

Inclusive conflict resolution in your club

Conflict happens in every club. How you respond makes the difference. Most conflicts can be resolved quickly if everyone feels heard, respected, and supported. Pausing, staying curious, and involving support networks can help resolve issues effectively.

Building an inclusive culture

- **Make sure your club has:**
 - A constitution, bylaws, or membership rules
 - Codes of conduct for players, coaches, volunteers, officials
 - A complaint/conflict policy that is known and accessible
- **Use the same values for everyone, but ensure communication is accessible:** plain language, alternative formats, or a support person if needed.
- **Remember that conflict can be an opportunity to improve relationships,** clarify needs, and grow as a team.

Understand behaviour and needs

- **What may look like “behaviours of concern” can often be:**
 - An unmet need (e.g., communication support, fatigue, sensory overload)
 - Misunderstanding (the person’s perspective or experience not heard)
 - Frustration at not being able to express needs or wants
- **Respond with curiosity, respect, and inclusion** rather than judgment.
- **Encourage coaches, volunteers, and other participants to ask supportive questions,** e.g.: “I noticed you looked upset when ... can you tell me what you need?” instead of “Why are you acting out?”



Resolve issues early and inclusively

- **Meet individually with each person** (if safe and appropriate) to hear their perspective.
- Ask: “What happened?” and “**What outcome would you like?**”
- **Consider support needs:** communication style, extra time, or a support person.
- **Bring parties together** for a facilitated conversation (if appropriate) to discuss needs, perspectives, and agree on next steps.
- With consent and where appropriate, **involve the person’s support network** (family, carer, advocate) to clarify needs and adapt the environment or communication.



Use formal processes when needed

- If informal resolution isn’t possible, or if the issue is serious (bullying, harassment, repeated behaviour), **follow your formal complaint process.**
- **Ensure accessibility:** information must be available in a format the person can use, and they should have support if needed.
- **Maintain confidentiality, fairness, and clarity of outcomes.**
- **Document decisions** and reflect on lessons learned.



Learn and improve

- **Conflicts highlight opportunities to strengthen club culture, communication, accessibility, and supports.** Ask:
 - What could we do differently next time?
 - Were the needs of the person with disability understood and supported?
 - Are support persons or communication aids needed as standard?
 - Do coaches/volunteers need training in inclusive communication and disability awareness?
- **Use conflict as a chance to improve relationships and build a stronger, inclusive team.**

Quick tips for inclusive conflict resolution

- 1 Be calm, patient, and curious.**
- 2 Hear and respect the voices of the persons involved.**
- 3 Adapt communication and environment as needed.**
- 4 Ask for support from networks if necessary.**
- 5 Focus on needs and solutions, not blame.**
- 6 Document, learn, and strengthen club culture.**