

NESTA – U18/Mixed-Age Touch Participation Guidance

Practical guidance for parents, young people, coaches, adult players and session organisers

The NESTA approach at a glance

NESTA starting age: from age 11, an U18 may be considered for participation in appropriate adult or mixed-age Touch, including both games and training.

Age 11 is the current minimum point for consideration — not automatic approval to participate. The particular young person, activity and environment must still be assessed as suitable and the required safeguarding controls must be in place.

What does ‘suitable’ mean?

It is not simply an age test. When assessing suitability, the authorised Coach / Session Lead should consider:

- physical development and the demands of the activity
- skill, experience and playing ability
- injury, medical or relevant welfare information
- the standard, format and physical demands of the particular session or game
- the young person’s wishes and confidence in the environment
- any environmental or safeguarding factors relevant to that activity

NESTA model for U18 participation in adult/mixed-age Touch

PARTICIPATION MAY PROCEED if:

**PARENT/CARER CONSENT GIVEN + YOUNG PERSON’S AGREEMENT TAKEN
+ COACH/SESSION LEAD SUITABILITY ASSESSED + APPROPRIATE SAFEGUARDS IN PLACE**

Important: The participant remains under 18 for safeguarding purposes.

The **Parental / Guardian Consent & U18 Participation Form** covers both **training and competition** involving players aged 18 or over.

The separate **Mixed-Age / U18 Session Checklist** is intended to check that the adult/mixed-age environment around that participation is appropriately controlled.

“U18” means any participant under 18.

“Adult/mixed-age Touch” means activity where an U18 may train or play with participants aged 18 or over.

“Coach / Session Lead” means the authorised person responsible for deciding whether the young person and the particular activity are suitable.

NESTA – U18/Mixed-Age Touch Participation Guidance

Quick answers for parents

Can my child aged 11–17 automatically join adult Touch?

No. Under this framework, an U18 aged 11–17 may be considered for appropriate adult or mixed-age Touch. The Parental / Guardian Consent & U18 Participation Form would record the parent/carer's consent, but participation also depends on the young person wanting to take part, an authorised Coach / Session Lead deciding that the particular activity is suitable, and the appropriate safeguarding controls being in place.

Does signing the Parental / Guardian Consent & U18 Participation Form guarantee they can play or train with adults?

No. This form records the parent/carer's consent and supports the participation decision. It does not guarantee a place in every adult or mixed-age session. The young person must still want to take part, the authorised Coach / Session Lead must consider the particular activity suitable, and the required safeguarding controls must be in place.

Is adult training treated exactly the same as an adult game?

No. Both may be appropriate, but the safeguarding arrangements reflect what is happening.

For an adult or mixed-age game, the U18 would still need the participation controls: parent/carer consent, the young person's agreement, an authorised Coach / Session Lead decision that the player and particular game are suitable, and appropriate U18 safeguards. There should also be a named responsible organiser / Session Lead, a known safeguarding/reporting route, and suitable arrangements for matters such as changing, emergency information and arrival/collection where relevant. Adult players do not become youth coaches simply because an U18 is playing alongside them.

For adult or mixed-age training, those same participation and session safeguards apply, but there is an additional coaching consideration. Anyone who is actually appointed to coach or supervise the U18 must have the appropriate role assurance, safeguarding training and PVG membership where required for that role.

The difference is therefore not that an adult game has fewer safeguarding responsibilities. Training introduces a formal coach–U18 relationship, which may create additional requirements for the person carrying out that role.

Do all adult players need a PVG because an U18 is present?

No. Simply participating alongside an U18 does not automatically make an adult player a youth coach or regulated-role holder. Roles must be assessed according to what the person actually does.

Does a PVG by itself mean somebody is approved to coach U18s?

No. The safer-recruitment approach treats PVG as one part of wider role assurance, alongside matters such as role clarity, safeguarding training, conduct expectations, supervision and ongoing suitability.

NESTA – U18/Mixed-Age Touch Participation Guidance

Common participation scenarios

These examples show how the controls would work in practice. They are intended to make the framework easier to understand, not to replace an individual safeguarding or suitability decision.

1. U18 attends dedicated youth training

Position: YES — normal youth provision.

Controls: Authorised youth coaches/helpers; roles assessed; PVG where the role is regulated; appropriate safeguarding training; attendance and emergency information; safe venue/activity arrangements; clear reporting route.

Related form / guidance: NESTA Parental / Guardian Consent & U18 Participation Form • STA attendance/register • STA risk assessment • NESTA Safe in Care • STA Safer Recruitment & Regulated Roles Procedure

2. U18 aged 11–17 wants to play in an adult or mixed-age game

Position: POTENTIALLY — if suitable for that particular environment.

Controls: Parent/carer consent; young person agrees; authorised Coach / Session Lead assesses suitability, including age, physical development, skill/experience and demands of the activity; U18 safeguarding arrangements remain in place.

Related form / guidance: NESTA Parental / Guardian Consent & U18 Participation Form • NESTA Youth Participation Guide

3. U18 aged 11–17 wants to attend adult training

Position: POTENTIALLY — with additional attention to the coaching environment.

Controls: As 2, plus identify who is actually coaching/supervising; assure those roles appropriately; named Session Lead; adults know U18s are present; appropriate changing, one-to-one, communications, emergency and transport arrangements.

Related form / guidance: NESTA Parental / Guardian Consent & U18 Participation Form • NESTA Mixed-Age / U18 Session Checklist • NESTA Safe in Care • STA Safer Recruitment & Regulated Roles Procedure

4. U18 joins an adult social / pick-up game with no formal coach

Position: POTENTIALLY — if the organiser permits U18 participation and appropriate controls are in place.

Controls: Consent/agreement/suitability; identify the responsible organiser or Session Lead; appropriate conduct and boundaries; emergency and reporting arrangements. Adult players do not become youth coaches simply by playing.

Related form / guidance: NESTA – Parental / Guardian Consent & U18 Participation Form • NESTA Mixed-Age / U18 Session Checklist where the activity is organised or delivered by NESTA • NESTA Safe in Care

5. An adult coach normally coaches adults, but U18s start attending

Position: THE COACHING ROLE MUST BE ASSESSED.

Controls: Do not rely on the label 'adult coach'. Consider what the person is actually doing with U18s. Confirm regulated-role/PVG requirements and the wider safer-recruitment and safeguarding training requirements before the relevant role is undertaken.

Related form / guidance: STA Safer Recruitment & Regulated Roles Procedure • STA role-assurance record

NESTA – U18/Mixed-Age Touch Participation Guidance

6. I am an adult player training in a session that includes U18s — what does this mean for me?

Position: You can participate normally. Being an adult player in the same session as an U18 does not, by itself, make you their coach, supervisor or responsible adult.

Controls: You should be made aware that U18s are participating and follow the expected standards of conduct, language and physical boundaries for a mixed-age environment. If you are asked to take on coaching, supervision or another responsibility for U18s, that is different and the role may need to be assessed before you undertake it.

Related form / guidance: NESTA Mixed-Age / U18 Session Checklist • NESTA Safe in Care • STA Safer Recruitment & Regulated Roles Procedure where an adult takes on an additional role.

7. Parent or other adult helps occasionally

Position: INCIDENTAL, SUPERVISED HELP MAY BE POSSIBLE.

Controls: Responsibility stays with the authorised Session Lead/coaches. Occasional assistance should not drift into independent coaching or supervision without the role first being assessed.

Related form / guidance: NESTA Safe in Care • NESTA Mixed-Age / U18 Session Checklist

8. Parent/helper is asked to coach or supervise U18s

Position: TREAT THIS AS A ROLE, NOT SIMPLY 'HELPING'.

Controls: Define and assess the actual role before it is undertaken; confirm required PVG membership where regulated; safeguarding training; conduct/boundaries; supervision and other safer-recruitment requirements.

Related form / guidance: STA Safer Recruitment & Regulated Roles Procedure • STA role-assurance record

NESTA – U18/Mixed-Age Touch Participation Guidance

Other situations parents and organisers may encounter

9. One-to-one coaching with an U18

Not treated as ordinary adult coaching. Apply NESTA Safe in Care controls, appropriate visibility/supervision and parent/carer awareness as appropriate; avoid foreseeable inappropriate isolated situations.

10. U18 uses facilities also used by adults

Plan changing/toilet arrangements so privacy and dignity are protected and foreseeable inappropriate adult/U18 or one-to-one situations are avoided.

11. U18 travels independently to or from activity

Potentially appropriate depending on age, maturity and circumstances. Arrival, collection or independent-travel arrangements should be understood, with emergency contact information available.

12. Coach or adult is asked to give an U18 a lift

Follow the transport arrangements in NESTA Safe in Care, including the applicable STA requirements for organised transport

13. Coach/session organiser needs to message an U18

Use approved communication arrangements and appropriate transparency/boundaries. Sensitive welfare matters should not be handled casually through inappropriate group or direct-message channels.

14. Photos or video are taken

Follow the STA Photography Policy and the recorded imagery permissions for the activity

15. The parent consents but the young person does not want to participate

The U18 does not take part in that adult/mixed-age element. The young person's agreement is an essential part of the participation decision.

16. Parent and young person agree, but the Coach / Session Lead considers it unsuitable

The U18 does not take part in that adult/mixed-age element at that time. Consent is not an entitlement to participate. Suitability can be reviewed if the player, activity or circumstances change.

17. A safeguarding or wellbeing concern arises

Immediate safety takes priority. The concern should be received, responded to, recorded and reported/escalated through the agreed safeguarding route. The participation form is not a substitute for the safeguarding procedure.

NESTA – U18/Mixed-Age Touch Participation Guidance

Which form or document does what?

Document / form	What it is for
NESTA – Parental / Guardian Consent & U18 Participation Form	Records core U18 information and permissions. This also records consent for training or competition with adults and the three-way participation decision.
NESTA – Youth Participation Guide	Provides a simple public-facing overview of the participation pathway, what U18s/parents can expect, and the four elements required before adult/mixed-age participation may proceed
NESTA – Mixed-Age / U18 Session Checklist	Checks the environment around the U18: attendance, consent, young person's agreement, suitability, Session Lead, role assurance, adult-player expectations, changing, emergency information, travel, communications, imagery, venue/activity and reporting.
NESTA – Safe in Care – Practical Guidance for U18 Activity	Practical operating guidance for issues such as professional boundaries, one-to-one situations, changing/toilets, transport, collection, first aid and mixed-age activity.
STA Safer Recruitment & Regulated Roles Procedure	Sets the process for defining and assessing roles, regulated-role/PVG requirements, safeguarding training, recruitment, induction, supervision and ongoing suitability.
STA Responding to Concerns & Case Management Procedure	Sets the practical route for receiving, recording, reporting, escalating and managing safeguarding/welfare concerns.
STA Risk assessment / attendance record	Records the practical activity/venue risks and who was present; complements rather than replaces safeguarding controls.

Important boundaries in the framework

- ✓ An U18 remains an U18 for safeguarding purposes even when participating in adult Touch.
- ✓ From age 11 is the NESTA minimum eligibility point for consideration — not automatic approval to join every adult activity.
- ✓ Parent/carer consent is not enough: the young person must want to participate, and the particular environment must be assessed as suitable.
- ✓ An adult merely playing alongside an U18 is not automatically a youth coach or regulated-role holder.
- ✓ Where somebody is appointed to coach, teach, supervise or manage U18s, the role must be assessed according to what they really do.
- ✓ PVG membership, where legally required, is one part of safeguarding and safer recruitment — not a substitute for training, role clarity, boundaries, supervision and wider suitability.

If you are unsure

Do not assume that a signed form or an adult-session label resolves the safeguarding question. For participation/suitability questions, refer to NESTA – Safe in Care – Practical Guidance for U18 Activity and the NESTA – Parental / Guardian Consent & U18 Participation Form. For welfare or safeguarding concerns, follow the STA Responding to Concerns & Case Management Procedure and use the NESTA reporting form where appropriate.