

Sports pitch usage - Policy

About us

Coram's Fields is a Children's Charity that has, since 1936, provided a range of facilities and services to support children and young people living in central London. Our seven acre park and playground, provides essential access to safe, open, green space in the heart of the city. Alongside this, our services deliver a variety of support to young people from birth through to early adulthood. You can find more information on our work at www.coramsfields.org

Policy context

Open 363 days a year, our three state of the art 3G football pitches provide young people with access to some of the best sports facilities in London, acting as a social hub where they can come together, socialise with friends and get involved in a number of structured activities. Through a diverse offer of community programmes for young people and free/subsidised hire of our facilities for schools and community groups, we play a vital role in enabling young people, irrespective of their age, ability or background, to become and stay active, and in supporting both their physical and mental well-being.

In addition to this, our pitches provide a critical source of income for the Charity. Income from pitch hire currently covers around a quarter of the total cost of keeping the park and playground open and funding all our services. As a result, our pitches are hired out on a commercial basis at certain times of day, taking great care to ensure minimum disruption to their availability for young people.

The complexity of managing our pitches, as a result of their popularity and the demand for them, means that our greatest challenge is striking a balance to ensure that young people of all ages have equal access, and that this is managed alongside their use by multiple schools and community groups, and the necessary hiring of them to generate income for the Charity.

Scope

This policy outlines the approach that we take to the hire of our pitches. It details the key principles that inform our decisions regarding the use of them and our commitments to children and young people.

Key principles and commitments

The use and hire of our pitches is underpinned by the following key principles and commitments;

- **Prioritising Young people:** We are committed to ensuring that as much as possible, our pitches are prioritised for use by young people – this includes ensuring that one pitch is always reserved for this purpose, alongside a commitment that overall no less than 65% of the total pitch availability is for young people.
- **Safeguarding:** That our pitches provide a safe space for young people to come and play sport through the provision of well-maintained and fully staffed facilities, a zero tolerance approach to bullying and antisocial behaviour and a strict code of conduct for all users.
- **Affordability:** That our pitches are fully accessible for all young people, through the provision of free access for those 19 years and under and subsidised access for 20-25 year olds.
- **Partnerships and collaboration:** That through proactive collaboration with local partners, and the provision of subsidised access for charities and local not for profit organisations, we are able to offer a diverse programme of sport for young people across the age spectrum.
- **Re-Investment:** The income generated from our pitches is invested in the upkeep of the pitches, park and playground and the services that we deliver to the local community.

Use of our Pitches

Structured Sports Programme

Through our free community sports programme, we ensure that local young people aged 5-19 years have access to a diverse range of sporting opportunities throughout the term time and holidays. These include the delivery of a number of targeted programmes for those at risk of social exclusion and young females. Our programmes are delivered by our team of qualified sports tutors and through a number of formal programme partners.

Free Play

The provision of free play, whereby young people have the opportunity to turn up and play without booking is vitally important in removing barriers to young people's participation in sport.

Through the provision of specific timeslots, we ensure that young people of all ages get the benefit of 'free play' without the disappointment of not being able to get on a pitch when they arrive. The following time slots are available for young people to turn up and play.

Age Range	Day	Time
5-16 years	Weekdays – term-time	4pm-5pm
5-16 years	Saturday	1pm-3pm
5-19 years	Saturday	3pm-close
5-16 years	Sunday	10am-3pm
5-19 years	Sunday	3pm-close
5-11 years	Weekdays – holidays	1pm-4pm
12-16 years	Weekdays – holidays	10am-4pm

State school bookings

Our pitches are available to hire for local schools and can be booked for PE lessons and school sports days. Schools can book pitches anytime between 9am-4pm during term time with availability limited between 12-2pm.

State schools in Camden can book the pitches for regular PE sessions free of charge where available. Our pitches can also be booked by Camden schools for sports days. These also remain free of charge; however, the school must cover the cost of any lost income from any commercial bookings cancelled to accommodate the request. To give adequate notice to cancel other bookings, we ask that all Camden sports days are booked in by the end of February each year. To enquire, please contact football@coramsfields.org.uk.

Private school bookings

As with Camden state schools, private schools or state schools from outside Camden can book our pitches between 9am-4pm at a subsidised rate. To enquire, please contact football@coramsfields.org.uk.

16-19 year-old bookings

Young people aged 16-19 years are free to turn up and play whenever there are free pitches available during the week - availability can be [viewed online](#). We also reserve a number of slots for these young people to book pitches in advance. There is **no cost** to booking and slots are available at the times below. Bookings should be made [here](#). Coram's Fields staff reserve the right to carry out random ID checks where the bookers appear over 19 years old.

Dates	Times
Weekdays Term time (Mon-Fri)	7pm-10pm
School Holidays	10am-6pm

20-25 year-old bookings

Whilst our pitches are free to all those aged 19 and under, we appreciate that many young people will want to continue using our pitches beyond this age yet might not be able to afford the full hire rates. To ensure that our pitches remain accessible, we have a number of slots available at subsidised rates for young people aged 20-25 years – these are available at the following times;

Dates	Times
Weekdays Term time (Mon-Fri)	12pm-2pm, 7pm-10pm
Weekends	3pm-close
School Holidays	4pm-10pm

Bookings should be made [here](#). Coram's Fields staff reserve the right to carry out random ID checks where the bookers appear over 25 years old.

Charities and voluntary sector organisations

We offer subsidised rates for charities and registered not for profit organisations at the following times:

Dates	Times
Weekdays Term time (Mon-Fri)	12pm-2pm, 7pm-10pm
Weekends	3pm-close
School Holidays	4pm-10pm

To qualify for the charity discount, the session must be used specifically with those who benefit from the charity's work (i.e. a homelessness charity running a session with rough sleepers or a youth charity running a session with young people).

Adult hires

Our pitches are available for hire to adults at certain times during the week and at weekends. All pitch bookings are for a full size 8-a-side pitch and hires are made on an hourly basis, with no half pitch bookings available. Should hirers wish to split their pitch into two smaller five-a side pitches, please ask a member of staff on booking – where possible, we will always try to accommodate this.

Exclusive use of Pitches

Our pitches provide an essential source of income for the Charity. Whilst this is the case, we aim to use our pitches in a way that brings limited disruption to use by young people, with the highest possible financial returns. We do this by using the facilities to deliver a small handful of fundraising initiatives each year that deliver high value returns, through single day events.

The majority of these events run across two pitches at the same time as our normal adult bookings and therefore bring no additional disruption to the young people using our space. However, once a year, our pitches are used to deliver an inter-legal football tournament that sees all three pitches in use and means that for one day only, our pitches are not available for use by the local community.

Whilst the closure of our pitches for this purpose is essential, **we have committed to only closing the pitches on a single occasion each year**. Should other similar opportunities arise, these will be considered on a case by case basis and will require authorisation by our Board of Trustees. On the day of the inter-legal football tournament, we will ensure that we communicate the closure of our pitches no less than two weeks before the date of the event.

Booking a pitch

Bookings for **adults and schools** can be made via the [Playfinder website](#) or via the [Playfinder app](#).

Bookings for **young people aged 16-25 years** should be made [here](#).

Access to pitches and accessibility

In order to ensure the safety of our young park users, adults playing on our pitches **must access and exit** Coram's Fields from the rear of the site, via the gate at the back of our pitches and **not through the main park entrance** on Guilford Street.

Our pitches are fully wheelchair accessible. On arriving at the rear entrance of our site, users should ask a member of staff to erect a ramp to gain access.

Changing Rooms

Our pitches are equipped with 8 changing rooms, male and female toilets and an accessible toilet. At certain times of day, our changing rooms may be used by children, young people and adults concurrently. Wherever possible, during the delivery of structured programmes, access to changing facilities and toilets may be limited to use by children to ensure the safety of our young users.

It is the responsibility of hirers to ensure that their changing room is locked when not in use. Please be aware that Coram's Fields accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage of personal belongings.

Rules of pitches

First and foremost, Coram's Fields is a place for children and young people. Whilst the hire of our pitches is necessary to generate essential income for the charity, safeguarding those that use our park and pitches is our greatest priority, and we ask that all users of our pitches make every effort to respect the space, the young people using it and our staff.

[View our full terms and conditions of pitch hire.](#)

Saving lives

Our pitches are fitted out with a lifesaving public defibrillator device – this is located on the wall near the changing rooms, instructions for its use are on the outside of the box.