EVERY CHILD DESERVES
A PLACE TO START

PART 01

Introduction: A place before a podium

A child arrives at a sports session and pauses at the edge. Other children seem to know the rules, the adults and one another. Whether that child takes a first step into the group may depend on something simple: a welcome, a clear explanation and permission to begin without already being good.

Ten parts of a better beginning

A connected planning journey; complete the readiness checks before delivering activities.

1 BEGIN A starting promise	2 LISTEN Children and families	3 REMOVE Practical barriers	4 INCLUDE Different needs	5 PROTECT Trust and safeguards
6 WELCOME The first session	7 LEARN Personal progress	8 COORDINATE Adult responsibilities	9 REVIEW Ongoing participation	10 SUSTAIN A community plan

This series is for clubs, schools, families and community groups that want to create a better starting experience. Across ten connected parts, it moves from listening and removing barriers to a welcoming first session, supported progress and a practical action plan. The aim is meaningful participation, not a promise that every child will become a competitive athlete.

Begin with the child's experience

A place to start includes more than a space on a registration form. Can a child understand what will happen, ask for help, make mistakes and choose a manageable way to join in? Treat these questions as part of programme design. A talented child and a hesitant beginner both deserve respectful treatment. Participation should not depend on looking confident on arrival.

Make the promise practical

Write a short starting promise: we will explain, listen, include and respond to concerns. Give each commitment an adult owner. Decide who welcomes new families, who plans activities and who handles safeguarding. Start at a scale your people and resources can support. An ambitious invitation means little if the group cannot provide the experience it describes.

SAM & NALEDI / FICTIONAL EXAMPLE

Sam and caregiver Naledi are fictional characters used throughout the series. Sam wants to try community sport but worries about being the least experienced child. Naledi needs clear information about costs, timing and supervision. Their questions help show how a welcome can become a workable plan.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Open a community starting notebook. Record who you hope to welcome, what is already available and three questions you need to answer. Write one sentence beginning: "A child joining us for the first time should be able to ___."

Every child's starting point is different. A good programme makes room to begin, learn and ask for help.

NEXT: Listen to children and families before deciding what they need.