

Coaching and Leading Club Led Activity Sessions

British Canoeing celebrates and recognises the vast experience of those club members that freely give up their time to coach and lead others on the water.

This document is to provide both guidance and support to English Club Committees to ensure club members are safe on the water during club led activities.

The Club Committee has a duty of care to ensure any club led activity takes place within a safety framework that incorporates appropriate risk management. This should include an assessment of the competence of those permitted to lead sessions.

As part of this safety framework, careful consideration needs to be taken to assess the competence and capabilities of an individual before allowing them to take responsibility in leading a paddlesport activity.

Club Committees must consider what is appropriate for their club and the activities that they offer.

Using formal qualifications is the most robust way of assessing competence. [British Canoeing](#) qualifications and awards have been accepted as the industry standard for over 40 years and are recognised and regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). With direct entry opportunities, clubs can encourage their experienced members to go straight to an assessment. An overview of British Canoeing qualifications can be found [here](#).

Within British Canoeing's database, the details of all certified coaches and leaders are recorded, alongside first aid and safeguarding training, as well as any uploaded continual professional development. Coaches and leaders' personal records provide evidence of currency as well as provide reminders of expiry dates.

Not all people in coaching and leadership roles within clubs possess recognised qualifications. Where this is the case, Club Committees should consider developing effective and robust ways within the club's own safety framework to ensure levels of competency are appropriate to the roles of individuals leading club activity sessions.

When creating a safety framework, British Canoeing recommends Club Committees should consider the following:

1. What needs to be assessed?

Club Committees are expected to take into account the different environments and conditions club activities take place in. The competence of the coach/leader and any assessment of their competence will need to reflect these. [Click here to see an example of a recorded assessment.](#)

- Personal skills and paddling ability
- Rescue of self and others
- Leadership of groups and individuals
- Experience operating in different environments and conditions
- Knowledge of environment, participants, equipment, etc.

2. What methods of evaluating competence can be used?

- A test or assessment
- Self-evaluation (not a method that should be used on its own)
- References from experienced competent person(s)
- Frequent and regular observations of the coach/leader
- Previous experience

It is up to the Club Committee to choose the best combination of approaches, as well as considering the time and expertise within the club. Each method has its pros and cons but normally a combination of measurements provides a more robust and reliable approach.

3. Who would be regarded as competent to evaluate competence or provide a reference?

British Canoeing recommends that the Club Committee has a robust system for evaluating competence. This might involve a collaborative approach which asks experienced members with appropriate skills and knowledge, and who are up to date with current practice and proactive in their own continual development. Those involved in assessing competence should also demonstrate an awareness of the difficulties of assessing friends and family.

An example of appropriate competence for a person assessing individuals for a sheltered water environment would be either a [British Canoeing Sheltered Water Coach](#) or a British Canoeing Paddlesport Leader Provider, details of which can be gained through the British Canoeing Coaching Department.

4. How many leaders and coaches does the club need?

This will depend on the scale and nature of the clubs activity programme. It is suggested that the club carries out an annual review of their planned activities and an audit of the current capacity and capabilities of the volunteer leaders and coaches to see if these match. From this it will be possible to see what gaps in provision there might be, either in terms of numbers or skills required.

Clubs are encouraged to evolve their ways of operating and their paddling programme in ways which reflect changes in the composition of the membership, members' aspirations, and the resources available to facilitate club activity. British Canoeing encourages all clubs to keep these factors under review and to have strategies in place to support the development of coaches and leaders who deliver club activities.

5. How often should an individual's competence be monitored or re-evaluated?

British Canoeing would expect a Club Committee to monitor the way club activities are provided and to make changes following any significant change of circumstances or planned activity. Monitoring should feed into periodic reviews (at least annually) of the evidence that everyone who takes on a key role is competent to undertake that role.

It is suggested that the club committee reviews the coaching and leadership volunteer workforce on a frequent and regular basis as part of an overall review of the safety framework. It is suggested that this review takes place at least every 3 years. This would include a recorded observation of each individual leader or coach's current ability to lead the activities or groups they are responsible for.

6. Keep a record

British Canoeing recommends that records are kept to show who, when, what and how key volunteers are involved in leading club activity. This should include information showing the process used to justify their involvement. Doing this demonstrates good governance and safety frameworks are in place for club members. British Canoeing has provided a series of example templates which can be used for recording:

[Example assessment of a club activity leader](#)

[Template for Club Activity Leader Assessment](#)

[Example of a club's process for signing-off new leader](#)

[Example Operating Procedures for Coaches and Leaders](#)

[Template for Club Coach/Experienced Person Register](#)

[Template for Club Coach Authorisation Form](#)

7. First Aid and Safeguarding

For anyone coaching and leading club activity, there is a duty of care to have both regular [first aid](#) and [safeguarding training](#), as a best practice and minimum requirement. First aid and safeguarding training should be refreshed every three years.

Paddlesport Activity Champion/Club Coach Coordinator

Clubs should consider recruiting volunteers who will ensure that the club's duty of care for the coaching and leading of club activities are appropriately managed. These volunteers (perhaps supported by a small sub-group of the committee) might also be responsible for some, or all, of the following:

- An audit of the existing coaching and leaderships qualifications/experience in the club;
- An audit of existing and/or proposed club activity;
- Developing a plan for matching the volunteer leader/coach to the club activity programme.

British Canoeing has prepared a series of templates and resources (above) to assist the Paddlesport Activity Champion/Club Coach Coordinator to carry out these tasks. Whilst it would be preferable, these roles do not necessarily require the individuals to have expertise or experience across coaching, leadership or development work. However, the skills of these people should enable the club committee to help audit, plan and organise training for others within the club.

Offer of regular online advice and training on measuring and assessing competence

British Canoeing provides services and support to clubs to help them ensure that the coaching and leadership of club activity sessions is managed effectively. A series of webinars will be offered to discuss and share advice on providing safe and enjoyable paddlesport club activity.

Contact Details for Area Development Officers

Area Development Officers (ADOs) are here to help British Canoeing Affiliated Clubs. If you have a question or would like further information, please contact your local ADO using the details below:

**South West, Southern, South East,
London and Eastern**

Contact: James Hives

Tel: 01158968817

Mobile: 07834 583369

james.hives@britishcanoeing.org.uk

**Cumbria, North East, North West and
Yorkshire**

Contact: Phil Scowcroft

Mobile: 07894 396484

phil.scowcroft@britishcanoeing.org.uk

East and West Midlands

Contact: Russ Smith

Tel: 01158968811

Mobile: 07701 387974

russell.smith@britishcanoeing.org.uk