

Coaches' Responsibilities

BCU Coaches have a number of responsibilities to ensure the paddlers in their care can enjoy the sport, are treated fairly, and are protected from foreseeable harm. When Coaches register for Coaching Awards using the C1 or CR form they sign a declaration agreeing the BCU Coaching Code and respective policies. The BCU/Home Nations have a number of policies that aim to provide guidance for Coaches on these responsibilities. Whilst this article does not negate the need to read these policies, we will outline each area to highlight what it means to our Coaches.

All of the relevant documents are available on:

<http://www.canoe-england.org.uk/coaching/bcu-documents/>

Keeping up-to-date:

The Canoe England Coach Update scheme provides a service whereby Canoe England recognises Coaches' qualifications as valid and updated. The Coach Update process is the same for all of our Coaches, whether they hold 'new' or 'old' awards. There are three things required to meet the update requirements:

1. Have a valid first aid certificate recorded
(See Canoe England website for the list of acceptable first aid awards)
2. Have a current Comprehensive Membership of Canoe England
3. Be up-to-date with current best practice. There are three ways this can be evidenced (each being valid for a period of three years):
 - i. Attend a BCU Coach Update Event
 - ii. Complete a BCU Self-Assessment Form
 - iii. Achieve a BCU Coaching or Leadership Qualification

More details are available on the Canoe England website.

Duty of Care:

Duty of Care is a legal obligation that rests upon an individual or organisation to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the safety of others. We all have a duty of care to everyone we come into contact with or have an effect on, this responsibility increases as we take on more responsible roles such as being a Coach. It also increases in specialist environments if we have a greater level of knowledge or ability than those around us. Duty of Care is a legal commitment to being responsible. It is not something that we can choose to avoid by writing disclaimers, or something we can duck out of. The BCU Duty of Care policy outlines a general and basic view of our Duty of Care.

Coaches' Code of Conduct:

The BCU Coaches' Code of Conduct outlines the behaviour a Coach must display to keep children and adults safe from harm. The BCU Coaches' Code of Conduct meets National standards for sports Coaches across the UK, and sets standards for Coaches as well as providing information to participants about what standards are expected. The Code of Conduct comprises such values as responsibility, humanity, relationships, commitment, co-operation, advertising, integrity, confidentiality, competence, personal standards, and safety, with regards to a responsibility towards participants, colleagues, the BCU, and to society.

Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults:

All BCU Coaches have a role to play safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and preventing their abuse. We have both a moral and legal obligation to ensure that when given the responsibility for children we provide them with the highest possible standard of care. Canoe England provides a number of resources that are available to support Coaches, available on the website. Coaches should be familiar with these key policies:

- BCU Child Protection Policy
- BCU Whistle Blowing Policy
- BCU Anti Bullying Policy
- BCU Disclosure Policy

Canoe England Coaches are all required to complete some element of Child Protection Training, this differs depending on the groups they work with. For example, any Coach who works regularly or alone with young people (U18) is required to complete "ScUK Safeguarding and Protecting Children" or equivalent, whilst most other Coaches are required to complete the BCU Paddlesafe online child protection training; or equivalent. Further details including equivalents are available on our website.

All existing BCU Coaches (Level 2, and above) are required to have an enhanced CRB through the BCU when their qualification is updated as part of the BCU Coach Update process (revalidation). Again, more details are available on our website.

Physical Competency:

Coaches need to be fit and able to perform the job. The BCU Statement of Physical Competence requires Coaches to declare any medical conditions that may impair their ability to be responsible for the overall safety of others. The declaring of impairments does not necessarily debar a person from coaching; certain working conditions may be established to ensure they can maintain their responsibilities. This helps protect Coaches, and is a mechanism by which the BCU can support those individuals with specific medical conditions. Coaches who need to declare a medical condition should return the Medical Declaration Form to Canoe England.

Insurance:

If someone becomes injured or suffers loss or damage because a Coach has failed to meet their Duty of Care, they may be able to pursue a claim against the Coach for negligence. It is, therefore, vital that Coaches have Third Party Liability insurance to provide cover against such claims. Third Party Liability insurance is included within Canoe England membership. This insurance covers anything defined by the BCU as 'Canoeing activities', including Coaching Canoeing.

It is important that details of any injuries, or damage to property, that occur while coaching or taking part in canoeing or kayaking activities are reported to the BCU. Sharing this information with the BCU will ensure that the information is passed to our insurers. Canoe England Members are required to use the BCU Incident Report Form in such events.

BCU Coaches who are comprehensive members of Canoe England are covered for civil liability under the BCU policy with an indemnity of £10m. In addition, the policy covers paid coaching activity with the following conditions:

- Their annual turnover is less than £25,000 per annum
- They can have a trading name
- They can be a partnership (each partner can turn over up to £25,000)
- They cannot be a limited company
- They cannot employ staff

Equal Opportunities Policy:

The Canoe England equal opportunities policy aims to ensure that people from all sectors of the Community (irrespective of their age, colour, disability, ethnic origin, race, sexual orientation, or gender), have genuinely equal opportunities to participate in canoeing at all levels. The BCU as the governing body for sport takes responsibility for this in ensuring that present and potential members receive equally favourable treatment, but also require Coaches working under BCU qualifications to do the same.

Responsibility to the environment:

Coaches have a responsibility to protect our environment and to teach others to do the same. We are fortunate to be involved in a sport that allows us to enjoy the wildlife and explore the landscape as an essential part of the canoeist's pleasure for aesthetic, cultural, and recreational reasons. The responsible use of canoes and kayaks leaves no trace of passing and causes no erosion, noise, or pollution; and is unlikely to have any significant impact on, or lasting disturbance to, wildlife and the water environment. We recognise that the wildlife and landscape of Britain is a part of our common heritage, and that we have a clear duty to concern ourselves with the care of the environment where canoeing takes place. Check out the Canoe England access and environment pages for more details.

Responsibility for access:

Many people who take up canoeing are surprised to learn that they cannot necessarily paddle wherever they want. The law in England and Wales is such that there is no certainty of public access to, or along, any inland water, and permission may be required. There are many waters without clear and publicised rights of navigation and paddlers need to be aware that their presence may be questioned. Many navigations need licences, some of which are included in Canoe England membership, but there are others that require a separate licence so one needs to check before launching.

Coaches have a special responsibility to inform their group about the access situation, access arrangements, and the need for licences. Important messages for newcomers are:

- Always seek information about the access rights when planning a trip. The BCU has a team of Voluntary Access Officers to help provide this information
- Join the British Canoe Union and/or a local club to support the work to increase the present limited access to water
- Help earn and retain the reputation of paddlers being responsible and considerate to other people and the environment

Check out the Canoe England access and environment pages for more details

First Aid:

All Coaches (with the exception of BCU (UKCC) Level 1 Coaches) are required to hold an appropriate First Aid award to ensure they have the skills to treat a paddler if they are injured. Canoe England holds details of this on the membership database – so it is important for Coaches to send us a copy. Coaches must also ensure they have access to an appropriate first aid kit whilst coaching. Details of the First Aid awards considered acceptable are available on our website.

Injury Prevention and Manual Handling:

The BCU Injury Prevention and Manual Handling policy provides guidelines for manual handling and risk assessment in relation to paddlesport. This covers good practice for Coaches, e.g. executing rescues, but also looks at the responsibilities that Coaches have to their participants, e.g. explaining and developing safe lifting techniques for the boats they are using.

Participants' Statement of Fitness:

As a Coach responsible for others' safety it is important to establish that participants are fit to perform. Information may be gathered on booking forms, signing-in sheets, or specific forms. (See note above about guidance on keeping records, this includes information about data protection, confidentiality etc).

Data Protection and Keeping Records:

One of the responsibilities of the Coach is to keep records. You may need to collect information about your participants, your sessions, safety, accidents, venues, etc. The BCU Coaches' Code of Conduct provides guidance on how to treat this information, including not to divulge it to a third party without the express approval of the participant (confidentiality does not preclude the disclosure of information to persons who can be judged to have a "Right to Know"). Coaches also have a responsibility to the Data Protection Act (1998) that states only relevant and necessary information should be held, used only for the purposes stated, not kept for longer than required, secured in a safe place, disposed of securely, and not passed on without consent.