

Responsibilities of the Coach - Summary

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 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 document does not negate the need to read these policies, we will outline each area to highlight what it means to our coaches.

The policies and guidance documents are all available to download from your Home Nation website.

www.canoe-england.org.uk

Canoe England

www.welsh-canoeing.org.uk

Canoe Wales

www.canoescotland.com

Scottish Canoe Association

www.cani.org.uk

Canoe Association of Northern Ireland

Duty of Care:

Duty of Care is the duty 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.

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 later about guidance on Keeping Records, this includes information about data protection, confidentiality etc)

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 you can maintain your responsibilities. This helps protect coaches, and is a mechanism by which the BCU can support those individuals with specific medical conditions. If you need to declare a medical condition request the **BCU Medical Declaration Form** from your Home Nation Association.

Injury Prevention and Manual Handling:

This 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 responsibilities that coaches have to their participants, e.g. explaining and developing safe lifting techniques for the boats they are using.

Coaches Code of Conduct:

The **BCU Coaches Code of Ethics** 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 comprise such values as responsibility, humanity, relationships, commitment, co-operation, advertising, integrity, confidentiality, abuse of privileges, competence, personal standards and safety, with regards to a responsibility towards participants, colleagues, the BCU and to society.

Safeguarding and Protecting Children:

There are a number of BCU/Home Nation policies and procedures designed to help safeguard and protect young people. BCU Coaches play an important role in safeguarding the welfare of children and preventing their abuse, with 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. The SCA Child Protection Policy includes sections on:

- Recognising abuse
- The main forms of abuse
- The effects of abuse
- How to respond to suspicions or allegations of abuse
- What to do if allegations are made against members of staff or volunteers
- Advice on good practice
- Advice on recruitment of staff and volunteers

In addition there are BCU Policies for Anti Bullying and Whistle Blowing. The Home Nation Associations also have guidance for coaches on child protection training, and disclosure. Check out your Home Nation Association Website for copies of the relevant policies and guidance documents.

Responsibility to the environment:

As a coach you 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. The British Canoe Union, as the sport's governing body in the United Kingdom, recognises that the wildlife and landscape of Britain is a part of our common heritage, and has a clear duty to concern itself with the care of the environment where canoeing takes place. Refer to your Home Nation Website for information on good practice in the freshwater and marine environment.

Responsibility for access:

Many people taking up canoeing are often surprised to learn that it cannot be assumed they can paddle on any waters deep enough to float a canoe or kayak. The law in England and Wales is such that there is no certainty of public access along all inland water, and permission may be required. The choice to go canoeing is up to the individual but there are many waters without clear and publicised rights of navigation and one needs to be aware that their presence there may be questioned. Many navigations need licences and most of these are covered, in England, through Canoe England membership but there are others that require a separate licence so one needs to check before launching. The law in Scotland is different with the Scottish Land Reform Act allowing general public access to most inland waters. Access in Scotland comes under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code which all people canoeing in Scotland should familiarise themselves with. The Outdoor access code can be found at www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

Coaches have a special responsibility when coaching 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 have 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

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 divulging it to a third party (other than to persons who can be judged to have a "Right to Know"), without the express approval of the participant. 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.

Insurance:

If a coach fails to meet their duty of care and someone becomes injured or suffers loss or damage, they can make a claim against the coach. It is therefore vital that coaches have Third Party Liability insurance to provide cover against claims of negligence. Third Party Liability insurance is included within Home Nation Association membership, this insurance, covers anything we consider 'Canoeing activities', including Coaching Canoeing. It is important that details of any known incidents or injuries that occur to students while undergoing coaching or taking part in canoeing or kayaking activities are reported to the BCU, particularly those involving a personal injury, which may give rise to a subsequent claim. Sharing this information with the BCU will ensure that the information is passed through to the BCU's insurance brokers. Individuals reporting incidents in this way need have no fear or concern about action being taken against them.