

## **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 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.

(Together these policies make up the BCU Responsibilities of Coach Pack as mentioned in the BCU UKCC Level 1 and 2 awards).

### **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.

### **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 return the Medical Declaration Form to your Home Nation.

## **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)

## **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 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 and Vulnerable Adults:**

The three policies below outline the responsibility we have towards protecting children and vulnerable adults from abuse. All BCU Coaches have a role to play safeguarding the welfare of children 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 provide a number of resources are available to support Coaches, available on their website. The three key policies are:

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

Details about Child Protection Training Requirements for Coaches, and Disclosure will be added soon.

## **Equal Opportunities policy:**

The BCU 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.

## **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.

## **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 appropriately treat a paddler if they are injured. Canoe England hold details of this on your membership record – so if you haven't already please send us a copy. Coaches must also ensure they have access to an appropriate first aid kit whilst coaching.

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

## 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 to an 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.

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

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

## Keeping Records:

One of the responsibilities of the coach is to keep records. Whilst you may not be directly responsible for all of the following 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.

## **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 Canoe England 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.