



Code of Conduct & Good Practice for Coaches and Sports Leaders

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This is one of a series of documents intended to set the standard for behaviour within Rowing Ireland. It applies to all Coaches, with or without qualifications, umpires, officials, and anyone left in charge of young people or vulnerable persons, within Rowing Ireland.

Rowing Guidance for Working with Young People and Vulnerable Adults¹

Rowing Ireland is indebted to the countless number of volunteers who give of their time in providing rowing opportunities for young people and vulnerable persons.

Rowing provides an excellent pathway for people to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own potential. Through their participation, they can learn and develop life skills, have fun and enjoyment, make friends and experience life in a way that can enhance their personal growth throughout their lives.

People become involved in rowing for a variety of different reasons. They come from a variety of sporting backgrounds and take on various roles within clubs and other organisations. Irrespective of their role or responsibility, coaches and leaders all share the common goal of providing opportunities for young people and vulnerable persons.

Coaches, parents, carers and administrators all have an important role to play in promoting good practice in sport. They should have, as their first priority, providing safety and enjoyment of the sport.

Rowing Ireland wants sport to be safe, to be fun and to ensure that all rowing and associated activity takes place in the spirit of 'FAIR PLAY'.

Coaches achieve satisfaction from working with young people and vulnerable persons. Focusing on the individual participants' needs and performance encourages young people to achieve and demonstrate enjoyment, equality and fair play. They will come to realise that standards of behaviour are as important as sports performance.

In taking this approach young people and vulnerable persons are encouraged to:

- Do their best – put in their best effort.
- Improve and develop their skills.
- Make friends.
- Play by the rules.
- Appreciate/accept everyone in the group, regardless of ability, race, religion, gender etc.

¹ RI have a Safeguarding Children and a Safeguarding Adults Policy to reflect the differences of risk and needs but our codes of conduct for volunteers/staff/officials applies to both groups.

Player Centred Approach

Coaches need to be aware of why young people and vulnerable persons want to try rowing. They want to learn new skills, make new friends, be part of a group, to win and be successful, experience challenges, excitement and action.

While winning is important, it must be remembered that winning at all costs does not meet the needs of players. Results are not necessarily a good indicator of coaching effectiveness or ability, the improvement level of those in rowing and their level of enjoyment is.

Coaches should aim to provide a safe and enjoyable environment where young people and vulnerable persons are placed at the centre of all activities.

In promoting good practice and creating a player centred approach coaches should:

- Act as good role models.
- Encourage and be positive during sessions so that participants leave with a sense of achievement.
- Set challenging, realistic but achievable goals.
- Plan and prepare each session appropriately and ensure proper levels of supervision.
- Ensure that all activities are inclusive and allow all participation in an enjoyable way.
- Put the welfare and enjoyment of young people and vulnerable persons first and strike a balance between this and winning or achieving results.
- Enforce the principles of fair play treating each person equally, with dignity and respect and ensure that everyone plays within the rules.
- Be aware of the developmental stages and needs of those in rowing.
- Avoid over training and over emphasis on competition.
- Involve parents/guardians/carers and other club members in what we do.
- Be qualified and up to date with the latest coaching knowledge and skills.

Best Practice

In keeping young people and vulnerable persons at the forefront of planning and practice, coaches can be confident that participants will enjoy their rowing experiences and that their actions are regarded as safe and in keeping with the principle that welfare of is of paramount consideration.

Coaches are given a position of trust by parents/guardians and rowers, and should show the highest standards of behaviour whilst in the company of young people and vulnerable persons. It is important that coaches follow an agreed code of good practice, and parents/carers/club officials are satisfied that coaches are suitable to lead the activities undertaken. It is important to note that in adhering to these guidelines we ensure not only a safe environment for young people and vulnerable persons, but also a safe environment in which coaches and volunteers can operate.

Coaches/volunteers should never:

- Exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward.
- Share a room with a young or vulnerable person alone on away trips.

- Engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind, and/or make sexually suggestive comments about or to a young or vulnerable person.
- Abuse their position of trust by engaging in any sexual activity with under 18's or adults defined as adults at risk. This will be subject to club/governing body disciplinary procedures.
- Use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a young or vulnerable person.
- Take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult.
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the coaching of young or vulnerable people.

Most coaches work in an environment where it is recognised that, in a sporting context, certain types of coaching require a 'hands on approach', i.e., it may be necessary to support a participant in order to physically demonstrate a particular technique. This should only occur when necessary and in an open and appropriate way within the boundaries set by the coaching award or needs for safety, but with the knowledge, permission and full understanding of the participant concerned and his/her parent/guardian/carer.

Coaches must realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted, not only by the rower, but by others with limited knowledge of the requirements of the sport or person's motivated by jealousy, dislike or mistrust and could lead to allegations of sexual misconduct or impropriety. Therefore, coaches should be aware of, and avoid all situations conducive to this risk.

Where possible, coaches/volunteers should avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time with young people or vulnerable persons away from others.
- Taking sessions alone (always employ "Two Person" supervision).
- Taking young people or vulnerable persons to their homes.
- Taking young people or vulnerable persons on journeys alone in their car.

Safety

Coaches have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the participants with whom they work as far as possible within the limits of their control. Therefore, coaches should seek to create a safe and enjoyable environment for rowing and training.

In this respect:

- Regular safety checks should be carried out in relation to premises, training facilities and equipment.
- Appropriate safety rules should be adopted and implemented.
- Parent/guardian/carer should be informed of the starting and finishing times of training sessions and events.
- A first aid kit should be available at all training sessions /events and injuries should be recorded, with a note of action taken in relation to each one. Never put injured rowers out to compete.
- Parent/Guardian/Carer should be notified of injuries/illness which their children/young persons incur while participating in any rowing activity.

In promoting “Sport for Fun” coaches should:

- Encourage participation and fun.
- Promote the development of skills as opposed to winning at all costs.
- Emphasise and praise effort.
- Act as a good role model.
- Actively discourage participants from abusing umpires, officials, crew mates or opponents).
- Insist on FAIR PLAY.
- Be realistic with your expectations.
- Be aware of participants’ feelings.
- Teach rowers to respect different cultures.

Coaches should be aware that young people & vulnerable persons also have a Code of Conduct and should also be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat other participants, officials, coaches and volunteers with the same degree of fairness and respect.

Responsibility to Report

Any person, who has concerns about a young or vulnerable person’s welfare or who suspects that a young or vulnerable person is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, has a responsibility to report their concerns the Club Children’s Officer, the Rowing Ireland Designated Liaison Person or to the local Statutory Authorities.

Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable, are advised that they can seek advice from the duty Officer at the local Garda / PSNI station where they will receive appropriate advice.

In cases of emergency where a young or vulnerable person appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the duty social worker is not contactable, call the Gardai/Police.

Under no circumstances should a young or vulnerable person be left in a dangerous situation, pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.

All Affiliated Clubs will have clear procedures for responding to reports or concerns relating to the safety and welfare of young people and vulnerable persons. Coaches / volunteers, young people, vulnerable persons and parents / guardians / carers should be aware of how and to whom they report concerns within the club or organisation.

Mobile Phones and Social Media

Mobile phones and communication devices are often given to young people and vulnerable persons for security, enabling parents / carers to keep in touch and make sure they are safe. However, such technology has also allowed an increase in direct personal contact with young and vulnerable persons, in some cases used to cross personal boundaries and cause harm.

Within clubs there is a need to encourage responsible and secure use of these devices.

In this respect Coaches are advised to:

- Use group texts for communication among athletes and teams and inform parents / carers of this at the start of the season
- Not to have constant communication with individual athletes
- Don't use the phone in certain locations; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person, e.g. changing rooms, or may cause a safety risk e.g. on the water.
- Not 'friend' or 'follow' young people on social media. (Young people may 'follow' leaders on social media so leaders should make sure any content they post is appropriate.)
- Ensure messages left to or from young people on social network sites should be written on an open page (e.g. A Facebook 'Wall') and not in a private message or by using 'chat' [one-on-one].
- Not network with youth members of their organisation/group via closed [one-on-one] chats e.g. Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, etc. This should be done only through 'Group Chat.'
- Ensure any emails sent to young people via the site must be sent to at least one other leader (this can be done by 'bcc' if necessary).
- Not communicate with young people in their organisation/group via email/text etc late at night.
- When signing off a post or email leaders should not do so in a way that could be misconstrued or misinterpreted by the recipient. Simply sign your name.
- Ensure parental permission is received before pictures or videos of children or young people are posted online.
- Ensure any disclosures of abuses reported through a social networking site must be dealt with according to RI reporting procedures.

By signing below, you are committing to and agreeing with the above. Any breach in this Code of Conduct will be dealt with appropriately and in accordance with the Rowing Ireland Complaints and Disciplinary process.

Signed:

Name:..... On Date:.....