

Coaching and Leading Club Led Activity Sessions

Paddle UK values the extensive experience of club members who generously volunteer their time to coach and lead others on the water. This document provides guidance and support to English Club Committees affiliated with Paddle England to help ensure the safety of members during club-led paddlesport activities.

Club Committees' Duty of Care

Club Committees are responsible for ensuring that all club-led activities take place within a robust safety framework. This framework should include appropriate risk management and assess the competence of those leading sessions, going beyond the minimum Standards for Deployment.

Before assigning individuals to lead paddlesport activities, committees must carefully assess their competence and suitability. This process is supported by Paddle UK's Safer Recruitment Policy.

Each Club Committee must determine what is appropriate for its specific activities and membership.

Using Formal Qualifications

Formal qualifications are the most reliable way to assess competence. [British Canoeing Awarding Body](#) qualifications and awards are:

- Recognised as the industry standard for over 40 years.
- Regulated by Ofqual (the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation).

Clubs can encourage experienced members to go straight to assessment through direct entry opportunities.

The Paddle UK database maintains up-to-date records of certified coaches and leaders, including first aid, safeguarding training, and continuing professional development. These personal records serve as both proof of current status and reminders for renewal.

Unqualified Coaches and Leaders

Not all volunteers in coaching and leadership roles hold formal qualifications. In these cases, Club Committees must:

- Develop effective ways to assess competence within their own safety framework.
- Clearly understand the [Standards for Deployment](#) (by 2026, see policy for more details) requirements and timelines to ensure proper insurance coverage.

Building a Safety Framework: Key Considerations

1. What needs to be assessed?

Assessments should reflect the environments and conditions in which club activities occur, including:

- Paddling and rescue skills
- Leadership of individuals and groups
- Experience across different conditions
- Knowledge of equipment, participants, and local environments

2. How can competence be evaluated?

Committees can use a mix of methods:

- Formal tests or assessments
- Self-evaluations (should not be used alone)
- References from experienced individuals
- Observations during sessions
- Past experience

The best results come from combining multiple methods based on available time, expertise, and club resources.

3. Who can assess competence?

Assessment should be carried out by experienced individuals with current knowledge and a commitment to best practices. These assessors should also understand the challenges of objectively evaluating friends or family members.

For sheltered water environments, suitable assessors might include:

- [British Canoeing Sheltered Water Coach](#)
- [British Canoeing Paddlesport Leader Providers](#)

(For more details, contact the Coaching Department.)

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

This depends on the size and nature of your programme. Conduct an annual review of:

- Planned activities
- Existing coach/leader capacity

Use this to identify gaps in numbers or skills. Club activities should evolve to reflect member interests, demographics, and available resources.

Ongoing Monitoring and Re-evaluation

Paddle UK expects committees to:

- Monitor how activities are delivered
- Reassess competence after significant changes in the club or programme
- Carry out periodic reviews (at least annually)

Additionally, a more in-depth review—including direct observation of each coach or leader—should take place at least every three years.

Record Keeping

Clubs must keep records that show:

- Who is leading club activities
- How and when they were assessed
- Justification for assigning them to lead

This supports good governance and demonstrates your safety framework is in place. Paddle UK provides templates to assist with this, including:

- Assessment forms (PDF/Word)
- Sign-off processes
- Operating procedures
- Coach/leader registers and authorisation forms

First Aid and Safeguarding

All coaches and leaders have a duty of care to maintain up-to-date:

- [First aid certification](#)
- [Safeguarding training](#) (renew every three years)

Certain roles may also require a [DBS](#) check.

Appointing a Club Coach Coordinator or Paddlesport Activity Champion

Clubs are encouraged to appoint volunteers to oversee the management of coaching and leadership. These roles may include:

- Auditing qualifications and experience
- Reviewing the club's activity programme
- Matching volunteers to suitable activities

These roles don't require technical expertise in coaching but should involve people with strong organisational skills who can help plan and coordinate training and development.

Resources and templates are available from Paddle UK to support these roles.