



# TYNE VALLEY CANOE CLUB

## RISK ASSESSMENT POLICY

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

The policy sections cover all areas of Paddlesport offered by the Club.

It is the aim of Tyne Valley Canoe Club is to enable people of all ages and abilities to participate in Canoeing at a recreational or competitive level. Participation in Paddlesport carries with it a number of inherent risks and by its very nature as outdoor water sport is categorised as an 'Assumed Risk Sport'. This policy has been formulated to identify the hazards associated with Paddlesport and to put in place a range of procedures and control measures to minimise the risks involved and to ensure the safety of all who participate in club activities. It is appropriate that all coaches/leaders, officials and volunteers are familiar with the contents of this policy and recognise their duty of care to both members and visitors to the club. The contents of this document must also be consistent with other club policies and rules of Tyne Valley Canoe Club, which seek to promote and deliver safe Paddlesport to all of its members.

All Club Coaches, Officials and Volunteers must recognise their duty:

- To take care of their own safety and the safety of others who may be affected by their actions.
- To be familiar with this safety policy and other policies and Club rules, which are to be considered in the context of Health and Safety.
- To co-operate with the General Committee in promoting safe Paddlesport.
- To report damaged equipment or ineffective safety systems as soon as possible to the Club Officials or Senior Coach.
- Not to undertake any activity unless suitably experienced/qualified and the requisite safety equipment is available and in good condition.
- To be responsible for the Health and Safety matters within the site or area of the Paddlesport activity they are leading.

### **PROCEDURES**

The four key are;

1. Risk Assessment and Planning before a Paddlesport activity or event.
2. Organisation of routines during the activity.
3. Control measures to minimise the risks.
4. Monitor and Review to ensure procedures are effective and that risk assessments are revised and updated as appropriate.

## **Section1. RISK ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING**

All coaches/leaders, club officials, and volunteers are required to be familiar with the contents of this health and safety policy and the supporting **venue/site risk assessment sheets** and **activity risk assessment forms**. They should consult the relevant parts of these documents before undertaking any Paddlesport activity or event and be aware that the policies will be periodically updated.

Before any club activity Coaches will:

- Have carried out a risk assessment and referenced the risk assessment site sheets.
- Have available any necessary safety equipment such as throw bags, first aid kits and spare warm clothing.
- Ensure that all coaches and paddlers are dressed appropriately for the activity.
- Brief and reinforce any safety points and guidelines, which paddlers must follow when paddling in a particular environment.
- Know how and when to use particular emergency equipment.
- Have checked and noted the quality and condition of all equipment to be used.
- Be aware of any medical conditions and details of medication club members are taking whilst maintaining confidentiality and in receipt of parental consent for members under 18 years of age.

### **Risk Assessment**

The Club will carry a range of risk assessments on sites and venues, which are regularly used. These will be periodically reviewed and updated by the Club Senior Coach or named Official responsible for Health and Safety issues. It must also be recognised that the coach on an activity especially on river journeys where water levels have changed may carry out a dynamic risk assessments on route.

The risk assessment sheets will have four components, which include:

**1. Hazards** – These include identified risks and potential hazards. These will be recorded as a list and will cover the following areas:

- Hazards generated by the site i.e. walking over particular terrain approaching the riverbank or activity site, steepness of gradient and state of paths etc...
- Hazards generated by the environment i.e. the weather, temperature, water levels, river obstacles, water quality; tides and currents.
- Hazards generated by man including weirs, fish ladders, bridges, fences, other water craft, fishing lines and nets; other water users and sea going vessels; discarded debris. ...
- Hazards generated by other canoeists and kayakers. These include collisions causing capsize and entrapment.
- Risks generated by the individual, which may have implications on self and others, safety. To include masking medical conditions, ignoring advice and instructions on and off the water, inappropriate behaviour.

**2. Who might be harmed? Cause and effect**– A list of all the groups of people who are at risk. This section will identify the risk against the action from the hazards list and will include:

- All paddlers involved in Paddlesport doing a particular activity. For example completing a capsize drill may carry a risk of head or face injury from a submerged rock, therefore, a suitable depth of water must be determined before the exercise is carried out etc...
- The group size should be restricted according to risk assessment and following the guidelines recommended by the British Canoeing Terms of Reference document.
- The safe and effective delivery of Paddlesports activity. Games are carried out in a safe manner and the risks of some activities such as running over the deck of a raft of kayaks have been realised by the coach may result in injuries to participants.

**3. Is the risk adequately controlled?** – This section identifies the existing control measures and examines the activity environment, including setting the activity boundaries, limits and procedures. Examples of these controls are detailed below:

- Club coaches will carry out pre-check of launch site for apparent hazards such as broken glass bottles and tins etc...
- Club coaches will carry out pre-check of launch site and warn participants to be aware of the terrain, where to walk and where to put their hands when launching and landing.
- Instructions will be given on safe lifting and carrying.
- All canoes kayaks and equipment will be checked for defects and any found will be made safe.
- All paddlers will be adequately equipped and clothed appropriate to the weather and planned activity.
- Coaches and participants will carry items of equipment such as; emergency equipment, first aid kit, spare food, flask with hot drink, spare clothing, when required.
- A warm-up will be completed prior to any paddling activity.
- Coaches and group leaders will brief participants on potential hazards and any safety procedures to be followed.
- Coaches will set limits/boundaries for canoeing activities where appropriate.
- The recommended minimum group size for Paddlesport activities where a coach is not present will be three.
- All novice paddlers will operate under the guidance and supervision of a club coach.

**4. Further actions take to control the risk** – This section identifies any additional actions taken to control the risks and in particular examines the competence and qualifications of the coaches and leaders in the context of the British Canoeing Coaching Certification. The Club will ensure that all club coaches who are teaching and leading groups hold current and up-dated certification including valid first aid certificates. Examples of additional control measures are summarised below:

- The Clubs senior coach will monitor all Paddlesport activities.

- All Paddlesport-coaching activities will be under the supervision of qualified British Canoeing coaches/leaders or competent paddlers deployed for the level of water or activity taking place (reference British Canoeing guidelines).
- Experienced canoeists who intend to enter the British Canoeing coaching scheme may operate when deployed to do so by a club coach.
- All participants will be fully briefed and aware of the type of activity they will be involved in.
- No junior members, beginner or novice members are allowed on the water unless they are under the supervision of a club coach or suitably experienced paddler.
- All coaches will hold current British Canoeing Awards and valid first aid certificates.
- All coaches and leaders will have easy access to a first aid kit.
- Appropriate rescue equipment will be carried by club coaches/leaders and additional throw bags are available in the club store.
- Weather and water conditions are reviewed by coaches and leaders prior to Paddlesport and will be constantly monitored during the course of the activity for any changes.
- Coaches and leaders will ensure that river and sea conditions are within the experience and capabilities of the participants.
- The coach must be prepared to abandon or halt an activity if weather and water conditions worsen or when the safety of club members is in doubt.
- All Paddlesport will be undertaken at the pace of the slowest participant.
- All club kayaks and canoes are regularly checked and are fitted with air bags.
- All helmets and buoyancy aids are checked for damage and wear.
- Club Accident and Emergency procedures will be followed.
- Where transport is shared, members do so at their own risk.
- Coaches will brief paddlers of the dangers of other water users.
- Participants who are camping are responsible for being properly equipped.

## **Section 2.ORGANISATION OF ROUTINES DURING THE ACTIVITY**

It is important for coaches and group leaders to ensure that certain preparation and activity routines are followed. A summary of these routines is detailed below.

- A register of junior and youth members will be taken detailing emergency contact numbers and medical information as appropriate.
- Coaches and leaders will constantly check the state of any equipment used.
- Participants should be advised of the dangers associated with wearing items of jewellery.
- Participants should be warned of the danger of '**LEPTOSPIROSIS**' (**Weil's Disease**) and the actions to prevent infection.
- During the Paddlesport activity coaches will constantly monitor participants for the effects of cold and for symptoms of '**Hypothermia**'.
- Coaches should be aware of the effects heat and monitor participants especially on very hot days for the onset of '**Hyperthermia**' or '**Heat Stroke**'.
- Participants in Paddlesport should be encouraged to develop a strong sense of safety awareness for themselves and others and be familiar with the general safety rules and procedures.
- Coaches should brief participants on appropriate clothing and safety clothing, correct fitting and visually inspect boats and make adjustments.

- Canoes/kayaks and canoeing equipment must be treated with respect and not mishandled in such a way that damage occurs. Any damage to safety wear and canoeing equipment must be reported immediately.
- At the end of the session the members will ensure that all items of equipment borrowed will be dried and stored correctly.
- All serious incidents, accidents and cases of emergency will be reported to a committee member or other senior coach as soon as possible after the event.

## **Equipment Checking**

The following equipment checks will be routine and carried out periodically and before use in Paddlesport:

### ***Safety Wear***

- Buoyancy aids – check jacket visually for wear tear or damage to body, zip or adjusting straps.
- Helmets – check dome for impact damage, cradle and foam integrity and chinstrap is secure.
- Throw bags – Check that the rope is correctly stored and that there are no tangles, which will prevent the efficient deployment of the bag in an emergency.

### ***Canoeing Equipment***

- Visually check the hull for visible damage or penetration; check location and fixing of the buoyancy foam blocks is secure. Ensure the seats, thwarts and gunwales are sound and the fixing bolts have not come loose or undone. Check airbags are inflated and have no leaks. Ensure that the footrests are fixed and that there are no loose fixing bolts and that the backrests are correctly positioned. Ensure that the end grabs or painters are firmly located and are sound.
- Kayaks with hatch covers are not damaged and the seals are sound. Ensure the skeg or rudder systems operate effectively and that they are not jammed. Check that deck-lines and tow systems are secure and not loose or broken.
- Paddles – check the integrity of the blades and shaft for damage, which will cause failure.
- Helmets should have no signs of impact, and cradle on protective foam is intact and complete. Straps should not be frayed and buckles should fasten and not release unintentionally.
- Spray decks – ensure there are no splits in the deck or deterioration of the coaming or waist elastics. Check that the release strap stitching is sound and that the waterproof backing of the nylon deck is damaged that serious leaks will occur.

***Any damaged items of safety wear, which is considered a risk to health and safety will be withdrawn from use and destroyed.***

## **Accidents**

In the event of an accident/injury of a participant, dealing with that incident must take priority using the protocol of Self, Team, victim, equipment.

- All activity must STOP and the rest of the group made safe in such a way as they themselves are not at risk and hinder the actions of the coaches/leaders whilst they are dealing with the incident. Ensure that they are adequately supervised.
- Stay calm but act swiftly and observe the situation. Is there danger of further injuries?
- Listen to what the injured person is saying.
- First Aiders in the group must be alerted.
- Do not move someone with major injuries. Wait for emergency medics.
- Small cuts and abrasions can be dealt with using personal first aid kits, which should be carried or from the first aid kit located in the canoe store.
- Serious accidents and incidents will be dealt with in the appropriate manner by calling the emergency services or police if warranted. Mobile phones are recommended to be carried by club coaches and group leaders, which would be used in the event of an incident or emergency.

### **Reporting Accidents, Incidents and Emergencies**

- All serious incidents, accidents and cases of emergency will be reported to the committee or other senior coach as soon as possible after the event and the details will be recorded using the club accident and incident/accident reporting form.
- In the event of a very serious incident it may be necessary to involve the police in the initial stages of calling the emergency services.
- In the event of emergency treatment being required by a doctor or accident and emergency hospital department, a member of the injured parties' family must be notified.
- If the accident is very serious the Club Committee will inform British Canoeing by using the appropriate channels.
- Coaches and group leaders who were in attendance when the accident or incident occurred must not speak to the media under any circumstances.
- When the accident or emergency has been dealt with to an acceptable conclusion coaches and group leaders must ensure all other participants are returned home safely.

### **SECTION 3. CONTROL**

- i) **Safety information:** Details of the Tyne Valley Canoe Club safety policies will be made available on the club website as a download. Any changes in policy and guidelines will be communicated to all the above mentioned and absorbed into the safety procedures and routines of the Club.
- ii) **Damage to equipment:** In the event of damage to or faults with equipment, which is liable to render their further use dangerous, it is important that the equipment is physically removed from use and destroyed if appropriate.
- iii) **Safety training for coaches:** It is expected of all coaches that they make every effort to attend any canoeing safety training and assessment courses, which, are a prerequisite for their awards and be familiar with current recommendation. Coaches are required to maintain current **First Aid Certification** and the club organises training and assessment courses in this

- respect. The Clubs Senior Coaches will offer guidance on the requirements to prospective and current coaches
- iv) **Operating guidelines:** Coaches/leaders will only operate on the level of water, which their award and competency entitles them using guidance from the British Canoeing Terms of Reference document.
- v) **Safety training for club members:** It is expected during the normal course of Paddlesport that members will be coached in appropriate safety matters. Some of the areas, which will be covered include:
- Why it is important to wear a buoyancy aid and helmet.
  - Lifting and carrying kayaks and canoes.
  - Hazards to canoeists.
  - The effects of cold (wind chill).
  - Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease).
  - Recognising one's level of ability.
  - What to do in the event of capsize.
  - The ability to swim in canoeing clothing.
- vi) **Leader equipment:** It is expected that coaches and group leaders will have available items of equipment applicable to the level of journey or event. The following list represents the basics of a leaders pack:
- First Aid Kit.
  - Mobile Phone.
  - Throw Bag
  - Bivvi Bag.
  - Spare Clothing.
  - Flask with hot drink and spare food.
  - .Repair kit for canoe/kayak.
  - Pencil and paper.
  - Map of off site venue.

## **SECTION 4. MONITOR AND REVIEW**

It is appropriate to have in place systems in order to Monitor and Review health and safety matters in the Club. This is in three parts:

### ***1. Procedures for reporting safety matters***

- Always inform the committee of any accident or incidents, which have occurred whilst involved in Paddlesport activity.
- Matters of concern in respect of safety procedures and systems should be made known to the committee/Senior Coach so that they can be acted on.
- All Club coaching staff and officials will be informed of any revisions made to safety policy and will be in receipt of a copy of the Risk Assessment Policy.
- Any damage or faults to canoeing equipment will be reported immediately to the committee or Equipment Officer. A decision will be made as to when the equipment can be used again or if it is necessary to withdraw it from stock and replace it.

### ***2. Procedures for circulating safety information***

Any new legislation or safety recommendations received by the Club will be analysed and categorised by the Club Committee under one of three headings:

- **Immediate action required:** Coaches, officials and leaders are verbally informed by the committee and are given a circular, which they are asked to read as soon as possible. The '**Risk Assessment Policy**' and related '**Risk Assessments**' will be updated as appropriate.
- **Medium/long term action required:** All Coaches, officials and leaders are made aware of possible forthcoming adjustments to policies and procedures and the risk assessments are then altered as appropriate.
- **No action required:** The contents confirm that the Club already practise the recommendations being made. All coaching staff and club officials will still be made aware of the suggested recommendations.

### **3. Procedures for reviewing and revising safety policies and risk assessments**

The Club safety policy and risk assessments will be reviewed and will take into account any recommendations being made by the British Canoeing or other relevant bodies. Any amendments to this policy will be notified to Club members.

#### **Supporting Policies**

The following Club Policies should be referenced in particular contexts in support of this document. They include:

- Club Duty of Care.
- Supervision of Away Trips.
- Club Code of Conduct.
- Junior Code of Conduct.
- Child Protection Policy.

#### **Declaration of Acceptance of the Risk Assessment Policy**

All members of Tyne Valley Canoe Club will read this policy when they become members and sign a receipt of acceptance attached to the Club membership form as required under Section 23 of the Club Constitution.

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