



## **Ringwood Canoe Club safety management plan**

### **Introduction**

Ringwood Canoe Club (RCC) caters for people of all canoeing abilities from novice to experienced paddlers. While the club does not have a specific juniors' section, many children have been introduced to canoeing through our family memberships. The club has no fixed premises. We meet regularly at Mudeford during the summer and organise a wide variety of day and weekend trips throughout the year.

The club also goes to considerable lengths to ensure that non-canoeists are not left out, with many events accommodating the entire family. These include summer picnics, barbecues, and weekend trips away.

RCC trips are specified in the events list on the website. Members may use the RCC contact list, email or Facebook platform to arrange peer trips with RCC members. These trips are not considered to be RCC club events and are not subject to the processes described within this safety management plan. They are not endorsed by RCC and are therefore not covered by the British Canoeing affiliated club insurance policy. It should be noted that individual members of British Canoeing may be covered; further information can be found on the British Canoeing website.

We have an introduction 'Welcome to RCC' document which is sent to all new members and available to all members on our website. It references our 'Safety at Mudeford' document, which provides safety guidance about our regular paddle meet location, and gives all members information on how the club operates.

### **Assessment of risk**

In order to capture the risks associated with the activity, the approach taken to the management of risk comprises two elements; generic assessment and dynamic assessment. Generic risk assessments are used to help the leader of the trip to conduct a dynamic risk assessment, based on the conditions and group on the day.

RCC members are general outdoor enthusiasts and are adaptable enough to flex the plans and or activity based on the conditions and abilities/wants of the members on the trip. However, the management of risk on club trips needs to be consciously considered for all members, from both a generic risk assessment considered before the event and a dynamic risk assessment conducted at the time of the event.

### **Generic risk assessments**

Generic risk assessments have been used to capture all the best practice and knowledge within the club of successfully running events over the last 20+ years. A generic risk assessment is contained within Appendix A of this document. Relevant hazards to consider when generating generic risk assessment are contained

within Appendix B. The type and location of the club trips are varied, but the nature of the activity conducted is very similar.

### **Dynamic risk assessment**

Due to the nature of paddling events there will always be an element of 'on the day' assessment of risk both before and during the event. This will be carried out by a member of the club deemed competent to do so.

In order to record this acknowledgement of competence a template has been created at Appendix C. This will be recorded in the club files prior to an event taking place.

Guidance and advice on the concept of dynamic risk assessment is given in our 'Safety at Mudeford' document and in the 'Dynamic risk assessment in paddlesport and the safe person concept guidance' given below.

### **Incident management**

Reporting of any incidents or accidents will be in accordance with the British Canoeing Guidelines.

The club holds a list of all the club members which include 'In Emergency Contact Information'.

### **Reviewing**

If during any RCC event a hazard or additional risk reduction measure is identified that could be relevant to future events, the associated generic risk assessment will be updated to capture the latest information to keep the associated generic risk assessment current and relevant to the type of events conducted by the club.

A 3 yearly review of all generic risk assessments and this Safety Management Plan will be conducted.

## **Dynamic risk assessment in paddlesport and the safe person concept guidance**

In paddlesport we work and play in an inherently dangerous place. People go there for adventure and it's not always possible or desirable to take all the dangers away from the environment. The alternative is to direct our efforts into making the person (participant, coach, client or student) safe. This approach is called the 'safe person' concept. It must be clearly understood that all leaders of whatever level, have the authority, as well as the duty, to take immediate action in the interest of safety. This is a fundamental part of the safe person concept. The safety of an individual paddling white water, or of a group, is reliant to a large degree on the self-discipline, knowledge and skills of the individual person(s).

A safe person has a number of important qualities some of which are shown in the illustration below. The safe person concept therefore relies on a number of personal attributes, together with the right support from paddling colleagues or other coaches, allowing for flexibility of response in order to react to unforeseen or changing circumstances. In the end, decisions will be made based on underpinning knowledge, skills and experience applied in the precise circumstances faced at the time. We all have a responsibility for our own safety and the safety of

other paddling colleagues. Those of us who are coaches have a 'professional' responsibility.

### **The dynamic management process**

Dynamic management is the continuous assessment and control of risks in a rapidly changing environment. Each paddler should take on a degree of responsibility for their own, and the rest of the party's wellbeing. However, the overall responsibility for this lies with the leader. The leader must ensure that safe practices are followed and that, so far as is reasonably practicable, risks are eliminated or reduced to the minimum. It should not be forgotten that leaders are also responsible for their own safety.

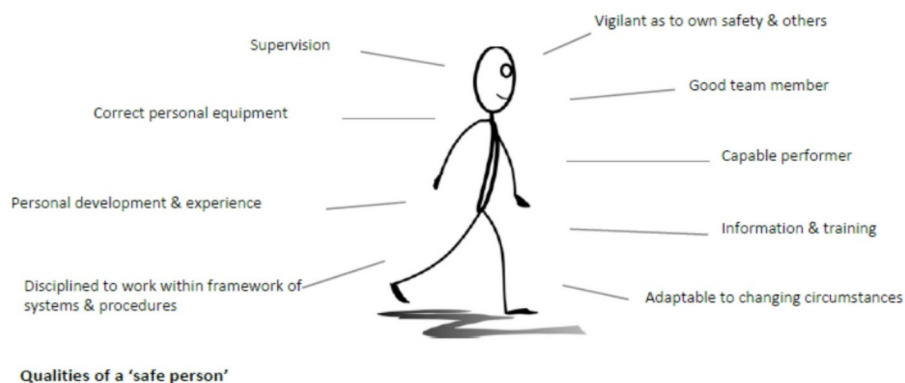
### **Pre-planning**

Is vital to ensure that the 'safe person' is in the best possible position to tackle incidents and to assist with and undertake dynamic assessments.

Leadership styles, group control, position of maximum usefulness, etc. would form part of this pre-planning requirement, as would river selection, group size, ability, equipment, etc.. The list is almost endless.

### **Qualities of a safe person**

- Vigilant as to own safety and others
- Supervision



- Good team member
- Correct personal equipment
- Capable performer
- Personal development and experience
- Information and training
- Disciplined to work within framework of systems and procedures
- Adaptable to changing circumstances

It is also important at this stage of pre-planning to consider the resources we have available. Have we taken the necessary rescue equipment, and have we trained and practiced in realistic scenarios? The value of formal river rescue training here cannot be understated. The dynamic assessment is the final link in a risk assessment process, it takes place within circumstances that are unforeseeable and / or are changing constantly (i.e. our white water river). It is this final assessment which we rely upon to allow us to carry on our paddling activities safely, and to make carefully considered judgments. The dynamic approach is a continuous thought process. As

the day progresses, you will need to gather information, evaluate situations and then apply your judgment to decide the most appropriate course of action. Hazards must be identified continuously and the risk to all concerned considered. The benefits of proceeding with a task must be weighed carefully against the risks. The consequences of a wrong decision in the initial stages of an incident may be irreversible. Start making your decisions before the group arrives; think about the weather, water levels, level of paddler, game plan and the kit needed.

What information is available? Has someone already done a generic risk assessment? Is there anyone or an internet site from whom you could obtain some local knowledge?

Although there are always time constraints on decision making in emergencies, this should not be used as a reason for accepting the unacceptable.

If after implementing all available control measures, the potential cost of proceeding with a task still outweighs the benefits, DO NOT PROCEED, but consider viable alternatives or introduce additional controls such as:

- Use of additional personal protective equipment
- Use of specialist knowledge
- Bank or boat support

Paddlers, and in particular leaders, need to manage safety by constantly monitoring the situation and reviewing the effectiveness of existing control measures.

## **Appendix A**

Ringwood Canoe Club risk assessment

## **Appendix B**

Guidance notes – how to assess the risks in activities associated with sport

## **Appendix C**

Trip leaders' skills and experience form

Ross Macildowie. 2/6/16

Revised Cindy Buckley 8/6/21