

**BRITISH CANOEING AWARDING BODY  
GUIDANCE FOR PADDLERS AND POOL MANAGERS**

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**1. Introduction**

Swimming pools provide a superb resource for introducing people to Paddlesport and provide opportunities for paddlers to develop their skills and experience in a comfortable, safe and easily managed environment, unaffected by seasonal weather conditions.

Paddlesport by its very nature is diverse. The swimming pool environment is ideally suited to enabling enthusiasts of all ages and persuasions to benefit from easy access to water and making the most of their leisure time, particularly throughout the winter months.

Pool sessions can maximise opportunities for experiencing our sports diversity, overcoming fears of capsizes, learning to paddle, developing water confidence, improving boat handling skills, raising awareness of general safety procedures and also specific rescue practice, all in a safe and controlled environment.

Equally important to paddlers and to the sport are the opportunities that Swimming Pool sessions provide for groups of paddlers to come together within a social and community context, benefiting from sound experiences, challenge and competition and here particularly Swimming Pools have provided an incalculable boost to the development of Canoe Polo. Polo is an important team game; it is ever growing in popularity and in its international standing, at which GB paddlers excel with many European and World honours.

## **2. British Canoeing Awarding Body, Paddlesport and Swimming Pools in Partnership**

The British Canoeing Awarding Body recognises that Swimming Pools can be expensive facilities to provide and that they are often operated under subsidies which are themselves cash limited. In this respect, paddlers should be aware that per hour charges can translate into high, individual charges where the density of individuals using the pool is low and therefore paddlers ought not to expect any better or worse treatment on charging than any other bonafide user, however, continued access to Swimming Pools to maintain such opportunities is clearly very important to paddlesport and, as such, Paddle UK is committed to developing and promoting the use of Swimming Pools by paddlers and to ensure that all pool activity can take place in a cost effective and safe way.

Paddle UK is recognised by the UK Sports Council as the Governing Body of paddlesport and recognised also by the Health and Safety Executive and the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority.

The British Canoeing Awarding Body provides training, qualifications and awards for paddlers and coaches in leadership, group management, safety and rescue. It is recognised by the Health and Safety Executive in its publication 'Managing Health

and Safety in Swimming Pools' (HSG 179 isbn 0-7176-1388-7) that Lifeguards require specialised skills or additional knowledge to supervise 'specialist' activities such as paddlesport and Sub Aqua adequately. Organisations that can advise are listed in appendix 7 of that document (Paddle UK/ British Canoeing Awarding Body is listed as BCU in this document) and further information on this is available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg179.htm>

Further to this and realising that such 'specialist' knowledge is not necessarily available to most Pool Managers and Pool Attendants, the HSE also notes that, where Pool Lifeguards do not have such specialist skills, the Manager can take two options:

- A. They can provide adequate supervision by either training lifeguards to obtain the necessary skills or by employing lifeguards who already have those skills.
- B. They can allow clubs to provide the necessary cover.

**British Canoeing Awarding Body believes that the availability of specialist skills during periods when paddlesport activities are taking place within a swimming pool are highly desirable and would, therefore, strongly support option B above.**

**It is important that both the pool manager and the club have a clear understanding of, and agreement of, their responsibilities and how they work together, for example:**

The paddlers hold responsibility for getting a casualty to the side, summoning support from the pool team and at which point the pool team takes over management of an incident.

### **3. Qualifications and Ratios**

#### **For led activity**

For led activity, please refer to the BCAB Environmental Definitions and Technical Advice:

<https://britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/environmental-definitions-and-technical-advice/>

and

The qualification and awards matrices for paddlesport-led activity:

<https://britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/qualification-and-awards-matrices-for-paddlesport-led-activity/>

#### **For Peer Training Sessions**

We recommend that paddlers who have undertaken one of the following courses and a pool-specific induction would have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to use the facility safely without the need for full lifeguard cover.

- Paddlesport Safety and Rescue Course
- Foundation Safety and Rescue Course
- Canoe Safety Test
- SUP Safer
- White Water Safety
- Inland Open Water Safety and Rescue
- Sea Kayak Safety
- Swimmer Safety and Rescue
- Paddle Explore
- Canoe Award
- White Water Award
- Touring Award
- BCU/ British Canoeing 2\*-5\* in any discipline

**Note:** Where 'Progressive' or 'Advanced' are stated on the certificate, these awards are considered higher than those listed above. For example:

- The Progressive White Water Award is higher than the White Water Award, Advanced White Water Safety is higher than White Water Safety.

In addition to the training above, any Instructor, Coach or Leader with a BCU, British Canoeing or British Canoeing Awarding Body Certificate. For example:

- British Canoeing Level 1 Coach, BCAB Paddlesport Instructor, etc.

#### **4. Events and Competitions**

Events and Competitions are organised within a Safety and Safeguarding plan across the entire event. The plan will detail the competence of both the paddler and the event volunteers to illustrate their part in each other's safety, this will include a specific pool induction and the rules for the event or competition.

#### **5. Coach and Club Insurance**

##### **Coach**

If you have an Instructing, Coaching or Leading qualification, membership of your National Association includes the additional insurance needed. The cover not only includes the main membership insurance but also includes the professional advice you provide, provided that the activity falls within the remit of your approved training, qualifications or awards. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.marshsport.co.uk/ngb-schemes/paddle-uk.html>

##### **Club**

Information on insurance cover provided to Affiliated Clubs can be found here:

<https://www.marshsport.co.uk/ngb-schemes/paddle-uk.html>

Clubs should evidence both their Certificate of Affiliation and a copy of the Insurance.

Due consideration to these points by authorities, organisations and Pool Managers in determining their 'duty of care' provision in relation to 'specialist' user groups could provide ideal opportunities to enter into 'partnership' with individual Clubs and Coaches. Such action would ensure that 'duty of care' requirements is fully covered and continue to provide cost effective access to members of the community to what, in most cases, is a community facility.

When being approached by Clubs seeking access to time slots within pool programmes, managers should expect/seek the following negotiation, discussion and agreements with respective club leaders.

Direct contact between yourself and a recognised club official creating an opportunity for both parties to consider their concerns, i.e., pool damage, pollution and safety provision.

**Pool/Facility Manager and organiser should determine if the normal safety standards of the pool could be provided by the Paddlesports Club.**

**Where this is the case, the following need also to be considered and put in place:**

The establishment of clear and effective working relationships between yourselves (liaising parties). Ensuring knowledge of, and direct involvement in, safety issues related to the pool's emergency plan, risk assessment and contact points. Occasional meetings to check on how the partnership is operating, etc.

Jointly, the Pool/Facility Manager and Club Representative should ensure that the agreed, safe operating procedures can be enacted in the event of an emergency such as a drowning or other serious accident. This should include raising the alarm, summoning the emergency services and the use of specialised equipment on hand to provide life support.

**Should it not be felt that the pool's normal safety standards can be provided by the Club:**

It may be necessary for a member of pool staff to be on hand should an emergency occur to ensure the site-specific procedure is enacted. This person need not be a lifeguard for the session but simply a member of staff on hand to carry out the essential elements of an emergency procedure agreed and written down in the written procedures for the pool.

**Additionally, the following negotiation, discussion and agreements should be considered:**

Provision by the club official of the names and qualifications of intended specialist safety personnel.

Confirmation that the club is an affiliated Club with Paddle England, Paddle Scotland, Paddle Northern Ireland or Canoe Wales.

## **6. Arrangements for Boats and Boat Storage**

Agree a Code of Conduct and terms of operation for usage of the pool.

Building a partnership with a club and being able to create cost effective access to a pool can have further 'pay back' for the club manager and your pool's local community.

Most clubs are more than willing to support the community activities of swimming pools and could be approached to support a pool paddling session as part of your community programme.

## **7. Pool Managers - Assuring yourself of actual requirements / gaining further reference as to a club's suitability as a user of your pool.**

Having had contact with Club officials to discuss their potential use of your pool, you may well have additional concerns you wish to raise, or you may

wish to reference the status of the club and of the qualifications of a coach's personal award as a supervisor. In such instances, please contact:

[clubs@paddleuk.org.uk](mailto:clubs@paddleuk.org.uk) (Clubs in England)

[hello@paddlescotland.org.uk](mailto:hello@paddlescotland.org.uk) (Clubs in Scotland)

[admin@paddleni.org.uk](mailto:admin@paddleni.org.uk) (Clubs in Northern Ireland)

<https://www.canoewales.com/contact> (Clubs in Wales)

We would also recommend that facility managers and user groups move towards preparing a joint statement on the role of a given facility in the development of paddlesports. This should incorporate what actually happens and is actually planned. It need not be long, but could simply set out that the pool aims to provide an indoor venue for introducing beginners to paddlesport and for winter training. Any such statement could be developed for those facilities that want to be more directly involved with paddling as an activity.

## **8. Recommended Numbers of Craft**

The number of craft allowed in a pool at any one time will depend on the size of the pool and the activity. While one to one coaching in the pool may require the coach/trainer to be in the water, free swimmers should not be allowed in the water at the same time unless the pool is partitioned. Depending on the activity, it may not be essential to wear buoyancy aids or helmets, the use of these will be a part of the consultation between the Club and Pool Manager and will, at all times, be covered in the risk assessment.

Although Canoe Polo involves physical contact and controlled aggression, when played within the rules and given the nature of the protective equipment worn; complete upper body protection in the form of a dense, all-round buoyancy aid, helmet and face guard, the likelihood of injury to a participant is minimal.

How to prevent damage to pools – some good practice:

There are two potential sources of damage to pools from the use of paddle craft:

- 1 - boats with pointed ends striking the sides of the pool
- 2 - paddles hitting the pool sides/bottom.

**It is important that coaches and paddlers using pools for paddlesport purposes are aware of the damage that paddle craft can cause and the significant knock-on effects that damage caused by paddle craft and paddlers can have on pool close down time.**

Damage to tiles, for example, is not just about replacing tiles. Broken or damaged tiles can be potentially harmful to other pool users, tiles can be expensive to replace and require pools to be drained and, if nothing else, damaged tiles are unsightly and off-putting to other pool users, possibly having an effect on user perception and continued use.

Clubs using pools should consider these issues with at least equal priority to general safety matters as addressing the potential for damage within your user strategy. Responsibilities will set priorities and guidelines that are both preventative and reflective to minimise damage. This will help to establish a best practice review should a problem occur.

Ideally, clubs and organisers regularly using the same pool should endeavour to have a 'for pool use only' fleet of craft and paddles which do not move off site. These could clearly be purchased specifically for use in the pool and designed and maintained exclusively for indoor use.

Where there is any possibility of the ends of paddle craft causing damage, they can be protected with ethafoam or other suitably dense material, secured with adhesive tape.

Where Canoe Polo is played, the ends of the Polo craft must be protected as per the Canoe Polo rules.

Whilst any type of craft may be used in a pool, shorter boats are most suitable.

Where there is paddling in sharp-ended boats (e.g., pool slalom or slalom training) it is preferable to set the gates in such a way that the boats will not strike the sides of the pool. Paddles with wooden, plastic or composite blades only, without metal tips, should be used.

## **9. Avoiding Pollution**

The only other source of damage is through pollution from river/sea water, dirt, leaves and crumbs of polystyrene buoyancy foam, etc.

Where craft are used outside of the pool environment and then returned to the pool on a rotational or occasional basis, it is important that the club/organisers ensure that priority is given to ensure that all craft and equipment are cleaned prior to pool use. Pre-cleansing should ensure that all river/sea contamination is removed. Any dirt should be hosed off prior to use with a mild disinfectant, and a suitable area for this purpose identified with the pool manager.

## **10. Swimming and Young People**

When setting up sessions for young people, the ideal scenario is that every child would be able to swim 25m, but it is not always the case that youngsters who come along to sessions can swim.

It has been known that they say they can swim when they cannot. Make sure you check this out at the beginning and provide for non-swimmers with buoyancy aids. The fact that a child cannot swim should not be an inhibiting factor preventing their enjoyment. Positively encourage them to take part using a buoyancy aid and help them develop water confidence.

## **11. Equipment and Young People**

It is essential to ensure that equipment being used is appropriate for children – the buoyancy aid should fit well and the craft and paddles used should be appropriate to the size of the children.