

**Marlow Rowing Club**

**Building a Thriving Club (for Everyone)**

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| **Version** | 2025/1 |
| **Status** | Approved by the Directors & Committee 6th January 2025. This is a club rule under Article 65 of the Articles of Association and binding on members |
| **Documents Replaced:** This document replaces the following documents which will cease to have effect from the date of this document: | Conduct, Disciplinary Process & Bullying Policy (version 1, dated 2013) or as amended |

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# **Why this policy?**

We want to make sure Marlow Rowing Club is a place where we can all thrive and feel safe, and this policy plays a part in helping us build a safe, caring community at our rowing club. It forms part of a wider Welfare strategy, and the real benefits from that will only come if we each play a part in ensuring the principles, behaviours and actions within it are upheld by each of us.

This policy covers:

* The Code of Conduct
* Abuse, including Bullying; and
* The Disciplinary Process.

# **Codes of Conduct**

## BR Code of Conduct

The **BR Code of Conduct** *(11 pages)* is one of BR’s mandatory rules that applies to all rowers, coxes, parents, clubs, competitions, officials, coaches and volunteers. Compliance with the Code of Conduct ([available online](https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FINAL-Code-of-Conduct-2022-June.pdf)) is part of your membership declarations and failure to comply is a disciplinary matter.

In relation to welfare the code of conduct sets out principles of openness and inclusivity, teamwork, rights of individuals, standards of behaviour and conduct (including for Parents), particular standards for coaches and particular standards for individuals working with children or adults-at-risk.

## Club Code of Conduct

In addition, members should at all times maintain professional and responsible standards of conduct. This should include:

* Operating within the framework of the club Rules including this code of conduct;
* Taking reasonable care of the health and safety of other members and third parties;
* Complying with reasonable and lawful instructions given by club officials and by other officials, for example, race officials;
* Complying with the BR code of conduct detailed above;
* Act at all times with respect for others, preventing bullying (mental or physical); and
* Acting in good faith and in the best interests of the club.

In additional specific junior squads codes of conduct may be agreed by squads or groups from time to time. They are incorporated into the Club Code of Conduct to the extent that they do not provide for lesser standards of conduct than the main club rules.

### Examples

Examples of failure to comply with this code of conduct include:

* minor breach of club policies;
* refusal to follow instructions e.g. from a club or race official;
* obscene language or other offensive behaviour; or
* personal abuse of club volunteers of officers who are carrying out their functions..

Examples of serious breach of the Code of Conduct include:

* Unlawful discrimination or harassment
* Physical violence or bullying
* Co-ordinating or leading mental or social bullying;
* Bringing the club into serious disrepute
* Causing loss or damage or injury through serious negligence
* Theft or fraud
* Serious breach of health and safety rules and misuse of safety equipment
* Serious breach of confidence
* Serious breach of club or British Rowing’s policies and procedures
* Use of banned or illegal substances

The club is highly dependent on volunteers, and allegations of bad faith against volunteers, particularly where the volunteer is carrying out a role in enforcing the Safety System or Welfare System are examples of breaches of the Code of Conduct.

These lists are not exhaustive, but are intended as a guide. Note that in all cases the conduct involved does not have to be on club premises: activity which relates to the network of friends and squad members which is carried on outside the club is relevant and the club may act. In particular online activity if part of a pattern of conduct connected to time on the club premises can be included.

**Abuse**

## Introduction

BR’s guidance recognises five forms of abuse, in relation to a child or adult at risk but the principles are general.

* Physical Abuse
* Emotional Abuse
* Neglect
* Sexual Abuse
* Bullying

## Signs

BR cautions everyone to be on the lookout for abuse and goes into further detail in their **Safeguarding Handbook 2: Handling Concerns**, with key signs as follows:

### Physical

* Injuries (in particular bruising, but also bites and burns)

### Emotional

* Seeming isolated from parents/carers
* Lacking in social skills
* Being withdrawn from their peers or having few if any friends
* Fear of making mistakes
* Self-harming

### Neglect

Most common:

* Hungry
* Dirty/smelly clothes
* Insufficient clothes for bad weather
* Taking a long time to be picked up
* Untreated injuries/dental
* Poor language skills/communications skills
* Not receiving appropriate care

Sexual Abuse

This is divided into “contact” and “non-contact” abuse.

For contact abuse:

* Sexual touching of any part of the body (clothed or otherwise)
* Requiring them to undress or touch another person sexually
* Forcing or encouraging a child/adult at risk to take part in sexual activity.

Non-contact abuse:

* encouraging/forcing child/adult at risk to watch or listen to sexual acts
* Making a child/adult at risk masturbate while others watch
* Showing them porn etc

Physical signs include:

* Genital bruising or bleeding
* Discomfort when walking or sitting
* STIs
* Pregnancy

Non-physical signs:

* Using langage or having sexual knowledge unexpectedly
* Being sexually active
* Having porn/indecent images on their devices.

### Bullying

Bullying is hard to detect, because the victim may feel concerns about reprisals. If this applies to you, the Club Welfare Officer is the person to talk to - they can listen to you confidentially, and can bring anti-bullying cases through our procedures on your behalf.

Symptoms are said to include:

* Belongings being reported as damage or lost on multiple occasions
* Physical injuries
* Being afraid of, or coming up with excuses to avoid, normal activities
* Continuously asking for things/money (to give to bully)
* Becoming nervous or losing confidence
* Problems with eating or sleeping
* Bullying others

“Hazing” (rituals or challenges involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating people) is also bullying.

### Abuse in Adults

Further Types

These are listed as:

* Self-neglect (a range of inaction where the person doesn’t look after themselves or lives in squalor)
* Modern slavery
* Domestic abuse (symptoms include low self-esteem, limited access to money, injuries or being physically/verbally abused in front of others).
* Discriminatory abuse (symptoms similar to bullying but based on a protected characteristic)
* organisation/institutional abuse
* financial/marital abuse (symptoms consistent with not fully controlling their own assets)

# Disciplinary Process

## Members Disciplinary Process

The aim of the Disciplinary Procedure is to provide a framework within which the Club can work with its members to maintain satisfactory standards of conduct and to encourage improvement where necessary. There is often a blurred line between day-to-day management of behaviour, and the club may use discretion to manage conduct. The disciplinary process is not intended to deal with allegations that an individuals coaching or rowing skills are insufficient – those matters should be taken up with coaches and the captain who may take away competency testing and/or ask for it to be revalidated

However, where a formal disciplinary process is invoked, or where a member is dissatisfied with the outcome of the informal process the following shall apply:

1. Any complaint must be made in writing (including email) and be addressed to the Secretary. The Club Welfare Officer may issue a complaint on behalf of one or more people who have been subject to bullying or who the CWO otherwise think need protection. The Secretary will verify that the complainant is aware of the dispute process. If the complainant wishes to proceed, the Secretary shall pass the complaint (the “Complaint”), in full, to the person complained about, and in the case of a junior/vulnerable adult to their parent/guardian within 5 days of the Complaint. The club will appoint a senior member of the club to investigate the case (“Case Officer”).
2. The respondent may either submit a response to the Complaint in writing, or request an in-person meeting. A written response must be made within 10 days of the sending of the Complaint, and any meeting shall as far as reasonably possible be within the same timescale. The meeting will be attended by the Case Officer, plus in the case of a junior, parents and for any adult a friend or carer to support and club welfare officer. The club may also send the secretary or other note taker.
3. The response or the minutes of the in-person meeting shall promptly be passed to the complainant as the “Response”.
4. The complainant may, but does not have to, reply to any new issues raised in the Response (the “Reply”). The complainant should not raise any new issues in the Reply. Any Reply must be sent within 5 days.
5. The parties are encouraged to produce evidence, including witness statements, of all relevant facts themselves - it is not the Case Officer’s obligation to conduct a full investigation. However, the Case Officer may, if they believe it is necessary to do so in order to ensure a fair outcome (particularly where one party may be at a disadvantage or where e.g. an allegation of bullying makes it likely that witnesses may be reluctant) conduct investigations and obtain witness statements, provided that such evidence, if it is relied on, is provided to both parties and both are given chance to respond to it.
6. Witnesses may be given protections, for example having their names withheld in the published documents, or a precis of their evidence summarised by the CWO. However, the content of the evidence may automatically identify them and in any event, such evidence cannot be reduced merely to the level of hearsay evidence (where a CWO summarises it, the Case Officer must be able to verify that the precis is valid against the original statement).
7. The Case Officer will make a decision and recommend action “Outcome”. Normally the Case Officer will not conduct an in-person hearing unless they think it is necessary: the standard outcome is in writing and issued to the Complainant and Respondent (with a copy to the CWO, if relevant). If both the Complainant and Respondent are satisfied with the Outcome (or fail to provide written objections to the Case Officer or Secretary within 5 days of being notified of the Outcome), it shall become binding and not subject to any appeal.
8. If either the Complainant or Respondent wish to appeal, they must set out their reasons in writing to the Case Officer and the Club Secretary (“Appeal Notice”). The Appeal Notice will be issued to all parties and the other party given an opportunity to respond. The Appeal will then be passed to the Board (or a sub-committee) of the Board (the “Appeal Panel”). If the Case Officer is on the board they will not be part of the Appeal Panel, but the Secretary or Welfare Officer are not barred by virtue of their involvement. The Appeal Panel will have at least 3 members, at least 2 of whom must be on the Board (this is required to make it a valid sub-committee of the Board).
9. The Board will review the case as full review on the facts unless the appeal is based purely on the scale of the punishment and not on culpability. The Board will issue it’s decision (“Appeal Outcome”) in writing within 5 days of having made it. The decision of the Board is final, and not subject to further appeal
10. The Case Officer and/or Board may:
    1. Require the parties to enter into a form of mediation, or settlement discussions at any time (since saying sorry often bypasses a lot of process and ill feeling and this is a sports club not a court) and may take any non-compliance or further bad behaviour into account in the Outcome or Appeal Outcome;
    2. Take into account prior conduct, disciplinaries and sanctions (particularly if a “last warning” type warning was given before);
    3. in the Outcome or Appeal Outcome impose any of the following sanctions (or a combination thereof):
       1. no action
       2. verbal warning (more minor)
       3. written warning (more serious)
       4. suspension from competition;
       5. suspension from use of some club facilities, or bans on attending club events (e.g. social events or training camps);
       6. full suspension from the club;
       7. (in the case of non-members, such as parents) exclusion from club premises;
       8. expulsion from membership\* (Appeal Outcome only, per club Articles of Association which requires a Director’s Resolution).
11. In all cases:
    1. The Case Officer and Appeal Panel are acting as experts not arbitrators and no rights of appeal to the courts apply;
    2. The admissibility of evidence is up to the Case Officer and Appeal Panel;
    3. Minutes recorded by the club will be sent to the participants of the meeting for comment, but in the event of disagreement the Secretary’s decision is final;
    4. The Complainant and Respondent shall not require the Case Officer or any club official to give evidence in court;
    5. The Case Officer and Secretary have the power to adjust any timescales or grant extra time for submissions, provided that they act in the interest of a fair outcome; and
    6. The parties consent to all correspondence being distributed as set in this policy. The club may edit any submissions which are defamatory, obscene or which it otherwise reasonably regards as unfit for transmission, or may require the party to resubmit the same.
12. The Club Secretary will manage the timescales and notify all parties of progress throughout.

### British Rowing Disciplinary Process

In addition to the club process, there is a British Rowing grievance, disciplinary or appeal procedures which relates to competitions, athlete selection, child protection and water safety.

# Appendix 1: Code of Conduct for Young People

Please sign and keep to the following code of conduct:

* Understand and follow the rules and procedures of the club
* Be loyal to the club and be proud to be a part of it
* Be friendly, welcoming and supportive, particularly to new members
* Behave sensibly and follow all instructions from coaches
* Take your safety and the safety of others seriously and act in a safe manner at all times
* Stay within the rules at events; show respect for officials and their decisions
* Take care of equipment owned by the club and do not use equipment belonging to others without their permission
* Respect the rights of all participants including competitors and other water users regardless of their age, gender, ability, race, cultural background or religious beliefs or sexual identity
* Do not use bad or abusive language – this applies equally to conversation and electronic communication
* Do not bully others, or take part in rough and dangerous play
* Keep to agreed timings for training sessions and competitions or inform your coach if you are going to be late
* Pay subscriptions and event fees promptly
* Never smoke, consume alcohol or use any form of drug whilst on club premises, or whilst representing the club at competitions
* Report behaviour or incidents which you think are not right
* Help to make your club a fun place to be

Your coach will deal with any misbehaviour and refer it to the committee where necessary.

Declaration

I understand the above Code and agree to abide by it while I am a member of Marlow Rowing Club.

Signature of young person …………………………… Name ……………………………………………

Signature of parent/guardian …………………………. Name ..…………………………………………..

Date ……………………