

**Marlow Rowing Club**

**Club Welfare Officer (CWO) Policy**

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| **Version** | 2025/1 |
| **Status** | Approved by the Directors & Committee on 6th January 2025. This is his will be 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: | Job Descriptions: CWO |

# **Background**

The Club Welfare Officer is a key part of the Welfare System at Marlow Rowing Club and required by British Rowing Welfare Policies which are set out in more detail in **BR Safeguarding Handbook 1 - The Club Welfare Officer** (42 pages).

As there are a number of rules and processes that apply to the CWO, or to club recruitment processes that the CWO will oversee, so this Policy separates out those rules and processes. This policy also contains rules about running regattas and camps, which are primarily of interest to the CWO and coaches, but not to the general membership.

The BR guidance also sets out requirements on those wanting to be a CWO. The CWO should read that guidance document. The role of the CWO is to deliver the CWO role that that document describes (see, for example Appendix 1, ‘The CWO - model role description’). We won’t repeat it in this policy, except to refer to relevant elements.

**BR Safeguarding Handbook 2 - Handling Concerns** sets out guidance for how a CWO should address concerns raised with them. Again, the CWO should read and follow that advice and only limited elements of the BR advice are reproduced in the MRC documentation.

For events, BR defines the role of an **Event Welfare Officer (EWO)** which is similar to a CWO in most respects (see BR guidance Appendix 2), and this CWO policy applies to EWOs at events MRC runs.Note that “events” doesn’t just mean our regattas - it would cover any event the club runs.

# **BR Guidance and Rules**

## CWO Qualification, Notification, Information

* CWO and EWO requirements are set out in Section 2 of the handbook. THe CWO/EWO cannot be someone directly involved in coaching/day-to-day running of the junior programmes.
* Section 3 requires CWOs to register with BR. Note that BR puts on the Chairman the responsibility of emailing BR [safeguarding@britishrowing.org](mailto:safeguarding@britishrowing.org) with specified info. ClubHub must also be updated.
* The CWO manages the club access to First Advantage Online Disclosure and is responsible for carrying out the DBS checks at the club.
* BR also asks CWOs oversee that any recruitment to the club follows appropriate safer recruitment procedures.
* RowHow contains specific information for CWOs.

## Safer Recruitment

* BR guidance includes recommendations about “safer recruitment” which includes:
  + Open advertising of roles
  + Checking ID
  + Additional rules if U18
  + Asking about safeguarding (attitude and knowledge)
  + Do DBS checks if role includes “regulated activity” and make sure that they don’t start until it comes back clear.
  + Ask for references from last two employer/clubs.
  + Check they’re not banned by BR or WADA
  + Do induction
  + Consider a mentor
  + Raise safeguarding at 1:1s
  + Get them to read **BR’s Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Code of Conduct** and **RowSafe** and ideally get them to sign to say that they have.
* BR gives separate advice for recruiting U18:
  + Get them to accept the **BR Code of Conduct**
  + Have parental permission
  + Must supervised by a (DBS checked) adult, but not left alone with only one adult;
  + Knows safeguarding responsibilities;
  + Is not given a role unsuitable for their age; and
  + If they’re sourced from another scheme (DofE) there may be further scheme requirements.

The guidance specifically suggests that EWOs undergo “safer recruitment”.

## Training

For training, see the general Welfare Policy. The CWO is responsible for organising Welfare training.

The Safety Records offer can enter data into the club database as required.

## DBS

The CWO is responsible for DBS checks, and should get access to the BR systems.

Section 7 of the BR guidance explains who needs DBS checks, which includes:

* teaching/training/coaches/caring for children; OR
* Providing guidance/advice on wellbeing; OR
* Transporting children

AND

* It’s at least 1/week; or
* Intensively (4+ days/30days, or overnight (0200-0600))

AND

* There is no other supervision (supervision is explained)

Generally in rowing this includes:

* CWO
* Junior coaches
* Chaperones/responsible adults on camps

BR does not accept “portability” of DBS checks obtained elsewhere (outside rowing - DBS done at other clubs is fine).

If the check doesn’t come back “clear”, BR will speak to the individual first - and then the CWO. If the individual doesn’t accept that the CWO knows, they cannot carry out activity. Delayed DBS checks are therefore important.

BR requires that you can only put a junior rower (U18) in a boat with adults if at least one has a DBS check and never on a 1:1 basis, unless the child’s parent/guardian is in the boat and/or alongside in a launch.

There are three levels of DBS check:

* Normal: Just Police National Computer (PNC) - not sufficient for juniors/adults at risk
* Barred List Check: checks barring lists (child/adult)
* Enhanced: PNC + local police data (e.g. arrests)

BR wants DBS checks stored on the person’s ClubHub profile, because the First Advantage system doesn’t store them for more than 6 months. MRC does not use BR’s Club Hub, except where necessary - we operate the club’s CiviCRM system and run reports of expiring DBS checks from there.

To the extent that DBS checks reveal criminal records history, they have specific data protection consequences, see the MRC **Data Protection Policy.**

## Recruitment of Ex-Offenders

There is specific BR guidance on this. Enhanced DBS will be required, but remember that under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 many ex-offenders are not required to disclose previous convictions for many purposes so may not declare something.

## CWO Support

Since Welfare is a key issue at the club and the CWO is a director, the CWO will always have the support of the directors. However, the guidance also refers the CWO to BR and other welfare officers for support.

Information sharing with other organisations may be necessary. This must be subject to Data Protection law - see the **Data Protection Policy**. The Secretary is responsible in the club for Data Protection compliance.

Handling Concerns Raised

This is primarily set out in **BR Safeguarding Handbook 2 - Handling Concerns.** Much of this is dealt with in the **MRC Welfare Policy**, but once raised, some elements are specific to the CWO.

### BR Notification

The BR Lead Safeguarding Officer (LSO) needs to be notified by the CWO if if either of the thresholds are met:

* There is a concern of abuse, or criminal offence, against a *child*, irrespective of where that concern may emerge from
* There is a concern of abuse, or criminal offence, against a *adult at risk*, irrespective of where that concern may emerge from

If these are not met, then the incident counts as “poor practice” and falls into section 3 of the handbook.

### Poor Practice

For “Poor Practice” BR requires the CWO to “raise the issue/s as appropriate with other committee members of their club, and then assess the matter against the club’s internal practices”. They want all clubs to align policies with BR on Safeguarding, Code of Conduct, Anti-Bullying and Whistleblowing.

Where there is an instance of poor practice at the club, and it cannot be dealt with informally, the CWO should investigate the alleged poor practice. The BR handbook has a fuller explanation of how they want this to operate in their guidance, but they envisage a very formal process with an investigation, framework, statements, outcomes and learnings.

### Adults

BR notes that The Care Act 2014 sets out 6 principles for safeguarding of adults:

1. ***Empowerment:*** Adults should be supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and given the opportunity to provide informed consent. Adults should be asked what they want as outcomes from the safeguarding process, and this should inform the actions involved in the process where possible.
2. ***Prevention:*** It is better to take action before harm occurs. Adults should receive clear and simple information about what abuse is, what it entails and what it looks like. This way, adults know how to recognise the signs and know what they can do to seek help. Remember, safeguarding should be proactive, rather than reactive.
3. ***Proportionality:*** The least intrusive response, appropriate to the risk presented. Adults should feel sure that the CWO will work in their interests and they will only be asked to take action as far as is necessary.
4. ***Protection:*** Support and representation for those in greatest need. Adults should get the help and support they need to report abuse and neglect. Adults should get help so that they can take part in the safeguarding process to the extent that they want to.
5. ***Partnership:*** Services offer local solutions through working closely with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse. Adults know that the CWO will treat any personal and sensitive information in confidence, only sharing what is helpful and necessary. Adults should be confident that professionals will work together, and with the adults, to get the best result for them.
6. ***Accountability:*** Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding. Adults understand the role of everyone involved in their life, including those at their rowing club. Any report or disclosure of a safeguarding concern relating to an adult at risk or an adult with care and support needs should be shared with the Club Welfare Officer unless this person is implicated in the concern. If you cannot raise the concern with your Club Welfare Officer, speak with British Rowing’s LSO

Otherwise the principles are much the same.

# Competitions

BR provides guidance for running competitions. Since this is for club officials not the membership generally it is covered in this policy.

The organisating committee is responsible for meeting the requirements.

### Safer Recruitment

Although in practice the greatest struggle in recruitment for competitions is getting any at all, BR reminds us that:

* Safer Recruitment policies should still be followed;
* There should be an Event Welfare Officer (EWO)
* If any roles need DBS checks that must be identified and done
* It is recommended that there is a Code of Conduct for all volunteers and everyone should accept it (for most club events, the general MRC policies and Code of Conduct apply, to avoid the administrative burden of asking everyone to sign a separate or different one).

### Welfare Plan

The event should have an Event Welfare Plan or Event Safeguarding Statements (example in Appendix 4 of BR guidance), to include:

* Overarching safeguarding policy (normally BR policy)
* Name of the person in charge of safeguarding for the event
* What officials should do with a safeguarding issues
* How the EWO will respond to allegations of abuse
* Where to go for further help

All officials should have read the plan and understand the reporting structure. Normal H&S rules apply, uprated to allow for specific vulnerabilities.

There should be a missing person process. BR guidance gives points to include.

### Photography

See general rules, but BR suggests that there should be measures in place to cover this and manage consents. Practically the ability to control this depends on the location of the event. Events entirely within club premises (like social events) are more controllable than river regattas which are held in public space.

Published information about the event should warn people if official photographers will be present and to the extent possible given a chance to opt-out (although again, for a regatta in a public place there is a limit to what can be enforced).

If there are concerns about personal photography, the person involved should be asked to leave.

# Camps and Overnight Stays

## General

Note the rules in the **General Safety Rules** which require Risk Assessments and other precautions around Camps and Overnight Stays. These Welfare rules build on those rules.

In addition to/as part of the Risk Assessment required under the **General Safety Rules**, the trip organiser needs to risk assess:

* Who is responsible for safeguarding
* How safeguarding will work (given the numbers/ages/mix of those involved)
* What to do if there is a concern on the trip and how to respond to it
* Whistleblowing procedures
* What to do about missing/AWOL participants
* Supervision ratios

There is a need to be clear who is there to supervise and who is just an adult-who-happens-to-be-there (and this may be different at different times) and that everyone (including the kids) understand this.

All adults on the trip should be aware of and understand the plan, and that it is communicated before the trip.

There is a checklist at Appendix 2 of the BR guidance, and Appendix 3 is a coach/volunteer information sheet.

### Consent Forms

BR requires that consent forms be obtained in advance to include:

* Medical conditions
* Allergies
* Disabilities or other vulnerabilities

There is a template in the BR guidance at Appendix 1. Note that these may be online and the club and/or the junior co-ordinator may already hold this information. Remember that medical information is Sensitive Category Data under UK GDPR - see the **Data Protection Policy** about information held.

### Overnight Stays - Accommodation

BR notes “key things to ensure” about accommodation:

* Separate sleeping, washing and toilet facilities for adults and children, older and young children and boys and girls.
* Children sharing rooms should be the same gender, and ideally of a similar age.
* Single beds. Carers (where relevant) should not be in the same room (some exceptions apply, see BR guidance)
* The suitability of the venue should be checked in advance incl. Fire processes.
* Ideally have exclusive areas (one building, one floor etc) for the group and keep the adults separate (but there may be a need to have a supervising adult per floor).
* Supervisors of the same gender.

# **MRC Specific Rules**

## CWO Role in Disciplinaries

Under the MRC **Building a Thriving Club**, the CWO has special roles in Disciplinary cases. The CWO can:

* intervene to assist any junior, safeguarding adult, or other abuse victim who is involved in the process to give them support;
* file complaints on behalf of a junior, safeguarding adults or abuse victim to ensure action is taken where a victim may not be willing or able to do it in their name or at all; and.
* Summarise evidence or anonymise evidence were possible to protect victims of abuse (including bullying)

## Systems

* The CWO manages data about welfare issues and must hold this in MRC systems and subject to the **Messaging Systems Usage Policy**.
* It is particularly important that welfare information, which is particularly important (and may also be special category data under The Data Protection Act 2018) is not stored in personal systems where possible (although there may be no alternative to WhatsApp).