

**Marlow Rowing Club**

**Welfare Policy**

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| **Version** | 2025/1 |
| **Status** | Approved by the Directors & Committee on 6th January 2025. This is a club rule under Article 65 of the Articles of Association and binding on members.  This policy should be reviewed no later than 3 years after it was approved. |
| **Documents Replaced:** This document replaces the following documents which will cease to have effect from the date of this document: | * MRC Child Welfare Statement (2011) (listed as Child Welfare Policy) * MRC Code of Conduct for Young People (2012) * Consent for The Photography of Children (2015) * Fob Regulations for Juniors * (Junior) Injury Policy (Undated Draft) |

# **Background**

Marlow Rowing Club has a large number of junior and para members to whom safeguarding principles apply. Safeguarding is important to protect our members, but British Rowing also imposes it as a requirement on all members clubs and members, and we have statutory obligations too.

Safeguarding is led by our Club Welfare Officer (CWO) who is a club director and trustee, although it is a responsibility of the directors and committee as a whole. Any questions or concerns about safeguarding should be raised with the CWO via [welfare@marlowrowingclub.org.uk](mailto:welfare@marlowrowingclub.org.uk). If the CWO is for some reason not suitable either contact the Chairman ([chairman@marlowrowingclub.org.uk](mailto:chairman@marlowrowingclub.org.uk)) or if you have concerns that you do not trust MRC directors with, go directly to BR safeguarding at [lso@britishrowing.org](mailto:lso@britishrowing.org).

This document is for the entire club. There is a separate **Club Welfare Officer (CWO) Policy** for the CWO.

# **Statement of Principles**

Marlow Rowing Club is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of its junior members, and those adult members to whom safeguarding principles apply (“Safeguarding Adults”). We believe that it is important that members, coaches, club officials and parents associated with the club should, at all times show respect and understanding for their safety and welfare. Junior and Safeguarding Adults are encouraged to be open at all times and to share any concerns or complaints that they may have about any aspect of the club with their coach or, if that is difficult or inappropriate, with the Captain or the Club Welfare Officer (CWO). The CWO is responsible for advising on safeguarding matters and for coordinating action within the club on receipt of any concerns or referrals.

We are committed to making sure that everyone who participates in rowing can do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. To safeguard and protect young athletes and Safeguarded Adults, we have a Welfare System (which links to and is complemented by our Safety System) and work within guidance set out by British Rowing:

* We believe that the welfare of young people and Safeguarding Adults and is paramount – our aim is to ensure that all are protected when training or competing.
* We recognise that some young people and Safeguarding Adults are additionally vulnerable particularly if disabled or high performing
* We enable everyone, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity - to enjoy a fun and safe environment.
* We take all reasonable steps to protect young athletes from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment, and respect their rights, wishes and feelings.
* We take seriously any suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse, and will respond swiftly and appropriately to them.
* We ensure that all adults who work with young athletes or Safeguarding Adults, including our coaches and volunteers, are recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility; receive guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures; and are subject to checks by the Disclosure and Barring Service at the enhanced level.

# **BR & MRC Guidance and Rules**

BR requires all clubs and members to comply with:

* BR’s “**Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy**” [June 2021]
* BR’s “**Safeguarding and Protecting Adults Policy**” [March 2020]; and
* BR’s “**Online Safety and Social Media Policy**” [Oct 2020]

and therefore MRC will comply with those policies and requires all members, volunteers and coaches to do so, or with the updated versions due in 2024 and 2025. They also have a Young Person’s Guide to the Safeguarding Policy which may be of interest to juniors to read.

These policies contain definitions (e.g. of Child Abuse (in various forms, including bullying, emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse), Adult at Risk, Grooming, Harm, etc. Where we do not define those terms in our policies, the BR definitions apply.

Behind that, BR provides four main large documents of guidance and other associated guidance:

* **BR Safeguarding Handbook 1 - The Club Welfare Officer** (42 pages)
* **BR Safeguarding Handbook 2 - Handling Concerns** (34 pages)
* **BR Safeguarding Handbook 3 - Club, training and competition guidance** (48 pages)
* **BR Safeguarding Handbook 4 - Safety in the digital world** (22 pages)

These in turn refer on to The Child Protection in Sport Unit of the NSPCC’s **Standards for Safeguarding a Protecting Children and Young People in Sport** (2018) (28 pages) and many other more detailed guidance documents. These all represent over 200 pages of policy and guidance, which ask us to teach you everything in them, but to keep it short and readable. We will try… .

This Policy seeks to apply these rules and Handbook Guidance to MRC, but this is also implemented in related club policies including:

* The **Club Welfare Officer (CWO) Policy** which contains the detailed rules and requirements for the CWO
* The **Building a Thriving Club Policy** which sets expectations about behaviour (Code of Conduct), explains symptoms of bad behaviour, abuse and bullying to watch out for, and the disciplinary process to deal with issues in behaviour
* The **Internet & Social Networks Policy** which talks about online conduct and how our social media works
* Our **Safety System** e.g. in relation to processes around camps and training intensity
* Our **Data Protection Policy** e.g how long we keep data about children
* Documentation for specific events, like Marlow Spring Regatta will contain event-specific material such as the appointment of the Event Welfare Officer.

In our Safety System we apply a “***Competencies, Rules and Checks***” (CRC) model (for an explanation, see the “**Safety System, Start Here**” document in the safety section of the website) and this applies to our Welfare System too. There are Safeguarding competencies that we recommend, as below.

## BR Minimum Requirements

The following are described as the “minimum requirements” by British Rowing so you should be aware of them (reproduced with edits from “Safeguarding Children and Young People”):

Everyone in British Rowing, including those involved in British Rowing governed activities must meet the minimum requirements for the safeguarding of children:

1. Always prioritise the well-being of all children
2. Be a positive role model and act with integrity. Help to create a safe, inclusive environment for all children, free from poor practice, discrimination and/or bullying
3. Clubs should carry out a risk assessment to decide how many adults are required to safely coach children. In accordance with CPSU (Child Protection in Sport Unit, part of NSPCC) guidelines (which generally recommends 1:8 for 9-12 and 1:10 thereafter) whatever the recommended ratio of adults to participants is, a minimum of two adults should be available, where one of which holds a current DBS check.
4. Always obtain consent from parents/carers and children before taking or publishing any photos, videos or personal information about a child. Please make sure you familiarise yourself with and comply with our ‘Photography and Use of Imagery guidance’, which can be found in section 1 of British Rowing’s Safeguarding Handbook 4 – Safety in the digital world
5. Keep your personal and working/volunteering life separate, including on social media. Avoid face-to-face and online private one-to-one communication with a child. Please ensure to familiarise yourself with our ‘Online Safety and Social Media Policy’, which can be found in Section 3 of British Rowing’s Safeguarding Handbook 4 – Safety in the digital world
6. Where possible, do not be alone with a child, unless in an emergency
7. Do not abuse, neglect, discriminate against or otherwise harm a child or act in a way that may be interpreted as such
8. Doing nothing is not an option: report all concerns and disclosures as soon as possible, as outlined in this policy. If someone is in immediate danger, call the emergency services (999) 9. When in doubt, seek advice: contact your Club Welfare Officer or the Lead Safeguarding Officer at British Rowing

## Competencies, Rules and Checks (CRC)

MRC operates a Competencies, Rules and Checks structure in its Safety System and Welfare System.

### Competencies

Tier 1:

* BR recommends that “anyone involved in rowing” is recommended to do the “BR introduction to safeguarding”.
* This policy contains information about recognising unacceptable behaviours (with more info in the BR documents) so if you read them you will learn more about the issues.

Tier 2:

* Coaches and any other supervisors of children must do the UK Coaching “Safeguarding & Protecting Children” course every three years and those working with adults at risk should do the UK Coaching “Safeguarding Adults” course.
* CWOs/EWOs must do both the child and adult course, and UK Coaching “Time to Listen” and a BR CWO introduction.

BR wants evidence of qualifications added to your BR Club Hub account. MRC has no access to that - all qualifications must be sent to the Safety Admin ([safetyadmin@marlowrowingclub.org.uk](mailto:safetyadmin@marlowrowingclub.org.uk)) who will add it to your club record.

### Rules

* **BR Code of Conduct** (see **Conduct, Disciplinary Process & Bullying Policy**) - these are mandatory rules for the whole club but compliance is particularly relevant to the Welfare System
* Club Policies (mentioned above)
* Rules Section (below)

### Checks

* Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) checks are applied to those who who need them (see the **CWO Policy**)
* During Recruitment we follow the Safer Recruitment guidance (see **CWO Policy**)
* Records of training & DBS checks are kept in the club database, and reports run periodically to confirm whether they have expired.

## Handling Concerns

For detailed information see **BR Safeguarding Handbook 2 - Handling Concerns**

Some terminology:

* ***Referral***: individual contacts the CWO because of a Concern
* ***Concern***: An individual suspects abuse is occuring - no evidence or child complaint required
* ***Allegation***: Suggestion or Concern that an individual has behaved in a way that contravenes Safeguarding legislation, where it is not yet proven
* ***Disclosure***: where a child tells someone about an issue.

### Advice for those receiving a disclosure

1. Listen carefully to what they’re saying.
2. Let them know they’ve done the right thing by telling you.
3. Tell them it’s not their fault.
4. Tell them you’ll take them seriously.
5. Don’t confront the alleged abuser.
6. Explain what you’ll do next. (For adults at risk, it is best practice to gain consent before sharing concerns. However, if this is not possible, consent is not required to share a concern if there is a legitimate interest in safeguarding the adult.)
7. Report what the individual has told you as soon as possible.

Report concerns to the CWO (or if about the CWO, to the Chairman). If there is an immediate threat, 999 may be appropriate. The CWO Policy and BR rules behind it govern whether it is then referred to BR or managed locally.

### Advice if a disclosure is made against you

In summary the BR guidance says:

1. Read the rules (and BR guidance)
2. BR will contact you, but if they don’t, speak to the Lead Safeguarding Officer there.
3. Suspension should be seen as a neutral situation to protect both sides.
4. You have rights to: (i) a fair and unbiased investigation, (ii) a representative at hearings, and (iii) appeal to the BR CMG.

But you have to comply with a suspension, BR rules and fully and honestly assist the investigation. See section 1.4 of the BR policy for more details.

### Poor Practice

BR defines “poor practice” as ‘non-adherence to British Rowing’s safeguarding policies, procedures and/or guidance which does not result in abuse’. BR gives a long list of examples in their guidance some of which are reproduced here:

* when insufficient care is taken to avoid injuries, e.g. from excessive training or ignoring the ‘How Much How Often Guidance’;
* any breach of British Rowing’s Anti-Bullying Policy which does not amount to the abuse of a child or adult at risk;
* unprofessional or inappropriate use of a person’s individual or club’s social media account;
* using foul and abusive language, especially in the presence of children or adults at risk;
* giving continued and unnecessary preferential treatment to certain individuals;
* prioritising performance over the safety of rowers;
* showing a lack of respect for other individuals, such as umpires, opposition coaches, volunteers, rowers or spectators; and
* failure to record incidents or accidents.

### Handling Poor Practice

BR guidance requires that anyone who witnesses poor practice or gets a disclosure must report it to the CWO. The CWO then tests the event against the club policies (with the committee) and the criteria for reporting to BR (see the **CWO Policy**). There is a flowchart in **BR Handbook 2,** Appendix 2, of how complaints flow.

### Incidents outside Rowing

Although the club’s disciplinary rules generally don’t apply outside of rowing activities, there is still a need to be aware of abuse and report it even if it occurs outside the rowing context. BR gives 4 examples:

* A child disclosing that their adult hit them
* An adult saying their carer stole their money
* A child never having food / drink with them
* An adult turning up with a black eye.

# Training, Events and Competitions

See **BR Safeguarding Handbook 3 - Club Training and Competition Guidance**

## Training Volumes

Training volumes are a trade-off between the amount of training required to succeed in a very competitive sport, and the vital needs to both enjoy rowing, fit in other vital activities (work, exams), not injure yourself and not train if injured if that risks inflaming the injury or delaying recovery in any way. Some of this is very personal, but BR provides two guidelines:

* [Rower Development Guide](https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/rower-development/rower-development-guide/)
* [How much how often](https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/rower-development/how-much-how-often/) (6 pages)

These are large resources so not repeated here but coaches should take these into account.

## Physical Contact

While as a minimum all physical contact must be consensual, there are also minimum standards. BR states that it must only be:

* To develop sports skills/techniques
* Treat an injury (by first aider or qualified practitioner)
* Prevent harm/accident
* Meet the requirements of rowing
* Comfort the distress/motivate/celebrade

Subject to these principles:

* Contact must be in the interest of the rower not adult
* Consent must be obtained, except in emergency
* Reason for/type must be explained
* Never used as punishment
* Cultural sensitivities apply
* Always in an open setting

Preferably explained to parents in advance.

Ultimately this is a fraught and easily misinterpreted area and physical contact should be avoided.

## Challenging Behaviour

BR defines this as: “it puts them, or those around them, such as fellow children, young people or adults at risk, at risk, or leads to a poorer quality of life. It can also impact the child’s, young person’s or adult at risk’s ability to join in everyday activities”. Where this is a risk, coaches/supervisors will need to:

* Carry out a risk assessment
* Consider whether outside help is needed
* Look at adult/child ratios
* Give guidance to adults involved.

However, the key issue is that all club members are expected to not participate in unacceptable behaviour.As above, everyone is bound by the BR Code of Conduct, and the **Conduct, Disciplinary & Abuse Policy** has a code for young people. Groups may benefit from agreeing behavioural contracts or squad agreements.

Where challenging behaviour occurs, the person in charge must take appropriate action, but not humiliate or physically punish them.

Physical intervention has to be a last resort, minimised and reported afterwards as it is neither fair on the member to brush it aside or fair on the adult to have them put in that position.The CWO must be told and will check that there is no unreasonable lasting ill feeling.

## Alcohol

There are a limited number of events where alcohol is served and juniors are present. Juniors have a separate club supper (with no alcohol) at Christmas, so generally the situations are limited. In the rare cases where this likely to occur, and the event is one where more than minimal alcohol will be served, the organisers must plan how to minimise risks.

The Bar Secretary and the Bar Manager are responsible for compliance with the club’s licencing arrangements and ensuring that underage people do not drink, although the bar is not open during junior training times.

## Transfers between clubs

BR has concerns about transfers between clubs, to ensure that any movements are in the best interest of of the child and made on a transparent basis. It is extremely rare for there to be any disagreement about a child’s move, but if this occurs see the BR guidance.

## Transport

Transporting children can be difficult for parents/carers. BR wants parents to know the advice, and also be clear that where they organise transport between parents that is out of the club’s control.

BR advice, based on CPSU advice, is very restrictive about coaches transporting children, and says that coaches/club staff should not transport individual children except in emergency situations or exceptional circumstances. They are slightly more relaxed if there are multiple children provided that everyone (parents etc) are aware, and consent, ensuring that the agreement is documented and the CWO is involved. DBS must be in place and the vehicle suitable and insured.

1:1 transport is advised only in exceptional circumstances where the child would otherwise be excluded, there were no other options, the parents sign off and this is documented and sent to the CWO. Exceptional circumstances are specifically said NOT to include a situation where the parents are just unable due to lack of time or work commitments.

See section 8.1 of the handbook for more detail.

If parents are routinely not engaging, a “buddy” system where other parents are involved is recommended, but ultimately that has to be a direct parent-to-parent relationship as if the parent is acting for the club all the other issues remain.

Transporting adults with care/support needs has slightly different requirements

## Collection

Due to the layout and parking at the club, we do not routinely supervise children once their session is over. Parents need to be told that we are not doing a handover in most cases. Junior Learn to Row and/or specific sessions, particularly off-site trips, may operate differently.

## Changing Rooms

The clubhouse has four changing rooms for adult women, junior girls, adult men and junior boys, each clearly marked. There are no door locks but doors must remain shut (both for privacy and fire safety) and have closers. Each has disabled areas in their showers and we have a separate disabled shower/changing room. Each changing room is for the designated group and cannot be used for others. Strictly no photography in changing rooms.

# Digital Safety and Photography

For this section, refer to **BR Safeguarding Handbook 4 - Safety in the digital world.**

BR general aim is to “*ensure photographic practices are carefully monitored, allowing* [BR] *to act in cases where inappropriate imagery is circulated and to deter anyone with undesirable intentions*.”

There are three main risks they are concerned about:

* Use of photos for abuse (either in original form or modified)
* Identification of child/adult at risk if the photo is accompanied by personal information
* Identification or location of a child who should be hidden because e.g. they have been removed from their family, a specific parent or person, or is a criminal witness.

They set some mandatory rules:

* No photo/video of a child/safeguarding adult should be published (incl. online/social media) without written, informed, consent from the parent/carer/guardian
* No personal information should be attached to it other than their name and club
* Editing should be minimal and not cause embarrassment or distress
* Those covered by court orders should not be covered at all
* Live streaming should be approached with caution
* Issues should be promptly addressed.

We have consent declarations as part of membership applications/renewals.

Generally photos should be staged and where locations are discernable, less information should be given.

### Events

See CWO Policy

### Coaching

Filming for coaching and/or updating parents on kids progress is acceptable but there should be:

* Prior written consent
* Don’t publish without consent
* Ensure two adults are present when filming is done\*
* Store images secure and delete when they are no longer needed.

\* Practically, coaches on launches may be single crewed, but the risk is lower as anyone rowing will be fully dressed as they are in public anyway.

### Online Safety and Social Media

BR has an [Online Safety and Social Media Policy](https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Online-Safety-2020-October-Clean-2021.pdf). Broadly this:

* Requires everyone to comply with it
* Applies an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for online conduct
* Makes the point that risks are device agnostic
* Cautions everyone about giving away too much information online, or posting inappropriate pictures, or befriending anyone online, or posting anything suggestive, or cyberbullying

### Phone use

In relation to dealing with children:

* Avoid contacting directly, and go via parents.
* Obtain parental consent
* Ensure accountability by having copies of texts or calls
* Do not engage in conversations
* If the child continues to communicate, end the conversation and involve the CWO.

### Webinars/Livestreaming

Rarely relevant for us, but if it does occur:

* Ideally 2 adults on the call
* Remind everyone to mind their backgrounds
* If recording, this has to be very clear
* Obtain consents etc.

### Website/ Club Social Media

The website is not editable by members. The club no longer maintains a Twitter/X presence. Therefore comments only apply on Facebook and Instagram. The social media manager will monitor for inappropriate comments and delete where possible but this is not possible on a continuous or rapid basis. If you see an inappropriate comment please report it.

Personal details other than name and age category (J16 etc) should not be published.

### Grooming

There is extensive information about grooming in the BR guidance, and BR are keen that everyone recognises the symptoms. Grooming may be online or in person, and aims to manipulate people to give the opportunity to abuse a child/adult at risk.Grooming may be for sexual abuse, but also for radicalisation, criminal exploitation or trafficking.

The BR guidance describes a process where the groomer first seeks to engage in some sort of relationship (friendship, mentoring, romance, trusted confidant) and then moves on to flattery and then steering the victim to their interests.They may engage in sexting either as a primary objective or as a blackmail tool for later.

Signs and indications BR highlight are:

* secretiveness about their friends, what they’re doing, where they’re going or their online activity, only using devices in private;
* engaging in antisocial or detrimental behaviour, such as drinking or taking recreational drugs;
* becoming emotionally volatile;
* staying out later than usual, with people you do not know or have not heard of, and not providing an explanation;
* unexplained injuries, such as bruising or cuts;
* unexplained gifts, such as new clothes or jewellery, or electronic devices;
* having a significantly older boyfriend/girlfriend/romantic partner;
* switching screens, or closing the laptop, when you come near them, or enter the room;
* spending an increasing amount of time on their electronic devices, or receiving more and more notifications on those devices;
* suddenly, or gradually, withdrawing from friends or family, or their previous hobbies, such as rowing training;
* sexualised behaviour or language, or demonstrating an understanding of sex that is not appropriate for their age.

Guidance on what to do is in the BR documents.