

Question and Answer Advisory Sheet: codes of conduct and disciplinary matters

- **What is a code of conduct?**

A code of conduct is a set of rules outlining the responsibilities of or best practices for an individual or organisation. It sets out clear guidance on the expected standards of behaviour of an individual member of an organisation such as a rowing club. British Rowing has developed a comprehensive set of codes for individuals working within and connected to the sport of rowing that can be adopted by its member clubs and events and adapted for their needs.

- **Why are there new British Rowing Code of Conduct?**

These codes are not all 'new'. Much of the document is based on a long established code of conduct for coaches developed by sportscoach UK who have let us adapt their Code for rowing's needs and to enable us to disseminate it throughout our sport. All UKCC qualified rowing coaches (and previously ARA qualified coaches) are obliged to sign a document agreeing to adhere to these codes. Other parts of the code have been added with advice from appropriate bodies and advisers.

- **What are the benefits of adopting codes of conduct?**

The aim of any Code of conduct is to provide a framework that a club or organisation may use to maintain satisfactory standards of conduct of its members and/or representatives; to encourage improvement where necessary, and to offer a framework for disciplinary action against a club member or the parent of a junior member who consistently or seriously breaches expected standards of behaviour.

- **Why should our clubs adopt codes of conduct?**

The conduct and behaviour of a club's representatives and membership is an important factor in the public perception of that organisation locally and of rowing, as a sport, nationally. Misconduct by club members and the consequences of not addressing this may lead to ill-feeling, legal disputes and can be a costly affair, in time and money, for the club and the individuals concerned as well as potentially bringing the sport into disrepute. Often disputes within a club become extremely complicated because initial complaints regarding misconduct were not dealt with fairly or effectively.

- **What if we don't bother?**

It is bad governance for a club not to have a fair and open system for disciplining members. If natural laws of justice are not followed, a club member may have grounds to take legal action against that organisation. Clubs may find themselves in an expensive and protracted battle with lawyers; funding and support may be withdrawn and individuals will be dissatisfied with their experience and may leave the club or sport.

- **What should we do next?**

All rowing clubs should look at which codes of conduct are appropriate to them and their memberships. Where possible the club members should be asked to help draw up the codes. This works particularly well for juniors who tend to buy into rules more effectively and will often raise issues adult members may not consider important or relevant.

All club members and parents of junior members should be made aware of both general and particular requirements of conduct that apply to them and must appreciate that it is their personal responsibility to apply them on every relevant occasion. If they have any doubt, they should seek advice from the club's senior officers. Events and other organisations should adapt the codes and disciplinary procedures to suit their needs.

Clubs must ensure that they have appropriate rules and bye-laws in place to deal with misconduct. Adherence to the Codes of Conduct should be a condition of membership and clubs might like to make this explicit by adding a line to that effect on the club's membership and/or renewal form. Further guidance on disciplinary procedures is available from the British Rowing website.