



BRITISH ROWING

Club Governance Guide

Organising, managing and
leading your club effectively.





Dear Rowing Club Members

Welcome to the British Rowing Club Governance Guide

Following consultation in 2019, this guide is one of several developed in response to clubs' requests for more guidance and support on a wide range of club related topics. We hope it will help to increase the overall standard of club governance and build good practice so that new and existing members can continue to enjoy rowing at all levels for many years to come.

If rowing is to prosper as a sport, we need a network of strong and sustainable clubs that give members the best club experiences. In this guide, we cover a range of topics to help you establish and improve the organisational structure of your club and how decisions are made and implemented. This includes legal, regulatory and statutory requirements that your club may need to comply with.

This guide:

- **Highlights the governance requirements for all affiliated rowing clubs, as well as other related guidance and best practice.**
- **Flags some key questions to ask yourself and your club committee.**
- **Signposts you to further guidance and resources available, either through the British Rowing website, government websites or from third parties.**

The guide will be a working resource, to be updated on a regular basis, so please provide feedback and share the experiences from your club.

We look forward to hearing from you.

The British Rowing Community Support Team

clubsupport@britishrowing.org

British Rowing would like to thank everyone involved in the development of this Club Guide for their input. We would also like to acknowledge the support of Sport England and the Sport England Club Matters website that provides a range of useful resources and information to support effective club governance.





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Section 1 - Introduction to club governance

I.1 Introduction

The purpose of this British Rowing Club Governance Guide is to raise awareness of good club governance, why it is important and what it's all about. We also cover some of the legal, regulatory and statutory requirements that your club may need to comply with.

The integrity of our sport must be protected and upheld by all clubs, at all times. Clubs are required to comply with a wide range of government legislation as well as other regulations. Not adhering to these requirements can put your club at risk and impact negatively on the integrity of rowing.

We hope that this guide will help you:

- Understand more about the importance of good club governance.
- Identify areas where your club needs to take action or seek further information and/or advice.
- Adopt good practice in both club governance and club management.

Further information on club management is set out in British Rowing's [Club Management Guide](#) which covers topics such as managing your membership, planning your finances, maintaining facilities and effective marketing/communications.

Throughout this guide, we signpost relevant or useful information on the British Rowing website, government or third party websites, such as the Sport England [Club Matters](#) resources.

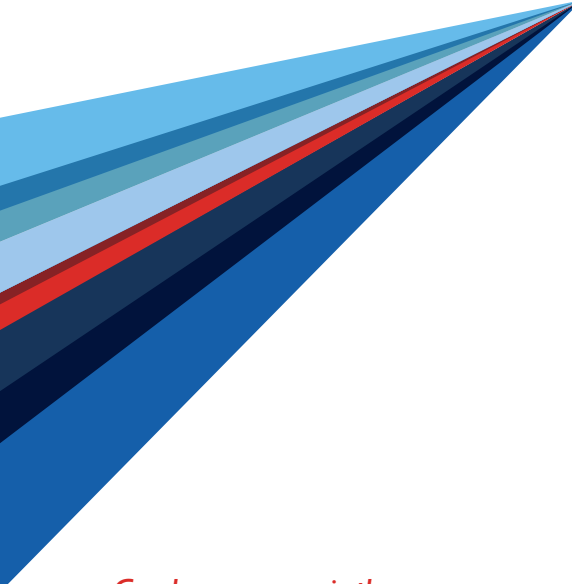
Good governance is not just one person's responsibility. It is a collective responsibility that will help your club to grow and flourish.

British Rowing disclaimer:

The advice given in this guide is intended for general guidance only and should not be taken as definitive legal, tax or financial advice upon which action is taken by the club or its advisors.

British Rowing does not accept any responsibility for loss occasioned to any person or entity acting on or refraining from action as a result of the guidance given.

Clubs are strongly recommended to engage professional advice where appropriate, to ensure they comply with all legal, financial and regulatory requirements and correctly account for VAT and other taxes at all times.



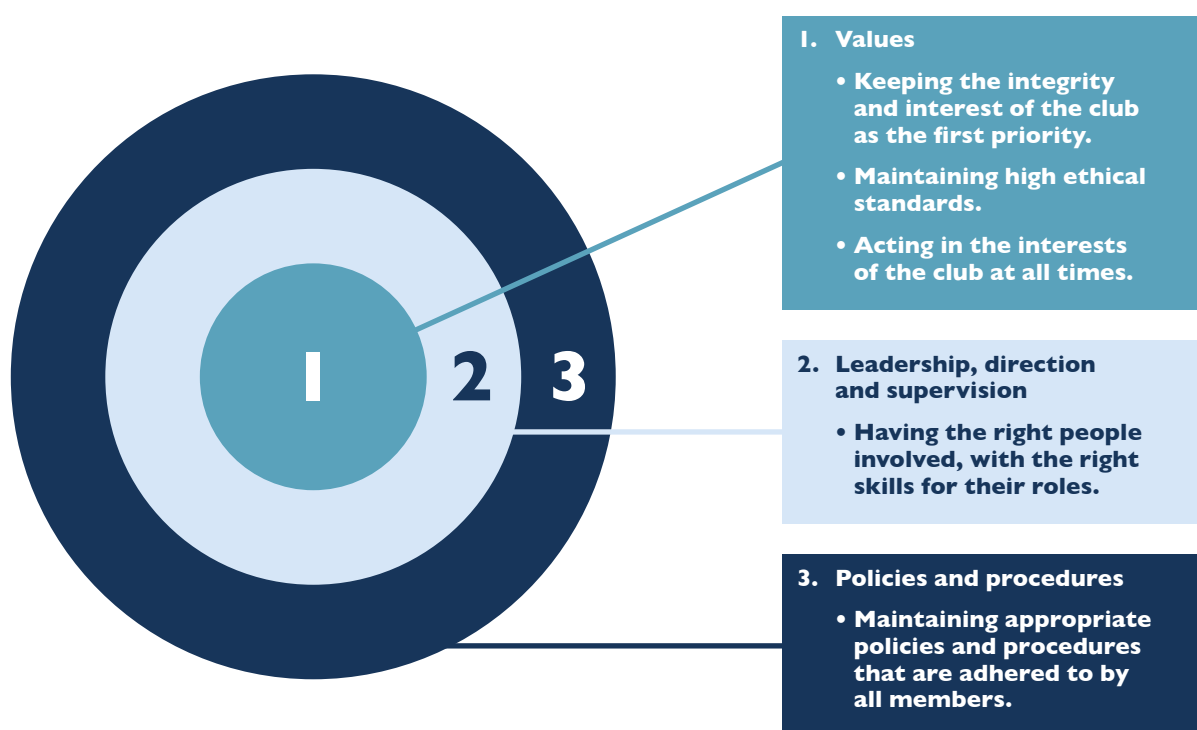
Good governance is the foundation of any well-run club and is essential to long term club sustainability.

What is good governance and why is it important?

Good governance is about having the right structures and people in place at your club, along with policies and procedures that everyone should follow. It starts with good leadership and appointing people with the appropriate skills and experience to perform their roles well. Following the principles of good governance will help you to run your club effectively, transparently and responsibly.

Poor governance, whether through inadequate or irresponsible management, financial failure or compliance issues (legal and regulatory), can impact significantly on your club's ability to function and thrive.

The three principles of good governance are:



Benefits of good governance

- Enhances your reputation – a well-managed club is credible and attractive to new members, the wider community and stakeholders.
- Helps you manage risk and protect your members, volunteers and visitors.
- Inspires people to become members and volunteers.
- Leads to happier, more engaged and effective volunteers.
- Gives you more time to focus on your club priorities.
- Supports funding applications – good governance is often an essential requirement of funding providers.



Good governance ensures your club is well managed, safe and compliant with any relevant legal obligations.

In recent years, governance has become a key focus for all sports clubs and National Governing Bodies (NGBs). The [UK Code for Sports Governance](#), developed by Sport England and UK Sport, sets out the minimum requirements that any organisation seeking or in receipt of public funding needs to meet. Even if you aren't looking to apply for funding, you should strive to meet these governance standards as a well-run, sustainable sports club.

The Sport and Recreation Alliance has also published its own guide, '[The Principles of Good Governance for Sport and Recreation](#)', which contains some useful information.

British Rowing affiliation and support

As the NGB for all forms of rowing, British Rowing has signed up to the UK Code for Sports Governance as a good practice standard. In turn, all affiliated clubs should be able to demonstrate that they are well run, safe and follow good governance procedures.

British Rowing affiliation offers a range of benefits to help your club and its members enjoy the sport and achieve their aims and ambitions. These benefits include voting and competition rights, access to the British Rowing ClubHub Management portal, staff and volunteer support and updates on the sport.

More details on affiliation to British Rowing are available [here](#).



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Section 2 - Club governance

In this section, we describe the fundamentals of club governance – from setting out your club constitution to getting your structure right and having a clear set of rules to help guide your club's operations.

2.1 Club constitution

As part of your club's affiliation to British Rowing, your club needs to have a club constitution that outlines how your club functions and the rules under which it operates. A good constitution, adopted and fully embraced by your club, will:

- Explain to members (and non-members) what your club is about, what you expect of all members and others associated with the club (i.e. parents, carers, etc.) and set out the requirements for conduct, in accordance with British Rowing's affiliation.
- Help protect club members and officers.
- Contain a diversity and inclusion statement, and confirm that your club will abide by the British Rowing Regulations and adhere to the safety requirements in British Rowing's [RowSafe](#) guide.
- Contain grievance, water safety and safeguarding procedures.
- Support your funding applications.

Remember to monitor, review, and update your club constitution and policies on a regular basis.

Guidance on developing your club constitution is available [here](#).

2.2 Club ethics and values

Your club is responsible for protecting both its own reputation and the reputation of all those who take part in its activities. As part of affiliation, your club will need to sign up to British Rowing's Code of Ethics and Behaviours and Code of Conduct. Promoting these codes amongst your members will help to inform and shape their attitudes and behaviours.

British Rowing's values of Teamwork, Open to All and Commitment are stated within our current strategic plan. Try to integrate your club's values within your own club development plan as described in British Rowing's [Club Development Guide](#).

It's also important that:

- **Individual members** who join British Rowing adhere to British Rowing's Regulations and Codes of Ethics & Behaviours.
- **All members** adhere to British Rowing's Rules of Racing when taking part in affiliated events.

You can find the Rules and Regulations and Codes of Behaviour [here](#).



2.3 Code of Conduct

British Rowing has a Code of Conduct which all members, affiliated clubs and events of British Rowing are bound by. These documents can be found on the [British Rowing website](#) under 'Codes of Behaviour'.

The behaviour of club members reflects both on your club and the sport of rowing in general, so it's really important to set clear standards of expected behaviour, not just for your members, but for anyone using your club. British Rowing's Code of Conduct will help you to define and communicate the expected standards of behaviour for everyone involved.

Make sure that:

- British Rowing's Code of Conduct is signed by all members (adult and junior), club officials, volunteers, parents and carers. Why not attach it to your club's membership form if it's not already there – adherence to the Code of Conduct must be a condition of club membership.
- If you have junior members, then their parents or carers should also sign to accept responsibility for their behaviour.
- If a member or non-member's (i.e. a parent or carer) behaviour does not reach the expected standards, there are clear procedures in place to avoid disputes escalating, allow for suspension or expulsion if necessary and also, to prevent the issue from becoming a drain in terms of both time and money.

There is further guidance on the British Rowing website on how club's should adopt and apply their own code of conduct [here](#).

Questions to ask

Club constitution:

- When was your club constitution last reviewed or updated?
- Does your constitution have diversity and inclusion, disciplinary, grievance, safeguarding, clean sport and water safety procedure statements or clauses?

Club values:

- Are British Rowing's values and your club's mission statement clearly communicated to your members, for example, on your club website or in your club newsletter?

Code of Conduct:

- Is everyone familiar with British Rowing's Code of Conduct?
- Have all members signed to say they have seen, read and will abide by the code of conduct for your club?
- Do you talk to parents/carers about why you want them to sign the code of conduct?



2.4 Club structure

Getting your structure right is one of the most important decisions that your club committee will make. Many clubs are set up as unincorporated associations. These unincorporated clubs are not legal entities in their own right. If you are unincorporated, are your committee members aware of the legal implications of this?

As society gets more litigious, the issues of liability arising from the activities of your rowing club increase. Make sure you review your club structure and its implications regularly and ensure that any requirements are clearly communicated to club officers and members.

It is important to highlight that **every club's situation is unique** and you are strongly urged to **seek the appropriate legal and accountancy advice** from relevant professionals when considering any changes to your legal structure. Always use an independent firm with no connections to your club for added protection. If the advice you receive is inappropriate or incorrect, then you will benefit from the firm's professional indemnity cover.

Whatever legal structure you think is best for your club, make sure you fully understand the implications and expectations, both for your club as an entity and for your members.

The Sport England Club Matters website provides further information on different club structures [here](#). It includes the following legal or regulatory club structures:

- **Unincorporated organisations.**
- **Incorporated organisations:**
 - **Company limited by guarantee.**
 - **Company limited by shares.**
 - **Community Interest Company.**
 - **Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies.**
 - **Charitable incorporated organisation.**
- **Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC).**
- **Charitable status.**

You can find more information about club structures [here](#).

Other clubs in your region are also a good source of information and may have experiences to share about their chosen club structure. Early discussions with your British Rowing Community Support Manager (clubsupport@britishrowing.org) may also be helpful.



Photo credit: British Rowing



Companies Act requirements

If your club is constituted as a limited company, there are various statutory requirements that will apply, including specific director's duties, filing of accounts and auditing, as well as notification and reporting requirements.

More information on running a limited company is available [here](#).

Further guidance on the roles of company directors is available [here](#).

The rules and requirements for filing annual company accounts can be found [here](#).

Questions to ask

Club structure and legal status:

- Do you and your club's committee members understand the advantages and disadvantages of your club's legal status?
- Have you thought about seeking external legal guidance to review your club's legal status?

2.5 Committee structure and club roles

An effective club committee will ensure that decisions are made in the best interest of your club and its members.

Make sure you have an appropriate committee structure, involving people with a good mix of skills and experience. Club committees should have a clear statement that:

- Sets out the committee's structure including roles, role descriptions and how people are recruited. Guidance on safer recruitment is available [here](#).
- Includes how you deal with conflicts of interest (see below for more information).
- Includes reporting frameworks and transparent communication with both sub-committees and members.
- Defines maximum terms of office.
- Supports training to assist an individual in their role where required (e.g. safeguarding).

You may find it helpful to refer to the Sport England [Club Matters website](#) for model role descriptions.



Don't forget to set out clear terms of reference for any sub-committees.

Conflicts of interest

It is important that conflicts of interest are recognised, recorded and managed to promote integrity and transparency.

A conflict of interest arises when an individual, who is in a position to influence a decision within an organisation, has the potential to exploit that position to benefit personally, for a friend, family member or another connection, at the expense of the organisation's best interests. A committee member would have a conflict of interest if they (or their family) would be set to benefit personally from a committee decision.

Please also refer to the Sport England [Club Matters website](#) for guidance on managing conflicts of interest.

The following key roles are expected, as a minimum, for a rowing club to run effectively:

- **Chair** – to lead the committee.
- **Captain** – for key club affairs.
- **Treasurer** – to oversee all financial matters, payments, accounts and financial records.
- **Secretary** – to manage club record-keeping, paperwork, coordinate AGM and meeting minutes.
- **Club Rowing Safety Advisor** – to ensure compliance with British Rowing's RowSafe guidance and to report incidents correctly by liaising with the appropriate [Regional Rowing Safety Advisor \(RRSA\)](#).
- **Club Welfare Officer** – to ensure that your club adopts and follows British Rowing's Safeguarding policies and procedures.

The number of roles may vary considerably, depending on your club's size, its activities and facilities. Other roles might also be appropriate to ensure a broad and fair representation of your membership. Further information on these [club roles](#) and their responsibilities is available on the British Rowing website.

The Sport England [Club Matters website](#) (Club Management page) also has some role outlines which can be adapted to suit your club.

British Rowing has set out a model role description for a Club Welfare Officer in its [welfare guidance documents](#) and there is further information on model roles in the British Rowing [People Development Guide](#).



Top tips for effective committees

- **Tasks and skills list.** Look at all the tasks and responsibilities needed to run your club effectively and make a list of the skills needed for any role. For some roles, enthusiasm and commitment may be more important than specific skills or experience.
- **Get the right people**
 - Ask people to get involved and discuss the roles with them in advance of any nominations process.
 - Consider using a skills matrix to support a balance of skills and expertise.
 - Ask people about their skills and interests when they join or survey your existing members to find this out.
 - Consider external recruitment if you can't find the right person from your existing membership.
- **Ensure diversity** – Make sure that your committee represents the diversity of your club membership so that decisions are made in the interests of your club as a whole.
- **Avoid overload** – Ideally, ensure that each committee member has only one role, so they are not overloaded and they don't encounter conflicts of interest.
- **Develop clear role outlines** – Be open about what the role involves and what is expected. Where possible, also indicate the expected time commitment. Role outlines that summarise the role and its main responsibilities can help.
- **Use sub-committees** – Keep the size of your main committee manageable. If you need lots of roles, create sub-committees to focus on specific areas, for example, you may have a Finance sub-committee or a Social sub-committee.
- **Consider development** – Consider training or support for committee members so they can improve their skills and experience, or to boost confidence. See Sport England [Club Matters](#) workshops, online modules and toolkits.
- **Wellbeing** – Ensure your volunteers are properly supported particularly in roles that could be stressful. Provide signposts to mental health resources and refer to British Rowing's [Mental Health](#) webpage.
- **Ensure independence** – It is good practice for all of your club's committee members to be independent of each other, i.e. not related or living together. This reduces the risk of decisions being made or influenced by a group that has a common interest, but doesn't necessarily reflect the club's best interests.
- **Avoid conflicts of interest** – Committee members should declare any potential conflicts of interest which might affect their role or decisions. Not doing so may cause issues if decisions are subsequently challenged.



Top tips for effective committees

- **Succession planning** – Keep a look out for new or potential committee members with new skills, experiences or perspectives. You might search for new committee members if:
 - Some of your committee members have left or are intending to leave.
 - Your committee needs further skills and experience, e.g. in areas such as governance, finance or marketing.
 - You feel that your committee needs reinvigorating.
- **Follow your club constitution** – Make sure that you follow your constitution regarding the election and/or re-appointment of committee members.
- **Run your club meetings effectively** – Your club's constitution should set out how your AGM or EGM will be conducted. [Appendix A](#) provides guidance on how to run effective meetings, including an AGM or EGM. Further information on the different types of meetings that your club may need to manage is provided on the Sport England [Club Matters](#) website (Club Management page, Effective meetings).

Questions to ask

Effective committees:

- Does your club elect its committee members in an open process at its AGM?
- Does everyone understand their voting rights?
- Is there representation from all sections within your club on the main committee or its sub-committees?
- Does your main committee meet regularly with decision-making recorded and approved? Do you receive, review and retain minutes of all club meetings?
- Do you need sub-committees/groups to reduce the size of your main committee?
- Are sub-committees clear about their delegated powers and what decisions they can or cannot make?
- Does your club committee undertake and encourage personal development e.g. training (online, face to face, mentoring), conferences, club cluster meetings, reading, etc?
- Have you ever carried out a membership skills audit to determine the knowledge, skills, experience and interests of your members?
- Do you have a succession plan in place for all roles on the committee?
- Do you actively seek out club members for future committee roles?
- Do you keep all sensitive information confidential in your capacity as a committee or board member?



2.6 Club financial planning

Financial planning should be fully integrated with your club's wider organisational planning and management, with policies and procedures in place to control and manage cash flow, reserves and any investments or borrowing.

Make sure that:

- You have an annual budget, with realistic club income and expenditure projections that can be met through your club's cash flow.
- Your club's activities are structured in the most efficient way (see [section 2.4](#) of this guide for information and signposts about the different structures available).
- You manage your club's financial stability by monitoring your cash flow and financial performance continuously throughout the year, with appropriate corrective action taken when required.
- You are fully aware of the financial risks involved with any existing or new venture. The risk of loss or fraud should be mitigated by ensuring that appropriate financial controls and procedures are in place.
- Your financial policies and procedures help your club committee to safeguard your club assets, prevent fraud, avoid mistakes and keep financial records in accordance with relevant legislation.
- You have a small payment or expenses policy (often included within club rules or the constitution) regarding small payments to individuals. If expenses are paid to members, clear procedures are essential to avoid any doubt on [whether volunteers are being paid as employees or not](#), with further details in [section 2.7](#).

For further information on financial management, see British Rowing [Club Management Guide](#), Financial Management (section 3).

Questions to ask

Financial planning and procedures:

- Are clear and easily understood management accounts provided at each committee meeting? It's good practice, rather than a requirement, for clubs to produce management accounts.
- Unless your club is exempt, are your annual club accounts independently verified or audited by an external independent qualified accountant?
- If appropriate, do you send out an annual income & expenditure statement and simplified balance sheet in advance for approval at your AGM?
- Do you have a business plan which is reviewed at least annually?



2.7 Employment law, tax and other financial obligations

This section covers a complicated area and it is recommended that you seek advice for your own circumstances to ensure you are suitably protected.

Recruitment

The first step in a good employment/contractor relationship is ensuring you've got the right person for the job and a proper agreement in place. For more information, please refer to the safer recruitment guidance [here](#).

Employed versus self-employed

Whether an individual is considered to be employed by your club or is self-employed will depend upon the nature of the relationship between your club and the individual. It is your club's responsibility to make this assessment and there may be penalties for getting it wrong so if you are unsure, always take appropriate legal advice. Both tax and employment law may be relevant. Regardless of employment status, there needs to be a written contract which should contain the minimum information required by law.

The [HMRC Employment Status Indicator](#) can help to confirm the position. Make sure you retain evidence of the results of this test. Clubs are also advised to be aware of the off-payroll rules, known as [IR35](#).

Coaches

An area where the 'employed versus self-employed' question can be particularly difficult is in relation to coaches. The level of control over the way coaches work is particularly relevant. Further government information is available [here](#).

If your club pays anyone for coaching or pays expenses, make sure you check out the rules on employment status as there may be instances where coaches are considered to be employees of the club with all the associated PAYE, holiday and [pension rights](#) that employees would receive.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Employee rights

Every club employing staff has a responsibility to comply with employment law. Having a clear understanding of the rights and obligations of employees will help to reduce the legal and commercial risks of your club breaching its obligations to its employees. Given the complexity of employment legislation, here are some links to government information that expand upon employee rights. Please note that this is a non-exhaustive list of employee rights.

- [National Minimum Wage & National Living Wage.](#)
- [Hours of Work.](#)
- [Pensions.](#)
- [Holiday Pay.](#)
- [Sickness and Sick Pay.](#)
- [Flexible Working.](#)
- [Maternity Leave.](#)
- [Paternity Leave.](#)
- [Shared Parental Leave.](#)

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

In addition to the government links above, if you have any other questions, further information and telephone support can be found on the [ACAS](#) website.

ACAS provides free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law.

Tax and other financial obligations

Corporation tax

Further information on Corporation tax is available [here](#).

VAT

VAT can be a substantial cost for many clubs. The cost is incurred principally through a supplier charging VAT on goods or services to your club and this VAT being either partially or wholly recoverable. There is a compulsory threshold for VAT when income is generated at your club.

The impact of VAT can increase significantly if a club undertakes capital improvement works such as clubhouse construction or extension, or improvements to changing rooms or other facilities. More information on this and other VAT related information can be found [here](#).

Gift Aid

Gift Aid enables registered CASCs and/or charities to increase the amount of a donation from an individual by a tax rebate. The donation must satisfy certain qualifying conditions. Further information is available [here](#).

Business rates

More information on business rates is available [here](#).

When embarking on a club re-development or extension project, always take advice from an appropriately qualified person about VAT recovery.



Alcohol licensing

If your club sells or supplies alcohol on a regular basis (daily/weekly) when your clubhouse is open, there is a requirement, under the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003, to hold either a Club Premises Certificate or a Premises Licence.

Further information is available [here](#).

Music licensing

If you play or perform music at your club premises, you will usually need *TheMusicLicence*. This is issued by PPL PRS Ltd – a joint venture between PPL and its fellow music licensing company PRS for Music, with the aim of simplifying the process of becoming licensed to play music in public. Further information is available [here](#). There are [different tariffs](#) for various clubs and activities.

TV/entertainment licensing

Your premises may need a licence if you have the use of a TV. Further information on whether you need a licence can be found [here](#).

2.8 Data Protection/GDPR

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) sets out legal guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information and it is supplemented by the Data Protection Act 2018. All clubs should be compliant. A guide to GDPR is found [here](#).

More information is available on the website of the Information Commissioner's Office [here](#).

British Rowing GDPR guidance is found [here](#).



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Section 3 - Policies, procedures and guidance

In addition to your club's constitution, every club needs a range of club policies and procedures that set out in detail how your club and its members should operate and behave. These documents and how you implement them, play an important role in running your club effectively.

Make sure you:

- Have appropriate policies and procedures in place and communicate these effectively to everyone involved.
- Understand the legal environment in which your club operates.
- Have appropriate controls in place to help mitigate any risks.

Questions to ask

Policies and procedures:

- Are your club's policies and procedures up to date?
- Are they regularly reviewed and updated?
- Are they communicated to all your members?
- Are they easy to access, for example, are they available on your club website?
- Are they understood by everyone involved in your club?
- Are they provided as part of an induction or club orientation process?
- Do you provide any training or support to any staff or volunteers who might be less familiar with, or experienced in, club policies and procedures?

In this section, we summarise and provide signposts to further information for the core policies and procedures that all clubs should follow.

3.1 Rules and regulations

Make sure that your club's constitution (see [section 2.1](#)), as well as any specific rules relating to your club, are publicised to members and readily available.



3.2 Discipline

Problems can arise within clubs and between members even where good procedures are in place. However, everyone needs to feel that complaints are handled sensitively and are given a fair hearing, with a clear process to follow. Make sure that the procedures for handling complaints and grievances at your club, described below, are set out in your club constitution and publicised to your members.

Disciplinary and grievance procedures

Clubs should have a clearly outlined process for dealing with any disciplinary or grievance matter. It's a requirement for your club's disciplinary and grievance procedures to work in parallel with British Rowing's policies.

Whistle Blowing policy

British Rowing's Whistle Blowing policy explains the processes for raising concerns about malpractice in a club or at an event.

Vexatious Complaints policy

If someone is persistently complaining or refusing to follow the appropriate procedures to deal with a complaint, whilst insisting you address their concerns, then a Vexatious Complaints policy will help you manage this.

A model club policy is available for clubs and events, as well as British Rowing's own policy. These policies can be found in the [policies and guidance](#) section of British Rowing's website, under 'Discipline'.

If you have further queries on disciplinary and grievance procedures, please contact: governance@britishrowing.org

3.3 Health and safety

All clubs should be aware of the following requirements in relation to health and safety:

- [British Rowing Regulations](#).
- Criminal law.
- Civil law liabilities.

British Rowing Regulations

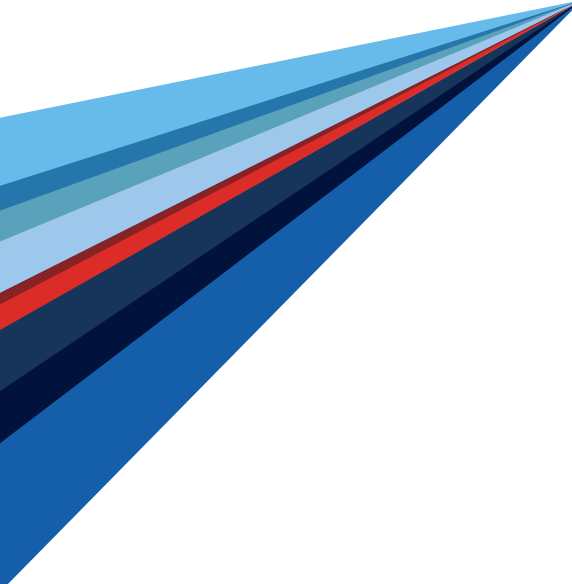
Section 11 of the [British Rowing Regulations](#) relates to safety and imposes duties on all affiliated members (clubs and competitions) and registered individuals (members). Further guidance and advice on how to comply with these duties is also provided in [RowSafe](#), chapter 1.

Criminal law

In general, the [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#) and the regulations based on it, do not apply to amateur sports clubs, except to the extent that clubs are in control of premises. Further guidance for clubs is available on the [Health and Safety Executive](#) website. There are also requirements if your club has employees.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Failure to comply with the law can lead to prosecution in the criminal courts and may result in fines and, in extreme cases, imprisonment.

Section 2 of the Act specifies the duties regarding employees and section 3 of the Act specifies the duties regarding those who are not employees. In many cases, health and safety regulations require that risk assessments are completed. Guidance on completing risk assessments is available in [RowSafe](#) and further training materials are available through the British Rowing website [here](#).

Anyone (including volunteers) with control of premises (e.g. a clubhouse) or equipment (e.g. boats) has a duty to ensure that the premises and equipment are safe for those using them, as far as is reasonably practicable. [RowSafe](#) provides advice and guidance on the safety of boats and rowing. Further guidance is available on the British Rowing website in the [Safety in Club Premises](#) section.

The extent of a club's legal duty will depend on the level of control that it has over the premises and the type of equipment used. For example, if a club is responsible for keeping its premises and equipment in good repair, it is also expected to take reasonable steps to check that all equipment is safe to use.

Your club should appoint someone who can advise on the management of your premises. This could be a club member or volunteer.

Civil law liabilities

Every organisation, including rowing clubs, owes a **duty of care** to people who can be harmed by its activities. Any harm that results from a failure to fulfil this duty can lead to a claim for compensation in the civil courts.

For a negligence claim to succeed, the injured person must show that the defendant had a duty to take reasonable care towards them and that they have suffered the physical, mental or economic harm through a breach of that duty. The injured person must also show that the type of loss or injury for which damages are being claimed was a foreseeable result of the breach of the duty and that they did not voluntarily accept that risk.

Part of this test is the extent to which the harm was foreseeable. Failure to foresee harm that could have been foreseen is no defence. It is important to use hazard identification and risk assessments to quantify the levels of risk and define actions to reduce the level of risk so that it is acceptable.

Make sure you take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which you can reasonably foresee that could cause injury to anyone who could foreseeably be harmed. The test of what a reasonable person would find to be reasonable is used to determine whether there has been a breach of a duty of care.

More information on the application of health and safety law and civil law can be found [here](#).



Photo credit: Drew Smith



RowSafe

RowSafe provides safety advice to rowers, clubs, competitions and everyone else associated with the sport of rowing. It helps people participate in rowing without putting themselves and/or others at unacceptable risk. Everyone is expected to be aware of their own safety and the safety of others.

RowSafe contains 'expectations' for various groups and provides links to further information across the following chapters:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Culture and expectations. 2. Communications. 3. Club safety. 4. Event safety. 5. Competence. 6. People. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Equipment. 8. Health. 9. Topics covered in risk assessments. 10. Rowing on the sea. 11. Land training. 12. Incident reporting. 13. Auditing. |
|---|---|

Questions to ask

Health and safety:

- Are your club's risk assessments reviewed and updated every year?
- Have the actions identified in the risk assessment been implemented?
- Have you identified any major emergency issues that could impact on your club and its future?
- Have your internal inspections identified any opportunities for improvement?
- Have you reviewed your reported incidents and identified risk reduction measures?

Health and safety policy

A safety policy provides the opportunity for your club to make a clear statement of its intention to keep your members safe. It also forms the basis for the development of a positive safety culture through a statement of your values and emphasis on the importance of safety to you. It should be authorised by your club's leaders and endorsed by all members. More information is provided in section 1.3 of [RowSafe](#), including a specimen club safety policy in section 1.3.1



Risk assessment

Hazard identification and risk assessment are the basis for your club's safety planning. They provide you with the ability to understand how harm can be caused and help to minimise the likelihood of harm occurring and the severity of harm should it occur. Please remember that completing risk assessments is not an end in itself; it adds value when the identified actions are completed. It is the first step in the process of safety management that puts you in control of your risks.

The basic process of risk assessment is to identify:

- **Hazards** – anything that can cause harm.
- **Hazardous events** – the events in which harm is caused.
- **Barriers** – these reduce the occurrence of the hazard causing the hazardous event.
- **Controls** – these tend to reduce the severity of harm should a hazardous event occur.

Further guidance on risk assessment is provided in chapter 9 and sections 3.1 and 4.1 of [RowSafe](#), with training materials available on the British Rowing website [here](#).

RowSafe (chapter 9) provides advice on assessing the risks relating to:

1. The weather.
2. The rowing environment.
3. The water.
4. Other water users.
5. Going afloat and landing.
6. In and around the boathouse.
7. Faulty, incorrectly set and poorly maintained equipment.
8. Pre-existing health conditions and low levels of fitness.
9. Ocean rowing risk management plan.
10. Rowing in floods.
11. Indoor rowing.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Incident reporting

The British Rowing [incident reporting](#) system is intended for you to report incidents that occur when rowing and training so that:

- We can all learn from each other and avoid similar incidents ourselves.
- Clubs can identify the areas of safety that need attention in their location.
- [Regional Rowing Safety Advisers \(RRSA\)](#) can offer advice and help clubs develop safe practices.

Every year, the incident reports are analysed and the results are published on the [RowSafe](#) page.

Annual safety audit

Every year, clubs are required to demonstrate compliance with a range of safety audit requirements, derived from RowSafe. Once completed by your club, your safety audit is then reviewed and, if acceptable, approved by your RRSA. Your club should work with your RRSA to ensure that there are suitable and sufficient arrangements in place to keep people safe.

Safety in club premises (including food safety and hygiene)

The British Rowing [Safety in Club Premises](#) webpage provides guidance on the following topics:

1. Work at height.
2. Fire arrangements.
3. Safety of electrical equipment and installations.
4. Gas safety including liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and liquefied natural gas (LNG).
5. Hazardous chemicals.
6. Storage of petrol.
7. Asbestos in the building structure.
8. Lifting equipment.
9. Avoidance of slips, trips and falls.
10. Legionnaires' disease.
11. Food safety.
12. Radio licensing.

If you have further queries on safety, please contact: safety@britishrowing.org or your RRSA.



Insurance

All British Rowing members are covered by personal accident insurance, with benefits if you are injured whilst taking part in rowing or rowing related activities. It also provides third party liability insurance, which protects you if you are held responsible for causing an injury to someone else or their property.

If you are a COACH member, you will receive an extra level of cover in the form of Professional Indemnity insurance that covers incidents arising from the advice that COACH members provide as a coach.

Be aware that your club or association's affiliation to British Rowing does not include any insurance. It is your responsibility to ensure that all of your club's activities and assets are insured. As well as adequately insuring your clubhouse and boats, make sure you take out suitable liability insurance to cover the full range of your club's and committee's activities.

Further information and support about insuring your club is available [here](#).

Further information and support about insuring your competition is available [here](#).

Questions to ask

Insurance:

- Do you have appropriate insurance, such as public liability insurance or other insurances to protect your club?
- When was the last time you updated your insurance schedule?
- Do you need different insurances for different people, different premises or different activities?



Photo credit: Drew Smith



3.4 Welfare/safeguarding

As part of your club's affiliation, it is a requirement to comply with British Rowing's safeguarding policies.

Everyone involved in your club, whether they are a volunteer, participant or spectator, should never have to worry about abuse or harassment. Safeguarding is the process of protecting children and adults at risk from harm by providing a safe space in which to play sport and be active. Everyone has a role to play in keeping others safe and people should know what to do if they have any concerns.

The duty of care to children, young people and adults at risk is firmly embedded at the heart of rowing. You can view the **British Rowing Safeguarding Strategy** for 2020 [here](#).

British Rowing's guidance documents and procedures are revised regularly to meet new regulations and are available [here](#). Make sure you read these, alongside the **Safeguarding and Protecting Children policy** and **Safeguarding and Protecting Adults at Risk policy**.

Club Welfare Officers

Your club should identify a Club Welfare Officer, either with combined responsibilities for children and adults or through separate positions, depending on your club's needs. This person(s) should receive adequate training and information about the role they are undertaking and their responsibilities. It is good practice to publicise details, including the name and role of your Club Welfare Officer, with a photo, to everyone at your club – both electronically and on club noticeboards. British Rowing school or university clubs usually nominate their organisation's safeguarding/pastoral lead as their club's welfare officer.

A model role description for a Club Welfare Officer, together with poster templates to help you publicise the details of your Club Welfare Officer, are available [here](#).

Safeguarding and protecting children policy

Your club must adopt and implement British Rowing's **Safeguarding and Protecting Children policy** which is based on statutory government guidance.

Make sure you publicise this policy and its associated procedures so that all club members and parents are aware of it, including details of where to go for help.

Further British Rowing guidance on the duty of care and child protection is available [here](#).

The British Rowing Safeguarding and Protecting Children policy is available [here](#).

The Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport are available [here](#).

Make sure that your club's welfare policies and procedures are easily available and are understood and adhered to by everyone.

It is vital that your club has safeguarding & welfare measures in place.



Make sure that your members know how to respond to and follow up on any safeguarding matters concerning any adult at risk.

Safeguarding and protecting adults at risk

Safeguarding adults at risk is everybody's responsibility. Your club should look out for the welfare of any adults at risk and be sufficiently informed to ensure that any safeguarding concerns about adults at risk are properly acted upon. An 'Adult at Risk' is defined as 'any person who is aged 18 years or over and at risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and support' (Care Act 2014, England).

Sport England Club Matters provides further information in '[Safeguarding Adults – The Essentials Guide](#)'.

The [Ann Craft Trust](#) also provides useful information on safeguarding adults at risk.

Make sure you adopt and implement British Rowing's **Safeguarding and Protecting Adults at Risk policy** at your club and ensure that all club members are aware of it and agree to adhere to it. The policy, along with other guidance, can be found [here](#) and further information on how to report concerns of abuse and respond to concerns is available [here](#).

If you have further queries on safeguarding, please contact: Iso@britishrowing.org

Welfare guidance documents

British Rowing provides additional guidance to further elaborate on best practice in a range of contexts. In the welfare guidance documents, you can access guidance on:

- Procedures for handling safeguarding concerns.
- Information on carrying out criminal record checks.
- Roles and responsibilities within your club.
- Safer recruitment (see below).
- Club activities that involve juniors.
- How to ensure safeguarding in the digital world and keeping safe online.
- Appropriate sharing of information.

The above list is non-exhaustive and we strongly encourage you to familiarise yourself with all of the [welfare guidance documents](#).

Safer recruitment of coaches and club roles

Safer recruitment is a fundamental part of safeguarding. Even if a role is voluntary and/or your club is small, make sure you follow the key steps set out in British Rowing's [safer recruitment guidance](#), which also includes information concerning Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

Anti-bullying policy

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in rowing. By having an anti-bullying policy, your club can demonstrate its commitment to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all members. Make sure that all your members are aware of your policy and adhere to it.

A model anti-bullying policy for clubs, which applies to everyone, and not just children, is provided [here](#).



3.5 Diversity and inclusion

There are many ways that rowing can benefit people's lives, from teaching new skills to forming new friendships, as well as varied health and well-being benefits. The rowing community recognises these positive impacts and wants everyone to have the opportunity to enjoy them. Diversity and inclusion are therefore central themes within 'Rowing: Everyone's Sport', British Rowing's [National Strategy for Rowing, 2021-2024](#).

Creating welcoming, accessible and inclusive clubs, competitions, offers and opportunities for people from all backgrounds/abilities and ages, as well as diverse leadership at all levels, is a key goal within the strategy.

It is also important to be aware that the Equality Act 2010 places a legal duty on everyone within the rowing community to end unfair or discriminatory practices, stop them happening in the first place and to promote equality of opportunity. This applies to club members, staff and volunteers as well as British Rowing as an organisation.

British Rowing's [Inclusive Club Guide](#) provides guidance on how to promote inclusion and diversity within your club. Being an inclusive club means welcoming everyone, regardless of race, gender, disability, faith, sexuality, socio-economic status, age or any other characteristic, and providing equal opportunities to participate and progress.

As well as explaining the terminology and benefits of being inclusive and diverse, the Inclusive Club Guide provides practical recommendations covering everything from creating an inclusive club environment to inclusive coaching, volunteering and leadership practices.

Additional British Rowing policies of relevance are found on the British Rowing website [here](#), under 'Diversity and Inclusion'. You can also find out more about the additional steps British Rowing is taking to promote inclusivity and diversity in our Inclusive Sport Plan, '[Committed to Inclusion](#)'.

Being an inclusive club helps to grow your membership and pool of volunteers and promotes long term sustainability.

Next steps:

- It is good practice for your club to adopt and publish a Diversity and Inclusion statement making your club's stance on these issues clear to both existing and potential members.
- Having a Diversity and Inclusion statement and committing to it will open your club up to your whole community, helping you attract more members and generating a positive club image.
- Your club constitution should include a clause on diversity and inclusion that aligns with your Diversity and Inclusion statement.

All clubs are also encouraged to review the Inclusive Club Guide recommendations. By developing your own Inclusive Club Action Plan, you can encourage everyone in your club to contribute and take ownership of your club's development.



3.6 Clean sport and integrity

Clean sport and integrity are key concerns for rowing that all your club members should know about.

Anti-Doping policy

Every rower has the right to compete in sport knowing that they, and their competitors, are clean. The use of performance-enhancing drugs and other doping behaviour severely damages the sport of rowing and undermines the integrity of clean rowers.

Anyone, at any level of event, can be selected for testing so make sure your club members know what medicines are or are not allowed, and what the testing procedures are.

The British Rowing **Anti-Doping policy** can be found [here](#) under 'Clean Sport and Integrity'.

Further information regarding the anti-doping rules, British Rowing's Supplement policy and how your club can support clean sport in rowing, is available on the British Rowing website [here](#).

Integrity policy

Make sure that your club complies with the British Rowing **Integrity policy** that relates to: betting; corrupt conduct; manipulation of results; inside information; misrepresentation and unsportsmanlike behaviour; reporting and co-operation. This policy can be found [here](#), under 'Clean Sport and Integrity'.

Next steps:

Make sure that:

- You provide information to help educate your members on the importance of clean sport and maintaining the integrity of rowing.
- Your club and all members oppose any attempt to bring the sport into disrepute and/or to manipulate the outcome or fairness of competition.
- All your club members are made aware of the British Rowing Anti-Doping policy, Supplements policy and Integrity policy.

If you have further queries on clean sport, please contact:
cleansport@britishrowing.org

Questions to ask

Clean sport and integrity:

- Does your club know and understand British Rowing's commitment to clean sport and the Anti-Doping policy?
- Are these publicised to all your members?
- Do you remind your members of the importance of clean sport?
- Do you know how to report any concerns you have that an anti-doping rule violation may be taking place?



Appendix A – How to run your club meetings effectively

Introduction

Here is a useful guide to help you prepare for and manage more formal meetings at your club, including your club AGM or EGM. Being well prepared will help to ensure that meetings are run effectively and achieve the required outcomes.

More information on the role and purpose of different types of club meetings, such as AGMs and EGMs, as well as managing these effectively, is provided on the Sport England [ClubMatters website](#).

Before the meeting:

To host an effective meeting, consider:

- Why are you having the meeting?
- What end result do you want from it?
- What will you discuss?
- Do you want speakers?
- Do you need to get more information to inform the discussion?
- The distribution of any information or papers must be made in advance of the meeting including an agenda.
- How will your meeting be conducted? Does your club's constitution or regulations allow for a meeting held by electronic means with electronic voting? If it does not, consider amending to give that flexibility.

Work as a small group, such as Chairman, Secretary and other committee members, to agree the process of the meeting. Find out what people want to discuss and think about how you can raise issues in a clear and informed way.

The agenda

Having a clear agenda – a simple list of topics to be covered agreed by the chair and committee – and circulating it before the meeting to all attendees, helps with time planning and ensures that nothing is missed out.

Timing is important as disorganised and unexpectedly long meetings can demoralise people. Productive meetings lasting no more than two hours can help to build morale and motivation. Ensure any supporting papers are circulated with the agenda as well.

Taking minutes

- Agree who will be taking minutes during the meeting.
- The minute taker should document key points, who made them and actions to be taken forward.
- You may wish to consider how you will minute matters of a confidential nature. Minutes should be factual and concise.
- Minutes should be circulated after the meeting and then agreed as accurate, or amended, at the next meeting.
- Once they are agreed by the committee as accurate you may wish to publish them.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



At the start of the meeting:

For a meeting to work well, everyone needs to feel welcome, included and informed. Everyone should feel comfortable about speaking and putting their point of view forward.

Here are a few tips:

- Organise someone to welcome people as they arrive. Never let a new person sit ignored while everyone else chats.
- Make sure everyone has the agenda and any papers.
- Introduce yourself and other speakers at the start of the meeting.
- If it is a small meeting, ask everyone to introduce themselves, with a brief overview of their background or role.
- Tell people what the meeting is about. Don't assume everyone knows as much as you do.

How will your meeting be run?

Work out the meeting rules that suit your group. Here are some commonly used rules:

- Ask people to speak through the chair i.e. people wanting to speak should put their hand up and wait to be asked by the chair.
- Don't interrupt other people.
- Stick to the items on the agenda.
- Don't talk amongst yourselves.
- Respect other people's views.
- Keep contributions short and to the point.
- Start and finish the meeting on time.

Remember...

- You will need to remind people of the meeting rules at each meeting. There may be new people there and even regular attendees will forget.
- A group can take a while to get used to the meeting rules that you've agreed. If it doesn't work perfectly first time, keep on trying.



Chairing the meeting – top tips

Getting through the business on time

Some key points to run meetings on time:

- Have a clear agenda with rough timings.
- Briefly introduce each agenda item (or get someone else to).
- Never assume people know what you're talking about and take time to go over the issues and explain why you are discussing them.
- Keep an eye on the time and move on if necessary.
- Stick to the agenda item under discussion. If people try to raise other issues, acknowledge them, but don't get drawn in, e.g. "That's an important point which we can come back to later..."
- Stop private conversations and asides as soon as they start.
- Tell the meeting what decisions you are making and why e.g. "I'm going to give this discussion another 5 minutes and then draw it to a close."

Make sure you:

- Keep an overview – remember your role as Chair. Don't be over or under-assertive.
- Listen to other people.
- Ensure that all views get heard including those you disagree with.

Involving everyone

Have you ever been at a meeting where no one spoke out against a particular proposal, but you discover afterwards that lots of people didn't agree with it?

To make sure that everyone is involved in the meeting it is important to:

- Restrain those who are over keen on the sound of their own voice!
- Encourage those who are quiet, nervous or new to meetings.
- Create an atmosphere for genuine debate and constructive discussion. This is not always easy and requires a commitment from the whole group.

Make sure you:

- Stop people from talking for too long. Be firm and consistent but not aggressive.
- Give preference to people who haven't spoken before.
- Give everyone opportunities to put their point of view across. For example, "Is there anyone who hasn't spoken yet who would like to say something?"
- For small meetings, ask everyone in turn to express their views.
- Stop people from interrupting. Make sure you don't forget to come back to the person who interrupted when it's their turn.
- Don't ignore people who have their hands up in favour of those who are interrupting.
- Consider keeping a list of people wanting to speak – let people know you have noticed that they want to speak.
- Listen carefully to what people are saying, and make sure their suggestions are considered by the meeting, even if they have unpopular or minority views.



Chairing the meeting – top tips

Reaching decisions

It's easy for discussions to drift on without any decision or action agreed, or discussions to get bogged down with no one taking responsibility for finding a way forward.

As Chair, you need to help the meeting to reach decisions. It's a skill that takes confidence and practice to do well.

Here are some tips:

- Listen carefully to the discussion and note down key points.
- At the start, remind people what the issue is and what decisions need to be made.
- See if you can pull together the points people are making and suggest a constructive way forward. For instance, you might begin "So we agree that..."
- If there are two or three different points of view, try to summarise each one and present them clearly to the meeting.
- Before you move on to the next item, summarise what's been agreed. This is a way of checking you did all agree the same thing and helps the minute-taker to get a clear record.
- Before you move on, check that you've decided who will do whatever it is you've agreed on. If you don't, either nothing will happen, or the person who always does everything will end up with yet another task.
- Don't assume silence means agreement. Make sure people have been able to say what they think.

Dealing with difficult people

As Chair, you might need to deal with 'difficult' people – the non-stop talker, the know-it-all, or those with a particular 'bee in their bonnet'. There are no easy answers, but the general way you conduct the meeting will make a difference.

Here are some tips:

- Remind people of the meeting rules, and that everyone has agreed to these.
- Be firm and consistent – don't allow difficult people to get away with things and then come down hard on people you find easier.
- When two people get into a heated discussion, summarise the points made by each, then move the focus away from the individuals by asking what other people think about the issues.
- When someone keeps repeating the same point, assure them that their point has been heard, and then turn the discussion back to the group.
- If someone is continually criticising try to turn the question round to them, for instance "What suggestions do you have for how this could be improved?"
- On rare occasions you may have to deal with someone who is really disruptive, try asking the group for support e.g. "Do people want to spend more time on this discussion or move on to the next topic?" This will make it clear to the person involved that everyone, not just the chairperson, wants to move on.
- If a matter is raised that would benefit from a proper debate, consider delegating it to a working group of the interested members and ask them to present their findings to a future meeting.



At the end of the meeting:

Ask for Any Other Business – bear in mind it is not considered good practice to raise an important or contentious issue under Any Other Business. In this instance, encourage committee members to take such an item to a future meeting when members have had time to consider the matter.

Arrange the date of the next meeting.

How did the meeting go?

It is always useful to get feedback on how the meeting went either by asking people directly, or by following up afterwards inviting comments or suggestions.

After the meeting:

- Allow time to talk to new people or follow up the suggestions and contributions that people made.
- Share the meeting minutes, along with the list of actions.
- Start thinking about the next meeting!

Further information

A draft template to be used for Club AGM/EGM minutes can be found in the Sport England [ClubMatters](#) resources, under Effective Meetings.



Thank you.

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Thank you to Drew Smith who provided photos to support the Club Governance Guide.