BRITISH ROWING

Honorary Rowing Safety Adviser Monthly Report

July 2023

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TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT

Awards for Rowers

In last month's report I described the action of an 18-year-old rower who, on 18th June 2023, when he was walking towards his club, came across a man who had collapsed onto the ground. The man was unresponsive and not breathing. The young rower opened his airway and commenced CPR. A woman nearby called for an ambulance. As a result of this rower's prompt and effective action the man was resuscitated and survived. He continues to recover.

I subsequently nominated the rower for a Royal Humane Society award. I heard this month that the Society has decided award a Resuscitation Certificate to Dominic Jones of Isle of Ely RC.

I also heard this month that the Society has decided to make awards to Megan Hill (Resuscitation Certificate) of Poole ARC, Stefan Saunders (Resuscitation Certificate) of Southampton ARC, and Jeffrey Watling (Certificate of Commendation) of Southsea RC who rescued and resuscitated a rower at the end of the Head of the Stour in Christchurch on 5 March 2023. There is more information in the March 2023 Monthly Report.

These are not isolated incidents. The following Royal Humane Society Awards have been made.

Simon Dean (Resuscitation Certificate), BlueBell Hill (Certificate of Commendation) and Peter Trythall (Resuscitation Certificate) of Cape Cornwall Gig Club who resuscitated a rower in Mount's Bay (Penzance) on 6th December 2022. The certificate will be presented on 6th September at the Club. There is more information in the January 2023 Monthly Report

Robert Parker (Testament on Parchment) and Anita Lowe (Resuscitation Certificate) of Boston Rowing Club following their rescue and resuscitation of an unconscious man found face down in the river on 20 June 2019. There is more information in the July 2019 Monthly Report.

Henry Jackson (Testament on Parchment and Resuscitation Certificate) and Alfie England (Testament on Parchment) of the Royal Agricultural University RC following both rowers entering very cold water to rescue and save the life of an unknown man on 26th February 2019. There is more information at Rowers Henry Jackson and Alfie England awarded for rescue bravery - British Rowing and in the October 2019 Monthly Report.

We can be justly proud of these fellow members of the rowing community. We should also be prepared to act in the same way if the opportunity arises.

Incidents in July

Rower goes to the aid of a member of the public

During an outing, a rower noticed that a member of the public had fallen into the water from the slipway. The two gentlemen that accompanied him were trying to lift him out of the water. The rower returned to the pontoon, by which time the man was back on the footpath. There was a considerable amount of blood on his face and hands. The rower I helped him to the clubhouse and sat him down. He was able to speak although a little dazed. The rower spoke with him while cleaning the wounds and he could hold a conversation. He, and his friends were given cups of tea. The man had arranged to meet his wife some distance away from the club so the rower took him and his friends there by car.

Care for your trees

A large branch fell from a poplar tree and as a crew were packing their kit. The tree fell onto a launch and bent the side of it. No-one was hurt but a coach had been in the launch five minutes earlier. The trees are inspected regularly by a tree surgeon; the last inspection had been Autumn 2022. The club avoided that area the next day as higher winds were forecast. A further tree inspection has been commissioned.

Take care when stepping ashore

During a competition, an umpire stepped ashore from the start boat onto the bank, the boat rocked away from the bank, causing the umpire to lose their footing and balance. The umpire instinctively grabbed the mooring rope which made things worse. A boat fender became entangled around the umpire's foot as the umpire fell into the water.

The umpire suffered a severely dislocated shoulder and incurred bruising to their hip and knee. They went to the local hospital Accident and Emergency department where the dislocation was treated. The umpire will attend the fracture clinic and they are now, temporarily, unable to work.

Look out for swimmers

A rower in a 1x almost collided with a swimmer in an area where it is prohibited to swim. The sun was low in the sky, she had dark hair and was difficult to see. This was communicated within the club so that others would be aware.

In another incident a 4- met a young deer swimming across the water and simply waited for it to pass.

Wash from launches

It has been reported that a launch has been operated in such a way that it produced significant wash, said to be about two feet high. This has caused rowing boats to be swamped and riverbanks to be damaged. Please take more care to understand the relationship between the speed of individual launches and the wash they produce. Please also be considerate of the needs of others.

Do not forget to eat

At end of an indoor rowing session, a 17-year-old rower felt unwell with blurred vision, incoherence and general malaise. The rower was laid down with their feet elevated and started to recover, eventually making a full recovery. It was subsequently found that the rower had not eaten anything substantial prior to attending the training session and their symptoms were consistent with transient low blood sugar.

Please remember that rowing burns calories and ensure that you and your rowers prepare well for any strenuous exercise.

Take care when storing boats on trailers

An 8 was temporarily stored on the middle rack of a trailer in the car park. It was hit by a vehicle leaving the car park and severely damaged. It may have been safer had it been placed on the top of the trailer.

Take more care when towing

One of the wheels came off the trailer near the end of a long drive. No-one was hurt. This was caused by driving with the trailer handbrake on and all four sets of drums, brakes and bearings had to be replaced.

In another incident the towing vehicle and trailer turned left at a sharp turn. The near side trailer wheel went over the curb which tilted the trailer and the bow of the far side, top boat clipped a lamppost on an island in the centre of the road. This resulted in the boat breaking where it was tied on.

In yet another incident when a trailer was being reversed a 4x on the towed trailer hit a 4x on a parked trailer causing considerable damage.

Please have someone outside of the vehicle to supervise reversing and have the towing vehicle windows open so that they can hear the person supervising.

Please take extra care when towing.

Take care with the trailer nose weight

There is a popular misconception that trailer nose weight determines trailer stability. Reality is far more complex. Too much weight on the tow ball will reduce the downward force (weight) on the front wheels of the towing vehicle and this could impact on its steering and handling.

If there is too much weight on the tow ball then adding more weight to the rear of the trailer will make it more unstable. This is graphically illustrated in this video Why trailer weight distribution causes loss of control - YouTube.

Take care with Heel Restraints

There were two enquiries about Heel Restraints. In one, I was asked: -

1. what is the recommended length of movement? There was a length of a wooden clothes peg suggestion, but I understand this may have changed.
2. is there a recommendation re the type of knot to be used, or is it simply "a secure knot"?

The response was

This is covered in RowSafe and in more detail in the Safety Alert - Check your Heel Restraints.

The simple logic is that the heel restraint should be configured such that no part of the sole of the shoe can rise above the lowest fixed part of the shoe. This does not apply if the shoe fixing is designed to detach from the boat and stay with the rower in the event of a capsize. This requirement is also included in the Rules of Racing.

I have never heard of the wooden clothes peg suggestion.

Any secure knot will do, I do not want to micromanage knot tying.

These statements appear in RowSafe

7.1. Boats and Blades Equipment

Checklist

A thorough boat and equipment check includes the following:

• In all boats the foot stretchers, shoes or other devices holding the feet of the rowers shall be a type which allows the rowers to get clear of the boat with no delay in an emergency.

• Heel restraints are strong, secure and durable and the correct length (laces and cable ties are not appropriate). See Safety Alert – Heel Restraints.

• Shoes shall be in good condition so that they do not break or become partially detached from the boat in the event of a rower trying to remove their feet during a capsize.

• Where shoes or other devices holding the feet will remain in the boat, each shoe or device shall be independently restrained such that when the heel reaches the horizontal position the foot will be released from the shoe.

• Shoe fastenings such as laces or Velcro or similar materials should not be too tight and must be able to be released immediately by the rower with a single quick hand action of pulling on one easily accessible strap.

• Where shoes or other devices holding the feet will not remain in the boat, each shoe or device must be able to be released by the rower without using their hands or with a single quick hand action of pulling on one easily accessible strap or release device.

The law relating to the driving of launches and other vessels

In May 2004 there was an incident in Weymouth Bay when a Personal Watercraft (PWC) collided with another, stationary, PWC causing serious facial injuries to its rider. During the initial hearing in the Crown Court, the rider was indicted under a single count "*of doing an act which caused or was likely to cause serious injury*", contrary to section 58(2)(a) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to six months imprisonment but released on bail pending appeal against conviction and sentence.

At a subsequent Crown Court hearing it was determined that a PWC is not a "ship" within the meaning of section 52 of the 1995 Act and the case was dismissed. This was confirmed by the Court of Appeal; the judgement is available here.

The law has recently changed by the coming into force (on 31st March 2023) of The Merchant Shipping (Watercraft) Order 2023. This, in effect, extends the definition of a "ship" to include "watercraft". This order defines watercraft as follows: -

Meaning of "watercraft"

3. (1) Subject to paragraph (2), "watercraft" means any type of craft which—

(a) is capable of moving under its own mechanical power,

(b) is used, navigated or situated wholly or partly in or on water, and

(c) is capable of being used to carry one or more persons.

(2) "Watercraft" does not include a ship or fishing vessel within the meanings given in section 313(1) of the 1995 Act.

This Order extends, and applies, in relation to the whole of the United Kingdom.

The result of this change is that operators of launches, etc. can be held accountable in criminal law for a deliberate act or omission, or one made under the influence of drink or drugs, that causes loss or serious damage to a vessel or a structure, or causes death or serious injury to a person. If found guilty then they would be subject to a period of imprisonment of up to two years, or an unlimited fine, or both.

There is more information in an article on the RYA website here.

Launch pre-use safety checks

Recent discussions in relation to the Boat Safety Scheme prompted the need for advice on pre-use safety checks for launches. This has been compiled into a Safety Alert that is distributed with this report.

This should be supported by the club making an annual thorough examination of each of its launches. These should be documented and include items such as:-

- outboard servicing
- hull integrity
- hull condition and
- general condition (seats, windscreens (if fitted)), cleats, mooring ropes, etc.)

Please feel free to suggest anything I have missed.

Launch Rescue training for Safety Boat Drivers

A club is planning some launch rescue training for their safety boat drivers. The RYA powerboat course ensures they are competent to drive but does not deal with rowing boat rescue. The club has experienced safety boat drivers and asked whether there is any British Rowing guidance on boat rescue techniques and whether we know of any rowing safety boat courses.

The response was that this is covered in Section 5.2.1 or RowSafe. Capsize and Recovery is covered in section 3.7.

There is no one answer but here are a few ideas. If the rower(s) climbs on top of their inverted boat (as explained in capsize and recovery training) then they are easy to find and it is relatively easy for them to be helped from that position into the launch. It is less easy to retrieve someone from the water but this is included in the RYA Level 2 Powerboat training.

In normal circumstances the rower should be positioned facing the launch and assisted to climb into the launch by the launch crew. The crew needs to be careful not to have too many people on the same side of the launch. Some launches are not as stable as we would hope.

The casualty could also climb over the stern of the launch (with the engine stopped, not just in neutral) by using the cavitation plate and fins on the outboard motor as steps.

The Lifeboat (RNLI) recovery method is to position the casualty facing away from the launch and have two crew members lift them into the launch. This will work even if the casualty is wearing an inflated lifejacket but most coaching launches are nowhere near as stable as most Lifeboats so I would not recommend it for our launches.

It also depends on the type of launch being used for rescue. There is a problem with the lateral stability of catamaran launches in that as soon as one sponson is immersed, they are no longer stable and will capsize. In this case the casualty should be encouraged to climb onto one sponson while the launch driver transfers his weight to the other sponson. The "climb up the outboard" method should be safe and effective.

The more difficult task is to remove a rower from their boat. It is often better to tow (or push) the boat to safety or encourage the rest of the crew to row the boat to safety rather than to try to lift a rower into a launch. If the rower is unconscious and not breathing then time is of the essence so all that matters is getting them to a place of safety where they can be assisted as quickly as possible. The best means of doing this will depend on their location.

The first problem is how to approach the rowing boat, this again will depend, to some extent, on the type of launch being used and the position of the rower in the boat. Rowing boats are easier to approach than sculling boats because there are fewer riggers. In the case of a rowing boat then the approach should be towards the casualty from the side opposite their rigger. The rower can then be taken from the rowing boat over the bows of the launch. This may not be possible using a catamaran launch.

How does a club know that its launch drivers are competent?

The Health and Safety Executive describes competence as follows: -

"Competence can be described as the combination of training, skills, experience, and knowledge that a person has and their ability to apply them to perform a task safely. Other factors, such as attitude and physical ability, can also affect someone's competence."

It is clear that competence is not just a matter of qualification and that it is task specific. In the case of launch driving, it is also venue specific. Someone who is competent to drive a launch on a simple canal may not be competent to drive a launch on a busy river or in a busy estuary.

Many navigation authorities specify tht launch drivers should hold the RYA Level 2 Powerboat qualification. A review of the syllabus shows that many parts of it are not relevant in some circumstances and that there are some requirements that are not included. Just because a person holds this qualification does not mean that they are able to operate the club's launches properly.

Clubs should be in a position where they can define for themselves the competence requirements for their launch drivers. There is a set of defined competencies that apply in specific circumstances outlined in Appendix 1. This is based on the RYA Level 2 syllabus with additional requirements added. This may not be complete, please feel free to suggest further relevant additions or to comment. Write to safety@britishrowing.org . In general, competence should be demonstrated so clubs can use this specification (once complete) as the basis for their own launch driver competence test.

Alleged failure to rescue a swimmer in distress

There was an accusation that a group of coaches on the bank ignored calls to assist a swimmer who was thought to be in difficulty in the water. It is alleged that they repeatedly refused to launch one of their launches that were on the beach and that this refusal was for "health and safety" reasons. He was subsequently rescued by the sculler who reported the incident by having the swimmer hold on to the stern of the rowing boat and taking him to the bank. The sculler was assisted by a RNLI Lifeboat crew who were called by the coaches.

This was subsequently discussed with the chief coach who was at the club, but in the boathouse, at the time. He will discuss their failure to assist with the other coaches.

I can think of no reason, related to health and safety or anything else, why the coaches should be reluctant to rescue the swimmer. Their lack of action contrasts dramatically with the actions for which other rowers have been recognised (see above). It is hoped that they will have learned from this experience and will no longer be reluctant to assist someone in distress.

It is perhaps chilling to note that about 40% of the drownings each year in the UK are due to suicide. This accounts for about 260 deaths per year. It is possible that this swimmer may have been attempting to end his life but changed his mind before doing so. There was a similar, but fatal, incident near a rowing club in a different Region in June; in that case there was no opportunity for rescue.

Should parents row with their children?

I was asked whether it is acceptable for a parent to row with their child in a 2x. Does there need to be a club official present. I wrote about this matter in the March 2019 Monthly report, this a summary of the advice given then.

From a pure safety perspective was that if both the daughter and the parent are capable of rowing in a 1x safety (and have demonstrated competence) then they should be safe to row together in a 2x. Rowing together in a bigger boat would be even more safe.

I suggest that you consult your club welfare officer and include them in this discussion.

However, from a safeguarding perspective, it is not good practice for a parent to coach a junior crew that includes one or more of their children. Other people may assume that there could be favouritism, particularly where selection is concerned. There may also be a problem of bias or enhanced expectations of a parent for their child. It is important that all children are supervised by a responsible adult at all times when they are at the club.

This is a summary of the advice from our Lead Safeguarding Officer at that time in relation to a parent coaching their child: -

The club is responsible for the appropriate supervision of the child at all times when they are on club premises, boating for the club or otherwise engaged in club activities, whether or not the parent is in attendance.

The club may choose to deploy a parent as a junior coach, following the appropriate safer recruitment protocols, provided they deem that individual to be suitable for that responsibility. It would be essential for the parent to understand that they were acting under the governance of the club, and were accountable to the club, in such circumstances.

I would not consider it good practice and am aware that there are some clubs which have specifically prohibited arrangements of this kind.

I'm afraid that we have also had repeated experience in safeguarding of scenarios, involving parents wishing to coach their own child in a single scull, where behavioural problems occurred that were extremely difficult for the clubs concerned to address.

Examples of this include, but are not limited to: -

- *the parent wishing to control all aspects of the child's involvement, and not accepting line management by the club*
- *the parent making the child isolated from their peers or from other responsible adults at the club*
- *the parent exposing the child to over training*
- *the parent rendering it virtually impossible for the child to voice any reservations about the coaching protocol, or any other matters of concern*
- *the club feeling unable to approach the child on any matters of concern.*

You should also consider your own club risk assessment and club rules. If your rules specify that small boats do not go afloat unless they are accompanied by another boat or a launch then these rules continue to apply.

If the parent is new to rowing or sculling and is not yet competent, then it may not be safe for them to row with their child.

Work with British Canoeing

The Safety Officer (Volunteer) of Canoe Avon reported an incident to the Canal and River Trust. He wanted to raise awareness of rowers and coaching launches and the speed they operate at. He was surprised that there is an acceptance that the coaching launches can exceed the usual 4mph speed limit and that drivers do not have to be RYA Power Boat Level 2 qualified. He had found the 2017 document drawn up by British Rowing and British Canoeing "Guidance for Rowers and Canoeists on Shared Water" and the rowing club are going to look at it.

He also explained that since 2021 water use by members of the public and clubs has increased considerably and with good weather more people are drawn to the water. He felt that launch drivers should be more aware of the kayaks, SUPs and other craft around and adjacent to them and the effect of their wash.

I replied to explain that in many areas, where the Navigation Authority have imposed speed limits on motorised vessels, there is a special dispensation for rowing coaching launches. For example, the Port of London Authority, in its Tideway Code, states: -

Speed limits

Rowing coaching launches have a special dispensation from the PLA to exceed the speed limit ***but only when directly coaching a crew.***

At all other times coaching launches are limited to 8 knots and should navigate to the starboard side of the channel.

The speed limit applies if a coach becomes separated from their crew and they must ***not*** *exceed 8 knots when attempting to catch-up with a crew.*

Similarly coaches must proceed with extreme caution and within the speed limit behind aits (islands in the river).

This dispensation is necessary in order for coaching launches to keep up with rowing boats as they can move considerably faster than the normal speed limit for motorboats.

Many Navigation Authorities also require operators of motor launches to be qualified to RYA Level 2 Powerboat. Our guidance simply advises that they should be competent. The Health and Safety Executive defines competence here as follows: -

Competence can be described as ***the combination of training, skills, experience, and knowledge that a person has and their ability to apply them to perform a task safely****. Other factors, such as attitude and physical ability, can also affect someone's competence.*

Many people have been driving launches for years and are competent to do so even though they may not be qualified.

The Safety Lead at British Canoeing wrote to say that they will be promoting the "Sharing the Water" on their social media channels in the summer months.

An Incident Report was shared with the Safety Lead at British Canoeing. The incident involved a minor collision between a 4x and a canoe resulting in the canoe capsizing. The water was shallow and relatively warm so the canoeist could stand up and walk with her canoe to the bank less than 5 meters away. The rowers apologised to the canoeist and her mother. The rowing coach stayed near the girl in his launch whilst she made her way to safety. He also apologised to her and her coach and checked that she was OK before he returned to the docking point.

A further Incident Report was shared with the Safety Lead. This involved a junior rower in a 1x who had not noticed that a canoeist had capsized just in front of her. She managed to stop and avoided a collision with the person in the water. The canoeist then decided to grab on to the single and refused to let go. The club's launch driver at this time was recovering the canoe but came back to the single to insist the man get into the launch. Both canoe and man were successfully delivered to the bank. The canoeist was not wearing a life jacket and obviously could not swim.

The club will ensure that a good look out is being performed, continue with good launch cover, advise crews of rogue canoeist and other water users. It appears to be following the safeguarding advice to ensure there is adequate supervision considering the surroundings, the environment and the circumstances of the activity

Who is in charge in a boat?

There was a request from the Safety Officer of a Gig rowing club who explained that they had a visiting cox was kindly running a race training session at the club in relatively sheltered water.

The visiting Cox wanted to demonstrate something and swapped over with a rower who did not put on a life jacket and took the helm. The situation suddenly changed when two power boats appeared at speed and were spotted about 150m away moving towards the gig. The Safety Officer asked the cox to stop and put on a lifejacket. The visiting cox who was rowing at this point said that she was in charge and would decide what needed to be done. The Safety Officer explained that the person at the helm needed to put on a life jacket.

I explained that the cox (helm) of any rowing boat is in command and responsible for the safety of the crew. This applies even though he or she may only be in command for a short time. The cox is in a good position to keep a good all-round lookout and able to instruct crew members so that they can avoid, or minimise, harm.

The cox is usually expected to wear a lifejacket because they need this extra protection so that they are able to continue to be in command even if a hazardous event (such as a capsize) has occurred.

This response was shared with the CPGA Safety Adviser.

Safer recruitment

There was a discussion with a club Vice Captain about the behaviour of a newly appointed coach. There was subsequently a discussion with the Club Chair that included reference to the Safety Recruitment guidance. This can be found in Section 4 of Safeguarding Handbook 1 here

Blue Green Algae

I was asked at for some clarification on what level does blue green algae need to be at to suspend our boating activities. The response was that this is not a matter that we have quantified, and I cannot help you with specific limits.

There is a useful guide on the Environment Agency website here. This contains the following: -

How can blue-green algae affect you?

Bloom and scum forming blue-green algae can produce toxins. Toxin producing blooms are called Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). These toxins can kill wild animals, farm livestock and domestic pets. In humans, they can cause rashes after skin contact and illnesses if swallowed. Not all blue-green algae blooms and scums are toxic, but you can't tell just by looking at them, so it's best to assume they are.

Whilst blue green algae is harmful to people both by ingestion, inhalation of droplets, and by skin contact, it is deadly to dogs. Please discourage dog owners from allowing their dogs to have contact with algal blooms or to drink the water. see Blue-Green Algae and its Dangers to Dogs | Blue Cross.

There is more information from the US Centre for Disease Control here .

Do rowers need to wear lifejackets?

A club that rows on a congested section of river is considering rowing on a nearby reservoir that is also used by a sailing club. The water authority has a rule that all water users shall wear life jackets. The response was that this comment appeared in my November 2021 Monthly Report.

Use of Lifejackets and Buoyancy Aids

A member of the public contacted British Rowing to say that some of our residents have expressed concern about the lack of buoyancy aids along this part of the river. We have witnessed kayakers, rowers and paddle-boarders capsize.

It was pointed out that rowers do not usually wear lifejackets or buoyancy aids. Lifejackets and buoyancy aids are bulky and tend to get in the way when rowing.

Rowers are coached that, if they fall in, they should stay with their boat and treat it as their liferaft. They should then climb on top of their boat and use their hands to paddle to safety. This training is shown in a video on YouTube here.

It would be very difficult to climb onto a boat when wearing an inflated lifejacket and it would be fairly difficult when wearing a buoyancy aid. Lifejackets and buoyancy aids are generally available in rowing clubs and would be provided to anyone who wants to wear one, or whose parent wants them to wear one.

We often say that rowing is a sport that happens on the water and not in the water. On the odd occasions when rowers do capsize then they usually get no more than cold and wet. They suffer no serious consequences."

Lifejackets again

The parents of a young rower wrote to explain that their child has started rowing earlier this year and has several months of indoor rowing training. He has now started going out on the water. He has however not completed a swim test or capsize drill and has not been offered a lifejacket to wear in the interim. Would this be normal practice?

They also explained that their child had a medical condition which results in exaggerated prolonged faints whereby the heart stops for up to 15-30 seconds. He has had one episode in the last year. The club is aware of the child's condition.

I explained that we no longer advise that rowers must be able to swim but leave this to each club to consider based on the venue where they row. In the event of a capsize then all the rower was to do initially is to float whilst folding on to some part of their boat.

The swim test is a bit of a misnomer as it now incorporates capsize training to prepare rowers so that they know what to do in the event of a capsize. If a rower, or their parent if a junior, says that they can swim then we tend to take their word for it.

I would expect a club to provide a lifejacket to anyone who wants one (or, if they are a junior, whose parent asks that they wear one). In the case of your child this would be an automatic inflation lifejacket. The club should also ensure that it is fitted it correctly.

The child's condition could have serious consequences for a rower so care is needed. There are two ways this can be addressed. These are to look for ways that reduce the probability of the child entering the water and to look for ways to reduce the severity of the consequences should he do so.

Reducing the probability of a capsize would involve rowing in bigger boats. It is not unusual for juniors to capsize in single sculls, it is less likely for them to capsize from double sculls and even less likely for a quad sculling boat to capsize, although it is not unknown.

It is possible to fit floats to the riggers to make the boat more stable and less likely to capsize. These floats are also used by rowers with a disability so that they can race. Some clubs use them for new rowers of any age. Some adult rowers choose to use them whenever they row in single sculls. If your club needs further information on this, then please ask them to contact me.

An auto inflation lifejacket would help. It is always a good idea to (manually) inflate the lifejacket before entering the water, this should help ensure that the head is not immersed. If your son's episodes occur suddenly and without warning then he probably would not be able to do this. However, the inflated lifejacket would help to prevent an episode due to him entering the water.

Indoor rowing is always possible for people who have conditions like this.

Reducing the severity of harm is less easy and we should recognise that the residual risk may not be acceptable. Even if we take all the precautions we can think of, it may not be safe for your son to go afloat in a rowing boat. One of the features of all medical conditions is that they are suffered by individuals and individuals vary considerably. It would help if you could take advice from your son's medical specialists.

Appendix 1 - Competence to operate a Launch

Competencies required in all circumstances

General

Knowledge of:

- Local Hazards (e.g., weirs, bridges, moorings, etc.)

Understands

- Application of local byelaws
- The agreed navigation plan
- The need for awareness of other water users
- Being adrift – alternative means of propulsion
- Towing and being towed
- Fire precautions and fire fighting

Pre-use safety check (see as described in the Safety Alert reproduced below)

Fuel tank

- The tank should be strapped or fixed into the boat so that it cannot move,
- The tank vent should be open
- The tank should contain sufficient fuel the planned activity (and some to spare)
- Fuel pipes are installed so that they cannot be trodden on or be a tripping hazard
- There are no fuel leaks

Outboard motor see also Safety Alert – Outboard Motor Safety Checks

- The motor should be securely fixed to the transom
- It should start easily and run smoothly
- The kill cord should be effective (the motor stops as soon as the kill cord is removed)
- The gear selector and speed control move easily and smoothly

Steering (if fitted)

- Remote (wheel) steering works correctly and there is no play in the system
- Steering cables are installed so that they cannot be trodden on or be a tripping hazard

Battery (if fitted)

- Battery is in a battery box that is fixed in the boat
- Battery cables are installed so that they cannot be trodden on or be a tripping hazard

Navigation Lights (if the boat is to be used other than in daylight)

- Lights work correctly (all-round white light and port & starboard navigation lights)
- Cables are installed so that they cannot be snagged, trodden on or be a tripping hazard

Mooring and other ropes

- These should be secured out of the water so that they cannot foul the propellor.

Safety equipment

- Carry the safety equipment specified by the club's risk assessment

Boat Handling

Knowledge of:

- Loading: effect on handling and performance, effect on balance and trim, CE plate and manufacturer's recommendation.
- Displacement boats: handling ahead and astern,

Understands:

- Crew members: minimum number in high-speed craft, keeping a look-out
- Awareness of other water users, including effect of wash
- Steering, controls, effect of current or tidal stream and wind
- High speed manoeuvring: planing, trim tabs and power trim
- Planing boats: propeller angle and immersion, shallow drive, high/low speed handling, tiller/console steering.

Is able to:

- Demonstrate the use of an appropriate length kill cord at all times
- Carry out low speed manoeuvres including turning in a confined area, effect of wind on bow and holding off.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the danger of flooding when going astern.
- Carry out high speed manoeuvres including S-turns and U-turns.
- Use of an anchor in an emergency

Rescue and Recovery

Man Overboard

Knowledge of:

- Recovery of man overboard

Is able to:

- Take immediate action
- Observe the man overboard
- Carry out the correct return with awareness of propeller
- Approach and recover the person in the water

Recovering a Rower from the Water into a Launch

Knowledge that

- Rowers who capsize are advised to climb on top of their inverted boats, as demonstrated in the British Rowing Capsize and Recovery video. This makes it easier for them to transfer into the launch than it would be if they were in the water.
- It can help if the launches carry boarding ladders or strops.
- There is a video here showing three ways to recover a casualty into a rib with two crew members. In all three examples the casualty is facing the launch.

- If the casualty is conscious,
    - deploy the anchor if necessary
    - stop alongside the casualty
    - turn off outboard engine
    - Assist the casualty into the launch
- The Anti-Cavitation plate on the outboard might be helpful as a step to allow a casualty to self-rescue over the transom.
- There are sometimes alternatives to helping the rower to climb into a launch.
    - have the rower sit on their inverted boat, or in the water holding onto their boat,
    - then tow the boat to the bank (this can be done by driving the launch in reverse so as to keep the propellor away from the casualty).
- If there are two crew members in the launch, then it may be possible to provide more support to the casualty but please remember the stability limitations of the launch. It does not help if the crew and the casualty are on the same side of the launch, and this causes the launch to capsize.
- Entry to the launch over the transom should always be considered.

Is able to

- Position the launch so that the casualty can climb into it.

Understands

- If a person in unconscious and in the water, then
    - immediately call for help (999 or VHF Ch16 MAYDAY),
    - keep their head above the surface even if recovery onboard is not possible.
- The launch may also need to
    - provide the casualty with some method of flotation (life-ring),
    - keep the casualty close and in contact and monitor their condition,
    - call nearby vessels for assistance, and
    - if possible, slowly make way to shore/shallows keeping the propellor away from the casualty.

Competencies required in specific circumstances

Specific actions that may be defined by the club

- Record the start of use of the launch
- Report any defects or issues
- Record the safe return of the launch

If the Launch is kept on land and launched when needed

Knowledge of

- • Use of a trailer or launching trolley
- • Number of persons required to launch/recover
- • Construction, width and condition of slipway
- • Care of trailer bearings, hitch, lashings, ties, lights and winch
- • Trailer parking

If the launch is moored alongside a landing stage, pontoon etc.

Understands:

- Preparation and use of painter, lines and fenders, attachment to boat, stowage under way

- Speed and angle of approach
- Wind effect
- Method of approach in tidal stream or current

Is able to

- approach and come alongside the landing stage or pontoon
- Make fast alongside
- Use springs (if the stream is strong)
- Leave the landing stage or pontoon – ahead or astern

If the launch is normally secured to a mooring buoy

Understands:

- Preparation of mooring warp
- Use of a boat hook
- Method of approach
- Crew communication
- Making fast
- Procedure when overshooting

Is able to:

- Approach and secure to a buoy

If the launch is normally anchored

Understands:

- Method of approach in various conditions
- Taking way off
- Crew communication
- Check holding
- Depth of water, holding ground, scope required

Is able to:

- Set and check the holding of the anchor
- Recover the anchor

Additional Competencies required if the launch is used on the sea

Knowledge of

- Consideration of launching and sea conditions, including hazards and obstructions.
- Steep/slippery slipways, beach launching, lee shores
- Types of anchor
- Stowage and attachment to boat
- Siting and use of fire extinguishers
- Pilotage and passage planning
- CG66 Small Craft Safety Scheme
- Sources of weather information
- Use and limitations of GPS
- Types of craft: advantages and disadvantages of different hull forms with respect to sea keeping ability
- Engines and drives: advantages and disadvantages of outboard, inboard and outdrive units, single and twin screws, choice and use of fuels
- Routine engine maintenance checks, basic fault diagnosis
- Close down procedure
-

Is able to:

- Use steering and hand bearing compasses
- Apply Section A on coastal waters
- Operate a VHF Marine Mobile Band Radio
- Apply the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea (the COLREGs)

Understands:

- Day shapes, flags, lights, and sound signals that may be used by shipping
- Charts, chart symbols, buoyage systems
- Tides and tidal streams
- Distress signals and the Mayday call
- Communication with other craft – and sound signals
- Disabled craft
- Emergency action preventing sinking
- Rope work