

# **Cork Boat Club**

## **Child Welfare Code of Conduct For Coaches / Volunteers / Adult Members**

### **Definition:**

Minor: A minor refers to any person who has not yet attained their 18th Birthday.

### **Rowing at Cork Boat Club**

Cork Boat Club is indebted to the countless number of volunteers who give their time to provide rowing opportunities for minors. Rowing provides an excellent pathway for minors to learn new skills, become more confident and maximize their own potential.

Through their participation, they can learn and develop life skills, have fun and enjoyment, make friends and experience life in a way that can enhance their personal growth throughout their lives.

People become involved in rowing for a variety of different reasons. They come from a variety of sporting backgrounds and take on various roles within clubs and other organizations. Yet irrespective of their role or responsibility, they all share the common goal of providing opportunities for Minors.

Our coaches, volunteers and adult members, parents and administrators all have an important role to play in promoting good practice at Cork Boat Club. They have, as their first priority, minor's safety and enjoyment of the sport.

Rowing should be safe, fun and ensure that all rowing and associated activity takes place in an environment of fairness. It should also ensure an environment where boundaries between adults and minors are very clear and respected by all.

## **Overview**

This policy was drafted by Cork Boat Club using the guidelines published by Rowing Ireland and leveraging guidelines from the Club's attendance at a recent Child Welfare Course.

It is introduced in the interests of child welfare for consideration and adoption by Cork Boat Club Committee, and subsequent implementation by all Cork Boat Club coaches, volunteers and adult members.

It is intended to set the standard for behavior with regard to child welfare for coaches, volunteers and adult members at Cork Boat Club and applies to all coaches, volunteers and adult members, with or without rowing qualifications, umpires, officials and anyone in charge of Minors or coaching at Cork Boat Club.

It is also intended to establish clear boundaries between coaches, volunteers and adult members of Cork Boat Club and minors so that there can be no confusion, in order to protect not only the minors but also the coaches, volunteers and adult members themselves.

The role of adult coaches and volunteers at Cork Boat Club is to guide, mentor and teach Cork Boat Club minor rowers and give them the benefit of their rowing experience. At no time, should adult coaches / volunteers view themselves as a friend of a minor rower, or allow a minor rower to consider the coach / volunteer as their friend.

The relationship between a coach / volunteer and minor rowers must follow socially accepted norms and boundaries of adult coach / child athlete relationships which should never be crossed or give cause to be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

Certain changes in how Cork Boat Club coaches, volunteers and adult members can henceforth communicate with Cork Boat Club rowing minors via social media, telephone and email are introduced in this policy and coaches / volunteers are asked to take note of these new guidelines.

Cork Boat Club requests that all coaches, volunteers and adult members comply strictly with these new rules for the safety and welfare of all.

## **Creating a Child-Centered Approach at Cork Boat Club**

Minors rowing at Cork Boat Club are encouraged to:

- Do their best – put in their best effort.
- Improve and develop their skills.
- Make friends.
- Play by the rules.
- Appreciate/accept everyone in the group, regardless of ability, race, religion, gender etc.

And they are entitled to:

- Be safe.
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect.
- Participate in rowing on an equal basis, appropriate to their ability and stage of development.
- Be happy, have fun and enjoy the sport.
- Make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through a proper and effective complaints procedure.
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality.
- Be listened to and to be believed.

Cork Boat Club coaches will aim to provide a safe and enjoyable environment where minors are placed at the centre of all activities.

In promoting good practice and creating a child-centered approach, our coaches and volunteers should

- Act as good role models at all times.
- Encourage and be positive during sessions so that participants leave with a sense of achievement.
- Set challenging, realistic but achievable goals.
- Plan and prepare each session appropriately and ensure proper levels of supervision.
- Ensure that all activities are inclusive and allow all to participate in an enjoyable way.
- Put the welfare and enjoyment of minors first and strike a balance between this and winning or achieving results.
- Enforce the principles of fair play treating each person equally, with dignity and respect and ensure that everyone plays within the rules.
- Be aware of the developmental stages and needs of those in rowing.
- Avoid over-training and over-emphasis on competition.
- Involve parents/guardians and other club members in what we do at the club.
- Be qualified and up to date with the latest coaching knowledge and skills.

- Encourage participation and fun.
- Promote the development of skills as opposed to winning at all costs.
- Emphasize and praise effort.
- Actively discourage rowers from abusing umpires, officials, crewmates or opponents.
- Be realistic with your expectations.
- Be aware of minor's feelings.
- Teach rowers to respect different cultures.

### **Best Practice Behavior in the Company of Minors at Cork Boat Club**

In keeping minors at the forefront of planning and practice, our coaches, volunteers and adult members can be confident that participants will enjoy their rowing experiences and that their actions are regarded as safe and in keeping with the principle that the welfare of minors is of paramount consideration.

Coaches and volunteers are given a position of trust by parents/guardians and the rowers themselves, and should show the highest standards of behavior when in the company of minors.

It is critical that Cork Boat Club coaches, volunteers and adult members follow an agreed code of good practice, and that parents & the club itself are satisfied that our coaches and volunteers are suitable to lead the activities undertaken.

In establishing and adhering to these guidelines we ensure not only a safe environment for minors but also a safe environment in which coaches and volunteers can operate.

Cork Boat Club coaches and volunteers should never:

- Exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward.
- Share a room with a minor alone on away trips.
- Travel to / from training or rowing competitions while alone in a vehicle with minors.
- Engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind, and/or make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child.
- Engage in any sexual activity with U18s.
- Use any form of modern social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Messenger, Email, Skype etc) to have direct one-to-one private conversations with a minor.
- Be a Facebook "friend" of any minor.
- Contact any minor via phone texting or calling.
- Use foul or abusive language when in the company of minors.
- Allow or sanction training on Cork Boat Club premises without coach/adult supervision being present.

- Use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a young person.
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the coaching of Minors.
- Discuss any topics with a minor which do not have a rowing context and which would be viewed as inappropriate topics of conversation with minors.
- Spend excessive amounts of time with minors when away from others.
- Take minors to their homes.

It is critical that all coaches and volunteers embrace the spirit and intent of these guidelines for their protection, for the protection of our minor rowers and for the club itself.

Failure to adhere fully to these specific requirements will disqualify coaches / club volunteers / committee members from membership of Cork Boat Club without exception.

### **Physical Contact between Coaches / Volunteers and Minors**

Certain types of coaching or techniques may require a 'hands on' approach, i.e., it may be necessary to support or physically touch a rower in order to physically demonstrate a particular technique. This should only happen by exception and should only occur when necessary and in an open and appropriate way in sight of others and with the knowledge, permission and full understanding of the rower concerned and in the company of another adult.

Certain situations or friendly actions can be misinterpreted, not only by the rower, but by others and could lead to allegations of sexual misconduct or impropriety. Therefore coaches and volunteers should be aware of, and avoid all situations which may give rise to this risk.

## **Contact via Facebook / Social Media / Telephone**

Cork Boat Club does not believe it is appropriate or safe to allow private contact between coaches / volunteers / adult members and minors who are members of our club, via Facebook, twitter or telephone.

Contact between the club and a minor rower re squad messages, training times etc can only be through the child's parents (via phone, text or Teamer) or general messages posted to the Cork Boat Club Facebook Group or posted to an official club squad Facebook page / group / forum, where messages and communications are visible and transparent to all.

At no time can coaches / volunteers engage in private one-to-one conversations or messaging on Facebook / text message etc with minor rowers.

Cork Boat Club requests that all coaches, volunteers and adult members can no longer be one-to-one "friends" with minor rowers from Cork Boat Club on Facebook or any other forms of social media.

Any coach / volunteer who is a Facebook "friend" of a minor rower, is requested to terminate that connection immediately in the context of this child protection policy.

All *Friend* requests on Facebook from a minor rower member to a Cork Boat Club coach / volunteer should be rejected or ignored by the coach / volunteer. No Cork Boat Club coach, volunteer or adult member should initiate a *Friend*-request to a minor member. Family connections are the only exception to this policy e.g. where a coach / volunteer has a known family connection to a Cork Boat Club minor rower.

Coaches and volunteers are advised to use "Teamer" group texts for communication of important squad messages to minor rower's parents or use the club Facebook group, or an official squad Facebook group.

Clarifications on this aspect of the Cork Boat Club Child Welfare Policy can be made by checking with the Male (Frank O'Leary) or Female (Karen Jeffers) Club Child Welfare Officers as appropriate.

Cork Boat Club takes the view that failure to comply with these aspects of the Child Welfare Policy places the child, the coach / volunteer and the club itself in potentially grave personal and legal circumstances and full compliance is requested.

**Responsibility to Report**

Any person, who has concerns about a minor’s welfare or who suspects that a minor is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, has a responsibility to report their concerns to the Health Service Executive (HSE), Social Services Department or An Garda Siochana.

Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviors are abusive and therefore reportable are advised that they can seek advice from the duty social worker in their local health board area where they will receive appropriate advice.

In cases of emergency where a minor appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the duty social worker is not contactable, call An Garda Siochana

Under no circumstances should a minor be left in a dangerous situation, pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.

Cork Boat Club also has two Child Welfare Officers – one male (Frank O’Leary) and one female (Karen Jeffers) who can be contacted at any time by coaches, volunteers, parents or minor rowers for consultation or advice.

***Child Welfare Policy Document Dated 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013***

***Approved by Cork Boat Club Committee***

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***John F. McCarthy, Chairman***

***Date:.....***