

Poole Harbour Canoe Club. January 2020

Leaders Guidelines - club paddling trips

These guidelines are intended for the Leadership Team, who manage sea trips, particularly with novice paddlers and if returning after dark.

Some guidelines only apply to large groups – the leader of a small and experienced group need only apply those that are relevant for safety.

Definitions:

Large group – typically 15 to 30 paddlers. But applies to any number that needs counting.

Small group – up to 8 paddlers– who can all be **seen present in a glance, without counting**

1) Leadership Team

A team of experienced paddlers are needed to manage a large group safely. The trip leader is responsible for appointing the team and clearly delegating responsibility. If possible one team member for every 6 paddlers. Always appoint a **rear watchman**, with good rescue skills, as a minimum.

2) Preferred Qualifications

Paddlers - at least BC Discover award (old one star) paddling standard. Minimum requirement for trips.

Assistant Leaders – Experienced, with the BC Explore award (old 2 star) standard or higher. Ideally FSRT.

Trip Leader – At least BC Kayak Award (old 3 star) or equivalent experience, ideally Sea Kayak Leader (equivalent to 4 star) and/or level 2 coach or above.

3) Notices (on club nights)

All trips to be posted on the blackboard at the hut, with Destination, Distance, Leader. Short and Easy paddles are to be noted, for new member information.

4) Kit.

The Leader must carry: Towline. Spare Paddle. Pump. Mobile phone or VHF radio.

Should carry: Shelter (bivvy bag, thermal blanket, or group shelter), 1st Aid Kit.

Assistant leaders should ideally have the same kit – **you may need several towlines!**

5) Briefings

The whole group must be briefed on the shore before the paddle. Those already paddling must land for the briefing. Introduce the leadership team and explain their roles. Make sure you check you are aware of any group members who may have a medical condition you need to be aware of PRIOR to launch.

Turn people away if necessary - if not suited, not fully equipped, or more than 6 per leader.

6) Buddies and Groups

Pair up novices with experienced paddlers – particularly if struggling on the water.

Use smaller groups for difficult stretches - but expect the groups to merge afterwards.

Dividing up very large groups – Each group is a separate trip – with a separate Leader, register, and count. If the groups merge on the water, then we lose count....

7) Registers

It is the trip leader's responsibility to make sure a plan is written and communicated to the group using the latest version of the trip form. The Leader or Coach carries the register on the water, ticks off all paddlers on safe return, and returns the form in the Boat House on return. Waterproof wallets and clipboards are kept in the club hut.

8) Counting – essential for bringing everyone back, but difficult to do...

Always check after the group moves off – it can get confused on the shore.

Always have rest points where the group gets together and can be counted.

Watch out for other paddlers passing by the group.

Keep a mental tally on the water – if people join or leave.

The Rear Watchman must also count.

Do the last count BEFORE returning to Lake Pier – **it is too late when you get home!**

9) Paddling in the Dark

Everyone must have lights - Turn people away if not equipped.

Carry spare lights

Keep the group closer together – be assertive. Rear watch is especially important.

Don't get run down by larger craft! – be seen. Keep out of the shipping channels.

10) Communications

Trip Leaders must carry a VHF radio and/or mobile phone, accessible whilst paddling.

Ideally Assistants are also equipped. Club radios will be kept in the hut – sign these out/in.

Leaders must call the duty officer if expecting to return after 10pm on a wed club night.

11) Rescues and Towing

Do not let the rest of the group become casualties as well – avoid escalation.

Delegate jobs – **the leader should not try and do everything.**

Towing – it's very hard to lead while towing....so delegate! Do not let group separate.

12) Someone is missing!

Use the whistle – repeated blasts.

Call the group together, check count, identify who is missing, and when.

Put the group in a safe place – it must not escalate!

Search, or retrace route.

Call Duty Officer and other groups – who may have seen the missing paddler.

13) Call 999 or the coastguard on VHF channel 16 when:

The casualty cannot be rescued by the group.

The problem escalates out of control – endangering more paddlers.

The missing person cannot be found, after searching and enquiring.

Medical emergency occurs, such as a heart attack, which clearly needs outside help.

On a club night – Inform the duty officer, after calling 999 or the coastguard.

The Trip Leader decides when to make the call after discussion with the duty officer if relevant – not the other paddlers or leaders.