

Coaching and Teaching in Clubs

It is vital for the future of our sport that participants are confident in the quality of activities offered by Swim England affiliated organisations. It is also very important that clubs, administrators, coaches and teachers have the peace of mind that they are covered by appropriate insurance.

The following statement and guidance covers Swim England's expectations of clubs in relation to the level of coaching and teaching in all disciplines in the club environment. This is also the standard that is required by our insurers in relation to a club's liability insurance.

Coaching

For club coaching and training sessions, Swim England strongly recommends that there be at least one active Level 2 coach on poolside who is responsible for the activities taking place. The club must ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken to determine the level of competency / qualifications required for those supervising the sessions.

Guidance

The nature of coaching and training across the aquatic sports covers a wide range of activities and it is impossible to issue a statement that covers all eventualities. The following is offered as guidance as to the standards expected by Swim England and agreed with our insurers. If this guidance is not followed then club insurance cover may be invalidated.

Swim England's expectation is that a club should have a minimum of one Level 2 coach on poolside who is responsible for the session. If they do not, it will be the responsibility of the club to demonstrate why they do not need a Level 2 coach for that session by undertaking a risk assessment and ensuring all relevant controls to mitigate any risks identified are in place.

Coaches are qualified and insured to coach within the scope of their qualification and any other relevant training that they have undertaken and successfully completed. Coaches must not deliver activities beyond the scope of their expertise and competence. This relates to poolside and dry-side training.

A Level 2 swimming teacher may be appropriate to run a swimming club training session provided that they deliver content within the scope of their qualification.

Having one Level 2 coach on poolside is viewed as a minimum expectation. There may be activities that require higher level coaches or more than one coach on poolside. In this instance, the club must ensure that the appropriate number and quality of coaches are present for the activity to be undertaken.

Further information and example

Coaching qualifications introduce principles and methods of coaching. It is expected that coaches will maintain and develop their knowledge through formal and informal learning and apply this in a suitable way with their athletes. This should always be done with athlete

welfare and safety at the forefront of thinking and the coach should be confident that she / he can apply knowledge safely and effectively. This should not exceed the competence level of the coach.

As an example, a Level 2 swimming coach may read about basic stretching techniques for post training cool-downs in a reputable resource and apply these with his / her athletes having assessed the risk and the competence of the athletes to perform the stretches safely and effectively.

The same coach should not however be developing a weight-training programme for athletes unless he / she has a relevant, recognised and valid qualification in this field and is competent to deliver this sort of activity.

It is impossible to describe all examples of this type, it is for the coach and the club to exercise their judgement having risk assessed activities to determine their suitability, ensuring that the safety and welfare of athletes is their primary concern.

Teaching

For clubs delivering Learn to Swim a minimum of a Level 2 teacher must be used and a Level 1 teacher(s) may teach under the supervision of the Level 2 teacher.

Guidance

The supervisory aspect relates to two main areas, i.e. safe practise and best practise and provides the opportunity for the Level 1 teacher to be mentored by the supervisory teacher.

The degree of supervision and support required will vary and should reflect a risk assessment carried out by the supervisory teacher/coach. The risk assessment will take into account a range of factors including:-

- Competence and experience of the Level 1 teacher
- Lifeguard provision – whether the supervising teacher is carrying out a dual role of teacher and lifeguard; whether the teacher being supervised holds an appropriate lifeguard qualification
- Design of the pool and where the teaching is taking place
- Ability of pupils being taught by the assistant and the supervising teacher

Ultimately, the responsibility for the group being taught by the Level 1 teacher rests with the supervising teacher. It is essential, therefore, that the supervising teacher is positioned close enough to the Level 1 teacher to be able to observe the teaching that is taking place and to intervene if this is considered necessary. It is essential, however, that any intervention required does not jeopardise the safety of the group being taught by the supervising teacher.

The role being carried out by the supervising teacher will impact upon the number of teachers/coaches being supervised at any one time. If the supervising teacher is not directly responsible for a group of swimmers she/he may supervise a maximum of four assistant teachers (subject to the risk assessment referred to above). However, if the supervising teacher is directly responsible for teaching a group then it is recommended that their supervision of other assistants be limited to a maximum of one and that the function of the lifeguard be carried out by a person not included in the teaching process.