



# Ring Rowing Club

## Anti-Bullying Policy and Guidance

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Rowing Ireland believes that a primary role of the sport is to provide individuals with the ability to develop to their full rowing potential. Essential to this is provision of a safe learning environment, without fear of being bullied. Bullying can result in psychological damage to those involved. It is an anti-social behaviour, which is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the sport of rowing. If bullying does occur this policy should outline the procedures for dealing with the situation. This policy applies to all within Rowing Ireland, Provincial Branches and Affiliated Clubs.

Ring Rowing Club is committed to ensuring that equity, where everyone is given the same opportunities, is incorporated across all aspects of its development. As such the principle of equality, where everyone is treated equally, will also be applied. This policy applies to Coaches and Club Leaders and to Athletes and others involved in Ring Rowing Club.

This is summarised as follows:

- Ring Rowing Club recognises sports equity is about fairness in sport, equality of access, recognising inequalities and taking steps to address them. It is about changing the culture and structure of sport to ensure it becomes equally accessible to everyone in society.
- Ring Rowing Club respects the rights, dignity and worth of every person and will treat everyone equally within the context of their sport, regardless of age, ability, gender, race, ethnicity, religious belief, sexuality or social/economic status.
- Ring Rowing Club is committed to everyone having the right to enjoy their sport in an environment free from threat of intimidation, harassment and abuse.
- Ring Rowing Club participants have a responsibility to oppose discriminatory behaviour and promote equality of opportunity.
- Ring Rowing Club will deal with any incidence of discriminatory behaviour seriously, according to Rowing Ireland disciplinary procedures.
- Ring Rowing Club will encourage all genders to participate as coaches, Club leaders and volunteers.

To reduce the additional vulnerability of young people, coaches will seek guidance on working with young people from external agencies, parents / guardians and the young people themselves.

## **BULLYING BEHAVIOUR WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**

Aims of this policy are:

- to create an ethos in which attending a rowing session is a positive experience for all members of the rowing community
- to make clear that all forms of bullying are unacceptable in sport
- to enable everyone to feel safe while at rowing and encourage reporting of any bullying
- to support and protect anyone who has been bullied and ensure they are listened to
- to help those who have displayed bullying behaviour to change their ways and to understand why change is needed
- to inform coaches, parents, and others relevant to the rowing community
- to ensure all members of the rowing community feel responsible for combating bullying

## **Definition of Bullying**

'The repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights or needs of one another or others.

The term bullying refers to a range of harmful behaviour, whether physical or psychological, and usually has the following four features:

- It is repetitive and persistent- though sometimes a single incident can have the same impact over time, as part of a continuous pattern. e.g. Racist bullying.
- It is intentionally harmful- though occasionally not consciously intended by the bully or bystanders.
- It involves an imbalance of power, leaving someone feeling helpless to prevent or stop it
- It causes distress, fear, loneliness and lack of confidence

Common characteristics include:

- Motivation to demonstrate power by creating fear and to gain 'respect' by peers.
- Often people who bully have themselves been bullied in the past. They may feel powerless and compensate by trying to intimidate others
- Bullying can be obvious, subtle, hidden, and difficult to prove.
- Males often use physical bullying and threats, but exclusion from groups is more common amongst females.
- Bullying can be by one person, one-on-one, by group against one or group on group.
- Bystanders often show acceptance or approval, and those on the receiving end can see them as part of the problem.
- Bullying in sport can be related to tensions in schools, groups, families and local communities.

## **Types of Bullying**

- Emotional - Unfriendly, exclusion, torment (e.g. hiding belongings, threats, rumours)
- Physical - Pushing, kicking, hitting, or any violence
- Racist - Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual - Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Verbal - Calling names, sarcasm, rumours
- Homophobic - Because of, or focussing on, sexuality
- Cyberbullying - All types of internet and email misuse, threats by text, calls by mobile phone and other devices, misuse of technology e.g. camera and video.
- Exclusion – less obvious. Person appears to be included but regularly excluded from group activity. Or given wrong information about activity, e.g. times of activity
- Extortion – regularly extracting something from someone without returning the "favour" e.g. borrowing money, snacks, drinks etc
- Gesture – a look, a signal, pulling a face, imitating the way someone walks, stands etc

## **Behaviour**

We need to learn that one person's teasing may, to another, be unkind and even cruel.

The way behaviour is received is important rather than what was intended.

A person can be bullying and subject to bullying, at the same time. Although some are vulnerable due to physical or social character, anyone can be bullied for any reason or for no reason. Individuals may resort to bullying for a range of reasons, and Rowing Ireland will support the bully as well as those who are bullied.

The rowing workforce – whether paid or voluntary - must be aware of how their actions are perceived and take care not to be accused of bullying. Such actions may include:

- Teasing about characteristics one has little or no control of.
- Inappropriate bad temper
- Ridiculing the actions of one in front of others
- Inconsistency in application of punishment or reward
- Physical intimidation
- Insults or swearing
- Belittling others on the workforce
- Non-constructive or unnecessarily personal criticism

### **People Involved**

There may be several people involved in incidents of bullying behaviour, directly or indirectly having seen or heard about what is happening and these may be adults and/or young people.

### **There are four typical types:**

1. The person displaying bullying behaviour can be an individual or a group, this may be an individual who is popular, or has discovered their behaviour evokes a reaction. Where a group is involved, they can be those most respected or thought to be part of a good team.

People who behave in a bullying manner may be recognised by their own behaviours, often where:

- An individual is being intentionally hostile, aggressive, seemingly be without reason
- An individual or group exert power over another individual or group, often where an imbalance of power already exists
- Satisfaction is gained from their bullying behaviour
- An individual purposely causes harm to another
- An individual repeats harmful behaviour to another

2. The person or group on the receiving end of the bullying behaviour can be known as the target. Often these are individuals who are different from others or stand out for a reason e.g. different culture, background, sexual orientation; someone with a disability; or a talented or less skilled individual.

3. Those individuals who are onlookers to bullying behaviour, often taking no part, are known as the backup and the audience. They provide the audience and the reaction to the bullying behaviour and may be afraid to speak up in case they become a target of the bullying behaviour.

4. There is usually an individual or group who know what is happening but consider it is not their problem; they don't get involved as they are not affected but don't do anything to stop the behaviour

#### **Where bullying behaviour involves an adult:**

The person in charge should ask to speak with the adult separately, away from any young people or other adults. The person in charge should describe the type of behaviour witnessed and the effect it is having on others, especially young people, highlighting the codes of conduct and the Anti-Bullying policy as reminders about acceptable behaviour. The adult should be asked to stop with such behaviour; if the behaviour is denied or does not change, the person in charge may need to issue an immediate sanction to protect young people or others.

#### **Where bullying behaviour involves young people only:**

The person in charge should talk with all the people involved in bullying behaviour as soon as they become aware of the issue and try to reach an agreement about what happened between those involved, highlighting the codes of conduct and the Anti-Bullying Promise as reminders about acceptable behaviour. An immediate sanction may be necessary to deal with the bullying behaviour.

### **Signs & Symptoms of Someone Being Bullied**

Initial impacts of bullying often go un-noticed, but may be apparent in mood changes and attitudes. Those bullied often develop insecurity and anxiety. This can cause vulnerability, low self-confidence and self-esteem. Reluctance to discuss problems through fear of consequences, is common, and the workforce should be alert to this.

These may indicate that a person is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travel to and from sessions, or changes to arrangements.
- Unwillingness or refusal to attend or participate, unexplained absence
- Deteriorating performance, poor concentration or enthusiasm
- Patterns of illness
- Unexplained mood or behavioural change, especially after absences
- Visible anxiety or stress: stammers, withdrawing from activities, etc.
- Spontaneous out of character comments about others
- Stealing or increased requests for money
- Unexplained bruising, cuts, or clothing damage
- Reluctance to discuss distress

### **Impact of Bullying Behaviour**

Bullying behaviour has an impact on everyone involved. For the person who is the target of bullying behaviour the effects can be felt psychologically and physiologically.

The person who is responsible for the bullying behaviour whilst often a popular person amongst their peers may also show signs of low self-esteem, show a lack of empathy and may have been labelled as a 'troublemaker' in the past.

If the person who is behaving in a bullying manner is an adult, other young people may be afraid to speak out because of the consequences, i.e. they may be afraid of not being picked for activities or left out of team selections.

## **Roles & Responsibilities within Rowing Ireland**

Anyone who is a target of bullies should not suffer in silence, but try to speak out, to end suffering by themselves and maybe others.

Everyone involved in rowing should work together to combat and, hopefully to reduce and put an end to bullying

Employees will:

- Foster in rower's self-esteem, self-respect, and respect for others
- Show by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect from all our participants
- Discuss bullying with our rowers, so that each one learns about the damage to the bullied and the bully, and discuss the importance to report any bullying when it happens
- Be alert to signs of distress and other indications of bullying
- Listen to those who have been bullied, take them seriously and act to support & protect.
- Report suspected bullying to the appropriate person on the organisation.
- Follow up any complaint from an individual or friend about bullying, and report back promptly on any actions taken
- Deal with observed bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures

Rowers will:

- Avoid getting involved in any kind of bullying, even if it makes you unpopular
- Step in to protect anyone from being bullied, unless it is unsafe for you.
- Report to the person in charge or their assistant, any bullying seen or suspected, to avoid secrecy and to help stop further instances

Parents/Carers, Coaches and Assistants will:

- Watch for distress or unusual behaviour, which might indicate bullying
- Advise their rowers to report any bullying to the person in charge, and explain the dangers of the spread of bullying to themselves and others
- Advise their rowers not to react violently to any form of bullying
- Be supportive to their rowers, reassuring them that suitable action will be taken
- Keep a written note of any reported bullying
- Inform the organisation of any suspected bullying, even if it is other rowers who are involved.
- Co-operate with the rowing community. If your rowers are accused of bullying, try to get the truth, explain the implications of bullying, both for the bullied and the bullies.

Parents and the Club Children's Officer should be informed of the issue by the person in charge and the way it was dealt with including any action necessary if the behaviour continues. It is better to sort issues immediately and quickly and we expect parents and adults to be supportive of this process. The person in charge should also observe the group/individuals to ensure the bullying behaviour does not continue.

The person in charge may also submit a disciplinary report to the complaints and disciplinary committee of the Club or to the **Rowing Ireland** Designated Children's Officer

## **Prevent Bullying from Taking Place**

### **Rowing Ireland**

- Through preparation and publication of bullying guidance – hopefully awareness of bullying will increase and ensure implementation of the procedures to deal with any bullying incidents and reports.

### **Clubs**

- Through participation in any Anti-Bullying events available.
- Through meetings of the whole club/organisation with announcement of a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying, and to dispel the idea that bystanders are innocent when bullying occurs.
- Through the organisation's policy for use of mobile phones, to include the reporting of inappropriate use to the police.
- Through anti-bullying information displayed in clubs.
- By role modelling of appropriate behaviour towards others by complete workforce.
- By discussion of procedures with beginners as part of their induction process.
- Through use of senior rowers as mentors with all beginners.
- By having the person in charge of rowing available to all rowers as a first point of contact.

### **Rowing crew/squad**

- Through learning social skills of negotiation, arbitration and intervention, and learning to consider issues of difference and diversity.
- Through learning what Cyberbullying is and how to prevent yourself becoming a victim- not making personal information public, not giving out passwords, and not responding to threatening or rude messages. Learn also what to do if cyberbullied- including keeping messages for proof, using online protection services, telling parents or friends.

## **Dealing with Incidents of Bullying Behaviour**

The aim in the process below is to support the person suffering the bullying behaviour, and to focus on changing the behaviour of those displaying bullying behaviour.

- Be vigilant and take immediate action. If you observe or become aware of, an alleged bullying incident record details, and pass these to a committee member.
- The person in charge, will investigate carefully and considerately by interviewing all those concerned. The information provided will be recorded.
- Following investigation, the person in charge and their assistant will decide on an appropriate means to best support the person suffering, including altering their behaviour.
- The action taken will be recorded.
- All bullying records will be attached to records for the rower, and the committee will be kept informed as appropriate and necessary.
- A date for review of the situation will be set with all those involved.

### **Where bullying behaviour involves an adult**

The behaviour of an adult may be dealt with through an informal complaints process. However, where a young person is involved the Club Children's Officer should talk with the young person and parent to find out what happened. The Club Children's Officer role is to support the young person in ensuring the matter is dealt with appropriately. An informal process is preferable to the formal process, where a resolution can be reached to the benefit of any young person involved. The processes are detailed in the Rowing Ireland Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.

### **Where bullying behaviour involves young people only:**

If an issue has not been resolved or continues after an attempt to resolve the behaviour at the time, or a report is received after an event the information should be passed to the CCO. Often it will require a coach or other person in charge, e.g. a team manager and the CCO to work together to resolve an issue.

The CCO will need to know who is involved i.e. the person or group who have allegedly behaved in a bullying manner, the target of the behaviour and any others who may have been present at the time, i.e. the bystanders.

The bullying behaviour should be assessed based on:

- Information from target of the behaviour (individual or group)
- How long the bullying behaviour has been going on
- How often the bullying behaviour is happening
- Is there an intention to cause harm to the target(s) of the bullying behaviour?

### **How an Alleged Bullying Incident Should be Handled.**

Three steps to deal with incidents of bullying are:

1. To interview the person who has been bullied and the person who has displayed bullying behaviour – separately.
2. To provide support for those individuals
3. To monitor and review the situation.

When a bullying incident is reported, remember:

- Each case will be different and the solution must be tailored to suit the problem;
- To remain impartial – do not seek to attribute blame;
- To help all individuals involved to gain insight into their behaviour;
- That both behaviours have been 'learned' from life experience, so with support they can be challenged and changed to acceptable behaviours

### **Step 1 – Interviewing the individuals involved**

#### The person alleged to have been bullied:

- a. Listen to the victim's story in a calm non-judgemental way

- b. Indicate from the start that the incident is being taken seriously
- c. Inform Designated Safeguarding/Children's Officer
- d. Allow the victim to explore their feelings about the incident
- e. Do not attempt to find out all facts as this may increase stress
- f. Discuss and agree how they might be supported. Involve them in achieving a constructive solution
- g. Agree acceptable targets for reaching the solution
- h. Agree a review date
- i. Monitor the situation with workforce members in an unobtrusive way.

#### The person who allegedly displayed the bullying behaviour

- a. Interview the person along with any bystanders
- b. Do not disclose information sources – respect confidentiality
- c. State that all incidents of inappropriate behaviour are taken seriously
- d. Clarify that the group has a problem and they need a constructive solution
- e. Facilitate them working to set agreed targets for the group
- f. Make the group aware that progress will be monitored and appropriate action taken

### **Step 2. Provide support for the individuals involved**

#### The person alleged to have been bullied

- a. Identify a committee member who will act a point of contact for the person
- b. Find a reliable friend or group of friends who will accompany the person and report any incidents
- c. Identify times and places of bullying and minimise opportunities by supervision
- d. Provide advice to the workforce on preventing bullying e.g. seating arrangements
- e. Work with the person to develop self-esteem and social skills

#### The person who allegedly displayed the bullying behaviour

- a. Communicate clear expectations of behaviour
- b. Communicate and act on any breach of disciplinary policies.
- c. Work with the person to improve their social skills

#### For the committee member

- a. Contact the person involved and if appropriate, a parent. (they may request that parents are not contacted, and interviewer should then use discretion, and note on interview form.)
- b. Enlist support to ensure awareness and agreement of targets set.
- c. Include supporters in monitoring and review process.

### **Step 3 – Conduct a review meeting. (After suitable period e.g. 3-6 weeks.)**

- a. Interview all those involved to ascertain level of progress.
- b. If targets are not achieved, set new targets
- c. Monitor and review until targets achieved.

### **Summary for Immediate Response**

The person in charge of the group should always try to stop bullying behaviour as quickly as possible

- Young people should not be forced to shake hands with each other
- If an adult is involved in the bullying behaviour this should be stopped immediately
- Parents should always be told – this may happen after the behaviour has been sorted out
- Club Children’s Officer should be told, the CCO should not need to do anything unless bullying behaviour continues
- Reaching a solution straightaway is usually better for all young people involved
- All those working with young people should encourage the group to follow the Codes of Conduct
- Only those involved, their parents and the CCO need to be told about what has happened; the CCO will note the behaviour, the actions and the outcome – this record will remain with the CCO.

## **Use of Sanctions**

If bullying behaviour cannot be resolved through the No Blame (see below) approach the issue should be sent forward as a disciplinary matter through the correct process to the Complaints and Disciplinary Committee. The Complaints and Disciplinary Committee will deal with the matter through the Rowing Ireland Complaints and Disciplinary procedures and may issue sanctions depending on their findings

## **Restorative approach with young people**

The preferred method to deal with reports of bullying behaviour is the No Blame approach to resolve the behaviour. This can help to restore or repair a previously positive relationship and allows the young people involved to consider their feelings, their behaviour and the effects of bullying behaviour on everyone.

## **The No Blame Approach**

The NO BLAME approach seeks a resolution for young people involved in bullying behaviour whilst maintaining their relationship within their peer group. Young people involved often want certain behaviours to stop, without a need for punishments to be imposed. This approach is often difficult for adults to reconcile, often wanting punishments to be handed out. The guidance should be taken from young people involved.

The NO BLAME approach encourages young people to recognise the impact of their behaviour and to take responsibility for changing it. Using this approach, a previous relationship between individuals or within a team may be re-established and this is often the preferred option for the young people involved.

The ethos behind the NO BLAME approach is to:

- EXPLAIN the problem, i.e. that someone seems to be unhappy, seems to be picked on etc. and explain how that person is feeling; this should not accuse anyone.
- ASK for ideas as to how to help this person
- LEAVE the individual/group to put their ideas into practice
- MEET with the individuals involved to check how the behaviour has changed

- SHARE the responsibility of changing the behaviour and encouraging everyone to speak to a trusted adult if there is bullying behaviour in the club

The NO BLAME approach does not attempt to get 'confessions', it seeks to get an acknowledgment of behaviour and provides an opportunity for young people to change hurtful behaviour.

There may be issues that are not resolved through the NO BLAME approach, where behaviour continues.

Bullying behaviour is a breach of a code of conduct and may have to be dealt with through a disciplinary process. However, the outcome for young people is far better when issues can be resolved through such a restorative practice.

### **Applying the NO BLAME Approach**

Step 1: Meet with young person who is the target of the bullying behaviour

If there has been an incident of bullying behaviour talk to the young person who is the target of the behaviour. Find out who is involved and what the young person is now feeling.

Try asking the following questions:

- What was the behaviour that has caused upset?
- Are you physically hurt and/or how are you feeling?
- Who was involved in the behaviour, i.e. was it in your own peer group?
- When and where did it happen?

Actively listen and advise the young person of the next steps that will be taken

Step 2: Meet with all involved - including those who appear responsible for the bullying behaviour, some of the backup and audience participants. This does not necessarily need to be a whole squad. Meet the individuals informally or if meeting with the group, it will be necessary to get everyone's points of view and their suggested solutions.

Step 3: Explain the problem at the meeting i.e. it appears there is something going on in general terms without apportioning blame, e.g. you might suggest the target of the bullying behaviour doesn't seem to be happy, and you have heard they have been called names/left out/picked on etc.

Ask questions like:

- What do you think they are feeling?
- How would you feel if it was you?
- What would you do if it happened to you?
- What could we do to see it does not happen again?

Do not use specific details of the incident or allocate blame; however, explain how that person might be feeling e.g. loneliness, feeling left out, being rejected, laughed at.

Listen and watch out for reactions and pick up on comments without accusing or isolating anyone. This is an opportunity to find out how others feel about bullying behaviour.

Step 4: Ask the group/individual for their ideas. The final outcome of the meeting is to seek suggestions that would make a target of the bullying behaviour feel happier.

Use phrases like: “if it were you what would help you ....”, to encourage a response.

Listen to all suggestions and note them, especially positive responses as these will help create an environment for the young people involved to work together.

Agree actions that will create a positive atmosphere and resolve the behaviour.

Step 5: Leave it to the group or individual. Hand the issue to the group to take the suggested actions forward and arrange to meet again a certain time frame. The responsibility is now with the group of individuals to put the suggested actions in place within that time.

Step 6: Meet them again. Meet everyone, including the person who had been responsible for the bullying behaviour and the target of the behaviour; discuss how things are going and check if there have been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and keeps everyone involved in the process. The Anti-Bullying Policy should be reinforced regularly. This encourages a team or squad to look after each other and that bullying behaviour will not be tolerated. The parents of the young people involved should be informed of the actions taken.

Step 7: Share the responsibility. Meet with the wider group or team to discuss what should be in place to help prevent further incidents and what impact bullying behaviour may have on everyone, e.g. less free time or social activities, or other actions might need to be imposed as a preventative measure. Any action should be used in the spirit of prevention, not as a punishment.