



Safety and Welfare Guidelines for Triathlon Clubs and Coaches



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Throughout these guidelines, the pronouns he, she, him, her, etc are used and intended to be inclusive of both men and women. Furthermore the terms athlete, participant, individual and triathlete are interchangeable. It is important in triathlon, as elsewhere, that men and women have equal status and opportunities

1. Introduction

Aim of these Guidelines

These guidelines have been developed to promote good practice for clubs and coaches that is safe, effective, enjoyable and appropriately challenging for all triathletes being coached. The guidance provided to triathlon coaches covers safety and welfare issues that should be considered when conducting triathlon based group sessions or prescribing training for individual triathletes¹. They also assist organisations² and coaches in the formulation of relevant health and safety policies.

Using these Guidelines

This document is offered as a guide to what is considered to be good practice. Each coach or organisation that regularly conducts triathlon related activities with groups or provides individual training prescription should produce their own health and safety and risk assessment policies taking these guidelines into account, together with any other specific requirements from their facility managers, or local authorities. Policies should be in writing and all people assisting with the coaching activity must be fully aware of what they are and how to implement them if necessary.

The nature of coaching and coaching environments is such that often a subjective opinion will need to be adopted, where a considered balanced view of best practice guidance (these guidelines) and common sense is required. Coaches and club session organisers should always hold the safety and welfare of participants and others who may be affected by the session in the forefront of their minds when making decisions about session provision.

It should be noted that qualified coaches who do not adhere to the safety and welfare guidance will, by their action/inaction be in breach of the coaches' code of ethics.

This document should be read in conjunction with other British Triathlon policies:

- *Code of Conduct for Triathlon Coaches.*
- *Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults.*
- *British Triathlon Rule Book.*
- *British Triathlon Event Organisers Guide.*
- *ASA-Triathlon England Organised Open Water Swimming Guide.*

All these guidelines and documents are subject to regular review and will be updated on a regular basis; club officials and coaches should ensure they review this document on a regular basis. The version and date can be found in the footer of each page.

If you have any problems understanding or applying these guidelines to your coaching please contact your Home Nation Coach Education Department.

¹ Only applicable to Level 3 coaches or above.

² Organisations in this context include clubs, Local Authority leisure facilities and schools.

2. Coaching Roles and Remits

It is the coaches' responsibility to be aware of their own level of training and of the qualification that they have obtained, in conjunction with their level of experience in a given environment. For any British Triathlon coaching qualification to be valid, the coach must hold insurance cover equal to or more than that offered by membership Home Nations. Further details on Coaching Insurance can be found in membership section of the Home Nation website.

The following table outlines a list of the coaching qualifications delivered by British Triathlon along with a brief description.

Coaches should ensure that they are qualified to operate at the level and in the environment where they are coaching. When working in a discipline specific environment, coaches are restricted to coaching as outlined by their coaching qualification.

If coaches are unsure about their coaching environments, then they should contact their Home Nation Association Coaching Department at the earliest opportunity for clarification.

Table 1: Qualification and Role Descriptors for British Triathlon Coaches

Coaching Qualification	Coaches Role	Qualification Description / Notes
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist more qualified coaches delivering aspects of their coaching sessions normally under direct supervision. Prepare for, deliver and review pre-prepared coaching sessions incorporating basic triathlon techniques. Coaching groups only 	<p>Level 1 triathlon coaches are first and foremost assistant coaches to more senior/ qualified coaches under direct supervision¹; however where a more senior coach is not present then Level 1 triathlon coaches are able to coach independently for 1 in every 4 sessions using pre-prepared swimming, cycling and running activity sessions.</p> <p>This should either be by using Level 1 coaching cards, OR appropriate sessions prepared by an appropriately qualified triathlon coach (i.e. Level 2 or Level 3).</p> <p>When there is a situation where a new club is being established or there is a change in coaching personnel, the level 1 coach can coach independently for up to 4 months from qualification.</p>
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan, deliver and evaluate coaching sessions incorporating basic and intermediate triathlon techniques. Coaching groups only² 	<p>Level 2 triathlon coaches are trained and qualified to plan and deliver a series of structured and progressive sessions incorporating basic and intermediate skills techniques, independently of a higher level coach.</p>
Open Water Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan, deliver and evaluate coaching sessions in an open water environment 	<p>For Level 2 coaches who completed a course that commenced before October 2011 there is no Open Water cover within their qualification. See section 6 for more information on open water coaching.</p>
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan, implement, analyse and revise annual coaching programs for individual triathletes through individualised training prescription. Plan, deliver and review coaching sessions incorporating advanced discipline specific skills, techniques and tactics. Coaching groups and individuals¹ 	<p>Level 3 triathlon coaches are qualified to prescribe training programmes to individuals.</p> <p>Level 3 coaches are also able to coach the full range of discipline specific skills, techniques and tactics, as outlined in the coach education course technical syllabus.</p> <p>Training prescription should be based on the triathletes current and potential performance, needs and aspirations, in order to achieve specific training/ competition goals.</p>

¹ Direct supervision can be defined as a situation where the more senior / qualified coach is on-site, with sight and sound of the assistant coach.

² See Section 9 on coaching individuals.

Insurance during Qualification

Trainee coaches will be insured to deliver sessions/ training programmes as outlined, during their qualification period. Please refer to the qualification criteria for further information. Level 1 triathlon coaches are insured for delivering sessions for four months following their qualification. They can then coach one session in four on their own.

Swim Teaching

A triathlon coach is not qualified to *teach* people the fundamentals of being able to swim, which includes but not limited to floating/ gliding, being able to perform a range of strokes with basic technique and feel confident with being out of their depth in deep water as well as being able to head under the water and breathe. The swim component of triathlon coaching is focused on technique improvement of the Freestyle (front crawl) stroke only. Any person who cannot 'swim' should be referred to a swim teacher to gain the key fundamental competencies of swimming.

Level 1 Assistant Coach – Changes of Insurance Cover

Following reviews of our coaching structure alongside a wider insurance review, it was identified that our level 1 coaching remit was not in line with the sports coaching industry. Our insurance company has raised this as an increasing risk, due to the number of coaches and sessions being run. So far, there has been no recorded action against a triathlon coach; however there have been incidents that *could* have lead to legal action against coaches.

The level 1 is and always has been primarily an **assistant coach role**. In the late 1990's when the coaching structure was formed, the role was given a remit to allow clubs and the sport to grow and develop. In essence this allowed a level 1 coach to deliver via set of cards or indirect supervision; however, this was unquantified and effectively allows a level 1 to coach without supervision indefinitely.

We also need to recognise that when the remit was designed there were only around 40 level 1 coaches qualified each year, that figure is now around 400 per year.

Whilst the role remains an assistant coach, we have recognised the need for the coach to work without supervision at certain times:

- When a new club is formed
- When the lead coach is unavailable sick/holidays

The revised remit is as follows and officially comes into effect on the 1st January 2015

- **Deliver up to 1 in 4 coached sessions independently**
- **When a new club is set up or replacing a lead coach, the level 1 can coach independently for up to 4 months from qualification**

It is important to clarify that this will only affect coached sessions, and the wider remit of the Level 1 assistant coach is unchanged.

We appreciate that this change may be a challenge for some clubs to meet. We have negotiated with our insurers a period of transition, the first stage of this is till the end of 2014. During this period we will be working with clubs to identify how we can support them. The Home Nations will review feedback and continue discussions with the insurance company. We will be looking for clubs to have clear action plans in place and towards the end of 2014 we will be able to advise the next phase in this process.

3. Important Considerations for Coached Sessions

General Points

The following points are relevant to all coaches, irrespective of level of qualification or whether they are coaching groups or individuals.

A. Prior to Coaching Session

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be carried out for every venue used during coaching sessions, and should be re-assessed if a different discipline is being carried out. The purpose of a risk assessment is to identify hazards that could cause harm, assess the risks that may arise from those hazards and decide on suitable measures to eliminate, or control the risks.

- A hazard is anything that has the potential to cause harm to people.
- Risk is the likelihood that the harm from a hazard is realised and the extent of it.

In most instances, the Lead Coach will have thought about safety requirements and will have documented their findings through the risk assessment process. By documenting safety procedures, policies and practices, coaches are able to establish a health and safety audit trail. This will support the coach in the event of an incident by demonstrating a responsible and proactive approach to managing safety. It will also provide a written template for the coaches of future sessions, particularly club training sessions where other coaches may organise and deliver the training.

When operating in a managed facility, the risk assessments should take account of and adhere to venue specific *Normal Operating Procedures (NOP)*, *Emergency Action Plans (EAP)* and Health and Safety Policy. Where an employer, manager of a facility or organiser's policy or actions cause an unsafe coaching environment then the coach should raise this issue with that individual and seek to resolve the issue prior to the session. If it cannot be resolved satisfactorily then the coach should consider cancelling the session on safety grounds.

Risk assessments should be reviewed prior to each session and should be assessed dynamically during a session.

Guidance and template risk assessment documents are available through Coach Education provision on the Coaches Hub online resource.

First Aid Provision

The coach should ensure that they and attendees of sessions have access to appropriate first aid provision. In a managed facility this is likely to fall under the remit of the facility staff (e.g. lifeguard or duty manager at a leisure centre). However this should not be presumed, and it is important to identify who this individual is through the risk assessment process. In a non-managed facility the coach will need to ensure access to a first aider and first aid equipment appropriate to the environment they are working in. The first aider can be a member of the group, helper, parent, facility/duty manager. The coach can also be the first aider; however this is not considered best practice. In either circumstance access to an appropriately stocked first aid kit is required.

Definition of a First Aider:

An individual who has attended a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) approved course of training (minimum of 1 day, competence based assessments delivered by a recognised training provider (e.g. St John's Ambulance). Further information visit <http://www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/>

Medical Attention

It is important to note that it is **not** the responsibility of the coach to diagnose or treat any participant with injury or illness. However they should direct participants to seek appropriate medical attention at the earliest possible opportunity.

Safety Provision (Lifeguarding)

In some environments, such as indoor swimming pools and open water venues additional safety provision is required over and above the coaches present. See [Section 5 for more detail](#).

Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

An EAP detailing what actions the coach and participants will take to maintain participant safety and welfare in the case of an incident occurring should exist and be accessible to all coaches. Managed facilities should have their own procedures which the coach should be familiar with. The coach should also have their own EAP, which will work in conjunction with the facility EAP, and will usually detail how to assist venue staff in ensuring safety. For non-managed facilities the coach will need to detail actions in case of a wide range of issues, a non-exhaustive list includes:

- Minor Injuries.
- Major Injuries.
- Missing persons.
- Need to evacuate due to fire or other emergencies.
- Structural or lighting failure.
- Adverse weather conditions.
- Contacting and directing emergency services to session location.

Participant Information

- 1 Participants under the age of 18 must provide the coach with a *Parental Coaching Consent Form*. Any participant failing to submit a form signed by a parent or guardian should not be allowed to participate in the coached session.
- 2 Coaches should collect and retain appropriate details regarding each participant being coached including name, address and emergency contact, preferably through the use of a registration form or consent form for participants under the age of 18. The information should be stored securely and appropriately ensuring confidentiality of information is maintained, under the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 3 To facilitate safe participation, coaches should also know about any specific health requirements or medical conditions of the participants. Where possible this information should be sought in advance of the coaching session/training prescription through the completion of a registration form or a coaching consent form. However, it may be necessary to talk directly with the participant and/or parent/guardian before the session.
As a triathlon coach you are not qualified to give advice on whether an athlete's medical condition prevents them from training. If a participant does not know, they should be referred to their GP (Doctor). In most cases a person will know what they should and shouldn't do, and the coach should simply be aware of this.
- 4 A register of attendance must be completed for every coaching session. When coaching triathletes under 18 years old, each triathlete is to be signed out on the register by a parent/guardian in the presence of the coach.

B. During Coaching Sessions

1. The content of the coaching session must be planned with due consideration for the ability and age of the triathletes in the group, as well as the venue size and surface conditions. A dynamic assessment of this may be required at the outset of sessions.
2. A safety briefing should be conducted prior to every coached session to ensure that participants and others involved in the session have the relevant health, safety and emergency information regarding the session. Relevant health and safety information might include:
 - an explanation of specific safety issues and hazards of the venue (i.e. identified during the risk assessment)
 - an explanation of any specific safety or operational requirements associated with the session or specific activities in the session
 - the purpose of the session (e.g. the session goal)
 - how to safely perform the discipline specific techniques required for the session
 - a reminder of the session rules/code of conduct
 - advise/reminder about the relevant safety and emergency procedures and how to obtain first aid if required;
3. When coaching a session that includes participants under the age of 18, those participants are the coaches responsibility from when the session commences until the parent/guardian collects them at the end of the session. Young participants are expected to remain in the session from beginning to end unless they have made prior arrangements to be picked up early.
4. The coach should adopt positions when coaching where they take an appropriate balance between being able to observe and feedback to participants, whilst maintaining a safe environment. Where there is a conflict between these two elements, safety should take precedence.
5. If a participant has to leave early or is being collected by someone other than the parent/guardian, the parent/guardian must advise the coach of the details of the arrangement including who will be collecting the individual and when. The coach should also agree departure times and procedures with parents/guardians before the session commences.
6. It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that the group is adequately supervised. The coach: participant ratios outlined in this document provides a maximum ratio to ensure a safe coaching session. However, coaches must only coach the number of triathletes they feel confident and competent to deal with, within the recommendations. The coach: participant ratio should be sufficient to enable meaningful support to be given to any participant who requires more support. Younger children, beginners and those with disabilities or special needs, for example, may require extra assistance as required.
7. While the coach: participant ratios provide a maximum ratio to ensure an effective and safe coaching session, it is recommended that when coaching young athletes a minimum of two responsible adults (with at least one person holding a valid coaching qualification at an appropriate level) are present at all times to ensure an adequate level of supervision. This means that in an emergency one adult can stay with the group while the other can go for help or deal with the emergency without having to consider supervision of the rest of the group. It can also address any concerns about one-to-one contact with young children.
8. In some instances it will be necessary to arrange for additional help during a session. The coach might arrange for another qualified coach to attend the session or ask another responsible individual such as a club official or parent of one of the participants to assist in the session. It is important that anyone enlisted to help in a session is suitably qualified for the role and tasks they are required to undertake. It is good practice to have a clear and accurate record of everyone involved in the delivery of the session. This will ensure the coach is able to identify who was in attendance at a particular session should an issue be raised at a later date that requires this information. This person should be present at the safety briefing held prior to coaching sessions.
9. It is strongly recommended by the British Triathlon Federation that a coach **should not** take part in the session as a participant, unless this is unavoidable. ***Coaching requires observation and feedback and a continual awareness of the bigger picture in terms of dynamic risk assessment; all these elements are significantly compromised by the coach taking part in a session.***

C. Post Coaching Session

Recording Accidents and Injuries

It is essential to record any accidents or injuries that occurred during a session. When documenting the occurrence of an injury or illness the coach should:

- Briefly note it in the relevant box on the session plan.
- Record the full details on an Accident and Illness Record Form or in an accident record book.
- Notify Managed facility Duty Manager as they may need to document the injury also.

Recording these details will help to identify any trends or re-occurring accidents as well as areas that could be addressed to improve safety. This record will be vital in the unlikely event of legal action. A copy of the accident report form should be submitted to the Club Secretary/ Welfare Officer if it occurred during a club session. The coach should always keep a copy for his or her own records.

Triathletes completing individual prescribed training programmes should record accidents, injuries or illnesses that occur during training on their training diary and inform the coach at the earliest opportunity. The coach should always keep a copy for his or her own records. Coaches should deal with each accident, injury or illness appropriately, which will normally involve a recommendation to cease training or to reduce the training load until the triathlete has recovered from their injury. Where appropriate the coach should encourage the triathlete to seek medical advice.

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4. Coach: Participant Ratios and Age Guidelines

These coaching ratios have been established to provide the coach with a **maximum** suggested ratio to ensure a safe and effective coaching session. They should be considered in conjunction with other safety ratios and guidance such as lifeguard cover. Furthermore, these are recommendations and coaches at the respective coaching level should only coach the number of participants they feel comfortable with, this may also vary depending on the level of age, competency of the group, the coaching environment and the weather conditions.

Table 2: Recommended coach: participant ratios for Adults

Sessions delivered	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Pool Based Swimming sessions e.g. managed Local authority pool	1:10	1:20	1:20
Cycling (traffic free) e.g. playground, grass field, car park closed to vehicles	1:15	1:15	1:20
Cycling (public highway)	1:7 (as an assistant ONLY)	1:7	1:7
Running sessions	1:15	1:20	1:20

Open Water Swimming

The ratio of participants to coaches will be dependent on safety provision (lifeguards safety craft) and a suitable risk assessment related to the environment, but this should not exceed the above ratios for swimming.

Coaching Children and Vulnerable Adults

Any coach working with athletes under the age of 18 on a regular basis, should hold a valid Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check (previously CRB - Criminal Records Bureau), and should adhere to the wider guidelines for working with children and vulnerable adults.

A coach should consider the environment/ activity/ support/ numbers when working with this group. All of these areas may have to be adapted to create safe and effective sessions.

Please refer to all other sections for more information with regards to guidelines for children and young people.

5. Coaching Pool-based Swimming Sessions

In addition to standard athlete safety and welfare guidance in previous section, information specific to swimming environments is detailed in this section.

Safe Supervision

Most indoor and outdoor swimming pools operate as managed facilities. In these circumstances the venue will have their own *Normal Operating Procedures* (NOP) which will indicate the safe ratio of lifeguards to participants. In these circumstances venue specific guidance on lifeguarding ratios should be adhered to in order that an appropriate level of safety covered is provided. Wherever possible it is advisable to agree with the facility to provide lifeguard cover.

It is recommended that everybody providing lifeguard duties (facility staff) – should hold an appropriate lifesaving award or qualification, such as *National Pool Life Guard Qualification* (NPLQ), see Royal Life Saving Society for further information <http://www.rlss.org.uk/>

Whilst we would recommend that clubs get full lifeguard cover for sessions as the costs are not prohibitive, we will accept the *Reach & Rescue Award* under the following conditions, however this should be seen as an **interim solution** until full lifeguard provision has been found:

- That a copy of the qualification certificate, including date of certification, is sent to your HN Regional Manager
- That a copy of Risk Assessment and EAP for the venue/session is sent to your HN Regional Manager

Coaches should not operate in a dual role of lifeguard and coach, as the attention requirements for each is too great to be able to do both roles simultaneously.

Where the pool is in *shared use* and clearly divided between coached and recreational swimming activities, appropriate lifeguard cover must be provided by the facility. This is not the responsibility of the triathlon coach.

Participants and Ability

The factors to be considered include:

- The age of participants.
- What the swimming ability is. This should be known by the coach and each new participant should be checked at the first session.
- The ability of participants to comprehend instructions including their command of the language in which the session is delivered.
- Any physical disabilities or learning difficulties.

Use of Equipment and Training Aids

A range of equipment in swimming can present risks if not used safely, some of the common training aids are listed here:

- **Training fins (flippers)** should be of soft design.
- **Paddles** – ensure adequate space is given between athletes. Coaches should only use paddles if their training has covered using them. Coaches should err on the side of caution for those inexperienced in using paddles.
- **Pull buoys and floats** - ensure safe storage as they can be a trip hazard on pool side.

Some training aids may not be allowed in certain pools, this should be checked by the coach before starting a session.

Pool Specific Risk Assessment Factors

Owners, operators and occupiers of swimming pools must follow the general duties and responsibilities in the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety in the Work Place Regulations 1992. They are obliged to take all reasonable and practicable measures to ensure that coaching activities are conducted safely. They have the overall responsibility for every person on the premises. It is advisable that coaches are familiar with the core principles pertaining to swimming pools so that they are aware of issues before it is too late, as often they may be the first person to observe issues.

Each pool will have unique features that make particular demands on safety. This section highlights important factors.

Pool Design

The suitability of the general design of the pool area for coaching includes:

- Blind spots resulting from the position of features or equipment;
- Glare, reflection, lighting and noise.

Depth

Importance in relation to the ability and height of the participants includes:

- the depth and extent of shallow water areas;
- the extent of deep water areas;
- the pool floor profile, in particular sudden changes in depth;
- the possibility of being able to segregate the shallow water area (e.g. roping off and using a boom).

Water Quality

The following factors need to be considered:

- The temperature of the pool water (and the air) in respect of comfort – bearing in mind participants' size, age and physical ability. Ideal operating temperatures for indoor pools are around 27-29°C
- Clarity of the pool water
- Water quality testing, the facility will have its own schedule, but the coach should report any issues as they come up e.g. swimmers complaining of poor taste/ smell/ clarity/ minor irritation.
- Any acute reaction to the water e.g. burning eyes or skin/ difficulty in breathing should be treated as an emergency.

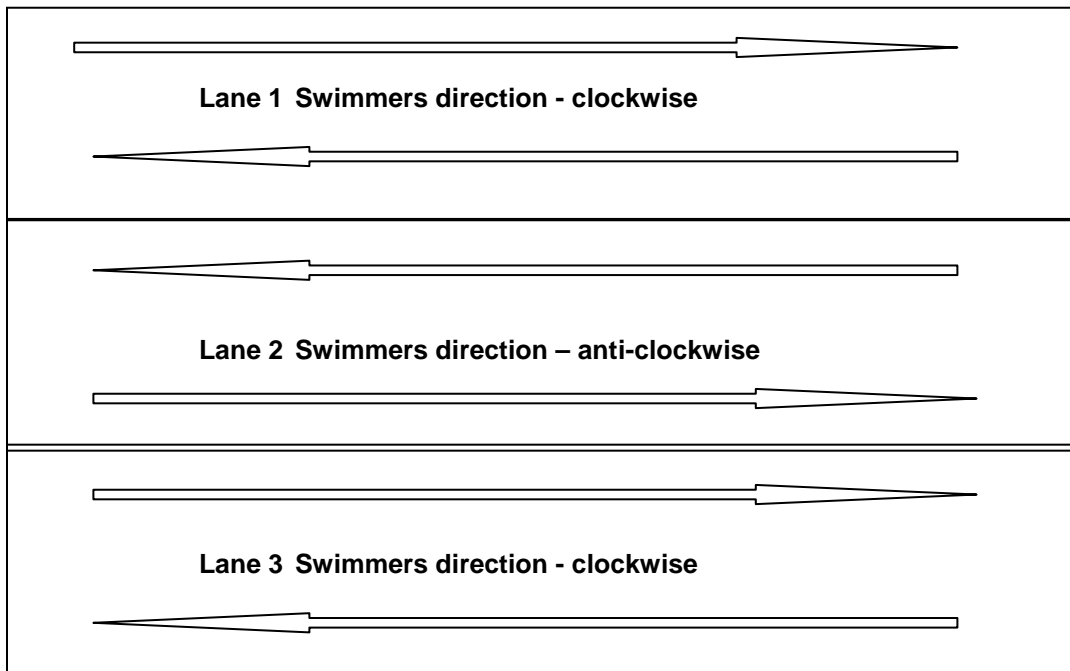
Coaches should be aware of these issues especially if they are the first users of a pool on a particular day, and ensure the relevant tests have been completed before participants enter the water.

Pool Organisation

The arrangements of the coached session must be considered:

- Who has the overall responsibility for the pool?
- Is there exclusivity of use?
- Is there shared use with other activities?
- If use is shared what are the implications? (e.g. life guarding responsibilities)
- Pool etiquette/ Lane direction?

Table 3: Recommended lane Organisation



Coaches may wish to consider sessions which do not include lane ropes to better simulate and prepare athletes for open water environment; however they need to carefully consider the abilities and experience of the participants, and be aware and address increased risk factors such as collisions due to a lack of lane ropes.

6. Coaching Open Water Swim Sessions

The ASA and Triathlon England have produced an '*Organised Open Water Swimming Guide*' which should be read in conjunction with this document and provides greater detail on sections covered below.

Qualification requirements for open water swimming

Level 3 coaches may deliver open water sessions independently, in appropriate open water environments.

Level 2 coaches can deliver open water swim sessions independently if they meet either of the following requirements:

- Completed their Level 2 qualification and have attended the British Triathlon Open Water Coaching workshop.
- Completed and certificated as a Level 2 coach on a course commencing **after October 2011**.

Please Note: Open water swimming skills can be delivered by a Level 1 or 2 triathlon coach (not meeting above requirements) only in a swimming pool.

Venue Selection

Ideally venues used for open water coached sessions should be a managed facility with appropriate safety procedures including lifesaving staff and water quality checks. This is not always possible in some locations and in these cases the following general advice should be taken when selecting venues:

- Ensure that the water quality is sufficient to minimise the risk to participants
Under no circumstances should open water swimming take place until the results of the tests are known and acceptable readings have been recorded.
- The site is easily accessible by participants but also by emergency services should they be required.
- There is adequate safety provision for participants.
- Entry and exit from the water is safe and does not create issues for safety or emergency services staff needing quick access.
- There are suitable facilities to deal with any injuries or accidents, especially being able to get the swimmer into a suitable environment for example in cases of hypothermia.
- The conditions in the water, such as temperature, currents, waves, tides, depth are suitable and appropriate to the capabilities of the participants.
- Water owner/operator permission for open water swimming has been granted, preferably in writing.

Safe Supervision

Due to the nature of open water environments safe supervision of participants requires a much greater degree of resources and actions to ensure a safe environment.

A coach should NOT provide a dual role of coach and safety personnel.

Safety Craft and Equipment

In a managed facility it is the responsibility of the owner/ operator to provide appropriate safety equipment. This will be decided upon in a discussion with the site's owner/operator on the provision needed and based on the Risk Assessment. This could take the form of:

- Powered rescue craft
- Human powered rescue equipment (boards/ boats)
- Safety line/ floatation devices
- Resuscitation equipment

The coach must ensure that the appropriate equipment is available for the venue and how this will be accessed/ contacted in the event of an emergency. The ratio of safety craft to participants will be site specific. Anyone using safety craft or equipment must be trained in their use.

Lifeguards/ Safety Personnel

Providing lifeguard and safety provision for open water is very different to coaching at a pool. Open water rescue is based around the equipment that will be used and the specific environment e.g. lake or beach. It is not possible for British Triathlon to formally define the qualification required, for the above reasons.

In most instances the venue staff will be first aiders/lifeguards who have received site specific training for rescues (e.g. use of powered craft)

A coach should ensure adequate provision is made; generally this will be down to the facility owner / operator to provide. They should also check that the personnel are suitably trained and qualified.

For more information regarding qualifications see Royal Lifesaving Society <http://www.rlss.org.uk/>

Participants and Abilities

Even strong swimmers can get into difficulty in open water environments due to a variety of factors. It is even more crucial therefore to gain a better understanding of the participants than in other environments.

Factors that should be considered and affect risk assessments and likely actions to minimise risk include, but are not limited to:

- Swimming ability level of participants;
- Open water experience, even experienced swimmers can become stressed in cold water;
- Over-confidence, inexperienced swimmers may be over confident, for example assuming because they have swam in a warm lake overseas before that a cold quarry will be just the same;
- Those with lower body fat are more susceptible to issues in cold water;

Children often fall into several if not all of these groups and for this reason extra caution should be considered when coaching children in this environment. Additionally children are less aware of body temperature than adults and this can exacerbate any issues.

Water and air temperature will affect children more than adults, a coach should monitor the environment closely and should be prepared to cancel the session if the water temperature is too low or they feel there is a potential risk to the participants. During training sessions, elapsed time in the water should be considered in conjunction with the water and air temperature.

Use of Equipment and Training Aids

The most common elements of equipment are a wetsuit and swim cap. Swim caps should be a bright, easily identifiable colour, and as well as providing temperature protection to the head, they are also a safety element allowing safety crew to see participants in the water. Wetsuits should ideally be swim specific wetsuits and should be of a good fit. A poor fitting wetsuit may allow water to flush through the suit and reduce its temperature protective properties.

Due to average water temperatures in the UK wetsuits are highly advisable, and coaches should consider making them mandatory for most training sessions, depending on the length of the swim or type of session planned. The only exception to this is when temperatures become too high, and there is then a risk of overheating in a wetsuit. Whilst rare in the UK, it is a possibility when water temperatures exceed 22 °C and other temperature affecting factors.

Use of buoys as swim markers is a common piece of equipment in open water, however care should be made to minimise the risk of participants coming into contact with anchor chains or other elements of a buoy which could be sharp or hard should there be a collision between the buoy and the swimmer.

Some swimmers may elect to wear additional temperature protection, such as booties and/or gloves and neoprene caps. Whilst some of these pieces of equipment are not permissible in race situations they should be allowed and possibly recommended in training where appropriate.

Open Water Specific Risk Assessment Factors

The risk assessment will assist the coach (and the site owner) to identify whether the body of water is suitable for open water swimming and that participants are not being placed in danger due to the location or condition of the venue. There are a number of factors that need to be considered and documented including both physical hazards and people hazards.

Responsibility for the content of the risk assessment lies with the Lead Coach (or club) although a designated third party e.g. a safety officer can be engaged to write the document.

Water Quality

Water quality should be tested regularly to ensure appropriate water quality. Testing of water quality should include tests for acidity (pH), evidence of blue-green algae and other water-borne pathogens. In a managed facility testing should be carried out by the facility on a regular basis, the coach should clarify this is the case and that checks have been done. In a non-managed facility the coach/ organiser may need to coordinate testing procedures. The Environment Agency or your Local Authority can undertake the necessary tests and give guidance on the frequency of the testing.

Coaches should be aware of external factors, such as heavy rain which may wash farm chemicals off the land and into the body of water and may affect water quality.

Issues such as algae are more common later in the summer or after periods of warm/ dry weather.

Whilst water quality tests provide an indication of the suitability of a venue for open water swimming they do not mean that there is a complete absence of potential pathogens. It should be noted that there is always a risk when swimming in open water. There are simple practices that triathletes should be advised to adopt to minimise risk of infections further.

- Cover all cuts and abrasions, however minor, with sticking plasters. You should not consider swimming if you have deep cuts.
- Wash hands in fresh water before eating after you have swum.
- Take a full shower at the earliest opportunity and also wash out any kit used.
- Try to ingest a minimum amount of water whilst swimming.

Water Temperature

The *British Triathlon Rule Book* gives guidance around minimum temperatures for racing and maximum temperatures for wetsuits. You will need to understand your athlete's abilities, tolerance of cold and preferences. Some athletes may be happy to swim in very low temperatures around 10⁰C , with others struggling lower than 15⁰C.

Coaches should note that training sessions may not be as physically demanding as race situations, and athletes may cool more in training than race scenarios.

In training sessions elapsed time in the water should be considered in conjunction with water temperature, in a similar way that distance and temperature are considered for races.

Factors effecting water temperature:

- Most large open bodies of water will often have large variances in water temperature- warm in the shallows- cold in deeper water.
- **Air temperature**- water will not heat up as quickly as land, and can have huge variances e.g. 25⁰C air temp with 7⁰C water temp.
- **Sea temperature** does not rise until late summer, often still being very cold into May and June.
- Other weather factors such as wind and rain can have a significant impact on participant comfort levels.

Water Based Hazards

In addition to the sections previously mentioned these additional factors should be considered (non-exhaustive list):

- Access and egress, condition and proximity of start and finish points.
- Likely water temperature – which will have implications for recommended swimming distances and immersion times.
- Nature of water – e.g. lake, river, sea.
- Currents or eddies.
- Hidden, overhanging or underwater hazards.
- Other water users, e.g. other groups including sailing, windsurfing, jet ski etc.
- Depth (changes).
- Conditions underfoot, especially on shore and in standing depth water.
- Wildlife, such as geese and swans.
- Reduced visibility due to topography of sight, buildings or natural features, overhanging trees.

Additional Emergency Action Plan (EAP) Points

With increased risk comes a need for a greater focus on EAP. The following points are in addition to generic ones covered earlier in Section 3.

- Description of venue – including maps, diagrams of swim course.
- Access arrangements for club.
- Access arrangements for emergency vehicles, including either grid reference or Postcode and description of how vehicle access is to be gained to water side.
- What to do when an injury to a swimmer occurs in the water.
- What to do when a swimmer gets hypothermia.
- What to do when a drowning or near drowning occurs.
- What to do if a swimmer becomes distressed in the water.
- What to do if deteriorating weather occurs e.g. lightning, high winds, poor visibility, including how to evacuate swimmers from the water.
- What to do if an unauthorized craft enter the swimming zone.
- A safety officer should be appointed for the specific session with the role of liaising with the venue and coach.
- Consideration should be given to how communication will work in reality, e.g. use of whistles, two-way radios

Consideration should be given to changing facilities, hot showers, provision of blankets, a warm environment for treating those who may need it, especially those in shock or with hypothermia.

Where possible it is advisable to practice scenarios to test the EAP remembering that when an incident does occur safety cover needs to be maintained for all swimmers and that all attention should not be focused on where an incident is occurring.

Suggested Club Open Water Session Rules

The following is a suggested list of recommendations to be given at club based sessions. This is not an exhaustive list but is included as a guide when planning and facilitating open water sessions:

- No entry into the water will be allowed until all safety arrangements are in place and the club appointed organiser has indicated that it is safe to do so.
- A register should be taken before and after the session and swimmers counted into and out of the water.
- The water temperature is taken and displayed, with wetsuits being worn as appropriate.
- Brightly coloured swim hats must be worn by swimmers.
- Swimmers will use a defined course set by the session leader/ coach– using landmarks where buoys etc are not available.
- Swimmers are to swim parallel to the bank/ shore where possible.
- Safety cover will be provided at all sessions and this will not be below the required minimum standard identified in the venue risk assessment.

- All participants to have provided their emergency contact details along with any medical issues to the session leader/coach. This information will be recorded.
- Before every session a pre-swim briefing will be given. This will provide clear guidance on the session, the group structure, the course to be swum, and information on what to do if a swimmer experiences difficulty.
- Sessions will not enter into water space used for other activities.
- All sessions will finish at the allotted time.

Suggested Open Water User Rules

The following list details suggested rules that should be given to swimmers before taking part in an open water session. Swimmers must:

- Provide the club appointed organiser with information about any medical issues
- Provide their emergency contact details
- Sign up to the club's safety code and rules for open water swimming
- Swim within their own ability and adhere to any directions given by the club appointed organiser and anyone providing safety cover
- Be of a minimum age of 8 (as at 31st December in the current year)

Coaching Guidance

A coach should not take part in their own sessions; however a coach should consider the best place to coach from, which may include:

- The bank/shore.
- A pontoon.
- In a boat or canoe.
- In the water- this should only be done where the water is shallow and the coach can stand up comfortably. (No more than waist deep).

When selecting a position to coach from the coach must always consider their own safety and that of the participants.

A coach should consider how they will observe their athletes and control the group. If they are at distance from the coach this will be challenging, and the risks to the athletes will increase.

Coaches should consider swim routes/ courses that have been designed for coached sessions and make use of small laps close to the shore. This will reduce the necessity for additional safety craft and reduce stress on inexperienced participants.

7. Coaching Cycling Sessions

Clothing

Clothing should be appropriate to the activity, environment and weather conditions, taking into consideration possible changes in weather. Trousers or shorts should not be loose or baggy, to avoid getting caught in the chain or on the seat during mount/dismount activities. Shoes should be appropriate to the activity and experience of the participants. Cycling gloves are recommended in most situations.

Participants and coaches should be dressed to suit the weather conditions. Due to the nature of cycling wind chill can have a far greater effect than inexperienced participants would consider. Clothing should preferably be of a layered nature to enable easy modifications to be made. Waterproof layers may be required, which will also provide wind chill protection.

For indoor turbo (static bike) sessions there is great potential for participants to overheat and therefore loose fitting and light clothing is recommended.

Helmets

Within competitive triathlon helmets are a mandatory requirement. British Triathlon strongly recommends that riders always wear a helmet for training sessions as well as racing, with the exception of turbo training sessions. British Triathlon qualified coaches should insist on the wearing of helmets within coached sessions.

The only possible exception may be when wearing of a cycle helmet may not be compatible with religious, faith or disability issues. In these occasions the cyclist may be permitted to participate but the ultimate decision will rest with the coach who conducts the session and be based on a risk assessment for that session.

Helmets should be:

- Undamaged and in good condition.
- Correct size for the rider.
- Have a CE mark and conform to an appropriate standard such as BS EN 1078:1997 (Europe) or SNELL B95 (USA).
- Worn correctly, namely, the right way round, shouldn't move around on the head, it should not be possible to move the chin strap over the chin.
- Within the Best Before Date displayed inside the helmet.

Bike

Any bikes used within a coached session should be fit for the purpose of the session. For example this may mean that a bike that is acceptable for a slow moving skills session may not be suitable for a closed road session with larger groups moving at higher speeds.

Coaches should be aware of, and consider advising participants; of the general rules for bikes within triathlon races (see section 11 of British Triathlon Rule book). From a safety perspective the following points should be prominent in the coaches thinking and advice to participants:

- There must be a brake on each wheel.
- Both wheels must be classified as free wheels.
- Handlebars and tri-bars must be plugged.
- Computers or lighting brackets and mounting points, must be positioned so as to prevent injury in the event of a crash or collision with other competitors or spectators.

For training sessions where groups are riding in close proximity at speed, e.g. practicing for draft legal racing on closed road circuit there are additional requirements:

- Only traditional drop handlebars are permitted.

- Clip-on handlebars (tri-bars) are permitted, and they must not be longer than the brake levers' foremost line.
- Straight forward clip-on handlebars must be bridged with a solid material.
- No forward-facing bar or gear shifters are allowed on the end of the clip-on handlebars. The only exception will be a grip shifter.
- Wheels shall have at least 12 spokes (no disc wheels).

A triathlon coach is not trained in the maintenance or repair of any cycling equipment. A coach should not attempt any repair on a participant's bike unless they are a qualified bike mechanic. The triathlon coach should encourage all athletes to check their own equipment, using the bike M-Check (see coaches hub for details). A coach who isn't trained could damage equipment or directly lead to injury by incorrect maintenance.

It is the athlete's (or the parent's, in case of those under 18) responsibility to have basic understanding of bike maintenance, (e.g. puncture repair) and to ensure they have the right equipment with them to use.

If a coach feels that an individual's bike isn't safe, they should not allow an athlete to take part in a session until this is resolved.

Participants

The coach should pay due care and attention to the safety and welfare of the participants, others involved in the session and themselves, particularly when coaching on open roads. The weather and environmental conditions must be conducive to learning and allow safe participation in the session. Weather can have a greater effect on different participants; children are more likely to become cold more quickly than adults.

Road Surface Conditions

The coach should consider the road surface is in line with the proficiency, and experience of the participants as appropriate for the session, taking into account elements such as

- pot-holes, gutters and grids
- glass, litter and debris such as wet leaves
- painted markings (especially when wet)
- pedestrians and observers of the session

Level 1 Coaching Environment

An appropriate environment for a cycling activity session conducted by a Level 1 Assistant Coach should meet the following criteria:

- indoor or outdoor traffic-free venue/location (e.g. a gymnasium, playing field, or car park where access to vehicles is restricted);
- has a surface that is appropriate for the bicycles and the activity (e.g. grass, tarmac, concrete);
- is an appropriate size for the activity and size of the group;
- appropriate for coaching the basic and selected intermediate triathlon techniques (e.g. gear selection, cornering and group riding);

Level 2 Coaching Environment

Coaches are qualified to deliver sessions in the environments including the Level 1 as above plus:

Closed Road Circuits

Most commonly this may be a purpose built closed road circuit. The circuit should be:

- well maintained, particularly the surface;
- have an area around the whole length of the circuit where riders may run off the circuit safely, such as a grass verge;
- ideally restrict access to non-participants to stop them crossing the circuit (e.g. dog walkers)

When coaching participants under 14 years of age, the riders should remain in sight throughout the session. For participants aged 14-18 the coach should exercise discretion regarding the length of time riders may be out of sight of a coach or recognised volunteer. When making this decision the safety of the rider should be paramount.

Static Bike sessions (Turbo)

For Sessions which take part on static bikes, most commonly participants' bike fixed to a turbo trainer the following considerations are important:

- Bikes should be checked to ensure they are securely fastened to the turbo trainer, and there is no danger of bike (and participant) toppling over during the session;
- Adequate spacing between bikes should be maintained to ensure riders can get on/off without coming into contact with other participants;
- Ventilation and air flow should be considered to ensure participants don't overheat, provision of fans in more enclosed environments is recommended;
- Coaches should ensure that participants have adequate access to drinks;
- Please note, spin bikes are not covered as part of the qualification and training of British Triathlon's coach education system, and therefore requires a separate specific spin instructors qualification.

Open Road Coaching Environment

The following considerations for this environment are taken into account:

- Current legislation governing road use should be adhered to. The coach and participants always adhere to current legislation and best practice; this may differ in England, Scotland and Wales.
- Other road users, sessions taking place on public highway present a risk to both those involved in the session, but also other road users, such as motor vehicles, pedestrians and horses.
- All riders should be over 14 years of age.*
- Road and weather conditions, length of the ride as well as the type of road (e.g. steep inclines) and areas where road climbs to higher ground, all can have a significant effect on fatigue and air and wind chill temperatures, which can impact safety of participants greatly.

*It is at the coaches and clubs discretion to decide whether to allow children over 14 years of age to join in, and be based on the experience of the child, duration and type of ride and weather conditions. Parent consent is required and we recommend that children are accompanied by a parent/guardian or a nominated individual.

Coaches should seek to minimise these risks by:

- Avoiding busy roads (including but not limited to A & B roads, dual carriageways), or areas where other events are taking place.
- Giving plenty of warning to horse riders, and passing wide of horses more slowly.
- Riding with due care and consideration of other road users.
- Ensuring participants have a prior basic knowledge and understanding of cycling proficiency on open roads. Coaches may choose to direct participants to a Government approved Bikeability course. Selecting routes appropriate to the whole group and taking into account the rider's ability and fitness levels.
- Being prepared to cancel sessions at any point, due to changes in weather, increase in traffic or other users or injury/ accident. The coach must have an appropriate plan in this instance.

Safety and Welfare Guidelines for Triathlon Clubs and Coaches

- Seek to give feedback to riders in safe static situation, e.g. pull off the main carriageway into a car park or lay-by where the risk of injury or accident is significantly reduced and participants and coach can give full attention to each other and the coaching points without having to overly consider safety implications.
- Assess the ability and experience of the riders. Coaches should assess rider ability, fitness and experience to ensure they are able to ride in the environment and take part in the activities of the session.
- Gain parental consent – informed parental consent should be gained for riders under 18 years of age. Parents should be asked to provide written consent to allow their children to take part in coaching sessions on the public highway and agree that their child is appropriately skilled and competent to take part in coaching related sessions and rides on the public highway.

Clubs/ coaches are recommended to have a list of those on the ride including their In Case of Emergency (I.C.E.) details. It is also recommended that this information is held by each participant.

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8. Coaching Running Sessions

In addition to standard athlete safety and welfare guidance in previous sections, information specific to running environments is detailed in this section.

Environments

Coaches across all levels can coach in all of the below coaching environments:

- Athletics tracks (tartan, grass or cinder surfaces)
- Off road paths and tracks
- Parkland areas
- Playing fields
- Astroturf playing surface

Non-Fixed environments

If the coach is not operating at a static venue, e.g. they are using paths or trails with their coaching group then the coach needs to consider the age, ability and fitness level of the group.

If coaching younger participants (8-16 years) you may need to use recognised helpers to manage the safety and welfare of the participants.

Specific Hazards

Coaches should consider the following hazards as part of a standard risk assessment that has been produced:

- surface and kerbing – slipping/tripping due to worn or uneven surface or loose kerbing;
- other users, including pedestrians, dog walkers and dogs (especially long dog leads);
- surface conditions – debris and stray equipment;
- weather conditions, i.e. rain or snow/ice, note that some running tracks can become icy/ slippery in temperatures above freezing;
- other users of the track and field events (e.g. throwing objects or ball based sports playing on infield);
- on a track observe lane discipline specific to that track– ensure participants are fully aware of which lanes they can and cannot use during the session.

For all coaching environments coaches and athletes must exercise greater caution during the session when there are other groups or members of the public in the same environment.

Equipment and Clothing

Any equipment needed for the session must be available and in good working order. All items of equipment should be tidied away and stored appropriately for other users.

Coaches should check that participants are:

- wearing appropriate clothing for the session and weather conditions;
- wearing appropriate footwear for the session, weather and terrain;
- they should be visible to other participants and road users (for example using high visibility clothing if appropriate);
- Running on an appropriate surface to the participants and the session activity.

Treadmill Sessions

Only Level 3 coaches working with athletes on an individual basis can utilise treadmills for their run component of their sessions/ programmes. The coach and athlete must have been orientated and competent in using the equipment.

9. Coaching Individual Triathletes

Qualification Level and insurance

Coaching triathletes on an individual basis is only applicable to coaches who are in possession of a valid British Triathlon/1st4sport Level 3 Coaching Qualification. Level 1 and 2 coaches are only trained and qualified to deliver group sessions. Within these sessions, a coach can work with individuals on technique/ performance and give general guidance to athletes, in line with the training they have received and experience gained.

Level 1 and 2 coaches who coach individuals (e.g. prescribe individualised training programmes) will be working outside the remit of their qualification and in effect working without insurance cover. In the event of legal action taken against them by a participant or venue could find themselves without support from the Home Nations Association or British Triathlon.

Individual Training Prescription

In addition to the general points listed previously, when prescribing training for an individual, the coach should also consider the following points:

1. British Triathlon regards a group to be a **minimum of 3 or more participants**.
2. The **minimum** age for prescribing training programmes to triathletes (i.e. training prescription to an individual triathlete) is **14 years old**. This takes into the consideration the early maturation period of the triathlete development. In many club environments there may be sufficient group coaching sessions to not require individualised training until the age of 16.
3. In addition to the general information that should be collected about the participant, an *Athlete Profile Questionnaire* and *Lifestyle Audit* should be completed (see Level 3 Coach Education Course content).
4. Where triathletes complete prescribed training alone or in a group in the absence of a coach, the triathlete(s) are responsible for their safety and choosing appropriate training environments. In the case where a triathlete is under the age of 18, the parents are ultimately responsible for safety and training environments being used. This should be made clear to the triathletes and parents at the onset of coaching. A coach should refer to the *Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Guidelines*, where necessary.
5. When coaching triathletes individually through a prescribed training programme, it is recommended that meetings should take place in a public place and if the athlete is under the age of 18 the parents should also be present. It is recommended that the coach keep a record of all communication with the athlete including meetings, phone calls and emails etc.
6. Individual programmes should be developed with due consideration for the triathletes goals, ability, age, lifestyle, training history and available resources (equipment, training environments and support).
7. During the execution of prescribed training it is the responsibility of the triathlete to ensure that the correct personal clothing and equipment is used. For triathletes under the age of 18 it is the responsibility of his/ her parents/ guardian.

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10. Insurance Criteria for Qualified Coaches

British Triathlon provides coaching cover for all coaches who have been trained and qualified by British Triathlon, and in most instances this is through membership of one of the Home Nations.

For British Triathlon coaching qualifications to be valid, insurance must be obtained and up-to-date. All coaches (including those in training) must obtain coaching insurance either through the Home Nation membership or an insurance policy that is equal to or greater than the British Triathlon insurance policy for coaching.

The cover is conditional on a coach following all established guidelines for British Triathlon coaches. Guidelines are established within this document, and the necessary points will be raised inside the course resource for each level.

Insurance is also conditional to the level of qualification and training the coach has received and will only be covered to operate to the extent of their training and qualification.

Full details of insurance cover; please refer to your membership handbook and the membership section of the website.

Commercial Coaching

Any coach receiving payment for their services should check the insurance conditions to ensure they are covered. Insurance cover is in force for qualified coaches with a limit of earnings up to a **Gross Annual Income of £10,000**. Qualified coaches earning more than this limit will be recognised as commercial coaches and these coaches should arrange a separate insurance to cover this professional coaching.

This insurance policy is only valid for individuals and will not extend to covering a coaching company

What is not covered by the Insurance

A triathlon coach will only be covered for the activities they have been trained to deliver. A non-exhaustive list of examples where a triathlon coach would not be covered by British Triathlon insurance:

- ‘Spinning’ or indoor cycling session using fixed wheel bikes or gym bikes (athletes using own turbo trainers is acceptable)
- Track cycling
- Pool based activities e.g. water polo/ octo-push
- ‘Fitness classes’ circuits/ yoga / aerobics
- Running sessions using treadmills (except Level 3 coaches)
- Fell/ extreme running including parkour

In all these instances a club should seek a qualified coach/ instructor to deliver any session that falls outside the remit/qualification of any club coach.

Club Insurance

The Club Insurance policy will provide cover for the club session if they use a qualified instructor to deliver the sessions. In organising a club session that is not delivered by a coach, the club should consider:

- Completing a Risk Assessment for the session
- Check the Instructors qualification
- Check the Instructors insurance.
- If hiring a facility, check whether they need to have copies of the Instructors qualification and insurance.

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11. Guidance for Non-coached Sessions

What is a coached session?

A coached session will generally include the following:

- A set objective - focussing on technique and/or conditioning.
- A session plan.
- Safety planning (risk assessment and emergency action plan).
- A coach present who directly supervises the session and provides guidance, direction and feedback the coach and assistants will take responsibility for the athletes in the session.
- Clearly defined and explicitly stated as a coached session.

What is a Non-coached Session?

If a group session is organised but not coached British Triathlon recommends that the club and coaches make it clear that the sessions will not be coached, and detail what, if any, supervision is offered. Unlike a lot of sports, a large number of triathlon training sessions may be un-coached. These sessions are generally more informal.

Examples of non coached sessions may include:

- Club rides.
- Club/ Park Runs.
- Time Trials.
- Open swim sessions (pool and open water).

Guidelines

The following general guidelines will reflect good practise in these non-coached sessions;

- An Activity Organiser (not someone who is acting as a coach) will take responsibility for organising the activity. However this person is not responsible for the safety and welfare of the group.
- Sessions are advertised in advance clarifying:
 - Date/ time/ meeting point.
 - Outline of route (possibly online map).
 - Speed/ pace of activity.
 - Expectation of participants (kit required/experience/fitness level/etiquette within session).
 - What happens when someone cannot keep up with the group (will someone wait/meeting points on route).
- At the start of the activity a briefing is given confirming the above.
- Any coaches taking part clearly state they are not acting in a coaching role.
- An Emergency Action Plan is available to all, which includes; what happens in the event of emergency and contact mobile numbers.
- Any person under 18 should be supervised by an adult, who is taking responsibility for their safety and welfare, i.e. parent or guardian.
- No advice should take place whilst on the move or in a vulnerable position. Guidance and advice may be offered by suitably qualified individuals when stopped and in a safe location to do so.
- A non proficient rider on a group ride could present a potential danger to other riders and road users. This person should be referred to coached sessions to develop riding skills, before attending non coached sessions.
- Clubs or individuals offering “turn up and swim” sessions without following appropriate safety recommendations may leave themselves open to legal action being taken against them.
- Ride and run leaders qualification are available via the Triathlon England Regional Managers.



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