

GUIDANCE ON U18 VOLUNTEERS

YOUNG LEADERS

It is very common and encouraged throughout sport for young people to take on leadership roles and starting on coaching, volunteering or technical official pathways is very common. They are often described as young or youth leaders. They may be an individual who is perusing their interest in this area or they may be part of a club youth leadership programme, Sports Leaders, Young Ambassador or similar programme. These young people take on roles that are normally filled by adults such as coach/assistant coach/helper or a technical official/time keeper/referee within the aquatics session.

This guidance document refers to any young person taking on any leadership role within aquatics as a Young Leader.

Legal restrictions on employing/deploying young people (U16's)

There are legal restrictions on employing young people, they do not generally apply to young volunteers, however it is good practice to be aware of the restrictions:

- Employment is restricted to those aged 14 and over
- Children may not be employed before 7am or after 7pm on any day or for more than 2 hours on schooldays or Sundays.
- Children to have at least 2 consecutive weeks free from work during school holidays
- In addition to legislation, young people of compulsory school age are not permitted to volunteer during school hours without the permission of their school

Duty of Care and Health & Safety

Organisations have a legal “duty of care” towards young people, they must legally do “what is reasonable for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child’s welfare”. There is an enhanced duty of care towards young volunteers, reflecting their relative immaturity.

Organisations need to carry out risk assessments to decide whether placing a young person in a volunteer role would put them, or the people they’re working with, at risk, and may wish to follow some basic principles:

- Consider the need for increased supervision, and for more explicit instructions and guidance
- Should not take responsible behaviour for granted
- What the behaviour/needs/skill level of the group the young leader will be working with is
- Any potentially dangerous activity should have constant adult supervision

It is good practice to carry out regular, comprehensive risk assessments when working with young leaders. For more information see the Health and Safety Executive website - www.hse.gov.uk - or contact VCTH for advice on risk assessing volunteer roles.

Inappropriate Tasks for Young Leaders

Young Leaders may be more vulnerable than adult volunteers. There are therefore some tasks that may be inappropriate for young leader including:

- Acting as an “adult” for supervisory purposes on an away or overnight trip
- Physically demanding work
- Certain types of advice work eg wellbeing /child protection
- Lone working
- Overly repetitive tasks with little opportunity for learning or development
- Certain types of fundraising eg any club events involving alcohol or gambling

Parental Permission

You should always seek consent from a parent/carer when appointing a young leader. When seeking consent make sure you are clear That the young leader and their parent/carer fully understand what the role involves:

- Code of Conduct
- Time commitments
- Any role description
- Any training or checks like PVG that might be required
- Supervision, support and mentoring provided
- the location of the volunteering
- the tasks to be performed
- Wellbeing and protection policies and procedures
- Encouraging parents to come along to your events, or even the young volunteer's first session.

Other issues to consider

Balancing education and volunteering

Many young leaders are in full-time or part-time education at school, college or university. It is essential to build in some flexibility to volunteering roles for young people, so that they can maintain a healthy balance between their education and their volunteering commitments. For example, there are busy periods during term-time or exam periods which will become a priority at that time. (often Xmas or Jan and late spring and early summer). During the summer holidays young leaders often have much more free time and some want to volunteer full-time for several weeks.

To support young leaders manage their time across the season speak to them about:

- Their time availability and any academic pressures at the start of their volunteering involvement / pre-season planning
- What is realistic to commit to
- Any periods of time when they might be less available
- Plan in regular check-ins to discuss how their level of input is working for them and if any changes are needed

Young Leader Finances

Most young people survive on very low incomes they may live with their parents and have no income of their own or have earnings from poorly paid part-time jobs, some may be on welfare benefits. Others are parents themselves and have young children to support. Volunteers in these situations cannot wait until the end of the month, or even the end of the week, to be reimbursed their expenses. This makes the prompt reimbursement of expenses for travel and other standard agreed expenses. Remember that not all young people are confident asking for things, so you may need to remind them to claim their expenses.

PVG and Supervision

U16s

PVG required: NO

Supervision Required: YES at all times by an adult with a PVG and relevant training

Rational: Young Leaders who are under 16 should be considered as a session participant who is taking a leadership role in that session and should be supported by a responsible adult at all times. The adult is considered to have duty of care responsible for the session and all participants (including the young person who might be leading the session) and should have a PVG and relevant child protection training.

16 years and above

PVG required: YES – if that role normally requires one

Supervision Required: An assessment should be made of the young person's skills, abilities, training and competence and if they are deemed to be ready then they can deliver their role without supervision. If they are not yet ready then supervision should be given in the same way that it is for U16s.

NB: it is important to assess the young person's levels of maturity and ability to act in a responsible way, as they may be technically competent to carry out the role but not mature enough to do this unsupervised.

Rational:

At 16 years old legal duty of care responsibility attaches to people who are in charge of children. Therefore at 16 (or above) young leaders should follow the PVG and training requirements for the role that they are delivering.

Mobile Phones

Many young leaders aged 14 – 18 will either still be active session participants or only recently moved from session participant to session leader and will be friends with their fellow members, some of whom will still be U18. It is therefore plausible that they will have the personal contact details or be connected on social media with those members.

It would be inappropriate to require young leaders to isolate themselves from their friends and social circle by removing the details of those members from their contact lists/social media.

Therefore the following guidance should be implemented:

- If a young leader is U18 (and consideration should be made for those aged 18 to 21) had phone, e-mail or social media connections for U18 athletes prior to undertaking the young leader role these contacts can be retained
- Young leader should provide a list of existing contacts (phone, email, social media) and the nature of their relationship to their supervisor and the wellbeing & protection officer
- The person supervising the young leader should make every effort to ensure that their role is not the lead for those athletes e.g. the young leader who is a coach is not the primary coach for those specified young persons except on an occasional basis.

NB this protocol is often appropriate for implementation for young staff/volunteers aged 18 – 21 who will have similar social networks to U18s and very often have come up through the club

Adults communicating with young leaders who are U18

Digital communication (phone, text, emails, social media etc) can be a useful tool for teachers, coaches and other staff/volunteers within the organisation to share information with other teachers, coaches or staff/volunteers.

U16

While the young leader may be a colleague, they are also still a child and as such all communication to them should be addressed to the young person and their parent/carer, and delivered via their parent/carers contact (e.g. phone, email etc.)

U18s

If the young leader is aged 16 or 17, it may be detrimental in their professional development of their role to restrict the ability to share professional information with them from other coaches, teachers or staff/volunteers.

Therefore, in such cases, if the parent of a young person in a position of responsibility aged 16 or 17 and the young person themselves requests to have contact with an adult member of staff for the purposes of sharing professional information relevant to their role, the organisation should:

- Gain written consent from the young person and their parent/care to have such contact, naming the individual adult and medium of communication eg phone, app, social networking site etc.
- Ensure the named adult signs an agreement to keep contact with the young person to the discussion of matters relevant to the young person's professional role in the club
- Ensure all such communications are available to be viewed or if preferred shared with an identified third person (e.g. the young person's parent/carer or club person such as another coach, wellbeing & protection officer)

- Ensure that if the young person or the adult is found to breach the above agreement, action must be taken by the club to address the concern and/or ensure that the breach is referred to Scottish Swimming or the statutory agencies if appropriate

Communication Guidance for young leaders who are U18

- Do not add or take contacts for athletes who were not previously in your contacts/friends on social media and who you have only met via your leadership role – that would be a breach of good practice and your code of conduct
- Always remember that you are in a leadership role and that any communication, comments, photos and video clips posted on a social networking site may be shared with more people than you originally intended and should reflect the standards expected by your code of conduct
- Never share pictures of yourself or your friends that you wouldn't be happy for your family to see. Also never post or send any photographs, videos or make comments that:
 - May be hurtful, untrue or upsetting or that you may regret sharing later on
 - May be used by other people in a way you did not intend or want
 - Other people may find inappropriate
- Do not upload images of other members taking part in your training, activities or events without express permission from your organisation. You will also have to ensure that all photographic permissions have been obtained and the photo contents are inline with guidance on content.
- NB: This will not prevent you having images of your friends from the organisation on your personal social networking site, as long as they were taken outside of the sporting arena. Even so, it is still a good idea to check that any person in the image, and their parents, are happy for you to upload the image.

Personal/Social/Romantic Relationships

Scottish Swimming has adopted the Home Office guidelines which states that people in positions of trust and authority should not have a romantic/sexual relationship with 16/17 year olds in their care (a relationship of that nature with those U16 is a criminal offence and a form of child abuse). The power and influence a coach or teacher and other staff/volunteer roles has in a professional relationship with a young person cannot be underestimated. In addition to this, the young person's success or failure and team selection/technical decisions may be dependent on that person. It is vital for all coaches and teachers, as well as other volunteers, to recognise the responsibility they have and ensure that they do not abuse that position of power and trust.

No sexual/romantic relationship should exist between any young member of the organisation aged 16/17 years and their coach or teacher or other staff/volunteers and that the relationship between those roles and members must be appropriate at all times; this has been included in the Scottish Swimming codes of conduct, and any relationship of this nature may result in disciplinary action.

Pre-existing relationships between young people

Where a pre-existing relationship exists between members and 1 of those in the relationship moves into a Young Leader role, the following should be implemented:

- The relationship should be declared to the person supervising the young leader and the wellbeing & protection officer
- The person supervising that young leader should make every effort to ensure that their role is not the lead for their partner e.g. the young leader who is a coach is not the primary coach for their partner except on an occasional basis
- A clear set of behaviour standards is discussed and agreed with both the young people as to how they are to interact at official events, meets, training etc – it should require the adherence of appropriate leadership role to participant behaviours

Trips away / Overnights

It should not be common practice to use young leaders who are U18 on trips away or over nights as “adults” on those trips. It is very good experience and will assist in the young leaders development if they can go on away trips and over nights, and perform their young leader role eg assistant coach, official etc HOWEVER they should be included as a “child” on the trip when planning is carried out to consider the number of “adults” required to facilitate the trip.

There should be a pre-trip meeting with the young leader to cover what their role will be and expectations of behaviour, sleeping arrangements and curfews, who is in charge etc as they will have one foot in the “adult/trip staff” group and another in the “child/trip participant” group.

The nature of their role and involvement should also be clearly communicated to all participants in advance; to support the young leader and ensure there are no misunderstandings around roles or responsibilities.

Complaints/Disciplinary

Young leaders while taking on adult roles are still young people and any process that they are involved in should reflect this and be based on the following key principles:

- Those who know the young leader best should be the ones who discipline, mentor, guide and educate them as part of their development
- The disciplinary/complaint procedure should be simple, easy to understand and conducted more informally than the adult procedure
- The wellbeing of the young leader is paramount and any arrangements around meetings should take into account their educational commitments and family life. Therefore meetings will be conducted locally and by those with experience in dealing with young people
- Sanctions and any suspensions of role should not normally be so severe as to discourage the young leader from continuing to volunteer should be tiered in severity to their age, responsibility and culpability
- The right to appeal is a required part of the process and should be included when communicating any final outcomes

Young Leaders U16s (14 & 15 year olds)

Any disciplinary matter arising shall be dealt with by the a sub group of the committee/disciplinary/complaints panel (of no more than three persons), normally to include the person supervising the young leader, the wellbeing and protection officer and any other member has to have experience in dealing with young people or the disciplinary/complaints process

Young Leaders U18s (16 & 17 year olds)

Any disciplinary matter arising shall be dealt with using the adult procedure BUT with reasonable adjustments made to reflect the age and stage of the young leader. The setting up of a sub group of the committee/disciplinary/complaints panel (of no more than three persons), normally to include the person supervising the young leader, the wellbeing and protection officer and any other member has to have experience in dealing with young people or the disciplinary/complaints process

Serious Cases

Escalating behaviour patterns where permanent exclusion is a potential outcome of the disciplinary process, cases that may require police investigation, racial abuse etc. shall be referred to the Scottish Swimming Wellbeing and Protection Officer who shall provide advice on how to deal with the matter / refer it to external agencies.

Precautionary Suspension

Depending on the nature of the complaint/disciplinary issue a precautionary suspension may be given, this is a precautionary step as it means no further allegations or incidents can happen. It is important to consider the following when considering and issuing a precautionary suspension:

- Is a precautionary suspension required in this case?
 - Can management measures be put in place to facilitate continuation in role while the matter is investigated?
- What will the suspension cover?
 - The Young Leader role only, but not participation as an athlete?
 - All aquatics activities in any role – total suspension

The advice on running a disciplinary meeting or panel is contained in the Scottish Swimming Guidance document: **Adapting the complaints and disciplinary process for U18s** within the section called: *“Good Practice in running disciplinary meetings and panels for U16s and U18s”*.