

BRITISHROWING

Adaptive Rowing Guide

Introducing and developing adaptive rowing at your club.





Dear Rowing Club Members

Welcome to the British Rowing Adaptive Rowing Guide

Following consultation in 2019, this guide is one of several developed in response to clubs' requests for more guidance and support on a wide range of club related topics. We hope it will help to increase the number of clubs that provide adaptive rowing opportunities and build good practice so that new and existing adaptive rowers can enjoy rowing at all levels for many years to come.

If rowing is to prosper as a sport, we need a network of strong and sustainable clubs that provide the broadest range of opportunities for a fully inclusive sport.

In this guide, we cover a range of topics to help you manage and deliver adaptive rowing effectively, from tips on getting started to more technical considerations and information about competitions and events.

Please note that providing adaptive rowing sessions at your club need not be onerous so don't feel daunted. Many adaptive rowers can enjoy our sport without significant changes to your usual club operations.

This guide:

- **Highlights what adaptive rowing is and who it is for.**
- **Flags some key questions to ask yourself and your club committee.**
- **Provides top tips and practical advice to help you develop and manage adaptive rowing effectively.**
- **Signposts you to additional guidance and resources, both on the British Rowing website and on many other third-party websites.**

This working resource will be updated on a regular basis, so please provide feedback and share examples of good practice or experiences of adaptive rowing from your club.

We look forward to hearing from you.

The British Rowing Community Support Team

clubsupport@britishrowing.org

British Rowing would like to thank everyone involved in the development of this Club Guide for their input, including Sport England, World Rowing and members of the Club Adaptive Rowing Group.





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Section 1 - Introduction to adaptive rowing

1.1 Introduction

British Rowing is committed to making rowing an inclusive and diverse sport that welcomes and has an offer for everyone. This commitment is at the heart of our National Strategy 'Rowing – Everyone's Sport'. We support diversity and inclusion in its broadest sense and this includes making the sport accessible and welcoming for disabled people.

Adaptive rowing is the umbrella term that British Rowing uses when talking about all forms of rowing activity for disabled people.

Para-rowing is a subgroup of adaptive rowing which includes anyone with an impairment that is recognised by the International Paralympic Committee.

In 2019, a comprehensive study into the current status and future growth of the adaptive rowing community showed that, whilst the adaptive rowing community is currently a relatively small part of the sport, the potential for growth is significant.

Research by Sport England and the Activity Alliance in 2019/20 showed that 70% of disabled people, who comprise one in five of the UK population, would like to be more active and improve their health. Some other key research findings are included in [Appendix A](#).

We know that rowing is a very flexible sport that can be adapted to cater for a wide range of impairments but there are currently barriers to participation. These include lack of promotion/communication and low awareness amongst the coaching community. Our challenge, as a rowing community, is to support clubs, coaches and volunteers to develop and grow the opportunities to get more people involved in adaptive rowing, removing these barriers to participation.

A Working Group of adaptive rowers and coaches has been formed to support the development of adaptive rowing. This work is also supported by British Rowing's Community Team, who can be contacted at adaptive@britishrowing.org.



Photo credit: Mayflower Offshore Rowing Club



I.2 Aims of the guide

This guide covers a range of topics to help you manage and deliver adaptive rowing effectively, from tips on getting started to more technical considerations and information about competitions and events. It aims to:

- Highlight what adaptive rowing is and who it is for.
- Flag some key questions to ask yourself and your club committee.
- Provide top tips and practical advice to help you develop and manage adaptive rowing effectively.
- Signpost you to additional guidance and resources, both on the British Rowing website and on many other third-party websites.

Getting started

Don't feel daunted – providing adaptive rowing at your club needn't be onerous. The majority of new adaptive rowers are just keen to try something new.

The fundamentals of adaptive rowing are not much different to providing other tailored rowing offers such as learn-to-row or recreational sessions.

Remember that your club doesn't need to cater for every impairment – recognise your limitations and start small, broadening your offer as your knowledge grows.

Once up and running, your coaches and volunteers will realise that adaptive rowing requires the same coaching skills and support that they provide to rowers every week.

Whilst safety considerations are of key importance (see section 4), there may be no need for extensive facility upgrades or any significant investment in new equipment.

You don't need to understand or address all the information in this guide in order to provide adaptive rowing.

Use this guide as a best practice resource to get started or to dip into when seeking guidance on a specific issue.

We hope that this guide will help you to:

- Recognise adaptive rowing as an opportunity for your club.
- Provide opportunities for anyone with an impairment who would like to row.
- Be confident in your ability to deliver adaptive rowing activity.
- Adopt good practice in all aspects of your adaptive rowing programme.

This guide should be read in conjunction with British Rowing's [Inclusive Club Guide](#), which explains what inclusivity is and focuses on promoting and creating a diverse sport that is open to all. It provides links to information on all aspects of inclusivity and is a good additional reference point for planning your club's approach to adaptive rowing.



British Rowing recognises that there is a range of terminology used to describe disability and impairments, both in a non-sporting and sporting context. For the purposes of this guide, we have followed the social model of disability and the definition of ‘disabled people’ used in the Equality Act 2010 and by the Activity Alliance, the national charity and leading voice for disabled people in sport and activity. Further information on these definitions and the use of language and terminology is provided in [Appendix B](#).

1.3 Why consider adaptive rowing?

Whilst disabled people are under-represented in clubs and in sport in general, the Activity Alliance Disability survey 2019-20 identified that: **4 out of 5 disabled people would like to be more active.**

This means that there is a group of potential new members that you may not have considered as a target group for your club.

The benefits of incorporating an adaptive rowing programme into your club include:

- **Club benefits:** there can be many positive effects on all aspects of club life such as increasing your membership and volunteer pool, attracting new partners or extra funding, as well as generating an open and inclusive club environment.
- **Community benefits:** widening the range of activities on offer to disabled people, as well as creating a wider support network and enhancing your club’s reputation in its local community.
- **Individual benefits:** from new friendships and skills to improved health, well-being and confidence.

Further details on the benefits of becoming a more inclusive club are described in the [Inclusive Club Guide](#), section 2.



Photo credit: British Rowing



Case study: Reflections from an adaptive rower

"To be this close to nature is thrilling and something I have longed for during the 20 years I've been in a wheelchair. To be able to do so using only muscle power and the cooperation of the boat is exhilarating. I have no ambitions to compete – for me this is enough.

I had never thought about rowing as being a sport that severely disabled people could enjoy. Many years ago I had friends who were rowers and they were beautiful to watch – strong, athletic, balanced and co-ordinated. I, on the other hand, am none of those things. Paralysed from the chest down, I'm unable to use my legs or core muscles and my balance is almost non-existent. To overcome these disadvantages our boat, or should I say, single scull, is adapted with a fixed seat and a back rest. I'm happy to say it is also extremely stable. When it comes to the technicalities, I'm still learning.

There is so much about rowing I enjoy. Being pushed away from the pontoon always gives me a thrill of anticipation. The sense that my body is working hard to create the momentum to move over the water. And yet there is a deeper reward than just physical activity, such as independence and an emotional outlet.

None of this would be possible without the willingness, cooperation, imagination and open mindedness of the volunteers who work behind the scenes and turn up every week in all weathers. On behalf of all the adaptive rowers, a big 'THANK YOU' to all of them."

Rebecca Hewitt, Pengwern Boat Club



Photo credit: Colin Hayton



Section 2 - Getting started

2.1 Where to start

The adaptive rowing programmes at many clubs start with an enquiry from one person. For others, they may start with a link to a local disability group. Whatever your approach, it's important to know and understand the number of adaptive rowers that you and your volunteers can accommodate safely.

Starting with one person allows your club to grow organically and build up its knowledge and experience of adaptive rowing over time. This is a good way to help build the confidence of your coaches. In contrast, developing links to larger, more formal disability groups may require more upfront planning and upskilling, but often provides access to a wider support network and knowledge base to assist with delivery.

Whatever your approach, there are a number of questions to ask that will help you provide a great experience for new rowers that encourages them to become club members. Don't be put off if you don't have all the answers from the outset.

Remember, you don't always have to make significant club changes to attract new adaptive rowers, indeed many adaptive rowers will need no changes to facilities or access arrangements at all. Understanding the needs of your adaptive rowers and what's important to them will help manage expectations. Not all clubs can, nor are they expected to, cater for every type of disability or impairment.



Photo credit: John Stead



Questions to ask

- How accessible is your club? Check out the [Activity Alliance's Access for All: opening doors](#) document for more information on creating an accessible club environment. World Rowing also has a comprehensive access audit that uses a sequential approach and can be found [here](#).
- Have you got the right safety procedures in place (see section 5)? Safety guidelines for adaptive rowing can be found in [RowSafe](#), section 6.2.
- Have you thought about the practicalities? Basic planning, such as setting out a rota for coaches and helpers to get everyone on and off the water safely, can be very useful when you first start.
- Do you have enough coaches, are they appropriately trained/experienced and DBS checked? Your club Welfare Officer will be able to help with this process.
- Do you have relevant membership categories and are any changes needed? Consider membership fee options such as part-year, per session, monthly or discounted rates. New members may be reluctant to sign up for a full year initially.
- Do you have a plan for advertising and recruiting adaptive rowers? Are your advertisements suitable and welcoming to everyone? [The Inclusive Club Guide](#) has lots of guidance and top tips to consider.
- Are you aware of any specific land and water equipment that you may need? It's important to be clear about the types of impairments that you can provide for now and those that you could aspire to provide for in the future.
- Are there rowers with specific impairments that your club would find it difficult to cater for? If not, can you refer them to alternative clubs?

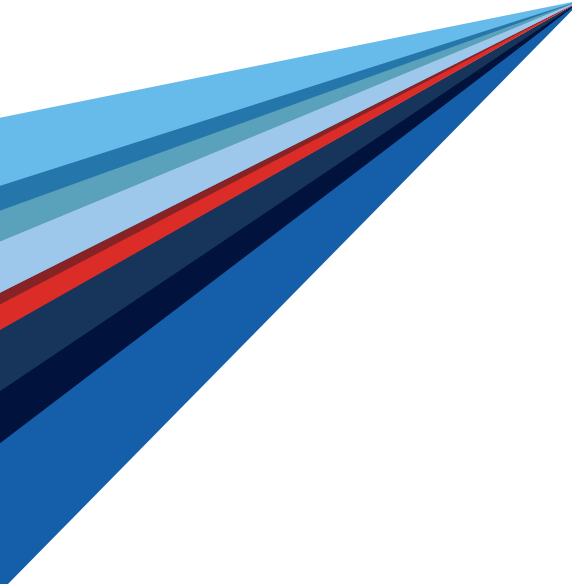
This guide provides further information, tools and support to help you answer these questions and build confidence amongst your coaches and volunteers to welcome new adaptive rowers to your club. Some simple guidance on interacting with disabled people is provided in [Appendix C](#).

Don't forget you can also ask for help and advice by emailing adaptive@britishrowing.org.

Some early considerations include:

Policies and procedures

There are a range of relevant policies and procedures to consider as you plan your adaptive rowing offer. Check out the British Rowing [Policies and Guidance](#) page to review the policies that you need and update them if required before you start. Of particular relevance are the Welfare, Safeguarding and Adults at Risk policies that can be found [here](#).



Encourage your coaches and volunteers to access further information or education opportunities – the more people with knowledge, the more people will be available to help.



Photo credit: Drew Smith

If your coaches feel they would benefit from having a mentor to support them, contact adaptive@britishrowing.org

Club point of contact

Consider nominating a single point of contact at your club for all adaptive rowing enquiries. This ensures continuity from the time of initial interest to club introduction. If individuals are apprehensive about trying something new or are unsure if they will be accepted, a familiar face is always comforting.

Coaches and helpers

Being involved with adaptive rowing gives coaches and helpers the chance to broaden their knowledge and skills beyond their technical knowledge. This experience can be very rewarding. It encourages everyone to think about a tailored approach to serve each rower's needs and how to communicate in a variety of settings with a variety of people.

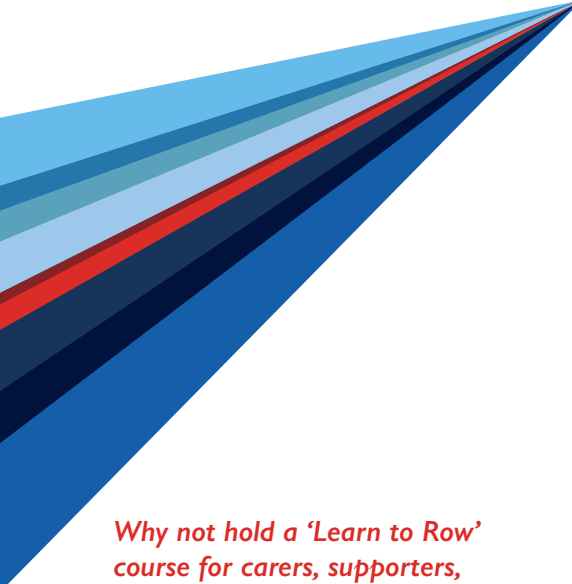
The basics of good coaching remain the same for all rowers whether they are adaptive rowers or not. Every adaptive rower will have their own specific challenges and more time may be needed at each stage of the Learn to Row sessions. It can sometimes be a steep learning curve for everyone, but don't let this put you off, there is support available and your coaches and volunteers will learn something new at every session. Help your coaches and helpers find out as much as they can about specific impairments to increase their confidence when working with disabled people.

One of the best sources of knowledge are the adaptive rowers themselves – disabled people know what works best for them and they can work with coaches to develop solutions to any challenges. There are also many clubs and coaches who already provide adaptive rowing sessions willing to offer advice and support.

A wide range of relevant training courses, workshops and educational videos are available to equip coaches and volunteers with the information, tools and confidence to support adaptive rowers. An internet search will identify many face to face or eLearning courses. Some organisations that provide disability training or workshops include:

- [British Rowing Introduction to Adaptive Rowing \(in development\).](#)
- [Mencap.](#)
- [UK Coaching.](#)
- [Anne Craft Trust.](#)
- [Disability Sports Coach.](#)
- [International Mixed Ability Sport \(IMAS\).](#)

Don't forget to follow British Rowing's [Safer Recruitment Guidance](#) when recruiting any new coaches and undertaking background and criminal records checks. Your Club Welfare Officer will be able to advise further.



Why not hold a ‘Learn to Row’ course for carers, supporters, helpers or parents?

To find new volunteers, try approaching volunteer groups or disability group contacts.



Photo credit: British Rowing

When discussing adaptive rowing sessions or just rowing in general, remember to involve any carers, helpers, supporters and parents as appropriate (with consent where necessary). Take time to explain how the sessions will work. The more they know about rowing, the more relaxed they will feel about the sessions. They may also be willing to help.

Attracting volunteers

If you need more volunteers:

- Ask your members to help – people often don’t volunteer because they don’t get asked.
- Ask other local sports clubs that have disability sections if their coaches can help.
- Contact your local [Active Partnership](#) to help connect you with local volunteering groups.

The following organisations may also be able to help:

- [Volunteer Centre Finder](#).
- [Do-it](#) – To find out more about volunteering opportunities.
- [Reach](#) – How to find skilled volunteers.
- [National Council for Voluntary Organisations \(NCVO\)](#) – Where to find your volunteers.
- [Vinspired](#) – Volunteering charity for 14-25 year olds.
- [University of the 3rd Age \(U3A\)](#) – For retired, early retired or those wishing to volunteer.
- [Royal Voluntary Service](#) – Finding volunteers and volunteering practice.

2.2 Promoting your offer

Marketing, promotion and communications

Good promotion can make the difference between the success or failure of your adaptive rowing programme. This includes how you advertise in the press or online, as well as how you communicate with everyone on a daily basis.

Your promotional effort should be designed to appeal to, and be accessible to, as wide a range of disabled people as possible. Impairment groups to consider include those with blind/visual impairments; deaf/hearing impairments; physical or mobility impairments; cognitive or learning disabilities; mental health conditions; and long term health conditions.

Each group has different needs and the words you use can help appeal (or not) to them. For example, if you have a long term health condition “come rowing to get or keep healthy” and pictures of people who are all shapes and sizes is likely to appeal more than “rowing as a competitive sport” and pictures of elite rowers in lycra. Consider each of these groups and tailor your communications accordingly.





Questions to ask

Promoting your offer:

- Do the images on your website/social media profiles fully reflect the audience that you are seeking to attract?
- Are the messages, wording and terminology you use inclusive and appropriate?
- Is the content clear? Is the font a suitable size and colour? Is there a mix of words and video?
- Are the words you use easy to understand, with no rowing jargon or terminology?
- Will the words you use appeal to everyone?

Try to educate your members about why the language they use matters to everyone.

Inclusive communications

Using positive language and appropriate terminology in all communications reflects a welcoming and inclusive club environment.

The language and words we use to describe each other can often lead to the reinforcement of stereotypes that are almost always untrue and can be very off-putting. Unfortunately, this is a common experience for disabled people. Research has shown that the use of negative language can act as a significant barrier to participation by disabled people.

Language can also be an emotive subject. There are circumstances where a person or section of society describes themselves with words that may be unacceptable if another person uses them. The language that we use should never make anyone feel uncomfortable. Words that were once acceptable change over time, so be careful with your choice of words and don't always replicate the language that you hear.

The following resources provide further guidance on the appropriate language to use:

- [Activity Alliance: Watch what you say around disabled people and other inclusive communications resources.](#)
- [Government publication on Inclusive Language – words to use or avoid when writing about disability.](#)
- [Spectrum](#) including a downloadable guide entitled 'The Language of Disability'.
- [Scope: the disability equality charity in England and Wales.](#)

Further information on phrases to use (and not use) when describing disabled people or their impairments is provided in [Appendix B](#).



Photo credit: Bruce Lynn



It is also important to remember that most of your current members will have a preference for how they receive club information, whether it be via email, text, website, telephone or audio file. Your club may also rely on social media sites for advertising. It's important to remember that, for some people, this advertising will be of limited use if they don't have a smart phone or access to the internet and/or may not use social media.

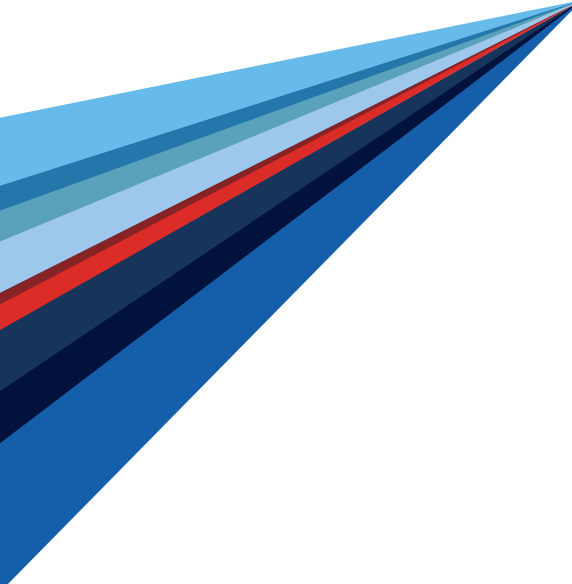
Top Tips: Inclusive communications

- If you already have a club communication policy or are developing one, make sure it's in an inclusive format.
- Look at the terminology, images, colours, fonts and formatting styles used in all your communications. If your offer doesn't look or sound inclusive, you might put off the audience you want to attract – people want to see “people like me” in adverts or invites to activities.
- Consider using technology to make websites and social media accessible for everyone. Visit: [Web Accessibility Initiative](#).
- Your policy statements relating to disability and accessibility don't have to be lengthy or complex – include a simple statement on the accessibility and inclusion options for your communications.
- Use clear phrases in your communications – this will benefit everyone.
- Make all your communications channels accessible – it shows that your club values all existing and prospective members and their club experiences.
- When designing posters or graphics:
 - Use images that demonstrate inclusivity – they don't have to include wheelchairs. An image of a supportive fixed seat on a rowing machine might appeal, for example.
 - Make sure images and text reflect what is on offer. For example, if you're promoting indoor rowing, avoid images of gym machines or boats.
 - Include an 'ask us a question' section to show you are available to talk but make sure the contact methods are clear (e.g. single name, email, phone, etc.) and that responses are actioned quickly.
- Emphasise the social and health benefits of the club and show the fun and friendly side of rowing. Not everyone will be interested in competition – many just want to experience a new environment.

For further information, visit:

- [Activity Alliance: Inclusive Communications webpages](#).
- [RNIB: Websites & Apps](#).

[Sport England](#) and the [Activity Alliance](#) offer guidance on how to make all your communications more inclusive and appealing to everyone.



Organisations to approach

There are many routes into a club for new adaptive rowers. These include indoor rowing, rowing on the water, using the gym or as a social member or volunteer. Whatever the route, a warm welcome is all that most people are looking for.

Many clubs start their adaptive rowing journey following an approach from an individual with an impairment. Alternatively, you may wish to be more proactive by approaching local organisations that might be looking for new opportunities. For example, if you would like to attract junior adaptive rowers, try connecting with a local school or disability organisation.

Consider approaching organisations such as:

- Local schools, colleges and universities.
- Local special education groups or schools.
- Local groups such as [Mencap](#), [Scope](#), [Mind](#) or [MS Society](#) that support disabled people.
- Local disability sport groups.
- GP Surgeries, who will have contact details for local support groups and may be able to help advertise your adaptive rowing offers.
- GP exercise referral schemes (for health-related activity). Your local [Active Partnership](#) can help with information and contacts.
- Your [Local Authority](#), [Active Partnership](#) or [British Rowing](#) (adaptive@britishrowing.org). All can help you to identify local groups to approach.
- [Disability Rights uk.org](#) has a comprehensive list of disability organisations.
- Specific disability sport organisations such as [British Blind Sport](#), [International Mixed Ability Sport](#) and [Cerebral Palsy Sport](#). More disability sport organisations are also referenced on the [Activity Alliance](#) website.



Photo credit: British Rowing

First impressions count: this is not just about your club facilities but about attitudes.

Further guidance and links to a wide range of useful organisations can also be found in [Appendix D](#).

Initial meetings

Initial meetings with adaptive rowers are no different to those with any other visitor interested in joining your club. People want information to see if your club is a good fit with what they're looking for.



Top tips for initial meetings

- If your first meeting is at your club with club activity going on, avoid times that are very busy so newcomers can see how your club operates but are not put off by the environment.
- Discuss the following points to fully understand your new adaptive rower's needs:
 - Access to the club facilities, the water and any landing stages.
 - Are there any safety concerns?
 - Ability and impairments – what is relevant and useful for both sides to know?
 - Support requirements – is extra support needed?
 - Capsize drills explained (and organised as soon as possible).
- New participants are best placed to tell you what will (or will not) be a problem for them in terms of accessing the facilities, boats and water.
- Many new participants worry that they won't fit in, be welcome or will stand out – if you have a disability or impairment, these worries can be heightened. Make sure you cover the positives of joining the club and address any concerns.
- Consider hosting a day/morning/evening of adaptive rowing and encourage interested groups to attend.

2.3 Planning and scheduling

When offering adaptive rowing, you don't need all your adaptive rowers to attend sessions together, although this might be easier if you are working with groups or schools. Many adaptive rowers need not be restricted to only rowing with other adaptive rowers and some may also be able to row in other club squad crews.

You may have individual one-to-one sessions for some rowers, tailored sessions for others or include adaptive rowers within non-adaptive sessions. Your approach should be made in consultation with your coaches, the rower(s) and any carers/parents or support that they need. The safety of everyone is the overarching consideration.

Whichever approach you take, make sure that adaptive rowers have the same opportunities as other members and are encouraged to be fully involved in the everyday activities of your club.

You could also consider:

- **Adult and junior adaptive rowing sessions.**
- **Competitive and recreational groups.**
- **Flexible session times, such as daytime rowing or sessions to accommodate shift patterns.**



- ‘Try it and see’ or ‘Pay as you go’ type sessions – many people prefer to try a sport a few times first, rather than having to pay an annual membership fee upfront. See [Club Management Guide](#), section 2, Managing your membership.
- Affordable options and/or financial assistance – does your club offer assistance if someone cannot afford to row?
- [Mixed Ability Sport](#) (supported rowing) sessions, where your rowers are in boats with their coaches and/or other club members. See [Bradford Rowing Club case study](#).
- Paralympic Performance pathway opportunities.

Top tips for planning your adaptive rowing sessions

- At your first adaptive rowing sessions, make sure you have plenty of help and support – it is better to have more people than not enough when everyone is learning what to do and how to manage.
- Complete an **individual safety plan** for every rower, with copies for the coach and the rescue team. It should contain, amongst other information, their medical details, contacts, how the rower would cope in the event of capsizing and the rescue procedures to follow. See [section 4, Safety and Welfare](#).
- Make sure that your risk assessments and safety plans are in place (and are followed) and that you have the appropriate level of safety cover. [RowSafe](#) provides information/advice and there’s a [gap analysis template](#) to help with the process. Contact adaptive@britishrowing.org if you need more information.
- Start people off on a rowing machine. This is a safe environment so the rower can experience the rowing stroke and the coach can assess their ability. Then agree what, if anything, your rower needs in terms of support.
- Encourage retired rowers to help as ‘buddy’ partners for adaptive rowers.
- Don’t have lots of adaptive rowers on the water at the same time initially – start slowly and grow over time.

Mixed ability rowing

Mixed ability rowing is a type of adaptive rowing where there is a disabled person and a non-disabled person in the same boat (it’s also known as supported rowing). It can be a very rewarding for everyone involved. This model focuses on more than just rowing, with an emphasis on:

- Peer education and training.
- Sustainability.
- Club level environments, fully integrated with all aspects of club life.
- Social interaction and individual impact.

[International Mixed Ability Sports](#) have supported a successful mixed ability rowing programme in Bradford for the past two years. See case study below and read more about this programme [here](#).



Case Study: Bradford Amateur Rowing Club

Mixed Ability Rowing

Mixed Ability (MA) is an innovative approach to promoting inclusion and equal opportunities in mainstream sports. The MA Model differs from disability-specific activities or provision as it includes people facing a whole range of barriers to participation including physical and learning disabilities, physical and mental health conditions, age-related barriers, low confidence and many other personal circumstances.

Bradford Amateur Rowing Club (BARC) launched its MA rowing programme in 2017, as part of the Mixed Ability Sports Development Programme led by [International Mixed Ability Sports](#) (IMAS) and funded by Sport England. MA rowing was a great way to help the club become more inclusive and increase diversity in its membership, without requiring significant changes to the club or its facilities.

Supported by external funding, BARC invested in two Swift touring doubles, stable boats suitable for beginners. From six participants initially, the squad has grown with MA rowers now training together twice a week. Some participants have learning disabilities and difficulties, experience poor mental health or have restricted mobility. This integration adds great diversity and atmosphere to the club. At BARC's 2018 annual summer regatta, MA crews competed against each other for the first time. Watch this [video](#) to see MA in action.

"At Bradford we really believed we were inclusive and yet we realised that it was not true. So, we thought about it differently and the benefits have been enormous."

Celia Hickson, Club President.

Top tips:

- Get in touch with IMAS for more information, training and support. They can also help signpost you to relevant funders.
- Remember that Mixed Ability is just another squad – including the team in the social life of the club is important.
- Publicise your sessions widely through local networks.



Photo credit: Celia Hickson



Indoor rowing

Indoor rowing is an ideal activity for almost everyone, whether they have an impairment or not, and there is specially designed equipment available to help, such as modified seats, hand gripping aids and downloadable software for rowing machine monitors.

The rowing machine is an ideal starting point for all adaptive rowers as it enables basic rowing technique to be practiced in a safe environment. Both the coach and the rower can see how they cope with getting on and off the rowing machine which, although different to a boat, is a good indicator of any support that might be needed. It can also help the coach highlight any technical pointers for consideration once the adaptive rower moves into a boat.

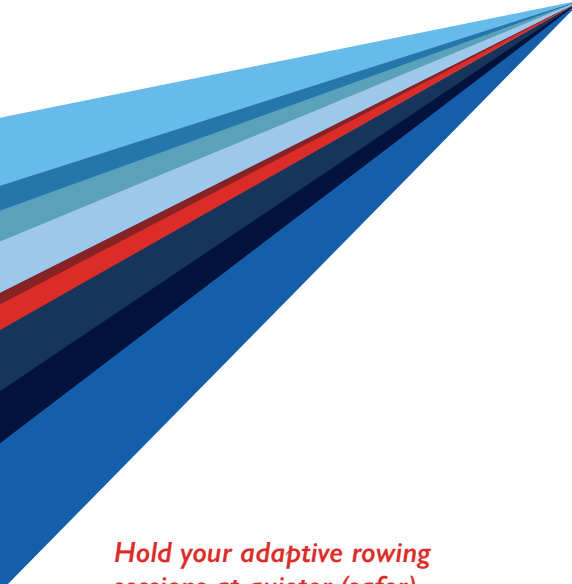
Further information on indoor rowing for adaptive rowers is available on the [British Rowing](#) website and the [Concept2](#) website. This includes ideas on indoor rowing for adaptive rowers, as well as details on indoor classification categories for anyone that wants to try racing. It also has information on equipment modifications and ideas from coaches about working with adaptive rowers.

[British Rowing's YouTube](#) channel has a number of videos featuring indoor rowing and the Go Row Indoor workout #7 ([here](#)) features disabled athletes with varying impairments enjoying a session with the instructor. This video also demonstrates some of the different equipment available for adaptive rowers as well as how to adapt other training exercises to build strength for rowing.

Top tips on indoor adaptive rowing

- Keep sessions short, with frequent breaks to maintain interest and help avoid injury – this applies to both indoor rowing and rowing on the water.
- Adopt a steady learning process, allowing time to adapt to the new positions that rowing requires.
- Help prevent [pressure sores](#) or pressure points and other injuries, by knowing what causes them and how to avoid them. More information can be found in '[Adaptive Rowing: A Guide](#)', on the British Rowing website or from the [World Rowing website](#).
- Remember there's no 'one size fits all' approach – it depends on the individual.
- Take time to talk things through with new adaptive rowers and their support/helpers/parents or carers, to find out what works best for everyone.

For any further information, please contact: adaptive@britishrowing.org or indoor@britishrowing.org



Hold your adaptive rowing sessions at quieter (safer) times of the day.

On the water

Some adaptive rowers might need more time to learn so it's important not to rush through the early learn to row stages, both indoors and on the water. It can pay huge dividends in the long term and enhances everyone's enjoyment. Coaching disabled people may require a few changes to coaching styles, with a heightened focus on safety, but the basic principles are the same for everyone. Individual impairments should be discussed with new rowers and their support teams, carers, parents or helpers (where applicable) in advance, to highlight specific considerations.

Once your rowers are ready to take to the water, make sure that the following areas have all been addressed first (see [section 4](#), Safety and Welfare):

- Safety (overall/club policies).
- Capsize and recovery drills.
- Individual safety plans.
- Equipment ([section 5.2](#)).
- Helpers, supporters and coaches.

Questions to ask – Getting ready for on the water sessions

- Have new rowers had the opportunity to watch some rowing on the water? Have any concerns been discussed with the rower and any carers, parents or helpers?
- Has a capsize drill been conducted? See British Rowing capsize video [here](#).
- Is there an individual safety plan for every rower, with sufficient information for your coach to run the session safely? Each individual safety plan should include the nature of the rower's disability or impairment, swimming ability and what to do in the event of capsize.
- Have you talked through what they will be doing on the water? This is much easier to do on land than when sitting in the boat.
- Have risk assessments been completed? Does the assessment cover access for the rower? Remember that, for some rowers, heat or cold may present an added risk.
- Are new rowers aware of the practicalities such as the clothing they should wear?
- Have you got enough help in place, e.g. for carrying the boats and supervision?
- Have you worked out how rowers will transfer into the boat (if applicable), for example, using ramps, transfer box and transfer mat? There are many images providing further guidance in, '[Adaptive Rowing: A Guide](#)', and British Rowing is also producing a series of videos to support this information.
- Have you got suitable safety cover and safety kit (throw lines for everyone and a sharp knife to cut through straps in the event of an emergency/capsize)?
- Equipment checks – Have you identified suitable boats and equipment or alterations such as pontoons, fixed seats or matting on the ground to prevent injury or wet clothing during transfers into the boat? For more information on equipment, see [section 5.2](#) or visit the British Rowing [Adaptive Equipment](#) webpage, or individual boat manufacturer websites.



Case study: Maidenhead Rowing Club

Adaptive rowing programme

Maidenhead Rowing Club (MRC) launched its adaptive rowing programme in 2017 with an Open Day, supported by British Rowing and Help for Heroes. It was attended by several members of the 2017 Invictus Games indoor rowing team and for many of them, it was their first experience of rowing on the water. One of the team was a triple-amputee who, with a volunteer club rower, single-arm-sculled a stable coxed pair to victory in the closing regatta.

MRC currently welcomes adaptive rowers at all levels from beginners to internationals, for both recreational and competitive adaptive rowing. Activities include regular weekly sessions on the water for rowing and sculling, land training and use of rowing machines, as well as invitational adaptive events at the Maidenhead Regatta. Whilst some sessions are specifically for the adaptive squad, other activities are integrated with club squads as far as possible.

When starting, the club consulted with other clubs/coaches with more experience of adaptive rowing, who helped with advice and the loan of equipment. A former GB PRI (arms & shoulders) para-rower, Andy Houghton, who had been training with the men's senior squad also provided practical suggestions – the best people to describe what is needed to get adaptive rowers onto the water are adaptive rowers themselves.

MRC obtained grant funding for two boats specifically for the adaptive squad and now has access to four stable singles (two with fixed seat options), two stable doubles/coxless pairs (with fixed seat options), a stable triple/coxed double/pair and two stable coxed quads. A custom-built ramp system allows wheelchair users to safely access the water. Whilst most areas of the clubhouse are accessible, ergos are re-located into the function room for use by adaptive rowers who use wheelchairs.

The club connects with the Club Adaptive Coaches Group and British Rowing's adaptive rowing team, to share experiences, lessons and knowledge on safety, racing, club environments, fundraising and enthusiasm.



Photo credit: Caroline Steel



2.4 Key points on getting started

When considering the introduction of adaptive rowing at your club, make sure you:

- Discuss your plans with your committee. Encourage them to read this guide and discuss what it could mean for your club.
- Learn from the case studies in this guide to understand what is working elsewhere.
- Include your adaptive rowing plans within your overall club development plan and allocate clear responsibilities for achieving them.
- Identify who will have lead responsibility for the adaptive programme and who will act as the main point of contact for enquiries.
- Consider a working group to actively champion your club's efforts to promote adaptive rowing – encourage members to get engaged and put forward ideas.
- Invite local disability groups/representatives to visit the club and discuss potential opportunities.
- Use appropriate language and terminology in your club communications.
- Encourage input from your existing members and volunteers – ask for their help and support.
- Contact clubs that already run sessions for adaptive rowers – for a list of these clubs, contact adaptive@britishrowing.org.



Photo credit: British Rowing

Get the basics right:

- Don't make assumptions about what people can or can't do.
- Hold a 1:1 meeting with all potential rowers, be open and honest about your knowledge and capabilities and ask lots of questions.
- Identify your rower's objectives – these can range from social interaction or health benefits through to competition or para-rowing aspirations.
- Consider the needs of every individual, for example:
 - Visually impaired or blind rowers may need somewhere to leave a guide dog safely and securely.
 - Deaf or hearing impaired rowers may need a British Sign Language (BSL) teacher – try your local college/HE for help. Agree signals for emergencies. For more information contact [UK Deaf Sport](http://UKDeafSport.org) or the [National Deaf Children's Society](http://NationalDeafChildrensociety.org) or email adaptive@britishrowing.org.
 - Makaton can be helpful if there are communication difficulties (e.g. using signs, pictures and symbols).
- Respect privacy regarding any support needs.



Case study: Pengwern Boat Club

Providing adaptive rowing sessions

Pengwern Boat Club's adaptive rowing section has been in operation for about eight years, developed through contacts with the local hospital in Oswestry that specialises in spinal injuries.

What was done?

The club offers adaptive rowing on Tuesday mornings throughout the year when river conditions allow. The adaptive rowing group includes six wheelchair users, one rower with MS and occasionally, a rower with severe sight impairment from another club. The club provides sessions for groups of two rowers, in single sculls, for one hour, with three sessions each day depending on numbers.

Each session is supported by three coaches (two coaches follow the scullers in the launch and one remains on the bank) and two helpers on the bank. The club has three adaptive single sculling boats: two set up with fixed seats and one with a sliding seat.

Occasional one-off sessions have also been provided, in conjunction with the Shropshire Inclusion Officer, for people with learning disabilities and those with a sight impairment. Two rowers with a severe sight impairment are members of a social rowing group, with one session per week (normally in a IV). Both adaptive rowers help to carry the boat to the water – one with support from his partner.

Challenges:

- The number of volunteer helpers limits the arrangement to one session per week at present.
- There are plans to improve accessibility for wheelchair users by providing a ramp on the landing stage and installing a lift to the upper floor of the boathouse.

Make sure you consider:

- Access to **both** clubhouse and the water.
- When and how to offer sessions, at times suitable for both adaptive rowers and your volunteers.
- How to integrate the adaptive rowers into wider club life.



Photo credit: Colin Hayton



Photo credit: Christine Hunter



Section 3 - Access considerations

3.1 Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 requires clubs to make '**reasonable adjustments**' to their services so that everyone can have access to them, including disabled people. For example, this may require physical changes to club premises to help disabled people overcome any physical barriers to access.

There is a degree of flexibility when deciding what constitutes a 'reasonable adjustment'. This may depend on the services that your club offers, the cost of making changes and the number of people affected. For example, 'reasonable adjustments' could be as simple as providing coaches with training to improve their knowledge (your services) or having a removable ramp to access the clubhouse (facilities). It doesn't have to mean having a lift installed or spending large sums on new buildings. Many adaptive rowers will require very few, if any, changes to your club's facilities.

Accessibility means much more than having ramps or wide doorways – from producing accessible, easy to understand information to providing a socially welcoming environment. Also remember that by improving club access, you will enhance the club environment for many other members of all ages.

Don't let fear of what you think you might have to do become a barrier to welcoming disabled people to your club.

3.2 Access audits

Although not a legal requirement, an **access audit** is a useful way of assessing how accessible your club is for everyone, not just for disabled people. It will also highlight any necessary changes. An access audit template is provided in [Appendix E](#).

Access audits can be completed by:

- A club member, using the audit templates provided by [British Rowing and Sport England](#).
- A professional access auditor – an internet search will show up many organisations that offer these services.

An access audit will help you understand the type of impairments you can cater for, as well as highlighting the areas of your club that may need adapting and any potential issues.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



An access audit will generally cover:

- Arrival – transport, parking, spaces, drop off, pathways, signage and outside lighting.
- Entrance – paths, steps, lighting, glass, door handle heights, handrails, ramps and lifts.
- Internal – lighting, doorway widths, signage, clearways, space, ramps, lifts, handrails, changing areas, toilets, equipment and communication systems such as induction loops.
- People – awareness training, marketing and consultation.
- Emergency plans.

This list isn't exhaustive and there will be other considerations. Both [British Rowing](#) and [Sport England](#) provide comprehensive guides and templates for access audits and design briefs, and there's a useful question and answer section in the Sport England link.

Top tips for access audits

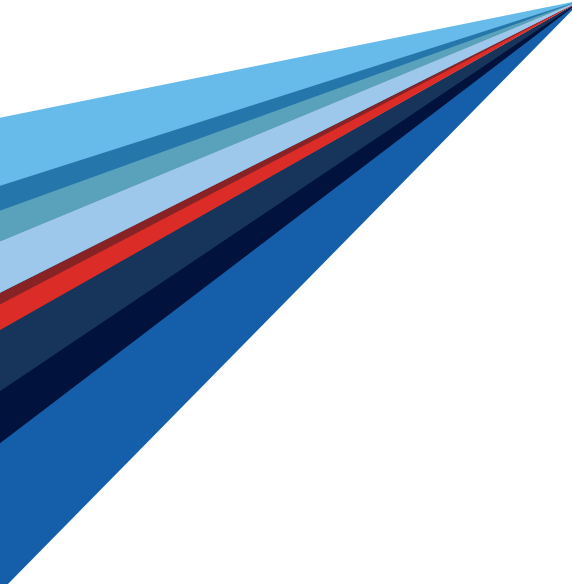
- Don't forget to involve any current members with an impairment – they may have already had to overcome barriers and may have ideas for effective or innovative solutions.
- 'Walk' through the adaptive rower's journey from pre-arrival through to accessing internal facilities and the water. Identify areas that might need changing or tweaking.
- As you work through your audit, compile a list of changes that could make your club more accessible in the future. These changes are also often relevant to all members, such as:
 - more outside lighting to make your club brighter and safer for everyone on dark evenings, or
 - reducing trip hazards such as protruding riggers by providing visible marking tape, better lighting or just a half tennis ball on the end of the rigger.

3.3 Improving accessibility

Whilst not all adaptive rowers will have needs that require a change to the club's operating procedures and facilities, there will be some rowers for whom a change would be beneficial.

Access to your clubhouse

Use your access audit to review your clubhouse provision. The minimum change you should make is ensuring that there are accessible toilet and changing facilities. This doesn't always mean building new facilities. If your current facilities are unsuitable, you could consider short term hire. If there is no accessible shelter, it might be possible to re-purpose existing spaces in your boathouse or even provide temporary facilities. In the summer, this could involve installing an outdoor gazebo to provide a covered area to change and/or socialise in that is accessible to everyone.



If you need to build new or refurbish your current facilities to provide suitable access, changing or toilets, contact adaptive@britishrowing.org for support or information about any grants that may be available to help cover the costs.

Make sure you also think about access to your gym and rowing machines. If access to these areas is difficult, why not come to a usage agreement with a local gym or health club for fitness training that benefits everyone. If your group grows, you could also consider hiring facilities, for example, in a local school or college, which are accessible to everyone.

Access to the water

Access to the water depends on the configuration of your club's boating areas and this may impact on the type and number of adaptive rowers that you can accommodate. For example, deep steps may be unsuitable for wheelchair users or people with limited mobility and may also be unsuitable for a ramp due to the gradient. Having a gradual flat slope to the water, with stable landing stages, is the ideal scenario but this is not the situation at many clubs. Some examples of access provisions are provided in '[Adaptive Rowing: A Guide](#)', pages 6-7. The provision of pontoons and staging are often within the scope of grant funding programmes, so purchasing these could be an option.

Other access considerations may include:

- Is there a clear path to the water's edge?
- Is the path and access to the water on the level?
- Do steps need highlighted edges?
- Do you need protection for any sharp edges such as steps and pontoons?
- Do you need transfer matting, seats or boxes?

It's important to note that often these adaptations can be made quite easily and economically and can benefit everyone.

It is also important to remember that, whilst access to the water may be impossible for a small number of people, involvement does not always have to be about rowing on the water. Try to involve members in all aspects of club life including access to your indoor gym or ergo facilities, as well as social activities and volunteering.





Case study: Marlow Rowing Club

Providing adaptive and para-rowing

Marlow Rowing Club has a long record of providing both adaptive rowing and para-rowing. One of its first rowers to achieve prominence was Naomi Riches OBE (PR3-VI) who won bronze at Beijing 2008 and gold at London 2012.

After a fire in 2011, Marlow rebuilt its clubhouse with a design goal to make it one of the most accessible in the UK. The club then expanded its adaptive/para-rowing programme from one rower to be one of the largest programmes in the UK.

The squad has included rowers with conditions such as spinal injuries, polio, cerebral palsy, Parkinson's disease, amputation, learning disability, brain injury and visual impairment. All levels of impairment are supported from permanent and severe disability (through adaptive and para-rowing) to temporary injury and milder conditions (through mixed ability sessions). All levels of skill and commitment are welcome from international Paralympic elite competitors to casual recreational rowers.

Benefits to the club/sport

- The inclusion of para-rowing, adaptive rowing and mixed ability rowing has expanded the sport, opening it up to new members and supporters.
- Commercial and charitable organisations are much more inclined to provide financial support to clubs/initiatives that support inclusivity. This is particularly important given the challenges that rowing faces as its demographics and perceptions can sometimes paint an elitist picture.
- The format of “supported adaptive” rowing (a double with one adaptive and one non-adaptive rower) can provide a very rewarding experience for all club members (see quote).

“When I did single arm-sculling (to support a below-elbow amputee), I had to re-examine all the conventional wisdom about rowing technique and really think about and experiment with what made the boat go faster. In the process, I gleaned great insights into improving my own technique for regular rowing.”

Marlow Rowing Club member



Photo credit: Caroline Steele



Section 4 - Safety and welfare

4.1 Safety issues

There can be additional hazards and risks associated with adaptive rowing. These risks depend on many factors and are often influenced by the specific impairments of each rower. Extra support and supervision, as well as additional equipment, may be needed to keep everyone safe.

The risks associated with different impairments vary. For example, if a rower has poor hand function, core stability, muscle control or strength, they might not be able to activate a lifejacket, catch a throw line or reach to undo any straps.

Make sure that:

- Your club rules, safety plans and emergency response plans all reflect the additional actions needed.
- Every rower has an individual safety plan which, with the rower's consent, should be communicated to all safety personnel and coaches involved in the session. Some people may not need extra safety measures but it's important to have all the relevant information from your rower and their support team/carers/parents – this will allow you to run the sessions safely for everyone.
- You know what information you are collecting and why. Tell your rower why you are collecting it, how it will be used and for how long you will keep it.

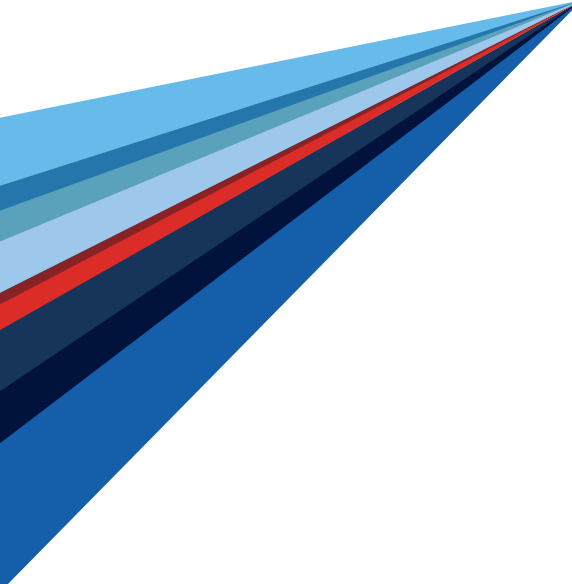
Adaptive rowing – Individual safety plans

The individual safety plan for every rower should contain, as a minimum:

- Personal details and relevant health information together with any responses to health emergencies.
- Emergency contacts.
- Individual considerations for the sessions including any actions to reduce the probability of a hazardous event occurring.
- An individual rescue plan with capsize recovery and retrieval actions.

Risk assessments

Appropriate lifejackets, floatation devices and safety aids should be available and may be needed for some or all sessions, depending on the rower's level of skill, experience, confidence and support requirements, as well as the conditions at the venue at the time. These aspects should all be assessed using a **risk assessment**.



Make sure that all lifejackets and any other equipment are checked regularly, well maintained and are worn correctly so that nothing interferes with their correct operation. It's important that they don't interfere with the rowing stroke or the rower's ability to get free from the boat in the event of capsize. More information can be found in [RowSafe](#).

Involve your Club Rowing Safety Advisor and any support personnel in all the safety discussions. These meetings should be a team effort for the benefit and learning of everyone but remember to respect the confidentiality of the participants. A 'need to know' basis should apply to sharing information about health issues.

You will find more information on the safety of adaptive rowers and the expectations of the rowers and their support team, carers, club and coaches in [RowSafe](#). There is also advice in [Adaptive Rowers Safety Guidance for Event Organisers](#) document.

Capsize and recovery

A capsize and recovery drill is an essential tool to help you and your rowers prepare for the consequences of capsize. It will:

- Enable your rower, safety personnel and coach to assess the procedures to follow should capsize occur.
- Provide feedback and learning opportunities, in a controlled environment, in relation to any difficulties that might occur. Any specific actions needed to safeguard your rower should be included in their individual safety plan.
- Evaluate the equipment to manage key issues such as foot entrapment, release from prosthetics and the rower's ability to safely remove body and leg straps under water.

There are many types of impairments that you will come across and dealing with a capsize situation will vary from person to person. It's important that everyone involved has experience of observing and attending a capsize and recovery drill, including anyone assisting with adaptive rowing sessions.



Photo credit: Nick Steele



Top tips: Capsize drills for adaptive rowers

- Ensure that it is safe for the rower by completing a detailed risk assessment of the drill.
- Ensure there are controls in place to make the experience as safe and controlled as possible for everyone. These can include:
 - Holding a full briefing for everyone (safety personnel, coaches, helpers and rowers).
 - Determining swimming ability in advance.
 - Making sure the rower knows what to do before getting in the boat.
 - Having medical support available.
 - Making sure the briefing includes the use of a suitable sharp knife to cut any strapping in case the participant can't undo it.
- At your first capsize and recovery session, you may wish to ask for support from someone who already coaches adaptive rowers (and who has run a similar session previously).

There is further information and a capsize and recovery drill video on this [RowHow](#) page that your qualified coaches will be able to access. The video can also be found on the British Rowing YouTube Channel [here](#).

British Rowing's Education Team can also advise on the delivery of Capsize and Recovery workshops. Contact education@britishrowing.org or adaptive@britishrowing.org.

Safety launches

It is good practice to have on water safety cover for all adaptive rowing sessions, with appropriately trained personnel.

Appropriate lifejackets, floatation devices and buoyancy aids should be carried as spares in your safety launch, together with a suitable knife to cut straps should a capsize occur and rowers cannot undo their strapping.

Not every rescue launch is suitable for rescuing all adaptive rowers. For example, your rescue launch may need to have low freeboards and/or a drop bow, to take account of reduced mobility or muscle weaknesses.

Other safety features for launches can be found in the [Adaptive Rowers Safety Guidance for Event Organisers](#) document.



Other considerations

Club safety procedures

Make sure that your club's safety procedures are adhered to at all times and give extra thought to:

- Throw lines – whether they will be of use and whether helpers are experienced in their use.
- Different communication methods such as radios/walkie-talkies/coach to athlete headsets.
- The number and experience of support personnel.
- The number of rowers you have at each session.

Land safety is covered under your club safety procedures, plans and rules, but if rowers are using gym equipment or rowing machines with additional fittings, these will also need to be risk assessed and included as part of their individual safety plan. [RowSafe](#) has further guidance on adaptive rowing, both on the water and for indoor rowing and gym activity.

Pontoons

The use of 'pontoons' or 'floats' for the boats used for adaptive rowing is one way of making them more stable. These do not have to be reserved just for single sculls. Using them in double sculls (2X) and coxed sweep or sculling boats (4+/X+) can make everyone more confident. However, it's important that they are set up correctly. For further information on the use on pontoons, see '[Adaptive Rowing – A Guide](#)'.

British Rowing recommends caution is taken with rowers who rely on pontoon floats for stability when changing rigger spans. The distance of the pontoons from the centre line of the boat can affect the stability of the boat, as can the height of the pontoons from the water. For further information, refer to [Adaptive Rowers Safety Guidance for Event Organisers](#).



Photo credit: Nick Steele



Top tips for using pontoons and strapping

Pontoons:

- If pontoons are used, fixing them as low as possible will maximise stability, although this does NOT guarantee that the boat will not tip over.
- Keep the bankside pontoon out of the way when getting your rower into the boat – it will help to keep the boat level and is safer and easier for the rower.
- Both pontoons should be on the water when the boat is level and the rower is seated.

Strapping, when used, should be:

- A minimum width of 50mm (under current safety regulations).
- Made of non-elastic material, without buckles.
- In good condition and self-closing (Velcro).
- Opened in the same direction and in the same manner, so it can be released immediately by the rower with a single, quick hand action of pulling on the free end of the strap.
- A contrasting colour to the rower's clothing (ideally).

For hand strapping:

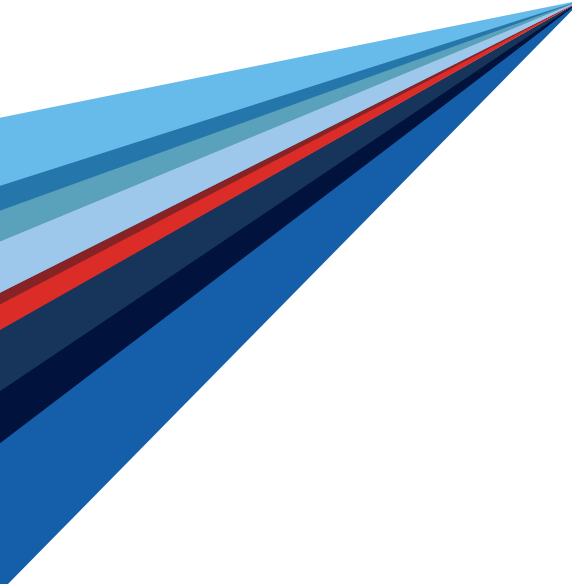
- Hand strapping should be able to be released immediately, either by the rower themselves or by a helper independently.
- Additional hand strapping may be used by any rower, provided the strapping regulation requirements are met. See [Adaptive Rowing Safety Guidance document](#).
- To avoid further incidents arising from a capsize, all boats should be equipped to allow the rowers to get clear of the boat without using their hands and with the least possible delay (see British Rowing [capsize video](#)).

Remember to check:

- Can your rowers undo their strapping unaided?
- Observe your rower removing their strapping on the bank – it's too late to confirm once a capsize has occurred.



Photo credit: Bruce Lynn



Pressure sores

Pressure sores can develop almost anywhere on the body and can be very serious as they can deteriorate quickly.

Any rower predisposed to pressure sores should:

- Use adequate protection, for example, a seat pad or cushion. Cushions not only provide comfort but can help to protect against the sitting pressures and shearing forces incurred when rowing.
- Watch out for pressure sores and bear in mind that increased perspiration, poor hygiene (or maintenance of prosthesis) can also cause skin irritation. Maintaining good skin and prosthetic hygiene should be encouraged at all times.
- Seek medical advice about the most suitable interface between themselves and the rowing seat.

If possible, the coach should use the rower's preferred method of skin protection when rowing, both indoors or outdoors.

Further information and guidance can be found in [Adaptive Rowing: A Guide](#), page 30 and on the [World Rowing website](#).

4.2 Rower welfare

Welfare and safety of Adults at Risk

The welfare and safety of all rowers should be of paramount importance to everyone at your club and detailed information on this topic is available in both the [Club Governance Guide](#) and on the British Rowing [website](#).

By having effective safeguarding policies and procedures and making sure everyone applies them in their roles, you will help everyone enjoy the sport in a safe and inclusive environment. Your club's policies and procedures should be widely available and implemented by everyone, from committee members to coaches and volunteers, as well as your rowers and their support networks.

If you have junior rowers you will already have a [Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy](#) in place and this will also apply to any adaptive rowers who are under 18 years old.

For adult adaptive rowers, your club should adopt British Rowing's [Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy](#). Everyone should understand this policy's contents and know what to do if there are any concerns, whether these arise in the rowing environment or not.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



The Care Act (2014) identifies adults as being more susceptible to harm and therefore 'Adults at Risk', if they are:

- Over 18 years of age.
- Have needs for care and support (whether or not their local authority is meeting any of those needs).
- Experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect.
- As a result of those care and support needs, unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

Your adult adaptive rowers can decide for themselves if they identify as an Adult at Risk as it is up to them to make their own decisions, unless it is proven that they do not have the capacity to do so. This does not alter your club's responsibilities towards them. Be aware that, as with any other group, abuse can happen anywhere and comes in many guises. There are many categories of abuse that may be experienced by Adults at Risk and you can find more information about them [here](#).

Your coaches and volunteers have a duty of care towards their rowers. Make sure that they are aware of the different forms of abuse, behavioural signs of abuse and the procedures for reporting any concerns.

If you are unclear about anything in the Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy, or what it means to your club and your rowers, contact your Club Welfare Officer.

Training for all those involved in coaching adaptive rowing is beneficial and your Club Welfare Officer can help you to source this. Both [UK Coaching](#) and the [Ann Craft Trust](#) have resources and training materials for safeguarding Adults at Risk. The Anne Craft Trust [resources](#) section includes a particularly useful Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document.

If you have any specific queries or need to speak to someone, contact Iso@britishrowing.org.



Photo credit: British Rowing



Section 5 - Technical aspects

5.1 Coaching considerations

When coaching adaptive rowers, it is important to find out the adaptive rower's starting point, discuss where they want to get to and work together to find a way of getting there. These basics are the same whether coaching an adaptive rower or not, although a key difference might be the amount of time that it takes to progress in some (although not all) circumstances.

Whether coaching indoor or on the water, fixed or sliding seat rowing, the basics remain the same:

- Keeping everyone safe.
- Being a good communicator and getting your message across.
- Planning progressions for everyone.
- Knowing how to give good feedback.

If your coaches would like to learn more about coaching disabled people, there are workshops or coaching courses offered by:

- [UK Coaching](#).
- [Disability Sports Coach](#).
- [Mencap](#).
- [International Mixed Ability Sport \(IMAS\)](#).
- [World Rowing – Level 1 Para-Rowing Course](#).
- British Rowing is currently developing an '[Introduction to Adaptive Rowing](#)' workshop.

Here are some further coaching considerations.

First steps

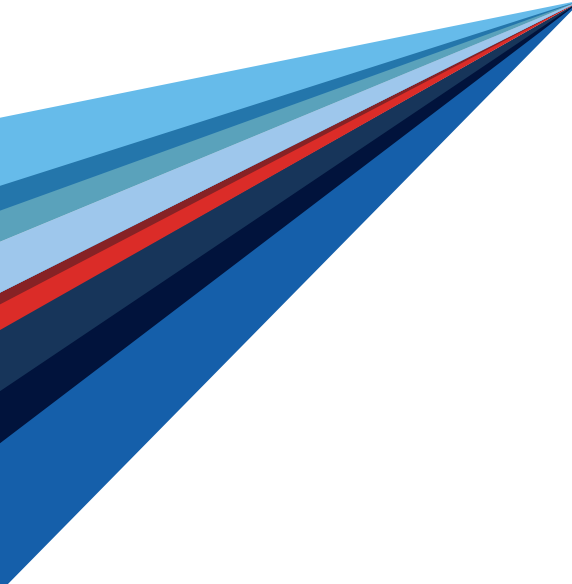
When starting out, some coaches might be apprehensive or worry about saying the wrong thing. They may be concerned about safety, the person's impairment or how to look after more than one rower at a time. By planning in advance, concerns such as access, safety and the rower's health and impairment can be addressed and coaches will feel much more prepared for their journey into adaptive rowing.

Meeting prospective adaptive rowers before the first rowing session gives both parties the opportunity to ask and answer any questions and for the coach to fully understand the nature of the rower's impairment. Your rower will be the expert on their impairment and may have managed it for a long time. They might have already given thought to how rowing could play a part in their life and how they could be involved.

Many coaches find that coaching adaptive rowers helps to develop their overall coaching skills.



Photo credit: Nick Steele



Many general concerns can be covered by acquiring knowledge and information. Some other considerations include:

- Assumptions – by engaging in open discussions, many assumptions can be diminished or dismissed. Talk to participants about what they *can* do and not just about what they *can't* do.
- Don't just focus on a person's impairment, focus on what they want to achieve.
- At the initial meeting, if appropriate, discuss any medical issues that may affect or be affected by rowing or by being on the water for any amount of time.
- Work out how individuals can take part – this might mean adaptations to equipment but could just mean changes to coaching style, the management of the session or rowing technique.

Encourage all adaptive coaches to ask for advice and support on any aspect of adaptive rowing.

Once any initial worries or concerns are overcome, it often becomes clear that the coaching skills required (and the progression achieved) for adaptive rowers are comparable to non-adaptive rowers.

Next steps

As with any learn to row course that your club runs, progression for anyone new tends to follow the same path:

- Indoor rowing – demonstration (used to analyse the rower).
- Rowing tank (if you're lucky enough to have access to one).
- Rowing in a stable boat – for adaptive rowers this usually involves a double scull boat with a coach/helper.
- Rowing in a single (with a rope tether initially).
- Rowing in a boat with others.
- Technical improvements – this might require more time for some rowers but is essentially the same for everyone, finding a way to progress through the skill levels.



Photo credit: Darren Douthwaite

Remember to treat everyone as an individual and not just part of a 'group' of adaptive rowers.

Coaches may need to adapt their coaching style to meet the needs of each rower. For example, the depth of explanation needed when coaching a blind or partially sighted rower may need refinement.

For group sessions, consider having separate groups for sliding seat rowers and fixed seat rowers. Those able to use sliding seats can use sweep oar boats where applicable, and those with upper limb impairments may also find this easier.



Top tips for coaching adaptive rowers

- Aim to understand the rower's impairment and how this might impact on their rowing – share this knowledge on a 'need to know' basis.
- Talk to the rower about their needs and ask them to set their own goals, even if you have to guide them.
- Be aware that some people might find accessing the seats on rowing machines or in boats difficult if there is limited space or they have physical impairments or mobility problems.
- Complete a swim test and capsize and recovery drill as soon as possible and preferably before going on the water. This will show how individuals might react in a capsize scenario and how they interact in a different environment and with other people.
- Always use a rope to tether any boats (for safety), especially when starting off in a single scull – it's too late to realise that rowers can't get back if they drift away!
- Progression into a 2X (double scull) with an experienced rower can help with confidence and skill progression – consider supported/mixed ability rowing.
- Keep instructions clear and simple.
- Remember feedback is a powerful tool for encouragement.
- Always have a 'Plan B' ready to adapt sessions if needed.
- Find out about appropriate workloads for adaptive rowers or where to go for advice, especially for rowing related injuries – email adaptive@britishrowing.org.
- Ask for support or mentoring if you need help. Contact adaptive@britishrowing.org to obtain contacts for other clubs and coaches who have been in your position.

Finding out more

By understanding more about different impairments, your coaches will be able to plan how best to help your rowers progress, as well as keep them safe.

Be aware that some adaptive rowers might possess skills and knowledge from previous sporting/water-sports experiences and so learning new skills might not seem so daunting. In contrast, others may have no comparable experiences and so may be more apprehensive.

When coaching juniors with an impairment, make sure that the parents are involved at each step. They will generally know what their child can and can't do and they may also be very cautious about their child trying a new activity and being in a new environment.



Specific impairments

Knowing more about a rower's specific impairment also helps to assess if any extra support is needed. For example, if they have a **learning impairment**, you should consider:

- Possible behavioural issues or reduced attention span.
- Keeping close to the bank (and coach) at all times.
- Simplifying language and possibly using repetitive language for coaching points.
- Providing physical help to show the movement of oars – always ask for permission.
- Providing repetition and routine for all sessions.
- Giving emotional support if needed.
- Involving the parents or carers of any juniors.

For someone with a **physical impairment**, find out more about:

- Key points of their disability.
- Any safety implications, such as lack of upper body strength, which make self-rescue impossible.
- Any special medical considerations, for example, any sensation loss in a limb that could be exacerbated by rowing positions.

There are many organisations providing specific advice on individual disabilities or impairments, see [Appendix D](#) – Links to useful information.

Every impairment has its own coaching challenges but by asking key questions and adapting coaching styles, activities or delivery, most can be overcome.

Questions to ask

For coaches:

- Do you need to consider where your activity takes place, do you need more space to keep everyone safe? Do you designate an area on the water specifically for adaptive rowing?
- Is the session indoors or on the water? Are you surrounded by other rowers racing up and down or moving between weights machines and proving a distraction?
- If you use crew rowing, does everyone have the same impairment or do you use a system of supported/mixed ability rowing? If you do, do your 'supporters' know their role?
- Do you keep everyone together and teach them the same thing, or have individual goals no matter how small they are?
- Is your equipment suitable – do you use stable boats, pontoons, higher rigging, less overlap, shorter oars?
- How do you make sure everyone learns if you have a group of rowers with very different speeds or standards? Can you set individual challenges?
- For anyone Deaf or hard of hearing, can you use visual aids such as pictures, video or British Sign Language (BSL)? Are you in front of the rower and close by (for those that lip read)?



Further considerations

To help make adaptive rowing coaching more enjoyable, consider the following:

- Adopt good lifting techniques – there may be local workshops for coaches.
- Practice wheelchair transfers in a safe environment on land first.
- Make sure there is protection for the rower, such as matting or boxes, from any sharp edges or wet floors, when transferring into a boat or onto an ergo.
- Understand any environmental factors that may affect your rower, such as heat, cold, etc.
- Know where any spinal cord injuries are (complete v incomplete) as this can have an impact on limb movement and symmetry.
- Learn about pressure sores and what causes them.
- Find out more about autonomic dysreflexia (a potential medical emergency) for those with spinal injuries.
- Discuss long term medical conditions with rowers to assess any impact on their rowing.
- For those that are visually impaired or blind:
 - Slow down any skill drills and be aware that balance and spatial awareness can be affected.
 - If indoors, consider using software for voice instructions such as erg data from [Concept2](#).
 - On the water, use radio (boat to land/launch for steering support) or even bluetooth supported earphones for both coach and rower, linked to a mobile phone.
- Seek advice and clarification if you are unsure about anything.

Considerations when coaching rowers using a fixed or upright seat (ARI/2 or PRI/2)

- Safety and the use of pontoons – always check the security of the fixings.
- Safety equipment – carry a knife to cut through strapping if needed in an emergency.
- Equipment – boats with pontoons are more stable but can still capsize.
- Equipment – rigging with narrower spans can make the boat more unstable.
- Capsize drills should be a priority – what would happen and how the rower would cope?
- Rower – check the rower's ability to swim and tread water.
- Rower – rehearse wheelchair transfers safely.
- Rower – if any prosthetics are used, will they be used in the boat and, if so, how are they released in an emergency.
- Personal or medical – hydration strategies may be needed for some disabled people due to issues with skin blood flow, sweat responses, temperature fluctuations and/or heat injuries.



Remember that other coaches, workshops and courses can all provide useful sources of information. Internet searches are useful, but unless the information comes from a reputable source, always check with adaptive groups, clubs or other experienced coaches first. [‘Adaptive Rowing – A Guide’](#), has in depth explanations about adaptive rowing for many disabilities and impairments.

Considerations when coaching people with prosthetics

When coaching anyone with a prosthetic, discuss how their prosthetic might impact on:

- Comfort when rowing.
- Health – there may be medical thermoregulatory, muscle imbalances, perspiration, pain and/or pressure issues to consider.
- Rowing stroke – to understand if any changes are necessary.
- Safety – how will the rower release themselves from the boat in the event of a capsize if they are wearing their prosthetic. Make sure the safety team are aware of any issues.

5.2 Equipment

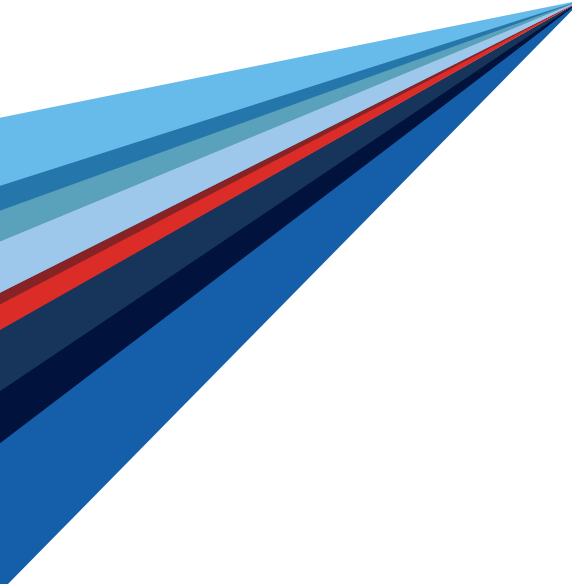
Clubs are encouraged to use the standard equipment that is currently in their boathouse and not allow a lack of adaptive boats to be a barrier to offering adaptive rowing.

Adaptive indoor rowing

Adaptive indoor rowing is possible using specially designed equipment, an adapted rowing stroke or different methods of communication. For indoor rowing equipment, there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution. However, there are a range of seating systems, additional tools and technologies available to suit different requirements. For example:

- A fixed flat seat can be used for those who have full trunk and arm function but are unable to use a sliding seat.
- Upright fixed seat can be used for those who have no or limited trunk control.
- A rotating handle can be used by those who only have the use of one arm.
- A gripping aid can be used by anyone with poor grip.
- Software or apps such as [ErgData](#) or [Boatcoach](#) for those with visual impairments.

For further information, visit the [British Rowing Adaptive Indoor Rowing](#) page.



Boats

Adaptive rowers come in all shapes and sizes with a range of impairments that might require boats with different adaptations. In general, the boats needed for adaptive rowers don't have to be specialised and it's impossible to prescribe a list of the adaptations you might need. The boats most commonly used for adaptive rowing are 1X, 2X, but any boat can be used and larger boats (4+/X or 8+'s) can enable adaptive rowers to join other squads or groups.

Further considerations include:

- Short sculls may be needed for some fixed seat rowers. However, adjustments to standard oars will help with getting started.
- Many club boats with flat-end riggers can be converted to accommodate pontoons.
- Equipment modifications vary from rower to rower, but as most adaptive rowers won't have their own boat, having boats suitable for a range of people is the answer for most clubs.
- Audit what you have at your club and seek advice from the adaptive rowing community.

When racing, the following equipment is used (see also [section 6](#) for more information on event categories):

- AR3 & PR3 events: 4+ any boat that complies with the [British Rowing Rules of Racing 4-2-2 & 4-2-3](#).
- AR2 & PR2 events: 2X boats are fixed seat and may have pontoons. The strapping used must comply with [Adaptive Rowing Safety Guidance](#).
- ARI & PRI events: 1X boats are fixed seat with pontoons. The strapping used must also comply with the [Adaptive Rowing Safety Guidance](#).

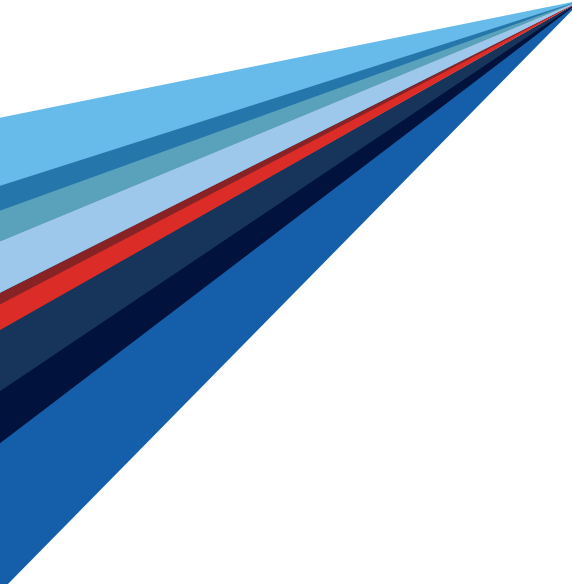
Rigging

Worrying about how boats are rigged shouldn't be a reason to prevent someone rowing, as not every adaptive rower needs a boat that has been modified.

When you've had time to see what works, you may find that adaptations like strapping, cushioning/padding and adjusting feet and seating positions have far more of an impact on the comfort and learning experience of the rowers than how many degrees their rowing or sculling stroke travels through.



Photo credit: Kevin Shaw



Most adaptive rowers start out using club boats that are shared with the rest of the club. You might not be able to alter the rigging but to make your rowers more comfortable or safer in the boat, try some simple adjustments such as:

- ‘Acquiring’ unused oars or sculling blades and resizing or shortening them. There are videos from [Concept2](#) and [Croker](#) on how to adjust or replace sleeves. Don’t forget to check the pitch too and use marine epoxy and fillers.
- Asking local clubs for any spare riggers and using them to alter the spread or span on boats that are difficult to adjust.
- Borrowing pontoons (floats) and their fixings.



Photo credit: Darren Douthwaite

During your initial sessions, try out changes and make adjustments to see what works for everyone.

At some point, you will start to consider whether you have the optimum rigging set up for the boats that you use. This guide does not set out rigging tables as there is the potential for rower injury if individuals are not assessed properly. However, some examples of rigging measurements can be found through an internet search. Be aware that they are often based on Paralympic level rowers and so may not be suitable for new club level adaptive rowers so use them as a guide/starting point only. The [World Rowing](#) website also has a [Paralympic Rigging Survey](#) example which shows the great variation in measurements between countries and boats, as well as between the athletes within the boats!

As your adaptive rowers progress, there can be significant gains to be made in terms of comfort, technique and boat speed by optimising the rigging and blade set ups of your boats. This applies to all adaptive rowers and not just those who want to race.

When setting up the rigging for any boat, consider the following aspects:

- Only adjust one parameter at a time and record all measurements.
- Span (sculling boats) and spread (sweep oar) measurements.
- Footplate position in relation to the pin.
- Length of oars/sculls (overall length and inboard).
- Height of the seat (or sitting position).
- How does it look and feel?

Remember that rigging boats for adaptive rowers may require extra considerations such as specific equipment adaptations, e.g. a fixed seat. There are many examples found in [Adaptive Rowing: A Guide](#), pages 36-41.



Top tips for rigging

Fixed seat considerations:

- Get the correct length for oars/sculls – ideally these need to be shorter than normal and there might be no cross over for sculling blades (because the rower has no use of their legs). This could require re-positioning sleeves, cutting down the size of the blades or purchasing new blades.
- Consider whether to use a narrow span (and potentially overload your rower if you don't have short blades) or wider span (which is easier but results in shorter strokes).
- Consider if an overlap in sculling boats is possible – this very much depends on your rower's impairment, their strength, leg length and the alterations you can make to the span of the boat.
- It is generally accepted that ARI/PRI (fixed seat) singles have no overlap on the scull handles as the rower will have no or minimal trunk movement.
- Backrests and fixed seats – the angle of the seat back might need to be altered. Also, consider if the back rest is needed (safety is always paramount).

Sliding seat considerations:

- A mix of genders and/or types of impairments may require different spreads and possibly lengths of oars.
- Mobility ranges can differ, so consider stretcher placement and angle carefully.
- For rowers with prosthetics or orthotics, their stroke length and balance may be affected. Depending on the boats you use, this can require different spread or oar length, and possible counter balance measures in the boat.

Generic rigging considerations:

- Ensure that the oarlock height measurement in relation to the seated height of the rower is correct, especially if they are using padding or seat cushions. This setting may need to be higher than a standard club height – for example, extra length pins may be needed. These can be obtained from most boat manufacturers or made to measure from specialist companies.
- Consider the height of the seat – changes to the seat undercarriage can add extra height where needed. This makes the rower higher when considering the height of the swivel from the water. This measurement should ideally be done whilst the athlete is seated in the boat.
- Stroke arc measurements are affected by different rigging configurations – ideally you want a comfortable arc which doesn't place too much stress on the upper body.
- Consider the use of pontoons/floats (or not) and the height of these in relation to the water. They can help with stability and can be lifted/raised as the rower becomes more confident.



Top tips for rigging – continued

Generic rigging considerations:

- Consider whether to use a narrow span (and potentially overload your rower if you don't have short blades) or wider span (which is easier but results in shorter strokes).
- Placement and angles of foot stretchers as well as the 'splay' between the feet might all need to be considered for comfort, technical development and prevention of injury in rowers with impairments such as restricted ankle movement or club foot.
- Understand how the use of prosthetics or orthotics can affect the rowing stroke, both in terms of the range of stroke and balance implications.
- The use of cushions can alter the centre of gravity for a rower.

Other rigging and technical aspects to consider as your rowers improve:

- Stroke arcs – many adaptive rowers will have reduced trunk flexion/extension and this will impact on the overall stroke length that they achieve. If the span and/or inboard length of blades is adjusted, the stroke arc measurement can be increased (aim should be 90 degrees) and the ratio of the arc can be altered.
- Stroke arcs – wider arcs (achieved by reduced spans) produce a longer stroke but require more power.
- Shorter inboard can give a longer reach but requires more shoulder use at the catch.
- Stroke length can be measured on an ergo by measuring how far the handle moves. Knowing this length allows the rower to be set up in the correct position in relation to the pin.

Further information

A number of boatbuilders now produce boats specifically designed for adaptive rowers. More information can be found on their websites, including the different types and sizes of sweep oars and sculling blades. The [adaptive rowing oar guide by Swift Racing](#) provides an outline of the oar lengths available as well as a sample rigging table.

British Rowing runs rigging workshops and coaching courses to help you find out more about general rigging. These are for all types of rowing boats. For more information contact education@britishrowing.org.

'[Adaptive Rowing – A Guide](#)' also has many images of equipment and equipment modifications, see pages 27-36.

For further advice on equipment contact adaptive@britishrowing.org





Section 6 - Competition and events

6.1 Introduction

Every rower is looking to challenge themselves in different ways. For some adaptive rowers, that might mean getting into a boat and rowing by themselves with no assistance. For others, it could be competing in a race. Whatever their goal, the possibilities are endless with a wide range of indoor and on-water challenges and competitions taking place throughout the year.

Setting personal challenges, either on a rowing machine or on-water, is a great way to have fun whilst learning new skills and developing self-confidence. Both coaches and rowers will benefit from setting challenges as they're a great way of seeing improvements and new found skills in action.

Competitions can be an extension of this goal setting, providing an opportunity to test these improvements further and motivate rowers to try to achieve higher goals.

The competition opportunities available for adaptive rowers are wide ranging and include [indoor rowing competitions](#), as well as on-water club and national championship competitions. For those with an eligible impairment and the desire to train hard, there is also the potential to race at the Paralympic Games.

Indoor rowing can offer an ideal introduction to competition for everyone, with a full competition calendar culminating in the British Rowing Indoor Championships (BRIC) which has many adaptive categories and races.

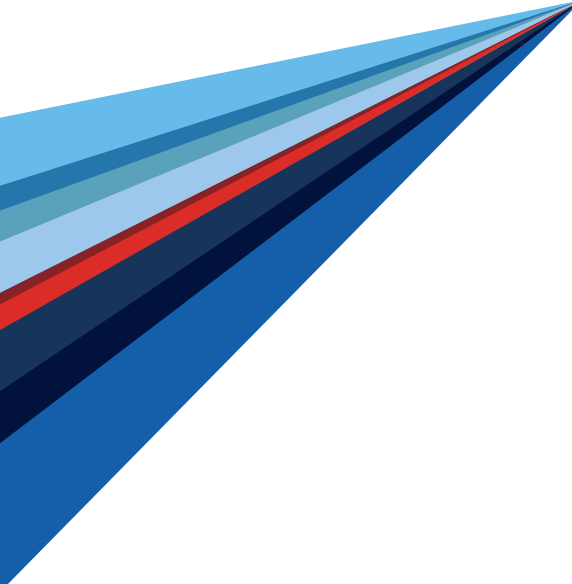
On-water competitions in rowing include regattas and head races. In rowing, the term 'events' refers to groups of races within a competition, such as supported 2X. If adaptive rowers at your club want to race on the water, the options are varied and include:

- Competing in adaptive only events within larger regattas.
- Competing in adaptive only regattas.
- Competing in non-adaptive events with non-disabled fellow club members.
- Competing in mixed ability (supported) rowing events within competitions.

Setting challenges in your adaptive rowing sessions can help to build skills, confidence and maintain interest.



Photo credit: Celia Hickson



The range of competitive events for adaptive rowers within large regattas, as well as the number of standalone regattas for adaptive rowers, is growing each year and, as the number of adaptive rowers increases, this trend is expected to continue. Mixed ability (supported 2X) rowing events are also growing in number, particularly within adaptive only regattas. [The British Rowing Regatta Calendar](#) has links to all affiliated competitions which can include adaptive rowing events. A list of adaptive rowing events can also be found on the [Adaptive Rowing](#) website.

For an explanation of the most frequent types of events, see [section 6.3](#).

6.2 Classifications

When racing at any British Rowing affiliated competition, whether indoors or on the water, adaptive rowers will need a classification.

Classification gives the adaptive rower a sport class that determines the category they will compete in according to how much their impairment impacts on their rowing. It's used to ensure that rowers at a similar level are grouped together for fairer competition.

There are medical and technical aspects to the classification process, both organised and delivered by British Rowing. More information on the assessment process is available [here](#) or you can find out more at classification@britishrowing.org.

There are two classification avenues for adaptive rowers who want to compete:

- **Adaptive rowing:** This is for club level rowers who are assigned a sport class to compete in British Rowing events. A rower with an adaptive rowing classification cannot race as a classified para-rower.
- **Para-rowing:** These rowers are assigned a 'sport class' that enables them to compete at national para-rowing events. A rower who has been classified under the para-rowing criteria can also race in the corresponding adaptive rowing category.

Note. Para-rowers may race in adaptive rowing events but an adaptive rower is not eligible to race as a para-rower.



Photo credit: Nick Steele



Adaptive rowing and para-rowing classifications

Under the British Rowing [Rules of Racing](#), the current groupings for adaptive rowers are:

AR1 – Adaptive Rower (Largely Upright Seat).

AR2 – Adaptive Rower (Fixed Seat).

AR2-LI – Adaptive Rower (Sliding Seat – Learning Impairment).

AR3-PI – Adaptive Rower (Sliding Seat – Physical Impairment).

International classification classes for para-rowers are:

PR1 – Para Rower (Arms and Shoulders; Fixed seat and stabilising pontoons).

PR2 – Para Rower (Trunk and Arms; Fixed seat with optional stabilising pontoons).

PR3-VI – Para Rower (Legs, Trunk, Arms & Visual Impairment; sliding seat – no restrictions).

PR3-PI – Para Rower (Legs, Trunk, Arms & Physical Impairment; sliding seat – no restrictions).

Indoor rowing classification classes are: [Note: IAR = Indoor Adaptive Rowing]

IAR1 – Rowers use a static/upright or flat seat.

IAR2 – Rowers use a static upright seat with mandatory chest strap and an optional lap/pelvis straps.

IAR3 – Rowers use a sliding seat and can row with a single hand grip or a D handle as required.

IAR4 – Rowers use a flat seat with optional legs straps.

IAR5 – Rowers use a standard rowing sliding seat with hand grips allowed.

IAR6 – Rowers with chronic health conditions not resulting in physical impairment, or those with physical impairments not comparable with impairments in the other categories. A self-declaration form must be completed and submitted for approval ahead of an event.

The objective for all competition is for races to be fair, equal and as well matched as possible. With the small population of adaptive rowers at present, this can take a little consideration, but is not insurmountable.

6.3 Organising competitions

In addition to ensuring that races are fair, equal and as well matched as possible, if your competitions and events include adaptive rowing, other considerations will include additional safety precautions and how to attract adaptive rowers to compete.

For advice on setting up a competition, speak to your Club Water Safety Advisor in the first instance. If more advice is needed, contact your [Regional Rowing Safety Advisor](#). You could also contact other adaptive rowing event organisers about their experiences.



For further information about including adaptive rowing events at your competitions, refer to:

- [Competition organisation guides for British Rowing affiliated competitions](#) [here](#).
- [Adaptive Rowing Safety Guidance document](#) – this includes specific safety considerations for event organisers.

Although these guides are written for affiliated British Rowing competitions, they are useful for any organiser planning to include adaptive rowing events in their competition.

You'll also find sections on adaptive rowing safety within competitions in [RowSafe](#).

Top tips for organising competitions

Safety:

- Ensure clear safety procedures for all adaptive races and rowers.
- All safety personnel should know how to rescue an adaptive rower in the event of a capsize, and how to undo (cut) any strapping. There should be clear recovery protocols as well as post incident actions.
- Make sure each adaptive rower has an **individual rescue plan** that is shared with the safety personnel (who know what it means and what to do with it) and is available at all times.
- Use appropriate rescue launches – stable, with low free board or a drop bow.
- Make sure safety personnel know which boat adaptive rowers are in and which seat they are sitting in if they are in a crew.
- Have a signing system in place, from the rower to the safety personnel, in case of an emergency.

Safeguarding and welfare

- Ensure all relevant officials know if an adaptive rower is attending, which races they are in and what support they may need.
- Make sure that coaches inform the organisers of their rowers' specific needs, for example:
 - A sculler who is visually impaired may need a guide on the course.
 - A Deaf sculler may need extra starting procedures/support.
 - Someone with a learning impairment may need a different approach.

Officials

- Ensure all officials have knowledge of strapping requirements.
- Ensure that individual rescue plans are in place, together with any other relevant health information.
- Make sure umpires know which boat adaptive rowers are in, which seat they are sitting in (if they are in a crew) and what support may be needed.



Top tips for organising competitions – continued

Entries and events

- Close entries early enough so you can allocate event categories and allow for discussions with coaches and/or safety personnel if needed.
- Consider different ways to run your competition, for example:
 - Regatta style racing (side by side).
 - Time trials.
 - Allocate crews into similar speed events irrespective of disability.
 - Use a handicap system where crews submit a 500m time and are then allocated events and receive race handicaps if necessary.
- Any event can be offered for adaptive rowers, but the standard ones used at present are:
 - 1X – single scull for men and women.
 - Supported 2X – double scull (mixed ability rowing).
- If using BROE (Online Entry System), the easiest way to offer adaptive events is to have a category named ‘adaptive rowing’ and ask those entering to use the notes section to put as much information as they can to help you decide on groupings/events.

Other considerations:

- What events will you offer? Will you offer one event as an ‘umbrella’ and allocate people to categories/groups when you see the entries?
- Publicise your competition early to help people plan, e.g. on social media including specific groups such as the ‘Rowability’ group on FaceBook or on the [Adaptive Rowing](#) website.
- Talk to clubs who already have adaptive rowers – they will help to spread the word.
- Adapt your competition safety plan to include individual recovery plans.
- Try to minimise the waiting time for adaptive rowers.
- Make sure all helpers, officials and marshals understand the implications and differences that having adaptive rowers competing might mean. For example, if boats have pontoons, make sure they know:
 - How to check that the pontoons are fixed correctly.
 - How to check that the strapping is being used correctly.
 - That the rower knows how and can undo it.
- Plan the launching area carefully to be as safe and as clear as possible.
- Have enough helpers to manage the boating area, carry equipment and offer support where needed.
- Seek advice from an established adaptive rowing competition organiser if you’re not sure how to run your competition. Contact competition@britishrowing.org.
- Be ready to help on the day!

Case study: Stratford-upon-Avon Boat Club

Managing costs for adaptive rowers

Many disabled people have a limited amount of surplus income and deciding how much to charge for adaptive rowing can be a challenge. At Stratford-upon-Avon Boat Club (SUABC) the membership fee for adaptive rowers has been reduced from two-thirds to half of the full adult membership rate. Pay-as-you-go rates were considered but ruled out as the club wants to see long term benefits that are less likely with ad hoc attendance.

Despite the challenges of equipment and personnel, SUABC has really benefitted from adaptive rowing. In 2020, funding was obtained for a new wide stable single, a lightweight trailer and safety launch, specifically for the adaptive group. Together with other adaptive boats, the club now has eight stable boats of all sizes that are also used to deliver summer camps to nearly 100 local children.

Key lessons:

Be flexible with adaptive rowing subscriptions – have a basic structure but allow some leeway for personal circumstances.

“I would say all members have benefitted from the presence of our adaptive rowers, it has brought new volunteers, new activity and a real club ethos of tolerance.”

Mark Dewdney, Adaptive Head Coach



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Appendices

Appendix A – Key research findings

Key statistics

- 10% of all British Rowing members identify themselves as having some form of disability (British Rowing Member Diversity Survey 2017).
- 21% of all people in the UK reported having a disability, with some regional variations from 14% in London to 21% in the North East (2011 Census).

Sport England: Mapping Disability survey, 2016:

- Almost 70% of disabled people are aged over 50.
- There are more females with a disability than males.
- 1 in 5 people have a long standing, limiting disability or illness.

The [Family Resources Survey 2018/19](#) (Department of Work and Pensions):

- 48% of people reported mobility impairments.
- 27% of people reported a mental health impairment.
- 18% of people reported other/unspecified impairments.
- 42% of disabled children were reported to have a social/behavioural impairment.
- 34% of disabled children were reported to have a learning impairment.

Activity Alliance [Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2019/20](#):

- Disabled people are twice as likely as non-disabled people to be physically inactive.
- Four in five disabled people would like to be more active.
- Seven in ten disabled people are motivated to be active to improve or maintain their physical health.



Appendix B – Definitions, language and terminology

Defining disability

- The **social model of disability** states that it is the barriers that society places in the way that create the disability, such as an inaccessible clubhouse. When these barriers are removed, e.g. by providing a ramp, disabled people then have control and independence over their lives that other people take for granted. For more information on this social model, visit [Scope](#), the disability equality charity in England and Wales.
- The **Equality Act 2010 definition of disability** states that you have a disability if you have a 'physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities'. 'Substantial' means more than minor or trivial i.e. it takes much longer than it would usually take to complete a daily task like getting dressed. 'Long term' means for 12 months or more, e.g. a breathing condition that has developed as a result of a lung infection. Further information is set out in the [Equality Act 2010 definition of disability](#).

Within this guide we use the term 'disabled people' as a collective identity for people that meet the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability and the term 'impairment' to describe medical conditions.

The above definitions include people with a wide range of disabilities, impairments or recurring, fluctuating or progressive health conditions.

British Rowing recognises that many individuals and communities may wish to use their own descriptions, such as those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, people with learning difficulties, or blind and partially sighted people. We appreciate and acknowledge these requests although we are not able to detail all specific groups within every reference in this guide.

The range of impairments that people may have is far too large to list in this guide, but [Remploy](#) provides an excellent [A-Z of disabilities](#). It is important to remember that many impairments are invisible or may not be obvious.

Your club may already have members with an impairment who either choose not to disclose it, or do not identify themselves as being disabled. Therefore, it's important to approach the subject sensitively, based on a well-informed approach.



Preferred terms			
Description	Correct	Incorrect	Why not?
To describe a person who has an impairment.	Disabled person.	Person with a disability.	This is in line with the Equality Act 2010.
To describe a person who is not disabled.	Non-disabled person.	Able-bodied, normal.	“Non-disabled” gives a clearer distinction as to what you are describing than “able bodied”.
A phrase to describe an impairment.	A person/athlete who has a spinal cord injury, a person/athlete with paraplegia.	A spinal injury athlete, a paraplegic.	A person might have an impairment or medical condition but it does not actually define them as a person. Avoid describing the person as an impairment.
A phrase to describe someone who uses a wheelchair, either occasionally for additional mobility or independence, or for everyday living needs or independence.	Wheelchair user or a person who uses a wheelchair.	Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair.	Terms like ‘bound’ or ‘confined’ should be avoided as they infer entrapment. Instead a wheelchair is an aid or tool, which a person uses.

Phrases to avoid	
Phrase/word	Why avoid?
Suffers from, afflicted with, victim of.	These portray the individual as being in a weak, frail or tragic position. A lot of athletes would say that they do not ‘suffer from’ their impairment.
The disabled, the blind.	Grouping disabled people by their disability in this way implies all disabled people in that group share the same characteristics, which stereotypes them.
Abnormal, defective and deformed.	These adjectives all have negative connotations in the English language and should not be used.
Spastic, retard, handicap, invalid and cripple.	These nouns all have negative connotations in the English language and should not be used.
Normal.	What is deemed normal is highly subjective. Using the word normal to draw a comparison between non-disabled and disabled people or between Olympians and Paralympians should be avoided. In a sporting context this is particularly unhelpful as the physiology of an elite sportsperson is unusual – would you describe Chris Hoy or Usain Bolt as “normal”?



Appendix C – Guidance on interacting with disabled people

Offer assistance, but remember it will not always be accepted: You should always ask if an individual would like assistance before rushing in and imposing yourself on them. Your help may not be required. However, don't feel awkward about offering to help, it is perfectly polite and acceptable to do so. Also, if your assistance is declined on one occasion, do not be offended or put off asking in the future. Encourage your rowers to ask for help if they need it.

Be direct: Always speak directly with the person rather than their companion, assistant or interpreter. Remember to use your usual manner and speak in your normal tone – a physically disabled person does not necessarily have a hearing impairment or learning disability so be aware that you could sound condescending.

Learning disability: If you are talking to someone with a learning disability, always use simple, plain language and give them time to answer your questions. Tell the person if you did quite not understand what was said and ask them to repeat what they have said, rather than letting them believe that you have understood them.

Wheelchair users: Be aware that a wheelchair is part of a person's personal space so do not lean on it or hold on to it unless of course offered permission to do so.

Behave naturally: For example, shake hands with a disabled person as you would any other person, even if they are wearing a prosthesis or have limited movement of their hand or arm. It is a universal sign of greeting.

Everyday phrases: There is no need to feel self-conscious about using everyday phrases. Some everyday phrases are perfectly acceptable; some people who use wheelchairs will state themselves 'I'm going for a walk'. It is also perfectly acceptable to say to a visually impaired person 'I will see you later'. Using common sense, everyday phrases of this kind are most unlikely to cause any offence.

Don't forget to tell all your adaptive rowers to ask for help if they need it. Equally, encourage all your adaptive rowing coaches to be open and to also ask for help or advice if they need it.



Appendix D – Links to useful information

Here is a list of organisations providing further guidance and useful information on related topics:

[Activity Alliance](#)

[British Blind Sport](#)

[Cerebral Palsy Sport \(CP Sport\)](#)

[Club Matters website](#)

[Concept2 Adaptive Rowing](#)

[Disability Sports Coach UK](#)

[Disability-grants Search Engine](#)

[Dwarf Sports Association UK](#)

[Epilepsy Society](#)

[Headway](#)

[Mencap](#)

[Mixed ability sport](#)

[Para Sport.UK](#)

[Paralympics](#)

[Royal National Institute for the Blind \(RNIB\)](#)

[Scope](#)

[Special Olympics](#)

[Sport and Recreation](#)

[Sport England](#)

[UK Deaf Sport](#)

[Wheel Power](#)

[World Rowing Education & Training courses](#)

For further information, please refer to:

- Rowability Facebook page.
- British Rowing Adaptive Rowing Group [webpage](#).



Appendix E – Access audit template

Rowing club – external		N/A	Yes	No	Identified in action plan?
1	Is the club within convenient walking distance of a public highway?				
2	Is the club within convenient walking distance of public transport?				
3	Is there accessible public transport to the club by bus and train?				
4	Are there bus routes with low-floor access ramps for wheelchair users?				
5	Is there a train station locally with lifts for wheelchair users?				
Car parking					
6	Is accessible parking provided for wheelchair users?				
7	Are sufficient dedicated accessible parking spaces provided?				
8	Is accessible parking clearly marked and signposted?				
9	Are there parking bays available with adequate transfer space for wheelchair users?				
10	Is accessible parking suitably surfaced and level for wheelchair users?				
11	Is accessible parking well lit, visible and safe?				
12	Are there suitable and safe set-down and pick-up points for vehicles?				
13	Are there spaces close to the club and/or boathouse?				
Footpaths					
14	Are there paths without steps?				
15	Are paths wide enough?				
16	Are the edges of pathways clearly defined by colours/tactile surface?				
17	Are there ramps and handrails where necessary?				
18	Is the ramp slip resistant?				
Steps					
19	Are there steps?				
20	Are the steps of appropriate dimensions?				
21	Do the steps have a tactile surface for advanced warning of change in level?				
Access to boathouse					
22	Is the boathouse entrance door wide enough for wheelchair users?				
23	Is the boathouse adequately lit?				
24	Are the boathouse bays wide enough to avoid projections (e.g. riggers)?				



Rowing club – external		N/A	Yes	No	Identified in action plan?
25	Is the floor space clear of obstacles (e.g. riggers, seats)?				
26	Are the boats easy to remove and replace in the boathouse (consider sliding racks/trolleys)?				
27	Are oar and sculling blades easy to remove and replace in the boathouse by wheelchair users?				
28	Are lifejackets located at an appropriate height for wheelchair users?				
29	Does the club have equipment including boats, seating that is appropriate to the rowers needs?				
Access to water					
30	Is the boating area accessible for wheelchair users?				
31	Is there an accessible shoreline?				
32	Is there an embarkation pontoon with access ramp for wheelchair users?				
33	Is the pontoon access ramp of the appropriate gradient?				
34	Does the pontoon have the appropriate transfer height to boats?				
35	Is the pontoon stable?				
36	Is there adequate room for assisted moving, handling and transfer to the boat?				
37	Is there a hoist for moving, handling and transfer to boat?				
38	Is the hoist sling appropriate to the rowers needs?				
Rowing club – internal					
39	Is the entrance door to the club clearly colour contrasted or distinguishable from the surrounding facade?				
40	If there is a glass door, is it visible in its closed position through transoms?				
41	Does the door have large pull handles?				
42	Does the glass door have glazing manifestation bands or logos 1.5m above floor level?				
43	Does the entrance door provide a clear opening for wheelchair users?				
44	Are floor surface areas easily negotiable by wheelchair users?				
45	Is there a lift to upper floors?				
46	Does the lift provide a clear opening width?				
47	Are the lift doors adequately colour contrasted from the surrounding wall?				
48	Is there a platform stair-climber lift?				



Rowing club – internal		N/A	Yes	No	Identified in action plan?
Sanitary facilities – toilets					
49	Is there a WC for rowers with a disability (accessible toilet)?				
50	Is there a WC with sufficient room for a left and right transfer?				
51	Is there a washbasin of appropriate height for wheelchair users?				
52	Are there hand drying facilities at an appropriate height for wheelchair users?				
53	Is the floor slip resistant and colour contrasted from the walls?				
54	Are all the sanitary fittings and grab-rails colour contrasted from the walls?				
55	Is the route to the WC accessible to wheelchair users without obstructions?				
56	Are any sanitary dispensers identifiable to rowers with a visual impairment?				
Sanitary facilities – accessible showers/changing rooms					
57	Are there changing rooms clearly identified by visual and tactile information?				
58	Are the shower controls at the appropriate height and easily identifiable to users with a visual impairment and users with limited hand function?				
Signage					
59	Are entry/exit points to the club and parking area clearly identified?				
60	Is signage current, consistent and relevant throughout?				
61	Are direction and information signs at consistent heights?				
62	Is all signage kept simple with approved pictorial symbols where appropriate?				
63	Is signage tactile?				
64	Is written information available in appropriate language and sensory format?				
65	Is all signage unobstructed and clearly visible from both a seated and standing position?				
66	Is there an audible emergency alarm system supplemented by a visual/tactile system?				
67	Are ground floor emergency exit routes level and accessible to all, including wheelchair users?				



Thank you.

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Thank you to everyone who provided photos to support this Adaptive Rowing Guide.