

Risk assessment – kayak, canoe & stand-up-paddleboard

Name of activity, event, and location Dernford Nook kayak, canoe & SUP This risk assessment is for kayaking, canoeing, or SUP on Dernford's Class C waters. This may need to be edited to make it suitable for a given event and location.	Date of assessment 17/05/26	Name of person using this risk assessment [Blank]
	Date of review 1 year after the date above	

What could go wrong? What hazard have you identified? What are the risks from it?	Who is at risk?	What are you going to do about it? How are the risks already controlled? What extra controls are needed? How is it communicated to young people and adults and remain inclusive to all needs?	Review & revise What has changed or what happened that needs to be thought about and controlled?
Adverse water conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drowning • Secondary drowning • Hypothermia • Snagging Risks 	All Participants	Activity Organiser to brief Leaders to be aware of waterway hazards (e.g. snagging risks from trees) and brief Participants to avoid these. Where necessary block or direct Participants away from hazards. Leaders to continually assess water conditions during the session. Activity Organisers to rescue young people in the water quickly enough to limit hypothermia from the 10-12° water.	
Falling in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drowning • Secondary drowning • Hypothermia • Injuries from sharp objects in the water • Head injury 	All Participants	Activity Organiser to ensure sufficient Competent Paddlers with appropriate rescue and first aid skills for the number of Participants. Activity Organiser to ensure each group has access to a first aid kit. Activity Organiser to ensure all Participants wear appropriate and properly fitted buoyancy aids at all times near or on the water. Activity Organiser to ensure all Participants are appropriately dressed for the weather conditions. Activity Organiser to ensure all Participants wear suitable footwear that will stay on and protect the feet. Activity Organiser to brief SUP Participants to kneel down when within paddle length of bank, jetty or other craft. Activity Organiser to ensure Participants wear helmets when practising any skills that risk capsize (e.g. support strokes) close to bank or jetty.	
Entrapment in own craft <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drowning 	All Participants	Activity Organiser to ensure there are sufficient Competent Paddlers with appropriate rescue skills for the number of Participants. Activity Organiser to check clothing of Participants and minimise risks (e.g. no long and loose lace loops). Activity Organiser to ensure Participants using spray decks have prior experience of a roll or wet exit. Activity Organiser to ensure craft are appropriately fitted to inexperienced Participants. Activity Organiser to brief inexperienced Participants on safe exit from craft in an emergency. Participants warned not to tuck feet or limbs into their raft's structure.	

You can find more information in the [Safety checklist for leaders](#) and at scouts.org.uk/safety

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<p>Entrapment in vegetation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drowning • Stings / scratches 	All Participants	<p>Activity Organiser to brief inexperienced Participants on entrapment hazards of vegetation such as weeds and overhanging tree branches. Leaders to actively dissuade Participants from overhanging or encroaching vegetation or any risky position to prevent entrapment.</p>	
<p>Collisions with other water users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drowning • Entrapment • Physical injury 	All Participants	<p>Leaders to maintain awareness of all water users (e.g. paddle craft, boats, anglers) and warn Participants of presence. Leaders to advise Participants of safe places to pass or wait.</p>	
<p>Water-borne infections and diseases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leptospirosis • Viral / bacterial illness • Blue green algae 	All Participants	<p>Although there is no known cases of Leptospirosis or other diseases at Dernford, Activity Organiser to inform Participants to wash hands after contact with lake water. Activity Organiser to ensure that minor cuts on Participants are covered. Activity Organiser to ensure that paddling is avoided for Participants with more serious wounds. Leaders to ensure that Participants are briefed to wash hands before eating. Activity Organiser to respond to notifications about water quality and limit paddling sessions if necessary.</p>	
<p>Wildlife</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bites • Bruising 	All Participants	<p>Leaders to monitor presence of wildlife, particularly during breeding season and advise Participants to keep a safe distance. Activity Organiser to brief Participants to respect wildlife and keep a safe distance. This is a Wildlife First campsite.</p>	
<p>Slips, trips and falls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strains, sprains & breaks 	All Participants	<p>Activity Organiser to brief Participants to ensure that all areas to be kept tidy at all times to remove trip hazards. Activity Organiser to brief Participants to ensure that boats and equipment are positioned tidily and off pathways when on the bank. Participants briefed on what to do if their raft 'self-dismantles'</p>	
<p>Manual handling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Musculoskeletal injuries 	All Participants	<p>Activity Organiser to advise Participants on good manual handling techniques for boats and equipment. Activity Organiser to ensure that boats have appropriate buoyancy fitted.</p>	
<p>Adverse weather conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypothermia • Hyperthermia • Electrocutation from lightning • Blown out of safety 	All Participants	<p>Activity Organiser to check weather forecasts before session, and cancel session if necessary. Activity Organiser to brief Participants on suitable clothing and equipment for the conditions (see below). Activity Organiser to continually assess weather conditions and alter plans or stop session if necessary. Dernford is sheltered so not usually windy but weather is surprising.</p>	

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<p>Hypothermia - cold</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hypothermia 	All Participants	<p>Activity Organiser to ensure that all Participants are appropriately dressed for the weather conditions (e.g. cagoules, synthetic & not cotton layers, sufficient layers, wet suit or dry suit if very cold).</p> <p>Activity Organiser to ensure in cold weather each group carries extra clothing layers.</p> <p>Activity Organiser to brief Participants to bring full change of clothing for longer sessions.</p> <p>Leaders to monitor Participants' condition throughout the session.</p>	
<p>Hyperthermia - hot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heatstroke Sunburn 	All Participants	<p>Activity Organiser to ensure that all Participants are appropriately dressed for the weather conditions.</p> <p>Activity Organiser to ensure that all Participants have access to a drink on long paddles in hot weather.</p> <p>Activity Organiser to brief Participants on the importance of hats & sun cream in sunny weather.</p> <p>Leaders to monitor Participants' condition throughout the session.</p> <p>Activity Organiser to reduce exposure where necessary by picking shady routes & planning breaks in shade where necessary.</p>	
<p>Exit plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to receive emergency aid 	All Participants	<p>Activity Organiser to ensure that they have the means to exit the lake in an emergency, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> knowledge of site postcode CB22 5DY ability to call for emergency aid (e.g. a charged smartphone). <p>On camps, Activity Organiser to ensure that there is an InTouch system in place to enable emergency contact with parents / carers.</p>	
<p>Leader injury</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to receive emergency aid Loss or injury of participant 	Leaders / All Participants	<p>Activity Organiser to ensure that, wherever possible, each group should include more than one Leader.</p> <p>Leaders to inform Participants about the location of first aid kit (leader's side of the toilet block or the cabin) and safety equipment.</p>	
<p>Equipment failure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pinch injuries Lacerations Entrapment 	All Participants	<p>Dernford Warden to ensure that equipment is checked at least annually.</p> <p>Activity Organiser and Leaders to monitor equipment when used and remove/replace any damaged equipment and report to Warden</p>	
<p>Pre-existing medical conditions</p>	All Participants	<p>Activity Organiser to collect medical information from Participants.</p> <p>Activity Organiser to ensure Leaders are informed of relevant medical information.</p>	
<p>Group dispersal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of participant 	All Participants	<p>Activity Organiser to ensure that there are sufficient Competent Paddlers for the number of Participants.</p> <p>Activity Organiser to brief Participants on keeping line of sight between</p>	

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		<p>Participants. Activity Organiser to brief Participants to be aware of other Participants within the group and follow instructions of Leaders. Leaders to regularly confirm headcount of Participants.</p>	
<p>Impact with paddles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruising • Fractures • Concussion 	All Participants	<p>Activity Organiser to brief Participants on dangers of wielding paddles in confined spaces and if splashing or close-proximity games are played. Leaders to maintain awareness throughout the session and intervene if necessary. Activity Organiser to ensure that helmets are worn if regular close-proximity games are played.</p>	

Never be afraid to stop an activity if it is becoming unsafe!

Don't forget, as part of your programme planning, you should have contingency activities in reserve just in case you can't do what was planned or you need to stop half way through. Make sure this is shared with those involved, so everyone knows how to respond. You should have risk assessed contingency activities prior to them taking place and communicated key information to those involved as with all activities.

Notes

Definitions:

- Activity Organiser – the Leader in charge of the activity or camp. The tasks listed for the Activity Leader may be delegated to another Leader.
- Competent Paddler – a paddler with appropriate skills, knowledge, and understanding, in group management, paddling, and rescue.
- Leader (which may include a Competent Paddler) – an adult with responsibility for assisting the session.
- Participant – any person, young or adult, of any or no skill level who is taking part.

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