

## Safety Alert - Children Driving Launches

Launch drivers must be competent and many clubs rely on the RYA Level 2 Powerboat Handling qualification (with coastal endorsement if appropriate) as evidence of competence. This is also required by some navigation authorities. Being competent is not enough.

The RYA level 2 qualification can be awarded to children as young as 12 but young people do not become adults until they reach 18, in law they are still legally children until then.

There is more to being a launch driver supporting rowers than simply being able to manoeuvre a launch around a waterway. They are usually expected to provide safety cover and often to assist with coaching. It would be unfair and inappropriate to expect children to accept the responsibility associated with being in sole control of a launch.

Launch drivers who support rowers can quickly, and without much warning, find themselves in stressful, difficult, and life threatening situations. Competence is necessary but not sufficient; maturity and experience are also required, these have to be acquired, they cannot be taught.

There is a safeguarding concern as well as a safety issue. British Rowing Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy has been clear for many years on the requirement for under 18s to be supervised at all times and for Risk Assessment to be undertaken :

*4.4 Although there is government guidance for people working with groups of Children, it is essential in rowing that a separate Risk Assessment is taken for each group of Children and that this is reviewed for each training session. Participants under the age of 18, even those qualified as coaches, should be supervised at all times.*

Clubs are advised to ensure that they do not allow anyone under the age of 18 to drive a launch unless they are accompanied by a mature and responsible adult. It would be unsafe to rely on such a young person in this situation and unfair to that person to risk exposing them to high levels of stress.

Clubs are also advised to consider whether it is appropriate to allow all competent young people over the age of 18 to drive a launch alone. They should consider whether each person is sufficiently mature and experienced.

**Take care of your juniors and remember that they are still children.**

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