

Volunteering to be in loco parentis for an individual or group.

Volunteering to supervise or take responsibility for one or more juniors on a trip is a very generous thing to do, and has historically been an important aspect of club life. Whilst the club appreciate anyone willing to do so, it is important that you understand the implications of doing so and take on the responsibility with awareness of what it entails.

In loco parentis "in the place of a parent" refers to the legal responsibility of a person or organisation to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent. In effect whoever is in this situation has a legal responsibility to the child for the entire trip. If something happens, there is a possibility of being sued for negligence or whatever. As a silly example, see this post from a parent after a school trip.

My son has Aspergers syndrome and returned from a school trip 5 days away. Whilst away, there was a problem where without supervision he got into an argument and damaged hotel property. Do you know who is legally responsible for the damage? Looking at loco parentis - I think the school should have supervised better (they cope very well at school), but failed. Any advice?

The British Canoeing insurance does help in that the individuals will be eligible for cover, providing the trip is a club activity. You should read the details of the insurance the club grants to its members which can be found [here](#).

You are volunteering to be responsible for the child as an individual. Others on the trip may not want to or be able to do this. You should not assume that others on the trip are able to 'help'. Those willing to do so should also be named in loco parentis. It is always helpful if more than one adult on a trip does so, obviously the club can help facilitate these discussions.

It is important that you consider that responsibility isn't just for the water based activity. It is for every aspect of the trip. Parents should be contactable, and it should be made clear that in an emergency they may need to attend/collect their child.

To be named, you should prepare a form using the template [found here](#) and be aware of the following;

- In loco-parentis must in writing, signed by parent and the individuals who will be responsible.
- Details of trip content/possible content to be included, this should cover potential rivers, rough grades, potential 'plus' activities and evening activities such as pub visits etc.
- Travel and sleeping arrangements should be detailed too.

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Once signed, this then allows the individuals to;

- Make decisions on appropriateness - e.g. going with the group on a trip to the pub, saying 'no' to a particular rapid on behalf of the child (even if they wish to run it) etc.
- In general consider risks etc as a parent would e.g. appropriate clothing, medical issues, abilities to do things etc
- In an emergency situation, give consent to medical personnel.

It **does not** allow you to permit something illegal, or unreasonable such as underage drinking.

If the Junior can't or won't take part in activities on or off water, the individuals responsible must supervise them, or arrange appropriate supervision in line with current safeguarding guidance. This may restrict your involvement in the activities.

Safeguarding

It is advantageous for individuals to have completed a safeguarding course and hold a current and valid DBS certificate.

As always, an adult should not put themselves in a situation where they are alone with a junior. This goes for travel, accomodation and other points on the trip.

Sleeping, showering etc should be sex seperated (either by management of the facilities or by separate rooms). The ideal situation is that the Junior is in a room other juniors of the same sex or with a minimum of 2 adults, the more the better, and the more that are DBS checked the better. Those responsible should be positioned to supervise as appropriate.

If messaging\contacting the child ensure that the parents are involved in the communication or are aware that you are in touch. Messaging juniors over online chat, whatsapp or social media is strongly discouraged, as is being 'friends' on social media.

If you need any more information or advice on the safeguarding aspects of the trip, please ask the club welfare officers, Fay or Dean.

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