

# **Portsmouth Joggers Club Group Leader Guide**

## Overview

Group Leaders are required by the Portsmouth Joggers Club to provide a safe and enjoyable running experience to all participants over the age of 18. There should be a Group Leader for all club runs and this will usually be whoever is available on the day.

Typically, PJC groups meet at 1000 Lakeside North Harbour in the week but there is also a number of weekend sessions to support members training for longer distance events, see the Welcome Pack and Running Groups pages on the Club website for further details.

Group leading can be fun and rewarding. Whilst Portsmouth Joggers is extremely grateful for any help and support offered by its membership, there is a set of minimum requirements outlined by the club and by the club's appointed affiliating body ARC. Not only does ARC provide the required liability insurance cover for the club and its members but also offers advice and assistance.

This guide has been split into 2 main sections:

1. **Requirements** – the minimum requirements to be a Group Leader.
2. **Good Practice** – guidance on how to run a safe and enjoyable group.

This guide aims to support Group Leaders who volunteer their own time to help and support the club membership. All club members from the Committee to casual joggers are asked to uphold the standards outlined within the Club Constitution and the Group Leaders Code of Practice.

## Group Leader Requirements

If you would like to become a PJC Group Leader by either creating a new group or by supporting an established group there are three main requirements:

1. You **must** be over the age of 18
2. You **must** either have a formal qualification or **must** have regularly trained with the club for at least 2 years
3. You **must** be approved by the Club Committee as sufficiently experienced and competent. See the Club website Running Groups page for a list of the approved Group Leaders and Deputy Group Leaders that provide cover when required.

These requirements are outlined by the affiliating body ARC. Please contact the Committee via email if you are interested in becoming a Group Leader and they will perform the required checks and offer guidance.

There are also a number of additional leadership and health and safety courses which will help with your role as a Group Leader, for example, Leadership in Running Fitness (LiRF). Please contact the Committee via e-mail who will advise and check availability.

Please be aware that Group Leaders or Coaches training elite or near elite athletes should have a formal qualification.

## Group Leader Good Practice

Group Leaders are volunteers who give up their own time to help and support the club membership. All club members from the Committee to casual joggers are asked to uphold the standards outlined within the Club Constitution and the Group Leaders Code of Practice. If a Group Leader does not feel comfortable with a particular situation or leading a particular individual it should be reported to the Club Welfare Officer who can take the appropriate action.

The following guidelines are designed to support a Group Leader to provide safe and enjoyable group sessions within the spirit of constitution. It is not an exhaustive list but merely provides some key checks and guidance for each training session.

1. Ensure your group led training session has been approved by the Club Committee and clearly identified on the Portsmouth Joggers Club website.  
*Typically, club training is on Tuesdays and Thursdays but weekend led sessions are also recognised. Please discuss any group session plans on non-club nights and weekends with the Club Committee.*
2. Encourage all group members to listen to club announcements prior to training.  
*These announcements by the committee may contain vital information to help a Group Leader provide a safe session, for example, weather conditions and route hazards.*
3. Ensure the group are paid up members and over the age of 18.  
*This is very difficult to police in practice but there are club checks in place. Please discuss any concerns with the Club Welfare Officer.*
4. Only allow non-members to attend group training sessions for a limited period, see the Welcome Pack page of the Club website for more information. At the end of which the novices should either join the club or not as appropriate.  
*The insurance covers club members including coaches and volunteer helpers against claims made against them following their negligence. It covers your members' liabilities to these novices and any claims made against your club members following negligence by the novices. Since these novices are not club members they are not themselves entitled to indemnity under the club insurance.  
Please discuss any concerns with the Club Welfare Officer or Club Committee.*
5. Plan or have a rough idea of a training route prior to a training session.  
*Most groups use a variety of training routes so a formal risk assessment is not practical. However, before leading a run, leaders should mentally review the route and the weather conditions and decide whether any specific precautions are necessary. For instance, if conditions are icy then it may be advisable to warn runners to be careful or to use routes which are not subject to icing. Of course, if you consider the weather conditions to be particularly hazardous then it may be appropriate to cancel the run. The club committee will support decisions to cancel a training session if appropriate. Also, do not lead the group across private land without the landowner's permission or along busy roads and think of the entire group when crossing roads. It might be wise to set regular re-group points so that everyone is clear on where to wait. Suggest runners off the front of the group to run to a certain point and then loop back to re-join the group.*

6. Before you start running make yourself visible to the group and briefly explain the session that they are about to undertake.  
*It is useful to agree a regular briefing point for a group after the club announcements. Group Leader running vests are available from the Club Committee.*
7. Always ask whether anyone is new to the group or is feeling unwell or carrying an injury.  
*Take precautions or discuss any concerns with the Club Welfare Officer.*
8. Advise members to wear a fluorescent vest or bright colours.  
*If you have no option but to run in areas where street lighting is poor or where there is no street lighting, then runners should be advised to use a head torch or runners lights.*
9. Begin each session with a gentle warm up of at least 10 minutes.  
*Warm up plans can be provided or at the very least encourage your group members to partake in this.*
10. Use regular members of the group to set the pace.  
*Do not be afraid to slow the group if it is too fast or identify a split in the group and designate a second leader for the faster/slower group.*
11. Do not allow large groups.  
*If there are more than 20 people then the group should be split into two separate groups. If there are more than 10 people nominate a second runner as an assistant group leader. UK Athletics recommend a maximum ratio of 1 coach to 12 athletes at a training session or work in partnership with another coach or coaching assistant.*
12. Ensure all members return to the Clubhouse (1000 Lakeside) or the agreed meeting point safely.  
*A formal register isn't practical but the group should be a manageable size. Where the leader is required to accompany an individual, it may be sensible to appoint a deputy leader to take the group back to the Clubhouse. Place the welfare and safety of the group above the development of performance. ARC guidance states that "female runners are not to be unaccompanied".*
13. Runs to be approximately 1 hour (maybe longer in summer months).  
*Members may have other commitments. If members choose to add sections on or change routes ensure they have informed someone responsible for raising the alarm if members become overdue.*
14. Make sure that all activities are appropriate to the ability and experience of those taking part.  
*On longer training runs you should be able to hold a conversation whilst running.*
15. Be particularly aware of slower runners or new runners to the group.  
*If someone is slowing down considerably, suggest they join a slower group.*
16. Do not always lead the group from the front.  
*Be aware of the whole group and remember to look out for all runners from the front to the back.*

17. Encourage a warm down and stretches at the end of every session.  
*Warm down plans are provided or at the very least encourage your group members to partake in this.*
18. Carry a mobile phone within the group.  
*There is no requirement for Group Leaders to be first aid qualified but it is sensible for the Group Leader or a member of the group to carry a mobile phone to use in an emergency.*
19. All incidents must be e-mailed to the Club Committee using the Incident Report Form available on the Club website.  
*A member of the Club Committee will add the incident to the Incident Report log and inform the ARC insurance where appropriate. If there is a verbal or written allegation against you / the club, inform the Club Committee and do not enter into any correspondence with the claimant. Do not admit liability as this may prejudice the claim.*
20. Report any group member health or safety concerns to the Club Welfare Officer.  
*Concerns can be reported to a committee member or fellow Group Leader if the Club Welfare Officer is unavailable.*

There is a wealth of experience within the club on how to structure an individual or series of training sessions. The Club Committee can provide advice or to put you in touch with other club members who can provide help.

Remember, Group Leaders are volunteers and should receive help and guidance rather than criticism, see the Group Leaders Code of Practice. It is in the club's interest to provide a supportive environment for those willing to help.