

# Working Together

A Guide for Coaches, Committees  
and Parents

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Section Two: Effective Communication

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# Introduction

This guide has been designed to be a practical, hands-on resource to help strengthen the relationship between committees and coaches in all types of aquatic clubs. It focuses especially on the key partnership between the head coach, the club chair and parents, showing how they can work together to lead a positive, successful club.

We'll explore how to create a strong vision and set of values that are reflected in everyday actions and guide everything the club does. Inside, you'll find a range of downloadable templates you can adapt, along with inspiring case studies that highlight great practices in action. There are also reflection points throughout for you to think about how the topics relate to your own club.

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**Full acknowledgements at the end.**

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## Section 2: Effective Communication

Communicating effectively is essential for keeping everyone updated and on the same page – whether that’s the coaching team, committee members, parents or athletes. It is also important to consider when this is best done in person, in writing or via digital communication. When communication is regular and meaningful, it helps everyone stay connected and aligned. However, disconnects can happen if teams or individuals are working in isolation or if communication is inconsistent.

### Internal club communication between the committee and the coaching team

Clear and open communication is key to any relationship.

- Regular meetings, which always include the head coach or representative from the coaching team.
- Clear roles and responsibilities.
- Transparent information sharing.
- Use of effective channels, e.g. emails, shared documents.
- Respectful and professional tone.

### Example internal club communication plan

Purpose	Frequency	Method	Responsibility
Monthly coaching update	Monthly	In person or online meeting	Head coach and chair
Training schedule changes	As needed	Email and shared calendar	Head coach
Club policy updates	Quarterly or as needed	Email and PDF	Club secretary
Competition planning	Before each event	Email and planning meeting	Competition coordinator/head coach
Feedback and or concerns	Ongoing	One to one meeting or anonymous database	Welfare officer

### Line managers / volunteer coordinators

Volunteers, including committee members and board of directors/trustees (if applicable), typically have volunteer coordinators rather than line managers. They provide support, guidance and training opportunities. It’s a good idea to have a volunteer policy in place to

outline how volunteers are supported and treated. For more info, check out [ncvo.org.uk](https://www.ncvo.org.uk). In most industries, each paid employee has a line manager who plays an important role in their development and communication. Line managers play a key role in supporting well-being, providing guidance, regular check-ins and helping with personal development.

## Who is the line manager for coaches?

Usually, the head coach is the line manager for the rest of the coaching team. Depending on your club's size and structure, coaches might be divided by discipline or have more levels of hierarchy. But what about the head coach's line manager? There's no one correct answer, but it's common for the club chair to take on this role. It's important to assess the skills of your club leaders and decide who is best suited for this responsibility. This role is key – if it's a strong relationship, it can lead to excellent training, open communication and mutual respect. If it's not a good fit, it could create challenges.

Here are some essential skills for a good line manager:

- Excellent communication
- Strong organisation
- Ability to delegate tasks effectively
- Good at prioritising
- Objective decision-making
- Motivating others
- Analytical skills

## Communication with parents and athletes

There are many ways to communicate with parents and athletes but never forget the power of conversation. Rather than a lengthy new parent's email, could you host a new parents/participants meeting with an opportunity to ask questions with both committee members and coaches present.

### **City of Coventry Swimming Club**

The club has parent representatives to help support and strengthen the relationship between parents, coaches, and the committee

“Our parent reps embody our club values and help us bring them to life by assisting sharing key messages, two way regular and effective communication without over burdening the coaches.”

\*Link to City of Coventry case study.

For written communication it is important to choose the right channels to share messages with members. Think about which method works best for your audience.

Here are a few other top tips:

- Be concise, consider using titles and subheadings to make the information easy to digest.
- Who's in charge of each communication channel?
- How often are you communicating? Be mindful of not overwhelming your audience.
- Have you got an automated reply set on messaging or emails to help set response time expectations and protect coach and committee working times?

Social media (Facebook, Instagram, X)	Suitable for general announcements applicable to all audiences	Are your members active and engaged with your social media? If you're using more than one platform to connect with your club, it's important to keep your messages consistent across all of them. This way, everyone gets the same clear information, no matter where they're following you.
Club website	Your website is the perfect place to share all the important updates and good news about your club. It's a great spot to highlight your club culture, vision and values, introduce the team, and provide contact details for any questions.	Your website might be the first place a new member visits, so make sure it's fresh and up to date. Regular updates help create a welcoming and professional impression right from the start. It's a great way to show your club is active, organised, and ready to connect with new members.
Email	Suitable for personalised / essential content for the individual.	Do you have a club email address? If so, who's in charge of checking and replying to it?  It's also a good idea to set up an automated response to let people know when they can expect a reply. This helps manage expectations and keeps things running smoothly.
Group messaging platforms (such as WhatsApp or SwimManager)	Suitable for urgent and/or quick generic updates to a large group.	Use with caution. While WhatsApp groups are great for sending a message to a lot of people at once, they can quickly become overwhelming – especially if the group is large and responses start flooding in.  Have you thought about using broadcast messaging instead? It's a fantastic alternative if you just want to send a message without the chatter.

### IMPORTANT

Make sure all your communication with members follows the Swim England Wavepower policy.

[\\*Link to Wavepower.](#)

## Keep data protection in mind

- When emailing a large group, always use BCC to protect everyone's email addresses. If you need people to reply to each other, you can use CC instead.
- Avoid sending Excel spreadsheets with personal data through email, as emails aren't always secure and can be intercepted.
- Don't send marketing or sales messages unless you have the proper permissions to do so.
- If you need more guidance, check out the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) step-by-step guide on direct marketing for small businesses. It has helpful tips on best practices and how to collect data the right way.

## Effective communication in action

Picture this - the coaching team has identified a training meet as a great chance for swimmers to focus on competition process and development, rather than times. They've communicated this to the swimmers and committee members multiple times in person and reinforced this in training sessions.

Consider what might occur if parents aren't on the same page? How can parents be kept up to speed with plans and keep the message consistent?

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