

Couch to 5k Leader requirements

As a result of the increase in recreational running as well as participation running initiatives such as 'Couch to 5k' programmes being delivered by clubs, community groups and external agencies across the UK there is a need for a clear set of guidelines regarding coach / leader requirements to deliver such programmes and be covered under UK Athletics insurance.

To become a participation running group leader, you need to have completed one of following UK Athletics courses / qualifications delivered by one of the Home Country governing body (England Athletics, Welsh Athletics, Scottish Athletics or Athletics Northern Ireland):

- [Leadership in Running Fitness](#) (LiRF - available in all home countries)
- [jogscotland - Jog leader](#) (previously delivered in Scotland)
- [Coach in Running Fitness](#) (CiRF - available in all home countries)
- [Athletics Coach](#) (or legacy UKA Level 2 and above)

The Home Countries offer a range of coaching qualifications accredited by UK Athletics that provide leaders, assistants and coaches with insurance cover in the case of an accident. Individuals who successfully complete these awards and return a clear Disclosure Check (DBS in England and Wales, Access NI in Northern Ireland and Self Declaration in Scotland) are issued with a British Athletics leadership / coaching licence. This insures them to operate within the limitations of this licence, which varies depending on the award undertaken.

Leadership in Running Fitness

If you're just starting out as a run leader, the [Leadership in Running Fitness \(LiRF\) qualification](#) is the course for you.

You will learn essential health and safety for leading a group run, how to structure running sessions appropriate to the level of your runners (including warm-ups, cool-downs and stretches), and how to plan suitable routes. There is no exam or assessment; completion of the course qualifies, insures and equips you to lead groups of adults in running activities taking place away from the club premises within the limits of the course content. The rest of this document explains these limits in more detail.

The qualification enables you to lead a group of participants (12 years of age and upwards). This could be an activity or series of activities covered on the course, or a structured training programme provided to you by the licenced coach (Athletics Coach or CiRF)

If you are in an isolated situation where you do not have access to a coach who can take on the responsibility of ensuring the training programme is appropriate you may follow one of the following three programmes:

- [NHS Couch to 5k - 9 week plan](#)
- [BUPA Beginner 5k programme](#)
- [jogscotland Beginner Level 1 and Level 2 programmes](#)
- [Run Together training plan](#)
- [Run Wales Couch to 5k plan](#)

Coach in Running Fitness

If you want to design and deliver your own training plan you will need to complete the [Coach in Running Fitness \(CiRF\) award](#) that covers additional material, licenses and insures you, enabling you to take responsibility for other leaders. Alternatively, you could take the Athletics Coach award.

Supervision and ratios

When working with adults, so long as you follow one of the approved programmes outlined above, or a series of the activities covered on course, or a plan provided to you, you can lead these groups without supervision.

When working exclusively with adults there is no strict rule regarding the number of runners / joggers you should have per Leader. It will depend on your group's experience, your route and your risk assessment. A session where everyone is of a similar ability is easier to manage - and so requires fewer leaders - than a mixed ability group. It is however recommended that you check if the facility provider or host organisation has a ratio restriction in place before sessions begin and adhere to such restrictions.

If you plan to work with participants between 12 and 18 years old some additional factors will need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, you should follow an approved plan i.e. Couch to 5k or an activity / series of activities covered on course. The plan should take the number and age range of the participants into consideration, as well as the specific make up of your group and the environment in which you will operate. You will then be able to lead a group of 12-18 year olds unsupervised, provided you adhere to best practice in health & safety when working with minors.

It is important to note that if you are working with athletes between the ages of 12 - 18 the recommended ratio is one leader for every ten athletes (1:10) with a minimum of two leaders for best practice. If a group is growing or changing and you're finding it harder to handle, some more experienced members could be encouraged to consider training as Leaders themselves. This will improve your ratio of leaders to participants.

Please also note that, LIRF and CIRF qualifications do not insure leaders / coaches to work with **anyone under the age of 12**. A British Athletics' [Coaching Assistant](#) qualification or [Athletics Coach qualification](#) is required in order to be insured to deliver athletics to under 12s.