



Couch 2 5K Leader Requirements

As a result of the increase in recreational running as well as participation running initiatives such as 'Couch 2 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.

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

- Leadership in Running Fitness (LiRF-available in all home countries)
- Jog Scotland - 'Jog leader' (available only in Scotland)
- Coach in Running Fitness (CiRF-available in all home countries)
- Athletics Coach (or legacy UKA Level 2 and above)

****Equivalent IAAF qualifications are also recognised.**

Athletics NI offer a range of coaching qualifications accredited by British Athletics that provide leaders, assistants and coaches with [insurance cover](http://www.britishathletics.org.uk/governance/insurance/) in the case of an accident. (<http://www.britishathletics.org.uk/governance/insurance/>)

Individuals who successfully complete these awards and return a clear Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (known as AccessNI in Northern Ireland) are issued with a British Athletics leadership/coaching license. This insures them to operate within the limitations of this license, which varies depending on the award undertaken.

If you're just starting out as a run leader in Northern Ireland, the [Leadership in Running Fitness](#) 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.

Having taken the LiRF course and been licensed as a leader, it is important to be familiar with you the scope and limitations of your role. Your qualification enables you to lead a group of adult participants through a structured training plan provided to you by a

licensed coach (Athletics Coach or CiRF). It is this coach who will be ultimately responsible for the appropriateness of the training plan in the case of legal action. When working with adults, so long as you follow the plan provided to you and approved by a licensed coach you can lead these groups without supervision.

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.

If working with participants between 12-18 you will need to work under the supervision of a licensed coach ([Athletics Coach](#) or [CiRF](#)) and it is their responsibility to design and oversee the delivery of sessions.

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 less 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.

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 twelve athletes (1:12). 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' 'Assistant Coach' qualification or 'Athletics Coach' qualification is required in order to be insured to deliver Athletics to under 12s.

Further descriptors of British Athletics qualifications and booking links for courses in NI are available here: <http://athleticsni.org/Coaches/Qualifications-&-Courses>