

RYA Covid-19 Q & A for English restarting boating activity and managing COVID-19 V1.2 (Updated 8th July 2020)

08 July 2020

Since boating as a form of exercise was permitted in England in the middle of May, clubs have gone to great lengths to interpret all the Government guidance and implement Covid-19 protocols so that their members could get back on the water as soon as possible. We recognise that the Government guidance can be confusing and is often not specific enough to clarify the exact limitations in every walk of life. This makes the decision making of club committees very challenging and the RYA has published various supporting guidance on our [‘Return to Boating hub’](#).

It is important to preface our advice by saying that the RYA does not seek to tell clubs what they can or cannot do and nor do we seek to enforce either our, or the Government’s, guidance. It is up to each club to interpret what any specific guidance may mean to them and their members considering their own very specific and hugely varied circumstances. The RYA are committed to our fundamental principles of minimising the risk of infection from Covid 19 and to supporting our boating community to be considerate and conservative in our return to boating whilst following Government guidance.

It is clear that the stated intent of the Government’s relaxation of lockdown rules is to *“return life to as near normal as we can, for as many people as we can, as quickly and fairly as possible”*, and this provides helpful context in reaching any interpretation. As the Prime Minister also stated – *“from now on we will ask people to follow guidance on social contact instead of legislation”*.

Q & A

What does the current guidance mean for clubs looking to run organised activities?

The current Government guidance is that we should only gather outdoors in a group of up to six people from different households, whilst following social distancing guidelines. However, the updated Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) No 2 Regulations make it clear that this only applies whilst onshore, on one vessel or within a private dwelling. Therefore, whilst a club is being guided to keep activity onshore to groups of 6 or less (from different households) where possible, a club is permitted by law to organise activity for an unlimited number of boats afloat as long as it can restrict ‘gatherings’ on land to less than 30 within communal areas such as boat parks. Premises or locations which are Covid 19 secure will be able to hold more than 30 people, subject to their own capacity limits, although any individual groups should not interact with anyone outside of their group they are attending the venue with – so in a group no larger than two households or six people if outdoors.

Are clubs allowed to run racing and if so should it be restricted in any way?

A club is now allowed to run racing for an unlimited number of boats. However, it should ensure gatherings onshore (and on individual boats) are 6 or less people from different households where possible, with a legally enforced limit of 30. A club needs to think and plan carefully for social distancing, especially any 'pinch points' such as launching, landing and any social interactions before and after racing

Is it feasible for clubs to run events yet?

With no apparent legal limit to the number of boats that can take part in activity on the water it is now possible to run sailing events. Organisers should be mindful that we remain in the middle of a global pandemic and should pay particular attention to all relevant Government guidance that is applicable ashore. Organisers should consider the likely impact of limitations on their facility provision and also consider any potential impact on local communities. All organisers should be ready to strengthen or relax measures at short notice. Outdoor gatherings are currently limited to groups of 6 people from different households but you may have multiple groups as long as they do not interact with each other. Venues that are Covid 19 secure can legally host more than 30 people if the organiser has taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the coronavirus, taking into account the requirements of Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999(14). (Updated 8th July)

Is it appropriate for people from different households to sail together in the same dinghy, keelboat or yacht?

The Government is trusting people to continue to act responsibly, and follow the guidance on what they should and should not do. Therefore, participants will have to make their own decisions on whether they can sail their dinghy, keelboat or yacht whilst maintaining adequate social distancing. From the 4th July social distancing remains at 2 metres unless you use mitigating measures which will allow a reduction to 1 metre plus. On a boat, these mitigations could include (in addition to being outdoors) 1m separation marks on the deck, wearing face coverings, avoiding face to face contact, cleaning procedures, no shouting etc. The risk should be assessed case by case and with the correct mitigation in place, it may now be possible for 2 people from different households to sail certain boats. As an example, a risk assessment may deem the risk to be low enough in a trapeze dinghy in strong winds, but too high in a 2 person hiking boat where the crew sit side by side for prolonged periods of time. For a yacht it may be deemed a low enough risk to sail with a reduced number of crew. Similarly it may be easier to manage the risk when not under the pressure of racing. (Updated 8th July)

What responsibilities do we have as a club over members, staff and volunteers?

Individuals within a club with responsibility for COVID-19 safety measures have a duty of care to carry out risk assessments and implement appropriate mitigation measures. To discharge a club's duty of care, the club management should ensure that reasonable steps are being taken to protect the health and safety of its members. The starting point should

be implementing the guidance issued by relevant authorities: i.e. Government, public health authorities, local authorities and NGB's. However, in the context of Covid-19 and 'return to play', risk assessments are central and whilst a good risk assessment does not eradicate the risk of liability, a good risk assessment which is reasonable, in line with relevant guidance and delivered properly will reduce those risks significantly. (Updated 7th July)

Does a club increase their own liability / duty of care by providing rescue cover for activity at their club?

Where a club provides safety boat cover it has a duty to those taking part in the activity and the safety boat crew to take reasonable steps to ensure that the safety boats are suitable and properly maintained and equipped. Safety boat crews themselves owe a duty of care towards those taking part in the activity. We suggest clubs may wish to have safety boat crew sign a Risk Statement acknowledging that they understand the COVID-19 risks associated with carrying out the role. The issue of PPE must be addressed e.g. is it available, who will provide it, will the club mandate the wearing of it. COVID-19 safety rescue measures should be adopted.

Can a sailing club open its premises yet?

The Government guidance is currently that indoor facilities, apart from toilets and through-ways, should be kept closed and when accessing and leaving facilities care should be taken to wipe down areas of contact, hands should be washed and surfaces should be avoided touched where possible. From 4th July, the Government has assessed that indoor sports venues/facilities cannot be made sufficiently Covid-19 Secure and should remain closed. The Government intends to enforce this by law so clubs should ensure members understand that they will continue to be expected to get changed at home (or in the boat park) and not enter the club house unless using the toilet.

Can a sailing club offer a catering or bar service and what restrictions apply?

As above, the Government guidance is that indoor facilities, apart from toilets and through-ways, should be kept closed.

If a club wishes to open its bar and catering service, it can do so in line with the Government guidance developed for pubs, restaurants and other organisations which offer those services. A club would need to weigh up the likely costs incurred of implementing the measures, the likely burden on volunteers versus the reward and they may feel it is not economically worthwhile at this current moment in time. If a club would like to investigate whether it would be feasible, it should review the detailed guidance for restaurants, pubs, bars and takeaway services [here](#). (Updated 8th July)

Useful links

Government Guidance for providers of outdoor facilities on the phased return of sport and recreation in England:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/guidance-for-providers-of-outdoor-facilities-on-the-phased-return-of-sportand-recreation#reopening-your-outdoors-sports-facility>

Government Guidance for restaurants, pubs, bars, cafes or takeaway services:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offeringtakeaway-or-delivery>

Further Questions?

We will endeavour to continue to answer the most frequently asked questions as they come in. If you have a question you would like answered, please send it to

sport.development@rya.org.uk