



## RYA Covid-19 FAQs valid in England

*(Updated 16 March 2021)*

These FAQs have been developed in accordance with the '[National Lockdown: Stay at Home](#)' and updated as a result of the '[COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021](#)' Government guidance.

Whilst we aim to provide a useful resource for our stakeholders, the decision to go boating ultimately lies with the individual concerned. There are fines in place for those deemed to be in breach of the regulations and it is essential that, you properly assess whether any activity is permitted within the most recent Government guidance and regulations.

**Please note** - the guidance within these FAQs is not intended to cover RYA Recognised Training Centres. Please refer to the [COVID-19: Guidance for restarting RYA training activity](#).

In the sections below we have outlined our current understanding of what activities are permitted.

In relation to the easing of restrictions, we will update this document as and when we receive more detailed guidance from Government departments.

[Current situation](#)

[Step 1: 8 March](#)

[Step 1: 29 March](#)

[Step 2: - no earlier than the 12 April](#)

[Step 3: - no earlier than the 17 May](#)

[Step 4: - no earlier than the 21 June](#)

### **Current situation**

#### **Can I go boating?**

Boating is a permitted form of daily exercise. However, to support the implementation of the national lockdown and to prevent the spread of the virus, the Government legislation and guidance places restrictions on the organisation of and participation in physical exercise. Aside from a few exemptions (which are covered later in this document) boating will only be possible if:

- you are able to launch and recover your boat from a publicly accessible place
- you are able to do this without leaving your local area
- the relevant waterway authorities permit boating, and
- you do so alone, with members of your household, childcare or support bubble, or you do so with one other person who is not a member of your household respecting social distancing requirements at all times.

We continue to urge boaters to take a considerate approach by complying with the Government's guidance, particularly at this time of year. Whilst some activity may be permissible, we would continue to urge you to question whether it should take place at this time.

### **Can clubs and facilities remain open?**

No, clubs along with all indoor and outdoor sports facilities must close. However, some venues or facilities may be permitted to open for a small number of reasons:

- Boat parks and slipways to which the public have, or are permitted access (whether on payment or otherwise) are public outdoor places and can remain available for use
- Venues will be permitted to be open for the small number of exempt activities (outdoor sport for disabled people, schools' activity where it is a normal part of their provision, and elite athletes)
- Clubs can provide food and non-alcoholic drinks for delivery (including alcohol), takeaway, click and collect, or drive-through.

### **Are people able to collect equipment from facilities to enable individual exercise (e.g. boat parks)?**

Yes, personal equipment belonging to an individual should be made accessible. However, the facility must be closed for public use and must not be used to hire out equipment.

### **Can we run organised on the water activity such as club racing?**

Organised activity such as racing is not permitted apart from a few specific exemptions.

These are:

- organised outdoor sport for disabled people
- activity for schools that is part of their normal provision
- activity for elite athletes

### **Is volunteering possible?**

Whilst volunteering at a club, centre or marina is permissible, in light of the current crisis, we would strongly advise you to defer the task/project until the lockdown restrictions have been eased. Clubs may wish to ensure their facilities are ready for reopening on 29 March in advance of this date and we although this is likely to be permissible under the volunteering exception, we would advise you to limit the number of visits and people required to get your facilities ready.

### **Can I access my boat for maintenance purposes?**

Whilst 'Stay at Home' restrictions are in place general boat maintenance is not an acceptable reason to leave home. Where maintenance is essential to prevent risk of harm or injury it will qualify as a reasonable excuse for leaving home.

### **Can marinas open?**

The Yacht Harbour Association has issued guidance to its member marinas which, whilst it does not specify the closure of marinas, advises marina operators to support Government guidance by 'not encouraging' either berth holders to visit their boats, nor public access which in reality is likely to result in its members preventing berth holders from utilising their boats for exercise as well as access to boats for maintenance purposes; although marinas themselves may stay open to carry out safety checks on customers boats.

### **Can I stay overnight on my boat?**

Not unless your boat is your primary residence.

### **What about elite sport and professional sailors?**

There are continuing exceptions for elite athletes so that they can train or compete. Within RYA activity, this currently relates to the British Sailing Team, selected youth performance or transitional squads and professional sailors.

### **What about organised activity for disabled people outdoors?**

Yes, during the current national lockdown organised outdoor sport for disabled people is permitted.

Organisers will need to follow the guidance published by the RYA including the:

- [Guidance for creating a COVID-19 secure club environment in England](#)
- [RYA Guidance on sailing and racing with participants from different households during Covid-19 in England](#)

By following this guidance, the activity will be in line with the Government's guidance on recreational team sport and grassroots sport and leisure activity and will incorporate measures to reduce the risk of virus transmission. This applies to disabled participants and the volunteers who help enable the sport or organised activity to take place.

Clubs and centres will make their own decisions about when it is right to restart activity and the RYA will do whatever we can to support, advise and guide you on this. The approach will continue to be cautious and there are difficult decisions to be made between balancing health and safety concerns and enabling people to make their own decisions to be active.

### **Can we sail with a person from another household as part of the organised activity for disabled people?**

Yes, if you:

- follow the [RYA Guidance on sailing and racing with participants from different households during Covid-19 in England](#),
- introduce mitigations to control the risk
- and you check that all parties understand and accept the risk associated with taking part in the activity

Social distancing remains important, and each club or centre will need to assess what is possible with the vessels and equipment they have available.

The fact that activity is outdoors reduces the risk of transmission but you may be closer than 2m so you should still aim to limit contact time participants have with any one person and the overall number of contacts people have. If possible, sailing could be with members of the same household or support bubble and if not then be strict about personal hygiene measures, avoid shouting and face to face contact, and wear face coverings.

### **Can we organise activity for a support group?**

Support groups are 1:1 or groups that provide mutual aid, therapy, or any other type of support to its members or those attending its meetings, including to those with or recovering from addictions including alcohol, drugs, or other substance addictions (or addictive patterns of behaviour).

Activity in relation to support groups is permitted if it consists of no more than 15 persons and takes place at a venue other than a private dwelling. You will need to follow the Government, RYA and any sector specific guidance (talk to your partners).

**Are we able to provide support to other people, even if that means close contact?**

Yes. Social distancing should be maintained where possible, but in some circumstances, people will need physical assistance to be active. It is important you discuss this with the people involved and consider everyone's needs and preferences.

This is covered in the RYA Guidance referred to above and was informed by existing guidance from Government and organisations working with blind people.

The principles are to:

- check with everyone involved that they are happy to proceed,
- in the first place, offer support from within the same household or support bubble; if that is not possible try offering verbal instructions or provide equipment that reduces the need for support
- if you do need to offer and receive support between people from different households then seek reassurance that everyone involved is symptom free, come up with a plan, limit the time spent at less than 2m, avoid face to face contact as much as possible, reduce the number of contacts people have and consider face coverings

**Can we use our hoist to assist people in and out of boats?**

Yes, if additional mitigations are put in place to reduce the risk of virus transmission. The principles about providing support to other people should be used. To make sure you do this follow the '[Guidance for creating a COVID-19 secure club environment in England](#)' and in particular the 'supporting other people' section.

Don't forget to ensure the maintenance and check regime is up to date.

**Can we train volunteers in preparation for organised activity for disabled people (outdoors) or activity linked to support groups?**

Yes, this is covered in the [regulations](#) – voluntary or charitable services are permitted. If you are in the process of organising outdoor sport for disabled people, you would be able to hold any necessary training or briefing of volunteers if it is needed for the activity.

It will have to follow the RYA guidance, but you should consider:

- is there an alternative way of delivering e.g., an online briefing?
- is it essential to the activity?

It is also worth talking to key local stakeholders about what you are doing and why – it will help with public perception and if you are challenged further down the line.

**Should our club or centre make it compulsory for participants to be vaccinated against Covid-19?**

Whilst the Government has promised a review on the issue of Covid-19 status certification, at present these are not compulsory. It is likely that the law and practice will evolve in this area but for the moment it will be for clubs and centres to make a policy decision. This is a difficult area for front line organisations such as those providing health and social care services, and not one where clubs and centres are likely to be taking the lead.

A club or centre may decide it is not within their remit to make a vaccine a condition of membership or participation.

On the other hand, a club or centre may decide to adopt a policy that does require all members to have a Covid-19 vaccine. Such a policy would have to consider several legal issues including those relating to data protection, equality, human rights, and employment. Importantly it would have to include provision for individuals who, for a variety of reasons, may be unable to have the vaccine or who are further down the vaccination priority list.

Whatever they decide on the issue, clubs/centres should ensure their policy is clearly communicated to members, guests, volunteers, and staff etc.

It is worth noting that:

- most of the evidence and expert opinion suggests that in the UK mandatory vaccination might well be counterproductive and do more harm than good to vaccine uptake.
- It would be logistically and administratively challenging for many clubs or centres to implement a policy requiring vaccination, and to then monitor and police it.
- We will be living with Covid-19 for a while and the vaccine is there to reduce deaths and serious impact from the virus. Vaccination is a part of protecting individuals, but we will still need to follow other measures to remain Covid-19 secure. There is a risk that a 'require vaccination policy' means people pay less attention to everything else they need to do to keep each other safe.

### **We get challenged by the public about organising activity for disabled people, is there anything we can do?**

Public perceptions about what should be happening can be a barrier to restarting. Even where activity is possible under the regulations, organisations come under additional scrutiny, including visits from the police. Many venues are in places with high public footfall, and this makes the issue of optics even more relevant.

Long term all clubs and centres need the support of their local communities, so need to make sure there is support for what they are doing and how they are going about it. Engaging with key stakeholders locally and explaining what you are doing (and why) is important.

### **Step 1: 8 March (as per above and in addition)**

The 'Stay at Home' restriction will continue but it will be amended so that people can leave home for recreation as well as exercise outdoors - with their own household, support or childcare bubble, or with one person from another household.

Under-18 sport can take place at school as part of educational provision, or as part of wraparound care, but should not otherwise take place at this time. This means that clubs which provide sailing as part of school activity/wraparound care may open for this limited purpose only.

### **Does working on my boat count as recreation and is it therefore a reason to leave home?**

Sport England has confirmed that general boat maintenance does not fall within the intended definition of recreation, however, where maintenance is essential to prevent risk of harm or injury it will qualify as a reasonable excuse for leaving home.

Clubs may need to ensure their facilities are ready for reopening on 29 March in advance of this date and we would advise you to limit the number of visits and people required to get your facilities ready.

### **Step 1: 29 March**

Outdoor sports facilities including sailing clubs can reopen, subject to the Rule of 6/two households. The Rule of 6 means that (apart from a set of limited exemptions including work and education) any social gatherings of more than six people are against the law.

Formally organised outdoor sports – for adults and under 18s – will also restart and where compliant with guidance issued by the national governing bodies (the RYA) will not be subject to the gatherings limits.

Indoor facilities, such as changing rooms, should not be used at this time, although toilet facilities can be accessed.

#### **Will it be possible for people from different households to sail together in the same dinghy, keelboat or yacht and is there a limit on the numbers onboard?**

It is possible for organised activities to include activity where people from different households sail together; these activities should comply with the 'RYA Guidance on Sailing and Racing with Participants from Different Households during Covid-19 in England'. Organised activity includes sport which is formally organised by an NGB, club, public body, qualified instructor, company or charity and which follows the sport's NGB guidance. Organised activity may encompass both racing and recreational activity.

If you or your club is considering this please read the '[RYA Guidance on Sailing and Racing with Participants from Different Households during Covid-19 in England](#)'. This guidance, which has been reviewed by DCMS as part of the '[Return to Recreational Team Sports Framework](#)', provides context and helps you assess whether it is appropriate for you to sail with someone from a different household and how you can mitigate risks. The guidance recognises that in some situations whilst afloat it will not be possible to maintain normal social distancing; helps skippers and participants to evaluate the risk and suggests some mitigations which may need to be implemented. It is important that skippers (in particular) determine a suitable number of crew whilst balancing the risk of Covid transmission vs the risks involved whilst carrying out manoeuvres and generally sailing and racing short-handed.

Sailing with mixed households is possible as part of activity that is not organised activity, but this must conform with the wider social contact regulations, which include social distancing and the Rule of 6/two households.

The maximum crew number should be decided by the ability for that crew to maintain social distancing afloat and other mitigations such as use of face coverings. Race organisers are encouraged to ensure a level playing field for all by requiring use of face coverings and/or limiting crew numbers. All children will be able to access any outdoor childcare and supervised activities.

People will no longer be legally required to Stay at Home, although we are still being advised to minimise travel wherever possible.

**Step 2: no earlier than the 12 April**

We believe that changing rooms will be able to open. It is currently unclear if this includes the use of showers.

Overnight stays away from home in this country will be permitted and self-contained accommodation - those that do not require shared use of bathing, entry/exit, catering or sleeping facilities - can also reopen, though must only be used by members of the same household.

Hospitality will be able to open for outdoor service, with no requirement for a substantial meal to be served alongside alcoholic drinks, and no curfew. The requirement to order, eat and drink while seated ('table service') will remain.

**Step 3: no earlier than the 17 May (as per above and in addition)**

Indoor hospitality will be permitted with no requirement for a substantial meal to be served alongside alcoholic drinks, and no curfew. The requirement to order, eat and drink while seated ('table service') will remain.

Overnight stays away from home in this country will be permitted subject to the Rule of 6/two households.

The Government will further ease limits on social contact, enabling people to make informed personal decisions.

**Step 4: no earlier than the 21 June (as per above and in addition)**

The Government hopes to be able to remove all legal limits on social contact.

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*The above guidance to members and affiliates is the RYA's interpretation of the Government's current position. Although we strive to ensure that all the information is accurate and up to date, this cannot be guaranteed due to the developing and fast-moving situation. RYA members should review the Government's full guidance themselves and follow the latest announcements at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).*