

RYA Covid-19 FAQs valid in Northern Ireland

Latest Update: 13th August

These FAQs have been developed in accordance with the NI Executive Pathway to Recovery and [SportNI Pathway out of Restrictions](#) guidance and latest updates.

Whilst we aim to provide a useful resource for our members and 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.

Certain activity is permitted and will move through the steps where there is clear compliance with protocols by clubs and individuals and the rate of infection remains low.

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 Executive departments or upon Regulation updates.

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General

Why has RYANI removed the Framework for a Return to Boating?

It had become clear that the nature of announcements and easing of restrictions had moved away from the original Roadmap in March. Guidance and restrictions had started to move to focus more on social distancing, hand hygiene, Risk Assessments and mitigations by sporting venues.

Why are there no dates or indicative dates?

The Executive will formally review restrictions every 4 weeks (from 16th March). Outdoor sport is one of the very first restrictions to be eased from 1st April. Indicative dates will only be confirmed where the R Rate and other metrics remain low. As the Executive will move through each of the 9 sectors at different stages, there are no longer term indicative dates given.

Will vaccination be considered a form of mitigation?

SportNI has outlined: No – mitigations are focused on methods to minimise risk of transfer of infection – masks, distancing, hand sanitation, limiting face to face etc.

Furthermore: Such a policy could have 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.

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.

What should we do if we get challenged by the public when organising activity?

Public perceptions about what should be happening can be a barrier to restarting. Even where activity is possible under the regulations, organisations may 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 they 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.

Facilities

Can clubhouses reopen from the 24th May?

Yes, where risk assessments and mitigations are put in place and well communicated, indoor facilities may reopen.

Can Changing rooms re open?

Yes, from 24th May, changing rooms can reopen. As far as possible, participants should be encouraged to arrive and depart changed.

Is shower use permitted?

Yes, showers may be used. As facilities may have sat for some time without use, clubs/ facilities are encouraged to check [RYA Guidance on Legionella Disease](#).

When running an activity, is a Covid Risk Assessment mandatory?

Yes, where it exceeds (or is expected to exceed) 15 participants indoors or 30 outdoors. Regulations outline that both indoor and outdoor organised activity must have an appropriate risk assessment and clearly outlined mitigations in place. These can be requested by a relevant officer (Regulation 9(5)).

Can Marinas reopen?

Marinas will operate under guidance issued by British Marine, the Yacht Harbour Association or equivalent and can reopen.

When can bars/ catering reopen?

From 24th May both indoor and outdoor hospitality may reopen. There are limitations and requirements available on the NI Direct website.

From 16th August further changes have outlined there will be no restriction on the number of people permitted to sit together at hospitality venues.

Further detail can be found at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-guidance-what-restrictions-mean-you>

Activity

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?

Yes, from 23rd April, provided this activity is organised by an NGB, club, public body, qualified instructor, company or charity and follows NGB guidance.

These activities should comply with the '*RYA Guidance on Sailing and Racing with Participants from Different Households during Covid-19 in Northern Ireland*'. This guidance, which has been reviewed by DCMS and SportNI Expert Panel 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 wider gathering limits. The maximum crew number should be decided by the ability for that crew to maintain social distancing afloat and other mitigations.

Race organisers are encouraged to consider how imposing crew limitations might help support a level playing field for all competitors wishing to enter an event.

Has social distancing reduced?

From 30th July, the guidance for social distancing reduced to 1 metre outdoors. 2m is still recommended, but 1 m where mitigations are in place. This will largely have impact for e.g. Training and where boats are considering capacity onboard.

Can I prepare my yacht under the guidance?

Preparing of boats for activity would fall under this guidance, where Social distancing measures can be adhered to.

Can I stay overnight onboard?

Overnight stays away from home in NI are permitted from 30 April, in self-contained accommodation. The NI Executive Office has confirmed that this is applicable to yachts/ motorboats, however some restrictions remain and are outlined in guidance.

We have a lift in/ launch date planned, can this go ahead?

It is permissible for your club to organise lift-ins, working parties, committee meetings etc. However, we would advise you to limit these to those which are strictly necessary. Risk Assessments for groups of 30 or more outdoors must be in place.

Is travelling within the Common travel Area permitted?

From 24th May the non-essential requirement for travel from/ to NI has been lifted, however, particular requirements may still need to be followed in different jurisdictions. Full details on this can be found at NI Direct. [Travel within the Common Travel area](#)

Are there limits to training groups?

Limitations on group numbers for training no longer apply.

Can training rooms be used for briefings and shore sessions?

Yes, training rooms may reopen in line with PHA guidance. A Risk Assessment and appropriate mitigations must be in place where the numbers indoor exceed 15. [NI Direct](#) provides further considerations for indoor venues.

Our club runs Open Water Swimming, SUP etc sessions, does this guidance apply?

RYANI Guidance for activity only applies to relevant activities including sailing, windsurfing and powerboating. Where clubs may run other activities, these should meet the relevant NGB protocols.

Racing/ Competition

Are there limitations to club/ event racing?

Racing / competition restarted from 23rd April and from 2nd July gathering limits no longer apply.

Numbers provided are a maximum and based on a venue having a site Risk Assessment for the facility/spaces being used to determine safe occupancy that minimises the risk of Covid spread

Can Regattas/ Regional/ National class events proceed?

There is currently no outlined restriction on the types of event or numbers participating.

Are parents/ guardians 'essential personnel'?

Parents/ guardians are included as essential personnel.

Are hospitality numbers included within limits for competition?

SportNI has outlined that hospitality numbers are not defined as spectators. They will come under the relevant regulations for opening of licensed premises and, where possible, should be separate to other activities taking place in the same venue.

Is there guidance for running racing?

Considerations for clubs and class associations (including draft wording for e.g. NORs) can be found through the [RYA Major Event Guidance](#).

Should participants be asked to undertake a Lateral Flow Device test before coming to an event?

SportNI has outlined: It is strongly recommended that anyone participating in, or attending, any event which will bring them into close proximity with other people from outside their existing bubble should test themselves before they attend, and on days 2 and 8 after the event.

The purpose of this testing is to identify any positive cases in advance of the event, and allow them to self-isolate. Post event testing will also help to identify any asymptomatic COVID-19 infections arising from the event, or social interactions that may occur before or after an organised event.

Full guidance can be found: [Guidance on Testing for Events & Large Gatherings](#)