



RYA Covid-19 FAQs valid in England

(Updated 28th April 2021)

These FAQs have been developed in accordance with the '[COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021](#)' Government guidance, The [Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) \(Steps\) \(England\) Regulations 2021](#) and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) sport specific 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.

[Step 2: Current situation](#)

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

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

Step 2:

Can I go boating?

Yes you can go boating. Outdoor sports facilities including sailing clubs can reopen.

Can I travel to go boating?

You should minimise travel wherever possible, but you can travel to exercise and take part in informal and organised sport. However, you should not stay away from home overnight for sport and recreation.

Can I travel overseas to sail/compete / maintain/move/sell/buy a boat?

International travel remains illegal unless you fall within the list of exemptions. Elite sport is an exempted reason for travelling overseas, you can find further information on the RYA Covid 19 hub - RYA elite sport status.pdf

The legislation includes a non-exhaustive list of permitted reasons to travel outside of the UK, but unsurprisingly travelling abroad for the purpose of maintaining/repatriating/getting charter ready/selling/buying/ boats is not mentioned in the legislation. However, as the list of permitted reasons is non-exhaustive, it could well be the case that such reasons may be permitted.

The penalty for breach of the international travel restrictions is includes sending the traveller home and/or a £5,000 fine. We have sought clarification from Government as to the circumstances in which a £5,000 fine may be imposed. The initial response is that the police will be responsible for enforcement and they will continue to use the 4Es approach, namely engaging with individuals who are not following the rules, explaining the rules to them and encouraging them to comply before moving on to enforce the law. Government expects the police to continue to use their common sense, discretion and experience in enforcing coronavirus regulations.

Whilst this provides some level of reassurance that a fine is unlikely to be imposed as a first sanction, we are nevertheless disappointed that this does not provide the clarity sought.

We will update this FAQ when the Government makes any further announcement on overseas travel'.

Can I stay overnight on my boat?

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

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, 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 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. 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.

Are spectators allowed?

Spectators are not allowed at any grassroot sport sessions or events taking place on private land. However, this does not apply to carers for disabled people, or adults needed to supervise under-18s in a safeguarding role. This means that, where necessary, parents/guardians can help their children rig/launch/recover etc. Where it is necessary for them to be present, supervising adults should not mix with others from outside their household or support bubble.

This doesn't prevent people from viewing recreational or organised sport that's taking place in a public space, e.g. at the beach, in groups of up to six people or two households. But even then, spectators shouldn't be actively encouraged.

Can we organise on the water activity such as racing events?

Activity organised by an NGB, club, public body, qualified instructor, company or charity, and follows NGB guidance can resume and will not be subject to the legal gathering limits. This is because the organising body has considered the risks and set out ways to mitigate them so people can participate safely.

Organised sport participation events such as regattas can take place outdoors and are exempt from legal gathering limits.

If the activity is not organised by one of these groups, it is considered to be informal or self-organised sport and is subject to the Rule of 6/two households.

Gatherings that are not part of the boating activity are subject to the rule of 6/two households. Therefore, participants should adhere to social distancing when not actively participating (e.g. around the boat park or marina). Social interaction before boating activity should only take place outdoors, and in separate and distinct groups consisting of up to 6 people or two households.

Can indoor facilities and changing rooms open?

Indoor sport for under 18's will be permissible. Clubs will be able to brief or debrief a group of up to 15 under 18's inside. However, we would actively encourage the use of virtual briefings where possible, or the use of outdoor spaces.

Changing rooms and showers will be able to open, but you should encourage participants to avoid or minimise use where possible (for example, by arriving in kit and showering at home) and to minimise the time they spend in the changing area.

Participants should social distance whilst in changing rooms. More than one household can use changing facilities at one time but they must not mix and must adhere to capacity limits. Clubs are advised to follow Government [guidance on working safely during coronavirus for providers of grassroots sport](#) if opening changing rooms.

Can clubs reopen bars and catering?

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. Where the sale of alcohol is offered all food and drink must be ordered, served and consumed at a table. Where the sale of alcohol is not offered, members/guests will need to be seated when consuming food and drink, but can order and collect food and drink from a counter.

Is volunteering at the club possible?

There is a legal exception to the wider limits on gatherings for volunteering purposes, as such it is likely to be 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 and adhere to the Rule of 6/two households wherever possible.

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.

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

Whilst the Government is reviewing 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.

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.

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.

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.