**RDA UK Coronavirus update as at 17 March 2020**

To Group Contacts and Group Chairs,

Following the government’s announcement yesterday, asking people to work from home and implement social distancing measures, we now assume that most if not all RDA group activity will have to cease.

**Open groups**

While it is the decision of your board of trustees whether to close or remain open, **RDA’s strong advice is for groups to close and suspend activity.**

If you do not, you must be certain that you can meet the guidance around social distancing and that your group can put measures in place to keep everyone safe.

**What is social distancing?**

* Social distancing means trying to avoid contact with other people.
* It means spending less time in public places, where a lot of people are around.

You can read the government guidelines on this here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

**Regional Qualifiers & National Championships**

In consultation with Regional Chairs and the Championships Lead, we have decided to cancel all Regional Qualifiers and The National Championships. We know this will be disappointing for everyone involved but please understand we have not made this decision lightly.

**Coach reviews, First Aid and Safeguarding Updates**

We understand that some training or reviews have a deadline attached to them to enable your coaches and volunteers to continue supporting your group. For the time being, we are issuing 6 month extensions on coach reviews and first aid courses.

Whilst safeguarding training should be updated every three years and alternated between face-to-face and on-line, if anyone is due to update their safeguarding and it should be face to face, they can either:

* Delay face to face training for up to 6 months i.e. by end of September

or

* Update online, providing face to face training is then attended within 12 months.

Please be assured; we have run this by our insurers who have agreed the extensions in the current circumstances.

**Coach assessments**

We advise postponing all coach assessments for the foreseeable future. We know this will be a frustration for the coaches affected, but we must prioritise the health of everyone involved, including the riders and volunteers who would be needed. This will mean the coaches will need to continue to be supervised until such time the assessments can be rescheduled.

**Closed groups**

Understandably, many RDA groups have now taken the difficult decision to close. We fully support this action and know it has not been made lightly. The impact on participants will be significant, as well as for volunteers, for whom RDA provides an important community.

We will continue to support groups as much as possible during this difficult time. There will be a few staff in the office and the majority will be working from home, but please continue to contact us – by email wherever possible.

Some specific areas you might be interested in:

* Talk to the comms team about publicity for your group. We will be circulating a template press release to help get support from your local area. This will also be a good time to stay in touch with your RDA community through social media, so please ask if you have any questions or need any advice. cward@rda.org.uk
* Talk to the fundraising team about how to use this time to fundraise. This could be a good time to look at MyRDA and applying for grants, using social media to fundraise etc. cyapp@rda.org.uk
* Use our educational resources to help your participants continue with RDA while they can’t come to sessions. Contact Marisa about Proficiency Tests, Arts & Crafts and more. marisa@rda.org.uk

**Groups with paid employees**

Employees have now been asked to work from home where possible. This may have an impact on your ability to look after your horses. The government has not issued any advice about this yet. We will let you know as soon as this changes.

In the meantime, ACAS is regularly updating its website with useful advice and information for employers and employees. <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

**National Office**

National Office remains open, but will be operating with a skeleton staff in the office, with the majority of staff working from home. Please contact us by email wherever possible.

**Staying safe**

Most importantly, we urge you and everyone involved at your group to prioritise their own health and wellbeing. This is an unprecedented situation for all of us and there is still a lot of change to come. We will do our very best to stay in regular contact, to support you and your community as much as possible, and we wish you all the very best of health and good luck in the coming weeks.

Best wishes,

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