

Carriage Driving COVID-19 FAQs

The rules say we have to remain socially distanced, how can we carriage drive?

The protocols were originally based on the dispensation provided for disabled participants that allow social distancing to be breached when sufficient mitigation is put in place to support participants to access sport and physical activity. This is relevant in all the home nations of the United Kingdom. These protocols were shared and agreed with Sport England in February 2021 and were agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive in April 2021 and so carriage driving can already take place. They have been shared with Horse Scotland who have confirmed that activity can resume when contact sport is permitted from 17th May. We are awaiting a response from the Welsh Government.

In addition, from the end of April 2021, these protocols can also be applied to non-disabled drivers (e.g. exercising of equines or assessment of coaches) if there is no alternative to these individuals sitting side by side in the carriage as long as all mitigations listed in the protocols are followed.

How can we carriage drive when we are limited to 15 mins closer contact?

The protocols do not state that you cannot undertake the activity if the duration of closer proximity contact is more than 15 mins. These protocols flag that there is increased risk if you are closer than 1m AND the duration is more than 15 mins. Risks can be reduced by following the mitigations listed on the table in the protocols. These are the coach, and if possible, the driver wearing a face covering, good hand hygiene being observed by hand washing in clean running water or the use of hand sanitiser prior to any sessions and immediately afterwards as well as periodic use if any equipment is touched. All equipment should also be cleaned as per the protocols. All sessions must be outdoors or being in a well-ventilated covered arena (sometimes termed indoors) and the nose to nose measurement between driver and coach must be at least 0.5m.

As detailed on page 7 of the protocols, some groups may wish to decide to reduce the risk further and keep their session to 15 minutes, but this is not mandatory within these protocols if all the other mitigation measures are put in place. It is noted that keeping a session to 15 mins may be impractical for a group or could be unsafe, for example where a circular route is used which could be safer than a there and back again route turning for home half-way through the session.

We have some participants who would not be able to understand our coaching when wearing a face covering, what can we do?

It is not possible for these participants to come to sessions at the moment as carriage driving requires the coach to wear a face covering.

We have some participants who cough/ spit regularly, what would you recommend?

We would recommend that this presents a higher risk to coaches than those who do not including the risk of COVID-19 transmission to the eyes. We recommend taking a phased approach to bringing drivers back to driving and so it may not be possible to welcome these participants back until risks of COVID-19 are further reduced. If there is a low or medium risk of this happening, mitigation would be that in addition to wearing a face covering, eye protection to EN166 should be worn. These should ideally be medium impact rated in case of an accident and should form a seal on the face to protect the eyes, these are often referred to as 'spoggles'.

I am a Carriage Driving Coach and I am unable to wear a face covering, can I wear a face shield instead?

No you cannot. Face shields are not designed for impact and so if an accident were to occur, there would be a significant health and safety risk that the shield could cause damage to your face, eyes etc.

Can I fix a Perspex screen between the Coach and the driver if face coverings cannot be worn?

No you cannot. The carriage must not be modified in any way as this presents a significant health and safety risk if an accident occurred.

I don't feel comfortable coaching/ volunteering whilst following the Carriage Driving Protocols as it feels too soon, what can I do?

If you do not feel comfortable coming back to driving sessions at the moment, that is fine. Think about what else you can do with your participants that is not driving. This includes: stable management sessions, education, quiet corners and long lining demonstrations.

How can we carriage drive when sidewalkers for riding have to be from within the rider's household/ support bubble?

Sidewalkers may be required to be very close or in contact with the rider during the session. They are also lower than the rider and may be more at risk from droplets from the rider. In addition, many Groups in 2020 have shown they are able to train people from the rider's household/ support bubble to be an effective sidewalker for their rider. However, it is not possible to train someone from a driver's household/ support bubble to take the role of the carriage driving coach. If a requirement such as this were to be applied, this would prevent all drivers from accessing driving.

It is worth noting that due to easing of restrictions due to the reducing community prevalence of COVID-19 we will be permitting 1 sidewalker from outside the rider's bubble to support the rider on the opposite side of the equine to the leader. The timing of this is being tied in with the level of confidence in each of the respective countries about permitting 2 households to meet indoors and/or to permit contact sport. This is expected to be 17th May in England and Scotland, 24th May in Northern Ireland and date to be announced in Wales (10th May at the earliest).