



COVID-19 What it means to Groups in Wales

The guidance from different governments is getting increasingly complex with local lockdowns and restrictions coming into force as well as changes to the numbers of people who can gather. It is every group's responsibility to keep up with changes to any restrictions that affect their group and ensure they are adhering to them. This may mean a change to your protocols and risk assessment at short notice. Please consider this when developing your plans and inviting participants and volunteers to sessions.

Trustee checklists should be completed and emailed to RDA National Office groupsupport@rda.org.uk before the group can be signed off as ready and any RDA activity can begin.

If you have previously been signed off and wish to restart, there is no need resubmit paperwork to National Office, although we would encourage you to revisit your risk assessment and trustee checklist to ensure nothing has changed. Even if you do make amendments to these documents, there is no need to be signed off again by National Office but please email groupsupport@rda.org.uk to notify us that you have reopened. This helps us understand the proportion of groups open.

Update – from November 2021

From Saturday 7 August most legally imposed restrictions were lifted throughout Wales.

Even though legal limits have been removed in Wales, we continue to suggest you put measures in place to protect your participants and volunteers. **Both indoor and outdoor spaces can be used and there is now no longer an upper legal limit or RDA recommended limit on the numbers of people who can gather. Groups should undertake a risk assessment to put in place actions to reduce the risks of transmission of COVID at large gatherings, putting actions in place such as the use of lateral flow tests for participants or reminding people about the importance of vaccinations.**

The Health and Safety Executive make it clear that workplaces (this includes premises used by voluntary organisations) must be kept safe even if the wider rules have changed.

We have set out below what we consider the standards that groups should follow but if groups decide to continue with the protocols they already have in place, or to return to activity with higher levels of mitigation than set out below we are wholly supportive of this. Decisions will need to be taken based on a number of factors including whether there are any groups of participants who have additional requirements for mitigating COVID-19 risk (e.g. from a school, care home), the confidence/ comfort levels of participants and volunteers in the group.

The key message in all of this, is even though mandatory elements are being reduced, we all must ensure we are respecting the needs and thoughts of others. We want to ensure we are not preventing participants and volunteers from engaging with our activities as they do not feel safe in the environment we have created. It is therefore vital that groups engage with their participants and volunteers to understand their views.

Practical measures in RDA groups

We continue to require you, as part of RDA restart, to provide hand sanitising or hot hand washing facilities to be used by all on arrival and prior to and following RDA session, as well as periodically.

In Wales face coverings continue to be required in indoor public places for those aged over 11 unless exempt including in sports facilities when individuals are not exercising.

We strongly recommend if you are outdoors and coming into close contact (<1m) you continue to wear a face covering especially if this is for a prolonged duration (e.g. supporting someone to mount using a hoist or carriage driving). In all other scenarios outdoors face coverings are optional. Face coverings are primarily to protect others, please bear in mind we may well have participants and volunteers who may be vulnerable to COVID-19 and may be unable to be vaccinated. Face coverings may also reassure people where they are lacking in confidence in coming back. It is important you have conversations with your participants, or those that support them if relevant, if there is something that you need to do to make them feel more comfortable. If face coverings are worn, the [face covering guidance](#) must be followed.

You are permitted to have leaders from outside the household/ support bubble of the rider and side walkers.

We recommend that you sanitise tack that is frequently touched (e.g. reins) between participants using suitable sanitiser for the materials you are using. Information about sanitiser is available [here](#).

We recommend that you sanitise any shared items that participants wear such as hats between participants. We have confirmation from BETA that the Aqueous sanitiser is suitable for use on both the inside and outside of hats, but this must be fully dry before next use. Some groups have a hat per participant to reduce transmission risk, or hats per groups of participants which allow hats to be quarantined between uses. This may not always be practical for every group and so you need to determine what works for your group.

As winter is coming, participants and volunteers may well wear of winter gloves in sessions. As gloves are made from a soft fabric, research suggests COVID is unlikely to last long. However, given the gloves could be touching lots of cold hard surfaces (where COVID may linger) we do need to be careful. We are therefore recommending that those wearing gloves should wash them frequently (at the end of each day ideally) and make a real effort not to touch their face (or indeed that of others if supporting people) with gloves. One way to discourage touching of your face would be to wear a face covering/ shield and then remove your gloves before removing the face covering or shield but it could simply be a reminder to those wearing gloves. The key message is to be careful and keep gloves any away from your face.

Given the 'flu season and as people have been in lockdown their immune systems may be less able to combat 'flu resulting in people become more ill than they would normally do. We therefore recommend that if people are feeling unwell with 'flu symptoms (including stomach flu symptoms) they should stay away from RDA sessions where possible. Where they are the coach (and therefore essential) or have another essential role, if they have 'flu symptoms but feel well enough, they should aim to remain distanced from others where possible and to use hand sanitisers or to wash their hands frequently to reduce transmission of 'flu.

Even though social distancing restrictions have been removed we recommend **for large gatherings** you **aim** to socially distance where you can.

If you work with a school, care home etc. you should continue to follow any specific COVID-19 requirements that they may have to ensure the individuals in their care continue to come to RDA sessions.

Carriage Driving

Carriage driving activities may take place. [The recommendations in the RDA Carriage Driving Protocols](#) may continue to be followed but face coverings are now at the discretion of those involved in the session.

Vaulting

Vaulting as individual may take place and pairs and teams are permitted. [The recommendations in the RDA Vaulting Protocols](#) may continue to be followed but face coverings are now at the discretion of those involved in the session.