

## Getting Started Update 24<sup>th</sup> July

The number of groups now offering some activity is now just over 60 – and this is growing all the time. We are grateful to all of you for rising to what we know is a very significant challenge. Many of you are tackling new and adapted activities, learning new ways of doing things and coping with guidelines that change week on week. Thank you.

The level of creativity and innovation happening at RDA all over the UK is inspiring, especially when it comes to activities for those participants who can't yet get back to riding or driving. Today we have put on the Getting Started page a new activity that enables a virtual equine therapy session (more on this below).

For any RDA activity to happen all RDA Groups must send in their Covid Risk Assessment (RA) and Covid Checklist to National Office and get confirmation from the Director of Operations that the group is signed off to re-start. This is applicable even if a group wishes to only get volunteers back to do training or if participants are coming back to see their favourite ponies....in these circumstances only the relevant parts of the RA and checklist need to be completed.

Of those groups who have already started, a strong message is to take time to think through all that needs to be done and plan re-starting in bite size chunks. There is a Getting Started Guidance Note and the "Are you Ready" questions which will help you to see what is involved. In addition, Muirfield RDA has shared a helpful presentation which the trustees used in their planning.

All guidance, forms and resources can be found at [www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/getting-started-after-lockdown/](http://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/getting-started-after-lockdown/)

When looking to do RDA activities it is important to ensure that what your Group is doing fits with your (devolved) Government guidelines, as well as RDA. This can be confusing because each devolved government is easing at different paces: for example we know the Isle of Man and Guernsey Governments have lifted social distancing and other rules (there's hope for the rest of us!), yet in Wales and Scotland the restrictions are tighter than in England and N Ireland. If you are unsure how it affects your Group's ability to hold sessions please contact the team at National Office with your queries.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Q1: Can people wear face coverings (masks or shields) when at RDA?**

We know there is a lot of debate about this point and much of this stems from the unclear guidance from the government(s). It is a topic discussed by the working Group on a regular basis. RDA's current position is based on guidance from the World Health Organisation, NHS and medical professionals. RDA does not sanction the use of face coverings during RDA activities i.e. when mounted or when side-walking and leading.

The most important measures to stay safe remain:-

- Keeping the 2M social distancing rule.
- Avoiding face to face contact.
- Keeping your hands and face clean

Face covering are not a substitute for these measures, even where governments have eased social distancing (eg 1m+), as you cannot side walk effectively and safely at 1m.

Based on WHO and Government guidelines, anyone mounted on a horse, or undertaking exercise (side walking, leading etc) must not wear face coverings in RDA.

Presently riding can only happen, by meeting social distancing rules, with independent riders, or riders who have household/bubble support who have been trained to side-walk or lead if required – using the Covid Basic Training Card. This will continue to be under review as the Government(s) adapt social distancing rules.

Anyone attending (who isn't mounted or exercising) may choose to wear a face covering (masks or shields) – for example someone may just feel more comfortable attending wearing a mask but then they could not take part in the actual session; or someone may choose to wear a mask when welcoming people on the yard. They must always be safely secured so that they cannot be easily dislodged or removed.

Face covering may cause alarm to equines if they are unsecure, brightly coloured or in any way distract from the activity taking place. Because individuals may attend with face coverings, it is important that equines have been inducted with this in mind.

### **Q2: Can groups have gathering of up to 30 – and what constitutes a gathering?**

Again, the rules will depend on where you are in the UK. Certainly the recent change allowing charitable gatherings means that in England groups are now able to bring together up to 30 people at a time.

However, this is where confusion can be had, because whilst as a charitable organisation groups can “gather”, when it comes to the running of sessions groups fall within the guidelines for coaching which currently only allows for up to 6 people in a session in England.

This means groups in England will need to work to both guidelines, ensuring social distancing is maintained. A group could now bring together up to 30 people for an AGM, or a training session, for example. In addition if the venue can accommodate, the group could have a session in the indoor arena with 6 people max (including coach), then another session in the outdoor and even have some people in the Quiet Corner. It means you could have up to 30 people on a yard with concurrent sessions. BUT groups will need to think about safety at pinch points – loos, doors, mounting blocks etc and revise their Risk Assessments accordingly.

### **Q3: What is the current situation with groups holding AGMs?**

Many of you have asked about the requirements for carrying out AGMs. Currently the ruling will depend on what part of the UK you are in. It is best to check your relevant Charity Commission for the latest information:-

Northern Ireland: [www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/charity-essentials/covid-19-guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-charities/#CANCEL](http://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/charity-essentials/covid-19-guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-charities/#CANCEL)

Scotland: [www.oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms/covid-19-guidance-for-charities/3-charity-meetings-and-governance/](http://www.oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms/covid-19-guidance-for-charities/3-charity-meetings-and-governance/)

England and Wales: [www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector#agms-and-other-meetings-postponing-or-cancelling-meetings](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector#agms-and-other-meetings-postponing-or-cancelling-meetings)

Isle of Man: [www.gov.im/media/1368931/coronavirus-guidance-v3-jun-2020.pdf](http://www.gov.im/media/1368931/coronavirus-guidance-v3-jun-2020.pdf)

England and Wales now have a suggested deadline of 30th Sept for CIOs / Companies, and as per governing doc for unincorporated charities, but not all groups can do this.

We suggest it may be prudent for groups to delay, especially if there are any potentially controversial or significant resolutions or votes. If delayed it will be important for the trustees to show they have done so in good faith and they record their decision and the rationale for it. Alternatively an AGM can be by electronic means, but trustees will need to make sure you get a majority (unanimity) of the voting members to agree to having it this way and for the meeting to still be quorate.

**New Activities:-**

Thanks to the Getting Started Working Group for producing another alternative activity – Virtual Equine Therapy sessions. A fun and interactive way of getting participants involved without attending the group venue. Find out more at [www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/getting-started-after-lockdown/](http://www.myrda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/getting-started-after-lockdown/)