

Covid 19 Update:

Easing of restrictions and implications for surf schools and coaching

10/07/2020

New government guidance was issued on the 4th July to support businesses from multiple sectors to re-open. Further leisure and sport specific guidance was released on the 10th July to support a return for recreational team sports, grass roots sport and gym and leisure facilities.

This document provides a summary of the practical actions all business need to take, based on the [government's 5 steps to working safely](#), plus links to the relevant leisure and water sport specific guidance followed by a Q&A.

Practical actions all businesses must take:

1. You must have a Covid 19 risk assessment in place.
 - [HSE guidance](#) for risk assessments including templates
 - The Surfing England [surf school checklist](#) provides useful framework for surf school specific risks and requirements
 - Make sure you complete in conjunction with your team and your display on your website alongside a completed [Covid Secure certificate](#)

2. You must have cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures in place, this includes for boards and wetsuits.
 - There is a specific section on maintaining hygiene in the surf school checklist
 - There is detailed government guidance on [cleaning in the workplace](#) and [handwashing and hygiene](#)

3. Help people to work from home where possible.
 - Although clearly not possible for surf coaches, schools with dedicated admin functions should actively pursue options for those roles to be delivered remotely

4. Maintain 2m social distancing where possible
 - The surf school checklist considers how to maintain social distancing through the surf school operation, which may mean staggering lesson times, additional signage, dedicated waiting spaces and one way systems

5. Where it is not possible to be more than 2 meters apart, doing everything practical to reduce the transmission risk
 - Take a risk based approach, in the first instance, consider whether the activity can be avoided or the time it takes reduced
 - Consider what physical interventions can be applied, for example PPE or Perspex screens

- Consider what process changes you can make, for example staggering lessons or creating separate access points for groups
- Consider what behavioural interventions can be applied, for example changing working practice to avoid face to face working

Specific Guidance for sports and leisure facilities

There is now specific guidance for providers of [grassroots sports, gyms and leisure facilities](#) which all surf schools should read and follow the relevant instruction. The Surfing England surf school checklist has been updated and can be used in conjunction with the guidance to assist you cover off the surf specific points not directly captured by the main guidance. It is really important you complete your Covid 19 Risk assessments in conjunction with your teams and that you share the results alongside displaying the [Covid Secure certificate](#).

Section 10 of the guidance for grass roots sports, gyms and leisure facilities has specific guidance for clubs, community sport orgs and working with volunteers.

The [public guidance for the phased return for sport](#) has a specific section for watersports and makes reference to surfing, reinforcing the rules on groups of no more than 6 being allowed to visit the beach and staying within the social distancing guidelines.

The [guidance for coaching](#) was updated on the 9th July and the position remains that coaches are limited to working with groups of 5 people from outside their household at any one time.

The main page which hosts all the relevant sporting guidance is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation>

The Surfing England surf school readiness checklist has been updated (10/07/2020) and should be used in conjunction with the main guidance for grassroots sports, gyms and leisure facilities.

We all need to assess and manage the risks of Covid 19 and as employers or operators of sports facilities we have legal responsibilities to protect workers, volunteers, customers and users from risk to their health and safety. This means spending time to understand the guidance, considering the risks they face and doing everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising you cannot completely eliminate the risk of Covid 19.

Whilst we all continue to adapt our processes and procedures to the evolving guidance, water safety must continue to remain the no.1 priority. If for any reason you feel the usual standards of water safety cannot be met, don't go out.

Questions and Answers

Can I go back to 1:8 ratios?

No. The government's [guidance for coaches](#) is clear that group size (including coach) must not exceed 6, this is also echoed in the guidance to the public on visiting the beach and taking part in water sports.

Can I run 1:8 group session if they are all from the same household?

No, as per the above, the guidance currently limits coaches to 1:5 irrelevant of how many households are involved.

Why does it look like leisure facilities can host larger groups indoors, but a surf lesson is being restricted to 1:5?

We understand this is due to a centre's ability to strictly control a space, which isn't possible for operators using public spaces – like beaches. However, we believe there may be inconsistencies in this approach given the comparable levels of transmission risk, something we have already shared with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and we are actively lobbying for a review.

What if I run 1:8 lessons anyway?

It is really important all schools adhere to the guidance. Working outside the rules has consequences for public health, is unfair commercial practice and risks government tightening the rules again which could impact the whole industry.

The 1:5 ratio is determined by government (not Surfing England) and is part of the guidance we all have to follow. Those that fail to adhere to the guidance run the risk of enforcement action from the agencies the government has resourced and charged with maintaining the rules, for example; councils, HSE, trading standards or police depending on the issue.

Surfing England is here to support schools understand and implement the guidance, and where schools are reported to us for non-conformance we will always reach out and provide the necessary support to bring their operations back inline with the guidance. For those that choose to deliberately and persistently flout the rules, putting the industry and potentially the health & safety of their clients and staff at risk, it would be referred to the relevant enforcement agency to take action.

Can I run sessions for multiple groups of 5 at the same time?

Providing you can still meet the guidance criteria and each group has their own coach and is kept separate. The other option is to stagger group arrival and lesson times, with cleaning in between.

Can I work with children and others that need extra support?

Yes. If needed you can help them over and into waves as long as you adhere to the guidance and do everything practical to reduce transmission risk. For example, it is important to minimise face to face working, so when assisting a client in the water you may consider working to the side of the board in order to position the clients face away from yours, also allowing for 1m+ distance to be maintained from the client's face. Working closer to the tail can increase the risk of getting tangled in a leash, so schools may wish to review their working practices and provide additional training for their coaches on safe practice.

Can customers carry boards in pairs?

We advise against this, unless from the same household.