



SURFING
ENGLAND

Updated guidance July 2023

This updated guidance below comes from the new Surf Instructor Recreation Award and is to be applied in line with the updated Surfing England Surf School Scheme

Module 7

Working with other instructors

When working with other instructors you can plan how you will work together to manage the group in the water. **(Module 4)** You may have one instructor waist deep and one in knee deep water. You could also have one instructor at each side of the group to mark the safe surfing area between you and keep people safe **(Module 3)** from rips or other hazards. If you are working with strong cross shore wind and or current, it can be useful to have one upwind of the group and one downwind.

Using what you learn in each module on this online part of your course and what you learn on your practical placement, once you start work as an employed instructor you should be able to work with fellow instructors/coaches and head coaches to work with appropriate ratios of Surfing clients : Instructors. This ratio would never be more than 8 clients : 1 instructor

There may be lessons in which for adequate safety, due to conditions, or working with a mixed ability level group, or with children of various ages, that the lesson needs a ratio of 2:8, or even subgroups of a 1:4 & a 2:4 for example. Surf schools are very much used to adjusting ratios (within a maximum of 8 clients : 1 instructor) and planning for this to give a greater number of instructors/coaches to a group as needed

Module 3

Higher Duty of Care and Loco Parentis

Children, young people (anyone under 18) and vulnerable adults are owed a **higher duty of care** as it is expected that they may be more susceptible to harm than adults in a similar situation.

This consideration should be even greater if a child is known to have learning difficulties or a medical condition which may make them more vulnerable than the average child to foreseeable risk of harm. The responsibility of an instructor working with children is the same as that of a teacher in charge of a class of children.

Here are some examples that help demonstrate the need for a higher duty of care when working with children:

- Not paying attention or following instructions
- Not able to judge distance or speed accurately
- Overly ambitious on expected capability
- Not aware of conditions or changing conditions
- Less developed risk perception skills
- Smaller, lighter, so more effect of wave power, current or other elements like cold or hot weather on them
- Shorter, so will be at waist/ head depth sooner
- Less coordinated if inexperienced; could lose footing in shorebreak, impact zone /surf zone sooner

Instructors in charge of children have to act in '**loco parentis**'. This term is best described as requiring the instructor to act as a reasonable parent/carer.

There may be a difference in what the parent/carer and instructor may permit because the instructor has a better understanding of the risks involved.

Example:

A parent/carer may say that their child can take part in a surf lesson without a wetsuit, however a responsible instructor would not allow this.

You should ensure that everyone is equipped appropriately with a wetsuit as per your training and the surf school risk assessment.

Question: What things can you do to demonstrate a higher duty of care?

Answers:

- More detailed risk assessment which may mean changing factors such as instructor ratios to help mitigate risk
- Ask regular questions to confirm they understand your instruction.
- Use more sheltered areas of beach and work to their waist depths
- More regular head counts
- Use simple language and clear gestures and hand signals
- Increase instructor ratios

Under 8 years old

For children under 8 the law means that the parent must stay on site with the child. In practice this means that a parent or guardian should be with the child during the surf lesson in the water or close by on the beach.

As a result some surf schools have a minimum age to participate in lessons.

Coaching ages younger than 8 will depend on the policies and insurance cover of your surf school. A dynamic risk assessment must have taken place specific to the session and customers in the session.