

Planning a safe and enjoyable programme.

Guidance for Group Scout Leaders, Section Leaders, and those in section support roles at District and County level

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Welcome

If you're in doubt about any of these checks please seek the advice of a professional. Guidance is also available [here](#)

Updated September 2020 to add specific guidance at the back of the document on:

- Remembrance Parades and programme ideas
- Bonfire and Firework events
- Singing guidelines
- District events
- Plus a new checklist for the use of external activity providers, in the existing section on adventurous activities

Background

Face to face meetings can take place when the risk level on the Scouts.org.uk website is at Amber, Yellow or Green. These levels are set for each national jurisdiction based on the guidelines of the relevant national operating authority, e.g.: the National Youth Agency for England, Youthlink Scotland, etc. You must also follow the Scouts' guidelines on group sizes, allowable meeting formats and good meeting practice.

When planning face-to-face activities, leaders need to risk assess their proposals and get the relevant approvals (see separate guidance on Making sure everything's in place - Guidance for Executive Committees and Commissioners).

As well as getting approval to restart face-to-face sessions, local risk assessments need to be completed for each meeting, as usual. These do not need external approval. Please note recent changes to risk assessment rules and the move to written risk assessments by January 2021. Key factors to consider include how to organise sessions effectively, how to select activities that will work and how to adapt activities for social distancing. Ideas for suitable activities for each section will be posted on scouts.org.uk

Things to consider

When planning sessions leaders need to consider venue, format, session length, leader availability, facilities, hygiene routines and communications, with specific individuals allocated to monitor distancing, cleaning, arriving and departing.

When selecting activities, leaders need to consider social distancing, equipment sharing and inclusion. This is a great opportunity to catch up on the outdoor activities our members have been missing. When adapting activities to comply with social distancing guidelines, leaders need to consider group management, hand hygiene, shared equipment, face-to-face working and activity timing. Checklists for all these topics are included in this guidance. Checks should include ceremonies/presentations at the beginning and end, adapting them to reduce contact that could transmit the virus.

For activities requiring permits (such as climbing walls, archery, canoeing and so on) volunteers should comply with the detailed COVID-secure guidelines published by the relevant governing bodies on their websites.

What's a bubble?

In England, the National Youth Agency (who have prepared the guidance we're following) have started to use the term 'bubbles' in their guidance. This refers to the limited group sessions which are allowed to take place.

This is different to how bubbles work in other settings, such as schools in England, where social distancing and group sizes are different. For clarity we have not used the term 'bubbles' in our documents and instead refer to 'limited group sessions' – of which the group size and social distancing requirements may vary depending on current local restrictions.

A blended approach

When planning a balanced programme, leaders should consider a blended approach. If working on a badge, some activities would work best on video, some face-to-face and some as 'At Home' assignments. The blended approach also allows those who need to shield or who are not ready for face-to-face meetings to continue to participate.

Resurgence of the infection rate could trigger a move back to earlier levels of the readiness framework, either nationally or locally so leaders should consider having a virtual programme ready in reserve. The activities you choose should not put unnecessary strain on our emergency services and/or NHS provision. National guidelines for social distancing in youth work activities should be followed at all times. Please note that the guidelines are different from guidance for schools and for out-of-school settings.

Risks and mitigating actions

Level	Permitted Activity	Key Risks	Key Control Measures	Who is responsible for making sure this happens?
Red	Only video, online and At Home programme can be delivered	Online safeguarding issues	See the Staying Safe Online page on scouts.org.uk	Section leaders and GSLs
Amber	Face-to-face activities can restart both outdoors and (in some nations) indoors, within group size limits and following relevant social distancing rules	Virus infection via poor social distancing and hygiene practice	See checklists below for planning sessions and selecting and adapting activities to prevent spread of the virus. Note that the preference remains to run activities outdoors.	Section leaders and GSLs
		Low turnout due to parental concern	See separate guidance on Speaking with parents, carers and young people.	Section leaders and GSLs
		Virus infection on return to indoor meetings	See guidance on 'Finding a Safe Place to Meet', plus advice in the checklists below	Section leaders and GSLs
Yellow	Face-to-face activities within size limits, indoors & outdoors, plus camping within guidelines in some nations, following relevant social distancing rules	Virus infection on return to camping	Detailed guidance on sleeping, catering, hygiene, waste management and programme for camping are in development to be ready for Yellow. Currently, of the major nations, only England has indicated an intention to allow limited camping in Yellow.	Section leaders and GSLs
		Country or local area may move back to Amber status	Manage up front spend on camping events carefully in case of late cancellation	Section leaders and GSLs
Green	Full range of programme can be delivered including all nights away	Country may move back to yellow status	Embedding improved hygiene practices into Scouting once social distancing rules are gone	GSLs
		Activities may be cancelled at short notice	Manage up front spend on nights away carefully via Exec governance	GSLs

Checklist for planning sessions

This table is completely revised from previous versions to reflect the resumption of indoor Scouting in some nations.

<p>Group size – Sessions must be planned in line with latest guidelines on group size and meeting format. Basing programmes around patrols, sixes and lodges provides some flexibility to scale meetings up and down if the group size guidelines change.</p> <p>See the table on Readiness Levels by jurisdiction for your local rules on group sizes: https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/scouts-at-home/getting-everyone-back-together-safely/readiness-levels-across-uk-scouts/</p> <p>This makes clear what numbers are allowed and whether leaders count in the numbers.</p>	
<p>Multiple groups –</p> <p>If the section is larger than the maximum <u>limited group</u> size, you can enable full participation by considering these options for your sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run video and face-to-face sessions in parallel. • Run sessions sequentially, with thorough cleaning of equipment and premises in between. Check national rules for youth work activities to see if the same leaders can run sequential sessions on the same day. • Meet with part sections on alternative weeks • Run parallel, separate face-to-face sessions in different locations. 	
<p>Running multiple groups in a single area or in adjacent spaces:</p> <p>When running more than one limited size group in parallel, groups need to be in their own distinct space. Clear procedures need to be in place to stop them mingling when arriving and departing and when using shared facilities like toilets and kitchen.</p> <p>For outdoor venues, groups should be separated by 25 metres to reduce the risk of groups mingling.</p> <p>For indoor venues with multiple large rooms, or indoor venues with an outdoor space attached, multiple groups can meet irrespective of distance, provided that each group has its own clearly separate location and the young people cannot interact with the other groups.</p> <p>For very large indoor spaces like sports halls more than one group can use the space in parallel if the space is well ventilated and if partitions between the areas are strong enough and tall enough that the groups can't interact and balls and other equipment are unlikely to get from one area to another. This should only be done when all the groups are Scout groups, so that the leader in charge has full control of the situation. The sort of barrier that would be appropriate to divide a big hall would be the floor to ceiling curtains used to divide up sports courts, or folding partition doors. A line of benches or a badminton net is not sufficient segregation.</p> <p>When your total group is within the national size limit for youth work then you can split it into smaller groups during your session to deliver your programme without needing to distance the groups in this way. In this circumstance, for track and trace purposes, your whole meeting counts one limited group session.</p>	
<p>Running multiple sessions in the same indoor location on the same day:</p> <p>When more than one group is using an indoor space during one day (examples: multiple Scout sections, multiple groups from the same Scout section, or a nursery school during the day and a cub pack in the evening) then a thorough clean is required between users (see guidance on Finding a Safe Place to Meet).</p>	
<p>Venue –</p> <p>Suitable outdoor venue agreed: e.g. provision for tarps, shelters, etc., in case of wet weather and all members bringing appropriate clothing. Use of indoor toilets and kitchens to support outdoor meetings is permitted. Outdoor shelters with open sides can be used for planned activities as well as for emergency shelter.</p> <p>Suitable indoor venue agreed, following the 'Finding a safe space to meet' guidance: a well ventilated venue with enough space to meet social distancing guidelines and with good hygiene and cleaning processes in place.</p> <p>When new venues are built into your programme, they need to be risk assessed and approved.</p>	
<p>Logistics – Where multiple groups are at the same venue, arrangements for keeping groups separate are in place, including for arrival and drop off. Young people are reminded not to arrive with others not part of their bubble. Young people need to be encouraged not to mingle with others who are not part of their bubble</p>	

before or after sessions.	
Toilets - Where meetings share toilets, plan use to prevent infection, e.g. different breaks, routes avoiding other groups, allocating separate facilities, regular cleaning/hand washing.	
Session length - Restrict face-to-face meetings to the shortest session that can contain an exciting and educational programme. For your first socially distant meetings try no more than an hour for Beavers/Cubs and no more than ninety minutes for Scouts/Explorers.	
Inclusion: Your venue and programme should allow as many section members to participate as often as possible. Where children with additional needs require individual assistance, this is best provided by one of their household, since distancing rules don't apply.	
Adult support – Make sure you have enough adult help to run your meeting, respecting current section supervision ratios, shielding, and personal choice. Young Leaders should be fully involved in planning and delivering content, but should not undertake first aid or cleaning. Follow national guidelines on whether leaders can move between groups during your meeting.	
Communications – All young people, parents/carers and volunteers briefed in advance. Parental consent for young people is obtained before restarting outdoor activities. Additional separate parental consent for young people is obtained before restarting indoor activities. InTouch in place. Volunteers assigned to monitor distancing, cleaning, arrivals / departures. Parental consent is required for Young Leaders to resume working with the section, separate from any consent obtained to resume face to face Explorer Scouting.	
Risk assessment – Risk assessment has been written and reviewed in line with guidance. RA has been prepared and approved before restarting outdoor activities. Additional separate RA has been prepared and approved before restarting indoor activities.	

Checklist for selecting specific activities for a face-to-face programme

Can be done within social distancing rules (and definitely no planned touching)	
Involving minimal sharing of equipment	
Accessible for as many of our youth members and volunteers as possible	
Able to be delivered with the amount of volunteer support you will have available	
Focused on the active face to face Scouting our members have been missing out on	
Able to be delivered safely in the space available	

Checklist for adapting specific activities for social distancing and hygiene

Session based around separated self-sufficient small groups	
Appropriate hand hygiene breaks built in	
Equipment sharing is restricted, and cleaning rules clear	
Face-to-face working is minimised	
Activities kept as short as possible	
Contingency plan in place to stop an activity in case young people break the distancing rules in the activity, allowing leaders to make necessary adjustments before continuing.	
Material exchange between home and scouts is minimised (follow schools' practice)	

Running adventurous activities as part of your programme, including guidance for using activity centres

With all activities you should not plan to break social distancing requirements in the normal operation of the activity. In an emergency situation (such as giving first aid or performing a rescue) of course you will need to break the social distancing requirements, consideration should be given on how to keep everyone as safe as possible whilst balancing the need to respond to the situation.

This does mean that for some activities you will need to wait until restrictions ease, and for others limit the participation and the way of delivering the session to ensure that social distancing is adhered to.

In planning on how to deliver the activity can the instructor and all participant always comply with the current social distancing requirements	
Is the need to rescue a likely occurrence – if yes then you will need to wait until restrictions ease	
When planning the activity consider where, under normal circumstances, the instructor would be within 2 metres. Can this be avoided by changing the process, restricting the age or height of participants, limiting participation to those with previous experience	
What will the quality of the activity be for the participant where there might be limitations on ability to coach or progress due to changes in the way you'd deliver the activity	

It's not possible to provide a definitive list of which activities would be suitable for running under the current conditions since so much depends on the location, the equipment available, the available supervision level and the experience of the participants. Where activities have a national governing body, their websites are often full of useful ideas for tailoring the activity in the current circumstances.

Guidelines for using external activity providers:

Use of external providers is a great way to add adventure to our programmes. As with all other activities, we need to make sure we are using them in a covid-safe way.

Decide if the activity is appropriate currently (see general guidance on adventurous activities, above)	
Check that the activity provider, whether operated by the Scouts or not, is properly licensed and qualified. The external provider must hold a relevant accreditation or qualification for the activity they are delivering as well as adequate insurance cover. Up to date guidance can be found in the A-Z directory at scouts.org.uk/a-z .	
Check they have their own covid-safe risk assessment for the activity you are doing. Check it is thorough. If in doubt, get the opinion of an expert in Scouting, eg: County activities team, District covid risk assessment assessor. This page from the Institute of Outdoor Learning shows what you should be expecting: https://www.outdoor-learning.org/Covid-19	
Add the risk assessment for the elements of the activity that will remain in Scout control, eg: getting there, meeting and greeting, attendance management, staggering group arrival times, managing pickup safely.	
Agree with the centre your group sizes and how they will be kept away from others. If their rules have a smaller number limit than that currently operating for Scouting you need to stick to the lower limit. Check Scouting guidelines for the different countries of the UK to see if you need to include instructors in the group size limit	
Work out your plan for running multiple groups on the same day, if you want to. You need to keep	

<p>both to the activity centre rules and to Scouting rules. For example, you might be able to have two groups being instructed by a centre that combined are under the limit for a group to meet in Scouting. They could arrive and depart at the same time, and for test and trace would be treated as one group. Adding a third group that broke the limit for young people attending a Scouting session would require keeping that group entirely separate, eg: with different arrival and departure times and distancing of at least 25 metres throughout the session.</p>	
<p>Attendance records: activity providers are required to keep the details of the leader for all groups doing activities at the centre, and of which centre staff interacted with each group. Its still the responsibility of the leader in charge of a Scout group visiting a centre to keep a full attendance record of who was there for test and trace purposes, as detailed in our guidance on: 'Guidance for Protecting ourselves and others'.</p>	
<p>Agree with the centre the procedure for incident management, eg: First Aid, PPE, etc</p>	
<p>Risk assessments: If the activity is taking place at a location that you have not included in your risk assessment for restarting outdoor face to face Scouting, then you will need to get approval for the new location via the Smartsheet system. There is no need to adapt the centre's risk assessment to a Scout format. Just submit their document as it comes to you, plus your procedures for the parts of the activity that you control</p>	
<p>Communication with parents: Parents may be nervous about new locations, and about places where Scouts come in contact with multiple members of the public. Be open, clear and factual in your communications to reassure them. Explain the process you have been through. Make detailed risk assessments available on request. See our document: 'Guidance for speaking with parents, carers and young people'</p>	
<p>Helping other sections use providers: Most activity providers are used by multiple Scout Groups. Districts and Counties can provide great support to sections by highlighting which centres are operating and by making approved risk assessments for those centres available to leaders so that they can follow proven procedures rather than having to develop their own. The risk assessment still needs to be submitted for approval, but that should be a very quick and easy process if you agree to follow existing proven processes approved for other sections.</p>	

Advice on adapting activities

Hazard	Controls and mitigations
<p>The virus can spread around groups that work closely together</p>	<p>If you can split the group into smaller self-contained groups for activities it will reduce the risk of spread.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you split into smaller groups they should be as spread out across the meeting place as they can be. • Leaders could rotate with their groups between activities, rather than stay at one activity while groups move round. • At the start of each activity, leaders should check that they still have the whole group with them.
<p>The virus can spread from surfaces, and from the air, onto hands and from there into mouths and eyes.</p>	<p>Keeping hands clean reduces the risk of spread</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insert hand cleaning into instructions at appropriate points, e.g.: after touching shared surfaces and equipment, before and after handling food and drinks. • As a minimum, everyone should wash their hands or sanitise them on arrival, before departure and at least once an hour during meetings.
<p>The virus can spread from person to person when we touch shared equipment, particularly with the hands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally each young person has their own set of equipment and it's cleaned before use by others. • Where that is not practical then sharing within a smaller group is better than sharing between everyone • For equipment touched intensively with the hands, e.g. compasses, scissors, cooking utensils, section members should be given one each. Less frequently touched equipment (e.g. most games equipment) can be shared. • Minimise hand contact with equipment, e.g. could a ball game involve kicking the ball rather than throwing it? • Whenever shared equipment has been used, a hand hygiene break should be included. • Because of the need for cleaning between users, meeting programmes that rotate around multiple sets of equipment in a session are less practical than longer activities using equipment for the full session. • Frequently touched equipment should be cleaned before being put back into storage. • Where practical, equipment should be cleaned at the meeting location to avoid virus transmission in transit
<p>The virus can spread more easily from person to person when they work face-to-face since it is carried on the breath</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't have a group huddled round a table face-to-face to do an activity. Consider alternative formats, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Group works in a circle, spread out by the distancing guideline applying at the time ○ Or group works in two lines back to back • Plan in advance how to help a child that is struggling to follow instructions, without a leader moving into the distancing zone to intervene: e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coach from outside the distancing area ○ Demonstrate from a distance with your own set of equipment ○ Show a video of the activity on a phone ○ Get a neighbouring young person to demonstrate

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's not worth taking the risk of going too close to solve this sort of problem. • Separate guidance on first aid is available to explain the trade-off between distancing and providing necessary help.
The more time a group is together, the more chance the virus has to spread from person to person.	<p>Keep activities as short as we can, thinking about the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could the activity be simplified? • Could more up-front preparation by leaders reduce the time it takes the young people to complete the activity, without diluting their learning? • Could the activity be finished off at home? E.g. make something in the meeting but do the decorating at home?
Sometimes young people may step outside the rules agreed, increasing the chances of the virus spreading.	<p>As part of the planning for the activity, think through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What you will do if young people leave their groups • What you would do if young people don't follow social distancing instructions within their groups
We can transfer the virus from location to location when we transport material and equipment that people have been using from place to place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align with local schools' practice on whether artwork and craft projects can be taken home. • Materials for craft projects should not be brought from home to the meeting place, e.g.: recycling for junk modelling. Consider doing projects like this using video meetings.

Guidance on specific events and activities (singing, Remembrance, Bonfire and Fireworks)

Singing

Singing as part of youth activities is now allowed again in Scotland and England.

Locations	Outdoors where possible or very well ventilated indoors in nations where indoor meetings are allowed.
Group Size	Limit group size (English schools guidance is no more than 15)
Distancing	maintain 2m distancing
Other	No shouting or loud singing. No face to face singing

In practical terms, where group singing is allowed again a classic campfire setup would work well. 15 people distancing by 2m in a single circle would each be over 10m away from the person directly across from them, with very low risk of aerosol contamination. **Singing in Scouting should be outdoors, socially distant, in a single line or a big circle.** Avoid yells, shouts or volume competitions, all of which could spray the virus further.

The guidance:

England: [guidance for the Performing Arts](#)

Scotland (21 August) [here](#).

We have no revised guidance for Wales and Northern Ireland

District Events: In some UK jurisdictions its possible for leaders to work with more than one group of young people during a day. This opens up a positive opportunity for District Events, potentially allowing some face to face Scouting opportunities for sections that are not yet ready to run them on their own. These events need to follow the standard rules, eg: local group size restrictions are respected, different groups arrive in different places or at different times, different groups remain separated by a 25m gap outdoors, etc. This will be more practical outdoors than indoors, given the need to clean thoroughly in between when different groups use the same indoor space in a day. Plus, indoor activities are not allowed in all parts of the UK.

Risk assessments for District Activities need to be written up at District Level and approved within the District before being submitted via the online system for approval at County level. These risk assessments should cover the entire event from arrival to departure so that the sections attending the event don't need to write up their own separate risk assessments. A summary of the Covid-safe plan should also be prepared for sharing with parents and carers, or the risk assessment itself made available. Where sections have not yet run any face to face meetings parents need to give consent for their children to take part. This can't be their broad assent to resume all face to face Scouting, since the local Covid-secure processes have not been developed and shared with them. It could be done via a specific consent form for this one-off event.

Remembrance:

Attending public Remembrance Sunday events is an important part of many Scout Groups' regular Autumn term calendar. Inevitably, things will be very different this year. In adapting what we do, Scout Groups and Districts should focus on keeping our members safe and on ensuring that all young people understand what it is that we are remembering. This is more important than formal participation in public events.

Currently, it's highly likely that most Remembrance events will not take place in their traditional form due to the complexity of managing the Covid risk and the vulnerable age profile of many of the regular attendees. That is currently the recommendation of the Royal British Legion. Where these local events are cancelled, Scout Groups should respect the decision and should not organise alternative events at War Memorials on Remembrance Sunday.

In many cases local events will be replaced with virtual events. Scout Groups are encouraged to join their local online events, or to organise their own virtual Remembrance, building on our virtual Scouting learnings in the Red phase of the pandemic. You could approach local branches of the Royal British Legion to join in these, or to provide speakers. When joining a public video event its important to talk to the organisers to make sure that two leaders are admitted into the call before its opened up to the general public, to ensure good safeguarding.

Remembrance can also be built into weekly Scouting programmes. Look out for some great resources on scouts.org.uk between now and Remembrance Day with some great socially distant activities to do with your sections. You could:

- Visit the local War Memorial as part of a hike on your regular meeting night
- Ask section members to wear poppies and have a brief silence at the end of the meeting
- Do Remembrance craft activities
- Research the names on the local memorial on the Commonwealth War Graves website.
- Make white crosses to display locally like Wooburn Scouts did



If public events are taking place in any of the territories that UK Scouting operates in, and that are not at Green status, Scout Groups should talk to the organisers to discuss what sort of participation is safe and appropriate. Any Scout involvement would need to respect the rules for Scout events, eg: number limits, social distancing rules etc, and would need clear stewarding arrangements to ensure that the general public do not breach social distancing guidelines towards Scouts. Scout participation should be limited to the outdoors part of any event, eg: not attending an indoor church service before or after the 11am silence. We should also avoid parading through the streets since its more difficult to monitor social distancing when moving than when standing still. We should not take on any roles that involve close contact with the public, eg: issuing orders of service at War Memorials.

Many Groups will decide to send representation from the Group rather than encouraging the whole Group to attend as usual. If a small group attends to lay a wreath they will need to maintain the appropriate distance from themselves and others. If young people are involved in the wreath laying then the normal supervision ratios apply.

Groups who want to attend any public events as Scouts should check that the organisers have completed a thorough risk assessment, and should complete one themselves for the group's involvement, eg: arrangements for drop off and pickup, distancing and hygiene plan, etc. Since this will be a new location for meeting face to face under Covid, and a complex event unlikely to have been anticipated in earlier risk assessments, a new risk assessment needs to be approved via the Smartsheet system.

Fireworks and Bonfire Events.

We have received several queries from Groups and Districts that normally run public events around Bonfire Night or Group events involving members' families.

Currently, there is no indication of any UK government currently in Amber or Yellow allowing special arrangements for Bonfire Night events. If such guidance is issued then this Scouting guidance would adapt accordingly.

With increasing restrictions on social contact across many parts of the UK, which are unlikely to be relaxed in the short term, and with the expected increase in virus contamination over the winter, it's very unlikely that these activities can take place in their traditional form. Organisers need to check their local regulations for the maximum number of people that can attend a community event. Where the group size allowed for

Scouting activities is greater than this it's important to understand that our exemptions to run activities apply when we are delivering our youth programme. We cannot use these group sizes for events with members of the public.

It's possible to incorporate activities on a Bonfire Night theme into regular weekly meetings provided that a strong risk assessment is put in place. Eg: can a bonfire be built within social distancing regulations? Currently across much of the UK its possible for multiple groups to meet in the same location provided that a gap of 25 metres is maintained between them. So it might be possible for groups to take turns around a Bonfire or Campfire area as part of a meeting. However, this should not be used as a method to justify a big fireworks display watched by multiple distanced groups. In practice, with the distraction of fireworks, it will be very difficult to keep Groups apart. And it would be next to impossible to explain to the public that this was not a big fireworks display breaching group size limits for public events.

Look out for some great small scale, affordable Bonfire Night ideas for section meetings on the Scout website in the coming weeks.