

HELPING KEEP OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES COVID SECURE

Information for Outdoor Professionals Delivering Walking, Scrambling & Climbing Activities – UK and Ireland.

This document has been produced by representatives from the British Mountain Guides (BMG) and the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI). It considers the practices evolving in various European countries as they begin to engage in professional outdoor activity.



These guidelines recommend a minimum standard and members may wish themselves to apply more rigorous behaviours, or they may find themselves working with and for organisations whose operating procedures require it.

Please be conscious of a possible difference in guidelines within your country of residence available through the links below.

The guidelines from the various governments of the UK and Ireland, along with those from other national bodies will continue to evolve. Please accept this working document as practical advice, helping you as outdoor professionals create the safest working environment that you can when practicing outdoor activities with your clients during this time.

Please lead by example by taking a measured approach, safeguarding clients, local communities and MRT as best you can from the transmission of Covid-19 and also protecting our industry's professional reputation by your actions during this crucial time.

We are recommending that you take a responsible and **phased** approach, taking responsible actions now and then slowly embracing more complex outdoor activities over time.

It may be most appropriate to undertake the less complex activities at the moment given the current (11/5/20) UK Government guidance for England. It is hoped that as the various UK governments lift more restrictions (including removing the current 1:1 ratio in England), we can phase in these activities at the appropriate time. It is likely that reduced ratios (compared to normal) will be necessary to enable social distancing to continue for larger group activities.

Initial key areas to consider

1. Hygiene
2. Social Distancing
3. Travel
4. Rescue and emergency procedures
5. Community relations

Helpful links to help understand the various complexities around safeguarding clients in the outdoors:

Hygiene:

- Food guidance – [UK Government](#)
- Protecting yourself and others from the spread of Corona Virus – [World Health Organisation](#)
- Cleaning and Care of Equipment – [Cleaning PPE](#)

Social Distancing:

- Corona Virus Social Distancing Guidance – [Welsh Government](#)
- Business and physical distancing – [Scottish Government](#)
- Social Distancing in the Workplace – [UK Government](#)
- Social Distancing in Ireland – [Irish Government](#)
- Social Distancing in Northern Ireland – [Northern Ireland Executive](#)

Travel:

- Transport and Travel guidance – [UK Government](#)
- Transport and Travel guidance – [Welsh Government](#)
- Transport and Travel Advice – [Transport Scotland](#)
- Transport and Travel Guidance – [Irish Government](#)
- Northern Ireland Executive Approach to Decision Making – [Northern Ireland Executive](#)

Rescue and Emergency Procedures:

- Scottish Mountain Rescue – [SMR News and Updates](#)
- Mountain Rescue England & Wales – [MREW Coronavirus COVID-19](#)
- Northern Ireland Mountain Rescue Teams – [Northern Ireland Search and Rescue](#)
- Search & Rescue Guidance – [Guidance to UKSAR Responders-COVID-19](#)
- Mountain Rescue PPE video – [Filmuphigh MRT PPE Video](#)
- CPR Covid-19 Statement – [Resuscitation Council UK](#)

Community Relations:

- Climbing & Walking Recovery Plan – [BMC](#)
- Mountaineering Scotland – [Updates](#)
- Mountain Training UK – [Updates](#)
- National Parks – [Updates](#)
- National Trust – [Updates](#)

Note – Please check other land owners for specific updates.

Outdoor professionals need to communicate a strong sense of responsibility in helping keep everyone Covid secure during any outdoor activity.

What extra precautions can we take as outdoor professionals (OP)?

Generic across all our activities:

1. Where possible keep a minimum distance of 2 metres apart.
2. At the beginning of any activities no-one involved should be in a position where they need to self-isolate either because of personal symptoms or contact with others. OPs should consider the use of pre-course screening questionnaires.
3. Planning sessions preferably outdoors whenever possible
4. Avoid sharing and all participants supplying their own
 - Drink, lunch and snacks.
 - Face coverings if they feel happier wearing one and hand sanitizer.

- Basic first aid kits – appropriate protective gloves, blister kits, plasters alcoholic wipes etc.
 - Sun glasses, sun cream etc.
 - Outdoor clothing appropriate for any conditions.
 - Specialist equipment if possible (map/compass for mountain days, harnesses, helmets, boots for climbing etc.)
5. The OP should have a face covering for themselves and spares. It is recommended that client(s) bring their own.
 6. The OP should have a sealed communal first aid kit.
 7. Client(s) should understand rescue procedures in the event of an accident including the requirement for increased self-reliance as a party owing to limitations placed on the services of Mountain Rescue services at present.
 8. Clients need to take more ownership of any personal medical problems and the OP needs to be more considerate of these problems allowing for more of a net of safety again planning a day.
 9. When stopping for breaks or lunch, give thought to wind direction and the air born movement of Coronavirus particles.
 10. Restrict numbers in cars (unless household members) to a minimum to help with social distancing.
 11. The OP should ensure that their own clothing and all equipment used or provided has been cleaned and/or quarantined and stored appropriately since the last use.
 12. All communal kit should be labelled as when last cleaned and so ready for the day.
 13. Be mindful of potential honeypot paths, areas and parking – be creative.
 14. Where equipment is loaned or rented it should be issued at the beginning of the day and remain in the client's possession all day. At the end of the day it should be sealed in a plastic bag until the OP can clean it appropriately.
 15. Social distancing, hygiene and risk management will all be aided by working to low ratios in all activities
 16. Operate comfortably within ones and the clients abilities/fitness levels and in optimum conditions

Activity Specific guidance:

Hill Walking:

- Consider avoiding routes involving easy scrambling that would normally require spotting.
- Be more risk adverse planning any given day with a client or bigger group of clients with varying levels of fitness and ability.
- Strong winds will make communication difficult whilst maintaining social distancing.
- Consider lower ratios/alternative strategies when teaching navigation. Distancing will not be possible gathered as a group around one small map.

Roped Scrambling: Same as the above plus

- Clients advised to turn up with clean technical equipment where possible.
- Use more roped travel than 'spotting' helping with social distancing.

Ghyll Scrambling: Same as the above plus

- Reinforcing the need that all kit issued to client(s) e.g. wetsuits, helmets etc. should be clean and labelled as to when cleaned before issuing to clients.
- Water levels should be well within the 'norm' to allow for a low risk session to be delivered.
- Consider using ropes on sections where spotting is normally practised.

- Keep 'spotting' to a minimum.
- Sections will be slower and more considered to communicate this to client(s) and allow more time in the day for this.
- Plan for individuals to dry and change separately before and after the activity
- Pass short swimming distances/constrictions individually, longer swimming distances at a distance of 2 metres.

Bouldering:

- Consider whether any advantages by using spotters are outweighed by the need for distancing. Can an alternative problem or more pads be used instead? Where spotters are used manage well and obtain consent of all involved.
- Avoid lying down to rest on the crash pads.
- Ensure bouldering mats are cleaned appropriately between trips
- Try and use liquid chalk. Research is underway on the effectiveness of using of liquid chalk with a 70% plus alcohol content. Consider this instead of dry chalk.

Top/Bottom Roped Climbing & Single-Pitch Climbing:

- Identify and encourage separate areas for both the belayer and climber to stand.
- All groups should be encouraged to wash and/or sanitise hands regularly throughout activities.
- Avoid routes immediately adjacent to other climbers unless it is easily possible to ensure 2 metres distancing when belaying, climbing and at the top of the crag.
- Ensure good group management to minimise proximity to other climbers at the base /top of the crag and on access paths.
- Bottom roping may be easier to manage the above, and reduce sharing of equipment

Multi-Pitch Outdoor Climbing: Same as the above plus

- Find suitable routes with large belay stance ledges to encourage safe distancing.
- Also give thought to separate belays where possible, again to encourage social distancing.
- Where instructing encourage clients to use their own rack or consider a separate rack loaned for their use for the whole day. This can be bagged, isolated and cleaned by the OP after the course

We hope this helps in your planning and decision making as activities start to resume in areas within the UK and Ireland.

British Mountain Guides and Association of Mountaineering Instructors

This document has been compiled with assistance from MDs who are all experienced mountaineers and holders of the UIAA/IKAR diploma of mountain medicine including a member of AMI

