

British Canoeing

Return to Team Activities – White Water Raft Racing

Competitive Rafting

Competitive rafting is formed of teams of 4 or 6 members who each face forward and paddle in the same direction.

Raft racing is held in four disciplines with the winning team accumulating most points across all disciplines:

- Sprint: fastest from top to bottom
- Head-to-Head: teams battle it out 1:1 with mandatory buoy navigation - full contact is permitted
- Slalom: fastest top to bottom with mandatory gate navigation
- Downriver (Endurance): long distance race with various options for start line including full contact permissible. Minimum 20 minutes, maximum 60 minutes

Please note full contact can be in the form of paddle against paddle, person against person, person against paddle/raft. This is only permitted in Head-to-Head and Downriver as these are the only two disciplines where teams have any proximity.

More detail on the rules of competitive rafting can be found [here](#)

Competitive Rafting v Commercial Rafting

Competitive rafting is formed of teams of athletes who train and compete together in competitions. Anyone who undertakes this sport needs to be familiar with race rules, water safety and usually already has some other paddlesports experience already.

Commercial rafting are members of the public paying for a qualified raft guide to lead them on water. There are minimal prerequisites to partake in commercial rafting. Commercial rafting is undertaken in groups ranging from 2 to 12 persons (dependent on the raft size). Commercial rafting involves safety briefs and learning how to paddle as a group facing the raft guide. Rafting on the water is all facing forward with the guide at the back of the raft (in most instances).

Return to team sport has the opportunity to provide many with both physical and mental relief as well as the social benefits of playing. British Canoeing (BC) are providing guidance for this to be done in a suitable manner as safely as possible within the current Government guidelines. In preparing to return Clubs and Teams should not rush to restart, doing so could give the impression of a return to normality which is not the case. Risk in sport cannot be eradicated however through care and caution it can be reduced.

Whilst for many a return to team sport will be welcome, it is important to note that some individuals, groups and communities are still deemed vulnerable in respect of Covid-19. **There is no pressure to return.** Everyone's health, wellbeing and safety are the priorities.

The purpose of this document is to provide the necessary mitigations to enable the return of competitive rafting as part of the easing of social restrictions. The framework below is designed to minimise the COVID-19 transmission risk whilst taking part in rafting and enable participants to make an informed decision about their own risk.

These mitigations allow for rafting to take place whilst maintaining appropriate compliance with social distancing and permitted group sizes.

These guidelines should be used in conjunction with venue specific risk assessments and local government / health authority advice.

This plan provides measures that should be taken by rafters, clubs, officials, volunteers, coaches, and spectators before, during and after all rafting activity. It should be read in conjunction with the latest [UK Government guidance](#) and [British Canoeing's guidance](#) for Paddlesport Clubs, Centres and Hire Providers and Returning to Events.

This document refers to current UK Government guidance for England only and is subject to change in response to the current COVID-19 Alert Level, community prevalence of COVID-19 and/or to reflect additional or updated UK Government guidance.

For all activity, the relevant UK Government social distancing guidance should be adhered to at all times except in the following limited circumstances during competitive paddling as detailed in the following sections.

When your club or team decides to return, you must carry out a risk assessment and record the procedures and checks put in place. It is essential everyone is clear about the restrictions and works together to manage social distancing, strict hand hygiene and the other protocols set out in this document.

Prior to all rafting activity

- All participants (rafters, coaches and officials) should share their contact details with the event organiser prior to training / events to allow NHS Test and Trace to contact all participants if an individual becomes ill with COVID-19.
- All participants (rafters, coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators) should check for [symptoms of COVID-19](#). In line with current UK Government Guidance, if an individual is symptomatic and/or living in a household with a possible COVID-19 infection they should remain at home and follow UK Government guidance.
- Any participants who have been asked to isolate by NHS Test and Trace because they are a contact of a known COVID-19 case, must not physically attend or otherwise come into contact with any persons of the training /event.
- Participants should follow UK Government guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 if it applies to them.
- Personal hygiene measures should be carried out at home before and after activity.
- Participants should bring their own hand sanitiser and maintain strict and frequent hygiene measures whenever possible.
- Participants should follow UK Government guidance on best practice for travel, including minimising the use of public transport and limiting car sharing.
- Organisers should make all participants aware of expected social distancing and hygiene measures during training and racing and whilst on site.

- Teams should strictly limit the time spent congregating at a venue before activity begins. Meet-up times should reflect this. Participants should arrive changed and ready to participate if possible.
- Teams, officials and spectators should all have dedicated areas and outside of activity should maintain social distancing guidelines.

During all rafting activity

- Participants should enter the site and prepare their personal equipment whilst maintaining social distancing.
- Where possible rafters should limit sharing of equipment. If they do, they must practise strict hygiene before and after use and the equipment must be cleaned before use by a nominated/dedicated person/s.
- All participants should sanitise their hands prior to the start of the activity.
- Hand sanitiser should be used at all breaks in activity and prior to consuming any food or drinks.
- Participants should refrain from spitting or rinsing out their mouths.
- Injury treatment
 - Injuries during rafting should still be treated as participant wellbeing is utmost. The best way to protect yourself and others is through rigorous cleaning, personal hygiene and regular hand hygiene.
 - Face coverings and latex gloves are advised when undertaking treatment.
 - An increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces and equipment, using standard household cleaning and disinfection products, is recommended. Caution not to contaminate local water sources should be considered.
 - After contact with an injured participant, clean hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser at the earliest opportunity. This advice is applicable to all situations, regardless of whether there was close contact, or the minimum social distancing was maintained.
 - Avoid touching mouth, eyes and nose until after hand washing/sanitising.
 - Physios/coaches or their equivalent, should keep a record of each participant they have come into contact with for track and trace purposes.
- Officials should observe the guidance in the same way as participants are required to.
- Officials must remain socially distanced from participants where possible before, during and after rafting.
- Individuals should bring their own food and drink. Water bottles or other refreshment containers should not be shared.
- Participant water bottles should be individually labelled to avoid cross contamination.
- Participants and coaches should refrain from shouting instructions to members of their team.
- Any spectators (including parents and carers) must be restricted to discrete six-person gathering limits and spread out, in line with wider government guidance, ensuring space for officials and coaches.

After all activity

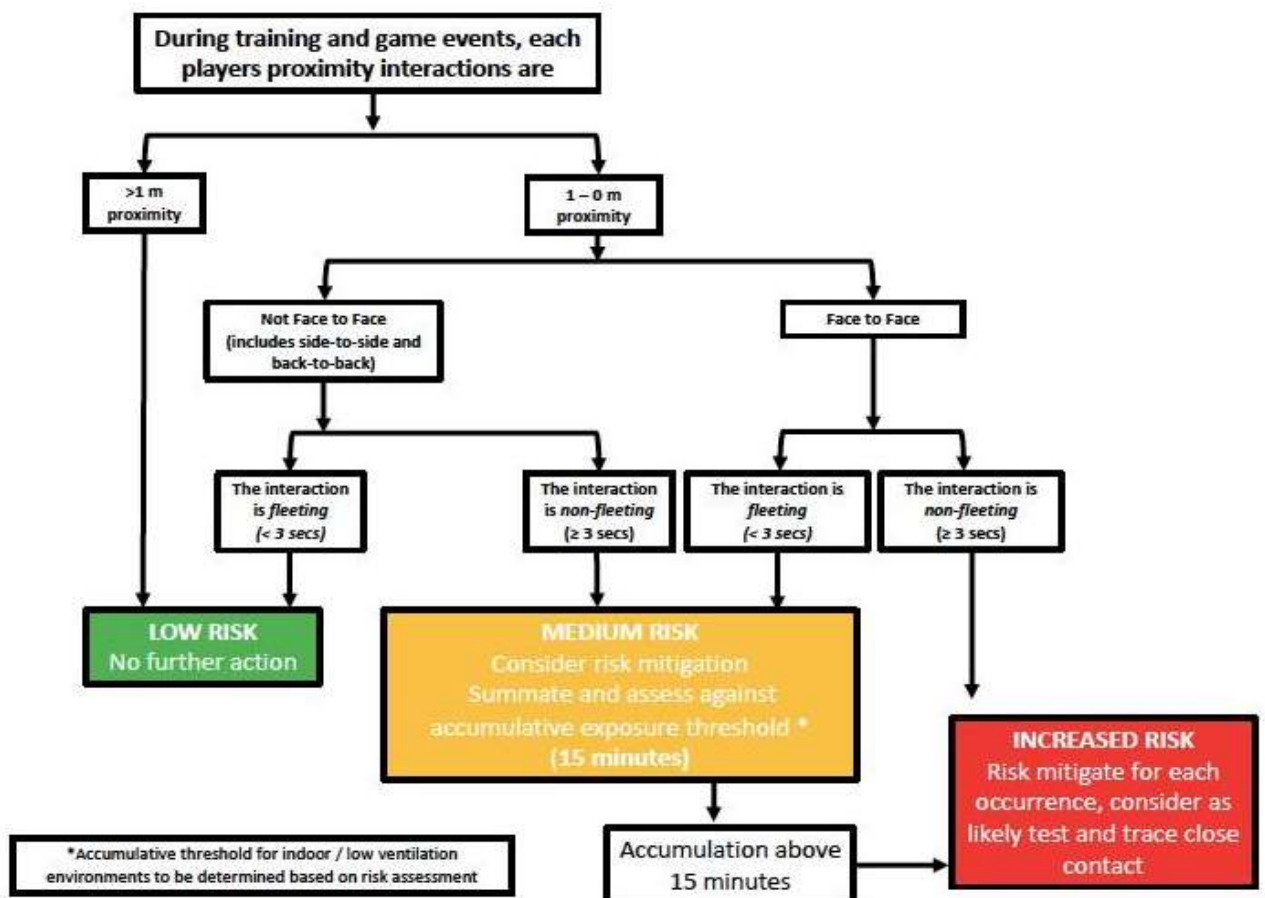
- All participants should sanitise their hands and equipment after the completion of activity.
- Participants should leave whilst maintaining social distancing.
- One team representative/volunteer should be responsible for collecting and disinfecting any shared equipment.

- Regular cleaning of equipment should take place, particularly between one group finishing, and the next group starting.
- Organisers should encourage all participants to report any infection of their household to the [NHS Test and Trace](#) system following the activity to limit the spread of the virus.

Rafting technical mitigations / adaptations

The risk of transmission of COVID-19 during rafting has been assessed based on two key variables.

1. Droplet transmission
2. Fomite transmission
3. Population



Droplet Transmission

Contact point	Type	Proximity	Risk	Interaction time	Cumulative Risk	Adaptions/Mitigation	Reasoning	Overall Risk
Head-to-Head Start	Not face to face	1-0m	Medium	>3 sec	Medium	Temporarily suspend the head-to-head contact rules such that contact between rafts / teams is absolutely not permitted	Reduced risk of close contact normally permitted in race rules. This will significantly affect game play.	Low
Head-to-Head field	Face to face / Not face to face	1-0m	Medium	>3 sec	Medium	Temporary amendment to race rules such that once teams have headed to their first buoy of choice, the opposing team cannot attempt to round the same buoy thus eliminating any potential contact	Reduced risk of contact whilst still requiring teams to use tactics in speed, angle and use of the water in obtaining the first buoy.	Low
Downriver Start	Not face to face	1-0m	Medium	>3 sec	Medium	Temporarily suspend the downriver contact rules such that contact between rafts / teams is absolutely not permitted. All downriver starts must be timed rather than sailing or beach start.	Reduced risk of close contact normally permitted in race rules.	Low
Downriver field	Not face to face	1-0m	Medium	>3 sec	Medium	Temporary amendment to race rules such that no contact is permitted. Blocking rules still apply.	Reduced risk of close contact normally permitted in race rules.	Low

Fomite Transmission

Contact point	Type	Occurrence	Risk	Length of time	Cumulative Risk	Adaptions/Mitigation	Reasoning	Overall Risk
Registration	Hand	Occasional	Medium	<10s per contact	Medium	All registrations will be electronic. No paper forms will be used	Remove the requirement for physical signatures	Low
Shared rafts	Hand / body	Frequent	High	<10min	High	Where possible single raft assigned to single team for duration of event. Where sharing of rafts is required, nominated official will clean raft between each team's use.	Very few teams have own rafts, sharing is required. Mandated cleaning between teams by nominated official ensures consistency and reduced risk of transmission	Medium
Paddle contact	Hand / body	Rare	Low	<5s per contact	Low	Already illegal within the rules.		Low
Raft contact	Paddle / Hand / body	Occasional	Low	<5s per contact	Low	Already illegal within the rules for hand / paddle contact. Temporarily suspend contact (boat-to-boat) engagement in head-to-head and downriver (as set out in Droplet Transmission)	Reduced risk of close contact normally permitted in race rules.	Low
Shoulder / torso contact	Body	Occasional	Low	<5s per contact	Medium	Temporary suspension of all contact in head-to-head and downriver.	Reduced risk of close contact normally permitted in race rules.	Low

Slalom poles / head-to-head buoys	Hand/body	Occasional	Low	<3s per contact	Low	Officials will set the course and be responsible for the cleaning of poles and buoys before and after event. Temporary inclusion of body contact to a buoy as a "touch" penalty (boat/paddle contact still permitted).	Slalom poles will normally be equipment to pole contact. Buoys will normally be shoulder or paddle contact. All participants encouraged not to touch buoys or poles with hands - time penalties already apply in race rules.	Low
Access / egress to water	Hand	Possible frequent (dependent on location)	Low	<10s per contact	Medium	Where possible, access / egress points should be where walking unaided is possible (no requirement for handrails) Where not possible, a nominated official to clean handrails between each team's use	Limited risk unless the access/egress is steep	Low
Judge whistle (if used)	Mouth	Frequent	High	<3s per contact	High	Personal equipment only. Under no circumstances allow sharing of referee whistle.		Low
Judge score sheets	Hand	Occasional	Low	>10min	Medium	Judges to print out own score sheets and provide own clipboard and pens. Scores will be shared in the judge's area verbally and physically sited. Photos of each sheet will be taken and sent electronically to the Chief Judge	Minimise risk by judges using own equipment	Low (If shared use suspended)

General Guidance

Contact point	Type	Occurrence	Risk	Length of time	Cumulative Risk	Adaptions/Mitigation	Reasoning	Overall Risk
Competitors not involved in game	N/A	Frequent	Low	N/A	N/A	Should conform to Government social distancing. Regular sanitation of hands. Restricted to marked team area.		Low
Match officials	N/A	N/A	Low	N/A	Medium	Shouting should not be used to communicate with teams.		Low
Coaches / Managers / Parents	N/A	Frequent	Low	N/A	Low	Coaches may be permitted to move up the water side to avoid shouting at their team or an official, but they must remain more than 2m away.		Low
Reserves	Face to Face	Infrequent	Medium	>5mins	Medium	Under the rules each team is permitted one reserve. The reserve must stay abide by all other rules as set out in this document and will be treated as a current member of the team for the purposes of this guidance	Avoid prolonged contact within 2m.	Low
Injury treatment	Face to Face	infrequent	Medium	Depends on injury	Medium	Injuries during play should still be treated as participant wellbeing is utmost. Face coverings and latex gloves are advisable when undertaking treatment. After contact with an injured participant, clean hands thoroughly		Medium

						at the earliest opportunity. Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose.		
Officials	Face to Face	Frequent	Medium	>2m	Medium	Event organisers should identify an official for the duration of the event. All pens/stopwatches and other timing equipment must be wiped down with an antimicrobial cloth before and after use.	Low	
Toilets	N/A	N/A	Medium	N/A	Medium	Toilets should be open before the first race and remain open until 30mins after the last race has ended. A regular cleaning schedule must be followed.	Medium	
Movement around Venue	N/A	Frequent	Medium	N/A	Medium	Where possible a marked one way system for entry and exit to the water should be provided. Event organisers should also provide a socially distanced area for each team at a competition/training session.	Medium	
Supporters/parents/other spectators	N/A	Frequent	Low	N/A	Low	All team supporters and spectators should remain socially distanced from teams. Six person gathering limits are still in force.	Low	
Handshake or exchange of gifts	Face to Face	infrequent	High	N/A	High	For the time being exchanging of gifts and handshakes before or after the races are suspended.	Has no impact on competition and can be stopped to avoid contact risk.	Low

Population

“The number of participants likely to take part in the proposed activity plus known risk factors of participants with underlying health conditions or high risk groups, who wish to participate.”

Raft racing is undertaken in teams of either 4 or 6 participants (R4 / R6). Teams are based across the UK with an average of 25-30 active teams each year.

Participants vary in age from 15 to early 60s. Teams are formed in gender and age categories. Women’s teams are women only, mixed teams compete in the Men’s teams. Age categories are:

- Junior (Under 19) - minimum 15 years of age, maximum 19 years of age
- Youth (Under 23) - minimum 15 years of age, maximum 23 years of age
- Open - minimum 15 years of age, no maximum
- Masters - minimum 40 years of age, no maximum

Teams train usually weekly on local rivers, lakes and canals. Once or twice a month, teams will train on the whitewater courses at Nottingham, Lee Valley, Cardiff and Tees Valley. If rain permits, teams will also train on rivers in North Wales and northern England.

In a normal year, the discipline committee will arrange three or four weekend race events at which between 15 and 20 teams compete. Two of these events are designated as Euro Cups which means an additional 3 to 5 teams from Europe will also compete.

In an average year, around 15 to 20 Euro Cups are held across the continent. Around 3 to 5 GB based teams attend two of three of these.

Summary of Mitigation Measures

Based on the above risk assessments the following mitigation measures have been identified as being necessary to allow competitive raft racing to be undertaken.

No.	Mitigation	Applies To	Conducted By
1	Pre-attendance Symptom Check	All participants	All participants
2	Maintain record of participant contact details for 21 days	All participants	Event organiser
3	Normal social distancing protocols to be followed off the water	All participants	All participants
4	Follow guidelines above regarding temporary rule suspensions	Competitors	Event organiser/officials
5	Hand sanitise before, during and at end of activity	All participants	All participants
6	At end of day or before use by another person clean down equipment with water & mild detergent	Competitors	Competitors

Adherence to measures

- British Canoeing has the right to stop, remove suspend and cancel further events or participation by and teams or individuals that breach these guidelines.
- An anonymous online reporting system will be available for incidents to be reported in confidence to the Rafting Committee.