

Getting your Cadet Units back together safely after COVID

Guidance for VPC Coordinators and Leaders in starting face-to-face meetings and activities

Foreword

This advice and supporting documents have been produced by the National VPC after consultation with DCC Netherton of Devon and Cornwall Police, ACC Thorne of South Wales Police, Chair of the VPC Safeguarding Gold Group and Chief Constable Sawyer the NPCC portfolio lead.

In developing the guidance, the National VPC team have sought advice from the other uniformed youth groups and subject matter experts which has ensured it is based on youth sector standards.

At its heart, the restarting of VPC activity should be viewed as a safeguarding issue as we have a legal obligation to keep our young people and leaders safe. In light of this, it is recommended that any decision to return to face to face VPC activity should be overseen by a Designated Responsible Officer (DRO) of ACC rank or police staff equivalent. To ensure this person can make an informed decision, they should be briefed on all appropriate guidance and have sight of any supporting checklists.

Overriding considerations when considering return to face to face VPC activity:

- What is the guidance of the government in your area?
- What is the guidance of the National Youth Agency (or equivalent for Wales and Scotland)
- What is the guidance from the National VPC?
- Has a full risk assessment been undertaken in line with the requirements of running a regulated youth activity?
- Is the proposed activity consistent with the spirit of the guidance offered?
- Does the insurer of the activity fully understand what is being proposed?
- Has the decision been agreed by the DRO, who has been provided with a comprehensive briefing, including the issues listed in the national VPC checklist?
- Does your police force have the capacity to deal with VPC activity during this period?
- What are the views of parents and carers?
- Have safeguarding leads for each unit been trained in dealing with safeguarding matters in support of the new national framework

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Welcome

Background

As we move to restart face-to-face meetings and activities, there are specific things you as leaders will need to do ahead of getting approval to restart. Our number one priority is making sure that all our leaders and cadets are kept safe. If we don't feel we can do that, we shouldn't feel obliged to restart activities.

You should be supported in completing robust risk assessments before any face-to-face cadet sessions restart. Remember, you are not alone. Work with your leadership team and ask for help where you need it. Your Force VPC Designated Responsible Officer (DRO) is responsible for making sure that face-to-face activities return safely and within a rapidly changing national framework.

Approval to restart

The decision to restart face-to-face activities is for each individual Force to decide. For each unit starting face-to-face activities, there should be a force level process for the checking and approval of risk assessments and other preparations before face-to-face meetings can begin

Once your risk assessment is prepared, your VPC force coordinator should check it. Once checked at that level, it should be passed to the CIP management for force level processes to be undertaken.

What do I need to do?

You should consider how you'll operate for the current alert level. We've developed guidance to help guide you through this, so review this first. Each piece of guidance is clear on where the boundaries lie for each alert level.

You will need to use your thinking and plans to undertake a thorough risk assessment of the restart process. You will need to do this in order to move from each level of alert and also when any significant changes occur. Therefore, if you think you will use a variety of meeting locations in the coming months, outline them all on your initial risk assessment. This way, you will not have to revise and get approval again.

We have provided a template risk assessment for you to use, the guidance documents will help you identify the hazards. If you need support or advice, please contact your line manager or Health and Safety department.

Once you have approval to restart you will need to make sure that you consult and communicate with all involved (including parents/carers, cadets, and young leaders) to ensure that everyone understands how things are going to be running, as this will be different to how things were before the lockdown. Cadet's parents or carers will need to give explicit consent to unit leaders to allow their children to return.

As with any risk assessment you will need to continually review the situation as things change. You should also review things more formally on a monthly basis, especially as we move through the year, as the weather and circumstances will change.

Returning Safely: The COVID Code

- 1. A COVID-safe risk assessment has been completed and we have communicated control measures to Cadet Leaders, Cadets, and Parents/Carers and all are encouraged to raise concerns.**
- 2. Additional hygiene measures are in place.**
- 3. Social distancing will be observed (check current Government guidance).**
- 4. Maximum group sizes will be limited and determined by individual Forces**
- 5. Make adjustments for cadets and leaders vulnerable to or affected by COVID and consult to make sure return plans are accessible and inclusive**

Checklist

General

Have you read and understood the relevant guidance document 'Returning Safely – a framework'?	
Have you checked your Government guidance (and any local / regional guidance that may be in place) and the current readiness level on the National Youth Agency webpage click HERE	
Do you have approval to authorise the return of face-to-face VPC activity for your Cadet Units for this? Are you independent of the author of the risk assessment?	
Have you completed or received a written risk assessment for each unit and for every environment the group wishes to operate in ? Has that been signed off inline with your Force COVID processes ?	
Do the risk assessments and action plan incorporate hazards and considerations identified in the appropriate guidance?	
Are all areas of the COVID code covered in the risk assessment?	
Are the control measures appropriate and adequate to keep Cadets and Leaders safe and in line with the spirit of the guidance ?	
Are the control measures achievable and realistic to be put in place?	
Have you checked with your Force Insurers that your insurance policy covers the return of cadet activity under the current restrictions?	

People

Have the leaders, parents, carers and young people (including young leaders) been consulted in preparation for returning ?	
Do you have enough leaders to run each session safely and within current recommended ratios?	
Are any leaders or cadets (or members of their household) vulnerable or shielding? Have they made appropriate adjustments to ensure they can still be engaged (where appropriate)?	
If the proposal is to run multiple sessions for smaller groups, do leaders have capacity for extra sessions or would you extend the programmed activity in alternate weeks, with activities to be done at home for those alternate weeks?	
Is there documented process agreed with leaders what to do if there is an incident if someone is injured, or shows signs of COVID-19 symptoms during a face-to-face meeting? Do all leaders know what this is?	
Have leaders got a way of recording all attendance for each face-to-face session, including adults and visitors / helpers (track & trace) and are they able to keep it secure for six weeks	
Has the Force produced a plan for how they intend to communicate with parents / carers?	

Has the Force identified a safe process for engaging and supporting any parents / carers / new volunteers who may have expressed an interest in volunteering?	
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Programme

If needed, are leaders able to 'buddy up' with other unit leaders to ensure they can deliver a quality programme safely?	
Are leaders able to ensure any shared resources used (surfaces and equipment) are kept clean, between users? Or have they identified alternative options (young people bring their own)?	
Is the programme flexible enough to be delivered both at home and face-to-face (as requirement allow)? Can those who are unable to attend face-to-face still be included and engaged?	

Places

Are you confident that the proposed meeting place(s) / venue(s) for running your programme meets Government guidelines? Including access consideration / drop off and pick up arrangements? Are there passing places or a one-way system in place?	
Is there consideration of what facilities may be needed for handwashing, drying, alcohol hand gel and toilet facilities?	
Have travel implications been considered? How do leaders and young people get to the venue? Is it within walking distance? Do people from different households usually car share or take public transport?	

Decision

Are you satisfied that VPC activity can restart safely and in accordance with the Returning Safely framework and guidance?	
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Date VPC activity is to re-start.....

Signature (Designated Responsible Officer)

Date

Notes: