



Returning safely from COVID

**A framework for restarting face-to- face
VPC 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 compressive 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

Ed Sherry OBE MSc
National Volunteer Police Cadet
Hub Director

Contents

1. Introduction: helping you get back together safely	3
2. Our Principles	5
3. Taking things a step at a time: a phased return	6
4. How we delegate decision-making	7
5. The approval process for restarting	8
6. Insurance and legal considerations	9
7. Guidance and resources	10
8. How we'll keep our guidance up to date: feedback, review and Communications	10

1. Introduction: helping you to return safe

We know that many of you are keen to get to back to face-to-face VPC meetings and activities. However, we can only do that when it's safe to do so – for both our young people and leaders.

We recommend that a Designated Responsible Officer (DRO) of the rank of ACC, or equivalent, is appointed to oversee the safe return of VPC activity in Force

- 1.1 Police Forces themselves will make the decision about when to resume face-to-face meetings and activities, along with their Health & Safety departments, Chief Officer lead or Designated Responsible Officer (DRO), CIP Managers and VPC force coordinators. These decisions should consider the national framework designed to help everyone stay safe.
- 1.2 The VPC Framework will be supported by a range of more detailed guidance documents which will be published within the Safeguarding guidance on the VPC website and via the Marshall Volunteer Portal and will offer practical support to Forces locally to meet the requirements set out in this document. To make sure everyone is working to the same standards, this framework will be a policy of the Volunteer Police Cadets until further notice.
- 1.3 The VPC Framework is aligned with government-approved guidance and developed with other youth sector partners and the National Youth Agency guidance Whilst this NYA guidance was designed specifically for England, The VPC Framework will be applicable in Wales.
- 1.4 The other key reference point for our framework is the National Youth Agency's website. This will be updated weekly, determining the COVID-readiness level for the youth sector – specifying permitted group sizes, as well as a range of other control measures referenced below. Outside of England, we will work with equivalent organisations and statutory bodies to assess the level of readiness and will replicate these in any advice given. We therefore need to be prepared to be at different stages of the framework at any given moment in time whilst this framework is in place.
- 1.5 We suggest all Forces start to make their plans for a return of VPC units for a return no earlier than September 2020 and update them in the following months as lockdown measures are eased or increased.
- 1.6 Chief Officers, Managers, Force coordinators and Unit Leaders need to make sure that their plans for restarting face-to-face meetings and activities are developed so that Cadet Leaders and Cadets at all times:
 - Comply with social distancing requirements (determined by their government)
 - Ensure hygiene levels are maintained, including hand washing, as well as surface and equipment cleaning
 - Safely manage any risk to Cadet Leaders, Cadets and the wider community, including a reduction in group sizes where necessary

- Make sure vulnerable young people can be effectively safeguarded, both in relation to COVID-19, as well as other risk factors.
- All Cadet Leaders, parents and Cadets clearly understand what adjustments need to be made to ensure everyone's safety and have had a chance to inform them.
- Comply with any restrictions placed on them at any premises

1.7 Cadet leaders should not resume face-to-face activities until sufficient control measures or mitigations are in place, if they feel that these conditions cannot be met or managed in a safe way, they should wait until they are able to do so.

1.8 Where Force VPC scheme has one or more units operating in different locations, the DRO, CIP Manager and Force coordinator are required to state that the group, in whole or part, is ready to restart face-to-face activity safely. Before starting, all evidence of written risk assessments must be approved and signed off by the Chief Officer lead or DRO and written agreement of such approval recorded. These records should also be accessible to the National VPC Hub.

1.9 This framework sets out the principles and the operating processes for local VPC units to be able to restart face-to-face activities. It's designed to be adaptable for activities at all levels to re-start.

1.10 You will notice that throughout this framework we refer to guidance documents. These set out clear operating procedures for specific activities. Over time, these will be added to, or amended, to keep in step with NYA readiness levels and changing government advice. We'll also make regular improvements based on feedback from leaders and police forces.

1.11 While the guidance will expand and improve over time, the requirements set out in this framework below will remain consistent. The guidance is designed to help Forces and Cadet Leaders meet the requirements of this framework in a simple and practical way.

1.12 Wales will be operating in accordance with the Welsh government guidance. VPC units in these areas need to apply this framework against the current Welsh government guidance.

1.13 While in most cases, the guidance documents will be applicable to England and Wales, there will be occasions when this is not this case. For the avoidance of doubt, whilst the framework can be applied to both, the specific guidance documents are in all cases applicable in England and Wales. Police Forces in Wales should support their Cadet Leaders with additional guidance or amendments for those instances that their government's guidance contradicts or varies from the guidance for England.

2. Our principles

2.1. Our guidance is based on the following principles:

- Our priority is to keep Cadets and adult Leaders safe
- A national framework will help Forces locally to focus on delivering high quality programme activities to meet the needs of their young people.
- We actively consider inclusion and accessibility for all in our decisions to resume in line with our values and equality legislation.
- Returning to face-to-face VPC meetings and activities is voluntary and needs to be with consent of Leaders, Parents and Cadets
- Our approach will be solutions-focused and in line with government guidance and health and safety legislation.

This framework contains the following areas:

- Permissions process including sign off
- Key considerations to be ready to restart face-to-face activities and how these will be phased
- Legal and liability conditions
- Key control measures ('the COVID code') for everyone to follow, as shown below:

Getting back together safely: The COVID Code -

1. A COVID-safe risk assessment has been completed and we have communicated control measures to volunteers, young people and parents and all are encouraged to raise concerns
2. Additional hygiene measures are in place
3. Social Distancing will be observed (check current distance determined by your
4. Government guidance
5. Maximum group sizes will be limited and determined by individual Forces
6. Make adjustments for young people and adults vulnerable or affected by COVID, and consult to make sure return plans are accessible

3. Taking things a step at a time: a phased return

3.1. In line with government-approved Youth Sector Guidance, we expect to see a phased approach to returning face-to-face VPC meetings and activities. This is broken down by four levels:

- Red, for when the rate of infection remains consistent or growing
- Amber, for when the rate of infection is reducing consistently
- Yellow, for when there are very few cases in the population and a full track and trace system is Operational
- Green, for when there are no new cases or there is a vaccine readily available.

3.2 This is the permitted activity at each phase: (the current readiness level can be checked [HERE](#))

Readiness level	NYA level	VPC level
Red Rate of infection is remaining consistent or growing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online and digital youth services • Detached youth services and 1-2-1 sessions with vulnerable young people outdoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital programme delivery • No face-to-face activity or meetings • No residential activities
Amber Rate of infection is reducing consistently in all parts of the country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online and digital youth services • Small group sessions can take place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital programme delivery • Small group sessions outdoors only from September (fully risk assessed in accordance with youth sector standards) • No residential activities
Yellow Number of cases low and decreasing, full Track and Trace system in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online and digital youth services • Indoor group sessions can take place • Outdoor learning, trips and visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital programme delivery • Small group sessions can take place indoors and outdoors from September (fully risk assessed in accordance with youth sector standards) • No residential activities
Green No new cases or a vaccine is readily available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All services open as per normal yearly operations • Overnight trips and visits allowed • International travel allowed within FCO advice 	<p>All activities can resume in line with government guidance</p>

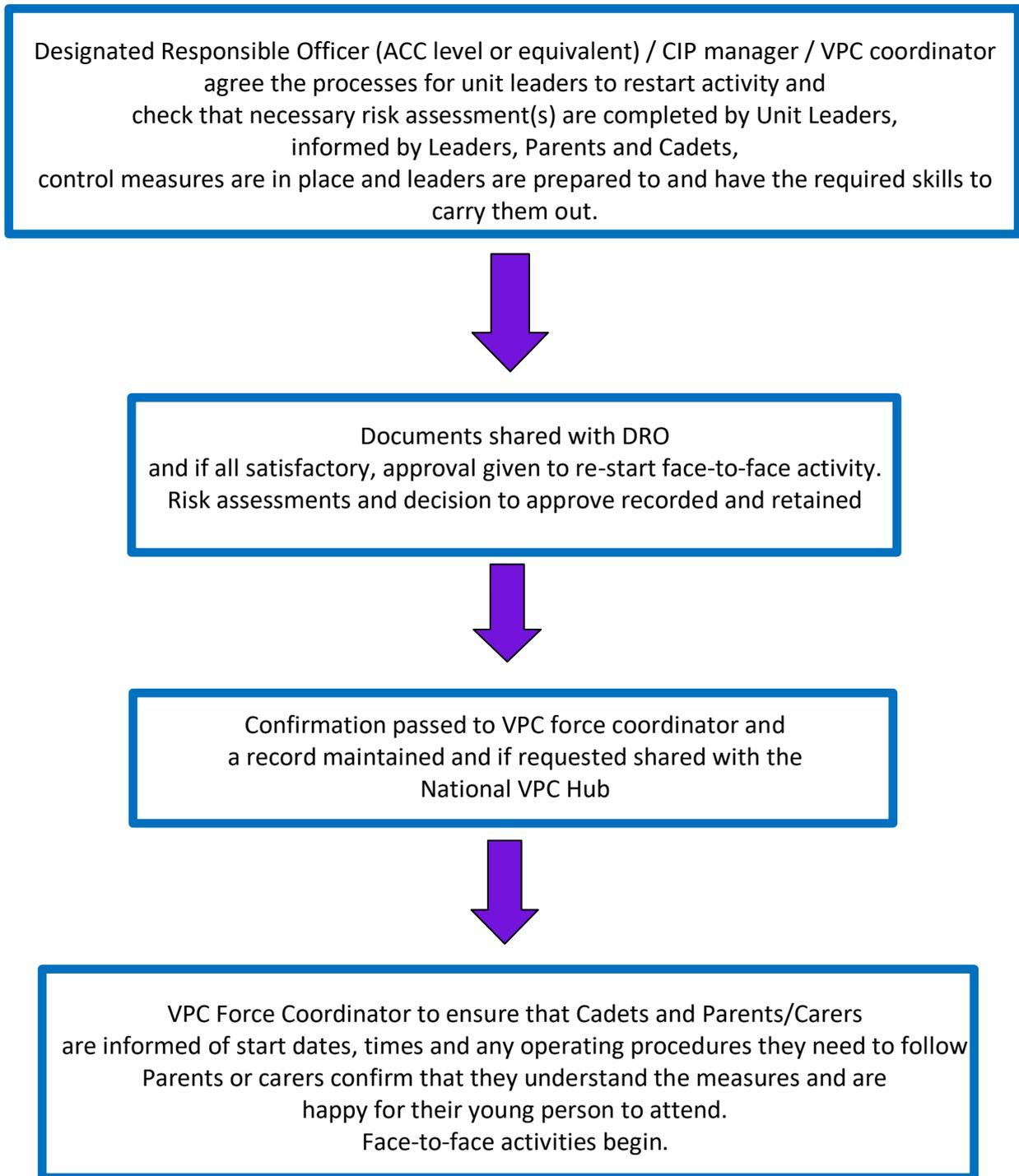
- 3.3 When levels change (as confirmed by the NYA and equivalents), Forces will need to revisit and, if necessary, update their written risk assessments and action plans. They will also need to gain permission from their Designated Responsible Officer to enter into the next phase. However, if lockdown measures increase and the readiness level escalates (e.g. Amber to Red), Forces are expected to revert back to previous practice immediately and notify line-managers, rather than ask for approval.
- 3.4 Adult Cadet Leaders may meet together in line with current Government Guidance regarding adults in social settings.

4. How we delegate decision-making

- 4.1 The Designated Responsible Officer needs to be assured that all necessary checks, controls and reparations have been considered and adopted in line with operating a regulated youth activity, before authorising any face-to-face VPC meetings or activities taking place within their Force area. All decisions must be documented.
- 4.2 We expect these tasks to be spread between individuals at operational level, however each approver should have the delegated authority to do so from the DRO. It should be recorded that they jointly believe that the individual nominee has the skills, knowledge and experience to complete this task to a high standard and that any conflicts of interest are managed appropriately.
- 4.2 The operating guidelines referenced in this framework document are the minimum required to allow VPC Units to restart. Forces should not arbitrarily apply additional requirements, except where those are jointly agreed by both parties and are sensible and reasonable.
- 4.3 Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks of COVID-19. Forces have a legal responsibility to protect other Cadet Leaders and Cadets and those who come into contact with them from risk to their health and safety. This means they need to assess the risks they face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them. At the same time, we need to recognise that we cannot completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19. Forces are responsible for supporting leaders to have rigorous written assessments and achievable action plans.
- 4.4 As the VPC, we deliver a range of activities in a range of environments. The risk assessments used to Authorise re-starting face-to-face activities are for the place or environment a Unit is planning to operate in. If that environment or place changes significantly enough for the risks to change, a new risk assessment must be completed and authorisation sought. These risk assessments do not replace regular weekly risk assessments in relation to specific activities, these should be complementary.

5. The approval process for restarting

5.1 The restart decisions will happen at Force level, which is why we've given the example below.



5.2 The Designated Responsible Officer should ensure these risk assessments are reviewed regularly, or when Government guidance and NYA readiness levels change. They should record any adjustments and update the National VPC with the date of the latest review.

6. Insurance and legal considerations

- 6.1 VPC schemes are insured when they comply with their Force rules and policies. This framework is guidance for Forces to assist with the safe return of VPC schemes. Forces need to make sure that risk is regularly reviewed.
- 6.2 International trips, outings, camps and non-standard activities may be subject to additional or alternative insurance. Forces should check their policies, and be certain that they are operating within the requirements of any insurance policy.
- 6.3 With residential activities that involve multiple households and international trips only permitted at the green readiness level, these will not take place until at least three months from the publishing of this guidance. This will be reviewed in September 2020 to give those planning trips as much certainty as possible.
- 6.4 There are special considerations when utilising third parties' premises or equipment for VPC Meetings, Forces need to have read and understand any, and all, insurance documentation relating to both parties and share their own with those third parties. Agreement responsibilities, such as deep cleaning, provision of hand sanitiser etc. should be recorded in writing. Regular communication and reviews between the parties is expected. Please see specific guidance on this.

7. Guidance and resources

7.1 As well as providing a template risk assessment and a checklist for Forces and Leaders to complete and keep, we've also developed a suite of guidelines to support the preparation for restart of face- to-face activities. These are summarised here. All will be available on the Safeguarding section of Marshall Volunteer Portal and the Safeguarding section on the VPC website www.vpc.police.uk

<u>National Youth Agency COVID-19 guidance</u>
<u>VPC Safeguarding policy & guidance</u>
<u>Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak</u>
<u>Guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak</u>
<u>Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance</u>
<u>Return Safely VPC checklist</u>
<u>Digital Youth Work</u>
<u>COVID risk assessment guidance</u>

8. How we'll keep our guidance up to date: feedback, review and communications

8.1 We will release updated versions of guidance documents based on any feedback from leaders and forces. We'll also add new guidance documents, over and above those publish