



Returning safely from COVID

**A roadmap 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 your Force VPC Designated Responsible Officer (DRO). 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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Hub Director

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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.

Force VPC Designated Responsible Officer (DRO) have been appointed in each Police Force and are accountable 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 is updated regularly, 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 and update them when lockdown measures are changed.
- 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
 - Ensure COVID safety - 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 the 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 Government guidance)
4. Maximum group sizes may be limited and determined by Government guidance
5. Make adjustments for young people and adults vulnerable or affected by COVID, and consult to make sure return plans are accessible

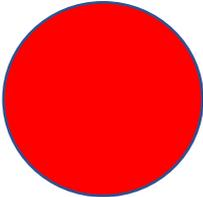
3. Taking things, a step at a time: a phased return

3.1. In line with government roadmap and approved NYA Guidance, there will be a phased approach returning to face-to-face VPC meetings and activities. This is broken down by four status levels:

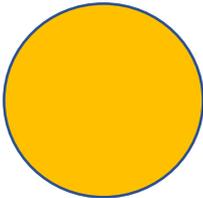
- Red 
- Amber 
- Yellow 
- Green 

3.2 This is the permitted activity at each stage of the roadmap: (the current VPC status level can be checked [HERE](#))

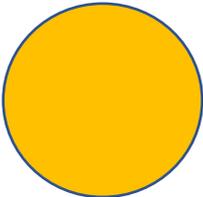
Monday 8th March 2021

Readiness level	Recommended activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital program delivery only • No face to face activity or meetings • No residential activities permitted

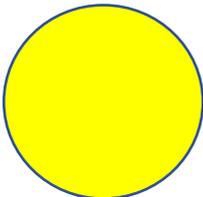
Monday 29th March 2021

Readiness level	Recommended activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital program delivery • Outdoor activity permitted there is no limit to numbers – face masks must be worn unless socially distanced 2m apart Fully risk assessed and must be signed off by Force DRO • No residential activities

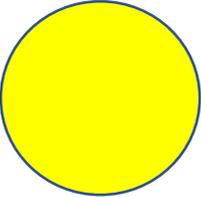
Monday 12th April 2021

Readiness level	Recommended activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital program delivery• Indoor / Outdoor activity permitted. (No limit on group or bubble sizes) Facemasks must be worn inside. Facemasks to be worn outside unless socially distanced 2m apart Fully risk assessed and must be signed off by Force DRO• No residential activities

Monday 7th May 2021

Readiness level	Recommended activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital program delivery• Indoor & Outdoor activity permitted (no bubble sizes apply to regulated youth activity) Facemasks must be worn inside (11yrs+) - Facemasks to be worn outside unless socially distanced 2m apart Fully risk assessed and must be signed off by Force DRO• Camping & Residential activities permitted but subject to tight restrictions

Monday 21st June 2021

Readiness level	Recommended activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital program delivery • Indoor & Outdoor activity permitted (no bubble sizes apply to regulated youth activity) Facemasks must be worn inside (11yrs+) - Facemasks to be worn outside unless socially distanced 2m apart. Fully risk assessed and must be signed off by Force DRO. • Residential activities permitted but subject to the restrictions below.

The youth sector, which includes the VPC is permitted to provide overnight and residential experiences – From the 21st June There are a number of key requirements which must be followed:

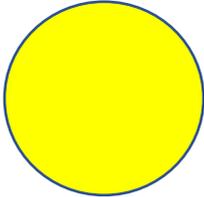
1. From 21st June, the maximum possible group size is **30** young people (who were under the age of 18 on 31 August 2020), **plus** leaders and carers.
2. Only **six** individuals are permitted to sleep overnight in the same space (room or tent).
3. Each group is not permitted to interact with any other groups on site.
4. Multiple groups of 30 is possible. However, they must **not** mix at any time, including during dining, free time and during activities.
5. Each group must always travel independently of all other groups.
6. Each group must remain as an isolated bubble. It is not possible for other young people to join a residential bubble for the day.
7. Members of a group should be tested using lateral flow tests every 48-72hrs (similar to schools). Including leaders/staff.
8. Groups must follow each venue's COVID Secure requirements, including social distancing, use of face coverings and hygiene.
9. Activity staff, catering and welfare staff are permitted to provide support services but must minimise mixing across groups (where not otherwise counted as a member of a fixed group subject a maximum of six members)

VPC schemes **must** carry out a thorough risk assessment which **must** be signed off by the Force DRO, for the educational visit in line with existing general and COVID-19 specific guidance and the following conditions:

- Ensure cadets and staff attending the residential visit are in consistent groups or “accommodation bubbles” of no more than six people (including leaders/carers) for their accommodation (tents, hotel rooms or dormitories).
- Where you have already assigned cadets to “bubbles” for your normal day-to-day provision, you should, as far as possible, try to keep young people from the same bubble together when undertaking residential visits in groups of six. This will minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 when cadets and staff members return from the residential visit.

Force VPC Coordinators / Leaders should familiarise themselves with the current COVID guidance document published by the National Youth Agency which contains further information relating to residential activity and can be accessed [HERE](#)

From: [Monday 19th July 2021](#)

Readiness level	Recommended activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normal VPC activity permitted. No restrictions on group sizes. No social distancing required – however we recommend that this is maintained in poorly ventilated venues.• No legal requirement to wear facemasks – however we recommend that they are still worn in busy places, poorly ventilated areas and on public transport.• Residential activities are permitted. <i>(Further information below)</i>

Residential activity – from 19th July

- No limit to group sizes
- It is recommended that a maximum of six individuals sleep overnight in the same space (Room or tent).
- Members of a group should be tested using lateral flow tests every 48-72hrs. Including leaders/staff.
- Should a cadet show signs of illness they should be tested and return home in a private vehicle.
- If a leader shows signs of illness the whole group should return home - unless a replacement leader can be found, or you can maintain the appropriate ratio of leaders to cadets.
- We recommend that Forces ensure an appropriate level of insurance cover is in place.

3.3 All status levels are subject to change and confirmation of a change to each status level will be communicated to Forces.

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 the next phase. However, if lockdown measures increase and the readiness level escalates (e.g. Amber to Red), Forces are expected to revert to previous practice immediately and notify line-managers, rather than ask for approval.

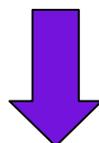
4. How we delegate decision-making

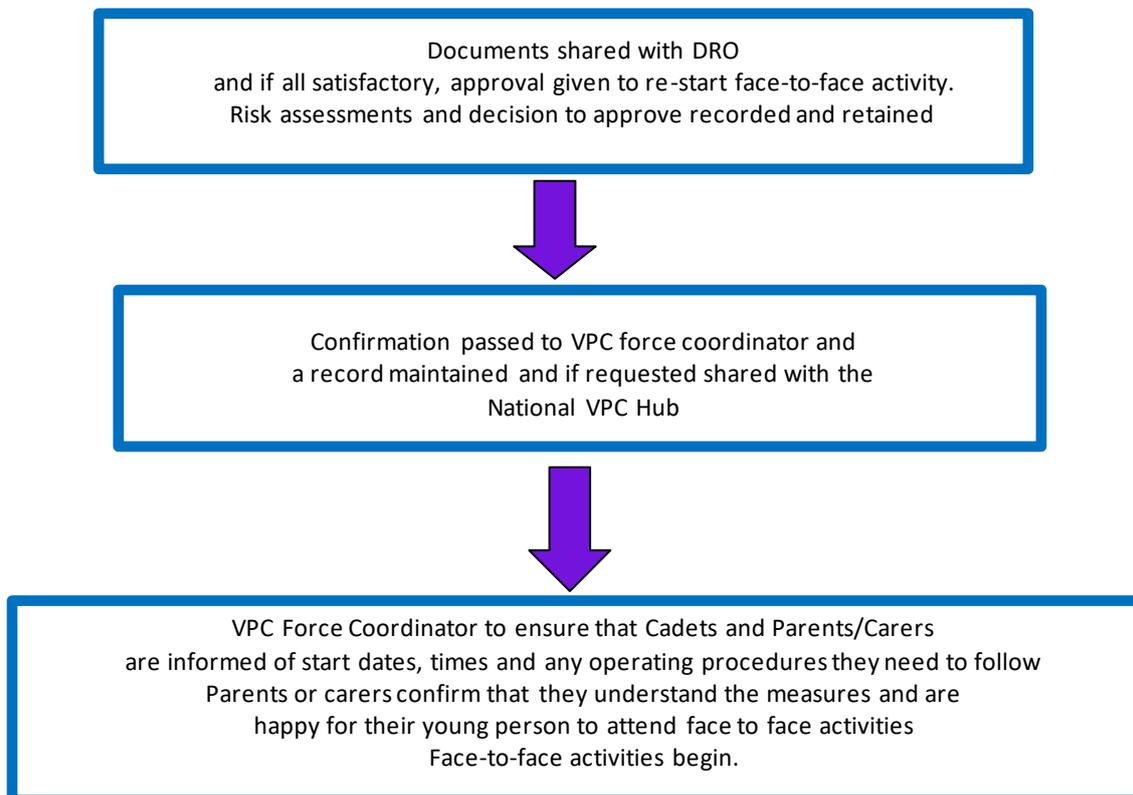
- 4.1 The Designated Responsible Officer needs to be assured that all necessary checks, controls and reparations have been considered and adopted in line with operating a regulated youth activity, before authorising any face-to-face VPC meetings or activities taking place within their Force area. All 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.

Designated Responsible Officer (or delegated person) / CIP manager / VPC coordinator agree the processes for unit leaders to restart activity and check that necessary risk assessment(s) are completed by Unit Leaders, informed by Leaders, Parents and Cadets, control measures are in place and leaders are prepared to and have the required skills to carry them out.





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 will 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 published