

## Shore diving Guidance

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These notes are intended to provide a framework for a return to diving following easing of government restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance is based on current knowledge and understanding of the risks associated with the outbreak and the current scientific evidence informing decisions by government and other relevant authorities. It is acknowledged that the evidence base and knowledge surrounding the outbreak is rapidly and continually evolving and so the guidance will be reviewed regularly and be subject to update and amendment as appropriate.

### **STATUS**

Currently in the UK different criteria applies within each of the devolved administrations. Please refer to the [STATUS document](#).

### **Protecting others and reducing the demands on the NHS**

Current advice on avoiding transmission of the virus can be found on the Government Website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

**The advice for anyone in any setting is to follow these main guidelines:**

- The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of a new continuous cough and/or high temperature. If you have these symptoms, however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started (if you live alone), or 14 days (if you live with someone who has symptoms). You do not need to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days, contact [NHS 111 online](#). If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.
- Wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, or after being in public areas where other people are doing so. Use hand sanitiser if that's all you have access to.
- To reduce the spread of germs when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your sleeve (not your hands) if you don't have a tissue, and throw the tissue in a bin immediately. Then wash your hands or use a hand sanitising gel.
- Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces using your regular cleaning products to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

**Anyone displaying any symptoms should NOT engage in any activity outside the home.**

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### **Travel to site**

Unless already resident on the location of a dive site access will undoubtedly involve some form of travel to the site. **See separate Travel Guidance.**

### **Risk Assessment**

All divers making up the dive party should conduct their own risk assessments for the dive in the normal manner. In addition consideration must be given to the impact of any factors associated with the risks of transmission of the COVID-19 virus, social distancing requirements and any increased potential for calls to the emergency services. Planning of diving should include taking account of the need to reduce even further the potential risks associated with diving activity.

## Dive Management

During the preparatory stages and prior to divers assembling at the dive site or meeting place the Dive Manager should confirm that each individual is fit and well and that if they are or become unwell at any time they should not attend. If necessary they may need to remind them to self-isolate if they have any of the symptoms of COVID-19 and seek further medical advice. Additionally, anyone who has previously tested positive for Covid-19 should follow the [Medical Guidance](#) for returning to diving following infection.

Dive planning safety measures during initial dives:

- Build up depth progressively
- Do not plan for mandatory decompression stops
- Do not dive in strong currents where risk of separation is increased
- A maximum depth of 30m is suggested
- No night dives or overhead environments
- Divers are encouraged to carry an independent gas source (pony cylinder/bail out)

Special care should be focused on ascents. Ideally use of a point of reference such as shot line, SMB/DSMB line, or natural topography.

## Equipment preparation

Personal diving equipment remains the responsibility of the individual diver. Equipment should be maintained and serviced in line with the manufacturer's recommendations and relevant local testing procedures for cylinders. **See separate [Equipment Guidance](#).**

## Emergency equipment

Emergency equipment such as O2 sets, AED and First Aid kits should be checked for function as normal. Preparatory checks on mouthpieces, oro-nasal masks and pocket masks should avoid breathing from them to minimise the risk of contamination. After checking, all surfaces touched should be disinfected using appropriate wipes and allowed to dry fully before packing away. If not already included, rescue equipment should be supplemented with protective equipment:

- Face shields or other barriers for protection of casualty and rescuers ([see separate guidance on CPR](#))
- Gloves
- Antiseptic wipes
- Alcohol based hand sanitiser

## Briefing

Briefing of a dive group by the Dive Manager (DM) should continue to be conducted.

The briefing should include any additional specific risks relating to precautions to manage and control the risks associated with avoiding the transmission of COVID-19. This includes ensuring appropriate social distancing by those attending the briefing. It may be appropriate to conduct a series of briefings to smaller groups to ensure this.

Discussion of a dive plan between a buddy pair can be completed as normal whilst maintaining a sensible social distancing separation.

## Kitting up/assistance

Donning heavy scuba equipment benefits from having assistance to avoid injury in trying to fit alone. Where possible making use of benches or similar platforms to reduce the need to lift heavy equipment, may be beneficial. Some tasks may not be possible to complete alone. Closing a drysuit zip across the back for example. If assistance must be provided it is recommended that:

- The equipment is prepared in advance by the diver
- The assistance is for as brief a time as possible

- The assistant/buddy does not touch any part of the equipment that would be breathed from directly by anyone
- During assistance both participants wear a surgical face mask or half mask whilst within 2m of each other as a means of limiting exposure
- Both position themselves so that neither is directly downwind of the other

\* Use of protective masks ([see separate guidance](#))

## **Buddy Checks**

A buddy check remains an essential safety procedure for diving. Checks can be completed as normal with the buddy pair positioned 2m apart if this is a current requirement. As long as separation can be maintained there should be no requirement to wear a mask, breathe from a regulator and/or conduct the checks without talking. The diver should breathe off their own regulator while monitoring their pressure gauge, simply to check function. Monitoring of buddy checks by a Dive Manager or assistant can also continue, maintaining the same distancing. During the buddy check each diver should NOT breathe from or touch the mouthpiece of an AS intended for use by another diver in an out of gas (OOG) situation. Confirmation of the AS working should be achieved by purging rather than asking the buddy to breathe from it in order to maintain distancing.

When demonstrating oral inflation of a BC, contact with mouth or hands on the mouthpiece should also be avoided. Inflate the BC with low pressure inflator, demonstrate venting options, then clearly show the actions required for oral inflation.

## **Dive procedures**

Where possible during water entry, exit and surface swimming divers should maintain appropriate separation if breathing surface air. Where conditions, for example uneven surface on entry, require closer proximity from a buddy for support then both divers should have masks and regulators in place, as is normal practice, and ensure they only breathe from their own gas sources.

Once underwater with mask and scuba regulator in place there is no need for social distancing. Divers will be wearing protective clothing and fully immersed in water that will be continually bathing all surfaces. Any potential for contamination from exhaled gases will be minimal as they enter the water column and ascend to the surface. Avoiding swimming directly above another diver's exhaled bubbles may reduce any concerns relating to potential contamination of equipment and bare skin surfaces but should not present a risk of inhalation.

## **Out of gas procedures**

An out of gas (OOG) situation underwater is a life threatening concern. All divers are trained to deal with such situations both for themselves and to assist a buddy. Divers should plan to be as self-sufficient as possible to deal with such situations in line with their training. A diver carrying their own fully redundant gas supply and trained and practiced in its use is a sensible precaution. Self-sufficiency does not remove the need to be able to provide a gas supply to an OOG buddy and consistent with 'Safe Diving' every diver should have an AS available, capable of being provided to a buddy. Such an AS should be dedicated to use by a buddy and not breathed from by the diver themselves. BSAC preferred method of teaching is for an OOG diver to take the dedicated AS (or be presented it by their buddy) and the buddy to retain their own primary regulator.

The practice of primary regulator donation presents an increased risk of virus transmission as both divers will share the same mouthpiece with limited rinsing and no disinfection between users. During this period of concern over the risks of infection divers might reconsider using this technique and must discuss and agree the risks with their buddy.

(see also [emergency procedures and CPR](#))

### **Post Dive debrief**

Reporting of dive details to the Dive Manager or assistant can be completed as normal whilst maintaining appropriate social distancing separation.

Discussion of a dive between a buddy pair can be completed as normal whilst maintaining appropriate social distancing separation.

Debriefing of a dive group by the Dive manager should continue to be conducted ensuring appropriate social distancing by those attending the briefing. With larger groups of divers it may be appropriate to conduct a series of debriefing to smaller groups to ensure this.

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To be used in conjunction with other guidance including:

- Medical guidance
- Status
- Equipment guidance
- Shore diving
- CPR and rescue procedures
- Diver Training
- Travel Guidance
- Charter boat diving
- RIB diving
- Swimming pool usage
- Etc.