



# British Caving Association

British Caving Association, The Old Methodist Chapel, Great Hucklow, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 8RG

WWW – <http://www.british-caving.org.uk>, Email – [bca@british-caving.org.uk](mailto:bca@british-caving.org.uk)

## Covid 19 – Guidance for BCA award holders

As government plans to further ease the lockdown across the UK, award holders may wish to start to plan for a gradual and phased return to activity. Careful planning is essential, as caving can present particular difficulties in terms of social distancing.

With the situation still being dynamic and changing, remain aware of the most recent government guidelines and the differences in guidance from each of the home nations.

Current advice from BCA, BCRC and regional councils should also be consulted in planning any return to work:

CNCC – <https://cncc.org.uk/>

CCC – <http://www.cambriancavingcouncil.org.uk/>

DCA – <https://thedca.org.uk/>

CSCC – <http://csc.org.uk/>

DCUC – <https://dcuc.org.uk/>

SUI – <https://www.caving.ie/>

### Key considerations for return to work:

- A thorough and rigorous risk assessment to ensure that the risks, to yourself, any member of your group, or third parties (members of the public, other cavers etc.), of contracting or spreading COVID 19 is minimised. This might entail physical and behavioural changes to past working practices. Specific thought might need to be given to risk assessing the administration of first aid and the items packed in your first aid kit (e.g. plenty of gloves, hand sanitiser, face masks and bags for placing potentially contaminated PPE). Procedures in the event of an emergency also need to be considered, bearing in mind that rescue teams will have limited capacity and will take longer to respond to a call out.
- Access to cave/mine venues, considering potential travel restrictions, rural community sensibilities and landowner permissions.
- Upholding the professional ethos of the BCA award schemes and keeping the image of instructed and led caving activities positive.
- Additional measures that your insurance provider may require or any limitations that they may have set. Check to confirm.



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## Sensible precautions may include:

### Choice of venue

- ‘Honeypot’ sites where multiple other groups may congregate, are best avoided.
- Large passages with easy access and good ventilation, offer a low risk factor where participants are able to progress without physical contact, observe an effective social distancing regime and potential communication problems are eased.
- Try to avoid any squeezes or ‘pinch points’.
- Assume that the virus is resilient outdoors and treat the cave as a potentially infected surface until we have a good understanding of how long the virus survives on rock.
- Limit group size to enable clear communication without compromising social distancing.
- Choose ‘low risk’ venues to lessen the risk of rescue being necessary. Activity should be well within the ability of all group members.
- Horizontal systems will invariably be more suitable, as managing pitch heads and aiding vertical progress will prove to be difficult, where social distancing is to be observed. Similarly minimise the need to ‘spot’ clients.
- Consider travel arrangements. Where possible arrange to meet clients at the venue. Take into account distances travelled and potential parking restrictions.

### Client Care

- Award holders **must** be free of Covid 19 symptoms themselves and should communicate with clients in advance, to ensure that all group members are also symptom free and are not categorised as ‘vulnerable’.
- Maintain social distancing.
- When briefing, choose a spacious outdoor area and consider standing adjacent to group members rather than facing them.
- Hygiene is crucial, yet effective hand washing is impractical in the cave environment, thus carrying and using hand sanitiser is useful.
- Limit sharing and loaning of equipment. Where loaned equipment is issued, a rigorous cleaning schedule should be in place both before and after use. Refer to manufacturer’s guidelines for [Cleaning PPE](#)
- Wash clothing regularly and ensure that any items loaned to clients are laundered, post use, at the highest possible temperature.

**STAY SAFE. BE CONSIDERATE.**