



## Normal Operating Procedures for Surf Therapy

Updated 29 June 2020

### Purpose of this document

This guidance has been drafted to enable the safe return to surf therapy sessions, surf club and beach school, following the coronavirus outbreak. It takes into consideration relevant advice from, amongst others, the UK Government, Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), Sport England, Sport Scotland, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Department for Education, Surfing England. It is intended to help staff and volunteers deliver sessions safely, minimising the risks of spreading the virus, while maintaining the effectiveness of sessions based on our tried and tested models of working.

The Wave Project has ten years of data and multiple examples of evidence-based research which demonstrate the efficacy of our model, including the importance of physical contact. A key component of surf therapy is the personal, one-to-one support provided by surf mentors. The government have advised that, *wherever possible*, staff should practice social distancing of 1m apart. Where this is possible, staff and volunteer should exercise this advice, without losing the essential personal quality of the session.

We must therefore ensure we use good pre-planning to reduce the risk of infected children or volunteers attending the sessions in the first place, and take what steps we can to reduce contact during sessions – without losing the core components of support and contact that make the intervention work well for beneficiaries.

The impact of isolation on mental health is well known, so the work of The Wave Project has never been more important. By providing these guidelines, we aim to make our service available to vulnerable young people who need it while observing the relevant government guidance to minimise the spread of infection.

### Pre- Session Guidelines

- Update Risk Assessments for individual surfers who may be clinically vulnerable to Covid-19 (such as those with asthma).
- Set group sizes in line with government guidance. With the surf school's consent, we can run more than one group at the same time, provided they maintain the recommended distance.
- Send our clear guidance to parents and volunteers not to attend sessions if they or anyone in their household has any symptoms.
- Ask parents to test their child's temperature 24 hours before the session and not to attend if they have a raised temperature.
- All students, staff and volunteers contacted by NHS test and trace must follow any advice given to them. If a student, or a member of their household is told to self-isolate, they will be required to inform the coordinator. The student and their mentor will be asked to miss the next two sessions.
- Where possible, assign the same mentor to a student for the duration of the course to reduce contact.
- Request that parents / carers attend sessions to assist surfers in getting changed in and out of wetsuits.
- Inform volunteers of new sessional operating procedures (see below).
- Adhere to partner surf schools' Covid risk assessments and operational guidelines.
- Take account of any location-specific additional guidance issued by individual surf schools, and share this with volunteers and students in advance.
- Ensure kit bags contain PPE such as gloves and face masks in the event of a rescue being required.
- Kit bags should also contain paper towels and a black bin liner for disposables.
- Where possible, sessions should take place at an actively lifeguarded beach. Follow any guidance from lifeguards on the day. If lifeguards are not on duty, an appropriate risk assessment should be drawn up in advance to ensure water safety cover is available at all times.

- Follow and relevant government guidance when arranging travel to sessions for students.

## **Session Guidelines**

Remember, the purpose of surf therapy sessions is to create a positive friendly vibe. Please keep this in mind, even while adhering to social distancing requirements. Stay positive and friendly, but to stay safe, please follow these instructions:

- Brief children and volunteers at each session about reducing physical contact. Explain that social distancing must be observed. If children persistently ignore social distancing rules, they may be excluded from future sessions.
- Get changed outside using robes. Do not use changing rooms.
- If a student has difficulty getting their wetsuit on, volunteers should, as a first port of call, approach their parent or guardian and ask them to help. If parents are not available, volunteers should assist the student as usual. Use hand sanitiser regularly.
- All participants, including coaches and mentors, should wash their hands with sanitiser at the start of each session. (This could be incorporated into the warm-up.)
- Maintain social distancing requirements where possible while getting changed or during the beach elements of the lesson.
- Do not leave a child in distress at any time, including getting changed. If it is not possible to assist them verbally, then we should help them physically.
- Always help a child who is at risk, for example if they have fallen off their board. If necessary, help them out of the water.
- If a child is distressed, comfort them in an appropriate way. Don't make unnecessary contact.
- During the beach element of the session, maintain the required social distance unless a student is distressed.
- If a student needs time away from the group, stay with them, maintaining social distance where possible. If they are very distressed or upset, it is ok to hold their hand. Avoid touching your mouth or face with your hands, and

encourage the student to do the same. Both student and mentor should use hand sanitiser afterwards when possible.

- While going out into the sea, mentors should maintain social distancing where possible. Remember that water safety remains the priority - it is ok to hold their board in the water to steady them or help them up after a wipeout.
- Students should be divided into group sizes as per government guidance (currently 6 at the time of writing). So a group of six consists of three students, two mentors and a coach. Spread the group out so that multiple groups do not crash into each other in the water.
- Where required, support surfers from the back or side, keeping hands on the board. Avoid facing the student directly if possible.
- If a child coughs or ends up with a face covered in mucus, encourage them to wash their faces in the sea water. If they are unable to do that, support them out of the water, get a tissue out of the kit bag and ask them to wipe their face. Use hand sanitiser afterwards and dispose of the tissue in the bin liner.
- In the event of an emergency, alert the lead surf coach and support them in managing the rest of the group.
- After the water session is over, it is ok to form a group circle if required, but do not do a group hug. Instead the group could do a group shaka or round of applause.
- Where possible, stagger changing times to avoid a large gathering around the surf school.

## **Post Session**

- Ensure all students wash their hands using hand sanitiser once changed.
- Make a note of any concerns and update any surfer Risk Assessments as needed.
- Re-emphasise symptom checks for the following session, reminding students not attend sessions if any symptoms are present.
- Remember this guidance may change, possibly from a week to week basis. Wave Project managers will review any government updates and liaise with

coordinators to implement any changes to operations as necessary. Please adhere to any changes and make sure these are communicated to lead volunteers, mentors and students.