

## Update to the BMC Guidance on Reopening Club Huts 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### Executive Summary

*This updated guidance is issued by the British Mountaineering Council. Thanks to greater immunisation protection in the UK population and progress towards the lifting of almost all government restrictions, emphasis shifts to taking personal responsibility and retaining a mix of mandatory and voluntary control measures to reduce infection.*



### Guidance

The BMC is working to update the “Reopening Huts” document in light of the recent announcements about the easing of restrictions in England and Wales. Some of the Government guidance has not yet been published which is delaying our release of the update. This [link](#) provides the latest overview of what is and what isn’t permissible in England and Wales as England progresses to Step 4 of the Roadmap and Wales moves to Alert Level 1. Please check the Mountaineering Scotland website for relevant updates north of the border.

Mass vaccination, the widespread availability of testing and removal of almost all legal restrictions on social contact are the biggest changes since our previous [update](#) to the BMC [guidance](#) on Covid-19 and reopening club huts.

Now that most of the UK adult population have some immunisation protection, quarantine periods may be relaxed as they have become a much less significant defence than other protective measures. Accordingly, our guidance highlights the need for effective ventilation and direct hygiene, on the basis that:

- The risk of infection via fomite transmission from contact with infected surfaces is lower than thought at the start of the pandemic.
- Recent research indicates that airborne transmission via droplets or aerosols poses a greater risk.
- Transmission is more likely within a group composed of multiple households than between successive groups staying at a hut.

Hut operators and users should continue to follow government guidance that is applicable during each meet, remembering to check each set of guidance when a meet involves travel between home nations (and hopefully abroad with growing prospects for foreign travel).

As we learn to live with Covid-19, it will increasingly become one risk alongside others that both hut operators and hut users must avert or mitigate to keep people safe and discharge their duty of care.

They may wish to do more than the basics, tailored to their specific circumstances. For instance, there is evidence that face coverings reduce the risk of transmission.

Please remember that legal minimums are just that – minimums. Many organisations are asking their staff, volunteers and customers to go beyond these minimums, to provide both genuinely improved safety, and the reassurance that is essential for higher levels of use. As with all other aspects of health and safety, people in any capacity are expected to take reasonable and appropriate steps to minimise their potential to harm those who may be affected by their acts or omissions.

In this case, taking reasonable and appropriate steps would be interpreted in the same way as the reasonable and appropriate steps that should be taken in normal usage to prevent all injury to visitors to huts (for example, regularly maintaining the building and any contents to ensure they don't present a foreseeable risk of injury, putting up signs to warn that water from the boiler is hot and users should take care). The risk of COVID infection has, in effect, become another risk that should be managed along with for example, risks of slips and trips, or legionella in standing water. All huts are different, and there will be differences between risks faced by different user groups and their relative attitudes, even within the same hut.



Hut users should take personal decisions based on their own medical history and perception of risk, the consequences of those risks materialising for them personally, and the need to safeguard other hut users and the local community. Everyone should be aware that even a proportion of double-immunised people are contracting the delta-variant, and although hospitalisation and death rates are thankfully proportionately much lower, those affected are from across a wider age range, and the effects of long-covid are not yet fully-understood. We call on everyone to act responsibly, so that huts can be re-opened as fully and promptly as possible, and remain open.

The legal position now increasingly permits individuals to make their own choices. Essentially huts can operate as close to "normality" as respective home nation guidance allows, if they and their Club members and other users feel comfortable doing so, with common sense around mitigation procedures. It remains sensible to encourage good hut hygiene and also, importantly, an open window policy to maximise ventilation. We are heading in stages towards a full opening with much more emphasis on personal assessments. Those who are risk averse can always choose to avoid huts, and those that are less concerned can use them with enhanced care.