



More people
More active
More often

COVID-19 – A framework for the re-opening of gym, leisure centre and wider fitness industry during social distancing (NI)



1. Context

Overview

This document sets out the framework for opening gym and leisure facilities during an anticipated period of “social distancing” following the full closure of the sector due to COVID-19. It also provides the basis for individual operators to develop their own required technical operating guidance for customers, staff and supply chains once the Government has said facilities, or parts of facilities, can open.

The framework has been developed in full partnership with the major fitness and leisure operators, and has been reviewed by leading medical experts. It has also been informed by best practice from international markets where governments are at different stages of managing the COVID-19 crisis, and working with their own fitness sectors.

The gym and fitness industry will have a vital role in ensuring the ongoing health and wellbeing of the nation following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. We believe this role has never been more important than at the current time in helping the country and British society regain its health. The Government realises how important ‘exercise’ is, and as the Chief Medical Officer stated: “There is no situation, no age, no condition, where exercise is not a good thing.”

It is not intended to be exhaustive in covering every possible scenario but aims to provide a clear direction of travel for the sector. Nor is it intended to cover all aspects of every operator: there will be special undertakings for those with specific offerings. Operators can make their own decisions and can go above the standards within this document, **but not lower**. We are tailoring this as a two-stage opening approach – this document looks at the initial opening period and anticipated social distancing restrictions.

This framework has been **endorsed by the NI Expert Group and the Department** to provide specific and practical steps to support these facilities in meeting the Government requirements as a bare minimum.

GENERAL

CLEANING

RECEPTION AREAS

CHANGING ROOMS/SHOWERS/TOILETS

GYM FLOORS

STUDIOS

COURTS/SPORTS HALLS

SWIMMING POOLS AND WET SIDE FACILITIES

CAFÉS/RESTAURANTS

OUTDOOR FITNESS

FIRST AID/LIFEGUARDS

VENTILATION

MISCELLANEOUS

CONFIRMED CASE

OPERATIONAL – FOR EACH FACILITY TO AGREE

2. Guidelines: Re-opening

General

- Posters will be on display informing customers and staff of social distancing and cleanliness/hygiene protocols throughout the facility.
- Operators will commit to the wellbeing of their staff and customers, and if they show/have any signs of COVID-19 (temperature, cough and difficulty breathing), they will be sent home to follow Government regulations.
- Operators will comply with any health designation documentation that the Government implements.
- Hand wipes/sanitiser will be on offer (or people will be directed to where they can clean their hands).
- Operators will ensure that social distancing is adhered to, further criteria is below for certain areas.
- Face masks will not be mandatory for staff, unless their role requires this.
- It is down to the individual customer to take reasonable personal responsibility when taking part in physical activity.
- Operators to maintain a commitment to the Equality Act 2010 and legal obligations to ensure that the decisions made in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) do not discriminate against customers or staff **with protected characteristics**.
- Operators should employ one way people flow systems to reduce congregation in any area of the facility where possible.
- Operators who are allowing non-members in, must have a process in place to retain contact details for 21 days (in-line with GDPR legislation).
- Markings should be put round machines or workout benches to denote social distance areas where appropriate.

Cleaning

- Continue rigorous cleaning procedures.
- If there is a COVID-19 case in the facility, the operator will follow **COVID-19 Cleaning in non-healthcare settings** while cleaning all areas of the facility.
- Staff will carry out regular cleaning of high-contact touch points throughout the premises.
- Follow National guidance around wearing PPE.

Reception Areas

- Hand wipes/sanitiser will be on offer (or directed to where people can clean their hands).
- Gloves are not mandatory as the World Health Organisation (WHO) advice is that it is preferable not to wear gloves but to regularly wash your hands.
- Processes to make sure social distancing remains in place for reception staff/or screens are in place.
- Queue management - markings on the floor and if necessary outside the entrance.

Changing Rooms/Showers/Toilets

- Operators will promote that customers should come swim or gym ready, where appropriate
- Extra care/signposting will be provided to maintain social distancing when in these areas.
- Lockers will remain in use, as long as social distancing can be maintained.
- Spray and cloths¹ will be available for customer use for touch points.

¹ Spray and cloths – this is a generic term and could be any cleaning apparatus eg – handwipes, paper towels and spray

Gym Floors

- Only equipment that is spaced far enough apart to maintain social distancing will be used – as an example this can be done via moving equipment or marking every other piece of equipment in the gym out of order.
- Users should not be working out face to face.
- Touch points of equipment should be cleaned after use – this can be done either by the customer or staff using spray and cloths provided. This is in addition to the cleaning schedule.
- Extra signage regarding social distancing will be in place around the free-weights area.
- Maximum gym capacity will be based on 100sqft per person.

Studios

- Social distancing guidelines must be followed.
- There will be a minimum of a 30-minute window in between classes, so no 'waiting around' in groups.
- Equipment (including mats etc) will be cleaned in between use. This can either be done by the customer or staff member using spray and cloths provided.
- No equipment will be shared during the classes.
- If possible, markings will be made on the floor to show the area for individuals.

Courts/Sports Halls

- If social distancing can take place, courts and halls will be open. However, for any activity where social distancing is not possible, these facilities/activities will remain closed/not played.
- Cleanliness protocols must be followed.
- If you are not sure which sports are suitable, please contact the relevant national governing body.

Swimming Pools and Wet Side Facilities

- Swimming pools will open as long as properly chlorinated (**as there is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the use of pools, hot tubs or spas**).
- Social distancing must be maintained in the pool.
- Extra care/signposting will be shown to maintain social distancing when getting in/out of the pool.
- Saunas/steam rooms/hot tubs/spa pools will only open if social distancing can be adhered to.
- Teachers/instructors/coaches and students on the poolside must follow social distancing guidelines between each other.
- Only one parent/carer per child will be allowed to supervise their child during swimming activities (external to the pool).
- The parent/carer/spectator must follow social distancing guidelines.
- Any equipment used will be cleaned after/between use.
- Considerations should be made to ensure limited time is taken in changing areas, especially during the changeover of group activity to maintain social distancing.
- Hand sanitiser and/or soap will be available poolside for staff.
- Prior to re-commissioning a swimming pool facility, the following re-commissioning advice should be followed: **PWTAG Technical Note – Technical operation after Covid-19 shutdown (TN46)**
- If flumes are available, social distancing must be followed.

Cafés/Restaurants

- Cafés, restaurants and bars will re-open when Government restrictions allow and will operate under any guidelines issued by national health authorities.
- Additional signs will be put up around cleanliness and social distancing.
- Vending machines will remain in use but will be cleaned regularly.
- Government [Guidance for food businesses on COVID-19](#) will be followed.

Outdoor Fitness

- Social distancing and cleanliness will be promoted when booking online.
- Social distancing and cleanliness will be promoted by the instructor(s) at the beginning and throughout classes.
- Group classes will be organised in a series of formations to comply with social distancing, with appropriate spacing between participants monitored by the instructor throughout the class.
- Nothing will be passed to/from the instructor to the customer – including personal items, water bottles, bibs etc.
- Customers should not cluster in groups before/after sessions.

First Aid/Lifeguards

- Operators will follow the HSE guidance on '[first aid requirements in non-healthcare settings](#)'.
- Lifeguards should follow the [RLSS guidance on first aid requirements](#).
- Although there may be heightened concerns around first aid, this will continue as normal, with the below aspects to be used when needed:
 - Gloves.
 - Resus masks for emergency first aid to be provided to all first aiders.
 - Face masks for general first aid.
- The Resuscitation Council UK has provided [specific guidance on CPR delivery](#).
- Where relevant, lifeguards will remain in place.

Ventilation

- A target ventilation rate of 20l/s/p is advised for facilities. This can either be attained through adjustments to ventilation systems themselves, or by controlling numbers and using natural ventilation.
- Ventilation systems should provide 100% fresh air and not recirculate air from one space to another.
- Increasing the existing ventilation rate by fully opening dampers and running fans on full speed.
- Operating the ventilation system 24 hours a day.
- Increase the frequency of filter changes.
- In the absence of known ventilation rates, a carbon dioxide sensor shall be used as a surrogate indicator to switch on additional mechanical ventilation or open windows.
- [Further guidance is provided in CIBSE COVID-19 Ventilation Guidance](#).

Miscellaneous

- Operators to follow Government guidance for workplaces.
- Towels/'sweat towels' will not be taken onto the gymfloor/into the studio.
- Personal training sessions can continue as long as social distancing is in place.
- Card/contactless payment will be promoted.
- For further information regarding external qualifications/training, please contact your training qualification body.

- Consider special provision for vulnerable groups using your facilities.
- All contractors must follow social distancing and cleanliness guidelines.
- Health consultations will remain if strict cleanliness of individuals and rooms is enforced and relevant PPE is worn (eg. in hospital, the patient simply wears a surgical mask and the doctor wears simple eye cover, a surgical mask an apron as full PPE is reserved for aerosol-generating procedures), or this could be done online.

Confirmed Case

- Alerted by authority:
 - Site gets alerted by the authorities that a member who had visited has tested positive.
 - Site gives the authorities the names and contact details of all customers who were in the club at the time (and 4 hours after the individual left – or more if authority informs them).
 - Areas of the club where individual was (if known, if not whole facility) are closed and deep cleaned (if not done so already since individual left) according to Government guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings – once complete – facility re-opens.
 - Staff and customers informed, and told that if they have any symptoms to stay at home/follow Government guidance.
- Alerted by customer /staff:
 - Wait for confirmation from authority.
 - Follow above steps.

Operational – for each facility to agree

- Health and Safety checks pre-opening – eg. Legionella.
- Training of staff in the above procedures.
- Above procedures and staff behaviors relating to these procedures looking at contact with users.
- Pre-opening - operators will commit to a level of communication to customers explaining the nature of re-opening, advising them of the responsibility they have regarding cleaning touch points, if they show/have any signs of COVID-19 (temperature, cough and difficulty breathing), they should not attend, providing Q+A, and ultimately reassuring customers.
- Operators to develop a risk assessment and operating plan covering all of the above and relevant other information such as access and egress for safety and evacuation procedures.

ukactive would like to thank our members and partners for their continued support in creating this framework

