



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



1. Context

Overview

This framework is aligned to the various Government documents, and has been updated as a 'how to' guide – providing specific and practical steps to support these facilities in meeting the Government requirements as a bare minimum and must be used in conjunction with the specific devolved Government Guidance.

This guidance was created for operating during the various stages of COVID-19, as we are now moving out of these and various restrictions are being lifted, please refer to the 'Member Update' on current restrictions within each Nation from the [ukactive COVID-19](#) page.

England – [Working Safely during Coronavirus – Providers of Sport and gym/leisure facilities](#)

Scotland – [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on sport and leisure facilities](#)

Northern Ireland – [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): regulations, guidance and what they mean for you](#)

This document sets out the framework for operating 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**. This document shows the operational procedures you should follow when allowed to open following Government announcements, and should be read in conjunction with relevant national and sector [guidance](#).

GENERAL	FURTHER SPORT GUIDANCE
CLEANING	OPERATIONAL – FOR EACH FACILITY TO AGREE
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	

2. Guidelines: Re-opening

General

- Public Health England (PHE) or equivalent 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.
- It is not advised to wear a face covering when doing exercise – please refer to relevant Government guidance when not exercising: [England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland](#).
- 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) and follow relevant Test and Trace details.
- Markings should be put round machines or workout benches to denote social distance areas where appropriate.

Cleaning

- Continue rigorous cleaning and disinfection procedures to minimise risk of contact transmission; this can be frequent and regular or through longer lasting treatments such as antimicrobial shields.
- If there is a COVID-19 case in the facility, the operator will follow the national guidance while cleaning all areas of the facility: England, Wales and Northern Ireland – [COVID-19 – Cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#), Scotland – [Environmental decontamination \(cleaning and disinfection\) after a possible case has left a workplace or other non-healthcare setting](#).
- Staff will carry out regular cleaning of high-contact touch points throughout the premises.

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 can remain in use, as long as social distancing can be maintained.
- Signs should encourage frequent hand hygiene and staff should be doing regular checks and cleaning of touch points.

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 facility capacity will be based on 100sqft per person.

Studios

- Social distancing guidelines must be followed.
- There will be a minimum of a 10-minute window in between classes (30 minutes in Northern Ireland), 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

- When courts and halls can open, social distancing must remain, unless part of bubble (please refer to National Guidance). However, for any activity where social distancing is not possible, these facilities/activities will remain closed/not played.
- Cleanliness protocols must be followed.
- Refer to national Governing Body guidelines for COVID secure protocols for individual activities.

Swimming Pools and Wet Side Facilities

- Swimming pools can open as long as properly disinfected (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.
- When hot tubs/spa pools open, social distancing must be adhered to and the [Spa and hot tub technical operation after Covid-19 shutdown \(TN47\)](#) should be followed.
- 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 \(TN46\)](#).
- When flumes are available, social distancing must be followed.
- Maximum pool capacity based on 3sqm per bather.
- Pool activities will be considered individually by operators and give due consideration to guidance from other industry bodies.

Cafés/Restaurants

- Additional signs will be put up around cleanliness and social distancing.
- Vending machines can 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](#).
- The Resuscitation Council UK has provided [specific guidance on CPR delivery](#).

Ventilation

- A target ventilation rate of 20 l/s/p is advised for facilities. This can either be attained through adjustments to ventilation systems themselves, or by controlling numbers (based on 100sqft per person, net usable indoor space available to members to use, including changing rooms) 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 could 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.
- Avoid use of shared objects e.g. towels, robes, balls, weights, rackets, balls, scoring equipment, sports clothing unless they can be cleaned or sanitised between users.
- When Personal Training sessions can continue social distancing must remain.
- 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.
- PPE will be worn for health consultations in line with the national Government policy on close contact services.
- For further details on volunteers please look at the Government document '[Operating safely during COVID-19 for providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities](#)'.
- Please follow the following guidance for opening indoor play areas for children: [England, Wales](#).

Further Sport Guidance

- [England](#)
- [Scotland](#)

Operational – for each facility to agree

- Health and Safety checks pre-opening – e.g. Legionella.
- Training of staff in the above procedures.
- Before re-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, 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.

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

