

Living with COVID-19 Framework
Individual, Indoor Training
Practical guidance for the sports and physical activity sector
May 2021

Overview

On 15 September 2020, the Government first published a Framework of measures to guide Ireland through the short to medium-term management of Covid-19.

The Framework consists of 5 levels. The lower levels of the Framework will be activated when there is low incidence of the disease, with isolated outbreaks and low community transmission. The higher levels will be used to deal with higher incidences of the disease. It will be possible for different regions and counties to be at a different Level to the National Level, depending on the incidence of the virus in that particular region or county.

It is the aim of the Return to Sport Expert Group to provide the Sector with a practical interpretation of the Framework that recognises the need to address public health concerns while maintaining the provision of sporting and physical activity opportunities to the Irish public.

Since its publication, Sporting Bodies have sought further guidance from the Expert Group on certain areas of the Framework, in particular the measures set out in Level 3 and 4 in relation to indoor training.

Indoor Sport & Physical Activity

Indoor environments are essential to the delivery of sport and physical activity particularly in Autumn and Winter where there are reduced opportunities for outdoor activity. Many sports while individual in nature are conducted in a group environment for example gymnastics and non-contact traditional martial arts. Additionally some indoor sports such as badminton and (indoor) tennis require a minimum of two people for any meaningful participation to take place.

The Expert Group recognises that this presents a unique challenge for indoors sports when Restrictions allow for individual training only. Providing a safe environment for participants on a sustainable basis in both sport and physical activity is paramount.

Defining Individual Training

Sporting Organisations acknowledge the need to tailor their approach to delivery to reflect the various levels of Covid 19 in the Community. There should be clear differences in the level and nature of sporting activity between the higher and lower elements of the Framework.

To date Sporting Bodies have developed and implemented robust Return to Sport Protocols addressing the necessary public health requirements. These Organisations remain best placed to develop sport specific protocols that minimise the potential risk associated with individual training.

To assist the sector the Expert Group recommends the adoption of the ‘pod of one’ concept.

This concept can be defined as *‘Individual, physically distanced, non-contact activity, completed in a pre-defined area, within a controlled environment and without the sharing of equipment.’*

The following additional risk mitigation measures are also recommended for protocol adoption.

These measures aim at clearly differentiating sporting activity between the higher and lower levels of the Framework while also distinguishing the activity from ‘traditional exercise and dance classes’ which are not permissible in certain levels.

- Staggered start and finish times combined with appropriate entry, exit and traffic management protocols to limit the interaction of participants at any one time.
- Prebooking of activity is essential. This includes the health screening of all participants (including coaches & support personnel).
- Reduction in the overall duration of the activity.
- Participants arrive ready to train and leave immediately (no changing room or shower use).
- Additional signage, hand sanitization stations and deep cleaning implemented.
- No equipment sharing in any circumstances.
- Activity should take place in a predefined area which is visually marked out and directionally signed.
- The space required in this area should reflect the nature and intensity of the activity
- There should be in excess of 2m social distancing between each of the predefined areas.

- The Cleaning & Ventilation of facilities should be conducted in accordance with the Governments most recent Work Safely Protocol. Additional information can also be found in the appendixes of this documents.

One to One Training

In the event of one to one training between a participant and instructor/coach, the following additional items to those outlined above should also be implemented.

- Any demonstration of equipment or technique should ensure that a minimum of 2m social distancing is maintained.
- Individual equipment should not be shared.
- In the case of fixed equipment, cleaning of such equipment **must** be completed immediately after demonstration and before the individual participant uses.
- There should be no hands-on adjustments or physical contact during training sessions.
- Coaches and trainers are asked to refer to the HSE guidance on wearing of face coverings, which is available here.

Additional Points:

- It is important to note that Sporting Organisations wishing to carry out one to one or individual training indoors should incorporate the guidance outlined in this document into their existing Covid 19 Return to Work and Return to Training Policies and Procedures. This document is not sufficient in isolation.
- The ongoing allowance of indoor activity will be dictated by the Public Health Situation and whether sporting facilities are open.
- This guidance applies to the indoor sporting activity of National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and the Network of Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs).
- The training must be supervised by a coach or a trainer accredited by the relevant NGB / LSP.
- NGBs / LSPs will have responsibility for approving the training activities to be undertaken. Sport Ireland is available to provide guidance to Sport Ireland recognised NGBs/LSPs where required.
- NGBs/LSPs must give an assurance that protective measures will be strictly adhered to and that they have the resources locally to monitor compliance by clubs and groups.

- Any club or group that is not in a position to apply these measures or enforce them should not hold training sessions.
- This continues to be on an opt-in basis for participants.

Appendices

Cleaning & Ventilation of facilities should be conducted in accordance with the Governments most recent Work Safely Protocol.

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

Ventilation refers to the movement of outdoor air into a building, and the circulation of that air within the building or room. This can be achieved through natural means (e.g. opening a window) or mechanical means (e.g. a central heating, ventilation and air conditioning).

Natural ventilation through the introduction of fresh air into the workplace e.g. opening doors and windows. Cross-ventilation is a good option for window ventilation as it facilitates the quick exchange of room air for fresh air through widely opened windows opposite to each other where possible. Propping open internal doors may increase air movement and ventilation rate. (Note: fire doors should not be propped open unless fitted with approved automatic closers so that they function as fire doors in the event of an alarm or fire).

Mechanical ventilation through the use of HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) systems. These provide comfortable environmental conditions (temperature and humidity) and clean air in indoor settings such as buildings and vehicles. Switching off air conditioning is not required to manage the risk of COVID19. However, as many air conditioning units just heat, cool and recirculate the air, it is important to check ventilation systems to ensure that there is an adequate supply of fresh air (from a clean source) and that recirculation of untreated air is avoided. Where workplaces have Local Exhaust Ventilation, the make-up air should ideally come from outdoor air rather than from adjacent rooms.

Cleaning

Cleaning of areas must be conducted at regular intervals.

Further information on cleaning in non-healthcare settings is available from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

Sporting Bodies must:

- Implement thorough and regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. If disinfection of an area is required, it must be performed in addition to cleaning, never as a substitute for cleaning.
- Ensure contact/touch surfaces such as table tops, door handles and handrails are visibly clean at all times and are cleaned at least twice daily. Additionally sports equipment should be cleaned before and after use.

- Implement modified cleaning intervals for sports facilities. This applies especially for washroom facilities, lockers and any communal spaces that may be open. Cleaning should be performed at least twice per day and whenever facilities are visibly dirty.
- Provide coaches/ participants with essential cleaning materials to keep their own areas clean (for example wipes/disinfection products, paper towels and waste bins/bags).
- Increase number of waste collection points and ensure these are emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day.
- Records should be maintained for all cleaning.