

9th September 2020 Sport NI Information Note



The Department of Communities has formed an expert advisory panel to make recommendations regarding a safe return to sport. The panel includes personnel with specialist expertise and best practice experience in the application of sports medicine, sports science and performance practice (coaching / managing / competing). The panel which includes key Sport Northern Ireland Sports Institute personnel, has recently produced the following important considerations for those staging sports events.

1. Context

The sporting community has generally welcomed a degree of sports competition following lifting of specific restrictions related to Covid-19. To date the response to the Covid-19 situation from many parts of the sporting community has been positive and it is important that this continues. Sport has the opportunity to continue to present examples of responsible practice and exemplary behaviours aligned to the current Health Regulations and in support of the NI Executive.

In recent weeks the Expert Group established to provide guidance on a 'Return to Sport' has been made aware of a growing number of sports events planned for the period ahead. These are being staged by a number of organisers ranging from Governing Bodies to individual clubs. Some organisers have been seeking approval from the expert group to stage their event. It is important to stress that the Expert group does not function to approve events. Its specific role is to offer guidance based on the best sports science and sports medicine advice available at the time. It can provide feedback regarding risk assessments and especially protocols that have been presented by organisers. The feedback is provided so that organisers can make responsible decisions regarding the safe running of the event.

There are a growing number of support resources for sports available on Sport NI's 'Return to Sport' website which is available [here](#). This site will continue to be updated as regulations change and new support resources are developed. In addition the Expert Group have identified a number of important considerations for all those groups planning a sports event. These are presented below.

2. Important Considerations

2.1 Responsible Decision-making

The organisers should consider (a) the Health Regulations in place and (b) local conditions regarding Covid-19 management as indicated by Public Health Authority data. Staging an event requires considerable forward planning and it is important that the organisers continue to monitor these two aspects on an on-going basis right up to the time of the event. There is a risk that in certain circumstances the event may have to be scaled back, pushed back or even cancelled. The key question that organisers must consider at any time will be:

Is staging this event a responsible act for the community?

2.2 Completion of a Risk Assessment

The organisers must complete a comprehensive risk assessment that considers the event from a range of different perspectives. In addition to resources on the Return to Sport website, the World Health organization has produced a risk assessment and mitigation

checklist for mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19. It is available [here](#). Control of participants and also spectators (if permitted) will be key. Recent observations from practice identifies that control of spectators in certain types of venues can be a major challenge especially if there is a social component associated with the spectator experience. All risks related to the periods before, during and after the event need to be assessed with appropriate management and mitigation strategies identified in order to set conditions so that the event can operate within the Health Regulations in place at that time. Events considering incorporating a spectator social experience should consult with Environmental Health to ensure the adequacy of arrangements for food and beverage provision as public health standards must be met.

2.3 Development of Robust protocols

The identified management and mitigation strategies must then be used to create a protocol for the event that makes required behaviours explicit and that assigns responsibility for operational elements to an appropriately sized and trained team of personnel. Clear individual roles and responsibilities to deliver on the protocols is key.

2.4 Ensure that Public Liability Insurance is in place

Risk assessments and protocol development are two forms of evidence that the organisers are taking their responsibility seriously. Another is ensuring that an appropriate level of public liability insurance is in place. Consultation with your insurance provider is recommended to ensure that adequate cover is in place. In the current climate this will usually depend on insurers being satisfied that risk assessments, protocols and implementation plans are robust.

2.5 Governing Body sign off is recommended best practice

It is recommended best practice that Governing Bodies should sign off on the event protocols to be used. Local event organisers will have invested considerable time during the preparation phase. There will also be economic drivers that come into play at different stages of the process. It is often difficult to assess competing factors especially when one may be known (economic) while the other (risk of Covid-19 infection spread) may be more challenging

to specify. Governing Body scrutiny provides the opportunity for healthy check and challenge and is of particular value when the event is being staged by a club. If a Local Authority led Events Safety Advisory Group exists within your locality the proposals should be submitted for review and/or (in the absence of this) be discussed with the blue light services.

2.6 Recognition that implementation is the greatest challenge

It is possible to develop robust protocols but the real challenge is delivery of these in practice. This depends on a number of factors including:

Clear communication of and education on, the behaviours expected by all attending;

Sufficient diligent personnel and processes being in place during the event, including plans for how to intervene if inappropriate behavior is identified;

Participants should be encouraged to download and use the Stop COVID NI app in order to assist with contact track and tracing.

Each member of the community engaged in the event being prepared to play their part as responsible citizens

2.7 Acceptance of responsibility and liability regarding the event

We would all like to see well-designed and managed sports events play their part in the journey towards a new form of normality. However it is also important that all understand the impact and implications should a local outbreak be tracked and traced back to a sports event. Liability for that will sit with the organisers and therefore they must understand and be prepared to accept this level of risk when making decisions.

Managing A Confirmed or Suspected COVID19 Case: A Guide for Sports Please also find advices regarding the management of a confirmed suspected case – a guide and actions for sports:



CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Managing a Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Case: **A Guide for Sports**

Key Actions for Sports Clubs



Perform a risk assessment



Develop a COVID-19 plan



Have a designated isolation area



Maintain records for contact tracing for 21 days



Encourage use of the StopCOVID NI App

Managing an Individual with symptoms

1



Individual develops key COVID symptoms - New continuous cough, high temp or change in taste/smell

2



Advise to put on face covering

3



Advise to leave immediately by their own transport or via a household member, who has been a close contact in the previous 48 hours

4



If not able to leave immediately - move to designated isolation area

5



If isolation area is used Minimise personnel, wear face covering and use PPE if social distance not maintained

6



If too unwell for home, contact an ambulance (999) and inform them of suspected case

7



Continue session if no other concerns Arrange deep-clean of all affected areas to required standards prior to future use*

8



For athlete at home advise Self and household isolation

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings#left-area>

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Managing a Confirmed or Suspected COVID -19 Case: **A Guide for Sports**

Managing an Individual with symptoms contd



If symptoms are present, arrange a COVID test.** You may also want to contact your GP for advice



Self isolation for at least 10 days and household isolation for 14 days depending on test outcomes



Negative test - Athlete is safe to resume activity provided:
- All in household with symptoms have tested negative
- Athlete is well with no raised temp for 48 hours
- They are not a close contact of a confirmed case



Positive test - Athlete to isolate for at least 10 days:
Club to cooperate with PHA contact tracers to identify potential close contacts Athlete should rest at least 14 days and make a graduated return to sport following medical clearance - see SportNI specic guidance***



For an isolated case, it is unlikely the club will need to close.



If two or more cases/suspected cases are present, the club should seek PHA guidance



If you have NO symptoms, await contact from PHA contact tracers prior to arranging a test



Close contacts will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days. The contact tracing service or PHA will determine close contacts following a risk assessment

** Visit nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus to book a test online or call 119

*** www.sportni.net/return-to-sport/sports-medicine/



Sport NI Learning – Digital Opportunities

Sport NI has a number of digital learning offerings currently available to support people in various roles across the sector, including #WebinarWednesday, The Curious Coaching Podcast, The Curious Coaching Blog and #ThoughtfulThursday webinars. All of these are free, open to all and can be accessed via the various links below:

- **WebinarWednesday:**
<http://www.sportni.net/learning/webinarwednesday/>
- **The Curious Coaching Podcast:**
<http://www.sportni.net/learning/the-curious-coaching-podcast/>

The Curious Coaching Blog

The Future Belongs
to the Curious



#SportSafeStrong #SportNILEarning

- The Curious Coaching Blog:
<http://www.sportni.net/learning/the-curious-coaching-blog/>
- #ThoughtfulThursday (previous session recordings):
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLaTxIWlDbDf4VfTZRgUEZS4aBKa4vskXt>

To receive direct email updates on new opportunities as they become available, it is possible to join the 'Learning List' via the following link: <http://www.sportni.net/learning/learning-list/>



Department for
Communities

The Department for Communities is developing a new 10-year Sport and Physical Activity strategy for Northern Ireland. The new strategy will be cross-Departmental and will focus on linkages between sport and physical activity and other policies of the Executive, such as physical and mental health and well-being, education, transport, urban and rural regeneration, good relations, community safety, social inclusion and economic and social equality.

The new strategy is being developed through a process of co-design with a wide range of stakeholders. As part of the co-design process the Department for Communities is keen to know the views of a range of key stakeholders on what issues and concerns they have in relation to sport and physical activity. We would therefore encourage you to complete the consultation at this link:

<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc-analytical-services-unit/47a516a5/>