



RETURN TO SPORT POST LOCKDOWN GUIDANCE FOR COACHES AND ATHLETES

This guidance document has been developed with reference to the Sport NI 'Getting Back to Sport' framework, advice from Marsh Insurance, collaborative planning with Athletics Ireland, British Athletics and the Home Country Athletics Federations and the NI Executive Roadmap for using outdoor spaces and public sport amenities.

This document contains sport specific advice for coaches, leaders, athletes and runners in Northern Ireland only and any return to activity must take account of local conditions. All government guidance on Covid-19 must be taken into account and risk assessments for normal activities should also be undertaken. It is the responsibility of each individual to make their own assessment based on their local environment and situation.

Any athletics or running coaching or activity should adhere to the following guidance to ensure safety of all:

Check the latest guidance – Guidance is likely to change at short notice. Check the Athletics NI website for the most up to date guidance.

Your own health - Monitor yourself for any signs of the virus, as well as general health. All coaches and athletes should follow the advice of their GP or medical practitioner in all cases. If you have had Covid-19 you may have an increased risk of developing myocarditis (inflammation of the heart) and this may occur as late as days 5 – 8 after symptoms have got better. Every runner and athlete should have at least seven days rest from when symptoms have fully resolved before restarting training. Anyone who has had the virus should speak to a doctor and their coach for advice regarding gradual return to training.

Hygiene – Wash your hands before and after the session with soap and water. Avoid touching your face. If the activity does not begin from your own home, take hand sanitiser with you and use regularly, particularly if hand washing facilities are unavailable.

Risk Assessment – Coaches should carry out a risk assessment prior to any session and ensure that it is up to date for that particular area and that it has taken all of the points in this document into consideration. Athletes training alone or with training partners should check that the area is safe and that you can adhere to government guidance. For further information on risk assessments [click here](#). For an example of a Covid-19 risk assessment see Athletics Northern Ireland Covid -19 Risk Assessment available [here](#)

Numbers – *Your group can be no larger than 10 participants – including athletes/runners and coaches/leaders (Step 2)*. A coach may carry out other sessions with different athletes/runners after the conclusion of the previous session. It is recommended that a time buffer is built in between sessions to enable social distancing and adequate cleaning according to guidelines.

Venue – Coaching sessions must take place outdoors where social distancing can be observed. Check directly with the venue that it is open. Do not use any tracks or facilities that are closed even if you are able to walk into them. If you are using a managed facility, contact the facility before your

session to make a booking where required. Let the manager know what your session is so that he/she is able to allocate space. Be aware that, even if an outdoor space is available, changing rooms, toilets and other inside spaces will be closed. Ensure you have enough food and hydration for the session and that your risk assessment considers risks around changing and toilet use. Ask your athletes/runners to use toilets at home, arrive ready changed and, where possible, with the correct footwear. For running coaches/leaders using 'wild' public spaces, be aware that car parks may not be open. Check before you organise your off-track training that access can be gained.

Travel to and from sessions – Do not travel with someone from outside your household unless you can maintain social distance or they are from your household

Training sessions – Do not congregate before or after training. At every session the coach must brief the athletes of the protocols that are to be followed. If possible and where you are working in one place, create a two-metre exclusion zone around athletes that no one else will enter. If your athletes are running in small groups, ensure that they stay two metres apart. Please note that a ONE lane gap, on the track, is NOT socially distanced. Avoid running in the slipstream of others and any overtaking by setting runners off at intervals. Instruction should be given to athletes to keep one lane free in between, if there is a need for overtaking. Keep a two-metre distance between the coach and the athletes. If a coach has to move an athlete into position, use a rod or pointer to point, which is easy to wipe down with a sanitising wipe before and after the session. All coaches and athletes should carry hand sanitising wipes.

Athletes that require additional assistance – If an athlete requires additional assistance, that person will count as one of the ten and so athlete numbers will need to be adjusted accordingly. Because of the two-metre rule, unless a guide runner is a family member or part of a family unit, they are currently not able to guide.

Athletes in higher risk groups – Government guidance on vulnerable persons should be adhered to. Athletes in higher risk groups should follow any medical guidelines they have been given. If there are further concerns, consult with medical organisations for support and best practice. For further information, see [this link](#).

Training load – Training plans should consider any de-training effect the athlete/runner has experienced during the period of lockdown whilst training in isolation. Any escalation of training at any accelerated rate, may cause injury or compromise the immune system. Coaches should plan for a graduated approach.

Equipment – Athletes must not share equipment and should use their own equipment if they have it. Athletes should not touch equipment that they are not using and thoroughly clean any equipment they are using before and after use. Coaches are encouraged to be creative around event specific drills in preparation for when this equipment can be used in a later Step. This includes using poles to practice approach runs and planting, providing all equipment is used by one athlete and then thoroughly cleaned before and after each session.

Jumps – Up to six athletes may use the High Jump and Pole Vault beds and Long Jump Pits at one time, and cleaning protocols must be adhered to between groups

Steeplechase – Steeplechase barriers should be sanitised before and after training sessions. Athletes should wash their hands/use hand sanitiser between runs. Disinfectant solution should be added to the water jump.

Leaving the session - Social distancing is as important after training as it is during so when training is over all athletes must leave the track/venue immediately so that there are no gatherings

Planning for unplanned incidents - Risk assessment must take into account mitigations and plans for when activities do not go as expected. Planning scenarios around, for example, an injury occurring to an athlete and the need to support that athlete while social distancing should be undertaken.

Disclaimer

Please note that the subject matter covered in this guidance is in no way exhaustive and the material does not stand on its own nor is intended to be relied upon as a substitute for obtaining specific legal advice. Individual circumstances will differ. The information contained in this guidance is given in good faith but any liability of Athletics Northern Ireland or its professional advisors (including their respective members or employees) to you or any third party which may arise out of the reliance by you or any other party of the contents of this guidance is hereby excluded to the fullest extent permitted by law. Athletics Northern Ireland and its professional advisors accept no duty of care or liability for any loss occasioned, whether caused by negligence or otherwise, to any person acting or refraining from actions as a result of any material in this guidance. We would strongly recommend that you consult professional advisors on specific issues before acting or refraining from action on any of the contents of this guidance.

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