

Step 4: Best Practice Considerations

Introduction

The Prime Minister has announced the removal of most Covid restrictions from Step 4 (19 July 2021).

Some of the biggest changes are:

There'll be no set restrictions on how many people can take part in sport and physical activity, indoors and outdoors.

All forms of activity will be able to take place without set government restrictions. Whilst we know that pools are well managed, chlorinated environments where the risk of transmission is lower, it is important to be aware of the fact that despite the easing of restrictions Covid is still present. Therefore we encourage people to continue to be responsible to help reduce the risk of transmission.

Government guidance for the sector within Step 4 can be [found here](#) and should be adhered to. This will enable activities to continue in a way that reduces risks.

Businesses still have a legal duty to manage risks to those using their business. Employers should continue to carry out a health and safety risk assessment, including the risk of Covid-19, and to take reasonable steps to mitigate the risks identified.

The Government's 'Working Safely' guidance sets out a range of mitigations employers should consider including:

- cleaning surfaces that people touch regularly
- identifying poorly-ventilated areas in the venue and taking steps to improve air flow
- ensuring that staff and customers who are unwell do not attend the workplace or venue
- communicating to staff and customers the measures you have put in place.

To support this pool operators should refer to PWTAG Code of Practice (PWTAG CoP) for water treatment and [HSG179](#).

Capacity limits

All Covid restrictions on maximum capacity calculations have been removed.

The Government's Health and Safety Executive HSG179 recommends a typical starting point for determining occupancy ratio in a swimming pool of 3 m² of water per pool user, but this is only a guide.

Pool users such as swim schools, clubs, schools and casual swimmers should work with their local operator to understand the capacity limits for their particular venue and it's recommended you conduct a risk assessment based on the specific activity undertaken.

In the event of government guidance and/or local restrictions being implemented in the future, these should be adhered to.

Face coverings

Face coverings will no longer be required by law but the government expects and recommends that people should continue to wear them in crowded and enclosed settings. Businesses and clubs should be supportive of individuals who would like to continue wearing face coverings.

Cleaning

We would recommend that the enhanced cleaning regimes implemented during the pandemic should be maintained for both equipment, changing and seating areas. Pool users should be encouraged to bring their own equipment where possible. We would recommend equipment is not shared unless cleaned in between use. Swimming pool water, which has been **shown to inactivate the virus**, can be used for this purpose.

Testing

You should continue to inform staff/customers/club members that if they have any Covid symptoms they must not attend a facility. They should remain at home and take a test.

People should follow the relevant rules in place at the time around self-isolation.

Respect other users

Whilst social distancing requirements have been removed by the government, all pool users should be encouraged to respect other users and their space, being mindful that some people may not be as comfortable with the lifting of restrictions as other people.

Clubs

Participants and workforce should be made aware that returning to training is not compulsory and they have the option to opt-in or opt-out. We advise that the club records and stores this decision. It remains a challenging time for many individuals with increased anxiety and different circumstances for many. We suggest that clubs should recognise this and there should be no compulsion or risk of losing membership if they cannot return straight away.

Clubs may wish to maintain some or all of the practices adopted under the previous guidance.

Clubs should appropriately risk assess their activities to manage the risks to staff, volunteers, participants and spectators.

Club members and the clubs workforce (including volunteers) should sign the declaration form, stating that they are symptom free, will only attend training if they remain symptom free and are returning to training fully aware of the risks associated with the Covid-19 virus. We recommend clubs maintain a record of those in attendance at training sessions to support ongoing Test, Track and Trace efforts.

When considering session planning, coaches should take into account the time that athletes may have spent out of the water.

Competitions: Separate best practice information is **available here** for running competitions.