



RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PROTOCOL

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with government and public health guidance on COVID-19 and the relevant National Governing Body of Sport guidance. Special Olympics Affiliated Clubs should also refer to the COVID-19 Safety Plan template when developing their Return to Activities Club Plan. These guidelines should be considered a 'live document' which will be updated to take account of any change in government or public health guidance as and when necessary.

***Please note the following amendments to this document as of 15th April 2021**

Following the publication of the Northern Ireland Executive's pathway out of restrictions on the 2nd March 2021; and recent Government Guidelines in the Republic of Ireland; references to this document have been included and highlighted in red text.

We are aware that the Sport Ireland [Return to Sport Awareness Course](#) is currently unavailable. We will provide an update on our website to let you know when the course is back online.

FOREWORD

Following the publication of the Government of Ireland's [COVID-19 Resilience and Recovery 2021 - The Path Ahead](#) published the 15th September 2020 (updated 23 February 2021), and the publication on 12 May 2020 of [Coronavirus: Our Approach to Decision Making](#) and [the Executive's pathway out of restrictions on the 2nd March 2021](#) by the Northern Ireland Executive, the island of Ireland is moving from a short-term emergency response approach to a medium-term approach in managing Covid-19.

Sport and physical activity are central to the fabric of life on the island of Ireland. There is a growing awareness and understanding that peoples' lives can be enhanced through participation, especially by improving health and wellbeing, increasing social interaction and empowering people to be the best they can be.

COVID-19 has presented a huge challenge for everyone in society to seek alternative ways of participating in sport, physical activity, exercise and outdoor activities. For many people with intellectual disabilities this has been a very difficult time as they did not have had access to their local club nor many of their day-to-day supports and services. We look forward to the opportunity to welcome our athletes, volunteers and our clubs back to club activities. Special Olympics Ireland has developed this document to assist clubs in their preparation for a 'Return to Activities'.

The return of athletes with an intellectual disability should be considered on a case by case basis depending on the nature of the activity, the environment, and if the participant has any underlying health conditions. It is important to note that not all people with an intellectual disability will have an underlying health condition that may pose an added risk to their health and wellbeing in relation to COVID-19. As sport and physical activity opportunities continue to reopen, it is important to plan for the safe return of our athletes and volunteers to our clubs.

Within this document the term Attendees refers to any individual present within the activity space (e.g. sports hall, meeting room, and outdoor field of play). This will include athletes, coaches and volunteers and may include parents / guardians / carers where their presence is required. This document should be treated as a live document and it will be updated in line with best practice and as new government advice is issued. The document sets out a Framework for a Return to Activities, based on a phased and gradual approach.

The Framework has been produced to guide decision-making in your club regarding how this gradual return might take place and to help you to return safely. It is based upon consideration of information from a wide range of sources, starting with the respective government department's guidelines. From a sports perspective, guidance from and discussion with Sport Ireland, Sport NI, the National Governing Bodies of Sport, CARA and Special Olympics International has also been considered.

It is fundamental that everyone understands that it is not possible to eliminate the risk of the spread of Coronavirus completely, and that we will work with all stakeholders to minimise risk. This concept must be fully understood and accepted, by all attending Special Olympics activities and by the attendees, particularly those who are minors.

Until a vaccine is widely available, sport in general, and clubs specifically, will need to plan modifications to training, competitions and events. Club Management Teams, athletes, volunteers and parents/guardians/carers must understand that progress through a phased return to sport will be totally dependent on how the respective governments assess it is doing in terms of managing the outbreak.

UPDATES

Version 7.0 **Issue Date: 15th April 2021**

Following the publication of the Northern Ireland Executive's pathway out of restrictions on the 2nd March 2021; and recent Government Guidelines in the Republic of Ireland; references to this document have been included and highlighted in red text.

The Return to Activities Framework is now broken down into two parts - one Framework for Northern Ireland and another for the Republic of Ireland.

Version 6.0 **Issue Date: 24th February 2021**

Following the most recent lockdowns in both jurisdictions this document has been reviewed in line with current restrictions to assist the clubs in their return to activities. 'Where we are now' section 2 has been updated to reflect our current situation. Website links have been checked and updated where necessary throughout the document.

We are aware that the Sport Ireland [Return to Sport Awareness Course](#) is currently unavailable. We will provide an update on our website to let you know when the course is back online.

Version 5.0 **Issue Date: 30th September 2020**

Following the publication of the Government's Resilience and Recovering 2020 -2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 in the Republic of Ireland; references in this Protocol have been updated with edits highlighted in red text. There has been some amendments to the Framework regarding meetings and updates to both the Self-declaration and COVID-19 Code of Conduct forms. Links throughout the document have also been updated and highlighted in red text.

Version 4.0 **Issue Date: 1ST September 2020**

Following recent Government guidelines on Sport in the Republic of Ireland and subsequent guidance in respect of parent/guardian attendance at activities; Section 7 of this Protocol has been updated.

Clubs are advised to familiarise themselves with current advice regarding sport activity which is in place until the 13th September 2020 or as advised by Government.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 FACT SHEET ON COVID-19

What is COVID 19?

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus2 (SARS-CoV-2). Most people (8/10) infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness

How does it spread?

The virus is spread from people in fluid and droplets scattered from the nose or mouth of an infected person when that person coughs, sneezes, or speaks. The droplets can land on surfaces, and people may contaminate their hands by touching these objects or surfaces; and then bring the virus into contact with their eyes, nose or mouth by touching them with their contaminated hands. However, spread is more likely to occur through close contact with someone who is already infected with the virus.

It is still not known how long the virus survives on surfaces in different conditions. The period of survival may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment). Studies indicate that it can persist on surfaces for hours and up to several days in the absence of effective cleaning. Simple household disinfectants can kill the virus. Surfaces should be cleaned first and then disinfected.

Identifying Symptoms

The following symptoms may develop in the 14 days after exposure to someone who has COVID-19:

➤ Cough	➤ Runny Nose
➤ Difficulty Breathing	➤ Flu Like Symptoms
➤ Fever/High Temperature	➤ Rash
➤ Sore Throat	➤ Loss of smell or taste

It is important to note that some people infected with the virus, so called asymptomatic cases, can demonstrate no symptoms at all, yet can infect others. People who are showing these symptoms must not show up to training, self-isolate and report to their doctor for further information on COVID-19 testing.

Health Service Executive (HSE) and Public Health Agency (PHA) in Northern Ireland Guidance

To prevent infection and to slow transmission of COVID-19, do the following:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or clean them with alcohol-based hand rub.
- Maintain a distance of at least 2 metres between you and another person.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Stay home if you feel unwell.

1.2 FACT SHEET ON 'WHO' IS AT HIGH RISK FROM COVID-19

COVID-19 is a new disease and information is changing on who is more likely to get COVID-19 and who is likely to have more complications. The lists below may not include everyone who's at higher risk from COVID -19 and may change as more is learned about the virus. Based on current available information and clinical expertise, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities may be at higher risk because of their underlying medical conditions.

Advice at present for **Republic of Ireland:**

The Health Services Executive (HSE) indicates that there are two (2) levels of high risk: (a) Very high risk and (b) High Risk

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html>

Very High Risk groups include people who:

- Are over 70 years of age - even if you're fit and well.
- Have had an organ transplant.
- Are undergoing active chemotherapy for [cancer](#).
- Are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer.
- Have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment.
- Are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer.
- Are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors.
- Have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs.
- Severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, [Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency](#), [severe asthma](#), pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and [severe COPD](#).
- Have a condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell).
- Are [taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections](#) (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies).
- Have a serious heart condition and you're pregnant.

High risk groups include people who:

- Are over 60 years of age?
- Have a learning disability.
- Have a lung condition that's not severe (such as [asthma](#), [COPD](#), emphysema or bronchitis).
- Have [heart disease \(such as heart failure\)](#).
- Have [high blood pressure \(hypertension\)](#).
- Have [diabetes](#).
- Have chronic kidney disease.
- Have liver disease (such as hepatitis).
- Have a medical condition that can affect your breathing.
- Have cancer.
- Have a [weak immune system \(immunosuppressed\)](#).
- Have cerebrovascular disease.
- Have a condition affecting your brain or nerves (such as Parkinson's disease, Motor Neurone disease, Multiple Sclerosis, or Cerebral Palsy).
- Have a problem with your spleen or have had your spleen removed.
- Have a condition that means you have a high risk of getting infections (such as HIV, lupus or scleroderma).

- Are [taking medicine that can affect your immune system \(such as low doses of steroids\)](#).
- Have [obesity](#).

Advice at present for **Northern Ireland:**

The health department indicates that there are two (2) levels of high risk: (a) high risk and (b) moderate risk:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

High Risk includes people who:

- Have had an organ transplant.
- Are having chemotherapy or antibody treatment for cancer, including immunotherapy.
- Are having an intense course of radiotherapy (radical radiotherapy) for lung cancer.
- Are having targeted cancer treatments that can affect the immune system (such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors).
- Have blood or bone marrow cancer (such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma).
- Have had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant in the past 6 months, or are still taking immunosuppressant medicine.
- Have been told by a doctor they have a severe lung condition (such as cystic fibrosis, severe asthma or severe COPD).
- Have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID or sickle cell).
- Are taking medicine that makes them much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppressant medicine).
- Have a serious heart condition and are pregnant.

Moderate risks include people who:

- Are 70 or older.
- Have a lung condition that's not severe (such as asthma, COPD, emphysema or bronchitis).
- Have heart disease (such as heart failure).
- Have diabetes.
- Have chronic kidney disease.
- Have liver disease (such as hepatitis).
- Have a condition affecting the brain or nerves (such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy).
- Have a condition that means they have a high risk of getting infections.
- Are taking medicine that can affect the immune system (such as low doses of steroids).
- Are very obese (a BMI of 40 or above).
- Are pregnant.
- If you are at a high risk, you may be putting yourself at risk when you return to activities with your club and you will also be placing your family and your teammates at risk. If you have these conditions you should not return to Special Olympics activities in person until Phase 3.

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, an individual should consult with a doctor for written medical clearance before returning to Special Olympics activities in person as serious cardiac, respiratory, and neurological issues may develop as a result of COVID-19.

2. WHERE ARE WE NOW

Special Olympics Ireland (SOI)

SOI suspended all club sports training and other person-to-person activities on March 10th last year and these activities remain suspended under current restrictions. As a resource to clubs in this interim time, Special Olympics Ireland has developed the 'Can't Stop Now' digital suite to assist clubs and coaches to keep connected with their athletes and the SO Ireland programme. The first stage of this initiative began in September 2020 following the Together at Home programme and the Summer Together at Home programme.

The 'Can't Stop Now' suite includes:

- Virtual Competitions,
- Together as Virtual Clubs,
- Health Promotion,
- Coach and Officials Development,
- Young Athletes™ Programme
- Strong Minds

Resources and further information on the can be accessed on our website here - [Can't Stop Now](#)

Staff members in the regional offices have and will continue to reach out to clubs to stay connected. The main focus now is to guide and support clubs, athletes, coaches and volunteers in connecting with the SOI Programme and preparing for a return to club activities in a safe manner offering an engaging and enjoyable experience for our athletes.

At programme level, SOI has made a decision to postpone all competition until a time that it is safe to do so. In the interim as part of the Can't Stop Now suite [virtual competitions and various club supports](#) are available.

A Return to Work Protocol is in place for staff members, most SOI staff will continue to work from home where possible.

Club Level

We hope that clubs can resume activities in person later on this year, albeit in a changed environment. Each club will be making their own decision based on their timeframe for and success in meeting the criteria as set out in this Protocol. Guidelines are provided in terms of how the club can put measures in place to re-open and how to approach sports training sessions. Special Olympics Ireland in the meantime are asking that all clubs move their activity online to keep some routine and engagement in their athletes lives.

Athlete Leadership and Health and Wellbeing activities at club level may take place subject to the implementation of the necessary control measures as specified for all activities within the protocol in the relevant phases.

3. FRAMEWORK FOR A RETURN TO ACTIVITIES

Special Olympics is adopting a five (5) phase approach to return to activities. It is important to note there may be times that we will revert to an earlier phase if and when there is a rise in the spread of the infection **or be unable to permit movement to the next phase, should government guidelines prevent SOI from doing so.**

In this document, attendees are any individual present within the activity space (e.g. sports hall, meeting room, outdoor field of play). Attendees will include athletes, coaches and volunteers and may include parents/ guardians/carers where their presence is required.

3.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The health and safety of all members of Special Olympics Ireland is paramount.
2. Special Olympics is an organisation for people with intellectual disabilities (ID), and activities extend beyond sports activities and the guidance must be inclusive and directed at the unique needs and abilities of people with ID.
3. Government guidelines should serve as minimum standards. In addition, consideration should be given to Special Olympics guidelines, and if these are more conservative/restrictive, these should be followed. **Similarly if the Government guidelines are more restrictive at times; these should take precedence.**
4. **This framework is a working document** and guidance is based on current public health advice information available at the time of publication. As knowledge of COVID-19 is changing rapidly, guidance will continue to evolve.
5. Guidance takes a phased approach, allowing clubs to decide, based on their club circumstances, prevailing conditions and government advice within their locality or region. It is expected that clubs may be at different phases at different times and therefore the phases are not dated.
6. For any athlete, coach or volunteer, a return to activity should be on an opt-in basis, with the individuals taking personal responsibility to decide whether they are happy to return.

3.2 PHASED APPROACH

The Framework allows for a gradual move from one phase to the next, whilst also facilitating a return to an earlier phase should circumstances within the club dictate or where the government is managing a strong upsurge of infection on either a local, regional or on a wider scale.

Clubs may enter the **PREPARATION PHASE** on receipt of Return to Activities Protocol. When a club has completed the necessary actions in the **PREPARATION PHASE**, outlined later in this document, and able to confirm, in writing to the Regional Office, that the measures are in place, approval to move to the **ORIENTATION PHASE** may be granted. We are recommending athletes and volunteers go through an orientation period to adjust and adapt to their new club environment. We want all attendees to have a positive experience on their return, but safety is paramount.

It may be necessary to step backwards for a period in order to reassess the risks before moving forward again. Stepping backwards would mean, as a minimum, returning to the restrictions in the previous phase. The final phase, **TOWARDS COMPETITION**, will see competition introduced in different formats with different timelines.

Additional notes on the framework (April 2021):

At the time of publishing (April 2021); it should be noted that; due to Government restrictions, SOI are not in a position to permit any clubs to move into the REACTIVATION or the TOWARDS COMPETITION PHASE.

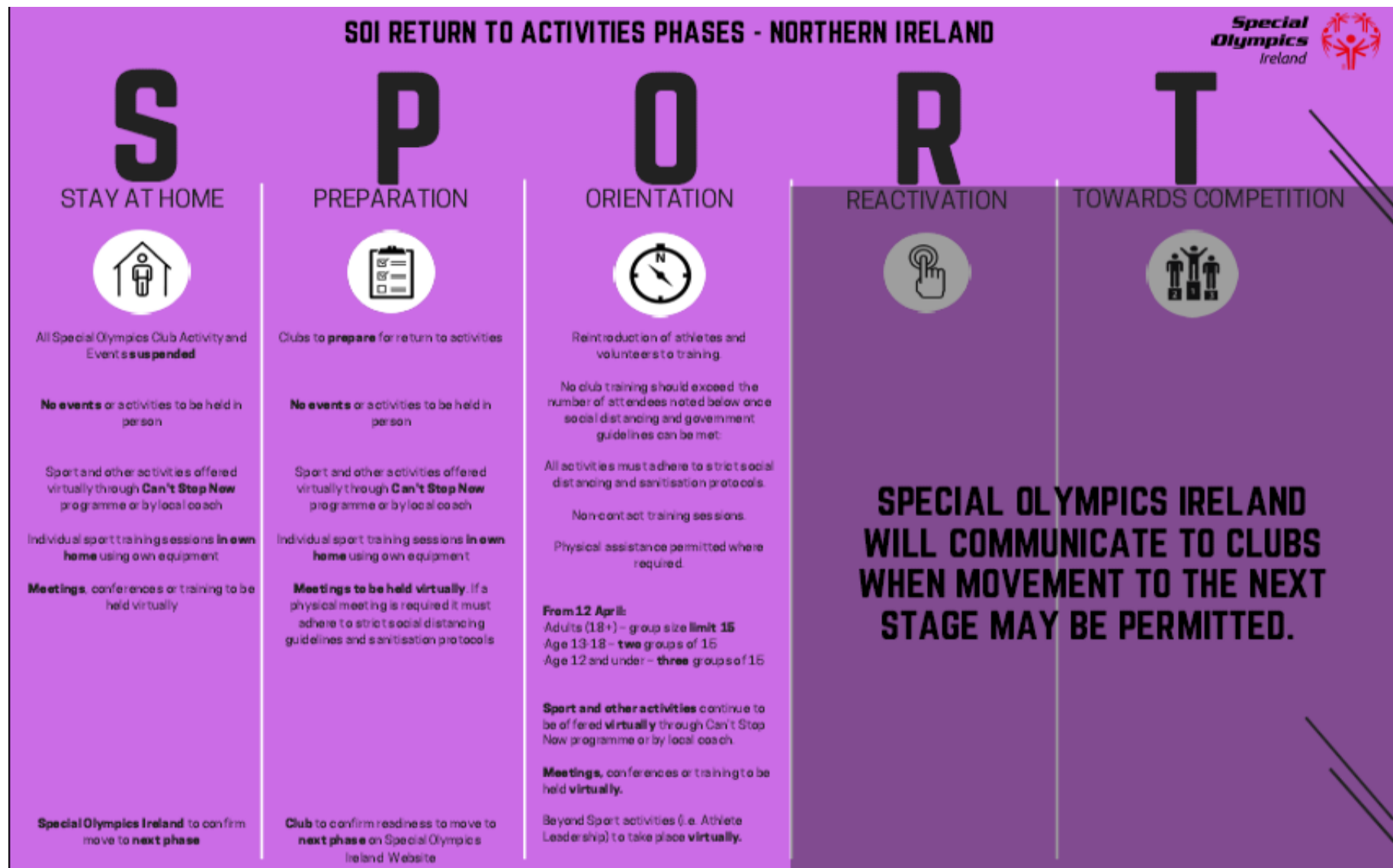
Due to differences in Government guidelines with Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; a framework for each jurisdiction has been outlined below. Please note the framework applicable to your location.

All clubs should review their protocols, safety plans and risk assessments; to ensure they still remain relevant; are in line with Government guidelines and include any changes to activities (i.e. moving sport from indoor to outdoor).

All attendees should complete:

- The Pre-Return Self Declaration Form before attending a club session.
- Athletes, Coaches and Volunteers will be expected to comply with a COVID-19 Code of Conduct. Please remind your attendees of the content within the code and ensure those who have not previously completed this Code of Conduct form to complete it.





7. PREPARING FOR A RETURN TO ACTIVITIES

7.1 GUIDELINES

Special Olympics Ireland has developed this guidance document to help outline how a safe return to activities may take place. We have reviewed and incorporated guidance and information from various government and other sources and now set out the links to these reference sources below so that clubs may easily access the relevant information when developing their club plan. Each club has received an advance communication outlining the need to establish a COVID-19 Coordinator and COVID-19 Safety Team to develop a club plan for a Return to Activities. Information and a requirement to complete training has been communicated in July 2020.

- [Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19](#)
- [Roadmap for Reopening Society and business](#)
- [Coronavirus: Our Approach to Decision Making](#)
- [The Executive's pathway out of restrictions](#)
- [Sport Ireland Guidance](#)
- [Sport Northern Ireland Guidance](#)
- [Special Olympics International](#)
- [COVID-19 Interim recommendations for the return to sports activities for children and adolescents \(HSPC\)](#)
- [Return to Work Safely Protocol](#)

Additional COVID-19 Information:

As the COVID 19 pandemic on the island of Ireland is continuously changing you can find out additional information by looking on the following links:

Republic of Ireland

Health Service Executive (HSE):

<https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

Health Prevention and Surveillance Centre:

<https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/>

Northern Ireland

Department of Health Northern Ireland:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>

Health Service Northern Ireland Public Health:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/>

When planning for a Return to Activities, clubs should review the different guidelines in conjunction with this Return to Activities Protocol document. A COVID-19 Safety Template has been developed for clubs that will assist clubs to work through the process of putting a safe plan in place. Other templates and information sheets to support the work that needs to be undertaken are available for clubs. If you would like to speak to a staff member about your Club's Return to Activities please contact your Regional Staff Team, contact details can be found here - [Speak to a Staff Member](#)

7.2 KEY POINTS

At all times,

- All Club attendees need to declare that he/she is symptom free from COVID 19 and to complete the Pre return Self Declaration form prior to return to club activities.
- No attendee (athlete, parent/guardian/carer, coach or volunteer) should attend activities if unwell or any members of their household are unwell with symptoms consistent with COVID-19. The club will need to ask parents/guardians/carers to declare that their athlete is symptom free prior to returning to club activities and coaches should observe athletes for symptoms during club activities.
- Physical distancing, hand hygiene and good respiratory etiquette should be observed by all (athletes, parents/guardians/carers, coaches (and spectators, when permitted) in accordance with the current (and updated) Government restrictions and guidelines.
- Guidance on travel and face masks/coverings should also be observed. Where physical distancing is not possible, cloth face coverings should be worn by coaches, volunteers and any other individual present. Face coverings are not recommended to be worn by children under 13 years. Face coverings may also be challenging to wear while playing sport. Unless there is a safety concern however, children older than 13 years should be allowed to wear a face covering if they wish to.
- For full and up to date government guidance re the use of face coverings/masks please see the link <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/> or <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-face-coverings>

It is everyone's responsibility to keep themselves and others safe and healthy.

7.3 FACTORS IMPACTING THE RISK OF GETTING COVID-19 (DATES CONCEPT)

DISTANCE	The risk of getting COVID-19 increases as the distance between you and others get smaller. Keep 2 meters apart where possible.
ACTIVITY	How you spend time with people and what you do with them can increase your risk.
TIME	The more time you spend in close contact with other people can increase your risk of getting COVID-19. Keep track of who you spend time with and how.
ENVIRONMENT	Being outdoors is safer than being indoors. Where possible meet with others outdoors. If this is not possible, keep windows and doors open when meeting others inside.
SPECIAL OLYMPICS	<p>Athletes with an intellectual disability should be able to return to sport once they are able to adhere to the measures in place to minimize the risks associated with COVID-19.</p> <p>Always assess your attendees' needs and ability to comply with guidelines.</p> <p>Specific considerations may include reduced numbers in comparison to mainstream guidelines or where more detail is required to manage close contact or required assistance.</p> <p>At-risk athletes and volunteers are advised not to attend activities.</p>

7.4 OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

When planning for a return to activities, consider:

i. Ability of the Club to offer all athletes the opportunity to take part in the same number of activities that they took part in before COVID-19.

Clubs need to look at each sport and activity that they offer and agree the number of athletes that they can offer the opportunity to attend training or the activity in order to be compliant with Government restrictions and guidelines.

Consideration needs to be given to:

- Training/ Activity requirements: size of training venue, number of lanes required.
- Duration of training/activity: time available to train or host the activity.
- Number of Athletes participating in the activity.
- Specific needs and requirements of the athletes.
- Number of volunteers available to support.

To support all athletes and volunteers interest in returning to club activity it is suggested to ask all attendees to complete an interest survey preference for activity/sport.

It is advised that Clubs set expectations with athletes and families for an initial period of time and reduce the number of activities that an attendee may participate in.

ii. The level of contact involved in the sport

Different activities and sports carry different degrees of risk related to the level of close contact involved. Team sports for example can largely be categorised into contact and non-contact sports, with contact sports carrying a higher risk of virus transmission:

Contact sport is an activity, particularly a team activity, in which by participating you are coming into close contact with others as part of competing or taking part in that activity – for example, physical contact sport in sport where there is close contact like football, basketball and floorball.

Non-contact sport – activities in which you can comfortably maintain 2 metres distance from others while participating – for example athletics, table tennis or golf.

iii. The risk level for each of the individual participants

- a. The ability of the participants to maintain 2 metres physical distancing rules
- b. If there are any concerns regarding an athlete's susceptibility to COVID-19 due to an underlying illness, their parent/guardian/carer should discuss this with their medical practitioner prior to a return to club activities.
- c. The age of the athlete - a very young athlete will be less understanding of physical distancing and hygiene measures and therefore return to activities may be most appropriate on an individual or small group basis, practicing skill, without physical contact between participants, and where physical distancing is more manageable.

iv. Orientating Athletes into Activities

It is important to recognise that many of our athletes may have been experienced more isolation than other individuals in society as their regular day-to-day structure, networks and supports that they rely on may have been closed, reduced or conducted through a virtual environment. Athletes will be excited at the prospect of returning to meet their friends and play their sport.



The environment and the experience for athletes will be much different from when they last took part in club training or other activities. In the absence of their regular day-to-day structured activities, Special Olympics activities may be their first encounter with others outside their home. We recommend that clubs and coaches:

- (i) Communicate the new measures, responsibilities and requirements to all attendees and
- (ii) Provide a briefing and walk-through at the start of each session to educate and reinforce the measures.

v. Grouping of athletes and volunteers.

In order to protect attendees at activities; it is advised that athletes are grouped together and assigned volunteers to support for the duration of the session.

8. KEY ACTIONS TOWARDS A SAFE RETURN TO ACTIVITIES

1. Establish a COVID-19 Safety Team

Clubs are required to establish a COVID-19 Safety Committee, led by a COVID-19 Coordinator who will oversee the planning and implementation of the club's Return to Activities plan. Where clubs offer more than one activity, whether that is different sports training sessions, Young Athletes Programme, Health Promotion or Athlete Leadership activities, it is recommended that a COVID-19 Activity Lead is appointed for each activity.

2. Conduct a Return To Activity Risk Assessment

Any return to activities will involve the undertaking of a risk assessment to determine the risk level for COVID-19 transmission related to the particular activity or sport, and what additional measures are needed to reduce this risk.

The additional measures, called Control Measures, will consist of reasonably practicable measures, to mitigate or eliminate hazards that create risk. The objective is to reduce, either immediately or within a reasonable timeframe, the level of risk completely or to a tolerable or acceptable level. The COVID-19 Safety Plan Template contains a Risk Assessment template that outlines a number of significant areas where control measures will need to be considered.

3. Develop and Implement a COVID-19 Safety Plan

A COVID-19 Safety Plan template has been developed for use by clubs. The COVID-19 Safety Plan should outline how the club will manage training and club activities in order to minimise the spread of COVID-19 and safeguard members from the risk of infection. The COVID-19 Safety Plan allows the club to:

- Demonstrate compliance with Government and Health Authority guidance
- Identify and outline specific arrangements to managing the risks of COVID-19 at their club
- Delineate key roles and responsibility with respect to managing against COVID-19

4. Develop a Suspected Case Response Plan

As part of the COVID-19 Safety Plan, the club will be required to outline how they will respond to a suspected case once an attendee presents or is identified as having possible symptoms. Further guidance and sample plan is provided with the COVID-19 Safety Plan template.

5. Source Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), Supplies and Signage

A list of PPE and supply items is supplied in the Safety Plan Template. Clubs will need to source these items. Posters and information templates will be supplied in electronic format for printing.

6. Engage and Communicate with Athletes, Parents/Guardians/Carers, Coaches and Volunteers

It is recommended that clubs engage with athletes, parents/guardians/carers, coaches and volunteers in advance of the timeframe for the club's return to activities. Some individuals may be anxious, have concerns or may not be in a position to return. Any return should be on an opt-in basis for all individuals. Clubs should afford individuals to take personal responsibility to decide whether or not they are happy to return. By engaging early, clubs will establish the numbers that are likely to return when the club is able to open. It will be critical to establish whether there will be a sufficient number of volunteers available to allow the club to provide the required supervision, as well as manage the new measures required. The club should communicate the new measures that will be in place to help minimise and manage the risks posed by COVID-19.

7. Educate all Stakeholders on COVID-19 Symptoms, Risks and Control Measures and Responsibilities

The COVID-19 Coordinator, COVID-19 Safety Team, including the COVID-19 Activity Lead(s) should complete the [Return to Sport Awareness Course](#).

Parents/Guardians/Carers, Athletes (where feasible), coaches and volunteers all need to be made aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and should also complete the [Return to Sport Awareness Course](#).

Athletes, Coaches and Volunteers will be expected to comply with a COVID-19 Code of Conduct.

Special Olympics Clubs should ensure that all attendees are educated about those that are at higher risk of complications from COVID-19 as well as all procedures and expectations for return to activities. All individuals need to understand the need to immediately self-isolate for 14 days and to phone their doctor in the event of onset of any COVID-19 signs or symptoms or to restrict their movement if they have had recent close contact with a suspect or confirmed COVID-19 case. Further information on when and how to self-isolate and restrict movement are also available on the Health Services Executive (HSE) in ROI and Department for Health in NI websites.

8. Pre-Return Declaration Form and COVID-19 Code of Conduct Form to be Completed

Athletes, coaches and volunteers returning to club activities will be required to complete the two forms included in the appendices here - [PRE-RETURN SELF DECLARATION & COVID-19 CODE OF CONDUCT FORMS](#)

If any athlete has tested positive and/or been diagnosed with COVID-19, the athlete must provide written proof of clearance from their healthcare professional prior to returning to sport, fitness or any Special Olympics activity.

9. Maintain a Contact Log for Contact Tracing Measures

A log of all athletes, volunteers or other individuals attending every activity session, with access to contact information for contact tracing purposes must be recorded to enable contact tracing should it be required. This log should be electronic and should be completed in advance where possible. There should be a system in place where this log is updated in real time for any necessary changes. This log should be readily and quickly accessible for contact tracing purposes. A contact log template can be found in the appendices here - [CLUB SESSION ATTENDANCE LOG](#)

10. Review COVID-19 Action List/Check List Before and After Each Activity

COVID-19 Activity Lead(s) will be required to carry out routine checks before and after each session. The checks should be completed and signed off by the COVID-19 Coordinator for each training session and provided or made available to the COVID-19 Coordinator for monitoring purposes. Club checklists templates can be found in the appendices here – [CLUB CHECKLISTS](#)

11. Confirming Readiness

Clubs will begin in the **Stay at Home** phase. With the Protocol and guidance, clubs can move into the **Preparatory Phase** to develop their club-specific plan. Clubs must confirm their readiness to move into the **Orientation Phase** with SOI prior to restarting activities. Similarly, a move to the next phase will require confirmation in advance of moving.

As this is an ever-evolving situation, affiliated clubs may need to revert back to an earlier phase at different times - [Confirmation-of-readiness-and-compliance](#).

9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In planning for a return to activities, **Special Olympics Ireland (SOI) responsibilities** are as follows:

- Develop the SOI Return to Activities Protocol, setting out information in relation to government guidance on COVID-19 and SOI guidance for a safe return to club activities.
- Monitor ongoing public health advice and update the Protocol where required, advising clubs on any new information, guidance, measures, restrictions or other as necessary.
- Consult and provide support to clubs on managing a safe return to club activities.
- Provide information documents, templates and reference links to help clubs to undertake risk assessment activities and to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan.
- Organise and manage Special Olympics Ireland/Regional activities as and when these resume.
- Develop Return to Work Protocol for SOI staff and Support Centre Volunteer Team.
- Confirm move from one phase to the next as per the Framework outlined on Pg. 9 of this document.

Responsibilities of the club are as follows:

- Review the Return to Activities Protocol and guidance to understand and address measures to manage and control risks associated with COVID-19.
- Stay informed and up-to-date on public health guidance on COVID-19.
- Appoint a COVID-19 Coordinator and Safety Team to oversee the planning for re-opening of club activities.
- Conduct a Risk Assessment for each venue that the club uses for its activities.
- Develop and implement a COVID-19 Safety Plan.
- Prepare a detailed response plan to deal with a suspected COVID-19 case.
- Display information on COVID-19 at activity locations.
- Engage with volunteers, parents/guardians/carers and athletes in advance of re-opening and provide information on the club's plan for a safe return.
- Induction and training provided for all attendees and update as required.
- Ensure all participants complete a Pre-Return to Activities Self-Declaration Form and COVID-19 Code of Conduct.
- Maintain records (electronic recommended) of attendance at activities to facilitate contact tracing should the need arise.
- Agree a process for check in on arrival of athletes and volunteers for compliance with COVID-19 measures at training sessions to include physical distancing guidelines.
- Conduct and complete the activity check list and monthly coordinator checklist.
- Monitor Risks and review and/or amend controls when identified as necessary.
- Confirm readiness to move from one phase to the next as per the Framework outlined on Pg. 9 of this document.

Roles within the club.

Clubs will have received previous communication regarding the specific COVID-19 Management roles required within your club.

Detailed role descriptions of each of the roles listed below can also be found in Section 3 of the Safety Plan template:

- Club Management Team
- COVID-19 Safety Team
- COVID-19 Coordinator
- COVID-19 Activity Lead(s)

10. GUIDANCE FOR EACH CLUB ATTENDEE

10.1 GUIDANCE FOR COACHES

The Special Olympics Programme offers 14 official sports, a non-competitive Motor Activities Training Programme and a Young Athletes Programme. The diversity within this range of sports brings a layer of complexity when implementing the Framework Phases. To overcome this complexity, we recommend that each club reads and understands the guidance issued by Special Olympics Ireland but also review the guidance provided by the relevant National Governing Body (NGB) of the particular sport(s) run in the club.

SOI has developed a series of flowcharts to assist coaches in making good decisions on how training sessions can be organised safely and to take account of COVID-19 guidelines for all attendees. The flowcharts are based on the governments **DATE** concept - **D**istance **A**ctivity **T**ime and **E**nvironment and SOI has added an **"S"** for Special Olympics specific content. The **DATES** concept will assist coaches to make good decisions for their athlete group and recognises that no two clubs are the same. These flowcharts should be reviewed prior to reviewing and taking account of the relevant National Governing Body (NGB) for Sport to ensure best practice is employed for Special Olympics club activities.

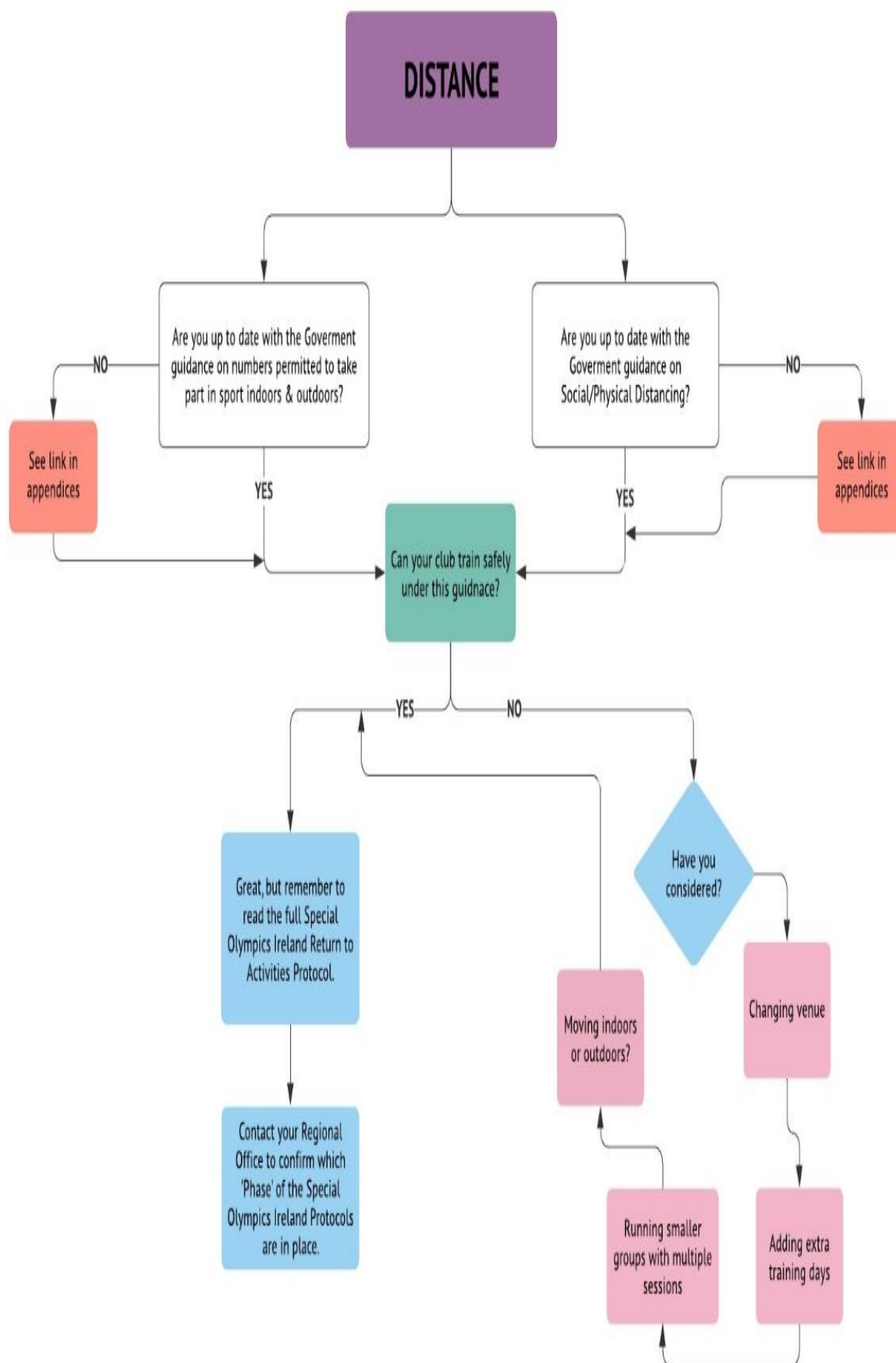
Floorball, Bocce, Motor Activities Training Programme and Young Athletes are sports/programmes for which Special Olympics Ireland is the National Governing Body. For two of these sports, SOI is signposting coaches to NGB guidance in a sport that is similar in nature, namely Hockey Ireland for Floorball and Irish Lawn Bowls for Bocce. In the case of Motor Activities and Young Athletes Programmes, clubs should refer to the recommendations outlined in the publication "[COVID-19 Interim Recommendations for the Return to Sports Activities for Children and Adolescents](#)", issued by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC).

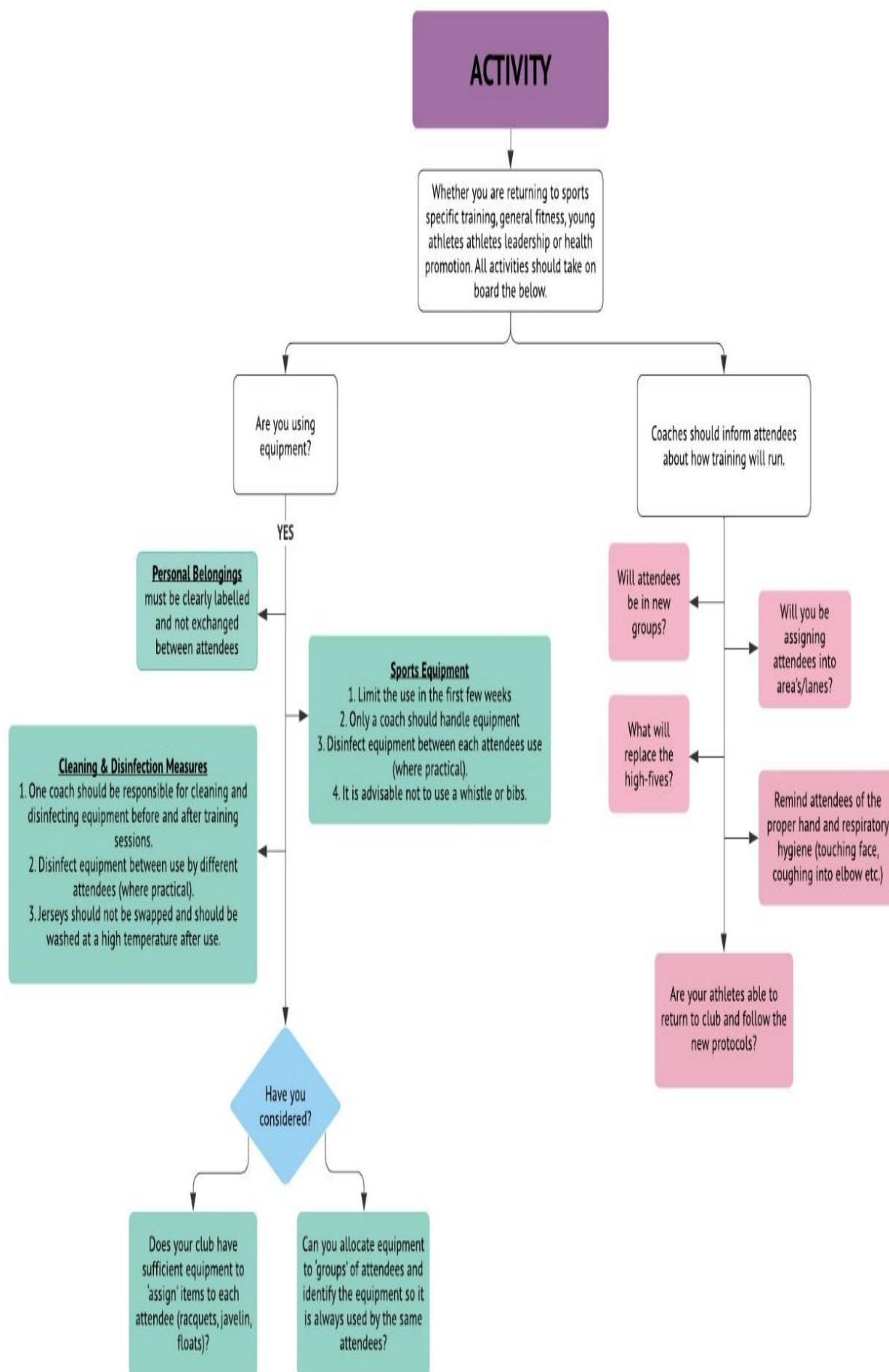
- Where a difference exists between the relevant NGB guidance and that of Special Olympics Ireland, clubs should follow Special Olympics Ireland guidance. An example of this is in the Orientation Phase in SOI's Protocol, the number of attendees is likely to be lower than that permitted by some other NGBs.
- Some Special Olympics athletes may need more assistance than others, increasing physical contact than the NGB guidelines may anticipate and it is hoped the 'S' in DATES will help identify these situations.

Coaches should be mindful that some athletes will have been relatively inactive for **up to 12** months and the level of fitness is unlikely to be at the level it may have been in March 2020. Therefore, the duration and intensity of training should not be at the same level that it was back in March. Sessions will need to be adapted to suit each athlete group and to facilitate a gradual return to fitness and skill level.

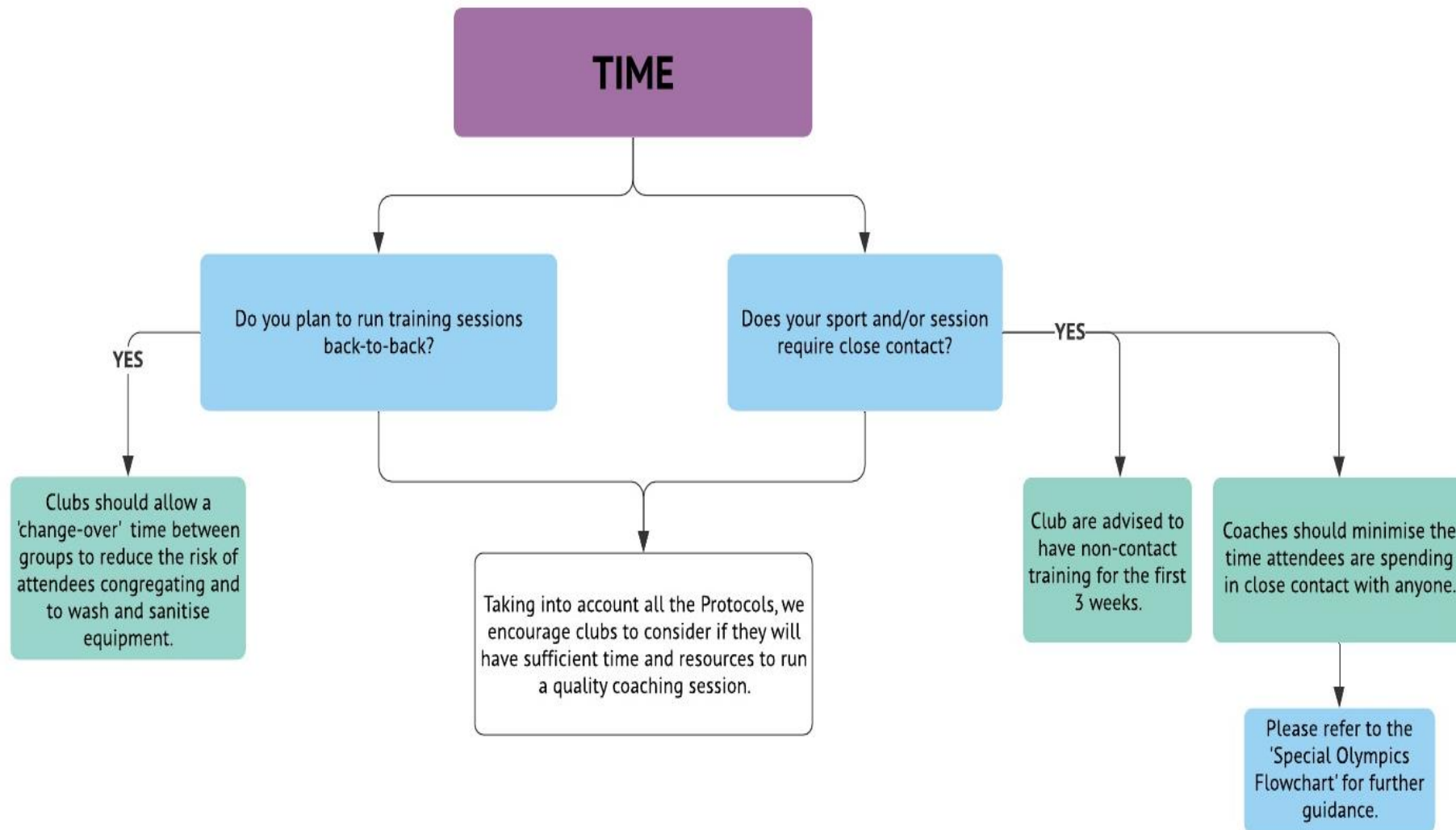
It is important to note that some athletes may choose not to return to the club for a variety of reasons, for example, they may require additional assistance, have underlying health issues or be anxious about the situation. We hope that, in time, all athletes will make a return and the club is active again and meeting the needs of all its athlete members.

The following flowcharts should assist coaches when planning their training session. The links to the relevant NGBs and other Protocols/Guidelines are contained in the appendices here - [NATIONAL GOVERNING BODY OF SPORT PROTOCOLS](#)

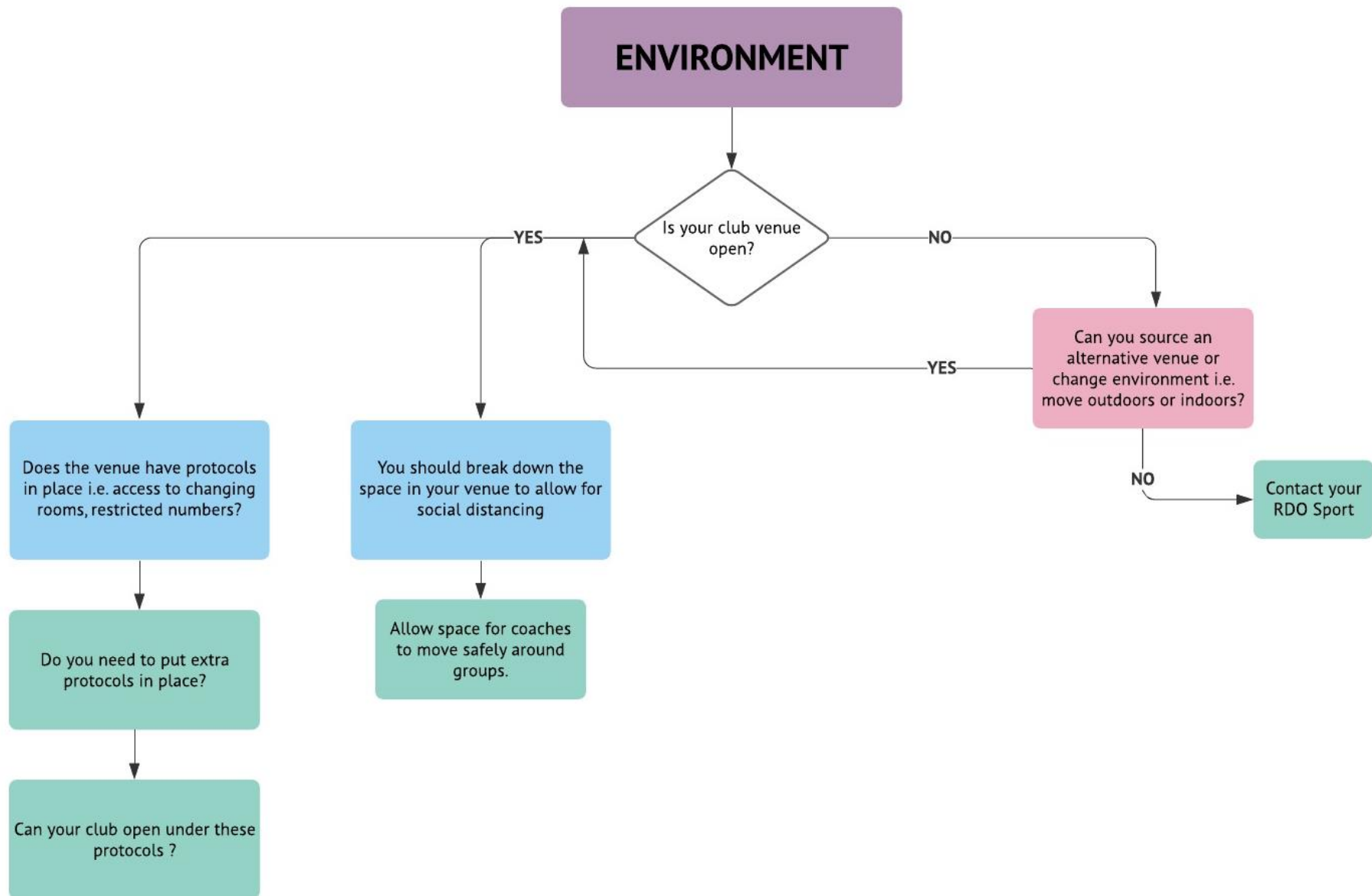




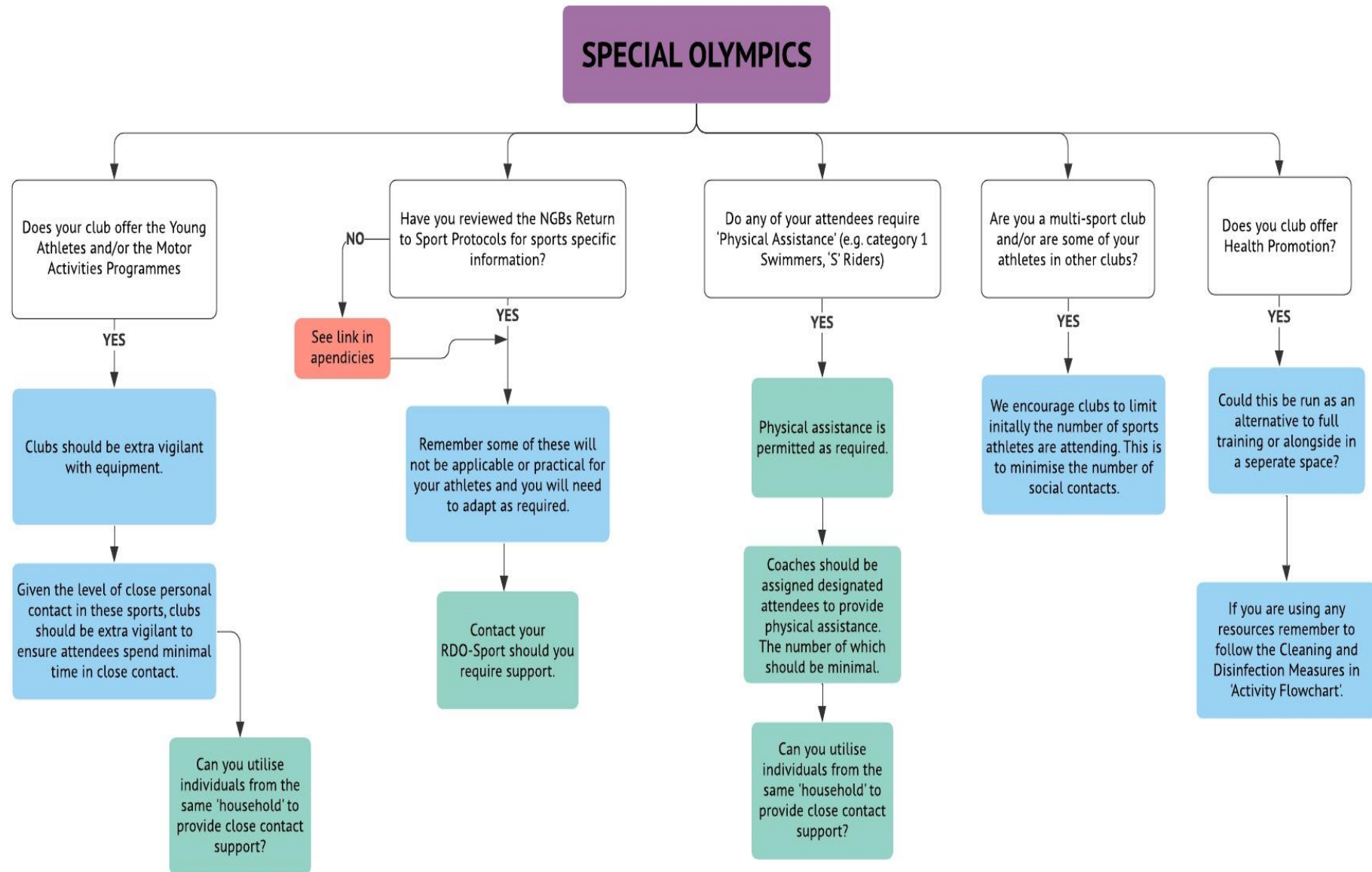
RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PROTOCOL



RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PROTOCOL



RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PROTOCOL



10.2 GUIDANCE IN RELATION TO ATHLETES

Athletes of the clubs have a responsibility to act in a safe and respectable manner while at training or club activities. Failure to do so could result in the formation of clusters at the club endangering the wider community.

All athletes should be advised to:

- Complete a Pre-Return Self Declaration and COVID-19 Code of Conduct Form and send to COVID-19 Coordinator / COVID-19 Activity Lead(s) via email a minimum of 3 days before returning.
- Make themselves aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
- Do not attend club activities if they feel unwell.
- Participate in the induction, and any training provided by the Club.
- Adhere to practice a high level of personal hygiene and physical distancing.
- Be open and honest if they have been in contact with a COVID-19 case or suspected case.
- When attending Club activities to bring own drinking bottle and any other equipment required.
- Agree to only share when instructed to and ensure prior to use it is disinfected.
- In travelling to Club activities ensure to only travel with individuals from own place of residence and if public transport is utilized to adhere to government requirements.
- Keep a contact log of direct contact with other people and ensure their next of kin is on file.
- Athletes must inform the COVID-19 Coordinator/Activity Lead or their Coach if they become unwell outside of Club activity; and if they have or are suspected of having COVID-19. Guidance on what to do is included in an appendix here – [SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19](#).

10.3 GUIDANCE IN RELATION TO VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers will play a critical role in enabling the club to return to activities. We advise the club Management Team engages with each volunteer, either via telephone or email, to establish if they are in a position to return and/or whether they have any concerns. A follow up communication should include the measures the club is putting in place to manage the safe return for all. The Health Service Executive / Public Health Agency have some posters and resources that can be used in preparation for return to club activities <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/> or <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications?keys=coronavirus>

It is important for the Club Management Team to get an understanding from each volunteer of their well-being and how they feel about returning to volunteering. Each volunteer will have been impacted by the pandemic in different ways and have different outlooks on how they as an individual move forward and this needs to be taken into consideration.

Some volunteers may be feeling anxious about returning, have questions about how the health and safety measures will be implemented. Some may not feel ready to returning to volunteer at the current time or may not want to return at all. It is essential that they may voice any concerns and not feel guilty if they make the decision to withdraw from volunteering either temporarily or permanently. Collating this information from club volunteers will help identify if there is going to be any resourcing shortfall(s), which may lead to other consideration of the return date and participant numbers that can be managed safely.



Crucial to a positive and safe return to activity is good communication and a collaborative approach between all members of the club.

SOI has developed a template communication to support the club's engagement with their volunteer; which can be found in the appendices here - [VOLUNTEER PRE-ACTIVITY ENGAGEMENT SAMPLES](#)

On return to activity in the club, volunteers must be advised to inform the Club COVID-19 Coordinator/ Activity Lead if they become unwell outside of Club activity; and if they have or are suspected of having COVID-19. Guidance on what to do is included in an appendix here - [SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19](#).

10.4 GUIDANCE IN RELATION TO PARENTS / GUARDIANS / CARERS

Parents/Guardians/Carers have an important role to play to support athletes and the club in making a safe return to activities. Each will need to know and understand the control measures in place in the club when activities resume. In particular, they will complete or support their athlete to complete the Pre-Return Self Declaration Form. Understanding and monitoring of the symptoms of COVID-19 will be a continuous responsibility in relation to their athlete and for the safety of other athletes and volunteers in the club. Athletes **MUST** stay home if they are sick or showing signs and symptoms of COVID-19. The club will need to establish if there has been any change in the athlete's general health status or relevant new medical information, since the cessation of club activities in March 2020.

Younger athletes and some adult athletes will need their parents/guardians/carers to spend time with them to educate (explain and outline) on the measures that will be in place and the clubs expectations in relation to the COVID-19 Code of Conduct.

Athletes in Special Olympics are generally more reliant on their parents/guardians/carers or other family members when it comes to getting to and from their activities. Parents/Guardians/Carers may, in the past, have relied on others to assist/share (car-pooling) the transportation of athletes to and from their home/place of residence for club activities. SOI recommends that only individuals from the same home/place of residence travel to and from training together in a car. Car-pooling is not permitted under current guidelines. Observation of physical distancing guidelines are expected during drop off and pick up of athletes and this may mean that some may remain in their vehicle until it is safe to exit.

We advise that clubs engage with parents/guardians/carers to establish if an athlete is in a position to return and to establish if they have any concerns in relation to the re-opening of the club. A follow up communication should include the measures the club is putting in place to manage the safe return for all. Parents/Guardians/Carers, like volunteers, will have been impacted by the pandemic in different ways and may have different outlooks on how they as an individual move forward. They may be feeling anxious about their athlete returning and/or have questions about how the health and safety measures will be implemented.

Parents/guardians/carers must inform the Club COVID Coordinator/Activity Lead if the athlete becomes unwell outside of Club activity and has or is suspected of having COVID-19. Guidance on what to do is included in an appendix here - [SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19](#).



Parent / Guardian / Carer attendance at SOI training sessions / activities

The recent Regulations announced by Government aim at decreasing the congregation of Groups in social settings and to assist with contact tracing where required. Public health and reducing the risk of Covid-19 transmission remains the overarching priority.

It is acknowledged that some parents/guardians/carers may wish to attend training / activities in a supervisory capacity or if there is a specific need to assist the athlete.

Each club will need to determine if they can facilitate such attendance. Clubs who choose to permit attendance should ensure that strict adherence to physical distancing and public health guidelines is maintained at all times. At a minimum, the following measures should be implemented by Clubs:

1. No more than 1 designated individual attending the session per child/family/group of children.
2. Overall numbers are kept to a minimum and in line with the space available in the venue/facility.
3. Pre-return Self Declaration and COVID-19 Code of Conduct Forms must be completed by all parents/guardians/carers as well as their athlete in advance of attendance.

Each Club must ensure that there are robust mechanisms in place to limit overall numbers, assist with contact tracing and implement compliance with physical distancing and other public health guidelines.

11. MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Infectious disease pandemics like coronavirus (COVID-19) can be worrying. Some people might find it more worrying than others. This can have an impact on our mental health. Clubs should consider ways in which it can support its members in safeguarding their mental health.

The main focus area at this time will be assisting people with the decision to access the emerging sporting opportunities in the **PREPARATORY** and **ORIENTATION PHASES** and affirming how the club will operate in a manner to create an environment for the enjoyment of sport but also prioritise self-care for all. In time as activities progress, focus will be on reconnecting those relationships that may have suffered during the lockdown.

Clubs should seek to support mental health and wellbeing by:

- Providing information about prevention and the control measures in place at the club will be delivered to all members and staff to help ease concerns about risk of infection.
- Encouraging healthy eating, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
- Ensuring details for publicly available sources of support and advice available for members.

The following are various resources to support Mental Health and Wellbeing:

Special Olympics Strong Minds Resources:

<https://www.specialolympics.org/our-work/covid19#strong-minds>

Special Olympics Strong Minds Activity Cards:

https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/health/disciplines/strongminds/Strong-Minds-YA-Activity-Cards-08-2020.pdf?_ga=2.133562889.626445031.1611848552-1276003366.1584525278

Strong Minds Tips for Keeping a Strong Mind:

https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/covid-19/Tips-for-keeping-a-strong-mind.jpg?_ga=2.166732094.1840808347.1594799444-1276003366.1584525278

Strong Minds Tips for getting a Good Night's Sleep:

https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/covid-19/Tips-for-keeping-a-strong-mind.jpg?_ga=2.106833155.1840808347.1594799444-1276003366.1584525278

Health Services Executive Resources for Supporting Someone with Special Needs:

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/supporting-someone-with-special-needs-during-covid19.html>

Mental Health Ireland Family Wellbeing Toolkit:

<https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Family-Wellbeing-Toolkit-Reduced-Size.pdf>

Mental Health Ireland Family Toolkit Planner:

<https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Family-Toolkit-Planner.pdf>

5 Steps to Wellbeing Booklet:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2020-02/Take%205%20Leaflet%2001%2020.pdf>

Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing Poster:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2020-02/Take%205%20Poster%2001%2020.pdf>

Beyond Words Social Stories:

<https://booksbeyondwords.co.uk/coping-with-coronavirus>

Inclusion Ireland Resources for Parents:

<http://www.inclusionireland.ie/>

Mencap:

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/>

12.APPENDICES

12.1 NATIONAL GOVERNING BODY OF SPORT PROTOCOLS






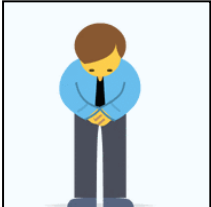

National Governing Body of Sport	Website – Return to Sport Protocol
Alpine Skiing	www.snowsports.ie
Athletics	www.athleticsireland.ie www.athleticsni.org
Badminton	www.badmintonireland.com
Basketball	www.basketballireland.ie
Bocce	www.irishbowlsfederation.co.uk
Equestrian	www.horsesportireland.ie
Floorball	www.hockey.ie
Football	www.fai.ie www.irishfa.com
Golf	www.golfnet.ie
Gymnastics	www.gymnasticsireland.com www.british-gymnastics.org/northern-ireland
Kayaking	https://canoe.ie/ www.cani.org.uk
Motor Activities	www.hpssc.ie
Pitch and Putt	www.ppui.ie
Swimming	www.swimireland.ie
Table Tennis	www.irishtabletennis.com
Ten Pin Bowling	www.tenpinbowling.ie https://nitbf.org.uk
Young Athletes Programme	www.hpssc.ie

Additional information provided by Sport Ireland and others for clubs can be found on the Special Olympics Ireland website Return to Activities Latest News by clicking [here](#); including:

- Northern Ireland updated Covid-19 restrictions in place until 5th March 2021
- Sport Ireland Guidance for sports regarding new Covid-19 restrictions 30th December 2020
- Information for Clubs on Level 3 Restrictions December 2020



12.2 INFORMATION SHEET FOR ATHLETES & VOLUNTEERS

	<p>Remember to wash your hands before going to training and use sanitiser when you get to your club.</p>
	<p>Bring your own water bottle with your name clearly marked on it and come dressed ready for training.</p>
	<p>You should only travel to you activity with members from your own home/place of residence. If using Public Transport a face mask must be worn as per COVID-19 Government guidelines.</p>
	<p>Follow instructions from your coaches and volunteers about keeping your distance.</p>
	<p>Cough or sneeze into your bent elbow or tissue. If using tissues throw it in the rubbish bin and wash your hands.</p>
	<p>Use a bow to say hello or foot bump to say well done. NO shaking hands, high fives or hugs.</p>
	<p>After training go straight to your car and wash your hands when you get home.</p>

12.3 VOLUNTEER RETURN TO CLUB INFORMATION

COVID-19 Guidance for Volunteers

Be Responsible. Be Safe

Be Responsible: Familiarise yourself with these guidelines before you return to volunteer at the club.

Be Safe: Cooperate with the measures the club are implementing to keep athletes and volunteers safe.

Returning to Volunteering:

Our club has been putting protocols in place to get athletes safely back to some club activity. We are contacting you to check how you feel about returning to volunteering. If you don't feel you are ready to return to volunteering just yet, it's ok to say no. Please look after your health. The club may be restricted in numbers returning and have a phased approach to returning to club activities. Please understand that any decisions made by the club is to ensure that measures for everyone's safety can be implemented. You may wish to return to volunteering but the club may not be able to accommodate you immediately.

Key Guidelines

- Before you return to volunteering at your club
 - Volunteering at your club
 - Using equipment at your club
- Leaving the club at the end of the activity

Before you return to Volunteering at Your Club:

- ✓ Complete Sports Ireland's [Return to Sport Awareness Course](#)
- ✓ Prior to returning to volunteer at the club, you will need to complete a Pre-Return Self Declaration Form. This form will be issued by your club and will also be available to download from <https://www.specialolympics.ie/return-to-activity-resources-for-volunteers>
- ✓ The Pre-Return Self Declaration Form reminds you that you must stay at home if you:
 - Have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 within 14 days prior to return
 - Have been overseas less than 14 days prior to return
 - Have symptoms such as cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness or flu like symptoms within the last 14 days of returning
 - Have been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days prior to returning
- ✓ You are advised to check with your General Practitioner (GP) prior to returning to volunteering if you are in a High Risk health category

We would encourage you to review the guidelines in terms of risk categories.

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>



Volunteering at your club

- ✓ Wash your hands before you leave your house and travel to the club, either alone, or if you need to, with members of your own household.
- ✓ Bring your own water, tissues and hand sanitizer.
- ✓ Arrive ready to go as access to facilities may be limited.
- ✓ Arrive as close as possible to when you are due at the club.
- ✓ Follow your clubs guidelines for check-in.
- ✓ Observe physical distancing guidelines (currently 2 meters) and keep this distance between yourself and others.
- ✓ Encourage athletes to use alternative greetings, e.g., thumbs up or hands crossed over chest.
- ✓ Do not share food, towels or drinks.
- ✓ Try not to touch any surfaces, but if you do, sanitize your hands as soon as possible.
- ✓ Cover your coughs and sneezes and dispose of any used tissue in your own bag and bring it home with you. Sanitize or wash your hands.
- ✓ Remain apart from athletes and other volunteers when you are having a break.
- ✓ Reinforce physical distancing with athletes and congratulate when you see them applying the guidelines.
- ✓ Only travel to the activity with members of your own household.
- ✓ If using Public Transport, a face mask must be worn as per COVID-19 Government guidelines.
- ✓ Avoid touching your face.
- ✓ If you become unwell during an activity, you must communicate this to the COVID-19 Activity Lead at the session, who will then put in place their Response Plan for a Suspected Case of COVID-19.
- ✓ If you become unwell outside of Club activities or if you have / are suspected of having COVID-19 you must inform the Club COVID-19 Coordinator.

Using equipment at your club

- ✓ Guidance will be provided by the coach as to when and how equipment may be shared.
- ✓ When sharing of equipment is permitted, it will require sanitizing between users.
- ✓ Watch out for athlete's use of equipment and ensure proper sanitization after use.

Leaving the club at the end of the activity

- ✓ Don't hang around, leave the club promptly.
- ✓ Hands should be washed and sanitized as soon as possible.
- ✓ Travel home alone or with people from your household only.
- ✓ If you become unwell after a club activity session, contact your General Practitioner (GP) and read the Health Service Executive (HSE) / Public Health Agency (PHA) guidelines and inform your club.

12.4 VOLUNTEER PRE-ACTIVITY ENGAGEMENT SAMPLES

Sample Email to Volunteers in the Club

Hi xxx,

With government restrictions being lifted, we are in the process of reviewing how and when the club can return to activity. The Club Management Team has established a Club COVID-19 Safety Team who are working through the requirements to ensure that the club can implement the necessary health and safety measures to minimise the risk of the spread of the virus and to ensure that the health and wellbeing of our athletes and volunteers are to the fore in our planning. We are keen to put the necessary measures in place that will allow our athletes to have a positive and beneficial experience when they do return.

As a volunteer with the club, we are reaching out to you to establish how you feel about returning to volunteer at the club and whether you have any concerns about returning to club activities. We recognise that these past months have been very challenging for everyone and the pandemic has impacted us all in different ways. We would appreciate it if you could reply with answers to the following questions

- How do you feel about returning as a volunteer?

(Looking forward to it, Have some reservations, don't feel comfortable to return at the current time)

- What are your main concerns about returning?

If you would prefer to talk to us in regard to the above questions, then please call ***name of contact*** on ***contact number***.

Once we have completed the necessary assessments and have further guidance we will be in touch with regard to the next steps to our return.

Kind Regards,

Club Management Team

12.5 PARENT / GUARDIAN / CARER INFORMATION

All parents/guardians/carers / athletes to be reminded that they **MUST** stay at their home / place of residence, if they are sick or showing signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Guidance on what to do is included in an appendix here – [SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19.](#)

Common signs and symptoms of coronavirus include:

- A fever (high temperature of 37.5° C or above).
- A cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just a dry cough.
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties.
- Loss of sense of smell or taste.

In such circumstances, the individual should telephone their GP for advice.

Pre- Training

All Parents/Guardians/Carers are required to:

- Ensure that they and are fully aware of the guidelines on the Return to Activities Protocol.
- Complete the Sport Ireland [Return to Sport Awareness Course](#).
- Complete the pre-return self-declaration form in advance of the first club session and return it to the COVID-19 Coordinator via email 3 days before your return.
- Continue to monitor their athlete's temperature before each training session.
- Inform the COVID-19 Coordinator or Activity Lead of any change in their athlete's health.
- Travel to training with members from their own house/place of residence.
- Ensure that the athlete has washed their hands before travelling to training.
- Ensure that the athlete attends club dressed for training, with a water bottle and all personal items labelled.
- Encourage their athlete to use the bathroom prior to leaving home to minimise the use of bathrooms within the training venue.
- Please bring hand sanitiser / wipes for your athlete if deemed appropriate.
- Parents / Guardians / Carers should adhere to the physical distancing guidelines when dropping their athlete at club facility. Drivers must drop off their athlete and leave or wait in their cars. Parents / Guardians / Carers will only be permitted to remain on site at the session if there is a defined need to support their athlete i.e. bathroom use.

During training

Parent/Guardian/Carer should inform their athlete that they:

- Must use their own water bottle at all times.
- Cough or sneeze into their bent elbow or tissue. If using tissues throw it in the rubbish bin and wash their hands.
- Must refrain from shaking hands, high fives or hugs. Use bowing and foot bump instead.
- Follow instructions from their coaches & volunteers about keeping their distance.

Post Training

- Athletes must leave immediately after training with members from their home / place of residence.
- Parent/Guardian/Carer should collect their athlete on time from the collection area as advised by the club & avoid any physical contact with others.
- Athletes must wash their hands & shower at their home / place of residence.
- Parent/Guardian/Carer should ensure that all personal gear and equipment is taken away with them and appropriately cleaned prior to the next club session.
- Parents/guardians/carers must inform the Club COVID-19 Coordinator/Activity Lead if the athlete becomes unwell outside of Club activity and has or is suspected of having COVID-19.



12.6 SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19

What to do if you suspect you may have or you have been confirmed as having COVID-19?

If you are feeling unwell and suspect that you may have COVID-19, you should contact your own doctor, who will advise you in relation to whether you require COVID-19 testing or not.

If advised to go for testing, you will be asked to:

Self-isolate until the test result is known.

If you need to go for testing:

You must alert your Club COVID-19 Coordinator/Activity Lead. This is very important as the club will need to cease activity for those who may have been in close contact¹ with you at the club.

If you have tested positive:

You will be asked by public health to provide details of your close contacts. Keep a note of the contact details for your Club COVID-19 Coordinator/Activity Lead who will be able to provide a close contact list on behalf of the club.

You will be advised by your doctor/public health on what the next steps are and when it may be safe for you to resume activities again.

You may only safely return to club activity 14 days after symptoms start or you have a positive test, and are at least 5 days free from fever, or 14 days from being a close contact of a confirmed positive case. Public Health or your doctor will advise you in this matter.

If you test negative:

You may return immediately following a negative test once you have confirmed to the Club COVID-19 Coordinator/Activity Lead the outcome of your test and your intended return date.

Prior to Returning to Club:

If you have had to self-isolate or tested positive for COVID-19, you must complete the Pre Return Self Declaration Form - this may involve getting your doctor's approval to return.

You will need to inform your Club COVID-19 Coordinator/Activity Lead of your intended date of return to club activity.

¹ Definition of a Close Contact

A close contact is anyone who has spent more than 15 minutes, face-to-face, within two meters of a person with coronavirus in any setting. For example, anyone living in the same household, or someone who has shared a closed space with a confirmed case for more than two hours.

See <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/factsheetsandresources/> (ROI) or www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public (NI) if you would like further information.

12.7 PRE-RETURN SELF DECLARATION & COVID-19 CODE OF CONDUCT FORMS

PRE-RETURN SELF DECLARATION FORM

If you answer YES to any of the below questions you should NOT attend your club and before you return you should follow appropriate medical advice and guidelines.						
Questions					Yes	No
1	Have you been in close contact with anyone who is confirmed to have had COVID-19 virus in the last 14 days?					
2	Have you been in close contact with anyone who is suspected of having COVID-19 virus in the last 14 days?					
3	Do you live in the same household with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19 who has been in isolation in the last 14 days?					
4	Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time?					
5	Are you suffering now, or have you suffered any of the following symptoms in the past 14 days?					
		Yes	No		Yes	No
	Cough			Runny Nose		
	Breathing Difficulties			Flu Like Symptoms		
	Fever / High temperature			Rash		
	Sore Throat			Loss of Smell / Taste		
6	Have you been advised by a doctor to cocoon?					
7	Have you returned to Ireland / Northern Ireland within the last 14 days from a country listed by Government, which requires individuals to self-isolate or restrict their movements on their return?					
8	If "YES", WHERE? <i>Insert name of country</i> _____					
9	Have you received a COVID 19 vaccination?				Yes	No

If you answer yes to any of the questions 1-6 in the above section of this Pre-return Self Declaration form, you must receive a medical examination & clearance from your GP to participate in Special Olympics Ireland activities

For Athletes whose Athlete Participation Form (APF) has expired or is due to expire between March 2020 – 30th June 2021 only OR if an athlete was diagnosed with COVID-19

Tick YES or No to the following questions		Yes	No
1	Have you a health condition that requires annual or more frequent assessment and monitoring by a specialist or your GP e.g. Diabetes, severe asthma, any cardiac condition, any condition in which a constant review of medication is necessary?		
2	Have you had the COVID-19 virus and been hospitalised?		

3	Have you experienced at rest /during exercise: difficulty breathing, chest pain, shortness of breath, loss of consciousness, light-headedness, visual changes, headache, cough, skipped heartbeats?			
<p>If you answered Yes to any of these 3 questions (immediately above) you must complete an Athlete Participation form (APF) & complete Pre return Self Declaration Form.</p> <p>All new athletes must complete an Athlete Participation Form</p>				
	Name:			
	BLOCK CAPITALS			
	Signature:			
	Date:			

COVID-19 CODE OF CONDUCT FORM

I understand I could get COVID-19 through sports, training, competition and/or any meeting or activity at my Special Olympics Club. I am choosing to participate in sports, competition and/or other Special Olympics activities at my own risk.

During the time these precautions are needed, I agree to the following to help keep me and my fellow athletes, coaches and volunteers safe:

If I feel unwell I will not attend Club activities.
If I have COVID-19 symptoms, I will stay at home / in my place of residence and NOT go to any Special Olympics activities until it has been 14 days since I first developed symptoms and I have no fever (high temperature) for 5 days. If I am exposed to COVID-19 and have no symptoms, I can return 14 days after exposure.
I know that if I have a high-risk condition, I have a greater risk of needing to go to hospital or getting very sick. I should not go to Special Olympics Club or activities in person, if I have a high-risk condition until there is little or no Coronavirus in my community.
The club has given me guidance and information on the preventative and control measure in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
I know that before or when I get to a Special Olympics activity, they will ask me some questions about symptoms and exposure to COVID-19. They may also take my temperature. I will answer truthfully and participate fully.
I will keep at least 2m (or the distance identified by Government guidelines) from all participants at all times unless required to do so by the nature of my sport.
I will wear a face covering if my sport indicates that I do or if a 2m distance (or the distance identified by Government guidelines) cannot be maintained whilst at my Special Olympics Club activities. If I am not comfortable to wear a face covering and for the protection of other athletes, volunteers or coaches I may be asked to not take part in the activity/activities.
I will use my elbow if I need to cough or sneeze, wash my hands for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer when I sneeze, cough, go to the bathroom, before any activity or get my hands dirty.
I will not shake the hands, give high fives or hugs or offer other forms of physical greeting.
I will bring to club and Special Olympics activities my own drinking bottle and any other equipment that I need to do my training like a towel and I will not share drinking bottles or towels with other athletes, volunteers or coaches. I will place my name on my own personal belonging.
I will only share equipment when instructed to. If equipment must be shared, I will only touch the equipment if it is disinfected first.
If I travel to and from club activities by: ➤ Car: I will only travel with individuals from my own place of residence/home. There should be no car-pooling. ➤ Public Transport: COVID-19 Government guidelines for using public transport should be adhered to.
If I get or have had COVID-19, I will not go to any in-person Special Olympics activities until it has been 14 days since I first developed symptoms and I have no fever (high temperature) for 5 days 7 days after my symptoms end. It is recommended that you contact your doctor to before your return to club activities to ensure that they see no reason to prevent you from returning to club activities.

I understand that if I do not follow all of these rules, I may not be allowed to participate in activities at my Special Olympics club during this time.

I have read all of this agreement or have had it read and explained to me and I agree to follow these actions.

ATTENDEE NAME: _____

CIRCLE ONE: **ATHLETE** **COACH** **VOLUNTEER**

By signing this, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the information in this form.

ATTENDEE SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** __/__/____

(Required for adult (age 18+) attendees, including adult athletes with a capacity to sign documents).

I am a parent / guardian / carer of the athlete named above. I have read and understand this form and have explained the contents to the athlete as appropriate. By signing, I agree to this form on my own behalf and on behalf of the athlete.

PRINTED NAME: _____ **RELATIONSHIP:** _____
PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARER

SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** __/__/____
(Required for athlete who is a minor (younger than age 18 years)?

Additional COVID-19 Information

As the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland is continuously changing you can find out additional information by looking on the following links look at the following:

Republic of Ireland

- Health Service Executive (HSE):
<https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>
- Health Prevention and Surveillance Centre Ireland:
<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/>

Northern Ireland

- Department of Health Northern Ireland:
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Health Service Northern Ireland Public Health:
<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/>

12.8 CLUB CHECKLISTS

TRAINING SESSION / ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

		Session 1		Session 2		Session 3		Session 4	
TRAINING SESSION									
NAME: COVID-19 ACTIVITY LEAD / COORDINATOR									
DATE									
TIME									
HYGIENE		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
1	Hand Sanitisers are available at key areas								
2	Soap is available at all hand washing facilities								
3	Waste Bins in place								
4	High Touch Facilities disinfected before and after training								
5	Disinfectant available for all attendees to clean down surfaces as required.								
Documentation		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
6	Have any Visitor - Pre-Return Self Declaration Forms been returned?								
7	Have all forms been checked and confirmed prior to arrival?								
8	Has the club received any new Pre-Return To Activity forms?								
Communication		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
9	Is signage in place, visible, and up-to-date?								
10	Have attendees received induction training?								
11	Reminders and updates carried out at the start of each session?								

RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PROTOCOL

Check-in		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
12	Queuing system in place and being observed								
13	Hand sanitiser available for Attendees as required.								
14	Signage in place at check-in								
Attendees		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
15	Attendees briefed on training activities								
Training Activities		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
16	Training Activities in line with Government Guidelines								
Equipment Use		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
17	Equipment sanitised before training session								
18	Equipment sanitised after training session								
Sanitisation		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
19	Has the rubbish been disposed of appropriately?								
20	Have all surfaces & touchpoints cleaned thoroughly?								
21	Have all toilets and sinks been disinfected?								
22	Hand washing facilities include soap hot water, disposable towels in place								
Deliveries		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
23	Were there any schedule deliveries?								
24	Were they wearing appropriate PPE?								
25	Was physically distancing practiced on arrival?								
Other: Site Specific Items		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
26	<i>TBC by Club</i>								
27	<i>TBC by Club</i>								
28	<i>TBC by Club</i>								
29	<i>TBC by Club</i>								



RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PROTOCOL

NOTES / ITEMS REFERRED TO COVID-19 COORDINATOR

RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PROTOCOL

MONTHLY CHECKLIST								
CLUB NAME:		COVID-19 COORDINATOR						
MONTH	DATE	Have hygiene supplies been checked and in sufficient supply? (Y/N)	Are appropriate levels of PPE available? (Y/N)	Is a high level of cleaning and disinfecting been performed regularly? (Y/N)	Have any additional extra precautions or requirements been requested? (Y/N)	COVID-19 safety plan reviewed and up to date? (Y/N)	Have briefings been carried out regularly? (Y/N)	Inspected by:
	__ / __ / 20__							
	__ / __ / 20__							
	__ / __ / 20__							
	__ / __ / 20__							
	__ / __ / 20__							
	__ / __ / 20__							

NOTES / ITEMS REFERRED TO SAFETY TEAM

Legal Basis for holding logs of names for contact tracing

The contact information that the club holds for its athletes, their parents/guardians/carers and volunteers is personal data and must be handled in accordance with GDPR to protect their privacy.

Who might you need to share this personal data with and why?

You may need to share this personal data with regulatory bodies such as the Health Service Executive (HSE) (Republic of Ireland) or the Public Health Agency (PHA) (Northern Ireland) where you are obliged to make data available as required for the purposes of contact tracing. They will seek these records only where it is necessary, either because someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 has listed your premises or activity session as a place they attended recently, or because your premises have been identified as the location of a potential local outbreak of COVID-19.

These regulatory authorities will work with you, if contacted, to ensure that information is shared in a safe and secure way. You should share the requested information as soon as possible to help identify people who may have been in contact with the virus and help minimise the onward spread of the virus.

In relation to the legal basis for holding names for contact tracing purposes, the following legal underpinnings support this action during a national pandemic – the Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981 as amended (Republic of Ireland) and Public Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967.

In the context of:

- The Public Health Emergency of International Concern relating to COVID-19 illness;
- The serious risk of COVID-19 transmission in congregate settings due to the high transmissibility of SARS CoV2 (the virus that causes COVID-19);
- The serious health, healthcare and broader impacts of uncontrolled COVID-19 in a population;
- The unprecedented efforts that were required to control COVID-19 in Wave 1 of COVID-19 in the first half of 2020, especially in relation to congregate settings;
- The ethical and public health imperative to prevent all avoidable cases of Covid-19, and so protect individual people;
- The ethical and public health imperative to break all chains of transmission particularly in view of the exponential potential, to protect our communities and the people on the island of Ireland.

It is required that:

- Contact details of those in a congregate setting are recorded, and made available in a timely manner on request of the responsible authority for the investigation and control, including contact tracing of people exposed to SARS CoV2/ COVID-19.
- All recorded data should be kept secure as per Article 5 of the GDPR, not used for any other purposes, and destroyed when no longer required under this direction.

CLUB LOG OF SESSION ATTENDANCE

All attendees names attending session must be included for health and safety purposes or if required for COVID-19 tracing.

Sport or Activity		Location of Session (insert address)	
Date		Start time and End time of the session	
Name of COVID-19 Coordinator / Activity Lead for the session			

Place an X in either the Yes or No box to indicate if there is a change in the health of the individual since completing their Pre Return Self Declaration Form

[illegible]

Informal education may include:

- Don't Share water bottles
- Wash hands before and after training
- No physical greetings or celebrations i.e. do not shake hands, hug, fist bump or high five
- Adhere to physical distancing measures
- Don't spit or clear nasal passages during training / activities
- If you feel unwell, notify your coach immediately

12.10 SAFETY PLAN TEMPLATE

An editable version of the safety plan template for use by Clubs is available to download from the Special Olympics Ireland website – <https://www.specialolympics.ie/return-to-activity-protocols-and-safety-plan>

HOW TO USE THE SAFETY TEMPLATE

This document is intended as a Template Document to assist Clubs in preparing a COVID-19 Safety Plan. The COVID-19 Safety Plan outlines how clubs will manage training and club activities in order to minimise the spread of COVID-19 and safeguard members from the risk of infection. The COVID-19 Safety Plan allows the Club to:

- Demonstrate compliance with Government and Health Authority guidance.
- Identify and outline specifics arrangements to managing the risks of COVID-19 at their club.
- Delineate key roles and responsibility with respect to managing against COVID-19.

Clubs should complete each section in as much detail as possible:

- **Green text boxes** are provided in each section with details of the requirement and actions for completing that section. See example below.

<u>Requirement</u>	<i>Please include details on....</i>
<u>Action</u>	<i>Sample headings have been provided in red font for clubs to aid in the completion of this section. Additional headings may be inserted as required. Any control measures must be edited as applicable to your Club.</i>
	<i>Delete this box when the section has been filled in.</i>

- Sample text to aid in the preparation and completion of the COVID-19 Safety Plan has been provided in *red font*. Your club should review and edit the text in red font as applicable to your club situation.
- All other text in black font is universal /agreed standard text which should be included in your plan.
- If a section is not applicable to you, please delete content and input 'Not Applicable'.

This document should be treated as a live document and updated in line with best practice and as new Government advice is released. The document contains links to relevant government advice. It is the responsibility of each club to ensure they are up to date with all government guidance. The clubs Safety Team must review this plan regularly.

12.11 KEY CONTACTS

If you need assistance or have any queries on the Return to Activities Protocol please contact your local regional office at the details below:

<p>Special Olympics Connaught Region</p> <p>Regional Director: Myra Merrick</p> <p>Telephone: +353 71 9118320</p> <p>Email: myra.merrick@specialolympics.ie</p> <p>Email: connaught@specialolympics.ie</p>	<p>Special Olympics Eastern Region</p> <p>Regional Director: Oisín Jordan</p> <p>Telephone: +353 1 8912000</p> <p>Email: oisin.jordan@specialolympics.ie</p> <p>Email: eastern.region@specialolympics.ie</p>
<p>Special Olympics Leinster Region</p> <p>Regional Director: Annette Codd</p> <p>Telephone: +353 1 629 6999</p> <p>Email: Annette.codd@specialolympics.ie</p> <p>Email: leinster@specialolympics.ie</p>	<p>Special Olympics Munster Region</p> <p>Regional Director: Eoin O'Beara</p> <p>Telephone: +353 21 4977192</p> <p>Email: eoin.obeara@specialolympics.ie</p> <p>Email: munster@specialolympics.ie</p>
<p>Special Olympics Ulster Region</p> <p>Regional Director: Shaun Cassidy</p> <p>Telephone: (+44) 028 9023 9023</p> <p>Email: shaun.cassidy@specialolympics.ie</p> <p>Email: so.ulster@specialolympics.ie</p>	