

GUIDANCE FOR ATHLETICS & RUNNING COACHES & LEADERS

Step 3: updated 4 August 2020

This guidance might be updated in due course

Introduction

This guidance document has been developed in adherence with government guidelines as outlined by the government on 9th July 2020 and can be put in place immediately unless otherwise stated. All England Athletics guidance will be updated as per government guidelines when they are made available or as soon as possible thereafter.

These guidelines apply to **England only** and are based on those detailing the use of public spaces, outdoor activity, and exercise. **[More details are available here](#)**. **We recommend that you stay up-to-date with government guidance at all times. Government guidance supersedes all advice given by the governing body and must be followed at all times.** The safety and wellbeing of all athletes, runners, coaches, and the wider community is at the heart of any guidance that England Athletics is distributing.

The guidance that follows provides sport specific advice to help coaches and leaders. **It is important to say that any return to activity must take account of local conditions and any risk assessment for normal activities should be undertaken as well as ensuring that all government guidance around COVID-19 is considered.** It is the responsibility of each athlete, coach, and facility to make that assessment based on their local environment. Risk assessment must consider mitigations and plans for when activities do not go as expected. Planning scenarios around, for example, an injury occurring to an athlete and the need to support that athlete while social distancing should be undertaken.

Your health

It is of paramount importance that coaches monitor themselves for any signs of the virus, as well as general health. All coaches should follow the advice of their GP or medical practitioner in all cases.

This guidance has been published on the understanding that it is an interpretation of government guidance relevant to the sport of athletics and running. It is likely to change at short notice, in which case we will publish updates through the [England Athletics website](#) and social media channels.

All parties should note the [disclaimer](#) at the end of this piece.

Please also read our other guidance documents:

1. [Guidance for Athletes and Runners – return to activity](#)
2. [Guidance for Athletics Venues – return to activity](#)

Section 1: Before and after coaching

Stay up-to-date

- Check all guidance that has been published, especially concerning social distancing and hygiene and any athletic specific guidance.
- Be aware guidance can change quickly and more restrictive rules may be applied in the future, so please refer to the England Athletics website regularly.
- Coaches, leaders and athletes running or training in a public space, other than a track and field facility, can take place in unlimited numbers as long as the activity is taking place within the [COVID secure environment](#) setting (which can be a track, indoor hall (25th July) open space such as a park or road). If a COVID secure environment is not in place the following will apply; **activity can take place on a one-to-five basis only (i.e. one coach or leader and up to five athletes or runners OR up to six athletes or runners with no coach or leader present). These individuals do not need to be from the same family household, but all must adhere to the latest social distancing guidance.**
- Groups involving young people (under 18's) should be coached/ led in no more than 15 (for this you would need 2 coaches/ leaders to meet the 1:12 coach/ leader ratio). More information on coaching young athletes and runners, and government guidelines for when working with young people, can be found [here at Sport England](#) or via [Department for Education](#)
- An individual coach or leader can carry out a coaching session with up to twelve athletes or runners and then coach or lead another group of up to twelve athletes or runners **after** the conclusion of the first session.
- It is recommended that a time buffer is built in between sessions to enable social distancing and adequate cleaning, according to guidelines, to take place.
- Individual coaches and leaders should not coach more than twelve athletes at any one time. This could then be part of a large club or group activity, if part of a COVID secure environment. More support for clubs and venues can be found in our [clubs](#) and [venue](#) guidance documents.
- Check directly with your athletics club on their policy for club activity. Outdoor track and field facilities should only open at the discretion and with the consent of the facility owner, provider, or contractor.

Before leaving home

- Follow all hygiene guidance including washing your hands.
- Ensure that all arrangements have been made prior to leaving home so that any government advice on social distancing, as an example, can be maintained at any facility. This may mean prior coordination of activities with the facility management or other coaches.
- At this point in time only outdoor facilities may be used – see our [Guidance for Athletics Venues](#) document for further guidance.
- [Risk assessment documents are available here.](#)
- [A risk assessment template relating to COVID-19 cleaning is available here as an example.](#)

- [Government advice on cleaning is here.](#)
- Coaches and leaders, along with athletes and runners, should ensure they are prepared and have planned for circumstances where injuries or other accidents occur, and they have mitigating procedures and plans in place to resolve the issue while maintaining all government guidance.
- Ensure you have enough food and hydration for the session.
- Be aware that changing facilities and toilets may not be open.

Equipment/Facility

- Take hand sanitiser with you.
- Read all the facility guidance in our [Guidance for Athletics Venues](#) document.

Training and coaching

- Do not congregate before or after training, return home.
- Ensure all hygiene guidance on use of equipment or facilities is followed.
- Ensure specific event guidelines are followed – read [Section 2: Event Guidance](#) in this document.

England Athletics COVID-19 Risk Assessment

We recommend that all coaches / venues complete a COVID-19 specific risk assessment. We have initially populated this template risk assessment for you by including a sample entry related to the spread of COVID-19 and to illustrate what is expected. Look at how this might apply to your coaching sessions, continue by identifying the hazards that are the real priorities in your case and complete the table to suit your venue and activity. This template is to be used as a guide to completing a full risk assessment to enable you to carry out your activity with safety.

Name of facility						
Coach/Name of Risk Assessor:						
Date of Risk Assessment:						
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed?	Controls Required	Additional Controls	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Spread of COVID-19 Coronavirus	Coach, athlete Vulnerable groups – Elderly, Pregnant workers, those with existing underlying health conditions. Anyone else who physically comes in contact with other people in relation to your activity	Hand Washing Hand washing facilities in place (with soap and water) Stringent hand washing taking place. See hand washing guidance . Gel sanitisers in any area where washing facilities not readily available. Cleaning Frequently cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are touched regularly particularly in areas of high use such as door handles, light switches, reception area using appropriate cleaning products and methods and any equipment.	Coaches and athletes to be reminded on a regular basis to wash their hands for 20 seconds with water and soap and the importance of proper drying with disposable towels. Also reminded to catch coughs and sneezes in tissues – Follow ‘Catch it, Bin it, kill it’ and to avoid touching face, eyes, nose or mouth with unclean hands. To help reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) reminding everyone of the public health advice. Ensure any use of equipment is restricted to one athlete while being used and that thorough cleaning is carried out prior to and after any training session.			

This is not an exhaustive list and we highly recommend that you complete a full risk assessment for your venue. This resource provides guidance and does not constitute formal professional advice. The information in this resource is based on advice provided by the Health and Safety Executive, but we recommend England Athletics coaches and clubs seek relevant expert advice in this subject area when required. [UKA Health and Safety guidance can be found here](#) and [UKA Risk Assessment guidance can be found here](#).

Section 2: Event guidance

Younger athletes (under 18 years of age)

- For coaching outside of a club or group environment, coaches must ensure they have the permission / agreement of the responsible parent or guardian of an athlete who is under the age of 18 to coach that athlete, if outside of a club setting.
- Young people (under 18's) should be coached / led in groups of no more than 15 (NOT including the coach / leader) If there are more than 12 young people in any group you will need at least 2 coaches/ leaders to meet the 1:12 coach/ leader ratio. More info can be found via [Department for Education](#)

Masters athletes

- All guidance applicable to coaches and leaders and athletes and runners in this document is relevant to master's athletes.
- In addition, government guidance on vulnerable persons should be adhered to, if relevant, and considered by coaches and individual athletes.

Athletes in Higher Risk groups

- Athletes and runners in the higher risk groups should follow any medical guidance they have been given about ensuring good health and welfare. If there are further concerns, please consult with your medical or national organisations for support and best practice.
- Advice will have been offered through your health body and/or is available here for those who are [Clinically Extremely vulnerable](#) and here for [Clinically vulnerable \(see Section 7\)](#).

Disabled athletes

- Higher Risk: athletes and runners in the higher risk groups should follow any medical guidance they have been given about ensuring good health and welfare. If there are further concerns, please consult with your medical or national organisations for support and best practice.
- General Assistance: disabled athletes and runners requiring support are permitted to bring one carer with them to training provided this person is part of their normal 'family' unit. This could include athletes with an intellectual impairment, athletes needing support tying shoelaces, changing, stretching etc. Coaches should maintain social distancing guidance.
- Guide Runners: guide running is able to take place with the following mitigations:
 - Both guide and runner should understand the risk associated with taking part in the activity.
 - Activity should take place outdoors.
 - Side by side running should be the preferred option.
 - Contact details should be held by both parties to ensure track and trace can be followed if needed.
 - Ideally where possible both parties should be from within the same household or support bubble. However, if this is not possible then the same runner/guide pairing should be maintained.
 - Running tethers to be cleaned thoroughly between uses & hands washed before/after activity.
 - Guide runners should be especially mindful that a significant proportion of visually impaired people also have underlying health conditions so could be at additional risk. Our friends at British Blind Sport are currently working on some resources to support visually impaired people to stay physically active at home. Visit: britishblindsport.org.uk/stay-in-work-out

- Equipment: para athletes and runners will be permitted to use their personal throwing frames and straps, RaceRunning Frames and Racing Wheelchairs. Hygiene guidance should be followed at all times.
- Seated Throws: extra time should be allowed for throwing frames to be moved and secured in place, whilst socially distancing.
- Accessible Toilets: see our [Guidance for Athletics Venues](#) document, be aware that these may not be open.
- Guide Dogs: dog owners should refer to guidance on Guide Dog welfare via Guide Dogs UK.

Communication and facility liaison

- Coaches, leaders, athletes and runners should ensure when they are planning to use a facility that they coordinate all activities prior to sessions taking place to ensure social distancing, as well as health and safety and cleaning protocols, can be carried out.
- This communication should take place within the club environment between all coaches, leaders or coaching coordinators and facility providers. Where a coach or leader is accessing an outdoor athletics venue outside a club environment, they will need to liaise directly with the venue operator.
- Coaches, leaders, athletes, and runners can access and utilise outdoor athletics training facilities with the permission of the facility owner / management. They should not access any facilities if they do not have permission to use and should at all times adhere to any guidance put in place.
- Coaches, leaders, athletes, and runners should be aware of any restrictions around toilets and specific access issues for athletes with a disability or vulnerable athletes. In all cases they should ensure government guidance is followed and a risk assessment in place before any coaching takes place.

Track and Field guidance

- In all cases normal coaching practice with risk assessment and high-quality practice should be adhered to as well as implementing any requirements around social distancing and hygiene.
- All coaches, leaders, athletes, and runners should ensure they have followed government hygiene rules including washing hands and cleaning any equipment prior to use. (See our [Guidance for Athletics Venues](#) document).
- All coaches, leaders, athletes, and runners must follow any hygiene guidance put in place by a facility.

Track

- Coaches, leaders, athletes, and runners should ensure they maintain social distancing appropriate for the activity.
- Steeplechase barriers, the water jump, and hurdles can be used by a coach and athlete provided the equipment is thoroughly cleaned according to guidance **before and after** each session.
- Starting blocks should be used just by one athlete and thoroughly cleaned according to guidance **before and after** each session.

Jumps

- Coaches should ensure they maintain social distancing at all times as well as maintain social distancing from any other coaches and athletes using adjacent space.

Vertical Jumps, High Jump and Pole Vault

- Athletes and runners follow hygiene guidelines for cleaning hands prior to any training starting.
- The mat is cleaned in line with manufacturers and government guidance, before and after each group of up to 12 athletes.
- **Operators must contact the manufacturer of the jump's mats in use at their facility to confirm whether the proposed cleaning products can be used safely on their equipment. Disinfecting landing beds effectively against Coronavirus is the responsibility of the facility operator. The disinfectant used for this purpose must not damage or compromise the safety properties of the landing bed, or cause harm to staff, volunteers, or athletes.**
- If sharing, poles should be re-gripped before use and any part of the pole outside of the grip should be cleaned before use by another athlete.
- Bars should be cleaned using an anti-viral spray or wipe before use and managed by dedicated individuals for a particular session – i.e. one athlete and the coach and cleaned between sessions.

Horizontal Jumps, Sand Pits

- Athletes follow hygiene guidelines for cleaning hands prior to any training starting.
- The landing pit is fully cleaned by turning and raking of the sand before and after each group, and rake between individual athlete/user. A venue operator may choose to use a high mist spray of sterilising fluid of a suitable concentration to neutralise the virus, this can be sprayed over the sand after use, as well as a turn and rake. [Public Health England cleaning guidance is here.](#)
- Equipment such as rakes and measuring tapes should be managed by dedicated individuals for a particular session – i.e. one athlete or the coach and cleaned between one athlete's series of jumps or between sessions.

Throws

- Athletes should follow hygiene guidelines for cleaning hands prior to any training starting.
- Coaches and athletes should ensure all equipment is used by one athlete and then thoroughly cleaned according to guidance **before and after each** session.
- Coaches should ensure they maintain social distancing at all times with an athlete they are coaching as well as maintain social distancing from any other coaches and athletes using adjacent space.

Off track coaching and leading including road running

- Coaches, leaders, and athletes running or training in a public space, other than a track and field facility, can take place in unlimited numbers as long as the activity is taking place within a COVID secure environment setting. If a [COVID secure environment](#) is not in place the following will apply; **activity can take place on a one-to-five basis only (i.e. one coach or leader and up to five athletes or runners OR up to six athletes or runners with no coach or leader present). These individuals do not need to be from the same family household, but all must adhere to the latest social distancing guidance.**

- More information on coaching young athletes and runners, and government guidelines for when working with young people, can be found [here at Sport England](#).
- Coaches, leaders, athletes, or runners should adhere to all restrictions that may be placed on a public space by the owner of that space.
- Coaches and leaders should think about a booking system being put into place before sessions.
- A coach or leader can carry out a coaching session or lead a session with up to five athletes or runners and then coach or lead another group of five athletes or runners after the conclusion of the first session. Coaches and leaders should not coach more than five athletes or runners at any one time.
- Coaches and leaders should ensure they have carried out a standard risk assessment of any training space or route, as they would normally, prior to the session taking place.
- Coaches and leaders should think about touch points on the route and as such should plan accordingly.
- Coaches and leaders should think about the public space they are meeting in along with the general population demand on the route being used.
- Coaches, leaders, athletes, and runners should ensure they carry out standard safety procedures (e.g. phones, route planning etc) when accessing 'wild' public spaces.
- Coaches, leaders, athletes, and runners aiming to access trails and mountains or public spaces a long way from assistance and emergency services should make themselves aware of any local guidance/considerations prior to travel/training. Consideration of whether the activity could add to pressure on emergency services should be taken.

Section 3: Disclaimer

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

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