

## PHASE 2 - RESUMPTION OF PERFORMANCE SPORT GUIDANCE

### Step 2A (close contact, outdoor training)

#### INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has presented a significant challenge to Scotland. Everyone's actions, including those of performance athletes and sporting bodies, have helped to reduce the transmission of coronavirus in our communities.

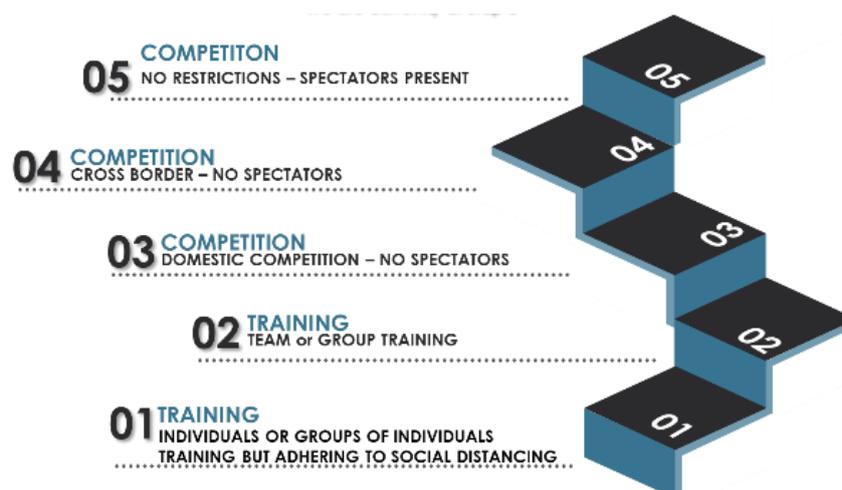
As Scotland moves to the next phase in our fight against coronavirus, the most important thing we can do is to follow the clear public health guidance from Public Health Scotland as well as the Scottish Government.

Approval & Endorsement by Public Health Scotland, Health Protection Scotland and Scottish Government are required. However, for planning purposes we are assuming that these guidelines are technically sound and provide practical areas to be covered on Medical and Scientific basis.

This is to minimise the risk to the performance sports community, fans, friends and family who support them, and have opportunities to re-assess safety and proportionality at every stage, and to minimise the pressure performance sport places on the wider community and healthcare workers during any resumption of training.

Five steps have been outlined for the performance sporting community to transition from the current restrictions through to full unrestricted performance sporting competition.

#### 5 STEPS TO RESUMPTION TO PERFORMANCE SPORT - SCOTLAND



#### PURPOSE OF GUIDANCE

The purpose of this document is to define a set of recommended minimum-practice guidance for a transition to Step 2A (outdoor only) for professional / performance athletes. It is anticipated that following this guidance will assist performance sport organisations to deliver a safe return to organised training for its athletes and staff.

This guidance does not constitute legal advice or replace any Scottish Government or Public Health advice; nor does it provide any commentary or advice on health-related issues. Performance sports and affected organisations should therefore ensure that they seek independent advice from medical practitioners prior to implementing any resumption of sport.

### **ATHLETE DEFINITION**

For the purposes of this guidance the definition of a 'performance athlete' is defined as:

#### **1) Athletes who are:**

- a. Professional athletes, and / or
- b. Athletes in professional teams, or
- c. Athletes on performance development pathways for professional sports.

**or**

#### **2) For GB Olympic and Paralympic sport, athletes who are:**

- a. GB senior (i.e. those not classified by age group) representatives for NGB's on a Summer or Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games (Tokyo/Beijing) pathway, **or**
- b. On GB senior training squads (i.e. those not classified by age group) for NGB's on a Summer or Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games (Tokyo/Beijing) pathway, **or**
- c. On performance development pathways for NGB's on a Summer or Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games pathway.

**or**

- 3) Athletes from territories in the British Isles who are senior representatives or on senior training squads (i.e. those not classified by age group) for sports in the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games programme.**

### **STEPS TO RESUMPTION**

**Step 2A** (outdoor) training can be described as the resumption of close contact (interaction within the two metre social distancing boundary) training where pairs, small groups and/or teams will be able to interact in much closer contact (e.g. close quarters coaching, teams sports tackling, technical equipment sharing, etc).

The progression of training into Step 2A is vital to prepare fully for the return of competitive sporting fixtures in many sports. Close contact training is required to replicate match formations and conditions, so that the sport-specific demands can be placed on the body, mind and senses. Close contact training develops the sport-

specific fitness which is an essential element for player safety and a reduced risk of injury during competition. It is anticipated that engaging in this type of training would start with smaller 'clusters' of 2-3 athletes and eventually progress to larger groups of 4-12 athletes, and ultimately full team training, without physical distancing possible at all times. Under Step 2A conditions, as per Step 1, physical distancing will continue to be the expectation at all other times aside from technical training.

The purpose of this Step 2A guidance is to build upon the Step 1 guidance and define an additional set of minimum 'return to training' considerations that will help performance sports organisations and teams to deliver a return to close contact training. This document outlines guidance that applies to all athletes, players and the staff who support them. No resumption of Step 2A training, where risk of transmission is increased, should go ahead without a documented risk assessment and risk mitigation strategy that addresses the points raised in this guidance.

All aspects of the published Step 1 guidance apply to underpin Step 2A, except in those cases where guidance presented for Step 2A offers a clear progression for outdoors close contact training circumstances.

### **Step 2A guidance for sports and support service providers**

1. Step 2A is a progression from Step 1. No sports or service providers should begin at Step 2A and must have completed Step 1 with a formal assessment of safe operability at the end, before proceeding to Step 2A.
2. The COVID-19 officer(s) for each Club/Team/Training Group should conduct a risk assessment and form a risk mitigation strategy prior to the resumption of Step 2A outdoor training, which should build upon the Step 1 risk assessment and mitigation plan. The Step 2A element should encompass the following sub-headings of specific risk considerations:
  - 2.1 Training facilities and environment
  - 2.2 Athletes, coaches and wider staff interactions (e.g. medical support practitioners, Paralympic guides/carers)
  - 2.3 Sport specific activity with reference to the number, duration and nature of close and face to face contacts for athletes and support staff during all training activities to inform a sport specific close contact exposure risk assessment
3. The risk assessment and mitigation plan should include but not be restricted to:
  - 3.1 Defining how Step 2A training exercises will be appropriately modified so that the time spent by two or more individuals within a 2-metre distance of one another, and level of face to face contact, is kept to a reasonable minimum, consistent with effective training

- 3.2 Ensuring hygiene protocols and risk mitigation strategies are in place for the use of sports specific items that may be shared by athletes and coaches or be a point of interaction between individuals because of Step 2A training. These items may include but not be limited to balls, technical clothing, technical equipment (e.g. wheelchairs, shared boats), tackle bags and other similar technical accessories, and protective equipment. These instances of equipment sharing, and interaction points, should be minimised or eliminated wherever possible.
- 3.3 Clearly articulating which staff and athletes are considered essential to conduct an effective Step 2A training session and limiting attendance to this list. Within the 'essential staff' cohort, minimum determined numbers for medical supervision of sessions should be in place to maintain a minimised injury and illness risk/NHS burden as a priority consideration. Appropriate healthcare support also needs to meet the demands of any COVID-19 player/staff assessments.
- 3.4 Ensuring that physical distancing is maintained during all preparatory or post training activities, briefings etc. The exemption on physical distancing is for the period of actual training itself but not to activities which are peripheral (under which all existing Scottish Govt restrictions still apply)
- 3.5 Communicating to the athlete cohort(s) the maximum number of athletes allowed to engage in the Step 2A training activity at any one time
- 3.6 Defining what close contact coaching practices (technical coaching and physical coaching) should be classed as essential and therefore delivered under the Step 2A context in line with the chosen training activities. In cases deemed as essential, the risk mitigation strategy should outline the precautions that should be taken including minimum hygiene practices (e.g. hand washing) and the use of any reasonable PPE relevant to the interaction(s) (e.g. face coverings).
- 3.7 Defining what treatment by medical, physiotherapy and soft tissue therapists should be classed as essential and delivered under the Step 2A conditions. In cases deemed as essential, the risk mitigation strategy should outline the precautions medical staff should take in keeping with current Health Protection Scotland advice such as the use of health care setting and athlete infection risk appropriate PPE that is also influenced by the procedure or treatment being conducted at that time.
- 3.8 Determining what level of monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms or testing for COVID-19 is required to engage athletes and staff in a Step 2A training scenario that has as reasonable a level of risk mitigation as possible. This may include approaches over and above, including Antigen testing, but no less than the questionnaire checks that are set out in Step 1 guidance.
- 3.9 Ensuring that, training takes place outdoors.

- 3.10 Keeping meticulous, time and date sensitive, written records of player groups and interactions
- 3.11 Ensuring that there is no swapping between designated 'small clusters' or between 'larger groups' unless strictly required for realistic training. Any such swapping should be meticulously recorded. This is to reduce the risk of whole squad impact in the event of an athlete contracting COVID-19
- 4 The relevant sporting body responsible for each Club/Team/Training Group should ensure coaches and athletes are briefed on, understand and are able to operate within the risk mitigation strategy associated with Step Two training. An emphasis on the maintenance of strict and frequent personal hygiene measures should be included as part of these briefings. It will be for individual sports to agree with their athletes any conditions for their engagement in Step 2A training. All athletes and staff should also be clear on their route to 'opt out' of the Step 2A training environment at any time without any resulting discrimination not associated with the potential natural competitive impact resulting from any loss of training time.
- 5 Sports should continually assess whether the extent to which Step Two is applied in their training environment means a different level of COVID-19 symptoms monitoring or possible testing is required to mitigate the increased risks that come with close contact training. Symptom monitoring and testing approaches are likely to develop over time, as understanding in this area improves. Therefore, each sport should continue to regularly reassess their risk assessment and mitigation strategy via their named COVID-19 officer (physician), who is required to maintain familiarity with the emerging evidence related to post-COVID-19 pathology.
- 6 Due to the unavoidable increased risk of transmission under Step 2A conditions the COVID-19 officer should re-emphasise the need for all individuals engaging with the training environment to abide by government and HPS guidelines whilst away from the training facility. Specifically, adherence to physical distancing rules always when away from Step 2A training, maintaining high standards of personal hygiene to reduce the risk of transmission, and never attending a training venue if in the slightest doubt about possible COVID-19 symptoms.
- 7 Due to the increased risk of transmission under Step 2A conditions the COVID-19 officer must have a clear policy for managing a COVID-19 positive individual and abide by government and PHE guidelines and reporting requirements.
- 8 Once Step 2A training resumes, any cases identified as a result of club/sport organised testing, will have immediate implications for contact tracing (as physical distancing is breached under Step 2A training conditions). Such instances must be notified immediately to the local Health Protection Unit of Health Protection Scotland.

### **Additional Step 2A guidance for elite training centre hosts and operators**

9. Host/operators of venues should liaise with sports and take joint steps to confine the behavioural practice of close contact to Step 2A training environments only. This includes making informed assessments about which other aspects of training venues that are shared and/or commonly used for physical interaction and carry an increased risk of transmission through reduced physical distancing and common surfaces. Only those that are essential should remain open. Areas such as changing rooms, cafeterias, athlete lounges, team rooms and recovery spaces should remain closed. The exempting from physical distancing applies to the actual sport training itself but NOT to activities which are peripheral to this (under which all existing Scottish Govt restrictions still apply).
10. Host/operators of venues being used for Step 2A should consult with all sports proposing to utilise their venue for Step 2A training and agree the specific training space(s) where Step 2A training will take place. Host/operators should ensure that any venue modifications required to operate the Step 2A training environment in line with risk assessments can be achieved while maintaining physical distancing and hygiene to government standards elsewhere. In particular there should be no opportunity for physical distancing to be breached between training clusters or between different sports; and no opportunities for the wider formation of large non socially distanced groups whether formal or spontaneous.
11. Hosts/operators of venues being used for Step 2A return to training should take active steps to ensure that close contact training, coaching and support within their facility does not invalidate their relevant insurance cover while COVID-19 physical distancing rules remain in place.

### **Resources**

1. [Scottish Government: Coronavirus in Scotland](#)
2. [NHS Inform COVID-19](#)
3. [Scottish Government Staying at Home guidance](#)
4. [NHS Inform COVID-19](#)
5. [Scottish Government Business and Physical Distancing Guidance](#)
6. [Health Protection Scotland guidance for non-healthcare settings](#)