

COVID-19 Guidance to Restart Netball Activity





Introduction

Following the post-Christmas lockdown, the Government have prioritised opening outdoor sport and physical activity to support the rebuild of the physical and mental health of the nation. From April 12th outdoor sporting activity is permitted to begin a phased return. Netball NI have been given approval to and it is our intention to support members who wish to consider outdoor activity as this allows an earlier return to play.

It is essential that this guidance is read in full ahead of any netball activity commencing. Sport NI and the Department for Communities have given Netball NI specific permission to restart the game, but this **MUST** be carefully managed so that transmission of Covid-19 is not increased as a result of netball activity. This is a collective responsibility, and all requirements must be considered and managed by organisers of all activity.

Members of Netball NI also have access to exclusive forums to support you restart netball at your organisation.

This document includes:

1. Return to court roadmap

This section details a general overview the NI Executive and Sport NI roadmaps for sport.

2. General information and requirements

This section includes details of the general information all netball organisations need to consider and be aware of.

3. General considerations for groups within the netball family

This section details how specific groups of people will be impacted by this guidance.

4. Risk mitigations

This section details the specific guidance and requirements at each stage of netball; before, during and after.

- a. Before Netball
- b. During Netball
- c. After Netball

Return to court roadmap.

As with all areas of society, the timescales to move to the next step will be determined by the NI Executive.

Full details of the restrictions at each step will be made available as the Executive continue to monitor infection and transmission rates. This guidance therefore covers everything known to date. As we move to the next steps in the future, Netball NI will provide an addendum with further clarification around the step specific detail.

The NI Executive framework for Sport and Leisure Activities¹ is in 5 steps. From 1st April we move to Step 2 'Cautious First Steps' which permits a phased return to outdoor activities.

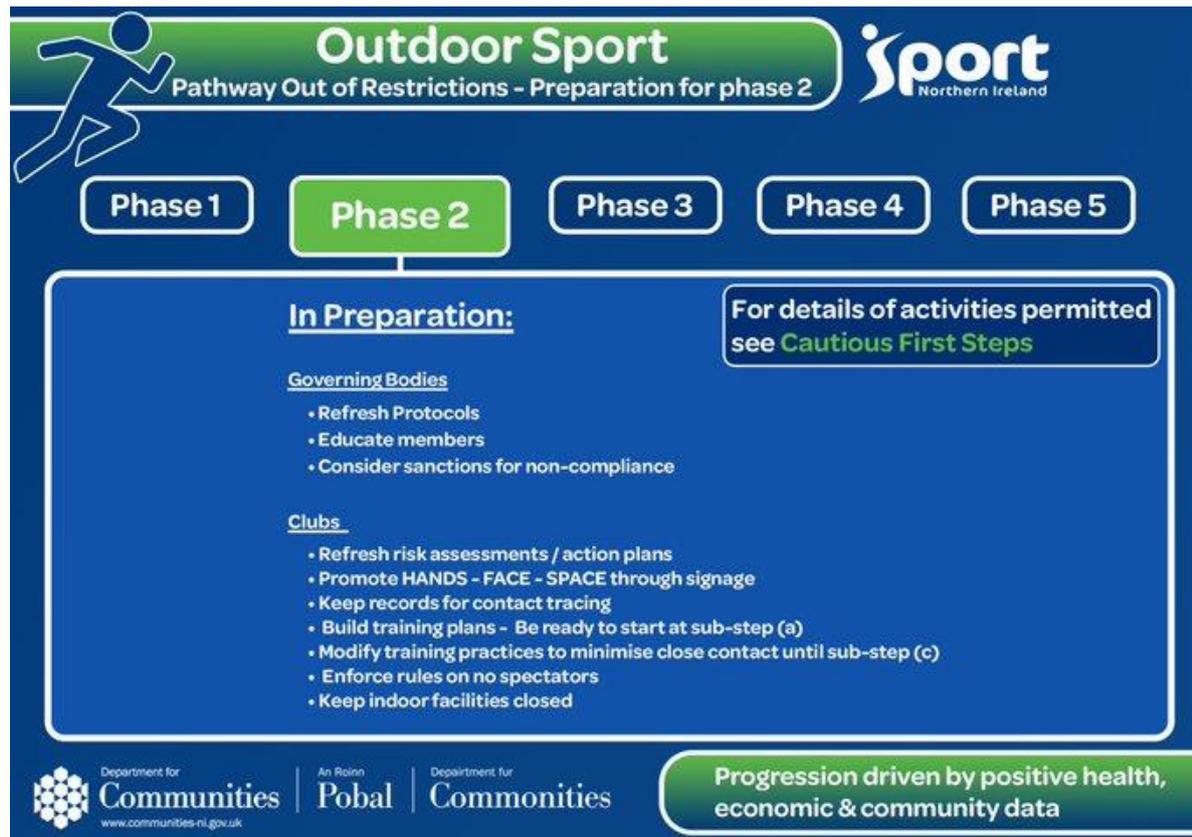


As we can see from this infographic, indoor sport will not be considered for resumption until phase 3, 'Gradual Easing'. Phase 3, as detailed below, will not come in to affect until all the sub steps of phase 2 have been successfully completed.

¹ Infographic courtesy of NI Executive

Additional Roadmap Breakdown

Sport NI and the Department for Communities have further supported the NI Executive Roadmap by providing clarity around requirements for National Governing Bodies and Clubs ahead of any return².

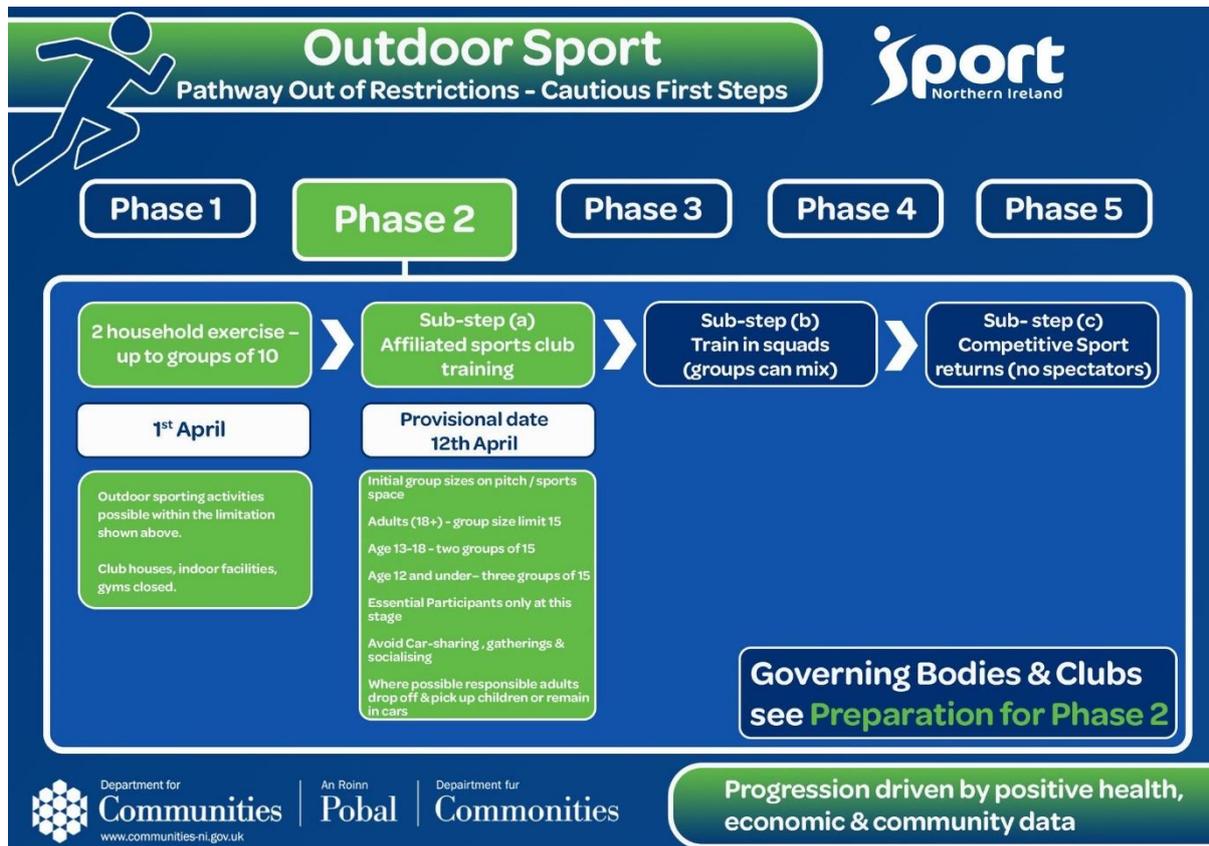


Netball NI have refreshed our protocols, obtaining check, challenge and approval from the Sport NI expert group and will be holding compulsory Club Forums to support our members to be fully prepared for their return. We have also agreed sanctions for non-compliance but would urge our members to support us, our sport and our communities by adhering strictly to the guidance given. Our collective reward for this is not only knowing we have acted in the appropriate way, but also that we are supporting our sport and all the participants who love our sport, in their return.

Only clubs affiliated to a recognised National Governing Body are permitted to undertake outdoor activity at this time. This provides clubs, club members, parents etc the assurance that appropriate measures are being taken to provide a safe setting. Clubs, therefore, also have an accountability role to play in supporting the return to sport, as detailed by Sport NI.

² Infographic courtesy of Sport NI

Outdoor Sports, phase 2



The breakdown of each phase will be detailed by Sport NI as we transition through them, phase 2 sees 3 sub steps detailed before any progression to phase 3³.

Netball NI are working to support our member clubs enter 'sub step a' from the 26th of April. We recognise the provisional date for this step is 12th April however we are accountable for returning in a responsible manner and have based our timeline on what will be achievable to best support clubs in their preparation and allow us to sign off clubs for return.

On sign off, Netball NI will permit affiliated clubs to host training in line with our guidance documents, protocols and mitigations, alongside the noted Sport NI guidelines adapted to netball court size areas:

1. Initial group sizes on a large netball court area:
 - a) Adults (18+) group size limit 15 inc coach
 - b) Age 13-18 group size limit 15 inc coach*⁴

³ Infographic courtesy of Sport NI

⁴ Netball group numbers based on standard size netball court and may differ from guidance based on a pitch sized space



- c) Age 12 and under – 2 groups of 15 inc coach*⁵
2. Essential Participants only permitted.
3. Avoid car sharing, gathering and socialising.
4. Where possible, adults dropping off and collecting participants, remain in their car.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS

WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that affects your lungs and airways. It is caused by a virus called Coronavirus and affected individuals can display a range of symptoms from mild to severe illness including death for confirmed cases. Affected people can also be entirely asymptomatic. Transmission is by respiratory droplets and direct contact.

RISK OF COVID-19 IN NETBALL

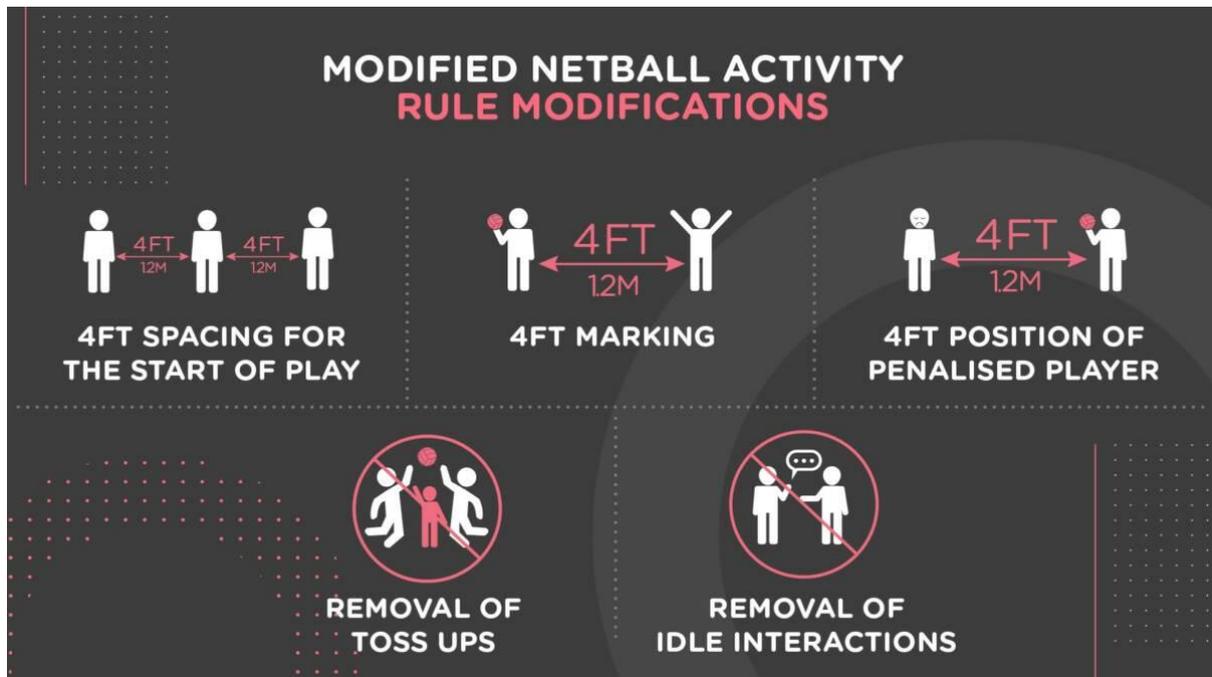
In every sport and leisure activity, there is a risk of contracting COVID-19 and team sports in particular pose slightly increased risks.

When thinking about netball, it is a game that is fairly static by nature (you have 3 seconds to pass the ball, or 4 seconds if you are a Walking Netball participant, we defend face to face at 3 feet away (0.9m) and a netball is passed continuously around multiple people. It is also a game that is routinely played indoors, and the netball family are a very friendly group and have traditions such as 3 cheers in close circles.

Netball therefore carries a greater risk than other team sport activities and as part of the return to community netball, we need to mitigate some of the risks to both protect the netball family, as well as ensure that netball is not responsible for an increased transmission of COVID-19 more broadly.

⁵ Please contact Netball NI directly if you need clarification on outdoor space size and numbers permitted, groups must not exceed size/number stated without agreement

MITIGATING THE RISK IN NETBALL⁶



This guidance document outlines the mitigations put in place to reduce the risk of participation in netball, however, to ensure that our sport along with several other higher risk team sports could return, a number of modifications to the rules of netball were also required to be made. These modifications have been in situ since our previous return and are detailed again below for reference.

The rule modifications are.

- 4ft spacing for the start of play – GS and GK are required to start inside their respective goal circles, GA, GD, WA and WD on the transverse line and the C's in the centre third. The modification requires all players to position themselves a minimum of 4ft away from their opposing players and teammates at the start of play. This should be managed by all players and coaches at the start of play.
- 4ft marking – the defending distance has been increased from 3ft to 4ft. Particular attention must be paid in the circle when defending. This will be sanctioned as obstruction.
- 4ft position of penalised player- penalised players for major infringements are required to position beside the player they infringed but from a distance of 4ft. This should be managed by all players and coaches when an infringement occurs.
- Removal of toss ups – No toss ups are permitted, the team who had the ball directly before the action that caused the toss up to be awarded will retain possession.
- Removal of idle interactions – Players not engaged in play or who are stood still are required to be positioned 4ft away from another player. This frequently happens on the circle edge, on

⁶ Infographic courtesy of England Netball



the transverse line, whilst walking back to centre pass and returning to the team bench at the end of a quarter. This should be managed by all players and coaches.

These COVID-19 rule modifications will be temporary, and it is currently anticipated that these will be removed at phase 5 of the updated roadmap.

Evidence from previous lockdowns show that these rule modifications work and alongside the other risk mitigations, have ensured that the risk of contracting COVID-19 through netball activity is minimised.

COVID-19 OFFICERS

Regardless of size, every sports organisation to have a COVID-19 Officer in place before activity can resume. This role must ensure there is understanding and compliance with this guidance.

Netball NI have issued a template role description for Covid-19 Officers that is available on our website.

VENUES

It is important to select an appropriate venue to deliver netball activity. Full guidance on venue selection can be found in the 'Before Activity' section.

During phase 2, this **must** be an outdoor venue.

Full details will be made available as we progress further along the roadmap.

TRAVEL

From 12th April, time spent outside of home is advised as stay local, travel is permitted as to take part in informal and organised sport. Netball NI urge all members to adhere to the stay local message.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing guidance should be always adhered to.

This includes.

Travel to and from any netball activity.

- Arrival at activity, during breaks in training or training match play
- On departure from activity.

It is crucial that netball clubs manage and facilitate this.

SPECTATORS

Spectators are not permitted at any training or netball activity until a later step in the roadmap.

This does not apply to carers for disabled people, or adults needed to supervise under 18s in a safeguarding role.

TESTING & VACCINATIONS

There is no requirement for those attending any community netball activity to complete regular testing ahead of the activity. It is however acknowledged that many may be being tested regularly through either their employment or via the testing processes within schools.

Anyone who has a positive test must not attend any netball activity and should stay at home for 10 days.

Currently, there will not be a requirement for anyone attending netball activity to have been vaccinated or carry with them proof of vaccination.



SAFEGUARDING AND WELFARE

Safeguarding and protecting children and young people and adults at risk is of the utmost important. Netball NI's safeguarding policies must be adhered to throughout all stages of the restart and beyond.

These policies can be found here <http://netballni.org/safeguarding/>

Netball NI is committed to ensuring all children, young people and adults at risk can take part in the sport in a safe and enjoyable environment. It is still a requirement to have a satisfactory Access NI check carried out before an individual takes up a role with children, young people and adults at risk and for the check to be renewed every 3 years.

HIGHER RISK GROUPS

Shielding and clinically extremely vulnerable:

People in this group are defined on medical grounds as clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 – that is people with specific serious health conditions. Many are likely to already have been vaccinated but they may still be advised to shield'. These people may have been less active whilst shielding which is important for any coaches, team managers and volunteers to be aware of.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GROUPS WITHIN THE NETBALL FAMILY

JUNIOR PLAYERS

This guidance is applicable to both adults and junior netball activity.

Wherever this guidance references U18, it refers to those that were under 18 on 30/09/2020 (Netball NI usual adult registration deadline).

Some junior players, particularly U11's will require more regular reminders to ensure compliance with the rule modifications.

Some junior athletes will also be part of the performance pathway at Emerging Warriors level. These athletes and their community clubs will need to be aware of the requirements of the Elite Netball framework as well.

PLAYER WELL BEING

Most players may have not been on court for a minimum of 6 months (potentially up to 14 months), awareness of their needs to reconnect with the activity and team members as well as re-build physical fitness must be considered.

All Netball clubs should ensure that a period to rebuild netball specific fitness must be incorporated into programming.

For many, the lockdown period and pandemic has caused additional stresses and anxieties. We are confident that netball has a role to play in supporting this and all netball clubs should consider this.

As netball returns during the spring and summer, Netball NI is advocating that activity should be fun and social, allowing players to reconnect both with one another and the game.

COACHES & Officials

Coaches and officials can travel to netball, this can be either paid or voluntary delivery.



Coaches and officials are included in the maximum number of 15 taking part in netball activity and should remain socially distanced at all times.

Coaches can deliver within school PE sessions, they must however adhere to any policies and procedures in place within the specific school and Netball NI schools guidance should be fully read and understood.

No competitive matches are permitted at this time.

Umpiring of a game-based activity within a training session can be undertaken by either a qualified/in training umpire or a qualified coach with knowledge of the game.

All coaches, official and players should have knowledge of the game modifications.

MANAGING CONCERNS AND BREACHES

This guidance is put in place to enable netball to restart whilst mitigating the risks associated with it. Clubs will be responsible for ensuring they adhere to national guidance as well as Netball NI guidance.

COVID-19 Officers should regularly review the risk assessment in line with any updated guidance. Netball NI will take seriously any breaches of this guidance. Initially any concerns should be reported to one of the following:

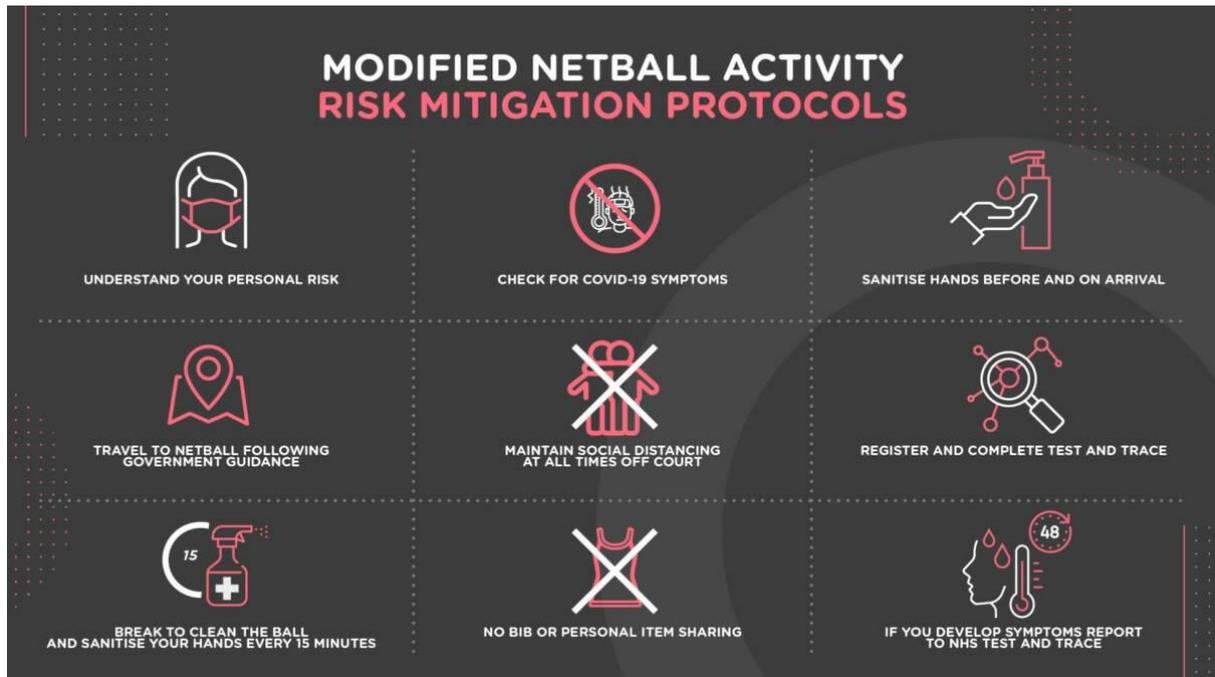
- COVID-19 Officer
- Club Safeguarding Officer
- Another appropriate committee member
- Netball NI Head of Development, Lisa Rickett via email Headofdevelopment@netballni.org

If a formal complaint is made regarding continuous, intentional breaches of this guidance disciplinary action will be taken by Netball NI.

No unaffiliated organisation is permitted to host netball activity at this time.

RISK MITIGATIONS⁷

This section of the guidance gives detail on all risk mitigations required before, during and after netball activity, including details of the key actions that need to be completed.



BEFORE ACTIVITY

This section covers the elements that need to be considered when planning any netball activity. It is also important that those coming along to your activity are aware of them before they arrive.

THE BASICS & RISK ASSESSMENT

- All netball clubs require a COVID-19 Officer. For larger clubs, you may consider having multiple volunteers undertaking the role. They should be identified with Netball NI.
- The COVID-19 Officer will be responsible for communicating relevant guidance and information to other volunteers/workforce as well as members.
- A COVID risk assessment must be undertaken, which will help formulate the COVID risk mitigation plan. Every organisation must produce these documents and there should be full consideration given to all activities as well as each venue used. New documents are required before commencing outdoor activity. Once Netball is permitted to move indoors documents that have been previously produced should be reviewed and updated
- The COVID-19 game modifications must be understood and adhered to during training and matches. These should be made available to those involved in any modified netball activity.
- As we progress along the roadmap, Sport NI will release more detail regarding each step. Netball NI will issue an addendum to this guidance to share any additional information.

⁷ Infographic courtesy of England Netball

VENUES

- Netball activity should only take place at venues that have been COVID-19 risk assessed by the venue operator/ owner. Netball organisations should also complete their own COVID-19 risk assessment for their own activity.
- Any netball on a single court has a limit of 15 participants (including all players and coaches – Covid Officers are excluded from this number but must remain socially distanced and not participate in activity).
- Netball clubs must obtain the venue risk assessment and be fully aware of any additional COVID-19 risk mitigations or operational procedures. This must be completed, even if it is a venue used regularly.
- If using a venue where multiple courts are available and situated together, adjacent courts can be used and latest Executive guidance on social distancing must be followed. Maximum numbers on site will be determined by venue operators.
- Congestion must be avoided when moving around the venue and court area, clear signage will support this.

COMMUNICATION

- All clubs should communicate clearly with all their members before, during and after netball activity to manage the transmission risks.
- Key messages that must be included are.
 1. Social distancing
 2. Checking symptoms ahead of attending
 3. Sanitisation protocols
 4. How movement will be managed around the netball venue
 5. Arrivals and departure processes
- All netball clubs must make participants/attendees aware of who the COVID-19 Officer(s) is as well as where applicable the Club Safeguarding Officer. They should also share how they can be contacted.
- Regular reminders should be issued to those attending netball activity.
- In the event of any single netball organisation having 2 or more positive cases of COVID-19 in a 14-day period, they must notify Netball NI via email HeadofDevelopment@netballni.org

SYMPTOM CHECKING AND PERSONAL RISK

- In line with the Executive guidance only necessary personnel should attend sessions, all players, coaches, officials and volunteers should check themselves and anyone in their household for COVID-19 symptoms prior to leaving home for netball activity. If they, or anyone in their household is exhibiting symptoms, they should not attend netball.
- Any participants (including coaches, officials, volunteers) who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace because of being in contact with a known COVID-19 case, must not attend any netball activity and they should remain at home. This must be explained to members in advance of activity commencing.
- Those young people who have been told by their school to self-isolate due to another young person within their school 'bubble' has tested positive must also not attend any netball activity.

- Participation in any training activity or match is the choice of the individual and all will be required to 'opt in'. Pressure must not be placed on individuals to participate or compete if they are uncomfortable with the risks associated with netball activity.
- Players, coaches and officials should be made aware that changing facilities will not be available so everyone should come changed and ready to play.

TRIALS & SELECTIONS

Netball NI do not envisage any club requiring trials at this stage of our return; however, we understand given the scale of some clubs they may need to determine who should attend each session and therefore a trial of sorts may be appropriate.

- All trial activity must be implemented in line with the information within this guidance document, including COVID-19 rule modifications.
- Group size within trial activity should not exceed 15 players; large scale trials are not permitted at this stage.
- An awareness of an individual's pre-trial activity must be known and understood when planning trial activity.
- Athletes should have a period of training and loading before any trials or selections.
- It is recommended that athletes should be in small groups for trial activity.
- Fitness testing should not be included in trials.
- Coaches and selectors should remain socially distanced from the activity at all times.
- The trial/selection administration process should be completed electronically where possible.
- Paperwork should not be passed between selectors and coaches during the trial activity.

DURING ACTIVITY

This section includes information to ensure training and competition is well managed.

It is important to note that players should be aware that netball activity will feel different to pre-COVID activity. Social interaction before, particularly during and after play need to be carefully managed.

VENUE PREPARATION

- A pre venue check must be completed before every session or match.
- If movement around site is required, for example if toilets are located a distance away, consideration should be given to movement of people. Signage should be used to ensure clear and direct routes are taken. The venue operator may have such plans in place already and these should be followed.
- Changing rooms and showers should not be used during training sessions or matches.
- Toilet facilities should be available and the process for increased cleaning should be understood. Toilets should not however be used for the purpose of changing.
- Huts and shelters. may be used in line with Executive guidance. Strict hygiene measures and social distancing must be in place. This will mean limiting the number of people within such shelters and if space does allow for more than one individual, a face covering should be worn.
- No refreshments should be offered from huts or shelters that may be available.



MATCH SETUP

No inter club matches are permitted at this stage.

ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION

- It is the individual's responsibility to socially distance from all others on arrival, during breaks and after the session.
- A traffic flow system should be clearly identified to help arrivals at court areas and venues. This should be detailed to players and must be in line with venue operator operational plans. Signage may be required to help with this.
- All players, coaches, officials and volunteers must go through a health screening as they arrive. (self-assessment questionnaire and temperature check) They should not mix with others until this is completed. The health screening must be carried out at all netball activity and to screen for COVID-19 symptoms.
- Any venue specific arrival protocols should be shared with all members and adhered to.

RULE MODIFICATIONS AND NETBALL ACTIVITIES

- All training must be delivered in line with the COVID-19 rule modifications. Full details of the rule modifications can be found at the beginning of this guidance.
- Standard game management rules should be used by officials/coaches to enforce the COVID-19 rule modifications during matches with any persistent breaches dealt with by accelerated application.
- Coaches must support implementation by reminding players of the COVID-19 rule modifications during any coaching practices or matches.
- Parents must be aware of the COVID-19 rule modifications and understand that these will be managed by coaches and umpires within club sessions.
- All circle and junior players, particularly those U11, must be reminded more regularly of the COVID-19 rule modifications by coaches and officials. Practices that encourage this should be included within training sessions.
- Shouting should not take place by coaches during netball activity as this increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Any Walking Netball activity must be delivered in line with the additional rule modifications. The activities and practices within training sessions must be carefully considered and planned.
- Activity that breaches social distancing should not exceed 60 minutes in any one session.
- Warm up must be factored in.
- Time must be planned into every session for ball and hand sanitisation at least every 15 minutes.
- Wherever possible social distancing should be integrated into practices.
- The amount of time spent face-to-face marking should be limited and where it is required, activities should be planned in line with the game modifications.
- Small, sided games during training are possible but game modifications must be incorporated.

SANITISATION

- Hands must be sanitised upon arrival at the netball activity, all balls should also be sanitised on arrival.
- Breaks should be scheduled at least every 15 minutes to allow for hands and balls to be sanitised in both netball training and netball activity.
- Netball posts should be sanitised before and after activity.
- If a player or official contacts the netball post, it should be sanitised.
- Passing between multiple players with multiple netballs during training practices should be kept to a minimum.
- Any personal items such as water bottles should be clearly marked and must not be shared.
- If the club or team are providing the netball for training or match play; it should be made clear which are 'clean' balls and which are used. This could be done via clearly labelling bags/containers.
- Bibs should not be shared unless they have been washed and this should be done where possible at 60 degrees.
- In games/practices within training sessions sharing of whistles is not permitted.
- Any additional equipment used e.g., floor spots, cones should be sanitised before and after all activity. If there is extensive handling of the equipment, sanitisation should happen at least every 15 minutes in line with ball sanitisation.

SANITISATION PROTOCOL

Netball clubs should ensure the following is available at every session or match.

- Hand sanitiser.
- Antibacterial wipes for sanitisation of netballs and netball post,
- Non-surgical face masks for certain roles (e.g., first aider).
- Signage for court area (laminated if possible so they can be sanitised).
- Health screening checklist (laminated in possible so it can be sanitised).
- Bin bag for disposing of wipes.
- Netballs:
 1. Where possible encourage players to bring their own ball to training sessions.
 2. Balls must be sanitised every 15 minutes.
 3. During match play, multiple balls may be required so that it can be replaced at regular intervals during the activity (recommend every break).
 4. Two marked bags or containers for netballs may be required to ensure 'dirty' and 'clean' netballs are clearly identifiable.
- Bibs
 1. Bibs must not be shared in the normal way during netball activity.
 2. Multiple sets of bibs are an ideal solution if available.
 3. You may want to distribute bibs for a whole session to be used inside out, position can be marked with sticky labels.
 4. Alternatively, large sticky labels can be used on their own.
 5. Wipe down patch bibs are also now available but must be sanitised if transferred between players.



SOCIAL DISTANCING DURING NETBALL ACTIVITY

Social distancing during activity should be maintained wherever possible. The following must not take place during any training sessions or netball match play.

- Nail checks should take place at a distance of 2m or more.
- There should be no player huddles – players should remain socially distanced for any team talk.
- No hands in
- No shouting or cheering.
- No high fiving.
- No hug circles or handshakes.
- No post training team teas or sharing of snacks and confectionery.

Netball clubs must put in place clear signage and if necessary additional aids to ensure participants comply with social distancing.

HYGIENE & TOILETS

Organisers of netball activity must ensure that the environment in which netball takes place has the following as a minimum:

- Rigorous cleaning procedures for high contact touch points throughout the venue.
- Rigorous cleaning procedures for any toilet facilities and other indoor communal spaces used.
- Procedures for the movement of and cleaning of any equipment such as netball posts (and any other large equipment items used at the facility such as tennis posts and football goals)
- Hand sanitisers / wipes on offer to assist with personal and equipment hygiene.
- Bins available for the disposal of any wipes / cleaning materials.
- Toilets will be overseen by the venue operator. There may be increased guidance and steps that venue operators take around toilet use.
- If there is a COVID-19 case in the facility, the operator will follow the PHE Guidance - COVID-19 Cleaning in non-healthcare settings while cleaning all areas of the facility.

FIRST AID

Injuries or accidents within training sessions or matches should continue to be treated as wellbeing is paramount.

First Aiders should consider the first aid protocol and see guidance from St Johns ambulance:

<https://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/first-aid-advice/covid-19-advice-for-first-aiders>

AFTER ACTIVITY

It should be noted that once the netball training session is complete, including a sufficient cool down, all should leave immediately and there should not be any congregating either on the courts or around the courts.

Social distancing must be maintained when leaving any netball activity.

- Players, coaches and officials should shower and change at home.
- A clear traffic flow system for leaving court areas and venues must be in place. This should be detailed to participants and must be in line with that of the venue operator.
- Parents of U18 members should be made aware a safe collection procedure and point. This should include clear information to parents as to where and when collection should be made.



- All equipment must be sanitised after all netball activity, including netballs, bibs, netball posts and other items such as spots, ladders and cones.
- All players, coaches, officials and other attendees must sanitise their hands as they leave.
- Any attendee who develops COVID-19 symptoms up to 48 hours after any netball activity must report to NHS Test and Trace and notify the COVID Officer if the test is positive.
- If there are two or more positive cases following a session, please report to HeadofParticipation@netballni.org

DISCLAIMER

This guidance has been developed by Netball NI (supported by England Netball, Sport NI and Department for Communities) for use for our affiliated members to facilitate a safe return to Netball and it is important that all our members ensure that this guidance is adhered to before any return to play.

Our documents and protocols for Netball's return to sport has been reviewed by the Sport NI Return to Play expert group who has given its confirmation that our protocols are consistent with current and relevant Executive guidance. Whilst efforts have been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information based on the latest available Executive advice, you will appreciate that this is regularly changing, so this guidance should be read in conjunction with the Executive's most up to date latest Covid-19 guidance which can be read at www.gov.uk/coronavirus. We continue to work closely with Sport NI in order to set out good practice guidance for those responsible for delivering different aspects of netball and as the Executive guidance changes, we will update our guidance accordingly.