



GUIDANCE FOR ATHLETES & RUNNERS

Step 3: updated 23rd September 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 22nd September 2020 and can be put in place immediately unless otherwise stated. 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**. [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 athletes and runners. **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, runner, 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 athletes monitor themselves for any signs of the virus, as well as general health. Athletes 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 Coaches – return to activity](#)
2. [Guidance for Athletics Venues – return to activity](#)

Section 1: Before and after training

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.
- Outdoors, athletics and running activity can now take place in unlimited numbers as long as it is within a COVID secure environment (which can be a track or open space such as a park or road). Where a [COVID secure environment](#) is not in place groups will need to be a maximum of 6.
- Indoor activity for Under 18's can take place with larger numbers, however Department for Education guidance and coaching ratios should be adhered to i.e. there must not be more than 15 athletes or runners as part of the group which therefore requires 2 coaches / leaders to be in attendance (i.e. for a total group of 15 U18s, the coach / leader ratio is 2:15).
- Indoor adult (over 18) activity can now only take place in groups of no more than 6.
- It is recommended that a time buffer is built in between sessions to enable social distancing and cleaning.
- Check directly with your athletics club, coach, or leader on their policy for club, coach, or leader activity. Any 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 club, facility management or your coach or leader.
- 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.
- Ensure that all equipment is cleaned before and after use.
- [Government advice on cleaning is here.](#)

Training and coaching

- Do not congregate before or after training, return home.
- Ensure specific event guidelines are followed – read [Section 2](#) of this document.

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.
- 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 and runners

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

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 and runners

- 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 can 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 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

- Athletes and runners should ensure when they are planning to use a facility that they coordinate all activities prior to a session taking place to ensure social distancing, as well as health and safety and cleaning protocols, can be carried out.
- This communication should take place between the club, all coaches, leaders, athletes and runners and facility providers.
- Athletes and runners can access and utilise 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.
- 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.
- 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 and the water jump can be used by a coach and athlete provided the equipment is thoroughly cleaned according to guidance before and after each session.
- 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 must 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 must 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 can participate in throwing activities.
- Athletes should ensure all equipment is used by one athlete and then thoroughly cleaned according to guidance before and after each session.
- Athletes should ensure they maintain social distancing at all times with any other athletes or coaches as well as any other coaches and athletes using adjacent space.

Off track coaching and leading including road running

- Athletes and runners 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 and 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.

- Athletes and runners should adhere to all restrictions that may be placed on a public space by the owner of that space.
- Athletes and runners should ensure they carry out standard safety procedures (e.g. phones, route planning etc) when accessing 'wild' public spaces.
- Athletes 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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