

Introduction

Following the publication of the Government's [Roadmap for Reopening Business and Society](#), Ministers Ross & Griffin announced the establishment of an [Expert Group](#) to provide guidance to Ireland's sporting bodies to prepare for the phased return to sporting activity.

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport chairs the Expert Group, which includes medical experts from the Sport Ireland Institute and the sports sector, as well as officials from both the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and Sport Ireland. The Group also contains a specific representation for disability sport. The Group will seek external advice and additional expertise as required.

As per the Terms of Reference of establishment, a key function of the Expert Group will be to assess the consistency of sporting organisations 'Return to Sport' protocols with the Roadmap, the [Return to Work Safely Protocol](#) and current public health advice.

In addition the Expert Group will publish a set of guidance notes to answer many of the frequently asked questions submitted by Governing Bodies.

Such guidance will be published on a Phase by Phase basis as the public health situation and advice evolves over time.

The previous FAQ's in relation to Phase One can be found [here](#):

Frequently Asked Questions – Phase Two

Q: What are the key elements covered in Phase Two in relation to sport?

Phase two of the Roadmap commenced on June 8. The key changes include the extension of travel and the increase in the number of people permitted to take part in outdoor sport & physical activity.

Travel: You may travel within your own county, and up to 20 kilometres from your home if crossing county boundaries.

Sport: Groups of up to 15, including trainers and coaches, may return to non-contact outdoor training activity (but not matches) while maintaining social distancing at all times.

Q: What sporting activity is covered in Phase Two?

In addition to the [sports](#) permitted in phase one of the Roadmap, an additional number of outdoor sports are recommended to be included in phase two. The list of sports is based on a review of Sport Ireland recognised National Governing Bodies and include:

- Archery
- Road Bowls
- Horse Shoe Throwing
- Clay Target Shooting
- Caving
- Croquet
- Outdoor Climbing
- Sub aqua sport
- Water ski & wakeboard
- Aero sport
- Martial Arts (outdoors, non-contact)

A limited number of outdoor team sports are also permitted to return to non-contact training in phase two. Sport Ireland is working with the relevant sports directly on their return to sport.

Sport Ireland acknowledge that a number of sports eligible to begin in phase two may decide not to return to active or organised participation at this point. This will be a matter for each individual sport to assess.

Q: Can people travel more than 20km under Phase Two in relation to sport & physical activity?

In relation to sport or physical activity, the general public may travel within their own county, and up to 20 kilometres from their home if crossing county boundaries.

There have been additional, specific, travel exemptions for individual high performance athletes and elite sports teams. Sport Ireland is engaged directly with the relevant sports on this matter.

Q: What is the maximum number of people allowed to participate in sport & physical activity in Phase Two?

Groups of up to 15, including trainers and coaches, may return to non-contact outdoor training activity (but not matches) while maintaining social distancing at all times.

The groups in phase two is applicable to all sports: amateur and professional, team and individual.

The conditions of small group activity in phase two includes:

- 15 participants is considered as a maximum number; smaller group sizes are recommended to minimise risk.
- There must be 2 metres either side and between each person. Social distancing must be observed. The activity which is occurring (i.e. more vigorous) may require further space between participants. Each Group should consider additional social distancing requirements to reflect the nature of their sport/activity.
- The individuals participating in small group activity should remain the same throughout phase two i.e. the same people always train together.
- Small group activity should be conducted in a controlled environment. Groups should be led by an individual who will assume responsibility for the activity and facilitate contact tracing, should it be required.

Q: Can multiple groups of 15 meet and train under Phase Two?

If sufficient space is available than more than one group can conduct an activity simultaneously. However it is advised that space should be maximised where possible for participants in order to risk mitigate.

- Groups should act independently, there should be no interaction between groups.
- Start and finish times of different groups should be staggered to allow appropriate flow and minimise congregation of people.
- Shorter duration sessions will likely reduce risk.

NGBs will need to assess as to how many groups can safely exercise concomitantly on a pitch or training area.

To have two groups on a pitch there may have to be less than 15 in the group in order to participate safely. Attention should be given as to whether equipment (i.e. a ball) can cross over to other group and a greater distance between groups should be sought if this is possible.

There should be no more than two groups on a games pitch or training area at one time.

Q: How should Groups conduct their activities in Phase Two?

Many National Governing Bodies of Sport have developed detailed protocols for their Affiliates, Clubs & members.

In addition the Return to Sport Expert Group has published some helpful [Guidance for Outdoor Sports and Fitness providers](#).

Q: Is competition allowed in Phase Two?

It is not advised that competition will occur in phases one and two for any sport. The current focus for these phases remains on the gradual return to casual play and training. Phase two remains a high risk period.

Q: Phase Two now states that Outdoor summer camps may operate for children. Is there additional information available in relation to summer camps?

The HPSC will be producing a guidance document in relation to outdoor camps. Sport Ireland will circulate Guidelines to the Sector once published.

Q: When will information be provided in relation to Phases Three to Four?

The Expert Group is to invite NGBs to submit phase three protocols during phase two.

A guidance document will be circulated in advance.

It is envisaged that all protocols on the return to sport will reflect and respect Sport Ireland's strategic priorities regarding women in sport and ensuring in particular that there is a gender balanced return for all participants.

Further information and guidance will be published on a Phase by Phase basis as the public health situation evolves over time. Sports should continue to engage with the Sport Ireland NGB Unit throughout the 4 phases on their specific issues.

Inclusivity of Activity – As opportunities to return to sport and physical activity increase, the Expert Group recommend sporting bodies to take an inclusive approach and facilitate as broad a range of participant as possible.

As part of it's work programme the Expert Group will be considering guidance in relation to the return to sport and physical activity for people with disabilities. In the interim sports are encouraged to facilitate activity where there are no immediate health or social distancing barriers.

Sporting Organisations are encouraged to raise any requests for additional advice or support to Expert Group Member Niamh Daffy at ndaffy@caracentre.ie