

RETURN TO RESTRICTED TRAINING ACTIVITY GUIDANCE FOR ATHLETES & RUNNERS

15th May 2020



Introduction

(This guidance document has been developed in adherence to the initial “steps” outlined by the government on 10th May 2020. 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](#).

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. We know that athletes, runners, coaches and athletics venues will be keen to resume athletics activity as soon as it is safe and appropriate for them to do so. England Athletics recognises that wish BUT at the same time wants to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of everyone in the athletics community, facility providers and the wider community is considered as the first priority.

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 taken into account.**

It is the responsibility of each athlete, runner, coach and facility to make that assessment based on their local environment. Risk assessment must take into account 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.

England Athletics is advising that **group activity does not take place** during this first step due to the requirements for social distancing.

Your health: it is of paramount importance that athletes monitor themselves for any signs of the virus, as well as general health. We will be updating specific ‘back to training guidance’ shortly but all 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.
- At this point in time **athletics and running coaching activity can take place on a one-to-one basis only (i.e. one coach and one athlete OR two athletes with no coach present). These two individuals do not need to be from the same family household, but both must adhere to the latest social distancing guidance.**
- Check directly with your Athletics Club on their policy, outdoor track and field facilities should only open at the discretion and with the consent of the facility owner, provider or contractor.
- A coach can carry out a coaching session with one athlete and then coach a further athlete **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.
- Coaches should not coach more than one athlete at any one time, even if one or more of those athletes is not present all the time.

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 your coach.
- At this point in time only outdoor facilities may be used – see our [Guidance for Athletics Venues](#) document for further guidance.
- Athletes 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.
- Athletes should ensure that any risk has been assessed in carrying out their activity.

Equipment/Facility

- Take hand sanitizer with you.
- Read all the facility guidance in our [Guidance for Athletics Venues](#) document.
- Ensure that all equipment is cleaned before and after use.
- **High Jump and Pole Vault beds and sand pits are NOT to be used at this point in time.**
- 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)

- 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.
- Coaching of young athletes should only be undertaken **in sight of** the parent or guardian due to the one-to-one nature of coaching restrictions at the current time.
- Social distancing guidance must be maintained at all times.

Masters athletes

- All guidance applicable to coaches and athletes in this document is relevant to Masters athletes.
- In addition, government guidance on vulnerable persons should be adhered to, if relevant, and taken into account by coaches and individual athletes.

Disabled athletes

- Higher Risk: athletes 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 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: currently, with the social distancing rule of 2m being in place, unless the guide is a family member or part of a family unit then guide running should not be carried 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

- Coaches, athletes and runners should ensure when they are planning to use a facility that they coordinate all activities prior to coaching to ensure social distancing, as well as health and safety and cleaning protocols, can be carried out.
- This communication should take place between all coaches or coaching coordinators and facility providers.
- Coaches, 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, 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 and athletes 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 and athletes must follow any hygiene guidance put in place by a facility.

Track

- Coaches, athletes and runners should ensure they maintain social distancing appropriate for the activity.
- ONE lane gap is **not** socially distanced.
- 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

- **High jump and pole vault landing beds, and sand pits, cannot be used at this first step due to implementation of cleaning guidelines.** High, Long, Triple Jump and Pole Vault activity onto a bed and into a sand pit should not be undertaken at this stage.
- 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 as well as maintain social distancing from any other coaches and athletes using adjacent space.
- Coaches are encouraged to be creative around event specific drills and other activities to bring athletes out of 'lockdown' in preparation for when this equipment can be used in a later 'step'. This would include using poles to practice approach runs and planting, provided all equipment is used by one athlete and then thoroughly cleaned according to guidance before and after each session.

Throws

- Coaches and athletes can participate in throwing activities.
- 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 and athletes running or training in a public space, other than a track and field facility, **can take place on a one-to-one basis only (i.e. one coach and one athlete OR two athletes with no coach present). These two individuals do not need to be from the same family household, but both must adhere to the latest social distancing guidance.**
- Coaches and athletes should adhere to all restrictions that may be placed on a public space by the owner of that space.
- A coach can carry out a coaching session with one athlete and then coach another athlete **after the conclusion of the first session.** Coaches should not coach more than one athlete at any one time.
- Coaches 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 athletes should ensure they carry out standard safety procedures (e.g. phones, route planning etc) when accessing 'wild' public spaces.
- Coaches and 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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