

GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE ON THE PHASED RETURN OF SPORT

In the wake of live sport action returning this week (horseracing and snooker), this note summarises the latest government guidance on the return of elite sport (Stages 2 and 3) in England. This is a follow on to our briefing note "*Government Guidance on the Phased Return of Sport (Stage 1)*" accessible [here](#).

Elite Sport Return to Training Guidance: Stage Two

- This guidance relates to Stage Two of the proposed five stage framework for returning to full unrestricted elite sporting competition. As per Stage One, it is targeted at sports and service providers and elite training centre hosts and operators.
- Stage Two permits:
 - the resumption of close contact training i.e. interaction within the two metre social distancing boundary; and
 - pairs, small groups and/or teams working in much closer contact (e.g. close quarters coaching, combat sports sparring, teams sports tackling, technical equipment sharing, etc).
- Stage One must be completed (with a formal assessment of safe operability) before sports or service providers can proceed to Stage Two.
- The COVID-19 officer (identified at Stage One) must conduct a risk assessment and form a risk mitigation strategy relating to Stage Two training (building upon the Stage One plans). This documentation should cover a minimum of 12 areas, including:
 - Defining how training exercises will be modified so contact is kept to a reasonable minimum
 - Developing hygiene protocols for sports specific items (such as balls, tackle bags, technical clothing and other technical equipment). Sharing should be minimised or eliminated wherever possible
 - Ensuring medical supervision of sessions (noting that only "essential staff" should be present)
 - Identifying what medical, physiotherapy and therapist treatment is "essential" at this stage
 - Monitoring COVID-19 symptoms and testing
 - Training to take place outdoors where possible (if indoors, with ventilation)
 - Keeping meticulous written records of people interactions
- Sports and service providers must ensure that all athletes and coaches are briefed on the risk mitigation strategy associated with Stage Two training and, just like Stage One, how they can "opt out" at any time without discrimination.
- The COVID-19 officer must have a clear policy for managing COVID-19 positive individuals and report cases to Public Health England.
- The exemption from social distancing only applies to the actual sport training. Social distancing must be adhered to in common areas, such as changing rooms.
- Hosts/operators should ensure that modified training does not invalidate their relevant insurance cover.
- All individuals need to abide by government guidelines whilst away from the training facility (adhering to social distancing, maintaining high standards of personal hygiene and not attending a training venue if they have COVID-19 symptoms).

Elite Sport Return to Domestic Competition Guidance: Stage Three

- Stage Three deals with the return to Domestic Competition – No Spectators ("RTDC"). It is a progression from Stages One and Two.
- Before progressing with RTDC plans, competition organisers and competition venue operators ("**Competition Delivery Partners**") and elite sport organisations must consider a set of 8 minimum standards for "all parties":
 - Agree on the roles and responsibilities and control between the Competition Delivery Partners and the elite sport organisation(s)

- o Ensure all relevant standards in Stages One and Two continue to apply. Elite sport organisations must take into account the presence of other User Groups (defined below) in addition to Stages 1 and 2 requirements
- o Identify an appropriate venue which can implement social distancing protocols. The competition should not limit the use of the venue to support NHS or key workers
- o Put in place a decision-making structure and agreed procedure to adapt, postpone or cancel the competition
- o If the Competition Delivery Partners are not the same person, they should enter into a venue use agreement
- Building upon the "opt in" requirements of Stages 1 and 2, all essential groups in attendance at the competition ("**User Groups**") (including competition delivery partners, athletes and teams, support staff, officials, suppliers, medical personnel and media and broadcast) must "opt in" to RDTC.
- If any of the key User Groups chose not to "opt in", consideration must be given to the integrity of the competition and whether the competition can safely proceed in light of the guidance.
- User Groups must also be appraised of risk and mitigation plans. This is also covered under Stages 1 and 2 but now may apply to a wider category of attendees.
- The guidance goes on to provide general and special guidance, including as follows:

General

- o Social distancing between User Groups in the venue is a priority
- o Screening of individuals prior to entry into the venue (i.e. a symptom questionnaire)
- o Any personnel with known or suspected COVID-19 are not permitted at the venue
- o Government guidance on mental health should be factored into planning and consider providing support for workers around mental health and wellbeing

Specific

- o Each Competition Delivery Partner and elite sport organisation (already in place from Stages 1 and 2) should appoint a COVID-19 officer ("**CO**"). The CO appointed by the competition organiser is responsible for ensuring that necessary standards are met including communicating to User Groups
- o Each competition organiser should appoint a named COVID-19 medical officer (and liaise closely with one another)
- o The Competition Delivery Partners (in collaboration with the elite sport organisation(s)) should develop a COVID-19 competition venue operations plan and a COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigation plan taking into account the list of minimum considerations set out in the guidance
- o The Competition Delivery Partners and elite sporting organisations should consider the relevant insurance is in place, implement an anti-doping testing programme complying with all relevant hygiene measures and ensure compliance with statutory requirements (e.g. Health & Safety). Further information on the relevant law can be found in our note "Key Legal Considerations Before any Return to Sport" accessible [here](#).

This note has been prepared on 3 June 2020. Given the live and rapidly evolving nature of events, we will provide further updates as and when things may change.

Onside Law



Harriet Leach
Senior Associate
harriet.leach@onsidelaw.co.uk



Jamie Singer
Partner
jamie.singer@onsidelaw.co.uk