

Government announces allocation of £100 million to support recovery of leisure centres

- 266 local authorities with outsourced publicly-owned leisure centres and gym facilities supported through National Leisure Recovery Fund
- £100m funding allows leisure centres to plan reopening with certainty
- Part of Government commitment to 'building back fitter'

The Government has announced that £100 million has now been allocated to 266 local authorities across England, to support the recovery of publicly-owned leisure centres and gyms.

The National Leisure Recovery Fund, which opened in December 2020, was established to provide a solid funding platform for the leisure sector to successfully reopen. It has been funded by the Government and managed by Sport England.

Allocations will mean that publicly-owned leisure centres and gyms can begin preparations for reopening as part of Step Two of the Prime Minister's roadmap, secured by financial backing from the Government. The lifting of restrictions will be subject to approval.

It follows the Prime Minister's ambition to 'building back fitter' from the coronavirus pandemic, underlined by the multi-billion pound support for the sport and leisure sectors over the past year.

Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

We know that Local Authorities have faced significant financial pressure as a result of the pandemic so this £100 million for leisure will be vital in helping them recover.

Communities across England rely on their local leisure centre or gym to help them keep fit and healthy and this funding will assist those public facilities to make ends meet.

Sport England Chief Executive Tim Hollingsworth said:

Leisure facilities have a vital role to play in supporting the health of the nation and in particular in serving our more disadvantaged communities.

They have been hit especially hard over the past year, so this investment is crucial and will help thousands to reopen when it becomes possible to do so – supporting the recovery and helping

people get back to the activity they have badly missed.

Sport England has worked at pace to enable the distribution of the investment to happen as quickly as possible and remains committed to doing what we can to continue to support this crucial part of our sector.

The £100 million comes on top of Local Authority funding also being increased in the Budget, with an additional £1.5 billion for 2021/22 financial year to be made available to councils.

This takes the total Government contribution to local government finance to over £6 billion for the course of the pandemic, which has helped councils to deliver critical local services such as leisure centres and gyms.

As announced in the Prime Minister's roadmap, leisure centres and gyms will be part of the Step Two reopening. They will be permitted to re-open their doors to the public no earlier than 12 April for individual socially distanced use, with this £100 million providing a significant capital injection to help with restarting.

As part of Step Three, indoor adult group sports and exercise classes will be permitted to resume from no earlier than 17 May.

The financial support comes on top of the sport and leisure sector benefiting from more than £1.5 billion worth of business support that has been made available by the Government, including the furlough scheme, business rates relief and business interruption loan scheme that has helped many sports clubs and leisure businesses to survive.

Grassroots sports and the physical activity sector are also benefiting from £270 million in emergency funding delivered by Sport England. Earlier this month, the Chancellor announced that the Government will provide an initial £25 million to support the growth of grassroots football, which will be enough to build around 700 new pitches across the UK.