

Government outlines conditions for elite athletes' return to competitive training

- Guidance permits close contact training when sport bodies, clubs and teams deem conditions right to do so, following consultation with athletes, coaches and support staff
- Follows guidance supporting initial return to training while maintaining social distancing – the first move towards a resumption of competitive sport behind closed doors

The Government has outlined the conditions for elite athletes and professional sportsmen and women to resume competitive training, in the latest move towards a resumption of live sport behind closed doors when medical experts advise that it is safe to do so.

[The 'stage two' guidance, published today \(25 May\) by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport \(DCMS\)](#), has been developed in close consultation with the Deputy Chief Medical Officers of England, Public Health England and medical representatives across Olympic, Paralympic and professional sports governing bodies.

The guidance makes clear that elite athletes can carry out organised, close contact training – such as close quarters coaching and team sports' tackling – so that players can get match fit, under carefully controlled medical conditions.

However sports bodies, clubs and teams will have a responsibility to decide, in consultation with athletes, coaches and support staff, when it is safe and appropriate to move to stage two training. They are expected to be fully briefed to ensure they have understood the specific risks and mitigations, training site protocols, and the importance of maintaining frequent personal hygiene measures. Athletes and staff should also be clear on their option to 'opt out' at any time.

All athletes, coaches and support staff must also adhere to the existing social distancing guidelines travelling to and from training, and keep time spent within a two metre distance during training to a minimum. Equipment sharing should be avoided, and communal areas, such as changing rooms, cafes, team rooms and recovery spaces, should remain closed where possible. Other restrictions applying to the general population must continue to be adhered to outside training.

Sports Minister Nigel Huddleston said:

This new guidance marks the latest phase of a carefully phased return to training process for elite athletes, designed to limit the risk of injury and protect the health and safety of all involved.

We are absolutely clear that individual sports must review whether they have the appropriate carefully controlled medical conditions in place before they can proceed, and secure the confidence of athletes, coaches and support staff.

Given the wide ranging input we have received from medical experts, we believe these pragmatic measures should provide further reassurance that a safe, competitive training environment can be delivered, as we work towards a restart of professional sport behind closed doors when it is safe to do so.

It follows [initial guidance published last week](#), outlining conditions for a return to individual performance training at official elite training venues while maintaining social distancing from teammates and other people outside their households. This includes safeguards such as the deep cleaning of facilities and the screening of athletes and staff for coronavirus symptoms before they can enter the training venue by an appropriately trained healthcare professional.

Additional guidance on stage three, the resumption of competitive sport behind closed doors, including the infrastructure and processes that will need to be in place to support this, will be published in due course.

The elite sport return to training guidance intends to minimise the risk to the elite sports community, while also minimising any pressure elite sport places on healthcare workers and the wider community during the resumption of training. Like all changes to current measures it will be kept under review in accordance with the Government's Covid alert system.

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The guidance follows the Government's publication of its [COVID-19 recovery strategy](#), as it takes forward the next phase of its response to the virus. This outlined that a return of elite sport will not happen before 1 June and will be dependent on whether the risk assessment posed by coronavirus allows the country to move onto the second step of the Government's recovery strategy.

In addition to guidance for elite athletes, DCMS has published [guidance for the general public on the phased return of outdoor sport and recreation](#).