

A practical guide for event organisers returning to athletics competition

This practical guide, prepared by our team in consultation with **sportscotland** and UK Athletics in line with government guidelines, outlines the specific measures **scottishathletics** recommends that event organisers take to ensure a safe return to athletics activity beyond level 0.

Version 7 – updated on 28 October 2021



Introduction

Most legal restrictions relating to Covid-19 were lifted on the 9th August 2021 when Scotland moved to 'Beyond Level 0'. This included restrictions on physical distancing and the size of social gatherings. Additionally, no businesses had to legally remain closed.

Whilst these changes signal the end of most restrictions for sport and physical activity, they do not signal the end of the epidemic. COVID-19 is a disease that will need to be managed for the foreseeable future. To maintain progress in returning to normality, it is important that people continue to abide by a set of baseline measures covered by Scottish Government guidance and relevant legislation. This includes:

- Good hand hygiene and surface cleaning
- Continued promotion of good ventilation
- Requirement for face coverings in certain settings (e.g., public transport, retail)
- Continued compliance with Test and Protect, including self-isolation when necessary
- Ongoing need for outbreak management capability, including active surveillance
- Continued encouragement of a greater degree of working from home than pre-COVID-19

Participant and Spectator Numbers

Participant and spectator numbers remain restricted beyond level 0, but now with up to **5000** allowed at outdoor events and **2000** at indoor events. Any event organiser wishing to increase spectator numbers must seek an exemption from the relevant local authority and obtain permission from other relevant bodies from which the organiser would normally require agreement to run the competition/event.

The following guidance applies to both indoor and outdoor competitions.

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1. Pre-Competition Planning

Event organisers planning to host an athletics event will need to consider several factors whilst planning their event. In the current climate, this may involve adaptations to usual approaches and additional considerations in some areas:

- Contact the venue (or landowner for off-track events) to ensure all COVID-19 requirements are in place and the venue is still available.
- Consider the maximum number of attendees at the event and how this can be controlled. This will include athletes, coaches, officials, contractors, venue staff and first aid personnel, as well as any parents/guardians supervising children or vulnerable adults, or spectators.
- Plan how the event will be conducted. This should include the flow of athletes, officials and other attendees from arrival through competition and departure. Create a map or other visual representation to share with attendees, if possible. This should also involve consultation with venue staff for stadium events.
- Determine the format of your competition. Considerations might include wave starts; introducing qualifying conditions such as expected finish time or the age range the event is open to; and whether you can offer a virtual alternative alongside or instead of the physical event.
- Be aware of where your attendees may be travelling from and consider whether any will be affected by international travel restrictions.
- Event organisers should discuss with the **scottishathletics** Covid Coordinator and/or Events Team any COVID-related concerns they may have.

2. Competition Preparation

Once an event licence is in place, the event organiser should begin finalising their plans for how the event will be delivered. This includes regular liaison with the venue/landowner and local authority, event programming, event promotion and determining how important information will be communicated to attendees.

Key Principles

- Event organisers have a responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure their activities and the event environment are as safe as possible for all.
- Medical provision must remain in line with current guidance, with additional requirements specific to the current Covid-19 situation in place.
- Venues must have adequate space for parking/warm up/cool down etc to maintain a free flow of people.

Venue Liaison

The event organiser should work with their venue to ensure that their event site will adhere to all current government guidance. All event organisers must complete, often with the venue provider, a detailed risk assessment covering all of the event's risks, including those related to COVID-19.

Venue considerations in relation to COVID-19 should include:

- Maximum number of ALL attendees, including venue staff, contractors, officials, athletes, coaches, parents, first aid, catering, etc.
- Hygiene/cleaning requirements for equipment and facilities to meet COVID 19 guidance.
- Catering arrangements (if any) for public and event staff/officials.
- Toilet allocation and changing facilities (if available), meeting all guidance on hygiene/cleaning requirements. This includes accessible toilets, which must be available.

- Ingress and egress, including routes from parking to the event area, for all competitors, parents/guardians and officials/volunteers whilst maintaining sufficient space for individuals. This could include one-way systems and/or restricted access to specific areas.

Event Programming

Event organisers must consider the format of their event in advance and ensure that it complies with any restrictions in place on the day.

Programming considerations may include but are not limited to:

- Entries should be taken online or prior to the event to ensure numbers of attendees and scheduling of events can be planned in advance and all attendee details can be recorded.
- It is advised that bibs/numbers are provided to participants in advance, where possible. If the event organiser decides that bib numbers are collected on the day of their event, any registration/declarations areas must be of a suitable size.
- Events must be timetabled and planned with sufficient time allowed between heats/groups/events to ensure maximum numbers within the venue are not exceeded, including warm up and cool down time.

Promotion of Events

- Ensure that all event advertising is factually correct and includes information about what facilities will be available for use, including parking, toilets, spectator areas, etc.
- Event organisers must take care not to mislead or force the athletics community in any way to take part in their competition. Sensitivity will help to ease the return to competition for many who may be feeling apprehensive in the current climate. Many may not yet feel ready to return to competition in any format and should have the choice not to do so until they feel prepared.

Participant information and management

All participants and individuals connected to them should have information provided to them prior to the event about how the event will run. This includes information on access, egress, event provisions, competitor and spectator management, competition management and timetables. All health and safety and risk mitigations should be communicated prior to the event. Information around procedures for registration, warm up, and cool down should also be communicated in advance.

Venue and Facility Considerations

- Any venue being used as part of the event is likely to have its own procedures and protocols in place. Liaise with your venue operator to ensure that all working spaces and facilities used are organised in a way that space between people can be maintained.
- Where a permanent building containing toilet facilities cannot be used or will become very busy, consider increasing the number of portable toilets on-site to reduce queuing, and ensure that these are fully stocked and replenished with hand sanitisers or soap and water and paper towels throughout the event.

Event Staff/Volunteers, Suppliers and Contractors

- All event staff, suppliers and contractors involved in the delivery of an event must receive and acknowledge detailed briefings on COVID guidelines before arriving at any event site.
- Event staff and volunteers must be supplied with suitable PPE if required for their role.
- Event organisers should develop suitable plans to monitor staff and volunteers for COVID-19 symptoms. Anyone showing COVID-19 symptoms, and those who have been in close contact with

them, must follow all up to date government instructions regarding isolation, contact tracing and testing.

- Event organisers' named COVID-19 Officer shall be the first point of contact for all contractors, volunteers and staff throughout the build and takedown period, as well as during the event itself. The COVID-19 Officer will be responsible for oversight of the risk and mitigation planning and will ensure that the necessary standards are met.
- The Event organiser should develop an event operations plan that considers measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at the event, and a COVID-19 risk assessment and mitigation plan. Depending on the scale of the event, consideration should be given to the following:
 - A code of behaviour for all contractors, volunteers and staff throughout the build and de-rig periods which provides clear operational guidelines.
 - A map of the event site and the course/route, defining all areas, routes and access/egress.
 - The maximum capacity and layout for each area.
 - A signage plan to support the implementation of the guidelines.

Attendees, Residents and Businesses

- Event organisers should clearly communicate any arrangements for spectators, such as total expected numbers and any pre-registration requirements.
- If appropriate, organisers should update existing plans for attendees and crowd flows to help to ensure numbers in attendance can be managed safely and in line with COVID-19 protocols.
- Event organisers should also take pre-emptive action to combat known points of crowding, including preventing access to those areas if necessary or applying one-way systems. This may be, for example, areas close to the finish line, or at narrower points on an off-track course/route. This is particularly important indoors.
- Organisers may need to inform local residents and businesses that the event is taking place, explaining how the event is being held safely.

3. Health, Safety and Hygiene

Reinforce good hygiene practices prior to, during, and after your event, as participants may be asymptomatic. You must stay at home if you have tested positive for Covid-19; have Covid-19 symptoms; or if you have been asked to self-isolate at home by [Scottish Government Test and Protect system](#). If you are returning from a country outside the UK, you must follow the Scottish Government guidance on testing and quarantine.

Event Organisers should link with venue staff to ensure that usual access to first aid and emergency equipment is maintained. Ensure that first aid equipment has been updated appropriately for the COVID pandemic and first aiders are aware of COVID-19 specific first aid advice. External first aid providers must conduct a Covid-19 risk assessment and provide suitable PPE for their staff's use.

Additional safety information can be found through the following links:

[Health & Safety Executive – COVID-19 First Aid Advice](#)

[Resuscitation Council UK – COVID-19](#)

[UK Government – guidance for first responders](#) (Section 7)

Cleaning Advice

- Event organisers must ensure that hygiene equipment is provided for staff, officials and volunteers at all times.

- Hand sanitiser should be at least 60% alcohol based and detergent wipes appropriate for the surface they are being used on.
- Organisers must ensure that all relevant areas of the event site are cleaned to the standard defined in the government guidance.
- High Jump and Pole Vault beds should be cleaned / sprayed with a suitable disinfectant solution before and after each session (in competition, this may mean a morning and afternoon session, rather than after each individual athlete). A high mist spray PFC1 grade cleaner should be used on the landing beds.
- Sand Pits should be cleaned with sterilising fluid spray of a suitable concentration to neutralise the virus and raked before and after each session. Pits should be raked as normal between athletes' trials.
- Venue guidance on required cleaning of equipment must be sought and followed at all times, as this may differ from the above suggestions. Individual venue guidance for cleaning must be followed at all times.

4. Event-Specific Guidance

In all cases, normal risk assessment procedures and high-quality practice should be adhered to, as well as the implementation of any additional requirements to promote space and hygiene. Anyone involved in a competition should ensure that they have followed government hygiene rules including washing hands and cleaning any equipment prior to use, as well as any additional hygiene guidance put in place by the event venue. Although physical distancing is no longer required within the covid secure environment, **scottishathletics** that athletes and spectators respect the space of others.

Travel to and from the Event

- Organisers should advise attendees to follow Transport Scotland guidance when travelling to and from the event.
- Organisers should adapt their plans to ensure that transport systems can cope with the volume of people attending the event. This could include staggering start times and asking separate start waves to arrive and leave at different times.

Warm Up and Assembly

- If you cannot distribute runner numbers in advance, ensure that your registration/declarations area has sufficient space for those who need to report there.
- Organisers should consider whether some facilities (e.g. bag drop, information desk) are necessary at the event and either remove elements likely to cause participants to congregate or mitigate that congregation (e.g. queue lines/markers, etc) where possible.
- It is recommended that event organisers advise athletes to report for their event 'ready to compete' with as little additional baggage as possible.

Off-Track Events

Event organisers must ensure that their start area allows plenty of space for athletes to gather and for officials to carry out their duties. This could be achieved by:

- Clear messaging to participants to follow start line protocols (e.g. seeding by predicted time).
- Ensuring that the start line is as wide as possible, and that the time available for participants to cross the start line is maximised.

- Reducing the assembly time before the start to a minimum, ensuring that runners are not congregating in the start area for too long.

Whilst the finish of any event is a positive environment, hygiene measures must remain of paramount importance.

- At the end of the race, organisers should ensure that finishers are dispersed quickly away from the finish line.
- Where possible, increase the width of the finish chute to give competitors more space when crossing the finish line – however it is accepted that timing points may limit this. Discuss options with your chip timer to ensure that times can still be recorded.
- Ensure competitors do not sit or lie down within the finish area (unless in the case of a medical issue). Identify volunteers to make sure that competitors are not congregating at the post-finish area. These volunteers should wear PPE appropriate to their role and have hand washing/sanitiser facilities available.
- If drinks stations must be used, they should be set up to minimise contact time. Sealed bottles are recommended, rather than open cups. In longer-distance events, the use of feed stations should be minimised, and participants encouraged to bring their own hydration and nutrition to the event using bottle belts, hydration backpacks, etc. where possible.

Post competition

Post competition, the venue must be returned to its original state, ensuring all venue equipment is thoroughly cleaned in line with the venue and government guidelines. Each competitor, official, and volunteer who was in the competition area during the event must be briefed to ensure that they are aware that if they show signs of COVID-19 within one week of the competition, you, the event organiser, must be informed. This is in line with the Government Test and Protect system. You should also collect details of spectators in attendance on the day in case you need to contact them. **scottishathletics** must also be notified through the event returns process if there is a positive COVID-19 case following a licensed competition.

5. **scottishathletics** Staff Contacts

Any general event queries should be directed to events@scottishathletics.org.uk in the first instance. This includes queries from event organisers, as well as athletes, coaches and clubs.

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All other staff contacts can be found at the following link:
<https://www.scottishathletics.org.uk/about/people/staff/>