**School Swimming and COVID -19 Considerations**

1. **Schools using other pools**
2. **Schools with their own pool**
3. **Hire of school pools**

**Key dates – these are the earliest possible dates for re-opening of pools and subject to change.**

* **School use of their own pool for school swimming was able to resume from 8th March.**
* **29th March Outdoor pools able to re-open for all activities**

Can be used by people in line with the wider social contact limits. (Rule of 6 or with one other household).

Formally organised outdoor sports are not subject to the gatherings limits,but should be compliant with guidance issued by national governing bodies.

* **12th April Indoor pools able to re-open**

At this point all children’s activities can resume, so learn to swim classes and club sessions, across all disciplines, for under 18s will be able to resume.

* **17th May Adult indoor sport able to resume**

Club sessions and group exercise classes in the water for over 18s cannot resume until Step 3 (from 17 May).

Swim England has published detailed guidance for the safe use of swimming pools, club activity and swimming lessons must adhere to this [**Returning to the Pool guidance**](https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/pool-return-guidance-documents).

1. **Schools using other pools (public pools, other school pools etc.)**

See <https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/pool-return-guidance-documents/>

* Contact your pool operator to discuss any changes / limitations that may apply to delivery of swimming lessons and the arrangements they have put in place to minimise transmission risks.
* They should provide you with their updated Pool Safety Operating Procedures (PSOP) which should include Risk assessments, Normal Operating Procedures (NOP) and Emergency Action Plans (EAP).
* Pool Operators should work in partnership with schools to outline an agreement and suitable approach for the delivery of school swimming lessons.
* In particular be aware of any changes to their maximum bather loads and teacher to swimmer ratios.

(Government guidance in ‘Providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities’ document, suggests a minimum of 3 sqm of water space per bather as a starting point. However Swim England have recommended a minimum figure for swimming lessons / clubs / instructor lead activities of 6m2 of per person)

**Pool operators**

All Pool Operators should have reviewed their buildings and ensured these are COVID secure there should be available pool and changing room space to allow for social distancing, including entry and exit points into the pool.

Operators should be clear on:

* How they are ensuring hygiene standards in the swimming pool area;
* The increased frequency of cleaning particularly in well-used areas, changing rooms etc.
* Ensuring hand washing facilities/hand sanitisers are well equipped and checked regularly;
* How social distancing is being facilitated, they should be limiting multi-activity use.

Other specific measures could include:

* A one-way system around the poolside;
* Separate entry and exit points;
* For lane swimming double width lanes and allocation of slow / medium and fast lanes
* Markers on poolside along length of pool to identify social distancing measures

Ensure you are clear on expectations and any changes **before** arrival and that all accompanying staff are briefed. Any concerns should be raised immediately with the pool manager.

**Areas for schools to seek assurance:**

* What assurance is there that cleaning has taken place before your school use of the pool and changing rooms?
* Has sufficient time been allowed by the pool between use of changing room / pool by different groups?
* Do you have dedicated use of the pool / changing rooms?

*If not, robust assurance over how social distancing will be maintained (E.g. is the pool zoned to ensure 2M distancing between your group and other users; what changes have been made to the changing room layout etc.)*

* If any swimming aids / equipment is provided – floats, woggles etc how are these cleaned before your use?
* Will pupils be expected to arrive swim ready?
* Location of Hand sanitiser (entrance to building, changing rooms etc.)?

**Swimming teachers**

* All swimming teachers should have familiarised themselves with relevant guidance including Swim England’s returning to the pool.
* Given the time that’s elapsed since swimming for some children then ensure the swimming teacher recaps on pool rules, emergency procedures etc. in the first lesson back as well as social distancing rules and how lessons may be different.
* Swimming teaching should be delivered from poolside to support current social distancing guidance.

**School responsibilities**

* Gain assurance from pool provider on the delivery of swimming lessons.
* Ensure you are clear on their expectations and any changes **before** arrival and that all accompanying staff are briefed. Any concerns should be raised immediately with the pool manager.
* Obtain copies of their Operating procedures and risk assessment.
* Review your offsite visit risk assessment and ensure this takes account of any additional COVID controls (hand sanitising, social distancing etc)
* Ensure staff and pupils are briefed on expectations.
* Whilst at the pool follow the pool operators expectations on social distancing, use of one way systems etc.
* Use hand sanitiser stations made available by the pool.
* Ensure swimmers are kept in the same clear and consistent groups as they are in school.
* Pupils are to sanitise hands before leaving school, on entry to pool building, on leaving pool and on return to school.
1. **Schools with their own pools**

See <https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/pool-return-guidance-documents/>

**School Swimming Guidance – COVID-19 – Return to pool** <https://swimming.app.box.com/s/aydu72bn10zwui6mgv34pmi8od8e9ko7/file/722437574187>

**PWTAG technical guidance**

Reopening a pool after COVID-19 shutdown : <https://www.pwtag.org/reopening-pool-after-covid19-shutdown/>

Operation after COVID-19 shutdown <https://www.pwtag.org/swimming-pool-technical-operation-after-covid-19-shutdown/>

**Key considerations:**

* Allocate a member of staff to have responsibility for management of swimming lessons and compliance with COVID controls.
* Review your existing swimming pool operating procedures (NOP / EAP) and risk assessment.
* Review your maximum bather load and staff to swimmer ratios. Any programmed session in the pool should seek to maintain social distancing in line with government advice. (Government guidance in ‘Providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities’ document, suggests a minimum of 3 sqm of water space per bather as a starting point. However Swim England have recommended a minimum figure for swimming lessons / clubs / instructor lead activities of 6m2 of per person)
* Review your available pool and changing room space and determine capacity to maximise social distancing. *(Schools should minimise contact and mixing by keeping children in their same consistent groups for swimming as with remainder of school day.)*
* Recap pool rules, water safety and emergency procedures with all users before the 1st lesson.
* Teaching is to be from the poolside to support social distancing. *Swim England recommend all teachers are to deliver from poolside where possible in line with current social distancing guidance. However, if there is a specific need for a teacher to deliver from within the water, this requires a robust risk assessment.*
* Allow sufficient time between lessons for cleaning and changeover of groups.

**Equipment use**

* Minimise the use of equipment where possible, only essential items should be provided.
* Allocate equipment to each group (use a box / bag to keep together and clean after each lesson), rotating the use of equipment will reduce the amount of cleaning required.

*(Alternatively, equipment could be ‘quarantined’ and left unused for 72*

*hours, this may be easier than attempting to clean in some cases, Where equipment is quarantined ensure this is clearly labelled with day used / next day available for use.)*

* Where equipment is used in a lesson (floats, woggles etc.) ideally allocate this to an individual (number or colour code equipment if that helps e.g. numbered floats for learners).
* Shared equipment must be appropriately cleaned between groups (as should touch surfaces such as handrails, pool ladder etc.)

## **Inflatables**

In line with PWTAG advice these should not be used, inflating them could create aerosols, they are not easy to clean and it is difficult to maintain distancing when in use.

**Cleaning**

See also <https://www.pwtag.org/disinfecting-coronavirus/>

Cleaning Equipment: Some buoyancy aids, in particular floats and noodles, are produced from open celled ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM) which allows water to be retained within the structure. PWTAG advises that after each use buoyancy aids should be submerged in a solution of 100mg/l available chlorine for one hour, then rinsed off with tap water before reuse. This can be done by using a dirty and clean storage system so that used flotation devices are submerged for an hour before transfer to the clean holding area.

For the health and safety of both staff and bathers, any containers used for cleaning purposes should be labelled: eg either as used equipment that has not yet been cleaned and disinfected; or as cleaned and disinfected equipment. Disinfectants should be stored safely and securely.

**Frequently touched surfaces** – e.g. door/toilet handles, lockers and changing cubicles, ladder rails etc. should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily and also when known to be contaminated with secretions / body fluids.

**Changing rooms, toilets and lockers areas.** These areas should be cleaned and disinfected frequently at least twice daily, and before use by another group / bubble.

**Cleaning in the event of a suspected / positive case on site**

In line with PHE advice then in the event of a suspected case / positive case on site disinfection should be undertaken as follows:

*Use disposable cloths or paper roll and disposable mop heads, to clean all hard surfaces, floors, handles, sanitary fittings etc. following one of the options below:*

* *use either a combined detergent disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1,000 parts per million available chlorine*

*or*

* *a household detergent followed by disinfection (1000 ppm av.cl.). Follow manufacturer’s instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants*

*or*

* *if an alternative disinfectant is used ensure that it is effective against enveloped viruses*

[**PWTAG Technical note 44 (Disinfecting coronavirus)**](https://www.pwtag.org/disinfecting-coronavirus/) has details on disinfection methodology. There is further guidance on gov.uk: [**COVID-1:cleaning of non-healthcare settings**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) .

**Showers**

If showers are unused then they should be flushed weekly for 15 minutes.

**Pool water**

Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group (PWTAG) is the recognised body for swimming water quality standards in the UK, ensure the pool is operating within the guidance detailed in PWTAG technical notes which can be found at <https://www.pwtag.org/>

Swimming pools are commonly disinfected with chlorine (as a primary disinfectant). SARS-CoV-2 is an enveloped virus that is sensitive to chlorination. Covid-19 should not be transmissible through the swimming pool water if the pool is operated in line with PWTAG guidance.

With adequately disinfected pool water the main risk is through airborne respiratory transmission from a person carrying this virus to others and contact surfaces not from waterborne transmission.

See [PWTAG Document Technical operation after Covid-19 shutdown (TN46)](https://www.pwtag.org/swimming-pool-technical-operation-after-covid-19-shutdown/) for full details.

* During COVID the operating pH for your pool water should be reduced to between 7.0 to 7.4 and ideally maintained between 7.0 to 7.2.
* The free chlorine concentration should be at least 1.5 mg/l at pH 7 and ideally at the top of the recommended range for your pool.
* If the pool cannot realistically achieve a pH below 7.4, the minimum free chlorine residual (from hypochlorite or chlorine gas) may have to be as high as 2.7mg/l as long as the pandemic continues.
* Combined chlorine concentrations should be maintained at less than half the free, never more than 1.0mg/l and as low as possible.
* School’s should test the pool water for free and combined chlorine and pH at frequent, regular intervals. PWTAG recommends testing **before bathing starts and every two hours after that.**

Results should be recorded and initialled, and senior staff immediately notified if they are not within the specified range. All resulting actions should be documented.

* PWTAG’s recommendation during this pandemic is that pools using cyanuric acid or chlorinated isocyanurates **including outdoor pools**– should maintain cyanuric acid levels below 100mg/l and minimum free chlorine of 5mg/l. This may mean dumping and diluting pool water more than usual.

**Circulation and hydraulics**

In order to get good dilution of any released virus particles and to ensure the distribution of free chlorine such that the risk of infection is minimised, it is important to maintain the circulation of the pool water at 100%.

As the virus is probably inactivated more quickly than it can be physically removed, the emphasis should be on maintaining sufficient residual of free chlorine throughout the pool water. If the circulation is sufficient to ensure the desired free chlorine residual in all parts of the pool, then the prime objective (disinfection) is achieved.

It is also important to remove any contaminated water from the pool as soon as possible, through the pool hydraulics and circulation system. This is more readily achieved in a deck-level pool with 80-100% surface water removal. Pools that use circulation systems utilising scum channels or skimmers will not achieve the same contamination removal rate, so it is important that they are kept clean and free from debris.

**Air handling/ventilation in pool halls**

An outdoor pool with appropriate disinfection and pH, and bathers correctly distancing, should provide a relatively safe environment.

**Indoor pools:** Most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment, however where systems serve multiple buildings, advice should be sought from an appropriate heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineer or adviser.

All heating/cooling, ventilation systems should be checked by a suitably qualified person prior to opening the pool.

You should ensure the rate of supply of outside air to occupants is a minimum of 20L per person per second as a precautionary measure.

Reducing recirculation and increasing the proportion of outside air reduces contamination generally, including disinfection byproducts and any airborne viruses.

It is recommended that any pool hall ventilation system which normally runs with recirculation should where possible maximise the input of outside fresh air.  There is further guidance on the [**CIBSE website**](https://www.cibse.org/coronavirus-covid-19) and in Swim England’s [**Return to Pools Guidance**](https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/pool-return-guidance-documents/).

**Life saving**

Lifeguards should adhere to government guidance on social distancing (please refer to the **RLSS UK’s guidance on lifeguard provision**).

[**https://www.rlss.org.uk/guidance-for-swimming-pool-operators-managing-lifeguards-during-covid-19**](https://www.rlss.org.uk/guidance-for-swimming-pool-operators-managing-lifeguards-during-covid-19)

* Ensure all lifeguards wash their hands on arrival and throughout their shift
* Provide hand sanitiser on poolside for lifeguards to use

**First Aid**

See <https://www.rlss.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=b7038891-7673-4fed-a5eb-0ed57e47b1c1>

* Where rescue equipment that has been used it should be disinfected immediately.
* It is important that lifeguards / those providing life saving have PPE **immediately available.**
* Consider providing lifeguards with personal bum bags to carry protective equipment in, or an emergency grab bag positioned next to lifeguard positions.
* If Operators choose to use bum bags, hand sanitisers could also be issued and kept in the bum bag.
* PPE should be stored so it is protected, it must be checked pre-duty, to ensure it remains in a useable and safe condition.
* Provide all relevant employees with suitable training for use and disposal of all PPE.

See Public Health resources on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-use-for-non-aerosol-generating-procedures>

**Putting on PPE** <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/911311/PHE_Putting_on_PPE__Standard_infection_control_procedures.pdf>

**Taking off PPE** <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/911312/PHE_Taking_off_PPE_standard_infection_control_procedures.pdf>

**Video on putting on / taking off PPE** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GncQ_ed-9w>

**Suggested PPE for first aid**

Face mask type IIR, disposable gloves, apron, Face shield

**Carrying out a Rescue**

**Paediatric and Drowning Casualty CPR**

Paediatric cardiac arrest is unlikely to be caused by a cardiac problem and is more likely to be a respiratory one, making ventilations crucial to the child or infant’s chances of survival.

This also applies to a drowning casualty.

Resuscitation Council UK provide additional guidance for paediatric casualties here:

https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-

coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/covid-community/

*We accept that doing rescue breaths will increase the risk of transmitting the COVID-19 virus, either to the rescuer or the child/infant. However, this risk is small compared to the risk of taking no action as this will result in certain cardiac arrest and the death of the child.*

<https://www.resus.org.uk/covid-19-resources/covid-19-resources-general-public/resuscitation-council-uk-statement-covid-19>

1. **Hiring of school pools**

See also all the above advice for schools with their own pools.

**Key considerations:**

* Ensure your terms and conditions of hire are amended to take COVID-19 into account. General advice on this is available on the Grid

<https://thegrid.org.uk/health-and-safety-offsite-visits-premises/health-and-safety/premises-and-site-related>

* Review your risk assessment for hirers and provide them with your operating procedures and risk assessment.
* Review the maximum bather loads and communicate these to hirers.
* Confirm contact information for lead booker for a group or all visitors (records maintained for 21 days) to aid track and trace. (Name, contact phone number, date of visit arrival / departure time)
* Schools to decide if the [NHS QR code poster](https://www.gov.uk/create-coronavirus-qr-poster) and check in function is to be used for members of the public when premises are let to external providers. Schools and FE providers are not expected to create NHS QR code posters for their normal day to day operations.

*Government guidance in ‘Providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities’ document, suggests a minimum of 3 sqm of water space per bather as a starting point.*

*Schools would be expected to comply with Swim England recommended figures for specific activities as follows:*

*Community lane swimming 6 m2 min per person*

*Open public swim 9 m2 per person*

*Family swim / parent and baby 6m2 per person (family groups don’t need to socially distance); 1 parent and 1 baby counts as 1 when considering social distancing.*

*Swimming lessons / clubs / instructor lead 6m2 per person*

* Limit any multi activity use. Keep to dedicated use of pool by single hirer at any one time.
* As the pool operator you should implement an effective method of controlling and recording the numbers of pool users with hirers.
* Review the available pool and changing room space to allow for correct social distancing, including entry and exit points. (Participants from the same household can participate amongst themselves without social distancing as per government guidelines.)
* Hirers such as swimming clubs etc to provide their risk assessments to the school and provide assurance on numbers and ability to maintain social distancing both in the water, on poolside and in changing rooms. **As the pool operator schools must monitor this.**
* Instructors should deliver from poolside and adhere to government guidance on social distancing.

**Hygiene**

* Hand sanitisers to be available and supplied monitored e.g. at entry to building / changing rooms.

**Safety information and signs**

* Encourage and advertise current distancing guidance.
* Safety signs should be in place to remind pool users of risk control measures and the need to maintain social distancing.
* Queue management consider if any social distancing markings on the floor and if necessary outside the entrance are required.

**Social distancing**

* Encourage only one parent/guardian to escort the swimmer if required to all activities.
* Depending on the size of any spectator area, access to the area will need to be reviewed. This means reducing the previous maximum capacity to observe lessons.
* Clear communication of the social distancing measures you put in place with parents/guardians. Display temporary signage and use directional arrows to demonstrate the changes to parents/guardians.

**Equipment use**

* All equipment should be sanitised before and after each activity.
* Minimise the use of equipment (where possible participants should bring their own equipment.), only essential items should be provided.
* Shared equipment must be appropriately cleaned between groups (as should touch surfaces such as handrails, pool ladder etc.)
* In line with PWTAG advice these should not be used, inflating them could create aerosols, they are not easy to clean and it is difficult to maintain distancing when in use.

**Lane swimming**

* When determining the capacity of lane swimming, operators should consider the advice on assessing risk in the pool as set out in the **Swim England Guidance for Operators***.*
* Operators should consider double width lanes when setting up for lane swimming.

**Family sessions**

* Participants from the same household are not required to socially distance from each other but will be required to maintain a social distance from others.
* Encourage only one parent/guardian per child should be allowed to supervise their child during swimming lessons
* All children under the age of eight should always be accompanied in the water and changing areas during unprogrammed swimming sessions by a parent. Operators can use their own discretion to temporarily adjust this age limit should they feel necessary, in-light of the government guidelines on social distancing.

**Changing rooms**

* Swimmers have a personal responsibility as does the hirer and the school as the pool operator to ensure social distancing in changing rooms.
* Provide washing facilities and hand sanitiser in changing rooms
* Consider if floor stickers/markings indicating social distancing are needed.
* Establish occupancy levels to assist social distancing arrangements.
* Implement effective cleaning regimes, paying particular attention to touch points.
* Schools should monitor occupancy and ensure the cleaning regime is robust.
* Requirements for social distancing need to be considered which will include the consideration of the size, style and layout to determine changing room capacities enabling social distancing to be respected by users and time allocated for cleaning.
* To mitigate the effect of this hirers should enable a ‘beach style turn up and swim’ option to minimise time spent in the changing rooms E.g. Come ready changed (costume under clothing) , encourage swimmers to shower directly before leaving home.