



Scottish
Swimming

Aquatic Participation Community Swimming & Instructor-led Sessions

Back to the Water COVID-19 Guidance

Phase 3

Updated 10 November 2020

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1.0 Introduction

The following guidance has been developed in co-operation with industry partners.

This document aims to support pool operators and providers to help guide their pool users when returning to swimming facilities, to take part in community swimming or instructor-led sessions, following the period of closure due to COVID-19. It provides guidance on reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission within the swimming pool environment.

It will highlight the continued requirements for safe physical distancing and enhanced hygiene regimes, along with guidance on how this will impact on the different experience the pool user will have.

Links to best practice and other industry standard guidance will be provided where appropriate.

As with all environments, there is still a level of risk of COVID-19 transmission in aquatic settings that requires control measures to be implemented. Operators must create their own risk assessment for each activity before implementing any of the activities listed below.

2.0 Community Swimming – guiding principles

The following guidance relates to activities for the public including casual swimming, lane swimming and family swim sessions.

- Providers should review their pool programme in advance of opening, to limit multi-activity use at any one time
- Providers should review available pool space and set-up to allow for correct physical distancing, including entry and exit points
- Lifeguards should adhere to government guidance on physical distancing (please refer to the [RLSS UK's guidance on lifeguard provision](#), or your lifeguard training provider)
- When determining the capacity of community activities, providers should consider the advice on assessing risk in the pool from the [Scottish Swimming Pool Operators Back to the Water COVID-19 Guidance](#)
- Participants should adhere to Scottish Government guidance on physical distancing when walking or waiting on poolside
- While in the water participants should adhere to Scottish Government guidance on physical distancing in relation to others in the pool or those on poolside
- Providers should consider asking participants not to overtake whilst lane swimming in order to comply with physical distancing measures
- Participants from the same household can participate amongst themselves without physical distancing as per government guidelines
- Equipment should not be issued to customers for community activity during this time and where possible participants should bring their own for example floats, kickboards, pull buoys etc...
- Equipment that cannot be sanitised in the pool should be appropriately cleaned between activities. Touch points of both fixed and free equipment, such as handrails and access stairs, should be cleaned after every session.

3.0 Instructor-led Activity – guiding principles

The following guidance relates to activities that require an instructor on poolside but are not a swimming lesson. This may include aquafit, aqua aerobics and exercise referral sessions.

- When determining the capacity of classes, providers should consider the advice on assessing risk in the pool from the [Scottish Swimming Pool Operators Back to the Water COVID-19 Guidance](#)
- Providers should review available pool space and pool set-up to allow for correct physical distancing, including at entry and exit points
- Lifeguards should adhere to government guidance on physical distancing (please refer to the [RLSS UK's guidance on lifeguard provision](#), or your lifeguard training provider)
- **Instructors should adhere to Scottish Government guidance on physical distancing and face coverings**
- Participants should adhere to Scottish Government guidance on physical distancing when walking or waiting on poolside
- While static in the water participants should adhere to Government guidance on physical distancing in relation to others in the pool or those on poolside
- Where possible participants should bring their own equipment
- When session planning, instructors should aim to rotate the use of different pieces of equipment from one session to the next rather than during a session, this will minimise the amount of cleaning required
- All equipment should be sanitised before and after each activity. This can be achieved simply and effectively by rinsing equipment in the pool
- Equipment that cannot be sanitised in the pool should be appropriately cleaned between activities. Touch points of both fixed and free equipment, such as handrails and access stairs, should be cleaned after every session.

4.0 Summary of Guidance with Practical Ideas for Implementation

Guidance	Practical ideas and considerations
<p>Pool users - Customer journey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure marketing collateral and communication channels are up to date with latest information. • Share pool user guidance with advice for participants on what to bring and time frame for when to arrive. • Prepare guidance/interactive video on the customer journey to and through the changing rooms on to poolside, so participants know what to expect.
<p>Programming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit multi activity use of the pool - programme one activity at a time with clear start and finish times. • Offer pre-bookable sessions only. • Allow time in between activities for cleaning and changer over of participants. • The use of slides, flumes, inflatables and special water features to be risk assessed on an individual basis to ensure the risk of COVID-19 can be adequately controlled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review pool programme and new timetable to be produced. • If the facility has more than one pool, consider alternating the use of pools for activities to help with cleaning and physical distancing. • A time limit could be applied to lane swimming bookings depending on demand.
<p>Applying physical distancing – poolside</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants should adhere to guidelines on physical distancing. • Operators should review available pool space to allow for correct physical distancing, including entry and exit points into the pool. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply a one-way system around poolside for participants. • Separate entry and exit points into the pool to be identified if possible. • Signage to be displayed to highlight any measures and changes to participants.
<p>Applying physical distancing – in the pool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators should refer to the risk factor profile in order to determine bather loads and ratios. • While static in the water participants should adhere to Scottish Government guidance on physical distancing in relation to others in the pool or those on poolside. • When travelling through the water, participants should aim to maintain as much distance as possible from other participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lane etiquette signage to be used. • Consider double width lanes for public lane swimming. • During public lane swimming, allocate a slow, medium and fast paced lane/section. • Consider positioning the faster, more confident swimmers in the centre of the pool. • Participants should not overtake whilst swimming.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children aged 11 years and younger are not required to physically distance at any time, as set out in Scottish Government guidance. • For those over 12 years of age taking part in indoor sporting or leisure activity normal physical distancing rules should be followed. • People from the same household can participate without physical distancing as per Scottish Government guidelines, however participants must adhere to Scottish Government guidance on physical distancing in relation to participants in the pool out with their household. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider using markers on the poolside, along the length of the pool, to identify physical distancing. • Participants should not leave their drinks bottle at the end of the lane. Consider allocating a space for participants to leave their drink and take a rest out of the pool. Participants should be reminded to adhere to physical distancing guidelines. • Consider configuring the pool for family sessions – each household has their own section of the pool. • Consider adding structure to your family sessions by utilising an activator/instructor to deliver family fun based activities from the poolside. • During public lane sessions a household could book a lane. • Consider using floor stickers/markers to allocate a position for participants during classes.
<p>Equipment usage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment should be sanitised before and after each activity, including surfaces in high traffic areas such as handrails and access stairs. • Participants should bring their own personal equipment, including drink bottles. • Instructors should aim to rotate the use of different pieces of equipment from one session to the next rather than during a session, this will minimize the amount of cleaning required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate your cleaning regime and schedule with users. • Instructors should be responsible for cleaning their own equipment.
<p>Instructor-led activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructors should deliver from poolside. • Instructors should adhere to Government guidance on physical distancing and face coverings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration to be given to the safety and management of the group. This may mean reviewing the amount of pool space required and class ratios. • When session planning instructors should take into consideration any changes in pool space and ratios. Poolside based activities should also be avoided, participants should remain in the water for the duration of the session. • A face covering must be worn by all coaches when indoors, except where an exemption applies (for instance, if you have a health condition or you are disabled, including hidden disabilities, for example, autism, dementia or a learning disability), or where there is a reasonable excuse not to wear a

	<p>face covering such as being physically active or exercising as part of a coached session. The priority should at all times be on ensuring the safety of the coach and participants and minimising the risk of virus transmission as much as possible. This should be considered as part of your risk assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If the instructor is delivering to a larger area of pool space than usual consider:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– voice projection and protection– using a microphone (consideration for use – microphones with foam mouthpieces not to be shared)– use of demonstrations– using visual cards.
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5.0 Customer journey

It will be more important than ever to ensure you are effectively communicating with existing users (prior to COVID-19), and potential users, regarding the health and safety measures you have put in place, the programme of activity you are offering and what users should expect when they visit.

Further guidance on the customer journey in the pool environment and requirements for safe physical distancing and enhanced hygiene can be found here [Scottish Swimming Pool Operators Back to the Water COVID-19 Guidance](#).

5.1 Website

A website is quite likely the first interaction users will have with your facility. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the information is clear and concise. You should consider including:

- A landing page with COVID-19 information, this could include guidance for pool users.
- Information on session types, including descriptions for each activity to highlight what the session involves and any new measures you have put in place regarding physical distancing etc.
- Information on price, whether booking is required and the details of how to book
- Information on the changing rooms, including the changing room layout, any changes due to physical distancing, information on cleaning regimes, access to lockers, hairdryers and other vanity facilities
- Clothing and personal effects permitted on poolside, including your swimwear policy
- Use of equipment, including what is provided and what users should bring

- Seating facilities for viewing and any physical distancing restrictions
- Parking facilities and travel choices i.e. public transport links

5.2 Virtual tour

You should also consider producing a video(s) to provide a virtual tour of the facility. This will allow users to familiarise themselves with the facility before they visit and help them to understand what to expect in terms of adjustments to allow for physical distancing. All this will aid them in feeling more comfortable and confident when visiting the facility.

The video(s) can be made available on your website and promoted via your social media channels.

5.3 Customer service

By providing the best customer service, you can build trust and loyalty to your business. Customer service is an asset, often valued over price that can help you manage expectations, smooth out problems and create a positive brand reputation.

Involving staff in discussions and agreeing what good customer service looks like (e.g. effective communication, taking ownership, be positive and friendly, be knowledgeable) will empower them to action this on a daily basis.

Here are some customer service ideas and thoughts that you may like to incorporate into your plans for re-opening:

- Staff to receive training on newly introduced physical distancing and hygiene measures
- Review the options for contacting your centre; phone, social media, e-mail etc. You may need to be prepared for an increase in phone and email traffic as users have questions about returning
- Staff to be made aware of any changes to the aquatic programme
- Pool user guidance to be made available to staff should they receive any questions from users about what they should bring and expect. This could also be displayed on reception
- Front of house staff to be provided with a FAQ document
- Utilise customer service announcements for reinforcing physical distancing and hygiene measures

- Front of house staff to greet users and make them aware of physical distancing and hygiene measures that have been introduced, especially in relation to changing facilities, and make them aware of signage
- Consider offering a refund or alternative session for those that may have booked but are feeling unwell or are having to self-isolate. This will help encourage users not to attend to avoid any further spread of the COVID-19 virus

6.0 Programming

By limiting multi-activity use of the pool and programming only one activity at a time, with clear start and finish times, it will be easier to manage participant numbers and additional time can be programmed for cleaning. This will also help control the number of participants using the changing rooms at any one time.

If your facility has a main pool and training pool you will need to risk assess whether it is possible to run two activities at the same time (one in each pool). One consideration to help you achieve this would be to stagger the start and finish times of the sessions, to manage the number of participants in the changing rooms and on poolside at any one time.

To help manage the capacity of sessions you may choose to offer pre-bookable sessions only. Therefore, a time limit may need to be applied to casual and lane swimming bookings.

The use of slides, flumes, inflatables and special water features to be risk assessed on an individual basis to ensure the risk of COVID-19 can be adequately controlled.

Although you will need to review your programme in light of the Scottish Government's guidelines on physical distancing, it is still important to understand your target audience and their needs or concerns at this time.

When it's time to promote your pool programme consider:

- Timetables that use different formats (list and table).
- Use of colour coding.
- High resolutions for visually impaired.
- Ensure names of sessions are consistent across your facilities.
- Is it simple and easy for your users to find and access your pool timetable?

6.1 Applying physical distancing - poolside

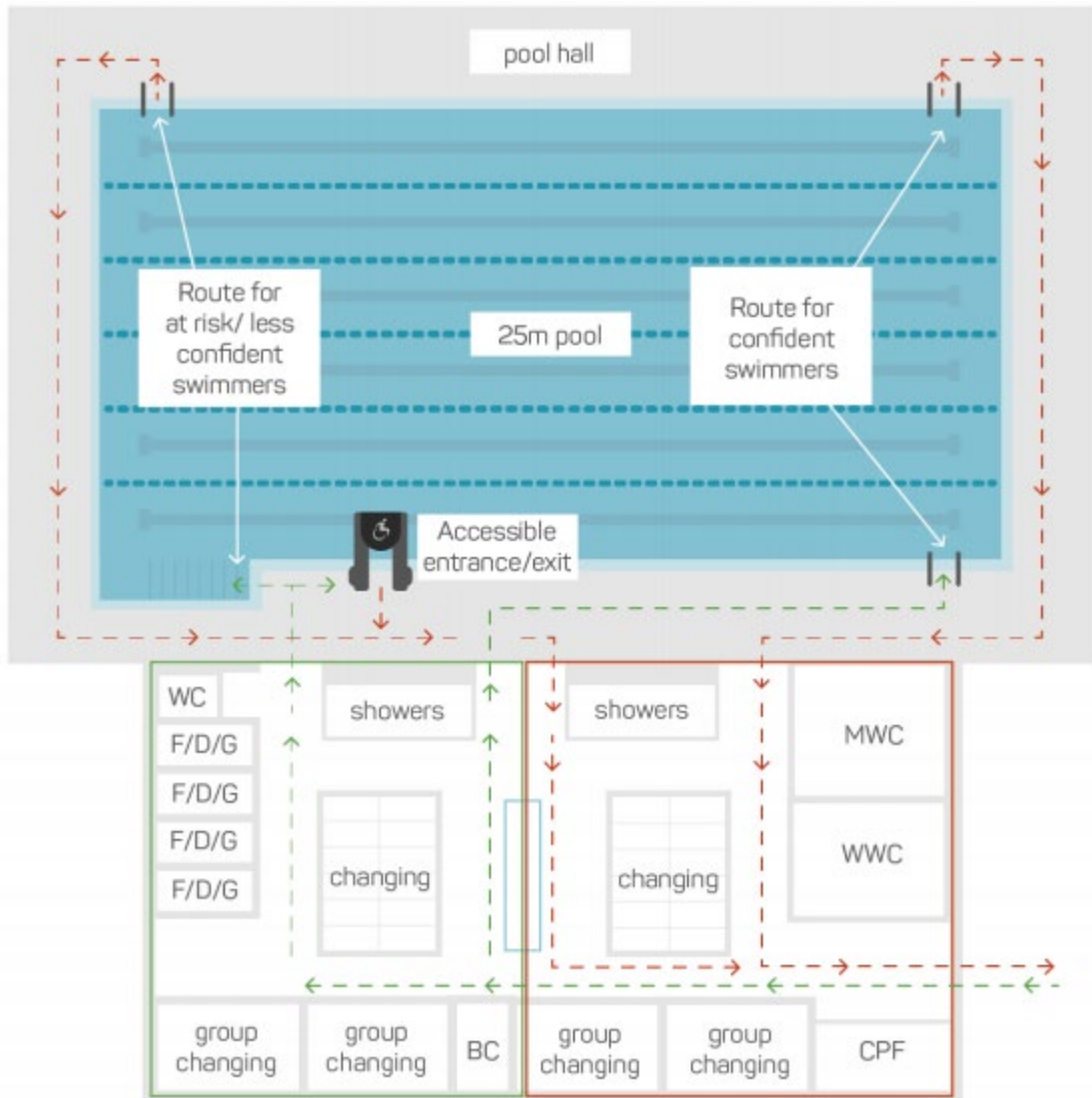
You will need to think about how you can help staff and participants adhere to physical distancing guidelines whilst on poolside.

Depending on the size of your pool deck, you should consider operating a one-way system, separate entry and exit points into the pool should also be identified if possible.

It is important to clearly communicate any measures you put in place with your users. You could display temporary signage and use directional arrows to demonstrate the changes to users. Consideration also needs to be given to the start of a session when participants arrive on poolside, will they be able to enter the water immediately or will participants be required to wait on poolside? If this is the case, then can participants maintain a safe physical distance?

These measures may also impact on the delivery of your activity and where it is positioned in the pool, so you will need to bear this in mind when reviewing your pool programme.

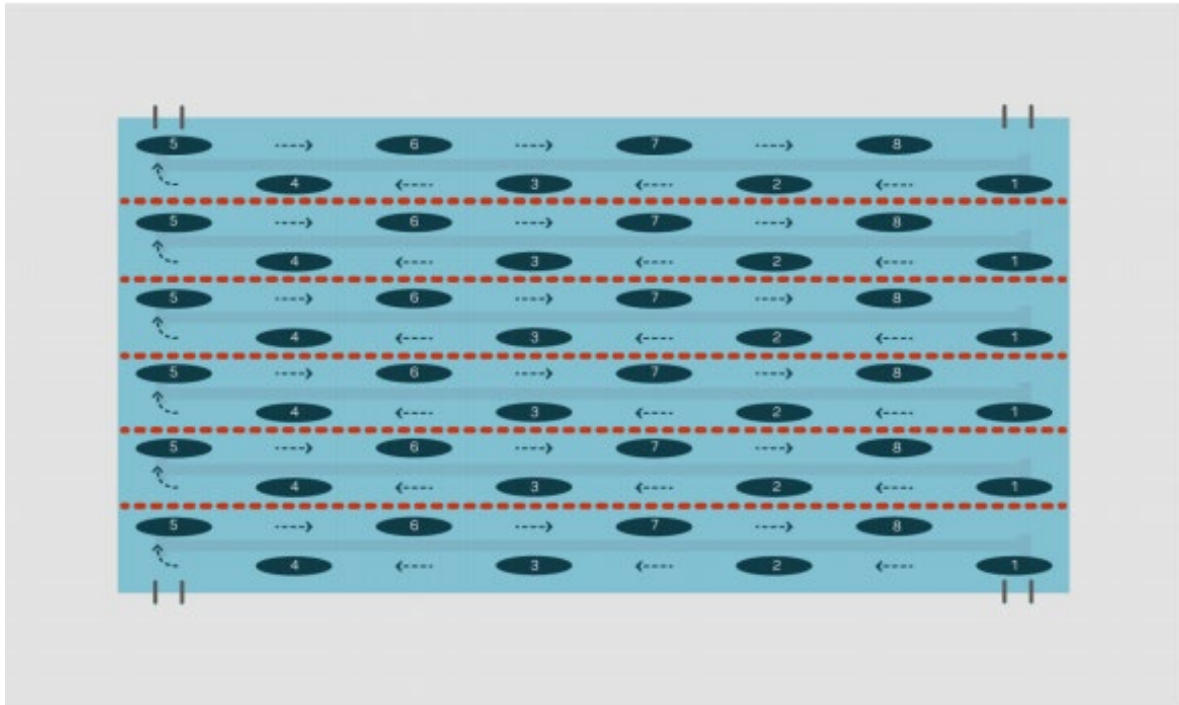
We understand that every pool is different but the diagram below provides an example of how you could manage physical distancing from the changing room to poolside.



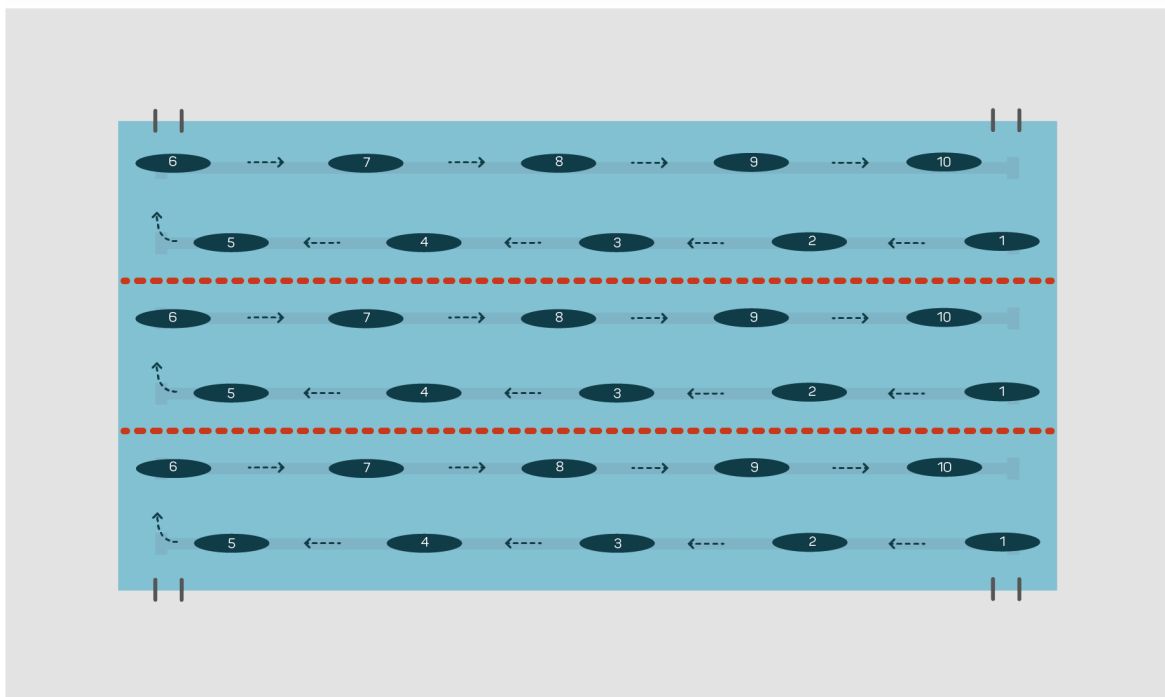
6.2 Applying physical distancing – in the pool

6.2.1 Lane swimming

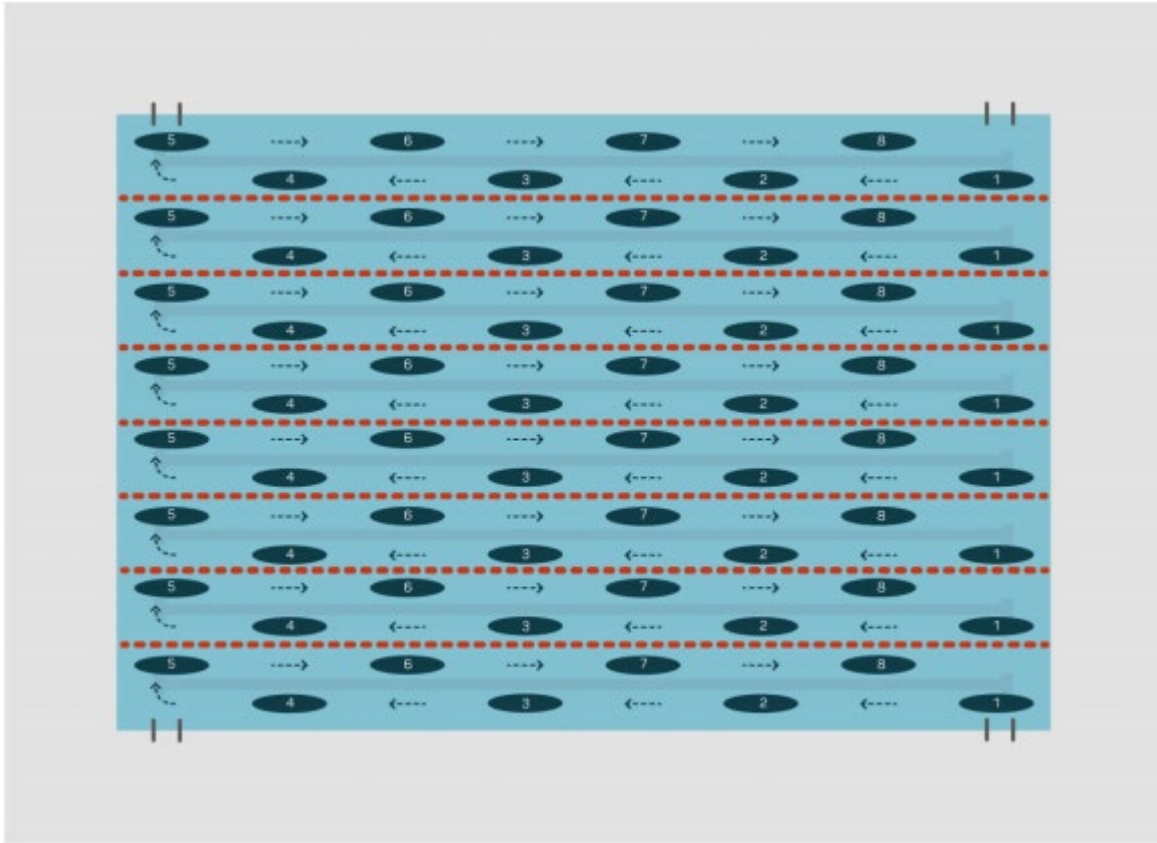
The following diagrams provides an example of how you could manage physical distancing in the pool for lane swimming.



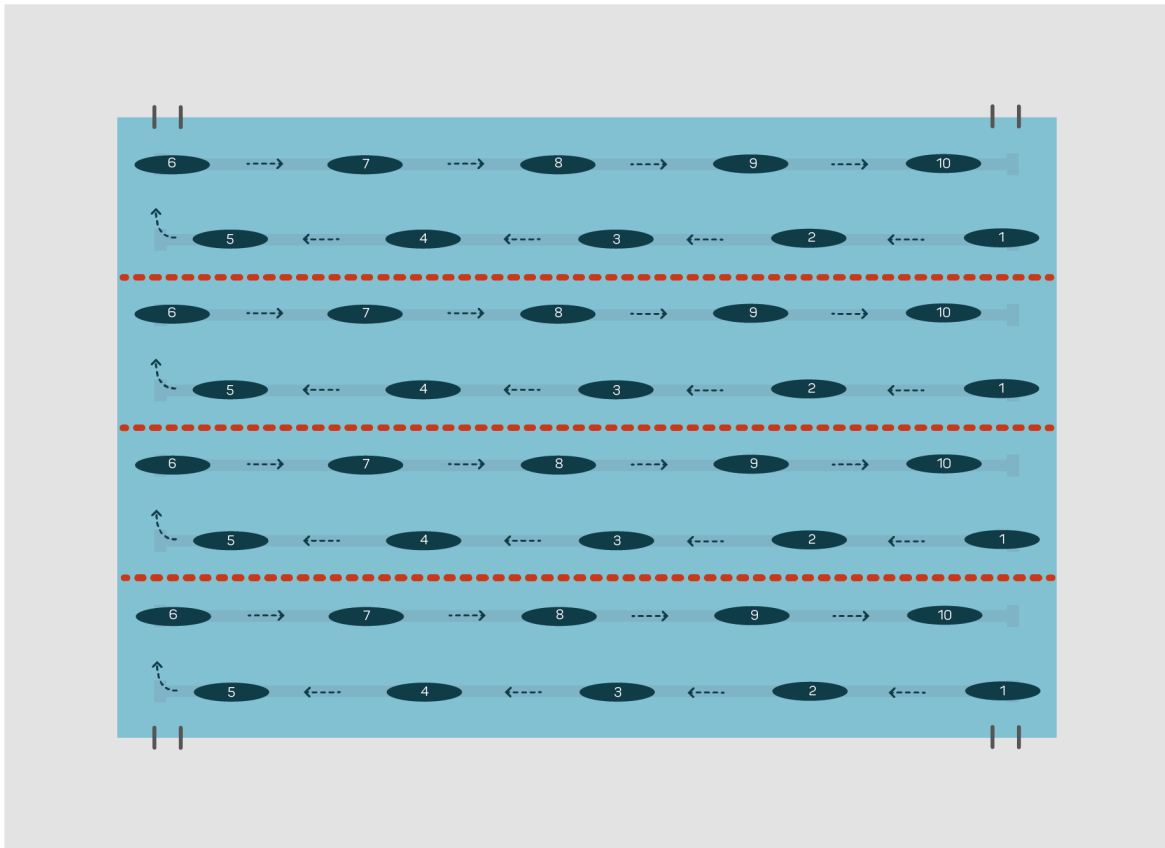
Lane swimming 25x12.5m pool 8 to a single lane



Lane swimming 25x12.5m pool 10 to a double lane



Lane swimming 25x16.5m pool 8 to a single lane



Lane swimming 25x16.5m pool 10 to a double lane

The risk factor profile in the [Scottish Swimming Pool Operators Back to the Water COVID-19 Guidance document](#) has been developed to help you assess the risk of potential transmission of COVID-19 and to understand how physical distancing can be applied within the pool when participants are travelling.

To allow for physical distancing during public lane swimming, the use of double width lanes should be considered and a slow, medium, fast paced lane/section should be allocated. The slower paced swimmers may feel more confident to be positioned along the side of the pool, with the faster paced swimmers in the centre. Each lane should follow the same direction of travel, this will mean swimmers are unable to swim side by side, minimising the risk of potential transmission of COVID-19.

It is advised that participants should not overtake whilst swimming as this will avoid close contact between participants. Instead, when reaching the end of the length, participants should move to the edge of the lane and turn their head away to allow others to turn at the wall and maintain physical distancing measures.

You should consider allocating an area on poolside for participants to leave their drink and take a rest out of the pool. This will prevent participants from congregating at the end of the pool where it is difficult to maintain a safe physical distance.

Consideration should also be given to using markers to visually help participants recognise a safe physical distance. For example, markers could be positioned on the poolside, along the length of the pool, to identify physical distance between participants during lane swimming and floor stickers/markers could be used to allocate a position for participants during classes.

6.2.2 Pool and lane etiquette

Research shows customers can find unspoken pool and lane etiquette to be confusing and intimidating.

To create a more welcoming environment, we suggest providing clear and positive guidance, with a change of tone from what you cannot do to what customers can do.

You may have to update the pool and lane etiquette you had in place pre COVID-19 to ensure users are aware of any changes you have had to put in to place, so that Scottish Government guidelines on physical distancing and hygiene can be adhered to. It is therefore important that you communicate clearly an updated pool and lane etiquette to all users.

If introducing or updating your guidance on lane swimming, here are some ideas on terms to include. These will need to be adapted to your pool needs.

To ensure everyone enjoys lane swimming, here are some guidelines to get the most out of your time in the pool:

- Swim in a lane appropriate to your swimming ability/speed
- Please follow the direction of the lane boards and swim in single file. This will help to prevent accidents and ensure participants can maintain a safe physical distance
- Allow faster swimmers to pass you at the end of each length. Move to the edge of the lane and turn your head away
- If you are continually being passed please consider moving to a slower lane

- If you need to take a rest, please exit the pool and use the designated area on poolside
- If using equipment such as kick boards or pull buoys, consider moving to a slower lane temporarily so you do not hinder others swimming full strokes
- Lifeguards are here for everyone's safety. If they ask you to adhere to the above guidance, your cooperation would be appreciated

6.2.3 Family sessions

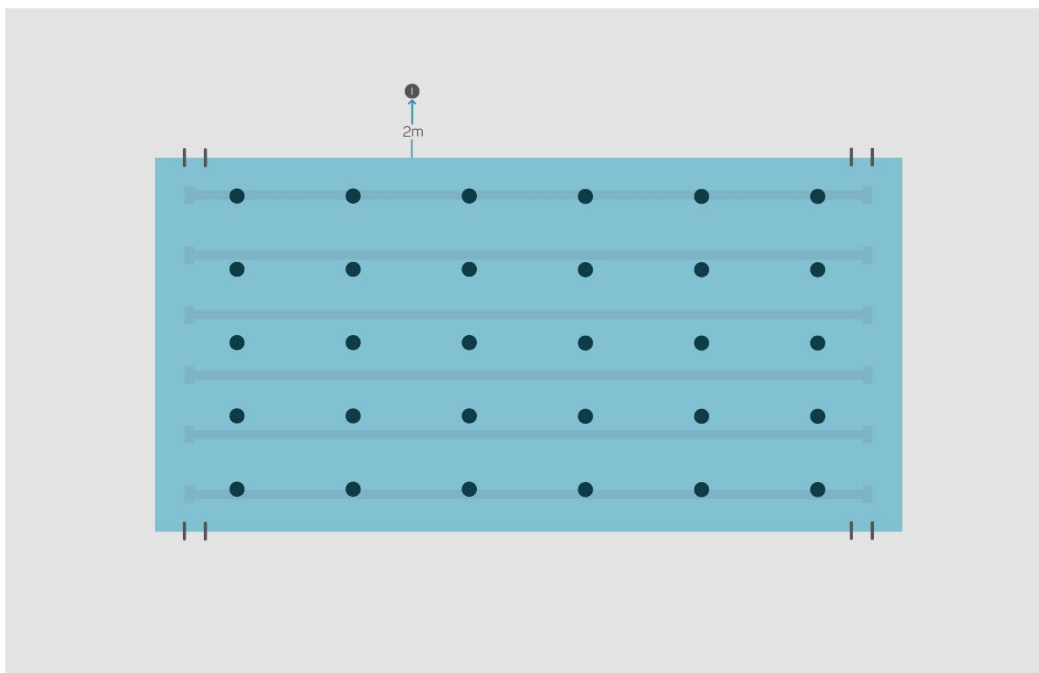
Participants from the same household are not required to physically distance from each other but will be required to maintain the recommended physical distancing from others. To support the delivery of family swim sessions in a safe way, adhering to physical distancing guidelines, you should consider configuring the pool so that a household is able to book their own section or area of pool space.

You should also consider adding structure to your session by utilising an activator/instructor to deliver family fun based activities from the poolside.

Alternatively, if members of the same household are keen fitness swimmers you could provide an option for them to book a lane. Consideration will need to be given here to your age restriction policy for lane swimming and whether this could be waived for an interim period.

6.2.4 Instructor-led sessions

The diagram below provides an example of how you could manage an instructor-led aquatic fitness type session.



Instructor led 25x12.5m pool

As every pool is different, the instructor will need to consider the safety and management of the group in accordance with the pool space available and the number of participants and this should be reflected in the session plan.

You will need to consider how participants enter and exit the pool to take up their position, avoiding close contact with others. Floor stickers/markers could be used to allocate a position to participants once in the pool.

Incorporating poolside-based activities into the session should be avoided.

It is important to use consistent naming and description protocols for sessions across your facilities to help users make an informed decision. Give users as much information as possible, so they are clear on what to expect. If you run the same session across all of your facilities, do ensure each facility uses the same name and description.

The following points should be considered:

- Name of session
- Brief description – swimming, movement in water, jogging, walking etc.
- Who it is suitable for – male, female, children, families, inclusive, 50+ years-old etc.
- Intensity level – use sliding scale or symbol indicators
- Health messages and benefits associated with the session - calories burned, use as rehab session
- Structure – is it instructor-led? Is someone on poolside available to give advice and support, a progressive session?
- Location – where in the pool does the session take place? (Deep water, shallow water, access to steps etc.).
- Accessibility – is the session accessible to all? Is it a tailored session for a specific audience? What is accessible about the session?
- Equipment – what should participants bring to the session (e.g. goggles) and what is any equipment is provided (e.g. noodles)
- Equipment guidance – inform customers of which sessions within the programme they are permitted to use their own training/swimming aids i.e. flippers/hand paddles
- Poolside environment – lighting, music, and lane ropes etc.
- Cost of session/activity – Is it bookable in advance or pay and play?
- Other session messages – normal swimwear policy applies, admissions policy applies

If you have your pool timetable available in print format, then consider providing detailed session descriptions on the reverse of timetables.

7.0 Equipment

To improve user confidence in the measures you have put in place to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, you should consider communicating your cleaning regime and schedule with users.

Instructors should be responsible for the equipment they require for a session and the cleaning of equipment at the end of the session. Equipment can be cleaned simply and effectively by rinsing it in the pool, equipment nets could be used to make this process easier and quicker. Equipment that cannot be sanitised in the pool should be appropriately cleaned between activities.

To help minimise the amount of cleaning required, instructors should rotate the use of different types of equipment from one session to the next, rather than during a session. If consecutive sessions are being delivered, that require the same equipment, you should consider using two separate sets of equipment to allow time for cleaning.

Participants should also be encouraged to bring their own equipment and should not share equipment during the session.

8.0 Instructors

Instructors should only deliver from poolside and are required to maintain the recommended physical distance from other poolside staff and participants. If instructors are responsible for providing safety cover they should refer to the [RLSS UK's guidance](#) on this.

Due to physical distancing guidelines, if the instructor is delivering to a larger area of pool space than usual, they should consider their voice projection and protection, using a microphone may help with this but microphones with foam mouthpieces should not be shared. The use of demonstrations can help with participant understanding as well as visual cards.

8.1 Face Coverings for instructors

Guidance from [sportscotland](#) and the Scottish Government in relation to coaches wearing face coverings during delivery of indoor sport sessions has been updated to include the following:

Face coverings must be worn by coaches when indoors, except where an exemption applies. For instance;

8.1.1 where an individual has a health condition or is disabled, including hidden disabilities, for example, autism, dementia or a learning disability.

8.1.2 or if there is a reasonable excuse not to wear a face covering such as;

8.1.2.1 where there is difficulty in communicating with participants who may not be close by and safety is an issue i.e. in a swimming lesson. In such cases alternative measures should be considered such as use of a face visor.

8.1.2.2 being physically active or exercising as part of the coached session.

The priority should always be on ensuring the safety of the coach and participants and minimising the risk of virus transmission before, during and after activity.

9.0 Further Guidance

Further detailed guidance has been developed in line with our Scottish Swimming's Back to Water Route Map for each section and phase and will evolve as advice and guidance is made available from Scottish Government. For more information on specific guidance please see below.

Scottish Swimming:

[Scottish Swimming Club Management Back to the Water COVID-19 Guidance](#)

[Scottish Swimming Club Training Back to the Water COVID-19 Guidance](#)

[Scottish Swimming Aquatic Participation Swimming Lessons Back to the Water COVID-19 Guidance](#)

[Scottish Swimming Aquatic Participation Community Swimming and Instructor-Led Activity Back to the Water COVID-19 Guidance](#)

[Scottish Swimming Aquatic Educators Back to the Water COVID-19 Guidance](#)

External guidance:

[Scottish Government - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on sport and leisure facilities](#)

[Scottish Government - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): returning to work safely](#)

[NHS Inform](#)

[Health Protection Scotland: COVID-19 Non-Healthcare Settings guidance](#)

[sportscotland - Getting Your Facility Fit for Sport](#)

[sportscotland – phase 3 return to sport and physical activity guidance](#)

10.0 Disclaimer

When referring to any documents and associated attachments in this guidance, please note the following:

1. Reliance upon the guidance or use of the content of this website will constitute your acceptance of this disclaimer.
2. The term guidance should be taken to imply the standards and best practice solutions that are acceptable to Scottish Swimming.
3. The documents and any associated drawing material are intended for information only.

4. The content of this guidance is considered by Scottish Swimming to be correct at the time of publication. Amendments, alterations and updates of documents and drawings may take place from time to time and pool operators should review at the time of use to ensure the most up to-date versions are being referred to and satisfy themselves that there has been no change in position.
5. All downloadable drawings, images and photographs are intended solely to illustrate how elements of a facility can apply Scottish Swimming's suggestions and should be read in conjunction with any relevant design guidance, British and European Standards, Health and Safety Legislation and guidance, building regulations, planning and the principles of the Equality Act 2010.
6. The drawings are not 'site specific' and are outline proposals. They are not intended for, and should not be used in conjunction with, the procurement of building work, construction, obtaining statutory approvals, or any other services in connection with building works.
7. Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy of all information, Scottish Swimming and its agents, including all parties who have made contributions to any documents or downloadable drawings, shall not be held responsible or be held liable to any third parties in respect of any loss, damage or costs of any nature arising directly or indirectly from reliance placed on this information without prejudice.
8. The views expressed are not intended to take away or diminish the responsibility of the user to comply with appropriate current or future legislation or standards and if there are any conflicts between the views expressed in any of sportscotland design guidance material and other appropriate current or future legislation, the latter shall take precedence.
9. The content of this guidance does not constitute specific advice to pool operators; this is a guide and the information should help pool operators make their own decisions in due course. We recommend that you obtain professional specialist technical and legal advice before taking, or refraining from, any action on the basis of information contained in this note.
10. Pool operators should continue to check information published by the Scottish Government and sportscotland after reading this guidance.

This guidance is provided for general information only. Scottish Swimming is not your adviser and any reliance you may place on this guidance is at your own risk. Neither Scottish Swimming, nor any contributor to the content of this guidance, shall be responsible for any loss or damage of any kind, which may arise from your use of or reliance on this guidance. Care has been taken over the accuracy of the content of this note but Scottish Swimming cannot guarantee that the information is up to date or reflects all relevant legal requirements. The information and drawings contained in this guidance note are not site specific and therefore may not be suitable for your project, facility or event.

This guidance is not intended for, and should not be used in connection with, any procurement activities, or for obtaining planning or other statutory approvals. Pool operators hold and will continue to hold Scottish Swimming free from all harm and liabilities arising from any action taken by pool operators under this guidance.