



Scottish
Swimming

Open Water Swimming

Back to the Water

COVID-19 Guidance

Update

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1.0 Introduction

Open Water Swimming training opportunities are permitted outdoors as long as the Scottish Government physical distancing guidelines are met. For more information see <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>. **Although open water swimming is permitted, club swimming should only happen if the water temperature is above 12C.**

In comparison to pool swimming there is a higher risk and greater number of challenges with open water swimming. The safety standards of open water swimming vary due to many reasons however the most common being a lack of appreciation and awareness of all the potential risks leading to planning failures. During the winter months the risk increases due to the lower water and air temperatures. Swimmers should be aware of the risks of winter swimming and decide if at this time the risk is worth taking.

Swimming in the winter has the same risks as the summer, however the risk of hypothermia, cold water shock and after drop are much higher. Swimmers should be aware of all of these risk factors and know what their own limits are. They should also know how to help others safely. Swimming in open water on your own is never recommended but this is especially true in the winter and there should be someone on shore not swimming to help any swimmer who is struggling. This is important for the safety of the swimmer but will need to be risk assessed due to COVID-19 and the physical distancing rules; this is something swimmers should consider prior to going for a swim. With many of the cafes and changing facilities around water ways currently closed, it is important to think about how you are going to warm up out in the elements. For some top tips from experienced winter swimmers - Swimsecure have a blog and the following article is particularly useful: <https://swimsecure.co.uk/blogs/stories/iisa-gbs-top-tips-for-staying-safe-when-swimming-through-winter>.

In **Section 4.2** is the updated Scottish Government & sportscotland phase 3 guidance. Please note that where organised outdoor sport is mentioned in a swimming context the following is required –

- A trained COVID officer (SportScotland have COVID officer e-learning module for more information <https://sportscotland.org.uk/covid-19/covid-19-e-learning-modules/>)
- A printed session risk assessment (specific to the venue, session & COVID)
- Session register
- COVID Officer/session lead

2.0 Guidance for Open Water Swimming & Training

2.1 Level of Coach

Coaches should only deliver activity for which they are trained. In all of the instances below, coaches should apply good coaching practice. The club must risk assess the activity, ensuring that it is appropriate for the developmental stage of participants and also take into account the fact that they will need to maintain current Scottish Government set physical distancing from athletes and ensure athletes are physically distanced from each other. Adjustments should be made accordingly.

2.2. Safety

The safety of the participant must be paramount. Delivering sessions outdoors can bring extra challenges that should be addressed. The following guidelines should be followed:

2.2.1 Considerations before commencing any session:

- All clubs providing physical activity must abide by Scottish Swimming guidance and have a named 'COVID-19 Officer' who will complete documented risk assessments and ensure all appropriate mitigations are put in place by the sports organisation before any physical activity is undertaken. Risk Assessment guidance can be found on the [Scottish Swimming website](#).
- The club representative must visit the chosen venue prior to the first training session. This will be necessary for session planning, suitability and health & safety considerations.
- Clubs should collect and keep the contact details of participants and visitors for a period of 21 days. This would fit with the recommendations around hospitality requirements also. Club should also consider embedding a COVID screening questionnaires as part of the return process to ensure participants, coaches and athletes are free of COVID symptoms.
- The club representative must ensure that they are allowed to use the outdoor space and have acquired the relevant permit for this if necessary
- Risk assessments must be carried out and documented at all sites. Consider safety first, minimising the risk of infection/transmission as well as other H&S risks.(see [Open Water Health & Safety Risk Assessments Guidelines](#))
- Appropriate physical distancing and hygiene measures must be put in place to ensure participants, staff and volunteers are always protected.
- Coaches should plan appropriately for the session in advance, be aware of responsibilities, be clear on expectations with participants and build in a review period to reflect on effectiveness and safety of the session.

- Coaches must stick to the guidelines with regards to the maximum of 15 people in a coached session (including coaches and participants) .
- Clearly outline the session timings to athletes and highlight that athletes / parents are responsible before and after these set times.
- Consider how athletes will get to the venue. The Scottish Government/ Transport Scotland advice on car sharing is that in general you should only travel with members of your own, or extended, household. The guidance does recognise that there may be occasions when there is no alternative but to travel with people out with your household. <https://www.transport.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/transport-transition-plan/advice-on-how-to-travel-safely/>
- Cleaning, hand, and respiratory hygiene are core measures and provision should be made for these. Clear guidance and plans are needed for cleaning of equipment and waste disposal. Note that toilets and other washing facilities may not be currently available check access prior to session and inform members what is available. Detailed guidance is available at:

www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings/

www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/hand-hygiene/

2.2.2 Consider the outdoor environment that is being used:

- What type of waterway is being used and is it safe to do so?
- Is the training area safe and free from intrusion from others?
- Is the weather appropriate, is there enough shade from the sun and a plan of action in case of rain/heavy rain?
- Can the athletes be seen and supervised effectively?

2.2.3 Consider the athletes to attend:

- People who are symptomatic should self-isolate for 10 days; household members for 10 days as per info on NHS guidance. No one who is self-isolating should attend an outdoor sports activity.
- Communication with participants is important and participants should know what to do before / during / after attending their coached session.
- The coach must ensure that those taking part are sufficiently fit and healthy to participate in the activity including considering any pre-existing medical conditions that athletes may have and if in any doubt, we recommend they do not train. If a participant has recovered from COVID-19 we strongly recommend they receive a medical check up to ensure they are fit to train before they start.

- Consider the condition of athletes who may not have trained fully for some time – we strongly recommend a gradual return to training with particular attention taken to avoid unnecessary injuries through doing too much too soon.
- The coach must agree any necessary measures to ensure distancing is adhered to and reduce the possibility of virus transmission. This should be communicated to athletes before the first session, at the start of all sessions and during sessions as necessary. This must also be documented within the risk assessments.
- It must be noted that all participants must be members of Scottish Swimming for insurance purposes. Any non-members engaged in the activities could invalidate insurance for the club.

2.2.4 Consider equipment being used:

- Athletes should bring their own equipment and should not share it. It should be cleaned thoroughly before and after use.
- Is the equipment safe and appropriate to be used in the environment?
- Can it be transported safely, and securely?
- Equipment (e.g. water shoes) cannot be thrown or passed between athletes due to the risk of virus transmission.
- Ensure appropriate clothing is worn by athletes including suitable wetsuits, no jewellery etc.
- The coach and participants should stay hydrated and remember to use appropriate sun-protection including sun-cream, caps etc.

3.0 Safeguarding

As with any other form of coaching, implementing good safeguarding practice is extremely important to protect the coach and the participant. All usual safeguarding considerations should be taken into account. In addition, the following guidelines should be followed:

All clubs and coaches must operate in a safe and effective manner in accordance with the Scottish Swimming insurance policy and Wellbeing & Protection Policy: Children & Young People Policies and Procedures, which are still in operation.

The club Wellbeing & Protection Officer (WPO) must be aware of the training that is being undertaken, undertake risk assessments (see [Open Water Health & Safety Risk Assessments Guidelines](#)), and give guidance as appropriate. This should include assessing that the venue, activity and supervision is appropriate from a safeguarding point of view.

Coaches should ensure they do not put themselves in compromising positions, in particular ensuring that they are never left one-to-one with an under-18 year old athlete.

Report child safeguarding concerns immediately to your designated WPO or Scottish Swimming's safeguarding officer Lindsey Booth (l.booth@scottishswimming.com, 07832117491).

4.0 Open Water Swimming Session Considerations

4.1 Introduction

In comparison to pool swimming there is a higher risk and greater number of challenges with open water swimming. The safety standards of open water swimming vary due to many reasons however the most common being there is a lack of appreciation and awareness of all the potential risks leading to planning failures.

This section of the guidance document provides a system for effective safety planning. It is intended to support clubs to establish new open water swimming venues and support a review of current venues. This section is for guidance only and Scottish Swimming cannot accept responsibility for any negligence or loss from its use. The guidance is based on good & best practice and does not carry any legal compulsion.

This section covers organising open water swimming sessions in a variety of locations. Open water swimming can be done in different types of water bodies. However each venue is unique and has its own risks associated with it. To start an open water swimming session requires careful and thorough planning. Some venues prefer to organise their own programmed activities including swimming. Others may prefer to hire their facilities out to an external organisation. Regardless of the facility arrangements it is essential to invest time in preparing thoroughly from the start.

With the COVID-19 pandemic there are many additional points that clubs will need to consider prior to organising an open water swimming session at this time. This includes specific risk assessments, a designated COVID-19 Officer per session and pre session checks. Clubs will have to follow the same process as they will in the pools moving forwards for information and club requirements.

4.2 Scottish Government & sportscotland Guidance: Return to sport and physical activity

Organised sporting activities can be undertaken, providing all activity is consistent with current Scottish Government guidance on health, physical distancing and hygiene – you will also need to make sure that your club, facility and participants are made aware and can adapt to changes in guidance at short notice. The above guidance should be read in consultation with the full Scottish Government Phase 3: return to sport and physical activity available here: <https://sportscotland.org.uk/covid-19/latest-sport-and-physical-activity-guidance/>

Information on Scottish Governments approach to managing COVID-19 is available at [Scottish Government: Coronavirus in Scotland](#) .

People who are symptomatic should self-isolate for 10 days and household members for 10 days as per info on NHS guidance. No one who is self-isolating should attend a sports facility or activity.

To manage a safe return to organised sport and physical activities all clubs, facility operators and deliverers (herein referred to as ‘operators’) should put in place Test & Protect procedures to help break chains of transmission of Coronavirus (COVID-19). Further information is available within this guidance and at [Scottish Government: Test & Protect](#).

Scottish Government has introduced a new [strategic framework document](#) for managing COVID-19 which will become effective from 2 November 2020. This provides a 5-Level approach to restrictions with each local authority area (or sub-area) placed in a relevant protection level depending upon its COVID-19 status which will be reviewed weekly.

SGBs, clubs and participants should be aware of their local area protection level and associated restrictions which may be in place and should consider this as part of risk assessment planning. Broad guidance for sporting activity which should be followed within each Level is set out in **Table A below**.

The full Phase 3: return to sport and physical activity is available at: <https://sportscotland.org.uk/covid-19/latest-sport-and-physical-activity-guidance/>

Further information on protection levels that will apply in each local authority area are available at: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): allocation of protection levels to local authorities](#).

Table A: Sport & Physical Activity Protection Levels

		Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
OUTDOOR SPORT Organised outdoor sport, competition, events and Physical Activity (PA)	Overview	An outdoor sporting ‘field of play bubble’ can consist of a maximum of 30 people including coaches, officials and other support staff at any one time. Multiple bubbles, each with up to 30 people, can be used in training, competition, or small-scale sporting events if all guidance is followed (200 max per day unless with Scottish Govt exemption).				Local training/competition only. U12s: max 30 including coaches. Over 12s/adults max 15 including coaches.
	Children & Young people (u18 years)	Contact & non-contact sport & PA permitted	Contact & non-contact sport & PA permitted	Contact & non-contact sport & PA permitted	Contact & non-contact sport & PA permitted	U12s: Contact sport permitted 12-17 years: Non-contact sport & PA permitted
	Adults (18+ years)				Non-contact sport & PA permitted Contact sport & PA prohibited	Non-contact sport & PA permitted Contact sport & PA prohibited
INDOOR SPORT Organised indoor sport, competition, events and Physical Activity (PA)	Overview	The number of participants allowed to take part in organised indoor sport or physical activity should follow Scottish Government guidance on the opening of sport and leisure facilities and sport specific SGB Guidance . ‘Group’ activity refers to adults, who take part in organised sport or physical activity, where the number of participants is larger than allowed under normal household rules. ‘Individual exercise’ refers to organised sport or physical activity which takes place within household rules i.e. 1:1 coaching. For further information see definitions within this guidance.				
	Children & Young people (u18 years)	Contact & non-contact sport & PA permitted	Contact & non-contact sport & PA permitted	Contact & non-contact sport & PA permitted	Contact & non-contact sport & PA permitted	Indoor sport & PA prohibited: Leisure Centres, gyms and other indoor sports facilities closed.
	Adults (18+ years)		Non-contact sport & PA permitted Contact sport & PA prohibited	Non-contact sport & PA permitted Contact sport & PA prohibited	<u>Indoor individual exercise only</u> No contact or non-contact group activity	

COACHING	Overview	General guidance is available within this document for coaches, leaders, personal trainers, deliverers and instructors, <i>herein referred to as coach/es</i> . In addition Getting Coaches Ready for Sport provides a 4-stage approach/checklist to further support coaches to plan and deliver safe sessions.	
	Indoor & Outdoor coaching	The local protection Level in place for sport and physical activity will dictate what activity can be coached, indoors and outdoors and to whom in that area. See indoor / outdoor above for further information. Coaches can take multiple sessions per day, however the numbers allowed in each session will depend upon the protection Level in place.	
PERFORMANCE SPORT	Professional & Performance	Professional & performance sports with Resumption of Performance Sport guidance in place and approved by Scottish Government or sportscotland is permitted at all Levels.	
TRAVEL	Indoor / Outdoor Sport & Physical Activity	For further information please refer to Travel Guidance within this document.	
HOSPITALITY & RETAIL	Clubs & Sports Facilities	Clubhouses and sports facilities which provide catering and bar services, can operate providing they adhere to Scottish Government guidance appropriate to the protection Level in which they are operating. Further information is available at Coronavirus (COVID-19): tourism and hospitality sector guidance .	
		Retail units operated by sports facility operators may reopen provided all specific Scottish Government guidance for retailers appropriate to the protection level in which they are operating is in place and adhered to. Further information from the Scottish Government is available at Retail Sector Guidance .	
TOILETS, CHANGING & SHOWER ROOMS	Clubs & Sports Facilities	Where changing rooms and showering facilities are to be used specific guidance relating to use of 'Changing and Showers' is available at Getting Your Facilities Fit for Sport. This is applicable at all levels where facilities remain open .	Indoor sports facilities closed. Changing rooms closed.
		Operators may open public toilets if they follow the guidelines outlined on the Scottish Government website Opening Public Toilets Guidelines	Public Toilets open.
WORKFORCE	Contractors & Staff	Sports facility operators must ensure that Scottish Government guidance on workforce planning in sport & leisure facilities is followed for contractors and staff and ensure existing health and safety advice is maintained and aligned. This should be detailed in the risk assessment.	
	Meeting Rooms	Although gym and leisure facilities can open up to Level 3, we would encourage providers to consider whether meetings and training must be completed in person or whether these can be completed online or via telephone. If it is essential that meetings and training takes place in person, Scottish Government guidance for general workplaces must be followed and a risk assessment should be completed.	

4.2.1 Travel Guidance

- Travel guidance outlined by the Scottish Government should always be followed. Further information on what travel is permitted is available at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on travel and transport](#).
- Information for each local government area, including their level is available at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): local protection levels](#) including a post code checker.
- [Specific information on car sharing is available from Transport Scotland: advice on how to travel safely](#).

Sport & Physical Activity Participation

- Participants can take part in organised sport and physical activity within their own local government area based on Level as detailed in [Table A](#). Such activity is subject to exemption from household rules as detailed within this guidance.
- When a participant travels out with their home local government area they should follow the travel guidance detailed below. Travel regulations are now legally enforceable.
- Participants should, where possible, avoid any unnecessary travel out of area and keep journeys within area to an absolute minimum.

Children & Young People (17 years or under)

- Participants aged **17 years or under** can travel to and from Level 0, 1, 2 and 3 areas to take part in organised sport, physical activity, training and competition.
- Children and young people may travel into or out of a Level 4 area for organised activity as outlined in [Table A](#) if that is where their sport, club or activity usually takes place.
- Children and young people living in a Level 3 or 4 area should only travel out with their local government area (up to 5 miles) to take part in informal exercise such as walking, running or cycling which starts and finishes at the same place. Such activity should follow [Scottish Government 'Stay at Home' guidance](#).

Adults (18 years or over)

- Participants aged **18 years or over** can travel to and from Level 0, 1 and 2 areas (but not Level 3 or 4) to take part in organised sport, physical activity, training and competition as outlined in [Table A](#).
- Adults living in a Level 3 or Level 4 area should only travel locally (within their own local government area) to take part in organised sport or physical activity as outlined in [Table A](#).
- Adults living in a Level 3 or Level 4 area should only travel out with their local government area (up to 5 miles) to take part in informal outdoor exercise such as walking, cycling or running that starts and finishes at the same place. Such activity should follow [Scottish Government 'meeting others outdoors' guidance](#).

Table B: Travel Summary

Age Group	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
U18s	✓	✓	✓	✓	Limited exemptions
18+ (Adults)	✓	✓	✓	Local Travel Only	Local Travel Only

4.3 Specific considerations for an open water swimming session

Open water swimming has increased risks compared with pool swimming and clubs need to decide if it is right for them to start open water swimming club sessions during the current situation. Open water sessions will not suit all clubs or all swimmers within clubs. The club has to decide if it is the right thing for them and if it is the right time to start doing open water sessions considering how long swimmers have been out the water and the resultant increased risk because they may be out of condition. Below is guidance on the considerations your club will need to discuss, investigate and organise prior to starting an open water swimming session. Please note this is not an exhaustive list for further examples and information please see the [Open Water Health & Safety Risk Assessments Guidelines](#).

Key Areas	Planning Considerations
Insurance	
Scottish Swimming Club Insurance	All swimmers and club support staff must be members of Scottish Swimming All risk assessments and safety procedures including risk assessments must be complete prior to session.
Rescue Support/First Aid	If you are using external water safety support check they are insured and competent. Take advice from SS Open Water Committee on HIVE if you are unsure.
Venue	
Does the venue have designated swim sessions?	Some venues have safety provision for swim sessions and clubs may be able to work in partnership with the venue to be able to train during these sessions or they may negotiate a separate time slot that has safety cover in place. Remember there may be a cost to this.
Does the venue have toilets, changing facilities, indoor space and are they currently open and operational?	Some open water venues have facilities e.g. showers, toilets; others don't. A risk assessment needs to be completed to ensure the safety of athletes and team staff in these facilities.

Does the venue have other water-based activities?	Partnership working with other water users can have a benefit around expertise in open water safety and boat use. Conflicts can occur if a mix of users uses the water at the same time. Swimmers can be hard to see and wake from boats can cause issues with swimmers.
Adequate venue parking	Check prior to the session and inform members of the parking considerations
Is there an emergency exit route?	Ensuring there is access to and from your location for emergency vehicles
Water Quality	
Does your venue do water quality tests? Or will you have to do water quality tests?	It is advisable for water quality to be routinely tested and this should be agreed with the venue, also who is responsible for this and who will pay for it?
Has the venue previously been affected by blue-green algae?	Previous blue-green algae means there is an increased likelihood of future blooms. It is best practice to get the historical information on this so that future blooms can be planned for.
Are there any obvious potential sources of contamination or pollution e.g. sewage outlets, bird flocks, farm run-off?	Visual checks of the water are essential prior to each session. Some sources of pollution are caused by heavy rain and flood water, be mindful of the weather prior to session and during
Organisation of Session	
Does the session organiser have suitable experience and training to run an open water swim session?	Open water swimming does carry a higher risk and it is important the individual/team organising the session has an understanding and an appreciation of the environment. Using local knowledge and expertise will support the organiser.
Communication with other water users and relevant agencies	Communicating with other water user groups is essential for a safe session, to ensure that other users are not crossing the swimmers' route and vice versa. Depending on the venue there may be local agencies you will need to inform prior to session and during the planning stages eg HM Coastguard, Harbour Master, Port Control.
Session Safety Cover	
At the venue is there access to an adequate number of suitable safety boats and paddle craft and trained safety personnel?	Check if the venue can cover the water safety for your sessions. If they can't or there is not sufficient support available, do they have any restrictions on crafts that may need to be considered.
If the venue does not have suitable safety craft does the club have access to safety provision equipment & personnel?	Each session will need a mix of spotters on shore and on-water safety cover, numbers dependant on the session risk assessment. If the club does not have access to these, can they be sourced externally?
Is there a suitable place for safety craft to land swimmers?	When looking at the entry & exit points for the session and the positioning of the first aider, be

	mindful of where a boat would bring a rescued swimmer.
Open water conditions change frequently sometimes very quickly, Is the safety support competent to provide cover in poorer conditions?	How experienced are your paddlers? Can they manage in rough water and be able to support a casualty.
Swimming Route	
Is there sufficient space in the water for the session to take place and swimmers to maintain physical distancing guidelines	Remember swimmers will not have lane ropes or lines on the bottom of the pool to follow. It is unlikely they will swim straight. What space do you need for the number of swimmers?
Is the water depth suitable for the session?	Is the water deep enough for the swimmers to swim (remember this can change with the weather)? Consider any changes in depth or under water hazards e.g. rocks
Can swimmers enter & exit the water safely?	Do you need to have a mat or do swimmers need to wear water shoes to enter the water
Is your swim area clearly marked?	Do you have access to marker buoys so that the swim area can be clearly sectioned off and swimmers know where they are swimming
Safety check	Organise a clear sign in/sign out of water system for swimmers and safety crew
What is the communication method going to be if the swimmers need to evacuate from the water in an emergency and is there more than one exit point?	Pre-plan for an emergency or extreme weather. How do you signal swimmers to leave the water?
Club Staffing	
Safety Representative (Rep)– each session should have a designated safety representative. This should be an additional person and not the coach.	The Safety Rep is responsible for overseeing the session and coordinating safety cover. This person needs to do the safety checks prior to the session and water temp readings.
Coach – each session should have designated coaches for each group of swimmers	The Coach is responsible for coaching the session and working closely with the Safety Rep
Parent/Guardian	Swimmers under the age of 18 must have a designated adult with them in case of an emergency but also to support them once out of the water.
Spotter – spotters are onshore support who spot for swimmers and signal to safety crew if someone is having difficulties	Spotters must not be distracted during the session and must keep a vigilant eye out on the swimmers throughout, looking for signals of distress or changes to stroke, etc.
First Aider- each session must have a competent qualified designated first aider	The First aider is there to take over from the rescue crew if a swimmer is removed from the water or if a swimmer gets injured. A risk assessment linked to Covid will need to be completed for the first aiders
Safety Crew	The Safety Crew can be external or internal to your club. They are responsible for the supervision, incident prevention and swimmer rescue. A risk assessment linked to COVID-19

	will need to be completed for the safety crew. If you use an external crew, you must satisfy yourselves that they are competent to do the work
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5.0 Open Water Swimming Template Safety Documents

The following are example safety documents for club to adapt and use

1. Example Normal Operating Procedure (NOP)
2. Example Emergency Action Plan (EAP)
3. Example session check list

5.1 Open Water Swimming NOP & EAP TEMPLATE

The following document is a template for clubs to create their own NOP & EAP for each open water facility they use. This is not an exhaustive list, rather a guide to what should be in the documents and examples of what to look for. NOP & EAP documents should be shared with all team staff that are supporting the open water swimming sessions.

The sections in red are to be edited to make document specific for a venue and a club. All open water swimming venues and sessions must be risk assessed prior to the sessions and on the day visual checks carried out prior to start of the session, with adjustments to the risk assessment and procedures as necessary.

Club Name Club Open Water Swimming

(Venue)

NOP & EAP

These procedures cover open water swimming at the **Venue name & address**

5.2 Normal Operating Procedures (NOP)

Water Quality

- Water testing should be carried out prior to first session (Water quality should be tested regularly, test should be for a minimum for coliforms please see Open Water Hive group for example labs for testing and good practice)
- When using a facility who operate open water swim sessions check they regularly carry out water testing
- If there is a major change in weather conditions, heavy rain or prolonged hot spells the water quality should be retested
- Swimming will stop upon the receipt of a poor result, until additional testing has proven the quality is safe again (if unsure of result check with Scottish Swimming Open Water Swimming Committee)
- A visual check of the water shall be completed prior to start of each session. Any visual evidence of poor water quality eg algae and the session will be cancelled until water quality can be clarified.
- It is the responsibility of the session safety rep to ensure all pre-session checks are Completed (see open water team staff list at the end of this document)

Weather

- The session safety rep will check the weather forecast before the sessions
- Sessions will be delayed, suspended or cancelled if
 - There is mist & fog – the session can only begin if it clears
 - There is heavy rainfall or if heavy rain is anticipated, which could interfere with swimmers' rescue and being able to observe swimmers
 - There is an electrical storm during the session all swimmers must be evacuated from the water immediately
- The session will be cancelled if
 - There is an electrical storm in the area
 - If strong wind/waves which make it difficult to observe or rescue swimmers

Water Temperature

- The water temperature will be taken by the session safety rep prior to each session
- The time in the water must be limited to prevent hypothermia. This will depend on water temperatures. The distance and time must be capped depending on the temperature and the experience of the swimmers in the cold
- Water Temperature 14C-18C wetsuits are compulsory for swimmers
- Water Temperature 18C-20C wetsuits are optional the safety rep will make decision depending on this depending on the air temperature and swimmers. With safety Rep's guidance, swimmers may choose not to wear a wetsuit.
- Water Temperature over 20C no wetsuits to be worn.

Access

- The sessions take place at **enter session venue and address**
- Sessions will be at the agreed times only

- Safe access to and from the water for users and emergency vehicles will be checked prior to each session
- It is the safety rep's responsibility to check the access to and from the water prior to the start of the session.
- If a member needs additional support for safe access to the session, this will be arranged prior to the session – **any amendments or additional process add in here**

Members Swimming

- All swimmers and team staff must be members of Scottish Swimming prior to swimming in sessions
- All swimmers under the age of 18 years must have an adult that is responsible for them at the session at all times. The adult is there to support the swimmer, give assistance if required when they come out of the water and to ensure swimmer is in their wetsuit correctly and it's zipped up ready for them to swim at start of session.
- All swimmers will do a small test swim in standing depth on their first session to ensure they are comfortable swimming in the open water and safe to continue out of their depth.

Team Staff

Each session requires a

- Minimum of 1 Safety Rep who is also the principal spotter
- Lead Coach to deliver session
- Safety cover – **club requires a minimum of**
- Maximum of 5 swimmers allowed in the water per spotter/safety cover
- All spotters will have a minimum of a whistle so they can get the attention of water safety cover (please see Open Water Risk Assessment Document)
- Qualified First Aider

Team Staff Equipment

- Safety Rep – Thermometer, Air horn, throw bag, whistle, paperwork – session check list, session risk assessment, swimmer emergency contact details and medical information, including dates of birth, charged mobile phone or access to a land line if no signal (**put in what your session phone access will be**). **This is a minimum. Additional equipment could be extra first aid kit, rescue equipment, binoculars.**
- Land Spotters – Whistle, towel or blanket **depending on responsibility – first aid kit, throw bag, rescue tube etc**
- Coach – Session register, session plan **depending on responsibility – throw bag, whistle**
- **First Aider – all session must have a designated qualified first aider – first aid supplies & warm blankets. Access to a warm place or car**

Signing in & Out

- Swimmers sign in once in wetsuit and ready to swim
- **There must be a system of recording swimmers in and out of the water. Below is an example for more examples please see HIVE Open Water Swimming Group**
 - **On sign in swimmers, receive an ID band which must be worn during the session (on wrist, ankle or a waist strap)**
 - **On exiting the water swimmer must return ID band prior to changing**

Swimmer Briefing

- All swimmers must attend briefing given prior to each session or they will not be allowed to swim
- They must attend the briefing for each session even for multiple sessions at the same venue
- Swimmers cannot join the session late – this can distract spotters and cause confusion with safety crews
- All swimmers must have preregistered for the session, providing emergency contacts and medical details

Briefing content

- If you need assistance roll onto your back and raise your hand

- Swimmers must swim following the designated routes and direction
- **Detail of swim route**
- If air horn is sounded all swimmers must exit the water at the closest exit point to them
- Any temperature restrictions and water temperature given
- Swimmers to ensure everyone has space to swim safely and not to swim close to buoys to avoid the anchor ropes. This is training, not a race
- Swimmers must exit the water if they become cold or start getting cramp or if instructed to do so. Hypothermia is dangerous
- Any open wounds: swimmers should be advised not to swim, small cuts/grazes must be covered
- Guidance given about risk & signs and symptoms of Weil's disease
- Advise showering and cleaning of all equipment as soon as possible after the session
- If a swimmer exits the water during the session, they must hand in (collect?) **their ID band** prior to going to their designated adult or changing
- Parents must not harass their swimmers if they leave the water early
- If First Aid is given, the First Aider must be allowed to do their work.

5.3 Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

Swimmer In Difficulty

- Swimmer in difficulty raises the alarm by turning on to back and raising arm, or spotter notices swimmer struggling in the water.
- Spotter or safety officer blows blasts on whistle to get the attention of the safety cover closest to the swimmer and points to the swimmer
- Swimmer is supported to the shore (by throw bag, kayak, tow, boat)
- Once on shore swimmer is reassured and assessed by session First Aider
- Any required first aid provided

Unconscious Swimmer

- Spotter notices unconscious swimmer and raises alarm by repeated blasts on whistle.
- The safety Rep sounds air horn (2 blasts at least 5 seconds long) and all swimmers exit the water.
- Swim safety crews are directed to the swimmer.
- The safety Rep dials 999 immediately, informing them we have a casualty in the water.
- The safety team carry out rescue by casualty removal onto boat or tow the swimmer to shore.
- The safety rep sends a spotter to the road to direct the emergency services
- **The safety rep will send a spotter to retrieve defibrillator. Details of where it is (if there is one)**
- Once at the shore first aid should be administered, following the guidance of RLSS or your First Aid provider. Inform Scottish Swimming & any other relevant authorities immediately. Scottish Swimming Accident report form completed

First Aid RLSS Current Guidelines (or chosen provider)

- The first aid kit must be present at all sessions and should contain:
 - **Please list your first aid kit contents**
- Address of the swim session location
- Calling for medical assistance
- Dial 999 on the mobile or land line if no signal
- **Post Code of venue is in first aid kit and on all documents linked to session**
- If casualty is in the water, let the call handler know so correct emergency services can be dispatched
- You will need to provide details of the number of patients, types of injuries, age, sex, how the incident occurred, current level of alertness/consciousness, and any other life signs.
- The call handler will be there to support you; offering suitable guidance. Listen carefully and speak clearly at all times
- A spotter should go out on to the access road to direct the emergency services to casualty

5.4 Open water swimming session checklist

(for guidance on risk assessment please see [Open Water Swimming Risk Assessment](#))

Club Name:			
Session Venue:		Session Date:	
When	Task	Completed by	Date Completed
Prior to Session	Water Quality Check		
Prior to Session	Booking or permission given for use of venue		
Prior to Session	Risk Assessment of Session		
Prior to Session	Session NOP Created		
Prior to Session	Session EAP Created		
Prior to Session	NOP & EAP distributed to team staff & safety team		
Day of Session	On day risk assessment check		
Day of Session	Visual check of swimming area visual check of entry & exit points		
Day of Session	Swimmer registration		
Day of Session	Safety/Team staff briefing		
Day of Session	Swimmer Briefing		
During session	Swimmer check into water		
During session	Continuous visual checks for changes in the water conditions		
During session	Swimmer check out		
Day of Session	Debrief with team/safety staff		
Post session	update risk assessment if required		
Post session	Update NOP & EAP if required		
Additional Information			

5.5 Open Water Team Staff Roles

Safety Representative (Safety REP)

- Overseeing safety cover for session
- Completing Session Check List
- Principal Spotter
- Ensuring Risk assessments are checked prior to session starting and depending on changes in the environment amending where appropriate
- Doing safety team briefing prior to each session
- Doing Swimmer briefing prior to each session
- If in doubt about session arrange emergency meeting with coach to discuss required changes or cancelling session as a joint decision

Principal Spotter

- Responsible for overseeing all other spotters are in position
- Coordinating any rescues ensuring areas are backfilled and covered
- Removal of swimmers in an emergency
- Checking swimmers when exiting the water
- Ensure team is clear on how raise alarm
- Ensure communication to relevant contacts

Spotter

- Ideal if swimmers are less than 50m from shore
- Land based person(s) responsible for overseeing a section of water
- Looking out for swimmer safety watching swimmers
- Watching for signs swimmers are getting cold or tired (e.g. stroke slowing, swimmer starting and stopping)
- Signalling to principal spotter any concerns

Water Safety Cover

- On water safety cover
- Kayak/Canoe/SUP can be used with experienced paddlers who can safely pull swimmer to shore or signal to rescue boat
- Powered rescue craft great for cover wider area and larger swim route, boat driver should have minimum of RYA Level 2 power craft certificate or RLSS UK Helm Award
- Boat need to have minimum of 2 personnel so one can deal with any swimmers whilst other is driving boat

First Aider

- Minimum of emergency first aid qualification ideally a first day at work or an outdoor sports first aid certificate
- Be aware of current COVID-19 guidelines
- Designated person per session, oversee any swimmers exiting the water from being rescued
- Assessing swimmers on exit for signs of hypothermia

6.0 Summary of Key Points

If coaching 18yrs and over:

- A group of up to 15 people (including coaches and participants) can meet for a coaching session. Physical distancing is required throughout the session for athletes and team

If coaching 17yrs and under:

- A group of up to 15 people (including coaches and participants) can meet for a coaching session. For anyone 12-17 years old physical distancing is required throughout the session for athletes.
- Children aged 11 years and younger are not required to physically distance at any time, as set out in Scottish Government guidance.

All ages:

- Equipment should not be shared between the group and if it's used by another group would need to be efficiently cleaned between sessions
- Coaches should ensure hand sanitisers or anti-bacterial wipes are available for use at entrance/exit to activity where possible and ask participants to bring their own hand sanitiser (Hand sanitiser should be at least 60% alcohol based and detergent wipes appropriate for the surface they are being used on)

Parents/guardians:

- When supervising their children, parents/guardians must abide by Scottish Government physical distancing guidance and stay at least 2m away from those outwith their own household. Groups of parents from different households must not congregate before, during or after the activity

7.0 Disclaimer

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2. The term guidance should be taken to imply the standards and best practice solutions that are acceptable to Scottish Swimming.
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