



**Scottish
Swimming**

Competition Management (Open Water Swimming)

COVID-19 Guidance

Version 9 – 10th August 2021

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Section 1 - Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The following guidance has been developed in co-operation with **sportscotland** and industry partners. The document aims to support the management of Open Water swimming competitions, from club time trials through to multi-club and district level events. This guidance document will support swimming clubs/event organising teams to work collaboratively to ensure there is a safe and practical environment. This document provides guidance on reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission within the Open Water training environment and during competition. Sections of this guidance will be familiar as they have been included in some of the other guidance documents.

The return of competitions is likely to be a lengthy and graduated process. The initial re-introduction to the competitive environment should be through timed swims and time trials within training sessions building through to multi-club and district events. Initially events need to be kept as simple and focused as possible, ensuring all necessary protocols are in place. The staged process is detailed in section 2 of this document. There is no timeline attached to moving through the different competition stages. This fully depends on how and when national and local restrictions change. This guidance document will be updated as required.

The guidance highlights the continued enhanced hygiene regimes and considers how this will impact on the different competitive environments and outlining other key considerations to include when preparing for timed/competitive events. As with all environments there is risk of COVID-19 transmission in aquatic settings that require control measures to be implemented. Operators and Clubs/Districts must have risk assessments in place before implementing any activities.

This guidance document should be read alongside the [Scottish Swimming Technical Official Back to the Water Guidance and the Scottish Swimming Open Water Regulations](#).

1.1 Guiding principles

The information contained within this document is based on the following overarching guiding principles:

- **Safety first** – the safety of anyone involved in our sports and activities is paramount and will be put first in all considerations. Clubs/event organisers should emphasise to members that during this period of time everyone has a personal responsibility to keep themselves safe
- **Consistent** – our guidance is across multiple activities and many stakeholders, we will seek to make it consistent and aligned to avoid creating conflict or confusion
- **Robust** – we will ensure that our guidance is developed by experts in the sport/activity/field and then reviewed internally and by a medical practitioner to ensure it is as robust as possible
- **Evolving** – we will provide initial guidance but understand that not all factors are currently known and that circumstances will change, to this end we will develop and improve guidance as appropriate and based on practical experience when activity recommences in the water

1.2 Be prepared for change

It is clear that the aquatic landscape is now vastly different and will continue to evolve over the next few months. Many pools and venues have reopened with reduced or amended opening hours and many activities and sports remain restricted with phased return of these activities planned over the next few months. Some venues and facilities may be delayed in reopening or not reopen. The level & format of competitions along with number of technical officials/event staff and set up for competitions may look very different. Clubs have an important role to play in regards to managing expectations of their athletes, coaches, parents, technical officials and volunteers as the club returns to the water and competitive opportunities restart.

Sports Events & Competitions

Sport Competition

- Organised sport competition can take place if guidance within this document is followed and subject to appropriate risk assessment and oversight by the designated Covid Officer to compliment the full event risk assessment.
- The maximum number of participants allowed to take part in a sport competition should be no more than 5000 people.
- Operators and organisers should where relevant, as part of their risk assessment, consult with and obtain agreement from those bodies that they would normally require agreement from to run the competition. Where the competition would require a licence from the local authority under existing Civic Government legislation, this must include agreement from local Environmental Health Officers. Other bodies depending on the type, location, and scale of the event, may include the landowner, Community Council, the transport police, or other body responsible for the safety of the public.
- Sports events, including spectator events, can take place subject to appropriate Scottish Government guidance being followed.
- As soon as a participant has completed training, a competition or event, they should leave the field of play/venue unless other Scottish Government guidance allows e.g. use of venue hospitality services.

Sports Events

- Sports events can take place subject to appropriate Scottish Government guidance being followed. Further information is available on the **sportscotland** website here: [Event information](#).

Travel

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](#).

2.2 Staged return to Open Water swimming competitions

The return to Open Water swimming competitions can be split into 4 different stages; Engage, Build, Develop, Stretch. The table below outlines the key elements of each stage.

	Engage	Build	Develop	Stretch	
FOCUS	Engaging with athletes and re-establishing the love for the water is the main focus as we return to training through "Back to the Water."	Building engagement and focusing on fun and enjoyment as the member of a team.	Maintaining the focus on building the team as competition opportunities are developed further.	A wider range of events in new and traditional formats to provide opportunity to compete both as an individual and as a member of a team as well as to prepare for future events.	New Normal
COMPETITION	Low level competition can be introduced during training sessions by racing alternative distances. Emphasis on fun and enjoyment.	Intra club competition with racing to develop skills and technique is encouraged, utilising space within current guidelines.	District Training days with mini races/events can take place. Competition may require individual age-groups, limited event orders, and new use of technology without the need for formal licensing and technical officials.	District Championships with limited entries and a National event covering a range of athletes and events will be considered for Summer 2021 if these can be delivered within the restriction levels. Scottish Swimming and Districts continue to plan for future competitions, National events and the "new norm" post summer 2021	
OUTCOME	Positive expectations and experiences	Focus on fun and engagement as a member of a team.	Team and club spirit developed and strengthened.	More opportunities to compete and planning for the "new norm" - team and individual.	

Accompanying notes

- The Engage and Build stages should operate within the constraints of the current open water training guidance document in conjunction with this document. The Develop and Stretch stages should operate under the constraints of this competition management guidance document
- As Clubs progress through the different stages of the return to competition, the competitions detailed in the previous stage(s) can also be conducted. The timeline for moving between stages should not be pressured. Clubs should progress to the next stage when they are comfortable to do so and local protection restrictions allow
- All of the above are subject to the current guidance on the use of face coverings and adherence to the venue capacity restrictions, including, spectator, changing/toilet areas and meeting room capacities. Clubs should have in place an appropriate risk assessment and event plan agreed by the venue in advance of hosting any competitive event

Section 3 – Competition management considerations

3.1 Competition Organisation Group

When considering organising a competition or timed event, it is recommended that an organising group is set up. This could be a club sub-committee or a designated group of individuals tasked with the organisation and delivery of an event. There are a number of important aspects for the group to consider including the COVID-19 compliance protocols to be able to deliver the event as safely and efficiently as possible.

The group should consider having the below in place when organising the event. Further information on the below is contained within this document.

Event Information	Event information is essential. It is important to identify what the purpose of the event is and to detail what the event conditions are along with any protocols and procedures that will be in place during the event
Event plan	An Event plan detailing necessary equipment and spaces required with maximum numbers in each area is recommended. This will support the venue and event staff to set up, operate and de-rig the event. Having a field of play diagram in advance of the event would help athletes, designated adults (each swimmer needs to have a designated adult at event for safety reasons) and team staff know what to expect at the event
Health & Safety	Liaise with the venue management to ensure the appropriate health and safety considerations are in place and a risk assessment is in place to cover the competitive activity
COVID-19 protocols	Ensure the necessary COVID-19 protocols and procedures are put in place to allow the competitive event to take place as safely as possible
Finance	Consideration should be given to the focus of the event and the financial implications. Where appropriate an event budget is important to have in place to assist with controlling expenses and managing income
Contingency planning	Consider 'what if' scenarios to ensure the group is prepared in the event of a change in restrictions or cancellation. Consider having a disclaimer statement in place in case of cancellation, especially if there is likely to be financial liabilities incurred

3.2 Health & Safety

The Club/organising team should liaise with the venue management when creating a risk assessment for competition to ensure none of the Operating Procedures, Emergency Action Plans and appropriate Risk Assessments conflict. The venue staff will be able to provide venue specific information that is required to ensure the risk assessments are as accurate as possible.

- Any risk assessment already in place for training at the venue may need updating to allow for additional team staff/supporting volunteers and/or additional visiting clubs to be within the event area (indoor & outdoors) to manage any racing and to facilitate the taking and recording of times if required
- Depending on the size and nature of the event it may be necessary to have a separate risk assessment covering the details of the event, including the additional equipment and participant numbers and should be specific to the venue. Clubs/Event organisers should liaise with the venue management as necessary
- Clubs/event organisers should liaise with the venue staff/water safety team to confirm arrangements for first aid and safe supervision of the session as well as the procedure for anyone who takes ill during the session. Risk assessments and club/event procedures should be updated accordingly
- Clubs/event organisers should liaise with venue staff in advance of the event to agree the required cleaning and hygiene protocols and procedures are in place for the event and confirm that appropriate PPE and equipment is in place
- Event health and safety information should be available for participants, team staff and volunteers in advance of the event where at all possible. In-person briefings at the venue should be avoided. Where this is necessary then physical distancing and the use of face coverings must be followed. Reminder announcements or signage within the facility would be helpful when/where appropriate

3.3 Facilities & Equipment

It is essential to continue to work with the venue staff when planning a timed event/competition. The club/organising team should include the venue staff at all stages of the event, from the concept and planning stages through to the delivery and review stages. Having in place an event plan will be essential to ensure everyone is clear about what is required, when it's required and who is responsible for what tasks. It is vital to understand facility restrictions such as building and changing capacities and what this means especially in higher traffic areas such as on marshalling/start areas and in registration areas for example.

- The organising team should liaise with the venue staff in advance of the event and agree the setup and de-rig timeline and procedures, keeping the number of individuals involved to a minimum where at all possible
- Liaise with venue staff to consider the protocols around participant arrival, drop-off and entry to the venue. Protocols for exiting, picking up and leaving the venue and venue car park must also be considered. Specific consideration should be given should participants arrive late and/or those who are not picked up on time
- The use of changing rooms should comply with venue protocols and procedures.
- Liaise with venue staff regarding the use of meeting rooms and registration areas, keeping the number of people accessing these areas to a practicable minimum

The table below details when it is suitable for competition based equipment to be used. Clubs/event staff should consider the ability of athletes, the appropriateness for using the equipment and safety/hygiene implications for using the equipment.

	Engage	Build	Develop	Stretch	Risk (RA)	Assessment	Event Plan/Notes
Steps (entering/exiting water)	✓	✓	✓	✓	Use of steps to be included in RA		Protocol detailed for setup, use, take down and cleaning
Process for counting swimmers in & out	✓	✓	✓	✓	Method (lanyards, numbered bags etc) included in risk assessment		Protocol detailed for use and appropriate cleaning
Swimmers registration pack	✓	✓	✓	✓	Event team to think of ways of reducing touch points, could everything be prepared in envelopes		Protocol detailed for registration and hand sanitising procedure
Buoyancy aids	✓	✓	✓	✓	Use of buoyancy aids. to be included in RA		Protocols for use and cleaning to be established
Starting horn	✓	✓	✓	✓	Use of starting horn. system to be included in RA		Protocols for operation and cleaning to be established
Flags	✓	✓	✓	✓	Use of flags to be included in RA		Protocols for operation and cleaning to be established
Gazebos & Tents	X	✓	✓	✓	Use of tents/gazebos to be included in RA		Protocol detailed for setup, use, take down and cleaning
Water craft	✓	✓	✓	✓	Use of water craft to be included in RA		Protocols for staffing, positioning and operation, (including entry and exit) required
Stop Watches/	✓	✓	✓	✓	Can technical officials bring their own.		Protocols for use and cleaning to be established
Clipboards	✓	✓	✓	✓	Officials to supply and use their own		
Radios	✓	✓	✓	✓	Use of Radio's to be included in the risk assessment		Protocols for use and cleaning to be established

- Clubs should liaise with the venue staff to ensure the necessary hygiene protocols, procedures and schedules are in place for cleaning any fixed and removable equipment as required
- Prior to the event it is necessary to agree who is responsible for providing the necessary anti-bacterial wipes and sanitising sprays/solutions for cleaning the equipment and for use by the technical officials, team staff and athletes during the event
- Venue/event equipment should be appropriately cleaned between events/races. Touch points of free and fixed equipment, such as handrails, chairs and event equipment, swimmer bags/boxes, timing equipment should be cleaned after every event or more frequently if considered necessary
- Venue/club owned competition/event equipment such as stopwatches, buoyancy aids, result sheets that are issued to team staff/Technical Officials should be operated by 1 person only per session and be sanitised before and after each session. Team staff and Technical Officials using clipboards should bring and use only their own

- Rescue craft –
 - Kayakers should bring their own equipment including boat to reduce risk through sharing. If equipment is shared then it needs to be sanitised between use.
 - Where rescue & technical official boats are in operation, the same rescue/technical officials staff should stay in the same boat throughout the event, if there is a changeover the equipment will need to be sanitised.

3.4 COVID-19 considerations

3.4.1 General considerations

- A COVID-19 Lead Officer should be appointed by the organising team to ensure all COVID-19 considerations are included in the event plan, event protocols and risk assessment. The Lead Officer should be present during the event to liaise with venue staff regarding the COVID-19 arrangements.
- Face coverings must be worn by all team staff, technical officials and other volunteers while within any indoor facility or in gazebo areas and during the event team staff should follow the guidance in the risk assessment. Exemption applies only for those who have relevant medical conditions and disabilities or other considerations that have been included in the risk assessment
- All athletes must wear face coverings when within any indoor facility or in a gazebo with more than 50% of walls applied. While moving around outdoors and during the activity, athletes should follow the information on face coverings detailed in the procedures & risk assessments for the club/facility
- The club/organising team should have an agreed procedure and protocols in place with the venue should a participant fall ill (COVID-19 or otherwise) during the competition/timed event. This should be communicated appropriately
- Store attendance information securely in the event of a positive case to support the Test and Protect procedures

Reminder for all participants

Do not go to a venue if you currently have any illness symptoms or have been in contact with a known COVID-19 case in the last 10 days.

For reference the main symptoms for COVID-19 are currently:

A new continuous cough, A high temperature or fever, Loss of taste or smell

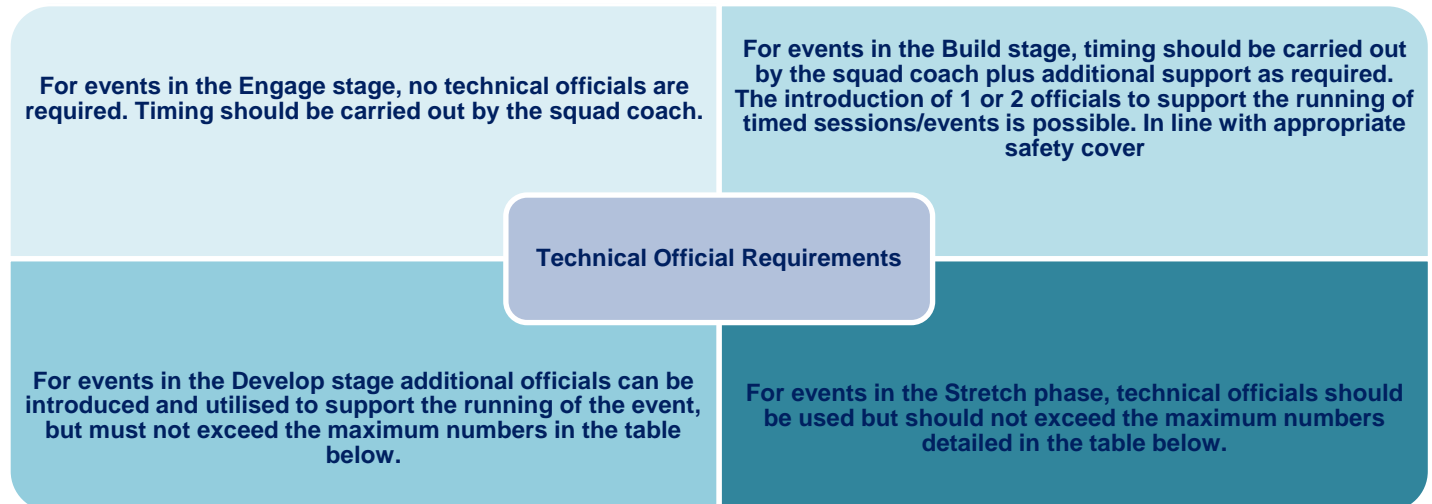
For a full list of symptoms and for more information: [NHS Inform website](#)

What should someone do if they have coronavirus symptoms?

If a person has a continuous cough, high temperature, or loss or change in taste or smell, they should self-isolate and request a coronavirus test right away. Further information is available at [NHS inform: Get a Test](#) or by calling **0800 028 2816** if they cannot get online.

3.5 Technical Officials

The re-introduction of technical officials is a vital part of considering the return of competitions. Based on the identified 4 stages of competition detailed in section 2 the following information should be considered when planning a competition/timed event. This is subject to change based on the restriction level information and any additional guidance from **sportscotland** and the Scottish Government.



For events in the new normal phase, more information will be available in due course

The focus should be on delivering the competition/event with as few volunteers as possible interacting with each other and for the minimum amount of time, whilst still allowing the competition/event to be run effectively and safely with respect to all other hazards as well as Covid 19. The table below details the **maximum** numbers of technical officials permitted at competitions/timed events and applied as per the information above.

	Trained	Trainee
Technical officials	10	8
Safety Officer	1	2
Safety Boat	8	
Kayakers	15	
Marshal/event volunteers	10	
Medical Officer	1	1

- Technical Officials from the local area to the event should be used where practicable. This is to reduce the need for individuals travelling longer distances and across areas. It will also reduce the requirement for accommodation. Best practice would be to appoint a couple of reserve officials who will be kept off site unless required

The use of face coverings indoors will also be a requirement for returning to duties. Specific thought may be needed to safely include those technical officials who are in the 'at risk' groups and an appropriate risk assessment should be in place. Below are the key points to consider for the reintroduction of technical officials and smooth running of events. More information is contained in: [Scottish Swimming Technical Official Back to the Water Guidance](#)

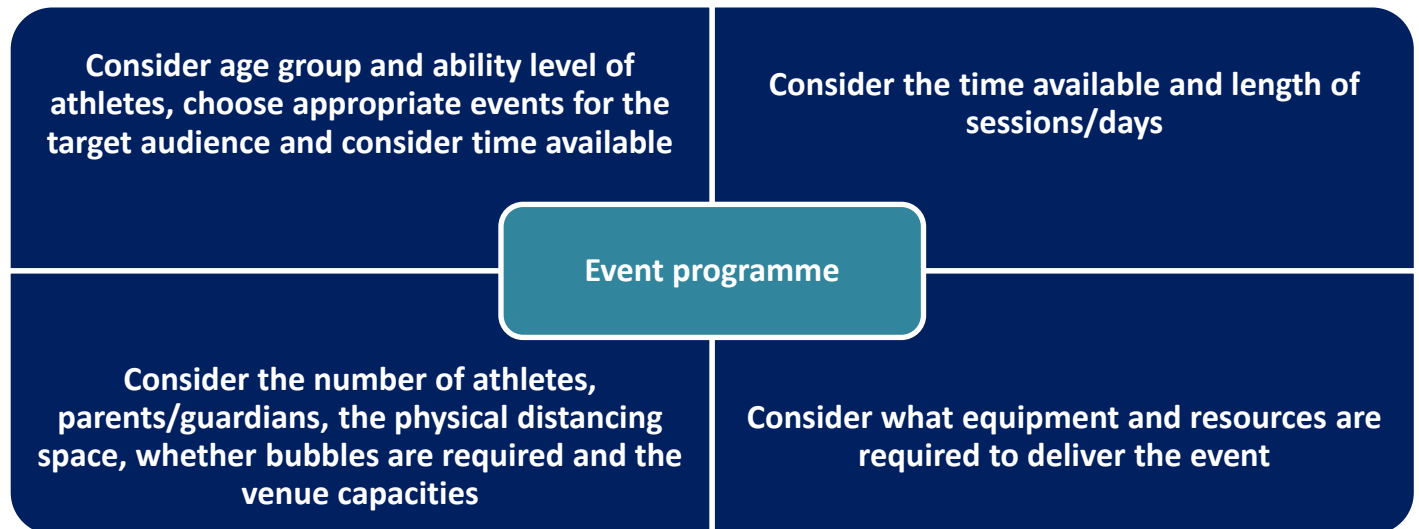
- Scottish Swimming recognises that there will be different considerations/challenges for each venue. It would be good practice for the lead referee/official to liaise with the event/competition organising committee/COVID-19 team to establish if there are any additional venue requirements or practicalities that need to be included within briefings or the way Technical Officials are required to operate during the event
- Technical Official briefings should be kept to a minimum to avoid congestion at the venue and where possible information should be available before arriving at the venue. Where in-person briefings are necessary the use of face coverings must be followed

- The application of any FINA rules & SASA regulations should be agreed by the referee and organising team in advance of the meet with technical officials receiving this information prior to arriving at the venue
- Technical Officials should spend as little time as possible in the changing rooms, following the operator's guidance on maintaining safe levels of distance. Technical officials should arrive appropriately dressed ready where at all possible, limiting the time in changing rooms.
- Technical Officials should limit their interactions with athletes and team staff during events/competitions as far as reasonably practicable.
- The amount of paperwork being handled/processed/stored during the event/competition by Technical Officials and Team Staff, for example results and team declarations should be minimised and electronic options should be explored where at all possible. Thorough hand washing with soap and/or hand-sanitiser, should be **regularly** undertaken by all during an event/competition
- Technical Officials should bring their own personal equipment such as stopwatches, whistles, clipboards, pens etc and should be clearly labelled where possible. Only take the minimum amount of equipment that you need to participate. Personal equipment should be cleaned with anti-viral wipes or solution before and after use.
- Any facility/club owned competition/event equipment that is issued to Technical Officials should be operated by 1 person only in each session and be sanitised before, during and after each session such as stopwatches or flags
- Equipment such as stop watches and starting horns should only be used by one Technical Official per session and should be cleaned with anti-viral wipes or solution before and after use. The use of whistles and shouting should be kept to a minimum

3.6 Event information

Having meet/event information for multi club events is recommended. It should set out the purpose of the event along with detailing the conditions of the event. The length and content of the information will depend on the type and level of the event. The following information details a number of points which should be considered when planning a completion/event. Only include what is required as keeping the information as clear and concise as possible is also important.

Event list and programme considerations:



- It is important to have in place a familiarisation video/information diagram available for all athletes, team staff and volunteers to view/read prior to accessing the venue, including details of athlete flow, bubble areas and other useful considerations
- Session times for the event must be created, communicated in advance and adhered to. This will enable arrivals and departures to take place effectively without overloading the capacity of the venue.
- Athlete and team staff briefings should be kept to a minimum to avoid congestion at the venue and where possible information should be available before arriving at the venue. Where in-person briefings are required the use of face coverings must be followed.
- The order of the races should be planned and agreed in advance with the athletes knowing what they are swimming and when prior to the session. Any additional rules or technical rules that are being enforced should be communicated to athletes and team staff/volunteers prior to arriving
- The use of changing rooms should comply with venue protocols and procedures. Athletes should arrive at the venue in swim costumes so only wetsuits are required to be put on ready to race and team staff should arrive ready to carry out their duties, as far as reasonably practicable
- Athletes should ensure their belongings are not left lying around. Belongings should be stored in their numbered bags. Organisers should consider how to eliminate handling of bags by more than person and how to deal with this if it is necessary for someone other than the swimmer to move the bag.
- Marshalling/call room areas should not be used in the Engage or Build stages. They should be re-introduced in the Develop stage and should be used in the Stretch stage where required or appropriate. However congregation of athletes should be kept to a minimum. Athletes should stand in an allocated spot arriving between the 10 & 5 minute to start call, following the appropriate athlete flow and process.
- Be clear in the meet/event information what the protocols, timelines and procedures for the entries, results and team declarations are

- The amount of paperwork being handled/processed/stored during the event/competition, for example start lists, results and team declarations should be minimised and electronic options should be explored where at all possible
- All athletes, team staff and volunteers who are taking part in competitive events of any size should have a current SASA membership Or National Governing Body, if anybody from outwith Scotland wish to take part?
- Ensure that information about any photography, video streaming or recording is included in the information and permission forms are in place if required
- Consider whether a disclaimer needs to be included within the event information. This is to be clear around the responsibilities and liabilities should the event have to be reduced or cancelled in light of changing restrictions for example

3.7 General event considerations

The points detailed below are additional considerations that should be factored in when organising competition/timed events. These may need to be included into the event information depending on the stage/level/focus of the event.

Spectating	Spectating is now allowed, event organiser needs to risk assess the management of spectators during an event and if spectating will be available or not. Each swimmer needs to be accompanied by a designated adult for safety reasons. Designated adult numbers are included in overall event numbers.
Presentations	Presentation or awards ceremonies are currently allowed however organisers should think about numbers and space being used for presentations in order to limit the number of people congregating within the venue
Catering	Ensure that athletes/team staff bring sufficient fluids for the event in their own clearly marked bottles and any necessary food in clearly marked containers Do not share food and drink
Announcing & Commentary	Announcing and commentary may be possible depending on the venue and level of event.
Local volunteers	The club/event organising team should utilise local volunteers where practicable, removing the need to provide accommodation for those supporting the event
Event passes	Consider whether the competition/timed event would benefit from passes being in place for athletes, team staff and volunteers. This would ensure that numbers remain as expected and as planned within a session and only those who need access to the session can

Spectating Additional Information:

It is recognised that it may not always be possible to prevent people from spectating [at a competition or event] in a public space such as a park. In such circumstances, the organisers are required to consider mitigating measures as part of their risk assessment/management plan with an emphasis on discouraging, where possible, informal spectating. Any such measures should be clearly communicated by the organiser prior to the competition or event which may include, amongst other things, the displaying of notices around the venue to remind the public to follow Scottish Government guidance.

For clarity, where informal spectating does take place organisers are not expected to enforce government guidance on members of the public in places not under their control.

3.8 Safeguarding

As a competitive focus is re-introduced, a number of changes to keep members safe and comply with COVID-19 management are necessary.

While implementing the COVID-19 protocols covering club training and competitive events, clubs, team staff and volunteers must operate in a safe and effective manner in accordance with the Scottish Swimming Wellbeing & Protection policies, procedures and insurance information. The principles of safeguarding children and young people and our duty of care responsibilities remain unchanged. Involve the club wellbeing and protection officer where appropriate when planning an event.

Coaches and volunteers should continue to follow best safeguarding practices when working with children and young people; by considering the needs and wellbeing of the child first and avoiding any situations that place the child or themselves at risk or in a compromising position e.g. unnecessary 1 to 1 situations. It is vital that coaches and volunteers report any child wellbeing or protection concerns immediately to the club's Wellbeing & Protection Officer or the designated responsible person at the event.

Coaches and volunteers should read and follow the guidance document from sportscotland and Children 1st relating to children returning to sport which can be found: <https://sportscotland.org.uk/media/5774/cyp-return-to-sport-after-COVID-19.pdf>

Section 4 - Disclaimer

4.0 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 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 may take place from time to time and clubs 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. 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, 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
6. Clubs 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 contained in this guidance note are not site specific and therefore may not be suitable for your 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. Clubs hold and will continue to hold Scottish Swimming free from all harm and liabilities arising from any action taken by clubs under this guidance.