

Protocols for Republic of Ireland clubs as part of COVID-19: Reframing the Challenge, Continuing Our Recovery and Reconnecting.

The Government and Sport Ireland have announced the next and final phase of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thanks to our clubs' diligence and adherence to COVID-19 protocols, along with the high uptake of COVID-19 vaccines throughout the country we can now look forward to a return to full training and competition soon. Clubs should continue to maintain a high level of vigilance and caution by encouraging club members to continue practising good hygiene and avoid attending training if they feel unwell.

Club committees, coaches, teachers, and COVID-19 officers should review this document and supporting information and contact their club support officer with any questions they may have.

The following protocols will come into effect from **20th September until 21st October**. Click on the text below to skip directly to a section:

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1. General Overview

- Where car-pooling or public transport is being used individuals should take protective measures such as wearing face coverings.
- A register of attendance is required for every session for contact tracing and safeguarding purposes. The coach on duty should also have access to emergency contact details for all participants
- Clubs must have a COVID-19 Officer on duty at every training session. Clubs with under 18's must have a person on duty. One person may fulfil both of these roles if they meet the COVID-19 Officer requirements. In adult only clubs/ sessions the coach or a nominated athlete may act as the COVID-19 officer as part of their normal duties/ activities if they meet the COVID-19 Officer requirements.

2. Declaration form and proof of immunity

- All club members attending training sessions, including athletes, coaches, COVID-19 officer, persons of duty etc. are required to complete and return the updated declaration form to their club by Friday 17th September, to enable clubs to best plan their ongoing training programme. **This is a once off form that will remove the requirement for daily self-report screening forms.**
- In line with GDPR best practise the declaration forms should be held until 30th October 2021, after which time they should be safely and securely destroyed.
- Declaration forms can be administered in paper or online format (online recommended).
- Club members over 18 in ROI will be asked to indicate their COVID-19 immunity status.
- Club members from NI attending training or events in ROI will be required to provide proof of immunity.
- COVID-19 immunity is defined on www.gov.ie as fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within previous 6 months.
- Your HSE Vaccination Card or your [EU Digital COVID Certificate](#) (provides proof of recovery and vaccination) is acceptable as proof of immunity. Facilities and clubs may also ask for Photo ID for verification purposes.
- If club members (over 18) do not disclose their immunity status these members must be treated as not being immune and the club should follow mixed immunity protocols.
- Clubs should engage with their facility in advance to understand their procedures and advise members of any changes.
- Club members under 18 may be asked for proof of age by their facility, this should be agreed with facility in advance if required.

3. Club Activity (Swimming)

- The following protocols are effective from 20th September until 21st October
- Clubs should engage with their facility in advance to understand and agree procedures for the club, including requirement to present proof of immunity and identification. Members should be advised of any changes.

Under 18's

- Social distancing should be maintained when swimmers are not engaged in activity, i.e., while on poolside, changing rooms etc.
- Social distancing is not required whilst in the swimming pool for this age group. Clubs should conduct a risk assessment to decide how many swimmers are suitable to be in each lane. This may vary between squad and sessions depending on:
 - Age of athletes
 - Ability of athletes
 - No. of coaches on deck
 - Type of session
 - Length of pool
 - Width of lanes
- Clubs and coaches should communicate any change to the current set up with their swimmers in advance.
- Personal training equipment should not be shared with others and should be clearly labelled.
- Shared equipment such as diving blocks should be cleaned between swimmers using them (chlorinated water will suffice).

Over 18's

- Where all swimmers can provide of immunity, social distancing is not required whilst in the swimming pool. Where swimmers have mixed immunity clubs should continue with previous protocols until 22nd October 2021.

Full immunity (all swimmers)	Mixed immunity
Clubs should conduct a risk assessment to decide how many swimmers are suitable to be in each lane. This may vary between squad and sessions depending on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Age of athletes ▪ Ability of athletes ▪ No. of coaches on deck ▪ Type of session ▪ Length of pool ▪ Width of lanes 	Clubs should operate on the following protocols (see Appendix A): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20 metre pool – option 1: 2 pods of 3, option 2: 1 pod of 6 ▪ 25 metre pool – option 1: 2 pods of 4, option 2: 1 pod of 6 ▪ 50 metre pool – option 1: 2 pods of 5, option 2: 1 pod of 6

- Social distancing should be maintained when swimmers are not engaged in activity, i.e., while on poolside, changing rooms etc.
- Clubs and coaches should communicate any change to the current set up with their swimmers in advance.
- Personal training equipment should not be shared with others.

- Shared equipment such as diving blocks should be cleaned between swimmers using them (chlorinated water will suffice).

4. Club Activity (Water Polo)

- The following protocols are effective from 20th September until 21st October
- Clubs should engage with their facility in advance to understand and agree procedures for the club, including requirement to present proof of immunity and identification. Club members should be advised of any changes.

Under 18's

- Social distancing should be maintained when swimmers are not engaged in activity, i.e., while on poolside, changing rooms etc.
- Contact training and match play is permitted.
- Under 18's are not required to provide proof of immunity for training and match play.

Over 18's

- Social distancing should be maintained when swimmers are not engaged in activity, i.e., while on poolside, changing rooms etc.
- Where all players can provide proof of immunity, contact training and match play are permitted.
- Where players have mixed immunity status, a maximum of 6 players are permitted per pod, contact training and match play is not permitted. Multiple pods will be permissible, and clubs should consider the overall size of the pool. Substantial social distancing between individual pods must be implemented.

Match play

- Social distancing should be maintained when swimmers are not engaged in activity, i.e., while on poolside, substitutes on bench, changing rooms etc.
- All team staff, including referees must be fully vaccinated, and should wear face coverings.
- Where players are under 18, match play is permitted, and proof of immunity is not required.
- Where players are over 18 and can provide proof of immunity, match play is permitted.
- All players over 18 from **Northern Ireland**, playing a match in the Republic of Ireland must provide proof of immunity to the facility.
- We advise no spectators to attend matches until 22nd October 2021. Where clubs want to allow spectators at matches, they must liaise with their facility directly in relation to their specific protocols and requirements.

5. Club Activity (Diving)

- The following protocols are effective from 20th September until 21st October
- Clubs should engage with their facility in advance to understand and agree procedures for the club, including requirement to present proof of immunity and identification. Club members should be advised of any changes.

- Social distancing should be maintained when swimmers are not engaged in activity, i.e., while on poolside, changing rooms etc.
- Shared equipment such as diving platforms should be cleaned between divers using them (chlorinated water will suffice).
- Where divers are over 18 and are mixed, i.e., not all have proof of immunity, pods of 6 divers should be implemented.

6. Club Activity (Open Water Swimming)

- The following protocols are effective from 20th September onwards.
- Restrictions on outdoor group activities for participants will be removed.
- Swimmers should continue to exercise caution both in relation to COVID-19 and open water swimming when engaging in open water swimming.

7. Competitions

- The following protocols are effective from 20th September until 21st October.
- Clubs should engage with their facility in advance to understand and agree procedures for the club, including requirement to present proof of immunity and identification. Club members should be advised of any changes.

Swimming

- No Regional or National Competitions with more than 50 entrants will take place prior to 22nd October 2021.
- No inter club or open club competitions with more than 50 entrants may take place prior to 22nd October 2021, if this is agreed with the facility.
- A revised season plan has been issued to the regions and updated on the Swim Ireland website.
- Clubs may run in house skills challenges/time trials from September 20th 2021, in line with club activity protocols above.

Water Polo

- Matches will resume from the 20th September in line with protocols issued by the National Water Polo Committee and club activity protocols above.

8. Swimming Lessons

- Swimming lesson providers can revert to pre-COVID-19 procedures, based on a 3-metre squared per swimmer bather load calculation and must risk assess accordingly.
- All lesson capacities must be based on a facility specific risk assessment considering the change in protocols for under 18's and over 18's.
- Social distancing is not required for children under 18 whilst participating in the swimming lessons.
- Swimming teachers who can provide proof of immunity may work in closer proximity with swimmers.

- Teachers who cannot provide proof of immunity must remain 2m socially distanced and continue teaching from the pool deck.
- It is recommended that any lessons returning for the first-time following closures should have a water safety focus for the first few weeks. Lessons should focus specifically on core aquatic skills rather than stroke specific.
- Facilities are advised to continue staggered start times to ensure customers can move easily around the facilities whilst socially distanced.
- Lesson providers should continue to have a COVID-19 Officer on duty at all times. This individual can now also be responsible for teaching a class.

9. Facility Guidance

General

- Most risk in facility/pool setting is linked to time spent out of the pool (arrival, registration, changing, showering, exiting etc.) compared to time spent in the pool. Clubs and individuals should minimise their time out of the pool, limit interactions, remove potential for congestion etc.
- Where possible, a one-way system should be implemented for transit through the facility (facility dependent)
- Access to changing rooms is permitted, with protective measures in place, such as wearing face coverings and maintaining social distancing (facility dependent)
- Spectators are permitted up to 60% capacity with appropriate protective measures for individuals with proof of immunity (facility dependent). We recommend that clubs refrain from inviting spectators until 22nd October and should seek advice from their facility.

Entry and exit

- Clubs should formulate a staggered entry and exit system with their participants.
- Sufficient buffer time should be planned between different participants entering & exiting facility.
- Adhere to social distancing requirements on entry and exit.
- Avoid loitering or congregating at facility entrance.
- On entry & exit, individuals should use the hand sanitizer provided.

Changing Rooms and Showers

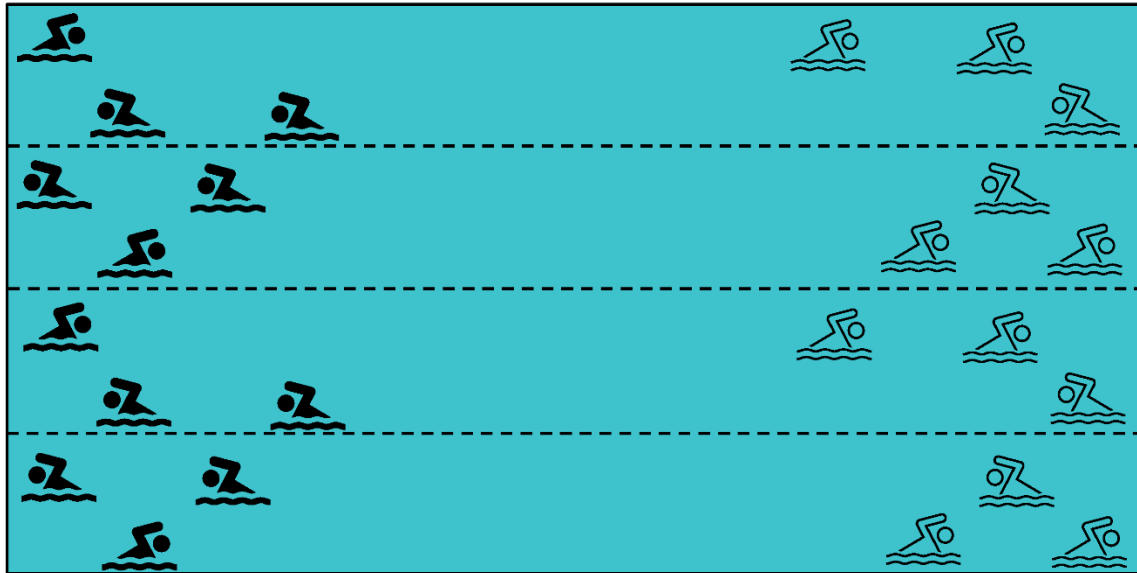
- Where possible participants should arrive ready to train, with swimwear on underneath clothes.
- Transit through changing rooms should be staggered and social distancing should be adhered to.
- COVID-19 officer should ensure shower protocols are fully communicated to all members where facility is allowing the use of showers
- Clubs should engage with their facilities to agree a well-managed, appropriate, and safe use of changing rooms.

10. Face Coverings

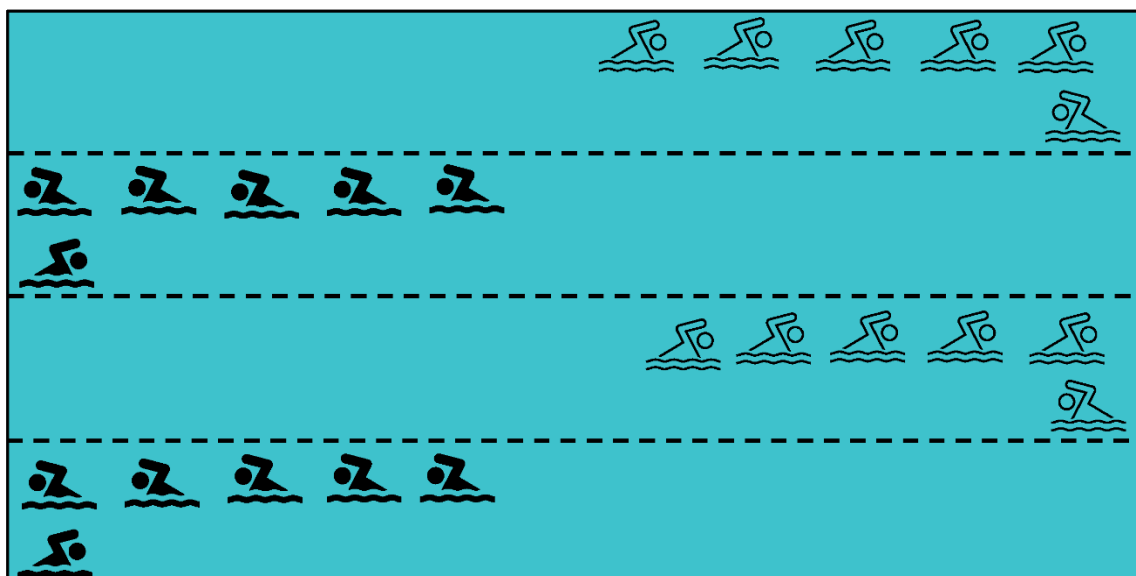
- COVID-19 is mainly spread through close contact and droplets that come from your nose and mouth. For example, when you cough, sneeze, or talk loudly. Wearing a face covering reduces the spread of these droplets and aerosols. It also helps stop the spread of the virus from people who may not know they have it.
- Face coverings are not recommended for children under the age of 13, but some children may choose to wear one.
- Any individual (13 years +) entering a facility should wear a face covering until they are ready to commence training. Some facilities may require all individuals to wear face coverings. Contact your facility in advance to ensure you understand their requirements.
- All persons on deck to wear face coverings until all participants have entered the water.
- Participants should wear a face covering if leaving the pool to use the toilet etc.
- It is recommended that participants bring a small zip lock or clip seal bag with their name printed on to store their face covering whilst in the pool.

Appendix A – Pool Layout for over 18's swimming with mixed immunity status

20 metre pool set up



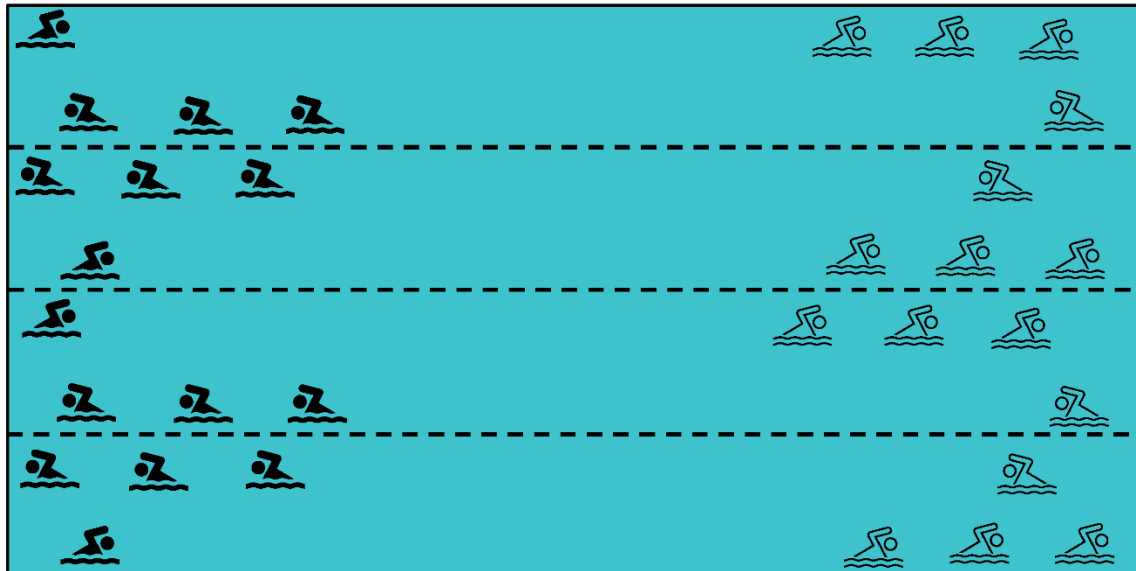
20 metre pool - option 1
Max 6 per lane



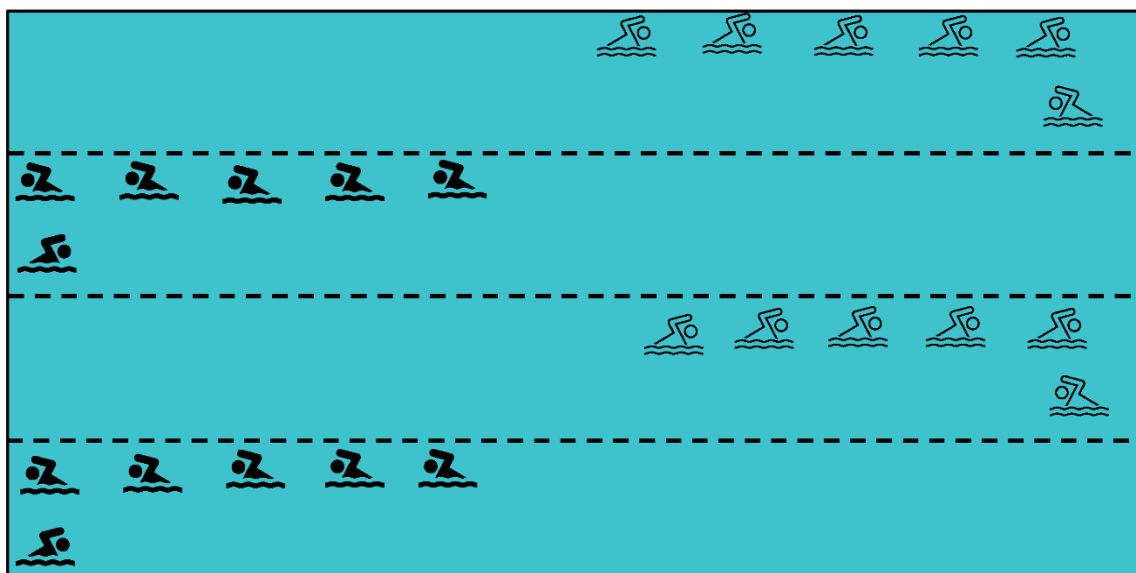
20 metre pool – option 2
Max 6 per lane

Pool Layout for over 18's swimming with mixed immunity status

25 metre pool set up



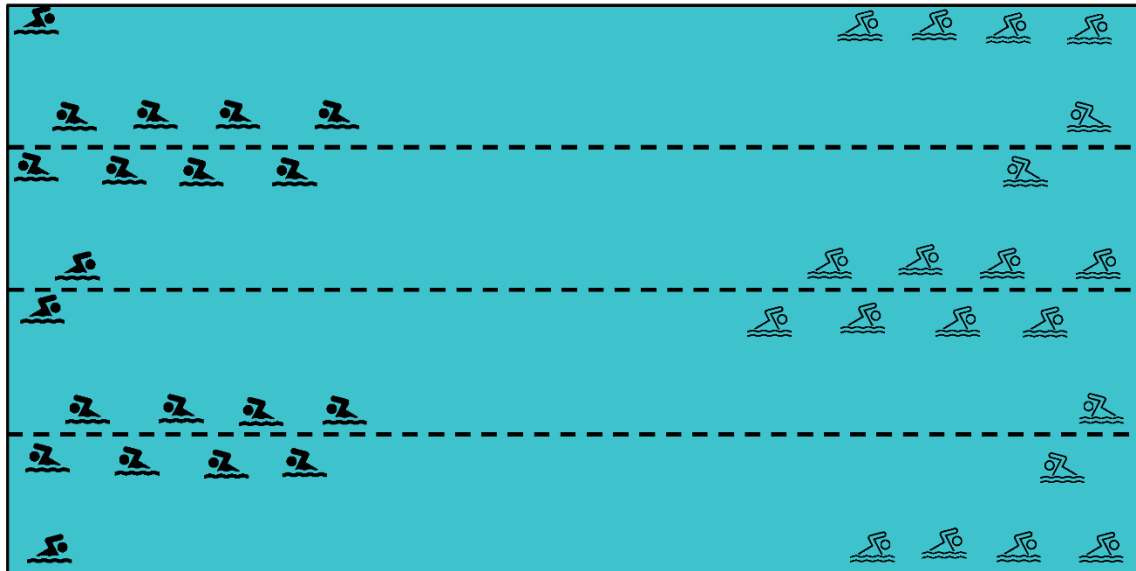
25 metre pool - option 1
Max 8 per lane



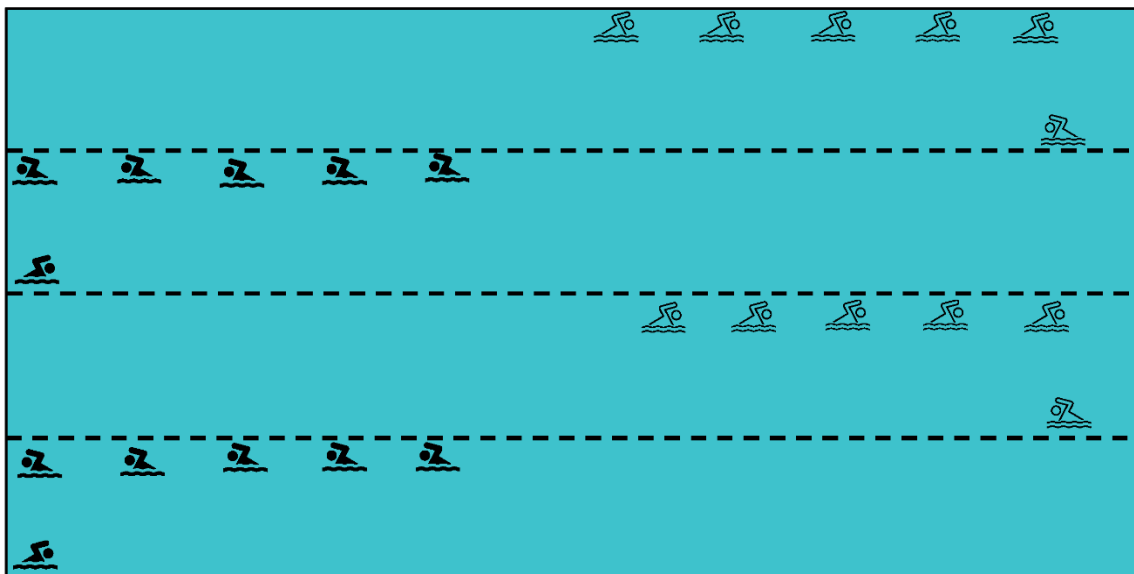
25 metre pool – option 2
Max 6 per lane

Pool Layout for over 18's swimming with mixed immunity status

50 metre pool set up



50 metre pool - option 1
Max 10 per lane



50 metre pool – option 2
Max 6 per lane