

Swim Ireland FAQ Document II – COVID-19 ('Return to Water' Roadmap)

5th June 2020

We would like to thank all club committee members and coaches who have continued to engage with us through our recent webinars; the level of engagement from our clubs is extremely encouraging. From these webinars, it was evident that clubs have several recurring questions and this document aims to provide clubs with the answers to the common questions we are receiving in relation a 'Return to Water' following the closure of pools amidst the COVID-19 outbreak.

Please note that the Government guidelines from both ROI and NI are paramount and supersede anything issued by Swim Ireland. All documentation will be continually reviewed in line with updated Government guidelines.

It is important for all to consider that while the rate of infection is on a downward curve (thanks to everyone fulfilling their role during the lockdown period), we cannot get ahead of ourselves and need to respect the guidelines issued to us. If the country moves quicker through the phases of the roadmap, we will of course aim to move quicker ourselves. However, if the government choose to freeze us in a phase longer than expected, or even regress us back through the phases, we are highly likely to follow suit.

It is also important to note that facilities may choose not to open until further along the Roadmap. While our current interpretation of the Government's Roadmap (we are seeking clarification on this) is that swimming could be permitted 'behind closed doors' in Phase 3, facilities may opt not to open until Phase 4. Some facilities may very well opt not to open until Phase 5 when they can also open their gyms and other leisure areas, while others may decide to stay closed until September. We are working closely with Ireland Active on these matters, but we must also remember that it may not be financially viable for some facilities to open their doors in June or July.

The advice in our [FAQ document](#) issued on the 9th of April is still very relevant and may provide further assistance. However, if you are still unsure about your question after reading this updated document, please contact Swim Ireland through your Club Support Officer.

Club Activities

Is the Swim Ireland 'Return to Water' Roadmap set in stone?

The Swim Ireland Roadmap reflects the five phase/step plan from both ROI and NI for the re-opening of society and is in line with dates and other restrictions being lifted. We are aware that both Governments may change this as we start to work through the phases, potentially speeding up or slowing down. We are treating The Swim Ireland Roadmap and all our advice as fluid and are we are fully prepared to make changes to reflect the most up to date advice and guidance. Any changes and/or updates will be circulated to clubs and members and will be reflected in the title i.e. Version 1, Version 2 etc.

What advice will Swim Ireland be providing clubs to help them prepare for returning?

Swim Ireland has developed a 'Return to Water' Working Group which has been busy developing several resources/supports and templates for clubs in helping them get back into the water. Club Swimming/Diving/Water Polo Framework documents will be issued by the 12th June and will include the following:

- Webinars to support clubs across the many different elements of returning to activities
- Detailed framework documents to outline protocols for clubs in returning to activities and these will include comprehensive advices and examples of how training sessions will work.
- Walk through videos of clubs undertaking training in line with the new framework and protocols
- Risk Assessment templates which all clubs should complete before commencing activities; these documents will not be reviewed by Swim Ireland on completion, but may be requested by your facility

- Health and safety advice and training
- COVID-19 Officer training and supports to help members in this role
- Managing Finance Guide

This list is not exhaustive and is provided to give you a snapshot into what will be provided to support clubs. It is important to remember that committees and coaches know their own clubs and facilities better than anyone else and you will need to develop your own club specific protocols in conjunction with your facility and other stakeholders.

Who should complete the Risk Assessment?

The COVID Officer/Panel will oversee the process of completing the Risk Assessment and will need input from several club members, including coach representation and CCO's in undertaking this process. The club will be provided with a template Risk Assessment and guidance notes in completing the assessment.

What procedures will clubs need to follow during a training session?

Each aquatic discipline's Club Framework will cover all the elements of how a club should return to training. These protocols will include all aspects of before, during and after training sessions.

What are the insurance implications for our club in relation to COVID-19?

The insurance programme and policy cover will operate as normal (subject to the standard terms and conditions) and protect the legal liability of Swim Ireland and the clubs in returning to activity.

As a club what should we be focused on now?

It is important that as a club you are all working together to plan (operationally and financially) for returning to club activities. Committees and Coaches will have different areas of focus but should be in regular communication with each other to develop the overarching plan for the club. It is also vital that you are engaging with your facility and key stakeholders to understand how and when they are preparing to return to activities and support them in this endeavour. Whilst we are all anxious to get back in the water it is important that several other club elements continue:

- Continue to hold Committee meetings via conference call/video conferencing
- Consistently monitor advice and support being provided by Swim Ireland to help put in place the procedures that will be required when returning
- Reviewing finances and engage with facilities to help both parties develop a modified business plan based on:
 - Number of athletes that the club cater for
 - Number of aquatic disciplines within the club
 - Number of lane hours regularly held
 - Additional lane hours which may be available in the short-medium term
 - Cost per lane hour
- Keep a regular communication channel open (with and for) your club members and start to gather insights into numbers returning to the club
- Coaches should still be engaging regularly with athletes through video conferencing, email and social media. Further advice regarding the use of video conferencing is provided below and Swim Ireland can support your club if you need help in setting up a session
- Provide athletes with safe and appropriate home-based training programmes that they would be familiar with and have undertaken previously
- Engage with and follow Swim Ireland support through training advice, online forums and education opportunities

Will we be allowed back in the pool during Phase 3?

In line with Swim Ireland's 'Return to Water' Roadmap, we currently see facilities being able to allow clubs to return to training 'behind closed doors'. However, we are still seeking further clarity from the Government on this statement and definition within their documentation. It is very important for clubs to remember that this is localised and will depend on the individual circumstances and decisions of the facility to open at this stage.

It is more likely that facilities will open in Phase 4 and clubs should be working towards that Phase. It is imperative that clubs are engaging and working cohesively with facilities now to understand their plans for re-opening and the potential for additional pool hours whilst other parties may not be using the facility.

Will all facilities open during Phase 3 or Phase 4?

We are fully aware that some facilities may take the decision not open during Phase 3 or Phase 4 as they will have several factors to consider, including financial implications, staffing, members requirements and staff safety. Swim Ireland are working closely with Ireland Active to develop protocols that are aligned for both organisations with an aligned return to sport being our ambition. We are also part of a 4 Nations working group with Swim England, Scotland and Wales to provide for alignment in our advices. It is imperative for clubs to be already working closely and cohesively with facilities to support each other throughout this process.

What new measure will facilities be implementing?

Many of the new measures that facilities will implement will focus on the reducing of numbers in line with social distancing - maintaining safety of staff and customers in line with guidelines with a more significant focus on cleaning and hygiene. Ireland Active have issued a detailed [framework document](#) for facilities and this outlines many of the steps that they will take once they have re-opened.

How many athletes will be allowed in each lane when we return?

Each aquatic discipline's Club Framework will include all details regarding the operations of the club, which will include before, during and after training session protocols. These protocols will provide details (including diagrams) and best-practice recommendations as to how many athletes should be in a lane at any one time. We are currently reviewing all advice and working with/monitoring other countries as they return to the pool prior to Irish clubs. The first version of this guidance will issue on 12th June directly to Club Committees only (not the wider membership).

We are not a swimming club; will we receive detailed club protocols?

We are working with key individuals from all aquatic disciplines to develop detailed return to club-based training protocols. This includes water polo, diving and open water swimming. Club Frameworks will be circulated to all clubs by the 12th June 2020. We will also be holding discipline specific webinars for all clubs as part of our Return to Water support programme.

We are an open water club – can we run club activities?

It is important that open water clubs are operating under the [Open Water Swimming Framework](#) issued to clubs on the 16th May 2020 and following the guidance outlined in [the Swim Ireland Roadmap](#) and Department of Health. The Open Water Framework will be updated in Phase 2 and circulated to accordingly.

Will athletes be able to use changing rooms on return?

At this stage we believe changing rooms in many cases are unlikely to be accessible to athletes however this will be a decision made by each facility depending on their individual circumstances.

Will coaches and/or athletes be required to wear PPE?

We are awaiting further guidance on this matter and have requested an update from the relevant authorities in this regard. Club based training protocols will reflect the latest advice regarding the use of PPE when we issue to clubs.

Will a Person on Duty (POD) be required under social distancing rules?

All clubs that have members under 18 years of age partaking in club sessions will still require a Person on Duty to be present at all such club training sessions. The POD will need to be positioned so they have full vision of the pool, adhering to all health protocols. Further advice on this will be included in the Club Framework.

Will all our squads be allowed back at the same time?

The Return to Water protocols will involve a phased approach in terms of a return via the Roadmap. We are currently advising that senior squads will return first as age and maturity will play a big part in a safer transition back for the club. However, we would envisage that the younger squads will follow swiftly after.

As a water polo club, when can we commence team-based training activities?

The detailed framework for water polo clubs are currently under development and Version 1 will be circulated to all clubs by the 12th June.

What is a COVID-19 Officer?

A COVID-19 Officer will be someone appointed by the club committee to monitor and support the club in implementing guidelines from Swim Ireland and The Department of Health relating to COVID-19. Further details on this position will be included with the Club Framework and in some of our larger clubs, this may need to be a 2-3 person COVID-19 Panel rather than one officer.

Do we have to appoint only one COVID-19 Officer?

Clubs can take the decision to appoint one-person, multiple people or a sub-committee, and this will be a decision for individual clubs. We would advise that clubs look to appoint multiple people as this will reduce the workload on any one person. Further advice will be included in the Club Framework document.

As a club, can we take part in small group outdoor training during Phase 2?

In line with the Government Roadmap, small group outdoor activity is permitted during Phase 2. We would therefore see it appropriate for clubs to provide such opportunities for members. It would be important to note that all such activities should follow all guidelines regarding numbers, social distancing and personal hygiene as outlined by the Department of Health. Any such sessions should be delivered by an appropriately experienced coach who has the relevant qualification in the area of activity, and such coaches must follow all necessary safeguarding and welfare requirements.

We are a pool-based swimming club; can we run open water training sessions for our members?

This is a decision which requires very serious thought and consideration by all pool-based clubs as swimming in open water is very different to swimming in the confined environment of a swimming pool. There are many factors to consider before undertaking the process of taking experienced pool-based athletes into open water and some of these are listed below:

- If you are not an experienced open water swimmer now is NOT the time to learn
- Engage with club coaches and members before taking this decision as you will need to ensure all individuals are confident and willing to take part in such activities
- Athletes should use caution if engaging in water sports, recognising that there are no lifeguards on the beaches, and many open water swimming areas are closed off to prevent gatherings in the name of social distancing
- The water is still extremely cold and there is a risk of cold-water shock (even if in a wetsuit)
- Swimmers should be cognisant of all risks of open water swimming and what can go wrong and the potential burden on the coastguard, our law enforcement and public health authorities should something untoward happen
- Complete a thorough and detailed Risk Assessment regarding these activities

As part of the support for clubs, Swim Ireland is running an [open water series](#) which will include a number of webinars and CPD's related to open water swimming. There will be CPD's to support pool-based coaches who may wish to start taking training sessions in an open water environment. Please contact Swim Ireland for further guidance and advice. Swim Ireland will issue Version 2 of its guidance in relation to Open Water shortly.

How can we keep our coaches and members involved as we prepare to return?

Club coaches are vital in providing support and advice to the athletes within your club. They should be providing essential information on training, nutrition, goal setting and social interaction with other club members. Swim Ireland is providing lots of useful advice for coaches and athletes through varying platforms

which can be used and shared. If you need more help in this regard, please contact Swim Ireland through your Regional Pathway Development Coach - contact details can be found at the end of this document.

Swim Ireland is delighted to launch our Online Training Schedule for the month of June. The schedule, available [HERE](#), is aimed at all learners, including teachers and coaches of each aquatic discipline, and is a mixture of online Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Forums, Classrooms and Modules delivered by professionals from our Education, Performance, Youth Development and Clubs & Communities Departments. The vast majority of these are free and they are open to members and non-members.

There are opportunities within this schedule for learning to take place for all members and parents within the club, including those for officials, team managers, safeguarding courses, CCO forums and committee training. This will help to keep everyone engaged and supported and is an opportunity to help clubs increase the number of qualified members within their ranks. If you have any suggestions, please contact the Education Department, with the contact details below.

Swim Ireland are also running an [Athlete Online Coaching Programme](#) (currently full, but we are working on confirming additional dates for this), an [Aquatic Parent Programme](#) as well as the [Summer 2020 Virtual Open Water Series](#)

Is it possible to engage with other clubs to understand how they are managing the current situation?

Yes it is, and we will provide several ways for clubs to engage with Swim Ireland and other clubs around the country. We have already hosted online webinars for committees and coaches and will continue to review the need for more of these opportunities. The Clubs and Community team will continue to deliver webinars on a twice monthly basis, click [HERE](#) for more details. Facebook Communities have also been created to allow club volunteers to engage with each other and share ideas:

Chairperson - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/swimirelandchairpersoncommunity/>

Secretary - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/swimirelandsecretarycommunity/>

Treasurer - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/swimirelandtreasurercommunity/>

Coach - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/swimirelandcoachcommunity/>

When should we start charging membership fees again?

As all clubs are unique and are in different situations, it will be for each club committee to decide this. If the club is still providing a regular service through member engagement, training programmes and incurring expenses in doing so, it is appropriate for the club to charge reduced fees to cover any such costs – particularly if some of this work requires clubs to pay one or more coaches (even if this is at a reduced rate or at an hourly rate). It is very important to consider all aspects of the club's finances (i.e. reserves, future expenses, outstanding monies owed) and make informed decisions in this regard. If you have further questions on this, please contact your Club Support Officer who can provide further guidance.

Will Swim Ireland be issuing refunds or credits regarding membership fees?

As Swim Ireland continues to provide a comprehensive service to clubs and members and is has developed a new range of online supports and programmes, we are still incurring considerable costs and will not be issuing refunds. Swim Ireland continues to be open for business and is committed to engaging with, offering learning opportunities to and supporting our members through this time.

Our club AGM is due to take place in the coming weeks

In relation to an AGM, the club has the following options:

- Hold your AGM via video conference (webinar). Swim Ireland can support you to undertake this. Contact your Club Support Officer for further information on the available platforms
- Postpone your AGM until the advice has changed and club activities are back to normal

With either option, it is important that the committee communicate with all members about the process and decisions being taken.

Our club AGM is due to take place in several months

It is best to delay a decision in this regard and wait until advice has been updated. Once advice in relation to club activities is clear, follow the advice as set out above.

2020-21 Season**When will the competitions calendar be released?**

The draft competition calendar for next season has now been issued to all clubs and members and can be found [here](#). This is, of course, subject to us being able to return to the pool in/from September 2020 and other changes may be necessary if this not the case. The Regions will be in contact with all clubs shortly to schedule a calendar meeting.

If this National crisis resolves itself more quickly than anticipated, Swim Ireland will consider this further in relation to any additional events that it might be possible to hold.

Qualifying standards for all National Competitions will be issued to clubs and members in the near future.

What will be the process for selection to Regional and National squads?

The Performance Department has reviewed the application process for all squads and will be running a webinar on the 8th of June to outline the process. Please see the online training schedule calendar for more details. Full details of the criteria and selection process will follow shortly after this.

International Travel

As in previous communication, all advice remains the same. For clarity, this has been included again as below:

What should we do if our flights have been cancelled?

Engage with your airline or travel agent to understand their policy. Most airlines are fully refunding customers for any cancelled flights. If the airline is not providing refunds, please contact your Swim Ireland Club Support Officer for further guidance.

We are a club based in the ROI and our event has been cancelled or facility is closed - what should we do?

If your event has been cancelled, you may be eligible to claim back the cost of your accommodation and flights through the Swim Ireland club insurance policy. Please email or call your Club Support Officer to find out more information and they will put you in contact with the broker.

We are a club based in the ROI and our flights and or/event has been cancelled and we have paid for accommodation - what should we do?

If your flights and/or event has been cancelled, you may be eligible to claim back the cost of your accommodation through the Swim Ireland club insurance policy. Please email or call your Club Support Officer to find out more information and they will put you in contact with the broker.

What should we do if we have an overseas trip planned for later in the year and no advice is being provided or nothing has been cancelled?

You will need to delay any decision and withhold any further payments until the situation becomes clearer when further advice is provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs (<https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/>). A decision may also be taken by the airline or event organisers to cancel flights and/or event. Please contact your Club Support Officer for further guidance and support.

We are a club based in NI and we have questions regarding possible travel insurance

If you have any questions regarding your trip and travel insurance, you will need to contact Swim Ulster and they will provide you with more information. Contact details can be found at the end of the document.

We hope that the information contained in this document has answered the questions that you have at present. If you have detailed questions regarding insurance, please contact your Club Support Officer who will be able to provide up to date advice in this regard. We will continue to monitor the advice being issued by the relevant Government departments and issue directives and updates to clubs in this regard. For the most up to date information, please follow the Swim Ireland website or social media pages, and links are provided below. It is important as a club to continue to engage with everyone in your club, make informed decisions and keep close and regular communication with Swim Ireland. We are here to help and offer guidance and support through all our departments. If you have any further suggestions or questions, please feel free to contact us.

Stay safe, healthy and informed

Adam Cox
Head of Clubs, Community & Competitions

Useful Contacts

Clubs and Community

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Swim Ireland Website and Social Media pages

Swim Ireland website – www.swimireland.ie



Swim Ulster Website and Social Media pages

Swim Ulster website – www.swimulster.net

