



**Hockey
Ireland**



Coronavirus
COVID-19
Public Health
Advice

Hockey Ireland

Return to Play and Competition Protocol

Update 06 May 2021



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Due to the impact of Covid19, Hockey Ireland in conjunction with Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland, would like to ensure that a returning to training and competitions can be done safely.

While government and Sport Ireland guidelines should be strictly adhered to, there are also several hockey-specific restrictions that should also be implemented at all levels within the sport. The safety of all players, coaches and volunteers is paramount. As Hockey Ireland is an all-island National Governing Body, governmental guidelines in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and in Northern Ireland (NI) will be strictly followed. There may be variations in restrictions between ROI and NI, and clubs will be subject to these based on geographic location.

Disclaimer: This document has been developed to assist the hockey community by informing them of what Hockey Ireland considers to be the appropriate course of action to return to sport safely. ROI and NI government guidelines supersede any information provided by Hockey Ireland.

All clubs need to consider their own situations at any given time. A club's decision on whether to allow a return to training needs to be based on the situation in their local area at the time.

Hockey Ireland further advises all clubs to ensure that they have appropriate (Public Liability) Insurance in place before any return to hockey activity. It must be noted that insurers may refuse to pay any claim, or may cancel, terminate, or avoid club insurance, if clubs fail to take appropriate steps to implement appropriate health and safety guidelines. We would strongly advise that you contact your insurance company for clarification.

Government Guidelines for Republic of Ireland

The latest ROI government guidelines for Covid-19 can be found here: [gov.ie - Search for services or information \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/search/services-or-information)

As of 10th May 2021, underage and adult players of hockey may return to full contact training in pods of 15 (including a coach).

As of 6th June 2021, competition for all groups may recommence behind closed doors, with only essential personnel in attendance.

Government Guidelines for Northern Ireland

Sport NI have issued a 'Framework for a Return to Sport'. This can be found here: [Return To Sport | Sport NI](#).

From 23rd April:

The following relates to non-elite level outdoor sport:

1. Outdoor sport organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated will be extended to include squad training.
2. Competitive outdoor sport can be organised by a club, individual or individuals affiliated, with numbers (including participants, officials, management and essential support personnel) not exceeding 100 and no spectators permitted.

Prior to Returning to Hockey:

1. All clubs must appoint at least one Covid-19 Officer (CVO) prior to the return to activity. The CVO must be registered with the club's provincial branch.
2. Clubs are required to sign and return to the provincial branch a Covid-19 Declaration Form to confirm that the club is ready to return to play and that all protocols have been prepared for/followed.
3. Clubs should undertake a risk assessment of club procedures and facilities before returning to training/playing.
4. Clubs should ensure that sufficient time is allowed to plan how the protocols will be implemented to ensure that they are fully prepared to return to hockey.
5. Many clubs are based within school grounds and may be subject to additional restrictions as set out by the governing authority for the school in question.
6. Clubs will need to inform their members of the necessity for these restrictions and outline the risk of reintroduction of restrictions. A communication plan should be considered which should include regular, direct communication with members as well as visible signage at the club's/school's facility.

Covid19 Compliance Officers (CVOs)

CVOs must be over 18 and may not fulfil a second role (e.g. coach/player/manager) while acting as the CVO.

CVOs should develop checklists for their individual club networks to ensure consistent compliance with protocols. Clubs should also undertake a Covid-19 risk assessment prior to returning to hockey.

The CVO must ensure names and times of club members accessing club facilities are recorded for contact tracing. This should be kept for a period of 6 weeks. Clubs should consider appointing more than one CVO to suit the club's needs.

All clubs must register a CVO with the club's provincial branch as the central contact for Covid-19 related matters.

Returning to Training

Health and Safety Responsibilities:

- Members with any symptoms of COVID-19 must stay away from the hockey facility.
- A basic health check should be carried out by everyone prior to attending each training session.
- All members should follow governmental guidance when travelling to and from the facility.
- Clubs should ensure all member contact details are accurate and up to date to assist with contract tracing if necessary.
- All those entering or leaving the pitch should be instructed to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser.
- Members should be advised of the correct cough/sneeze etiquette.
- Players should not spit or clear their nose openly at any time.

Suspected and Confirmed Cases:

- If the club becomes aware of a person becoming ill after visiting the club, the club should inform the person to contact their GP.
- If contact tracing is required, the HSE/PHA will contact the club.
- The HSE/PHA will determine the status of 'close contacts' and will provide all necessary information to the person in question.
- The HSE/PHA will advise if any further action is required.

Facilities:

- Additional hand sanitiser/washing stations should be installed around the facility with clear signage as to their location. A station installed at the entrance to the field of play is highly recommended. Club members should also be advised to bring their own hand sanitiser.
- If necessary, defibrillators should be moved to an accessible area and members must be notified of new locations.
- Should a player be escorted to the facility by a person who will remain at the facility for the duration of the session (e.g. a parent waiting for their child), that person should remain in a safe space (if not in a vehicle) while observing social distancing.
- Clubhouses and changing facilities may be opened provided governmental guidance is followed.

Pitch Access:ROI:

- Training group sizes and limitations will be determined by the latest government advice. This is currently in pods of 15, including a coach. Groups must remain in separate areas of the pitch at all times.

NI:

- Groups sizes are determined by advice from Sport NI. This is currently defined as a 'squad'.

Equipment:

- Players may touch on-field and coaching equipment but should disinfect their hands afterwards.
- Players should minimise the amount of equipment they bring to the field.
- Essential personal equipment (e.g. water bottle, hand sanitizer) should be kept separate from other players in a designated area.
- Communal bibs should not be used.
- All coaching equipment should be disinfected after use.
- Goalkeeping equipment, with the exception of helmets, may be shared provided it is fully disinfected between uses.

On-field Guidelines:

- Coaches should plan sessions to comply with current COVID-19 guidelines.
- Equipment should be managed as per guidelines above.
- Defensive penalty corner equipment (e.g. masks) should not be shared.
- Good hand hygiene should be practised before and after each session by all.

Match Protocols**Pre-match Protocols:****Away Team Responsibilities:**

1. Governmental travel guidelines should always be adhered to.
2. The away team must submit a list of names of those travelling to the match to the home team's CVO electronically. This should include all match personnel and any parents that may travel with an underage player. This list should be updated and communicated to the home team's CVO should there be any changes. All personnel should undergo the standard COVID-19 health checks before travelling to the match.
3. The away team must confirm a time for arrival at the facility.
4. The away team should be aware of the home club's Covid-19 system prior to travelling. This may include policies around entry and exit points to the facility, use of toilets, locations of hand-sanitizer stations etc.

Home Club Responsibilities:

1. Ensure that a list of those travelling with the away team for the match is received.
2. Contact details for all match officials (umpires; technical officials) should be recorded by the home club's CVO prior to the match. For officially appointed umpires and technical officials, these details will be available through the club's own Fixture's Secretary via the official umpires appointing system.
3. Communicate the club's COVID-19 management system to the away team, umpires, and technical officials.
4. Ensure that the list of those travelling is correct when players and officials arrive at the club.
5. The home club CVO must be present during the build-up phase of the match and remain at the club until the away team and match officials have departed after the match to ensure COVID-19 protocols are always adhered to. If the home club are unable to provide a CVO during this time, the match must not take place.
6. Ensure that travelling parties have designated areas on the pitch to base themselves safely. This includes an area for umpires and for match officials.
7. Ensure that there is sufficient space for substitutes and coaching/management staff for each team to allow social distancing when not playing. Please consider player safety when doing so (e.g. minimise the risk of a player being hit by a ball).
8. Ensure that an area is designated for suspended players for each team and allow for additional space should several players be suspended at one time.
9. Ensure that the club is following governmental guidelines for numbers of people allowed inside the facility.

10. Ensure that only essential match personnel (players; umpires; coaches etc) are allowed inside the pitch in the lead up to and during matches.
11. The home club should inform the away team of what facilities will be available. Consideration should be given to the distance travelled by the away team and likely weather conditions for the match.

Spectators: Government guidance should be strictly followed when managing spectators at matches. Clubs must ensure that social distancing is strictly adhered to. The home club should ensure that attendees (if allowed) register their contact details on entering the venue for contact tracing purposes.

Match Specific Guidance

Please note: Umpires are responsible for the conduct of players, coaches etc., in accordance with the Rules of Hockey, within the playing area (the pitch and outer playing area) & COVID-19 measures within the field of play. The CVO is responsible for the conduct of players, coaches etc, in respect of COVID-19 social distancing and compliance with the guidance, outside of the pitch (this includes the outer playing area/benches).

Player and Match Guidelines:

1. All match personnel (players, coaches, umpires etc.) should follow social distancing guidelines while waiting for the pitch to fully clear from any previous activity.
2. Dugouts may be used provided social distancing can be maintained at all times.
3. Teams must not complete line-ups, handshakes/high-fives, or huddles prior to the start of the match, or before the start of each quarter. This will be enforced through the offending team's captain receiving a verbal warning in the first instance, a green card personal penalty may be awarded to the captain for repeated offences.
4. Ball patrol should not be used for any matches.
5. Players should avoid coming within 2m of an umpire or technical official. If players are asked to retreat from an umpire and fail to do so, they will be issued a personal penalty.
6. Players are discouraged from celebrating goals as a group. This will be enforced through the offending team's captain receiving a verbal warning in the first instance, a green card personal penalty may be awarded to the captain for repeated offences.
7. During penalty corners, defenders must have their own, clearly marked defensive equipment. Equipment must not be shared between team-mates. Umpires will manage the time needed to allow players to put on their own equipment (players are encouraged to avoid any unnecessary delay and to assist the umpires at all times).
8. Players must not spit or clear their nose on the field of play. If this is observed by an umpire, they will issue a green card to the offending player. A repeated offence by any player will result in a further upgrading in the sanction. **Please note:** It is acknowledged that umpires will not be able to see every occurrence of this. It is up to players to take personal responsibility and not engage in this behaviour.
9. Players must not deliberately cough in the face of any other player, umpire, official, ball patrol or spectator. A red card will be issued for this offence, if witnessed by officials. **Please note:** It is acknowledged that normal coughs happen within play and cannot always be controlled. Normal

coughs that occur at a distance or that are not deemed to be intentional acts of potential harm should not be sanctioned.

10. When an injury occurs that requires attention, an agreed member of the team of the injured player should attend to the play. Standard first aid protocols apply.
11. Both teams should supply managers and officials with their own equipment. E.g. captains and managers should have their own pen for signing match cards.
12. Non-playing members of each squad (substitutes; coaches; management) must adhere to social distancing guidelines when not on the field of play. It is the responsibility of the home club to ensure sufficient space is provided for this.

Umpiring Guidelines:

Pre-match:

1. The home club's appointed CVO should contact appointed umpires no less than 24 hours prior to the start of the match, to outline the Covid-19 policies of the club and to ensure that umpires are symptom free.

For regional or local games that may not have officially appointed umpires, the home and away teams should include the name and contact details of their selected umpire within the team list.

Any individual should not attend any matches if they display symptoms, have been in close contact with a confirmed case but have not been tested themselves, have recently been in an area that requires them to quarantine.

2. Umpires should follow governmental guidelines when travelling to matches. For official umpiring appointments, all umpires must follow the directive issued by IHUA regarding travel to matches.

3. Umpires must arrive on site in their match day clothes and practice social distancing upon arrival to the ground.

4. Umpires must not share any equipment.

5. Umpires should wait until all personnel from the previous match have left the field of play before entering.

6. IF A CLUB CVO IS NOT PRESENT THEN THE MATCH MUST NOT TAKE PLACE.

During Play:

1. A pre-match coin toss should be conducted using social distancing. One umpire should handle the coin.

2. Umpires, where possible, should avoid situations that require them to be in close proximity to groups of players at once (e.g. penalty corner defence set-ups, player clashes). We recognise, however, that this is not always avoidable, and that the management and safety of players remains the primary focus of umpires.

3. Umpires must not move or touch any players equipment with their hands.

4. Umpires are recommended to sanitise their hands prior to and at the end of the game.

Post-game:

1. Umpires must not shake the hands of players, or each other, following the game.
2. Umpires will vacate the technical area as quickly as possible once the match concludes to allow the next match to enter.
3. Umpires, where possible, should shower at home. However, if essential, they may use the facilities on site if they are available but should ensure that this is done in a time efficient manner. All governmental guidelines on the use of indoor facilities should be adhered to.
4. Each umpire should bring their own pen to sign the match sheets.