Return to Play: Step Three

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Bowls has a big role to play in providing fun, local, outdoor activity as the lockdown restrictions continue to ease. We have been delighted to share some great stories of clubs opening their doors over the past few weeks, welcoming back old friends and introducing some new faces to our sport.

At each stage of the government's roadmap, in preparing our guidance for affiliated clubs and counties, we have been driven by three key principles:

1. Providing a safe environment for participants to enjoy our sport
2. Maximising participation
3. Empowering clubs and counties to adopt a flexible approach to the organisation of activity

At Steps 1 and 2 of the government's roadmap, we have endeavoured to strike a responsible balance between those key principles. It has been great to see the confidence that has built amongst the bowling community over the last few weeks and we thank our affiliated clubs for their support in adhering to the guidance.

In accordance with its roadmap, the government has now announced its plans to move to Step 3 from Monday 17 May, and in line with the government's announcement we are delighted to confirm the following:

1. **All restrictions on formats and numbers for organised activity under the jurisdiction of Bowls England will be removed.**
2. **Car sharing, spectators and indoor hospitality will be permitted**

This latest announcement is a great step forward for our sport, as we expect the majority of clubs to be able to operate in a fairly normal manner from Monday 17 May. All participants and clubs are encouraged to review our 'Frequently Asked Questions' for more information on specific items that will have been addressed earlier in the government roadmap.

We recognise that the restrictions on car sharing and spectators in particular have presented challenges for some clubs and players and, like other sports, made representation to government on behalf of our affiliated clubs. We are therefore delighted that these will be permitted from Monday 17 May.

With growing confidence among players returning to the sport and a high number of participants vaccinated, we are also pleased to confirm that all restrictions regarding the number of players on

the green at any one time will be removed from Monday 17 May. We would encourage clubs to plan sessions with reduced capacity for those who may still be building their confidence in returning to the club environment.

This latest announcement is a fantastic boost for the 600 affiliated clubs who are running events during Bowls' Big Weekend. This national initiative is under 3 weeks away and promises to be a fantastic showcase for our sport. The easing of restrictions will hopefully see more people coming to clubs up and down the country to try our sport for the first time. You can still register your event here.

This latest 'return to play' guide will be valid until Step 4 (no earlier than Monday 21 June).

We recommend that all clubs consider this document together with the government guidance. All items may be adapted as necessary to meet your club's specific circumstances, so long as your actions remain consistent with government advice and social distancing requirements.

If your club is not affiliated to Bowls England, please email us at clubs@bowlsengland.com and we can take you through the affiliation process, including connecting you with your County Association.

This guidance is applicable from Monday 17 May and replaces all previous guidance that we have issued.

At Step 4 (Monday 21 June at the earliest) we expect all restrictions to be lifted. We shall update our guidance to affiliated clubs once the government has confirmed the country is moving to Step 4 (a decision is expected on Monday 14 June).

As the picture is now clearer, and with the season underway, we will be spending time over the coming weeks exploring the delivery of the National Finals at Victoria Park from Thursday 19 August to Sunday 5 September inclusive and will advise on plans as soon as they are developed.

We want to thank everyone in the bowls community for their patience and diligence over the past year. It has been a difficult time for everyone and now, as the country opens up, we can all share excitement at the prospect of normality.

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Step 3: Monday 17 May – Key points

From Monday 17 May until Step 4, the following applies to outdoor lawn bowls:

- Play is permitted in accordance with the format of play below
- Bowls coaching and other curriculum-based activity is permitted
- Greens maintenance is permitted
- Car sharing is permitted in accordance with government guidance
- Spectators are permitted in accordance with social distancing rules and social gathering limits (no more than group of 30 outdoors)
- Clubhouses and facilities that serve both indoor and outdoor hospitality are permitted in accordance with government guidance. Social distancing rules and social gathering limits must be strictly adhered to.
- Changing rooms can be opened in accordance with the guidance on page 5
- Clubs are advised to continue with pre-booking systems

Format of Play

Organised sport	Informal activity
Singles – Use of every rink (marker permitted) Pairs – Use of every rink Triples – Use of every rink Fours – Use of every rink	Up to 30 people per session

Any combination of formats may be played under the 'organised sport' exemption, therefore the maximum number of participants on a six-rink outdoor green for 'organised' activity at any one time is 48. Clubs with less or additional rink capacity may amend figures accordingly.

Social Interaction

Social interaction before and after play should only take place in separate and distinct groups consisting of up to 30 people. We recognise that each club is different and may wish to set its own limit for numbers of people off the green at any one time.

Equipment

We would advise players to avoid using shared equipment whenever possible – players are advised to have their own mat/jack during any session. If you are sharing equipment, for example jacks/mats, practise strict hand hygiene including sanitisation after using any shared equipment. Should measuring be necessary, players (or marker if used) must use their own measure.

The following items can be utilised during any session:

- Mat
- Bowls
- Jack
- Rink markers
- Gloves
- Scorecards (these should be retained by one person only if required)
- Bowling arm/lifter (for use by one person only if required)

- Bowling aids (for players with a disability if required)

The following items are deemed optional – it is for individual clubs to permit their use or otherwise:

- Scoreboards
- Bowls pushers
- Ditch markers
- 2m distance sticks
- Chalk (Spray chalk only)

Spectators

Spectators for all outdoor sports are permitted at Step 3, but need to adhere to social distancing rules and social gathering limits (groups of 30 outdoors). This number is in addition to those who are participating on the green.

Travel

Car sharing will be permitted in Step 3 for all sports. The guidance for safer travel will be updated ahead of Step 3 to provide further information about this.

Changing rooms

Changing rooms can be opened, but participants should be encouraged to avoid or minimise use where possible. Participants should socially distance whilst in changing rooms. Subject to available space, more than one household can use changing facilities at one time but they must not mix and must adhere to capacity limits set by the club. Face coverings should be worn at all times when indoors. Use of these areas for essential activity, such as provision of first aid or access to essential equipment for training and matches, is allowed. Toilet facilities can also open.

Coaching

Bowls coaching and other curriculum-based activity is permitted.

Hygiene

We recommend using hand sanitiser at regular intervals, especially if you have to touch communal surfaces or equipment. Once you are home, remember to wash your hands thoroughly.

Hospitality

Clubhouses and facilities that serve food and drink can open. In Step 3, both indoor and outdoor hospitality will be permitted. The guidance on hospitality settings will be updated ahead of Step 3 to provide further information about this. People using clubhouses and hospitality facilities must adhere to legal gathering limits and wider government guidance for hospitality.

Frequently asked questions

Does guidance on face coverings apply for playing bowls?

You're not required to wear face coverings while taking part in the sport of outdoor bowls. Sport England advises that all forms of face coverings may restrict breathing efficiency and should not be used during exercise unless your doctor advises it.

Do I need to be vaccinated to participate in outdoor bowls?

There is currently no requirement from government for participants to have been vaccinated and clubs are advised not to restrict access to our sport to anyone who has not yet received the vaccine.

Can we provide refreshments?

Clubhouses and facilities that serve food and drink can open. In Step 3, both indoor and outdoor hospitality will be permitted. The guidance on hospitality settings will be updated ahead of Step 3 to provide further information about this. People using clubhouses and hospitality facilities must adhere to legal gathering limits and wider government guidance for hospitality.

Can we open the changing rooms and toilets?

Changing rooms can now be opened, but participants should be encouraged to avoid or minimise use where possible. Participants should socially distance whilst in changing rooms. Subject to available space, more than one household can use changing facilities at one time but they must not mix and must adhere to capacity limits set by the club. Toilet facilities can also open. Face coverings should be worn at all times when indoors.

Are spectators allowed?

Spectators will be permitted at Step 3, but need to adhere to social distancing rules. Spectators need to adhere to social gathering limits (groups of 30 outdoors).

Are club meetings permitted?

30 people are permitted to meet outdoors from Monday 17 May. Should you wish to meet indoors you must stick to the rules on social gathering, of six people (the 'rule of six') or two households. We recommend that any larger meetings that can't be held outside are conducted virtually until further notice. Sport specific guidance on organising virtual meetings, including Committee Meetings and AGMs, is available from Sport England Club Matters.

Is greens maintenance work permitted?

Yes – greens maintenance work is permitted as it is 'work that cannot be carried out at home'.
The most comprehensive advice for greens maintenance is available via the Grounds Management Association, of which Bowls England is a member.

Can I travel to take part in the sport of bowls?

Travel to participate in bowls is permitted. Car sharing will be permitted in Step 3 for all sports. The guidance for safer travel will be updated ahead of Step 3 to provide further information about this.

Is coaching permitted?

Outdoor coaching sessions are classed as organised outdoor sport, and can take place where it's formally organised and follows Covid-secure guidance.

What should we do to keep facilities and equipment clean?

Cleaning protocols should be put in place to limit coronavirus transmission in public places. Touch points (e.g. handrails and gates) should be particular areas of focus for increased cleaning.

What advice do you have to maintain hygiene?

To help everyone maintain good hygiene, consideration should be given to the following:

- Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into your arm. Consider how to ensure safety messages reach those with hearing or vision impairments
- Providing regular reminders and signage to maintain hygiene standards
- Providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms
- Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved
- Enhancing cleaning for busy areas
- Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection
- Using disposable paper towels in handwashing facilities where possible
- Minimising use of portable toilets
- Provision of automated hand sanitising dispensers in public places

Will there be different local restrictions?

At this stage, in England we understand that the relaxation of restrictions will occur at a national level at the same time. Clubs/counties must adhere to any local restrictions should any be imposed in the future.

What activities can disabled people take part in?

Organised outdoor bowls can take place where it follows the government's guidance on recreational team sport and grassroots sport and leisure activity.

Where disabled people need support from a carer or personal assistant during activity, will this be allowed, e.g. a visually impaired bowler?

Yes. People who provide essential support (e.g. carers) to disabled people are exempt, and don't count towards gathering limits. Therefore, disabled participants can be supported by a carer(s)/personal assistant(s) while taking part in the sport of bowls.

Do I need to maintain social distancing if I'm working with a disabled person who needs support?

Social distancing should be maintained where possible, but in some circumstances people will need physical assistance to be active. It's important you discuss this with the person to consider their needs and preferences. Any sports coaches or trainers undertaking one-to-one sessions should ensure they're complying with relevant national governing body safeguarding policies and procedures and conduct a thorough risk assessment before engaging in any sessions. This should include particular consideration for under-18s and vulnerable adults.

What are the test and trace regulations?

Clubs should display an NHS QR code that participants can scan using a mobile device. This is to help trace and stop the spread of coronavirus. Alternatively, ensure you maintain a separate log including contact details so that contact tracers can get in touch with people if required. To support NHS Test and Trace, you must hold records for 21 days. This reflects the incubation period for coronavirus, which can be up to 14 days, and an additional seven days to allow time for testing and tracing. Notify the venue operator if possible.

Elite sport

Elite athletes and support staff can use indoor and outdoor sport facilities for training and competition. Elite sport events can continue to take place in sport facilities, where permitted in line with the guidance on elite sport.

Additional Information

Organised sport

For the sport of outdoor lawn bowls any activity organised under the jurisdiction of Bowls England by affiliated clubs, counties and associate members is recognised as organised sport in accordance with DCMS guidance. This includes:

- International and High Performance events (including training)
- National Championships (including County Championship qualifying rounds)
- National Competitions
- District and county competitions involving affiliated clubs only
- District and county leagues involving affiliated clubs only
- Fixtures between affiliated counties
- Club fixtures between affiliated clubs
- Internal club events or organised sessions for club members
- Coaching by a qualified coach (see section on coaching for details)
- On green training provided by the Bowls Development Alliance

Any activity not listed above is not recognised by Bowls England as organised sport and will need to follow the guidance on outdoor legal gathering limits as this is considered to be informal or self-organised sport. This includes any casual play (for example 'roll-ups') and any activity involving clubs, leagues or associations not affiliated to Bowls England.

Whilst organised sport removes the restriction on legal gathering limits during participation, the relevant organising body (club, county, league or Bowls England) must consider the risks and set out ways to mitigate them so people can participate safely in accordance with this guidance. Informal or self-organised sport is not covered by any exemptions.

We will review our guidance for organised sport as the restrictions are eased to maximise participation whilst maintaining a safe environment for all participants. If you wish your club or leagues activity to be defined as organised sport and are not affiliated to Bowls England, please email us at clubs@bowlsengland.com and we can take you through the affiliation process, including connecting you with your County Association.

Roadmap Timeline

The government has reviewed four tests ahead of each Step. The dates outlined within this document are the earliest that we may move to each step and may be subject to change. You can read a summary of what will be included in each step on the government's website.

- Step 1: Monday 29 March
- Step 2: Monday 12 April
- Step 3: begins no earlier than Monday 17 May
- Step 4: begins no earlier than Monday 21 June (confirmation expected w/c Monday 14 June)

We're continuing to work with the government, via DCMS, and Sport England to answer your questions about the roadmap and what this means for our sport.

As we move through each new Step of the government's roadmap, we will update our guidance accordingly. Please note that this guidance is based on the information published by the government

to date, and will be updated following any further updates. A maximum of one week's notice ahead of each change is expected.

Useful Links

Guidance for the public and sport providers on how to participate in grassroots sport and physical activity during COVID restrictions
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-grassroots-sports-guidance-for-the-public-and-sport-providers#organised-sport

Restaurants, pubs, bars and takeaway services
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery

Sport England – Return to Play Guidance and Club Resources
https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/coronavirus/return-play

Activity Alliance – Specialist support for disabled people
http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/covid19