



ENGLISH CURLING ASSOCIATION

RETURN TO CURLING ACTION PLAN AND GUIDELINES

8 December 2020

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Introduction

The English Curling Association is the national sport governing body responsible for the development, promotion and organisation of curling in England.

The English Curling Association organises championships for men, women, juniors (under-21), mixed doubles, seniors (over-50), mixed teams and wheelchairs.

There are five active affiliated curling clubs in England which together have a total of 200 members, 10% of which are juniors. Three of the clubs (London, South of England and Preston), plus members of the general public who play in corporate or social events, are based at the two curling rinks in Kent and Lancashire, while the Glendale Club plays at Kelso in Scotland. The St George's Club caters for English nationals who reside in Scotland. Curling is also played on a weekly basis at Cambridge ice rink. In recent years curling has taken place on an increasing number of temporary ice rinks over the Christmas period.

All regular curling in England is played on indoor ice rinks (i.e. excluding curling played on temporary ice rinks over the Christmas period referred to in the previous paragraph). A game of curling takes place on a sheet, which is a rectangular sub-division of the rink of dimension approximately 45.5m in length and 4.7m in width. There are typically 3 to 5 curling sheets per rink. A game is played with 8 players (4 per team), giving each player approximately 27m² in space.

The previous curling season ended in March 2020 and since this time no curling has taken place in England.

The English Curling Association supports all government measures to control COVID-19, and the health and wellbeing of our members and the broader public are our primary concern. We also recognise the important role that sports and physical activity plays, and are keen to support an orderly and safe return to sport, in line with the latest government guidelines.

This document sets out the English Curling Association's action plan and guidelines, in line with the requirements defined in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's "Return to recreational team sport framework", last updated on 1 October 2020.¹ This document provides an assessment of the risk of curling based on the referenced framework, an action plan addressing the risks identified in the risk assessment, and associated guidelines to participants, members, clubs and

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/return-to-recreational-team-sport-framework>

rinks. The document is based on the latest guidelines and may be revised (subject to reapproval) following updates to guidance.

Note that this guidance applies to COVID Alert Level 1 (Medium). Rinks, clubs and participants should adhere to local restrictions in cases where the area is in COVID Alert Level 2 (High) or 3 (Very High). Details of local restrictions are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-covid-alert-levels-what-you-need-to-know>

In particular, the following restrictions apply:

- In areas with a medium alert rating, organised indoor team sport should only take place in groups of up to 6 people (not including anyone present in a work capacity or providing voluntary services, such as officials and coaches). Other organised indoor sport, including indoor exercise classes, can continue to take place with larger numbers present, provided that participants are in separate groups of up to 6 people which do not mix with other groups.
- In areas with a high or very high alert rating, organised indoor sport, including team and individual sport and exercise classes, can only take place between people from the same household. They are only permitted if it is possible for people to avoid mixing with people they do not live with or share a support bubble with. Where it is likely that people will mix with others they do not live with (or share a support bubble with), these activities should not take place.
- These additional restrictions do not apply to sport for people with disabilities, sport for the purpose of education, and supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s, which can continue in any number across all levels.

In addition to these guidelines, each curler, club and rink should refer to and follow the latest NHS and government guidelines and guidance available at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
 - Especially relevant for public participating in sport: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-phased-return-of-outdoor-sport-and-recreation>
 - Especially relevant for providers: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/providers-of-grassroots-sport-and-gym-leisure-facilities>
- <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/coronavirus>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

We would also recommend referring to sport specific guidance provided by Scottish Curling: https://www.scottishcurling.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Return-to-Curling-Guidelines_v7.pdf.

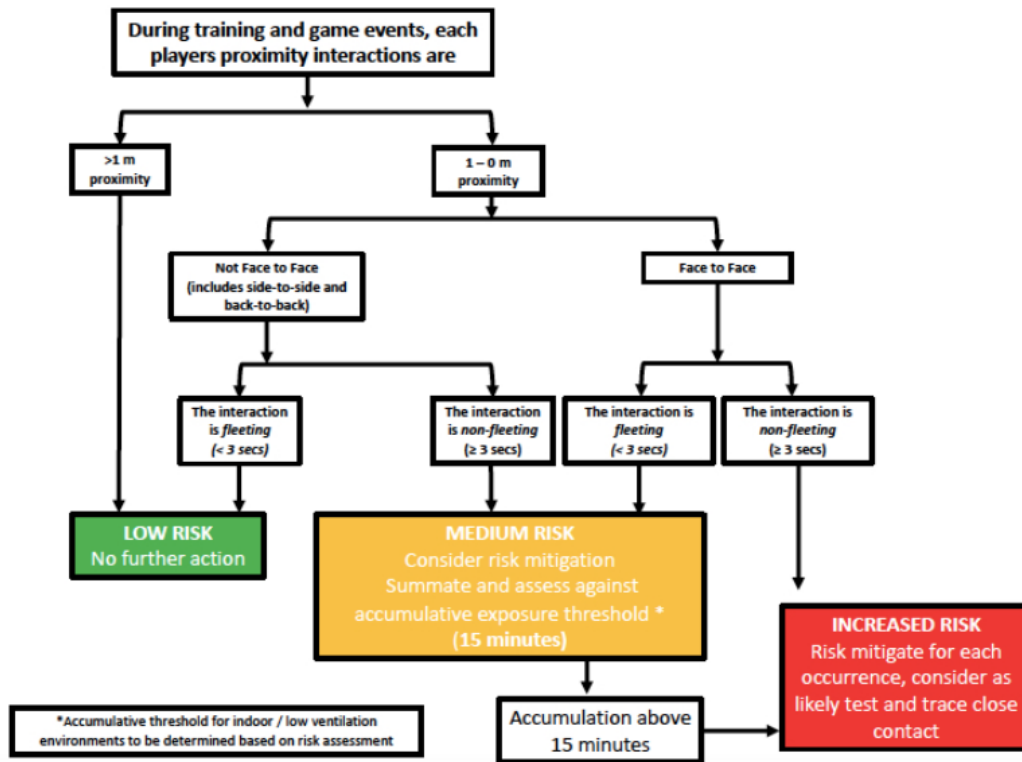
Risk assessment

The "Return to recreational team sport framework" identifies three key variables of transmission risk from a return to competitive recreational activity. These are:

1. Droplet transmission: The risk associated with each action in an activity based on duration and proximity of participants. By using the framework, sports can determine the risk of actions in their matchplay environment - anything, for example, from tackling, to bowling, to re-start - which will then determine the overall level of risk of taking part in that sport.
2. Fomite transmission: The risk associated with the handling and transfer of equipment in the sport
3. Population: The number of participants likely to take part in the proposed activity plus known risk factors of participants with underlying health conditions or high risk groups, who wish to participate

The framework referenced under point 1 is copied below. In this assessment, the English Curling Association has used the same definitions of low, medium and increased risk as implied by this framework. We also define "gross risk" as risk pre-specific mitigations (as per the scale in the framework) and "net risk" as risk post-specific mitigations defined in this document.

Figure 1: A team sport's risk exposure framework to inform risk mitigation strategies and support test and trace



The table below summarises the risk assessment across the three main areas set out above. Without mitigations in place, elements of curling (such as when two players are sweeping a stone) are assessed to be an increased risk activity according to the framework. With the specific mitigations in place, curling is assessed to be a low risk activity. Full details of the mitigations and associated guidelines are provided in the following sections.

Risk	Commentary	Risk assessment (gross)	Specific mitigations	Risk assessment (net)
Droplet transmission	Limited concentration of players on the sheet enables social distancing to be maintained. Throwing the stone is an individual activity and therefore is already distanced. Sweeping stones would typically be undertaken in	Increased risk due to sweeping in pairs. Other aspects of the sport, low risk.	Until further guidance, maximum of one sweeper per shot.	Low risk.

	<p>pairs and can result in two players being within 1m proximity for extended periods (~10-15s). However, sweeping in pairs is not a necessary condition for a game to be played and it is possible to deliver stones with zero or only one sweeper.</p> <p>Curling is a sociable sport, with games typically commenced with a handshake and discussions within and between the team during this game. However, this is obviously not a prerequisite for a game of curling to take place.</p>			
Fomite transmission	<p>There are various pieces of equipment used during a game of curling: stones and brushes.</p> <p>1) Stones are provided by the ice rink, with 16 stones per sheet divided into 2 sets (marked by different coloured-handles). Each set of 8 stones are numbered, with the same player throwing the same two stones throughout the game. Once thrown, a stone is in the "field of play" and can be knocked by other stones but not touched by players. At the end of the end, the stones are kicked or pushed to the back of the sheet to enable the new end to start.</p> <p>2) Brushes are either owned by the individual player or borrowed from</p>	<p>Not covered by assessment framework so not rated.</p> <p>Highest risk of fomite transmission is from multiple players touching stones during a game, and from players using borrowed brushes or throwing the same stones between different games.</p>	<p>Stone and brush cleaning requirements on rinks / clubs.</p> <p>Guidelines on not handling other stones.</p>	<p>Not covered by assessment framework so not rated.</p>

	<p>the ice rink, but are not transferred between players through the game.</p> <p>3) Delivery aids used by individual players and not shared between team members</p>			
Population	<p>Curling is a sport played by people of all ages. There are active junior curling clubs and wheelchair curling clubs. As per its Child Protection Policy and Adult Protection Policy, the English Curling Association is The ECA is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all athletes, staff and volunteers, especially children, young people and adults in its care.</p>	<p>Not covered by assessment framework so not rated. While curling attracts a variety of participants, participant numbers during a session of curling are low (at most 8 players per sheet, and ~3-5 sheets per rink, equal to ~24-40 players on a full ice rink), enabling attention to be provided to all participants.</p>	<p>Various measures in the action plan to enable distancing to be effectively practiced before, during and after a game of curling.</p>	<p>Not covered by assessment framework so not rated.</p>

Action plan and associated guidelines

This action plan sets out the steps the English Curling Association require in order to enable a safe return to curling. In developing this action plan and associated guidelines, the English Curling Association has adopted closely the latest government guidelines, as well as considering the sport specific guidelines developed by Scottish Curling, to enable a consistent approach across both nations (for example, in the case that English clubs play curling in a Scottish ice rink).

The English Curling Association would like to highlight to all participants and organisers the importance of following the latest government guidelines on hygiene and distancing, in particular:

- Wash hands - keep washing your hands regularly
- Cover face - wear a face covering over your nose and mouth in enclosed spaces
- Make space - stay at least a metre away from people not in your household

The action plan considers key modifications that are required, prior to the activity, during the activity and as part of facility usage.

From the 24 September, additional requirements on the 'rule of 6' were introduced by the government. Participation in practices and games should be limited to groups of up to 6 (not including anyone present in a work capacity or providing voluntary services, such as officials and coaches). These additional restrictions do not apply to team sports for people with disabilities, which can continue in any number.

Prior to the activity

Club and rink preparation

Each club and / or rink must only return to sport when they have the appropriate measures in place consistent with the guidelines contained within this document and general government guidance in relation to recreational sport. Clubs should appoint a Covid-19 officer to ensure that the latest guidelines are being adhered to.

All clubs and / or rinks must develop a written COVID-19 plan and risk assessment prior to activity. Preparation must include those in charge of the session taking part in specific training, as necessary, and participants being asked to consider if their underlying health, may caution against participation. Clubs should ensure they have adequate insurance in place and have notified insurers of any changes to normal operation that might impact on the cover.

All clubs running activities for children should also consult the Department for Education guidance on Protective measures for out-of-school settings, which sets out further practical steps providers of community activities, holiday clubs, after-school clubs, tuition and other out-of-school provision for children should follow to minimise the risk of transmission for children attending their settings.

Clubs should share operational details with club members prior to running their first session / games to ensure club members understand the guidelines and abide by them.

Test and trace

Activity organisers should support track and trace efforts by collecting written information on participants at both individual training sessions and all matches. This must be detailed enough to allow NHS Test and Trace to contact all participants if a player becomes ill with COVID-19. These records must be kept for 21 days. The English Curling Association does not prescribe specific ways in which this information should be captured, but this should be maintained in a way consistent with data protection standards. The latest guidelines can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>

Pre-attendance official symptom check

All players, officials, volunteers and spectators must undergo a self-assessment for any COVID-19 symptoms. No-one should leave home to participate in sport if they, or someone they live with, has symptoms of COVID -19 currently recognised as any of the following:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste

Should an individual have demonstrated any such symptoms, they must follow NHS and PHE guidance on self-isolation.

Participants should be strongly advised to comply with public health restrictions and avoid high risk behaviour outside the sports setting to reduce the risk to their fellow participants when they do attend.

Travel to training and matches

Participants are encouraged to follow best practice for travel including minimising use of public transport and limiting car sharing. Walk or cycle if you can. People from a household or support bubble can travel together in a vehicle.

Arrival at venues

Clubs and / or rinks should strictly limit the time spent congregating at a venue before activity begins. Meet-up times should reflect this. This includes arriving changed and ready to begin the activity. Exceptions may be made where safety and safeguarding measures require this, for example supporting disability athletes with minimum time spent waiting or in changing rooms.

During activity

Social distancing during the curling game

Social distancing should be adhered to at all times during warm-up, and during curling games and practice. Participants and organiser should follow the latest government guidelines with respect to face coverings while participating in indoor sports.

The following modifications should be adopted:

- Maximum one sweeper at a time. Of the two players who would usually sweep, one should stand to the side of the sheet while the other sweeps from the hog line at the throwing end.² All other players should maintain a distance of 2 metres from the sweeper. There should be no sweeping of an opposition stone behind the tee line and the opposition skip should be behind the hack when their opponent's stone is in motion
- No shaking of hands at beginning or end of games. Good sportsmanship should still be acknowledged verbally
- Local competitions can begin but organisers may require variations to the rules to ensure the respect of physical distancing, e.g. reduced number of sweepers
- Curlers with a disability and disability clubs should consider the following additional points:
 - Wheelchair curling
 - For wheelchair curling each game should have a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 2 on ice helpers (OIHs)
 - The role of the OIHs is:
 - To place the stones for the curlers in the correct positions as defined by each player
 - To gather the stones at the end of the end and sort (only OIHs are to handle stones)
 - To buddy each and every player in the game (or at their end if 2 OIHs), using the 'buddy pole'.
 - OIHs should wear face covering, be conscious of the social distancing rules and wear gloves
 - Wheelchair curlers should not:
 - Handle the stones
 - Share cues or brushes
 - Only one person from each team in the head at any time, when in the head skips should remember social distancing

² Note: under the 'rule of 6', there would only be three players per team.

- No "huddles" at the end of games ends, unless absolutely necessary then social distancing should be paramount.
- No handshakes, fist pumps or other player to player contact, including the touching of others' chairs
- The five players either not taking the shot or at the head should use the full space of the delivery end head to maintain social distancing, and must provide space for OIH to place the next player's stone before that player rolls in
- When changing ends wheelchair curlers shall ensure social distancing is fully maintained and should only complete the change of end when the OIH has cleared the head
- Skips should ideally use their cue as a "marker" rather than a brush to avoid additional contamination and cleaning.
- *General*
 - Additional consideration is required on the access and sanitising of disabled toilets, as in some circumstances curlers with a disability may need access more frequently
- Coaching and junior club sessions may commence with physical distancing measures in place with a maximum of eight people per sheet including coaches
- Umpires can perform their duties while being mindful of physical distancing, and with special consideration given to:
 - Cleaning measuring equipment before and after use
 - LSD measures to be used by one umpire with the other recording results
 - Teams to sign scoring sheets with their own pens
 - Wearing of gloves to change scores
 - Umpires to supervise while curlers tape their own brushes for championship play
 - Alternative arrangements for change of line-up process to remove touch points e.g. electronic or drop off point

Social distancing during breaks and post-game

All participants must remain socially distanced during breaks in play (e.g. at the end of each end or during a 5th end break if applicable) with spaced areas for equipment and refreshment storage for each individual including officials if applicable.

Water bottles or other refreshment containers should in no circumstances be shared. Participants are advised to bring their own, in a labelled or highly distinguishable container.

After activity participants must maintain government mandated social distancing for social interaction. This includes in any available rink facilities or other venue participants congregate in afterwards.

Use of equipment

The sharing of equipment must be avoided where possible.

Specific requirements for curling include the following:

- If curlers do not own their own brush, cue or delivery aid, one will need to be allocated to each curler per session and sanitised between uses
- Rinks should disinfect any provided curling equipment, including brushes and stone handles, between each session

Shouting

Players should avoid shouting or loud calling when in proximity of others. In other situations (e.g. when skips are calling the line of sweeping), loud calling should be minimised. Opposing skips (i.e. the skip of the team not throwing) should distance themselves from the calling skip.

Handling of curling stones

Participants should avoid touching the handle of stones thrown by other players.

Displaying scores

Where scoreboards are used, only a designated player (one per game) should update the scoreboard during the games. Scoreboards should then be cleaned between games.

Injury treatment

Injuries during play should still be treated as participant wellbeing is utmost. The best way to protect yourself and others is through rigorous cleaning, personal hygiene and regular hand hygiene. An increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces and equipment, using standard household cleaning and disinfection products, is recommended. Face coverings are also advisable when undertaking treatment.

After contact with an injured participant, clean your hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser at the earliest opportunity. This advice is applicable to all situations, regardless of whether there was close contact or the minimum social distancing was maintained. Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose.

First responders, should keep a record of each participant they have come into contact with for track and trace purposes.

See further information for those who may need to act as a 'first responder' role in a sports setting: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-interim-guidance-for-first-responders/interim-guidance-for-first-responders-and-others-in-close-contact-with-symptomatic-people-with-potential-2019-ncov>

Spectators

Supporters, parents, and other spectators should remain socially distanced whilst attending events. Spectator groups must be restricted to discrete six person gathering limits and spread out, in line with wider government guidance.

Facility usage

Each facility must have a specific facility operations plan that incorporates a full risk assessment. Facilities should follow requirements set out under government guidelines under "Key principles - facility usage":

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/return-to-recreation-team-sport-framework>.

In particular, we would highlight the following areas:

Changing rooms and showers

Players should arrive changed and shower at home. Use of changing and shower facilities must follow government advice on the use of indoor facilities where available.

If these facilities remain closed, exceptions may be made where safety and safeguarding measures require their use, e.g. supporting disability athletes, a child needs a change of clothing etc.

Toilets

Toilets will need to be opened before games, during games and for 30mins following games.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency and to avoid touching your face, and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available.
2. Consider the use of social distancing marking in areas where queues normally form, and the adoption of a limited entry approach, with one in, one out (whilst avoiding the creation of additional bottlenecks).
3. To enable good hand hygiene consider making hand sanitiser available on entry to toilets where safe and practical, and ensure suitable handwashing facilities including running water and liquid soap and suitable options for drying (either paper towels or hand driers) are available.
4. Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage. Use normal cleaning products, paying attention to frequently hand touched surfaces, and consider use of disposable cloths or paper roll to clean all hard surfaces.
5. High ventilation in indoor facilities is paramount to reducing transmission of Covid-19; keep the facilities well ventilated, for example by fixing doors open and opening windows where appropriate.
6. Special care should be taken for cleaning of portable toilets and larger toilet blocks.
7. Putting up a visible cleaning schedule can keep it up to date and visible.
8. Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection. Toilets capacity should be managed via entry and exit as per government guidelines.

Hygiene

Participants should be reminded of the importance of high levels of hygiene, for example through regular handwashing and use of hand sanitiser.

In addition to the above, the following includes a non-exhaustive list of suggestions, adapted from the Scottish Curling guidelines:

- Carry out risk assessments for all areas of the facility and implement control measures as required

- Adopt measures that assist with following government guidelines on physical distancing which may include restricting the number of people able to access the facility, floor markings and planning the flow of people entering and leaving the building
- Liaise with their local authority for any specific conditions that may apply, or for advice/support they may offer
- Follow any procedures related to the government's Test and Trace approach such as the recording of individuals' attendance
- Ensure policies, procedures and training material are updated for staff and volunteers, including first aid provision
- Provide suitable equipment for their workforce (including appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) as necessary)
- Review and update operating procedures to allow touch-free access where possible and ensure busy areas of the building are cleaned more regularly
- Operate an online payment system or use contactless where possible
- Provide hand sanitisers at key points and ensure hand-wash sinks have disposable hand towels
- Disinfect any provided curling equipment, including brushes and stone handles, between each session
- Publicly display a statement on cleaning and disinfecting procedures and remind customers of their responsibilities
- Conduct formal training for all workforce members on new procedures and protocols
- Communicate with members regularly, with key updates such as reopening date (when known) and new procedures that players/visitors may be required to follow on their return

Version control

Version	Date	Approved by
Public v1	06-Aug-2020	Tom Jaeggi, President English Curling Association
Public v2 Updates to facilities guidance, covering changing rooms, toilets and hygiene	16-Aug-2020	Tom Jaeggi, President English Curling Association
Public v3 Updates to the 'rule of 6' and tiering	24-Oct-2020	Tom Jaeggi, President English Curling Association

Public v4	8-Dec-2020	Tom Jaeggi, President English Curling Association
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