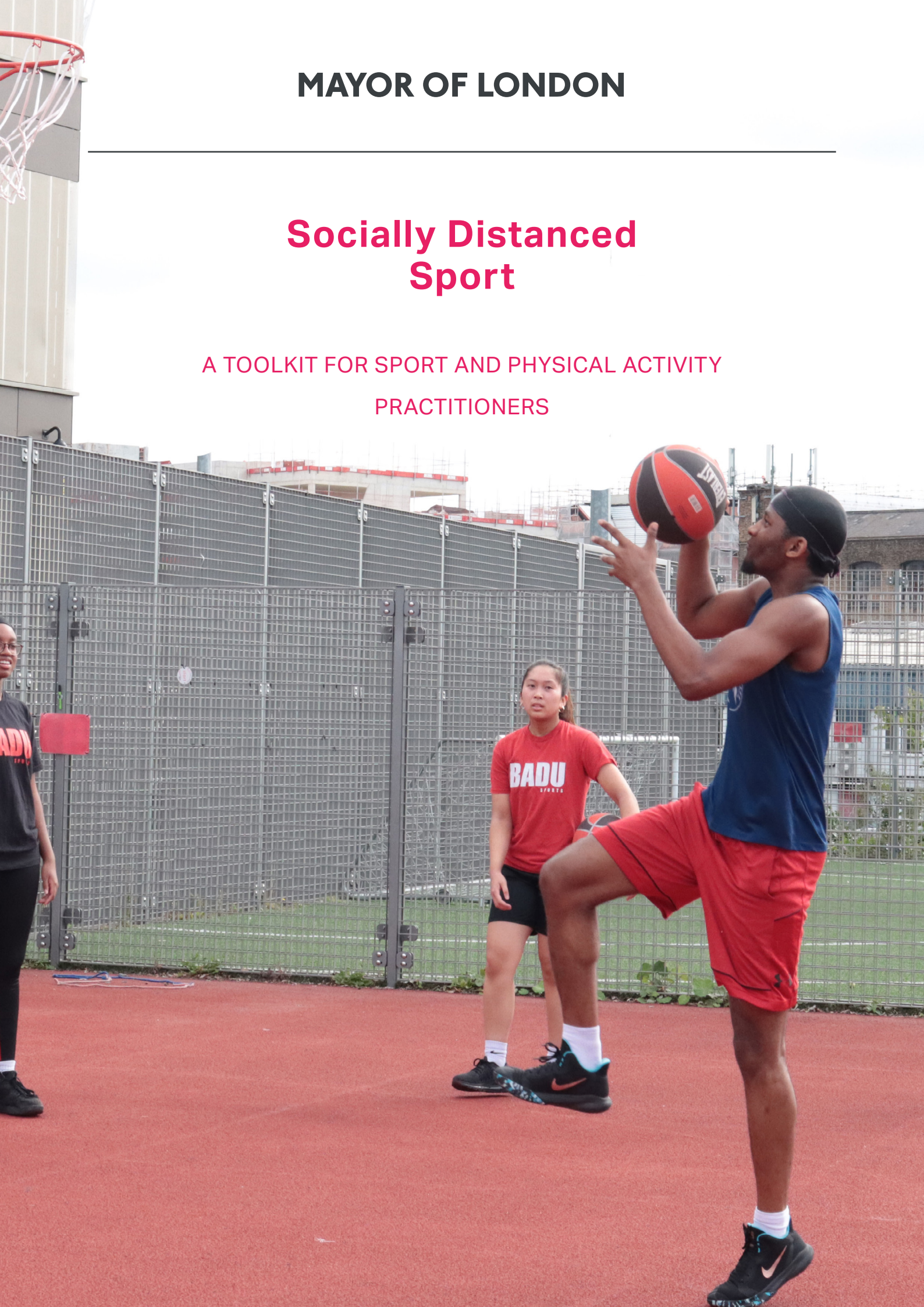


**MAYOR OF LONDON**

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## **Socially Distanced Sport**

**A TOOLKIT FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY  
PRACTITIONERS**



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## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document summarises the learnings from a pilot of socially distanced sport funded by the Mayor of London and delivered by BADU Sports and Salaam Peace. It is important to note that it is intended as a practical toolkit, not official guidance. Participants were children aged 8-12 years and young people aged 15-19 years who were all able bodied and predominantly existing participants of the two delivery organisations. The project was held in school-based facilities and used football, netball, basketball and fitness activities.

This document outlines suggestions for organisations wishing to run activities while COVID-19 is present but we recognise that they will not be relevant for everyone. We expect that you will adapt the toolkit to meet your organisation's needs and within the context of your own activities.



# INTRODUCTION

Amongst the many adverse effects of the pandemic, lockdown has resulted in an increased need for children and young people to be out and about, re-engaging with their communities and interacting with their peers – both for physical and mental health, and to support their wider family units. In the phased return from lockdown, the government has permitted the re-introduction of most sports (albeit often in adapted forms); but advice on facilitation and how to appropriately engage participants in an enjoyable and safe way has not been widely available. Access to facilities remains a huge challenge, as indoor facilities have restricted access; outdoor public spaces are busy; and contained outside facilities are oversubscribed which exacerbates both actual and perceived inequalities.

To test both the challenges and opportunities of socially distanced sport in real time, the Mayor of London funded a pilot project in Hackney during June-July 2020, under his Sport Unites community investment programme.

The five-week project engaged children aged 8-12 years and young people aged 15-19 years, and trialled the facilitation of football, netball and basketball – chosen both for their accessibility, low cost and appeal to a wide range of children and young people, boys and girls; and because unlike cricket and tennis, for example, in their competitive form the sports involve close contact and do not naturally lend themselves to social distancing.

The children and young people attended weekly sessions in self-contained groups of six, run by a professional community sport coach within school sports facilities. The schools offered 'private' open space and controlled access/use – enabling the kind of face-to-face social interaction that had been missed during lockdown. Physical education teachers from local schools observed activities to see what they could implement within curriculum time and offered feedback. The process was also documented by photojournalism students from the



Photo Credit: Leanne Fowale (Our Content - Change the Game)

Sport Unites funded pilot 'Our Content – Change the Game':

The pilot was delivered by experienced and trusted local community leaders who could readily reach their beneficiary cohorts. Evaluation of the pilot has resulted in this toolkit outlining the valuable insight for the wider community sport sector, as well as aiding physical education departments in the introduction of socially distanced curriculum delivery. A case study has also helped inform planning by the Mayor of London's Community Sport Team and the Violence Reduction Unit in their planning to provide effective diversionary activity for at-risk young people during Summer 2020 and beyond; and it links with the work of Education & Youth in planning a wider support remit for children and young people emerging from lockdown. Both community partners have now extended their activity programmes and summer activities in light of these learnings.

## A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

- Funded by the Mayor of London's Sport Unites investment programme
- Led by BADU Sports, who focus on educational and community development through physical education and sport
- Supported by Salaam Peace - a community engagement programme using sport to bring diverse people together
- Participants from existing BADU Sports and Salaam Peace programmes
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning conducted by inFocus Consultancy
- Facilities at Mossbourne Riverside Academy and Gainsborough Primary School
- Documentary support from 'Our Content – Change the Game' photojournalism project



## MITIGATING RISK AND ADAPTING

The main takeaway from the pilot is that COVID-19 requires extra risk assessment and mitigation in every aspect of a project. Even simple acts, such as participants entering the facility or training area, going to the toilet or picking up equipment has to be thought about in advance so you can plan how to mitigate the potential risks.

Mitigation is key. If participants with signs and symptoms are not allowed to attend; if hand washing is done before play; if equipment is sanitised before use; and if social distance is maintained, then the risk of transmission is significantly reduced.

Carry out a full risk assessment as part of your planning and before you start activities. It's helpful to involve a few team members with different roles so you're sure you've covered the full range of risks. Some funders will ask you to submit your risk assessment when you apply for funding.

Appoint a COVID-19 Officer for your organisation. Many national governing bodies now require this. This individual is responsible for developing, putting in place and managing activities and actions in relation to COVID-19. Their role is to ensure that risk assessment, mitigation procedures and any appropriate staff training is in place.

Adhere to the latest government guidance and restrictions. Monitor the

advice issued by the national governing body of the sport(s) relevant to your work.

Know the difference between what is guidance (meaning suggested practice) and any actual restrictions (meaning you are potentially breaking the law if you contravene these). If different guidance seems to conflict or be unclear, always err on the side of caution. For example, by having smaller groups.

Find out what others are doing and adapt and adopt any good practice!

### PILOT EXPERIENCE

At the time of planning this pilot, very little had been revealed about what you can do in socially distanced sport. As the project was in a school setting, we could interpret the guidance as 15 participants in a group with one teacher – although it was implied that only qualified teachers could run sessions in this way and not professional coaches. Guidance from the FA at the time focused on professional coaching sessions for adults, as elite football clubs were returning to training with whole teams present at sessions. Sport England guidance allowed for groups of six participants in a group with a Lead and an Assistant Coach. Therefore, we decided on group sizes of six participants, working with a Lead Coach and Assistant Coach. Sessions had up to six groups at a time based on the size of the facilities.





## PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND REGISTRATION

Create a code of conduct with your project participants which sets out how everyone should behave to stay safe. Include expectations of parents and carers too.

Provide copies of the code of conduct and consider asking participants, parents and carers to sign their agreement along with the project consent form.

Keep it local – consider the journey each participant will have to make to get to your activities. Can they walk or cycle? Will they need to use public transport? What support can you provide?

With spaces limited, consider asking participants to commit to a number of sessions or confirm on a weekly basis that they will attend so that you can make the most of your spaces and manage your numbers effectively.

All staff need to know and follow your 'capacity limits' for group sizes which includes participants and staff.

If sessions are 'drop in', plan in advance how you will manage different numbers of participants. If more turn up, ensure that there is control of how many enter the space and join in. Plan for what you will do with those who can't join in.

Having a strict registration process will help to mitigate the risks of being over capacity.

## STAFFING, SUPPORT AND TRAINING

Different organisations will appoint their designated COVID-19 Officer in different ways. If staff have the opportunity to apply for the role, make sure the responsibilities are clear, that they have access to suitable support and training, and that they will have the time to do this work. Your COVID-19 Officer should be on-hand at sessions at all times.

All staff (delivery and administrative) need reassurance that they are safe at work. Clear, open and timely communication is key to ensuring a positive and safe working environment. Make sure everyone is aware of any new guidance or legislation that affects them. Include risks to staff in your risk assessment, especially risks to those who may be more vulnerable. Remember to factor in not only physical safety, but also mental health and wellbeing of staff and volunteers.

Consider running 'back to work' or 'new activity' training sessions for staff that highlight what they can and can't do, and any new systems and processes you've put in place. Encourage staff to ask 'what if' questions.

Volunteers also need training and support so that they understand the new way of working. Invite them to your sessions with staff or hold a session just for volunteers.

Delivery staff such as coaches will need to carry out dynamic risk assessments

during sessions and make quick changes on the spot if something isn't working as planned. Dynamic risk assessment is the practice of identifying, assessing and evaluating risk in real-time, while working. Ensure you have one or two suitably qualified and experienced team members who are skilled to do this and responsible for this at sessions.

You may have external observers attend your programme from time to time (e.g. other members of staff, local authority or funder). Observers also need to follow your measures. Consider having a statement for them to read and sign which makes clear they are aware of any possible risks and will follow your project processes.

If you can, identify an experienced coach or member of staff for the role of 'Floater' at sessions. Their role is to float and oversee all groups, give reminders to participants and delivery staff on social distancing measures and hygiene, and suggest 'on the spot' adaptations if activities are not working as planned. They can also offer guidance and support or stand in and take control of a situation if needed. They might also be your first responder for first aid incidents.

Build up confidence in your delivery staff by starting with a Lead Coach and Assistant Coach with each group for the first few sessions. Staff working together can observe and give each

other feedback. With fewer groups, it's also easier to work consistently across the team and helps to make sure your planned mitigations are in place, understood and being followed. It allows you to learn, adapt and train less experienced staff before Assistants start work with their own groups.

Young people respond to the energy and example of delivery staff. Modelling positive, appropriate behaviour and good leadership is key to ensuring a fun and safe space for activities.

## PILOT EXPERIENCE

**The Head Coach from the lead delivery organisation created all the session plans, which the coaches followed whilst making small changes if needed. This was helpful because given the very different way of working, coaches said they found it hard to rely on their experience of non-socially distanced lesson plans. The Head Coach led a (socially distanced!) briefing before each session and a debrief at the end where staff and volunteers could feedback and suggest improvements for the next session.**





Photo Credit: Shirin Al Rashid (Our Content - Change the Game)

## SOCIAL DISTANCING

Put up social distance reminder signs, including at the entrance to remind participants, parents, carers and the public about the social distancing measures in place.

Everyone should stand 2 metres apart. If people will be queuing before your activities start, create a safe waiting area. You can mark spaces on the floor with tape so they know where to stand.

Ask parents and carers not to arrive too early to drop their children off – but be prepared for people that do! You might want to stagger the start time for different activity groups to avoid crowds gathering.

Look at the entrances and exits – if participants are coming and going at the same time and your entry/exit is small or narrow, you might want to use separate entrances and exits if you have them.

Make sure you have lots of time in between sessions if you have one session after another. You'll need this time for cleaning and to avoid crowds gathering.

Have designated individual spaces for participants to place their bags, water bottles and belongings to reduce the risk of people gathering in breaks.

Clearly mark out the areas for each group and create corridors for people to use for going to the toilet, water breaks, moving from one area to another or retrieving balls.

## SCREENING FOR COVID-19

### Awareness:

Make sure all staff, participants, parents and carers are aware of the signs and symptoms of the COVID-19 Corona Virus. [The NHS website outlines these below](#)

[READ MORE](#)

### Individual self-screening:

Follow the latest guidance. At the time of writing, anyone with symptoms should self-isolate and apply for a test. Be prepared for staff to self-isolate at short notice and plan and mitigate for short notice cancellations by staff and volunteers.

[APPLY FOR A TEST](#)

### Arrival:

Anyone displaying symptoms should not be allowed to join in or watch, and advised to return home to self-isolate.

Temperature checks with hand-held infrared thermometers can be useful as part of wider mitigations listed above. No oral or body thermometers should be used.

### Test and trace:

If you are informed that a participant, staff member or volunteer has tested positive then the COVID-19 Officer should record the incident. At the time of writing, you should direct the individual to the [National Government's Test and Trace procedure](#).

[READ MORE](#)





Photo Credit: Malcolm Ujeke (Our Content - Change the Game)

## ESTABLISH SAFETY AND SECURITY

Invite parents and carers and participants to visit the facilities before a project to see the space, ask questions and address any concerns they may have.

In a letter or as part of your project consent form, include information about how you will be observing social distancing in your activities and what you will be doing to keep everyone safe. People should know that your activities will be different from normal. This will help to reassure people and shape their expectations.

Make hand washing/hand sanitising stations visible. Have hand sanitiser available outside the facility or at a registration desk for people to use before they enter.

Anyone not delivering sessions (e.g. administrators, observers) should wear a face covering unless they have a reason not to. Staff or volunteers should wear a face covering when talking with parents and carers.

Staff should always keep their distance when talking with participants in their group.

Have a code of conduct and/or a sign in place for parents and carers so if they choose to wait (or if your project allows them to stay) they know where they can wait and how they should behave.

### PILOT EXPERIENCE

Going somewhere new to exercise, especially in uncertain times, can be challenging for people. Knowing that girls and women can feel less confident joining sports and physical activities; BADU Sports invited the female participants aged 15-19 to visit the facilities before the project started so they could see the project space and meet the coaches. They said this helped them to feel more comfortable and safe, and confident to join the sessions.

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

PPE mitigates the spread of viruses.

Face coverings (mouth and nose) should be worn by staff supporting or observing, or interacting with parents and carers. Parents and carers and anyone visiting the project should be actively encouraged to cover their face.

Consider providing a reusable and washable face covering for all participants and even parents and carers for them to use away from the project to protect themselves in public. These could be branded with your colours or logo to make them more appealing.

Where you set up your reception or desk to receive and register participants, use a distancing barrier such as a tape, chalk or cones on the floor to protect staff who meet and talk to people.

Staff cleaning equipment and facilities should be provided with disposable gloves.

Disposable gloves, aprons and masks should be available for those responsible for administering first aid.









Photo Credit: Leanne Fowale (Our Content - Change the Game)

## HYGIENE

Viruses can be passed on via person to person; equipment to person; and surface to person.

People should sanitise their hands on arrival and, if possible, wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water before they start. You'll need to allow for extra time for this!

Plan for regular breaks for people to sanitise their hands during the session. Each group should have their own area for this.

If you don't have access to washing facilities and toilets, consider taking extra precautions such as setting up a temporary hand washing station.

Ask everyone to bring their own water bottle with their name on it. Sharing amongst participants should be actively discouraged!

Clean all equipment before and after use.

Avoid sharing equipment as much as possible. And where you do share, the numbers sharing should be limited (e.g. only share within one group).

Toilets, changing rooms, tables and chairs etc. should be cleaned before and after each session, and maybe during the session too.

## PILOT EXPERIENCE

All participants used hand sanitiser on entry and were then guided to queue up to wash their hands with soap for 20 seconds at one of the two toilets. The toilets and sinks were cleaned thoroughly before and after the hand washing and again at the end of the session by staff.

## FIRST AID

UK Government guidance can be found by clicking the link below:

[READ MORE](#)



Identify your first responders and think through various scenarios that you may encounter. Be prepared to guide others.

Audit your first aid equipment to ensure you have the necessary PPE in place (masks, gloves, aprons, resuscitation face shields).

Ensure your risk assessment is up to date and all staff and volunteers are aware of any changes to your first aid procedures.

In the event of a first aid incident, first responders should implement dynamic risk assessment with COVID-19 as a key consideration.

All other participants and staff should move away from the incident area to a safe distance. As few people as possible should be involved, and make sure you don't allow crowds to gather.

Those responding should wear disposable masks, disposable gloves and aprons if they need to get close to or touch the casualty.

If CPR on an adult is needed, then only chest compressions should be adopted initially (see latest guidance).

If mouth to mouth resuscitation is needed, then a mouth shield should be used.



## USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

Many schools are left empty during holiday periods and after school. While many facilities are closed or have limited access, they potentially provide an opportunity for community sport projects to be run within secure facilities.

Most private schools are charities and work with community organisations to ensure they retain their charity status. State schools are often run by Academy groups and may rent out their facilities.

If you have existing links and arrangements with schools, use these contacts to help approach schools about partnering and/or hosting a project within their facilities.

If you can, approach Headteachers directly. If the school is run by the local authority or a wider academy group, they will need to be involved but approach the school first.

Primary schools are usually smaller, more contained and can be open to working with community groups in school holidays.

Secondary schools usually have more and larger facilities but with added access/maintenance/funding issues which you'll need to take into consideration.

A school is more likely to be open to collaboration if a project benefits its' students and their families (not necessarily solely).

Consider the location of changing/toilet facilities. Direct access is best, but if there is a need to go further into a building, then it's essential to limit access to the rest of the school.



Photo Credit: Leanne Fowale (Our Content - Change the Game)

Work collaboratively with schools. Consider sharing resources, equipment

or using staff to run after-school activities.

Trust and clarity are key – any arrangement should include a formal agreement over responsibilities e.g. which parts of the school can be used and for what purposes; who has responsibility for cleaning/access arrangements such as opening, closing, keys etc.

Any arrangements will likely have to conform to any Teacher Union agreements with schools plus individual school policies. What works in one school will likely have to be adapted for it to work in another.

In some boroughs there may be funding for schools to allow community organisations to access facilities in school holidays. Learning Trusts do this,

and some local authorities may have schemes in place.

In any funding bid, include costs that would cover the hire of facilities from the school and any arrangements for cleaning and maintenance (or a contribution to) etc.

Where schools are not an option, consider other venues. The local authority may have facilities open and available for use but churches and housing associations are other entities that have access to land and facilities.

If using public parks/open spaces ensure you have the right permissions and that your insurance covers you.





## SESSION PLANNING, CONTENT AND DESIGN

Test out your space and session plan with a run-through with staff before you try things live.

Think about the movement of participants and flow of your groups, before, during and after your session.

Allow time at the start and end for participants to socialise and talk with each other. This can be managed by the delivery staff or supervised from a distance. This avoids it happening unmanaged in sessions and helps encourage positive social interaction and social contact.

If you have back-to-back sessions with different cohorts, allow time in between sessions to clean equipment and to avoid contact between groups.

Schedule water breaks to reduce contact with other groups.

In hot weather, a large enough shaded area may be needed for breaks. You can

rotate use of this space for different groups.

For multi-activity projects consider a 'circuit' where groups rotate around a series of activities over the course of a session. Keep in mind the need to either provide different equipment for each group or to clean equipment in between groups.

Clear learning objectives are still key to any project and as the group improves, delivery staff should take a step back and look at the quality of the skill being developed.

Early drills should be designed for mindfulness and team cohesion whilst encouraging healthy competition (e.g. how quickly can you do 20 passes). These can progress and become more complex over several sessions.

Design sessions so that the different components – from warm-up to cool-

down – are progressive and stay relevant to your learning objectives.

Balance fitness activities, skills/technique drills, with games and competitive elements to keep it fun and so participants have variety. Introduce personal challenges that can be repeated over time so that participants can improve on their personal best.

Playing a contact game is not necessarily the most suitable activity within social distance restrictions. Ensure any challenges, competitive activities or possession-based games are either adapted appropriately or not permitted as these can often promote close physical contact.

Tailor your activities to your participants. For example, if you have different ages working together in a single group, think about adaptations for younger players. Different groups may also work at their

own pace.

Dynamic risk assessment – do not be afraid to pause activity or adapt something that is not working or appears to encourage contact.

A standard basketball or netball court (including the run-off area) may allow for two groups of 6 participants, 2 delivery staff and a 'Floater'.

A full-sized football pitch might cater for 6-8 small groups.

The older the participant, the more space they will need.

**DOWNLOAD SESSION PLANS BELOW:**

**BASKETBALL**



**FOOTBALL**



**NETBALL**



Photo Credit: Leanne Fowale (Our Content - Change the Game)



# MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

Have a conversation with participants at the start of your project and with new starters to make sure everyone understands why social distancing is important and why it's part of your project.

Don't be afraid to remind participants and staff about maintaining safe distances as many times as you need to. As behaviour and habits change you'll need to do this less and less.

Different participants will display different behaviours based upon their needs. Staff will need to differentiate their responses and adapt accordingly to support individuals and keep control of the group.

Teenagers may wish to have more opportunities to socialise with their friends and may do this outside of the project. Staff can help by being good role models, raising awareness of social distance restrictions, explaining how to mitigate risks, and helping them make judgement calls outside of the projects.

Staff need to be constantly aware of what is happening within and around their group. Get them to consider where is best to stand and lead from.

To help children get used to your social distancing expectations, start with individuals working within their own physically marked out area (e.g. circle/square). As sessions progress and you're confident that the group understands and respects the correct behaviours, remove the physical barriers.

## PILOT EXPERIENCE

Week 1 was about finding a way to make everyone feel comfortable. For many of the participants, it was the first time they had been out of their homes without family. All were keen to be active but many simply wanted to talk with others. The older young people needed a space to 'socialise' before and after as they would turn up early and stay late to talk with their friends and so this had to be factored in to ensure that this could be done safely.

# OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

**Ensure you're covered – you should have received a guidance letter from you insurance policy providers (including public liability).**

**Ensure your safeguarding policy and systems are in place and functioning. The COVID-19 crisis has created many problems that may have affected participants and staff, and disclosures may be more likely to occur.**

**Keep your local network and stakeholders informed with what you are doing and see how they can be involved and support your work. Could they be referral partners to target specific participants? Can they help secure a suitable facility?**

**Consider partnering, collaborating or supporting other organisations.**

**Could you share facilities, staff or learning?**

**Forecast and plan ahead to make your project sustainable. With higher ratios of staff to participants, can you fund the costs of additional delivery staff or run more sessions to ensure as many participants benefit from your work?**

**Consider the environmental impact of your project. Limit disposable products where possible and use re-usable and washable face masks.**

**Constantly reflect on your work and put valuable learnings into future practice. Can you become more resilient and prepared to respond in the future? Are you ready for any new changes or restrictions?**

## USEFUL LINKS

[Government guidance from Public Health England](#)

[Government guidance specifically on First Aid](#)

[NHS Advice on COVID-19, including signs, symptoms and self-isolation](#)

[NHS Advice on 'Test and Trace' procedures](#)

[Sport England guidance including research and funding opportunities](#)

[Sport England's 'Return to Play' guidance.](#)

[London Sport COVID-19 guidance and support](#)

['Return to Sport' guidance from governing bodies and federation](#)

[The latest updates and guidance from the Mayor of London](#)



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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[London.gov.uk/sport-unites](https://london.gov.uk/sport-unites)

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