

Leisure Facilities in Tiers 1, 2 & 3.

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England,

For information: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Key Points

On 2 December a tiered response to Covid-19 will be applied across England. This has implications for those operating Gyms and Sports Facilities

- Indoor exercise classes can have more than 6 people in them in Tier 1 and 2 if socially distanced.
- In Tier 3 group exercise is restricted to a single household or support bubble.

1.0 Background

On 23 November, the Prime Minister announced that from 0.01 am on Wednesday 2 December the following criteria would be applied across England

Tier 1

- Gyms and swimming pools can open
- Group exercise classes can continue following the previous guidance

Tier 2

- Gyms and swimming pools can open
- Group exercise classes can continue following the previous guidance

Tier 3

- Gyms and swimming pools can open
- Group exercise activities and indoor sports should not take place unless with household or bubble.
- Organised activities for elite athletes, under 18's and disabled people can continue

Further details are contained with the Government's [Covid-19 Winter Plan](#)

On 26 November, it was announced which Tier each authority would be assigned. It is worth noting that only three authorities, the Isle of Wight, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were placed in Tier 1, representing just 1% of the population, 714,000 people. 32 million people, just over 57% of the population will be in Tier 2, whilst 23.3 million, 41.5% of the population, will be in Tier 3.

Warrington and Merseyside are the only two places in the country which will see eased restrictions from 2 December - both are moving from Tier 3 of the previous lockdown system to Tier 2.

2.0 Guidance

When Tiers were first introduced on 12 October, there were inconsistencies between authorities so for example, gyms were initially closed in Merseyside and some fined. Other neighbouring authorities such as Lancashire and Greater Manchester allowed gyms to remain open.

The previous tiered system also introduced the 'Rule of Six' which applies to outdoor spaces including private gardens. With multiple changes over the last 3 months, some operators have been left unsure as to quite what guidance applies to their facility. The latest guidance uses the 'Rule of Six' as a metaphor for social distancing and mixing of households rather than that originally intended.

3.0 Rule of Six

A new law prohibiting social gatherings of more than six people came into effect on Monday 14 September as the Government called on the public to remain vigilant in the fight against coronavirus. The new "rule of six" was intended to simplify and strengthen the rules on social gatherings, making them easier to understand and easier for the police to enforce.

It means that, apart from a set of limited exemptions, including work and education, any social gatherings of more than six people will be against the law. Police have the new power to disperse any such gatherings and fine individuals involved £100, doubling up to a maximum of £3,200.

The rule applies across England and replaces the existing ban on participating in gatherings of more than 30 and the guidance on allowing two households to meet indoors. It remains the case that organisers and facilitators of larger gatherings of more than 30 people, such as unlicensed music events, can be subject to fines of up to £10,000.

Exemptions include cases where a single household or support bubble is larger than six people. The rule also does not apply to gatherings for work or education purposes, and to other gatherings including weddings, funerals, and team sports organised in a Covid-19 secure way.

Venues following Covid-19 secure guidelines – such as places of worship, **gyms**, restaurants and other hospitality venues – **can still hold more than six people in total**. But within those venues, there must not be individual groups larger than six, and groups must not mix socially or form larger groups.

The rule will be kept under constant review and will only remain in place as long as is necessary.

4.0 Latest Guidance

The Government's [Covid-19 Winter Plan](#), explicitly allows for Gyms and Swimming Pools to remain open across all three tiers.

Tier 1

- Classes and organised adult sport can take place outdoors but must follow the rule of six indoors.
- Organised activities for elite athletes, under-18s and disabled people can continue

Tier 2

- Classes and organised adult sport can take place outdoors but cannot take place indoors if there is any interaction between people from different households.
- Organised activities for elite athletes, under-18s and disabled people can continue

Tier 3

- Classes and organised adult sport can take place outdoors but should avoid higher-risk contact activity.
- Group exercise activities and indoor sports should not take place, unless with household or support bubble.
- Organised activities for elite athletes, under-18s and disabled people can continue

5.0 Clarification

Gyms and fitness studios are classified as business premises and therefore not subject to the 'Rule of Six'. **Exercise classes can have more than 6 people in them in Tier 1 and 2**, as long as they follow the Covid secure guidelines (including keeping social distancing). However, you are not allowed to have more than 6 people mixing (closer than 2m). **In Tier 3 group exercise is restricted to a single household or support bubble.**

To clarify, gym and pool activities, including group exercises classes, are exempt from the Rule of Six, so long as COVID-19 protocols are followed. This also applies to aqua aerobics classes, which are permitted to continue.

Children's lessons can continue in Tier 3 and there are further exceptions for indoor disability sport, sport for educational purposes and supervised sport and physical activity for under-18s. Sauna and Steam rooms should remain closed in Tier 3 locations

6.0 APSE Comment

APSE will continue to monitor ongoing announcements in regard to the pandemic and will attempt to disentangle guidance where it remains unclear. Covid-19 guidance on reopening Gyms and swimming pools is contained on the APSE website [Sports & Leisure Guidance](#)

Further guidance for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be released, following release by the devolved governments, accepting that gyms and physical activity tend to follow sometime after headline announcements.

The leisure sector remains in a precarious financial state and will remain so for the next 6 months at least. APSE Sports and leisure advisory groups are free to members and allow leisure officers to share concerns and learn from others as we look to relaunch leisure post pandemic.

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