

COVID-19 BLITZ GUIDELINES

7th June 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY POINTS _____	3
PREPARING VENUES, FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT _____	4
EVENT DAY GUIDELINES _____	5
POST EVENT _____	9
SAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT _____	10
USEFUL LINKS _____	15

KEY POINTS

- This document is aimed to assist units when hosting blitz games programmes. A blitz is defined as any gathering of more than two teams.
- It is essential that current Government restrictions at the time are adhered to and details in this document relate to what is permitted from 7th June 2021
 - In the 26 counties: games are permitted with up to 100 spectators (200 if capacity of ground is 5,000 or greater) - this includes parents/guardians
 - In the 6 counties: games are permitted with up to 500 spectators
- Should restrictions ease further this document will be updated to reflect these changes but organising bodies (club, county, province, school) need to ensure they adhere to a maximum of 100 people per full size regulation pitch throughout all levels of Return to Play
- Should restrictions increase to 200 participants per pitch for example the same principles and organisation should apply but numbers in pods or number of pods of teams could increase ensuring to take into account required coordinators and match officials also
- The organising body must appoint an event coordinator and a pitch coordinator for each playing pitch to ensure all guidelines are adhered to
- The event coordinator will act as the blitz covid supervisor ensuring all personnel involved in organising the event and match officials have completed their health checks while each team covid supervisor is responsible for their own team
- From a Health and Safety perspective the only responsibility resting with the unit is to ensure there is strict adherence to guidelines outlined in the Safe Return to Gaelic Games Document - Link : <https://www.gaa.ie/news-archive/news/covid-19-update-safe-return-to-gaelic-games/>

PREPARING VENUES, FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT

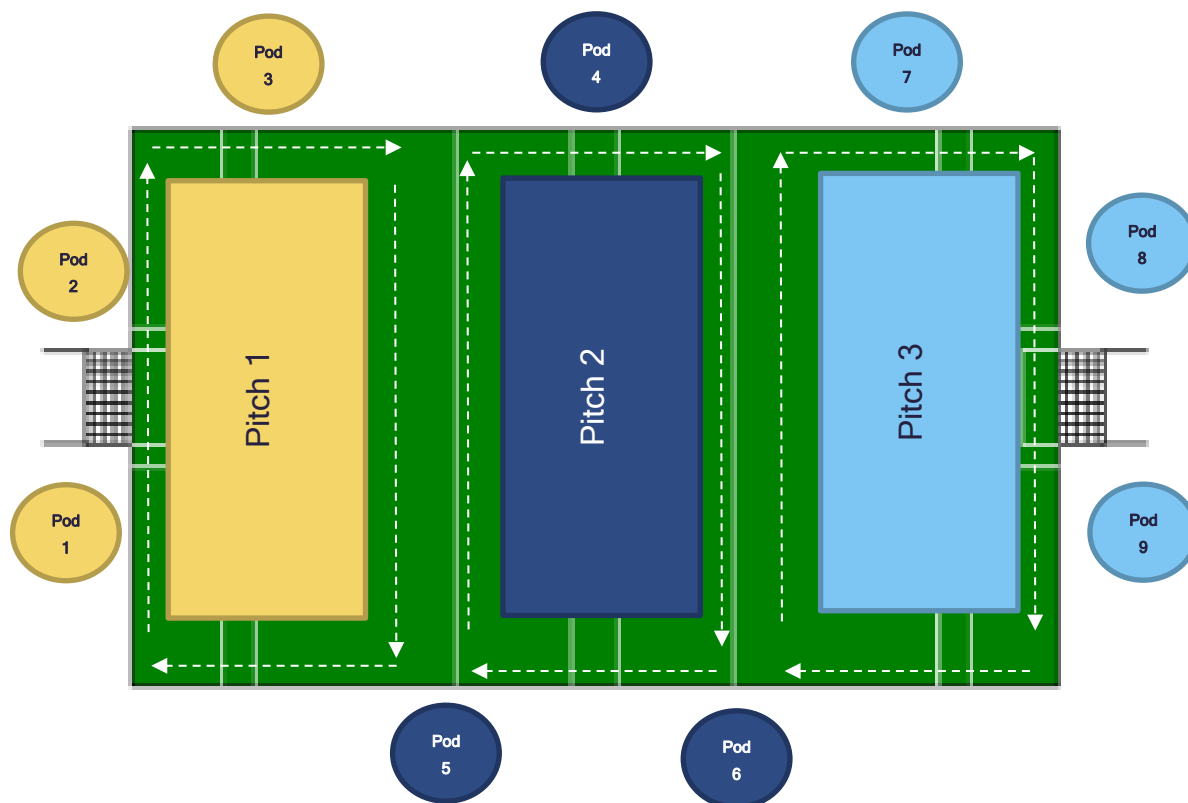
- A COVID-19 Risk Assessment must be carried out by all clubs in advance of any blitz.
 - See Page 10 for further details on Risk Assessment
- For clubs using a facility they rent or do not own, they should liaise with the facility owner as there is dual responsibility when it comes to ensuring all protocols are being adhered to
- Use separate entrance and exits (if possible) to the pitch(es)
- Clubs must have traffic management in place with parking areas for parents/guardians who must remain in cars and it is one parent/guardian per child permitted. In 6 counties the parents/guardians may watch the games from the perimeters of the pitch once adhere to social distancing of 2 metres
- There can be no access to indoor facilities except to use toilets and this access point should be attended ensuring 2 metres social distancing is maintained. Where possible assigned toilets should be identified specifically for each pitch, where this is not possible management and control should be in place. Recommend that towels are for single use only or air dryers used.
- No shower facilities can be used until further notice
- Water fountains must not be used
- Hand sanitiser and cleaning products should be available to observe strict hand hygiene measures
- All equipment - including goalposts - must be sanitised before and after each match •
- Players and coaches from clubs must bring their own hand sanitiser
- COVID-19 Signage must be clearly visible throughout the facility
- COVID-19 Signage is available to download from learning.gaa.ie
- Clubs should be advise their members not to attend the event if they are unwell. Stay at home and contact their GP if they have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19
- The symptoms include:
 1. Temperature of 37.5C or greater
 2. Sudden onset of cough or shortness of breath
 3. Sudden loss of the sense of taste or smell

EVENT DAY GUIDELINES

Set Up

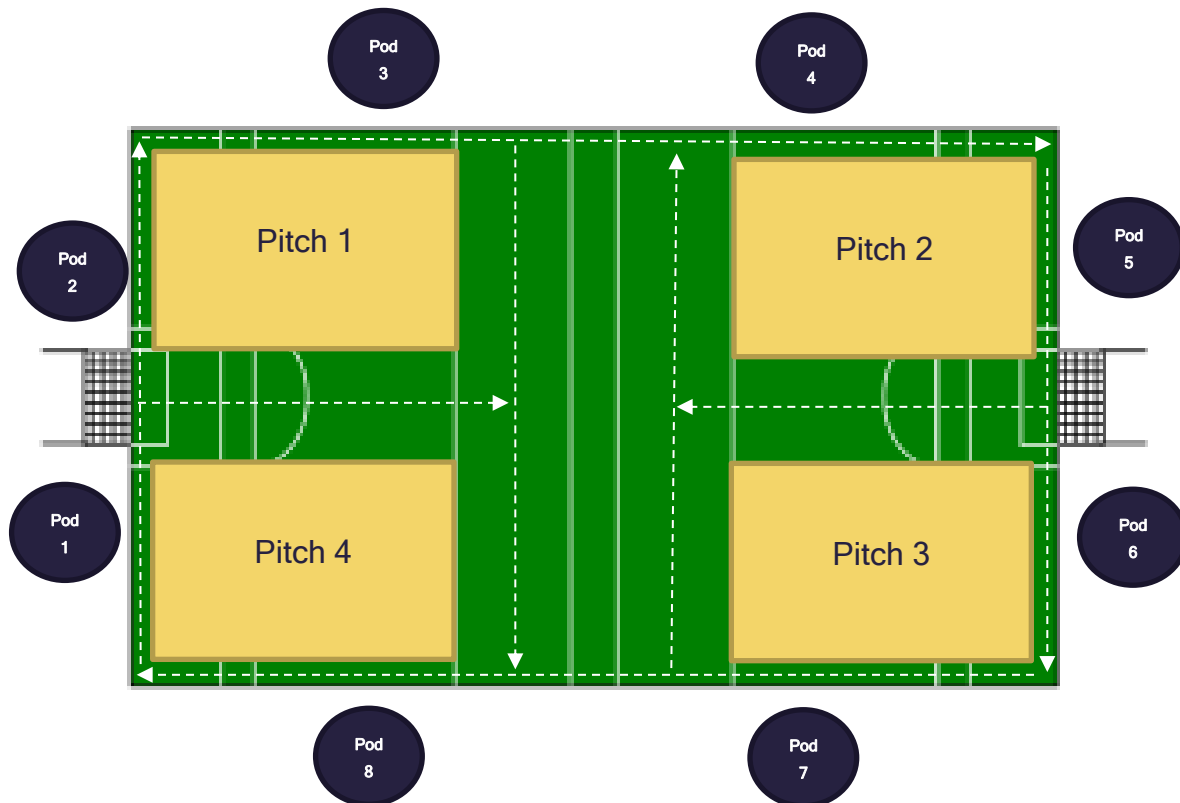
- Maximum 100 people allowed per regulation full pitch (including players/coaches/covid officers/coordinators and match officials)
 - E.g. 3 small pitches with 3 teams of 8 players and 2 mentors (10 per team) per small pitch (total 90), 3 pitch coordinators, 3 match officials = 96
- Arrival times should be staggered for clubs. If using more than one full size pitch at a venue then the start time for games on Pitch 1 should differ to Pitch 2 to ensure teams arriving and departing at different times. There should be no more than two pitches used at any venue at the same time
- Each team should be assigned to a designated resting area where they return to between games. They must remain in own area
- A traffic flow system should be in place to ensure all teams move in one direction to avoid teams congregating or mixing when going to a pitch for their game
- In venues where more than one full size pitch is being used teams must be designated to play games only on the one pitch at all times, ideally they will remain at their own small playing pitch where possible

Sample 1: Set Up - 3 pitches as example above = 96 people



Sample 1: Set Up - 4 pitches

- E.g. 4 small pitches with 8 teams of 9 players and 2 mentors (11 per team) total 88, 4 pitch coordinators, 4 match officials = 96 people



REMEMBER

- No more than 100 people participating on a pitch
- Maximum of two full size pitches in use at a venue at any one time
- No spectators are allowed on playing area, all must remain outside the parameter of the pitch when spectators are allowed
- Ensure designated area for each team

BE A TEAM PLAYER ON AND OFF THE FIELD

-  1. BRING YOUR OWN WATER BOTTLE
-  2. DON'T SHAKE HANDS
-  3. FOLLOW THE LATEST HSE ADVICE

COO WHERE WE ALL BELONG  

DO THE RIGHT THING FOR YOU AND YOUR CLUB

-  1. UNDERSTAND AND FOLLOW THE SAFE RETURN TO GAELIC GAMES GUIDELINES
-  2. WASH YOUR HANDS
-  3. MONITOR YOUR HEALTH

COO WHERE WE ALL BELONG  

IT'S UP TO YOU

IF YOU OR YOUR CHILD HAVE SYMPTOMS...

-  TAKE RESPONSIBILITY
-  AVOID GAELIC GAMES ACTIVITIES
-  CONTACT YOUR GP

COO WHERE WE ALL BELONG  

Participating Teams

- Clubs should arrive as close to start of blitz time as is feasible
- All players should travel to event in line with Covid Guidelines
- Players should arrive to event in their gear as no changing facilities are allowed
- Players should bring their own labelled food and water and seal them in a plastic bag
- On arrival all players and coaches must remain in cars until the team covid supervisor completes attendance and ensures all health checks are complete. They then provide the list to the event coordinator or designated person. (sample list attached)
- Event coordinator or designated person will then direct the team to their assigned area and team covid supervisor will take players and coaches to that area. If a club has multiple teams they must have designated area for each team and remain in that pod
- Parents/guardians must remain in cars in 26 counties and in 6 counties they may stay on outside perimeter of full-size regulation pitch
- The team covid supervisor is responsible for ensuring all guidelines are adhered to by their team
- Players and Coaches should observe 2 metres social distancing where possible (warm-ups, team-talks)
- Where physical distancing is not possible, cloth face coverings should be worn by coaches. E.g. When administering first aid and tying shoelaces
- No hand greetings are permitted (handshakes, high fives)
- If a team is using bibs then players should use the same bib at all times and not exchange

Pitch Coordinators

- Ensure clubs are adhering to covid-19 guidelines and liaise with team covid supervisor on any issues
- Keep match schedule on time to avoid teams congregating to wait for games
- Manage traffic flow around the pitch
- Ensure footballs/sliotars are sanitised between games
- Face coverings should be encouraged for everyone at the venue except players on pitch, active match officials and the head coach of teams playing. Players Under 13 do not need to wear face coverings unless they wish to do so
- If a team is taking a team photo to ensure players are socially distanced
- Liaise with event coordinator if there are any issues at your pitch

How to Deal with Symptoms on the Day

- The designated Covid-19 supervisor should take charge of the management of any persons with symptoms
- Immediately separate any person displaying or complaining of Covid-19 related symptoms from other people at the venue
- Ask this person to wear a face covering if possible or if available provide them with a facemask
- The designated person managing the situation should try to maintain at least 2 metres from the person with symptoms and should wear a face covering and wash their hands regularly.
- Provide the ill person with tissues and hand sanitizer and ensure that all tissues are disposed of in a waste bag that can be tied and marked as separate from other waste
- If they are well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspected case
- All persons who have been in close contact with the suspect case will need to be informed to restrict their movement for 14 days or until further information is available (i.e. a negative test result of the suspect case).

HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE AND DECLARATION

The infographic is set against a red background with faint icons of hands and a laptop. It features three main steps in blue boxes with white text and icons. Step 1 includes a laptop icon. Step 2 includes a smartphone icon. Step 3 includes the GAA Learning logo. At the bottom, there is contact information and logos for GAA, LGFA, and the HSE.

1. COMPLETE THE HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE AT [RETURNTOPLAY.GAA.IE](https://returntoplay.gaa.ie)
2. BEFORE EACH TRAINING/GAME, HEALTH STATUS MUST BE RECONFIRMED VIA THE HEALTH DECLARATION - [RETURNTOPLAY.GAA.IE](https://returntoplay.gaa.ie)
3. A USER GUIDE AND TUTORIAL VIDEO ARE AVAILABLE AT [LEARNING.GAA.IE/COVID19RESOURCES](https://learning.gaa.ie/covid19resources)

FOR ANY ISSUES EXPERIENCED WHEN COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE/DECLARATION, PLEASE CONTACT GMSSUPPORT@GAA.IE

GAA WHERE WE ALL BELONG

LGFA

POST EVENT

- If you are organising a Go Games or recreational Blitz, must be non-competitive, and presenting medals to all participants it is essential that you do not congregate all teams together. Team medals should be presented to the head coach at the team pod and they can in turn present to players
- If you are organising a competitive blitz only the winning team and runners up should be at presentation area and must stand socially distanced. The trophy should be placed in a table/stand for captain to lift themselves and it should not be handed over to them
- Any photos taken of teams must be socially distanced
- Attendees must leave immediately, and dressing rooms will not be accessible for anyone
- Attendees must shower at home and no access will be given to shower facilities in clubs at this time
- Event team must, always, avoid grouping larger amounts of attendees together
- Parent/Guardian must report if attendee subsequently develop COVID-19 to their team covid supervisor who will in turn contact the blitz covid supervisor

SAMPLE BLITZ RISK ASSESSMENT

The Coronavirus pandemic has impacted sport activity at all levels, and whilst there remains significant uncertainty, it can be challenging to plan with purpose. However, with restrictions gradually being eased across areas of the country it is essential to conduct a risk assessment prior to blitz events.

What is a Risk Assessment?

Risk management relates to the process of making decisions that will help to avoid and reduce the impact of unexpected/ undesired outcomes. People need to be fully aware of what can go wrong and be there to implement strategies to prevent them or at least manage them.

Five steps to Risk Assessment

1. Identify potential hazards.
2. Establish who might be affected and how
3. Assess the risks, decide whether existing precautions are adequate or whether more steps are required.
4. Record your findings.
5. Regularly review your assessment and revise if necessary.

COVID-19 - Gaelic Games Units Return Considerations

To assist clubs in preparing a return to blitz events during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have outlined some areas to consider when reviewing a risk assessment document. As with any risk assessment it will need to be tailored to a unit's individual needs, so the following is for guidance only.

	Areas to consider	Suggested action
Pre-Planning	Risk Assessment	Each unit should undertake its own COVID-19 risk assessment and devise its own COVID-19 operational standards that considers the facility and its activities.
	Numbers of people	<p>The unit must ensure that social distancing guidelines can be maintained at the facility. This should include assessing the maximum number of people that can safely operate in each training space/area.</p> <p>There should be enough volunteers to help ensure and maintain social distancing during sessions.</p> <p>Depending on player and/or coach's numbers eligible to attend a blitz, staggered arrival/exit time slots for groups may need to be considered to minimise player and coach's interaction.</p>
	Games Structure	<p>The type, duration, layout, and location of the blitz should be considered.</p> <p>Blitzes should be designed and pre-planned in advance to ensure that social distancing can be maintained and structured to always enable adherence to the risk assessment.</p>
Communication	Communicate information to all attendees regarding:	<p>The COVID-19 risk and symptoms, and the practices that should be undertaken to mitigate risks.</p> <p>Awareness that although COVID-19 infection risks can be minimised through adherence to the club's policies and procedures, they cannot be eliminated and risks remain for at-risk populations, their families, and the potential for unintended transmission.</p> <p>The units' approach, standards, and policies to mitigate the risks.</p>

		<p>Before leaving home to attend a blitz, players (or parents/ guardians on behalf of) and volunteers' members should assess whether they have any symptoms of COVID-19, for example, a high temperature or fever, a new continuous cough, new unexplained shortness of breath, loss of taste, or smell etc.</p> <p>Players and volunteers should be instructed in communications to stay home and not attend any sessions when they are showing symptoms of COVID-19 or have had close contact with a person with COVID-19.</p> <p>Information should be communicated by way of email, social media, coach talks, and public announcements where applicable and practicable.</p>
Use and availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - sanitiser/masks/ gloves etc.	Player hand sanitiser and wipes	Both the unit and parents should provide all players with hand sanitiser for use between play periods, as well as antibacterial wipes for disinfecting equipment.
	Volunteer hand sanitiser and wipes	Both the unit and volunteer members should provide their own hand sanitiser for frequent use and antibacterial wipes for disinfecting hard surfaces and shared equipment.
	Masks/gloves for Volunteers Members	These should be provided by the unit or by the volunteers where the risk assessment deems these items necessary, e.g., bagging up of rubbish, whilst cleaning surfaces, etc.
Symptom Checking Conduct	Players, coaches, volunteers, and referees	Completion of the Gaelic Games Covid Health Questionnaire
Food and Drink	Water bottles	Players and volunteers should bring their own personalised water bottles to all team activities to help reduce the transmission risk. Individuals should take their own water bottles home for cleaning and sanitisation.

Arrival	Hygiene	<p>When arriving at team seating or sideline areas, team mentors should disinfect all hard surfaces, such as benches, railings. Advise all players and volunteers on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.</p> <p>Volunteers and players should ensure that hand hygiene/ sanitisation is being undertaken upon arrival, during and leaving the facility.</p>
	Parking arrangements	Awareness and prevention must be considered from arrival. Where possible arrange social distancing in relation to car park spaces.
	Pre training groups	Players and team mentors should not congregate and should stay in cars until just before the start of the session.
Equipment	Limit team shared equipment and sanitise regularly	<p>Only equipment deemed as essential should be used during the blitz.</p> <p>Equipment should be sanitized between games.</p>
Player Conduct	No Handshakes/ Celebrations	Players and officials should refrain from physical contact, including handshakes, high fives, chest bumps, group celebrations, etc.
Reopening closed premises for access to and use of toilets	Hygiene	<p>Consider how the building will need to be sanitised including within the toilets, (e.g. taps, basins, surfaces, door handles etc.)</p> <p>Paper towels and soap provision. Hand sanitiser at building entry.</p>
	Toilet distancing	<p>Consider social distancing within toilets.</p> <p>The numbers of people using the toilets may need to be controlled and consideration will need to be given to access and egress arrangements to support social distancing measures and to minimise the risk of transmission.</p>

First Aid Provision	First aider PPE	Consider the first aid provision and arrangements for first aiders. Formulate a plan of the steps to be taken if a player is injured, and, or requires first aid treatment/attention.			
	Post-Event	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Cleaning</td> <td>Volunteers should clean and dispose of all rubbish from player seating or side line areas when departing blitz using dedicated PPE and refuse sacks.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No Congregation</td> <td>Players, officials and volunteers should quickly exit the session location after the event and go directly to their cars without congregating with other players.</td> </tr> </table>	Cleaning	Volunteers should clean and dispose of all rubbish from player seating or side line areas when departing blitz using dedicated PPE and refuse sacks.	No Congregation
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Sample Risk Assessment Document may look as below across areas above.

Hazard	Likelihood of Risk happening L-M-H	Risk	Responsibility	Possible Actions taken by the club to mitigate the risk	Action taken by Club to mitigate risk	Likelihood of Risk After Action L-M-H
Event Committee						
No Person/s identified who is to be the main contact for the blitz	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No knowledge of who to contact if there is an issue within the club A potential case of Covid-19 could be spread within an environment without knowledge of the club 		-Communicated to all attendees a designated person for the blitz and who to contact in the case of logistics, an illness etc.		

USEFUL LINKS

Covid-19 Education eLearning Module – must be completed by all players, coaches, members, parents and referees

<https://learning.gaa.ie/covid19learning>

Health Questionnaire (if any problems please email gmssupport@gaa.ie)

<https://returntoplay.gaa.ie>

Covid-19 Resources

<https://learning.gaa.ie/covid19resources>

Covid-19 Roles and Responsibilities

<https://learning.gaa.ie/covid19roles>