



# A Practical Guide for Clubs **Returning to Play Tennis**

**during Step 1 of the Northern Ireland Executive  
Approach to Removing the Covid-19 Restrictions**



# Step 1

## Return to Restricted Play

### Always follow the Government Guidelines of Good Hand Hygiene – Respiratory Etiquette – Social Distancing

The guidelines in this document relate to Step 1 of the Northern Ireland Executives Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business.

This step:

1. Permits sporting activity in open outdoor public sports amenities (e.g. pitches, tennis courts, golf courses etc.) where social distancing can be maintained
2. Permits people to engage in outdoor sporting and fitness activities, either individually or in very small groups (maximum 4 people), where social distancing can be maintained and where there is no contact

### Safe every step of the way

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| 2. Club Access       | 5. Clubhouse Facilities | 8. On Court - Coaching |
| 3. Booking & Arrival | 6. To the Courts        | 9. Getting Home Safely |

Tennis is a Sport For Life. We know playing tennis provides great mental and physical health benefits for our players. We therefore must ensure that Tennis is only played within a safe environment.

This practical guide, prepared by our team in consultation with medical experts and inline with Government Guidelines, outlines the robust measures Tennis Ireland would like clubs to implement and maintain to help safeguard staff and members during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will allow all of us to get back on court, safely, improving the wellbeing of members across the country.

The measures, which relate to Step 1 of the Northern Ireland Executive Approach to Decision-Making cover each step of the journey from home to the club gate and back home again.

These measures should be in place seven days a week and until further notice.

Our measures and procedures are under constant review and updated as advice from government, health authorities and governing bodies evolves in line with the gradual lifting of social restrictions.

#### 1. Club Covid-19 Committee

Tennis Clubs should consider the appointment of an assigned COVID-19 Officer and committee responsible for managing issues and queries relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. This committee should:

- Ensure indoor courts are not utilised during this phase of reopening
- Should check with their insurers if any amendments to their policies are required to cover Covid19 issues.
- Ensure they review and that the club can comply with all of the protocols outlined before reopening their club
- Ensure that the club and its members adhere to NHS/ Public Health advice in all cases.



- Ensure that sufficient NHS Covid-19 information Posters are in place
- Consider the operation of a court booking system that, if possible, allows for staggered play and perhaps allow 10 minutes between booking slots for players to exit and enter without interaction. If this cannot be done it would be advisable that players understand the need for social distancing while entering and exiting the courts and wait in a designated waiting area.
- Ensure that the club maintains accurate records of who is playing and when. This should include all persons on court and not just the one making the booking. This must be carried out for coaching sessions as well, and in the case that a parent/guardian is present in the club that must also be recorded. This will help with contact tracing if necessary.
- Be responsible for informing all members of the Covid-19 guidelines and insist on full cooperation
- Ensure that the contact details for all members are up to date as this will assist with contact tracing should it be necessary
- Listen to feedback and contact Tennis Ireland if there are issues not covered under these protocols

## 2. Club Access

In the initial period following a club's re-opening, access to the clubhouse should only be limited to staff / committee members only and only for emergency access by players

Courts should only be accessed by staff and members only.

Non-members with or without a host can be welcomed to the club in due time, in line with the easing of government restrictions. Children should always be supervised and by no more than one parent/guardian.

To access the courts in this phase of the reopening, a player must:

- Be a current member
- A parent/guardian must accompany any player under 18 years
- Not have been out of the country in the last 14 days
- Not have been around someone with symptoms of Covid-19 in the last 14 days
- Not be in a period of self-isolation and required to cocoon under the current Health Policy Rules
- Not be displaying COVID-19 symptoms
- Have a pre-reserved playing time

Note: Frontline workers can play but should personally assess the risk of passing on infection and follow recommended NHS Guidelines

## 3. Booking and Arrival

- Booking a court time in advance is advisable, preferably via a court booking system, website, app, or phone. This will assist should contact tracing be required subsequently.
- All players should ensure their club has their up-to-date contact details (phone and email).
- Play should be limited to singles only during this phase of the reopening. The only exception for doubles is if playing partners are from the same household. Further doubles play will be considered in future phases of reopening.
- All players, and not just the player making the booking, should be included in the booking notes. If there is a change to who is playing, it is advisable to make sure the booking is updated.
- Players should travel to the club alone, or only with a member of the same household.
- Ample car parking spaces should be available to ensure social distancing. If players must park next to another car, they should wait for the other person to exit or enter before doing so themselves.
- Players should arrive at the court entrance no more than 5 minutes prior to the reserved playing time. It is important that players maintain social distancing and wait in a pre-designated waiting area that allows for social distancing



- Players should observe social distancing at all times and resist the temptation to mingle
- Locker rooms should remain closed during this phase. Players should arrive in Tennis attire and change footwear at the car or at home
- Players should sanitise their hands using dispensers provided at the entrance to the club and courts
- Players should head straight to their designated court unless required to check-in
- Players should ensure that they utilise toilet facilities in their own home prior to arriving at the club.

#### **4. Check-in and Club Shop Protocol**

- Two-metre queue markers should be in place at any single-entry point whether at the clubhouse reception or at the entrance to courts
- Only one person at a time should be permitted inside the reception area
- A two-metre exclusion zone should be in place at the service desk and, if possible, a protection screen should be fitted.
- If your club has a shop for essential tennis items that are available to purchase these should be gathered by staff upon request
- Food and beverage items should not be available, and people should be encouraged to bring them from home if required
- Club vending machines should be placed out of commission during this phase
- Any Purchases should be paid for by contactless card payment only

#### **5. Clubhouse Facilities**

- Protocols for cleaning clubhouse facilities should be in place prior to opening and during operation.
- Clubhouse access for members should only be when necessary and be limited to the Club Reception if required to check in.
- Toilets should not be opened in this phase.
- Changing rooms, restaurant, function rooms and, where relevant, the club bar should remain closed during this Phase of reopening
- Players must provide their own racquets and equipment
- Chairs should be removed from the reception area in order to prevent people congregating

#### **6. To the Court**

- Play should be restricted to singles play only in this phase of reopening. The only exception for doubles is if playing partners are from the same household. Doubles play will be considered in future phases of reopening.
- Courts that are side by side can be utilised.
- Players should enter the court one at a time
- Entrances / Gates to courts should remain open, if safe to do so, perhaps tied back to prevent use of handles
- Rubbish bins should be removed, and all items brought on court should be taken home afterwards.
- Other court furniture should be removed including scoreboards, chairs/benches and net winders.
- Shoe cleaners should be removed
- Any player(s) repeatedly not following the club directives should be asked to leave the club
- Nobody but the players should be allowed on the court. There should be no spectators present during this phase of reopening
- Parents supervising children should be limited to one

#### **7. On the Court - Playing**

- Physical distancing should be observed throughout the period of play, particularly on change of ends and entering and exiting the court. Players should change ends at opposite sides of the net.



- Players must refrain from handshakes and high fives
- Equipment such as towels, food, and drink must not be exchanged between players. Players should be encouraged to bring their own drinks and towels.
- Players should avoid touching their face after handling a ball, racquet, or other equipment.
- Players should ideally bring a small bottle of hand sanitizer with them and keep it in their pocket or bag for use.
- Players should use two sets of clearly marked tennis balls. These should be alternated for serving with each player only touching their individual tennis balls.
- Players should use their racquet / foot to pick up balls and hit them to their opponent and should avoid using their hands to pick up the balls.
- Players should remain apart from other players when taking a break.
- If a ball from another court comes across, players should send it back with a kick or with a racquet.

### 8. On the Court – Coaching

- Coaches should prepare and present a Risk Assessment document and get approval to coach from the Covid 19 Committee
- Coaching sessions should be booked and recorded.
- Coaches should brief their students and/or their parents of the protocols that should be followed in advance of the session
- Coaching should only be provided to members during this phase of reopening.
- Coaches should ensure a player has registered their contact details with the clubs.
- As much as possible, coaches must try to remain on the same court and adjust their schedules in order to stay on-site for the minimum amount of time required.
- Exercises that require continuous play are recommended.
- Coaches should limit the number of tennis balls used and not use basket drills or feeding during this phase
- Coaches should limit the use of equipment such as cones, drop lines and targets.
- Do not let players manipulate the practice equipment. Coaches should take charge of picking up the balls.
- Players should use their racquet or their foot to push balls back

### Clarification

Coaches can work with two players who are not from the same household on one court but only when players are at opposite sides of the net to each other. In this instance, coaching should not take place where players are side-by-side on one half of a court.

Coaches can coach a maximum of 3 players from the same household on one court at any one time. Social distancing measures should always be followed and such procedures for doing so should be outlined in the risk assessments being prepared by Coaches.

### 9. Getting Home Safely

- Once play has finished players should leave the premises promptly, sanitising their hands on the way out using a courtside dispenser.
- Restaurant and bars should remain closed until restrictions are eased so there should be no congregating in these areas
- Clubs should make provision for thoroughly cleaning accessible areas and ensuring that all “touch areas” are cleaned thoroughly daily
- If a player becomes unwell after playing, they should first contact their GP/HSE and then inform their club. The club should contact the HSE and follow the advice provided to them on the next steps.



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