



Department for  
Digital, Culture  
Media & Sport

**Nigel Huddleston MP**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of  
State for Sport, Tourism and  
Heritage

March 2021

To all MPs in England

Dear colleague,

### **THE ROADMAP AND THE SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SECTOR**

The Prime Minister's Roadmap of 22 February sets out a clear plan for removing the current restrictions and delivers on our commitment of sport and recreation being amongst the first activities to return.

I am writing to set out how each step on Roadmap will affect sport and physical activity in England. I hope that the following information will provide clarity for yourself and your constituents, who will want to safely get back to enjoying their chosen sports and recreation.

#### **Government support for sport and physical activity.**

The importance of sport and physical activity for the nation's physical and mental health has never been more apparent. They are powerful defences against Covid-19, and as we prepare to return to our normal lives, we will need to do all we can to improve people's fitness and wellbeing.

Sport also brings people together and helps build stronger communities. These are some of the reasons why the Government has provided over £2 billion to support the sport and physical activity sector through the pandemic. This support includes: over £270 million to grassroots sport (delivered via Sport England) and a £100 million package to support local authority leisure centres. Local authorities are also able to use their allocation of the more than £1.5 billion additional funding, announced by MHCLG in December, to further support their leisure centres.

Examples of Sport England's support include the £35 million *Community Emergency Fund*, which is helping community clubs remain open (where permitted) during the pandemic and the £16.5 million *Return to Play Fund* to help sport and activity organisations affected by restrictions. The [Return to Play Fund](#) is still open for applications and I encourage those who think they may be eligible to apply.

For sports most affected by a lack of paying spectators, we have provided unprecedented support through the £300 million *Sports Winter Survival Package*. This support has been extended beyond the Winter with an additional £300 million. This package is also administered by Sport England and awards continue to be made on a regular basis.

## **The Roadmap**

### **Step 1**

The Government promised that children's and wider sport would be one of the first things to reopen, and the Roadmap makes good on that promise. That is why from 8 March, schools and colleges opened for all students and wraparound activities restarted. Crucially, this means school sport has now resumed. Recreation or exercise outdoors with your household or one other person continues to be permitted.

In addition, grassroots sport has been prioritised above the return of other parts of the economy. To support that, from 29 March outdoor sports facilities can reopen, broadening the options for outdoor exercise and recreation. These facilities include, but are not limited to: golf courses, sports courts, skate parks, outdoor gyms, riding schools and swimming pools. Wider social contact limits still apply, including restricting groups to 6 people or two households. Travel for the maintenance of sports facilities, ahead of them reopening on 29 March, has been permitted since 8 March.

In addition, organised outdoor sports for all ages will be able to restart and will not be subject to the gatherings limits. Each sport will need to comply with guidance issued by its national governing body. This includes individual sport, team sport and organised sports participation events. However, close contact (such as martial arts or rugby scrums) should not take place at this time. Leagues can restart but must do so without spectators.

### **Step 2**

Step 2 will take place no earlier than 12 April. At this stage, indoor leisure facilities including gyms and leisure centres, indoor sport courts and pitches, swimming pools, fitness studios and multi-sport facilities (such as climbing walls, driving ranges, archery venues and skate parks) will be able to reopen. These indoor facilities must be used in line with the wider indoor social contact limits at this stage - as a single household or bubble. We will build on the hard work undertaken previously with the sector to ensure these facilities open safely.

### **Step 3**

Step 3 will take place no earlier than 17 May. We will move further along the path to normality by permitting group exercise and starting to get fans back into stadia. All but the activities with the highest risk of transmission will reopen including: remaining indoor leisure, adult indoor group sports and exercise classes and some large events. Facilities which can be used for sport but are primarily used for leisure (such as trampoline parks, bowling alleys and ice rinks) can open at this stage.

We all want to see fans back into grounds and stadia as soon as possible however this process needs to be managed gradually and safely. Initially that will mean up to 4,000 fans or 50% of total seated capacity, whichever is lower, for most venues.

We will also make a special provision for large (seated capacity of above 16,000), outdoor venues where crowds can be safely distributed, allowing up to 10,000 people or 25% of total seated capacity, whichever is lower, helping more fans to return safely to some of our iconic venues.

We also know that sports are looking for the path out of current restrictions. To support this, pilots will run as part of the Events Research Programme to examine how such events can take place without the need for social distancing using other mitigations such as testing. We

are already working directly with selected sports on this programme and will provide further details in due course.

**Step 4**

Step 4 will take place no earlier than 21 June, at least five weeks after Step 3. The ambition is to remove all legal limits on social contact and publish accompanying guidance on how best to reduce any risks that remain.

The past year has hit the sport sector particularly hard but reminded us of just how important sport and activity are to so many aspects of our lives. That is why we have supported the sector, at all levels, including with the packages outlined in this letter. I am delighted that the Roadmap means we can look forward once again to the thrill of playing and watching sport.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Huddleston', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail.

**Nigel Huddleston MP**  
Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage