

It has been over a month since the GAA last communicated with you in relation to the situation with Covid-19. While much has changed in that time period – the relaxing of many societal restrictions, the huge uptake in the vaccination programme, the return of large crowds at certain of our inter-county games on a trial basis – there are still some societal restrictions that remain in place for our clubs North and South of the border.

Following recent updates by the relevant Governments, we have summarized below the restrictions that apply for our clubs:

Health Questionnaire and other RTP Guideline:

The Health Questionnaires should continue to be completed ahead of all training sessions and games and the Return to Play guidelines issued earlier in the year should continue to be adhered to. The Health Questionnaire was recently updated to reflect the additional symptoms associated with the Delta variant. It is important to note, that regardless of whether a player/participant is vaccinated or not, if they have any of the symptoms associated with Covid and detailed on the Health Questionnaire, they should not attend a training session or game.

Dressing Rooms:

In the South and for all club games, dressing rooms should remain closed for the moment under current Government regulations. From September 20th, Dressing Rooms may be used as changing facilities only before and after games but with a maximum occupancy of 6 people at any one time. Pre-game, or half-time team talks, should continue to take place outdoors and it is recommended that shower facilities are only used where absolutely necessary.

In the North, dressing rooms are now permitted to open but usage should be avoided or minimised where possible (for example, by arriving in kit and showering at home) and time spent in dressing rooms should be kept to a minimum. For this reason, and as in the South, it is strongly recommended that pre-game or half-time team talks should continue to take place outdoors.

In both jurisdictions, where dressing rooms are being used, hand sanitization stations should be in place at the entrance, the areas should be well ventilated (i.e., windows or doors left open), masks should be worn (except if using showers) and no one other than team or support personnel should be permitted entry.

Use of Gyms:

In the South, from Sept 20th, and where there is mixed immunity status, the use of GAA owned Gyms will be permitted in pods of up to 6 participants at a time (excluding coaches). Where groups have full immunity (i.e., fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within the previous 6 months) the provision for pods of 6 is not applicable.

In the North, if more than 15 people are using a Gym at the same time, a risk assessment must be carried out in advance of any usage.

Indoor meetings:

From September 6th, all club and county committee meetings in the South should continue to be held remotely or outdoors unless all participants are considered immune (i.e., fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within previous 6 months) in which case meetings can take place indoors at 60% of venue capacity. Where patrons have mixed immunity status indoor meetings will not be permitted – the Government have signalled Oct 22nd as a date on which this may change. We will advise in advance if that is the case.

In the North, club and county committee meetings may now be held indoors subject to a risk assessment being carried out in advance by the organizer, to determine the maximum number of people permitted to attend. The organiser must also take all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the virus.

A person responsible for organising a gathering must, if requested to do so by a relevant person, provide:

- - a copy of the risk assessment, and
- - an account of the reasonable measures taken

Indoor meetings of 15 people or fewer in the 6 Counties do not need a risk assessment.

When organising meetings, in either jurisdiction, it is important that indoor spaces are well ventilated at all times, by leaving doors and windows open. Frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, should be cleaned regularly while good hand hygiene should be encouraged, and social distancing measures observed.

Bingo:

Clubs organizing indoor Bingo events in the South should note that from September 6th these can take place with capacity limits of 60% of venue capacity where all patrons are immune (fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within previous 6 months), or accompanied minors (under 18), in line with sectoral guidance. Where patrons have mixed immunity status, there will be no change to the current restrictions during September.

In the North, such events may be held subject to a risk assessment being carried out (follow advice for “indoor meetings” above).

Club Bars:

Club bars in both jurisdictions should follow the relevant guidelines for the sector.

Attendances:

In the South and because attendees at our games have mixed immunity, 50% of ground capacity may be used from September 6th.

In the North, a risk assessment must be carried out to determine the maximum number of people permitted to attend or participate in an outdoor sporting event. Further information and assistance is available from Comhairle Uladh as required.

The use of facemasks is recommended at all games.

Use of Indoor Halls (for sports, art, culture or dance activities):

In the south, indoor use of Halls for these activities will be permitted from September 20th subject to capacity limits of 100 people (with appropriate protective measures in place) and only where all attendees are immune (fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within previous 6 months) or for accompanied minors (under 18) who are not immune.

Where patrons have mixed immunity status, multiple pods of up to 6 participants will be

permitted, subject to protective measures and where the number of pods has regard to the size of the venue and substantial social distance can be maintained between individual pods.

In the North, and to determine the maximum number of people permitted to attend an indoor gathering, the organiser or operator must carry out a risk assessment. As with the use of other indoor facilities (Gyms or for indoor meetings), the organiser must also take all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the virus, must provide a copy of the risk assessment if requested and provide an account of the reasonable measures taken. Current guidance also recommends maintaining social distance of 1m in such instances.

The provision for a risk assessment does not apply if less than 15 people will be in attendance.

Travel to games and Training:

In both jurisdictions, and on a risk minimisation basis, we are continuing to advise that when using Buses, only 75% of available capacity is utilized. The wearing of masks on buses is mandatory.

Quarantine after Travel abroad:

Where quarantine after travel abroad is a government requirement, it is essential that all of our members adhere to the relevant advice - as such, if a player, coach or member of the Association participates in a training session or game in contravention of quarantine rules in the relevant jurisdiction, they may be dealt with under Rule 7.2 (e) "Misconduct considered to have discredited the Association" (minimum 8 week suspension).

Trophy Presentations:

Where trophies are being presented, the winning captain should lift the trophy directly, rather than it being presented to him or her. Trophies should remain in the presentation area once the Captain has completed the winning speech. Arrangements can be made for the winning players to have their photos taken with the trophy; but all trophies should be retained by the County Committee or other organizing body until a later date.

Further relaxations of restrictions are expected in October and we will once again advise Clubs and Counties in this context once details are announced.

It will require a monumental effort on all of our behalf's to ensure that the Club season can be completed with a minimum of disruption. Our priority is to ensure players remain in a position to play and that their chances of either contracting the virus or being designated as close contacts is minimized. Therefore, in some instances above, our own regulations go beyond those prescribed by the respective Governments. However, we will be keeping all of the above restrictions under review in the coming weeks and will communicate with you immediately if there are any significant changes to what is in this correspondence.

In the interim, we thank you again for all of your hard work over the past 18 months in helping the country to tackle this virus. We are hopefully nearing the end of the journey but ask again for the cooperation of all club members in following the restrictions outlined above to ensure the successful conclusion of the 2021 club season.

Is muide le meas,

Labhrás Mac Carthaigh

Tomás Ó Riain

Uachtaráin

Ard Stiúrthóir