

Following on from the latest Irish Government update in relation to Covid restrictions earlier this week the GAA has published it's latest guidelines for all Clubs. The advice below for both the Northern and Southern jurisdictions is what will be in place for GAA clubs for the foreseeable future:

Health Questionnaires

There is no longer a requirement for participants to complete Health Questionnaires before training or games – however it is important to remember that individuals should not attend training, games, meetings or any other activities if they are displaying, or have had within the previous 48 hours, any of the possible symptoms of Covid-19 (high temperature, a new continuous cough, unexplained shortness of breath, loss of sense of smell, taste or distortion of taste, headache, runny nose, sore throat or sneeze).

It is also essential that records of attendance are maintained to assist with contact tracing if required.

Dressing Rooms

In the South, where all individuals are vaccinated the full use of showers and changing rooms is permitted. However it is advised that time spent in dressing rooms or showers should be kept to a minimum and that where possible, pre-game or half time team talks should take place outdoors.

Where individuals have mixed immunity status the use of Dressing Rooms and Showers should remain pod based (with usage in groups of no more than 6 at any time).

In the North, dressing rooms are now permitted to open but again usage should be avoided or minimised where possible (for example, by arriving in kit and showering at home) and again, time spent in dressing rooms should be kept to a minimum.

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. Clubs should continue to promote hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette through signage, posters etc. and deep cleaning of shared areas should be carried out on a regular basis.

Use of Gyms

In the South the use of GAA owned Gyms will continue to 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 does not apply.

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.

Water Breaks

For the remainder of 2021, Water breaks will remain in place for all games,

Attendances

In the South, up to a maximum 100% ground capacity may be used from Saturday, October 23rd. Venue operators are asked to consider a gradual increase to maximum capacities and seek assistance from the National Health and Safety Committee if necessary.

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 are available from Comhairle Uladh as required.

The use of facemasks is recommended at all games.

Indoor meetings

Clubs and Counties should continue to give consideration to conducting online meetings where possible.

Where indoor meetings are being organised, in the South, club and county committee meetings (including County Conventions, AGM's etc.) can take place indoors once all participants are considered immune (i.e. fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within the previous 6 months). Consideration should be given to room densities, meeting durations and ventilation when planning such events.

Where participants have mixed immunity status, indoor meetings must be conducted in pods of 6 people with the overall number of pods having regard to the size of venue and with substantial social distancing in place between individual pods. To any independent onlooker it should be clear that pods are completely separate groups operating independent of one another, with no interaction or sharing of equipment and no opportunity for them to mix or stray into one another's group or meeting space.

In the North, club and county committee meetings may 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.

The use of masks in all indoor settings continues to be recommended

Use of Indoor Halls

(for sports, presentations, art, culture or dance activities) In the South, where all participants are considered immune (fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within the previous 6 months) use of Halls is permitted without capacity limits (appropriate protective measures should be in place). The use of the EU Digital COVID Certificate (vaccine or recovery certificate) will be required for access in such circumstances.

Where patrons have mixed immunity status, multiple pods of up to 6 participants will be permitted to use indoor halls for sports activities, subject to protective measures being in place. The overall number of pods will have regard to the size of venue and there should be substantial social distance 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.

Bingo Clubs

organizing indoor Bingo or similar events in the South should note that these can take place where all patrons are considered immune (fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within

previous 6 months), or accompanied minors (under 18), in line with sectoral guidance. All attendees must be seated.

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.

Travel to games and Training

Capacity limits on transport have been removed. Clubs or Counties organising transport to/from events should implement protective measures such as mask wearing etc. as appropriate.

Private transport (carpooling) carrying those not yet vaccinated or of mixed immunity should be aware of the higher risk. The use of appropriate face coverings is recommended. If sharing cars, clubs and individuals are asked to consider the use of a pod system in which the same participants pool together for all activities.

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

For the remainder of 2021, 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.

From the GAA:

The foregoing restrictions are likely to remain in place into the early months of 2022. We will as always communicate with you further if there are any changes to the above. In the interim, we again thank you for all of your hard work over the past 18 months in helping the country to tackle this virus and in helping the GAA to successfully complete both our inter-county and club games programmes during that time.