



Para Dance UK

Return to Training, Rehearsal, Performance and Competition for Elite Athletes

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Scope of Use

This guidance has been written specifically for para dance sport elite athletes currently questioning the safety of returning to training, rehearsal, performance and competition in light of recently published government guidance for those participating in sport and the performing arts.

It is not written to help guide affiliate coaches in arranging athletes' return to training, rehearsal, performance and competition, nor is it designed to guide venues on the measures they should take to ensure that all training, rehearsal, performance and competition venues are made as safe and as risk-free as possible for Para Dance athletes.

For further information, please visit the [gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk), or refer to the references listed.

Summary Recommendation

Para Dance UK have made the following recommendation having first considered all published guidance on return to sport and performance (during the continued COVID-19 pandemic) by the Department of Culture and Sport, the British Paralympic Association, alongside consensus guidance from the medical leads at One Dance UK, the Royal Ballet, English National Ballet, the Scottish Ballet, and Birmingham Royal Ballet.

It is our recommendation that Para Dance Sport athletes continue to avoid training, rehearsal, performance and competition, including international competition, where the COVID-19 transmission risks cannot be adequately mitigated against.

Although this prolongs the time spent away from sport-specific training, and unfairly discriminates against GB athletes who are unable to accumulate points through international competition, consideration of the health and safety risks of Para Dance Sport athletes is of the utmost importance to the NGB, and in communicating this recommendation, we encourage athletes to remain cautious and to consider all potential risks posed by returning to training, rehearsal, performance and competition.

- Dr Amal Hassan, COVID Medical Officer and Head of Classification, Para Dance UK

“Competitions may be many months away but risking the health of the athlete where no urgency to return to training exists, could have negative consequences.”

– Dr Stuart Miller, British Paralympic Association

Return to Training – Para Dance UK Guidance for Representative Athletes

1. Thinking about risk

It is currently recommended that individual athletes first consider the risk of COVID-19 transmission posed by any proposed training, rehearsal, performance or competition environment not only to themselves, but also to all those they interact with beyond training, performance and competition.

In order to mitigate against any potential COVID-19 risk, or reduce it to the lowest predictable level possible (in line with [government guidelines](#)), it is recommended that organisations:

- a) perform risk assessments of individual training, performance or competition venues for representative athletes, and,
- b) take preventative measures to ensure that all recommended social distancing and infection control measures are complied with across all training, rehearsal, performance and competition venues.

Where Para Dance UK are unable to secure such procedures for representative athletes, the NGB recommends following government guidance, echoed throughout this document.

With respect to the nature of Para Dance Sport – where activity is performed indoors, and where respiratory rates will be elevated, necessitating greater distancing between individuals – the guidelines cannot be predictably followed in full, and the NGB and representative athlete are both obliged to consider the necessity of continued activity (training, rehearsal, performance and competition) in view of ongoing risk of COVID-19 transmission.

The current recommendation of the NGB is influenced by the limitation of risk assessment and guideline enforcement detailed above, as well as careful consideration of the health-related protective characteristics of many representative athletes and those individuals they may reside or have contact with (see Appendices).

2. Who should return to training and performance

The NGB supports the decisions and wishes of those representative athletes who choose not to return to training, rehearsal, competition and performance during this phase of the global COVID-19 pandemic. It also respects the decision of those athletes continuing to shield or take precautions where they, or those they live with, fall into the “at risk” categories (see Appendix 1).

It remains important for the NGB to maintain contact with representative athletes during this time to ensure:

- a) the wellbeing and wishes of those representative athletes, and,
- b) safe, appropriate, and phased return to training, rehearsal, performance and competition in the future.

Where possible, the NGB should work with coaches to provide access to information that will support:

- a) the maintenance of representative athletes’ baseline fitness, strength and skill, and,
- b) graduated-return to training, performance and competition once appropriate.

This will help ensure the safety of individual athletes returning to training, rehearsal, performance and competition, in reducing injury and illness risk.

Further, the NGB will continue to advise that athletes self-isolate if they experience any [Covid-19 symptoms](#), and encourage them to comply with the government’s [Test and Trace service](#). Any athletes returning to training following COVID-19 illness will need to be guided by their healthcare provider on safety and graduated return.

3. Social distancing and risk mitigation in performing arts environments

The following are a list of mitigating actions that should be followed in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission should any representative athletes decide to return to training, rehearsal, competition or performance if they consider the activity necessary to continue. Please note that it is not recommended for non-professionals to consider activities that require social distancing to be compromised.

1. Further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning.
 2. Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible.
 3. Using back-to-back or side-to-side positioning (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible.
 4. Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by considering the use of 'fixed teams, groups or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others). For example, where social distancing may be impractical due to the degree of proximity required, fixed teams could be operated as follows:
 - Grouping individuals into fixed teams that work together throughout a production or performance, or for specific periods, to minimise the risk of transmission beyond these fixed teams.
 - Minimising transmission risk between fixed teams when they mix outside their team during a rehearsal or performance and during breaks or moving around a premises or venue.
 - Ensuring that there is no swapping between designated fixed teams. This is to reduce the risk of whole team impact in the event of a worker contracting COVID-19
 - Including any personal assistants for disabled workers or athletes as a member of the fixed team
 - Note that it is unlikely that this fixed team approach will be possible in non-professional environments or where elite athletes work with more than one group or organisation simultaneously.
- Using screens where feasible to separate individuals or fixed teams from each other where they cannot achieve social distancing.

Athletes are reminded that the capacity, movement-flow, continued accessibility, and ventilation of training, rehearsal, performance and competition venues is not under NGB control or influence and we are unable to guarantee adequate risk assessment or risk mitigation policies and procedures at any proposed training, performance or competition venues. Further, it is important that athletes consider the additional challenges they may face in accessing training, rehearsal, performance and competition venues when using [transport or whilst traveling](#), including foreign travel, and in securing accommodation. Para Dance UK do not currently recommend foreign travel for competition at this stage.

4. Keeping those involved in the sport safe during training

The overarching objective remains to reduce transmission and maintain social distancing where possible whilst training. 2 metres, wherever possible, or 1 metre with robust risk mitigation (where 2 metres is not viable), are acceptable. Mitigation does not include basic measures such as good hand and respiratory hygiene, the compliance with which should be universal and is assumed, and cannot be assumed to be adequate without comprehensive risk assessment.

Further mitigation actions include:

- increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning, including disinfection of high footfall areas or common touchpoints with particular attention to toilets/restrooms.
- thorough cleaning and disinfection of any mobility equipment (ie wheelchairs) where contact has been made with public areas
- keeping the activity time of any activity where social distancing cannot be maintained as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate people from each other
- using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using ‘fixed teams or partnering’ (so each person works with only a few others).
- minimising increased respiratory effort during training

As such, it is still recommended by the NGB that athletes continue to avoid training beyond that which they can continue in their own homes or safely outdoors or can be safely risk mitigated.

5. Cleaning equipment

[Current government guidance](#) strongly encourages the strict and regular cleaning (disinfecting) of all equipment used during activity, alongside the usual cleaning of personal equipment and belongings. This includes both personal and shared equipment; with regards to wheelchairs, this means thorough disinfection, particularly of all contact areas on arrival and leaving the training venue, and avoiding contact with wheelchairs by other athletes during the training wherever possible.

It is strongly recommended that no equipment is unnecessarily shared e.g. water bottles, and that athletes carry with them at all times hand sanitiser (70% alcohol), tissues, and disinfecting wipes, and adhere to the usual hand-washing guidance in order to prevent COVID-19 transmission.

6. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and face coverings

There are some indoor places where you must wear a face covering by law. It is also [government guidance](#) to wear a face covering in indoor places where social distancing may be difficult and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet. The same guidance states that if you are undertaking exercise or an activity and it would negatively impact your ability to wear a face covering, then you might choose not to. Current guidance from WHO advises against wearing a face covering during physical activity

Further, there are medical exemptions to wearing face coverings. No person needs to seek advice or request a letter from a medical professional about their reason for not wearing a face covering.

Definitions & Terms

NGB – National Governing Body – Para Dance UK

Training, rehearsal, performance and competition venues – any venue where athletes undertake Para dance sport activity

Training, rehearsal, performance and competitive equipment – any equipment used either for the purpose of, or during, Para dance sport activity

Representative athletes – athletes representing Great Britain in Para Dance Sport, and any athlete registered with the National Governing Body

Protected characteristics – those characteristics that define the medically “at risk” groups

References

1. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts#arts-3-1>
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/elite-sport-return-to-training-guidance-step-one--2>
3. <https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/myth-busters/mythbuster---masks-and-exercise.png>
4. Return to Performance Consensus (unpublished) – Medical Leads: Royal Ballet, Scottish Ballet, English National Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet. Authors: Dr Nick Allen, PhD, Professor James Calder, Dr Roger Wolman, Richard Clark, Andy Reynolds, Martin Lanfear. June 2020.
5. Return to Training and the Training environment for Paralympic Athletes - Medical considerations (unpublished). British Paralympic Association, Dr Stuart Miller.

Appendix 1 – At risk athletes

As per the guidance from the British Paralympic Association, it may be useful to consider Para dance athletes within a number of categories, when considering their return to training on a phased basis.

Athletes in **Group 1** would not be expected to stop shielding and there are many athletes in **group 2** who, whilst not formally on the 'shielded' list are, nonetheless, significantly at risk by exposure to COVID-19 and would not be expected to return in the early phases of returning to training.

For those deemed less at risk from COVID-19, we would encourage a careful individual assessment of the benefits vs. risks of returning to the training environment.

Group 1 – “Athletes who fall into the [government guidelines](#) of shielded populations”.

Group 2 – “Athletes who by their disability may have a reduced or poorly co-ordinated respiratory effort, reduced cough reflex, poor airways protection or other disability that may interfere with respiratory function. Athletes with cardiac co-morbidity as part of or distinct from their disability. Athletes with significant disabilities that require significant input from a carer or who may be significantly affected by COVID-19 infection as a consequence of their disability.”

Group 3 – “Athletes who – whilst not obviously at increased risk would be significantly impacted in their ability to self-care if affected by COVID-19”.

Group 4 – “Athletes with a disability that do not have particular additional risks to their health or independence if affected by COVID-19”.

From BPA guidance

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