

# Government gives green light to resumption of competitive sport behind closed doors

- Guidance permits return to domestic competition from 1 June 2020
- First major sporting event expected to be 2000 Guineas Stakes at Newmarket Racecourse on 6 June
- Follows guidance supporting the return to training for elite and professional sport

The Culture Secretary has outlined the strict conditions for elite athletes and professional sportsmen and women to resume competitive sport safely behind closed doors in England from 1 June 2020, paving the way for the first domestic live action in almost three months.

The [‘stage three’ guidance](#), published today (30 May) by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), has been developed in close consultation with the Deputy Chief Medical Officers of England, Public Health England and medical representatives across Olympic, Paralympic and professional sports governing bodies.

The guidance, designed for competition delivery partners and elite sport organisations, outlines the facilities and processes that will need to be in place, including that there will be no spectators at events.

Providing its conditions are met, one of the first major sporting events is expected to be the 2000 Guineas Stakes race meeting, which would take place at Newmarket Racecourse on 6 June and be broadcast on free to air television.

Following detailed discussions with DCMS, the Deputy Chief Medical Officers and Public Health England, preparations are also being finalised for the Premier League and EFL football to resume later in June. This will be subject to a successful vote from their clubs and approval by safety advisory groups including police.

Further announcements are expected to be made by other sporting governing bodies in due course.

In light of the Government making clear that the Premier League should widen access for fans to view live coverage during the remainder of the season in light of ongoing social distancing measures, the Premier League has this week reached an agreement with its broadcast partners to televise a significant proportion of its remaining matches on free-to-air platforms, including Sky’s ‘Pick’ TV, that is available on Freeview, and for the first time in Premier League history, the BBC.

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Oliver Dowden, said:

The wait is over. Live British sport will shortly be back on in safe and carefully controlled environments.

This guidance provides the safe framework for sports to resume competitions behind closed doors. It is now up to individual sports to confirm they can meet these protocols and decide when it's right for them to restart.

This is a significant moment for British sport. By working with clinicians every step of the way, we are creating the safest possible environments for everyone involved.

The stage three guidance makes clear that the following conditions should be met for the staging of competitive sporting events until further notice:

- All competition delivery partners and user groups involved, from the teams and athletes, to the support staff, officials and media, must travel individually and by private transport where possible;
- Prior to entering the competition venue, they are expected to carry out a screening process for coronavirus symptoms. Anyone with known or suspected Covid-19 will not be permitted to enter and should be placed, or remain, in isolation and follow the latest Government guidelines;
- A one-way system for the movement of people and vehicles should be established around the competition venue;
- Social distancing should be maintained by all groups where possible. This includes the competing athletes and support staff on the bench and field of play, such as during any disputes between players and referees, or scoring celebrations;
- Where social distancing cannot be maintained, sports governing bodies, clubs and teams should implement a rigorous regime to monitor for symptoms;
- Dressing room usage should be minimised, however showers can be used in line with Government guidelines;
- All non-essential activities, such as catering, should be limited;
- Team / athlete medical staff must ensure they adhere to the latest Public Health England advice, such as through the use of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment. Physiotherapy treatment should be limited to an essential need only;
- Competition delivery partners and elite sports organisations should appoint a named COVID-19 Officer to be responsible for oversight of all planning and communications, and a named COVID-19 Medical Officer to have oversight of and manage any individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases, to ensure necessary standards are met;
- Other restrictions applying to the general population must be adhered to outside of competition venues and official elite training venues.

It is expected that the guidelines will be considered by competition delivery partners (such as the organiser and venue operator) and elite sport organisations (such as the national governing bodies, professional leagues and clubs), and applied to their individual competitions. They will have the responsibility to decide when it is safe and appropriate to move to stage

three and resume competition when they have their own protocols in place.

They must also ensure all competition delivery partners and user groups involved in staging a competitive sporting event, from the teams and athletes, to the support staff, officials and media, are fully briefed to ensure they have understood the specific risks and mitigations, and be clear that they must actively 'opt in'.

It follows ['stage two' guidance published on 25 May](#) making clear that elite athletes could resume competitive, close contact training at official elite training venues, so that players can get match fit under carefully controlled medical conditions. However it made clear that time spent within a two metre distance should be kept to a minimum, equipment sharing should be avoided, and communal areas, such as changing rooms, cafes, team rooms and recovery spaces, should remain closed where possible.

['Stage one' guidance](#) was published earlier this month, outlining conditions for a return to individual performance training at official elite training venues while maintaining social distancing from teammates and other people outside their households. This included safeguards such as the deep cleaning of facilities and the screening of athletes and staff for coronavirus symptoms before they can enter the training venue by an appropriately trained healthcare professional.

All relevant standards defined in stages one and two for a return to training must continue to apply, and must be satisfied before a sport or sporting event can progress to stage three.

The elite sport return to training guidance intends to minimise the risk to the elite sports community, while also minimising any pressure elite sport places on healthcare workers and the wider community. Like all changes to current measures it will be kept under review in accordance with the Government's Covid alert system.

- [Read and watch Oliver Dowden's statement](#)
- The guidance follows the Government's publication of its [COVID-19 recovery strategy](#), as it takes forward the next phase of its response to the virus. This outlined that a return of elite sport would not happen before 1 June and would be dependent on whether the risk assessment posed by coronavirus allows the country to move onto the second step of the Government's recovery strategy.
- In addition to guidance for elite athletes, DCMS has published [guidance for the general public](#) on the phased return of outdoor sport and recreation.