

# Covid-19 Guidance for owners and operators of outdoor gyms and playgrounds - re-opening and managing them

Updated 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020

## Introduction

Outdoor gyms<sup>1</sup> and playgrounds<sup>2</sup> can re-open from 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020. This guidance has been developed for the owners and operators<sup>3</sup> responsible for playgrounds and outdoor gyms in parks and green spaces, such as Councils; they must carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment to help decide what actions to take, to ensure that the risks of transmission of Covid-19 are controlled.

The first part of this document is intended to form the basis of a protocol for those using or attending with users of outdoor gyms or play areas; the second part provides additional notes and information for owners and operators.

## Part 1

### Guidance for using outdoor gym equipment/playgrounds in Parks and Green Spaces

[Note: This guidance is based on [COVID-19: Guidance for managing playgrounds and outdoor gyms](#) published on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020)

The recommendations for advice given below (for signage/messaging) may not all be applicable, as these will largely depend on available resources to implement new measures and some advice will only be applicable to play areas only\*

- 1. You must read and follow this guidance for your safety and that of others/or Parents/carers must read and follow this guidance, for the safety of children and others.**
- Equipment is cleaned daily [or twice daily] [or x times daily], with [insert], do not use whilst cleaning is in progress or [if applicable -**Equipment is NOT sanitised**].
- Equipment is checked regularly for damage and wear and tear.
- 4. Equipment is shared and it is USED AT YOUR OWN RISK [please read part 2, point 1 ii – you may decide to just say Equipment is shared]**
- Do not use this equipment if you have coronavirus symptoms, or anyone in your household has symptoms, or you are self-isolating.
- You [or Children] are advised not to use this equipment if you are clinically or extremely clinically vulnerable.

---

<sup>1</sup> Outdoor gyms are defined as: an outdoor space containing exercise fixtures and/or machines.

<sup>2</sup> Playgrounds are defined as: outdoor structures designed for children to play in or on. They may include equipment such as slides, monkey bars, climbing frames, activity towers, swings, spring rockers, see saws and sandpits.

<sup>3</sup> Owners or operators are defined as those responsible for the management of a playground or outdoor gym, including assessment of compliance with any relevant legislation or guidelines.

7. Make sure you have hand sanitiser with you and wash your hands frequently [or delete if provision is made on site].
8. Wash your hands before and after using any equipment, with hand sanitiser.
9. We advise you wipe this equipment down before and after use, with anti-bac wipes.
10. Avoid touching your face.
11. Do not let children put their mouths on the equipment\*
12. You MUST stay at a safe distance from others (unless from the same household) we advise you stay 2 metres apart [see advice in part 2 – 2.ii regarding social distancing].
13. Groups should not exceed 6 people unless from the same household and must socially distance.
14. We ask that only one adult accompanies children in the play area\*.
15. We recommend that parents/carers/guardians wear face masks\*
16. Equipment can only be used by one person at a time.
17. Wait at a safe distance if the equipment is in use or return later [or if applicable wait in the designated queuing area].
18. [if applicable for enclosed play areas] Numbers permitted in this play area should not exceed [xx], at any one time\*.
19. [if applicable] Please follow the one-way system.
20. [if applicable] Do not consume food or drink in this area.
21. Try to avoid busy times [state times if known].
22. Please dispose of ALL litter (including any PPE) in bins provided. If the bins are full, take it home with you – PLEASE DO NOT LITTER.
23. Remember to wash your hands when you get home.
24. If you or a member of your household becomes ill following a visit to this site, please contact the Council at [ xx] so that they can consider the possibility of temporarily closing the facility due to a localised outbreak. Please also contact the NHS 111 coronavirus online service.

Thank you for helping us keep you and other park users safe.

It is recognised that adherence to social distancing between individuals/households can be particularly difficult in a playground setting. It is vital therefore that risks are communicated clearly and effectively to parents/guardians/carers in these areas, through clear and visible signage and through social media.

In addition to the above link, you may want to direct users to other useful Government guidance:

[Stay safe and stay alert \(social distancing\) until 4<sup>th</sup> July](#)

[Stay safe and stay alert \(social distancing\) after 4<sup>th</sup> July](#)

[NHS - Coronavirus symptoms](#)

## Notes for Councils and other Land Managers or Landowner

### 1. Considerations for owners/managers of outdoor gym equipment/playgrounds

This guidance is based on [COVID-19: Guidance for managing playgrounds and outdoor gyms](#) published on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020

We would advise you **consider** the following:

- i) Update risk assessments to address the risks of Covid-19 in relation to users, parents/guardians and staff (that may be involved in cleaning, maintaining or stewarding these areas). See under useful links for HSE guidance on managing risk at work – which includes risk assessment templates. Government guidance states that *‘Failure to complete a risk assessment which takes account of COVID-19, or completing a risk assessment but failing to put in place sufficient measures to manage the risk of COVID-19, could constitute a breach of health and safety law’*.
- ii) We advise you to check with your legal department if you include the wording ‘use at your own risk’ in your signage. Whilst this alerts the public to possible dangers and helps them understand risks, it is unlikely to act as a disclaimer. It should be viewed as information to the public rather than as a prevention of liability by the owner/service provider of the facility, particularly given that most Councils are not able to follow government guidance to sanitise all outdoor gyms/playing area equipment.
- iii) Ensure necessary safety inspections and maintenance are carried out, especially as equipment will have been out of action for a while. The Play Inspection Company has issued [advice](#) where an annual inspection cannot take place prior to opening.
- iv) If resources allow, update cleaning protocols and hygiene measures, including enhanced cleaning around contact points to help stop the transmission of coronavirus. Encourage effective sanitation by users, parents, guardians and carers. (Also, see *cleaning* below and additional note).
- v) We recommend that you check with your insurance company regarding cover for claims relating to contracting Covid-19 from equipment in play areas or outdoor gyms; it may be necessary to put in place some cleaning protocols, in line with government guidance, to ensure you are covered for such claims.
- vi) Additional staffing requirements (if resources allow)– for cleaning, maintenance and stewarding.
- vii) Develop a safe system of working for staff involved, based on the RA and consider their PPE/equipment needs.
- viii) If PPE is required, this must be provided free and be properly fitting.
- ix) Social distancing measures (see below).
- x) Phased re-opening if necessary.
- xi) Programmed activities (relevant to outdoor gyms)– if continuing ensure social distancing, with small groups of 6 people or less.
- xii) Provision of additional bins if necessary.
- xiii) Be ready to strengthen or adapt measures at short notice.
- xiv) Develop appropriate and clear signage and messaging – consider the needs of those with impairments such as poor vision.

- xv) Consideration should also be given on how to assist those with disabilities with complying with any changes. The Activity Alliance have produced guidance on [Re-opening Activity – An inclusive response](#)
- xvi) Public messaging – let the public know what steps you are taking to ensure public safety, what steps the public need to take (i.e. responsibility for bringing own hygiene products) and promote user guidance on websites and social media etc as well as clear signage. If the facilities cannot be re-opened safely let the public know why they must remain closed.

## **2. Site Management/Management of Risk – Measures to Consider**

### **2.1 Social distancing and use of equipment**

- i) Ensure clear and visible signage is in place for users/parents/carers/guardians
- ii) Government guidance on [staying alert and staying safe \(social distancing\)](#) will be updated with changes coming into place from 4<sup>th</sup> July. People should continue to socially distance if from different households. We advise that you ask users to still maintain a 2metre distance, where at all possible. If this is **not** possible it can be at a distance of 1 metre with mitigations; but mitigations may be difficult to implement in these settings. We have suggested that you could ask parents/carers/guardians accompanying children to wear face masks; but this migration is not suitable for children and is likely not practical for those exercising in outdoor gyms.
- iii) Temporary line markers on the ground to show where users can wait at a safe distance from others, in line with the above.
- iv) Where possible, consider putting in place access restrictions to control the number of people in the gym area, either through booking or queuing systems.
- v) For multi or double use stations, signage or stickers should be used to remind users to use the station one at a time to ensure safe social distancing.
- vi) If the play area is enclosed, consider limiting numbers and/or opening hours.

### **2.2 Cleaning\*\***

- i) It is recommended that outdoor gym/playground equipment should be cleaned/sprayed at least once a day during this period, with an appropriate antiviral solution (or wipes), with enhanced cleaning for contact points including those leading to the gym area (i.e. gates etc.).
- ii) Ensure the site is closed during cleaning for staff safety.
- iii) Ensure cleaning staff are properly briefed regarding new cleaning protocols [if in place] and equipped (i.e. PPE [appropriate and properly fitting], fully charged radio, cleaning products, barriers to close site during cleaning).

**Important note:** \*\*Many Councils have indicated that due to limited resources, implementing any additional cleaning protocols is not feasible, thereby increasing the health risks to users and the wider community. Under such circumstances, it is recommended to make it very clear that equipment is not sanitised and it is shared.

Where Councils and other land managers consider the risk to be too high, i.e. users may ignore potential hazards even with clear signage, such facilities may be kept closed. Under government guidance it states owners/manager 'may decide to keep these areas closed should they feel they are not able to facilitate their safe usage'. Please also refer to point 1.v (part 2) regarding insurance cover for claims relating to contracting Covid-19.

### 2.3 Other measures

- i) Consider the provision, if feasible, of an outdoor hand sanitiser dispenser near the outdoor gym/play area.

#### **Other useful links**

[HSE – Managing risks and risk assessment at work](#)

[UK Active – Covid-19 framework for reopening gyms, leisure centres and the wider fitness industry during social distancing](#)

[Government Guidance – Covid-19 cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#)

[HSE Children’s play and leisure: promoting a balanced approach](#)

[API – Guidance for Managing Playgrounds and Outdoor Gyms](#)

You may find it useful to refer to Parks for London -[guidance on re-opening public toilets](#)