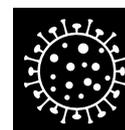




Framework for Playing Tennis in Northern Ireland during the COVID-19 Restrictions

November 16th 2020





Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to extraordinary demands on everyone of us as individuals, as parents, as families, as workers, as business owners, as players and as clubs.

We have never had to deal with the demands and complexities which COVID-19 brings to even one area of our lives, not to mind all areas of our lives at the same time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been characterised by the European Centre for Disease Protection and Control as a “marathon and not a sprint”.

There is no real precedent on how to deal with a global pandemic of this nature and scale. Governments and consequently National Governing Bodies of Sport here and all over the world are making decisions based on the best information available at a given point in time. It is changing constantly.

While, at the beginning, it was arguably “easier” to focus on the disease suppression and containment, life is more complicated than that. The longer this disease is with us, the more complex the issues and the higher the impact of the ongoing restrictions on every aspect of our lives.

We have learned a lot over the last six months and these learnings are informing our future approach:

- The power to control this pandemic is in our hands
 - individually and collectively
- People in Ireland and within our sport are willing to follow public health advice to protect themselves and others
- Cooperation and solidarity across our sport is vital if this disease is to be contained
- No single preventative measure is adequate to control virus transmission – what matters is a combination
- There is an ongoing need to minimise the risk of cases/clusters and respond decisively when new threats/clusters emerge
- If the disease spreads in the community, it will have the greatest impact on the vulnerable and this will impact our members, many of whom are of an older age profile
- Rapid identification and contact tracing of new cases is central to the government’s response

Northern Ireland as a country is moving from a short-term emergency response approach to COVID-19, to a medium-term approach to managing risk.

To this end, a Framework for Restrictive Measures has been developed and released by the NI Executive to help us to go about our daily lives as much as possible, while managing the behaviour of the virus.

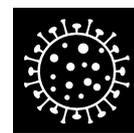
The Government’s strategy, in line with the public health advice, is suppression.

In response to the Government’s Framework our team, in consultation with Sport NI, and in line with Government Guidelines, have developed a framework of restrictive measures that is specific to Tennis in Northern Ireland.

We are asking that clubs make themselves aware of and implement the measures contained within the framework to help safeguard staff and members. This will allow all of us to play safely and keep our communities safe while the threat of COVID-19 exists.

It is designed to allow individuals, families, coaches and club administrators to better understand, anticipate and prepare for and implement the measures government might introduce to stop escalation of the transmission of the disease.

Our measures and procedures are under constant review and updated as advice from government, health authorities and governing bodies evolves.



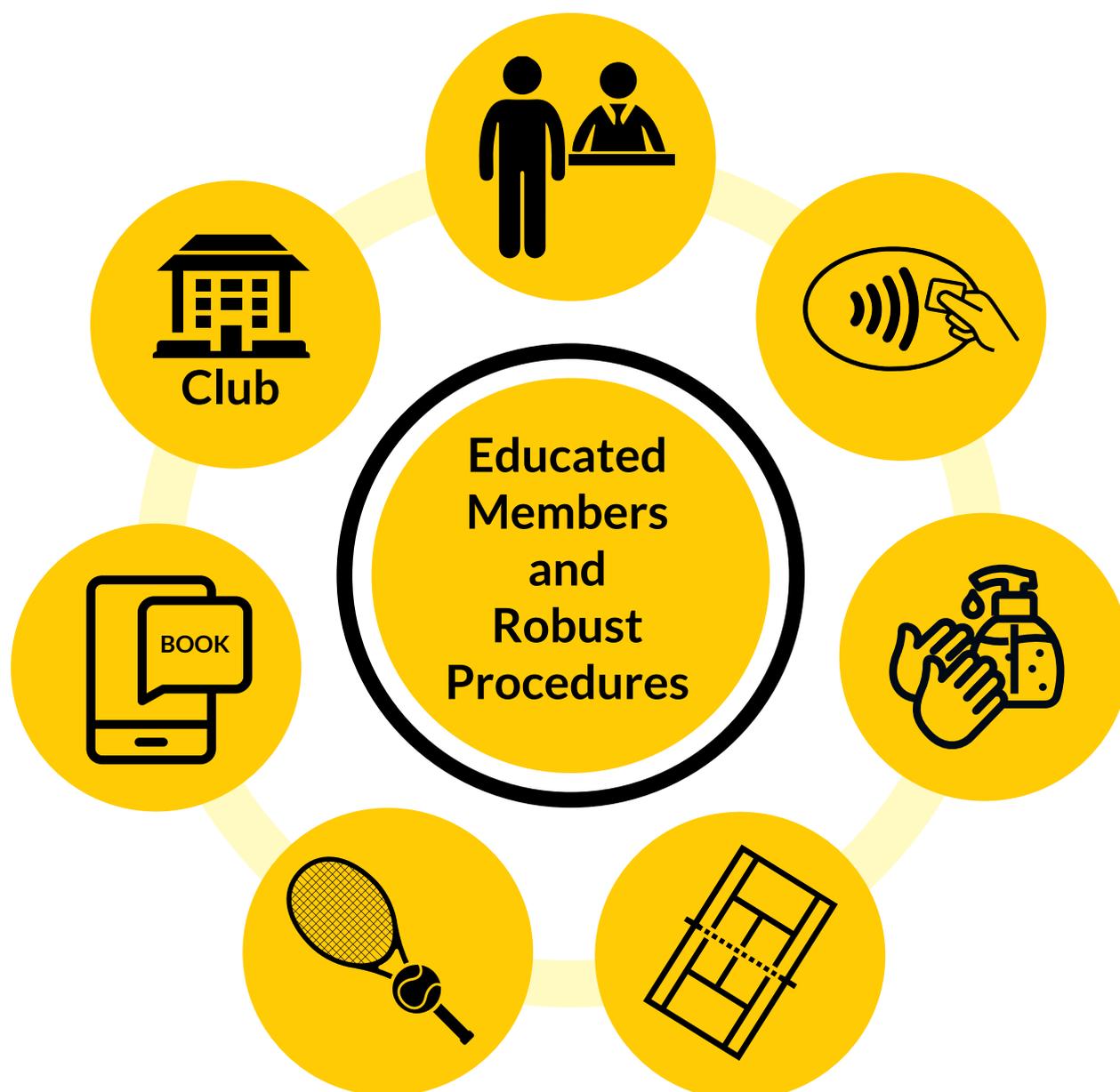
Safe every step of the way

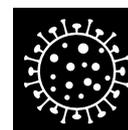
1. Club Committee
2. Club Access
3. Booking & Arrival
4. Check-in Protocol
5. Clubhouse Facilities
6. To the Courts
7. On Court - Playing
8. On Court - Coaching
9. Getting Home Safely

This practical guide, prepared by our team in consultation with medical experts and inline with Government Guidelines, outlines the robust measures Tennis Ireland and its Ulster Branch would like clubs to implement and maintain to help safeguard staff and members during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will allow all of us to get back on court, safely, improving the wellbeing of members across the country.

The measures, which relate to the announcement by the NI Executive on 13th November last and cover each step of the journey from home to the club gate and back home again.

These measures will be in place for at least two weeks from the 16th October.





1. Club COVID-19 Committee

Tennis Clubs should consider the appointment of an assigned COVID-19 Officer and committee responsible for managing issues and queries relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. This committee should:

- Ensure indoor courts are not utilised with an exception for designated High Performance Players*, one to one coaching and members of the same household for singles or doubles.
- Should check with their insurers if any amendments to their policies are required to cover Covid19 issues.
- Ensure they review and that the club can comply with all of the protocols outlined before reopening their club
- Ensure that the club and its members adhere to NHS / Public Health advice in all cases.
- Ensure that sufficient COVID-19 information Posters are in place
- Consider the operation of a court booking system that, if possible, allows for staggered play and perhaps allow 10 minutes between booking slots for players to exit and enter without interaction. If this cannot be done it would be advisable that players understand the need for social distancing while entering and exiting the courts and wait in a designated waiting area.
- Ensure that the club maintains accurate records of who is playing and when. This should include all persons on court and not just the one making the booking. This must be carried out for coaching sessions as well, and in the case that a parent/guardian is present in the club that must also be recorded. This will help with contact tracing if necessary.
- Be responsible for informing all members of the COVID-19 guidelines and insist on full cooperation
- Ensure that the contact details for all members are up to date as this will assist with contact tracing should it be necessary
- Listen to feedback and contact Tennis Ireland or its Ulster Branch if there are issues not covered under these protocols

2. Club Access

Access to the clubhouse should be limited to staff / committee members and for emergency access by players

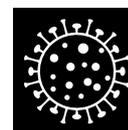
Courts should only be accessed by staff and members only.

To access the courts, a player must:

- Be a current member
- A parent/guardian must accompany any player under 16 years
- Not have been out of the country in the last 14 days
- Not have been around someone with symptoms of COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- Not be in a period of self-isolation and/or cocooning under the current Health Policy Rules
- Not be displaying COVID-19 symptoms
- Live within the county in which the club operates
- Have a pre-reserved playing time

*High Performance is defined as covering those who are:

- Professional sports people and those who participate within professional competition
- A member of a high-performance team funded by Tennis Ireland e.g. Davis and Fed Cup, Team Ireland programme recipients
- Those who compete at major international events including European and World Champions, Olympic and Paralympic Games, Grand Slam, ATP, WTA, ITF Men / Women's World Tour
- National level Junior Players are not High Performance Players



3. Booking and Arrival

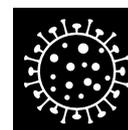
- Booking a court time in advance is required, preferably via a court booking system, website, app, or phone. This will assist should contact tracing be required subsequently.
- All players should ensure their club has their up-to-date contact details (phone and email).
- Singles and Doubles play is allowed but subject to social distancing.
- All players, and not just the player making the booking, should be included in the booking notes. If there is a change to who is playing, it is advisable to make sure the booking is updated.
- Players should travel to the club alone, or only with a member of the same household.
- Ample car parking spaces should be available to ensure social distancing. If players must park next to another car, they should wait for the other person to exit or enter before doing so themselves.
- Players should arrive at the court entrance no more than 5 minutes prior to the reserved playing time. It is important that players maintain social distancing and wait in a pre-designated waiting area that allows for social distancing
- Players should observe social distancing at all times and resist the temptation to mingle
- Locker rooms should remain closed during this period. Players should arrive in Tennis attire and change footwear at the car or at home
- Players should sanitise their hands using dispensers provided at the entrance to the club and courts
- Players should head straight to their designated court unless required to check-in

4. Check-in and Club Shop Protocol

- Two-metre queue markers should be in place at any single-entry point whether at the clubhouse reception or at the entrance to courts
- Only one person at a time should be permitted inside the reception area
- A two-metre exclusion zone should be in place at the service desk and, if possible, a protection screen should be fitted.
- If your club has a shop for essential tennis items that are available to purchase these should be gathered by staff upon request
- Clubs with catering facilities should serve on a take away basis only.
- Club vending machines should be placed out of commission during this level of restrictions.
- Any Purchases should be paid for by contactless card payment only

5. Clubhouse Facilities

- Protocols for cleaning clubhouse facilities should be in place prior to opening and during operation.
- Clubhouse access for members should only be when necessary and be limited to the Club Reception if required to check in.
- Toilets can be utilised during but on a one in / one out basis.
- Changing rooms should remain closed during this level of restrictions
- Players must provide their own racquets and equipment
- Chairs should be removed from the reception area in order to prevent people congregating



6. To the Court

- Singles and Doubles Play is allowed, however, competitive play is not allowed.
- Courts that are side by side can be utilised.
- Players should enter the court one at a time
- Entrances / Gates to courts should remain open, if safe to do so, perhaps tied back to prevent use of handles
- Rubbish bins should be removed, and all items brought on court should be taken home afterwards.
- Other court furniture should be removed including scoreboards, chairs/benches and net winders.
- Shoe cleaners should be removed
- Any player(s) repeatedly not following the club directives should be asked to leave the club
- Nobody but the players should be allowed on the court. There should be no spectators present during this period.
- Parents supervising children should be limited to one

7. On the Court - Playing

- Physical distancing should be observed throughout the period of play, particularly on change of ends and entering and exiting the court. Players should change ends at opposite sides of the net.
- Players must refrain from handshakes and high fives
- Equipment such as towels, food, and drink must not be exchanged between players. Players should be encouraged to bring their own drinks and towels.
- Players should avoid touching their face after handling a ball, racquet, or other equipment.
- Players should ideally bring a small bottle of hand sanitizer with them and keep it in their pocket or bag for use.
- Players should remain apart from other players when taking a break.
- Caution is advised for those who intend to engage in high intensity training following a recovery from COVID-19. Individuals should seek medical advice prior to a return to playing / training.

8. On the Court - Coaching

- Coaches should prepare and present a Risk Assessment document and get approval to coach from the Covid 19 Committee
- Coaching sessions should be booked and recorded.
- 1-1 coaching is permitted indoors, coaches should pay extra attention to social distancing.
- Coaches should brief their students and/or their parents of the protocols that should be followed in advance of the session
- Coaches should ensure a player has registered their contact details with the clubs.
- As much as possible, coaches must try to remain on the same court and adjust their schedules in order to stay on-site for the minimum amount of time required.
- Exercises that require continuous play are recommended.
- Coaches should limit the use of equipment such as cones, drop lines and targets.
- Do not let players manipulate the practice equipment. Coaches should take charge of picking up the balls.
- A pod, up to a maximum of 6 players, can be coached. For red ball players pods of 8 can be coached on one court subject to social distancing
- A maximum of 4 players can operate on the court at any one time while remaining in their own sections of the court with up to 2 other players rotating in and out as required.
- All activities are subject to strict social distancing and those players not on court must always maintain a clear 2m distance from others.

9. Getting Home Safely

- Once play has finished players should leave the premises promptly, sanitising their hands on the way out using a courtside dispenser.
- Restaurant and bars should remain closed until restrictions are eased so there should be no congregating in these areas
- Clubs should make provision for thoroughly cleaning accessible areas and ensuring that all "touch areas" are cleaned thoroughly daily
- If a player becomes unwell after playing, they should first contact their GP/NHS and then inform their club. The club should contact the NHS and follow the advice provided to them on the next steps.



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