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1. Department for  
Digital, Culture,  
Media & Sport (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-digital-culture-media-sport>)

Guidance

# Return to recreational team sport framework

Updated 10 September 2020

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Applies to: England (see guidance for Wales (<https://gov.wales/sport-recreation-and-leisure-guidance-phased-return-html>), Scotland (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-what-you-can-and-cannot-do/pages/sport-culture-and-leisure/>), and Northern Ireland (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-guidance-sport-culture-and-leisure-activities>))

While this guidance applies to England, you should always consider whether there are local restrictions in place in your area. If you live, work or volunteer in an area that is experiencing a local COVID-19 outbreak and where local restrictions have been imposed, different guidance and legislation will apply. Please consult the local restrictions pages (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>) to see if any restrictions are in place in your area.

Find out more information about the changes to social contact (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-what-has-changed-9-september>) announced on 9 September.

## Introduction

The government recognises the vital role sports and physical activity plays in ensuring physical and mental health. The return of team sport is an exciting moment for the millions of people who use this activity as their exercise of choice and gain the multiple physical, mental and social benefits of playing. This return must be made as safe as possible, which is why the government has produced this guidance and why sport governing bodies will be preparing thorough plans of their own. It is recognised that risk in sport cannot be completely eradicated, but with caution and care, risks can be reduced and the benefits of team sport enjoyed fully again.

## Transmission

According to current evidence, COVID-19 is primarily transmitted between people through respiratory droplets and contact with contaminated surfaces – usually those that are frequently touched. Airborne transmission is possible in specific settings where certain procedures or sports treatments are performed in close proximity.

## Mitigating risks

The purpose of this document is to provide the necessary mitigations to enable the return of competitive recreational team sport as part of the easing of social restrictions from 4 July onwards. The framework we outline below is designed to minimise the COVID-19 transmission risk whilst taking part in recreational team sport and enable participants to make an informed decision about their own risk.

These mitigations allow for competitive sport to take place whilst maintaining appropriate compliance with social distancing and permitted group sizes. This is only permitted if this guidance is fully implemented by a national governing body (NGB) and complemented by a public health approved action plan for each sport, with activity taking place under an official governing body's oversight. Compliance with current guidance on social mixing (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household>) must be maintained at all times when not on the field of play.

## Sport action plans and guidance

Each individual sport will submit to the government (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport) an action plan and any related guidance, demonstrating its mitigations, how it plans to operate, and any adaptations required. The sport specific action plan and risk mitigation proposal must recognise that practice may need to be adapted or curtailed and this information communicated to participants swiftly, if the overall threat level or community prevalence of COVID-19, dictates or if it becomes apparent that a specific sport carries a high level of transmission risk.

Each sport will provide an assessment of the transmission risk that a return to competitive recreational activity represents based on three key variables:

- Droplet transmission: The risk associated with each action in an activity based on duration and proximity of participants. By using the framework, sports can determine the risk of actions in their matchplay environment – anything, for example, from tackling, to bowling, to re-start – which will then determine the overall level of risk of taking part in that sport.
- Fomite transmission: The risk associated with the handling and transfer of equipment in the sport
- Population: The number of participants likely to take part in the proposed activity plus known risk factors of participants with underlying health conditions or high risk groups, who wish to participate

Based on this overall risk profile some recreational sports will be lower risk than others and better suited to return to competitive play earlier with or without adaptation.

All sports should ensure that sessions comply with the relevant National Governing Body Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and conduct a thorough risk assessment which should be included as part of the action plan. Particular consideration needs to be given to children and young people under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults who may be less able to understand or maintain social distancing discipline.

Action plans and guidance should be submitted for review to DCMS at [sportsCOVID19@dcms.gov.uk](mailto:sportsCOVID19@dcms.gov.uk). National governing bodies will receive confirmation of receipt of the action plans and guidance, and also confirmation when DCMS has reviewed those documents and is satisfied that their content is not inconsistent with all current and relevant government guidance.

PHE may also wish to review action plans and guidance in certain circumstances. In such a case, the review process may take longer.

Once DCMS has given this confirmation, the national governing body will be linked at the bottom of this page. Until the national governing body is linked on GOV.UK, the team sport should not restart.

## **Key principles - prior to activity**

### **Club preparation**

Each club must only return to sport when they have the appropriate measures in place as developed by the NGB and general government guidance in relation to recreational sport (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation>).

All recreational clubs must develop a written COVID-19 plan and risk assessment prior to activity. Preparation must include those in charge of the session taking part in specific training, as necessary, and participants being asked to consider if their underlying health, may caution against participation. A checklist to support clubs to put the appropriate measures in place will be made available. All the above documents must be promulgated to all coaches, assistant coaches and welfare officers.

Risk assessments should be completed in line with guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/risk-assessment.htm>).

All clubs running activities for children should also consult the DfE guidance on Protective measures for out-of-school settings (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>), which sets out further practical steps providers of community activities, holiday clubs, after-school clubs, tuition and other out-of-school provision for children should follow to minimise the risk of transmission for children attending their settings.

## Test and trace

Activity organisers should support test and trace efforts by collecting written information on participants at both individual training sessions and all matches. This must be detailed enough to allow NHS Test and Trace to contact all participants if a player becomes ill with COVID-19. These records must be kept for 21 days. Each sport/ NGB will determine in their action plan or guidance the process their sport will go through to enable test and trace efforts to happen by providing the way in which all information on participants will be collected at both training and matches. Appendix 4 explains the government expectations with further developments to follow in due course.

Organisers should maintain a record of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>).

Further guidance is available here - NHS Test and Trace: how it works (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>).

## Pre-attendance official symptom check

All players, officials, volunteers and spectators must undergo a self-assessment for any COVID-19 symptoms. No-one should leave home to participate in sport if they, or someone they live with, has symptoms of COVID -19 currently recognised as any of the following:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste

Should an individual have demonstrated any such symptoms, they must follow NHS and PHE guidance on self-isolation (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>)

Participants will be made aware of any increased risk associated with taking part in activity, based on the assessment undertaken by the governing body. They should also be strongly advised to comply with public health restrictions and avoid high risk behaviour outside the sports setting to reduce the risk to their fellow participants when they do attend.

## Travel to training and matches

Participants are encouraged to follow best practice for travel including minimising use of public transport and limiting car sharing. Walk or cycle if you can. People from a household or support bubble (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do#gatherings-public-spaces-and-outdoor-activities>) can travel together in a vehicle.

See the government's safer travel guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>) for passengers for further information.

## Arrival at venues

Clubs should strictly limit the time spent congregating at a venue before activity begins. Meet-up times should reflect this. This includes arriving changed and ready to begin the warm up., Exceptions may be made where safety and safeguarding measures require this, for example supporting disability athletes with minimum time spent waiting or in changing rooms.

## Key principles - during activity

### Social distancing in play

All sports must adhere to social distancing throughout warm-ups and avoid equipment sharing. The sport specific action plan must address the issue of how the sport can best mitigate the risk of social distancing in competitive matches and training.

Having completed the droplet transmission risk assessment each sport may introduce 'COVID-19 adaptations' to lower the frequency of activities that cannot be done whilst socially distanced. Avoid unnecessary breaking of social distancing such as pre-game handshakes, huddles, face-to-face confrontation with opponents and officials, and scoring celebrations.

### Social distancing during breaks and post-game

All participants must remain socially distanced during breaks in play with spaced areas for equipment and refreshment storage for each individual including officials and substitutes. Coaching staff and substitutes, should, for example, spread out and avoid sharing a dug out or bench if social distancing cannot be observed.

Water bottles or other refreshment containers, should in no circumstances be shared. Participants are advised to bring their own, in a labelled or highly distinguishable container.

After activity participants must maintain government mandated social distancing for social interaction. This includes in any available clubhouse facilities or other venue participants congregate in afterwards.

## Use of equipment

The sharing of equipment must be avoided where possible, particularly that used around the head and face e.g. helmets. Where equipment is shared, equipment must be cleaned before use by another person.

Sports should give consideration on how to protect participants in relation to all equipment use and the risk of transmission, including checking ongoing Government research and advice on transmission of the virus and ensuring their guidance reflects it.

Participants should take their kit home to wash it themselves, rather than have one person handling a large quantity of soiled materials. Where kit absolutely has to be shared or kept together (for example last minute stand-in players, shortage of kit, or an essential club function), each person handling it must wash or sanitise their hands immediately after.

## Ball transfer

Based on the fomite transmission risk assessment sports where a common ball needs to be handled by multiple players (e.g. basketball, cricket, football) will produce a plan to reduce this risk following advice from their governing body.

## Match officials, medics and coaches

Match officials should observe the governing body guidance in the same way as participants are required to. Match officials must remain socially distanced from players where possible during play. Should match officials not be able to remain socially distanced due to their role in the sport, their sport should conduct a risk assessment to see if other mitigations may be necessary.

## Adherence to measures

A code of behaviour should be developed by each sport to ensure a commitment for all involved to adhere to COVID-19 adaptations, match officials will be empowered to ensure measures are adhered to through appropriate sanctions designed by the NGB. Participants must be clear that they are opting in to participating as defined in the sport-specific guidance with regard to risk and risk mitigation.

## Shouting

There is an additional risk of infection in close proximity situations where people are shouting or conversing loudly. This particularly applies indoors and when face to face. If possible, players should therefore avoid shouting or raising their voices when facing each other during, before and after games.

## Injury treatment

Injuries during play should still be treated as participant wellbeing is utmost. The best way to protect yourself and others is through rigorous cleaning, personal hygiene and regular hand hygiene. An increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces and equipment, using standard household cleaning and disinfection products, is recommended. Face coverings are also advisable when undertaking treatment.

After contact with an injured participant, clean your hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser at the earliest opportunity. This advice is applicable to all situations, regardless of whether there was close contact or the minimum social distancing was maintained. Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose.

Physios or their equivalent, should keep a record of each participant they have come into contact with for test and trace purposes.

See further information (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-interim-guidance-for-first-responders/interim-guidance-for-first-responders-and-others-in-close-contact-with-symptomatic-people-with-potential-2019-ncov>) for those who may need to act as a 'first responder' role in a sports setting.

## Spectators

Supporters, parents, and other spectators to remain socially distanced whilst attending events. Spectator groups must be restricted to discrete 6 person gathering limits and spread out, in line with wider government guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>).

Where it is anticipated that an activity will attract spectators, there should be a named person or persons with responsibility for ensuring adherence with these guidelines and ensuring the facility is COVID-19 Secure. The person should carry out and publish a risk assessment for the activity which limits the number of spectators and focuses on the need to maintain social distancing on arrival, for the duration of the activity, and on departure.

Arrangements should also be put in place to support test and trace efforts by collecting information from spectators which is detailed enough to allow NHS Test and Trace to contact them if necessary. See the maintaining records guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace>) for further information.

## Key principles - facility usage

For sports reliant on third party owned or managed facilities adherence to these guidelines should be worked out collaboratively between club and facility. Each facility must have a specific facility operations plan that incorporates a full risk assessment.

## Movement on site

All venues must have entry and exit and parking arrangements to venues that ensures social distancing can be maintained.

Venues must display the appropriate signage to facilitate at all points throughout the facility and car park.

Venues will implement traffic flow systems where possible and appropriate.

Venues will outline socially distanced areas for teams, officials and spectators.

Venues will ensure that all accessible provision within the site and the facility are available.

## Changing rooms and showers

Players should arrive changed and shower at home. Use of changing and shower facilities must follow government advice on the use of indoor facilities (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/guidance-for-providers-of-outdoor-facilities-on-the-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation>) where available.

If these facilities remain closed, exceptions may be made where safety and safeguarding measures require their use, e.g. supporting disability athletes, a child needs a change of clothing etc.

## Toilets

Toilets will need to be opened for pre-match, match and for 30mins following.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency and to avoid touching your face, and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available.
2. Consider the use of social distancing marking in areas where queues normally form, and the adoption of a limited entry approach, with one in, one out (whilst avoiding the creation of additional bottlenecks).
3. To enable good hand hygiene consider making hand sanitiser available on entry to toilets where safe and practical, and ensure suitable handwashing facilities including running water and liquid soap and suitable options for drying (either paper towels or hand driers) are available.
4. Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage. Use normal cleaning products, paying attention to frequently hand touched surfaces, and consider use of disposable cloths or paper roll to clean all hard surfaces.

5. High ventilation in indoor facilities is paramount to reducing transmission of Covid-19; keep the facilities well ventilated, for example by fixing doors open and opening windows where appropriate.
6. Special care should be taken for cleaning of portable toilets and larger toilet blocks.
7. Putting up a visible cleaning schedule can keep it up to date and visible.
8. Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection. Toilets capacity should be managed via entry and exit as per government guidelines (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/guidance-for-providers-of-outdoor-facilities-on-the-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation>).

## Hygiene

Participants will be encouraged to refrain from spitting or rinsing out their mouths on or around the playing area.

## Clubhouses and hospitality

Venues will use clubhouses and hospitality facilities in line with government guidance on hospitality settings (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/restaurants-offering-takeaway-or-delivery>).

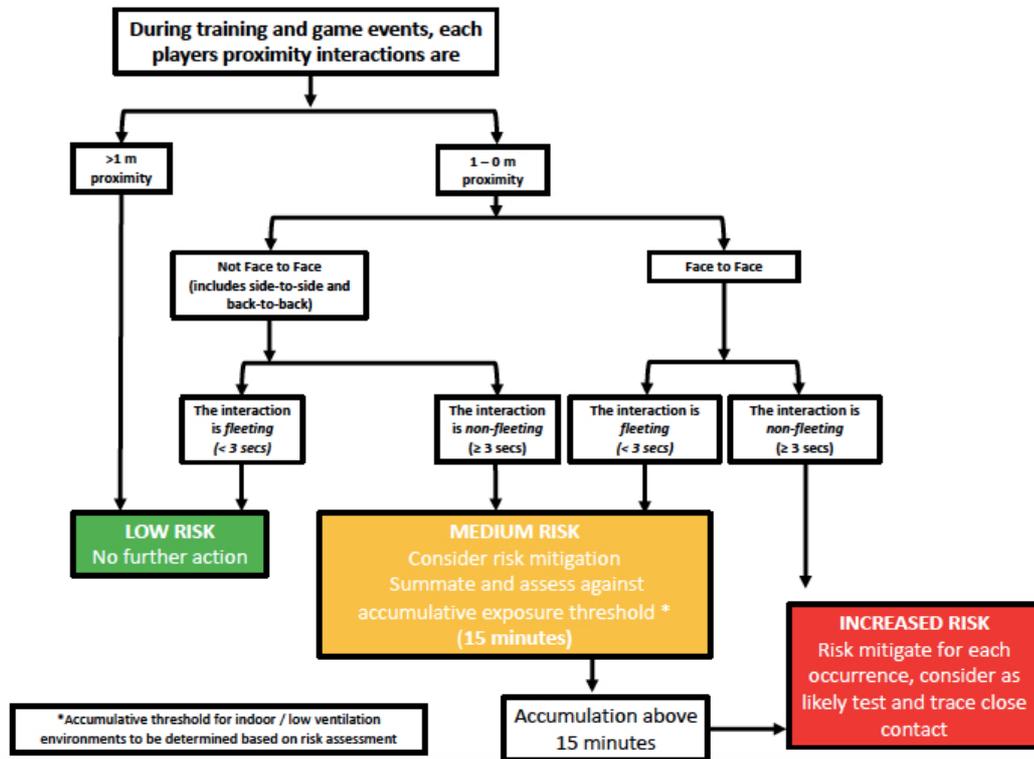
Groups in clubhouses and hospitality facilities must be restricted to 6 person gathering limits and spread out, in line with wider government guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>).

High ventilation in indoor facilities is paramount to reducing transmission of COVID-19; keep the facilities well ventilated, for example by fixing doors open and opening windows where appropriate.

If facilities remain closed, exceptions must be made for essential activity such as provision of first-aid or access to essential equipment for the match.

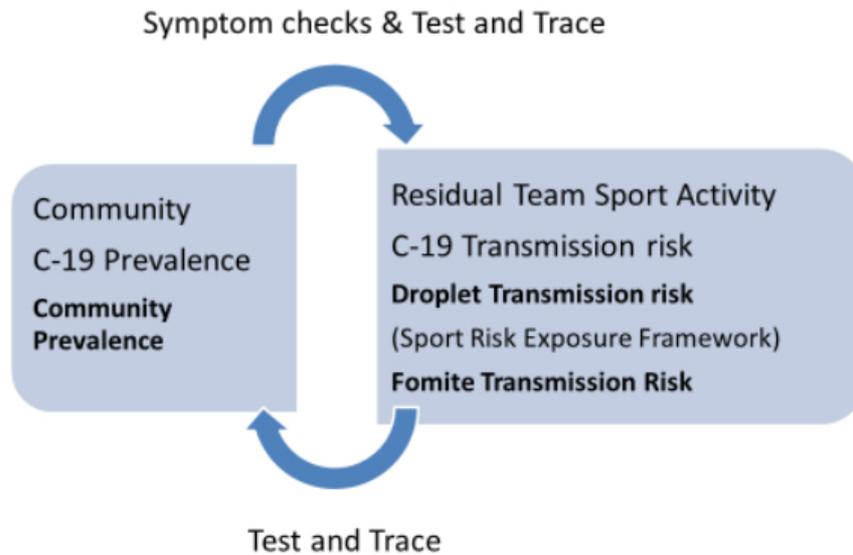
## Appendix

### Appendix 1



A team sports risk exposure framework to inform risk mitigation strategies and support test and trace

## Appendix 2



Key influences on when team sports return

## Appendix 3

### Proposals to assist in the mitigation of transmission of COVID-19 through fomites during sporting activities

Equipment used both during training and competition phases of sport can act as fomites, a vehicle for carrying the virus, and therefore impacting on the transmission of COVID-19 between individuals. This document aims to assist individuals and organisations in assessing their particular activity, and makes suggestions as to how this route of transmission might be mitigated.

#### Assessment process

The use of video analysis, of training and competition footage by staff and players, may allow identification of incidents and interactions between athletes and fomites (clothing and equipment). This can help inform decisions outlined in the process below, as to how the risk of any such contact can be mitigated. By involving staff and players in the process there is likely to be increased 'buy-in' from all parties.

Step 1 - Identify:

- Identify fomites (equipment) used in activity
- What is it? [Name]
- What is it made of? [Material]
- How is it cleaned safely, repeatedly and effectively without degrading it? [Cleaning]

**Step 2: Use:**

- Consider how the fomite is used in activity and how its use might be changed
- Reduce overall use
- Personal use only
- Change fomite to a version which poses less transmission risk
- Estimate risk of use - Red Amber Green [Risk] and impact of mitigation

**Step 3: Clean and protect:**

- Cleaning and protection protocols for fomites
- When - between or during sessions? (see note 1)
- How - time, chemical, heat, light (see note 2)
- Protect - Use by individuals (possibly screened) with high levels of personal hygiene<sup>3</sup> and facial coverings

**Step 4: Educate and monitor**

- Educate and audit
- Educate, re-educate and remind staff and players regarding change in behaviours and use of fomites
- Monitor effectiveness

**Notes**

1. Cleaning during play might occur if for instance a ball goes out of play and is replaced by another clean one. Clothing might be changed at half-time. Equipment might be used every 3 days to allow viral decay

2. Equipment manufacturers should be able to offer advice on cleaning regimes. Staff undertaking cleaning may need suitable PPE

3. The benefits of hand hygiene to protect individuals and equipment are so substantial it is recommended that training and competition have routine hand sanitising breaks incorporated in a similar fashion to water breaks. These should be as athletes enter/leave the field of play and approximately every 20 minutes thereafter. For example in football this equates to five occasions in a 90 minute match.

Following the structured review of fomite interactions, a risk assessment document should be drawn up to summarise the risks identified, RAG rate them and document the mitigations undertaken to diminish that risk.

A review process should be built in to refine any mitigations and to react in the event of any positive COVID-19 infections and potential changes in government advice, following guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>).

**Appendix 4 - Test and trace**

The opening up of the economy following the COVID-19 outbreak is being supported by NHS Test and Trace. You should assist this service by keeping a temporary record of your participants for 21 days, in a way that is manageable for your organisation, and assist NHS Test and Trace with requests for that data if needed. This could help contain clusters or outbreaks. Many organisations already

have systems for recording their participants. If you do not already do this, you should do so to help fight the virus. We will work with industry and relevant bodies to design this system in line with data protection legislation, and set out details shortly at [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>).

You should assist the Test and Trace service by keeping a temporary record of your staff shift patterns for 21 days and assist NHS Test and Trace with requests for that data if needed. This could help contain clusters or outbreaks.

## Team sport guidance

The governing bodies below have developed guidance under the principles of the team sport government guidance above. For further information, please see the relevant body website:

- Baseball/Softball UK (<https://www.baseballsoftballuk.com/>)
- Basketball England (<https://www.basketballengland.co.uk/>)
- British Baseball Federation (<https://britishbaseballfederation.leaguerepublic.com//index.html>)
- British Canoeing (<https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/>)
- British Dodgeball (<https://britishdodgeball.org/>)
- British Dragon Boat Racing Association (<https://www.dragonboat.org.uk/>)
- British Equestrian (<https://www.britishequestrian.org.uk/>)
- British Octopush (<https://www.gbuwh.co.uk/>)
- British Roller Sports (<http://www.brsf.co.uk/>)
- British Rowing (<https://www.britishrowing.org/>)
- England and Wales Cricket Board (<https://www.ecb.co.uk/>)
- England Hockey (<http://www.englandhockey.co.uk/>)
- England Lacrosse (<https://www.englandlacrosse.co.uk/>)
- England Netball (<https://www.englandnetball.co.uk/>)
- English Curling Association (<https://www.curlingengland.com/>)
- Football Association (<http://www.thefa.com/>)
- Gaelic Sports (<https://britain.gaa.ie>)
- Goalball UK (<https://goalballuk.com/>)
- Hurlingham Polo Association (<https://hpa-polo.co.uk/>)
- Ice Hockey UK (<https://www.icehockeyuk.co.uk/>)
- Rugby Football League (<https://www.rugby-league.com/>)
- Rugby Football Union (<https://www.englandrugby.com/>)
- Rounders England (<https://www.roundersengland.co.uk/>)
- Royal Yachting Association (<https://www.rya.org.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>)
- UK Floorball Federation (<https://ukfloorball.com/>)
- UK Ultimate (<https://www.ukultimate.com/>)
- Volleyball England (<https://www.volleyballengland.org>)