



COVID-19: Leisure Facility Guidance

To: UK Wide

Key Issues

- Where facilities remain open, explicit cleaning and social spacing regimes should be applied
- Focus during the pandemic should be on retention and membership support

1. Introduction

We are operating in a fast-moving environment where new information is released on a daily basis. This uncertainty is unlikely to recede until infection levels are demonstrably seen to falling. The peak rate of infection is currently predicted to be around late May. At the time of writing, most local authority leisure facilities are experiencing significantly reduced customer numbers and many have taken the decision to close all their centres until a time post-virus. General Government advice can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19>

APSE suggest that there are 2 main priorities:

- Safety of Employees and Customers
- Retention of the customer base until 'normal' service resumes

2. Safety of Employees and Customers

It is estimated that 85% of the population will catch Covid-19 during the current pandemic. Handwashing and social distancing are methods of reducing the speed that the virus spreads, hopefully allowing the NHS to cope with more urgent cases as the numbers increase. Apart from following the Government guidelines on handwashing and frequent

cleaning there is little to be achieved by more draconian measures. Staff with underlying health conditions should be requested to work from home where possible.

Gyms and swimming pools by their very nature, tend to have an atmosphere more humid than most and susceptible to contamination. Cleaning and disinfection of Gym equipment should be increased and obvious to customers. Facilities for hand washing and wiping down of equipment should be made explicit and easily available to customers. Ideally space between customer workstations should be 2 metres apart. If not viable, intermediate workstations should be decommissioned. Where classes continue to operate, some operators have reduced maximum numbers to allow sufficient spacing.

Current Government advice:

- businesses and workplaces should encourage their employees to work at home, wherever possible
- if someone becomes unwell in the workplace with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they should be sent home and advised to follow the advice to stay at home
- employees should be reminded to wash their hands for 20 seconds more frequently and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues
- frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products
- employees will need your support to adhere to the recommendation to stay at home to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) to others
- those who follow advice to stay at home will be eligible for statutory sick pay (SSP) from the first day of their absence from work
- employers should use their discretion concerning the need for medical evidence for certification for employees who are unwell. This will allow GPs to focus on their patients
- employees from defined [vulnerable groups](#) should be strongly advised and supported to stay at home and work from there if possible

Leisure staff operate under a variety of contracts and some trainers are employed on a casual basis. APSE would ask councils, where possible, to support all leisure staff, however contracted and partners for the new few weeks to ensure that service can quickly be reinstated post-virus

3. Retention of the customer base

With selective gym closures and customers reducing or ceasing attendance, their leisure routines will be disrupted, they consider cancelling membership and may be potentially lost to the gym/pool for ever. Where facilities are closed, direct debits for membership subscriptions have been stayed by many operators.

Now is the time to ramp up customer communication, stressing that that fitter one is, the more resilient to infection. There are many studies demonstrating the positive link between physical activity and the body's defence system. Whilst members may have ceased visiting the Gym, there are many physical training videos online either free or commercially which can be sent to members. A few operate behind a low cost paywall which may be worth subscribing to on members behalf. Leisure staff can call members to offer support and make them aware of online content. Examples of what your own staff may create or share may be found here: <https://m.facebook.com/pg/livbaileypt/videos>

All Gym facilities, retain a membership database with email addresses and during the pandemic frequent communication, whilst many are cocooned at home, can only help retention until times become more 'normal' again.

4. APSE COMMENT

APSE has set up a COVID-19 Information Hub to deal with frontline service issues as they arise; ensuring greater resilience and learning between each other during this difficult time.

Details can be accessed via the following link:-

[COVID -19- APSE information hub](#)

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