



**Open Court**  
Disability Tennis

# Disability Tennis

## COVID-19: RETURN TO PLAY

Version 2 – Published 8 January 2021  
England

**This version covers the exemption for organised outdoor disability sport in England following the Government's announcement of a Stay at Home national lockdown on 4 January 2021.**



**TENNIS**  
FOR BRITAIN

## DISABILITY TENNIS: RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

These COVID-19 guidelines have been developed to support the resumption of the LTA's Open Court disability tennis programme.

**[UPDATED]** Guidelines have been updated for England to reflect the exemption for organised outdoor disability sport to continue following the Government's [announcement of a Stay at Home national lockdown](#) on 4 January 2021.

This exemption has been granted by Government in recognition that not allowing organised outdoor sport would have a disproportionate impact on disabled people. The Government and Sport England have recognised that disabled people face more barriers to taking part in sport and physical activity, and that it is vital that opportunities are kept as accessible as possible.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the full, detailed guidelines for venues, players, coaches, and officials/competition organisers published at [www.lta.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.lta.org.uk/coronavirus), and all elements of the guidelines should be considered to ensure activity can be delivered safely.

**IMPORTANT:** the Government's COVID-19 restrictions are subject to change and those delivering outdoor disability tennis activity during the period of national restrictions are advised to check our main coronavirus information page for further information.

## DISABILITY TENNIS ACTIVITY DURING NATIONAL LOCKDOWN

### INTRODUCTION **[UPDATED]**

This guidance is intended to provide support and guidance for venues and coaches considering providing organised outdoor tennis activity for disabled people during the period of national lockdown restrictions from 5 January 2021.

The LTA appreciates and understands that some venues and coaches may not wish, or be able to, open or provide outdoor tennis activity for the period of national Stay At Home restrictions. There is no obligation for Open Court disability tennis programme venues to open for activity, and the LTA advises that venues and coaches consult with participants in advance of staging activity.

Our recent Open Court 'Return to tennis – participant survey' showed that while the majority of players who are now back playing every week (84%), a large proportion feel they are playing less now than they have been in the past (41%).

On the whole, disabled people are excited and happy to return to tennis (74%, 77%) but nearly half feel uncertain or negative around their own safety (46%) and anxious about returning (44%). We are concerned that people's mental health during this time has been greatly affected and, therefore, venues reaching out and finding out how people are during this time and what their intention is for returning for tennis is important.

The majority of disabled people who responded to the survey kept in communication with their coach and other players (71%) which helped maintain the missing social

interaction. Although less than a third (31%) kept in contact with the venues they were part of.

To be comfortable returning to the sport, participants want to see venues and coaches continuing to promote the strict protocols they have in place and reassure users that facilities are safe. This guidance is intended to help those venues and coaches who decide to deliver outdoor tennis activity for disabled people the period of national lockdown in a COVID-secure way.

Thank you for your continued support in opening tennis up to more people!

## TENNIS ACTIVITY [NEW]

- During the period of national lockdown restrictions announced by the Government and effective from 5 January, an exemption to the restrictions requiring closure of sports facilities and Stay at Home restrictions has been provided for organised outdoor disability sport. This means that organised disability tennis activity can continue outdoors. Venues, coaches and players can [find more information on the Stay At Home national lockdown here](#).
- The Government defines 'organised sport' as sport which is formally organised by a national governing body, club, public body, qualified instructor, company or charity, and which follows the sport's national governing body's guidance. There is no limit on the number of disabled people who can participate, although venues and coaches should ensure they follow the LTA's COVID-19 guidance, as well as the Government guidance on organised outdoor sport, which includes producing a full risk assessment.
- The Government defines disabled people as those who have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Tennis sessions that are specifically intended for individuals who fall under this definition may continue.
- [Sport England have confirmed](#) that people who provide essential support (e.g. carers) to disabled people are exempt, and don't count towards gathering limits. Therefore, disabled participants can be supported by a carer(s) while taking part in exercise. Up to two carers for a disabled person, needing continuous care, aren't counted towards the gatherings limit on two or more people exercising outside. However, non-disabled people who are not essential to enabling the sport to take place cannot participate.
- The LTA continues to work with our national partners in this area, including Activity Alliance and National Disability Sport Organisations. Venues are encouraged to read [guidelines published by Activity Alliance](#) to assist the reopening of activity in a welcoming and accessible way. Those running visually impaired tennis activity can also refer to [guidance on the British Blind Sport website](#).
- Given that ordinarily much Open Court disability tennis activity would take place inside during the winter months, venues and coaches should give particular consideration to seasonal and other factors arising from activity taking place outside, in any risk assessment.

## COMMUNICATION

- Although activity levels were at a record high prior to COVID-19, participation of disabled people in sport has been greatly impacted by coronavirus – venues hosting inclusive and disability-specific tennis activity is therefore particularly encouraged

- Be aware that disabled people as a group have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, and so there may be increased concern and anxiety about returning to play. Venues should consider reaching out disabled players yet to return and finding out how people are, as well as discuss what their intention is for returning to tennis
- Communication is crucial, and venues should continue to promote the hygiene and coronavirus safety measures you have in place to help reassure disabled players about their return.
- Consider producing a virtual tour of the venue to demonstrate the coronavirus safety measures that are in place to help build confidence in these individuals attending your sessions. This should particularly be a consideration for people with sight loss, for which venues should ensure it is a video with audible cues
- If a player finds it difficult to follow certain protocols, or needs additional assistance in order to take part in organised activity, they should be encouraged to contact the activity organiser in advance, so that reasonable adjustments can be made to ensure the safety of the player and others

## GUIDANCE FOR VENUES

### OPENING DURING NATIONAL LOCKDOWN [NEW]

- Whilst the Government requires indoor and outdoor tennis courts to close for the period of national lockdown restrictions, an exemption for organised outdoor disability sport means that outdoor tennis courts can open for organised activity for disabled people.
- Only outdoor tennis courts may be opened for tennis activity. Access to indoor facilities is permitted for specific reasons, such as to turn on floodlights or for access to toilet facilities, subject to a strict risk assessment.
- Venues providing such indoor access should ensure clear signage is in place so people can find their destination quickly, putting in place queue management or one-way flow measures where appropriate, and limiting the number of customers in the building (both overall and in any particular congestion areas)
- No other facilities should be opened, and outdoor courts should only be opened for the duration of organised disability tennis activity.
- Venues must consider safety first, particularly minimising the risk of infection/transmission. A thorough risk assessment should be undertaken (or updated if one previously done), and appropriate measures put in place to ensure participants, staff and volunteers are protected. A risk assessment template is available from the COVID-19 section of the venue [Resource Library](#) on the LTA website. For larger group activity, venues should consider transmission risk based on three variables: droplet transmission and aerosol generation; fomite transmission; and population
- As a COVID-19 secure venue, all venues should have in place a process for how they would handle a case of someone testing positive. Venues should refer to the Test & Trace section below, and can find information on [how to approach cleaning for such instances on the Government website](#)
- Guidelines will continue to be updated as we progress through the different phases of Government measures - the LTA remains in discussions with Government, so we recommend you check the official LTA position at [lta.org.uk/coronavirus](http://lta.org.uk/coronavirus) on a regular basis to stay abreast of the latest recommendations

### PRE-ATTENDANCE SYMPTOM CHECK

- Anyone attending a venue (including players, coaches, staff and any other visitors), should undergo a pre-attendance self-assessment for any COVID-19 symptoms [using the information on the NHS website](#) before leaving home.
- No-one should leave home to participate in tennis 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](#)

## NHS TEST & TRACE

- If someone who has played at your venue develops symptoms of COVID-19, they should be directed to follow the Government's 'test and trace' guidelines, which can be read on the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website
- For some types of venue, including those providing hospitality or indoor sports facilities, **it a mandatory requirement** have a system to collect NHS Test and Trace data – this can be via the NHS app (see below). Organisations in [designated sectors](#) must:
  - ask at least one member of every party of customers or visitors (up to 6 people) to provide their name and contact details
  - keep a record of all staff working on their premises and shift times on a given day and their contact details
  - keep these records of customers, visitors and staff for 21 days and provide data to NHS Test and Trace if requested
  - display an official NHS QR code poster, so that customers and visitors can 'check in' using this option as an alternative to providing their contact details (see below)
  - adhere to the General Data Protection Regulation
- Further guidance on maintaining records of staff, customer and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace can be [read on the Government website](#)
- Please note, it is down to NHS Test and Trace to make decisions on close contacts. However, it is our understanding is that if all those attending a venue to take part tennis activity adhere to the LTA Covid-19 Secure guidelines and maintain social distancing at all times, then it would not be anticipated that they would be classified as a close contact of another venue user who subsequently tests positive

## NHS COVID-19 APP

- Venues that provide indoor tennis facilities or offer hospitality must download and display an official QR code poster for visitors to scan with the NHS app
- Any other tennis venue that has an indoor space where people congregate is also encouraged to create a QR code poster for the entrance to that venue. By supporting the official NHS QR code poster system, you'll be protecting your visitors and your business.
- **To create a coronavirus NHS QE code for your venue** [visit the Government website](#) – if you need help, [see this guide on how to create your poster](#)
- When displaying posters, venues should ensure that enough are on display and located appropriately to allow visits to scan in without queues forming – [see the NHS' tips for displaying your posters](#)
- Be aware that for venues that are required to collect data, you will still need to offer a manual option for recording visitors' contact details, for people who do not have a smartphone or do not want to use the NHS COVID-19 app, or who do not wish to show you their venue check-in history
- If you have a locker room or communal area where people may leave their phones, then you can [display this poster](#) to advise them to pause the contact tracing on their app
- Further help and guidance is available on the NHS website, including [FAQs for venues](#), guidance posters for the public on how to download the app on [iOS](#) and [Android](#), and [how to use the QR code poster to scan in to a venue](#)

## SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Venues should be fully aware of the latest Government advice on staying alert and safe (social distancing) which can be read [here](#)
- Venues should ensure players do not congregate on or around the court before and after play
- Attendees should be advised to limit their interactions with anyone outside of the group they are attending the venue with (e.g. players on another court or in a different coaching group), and they should continue to maintain social distancing from those that they do not live with or are in a support bubble with

## TRAVEL

- Exercise is one of the Government's permitted reasons for individuals to leave the home, which includes for organised outdoor disability sport. The Government advises that exercise should be done locally wherever possible, but that individuals can travel a short distance if necessary to participate. [Information on travel from the Government is available here.](#)
- If players cannot travel on their own, it is advised they should be accompanied by someone from their household or bubble.
- There should be no socialising after activity, and players should leave promptly.

## HYGIENE

- Make hand sanitizers or wipes available for use at entrance/exit to venue/courts and buildings where possible (Hand sanitiser stations can be sourced from the LTA Buying Group - see <https://www.ltabuyinggroup.co.uk>)
- Official 'Hands, Face, Space' posters and other resources venues are available for venues to [download from the Government website](#)
- Clean all common touchpoint surfaces (gates, door handles, handrails etc) regularly, wearing any personal protective equipment that would usually be used – it is not necessary to wear any PPE or clothing over and above what would usually be used
- Details on how to approach cleaning after an individual with symptoms of, or confirmed COVID-19, has left the setting or area is provided on [Gov.uk](#)
- Further guidance on maintaining hygiene at your venue is [available on the Government website](#)

## HEALTH & SAFETY

- Ensure usual access to first aid and emergency equipment is maintained
- Injuries should still be treated, as participant safety is of the utmost importance. Physios and other medical personnel should take care to protect themselves and others through rigorous cleaning and personal hygiene, including increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting equipment and surfaces. Wearing face coverings is recommended for both medics and patients, where this is possible and practical
- After contact with an injured participant, physios and other medical personnel should clean their 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. They should also avoid touching their mouth, eyes and nose
- Physios and medical personnel should keep a record of each participant they have come into contact with, for test and trace purposes. Records should be

kept for 21 days and then destroyed. Those working at a sport event should familiarise themselves with the guidance for first responders, in case of emergency situations.

- Guidance on delivering first aid during the coronavirus pandemic is available on the [St John Ambulance website](#)
- Further information for those who may need to act as a 'first responder' role in a sports setting is available on the [Government website](#)

## OUTDOOR FACILITIES

- Ensure nets are maintained at the appropriate height to avoid players having to adjust them, and remove net winders
- If your courts require dragging (e.g. clay) or drying after rain, venues are advised to have a nominated person to do this or make disposable gloves and spray available for players to use
- Remove any other unnecessary equipment and items from courts, and ensure appropriate cleaning measures are in place items that remain in place. Equipment such as benches may be returned if necessary to provide support to participants, but regular and appropriate cleaning must be undertaken.

## EQUIPMENT

- Players are advised to bring their own equipment, and where possible players and coaches should limit sharing of equipment. If necessary, use of communal rackets can be done subject to thorough cleaning measures between uses
- Any coaching equipment used (e.g. cones) should be cleaned and wiped down afterwards

## GUIDANCE FOR COACHES

### OUTDOOR DISABILITY TENNIS ACTIVITY DURING NATIONAL LOCKDOWN [NEW]

- Whilst the Government requires indoor and outdoor tennis courts to close for the period of national lockdown restrictions, an exemption for organised outdoor disability sport means that outdoor tennis courts can open for coaches to lead organised activity for disabled people.
- Social distancing should be maintained where possible, but in some circumstances people will need physical assistance to be active. It's important you discuss this with the person to consider their needs and preferences.
- [Sport England has advised](#) that any sports coaches or trainers undertaking one-to-one sessions should ensure they're complying with their national governing body's safeguarding policies and procedures and conduct a thorough risk assessment before engaging in any sessions. This should include particular consideration for under-18s and vulnerable adults.
- Coaches and coaching organisations must consider safety first, particularly minimising the risk of infection/transmission. A thorough risk assessment must be undertaken (or updated if one previously completed), and appropriate measures put in place to ensure participants, staff and volunteers are protected - you are advised to liaise with your venue when doing this. A risk assessment template is available from the COVID-19 section of the venue [Resource Library](#) on the LTA website. For larger group activity, venues should consider transmission risk based on three variables: droplet transmission and aerosol generation; fomite transmission; and population.
- Coaches who have had their normal activity disrupted and have a need to coach outside of their normal venue for organised outdoor disability tennis activity, should seek prior permission from the venue, local authority or operator who is in charge of the tennis facility, before undertaking coaching
- Guidelines will be updated as we progress through the different phases of Government measures – the LTA remains in discussions with Government and so we recommend you check the official LTA position at [www.lta.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.lta.org.uk/coronavirus) on a regular basis to stay abreast of the latest recommendations
- You can meet with different groups in a single day for organised outdoor disability tennis activity.
- Coaches should continue to work closely with the venues at which they are delivering activity, to ensure that all activity is COVID-19 secure.

### PRE-ATTENDANCE SYMPTOM CHECK

- All coaches and participants in your sessions should undergo a pre-attendance self-assessment for any COVID-19 symptoms [using the information on the NHS website](#) before leaving home.
- No-one should leave home to participate in tennis if they, or someone they live with, has symptoms of COVID -19, currently recognised as any of:
  - 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](#)

## NHS TEST & TRACE

- If a player you have coached develops symptoms of COVID-19, they should be directed to follow the Government's 'test and trace' guidelines, which can be read on the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website
- Please note, it is down to NHS Test and Trace to make decisions on close contacts. However, it is our understanding is that if coaches ensure they and those taking part in their tennis activity adhere to the LTA Covid-19 Secure guidelines and maintain social distancing at all times, then it would not be anticipated that they would be classified as a close contact of a participant user who subsequently tests positive

## SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Coaches should be fully aware of the latest Government advice on staying alert and safe (social distancing) which can be read [here](#)
- Coaches should ensure players do not congregate on or around the court before and after play
- Attendees should be advised to limit their interactions with anyone outside of the group they are attending the venue with (e.g. players on another court or in a different coaching group), and they should continue to maintain social distancing from those that they do not live with or are in a support bubble with

## TRAVEL

- Exercise and work/voluntary activity are two of the Government's permitted reasons for individuals to leave the home, which includes for organised outdoor disability sport. The Government advises that exercise should be done locally wherever possible, but that individuals can travel a short distance if necessary to participate. [Information on travel from the Government is available here.](#)
- If players cannot travel on their own, it is advised they should be accompanied by someone from their household or bubble.
- There should be no socialising after activity, and players should leave promptly.

## HEALTH, SAFETY & HYGIENE

- Ensure usual access to first aid and emergency equipment is maintained
- Injuries should still be treated, as participant safety is of the utmost importance – further details are provided in the LTA's guidance for venues
- Guidance on delivering first aid during the coronavirus pandemic is also available on the [St John Ambulance website](#)
- Further information for those who may need to act as a 'first responder' role in a sports setting is available on the [Government website](#)
- Hand hygiene is imperative - hand sanitise at intervals if you have to touch communal surfaces
- Avoid touching your face
- If you need to sneeze or cough, do so into a tissue or upper sleeve

## EQUIPMENT

- Coaches do not need to use new or fresh tennis balls for each lesson, and are no longer advised to be the only person to touch the tennis balls
- Where new or fresh balls aren't used or where players handle tennis balls as well as the coach, then extra care must be taken to ensure the coach and

players do not touch your faces during play, and you should all clean your hands before the session and immediately after finishing (use alcohol gel if required)

- Players should bring their own equipment where possible and sharing of equipment should be limited – however, use of communal rackets can be done subject to thorough cleaning processes between uses
- Any coaching equipment used (e.g. cones) should be wiped down and cleaned rigorously afterwards
- Ensure all equipment is removed from the court at the end of the session

## COMMUNICATION & VENUE LIAISON

- Coaches should liaise with the venue to ensure an agreed approach to activity that is feasible to deliver safely, and explore how coaches can be supported to deliver sessions
- Coaches should make customers aware in advance that undertaking any activity, including tennis, has the potential for increased risk of transmission of COVID-19, and advise attendees to read the [Government's guidance on staying safe outside your home](#)
- Communicate with your customers clearly and regularly, making them aware in advance of the measures you are putting in place for your sessions, and guidelines they should follow when attending
- Clear instructions should be provided to participants ahead of the session so that they know which coach and which court to report to

## WHEELCHAIR TENNIS

- Player/coach using a tennis wheelchair for activity should be either:
  - Able to transfer themselves from their day chair into a tennis wheelchair
  - A person from their household or bubble can transfer the player from a day chair into a tennis wheelchair. This person should remain available throughout the session in case of an emergency or toilet break, if required support is needed
- Tennis wheelchairs owned by the venue should be sanitised pre and post activity. This should be conducted by a nominated member of staff, using appropriate PPE
- A person accessing a sports wheelchair owned by the venue should only use the tennis wheelchair that has been assigned to them, no swapping of wheelchairs mid-session should be allowed

## VI TENNIS GUIDING

- If verbal guiding is not appropriate, and the player doesn't have appropriate support from someone from their household/bubble, then guiding people with sight loss at tennis venues can take place as long as both the guide and visually impaired player follow the mitigations outlined below:
  - Both people to wash hands or sanitise immediately before and after guiding
  - Both people wear a face covering
  - Use a tennis racket as a guiding aid, between the player and the guider. Player to hold grip end of the racket; guider to use head end of the racket.
  - Volunteers that are supporting players with sight loss should stay with the assigned player for the duration of the activity. Volunteers should not mix with other players to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus