



Open Court
Disability Tennis

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COVID-19: RETURN TO PLAY

Version 1 – Published 23 September 2020



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.

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, and all elements of the guidelines should be considered to ensure activity can be delivered safely.

IMPORTANT: Where a local lockdown is in place additional measures and guidelines may be in place – venues in these areas are advised to check our main coronavirus information page for further information.

GUIDANCE FOR TENNIS VENUES

INTRODUCTION

With the LTA's Open Court programme back up and running for the most part, it is extremely important that tennis venues in Britain that deliver tennis to disabled people reach out and encourage players to return to tennis. We have therefore developed the set of measures below for venues to consider when looking at adapted play.

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.

In order to encourage people back to the sport, people want to see venues continuing to promote the cleanliness and reassure users that the centres are safe. This is a call to action for venues to update and clarify their guidance to disabled people, and involve them in the solutions to ensure their venue is COVID safe, for everyone.

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

GENERAL

- 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
- Where attendance of a parent/guardian (non-participant) is required, or a carer for a disabled player, it is permitted, but should be off court and limited to one per player where possible
- While from Thursday 24 September indoor group tennis activity should take place in sub-groups of no more than six that do not mix, there is [an exemption for activity for disabled people](#), which can take place in any number
- While changing rooms and showering facilities can be opened, their use should in general be avoided where possible. However, changing/shower facilities must be made available for participants with disabilities or special needs
- 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](#)

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

TRAVEL TO THE VENUE

- If players cannot travel on their own, it is advised they should be accompanied by someone from their household or bubble.
- Outside of the activity itself the law in relation to the 'rule of six' still applies, and so players that normally meet at a centralised point to travel to the venue with other players should ensure they do not meet in a group of larger than six people