

**SWIM  
IRELAND**

**Swim Ireland  
Club Swimming**

**COVID-19 Return to Water Framework  
(June 2020)**

**SWIM  
IRELAND**

Me and  
the water

## **Introduction**

Following the Government of Ireland's publication of the 'Roadmap for Reopening Society & Business' on Friday 1st May 2020 and the Northern Ireland Executive's publication of the 'Coronavirus Executive Approach to Decision-Making' on 12th May 2020, Swim Ireland produced a Roadmap as to how aquatic activities may be resumed on the island of Ireland on a phased basis. As Swim Ireland gain clarity on a number of issues within each Government's published guidelines, the recommendations and guidelines within this Roadmap have already begun to alter and will continue to be updated accordingly. Swim Ireland have been working with England, Scotland and Wales as part of a 'Four Nations Working Group' on these matters and have also observed and studied closely that which would currently be seen as best practice by other European nations.

We need to emphasize at this point that it is not permissible for indoor swimming pools to open either in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland under the roadmaps of both governments, with the exception, at this time, of the National Aquatic Centre for elite athletes.

***The purpose of this document is to assist, empower and support you and your Club to get back into the water as safely as possible. It is fundamental that it is understood that it is not possible to eliminate the risk of the spread of the Coronavirus completely and that we will work with all stakeholders to minimise risk; this concept must be fully understood and accepted by all Swim Ireland members and the parents of our members who are minors.***

We know that with strong and organised collaboration between club committees, club coaches, parents of athletes, athletes themselves and facility providers, we can create safe plans for the usage of our pools to deliver swimming coaching, and deliver this in a manner which is compliant with public health directives. The current HSE advice in relation to the impact of COVID-19 in chlorinated environments states that '**adherence to current recommended disinfection practice is sufficient to inactivate COVID-19 virus in chlorinated drinking water and swimming pools**' and can be found [HERE](#).

At all times, current (and updated) Government restrictions and guidelines in place relating to travel, social distancing, hand washing/hygiene and face masks/coverings should be adhered to at all times via [HERE](#) (ROI) or [HERE](#) (NI).

**This document is comprised of the following sections:**

- 1. General Points to Consider in Relation to Club Based Return to Water (Page 3)**
- 2. Practical & Logistical Issues Associated with a Return to Water/Training (Page 3)**
- 3. Preparation for Entry Into the Water & In the Water (Page 5)**
- 4. Other Key Points (Page 15)**
- 5. Training & Programme Considerations (Page 16)**
- 6. Appendices (Page 19)**

## **Fundamental Decisions Required Before Returning to Water**

- 1. COMPLIANCE WITH CURRENT COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS** – The need for full compliance on the phased lifting of restrictions to ensure that the majority of aquatic activity remains a 'low-medium' risk activity.
- 2. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY** – Each person taking personal responsibility for their own health, safety and decision making.
- 3. RISK ASSESSMENT** – Individuals, clubs and the associated workforce must ensure that they have assessed the risks associated with the conditions, the equipment, and the experience which lies with individuals, clubs and facilities before making the decision to return to water. A Risk Assessment template, an information webinar and associated guidance will be provided by Swim Ireland.
- 4. BE PREPARED FOR CHANGE** - It is becoming clear that the aquatic landscape that we knew pre COVID-19 may be vastly different on our return. Once there is a green light to open all facilities, it is unlikely that all pools will simply open their doors on that date:
  - Many pools may open with reduced pool hours
  - Whilst a facility may open, there may be a phased return to certain activities – aquatics potentially being later in that phasing
  - Local authorities/pool operators may open pools within certain geographical areas bit by bit rather than on mass

Therefore, a strong emphasis must be placed upon working closely and in a timely fashion with both the relevant facility/s and Swim Ireland, prior to such pools re-opening. Swim Ireland do not own any pools and as such, negotiations with pool providers is key to the ability of Clubs and members to return to water.

## Section 1 – General Points to Consider in Relation to a Return to Club-Based Training

1. Each Club must reach out to its own facility to understand their intended re-opening date and plan
2. Club plans must be aligned to the facility plans and the facility protocols will need to form part of the Club's re-opening protocols (further detail on this will follow as part of the Return to Water Toolkit)
3. Clubs must carry out a Risk Assessment in advance of any return to the pool (please see Appendix A)
4. Clubs should consider issuing a survey to club members to ascertain the likely level of return to training
5. We would advise that Clubs prepare for a return of older swimmers first as it will be important for Clubs and Coaches to build confidence in the new protocols and to re-introduce different elements/squads in the Club over a period of time
6. Clubs will need to work on developing a modified Operation/Annual Plan and associated budgeting to take into consideration the different world and environment in which we are all currently operating and living. Further information from Swim Ireland will follow to support this piece of work

## Section 2 – Practical & Logistical Issues in Relation to the Return to Water/Training

The subsequent sections of this document will focus on the various practical and logistical issues with a return to club-based training scenario (and how these can potentially be resolved). The following key areas will be addressed:

1. Travel to Pool
2. Entry to Building
3. Internal Transit to Pool
4. Exit from Water & Changeover of Groups
5. Transit from Pool
6. Travel & Parental Expectations Post-Sessions

It is important to stress that some of the below details will be subject to agreements between the club and facility. As an educational piece, clubs should consider videoing a senior athlete or a group of such athletes going through the above and use it as an example of best practice to share with other club members. Swim Ireland will issue such videos as part of its Return to the Water Toolkit.

### Travel to Pool

- Individuals are **NOT TO ATTEND** any session if any cold or flu symptoms are being experienced, or if any of the COVID-19 symptoms are present. If an individual is experiencing symptoms, then the HSE/PHA protocols need to be followed.
- Only those who are within any travel restrictions in place at that time (please refer to the Government of Ireland Phases or the Northern Ireland Executive Steps) should attend training.
- No car-pooling or lift sharing to the training sessions for those from different households (subject to change, based on updated Governmental advice).
- Once at the facility, parents should ideally stay in the pool car park until the session is finished. If this is not possible, parents should always be within a five-minute travel time of the facility. If a child feels sick during training and has to leave early, there will be a requirement for them to leave the building quickly.
- Athletes should arrive at a predetermined time. For example, if the session is starting at 1800, athletes will need to arrive at the facility for 1745, with the screening questionnaire pre-completed (detailed in Entry to Building). Any athlete who arrives late, compromising safe transit to pool and/or safe entry into water **SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO ATTEND THE SESSION**.
- Those who are under the age of 18 years will need parental consent to complete the pre-entry checks. This should be arranged between the club and its members before any club-based training resumes. Relevant documentation will form part of the Swim Ireland Return to the Water Toolkit.
- Athletes should arrive for the session with their swimsuit on under their clothes. From a pool hygiene perspective, where facilities do not permit the use of their showers, athletes should shower immediately prior to departing for training.

### **Entry to Building**

#### **N.B - The specific detail here may change in line with the facility specific protocols in this regard**

- Upon entering the building, athletes should use the hand sanitiser provided.
- Athletes will need to arrive with the screening questionnaire completed (**Appendix B**), before proceeding to the pool deck. Some facilities may require non-intrusive temperature checks to be taken before permitting entry.
- Once the screening questionnaire has been provided to and accepted by the relevant Club Official/Coach, athletes should proceed to the changing rooms or the pool deck (facility dependant). Directions and movement flow should be dictated by the facility's operating procedures. Note that there may need to be a separate entry and exit route, which will be facility dependent. It will be each facility's responsibility to determine whether changing rooms and/or showers should be used by club members before/after sessions.
- Parents should follow public access guidelines as required by the facility and clubs should inform parents of these protocols

### **Transit to Pool**

In some facilities, clubs may find that access to changing rooms and shower facilities will not be permitted (or at least severely restricted) for the foreseeable future. If the facility deems that changing rooms should not be used by clubs, both the club and the facility should prepare the pool deck in advance of the session, in order to ensure that every athlete in any particular session has a designated 'Athlete Spot'. These Spots should be marked (e.g. with a gym mat or with tape) and be a distance apart which complies with current social distancing requirements. In such situations, athletes should be notified of their Athlete Spot in advance of the session. The Spot should also be adjacent to the side of the pool that is closest to an athlete's 'Home Point' in the water (detailed in Preparation for Entry into the Water).

- Where the use of changing rooms is not permitted, once at their Athlete Spot, athletes should place their belongings on the mat, and prepare for the session. During this time, coaches may decide to explain the session content to the athletes.
- In general, it is expected that the facility will advise of the protocols regarding changing rooms and showers and these should form part of the Club's Return to Water protocols.

### **Exit From the Water & Changeover of Groups**

- Once the session is completed, athletes should exit the water, in a similar (but opposite) manner to how they entered the water (see detail below), and return directly to the changing rooms or their Athlete Spot on the deck.
- If the use of changing rooms is not permitted, once at their Athlete Spot, athletes should towel dry themselves and dry their swimsuit with a towel as best they can, and then dress themselves (while still wearing their damp swimsuit). In such circumstances, once dressed, athletes will need to wipe down their Athlete Spot (with provided disinfectant equipment) for the next group.
- The above practice will need to be completed in a specific amount of allotted time in order to ensure that the athletes have left the changing room or the pool deck (and the building) before the next group enter the building. Crossover between groups should be limited as much as possible.
- Any and all kit/equipment must be taken home with the athlete. There is to be no storing of personal training kit/equipment at the facility.

### **Transit from the Pool**

- Athletes will leave the pool deck by following the directions and movement flow provided by the facility. Again, this might be a separate route to how the athletes entered the pool deck.

### **Travel & Parental Expectations Post-Sessions**

- Athletes will leave the building and go straight to their cars. No car-pooling or lift sharing for those from different households (subject to future Government advice).
- As athletes leave the building, they should use the hand sanitiser provided.
- Athletes should not congregate outside the pool for any reason.
- In facilities where the use of showers is not permitted, athletes should shower once they arrive home.

### Section 3 – Preparation for Entry Into the Water & In the Water

You will recall earlier in the document a reference for clubs to need to be ‘prepared for change’. For athlete entry into the water and how athletes will train in the water, this will be significantly different at first and it is important that this is explained and understood by all involved. Swim Ireland have an initial conservative approach to a Return to the Water and it is possible and hopefully probable that the advices below will need to be updated regularly as matters evolve.

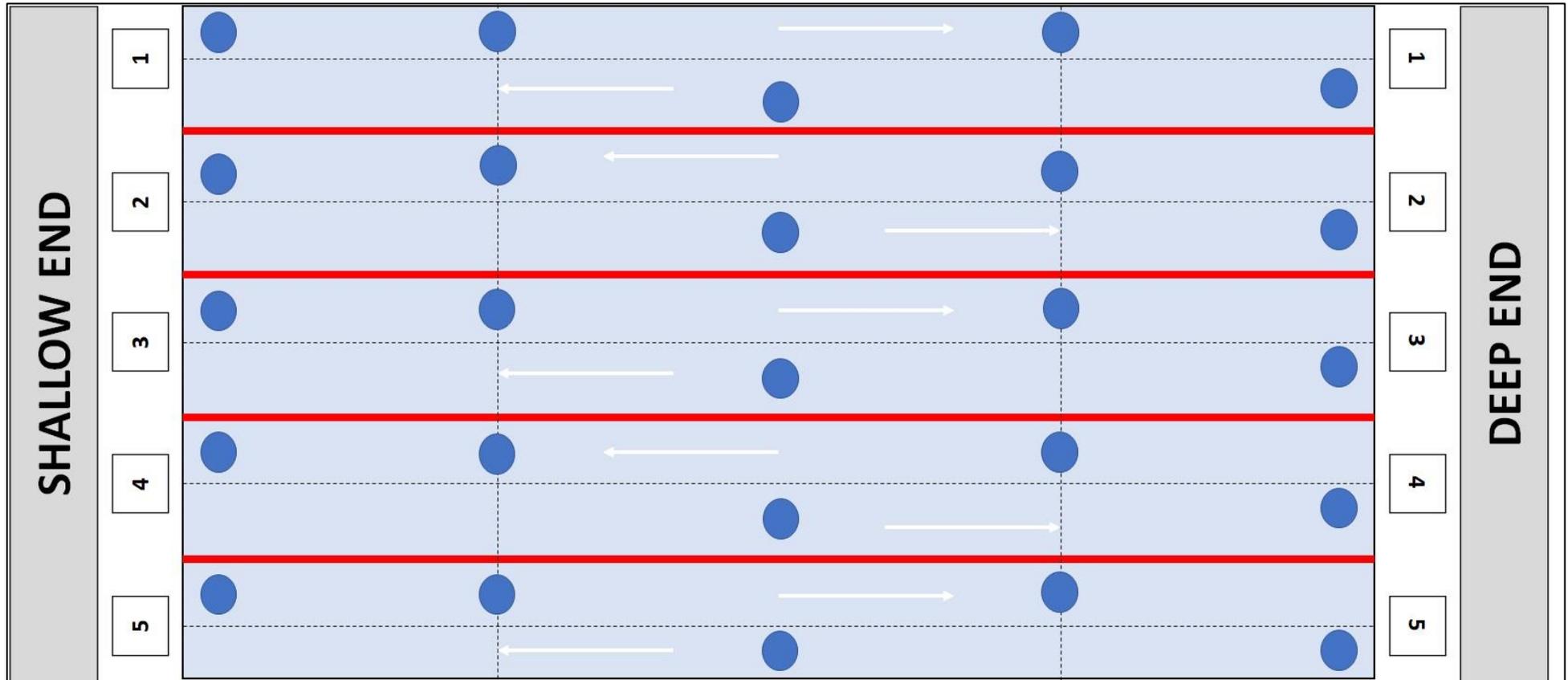
The information below is supported by diagrams later in the document which we hope will make it easier to understand the options available to you. These should be shared with your facility and we will be hosting Club webinars to address any queries you have.

#### Preparation for Entry into Water

- A procedure will need to be put in place for how athletes enter the water. It will not be possible for all the athletes who are using a particular lane to enter together at the same point. Two examples of a procedure for entering the water are given below:
  - 1) Athletes enter the water at the end of their respective lanes, one at a time and move to their Home Point. Social distancing would need to be adhered to at all times.
  - 2) Athletes enter from the side of the pool (at the side that is closest to and adjacent to their Home Point). Where athletes are not permitted to use the changing rooms, this should also be adjacent with their Athlete Spot). Athletes are to then move across the lanes under the lane lines until they reach their designated Home Point. Social distancing would need to be adhered to at all times.
- It is important that both athletes and coaches are ready to start the session at the designated time. To ensure that there is ample time to complete the session, coaches should have athletes exit the deck and pool before the next squad/coaching group arrive for their designated training period. This is a further reason as to why any athlete who arrives late to a training session should not be permitted to partake in the session.
- Athletes must become accustomed to commencing swimming immediately on a coach command, on a whistle or at a designated point on a pace clock. Athletes who delay starting a swim within a lane in comparison with everyone else in the lane seriously compromise athletes being able to socially distance at all times
- As previously mentioned, athletes should be made aware of their Lane Number and Home Point within the lane before the session.
- The number of Home Points in any given lane is dependent on the age, maturity, and level of understanding of the athletes in question. An example of how this would work for different groups is given below (based on a 25m pool format):
  - **Adults/Masters Swimmers (aged 18 year +): Five athletes per single lane (Figure 1) or six athletes per double lane (Figure 4a or 4b)**
  - **Older Adolescent/Youth Swimmers (aged 14-17 years): Four athletes per lane (Figure 2) or six athletes per double lane (Figure 4a or 4b)**
  - **Child Swimmers (aged 13 years & under): Three athletes per lane (Figure 3) or six athletes per double lane (Figure 4a or 4b)**
- As younger athletes become more familiar with this concept, there is the possibility of increasing the number of athletes per lane from three to four, and the number of older adolescent/youth athletes per lane from four to five per lane.
- A video of a working example of this will be sent to you next week but it is important to note that the example in the link will be provided to show how the concept works, and recommendations relating to numbers per lane and training structure should be taken from this Swim Ireland Framework
- The Home Point for any given athlete should be rotated on a session by session basis, so that athletes do not always have the potentially more disadvantaged Home Points (i.e. not at the end of a given lane).

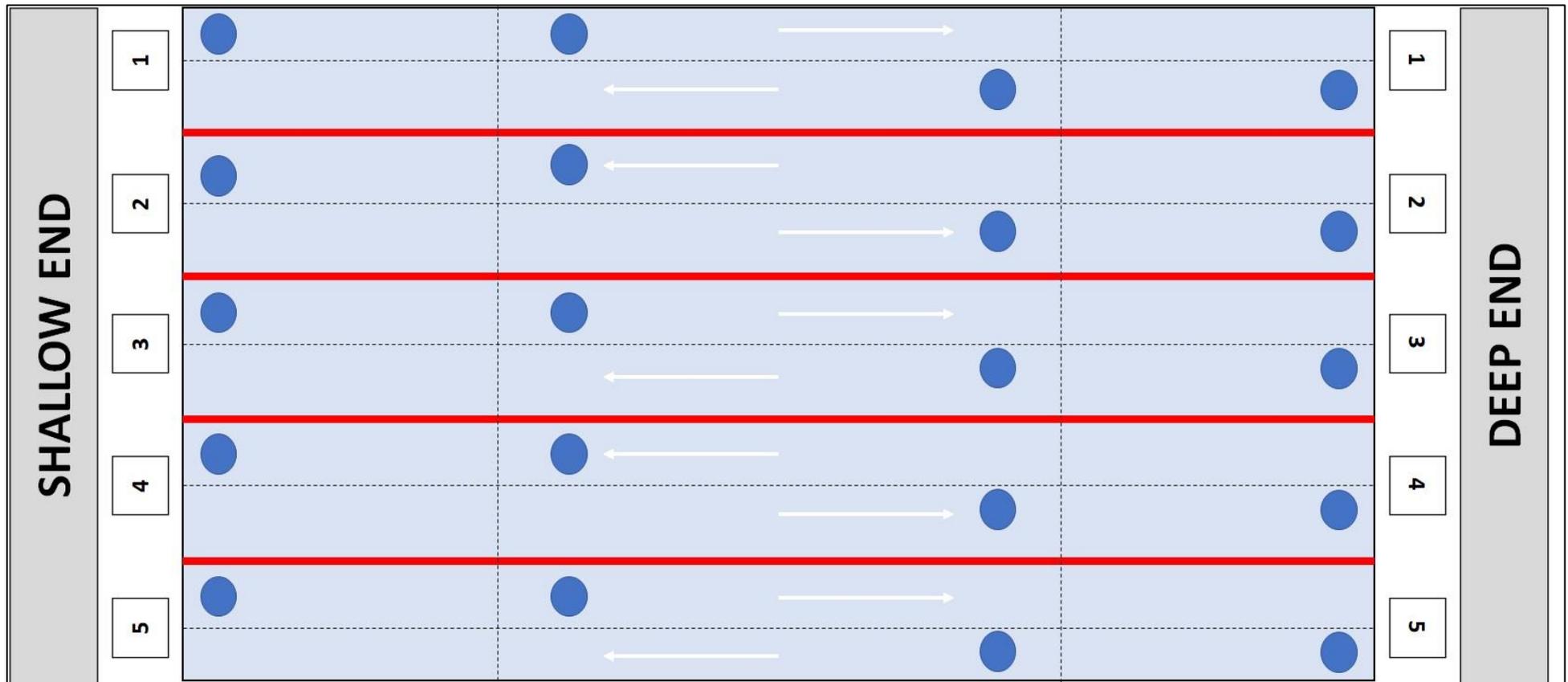
- For clubs where there are athletes who are aged 10 years and under, and where such clubs plan on a more skill based return to the pool, there is also the option of swimming across the width of the pool for such sessions. While the number per lane will be limited to a maximum of three, there is the possibility of having more than five lanes in situ (**Figure 5**). It is important to note that this set up is based on the Facility in question having suitable lane lines available to allow the pool to be properly divided up. A distance which complies with current social distancing requirements needs to be kept between lanes, in order to ensure that for those athletes who have a Home Point is at the end of the lane, can adequately maintain social distancing between the other lanes. This format should not be considered if widthways lane lines are not available to definitely mark the lane space.

**DETAILED DIAGRAMS/FIGURES 1-6 referenced above are set out on the following pages:**



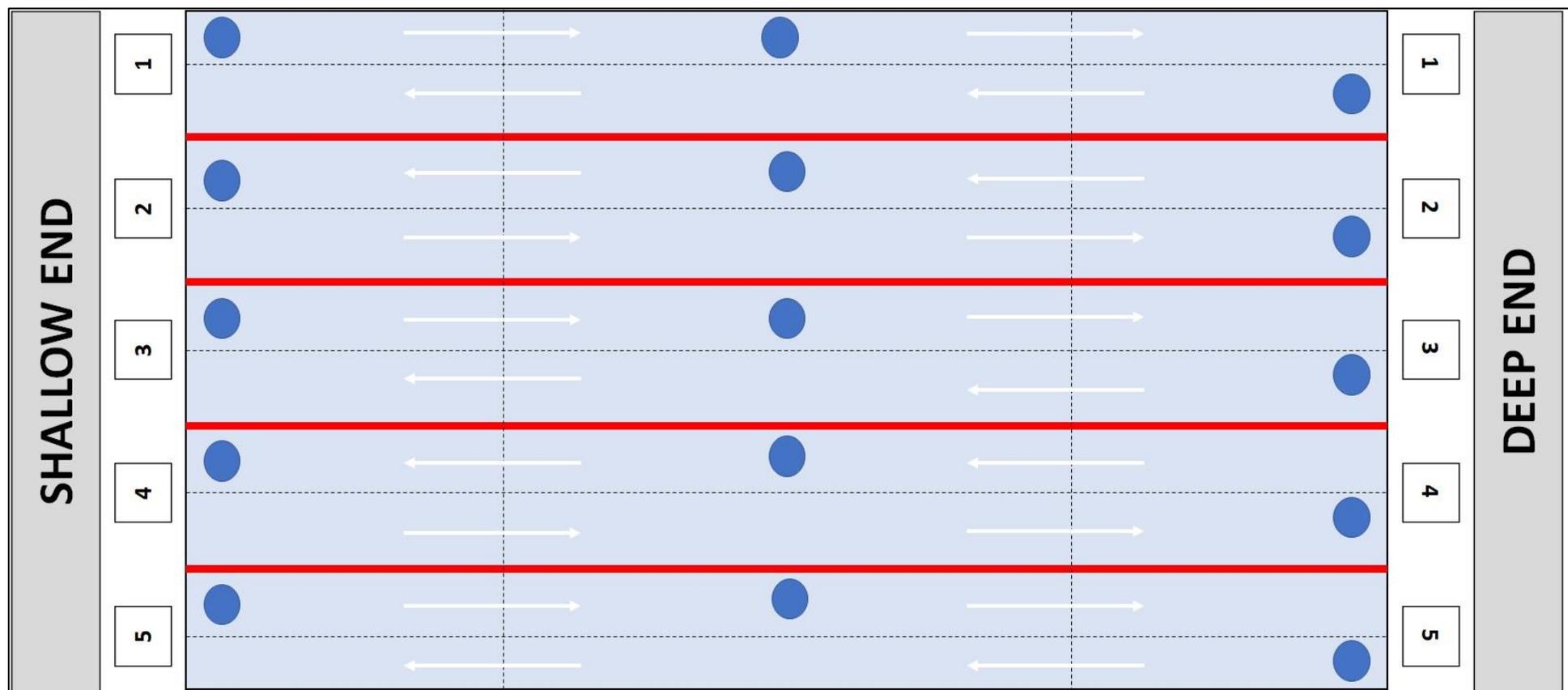
**Figure 1.** Five athletes per lane (based on a five lane 25m pool). One athlete is stationed at each end of the lane, with a further three athletes in the middle (by the backstroke flags and one at the mid-point of the lane). Lanes will alternate between clockwise and anti-clockwise. This allows for **25 athletes** to be in the pool at any one time. For 50m pools, up to eight athletes per lane can be similarly considered

*Adults/Masters Swimmers (aged 18 year +): Five athletes per single lane (25m pool)*



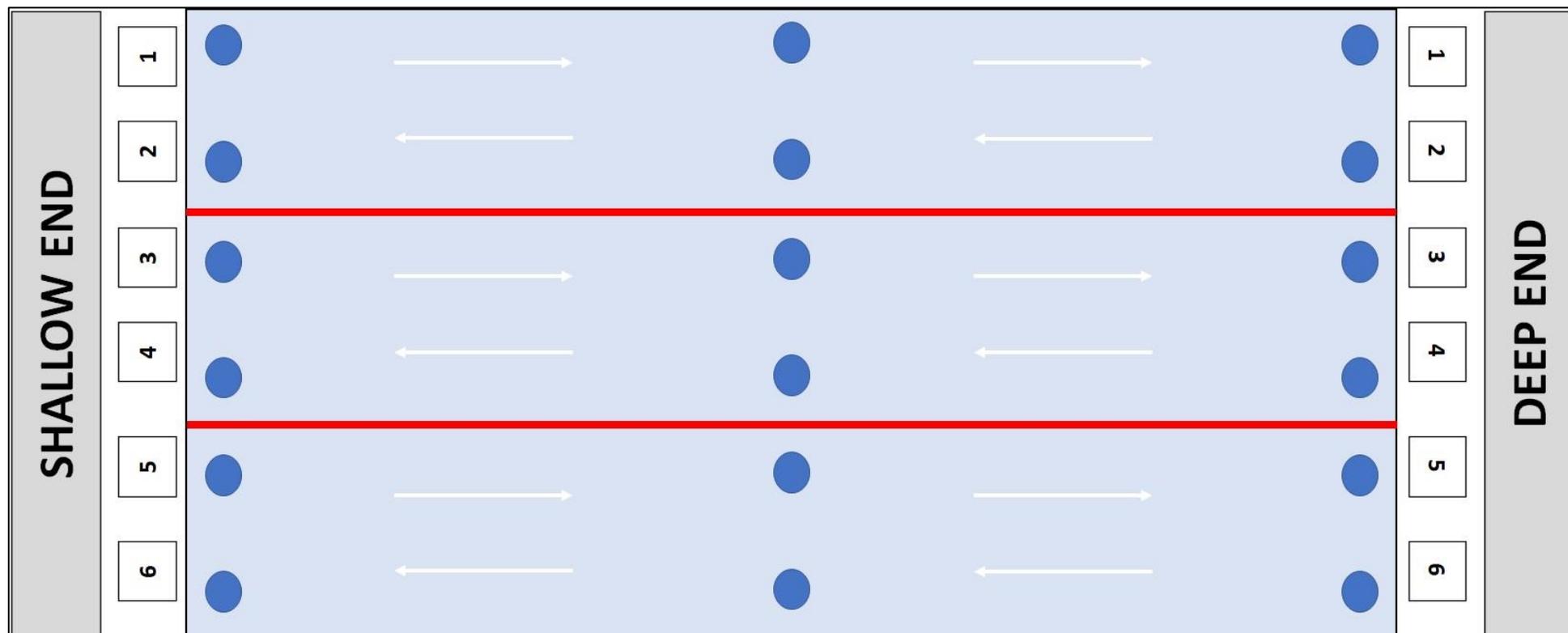
**Figure 2.** Four athletes per lane (based on a five lane 25m pool). One athlete is stationed at each end of the lane, with a further two athletes between the backstroke flags and the mid-point of the pool (on opposite side and opposite ends). Lanes will alternate between clockwise and anti-clockwise. This allows for **20 athletes** to be in the pool at any one time. For 50m pools, up to six athletes per lane can be similarly considered

*Older Adolescent/Youth Swimmers (aged 14-17 years): Four athletes per lane (25m pool)*



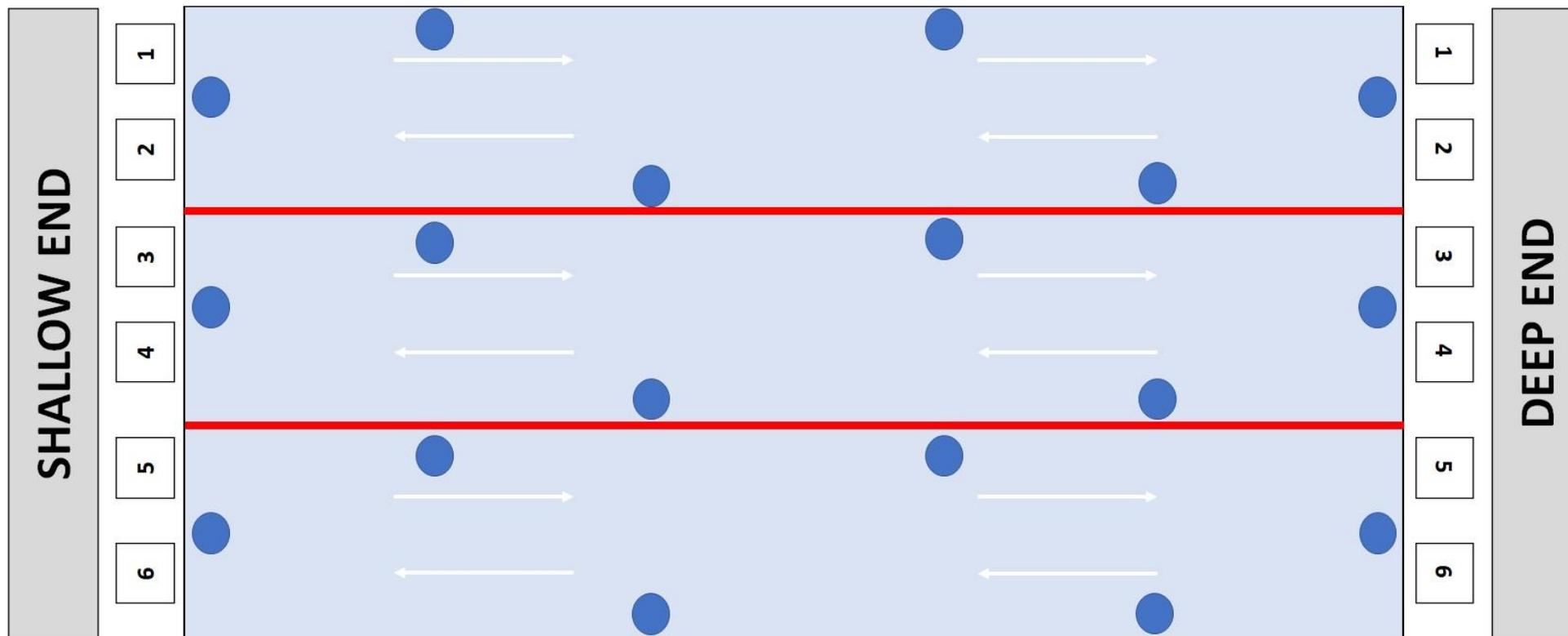
**Figure 3.** Three athletes per lane (based on a five lane 25m pool). One athlete is stationed at each end of the lane, with another athlete at the mid-point of the pool. Lanes will alternate between clockwise and anti-clockwise. This allows for **15 athletes** to be in the pool at any one time. For 50m pools, up to four athletes per lane can be similarly considered

*Child Swimmers (aged 13 years & under): Three athletes per lane (25m pool)*



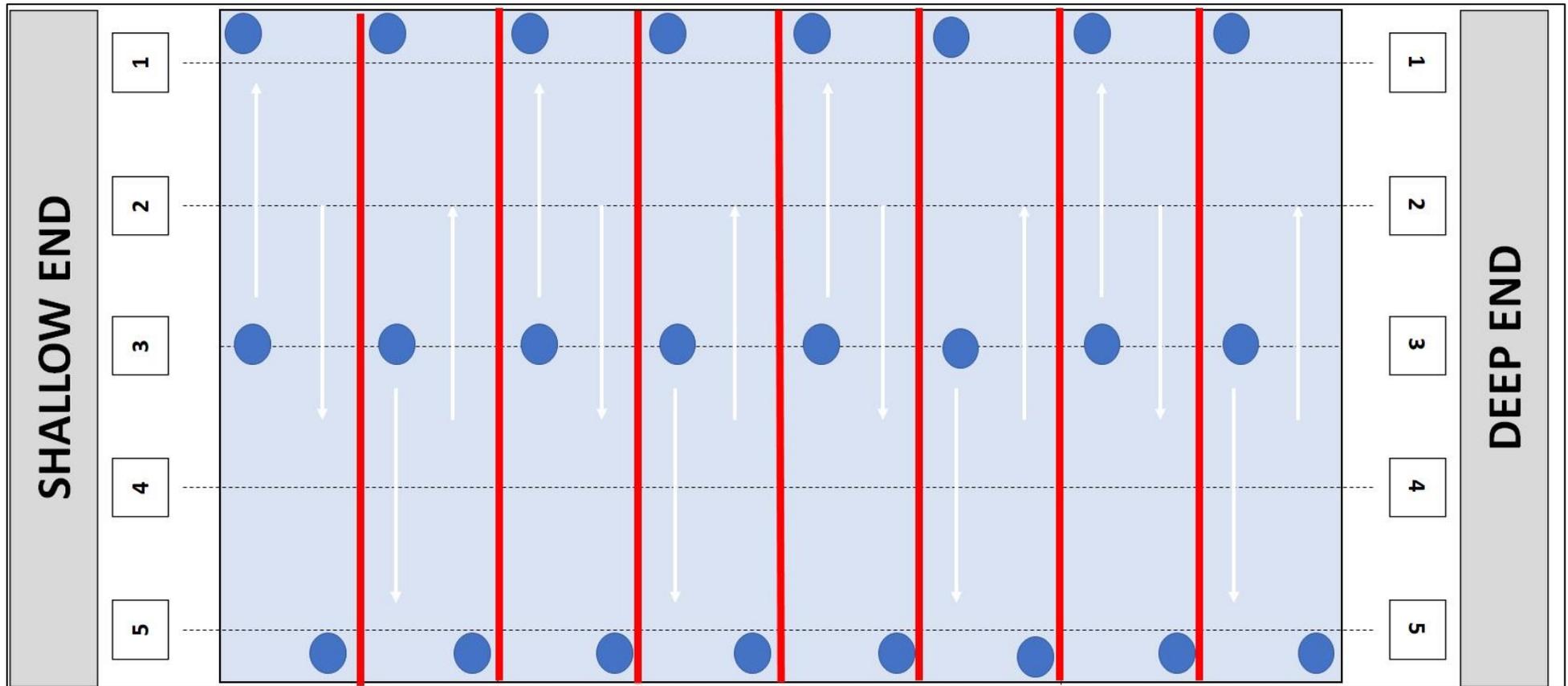
**Figure 4a (For Pools Where Singles Lanes Are 2m or More in Width).** Six athletes per double-width lane (based on a six lane 25m pool). Two athletes are stationed at each end of the width lane, with another two athletes at the mid-point of the pool. Lanes would all swim clockwise or anticlockwise. The above example shows the pool being divided into three double-width lanes. The above example allows for **18 athletes** to be in the water at any one time.

*Adults/Masters Swimmers (aged 18 year +), Older Adolescent/Youth Swimmers (aged 14-17 years) and/or Child Swimmers (aged 13 years & under): Six athletes per double lane*

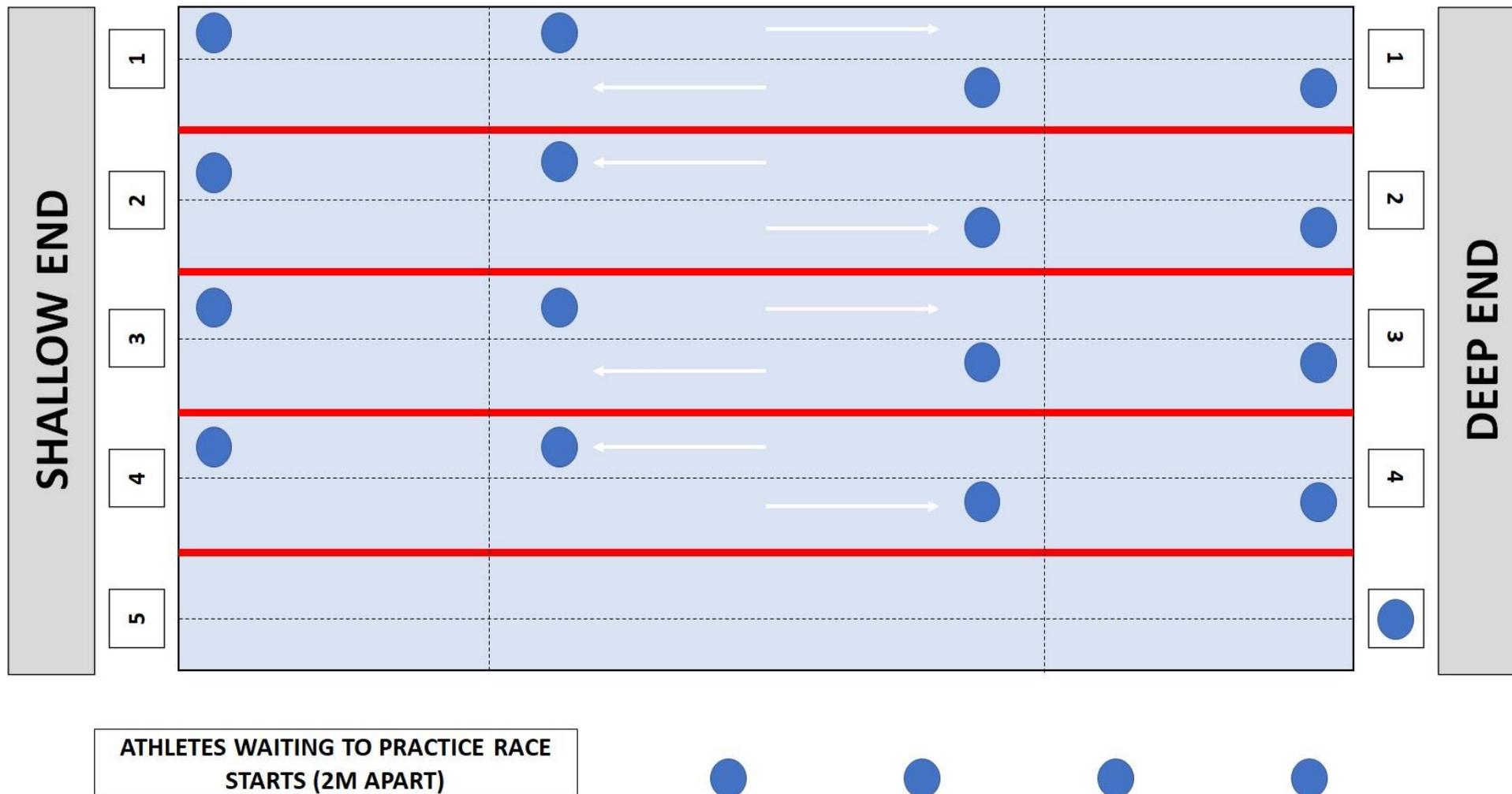


**Figure 4b (For Pools Where Singles Lanes Are Less Than 2m in Width).** Six athletes per double-width lane (based on a six lane 25m pool). One athlete is stationed at each end of the double width lane, with another four athletes stationed in a zig zag fashion along the lane. Lanes would all swim clockwise or anticlockwise. The above example shows the pool being divided into three double-width lanes. The above example allows for **18 athletes** to be in the water at any one time.

*Adults/Masters Swimmers (aged 18 year +), Older Adolescent/Youth Swimmers (aged 14-17 years) and/or Child Swimmers (aged 13 years & under): Six athletes per double lane*



**Figure 5.** Three athletes per width lane (based on a five lane 25m pool). One athlete is stationed at each end of the width lane, with another athlete at the mid-point of the pool. Lanes will alternate between clockwise and anti-clockwise. The above example shows the pool being divided into eight width lanes. This can be increased, as long as there is a distance between width lanes which complies with current social distancing requirements. The above example allows for **24 athletes** to be in the water at any one time.



**Figure 6.** Dive start practice should take place in outside lanes only, with athletes forming a queue where social distancing can be maintained (see lane 5 in this diagram). Athletes wait until an individual has completed a minimum of 12.5m before the next athlete takes their turn. All other lanes can follow regular swim sets. This diagram shows four athletes per lane but should be taken into consideration with the age/maturity information provided in **Figures 1-3**

### In Water

- Athletes should place their water bottle/s on the pool deck adjacent to their Home Point. Coaches should plan into their sessions how athletes may access their water bottles at key points within a set without compromising the work of others, without coming into contact with other athletes and maintain social distancing. This can be best achieved by allowing certain athletes or certain lanes of athletes to transgress across the pool under the lane lines to their bottle. What is clear is that athletes who occupy Home Points which are not at the ends of lanes will not be able to hydrate as frequently as they may have been used to and this is one of the reasons as to why Home Points should be rotated between athletes from session to session
- Athletes in lanes should travel in opposite directions (i.e. alternate between clockwise moving lanes and anti-clockwise moving lanes).
- Athletes should be instructed on the direction of their breathing when they are waiting at their Home Point in order to ensure that they are not breathing directly in the direction of other athletes.
- All repeat distances should enable the athlete to start and stop at their designated Home Point.
- Lanes should consist of athletes who are of a similar ability, with all athletes in a given lane swimming at a constant speed. **AT NO POINT SHOULD AN ATHLETE TRY AND CATCH THE PERSON IN FRONT OF THEM.**
- In the initial return to Club-based training, freestyle should be the primary training stroke, particularly in the initial weeks.
- Some butterfly and breaststroke can be introduced; however, due to the greater displacement and movement of these strokes (and the increased likelihood of coming into contact with other athletes), the number of athletes per lane would need to be considered for these strokes.
- Backstroke should be avoided in the initial return, as it is more difficult to maintain adequate spacing between athletes and it is the only one of the four strokes where exhalation does not take place into the water
- The use of kick boards for kick sets should be considered carefully by coaches as this increases the possibility of athletes inhaling the exhalations of others (as athletes will exhale in a front facing direction as other athletes are approaching them on the other side of the lane). Snorkels reduce this risk, as although exhalations still take place out of the water, such exhalations are less likely to be directed towards another athlete
- Coaches should consider reducing the use of training equipment and kit as the collection of, putting on and removing of training equipment in relation to their Home Point will be highly challenging
- If fins and paddles are to be used, the number of athletes per lane will need to be considered.
- During the initial return, coaches and athletes should not worry about working on dive starts. As the weeks progress, and coaches want to introduce them, they should consider the following:
  - Use of the outside lanes only, with athletes forming a queue where social distancing can be maintained (**Figure 6**).
  - Athletes wait until an individual has completed at least 12.5m before the next athlete takes their turn.
  - The first athlete undertaking this practice will need to wipe the blocks down before completing a dive start.
  - Relay takeover (and race finishes) practices are not recommended as part of this protocol as social distancing is easily compromised within such practices (and will be revisited at a later date).

### Bathroom Breaks & Hygiene

- Each club/facility will need to formulate venue specific protocols for how Bathroom Breaks are built into a session. Specific lanes being offered Bathroom Breaks at certain times may be considered and a one in – one out scenario may need to be adopted if some bathroom areas are limited in size.
- Clubs will need to discuss a hygiene routine with the facility, with hot water/soap and/or sanitiser available for athletes as they enter and exit a Bathroom.
- Each facility should consider a cleaning of the bathroom area between group sessions.
- Where clubs have the option of more than one bathroom area within a facility, they would ideally identify one such area and restrict usage to this space.
- Once an athlete returns from the Bathroom, they will need to return to their Athlete Spot on the deck and wait until the coach informs them that it is safe for them to re-enter the water.

### Responsibility

- Swim Ireland/Club members are expected to follow *this* stated guidance for their health and wellbeing, being conscious of any increased measures required in the current circumstances. All members will have been informed of *this* prior to starting back with Club activities. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their children are fully aware of these measures to ensure the risk to their athlete's health and the health of others is minimised.

- Any additional health and safety measures required by the club and/or facility are considered part of the general rules for Swim Ireland and the Club and therefore any breach will be treated as such – and this includes where the health of others is put at risk.
- With agreement from parents/carers, Clubs will assume responsibility for young people when they enter a facility. Young people are expected to follow the guidance and direction of the club staff, which includes the requirements of the facility. Club and facility staff work together to ensure this guidance is in place as are effective measures to minimise risk.
- Parents/carers are expected to be present outside the facility to collect their child/children immediately the session finishes. Young people may only leave the facility if their parent/carer is present outside. Once a young person has left the facility, their parent/carer is responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of their child/children.
- The Club staff present must have easy access to parent/carer emergency contact details as is already required; however, these details must be checked prior to starting back to ensure accuracy.

### **In the Facility & During Sessions**

The appointed COVID-19 Officer and Club Coach(es) present act as the person/s in charge and are responsible for ensuring all guidance is followed whilst Club members are in a facility. Any breach of this guidance may result in disciplinary measures being taken against a member. The person in charge may take action to ensure the health and well-being of others present, action which is in accordance with the Swim Ireland Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures, including the removal of that member, and any follow up action required.

### **Section 4 - Other Key Points**

#### **General**

- At their Athlete Spot, athletes can have a water bottle with them for pre/post training; however, this water bottle needs to be clearly labelled with the athlete's name. **THERE IS TO BE NO SHARING OF WATER BOTTLES UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.**
- Athletes should not eat while they are at the facility. For post-training snacks, these should be consumed in the athlete's car on the return journey.
- No athlete-coach, athlete-athlete or coach-coach meeting should take place with at the facility. All meetings should continue to be conducted by virtual means.
- Coaches should coach from the side of the pool, and a distance from the pool edge which complies with current social distancing requirements. They should not approach any athlete during the session. If there is more than one coach present on deck, they should coach from either opposite ends or opposite sides of the pool. In most instances, a maximum of two coaches per session would be seen to be best practice
- All athletes should work off the mantra of '**GET IN, TRAIN, GET OUT & GO HOME**'.

#### **COVID-19 Officers/Committees**

Each club should appoint one or more COVID-19 Officers/Committee to oversee the safe return to the water for athletes in liaison with the facility. Such officers/members of this Committee will need to be present at each pool session to monitor social distancing and wellness of athletes and staff, reporting back to the Club Committee with any adverse findings. This should not be the session coach.

1. Briefing on pool protocols should be given via video link/recording and clubs will require athletes to sign a document accepting that they have been understood and will be abided by. This document will form part of the Swim Ireland Return to the Water Toolkit.
2. A Health Questionnaire should be completed by each athlete and provided to the COVID-19 Officer in advance of any entry into the changing room/towards the water. The athlete should not attend where there are adverse findings and should seek relevant medical advice as appropriate.
3. Those who are medically at risk or have at risk people living in their homes (those needing to Shield/Cocoon) should not return to pool training at the early stages as per Government guidelines on this.
4. Any athletes who have someone with whom they have contact/in their household with COVID-19 symptoms should not train for 14 days and should self-isolate as per Government guidelines
5. Clubs should identify members that have had COVID-19 during the lockdown and ensure that they are able to resume training by following advice given by their own medical practitioner. These athletes should **not** return to activity until they have medical approval to do so and once this has been provided to the COVID-19 Officer for their approval.

### Contact Tracing

A key point in public health measures is to ensure that there are clear records at all times of who was in the water at each session and who else was present. These records should be kept digitally in order that they can be transferred easily. This is vitally important to ensure that contact tracing is provided for in the event of a case of the virus presenting itself in one of the Club members. It will be important to discuss this with the facility to agree the protocol and avoid duplication of documentation.

### Reminder as to how social distancing will be applied

1. Briefing/corrections in sessions kept to a minimum
2. Prior to the first session, a remote information briefing should be given outlining the new protocols that are in place based on Government guidelines and local pool procedures that need to be adhered to by all participants, all of the time.
3. To enter the pool, a one-way system-should ideally be in place.
4. Ensure a full water bottle is brought to the session to avoid using taps and public water fountain.
5. No physical contact between coaches and athletes when making corrections, only oral communication, keeping the required distance.
6. Briefings/corrections in sessions should be kept to a minimum
7. Athletes must keep their personal training equipment in kit bags, and it should be noticeably clean at each session. No kit bags are to be stored at the pool.
8. It is advised that until further lockdown restrictions are lifted for clubs to continue to use online/virtual sessions for land-based training to minimise risks.

### Section 5 - Training & Programme Considerations

While it is recognised that COVID-19 is a systemic condition, the full effects of the disease are still being elicited. As such, any athlete who has tested positive for the disease will need medical confirmation that they are able to return to training. For those who may have had symptoms, but did not meet the criteria to be tested, medical confirmation for a return to training will also be required.

As athletes will have been out of regular club-based training for a number of weeks, a certain degree of detraining (loss of swimming form and fitness) is to be expected (regardless of the home-based programmes that a number of athletes have been undertaking).

***However, the expected levels of detraining are nothing to be concerned about and can be alleviated upon a return to a club-based programme. A gradual return to training should be implemented for all athletes. For this, coaches should design and structure a programme based on the following:***

- The 2019-2020 season is closed; there is no requirement for athletes to be in race shape shortly after a return to club-based training.
- While athletes may have been able to continue some form of cardiovascular fitness and muscle endurance, coaches need to be mindful of the unaccustomed stress that athletes will experience, upon a return to club-based training, paying particular attention to the shoulders and knees.
- Shoulder stability programming should be considered by coaches in this period to augment the work undertaken in a return to pool training
- Coaches should work on the basis of a 'minimum amount of overload' required, in order to elicit a training effect. Coaches should structure their return programme around one session per day (as a maximum) for the first number of weeks, in order to gauge an athlete's response to training.
- Rest days and down/regeneration weeks should be incorporated into the new training plan.
- Coaches should focus on steady-state swimming upon a return to club-based training.
- Intensity should be kept to a minimum during the initial return period.
- Coaches should implement simple monitoring metrics (e.g. Session Rate of Perceived Exertion or sRPE) to determine how an athlete is coping with the increased demand and load from their return to Club-based training.
- If in doubt, a coach should follow the rule of 'less is best' and take a long-term approach to a full return to club-based training.

### **Advice for Returning to Exercise Following Illness with COVID-19**

*This advice is for athletes who have had a mild form of COVID-19 not requiring hospital treatment. For those who have been hospitalised or under the care of their GP, please consult your medical practitioner about return to exercise.*

This guidance should be applied to both **confirmed and suspected cases** of COVID-19

#### **How long should an athlete remain away from training?**

Current evidence advises athletes to have complete rest for 10 days after the start of the symptoms and at least 7 days after they have been symptom free. This may mean that athletes have at least 17 days rest before any exercise can be considered. During this period, athletes must not do any exercise at all—complete rest is indicated.

Symptoms include a raised temperature, repeated cough, muscle aching and shortness of breath. Once an athlete has been symptom free for 7 days and it is at least 10 days since the start of the symptoms, they may return to light exercise. Before athletes do this, please ensure the following:

1. Resting heart rate is normal and has been so for at least 48 hours
2. No shortness of breath walking around the house
3. Temperature is normal (circa 36.9 degrees Celsius)

If athletes experience any of the following symptoms, athletes should not commence any exercise and should seek urgent medical advice:

1. Chest pain
2. Severe shortness of breath after light exercise
3. Palpitations or irregular heartbeat
4. Severe muscle pains

#### **What do such athletes need to consider as they return to training?**

Athletes will need to start with a low level of exercise and build up gradually. If athletes have any of the following symptoms during exercise, they should seek medical advice and stop exercises:

1. Persistent cough
2. Shortness of breath on light exercise
3. Unusual fatigue

If athletes experience any of the following - stop exercising and seek medical advice **urgently**:

1. Chest pain
2. Severe shortness of breath
3. Palpitations or irregular heart rate
4. Severe muscle pains

If in any doubt about an ability to return to exercise, athletes must consult their GP or medical practitioner.

### **Conclusion**

We fully appreciate that this is a detailed document and we will be hosting Club webinars and offering support to you as you prepare for a return to water. We will also be issuing our Club Return to Water Toolkit in the next two weeks and this will contain further information and documentation which will be of assistance to you. The Swim Ireland Clubs & Community and Performance teams are at hand to support you through this process. Their details are as follows:

***If you are a club member (parent or athlete), a member of your Club Committee is your first port of call for any questions or points of clarification***

***If you are a representative from a Club Committee, a member of the Clubs & Community team (or a relevant member of the Swim Ulster staff) is your first port of call for any questions or points of clarification:***

Leinster - Aisling McKeever (Club Support Manager) – [aislingmckeever@swimireland.ie](mailto:aislingmckeever@swimireland.ie)

Connacht - Vincent Finn (Connacht Club Support Officer) – [vincentfinn@swimireland.ie](mailto:vincentfinn@swimireland.ie)

Munster - Damien Fitzpatrick (Munster Club Support Officer) – [damienfitzpatrick@swimireland.ie](mailto:damienfitzpatrick@swimireland.ie)

Ulster - Ruth McQuillan (Club & Workforce Development) – [ruth@swimulster.net](mailto:ruth@swimulster.net)

Water Polo (Leinster, Connacht & Munster) - Sarah Kelly (Discipline Support Manager) – [sarahkelly@swimireland.ie](mailto:sarahkelly@swimireland.ie)

Water Polo (Ulster) – Phil Kelly (Water Polo Development Officer) – [phil@swimulster.net](mailto:phil@swimulster.net)

Health & Safety/Risk Assessments - Pat Daly (Competitions Manager) – [patdaly@swimireland.ie](mailto:patdaly@swimireland.ie)

who will liaise with Adam Cox and Stephen Cuddy as necessary

***If you are a Coach, a member of the Performance team (or a relevant member of the Swim Ulster staff) is your first port of call for any questions or points of clarification:***

Leinster - Mark Lappin (Regional Pathway Development Coach) – [marklappin@swimireland.ie](mailto:marklappin@swimireland.ie)

Munster & Connacht - Sarah Fellner (Regional Pathway Development Coach) – [sarahfellner@swimireland.ie](mailto:sarahfellner@swimireland.ie)

Ulster - Mark Craig (Regional Pathway Development Coach) – [talentid@swimulster.net](mailto:talentid@swimulster.net)

Strength & Conditioning – Paul Talty (Associate Head of Performance Services) – [paultalty@swimireland.ie](mailto:paultalty@swimireland.ie)

Sports Science – Cormac Powell (Associate Head of Performance Services) – [cormacpowell@swimireland.ie](mailto:cormacpowell@swimireland.ie)

Health & Safety/Risk Assessments - Pat Daly (Competitions Manager) – [patdaly@swimireland.ie](mailto:patdaly@swimireland.ie)

who will liaise with Jon Rudd and Andrew Reid as necessary

**APPENDIX A**

**Swim Ireland COVID-19 Risk Assessment Template**

Return to Water - June 2020

All clubs must complete a Risk Assessment prior to returning to the water and keep this on file for their records.

This template has been prepared to assist clubs in identifying the risks and measures that need to be implemented prior to returning to club activities. It will help clubs in completing this process and will act as a starting point for your own Risk Assessment. As all clubs are unique and have individual circumstances and as such it is important that the Risk Assessment is completed in full and with the appropriate level of detail relevant to your club.

The examples below are not exhaustive and we highly recommend that the club through the COVID-19 Officer/Committee takes time in reviewing all aspects of the club's activities and identifying the risks associated with these.

This document outlines as a club how you will help try and reduce the risk to your members from the spread of COVID-19 and must be reviewed regularly to ensure it is in line with the most up to date guidance and/or advice.

Swim Ireland will provide further online webinars/training in undertaking a Risk Assessment and if you need further advice or support in completing this document please contact Swim Ireland through your Club Support Officer or your Regional Pathway Development Coach.

<b>Step 1: Identify the Hazards</b>	<b>Step 2: Assess the Risk</b>		<b>Step 3: Additional Actions Needed</b>		
<b>What are the hazards? Identify all potential hazards relating to the transmission of COVID-19</b>	<b>Who is at risk?</b> Identify individuals within the club who are potentially at risk of the hazard.	<b>Level of risk</b> (Your estimate of the risk level, based on the current practices – High, Medium, or Low)	<b>Controls measures to be implemented</b> Further actions needed to reduce risk level to as low as possible.	<b>Action by who and when</b> Identify who will complete the additional control and by when	<b>Date Completed</b> Date additional control measure has been implemented and/or completed
<b>Spread of COVID-19</b>	All club members	High/Medium/Low	Follow Swim Ireland Club Framework and procedures and share with members  Members to sign revised code of conduct  Hand washing  Signage for direction of traffic through facility is clear	All members, COVID-19 Officer	

			<p>Issue letter and protocols to members</p> <p>Detailed rules for operations of club activities (further detail found below)</p> <p>List more or delete as appropriate</p>		
<b>Equipment sharing by athletes</b>	Athletes and Coaches	High/Medium/Low	<p>All sharing of equipment by athletes will be prohibited.</p> <p>Athletes to use mats to prepare on poolside and wipe down with antiseptic wipes before and after preparation. Athletes to provide own mat where possible.</p> <p>Water bottles will not be shared and clearly labelled.</p> <p>Equipment that is not frequently used is locked away or in a designated storage space.</p> <p>Athletes take personal training kit home each day and are responsible for cleaning this</p> <p>List more or delete as appropriate</p>	COVID-19 Officer, Athletes and Coaches	
<b>Use of Changing Rooms/Toilets</b>	Athletes	High/Medium/Low	<p>Follow Swim Ireland Club Framework and procedures and share with members</p> <p>If changing rooms are not in use, athletes to shower prior to arriving at training and arrive dressed and ready to train</p> <p>If changing rooms are not in use, athletes to have clearly marked allocated space on poolside</p>	COVID-19 Officer, Athletes and Coaches	

			<p>Clear protocol communicated regarding toilet breaks during training</p> <p>List more or delete as appropriate</p>		
<b>Maintaining social distancing on pool deck</b>	Coaches and Athletes	High/Medium/Low	<p>Follow Swim Ireland Club Framework and procedures and share with members</p> <p>POD not situated on poolside where possible</p> <p>Staggered return for all squads</p> <p>Place signs up within the facility</p> <p>Appoint a lead in each squad responsible for protocols</p> <p>Name individuals to attend each session and which lane they have been allocated</p> <p>Allocate individual space on poolside</p> <p>List more or delete as appropriate</p>	COVID-19 Officer, Athletes and Coaches	
<b>Maintaining social distancing in pool</b>	Athletes	High/Medium/Low	<p>Follow Swim Ireland Club Framework and its procedures and share with athletes</p> <p>Clearly marked areas for athletes to start and finish</p> <p>Lane protocols are clear and shared with all athletes</p> <p>No group congregation in pool</p> <p>List more or delete as appropriate</p>	COVID-19 Officer, Athletes and Coaches	

**Swim Ireland Club Swimming**  
**COVID-19 Return to Water Framework (June 2020)**



<b>Maintaining social distancing during coaching</b>	Athletes and Coaches	High/Medium/Low	<p>Follow Swim Ireland Club Framework and procedures and share with members</p> <p>Identify coaching staff to be on poolside</p> <p>No face to face meetings</p> <p>Coaches to have clearly marked coaching areas on poolside</p> <p>List more or delete as appropriate</p>		
<b>Maintaining social distancing throughout facility</b>	All members	High/Medium/Low	<p>Follow Swim Ireland Club Framework and procedures and share with members</p> <p>Signage for direction of traffic through facility is clear</p> <p>No parents/carers allowed inside facility</p> <p>No congregating inside facility prior to and after training</p> <p>List more or delete as appropriate</p>	All members, COVID-19 Officer, Committee	
<b>Lack of education of members</b>	Members not understanding the new protocols in place within the club	High/Medium/Low	<p>Members to sign revised code of conduct</p> <p>Issue letter and club protocols to all members, post on noticeboard and website</p> <p>Provide webinar for members</p> <p>List more or delete as appropriate</p>	All members, COVID-19 Officer, Committee	
<b>Travel to and from training</b>	Athletes and parent/carers	High/Medium/Low	No car sharing from outside of your household is permitted		

**Swim Ireland Club Swimming  
COVID-19 Return to Water Framework (June 2020)**



Clubs and  
Community

			Avoid use of public transport  List more or delete as appropriate		
<b>Athlete showing symptoms of COVID-19</b>	Athletes	High/Medium/Low	Athletes will be sent home and Parent/Carer contacted  Parent/Carer to remain in car and close proximity to pool at all times during training session  Follow Swim Ireland Club Framework and procedures		
<b>List more or delete as appropriate</b>					

Risk Assessment completed by – (Please identify who completes assessment)

Date – (Identify date completed)

**APPENDIX B**

**Swimming Club COVID-19 Self Report Screening (Athletes & Staff)**

You will be aware of the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus. Swim Ireland are adhering to guidance from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre in containing the virus and ensuring a safe environment for athletes and staff.

As one of our measures, we are seeking to identify any potential cases at the earliest opportunity in order to avoid any contacts/spread. The research to date for this novel virus suggests that transmission appears to be during symptomatic phase, and as such, identifying those with symptoms and isolating them should reduce risk significantly.

In addition, it complies with our general illness rule which is to avoid contacts in the club when ill. Please answer the following questions (YES / NO) prior to travelling to the swimming pool building – and hand it to the designated club officer on arrival. **This process must be completed for each and every session with your club that you intend to attend.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Have you travelled to any country (outside of all-Ireland) in the last 14 days? YES / NO**

If YES, please notify the Club COVID-19 Officer by phone. You should not leave home and you should not travel to the pool. You should avoid contact with any other club members for 14 days (from the time of your return). If you are symptom free for 14 days, you may return to the club.

If No, please proceed to the next question.

**2. Have you been in contact with a case of COVID-19 (>15 minutes face to face contact)? YES / NO**

If YES, please notify the Club COVID-19 Officer by phone. You should not leave home and you should not travel to the pool and await further information.

If No, please proceed to the next question.

**3. Have you been contacted by a member of Public Health about a recent case of COVID-19? YES / NO**

If YES, please notify the Club COVID-19 Officer by phone. You should not leave home and you should not travel to the pool and await further information.

If No, please proceed to the next question.

**4. Do you have any of the symptoms below in the last 48 hours?**

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| • Cough   | YES / NO |
| • Fever   | YES / NO |
| • Feeling short of breath                                   | YES / NO |
| • Excessive fatigue/tiredness (out of proportion to normal) | YES / NO |
| • Sore throat   | YES / NO |
| • Headache  | YES / NO |
| • General aches and pain (out of proportion to normal)      | YES / NO |

If the answer to any of the above questions is YES, please notify the Club COVID-19 Officer by phone. You should not leave home and you should not travel to the pool and await further information

If the answers to all questions are NO, you should attend training with your club