



**CORONAVIRUS - [COVID-19]
RELAXATION OF LOCKDOWN FROM 2ND DECEMBER 2020**

The Prime Minister announced that all areas of England would return to a tiered system of coronavirus (Covid-19) restrictions on 2nd December 2020. Until this time every part of England remains under the same coronavirus restrictions.

The above measures will apply nationally until Wednesday 2nd December when there will be a return to a regional approach based on the latest data. These measures are underpinned by law. Police and other authorities will have the powers to give fines and break up gatherings.

With regard to the recommencement of Martial Arts clubs and classes the main issue is the effect on the UK when lockdown is relaxed. It is likely given that the Lockdown has not sufficiently reduced the daily infection rate over the time that most areas will be relaxed into tier 2 (high) restrictions when lockdown is relaxed.

At time of writing only 3 of the 200 councils have an r rate lower than 100 in 100,000 people and have been allowed to operate under Tier 1 Terms. It is imperative that if clubs want to offer better services, their entire community must push toward lowering rates. The Government have put the onus on every community to adhere to the rules and lower the rates in their areas so that more services can open up for the benefit of all persons. Undoubtedly there will be time when the Government cannot continue to furlough or support the economy and services will suffer unless we act now to actively stop the spread any further.

The Allocation of tiers will be dependent on a number of factors including;

- each areas case numbers,
- the reproduction number (r rate) and
- the current and projected pressure on the NHS locally.

These allocations will be reviewed every 14 days and the regional approach will last until March 2021. Focus over the next three months is on “Tough tiering, mass community testing and the vaccine roll out”.

Under school age children are not counted toward a household support bubble figure and it appears that under 18s possibly do not count. Any student 12 years or over may in future be a countable number in terms of the definition of ‘Rule of Six’ if this becomes applicable.

Martial Arts clubs are specifically exempt from lockdown rules (across all the tiers) as they can be taught as ‘organised or supervised sports’ as long as the guidelines are followed. This allows an instructor to teach any number of students up to age 18 without the rule of six applying. However Adults are not included in this figure.

The main point that determines clarification is the mixing of households. Most clubs that operate under Tier 2 and 3 cannot permit the mixing of households or support bubbles for over 18s. This means that no adult (or over 18) can train in Martial Arts as being a face to face activity indoors in a room with someone outside of your support bubble or household. This would constitute a breach of lockdown rules, even if that bubble constitutes a six.

Tier 1 - Medium

Following the Rule of Six if meeting people indoors or outdoors (martial art clubs are exempt) and can continue. Clubs can teach an undisclosed number of under 18s subject to maximum capacity constraints calculated by their venue to ensure Covid Secure guidelines. OFMAR does offer a certification process to approve and register that clubs meet covid secure guidelines.

Venues are limited up to 4,000 spectators at sports and live performances (or 50% capacity if lower) outside or 1,000 indoors.

Business Events can continue subject to venue capacity constraints and social distancing. Only those in tier 1 will be able to meet people they don't live with indoors. There are exemptions such as supervised organised sport and educational basis, or provision of 'wraparound care' or support groups which permit a maximum attendance of 15 persons.

The existing guidelines state that 100sqft per person must be allowed for each attendee, social distancing of 2m must be maintained at all times (with an additional 1m overlap) and absolutely no close contact is permitted. Ventilation is a key requirement for any venue offering Covid Secure training and must be non recycled air.

Tier 2 - High

Martial Arts clubs are specifically exempt from lockdown rules (across all the tiers) as they can be taught as 'organised or supervised sports' as long as the guidelines are followed. This allows an instructor to teach any number of students up to age 18 without the rule of six applying. However Adults are not included in this figure.

You cannot socialise or interact with anyone who you do not live with, or who is not in your support bubble in any indoor setting, whether at home or in a public place. In an outdoor space you are subject to the Rule of Six (which is inclusive for any person over the age of 18 years).

Venues are limited up to 4,000 spectators at sports and live performances (or 50% capacity if lower) outside or 1,000 indoors.

Tier 3 - Very High

Martial Arts clubs are specifically exempt from lockdown rules (across all the tiers) as they can be taught as 'organised or supervised sports' as long as the guidelines are followed. This allows an instructor to teach any number of students up to age 18 without the rule of six applying. However Adults are not included in this figure.

Adults must not interact or meet socially indoors or in most outdoor places with anyone they do not live with, or is not in their support bubble. Where outdoors groups are formed they must adhere to the rule of six and higher risk contact activity should not take place

Group exercise classes, fitness and dance classes should not go ahead.

Business Events and Spectator Sports should not be taking place

There are several parameters that must be considered when applying the new Tiered system to the recommencement of Martial Arts clubs after lockdown is relaxed.

The R rate

Statistically the lockdown has reduced the daily infection rate down from 33,000 (at its highest) to 17,000. Latest figures suggest that the r rate is between 1 and 1.2. National statistics have shown that roughly 4 out of 5 people could carry Coronavirus asymptotically even if they do not project all the symptoms. The obvious worry is that asymptomatic carriers are infecting those in more clinically vulnerable groups (such as those with pre-existing medical conditions, or over 60yrs old).

The daily case rate is only those people who are actually triggering the NHS Test and Trace Protocol which could be 20% people who may be affected at the time. The meaning here is that every day people are potentially spreading the infection without producing symptoms (or reporting all of the symptoms). The main reason for not reporting a case of covid is fear of having to self isolate, take a test or lose income from business enterprise.

If five times the daily infection rate is considered a 'snapshot' of those infected then the UK is looking at 80,000 persons carrying the infection at any time. With the current success of NHS Test and Trace at around 60% then we are contacting 12% of those that need tracking each day (approx 10k cases). This is why mass testing is important to determine and include the extent of the spread asymptotically and vaccinate accordingly.

This means that the r rate should be readjusted to be more 5.5 to 6 to account for, and include the asymptomatic spread. OFMAR believes that face coverings should be worn by any person over age 18 when out in public and within the parameter where social distancing cannot be maintained.

Indoors Training and Gyms

Sport should be split into three distinct areas: Professional or Elite Athletes (who can continue to train indoors or outdoors even throughout lockdown), 'Grassroots' sports and 'Recreational Sports'. Unless specifically funded by Sport England for Olympic or Paralympic purposes by Team GB, £300M was awarded to 'Grassroots' Sports to fund the Winter Survival Package. Nothing was awarded to 'Recreational' Sports (such as Gymnastics, Dance, Martial Arts, Bowls, Table Tennis etc).

The Department of Culture Media and Sport already confirmed that national funding has been removed from all National Governing Bodies except for Taekwondo, Boxing and Judo (as these are Olympic Sports) and loans and grants are available from Sport England on request. From experience Sport England do not recognise a Martial Art Style or Sport if it doesn't have a clearly approved National Governing Authority or National Governing Body then it is unlikely any funding will be awarded to any club applying for survival funding.

The main issue is any club has to wait a minimum of 14 days to change between the tiers they are allocated or assigned to. This means that in areas rated Very High they will have to wait until December 14th before any possible downgrading to Tier 2 and that is subject to NHS queues dropping, the rate rate falling and cases dropping in their areas.

The same also applies to those in Tier 2 who cannot teach other than by 'Zoom' because households cannot mix indoors for over 18s.

Only under Tier 1 can Martial Arts Clubs properly reopen and teach 'face to face' in accordance with local guidelines and subject to the maximum determined capacity for their venues.

At bare minimum most schools and clubs require a minimum of 2 or 3 Instructors to be present at every class (for First aid, and Health and Safety requirements).

If you run your own dojo it is unlikely that the revenue a class would generate from teaching face to face support bubbles not be sufficient to cover the hall rental and associated compliance expenses; so offering classes to under anything other than Zoom or Tier 2 or 3 rules is unlikely cost effective. There is no current financial support mechanism to compensate clubs that cannot operate or teach to over 18s (or Adults) during lockdown restriction; but have had to close due to restrictions in the Tiering system.

This also provides pressure on clubs offering intermittent services as they transition between the bandings. Clubs still have to finance insurance cover, training and qualification, national recognition, Authority memberships, DBS Checks and Course attendances. OFMAR has estimated the cost per school to be around £4,000 per year for full compliance inclusion before you even consider wages, rates and rents.

The 'light-switch' mentality of the lockdown relaxation will not work in the long term for sustaining or rebuilding the Martial Arts Industry. Many Clubs have already lost between 50% and 85% student membership before the 2nd lockdown so are already operating on 'fumes' having reinvested any government grants and loans in trying to sustain their businesses throughout the lockdown Covid months. Many instructors now work casually or have re-tasked their skills to other markets and changed their careers in order to make ends meet.

Reporting Covid-19

“Any club that reports a case of positive Covid-19 is fundamentally dead”

This statement was said in a discussion on controlling and implementing the guidelines in July to reopen Martial Art Clubs. Clubs must implement and operate on Covid secure guidelines. You cannot guarantee that a student, instructor, volunteer, spectator or attendee will not catch Covid or be affected by it, but what you absolutely must do is limit the impact it has on your club. No club can stand back and believe that covid will not affect them.

No amount of insurance coverage will save any club from the instance of someone catching Covid on your premises and negligence or misconduct is no excuse or defence to protect you.

With up to a 2% fatality rate no supervising instructor can balance the age demographics of an infected person against the potential chance or probability of a claim. It is 100% likely that you will be sued if a student at your club contracts coronavirus (even if you have followed the guidelines to an absolute T). The damage to your club and its reputation in the long run has been done and no amount of 'deep cleaning' will eradicate that. You cannot allow symptomatic persons onto your premises.

We know that teaching under 18s represents 60% of most clubs revenue, so this is a key group to still be able to teach throughout all Tier restrictions. However with a class of 20 – 30 under 18s (who may come from mixed support bubbles at their schools) will no doubt increase the chance of a infection or outbreak occurring.

Accordingly the 'sting in the tail' of Covid-19 is the as yet undetermined long term effect of long-covid. This is affect on a person who has suffered from (or been infected with) Coronavirus and in the post recovery stages (although they now test negative).

All of the current 60 Million people across the world who have been infected with Coronavirus could potentially end up suffering from symptoms of long-covid even though 43 Million have supposedly recovered.

The effects of long-covid are potentially as bad as main infection but may not have presented at the time. These include symptoms such as fatigue, shortness of breath, joint pain, chest pain along with memory impairment or 'brain fog', depression and psychiatric disorders, muscle pain, headaches, heart palpitations. There are more serious long term complications including, cardiovascular inflammation, strokes, respiratory and lung abnormalities, kidney injury or failure, rashes and hair loss, neurological and sleep issues,

Although it cannot be assumed that persons recovering from Covid may suffer from Long-covid these symptoms can also be experienced by asymptomatic carriers as well including the neurological, fatigue, muscle pain, hair loss and depression. There has been instances of unexplained heart attacks and strokes post covid. It must be noted and adopted that even with an effective vaccine program, students long term health may be severely impacted for many years to come even amongst those who may not have presented symptoms at the time.

If long-covid becomes medically recognised as a condition this will be extremely difficult to insure and litigate against in the long run to protect clubs and instructors from possible civil suit claims in the future. It may be that students will need to take out insurance in their own names to be able and covered to train in Martial Arts, and be required to prove vaccination and compliance with health guidelines each year.

One of the major questions facing instructors that teach at venues such as village halls, community centres, educational premises, sports and leisure centres is 'what if I am forced to close as a result of an issue that is not my fault.

Insurers have forcefully stated they will not cover instructors 'loss of earnings' due to lockdowns, or having restrictions imposed on venues. Many instructors have accepted the hit to business as part of meeting the national requirement to shield the public, but a small minority have looked toward loopholes and reasons to remain open – often for mental wellbeing purposes or essential 'wraparound care for essential workers' or registering themselves as a support group. Clubs at the moment cannot claim against venues for loss of services or income as this would put a huge onus on the insurance market to shift the cost of covid into the long term.

Blanket regional lockdown restrictions will affect venues which means services will be affected until at least March or Easter (where the Government suggest a return to 'normality'). A Fair assumption is that coronavirus could be around for 2-3 years but flair up seasonally until such a time as it is blended out of the population. At present almost year in up to 10% of the UK population has been infected and it probably needs to 'run its course' toward 'herd immunity'. There is also the risk that as the virus finds less people to infect the possibility of it's mutation increases, and along with threats of other zoonotic virus breaking forth (such as brucellosis, bubonic plague, hantavirus, mink_coronavirus) we need to be aware that the after effects of this pandemic could potentially last decades.

Social Distancing

The Prime Minister was due to review the rules surrounding Social Distancing in November 2020 and possibly consider a move toward a 'one meter plus'. Social Distancing currently remains at 2m and will look likely to do so until at least March, possibly into late 2021. Statistics show that there is a 58% reduction in particle spread at 2m than at 1m. The guidelines suggest a 100sqft per person allocation which is allowing 3mx3m training space and access passage such to an extent that social distancing is maintained throughout. Many venues have spaces marked out at 2mx2m which do not meet this requirement as this only effectively allows 36sqft per person and 3x less ventilation area. Secondly ventilation is of paramount importance. Without this you are just recycling potentially infected air.

Early publications are looking at a reduction to 1.5m possibly some time next year, or from one meter (but face coverings must be worn). **CLOSE CONTACT** is forbidden (unless it is between household support bubbles and partnerings only) and no contact is one of DCMS main objectives as detailed in their letter dated 9th September 2020 along with equipment cleansing and instructor certification and a regular hygiene regime.

To summarise:

Tier 1 – Can Teach as many child students as you want up to 4 Adults in a Class

Tier 2 - Can Teach a Household or support bubble upto 4 persons Indoors, or ZOOM Classes

Tier 3 - Cannot Teach or ZOOM only classes

ZOOM Classes

Online 'dojos' have become very popular for fitness and maintaining health. OFMAR still questions the fighting capability of students who learn through 'Youtube' or via online dojos. Many black belts have been awarded without facing the physical test of human interaction and believes this is mostly motivated by the balance sheet.

“Theory is only theory until it is put into practice, then it becomes experience”

Liasing with Insure4Sport they have clarified some of the guidelines for their ZOOM Classes which is good to know for all persons who are considering teaching online classes.

1. Check with your insurer you are covered for live two way applications like Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams or Google.
2. Your Session needs to be Live and both you and each client needs to be able to see each other
3. You need to be able to see all of your clients at the same time
4. Sessions which are pre-recorded or shared, hosted on Instagram or Facebook Live must be private and the Coach can control who is seeing it
5. All New existing and Current Clients on any platform must go through the normal onboarding process, health declaration, PARQ forms as if they were a normal face to face client.
6. Participants have checked their training area to ensure there are no obstacles or hazards
7. Participants are fit and well enough to complete the class
8. Any equipment used by the participant is being used correctly and in line with the manufacturers guidelines. It must be cleaned afterwards
9. All participants must be UK Residents and activities completed within the boundary of the UK.

10. You are not covered for any exercises or moves that require physical contact with other participants in the class e.g kicks, punches, tackles, throws etc especially where a family may be training online from home.
11. You are not covered for any exercises where participants are suspended above the floor, e.g. aerial hoops, poles or rings
12. You are not covered for any exercises where participants are completing gymnastics moves such as headstands , cartwheels or somersaults

Conclusion

The reopening of sports and community facilities is wholly dependent on the allocation of tiers on Thursday 26th November as this will affect what provisions clubs can train at from 2nd December 2020 until the first review on the 16th December 2020.

The Government intentions at the time are that under 18s should not be impacted by lockdown which is why martial arts can continue under all Tiers for this age-group. It must be noted at the time that the minimum age requirement for a face covering is from age 12 onwards. This may mean that later on the rule of six could be extended to include over 12 year olds into this category.

Clubs that do teach under 18s also need to consider the delivering martial arts to child welfare guidelines that under 18s cannot participate in sport against people who are more than 5 years older. I.e a club that teaches from 3 year olds must band their classes as follows

Age 3 – 7	permitted (8yrs+ cannot be taught in the same class)
Age 8 – 12	permitted (13yrs+ cannot be taught in the same class)
Age 13 – 17	permitted (cannot train against anyone over 18)
Age 18+	banned under Tier 2 and Tier 3 from mixing with other people

Any Instructor who teaches 'Family Classes' or mixed age bandings is potentially breaching child welfare rules. The maximum age band range for a 7 year old is 11 years so instructors will need to tailor classes and teaching instruction bearing this in mind whilst ensuring the classes are kept separate and do not mix.

According to statistics up to the 25th November 2020, Gyms and Leisure Centres accounted for roughly 2.8% of cases reported, the 6th place on the common locations, behind supermarkets, pubs and bars, schools and universities.

The Government have hinted that most of the UK will be released into Tier 2 or Tier 3 which means that most services will be impacted due to cost effectiveness and inability to teach 'face to face'. This has caused uproar amongst the fitness industry who believe that a comprehensive financial support package should be made available for recreational sport participants and operators.

STAY SAFE – PROTECT THE NHS
"Hands – Face – Space"

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