

PM announces ‘cautious’ reopening of swimming pools

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced a ‘cautious’ reopening of swimming pools but over 18s will face a further frustrating wait before being allowed to train with their clubs.

While indoor and outdoor pools across the country will be included in the first two waves of easing the restrictions, Swim England CEO Jane Nickerson was left ‘extremely disappointed’ for the organisation’s over 18s swimmers, divers, water polo players, artistic swimmers and Masters swimmers.

Outdoor swimming pools and lidos plus open water venues will be allowed to open from 29 March in the first wave of easing lockdown restrictions after schools resume on 8 March.

Five weeks later, from 12 April, indoor pools can reopen for individual use or within household groups.

Indoor children’s activities – including club sessions for all under 18s in all aquatic sports and learn to swim lessons – are also allowed to resume from this date.

Organised indoor adult sport, including club activities and group water-based activities for over 18s such as health and wellbeing classes, will be allowed five weeks after step two – no earlier than 17 May.

Jane said: “This announcement from the Government will come as a relief to so many people who have missed swimming and aquatic activity so much – the end is finally in sight. We appreciate that many will have been hoping for an earlier reopening date but we understand the need to be cautious as we don’t want to end up in another lockdown in the future.

“While I’m delighted that outdoor and indoor pools can reopen at the earliest available opportunity allowed by the Government, it’s still a bitter sweet moment for our thousands and thousands of over 18 club members. Of course adults will be allowed to get back in the water when pools reopen but, for so many of them, it will mean they have been unable to train with their clubs for more than six months by the time the indoor restrictions on adult organised sport are eased.

“We have stressed over and over again to the Government that it needed to change this frustrating ruling so it’s extremely disappointing to see restrictions still in place for several more weeks when pools do reopen.

Reconsider this restriction

“Our over 18s members have been locked out of their club pool training sessions for far too long. Club-arranged land training in groups can resume outdoors from 29 March but we appreciate it’s not a substitute for being in the water. That’s why we shall be urging the Government to reconsider this restriction and allow adult organised activity to take place in the second wave when indoor pools reopen.”

Organised adult activity can resume outside from 29 March, meaning over 18s could train with their clubs in outdoor pools.

However, there are only 110 outdoor pools and lidos that are publicly accessible in England – with 78 per cent of those in the south of the country, while more than half typically open up for business in May or June.

Jane added: “We are aware that there is a north-south divide with outdoor pools. We have heard encouraging sounds from the operators of these outdoor facilities that some will open earlier than usual but this won’t be the case for all of them. Our clubs and recreational swimmers cannot simply rely on outdoor pools and lidos which is why all activity should be allowed when indoor pools can reopen on 12 April.”

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