



# Step Forward Plan



## Reintroduction of foam pits

Version 1.0 – 04/03/2021

Following the results of research that included the use of foam in a sporting environment and the transmission of Covid-19, we have consulted with our Chief Medical Officer and Health and Safety Experts Agility to look at the reintroduction of foam pits. This document provides information on the safe use of pits to help reduce the spread of coronavirus. Gymnastics deliverers wishing to use pitted areas should implement the control measures contained within this guidance in conjunction with their existing risk assessments, cleaning protocols and operational procedures.

*This guidance document only applies to the use of foam pits/foam-based equipment and all other equipment and/or apparatus should still be used in line with [the Cleaning Guidance](#) and a comprehensive risk assessment conducted.*

*This guidance is applicable across all home countries, however, please note that this is subject to change in Wales if Welsh Government guidance changes.*

*The STRIKE Study can be found [here](#). A copy should be downloaded and kept for easy access in case of an inspection.*

Last year we took part in a cross-sport study into the risk of Coronavirus transmission from sharing sports equipment. Samples of foam (Polyurethane (PU) foam (open cell)) were used as part of this research, where tests between low and high doses of the virus were carried out. The Strike study determined that the virus was least transferrable on absorbent materials and concluded that the risk of Covid transmission in foam was low after one minute.

As a result of this research, and after liaising with our medical and health and safety partners, the use of foam pits will now be permitted in line with the guidance contained within this document.

The reintroduction of foam pits is allowed following the below control measures:

- Prior to departure and travel to the gym (within two hours of session start time), pit users must complete a self-screening survey to determine whether they can attend the training session and should not leave home if they or someone in their household is displaying symptoms.
- Gyms should have suitable screening methods in place prior to entry into the building. Anyone displaying any symptoms should not enter the venue.
- To reduce the risk of transmission **only one person may be in the pit at any one time**. *Where it is necessary for more than one person to enter the foam e.g., in an emergency, the pit should not be used for 90 minutes to ensure any potential viral load has disappeared before further use.*
- Ensure that **a gap of 1 minute** is introduced between each gymnast using the pitted area. This time gap was a key factor in the study results and in turn lowering the Covid transmission risk.
- Make sure that the pit is vacated as quickly as possible after use. For example, wait until the gymnast is out of the foam before providing feedback on the skill performed.
- Pit use should be limited to essential skill development activities only. Where possible, utilise other set ups.
- If following the Return to Coach Contact Framework, you should not carry out skills which require both the coach and gymnast to be in the pit at the same time.
- Review and update existing risk assessments and communicate any changes to procedures with staff and members.
- Maintain regular hand sanitisation and cleaning of high touch areas around the pit as determined by the clubs or venue's risk assessment.

Whilst coverings for foam have not been tested as part of the study (e.g., pit socks/resi pits/resi mats), foam covered with porous materials may be used in line with the control measures above. It is the gym's responsibility to ensure all equipment being used is cleaned appropriately as per their risk assessment.

Where large pit areas include more than one piece of equipment, it is reasonable to divide the pit into zones that a single gymnast can use. A risk assessment must be completed to ensure that no two gymnasts come into contact within the same area of foam within 1 minute. Zones should provide sufficient space for landings to vary and entry and exit pathways for all gymnasts.