

BACK TO BOWLS

COVID ACTION PLAN



ENGLISH SHORT MAT BOWLING ASSOCIATION
JULY 2020

Introduction

The ESMBA is the National Governing Body for Short Mat Bowls in England and in line with current Covid-19 Government policy presents its Action Plan – Back to Short Mat Bowling.

Short Mat Bowls is a member of the wider bowls family which includes Lawn Green Bowling, Indoor Bowls, Crown Green Bowls, and Carpet Bowls. Short Mat Bowls is played on a portable surface (45 foot long and 6 foot wide) that can be laid on any flat and level surface – mainly indoors therefore it is suitable for village halls, community centres, leisure centres and indoor bowling arenas and other spaces. It is played at club, county, national and international level by all ages and levels of fitness. The ESMBA has over 30 member County Associations that have a network of around 1,500 clubs and 17,000 players. The ESMBA does not have any paid officials and is administered by a Management Committee manned by volunteers.

Due to the nature of Short Mat Bowls – reliance on third party venues and with over 75% of its members in the vulnerable/shielding category with respect to Covid-19 drawing up an adequate Action Plan is somewhat challenging.

What we have done

When lockdown was introduced towards the end of March 2020 the Short Mat Bowling programme was reaching its finale – World Championships in Belgium (end of March), National Championships for Singles, Pairs, Triples and Fours to be held at Melton Indoor Bowls Club (Beginning of April) and the final stages of our Inter County Championship (April) all to be played. These events were all postponed and have now been rescheduled for the same time in 2021.

We have ensured our member County Associations and players have been kept up to date with Government Covid-19 policy as the ESMBA interpret it with respect to indoor activities and team sports through emails, Facebook, and our website. Our advice currently maintains short mat bowls is not to re-commence until the ESMBA Action Plan has been sanctioned by the relevant Government Department.

Our latest press release detailed our thoughts on a route map to playing short mat bowls again with the proviso that it still required Government clearance.

Administratively the ESMBA has postponed its Annual General Meeting until it is safe to meet and cancelled face to face Committee meetings. We recently held an ESMBA management committee meeting by Zoom and we intend to repeat this process until it is safe to meet up.

Set up a Covid-19 information page on our website and dedicated email address covid19@esmba.co.uk.

Our Approach

There have been many factors to consider in producing a reasonable yet safe way forward for the resumption of Short Mat Bowls.

Our biggest concern is for the safety of our registered players at all levels especially as most of them fall into the Covid-19 vulnerable category. Our route map suggests September as the earliest starting date for social Short Mat Bowls to re-commence.

A real challenge is our reliance at all levels on third party venues. We do not know of a Short Mat Bowls club that owns its own premises, so we are governed by when the venues deem it safe to open.

The Action plan has four main elements – the route map, General Risk Assessment template and guidelines, emergency fund for clubs, leagues and Associations and Competitive Bowling.

1. Route Map

The Route Map has already been published to act as a guide to enable clubs, leagues, and County Associations road back to short mat bowling. It does have the proviso that it needs to be sanctioned by the relevant Government Department.

The following is the planned phasing of the Sport of Short Mat Bowls within England. The dates below are only provisional and will be continually reviewed. The ESMBA will work strictly within Government Guidelines.

It is worth remembering that over 80% of our players and officials are over 65, of which many if not all have been shielding for 12 weeks or more. It is our national duty not only to protect our players and officials but also the local communities they come from.

The ESMBA is committed to resuming the sport but only when it is deemed to be safe to do so.

Members will have the right to decide if they wish to resume or not and should not feel pressured by any other club members to participate if they do not feel safe to do so. Members that do feel pressured should raise their concerns with the County Safeguarding officer who will investigate and take necessary action.

Please remember the following dates will be fluid and are a guideline only.

1. All International matches will be cancelled until March 2021 (re arranged World Championships)
2. The diary will be clear of England days and games (to enable Counties to use these later in the year when safe to do so).
3. The ESMBA National Championships 2019/20 will be postponed until April 2021. There will be no qualifiers for the Main Nationals this season.
4. September 2020 - Clubs will be able to open for social roll ups, maximum four per mat providing they have met the criteria laid down by the ESMBA and approved to do so.
5. October 2020 - Clubs will be able to increase their participation from four to six per mat, if they can comply with the then social distance guidance.
6. November 2020 - Inter club activities will be permitted. (guidelines will be issued nearer the time).
7. December 2020 - County Open competitions will be permitted (guidelines will be issued nearer the time).
8. January 2021 - The ESMBA will look to run knock out and open Competition based at Club level.
9. January/February 2021 - Counties will be able to run National O55s and Mixed Fours qualifiers.
10. The ESMBA membership will remain due for the Association. There will be a reduced playing diary at National level, but the Administration of the Association will remain the same. Both the ESMBA and County Associations will be there for the support of their members. The Personal

Accident insurance will still cover personal Accidents whilst playing and in official capacity of Short Mat Bowls.

11. The ESMBA is to allocate a large proportion of the coming seasons membership fee to a Covid-19 fund and invite applicants to apply for funding to ensure their clubs are compliant and remain active.

At all times, the ESMBA will work within the Governments guidelines, be it at national or local level.

The published ESMBA Route Map is shown in Appendix 1.

2. Risk Assessment Approach

The ESMBA has developed a general risk assessment template (see Appendix 2) along with guidelines (see Appendix 3) and a Covid-19 venue checklist (See Appendix 4). These documents should enable the safe return to playing short mat bowls at the venue. The approach is very much in partnership with the venue and does rely on them having completed a venue risk assessment. Our template covers the perceived risks of playing short mat bowls and any mitigations that can be put in place to reduce that level of risk.

The guidelines are there as the basic requirements for clubs, leagues, and associations to start short mat bowling again. It is recognised that one solution does not fit all and there may be instances that are not covered by the guidelines. If this is the case the concerns should be directed towards the ESMBA Lead Safeguarding Officer and the ESMBA Chairman.

The guidelines also include the route for a club and association to gain “Safe Bowls Status” so short mat bowls can re-commence. The route is via clubs safeguarding Officer or nominated person to the County Association Safeguarding Officer to the ESMBA Lead Safeguarding Officer.

3. ESMBA Community Emergency Fund

As part of getting back to short mat bowls in the new “normal” world the ESMBA Management Committee recognises that Players, Clubs, Leagues and County Associations could well face extra expense in meeting the conditions laid down by Government Covid policy.

The ESMBA Management Committee has agreed to setup a fund that will contribute to the extra expense that could be incurred in playing short mat bowls in the Covid world. The aim of the fund is to sustain and grow the number of registered players.

It is planned to release funding in phases based on the number of applications received. The fund will go live on 1st September 2020 and the first phase will close on 30th September 2020. Details of further phases will be released in due course.

Who We Will Fund?

- a) Local clubs who have at least 6 ESMBA registered players (fits in with Insurance scheme taken from the last renewal date)
- b) Leagues who are registered/recognised by their ESMBA member County Association
- c) ESMBA member County Associations.

What We Will Fund

- a) Expenses essential to the maintain the operational viability of the club/league or association in playing short mat bowls such as the hire cost of extra sessions to enable all members to participate, hygiene essentials, and bowls lifters
- b) Activities to kickstart short mat bowls in your local area for example advertising costs and if practical open sessions
- c) A contribution to your local club, league, or County Association membership fee. To be eligible you must be able to demonstrate that your ESMBA registered player numbers are at least maintained at the 2019/20 level. This would be measured after the deadline for registrations i.e. end of November. This is likely to be in the second phase of funding based on the measurement point
- d) Other ideas and expenses that are as a result of the Covid pandemic e.g. completion of a risk assessment.

Application Process

The proposal will be in letter form and at the very least must include;

- a) Objectives – what do you plan to achieve
- b) Purpose – How are you going to do it
- c) Amount requested – Contribution of up to 50% of the costs and not exceeding £500
- d) Must be signed off by the Organisation's Chairman

The proposal must be supported by ;

- a) Cashflow statement that demonstrates and extra increase in expense and show that expense exceeds income
- b) Latest Accounts – 2019/20
- c) Latest Bank statement current at the time of application

Not all applications will be successful, and the ESMBA Management Committee decision is final.

Enquiries and applications to be sent to the Treasurer. Please remember we are all volunteers therefore we may not be able to take your call or get back to you straight away.

4. Competitive Bowling

The ESMBA has taken the decision to cancel its 2020/21 Inter County Championships and replace it with some regionally focused competitions. It has decided that the postponed latter stages of its 2019/20 Inter County Championship will take place in April 2021 as long as Government Policy allows.

Also, the National Championship qualifiers for 2020/21 have been cancelled with the National Championship Finals for 2019/20 hopefully being played in April 2021.

The World Championships in Belgium were to be played in March 2020 and currently have been re-arranged for March 2021 at the same venue in Belgium.

The British Isles Championships were to be hosted by the ESMBA in November 2020 this has been rescheduled for November 2021 to again be hosted by the ESMBA.

In all cases players will be given the opportunity not to play if they feel it is unsafe to do so.

The ESMBA Route Map details when competitive bowling is likely to restart. Practically this will more than likely be in January 2021. The ESMBA is currently developing ideas for some open competitions that can be organised at a county and national level.

Conclusion

Our strategy for short Mat Bowls to restart has been outlined and hopefully meets the criteria laid down by Government. It is important to remember that Short Mat Bowls is unique in its design and does not necessarily sit within any general guidance on Covid-19. Our framework has been developed with the safety of its players at the heart and the enthusiasm to return to playing at the earliest opportunity. However, the ESMBA management committee has a duty of care to those players and to ensure it complies with the most up to date government Covid-19 policy. It is on this basis that the Action plan has been prepared.



ENGLISH SHORT MAT BOWLING ASSOCIATION

ESMBA Covid-19 Route map V1 (July 2020)

Please note: This is the Management Committee's proposal and is awaiting Government comments

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The ESMBA is committed to resuming the sport but only when it is deemed to be safe to do so.

Members will have the right to decide if they wish to resume or not and should not feel pressured by any other club members to participate if they do not feel safe to do so. Members that do feel pressured should raise their concerns with the County Safeguarding officer who will investigate and take necessary action.

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11. The ESMBA is to allocate a large proportion of the coming seasons membership fee to a Covid-19 fund and invite applicants to apply for funding to ensure their clubs are compliant and remain active. (Details to follow).

At all times the ESMBA will work within the Governments guidelines, be it at national or local level.



ESMBA Covid Risk Assessment Template - 30/07/2020

Risk	Description	Result	Mitigations	Who	When	Done
Venue Risk Assessment completed	In line with Government Policy the Venue must have completed a risk assessment to re-open	If no Venue closed	Risk Assessment to be completed	Venue Representative		
	Club/Association to ensure it caters for the safe return of short mat bowls and retain a copy of the venues risk assessment	If not then no return	Club and Venue	Representatives		
Venue Track and Trace arrangements	Club/Association must ensure Venue has Track and Trace system in line with Government policy to allow individuals to be traced if needed	If no Venue closed	System to be set up and operated	Venue Representative		
Bowling Arena suitable	Well Ventilated					
	Dedicated WC Facilities					
	Dedicated washing facilities - running hot water and hand sanitizer					
	Changing Rooms closed - Arrive at venue in playing attire apart from shoes					
	Government Covid-19 posters/guidance on display					
	Kitchen Facilities closed - Own refreshments to be bought in and not shared					
	Placement of Bowling Carpet(s)					
	Social Distancing					
Equipment Setting up and Putting away	Cashless transactions where possible or provide a receptacle for placing exact money in. Alternatively consider free sessions if practical.					
	No more than 3 nominated Club/Association members for each session					
	Shared equipment - jacks, footmats, blocks, fenders, club bowls and other to be wiped down before and after every session					
Attendance	Bowls and personal equipment (e.g. shoes) cannot be shared and must be bought to the venue					
	Adhere to latest Government Covid-19 policy e.g. sickness and quarantine rules					
	Track and Trace must be completed (see next section)					
	No spectators - only bowlers taking part in that session					
Track and Trace	Club/Association booking in system - must book session before turning up. Not booked cannot come in.					
	All attendees must sign in - name and contact details (ESMBA Track and Trace form provided)					
	Record to be maintained by nominated Club/Association member and kept for 21 days in line with Government Covid-19 Policy					
Bowling	Individual has a duty of care to inform nominated Club/Association member if they show Covid-19 symptoms who will inform the appropriate authorities					
	Arrive at venue no more than 10 minutes before the bowls session is to start					
	Leave when your bowls session has finished do not stop and chat in the venue					
	No competitive bowls - i.e. external or internal matches					
	No physical contact and must maintain social distancing at all times - consider the use of face masks					
	Each session to be limited to 1 hour to reduce contact time and ensure all members have an opportunity to bowl					
	Maximum 4 players per mat					
	Nominated person for placing the footmat, for setting the jack, replacing the centre block, ensuring the fenders are correct, dead bowls to be removed with the use of an aid, keeping the score					
	Do not stop illegal running bowls e.g. hit centre block with your hands - consider restriction on playing heavy bowls					
	Re-setting of jack and bowls if displaced (e.g. if in ditch) - needs to be agreed by skips					
No chalk sticks to be used - only spray chalk						
No Scoreboards						

Nominated Club Representative:	Signed	Date
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County Association Safeguarding Officer:	Signed	Date
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ESMBA Safeguarding Officer:	Signed	Date
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ESMBA Covid-19 Compliance guidelines V1 (July 2020)

Last Reviewed: 14th August 2020

Social Distancing

Government guidelines continue to state that if you have a health condition that places you in the clinically vulnerable category, you could be at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. Although you can meet people outdoors and indoors, you should be especially careful and be diligent about social distancing and hand hygiene.

This includes those who are aged 70 or older, regardless of medical conditions.

The current, full guidelines can be found here:

[gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-aGer-4-july](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-aGer-4-july)

County Associations and Clubs must first be able to sign a declaration that all the below can be followed. If all criteria are met then "Safe Bowls Status" (license) will be granted to allow Short Mat Bowls to resume at that venue. The ESMBA reserve the right to remove or suspend this "Safe Bowls Status" (license) at any time to prevent the spread of the virus. The ESMBA Management Committee decision will be final on this.

Procedure for the approval of 'safe bowls' status

- The County or Club Safeguarding officer or nominated person is responsible for ensuring that the County/Club remains Covid-19 safe at all times
- The Safeguarding Officer or nominated person will complete all the necessary documents and declare the site safe
- The safeguarding Officer or nominated person will then get the Officer above them (i.e. Club to County, County to National) to review and counter sign if all conditions are met
- The County Safeguarding Officer must notify the ESMBA Lead Safeguarding Officer of Covid-19 safe clubs as they are signed off. The ESMBA Lead Safeguarding Officer will update the ESMBA Management Committee on a weekly basis of the 'Safe' clubs/associations, these will be advertised on the dedicated ESMBA Covid-19 Web page
- The ESMBA reserve the right at any time to cancel the "Safe Bowls Status" status and restrict activities for any period to control any localised outbreak. The ESMBA will closely monitor Government advice for "hot spot" areas. Short Mat Bowls will not be permitted in these areas
- The ESMBA reserve the right for its Safeguarding Officers and Management Committee members to make spot checks on "safe clubs" to monitor they are following the agreed conditions. Clubs found not conforming will be removed from the list, and not allowed to bowl until their status has been re-issued
- If a club does not have a Safeguarding Officer then in the first instance they should appoint one, failing this a senior member (person in authority e.g. Chairman) to be nominated to undertake the roles

Venues	
Risk Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the Associations/Clubs Safeguarding Officer or nominated person to ensure that the venue has completed a venue risk assessment, to confirm Short mat Bowls can resume. This must be documented and submitted for approval. Our clubs play in varied venues, that are all unique in their size, layout, and location. Some venues will find it easier than others to comply with the conditions • The Safeguarding Officer or nominated person will need to complete a risk assessment for activities of short mat bowls
Contact Tracing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The venue must confirm that it is following a “track and trace” scheme for users of the venue and highlight how they will manage this and confirm their procedures for informing other users if a case is reported
Cleaning, Hygiene and Social Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The venue at a bare minimum must be able to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An adequate ventilated space for Short mat Bowls to operate whilst maintaining a social distance of 2m ▪ If a club wishes to play on more than one mat it must demonstrate it can lay them a clear 3m apart (sketch of hall layout and mats are to be included) ▪ Hot water close to the entrance and exit for members to wash their hands on arrival and before leaving, along with times within the session ▪ Cleaned and dedicated WC facilities, these will be for one person at a time and suitable indication must be available to show at a distance if engaged or not • Hand sanitiser must be made available for members at each end of the rink mat either by the venue or club • Face coverings must be worn in communal areas, as per government guidelines.
Sickness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are feeling unwell at all, please stay at home • If you have had symptoms (change or loss of taste and smell, a new continuous cough or a high temperature) you MUST stay at home, and book a test and inform the club accordingly
Posters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest Government posters advertising the potential dangers, symptoms, and general advice notices must be on display at various locations around the venue
Changing Rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under no circumstances should there be any use of changing rooms. Participants should arrive in their playing kit apart from bowling shoes which should be changed at the venue

Equipment	
Equipment set up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment will be set out and put away by a maximum of three nominated individuals per session. A record of these individuals will be kept for “track and trace” • Shared equipment (Jacks, etc.) will be cleaned with anti-bacterial wipes before and after every session. Any member that touches shared equipment should then wash their hands with hot soapy water • If equipment is stored in an area where 2m Social distancing cannot be achieved then the Governments guidelines for 1m plus must be followed. Thus face coverings must be worn
PPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs will make available disposable gloves and masks that must be used when putting equipment out and away, these will be disposed of after and individuals will wash their hands with warm soapy water
Mats and Bowls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members are to bring their own bowls • Bowls are not to be shared at this time

Playing Conditions	
Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No individual is to attend a club session if they have shown any of the symptoms of Covid-19 in the last 14 days as indicated by the current Government guidelines • Only bowlers will be allowed at sessions. There are to be no non bowlers or spectators. • Short Mat Bowls clubs should set up a booking system to restrict the number of participants to only allow the maximum number per mat as detailed in these guidelines • There will be no external or internal club matches at this time
Before, during and after play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is to be NO physical contact with members (Shaking hands, kissing) before, during or after any sessions • When changing ends players will walk to the opposite end with the rink mat on their right hand side • Sessions should be capped to 1hr to reduce the contact time with others
Track and Trace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the start of each session the Safeguarding Officer or nominated person in charge of that session is to have everyone in attendance sign a “ESMBA Track and Trace” form, refusal to sign these forms will result in the member not being able to attend and a note should be made that such person attended and refused entry • These forms will be kept for 21 days (in accordance with GDPR) in a secure location by the Safeguarding Officer or nominated person. If a case is reported from a member of one of these sessions in that time period then everyone is to be informed that they must self-isolate and take further consultation from the local health authority • Copies of these forms will be made available to the local track and trace Organisation/contact if a case is reported or requested to do so

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ESMBA must be notified immediately by its dedicated email (covid19@esmba.co.uk) of any outbreak at any of its County/club venues. The ESMBA Chairman will lead on any further action. The ESMBA decision will be final with no right of appeal
Disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unless all players are from one household games will be limited to 4 players per mat only
Laying of the foot mat and Jack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the start of the session one player will be nominated to lay and collect the foot mat. One player will be nominated to always set the jack (this will always be the same player but will be instructed by the winning side to its position)
Resetting the block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One player will be nominated to reset the block, no matter who hits it
Removing dead bowls from the mat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bowls will be removed or moved from the rink mat by bowls lifter or other aid. There is to be no hand contact with bowls except of your own set
Touchers/measuring And Scoreboards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be no measuring of any sort Touchers will only be marked with spray chalk Scoreboards should not be used
Transactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clubs should consider 'cashless' transactions, if this is not possible the correct money should be placed in a storage container supplied by the Treasurer

Refreshments	
Refreshments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is to be No communal refreshment breaks or use of venue kitchen facilities Members should be encouraged to bring bottled drinks for their own consumption It is important to remember although there is to be no designated refreshment break members should keep hydrated during the session
Smoking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smoking members must smoke in their venues designated smoking areas singly only and not in groups Smokers must wash their hands with Soap and water before resuming play
Hand washing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any member leaving the venue must wash their hands before and after re-entering

Appendices:

- ESMBA risk assessment template (Appendix 2)
- ESMBA Track and Trace document (Appendix 3a)
- ESMBA 'Covid-19 safe' declaration form (Appendix 3b)
- ESMBA venue COVID checklist (appendix 4)

Useful resources:

The Government roadmap and COVID-19 Secure Guidelines:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19->

[recovery-strategy](#)

Guidance for the Safe Use of multi-purpose Community Facilities:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-safe-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities>

“Catch it, Bin it, Kill it” poster:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/09/catch-bin-kill.pdf>

Face Coverings:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home#face-coverings>

Guidance for social distancing and vulnerable people:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

ENGLISH SHORT MAT BOWLING ASSOCIATION
SAFE BOWLS STATUS



NOT ACTUAL CERTIFICATE

This is to confirm that _____
(Name of club/league/association)

Has completed all the required Covid safe assessments and has been granted Safe Bowls Status.

Signed _____
(County/ESMBA Lead Safeguarding Officer)

Dated _____

Remember this status can be revoked at any time if the entity is found to be not complying with the standards laid down



VENUE COVID CHECKLIST



Appendix 4

Conducted By	Date	
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	RISK	YES	NO	If NO what measures implemented to reduce risk
1	Has the Venue completed a Covid risk assessment			
2	Have dangers of having venue closed been actioned			
3	Does the venue have a Tarck and Trace system			
4	Has the water supply been checked			
5	Have any pinch points been identified			
6	Are there adequate hand washing facilities			
7	Is there good ventilation			
8	Is equipment safely stored			
9	Is your equipment for your use only			
10	Are seats cleanable			
11	Are one way systems in place			
12	Is venue cleaned between users			
13	Are Covid Posters displayed			
14	Are changing facilities isolated			
15	Is there a procedure when members feel unwell			
16	Are all rubbish bins foot operated			
17	Are hand sanitisers available/working			
18	Are toilets single occupancy			
19	Are first aiders on hand			
20	Are catering facilities isolated			