

RETURN TO PLAY – GUIDELINES FROM CHILD PROTECTION IN SPORT UNIT.

Your child might, understandably, have some concerns about returning to sport as lockdown restrictions in the UK begin to ease and organised sport starts up again.

Some children might feel nervous about meeting and mixing with peers after so long away from social interactions. Others might be concerned about coronavirus (COVID-19) itself and might have worries about contracting the virus or how COVID secure a setting will or will not be.

There are lots of ways you can support your child and reassure them about why getting back into physical activity might be important to both them and their physical and mental wellbeing.

Ways to support your child

- listen to any worries and talk about any feelings they might have about going back. The NSPCC has guidance on **how to talk to your child about coronavirus**
- look into the **COVID safety practices** your child's sport has put in place together, talk them through to reassure your child of the kinds of behaviours and practices that can keep everyone safe in sport
- give them a sense of control by showing them the guidance that Childline has for **children and young people on coronavirus**
- find out how little or much you can be part of their experience of returning. If it's outdoors, can you go and watch? Can you walk them into the venue, or drop them off outside?
- talk through any concerns about your child's return with coaches, welfare officers and support staff and make sure you're happy that your child's worries are being listened to

Why going back to sport is so important for children

Children returning to a sport they enjoy can have many benefits to both their physical and mental health. Some of these benefits might include:

- staying healthy and active
- a sense of normality or routine after a turbulent year
- interacting with peers and developing life-long social skills
- being able to access support from other trusted adults in sport
- developing new skills and achieving goals, which can help build children's confidence
- feeling part of a team, or a sense of belonging to help tackle feelings of isolation, which they may have experienced during the pandemic.

