

## Equality Impact Assessment

### The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 13) Regulations 2020

#### Introduction

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented calls on the health system as well as policy and financial decisions that have made fundamental changes to everyday life for people in Scotland. While it has been necessary to take these extraordinary measures to respond to the pandemic, the protection of equalities for Scotland's population, and the proportionality of the measures taken, have also been at the forefront of consideration of these actions during this emergency situation.
2. The Coronavirus (COVID-19): Framework for Decision-Making and *Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis* ("the Route Map") make clear that COVID-19 is first and foremost a public health crisis, and the measures to combat it have been necessary to save lives. The *Framework for Decision-Making* identified four main categories of harm: direct health impacts, non-COVID-19 health harms, societal impacts and economic impacts. These harms are deeply inter-related: health harms impact on society and the economy, just as the societal and economic effects impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing. The Route Map sets out the range and phasing of measures proposed for Scotland as it moves out of lockdown. Like the initial response to the crisis, navigating the right course out of lockdown involves taking difficult decisions that seek to balance these inter-related harms and risks.
3. The Framework and the Route Map documents also note that the pandemic, and the measures to respond to it, can have the most negative impacts on people least able to withstand them.
4. Some harms will be felt over different time horizons: short, medium and long-term. Some harm may not be fully understood for many months or even years, such as the long term impacts on mental health and school attainment. However, even in these initial stages, it is clear that impacts have not been equally felt across the population. Consideration of the continued but differential impacts as lockdown is lifted in careful phases is therefore critical to the decision making process.

#### Legislative background

5. The UK Coronavirus Act 2020 received Royal Assent on 25 March 2020. The Scottish Government immediately used powers conferred by that Act to bring forward the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 ("the Principal Regulations"), to implement physical distancing and impose restrictions on gatherings, events and operation of business activity. The Principal Regulations came into force on Thursday 26 March.
6. Recognising the extraordinary impact of the measures, Scottish Ministers have put in place a statutory requirement to review the restrictions every three weeks to ensure they remain proportionate and necessary.
7. As soon as the Scottish Ministers consider that any restriction or requirement is no longer necessary to prevent, protect against, control or provide a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection in Scotland with coronavirus, the Scottish Ministers must revoke that restriction or requirement.

8. The Framework for Decision Making makes clear that the reviews will be informed by assessments of options for relaxation under their impact on the 'four harms', their viability, and broader considerations including equality impacts and consideration of measures, for example, for specific geographies and sectors.
9. The Scottish Government considered from the outset whether the lockdown provisions were consistent with the Equality Act 2010 and also considered whether the provisions could constitute indirect discrimination. In many cases, the provisions have applied to all persons irrespective of protected characteristic. Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) have been carried out to consider the impact of the measures contained in the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 and for the respective legislation thereafter. Where some possible impacts have been identified, the Scottish Government has considered these to be justified as both a necessary and proportionate means of achieving the legitimate aim of protecting the general public from the threats posed by the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic and, therefore, the threat to human life in Scotland. However, from the beginning measures were put in place to support people as they complied with lockdown guidance, such as the £350 million of community funding announced on the 18 March.
10. As Scotland emerges from the lockdown, following the Route Map, some changes are delivered through regulations, such as the opportunity to take part in outdoor recreation. Other measures are delivered through changes to guidance, such as driving lessons resuming. However, all measures are given thorough consideration on the basis of their impact, including on equality and human rights.

## **Policy Objectives**

11. On 21 May 2020 the Scottish Government published a route map setting out a phased approach to easing lockdown restrictions while still suppressing coronavirus (COVID-19). The route map recognises that the restrictions and requirements in place have a negative impact on some aspects of people's lives, such as increasing loneliness and social isolation and have potential to deepen inequalities and damage our economy. The route map also stated that, subject to the available data and evidence in support of such proposals, some of the restrictions and requirements may be eased at this time.
12. Some changes to the lockdown measures are made by this instrument and are described below. The Scottish Government's guidance has been updated to reflect these changes and to make other changes for the purpose of implementing proposals in the route map. The revised guidance is available at [www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance](http://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance).

### *Indoor activities for children*

13. Regulation 6 of the principal regulations provides that no person may participate in a gathering in a public place with certain exceptions. These Regulations provide further exceptions for where the gathering is for the purpose of organised exercise (whether indoors or outdoors) or other organised activities for children (which may take place indoors or outdoors) or for adults (which may take place outdoors only). An activity is organised if it is organised by a person responsible for carrying on a business or providing a service, a place of worship, a charity or other not for profit organisation, a club or political organisation, or the governing body of a sport or other activity.

### *Restriction on parties in private dwellings*

14. Regulation 2(3) of these Regulations sets out that no person may attend a party in a private dwelling. A party is defined as a social gathering where 16 or more people, who are members of more than one household, are present together in a place. Some exemptions are set out to ensure certain gatherings are not covered, such as for the purposes of work.
15. The Regulations also provide a power to enter a private dwelling if a police officer reasonably suspects that a party, as defined in the regulations, is taking place and it is necessary and proportionate for the officer to enter the property to prevent the party from continuing. The power can only be used if the constable has first requested any person reasonably suspected to be contravening regulation 6ZA to stop doing so and the person has failed to comply with the request.

### *Reopening of certain fitness premises*

16. These Regulations amend the principal regulations, with the effect that indoor fitness studios, gyms, swimming pools or other indoor leisure centres, including skating rinks can now reopen.

### *Face coverings*

17. These Regulations amend the principal regulations, with the effect that face coverings must be worn in indoor fitness studios, gyms, swimming pools or other indoor leisure centres, and indoor skating rinks.
18. The Regulations also provide a new reasonable excuse for not wearing a face covering, this new exemption is for the purpose of exercise. The result of these Regulations is that face coverings must be worn when inside indoor sport and exercise venues such as corridors, changing rooms and reception areas but do not need to be worn when exercise is being undertaken.

### **Assessing the impacts and identifying opportunities to promote equality**

19. It is necessary to make and lay this instrument urgently to make necessary adjustments to the current arrangements which facilitate self-isolation and minimise the risks to public health arising from COVID-19. On that basis, there has been a welcome opportunity to gather evidence on the possible impacts of the Regulations. Evidence was also gathered as part of the development of the Scottish Government's COVID-19 route map and the review of the Principal Regulations.
20. Given the importance of assessing the impact of policy change on each of the protected characteristics, the following table sets out an assessment of the impact of the changes made in the Regulations on each of the protected characteristics.

• **Upper limit on gatherings to restrict house parties.**

<b>Impact</b>	<p>Along with guidance previously published by the Scottish Government relating to seeing friends and family, this measure is intended to increase compliance with the rules relating to private indoor gatherings.</p> <p>There is increasing evidence of larger indoor gatherings taking place in private homes, these are known to be potential super-spreader environments, so these measures will allow police to disperse groups if a party of 16 or more people from more than one household is found to be taking place.</p>	
<b>Differential impacts</b>	<b>Age: Children and Younger People</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups will be disproportionately affected this measure a consequence of age.
	<b>Age: Older People</b>	As above.
	<b>Sex: Women</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups will be disproportionately affected this measure a consequence of gender.
	<b>Sex: Men</b>	As above.
	<b>Race</b>	The average household size for households with children is 3.6 with the exception of Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British families where the average size is 4.1. This means that Asian, Scottish Asian and Asian British families are likely to see higher numbers if households were to meet than non-Asian families.
	<b>Religion &amp; Faith</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups will be disproportionately affected this measure a consequence of religion and faith.
	<b>Disability</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups will be disproportionately affected this measure a consequence of disability.
<b>Socio-economic disadvantage</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups will be disproportionately affected this measure a consequence of socio-economic status.	
<p><b>Mitigating actions</b></p> <p>As a result of the data relating to average household sizes, a limit of 15 people from more than one household has been set before an offence has been committed. This ensures that race does not disproportionately impact certain households from having small gatherings with family members from other households.</p> <p>The specific mention of “more than one household” has been selected as to avoid criminalising the small number of families in Scotland who have more than 15 people within their single household.</p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Indoor gyms – (with physical distancing and enhanced hygiene measures).</b></li> </ul>	
<b>General impacts of the measure</b>	<p>The 2018 Scottish Household Survey reported that 15% of adult participation in physical activity in the previous 4 weeks was through multi-gym and weight training.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>This is amongst the most popular ways that people engage in physical activity and closure of indoor gyms has significantly affected this group. According to a survey by Community Leisure UK, around 52% of gym/centre users said they've been less active or significantly less active during lockdown. This percentage rises to 60% for those 75+ and to 64% for those with a disability suggesting that these groups have been disproportionately affected by closure.</p>
<b>Differential Impacts by Equality Group or Socio-Economic disadvantage</b>	
<b>Age: Older People and Children and Young People</b>	<p>UK Active age breakdown of adult gym membership (16+) suggests that those aged over 55 account for 23% of gym membership in 2019, and that membership is dominated by younger age groups.</p> <p>The Scottish Household Survey 2018 reported that 6% of those aged between 60 and 74 participated in multi-gym and weight training compared with 66% who participated by walking for 30 minutes.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>For those older adults who do use indoor gyms, closure has had a disproportionate effect on levels of activity as noted above.</p> <p>The numbers of children under 16 who use gyms in Scotland is not available so it is difficult to comment on the effect of closure on this age group as a whole.</p>
<b>Sex: Men and Women</b>	<p>According to UK Active,<sup>3</sup> 46% of gym members in 2019 were male with 54% female. Sport England have reported that 80% of fitness classes offered at leisure centres are used by women. This higher percentage of female membership and participation contrasts with the overall figures for those meeting the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines for Moderate or Vigorous Physical Activity. In 2018, the Scottish Health Survey<sup>4</sup> reported that only 62% of Scottish women met the guidelines compared to 70% of men. This suggests that, compared to other forms of physical activity, gyms provide an important role in providing women and girls with opportunities to be active. Thus, while we are not aware of any published evidence that closure of gyms has had a disproportionate effect on women and girls, it seems likely that this may be the case.</p>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.ukactive.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Moving\\_Communities\\_Active\\_Leisure\\_Trends\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ukactive.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Moving_Communities_Active_Leisure_Trends_2019.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-health-survey-2018-volume-1-main-report/>

<b>Race</b>	UK Active report that 74% of gym members in the UK in 2019 were white. We are not aware of any published evidence that the closure of gyms has disproportionately affected groups based on race.
<b>Disability</b>	It is not clear how many of those with gym memberships are disabled people. As noted above, for those disabled adults who do use indoor gyms, there is evidence that closure has had a disproportionate effect on levels of activity.
<b>Religion and Belief</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence that the closure of gyms has disproportionately affected groups based on religion and belief.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence that the closure of gyms has disproportionately affected groups based on the sexual orientation of individuals.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	There is strong evidence that combined aerobic and resistance exercise interventions during pregnancy can maintain, or improve, cardiovascular fitness without adverse effects <sup>5</sup> leading to improved maternal health after delivery, decreased complications during labour & delivery, and quicker maternal recovery. Ready, Steady, Baby guidance on NHS inform <sup>6</sup> advises pregnant women to take part in low-impact fitness classes for pregnant women, including yoga. The guidance notes that classes are a great way to meet other mums-to-be and build up a support network.
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence that the closure of gyms has disproportionately affected groups based on gender reassignment.
<b>Socio-economic disadvantage: any people experiencing poverty</b>	UK Active data suggests that 8% of gym members reside in the most deprived 10% of areas. In comparison, 14% of members are from the least deprived 10% of areas. We are not aware of any published evidence that the closure of gyms has disproportionately affected groups based on socio-economic disadvantage. As the majority of gym members come from less deprived areas, the impact on this group is greater than for those in the most deprived group.
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>	
<p>sportscotland have worked closely with Scottish Disability Sport (SDS), who have been involved in planning sessions with all sports. SDS have developed a document of Principles for Participants with Disabilities Returning to Physical Activity and Sport in Scotland which are used in these sessions.</p> <p>Sportscotland have also worked closely with Leap Sport Scotland to understand the impact of closure of facilities on the LGBTI community and with the Children 1st Safeguarding in Sport service to produce guidance on <a href="#">'Child wellbeing and protection considerations in the return of children and young people to sport'</a></p>	

<sup>5</sup> <https://movingmedicine.ac.uk/evidence/improves-fitness/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nhsinform.scot/ready-steady-baby/pregnancy/looking-after-yourself-and-your-baby/keeping-active-in-pregnancy>

## Mitigations

National guidance has been developed to provide support to the sport and leisure sector to help them plan and prepare for the resumption of activity. This will be supported by additional more specific guidance for particular parts of the sector.

In addition sportscotland is supporting Scottish governing bodies of sport and local partners to plan for the return of sport and to develop specific guidance for their sports. This has included facilitating scenario planning based on the Scottish Government decision making framework and route map and a template with prompts to facilitate planning, including inclusivity, communicating with participants and ensuring that information on plans for restarting and safe opportunities within the parameters of physical distancing are followed.

We have also developed an operational guide and checklist to sit alongside the guidance that includes a four-stage plan checklist that we recommend operators follow to ensure the health and safety of workers and participants is protected.

Further engagement with specific groups will be necessary to better understand the impact of closure from different perspectives.

- **Swimming pools (indoor) can re-open following relevant guidance.**

<b>General impacts of the measure</b>	Outwith walking (68%), more people in Scotland participated in swimming (17%) in 2018 than any other activity. Swimming pools are also used for other water based activities including other sports as well as aqua natal and other classes. Closure of swimming pools therefore affects large numbers of people in Scotland.
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### Differential Impacts by Equality Group or Socio-Economic disadvantage

<b>Age: Older People and Children and Young People</b>	Swimming is an activity which is undertaken by all ages. Although a larger percentage of 35-44 year olds participate in swimming than other age groups, significant percentages of older and younger age groups also participate. Compared to other activities (except walking), swimming is particularly important for older adults who will therefore have been particularly affected by closure.
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<b>Sex: Men and Women</b>	Slightly more women (18%) participate in swimming than men (16%). As in general, fewer women than men participate in physical activity, closure of swimming pools has a greater effect on women than men.
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<b>Race</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups have been disproportionately affected by the closure of swimming pools as a consequence of race.
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<b>Disability</b>	We lack data on the participation of disabled people in swimming in Scotland although there is historic evidence from England to suggest that swimming is particularly important to young, disabled people. <sup>7</sup>
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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/rworks/nov2001.pdf>

<b>Religion and Belief</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups have been disproportionately affected by the closure of swimming pools as a consequence of religion and belief.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups have been disproportionately affected by the closure of swimming pools as a consequence of sexual orientation.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	There is clear evidence that aqua exercise sessions an attractive and safe option during pregnancy and postnatal period. Closure of swimming pools therefore prevents pregnant women from accessing this important opportunity to remain active.
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups have been disproportionately affected by the closure of swimming pools as a consequence of gender reassignment.
<b>Socio-economic disadvantage: any people experiencing poverty</b>	The 2018 Scottish Household Survey reported that 12% of those in the 20% most deprived areas participated in swimming compared to 23% in the least deprived 20%. <sup>8</sup> The report notes that swimming along with keep fit, running, cycling and golf show the most disparity between participation rates in the most and least deprived areas. This disparity was less apparent for football, snooker, bowls and dancing where participation was broadly similar between areas of both high and low deprivation. This suggests that swimming plays less of a role in more deprived areas although there will be an impact on those who do participate.
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>	
<p>sportscotland have worked closely with Scottish Disability Sport (SDS), who have been involved in planning sessions with all sports. SDS have developed a document of Principles for Participants with Disabilities Returning to Physical Activity and Sport in Scotland which are used in these sessions.</p> <p>sportscotland have also worked closely with Leap Sport Scotland to understand the impact of closure of facilities on the LGBTI community and with the Children 1st Safeguarding in Sport service and have produced guidance.<sup>9</sup></p>	
<b>Mitigations</b>	
<p>National guidance has been developed to provide support to the sport and leisure sector to help them plan and prepare for the resumption of activity. This will be supported by additional more specific guidance for particular parts of the sector.</p> <p>In addition, sportscotland is supporting Scottish governing bodies of sport and local partners to plan for the return of sport and to develop specific guidance for their sports. This has included facilitating scenario planning based on the Scottish Government decision making framework and route map and a template with prompts to facilitate planning, including inclusivity, communicating with participants and ensuring that information on plans for restarting and safe opportunities within the parameters of physical distancing are followed.</p>	

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://sportscotland.org.uk/media/5774/cyp-return-to-sport-after-covid-19.pdf>



We have also developed an operational guide and checklist to sit alongside the guidance that includes a four-stage plan checklist that we recommend operators follow to ensure the health and safety of workers and participants is protected.

Further engagement with specific groups will be necessary to better understand the impact of closure from different perspectives.

- **Indoor sport courts can re-open with physical distancing and subject to relevant guidance, including skating and dance studios.**

<b>General impacts of the measure</b>	<p>A wide range of activities take place in indoor sports courts. Separate assessments have been undertaken on swimming pools, snooker/pool halls and indoor bowling. The impact on those participating in football is considered under</p> <p>Similarly, the impact of the closure of indoor gyms, often located in sports facilities, is considered separately. This section therefore covers the impact on other activities such as dance, gymnastics, badminton, squash etc.</p> <p>Excluding football, participation numbers in individual sports are relatively small with only dance being listed in the 2018 Scottish Household Survey with an overall participation rate of 8%. Collectively, however, these other activities involve large numbers of people who have been adversely affected by closure.</p>
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**Differential Impacts by Equality Group or Socio-Economic disadvantage**

<b>Age: Older People and Children and Young People</b>	<p>Participation by different age groups in the variety of sports and activities taking place in indoor courts differs according to the activity. Thus, older people are less likely to participate in dance than younger age groups though there have been a number of successful recent initiatives which suggest that dance can play an important role in re-engaging older people in physical activity. Participants in gymnastics are overwhelmingly young while participation in other sports are higher amongst middle aged or older groups. It is therefore difficult to identify disproportionate impact on individual age groups.</p>
<b>Sex: Men and Women</b>	<p>Women are more likely to participate in dance than men with 11% of women participating in the last four weeks compared to 4% of men.</p> <p>Other activities, such as boxing, are more popular with men. It is therefore difficult to identify disproportionate impact of the closure of indoor courts on either men or women.</p>
<b>Race</b>	<p>We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups have been disproportionately affected by the closure of indoor courts as a consequence of their race.</p>
<b>Disability</b>	<p>No impact identified.</p>

<b>Religion and Belief</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups have been disproportionately affected by the closure of indoor courts as a consequence of their religion or belief.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups have been disproportionately affected by the closure of indoor courts as a consequence of their sexual orientation.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<p>Classes for pregnant women often take place in indoor sports courts. There is strong evidence that combined aerobic and resistance exercise interventions during pregnancy can maintain, or improve, cardiovascular fitness without adverse effects<sup>10</sup> leading to improved maternal health after delivery, decreased complications during labour &amp; delivery, and quicker maternal recovery.</p> <p>Ready, Steady, Baby guidance on NHS inform<sup>11</sup> advises pregnant women to take part in low-impact fitness classes for pregnant women, including yoga. The guidance notes that classes are a great way to meet other mums-to-be and build up a support network.</p>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups have been disproportionately affected by the closure of indoor courts as a consequence of gender reassignment.
<b>Socio-economic disadvantage: any people experiencing poverty</b>	We are not aware of any published evidence which suggests that groups have been disproportionately affected by the closure of indoor courts as a consequence of socio-economic disadvantage.
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>	
<p>sportscotland have worked closely with Scottish Disability Sport (SDS), who have been involved in planning sessions with all sports. SDS have developed a document of Principles for Participants with Disabilities Returning to Physical Activity and Sport in Scotland which are used in these sessions.</p> <p>sportscotland have also worked closely with Leap Sport Scotland to understand the impact of closure of facilities on the LGBTI community and with the Children 1st Safeguarding in Sport service and have produced guidance.<sup>12</sup></p>	

<sup>10</sup> <https://movingmedicine.ac.uk/evidence/improves-fitness/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.nhsinform.scot/ready-steady-baby/pregnancy/looking-after-yourself-and-your-baby/keeping-active-in-pregnancy>

<sup>12</sup> <https://sportscotland.org.uk/media/5774/cyp-return-to-sport-after-covid-19.pdf>

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We have also developed an operational guide and checklist to sit alongside the guidance that includes a four-stage plan checklist that we recommend operators follow to ensure the health and safety of workers and participants is protected.

Further engagement with specific groups will be necessary to better understand the impact of closure from different perspectives.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Indoor activities for children and young people (unregulated) can resume subject to guidance that will vary by activity.</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>General impacts of the measure</b></p>	<p>The scope of unregulated children’s activity is wide, and crossover between definitions of activity exists. Officials have described activity under the following headings, though in reality this is not an exhaustive list, and there is much overlap the type of activity undertaken and how service providers might categorise themselves.</p> <p>Unregulated indoor activities for children and young people cover a broad scope of activity for an age range from new-born babies up to 18 years old. They include, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor youth work for young people aged under 18 years of age (mentioned separately in the Route Map).</li> <li>• Organised indoor play, activity clubs (excluding indoor sport and dance which is dealt with as part of indoor sport Route Map considerations) operating either in the school estate or in other community settings.</li> <li>• Unregulated wrap around clubs and activities operating before and after school, including breakfast clubs and private tutoring.</li> <li>• Group work, including for family support.</li> <li>• Faith-related education for children and young people (not in schools and not taking place as part of an act of worship), such as Madrassahs.</li> <li>• Activities to support parents with new-born and pre-school age children, including breastfeeding groups, peer support (including perinatal support), and supported learning sessions such as Bookbug, mother/toddler groups, baby massage.</li> </ul> <p>Activities normally run daily in communities across the country. Families may attend multiple activities in one day, for instance a parent toddler group in the morning, after school club in the afternoon, then youth club in the evening.</p> <p>The impact of lockdown on children, young people and families has been well-documented. The range of activities covered by this varied sector help support the wellbeing of children, young people and families across Scotland, in areas such as child development, childcare, socialisation, attainment, mental wellbeing and broad family support.</p>
<p><b>Differential Impacts by Equality Group or Socio-Economic disadvantage</b></p>	
<p><b>Age: Older People and Children and Young People</b></p>	<p>Children and young people are heavily affected by not being able to access these activities. They provide space for them to play, socialise and interact with their peers. Often they will be for hobbies or personal interests that the children cannot get elsewhere. Children will often attend multiple groups or clubs at different days across the week.</p> <p>Parents are also affected, particularly parents of young children who cannot access support groups or the support of the community such as parent and toddler groups where they can bond with their child and also share experiences with other parents.</p>

	<p>A Co-SPYCE Oxford university study<sup>13</sup>, which is based upon UK-wide data gathered between 17 April and 20 May reported that 47% of children spent no time playing with another child in their household and 51% are reported as not communicating at all via phone, video call or message with friends outside their home.</p> <p>A survey by Mary Immaculate College in Ireland<sup>14</sup> conducted from 21 May to 3 July during Ireland's phase 1 of easing restrictions reported that despite the easing of lockdown, less than a third (27%) of children have played with children from another household outdoors with social distancing at least once a week. Almost all children (90%) missed their friends and playing with other children (87%).</p>
<b>Sex: Men and Women</b>	<p>No disproportionate impact has been identified between boys and girls that attend these activities.</p> <p>Women are more likely to miss out on the baby centred peer support activities such as breastfeeding groups.</p>
<b>Race</b>	<p>Not being able to access groups that particularly target support for minority ethnic groups has stopped children and young people being able to share their experiences in a safe space.</p>
<b>Disability</b>	<p>Groups specifically for disabled people have not been able to meet and will have been difficult to replace or replicate during lockdown.</p>
<b>Religion and Belief</b>	<p>Faith-related education groups have not been able to meet, preventing children and young people exploring their faith with their peers outside of acts of worship.</p>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<p>LGBT groups where young people can discuss their sexual orientation in a safe space have not been able to meet. This can be a difficult time for young people and have a negative effect on their mental health.</p>
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<p>There are a number of support groups for pregnant women and new parents that have not been able to go ahead. These can be helpful in providing new mothers and parents a support group of peers who are all having the same experience.</p>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<p>Any support groups for young people during gender reassignment have stopped, removing a safe space for them. This can be a difficult time for young people and have negative effect on their mental health.</p>

<sup>13</sup> [https://emergingminds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Co-SPYCE-report\\_1\\_Final.pdf](https://emergingminds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Co-SPYCE-report_1_Final.pdf)

<sup>14</sup>

<https://www.mic.ul.ie/sites/default/files/uploads/241/Impact%20of%20COVID19%20on%20Young%20Childrens%20Play%2C%20Learning%20%26%20Development%20-%20PLEY%20Survey%20Preliminary%20Findings.pdf>

<p><b>Socio-economic disadvantage: any people experiencing poverty</b></p>	<p>While some groups offered online support in place of meeting in person, this relies on people having sufficient technology and broadband or data provision to access it.</p> <p>Services are predominantly low or no cost. Some services will offer food and drink. Children and young people from deprived areas may feel their loss more keenly, as both a safe space to socialise with peers and as a source of nourishment. For vulnerable children these sorts of activities go beyond simply being fun, they are a vital part of their wellbeing, development and even safety.</p> <p>The Children’s Commissioner for Wales survey<sup>15</sup>, which was completed by 23,700 children and young people aged between 3-18 reported children living in deprived areas had fewer places to play (57% compared to 72% in non-deprived).</p>
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**Stakeholder Engagement**

The wide scope of the activities, covering any group or service for children under 18, means that this cuts across a number of Scottish Government portfolios. Policy officials have engaged with stakeholders throughout lockdown to ensure that every effort is being made to support children and young people. Guidance is being developed for the reopening of services which will involve some engagement with stakeholders while acknowledging the broad range of services and that there is minimal sectoral organisation for many of these activities.

**Mitigations**

The Scottish Government will aim to publish guidance to allow unregulated indoor activity to restart after 31 August.

Throughout lockdown we have worked with stakeholders across the children and families age ranges to offer support while their groups and activities have had to cease.

Some groups are providing online versions of their support, connecting people and offering support or the space to chat with their peers online.

The Scottish Government launched its Connecting Scotland programme in August 2020 with a £15 million investment to help 23,000 households get online.

The Route Map allowed some groups to meet outside following physical distancing and within the guidance for the number of people and households allowed to meet at one time. Outdoor work by some of these groups is underway. Youth work is also currently permitted outdoors.

The Scottish Government have worked to support children and families through social marketing and messaging across all traditional media and digital platforms.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/coronavirus-and-me-results/>