



Report of online information sharing seminar

- COVID-19 and current situation, challenges and future steps regarding sports environment

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This report describes the current situation, challenges and future steps for sports environment regarding COVID-19 which were gathered from the above Japanese section members via an online meeting on the 25th of June 2020. We hope that this report will be helpful to understand and refer to considering the new normal in the field of sports and leisure facilities.

1. Sports and leisure facilities

Current situation (inc. prior state of emergency) and challenges:

- Reopening of outdoor facilities after the state of emergency.
- Facilities for individual or small groups were well utilized after reopening e.g. tennis courts.
- Wearing of masks is one of the ways to prevent spreading the virus, however, masks present a risk for other health problems such as heatstroke.
- Users of indoor facilities, especially gyms, fell steeply and profits decreased dramatically to 50% in March and 25% in April 2020 in the UK. The situation in Japan was similar.

What we learned and future steps:

- Designing for social distancing.
- Providing a safe environment for both users and staff by making guidelines and explaining rules to users. e.g. if not wearing a mask due to health reasons, maintain a sensible social distance.
- Educating about new normal protocols for staff, teachers, and coaches.
- Research in the UK shows that 90% of the gym users will return after the pandemic. Both online and physical management are needed.

2. Parks and open spaces

Current situation (inc. prior state of emergency) and challenges:

- During the state of emergency, for example, the use of playground equipment in metropolitan parks was banned, but the parks in cities and wards had a variety of restrictions, as a result, parks which were open were very crowded during that period compared to typical usage.
- In the spaces which were open, the number of users of all generations increased dramatically. Due to the number of school age students playing ball sports, adult joggers, and elderly and infants in close proximity, there was the concern of collisions and aerosol spread. However, social distancing and the wearing of masks took root over about two weeks, thus, safety came to be insured.
- Some cities opened sports grounds for free for citizens. These grounds were crowded with children as schools and indoor facilities were closed.

What we learned and future steps:

- Sports and leisure activities not only promote physical and mental health but overall well-being. As such, the importance of parks and open spaces were re-recognized to be essential in facilitating activities which promote being in nature to boost immunity and holistic health for all.
- Provide appropriate size and quality of parks depending on population.
- Walkable to access to the parks and parks should be connected to encourage more physical activities.
- Multipurpose use is important for parks (especially in big cities as space is limited) including protection against natural disasters e.g. green infrastructure for heavy rains, evacuation area for earthquakes etc.
- Parks' positioning is as the provider of the space and opportunities for physical, mental, and social well-being as the third place.