Live Covid-19 FA Q&A

1) Do the recent Government restrictions limiting gatherings to groups of 6 affect grassroots football?

Team sports are exempt from these restrictions and organised, Covid-19 secure grassroots football can continue. All participants must follow all FA and Government guidance.

2) Why is training limited to 30 people, but matches are not?
The FA guidance does not provide a cap of 30 for competitive matches as this would prohibit many formal matches from taking place when you factor in players, substitutes and officials.

The wider Government guidance is clear that that you are able to play team sport in any number if this is formally organised by a sports club or similar organisation and sports-governing body guidance has been issued, as detailed here.

Social distancing must be adhered to in all settings before and after matches. Training sessions should be limited to groups of no more than 30.

3) What happens if a player tests positive for Covid-19?

If there is a player who has tested positive, they must from that point self-isolate (or if they have symptoms, from the moment of symptoms) and NHS Test and Trace will pick up from this point. The player should contact NHS 111.

The Club can carry on, but be mindful to ensure all the guidelines are strictly followed on social distancing, hand washing etc. If Test and Trace contact them, they must provide the details and then if deemed anyone needs to isolate on their instruction, do so.

4) What happens if I have played an opposition team and one of their players has tested positive for Covid-19?

Match play is not considered 'close contact' so no action is needed unless individuals experience symptoms, in which case they must self-isolate from that point as per Government guidance.

5) When is indoor football/futsal returning?

We are working closely with Government on our proposal for the return of indoor play and will issue an update shortly.

6) Can football teams play international fixtures?

Government guidance currently advises against all but essential travel. Given that we cannot class international fixtures as an essential reason to travel, The FA cannot endorse participation in an international tournament, at this time. For elite athletes, guidance on the return to cross-border competition can be found here.

7) A player has had Covid-19 but is now recovered – can they play? (Do they need a negative test?)

As long as the player is no longer symptomatic and has fully recovered then it would be fine for them to play, without a negative test, as long as they have finished the specified quarantine period. However, the player should follow advice from a medical professional on when is best to return to exercise. They should also not rush back if they do not feel well enough.

8) I am a healthcare worker and regularly in contact with people with Covid-19 – can I play?

As long as you do not have any symptoms (as is the case for any other participant) and are not self-isolating, then you are able to play. Please adhere to Government guidance on this.

9) Will the grassroots football guidance be updated to mirror the latest National League System (NLS) guidance with regards to the use of changing facilities?

All participants should follow the Government's guidance on changing rooms which can be found here. The FA's guidance reflects this position.

10) What if my club is not ready to return to full competitive training and matches?

The FA has worked with the government to develop approval for the restart of competitive grassroots football; however, each club should fully understand the guidelines before deciding to commence activity. Each club must only return to competitive football when they are ready and have the appropriate measures in place as developed by The FA and general government guidance. There is no pressure to return. Everyone's health, wellbeing and safety are the priorities.

11) What happens if a player, parent or coach shows Covid-19 symptoms before, during or after a match?

All players, officials, volunteers and spectators must undergo a self-assessment for any Covid-19 symptoms. No-one should leave home to participate in football if they, or someone they live with, has any of the following:

- A high temperature (above 37.8^{0}C);
- A new, continuous cough;
- A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste.

If a participant becomes Covid-19 symptomatic during the activity, they should immediately remove themselves from the session and return home as soon as possible. NHS guidance on further management of symptoms should be followed.

If an individual becomes symptomatic post an activity they must follow the NHS Test and Trace guidance found here.

12) Does this mean we can now play competitive football normally?

Competitive match play is now permitted, however, in all settings before and after the session, and in any breaks, all participants should practise social distancing, in line with government guidelines on two metres or 'one metre plus'. You can read these guidelines here.

Substitutes and coaches are permitted but must socially distance on the touchline or in the dugout. During warm ups and cool downs, participants should practise social distancing where possible.

13) We want to arrange a football competition with different teams competing, is this allowed under the new guidelines?

The current government guidance permits competitive football activity, therefore in order to host multiple fixtures at the same time you will need to ensure you have considered this as part of your Covid-19 risk assessment and are comfortable that the groups can maintain social distancing off the field at all times.

All clubs and teams need to ensure they are affiliated to their respective County FA to ensure valid insurance is in place and to allow for the use of FA registered referees.

You must ensure that you do not overload your facilities – your Covid-19 risk assessment should cover maximum occupancy levels to ensure that social distancing can be maintained. For all other consideration on the impact upon your facilities please see The FA guidance which is available here.

14) Are we allowed to share kit and equipment such as balls, goalkeeper gloves and training tops?

The sharing of equipment must be avoided where possible. Where equipment is shared, equipment must be cleaned before use by another person.

Participants should take their kit home to wash it themselves, rather than have one person handling a large quantity of soiled materials. Where kit absolutely has to be shared or kept together (e.g. last-minute stand-in players, shortage of kit, or an essential club function), each person handling it must wash or sanitise their hands immediately after and appropriate cleaning arrangements for the kit must be made.

15) If there is a regional lockdown, does this mean we won't be allowed to play competitively?

Clubs must always consider whether there are local restrictions in place in their area. If so, clubs should first read the guidance relevant to their area as this may supersede FA guidance and therefore also football activity. County FAs will be working with Local Authorities to determine what restrictions, if any are appropriate.

16) Will we be able to use changing rooms?

Changing rooms are an area of increased risk of transmission. Where possible, they should remain closed. Players and Officials should arrive changed and shower at home. Exceptions may be made where safety and safeguarding measures require their use e.g. supporting disabled athletes or a child needs a change of clothing etc. If you choose to use your changing and shower facilities you must follow government guidelines found here.

Preparation and use of toilets before, during or after the match or training should follow government guidance as seen here.

17) Will I be allowed to go and watch a grassroots football match as a spectator if I'm socially distanced?

Supporters, parents, and other spectators should remain socially distanced whilst attending events. Spectator groups must be restricted to discrete six-person gathering limits and spread out, in line with wider government guidance, ensuring space for officials, coaches and substitutes.

Specific FA spectator guidance and protocols for clubs in the men's National League System and Women's Football Pyramid is available here.

18) What are the guidelines for participants and spectators before and after a game or training session?

There are a number of considerations that should be taken before, during and after a game. The full guidance here provides an overview of these.

19) Do we need to support NHS Test and Trace efforts?

Yes, clubs and facility providers should support NHS test and trace efforts by collecting name and contact information on participants at both training and matches. This information should be stored for 21 days in-line with the Government Recreational Team Sport Framework then deleted and collected/processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and in line with GDPR principles. It should be used only for the purpose of NHS test and trace and, where requested to share with the NHS for test and trace purposes, the shared information should relate only to the match or training in which the player or supporter tested positive Clubs and facility providers should follow current UK Government NHS test and trace guidance, which is available here, with detail on how to maintain test and trace records here.

20) What does this mean for clubs with teams in the National League System or the Women's Football Pyramid, is there a set of specific guidance for players and spectators at this level of the game?

Guidance for the National League System and Women's Football Pyramid is available here.

21) Can clubs/venues provide food and drink?

Yes, for those clubs that have catering and bar facilities they are able to operate in accordance with the government guidelines for that sector and these can be found here. Extra considerations should be made to ensure social distancing is in place. Further information can be found in The FA's guidance on facilities which you can find here.

22) Are there any rules around goal celebrations?

Yes, goal celebrations should be conducted in a socially distant manner. Please refer to this guidance for a summary of considerations that should be taken during play.

23) What about Walking Football, is there any specific guidance around this?

As a format of football, Walking Football is covered by all the same guidelines that are provided by The FA. These can be found here.

24) What if there is an injury, is it safe for a player to be treated?

If a participant gets injured, a member of their household can assist if present and appropriate, but others (including match officials, teammates and coaches) will still need to socially distance unless a life or limb-threatening injury necessitates compromising guidelines to provide emergency care.

If there is a first-aider or other medical personnel present, they should be equipped with the appropriate PPE (including face coverings) before treating anyone to protect themselves and others if they need to compromise social-distancing guidelines to provide medical assistance. Full medical guidance can found here.

NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM, STEPS 3 TO 6 SPECIFIC FAQS

25) Our Club plays at Step 3 (example) but we have a B Graded ground – can we work on 15/30% of the minimum capacity of the B Grade?

No, not at present. The submission to DCMS was made on the basis that any return to spectators was a phased approach and, in order to mitigate risk, the % figure is derived from the minimum capacity required for ground grading at the Step level of the host Club. That is not to say that we may be able to adjust this upon a future review.

26) Our Club, who plays at Step 3 (example) has an officially calculated capacity that is higher than the minimum required for the Step level – can we work on this basis and apply 15/30% of the calculated capacity?

As above, not at the moment, but again it is something that will be considered upon a future review.

27) We participate at Step 1/Step 2 – can we have a return to spectators?

In order to complete play-offs, the National League was deemed to be "Elite" in relation to the Government's sporting guidance. As such, a return to spectators within Steps 1 and 2 will be subject to the conditions of the Government's Elite Sport Guidance which will be issued from time to time. At this time there are no spectators permitted at Steps 1 or 2 of the NLS.

28) Our local authority has informed us that we are not permitted to have as many spectators in our ground as The FA are currently suggesting (i.e. 15/30% of the minimum grading capacity) – which figure do we work to?

Local authorities now have delegated powers from the Government to deal with Covid-19-related matters and so, if a local authority provides a lower maximum capacity, this must be adhered to as opposed to that set by The FA.

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL PYRAMID

29) Our Ground is used above Step 1 of the Men's National League System – what are there minimum capacity percentages we should work from?

There is no set capacity percentages for venues outside of Steps 1 to 6 of the Men's National League System. Clubs should discuss what level these should be sat at with their host venue Safety Officer. As a starting point, Step 1 capacity percentages could be used.

30) We play at Tier 5 or below in the Women's Pyramid, but our ground is used at Steps 1 to 6 of the National League System – do we have minimum capacity percentages we need to follow?

Clubs at Tiers 5 and below of the Women's Football Pyramid are able to follow the FA Grassroots Guidance in relation to spectators, with no minimum capacity percentages. However, if your club expect to exceed 100 spectators you should consider following the minimum capacity percentages set by the National League System Step that the venue falls within.

31) Our venue have set a lower maximum capacity than The FA have proposed – are they able to do this?

The venue have final say over the number of spectators they are willing to allow into the ground and this must be respected at all times.