

For County FAs - Updated 24 July

Return of outdoor competitive grassroots football – FAQs

Below are a set of FAQs in response to The FA's guidelines on returning to play outdoor competitive grassroots football, which were published on 18 July 2020.

Q: What if my club is not ready to return to full competitive training and matches?

A: 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.

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

A: 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°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](#).

Q: Does this mean we can now play competitive football normally?

A: 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](#).

The FA would strongly recommend a phased return to competitive football activity as follows:

- **Until 31 July** – When ready, you can begin competitive training, with the overall group size (inclusive of coaches) being limited to 30 people;
- **From August** – Competitive matches to begin, for example pre-season fixtures, festivals and small side football competitions;
- **From September** – Grassroots leagues, men's National League System, Women's Football Pyramid tiers 3 to 6, and FA Competitions can commence.

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.

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Q: Is there a limit to the number of people that can train together?

A: Yes, competitive training can take place, in an outdoor setting provided this takes place in groups of no more than 30 (including coaches).

Q: Does this now mean we can play football indoors?

A: Unfortunately, for now, the current government approval does not permit football or futsal activity within indoor settings.

The FA will look to work with indoor facility providers to develop appropriate guidance for indoor formats as soon as possible.

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

A: The FA would strongly recommend a phased return to competitive football activity as follows:

- **Until 31 July** – When ready, you can begin competitive training, with the overall group size (inclusive of coaches) being limited to 30 people;
- **From August** – Competitive matches to begin, for example pre-season fixtures, festivals and small side football competitions;
- **From September** – Grassroots leagues, men’s National League System, Women’s Football Pyramid tiers 3 to 6, and FA Competitions can commence.

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 “providers of outdoor football facilities including clubs” document which is available [here](#).

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

A: 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.

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

A: 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.

Q: Will we be able to use changing rooms?

A: 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](#).

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

A: 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.

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

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

A: 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.

Q: Do we need to support Track and Trace efforts?

A: Yes, clubs or facility providers must support Track and Trace efforts by collecting name and contact information on participants at both training and matches.

This information should be stored for a minimum of 21 days in-line with the government Recreational Team Sport Framework 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 Track and Trace.

Clubs or facility providers should follow current UK Gov guidance [here](#).

Q: 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?

A: Specific guidance for those clubs that have teams participating in the men's National League System and Women's Football Pyramid is available [here](#).

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Q: Can clubs/venues provide food and drink?

A: 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 “providers of outdoor football facilities including clubs” document which is available [here](#).

Q: Are there any rules around goal celebrations?

A: 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.

Q: What about Walking Football, is there any specific guidance around this?

A: As a recognised format of football, Walking Football is covered by all the same guidelines that are provided by The FA. These can be found [here](#).

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

A: 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) to protect themselves and others if they need to compromise social-distancing guidelines to provide medical assistance. Full medical guidance can be found [here](#).

NEW – Added 24 July 2020

Q. In the Risk Assessment document, should we ask clubs to record the name of their Covid-19 Officer as I can't see space for it?

A. Yes, that is an option that clubs could follow.

Q. Does a club need a Covid-19 Officer per club or per team?

A. The Covid-19 officer should consider establishing a Covid-19 group to be responsible for producing and implementing the Covid-19 risk assessment and to oversee the safe return to play.

Q. Is there a risk assessment template that could be adopted with change regarding contact football?

A. It is within the Football Activity Guidance – Covid-19 Safeguarding Risk Assessment.

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Q. Can The FA provide a summary document covering all the various requirements for qualifications/certifications including where these have been extended?

A. New coaches will be provided an extension through until July 2021 to obtain their Level 1, Safeguarding and IFAIF. Each learner will be communicated to directly and FAN records will be updated.

- Safeguarding

Please remember that all individuals whose DBS checks were due to expire between 1 March 2020 and 1 October 2020 will not be required to renew their DBS checks until 1 year after the scheduled date of expiry.

The focus for FA DBS Checks needs to be on new volunteers (in both youth and open-age adult football where there are U18s). The Safeguarding Team are working with FA Education to provide an appropriate solution for safeguarding education and we will update you ASAP.

- Charter Standard

We communicated in the first week of July that all Charter Standard applications will be on hold for clubs and leagues until at least mid-September when we open the annual health check for 2020/21.

Q. If a player caught Covid-19 from another player during training or a match and someone sued, would the club be covered under its NGIS legal liability policy if it's not under its personal accident policy?

A. The NGIS has no exclusion of Covid-19 within the Liability cover. There would be an expectation that clubs had followed The FA and Government guidance as part of any investigation for indemnity support.

Personal Accident insurance does not cover illness or sickness, and this is not something new.

Q. Can County FAs decide not to sanction festivals if they feel the club cannot adhere to the guidance?

A. County FAs are the sanctioning bodies so would need to determine why a festival could or could not be sanctioned.

Q. What is the maximum number of people allowed to attend festivals and tournaments from 1st August.

A. The wider guidance allows spectators to gather in groups of maximum size of 6, whilst also following social distancing.

Q. Where do we stand with County Cup Finals, which would be looked to play in August? Would games need to be played with a maximum of 30 people in attendance (which would include players, officials, physios etc. or are we able to mitigate this as with Professional game to include some officials being socially distant from the game itself)?

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A. The guidance states that competitive match play is now permitted, however, in all settings before and after matches all participants should practise social distancing. Therefore, those players, match officials and physios involved are covered as part of this guidance, subject to following the wider game mitigations.

Spectators for matches should follow the specific spectators guidance which states: 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.

Q. What happens if a club is caught contravening the Covid regulations, or a CFA gets told about a club doing so?

A. The FA has issued guidance and we strongly urge all participants to digest the information and ensure that they adhere in order to protect public health.

Q. Will The FA be providing a role description for the Club Covid-19 Officer?

A. No. The guidance details what is required from the Club Covid-19 Officer.

Q. Why does The FA include a disclaimer statement within the guidance?

A. The FA does not act as a direct legal advisor to clubs or facility operators. Furthermore, in providing this guidance, The FA is not aware of the specific legal and medical circumstances of each individual club or facility operator seeking to return to football. As such, the guidance provided is of a general nature to inform the relevant parties in their decision making.

The guidance importantly references the fact that it's important to seek either expert help or online government guidance as a reference because things are so rapidly changing in this area currently. Government websites and professional experts will be able to give up to date and specific advice in a way that a general guideline which was correct 'at time of press' can never guarantee. The FA disclaimer statement is as much advice for their own protection as ours.

The issue of individual legal liability is complex and therefore clubs and facility operators are recommended to seek independent specialist advice where required, although this is not mandated within the documentation.