



COVID-19: STEP ONE GUIDANCE ON THE RETURN OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

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FOR ALL



COVID-19: STEP ONE GUIDANCE ON THE RETURN OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

EVERY PARTICIPANT MUST FOLLOW ALL FA AND GOVERNMENT ADVICE. THIS IS CRUCIAL TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE GAME, AND SO WE CAN CONTINUE TO PLAY. ANY INCIDENTS OF NON-COMPLIANCE WILL BE REPORTED TO THE RELEVANT COUNTY FA FOR ACTION. THE LATEST GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE IS [HERE](#).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE RETURN OF OUTDOOR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

On Monday 29th March, as part of the next step of the Government's roadmap out of national lockdown, outdoor sports facilities can open, and organised outdoor sport can take place. **This means that from 29th March, organised outdoor football, following all the protocols in The FA's guidance, can take place.** Organised outdoor disability football can take place, including under national lockdown. **This guidance document applies to all outdoor youth and adult football and futsal, including all formats of the game.**

TRAVEL

The Government guidance on travel is that the 'stay at home' rule will end on 29th March, but many restrictions will remain in place. As organised sport can resume, all participants may travel to games but should avoid travel at the busiest times and routes, as well as minimising any unnecessary journeys where possible. All participants must follow the Government's guidance on [safer travel](#). Participants should note that this guidance will be updated as we move through the different steps of the Government's roadmap. All participants should therefore regularly review this guidance to make sure they are following up to date information.

CHANGING ROOMS

Changing rooms cannot be used as part of step one of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown and therefore must remain shut. **Changing facilities can only be used in emergency situations, or by disabled people who are taking part in organised sport and physical activity. Toilets will be allowed to open, 30 minutes before and 30 minutes after training and/or matches.**

SPECTATORS

No spectators are allowed at grassroots sport as part of step one of the Government's roadmap. This means that at this stage, no spectators are allowed at grassroots football.

PARENTS/CARERS

Where clubs and facilities can accommodate this safely, one parent/carer per youth player is permitted to be present at football activities although they must observe the relevant Government Covid-19 guidance.

INDOOR FOOTBALL

Indoor sport is not currently allowed. This is planned to return no earlier than **Monday 12th April** for under 18s and **Monday 17th May** for adults, as part of steps two and three of the Government's roadmap. **Disability football is exempt and can take place indoors from the 29th March.**

Additional guidance for clubs with teams competing in the men's National League System and the Women's Football Pyramid (Tiers 3 to 6) will be available on TheFA.com.

The guidance you are reading is FOR ALL – players, coaches, club officials, club welfare officers, match officials, league officials, first-aiders, volunteers, parents/carers, spectators. It is also for clubs and football facility providers and should be read in conjunction with the updated additional guidance for providers of indoor and outdoor football facilities, which is available on TheFA.com.

Please remember anyone who is deemed vulnerable in respect of Covid-19 is reminded to follow the Government's specific guidance, only returning to football when it's right for them to do so. There is no pressure to return. Everyone's health, wellbeing and safety are the priorities.

COVID-19: STEP ONE GUIDANCE ON THE RETURN OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL (CONTINUED)

Please also bear in mind the Public Health England (PHE) report published [here](#), which has highlighted a greater risk from Covid-19 to people from BAME communities.

Before re-starting playing/training, clubs must carry out a risk assessment and record the procedures and checks put in place. It's essential everyone is clear about the restrictions and works together to manage social distancing, strict hand hygiene and the other protocols set out in this document.

Clubs should also update their medical emergency action plan around player care and strictly follow the first-aid guidance document published by The FA, without exception. This is both to protect players and any club member who is trying to aid the player if an emergency arises.

The FA is working with its recently-appointed official hygiene partner, Dettol, to support the return of the grassroots game.

Whenever this document refers to finding further information on TheFA.com, you'll find it [here](#).

AS WE MOVE THROUGH EACH NEW STEP OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ROADMAP, THE FA WILL UPDATE OUR GUIDANCE ACCORDINGLY. PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS GUIDANCE IS BASED ON THE INFORMATION PUBLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO DATE, AND WILL BE UPDATED FOLLOWING ANY FURTHER UPDATES.

THE RETURN OF FOOTBALL AS PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ROADMAP OUT OF LOCKDOWN

The Government has published a roadmap setting out four steps for the easing of national lockdown restrictions in England. The FA's guidance will continue to strictly follow all Government guidance, as we have throughout the pandemic. The FA's guidance will be updated at each step to provide participants with the information needed to facilitate the safe return of the game.

The Government has been clear that the easing of restrictions set out in the roadmap is subject to review and could change if we see another surge in hospitalisations, if a new variant of concern is found or if there are any issues with the roll-out of the vaccination programme. As such we cannot confirm with certainty what the next steps for the return of football will look like over the coming months. We can instead point to what is in the Government's roadmap as an indication for what this return could look like. This is summarised below:

		STEP 1		STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
		8 th March	29 th March	No earlier than 12 th April	No earlier than 17 th May	No earlier than 21 st June
UPDATE		Schools return, including play for school-age children as part of educational provision and wraparound care – following DfE guidance.	Outdoor grassroots football returns – following all FA guidance. No spectators. No changing rooms. No hospitality.	Indoor football for under 18s returns – subject to Government approval. Socially-distanced spectators permitted - in accordance with Government guidelines. Changing rooms can be used – following strict Covid-19 protocols. Outdoor food and drink allowed – following the rule of six or two households.	Organised indoor football returns – subject to Government approval. Socially distanced spectators permitted - in accordance with Government guidelines. Changing rooms can be used – following strict Covid-19 protocols. Indoor food and drink allowed – following the rule of six or two households.	No legal limits on gathering. Larger events allowed.

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BEFORE ANY FOOTBALL ACTIVITY TAKES PLACE

Who?	Topic	Required actions
CLUBS AND FACILITY PROVIDERS	The basics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility operators should ensure they have read and understood The FA's Covid-19 Guidance on Grassroots Football that's specifically for facility providers. It's available on TheFA.com. • Clubs/teams should ensure they are affiliated to their local County FA for the 2020/21 season ahead of any match play. • Each club must only return to sport when they are ready and have the appropriate measures in place as developed by The FA and general Government guidance in relation to recreational sport. • All clubs must identify a Covid-19 officer who is responsible for developing a Covid-19 plan and a general risk assessment prior to the restart of any activity. The Covid-19 officer should continually monitor how compliance is being observed within the club. A specific safeguarding risk assessment must also be produced. The Covid-19 officer may choose to enlist the support of their club/committee as they see fit. The FA has produced guidance on conducting a safeguarding risk assessment, which includes a template for self-completion. It can be found on TheFA.com. • 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. • The Covid-19 officer at each club will be responsible for clearly communicating all relevant guidance to its players, coaches and volunteers. • Clubs should also check the insurance policies they have in relation to all football activities (e.g. personal accident and public liability), specifically any changes to insurance provider's advice and guidance on returning to competitive play, ensuring full compliance with its terms. <p>Please note: if you have teams that play in the men's National League System or the Women's Football Pyramid Tiers 3 to 6, The FA has produced specific information, which can be found on TheFA.com.</p>
	Arrival at venues	<p>Clubs/facilities should consider further mitigations to ensure safe arrival at venues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In line with current Government guidance, all participants (players, coaches, club and match officials, volunteers, spectators etc.) should check for symptoms of Covid-19. If an individual is symptomatic and/or living in a household with a possible Covid-19 infection they should remain at home and follow Government guidance. In addition, any participants who have been asked to isolate by NHS Test and Trace because they are a contact of a known Covid-19 case, must not exercise outside their home or garden and must not exercise with others; • Clear signage (e.g. for one-way systems) to manage entry, parking arrangements, traffic flow and general movement around the venue which ensure social distancing can be maintained
	Safety briefing	<p>In competitive football activities the Covid-19 officer of each club must ensure a safety briefing is provided before the commencement of any fixture. This briefing will remind both sets of players and officials about their responsibilities in complying with the Code of Behaviour set out in Appendix 1 to this guidance.</p>

BEFORE ANY FOOTBALL ACTIVITY TAKES PLACE (CONTINUED)

Who?	Topic	Required actions
CLUBS AND FACILITY PROVIDERS	Changing rooms and showers	The Government's position is that changing rooms cannot be used as part of step one in the roadmap out of lockdown. Changing facilities can only be used in emergency situations, or by disabled people who are taking part in organised sport and physical activity. We are working with the Government on this and will update our guidance as soon as we have any further information.
	Toilets/ facilities	Toilets will be allowed to open, 30 minutes before and 30 minutes after training and/ or matches. All Government guidance on hygiene and social-distancing measures must be followed. Where you are a sport provider and are also the facility operator (or there is no operator present, e.g. an outdoor pitch booking) you should follow the guidance for sport facility operators on TheFA.com.
	NHS Test and Trace	<p>Clubs and facility providers must adhere to the NHS Test and Trace system. This means ensuring information for all training sessions and matches is collected by one of the methods set out below.</p> <p>You must register for an official NHS QR code and display the official NHS QR poster to help NHS Test and Trace to identify and notify people who may have been exposed to the virus.</p> <p>In addition, there is an NHS Covid-19 app, which has a feature that allows users to quickly and easily 'check in' to your venue by scanning the code. The information stays on the user's phone. In England, you do not have to ask people who choose to 'check in' using the official NHS QR code to provide their contact details. If there is an outbreak associated with a venue, a message will be sent to the relevant app users with the necessary public health advice.</p> <p>For those who do not have a smart phone, a manual process should be used to collect information. This information should be collected, processed and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR principles for 21 days in line with the Government Recreational Team Sport Framework, then deleted. 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.</p>

BEFORE ANY FOOTBALL ACTIVITY TAKES PLACE (CONTINUED)

Who?	Topic	Required actions
EVERYONE	Covid-19 self-assessment	<p>All players, officials, volunteers and spectators must undergo a self-assessment for any Covid-19 symptoms. The main symptoms of coronavirus are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high temperature (above 37.8°C); • A new, continuous cough; • A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste. <p>This self-assessment should be done before each training session and must be recorded in regular risk assessments. It is important to note that no training session should take place without this having been done. Some clubs may wish to have this completed in the form of an online or paper questionnaire at the start of sessions. If symptoms are checked at the start of a session rather than in advance, this should be completed on arrival before the player mixes with others, so that if they have symptoms there is no chance of others being affected.</p> <p>Should an individual have demonstrated any such symptoms, they must not participate. Instead they should follow NHS and PHE guidance on self-isolation available here.</p> <p>Anyone who has already been instructed to self-isolate by a health care practitioner or PHE should continue to follow this advice and may not participate.</p> <p>Clubs will make relevant participants aware of any increased risk associated with taking part in activity, based on the risk assessment undertaken by the club. Everyone should comply with public health restrictions and avoid high-risk behaviour outside the football setting to reduce the risk to fellow participants and other attendees.</p>

BEFORE ANY FOOTBALL ACTIVITY TAKES PLACE (CONTINUED)

Who?	Topic	Required actions
EVERYONE	Travel to training and matches	All participants must follow the government's guidance on safer travel . Participants should note that this guidance will be updated as we move through the different steps of the Government's roadmap. All participants should therefore regularly review this guidance to make sure they are following up to date information.
PLAYERS, MATCH OFFICIALS AND COACHES	Changing, showering and use of toilets	Where you are a sport provider and are also the facility operator (or there is no operator present - e.g. an outdoor pitch booking) you should follow the guidance for sport facility operators .
CLUB OFFICIALS, COACHES & CWOs	Safeguarding	Please see Appendix 2: Safeguarding Children for guidance and your specific responsibilities in this area.
PLAYERS WITH A DISABILITY	Advance information	If you have additional disability or medical needs, please ensure that you have discussed this specifically with the club and coach. Then you can agree how/if these needs can be met within current Government Covid-19 and FA guidance.

BEFORE ANY FOOTBALL ACTIVITY TAKES PLACE (CONTINUED)

Who?	Topic	Required actions
PARENTS/ CARERS	Advance information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you choose for your child to take part, you will need to give your written consent to the club and or coach. Ensure you are comfortable with the club's Covid-19 planning arrangements before doing so. • You may already be aware that the period of isolation may have resulted in your child becoming anxious or unsure whether to resume previous activities, such as football. Please only support their return to football activity when they feel confident to do so and you feel the activity is safe and right for them. • Your child should arrive changed and ready to exercise. • Ensure your child takes their own water bottle and their own hand sanitiser, both clearly marked with their name. They must not share these with anyone else. • Please ensure your child/children know how to maintain good hygiene and hand washing; • Young children may struggle to maintain social distancing. Please continue to do your best to help your child recognise what 'social distancing' looks and feels like for example, relating to arm spans or standing jumps for example; • Despite the changed circumstances the organiser of the activity still has a responsibility to implement The FA's safeguarding requirements. Anyone involved in activity directly with children (anyone aged under 18), must have an in-date DBS • Check, is responsible for ensuring the environment is safe and should have completed some FA safeguarding training; • Coaches must ensure the ratio of coaches to children is appropriate – see FA safeguarding Guidance Notes 5.5;

DURING ALL FOOTBALL ACTIVITY

Who?	Topic	Required actions
EVERYONE	Social distancing in competitive training	<p>Competitive training can take place for all participants, in an outdoor setting.</p> <p>Care should be taken on busy sites with limited access points to ensure safe play. Facilities should consider staggering start times and allowing cleaning time between change-overs.</p> <p>Clubs should determine the appropriate ratio of coaches to participants, following the relevant FA safeguarding policy outlined in safeguarding Guidance Notes 5.5.</p> <p>In all settings before and after the session, and in any breaks, all participants should practise social distancing, in line with Government guidelines.</p> <p>No spectators are allowed at grassroots football, including training sessions, as part of step one of the Government's roadmap, unless for safeguarding purposes, and this should be limited to one parent or carer per child.</p>
	Social distancing around matches	<p>Outdoor competitive match play is now permitted. However, in all settings before and after matches all participants should practise social distancing.</p>

DURING ALL FOOTBALL ACTIVITY (CONTINUED)

Who?	Topic	Required actions
EVERYONE	Other Covid-19 modifications – in matches (and training where applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-match handshake should not happen. Instead players will be asked to hand-sanitise before kick-off; • Team talk huddles should not take place. Team talks can take place, as long as social-distancing is observed and held outdoors where possible; • Warm-ups/cool-downs should always observe social distancing; • Coaches, other team staff and substitutes are allowed, but must also always observe social distancing on touchlines/dug-outs. Social-distancing must also be observed during interactions when a substitution is being made; • Match preparation meetings by officials should be held by video call; • Set plays – free kicks: referees and coaches should encourage players to get on with the game and not unnecessarily prolong set play set-up, such as defensive walls; • Set plays – corners should also be taken promptly to limit prolonged close marking and goal posts should be wiped down before matches, after matches and at half time. • Goal celebrations should be avoided; • Interactions with referees and match assistants should only happen with players observing social distancing; • Small-sided football should be modified to provide more regular hygiene breaks in activity. Players should be discouraged from touching boards at any time, with tackling against boards discouraged. Referees should consider stopping play when this happens. • Youth football coaches are encouraged to limit persistent close proximity of participants during match play (where young participants may be more likely to cluster around the ball) and provide regular hygiene breaks in activity. • Other formats of the game may require specific adaptations, and participants should work with their club or facility provider to ensure these can be put in place. • Face coverings: All participants should follow the Government guidance on face coverings.

DURING ALL FOOTBALL ACTIVITY (CONTINUED)

Who?	Topic	Required actions
EVERYONE	Social distancing during breaks (e.g. half-time)	<p>All participants must remain socially distanced during breaks in play, with spaced areas for equipment and refreshment storage for each individual including officials and substitutes. Coaching staff and substitutes, should, for example, spread out and avoid sharing a dug out or bench if social distancing cannot be observed. Players and officials should also observe social distancing during sin-bin instances.</p> <p>Water bottles or other refreshment containers should in no circumstances be shared. Participants are advised to bring their own drinks or refreshments, in a named container.</p> <p>After activity participants must maintain government mandated social distancing for social interaction.</p> <p>Any payments relating to the fixture (match fees, referee fees or facility fees) should where possible, be made in a cashless manner. The FA Matchday app allows affiliated teams using Full-Time to receive cashless payments from their players.</p>
	Use of equipment	<p>The sharing of equipment must be avoided where possible. Where equipment is shared, equipment must be cleaned before use by another person.</p> <p>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.</p>
	Ball transfer	<p>The nature of football means that the ball is not frequently handled. When the ball goes out of play it should not be retrieved by non-participants and should be retrieved using the feet rather than the hands where possible. Where there are breaks in the game, or training, if throw-ins or handling has occurred the ball should be disinfected. Further guidance on disinfecting can be found here.</p>
	Shouting	<p>There is an additional risk of infection in close proximity situations where people are shouting or conversing loudly. If possible, players should therefore avoid shouting or raising their voices when facing each other during, before and after games. This is included within The FA's Code of Behaviour (see Appendix 1).</p>
	Spitting	<p>Everyone should refrain from spitting. If you need to sneeze or cough, you are encouraged to do so into a tissue or upper sleeve and advised to avoid touching your face. Ensure any tissues are disposed of in a sealed bin as soon as possible.</p>

DURING ALL FOOTBALL ACTIVITY (CONTINUED)

Who?	Topic	Required actions
CLUBS	Code of Behaviour	<p>In Appendix 1 you will find the Code of Behaviour The FA has produced to ensure a commitment for all involved to adhere to Covid-19 adaptations.</p> <p>The Covid-19 officer for each club will be responsible for communicating the code of behaviour to all players, coaches and volunteers within the club.</p> <p>Participants must be clear that they are opting-in to participating as defined in The FA's guidance about risk and risk mitigation.</p>
MEDICS	Treatment of injuries	<p>The FA has produced a detailed First Aid Guidance document for First Aid which can be found on TheFA.com.</p> <p>Injuries during play should still be treated as participant health and safety is of utmost importance. In all cases but particularly where emergency medical treatment is needed, the best form of protection is through rigorous cleaning, personal hygiene, personal protective equipment and regular hand hygiene.</p> <p>If a participant gets injured, a member of their household can assist if present and appropriate, but others (including match officials and teammates and coaches) will still need to socially distance unless a life- or limb-threatening injury necessitates compromising guidelines to provide emergency care.</p> <p>An increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces and equipment, using standard household cleaning and disinfection products, will be recommended in The FA's supporting medical guidance which can be found on TheFA.com.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>After contact with an injured participant, the person who has administered first aid should clean their hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser at the earliest opportunity. This advice is applicable to all situations, regardless of whether there was close contact or social distancing was maintained. The first aider should also avoid touching their mouth, eyes and nose.</p> <p>Physios or their equivalent or anyone who is administering any form of treatment, should keep a record of each participant they have come into contact with for NHS Test and Trace purposes. Further information for those who may need to act as a 'first responder' role in a sports setting can be found here.</p> <p>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.</p>
MATCH OFFICIALS	Social distancing	<p>Match officials should observe The FA's guidance in the same way as participants are required to. Specific guidance for officials can be found in the Covid-19 section on TheFA.com.</p>

AFTER ALL FOOTBALL ACTIVITY

Who?	Topic	Required actions
SPECTATORS	Social distancing	No spectators are allowed at grassroots football as part of step one of the Government's roadmap, unless for safeguarding purposes, and this should be limited to one parent or carer. This guidance will be updated following any changes to the Government's position on spectators.
PLAYERS, MATCH OFFICIALS AND COACHES	Hygiene	Hands should be washed at the earliest opportunity and personal equipment should be wiped down with a disinfectant. Individuals should take their own 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. Coaches are encouraged to maintain a record of the regular cleaning of club or team equipment that players use, and review the risk assessments you undertake in between sessions, learning from any changes you need to apply.
EVERYONE	Social distancing	After training sessions and/or matches, participants must maintain social distancing at all times.
	Departing	All participants must depart following the traffic-flow system that the venue will have in place.
CLUBS AND FACILITY OWNERS	Hospitality venues (e.g. clubhouse bars)	Hospitality venues are not permitted to open as part of step one of the Government's roadmap.

APPENDIX 1

COVID-19 IS A HIGHLY INFECTIOUS AND DANGEROUS DISEASE. EVERY PARTICIPANT MUST FOLLOW ALL FA AND GOVERNMENT ADVICE. THIS IS CRUCIAL TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE GAME, AND SO WE CAN CONTINUE TO PLAY. ANY INCIDENTS OF NON-COMPLIANCE WILL BE REPORTED TO THE RELEVANT COUNTY FA FOR ACTION.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

A resumption of contact play is only achievable if those involved create and maintain a controlled environment that minimises the threat of infection.

Risk in sport cannot be completely eradicated but with caution and care these risks can be reduced.

Each player will need to decide when to return to contact football, based on their own circumstances and the arrangements that have been put in place for a safe return. This is particularly the case for players from BAME communities or those with underlying health conditions.

All those returning to competitive grassroots football must adopt the following code of behaviour:

- **Be aware of your own personal health.** If you show any of the Covid-19 symptoms you must stay at home, inform NHS Test and Trace and seek medical advice.
- **Be responsible.** Read the guidance provided by The FA and by your club so that you are aware of the changes to the game and what is expected of you. This will include things like being prepared to wash your own kit, bringing your own labelled water bottle and being aware of changes to meet-up times.
- **Practise good hygiene.** Wash your hands regularly and before, during and after a game.
- **Maintain social distancing.** This won't always be possible in a competitive match environment (for example when tackling an opponent) and that is acceptable. However, before, and after a game you should maintain social distancing.
- **Face coverings.** Unless you have an exemption, face coverings are mandatory for all staff in retail/hospitality outlets (e.g. a clubhouse). This also applies to users of the facility, except when seated at a table to eat or drink.
- **Support NHS Test and Trace.** You will be asked to provide your details so that in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak those potentially infected can be traced. This is to everyone's benefit so please co-operate.
- **Do not spit.** Spitting and the rinsing out of mouths is now a recognised risk to health and must not be done. Avoid shouting or raising your voice if face to face with other players.
- **After the game.** Be aware that other users may be waiting to use the facilities. Follow all advice if using changing rooms and showers.

APPENDIX 2

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN – GUIDANCE FOR CLUB OFFICIALS INCLUDING COACHES AND CLUB WELFARE OFFICERS

- Your club must have completed a safeguarding and Covid-19 risk assessment and briefed you on your responsibilities. The Safeguarding Risk Assessment is FA safeguarding Guidance Note 1.9.
- You are responsible for continuing to ensure the environment is safe and for implementing your club's safeguarding children policy and procedures.
- Coaches working with children must have an in-date FA DBS Check and should have done some FA safeguarding training.
- You must ensure the ratio of coach to different age groups of children is appropriate. See FA safeguarding **Guidance Note 5.5**, which covers the ratios of adults to children. There must be a minimum of two FA-DBS-Checked adults present at any one time.
- It is essential that parents/carers give informed consent for their child(ren) to participate in your football session. When requesting consent, you have the ideal opportunity to be clear about what is expected of the children and their parents/carers in line with this guidance.
- Ensure you retain a written record of parent/ carer consent. The club may use a form such as the one in FA safeguarding **Guidance Note 8.2** to gather any relevant information from parents/carers.
- Any children with additional medical or disability needs must be discussed with parents/carers to ensure you, or as the parents/carers, they can provide effective support to facilitate their involvement and appropriately update your risk assessments.

LISTENING TO CHILDREN

While many families have coped well during lockdown, others may not have and for some children the experience will have been very difficult. You may be one of the first people outside the family unit that a child has met in recent times. It's important you know that some children may be struggling for various reasons, including:

- Lacking confidence, as they have felt cut off from their friends;

- Being confused and stressed about how to behave because of social distancing;
- They or someone they care about may have been or still be unwell;
- They may still be grieving because someone they love has died;
- Hearing that people from BAME communities may be more vulnerable to Covid-19;
- They may have been neglected emotionally and/or physically – through lack of food and/or care;
- Children with learning disabilities may find it particularly confusing, as their routine has changed.

You may also have seen media coverage on the increase in:

- Domestic violence – significantly impacting children emotionally and/or physically in households where this has happened;
- Online grooming of children;
- Cyberbullying.

We're sharing this because of your important role in safeguarding. If you are worried about a child as they return to football, it's vital you report your concerns. Doing nothing is not an option.

Please check-in with the children you are coaching/working with, and ask them how they've been and how they're doing. There are five ways to report your concerns if you are worried about a child as they return to football:

- To your club or league Welfare Officer;
- To your County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer. Click [here](#) for a list of County FA contacts;
- By emailing The FA Safeguarding Team at safeguarding@TheFA.com;
- If urgent and you cannot contact your club, league or County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer, you should call the NSPCC 24-hour helpline on 0808 800 5000;
- If it is an emergency because a child or children are at immediate risk, then call the Police on 999.

The NSPCC has produced a great film which reminds us all how best to respond if a child discloses to you. It really is worth taking the two minutes it requires to watch. You can watch the film [here](#).

FINALLY

Thank you in advance for playing your vital part in helping our great game get going again. By observing Government guidance and the football-specific protocols, let's work together to ensure the transition back to competitive grassroots is as smooth and safe as possible.

But remember, if you're not comfortable returning to football, whatever your role, there is no pressure to do so. Everyone's health, wellbeing and safety are the priorities

DISCLAIMER:

This guidance is for general information only and does not constitute legal advice, nor it is a replacement for such, nor does it replace any Government or PHE advice; nor does it provide any specific commentary or advice on health-related issues. Affected organisations should therefore ensure that they seek independent advice from medical practitioners, or healthcare providers, prior to implementing any re-opening plan, as required. Independent legal advice should be sought, as required and depending on your, or relevant circumstances.

While efforts have been taken to ensure the accuracy of this information at the time of publication, the reader is reminded to check the Government website to obtain the most up-to-date information regarding social distancing and any other Government measures.





FOR ALL

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