

NORTHUMBERLAND FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

COUNTY CUP RULES 2020/21

Special Notice for 2020/21 related to the return of Football during Covid-19.

Government, Local Authority and FA guidance and instruction will supersede any rule of Northumberland FA County Cup Competitions in relation to increasing safety in regards to the spread of Covid-19. For example, rules regarding provision of changing rooms will not be applicable if guidance states these environments should not be used.

NFA County Cup Competitions, eligibility and formats

1. The grid below details formats and basic eligibility for all NFA County Cups. Further details of player eligibility are outlined I the 'Player Eligibility' section.

COUNTY CUP	TEAM ELIGIBILITY	PLAYER ELIGIBILITY	FORMAT	MATCH LENGTH (minutes)	BALL SIZE	GOAL SIZE (feet)	MIN PITCH SIZE (yards)	MAX PITCH SIZE (yards)
NFA Men's Senior Cup	Step 6 and above	Male 16+	11v11	90	5	24x8	100 x 50	130 x 100
NFA Women's Cup	Open-age Women's teams	Female 16+	11v11	90	5	24x8	100 x 50	130 x 100
NFA Men's Benevolent Bowl	Step 7 clubs (and invitations*)	Male 16+	11v11	90	5	24x8	100 x 50	130 x 100
NFA Men's Minor Cup	Open-age Saturday male teams outside of Step 7	Male 16+	11v11	90	5	24x8	100 x 50	130 x 100
NFA Men's Sunday Cup	Invited Open-age Sunday male teams**	Male 16+	11v11	90	5	24x8	100 x 50	130 x 100
NFA Men's Sunday Minor Cup	Open-age Sunday male teams	Male 16+	11v11	90	5	24x8	100 x 50	130 x 100
NFA U18 Sunday Junior Cup	Teams competing in boys/mixed U18 & U17 leagues, or U19 leagues with players who meet eligibility requirements	Mixed aged 16 or 17 on 31st August	11v11	90	5	24x8	100 x 50	130 x 100
NFA U16 Cup	Teams competing in boys/mixed U16 leagues	Mixed aged 14 or 15 on 31st August	11v11	80	5	24x8	90x50	110x70
NFA U16 Girls Cup	Teams competing in U16 & U15 girls leagues	Female aged 14 or 15 on 31st August	11v11	80	5	24x8	90x50	110x70
NFA U15 Cup	Teams competing in boys/mixed U15 leagues	Mixed aged 13 or 14 on 31st August	11v11	80	5	24x8	90x50	110x70
NFA U14 Cup	Teams competing in boys/mixed U14 leagues	Mixed aged 12 or 13 on 31st August	11v11	70	4	21x7	90x50	110x70
NFA U14 Girls Cup	Teams competing in girls U14 & U13 leagues	Female aged 12 or 13 on 31st August	9v9	70	4	16x7	70x40	80x50
NFA U13 Cup	Teams competing in boys/mixed U13 leagues	Mixed aged 11 or 12 on 31st August	11v11	70	4	21x7	90x50	100x60
NFA U12 Cup	Teams competing in boys/mixed U12 leagues	Mixed aged 10 or 11 on 31st August	9v9	60	4	16x7	70x40	80x50
NFA U12 Girls Cup	Teams competing in girls U12 leagues	Female aged 10 or 11 on 31st August	9v9	60	4	16x7	70x40	80x50

*1a. If less than 16 teams are at Step 7, teams from the division below, that finished highest the previous season, will be included in the Benevolent Bowl up to 16 teams.

**1b. 16 teams will qualify for the NFA Sunday Cup. The holders qualify for the next season's competition, along with the highest placed teams across the Sunday Leagues sanctioned by Northumberland FA. If team entries can not be spread evenly across all Sunday Leagues, the League of the holders will gain an additional place in the Sunday Cup, followed by the league of the runners-up. If additional places to leagues need to be awarded, this will be decided by the drawing of lots to determine which league(s) gain additional places.

1c. Default Match Days and kick off times (please also see rule 6a)

COUNTY CUP	Default Fixture Day	Default Fixture Time
NFA Men's Senior Cup	Saturday	N/A
NFA Women's Cup	Sunday	1.30pm
NFA Men's Benevolent Bowl	Saturday	1.30pm
NFA Men's Minor Cup	Saturday	1.30pm
NFA Men's Sunday Cup	Sunday	10:30
NFA Men's Sunday Minor Cup	Sunday	10:30
NFA U18 Sunday Junior Cup	Sunday	13:30
NFA U16 Cup	Sunday	12:00
NFA U16 Girls Cup	Saturday	12:00
NFA U15 Cup	Sunday	10:30
NFA U14 Cup	Sunday	12:30
NFA U14 Girls Cup	Saturday	12:30
NFA U13 Cup	Sunday	10:30
NFA U12 Cup	Sunday	11:30
NFA U12 Girls Cup	Saturday	11:30

Management of Competitions and Entry

2. The entire control and management of all County Competitions shall be vested in the Northumberland FA, whose decision shall, in all matters affecting such Competitions, be final.

3. The various Cups shall be competed for annually in accordance with these Rules and Instructions.

4a. The closing date and entry fees for all County Cup Competitions shall be decided by Northumberland FA each season. A team must have submitted their entry and paid their entry fee by this closing date to participate in the competition.

4b. Northumberland FA may reject the entry of any team for any Competition if they deem such a course required for the benefit to the competition.

4c. Teams in membership of Leagues of the National League System at Step 6 and above will be required to enter the Senior Cup and teams below Step 6 will be required to enter the relevant competition for their level of football. The final decision will be made by Northumberland FA.

5. The teams in each Competition shall be drawn in pairs. These pairs shall be placed into a Competition Bracket which will determine the subsequent ties of the competition.

6a. Following each draw, or completion of previous round, notice shall be given to each team of the name of its next opponent, and the date and hour when the tie shall be played. All ties in each round shall be played on the date and at such hours as Northumberland FA may determine. An earlier date, or kick-off time, may be mutually agreed between team secretaries and appointed match official if 2 working days' notice is given to Northumberland FA. Matches may be played under Floodlights providing Northumberland FA has been notified. Working days are qualified as the days Monday-Friday in this instance.

6b. If no agreement on fixture dates and kick-off times can be arranged, the default day and time of that Competition shall be played.

6c. NFA Senior Cup ties will be provided with a 'completion-by' date, where teams must schedule a date for their fixture to be played on or before. If no date can be agreed it will be determined by Northumberland FA.

6d. Use of artificial turf pitches (3G/4G pitches) is allowed in this competition. These pitches must be on the approved FA Pitch Register. Any 3G or 4G pitch not on the approved FA Pitch Register will not be allowed to host matches. Any home side hosting a County Cup tie a 3G or 4G pitch should include this information with their match confirmations. Participating teams can not refuse to use any 3G or 4G pitch that is on the FA Pitch Register that is available and deemed safe to play by facility owner and/or match official.

7a. In each tie, the game shall be played on the ground of the first team drawn, unless otherwise directed by Northumberland FA or otherwise mutually agreed, and the consent of the Competition obtained. The ground must provide changing rooms for both teams and match officials. In such cases, the Home team in the original draw must notify the Match Official(s). A team not having a ground shall provide one free of all charge to the visiting team, or play upon its opponent's ground. If the ground of the team having choice is considered unsuitable for a cup tie, the opposing team may appeal to Northumberland FA. Such appeal must be accompanied by a fee of £25, which shall be forfeited if the appeal is not sustained. Northumberland FA may order the match to be played on the ground of the appealing team or on a neutral ground. If such appeal is not sustained: the complaining team may be called upon to pay the expenses incurred in deciding the appeal.

7b. Teams shall not mutually arrange to play a match in lieu of a cup tie, meaning no ties may be played as both a league, or other, and NFA County Cup match.

7c. Postponed matches shall be rescheduled on the following Saturday or Sunday, dependent on the default day of the Cup competition, unless the team agrees to an earlier date. This Rule does not apply to the final tie.

8. Northumberland FA shall fix the ground for the Final Ties in all Competitions and shall have direct control of the arrangements.

Player eligibility

9a. A player shall not, in the same season, play for more than one competing team in the same competition.

9b. A player who has played in a higher level, or higher age group, competition can not play-down (within its default day category). However, a player may play up a competition level having already played in a lower level, or lower age-group, competition.

Senior competitions by default day are ranked in the table below. Youth competitions are ranked from oldest age-category to youngest age-category, with the oldest being classed as the 'higher' level competition.

RANK	SATURDAY COMPETITIONS	SUNDAY COMPETITIONS
1	Senior Cup	Sunday Cup
2	Benevolent Bowl	Sunday Minor Cup
3	Minor Cup	

10a. In all rounds of a competition, a player must have been a registered member of their team, having been registered by 12:00 on the day prior to the date fixed for the playing of the original cup tie, with their league and on the FA Whole Game System.

10b. Players named as substitutes who do not enter the field of play shall not be classed as appearing in the competition.

11. In the case of postponed matches, only those players who were qualified on the date fixed for the playing of the original match shall be eligible to take part.

12a. No player will be allowed to compete in any competition's Semi-Final unless they have played in an earlier round of that season's competition or played 3 competitive fixtures for that team that season before the semi-final (original) date.

12b. Only players eligible for the original date of their team's Semi-Final tie shall be eligible for the Final.

13. A Player who has been suspended for a cup tie may play in a postponed tie after the term of their suspension has expired.

14a. Five substitute players from five nominated to the Referee will be allowed in in all competitions other than the Senior Cup where three from five will be allowed.

14b. In Youth Competitions, Repeat Substitutions, also known as 'Rolling' Substitutions may be used, with player able to be substituted off and then back on again.

14c. In Open-age Competitions, excluding the Senior Cup, substitutions shall be fixed 5 from 5, meaning a player substituted off the field of play may not be substituted back on.

15. To play in any Open-Age ('Adult') County Cup, a player must be at least 16 (sixteen years old). For youth County Cups, please see rule 1 which outlines ages eligible for each competition unless dispensation has been provided by The FA.

16a. The Secretary of the Home Team playing in any Competition shall, at least four days (96 hours) before the match, send to the opposing Team Secretary and Match Official(s) written details of ground and home team kit colours via email. The away team Secretary and the Match Official(s), should respond to confirm receipt and away team kit colours.

17. A written list of players (Forename and Surname) on the official Team Sheet shall be given by each team to the Match Official at least 15 minutes before kick-off. Such list must be sent to the Secretary of the Association within three days (72 hours) of the conclusion of the match. Teams infringing this Rule shall be fined the sum of £20.00.

17b. Team sheets should include player's names as they are registered with their league and on the FA Whole Game System.

18a. If the Northumberland FA and Participation Committee have any doubt as to the qualification of any player taking part in any Competition, they shall have the power to call upon such player, or the Team to which the player belongs or for which they have played, to prove that they are qualified according to the Rules, and, failing satisfactory proof, the Committee may disqualify such player, and may remove the team from such Competition and/or impose such other penalty as they may deem fit and, should time permit, the Participation Committee have the right to reinstate their opponents if the defaulting team won.

18b. In the event of an ineligible player participating in a County Cup competition only coming to light following subsequent rounds taking place, only the last played round will be forfeited and no teams played in previous to the most recent round played will be able to be reinstated. If the team has fielded the ineligible player for more than one round of the competition, they will be charged for each offence of fielding an ineligible player.

19. Northumberland FA shall have the power to disqualify any competing team or player, or players for any competing teams who may be proved to be guilty of any breach of the Rules of the Association.

Kit Colours

20a. When the kit colours of two competing teams are similar, the visiting team must change. Goalkeepers must wear colours to distinguish them from other Players, and Match Officials.

20b. Kit colours must be communicated and agreed before the fixture date.

21. Match officials in Northumberland FA County Cups shall wear all black. No team is permitted to wear predominantly black or dark colours that may clash with match officials.

22. Numbered shirts must be worn in all cup ties. Referees are to report any club in default of this rule. Teams in default of the Rule will be fined £20.00.

Match length and determining tied games

23. The duration of each match, as outlined in rule 1, shall be played in two equal halves.

24. The Match Official shall allow for time wasted or lost through accident or other causes. This time is solely at the discretion of the Match Official.

25. There will be no extra time in any competition, nor replays for any tied fixture. Where the scores are level after normal time a penalty kick competition shall take place to decide the winners.

25b. Penalty kicks will be taken in the ABAB format, in a best of five penalty kicks, before sudden death penalties if required.

25c. Only players on the field of play at the end of normal time may take a penalty kick.

Withdrawals

26. Any team intending to withdraw from any competition will forfeit their entry fee.

27. Any team failing to play, without showing a good and sufficient cause, will be withdrawn from the competition.

Match Officials

28a. In all Ties the County FA shall appoint all match officials. Present members of either of the competing clubs shall be ineligible. The expenses of all Officials appointed by the County FA to officiate in any match prior to the Final Tie shall be paid by the team upon whose ground the match takes place. Please see Appendix 2 for fees.

28b. If a match is postponed after the arrival of Match Officials, they are entitled to their travelling expenses and half their fee. In all games, match officials are expected to be in attendance 45 minutes prior to kick-off. Referees must report any game that does not commence on time, the defaulting team will be fined £20.00.

28c. In the event a match official is unable to be appointed or unable to referee the game on the day of the match taking place, teams may agree a suitable club official(s) to officiate the game. In this instance, the appointed club official will have the same powers as per a County FA official with cautions and red cards counting the same way. If teams can not agree a suitable replacement official, the match shall be postponed.

29. The appointed Referee shall have power to decide as to the fitness of the ground in all matches and the decision shall be final subject to either in the case of a ground of a Local Authority or the owners of a ground, the Representative of that body is the sole arbiter and whose decision must be accepted and can not be appealed.

Postponement and Rescheduling of Cup Ties

30a. If a tie's home team pitch is unplayable or unavailable, they must offer the away team and appointed match official the opportunity to reverse the tie before the game is postponed. Failure to do so will result in expulsion from the competition. If the away team's ground is unavailable or unplayable, the tie will be postponed and will roll-over to the following weekend with the drawn home team remaining the home team.

30a. NOTE: this rule is to support a reduction in ties being postponed and rolled-over to the following weekend, impacting other competitions in a condensed season. Home teams should plan for potential travel in the event of a postponement. If less notice can be given than the travel time between the two competing teams' grounds to arrive 45minutes before kick-off the tie can be postponed.

30b. In the event of a tie reversing to the drawn away team's home ground, the original away-team becomes the home team in respect of responsibilities for paying match officials and submitting the result sheet.

30c. If both team's named grounds are unavailable, or unplayable, but a 'neutral' ground, which meets FA requirements (e.g 3/4G pitches must be on the FA Pitch Register), can be secured the tie shall be played at such ground. A competing team may only reject such a ground if notice is given later than 6pm the day before the tie is scheduled.

30d. All postponements must be reported to Northumberland FA by the drawn home Team Secretary, and both teams must inform their respective League Secretary.

31. Special requests to play a tie in the Senior Cup only beyond the tie completion date may be made in exceptional circumstances where no reasonable date can be found.

Appeals and Protests

32. All questions relating to the qualifications of competitions or interpretation of the Rules, or any dispute or protest, should be directed to Northumberland FA staff. Should the competition rules not provide a clear outcome or a potential breach of rules has occurred, the matter shall be referred to Northumberland FA's Participation Committee, whose decision shall be final and binding on both teams. Please see Appendix 1 for process diagram.

33. To be considered, every protest must be made in writing, by the club's secretary, and must contain the information upon which the appeal is founded.

34. Protests must be lodged with the Association, accompanied by a fee of £25.00, within seventy-two hours of the conclusion of the match. The fee shall be forfeited to the Association in the event of the protest not being sustained. Northumberland FA may order any team engaged in a dispute or protest to pay such sum as may be considered necessary towards defraying expenses incurred.

34a. Any protest relating to the ground, goal posts, or matters which could be reasonably known before the game commences, shall not be entertained by the Committee unless an objection has been lodged with the Referee by a named Club Official before the commencement of the match. The Referee shall require the responsible team to rectify the cause of the objection, if this is possible, without unduly delaying the progress of the match. If not possible, and the match official deems the ground safe to play the fixture, the tie may be played under protests to be considered by Northumberland FA.

35. Northumberland FA shall, within five working days of receipt of a complaint against another team, send a copy of the protest and particulars to the team the protest is lodged against. Each team must be represented by its Secretary or a member of its Committee and may support its case by witnesses. If a member of Northumberland FA (staff, Board, Council, committees, sub-committees) is connected with a team concerned in a dispute or protest, they shall not sit on the Committee dealing with the dispute or protest being considered.

Trophy

36. When the winning team in any Competition is known the Association shall deliver the Trophy to such team, which shall sign a Bond, signed by the Secretary who will be responsible for its return to Northumberland FA on or before the first day of March in the ensuing year, in good order and condition. Should the Trophy be destroyed or damaged whilst under care or custody of the team, the team shall refund to Northumberland FA the amount of its current value or the cost of thorough repair.

ii. Any team failing to return a Trophy by 1st March in good and clean condition as required, will be fined £25.

37. All fines imposed upon teams relating to County Cup competitions shall be paid to the Association within 14 days from the dates of the meeting at which fines are imposed.

ADDITIONAL

38. In all County Cup ties corner flags and goal nets must be used. If a team is reported for not providing goal nets or corner flags they will be fined £20.00.

39. The fees and expenses for Match Officials shall be fixed by Northumberland FA. Referee fees can be found in Appendix 2.

40. The Home team must provide suitable changing accommodation for both teams and match officials. This rule is superseded by Covid-19 Guidance.

41. The half-time interval shall be five minutes and not exceed fifteen minutes as agreed with the match official.

Northumberland Football Association

INSTRUCTIONS FOR NORTHUMBERLAND FA COUNTY CUP COMPETITIONS

1. Home Secretary must communicate with the Referee (and Assistant Referees if appointed) and opponents, at least five days before the stated date of the tie, who should reply without delay. The following information should be included within match confirmations:

a. Cup and Round Number
b. Fixture date
c. Venue and post code, with directions if necessary, e.g if post code does not lead directly to the ground
d. Kick-off time
e. Home team kit colours (shirts, shorts, socks)
f. Any additional instructions pertinent to the fixture and or venue, and or special requirements for Covid-19 safety.

2. Referees failing to accept appointments must immediately notify the Secretary of the Association of their decision and reason.

3. Referees must report late starts and the defaulting team or Referee must forward a full explanation within seventy-two hours of the conclusion of the match.

4. In cases of a postponed fixture, the same Official(s) will be appointed, unless the Official(s) has closed that date.

5. There is no extra-time in any Northumberland FA County Cup competition. Drawn ties go straight to a penalty shoot-out.

6. Both teams' Secretaries, or nominated Full-Time Contact, will respond with the result of their game in the format requested by the auto-result text message service within 1 hour of the match finishing. Failure to report the result will incur a £10.00 fine. All teams must ensure they have their County Cup SMS Contact entered correctly in Whole Game System to a Team Official that is able to complete this task within 60minutes of a County Cup fixture ending.

7. The team sheet exchanged before the match commences, with match result, goal sorcerers and cautions and referees marks added following the game, must be sent to Northumberland FA by the home team Secretary within 48 hours of the game's kick-off time. Emailing a clear photograph of the sheet or photo copy is acceptable. Failure to submit the completed team sheet in the time period will incur a £10 fine.

8. The Referee, and Assistant Referees when appointed, shall be in attendance at the ground a minimum of 45 minutes before the advised time of kick-off.

9. When a match has a Referee and two Assistant Referees appointed by Northumberland FA, the pitch must be cordoned off, or designated area for spectators to be made, so that spectators cannot obstruct the Assistant Referee's view.

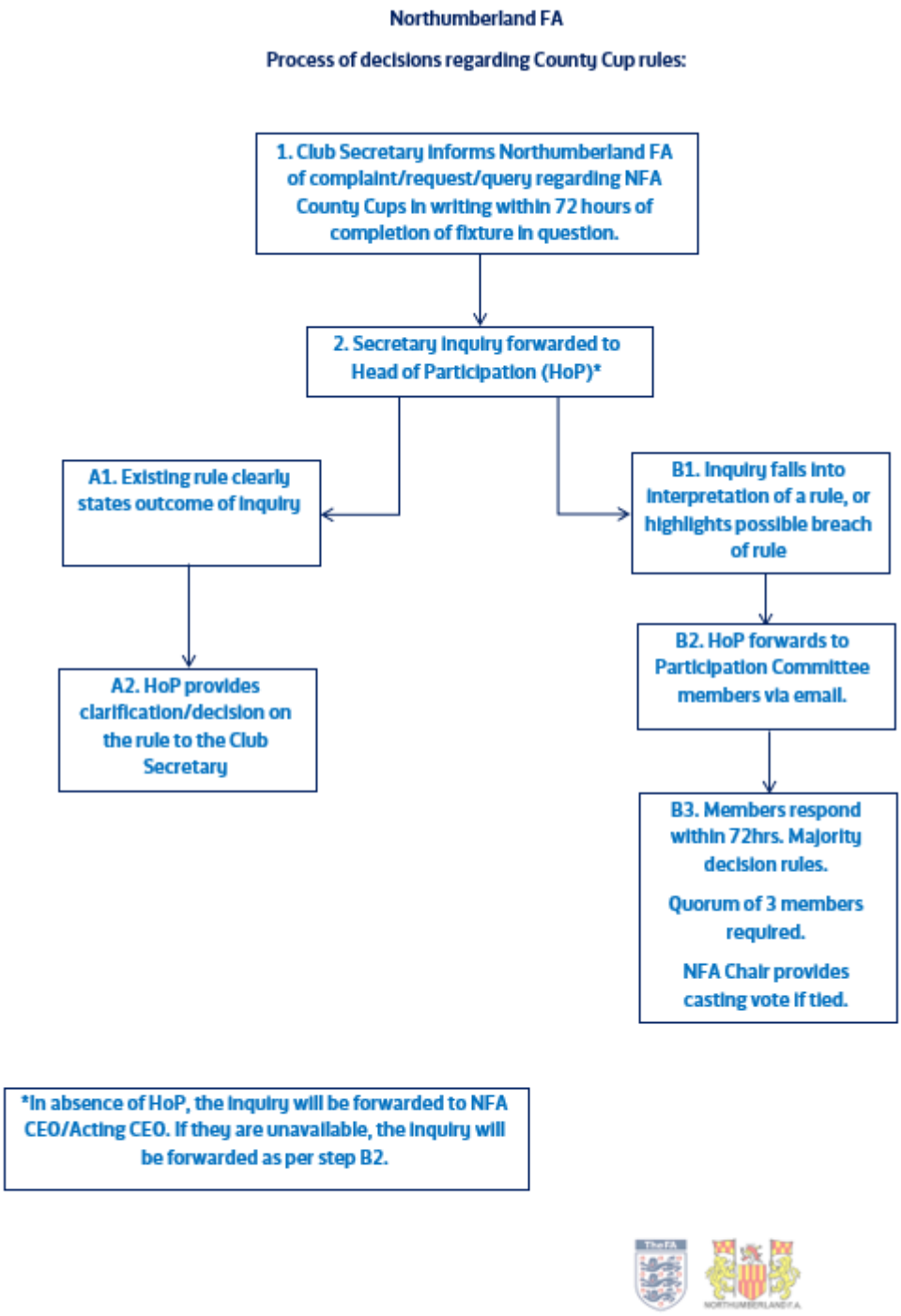
10. Where no Assistant Referees are appointed, each side shall nominate a Club Assistant to act as a Assistant Referee, operating in their side's defensive half of the field of play. Club Official Assistant Referees are to assist and guide appointed Match Officials and the Match Official's decisions remain final as always.

11. The half-time interval should be between five minutes fifteen minutes.

12. Ties in all rounds preceding the final of the Northumberland FA County Cup may be played on a date and time agreed by both sides and the Association ahead of the date of that round's completion date. If no agreed date can be found, the game must be played on the default day of that Cup at the default time.

13. Completed Result Sheets should be sent to info@northumberlandfa.com within 48 hours of the tie.

APPENDIX 1 – PROCESS OF DECISIONS FOR COUNTY CUP PROTESTS



APPENDIX 2 – REFEREE FEES

County Cup	Referee Fee	Assistant Referees Fee	Travel per mile
NFA Men's Senior Cup	£45.00	£30.00	30p
NFA Women's Cup	£25.00	£18.00	30p
NFA Men's Benevolent Bowl	£25.00	£18.00	30p
NFA Men's Minor Cup	£22.00	£16.00	30p
NFA Men's Sunday Cup	£22.00	£16.00	30p
NFA Men's Sunday Minor Cup	£22.00	£16.00	30p
NFA U18 Sunday Junior Cup	£22.00	£16.00	30p
NFA U16 Cup	£20.00	£14.00	30p
NFA U16 Girls Cup	£20.00	£14.00	30p
NFA U15 Cup	£20.00	£14.00	30p
NFA U14 Cup	£20.00	£14.00	30p
NFA U14 Girls Cup	£20.00	£14.00	30p
NFA U13 Cup	£20.00	£14.00	30p
NFA U12 Cup	£18.00	£12.00	30p
NFA U12 Girls Cup	£18.00	£12.00	30p