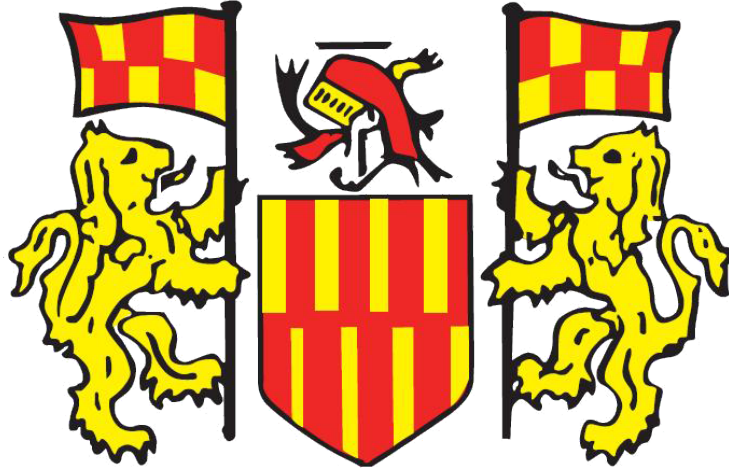




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NORTHUMBERLAND FA

Risk Management Considerations for Grassroots Football Training Sessions



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On Saturday 30th May, the UK Government announced that from the 1st June, training sessions for sport could recommence with groups of up to six including the coach taking part in fitness training sessions. All sessions must still include social distancing for all. The social distance currently stands at 2 metres and will not move to one metre plus until the 4th July. The Government guidance can be found at the links below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-phased-return-of-outdoor-sport-and-recreation>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation>

The FA have issued guidance in line with government requirements to re-introduce grassroots football and have stipulated that football involvement at present can only consist of the following:

- playing football individually, for example, practice of individual skills or fitness activities
- playing football with your family or other people living in your household
- football training or fitness activities in groups of no more than six, keeping two metres apart at all times
- Physical contact with anyone outside of your household is not permitted, therefore **playing of any games (small-sided or full) is also not permitted at this time**

The FA have produced a Football Restart Guidance which can be downloaded from [here](#) and specific guidance for different parties which can be found [here](#).

The FA also announced that “It is permissible for coaches to organise a training session that has two or more groups of six (including the coach) involved in the session, as long as the groups of six are kept separate, everyone is socially distancing and strict hygiene measures are in place with any equipment” .

Commencing training with 6 adults is relatively easy with a little planning, however, running a session with children becomes more complicated when supervision, assistance, safeguarding, DBS requirements, adequate training certificates etc are factored in. Clubs have a responsibility to fulfil their duty of care for all participants and are responsible for ensuring coaches are fully trained and DBS checked in order to work with under 18's and must be aware of what and how the coaches are delivering during these sessions. Safeguarding must also remain a priority throughout.

There are several areas required to be addressed before anyone engages in football training including ensuring that some level of assessment of risk has been carried out, the relevant allocated person / people are delivering the session, government guidelines can be adhered to, that there are procedures for the different aspects of carrying out a session and communication has been carried out to ensure everyone is aware of procedures and expectations. Understandably therefore, there has been a lot of questions raised by clubs across the county as to how best to facilitate the sessions and also if there is any guidance available to help with the process.



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Health and Safety legislation applies to organisations who employ at least one person. This means as an employer, the Health and Safety at Work Act imposes a duty of care on protecting their employees as well as any one else effected by the actions such as volunteers or members of the public. If an organisation is not subject to health and safety legislation because they are not an employer, they will still be subject to civil law, also referred to as common law. Under common law, voluntary organisations and individual volunteers have a duty of care to each other and others who may be affected by their activities. Further advice on health and safety law and civil law and who it applies to can be found [here](#).

Northumberland FA cannot feasibly create a risk assessment template for everyone to use as the requirements and areas which need to be covered change from club to club. Clubs within Northumberland FA's geographic area range from remote one team clubs to clubs with tens of teams with upwards of four hundred participants. Control measures to protect people need to be proportionate to the activity, the risk being controlled, and the people involved.

What follows in the next section of this document are categories of questions which may be helpful when looking at what needs to be considered in order to manage risk when carrying out training sessions.

The list is not exhaustive, and clubs will need to look at their individual circumstances and needs to identify if anything further is required in order to safely deliver sessions with participants. These actions would be good practice outside of the current Coronavirus pandemic and clubs would be encouraged to review their workings and procedures towards risk management on a regular basis.

Both clubs and individuals should commence training sessions only when they are comfortable and fully confident that all risk can be managed. At the end of this document are links to various websites including the Health and Safety Executive and RoSPA who both provide guidance on the management of risk and if required, risk assessment templates. The following categories will assist in thinking about the more common areas to be included in assessing risk related to session delivery.

If there is an area it is felt that risk cannot be managed, such as allowing access to toilets, it does not mean that the entire activity needs to be stopped, the question just needs to be asked can the session go ahead without toilet access. If not, don't do the session; if so, make sure everyone is informed there will be no access. If however there are areas fundamental to being able to deliver the session which cannot be satisfied like not having enough space to be able to achieve social distancing or being able to safely control children to maintain social distancing, then do not do the activity.

Location / Venue

- Will the group be sharing the venue with other groups, could this limit your available area to train, impacting on social distancing?
- Can the coach adequately see all participants without barriers?
- Can parents still observe from a safe distance and maintain social distancing amongst themselves?





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- Is there adequate parking to allow people to park, get equipment out of cars etc and still maintain social distancing?
- Do arrival and leaving times need staggering for parking?
- Can you sweep the area for dog waste, anything that can cause slips, trips or falls etc immediately before the session without compromising social distancing?
- If coaches are carrying out follow on sessions, i.e. one session after another, is there adequate time being allowed to have one group leave before the next group arrives to avoid overlap or a crowd forming?
- For large clubs who may have multiple teams and coaches training at the same time, what control measure are in place to ensure social distance is maintained and crowds and bottle necks are avoided as multiple people arrive and leave?
 - Is there a maximum number allowed at the venue at any one time?
 - Have times been staggered for people to arrive at different pitches?
 - Can people reach the training area without having to squeeze past spectators or people waiting for other pitches or locations?
 - Are alternate pitches being used to maximise space i.e. pitches 1, 3 and 5 used for the first session, 2, 4 and 6 for the second session etc (depending on layout)?
- Have parents / participants been informed to stay away from the venue until the specific time provided for them to arrive, again avoiding too many people gathering in one area?
- If required, do you have an allocated drop off zone for participants to be dropped off and then parents / carers etc can park and wait throughout the session? This may only need to be implemented at certain venues depending on size and layout.
- Is it possible to implement a one-way system so people arrive or enter one way and leave by another point to avoid people passing each other or causing a bottle neck - particularly in locations with fences dividing the playing areas or 3G pitches?
- Have parents / participants been informed club houses or facilities will not be open before, during or after the session?
- Have participants been informed to come to the session already changed and ready just to participate?
- Do coaches have the full address of the location including post code for the emergency services? Depending where you are in the county, a grid reference may help.
- Can emergency vehicles gain access easily to the full location even with possible additional parking of cars (if people aren't sharing transport)?
- Have coaches checked mobile phone coverage?
- Do clubs / coaches have an emergency response plan?
- If the location has toilets outside of a clubhouse, will these be open during the session? If so, how will they be cleaned in between uses and deep cleaned after the session? Is there access to running water, soap and paper towels?
- If toilets will not be available, have participants, parents, carers been informed of this?

External factors

- Has the weather been factored into the session? Hot weather, pollen for some individuals, physical exertion and heat all increase the risk of the possible need for first aid assistance and therefore possible one to one contact.





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- Have participants been advised to bring refreshments with them and instructed not to share drinks bottles, food, towels or equipment with other participants?
- How are participants traveling to the venue? Although it is nice for parents / participants to offer lifts to friends, it is not possible to comply with social distancing requirements in a car or small vehicle. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

Participation, delivery and supervision

Covid-19 is a respiratory disease spread when an infected person coughs, sneezes, speaks or shouts through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose. This can easily be spread when participants are physically exerting themselves or shouting to teammates. Not all infected people show symptoms, so it is critical to ensure enough distance is maintained throughout the entire session and good hygiene is followed. The FA have advised the following during the reintroduction of football training: *sharing of equipment should be kept to a minimum and strong hand hygiene practices should be in place before and after each session.*

Other things to factor in during the delivery of a training session:

- Is there a booking system of some sort so coaches know exactly who should be turning up for which sessions and communicating with the right parties? Have parents been informed not to just turn up with the expectation of participating in any session?
- Do coaches have relevant information about the participants such as medical details, allergies etc
- How do participants, particularly children understand what a 2 metre distance is and where they can and can't go?
- Can all participants fully hear instructions when socially distanced?
- Has supervision ratio been considered? Current government guidelines for exercising are no more than 6 including the coach in one group. The current FA guidelines for a group of children is a ratio of **two FA DBS checked adults** with four children (2:4). For groups training at the same time, the ratio would be one to five as there are additional adults present to assist if a situation occurs. The guidance prior to Covid-19 can be found [here](#) and should still be consulted as under safeguarding requirements, adult to child ratio will change with the age of the participants. There is a simple info graph which can be found [here](#) which helps explain ratio requirements. Parents, general volunteers and anyone not fully FA DBS checked should not be helping to deliver, supervise or monitor sessions. Parents can stand off to one side respecting social distancing or can wait in cars etc but should not be used in the session delivery to compensate for a lack of coaches.
- Are the activities well controlled to ensure there is no physical contact or increases the chances of an injury or accident?
- How is equipment being sanitised during and after the session?
- Are suitable cleaning substances being used? Are coaches using bleach to clean equipment which may be touched shortly after by a participant?
- Do coaches have hand sanitiser for participants to access throughout the session?
- How will the ball be cleaned if being handled during the session to avoid cross contamination?





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First Aid and medical requirements

- Are there any participants with specific medical needs such as asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, allergies requiring the use of an epi-pen or any other medical condition etc which may increase the possible need for one to one assistance? If so, has this been included in assessing risk i.e. depending on the severity of the condition, is it appropriate for the individual to participate; is there a member of the same household present at the session who can assist the individual if required?
- Do coaches have participant details with next of kin details that can be handed straight over to emergency services – on individual pieces of paper for example or on something that can be detached and handed over? This could remove the need for further physical contact looking for details or emergency numbers? If coaches do have this information, how is it secured during the session?
- Do coaches have a well-stocked first aid kit with items such as cool packs that an individual can apply themselves or with the assistance of someone from the same household?
- Can parents / carers / someone from the same household be called upon to help in a first aid situation so they are the person having physical contact with the individual if the injury is relatively minor?
- Are participants told at the beginning of the session what the rules are on interaction and distance and asked not to touch their face - eyes / nose / mouth as far as possible during the session particularly if they will be handling the ball or equipment?
- Have participants been asked to bring sanitiser to use before, during and after the session especially if there is no access to hand washing facilities?

No one can tell an individual they must put themselves in harm's way to save another person unless they are specifically employed to do so, at which point the employer has a legal obligation to do a full risk assessment and provide PPE etc. Outside of this setting, when it comes to a situation such as providing CPR, it can be a massive moral dilemma even without the Covid-19 situation. Not providing assistance can be critical for the injured party, however, to do so without the adequate knowledge and potential equipment may just be exacerbating the situation. Having the ability and knowledge to adequately manage the situation will help with the outcome. The guidance for carrying out CPR during the current pandemic has been amended and further information can be found below:

<https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/covid-community/>

<https://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/first-aid-advice/unresponsive-casualty/how-to-do-cpr-on-an-adult/>

Prevention is far better than cure and having the appropriate measures in place as far as possible will help prevent situations occurring. In the unfortunate event an accident does occur, further general first aid advice for coaches during the pandemic can be found on the St Johns website here: <https://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/first-aid-advice/covid-19-advice-for-first-aiders/>

PPE



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- Do all coaches have a face mask in case they need to deal with an emergency first aid situation?
- Have parents / carers been asked to bring a face mask in case they need to assist with first aid or if they need to pass through a building to get to the training area?
- Do all coaches / first aid kits have sufficient gloves which are easily accessible?
- Have coaches been asked to wear gloves if they are regularly handling the ball or equipment during the session?

Guidance on facemasks is periodically changing and current guidance from the World Health Organisation can be found [here](#):

Please note UK government guidance on face mask use is also periodically changing so please regularly consult the government website [here](#)

Communication

Communication with parents will be critical to assist in managing the risk of any training sessions so it may be helpful to consider the following:

- If there is higher risk or multiple areas to factor in such as having multiple teams with a number of coaches from the same club utilising one large space and possibly parts of a club house, how will procedures to be followed be recorded and shared by the club? Who will it be shared with?
- Will the club share one set of information or a communication with the coaches and another with parents for simplicity or will everyone get everything? What is best for your club?
- How will any information be shared with the relevant parties be done? Some clubs are issuing written guidelines some have coaches carrying out zoom meeting with parents to answer questions and give instruction. It is personal choice but information must be shared to ensure everyone is aware of their responsibilities.
- How is written parental consent being obtained for children to participate in training sessions?

Safeguarding

When dealing with under 18's, safeguarding must always be a priority. All clubs should be working in conjunction with the FA's safeguarding children's policy to protect children during training sessions and any other club activities. Procedures may need to be amended during the period of the pandemic to factor in such things as access, or no access, to bathroom facilities. Clarity needs to be provided on areas such as who will supervise or be responsible if a young person leaves to go to the nearest toilets if welfare facilities are not available, for example a very close supermarket. Likewise, if toilets are open but not the club house or other facilities meaning fewer people around, could this mean a young person is in a vulnerable, unsupervised position? What is communicated to the parents or carers of children is very important and will ensure there are no confused expectations or blurred lines of responsibility. Any actions implemented to protect and safeguard children should ideally be recorded and shared with all relevant parties.

The FA Safeguarding Children policy and procedures and other policies, regulations and templates can be found at this [link](#)





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Working with participants with disabilities

The FA has stated that during the pandemic *'Football coaches working with people with impairments must ensure they can adequately cater for any additional needs whilst still avoiding physical contact and maintaining social distancing. Individuals should follow government guidance relevant to their own impairment or health condition'*.

Participants with specific disabilities or medical conditions may be included in the vulnerable category and should consult medical specialists before recommencing any participation in football training. In addition to everything previously mentioned, clubs may need specific procedures around accessibility, for example if a participant requires one to one assistance in transferring wheelchairs or requires access to toilets which will then need to be cleaned. Safeguarding must always be considered and where possible, someone from the same household should attend to assist with any initial actions which require one to one assistance but clubs / coaches may also need to stagger arrival / leaving times to avoid having a group of more than 6 people including the coach present. Further advice and guidance can be found here <https://www.accesssport.org.uk/news/coronavirus-update>

As stated earlier, factoring in the previous categories and answering the questions relevant to your club or individual training situations will help assist in identifying the best approach to delivering a session and managing risk. It is not exhaustive, it will not cover every eventuality and it is not instruction from Northumberland FA in what individual clubs must do or how it must be done. There is not a one size fits all approach, so it is down to the club and individual to ensure a safe delivery and management of risk, and clubs must be aware of their own legal and moral obligation to protect and safeguard their participants and volunteers.

For affiliation purposes only, some requirements have been lifted on the Whole Game System to allow clubs to still affiliate while football is not taking place. For the avoidance of any doubt, this is for affiliation only and the information will be gathered by Northumberland FA via a risk register of the clubs who require specific training such as a Safeguarding Children's Workshop or a DBS for coaches or Club Welfare Officers. No one should be carrying out the role of coach or CWO or running training sessions without the relevant training and qualifications already having been completed and the individual holding an in-date DBS. The FA have taken measures to extend some qualifications and DBS's expiring within 1st March and 1st October was extended by a year so coaches are advised to check their own records on WGS to ensure compliance.

Knowledge, guidance, instruction and requirements regarding Covid-19 are changing on a rapid basis and clubs must be prepared to continue reviewing their procedures and adding control measure or amending as required. Please monitor Northumberland FA's website and social media for updates and FA and government guidelines for football participation.





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Useful Website to consult:

<http://www.thefa.com/news/2020/jun/01/grassroots-football-covid-19-guidance-update-010620>

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/coronavirus>

<https://www.uk sport.gov.uk/coronavirus-response>

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/news/2020-04-coronavirus-covid-19-and-safeguarding-in-sport/>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/controlling-risks.htm>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/voluntary/when-it-applies.htm>

<https://rospaworkplacesafety.com/2013/11/12/risk-assessment-template/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-support-children-families-parents/>

Please be reminded, if an individual is symptomatic, living in a household with a possible COVID-19 infection or classified as extremely vulnerable on health grounds, the guidance is that they should remain at home.

If a participant feels unwell during the session with Covid-19 like symptoms, the session should stop and the individuals asked to return home immediately. They should then consult government guidance. Other participants and coach(es) involved in the session should also return home and consult the government track and trace service. Info on both can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Club Welfare Officers and Secretaries are encouraged to sign up to the Northumberland FA Safeguarding Hive group which will have information around many subjects with sources of support including mental health, domestic abuse, self-harm, young carers, supporting young people with disabilities and many others which may be particularly helpful during the current pandemic and following the period of lockdown. Secretaries and CWO's will be contacted directly with information on this. If you are not contacted directly by mid-June, please get in touch with safeguarding@northumberlandfa.com

As guidance and guidelines change in response to developments during the pandemic, documents will be updated to reflect these changes. Please ensure you have the latest version of this document by accessing it on the Northumberland FA website which can be found [here](#) or CWO's can find it at the Safeguarding Hive Group



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