



# COVID 19 GUIDANCE ON RE-STARTING FOOTBALL ACTIVITY

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**FOR** ADULT PLAYERS



# INTRODUCTION

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These guidelines have been produced in line with the recent Government updates to the **Covid-19 guidance**. Specifically, this document has been updated to reflect changes to social distancing guidelines which will come into effect from the 4th July and the introduction of **support bubbles** which came into effect on the 10th June. The Government guidance for the phased return of outdoor sport and recreation can be found **here**.

The return of grassroots football is something that we know many are keen to see, but at this stage of the nation's response to Covid-19, it must be done with careful consideration for everyone's safety – especially vulnerable groups.

Every grassroots club will have to decide when it's right for them to return. They should also undertake a risk assessment to ensure that it's done safely. If your club decides to recommence football activity and you choose to take part, please ensure you do so safely, within the Government guidance.

In particular, please check any insurance policies that you hold in relation to your football activities (e.g. personal accident) to ensure they remain valid and adequate during the pandemic. You should liaise with your Insurance adviser to clarify if any additional requirements are necessary to ensure you remain in compliance with its terms.

Anyone who is deemed vulnerable in respect of Covid-19 is reminded to follow the Government's guidance, only returning when it's right for them to do so. We are aware that people from BAME communities may face greater risk from Covid-19, as detailed within this **report** from Public Health England (PHE). Therefore BAME players should talk to their club to identify and understand the measures that will be put in place. Based on this information they should then make a personal decision as to whether the time is right to re-start playing. The Football Association (The FA) will review its position in response to any specific guidance that may be issued by the Government or PHE in the future.

While some may have coped well during lockdown, others may not. For some the experience may have been very difficult. If your mental and emotional wellbeing has been affected as a result of the changes brought about by Covid-19, we hope you will talk to someone you trust. Click **here** for further information on the 'Heads Up' campaign. The guidance you'll find could help you, or anyone else you know who may be struggling.

As the weeks progress, Government restrictions may or may not be eased further. If they are, The FA will update its advice accordingly. It's essential everyone is clear about the restrictions and works together to manage social distancing and strict hand hygiene.

**Important:** If you are showing symptoms of the virus or have been in contact with someone displaying symptoms within the last two weeks, then you should stay at home until a NHS practitioner advises you that you no longer need to remain in isolation.

## IN SUMMARY:

- **Always follow the latest Government guidance;**
- **Follow your club's football specific protocols which should be in line with Government guidance**
- **Check your insurance cover;**
- **If in doubt, or you're not comfortable returning to football, don't.**

# BEFORE SESSIONS

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- **Check with your provider (e.g. your club) that you will only be taking part in activities that ensure Government and The FA's guidance is followed.** This permits football training or fitness activities in groups of no more than six (including a coach), keeping socially distant at all times. Social distancing guidelines should be followed between people from different households wherever possible. From 4 July, this means a distance of two metres between people from different households, or one metre plus mitigations (such as face coverings or avoiding face-to-face contact) where two metres is not possible. Further details can be found **here**.
- **Physical contact with anyone outside your household (a support bubble counts as one household) is not permitted.** Therefore, playing of any games (small-sided or full) is also not permitted at this time.
- **Re-starting football activity will require the introduction of new arrangements and unfamiliar restrictions.** As a player, please support those who are trying to provide a safe re-introduction to football in accordance with Government guidance.
- **Stay Alert – you must maintain good hygiene, hand washing and social distancing.** Make yourself aware of the measures being taken to provide a safe environment. If you are not happy with the arrangements that have been made, then you should remove yourself from that environment.
- **In line with Government guidance on travel, you should travel to the venue alone or only with another member of your household or support bubble, or via a socially-distant method (e.g. cycling).** You should consider all other forms of transport before using public transport. There must be no car-sharing with anyone outside your household or support bubble. Please arrive shortly before the session starts and leave when it finishes.
- **You should arrive changed and ready to exercise.**
- **Bibs must not be used unless they can be washed between every session.** They should not be shared at any point during a session.
- **To operate safely, changing rooms, club rooms and showers will be closed.** Access to a toilet may still be possible but check with the venue or try to use one at home.
- **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 guidance.



# AT AND DURING SESSIONS

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- **Avoid touching equipment e.g. cones and footballs.** The focus should be on kicking the ball and limiting any touching of the ball with hands.
- **Clubs/facilities may arrange a parking system that avoids users congregating** and also implement a clearly signposted 'one-way' system into and out of the facilities.
- **If access to a facility is required, hand-cleaning facilities should be provided.** Please use them regularly. If there is no facility for running/clean water at the venue, please bring hand sanitiser with you.
- **You 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.
- **Equipment should be handled as little as possible by as few people as possible.** Where equipment is handled by more than one person, they should wash their hands immediately afterwards, taking care not to touch their mouth/face in the meantime. For goalkeepers, it might be sensible for players to have their own individual ball

for the session, with wiping of the ball using disinfectant wipes every so often if it is being handled by more than one person.

- **Ensure you take your own water bottle that is clearly recognisable.** Do not share your drink with anyone else.
- **If you get injured, a member of your household can assist you, if present, but others 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 to protect themselves and others if they need to compromise social-distancing guidelines to provide medical assistance.
- **If you become symptomatic during the session, you should immediately remove yourself from the session and return home as soon as possible.** NHS guidance on further management of symptoms should be followed.



## AFTER THE SESSION

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- **When the session is finished, you should leave the venue rather than congregate,** and avoid congestion at gates or doors.
- **All participants should wash hands at the earliest opportunity** and personal equipment should be wiped down with a disinfectant.

# FINALLY...

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We want to 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 enjoying football is as smooth and safe as possible.

But everyone's circumstances are different, and if you don't feel you're ready to return to football, there's no pressure. Everyone's health, wellbeing and safety are the priorities.



**DISCLAIMER:**

This guidance is for general information only and does not constitute legal advice, nor is it 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/persons should therefore ensure that they seek independent advice from medical practitioners, or healthcare providers, prior to implementing any return to football activity, 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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