



# COVID 19 – GUIDANCE ON RE-STARTING FOOTBALL ACTIVITY

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**FOR** PARENTS AND CARERS



# INTRODUCTION

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These guidelines have been produced in line with the Government guidance issued on 1 June 2020, which sees the easing of lockdown restrictions on gatherings, public spaces, and outdoor activities and the phased return of outdoor sport and recreation. The Government guidance is published **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, children and their families. Please note this guidance will be updated regularly in line with Government guidance, as we progress through this pandemic. We recommend that parents and carers keep up-to-date with the latest Government guidance.

If your child's grassroots club decides to co-ordinate football activity and you choose to let your child play, everyone – including you and your child – will need to play their part in ensuring this is done safely, within the Government guidance.

Just like schools, every grassroots club will have to decide when it's right for them to return. They should also have undertaken a risk assessment to ensure that it is done safely.

Each club official and coach/manager will need to decide when they are ready to continue with their role in football. It's important to remember that the majority of people running grassroots football are volunteers.

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.

A recent Public Health England (PHE) report published **here** has highlighted a greater risk from Covid-19 to people from

BAME communities. As the current impact of Covid-19 on members of these communities is not yet fully understood, we acknowledge that there may be increased concerns and levels of anxiety from within these communities. Grassroots clubs and coaches should do everything they can to create a safe and inclusive environment. However, we encourage you to ask any questions of them to ensure you feel comfortable with your child taking part in activities. The FA will review its guidance in response to any specific guidance that may be issued by the Government or PHE in the future. Please also consider whether your child falls within particular risk categories and if so, remain aware of following Government guidance.

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

**Important:** If you or your child 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 an NHS practitioner advises you that you no longer need to remain in isolation.

## IN SUMMARY:

- **Always follow the latest Government guidance;**
- **Be aware of your club's football specific protocols which should be in line with Government guidance**
- **If in doubt, or you're not comfortable about your child(ren) returning to football, there's no pressure to do so.**

# BEFORE SESSIONS

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- **Check with your provider (e.g. your child's club) that your child 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 (with each group including a coach), keeping two metres apart at all times. Physical contact with anyone outside your 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 parent or carer, please ensure your child understands what to expect and please support those who are trying to provide a safe re-introduction to youth football in accordance with Government guidelines.
- **Stay Alert – children 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 your child from that environment.
- **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. If you choose for your child to take part, you will need to give your consent to the club and or coach for them to do so. You should check their revised safeguarding arrangements as part of this process.
- **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 and is responsible for ensuring the environment is safe.
- **Children (anyone under 18) should not be working 1:1 with a coach, unless another adult with an in date DBS Check or their parent/carer is present and observing social distancing.** Coaches must ensure the ratio of coaches to children is appropriate - **see download 5.5**
- **As you will undoubtedly already know, young children are more likely to struggle to maintain social distancing.** Please continue to do your best to help your child recognise what two metres looks and feels like – this could be related to several arm spans or standing jumps for example.
- **In line with Government guidance on travel, you or another adult from the family should travel with the child to the venue together, 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. Please arrive shortly before the session starts and leave when it finishes. You can watch from your car, or a safe distance away from the group and everyone else.
- **Your child must arrive changed and ready to exercise.**
- **Bibs must not be used unless they can be washed between every session and not shared at any point during a session.** Just as shopping trollies are required to be cleaned, bibs must be too. So please check with your coach what arrangements they have in place.
- **To operate safely, changing rooms, club rooms and showers will all be closed.** Access to a toilet may still be possible but try to use one at home.
- **When the activity is finished, children should take the earliest opportunity to wash their hands or use a hand sanitiser.**
- If your child has additional disability or medical needs, please ensure you have discussed this specifically with the club and coach. **You can then agree how/if these needs can be met within current Government Covid-19 guidance.**

# AT AND DURING SESSIONS

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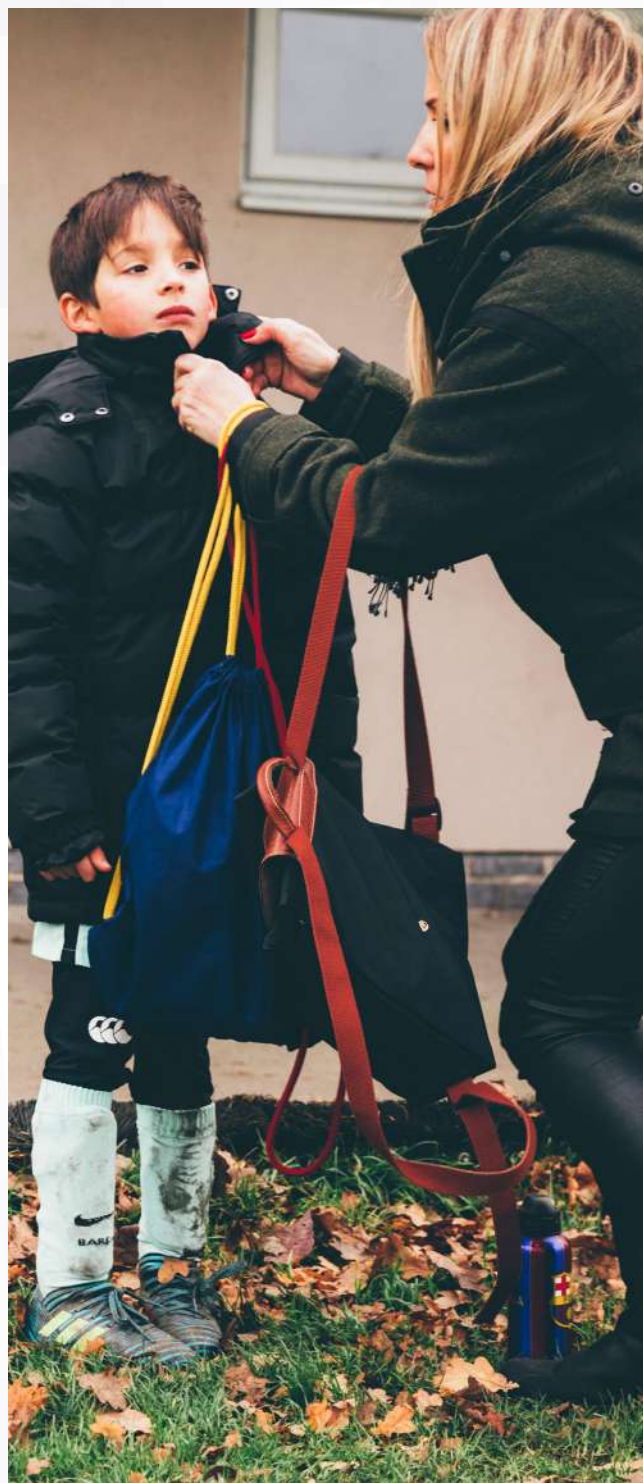
- **Children must be guided not to touch equipment e.g. cones and footballs.** The focus should be on kicking the ball and limiting any touching of the ball with hands. If you have young children, please help them to understand this before they attend any sessions.
- **Clubs/facilities may arrange a drop-off and pick-up system that avoids parents congregating and also implement a clearly signposted 'one-way' system into and out of the facilities.** If parents/carers are required to be in attendance for the duration of a session, then please maintain social distancing at all times, e.g. in their own car, if they have one.
- **If access to a facility is required, hand cleaning facilities should be provided.** Please use them regularly. In case there is no facility for running water/clean water at the venue, please ensure your child brings hand sanitiser (alcohol-based), with their name on it, and they know how to cleanse their hands in line with Government guidance.
- **Once the session is finished, all players should take the earliest opportunity to wash hands or use their own hand sanitiser (alcohol-based).**
- **If your child needs to sneeze or cough, encourage them to do so into a tissue or upper sleeve and advise them to avoid touching their face.**
- **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 or face in the meantime. For goalkeepers, it might be sensible for players to have their own individual ball for the session, with the frequent wiping of the ball with disinfectant wipes if it is being handled by more than one person.
- **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.
- **If your child gets injured, a member of their household can aid them but others will still need to socially distance unless a life or limb-threatening injury necessitates breaking 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 break social-distancing guidelines to provide medical assistance.
- **If your child becomes symptomatic during the session, they should be immediately removed from the session and taken home as soon as possible.** NHS guidance on further management of symptoms should be followed.
- **Your child may be asked by their coach or club to complete a self-check in advance or upon arrival at the activity.** Self-checks are important to prevent transmission among people who are unaware that they are carriers of the virus. You should ask the activity provider what steps will be involved in any self-check.



# AFTER THE SESSION

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- When the session is finished, children should be encouraged to leave the venue rather than congregate, avoiding 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 your child(ren) are 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 or 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. 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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