

HARROW YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE

(FA ACCREDITED LEAGUE / FA CHARTER STANDARD & RESPECT LEAGUE)

PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED DURING INCLEMENT WEATHER AND PITCHES POSSIBLY BEING UNPLAYABLE

Under the League and FA rules/regulations, it is ONLY the appointed match referee who has the power to decide the fitness of the ground in all matches and his/her decision is final and binding, subject to the matters noted below.

To be clear, the decision regarding whether a pitch is playable is primarily determined based on whether the pitch is dangerous for the players playing in the match, not if it is too wet or too muddy, as the case may be. All registered referees are provided with training in this area and they are independent of mind in this regard.

The home club must liaise with the appointed match referee, as early as is practicable and reasonable, so that he/she can attend and visit the ground and inspect the pitch.

All appointed match referees themselves must be available to be contacted and attend and visit the home ground as necessary.

In all cases, the match referee must attend and review the pitch conditions in person. A home club official should be in attendance at the ground when the inspection takes place.

Subsequently, if a match is not played, the match referee is entitled to claim travelling expenses (only) from his/her home to the venue (this shall be paid by the home club).

If a home club has more than one pitch in use at the venue, it is permissible for one of the appointed match referees to attend and to inspect all the pitches that are scheduled to be played on; and in this case his/her decision shall be final and binding over all pitches/matches.

Under no circumstances shall a team manager, club official or any other non-match appointed referee be entitled to decide as to the pitch condition and whether a pitch is playable or not.

When the pitch is being inspected by the match referee, he/she must do so on his/her own (unaccompanied) and the match referee (after inspection) shall then advise the home club official of his/her decision.

Under no circumstances shall a pitch be inspected and/or declared unplayable before the Saturday (prior to the Sunday match day); and if on the Saturday then only in exceptional (weather-related) circumstances.

If there is no League appointed match referee for any particular game, the person who the home club has appointed to be the match referee on the day shall have the full powers, status and authority of a League appointed match referee and the procedures noted above shall be followed in full.

In certain rare cases, it is possible that the ground authority (i.e. a local Council) makes a decision as to whether a pitch can be used (i.e. whether it is playable or not). In such circumstances, the decision of the ground authority is final and binding and there is no need for clubs to liaise with the appointed match referee for any independent inspection.

The above-mentioned rights of the ground authority (in almost all classes this will 'only' be a local Council) does not apply where the home team are the pitch owners or have control (directly or indirectly) over the pitch. If that is the case, then the right to make a decision as to whether a pitch is playable or not reverts solely to the appointed match referee – as stated above.

Before any match is finally postponed, the home club MUST contact the away team and see if the away team can host the match. If the away team can host the match, then the game must be switched to the away team's ground and be duly played.

Regarding the timing of any pitch inspection, it is clearly preferable for any inspection to take place early enough to avoid the away team having to travel to the home team ground (if there is a possibility of the pitch being declared unfit for play). However, if that is not possible (and in the interest of matches taking place) – if a match is not called off then the away team must travel to the home team ground to be ready to play the match at the scheduled kick off time.

It is always frustrating for all concerned (players, parents, coaches, club officials and referees) when matches have to be called off due to inclement weather. The League is seeking to facilitate an independent, standard process be followed, so as to ensure that the maximum number of matches are played each week whilst, at the same time, recognising that some pitches may not be playable; and that such decisions are taken as early as reasonable possible, but by bringing the ethos of football-for-all to the fore.