

COVID-19 – SUMMARY GUIDANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND AND THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Background

Outdoor team sports are 'exempt' from the main current Covid-19 restrictions; and so organised Covid-19 secure grassroots football can continue. This is applicable for areas in Tier 1 and Tier 2 Covid-categorisations.

All participants must follow all FA and Government and Public Health England ('PHE') (including NHS Test & Trace) rules and laws.

The FA guidance does 'not' provide a cap of the number of people for 'competitive/development' matches played in the League/Combination, as this would prohibit many formal matches from taking place when you factor in players, substitutes and officials, etc.

The wider Government guidance is clear - that you are able to play outdoor team sport in any number if this is formally organised by a sports club or similar organisation and the sports-governing body has issued guidance. That is the case for The FA / Middlesex FA / Harrow Youth Football League / Harrow Soccer Combination.

Social distancing (for all participants) must be adhered to in all settings 'before' and 'after' matches.

What happens if a player in my club tests positive for Covid-19?

If there is a player who has tested positive, they must, from that point, self-isolate (or if they have symptoms, from the moment of symptoms); and NHS Test & Trace will pick up from this point.

The player's Club can carry on, but be mindful to ensure that all the guidelines are strictly followed on social distancing, hand washing etc.

The other players (and coaches) who have played with that player, or trained with them, do 'not need' to self-isolate; unless they themselves (on an individual not group basis) show symptoms of Covid-19 or it is confirmed that they have Covid-19; NHS Test & Trace will pick up from that point.

What happens if I have played an opposition team and one of their players has tested positive for Covid-19?

Match play is 'not' considered 'close contact', so no action is needed unless individuals experience symptoms (or test positive), in which case they must self-isolate from that point as per Government guidance; and NHS Test & Trace will pick up from that point.

A player has had Covid-19 but is now recovered – can they play? (Do they need a negative test?)

As long as the player is no longer symptomatic and has fully recovered, then it would be fine for them to play, without a negative test; as long as they have finished the specified quarantine period. However, the player should follow advice from a medical professional on when is best to return to exercise. They should also not rush back if they do not feel well enough.

Does this mean that we can now play football normally?

Match play is now permitted, however, in all settings before and after the session, and in any breaks, all participants should practise social distancing, in line with Government guidelines on two metres or 'one metre plus'.

Substitutes and coaches are permitted, but must socially distance on the touchline.

During warm-ups and cool-downs, participants should practise social distancing where possible.

What if there is an injury, is it safe for a player to be treated?

If a participant gets injured, a member of their household can assist if present and appropriate, but others (including match officials, teammates and coaches) 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 (including face coverings) before treating anyone to protect themselves and others if they need to compromise social-distancing guidelines to provide medical assistance.

What if a player is sent home from school (as the class bubble is breached) as they may (or have) come into contact with someone (a fellow pupil or teacher for example) with Covid-19 symptoms or Covid-19 itself; i.e. they are asked to self-isolate for 14-days and not return to school until the end of the period?

Schools, after consultation with their Local Education Authority and PHE/NHS T&T will likely set a period of 14-days isolation before the child can return to School; unless they have Covid-19 in which case it may be longer.

PHE/NHS T&T are the Government's proxy for determining if the child must (i.e. mandated) self-isolate or if there may be exemptions, such as for Grassroots football.

The communications from PHE/NHS T&T can take a number of forms and each must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

If PHE/NHS T&T mandate that a child must self isolate for the 14-day period without exemption, then that is what they must do.

If PHE/NHS T&T do not mandate such a course, then the player can still play grassroots football during the so-called isolation period, so long as they themselves do not display symptoms of Covid-19 or have confirmed that they have Covid-19 (in which case they can't participate in grassroots football - see above).

What if a parent of a player (or someone living in the player's household) has symptoms of Covid-19 or has Covid-19?

As above, such a player 'can' still play grassroots football - so long as they themselves do not display symptoms of Covid-19 or have confirmed that they have Covid-19 (in which case they can't participate in grassroots football - see above - NHS Test & Trace will pick up from that point).

The above position applies, unless PHE/NHS Test & Trace specifically and directly 'mandate' that such a player can't play.

What is the team coach/manager has symptoms of Covid-19 or has Covid-19?

As above, all players in that team 'can' still play grassroots football - so long as they themselves do not display symptoms of Covid-19 or have confirmed that they have Covid-19 (in which case they can't participate in grassroots football - see above NHS Test & Trace will pick up from that point).

The above position applies, unless PHE/NHS Test & Trace specifically and directly 'mandate' that such a player can't play.

Dated: 21 October 2020