



COVID-19: STEP FOUR GUIDANCE FOR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

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FOR ALL



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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. Naturally, we'll provide any updates if any are required going forward.

THIS GUIDANCE FOR STEP FOUR COMES INTO EFFECT ON MONDAY 19TH JULY. UNTIL THEN PLEASE FOLLOW FA GUIDANCE FOR STEP THREE, WHICH CAN BE FOUND ON [THE FA.COM](#).

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT CLUBS, PLAYERS, COACHES, MATCH OFFICIALS, LEAGUE OFFICIALS, VOLUNTEERS, PARENTS/CARERS AND FACILITY PROVIDERS READ AND UNDERSTAND THIS GUIDANCE ON WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT DO AS PART OF THE LATEST STEP OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ROADMAP.

A SUMMARY OF WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT STEP FOUR OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ROADMAP OUT OF LOCKDOWN

On Monday 19th July, England will move to step four of its roadmap in easing Covid restrictions. This means almost all legal restrictions of social contact will be removed. However, the Government is encouraging people to act with caution.

The summary key points are below, with more detail on subsequent pages:

- 1.** On-field adaptions for playing football are no longer required.
- 2.** No limits of how many people can meet.
- 3.** One-metre-plus rule is removed.
- 4.** The **definition of close contact** remains the same, however the rules on self-isolation will be changing from the 16th August.
- 5.** Face coverings no longer required by law, but recommended in crowded indoor settings and may be mandated by some organisations.
- 6.** Changing rooms can be used, however participants should use their own judgment and minimise use where possible to avoid close contact in a crowded area for a prolonged time.
- 7.** No capacity limits for spectators, but good practice is encouraged.
- 8.** Hospitality is permitted without restrictions.
- 9.** NHS Test and Trace QR codes are not required by law, but are encouraged.
- 10.** Free NHS lateral flow testing is available to clubs and The FA encourages clubs to take this up.
- 11.** No domestic travel restrictions. Participants should continue to follow Government advice on international travel for any fixtures/tournaments.

This guidance document applies to all youth and adult football and futsal, including all formats of the game, indoors and outdoors.

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DETAILED GUIDANCE ON STEP FOUR RESTRICTIONS FOR GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

ADAPTATIONS TO THE GAME

In previous FA guidance, we set out the required adaptations to the playing of the game, to align to the Government's team sports framework. This included not prolonging elements of the game where players will be in close proximity (i.e. free kicks and corners) and avoiding team huddles and handshakes (for example).

As part of step four, these adaptations will no longer be required by the Government and so have been removed from The FA guidance. However, clubs, leagues and all participants should remain vigilant and be respectful of individuals/teams who may not wish to shake hands before games (for example).

CLOSE CONTACT AND SELF-ISOLATION

It is important to note that the **definition of close contact** remains the same in step four. Examples of close contact include:

- Face-to-face contact under one metre for any length of time – including talking to someone or being coughed on;
- Being within one metre of each other for one minute or longer;
- Being within two metres of each other for more than 15 minutes in total in one day;
- Travelling in the same vehicle.

If a player tests positive on a team there is not a need for the other players to self-isolate, unless they were in close contact, have been contacted by Test and Trace, have developed symptoms or tested positive themselves. Therefore, players and clubs should consider how they can reduce the likelihood of close contact occurring.

From the 16th August, those who are fully vaccinated and under-18s will not have to self-isolate, unless they test positive for Covid or develop symptoms, in which case they must isolate. There must also be a two-week gap (i.e. 14 days) between your second vaccination and this exemption coming into effect. If you are over 18 and not fully vaccinated, you will still need to isolate if you come into close contact with someone with Covid.

It is important to note that players must continue to self-assess and if they are experiencing any symptoms and awaiting a test result, they must stay at home.

MASKS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

In step four, the use of masks will become voluntary in all settings, with the Government advising people to use their personal judgement and to take responsibility, depending on the situation. Government advice is that the use of masks reduce risks to people (both yourselves and those around you) in crowded spaces. Please also note that businesses and organisations may still require masks to be used.

CAPACITY

All businesses and facilities will be able to open in step four, with no caps on capacity (indoors or outdoors).

QR CODES

While there is no legal requirement for use of QR codes, Government is encouraging businesses and facilities to continue using these.

CHANGING ROOMS

Changing rooms can be used. However, given that the definition of close contact is not changing, participants may wish to consider this and minimise use of changing facilities where possible to avoid prolonged contact with people in a crowded space.

Clubs and facilities may also wish to consider taking precautions to avoid close contact, for example, asking participants to socially distance and ensure thorough ventilation.

SPECTATORS

As part of step four, there are no limits on spectators for indoor or outdoor football, this includes parents and carers. All facilities can open without restrictions on capacity; however, facilities should follow **Government guidance** on how to best manage crowds, particularly for bigger events.

HOSPITALITY

All outdoor and indoor hospitality will be allowed as part of step four and can operate without restrictions on capacity limits or how people order food and drink.

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KEEPING YOUR CLUBHOUSE AND EQUIPMENT CLEAN

Keeping your clubhouse clean will reduce the risk of passing the infection onto other people. To achieve this, your cleaning procedures should be thorough and rigorous. A cleaning schedule could include:

- Daily cleaning throughout the clubhouse and facility;
- Identifying high-contact touch points for more regular cleaning (e.g. door handles, grab rails, vending machines);
- Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between use;
- Cleaning of shared training equipment after each individual use;
- Having waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection;
- Removing any non-essential items that may be difficult to clean.

The FA is working with its recently-appointed official hygiene partner, Dettol, to support the return of the grassroots game. You can find more information [here](#).

NHS FREE LATERAL FLOW TESTS

As a further consideration for club safety at this time, The FA encourages clubs to consider the Government's community-testing programme. You can find details on this [here](#).

Rapid lateral flow tests help to find cases in people who may have no symptoms but are still infectious and can give the virus to others. These are currently distributed free by the Government, and you can order packs to be sent to a home address. Where clubs do follow the twice-weekly free community Government testing programme, according to recently published PHE guidance they would meet the criteria for a Low-Risk Pathway, meaning certain first aid restrictions during Covid-19 can be lifted in this situation. More information can be found in our First-Aid guidance on TheFA.com.

FIRST AID

All participants should ensure they have read the updated FA guidance on First Aid, which can be found on TheFA.com.

TRAVEL

All participants may travel to games with no restrictions in place for domestic travel. Participants should be aware that travelling in cars is now permitted, however this does mean that they will likely be in close contact and should manage any risks linked to this. Any international travel should be in line with [Government advice](#). Players and clubs should consider how they can reduce the likelihood of close contact occurring.

INSPECTING THE EXISTING CONDITION OF YOUR FACILITY

If parts of your facility have not been used for some time, a thorough building inspection and walk-round will allow you to identify any issues and damage. This will help you plan what work needs to be carried out and should include water quality (e.g. for Legionella and other contaminates), drains, gas services, ventilation, alarms/safety systems and pest control.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The guidance you are reading is FOR ALL – players, coaches, club officials, club welfare officers, match officials, league officials, first-aiders, volunteers, parents/carers, facility providers and spectators.

Clubs and facility providers should update their risk assessment regularly and also update their medical emergency action plan around player care, as well as strictly following the first-aid guidance document published by The FA, without exception. This is both to protect players and any club member who is trying to aid the player if an emergency arises.

Whenever this document refers to finding further information on TheFA.com, you'll find it [here](#).

DISCLAIMER:

This guidance is for general information only and does not constitute legal advice, nor it is 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 should therefore ensure that they seek independent advice from medical practitioners, or healthcare providers, prior to implementing any re-opening plan, 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.



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