

# HEADING IN FOOTBALL TRIAL



A trial to remove deliberate heading in football matches across U12 level and below in England from the start of the 2023/24 season.

## GUIDANCE FOR REFEREES

### WHY?

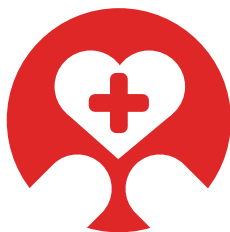
**Align matches with training.**  
Currently heading in training at U12 and below is eliminated or restricted.



**Support the development of more skilful players.**  
Stay on the ball when in possession.



**Player welfare.**  
Mitigate against any potential risks that may be linked to heading the ball while research is ongoing in this area.



### HOW?

Leagues and competitions will be invited to take part in the trial for the duration of the **2023/24 season**.

### WHAT IS A DELIBERATE HEADER?

A deliberate header / heading will usually involve a player moving their head and / or body:

- Towards the ball and / or
- Into the path of the ball

When judging if a header is 'deliberate', account should be taken of whether the player had the time / opportunity to avoid the ball. This will be influenced by:

- The speed of the ball
- The distance between the ball and the player when it is played by another player or rebounds from the goalpost or crossbar etc.

### WHAT ARE THE LAW CHANGES?

Deliberately heading the ball is an offence punishable by an indirect free-kick. The indirect free-kick is taken at the point where the ball was deliberately headed.

- Where a player deliberately heads the ball within their own penalty area, the referee will stop the game and restart with an indirect free-kick to the opposition from the nearest side line of the penalty area where the offence took place.

Deliberately heading the ball is not a cautionable (yellow card) or sending off (red card) offence, unless it:

- Stops or interferes with a promising attack (yellow card)
- Denies the opposing team a goal or obvious goal-scoring opportunity (red card)
- Occurs often enough to be considered 'persistent misconduct' (yellow card)

During this trial, indirect free-kicks will be introduced into Mini-Soccer for the purpose of restarting play in the event of a deliberate header only. They will not be used in any other circumstance during Mini-Soccer.

### WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

1. Seek clarification that the game / competition that you are refereeing is part of the deliberate heading ban trial.
2. Apply the laws of the game.
3. Show empathy and appreciation of the 'spirit' of the law and that this trial will be new for the game's participants.
4. Share feedback, thoughts and observations with the league and local CFA RDO.



**ENGLAND FOOTBALL**