

RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOLS

7/8/21

Based on Welsh Government Coronavirus Control Plan first issued 14 December 2020 and last updated July 2021 (available [here](#)) and Sport, Recreation and Leisure: guidance for a safe return issued 10 May 2021 (available [here](#))



SUMMARY

- Subject to formal confirmation from Welsh Government, Wales will move to Alert Level 0 from 7th August
- Legal restrictions on the number of people who can meet indoors removed, including in private homes, public places or at events
- Changing rooms can now be used for matches
- Face coverings remain a legal requirement indoors, with the exception of hospitality premises.
- Fully vaccinated adults, under 18s and vaccine trial participants will not need to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus.



TRAINING

- Clubs and leagues will need to be led by the facility provider on the number of people permitted to train at an indoor or outdoor venue
- Based on WG guidance, we would still deem the following training numbers appropriate

Age categories	Indoor sports hall	Half-pitch (min. 45 x 45m)	Full-size pitch (min.90x45m)
All age groups	1 group of 20 players	1 group of 40 players	2 groups of 40 players

- All persons involved must complete a self-assessment for COVID-19 symptoms check prior to every training session.
- Coaches, officials, first aiders and COVID Officers are exempt from this number
- 1:16 (qualified coach:player) ratio must be adhered to at all times for U18s
- All training equipment – including goalposts – must be sanitised before and after every training session or fixture
- Clubs should follow guidelines on cleaning in a non-healthcare setting [here](#)



MATCHES

- Following changes to Welsh government guidance from Monday 7th June, the limit on the number of people that can be involved in match will be determined by competition rules and regulations
- The number of people that can be involved in a match will also have to consider any regulations in place by the facility provider, if using private facilities



MATCHES, FESTIVALS & TOURNAMENTS

- Organisations who wish to play any matches, festivals or tournaments in Wales or outside of Wales must contact the FAW or Area Association, dependent on who the club is affiliated to, in order to gain formal approval
- Failure to do so will result in the organisation participating in an unsanctioned match or event, which would automatically invalidate their FAW insurance policy for this match/event and trigger disciplinary procedures against the organisation in question
- An organisation may only participate in a tournament or festival hosted outside of Wales if that event has also received approval from the host country's governing body e.g. The FA
- Organisations should be aware that certain areas of the UK may have travel restrictions in place and as a result should avoid travel to these areas.
- Further guidance to support clubs to run their own tournaments or festivals in Wales is available [here](#)



MATCH-DAY PROTOCOLS

1. We would advise all persons involved should be temperature tested prior to being allowed entry into the playing area.
2. The host club must ensure, upon arrival, that all persons involved have completed a self-assessment for COVID-19 symptoms check. Entry should be refused to anyone who is unable to provide assurance that they have done so and that to the best of their knowledge it is safe for them to take part. Anyone refused entry on this basis must be instructed to immediately self-isolate.
3. Clubs should strictly limit the time spent congregating at a venue before activity begins. Meet-up times should reflect this.
4. **Changing rooms can be used provided Changing room protocols are followed.**
5. Where possible, avoid travelling with people from other households in private cars, however if this cannot be avoided the guidance issued by Welsh Government should be followed at all times.
6. No-one should leave home to participate in the match if they, or someone they live with, is symptomatic - or have been informed to self-isolate.
7. 2 designated areas should be marked pitch-side – these should be used to house home and away team players and coaches during match-play
8. Water bottles or other refreshment containers, should in no circumstances be shared. Participants will need to bring their own, in a named container.
9. The coach/COVID officer is responsible for disinfecting each ball when it goes out of play.
10. Toilets should be opened for pre-match, match and for 30 minutes following. Toilets should be cleaned regularly in line with Welsh Government guidance for sports, clubs and facilities. Toilet capacity should be managed via entry and exit with face coverings worn whilst indoors.
11. All equipment – including goalposts – must be sanitised before and after every fixture. Clubs should follow guidelines on cleaning in a non-healthcare setting here
12. Ground staff are permitted on the pitch before the warm-up and 15 minutes after the conclusion of the match



CHANGING ROOM PROTOCOLS

1. Changing facilities may re-open providing risk assessment is carried out and adhered to.
2. Where mains water has been turned off or unused since the close of the premises at lockdown, when it is reconnected it will need running through to flush away any microbiological or chemical residues built up while the water supply was disconnected (see additional Welsh Government guidance, '[Principles to prepare for safe management of indoor and outdoor facilities](#)') This should also be included within the Risk Assessment.
3. Ensure players and visiting teams are aware of restrictions, procedures and responsibilities before entering the changing facilities Only essential personnel should access changing rooms (players, medical staff, coaches/ team managers and safeguarding officers for junior and youth matches)
4. Ensure face coverings are worn in all indoor technical facilities such as changing rooms and medical room areas accordance with Welsh Government guidelines
5. Existing player welfare and safety policies should not be compromised
6. Allow more time for players to change, stagger changing times and spend the least possible amount of time in the changing rooms.
7. Changing rooms and showers to remain closed to players and officials during game including half time - access to medical room and toilet facilities only during match
8. Maximise ventilation available in the rooms
9. Ensure washing facilities are available to wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser
10. Use signage to increase awareness of hygiene practices including i.e. Increased frequency of hand washing

Additional considerations:

- Encourage players to turn up changed and ready to play
- Utilise other rooms or temporary space to minimise the amount of players in one space - consider closing space where social distancing may be difficult
- Apply floor markings and mark spaces on benches and showers to encourage social distancing
- Participants should be encouraged to shower at home and be encouraged to only use the changing room showers in inclement weather



SPECTATORS

Following the Welsh Government announcement, spectators are able to return to watch training sessions and matches in both indoor and outdoor settings

Outdoor venues

The number of people able to spectate a training session or match outdoors and whether 2 meter social distancing will still need to be in place will be dependent on the

- nature of the venue and consultation with facility provider, if using private facilities
- risk assessment completed by the club or organization - when confirming the risk assessment, clubs must give due consideration to all pinch points where there may be close contacts and clubs must encourage distancing within these areas of the stadium. For example;
 - When queuing to enter or exit the stadium;
 - When queuing for refreshments;
 - When queuing for sanitary facilities or inside the sanitary facilities;
 - When walking along narrow walkways and paths inside the stadium;
 - When passing other fans who are standing or sitting inside the stadium;
 - Encourage spectators to apply social distancing when choosing their place to watch the match in the stands or terraces.

Indoor venues

The number of spectators permitted to watch training sessions and matches indoors are 200, if standing, or 1000, if seated with 2 meter social distancing a requirement at these venues at all times. A risk assessment must also be completed.

Both indoor and outdoor venues will need to put measures in place to ensure they can capture contact details for all spectators for track, trace and protect service purposes.



SPECTATORS

Playing or training on an enclosed ground or pitch:

If playing or training on an enclosed ground, clubs will need to follow the FAWs Return to Spectating Regulations available [here](#)

Playing or training on a non-enclosed ground or pitch e.g. public park:

- Clubs should consult with their facility provider to determine if the number of spectators permitted at the venue is less than the number permitted by the FAW
- Clubs should consult with their facility provider to determine what level of responsibility the club has in managing spectators at a non-enclosed ground or pitch and this should be agreed by both parties prior to the return of spectators.

Once this has been determined, clubs must

- Complete an updated risk assessment and share this with the facility provider.
- Put measures in place to ensure they can capture contact details for all spectators for track, trace and protect service purposes.
- Ensure that any person(s) present on premises occupied by the Club are reasonably safe by communicating this guidance clearly.
- If required, put measures in place to ensure spectators maintain 2m social distancing from each other and be at least 2m away from the field of play.



TRACK, TRACE AND PROTECT SERVICE

- All clubs are required to support NHS Track, Trace and Protect service by registering the name and contact telephone number of all individuals involved and spectating training sessions and matches
- NHS Track, Trace and Protect service will determine if an individual is required to self-isolate if there has been a positive case amongst a team member, opposition player, coach, official or spectator
- Fully vaccinated adults, under 18s and vaccine trial participants will not need to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus.
- Clubs and individuals should contact Public Health Wales on 119 if they are unsure if they need to self-isolate



CLUB NEXT STEPS

- Club management committees should meet to review the latest Return to Play protocols and supporting guidance related to the return of spectators
- A NEW COVID-19 risk assessment must be completed by all clubs
- If clubs are accessing private facilities, they should consult the facility provider to discuss the return of spectators and share their risk assessment which will be considered alongside providers own risk assessment
- A risk assessment must be completed by the club at each training and fixture venue used by the club
- The risk assessment must be reviewed regularly and kept up to date at all time
- The FAW has developed a risk assessment guide and template for clubs and is available [here](#)

A club risk assessment does not need to be shared with, or approved by FAW

