



THE WALKING
FOOTBALL
ASSOCIATION

Covid-19

Return to play guidelines

**Our latest guidance on returning to play walking football.
Created in consultation with clubs and incorporating the
latest Government advice.**

Version 3 - Aug 2020

Introduction

The long-awaited news regarding the return of Walking Football is clearly welcomed by all.

Many venues have started up with socially distanced Walking Football with bubbles of no more than 6. The feedback we have received has been very positive.

- ▶ Players have felt safe and many have really enjoyed the opportunity to 'train' and develop skills, rather than just play
- ▶ Many have enjoyed the fact that 'no contact' was enforced and they were safe in the knowledge that there would be no tackling from behind
- ▶ All enjoyed a return to the fun and banter
- ▶ Many clubs have not yet started back, as their facility is not yet open
- ▶ It is essential to understand that the guidelines published only relate to outdoor sport - indoor sport is still not permitted
- ▶ Many players have expressed concern that this jump from no contact bubbles of 6 to full contact with up to 30 is too big a jump too soon.
- ▶ We must remember that we are dealing with a more 'vulnerable' age group and, as such, we need to make sure we all take appropriate precautions.

These best practice guidelines have been prepared in consultation with the Government, Sport England, WFA and FIWFA executive teams and a dozen walking football clubs of various size. Clubs / organisers may wish to make modifications with the agreement of their members/ participants.

With thanks to the following football clubs: Birmingham, Mansfield, Leggy Mambos, Chesterfield, Wigan, Bolton, Erpingham, Abbeymead Rovers, Portsmouth, Sheffield, Walton, Wokingham, Stamford.

Stay safe and well

Paul W Carr
Chief Executive

8th August 2020

Disclaimer: This guidance is for general information only and does not constitute legal advice

General guidance

1. Await Government clearance for sport gatherings to resume for inside venues
2. Anyone who has a temperature or other Covid-19 symptoms must not attend and if they do, must be sent home immediately
3. Consider the appointment of a club official to be responsible for all Health & Safety, to include compliance with these guidelines
4. Most Walking Football clubs do not own their own facility. Therefore, it's the responsibility of the individual provider to ensure the facility meets the necessary Government legislation and guidance
5. Social distancing is essential before and after playing – players should not put their bags and drinks all in one place.
6. Footballs and, where needed, ground cones should be regularly sanitized and handling of such equipment should be kept to a minimum.
7. Limit the size of spectator groups based on the Governments latest guidance
8. Activities should be in groups of no more than 30 (including organiser and referee)
9. Clubs / organisers should carry out a risk assessment before resuming sessions

Pre-session guidance

1. Limit players per session. May need to use a booking system and add more sessions.
2. A register needs to be taken for each session for 'track and trace' purposes and players need to declare that they are fit and healthy to take part in the session
3. Should anyone show symptoms after a session they must follow current Government guidelines and self isolate and contact the NHS Track and Trace immediately to inform them of the session they attended and who kept the register.
4. Leave adequate time between sessions to avoid mixing of participants
5. If possible, consider testing staff, players & refs - evidence of recent test to be provided.
6. Consider testing temperatures with infrared forehead thermometer every session on entrance (cost is approx. £50)
7. Hand sanitisers to be available
8. Separate sessions by age, so over 70s are isolated
9. Players to come already changed
10. Balls to be disinfected prior to each session
11. Have players sign a new medical waiver form - no liability and accept terms
12. Consider wearing of protective scarf, bandana or mask
13. Consider advance payment by card or contact payment system to eliminate cash handling
14. Players should sanitise hands before and after playing – gloves are still recommended

During play guidance

1. Apply social distancing during warm-ups as far as possible
2. Ensure game is played strictly as NON-CONTACT
3. No handshakes or hugs or physical goal celebrations
4. Anyone considered to be continuing to cough or splutter asked to leave
5. No sharing of drinks, whistles or pens or anything that could potentially infect others
6. Wear own kit and retain the bib throughout the session. Consider allocating personal bibs
7. All goalkeepers to wear gloves - these must be washed after each session
8. Dedicated first-aiders must wear protective gloves and masks when treating injuries
9. All sessions to be refereed by a non-playing referee
10. Consider using 3 touch rule to control close activity
11. Reduce vociferous interactions during play (shouting as opposed to talking increases the risk of viral infection)
12. No spitting
13. Adapt player groupings as far as possible to keep discreet groups and lower numbers e.g. 5-a-side as opposed to 7-a-side
14. Players need to show self-discipline and respect to other players who might still have concerns about contact – for now, all Walking Football will be within clubs and therefore non-competitive
15. Facemasks are optional, but recommended, and sport specific masks will be available soon from one of our partners Kom Fuel

Post session guidance

1. No social drinks etc after or before sessions
2. All bibs to be washed after each session
3. As far as possible members to be asked to install Govt smart app when available
4. Players should wash their own kit
5. Players to contact NHS Track & Trace post- match if they develop symptoms

New guidance - Aug 2020

1. No competitive matches to be played between clubs or organisations until 1st November 2020
2. No tournaments of any kind to be played until 1st November 2020
3. Recreational and training sessions can be played within the existing guidelines which currently limit the number of participants to 30.