RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOLS

3/5/21

Based on Welsh Government Coronavirus Control Plan first issued 14 December 2020 and last updated March 2021 (available here) and Sport, Recreation and Leisure: guidance for a safe return issued 22 December 2020 (available here)

SUMMARY

- Indoor organized activity can resume for all players from Monday 3rd May 2021
- Further changes to Welsh Government guidance will come into force from 17th May impacting both indoor and outdoor activity
- All indoor and outdoor activity for players that were permitted prior to the national lockdown announced on 19th December 2020 is able to resume
- An U18 player is an individual who has turned 18 during the 20/21 season i.e. Academic Year 13
- There are no travel restrictions in place

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 deem the following training numbers appropriate

Age categories	Indoor sports hall	Half-pitch (min. 45 x 45m)	Full-size pitch (min.90x45m)
Under 18 (Year 13 and under)	1 group of 20	1 group of 35	2 groups of 35
Over 18	1 group of 15	1 group of 15	1 group of 30

- All persons involved must complete a self-assessment for COVID-19 symptoms check prior to every training session.
- This number will need to include players and coaches. First aiders and COVID Officers are exempt.
- 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 (U18)

Under 6 – 12

Matches should follow Small-sided football regulations

Under 13 – 18

Max. 20 players per squad

Volunteer participants

- Up to 3 coaches/first aiders per team
- 1 COVID-19 Officer / Operational Lead per team
- 1 Referee
- League officials

If hiring facilities, clubs and leagues will need to be led by the facility provider on the exact number of people permitted to be involved in a match

MATCHES (OVER 18)

Based on the 30-person limit issued by Welsh Government , the number of people permitted to be involved in a match-day are

- Up to 14 players per home team squad
- Up to 13 players per away team squad
- 1 coach per team = 2 coaches across both teams
- 1 Referee

First aiders, COVID-19 Officers, club secretaries and league officials are exempt.

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. All participants must remain socially distanced during breaks in play with spaced areas for equipment and refreshment storage for each individual including officials and substitutes.
4. Clubs should strictly limit the time spent congregating at a venue before activity begins. **Social and physical distancing measures** must be applied at such times. Meet-up times should reflect this.
5. **No changing rooms should be used** – players should arrive in training or playing kit. Exceptions may be made where safety and safeguarding measures require their use.
6. Only people from one other extended household can travel together in a vehicle.
7. 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.
8. The match must be played 'behind closed doors' unless there are people who absolutely need to attend
9. 2 designated areas should be marked pitch-side – these should be used to house home and away team players and coaches during match-play
10. Water bottles or other refreshment containers, should in no circumstances be shared. Participants will need to bring their own, in a named container.
11. The coach/COVID officer is responsible for disinfecting each ball when it goes out of play. We would encourage 'pass-ins' to replace 'throw-ins' where possible.
12. 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. Toilets capacity should be managed via entry and exit and to allow for the 2m physical distancing to be maintained.
13. All equipment – including goalposts – must be sanitised before and after every fixture. Clubs should follow guidelines on cleaning in a non-healthcare setting here
14. Ground staff are permitted on the pitch before the warm-up and 15 minutes after the conclusion of the match

SPECTATORS

- Welsh Government guidelines state "supporters and other spectators should be limited at this stage **to only those persons who absolutely need to attend**, e.g. parents or guardians of children who require their attendance for health or safeguarding reasons.

- Under the terms of those "who absolutely need to attend", a parent/guardian would be permitted to attend a match or training session
  - in a supervisory capacity if they are concerned about their child being left on their own
  - if there is a medical condition that meant it was advisable for a parent/guardian to be pitch-side to support the club
  - if there is a welfare reason for a parent/guardian to be present pitch-side

- Any person(s) who absolutely needs to attend must "remain physically distanced from each other and from the area of play whilst attending events, including accessing and leaving the venue, use of any facilities (wearing face coverings as appropriate where facilities are indoors) and whilst watching game play."

- Parents/guardians, who do not meet the above criteria, would be permitted to remain within the wider facility area, e.g. club car park or away from the pitch at a public park, after they have dropped their child at the designated drop off area to meet their club coach.

- Any person(s) who remain on Club premises or within the wider facility on a public park should remain in their vehicles where possible and should follow government guidelines at all times.

- Clubs are reminded of the legal duty to ensure that any person(s) present on premises occupied by the Club are reasonably safe by communicating this guidance clearly

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 in 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 or official

- 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 ahead of returning to football activity
- A NEW COVID-19 risk assessment must be completed by all clubs in advance of any resumption of football activity
- If clubs are accessing private facilities, this risk assessment must be shared with facility providers and considered alongside providers own risk assessment
- A risk assessment must be completed by the club at each training and fixtures venue its club teams uses
- 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