



FAW Return to Play Protocol

Alert Level 0 Regulations

August 2021

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Football Association of Wales Return to Play Protocol

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Although serious illness and deaths have greatly reduced as a result of the success of the vaccination programme and the rules introduced to slow the spread of coronavirus in Wales, coronavirus is still with us and still poses a significant risk to public health. We all have a responsibility to help minimise this risk to protect ourselves, our players, our referees, our supporters, our volunteers, our employees, our media and broadcasters and all other stakeholders in the game.
- 1.2 The response to the pandemic in Wales has been a collective effort or working together, and we all have a duty to continue to do so, to help keep the virus under control as we enter this new phase of the pandemic
- 1.3 The purpose of this document is to provide Regulations for all Cymru Leagues and Adran Leagues clubs.
- 1.4 Football Clubs and facility owners have a duty to protect their employees and customers while on their premises. While there are some important steps we must all continue to take to help ourselves and others, three legal requirements remain at Alert Level Zero:
- Businesses, employers and other organisations, including activity and event organisers, must undertake a coronavirus risk assessment of their premises and activities and take reasonable measures to minimise exposure to, and the spread of, coronavirus based on that risk assessment.
 - Everyone must still self-isolate for 10 days if they test positive for COVID-19. If you are a close contact of someone who has tested positive and you are not fully vaccinated you must also self-isolate for 10 days as instructed by the Test Trace Protect system.
 - Adults and children over 12 must wear face-coverings in indoor public places, with the exception of hospitality settings such as restaurants, pubs, cafes or nightclubs.

2. Fundamental Protocols for FAW Regulations

- 2.1 All clubs must have COVID-19 mitigation protocols in place for those attending matches, both at their venue and when their team is away. This is the Coronavirus Risk Assessment.
- 2.2 All personnel with access to the Red Zone on a matchday, must fill out the Medical Questionnaire (Appendix 1) on the day of the Match and prior to entering the Match stadium.
- 2.3 All personnel with access to the Red Zone on a matchday, must have their temperature taken on the day of the Match and prior to entering the Match stadium. Persons returning a temperature of 37.8 or more will not be permitted to enter.

- 2.4 If anyone develops symptoms included in the Medical Questionnaire, they must stay at home and inform the relevant COVID-19 Compliance Officer.
- 2.5 If a person fails to complete the Medical Questionnaire, if a person cannot acknowledge the statements made in such form or if a person shows abnormalities in their temperature checks, the COVID-19 Compliance Officer will be called immediately and access to the stadium should be denied.
- 2.6 The Medical Questionnaire and attendance list must be retained by the Team COVID-19 Compliance Officer and kept for 21 days.

3. Coronavirus Risk Assessment

- 3.1 A Coronavirus Risk Assessment is a legal requirement and must take place for all fixtures.
- 3.2 Existing concepts and arrangements around Match Operations should be reviewed to;
 - to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus on the premises, and
 - to minimise the risk of spread of coronavirus by those who have been on the premises.

4. Hygiene Principles (Including Stadium Deep Clean)

- 4.1 Clubs must follow HSE Guidelines for cleaning your workplace to reduce risk from COVID-19. (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/cleaning/index.htm>)
- 4.2 A pre-match deep clean must take place and be completed no later than one hour before the stadium is open. Any broadcasters equipment must be in place before the start of the disinfection. All cleaned areas must be sealed until Teams & Match Officials arrive.
- 4.3 It is recommended that host Clubs ensure that specific areas and equipment that come into frequent contact with individuals are thoroughly cleaned in accordance with the advice offered in the HSE Guidelines for cleaning your workplace to reduce risk from COVID-19 (link above).

Some of these will include but are not restricted to:

- Doorknobs, Door Bars Chairs, Tables, Armrests, Light Switches, Handrails
 - Toilet Flush Mechanisms, Water Taps
 - Medical Treatment Beds & Surfaces
 - Office Equipment
 - Dressing Rooms
 - Team Benches and warm-up equipment (cones, poles, mannequins)
 - Goalposts
 - Media Areas
- 4.4 Adequate supplies of hand sanitisers must be supplied and be well positioned throughout the match venue.
 - 4.5 Everybody should practice good coughing and sneezing etiquette. Spitting and handshakes are not permitted.

4.6 Players should only consume liquids and food from their own labelled supplies

4.7 Hand sanitiser must be used before and after warm-ups, during half-time after the match and where possible, during breaks in play.

5. Staff

5.1 COVID-19 Compliance Officer

- Each team must appoint a COVID-19 Compliance Officer;
- The home team COVID-19 Compliance Officer will support & assist the Protocol Compliance Officer during the planning phases of the fixtures;
- The visiting team's COVID-19 Compliance Officer should travel with the visiting team to the match venue and should be in regular communication with the home club's COVID-19 Compliance Officer;
- All COVID-19 Compliance Officers should work closely with their own club medical staff.
- All Club staff and volunteers should receive training on Match Operations in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic;
- The COVID-19 Compliance Officer Roles & Responsibilities document will be circulated to all clubs.

5.2 Protocol Compliance Officer

- Each team must appoint a Protocol Compliance Officer (PCO).
- The PCO is responsible for ensuring the travel, accommodation and general hygiene measures are respected at all times.
- The PCO must travel with the team and must ensure contracts with bus companies and hotels include best practice guidelines and that the measures of the RTP Protocol are strictly implemented.
- The PCO of each club is responsible for the accreditation process and medical compliance of their own Club.

5.3 All match attendees, especially club staff and volunteers, must be familiar with all FAW and HSE COVID-19 protocols.

6. Match Operations – Safety and Security

6.1 In order to ensure a safe environment and to protect all stakeholders, it is recommended that all Safety and Security staff complete The Questionnaire on Matchday.

6.2 The safety and security staff are responsible for ensuring a safe and controlled entry procedure for all personnel with Red Zone Access at the point of the temperature testing (including the team and official arrivals in accordance with 8.1)

6.3 The safety and security staff are responsible for ensuring compliance with the accreditation procedure.

6.4 The safety and security staff are responsible for protecting the transit points between the stadium zones.

7. Match Operations – Stadium Zoning

- 7.1 A zoning system will be implemented in order to prevent any uncontrolled or indirect contact with the teams.
- 7.2 The zones will be implemented as follows;
- **Red Zone** - the pitch, tunnel area, technical areas, changing rooms and any other area that will be accessed by Players and Football Staff on a matchday, including the Host Broadcast flash interview position. Only those who have completed The Medical Questionnaire and have been issued with a Red Zone Accreditation pass for the match, will be allowed to enter the Red Zone. It is recommended that no more than 80 people are allowed to be in the Red Zone at any one time. (See Appendix 3).
 - **Amber Zone** – all areas within the Stadium that are not included in the Red Zone, including the post-match interview positions for non-rights holders and the Host Broadcaster Compound.
- 7.3 In principle, individuals should not cross Zones. However, those in the Red Zone may enter the Amber Zone, but they must remain there for the duration of the match (plus 30 minutes as per 7.5).
- 7.4 An exception to 7.3 are the ball retrievers who should be based in the Amber Zone, but may need to return balls to their locations in the Red Zone (see 18.2). All caution should be taken when performing this duty to avoid contact between Red and Amber Zone personnel.
- 7.5 The stadium zoning system concludes 30 (thirty) minutes after the actual full-time whistle.
- 7.6 Clubs may establish a fluid zoning system, which allows transit between Zones at times when there can be no crossover between players and officials and Amber Zone personnel. This must be recorded within the Risk Assessment and approved by the FAW in conjunction with the host Club.
- 7.7 To highlight the sensitivity of the Red Zone, it is recommended to implement a very clear visual floor-level demarcation at all potential points of access to the Red Zone to indicate the start of the Red Zone at each point.

8. Match Operations – Team and Officials arrival/departure procedures

- 8.1 The arrival of each team and the match officials should be staggered to avoid mixing and crowding at the entry points and in the corridors to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus. This should be controlled on matchday by the home security.
- 8.2 Teams and Match Officials should leave the dressing rooms as soon as possible after the match and the completion of any media obligations.

9. Match Operations – Communications, Media and Broadcasters

- 9.1 The media interview area must be located outdoors and near a transit point between the Red and Amber Zone.
- 9.2 Photographers must be strategically placed in the amber zone, on pitch level but not pitch side of the perimeter fence – maintaining Social Distancing at all times.
- 9.3 All areas of the stadium, used by the Host Broadcaster should be deep cleaned and disinfected by the host Club.
- 9.4 All equipment (cameras, trucks, trollies, cables, etc.) should be deep cleaned by the Host Broadcaster.

10. Match Operations – Countdown to Kick-Off

- 10.1 It is best practice, that a pre-match countdown to kick-off is produced and displayed in all dressing rooms to ensure minimal contact between players and match officials.
- 10.2 Teams will not line up together in the tunnel as usual before the opening ceremony to avoid congestion in the tunnel area. Teams will also exit the dressing room directly to the pitch one team at a time for the on-field pre-match line-up, in the following order;
 - 1st Out – Match Officials
 - 2nd Out – Home Team
 - 3rd Out – Away Team
- 10.3 Players and referees should maintain at least 1m distance between each person during the line-up ceremony.
- 10.4 No additional activities may be organised (e.g. player escorts, flag-bearers, mascots, dancers, musicians, etc.), nor will there be any handshakes between teams or with the referees.
- 10.5 The coin toss will still take place after the line-up ceremony with the two captains and the referee only, while still maintaining a 1m distance.
- 10.6 At half-time and second half the teams should again avoid congregating in the tunnel and must instead exit directly to the pitch according to the timings indicated in the match countdown.

11. Match Operations – VIPs and Hospitality

- 11.1 Clubs must ensure that any VIP and Hospitality provision complies with Welsh Government Regulations for the hospitality sector.

12. Match Operations – Players Indoor and Outdoor Technical Areas

- 12.1 Changing Rooms and all equipment within the changing rooms must be deep cleaned before and after every fixture.
- 12.2 Clubs must ensure the Coronavirus Risk Assessment carefully considers the changing room environment and mitigations are put in place to minimise the risk of exposure and spread of coronavirus. Such mitigations may include; maintaining physical distance, wearing face-

coverings, using the changing rooms in small groups, exiting the changing room as soon as the player is changed.

- 12.3 Clubs must ensure the Coronavirus Risk Assessment carefully considers the changing room environment and mitigations are put in place to minimise the risk of exposure and spread of coronavirus. Such mitigations may include; maintaining physical distance or wearing face-coverings
- 12.4 Home Clubs must provide the Away Clubs with a solution to socially distance in the Technical Area if requested, with additional seating provided.

13. Match Equipment

- 13.1 All footballs used in the warm-ups and the match must be cleaned and disinfected before the match and at half-time.
- 13.2 All players should have their own accessories throughout the whole of match-day including identifiable water bottles, tape and bandages.

14. Travel

- 14.1 All players, match officials and staff should travel to games in line with Welsh Government and HSE Guidelines and the Coronavirus Risk Assessment must carefully consider what mitigations are put in place to minimise the risk of exposure and spread of coronavirus.
- 14.2 All buses should be disinfected before and after teams embark and disembark.
- 14.3 Both home and away clubs and match officials must consider scenarios for alternate transport arrangements e.g. if a player or staff member is injured or unwell.

15. Medical Staff

- 15.1 The Physio must wear a facemask and gloves when treating a Player or Match Official.
- 15.2 Physiotherapists or Team Doctors must wear PPE for prolonged treatment sessions. These sessions must last no longer than 15 minutes

16. Match Operations – Match Officials

- 16.1 The coordination of pre-match protocols (i.e. kit and equipment check, stud check, coin toss, Countdown to Kick-Off) should be discussed and agreed with the Match Officials and the Clubs upon arrival at the stadium in an outdoor setting.
- 16.2 All match officials should have their own accessories throughout the whole of match-day (i.e. Water Bottles, Tape, Bandages, Red & Yellow Cards, Head-set earplugs.)
- 16.3 The match referee must disinfect the communication kits before arrival at the stadium and once again, in the dressing room, before handing the individual sets to colleagues.
- 16.4 The match referee must disinfect the referee spray and holders before arrival at the stadium and once again, in the dressing room, before handing the individual sets to colleagues.

16.5 When appointed, the FAW Referee Observer must adhere to the COVID-19 protocols. A seat will be provided in accordance with COVID-19 protocols.

17. Contact Tracing (Track and Trace)

17.1 Contact Tracing is a key component to all activities around the game and the Protocol Compliance Officer must keep a register of **ALL** personnel in the stadium on match-day for a 21-day period.

17.2 The details of all persons must include the name, arrival date and contact details.

17.3 The information must be destroyed after 21 days.

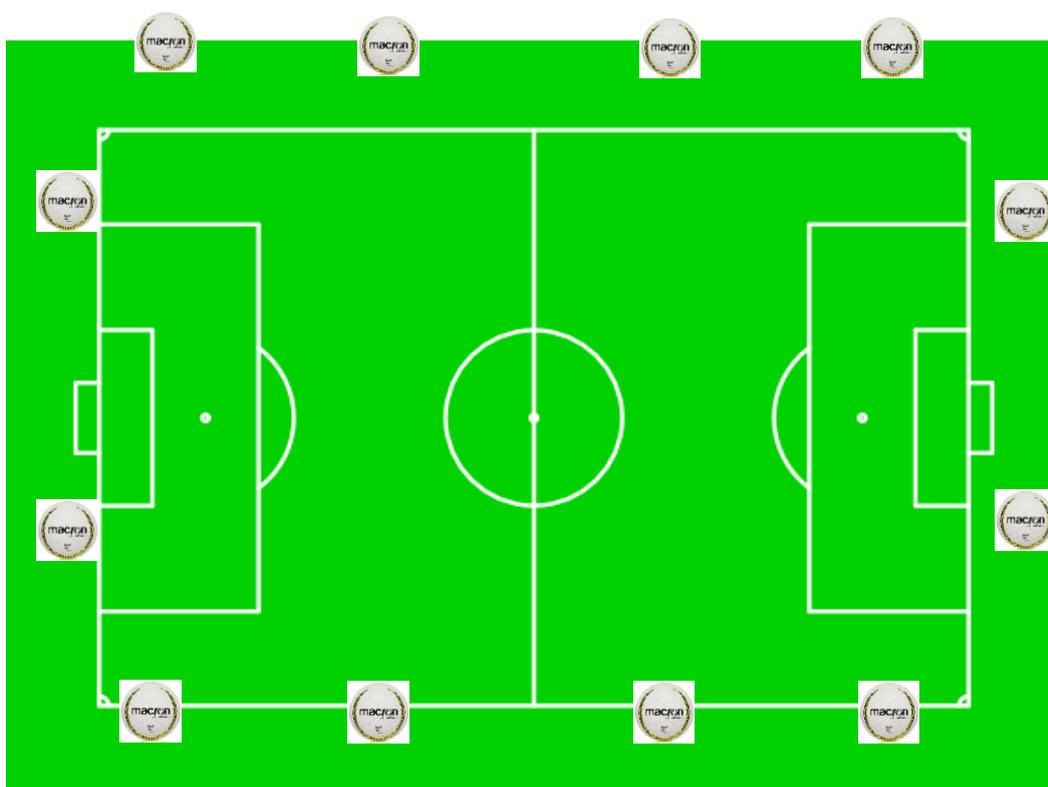
18. Ball Retrievers

18.1 Ball retrievers must be over 16 and abide by COVID-19 protocols. During the match, they must be located in each stand or terraced area and must replace the ball on the pitch perimeter when used. The ball retrievers must wear gloves at all times.

18.2 Ball retrievers should be based in the Amber Zone, but may need to return balls to their locations in the Red Zone. All caution should be taken when performing this duty to avoid contact between Red and Amber Zone personnel.

18.3 A Ball Retriever is responsible for retrieving used match balls, disinfecting the match ball and placing it on a cone. The cone should be placed two metres from the touchline if space permits.

18.4 All spare balls must be placed around the pitch perimeter on the cones during the match. They must be placed in accordance with the following diagram;



Appendix 1 – Medical Questionnaire

1. Have you tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 28 days?
2. Have you been or are you currently a contact of a COVID-19 case or a suspected case?
3. Are you currently self-isolating?
4. Are you feeling well today?
5. Do you have a cough, throat pain, muscle pain, unusual weakness, short of breath, chest pain, any palpitations (abnormal heart rate), diarrhoea, conjunctivitis, a loss of taste or smell or any other signs or symptoms of COVID-19 that you think we should be aware of?

Please refer to HSE guidelines (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/index.htm>) on how you should proceed if you answer YES or Poorly to the above questions.

If you are in any doubt DO NOT attend for the fixture without clearance from your club

Appendix 2 – Scope of the Return to Play Protocol

This protocol is applicable when participating in all FAW Official Matches and Open Friendly matches for the Member clubs of the following Leagues;

- Cymru Premier League
- Welsh Premier Women's League
- Cymru North
- Cymru South

Appendix 3 – Example of Red Zone Personnel (80)

Stakeholder	Number
Home Team Players & Staff (as listed on teamsheet)	24
Away Team Players & Staff (as listed on teamsheet)	24
Home Team additional staff or unused players	4
Away Team additional staff or unused players	4
Home Team PCO	1
Away Team PCO	1
Referees	4
Referee Observer	1
FAW officials	3
Broadcasters	4
Ball retrievers (min. 4), Security (min 4), Grounds people	10
TOTAL	80