

RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOLS

16/11/20

Based on Welsh Government guidelines issued on 12th November 2020 and available [here](#)



VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANTS

Welsh Government guidelines state that “ *coaches and match officials would generally be regarded as participants so the limit of 30 or 15 should include them. However, anybody who is there to organise or support the activity, if they are working or providing a voluntary service, can also attend and do not need to be considered within the limit of 30 or 15.*”

Based on WG guidance, the following individuals will be included within the 30-person limit

- Coaches
- Match officials

Based on WG guidance, the following individuals will be exempt from the 30-person limit

- First aiders
- COVID Officers
- AA/league officials
- Club secretary

If a coach is also the first aider, they would still need to be included within the 30-person limit.

These positions will be constantly reviewed in line with government guidance.



TRAINING

- Updated Welsh Government guidelines state that “*the number of children aged under 18 who can legally participate is constrained only by the boundaries of the setting and the need for sufficient adults to be present to supervise.*”
- Clubs and leagues will need to be led by the facility provider on the number of people under the age of 18 permitted to train at an indoor or outdoor venue
- We would deem the following training numbers appropriate

Age categories	Indoor sports hall	Half-pitch (min. 45 x 45m)	Full-size pitch (min.90x45m)
U18 (17 and under)	1 group of 20	1 group of 35	2 groups of 35
18+ (18 and over)	1 group of 15	1 group of 15	1 group of 30

- 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 (U6 – U11)

Match formats and numbers of people permitted to be involved

Under 6 & 7 – 4v4

8 players per squad = 16 players across both teams

Up to 6 matches can be played at a central venue*

Under 8 & 9 – 5v5

10 players per squad = 20 players across both teams

Up to 4 matches can be played at a central venue*

Under 10 & 11 – 28-30 persons

14 players per squad = 28 players across both teams

Up to 2 matches can be played at a central venue*

*Based on a 90x45m full-size pitch

A TEAM IS ONLY ABLE TO PLAY A MATCH AGAINST 1 OTHER TEAM PER MATCH-DAY



MATCHES (U12 – 18)

Competitions for players at these age groups are now able to return

Despite government guidelines easing restrictions on activity for u18 players (17 and under), **ONLY** the following personnel should be involved in a match-day

- 16-20 players per team squad*
- Up to 3 coaches/first aiders per team
- 1 COVID-19 Officer / Operational Lead per team
- 1 Referee

*Exact squad numbers will be determined by competition rules

League officials and spectators who are required for health/safeguarding reasons can also be present



MATCHES (PLAYERS 18 AND OVER)

FRIENDLY MATCHES WILL CONTINUE TO BE IN PLACE

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

- 14 players per home team squad
- 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.

These personnel, with the exception of the qualified first aider, should not be permitted inside the pitch perimeter area and must always be segregated from the main group of 30.

Players 17 and under playing in a senior match would still need to be included within the 30-person limit



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. Coaching staff and substitutes, must, for example, spread out and avoid sharing a dug out or bench if social distancing cannot be observed.
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. This includes arriving changed and ready to begin the warm-up, if possible, to minimise time spent waiting.
5. Only people from one other extended household can travel together in a vehicle.
6. No-one should leave home to participate in the match if they, or someone they live with, is symptomatic - or suspects they may have been exposed to the virus.
7. The match must be played 'behind closed doors' and spectators are not permitted unless there is a valid health or safeguarding reason for them to be present
8. 2 designated areas should be marked pitch-side at least 2m away – these should be used to house home and away team players and coaches during match-play
9. Water bottles or other refreshment containers, should in no circumstances be shared. Participants will need to bring their own, in a named container.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. All equipment – including goalposts – must be sanitised before and after every fixture. Clubs should follow guidelines on cleaning in a non-healthcare setting here
13. 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 *“any adults that may be present during these activities but are not directly participating in or facilitating the activities, should not stay in the area where the activity is taking place. Supporters and spectators of organised activities should be limited to only those who absolutely need to attend, for example, parents or guardians of children who require their attendance for health or safeguarding reasons.”*
- Parents/guardians would be able to view a match from the sidelines
 - if they are concerned about their child being left on their own, particularly if they are a young child or new to a team or club
 - 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
- While parents cannot be present pitch-side, they can 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.
- The issue of spectators should be included within any risk assessment to ask spectators to be respectful of the guidelines.
- It is up to any spectators present at the facility to act responsibly to maintain social distancing.



TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- The removal of local lockdown restrictions will ensure that no travel restrictions will be placed on players of any age residing within Wales participating in training or matches
- Volunteers residing in Wales that are facilitating football opportunities will also be able to travel to continue with their respective volunteer roles
- Players and volunteers residing in England are unable to travel to Wales to continue their involvement as this would not constitute a 'reasonable excuse'

Whilst local travel restrictions have been removed, friendly matches should still be organised either against teams within the same league or within the same local authority.



NEXT STEPS

- Club management committee should meet to discuss latest protocols
- Clubs should update risk assessments to reflect amended protocols
- Clubs should contact facility provider, if applicable, to discuss training numbers and share updated risk assessment
- Junior leagues will require time to plan a season structure and fixture list before competition can return

