



# **BRITISH**

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## **AMERICAN FOOTBALL**

### **COVID-19 RETURN TO PLAY ACTION PLAN**

#### **STAGE 4 COMMUNITY CLUB GUIDANCE FOR WALES**

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**Updated: 1 December 2020**

These guidelines have been produced in line with the Welsh Government's [sport, recreation and leisure: guidance for a phased return](#) framework and have now been updated to move to stage 4 of BAFA's return to play roadmap.

While stage 4 provides us with new opportunities to increase American football activity, we must be cautious in our approach to ensure the safety of our members.

**Please also be aware that guidance can change, and restrictions may be reintroduced at short notice. Where a locality or region is subject to localised restrictions, guidance in this document may not apply. You can find about any local restrictions in place on the [Welsh Government's Covid-19 website](#).**

Our guidance will be updated and reissued as we progress through our road map and to reflect any relevant changes to public health guidance or advice from the Welsh Government or the UK Government's Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Make sure you read this guidance carefully and fully understand the requirements in place to meet with the varying restrictions outlined by your relevant home nation government.

If you have any questions relating to this document, or the guidance contained within, please contact [covid-19@britishamericanfootball.org](mailto:covid-19@britishamericanfootball.org) in the first instance.

## **BAFA's return to play road map**

Read BAFA's six stage [return to play road map](#) for more information.

## GENERAL GUIDANCE

1. Clubs are only allowed to return to the activity detailed in each stage of our route map when advised they may do so by BAFA.
2. Club management should ensure all appropriate management processes are in place so that they can effectively oversee and maintain the implementation of the measures outlined in this document.
3. It is expected that clubs will draw up their own detailed practice protocols, however the Covid-19 adapted behaviours outlined in this document should be common to all clubs.
4. All clubs need to conduct a risk assessment of their facilities, operating procedures and planned activities prior to returning to American football activity. They should have appropriate measures in place to provide a safe environment for players, volunteers and other relevant individuals. These measures should be aligned with BAFA and Government guidance. The aim is to introduce suitable control measures to reduce the risk of contracting the virus to as low a level as is 'reasonably practicable'. A BAFA risk assessment template is available [here](#).
5. Clubs must also make sure they have an Emergency Action Plan for reacting to incidents. An example template is available [here](#).
6. American Football activity is allowed in groups of up to 30 people outdoors or 15 people indoors. Simultaneous gatherings of groups and individuals are also allowed, both indoors and outdoors, where there is sufficient space to do so safely and independently.
7. Clubs should strictly limit the time spent congregating at a venue before activity begins. Meet-up times should reflect this – arrival no more than five minutes before the start time of a session is recommended. This includes arriving changed and ready to begin the warmup, if possible, to minimise time spent waiting or in holding areas.
8. No spectating should take place other than where a parent / guardian is supervising a child or vulnerable adult. All spectators that are not part of a household, or extended household, are to remain socially and physically distanced from each other and from the area of play whilst attending events, including accessing and leaving the venue, use of any facilities and whilst watching game play. Anyone on the area of play, or closer to it than social distancing rules would permit, will count towards the total number of people considered to be gathered for the organised outdoor activity, where a limit of no more than 30 persons applies.
9. Use of changing rooms and showering facilities should be avoided where possible, Players should arrive changed and shower at home afterwards. Use of changing and

shower facilities must follow [government advice on the use of indoor facilities](#) where available.

10. BAFA clubs should adhere to the government managed social distancing guidelines in force at the time, before and after any activity, and during breaks.
11. Participants to be encouraged to follow best practice for [travel](#) including minimising use of public transport (but complying with the [mandatory use of face coverings](#) where public transport is necessary) and limiting car sharing. Walk or cycle if you can. People from one household and extended household can travel together in a vehicle.
12. Participants should be discouraged from socialising after practice or games and reminded that they must adhere to current government guidance on social mixing.

## **FACILITY GUIDANCE**

13. We know that our member clubs are reliant on third party owned or managed facilities. Adherence to the following guidelines should worked out collaboratively between club and facility. Clubs should request information from their facility provider on venue operations plans, risk assessments and any special requirements relating to Covid-19 to help inform their planning and understand requirements around the following:

- Entry exit and parking arrangements in place at venues to ensure social distancing can be maintained.
- Traffic flow systems and signage at entry and exit points, to ensure that people maintain social distancing rules.
- Socially distanced areas for teams, officials, and spectators.
- Hygiene provisions in place.

More information of the key principles of facility usage can be found [here](#).

If not already in place, clubs are also encouraged to request their facility provider create and display a [QR code for their venue](#). This will enable visitors to scan the QR code when they arrive, using the NHS Covid-19 app, and help trace and stop the spread of the virus.

## **CLUB COVID-19 OFFICER / COVID-19 TEAM LEADS**

14. Each club should appoint a Club Covid-19 Officer to help assist in ensuring that the club has taken the appropriate measures to resume activity. The club ultimately has the responsibility to ensure that there are risk assessments in place for the club and the activity that is taking place, however, to assist in the implementation of these a Covid-19 Officer should be introduced to ease the burden and be a lead in this area.
15. As we appreciate many of our clubs comprise multiple teams operating across different third party provided facilities, and running to different timings, we know that having a single club Covid-19 Officer may be impractical. In these instances, we request that each team within the club has a designated Covid-19 Team Lead, reporting to an overall Club

Covid-19 Officer.

16. Club management shall ensure that the appointed persons will receive all necessary support to undertake their roles.

17. The Club Covid-19 Officer and any Covid-19 Team Leads should not put themselves at risk whilst carrying out the role. Duties of these role should include:

- Completing documented risk assessments and ensuring all appropriate mitigations are put in place by the club before any outdoor activity is undertaken.
- Being aware of and understanding government and BAFA guidelines, communicating these with relevant club volunteers and monitoring that these are strictly adhered to especially in terms of the 2m social distancing rules and the practice activity undertaken by the club. (This is subject to change)
- Ensuring that players have completed a Return to Play health questionnaires for each practice session and game or tournament and ensure the club keeps records of these as they may be requested by BAFA. (Covid-19 Team Leads should share these with the Club Covid-19 Officer on a weekly basis for their team).
- Keeping a record of attendees practicing or attending games or tournaments within the club. (Covid-19 Team Leads should share this with the Club Covid-19 Officer on a weekly basis for their team).
- Ensure all records must be kept for 21 days and used in accordance with GDPR legislation. More information is available from the Welsh government on [Test, Trace, Protect](#) and [keeping records](#). Clubs should decide how these records will be kept and stored, for example paper or using online format e.g. Google Docs.
- Providing safety information and protocols to all players, coaching personnel and parent/guardians prior to the resumption of club activities.
- Ensuring relevant club volunteers are aware of the need to regularly clean and sanitise all equipment after each session (e.g. balls, flags).
- Making necessary representations to club management about any Covid-19 concerns. (Covid-19 Team Leads should raise any issues with the Covid-19 Officer to share first).
- Reporting any areas of non-compliance immediately to club management and ensuring that these are addressed. (Covid-19 Team Leads should raise any issues with the Covid-19 Officer to report first).
- In the case of players or coaching personnel experiencing or displaying COVID-19 symptoms the Club Covid-19 Officer should inform club management if there is a confirmed case or if they have been made aware of an individual with COVID-19 symptoms. (Covid-19 team leads should advise the Covid-19 Officer first)
- If there is a confirmed case ensuring that Test, Trace, Protect protocols are followed
- In the event that a club is alerted to a confirmed positive case of Covid-19, either by the individual or by Test, Trace, Protect, informing BAFA by emailing [Covid-19@britishamericanfootball.org](mailto:Covid-19@britishamericanfootball.org)

18. BAFA recommends that the Club Covid-19 Officer and any Covid-19 Team Leads undertake the [Covid-19 Awareness Course for the Sports and Recreation Sector](#), including the bolt-on module for sports clubs, provided by the Welsh Sports Association. Please note, a small charge applies for these courses.

## TEST, TRACE, PROTECT

19. [Test, Trace, Protect](#) is the Welsh Government's strategy to enhance health surveillance in the community, undertake effective and extensive contact tracing, and support people to self-isolate where required to do so.
- The gathering of contact information from anyone attending American football activity in a secure and safe manner, will assist the Test, Trace, Protect to identify any clusters of cases, contact those who may have been exposed to the virus, and request them to take appropriate steps to prevent potential onward spread.
  - In order to support Test, Trace, Protect, Club Covid-19 officers for BAFA affiliated clubs are required to keep a record of the name, contact number, date of activity session and timings for all those attending organised American football activities within the club. (Covid-19 Team Leads should share this with the Club Covid-19 Officer on a weekly basis for their team).
  - Ensure all records must be kept for 21 days and used in accordance with GDPR legislation. More information is available from the Welsh government on [Test, Trace, Protect](#) and [keeping records](#). Clubs should decide how these records will be kept and stored, for example paper or using online format e.g. Google Docs.
20. GoMembership! Is BAFA's member registration system. Accurate player, coach and support staff data including full name, email address and phone number is collected upon registration and is available to designated club administrators to help enable detailed Test, Trace, Protect record keeping.
21. Only members registered in the BAFA GoMembership! System are eligible to participate in sanctioned American football activity. The only exception to this is new club members – who may undertake three trial sessions as long as their details are captured as per BAFA's existing three-trial session process. New members MUST be registered after their third trial session.
22. Clubs will be regularly spot-checked by BAFA to make sure this information is accurately captured and will have strict sanctions failing to produce records or ensure members are registered.
23. Through these measures, an accurate and effective database will be available if required for Test, Trace, Protect purposes.
24. Should a suspected Covid-19 case occur in the training or play environment, or an

individual be identified as a contact of a known case, the individual/s in question should be immediately isolated at the training venue and required to return home to self-isolate and follow the Welsh Government's [self-isolation guidelines](#), and apply for a [Coronavirus test](#). The designated Covid-19 officer for the club, facility or NGB responsible for the training or play activity at which the known or suspected case occurred should be immediately informed if they have not been involved with identifying and isolating the case at the training venue.

## PRE-SCREENING

25. All players, officials, volunteers and spectators must undergo a pre-practice health questionnaire for any Covid-19 symptoms prior to attending practice or games. No-one should leave home to participate in sport if they, or someone they live with, is [symptomatic](#), has been tested positive for the virus - or suspects they may have been exposed to the virus. They should immediately [self-isolate](#) (as well as their household and extended household), [follow the Welsh Government's self-isolation guidelines, and apply for a Coronavirus test](#)
26. As part of this pre-practice health questionnaire participants will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood the risks associated with playing American football and the transmission of Covid-19. This should be completed by a parent or guardian for members under 18. A template form is available [here](#). They should also be strongly advised to follow Welsh Government advice on how to [protect yourself and others from coronavirus](#) outside the sports setting, to reduce the risk to their fellow participants when they do attend.
27. Consideration of athlete and support staff well-being will be paramount – there should be a clear and non-punitive opt-in/opt-out option for activity
28. Clubs may create and use an equivalent electronic form – ie Google forms - to capture this information instead if appropriate but must have access to view and validate the information ahead of activity taking place.
29. Activity organisers should ensure, upon arrival, that participants have completed the pre-practice health questionnaire for any Covid-19 symptoms. 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 and to [follow the Welsh Government's self-isolation guidelines, and apply for a Coronavirus test](#)
30. Players or staff who had previously been ['shielding'](#) on medical grounds should continue to follow Welsh Government advice. This permits them to leave home for any reason, including exercise, but they should closely follow the [social distancing](#) rules. These individuals can therefore return to organised training or play as long as they are satisfied the training venues are Covid-19 secure and all reasonable measures are put in place to protect them and limit any risk of them contracting Covid-19.

## PHYSICAL DISTANCING

31. Normal physical distancing and household number guidelines apply before (including warm ups), after any activity takes place or when taking breaks.
32. Non-contact practice activities should in the main follow social distancing rules of 2m wherever possible. However, larger groups of up to 30 participants may breach social distancing guidelines for the narrow circumstances of non-contact only practice and play activity if following the appropriate mitigation measures detailed within our guidance. These circumstances include, for example, playing a game of flag football at the end of a practice session where any instances of face-to-face contact would be fleeting in nature.
33. No formal presentation ceremonies should take place during or after an activity and the focus should be on reducing numbers in attendance at any one time.
34. Coaches and others supporting organised activity should attempt to keep physically distant where possible, but it is recognised that this will not always be possible. In such circumstances the responsible Club Covid-19 Office should consider appropriate mitigating actions as part of their risk assessment. Coaching staff and substitutes, should, for example, spread out along the sideline during any games and avoid sharing a bench if social distancing cannot be observed.

## FIRST AID, HEALTH AND HYGIENE

35. Injuries during practice and play should still be treated as participant wellbeing is utmost. The best way to protect yourself and others is through rigorous cleaning, personal hygiene and regular hand hygiene. An increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces and equipment, using standard household cleaning and disinfection products, is recommended. [Face coverings](#) are also advisable when undertaking treatment.
36. After contact with an injured participant, clean your hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser at the earliest opportunity. This advice is applicable to all situations, regardless of whether there was close contact or the minimum social distancing was maintained. Avoid touching your mouth, eyes and nose.
37. Physios or their equivalent, should keep a record of each participant they have come into contact with for Test, Trace, Protect purposes.
38. If you are not wearing face coverings and need to sneeze or cough, do so into a tissue or upper sleeve. Dispose of your tissue into an appropriate bin supplied at the venue or place in a plastic bag and take home. Wash your hands afterwards for 20 seconds.



39. Avoid touching your face and ensure to clean your hands with at least 60% alcohol gel when you finish participating.

## **SAFEGUARDING**

40. The lockdown period will have affected children in many ways. While most will have had a positive time with family, others may have had negative experiences and could be at increased risk. Please continue to follow the process outlined in your club Safeguarding Policy and report any concerns to BAFA by contacting our safeguarding team at [safeguarding@britishamericanfootball.org](mailto:safeguarding@britishamericanfootball.org)

41. There will be no alteration to the standards we had in place pre-Covid 19, therefore DBS checks will still need to be in place for designated roles, including coaches, and for any new recruits to roles, prior to any activity resuming with children and youth teams.

42. Coaches and those working with children should familiarise themselves with the Covid-19 resources for supporting young people developed by the [NSPCC](#). You can also find useful resources from the [Children's Commissioner of Wales](#) and [Children in Wales](#).

## **EQUIPMENT**

43. Clubs should carry out the following to make sure all [equipment is regularly sanitised](#):

- Balls should be sanitised at the start of activity, during natural stoppages and at the conclusion activity as a minimum. If there is no natural stoppage this should be done after every 15 minutes.
- Each player should have their own set of flags which they will keep for the duration of the practice or game. Flags and belts should be sanitised at regular intervals during activity, and at the conclusion of practices or games by either the individual, coach, team manager or Club Covid-19 Officer or Covid-19 Team Lead. During games, players should sub-out if equipment sanitisation is required.
- Each pitch area should have antibacterial wet wipes or spray available to enable this.
- At the end of each practice or game, the Covid-19 Officer or Covid-19 Team Lead should ensure any other equipment which has been handled (such as cones) is sanitised.

33. Cones should be put out and collected by the same person on each pitch - preferably by a coach.

34. Participants should be encouraged to bring their own hand sanitiser to practices and games and use it at regular intervals in activity.

44. Participants should bring their own clearly labelled water bottles to practice and not share it under any circumstances. No communal water buckets or bottles are to be used.
45. Participants must not share towels, toiletry products, clothing such as practice jerseys or bibs, water bottles, boots, gloves, mouth guards, or disposables such as tape or ice packs.
46. As the virus is transmitted from respiratory secretions, mouthguard etiquette is very important. Players should refrain from touching or removing their mouthguard, and if they do so must sanitise their hands. Mouthguards must not be left on shared surfaces or public places but be placed in a personal container and stored with personal possessions.

## AMERICAN FOOTBALL ACTIVITY GUIDANCE

47. No traditional American Football contact activities (e.g. tackle or blocking practices, including the use of tackle bags or blocking shields that have to be held) are permitted at this time. The only exception to this is drills which use free-standing training aids – such as free-standing tackle dummies – which may be used in conjunction with strict equipment sanitising protocols.
48. Inter-club locally organised non-contact friendly games are now permitted, as long as the following guidance is strictly adhered to:
  - A separate risk assessment must be completed for each planned game.
  - When planning games, clubs must keep themselves up to date on any enhanced lockdown restrictions that may impact on the host team or travelling team, particularly related to travel, and be aware that the guidance in place may change at short notice. To find out where local restrictions are in place, and what these restrictions are, [refer to the local restrictions page on the government's website](#) which is being kept constantly updated. This details local lockdowns in England, but also links to local lockdown information for Scotland and Wales.
  - **Teams and individual players must not travel outside of Wales to participate in a game at this time.**
  - Participant numbers for friendly games should be kept to a minimum at all times. The total number of participants from across both teams taking part in a game and present on the playing and side-line areas should not exceed 30 – this includes coaches and those acting as game officials.
  - No spectators are allowed – other than where a parent / guardian is supervising a child or vulnerable adult. In all cases physical distancing guidelines should always be followed and those individuals should spectate from outside the designated playing and side-line areas.
  - When not in active game play, participants must socially distance along the side-line area. Side-line areas may extend the full length of the pitch to enable this.
  - The host club should clearly communicate any Covid-19 related venue requirements –

for example, one-way systems, designated entry points, availability of toilet facilities onsite – to the visiting team ahead of the game taking place.

- Staggered arrival and departure times and designated pitch entry points for each team are highly recommended to minimise any risks.
- Before the start of any game, the Club Covid-19 officer should hold a short, socially distanced, briefing with the head coaches for each team, and any individuals acting as game officials, reminding them of their responsibilities aligned to BAFA's return to play guidance.
- Individuals acting as game officials should observe BAFA's return to play guidance in the same way as participants are required to. Game officials must remain socially distanced from players wherever possible.
- Inter-club locally organised non-contact friendly game activity between two teams does not require BAFA sanction – however any plans for game activity involving multiple teams and games on the same day, such as a tournament, must be sanctioned by BAFA before taking place. To request sanction, please contact [covid-19@britishamericanfootball.org](mailto:covid-19@britishamericanfootball.org) detailing your plans, venue, the teams involved and attaching a copy of your risk assessment for the event. Please give at least 14 days' notice for approval.

We appreciate organising friendly games may not always be straight forward, and there are some BAFA teams who are geographically isolated and their nearest opponents may be some distance away. Although frustrating, we would advise teams in these circumstances to exercise extreme caution in planning friendly games and if in doubt, to contact [covid-19@britishamericanfootball.org](mailto:covid-19@britishamericanfootball.org) for guidance.

49. Maximum non-contact practice or play groups of 15 individuals can take place per 1/4 pitch or 30 individuals per 1/2 pitch – this is based on either a full-sized rugby pitch or 11s soccer pitch. The maximum number includes coaches and any individuals acting in the capacity of game officials.

Two groups of maximum 30 participants may practice or play on one full sized pitch. However, they must remain wholly separate throughout the activity and must be separated by a 2m 'safe zone'. Staggered start and finish times and designated pitch entry points for each group are highly recommended to minimise any risks.

- Should other spaces be used for practice – for example – a 7-a-side soccer pitch or other area that is a third of a larger pitch or similar, coaches and the Club Covid-19 Officer should use the above numbers as a guide and exercise their judgement while being very careful to not exceed the maximum numbers detailed. This should also be recorded and detailed in the club risk assessment by the Club Covid-19 Officer.

50. In addition to non-contact flag football activity, players are also permitted to undertake non-contact skill development (ie, ball handling, route running) or fitness activities.

51. Non-contact practice activities should in the main follow social distancing rules of 2m wherever possible. However, larger groups of up to 30 participants may breach social

distancing guidelines for the narrow circumstances of non-contact only practice and play activity if following the appropriate mitigation measures detailed within our guidance. These circumstances include, for example, playing a game of flag football at the end of a practice session where any instances of face-to-face contact would be fleeting in nature.

52. Coaches should risk assess and plan appropriately for each session in advance, be aware of responsibilities and be clear on expectations with participants. Practice planning should reflect the requirement for regular scheduled breaks for hand and equipment hygiene – before, during and at least every 15 minutes during sessions.
53. Only individuals registered in the BAFA GoMembership! System are eligible to participate in sanctioned National Leagues American football activity. The only exception to this is new club members – who may undertake three trial sessions as long as their details are captured as per BAFA’s existing three trial session process. New members MUST be registered after their third trial session. University football participants should be registered with their institution and follow their guidance.
54. To support maintaining records for Test, Trace, Protect, participants should only take part in activity sessions with their registered BAFA club team and age group.
55. Players, coaches and support staff registered for any BAFA football format may participate in non-contact flag American football activities with their registered BAFA club team and age group.
56. As per [BAFA Competition rules and regulations](#) item 3.8, mixed age ranges may practice alongside each other in the same facility or field but must operate distinctly from each other. No game like scenarios should take place across (or mixing) any age ranges.
57. Huddles – it is recommended that where possible team huddles do not take place before, after and during practice or non-contact game activities. If these are essential, it is recommended that teams all face in the same direction to receive instructions.
58. Team scoring celebrations involving person-to-person contact are not permitted.
59. Shouting - There is an additional risk of infection in close proximity situations where people are shouting or conversing loudly. This particularly applies indoors and when face to face. If possible, players should therefore avoid shouting or raising their voices when facing each other during, before and after games.
60. No pre or post-game handshakes, or alternatives of any sort e.g. elbow bump or foot taps are permitted.
61. No spitting or mouth rinsing is permitted during practice or play.

## Key pieces of Welsh Government guidance

- [Check if you need medical help \(symptoms of coronavirus\)](#)
- [Guidance in individuals who were shielding](#)
- [Coronavirus and personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#)
- [Coronavirus: closure of businesses and premises](#)
- [Coronavirus regulations: FAQs](#)
- [Coronavirus social distancing guidance](#)
- [Guidance on leaving your home and seeing other people: coronavirus](#)
- [Face coverings: coronavirus](#)
  - [Requirement to wear face coverings on public transport in Wales](#)
- [Guidance to employers and businesses on COVID-19](#)
- [Protect yourself and others from coronavirus](#)
- [Self-isolation: stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus](#)
- [Taking all reasonable measures to maintain physical distancing in the workplace](#)
- [Travelling safely \(coronavirus\): guidance for the public](#)
- [Guidance on extended households: coronavirus](#)
- [Keeping records of staff, customers, and visitors: test, trace, protect](#)
- [Guidance for Tourism and Hospitality Businesses for a Phased and Safe Re-opening](#)