



FAI SAFER RETURN TO TRAINING PROTOCOL
UNDERAGE FOOTBALL (U18 players and younger)

INTRODUCTION

- This Protocol applies to all **NON-CONTACT** training sessions for U18 players and younger from Monday 26th April 2021.
- The primary aim of this Protocol is to support the clubs affiliated to the FAI and to protect the health & safety of their players, coaches, all essential personnel and volunteers in a Safer Return to Training.
- This Protocol is in line with Department of Health and Public Health Policy at all times.
- This Protocol will follow all Government updates to [COVID-19 Resilience and Recovery 2021 - The Path Ahead](#).
- The Safer Return to Training Protocol will be utilised in line with all other FAI policy documents including [Child Welfare & Safeguarding Policy](#)

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1 - Key Dates

- This Protocol applies to all training sessions from Monday 26th April 2021 and must be adhered to for all training sessions under the jurisdiction of the FAI and its Affiliates.

2 – Club Management COVID-19 Compliance

- It is recommended that club management committees review the FAI Safer Return to Training Protocol 6th Edition ahead of any return to non-contact training from Monday 26th April 2021.
- No indoor gatherings/meetings are permitted.
- COVID-19 Compliance Officers should be familiar with the Updated FAI Safer Return to Training Protocol 6th edition in advance of any consultation with their club.
- All clubs must appoint at least one COVID-19 Compliance Officer before any return to training is implemented.
- Clubs with multiple training venues will need to appoint more than one COVID-19 Compliance Officer (minimum 1 per training venue).
- The Football Association of Ireland will provide a [Role & Responsibilities Document](#) for all COVID-19 Compliance Officers.
- All clubs must complete a [COVID-19 Checklist](#) for 2021 prior to returning to training.
- Clubs must confirm appointment of COVID-19 Compliance Officer(s) to FAI via the checklist prior to returning to training.
- Clubs must ensure, through their Compliance Officers, that all coaches, parents/guardians and players are fully aware of their responsibilities.
- Clubs must continually educate players/coaches/parents/guardians/volunteers – see <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>
- Clubs are advised to inform insurers of their intention to return to training.
- Clubs who are returning to training must follow all steps set out above.

3 – Preparing Training Venues, Facilities & Equipment

- A COVID-19 Risk Assessment must be carried out by all clubs in advance of any resumption of training and/or facility reopening.
- FAI Risk Assessment Template can be found here - [FAI Risk Assessment Template](#)
- The Risk Assessment must be reviewed regularly and kept up to date at all times.
- The Risk Assessment must be in line with any Government updates to [COVID-19 Resilience and Recovery 2021 - The Path Ahead](#).
- No changing rooms can be used at any time.
- No shower facilities can be used at any time.
- Sanitary facilities should be accessible for players and coaches.
- Sanitary facilities should be thoroughly cleaned before the first and after the last training session at the venue.
- Hand sanitizer and cleaning products should be available in the sanitary facilities for use during training sessions.
- All training equipment – including goalposts - must be sanitised before and after every training session.
- Players and Coaches must bring their own hand sanitisers.
- Clubs are advised to have hand sanitisers in place and observe strict hand hygiene measures.
- COVID-19 Signage must be clearly visible throughout the training facility.
- COVID-19 Signage is available to download from www.fai.ie

4- Training Groups / Numbers

The maximum numbers are as follows:

- Underage Training (Under 18) – Group of 15 (13 players and minimum 2 coaches).
- Clubs must adhere to the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy and other associated policies at all times which can be found here - [FAI Child Welfare & Safeguarding Policy](#)
- Only essential personnel are permitted access onto the training pitch/area.
- More than one team can train at a venue at any given time provided there is a clear buffer zone of at least 15metres between the groups - pods of 15 including coaches.
- Keep training times staggered to ease the flow of arrivals and departures of players and coaches.

4 A - Parent Responsibility

- A parent or guardian is allowed to accompany any player under the age of 18 to training and may remain at the venue for the duration of the training session. However, please only attend if essential circumstances exist.
- Any parent or guardian attending a training session must strictly observe 2 metres social distancing at all times. Strictly no gatherings of groups while training is ongoing are permitted. Protocols must be followed throughout the duration of sessions.
- Adhere to club management protocols to include one-way traffic system and designated drop off points if applicable.

5- Coach Responsibilities

- All coaches must be familiar with the Updated FAI Safer Return to Training Protocol.
- All coaches must ensure that all participants in training sessions are briefed on the Updated FAI Safer Return to Training Protocol.
- Coaches must arrive to the session in their training gear.
- All coaches must adhere to the Updated FAI Safer Return to Training Protocol throughout the full duration of the training session.
- Coaches must provide a register of attendees at all training sessions to the COVID-19 Compliance Officer for contact tracing purposes.
- Coaches must bring their own hand sanitizer.
- Coaches must ensure that the training area and pitch is clear of all equipment before leaving the facility.

6 – Before You Coach

You must stay at home if you:

- Have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 or a suspected case in the last 14 days.
- Have been overseas or exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
- Have flu-like symptoms or are feeling unwell.
- Have a temperature of 38C or more.
- Experience the sudden onset of a cough or shortness of breath.
- Experience a sudden loss of taste and smell.

You must:

- Check with your GP if you are in a high-risk health category and if you are medically fit to coach.
- Familiarise yourself with COVID-19 safety protocols at your club.
- Ensure your club has up-to-date contact details for you.
- If you have additional concerns due to underlying medical conditions - or you are living with people with underlying conditions - please discuss these concerns with your club's COVID-19 Compliance Officer as part of your club's risk assessment.
- Please ensure you have clarified that it is safe for you to return to coaching.

7 – Player Responsibilities

- All players & parents/guardians of underage players must be familiar with the Updated FAI Safer Return to Training Protocol.
- Clubs must ensure that all players & parents/guardians of underage players are briefed on the Updated Protocol before returning to training.
- Players and parents/guardians are advised to keep up to date with [HSE Guidelines](#).
- All players must arrive to the training venue alone (if age appropriate) or can be dropped off by a member of the same household.
- Players must arrive in their training gear and with their own equipment including water (labelled with their name) and shin pads.
- Goalkeepers, or any player acting as a goalkeeper, must wear their own gloves
- Players must bring their own hand sanitiser.
- Personal items must be labelled with the player's name and not shared.
- Players must bring all personal items home with them.

8 – Before You Train**You must stay at home if you:**

- Have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 or a suspected case in the last 14 days.
- Have been overseas or exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
- Have flu-like symptoms or are feeling unwell.
- Have a temperature of 38C or more.
- Experience the sudden onset of a cough or shortness of breath.
- Experience a sudden loss of taste and smell.

You must:

- Check with your GP if you are in a high-risk health category and if you are medically fit to coach.
- Familiarise yourself with COVID-19 safety protocols at your club.
- Ensure your club has up-to-date contact details for you.
- If you have additional concerns due to underlying medical conditions - or living with people with underlying conditions - please discuss these concerns with your club's COVID-19 Compliance Officer as part of your club's risk assessment.
- Ensure you have clarified that it is safe for you to return to coaching.

9 – Training sessions

- Access and egress to and from the training pitch or area must be signposted and coordinated, and is subject to social distancing guidelines.
- A 15-minute gap between sessions must be implemented if consecutive training sessions are scheduled on the same training area.
- All activity must take place only on the training pitch or area.
- Players and coaches must practice good coughing & sneezing etiquette.
- Players and coaches must adhere to HSE guidelines on hand hygiene at all times.
- Any meeting which may need to take place must take place on the training pitch area and should last no longer than 10 minutes.
- All meetings and briefings on the training pitch or area must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Please avoid players queueing within activities.
- All training sessions must be non-contact including no in-house matches, small sided games, or other activities that will involve contact between players.
- Coaches and players are permitted to travel within their own county or outside their county up to a maximum of 20km beyond their residence for training.

10 – Player Welfare

- Players in need of medical attention, where possible, should be treated on the pitch.
- A coach or Club Physiotherapist can attend an injured player on the pitch.
- Coaches should wear a face mask and gloves.
- A designated room – where applicable and necessary – can be used for treating an injured player.
- Physiotherapists – where applicable – must wear PPE.
- A player suspected of a new onset of COVID-19 must be given a face mask and must be isolated immediately from the rest of the attendees.
- Contact must be made with a parent/guardian of any underage player who is suspected of contracting COVID-19.

11 – Actions Around A Suspected Case

- Immediately separate any person displaying or complaining of COVID-19 related symptoms from players and coaches.
- Provide the suspected case with a face mask as soon as possible.
- The designated person managing the situation should try to maintain at least 2 metres from the person with symptoms and should wear a face mask.
- Provide the person with tissues and hand sanitiser and ensure that all tissues are disposed of in a waste bag that can be tied and marked as separate from other waste.
- If they are well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms.
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Has the player travelled with other players or staff members to games and training over the past 14 days?

If the answer is yes, the player and those he/she travelled with should stand down until test results are known and public health have completed their contact tracing process.

If the answer is no, there is no requirement for anyone other than the player to stand down.

Has the player socialised with other squad members over the past 14 days?

If the answer is yes, the player and those he/she travelled or socialised with should stand down until test results are known and public health have completed their contact tracing process.

If the answer is no, there is no requirement for anyone other than the player to stand down.

Has the player been in a dressing room, meeting room or ON A? team bus for 15 minutes or more with the full squad over the past 14 days?

If the answer is yes, the player and those he/she travelled with should stand down until test results are known and public health have completed their contact tracing process.

If the answer is no, there is no requirement for anyone other than the player to stand down.

12 – Contact definition

Close Contact -v- Casual Contact

- A close contact is deemed to have occurred when a person is in face to face contact with a positive or suspected case (result of test awaited) for more than 15 minutes, inside a 2-metre distance.
- Close Contacts need to self-isolate for 14 days pending contact and subsequent testing by Public Health.
- Close Contacts in the context of training and playing are most likely to occur in the following circumstances:
 - o Shared car journeys
 - o Shared dressing rooms
 - o Contacts on the field of play (training or playing) are considered casual contacts
 - o Casual contacts are not required to restrict their movements or self-isolate

Please send any queries to covidchecklist@fai.ie

13 – Updating Policy

- Clubs should communicate regularly to review implementation, Risk Assessment and Updated FAI Safer Return to Training Protocol.
- All clubs should hold regular de-briefing sessions with coaches, player representatives and COVID-19 Compliance Officers.

14 – Next Steps

- All clubs must complete a COVID-19 Checklist for 2021 prior to returning to training, and send it to covidchecklist@fai.ie
- The FAI will continue to update this FAI Safer Return to Training Protocol based on the advice of Government and Health agencies.
- All FAI Safer Return to Training Protocol updates will be posted on FAI.ie.
- All enquiries can be emailed to covidchecklist@fai.ie

All stakeholders, including players, coaches, administrators and parents have a responsibility in ensuring the above guidelines are adhered to at all times. In turn, this will ensure that our children can continue to participate safely in sport.