

Abingdon United Football Club

Safe Return to Football Policy

First Created: 27th July 2020

Updated: 17th May 2021

Introduction

In response to the lockdown changes from 29th March allowing competitive grassroots football to return. Abingdon United have analysed the F.A.'s published guidelines and produced the below policy to ensure adherence to the new guidelines and also to ensure safety of players, staff, officials and eventually spectators. The policy will also be backed up by a series of individual risk assessments which will be continuously reviewed and the policy updated where necessary.

Every club has been instructed to appoint a Covid-19 officer. The role of this person is to remain familiar with the most up to date FA guidance and ensure this is communicated throughout coaches, players, club officials and supporters. The appointed Covid-19 officers for Abingdon United are Adam Wood and Tony Collins, and their contact details are to be found at the end of this document.

Whilst many of the directives issued are legislative there are some that are advisory which Abingdon United have included in this policy for best practice and again, to ensure safety is at the top of the priority list. It is also important to note that this policy/guidance has been produced to allow football to take place at Abingdon United Football Club and does not supersede any further guidance or rules put in place by competition authorities.

From 29th March all teams at Abingdon United will be allowed to return to football, despite some leagues being null and void, teams are still able to compete in formally organised/sanctioned cup competitions and friendly matches as well as training.

The guidance following is FOR ALL players, coaches, club officials, match officials, league officials, volunteers, parents/carers and spectators. The following document has been broken into 3 definitive sections which will cover all of the match day protocol as directed by The FA:

BEFORE ANY FOOTBALL ACTIVITY TAKES

PLACE DURING ALL FOOTBALL ACTIVITY

AFTER ALL FOOTBALL ACTIVITY

It is vital that all 3 parts of this document are read by anyone visiting Abingdon United, Northcourt Road, as they apply to all clubs returning to football and are put in place to protect everyone.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Covid-19 is a highly infectious and dangerous disease. A resumption of contact play is only achievable if those involved create and maintain a controlled environment that minimises the threat of infection. Risk in sport cannot be completely eradicated but with caution and care these risks can be reduced. All those returning to competitive grassroots football must adapt the following F.A code of behaviour:

Be aware of your own personal health. If you show any of the covid-19 symptoms you must stay at home, inform the NHS test and trace and seek medical advice.

Be responsible. Read the guidance provided by the F.A and your club so that you are aware of the changes to the game and what is expected of you.

Practise good hygiene. Wash your hands regularly and before, during and after a game.

Where possible maintain social distancing. This will not always be possible in a competitive match environment and that is acceptable. However, before and after a game you should maintain social distancing.

Support NHS test and trace. You will be asked to 'check-in' via our QR code on the NHS Test & Trace App so that in the event of a covid-19 outbreak those potentially infected can be traced. This is to everyone's benefit so please co-operate.

Do not spit. Spitting and the rinsing out of mouths is now a recognised risk to the health and must not be done. Avoid shouting or raising your voice if face to face with other players.

After the game. Be aware that other users may be waiting to use the facilities.

SPECTATORS

From 17th May 2021 England enters into phase three of the release of lockdown which means spectators are allowed to attend football stadia, this is limited to 4,000 or 50% whichever is lower, in the case of The Northcourt this means a limit of 1,500 spectators.

We ask all spectators to follow local guidance as well as that mentioned in this policy and signposted around the club. Including; entry and exit routes for the clubhouse and the stands, sanitising hands, wearing a mask when indoors.

Section 1 BEFORE ANY FOOTBALL ACTIVITY TAKES PLACE

In line with current government guidance, all participants (players, coaches, club officials, match officials' volunteers and spectators) should self-check for symptoms of covid-19. No- one should leave home to participate in football if they, or anyone live with, has any of the following:

A HIGH TEMPERATURE (ABOVE 37.8C)

A NEW, CONTINUOUS COUGH

A LOSS OF, OR CHANGE TO THEIR SENSE OF SMELL

If an individual is symptomatic and/or living in a household with a possible covid-19 infection they should remain at home and follow government guidance.

Travelling to the match

All participants and other attendees should follow best practice for travel, including minimising use of public transport. Participants should walk or cycle if possible. People from a household or support bubble can travel together in a vehicle. If participants do have to travel with people outside their household or support bubble they should try to:

- Share the transport with the same people each time;
- Keep to small groups of people at any one time;
- Open windows for ventilation;
- Face away from each other;
- Clean the car between journeys using standard cleaning products – including door handles and other areas that people may touch;
- Ask the driver and all passengers to wear a face covering;
- Consider seating arrangements to maximise distance between people in the vehicle – this may mean using more than one coach or minibus if possible, and the wearing of face coverings on coaches or minibuses;
- Require regular hand sanitisation by passengers on a coach or minibus;
- Limit the time spent at garages, petrol stations and motorway services;
- Keep distance from other people and if possible, pay by contactless;
- Wash hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise hands often, and always when exiting or re-entering the vehicle;
- When finishing the journey participants should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds or sanitise their hands as soon as possible.

Upon arrival

Upon arrival at the all participants will be required to adhere to the one-way systems in place and general movement around the ground following relevant signage in place. Some of these are also detailed in the Club Risk Assessment that has been live since the reopening of our clubhouse facilities on the 4th July. All attendees should follow best practice and wash their hands upon arrival for at least 20 seconds or sanitise immediately with the sanitiser provided, at all times observe the 1-meter social distancing guidance.

Everyone who enters the ground will be directed to our QR code for **NHS test and**

trace. Anyone who does not have the app will be able to give their details to a member of the club or a member of the bar staff to manually record. This information will be held for 21 days in line with the government recreational team sport framework in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Toilets will be available and clearly signposted. Please ensure the practice of social distancing.

For matches, all players, club staff and officials will undergo a temperature check before being allowed to take part. If a temperature is too high, the participant will be asked to return to their vehicle for ten minutes before returning for a second measure. Anyone showing over after the second attempt will be asked to leave.

Changing Rooms Before the Match

From 12th April 2021

There is a one-way system in operation for the changing rooms therefore the below considerations are required for the following:

Officials – Where possible officials should arrive in kit however there is enough room within the changing rooms to follow the 1m+ guidelines.

Men's/Women's First Team/Development and U18s – A maximum of eight participants are allowed to get changed in the changing room at one time. Before the match the first elevens plus the manager will be allowed for team talks if absolutely necessary but then should wait in the changing room until the bell rings. The officials should leave for the pitch first, followed by the away team and finally the home team. In the event of poor weather, the designated Covid Officer can approve more to be in the changing rooms as long as social distancing can be pursued at great effort.

Grassroots (Youth Football) – Where possible teams should arrive already in kit should this not be the case, teams are encouraged to swiftly change and limit to eight participants at one time.

To avoid time spent indoors, where possible and where weather permits. Team talks should take place outside. You will be advised by the home manager if there is a place where team talks can take place when the weather is inappropriate.

The exchange of team sheets will follow the guidelines of the respective competition.

Section 2 DURING ALL FOOTBALL ACTIVITY

Social Distancing in Competitive Training

Competitive training can take place for all participants, in an outdoor setting provided this takes place in groups of no more than 30 (including coaches).

Care should be taken on busy sites with limited access points to ensure safe play. Abingdon United will consider staggering start times and allowing cleaning time

between change-overs where the club may be used by more than one team in a day.

The individual teams will decide the appropriate ratio of coaches to participants, following the relevant FA safeguarding policy outlined in safeguarding guidance notes 5.5. Sessions might include multiple groups of 30 but only if they can be appropriately socially distanced from each other.

In all settings before and after the session, and in any breaks, all participants should practise social distancing, in line with Government guidelines on two metres or 'one metre plus'.

Any spectators at training sessions (including parents and carers) must be restricted to discrete six-person gathering limits and spread out, in line with wider government guidance, ensuring space for officials, coaches and substitutes.

Social Distancing Around Matches

Competitive match play is now permitted, however, in all settings before and after matches all participants should practise social distancing

Covid-19 modifications in matches – **guidance** from the FA

Pre-match handshake should not happen. Instead players will be asked to hand-sanitise before kick-off.

Team talk huddles should not take place. Team talks can take place as long as social- distancing is observed.

Warm-ups/cool downs should always observe social distancing.

Coaches, other team staff and substitutes are allowed, but must always observe social distancing on touch lines/dug-outs. Social distancing must also be observed during interactions when a substitution is being made.

Set plays free kicks/corners: referees and coaches should encourage players to get on with the game and not unnecessarily prolong set-up such as defensive walls to limit the prolonged close marking. Goal posts should be wiped down before matches, after matches and at half time.

Goal celebrations should be avoided

Interactions with referees and match assistants should only happen with players observing social distancing.

Small-sided football should be modified to provide more regular hygiene breaks in activity. Players should be discouraged from touching boards at any time, with tackling against boards discouraged. Referees should consider stopping play when this happens.

Youth football coaches are encouraged to limit persistent close proximity of participants during match play (where young participants may be more likely to cluster around the ball) and provide regular hygiene breaks in activity.

Social distancing during breaks (e.g. half time)

During breaks and half-time all participants must remain socially distanced. Coaching staff and substitutes should for example, spread out and avoid sharing a

dug out or bench if social distancing cannot be observed. Water bottles or other refreshment containers should in no circumstances be shared. Participants are advised to bring their own drinks or refreshments, in a named container.

After activity participants must maintain government mandated social distancing for social interaction. This will include the use of the changing rooms or showers if required, and clubhouse facilities participants congregate in afterwards.

Use of Equipment

The sharing of equipment must be avoided where possible. Where equipment is to be shared, equipment must be cleaned before use by another person. Participants should take their kit home to wash it themselves, rather than have one person handling a large quantity of soiled materials. Where this is not possible each person handling the soiled kit must wash their hands and sanitise immediately after, and appropriate arrangements made for the cleaning of the kit.

Ball transfer

The nature of football means that the ball is not frequently handled. When the ball goes out of play it should not be retrieved by non-participants and should be retrieved using the feet rather than the hands where possible. Where there are breaks in the game if throw-ins or handling has occurred the ball should be disinfected.

Shouting

There is an additional risk of infection in close proximity situations where people are shouting or conversing loudly. This particularly applies indoors (e.g. inside clubhouses) 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. This is included within The FA's Code of Behaviour

Spitting

Everyone should refrain from spitting. If you need to sneeze or cough, you are encouraged to do so into a tissue or upper sleeve and advised to avoid touching your face. Ensure any tissues are disposed of in a sealed bin as soon as possible.

Treatment of Injuries

Abingdon United's appointed first-aiders will follow the FA's First Aid Guidance.

Injuries during play should still be treated as participant health and safety is of utmost importance. In all cases but particularly where medical treatment is needed, the best form of protection 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, will be recommended as per The FA's supporting medical guidance.

If a participant gets injured, a member of their household can assist if present and appropriate, but others (including match officials and teammates and coaches) will still need to socially distance unless a life- or limb-threatening injury necessitates compromising guidelines to provide emergency care.

Where there is a first-aider or other medical personnel present, they should be equipped with the appropriate PPE (including face coverings) to protect themselves and others if they need to compromise social-distancing guidelines to provide medical assistance.

After contact with an injured participant, the person who has administered first aid should clean their 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 social distancing was maintained. The first aider should also avoid touching their mouth, eyes and nose. Physios or their equivalent or anyone who is administering any form of treatment, should keep a record of each participant they have come into contact with for NHS test and trace purposes. Further information for those who may need to act as a 'first responder' role in a sports setting can be found here. If a participant becomes Covid-19 symptomatic during the activity, they should immediately remove themselves from the session and return home as quick as possible.

Abingdon United have a welfare/first aid room available however those wishing to use it should wait outside until called in by the physio.

Players That Leave the Field (Sub or Sending Off)

Any player who is subbed or sent off should return to the changing rooms immediately to get showered (if applicable) and changed.

SECTION 3 AFTER ALL FOOTBALL ACTIVITY

Hands should be washed at the earliest opportunity and personal equipment should be wiped down with a disinfectant.

Changing Rooms After the Game

Officials – There are two separate showers inside the match officials changing room allowing for change and shower whilst sticking to social distancing.

Men's/Women's First Team/Development and U18s - Only three people should use the showers at a time. As before the game, best efforts should be made to ensure the changing rooms do not have too many inside at once so a maximum of eight players should be in there at one time. For the home team, used football kit should be placed in the baskets provided. This will allow a single person to load the kit into the club's washing machines using the correct PPE. If a player/parent feels they need to take the kit home they should communicate with the respective manager for arrangements. Whilst the guidance advises own kits should be washed; the senior and under 18s team are not supplied with their own individual kit so it would deem appropriate for the kit to remain washed at the club to avoid contamination (16 players taking their kit home to 16 different households and then returned for another player to wear another week).

Youth - as already covered participates should take their own kit home to wash it themselves.

After matches participants and attendees must maintain government mandated social distancing for social interaction. This includes any available changing rooms, showers, and clubhouse facility.

The clubhouse is currently closed, post-match food will be confirmed by the appropriate manager but only if the latest government guidance can be followed in preparation, deliverance and consumption.

Payment of Fees

Where possible payment of fees, such as match official fees should be made by bank transfer. This can also be arranged before the start of the game.

Covid Officers:

Adam Wood – 07789 310378 – abingdonunitedwfc@gmail.com

Tony Collins – 07811 450895 – collins.tony@btinternet.com

Abingdon United would like to thank you in advance for your part in making sure we pull through this together.

**Policy approved by A.Midwinter – Abingdon United Football Club
Chairman**