



MATCHDAY PROTOCOL
*(Stage Three – Return to Elite
Socially Distanced Competition)*

AUGUST 2020

INTRODUCTION


OVERVIEW

The public health crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for the EFL and Clubs.

The EFL has been led by guidance issued by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport ('DCMS'), which provides for a phased return to League Matches, through a process of stages:

- **Stage One (return to first team small group, socially distanced training)** – on 18th July 2020 updated guidance was agreed that facilitates a return to first team small group training without contact and maintaining social distancing
- **Stage Two (return to first team contact training)** – on 27th July 2020 updated guidance was agreed that facilitates a return to first team full contact training.
- **Stage Three (return to first team domestic competition)** – this document provides updated protocols in relation to the playing of competitive matches. This should be read in conjunction with the updated Matchday Operations Guidance document that has been circulated at the same time.
- **Stage Four (return to cross-boarder competition)** – the government has issued its guidance in this respect which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/elite-sport-return-to-cross-border-competition-guidance>
- **Stage Five (return to first team competition – safe return of spectators)** – the government has issued its draft guidance in this respect which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/elite-sport-return-to-competition-safe-return-of-spectators>

In addition the SGSA has released supplementary guidance on planning for social distancing at sports grounds which can be found here: <https://sgsa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SG02-Planning-for-Social-Distancing-at-Sports-Grounds.pdf>



The purpose of this Matchday Protocol is to allow Clubs to transition into Stage Three, and to facilitate the resumption of competitive matches under Socially Distanced guidelines, while at all times adhering to the principal aim of maximising the safety of all individuals involved in the delivery of the Competition.

The provisions of this Matchday Protocol do not replace or vary the obligations placed on Clubs in the RTTP, which will remain in force and continue to regulate Club conduct in the training ground environment. Further, in line with point five of the RTTP, nothing in this Protocol replaces, reduces or affects in any way the obligations imposed on Clubs by statute and/or common law in the fields of medicine, occupational health and/or health and safety. Where Clubs consider that they can implement additional arrangements which help meet or exceed the standards set out herein, they should engage with the EFL at the earliest opportunity.

Where, in accordance with any Regulation, Club resolution or directive from a statutory body, a League Match is required to be played at a neutral venue, the League, the venue hosting the League Match and the two participating Clubs will enter into good faith discussions to determine who assumes the obligations imposed on the **Home Club** in this Matchday Protocol.



FORMAT

In line with the RTTP, this Matchday Protocol sets out obligations binding on Clubs and incorporated into the Regulations, a breach of which will be dealt with under Section 9 of the EFL Regulations, albeit with an expedited timetable requiring response to the charge within [3] days, and hearing promptly thereafter. The obligations apply in respect of all League Matches that (for whatever reason) are staged under Socially Distanced guidelines.

Supplementing this Matchday Protocol is a range of non-binding guidance, which has been issued by the EFL in consultation with Clubs in the form of the Matchday Operations Guidance (Return to Socially Distanced Competitive Matches) and seeks to support Clubs in the practical application of their obligations to ensure the safest possible stadium environment for the delivery of a League Match. The guidance covers considerations for all areas of matchday delivery save for the admission of spectators which is covered in the SGSA guidance document SG02.

It is envisaged that the Matchday Operations Guidance will be a 'living document' and will develop as Government guidance in relation to COVID-19 develops. However, given that they operate as Regulations, no amendment to this Matchday Protocol will be made without the necessary approval by Clubs.

KEY TERMS

Capitalised terms not otherwise defined in this Matchday Protocol bear the meanings given to them in the Regulations.

References to **'Socially Distanced'** League Matches are to League Matches where:

- The admission of spectators to the venue at which the League Match is played is strictly in accordance with Government guidance.
- The admission of any other individual is strictly in accordance with this Matchday Protocol

References to individuals collectively referred to as **'Players and Football Staff'** include:

- Players; and
- Club employees, consultants and contractors essential for the performance of training (including coaches, doctors, analysts, physios, sports scientists and other members of the Club's medical team, but not including security staff, cleaners or members of the Club's catering staff).

References to **'Matchday Personnel'** are to individuals who are not Players and Football Staff but who are otherwise permitted to attend the venue at which a League Match is to be played, in accordance with this Matchday Protocol, including:

- Employees and/or or representatives of the participating Clubs and/or the League
- Match Officials
- Broadcaster or media representatives accredited to attend the League Match

In respect of each League Match staged Socially Distanced, the Players and Football Staff and Matchday Personnel who are permitted to attend the venue as part of their job role are collectively referred to as **'Cleared Individuals'**

EFL DESIGNATED ROLES

The EFL's COVID-19 Competition Officer is David Cookson (dcookson@efl.com)

The EFL's COVID-19 Medical Officer is Dr Richard Higgins (rhiggins@efl.com)

The obligations and guidance set out in this Matchday Protocol are each underpinned by the following principles that will determine the safe and successful delivery of the Competition in a Socially Distanced environment:

Maintain social distancing and apply Public Health England ('PHE') guidance	Where social distancing cannot be maintained, it must be managed by a clear risk assessment and mitigation plan. All existing PHE guidance will continue to apply unless specified otherwise.
Minimise support from public services	The delivery of League Matches must not negatively impact community, healthcare or policing services. The EFL will continue to work with the police and St.John Ambulance to support Clubs' local engagement with their respective Safety Advisory Groups ('SAGS') and police forces.
Build upon Stage One and Stage Two	The RTTP, risk assessment frameworks and testing programme within Stages One and Two will continue to underpin the requirements, with new requirements relevant to matchdays building upon them.
Implement a Stadium planning and risk management framework	All Stadia must implement robust operational plans to meet obligations and demonstrate the assessment and mitigation of transmission risk, e.g. clear Stadium zoning for personnel and facility modifications where possible.
Define clear roles and responsibilities	Clubs will ensure that all roles and responsibilities during matchday delivery will be clearly defined and will ensure that they adhere to this guidance.

B. Obligations

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. Seven days prior to each Club's first home fixture, it must complete and submit to the League a multi-disciplinary risk assessment of all aspects of hosting a League Match at its Stadium ('COVID-19 Stadium Risk Assessment') that incorporates the following:
 - i. a venue operation plan for the preparation for and hosting of League Matches at its Stadium, including a plan of the Stadium and its environs, defining all areas, routes and access/egress points and including measures for the optimisation of social distancing and all Government recommended hygiene measures throughout
 - ii. delineation of the Stadium into the following 'zones':
 - a. '**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
 - b. '**Amber Zone**' – all interior areas within the Stadium that are not included in the Red Zone, as well as the TV gantry and pitchside interview positions.
 - c. '**Green Zone**' - the stadium exterior and its immediate vicinity (including the Outside Broadcast Compound and any parking facilities to be utilised by Cleared Individuals)
 - iii. appropriate modification of facilities where social distancing cannot be easily maintained to mitigate risk (for example, the utilisation of one-way systems for people and/or vehicles wherever possible and the use of appropriate signage)
 - iv. restriction of all unnecessary activity
 - v. a maximum capacity for each room or area within the Stadium to permit social distancing measures to be maintained
 - vi. a security plan, screening process and accreditation system for all Cleared Individuals that limits contact between Players and Football Staff and Matchday Personnel and Spectators wherever possible
 - vii. an assessment of the impact of all measures adopted as part of the COVID-19 Stadium Risk Assessment on existing emergency action plans, security plans, health and safety plans and/or fire evacuation plans

- viii. designation of:
 - a. an isolation room within the Stadium and consideration of steps to be taken to manage any individual(s) who develop COVID-19 symptoms while within the Stadium
 - b. an individual (with the qualifications and experience referred to at paragraph 4i, below) responsible for oversight of the isolation room and clinical management of any individuals who develop suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 while within the Stadium, ensuring that all such cases are managed in line with standard COVID-19 case management protocols, this Matchday Protocol and Government guidance
 - ix. measures agreed with emergency services to minimise and manage informal public gatherings in the immediate vicinity of the Stadium
 - x. provision for any individual who attends the Stadium and who is considered to be '*clinically vulnerable*' or '*clinically extremely vulnerable*' (in line with Government guidance)
 - xi. provision for the conduct of anti-doping during and/or immediately after a League Match, including appropriate modifications to all facilities necessary for doping control to maintain social distancing and necessary hygiene measures
 - xii. provision for the delivery of each Club's rights holder and non-rights holder access obligations in accordance with the Regulations and any guidance issued by the EFL
2. By no later than seven days prior to its first home fixture, each Club must devise a 'COVID-19 Stadium Operations Policy', which must:
- i. be agreed by its Board and Chief Executive Officer
 - ii. identify an individual as the 'Designated COVID-19 Stadium Operations Officer' (who may be the same as the Club's Designated COVID-19 Officer)
 - iii. reflect the Club's COVID-19 Stadium Risk Assessment Policy
 - iv. include a framework to:
 - a. support the education and familiarisation of all of the Club's Cleared Individuals with regard to the Club's COVID-19 Stadium Operations Policy

- b. ensure that, no later than two days before any League Match at which it is the Home Club, the following individuals are provided with a copy of the Club's COVID-19 Stadium Operations Policy:
 - 1. the Team Doctor and COVID-19 Officer of the Visiting Club
 - 2. a representative of Professional Game Match Officials Limited
 - v. include guidance as to the process by which the Cleared Individual can opt out of the policy at a later date, should they choose to do so (in which case, they will not be permitted to attend the Stadium)
 - vi. be submitted to the League
3. Each Club must ensure that, before any Cleared Individual attends the Stadium, they have provided written confirmation (in such terms as are approved by the EFL) that they have **received and agree to be bound by the Club's COVID-19 Stadium Operations Policy**. Confirmation provided by the individuals listed at paragraph 2iv.b.1 and 2iv.b.2, above, shall constitute acceptance on behalf of all Players and Football Staff and Matchday Personnel employed by or representative of the Visiting Club or PGMOL (as appropriate) **that they agree to be bound by the relevant Club's COVID-19 Stadium Operations Policy**.
4. Each Club must ensure that for any matches where spectators are permitted, any spectator attending the match must have **'opted-in' to attendance after careful consideration of the associated risks and their own vulnerability status**.

DESIGNATED ROLES

5. In addition to the roles required by paragraph two, above, each Club must designate an individual as:
- i. its 'COVID-19 Medical Officer', who will ordinarily be the Club's Team Doctor, but in all cases must:
 - a. be a registered medical practitioner, licensed to practice by the General Medical Council
 - b. be familiar with all relevant developments and Government guidance in relation to COVID-19 and post COVID-19 pathology

- c. be in attendance at the Stadium for the period from one hour prior to kick-off of each League Match until one hour after the conclusion of the League Match

TESTING, SCREENING AND STADIUM ACCESS

6. Where there is a requirement to submit to a COVID-19 Antigen Test ('CAT') in this Matchday Protocol, the CAT must be conducted in accordance with the process administered by the League.
7. Each Home Club must ensure that no one who is not a Cleared Individual or has a valid ticket gains access to any area of the Stadium on a matchday (whether the Green Zone, Amber Zone or Red Zone).
8. Each Home Club must ensure that only the following individuals may access the Red Zone on a matchday:
 - i. Players and Football Staff and Match Officials who have submitted to the CAT regime set out in section D of the RTTP and whose most recent CAT prior to the first League Match has returned a negative result
 - ii. Other essential Staff identified as essential to the operation of the Red Zone
 - iii. UK Anti-Doping
 - iv. Those identified by the League as requiring access for broadcasted matches
9. Each Home Club must ensure that no Cleared Individual may access the Amber Zone on a matchday unless they have satisfactorily passed a screening protocol including at least the following measures:
 - i. A COVID-19 symptom questionnaire of an example template has been provided by the EFL. Clubs may in addition wish to conduct a non-invasive temperature check (to be carried out on the matchday at a designated point within the Green Zone).
 - ii. The individual has complied with Government guidance regarding self-isolation and quarantine requirements, and where necessary, submitted a negative CAT result within 5 days of matchday.
10. Each Club must ensure that no individual may access the Green Zone unless they have **agreed to be bound by the Club's COVID-19 Stadium Operations Policy**, in accordance with paragraph 2, or are a Spectator who **has 'opted-in'**, in accordance with paragraph 4, above.
11. Each Club must comply with the action plan in relation to any instance of a positive CAT result for one of its Players and Football Staff and/or record of any symptoms of COVID-19 set out in Annex 7 to the RTTP (and/or any subsequent or replacement guidance issued by the EFL).

12. No Club may permit a Player or Football Staff member who is required to self-isolate under the results management framework at Annex 7 to the RTTP (and/or any subsequent or replacement guidance issued by the EFL) to attend the Stadium on the day of a League Match.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT ('PPE')

13. Each Club must ensure that:
 - i. Any member of Staff performing essential physiotherapy or soft tissue treatment prior to, during or immediately after a League Match wears appropriate PPE throughout the treatment, which must include (as a minimum):
 - a. Fluid resistant surgical mask (type IIR)
 - b. Disposable gloves
 - c. Disposable plastic apron for off-field treatment

It is noted that wearing plastic aprons for on-field treatment may be inconvenient, for example during inclement weather. PPE need only to be suitable and sufficient for the type of medical activity conducted. Therefore, our stance is that the choice to wear an apron is at the discretion of the medical practitioner. If aprons are not worn, tops should be changed in the event of contamination.
 - ii. Every member of Staff involved in such physiotherapy or treatment disposes of their apron and gloves in between attending each Player and puts on clean replacements after handwashing or using alcohol hand gel and before seeing the next Player
 - iii. Every member of Staff involved in such physiotherapy or treatment replaces their face mask whenever it becomes moist or soiled
 - iv. Where a member of Staff is conducting an examination of a Player's mouth, head or ear, nose and throat areas, they wear a fluid resistant visor (in addition to the PPE referred to at paragraph 12i)
 - v. The following individuals wear a (non-surgical) face covering while located in the Stadium:
 - a. All Matchday Personnel, save for Match Officials
 - b. All Players and Football Staff, save for those Players and Staff members who will be present on the Club's trainers bench during the League Match, in accordance with Regulation 34.1

- c. All Red Zone accredited Staff
- vi. All used PPE items are disposed of in a yellow bin, with clinical waste removed from the Stadium site as soon as practicable after every League Match (and in any event prior to the date of the next League Match to be staged at the Stadium)

HYGIENE

- 14. Each Home Club must ensure that, on the day of a League Match:
 - i. hand sanitiser dispensers are freely available throughout the Stadium (with dedicated dispensers in each changing room, technical area and the tunnel area) and are regularly re-supplied
 - ii. handwashing facilities are clearly signposted and soap dispensers are regularly re-supplied
- 15. Each Club must ensure that all Cleared Individuals refrain from spitting whilst at the Stadium.
- 16. Each Home Club must ensure that, as soon as possible after every League Match, cleaning of the Stadium is undertaken in accordance with Annex 3 of the RTTP.
- 17. Each Club must ensure that prior to, regularly during at half time and immediately after each League Match, the following items are disinfected:
 - i. corner flags
 - ii. goalposts
 - iii. substitution boards
 - iv. match balls

VENUE OPERATIONS AND CONTROL

- 18. Each Club must comply with the limit specified by the League from time to time on the number of Matchday Personnel that may be present within the Stadium for any League Match.
- 19. Each Home Club must develop, monitor and enforce an accreditation process that limits access to the Red Zone, Amber Zone and Green Zone in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 6 to 9, above.

20. Each Home Club must ensure that appropriate modifications (or alternative facilities are identified and provided) for all areas to be accessed by Players, Coaches and Match Officials prior to the League Match, at half time and after the conclusion of the League Match (including changing rooms and tunnel areas), to facilitate social distancing wherever possible.
21. Each Home Club may prepare food on-site in accordance with any measures identified in its COVID-19 Stadium Risk Assessment and in-line with government guidance.
22. After the conclusion of the League Match, all personal items and technical equipment must be removed from the Stadium, save that equipment essential for the live broadcast of the League Match may be stored in the Outside Broadcast Compound between League Matches, provided that it is disinfected after each League Match and it is locked or otherwise safely secured to ensure that it cannot be accessed by anyone.

TRAVEL

23. Matchday Personnel must not travel to the Stadium together and should only use public transport for the journey to the Stadium where absolutely necessary and in line with Government guidance.
24. Each Club must ensure that Players and Football Staff only travel to or from the Stadium by one of the following means):
 - i. by car carrying no other Players and Football Staff
 - ii. by coach, train or plane (or combination of the three), in all cases maintaining appropriate social distancing measures and hygiene measures (with the coach, train or plane subjected to the cleaning processes set out in Annex 3 to the RTTP prior to use by any Player or Football Staff). Facial coverings are strongly advised during transit.

PRE-MATCH

25. Each Club may arrive at the Stadium up to three hours and 15 minutes prior to kick off.
26. Manual therapy of Players by Staff (including soft tissue therapy and massage) is permitted before the League Match, provided that it is conducted in accordance with paragraph 19 of the RTTP.

27. Each Club must ensure the modification of existing changing room facilitates, or identify a suitable alternative area (s), which maintains social distancing and includes the provision of a tactical meeting. Such meetings shall be incorporated into the Home Club's COVID-19 Stadium Risk Assessment.

In-match

28. Each Club must ensure that social distancing by all Players and Football Staff is maintained during the League Match wherever possible, including
- i. In the technical area and during warm ups
 - ii. In the tunnel area
 - iii. During communications with Match Officials for Players and Coaches
29. Each Club must ensure that there is no sharing of drinks bottles among Players.

POST-MATCH

30. Each Club must ensure that:
- i. Access to communal shower areas is risk assessed to ensure that social distancing can be maintained at all times
 - ii. Ice baths are single occupancy only
31. In complying with its broadcaster access obligations, each Club must ensure that all interviews are conducted:
- i. outside wherever possible
 - ii. with all participants situated at least two metres from each other