



COMMUNITY RUGBY LEAGUE ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

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1. INTRODUCTION



This document is a summary of the RFL's Community Rugby League Action Plan aligned to the Return to Recreational Team Sport Framework which was submitted to DCMS for approval on 30th June 2020.

That Framework required all team sports to produce an action plan outlining a safe return to play and associated community game guidance. The RFL's Action Plan and Community Game Guidance were submitted to Government for approval on 16th July 2020 and received clearance on 7th August 2020. Given the huge challenges faced by Government because of the global pandemic as a Governing Body we are grateful to the staff at DCMS for the response time taking all the circumstances into account.

There are several different formats of Rugby League in addition to the full contact version. These formats include the non-contact versions of Touch Rugby League and Tag Rugby League and a limited contact version known as X-League. There are also specific offers tailored for players with disabilities including Wheelchair Rugby League, Physical Disability Rugby League and Learning Disability Rugby League.

The purpose of this action plan and community game guidance is to provide the necessary mitigations to enable the safe return of community Rugby League in all its formats in a team sport environment as part of the easing of social restrictions from July 4th 2020 onwards.

Most of the Rugby League activity takes place in summer-based seasons. The start of the main summer season coincided with the beginning of lockdown. With the season traditionally ending at the end of October unless we can start social Rugby League in August and contact training activity during September the entire season will be lost. This could have severe long-term consequences for the game.

The action plan summary outlined below is designed to minimise the COVID-19

transmission risk whilst taking part in recreational team sport and enable participants to make an informed decision about their own risk.

These mitigations allow for maximum groups of participants as set out in relevant government guidance (currently 30) to gather on the playing area and for social distancing to be breached in the narrow circumstances required by Rugby League during training and play.

The action plan and community game guidance sets out how we plan to facilitate the safe return of Rugby League and any adaptations required. The action plan and risk mitigation proposals recognise that practice may need to be adapted or curtailed and this information communicated to participants swiftly, if the overall threat level or community prevalence of COVID-19, dictates. This includes the possibility of practices needing to be curtailed on a local as well as national level as circumstances dictate.

The safe return as set out in this action plan builds upon the RFL's Community Rugby League COVID-19 Return to Play Plan submitted to DCMS on 15th June 2020. This return to play plan (as set out below) envisaged a staged return to Rugby League activity using the Government Alert Levels as guidance. Whilst the intention within this action plan is to mirror the same staged return as set out in the original return to play document, movement between the various activity and stages will be dependent on receiving approval in respect of the contents of this action plan from Public Health England, DCMS and the RFL's Clinical Advisory Group rather than tied directly to Government Alert Levels and dependent on changes to government restrictions.

As part of this action plan we provided an assessment of the transmission risk that a return to community Rugby League presents. This assessment was based on the Team Sport Risk Exposure Framework.

1. INTRODUCTION (CONT'D)



The assessment of the transmission risk that a return to community Rugby League activity in its various guises represents is based on four key variables i.e. Droplet transmission, Fomite transmission, Population and Environment.

Based on this overall risk profile some Rugby League activity will be lower risk than others and better suited to return to play and training earlier with or without adaptation.

All Rugby League activity will comply with the RFL's Operational Rules, Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and include a thorough risk assessment. Consideration has been given to children and young people under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults.

All activity taking place as outlined within the action plan must be sanctioned by and with oversight of the RFL.



2. PHASED RETURN TO PLAY



We have previously set out a 4-stage approach for the return of all Rugby League activity in our Community Rugby League Return to Play Plan which is summarised in the diagram below. Whilst Stage 1 and part of Stage 2 activity are currently permitted we have included those elements within the action plan for completeness and to

recognise that there remains a possibility that there could be regression as well as progression, on a local or national level, depending on the prevalence of COVID-19 within the community.



The Government announced recreational team sport will be permitted from 11th July 2020. Inherent in this announcement is a recognition social distancing can be breached in certain narrow circumstances required by Rugby League during training and play.

Set out below is a Return to Play timetable aligned to the existing Community Rugby League Return to Play Plan. This timetable

sets out when the various formats of the game can safely return based on the mitigation of transmission risk and the prevalence of COVID-19 within the community being low enough that the Government Alert Levels remain at 3 or below.

In the event there are localised lockdowns in place the level of Rugby League activity will reflect the government advice at any given time relating to those specific areas.

TABLE 1: THE RFL RTP ROADMAP



	What	Who	Format	When
Stage 1	Home based virtual activity.			Permitted
Stage 2	Socially distanced fitness and skills activity in groups.			Permitted (Limited to max 6)
Stage 3	Introduction of social variants including Touch RL, Tag RL and non- contact large group training.			
Stage 3.1	Non-contact social Rugby League offers to return.	Partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try Tag Rugby • Club Foundations • Authorised Touch Providers • Community Club setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • League format • Intra community club activity 	August 7th 2020
Stage 3.2	N/A			
Stage 3.3	Community Club non-contact training permitted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community club training sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training session within a team only 	August 10st 2020
Stage 4	Phased return of full contact. Contact training, localised activity, a phased return of age groups and rule adoptions to reduce face to face contact. Final stage a return to competition.			Commencing September 2020 subject to review
Stage 4.1	Phased return of contact training and X-League	Community clubs	Full contact training session	September 7th 2020
Stage 4.2	Phased return of local activity and games	RFL & Partners	Localised organised activity including matches	October 1st 2020
Stage 4.3	Return to full competition	Member and Affiliate Leagues	Local and national competitions resume	March 1st 2021

STAGE 3 – INTRODUCTION OF SOCIAL VARIANTS AND NON-CONTACT LARGE GROUP TRAINING



Stage 3 | Introduction of social variants and non-contact large group training

- The re-introduction of non-contact Tag Rugby on 7th August will allow RFL partners Try Tag Rugby to introduce a shortened summer season.
- Touch RL is mainly delivered by Professional Club Foundations or via small locally organised leagues. Whilst this activity with rule modifications will be allowed under this action plan, the RFL organised national events will not take place this year. All Touch RL activity will take place locally and community clubs delivering within a community club setting will be expected to comply with the amended Touch rules in place.

- Training sessions would in the main follow social distancing rules of 2m. However, for limited windows within each session we would allow larger groups together to breach social distancing guidelines using appropriate mitigation measures, for example playing a 10-minute game of Touch RL at the end of a training session.

A full review of Stage 3 activity led by the RFL's Clinical Advisory Group will take place at the end of August 2020 prior to Stage 4 activity being sanctioned.

STAGE 4 PHASED RETURN OF CONTACT

Stage 4 | Phased return of contact

- To prepare fully for a return to full contact games at ages 12+ it is necessary to have a period of conditioning and gradual introduction of contact. For games to recommence at 12+ from 1st October 2020 contact training would need to be phased in for this age group from 1st September.
- Given the volume and impact of tackles at our primary age groups (up to U11) are considerably less than at 12+ these younger players do not require the same level of conditioning as players in the older age groups.
- Evidence suggests children of primary school age are also at lesser risk of contracting COVID-19. Taking both these things into account this action plan envisages activity at ages up to and including U11 can recommence in terms of phased contact training from 1st September and game activity potentially starting prior to 1st October 2020 subject to approval from the RFL's Clinical Advisory Group.
- Ensuring all age groups do not recommence at the same time will reduce the pressure on community clubs by not

over burdening them with a high volume of games and people flowing through the facilities whilst they adjust to the new regulations.

- All activity which takes place during 2020 will be delivered locally - where possible within the same local authority area. This will minimise the impact of any local lockdowns and reduce the risk of the spread of the virus by activity taking place over a wider geographical area.
- As the governing body of Rugby League all activity delivered in the remainder of 2020 will be delivered with the oversight of the RFL who will work with partners in each area to deliver a suitable playing offer between the 1st October and 28th November 2020 when the season will finish. Those partners will include the Professional Club Foundations and Playing Leagues who will work alongside the RFL together with the community clubs in their respective areas to ensure players, coaches and other volunteers are educated correctly and appropriate playing opportunities are put in place.
- There will be no return to a competitive playing structure organised by member or affiliate leagues until March 2021 at the earliest. Depending on the prevailing public health situation local and national cup competitions may take place from 1st January 2021.

STAGE 4 PHASED RETURN OF CONTACT



2.1.1 | Physical Disability Rugby League (PDRL)

The RFL's current Return to Play guidance for community clubs also applies to PDRL activity, only if a club or foundation is ready to safely deliver some small group fitness-based activity, they can by strictly following the RFL's guidelines.

However, there are some additional guidelines set out specifically for PDRL players on Return to Play. This is due to experts and medical professionals in England who have identified specific medical conditions and vulnerable groups that, based on current knowledge of the COVID-19 virus, place some people at a greater risk of severe illness.

The RFL's guidance for PDRL players is:

1. Players who are shielding during this period should continue to do so
2. Players who have a high or moderate health risk if infected with COVID-19 need to seek advice and be signed off by a medical professional, such as their GP prior to participating in any group activity (this is the responsibility of the individual or a parent/guardian if a player is under 18 years old)
3. Proceed with caution if you are signed off and decide whether you are individually ready to participate in any activity your club may start to deliver safely
4. If you are unsure on your risks, seek advice from a medical professional who can advise you on the risks and whether to return to group activity or not
5. Start or continue to take part in the Virtual RL activity available, such as Active at home and the upcoming Virtual Festivals

Given the wider return to recreational team sport the existing guidance for the PDRL community has been revisited. PDRL players will be allowed to commence a phased return to training in line with the wider community game from 1st September 2020 but no fixtures or festivals will take place until January 2021 at the earliest. The additional medical guidelines set out for PDRL Players remain in place.

2.1.2 | Learning Disability Rugby League (LDRL) Return to Play Current Guidance:

Given the specific challenges faced by our LDRL community and Learning Disability Super League Partners, Community Integrated Care, the RFL's recommendation at this stage is that there should be no return to play in the Learning Disability Super League in 2020 in terms of festivals or games.

This is due to experts and medical professionals in England who have identified specific medical conditions and vulnerable groups that, based on current knowledge of the COVID-19 virus, place some people at a greater risk of severe illness. A significant proportion of our LDRL and LDSL community are shielded and will continue to be so. All the LDRL activity is delivered through Professional Club Foundations. It will be at the discretion of each Foundation as to whether any LDRL training takes place during the remainder of 2020 with players who do not have specific medical conditions or are part of a vulnerable group.

STAGE 4 PHASED RETURN OF CONTACT



2.1.3 | Wheelchair Rugby League

As the vast majority of Wheelchair Rugby League (WhRL) activity takes place indoors in a sports hall setting any return to play activity will be linked to guidelines around sport and activity returning in indoor settings. The Government has now confirmed that Leisure Centres and Sports Halls can reopen from 25th July 2020. Whilst there will be no formal competition structure before 1st January 2021 there may be some localised activity in line with the wider community game return involving players who do not have specific medical conditions or are part of a vulnerable group. Given the England Wheelchair Rugby League Team are due to compete in the RLWC2021 Final in the autumn of 2021 there will also be provision made for the national squad to train in accordance with the relevant Government guidance in place and this action plan.

There are some additional guidelines required for Wheelchair Rugby League players on returning to play. This is due to experts and medical professionals in England who have identified specific medical conditions and vulnerable groups that, based on current knowledge of the COVID-19 virus, place some people at a greater risk of severe illness. The RFL's guidance for Wheelchair players is the same as the guidance for PDRL players above.

2.1.4 | Masters Rugby League

Masters Rugby League is a social version of the sport for those aged 35+ with the oldest player being 80+. The rules are modified with the amount of contact (ranging from Tag to full contact) dependent on the players age. Subject to ensuring players who have specific medical conditions or considered as part of a vulnerable group, Masters Rugby League activity can recommence training in line with the rest of the Community Game and a phased return to contact training from 1st September. Localised fixtures can take place from 1st October 2020 although there will be no centrally organised festivals before January 2021 at the earliest.

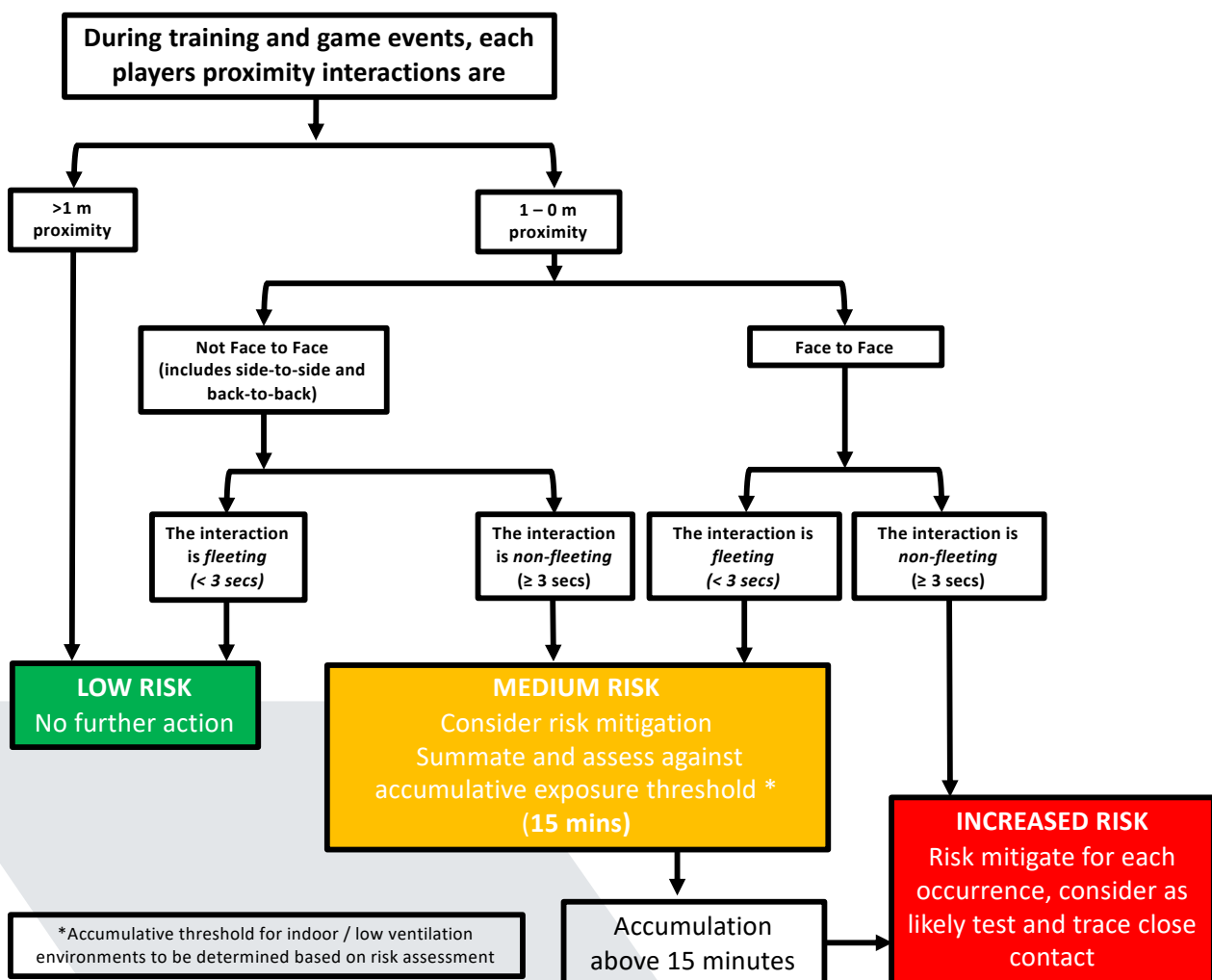
3. ASSESSMENT OF TRANSMISSION RISK SUMMARY



To return safely an assessment of the transmission risk that a return to community Rugby League presents has been carried out. This assessment has included analysis of the Team Sport Risk Exposure Framework as set out below: -

A TEAM SPORT RISK EXPOSURE FRAMEWORK TO INFORM RISK MITIGATION STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT TEST AND TRACE

Ben Jones, Gemma Phillips, Simon Kemp, Keith Stokes



The analysis carried out has considered the following key elements of the framework: -

Droplet transmission: The risk associated with each action in an activity based on duration and proximity of participants. By using the Team Sport Risk Assessment

Framework, we have determined the risk of actions in the playing and training environment and in doing so determined the overall level of risk of taking part in Rugby League activity in its various forms.

3. ASSESSMENT OF TRANSMISSION RISK SUMMARY



Fomite transmission: The risk associated with the handling and transfer of equipment in Rugby League. We have assessed the risk of the handling and transfer of equipment in Rugby League. This is primarily the ball and in the case of Tag Rugby League and Wheelchair Rugby League the tags.

Population: The number of participants likely to take part in the proposed activity plus known risk factors of participants with underlying health conditions or high-risk groups, who wish to participate. This affects particular settings such as Learning and Physical Disability Rugby League, Wheelchair

Rugby League and Masters Rugby League. There may also be less perceived risk with some categories such as Primary age groups.

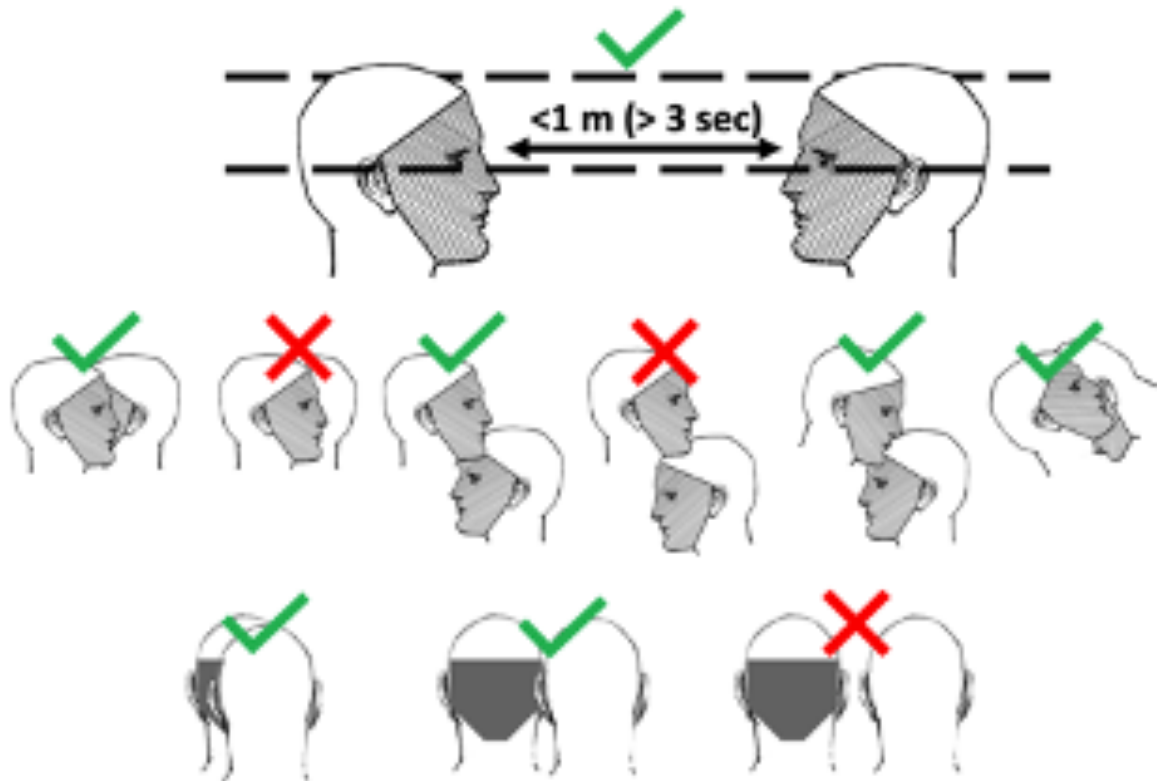
Environment: This is dependent on the type of venue the different variations of the sport would take place in. This has an impact for indoor variations of our sport mainly Wheelchair Rugby League but also in respect of indoor training activity. Each of the following types of Rugby League activity have been risk assessed and classified as follows: -

TABLE 2: RISK ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

	Activity	Team Sport Risk Framework LOW MED INCREASED	Fomite Risk	Population Risk Reduced Risk Low INCREASED	Environmental Risk Outdoor / Indoor
Group 1	Large Group (max 30) Non-contact	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Touch RL	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
	Tag RL	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
	Training session (incorporating Touch and Tag)	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
Group 2	Primary RL (4-12 yrs)	Red	Green	Blue	Green
	Junior Youth	Red	Green	Blue	Green
Group 3	X-League Semi-contact	Red	Green	Green	Green
	Training Full Contact	Red	Green	Green	Green
	Open Age	Red	Green	Green	Green
Group 4	Learning Disability Rugby League	Red	Green	Red	Green
	Physical Disability Rugby League	Red	Green	Red	Green
	Masters Rugby League	Red	Green	Red	Green
Group 5	Wheelchair Rugby League	Yellow	Green	Red	Blue

3.1 DROPLET TRANSMISSION

Using the Team Sport Risk Exposure Framework and face to face guidance below we have analysed the risk factors rating for the different types of Rugby League activity and classified as detailed in Table 2 above.



3.2 FOMITE TRANSMISSION

The mitigation against the possibility of fomite transmission is set out fully in Appendix 1, section 8.3 – Use of equipment. The sharing of equipment must be avoided where possible and where equipment is

shared, equipment must be cleaned before use by another person. Particular attention has been paid to the sanitisation of balls and tags given the greater potential for fomite transmission risk.

3.3 POPULATION



Due to the number of different variations of Rugby League and the age profile of the people playing we have analysed the population risks across the sport. Having liaised with partners and analysed the impact of COVID-19, pre-existing medical conditions and ages we have identified three relevant 'populations' playing Rugby League. These are:

Reduced risk – Children under the age of 16

Low risk – Open age 16+ with no pre-existing medical conditions

Increased risk – Children and adults with pre-existing medical conditions.

Identifying these groups will assist us in facilitating the safe return of Rugby League whilst protecting our most vulnerable.

3.4 ENVIRONMENT

Following the Government announcement on the 9th July 2020 informing us the measures that have been put into place to work toward re-opening grassroots sport and Leisure facilities CIMSPA have been working with Future Active Workforce and Sport England to produce 'Reactivate – return to sport and physical activity with confidence' and issued a framework to support the

sports sector to reopening facilities. This can be accessed here - [UK Active Framework Link](#).

The document gives clear direction of travel for the sector and operators can make it specific to venues and facilities, but the standards are not to be lowered.

4

MITIGATING RISK

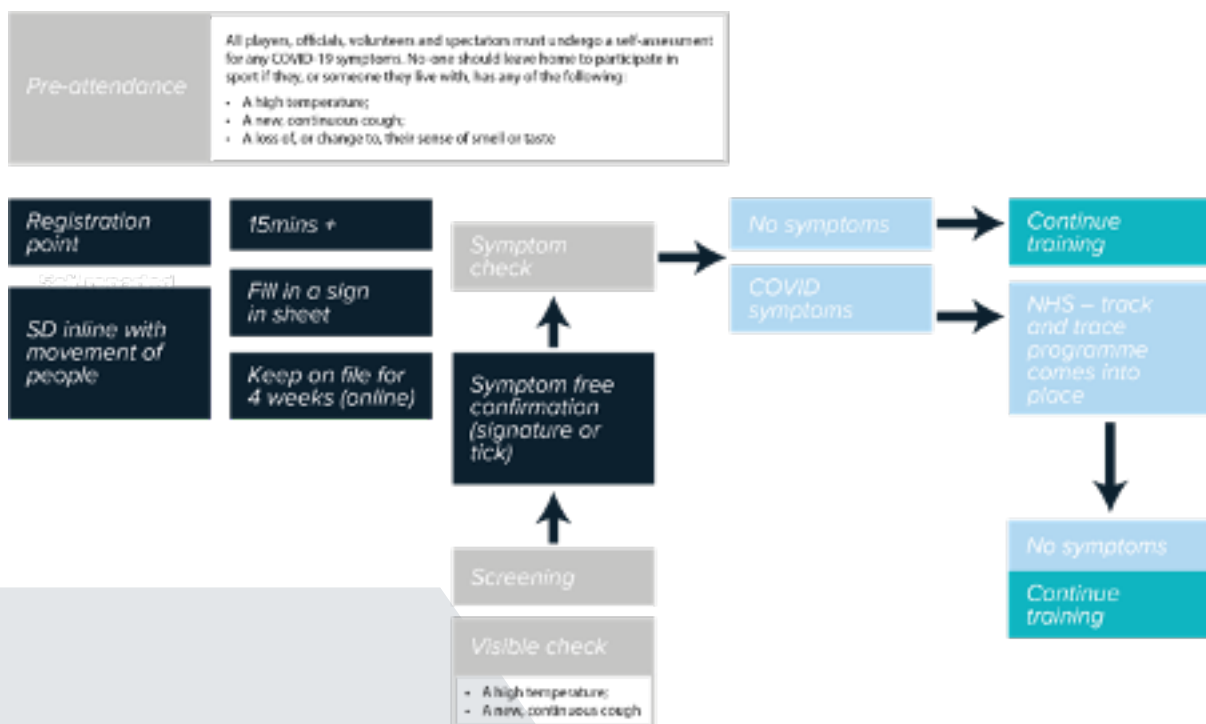


As part of this action plan we will outline the various mitigating factors that have been put in place to minimise the COVID-19 transmission risk whilst taking part in each of the activities outlined above.

We will be asking participants to confirm that they have read and understood the risks associated with playing Rugby League and the transmission of COVID-19.

4.1. PRE-ATTENDANCE SYMPTOM CHECK

All participants (players, coaches, officials, volunteers, and spectators) should check for symptoms of COVID-19, in line with Government guidance.



4.2. TEST AND TRACE



- **All participants (players, coaches, support staff) in the training session have responsibility to notify the Club Covid Officer should they display symptoms of COVID-19 within 48 hours of a training session and or match.**
- Anyone with symptoms should ask for a test online or call to arrange a test by calling 119.
- They must complete the test within 5 days of the symptoms starting.
- Club Covid Officer to direct the infected individual to the National Government's Test and Trace procedures. In England this will mean that individual will have a test within 48 hours. Each nation: England, Scotland, Wales and NI, have different procedures currently.
- In addition to the above advice, Club Covid Officer to contact all individuals that attended the training session and or match in question to advise that an individual within that group has reported symptoms. If the individual is a coach, then all participants of all sessions will need to be contacted.
- If a member of the club presents with symptoms within 48 hours of a training session/game and has been in contact with players and officials in the interim, then training/practice/matches played by the club must be suspended and a period of isolation as set out by the government followed, currently 7 days for an individual and 14 days for members of the household.
- The name of the infected individual is not to be disclosed to protect anonymity.
- All attendees of the session should be advised to isolate for 14 days (as per government guidelines) in case symptoms arise.
- In the event there is a confirmed positive case then the Club Covid Officer should complete the COVID-19 Incident Report Form available [HERE](#).



4.3. USE OF EQUIPMENT



The use of equipment has been addressed in Section 3.2 Fomite Transmission above and more fully in Appendix 1, Section 8.3 – Use of Equipment below.

4.4. BALL TRANSFER

The transfer of balls has been addressed in Section 3.2 Fomite Transmission above and more fully in Appendix 1, Section 8.4 – Ball Transfer.

4.5. RULE ADAPTATIONS

This mitigation would be achieved by making the necessary COVID rule amendments removing high-risk factors, including:

- Scrums
- Pre-game huddles and drinks breaks
- Celebration and gathering after scoring try.
- Having a robust ball and equipment cleaning process
- Clear separation policies for injuries or breaks in play (including hygiene breaks quarterly)
- Try Tag RL, “marker” the person who has made the touch or tag to be at least 2m away from the Play the Ball.

