



## Updated - IRFU Recommendations To Clubs On Updated Government Guidelines

Published August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
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### Introduction:

On August 18<sup>th</sup>, the Government of Ireland announced new public health measures in response to a recent surge in cases of COVID-19.

The IRFU issued recommendations to clubs on August 19<sup>th</sup> to allow clubs implement measures ahead of rugby matches taking place from August 28<sup>th</sup>.

On August 20<sup>th</sup>, Sport Ireland issued further detail on the practical implications of the guidelines of sporting organisations.

The IRFU have been liaising with government stakeholders since the initial announcement and welcome this update. Our recommendations have been revised in line with this new information.

### Summary of changes:

#### What does this mean for rugby matches?

- Additional information on who may be included in a 'behind closed doors event'
- Clarity on the status of club run events
- Access for parents/guardians

#### What does this mean for training?

- Confirmation that a team may be split into training groups/pods of 15 people on a pitch "once sufficient space is available and strict public health protocols are in place."
- Pods of 15 must now include Coach/COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer.

### Participation Programmes:

- 2 tag matches can now take place on the same pitch.
- Pitch classification is based on age-grade.

#### My club is based in Northern Ireland. Are we affected?

On August 20<sup>th</sup>, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed changes to the Coronavirus Health Regulations to reduce the numbers who can gather indoors and outdoors, including in domestic settings. The IRFU will issue recommendations based on these changes in due course.

## IRFU Recommendations To Clubs On Updated Government Guidelines

Irish Rugby is committed to stopping the spread of COVID-19 and the IRFU would like to offer guidance to clubs to help them adhere to these measures while continuing to provide a health and wellbeing outlet for their community.

As clubs prepare for matches in the coming weeks, we understand that these restrictions pose serious challenges - particularly in relation to the restriction of training numbers.

It is paramount however that the rugby community continues to demonstrate safe and responsible behaviours for ourselves and for society.

- Do not attend the club if you feel unwell;
- Social (Physical) distancing, hand hygiene and good respiratory etiquette remain key practices in lessening the risk of COVID-19 transmission and should be observed by all (children, parents, coaches and spectators);
- Players should travel alone to rugby training or with members of the same household;
- Ongoing completion of the [Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration](#) is mandatory for all club members;
- Clubs should limit the size of training groups to minimise the impact of the symptom/case response plan and contact tracing;
- Use the COVID-19 Tracker App or StopCOVID NI Proximity App;
- Wear face coverings where appropriate;
- Observe any travel restrictions in place.



### What are the new government measures?

Outdoor gatherings and events are now limited to 15 people, however sporting events and matches can continue to take place behind closed doors.

These measures are in place until September 13th at the earliest.

The 15 outdoor participant restrictions do not apply to competition, events, or tournaments.

Clubs with competition, events, tournaments planned up to September 13th 2020 should go ahead as planned with strict public health measures and protocols in place. No spectators should attend these events.

A behind closed doors event can include: 'Any individual involved in the participation, running, delivery, and broadcasting (if relevant) of the event'.

These provisions will be subject to strict protocols which will be issued in the coming days.

### **What does this mean for rugby matches?**

Friendly fixtures are permitted from August 28th – August 30th between clubs within the same province. The Competition Stage of the IRFU's Return To Rugby Summary Roadmap for clubs commences on September 5th.

These matches will be able to go ahead as planned, however there will be a strict ban on the attendance of any spectators.

Gatherings, including social gatherings, before or after events must be avoided.

Participants should practice 2 metre physical distancing before and after events, during breaks in play, on the touch lines and team huddles should be avoided.

The IRFU will issue further match-day guidelines to clubs ahead of the start of competitive fixtures. These will include clarification on use of clubhouses and changing facilities.

### **What about training?**

The government have advised that groups exercising outdoors should be limited to 15 people, including training sessions.

The IRFU advises clubs to work in set training groups/pods during this period. There should be one team per pitch at any one time and as directed there should be no mixing between groups.

Training can take place multiple pods of 15 once sufficient space is available and strict public health protocols are in place.

### **Numbers of coaches and players per group:**

- **Under U12:** Under these restrictions, at least 2 coaches and a COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer must be present in each training group/pod of 15.
- **U12-Adult:** A COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer and at least one coach must be present in each training group/pod.

A Coach may act as a COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer if already assigned the role.

**\*Training Plans:** Suitable training plans should be prepared, electronically sent to the COVID-19 Club Safety Officer for approval and such plans should be in line with government advice.

**\*Minimising numbers in the Clubs:** The number of players/coaching staffs in the club should be limited depending on government advice at any one time. Training session(s) should be appropriately arranged so that players are absolutely clear as to the date and time of their training.

Once arranged, players must stay in their allocated day/time slot and cannot observe, participate or otherwise be involved on other sessions.

Multiple additional training sessions may be required to ensure that all players can access training safely.

The club should also consider and implement all activities that can be completed from home, such as Strength and Conditioning programmes.

*\*Source: IRFU's COVID-19 Health & Safety Operating Procedures For Clubs.*

### **Is contact allowed?**

Contact in training is still permitted under government guidelines. The IRFU's Contact Stage Guidelines recommend the introduction of Match Contact Skills from August 17<sup>th</sup>, but this type of training must adhere to the current measures.

### **How is age-grade rugby affected by these measures?**

All event and training restrictions and coach/compliance officer restrictions apply.

Parents/Guardians attending in a safeguarding /supervisory capacity are not classified as a spectator however strict social distancing and public health guidelines should be adhered to at all times.

In that context, one parent/guardian per child is permitted to attend at a sporting event, including a game or training session, should they consider it necessary.

Pitch classification is based on age-grade. [Click here for the latest Mini Rugby Regulations.](#)

### **What about participation programmes?**

Localised sanctioned tag rugby and touch rugby events are classified as sporting events and may take place behind closed doors in line with the latest public health measures.

Two tag or touch matches can now take place on the same pitch.

The IRFU's Canterbury Give It A Try programme is classed as a training session.

Canterbury Give It A Try programmes may operate on mini-rugby sized pitches to facilitate multiple sessions.

Participants of all IRFU programmes must adhere strictly to government guidelines and public health advice at all times.

### **If our club has a gym, can it stay open?**

Gyms can remain open with strict distancing and other appropriate protective measures in place.

It is recommended that those responsible for managing these facilities should have completed a risk assessment before reopening to manage the public health risk for their customers, attendees, participants, and staff.

### **The government recommends a completed risk assessment before reopening. What does that mean for my club?**

Under the IRFU's Return To Rugby Guidelines, all clubs are required to have a completed risk assessment and a COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan in place prior to commencing any rugby activity.

A club's Health & Safety Plan must account for the reopening of its facilities, spectators and match-day activities where allowed.

### **We have an AGM coming up. Can it go ahead?**

Indoor gatherings and events are now limited to 6 people from no more than 3 households. Clubs should look at online alternatives where possible.

### **My club is based in Northern Ireland. Are we affected?**

On August 20th, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed changes to the Coronavirus Health Regulations to reduce the numbers who can gather indoors and outdoors, including in domestic settings. The IRFU will issue recommendations based on these changes in due course.

