



We have updated our guidelines following further information from the NI Executive on 23 July allowing spectators to return to outdoor competitive games from 24 July.

Below is some guidance to help interpret what this means for clubs and stakeholders at different levels of the game.

Please note changing rooms are to remain closed.

Football clubs which do not have control over access to the football ground

- Spectators are still not permitted in these circumstances; numbers at games should remain restricted to those deemed essential for the game as previously outlined.
- For underage games (U18 and below) if a parent is required to transport the player to the game then they may attend in addition to the essential numbers previously outlined.

Football clubs which can control access to the football ground

- Where the match organiser can ensure social distancing can be maintained throughout the game (including during entry and exit) spectators may be permitted.
- Please observe the following guidelines:

Guidelines for football clubs permitting spectators

Coronavirus (Covid-19) remains active in Northern Ireland and everyone must help prevent the virus from spreading. It is important that spectators are aware that the risks posed by Covid-19 cannot be eliminated, however the following guidelines should be followed to reduce this risk. Any club venue which permits spectators should ensure up to date Covid-19 signage is on display.

- Clubs must advise that no spectator should attend a game if they are displaying symptoms of Covid-19.
- Anyone considered high risk, or who is in close contact with someone considered high risk, should not attend a game.
- All venues should be subject to a risk assessment prior to an organised sporting event or fixture being held.

- The social distancing requirement to be applied is two metres.
- A crowd management plan should be in place, incorporating the controlled entry and exit of spectators (including staggering entry times) and one-way systems inside the venue to maintain social distancing and minimise the risk of crowd congestion.
- Where possible ticketing/booking systems should be in place to assist with social distancing in, for example, a seated venue. This approach will also help manage numbers, ie predefined safe capacity.
- Additional hygiene provision, such as hand washing and sanitiser stations, should be in place and well stocked, particularly at entry and exit points to venues and other key points.
- Spectator medical requirements should be considered along with the availability of a Covid isolation room(s).
- Spectators must observe social distancing rules at all times (including during entry and exit); this means a distance of two metres must be kept between spectators unless they are from the same household.
- Spectators should be reminded to allow time to enter a venue, refrain from any unnecessary movement around a venue and to respect social distancing for other spectators and ‘family bubbles’.
- We strongly recommend that spectators wear face coverings.
- Spectators should be encouraged to provide their name and contact number when entering the football ground to assist with any contact tracing requirements. Clubs should follow appropriate GDPR guidelines for storing this information and dispose of it within 30 days.
- Spectators should be made aware of the current Department of Health/Public Health Agency messaging on track and trace and the arrangements for Covid testing:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/contact-tracing>

- Spectators must not enter the field of play at any time.

Capacity

Certificated football grounds

- Venues with a ‘Safety in Sports Ground General Certificate’ need to review and amend their management plans in conjunction with their local licencing authority to include Covid-19; as a condition of the Safety certificate a ‘Qualified Person’ at the ground must notify the council in advance of the specified activity taking place and shall carry out a risk assessment and ensure appropriate safety management controls are put in place proportionate to the risk associated with that fixture.

Other grounds

- Whilst the NI Executive does not specify maximum numbers of spectators, it does emphasise that social distancing must be adhered to at all times (including during entry and exit). Clubs have a responsibility to ensure that the number of spectators admitted is adequately managed to ensure social distancing can be achieved.
- For clubs without spectator accommodation and where all four sides of the pitch can be accessed by spectators, we recommend spectator numbers should not exceed 120*.
- For clubs without spectator accommodation and where all four sides of the pitch cannot be accessed, clubs should restrict spectator numbers to 40* per available sideline and 20* per available byline; these numbers are designed to ensure two metres social distancing can be achieved at all times.
- The Irish FA strongly recommends clubs adopt a cautious approach when deciding the number of spectators that are allowed to enter.

**These are maximum numbers and social distancing guidelines must be adhered to at all times*