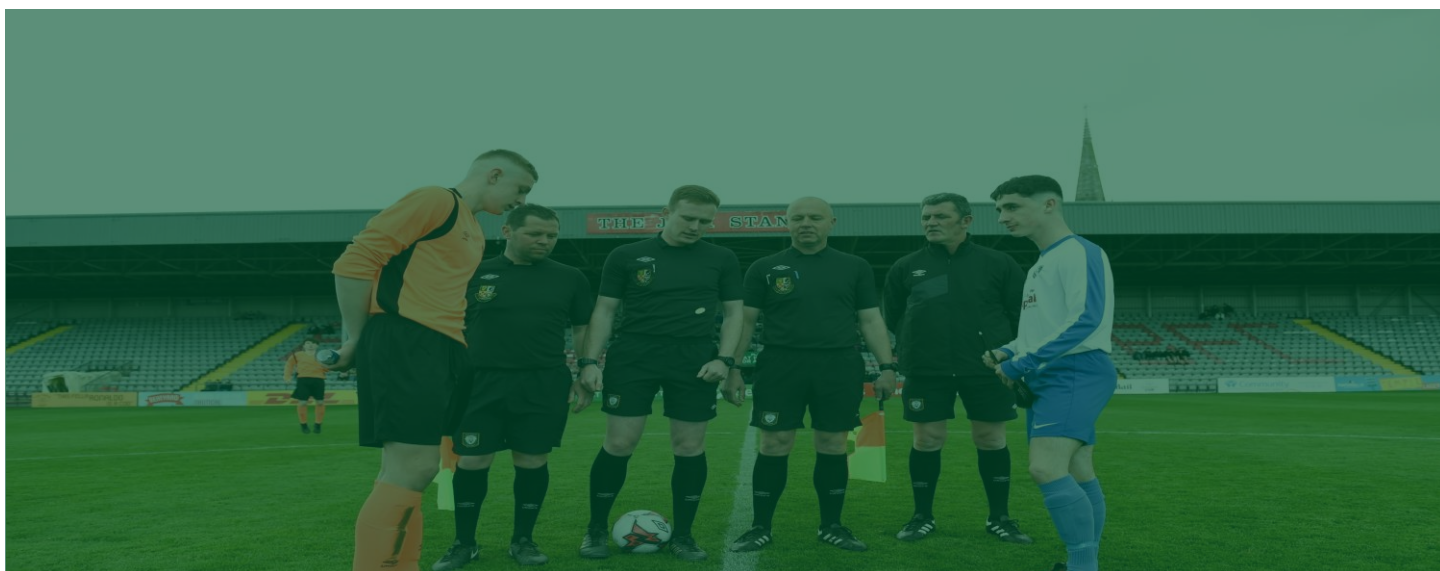


# SAFER RETURN TO PLAY



## MATCH DAY PROTOCOL

### Grassroots Referee Observers



1ST EDITION 6TH JULY 2020

FAI Referee Department



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# Introduction

Observers play an invaluable role in the development of our match officials and are an integral part of the game. This 'Safer Return To Play – Grassroots Referee Observers Protocol' provides guidance and direction to referee observers as we return to football.

The primary aim of this protocol is to minimise risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus to as low a level as possible. This protocol must be followed in conjunction with all FAI Protocols which can be found [here](#)

All guidelines are underpinned by the principle that each individual should only engage with practices that protect their health and safety as they return to observing in line with Government and HSE directives. We must take personal responsibility around our own health when making our decision to return.

The exact date of a return to play will be determined by the league you are assigned to and this will be guided by the Affiliate body and Football Association of Ireland.

Referees have been provided with a protocol on pre and post game procedures and match practices. This protocol has been circulated to the Observer group and should be read in conjunction with this document. The protocol is available at the following link [Match Day Protocol – Grassroots Referees](#)





## Availability

- It is important that Observers are afforded the choice on whether to return or not. Be assured observers are under no pressure to resume their duties and while some of you may be eager to return immediately, others may wish to adopt a 'wait & see' approach. Whatever your choice is, it is imperative that you make your decision based on your own personal circumstances.
- To ensure Observers can plan which matches to attend referees have been advised to keep their Observer informed of their availability.

## Laws of the Game

- If your league is resuming its 2019/20 season, then the 2019/2020 Laws of the Game will apply to the matches in your league until the season concludes.
- If your league is starting its 2020/21 season, then the 2020/2021 Laws of the Game will apply. A summary of the changes can be found here [LOTG Changes 2020.2021](#)
- A full version of the 2020/2021 Laws of the Game can be downloaded from the following link [LOTG](#)
- Training will be provided by the Referee Department for observers allocated to leagues operating under the new laws.

## Key Points

- Clubs are permitted to resume full contact training and training games between teams from the same club from June 29<sup>th</sup>. Referees have been informed they are **not** permitted to referee these games.
- Clubs are permitted to resume friendly games from July 11<sup>th</sup> and leagues are permitted to organise competitive fixtures from July 18<sup>th</sup>
- **If you are unwell, stay at home and contact your GP**
- Adhere to social distancing of 2 metres, where possible
- Practice good hand hygiene with regular hand washing and the use of hand sanitiser
- Practice good coughing and sneezing etiquette - [HSE Coughing and sneezing Guidelines](#)





## Pre match preparation

The day before the game the observer should contact the match official and agree a protocol for the post-match debrief.

- Observers and referees have the option of conducting the debrief by phone or video call, where possible. Timelines should be agreed.
- If the match official(s) and observer agree, the post-match debrief may take place at the venue but must be outdoors and must not exceed more than 10 minutes.
- The referee observer report should be sent by email to the match official(s) within five working days of the match.

## Before the game

If you are unwell stay at home and contact your GP. The symptoms include:

- Temperature of 38C or greater
- Sudden onset of cough or shortness of breath
- Sudden loss of the sense of taste or smell

A Risk Assessment of the venue must be carried out. The protocols are available at the following [LINK](#)

**This is the responsibility of the club. Referees or observers will have no part in policing this.**

The club must appoint the COVID-19 Compliance officer or a designated club member to act as the first point of contact for the match official on arrival. The observer should make themselves known to this person on arrival.

### a) Arrival

- Observers should arrive as close to kick-off time as is feasible
- Observers should travel to games in line with [HSE Guidelines](#)
- Observers are advised not to enter the dressing room facilities before the match
- Bring your own hand sanitiser
- Bring your own labelled, food and water if needed and seal them in a plastic bag
- On arrival, observe and obey the COVID-19 signage
- Observers should observe 2 metres social distancing where possible
- Avoid greeting players, coaches, match officials with handshakes, fist bumps, high fives
- Spectators must adhere to 2 metres social distancing at all times





## During the game

The following protocols apply to all participants in the match.

**It is not the referee or the referee observer's responsibility to ensure that all participants, players, managers, spectators adhere to this protocol.**

- Practice good coughing and sneezing etiquette
  - No hand greetings are permitted (handshakes, fist bumps, high fives)
  - No spitting is permitted
- a) Social distancing**
- Observers should adhere to social distancing of 2 metres where possible,
- b) Half Time**
- Observers are advised not to enter the dressing room facilities at half time.

## After the game

- a) At the final whistle**
- Observers are advised not to enter the dressing room facilities after the match
  - No hand greetings are permitted (handshakes, fist bumps, high fives)
  - Practice good coughing and sneezing etiquette
  - No spitting is permitted
  - Use hand sanitiser after the game
  - Observers must adhere to 2 metres social distancing when exiting the venue
  - Wash your hands when you get home
- b) Post-match debriefs**
- Observers and referees have the option of conducting the debrief by phone or video call, when possible
  - If the match official(s) and observer agree, the post-match debrief may take place at the venue but must be outdoors and must not exceed more than 10 minutes



# Contact Tracing

- Contact tracing is a key component to all activities around the game
- The COVID-19 Compliance Officer must keep a register of ALL Players, Match Officials, Coaches, Parents/Guardians, Volunteers and Administrators attending the match
- Each club is responsible for providing its own COVID-19 Compliance Officer with a list of attendees for every game, home or away
- This will include name and contact details
- Observers must comply with this requirement
- This register should be kept electronically and be updated continually

**This is a live document and is subject to change on a regular basis as Government and FAI updates are announced.**

