

To all Youth Chairs, Age Grade Coaches, Team Managers and Parents,

You may have seen that the RFU have very recently released new guidance on return to rugby. On the back of that, and in the light of questions we have received from the community, we felt it might be useful to issue some additional guidance in the context of Kent Rugby.

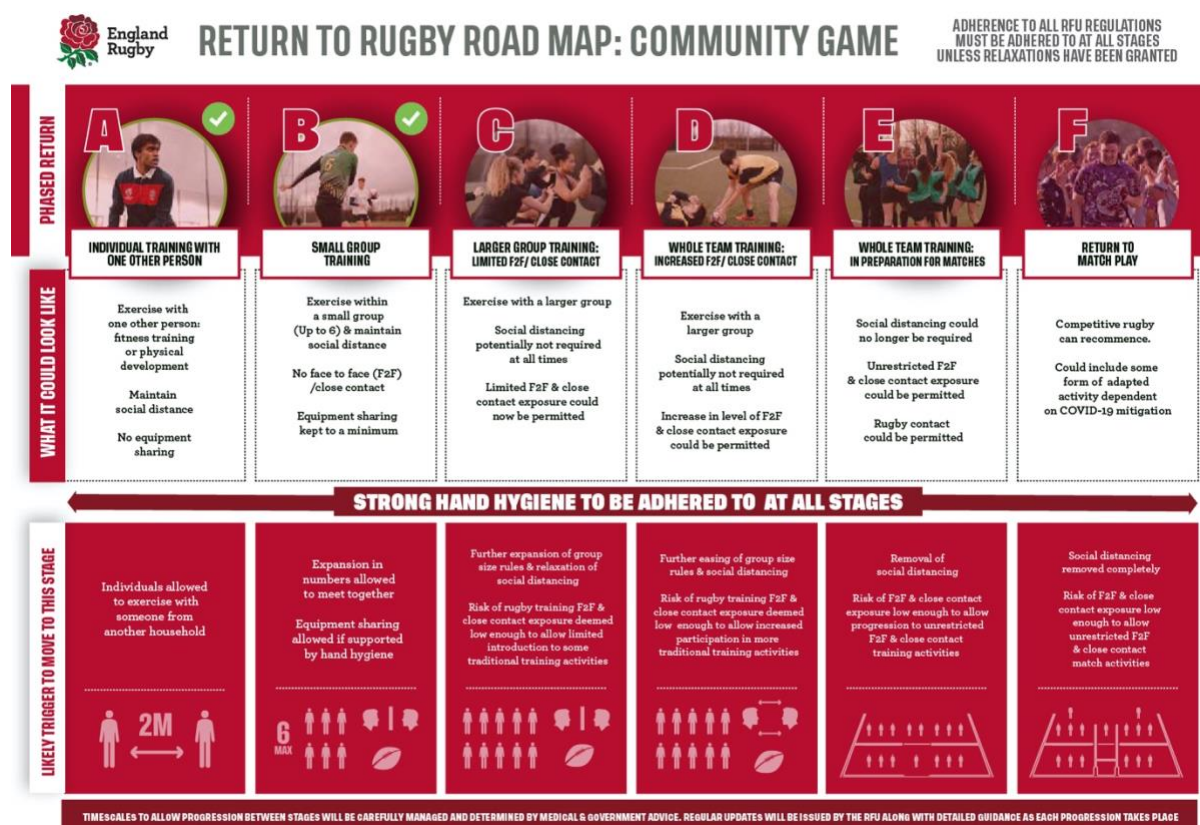
We are currently in the “Out of Season” period. In normal times this would mean that clubs would be permitted to run NON-CONTACT training for U5s to U18s, subject to the provisions of Regulation 15.8.2 that states, "The RFU has specifically developed best practice principles on out of season activity to ensure players have sufficient rest and recovery over the summer. The RFU expects those involved in age grade rugby to respect these principles in the interest of player welfare. These principles can be found at www.englandrugby.com/participation/coaching/age-grade-rugby/codes-of-practice.”

Children of primary school age are to be encouraged to participate in non-rugby activities that develop fundamental movement and core skills.

However, we are not in normal times and any and all training sessions must adhere to the “new normal” protocols established.

ROAD MAP

The following infographic gives an overview of the 6 stages laid out by the RFU which take us from now to the point of return to competitive matches. This infographic must be read with the associated notes which can be found [here](#).



The roadmap consists of six stages. **We are now in stage B.**

- A. Individual training with one other person
- B. Individual training in small groups**
- C. Larger group training with limited face-to-face or close contact
- D. Whole team training with increased face-to-face or close contact
- E. Whole team training in preparation to play matches
- F. Return to matches against other teams

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR AGE GRADE RUGBY?

Clubs must risk assess all return to rugby activity properly and ensure that safe and adequate distancing between groups is strictly observed and adhere to the following advice:

- a) Club houses are open at the discretion of the club for access to toilets and pitches; take away food and drink can be provided.
- b) Rugby fitness training for individuals can take place in bubbles of six individuals; if a coach is involved, they are part of the group of six.
- c) The **two-metre social distancing rule still applies**
- d) The RFU's guidance would be that no more than one group should be active on each quarter of any pitch.
- e) Equipment sharing (including balls) should be kept to a minimum
- f) Provision must be made for strong hand hygiene practice before and after.
- g) Parents/carers observing a session at a distance from a safeguarding perspective is permitted, without them being part of the participating group.
- h) **Under NO circumstances** must age grade players train at the same time as adult players and clear in / out strategies must be in force where one group ends and the other begins.

THE RFU DOES NOT ANTICIPATE A RETURN TO AGE GRADE GROUP ACTIVITY UNTIL WE MOVE TO STAGE C.

WHAT SHOULD A RISK ASSESSMENT INCLUDE?

Your risk assessment should include at least the following:

- how many players can you safely accommodate, given appropriate ratios of coaches to players?
- are there adequate sanitising stations and will everyone be encouraged to use them?

- what procedures are in place to check the well-being of volunteer coaches, children and parents on arrival?
- what is the protocol if someone attends showing signs of COVID-19 (i.e. will they be sent away or will the club actively engage in the government track and trace scheme and put everyone into self-isolation?),
- are players able to arrive on foot or by bicycle (thus avoiding non-essential travel by vehicle)?
- have you considered the risk exposure for and from volunteer coaches? (especially where a volunteer coach is working alongside others outside of the bubble)
- have you considered how you are going to deal with a player who is injured during training, (cuts, sprains etc can all occur readily in age grade rugby activities and are more likely to after a period of inactivity).
- will players be encouraged to wash all kit and clean boots etc on returning home, etc.
- is social distancing signage available to attending parents/ carers
- will the activities you engage in support England Rugby best practice for out of season activities for age grade players?

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE 2020-21 SEASON

There are many implications of a staged return to play. In relation to the 20/21 season these fall into four main areas:

1. The competitive programme. Depending on when it is possible for the season to commence (currently three scenarios are contemplated – September, November or January) there may need to be changes to the competitive programmes, including leagues, cup competitions and representative rugby.

The RFU have an Age Grade review group considering this and anticipate being able to publish their recommendations later in June.

KCRFU will follow guidance; currently we do NOT anticipate starting the scheduled season in September as we will need to evaluate the return to school protocols as well as RFU guidance. Provisions are in place to run truncated forms of all Age Grade competitions and we will announce these as soon as we have a clear view of what the season might look like.

2. Rugby activity in clubs. We recognise the importance of clubs being able to offer rugby activity – both to retain their players (particularly at a time when other sports may be able to commence earlier) and to protect their revenue streams. Should it be necessary to delay the return to normal rugby activity it will be important to have alternatives in place. The RFU is working on options to support this and aim to publish these by the end of June. This will include a range of things from alternative activity for mini and junior players on Sunday mornings through to potential temporary law amendments to the game to enable some activity to happen.
3. Rugby activity in schools, colleges and universities. Recognising the significant amount of rugby played in education settings we recognise the importance of

maintaining a rugby offer when these institutions begin to return to some degree of normality. We are working on options and suggestions for this and would seek to have these available for the start of the 20/21 term/season.

4. Clubhouses and indoor facilities. As government regulations and guidance change in relation to indoor facilities advice and guidance for clubs will be updated. Clubs are reminded of the need to undertake comprehensive risk assessments before reopening any facilities.

Debby Park
Kent Rugby Youth Chair
June 2020