



#### Version Control

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|-----|---|-----------------------------|
| 1.0 | Initial version   | 29 <sup>th</sup> March 2021 |
| 1.1 | Updated using current experience and scientific research and latest government guidance, step 3 and 22 <sup>nd</sup> June | 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2021   |
| 2.0 | Updated after government guidance, step 4   | 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2021  |

Guidance for a Return to Powerchair Football

Guidance Document

Version 2.0

## Introduction

In March 2020, The Wheelchair Football Association took the decision to cease all powerchair football activity until further notice due to COVID-19. This document outlines guidance and advice on the return to powerchair activities and has been developed alongside FA guidance and the latest government guidance.

The WFA established their 'Return to Powerchair Football' roadmap, providing an overview of each step to explain how a return to activity is envisaged in a phased process.

It is also important to note that whilst Government guidance regarding COVID-19 is continuously evolving and being published, The WFA will only move steps in our roadmap following careful consideration and professional counsel with specific reference to our sport and its participants.

Previous government guidance meant that, we were able to permit activity up to Stage 3 of our roadmap upon our initial return. This was due to the government exemption on numbers of people able to participate in an indoor sporting activity. However, feedback from our community played a key role in decision making to that point, therefore, activity was permitted as of 29.3.21 to include:

- Playing powerchair football individually
- Training activities in small groups, maintaining 2m separation at all times working on movement and technical skills (full games with contact are not permitted).
- Enabling events where the guidance and risk assessment is accepted by all those taking part.

Updated government guidance, step 3 and June 22<sup>nd</sup> identified that organised indoor sport must adhere to the relevant capacity restrictions for indoor sport facilities including allowing a minimum of 100 sq ft (9 sq. metres) per person for all people in the venue.

This number is **inclusive** of players, coaches and parents/personal attendants. This is in order to provide clubs with the flexibility to establish group numbers of their choice, dependent on the needs of their players and their club as a whole.

**On 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021, the government and FA removed gathering limits. However, The WFA recommends keeping numbers present to a minimum, using the 100 sq ft per person as a guide, based on the needs of The WFA community and feedback received from our membership on an initial return to activity.**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021, having had several weeks of using the guidance / risk assessment and using further understanding of infection incidence, testing availability and scientific research the guidance (version 1.1) was updated (but not issued) in the following areas:

- Testing
- Continuous surveying of players
- Shouting
- Ventilator and cough assist use

On 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021, the government's step 4 relaxations of Covid restrictions were introduced. Likewise, the FA guidance is also relaxed accordingly. Whilst almost all mitigations are no longer legally enforceable, wording still exists in government documents about advising continued restrictions for clinically extremely vulnerable people and at events where there is high risk [meaning both likelihood and impact] of infection transmission. Also, the FA are still advising precautions are continued.

This means we are able to permit activity up to **Stage 5** of The WFA Roadmap at this time.

**In addition to existing mitigations, in response to the increasing prevalence of cases in the public environment, there will now be a need to provide EITHER a NHS Covid Pass showing double vaccination OR a negative lateral flow test result.**

Much of the guidance is not legally enforceable and not within current FA or government guidance. However, The WFA constitution states the WFA is responsible for the organising and delivery of the sport of Powerchair Football. All registered and mandated members must adhere to these mitigations. The result of not doing so will be that an event or training organiser will deny access to such individuals.

A full explanation for The WFA position is included in a covering justification letter that is to be read in conjunction with this guidance document.

This guidance has been produced for all members of WFA affiliated powerchair football clubs – club officials, coaches, players, parents and personal assistants in relation to powerchair football activities. FA guidance on indoor football should be used alongside this for further detail on non-powerchair specific football and club best practice.

When preparing for a tournament s/ league event, the event Covid officer / organiser shall use the same guidance as for training sessions, but shall co-ordinate with venue and liaise with all clubs participating to ensure acceptance and adherence.

**DISCLAIMER:**

This guidance is for general information only and does not constitute legal advice, nor it is a replacement for such, nor does it replace any Government or PHE advice; nor does it provide any specific commentary or advice on health-related issues. Readers are also encouraged to check current FA guidance for additional support and football specific advice to follow.

Affected organisations should therefore ensure that they seek independent advice from medical practitioners, or healthcare providers, prior to implementing any re-opening plan, as required. Independent legal advice should be sought, as required and depending on your, or relevant circumstances.

While efforts have been taken to ensure the accuracy of this information at the time of publication, the reader is reminded to check the Government website to obtain the most up-to-date information regarding Government measures.

The Wheelchair Football Association accept no duty of care or liability for any loss occasioned, whether caused by negligence or otherwise, to any person acting or refraining from actions as a result of any material in this guidance. We would strongly recommend that you consult professional advisors on specific issues before acting or refraining from action on any of the contents of this guidance.

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# Guidance – BEFORE activity begins

## ***Clubs***

- Clubs must ensure they are affiliated to the WFA and to their county FA and have their insurance documents in place before any return to activity.
- All clubs must appoint a COVID-19 officer who will lead on the planning for your return to activity. The key duties of the club's COVID-19 Officer are to ensure COVID-19 protocols are followed during sessions in accordance with government, FA & WFA guidelines. (See Appendix B for a COVID-19 officer role description)
- Your COVID-19 officer must also undertake a risk assessment to reduce any foreseeable risks for your activity at your venue, incorporating other club members if required.
- Liaise with your venue on the new procedures that they have in place. You can request confirmation of all relevant risk assessments that have been carried out and request details of any specific risks associated with your club. Considerations include:
  - Entry and exit from venue
  - Toileting provision
  - Any changes to venue heating & ventilation systems
  - Access to disabled parking spaces if the venue is considering limiting car parking spaces.
- Ensure you have a register for all attendees, including necessary contact information.
- Before you return, consult with and provide clear communication with all members of your club about the steps you have taken to make your session(s) safe. This will allow them to familiarise themselves with your new procedures before entering the session. This could also include your expectations of parents/personal attendants when they arrive at your venue.
- Gain written consent from all of your members on their involvement in any activity, either via a written consent form or email trail (Appendix A) before they return to powerchair football activity. With increasing infections and uncertainty over new variant viral strains, clubs shall pro-actively and regularly survey their membership to ensure that consent is still valid.

**(Not within current FA or government guidance, however, to encourage participants to give consent that they understand the processes being put in place to ensure their safety, as well as their responsibilities to ensure their own safety as well, The WFA advise this takes place.)**

- All individuals to undertake a self-assessment prior to attending any training activity for any COVID-19- symptoms. No-one should leave home to participate in powerchair football activity if they, or someone they live with, has any of the following:
  - A high temperature (above 37.8°C);
  - A new, continuous cough;
  - A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste.
  - Waiting for a SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) test result\*

In addition to the above, attendees MUST provide:

1. Proof of full vaccination, where both doses received have been received no less than 2 weeks before the event. Evidence will be accepted in the form of a screenshot or pdf download from your NHS COVID Pass on the NHS App or a copy of the English vaccination letter. A vaccination card will not be accepted.

For more information on how to collect the required evidence, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/demonstrating-your-covid-19-status>

OR

2. Proof of negative Lateral Flow Test (LFT) Result. LFTs are free and accessible via <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>. To complete the test you will need to follow the simple instructions included within the home test pack and input your results via <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result>. You will receive an email or text from the NHS with proof of the result which must be provided as evidence. You MUST complete the LFT no more than 24 hours before attending the session. The reason for the testing requirement is two-fold; (i) tests are freely available and contributes to a lower risk to the community and (ii) the “Delta” variant symptoms now include sore throat and runny nose, thereby adding to the ambiguity of Covid symptoms.

This check should be done before each training session and must be recorded in regular risk assessments and it is important to note that no training session or event shall take place without this having been done.

- Register for a NHS QR code and display the NHS QR code poster at your venue. We encourage you to discuss this with your venue as to whether you need to establish a code specifically for your activity or if your facility has created one. More information can be found <https://www.gov.uk/create-coronavirus-qr-poster>

- All members must download the NHS COVID-19 app to use to 'check-in' to your location.
- Ask participants to arrive shortly before the session starts and depart promptly when it finishes.
- If you collect money from your members, payment for sessions should be made online or via contactless card payment where possible to avoid handling of cash.

## **Coaches**

- All coaches to undertake a self-assessment prior to attending any training activity for any COVID-19 symptoms. No-one should leave home to participate in powerchair football activity if they, or someone they live with, has any of the following:
  - A high temperature (above 37.8°C);
  - A new, continuous cough;
  - A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste.
  - Waiting for a SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) test result\*

Provide either an NHS Covid pass or a LFT result, as described above.

This check should be done before each training session and must be recorded in regular risk assessments and it is important to note that no training session should take place without this having been done.

- Consider whether timings of your sessions need to change
- Establish your initial groupings if you have multiple sessions to deliver and communicate this to your members.
- Plan sessions that feature activities that maintain 2m distancing, if possible
- Be sensitive to player/parent concerns regarding a return to activity. We advise against encouraging players to return to activity if they do not feel confident to do so.
- Coaches must have an in-date FA DBS check and FA safeguarding certificate.
- Download the NHS COVID-19 app to use to 'check-in' to your location.



### Travel to the venue

- Coaches must travel to the venue on their own or with members of their own household or support bubble where applicable. Please remember there should be no car-sharing with anyone outside your household or support bubble at this time.

## ***Players, Parents and Personal Assistants***

- Ensure you are aware of the changes made at your club ahead of a return to activity, following the guidelines provided by the government, The FA and The WFA.
- For parents, you or your child may be anxious or unsure whether to resume previous activities, such as football. Please only support their return to powerchair football activity when they feel confident to do so.
- Parents to provide consent to your club that you/your child is happy to return to activity and you are aware of the changes made.
- All players, parents and personal assistants to undertake a self-assessment prior to attending any training activity for any COVID-19 symptoms. No-one should leave home to participate in powerchair football activity if they, or someone they live with, has any of the following:
  - A high temperature (above 37.8°C);
  - A new, continuous cough;
  - A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste
  - Waiting for a SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) test result\*

Provide either an NHS Covid pass or a LFT result, as described above.

This check should be done before each training session and must be recorded in regular risk assessments and it is important to note that no training session should take place without this having been done.

- Follow government best practice guidance for travel to venues
- Download the NHS COVID-19 app to use to 'check-in' to your location.

**\*Not within current FA or government guidance, but is considered suitable by The WFA based on the needs of the powerchair community.**

# Guidance – AT & DURING activity

## *Clubs*

- Complete a register of attendance, inclusive of parent/personal attendants.
- Club personnel to wear masks.
- Provide hand sanitiser for members and encourage people to bring their own as good hygiene practice.
- Provide a bin for the disposal of any PPE equipment after activity.
- Establish a designated area/areas in your venue for individual players to transfer into their playing chair and keep belongings, 2m distanced from the next area.
- Allocate a specific area for the use of a club hoist for operation away from others. It should also be disinfected between uses.
- Club equipment and club chairs should only be manoeuvred by club coaches into the venue, wearing gloves. Chairs should then only be manoeuvred by club coaches again once the player has left the venue.
- If club equipment, i.e. chairs, are used by more than one player, the chair must be wiped down before it is used by another player.
- See Appendix C for the background and guidance on the use of aerosol generating procedure equipment.
- A recent BMJ (British Medical Journal) report has indicated that NIV and cough assist equipment should not be attributed as “aerosol generating procedures”, there being no excessive aerosol generation over normal breathing or coughing whilst wearing a mask. Public Health England has been told and advised to withdraw the current guidance in care environments, from which The WFA has used as reference guidance. As such, adherence to Appendix C is discretionary for clubs and events.

## ***Coaches***

- Check into your activity using the NHS COVID-19 app.
- Coach to wear a face mask in the venue during the setting up and delivery of activity.
- Club chairs should only be manoeuvred by club coaches into the venue, wearing gloves.
- Only coaches handle equipment to set up for the delivery of activity.
- Encourage the sanitising of hands before & after the handling of equipment, inclusive of tools for chairs.
- Only coaches to handle footballs and footballs are to be sanitised before and after activity.
- Shouting should not be used as a method of communication unless in case of an emergency or immediate danger. The use of a microphone is a viable alternative if there is a need to do so. Experience has found that coaches in particular are inadvertently shouting. A personal or wireless PA system must be used.
- Communicate with players from a distance of at least 2m at all times.
- It will take time for players to reach the playing standard they were at pre-lockdown. All coaches must be mindful that this will take time and support accordingly.

## ***Players, Parents and Personal Assistants***

- Players should be accompanied to training sessions by only one parent/guardian or personal assistant unless they require more than one individual due to personal circumstances. If players require more than one parent/guardian or personal assistant to accompany them to sessions, then the club lead should be notified in advance.
- Players, parents and personal assistants are not to touch any equipment other than their own.
- Check into your activity using the NHS COVID-19 app.
- Maintain a distance of at least 2m at all times, except during play.
- Use hand sanitiser upon entering the hall.
- Parents/personal attendants to wear a face mask if they remain in the venue during the activity.
- Players to wear a mask/visor where possible.
- Players to maintain at least 2m separation during any break in activity.
- If a player becomes ill during a session, they should leave the session and go home as soon as possible.
- It will take time for players to reach the playing standard they were at pre-lockdown. All parents must be mindful that this will take time and support accordingly.
- Non-essential parents/personal attendants to leave the playing venue during activity to maintain reduced numbers.

## Guidance – AFTER activity

- Encourage a prompt exit from the venue, maintaining 2m distancing.
- Use sanitiser before leaving.
- Parent or personal assistant to return player equipment to club storage area or vehicle for loading if it does not travel with them.
- Coaches, parents or personal assistants to pack up equipment at the completion of activity and sanitise appropriately.
- Clubs should keep a register of attendance for a minimum of three weeks after the sessions to contact members if somebody who attended the session tests positive for COVID-19.
- If members develop any coronavirus symptoms (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss/change of sense of smell or taste) within 14 days of attending a powerchair football session, they should notify their COVID-19 Officer immediately. Individuals should seek a test promptly and follow the NHS Track and Trace procedure (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/>).
- The COVID-19 Officer should contact everyone who attended that session to advise them that an individual within the group has reported symptoms and that they should self-isolate.

## Guidance – Safeguarding

- Safeguarding protocols must be strictly adhered to at all points of planning and delivery. Clubs are responsible for continuing to ensure the environment is safe and implement your safeguarding procedures.
- It is essential that consent is secured from all players prior to a return to activity.
- Whilst some members of the community may have coped well during lockdown, others may not have and their initial experiences outside may have been very difficult. This must be considered when players initially return to activity.
- Please check in with your players to see how they are doing and how they have been coping.
- If you have any major concerns there are different options available for you to report them:
  - To your club welfare officer
  - To your county FA designated safeguarding officer
  - By emailing The FA Safeguarding Team at [safeguarding@TheFA.com](mailto:safeguarding@TheFA.com)
  - If urgent and you cannot contact your club, league or county FA designated safeguarding officer, you should call the NSPCC 24-hour helpline on 0808 800 5000
  - If it is an emergency because a child or children are at immediate risk, then call the Police on 999.

## Appendix A

### Consent from Players, Parents and Personal Assistants

The safe return to sport for the powerchair football community is a priority for all of us. Clubs must secure consent from players under the age of 18 and it is strongly advised to secure consent from those 18 and above.

It is an individual's choice whether they return to powerchair football based on their own assessment of their individual risk, upon the advice and guidance of their GP, and ultimately whether they are comfortable and happy to do so.

Clubs need to decide how they retain a record of those who have given consent (e.g. retain email, log consent form).

Clubs may wish to create their own form or to use an example such as **FA safeguarding Guidance Notes 8.2** or gain consent via email.

#### Example Email consent message

If consent is sought via e-mail, clubs will need to ensure they use wording such as (delete as appropriate):

*CLUB NAME* requires consent / parental consent before you / your child takes part in any powerchair football activities.

By replying to this e-mail and stating "I consent to take part / I consent for my child to take part", you are confirming that you have read and understood the activities being offered to you / your child and agree with the measures the club has put in place to manage any risks, including its COVID-19 measures in line with current Government guidance.

I confirm I have read and understood the guidance and am aware of my requirements

A copy of the club's risk assessment/management documentation (can be found here/is attached to this email).

If you wish to withdraw consent to participating/your child participating in any or all activities, please notify (Name of Club COVID Contact) in advance, or as soon as possible.

## **Appendix B**

### **COVID-19 Officer Job Description**

- Keep up to date with COVID-19 guidance from The FA, The WFA and national/local Government to ensure the club is compliant.
- Liaise with your session venue to gather information on the venue's COVID-19 guidance to ensure sessions adheres to this.
- Complete a COVID-19 risk assessment for each session, identifying and managing any risks
- Work with the club committee and club coach(es) to ensure that sessions follows the current guidance.
- Collect and safely store completed risk assessments.
- Ensure all players, coaches, personal assistants, and parents attending sessions understand the COVID-19 guidelines at your club.
- Collect and safely store contact details of all players, coaches, personal assistants, and parents who attend each session.
- Manage session delivery and movement within the sports hall to ensure that group sizes are acceptable and 2m distancing is always maintained.
- Work with the Club Welfare Officer to ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are applied.

All players, coaches, parents and personal assistants have a responsibility to notify the COVID-19 Officer should they get symptoms of COVID-19. The individual should seek a test promptly and follow the NHS Track and Trace procedure.

The COVID-19 Officer should contact everyone who attended that session to advise them that an individual within the group has reported symptoms and that they should self-isolate. If the individual is a coach who has led additional sessions, all participants in these sessions need to be contacted.



## Appendix C

### The use of Aerosol Generating Procedure Equipment

- PHE defines Non Invasive ventilation as an aerosol-generating procedure and has produced guidance as to how this should be managed in a health-care setting.
- Increased aerosol production increases the likelihood of aerosol-borne infections, such as COVID-19, being spread *where such infection is present*.
- **Medical evidence published in the BMJ shows that non-invasive ventilation does not produce more aerosols than normal breathing. However, after lobbying, PHE guidance has not yet recognised this and also does not clarify how this compares to singing, shouting or breathing heavily during able-bodied exertion such as badminton, gym-work etc. Accordingly, the guidance for the use of ventilators is now discretionary.**
- PHE categorises individuals as being on low, medium or high-risk care pathways in relation to COVID-19, in healthcare settings. For clarity, high-risk individuals are those who do not meet the pre-activity self-assessment requirements and should *not* attend the session
- Low-risk\*\* individuals are categorised as those who have shielded or isolated themselves and have had no COVID-19 contacts or symptoms. Due to their own vulnerability, ventilator-users are most likely to fall into this category. In addition to the pre-activity self-assessment, ventilator users shall also determine their risk category.
- If individuals are low-risk, additional protection surrounding the use of aerosol-generating procedures are not considered necessary beyond 2m distancing and general transmission reduction measures as stated in section 4 of “COVID-19 infection prevention and control guidance: low risk pathway - key principles”, 16/09/2020. Only low-risk individuals can play football while using a ventilator. Necessary mitigation for medium-risk individuals is to moderate their behaviour to become low-risk. Alternatively, all other participants could comply with full PPE regulations.
- Common sense dictates that it is sensible to maximise distance from ventilator-users and players/playing area while they are not playing.
- Medium-risk\*\*\* players must use ventilators in a separate room from other players.
- Clubs must identify players who use ventilators in their club, and whether they use them to play. Players must be reminded of their responsibility to other players, coaches etc in limiting social activity away from the sport.

- High-pressure aerosol generating activities such as cough-assistance must take place in separate room from others, or ideally, outside.

The following criteria are adapted from PHE definitions for clinical care settings as defined in the "COVID-19 infection prevention and control guidance: low risk pathway - key principles", 16/09/2020 and "COVID-19 infection prevention and control guidance: medium risk pathway - key principles", 16/09/2020.

**\*\* Low-risk:**

- a) Individuals self-assessing as having no COVID-19 contacts or symptoms who have isolated/shielded

AND

- b) individuals who have a negative SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) test result within the previous 72 hours and, have self-isolated since the test date

OR

- c) individuals who have recovered from COVID-19 AND have had at least 3 consecutive days without fever or respiratory symptoms AND a negative SARS-CoV-2 test result

OR

- d) individuals in a facility where testing is undertaken regularly (remains negative)

**\*\*\* Medium-risk:**

- a) individuals who are asymptomatic and are waiting a SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) test result and have no known recent COVID-19 contact

OR

- b) individuals in any care facility where testing is not required or feasible on asymptomatic individuals and therefore infectious status is unknown

OR

- c) asymptomatic individuals who decline testing in any care facility

## **Hospital Visits**

Due to the high risk of hospital acquired COVID-19 infection, any player, coach, parent or personal attendant attending A&E or spending time in hospital as an inpatient should not meet to participate in football activity for 14 days.

**(Not within current FA or government guidance, but is considered suitable by The WFA based on the needs of the powerchair community.)**