

Community Football

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, all football activity across Wales halted in March 2020. The Football Association of Wales developed a series of 'Safer Return to Play' protocols for the various tiers of clubs and age groups.

On 21 September 2020, phase 3 'Safer Return to Play' Protocols commenced, enabling play to restart in lower tier clubs, with outdoor contact training for up to 2 groups of 15 players and coaches. From 5 October 2020, intra-club training matches were permitted within a 30-person limit. From 19 October 2020, friendly matches were permitted against other teams, without spectators and a maximum of one coach and first aider per team and a limited number of substitutes and game length. Local lockdown restrictions may affect which clubs are able to play. The Firebreak lockdown from 23 October – 9 November suspends all play for lower tier clubs.

The FAW urges everyone to follow the Welsh Government guidelines during the firebreak lockdown to limit the spread of COVID-19. They also confirmed that they are currently seeking clarification from the Welsh Government on the level of restrictions that will be in place following the end of this lockdown period, in order to ascertain what football activity can resume from 9 November.

In: <https://www.faw.cymru/en/covid-19/>

<https://www.faw.cymru/en/news/firebreak-lockdown-and-football-wales/>

Community Rugby

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, all community rugby across Wales halted in March 2020. In early August 2020, touch rugby was sanctioned for U7-U11 players and, in late August, players of all ages were allowed to play rugby. On 26 September 2020, the Wales Rugby Union (WRU) sent guidance to clubs in areas affected by local lockdowns stating: "*All community rugby training in these County Boroughs will be suspended until further notice in line with government timelines*".

The suspension of rugby training provoked a strong response from various community rugby clubs throughout Wales including a petition that gained circa 4,500 signatories within 3 days (by 29th September 2020). Local clubs questioned the WRU's decision, which was in contrast to the approach taken by the Football Association of Wales (FAW). A number of club representatives spoke to Wales Online to express their concerns over the situation, fearing a "lost generation" of rugby players.

WRU explained their rationale for suspending rugby in local lockdown areas because *"rugby environments bring people together who might not otherwise come into contact with each other"*.

On 14 October 2020, the WRU announced the lifting of the suspension of community rugby in the local lockdown areas, following their review of the situation, stating that clubs and teams could return to training within the current 'return to rugby' guidelines, if they felt they could provide a safe environment for players, coaches and volunteers.

The Firebreak lockdown from 23 October – 9 November suspends all play for community rugby. The WRU statement confirms they will be contacting local clubs before the end of the Firebreak and before any community rugby activity resumes. The WRU has written to local clubs on the allocation of the WRU emergency fund that will assist them in meeting running costs for their facilities and help them to return to rugby.

In: <https://community.wru.wales/returntorugby/>
<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/sport/rugby/rugby-news/rugby-shutdown-partially-lifted-less-19015960>.
<http://www.ponty.net/wru-statement-on-community-rugby/>
<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/sport/rugby/rugby-news/the-catastrophe-lost-generation-welsh-19012350>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/rugby-union/54332799>
<http://www.ponty.net/wru-status-update-21-10-20/>
<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/sport/rugby/rugby-news/rugby-shutdown-partially-lifted-less-19015960>

Innovative responses to COVID pandemic

1. Digital Resources provided by the Cardiff City FC Foundation.

In: <https://www.cardiffcityfcfoundation.org.uk/pages/category/digital-resources>

In response to Coronavirus (COVID-19), Cardiff City FC Foundation have developed a web portal providing online resources and activities to support young people of different age groups, parents, older people, those with disabilities and the beneficiaries of their outreach programme promoting safer communities.

The resources available on the web portal for young people of school age are set up by these categories:

- Primary Stars (Foundation Phase: Ages 4-7) - Resources to support primary school pupils in Foundation Phase
- Primary Stars (KS2: Ages 7-11) - Resources to support primary school pupils in Key Stage 2 learning
- Inspires (KS3: Ages 13-15) – Resources to support secondary school pupils in Key Stage 3 learning.

Other online resources in this portal include:

Digital Kicks Online - on-line activities targeting young people aged 11-19 in South Wales to support their personal development and help to create safer communities and reduce offending. Activities include: Group video calls (occasionally joined by Cardiff City First Team Players); Football challenges; Fitness challenges; Healthy living, community safety and community coaching workshops etc.

Connecting Generations: – this is a ‘Digital Hangout’ webpage 2x a week intended to connect young people aged 16-24 year olds with the over 50s . This will involve fun games and quizzes, along with reminiscence activities to reduce social isolation.

BlueBirds Ability – this is a ‘Digital Hangout’ webpage available 3x a week to enable children and young people with a disability and their parents to access online

activities that will help to improve their physical health and activity, social interaction and improve their confidence.

The Positive Pathways Project – this is an online support service during the Covid period for ex-armed forces personnel who are at risk of becoming lonely and socially isolated. Two-hour Virtual Tea and Toast sessions are available 3x a week to help improve social interaction during lockdown. Veterans can also access advice on how to stay active during lockdown and benefit from mental health awareness sessions and CV writing support.

Walking Football - web page for members of the Cardiff City FC Foundation Walking Football team to digitally catch-up every week during the COVID period. Provides an opportunity for members to meet digitally for two hours every Thursday.

Digital P.E CPD For Teachers (Part 1 and Part 2) – Free two-hour online courses for all primary school teachers, TA's, NQT's and PGCE students. The online course presents ideas for lessons using a variety of games based around movement skills for 5–11-year-olds, and the basic principles of invasion games. The course provides guidance to those teachers who might run a school team.

2. Bridgend Council – Support for outdoor sports facilities

In: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/sport/bridgend-porthcawl-football-sport-cricket-18394294>

According to a Wales Online report on 10 June 2020, sports clubs in Bridgend will no longer have to pay fees to use outdoor sports facilities after the local authority waived the charges. Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) has cancelled the fees in response to the financial pressures on local sports clubs caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Bridgend Council Cabinet Member for Communities, Councillor Richard Young, stated that a decision not to impose sports club charges was in recognition of the financial strain caused by the coronavirus pandemic that has greatly reduced income streams at local clubs. The Cabinet Member believes that the waiver of hire charges will automatically *“improve the cash flow of individual sports clubs as it is one less bill that they no longer have to pay”*.

In April, the council also offered sports clubs a grant of up to £1,000 to help with the day-to-day operating costs during the pandemic. The Council has also welcomed sports clubs applications for community asset transfers (CAT). The Cabinet members confirmed that, “*all playing fields are now subject to formal expressions of interest from sports clubs or town and community councils, and asset transfers are at various stages of development*”.