



**COVID-19 Match Management Guidelines 2021/22**

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## 1. Background

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an ever-changing environment for rugby. It is the responsibility of each club/school to be aware of the latest public health measures in place.

Clubs must have an up-to-date COVID-19 Safety Plan. As things change, our plans should change with it so that clubs take the right measures every week to keep COVID out of their club.

Club members should know what they can do be a part of that COVID-19 Safety Plan. A club's safety plan is only as strong as the responsibility its members take for it.

This document is a resource for clubs where matches are allowed to take place and spectators are permitted.

Where a club is in any doubt, government and public health authority guidelines supersede IRFU guidelines at all times.

## 2. Pre-Match Operating Procedures

### 2.1 RugbyConnect:

All players must register individually to participate in the 2021/22 season.

- More information: <https://www.irishrugby.ie/running-your-club/rugbyconnect/>
- RugbyConnect platform: <https://rugbyconnect.irfu.ie/>

### 2.2 Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration:

A Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration Template (Up-To-Date August 2021) is available at <https://www.irishrugby.ie/running-your-club/return-to-rugby-for-clubs/>

#### 2.2.1 Participating Teams:

Before attending, all home team and away team personnel must fill out a Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration to be verified by their attending COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer.

The away team officer should confirm to the home team officer that all away team personnel are compliant.

### **2.2.2 Match Officials:**

Match officials will have completed their Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration in advance and are expected to present confirmation to the home team's COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer.

### **2.2.2 Match Day Personnel:**

All match day personnel must also complete a Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration Form prior to arriving on site as per the [COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan Template \(inc. Risk Assessment\)](#).

## **2.3 Team Sheets**

Team sheets must be produced as normal with full details of subs, replacements, and front row cover identified.

The referee will take a photo of the team sheet only and will not be taking any team sheets from the manager.

Teams must ensure by the Monday following a match that the electronic team sheet on RugbyConnect exactly matches that which the referee was given match day.

## **2.4 Replacement Cards**

There will not be a requirement for managers to provide a replacement card to the referee. Instead, the referee will note the player leaving and coming onto the pitch.

## **3. Guidance For Participants & Spectators**

### **3.1 Team/Match Personnel**

In order to minimise contact, support personnel for teams and match operations should be limited to any individual involved in the participation, running, delivery, and broadcasting (if relevant) of the event'.

For the purposes of rugby matches this can include:

- Team personnel to a maximum of 40 people per team including: Players as per team sheet, Head Coach, Director of Rugby, Assistant Coach(es), Team Manager, Strength & Conditioning Coach, Video Analyst, Medical Personnel, Baggage Master, Water Carrier
- Match officials can include referee, touch judges, 4<sup>th</sup> official and referee assessor
- Match management officer
- COVID-19 Club Safety Officer & Compliance Officer(s)
- COVID-19 Health & Safety Committee members
- Pre-approved media personnel

Club members, committee members and officers not deemed necessary for the safe running of the event should be classed as spectators.

The wearing of a face covering is advised both indoors and outdoors for all non-playing personnel, including coaches and replacements where social distancing cannot be maintained.

### 3.2 Spectators

Spectators play a fundamental role in the rugby experience. Crowds also present an increased risk of COVID-19 transmission and congestion around common areas such as entrances and exits must be managed.

ROI: Guidance on Outdoor Organised Events:  
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3361b-public-health-updates/>

Clubs should have an accredited safe holding capacity, calculated in accordance with the [Code of Practise for Safety At Sports Grounds](#) (Government of Ireland, 1996)

NI: Outdoor Gatherings: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-and-guidance-what-they-mean-you#toc-5>

Parents/Guardians attending in a safeguarding /supervisory capacity are not officially classified as a spectator however strict social distancing and public health guidelines should be adhered to at all times.

Parents/Guardians should also be considered within capacity limits as identified by government guidelines.

## 4. Match Management Procedures

### 4.1 Match Management:

All events, including matches, must adhere to government and IRFU guidelines.

The home team should appoint an officer to oversee compliance and ensure the following measures are in place on match day:

- The latest government guidelines are being adhered to
- The away team and match officials are given a short briefing outlining the specific COVID-19 health & safety measures in place in the club
- The away team's COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer is assisted in implementing their own health & safety measures

- Match officials present a completed Pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration (screen shot)

The home team's officer may be their COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer, the COVID-19 Club Safety Officer or another appointed member of the club's COVID-19 Health & Safety Committee.

## 4.2 Travel To/Arrival At The Venue

Individual transport minimises the risk of players contracting the virus in indoor environments and close contacts being identified within a squad.

<sup>1</sup>Where a vehicle must be shared, you should open the windows to create ventilation. Do not use the ventilation recirculation setting.

Keep seating as far apart as possible to maintain social distancing of 2 metres.

Where buses are being used, protective measures such as the wearing of face coverings should be maintained.

Attendees should arrive at the club no more than 5 minutes before the beginning of warm up.

## 4.3 Indoor Facilities

Use of indoor facilities dramatically increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

NI: Sport NI stipulate that changing rooms and shower facilities can be opened, but participants should avoid or minimise use where possible, for example, by arriving in kit and showering at home and to minimise time spent in the changing area.

A link to the Northern Ireland Executive's Guiding Principles On Restricted Access and Safe Use of Changing and Shower Facilities is available at:

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-covid-19-guiding-principles-restricted-access-and-safe-use-changing-facilities.pdf>

ROI: The IRFU is awaiting clarity from government stakeholders around guidance on access to shower/changing facilities.

All attendees must sanitise their hands prior to going on pitch at the club.

## 4.4 Match Facilities

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<sup>1</sup> [HSE Safety In The Workplace](#)

Clubs should enforce one-way systems around the club both in the car park, and common walking areas, with regular visuals of a 2 metre social distance.

Hand sanitiser should be available to all.

Any necessary team meetings/briefings should be conducted on-pitch with physical distancing in place.

Home team, away team and match officials should be zoned on pitch for warm up.

Technical Zones should be large enough to cater for social distancing between all those in the TZ, including subs and the Technical Zone attendees permitted in the zone. Jerseys/jackets etc should not be exchanged between players and subs.

#### **4.5 Medical Facilities**

An isolation room should be available to separate any child or other person displaying or complaining of COVID-19 related symptoms.<sup>2</sup>

A medical room should be available for use in line with public health measures.

Players who require pre-match treatment from a medical professional, including strapping, may arrive prior to five minutes before the warm-up.

All other strapping should be applied at home.

#### **4.6 Match protocols**

##### **4.6.1 Stud check/Front Row talk/Coin Toss**

These will all take place outdoors at a time agreed with the referee.

##### **4.6.2 Behaviours**

Team members must refrain from:

- Handshakes
- High Fives
- Spitting or clearing of nostrils on pitch or grounds
- Post-match 'tunnel'
- Sharing water bottles

##### **4.6.3 Water Breaks**

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<sup>2</sup> [Guiding Principles in Assessing Contact Risk of Rugby during The COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

A water break of one minute will be introduced after approximately 20 minutes in each half to allow players access their own personal water bottles.

The exact time will be determined by the referee and will fall at an appropriate time and break in play after a score or close to the half-way line.

#### **4.7 Post Match**

Players and participants who are not staying on club grounds for matters unrelated to the rugby match are asked to depart the club immediately after the warm down at full-time.

Hospitality services are vitally important to rugby clubs as a means of generating revenue. Clubs are advised to ensure sectoral guidelines are in place for all hospitality services:

##### **Failte Ireland Operational Guidelines:**

<https://covid19.failteireland.ie/operational-guidelines/>

##### **Tourism Northern Ireland Guidelines For Hospitality Venues:**

<https://www.tourismni.com/covid-19/practical-guidance-for-working-safely-during-covid-19/restrictions-update-guidance/>

In addition to ongoing advice around social distancing, hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette and staying at home if unwell, clubs are reminded of the importance of effective contact tracing as a way of minimising the impact of COVID-19 on rugby.

Both the Failte Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland hospitality guidelines both advise collecting the following for members and guests aged 16 or over:

- Name
- Telephone number
- Date of visit
- Time of arrival

This measure should also apply to anyone who had initially attended the club for rugby purposes and had completed a pre-Rugby Personal Assessment Declaration.

Capacity to run multiple concurrent activities on club grounds should be considered in a club's COVID-19 Safety Plan. e.g effective and safe management of a time when hospitality offerings in a club house, rugby training and a rugby match with spectators may take place at the same time or run into each other.

Considerations may include:

Active management of common areas, access and egress to avoid any congestion, particularly indoors;



Active management of congestion where hospitality facilities are at capacity and spectators/walk-ins may wish to access the clubhouse;

Ensuring sufficient WC facilities for all players, spectators, members and guests while maintaining health and safety measures;

Minimising crossover of groups and movement of players, spectators and clubhouse visitors where practicable.

Where a member is attending a club for rugby and wishes to stay on to avail of hospitality, they should abide by the operational safety guidelines for each activity e.g. complete Personal Assessment Declaration for rugby and then provide contact tracing details for clubhouse.

#### **4.8 Concurrent Matches:**

Clubs are asked to minimise the amount of matches taking place in the club at the same time and to stagger kick-off times.

Clubs organising blitz events should have a standalone risk assessment for the event as part of their overall COVID-19 Safety Plan, including an outline of all protective measures in place.

## **5. Further Information & Contact**

IRFU Resources: <https://www.irishrugby.ie/running-your-club/return-to-rugby-for-clubs/>

Northern Ireland Executive: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>

Government of Ireland: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>

Sport NI: <http://www.sportni.net/return-to-sport/>

Sport Ireland: <https://www.sportireland.ie/ga/node/7532>

Club members should direct queries to their COVID-19 Club Compliance Officer, Safety Officer or COVID-19 Committee.

COVID-19 Club Safety Officers can avail of support from:

CONNACHT RUGBY:	fraser.gow@connachtrugby.ie
LEINSTER RUGBY:	carol.maybury@leinsterrugby.ie
MUNSTER RUGBY:	aidancleary@munsterrugby.ie
ULSTER RUGBY:	clubsupport@ulsterrugby.com