



Monday 24th February 2020

Dear Colleague,

Re: FA Heading Guidance

You will recall that in October the New England Journal of Medicine published a report that The FA and PFA commissioned into health, dementia and football.

The independent FIELD study was led by Dr Willie Stewart with Glasgow University and the Hampden Sports Clinic. The publication of the report was a hugely important piece of work for football.

At the end of 2019 the Technical Directorate formed a coaches group to develop age-specific coaching guidance for heading in the youth game to would ensure appropriate heading burden, while ensuring the development of appropriate technique.

The group was made up of colleagues from across the technical directorate, including EPL, EFL, LMA, PFA as well as active coaches from the grassroots game and professional clubs.

Following this meeting, recommendations were made to the overall Project Glasgow Steering group who also took in to account recommendations from the other expert groups.

There then followed a period of collaboration and consultation with colleagues from the other home nation FAs and UEFA.

At 11.00am today the FA published its revised Heading Guidance, (<http://www.thefa.com/about-football-association/field-research-study-findings>) our colleagues at the SFA & NIFA published similar guidelines.

The FA are also exploring other ways we can mitigate any other potential risks in the game.

For example, by supporting the EPL and EFL in putting forward a proposal to the lawmakers of the game, IFAB [International Football Association Board], to trial concussion substitutes from next season.

Next season we will also introduce a rule change that will see U10 use Size 3 footballs, in line with other mini soccer ages. We will also advise coaches not to over-inflate the football and instead use



Patron
Her Majesty The Queen
President
HRH The Duke of Cambridge KG

The FA Group
Wembley Stadium
Wembley
London HA9 0WS

Postal Address
Wembley Stadium
PO Box 1966
London SW1P 9EQ

T +44 (0) 800 169 1863
F +44 (0) 800 169 1864
W TheFA.com
Registration. 77797

the lowest pressure authorised by the Laws of the Game. Youth coaches will also have to complete The FA online concussion course.

To be clear

- The FA is not banning heading in football
- The FA is leading the way by introducing a number of clear recommendations to English football, at all levels of the game, in conjunction with our independently-chaired Research Taskforce
- The FA, Irish FA and Scottish FA have come together to agree and implement steps to reduce and remove repetitive and unnecessary heading from youth football, without impacting how the game is played
- This is an evolution of existing heading guidance for coaches that helps to mitigate any potential risk without impacting the way the game is played. That is the responsible thing to do
- We have liaised with the Irish FA, Scottish FA, UEFA and the coaching group, and we have created an updated set of Heading Guidance for training and coaching across age groups. The Heading Guidance is proportionate to the amount of heading that actually takes place for each respective age group – our research shows heading is extremely rare for younger age groups
- Importantly, we are not making fundamental changes to the way the game is played. This Heading Guidance is a precautionary and common-sense approach to take while further research continues into whether there are any potential risks associated with heading
- These guidelines will remain under regular review, and if new evidence comes to light, we will take the appropriate steps
- Further research – across the game – is required and we will certainly be playing our part in this
- It is important that we do all we can to ensure that everyone feels safe playing football and endorse the number of proven health benefits from playing regular football

I'm sure over the coming days and weeks when delivering on courses or visiting clubs that you will be asked about the guidelines, so it's important that you take the time to review and make yourself familiar with the guidance.

It is also important that as FA mentors and tutors that we model and follow the revised guidelines in our practice and coaching.

Best wishes

Les Reed
Technical Director