

NCA ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

1 GENERAL

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The National Clubs Association (“NCA”) has delegated authority from the Rugby Football Union (“RFU”) to act as the organising committee for the National Leagues which comprise National 1, National 2 North and National 2 South and the NCA Secretary is the designated League Secretary for all three Leagues.

All rugby must be played under the Laws of the Game (“the Laws”) issued by World Rugby. The RFU governs the game in England and issues wide-ranging regulations to achieve this (“RFU Regulations”). NCA issues further instructions to enable it to administer the National Leagues efficiently and equitably (“NCA Administrative Instructions”).

Where there are any anomalies or contradictions between the Laws and the RFU Regulations and/or the NCA Administrative instructions, the Laws are the definitive statement. Likewise, the RFU Regulations take precedence over the NCA administrative instructions.

The RFU regulations can be viewed at

<https://www.englandrugby.com/governance/rules-and-regulations/regulations>

and World Rugby regulations at <http://www.worldrugby.org/regulations>

1.2 OBJECTIVE

The objective of the NCA administrative instructions is to provide a guide to its member Clubs by pulling together relevant extracts from the RFU Regulations along with particular instructions and rules regarding the National Leagues.

By accepting a place in any of the National Leagues, Clubs agree implicitly to be bound by these instructions.

Clubs are advised to study and understand these instructions and the appropriate RFU regulations and World Rugby Laws as ignorance of these will not be accepted as a defence in the event of a Club breaching these instructions, regulations or laws.

2 LEAGUES

2.1 STRUCTURE

The League Competition overall shall be called ‘The English Clubs Rugby Union Championship’. All League matches shall be played in accordance with RFU Regulation 13. The leagues are organised in a pyramidal structure, the top of end of which is as follows

Level	Number of leagues	Names	Number of Clubs
1	1	Premiership	12
2	1	Championship	12
3	1	National 1	16
4	2	National 2 North	16
		National 2 South	16
5	4	London & South East Premier	14
		Midlands Premier	14
		North Premier	14
		South West Premier	14

2.2 PRINCIPLES

In the 2019-20 season, the following principles shall be effective:

- only Clubs' 1st XV's may take part in National Leagues 1, 2 North and 2 South
- a Club may only play in National League 2 North and National League 2 South according to its RFU Constituent Body allocation unless otherwise specifically agreed by the RFU Competitions Committee or where it has been required to transfer to another League pursuant to the Level Transfer Regulations;
- subject to RFU Regulations 13.2.4(b)(vii) and (viii), in the event it becomes apparent to the Committee or the NCA is advised on or after 1st June prior to any season that a Club for any reason whatsoever is withdrawing from or is unable to participate in its League, then the League in question will for the ensuing season comprise the remaining participating Clubs;
- in the event it becomes apparent to the RFU Board of Directors or the RFU Board of Directors is advised **before 1st August** prior to the Season that a Premiership Club or a Championship Club for any reason whatsoever is withdrawing from or is unable to participate in or is removed from the Premiership or the Championship (as the case may be), the RFU Board of Directors may, in its absolute discretion and subject to such terms as it may decide, require that:
 - a Club which would otherwise play in the Championship play in the Premiership; and/or
 - a Club which would otherwise play in National 1 play in the Championship;
- Where such decisions referred to above are made **on or after 1st June** prior to any season National League 1 will for the ensuing season comprise fewer than 16 Clubs.

2.3 POSITIONS

Unless otherwise agreed by the RFU Competitions Committee, the position of a Club shall be established by awarding four League points for a win and two League points for a draw. An additional League point will be awarded to a team on each occasion:

- it scores four or more tries in a League match
- it loses a League match by seven points or less.

If two or more Clubs have the same number of League points at the end of the season, final League positions shall be determined firstly by the number of wins achieved, then the number of draws and then on the basis of match points scored as follows:

- a Club with a larger number of wins in the League shall be placed higher than a Club with the same number of League points but fewer wins.
- a Club with a larger number of draws shall be placed ahead of a Club with a fewer number of draws.
- if Clubs have equal League points and an equal number of wins and draws in the League then a Club with a larger difference between match points 'for' and match points 'against' shall be placed higher in the League than a Club with a smaller difference between match points 'for' and match points 'against'.
- should two Clubs have the same number of League points and an equal number of wins and draws and the same match points difference, a Club having scored more match points 'for' shall be placed higher in the League than a Club having the lesser number of match points 'for'.
- if this still does not establish the positions, then the Clubs involved shall be ranked according to the number of matches won, excluding the first League match of the season. If necessary, this process shall be extended to exclude the second match, third match and so on until the final positions are established.

2.4 PROMOTION

2.4.1 PRINCIPLES

The principles of promotion at the conclusion of Season 2019 - 20 shall be:

- promotion and relegation as between the Premiership and the Championship shall be as agreed by the RFU and notified to the Clubs
- subject to RFU Regulation 5, the top Club in National League 1 shall be promoted to the Championship
- in National 2 North and National 2 South, the top Club in each League at the end of the Season shall be promoted to National 1. Additionally, the two second placed Clubs in each League shall play off in accordance with the RFU Play-Off Regulation 13.2.10) and the winner shall be promoted to National 1
- the top Clubs in Leagues London & South East Premier and South West Premier at the end of the Season shall be promoted to National League 2 South. Additionally, the two second placed Clubs in each of Leagues shall play off in accordance with the Play Off Regulations and the winner shall be promoted to National 2 South
- the top Clubs in Leagues Midlands Premier and North Premier at the end of the Season shall be promoted to National League 2 North. Additionally, the two second placed Clubs in each of Leagues shall play off in accordance with the Play Off Regulations and the winner shall be promoted to National 2 North.

2.4.2 EXEMPTION FROM PROMOTION

A Club is permitted to submit an application to the Organising Committee to request an exemption from promotion subject to the following conditions:

- such request is received by the Organising Committee no later than the 31st January of the Season; and

- subject to the Club achieving a promotion place, this right to submit a request is only available to each Club once on each occasion that it is at each level of the Leagues; and
- the Club must demonstrate that promotion would be detrimental to the finances and infrastructure of the Club.

In the event that a request is submitted in accordance with RFU Regulation 13.2.9(b), the request will be considered by the Committee who may request such additional information and supporting evidence as it requires. If a request is approved by the Committee and a Club is granted an exemption from promotion for the next season the following will apply:

- if the Club finishes in an automatic promotion place, the highest placed Club in the league above who was due to be relegated the following season will be reprieved from relegation.
- if the Club finishes in a play-off place, then their opponents shall be awarded a walk-over.

2.4.3 PLAY OFF MATCHES

General

Play off matches shall be held at the ground of the Club with the best playing record. The date for the play off for a place in National 1 will be as defined in the RFU structured season unless altered by the NCA Secretary. Kick off will be 15.00 unless otherwise agreed by the NCA Secretary.

Drawn game

In the event of a draw at full time, the following process will be used to determine the winner

- If, after 40 minutes of play each way the scores are level, there shall be a five-minute break. After this break, the teams will change ends and there shall be a period of extra time of 10 minutes each way with a one-minute interval
- If the scores are then still equal, the team that has scored most tries shall be declared the winner
- If this does not produce a result, the team that has scored the most goals from tries shall be declared the winner
- If the scores remain equal, the away team shall be declared the winner.

Match officials

The RFU will appoint Match Officials and these may include a 4th Official. Notwithstanding, it is still the home Club's responsibility to complete and submit the electronic match card for the game and to produce a video of the match and to download this to the RFU Elite Hub.

Gross gate receipts

- At all Play-off matches the minimum charges be £5.00 for admission to the ground with a further £1.00 for a stand seat; and
- All spectators (including members, season ticket holders, debenture holders, sponsors and their guests) must be charged the advertised entrance, stand and car park prices or in any event if not so charged the income from the match is to be distributed in accordance with Regulation 13.9.2 and must be credited with an amount equal to the advertised prices.

- Complimentary tickets shall be available solely for playing squads (limited to 26), the Match Officials (including their coaches and observers), medical staff and those members of the home Club who are required to be at the match to fulfil a specific role on the day of the match (e.g. ball boys, bar staff, gate attendants).
- Gross gate receipts, which shall also include car park and programme receipts, will be distributed as follows
 - 40% for the away team
 - 60% for the home team
- The home Club will be responsible for preparing proper records showing the number of persons admitted to the play-off match, the price(s) charged, details of receipts from car parking and programmes sold in a form which enables the NCA Secretary to satisfy himself that the gross gate is correct. This report should be sent to the NCA Secretary within two weeks of the match date and the balance of the payment to the away team should be made within three weeks of the match day.
- Payment must be made to the away Club as to 20% of the estimated gross gate receipts on the day of the match and the balance of the monies owing within 21 days of the match together with a clear statement showing how such payment is calculated

2.5 RELEGATION

2.5.1 PRINCIPLES OF RELEGATION

The principles of relegation at the conclusion of the 2019 - 20 seasons are as follows:

- Provided that the winner of National 1 fulfils the criteria for promotion set out in RFU Regulation 5, the lowest placed Club in the Championship shall be relegated to National 1. If the winner of National 1 does not fulfil such criteria and is not promoted for that or any other reason, the lowest placed Club in the Championship shall not be relegated to National 1
- In National 1, three Clubs shall be relegated to National 2 North or South according to the relegated Clubs' RFU Constituent Bodies
- In National 2 South, three Clubs shall be relegated and go to leagues London & South East Premier or South West Premier according to the relegated Clubs' RFU Constituent Bodies
- In National 2 North, three Clubs shall be relegated and go to Leagues Midlands Premier or North Premier according to the relegated Clubs' RFU Constituent Bodies

2.5.2 REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF CLUBS

Where at the end of the season, a League at levels 2 to 7 (inclusive) finishes with fewer Clubs than the number set out in RFU Regulation 13.2.4 (due to merger, liquidation or other reason), then the number of Clubs relegated from that League shall be reduced accordingly by the number of Clubs it is missing.

This shall apply as follows:

- in the Championship, no Club shall be relegated
- in National League 1, one fewer Club shall be relegated for each Club the League is missing

- in National Leagues 2 North and South, one fewer Club shall be relegated from each League for each Club the League is missing
- in National Leagues 2 North and South, where fewer Clubs have been relegated from National League 1, equivalent less Club(s) shall be relegated. The Club(s) reprieved from relegation which would otherwise have occurred will be determined by the 'best playing record' of all Clubs that would normally have been relegated, save that a second Club cannot be reprieved from the same league until the other league at the same level has had a team reprieved from relegation
- where the number of Clubs which would be reprieved from relegation exceeds the number of Clubs which would be relegated under Regulation 13.2.7, the decisions as to relegation and any additional promotion shall be determined by the RFU in consultation with the NCA.
- where in exceptional circumstances the strict application of these regulations creates significant disadvantage to a Club or Clubs, the RFU can affect a variation which removes or reduces the significant disadvantage for the benefit of the game of rugby union overall in the locality and the RFU may in its discretion take such factors as it deems appropriate into account.

2.5.3 LEVEL TRANSFERS

If as a result of relegation and promotion, there is an imbalance between the number of Clubs in National 2 North and 2 South, and then a Club or Clubs must move from one League to the other to give an equal number of teams in each League. This process is known as level change and this is defined in RFU regulation 13.2.11.

3 ELIGIBILITY & RESTRICTION ON PLAYERS

3.1 REGISTRATION

For a League match, a Club may only play or select as a replacement or substitute players who hold Effective Registration for that Club in accordance with the Adult Player Registration Regulations set out in RFU Regulation 14. The only conclusive evidence of Effective Registration is the computerised record held by the RFU as at the kick-off time of the match in which such players are selected to play or be a replacement as listed on the match card. Each Club is responsible for ensuring its strict compliance with this Regulation and must take all reasonable steps to ensure compliance.

In addition, the following apply to National League Clubs

- No Club shall knowingly play in any match players who have been suspended or expelled by the RFU
- A Club may not play or select as a replacement or substitute more than two foreign players in any match.
- In National 1, Clubs may have no more than three Loan Players and not more than six England Academy Players under the age of 24 as at 1 September 2019 in their match squads
- In National 2 Clubs may have up to four players from other Clubs of which no more than three shall be Loan Players and the others (up to the maximum of four) must be England Academy Players under the age of 24 as at 1 September 2019.

Registration of National League players is handled by the RFU and the registrar is

Warren Collier
Rugby House, Twickenham Stadium, 200 Whitton Road, Twickenham TW2 7BA
Telephone 020 8831 7993
Mobile 07590 890 865
Fax 020 8892 4446
Email warrencollier@rfu.com

Registration communications should be sent to

mensplayerregistration@rfu.com

Information on registration can be accessed from

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17UuKViCZGPBWC60iZAgG5kqP-n4fPE3G?usp=sharing>

and

<https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/running-your-club/player-registration/adult-men-registration>

For season 2019-20, the transfer deadline date for National League Clubs is 12 noon on 21st February 2020.

RFU regulation 14 defines the principles and processes for registration and Clubs are advised to study this closely as there are significant penalties for breaching these regulations.

3.2 MATERIAL BENEFITS

Clubs are reminded that any player who receives material benefit is considered to be a contracted player and must have an appropriate written contract which must be declared to the Registrar. Giving material benefits directly or indirectly to non-contracted players is considered by the RFU to be a serious breach of regulations and they can impose serious penalties.

The definition of material benefits and allowable expenses is covered in RFU regulation 7.

All players receiving material benefits must have a signed contract in a form approved by the RFU and details of these contracts must be submitted to the RFU. Registered players who do not have contracts, must be declared as amateur players to the RFU.

HRMC consider any players receiving material benefits to be professional players and any such benefits are subject to appropriate taxes and regulations. Clubs are responsible for maintaining appropriate records and for ensuring that appropriate taxes are deducted and remitted to HRMC who can impose significant penalties where this is not done correctly.

At the end of the season, all clubs are required to submit a return to the RFU detailing the material benefits made to players. Clubs exceeding defined limits on these material benefits (salary caps) will lose various RFU grants and benefits for the following season.

Full details can be found in RFU regulation 7.

3.3 AGENTS

Clubs and players must only use agents who are registered with the RFU. RFU regulation 8 covers this and instructions on the use of agents and the list of registered agents can be found on the RFU web site

<https://www.englandrugby.com/governance/player-agents>

There are significant RFU penalties on players and Clubs who use unregistered agents.

When a Player enters into an agreement with a Club and an Agent has been acting for either the Player or the Club, all parties including the Player, the Club and the Agent must complete and sign the RFU agent's declaration form and send this to the RFU.

3.4 APPROACHES TO PLAYERS

No party may directly or indirectly, approach (or accept an approach by or on behalf of) any Player who is contracted to (or has entered into a Contract with) a Club, Constituent Body or Union to induce or attempt to induce such Player to leave that Club, Constituent Body or Union unless such approach or inducement is made with the written consent of that Club, Constituent Body or Union, or is made in the six month period before the expiry of, or the next option/break clause in, the Player's Contract. Any Club or Constituent Body wishing to make such an approach may contact the RFU for details of when a particular Player's Contract is due to expire.

It shall be a disciplinary offence for any club knowingly to play any player who has previously been a member of another club which he/she has left without paying his/her outstanding debts to his/her previous Club or without fulfilling his obligations to his previous club under a contract approved and registered with the RFU under World Rugby Regulations.

3.5 ENGLAND ACADEMY PLAYERS (EAP)

An EAP is permitted to simultaneously hold at any one time effective registration with one club at each of Level 1 (Premiership), Level 2 (Championship), Level 3 (National 1) and Level 4 (National 2).

In National 1, in addition to up to three loan players, clubs may also have no more than six England Academy Players under the age of 24 as at 1 September 2019 in their match squads.

In National 2 Clubs may have up to four players from another Club of which no more than three shall be Loan Players and the others (up to the maximum of four) must be England Academy Players under the age of 24 as at 1 September 2019.

After the Transfer Deadline, only those England Academy Players who have already played or been selected as a replacement or substitute in a League or Cup Match for the Club's first XV prior to the Transfer Deadline will be permitted to be selected in a League or Cup Match for the Club's first XV, unless otherwise approved by the RFU Head of Academies.

4 PLAYER SAFETY

4.1 GENERAL

Rugby is a physical contact sport. Like all sports, injuries may occur as a result of isolated incidents or through the continuous playing of the Game over an extended period of time. Safety is of paramount importance and it is therefore essential for those involved in the Game to consider their own safety and the safety of others at all times. They should familiarise themselves with any specific responsibilities that may be applicable to them, as set out in various documents issued by the RFU and/or World Rugby from time to time.

All Clubs need to ensure that

- there is an appropriate level of immediate care and/or first aid cover, and equipment provided for that rugby activity. These should be determined by a risk assessment and further guidance on the minimum requirement at each type of rugby activity is given in:

<https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/playing/player-welfare-rugby-safe>

- there is access to a telephone to ensure that the emergency services can be contacted immediately when needed
- there is clear vehicular access for an ambulance or other emergency vehicle.

4.2 HEAD INJURIES AND CONCUSSION

Clubs should refer to the RFU Headcase guidance set out in

<https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/playing/headcase>

This gives guidance on prevention, recognition, management and returning to play. Clubs must ensure that their players, coaches and officials are familiar with this guidance.

Any individual who exhibits any of the signs or symptoms of concussion should be immediately and permanently removed safely from the field of play, should not return to play that day, and it is recommended that they are referred to a medical or healthcare professional for assessment and advice.

4.3 REPORTING INJURIES

Club officials and those involved in arranging any rugby activity must ensure that any injury which results in an individual being admitted overnight to hospital (save those initially taken to an Accident & Emergency Department, but subsequently sent home after treatment) and any death occurring during rugby activity, or within 6 hours of the game or training ending, is reported to the RFU in accordance with the RFU's Injury Reporting System; details are at:

<https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/playing/player-welfare-rugby-safe/injury-reporting>

For information on how the RFU and/or the Injured Players Foundation may be able to assist a seriously/catastrophically injured player and their family, please see

<https://www.rfuipf.org.uk/index.php>

4.4 HEALTH CARE WORKERS

No person may directly or indirectly seek in any way to influence a medical professional or health care worker to breach their professional group's code of ethics, code of conduct or other such code. For avoidance of doubt, professional codes of ethics take precedence over any employer/employee contract or other service agreement.

5 GROUNDS

5.1 PITCHES

It is the responsibility of the home Club to ensure the availability of a pitch for a League match and to correctly and clearly mark out this pitch.

All pitches used for National League games must conform to the standards defined in the World Rugby Laws section 1. These Laws do not define a minimum size for a pitch. However, at the NCA AGM on 5th June 2016 the Clubs agreed that the following minimum sizes should apply

- Try line to try line – 90 metres
- Touch line to touch line – 65 metres
- Try line to dead ball line – 5 metres

Artificial pitches can be used. However, these must comply with World Rugby Regulation 22 and have the appropriate and current certificates.

At least 30 days before the start of the season, Clubs must inform the NCA Secretary what is their designated primary match pitch for League fixtures and confirm that it meets the above standards. At his discretion, the NCA Secretary may allow a Club to designate a non-conformant pitch as its primary match pitch. A Club's primary pitch must be used for all League fixtures unless this pitch is declared unplayable by an authorised RFU match official or both Clubs and the Match Referee agree to use another pitch

Clubs should also declare any other pitches which they could use if their primary pitch is unplayable and confirm that these meet the above standards or could easily be made to conform.

Details of Clubs' primary pitches and other conformant pitches will be available from the NCA web site

If a Club's main pitch is declared unfit by the inspecting RFU match official, he should be asked to inspect the other declared pitches in the Club's order of preference. If any of these pitches are playable, the game will proceed subject to any decision taken by the Match Referee.

Even though a pitch has been declared playable, if both captains and the Match Referee all agree, the game may be moved to another playable pitch.

A home Club may ask the away Club to agree to play their game on another conformant pitch and the away Club is expected to agree to a reasonable request. Any disputes should be referred to the NCA Secretary for resolution and his decision is binding on both Clubs

5.2 BARRIER FROM FIELD OF PLAY

Each home Club playing a match in an RFU Competition must make provision:

- To ensure that (with the exception of permitted personnel as defined below) all other persons are kept at a reasonable distance from the playing area by permanent or temporary barriers
- For two technical areas, one for each team, to which permitted personnel (when not undertaking their duties) are to be restricted during the match other than for the period of half-time.

Where there are permanent dugouts or shelters, team replacements and coaching staff must confine themselves to them or remain outside the pitch side barriers, or, if none, the playing enclosure (as defined by the Match Referee) other than

- when a player is about to replace a player on the pitch
- when a player is temporarily suspended
- the period of half-time.

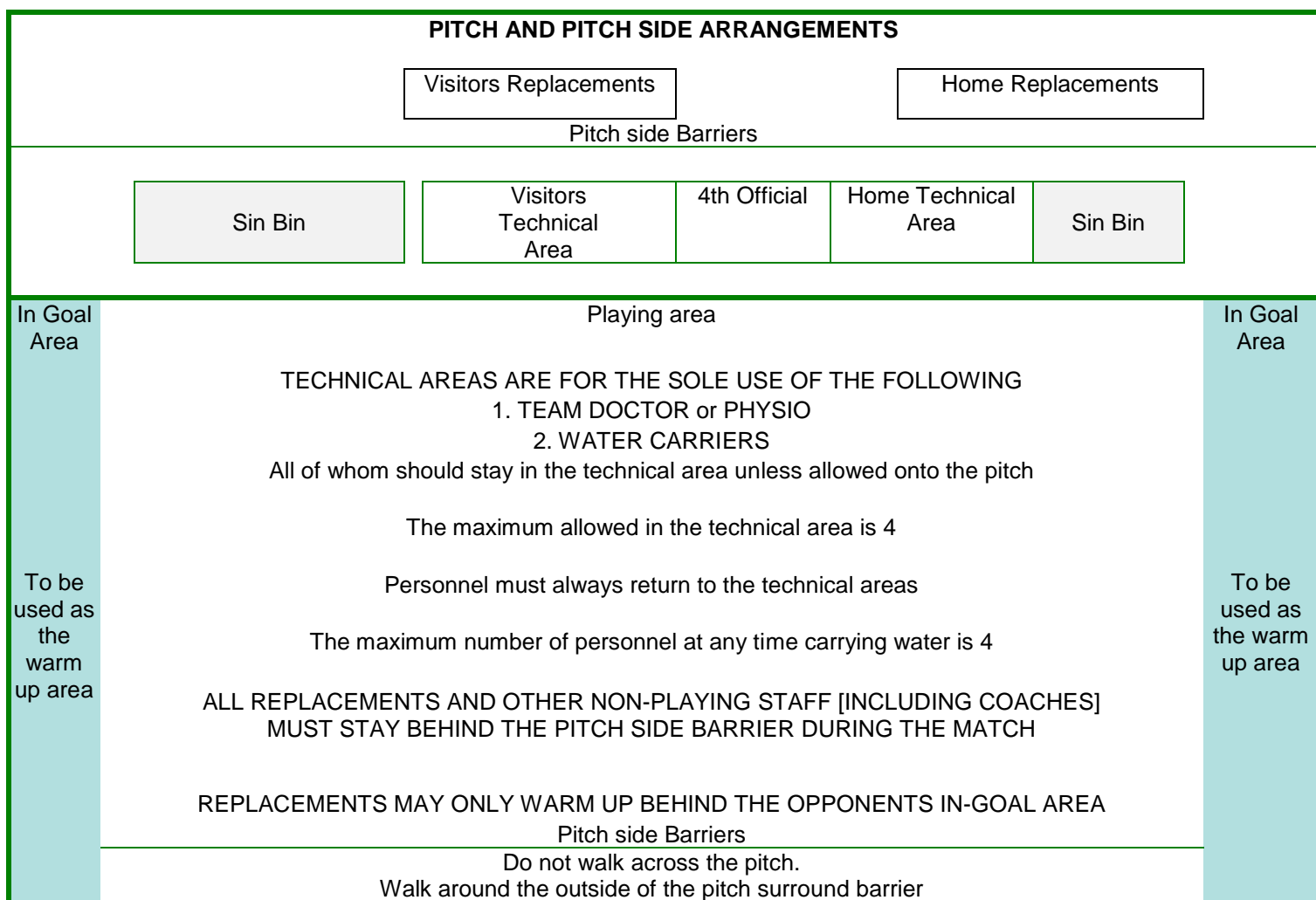
Permitted personnel are defined as no more than four water carriers per team (including medical staff and replacement players) who are permitted within the pitch side or perimeter fencing or other barrier. Water carriers may only be permitted onto the playing area for the purposes of taking water to the players at such times as shall be approved by the Referee. On any other occasion players must come to the touchline to get water.

Any player temporarily suspended must remain in the technical area or leave the playing enclosure and be clearly and readily identifiable to the 4th Official.

Any player sent off must leave the playing enclosure.

This regulation must be observed. Referees have the power to report non-compliance to the NCA and RFU who can apply sanctions.

The following pitch lay out shall be followed as far as possible.



5.3 FLOODLIGHTS

Floodlighting for National League fixtures must achieve the following performance criteria

- Maintained Illuminance 200 lux
- Uniformity 0.6

This must be evidenced through a lux certificate not more than 3 years old.

The figures apply to the entire playing area, which includes the field of play and the in-goal areas. The pitch perimeter area must achieve a lighting level that is 25% of the total lux level of the playing area.

Clubs who use floodlights for League matches are required to have them turned on at the start of the match or later if agreed by the visiting team or at the request of the Match Referee.

5.4 CHANGING ROOMS

Clubs must make available suitable changing accommodation for the sole use of the visitor's match squad of 20 players and up to ten support staff. They must also provide a separate and suitable changing room for the Match Officials and a suitably equipped medical room.

Clubs are reminded that they are liable to receive unannounced visits from the RFU drug testing team who can arrive very close to kick off time. When this happens, a changing room must be made available for the drug testers' exclusive use.

6 FIXTURE MANAGEMENT

6.1 FIXTURES

About the end of the season, the NCA Secretary will circulate Clubs asking for any specific fixture related requests. NCA will work with the RFU Competitions Department to produce a fixture list which accommodates as many of these requests as possible. This list will be circulated to Clubs and loaded onto the NCA web site.

Once issued, fixtures can only be changed with the express permission of the NCA Secretary.

All matches must be played on the Saturday of a scheduled weekend unless another date is specified by the NCA or agreed by both Clubs and approved by the NCA Secretary.

Clubs are obliged to fulfil their scheduled fixtures. Failure to do so can result in serious sanctions.

All League matches shall be played on a home and away basis unless agreed otherwise by the NCA Secretary.

If a Club is forbidden from playing on its home ground for disciplinary reasons, the match must still take place on the scheduled date. The home Club must obtain the use of an alternative conformant pitch to the satisfaction of the NCA Secretary.

6.2 KICK OFF TIMES

All matches originally scheduled to be played on the last full League Saturday of the season shall only be played on that Saturday and all games will kick off at 15.00. Any postponed games played after that date shall all have a kick off time of not later than 15.00. These times can only be changed with the express permission of the NCA Secretary.

Subject to the above, the home Club shall fix the time of kick off of all its home League matches and inform the NCA Secretary of these within 28 days of receiving the final fixture list. These kick off times must be between

- 14.00 and 15.00 on weekends and public holidays; and
- 19.00 and 20.00 on weekdays.

The two Clubs concerned may agree an earlier or later kick off time. However, any such agreement must be submitted to the NCA Secretary for his approval no later than three days prior to the date of the match.

In any event, the NCA Secretary retains the power to specify any kick off time. He may, if he wishes, permit written representations from the two Clubs concerned in this regard.

Where cancelled games are rescheduled, the kick off time will be that of the original game provided that it meets the conditions above. If not, the home Club will select a kick off time which meets the above conditions and this will apply unless a different time is agreed by both Clubs and approved by the NCA Secretary.

Once defined and posted to the NCA web site, fixture dates and kick off times cannot be changed unless agreed by both Clubs and approved by the NCA Secretary.

6.3 POSTPONEMENT OF FIXTURES

Clubs are not permitted to decide to postpone a scheduled league fixture. A decision to postpone a game because a pitch is unplayable must be taken by an accredited RFU match official. Postponing a fixture for any other reason must be approved beforehand by the NCA Secretary.

A Club is not permitted to postpone a match because it has player(s) being required to play in a representative match involving England or other national unions on the date specified for a League match.

Unless there are extreme conditions which make it obvious that the game cannot be played, the earliest time when a game can be called off due to pitch conditions is the day before the match was due to be played.

Where a National League home Club is concerned, or has any cause to doubt, the suitability of the pitch or weather conditions making the match potentially unplayable, the following procedures must be followed:

- The home Club must contact the RFU Referee Department as early as possible and in any event before 5.00pm on the day preceding the match to request a pitch inspection
- The home Club should determine from the visitors when they plan to start their journey and obtain at least two mobile telephone numbers of officials whom they can contact on the morning of the game if there are any doubts about the fitness of the pitch. If any of this information changes, it is incumbent on the away team to inform the home Club. The home Club should make the same arrangements with the Match Officials
- The home Club should also inform the away Club and the NCA Secretary that the match is in doubt due to the pitch being unplayable as a result of poor weather conditions or the forecast of poor weather conditions as soon as reasonably practicable
- A suitably accredited RFU Match Official (not a person, whether a referee or not, who regularly acts as a Club's 4th official or who is a member of the home Club) must confirm the postponement after an inspection of the match pitch. The pitch inspection must take place before the time the away Club intend to travel to fulfil the fixture
- Where a Club has indicated that it has other pitches suitable for League rugby, the inspecting Match Official should rule on whether these are playable
- If the inspecting Match Official decides all compliant pitches are unplayable and/or likely to be unplayable **before 17.00** on the day preceding the match, the home Club must immediately inform the RFU Competitions Department, the NCA Secretary and the Match Officials as well as the away Club. If the accredited RFU Match Official decides all compliant pitches are unplayable after **17.00** on the day preceding the match, the home Club must without delay notify the away Club, the NCA Secretary and the Match Officials. Alternatively, if the inspecting accredited RFU Match Official deems a pitch playable and/or likely to be playable, the home Club must act on that judgement and notify the away Club accordingly

- When a late decision (i.e. within 3 hours of kick-off) as to the fitness of the pitch for playing a match is necessary, the decision shall be made by the accredited RFU Match Official in accordance with the NCA pitch inspection protocol see (Appendix C). If one or both of the captains do not agree for the match to proceed, the match will not be played and the matter will be referred to the NCA Secretary to decide upon what action shall be taken in accordance with RFU Regulation 13.6.11 and the NCA pitch inspection protocol. Any match that is not played on the grounds that the pitch was unfit or for any other substantial reason shall be notified by the home Club to the NCA Secretary within 48 hours of the decision to not play the match.

If this procedure is not followed correctly by the home club and the fixture is postponed because the Match Referee considers the pitch is unfit after the visiting team have travelled to fulfil the fixture, the home Club will be responsible for the costs of travel and accommodation incurred by the visiting team. Such costs will be payable by the home Club within 28 days from receipt of a relevant invoice and supporting copy invoices from the visiting team. In this instance, the costs claimed should be the actual cost of the coach used only. If no coach was used, the costs claimed should be no greater than those which would have been incurred if a coach was used. Where applicable, accommodation should be the actual cost of bed and breakfast up to a maximum of 26 people.

If this procedure has been followed correctly and the fixture is postponed because the pitch is unplayable after the visiting team have travelled to fulfil the fixture, the away team may be able to claim some of their costs from an RFU fund. To do so, they need to complete the appropriate form which can be downloaded from the NCA web site and send this to the NCA Secretary within 28 days of the match date.

Other than adverse pitch conditions and a decision from the Match Referee, games cannot be called off without the NCA Secretary's express permission. Clubs who do so will have sanctions imposed on them by the NCA Secretary. These sanctions are likely to include deduction of League points.

Clubs are advised at the start of the season to identify and contact at least two RFU Match Officials authorised to inspect pitches who live within easy travelling distance and ensure that they have and maintain up to date contact details for these officials. The RFU Referees Department will assist Clubs in identifying suitable persons.

6.4 ABANDONED MATCHES

Where the Match Referee has cause to abandon a match, the following procedure should be followed

If weather conditions (which shall be deemed to include bad light in the sole opinion of the Referee) solely prevent a match being played or result in a match being abandoned then

- if less than sixty minutes have been played, the match will be replayed unless the NCA Secretary exceptionally and in his absolute discretion agrees or specifies otherwise
- when sixty or more minutes have been played, then the score at the moment of abandonment shall stand and be deemed to be the final score in the match
- the Match Referee's decision as to the necessity for abandonment and the number of minutes played at the moment of abandonment shall be final

If the Referee finds it necessary to abandon a match for any reason other than weather conditions, then, irrespective of the number of minutes played, the following shall apply:

- if it is possible for the match to be reconvened on another pitch at the hosting venue and that pitch is compliant with the applicable World Rugby Regulations and NCA instructions, the match must be reconvened on such pitch unless the Referee deems (in his or her absolute discretion) that such pitches are unsuitable or that it is inappropriate to reconvene the match;

- if it is not possible to reconvene the match on another pitch, the result of that match shall be reviewed and determined by the NCA Secretary who may order the match to be replayed and/or impose such other sanction as he deems appropriate.

When a match is abandoned for any reason, the home Club must notify the NCA Secretary of the reason for the non-playing or non-completion of the match as soon as possible but in any event within 24 hours of the event.

In all instances, the electronic match card or the manual card as appropriate needs to be completed and confirmed. This must include the number of minutes played, the score and the Match Referee's statement of the reason for the abandonment.

6.5 FIXTURES INVOLVING SUSPENDED CLUBS

Any Club which is suspended from playing rugby union football for disciplinary reasons will not be permitted to re-arrange any fixtures falling within the period of the suspension. The effects thereof on the non-offending Club in the League concerned shall be dealt with by the NCA Secretary under RFU Regulation 13.6.1.

6.6 RE-SCHEDULING OR RE-ARRANGING MATCHES

A postponed league match shall be replayed on the next available League weekend where neither side has a League fixture, unless some other date is specified by the NCA Secretary. League matches (including rearranged matches) take precedence over all other matches other than RFU Cup Competitions.

6.7 CLUBS UNABLE TO FULFIL FIXTURES

A Club must fulfil its matches in League Competitions in compliance with the RFU Regulations.

If the NCA Secretary considers that a Club has unjustifiably failed to fulfil a match, NCA Secretary may deduct League points from that Club and/or order the match to be replayed, provided he has regard to promotion and relegation issues in any relevant League, including the effect on other Clubs and to the commitments of the Clubs concerned. When the first fixture is defaulted by the 'away' team, the return fixture shall be reversed and take place at the ground of the non-offending Club. For the avoidance of doubt, lack of players or insufficient front row players with effective registration whether through injury, illness or work or other commitments shall not be deemed to be a justifiable reason for not playing or seeking a postponement of a League match.

Where at the end of the season an unplayed match is considered by the NCA to have had an effect on the Clubs promoted or relegated, the following apply

- an adjustment of match points will be made if either Club involved in the unplayed match is a contender for promotion (League winners or runners up) or relegation by virtue of an equal number of League points
- all match points in the corresponding fixtures of all other contending Clubs will be removed from the playing records (a corresponding fixture is defined as the scheduled fixture at the same venue as the unplayed match)
- the adjustment referred to above will not be made if it benefits the defaulting Club in the unplayed match to the detriment of another Club. Further, where two or more Clubs have complete records, their positions relative to each other will remain unchanged by adjustments caused by a defaulting Club in an unplayed match

Where it appears to the NCA that

- a Club is incapable of completing its League programme for reasons unacceptable to the NCA, **or**
- if a Club voluntarily withdraws from a League, **or**
- if a Club is expelled or suspended from a League or from membership of the Competition

the results of all matches played by it shall be deleted for all purposes and the final League table positions shall then be established from all matches played between the remaining Clubs in the League.

If the circumstances set out above occur and the deletion of the results of all matches played by the defaulting Club causes a situation whereby another Club is deprived of promotion from or being a runner up in the League concerned or gives rise to a Club being relegated from the League concerned and such event would not have occurred had the results of all matches played by the defaulting Club not been deleted, the NCA Secretary may exceptionally upon the application of the Club adversely affected (such application having been made within three working days of the final League match being played by the Club adversely affected or such earlier date as the NCA Secretary reasonably decides and notifies to the adversely affected Clubs) make an adjustment to League or take such other action so that any adverse effect upon the Club is removed.

6.8 COSTS AND REVENUES

Gross gate receipts of League matches are retained by the home Clubs who are responsible for all their expenses incurred in staging the game including the provision of appropriate post match meals for the Match Officials (including their coaches and match observers) and the opposition players and team officials. The visiting Club is responsible for its own travelling costs.

For season 2019-20 the RFU will provide funding to contribute towards Clubs' travel costs. The amount is calculated by the RFU Competition Department and details are circulated to Clubs by the NCA Treasurer before the start of the season. Payment less a deduction for Match Officials and any outstanding monies owed by Clubs to the RFU will be made to Clubs around the start of the season,

The RFU make a fixed charge for Match Officials for League matches and this is deducted from the travel grant before this is paid. Where the RFU provides Match Officials for pre-season and non-league matches, the home Club should pay the Match Officials' travelling costs directly at a mileage rate which the RFU will advise prior to the start of the season.

Clubs who do not comply with the Payment of Players regulations will receive no travel money and will have to bear the full cost of match officials.

7 MATCH MANAGEMENT

7.1 TEAM SELECTION

Every Club must play its strongest possible first XV in all League matches unless agreed otherwise by the NCA Secretary.

7.2 JERSEYS

Clubs are required to inform the NCA Secretary of the colours and designs of their main and replacement kits with photographs or illustrations before the start of the season. These will be displayed on the web site to make it easier to identify any colour clashes. They should also inform the NCA Secretary of any significant changes made during the season.

The home team can decide which jerseys it will use. The away Club shall be responsible for checking for a potential colour clash at least one week prior to a match and shall notify the colours its team will wear to the home Club in time for programme printing. In the event of Clubs having similar or clashing colours, the **away** Club shall be responsible for changing its colours for the match where a clash of colours would otherwise occur.

The Match Referee has the definitive word on colour clashes and can dictate the strip to be worn by the away team. If the away team has concerns about a potential colour clash with both of their strips, they should consult the Match Referee before the day of the match and act on his guidance.

In the event of the away Club failing to comply with this instruction, the home Club should report this to the NCA Secretary who can impose sanctions. These will generally be a financial penalty of £50 on the first occasion in a season and £100 for each occasion thereafter during that season.

Away teams are recommended to take two different strips to away games to minimise the risk of colour clashes and to allow the Referee to ask for shirts to be changed in adverse conditions.

The jerseys should all be numbered in accordance with World Rugby requirements in order to ensure the correct identification of all players and replacements during a match.

7.3 TOSS

The toss to decide who will kick-off or choose ends and the decision as to which end each team will have in the first half of the match must be taken no later than 15 minutes before kick-off.

7.4 DELAY TO KICK OFF

Any delay from the specified or agreed kick-off time should be reported by the non-offending Club and the Referee to the NCA Secretary and may lead to sanctions being imposed.

7.5 HALF TIME

All matches shall be of 80 minutes duration, divided into two halves of 40 minutes each. The interval between each of the two halves shall be 15 minutes unless both teams agree to a shorter period. The interval shall not be less than five minutes or more than 15 minutes. Teams may leave the playing enclosure during the interval.

7.6 MEDICAL COVER

Each Club must provide an appropriately qualified medical practitioner or an appropriately qualified physiotherapist, sports therapist, or sports rehabilitator throughout the match to attend to their respective players and, if necessary, to the Match Officials. Appropriately trained implies having a relevant professional qualification plus knowledge and experience in pitch side and trauma work.

At the NCA AGM in June 2019, it was agreed that all home clubs should have certain items of medical equipment available to both teams. This list will be circulated to all clubs.

Clubs are urged to think seriously about their liabilities if there are serious injuries and appropriate medical cover is not available.

7.7 MATCH OFFICIALS

7.7.1 Appointments

The RFU will appoint referees and assistant referees to all National League matches and the RFU Referee Department will inform the home Clubs of the appointed officials. If the home Club has not received notification by two days before the game, they should contact the Referees Department.

Contacts at the Referees Department are

Secretary	Alice Lawson	Telephone 020 3118 3194	email; alicelawson@RFU.com
Managers	Gareth Thomas	Mobile 07764 699644	email; gareththomas@rfu.com
	Steve Harland	Mobile 07738 029107	email; steveharland@rfu.com

The home Club is responsible for contacting each appointed match official at least 3 days before the game to confirm their attendance.

The home Club is responsible for ensuring that a suitably trained and kitted out person is available at each home match to take over as an assistant referee should one of the appointed officials have to be replaced for any reason. His duties will be determined by the Match Referee but will not normally extend beyond indicating when the ball or a player carrying the ball is in touch and indicating a successful or unsuccessful kick at goal.

7.7.2 Replacement referees

If the Referee appointed has not arrived at the agreed kick-off time or if the Referee is unable to officiate for the whole of the match for any reason, the Assistant Referee where appointed may referee the match.

In the event the Assistant Referee is unable to continue to officiate for the whole of the match in question then another suitable replacement referee who is agreed by both team captains (or such other official or manager of the Club nominated by the Club) will take charge. Any agreement reached between team captains in relation to replacement referees shall thereafter be binding upon the Clubs.

In any RFU Competition, if no other suitable replacement referee is available to commence or continue the match or if both team captains (or such other official or manager of the Club nominated by the Club) do not agree to him, the match shall be abandoned and the provisions of Regulation 13.6 will apply.

In determining who shall be classified as a suitable replacement referee, reference should be made to RFU policy and such other requirements as may be stipulated by the RFU from time to time.

In all matches, any decision taken by the appointed Match Officials or their replacements shall be final and binding insofar as the Laws of the Game are concerned.

7.7.3 Comments of Match Officials

Any comment or opinion expressed regarding the Regulations, or the interpretation or the effect thereof by any Match Official on any circumstance that might occur before, during or after a match is not final or binding on the RFU, the Committee or an Appeal Panel. No Club or person can rely on any such comment or opinion.

7.7.4 Approaches to Match Officials

No person (other than the Match Officials team or Match Officials coach) shall approach the Match Officials at any time during the half-time interval and up to 30 minutes after the match to discuss any issue arising from the match nor shall enter the referee's changing room unless invited to do so by the referee.

7.8 MATCH DISCIPLINE

Disciplinary issues initiated by the Match Officials including sendings off and inappropriate behaviour towards the Match Officials are handled by the RFU Disciplinary department. The primary contact is

Disciplinary Secretary Rebecca Morgan Tel; 020 8850 0210 email; rebeccamorgan@RFU.com

Clubs should note that under RFU Regulation 19.5.2, players ordered off are provisionally suspended pending the hearing of their case; such suspension should be taken into consideration when sanctioning.

Clubs are entitled to cite a member of the opposing team for foul play. Citings should be made directly to the RFU Disciplinary department who will advise on the procedure to follow. The NCA Secretary should be informed by the citing Club that a citing has been made.

Clubs may appeal against the awarding of a yellow card for foul play. These can only be made where the appellant alleges that there was mistaken identity or that no act of foul play took place. Written details of the grounds for the appeal plus any relevant video evidence need to be sent to the disciplinary secretary within 7 days of the match. Any appeal that is lodged after the 7-day period will not be valid and shall not be considered by the Disciplinary Panel. There is no charge for this. The Disciplinary department puts these appeals on file. They are only looked at if the player concerned accumulates three yellow cards in a season and is charged with this.

7.9 4TH OFFICIAL

Each home Club must provide a nominated 4th official whose responsibilities are as follows.

- Meeting with the appointed Match Officials before the game to be made aware of any particular requirements which they may have
- Ensuring that both teams have adequate supplies of substitution cards and establishing who from each Club will be notifying him of replacements
- Being readily available at the pitch side to the Match Officials and both Clubs' officials
- Managing all substitutions. In particular, ensuring that a team does not replace more than two players at a time and does not exceed 10 interchanges
- Logging full details of all match events including scores and scorers, substitutions, red and yellow cards issued and kicking records
- Ensuring in conjunction with the Referee and an official of the visiting team that the match result sheet is completed and signed off correctly. This should be done within one hour of the end of the game
- Monitoring the time penalty for any player sent to the sin-bin, ensuring that suspended player remains in the technical area until the time penalty is complete and notifying the Referee via the near side assistant referee when the player can rejoin the game
- Ensuring that replacements warm up at the correct ends of the pitch
- Maintaining good order in the technical area. Any issues should be reported to the referee.
- Assisting the Match Officials as requested and appropriate

7.10 REPLACEMENTS AND SUBSTITUTES

In National League matches, each team is allowed up to 5 replacements. These must be listed on the match report sheet at least 15 minutes before the kick off. After this time, changes to replacements can only be made with the permission of the Match Referee.

In addition, each team must have and nominated in advance at least five suitably trained and experienced front row players in their match squad, all at least eighteen years old (unless otherwise permitted pursuant to RFU Regulation 15).

Rolling substitutions will be utilised in all National League matches and each Club is permitted to use a maximum of 10 interchanges. The following regulations apply to their use

- After all the permitted 10 player interchanges have been made, no other replacements, substitutions or player interchanges will be permitted for any reason (including temporary or permanent injuries, sending offs and suspensions) and in the event that a player is injured, sent off or suspended from the field the team will play with one less player and with uncontested scrums in the event that this involves a front row player and the game cannot continue safely with contested scrums.
- For the avoidance of doubt, player interchanges replace the “blood bin” which means that, if a player has an open wound and has to leave the field, this will be classified as a player interchange if that player is replaced by another player. If a team has used all its player Interchanges, that player may not be replaced and the team shall continue with one less player than was on the pitch prior to the “blood bin”. The player is permitted to return once the wound has been treated and the bleeding stopped.
- Not more than two player Interchanges per team may occur at any one time and may only occur during a stoppage in play and with the knowledge of the Referee who is entitled in his sole opinion to refuse to allow or postpone a player Interchange if he believes either that
 - the player Interchange would prevent the opposition from restarting the game quickly
 - the replacement player is not fit to continue playing in the match
- A player must enter the field of play on the halfway line.
- A player who is a replacement shall not be entitled to take a kick at goal until a passage of play has taken place since that player took to the field of play.
- A player who suffers two injuries in a match which has necessitated that player being replaced on each occasion is not permitted to act as a replacement following the second injury.
- Under dispensation provided to Unions by World Rugby, where these rolling substitutions regulations conflict with the Laws of the Game, these regulations shall take precedence.
- Substitution cards will be used for the management of substitutions on and off the pitch. These can be downloaded from the NCA web site.

The following procedure will be used during a match.

- Each team’s nominated person will be situated during the match in the technical area and will have at his disposal as many replacement cards as he/she requires.
- When it is decided that a player must be replaced, the appropriate nominated person completes the details on the card, giving all the requested details (names, numbers, reasons, times etc.).
- Once this card is completed, it is handed to the 4th Official instructing him to make the replacement at the next opportunity.

- The 4th Official liaises with the near side assistant referee to get the Referee's permission to make the change
- The home Club should retain the substitution cards until the end of the season in case they need to be referred to in the case of a dispute

The specific Regulations relating to replacements and substitutions are set out in Appendix 2 of RFU Regulation 13.

7.11 FRONT ROW REPLACEMENTS

Specific regulations apply to replacement of front row forwards as follows

- With the exception of those players who fall within RFU Regulations 15.3.6 or 15.3.8, no player may play in the front row of the scrum during contested or uncontested scrummages in adult rugby until he has reached his eighteenth birthday. Any breach of this RFU Regulation shall be considered a serious breach and may give rise to a severe penalty.
- As set out in World Rugby Law 3, the replacement of a front row player must come from the suitably trained and experienced players who started the match or from nominated replacements. A player other than a nominated front row player is permitted to play in the front row only when uncontested scrums are being played and there are no available front row replacements.
- In their match squads, sides must have at least two players capable of playing hooker and three players capable of playing prop such that on the first occasion a replacement hooker is required and on the first occasion a replacement prop is required, the team can continue to play safely with contested scrums.

7.12 UNCONTESTED SCRUMS

The Match Referee shall order uncontested scrums when either:

- a front row Player is required to be replaced if, having made enquiry of and having confirmed with the captain of the team (or such other person nominated by the Club as the manager or other person responsible for the team), there is no suitably trained and experienced front row replacement who started the match or from the nominated replacements
- the Referee deems it unsafe for any other reason to start or continue the match with contested scrums.

In National League matches if, on any occasion uncontested scrum(s) are ordered by the Referee, in accordance with the above paragraph, due to injury (including a temporary blood injury) or consequent to a Player being temporarily suspended or ordered off or for any other reason, the team concerned shall not be entitled to replace the Player whose departure caused the uncontested scrum. On the return to the field of a front row Player who has been temporarily excluded the Match shall continue with contested scrums provided it is safe to do so.

Where uncontested scrums occur, the Referee should record details of this on the match report sheet. The NCA Secretary will investigate these reports and, where appropriate, impose sanctions. If requested clubs must provide the NCA Secretary with a signed report within 7 days of the match from the club's senior medical official giving the reasons for the player(s) being unable to continue

On the first instance where a hooker has to be replaced and the first instance where a prop has to be replaced, the side concerned must provide a capable replacement so that the game can continue with contested scrums. If they do not do so, the following apply

- The game continues with uncontested scrums until the end of the match or, if the need for replacement is caused by an injury or yellow card, the player returns
- The offending Club will forfeit the match and their opponents will be deemed to have won the match by four tries. For League purposes points scored by both teams will be disregarded as will any bonus points for the offending side
- Additional sanctions can be imposed by NCA on the offending side
- The player leaving the pitch cannot be replaced. If the need for replacement is caused by an injury or yellow card, the player can only return if he resumes his position such that scrums can be contested

In the above situation, if the player is a tight head prop and his team decline to replace him because the available replacements are all loose heads and not capable of safely playing tight head, the team will be considered to be in breach of the regulations and the consequences above will apply. The same applies if the player to be replaced is a loose head and his team declare all the available replacements to be tight heads

On the second occasion a hooker and on the second occasion a prop has to be replaced and the side concerned does not have a capable replacement, the following apply:

- The game continues with uncontested scrums until the end of the match or the injured or yellow carded player returns
- The result stands
- The player leaving the pitch cannot be replaced. If the need for replacement is caused by an injury or yellow card, the player can only return if he resumes his position such that scrums can be contested
- No sanctions will be applied by NCA

The responsibility for ensuring that replacement props and hookers are competent lies with their Clubs.

7.13 RESULT REPORTING

An electronic process has been implemented to provide quick updating of match results on the NCA web site.

Prior to the start of the season, Clubs are required to submit the names and email addresses of at least two officials who have smart phones. These officials will be given access to an app which allows them to enter the match scores and number of tries for each team. This needs to be done by the home team and obviously only one official needs to do this.

Clubs should endeavour to submit the information as soon as possible and within 30 minutes of the end of the game. Clubs who do not submit their scores in time are liable to a fine of £50 for the first offence in a season and £100 for subsequent offences in that season.

7.14 MATCH REPORT SHEETS

Clubs are required to make use of the electronic match system to record details of all League matches.

Details of the players in the match squad can be entered in advance and need not be done at the ground where the game takes place. Clubs are recommended to enter their match squads by noon on the day before the match to allow them to contact the RFU registrations team if there are issues with players. A team's squad may be changed up to 15 minutes before the scheduled kick off. Changes after this can only be made if approved by the Match Referee.

The system automatically checks that players are correctly registered. It also highlights where a player is classified as foreign, on loan and dual registered. Clubs need to check manually to ensure that they conform to RFU Regulation 13.4 which stipulates for National League matches

- No more than 2 foreign players
- No suspended players
- National 1: no more than three Loan Players and no more than six England Academy Players under the age of 24 as at 1 September 2018
- National 2: four players from another Club of which no more than three shall be Loan Players and the others (up to the maximum of four) must be England Academy Players under the age of 24 as at 1 September 2017.

Failure to conform to the above will make the offending Club liable to sanctions.

After the match, the home team needs to input details of the match events and confirm these. Confirmation posts the details to the RFU Game Management System. This process should be completed within one hour of the end of the game. Clubs who fail to do so within the allotted time may be fined £50 for the first offence and £100 for subsequent offences. If a Club has an issue which is likely to delay completion, they should inform the NCA Secretary as soon as they realise this.

The home team should endeavour to get the Match Referee to complete his portion of the report before he leaves the ground although, if necessary, he can do this later. If the Match Referee is an exchange referee from outside England, the home team should contact the NCA Secretary for guidance

The system can generate a match report sheet which Clubs can circulate for their own purposes.

Clubs who have genuine reasons not to use the electronic system need to apply to the NCA Secretary before the start of the season. If approval is given, Clubs must make use of a manual match result sheet. Instructions on this are in Appendix A.

Clubs who have technical reasons affecting their ability to use the electronic match card during a particular match e.g. power cuts or loss of internet should inform the NCA Secretary as soon as possible and are permitted to use the manual match result sheet.

Clubs should note that, where the manual form is used, it is their responsibility to ensure that all players entered on the form are correctly registered and eligible to play.

All manual match sheets will be checked by the RFU Competitions Department against the current RFU Player Register. Any irregularity will be notified to the NCA Secretary who will inform the Club as soon as possible.

If any Club is found to have been guilty of fielding an ineligible player, points deductions will be applied for the match or matches concerned. The NCA Secretary will inform the Club concerned. The Club has the right of appeal. Sanctions will not be applied until any appeals are concluded.

Clubs who make false or misleading or incorrect entries on the match report, manual or computer, can have sanctions imposed by the NCA Secretary.

7.15 MATCH VIDEOS

The home Club is responsible for producing a match video which should include the Referee's commentary. NCA has negotiated a discounted price for the communication equipment required to pick up the Referee's commentary. Clubs requiring new or replacement communication equipment should contact the NCA Treasurer for details of these discounts and the process required to obtain them.

The home Club is also responsible loading an unedited copy of this video onto the RFU Elite Hub. This need to be completed no later than 12:00 on the Monday after the game. Fuller details are in Appendix B.

The failure of the home Club to comply with the above renders them liable to a financial penalty. On the first occasion this will be £50 and then £100 for each occasion thereafter. Persistent offenders can have their access rights to the Hub suspended.

Clubs must also comply with RFU Regulation 19 regarding the provision of any match footage to a Disciplinary Hearing.

8 NCA ADMINISTRATION

8.1 APPEALS

Any appeal by a Club against any sanction imposed by the NCA (e.g. points deduction, the imposition of fines or the application of any other sanction) needs to follow the procedure below:

- The NCA Secretary will formally notify the offending Club of any sanctions by email or in writing.
- If the Club wishes to appeal against the NCA Secretary's decision, the Club will have fourteen days in which to lodge a written appeal to the NCA Disciplinary Officer. Before the appeal is considered, the Club must remit a deposit of £100 to the NCA Treasurer who will advise on how this should be done. This deposit will be forfeited in the event of an unsuccessful appeal.
- If the Club wishes to appeal against the NCA Disciplinary Officer's decision, it will have fourteen days or whatever period the RFU have in force at the time, in which to lodge an appeal directly to the RFU in writing. The RFU Appeals Panel decision will be final.
- No sanctions will be applied until the appeals procedure has ended.
- Clubs must be aware that the imposed sanction(s) may be increased as well as decreased on appeal. This may also apply to an appeal which is deemed to be frivolous. All costs (including travel, hire of ancillary equipment etc.) of an appeal regardless of the outcome can be charged to the Clubs at the discretion of the NCA Disciplinary Officer hearing the appeal. Costs will not be invoiced until the appeals process has ended.
- Appeals not lodged within the prescribed period will be adjudged to be 'out of time'.

8.2 NCA WEBSITE

Each member Club of the NCA which has a website is required to place a conspicuous link on their website to the NCA website www.ncarugby.org.

8.3 CLUB ACCOUNTS

Clubs in National 1 are required by the RFU to have their financial year ending on 30th June.

The NCA has been delegated by the RFU to collect audited annual accounts every year from all its member Clubs.

Each Club must submit its audited accounts to the NCA Treasurer by the 1st December. In the event of a Club failing to comply with this requirement for whatever reason, a financial penalty of £100 and/or a deduction of five League points will be made. The RFU may impose other sanctions.

In addition, around the start of the season, Clubs will be asked to complete a short financial questionnaire.

8.4 VALUE ADDED TAX

The NCA is registered for VAT and VAT at the standard rate will be added to any invoice issued under these regulations other than fines which are outside the scope of VAT.

8.5 MANAGEMENT FEE

Each Club participating in the National Leagues shall pay an annual management fee to the NCA to cover the administrative and operating expenses of the National Leagues. Such sum will be determined at the Annual General Meeting of the NCA.

8.6 INSURANCE

The RFU funds an insurance policy which provides some insurance cover for its member Clubs. This is provided free of charge to Clubs.

Details can be obtained from the insurance section of the RFU web site using the link below.

<http://englandrugbyinsurance.co.uk/>

Some key documents including the employer's liability cover note can be downloaded from the NCA web site.

Clubs are advised that, if they are expecting more than 1,000 visitors (or more than 2,000 people at a rugby festival) it is essential that insurers sign-off their plans before the event. Clubs need to contact the RFU brokers (rfu@howdengroup.com) before the event with a copy of their risk assessments.

8.7 NON-PAYMENT OF PENALTIES

Failure by a Club to pay any financial penalties or charges imposed by the RFU or NCA within 14 days of notification (subject to any appeal), will render the Club liable to deduction of up to 18 league points as per RFU Regulations.

9 RFU CONDITIONS

9.1 DISCIPLINARY POWERS

RFU Disciplinary has over responsibility for club and player discipline. All player disciplinary is handled by the RFU. Some other matters particularly to game and league management are delegated to the NCA. However, clubs and players have the right of appeal to the RFU against sanctions applied. These are described in section 13.10 and section 19 of the RFU Regulations and Clubs are advised to understand these.

9.2 MANAGEMENT FEE

An annual fee may be payable by each participating Club in the RFU Leagues in order to cover the administrative and operating expenses. This fee will be determined annually by the RFU Competitions

Committee and shall be due and payable not later than 1st September or on such other date as the RFU Competitions Committee may determine from time to time.

9.3 FUNDING

The Committee has established a reserve fund to contribute towards the travel costs incurred by away Clubs when a match is called off after they arrive at the match venue. Claims need to be submitted to the NCA Secretary within 28 days of the postponed match. There is a cap on the fund and, if it is over-subscribed by claims, individual claims may be scaled down appropriately

9.4 SPONSORSHIP, FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OR GIFTS

Any proposal involving an offer of sponsorship, financial assistance or gifts for an RFU Competition or combination of RFU Competitions must be submitted to the RFU for approval which it will not refuse or delay unless such offer or the terms thereof would cause the RFU to be in breach of any other contract or commitment it may have to a third party.

9.5 LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Each Club in consideration of the funding received by it from the RFU or any funding from a sponsor(s) whether or not received direct from the sponsor(s) or through the RFU or any third party for participating in any RFU Competition agrees that by commencing its programme of matches in any RFU Competition it has entered into a legally binding obligation with the RFU and as a separate covenant with each other Clubs in the RFU Competition and with any sponsor of the RFU Competition in which the Club plays:

- to comply in every particular with RFU Regulation 13
- to permit access to its premises during a match to any person authorised by the RFU Competitions Committee or the NCA (with or without notice) to check compliance with all or any of this RFU Regulation 13
- to maintain at all times during the Season a sufficient number of Effectively Registered fit and available players to ensure the ability of the Club to fulfil its programme of matches on the dates determined by the NCA or any rearrangement thereof
- to comply at all times with each and every obligation and requirement entered into by the RFU (or the NCA as the case may be) with third parties including but not limited to the terms and conditions of any sponsorship or other agreement provided that the particulars of any such obligations and requirements have been and prior to the commencement of its first match in the RFU Competition notified to the participating Clubs
- to comply and to ensure and procure that its members and players are aware of and agree to be bound by the RFU's disciplinary policies and their enforcement by the RFU in accordance with its published procedures.

9.6 POTENTIAL CLAIMS FOR DAMAGES

Each Club in consideration of the funding received by it for participating in any RFU Competition or in consideration of the RFU providing at no cost to the Clubs insurance in terms of the RFU approved policy by commencing its programme of matches in any RFU Competition agrees it has entered into a legally binding contractual obligation, any breach of which may give rise to a claim for damages or compensation with each and every other Clubs in the RFU Competition and the RFU:

- to play all and each of its fixtures on the dates fixed pursuant to this RFU Regulation 13;

- to comply at all times with every applicable RFU Regulation.

9.7 RESTRICTIONS ON CLAIMS

Each Club in consideration of the funding received by it for participating in the RFU Competition or in consideration of the RFU providing at no cost to the Club's insurance in terms of the RFU approved policy by commencing its programme of matches agrees it has entered into a legally binding obligation with the RFU, any sponsor of the RFU Competition and as a separate covenant with each other Clubs in the RFU Competition, Match Official involved in any match in the RFU Competition or cancellation or abandonment thereof that it will not hold liable or make any claim against any of the foregoing or the RFU or the Competitions Committee:

- for any loss cost charge compensation or expense arising out of or in connection with any kind of injury or illness suffered by any player, spectator or other person (in so far as is permitted by law)
- for any damage to property of any kind
- for any other loss cost charge expense or damages, be it economic financial consequential or for loss of profit expense incurred or otherwise and whether directly or consequential
- for any loss of any description howsoever arising or alleged to arise from or in relation to the result of any match in the RFU Competition or cancellation or postponement of any match arising out of or due to any decision or action that such official may take (or failed to have taken) under the Laws of the Game, these RFU Regulations or any other Rules or Regulations published in the Handbook or which have been properly introduced by the RFU or in respect of any opinion expressed under these Regulations or in respect of the normal procedures to hold play control, cancel or abandon a match.

9.8 SEVERABILITY

If any provision in these RFU Regulations is found by any court or competent authority to be illegal, void or unenforceable, such provisions shall be deemed to be deleted and the remaining provisions shall continue in full force and effect. Such provision must also be replaced by a provision which is valid and enforceable and which gives effect to the spirit of the RFU Regulations.

9.9 DISCIPLINE & DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The RFU Discipline & Dispute Resolution regulations apply to all National League Clubs and are contained in Regulation 13.10. Clubs are advised to read and understand these important regulations.

APPENDIX A

MANUAL MATCH RESULT SHEET

1. Manual match report sheets can be downloaded from the NCA web site and Clubs should ensure that they use the current version.
2. The fully completed sheet must be faxed or emailed within 60 minutes of the final whistle to the NCA Secretary

email ncamatch@yahoo.com

This copy need not necessarily have the team officials and Referee's signature.

3. If a Club has a technical issue preventing them sending the form in time, they should contact the NCA Secretary as soon as they realise this.
4. A copy of the sheet containing all the officials' signatures needs to be sent to the RFU by fax or email to be received within 72 hours of the final whistle.

email nationalleague@therfu.com Fax 0208 831 7613.

5. Failure to comply with the above deadlines will give rise to a fine of £50 on the first occasion in a season and £100 for subsequent failures during that season.
6. Fines as in 5 above will also be imposed where Clubs submit incomplete forms or enter erroneous information
7. The home Club is responsible for ensuring that the sheet is completed in accordance with RFU Match Regulations and NCA Administrative Instructions.
8. Clubs are responsible for ensuring that all players entered in their squad list are correctly registered to play and that they conform to RFU regulations regarding foreign, loan and dual registered players. They are advised to use their registration list downloadable from the RFU web site for this purpose as this is the definitive list.
9. The RFU will check player eligibility and inform NCA of any ineligible players. NCA is authorised to impose sanctions for such breaches and these can include deduction of League points.
10. The home Club must give a copy of the completed match report sheet to their opponents and retain the signed copy until the end of the season.

APPENDIX B

ELITE HUB

1. INTRODUCTION

The Elite Hub is an RFU funded site for sharing match videos. For all National League matches, the home club is required to load an unedited copy of the match video onto the hub no later than 12.00 noon on the Monday after the match.

2. ACCESS

Each National League club can nominate up to three persons who can view videos on the hub and upload their club's videos. Access is conditional on abiding by the Hub's terms and conditions. Failure to do so, could lead to access rights being removed.

Requests to add or change access rights should be made to matchofficials@RFU.com

3. FILES

Only one file per game can be uploaded to the hub and this must contain both halves. The file must not be edited and must run continuously from the start to finish of each half.

The referee commentary must be included which requires the use of an appropriate communications transmitter on the referee with a receiver on the camera. Clubs must supply this equipment. The communications kit used by the match officials is not suitable for linking to a video camera and cannot be used.

MP4 and .MOV files can be loaded. The size of the file needs to be sufficient to give good clarity without taking up too much space on the Hub. Around the 2gb mark is a good guideline.

4. CAMERA POSITIONS

Games need to be filmed from an elevated side on position as near to the half way as practical. The camera should have an unobstructed view of the whole pitch.

5. LOADING FILES

Loading files is straight forward and intuitive. The match video needs to be correctly formatted and accessible from the device being used to access the Hub. The appropriate fixture needs to be accessed from the fixtures tab. Clicking the files button displays a red box with the message "send this video to us". Selecting this displays a screen asking where the file is. Select "browse" and find your file and select it. The file will then automatically load to the hub.

Once it is loaded to the Hub, it then automatically goes through a decoding process to enable it to be streamed. The time taken for this depends on the number of files currently being processed.

6. TIMESCALES

The deadline for loading files is 12 noon on the Monday following the game. However, clubs are encouraged to load the files as soon as possible.

APPENDIX C

PITCH INSPECTION PROTOCOL

NATIONAL LEAGUES

The following protocol is designed to assist both match officials and teams in determining whether the ground is fit to play. All officials must ensure they follow this protocol diligently.

PROTOCOL

- Immediately following their arrival at a ground, the match referee (or the appointed alternate in cases where an early assessment is required) will decide whether any part of the ground is unfit for play. If appropriate, the home team may be asked to carry out work on the pitch to attempt to make it fit to play. The assessment shall be made without consulting either team. If the view is that the pitch is unfit, the referee will immediately inform the PGMOT National Panel management team.
- If either team raises objections about the condition of the ground, they **MUST** identify these to the referee before the match starts. This should be done as early as possible and no later than 30 minutes before the scheduled kick off time.
- Any discussions with the match referee about the condition of the ground will be undertaken by a single member of the team's staff. That person will represent their club in all discussions with the match referee with regard to any part of the ground being unfit for play.
- The teams should specifically identify any issues they have with the condition of the ground.
- In the first instance, the referee will attempt to resolve any issues raised by a team. If, however, a team still has objections about the ground, they must make it clear to the match referee that they believe that the ground is unfit for play.
- If concerns are raised by either club, the match referee and their team of officials will then carry out a further pitch inspection when no club officials will be present. The match referee, in discussion with the team of officials, will then decide whether the game can start.
- The match officials will then ask to meet with the single representative from both each team and the referee will inform the teams of the decision.
- If the referee believes that the pitch is unfit but both clubs indicate that they are prepared to play, the referee may reconsider his decision.
- If the match referee believes that a ground is fit to play and a team refuses to start the match, the referee will abandon the match at that point.
- If the game is called off, the referee will immediate contact a member of the PGMOT National Panel management team who in turn will inform RFU / NCA of the outcome of the deliberations.
- Once a game is abandoned the match officials will make no comments to any individual or individuals.

SANCTIONS

- If the game is called off by the match referee and the home team did not have the pitch inspected by an accredited RFU match official before the away team set off, the home club are liable to pay the visiting team's travelling expenses. If the pitch was inspected, the away team may make a claim against the RFU duplicate travel fund.
- If either team declines to play after the referee has decided the pitch is playable, the referee should call the game off. Unless decided otherwise by the NCA Secretary, the game will be replayed.
- If both teams decline to play after the referee has declared the pitch playable, each team will be deducted 5 league points and the away team will not be able to make a claim against the duplicate travel fund.
- If only one team declines to play after the referee has declared the pitch playable, the following sanctions apply to that club:
 - A deduction of 5 league points;
 - If it is the home team, they must pay the away team's travelling expenses;
 - If it is the away team, they cannot make a claim against the duplicate travel fund.