



Match Day Safety

The protocol two of this folder's own sessions already assume exists. It does now — read this once, then keep it where the kit bag is.

This is not medical advice, and it doesn't replace it. It's the same club-wide "if in doubt, sit them out" standard the Youth curriculum already runs on, adapted for a senior squad: what happens the moment something goes wrong, before a qualified professional takes over. `Technical/Heading.md` and `Set-Pieces/Defending the Box.md` both refer to "the concussion guidance in the club's match-day material" — this page is that material.

1. Concussion — if in doubt, sit them out

This follows the UK Concussion Guidelines for Non-Elite (Grassroots) Sport and the Irish FA's own concussion guidance, which apply identically to adult grassroots players — there is no lighter version of this protocol for seniors than for youth.

- **Any suspected head injury comes off immediately** — no "play to the whistle," no "see how they feel in five minutes." The player does not return to the pitch that day, even if symptoms appear to clear.
- **No return to any football activity within 24 hours** of the incident, and the player should be seen by a healthcare professional (GP or emergency department, depending on severity) within that same 24 hours.
- **No return to contact training or competition before 21 days** from the day of injury, and only once fully symptom-free — this is a floor, not a target; some players need longer.
- **Symptoms lasting more than 28 days** need assessment and management by a healthcare professional (typically a GP) before any further return-to-play steps.
- **Log it the same evening** — who, what happened, what was observed, who they were told to see. Tell the team captain or club safety contact (below) before the next session, not after.
- A team-mate, not just the player themselves, can and should flag a suspected knock — head injuries are the one situation where a player's own read of their symptoms is deliberately not the final word.

Any player who takes a blow to the head in training comes off and stays off, exactly as on a Saturday — this applies to every heading and set-piece session in this folder, not just match day.

2. Before you travel

- Confirm the ground's **what3words** or full address before leaving, and know the **nearest defibrillator** location if it isn't the ground's own.
- Check **vehicle access** for an ambulance at an unfamiliar ground — which gate, which side.
- Nominate **two people** (not just the manager) who know this protocol and where the first-aid kit and defibrillator are, in case the manager is the one who needs attention.
- Confirm **phone signal** at the ground — some pitches have dead spots; know which of the group has signal if it matters.
- Bring a **printed contact card**: club safety contact, nearest ED, and this page's protocol summary, in the kit bag — not just on a phone that might be flat or lost.

3. Pre-match pitch check

- Goals anchored and stable.
- Pitch clear of glass, debris, and obvious hazards.
- First-aid kit and ice packs present and in date.
- A weather call made and communicated before players travel, not on arrival — lightning and waterlogged pitches are the coach's call to make early.

4. During the match

- The decision to remove a player for a suspected head injury is **not overruled by the scoreline, the stage of the match, or the player's own protest**. It is made once and it stands.
- Any club official present — not only the manager — can make the call. Waiting for one specific person to be looking at the right moment is how these get missed.
- A player removed for a suspected head injury is **not** eligible to return as a substitute later in the same match.

5. After the match

- The same-evening log (Section 1) happens regardless of how the game went — this is not something to remember tomorrow.
- The player is reminded of the 24-hour and 21-day minimums before they leave, in person, not left to look it up themselves.
- Training that week is adjusted for that player without requiring them to ask — see the individualised-load table in `00 Season Architecture.md` Section 7 for how a returning player's Tuesday load should already flex around exactly this situation.

Club contacts

Fill in and keep current — this table is the one meant to travel in the kit bag, not stay on a laptop.

ROLE	NAME	CONTACT
Club safety contact	_____	_____
Deputy	_____	_____
Nearest ED (home ground)	_____	_____
Defibrillator location (home ground)	_____	_____
Home ground what3words	_____	_____

Always: 999 for any immediate emergency. NHS 111 / GP for next-day assessment guidance if not urgent enough for 999 or an ED visit.

Sources

- Irish FA concussion guidance — [irishfa.com](https://www.irishfa.com)
- UK Concussion Guidelines for Non-Elite (Grassroots) Sport (November 2024 update) — sportandrecreation.org.uk
- The FA — "If in Doubt, Sit Them Out" — [thefa.com](https://www.thefa.com/get-involved/fa-concussion-guidelines-if-in-doubt-sit-them-outold)

Castlewellan Town FC · Senior Coaching Curriculum · match-day safety one-pager · written by Alan Cunningham with Claude AI