

# PUBLIC Q&A



Football Heading – U12 and below, Trial of Law Changes 2022/23

## OVERVIEW

The FA has been granted approval from the International Football Association Board (IFAB) to introduce a new trial to remove deliberate heading in football matches across U12 level and below in England from the start of the 2022-23 season.

Norfolk Combined Youth Football League have been accepted for the trial and will be trialling the removal of deliberate heading in **U7 to U11** matches only. We will not be including U12 matches.

## WHAT EXACTLY ARE THE NEW LAWS THAT WILL BE INTRODUCED AS PART OF THIS TRIAL?

The law changes for these trials are dictated by IFAB and state:

1. Deliberately heading the ball is an offence punishable by an indirect free kick. This will also mean the introduction of indirect free-kicks within mini-soccer for this circumstance.
2. The indirect free kick is taken at the point where the ball was deliberately headed, except:
  - Where a player of the defending team deliberately heads the balls in their own penalty area, the indirect free kick is taken from the penalty mark.
3. Deliberately heading the ball is not a cautionable (yellow card) or sending-off (red card) offence unless it:
  - Stops or interferes with a promising attack (yellow card)
  - Denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity (red card)
  - Occur often enough to be considered 'persistent misconduct' (yellow card)

## BUT MINI-SOCCER DOESN'T HAVE INDIRECT FREE-KICKS?

During this trial, indirect free-kicks will be introduced into mini-Soccer for the purpose of restarting play in the event of a deliberate header only. They will not be used in any other circumstance during mini-soccer.

## IF A CHILD PLAYS AT A HIGHER LEVEL THAN THEIR AGE GROUP (I.E. AN 11-YEAR-OLD PLAYING IN THE U13 AGE GROUP) ARE THEY ALLOWED TO HEAD THE BALL?

The trial will specifically relate to the relevant playing age groups, rather than the age of the player.

## WHY HAVE THE FA MADE THE DECISION TO INTRODUCE THIS NEW TRIAL?

Last year we introduced Heading Guidance in Training which was well received. Now we want to align matches with training in these age groups. Currently heading in training amongst these age groups is eliminated or restricted, so this is the natural next step for these age groups.

Reducing heading at this level can support the development of more skilful players who are able to stay on the ball when in possession, contributing to the improved technical ability of our young players.

## WHY ARE YOU BRINGING THIS TRIAL IN FOR NEXT SEASON?

We believe it is in the best interest of the youth game to introduce this trial for the 2022/23 season. Removing and restricting heading in training has worked well for these age groups, so it makes sense to take the same approach with matches. In addition, introducing this trial in time for the 2022/23 season will allow us to see exactly how the new laws can be implemented in the youth game. We can then carry out our own research which will help further decision-making later on. Naturally we will also work closely with our stakeholders, including CFAs, Coaches, Referees and IFAB to support the introduction and implementation of the trial.

## HOW DO I PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON THE TRIAL AND/OR THE GAMES I'M INVOLVED IN?

As part of the sign-up process The FA will be collating contact details of league secretaries. These will be used by the Insight Team to contact the league and club workforce and to reach out to parents, coaches and match officials to collect feedback on experiences within the trial. We will also be exploring methodologies for capturing the experiences of youth players, as well as conducting observations to collect data during matches.

## HOW SHOULD WE SUPPORT THE TRANSITION INTO U13 WHERE PLAYERS CAN HEAD THE BALL?

Our advice remains consistent with the heading guidance for training, where **heading remains a low priority at this age and our expectation is that heading should not be introduced at this stage**. However, if coaches feel it necessary to introduce the technique of heading, due to the increased heading activity in the game, we strongly advise a maximum of **one session per week** with light balls, limited repetition of a **maximum of five headers**, using self-serve or short distances. These limited sessions should introduce the technique of heading and should always be unopposed.

## WITHIN U12 FOOTBALL THE LACK OF QUALIFIED MATCH OFFICIALS OFTEN MEANS COACHES/PARENTS FULFIL THAT ROLE. HOW WILL THEY BE SUPPORTED?

As part of the resource packs, clubs and leagues will be given information that can be cascaded to coaches and parents regarding the protocols of the trial. Leagues will be responsible for information that the 'officials' receive before the match, if the match is included in the trial.