

# Joint Response Group provide updated advice based on Scottish Government restrictions

The Joint Response Group has met Scottish Government Ministers on a number of occasions and has been heavily involved in dialogue with government advisers and clinical experts on a variety of matters on a frequent basis since last March.

This undertaking is to ensure that clubs can continue to comply with all government public health guidance and respond to changes that occur within the government's rolling period of public health restriction enforcement.



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These discussions include regular liaison on implementation of operational guidance for football and, through the Scottish FA's Chief Medical Consultant, Dr John MacLean, with the government's Elite Sport Clinical Advisory Group (ESCAG).

ESCAG was set up by government in October last year with the aim of providing consistent clinical advice to elite sports as they continue to navigate through the impact of restriction levels and public health guidance.

In the recent case of Dundee United's Premiership match against Motherwell, questions were asked by Motherwell regarding a United player and his eligibility to participate

in the match.

In cases such as this, where a club positive test is followed by an NHS negative test, it is for ESCAG to review the specific circumstances of the case and determine whether the individual should be required to self-isolate or not. Prior to ESCAG players were not permitted to play and had to self-isolate even in the knowledge of a subsequent negative NHS test.

Now such instances are reviewed by ESCAG on a case-by-case basis. The review is undertaken by expert clinicians with input from the player and club concerned, as well as local public health officials

It is therefore not a policy decision, but a clinical evaluation. Clubs who have returned positive tests undergo an evaluation via the relevant local public health team in conjunction with ESCAG. This is now a well-established process.

On the subject of Livingston's recent statement regarding pre-match meals, the ability for restaurants to open during current restrictions is mandated by government via local authority licensing laws. The club made a request to use a sponsor's restaurant ahead of their match with Celtic on 16 January. That request was approved by government and communicated to the club.

The JRG was advised by government this week of a change to that legislation and this was communicated to clubs upon confirmation of the change.

The JRG understand clubs' challenges in adhering to the guidance, which changes in line with the government's public health strategy, but this is simply unavoidable in the effort to eradicate a deadly virus that continues to affect every aspect of human life.

They ask for patience and understanding of the bigger picture as we strive to keep Scottish football operating at professional level amid a lingering and devastating global pandemic.