# Football Association to Phase Out Deliberate Heading in Youth Matches



The Football Association (FA) will introduce a new rule to phase out deliberate heading in grassroots youth matches across England. This change will be implemented over the next three seasons for all leagues, clubs, and affiliated school matches at the under-11 level and below.

The phase-out plan will start with under-seven to under-nine matches in the 2024-25 season, extend to under-10 level in the 2025-26 season, and include under-11s in the 2026-27 season. The new rule follows a two-season trial by the International Football Association Board (Ifab).

Research commissioned by the FA revealed that former professional footballers have a nearly three-and-a-half times higher risk of being diagnosed with dementia compared to the general population. Consequently, deliberately heading the ball in these youth games will now result in an indirect free-kick awarded to the opposing team.

The FA reported that approximately 16,000 teams and 107,000 players participated in the Ifab trial, which began in 2022. The FA aims to enhance technical skills, increase effective playing time, and reduce the ball's airborne time during matches.