



English Schools' Football Association

# Membership Matters

## A message from the Chairman

### Don't forget...

If you want to take part in District or County Cup competitions for the remainder of this season - please contact [Darren Alcock](#) to let him know which teams will be taking part

The government's plans to move the country out of lockdown will shortly see the return of all students to school, followed three weeks later by team sports resuming, accompanied by the easing of travel restrictions. Although these are subject to rates of infection continuing to fall, they do give cause for cautious optimism that young people will soon be able to enjoy activities that mean so much to them – including football. Now more than ever they need the wide benefits that sport provides.

The ESFA has offered those districts and counties that wish to resume their activities the opportunity to take part in the U11 DANONE 7a-sides, the U13 and U15 Inter-Association trophy competitions, and the full suite of Inter-County cups for girls and boys. Entries to date are encouraging, but if you have yet to confirm your wish for your district or county to participate, please contact [Darren Alcock](#) by e-mail before the end of this week. There is no expectation to enter, and we recognise that there will be good reasons why some districts and counties will choose not to.

As you will be aware, the current Inter-Associations and Inter-County competitions will cease at the end of this season. They will be replaced by a new set of competitions that will provide even better opportunities for the youngsters who play schools' representative football. Our plans for these continue apace and we have recently:

- Held briefing meetings for districts and counties to share those plans, and importantly to outline our responses to the invaluable feedback we received at the roadshows in November that has enabled us to strengthen the plans.
- Commissioned the App that will serve as the operating tool for the new competitions and the Player Passport scheme that underpins them.
- Liaised with the secretaries of the four regions to discuss ways in which existing inter-county competitions in the areas could be remodelled to accommodate the new national structure and provide players with the very best opportunities when representing their counties.

Crucially, the new competitions will secure the future of schools' representative football and enable districts and counties to meet the myriad challenges we have sought to address for many years. As I indicated in the previous edition of Membership Matters, we all have an emotional attachment to the past, but that is invariably not good thinking and, in looking at the bigger picture for schools' football for the future, we all need to embrace change and recognise that, unless we do so, other providers will take our place.

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## Chairman's message continued

We have been particularly encouraged by responses from around the country in support of the new competitions. Several districts have announced plans to run more teams next season, others have indicated they will be running teams again after a gap of many seasons and we have had enquiries about starting new districts. One long-standing district secretary e-mailed last week to say *"After having been very sceptical about the suggested competitions for next year and in particular the Passport system, recent paperwork and virtual meetings have convinced me that ESFA have listened to feedback from members and have made it into a potentially good product. We will certainly be entering at all age groups."* Several county colleagues have also been in touch to say that their counties are fully supportive too.

The quality of the product we offer is crucial. It is also essential that we offer girls the same opportunities as boys. That is why the new structure addresses the current lack of representative football for girls and will include inter-district National Competitions for girls at every level from U12 to U15, as well as an U18 Girls Inter-County National Cup. Now is the time to look forward. Not to settle for the ESFA as it was or is or what we thought it might have been, but for what it could and should be for the future generations of young people who will represent their districts and counties.

Last week, we said farewell to Andy Weston, our Football Development Manager, after seven years at the ESFA. Andy has overseen the re-structuring that has taken place in all 44 of our counties, and the project, equally important to the future as the new competitions, is now nearing a successful conclusion. Andy's commitment, diligence and resilience have been instrumental in this and he goes to pastures new with our thanks and best wishes.

Finally, I hope you are keeping safe and well as the country moves out of lockdown. To those who are working at what used to be called the chalk face, best wishes for a smooth transition from online lessons, blended learning and key worker bubbles to the new normal of all students returning to school. If, like me, you are fortunate enough to have received your first dose of the vaccine and are enjoying some Spring-like weather, let's make the most of it!

Phil Harding

## Message from the Chair of Trustees

The Trustees of the ESFA have the financial responsibility for ESFA activity and for ensuring that the ESFA council has the financial resources to meet its responsibilities as the governing body for schools' football.

One of the key financial challenges faced is to source funds to maintain and reinvigorate representative football at county and district level. National Competition entries have been in decline for over 10 years.

I, like you, believe that ESFA representative football is a great experience for those young people who are lucky enough to take part in it. As a county secretary I know only too well the challenges of finance and logistics that running rep teams presents, but it is my belief that the opportunities it offers make meeting these challenges worth it – at regional and national level.

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## Chair of Trustees' message continued

The continuation of national representative competitions and the introduction of Player Passport are inextricably linked. The simple fact is that these competitions are not sustainable without additional income to run them. We have sought sponsorship and grant funding from a variety of sources and this has not been successful, leaving the Trustees with a set of universally valued competitions that have no funding to support them.

The budget for the current 20-21 season required £80,000 worth of expenditure to run our representative competitions. The entry fees for these competitions total about £2,500 – the maths is simple.

The context into which this is set includes a reduction in income for the association that is beyond our control with belts being tightened everywhere during the pandemic, including at the Football Association. Commercial income is difficult to guarantee with any certainty as the world begins to emerge from Covid-19. We are also aware that the potential 'market' for commercial sponsorship is smaller due to the selective nature of the competitions, underlining the need for us to think differently in terms of income generation and the profile of the competitions.

It is against this background that the ESFA Trustees must meet the challenge of reinvigorating representative football.

Money from ESFA reserves has been allocated to give the Player Passport proposals a kick start. The passport cost has been reduced to £25 for the first year with the ESFA underwriting the remaining £15 per player. Payback to associations has been brought forward and a guarantee of £190 per team entering has been made. In addition a £20,000 development fund has been established to stimulate new teams.

This use of ESFA reserves is permitted under the rules of the charity commission because it is targeted, strategic expenditure to start a project which will become sustainable in its own right, having repaid the association's reserves. What we are unable to do is use reserves to maintain the current competition format and expenditure without a plan to ensure sustainability. This would be a clear dereliction of our duties and not comply with the charity commission's requirement to 'manage the charity's resources responsibly.'

Player Passport is the plan for income diversification and sustainability. It has been worked on by Trustees and council for over 2 years. Our hope is that the introduction of the rebranded Champions Cup will raise the profile of the competitions and make them more attractive to a major sponsor. Sponsorship of the competitions could help to reduce the cost of the passport or increase the kick back to associations – or both. We gave a commitment that all profit from the player passport would be distributed to membership and we stand by this.

Work with us as we try to maintain our national competitions for those who they are intended to benefit – the pupils of England's schools.

Mike Coyne

ESFA Chair of Trustees

## Resumption of Schools' Football

Whilst we await the updated DCMS-approved guidance for the resumption of schools' football as negotiated by The FA, and following responses from Membership, we are pleased that we will be able to run our rep football competitions for this season. The details of this are obviously subject to that guidance from The FA, and once that has been released and been assessed, we will update Members further.



## Grief Encounter - Forget-Me-Not Walk

**Walk in memory of a loved one & raise money for bereaved children and young people in the UK**

The ESFA's charitable partner, Grief Encounter, leading UK bereavement charity, provide free, professional bereavement services, including a national helpline for those experiencing grief. During the last 12 months, calls to their 'grieffalk' helpline have been the busiest they've ever experienced, so the charity has launched a brand new covid-secure initiative to raise money, supporting the incredibly important services that they provide. We'd love it if you could help them too!

The ESFA are sharing Grief Encounters' Forget-Me-Not Walk details in the hope that our schools, associations and young people can come together, safely, to support the work carried out by the charity, which provides an essential service to youngsters across the country. We are also taking part in the walk as an organisation, as an ESFA-wide team activity.

### How can you help?

Share this email and [link](#) to your colleagues, parents and players to encourage them to get involved: Registration costs £5 and each registered walker will receive a 'forget-me-not' walk baseball cap or dog bandana (!) plus a packet of forget-me-not seeds to plant on or after the walk.

You can join the ESFA's JustGiving page to raise money collectively as part of the ESFA team. Several members of staff and ESFA council are already signed up to take part. If you would like to talk part in the Forget-Me-Not walk as part of the ESFA's team, please email [sarah.kearney@schoolsfa.com](mailto:sarah.kearney@schoolsfa.com) for further Details.

### Become Forget-Me-Not Walk Champions

Every person who shares the 'forget-me-not' walk details on their social media channels, by word of mouth or any other way, is already a champion, but could you or your school or association take it to the next level? Maybe you could invite your players to write stories, poems or songs about raising money for the cause? £26 funds a grieffalk helpline session – maybe you and your teams could think about ways of using '26' to promote the walk too?

Head over to the [Grief Encounter website](#) for full details and the registration link. There is plenty more information on their website.

If you would like to become a forget-me-not walk champion, then please email [sarah.kearney@schoolsfa.com](mailto:sarah.kearney@schoolsfa.com) directly to register and discuss how you can help us support this fantastic cause.

the forget-me-not  
walk

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021  
Sign up now!



Walk in memory of a loved one & raise funds for bereaved children, young people & their families



## FA update on futsal

### Message from Louise Gear, Head of Development at the FA, on behalf of The FA Futsal Committee

The current COVID-19 climate is presenting challenges for organisations across the globe and sports NGBs in this country have not been immune to the financial impact. As previously disclosed, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on The FA and as an organisation we are currently planning for potential losses of approximately £300m. As a result of unavoidable budget cuts associated with the pandemic, we confirmed in September that funding will no longer be provided for elite England Futsal teams.

The FA remains responsible for the governance, development and control of futsal within England, in accordance with the mandate afforded to it by FIFA. This responsibility is irrespective of any FA allocation of funding and work will continue at a reduced scale, overseen by the FA Futsal Committee.

The FA Futsal Committee is a committee of the FA National Game Board and does not control or influence FA finances, budget setting or allocation of funds. The role of committee is to advise, support and provide over-arching governance to FA futsal investment and activities. The FA acknowledges the past 10 months have been challenging for the whole futsal community, noting the Futsal Committee are also part of this community of fans and volunteers. These reductions in futsal funding have undoubtedly limited the ability to engage as widely as previous seasons, which is disappointing but an unavoidable reality for The FA.

The purpose of this communication is to re-confirm that despite the financial cuts, The FA remains committed to futsal at grassroots levels and its dedicated competition structure, the futsal competition pathway. Whilst futsal is not considered as a professional game in England, it is often utilized within the Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP) for player development purposes. The FA therefore appreciates futsal is both a specialist game in its own right (where it has a specific and dedicated audience) but also a game that provides valuable player development opportunities for young footballers on the male and female pathways. It has dual purposes and participation benefits, requiring a unique approach with a specific competition structure.

In conclusion, the 2018-2024 **Fast Forward with Futsal Strategy** remains relevant and applicable to our stakeholder groups, but certain elements can no longer be delivered due to financial constraints. Integrating futsal participation and coaching in to existing pathways are a priority moving forward, along with supporting the existing competition pathway.

This is a difficult time, further complicated by an ever changing, indefinite landscape and we urge all stakeholders to unite and work collaboratively for the benefit of the game going forwards. The FA, through its Futsal Committee, aim to re-establish the Futsal Pathway Stakeholder Group with invitations for the first meeting to be sent next week. This stakeholder group will be the filter point for any queries concerning the futsal pathway in the future. It would be much appreciated if you could therefore act as a conduit for communications with your clubs and circulate this updated information.



## Safeguarding checks in lockdown

As some of you will know, the ESFA will be expected to meet the child welfare standards set down in The FA's "Safeguarding Operating Standard" - the SOS. We will share more of the details of this once we have the version of the SOS which is specific to us, but in the meantime, as part of our preparation, our National Child Welfare Officers are going to undertake a series of reviews of websites, social media accounts and other public information to establish that information published is appropriate. They will sample CSFA and DSFA social media as part of this process.

Please be assured that this is intended to be a developmental and supportive process - should the NCWOs identify any points of risk in these checks, they'll be in touch with you to alert you to them and to advise on how to adjust accordingly. We will sample randomly to begin with, but if you want an objective view in advance of sampling, please feel free to ask the NCWOs for an early check.

## The Panini Classroom Challenge returns

**Win the biggest yet cash prize for your school with the ESFA & Panini's Classroom Challenge for 2021**

The Classroom Challenge continues in 2021 with a brand-new opportunity for your school to win a huge **£3,000 cash** with a 'Design a Football' competition – but hurry, there's only 2,000 packs up for grabs!

For the chance to take part in the competition, putting your school in the running to win a huge £3,000 cash prize, a Panini assembly and trophy presentation, plus a £50 Amazon voucher and a football shirt for the winning pupil.

All you need to do is register your school via this [link](#).

Aside from the fantastic Classroom Challenge competition, your school will also receive sticker albums, sticker packets and a competition guide, which you can use within your school. We have had some amazing feedback from teachers from across England on the benefits of receiving these goodies and entering our competitions

To register, simply click [here](#) or follow the link at the bottom of the page and enter your details – but hurry, we only have 2,000 packs to send out and you only have until 7 April to register your school! The competition will run throughout April and May and we're already excited to see the entries we'll receive. The standards have been incredibly high in previous competitions and we love to see how creative school children in England can be!



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