



English Schools' Football Association

Membership Matters

Chairman's Message

Don't forget...

Player Passport debriefing sessions will be held for DSFAs and CSFAs on the 9th and 10th February.

Full information on this debrief can be found on page 3 of Membership Matters.

Please ensure you book your place via email

Since the last edition of Membership Matters, Lockdown 3 has been imposed across the country, bringing with it a return to online learning for most young people and a complete cessation of all schools' football at a time when, in normal circumstances, we would be keenly anticipating that part of the season that sees local, county, and national competitions reach their climax. These are challenging times, but we know that school sport, and school football in particular, adds so much to the educational experience for so many – indeed, recent research by the Youth Sport Trust has highlighted that well-being is considered by parents to be the most important factor when they choose a secondary school for their child, and that well-being is likely to be better in schools that prioritise sport and physical education.

A key feature of our National Competitions is that, in normal times, girls as well as boys have excellent opportunities to represent their schools and counties. That is also the case with our Under 11 district provision, and an increasing number of Primary Associations have been offering girls the unique and special experience to play for their district.

It is now time for girls in the secondary age groups to enjoy those same experiences, which is why the ESFA's Player Passport scheme, with its enhanced opportunities for representative football, will include new inter-district National Competitions for girls at every level from U12 to U15. In addition, we will also introduce a new inter-county National Competition for Under 18 girls, which will mean equality of provision across all age groups in this crucial part of the schools' football pyramid.

Last week, the ESFA Trustees met to review the Player Passport scheme, and to take into full account the invaluable feedback that was given by Membership in the 29 roadshows that were held before Christmas. We were also able to consider some revised financial modelling, and to reflect on the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic. On Saturday, Council had a full and wide-ranging discussion on the scheme and, in the spirit of transparency that has characterised our approach since we first shared our thoughts with everyone at the 2018 AGM, we agreed to hold two online briefing meetings for Membership early in February. Moving forward with the scheme will present some challenges. We all have an emotional attachment to the past, but that is invariably not good thinking, and as we look at the bigger picture for schools' football for the future, we need to move forward and to provide the best possible opportunities for young people – as former President Barack Obama writes in his memoir *The Promised Land*, "to work for the world as it should be".

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Chairman's Message continued

Also at the meeting, I was pleased to welcome two colleagues to Council: Nick Loftus and Sion Portman. Nick will be well-known to many in Membership through his long involvement with Wolverhampton Schools' FA, one of our oldest and most active districts. Sion is a marketing specialist and joins us as an independent Council Member; he has focused on increasing participation, diversification and performance of young athletes and has over 20 years international experience across strategy, marketing, and operations. Both Nick and Sion bring excellent skill sets to Council and we look forward to them making significant contributions to the work of the ESFA.

We also honoured the memory of Dave Prothero, John Larter and Don Palmer, members of the ESFA family who very sadly passed away since our previous Council meeting. Owen Aiston, Mike Spinks and Peter Clayton shared their memories of Dave, John and Don respectively - all of whom gave wonderful service to schools' football throughout their lives. Their families and friends are in our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time.

Finally, having mentioned our tendency to have an emotional attachment to the past, the lockdowns have seen an increasing number of enquiries about the history of the ESFA, and it seems opportune to establish a physical archive in our headquarters, and an online one on the new ESFA website, which will go live very soon. We would welcome offers of help to assist with this project: when we are able to reopen the premises, donations of memorabilia would be gratefully accepted, as too would the assistance of volunteers to catalogue the existing material.

We should be rightly proud of our past, but now is the time to look forward. Not to settle for the ESFA as it was or is, but for what it could and should be.

Best wishes, stay safe and well, and thank you.

Phil Harding

Report of Council to Membership

Phil Harding, Chair for 2020/21, opened the meeting by welcoming all Members, particularly Nick Loftus, new Council Member for the Midlands (Wolverhampton), and Sion Portman, HA-appointed Independent Council Member. A minute's silence was held for those members of the ESFA family lost since the last meeting.

Council heard from Trustees of the ongoing work to plan for a stable and sustainable financial future for the Association, taking account of the restrictions on use of reserves laid down by the Charity Commission and the financial performance in 20/21, which had also proved to be an exceptional season with the ongoing suspension of football. Trustees reported on the progress towards financial recovery, including the impact of reduced expenditure in 20/21 arising from this suspension. Trustees were pleased to report the continuation of all major sponsors through the season, despite the lack of football, and with the progress made by the Commercial Director. Trustees confirmed that, should Rep Football competitions not be able to proceed this year, then fees would be carried over to next season, as per the decisions about inter-school competition fees. Members heard that Trustees were disappointed that a minority of CSFAs had not engaged in the Association restructure process and that they had taken appropriate steps to ensure that compliance with the ESFA's Constitution was achieved.

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Report of Council to Membership continued

Council heard from Competitions Committee that, as per the decisions of the ESFA's Emergency "COBRA" Committee, the national inter-school football competitions for season 20/21 were to be abandoned, with rep football competitions to be reviewed again at half term. Opinion about an outdoor finals day to contest the Deaf Schools' Trophy was also being sought. Outstanding 19/20 finals were to be played once safe, should participants wish, again as per COBRA decisions. The Committee also made proposals for guidance notes to accompany the rule change for participation in the U18 Schools' Cup, approved by the AGM, to aid clarity and understanding about player eligibility to participate.

Council heard from Rep Committee that, as per the decisions of the ESFA's Emergency "COBRA" Committee, the international season for 20/21 was to be abandoned, but that the commitment to secure fixtures and suitable cap presentation events for the 19/20 squads remained. Members were informed that SAFIB had also determined that the 20/21 season's competitions were not able to proceed, but that Members were welcome to play friendlies if squads had been selected. A friendly fixture for the U18 Boys' squad had been offered by Australia for 21/22 season. The Committee received a report on unaffiliated Associations and noted that some records appeared to include details on personnel no longer involved. All Associations are reminded of the need to delete records in these cases, in line with the General Data Protection Regulations, so that no breach of legislation occurs.

Council heard from Association Development Committee that a schools-specific SCORY had been agreed by the FA Youth Committee and FA Council would consider it at its next meeting, where some proposed changes were to be reviewed. Members received the routine report on discipline in schools' football. Feedback to Council on a revised policy for the appointment of match officials to ESFA national finals was provided, following joint work between Association Development and Competitions Committee: Council accepted the recommendations of the revised policy in principle, but sought further refinement to the detail. Members also accepted the recommendation that the database for match officials willing to serve schools' football be updated, using local information to be sought from CSFA secretaries and administrators. All Members were encouraged to respond to the request to provide such information. Council agreed that this work should be completed by ESFA staff, rather than any new committee of Council.

Council Members then went on to review the implementation arrangements for the Player Passport, in light of the football, financial and commercial imperatives underpinning the project. Members considered the matters raised, and agreed that Membership should be briefed on the outcomes of the discussion at follow up on-line meetings, one for DSFAs and one for CSFAs, to be held on 9th and 10th February respectively.

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their commitment during these challenging times.

Debriefing Meeting for Membership

You are invited to nominate one attendee per Association to join the ESFA Chair, Chair of Trustees and CEO to receive an update on the Player Passport for 21/22. There will be two sessions, via "teams":

Tuesday 9th February, 6.30-7.15pm, for District Schools' FAs representatives

Wednesday 10th February, 6.30-7.15pm, for County Schools' FAs representatives

Please make your Association's nomination by sending the name and email address of your nominee to Sarah.Kearney@schoolsfa.com no later than midday on Friday 5th February, then invitations will be issued early the next week.

Please note that, due to the size of the meeting, only one nomination can be accepted per Association and admittance to the meeting on the day will be secured via this registration process



Updated FA DBS guidance

The date of DBS checks that are due to expire between 1st October 2020 and 31st May 2021 will be extended by one calendar year. This follows the action that was taken in April 2020 for checks that expired between 1st March 2020 and – 31st September 2020 to be extended by one calendar year.

For the avoidance of doubt, only DBS checks expiring between 1st October 2020 and 31st May 2021 are to be extended. DBS checks that were extended 1st March to 31st September 2020 are not to be extended further.

Once Government restrictions are lifted, the priority for undertaking DBS checks will be as follows:

1. Individuals new to football and have not undertaken a DBS check.
2. Individuals that were extended by a year in April 2020 but haven't yet been renewed.
3. Individuals requiring renewal and whose DBS that was extended for 12 months between 1st October 2020 – 31st May 2021

FA RTC update

The FA has recently released this update about its RTC programme. The ESFA is due to receive an update from them towards the end of February:

“The FA Regional Talent Clubs Programme is currently under review as part of The Football Associations Player Pathway Review. The review is focussing on the alignment of talent development and performance structures and services across The FA's licensed club network to support the demands of the women's professional game. The new Player Pathway programme will now be launched in time for the 2022/23 season and not 2021/22 season as originally planned. This period will enable greater consultation regarding future changes, increased lead in time and more certainty around budgets and funding.

FA Regional Talent Clubs, will continue to be supported alongside current licence criteria alongside a number of improvements as part of a phased approach.

In previous license cycles the application process to become a Regional Talent Club has been open to any Club. However, The FA will continue in not seeking external applications in order to maintain certainty and continuity, through to the end of the extended period. This will enable players and Clubs who have already invested in delivery some continuity whilst the new Player Pathway programme continues to be developed.”



New Council Member welcome

We are very pleased to inform you that the final and long-standing Council vacancy in the West Midlands has now been filled, following the eligible nomination from Wolverhampton Schools' FA, seconded by Halesowen and Stourbridge SFA, of Nick Loftus from Wolverhampton.

Nick served as a teacher for 23 years before joining Wolves, a position from which he is now retired, allowing him the time to dedicate to his longstanding interest in schools' football. Nick is well known to Midlands colleagues on Council, and a welcome addition to their ranks.

We are sure you will join us in welcoming Nick to Council and will encourage and support him in his endeavours.

Staff furlough update

Some of the ESFA office staff have been placed on part-time furlough due to the current lockdown procedures in place. Therefore, if contacting staff members, please be aware that there may be a delay in receiving a response from them due to their diminished working hours.

Thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

ESFA AGM minutes

A copy of the minutes from the November AGM, held online via Microsoft Teams has also been included with this email.

We hope that you find these both informative and useful.



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