

E S**November &
December 2020**

English Schools' Football Association

Membership Matters

Chairman's Message

As we approach the Festive Season and look forward to the end of a year like no other, reflections on our experiences of recent months will doubtless be in our minds: furlough, remote teaching and learning, social distancing, online meetings, masks, bubbles, working from home, and many other new aspects of life that would have been beyond our imagination a year ago.

Since the previous edition of Membership Matters, Lockdown 2 has been and gone, a new system of Tiers has been introduced, our wonderful ESFA staff have continued to work from home and, thankfully, a programme of vaccination has begun. Change has been a constant feature of our lives. Where it has been able to be played, schools' football has had to change and adapt. Where it has been halted, there will be eager anticipation to restart when it is safe to do so.

The recent online AGM was attended by almost a hundred colleagues from across the country, far more than would normally have attended in person. It was good to have so many of you involved, particularly those who, for whatever reasons, would not have been able to join us for the traditional format. Perhaps future meetings could take the form a hybrid model, with those who wish to and who are able to attending in person, and others joining via an online link. That is something we will be exploring, and we welcome your views.

We have now concluded our programme of Membership Roadshows across the country. The discussions have been rich and informative, respectful and considered, and full of constructive suggestions. Reaction to our plans to introduce a Player Passport and a Champions League format to our inter-district and inter-county competitions has ranged from "brilliant" to "impossible". Sometimes reasonable people can disagree on what is best. But hopefully we can all agree that our non-negotiable goal is doing what is in the best interests of the young people – over a million of them – who play inter-school, inter district and inter-county football.

Prior to the pandemic, the last major disruption to life in this country was the Second World War. After it, the ESFA resumed its two activities: running the Inter-Association Trophy and the Under 15 International Team. Council soon realised that this very narrow focus would threaten the long-term future of schools' football and so in 1950 they took two far-reaching decisions: to employ a full-time General Secretary and to take an international match to Wembley Stadium. There was much opposition, with many in Membership claiming that these radical changes would result in the financial ruination of the ESFA. It was not long before the naysayers were proved wrong, as youngsters descended on Wembley in their thousands. Not only did the matches secure the financial future of the ESFA, but they also provided vital income for many districts and counties, who organised coaches and trains to get the hordes to them. Many have lifelong memories of those occasions, me included.

Continued overleaf



We now have a similar opportunity. We know that the players in our district and county teams would much prefer the Champions League format to a knockout format. We know that the current generation of parents willingly pay for activities for their children. And we know that the unique and special experiences of schools' representative football offer a great product that players and parents value. All of the ingredients to make the Player Passport scheme and the Champions League format a huge success are in place. For some colleagues, the doubts will remain, just as they did for our forbears in 1950. The idea of any payment is anathema to traditionalists. Some colleagues are optimistic about the future, whilst others are pessimistic. We're allowed to be both. As George Bernard Shaw put it: "Both optimists and pessimists contribute to the society. The optimist invents the aeroplane, the pessimist the parachute." We have listened carefully to the many constructive suggestions and ideas that have characterised the Roadshows, and we want to work closely with Membership to finalise plans that, whilst they might not meet with universal acceptance (in an organisation as diverse as the ESFA, that would be impossible) will enthuse current and future generations of youngsters. Following the Council meeting towards the end of January, we will engage with Membership over the best way forward.

Sadly, we lost another member of the ESFA family recently with the passing of Dave Prothero, who devoted his life to schools' football in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Cleveland. Across four decades. Dave played a significant role in all three counties. He served as the Honorary Auditor to both the Northern Counties and the ESFA and was a very committed Chairman of the NCSFA. Very many young people owe a great debt of gratitude to Dave for his unstinting efforts to create opportunity for them to play football at the best possible level.

I am delighted to announce that we have another new member of ESFA Council – Sion Portman is joining us as an Independent Council Member, following an extensive recruitment process conducted by the Honorary Auditors. He has been the Global Head of Brand for Youth Sports at Nike, where he has led marketing and strategy across multiple sports. He has focused on increasing participation, diversification and performance of young athletes and has over 20 years international experience across strategy, marketing, and operations. Sion has also been heavily involved in sport as a volunteer. We currently have opportunities in the North, the Midlands and the South-West, so if you are interested, or know of someone who is, please get in touch. You will have a warm welcome and get a real satisfaction in supporting the opportunities for young people across the country to play schools' football.

Finally, I wish you the very best for the festive season. For those colleagues who have been on the front line in schools, it will be a particularly welcome break. For all of us, it will be an opportunity to spend time with family and friends. A chance to recharge our batteries after a hectic and challenging year.

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

Phil Harding
ESFA Chairman



Council report to Membership

Phil Harding, Chair for 2020/21, opened the meeting by welcoming all Members to, particularly Jon Foot, new Council Member for the Midlands, from Lincolnshire. The Chair paid tribute to Lorna Blakeman, outgoing Head of Administration at HQ, commending her on her extended service to the ESFA. The Chair also gave a very brief summary of the helpful suggestions and concerns/questions raised by Membership during the Player Passport roadshows so far, with a full report to come to the January meeting so that Council could finalise implementation plans.

Members reflected on the AGM, noting the advantages and disadvantages of an on-line meeting, and invited the CEO to explore whether a hybrid arrangement, allowing physical and on-line presence, would be possible. Members were pleased at the high level of turnout at the AGM and that feedback about the meeting had been positive. Steps were to be taken to secure a third Honorary Auditor.

Council heard from Trustees that their work in recent months had largely been in reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly where financial implications for others had affected ESFA income. A three year budget had been planned, with a likely deficit of c£10,000. The focus of the Trustees had been to protect activity by pushing as much available funding to Members as possible. The Chair of Trustees reported that the IT developments were critical to support income generation in future, so that reliance on third parties could continue to decrease. Work had been undertaken to make sure sponsors remained satisfied with the ESFA despite the lack of football, and this had been successful. The ESFA HQ would this year close for an extended break on 18th December.

Council heard from Competitions Committee that 15 of the 19/20 national finals had been successfully staged at Lilleshall; that a further 18 titles had been awarded jointly to the finalists; that 2 competitions had been abandoned and that there were 2 still to play. Council reflected on the level of entries for this season's competitions, with just under half of last year's teams entering in both boys' and girls' competitions in 20/21, and around ¾ of teams entering the rep competitions. Competitions would run until the summer of 20/21. The Danone World Finals planned for Indonesia in 2021 would not go ahead, but a 9 v 9 format of the ESFA competition would run, from January, to the satisfaction of Danone. The Indoor Football 5s competition would not run this season, and the Deaf Schools would be approached to establish if a later, outdoor competition would be acceptable.

Council heard from Rep Committee that they too had been largely reactive to the COVID-19 situation. The Committee was supportive of the revised format of the Danone competition as planned, which was for this season only. International trials had been paused, but it remained the ambition of the Association that these should take place, if safe to do so, after Christmas.

Council heard from Association Development that the Standard Code of Rules for Youth football (SCORY), as amended by the ESFA, had been accepted by the FA Youth Committee and would now go forward to their Council. A report on Association Restructure, now nearing completion, was received.

The ESFA's rep on the FA Council reported that tribute had been paid to both the late John Appleby and Paul Rickard at the recent FA Council meeting and noted that he had expressed disappointment about the lack of ESFA presence in the new Women's and Girls' football strategy, which was being followed up.

Members heard that SAFIB were due to meet to finalise plans for the remainder of the international season imminently and that arrangements would be confirmed thereafter.

Finally, Members were reminded of the critical importance of complying with the rules and guidance from The FA in organising football, particularly with regard to COVID-19-specific risk assessment.

The Chair closed by wishing all a safe and happy festive period.



Latest Covid-19 Statement from the ESFA

The ESFA has reviewed The FA guidance with regard to the resumption of football, and you can find it [here](#).

The guidance exempts those aged under 18 from the restrictions, so subject to risk assessment and compliance with FA regulations, football can continue. However, please bear in mind that, even with the exemption, there is still an expectation from government that travel is minimised.

On the basis of the latter, the ESFA's Emergency Committee has determined that there will be no ESFA-hosted events such as international trials or national finals before January 2021, at which point we will review the guidance again. In the meantime, ESFA National Cup fixtures for 20-21 and any local football is permitted to take place, subject to compliance with The FA's regulations. Should you decide to proceed, please take extra care to ensure that your risk assessment is thorough and your compliance with regulations clear, as failure to do so exposes you and your players to risk

Heading Guidance from The FA

In February this year, The FA issued new and updated Heading Guidance for all age groups between Under 6 and Under 18, in association with the Irish and Scottish FAs.

The guidance provides grassroots clubs, coaches and players with the recommended heading guidance for training sessions only. It does not make any changes to the way matches are played. Please find the guidance [here](#).

Lorna Blakeman

The ESFA wishes to place on record its sincere appreciation for the services rendered to the association by Lorna Blakeman, Head of Administration, over the past 35 years. Lorna, having joined the association in 1985, was instrumental in the monumental organisation of the annual England U15 Schoolboy international events which were hosted at Wembley Stadium and Old Trafford throughout late 80's and 90s; including ticketing for up to 80,000 spectators and co-ordinating the official banquet for hundreds of dignitaries on each occasion with meticulous precision and professionalism. Additionally, during the same period, Lorna managed the Associated Schoolboy forms between schools and professional clubs including, the then to be future global icons, David Beckham and Michael Owen.

One of Lorna's most memorable and rewarding projects was the centenary celebrations which included taking a lead role on the organising committee of the England U18 Schoolboys versus Rest of the World showcase match at Villa Park in 2004, as well as the return to the newly built Wembley Stadium in 2008 and 2009 to co-ordinate internationals against Scotland and France, respectively. The latter of which included a celebrity invitation match involving David Tennant, Ralph Little and Ben Shepherd.

As pastures new beckon, Lorna, now a Life Member of the association, will be affectionately missed by her friends and work colleagues at HQ, as well as by countless members of Council and Member association officials which she has served so well during her time with ESFA. We offer Lorna our very best wishes for a successful and enjoyable future.

Lorna would also like to send thanks to those of you who sent her leaving gifts, for which she is most grateful.



Safeguarding training update

Representative Team staff

For Association rep team staff who are not practising teachers with annual safeguarding training through their school,(AOTTs), the FA Safeguarding Workshop needs to be updated every 3 years. If staff need to renew this training, it can be updated free online by following this link: <https://thebootroom.thefa.com/learning/qualifications/online-safeguarding-children-re-certification>

New AOTTs who have never completed a face-to-face workshop will need to attend the course once they are back up and running (this is likely to be sometime in the Spring). In the meantime, we are asking all those who have never attended any FA Safeguarding training to complete the new introductory Safeguarding For All course, found here: <https://thebootroom.thefa.com/learning/qualifications/safeguarding-courses> It does not replace the full workshop and is an interim measure until the workshop is available but provides an overview of safeguarding in football and our policies and procedures.

All Association coaches and managers working with players in representative football must have an in-date FA DBS (updated every 3 years) and Safeguarding training before they can be involved in any Association representative footballing activity. Details of this policy are on our website here: <https://schoolsfootball.org/child-welfare/esfa-affiliation-policy/>

Association Welfare Officers

Every District or County Schools' Association which runs representative teams must have an ESFA qualified Welfare Officer, registered and approved on the portal. A Welfare Officer must have an FA DBS check, issued and approved within the last 3 years and have attended both the FA Safeguarding Workshop and Welfare Officer Workshop.

- The FA Safeguarding training must be updated every 3 years, (including when the Welfare Officer is a practising teacher) and it can be renewed free online here: <https://thebootroom.thefa.com/learning/qualifications/online-safeguarding-children-re-certification>
- If a Welfare Officer has never attended the FA Safeguarding Workshop, they must contact Sarah DaCosta (below) who will arrange for access to this training
- The FA Welfare Officer Workshop is being delivered virtually and can be booked online here; <https://thebootroom.thefa.com/learning/qualifications/fa-welfare-officers-workshop>
- The Welfare Officer Workshop does not need to be renewed but can only be attended by those who have an accepted FA DBS and FA Safeguarding training in place.

If your Welfare Officer has been declined on the portal, your Association is not compliant to run representative football and this needs to be addressed as a priority before you can commence training and/or matches.

Please remember it is ESFA policy and a legal requirement that all those working with children in Association teams are registered and approved on the ESFA portal before they can be involved, and that this information is kept up to date.

Any questions regarding Safeguarding training or if you have concerns, please contact one of the National Welfare Officers for support and guidance:

Sarah DaCosta sarah.dacosta@schoolsfa.com
Martin Duffield martin.duffield@schoolsfa.com



Congratulations to former intern, Ross Deakin

Ross, who first joined the ESFA as an intern in the 2017/18 season, has just been offered his first full time teaching job since finishing his internship, graduating with 1st class honours and completing his PGCE.

Ross, who has been volunteering at his own former primary school and providing private tutoring throughout 2020, flew through the recent interview process, securing himself a job at the Stafford school.

The ESFA is delighted that yet another former intern has gone on to start a promising new career. Ross has continued to volunteer and assist at the ESFA since his internship ended in 2018 and we hope that he will be able to find the time in his teaching schedule to still support the work carried out in the office and at events from time to time.

Congratulations, Ross!

Season's Greetings

The ESFA would like to wish all members a very safe, happy and healthy Christmas and New Year. We are hopeful that 2021 will bring with it new opportunities, a sense of 'normality' and the chance to see the football season resume safely.

Thank you to for your ongoing support of the ESFA and all that it does for school children in England each year.

Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year



Follow @SchoolsFootball on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to keep up with all the most up to date news from the Association