



# Membership Matters

## A Message from the Chair

February, 2023

Schools' Football Week – what a concept and what a magnificent success it proved to be. A huge thanks to you all for participating in so much activity for your young people. The statistics are amazing with 1,489 schools registering an activity with 235,235 students taking part. I had the pleasure of attending a registered activity in West London and to see so many young people engaged in football was great. The staff pulled out all the stops, producing banners, posters and even cheerleading on the touchline to make the event a memorable one for the students involved. A fuller report is provided later in this newsletter.



It is very heartening to see so many girls participating, with over 108,000 girls taking part, which was an increase of 51,000 on last year. Well done and thank you to all those who registered, took part and made the week a huge success. Thanks to our SFW partners, Pro:Direct who were on hand to provide 567 schools with footballs to support their Schools' Football Week activity resulting in 1,701 free footballs being distributed. They visited to Hewens Primary School in West London give them the "Trial Van" experience during SFW and, alongside their partners Coerver Coaching, Pro:Direct provided coaching courses and lesson guides for 144 teachers.

Of course, this does not just 'happen'. There is a huge amount of effort, planning and organisation that goes in to a national initiative like this and I would like to thank the staff team at ESFA HQ in Stafford, led by Andrea and Sarah, who went above and beyond to make this the best Schools' Football Week ever.

I had the pleasure of attending the International Preparatory Camps for our Under 15 Girls' and Under 18 Boys' squads in Fleetwood over the half-term break. It was an honour to present the players with their England shirts for the season ahead and to see them gel, promote positivity and generate the team ethos and camaraderie was just what they need for the season ahead. This was, in large part, down to the hard work and planning by the management teams of both squads, in order to maximise the time they had and produce some quality on the field. The sessions were intense and provided the players with a lot of focus and insight on the tasks ahead. The boys start their SAFIB Centenary Shield programme on the 24th March in Dublin followed by a trip to Glasgow to face Scotland the week after. The two home matches against Northern Ireland at Billericay FC and Wales at Hednesford Town FC are in April and more on those in the next MM. The girls take part in the SAFIB Bob Docherty Tournament in April, again more on that in the next edition of Membership Matters.

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## A Message from the Chair (Continued)

Finally, from me, I hope you can attend the forthcoming Membership Discussion Meetings where the Vice Chair, Marvin Robinson and I will be discussing how the ESFA can improve and increase engagement from you, our members. We aim to find out what the main areas of need are and how you can be supported in the best way possible. As I have mentioned before, your input is something that is very important to me and I hope you are able to drop in for a discussion on the matters mentioned.

### The meetings are as follows:

Midlands: Monday 6th March  
South West: Tuesday 7th March

They all start at 6pm on MS Teams.

Thank you once again for all of the work you do to provide activity and in particular, football for your young people. There is nothing better than seeing happy, engaged students taking part in sport in a controlled, safe environment with students showing true values and a positive ethos and spirit in which the games should be played. You should all be very proud of the hard work and effort you demonstrate on a daily basis to make this happen.

Thank you



**Stuart Botham**  
Chair

## Spotlight on: Jack Evans, National Competitions Organiser

Hello, I'm Jack, one of the National Competitions Coordinators at the English Schools' FA. I completed my degree in Sport and Exercise Sciences at the University of Chester, graduating in 2018. After graduating, I joined the ESFA as a National Competitions Intern, before joining as a full-time staff member for the next season. My role encompasses a wide range of responsibilities, including the management of our competitions, providing exceptional customer service, appointing referees, and assisting with running of our National Finals at the end of the season.



I'm committed to ensuring that our competitions run smoothly and efficiently and I work tirelessly to provide clear communication and assistance to schools and teachers, so they have a seamless experience throughout the competition process. My role seeks to resolve customer enquiries and complaints and to provide a high and consistent level of customer service, therefore improving customer satisfaction. All of this contributes towards ensuring schools become return customers of the ESFA, helping us to continue to provide high quality competition offerings for all participants. With my experience growing each year, I feel that I am able to provide increasingly better support to our schools and Associations on a range of issues.

The most rewarding part of my job is the running of our National Finals, which are the pinnacle of the English Schools' FA calendar. I take responsibility for a number of key elements within the planning and delivery of these events and take great pride in seeing each Final come together as we head through the end of the season. With the great team we have, these events are expertly executed, providing a memorable and rewarding experience for all involved. It's great to know we are providing inclusive and long-lasting memories for schools' football players from across England.

I look forward to continuing to serve the organisation and its participants to the best of my abilities.

## Spotlight on: Nick Loftus, Midlands Council Member & ESFA Board Safeguarding Champion

I have relatively recently joined the ESFA Council following over 40 years' involvement in schools' and representative football. I have many fond memories, and really enjoyed developing children through football whilst helping them to improve their ability playing the game.

I gained my initial awareness of schools' representative football after feeling the pride myself in gaining selection for my own District and my County team. I represented West Midlands at the ESFA U18 Skegness Tournament in the mid 1970's. Other trips to Scotland and the USA as a Wolverhampton schoolboy player have left some fantastic lifelong memories.

I regularly coached football after training as a PE Teacher and gained my FA Coaching badge before embarking upon my secondary school teaching career. I coached on lots of community courses and later, during a couple of school summer holidays, in the USA with North American Soccer Camps.

I felt really privileged to be able to become an Assistant Coach, alongside another teacher running the District U15 team in my very first year as a teacher back in my hometown of Wolverhampton. There were generally two teachers running each of the District teams in those days and it was a privilege, because you were coaching the best players. Prior to professional football clubs setting up academies and then the Midland Junior Premier League setting up football options on Saturday mornings, the best players in schools were recognised by selection for Districts, County and potentially the England U15 Schoolboys.

Every weekend during the football season from the age of 16 until I was 45 years old, I played adult non-league football, but made sure that my commitment to run District teams on a Saturday morning, along with my school teams and County teams midweek, wasn't compromised.

Whilst times change and the gulf between the wealth in the Academy system and the hardships encountered by the volunteers operating grassroots and schools' football grows ever bigger, I believe that parents and young players still value the opportunity to represent their schools and Districts. We must all make every effort that we can to ensure that representative football maintains its prestige and quality for those school children that want it. It gives all school team players an aspirational target and the evolution of girls' football in general and at schools' representational level, is very pleasing to see and it's even better to be a part of its progress.

Since taking my place on the English Schools' FA Council, as one of the four Midlands regional members two years ago, I have enjoyed witnessing many excellent National Finals, International fixtures for both the U18 Schoolboys and U15 Schoolgirls and seeing schools' football bounce back after the impact of the pandemic.



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## **Spotlight on: Nick Loftus, Midlands Council Member & ESFA Board Safeguarding Champion (Continued)**

Around a year ago I took on the role as the Board Safeguarding Champion for the ESFA. This is to ensure that the ESFA, as the National Governing Body for Schools' Football, is constantly updated on relevant safeguarding matters. I have many years of experience within safeguarding, dating back to my teaching days where I was Head of Personal, Social and Health Education for many years, before becoming a Child Welfare Officer and then Head of Safeguarding at Wolves FC where I was also Head of Education & Welfare.

At the ESFA, I work closely with the full and part time safeguarding staff to further develop our policies and practice around safeguarding in representative schools' football. We have introduced Safeguarding Support Visits over the past couple of seasons and I feel that we must develop further our interaction with players, parents, Association officials, and especially our volunteer CWO's across the country.

We want the selected players, their parents, and the volunteer staff to feel confident, safe, and supported whenever they experience representative football. There must always be a Safeguarding 'presence' where children are playing sport, so that we can focus on celebrating their successes. We appreciate the contribution of Officials, Administrators, Team Managers and Child Welfare Officers in our member Associations. Thank you.

# Geoff Reynolds MBE



Our thoughts are with the family and friends of Geoff Reynolds MBE

Geoff served as an ESFA council member from 1985 - 1993 before receiving his 50 year Long Service Award in 2005. Geoff was former President, Chairman and Secretary of Cheshire Schools' FA and former Chairman and Secretary of Chester Schools' FA. Geoff received an MBE for his service to schools' football.

The ESFA would like to once again, recognise Geoff for his service.

Should anyone wish to send their condolences to Geoff's wife Ann, please send them via [andrea.chilton@schoolsfa.com](mailto:andrea.chilton@schoolsfa.com)

## Safeguarding staffing ratios

A reminder of the importance of maintaining safe staffing ratios in schools' football, in line with the FA regulations which can be found here:

<https://schoolsfootball.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/21095fasafeguardingratios-of-adults-to-children55hr.pdf>

## FAN registrations and personal detail updates

A very big "thank you" to those of you who have responded to our drive to ensure that all volunteers involved in an Association are registered with The Football Association. We appreciate that, for some of you and depending on roles, this has been a new requirement. The positive response from the majority to this small but additional task has been gratifying, thank you.

For those of you who have been asked to set up a FAN record with The FA, just a reminder that the purpose of this is to ensure that:

- There is no mis-identification in the event of an allegation against someone with a name the same as, or similar to, your own; and
- Where ESFA volunteers serve elsewhere in the game, any suspensions issued can be enforced in schools' football where required.

Could I therefore please urge those of you yet to respond to do so in order that these controls can be fully implemented.

## Resources for Members

There has been a number of requests recently for sample role descriptions for Officer posts in Associations as well as periodic requests for an induction or welcome pack for new volunteers. We will therefore work on producing some examples for you to use over the coming months.

If you have other suggestions for template resources or examples which would be of help, please contact [andrea.chilton@schoolsfa.com](mailto:andrea.chilton@schoolsfa.com) with your suggestions.

## Royal National Institute for Deaf People- Resources

The ESFA staff team this week took part in some Deaf Awareness training and British Sign Language training ahead of the Deaf Schools' National Finals taking place in June. Attached to Membership Matter's cover email you can find a variety of resources that members may like to consider to help make your schools' football offering as inclusive as possible.

## Schools' Football Week 2023

Schools' Football Week is an ongoing ESFA initiative designed as an opportunity for schools, teams and Associations from across the country to embrace schools' football and the wellbeing benefits it provides to pupils and players. It celebrates the importance of schools' football, competitive or otherwise, to pupils across England and provides teachers and coaches with tools and a motivation to further discuss the benefits of schools' football within their educational environment.

The 2023 campaign from the 6th - 12th February, saw almost a quarter of a million pupils engage in schools' football activity during the week with over 108,000 girls benefitting from activity. Schools' Football Week 2023 was run in partnership with Pro:Direct Sport, who helped facilitate schools' football activity by providing 567 schools with over 1,700 new footballs to use throughout the week. A full round-up of everything that happened during Schools' Football Week 2023 can be found attached to the Membership Matters cover email.

Schools' Football Week 2023 saw the ESFA reach huge new levels of participation -

- Almost 250,000 pupils registered to take part in SFW activity
- Over 15,000 teams benefitted from the campaign
- Over 1,400 schools registered for SFW activities
- Over 108,000 girls benefitted from schools' football activity during SFW

The Schools' Football Week campaign was once again backed by the Department for Education in 2023, as they continue to show their support for football in schools. Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan said: "It is great to see that 250,000 children are involved with the English Schools' FA's, Schools' Football Week this year – including over 100,000 girls, many of whom I'm sure will discover a sport for life.

Following the fantastic achievements of the Lionesses, schools and families are clearly now building on that momentum to make sure every child - girl or boy - has the chance to enjoy a game of football.

I look forward to doing more in the coming weeks and months to champion school sport, building on the government's existing investment in high quality PE and sport in schools, including through our £320 million PE and sport premium"

A huge thank you to everyone who supported this year's Schools' Football Week campaign and we look forward to seeing even more children enjoying the benefits of schools' football for next year's campaign.

## Membership Matters content

Membership Matters has now been published for a number of years, we are intrigued to know what sort of articles interest you most or what else you would like to see in our newsletter. Please email any suggestions/ requests to [Ben.Woolley@schoolsfa.com](mailto:Ben.Woolley@schoolsfa.com).

## February's monthly photo round up





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