

Membership Matters- May 2023

Report of ESFA Council Meeting - 29th April

Stuart Botham, Chair for 2022/23, welcomed Members to a busy in-person meeting at HQ in Stafford, following the final fixture of the Centenary Shield the previous evening at Hednesford Town in Staffs.

In response to feedback from Membership about the value of in-person meetings and the opportunity to share challenges and solve problems, Council determined that the summer AGM should be held in person, to allow for networking between Associations prior to the meeting. The option of joining on line would also be possible, although this may limit the networking opportunities. Some examples of successful practice from across Membership would be identified for presentation prior to the networking session. Council also agreed that a more detailed summary of individual Committee meetings should be presented in Membership Matters, so that colleagues could see further details about topics of interest. Council received feedback from the Chair/Vice-Chair about the on-line Membership meetings and considered whether Members would welcome the opportunity to access Committee Chairs/Members for discussion about their areas of responsibility: Associations are invited to share their views about this possibility with the CEO or the Chair.

Council welcomed Andy Dyke, FA Development Manager (Pathways), to present the FA's latest Review of Youth Football. Andy explained that there were more children than ever playing football, so it was timely to re-check youth football formats to make sure they maximised playing time, skill development and opportunities to participate. ESFA Council strongly encouraged The FA to use the ESFA (and ISFA) as a conduit to get directly to schools and players and sought confirmation that the ESFA and its Members would have the opportunity to engage fully in the review prior to any implementation. This assurance was provided.

At the invitation of the Representative Committee, full Council engaged in a discussion about the future of the international programme, taking account of the current levels of engagement in representative football for boys at U18, and of the challenges arising in clashes for the girls. The Chair commented on the pride and positive behaviour demonstrated by the international players this season, following the sharing of the Centenary Shield with Wales for the boys and the girls finishing second in the Bob Docherty to the Scottish Schools' FA. The Vice-Chair and the CEO provided Council with an update on the development of Professional Game Academies (PGAs), which, along with Emerging Talent Centres (ETCs), form the successor programme to the RTCs which are being phased out. All of the clubs in the Women's Super League and Championship would be eligible to operate a PGA, which has the aim of more effectively transitioning female players from the RTC system into first team football. Clubs can operate two age groups (likely to be U16 and U21) or in one age group (most likely to be U21), and teams will play against boys in leagues. Council Members were extremely disappointed to hear that The FA had determined that second weekend priority was intended to be disregarded for these players and further discussions on the topic are ongoing. Council confirmed that an outdated policy preventing games from being played on a Sunday was no longer relevant and that ESFA insurance would apply for any Saturday/Sunday fixtures: however, the FA definition of the second weekend did not include Friday evenings.

Council reflected on their previous discussions about the role of the Council Member and considered a revised role description created from those discussions. A further review of the final draft would be carried out before sharing this with ESFA Membership.

The Chair closed the meeting with his thanks to all involved in schools' football this season so far and looked forward to seeing colleagues at the AGM.

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Report of the Representative Football Committee (29 March 2023)

The Committee reviewed affiliation and CWO compliance, noting that 8 Associations had had their affiliation suspended due to failure to comply with safeguarding requirements and were temporarily unable to play representative football. Members reviewed the progress of the international programme and confirmed the arrangements for the cap presentations. It was agreed that consideration should be given to an end of season celebration event so that caps could be presented whilst parents were present, given the rotation of the Bob Docherty tournament between the home nations. Player feedback from the final trials was reviewed: there were high levels of satisfaction with the girls marginally more satisfied than the boys, and the regional trials considered to be better venues than the final trials. All had said they felt safe at the trials, but two said they would not know who to report to in the event of any concern, so the Committee agreed to provide hi-vis vests with “Event Welfare Officer” on them for next season. A review of administrative processes was necessary at the end of the season, to include amending the Player Code of Conduct to reflect the need for high standards of behaviour off the pitch as well as on, and the roles and responsibilities of all programme management needed to be re-evaluated. The Team Welfare Officer was commended for the quality of her risk assessment and the team captains were to be invited to Council in June to share their experiences with Council.

Report of the Football Governance Committee (13 April 2023)

The Committee were pleased that the risk assessment training for Welfare Officers had been completed and a recording of the same materials published on the website as one of the ESFA’s “Talking Heads”. Members received an update on sanctioning for 23/24 and data collation for 22/23, with CSFAs being given the option of providing the data or having it collected on their behalf, and for their rules to be drafted by the ESFA. The Committee approved revised paperwork for playing abroad and for fixtures against unaffiliated opposition for next season. The routine report of discipline cases was presented, with an increase in serious offences being seen, although similar trends had been seen in other seasons, due to the increased intensity of fixture programmes after the Christmas break. Members congratulated the Trainee Governance Manager on his progress through his traineeship, including qualification as the ESFA’s Deputy Senior Safeguarding Lead. Members received a brief update on the FA’s Review of Youth Football, to be discussed further in full Council.

Report of the Football Development Committee (17 April 2023)

The Committee received a progress report on the Volunteer Reward and Recognition Awards, noting the pleasingly high level of applications, then guiding the shortlisting process. Members noted that Association vacancies and requests for support were to be updated on the ESFA website shortly after the final deadline of 28th April and the ESFA would link their promotion to the “Big Help Out”, the national volunteering campaign associated with the King’s coronation. The Committee undertook its routine review of the ESFA’s football development plan, noting the positive progression with the partnership with the Association of Muslim Schools and the ambition to form a relationship with the Blind Schools. All of the Discretionary Development Fund had been allocated but there remained opportunities to support SEND festivals and futsal. The 6 new girls’ football competitions (U13 and U15 B teams, small schools and new teams) had attracted a total of 485 teams and competitions were on track. The Hot Shots intra-school campaign had secured 1075 school registrations and was expected to attract nearly 35,000 new players. Regional disability festivals had been arranged in the NE, NW, Midlands, E, SW and SE and 28 year 3 and 4 festivals (in conjunction with The FA and the PLCF had been arranged.

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Report of the National Competitions Committee (18 April 2023)

The Committee was informed that the Pokémon Primary Schools' Finals had been scheduled for Wednesday 7th June at Leicester City FC and the Deaf Schools' Trophy had been re-arranged for Tuesday 20th June at St George's Park, having been changed due to the teachers' strike. Interest had been expressed by Membership for an U11 Small Schools' Cup for Girls, which the Committee wished to consider. Members discussed the continuation of the national rep football competitions, which (subject to financial viability) should continue in the same format for next season, although there was scope in the group phase of the District competitions to have 6 teams, subject to logistics. Consideration was also given to reverting to two year age brackets in the Champions' Cups but in the view of the Committee, single year age bands created more opportunities to play, and should be retained. The new U13 and U15 girls B teams and small teams competitions were to continue next season, under the auspices of the National Competitions Committee, with the new teams competition continuing under the auspices of the Football Development Committee. Future consideration was to be given to referee match fees given feedback from them that ESFA policy was out of date.

Report of Trustees (21 February and 11 April 2023)

Trustees had received the draft budget for 23/24 and had reviewed the Association's financial commitments and expenses for next season, renewing their commitment to maintaining as much activity as possible. Members received an update on the activity of the Commercial Director, including discussions to renew and extend contracts with existing sponsors where partnerships were due to expire at the end of this season. The non-contractual terms and conditions for HQ staff were also reviewed and the departure of the Governance and Data Administrator confirmed. Trustees undertook their routine review of the progress towards targets in the business plan, including financial targets, risks and opportunities. Consideration was given to safeguarding arrangements and preparation for the next Safeguarding 365 assessment.

ESFA Volunteer Recruitment Campaign

On the 4th May 2023 the ESFA launched an online advertising campaign to help Associations across the country recruit new volunteers. The campaign has been a huge success, reaching over 250,000 people with over 6,000 people viewing the 'volunteer opportunities' page on our website. The adverts, hosted on both Facebook and Instagram, have seen a surge of enthusiastic volunteers making contact with the Associations that have advertised vacancies and as a result, those counties and districts included have received multiple applications for the volunteering roles available, including a volunteer referee vacancy. The campaign is still ongoing, and it's not too late for Associations to be part of it.

To include vacancies in your Association, all you need to do is create a list of volunteering roles you have available or write a short paragraph about how people can find out volunteering for your association and send it to Daniel.smith@schoolsfa.com

The volunteering opportunities webpage can be seen [here](#).

ESFA U18 Schoolboys' international team home fixtures

Members are invited to express an interest in hosting the U18 boys home internationals next season, played as part of the SAFIB Centenary Shield. The opposition for the home fixtures will be Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. Expressions of interest should be submitted to the ESFA CEO no later than 30th June 2023, after which point the Representative Committee will make their selections.

Professional Game Academies

The report of Council refers to the development of Professional Game Academies for the female game. The table below lists the clubs in the WSL and the Women's Championship who have been awarded PGA licences. Category 1 PGAs can run two age groups under licence and category 2 can run one age group, with most expected to operate at U16 and U21.

As previously reported, discussions are ongoing with The FA about the second weekend priority for schools' football.

Category 1	Category 2
Arsenal Women	Blackburn Rovers Ladies
Aston Villa Women	Charlton Athletic Women
Birmingham City Women	Reading FC Women
Brighton & Hove Albion Women	Sunderland AFC Women
Bristol City WFC	
Chelsea FC Women	
Durham Women	
Everton Women	
Leicester City Women	
Liverpool FC Women	
London City Lionesses	
Manchester City Women	
Manchester United Women	
Sheffield United Women	
Southampton FC Women	
Tottenham Hotspur Women	