



## COVID 19 Update, Advice & FAQ's

29th April 2020

GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IS CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING AN UNPRECEDENTED PERIOD OF DISRUPTION DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Quite rightly the focus is on staying safe and adhering to Government social isolation guidelines. We are aware though that clubs, leagues and volunteers are looking for the most up-to-date information on the current and future impact on grassroots football as a result of the pandemic.

### **Is the Nottinghamshire FA still open for business?**

Yes, whilst the Association took the difficult decision to place a number of staff on furlough leave the following staff members are working remotely to provide as much support to clubs, leagues and referees as possible. Please direct any enquiries through to the most relevant staff member outlined below or email [info@nottinghamshirefa.com](mailto:info@nottinghamshirefa.com) and we will respond as swiftly as we possibly can.

Elaine Oram, CEO – [Elaine.Oram@nottinghamshirefa.com](mailto:Elaine.Oram@nottinghamshirefa.com)

Leanne Woodhead-Groves, Business Development Manager – [Leanne.Woodhead@nottinghamshirefa.com](mailto:Leanne.Woodhead@nottinghamshirefa.com)

Marc Birkett, Football Development Manager – [Marc.Birkett@nottinghamshirefa.com](mailto:Marc.Birkett@nottinghamshirefa.com)

Julia Crone, Designated Safeguarding Officer – [safeguarding@nottinghamshirefa.com](mailto:safeguarding@nottinghamshirefa.com)

### **The conclusion of the 2019-20 season?**

After consultation with a number of key stakeholders the FA decided to conclude the 2019-20 Grassroots Football season. Nottinghamshire FA have been working closely with member leagues to help them to determine how they close out their current competitions, both league and cups. The majority of leagues have concluded the season with the outcome communicated to member clubs. Those leagues that haven't finalised their approach will be making decisions shortly and will communicate directly to clubs.

### **What about County Cup competitions?**

This is currently being discussed with the Nottinghamshire FA Board and a decision will be communicated shortly.

### **When will football start again?**

We wish we knew! The situation regarding Covid-19 is incredibly fluid and it is impossible to say at this stage when and how football will be back. Like you we are already desperate for it to return!

### **Is there a chance that next season may not be able to start on time?**

We hope that things will be back to normal next season, but it certainly remains a definite possibility that there may be a delay. The government will determine when and how the current restrictions that are in place are lifted and only once it is safe to do so will The FA permit grassroots football to start again.

### **As this season has been concluded, does that mean that as a player I can now sign for another club for next season?**

No. As it stands there has been no change to the Rules regarding player registrations so players cannot sign for next season yet. Players are free to join new teams from the 31st May as per a normal season.

### **Are we able to train as a team?**

No. The suspension also applies to training. If a team were to organise a training session this would contravene the Government's current advice and you would not be covered by the Club's Public Liability and Personal Accident insurance.

### **Can we play friendlies?**

No. There is no difference between playing a friendly and playing a league or cup match. You cannot play any football whilst the suspension is in place. It is important to understand that if you were to play a friendly, you would not be covered by the Public Liability and Personal Accident insurance.

### **What about small-sided football?**

Yes, all affiliated football is currently suspended for the foreseeable future so that covers every format of the game.

### **Affiliation for 2020/21**

The FA have made us aware that affiliation will be available from our normal date if we wish; however, at present we have not made a decision as to when to open affiliation as the situation is far too uncertain and we don't know when the season will commence. Obviously, we will communicate more when we have a definitive date.

We have also been asked about affiliation fees for next season. The Board are currently reviewing the affiliation pricing for next season as they assess how best to help clubs recover from the impact of Covid-19. Further information will be available in due course.

In relation to league fees, as autonomous bodies it is down to each individual league to make a decision on the fees they charge. Once each League has confirmed their position regarding the conclusion of the 2019-20 season, plans will be made for League AGMs to take place. It is highly unlikely that these meetings, which are scheduled to take place in June & July will be able to take place in their normal format due to the requirements of social distancing. Therefore, over the coming days we will be working with our Leagues regarding how to proceed.

### **Referee Registration 2020/21**

It is currently planned that referee registrations will open from 1<sup>st</sup> June via the usual Whole Game System portal. Please note all referees U18 will be required to have a parent/carer attached to them, this individual will need a FAN number. For any issues on this please contact [marc.birkett@nottinghamshirefa.com](mailto:marc.birkett@nottinghamshirefa.com).

### **Safeguarding and Welfare**

Should I still report any Safeguarding or Welfare concerns I have?

Yes. Although football is not being played the welfare and safety of young people is still our main priority. If you have any concerns then please report them to Julia Crone ([safeguarding@nottinghamshirefa.com](mailto:safeguarding@nottinghamshirefa.com)). If a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, then contact the Police (999) or the NSPCC (0808 800 5000).

#### Requirements for Affiliation

This is subject to review depending on the progress of Covid-19. We will be liaising with The FA to have a better understanding for this period and the impacts of individuals not being able to complete the workshop. By way of assistance, please see below the period of validation for a certificate:

- Safeguarding Children Workshop - three years
- Welfare Officer Workshop - does not have to be renewed after completion
- Safeguarding for Committee Members - four years
- DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) - three years

If you have previously completed a Safeguarding Children Workshop in person (three hours), you should be able to renew via the online self-recertification. Please contact Julia Crone for further information.

## FA DBS

The FA are implementing temporary changes to DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks in football for the period which football is suspended due to Coronavirus, up to and including the start of the 2020/21 season. These changes are outlined below and will apply to all roles in football. This decision has been made considering the current cessation of football activity, difficulties regarding online ID verification for the purposes of renewing a DBS check and demand on the DBS service due to the current health crisis.

1. All volunteers carrying out regulated activity with under 18s (in accordance with DBS guidance) require an Enhanced DBS with a check of the Children's Barring List before they commence their role within football. This is current practice and will remain in place. However, we ask that new DBS checks are not submitted whilst football activity remains suspended. For the avoidance of doubt, volunteers will not be permitted to carry out regulated activity with under 18s until they have obtained a DBS check. The FA will provide a further update on processing new DBS checks in due course when there is further clarity on when football activity will resume.
2. All individuals whose DBS checks are due to expire between 1st March 2020 and 1st October 2020 will not be required to renew their DBS checks until one year after the scheduled date of expiry. The FA currently requires DBS checks to be renewed every three years, in accordance with industry standards and best practice. However, we have made an informed decision to extend that to four years, in these limited circumstances, based on the current health crisis, associated difficulties in DBS check renewal and the fact that these individuals already hold a DBS check which has been accepted by The FA.

The FA are currently proposing an end date of 1st October 2020, based on the fact that this season's grassroots footballing activity has ended and the assumption that pre-season will commence with the start of the youth season starting in September 2020. However, as circumstances develop, this date is potentially subject to change. The FA's proposals outlined above are applicable to all DBS checks completed through The FA and the Whole Game System will be updated to reflect these changes.

Please note that the changes outlined above are temporary, and The FA reserves the right to review and amend the position, including to reflect changes in legislation and/or statutory guidance with respect to the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic and further clarity on when football activity will resume. The above changes are made to support the footballing family in the immediate term and to support a return to football activity in the longer term whilst ensuring The FA's commitment to safeguarding remains in place.

### **How do I commence new, or renew an existing, DBS application?**

No new FA DBS checks should be undertaken at this time. We are in communication with The FA and as we receive further updates this information will be shared.

You may already notice that, if your DBS is due to expire between 1st March 2020 and 1st October 2020, the expiry date on your FAN made have been updated. Please read the above section on FA DBS. We will continue to share all updates as well as the processes which will be put in place for DBS checks upon the return to football.

## **Funding and Club Membership Advice**

### **How will my club pay its bills?**

We do recognise that this is a significant worry for many clubs and County FA's are currently discussing the financial implications of the suspension with The FA who in turn are talking to the Government. At this stage it is simply too soon to give any further information about any support that may be available, although the Treasury have issued the following:

- Grant funding of £25,000 is available for hospitality and leisure businesses with property with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000.
  - A 12-month business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England will be introduced.
- For further support, please visit the Government's support for businesses page or contact your local authority which will be issued with guidance to help businesses in their area.

### **Is there any funding for clubs during this time?**

Sport England have released an emergency fund in response to the Covid-19 crisis. Local clubs, leagues and community sports organisations who are experiencing short-term financial hardship due to the impact of Covid-19 are eligible to apply to Sport England's new Community Emergency Fund. We encourage all our affiliated clubs and sanctioned leagues to consider applying if emergency money is needed.

## **Can clubs still charge subscriptions while all football is postponed?**

This is a club decision. We would advise that you consult with players, parents and guardians on reaching a decision. Clubs who own / lease facilities will still have bills to pay and this should be explained. However, clubs should be mindful of people who are currently out of work as result of COVID-19 or have had their working hours reduced and may struggle to make payments. Could you: -

- offer payment holidays for those in need?
- allow subscriptions to be paid in instalments?

## **Summer Tournaments**

As it stands, no Club can run a summer tournament due to the current suspension. We do, of course, recognise that these events are important fundraisers for Clubs but at the present time the suspension does prevent these from taking place.

## **Discipline**

### **Can I still action and pay my discipline?**

Yes. We encourage everyone to use the Whole Game System to do this. If you normally pay by cheque you can continue to do so by sending the payments to the office address as usual where they will be collected and processed

### **Will my suspension still stand?**

Yes. Any suspension still outstanding following the last competitive fixture will be served at the start of the 2020-21 season.

### **If results from last season are expunged, will any discipline fines we paid during the season be refunded?**

No. The FA have confirmed the position regarding this. The Sanctions imposed are as a result of misconduct committed and are not dependent on the completion of a season. This would be a similar scenario to matches abandoned where the game has not completed but the sanctions remain.

### **What about outstanding suspensions from the 2019-20 season? Will these be waived?**

As per the regulations any suspension outstanding following the last competitive fixture will be served at the commencement of the next season. On that basis any suspension that remains outstanding will be served at the commencement once competitive football recommences.

### **Will my team still receive late fines and suspensions if I do not deal with the discipline?**

We will not be issuing late fees during this period.

### **What is happening with current misconduct charges?**

In line with Government advice no personal hearings are to be staged at this time. You may be offered the chance to proceed by papers or digitally but if you want a personal hearing then this will be held once Government restrictions are lifted.

### **Will my team be disciplined for having excessive discipline points at the end of the season?**

With the number of outstanding fixtures that were due to be played it is unlikely any team will surpass the threshold. For those teams that already have reached the threshold then your punishment will be served at the start of the 2020-21 season.

## **Football debt recovery**

Should the current COVID-19 restrictions continue for longer than 12 weeks then applications can still be submitted by clubs although action may not be taken until the County FA offices reopen.

If a player refunds a club directly during this time, then please notify the County FA as soon as possible.

## **Coach Education and Courses**

All courses are postponed for the foreseeable future. When the current Government advice changes and we receive confirmation from FA Learning that courses can resume we will then make an announcement.