

Date: 12th March 2021

From: Frank Thompson

To: All Club Secretaries

All, just a short e-mail to update you on the current situation. Since our last questionnaire the league have been looking closely about how the new format will take shape and also how to make this fit within the Government Guidelines. Our aim is to offer football to as many players as possible. We will do this on the basis of **“those who can & those who want too”** If we divide the age groups up first it may make more sense:

U7 – U11

These age groups will continue their development programme, we will offer games up to the 23rd May for these age groups. We will have to adjust your playing groups (Divisions) to make the games more localised in line with Government Guidelines. It cannot be classed as local to send teams from Chipstead to Staines etc. for a development match. That said we want as far as possible to ensure the games are meaningful and that we avoid 6-0 + matches happening. There will be an element of repetition of games already played this season but we feel this is unavoidable.

Pitch availability seems a huge issue at these ages. Whilst we can play a few games away it may well be that if you have absolutely no access to a pitch you may have to consider sharing the costs with opponents or paying to play at their venue. This will take a lot of communication on both teams' parts so it's important this is considered when deciding you are available to play. **As the main aim is to get children playing we don't want games cancelled every week so there will be a certain expected level of up front commitment to this as I am sure you understand.** If anyone is unclear please call me to discuss.

Your fixture secretaries are busy putting groups together to achieve this. They need to know if you are continuing, what pitches you may have and until when. Some fixture secretaries may have contacted your managers already or will do so soon. Can I please ask that you let your U7-U11 Fixture Secretary know your situation as soon as possible?

U12 – U18

These age groups will start a new 5/6 week game programme based on small localised groups of the same ability. We appreciate that this will be a challenge especially the local and ability groupings but we think it is possible with some understanding from the teams. We would start on the 11th April and recognise we may have to play past the 9th May but not past the 23rd. This all depends on weather and Covid self isolation issues etc. but the idea is that teams would be placed in groups of 4 – 6 where possible. They would play each other once and then have play off finals is the idea. We are reviewing the registration and unplayed fixtures rules to make it easier for clubs. These will be announced shortly.

Pitch availability is key to this. We ask clubs to consider carefully if they want to take part in this. Whilst we can play a few games away it may well be that if you have absolutely no access to a pitch you may have to consider sharing the costs with opponents or paying to play at their venue. This will take a lot of communication on both teams' parts so it's important this is considered when deciding you are available to play. **As the main aim is to get children playing we don't want games cancelled every week so there will be a certain expected level of up front commitment to this as I am sure you understand.**

Can I ask that any club who has an U12 –U18 team that will not be taking part e-mail me as soon as you know. If anyone is unclear please call me to discuss.

We are aiming to get the groups finalised by Wednesday 25th March. A survey will go out shortly to follow up on what you said in the recent "Pitch Status" one. Can I please ask that you continue to chase your pitch providers for answers and that as a committee you use the time to discuss the important issue of what teams want too & can enter in the circumstances with the related costs etc. should yours be unavailable?

Thanks for all you do to give so much enjoyment to so many children & young people. It's going to be challenging but hopefully we will get there. Any issues please call me to discuss. Stay safe, best regards, FT