**COVID-19**

This update has been developed following the Government’s move to Plan B of the Covid / Autumn Winter Plan, in response to the risks of the Omicron Variant. It is recognised the Covid pandemic will continue to create situations that have the potential to impact on the competition through the course of the season. The intention is to try and minimise disruption to the County Cup competition as well as disruption to other club and league fixtures.

To assist in this we have outlined information below to help in that process:

- Please read and review FA Covid-19 Guidance for Grassroots Football which can be found here <https://www.essexfa.com/about/coronavirus>

 - There is no legal requirement but clubs are encouraged to continue to support NHS Test and Trace by displaying an NHS QR code;

Reference to FA FAQ guidance on clubs competing:

- If an individual has Covid-19 symptoms you should stay at home and self-isolate immediately. You should arrange to have a PCR test as soon as possible and follow all government guidance. If this PCR test result is positive, you must continue to self-isolate. If you do not have Covid-19 symptoms, but you have a positive PCR test result, you must stay at home and self-isolate. If you live in the same household as someone with Covid-19 you are at significantly higher risk of becoming infected yourself.

- the Club can carry on, and continue to adhere to FA Covid 19 Guidance for Grassroots Football and ensure all current Government guidelines are strictly followed

- Match play, including training, is not considered close contact;

**COUNTY CUP FIXTURES**

*We wish to be vigilant of Covid situations that are beyond the control of teams having progressed to this stage of competitions, with the impact of the current Omicron variant while ensuring competitions progress in a timely manner with as little disruption to clubs and leagues as possible.*

- Providing a team has a minimum of 11 players available to play (9 players for U12 competitions), it is expected that the fixture takes place;

- If a team does not have the minimum number of players available, no fixture may be postponed without prior communication and agreement from Essex FA;

- Should Essex FA agree a fixture postponement, the fixture must be re-arranged no more than seven days after the scheduled date;

- If a team cannot fulfil the fixture having not had a postponement agreed by Essex FA, the team will be invited to withdraw from the competition. Should the club not opt to withdraw, it will be charged with failure to fulfil the fixture, as per competition rules. The club will have the opportunity to respond to the charge detailing individual circumstances and each case will be looked at on an individual basis by a commission;

- If a team cannot fulfil a re-arranged fixture within 7 days, the team will be invited to withdraw from the competition. Should the club not opt to withdraw, it will be charged with failure to fulfil the fixture, as per competition rules. The club will have the opportunity to respond to the charge detailing individual circumstances and each case will be looked at on an individual basis by a commission;

This guidance has been agreed in order to minimise:

- Impact on the County Cup competition, with a County Cup running to schedule under the current restrictions important for clubs and leagues;

- Disruption to club and league fixture lists to ensure we can do all we can to assist clubs and leagues with completing their own competitions in a timely fashion.

Any club who believes it cannot fulfil a fixture due to Covid-19 isolations must detail all its available and unavailable players and contact either of the following prior to the match:

**Inside Office hours (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)**
Mark Wallis: 01245 393084, mark.wallis@essexfa.com

**Outside Office hours**

Barry Fitzgerald: 07831 423473, barrysmail58@aol.com