



FA NEWS

We've made a flying start

FA's new National Game Strategy is making huge strides already for grassroots football - but there's still plenty to do

Less than two years in and The FA's £200m National Game Strategy, one of the most ambitious and far-reaching projects ever undertaken in any sport, is already reaping huge dividends for grassroots football.

Thousands of new teams have been created, more and more children and young people are flocking to the game, and real progress has been made in football for the disabled. More coaches and referees are being better trained, clubs and leagues are becoming stronger, safer, more responsible and more community-orientated, and on-field behaviour is improving by the day.

Put simply, more people are playing football to a higher standard in a better environment than ever before.

The four-year strategy got under way in March 2008 after a massive consultation exercise, involving more than 37,000 of you at the heart of the game.

You told us you wanted:

- Poor behaviour to referees and young players addressing as your top two priorities.
- A qualified referee for every game.
- Improved facilities.
- Skills training for young players.
- 1.1m five to 15-year-olds wanted to know how to join a club.
- Equality across football.
- Support at every level, from Conference to Sunday league.
- More direct communication with The FA.

Four clear goals were adopted:

- To grow and retain participation.
- To raise standards and address abusive behaviour.
- To develop better players.
- To run the game effectively.

To make it all work, two 'key enablers' were agreed:

- A skilled workforce.
- Improved facilities.

The FA then put in place a national and regional team focused on delivering 17 key targets to achieve these overall goals. And the County Football Associations also received FA investment to deliver support where it is most needed - on the ground in your community.

The 17 key targets are measured quarterly, locally and nationally, as part of a scoreboard. This allows us to react quickly to areas of concern and understand which areas of the game are the biggest priorities.

So how are we getting on?

It was an enormous undertaking – we are investing £200m over the four years – but, as we approach the half-way point, there's no doubt progress against key objectives is encouraging. Just look at what has been achieved so far:

GOAL 1: Participation

4,212 new Mini-Soccer teams have been created.

3,213 young people have joined club teams across the UK through The FA Club Links programme.

13 county disability leagues have been established.

Strategic alliances have been developed with British Colleges Sport and British Universities and Colleges Sport to increase participation across education.

20 Focus Colleges and Universities are now hubs of football development.

A powerful men's 11-a-side recruitment campaign has been encouraging lapsed players to join local teams.

GOAL 2: Raising standards and addressing abusive behaviour

The FA **Respect** programme has been introduced at all levels, from the professional game to Mini-Soccer, with 570 leagues already signed up as **Respect** leagues.

A paid welfare officer has been funded at each of 46 County FAs to support safeguarding children measures.

11,500 youth league and club welfare officers have been CRB-checked, appointed and trained in safeguarding children.

A new FA Charter Standard League award has been introduced.

- The FA Charter Standard Club programme has been reviewed, and we've re-launched criteria to ensure clubs continue to meet high standards.

Case study 1: Participation

'The best thing that has happened to school football'

An innovative new nine-a-side school-club link league has proved inspirational in uniting a previously disjointed community in South Bristol.

It was introduced by Somerset County FA after being created by an action group involving local schools, Charter Standard Clubs, the local authority and the School Sports Partnership. Sue Jay, a teacher at Christ the King School, Knowle, Bristol, said: "The 9v9 school-club link league is the best thing that has happened to school football. This provides us with a hassle-free solution to finding extended safe and fun opportunities for our children to enjoy and achieve.

"The project will also provide our teachers, teaching assistants, parental volunteers and local young people with necessary training and support to ensure that this activity continues for years to come."

Two County FAs have achieved the Foundation level of the National Standards for Equality – Middlesex and West Riding. Eight others have set up equality advisory groups.

GOAL 3: To develop better players

Vital funding has been extended into The FA Skills Programme through increased contributions from Tesco and Sport England.

Amazingly, more than one million children have now been trained through the Skills Programme. That landmark was reached in August 2009 – one year ahead of schedule.

The FA Youth Award has been launched, with nearly 2,000 candidates completing the first module. A second module was introduced late in the season.

32,000 coaches have now qualified at Level 1, 6,000 at Level 2 and 1,100 at Level 3 through The FA's education arm, FA Learning.

200 free in-service events have been run through the regional team for coaches working in FA Charter Standard Clubs.



Case study 2: Raising standards

Pioneering boys' league shows how it's done

Hull Boys' Sunday Football League has been a pioneer in the development of The FA's Charter Standard programme, becoming the first FA Charter Standard League in the country. By working with clubs and volunteers, it has helped provide a high-quality, safe and enjoyable football experience.

League chairman Les Fussey said: "I am delighted the HBSFL are the first in the country to achieve this award, which is in recognition of the forward thinking we have tried to bring to soccer in this area.

"This award is about us achieving high standards in providing safer, more enjoyable soccer for boys and girls at a younger age through bringing a much-needed emphasis on respect on and off the field. It's also about opening the doors for opportunities for clubs and teams through the excellent development team at the East Riding County FA. We have to thank them for their hard work in helping us achieving this award."



ENABLER 1:
Supporting the workforce

32,000 coaches have qualified at Level 1.

6,000 coaches have qualified at Level 2.

1,100 coaches have qualified at Level 3.

2,000 coaches have completed The FA Youth Award.

A referee development officer has been installed in every County FA.

Each County FA has a **Respect** lead officer and nationally these officers have supported 570 leagues to sign up to **Respect**, as well as offering free referee **Respect** training sessions.

A paid welfare officer has been funded in each of 46 County FAs to support safeguarding children measures.

ENABLER 2:
Better facilities

Year One investment has been more than £57m in Football Foundation grants in 162 projects, worth £191m in total project cost.

A further £1.2m of Football Foundation small grants (under £20,000) has been handed out for grassroots projects, worth £4.7m total project cost.

We're on target for £300m total expenditure across 2008-2012. 40 artificial grass pitches (AGP) have been supported through Football Foundation grants.

GOAL 4:
Running the game

50 County FAs have received investment after developing and delivering against local area plans linked into the over-arching strategy.

- Match-based discipline procedures have been extended to Step 7 of the National League System for 2009-10 after successful implementation at Steps 5 and 6.

Administration grants topping £650,000 have been handed out as support continues for leagues in Steps 1-7.

A digital communications strategy has been introduced, including a newly re-launched TheFA.com, three monthly grassroots football e-newsletters and direct targeting through social networking (including The FA's men's 11-a-side YouTube channel).

A joint County FA and FA magazine is now being published in 40 areas to communicate with participants and providers.

England and FA Cup matches are being used to promote grassroots messages.

An annual online survey has begun, testing perception of The FA and County FAs.

Case study 3: Developing better players

Refugee boys who just can't wait for skills sessions

A foster parent who brings her adopted refugee boys, Ayo and Ade, both aged six, to The FA Skills Centre at Platt Lane, Moss Side, Manchester, each week described how excited they always are about attending the sessions. Their understanding of the week is through knowing how many more 'sleeps' there are until FA Skills football.

"When I put them to bed every night, they want to know how many more sleeps it is until football again," she says.

When skills coach James Burton asked Ade what he thought about the Skills Centre, he said: "I love it. I love coming here and playing football with new friends."

James himself is delighted with the way the programme is progressing. "Ade and Ayo are just two of over 50 children who regularly attend The FA Tesco Skills Centre at Platt Lane. We are delighted with the effect the centre is having on the surrounding community, particularly with children like Ade and Ayo. Long may it continue."



HOME

Where do we go from here?

As you can see, we've achieved plenty, but don't think we're resting on our laurels. We're well aware there's still a lot to be done. These are our major priorities for the rest of the current season:

Goal 1:

To grow and retain participation

Pushing ahead with the £5 million Whole Sport Plan investment in player retention.

Using England's participation in next year's World Cup to drive a player recruitment campaign.

Delivering higher and further education football plans.

Creating 20 new disability centres of excellence and 26 new county disability leagues.

Goal 2:

To raise standards and address abusive behaviour

Increasing support for The FA **Respect** Programme.

Reviewing and improving The FA Charter Standard Club Programme.

Working with the 200 leagues who have committed to achieving The FA Charter Standard League award.

The FA has appointed a National League Development Manager to provide direction, resources and support to CFA teams working with leagues.

Developing a training programme for league personnel within the pyramid, as well as those at grassroots level.

Ensuring more effective reporting and management of safeguarding cases, and piloting information-sharing to develop a closer working partnership in managing cases between The FA and CFAs.



Case study 4: Supporting the workforce

'With such camaraderie, refereeing is a pleasure'

More than 150 entry-level referees have joined up in the North Riding the past 12 months – a sure sign that the County FA there is making great strides in its drive to boost recruitment and retention.

That's a 22 per cent increase year-on-year, made possible by a comprehensive set of measures, including the use of three centres of referee development and an enhanced coaching scheme for new recruits.

Matthew Lindley is one of those to benefit, having qualified as a Level 7 referee in the summer of 2008 after a two-day course at Teesside Athletic. "I have been fortunate enough to participate in some fantastic matches and meet some top officials," he said. "In the North Riding, we are particularly lucky to have a Referees Academy.

Aimed at officials who are new to the game, the academy provides us with the opportunity for forum-based discussion.

"As well as providing additional training, it also gives me the opportunity to talk to other referees, who like me, are just starting out, encountering similar complications and yet tackling them in different and sometimes better ways.

"Another vital asset to new referees is the coaching/mentoring programme, through which an experienced official provides personal guidance and support for one or two less experienced colleagues.

"With such a sense of camaraderie and community, refereeing is a pleasure. There has for me been many highlights – cup finals, games in Premier League stadiums, fantastic hospitality and of, course top-class, fast-paced football."



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**BIDDING NATION
ENGLAND**

News from The FA

Goal 3: To develop better players

Securing funding to maintain and potentially expand The FA Tesco Skills Programme.

Continuing the coach education plan and the age-appropriate course programme.

Goal 4: To run the game effectively

Testing to see if match-based discipline can be extended outside the National League System by running a pilot in five leagues (four Saturday and one Sunday) in 2009-10.

Extending the National Game communications plan by improving TheFA.com content and maximising the reach of e-newsletters to stakeholder groups.

Providing an annual report on performance, and implementing a media plan to communicate progress.

Enabler 1: Skilled workforce

Recruit 3,753 new male and female referees.

Training, development and mentoring of existing referees.

Expanding the Get into Refereeing marketing campaign.

Introducing an FA-licensed coaches programme through FA Learning to continue to develop our coaches.

Focusing on identifying volunteers from diverse backgrounds.

Delivering targets in the coaching strategy to increase the number of coaches at all levels from minority ethnic and emerging communities.

Enabler 2: Facilities

Expanding the Facilities and Investment team to make an even greater impact on grassroots facilities.

Working closely with the Football Foundation to ensure that the highest priority facility needs are addressed wherever possible. Supporting the work of Sport England and other agencies in protecting playing fields. Ensuring delivery of capital investment secured through The FA's Whole Sport Plan.

Working closely with County FAs to support county facility plans. Working closely with leagues and clubs to create sustainable facility plans capable of supporting retention and growth.

Case study 5: Better facilities

How a village club became hub of the community

Things have changed down in rural West Somerset ever since Bishops Lydeard AFC was awarded Football Foundation funding of £430,357 in March 2008.

The FA Standard Charter Standard Community Club received the grant to develop new facilities and become a sporting hub in the community – and the whole area is benefiting.

The re-development included:

- Four dual-gender team changing rooms with showers.
- Two match officials' changing rooms.
- Male, female and wheelchair-accessible toilets.
- Medical room.
- Ramped access.
- Clubroom with kitchen.

The new facility has created huge momentum, which the club has harnessed to develop new relationships in the village and neighbouring community and to deliver sport opportunities to more and more local people.

Plans are already under way for a disability football section, which will be fully inclusive and provide pathways to the emerging county disability football structure, national disability football squads and the Ability Counts Pan-Disability Football League.

Club Chairman Peter Durman said: "It continues to take my breath away when I see so many young people involved so passionately in sport. We are a community club, and this new facility will give us a long-awaited and much-needed home, allowing us to take the next step in our plans to develop football and other sports in our community.

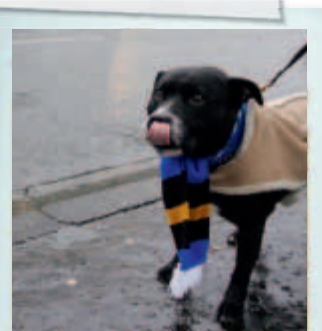
"The club motto is 'Passion and Pride', which we have in abundance throughout the club, and we appreciate the support of The Football Association, Football Foundation and other partners in this project. We are sincerely grateful to them all."

As well as the grant from the Football Foundation - part of the money came from the Sport England Community Club Development Programme Fund – the project received funding from Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, Bishops Lydeard Parish Council and other benefactors.



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The football missionaries

It's all go for FA Young Leaders as they spend a week aiming to inspire youngsters in Botswana

For the four FA Young Leaders, it was a punishing schedule and a huge challenge. For the hundreds of African children they met, it was a fresh insight into what football has to offer. For all of them, it was a life-changing experience.

When Sarah Cummings (Manchester FA), Doug Howie (Worcester FA), Elizabeth Adewole (London FA) and Joe Brownless (Isle of Man FA) touched down in Botswana on October 25 as part of an FA contingent, they had little idea how hard they would have to work over the coming seven days – or how uplifting the week would prove.

The four were selected from the 100 who attended the 2009 FA Leadership and Volunteering Camp at Warwick University in July. The idea was to work with a youth-led sports and community development programme in Botswana called SEDYEL (South East District Youth Empowerment League) and pass on some of their expertise to their opposite numbers there.

It was all go from the moment they arrived. First stop that Sunday morning was an SOS orphanage, where they rolled up their sleeves to deliver a mini-festival. The following day, it was on to the SEDYEL youth centre to provide leadership training to a group of 16 SEDYEL leaders.

Over the next three days, The FA contingent visited six schools and more than 300 children took part in football coaching sessions delivered by Sarah, Doug, Elizabeth and Joe, supported by the team from SEDYEL.

As the week progressed, the African leaders began to lead the sessions more and more themselves as they prepared to carry on the work once The FA visit was over.

FA Education Project Officer Steve Swallow, who has recently taken over responsibility for The FA's Leadership and Volunteering Programme, said: "The values statement of the SEDYEL is to inspire and empower young people through football. Both the leaders within our party and from the SEDYEL have enjoyed a life-changing experience, and we are

sure that our time here will create opportunities through football for many young people."

The SEDYEL program is an attempt to channel the energy and enthusiasm of the young in Aids-ridden Botswana to a healthy and productive lifestyle through sport.

It is an initiative of the South East District Council in Botswana, in partnership with the City of Toronto in Canada, and in co-operation with Commonwealth Games Association of Canada, UK Sport and the Mathare Youth Sports Association of Kenya.

Tell us what you think and win prizes!

We believe the National Game Strategy is bearing fruit, and that grassroots football is in increasingly good shape, but are we getting it right? Your views are the ones that count, and you could win some fantastic prizes if you tell us just what you think.

We'd love everyone involved in football throughout the country – including players aged over 11, coaches, referees and volunteers – to take part in the 2010 FA annual online survey and have their say on local football provision and the future of the grassroots game.

This is the third annual online survey, and The FA wants grassroots stakeholders to say what they think about the way their County FA runs the game, the services it provides and how it is implementing some of the key central initiatives, such as the highly publicised Respect programme.

Ian Watmore, The FA's Chief Executive, said: "As we move into the third year of the National Game Strategy, which has seen a £200m investment into the grassroots game through the County FA network, The FA is committed to helping County FAs meet these targets. The annual survey is vital to ensure that we remain on track, and, by listening to the thousands of players and volunteers, it allows us to understand whether we are meeting expectations and whether we are getting it right."

It takes just five minutes to have your say, and this year we are offering some tempting incentives to get involved.

To access the survey and for more information about competition prizes, visit [HYPERLINK "http://www.TheFA.com"](http://www.TheFA.com) TheFA.com. Hard copies of the survey are available by contacting The FA's Customer Relations team on 0844 980 8200. The deadline for responses is February 14.