



**INITIAL  
FINDINGS**

**OPEN UP SURVEY**

March 26<sup>th</sup> 2021



# THE SURVEY

Hampshire FA conducted a survey in February and March 2021 to seek the views of youth players on a range of issues including the impact of lockdown on their sporting activity and any concerns or worries they have about returning to football.

**1,562 YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 6 – 18 YEARS-OLD RESPONDED AND THEY HAD LOTS TO TELL US!**

Full details of our findings will be released shortly, but these are the key findings related to the return of football after lockdown





# **YOUNG PEOPLE REPORTED A DRAMATIC DROP IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING THE LATEST PERIOD OF LOCKDOWN**

Around 9 out of 10 young people said that they had played football twice or more per week before lockdown, with over a quarter of them playing football every day.

During lockdown only roughly 3 out of 10 young people played football twice or more per week with less than 1 child in 10 playing football every day during lockdown.

A quarter of 12-18 year olds said that they had played football less than once a month during lockdown.



# YOUTH PLAYERS ARE KEEN TO GET BACK TO THE GAME

A resounding 97% of respondents to our survey said that they intend to come back to football as soon as they can, and 99.5% said that they intend to do the same or more sport and exercise than before lockdown.

Over half of young people told us that they are most looking forward to seeing their friends again – underlining the social gains from organised sport.





# **THE MAJORITY OF YOUTH PLAYERS FEEL SAFE TO RETURN TO FOOTBALL, BUT SOME DO HAVE SIGNIFICANT WORRIES**

The vast majority of young people – more than 8 out of 10 responders - feel happy and safe to return to football. When asked what action clubs and leagues could take to make them feel safer young people thought that parents and spectators need to follow the rules and wear face coverings, that there needed to be more cleaning facilities and football authorities needed to ensure that rules were enforced consistently across different venues.

Several young people reported feeling worried about their families who had been shielding and many reported concerns about their level of fitness and whether they were ready to return to matches.



# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR CLUB?

## INCREASED PARTICIPATION

The return to football is a great opportunity to engage young people in more football activity when restrictions are lifted and may suggest an increase in participation overall. Hopefully new players will also mean new volunteers and Hampshire FA are happy to support clubs in ensuring that any new volunteers are safely recruited to, and supported, in their role.

FA safeguarding courses are now available online via: <https://thebootroom.thefa.com/learning/qualifications/safeguarding-courses> and the FA Playmaker course is the perfect starting place for new coaches and club volunteers: [www.thebootroom.thefa.com/learning/qualifications/the-fa-playmaker](http://www.thebootroom.thefa.com/learning/qualifications/the-fa-playmaker)

Please make sure that you have enough appropriately trained volunteers to provide a safe and fun environment for your players.





# LISTEN TO YOUR PLAYERS

Young people will have experienced lockdown differently – some will have been at school throughout this period, others may have experienced extended periods of isolation and inactivity.

Some young people may have experienced the serious illness or loss of family or friends due to COVID-19. You will know your players best – check how they are feeling about returning to football, are they worried about their fitness? How has lockdown impacted on them?

Early sessions may need to focus on re-building team connections, building confidence and having fun – have you considered incorporating Free Play into your training sessions?

Young people may need time to adapt to socialising and to re-build confidence, some may need more support and reassurance than others.



# COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

A key message is that young people are aware of the risks posed by returning to the sport and we would encourage clubs to ensure that they communicate directly with young people, using age appropriate and child-friendly materials, to outline the measures being taken to keep them safe as well as who they can speak to if they have concerns that the measures are not being implemented. We should all make sure that we are communicating clearly with children to offer support and reassurance and not just communicating with the adults in the club.

When communicating with parents about the return to football, please remind them that the behaviour of parents and spectators on the side-lines impacts on all players – their children are telling us this! Please ensure that all parents have completed Code of Conduct document, remind them of their responsibilities in relation to the Respect Programme ([www.hampshirefa.com/about/respect](http://www.hampshirefa.com/about/respect)) and ensure that they are aware of any new guidance in regards to COVID-19 safety.





# SAFEGUARDING

## **AS ALWAYS, SAFEGUARDING IS OUR TOP PRIORITY**

As we return to football Club volunteers need to be alert to and report any concerns about a young person's welfare to the Club Welfare Officer.

Before re-starting play, all clubs must carry out a risk assessment in line with updated FA guidance and update Emergency Action Plans

If you need support or guidance from Hampshire FA please contact us via [safeguarding@Hampshirefa.com](mailto:safeguarding@Hampshirefa.com)

