



# SEASON REVIEW

2021/22

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# CHAIR'S WELCOME



## **It is really pleasing to be able to provide my view on the first fully completed season since I became Chair of Kent FA.**

To say it's been a challenging two years is probably an understatement. Still, collectively we (leagues, clubs, participants, match officials and volunteers) have worked through those challenges. We are ensuring football in Kent is in a good place to meet and achieve our strategic aims of **PLAY – PROTECT – PROMOTE**, the game that we all love. A big thank you to our team at Kent FA HQ for their continued enthusiasm, hard work and love of Football in Kent in ensuring that we stay on track and focused.

Football has seen much success on the field too, with the completion of all league programs, 24 County Cup Finals, plus a National Competition winner in Bromley FC in the Buildbase FA Trophy. Congratulations to all promoted teams and cup winners.

We will continue along our strategic path for the coming year by looking at how we can refocus our Kent FA Council to achieve those next steps and targets. With new executive members, along with targets aligned to the FA Strategy, we need to evolve and refocus our efforts to ensure we have strong pathways for our players, that clubs are structured and ready for the future and we support them to improve and renew their facilities.

**I'm looking forward to working with you all to do just that.**

*Denise Richmond, Chair of Kent FA*

## KENT FA BOARD

**Chair** - Denise Richmond

**Finance Director** - Lee Dyson

**Vice-Chair** - Kellie Discipline

**Directors** - Arnie Van Orsouw, Bill Stoneham, Michael Tapp

**CEO** - Darryl Haden

**Independent Non-Executive Directors** - Nicola Rabson, Natalie Benville, Daniel McCarthy

# CEO'S FOREWARD



## **I have the pleasure of presenting our season review for 2021/22.**

It was pleasing that we could complete an entire season for the first time in two years, something we had reservations about at the start of September. Kent football has bounced back superbly from the challenges of the pandemic, and great credit must go to the club and league officials who have worked tirelessly to ensure that football has continued to thrive.

The past season saw the launch of our Strategy: **PLAY – PROTECT – PROMOTE**, which set out our vision for the period to 2024. We have produced a bold and challenging strategy that sets clear targets of increasing participation, developing the club and league network, supporting and developing our match officials', embracing digital technology, and maximising investment to improve facilities and develop the volunteer workforce. Our strategy aligns with the FA 'Time for Change' 2020-2024 and FA Grassroots Strategy 'Survive. Revive. Thrive' 2020-2024.

A vital thread of this strategy has been consultation with key stakeholders and engaging with grassroots volunteers on their view of the current picture of the game in Kent. We consulted far and wide to identify and address the issues and challenges that grassroots football faces. We also looked at innovative ways to present the strategy and are grateful for the support from our digital partner, Sleeping Giant media, who developed and produced our strategy video.

The 2021/22 season has also seen changes to the executive team, with Lee Suter, Luke Baker and Natalie Curtis moving on to new challenges. We welcome Jeff Davis, David Webb and Beckie Moore into the Association and look forward to working with them all. There have also been changes to our Equality Advisory Group. Through Toby Elgar, our Football Development Officer (Inclusion), we have been working to re-certificate the Preliminary Level of the Equality Standard for Sport. Equality and diversity feature heavily in the FA Code of Governance. We are actively working towards this code, and it will ensure that we have the best structure to apply effective governance across the Association. The code will also allow us to meet the Sport England Governance Code criteria, an important requirement moving forward.

Lastly, a particular highlight over the past season was the Grassroots Workforce Awards evening, where we met the shortlisted nominees and presented the finalists with their awards. It is always an inspiring evening and highlights Kent football at its best.

*Darryl Haden, CEO*

# PARTICIPATION



## ADULT FOOTBALL

**A full return to football was welcomed this season, seeing player numbers grow since last season!**

In Kent, we have 22,680 players in the open age and veterans game enjoying the season, with a compliment of 736 teams. It was a season with almost all adult leagues running full cup programmes to their joy. Although adult football is back, it doesn't return without challenges. Areas of the game need further support, so we continue to work with our stakeholders to develop key areas. Focus on vets football next season with a reformation of the Kent County League should expand playing opportunities in this growth area. Many hard-working volunteers made this season happen, and they are a credit to the football community here in Kent.



**57,402 REGISTERED MALE PLAYERS**  
**22% OVER TARGET**

Walking Football continues to be one of the fastest-growing areas of the game. This season we have increased the competitive provision offered in the county whilst identifying and supporting more recreational sessions across Kent. We hosted a 50+ and a 60+ Walking Football Cup, with the former having record attendance. After the success of these competitions, we are now collaborating with the existing provisions in the county to form the very first Kent FA Walking Football League. It kicked off in March with a 50+ and 60+ division (each having an East and West conference); overall, 25 teams are taking part in the league.





## YOUTH AND MINI SOCCER

**Mini soccer and youth football has had another year of high uptake and engagement on its first full season return from Covid-19.**

Participation in youth football has continued to increase with 35,067 players registered for the 2021/22 season. We continue to work with our stakeholders to provide a fun, safe and enjoyable playing experience for all young players.



### IN KENT YOUTH FOOTBALL WE HAVE...

**31,517**

**YOUTH PLAYERS IN MALE PATHWAY**

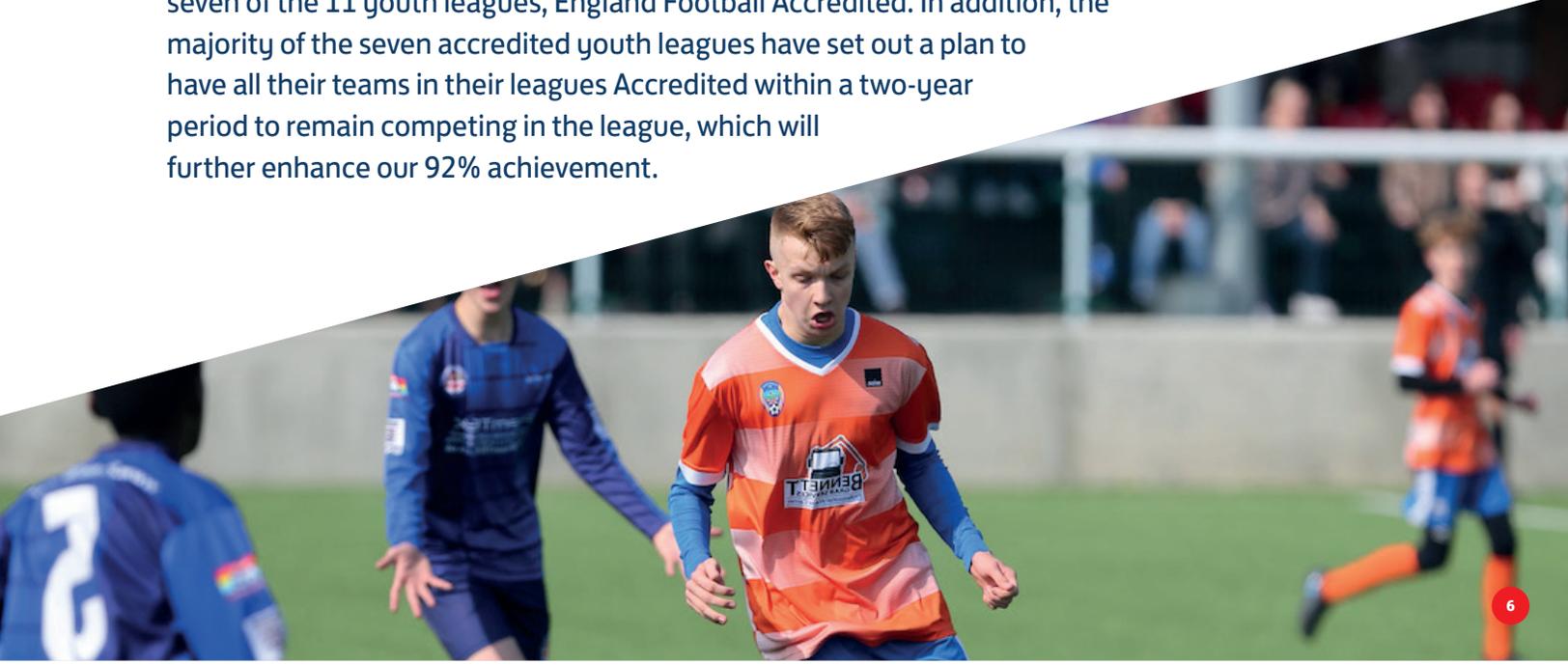
**3,405**

**YOUTH PLAYERS IN FEMALE PATHWAY**

**145**

**DISABILITY YOUTH PLAYERS**

This year has seen a record high for youth clubs and leagues being England Football Accredited. Set with a target of 89% of youth clubs being England Football Accredited, the county has achieved 92%, with 1,508 youth clubs achieving Accreditation. Despite not being targeted with a specific number of accredited youth leagues, we currently have 64%, seven of the 11 youth leagues, England Football Accredited. In addition, the majority of the seven accredited youth leagues have set out a plan to have all their teams in their leagues Accredited within a two-year period to remain competing in the league, which will further enhance our 92% achievement.





## WOMEN & GIRLS FOOTBALL

**It has been another year of growth for the female game within the county.**

We have 6,008 registered female players; this is 13% above our year one target, playing in 307 female teams. Continued development of recreational football has seen the Weetabix Wildcats session grow to 64 centres, and we have four Squad Girls centres across the county. However, our Women & Girls Football Development Officer, Natalie Curtis, left the Association in April. We want to place on record the outstanding job Natalie undertook to place the female game at the forefront of all our plans and develop a framework that is the envy of many.



# 6,008

**REGISTERED FEMALE PLAYERS**

**13% OVER TARGET**



## DISABILITY FOOTBALL

Disability football returned after an 18-month enforced absence, with 21 clubs affiliating 72 teams for the 2021/2022 season, equating to approximately 600 players, with around 450 of those players registering to play in the Kent Disability Football League alone, once again making it one of the top 3 largest pan-disability leagues in the country.

Kent FA also introduced Blind/Visually Impaired Football, where 14 sessions ran for six young people with a visual impairment. We have also been working with CP Sport to expand the county's Cerebral Palsy football provision, creating a new team supporting 11 individuals with Cerebral Palsy.



**587** REGISTERED PLAYERS

**26% UNDER TARGET**

# FACILITIES AND FUNDING

**It has been another busy year as we strive, with partners, to improve the playing environment, pitches and facilities for the Kent football community.**

Working with our partner, the plans are invaluable as we identify and develop projects around the county.

During the 2021/22 season, 75 organisations received funding from the Football Foundation to develop grass pitches, floodlights (static and portable), goalposts, fencing, changing room refurbishment, etc. These projects have seen a £764,554 investment into Kent Football.

## CASE STUDY

Ramsgate FC received £150,000 for new changing rooms, an external path and a retractable tunnel. This funding formed part of a £218,000 investment into the club, with the development of their facilities which benefit the whole community. This was one of 75 projects who received money from the Football Foundation.



**£764,554**  
**INVESTMENT**  
INTO KENT FOOTBALL FOR 2021/22

# FOOTBALL WORKFORCE

**The adoption of online player registration across Kent has been a huge success with almost 70,000 registrations completed in season 21/22 which is an increase of almost 20,000 from the previous season.**

The club and league affiliation process covering almost 850 organisations, despite a later launch due to the pandemic, was also completed efficiently. It is clear to see the positive impact the switch to digital solutions is having on grassroots football in Kent with the aim to reduce the workload of volunteers and create simple, efficient solutions. The success of these transitions has been largely down to the amazing volunteers in clubs and leagues who have utilised the systems provided by the FA.



# COACH

## DEVELOPMENT

**After a challenging couple of years with Covid-19 and with restructures to the national coaching course pathway, the last few months have seen face to face courses start to roll out.**

We have seen the most completed coaching courses online within the country, with 216 coaches completing the BT Playmaker and 338 coaches completing the Introduction to Coaching Football (the restructured Level 1). As a result of face-to-face coaching courses being suspended during Covid-19, there was a delay in some coaches within the county completing and being signed off from Level 2 – Level 5 courses. This resulted in 31 coaches achieving their FA Level 2 and 7 coaches achieving their UEFA B last year.



**We have also held our own CPD (Continuing Professional Development) events including:**

- ✓ **CALM session raising awareness of mental health (Online)** – The aim was to introduce CALM to the football community in Kent, to provide techniques and tips to support players, provide awareness strategies and signposting towards CALM's services.
- ✓ **Football during Ramadan (Online)** - This event aimed to empower educate and supply tools, tips and techniques to support players during Ramadan.
- ✓ **Coaching players with impairments (F2F)** – The event aimed to educate coaches with tools and skills to be able to deliver more confidently with players who have impairments.
- ✓ **Baypoint Roma Community CPD events** – The event focused on how to improve engagement with the Roma community and to enhance their coaches tools, skills and knowledge to be able to deliver more confidently within their community.

**84.9%**  
of youth teams have a  
**QUALIFIED COACH**

# YOUTH COUNCIL

## **The Kent FA Youth Council offers young people involved in Kent football the opportunity to have their voices heard.**

We had thirteen new ambassadors join the group at the start of the season. The 16 strong council has enjoyed various meetings across the season, learning about each other and the group's shared values, goals, and aspirations.

As the season progressed, the focus shifted. The group provided Kent FA with valuable feedback on engaging young people through safeguarding and the new Equality Action Plan. Three new team leaders have been appointed to lead mini-project groups next season. Several ambassadors also contributed to the Kent FA Council Consultation evening to ensure all stakeholders were represented.



# DISCIPLINE

**Season 21/22 saw a return to ‘normal’ following the pandemic and this has been reflected in the discipline responsibilities delivered across the county by the Kent FA.**

Although the existence of discipline is negative, it is important for the county FA to deliver and uphold robust rules and trusted regulation free from prejudice and conflicts of interest in a timely and transparent manner following thorough investigations. The Kent FA’s delivery of discipline is continually reviewed and assessed by the FA discipline department at Wembley and Kent FA continues to be leaders in this area. We acknowledge that not every outcome in discipline is the outcome a club or individual want, but the Kent FA does commit to ensuring every instance is processed fairly and in line with FA regulations. It is important for clubs and participants to take responsibility for our game and protect it from abuse and violence to ensure a fun and safe environment can be enjoyed by all.

**Football services priorities for next season are an efficient delivery of affiliation and player registration in preparation for season 22/23. To continue the exceptional management of discipline throughout the season and to provide competitive and exciting cup competitions across the formats with outstanding finals showcasing the beautiful game in Kent.**



# REFEREEING



**Refereeing has heavily centred this season on recruitment. Having delivered 27 ‘Get into Refereeing’ workshops, we recruited 457 trainee referees across the County via 26 referee courses, succeeding our recruitment KPI by 25%.**

The referee Key Performance Indicator (KPI) target of 223 has been surpassed, with 331 completing their qualification and going on to support local leagues and clubs. The heavy influx of new trainees has added pressure onto our mentoring workforce, where we ran one new workshop for 82 potential new mentors.

We finish 2021/2022 with the highest number of affiliated match officials we have ever seen; 1,758 affiliations surpass 1,607 registering for the 2020/2021 season. We incentivised the workforce at the affiliation point in June 2021, further supported by recognition and reward incentives.

In September 2021 (to the Football Community – ‘Time for Change’), our open letter addressing participant behaviour received much media interest, locally, regionally, and nationally, which increased interest in our ‘Get into Refereeing’ workshops and supported recruitment. The letter was delivered to support the fantastic job match officials do when officiating.

A total of 17 mid-season promotions across varying levels of the game (L7-6, 6-5, 5-4, 4-3) were further enhanced with 56 end-of-season promotions across all levels.



## RETAINED 1,758

**3% OVER TARGET**

# SAFEGUARDING & WELFARE

This year the County FA have made a big push to ensure that safeguarding is at the forefront of all individuals playing an active role within football across the county. There has been a high uptake in safeguarding courses, awareness and commitment to ensure that clubs are operating in line with regulations for affiliation and accreditation. This year has seen 635 individuals completing the Safeguarding Children Course, 39 individuals completing the Safeguarding Adults Course, 781 individuals completing the Safeguarding for All Course and 76 individuals completing the Safeguarding For Committee Members course.

**Kent FA continues to support all clubs and leagues across the county by fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities. Ongoing collaboration between the discipline and safeguarding teams enables poor practice and serious issues to be identified, reported and dealt with efficiently by the most appropriate route. Across youth and adult football, we provide advice and support to a network of 328 Club Welfare Officers.**

**We continue to work with these officers to ensure that clubs can deal with any incidents efficiently. In April 2022, Kent FA was assessed as “meeting the standard” for The FA’s 365 Safeguarding Standard, and we continue to work across the staff team to maintain this.**



# DISCRIMINATION

**Combatting discrimination continues to be a focus for Kent FA. As a county FA, Kent FA continues to promote the importance of reporting and tackling discrimination.**

We are proud to be one of a few county FA's who regularly promote the discrimination reporting processes on social media. The aim is to increase the confidence of those facing discrimination that their voice will be heard and that we will support them. The Kent FA Equality Advisory Group also monitors discrimination case data, identifying trends that help inform areas where additional education around discrimination might be required.



## INCLUSION & EQUALITY

We are proud to have supported several equality and inclusion initiatives this season. Working with Charlton Athletic Invicta, we promoted positive news articles to highlight the importance of the Rainbow Laces and FootballvHomophobia campaigns. We also ran a CPD event around Ramadan in football.

Kent FA has also established a Board Equality Champion who sits on the Equality Advisory Group to ensure equality is embedded across the whole organisation. The Equality Advisory Groups' expertise and knowledge are utilised to advise on such matters. A large area of focus has been working to reaccredit the organisation with the Equality Standard for Sport Preliminary Level, which should be completed by September 2022. This involved surveying over 600 referees, 2,500 players and 1,800 coaches to understand our equality profile to enable us to produce an Equality Action Plan, setting our equality strategy going forwards.

# KENT COUNTY CUPS

## 2021-22

**A very successful season of county cups saw us run 25 cups in total, a record number for the county. This included the introduction of two new plate competitions in the U14 and U15 boys categories as we expanded to allow even more players to experience the Kent County Cups.**

The Merit Group became the partner of the youth cups, which saw 335 teams enter across the 12 youth cups. We had 691 men's teams enter the 11 adult men's cups, whilst 68 women's teams entered the two adult women's cups. The first county cup match of the season began on Monday 6th September as Sheppey United faced Larkfield and New Hythe in the Kent Intermediate Cup. Then 265 days later, the final match of the county cup calendar saw Littlebourne take on Medway City in the Kent Junior 'A' Cup Final. In total, there were 1,032 county cup fixtures played throughout the season. Our cup finals saw over 5,500 people in attendance, which is an increase on previous seasons.

New for the 2021/22 season, the cup draws from the last 16 were filmed and released on social media, which saw our digital engagement vastly increase - a welcome new feature for those teams still in the various cups.

## OUR 2021/22 COUNTY CUP WINNERS ARE:

**Senior Cup: Dartford**

**Senior Trophy: Sheppey United**

**Intermediate Cup: Margate U23**

**Intermediate Challenge Shield: Kings Hill**

**Junior Cup A: Medway City**

**Junior Cup B: Selhurst**

**Junior Cup C : Grand Sports Club**

**Sunday Premier Cup: Ashford Genclik**

**Sunday Junior Cup: Range Rovers Sports**

**Sunday Junior Troph: Hatcham Beckenham Manor**

**Women's Cup: Gillingham Women**

**Women's Plate: Herne Bay Women Reserves**

**Veteran's Cup: Metrogas**

**U13 Boys Plate: Danson Sports**

**U13 Boys: Bromley**

**U14 Boys Plate: Danson Sports**

**U14 Boys Cup: Rochester City**

**U15 Boys Plate: Vinters**

**U15 Boys Cup: Bromley**

**U16 Boys Cup: Bromley**

**U18 Boys Cup: Whitstable Town**

**U13 Girls Cup: Maidstone United**

**U14 Girls Cup: Kent Football United**

**U15 Girls Cu: Kings Hill**

**U16 Girls Cu: Danson Sports**





**Kent Intermediate Challenge  
Shield winners**

**Kings Hill FC**



**Kent Senior Cup  
winners**

**Dartford FC**



**Kent Senior Trophy  
winners**

**Sheppey United**



**Kent Women's Cup  
winners**

**Gillingham Women**



**Kent Women's Plate  
winners**

**Herne Bay Women Reserves**



**The Merit U14 Girls Cup  
winners**

**Kent Football United**



**The Merit U18 Boys Cup  
winners**

**Whitstable Town**



**The Merit U13  
Boys Plate**

**Danson Sports**

# KENT REPRESENTATIVE FOOTBALL

**Representative Football made a welcome return to the county after the Covid interruptions had seen no rep team football for the 2020/21 season. Several counties had chosen to opt out for the current season, but a small competition was still created, with Kent joining Essex & Bedfordshire to compete at the U18 level.**

We faced Essex at Aveley FC in the first match and found ourselves 2-0 down after 20 minutes, but a superb comeback saw Kent run out 5-2 winners, with some delightful goals scored in the second half. This meant a draw against Bedfordshire FA would see Kent retain the Tony Elsey U18 league title, but the team did it in style with a 4-0 win to finish with a 100% record and retain the trophy. Dover Athletic striker Jack Nelson scored a hat trick against Bedfordshire to help the team to secure the win.



# THE KENT GRASSROOTS WORKFORCE AWARDS

**On Thursday 2 September, we hosted the Kent FA Grassroots Workforce Awards 2021 at the Tudor Park Marriott Hotel and Country Club for a celebratory and inspiring evening.**

Every year, we celebrate those people who make a positive difference to our football community. It's our way of celebrating the fantastic individuals who put their heart and soul into the grassroots game across Kent – and say a huge thank you to the incredible volunteers who inspire us all.

During the award ceremony, we announced our local winners for The FA and McDonalds Grassroots Football Awards as well as presented a number of lifetime services awards and referee service awards. New for 2021, Kent FA also launched The Colin Boswell Young Referee of the Year Award. Sadly, in May 2020, Colin Boswell, former Kent FA President, passed away after a short battle with cancer. The fantastic winners were:

## THE FA AND MCDONALD'S GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL AWARDS

Coach of the Year for Adults –  
**Jo Treharne, Canterbury Old Bags**

Coach of the Year for Youth –  
**Simon Ryan, Swanscombe Tigers**

Club of the Year –  
**Aylesford FC**

Volunteer of the Year –  
**Paul Carter, Westerham JFC**

Project of the Year –  
**Aylesford FC**

Rising Star of the Year –  
**Ethan Clayton, Whitstable Town FC**

The Spirit of Grassroots Football Award –  
**Steven Groves, Tonbridge Junior FC**

The Colin Boswell Young Referee of  
the Year Award –  
**Josh Williams**

The FA 50 Year Service Award –  
**Colin West, Keith Vaughan**

50 Years Officiating Service Awards –  
**Stuart Clay, Stewart Spashett,  
Keith Wenham, Keith Whitlock**



# PARTNERS

It has been an exciting season as we develop relationships and new partnerships with Kent businesses across the county. We started the year with a handful of partnerships and finished with eleven partnerships, all providing true value to our clubs and us as a county FA. The highlights include:



## THE MERIT GROUP - COUNTY CUP PARTNER (YOUTH)

The Merit Group positively engaged with the partnership from the outset featuring in monthly video cup draws and supporting all the finalists on match days. This partnership continues to go from strength to strength as they renew their partnership for the 2022/23 season.



## SLEEPING GIANT MEDIA – DIGITAL MEDIA PARTNER

This partnership has driven educational impact as they helped to upskill over 60 club volunteers on how to get the most from their digital communication platforms through virtual workshops. The partner also supported us to bring our three-year strategy to life through a video storyboard. A fantastic initiative which witnessed high levels of engagement from our stakeholders.



## DARENTH PRINT & DESIGN – PRINT PARTNER

As well as meeting our print needs for the association, our Print Partner also offers discounts on printed materials for registered Kent clubs.



## TECHNICAL SURFACES – 3G PITCH MAINTENANCE PARTNER

Our 3G Pitch Maintenance Partner provides advice and resources to grounds team across the county to ensure they get the most from their facilities.

We also continue to enjoy excellent partnerships with MyClubPro (Club Website Partner), VEO (Camera Technology Partner), EasyFundraising (Online Retail Partner), UK Global (Insurance Partner), The Tommy Crush Foundation & CALM (Charity Partners).

A huge thank you to our partners and suppliers. We look forward to another outstanding season with you.



# PRIORITIES FOR THE 2022/23 SEASON

Setting realistic and achievable targets to deliver the strategy is key to its success. By the end of 2022/23, we will achieve the following...



**57,902**  
REGISTERED  
MALE PLAYERS



**6,208**  
REGISTERED  
WOMEN & GIRLS  
PLAYERS



**637**  
REGISTERED  
DISABLED  
PLAYERS

RECERTIFY FOR  
PRELIMINARY LEVEL BY  
**2024**



**90%** OF YOUTH TEAMS HAVING  
A QUALIFIED COACH

**MAINTAIN**  
SAFEGUARDING  
STANDARDS  
ACROSS THE GAME



IMPROVE  
**365**  
GRASS PITCHES

**ACHIEVE**  
FA CODE OF  
GOVERNANCE



RETAIN  
**1,704**  
MATCH OFFICIALS



**COMPLETE 200**  
PITCH ASSESSMENTS THROUGH PITCH POWER



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