

**Kent FA**



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**REFEREE STRATEGY**

*SUPPORTIVE PROVISION TO MAXIMISE POTENTIAL*

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## WELCOME TO THE KENT FA REFEREE STRATEGY & KENT FA CORE

The Kent FA governs, develops, promotes and protects grassroots football in Kent. We aim to establish safe and structured football opportunities for the benefit of all.

Football remains the most popular sport in Kent, with 45,000 players competing each week across the county and 15,000 volunteers helping us to keep the game going locally. The Kent FA is committed to creating a culture of continuous improvement and always providing exemplary standards of service delivery, with the aim to support football in Kent and ultimately provide a positive football experience to everyone.

The Kent FA provides to the following key groups:

- › Match Officials,
- › Players,
- › Club/League Officials,
- › Volunteers, Spectators, Parents/Guardians of Youth Players, and,
- › Coaches.

We are now looking at how we communicate our aim, our values, our resources (where our money comes from and goes!) and the actual services that we do provide to these key groups. It is also crucial that we continue to look at what more we could be doing for these key groups through continual consultation and feedback.

The information detailed in this strategy is a prime example of this. We know that we need to provide greater levels of support to all our match officials, and not just those within our Academy or Development Groups, while still developing those with potential and recognising the ambitious through a tiered system. This support will be available to any match official, at any level, and through a variety of engaging methods. In addition to this we are committed to enhancing the match day experience with, at the very least, 90% of adult and youth football matches officiated by a qualified and registered referee.

The Kent FA is also determined to provide an inclusive football experience for anyone who wishes to play or support football. We want this experience to be free from abuse, and discrimination, and reflective of our diverse communities. A positive progression in this strategy is the setting of specific 'Inclusion' targets around refereeing, to ensure that the Kent FA can focus its work on underrepresented areas of the game. We will become truly reflective of the demographics of our county through an inclusive referee workforce which will include 10% Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) referees, 5% female referees and 3% disabled referees by 2019.

We are confident that this strategy will demonstrate a commitment to improving the perception of the Kent FA as an effective and professional organisation for the greater good of grassroots football in the county.

Whilst much has been achieved we certainly recognise some of the challenges ahead, however, as an Association we are in a very good position to meet these challenges and continue to be 'Ahead of the Game' in everything we do.

**Paul Dolan**  
Chief Executive

**Barry W. Bright**  
Chairman & Managing Director

## KENT REFEREE STRATEGY

Over the past few seasons, our Referee Development Team had devoted hundreds of voluntary workforce hours developing our match officials. Such sterling work has contributed to the many success stories for Kent's match officials. Whilst this has been very successful, much of our time has been shaped towards our 'elite'.

It is now time to review and improve the recruitment, retention and development of match officials at ALL levels.

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### The Majority

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Those match officials who service the game at the 'local parks' and at 'grassroots'. They are happy to devote their time supporting local football. They may have few aspirations to progress to higher levels but are very happy to continue officiating at their current level. Over the past few years, these match officials may well have been 'forgotten', but there is now opportunity for them to improve, thus increasing their enjoyment and the football they operate in will also benefit.

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### The Ambitious

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Those match officials who have the desire and ambition to progress to higher levels. Not all of these ambitious match officials have the ability, or potential, to reach higher levels, but there should be development opportunities for them to maximise their potential.





## Strategy Overview

So what changes? Over the past few years the Kent FA, and its volunteer workforce in the Referee Development Team, have significantly improved the image and quality of refereeing standards within the county, but it is time for a change in direction. Our Academy and Development Groups have helped many match officials to flourish. This has greatly benefited the professional game but has been at the expense of supporting match officials more frequently at grassroots.

Our new strategy provides a clear focus on supporting the development of match officials at all levels. The Kent FA is fully committed to being an inclusive body which provides a clear structure and utilises modern techniques so that match officials at all levels can flourish and enjoy their refereeing. Remember, we are never too good to learn a little bit more.

**Nick Dunn**  
Referee Development Officer

**John Moules**  
Chairman, Referees' Committee



## VISION

Supportive Provision  
to Maximise Potential.



## MISSION

To cultivate, enrich  
and reflect on the  
importance of a  
diverse, high-quality  
referee development  
programme, for match  
officials at all levels



## VALUES

Progressive  
Respectful  
Inclusive  
Supportive  
Excellence  
Empathy



## WHAT DOES KENT REFEREEING LOOK LIKE?

### PEOPLE

Match Officials  
Observers  
Tutors  
Administrators  
Volunteers  
Mentors  
Coaches  
RDO

### DEVELOPMENT

Training  
Education  
Development  
Support  
Mentoring  
Kent CORE  
International Exchanges  
National Exchanges

### PARTICIPATION

Recruitment  
Retention  
Female  
BAME  
Coverage  
Disability  
Mini-Soccer

### GOVERNANCE

Appointments  
Registration  
Discipline  
Referee Liaison  
Promotion Scheme  
Support

## THE DNA OF KENT REFEREEING

It is important for fundamental values to underpin all aspects of refereeing, at all levels of the game, with these values shared by those involved within the world of refereeing (match officials, coaches, observers, tutors, mentors etc.).

The values underpinning English refereeing are its unique DNA, which should be integral to the work and attitudes of everyone from the newest referee right through to FIFA match officials, as well as from those training, developing and educating these referees and assistants.

They are all required for success to be achieved, which relate to traits both on and off the field, and are defined as follows;

### **R**ESPECT

### **E**MPATHY

### **F**ITNESS

### **E**VALUATION

### **R**ELIABILITY

### **E**DUICATION

### **E**XCELLENCE

Outlined below is a detailed explanation of each of these crucial elements.

### **R**ESPECT

Everyone should have respect for:

- The game
- The Laws of the Game
- Stakeholders (match officials, observers, mentors, tutors, coaches, players, managers, administrations, volunteers, etc.)

Respect is also underpinned by values such as integrity and honesty, in all values of on- and off-field behaviour and conduct.

### **E**MPATHY

Having a 'feeling/understanding' for the needs of each match allows us to build important relationships with key stakeholders in the game. Whilst it is important for referees to uphold the Laws of the Game and not shirk their responsibilities, sometimes situations develop that allow for empathy to be applied; applying 'common-sense' and not appearing 'robotic', is sometimes important in controlling a game of football.

Empathy allows a referee to distinguish, perhaps, between frustration and dissent. The very best referees 'understand' the game and control games with empathy for the needs of each match. Off-field empathy is equally important in building and developing relationships; for example, when a referee has made a major mistake, and was clearly incorrect in Law, honesty can be important. Colleagues with empathy will offer support, guidance and encouragement, whilst empathic observers will decide when it is best to offer advice.

In dealing with incidents and stakeholders, empathy and respect are closely linked; if you respect other people then you will have empathy for their feelings, knowing when best to interact with this in different situations.

### **F**ITNESS

Evidently, match officials must be physically fit to perform in a match; one major element to fitness is endurance, as often the most controversial incidents will occur in the closing stages of a match. Physical fitness comes not just from correct and focused training, but also from diet and lifestyle. Refereeing is a 'sport' and successful referees need to be athletes, in terms of their training and preparation.

Whether operating at the grassroots level, or higher within the National League System, match officials should always be looking to be fit enough to operate at the next level. This comes in both physical and mental forms, so the need to develop the mental strength (resist on-field pressures, copes with controversy, etc.) is a key area that requires great attention.

### **E**VALUATION

Evaluation comes in two forms; in-game evaluation and post-match evaluation. Whilst it is important to be reflective, and to evaluate specific match-based incidents, the best referees have a high level of ability to evaluate the match 'atmosphere/temperature', and, as these change, to adjust their refereeing level to the needs of the game, in order to maintain control.

Again, whether operating at the grassroots level, or higher within the National League System, match officials should always be looking to reflect upon key decisions within the match. Developing an ability to self-evaluate is integral to improving performance if there is no coach, mentor, observer, etc. The ability to identify trends is another key evaluation skill, ensuring that advice is placed 'in context'.

### **R**ELIABILITY

Being reliable helps instil trust in a match official. Whether it's an appointment officer, player or RDO, each stakeholder will be looking to rely on match officials they can trust. Referees must be reliable and dependable both on and off the field. On the field, everyone depends on the reliability of the referee's decision-making, and expects them to be the 'leader' when there are major incidents (for example, serious injuries, anomalous occurrences, etc.), but to be reliable and consistent in applying the Laws of the Game and Competition Rules.

Furthermore, off the field, match officials must be both professional and reliable, in terms of administration, information of closed dates/availability, submission of discipline/league reports, appearance and use of social media outlets, etc.

### **E**DUICATION

Only those who are open-minded, and receptive to advice and development, will be those who improve and/or progress. Education comes in many forms; hands-on experience gained as an assistant referee or 4th official, formal education courses, simulated in-game scenarios/training, vicarious learning by watching fellow colleagues, etc.

You only improve by learning, and those who succeed will have a willingness to be educated. This is inclusive of key development stakeholders, such as observers, mentors, coaches, tutors etc., in so much that these individuals need to educate others by passing on their knowledge and experience too; these individuals must also be ready to be educated.

### **E**XCELLENCE

Every time a match official crosses the white line, a referee or assistant referee must strive to give the best possible performance they can offer. This is owed to the players, the management, the teams, the clubs, the spectators, etc., but most importantly to the referee and/or other assistant referee. Underpinning everything related to refereeing must be an individual, and collective desire to achieve excellence.



## THE STRUCTURE OF KENT REFEREEING

Football in England has evolved significantly over recent years and, with this, refereeing has had to structure itself to accommodate the changes. With this in mind, there are now several pathways that a match official can take, within the various types of football, such as Male, Female, Futsal, Mini-Soccer, Small-Sided and Futsal. Referees can be classified on more than one pathway, which is based on their ability and performance on each, but there is no transferability of comparison from one pathway to another.

Currently, the conventional open-aged 11v11 pathway has several levels; 10 in-fact. The system, as it stands, is under review at The FA due to its restrictiveness of allowing the County Football Associations (CFAs) to give promising referees higher levels of matches, without

it being clear that a lower level referee is being used. One proposal is to that Levels 7, 6 and 5 are combined into one; CFAs may, naturally, have an unofficial grading system within this level, but this change will allow greater flexibility for appointments. There will be a minimum number of games that must be completed in order to attain promotion to Level 4.

A major benefit is that CFA observers will now focus on developing referees, rather than the narrow, less beneficial role as to informing the CFA in whether a referee is ready for promotion. This will make the observer a developer/coach, who should be more appreciated, by improving the relationships and, hopefully, persuading more referees to become observers when they retire.



The following proposed classification pathway is being discussed for season 2017/18 onwards:

Current Level	Description	Proposed Level
Level 1	National List Referee	Unchanged
Level 2a	Panel Select Referee	Unchanged
Level 2b	Panel Referee	Unchanged
Level 3	Contributory League Referee	Unchanged
Level 4	Supply League Referee	Unchanged
Level 5	Senior County Referee	
Level 6	County Referee	Level 5
Level 7	Junior County Referee	
Level 8	Youth Referee	Level Y
Level 9	Trainee Referee	Level T
Level 10	Referee Developer	Level D

^Level 10 will be renamed and all FA/CFA Observers/Tutors/Coaches/Mentors MUST register (without charge) annually with their CFA, to ensure that the appropriate Safeguarding Children (SGC) and Criminal Record Checks (CRC) are in place, and to ensure that they also have access to continued professional development (CPD) opportunities.

## SPECIALISATION

From Level 3 onwards, there is now a specialist Assistant Referee pathway.

## REFEREE OBSERVERS

Formerly known as 'assessors', the change in name is to alleviate the stigma associated to the 'fault-finding' perception that once occurred. The change allows for a greater 'developmental' role, which should increase the appreciation of the observer's role and work, thus improving relationships between referees, observers and also the clubs and leagues. This terminology falls in-line with FIFA, UEFA and the PGMOL.

There shall be a developmental pathway for observers, thus increasing motivation and enthusiasm, allowing them to strive for higher levels of performance.





## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Referee recruitment has been very successful in recent years, with current numbers being higher than they have ever been. Whilst this has been extremely promising, and must be maintained, there are specific areas in which we must continue to focus;

- › Referees from BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) backgrounds.
- › Female Referees.
- › Encouraging players, who may be coming to the end of their careers at any age, an invitation and entry strategy into refereeing.

A major priority for the Kent FA Refereeing Department is to ensure provision is made for under-represented stakeholders, such as those in the BAME, Female and Disability categories. This ultimately helps to ensure greater representation, and to provide an equal opportunity for all Individuals to be part of refereeing.

The first unit of the referee course is our 'get into refereeing' workshop, which are held at different times of the year, and around the county. Dates of these workshops are on our website.



## PARTICIPATION AND COVERAGE

Another priority for the Kent FA Refereeing Department is to work towards ensuring that every game of football is covered with a qualified, and affiliated, referee. As we move towards 100% coverage, the next focus will be to enable more competitions to have neutral assistant referees, which will ultimately benefit those competitions and the development of match officials too.

It is important that the retention of match officials is paramount, and thus the Kent FA is here to support any match official. If a match official feels that they are coming to the end of their career, then there may be an avenue into supporting the next generation of referee, perhaps in the role of a tutor, coach, mentor or observer. In this way, the skills of experienced referees will be retained, should not be lost, and used to benefit other referees.

As of the end of the 2015/16 Season our current referee coverage, for our affiliated leagues and competitions, stands at 93.81%. Over 15,250 competitive fixtures have been covered around the county with a qualified and registered referee. Whilst we are already above the FA's vision of 90% coverage, the Kent FA are working towards achieving 100% coverage.





## DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Crucial to the future of refereeing in Kent, is the identification and development of match officials who display the potential to perform at higher levels. Over the past few years, Kent have been extremely fortunate to have produced some exciting talent, through the previously established Referee Academy and Development Group. Building upon these structures, The Kent FA Centre of Refereeing Excellence (CORE) has been created, amalgamating elements from each, but also making use of structures based on the UEFA model (used by many countries worldwide).

The focus will be on potential, as opposed to talent, regardless of age, location, gender, background, etc., and will be critical if Kent is to continue producing high-quality referees. Our goal here is two-fold:

1. Produce high-quality match officials to service the local game, enhancing the experience for all at grassroots level, and,
2. Produce high-quality match officials who will go on to give Kent greater recognition and representation at national level (via the Football League, National Leagues and Contributory Leagues).

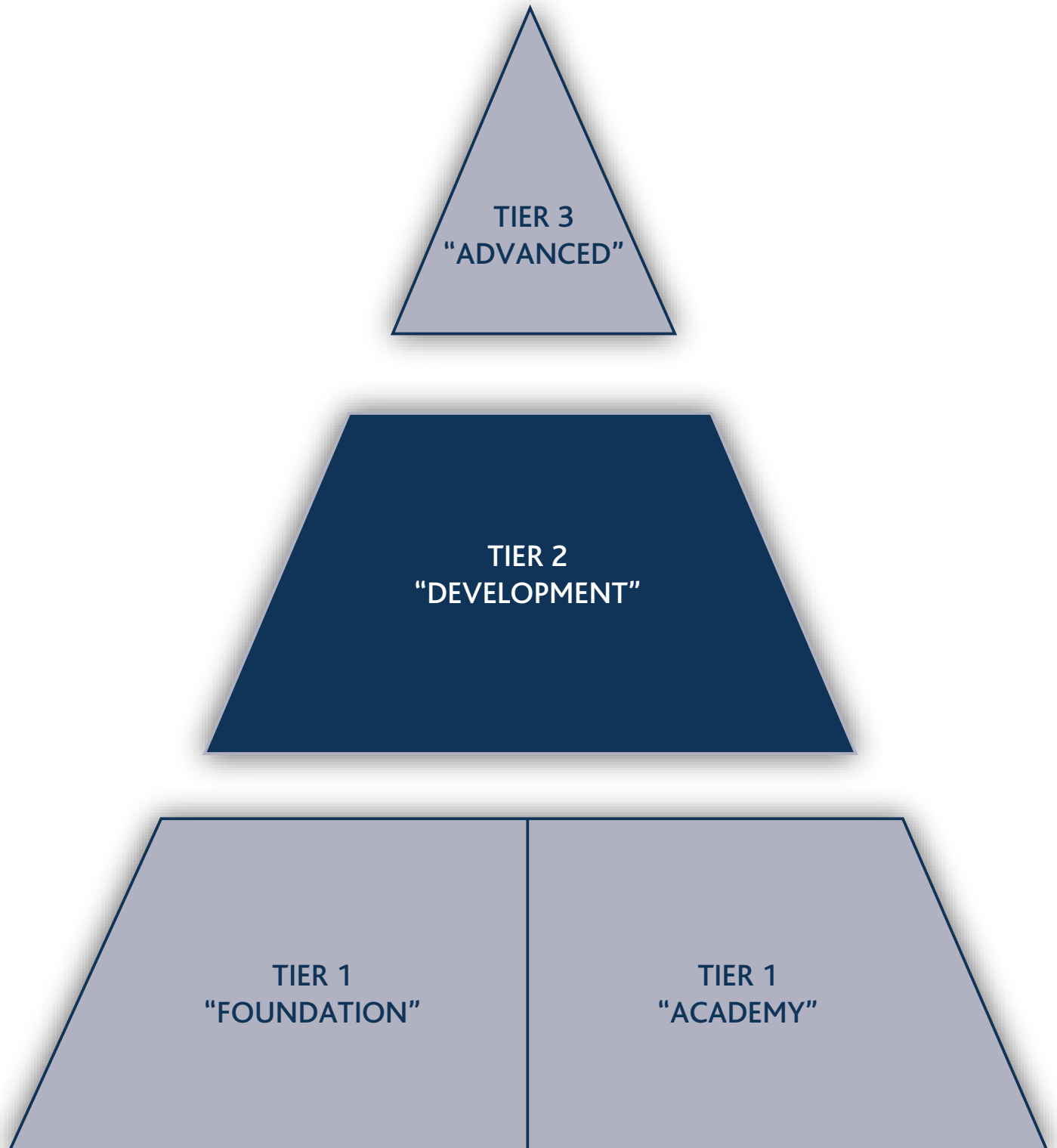
From the start of the 2016/2017 season, Kent FA CORE is being introduced. The Kent FA CORE will immediately replace existing development structures, and now serve as a mechanism to support match officials up to, and including, Level 4. The Kent FA is committed to ensuring that provision is made to those match officials who are content at officiating at grassroots level, and to guarantee the delivery of a varied development programme for those referees. This shall, subsequently, filter into a Talent Identification Scheme, whereby we shall continue to nurture, support and encourage the development of those with potential, recognised from the ambitious, from within the majority.

The structure of the Kent FA CORE shall be over three tiers, with each tier supporting a varied level of match official. Each tier has a varied level of commitment, and is solely built on an 'opt-in' basis. A pyramidal CORE structure is outlined overleaf;





# KENT FA CENTRE OF REFEREEING EXCELLENCE DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY





## TIER 1 – ‘FOUNDATION TIER’

This tier is dedicated to assisting those match officials who are solely content on operating at the ‘grassroots’ level of the game. Here, match officials can take advantage of several development sessions, hosted throughout the season, which are aimed at helping to improve and enhance your overall control and game management. This tier is ‘open’ to all county match officials, from Level 9 (Trainee) through to Level 5 (Senior County Referee), of any age and ability. There shall be four phases to the development delivery, with 4 venues across the county for Phase 1 (July), Phase 2 (September), Phase 3 (November) and Phase 4 (March). Those who ‘opt-in’ to Tier 1 shall also have the opportunity to benefit from additional incentives.

## TIER 1 – 'ACADEMY TIER'

Similarly to the 'Foundation Tier', this developmental platform is solely aimed at supporting match officials who are ideally aged between 14 and 23 (inclusive), who are Level 9, 8 or 7 referees. These match officials will have expressed a desire to develop their skills, and who show the potential to move into open-aged football/onto the promotion scheme. This generation of match officials is integral to the future of refereeing, and so it is important the Kent FA nurture their development, and support their transition. The 'Academy Tier' shall meet a minimum of 6 times during the season, with access to a specific referee coaching team, as well as also have the opportunity to benefit from additional incentives.





## TIER 2 – 'DEVELOPMENT TIER'

Building on 'Tier 1', this stage is dedicated to those match officials who are solely part of the Level 7 to 6 and 6 to 5 promotion scheme. There are no age-restrictions to being part of the 'Development Tier', as the aim here is to support those who have expressed a commitment to getting to the next level. There shall be a minimum of 4 sessions per season, pitched towards those match officials who are dedicated to improve and are looking to be promoted. All match officials at this tier also have the opportunity to benefit from additional incentives.



## TIER 3 – ‘ADVANCED TIER’

The ‘Advanced Tier’ shall look to meet on a monthly basis, in which development opportunities are being provided not only for Level 4 match officials, but Level 5 to 4 promotion candidates too. This shall be a very relaxed development platform, in which both groups of match officials are looking to move to the next level, with the ultimate goal of achieving Level 3 refereeing status.





## GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Underpinning all of the development opportunities on offer is the administration aspect of refereeing development. Integrity underpins everything within the Referee Development Team, and therefore the governance and administration by all those involved with refereeing (active or non-active) must be of the highest order.

The Kent FA have 20 County Cups to appoint to, ranging from our most senior competition (Kent Senior Cup), to our Saturday and Sunday competitions, as well as both male and female youth competitions. In addition to this, appointments are available on a variety of other competitions, too. Additionally, this area can relate to referee registration, following FA Regulations and administering disciplinary procedures where necessary.

## RAISING THE PROFILE OF KENT REFEREEING

The Kent FA continually has great success stories relating to refereeing, but does not promote these often enough. A pro-active communication strategy will be developed to help create a positive perception and portrayal of refereeing in Kent. This will help to publicise;

- Kent refereeing successes (at all levels),
- Career opportunities available within refereeing (notably professional refereeing opportunities),
- Important life skills that come from refereeing, such as man-management, conflict resolution etc.



## CLOSING COMMENTS

This is an exciting time to be a referee in Kent. Our aims, visions and goals help ensure we retain focus on developing all levels of Referees. Not only will we be there to help support those at the grassroots level of the game, but we shall continue to unlock new potential and build a bright future. We aim to raise the quality and profile of Kent refereeing, ultimately benefiting the wider game.



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