

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 23/24



OUR PROMISE

Through our delivery plans for 2023/24 season, we want to ensure we are making football accessible for all. This is across all our pathways, male, female and disability. We strive to support those involved in our grassroots game, aiding our volunteer workforces, our coaches and spectators.

Throughout the season, Worcestershire FA endeavours to make Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at the heart of all our activity.

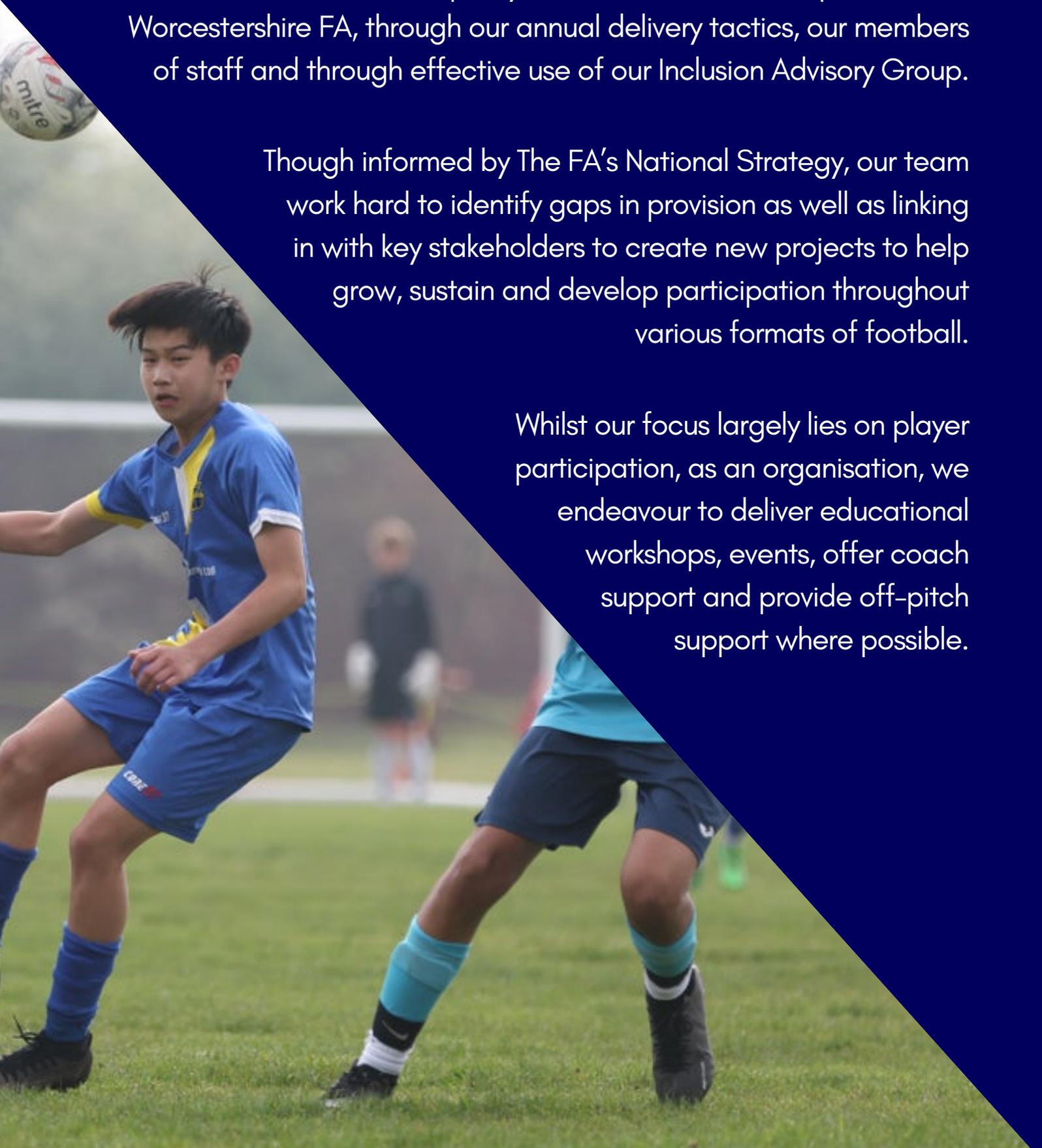


OUR VISION

We want to ensure that equality is at the centre of our operations at Worcestershire FA, through our annual delivery tactics, our members of staff and through effective use of our Inclusion Advisory Group.

Though informed by The FA's National Strategy, our team work hard to identify gaps in provision as well as linking in with key stakeholders to create new projects to help grow, sustain and develop participation throughout various formats of football.

Whilst our focus largely lies on player participation, as an organisation, we endeavour to deliver educational workshops, events, offer coach support and provide off-pitch support where possible.



WFA STAFF TRAINING



We hold the education and professional development of our Staff very highly, ensuring they are offered the opportunities to undertake educational courses and qualifications to enhance their understanding. Below are a list of courses available to staff on the FA Training Ground and England Football Learning, online educational platforms:

- Safeguarding Risk Assessments
- Introduction to Club Development
- County FA Induction Course
- Unconscious Bias
- Dignity at Work
- Mental Health and Wellbeing for All
- Safeguarding Children Course
- Safeguarding Adults Course
- Player Welfare in Open Age Football
- Safeguarding for Committee Members
- County FA Health and Wellbeing
- The Uncomfortable Truth
- Equality in the Workplace
- Learning Disability Awareness
- A Guide to Reasonable Adjustments
- Inclusion Resources from The FA
- Including Trans People in Football
- Suicide Prevention Awareness

WFA INCLUSION ADVISORY GROUP

The Inclusion Advisory Group is part of the company and acts as a critical friend. It advises on matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). In turn, this helps our development, operations and activity across the county. The group is there to provide guidance and advice so that football is accessible and enjoyable for all in Worcestershire.

The IAG consists of individuals with relevant expertise and knowledge that relates to EDI and should be from various backgrounds and communities. Some are from footballing backgrounds (grassroots or higher) and some are elected on the basis of their experiences external to football. However, all members share the common vision of football being there for everyone to enjoy, be that refereeing, coaching or playing.



EDI PRIORITY PILLARS FOR 23/24

YOUTH VOICE

Identify ways in which our organisation can provide opportunities to young people in grassroots football to have a say in their activity. By engaging a 'youth voice' we are able to ensure football continues to be enjoyed by children and young people as well as making it a safe and secure environment to thrive in.

ENGAGEMENT OF HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Ensure those from Ethnic Minority Communities and historically under-represented communities (such as women and girls) have equal and improved access to football opportunities, whether that be playing, coaching, officiating, spectating or informing the game.

MENTAL HEALTH

Ensure mental health is addressed to a greater extent by our organisation. This includes raising awareness, offering support and providing resources where possible. This also includes establishing new connections and partnerships to ensure mental health is a priority for our organisation and our clubs.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF DISABILITY FOOTBALL

Through our operational plans for the season, disability football is a key target area for the Development Team. We plan to grow, sustain and develop the disability pathway across both pan-disability and impairment specific provision.

WHAT INFORMS OUR EDI PRIORITY PILLARS?

As an organisation, we recognise that EDI should and will be at the heart of our activity. However, we also recognise that not every aspect of EDI can be independently addressed every season. Therefore, we choose to prioritise specific aspects each year, also known as EDI Priority Pillars. These are informed by a range of sources:

- **Inclusion Advisory Group** – Our IAG is an integral part of our company's operations, acting as a critical friend to our activity and ensuring our efforts are directed in the appropriate directions.
- **Active Sport Partnership** – Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire is the strategic lead for Sport and Physical Activity in our county, receiving funding from Sport England and the DCMS.
- **The FA** – The FA is the National Governing Body (NGB) for Football in England and is broken down into County FA's. Prior to each season, the FA help to inform our Operational Plans by outlining demand and suggestions for tactical outputs across various sections of the sport including participation, education, governance and Equality.
- **Power BI** – An electronic system used by The FA and County FA's which helps track, monitor and record data regarding grassroots football. The system shows data regarding demographics, participation breakdowns and EDI.
- **Grassroots Football Community** – Our community is made up of grassroots clubs, coaches, volunteers, referees, spectators, parents/carers and ambassadors. Regular contact with all parties (including surveys and feedback) helps to inform our activity on the ground both on and off pitch.
- **County Football Networks (Youth Council, Walking Football and Disability)** – Our networks meet regularly throughout the season to discuss the current landscape of grassroots football in the county as well as challenges the community might be facing.

OUR OBJECTIVES

YOUTH VOICE

The engagement of children and young people is an integral part of our County FA's operations. By recording their feedback and ideas, Worcestershire FA are able to make informed decisions that will ultimately benefit the youth community where they feel they need it most. Not only do we invite ideas or new projects involving the youth community, but we also hold the safeguarding and welfare of our youth participants as the highest priority each season. We aim to ensure all those part of the grassroots community feel safe and valued.



Gauge feedback and ideas to help inform tasks relating to the youth community

- Send/receive sources of feedback (e.g. online forms) at least twice a season
- Discuss results and trends at Development Team meetings to identify areas for improvement and project ideas

Identify ways to record and offer opportunity for a 'Youth Voice' in Worcestershire

- Use of various methods to capture concerns, ideas and opinions on current activity within clubs, leagues and any WFA delivered events such as Mini Soccer Festivals
- Utilise engaging methods such as the use of emojis, videos, online forms, 'worry monsters' (for younger audiences) to help boost youth engagement in offering feedback.

Continue to work with key stakeholders and county networks to help improve and develop the landscape of grassroots football for children and young people

- Re-establish and utilise the WFA Youth Network (formerly Youth Council). Ensure they engage in areas focused on youth and development in the Operational Plans and help to feedback ideas from the local youth community.
- Regularly engage with stakeholders (such as the NHS, care homes, schools and grassroots clubs or parents/carers) to ensure the safety of young participants and U18's in Open Age Football.

OUR OBJECTIVES

ENGAGEMENT OF HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Worcestershire FA believe that football can help drive change throughout our local community, socially and culturally. In the past, many communities have been underrepresented in the sport including women and girls, the LGBTQIA+ community, Ethnic Minority groups and older generations (such as walking football). Our Development Team and other departments work hard to improve existing opportunities and provide new methods to help combat obstacles and stigma's some communities face.



Develop and grow the female game across girls and women's football, addressing players, coaches, volunteers and match officials



- Promote and establish Wildcats, Squad and Just Play Centres to increase recreational participation levels
- Support local youth and adult leagues regarding female provisions
- Work with RDO to increase opportunities and support for female match officials as well as establishing a female only coaches development group
- Deliver Talent ID events to help support and identify local female talent in Worcestershire.

Help to support and promote awareness of LGBTQIA+ groups in Worcestershire and link with football

- Work alongside the IAG and University of Worcester to consult with the local LGBTQIA+ community and help to make informed decisions about the future of football for them in our county.
- Deliver CPD workshops to help educate grassroots workforces around LGBTQIA+, homophobia and discrimination.
- Promote related campaigns such as Rainbow Laces and Football v Homophobia across the local football community.

Improve opportunities for those from ethnic minority origins

- Work with clubs and leagues to ensure diversity and equality policies are up to date and aligned with activity.
- Work with RDO to offer subsidised Referee Courses and opportunities.
- Showcase and celebrate achievements/best practice
- Increase the diversity of our IAG and Board but being aware of positive discrimination.
- Work with Discipline Department to ensure discrimination cases are addressed and appropriate outcomes are sought.

Develop recreational and competitive opportunities for Walking Football

- Establish a Walking Football Network to help advise and guide activity and gauge feedback from the local community.
- Continue to provide off and on pitch support to clubs/groups.
- Deliver 3 walking football tournaments to gauge interest for a league for next season

OUR OBJECTIVES

MENTAL HEALTH

One in four people will experience mental health difficulties within their lifetime. In Worcestershire alone, over 75,000 adults were listed on GP registers as having depression at the end of 2022. Regarding younger generations in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, 7725 children and young people accessed child and adolescent mental health services by the end of July 2022.

These statistics alone demonstrate a clear need for support and opportunities to improve health and wellbeing for our county's population. By increasing the number of accessible opportunities in grassroots football, Worcestershire FA can help relieve a certain amount of stress placed upon our National Health Service. Primarily, we can ensure we are providing active opportunities to those who may need sport most to help improve their quality of life.



Promote awareness of Mental Health and attempt to normalise the topic within the community



- Regularly post on social media or our website promoting awareness of mental health conditions and wellbeing to help signpost to help lines and services.
- Establish new links with clubs, charities and organisations to create new projects and ways that will help engage the local community in mental health awareness and support.
- Continue to support and promote the Mental Health Champions scheme for both WFA Staff and for Match Officials.

Work with stakeholders and new partners to ensure Mental Health is held as a priority area for Worcestershire FA

- Establish a new partnership with The Vault, an online mental health platform aimed at the national football community.
- Promote the partnership through social media and our website
- Record engagement with the platform and encourage WFA staff to utilise within their remits (including available training, resources and helplines).

Educate our workforces on the topic of Mental Health and encourage productive conversations

- Deliver CPD workshops that will aim to educate, inform and support our grassroots workforce to ensure they are aware of the challenges faced by those with mental health difficulties.
- Work with clubs and leagues to encourage conversations that will help normalise the topic.

OUR OBJECTIVES

ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF DISABILITY FOOTBALL

Disability Football is rapidly growing, both nationally and within Worcestershire. In fact, a fifth of England's population are classed as having a disability, whether that relates to hidden disabilities, impairment specific, pan-disability and mental health. The FA's disability strategy for 2021 – 2024, 'Football Your Way' outlines how those living with disabilities can be given equal opportunities and support to participate in football, from grassroots level to National Squads. At Worcestershire FA, we strive to uphold the values and targets set within the National Strategy for Disability Football, ensuring existing clubs are supported as well as overseeing the establishment of new groups (both recreational and competitive).



Continue to support all existing and new Pan-Disability Adult teams competing in the 3CACL

- Provide ongoing support throughout the season to the Adult Pan-Disability League (Three Counties Ability Counts) ensuring appropriate formats of football are offered
- Ensure the structure and delivery of the tournament days are of a high quality, gauging feedback from participants and officials where possible.

Launch 'Back in Play Employability' (as part of FDF) to involve those with disabilities and mental health conditions

- Deliver weekly sessions for 2 hours to young people aged 18-24 who are unemployed and diagnosed with a disability and/or mental health condition.
- Provide financial support to fund participants for their FA Introduction to Coaching Football Qualification, Safeguarding Children and First Aid Courses.
- Signpost and support learners into grassroots club. Offer support relating to coaching and delivery.

Promote and develop youth disability football in Worcestershire

- Identify demand for delivery of a youth league through festivals and tournaments through the season. Work with a local league to complete.
- Promote Comets, a recreational pan-disability football programme for 5-11 year old children with disabilities.

Support impairment-specific provisions, opportunities and England Para-Talent Days

- Continue to support Worcestershire Disability FC's Powerchair and Frame Section, covering player recruitment, promotion, coach education and infrastructure.
- Promote England Para-Talent Days through marketing materials provided by The FA and England Football.

INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 23/24



**WORCESTERSHIRE
FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION**



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