

The background of the entire page is a photograph of children playing football on a green field. The scene is viewed through a white goal net in the foreground. Several children in red and black kits are visible, some running and others standing. A white football is on the ground in the lower left. The sky is a mix of orange and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall tone is active and healthy.

# FOOTBALL AND HEALTH

# FOREWORD



Interest in people's health and how to make healthy choices in life has never been higher. With increasingly sedentary lifestyles and rising rates of obesity, society as a whole must examine the choices it faces. Government is keen to provide leadership and guidance on what constitutes healthy choices and to help individuals find that the healthy choice can be the easy choice. We have therefore set out our vision in *Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices Easier* and published concrete delivery plans for implementing that vision, including in *Choosing Activity: A Physical Activity Action Plan*. As we have made clear in those publications, our vision can only be achieved by a wider partnership across society.

We are all aware of the powerful impact football has on our lives – not just for the fans who attend matches every week or those who watch on television, but

also those whom it reaches every day. As set out in the following pages, healthcare and football professionals are already working together in a wide variety of ways across the country to improve the health of the nation. I want this developing partnership to widen, deepen and reach further. Other professional sports are similarly engaged in promoting health and we must build on that. While this publication focuses on football, we intend to produce further examples, shortly, across other sports.

Both health professionals and the football clubs featured in this publication are achieving real success in local communities to improve understanding of healthy choices and increase access to health services. I commend these pioneers and hope that you too can develop such successful partnerships with football and other sports in your community.

**Caroline Flint**  
**Minister for Public Health**



# FOOTBALL'S PROVEN TRACK RECORD

Football has a proven track record in delivering successful education, social inclusion and community projects in partnership with Government and other agencies. These include:

\* **The Football Foundation** enables people of all ages and abilities to participate in sport through the funding of grass-roots facilities and football-based community and education projects.

\* **Playing for Success** has given 100,000 children access to Learning Centres based at football grounds and other sports clubs. These classrooms provide literacy, numeracy and ICT support for pupils aged 7–14 who may be underachieving or demotivated.

\* **Positive Futures** has worked with over 50,000 of the most marginalised young people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods, providing access to education programmes, drug awareness and routes into training and employment.

\* **The Prince's Trust Football Initiative** has delivered 12-week vocational education courses to over 9,000 hard-to-reach young people. 83% of participants who were previously unemployed have gone on to find work, further education and training.

\* **Football in the Community**, with support from the Professional Footballers' Association, provides a support network for 4,000 full and part-time staff who work on community schemes that encourage physical participation.

\* **Premier League Reading Stars** is one of a number of successful football-based reading schemes that promote family reading and the use of public libraries. 90% of the children taking part said the scheme had made them want to read more.

\* **Up for the Cup** is an education resource pack designed by The Football Association that uses football to motivate school children to learn key subjects. The science section of the pack specifically focuses on healthy eating and fitness to inspire pupils to learn the subject in a fun way.



# HOW CAN FOOTBALL AND HEALTH WORK TOGETHER?

There is great potential for football clubs to work in local partnerships with the NHS on initiatives that can contribute to improving health. In addition, there are opportunities in which both football and health can make more positive use of facilities so that access to services and health information can be enhanced.

This brochure provides a range of examples of good practice and advice to help organisations establish local initiatives. With over 7 million adults and 5 million children playing football each year and over half a million people passing through turnstiles of professional matches each week, this mass appeal can be utilised to reinforce health messages and build upon football's track record of involvement in promoting healthy lifestyles.

Government departments, NHS trusts, local authorities and football organisations have already combined to use the power of football to promote a wide range of educational, social inclusion and community initiatives.

## **Promoting physical activity**

Encouraging participation in football, whatever a player's ability, is a way of contributing towards health improvement to reduce the risk of chronic diseases and can have a positive effect on mental health by boosting self-esteem.

In the last three years, by putting resources in the right areas and working to an agreed Football Development

Strategy, football has seen remarkable rises in participation in different sections of the game:

- \* 32% in Mini-Soccer
- \* 27% in youth football
- \* 53% in girls' and women's football
- \* 25% in small-sided football.

## **Promoting healthy living for children**

By using football-based examples for innovative learning material, young people can be inspired to improve their diet and nutrition and live a healthier lifestyle.

## **Health facilities at football grounds**

There is the potential for football clubs to work with their NHS trusts to develop joint facilities at football grounds and attract people who may not otherwise access local services.

## **Marketing health and players as role models**

Footballers can be used as positive role models through marketing campaigns to promote healthy living or raise awareness of particular health issues.

## **Promoting social inclusion**

Football has the ability to engage socially excluded groups through community-based coaching courses at which key messages about health issues and the dangers of drugs and smoking can be reinforced.



# USEFUL CONTACTS

## **How do you contact the Football Authorities or your Football Club?**

The Football Association – 020 7745 4599  
[Health@TheFA.com](mailto:Health@TheFA.com), [www.TheFA.com](http://www.TheFA.com)

The FA Premier League – 020 7298 1657  
[Health@premierleague.com](mailto:Health@premierleague.com), [www.premierleague.com](http://www.premierleague.com)

The Football Foundation – 0800 0277766  
[enquiries@footballfoundation.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@footballfoundation.org.uk), [www.footballfoundation.org.uk](http://www.footballfoundation.org.uk)

The Professional Footballers' Association – 020 7329 9449  
[healthinfo@thepfa.co.uk](mailto:healthinfo@thepfa.co.uk), [www.givemefootball.com](http://www.givemefootball.com)

## **For a full list of contact details for your nearest club or county FA, please go to:**

[www.TheFA.com/TheFA/ContactUs/Postings/2004/06/fa\\_directory](http://www.TheFA.com/TheFA/ContactUs/Postings/2004/06/fa_directory)

## **How do you contact your nearest primary care trust?**

Primary care trusts, strategic health authorities and local authorities that are interested in establishing sport and health initiatives should contact Keith Houghton, Sport and Health Project Coordinator.

[www.nhs.uk/England/AuthoritiesTrusts/Pct/postcodesearch.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/England/AuthoritiesTrusts/Pct/postcodesearch.aspx)  
[keith.houghton@nhs.net](mailto:keith.houghton@nhs.net) – 07859 016612