



ENGLAND
FOOTBALL

CUMBERLAND FA GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL STRATEGY



***INSPIRING POSITIVE
CHANGE THROUGH
FOOTBALL***

2024-2028



WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Grassroots Football Strategy 2024-2028.

The last four years have certainly felt like an age, as we look ahead to our new four-year strategy for the Cumberland FA. The cost-of-living crisis in the last couple of years, has seen the country struggle with high inflation, high costs that were accelerating faster than salaries. The struggle was felt throughout the county, with more and more people turning to foodbanks to provide for their families, getting second jobs. Despite this, one consistent remained throughout, football. We have and will continue to support our member clubs to be able to play football at any age group, in the best and safest environment possible. After all, our business is football, and football is our business.

It's all too easy to forget sometimes, why we do what we do. It's for the love of the beautiful game. As we will discuss later, there are many challenges that pose a threat to us as an organisation. Finances, shared services, county review of counties to name but a few. But one thing our team at the Cumberland FA, directors, staff, member clubs, volunteers, one will remain consistent throughout, and our love for the game.

It's clear, that despite being a small county, we have a huge role to play in delivering the grassroots strategy on behalf of the FA for 2024-2028. It won't be easy, but since when has it been.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Pattison'.

Adam Pattison
Cumberland FA Chair





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we set out our Strategy for 2021-2024, we were coming out of a pandemic and facing up to an uncertain world and likewise an undefined future for the grassroots game. This meant that the last strategy was created with football at its heart as the focus was based around reviving, driving, and ultimately surviving. Our major goals were to hopefully get the game back on its feet, and then strengthen, and eventually develop it, to try and safeguard the future of the game.

Key performance indicators, particularly those centred around participation, would suggest that the strategy was a success, and the game in Cumberland is in a strong position in terms of those wishing to participate within grassroots football.

However, the period has not been without challenge, with the most significant one being the loss of the counties Chair Fred Conway (right), towards the end of 2022. This was a huge shock to all involved within the CFA and it has understandably taken the organisation time to try and process the loss.



However, more than anyone, he would want to ensure that the County FA and the grassroots game, which he devoted his life too, continued without him. Any new player for the All-Blacks Rugby Union team receives a small black book when joining, which details on each page the jerseys of the all-black teams from the 1905 originals, right up to the modern day. These pages are layered with meaning and remind you of the legacy you are about to step into. The next few pages of this book are left blank to allow you to write how you plan to make your own contribution and ultimately leave your own legacy.

As a County FA we were founded in 1884 as an agent of The FA with a remit to act as the governing body for football within the now historic, rural county of Cumberland. 140 years of developing and being custodians of the game within Cumberland, means that whilst we recognise that we are standing on the shoulders of giants who have gone before us, and honour their legacy, we must live in the present and build for the future. It is our time, to make our own mark and hopefully leave our own legacy and that this can be done through delivering this strategy.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Whilst we are a small county, in terms of population and in terms of our market share within The FA's funding formula, our KPI's suggest that we punch above our weight. We are undoubtedly having to plan for and are facing up to significant external challenges throughout the duration of this strategy, not least social trends, adverse weather conditions, recruiting and retaining volunteers, and increased financial pressure through the cost-of-living crisis. On top of these are our own internal stresses, as we continue to receive an incremental reduction in central FA funding following a change in its funding formula, and an uncertain future with regards to the future of County FA's in general. Despite these significant challenges, our size and structure also afford us opportunities that other, larger, County FAs may not have. This includes an ability to use this duration to really focus upon and develop our core values. To embed a service culture that we hope is personalised, competent, convenient, and proactive. And to look at undertaking actions that increase our relevance and perception within the local grassroots game and the wider community, including targeted campaigns and programmes that use the power of football as a tool to drive social change and a sense of community.

As a business we recognise that within this strategy there may have to be more of a lens and a critical eye cast upon ourselves internally. The last strategy was mainly about the game, but we must use this strategy as an opportunity to also focus on our ability to demonstrate good governance, to become more diverse as an organisation, to be able to apply effective business practices and procedures, and to employ shrewd financial planning and management, as it is only by being a viable and relevant business, that we will be able to support and develop the grassroots game in the future, beyond this strategy.

The All-Blacks Rugby Union team also speak about being a good ancestor 'planting trees that you'll never see,' this follows the philosophy that we must take responsibility and play our part in making a better future.

Fred's influence on the staff, the board, and wider grassroots football community, means that his desire to place the best interests of the game, and more specifically the interest of the game in Cumberland above anything else, is the tree that he planted, and the tree that will grow, and whose roots continue to drive our shared passion, our direction, and the content of our strategy for 2024 to 2028.





THE BOOT ROOM

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE COUNTY FA

CFA GOVERNANCE – CFA BOARD THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

• The County FA has always recognised the need for effective governance to meet the challenges of an everchanging world and the needs of modern football and therefore, were one of the first County FAs, to undertake a comprehensive review of its corporate governance in 2010. This led to changes being made that included term-based limits and independent appointed directors, as well as the removal of The CFA Council, ensuring that decisions were made by The Board of Directors. This work meant that we were well advanced in comparison to other County FA's and therefore had not prioritised becoming fully FA code compliant, instead wishing to make slow progress towards it and focusing our time and resource on the recovery of football following the pandemic and addressing the subsequent challenges facing the game including the cost-of-living crisis.

• However, earlier this season The FA communicated that all County FAs would need to be code compliant by the end of the 2024-25 season. This means that the CFA Board of Directors are now expediting this work and are committed to becoming compliant with The FAs Code of Governance for County FAs by the end of the 2024/25 season. The new code would see the CFA working towards a model which has:

- Greater independence upon the CFA Board – including the recruitment of an Independent Chair and a Senior Independent Non-Executive Director (INED)
- A Skills- based Board Appointments Model
- Term Limits and succession plans for Directors.
- Consideration around and compliance with diversity targets for the Board
- Revised Committee/Advisory Group Structure – including a nominations committee, audit & risk, Youth Council/ Committee, and Inclusion Advisory Group as Mandatory.
- Compliance with the code will put the CFA in the strongest possible position to execute this strategy and the CFA operational plans that deliver significant outcomes for grassroots football in Cumberland. The code looks at five key principles and has 63 requirements which are aligned with the updated Sport England UK Sports Code. They are:

- Structure (29 requirements)
- People (15 requirements)
- Communications (5 requirements)
- Standards & Conduct (6 requirements)
- Policies and Procedures (8 requirements)



• In January 2024, the CFA Board of Directors proposed and had accepted, changes to the company's Articles of Association, by adopting The FA model articles, to ensure that it could make substantial progress towards meeting the requirements of the code.

• Following a skills audit of all Directors, The CFA is currently working with Parrett Laver to support the CFA with up to 4 Board appointments. It is hoped that using Parrett Laver's sports governance expertise will help The CFA to increase our standards of governance, our diversity, and strengthen our ability to reach the code of governance targets.

• The CFA is also restructuring our committees to allow a more streamlined structure and consequently provide greater opportunities for members to influence, communicate and participate within the CFA. This should allow us to make natural and considerable progress towards becoming and maintaining compliance with the code of governance for football.



THE BOOT ROOM

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE COUNTY FA

THE CFA SQUAD – STAFF TEAM

- We are a Small Team with Football in our Hearts – we believe our staff are a passionate, knowledgeable, dedicated, and empathetic team who deeply care about and remain involved in the grassroots game themselves.
- We will continue to promote a positive culture and working environment through our own 'Principles of Play' that provide staff with values that promote ownership, responsibility and accountability for their actions, behaviours, and delivery against key goals. We try to foster a sense of belonging and pride within our staff team and ask them to display the 'Spirit of Football' along with our staff values of connecting, supporting, and developing grassroots football.
- There is a clear performance management structure, which is underpinned with robust HR procedures and policies through our partnership with Howarth's and staff are provided with professional development and learning opportunities through various online and face to face providers.
- We recognise that we have a duty of care and do all we reasonable can to support employee's health, safety, and wellbeing. To do this we:
 - Make sure employees can work safely and healthily. This has included a hybrid, flexible working model available to all staff members.
 - Staff have access to The FA employee assistance programme and there is a monthly check in to support open conversations about mental health and wellbeing.
 - There are now 3 trained mental health first aiders amongst our staff team.
 - Staff have taken part in 'staff challenges' for charity or to raise awareness (e.g., Red January)



FDM - Football Development Manager

FDO - Football Development Officer

RDO - Referee Development Officer

FDA - Football Development Administrator

FSA - Football Services Administrator

DSO - Designated Safeguarding Officer



THE BOOT ROOM

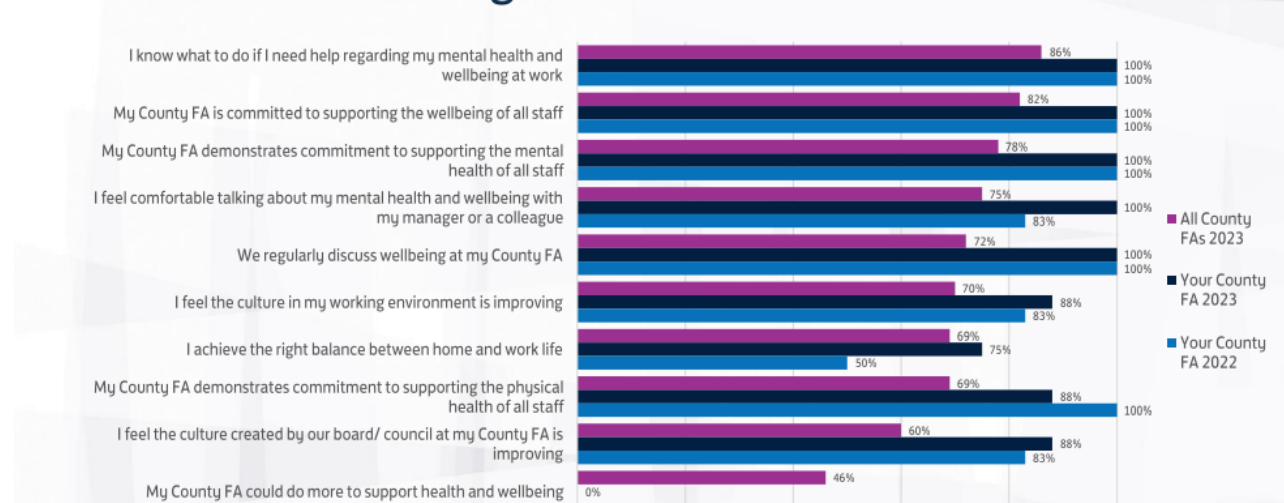
THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE COUNTY FA

From FA State of Play Survey 2023:

Staff satisfaction rating



Health and Wellbeing



Culture





THE ENGINE ROOM

THE BUSINESS PROCESSES, PROCEDURES, & STANDARDS THAT DRIVE PERFORMANCE

SAFEGUARDING - OUR NUMBER ONE - BEHIND EVERYTHING WE DO

- The CFA continue to keep safeguarding central and fundamental to everything that we do.
- The CFA has undertaken 4 Successful external independent inspections with the latest assessment, in September 2023 finding:

Standard area	Assessment rating
Governance and Leadership	Meets the Standard
Operational Delivery	Meets the Standard
Listening to the Voice of and Supporting U18s	Meets the Standard
Football Disciplinary	Meets the Standard
Case Management	Meets the Standard
Compliance and Monitoring	Meets the Standard

- The NSPCC assessors stated that “staff interviewed, had a strong understanding of their specific safeguarding responsibilities and clarity around the organisation’s overall commitment to safeguarding.”
- The NSPCC congratulated the CEO, DSO, BSC, Board and whole staff team for “the commitment to safeguarding evidenced during the assessment.”

Highlighted areas of strength included:

- The CFA collaborative approach to working with external partners. Of note was the work with the British Heart Foundation, raising awareness of their work and training across the grassroots football community, and with Period Poverty North Cumbria, where period poverty packs were provided to all 12+ girls teams.
- Innovative ways to improve engagement from the grassroots community around promoting positive playing environments.
- The Deputy Board Safeguarding Champion arrangement.
- CFA adhere to safeguarding safer recruitment policy and have a good induction package for new members.
- Effective communication channels. Sharing consistently information about safeguarding courses and requirements

- A real commitment to promoting positive mental health.
- Clear Prioritisation of compliance and use of the National Safeguarding Administration Shared Service leading to low levels of non-compliance within clubs, coaches, and referees.
- Completing all required club visits and providing detailed, informative reports that highlight good practice and areas for development.

From the assessment and as part of a wider safeguarding strategy The CFA plan to:

- Review and update the CFA Staff Safeguarding Handbook.
- Continue to build a valued and supported network of welfare officers in the county, including the delivery of a proactive and engaging support plan for these officers.
- Deliver a Children and Young People Engagement Plan and encourage clubs and leagues to establish youth committees to provide children and young people with a platform to have their say about the game.
- Develop a more robust plan for targeted and random club safeguarding visits.
- Build upon foundations laid through the delivery of an adult support package, to deliver FA regulations around club and individual compliance for clubs who have 16/17-year-olds playing within adult football.
- Continue to work with key strategic partners to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding and of modern threats to children and adults at risk – particularly online.

Further Information [click here](#)





THE ENGINE ROOM

THE BUSINESS PROCESSES, PROCEDURES, & STANDARDS THAT DRIVE PERFORMANCE

TACKLING INEQUALITIES ACROSS CUMBERLAND

– ED&I (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) Strategy and DIAP (Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan)

Cumbria is one of the country's most ethnically homogeneous counties. This may lead some to presume that this is not a priority area of work for us. We would argue differently and say that this is exactly why we must do more to promote inclusion within the game.

The CFA achieved the foundation level of Equality in Sport Award in 2023 and has submitted to hopefully meet the criteria to achieve the Preliminary Level in 2024.

We have recently appointed an independent ED&I Director to help drive this work and create a new, bespoke, and sustainable Inclusion Advisory Group. We have also recently

created a new ED&I Strategy and a DIAP (Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan), which will be managed and challenged by this group.

Whilst the strategy and DIAP is a sign of our passion for and commitment to allocating the time, energy and leadership required to make progress, we must also be realistic in our approach to this area of work, considering our size, our resources (human, financial and time), and most importantly our demographics as a County. We therefore need to ensure that we drive our own ED&I agenda, in line with local data and the games needs locally.





THE ENGINE ROOM

THE BUSINESS PROCESSES, PROCEDURES, & STANDARDS THAT DRIVE PERFORMANCE

A FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING 'A GAME FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION'

The FA's ED&I vision is a 'A Game free from discrimination and it remains one of The FA's top 4 priorities within its strategy for 2024 to 2028.



Taken from The FA Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028.

The CFA ED&I strategy hopes to provide a summary of how we plan to adapt and adopt The FA's key objectives, with the accompanying DIAP providing the roadmap as to how we hope to proactively achieve progressive, credible, and enduring cultural change, by harnessing the power and spirit of football to create a game that is truly collaborative, inclusive and representative within Cumberland.

The Strategy focuses on 3 pillars which are:

1. Boosting Representation

Cumberland FA will get serious about ED&I and make a commitment at every level of the organisation to better represent and reflect the grassroots community within Cumberland.

2. Driving Inclusion

We promise to make efforts that go beyond the words within this strategy and instead are an organisation that is action orientated, promoting social change through our Football Offer and Programmes

3. Tackling Discrimination

Everyone has the right to live free from harm, abuse, exploitation, and neglect regardless of age, ability, or disability, sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, marital or gender status.

Whilst we know we cannot force people to accept or appreciate differences, efforts can certainly be made to encourage and foster Respect for others. We are committed to trying to create a game that is representative of our community; a game for all in Cumberland.

For further Information [click here](#)





THE ENGINE ROOM

THE BUSINESS PROCESSES, PROCEDURES, & STANDARDS THAT DRIVE PERFORMANCE

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - FINANCIAL FAIR PLAY

As an organisation, we closely review and monitor our finances.

Each board member receives a copy of the management accounts pack in a timely manner, which allows the board to make informed decisions based on accurate financial data.

Transactions are monitored by the CEO and FD to ensure that money is appropriately spent and categorised, and meets the criteria as set for the grassroots game in Cumberland.

Management accounts, which are produced monthly on a cash basis, incorporates a finance summary, which details some high-level narrative and outlines the company's financial position. The report also contains:

- Executive summary, around cash, profitability, balance sheet, Sales, and accounting ratios
- Profit and loss account reviewing the current month and same month a year ago, along with the year-to-date position for the current and previous year.
- Budget variance, looking at month/period against budget, and against year-to-date budget.
- KPI Performance
- Balance sheet for the year to date
- Statement of cashflows
- Aged receivables and aged payables summary





THE ENGINE ROOM

THE BUSINESS PROCESSES, PROCEDURES, & STANDARDS THAT DRIVE PERFORMANCE

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION

FA Financial Management Operating Guidance Key Area	Current CFA Performance Status
1. Effective budgeting	Green
2. Standard chart of accounts	Green
3. Management accounts	Green
4. Cashflow projections	Amber
5. Cash reserves	Green
6. Accounting ratios	Green
7. Investment planning	Green
8. Fixed asset management	Green
9. Internal controls	Green
10. County FA year end	Green
11. Statutory accounts	Green





THE ENGINE ROOM

THE BUSINESS PROCESSES, PROCEDURES, & STANDARDS THAT DRIVE PERFORMANCE

REVIEW OF KEY FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Key Performance Indicator	As at 30 April 2024 (per management accounts)	As at 30 June 2028 (estimated)
FA grants as a percentage of turnover	60%	52%
Salary costs as a percentage of FA grant income	88%	152%
Salary costs as a percentage of total income	52%	80%
Office costs as a percentage of total income	18%	19%

KEY FINANCIAL ACHIEVEMENTS WITHIN LAST STRATEGY

- The integration and development of Xero to its maximum capacity has created a streamline and systematic, and consistent approach to the Cumberland FA management accounts. This has allowed the management accounts to be created and developed further on Xero, which allows the board of directors to make better informed decisions in line with the underpinning strategy for 2024-2028, particularly considering future challenges.
- Cash within the Cumberland FA that remains surplus to day-to-day operational needs have been invested in high interest fixed rate 1-year terms, to boost the investment income returns. The return on investment has increased from 0.42% in June 2022, to 2.05%, and increase in cash terms of £6,500!
- Further cost efficiency savings have been undertaken during the year, whereby we changed our insurance provider, to give a better cover to our member clubs and individuals, but also ensured the costs remained reasonable.
- CFA have looked to re-invest profits and reserves into targeted areas of the game including £25k a season for football development delivery (from reserves to fund delivery programmes including the adult package, Positive Football Environment etc.); 75% of income from referee registration and referee course profit is put into Referee Development; 10% of discipline income has been ringfenced and put into establishing a Fred Conway Fund that will support clubs and individuals with numerous things including hardship, benevolence and well-being; over £9,500 invested during the last strategy, to provide grants of up to 50% of the total cost of sports glasses (through a scheme with Specsavers) across youth football.
- Financially finding a balance between supporting the grassroots game and ensuring we remain operational as a business e.g. freezing club and team affiliation fees for over 10 years, waived all late fines on discipline for season 23-24 (and will continue to do so), to support clubs with the impact of inflation and in dealing with increased costs through cost-of-living crisis.
- We remain on track to our goal as set three years ago, of breaking even by 2024. The board in recent years have improved their knowledge through the finance director, by being able to produce understandable, easy to read management accounts for the user to interrogate and pull the headline figures from. This in turn, has increased the awareness of the need to be more commercial minded, and more commercial thinking going forward in their decision making.





THE ENGINE ROOM

THE BUSINESS PROCESSES, PROCEDURES, & STANDARDS THAT DRIVE PERFORMANCE

CFA FINANCIAL PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2028

- Recruit a new Finance Director
- Continue to maximise the return on investment of our surplus cash reserves, following our long-term investment plan, to reinvest the proceeds back into the grassroots game.
- Continue to develop Xero to the most efficient and effective ways, developing internal reports for review on a regular basis to aid decision making.
- Compliance with FA Finance Operating Standards.
- Over the next four years, our FA funding will be cut by 17% (£32,695) per annum. This, coupled with continuing rises in inflation and other costs means we will be reliant on reserves to balance the books. Not only this, but our investment strategy, where possible, will continue, as we look to recruit

a commercial director in line with our Corporate Governance board structure, that we hope will drive the commercial revenue through sponsorship and other opportunities, to allow us to provide the best service available to our member clubs.

- Identify further cost-benefit savings to help deal with the identified reduced central funding from the FA.
- Remain solvent as a business and budget for a break-even position for the length of strategy, which will be challenging, and the directors expect to be utilising some of the reserves and estimate a deficit of £20,000 a year as of the 30th of June 2028.
- Ensure that whilst our business is football, football remains our business!



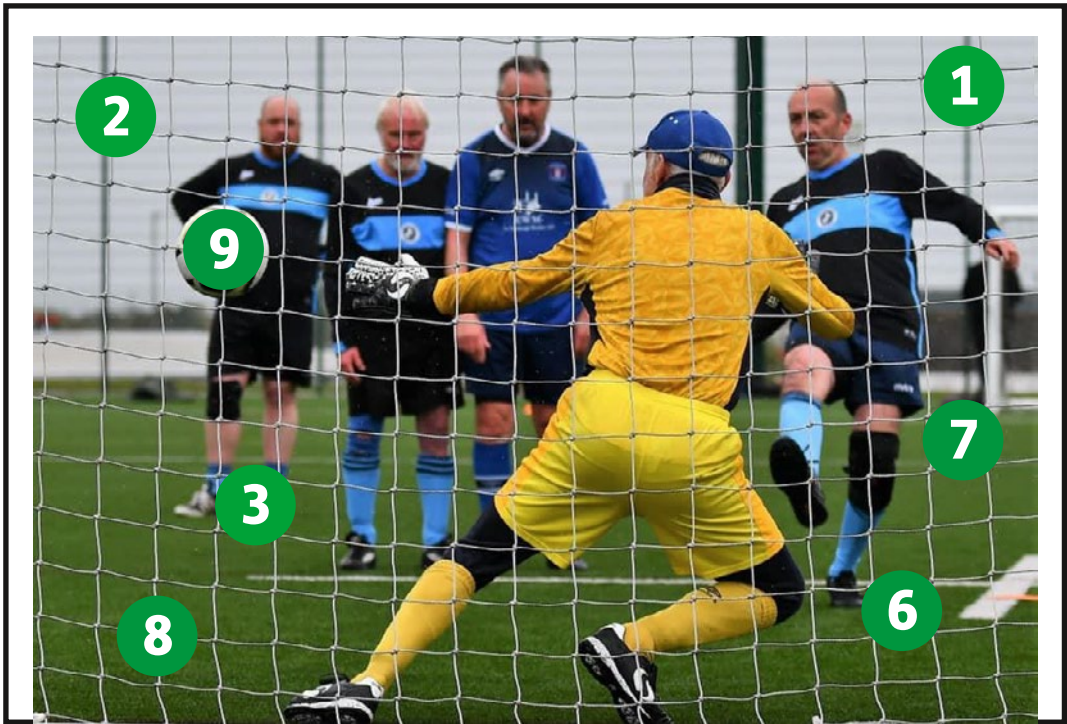


THE ENGINE ROOM

THE BUSINESS PROCESSES, PROCEDURES, & STANDARDS THAT DRIVE PERFORMANCE

DELIVERY - FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT
MATCH ANALYSIS - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

KPI	Performance
1. Male Pathway	+18.8% vs target
2. Female Pathway	+16.5% vs target
3. Disability Pathway	+64.8% vs target
4. Youth Teams with a Qualified Coach	-8% vs target
5. CPD for coaches	-18% on target
6. Registered Referees	16% vs 22-23
7. Accredited Clubs	a. Accredited Clubs 88 of 133 (66%) b. 10 – 3* Clubs (37% of Teams) c. 18 – 2* Clubs (39% of Teams) d. 60 – 1* Clubs (25% of Teams)
8. Accreditation Renewals - 100%	a. 99% coverage in Youth Clubs b. 71% Adult Team coverage
9. Facilities	+32% vs target





THE ENGINE ROOM

THE BUSINESS PROCESSES, PROCEDURES, & STANDARDS THAT DRIVE PERFORMANCE

FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT - KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Adult Pathways

- Growth in Veterans Football 35+
- Growth in Walking Football Teams
- Increase in teams playing in traditional Saturday/Sunday Leagues
- Successful merger of Sunday Leagues in West Cumbria
- Accreditation support package in place with £6k invested into Adult Clubs
- Start-up grants given to new Male/Female teams given with £6k invested into new clubs
- 4x Female Over 35's Just Play centres set up across the County with 85 Women taking part.

Disability Pathway

- Increase in Number of teams taking part in County Ability Counts League
- More Junior Ability teams taking part in U16 Provision
- Corporate partnership established to showcase & increase the profile of the Disability League
- More teams & players taking part in FA Accredited Clubs
- Disability Ambassador in post to assist with development of Disability Football In England Football Accredited Clubs

Youth Pathway

- 100% renewal of Youth Clubs to be England Football Accredited
- Accreditation support package provided to Clubs with £5.5k invested to support criteria
- Continued growth of Mini Soccer across Mixed & Female Football
- Increase in Female Youth & Mini Soccer across County

Digital Services

- All Leagues using FA Full Time & Player Registrations Systems
- All Leagues adopting use of Match Return function in Full Time & Match Day with 74% average returned via MD App
- Support provided to clubs and Leagues to use new England Football Portals.

Facilities

- 63 Grass Pitches improved during last 3 Years around the County
- £500k of Funding going directly into Grass Pitch Maintenance to improve Sites
- £200K of funding towards Maintenance Machinery to assist sites with ongoing maintenance
- Increase in 3G Sites upon 3G Pitch Register
- 1x Additional Stadia 3G Pitch in Penrith
- Increase in Leagues utilising 3G Pitches around County to deliver League Programmes





THE ENGINE ROOM

THE BUSINESS PROCESSES, PROCEDURES, & STANDARDS THAT DRIVE PERFORMANCE

CFA CONSULTATION

In April 2024, the CFA undertook some consultation with the local grassroots game via an online survey.

Whilst the respondent sample was quite small it did include a good cross section of participants from within the game.

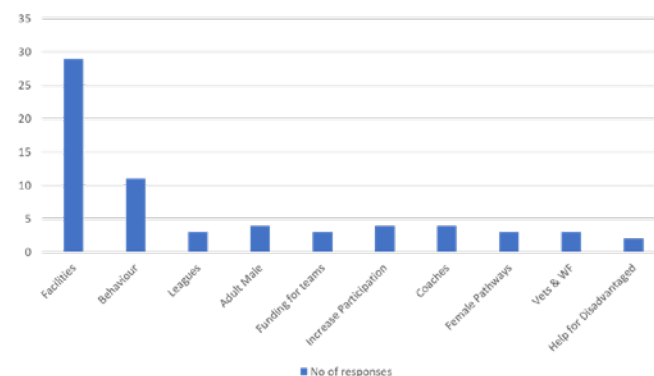
The findings from this work included:

- Overall Positivity Satisfaction Rating of 3.75 out of 5 for the grassroots game within Cumberland
- Average Rating of 3.78 out of 5 for interaction with the CFA and this was through a variety of preferred communication methods including Email, WhatsApp, direct message (social media), in person and via phone/mobile.
- In terms of CFA working hours:
 - 8% said that they were happy with current set up (Mon-Fri; 9-5pm)
 - 49% said they weren't really bothered either way.
 - 35% said that they would like the CFA to be open on a weekend.
 - 8% said they would like the CFA to be open on a weekend where there were County Cup Games

What The CFA does well

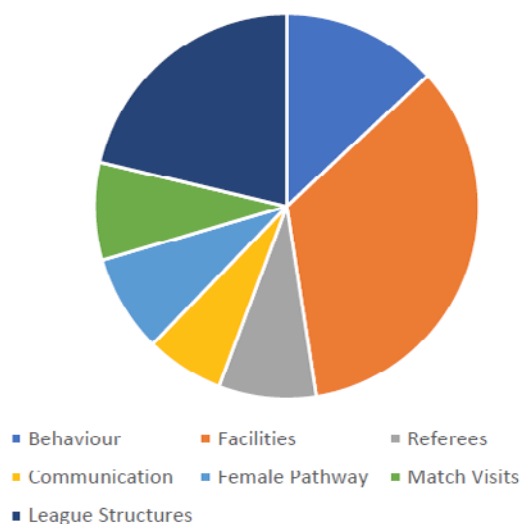


Priorities for Grassroots football in Cumberland



What Areas of the Game need to be focused upon and developed?

Where to improve





THE 2024-2024 CUMBERLAND FA GRASSROOTS STRATEGY

INSPIRING POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH FOOTBALL

THE GRASSROOTS STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Over the course of the next strategic cycle, The FA, and County FA both recognise that we are going to have to work collaboratively, if we really wish to tackle the biggest problems our game faces.

Following consultation with the grassroots game, The FA have identified 8 priority areas which, their research suggests, the game wants us to focus upon.

A single strategic framework for grassroots football has therefore been created by The FA to ensure that we work in a collective direction.

Working on the same principles should not only allow for greater collaboration, better use of resources and ensure greater value for money, but it is also hoped that this will also ensure that we can have a greater impact to benefit the grassroots game.

Whilst we agree that a single framework makes sense and would be of benefit to grassroots football, we must also make use of the undeniable understanding and connection to the needs of local communities that we, as a County FA have, and ensure that these strategic priorities and drivers, are right for a small, rural county like ours.

We have therefore used the knowledge, insight and experience we have available to us, to consider how the objectives within this framework can be best used to develop the game within Cumberland.

This included only adopting objectives that are relevant to our local needs and at times devising specialised local interventions, based on our resource and our local priorities, to best meet the interests of the game in Cumberland.

THE GRASSROOTS STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

INSPIRING POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH FOOTBALL

OUR PURPOSE: *Working Together to make a difference through the game we love*
– by increasing participation, regulating the game, and promoting safe, inclusive football.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	 Improve Playing Choice & Opportunities	 Deliver Equal Opportunities to Play	 Build More & Improve Existing Facilities	 Tackle Poor Behaviour	 Develop & Valued Network of Volunteers, Coaches & Referees
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STRATEGIC DRIVERS	Support Thriving Community Clubs
	Connect & Serve Participants
	Progress The Game's Governance



THE 2024-2024 CUMBERLAND FA GRASSROOTS STRATEGY

INSPIRING POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH FOOTBALL

GLOSSARY

Priorities and Drivers – are the 8 principal areas where we want to have an impact.

Objectives – in each area and driver the objectives are the things we want to achieve in each priority area or driver.

Interventions – is the detail on what we plan to do and how we plan to achieve each objective, within each priority area or driver. More detail around this will be available in the CFA Annual Operational Plan, which is completed before every season to show how we plan to work in that season to align to the FA grassroots Strategy and its priority areas and objectives.

IMPROVE PLAYING CHOICE AND OPPORTUNITIES

Objective	Interventions
Evolve The Youth Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement new pathway formats and deliver coach, league and parent awareness campaigns and learning assets to support this change. Create exciting and inspiring opportunities for U5s and U6s to play.
Improve Team Based Football for Adult Male Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide small sided, walking football and flexible competitive opportunities to fit modern lifestyles and life-stages. Improve the appeal of the traditional 11v11 format to attract and retain players. Support young people to transition from youth into adult football
Create More Opportunities to play safe, inclusive, casual football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a range of casual football offers to include small sided, fun & fitness, walking football and futsal Ensure our systems are fit for purpose for casual football (e.g., make it easy to book sessions and ensure their environments are safe/insured)

DELIVER EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO PLAY - WOMEN AND GIRLS

Objective	Interventions
Create More Team Based Playing Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to grow the number of girls teams and clubs that offer a full female pathway, ensuring access to high quality competition opportunities. Grow the number of adult women's teams playing 11v11, small sided and alternative games (with a focus on those aged 35+). Actively improve the transition of girls from youth to women's open age football (with a focus on U18s)
Extend and Enhance Casual Opportunities to Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow the number of girls engaging in the youth pathway 'Play Phase' and embed entry level provision within England Football Club Accreditation Expand the causal football offer for adult women to include small sided and walking football sessions county wide.
Deliver Safe and Inclusive Environment for Women and Girls to Thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the awareness of female health and wellbeing of players and for those delivering the grassroots game. Provide specific support for female players through different life stages to sustain participation.



THE 2024-2024 CUMBERLAND FA GRASSROOTS STRATEGY

INSPIRING POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH FOOTBALL

DISABILITY FOOTBALL

Objective	Interventions
Support the Disability Game to Grow and Thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for disabled people of all ages to play football casually in fun and safe environments. • Increase the quality and quantity of team-based opportunities for disabled people to play in grassroots clubs and leagues. • Harness the power of major events including The FA Disability Cup and Men's Euro 2028 to inspire participation. • Improve the awareness of health and wellbeing of disabled players and for those delivering the grassroots game. • Provide specific support for disabled players with regards to specific disability groups and through different life stages to sustain participation.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Objective	Interventions
Extend and Enhance Opportunities for those with mental health problems to Play the game.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for adults with mental health problems to play football casually in supportive and safe environments. • Develop a new adult competition offer for Recreational Mental and Physical Health teams. • Improve the awareness of mental health and wellbeing and where to get support should it be required to those delivering the grassroots game. • Provide specific support for players at all ages with mental health problems.

OTHER UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS

Objective	Interventions
Sustain and grow more playing opportunities for targeted under-represented groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Cumbria pride to establish a football offer within the LGBTQ+ Community. • Work with key partners and clubs to provide opportunities for adults and children asylum seekers to play football in supportive and safe environments. • Establish a new annual 'Cup of Nations' event to showcase multiculturalism within the County.



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BUILD MORE & IMPROVE EXISTING FACILITIES

Objective	Interventions
Transform Grass Pitch Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide expert advice and recommendations to enhance pitch stock within the County • Offer grants for pitch maintenance and equipment upgrades. • Empower groundskeepers with workshops, courses, and an online community.
Build More 3G Pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify Opportunities to build more 3G pitches. • Increase the use of multi-pitch 'hub sites' in places where demand is greatest. • Explore potential Playzones facilities to facilitate casual football in urban areas.
Create Inclusive and Accessible Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set standards for new build facilities and support improvements to existing facilities to provide better access for women and girls. • Provide support to secure more funding towards inclusive and accessible clubhouses. • Prioritise funding to help tackle inequalities and support communities with the greatest need.
Improve Environmental Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance and support to help improve environmental sustainability. • Support facility providers with innovative tools and support to reduce and manage energy consumption. • Facilitate the adoption of renewable energy sources for long term environmental and financial benefits.

TACKLING POOR BEHAVIOUR

Objective	Interventions
Promote Positive Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and implement tangible ideas to reward positive behaviour (e.g. Behaviour Consequence Ladder). • Celebrate positive behaviours (e.g., The John Twentyman Spirit of Football awards, Monthly Ladder Winners, Annual Fair Play League awards, Gratitude weekends etc.). • Develop and embed a long-term comms and campaign approach to amplify best practice, showcase the values of the game and provide clear messaging on behaviours.
Drive Collective Responsibility across the Game to Raise Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower and support parents and coaches to set standards and lead by example. • Launch a programme to elevate the responsibility of captains in the adult game in ensuring positive behaviour on-field. • Review and extend the powers and systems leagues have to tackle poor behaviour and increase accountability (e.g., Behaviour-Consequence Ladder). • Support clubs to deal with difficult situations and individuals, and to build positive cultures. • Support referees to manage behaviours (e.g., referee coaching and development, greater support, and engagement with disciplinary process, roll out of body cams).
Apply Tougher Sanctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and amplify sanctions including simplifying sinbins, points deductions, and heavier weighting towards offence history. • Explore options for addressing parents' poor behaviour, including through education. • Build upon the work already undertaken around a tiered approach to address repeat offenders and clubs through education and sanctions (e.g., Behaviour-Consequence ladder). • Publicise sanctions more openly (e.g., points deductions for serious offences should be widely known to act as deterrent).



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DEVELOP A VALUED NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS, COACHES, AND REFEREES

Objective	Interventions
Grow the Number of People Running the Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with football partners to support and deploy young people & young adults into roles in clubs and leagues. • Drive equal opportunities by supporting and growing the number of female coaches and referees. • Utilise major football events as a catalyst to attract new volunteers, coaches, and referees. • Establish a Support network for Clubs to assist with Volunteer Development. • Develop and retain a knowledgeable and influential workforce who can champion change & deliver targeted opportunities for disabled people.
Improve the Diversity of those Running the Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the specific needs of coaches working in the female game. • Deliver a sustainable increase in the number of female referees and referees from under-represented ethnic groups. • Support clubs and leagues to create sustainable plans and welcoming environments for all volunteers from all backgrounds. • Deliver regular campaigns and activation projects that demonstrate volunteering in football is for everyone.
Support those Running the Game to Learn and Develop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop role specific support and development plans for volunteers, coaches, and referees.
Celebrate and Reward those Running the Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcase and raise the sense of value placed on voluntary roles. • Support The FA to expand and build their reward and recognition scheme to reach as many volunteers as possible. • Deliver celebration events for targeted voluntary roles.





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SUPPORT AND DEVELOP THRIVING COMMUNITY CLUBS

Objective	Interventions
Support clubs to provide a quality experience, and where appropriate, encourage them to grow opportunities through England Football Accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing benefits and services that clubs value to drive up the quality and number of accredited clubs. Support 1*, 2* and 3* England Football Accredited clubs to increase female and disability provision. Continue to support and recognise the role of 1* and smaller clubs play in providing football opportunities in Cumberland.
Help Clubs to Become More Sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities for more clubs to build and take ownership of facilities, such as 3Gs, grass pitches and clubhouses. Provide access to expertise, best practice via communities, subject matter experts and a range of tools and education to improve finance and business acumen within clubs. Support clubs in creating commercial and sponsorship opportunities.
Equip Clubs to add Value to their Local Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support clubs to maximise and demonstrate their social and economic impact. Support clubs to provide mental health signposting support for their members and communities. Support clubs to create wider community opportunities if they choose to do so and link them with other community organisations where relevant i.e. NHS forums, policing and local refugee groups.
Support the Current and Future Generation of Club Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a bespoke club leadership programme, including training, recognising their unique responsibilities and opportunities in building inclusive environments and in dealing with difficult situations. Identify, support, and develop the club leaders of the future aligned to the volunteering programme.





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CONNECT AND SERVE PARTICIPANTS

Objective	Interventions
Make it easier to find information and opportunities to play, volunteer and learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve our communications (including WhatsApp Communities) and social media posts to showcase local opportunities to play and volunteer. • Improve the ability of our participants to book pitches and places to play, that suit them.
Improve our Customer Service and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endeavour to enhance and identify new methods that provide clear, timely and tailored communications so that participants receive the right information, at the right time and in the right way. • Create and implement a high standard of customer service that participants can expect when contacting or working with the CFA. • Work with external partner to improve our overall communications and social media presence to both showcase the brilliance of the grassroots game, but also act as a useful information tool.
Develop Digital Tools to Make Running the Game Easier and Enhance the Football Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote and support our participants with the use of existing and any developed FA apps, platforms, and systems within the grassroots game within Cumberland. • Monitor and solicit feedback from the grassroots game within Cumberland regarding user experience, accessibility, and improved experience of those administering, playing and/or engaging in the game.





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PROGRESS THE GAME'S GOVERNANCE

Objective	Interventions
Promote the Highest Levels of Governance across the Grassroots Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve compliance and remain compliant with The FA's Code of Governance, Safeguarding 365 Standard and Equality Standard. • Complete a full review of the league role, function, identity, and structure to support them in being modern, progressive, and customer-centric organisations. • Explore and prioritise governance risks with a particular focus on safeguarding and leadership in open age clubs.
Evolve Local Football Focused on Supporting and Developing Football for All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to The FAs review of the future role, function, identity, and structure of County FAs and consider, and consult with CFA Directors, Staff, member clubs, leagues and the wider game regarding any recommendations made via the County Review of Counties. • Contribute and feedback with regards to any proposed new FA Operating Model for County FAs. • Ensure the CFA continues to monitor, review, and continuously develop its various strategies and operational plans in line with The FA grassroots football strategy framework and the needs of the game locally. • Investigate ways in which to increase the perception and perceived relevance of The County FA within the local football network.
Support the Grassroots Game to be Financially Robust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to reinvest funding into the grassroots game and to utilise our Cash Reserves, in line with our Cash Reserves Policy, to best support the development of the game within Cumberland. • Explore partnership opportunities that benefit football within Cumberland, seeking ways to bring in additional investment and improve the exposure and relevance of the County FAs. • Enhance and continue to provide the game with ongoing support to try and tackle the Cost-of-Living crisis, including the support provided through The FAs Resource Hub.
Support the Game to be Safe and Well-Run	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate consistent standards, culture, and practice within the CFA by meeting standards set within The FAs Safeguarding 365 and Anti-Discrimination Standards. • Best utilise FA and our own bespoke systems that enable us to easily connect Low-Level Safeguarding Concerns, Discipline cases and club visit data to identify issues and manage cases. • Continue to support clubs and leagues with all Safeguarding Matters to continue to try to ensure that football is played within a safe and inclusive environment. • Work with The FA to develop and distribute guidance on complaint and conflict management including Low-Level Concerns to leagues and clubs. • Endeavour to engage with private coaching providers to support and drive standards and quality.

INSPIRING POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH FOOTBALL



Cumberland FA
Units 3 & 4 Tithe House
Station Street
Cockermouth
England
CA13 9QW



Cumberland FA

