



ENGLAND  
FOOTBALL

# #ESSEXFOOTBALL: MOVING FORWARD 2028

Creating a united #EssexFootball  
environment that tackles inequalities,  
delivers inspirational football opportunities  
and improves health For All



# 29

LEAGUES

# 5,500+

ESSEX-AFFILIATED  
TEAMS

# 84

WILDCATS CENTRES

# 19

LOCAL AUTHORITIES, INCLUDING  
5 LONDON BOROUGHS

MORE THAN

# 1,100

CLUBS

# 353,000+

MATCHDAY ENVIRONMENT  
PACK ENGAGEMENTS/  
IMPRESSIONS/REACH

SUPPORTING THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF  
THE DISABILITY  
PATHWAY IN ESSEX

TOTAL POPULATION  
OF MORE THAN

# 3.3m

# 78,011

MALE PATHWAY PLAYERS  
(GROWTH EXCEEDS  
TARGET BY 15.6%)

# 619

CLUBS HAVE ADOPTED THE  
FOOTBALL LEADERSHIP  
DIVERSITY CODE (73% OF  
OUR AFFILIATED CLUBS)

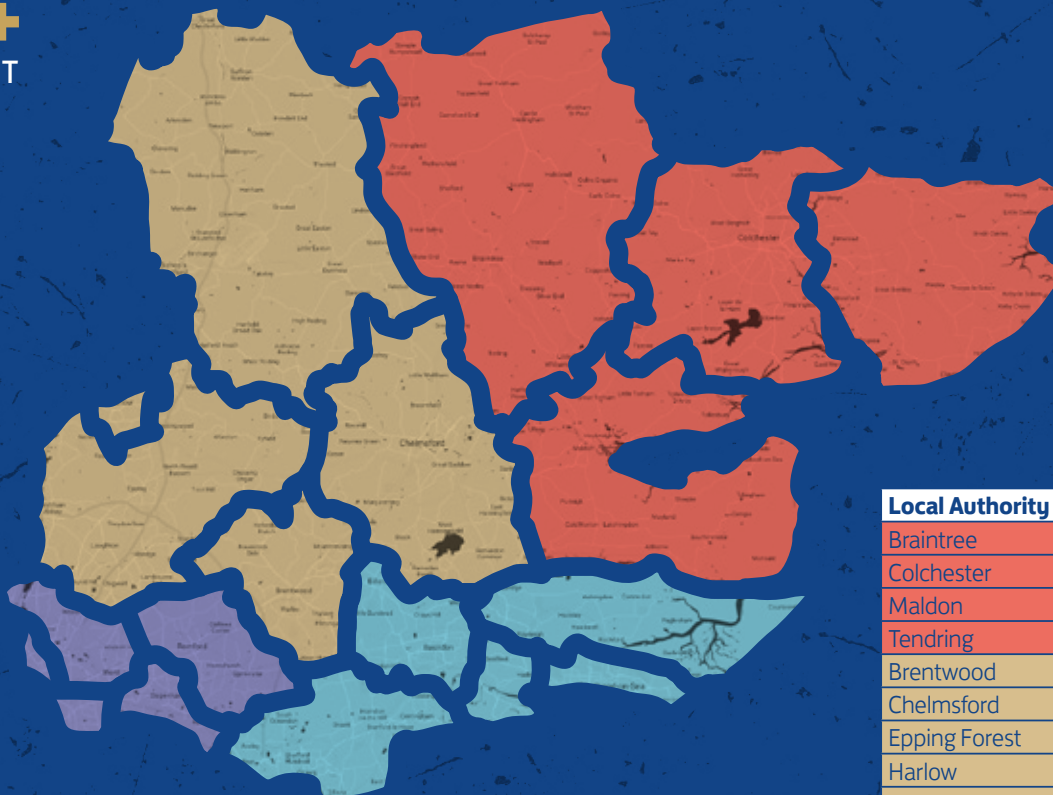
# 9,471

FEMALE PATHWAY  
PLAYERS (GROWTH  
EXCEEDS TARGET  
BY 36.1%)

# 1,705

REFEREES (INCLUDING  
TRAINEES), 145 FEMALE  
REFEREES AND 129  
ETHNICALLY-DIVERSE REFEREES

CONTRIBUTED IN  
EXCESS OF £250,000  
TO SUPPORT CLUBS  
AND LEAGUES WITH  
THE FINANCIAL  
COSTS ASSOCIATED  
WITH AFFILIATION,  
LEGAL LIABILITY  
INSURANCE AND  
PERSONAL ACCIDENT  
INSURANCE



Local Authority	Population 2024	Population 2028	Clubs	Teams
Braintree	154,094	155,533	68	326
Colchester	204,764	211,272	81	381
Maldon	67,065	68,672	33	145
Tendring	154,015	159,057	54	228
Brentwood	76,273	76,409	44	288
Chelmsford	185,792	190,301	95	502
Epping Forest	134,450	136,187	39	282
Harlow	88,704	89,595	40	187
Uttlesford	95,854	99,403	39	240
Basildon	191,723	194,838	76	476
Castle Point	91,428	92,294	35	193
Rochford	90,548	92,578	42	303
Southend	189,404	193,246	59	320
Thurrock	183,737	189,256	70	294
LB of Barking & Dagenham	218,300	220,006	48	174
LB of Havering	269,201	275,225	62	402
LB of Newham	367,386	372,257	35	104
LB of Redbridge	308,383	310,191	125	354
LB of Waltham Forest	285,009	287,483	76	260
	<b>3,356,129</b>	<b>3,413,799</b>		

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# FA GRASSROOTS STRATEGY FRAMEWORK 2024-2028 ▶▶▶



As part of the strategy development process for 2024-2028, The FA undertook a detailed consultation in June and July 2023 through 'A Conversation About Our Game' via a digital consultation. This led to analysis of more than 48,000 modules of data collected, as well as 16 in-person consultation events attended by local stakeholders from the grassroots game.

Stakeholders from the game in Essex attended the event in London. The key themes from discussions at the in-person consultation events included: Behaviours; Workforce & Volunteers; Clubs of the Future; Youth Football; Adult Football; Inclusive Football; Future Football Experience. After consulting with the grassroots game, and following analysis of the digital survey's responses, it identified key areas which The FA should be focusing on from 2024-2028:

- ▶ Improvements in pitches and facilities
- ▶ Tackle poor behaviour
- ▶ Better playing experience and choice
- ▶ Support the workforce and volunteers, particularly around coach education
- ▶ Continue to develop the women's and girls' game
- ▶ Better connection and support for participants
- ▶ Provide clubs with the help they need
- ▶ Make improvements in governing the game

This has led to the development of the FA Grassroots Strategy Framework, which sets the strategic priorities and drivers for the game from 2024-2028:



	Date	Location
Week 1	12-Jun	Southampton
	13-Jun	Eastbourne
	14-Jun	Cambridge
	15-Jun	London
Week 2	20-Jun	Middlesbrough
	21-Jun	Newcastle
	26-Jun	Burnley
Week 3	27-Jun	Manchester
	28-Jun	Bradford
	03-Jul	Hull
Week 4	04-Jul	Boston
	05-Jul	Nottingham
	10-Jul	Exeter
	11-Jul	Bath
Week 5	12-Jul	Worcester
	13-Jul	Burton
Total		16

## THE FRAMEWORK FOR OUR GRASSROOTS STRATEGY 2024-28

Our purpose: Inspiring positive change through football – by uniting communities, tackling inequalities and improving the health of the nation.

### OUR FIVE PRIORITIES

1. IMPROVE PLAYING CHOICE & OPPORTUNITIES
2. DELIVER EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN & GIRLS TO PLAY
3. BUILD MORE & IMPROVE EXISTING FACILITIES
4. TACKLE POOR BEHAVIOUR
5. DEVELOP A VALUED NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS, COACHES & REFEREES

### OUR THREE DRIVERS

- SUPPORT THRIVING COMMUNITY CLUBS
- CONNECT & SERVE PARTICIPANTS
- PROGRESS THE GAME'S GOVERNANCE



# THE FA's SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC VALUE OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IN ESSEX ▶▶▶

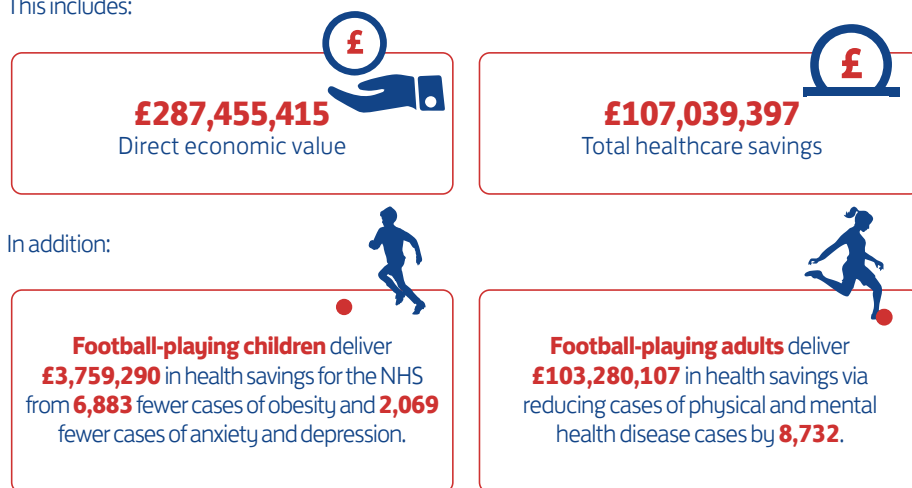
**Social Return on Investment (SROI):** We often talk about the unique power of football to improve lives and drive positive social change. This is brought into focus when we look at the social, health and economic return on investment from grassroots football in Essex.

**849,229<sup>1</sup>** are playing football in Essex, creating a growing value to society. The FA's SROI 2024 Report provides robust and compelling evidence of the significant value that the grassroots game contributes - over **£15.9bn<sup>2</sup>** nationally. All these statistics, and the narrative behind them, appear in the full report, which you can read on [www.essexfa.com](http://www.essexfa.com).

## ESSEX SUMMARY

**849,229** people across Essex play football regularly<sup>1</sup>, contributing **£718,723,739** to society each year<sup>2</sup>.

This includes:



In addition:

## NATIONAL STORIES BEHIND THE STATS

- ▶ **SROI is Growing:** More people than ever are playing football, growing its annual SROI value to society: **£15.9bn** in 2024 vs **£10.2bn** in 2021.
- ▶ **Mental and Physical Wellbeing Benefits:** Grassroots football participation contributes to **324k** preventions of disease cases and **£3.2bn** in NHS savings - equivalent to **34.8m** accident and emergency visits. Children who regularly play football are **20% more likely** to have met the Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guidelines (vs non-players).
- ▶ **Reach and Scope:** Football is four times more popular than any other team sport in adults from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
- ▶ **Women's and Girls' Football:** **4.4m** women and girls currently play regularly. **86%** of girls who play say football has helped them become more confident.
- ▶ **Power to Tackle Societal Issues:** Grassroots football delivers positive outcomes for our society via more than **360m** social interaction hours enjoyed by England's children each year. That equates to **£900m** Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth through improved educational attainment.
- ▶ **Volunteers:** **Over 1m** individuals work and volunteer in grassroots football, contributing **£5.8bn** to society each year.
- ▶ **Clubs:** **18,000** registered clubs across the country, supporting **120,000 teams** with **1.6m players**. **99.7%** of the country have an Accredited club in their local authority.
- ▶ **Facilities:** Since 2000, The FA and the Football Foundation have invested **over £1bn** into improving grassroots clubs and facilities, creating jobs and growing local economies, with **50%** of investment directed into the most deprived and inactive communities.

All the above statistics are taken from The FA's independent survey of the social return on investment (SROI) of grassroots football in England.

<sup>1</sup> 849,229 regular players consists of 232,101 children and 617,128 adults playing any type of football, including in the garden, park or street with friends or family, as well as team-based, sessional football and schools football.

<sup>2</sup> The **£15.9bn** contribution of football to society is enabled by a football workforce exceeding **1m**, **21k** facilities and **114k** teams across England.

# ESSEX COUNTY FA: MOVING FORWARD 2028 ▶▶▶



**Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All**

**Following The FA's 'A Conversation With Our Game' national consultation series, the Essex County FA undertook a local consultation with grassroots stakeholders via a digital platform for clubs, leagues, players, parents, referees, coaches, welfare officers, local authorities and professional and non-traditional stakeholders. This also included two in-person events in January 2024, collectively providing 4,000+ engagements of data and feedback.**

Utilising this, and The FA's 'A Conversation With Our Game' data, as well as analysis of the growth and trends from grassroots football via Essex County FA #MovingForward 2021-2024 Strategy performance and future growth forecasts, we were able to take a local lens to the growth and development of the grassroots game in Essex. It enabled exploration of the local priority areas for stakeholders in the game up to 2028, aligning these to the FA Grassroots Strategy Framework.

Our new strategic plan through to 2028 builds on the successes, progress and strong foundations made up to 2024, aligning The FA's Grassroots Strategy Framework key strategic priorities and drivers into a bespoke strategy, tailored to meet the needs of Essex football. There is evolution in our focus to achieve our purpose of "Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All."

This purpose is built on these strategic pillars:

## **CONNECT AND SERVE PARTICIPANTS | PROGRESSIVE GOVERNANCE | BUSINESS | FOOTBALL OPERATIONS**

Each of these pillars sets out key objectives, which will drive the Essex County FA forward as we support grassroots football to continue to thrive. This follows a strong recovery from the impact of Covid-19, now with more than 5,500 teams affiliated at the conclusion of 2023/24 season, which is a growth of 29% (since 2018).

To continue on this upward trajectory of participation, we will continue to focus on the needs of the participant, driving decision-making through the use of informed data and insight. We are also committed to supporting those who need the most help as football faces financial challenges, with the cost-of-living crisis' impact continuing to be a concern for stakeholders in the game.

Recognising this, we have committed to continuing to support clubs and leagues with the financial costs associated with affiliation - Legal Liability Insurance and Personal Accident Insurance - for the 2024/25 season, and we will review this, annually, ahead of each season up to 2028.

This represents a reinvestment back into grassroots football of c£70,000+ per annum. Across the 2021-2024 strategy period, the Essex County FA reinvested £250,000+ through this policy and Covid-19 affiliation support.

We will also ensure those areas of the game which need specific focus will receive it, to help retain individuals within the game and grow participation, as well as creating additional recreational opportunities to play the game for all sections of the community. Key to this is ensuring we continue to develop a quality network of football facilities for the game to take place in.

Underpinning the strategic pillars are the department-led strategies which set the key focus and objectives for each department of the Essex County FA:

## **FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT | SAFEGUARDING & WELFARE | REFEREEING | FOOTBALL SERVICES | MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS**

Key themes up to 2028 have also identified the need to continue to tackle a rise in poor behaviour within the game, and we are committed to playing our part in tackling this behaviour. We will support clubs and leagues to create positive and inclusive matchday environments which enable the player pathway to progress, continuing to support the growth of the male, female and disability pathways and providing increased opportunities to participate.

We will continue to improve the facilities to support the development of the game, and support the thriving club and league network to meet evolving participation needs. We will continue to provide for the football workforce across coaching and refereeing, as well as for club and league officials, with regular CPD (Continuing Professional Development) events to support ongoing learning, development and progression.

It is fully recognised that achieving many of the areas and objectives we've set out will require collaboration across the game, and we fully appreciate that football in Essex is built on a strong foundation of committed volunteers who dedicate thousands of hours to support the delivery and coordination of football every week.

# ESSEX COUNTY FA: MOVING FORWARD 2028 ▶▶▶



**Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All**

A key priority within our #MovingForward 2028 Strategy will be to continue to enhance the recruitment, recognition and ongoing development of volunteers within the game in Essex. This is an area of focus and support within each department strategy.

This is in conjunction with working alongside a wide variety of local partners and organisations, including local authorities, funding partners, clubs, leagues, referees, facility providers, recreational football providers, educational organisations, professional clubs, Football in the Community programmes and more.

These foundations and partnerships will be key in the years ahead to achieving the targets which are laid out in this strategy, and we very much look forward to working with you to do that. We are committed to demonstrating this through our core values:

**UNDERSTAND** - We are supportive, empathetic and knowledgeable, using insight and data to drive decision-making

**NEW INNOVATIONS** - We are proactive and creative to improve existing formats and explore new ways of delivering football

**INTEGRITY** - We are fair, honest, reliable and accountable and commit to "doing what we said we would do," ensuring equality and diversity to develop football for all and ensure all those who wish to be involved are supported and encouraged

**TEAMWORK** - We work collaboratively and inclusively with each other across all areas of the business, and with our partners across the game, to optimise all our opportunities

**EXCELLENCE** - We aim to deliver high-quality football services, seeking feedback and constantly reviewing our work, to develop our services based on the needs of our community and individual customers

Since 2018, and the first edition of the Essex County FA #MovingForward Strategy, the 29% growth in affiliated teams across Essex has seen team numbers rise from 4,263 to 5,500+. This highlights the commitment, resilience and strength of the game in Essex, and we are looking forward to working in conjunction with all the game's stakeholders to ensure we continue to achieve the full potential of #EssexFootball.

As part of our local stakeholder consultation survey to develop this strategy, it was identified that 83% of respondents rated the Essex County FA as either "extremely important or somewhat important" in our role of "working to regulate, develop and support the game to meet current and future participation and workforce needs." As part of our ongoing development as an organisation, we are committed to continuing to evolve.

We express our sincere gratitude to those whose outstanding work continues to make the game an enjoyable experience, and we look forward to working with you in the years ahead and, in doing so, bringing all parts of the game together.

**Brendan Walshe**  
Chief Executive Officer

Board:

Andy Chaplin (Chair of Board and Council)  
Barry Fitzgerald (Council)  
Sheryl MacRae (Council)  
Andy French (Council)  
Hafiza Patel (INED)  
Matt Clare (INED)  
Craig Leverington (INED)  
Andrew Macdonald (INED)  
Paul Findlay (INED)









# 2021-24 STRATEGY REVIEWED ▶▶▶

Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All

**Success Against Our Targets:** In 2021, we set ourselves an ambitious and challenging set of success measures to hold ourselves to account, and to have a clear view on progress against our strategic priorities.

We can be proud of a huge amount, including the progress made across our player pathways, the number of new quality grassroots pitches and the improvements to our digital platforms.

It is also clear where we need further work and focus, where we haven't yet seen the progress we want - most notably on behaviours and supporting our volunteers to feel valued.

We will double down on our efforts to drive progress in these areas over the next strategy cycle.

## MALE PATHWAY:

**78,011** PLAYERS  
(4% INCREASE),  
**4,913** TEAMS  
(14% INCREASE)



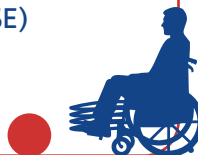
## FEMALE PATHWAY:

**9,471** PLAYERS  
(99% INCREASE),  
**534** TEAMS  
(91% INCREASE)



## DISABILITY PATHWAY:

**779** PLAYERS  
(8% INCREASE),  
**76** TEAMS  
(3% INCREASE)



## COACHING:

**3,949**  
COACH CPD (CONTINUING  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT)  
HOURS ACCRUED  
(TARGET 3,778)



## REFEREEING:

**1,705**  
REFEREES  
(INCLUDING  
TRAINEES)



## FACILITIES:

**£10,617,412**  
FACILITY INVESTMENT  
INVOLVEMENT (LARGE  
CAPITAL PROJECTS) AND  
PREMIER LEAGUE  
STADIUM FUND



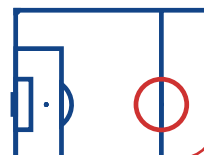
## ACCREDITATION:

**90.34%**  
OF YOUTH TEAMS  
ARE ENGLAND  
FOOTBALL  
ACCREDITED  
(TARGET 90%)



## FACILITIES:

**413**  
QUALITY GRASS PITCHES  
(TARGET 328)



## VOLUNTEERING:

**1,033**  
VOLUNTEERS  
RECOGNISED (AWARD  
WINNERS AND  
NOMINEES)



## COACHING:

**98.6%**  
YOUTH TEAMS WITH  
QUALIFIED COACHES  
(TARGET 90%)



# ESSEX COUNTY FA PURPOSE FOR 2028 ▶▶▶



Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All

## Connect & Serve Participants

**To develop new, and enhance existing, offers to engage all stakeholders and formats of the game by putting the participant's needs at the heart of football.**

- 1:** Monitor and review existing grassroots delivery model and continue to adapt to participation trends, meeting modern-day demands for 2028
- 2:** Develop, engage and support a network of football delivery partners across affiliated and recreational formats, reviewed annually
- 3:** Utilise social media, our website and digital technology platforms as the core engagement and promotional tools to showcase #EssexFootball, making it easy to access information on grassroots football
- 4:** Deliver regular infographic and reporting updates on progress against strategy targets to inform stakeholders and provide regular opportunity for grassroots football stakeholder surveys



## Progressive Governance

**To be an inclusive, accountable and transparent decision-making organisation, progressing the game's governance and developing, safeguarding and supporting football.**

- 1:** Achieve and maintain standards in-line with the Code of Governance for County FAs
- 2:** Progress the game's governance and support it to be financially robust, safe and well-run
- 3:** Maintain intermediate status of the Equality Standard and evolve our Essex County FA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Strategy 2024 into a Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan to 2028 to:
  - i) engage, recruit and maintain an Inclusion Advisory Group (IAG) with representation on the Essex County FA Board
  - ii) engage, recruit and develop a diverse paid and volunteer workforce, with the independence, skills and knowledge to support inclusive decision-making across the Essex County FA and grassroots football structures
- 4:** Evolve and maintain effective policy and procedures to govern organisation decision-making with:
  - i) clear complaint, grievance, control and risk management processes
  - ii) development of climate and environmental considerations for grassroots football

## Business

**To develop a sustainable business model that promotes innovation and continuous improvement, attracting inward investment.**

- 1:** Deliver the 2024-28 Essex County FA Business Strategy to support the FA National Grassroots Strategy's strategic priorities and drivers, reviewing progress annually
- 2:** Maximise our brand to attract more investment into #EssexFootball, continuing to enhance our partnerships across the business and commercial community
- 3:** Continue to monitor and evolve the business delivery model to:
  - i) be service-led and sustainable
  - ii) utilise Essex County FA finances to explore and support the development of multiple grassroots football facility hubs across Essex, supporting grassroots football
- 4:** Undertake responsible strategic planning across all financial matters to:
  - i) ensure the business is appropriately resourced to meet the evolving demands of grassroots football
  - ii) annually review the Essex County FA's reinvestment policy to grassroots football to provide financial support for member clubs for Legal Liability and Personal Accident insurance costs

## Football Operations

**To be the strategic lead for football in Essex, using data and insight to drive decision-making.**

- 1:** Day-to-day services, operations and delivery of FA National Game Strategy (NGS) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), delivered through department-led, strategic objectives for 2024-2028 for Football Development, Football Services, Safeguarding & Welfare, Refereeing and Marketing & Communications
- 2:** Enhance, evolve and maintain strategic support and guidance materials for football delivery partners in affiliated and recreational formats which share best practice and enhance the grassroots matchday environment
- 3:** Embed the 'UNITE' values throughout the organisation through a People Development Plan, reviewed annually, to uphold high standards and drive continuous improvement
- 4:** Embed a 'Customer Charter' for our activity to continually drive customer service standards







# FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ▶▶▶



Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All

Participation Pathways & Equal Opportunities	Valued Volunteers & Coaches	Thriving Clubs & Competitions	Build & Improve Facilities
<p><b>To grow the number of registered players playing in the male, female and disability grassroots player pathways within the affiliated and recreational game.</b></p> <p><b>1:</b> Target 77,999 registered players within the male pathway and grow opportunities to participate by 2028 through: i) supporting our affiliated and recreational football network to deliver affiliated team growth and Just Play opportunities</p> <p><b>2:</b> Target 14,150 registered players within the female pathway and deliver equal opportunities for women and girls to play by 2028 through: i) supporting our affiliated and recreational football network to deliver affiliated team growth, plus Wildcats, Squad Girls and Just Play opportunities ii) supporting the education sector to enhance equal opportunities for girls in schools</p> <p><b>3:</b> Target 1,186 registered players within the disability/inclusive pathway and grow opportunities to participate by 2028 through: i) supporting our club and community football provider network to deliver affiliated team growth, plus Comets and Just Play opportunities ii) supporting our sanctioned competition network to enhance youth and adult participation opportunities</p> <p><b>4:</b> Work strategically with the Essex County Schools FA to develop a strategy up to 2028 to continue to enhance and grow schools football provision for the male, female and disability pathways</p>	<p><b>To develop, support and reward a diverse volunteer workforce across grassroots football, meeting the evolving coaching, administrative and technological demands of the game.</b></p> <p><b>1:</b> Grow the volunteer workforce to 7,928 by 2028 through: i) supporting our stakeholder network with a range of tools and programmes to aid the recruitment, retention and recognition of volunteers, including promoting the #EssexFootballThanks campaign and the FA Community Awards programme ii) Deliver an annual volunteer awards event to recognise and reward volunteering service for #EssexFootball</p> <p><b>2:</b> Grow the number of registered coaches to 8,604 by 2028 by deliver a wide-ranging, accessible coach development programme which: i) engages 25% of coaches in the affiliated game into local coaching Continuing Professional Development (CPD) by 2028 ii) provides 2,000+ CPD opportunities annually</p> <p><b>3:</b> Support our club and league volunteer workforce with a programme of CPD opportunities which develops volunteers to meet the evolving needs of grassroots football and progress the game's governance</p> <p><b>4:</b> Deliver and develop the Essex County FA Youth Forum, which empowers our grassroots football structures to engage with the voice of young people, providing opportunities for the next generation of volunteer leaders</p>	<p><b>To develop a sustainable network of thriving England Accredited clubs and competitions who have the knowledge and expertise to provide engaging and diverse experiences to their local communities.</b></p> <p><b>1:</b> Provide support for our clubs to grow and sustain quality experiences through achieving and sustaining England Football Accreditation by: i) growing the number of thriving 3* clubs to 54 by 2028 ii) growing the percentage of teams in accredited clubs to 83% by 2028</p> <p><b>2:</b> Support our grassroots club, league and local authority network, utilising data and insight, to inform long-term football development decision-making through annual production of strategic participation reports for clubs, leagues and local authorities, including the social value of football</p> <p><b>3:</b> Tackle poor behaviour by supporting clubs and leagues to improve matchday environments by: i) delivering coaches' workshops in partnership with youth leagues ii) enhancing the Essex County FA #PlayYourPart 'Matchday Environment Pack' resources to promote positive behaviour for players, coaches, parents and spectators</p> <p><b>4:</b> Support grassroots football stakeholders to implement the FA Youth Review, evolving the youth game to continue to create inclusive and positive football environments</p>	<p><b>To develop a sustainable network of quality football facilities across the county which allows participation to continue to sustain and grow.</b></p> <p><b>1:</b> Increase the number of 3G Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) in Essex by: i) targeting £3 million of total project cost investment in Essex per annum ii) working with our local authority network and other partners to address shortfalls in 3G AGP provision through actively developing projects identified in Local Football Facility Plans</p> <p><b>2:</b> Improve the grass pitch infrastructure by: i) working with our grass pitch operators to increase the percentage of quality grass pitches to 630 by 2028 ii) working to have 50% of pitches utilising the Football Foundation's PitchPower app</p> <p><b>3:</b> Develop external investment partnerships and promote funding opportunities to support our grassroots network to access relevant funding, improving the training and matchday environment</p> <p><b>4:</b> Work closely with Sport England and our local authorities through the planning process to provide strategic support on: i) planning applications affecting the loss of existing football facilities ii) planning applications developing new football facilities iii) the distribution of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to meet future needs of football facilities as part of housing growth development</p>

# FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ▶▶▶

Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All



## 2021-2024 Strategy Achievements

**£10,617,412**

FACILITY INVESTMENT INVOLVEMENT (LARGE CAPITAL PROJECTS) AND PREMIER LEAGUE STADIUM FUND



**1,167+**

WEETABIX WILDCATS AND SQUAD GIRLS PARTICIPANTS (CONTINUED GROWTH)



**5,500+**

ESSEX-AFFILIATED TEAMS

**4,913**

MALE TEAMS (78,011 PLAYERS)

**537**

FEMALE TEAMS (9,471 PLAYERS)

**192**

VETERANS TEAMS

**36**

WALKING FOOTBALL TEAMS



**3,949**

COACH CPD (CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT) HOURS ACCRUED (TARGET 3,778)



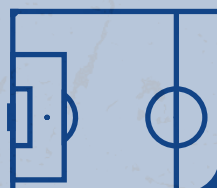
**90.34%**

OF YOUTH TEAMS ARE ENGLAND FOOTBALL ACCREDITED (TARGET 90%)



**413**

QUALITY GRASS PITCHES (TARGET 328)



**98.6%**

YOUTH TEAMS WITH QUALIFIED COACHES (TARGET 90%)









# SAFEGUARDING & WELFARE STRATEGY ▶▶▶



Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All

## Valued Volunteers

**To support a network of volunteers within youth, disability and open-age football, proactively promoting safeguarding across grassroots football and creating an ever-safer football environment.**

- 1:** Support, promote and direct volunteers to undertake:
  - i) FA Safeguarding Children qualifications to meet youth football and affiliation requirements
  - ii) FA Player Welfare Course to meet open-age football and affiliation requirements
- 2:** Promote and share best practice in safeguarding and welfare across grassroots football in Essex by:
  - i) regularly reviewing and refreshing safeguarding pages on the Essex County FA website
  - ii) providing monthly newsletter communications to the club and league welfare officer networks
- 3:** Deliver a programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) events, annually, for Welfare Officers across our club and league networks to continue to support and upskill the workforce, meeting evolving safeguarding and welfare demands
- 4:** Develop partnerships with external agencies which can provide welfare and safeguarding support to the club and league Welfare Officer networks



## Safeguarding Compliancy & Protection

**To ensure safeguarding compliancy across grassroots football in Essex.**

- 1:** Achieve and maintain compliance with the FA Safeguarding 365 standard each season
- 2:** Undertake safeguarding visits on a minimum of 13% of affiliated clubs with under 18s annually
- 3:** Continually review all relevant roles in affiliated youth and open-age football across the club and league networks to meet FA requirements, ensuring:
  - i) in-date and accepted FA Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Checks
  - ii) in-date FA safeguarding qualifications
  - iii) necessary steps are taken to manage compliancy through the issuing of suspensions for non-compliance
- 4:** Work with statutory agencies including Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs), the police and third-sector organisations to safeguard under 18s and vulnerable adults



## Investigations & Prevention

**To work in partnership with The FA and key safeguarding organisations in Essex to protect under 18s and vulnerable adults in grassroots football.**

- 1:** Identify and assess individual cases, in partnership with The FA, and refer them to the appropriate safeguarding agency by:
  - i) recording low-level concerns and serious cases on the FA Case Management Platform
  - ii) taking appropriate safeguarding interventions and actions
- 2:** Work collaboratively with the Football Services Department to:
  - i) regularly review football discipline misconduct reports and cases
  - ii) identify, record and manage safeguarding and welfare concerns
  - iii) deliver appropriate safeguarding interventions to help tackle poor behaviour
- 3:** Develop a network of partnerships and signposting to services providing wellbeing support, as identified as part of investigation process



## Environment & Tackling Poor Behaviour

**To promote and encourage a positive, respectful and inclusive experience and tackle poor behaviour within grassroots football.**

- 1:** Promote and support club and league network to deliver Play Safe campaign and FA initiatives to improve behavioural standards and matchday environments
- 2:** Work with volunteer workforce to improve matchday experience and environment, offering guidance and information on best practice, together with engagement with under 18s to incorporate their opinions
- 3:** Work collaboratively with clubs and leagues to support the sharing of information to maximise the voice of under 18s within club and league structures
- 4:** Promote 'Players Place', a bespoke area on our website providing safeguarding information and details of agencies providing support, including contacts for wellbeing



# SAFEGUARDING & WELFARE STRATEGY ▶▶▶

Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All



## 2021-2024 Strategy Achievements

SAFEGUARDING VISITS  
100% COMPLETE



**300**

CLUB SAFEGUARDING  
VISITS (DESKTOP AND  
FACE-TO-FACE, 410  
TEAMS, 815 COACHES,  
1,263 PARENTS)



SAFEGUARDING  
OPERATING STANDARD  
PASSED (2022, 2023,  
2024)



**35**

WORKFORCE &  
DEVELOPMENT CPDs  
(CONTINUING  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT)  
SESSIONS



**353,000+**

MATCHDAY  
ENVIRONMENT PACK  
ENGAGEMENTS/  
IMPRESSIONS/REACH



ONGOING ASSISTANCE  
WITH OPEN-AGE  
AFFILIATION DBS  
VERIFICATIONS



SAFEGUARDING  
CONFERENCE  
WELL-RECEIVED



PROMOTED FA  
SAFEGUARDING 365  
SHARED SERVICES



SUPPORTED FA  
RESPECT AND  
#WEONLYDOPOSITIVE  
CAMPAIGNS









# REFEREEING STRATEGY ▶▶▶

Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All



## Recruitment

**To recruit a diverse and inclusive referee workforce across all formats of the game.**

- 1:** Grow the number of registered referees to 1,684 by 2028 by:  
i) recruiting 25% more registered referees based on the number of referees registered on 1st June to the Essex County FA on a seasonal basis (a minimum of 340 referees)
- 2:** Deliver additional courses and workshops to meet the demand in Essex, supporting refereeing Futsal, Walking Football and disability/inclusive football on a seasonal basis
- 3:** Run annual initiatives to support an increase in the recruitment of female referees and referees from Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage communities
- 4:** Monitor referee coverage levels across Essex and support competitions to maximise and increase their referee coverage levels on a seasonal basis through targeted courses



## Retention & Environment

**To retain a diverse and inclusive referee workforce across all formats of the game.**

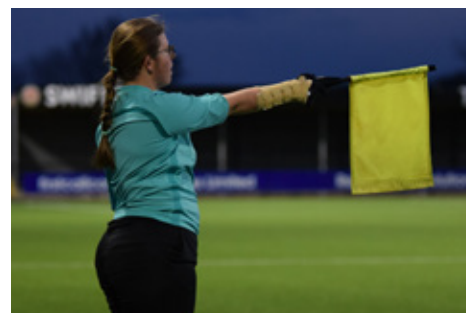
- 1:** Retain 80% of the registered referees (excluding Level Trainee Referees) based on the number of referees registered on 1st June to the Essex County FA on a seasonal basis (a minimum of 1,100 referees)
- 2:** Target a minimum conversion of 60% of our trainee referees each season
- 3:** Deliver a referee mentoring programme to support trainee referees and those referees identified who need additional support
- 4:** Support all referees to make sure they meet the FA Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) and safeguarding requirements to carry out their role as a referee



## Performance & Development

**To provide all referees with a clearly-defined development pathway from youth to senior football to assist with identifying referees for promotion and for the Essex County FA and FA Centre of Refereeing Excellence (CORE) programmes.**

- 1:** Target 20% of the registered referees in the Essex County FA to enter the Referee Progression Pathway on a seasonal basis
- 2:** Deliver a structured Essex County FA Centre of Refereeing Excellence (CORE) programme, which supports FA CORE
- 3:** Deliver a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme of practical and theoretical sessions per season to support the development of referees (league-specific CPDs, County Cup Final CPDs and general CPDs) and to support referees in tackling poor behaviour
- 4:** Deliver a youth-to-adult transition programme to support referees moving from youth football to open-age football



## Valued Referee Workforce

**To have a quality-assured referee workforce to support the development of all referees in Essex.**

- 1:** Continue to upskill referees in being a mentor, matchday coach, observer or a performance coach to support all development programmes, increasing our workforce by 20% on a seasonal basis
- 2:** Deliver a bespoke CPD programme each season for our mentors, matchday coaches, observers and performance coaches to support them in their roles, with a minimum of three CPD sessions per role
- 3:** Support the development and transition of observers looking to move into the semi-professional and professional game
- 4:** Recognise and reward our referees, mentors, matchday coaches, observers and performance coaches for the role in which they play in supporting grassroots football across Essex



# REFEREEING STRATEGY ▶▶▶

Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All



## 2021-2024 Strategy Achievements

**58**

FA REFEREE COURSES  
(1,203 LEARNERS)



FA FUTSAL  
REFEREE COURSE



**3**

REFEREEING WALKING  
FOOTBALL WORKSHOPS  
(30 LEARNERS)



**1,705**

REFEREES  
(INCLUDING  
TRAINEES)



**145**

FEMALE REFEREES AND  
129 ETHNICALLY-DIVERSE  
REFEREES



**234**

DEVELOPERS,  
165 MENTORS, 105  
MATCHDAY COACHES,  
56 OBSERVERS



**24**

PROMOTION CPDs  
(CONTINUING  
PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT)  
(429 ATTENDEES)



**12**

ESSEX CORE (CENTRE  
OF REFEREEING  
EXCELLENCE) SESSIONS  
(266 ATTENDEES)



**7**

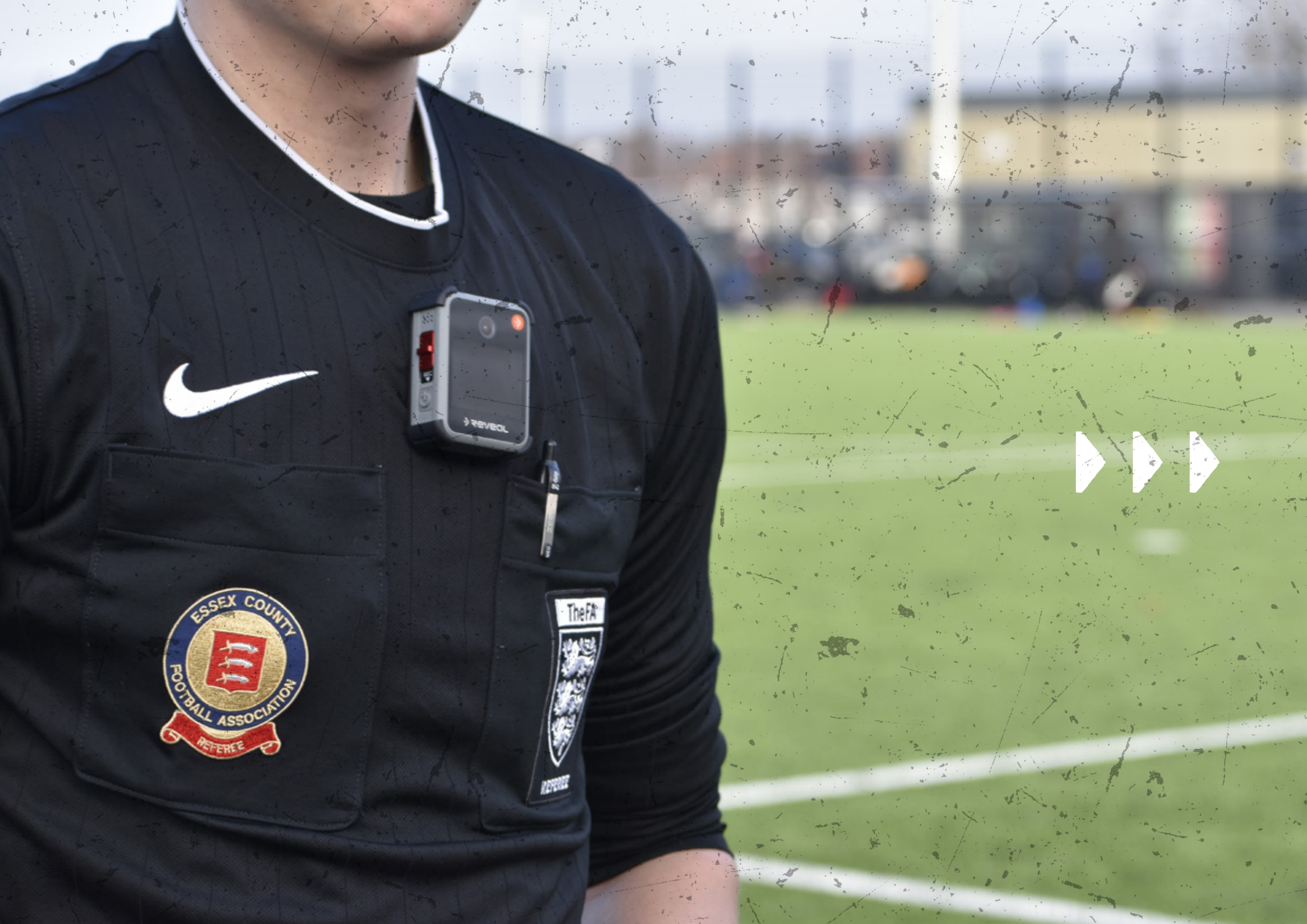
LEAGUE-SPECIFIC CPDs  
(161 ATTENDEES)



BODYCAMs TRIAL  
IN ESSEX







# FOOTBALL SERVICES STRATEGY ▶▶▶

Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All



## Tackling Poor Behaviour

**To administer all on-field discipline and misconduct correctly, fairly and efficiently and to identify and investigate all discipline cases involving assaults, discriminatory language or behaviour and serious complaints.**

- 1:** Ensure 100% of cautions and send-offs are administered within five days of receiving the referee's report
- 2:** Ensure all on-field discipline and misconduct reports are investigated and completed in accordance with FA rules and regulations:
  - i) making sure all cases are concluded within 90 days of notification of alleged misconduct
  - ii) targeting the average number of days for an investigation to be 49 days or less
- 3:** Target all abandoned games, assaults and physical contact on referees investigations to be dealt with within 28 days of the match, and the hearings to be completed within 42 days
- 4:** Ensure all commission panels and members have the appropriate skills, independence and expertise and have undertaken the appropriate training by The FA for chair-trained, secretary and national panel targets



## Regulations & Sanctions

**To support clubs and leagues in meeting affiliation and sanction requirements in-line with the FA Standard Code of Rules (SCOR) and FA Standard Code of Rules Youth (SCORY).**

- 1:** Support all clubs and leagues with rule queries and undertake an annual review of all competition rules to align with SCOR and SCORY
- 2:** Prioritise that all league appeals are dealt with within 45 days of being received
- 3:** Ensure all Football Debt Recovery requests are administered efficiently
- 4:** Support 100% of clubs and leagues to meet affiliation and sanction guidelines and provide any organisation in need of support with an affiliation action plan



## Clubs & Competitions

**To support and provide high-profile and high-quality competitions.**

- 1:** Organise, coordinate and promote high-quality County Cup competitions for the male, female and disability pathways (Under 12s to 18s boys, men, veterans, women and girls) and review annually to meet the needs of the game, ensuring equal opportunities for women and girls to play
- 2:** Support all recreational and small-sided football formats to meet affiliation requirements, including adopting FA technology
- 3:** Support the club and competition networks in promoting initiatives to tackle poor behaviour within the game
- 4:** Provide guidance and support to all clubs, teams and competitions as appropriate, promoting the County FA website and the Freshdesk knowledge base



## Connect, Serve & Technology

**To utilise FA technology, data and insight to connect, serve and support the volunteer workforce.**

- 1:** Provide training, promotion and support to all clubs, competitions and members in the use of FA systems and technology to assist in football administration through the FA Club and Competition Portal and new FA systems
- 2:** Continue to adopt technological enhancements to improve the services available to stakeholders, including automation and artificial intelligence (AI) where appropriate
- 3:** Support The FA to develop existing digital tools to make the game easier to run by connecting apps and FA platforms, providing a seamless user experience
- 4:** Explore digital opportunities and partnerships to enhance the football experience





# FOOTBALL SERVICES STRATEGY ▶▶▶

Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All



## 2021-2024 Strategy Achievements

**2,149**  
INVESTIGATIONS  
COMPLETED



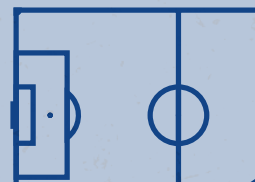
**76,772**  
PLAYER REGISTRATIONS  
ON NEW ONLINE  
PLATFORM (2023/24  
SEASON, 27 LEAGUES)



**1,540**  
COUNTY CUP TEAM  
ENTRIES (2023/24  
SEASON, 1,525  
COMPLETED MATCHES)



ESSEX COUNTY FA  
YOUTH FORUM  
SUPPORTS FUTURE  
VOLUNTEERS



VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE  
LONG SERVICE AWARDS



**34**  
APPROVED SPECIAL  
DISPENSATION CASES  
(UP 10 FROM LAST  
SEASON)



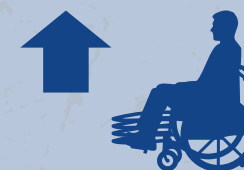
FA SERIOUS  
MISCONDUCT ACTION  
PLAN PUBLISHED  
ON WEBSITE



OFFER OF TRANS  
INCLUSION SUPPORT  
TO A REGISTERED  
LEAGUE



**66**  
DISABILITY TEAMS (UP 2  
FROM LAST SEASON)









# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY ▶▶▶



Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All

Website	Social Media	Communication	Partnerships & Branding
<p><b>To be the central information point for grassroots football stakeholders.</b></p> <p><b>1:</b> Regularly review and update website content to create key reference and resource pages on cups, players, referees, coaches, clubs, leagues, volunteers, facilities, safeguarding and inclusion</p> <p><b>2:</b> Reach 500,000 unique website visitors by 2028, making full use of analytics software to identify key audience acquisition trends</p> <p><b>3:</b> Use the website to promote key football news articles on a monthly basis and arrange for relevant news stories to be published in local, regional and national publications, and on websites</p> <p><b>4:</b> Tackle poor behaviour by continual promotion and improvement of the Essex County FA #PlayYourPart 'Matchday Environment Pack' resources for players, coaches, parents and spectators</p>	<p><b>To be the key mobile engagement and promotional vehicle.</b></p> <p><b>1:</b> Increase Twitter/X followers to 42,000 by 2028, embracing the #EssexFootball hashtag</p> <p><b>2:</b> Increase Facebook followers to 20,000 by 2028, featuring more human interest and individual-specific content</p> <p><b>3:</b> Create new promotional videos, distributed through YouTube and the website, growing the audience to 4,000 subscribers by 2028</p> <p><b>4:</b> Utilise Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn as platforms to engage, inform and educate grassroots football quickly and efficiently</p>	<p><b>To deliver efficient and effective communication to all football stakeholders in Essex.</b></p> <p><b>1:</b> Deliver a fortnightly branded digital newsletter to update stakeholders on key developments, building a subscriber list of 7,000 by 2028</p> <p><b>2:</b> Create a regular opportunity for stakeholder feedback on Essex's grassroots football strategy</p> <p><b>3:</b> Produce an annual report each season, updating football stakeholders on all key activities and the financial position of the Essex County FA</p> <p><b>4:</b> Support FA initiatives and campaigns locally, including the promotion of new technological advancements</p>	<p><b>To enhance the profile, image and partnership investment into grassroots football in Essex.</b></p> <p><b>1:</b> Develop and deliver a specific range of partnership opportunities to enhance external investment into grassroots football</p> <p><b>2:</b> Publish informative infographics which concisely represent strategic progress</p> <p><b>3:</b> Maintain a consistent and high-quality brand image in collaboration with a branding partner</p> <p><b>4:</b> Work with charities and fellow non-profit organisations to help achieve joint/aligned aims</p>
			

# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY ▶▶▶



Creating a united #EssexFootball environment that tackles inequalities, delivers inspirational football opportunities and improves health For All

## 2021-2024 Strategy Achievements

**484,697**

UNIQUE WEBSITE VISITORS  
(CUMULATIVE, CIRCA)



**473**

NEWS STORIES PUBLISHED



**12,442**

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS  
(1,939 POSTS)



**40,956**

TWITTER/X FOLLOWERS  
(23,454+ POSTS)



**2,325**

YOUTUBE SUBSCRIBERS  
(75 VIDEOS)



**3,539**

E-MAIL SUBSCRIBERS  
(38 E-MAILS)



SUPPORTED THE FA'S NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS



REGULAR COLLABORATION WITH BBC ESSEX

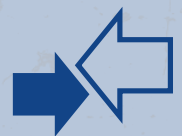


ARTICLES PUBLISHED AND SHARED BY LOCAL MEDIA



**5,000,000**

ESSEX COUNTY CUP SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS









VOLUNTEER  
WALL  
AWARDS 23







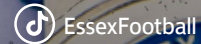
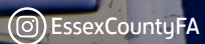
# ENGLAND FOOTBALL

## Essex County Football Association

The County Office,  
Springfield Lyons Approach,  
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CM2 5LB.

[www.essexfa.com](http://www.essexfa.com)

Incorporated in Cardiff. No. 3843186



[www.essexfa.com](http://www.essexfa.com)