



# **Hertfordshire FA**

**Strategy 2021-2024**

# HERTFORDSHIRE FOOTBALL IN 2021

*Football is by far the largest sport in our county with a breadth and depth of participation that reaches into every community*

**37,218**

Male  
Players

**4,903**

Female  
Players

**383**

Disability  
Players

**3,156**

Teams

**79%**

Youth clubs are England  
Football Accredited

**34%**

Adult clubs are England  
Football Accredited

**28%**

Youth clubs with a  
female team

**18**

Clubs with a  
full female pathway

**85%**

Youth teams with a  
qualified coach

**677**

Registered Referees

**20**

Leagues

**26**

Full size 3G pitches listed  
on The FA Pitch Register

**113**

Grass pitches achieved a  
PitchPower rating of Good

**38**

Weetabix Wildcats  
Centres

# INTRODUCTION

*The opportunity for everyone in our community to get out and enjoy the benefits of being involved in football has never been more important*

When we launched our last strategy, few could have imagined the events that would unfold over the course of those three years. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on all of us and its effects will continue to be felt for a long time to come.

While so much in our lives has been turned upside down, what hasn't changed is football's place at the heart of our communities. We are incredibly proud to have heard so many examples of clubs working to support those in need during these challenging times.

As we move forward football is uniquely positioned to help us all recover from the negative effects of the pandemic and repair the damage to our collective mental and physical health brought about by long periods of inactivity and isolation.

The power of football to unite communities, build aspiration, reduce inequalities and bring joy to those involved has never been more important. Put simply, our role is to help ensure that those benefits are spread as widely across our county as possible.

This strategy sets out how over the next three years we will work to ensure that football in Hertfordshire will 'Survive, Revive and Thrive' following the pandemic and maximise the positive impact the game has on society.

Over the last eighteen months we've seen what our incredible grassroots community can achieve when faced with a challenge. It's this kind of commitment and dedication, aligned with the right support, that will see the game come back stronger in the years ahead.



**Karl Lingham**  
CEO, Hertfordshire FA



*"We believe we are in a strong position to support our football community in recovering from the impact of the pandemic and building towards a more positive future"*

**Graham Phillips**  
Hertfordshire FA Chair



*"All sport has the power to change individual lives for the better, but with its huge reach football can have a far wider impact by creating benefits to whole communities"*

**John O'Callaghan**  
Director, Herts Sports Partnership

# THE VALUE OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL TO SOCIETY

*Many of us get involved in football simply because we love the game, without ever stopping to think about the wider benefits that it brings*

Studies show that football not only improves the physical and mental health of participants, but also impacts other areas of their lives too, such as increasing confidence, building trust and improving educational outcomes.

Across the country grassroots football contributes to healthcare savings of £1.6bn through disease reduction, including £525m direct savings to the NHS:

- 213,000 reduction in cases of childhood obesity
- 66,000 reduction in cases of depression and anxiety in children
- 203,000 reduction in physical and mental health disorders in adults

In addition, it also provides social value of £780m through education improvement and crime reduction, which lead to better life chances for young people:

- Regular sport participation is associated with improved educational performance
- Football provides children with opportunities to build relationships and trust others
- Increased leadership, confidence and resilience improves future earnings potential
- Childhood football participation is linked to the reduction of over 1,200 juvenile crimes

This is on top of £7.7bn in direct economic value. You can find out more in this report on the [Social and Economic value of Grassroots Football in England](#).

# WHAT DRIVES US

*We are proud to have been supporting and developing football in Hertfordshire for over 135 years. We truly believe in football as a powerful force for good and want to see its positive impact spread as widely across our county as possible*

## OUR VISION

*To create a positive, safe, experience and inclusive environment for everyone involved in Football in Hertfordshire*

## OUR MISSION

*To work with all participants in football and our partners to use the power of football to positively impact physical, social, and mental wellbeing across Hertfordshire*

## OUR VALUES

*Our values serve as a constant source of guidance to staff in our interactions with each other and the wider football community in the County. They are:*

*Trust, Respect, Teamwork, Efficiency, Honesty*

# CREATING A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

*In building this strategy we have drawn on a wide range of sources and consulted many stakeholders to inform our thinking*

## Insight

- FA Value of Football Report
- County demographics
- Participation tracking
- Local Football Facility Plans
- Customer service feedback via Freshdesk platform



## Analysis

- Review of our 2018-21 Strategy
- SWOT and PESTLE
- Staffing review
- Safeguarding Operating Standard review

## Consultation

- Grassroots Survey results
- Youth Survey results
- FA State of Play Survey
- Competitions feedback
- Key Partners Survey

# OUR FOCUS AREAS

*This is a strategy with players at its heart. Everything we plan to do is centred on delivering for those who play the game*

## Positive Environment

A game that's representative of our diverse footballing community, played in a safe and inclusive environment

## Club and League Network

A vibrant network of clubs and leagues that deliver grassroots football that meet the needs of the community

## Players

A modern football offering across Hertfordshire that retains and re-engages existing participants and supports sustainable growth in new areas

## Facilities

Connecting providers with expertise and sources of funding to increase access to good quality pitches across grassroots football

## Grassroots Workforce

Delivering services that help grassroots football flourish by inspiring, supporting and retaining volunteers in the game

## Governance

An effective modern organisation with the structures and processes in place to offer the best possible service to the game at a local level



*"Young people are the future of the game. If football is to thrive we need to ensure that the voices of young players, coaches, referees and volunteers are heard"*

**Madeline Hurley, Hertfordshire FA Council and Youth Committee Member**

# PLAYERS

*A modern football offering across Hertfordshire that retains and re-engages existing participants and supports sustainable growth in new areas*

To ensure football has a bright future it must adapt to meet the needs of a changing society. This means continuing to support traditional formats, while also providing flexible alternatives to help people maintain their love of the game and keep playing throughout the different stages of their lives, from mini soccer to walking football.

## Strategic Priorities

- Support local leagues, clubs and partners to sustain participation levels by providing a variety of formats across all levels of the game to suit changing demand
- Work with leagues on developing succession planning and facilitate quarterly steering groups to share best practice, offer advice and resolve challenges
- Work with schools to help ensure young players have a positive first experience of football, providing the platform for building a lifelong love of the game
- Ensure every girl has equal access to opportunities to participate, compete, and excel through the game in Hertfordshire
- Elevate the awareness of inclusive provision available in Hertfordshire and encourage more clubs to offer inclusive sessions

## Key Measures

- Sustain the number of registered male players at 37,218
- Increase the number of registered female players to 6,373
- Increase the number of registered disability players to 524
- Increase the number of Weetabix Wildcats centres to 45

# POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

*A game that's representative of our diverse footballing community, played in a safe and inclusive environment*

If football is to thrive we must ensure that everyone is free to enjoy the game, safe from abuse and discrimination. At its heart, football is about uniting as a team to overcome challenges. As a football community we must all work together to ensure that whatever the results on the pitch, everyone is able to enjoy playing and build a lifelong love of the game.

## Strategic Priorities

- Maintain and enhance robust safeguarding standards, embedding a child-centred culture and best practice across the grassroots game
- Drive initiatives that promote positive behaviours and deliver a game free from abuse and discrimination in youth and adult grassroots football
- Support clubs and leagues in continually raising standards through ongoing support of key national programmes such as Respect and England Football Accreditation
- Enable clear and straightforward reporting procedures to allow poor practice and behaviour to be brought to light and dealt with quickly and effectively
- Apply fair, consistent and transparent governance across the game
- Ensure inclusion is at the heart of our grassroots football programmes, increasing opportunities for those from underrepresented groups in our community

## Key Measures

- Maintain The FA Safeguarding Standard for County FAs
- Establish and embed an effective Inclusion Advisory Group



*"Safeguarding in football is not just about qualifications and DBS checks. It is vital that everyone involved in the game understands how they can play their part in keeping it safe"*

**Gemma Chaffey, Hertfordshire FA  
Designated Safeguarding Officer**



*"Football needs to make the most of all the talents available to it. We need to offer support that is both inclusive and flexible so that everyone has the chance to learn and develop"*

**Daniel Fenner, FA Diversity and Inclusion Officer and County Coach Developer**

# GRASSROOTS WORKFORCE

*Delivering services that help grassroots football flourish by inspiring, supporting and retaining volunteers in the game*

It takes a small army of dedicated people to make grassroots football happen. While some are paid, the vast majority are volunteers, giving up their free time to help others. We want to support the grassroots workforce so that they feel confident and valued in undertaking their roles and are able to direct their energy and expertise into making the game better.

## Strategic Priorities

- Promote access to the learning opportunities that enable volunteers to get involved and make a positive impact on the game and their communities
- Provide services and support to help the workforce focus their time on the delivery of a quality football experience
- Enable the continuous development of all those involved in delivering football via an ongoing programme of learning events
- Help secure a sustainable future for the game by ensuring the next generation of volunteers are able to make their voices heard
- Recognise and celebrate the contribution of volunteers to our game through our Grassroots Football Awards

## Key Measures

- Provide CPD and networking opportunities for coaches and referees
- Increase the number of youth teams with a qualified coach to 90%
- Recruitment, conversion, retention and progress of referees
- Encourage the development of Youth Forums across clubs and leagues
- Increase the proportion of coaches and referees from underrepresented groups

# CLUB AND LEAGUE NETWORK

*A vibrant network of clubs and leagues that deliver grassroots football that meets the needs of the community*

Clubs and leagues are the cornerstones of grassroots game. We are here to support them in delivering high quality opportunities for everyone who wants to play football, providing the tools, resources and guidance to help them operate effectively and grow sustainably, so that they can continue to add value to their communities for years to come.

## Strategic Priorities

- Support and guide clubs in operating as effective and efficient organisations in line with the requirements of England Football Accreditation
- Embed a broader set of playing opportunities at clubs to meet the needs of male, female and disability pathways
- Support leagues to deliver modern, safe and inclusive competitions to meet the needs of the game and maximise development and playing opportunities
- Support leagues and clubs to use FA systems to allow simple and efficient grassroots football administration

## Key Measures

- Increase the number of youth clubs achieving England Football accreditation at 90%
- Increase the number of adult clubs achieving England Football accreditation to 75%
- Increase the number of youth clubs with female teams to 75%
- Increase the number of clubs with a full female pathway to 25



*"We are always looking for ways to develop and improve. With the right help and support we can continue to provide more opportunities for inclusive football across the county"*

**Tracy Light**  
**Herts Youth Inclusive Football**



*"Our facility is not only of huge benefit to pupils, but to the health and wellbeing of all in the local area who are able to make use of it. It's a real asset for the whole community"*

**Matt Gauthier**  
Head Teacher, Samuel Ryder Academy

# FACILITIES

*Connecting providers with expertise and sources of funding to increase access to good quality pitches across grassroots football*

All the hard work and effort that goes into making football happen is for nothing if you don't have a pitch to play on. Too many games are cancelled because of bad weather and playing on a poor quality pitch makes for a less enjoyable experience. If we are to grow the game it is vital that the stock of both grass and artificial pitches is greatly improved.

Investment from The FA, Premier League and Government has made a difference, with more than £1bn being put into facilities across England over the last 20 years, but there is much more that needs to be done. Further investment is planned across the country and our role is ensure those in Hertfordshire are in a position to take full advantage of this.

## Strategic Priorities

- Work with clubs and Local Authorities to secure investment through the Football Foundation to deliver priority projects identified within the Local Football Facility Plans
- Improve the quality of grass pitches across the county by helping clubs engage effectively with the support and funding available
- Enhance the knowledge of grounds teams responsible for preparing and maintaining pitches through an ongoing programme of CPD
- Work with Sport England and the 10 Local Authorities in Hertfordshire to refresh the Playing Pitch Strategies for our area

## Key Measures

- 116 more grass pitches to achieve a PitchPower rating of 'Good'
- 14 new full size 3G pitches added in the county

# GOVERNANCE

*An effective modern organisation with the structures and processes in place to offer the best possible service to the game at a local level*

Our goal is to provide effective support tailored to the needs of our football community. Throughout the pandemic we have all seen just how responsive and adaptable we can be when faced with a challenge and we want to ensure that this continues moving forward.

## Strategic Priorities

- Ensure excellent corporate governance through a membership that is diverse and representative of football in the county
- Have a high performing County FA workforce that meets the needs of the business and those of the grassroots game
- Provide and promote initiatives that place an emphasis upon good physical and mental health and wellbeing for both our staff and the wider grassroots football community
- Deliver a commercial strategy that increases revenue into the business and allows for greater reinvestment back into the grassroots game
- Maximise use of the 3G pitch and education facilities at The County Ground
- Ensure that robust and effective financial management systems are in place that allow the business to thrive

## Key Measures

- Meet The FA Code of Governance for County FAs
- Achieve Preliminary Level of the Equality Standard
- Achieve all areas of The FA Financial Standards
- Customer Service feedback via Freshdesk platform
- Scores in staff State of Play survey



*"Even in the relatively short time I have been involved I have seen a real willingness within the organisation to embrace change in order to better serve the needs of the local game"*

**Greg Heaton, Hertfordshire FA  
Senior Independent Non Executive Director**

# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

*We cannot achieve our goals alone. It is only by working together with others that we can realise all the benefits that football can offer*

From the countless volunteers who keep the game going across grassroots, to charities, organisations and agencies who share a common purpose, it's a real team effort. We are proud to have close working relationships with our partners and together we can maximise the positive impact on our communities.



# HERTFORDSHIRE FOOTBALL IN 2024

*We look forward to supporting an even bigger, stronger, and more inclusive football community in the future*

**37,218**

Male  
Players

**6,373**

Female  
Players

**524**

Disability  
Players

**3,251**

Teams

**90%**

Youth clubs are England  
Football Accredited

**70%**

Adult clubs are England  
Football Accredited

**75%**

Youth clubs with a  
female team

**25**

Clubs with a  
full female pathway

**90%**

Youth teams with a  
qualified coach

**750**

Registered Referees

**22**

Leagues

**40**

Full size 3G pitches listed  
on The FA Pitch Register

**229**

Grass pitches achieved a  
PitchPower rating of Good

**45**

Weetabix Wildcats  
Centres

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