



# Lancashire FA Youth Voice Framework

## Youth Consultation, Engagement & Development

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## The Lancashire FA Vision for Football

### **“A Game for Everyone”**

This vision is simple in content, but powerful in impact, with a clearly stated aim that the game of grassroots football should be accessible, in some way, to all members of our community.

#### Forewords

##### Simon Gerrard – Chief Executive

The pace of change in our society is ever-increasing, and with it the demands on young people dramatically expand, leaving less room for activities that do not meet their needs. This makes it more important than ever that we bring the youth perspective into decision-making about how football looks, feels and responds. We need to work with young people, carefully listening and taking the time to understand what they want, so we can get it right and flex the game to stay current and relevant, future-proofing football’s involvement with the generations to come.

At Lancashire FA we recognise that young people want the game on their terms, and we need to follow this lead and embrace technology that supports this. I would encourage all footballing stakeholders to similarly be led in this way and work hard to form true youth-adult partnerships that can engage young people, giving them a voice at the table to shape football of the future.

##### Neil A Yates – Head of Safeguarding and Well-Being

With nearly 50,000 participants within grassroots youth football in Lancashire, children and young people occupy one of our biggest stakeholder groups. Over four hundred clubs with over four thousand teams play each weekend in games, which are often refereed by young people too.

Our clubs and leagues have done great work, historically, in creating and developing such comprehensive provision, but this has been based almost entirely on adult interpretations of what young people want and need from the game. The truth is, it is THEIR game, not ours, and the time has come for us to consult, engage and, in some cases, develop young people to shape youth football going forwards.

My vision is for all clubs and leagues to accurately reflect the views of their youngest members in determining the future game. Of course, as the body responsible for governing the game we need to lead by example and ensure our governance structure can demonstrate meaningful and impactful input from young people. We have talked about youth engagement for several years, but with limited success. The time for talking has now finished, and this is the time for action.





## Lancashire FA Youth Voice Framework Purpose

- To **consult** children and young people involved in grassroots football, both at county and club level, to gain a much richer insight into their needs and aspirations within their game.
- To **engage** with children and young people in grassroots football, at county, league and club level to ensure they play a pivotal role in deciding what their game should look like in the future.
- To **develop** the skills and attributes of young people, empowered by football, to improve their personal employability and enrich their current and future contribution to the game.







## Why Should We Engage Young People?

“Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to be heard in decisions that affect them. It is also important that children and young people have the opportunity to voice their opinions when making decisions that affect them because they have many varied experiences, insightful ideas and plenty of enthusiasm.”

[Save The Children's Consultation Toolkit](#)

“Ben Levin (1999) pointed out that the fear of students as ‘revolutionaries’, bent on undermining the system is mostly unfounded: most students’ wishes he says, are ‘modest, even timid. They do not seek to overthrow the system, or even to control it. They do, however, want to understand why things are done as they are. They would like to be able to voice their views about change and have them heard. They wish to have some more choice about what and how they learn. These are all reasonable expectations.”

Rudduck 2002

“There is growing evidence of the desire from children and young people to be involved in decisions and services affecting their lives. There is equally evidence of a response from a number of researchers and practitioners to incorporate children and young person’s perceptions in service evaluation.”

Walker 2001







## The Role of Lancashire FA and our Priorities

Lancashire FA is the governing authority for all sanctioned grassroots football played across our footprint. As such, we need to demonstrate leadership in the drive towards establishing a culture of youth engagement and empowerment right across the game. In order to provide this strategic and operational direction we need to:

- Ensure the voice of young people is an agenda item, with discussions minuted, at all Board meetings.
- Ask if the voice of young people can be heard in any football development or other initiatives driven by the Association.
- Create a Youth Voice Football Advisory Board, based on an equal youth-adult partnership to serve as a link between the Board of Directors and the Executive Staff of the Association.
- Ensure our website and social media platforms are used to promote the youth engagement agenda and to liaise directly with young people in age-appropriate ways.
- Promote the concept of youth engagement through our league and club network.
- Act as an advocate for young people in Lancashire when shaping their future game in dialogue with The FA.
- Ensure that young people from every part of Lancashire's diverse culture, including those with the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation), are fully integrated within our football provision and involved in consultation and engagement so their voices and opinions are heard, and they can be part of shaping football's future.





## The Framework

The core principle around our youth engagement plan is sustainability, with the development and promotion of long-term cultural change, rather than short-term changes or tokenistic gestures.

It is predicated on the commitment of the Board and Senior Leadership Team of Lancashire FA that, not only will we consult and engage young people where possible, we will make changes to the game and its governance in response to what we learn.

For this to become part of the culture, it will require universal acknowledgement from both children and adults that an equal partnership between both is pivotal to success. The truth is children cannot play organised football without adults, but similarly, without children, there is evidently no youth football.

The Framework is based on the following key elements:

- Three discrete, differentiated age groups: 7-11, 12-16, 17-21.
- A tailored approach, with different tactics for each age group, based on age, cognitive capacity and needs.
- SMART objectives with agreed actions within defined timescales.
- A monitoring and evaluation process to assess impact and make adjustments as required.







## Actions and Milestones

# Youth Consultation and Engagement 2021

Objective-Action	Commitment	Duration	Start	Finish	Predecessors
1 To consult young people as to their football experience and the future game	We commit to consulting directly and facilitating via clubs and leagues	281d	01/02/21	28/02/22	
2 1.1 Lancashire FA survey ages 7-16		20d	01/02/21	26/02/21	
3 1.2 Examine feedback and create report		23d	01/03/21	31/03/21	
4 1.3 Create template form for club consultation		23d	31/03/21	30/04/21	
5 1.4 Repeat Lancashire FA survey annually to establish trends		261d	01/03/21	28/02/22	
6 1.5 Seek an appropriate method for consulting 16-21 and implement		22d	30/04/21	31/05/21	
7 1.6 Ensure all consultation and engagement is inclusive and respects diversity and equality		221d	28/02/21	31/12/21	
8 1.7 Ensure all consultation and engagement meets all safeguarding protocols and responsibilities		221d	28/02/21	31/12/21	
9 To engage with young people and promote youth-adult partnerships to shape the future of youth football	We commit to actively promote youth adult partnerships in governance, clubs and leagues	154d	01/03/21	30/09/21	
10 2.1 Research youth-adult partnership theory and history		88d	01/03/21	30/06/21	
11 2.2 Research effective youth leadership in county FAs		88d	31/03/21	30/07/21	
12 2.3 To establish a youth-adult football Football Advisory Board at Lancashire FA		110d	30/04/21	30/09/21	
13 2.4 To create and launch a "child/family friendly kitemark with potential future membership benefits		88d	30/04/21	31/08/21	
14 2.5 To update youth friendly area on website with age differentiation for relevance		66d	31/03/21	30/06/21	
15 2.6 Create and deliver workshops on youth-adult partnerships to clubs and leagues		66d	30/04/21	30/07/21	
16 2.7 Presentation by two youth councils to Safeguarding Conference on engagement		58d	31/03/21	18/06/21	
17 To develop future leaders and volunteers through football	We commit to supporting young volunteers to develop life skills and increase employability prospects	198d	31/03/21	31/12/21	
18 3.1 Promote key skills required for the Youth Football Advisory Board in role specification		66d	31/03/21	30/06/21	
19 3.2 Explore training and development opportunities for young volunteers		67d	30/06/21	30/09/21	
20 3.3 Explore CV writing assistance and developing interview skills		67d	30/09/21	31/12/21	







## Evaluating Impact

Evaluation and impact will be built into the Terms of Reference of the Lancashire FA Youth Voice Football Advisory Board. Similarly, Board, Senior Leadership Team and Departmental meetings need to have the “Voice of the Child” as a regular agenda item to create a culture of youth engagement, that is embedded in the same way as safeguarding currently is at Lancashire FA.

In order to facilitate positive and sustainable change in the youth game, it will require the game’s authorities to be willing to change provision to reflect the youth agenda. Whilst some of this will be outside the control of Lancashire FA, we will continue to be loud and persistent advocates for positive, youth-driven change.

## Summary

This document provides an aspirational, and measurable and timed, commitment to change the face of youth football within Lancashire. By establishing a ‘youth adult’ partnership within governance and promoting this within our stakeholder network we can help to ensure that young people have a much greater say in how their football looks, feels and sounds.

We know it will take time to embed this cultural change, and we may meet opposition or resistance on the way, but this is absolutely the right thing to do. In being a tireless voice for change, we will improve the football experience for thousands of young people and in the process boost both recruitment and retention across all roles.

