

Oxfordshire FA



# *YOUTH* **CONSULTATION**

*Report Three: Referee Staying in the Game*



**MAY 2022**



**Oxfordshire FA**



# INTRODUCTION

Alongside our Oxfordshire FA Youth Leadership Team, we are excited to launch the third instalment of our youth consultation initiative. This is where we are regularly getting feedback from children & young people across the county to help make continuous positive improvements.

The aim of 'Youth Referee Staying in the Game' consultation is to get the views of 16-21-year-old referees across the county. The consultation aim was specifically to get their views on their current experience and making the transition from officiating youth to adult football.

This insight will help shape our work for the 2022-23 season and hopefully support us keep more individuals aged 16-21 officiating into their adult years.

I would personally like to thank all 41 registered young referees that took part in the study and look forward to working with you going forward as we shape the game together.

**Nigel Saverton**  
Education, Safeguarding & Referee Support Manager

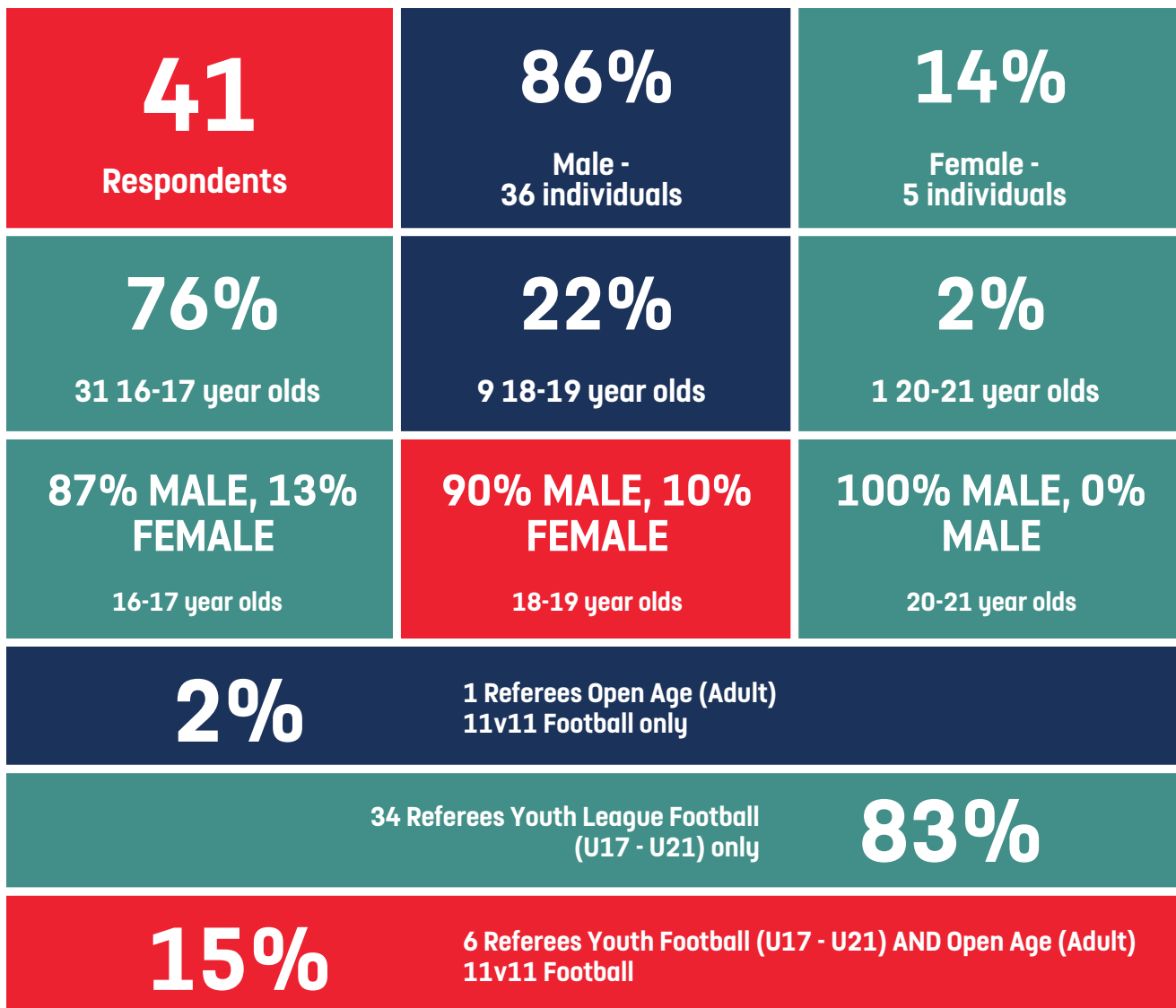
“  
*It is vital we listen to the views of young people to help make continuous improvements to the game in Oxfordshire to help keep everyone involved into their adult years*  
”

# CONSULTATION SAMPLE

Consultation was carried out online using a Microsoft Form with respondents completing different questions based on whether they refereed youth (U17-U21) only, Adult Open Age only or both youth (u17-U21) and adult open age football.

A range of open and closed questions were used.

41 Oxfordshire FA registered referees aged 16-21 took part which is 46% of the total number registered across this age category.



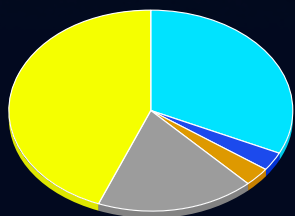
AGE GROUPS INDIVIDUALS REFEREE	
U7 - U9	5
U10 - U12	32
U13 - U16	30
U17 - U18	2
Open Age	7

OFA SANCTIONED LEAGUES	
Oxfordshire Youth Football League	23
Witney & District Youth League	21

Oxfordshire Girls Football League	13
BOBi League	1
Witney & District FA	1
Oxfordshire Senior Football League	0
Banbury District & Lord Jersey	0
Oxford City Football League	0
Oxfordshire Over 50s League	0
Non OFA Sanctioned Leagues	0
Uhlspport Hellenic League	1
JPL Midlands	1



# RATE YOUR CURRENT EXPERIENCE OF REFEREEING IN YOUTH (U7-18) FOOTBALL?



- 3% VERY NEGATIVE
- 3% NEGATIVE
- 18% NEITHER POSITIVE NOR NEGATIVE
- 44% POSITIVE
- 32% VERY POSITIVE

## 76%

of respondents rated their experience of refereeing U7 – U18 football as 'positive' or better with 32% feeling their experience was 'very positive'.

18% felt their experience was neither 'positive nor negative' with only 6% feeling it was 'negative' or worse.

There was only a marginal difference in experience between male and female referees.

# EXPLORING THE REASONS

**Tell us a bit more about why you think this?**

## POSITIVE EXPERIENCE POSITIVE RESPECT

The main theme that emerged that resulted in young referees having a positive experience was how respectful most players were towards them, particularly the younger age groups. It was stated that the high level of support provided by parents and coaches was a key factor for their experience being positive.

This however was a conflicting view as shown in the section below.

## GAINING SKILLS & EXPERIENCE

The second key factor for a positive experience was how refereeing provided individuals the opportunity to gain new transferable skills and experience for later in life. It was stated that it was an enjoyable way to gain key skills such as communication and build confidence.

## FUN & INTERESTING

The third most prominent theme was that overall individuals found the role of a referee fun and interesting due to it being a different experience each week.



## MATCH FEES

Despite only stated by three respondents, the reason provided for their experience being positive was due to it being a good way to earn money and it was good pay for their age.

## NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE POOR BEHAVIOUR

The most emerging theme that was currently having a negative impact on experience was poor behaviour from players, coaches or spectators. This was mentioned by 9 individuals in total with a couple that even though stated they had an overall positive experience, poor behaviour had an impact at times.

Respondents stated that they have received verbal abuse from coaches, parents and spectators. It was also mentioned by two individuals how they feel some coaches and parents take it too seriously and they can get quite angry and aggressive.

“

*I wear my U18s arm band to show I'm still not an adult and try and defuse the situation, but people just look past this and shout abuse*

”



# IS THERE ANYTHING THAT WILL LIKELY STOP YOU FROM REFEREEING?



32%

of respondents stated that nothing would likely make them stop refereeing vs 68% that gave a reason for potentially dropping out in the future.

## EXPLORING WHY YOUNG REFEREES MIGHT DROP OUT

68%

of respondents gave a reason for potentially stopping

44%

of these stated verbal abuse from players, coaches, or spectators as the reason for potentially dropping out of the game.

### 1. VERBAL ABUSE

The main reason stated for young referees potentially dropping out of the game was due to verbal abuse from players, coaches, and parents.

It was stated they encounter "shouty", "rude" and "disrespectful" parents and managers on a regular basis.

### 2. STUDY OR OTHER COMMITMENTS

The second most emerging theme was young referees would likely drop out due to studying or other commitments which

meant they were unavailable at the weekend.

It was stated by one individual that support linking up with other counties when individuals moving away to university would be useful.

### 3. LACK OF SUPPORT

Despite only being mentioned by two respondents, it was stated that the lack of support to referees was off-putting.

More information and support on how to progress, improve and excel would be beneficial.

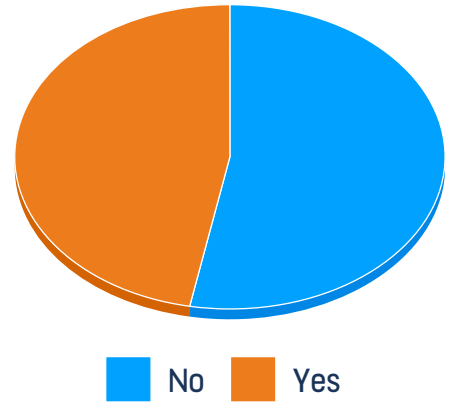
### 4. POOR ORGANISATION OF FIXTURES

This was only mentioned by one individual, but the continued disorganisation of referee appointments was "making refereeing a lot more difficult" than it should be.

### 5. INJURY

The final theme was that individuals would not drop out from refereeing unless they got an injury.

# IS THERE ANYTHING **PUTTING YOU OFF** REFEREEING OPEN-AGE (ADULT) FOOTBALL?



**53%**

of respondents said nothing was putting them off from refereeing open-age football currently or in the future.

of individuals have provided a reason for currently not wanting to referee adult open-age football in Oxfordshire now or in the future.

**47%**



# EXPLORING THE REASONS

Tell us a bit more about why you think this?

## 1. POOR RESPECT & DISCIPLINE

The main emerging theme for young referees being put off refereeing in open age football now or in the near future was the worry of being on the end of verbal abuse and poor discipline from players, managers and spectators.

It was stated that they felt there was a lack of respect towards young referees in the adult game and this put them off.

## 2. MY AGE

The second main point was that respondents felt that they were not old enough yet to referee open age football.

The majority of these responses came from 16- and 17-year-olds.

## 3. LACK OF EXPERIENCE & CONFIDENCE

The third theme that emerged was young referees said that they felt they lacked experience and confidence to make the transition into adult football.

It was mentioned that they would require more training and mentoring to make this step.

## 4. SUPPORT & GUIDANCE

Linking to the above point around training, it was also mentioned that not knowing the differences between youth & adult football and not knowing what to expect was putting them off.

Guidance in this area would be beneficial to help build knowledge and confidence.

## 5. REFEREE APPOINTMENTS

It was only mentioned once, but it was mentioned that a better process of appointing young referees needs to be implemented, making sure they are appointed to games based on their ability & experience.





# The FA



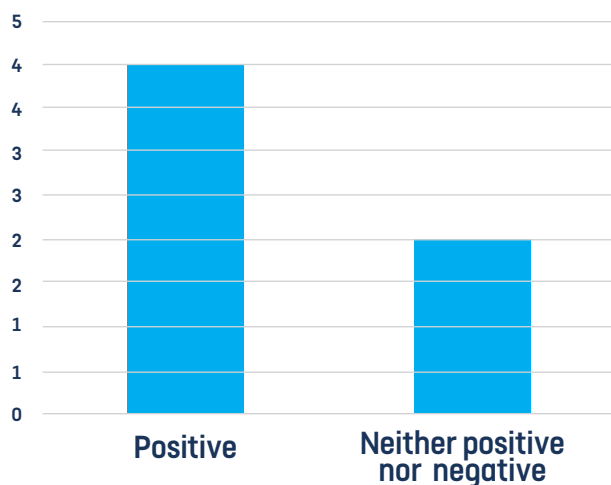
## TheFA.com/Refereeing

Competition				Date				Venue							
Pitch/apparel inspection															
Teams		Home				Capt		Away				Capt		Assistants	
Colours						k.o. time						k.o. time			
GOALS SCORED		1st half						1st half							
		2nd half						2nd half							
		Extra time						Extra time							
	Sub	Name			Time	C	S/O	Sub	Name			Time	C	S/O	Codes
1															C1 Unsporting
2															C2 Dissent
															C3 Persistent
															C4 Delaying R



# WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT EXPERIENCE OF REFEREEING OPEN AGE (ADULT) 11V11 FOOTBALL?

The following feedback was from 6 individuals that stated they refereed adult football in the county.



4 individuals stated that their current experience of officiating in open age football was **POSITIVE**

The other 2 said their experience was neither positive nor negative.

Four of these match officials said they were 18 years and older.

## WHAT ARE THE REASONS?

The reasons for respondents stating their experience being neither positive nor negative were that there could be poor discipline and dissent in the adult game.

This therefore impacted in their overall experience being positive or very positive.

Two individuals that gave positive overall said they enjoyed officiating adult football however they both mentioned challenges with respect.

“

*There is a little more verbal abuse from players compared to youth football but is manageable most of the time*

”





# DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY BARRIERS GOING FROM REFEREEING YOUTH FOOTBALL TO REFEREEING OPEN-AGE (ADULT) FOOTBALL?

Two out of six respondents stated they had experienced barriers going from refereeing youth football to adult football.

The first individual stated it was due to travel and not having a driving licence so they couldn't get to games they were appointed to further afield.

The second respondent said they lacked confidence and did not know anyone in the adult game which impacted their transition to adult football.

## WHAT DO YOU FEEL WOULD SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE EXISTING YOUNG REFEREES TO START REFEREEING ADULT FOOTBALL?

In no order, these are some of the things that respondents feel would support existing young referees start officiating adult football.

### MENTORING

It was stated that more mentoring for young referees is needed, this is not only in their first four matches as an official at youth but also as they make the leap into adult football.

Linked to this, one individual said introducing young referees' to adult friendly games either as an assistant referee or referee might be useful as a starting point.

### SUPPORT MEETINGS

It was mentioned by two respondents that support evenings would be useful for young referees. Linked to this, it was said guidance on what to expect and what the process of transitioning into adult football is.

### EDUCATION OF COACHES & PLAYERS

It was stated that education was needed for managers, coaches, and players to make sure there was more respect and less dissent towards young referees.



# IS THERE ANYTHING THAT WILL LIKELY **STOP YOU** FROM REFEREEING?

It was stated that if verbal abuse, disrespectful and unhelpful comments became a weekly occurrence then this would likely make them want to quit the game.

Despite only being mentioned by one individual, it was said that poor communication from coaches when confirming the game (i.e., venue, changes to kick-off time etc.) would make them stop refereeing.

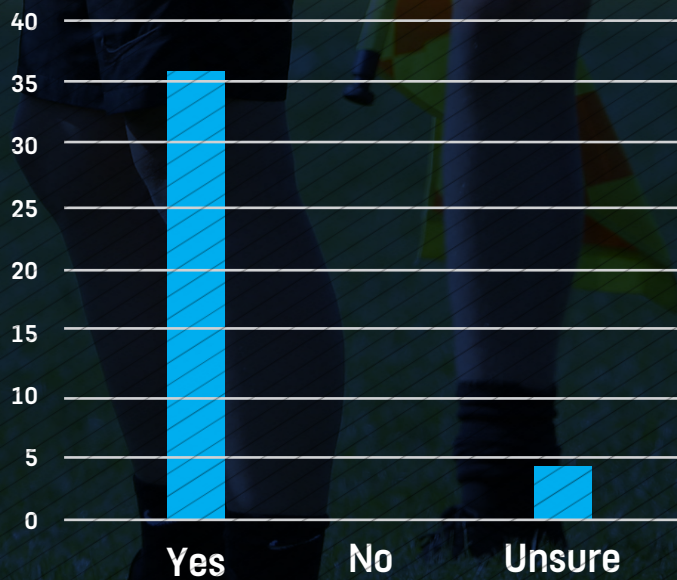
Finally, it was stated that moving away for education would make them stop officiating in Oxfordshire. However, finding an opportunity in another area of the country would be beneficial.





# REPORTING CONCERNS

IF YOU HAD **A CONCERN OR PROBLEM**  
WHEN REFEREEING, WOULD YOU KNOW  
**HOW TO REPORT THIS?**



**36 (87%)**

of respondents said that they know how to report any concerns or issues that they might have when refereeing.

**0** respondents said they didn't know and

**5** said they were unsure.



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