

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

PROGRESS REPORT 2025



A game free from discrimination

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Measuring progress



In 2024, we published our four-year EDI strategy, A Game Free From Discrimination. One year on, we're publishing this report to take stock of our progress and identify opportunities and goals for the future. We recognise that progress in our work

is not always linear, but we remain focused on moving forwards, adapting and evolving as we go.

For better or worse, football is a mirror of current societal trends, and at the moment this means we are facing some challenging situations within the game. The ever-changing landscape that we operate within, like recent changes to the law, has meant we have had to make some changes.

Within our remit, we are continuing to push for meaningful change within the world of football. We know that football has an extraordinary power to bring people and communities together – our job is to harness that power and ensure as best as possible that football is representative, inclusive, and most of all, safe at every level.

We know that making a real, lasting difference is not achieved alone. That's why a key focus for us this season has been on uniting stakeholders from across football to tackle challenges together in a collaborative way.

Through close working with our partners at the Premier League and the English Football League, this year we reached the milestone of all 92 clubs in

England's top four divisions publicly reporting on their workforce and coaching diversity data for the first time.

We hosted an inaugural Football Leadership Summit, which brought together industry leaders from across football and the wider business landscape to discuss and address issues we all face.

And we have expanded our campaigning efforts to focus on improving bystander reporting of discriminatory behaviour, aided by partners across the game, including our County FA network. Our new initiative in this space, Flag It, has now completed its pilot phase, while our refreshed Enough is Enough campaign has been seen by millions and has contributed to an increase in serious cases being reported and investigated.

While we recognise there will always be more work to do, we also celebrate progress when we see it. In July, 75,000 people lined London's streets to welcome home England's Women's EURO-winning squad; it was a powerful reminder of how far the women's game has come.

In this report, we look at the past year's work against each of the six key deliverables outlined in our original strategy. There is much still to be done, but whether it's on the pitch, in the boardroom or in front of millions, we are deeply committed to making football safe, inclusive and representative.

Yasir Mirza
Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Boys take part in
a Devon FA event



Unite leaders across professional football
to tackle the big EDI challenges

Alexis Ohanian (below) and Sam
Rapoport (bottom right) speaking
at the Football Leadership Summit

Joining forces

We're working
in new ways
with our partners
across football
to enact real,
tangible change

FOOTBALL
LEADERSHIP
SUMMIT



Every governing body in football is unique, with its own ambitions, challenges and audiences, but there are far more commonalities than differences and plenty of opportunities for joint working. In the past, the FA, EFL and Premier League focused on EDI largely independently of one another; that has evolved and the results speak for themselves. This year, we've worked more closely than ever with the EFL and Premier League, pooling our resources and presenting a united front to ensure our efforts have a concrete, lasting impact.

One of the most visible ways football supporters may have encountered this joint initiative is through the Love Football, Protect the Game campaign. Launched in 2022, the campaign aims to ensure a safe matchday environment for everyone, tackling anti-social and discriminatory behaviour through enhanced measures and sanctions. This year, we've worked with partners to shift the focus of the campaign towards encouraging bystander reporting, a change in approach that has begun closing the gap between discriminatory incidents and the reporting of them.

We work together in stadiums, but our combined influence extends to boardrooms too. In November 2024, we held the inaugural Football Leadership Summit, bringing together leaders across football and business to explore how effective leadership can make the football industry more diverse and inclusive. One keynote speaker was Alexis Ohanian, co-founder of Reddit and a passionate advocate for women's sports. He engaged with attendees about lessons to be learned from the business world. Ohanian has since

become a minority investor in Chelsea Women and has been vocal in the media about the growth potential for women's sports in England.

Other speakers at the summit included award-winning sports executive Sam Rapoport, who discussed ways to increase the number of female coaches in men's sports. All four CEOs of the FA, WPLL, EFL and Premier League also participated, taking part in panel discussions and publicly committing to actions to improve the game's diversity.

One such discussion was chaired by Deji Davies, director at Brentford FC and chair of the FA's Inclusion Advisory Board, who was enthusiastic about the new collaborative approach. "The summit represents a new dawn for football," he said. "It brings together senior leadership from across the industry to ensure the game becomes more inclusive and representative of our communities."

The commitments made at the summit were not just empty words. One of the key actions spearheaded by the FA was to require all 92 professional clubs in the Premier League and EFL to publicly report on their workforce's diversity. By July 2025, every club had made that data available for the first time.

We now have an accurate picture of diversity at club level and can turn our focus to analysing the data and supporting them on their individual EDI journeys. Thanks to the partnership working we've established this year, we can maintain a united approach as we continue down this important path. A second summit is planned for November 2025, which will take the next step on from mandatory reporting, asking clubs to commit to a set of individual goals and targets.



92

Every PL and EFL club publicly
reported on their workforce and
coaching diversity data for the
first time

Increase the number of players from under-represented groups in grassroots football

Everyone's game

We're dedicated to growing participation across under-represented groups

More people are playing football than ever before; 15.3 million play regularly across England and that number is on the rise. But that doesn't mean our work is done for us. Some groups are still under-represented and we want to help get them involved too. This year, our work has focused on three such groups – the South Asian community, women and girls, and disabled people.

In June 2025, just 6.2% of youth players in England were of South Asian descent. We want to boost that figure, which is why in January 2025 we published a new three-year plan – Build, Connect, Support – that aims to increase South Asian representation in English football. We've also set up the South Asians in Football Working Group, comprised of 14 people who have a deep knowledge of the football landscape and wider context of South Asian communities, and who meet regularly to keep us on track.

Coaching training taking place at St. George's Park; a KS2 girls' football session (inset)



Girls enjoying football training at a school in Neasden

One of the key aims of the new plan is to raise awareness of the different pathways into football for members of the South Asian community. In April, we hosted a course at Wembley Stadium for South Asians in football looking to make their first steps into a career in talent scouting. The Level 2 Talent ID course taught the 36 participants the fundamentals of scouting, with every participant being awarded a qualification at its conclusion. Newcastle United scout Abdul Habib took part in a Q&A, sharing insights into his scouting journey and his role as a full-time scout.

The importance of role models is highlighted by the success of England's Lionesses, whose EURO triumphs have been reflected in soaring participation levels among women and girls. There was a 4% increase in women and girls playing football during the 2024/25 season, taking the total to 5.5 million, with 90% of schools now providing equal access for girls in the school curriculum.

But while transformational growth has been achieved, significant work remains to unlock equal opportunities for women and girls. This year, we've launched a new campaign, Made for This Game, which continues the drive to empower all women and girls to access and enjoy football. Made for This Game is now the prominent brand for all of our activity in this sector.



The England women's blind team in action on the pitch;
a child takes part in the
Comets programme (below)



A referee trainee in Coventry

We're also focused on improving development opportunities for young female players, especially those from under-represented backgrounds. The 2024/25 season saw us reach the end of the first three-year cycle of our Girls' Emerging Talent Centres (ETCs) project, which aims to identify and develop future potential players by providing local, accessible high-quality training environments in collaboration with clubs, County FAs, community organisations and universities. Over the last three years of the programme, we have set up 70 centres and have seen an 87% increase in players from ethnically under-represented groups.

Disability football is another key focus for us, driven by our four-year strategy Football Without Limits. Launched in 2024, our efforts are already paying off; the number of players in disability football has increased from 20,654 to 22,630, representing a 10% annual increase.

One of our flagship programmes in this space has been Comets, our recreational football programme for disabled children aged 5-11. This year, we've begun scaling up the programme, running a Comets in Schools pilot with 17 schools, helping us to prepare for a full launch in 2026.

We are also in the second year of our Journey to Inclusion workshops, which provides disability training for grassroots clubs. During the 2024/25 season we held 26 workshops, which were attended by over 500 people representing 295 clubs. Post-workshop feedback showed that the training had a positive impact on attendees' confidence, competence, knowledge, and motivation to be more inclusive of disabled people. As of June 2025, 515 new disability opportunities had been created at clubs following their attendance at a Journey to Inclusion workshop.

Increase coaches and referees from under-represented groups at all levels of the game

New pathways

We are seeing results from our commitment to diversifying the refereeing and coaching workforces

Referees

Our groundbreaking Reflective and Representative campaign entered its second year in 2025 and continues to grow. Aimed at making the referee workforce more diverse, the campaign focuses on three key strands – recruitment, retention and representation – and new programmes and events were introduced this year to provide fresh impetus.

In recruitment, we developed a referee training course, delivered through our County FA network, that is designed specifically for Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage populations. Thirty-one courses were delivered, with one at Gravesend Sikh Gurdwara being the first time a place of worship has hosted such an FA event. Another was held at the ground of Sporting Khalsa FC – a pioneering British-Asian semi-professional football club – and was attended by our Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales, who met with aspiring referees and took part in a lesson on the pitch.

To improve retention, we launched a new mentoring programme in January 2025. Run in partnership with referee support group BAMREF, the programme provides mentoring to Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage match officials working in the grassroots game. Already 20 referee mentors have been trained and deployed across the country thanks to the programme, providing bespoke support to over 200 referees this year alone.

To ensure that our network of match officials is representative of the diversity we see on the pitch, we ran six showcase events across the country offering aspiring referees the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and ambition for officiating at the professional level. For the first time, aspiring referees could self-nominate onto these courses rather than being put forward by their County FA, widening the path into officiating even further. Over 170 match officials took part, and 50 have now been placed into refereeing programmes.

Aspiring match officials in a referee workshop (left); coaches take part in a Made for This Game event (right)

Coaches

We have also continued our efforts to create a more diverse coaching workforce across English football by scaling up our existing programmes. We've increased the number of places available on our successful Club Placement Programme, which gives female coaches from under-represented groups an opportunity to get hands-on coaching experience in the women's game, alongside resources and mentoring. This year, 69% of Club Placement Programme participants went on to secure full or part-time jobs within football.

Our Mentee Development Programme supports aspiring coaches to break into the professional game. The programme gives coaches from Black, Asian, and mixed heritage backgrounds a season-long placement in different professional settings and this year, 100% of learners have secured a full-time or part-time position after taking part.

We have also continued our work in the top echelons of the professional game with England Elite, our flagship coaching programme which recruits coaches from historically under-represented groups to work with our national teams. This year, five people from Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage backgrounds have been placed in positions with the England men's teams via the programme.

17.5%

increase in the number of registered referees from Black, Asian and Mixed heritage backgrounds this season



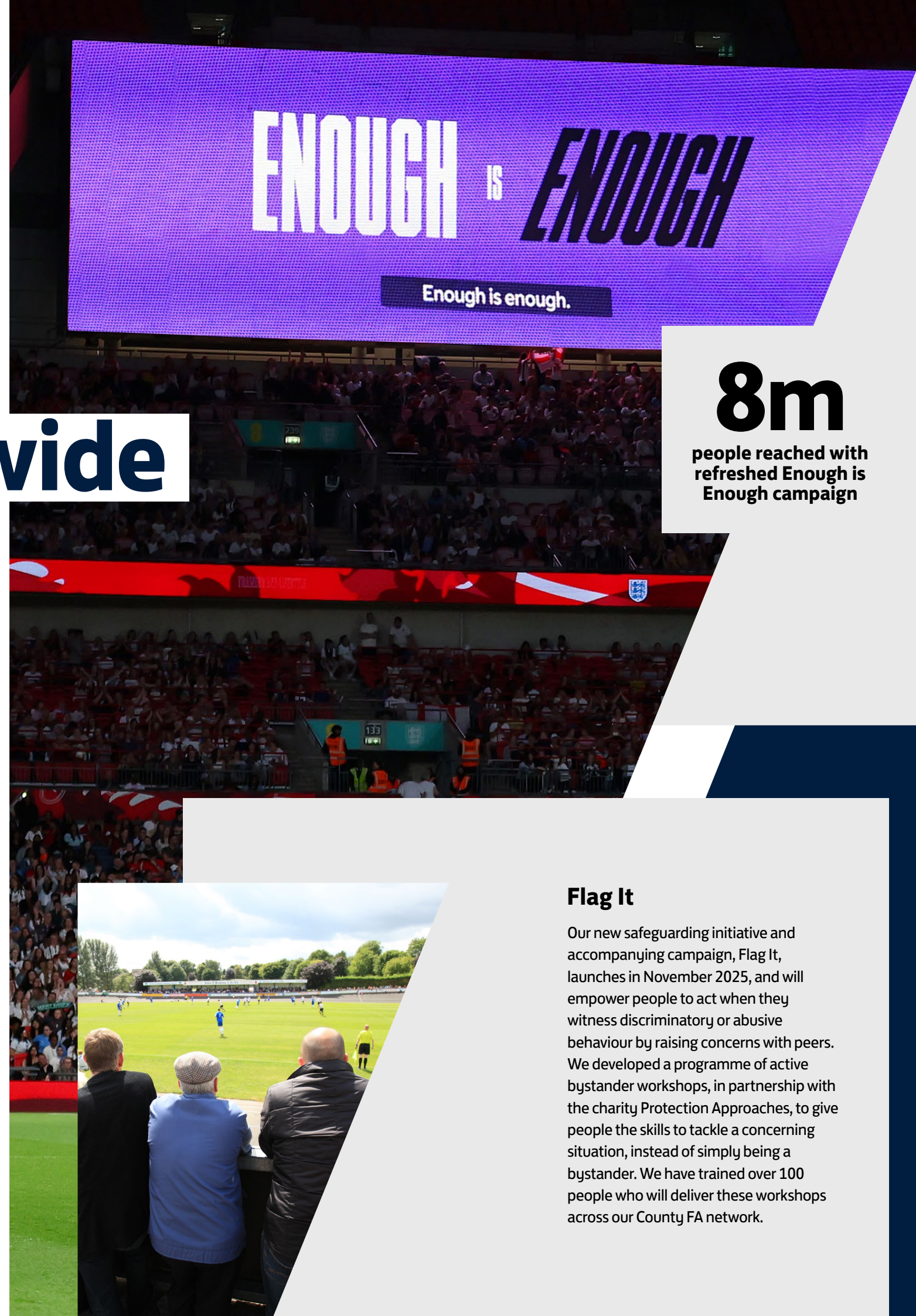
Deliver meaningful and impactful campaigns across the game

Far and wide

New messaging to influence bystander behaviour gave added impetus to our many impactful EDI campaigns

Our numerous campaigns and strategic initiatives provide a platform to share important messaging across both our own channels and external outlets, working to influence behaviour and enact change in our industry.

This year we built on some of our most successful campaigns, by introducing an important shift in messaging for our work tackling discriminatory behaviour in football. Our latest public-facing campaigns focus on driving collective responsibility across the game, encouraging those who witness abuse to step up and report it.



8m

people reached with refreshed Enough is Enough campaign

Enough is Enough

In November 2024, we launched the latest edition of our Enough is Enough campaign, which raises awareness around discriminatory behaviour in grassroots football. Previous iterations of the campaign had focused on the perpetrators of discriminatory behaviour, but the new campaign has seen a shift in messaging to focus on collective responsibility – encouraging bystanders who see, hear or experience hate to report it. Campaign messaging explaining to people how to report any instances they witness has been pushed out across all England Football channels. Whilst allegations of discrimination occur in 0.2% of all grassroots football, it is an area we take very seriously, as we know the impact an incident can have.

Sitting alongside the campaign is the introduction of a number of new measures to tackle unacceptable behaviour, including penalty points accumulations, the accrual of which can trigger FA intervention and even eventual removal of England Football Accreditation. As a result of the new campaign, the 2024/25 season saw a 4% increase in serious cases being reported and investigated. We are continuing to prioritise this area through a range of initiatives and support measures, more details of which are set out in our Annual Discipline Review.

Flag It

Our new safeguarding initiative and accompanying campaign, Flag It, launches in November 2025, and will empower people to act when they witness discriminatory or abusive behaviour by raising concerns with peers. We developed a programme of active bystander workshops, in partnership with the charity Protection Approaches, to give people the skills to tackle a concerning situation, instead of simply being a bystander. We have trained over 100 people who will deliver these workshops across our County FA network.



Rainbow Laces

The 2024/25 season was the final year of our groundbreaking Rainbow Laces campaign, which has promoted LGBT+ equality in sport since 2013. In 2025 we distributed over 7,000 pairs of rainbow laces including to our County FA network, women's professional clubs and the women's National League System. The campaign has achieved its stated purpose to raise awareness, and we are now evolving this work to focus on breaking down stubborn barriers in football for the LGBT+ community, working closely with the County FA network on educational initiatives.



Faith and Football

We work closely with many different faith communities here at the FA. One key way in which we do this is through our Faith and Football events, which invite people to celebrate major dates in their calendar with us at Wembley Stadium. In April 2025 over 700 Muslims joined us at Wembley for a Faith and Football event featuring food, music, panel discussions and a

sunset pitch-side prayer. “The community feel and the fact the Football Association are putting on something for Muslim fans is absolutely incredible,” said one attendee. We also held a Vaisakhi celebration for the Sikh community in May, which was also attended by over 700 people, and we will be hosting Hanukah and Christmas celebrations to round off the year.



Football and Me

Our award-winning flagship EDI content series entered its third season this year, with six new episodes using personal stories to focus on a variety of equality and diversity topics across the game. Filmed at Wembley Stadium, guests this season included EDI expert Liz Ward, who spoke about LGBT+ inclusion in football, footballer Arjan Raikhy discussing his experiences as a South Asian player, and former players Mary Phillip and Ryan Bertrand in conversation about Black History Month.

250k
video views across
all FA channels



Drive further EDI best practice
into our County FA network

Sharing knowledge

**We have increased
our support for
all 50 County FAs,
helping them to
embed good EDI
practices in their
local communities**

There are 50 County FAs in England, overseeing the nation's grassroots and semi-professional football and employing over 750 people. As the governing body for English football, our relationship with the County FAs is crucial to delivering our EDI initiatives, but given the scale of the network we have to operate strategically to support them.

An important focus has been on helping each County FA work towards meeting our Code of Governance, which includes seven EDI requirements for them to achieve. This year, for the first time, every County FA became compliant with the code, marking a significant milestone in our work in grassroots and semi-professional football.

One of the requirements laid out in the Code of Governance was for each County FA to set up their

own Inclusion Advisory Group (IAG), an independent body that supports and challenges the County FA on their EDI actions. This year, we've introduced new ways to assist these IAGs, including holding monthly seminars for all IAG members, each on a different EDI-related theme. These act as a space for them to hear from experts, learn more about a particular topic, and importantly, share best practice with one another.

The network of County FAs supports us in our efforts too. This year, a working group made up of network members has been helping us write a new Equality Standard for all county FAs, which will be launched in the 2025/26 season and act as a blueprint for best-in-class EDI practices for every county FA to follow.

Young players take part in a competition
at West Riding County FA



'Great work'

Inclusion Advisory Groups (IAGs) are comprised of volunteers who want to help their local FA become more inclusive and equitable. This year, Kent FA's IAG have assisted in developing and launching a new Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for the county, which provides a road map setting out how EDI objectives can be met.

David Rainford is a member of the Kent FA's board and has been the chair of its IAG since 2024, helping to develop the action plan. "It's a four-year plan, so we can look incrementally at where we're at with targets and ambitions," he explained. "There's already some great work going on, so it's about progressing EDI across the county. My role as chair is to ensure that EDI is at the centre of the board's thought processes in everything they're doing."

Continue to increase the diversity of the FA workforce and leaders



Two members of the England U17 men's coaching staff

Leading by example

We are making progress towards meeting our 2028 workforce diversity targets

We feel very strongly that any EDI work we do externally must be reflected internally too, which is why increasing the diversity of our workforce is so important to us. In order to work collaboratively and impactfully with other football industry leaders, as well as smaller football associations across the country, we must have our own house in order. We need to lead by example.

Our 2024-2028 strategy, A Game Free From Discrimination, laid out clear targets for diversity in our workforce, across all of our employees including coaching staff and those in leadership roles.

Transparency around these figures is essential and we have committed to publish them every year. This year, the number of staff completing the demographic survey increased by 6%, giving us an even more accurate picture of where we currently are. While we are pleased with our progress in some areas, like the ethnic diversity of our men's team's coaching staff and the gender, LGBTQ+, and disability make-up of our workforce, we need to be better in a number of other areas and are committed to improving the diversity of our leadership team.

EMPLOYEE	GROUP	JUNE 2024	CURRENT (OCT 2025)	2028 TARGET	STRETCH 2028 TARGET
England coaching staff – men's game	Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic background	19%	23%	25%	30%
	Female	42%	43%	50%	50%
All employees	Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic background	17%	14%	20%	23%
	Disability	10%	11%	12%	15%
	LGBTQ+	12%	14%	14%	16%
	Female	38%	30%	45%	50%
Leadership roles	Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic background	7%	7%	15%	18%
	Female	42%	40%	50%	60%
England coaching staff – women's game	Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic background	4%	0%	7%	15%
	Female	42%	40%	50%	60%

The year ahead

We are looking forward to continuing the progress we’ve made this year into 2026 and beyond

Our work has always been fluid. The sport of football is continuously evolving, and at times we have to work reactively to respond to what is happening within the game at the current moment.

We can’t know what the future holds, but we do know that if we establish a solid foundation for our work built on strong values, we will put ourselves in the best position to effectively deal with challenging issues when they arise.

In today’s climate, we know better than ever of the power of football to inspire positive change. Our partners across football are facing many of the same concerns that we are, and through our collaborative work with them, we can feel confident that we will make the right decisions despite the challenges we may face in the future.



In 2026 and beyond, we will:

Launch the new Equality Standard for all County FAs	Increase the reach of our Flag It workshops	Scale up our LGBT+ inclusion work	Expand disability training for grassroots clubs	Continue the implementation of our South Asians in Football Plan	Deliver our third Football Leadership Summit with our partners
The new standard, launching in early 2026, will act as a blueprint for best-in-class EDI practices for every County FA to follow	Previously run through County FAs, Flag It’s Active Bystander workshops will now be rolled out directly to clubs through a series of Train the Trainer sessions	We will issue clear national guidance on LGBT+ inclusion, which will allow for bespoke approaches from all our County FAs and clubs	Our free Journey to Inclusion workshops will be rolled out to more clubs, expanding access and opportunities for disabled people to participate in football	Grassroots parent support networks and regular roadshows will bring people together to discuss particular themes, best practices and challenges	The summit will bring together leaders across football and business to explore how effective leadership can make the football industry more diverse and inclusive

