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The Football Association's
National Game Strategy 2008–2012
The vision for grassroots football in England

YOUR GAME YOUR SAY OUR GOAL

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7 MILLION PLAYERS

3 MILLION ADULTS

4 MILLION CHILDREN

81% OF ALL BOYS 5-15

31% OF ALL GIRLS 5-15

125,000 TEAMS

1,700 LEAGUES

£44M FA INVESTMENT PER YEAR



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FOREWORD

Defining our vision for the grassroots game has been a huge task.

We know we want everyone to have an opportunity to be involved in football – whatever their age, gender, disability, ethnic or social background. We want to help them be the best they can. And we also want to ensure football is played, watched and enjoyed in a safe, positive environment.

We take our role as the national governing body of the beautiful game seriously. The FA has already committed to investing £44 million per season until 2012 improving every aspect of grassroots football. That's a significant jump of £10 million a year. This includes a £15 million contribution to the Football Foundation to build on their invaluable support of the grassroots game.

We have consulted with 20,000 people involved in the game to get this five-year strategy right. You have helped shape our thinking, and this is our response.

This is our vision to address the challenges our game faces – now we need you to help us turn this vision into reality.



Brian Barwick
Chief Executive Officer
The Football Association



This publication outlines our commitment to developing the National Game over the next five years. This strategy covers the whole of grassroots football from local leagues to the Football Conference. We are pleased to be able to increase our investment into the game thanks to The FA's new commercial and broadcast deals. This strategy outlines the ways in which we will direct this investment towards the further growth and development of the game.

There are some challenging targets in the strategy. We rely hugely on 400,000 volunteers to run the game at a local level and need to support them more. For example, we will offer more support to the club and league secretaries who undertake the valuable work off the pitch to ensure matches are played every weekend. In addition, we will work to improve the behaviour of players and spectators in order to address the critically high numbers of referees dropping out every season due to abuse. In turn, we will provide more support for the recruitment and retention of referees.

We will aim to provide a high-quality coaching environment for every player – whatever their age or ability. We will also put the policies and procedures in place to safeguard football for our young players.

All this means there will be a changing and emerging role for our County Football Associations as we look to secure the future of grassroots football. The 50 County Football Associations (County FAs) will be working as the key delivery agencies for The FA's National Game Strategy and are already seeing an increase in investment available for personnel – notably towards Referee Development Officers and Welfare Officers.

We have already shown that football can deliver against important national targets on health, physical activity, social inclusion and community cohesion. Now we want to challenge our strategic partners to work with us to invest in our national game.

Football is a team game and so is the implementation of this strategy. Everyone in the National Game structure has an important part to play to nurture our game and ensure it thrives long into the future.



Roger Burden
Chairman – The FA National Game Board

WE LISTENED TO YOU...

Over 20,000 people have been involved in The FA's most fundamental review to date of the state of grassroots football in England. They have represented all sections of the community and all areas of grassroots football. This review has led directly to this strategy and the objectives and activities it contains.



Those consulted have included:

- 11,600 adults (players, parents, league and club officials, coaches, referees, administrators, tutors, fans and volunteers), via an online questionnaire
- A nationally-robust sample of 4,670 young people aged 5-15 in face-to-face surveys
- 1,321 people involved in football, or who could influence it, at nine regional consultation events
- Key stakeholders including local authorities and County Sports Partnerships.



In addition:

- A series of focus groups have been held to canvass the views of specific groups, such as:
 - Asian boys and girls
 - Young players with a disability
 - Current and lapsed adult players
 - 'Kickabout' adult players
 - Adult league secretaries
- We have conducted international benchmarking with the German FA, Dutch FA, Cricket Australia and New Zealand Rugby
- And we have learnt from other research sources, i.e. 'Child Welfare in Football' and Sport England's 'Active People' survey.



... AND HERE'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO

Our vision:

Everyone will have the chance to be actively involved in football in a safe, positive, high-quality environment where they are given the appropriate support to be they best they can.

To fulfil this vision, we have set overall targets to 2012 as follows:

- To retain 125,000 existing teams and create 20,500 new teams
- To use The FA's RESPECT campaign to reduce poor behaviour
- To ensure everyone in youth football has had a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check
- To ensure 75% of all registered youth teams attain The FA Charter Standard Award
- To train one million 5-11 year olds through The FA Tesco Skills Programme
- To ensure every youth team has at least one FA-qualified coach
- To ensure equality across all areas of the game and FA Programmes
- To create a national database and to communicate to every participant – players, coaches, referees, clubs, leagues and volunteers
- To ensure 75% of football stakeholders agree The FA has improved grassroots football
- To retain 26,000 active referees and recruit 8,000 new referees
- To invest £300 million to improve facilities.

This strategy has four clear goals:

- 1. To grow and retain participation**
- 2. To raise standards and address abusive behaviour**
- 3. To develop better players**
- 4. To run the game effectively**

Supporting the four goals are two key areas of focus – a skilled workforce and improved facilities.





“Football is about getting a buzz, developing your skills and playing for your team. But not everyone is going to be the next Steven Gerrard. I want to play with people at my level.”

11-year-old player

1. TO GROW AND RETAIN PARTICIPATION

Right now 1.5 million people take to the playing fields of England every week during the football season to play our national sport. Collectively, they represent 125,000 teams, playing in more than 1,700 leagues.

470,000 children (5-15 years) play for clubs in leagues throughout England. Another 3.4 million play 'kickabout' football.

Our challenges:

- 1.1 million children would like to join a football team
- 2.4 million children want to improve their football skills
- 61,000 disabled people aged 5-16 want to play football regularly
- People want football on their doorsteps at times which suit their lifestyle, and in more flexible formats (i.e. five-a-side)
- Thousands drop out of the game between the ages of 16 and 20
- There is a huge lack of qualified match officials
- Facilities are poor, and in some cases, awful
- Less people are playing 11-a-side in some parts of the country.

We will:

- Halt the decline and support the existing 32,000 men's 11-a-side teams and support the existing 1,250 women's 11-a-side teams and increase their number by 15% to 1,437 teams through improved facilities, creating U18 and U21 leagues and introducing flexible competitions
- Support existing boys' teams and increase their number by 10% from 34,300 to 37,730 and the number of girls' teams by 50% from 4,500 to 6,750. Support existing Mini-Soccer teams and increase their number by 10% from 21,800 to 24,000 by creating links between schools and clubs, developing school competition and by signposting competitive playing opportunities through 'Get into Football'
- Support existing adult male small-sided football teams and increase their number by 50% from 25,000 to 37,500 teams by supporting organisers of affiliated competition and promoting The FA Umbro Fives, The FA Umbro Futsal Cup and National Leagues
- Support the existing teams and increase the number of male disability teams by 50% – from 270 to 405 – by promoting opportunities to play and supporting clubs to become more inclusive
- Create 100 new teams for disabled females
- Support the English Schools FA (ESFA), British Colleges Sports (BCS) and British University Sports Association (BUSAs) to run high-quality football competitions
- Support and build links between schools, colleges and universities and FA Charter Standard Clubs
- Build on work with existing and new communities (i.e. ethnic minority, gay, lesbian and faith-based) to support them to participate fully in affiliated football
- Develop an FA Club Services programme providing a range of support services.



Get into Football is The FA's national recruitment campaign. Its objectives are to provide clear signposts and accessible information for everyone interested in opportunities to play, coach, referee, administrate or to be a volunteer. Football is an inclusive sport and its governing body, The FA, is working to eradicate any barriers to getting involved for under-represented groups, such as women and girls, disabled people and ethnic minorities. Through this campaign, The FA will work to ensure a legacy for participation in football through the London 2012 Olympics.



“I’m not sure what team I’ll play for once I leave school. I want to play and build on my skills, but I don’t want it to become stressful. There are not many options other than to join a league team. I am not sure if I want to do that.”

17-year-old player

2. TO RAISE STANDARDS AND ADDRESS ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Everyone in football is entitled to enjoy it in a safe, positive environment. The FA must take the lead to raise standards of behaviour, ensuring The FA's quality kitemark scheme, Charter Standard, is central to this aim. We will also ensure all children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded in line with current and new legislation, particularly through the new Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA).

Our challenges:

- Implementing legislation concerned with safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- Tackling the fact that 77% of those involved in football have received verbal abuse
- Reducing abusive behaviour towards referees at all levels of the game and poor touchline behaviour by parents and spectators to children
- Dealing with issues of discrimination and abuse such as racism and homophobia
- Promoting and improving the benefits of the FA Charter Standard Programme
- Ensuring the Charter Standard Programme raises standards across the game.

We will:

- Launch a campaign called RESPECT to significantly reduce all forms of verbal and physical abuse
- Enforce mandatory ISA/Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for anyone working with children.
- Appoint and train a Welfare Officer in every club and league with youth teams
- Review and improve procedures to manage and monitor allegations of discrimination, harassment or abuse
- Ensure The FA Charter Standard kitemark scheme is recognised as the measure of quality across grassroots football
- Work with our partners to create a better benefits scheme for FA Charter Standard Clubs, and to help clubs gain and retain the Award
- Increase the percentage of youth teams achieving the basic FA Charter Standard Award from 40% to 75% and support the existing Charter Standard Clubs to maintain a high level of quality football provision
- Help 30% of youth leagues achieve the new FA Charter Standard League Award
- Support our existing Community Clubs to provide a multi-team, high-quality environment and increase their number from 360 to 500.



Respect

Lose Respect
Lose the game

In 2008 The FA will launch a national campaign called **RESPECT** to address poor behaviour at football matches. Abuse from players and spectators is the No.1 reason why 7,000 referees drop out each season, while unnecessary parental pressure from the sidelines creates a hugely negative impact on children. A pilot will be followed by a national and local marketing campaign.





“English teenage players are technically behind their counterparts in leading countries across the world. It's crucial to have a quality coaching environment if we're going to develop better players.”

Sir Trevor Brooking
Director of Football Development, The FA

3. TO DEVELOP BETTER PLAYERS

The FA must support every player to achieve his or her potential by focusing on the 5-11 age group. Developing techniques, embedding basic skills and improving coaching is vital if we are going to provide a new generation of talented players.

Our challenges:

- Creating a culture of 'fun and development over results' across youth football
- Creating a clear pathway between local clubs and FA boys' Centres of Excellence and Academies, and girls' and disability Centres of Excellence
- Training more 'age-appropriate' coaches i.e. coaches who can pick up on all aspects of a player's development at a specific age
- Improving players' skills and techniques, particularly young players aged 5-11
- Reviewing The FA's rule preventing boys and girls aged 12 and over from playing in the same match.

We will:

- Promote a culture of learning where there is an emphasis on player development over results
- Invest £10 million to employ 66 full-time coaches to train one million 5-11s by 2010 through phase one of The FA Tesco Skills Programme
- Ensure there is at least one FA-qualified coach working with every youth team
- Deliver our new age-appropriate courses (for 5-11, 12-16, 17-21 age groups) for coaches
- Support coaches and teachers to develop through qualifications, mentoring, online support and coaches associations
- Use our network of regional coaches to provide in-service training and support to youth coaches
- Take action to support people from under-represented groups to help them challenge for places in the talent development structures
- Undertake extensive research and consultation to review the FA rule which currently prohibits boys and girls aged 12 or over from playing in the same match
- Review existing and develop competition and training programmes for young people to achieve their potential
- Encourage greater use of alternative small-sided football formats (i.e. 3v3, 4v4 and Futsal) to improve technique and tactics.




The FA Tesco Skills Programme was launched in June 2007 to train one million 5-11s to improve their football skills by 2010. The FA has employed 66 full-time, expert coaches to enhance the skills of existing players and skill-up potential players; all assisting with the government agenda to increase physical activity. The National Sports Foundation has also contributed £3 million to fund phase one of this Programme to June 2010.



E.ON is The FA's Partner for Schools Football. E.ON supports our work on school to club links and the training of teachers. E.ON, as The FA Cup Partner, supports our delivery of FA Cup-themed education resources for primary school teachers and the annual national FA Cup Schools Day. This culminates in a day-long national football festival in Nottingham each May.



"Players, teams, officials and leagues can only develop if there is sufficient investment in facilities and funding for clubs who largely self-finance and operate as voluntary organisations."

Club Official

4. TO RUN THE GAME EFFECTIVELY

The FA needs to show leadership in its governance of the game. There is a vital role for County FAs to run and develop the game efficiently and effectively at a local level. We need to measure the impact of this overall strategy, through monitoring and evaluation, and ensure modern information technology systems underpin the entire way the game is run.

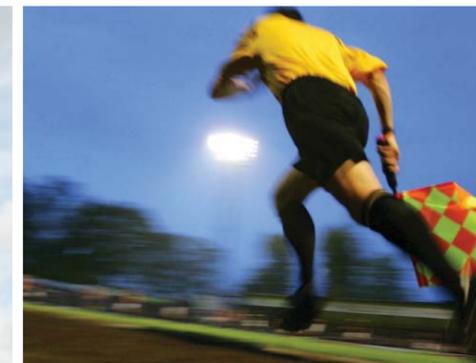
Our challenges:

- Addressing administration systems that are seen as too bureaucratic and paper-based
- Tackling the lack of investment and resources to enable leagues to operate at maximum efficiency
- Changing the negative perception of The FA's leadership in the grassroots game
- Ensuring diversity in decision-making structures.

We will:

- Invest in County FAs to enable them to lead and develop the game locally
- Have a direct relationship with every club, league and player through an improved website and better communications
- Introduce a single web-based football administration system to make running a club or league a lot easier
- Improve the administration of the game by simplifying and standardising rules and regulations
- Review how leagues and clubs affiliate and create new categories of membership to support all football formats
- Improve player discipline on and off the field, review sanctions and standardise the disciplinary process
- Review regulations to support more flexible formats of football (i.e. mid-week leagues)
- Ensure football is compliant with equality and other relevant legislation
- Conduct annual market research to track the perception of participants and providers on The FA's role and County FAs' role in leading and developing grassroots football
- Deliver enhanced support and funding to leagues.

Room No.	Team	25 th NOV '07	Pitch No.	Ref
1	COBURN ATH	V MOOREHOUSE	22	
2	OS. LUSOS	V ARCHWAY A'STARS	23	
3	TERGEMO	V REDDOT	20	
4	M.D.M UTD	V D.O.M	19	
5	SURREAL MAD	A VFC BERTOLI	18	
6	A C SCORPIONS	V OS. AMIGOS	16	
7	AFC SHOOTERS	V MAYVILLE	13	
8	RIVER FLEET	V TEVERKELI	15	
9	HORNSEY	V GLASGOW RANGERS SUPP.	11	
10	(L.F.A JUNIOR CUP)			
11				
12				





“They persuaded me to give refereeing a go. My grandson was playing matches with no referee. I'm only trying to do my bit, but the abuse I'm getting from mums and dads is unbelievable.”

Referee, aged 50

SKILLED WORKFORCE

This strategy's four goals cannot be delivered unless The FA also invests in on two key areas of focus: developing a skilled football workforce and improving football facilities.

Developing a skilled football workforce

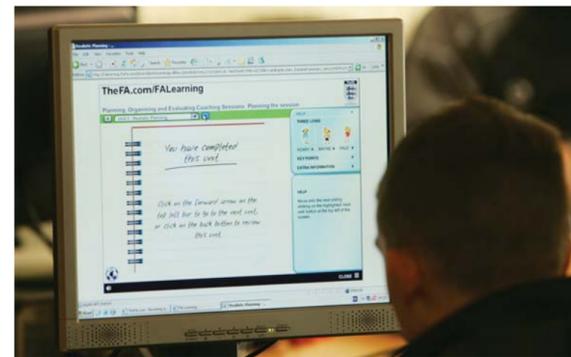
This National Game Strategy will only be successful if The FA, County FAs and key partners invest in a skilled and diverse workforce to promote, administer and develop the game.

Our challenges:

- Ensuring diversity in decision-making structures, coaching and refereeing
- Retaining league and club officials and ensuring they have successors
- Retaining the 7,000 referees who drop out each season, many due to abuse, resulting in thousands of matches taking place each week without a qualified official
- Making sure qualifications and training are affordable and accessible.

We will:

- Provide support and high quality education programmes for the existing football workforce, both paid and voluntary
- Invest in County FA referee development officers to recruit, retain and develop referees
- Tackle referee drop-out through the RESPECT campaign – aimed at significantly improving behaviour towards referees
- Develop a coaching workforce that meets the needs of football players including age-appropriate coaches
- A paid network of welfare officers will be appointed at County FAs across the country to support youth league and club welfare officers; roll out mandatory checks and training, and assist in tackling abusive behaviour
- Recruit and train a welfare officer in every league and club with youth teams
- Take action to encourage people to become administrators, coaches and referees from diverse backgrounds i.e. through mentoring and leadership programmes
- Increase resources and support people in key roles within the voluntary sector, such as league and club secretaries
- Develop a network of skilled tutors to meet the needs of grassroots football (i.e. coaching, referees, medical, development, administration, safeguarding, equality and psychology)
- Develop young volunteers to take an active part in running and developing the game.



McDonald's: The FA's Community Partner Through our partnership with McDonald's, The FA is creating 4,000 new qualified volunteer coaches and supporting 1,500 existing McDonald's coaches to take higher qualifications. McDonald's also supports our FA Learning adult education programme to support coaches, parents, volunteers and medical staff to improve their skills to benefit football. McDonald's also partners The FA Charter Standard Club programme, supporting 3,500 current clubs who have gained the quality kitemark.



"My children have lots of hobbies, but always choose football first. What I don't understand is why they have to put up with such poor pitches and changing rooms."

Parent

IMPROVED FACILITIES

We must improve the quality, quantity and accessibility of training and playing facilities. As the game grows, a greater number of facilities may be required to sustain and increase participation in football. We need to invest in new and improved facilities in schools, clubs and on local authority sites to deliver this National Game Strategy.

Our challenges:

- Improving the quality of and access to existing facilities to support grassroots football
- Understanding what is needed to meet the demand for quality facilities in every local authority area
- Addressing increasing costs to clubs of hiring facilities for training and playing matches
- Campaigning against the loss of playing fields.

We will:

- Invest £300 million with the Football Foundation and other partners to improve existing and create new facilities
- Identify local priorities to determine where to invest in facilities
- Create and promote a network of FA Development Centres to support the training of coaches and volunteers
- Prioritise investment into FA Charter Standard Community Clubs to access new and improved facilities
- Develop 150 artificial grass pitches to FIFA and FA standards to increase opportunities for coaching, leagues, competitions and more flexible football formats
- Work with 'Partnership for Schools' to improve sports facilities and increase community access to school facilities
- Develop facilities to support the women's football pyramid and the pathway for players with a disability
- Work with local authorities to develop sporting facilities in areas of significant housing growth.



Football Foundation
football's biggest supporter

The Football Foundation is the UK's largest sports charity. Funded equally by the Premier League, The Football Association and the Government, it directs £40m every year into grass roots sports.

The Foundation ensures this investment goes towards rebuilding the infrastructure of local sport across the country by funding new facilities such as changing pavilions, grass pitches and floodlit artificial grass pitches.

The Foundation also funds community schemes that use the power of sport to

address issues in society's key areas, i.e. health and wellbeing, education and lifelong learning, social inclusion and equalities.

Through the work of the Football Foundation, football and government funding is used to increase participation in sport, keep our nation healthy, our workforce skilled, our communities safe and our society fair and equal.

Since its launch July 2000 the Foundation has supported 4,760 projects worth over £600m, has kitted out over 210,000 youngsters with free football strips, delivered a £5 return on every £1 invested by each funding partner, directed 40% of funding to the top 20% most-deprived wards and has £150m worth of projects in the pipeline.



GET INTO FOOTBALL

The FA cannot deliver this strategy for our national sport without the support of key partners at national, regional, county and local levels.

We know from past experience that we can help deliver your strategic goals as well.

For example, by:

- Creating a more active and healthy lifestyle for people of all ages
- Working alongside the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics to drive participation and widen access to all forms of sport and physical activity
- Reaching out to the most deprived communities
- Engaging *all* communities in England.

To discuss the mutual benefits of partnership opportunities, please contact The FA on 020 7745 4545 or your County FA.

The FA's Partner Programme ensures a multi-million pound investment directly into grassroots football. Our Development Partners are:

- McDonald's: The FA's Community Partner & FA Learning Partner
- Umbro: The FA's Small-Sided Football Partner
- E.ON: The FA's Schools Partner
- Nationwide: The FA's Disability Football Partner
- Carlsberg: The FA's Men's Football Partner
- Tesco: The FA's Official Skills Partner & Women's and Girls' Partner

Umbro has also made available a grant of £500,000 worth of free kit and equipment each season to the County FAs until 2014 to support the delivery of this Strategy on a local level.

