

Amateur FA

Grassroots Football
Strategy 2024-2028

Making a Difference

PURPOSE

To grow and support a fun, fair, friendly football environment

From the origins of the Amateur FA, we believe football should be played on a level playing field.

Most of our clubs are multi-teamed. Regardless of your skill level you will find a home in one of our clubs. We organise our cup competitions based on similar levels of ability. We believe football should be accessible, fun, fair and safe.

We want to bring all abilities together through football.

We want to create friendships and happy memories from football experiences.

We want to bring the enjoyable experience of football in the Amateur FA to more people.

We want to use the power of Amateur FA football to improve the health (physical and mental) and wellbeing of as many people as possible.

GRASSROOTS STRATEGY 2024-28

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Improve Playing
Choice & Experience



Deliver Equal
Opportunities for
Women to Play



Build More & Improve
Existing Facilities



Tackle Poor
Behaviour



Develop A Valued
Network of Volunteers
Coaches & Referees

STRATEGIC DRIVERS

Create Thriving Community Clubs

Connect & Serve Participants

Progress The Game's Governance

IMPROVE PLAYING CHOICE & EXPERIENCE

As the world changes, participants demands for the game changes. We want to make sure players leaving youth football find clubs in their communities, and within their community there is a type of football that suits them. We're committed to creating an impairment specific football session in North London.

- **Improve team-based football for adult male players**
 - Recreational Football; New Competitions & Team/Club Placement Support
- **Create more opportunities to play safe, inclusive, casual football**
 - Development of transition from youth to adult football
- **Support the disability game to grow and thrive**
 - Continue Physical Ability Impaired sessions (Adult CP)

DELIVER EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN TO PLAY

We're turning our Saturday 11v11 festivals into a league and running more festivals, we're helping build more small sided opportunities. We want more male clubs to build or join with female teams, and more female clubs to do the same with male teams. We want to build networks for women of all ages across all football disciplines to be able to support each other. We want our clubs with facilities to make them as open and accessible as possible.

- **Create more team based playing opportunities**
 - Saturday 11v11 League (from festivals); more festivals; more small sided sessions
- **Extend and enhance casual opportunities to play**
 - Just Play; Festivals; Older Women into Football
- **Deliver safe and inclusive environments for women and girls to thrive**
 - Developing Referee & Player Networks; Focus on Asian Female opportunities; Widen Friendly Facilities
 - Transition more multi gender clubs (Male + Female; Female + Male)

BUILD MORE AND IMPROVE EXISTING FACILITIES

We will support Amateur FA clubs with their facility projects. We will work to help clubs with the sustainability of their facilities.

- **Transform grass pitch quality**
 - Support clubs to upgrade pitches
- **Build more 3G pitches**
 - Guide towards the development of 3G pitches
- **Improve environmental sustainability**
 - Knowledge of environmental and financial sustainability

TACKLE POOR BEHAVIOUR

The guiding purpose of Amateur FA football is fun, fair and friendly. We want everyone to enjoy the football environment in which they participate. We want to support football communities so they will thrive. We will bring our football communities together to set the standards they we agree we want. When people fail to meet those standards we will deal with it, when they exceed those standards we will celebrate it.

- **Apply tougher sanctions**
 - Report sanctions externally
- **Promote positive behaviour**
 - Enhance shoutouts for great behaviour
- **Drive collective responsibility across the game to raise standards**
 - Set Expectations – Referee; Match Day Delegate/Manager/Captain; and Player Standards

DEVELOP A VALUED NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS, COACHES & REFEREES

There is an army of people who provide the structure in which people who want to play, can play. As well as using our football network to provide a safety net for our participants to look after one another, we will sing the praises of the benefits involvement in football can bring to your Mental and Physical Wealth. We will make it easier to be in the network and we'll let you know that we really appreciate what you do. We will develop our referee pool with clarity and determination.

- **Grow the number of people running the game & Improve the diversity of those running the game**
 - Launch PERMA Volunteering Programme – Positive Emotion; Engagement; Relationships; Meaning; Achievements
 - Deliver Referees Strategy
- **Support those running the game to learn and develop**
 - Enhance Adult Coaching CPD; Volunteering Guides – Upskill existing
- **Celebrate and reward those running the game**
 - Reward Volunteers/Participants

CREATE THRIVING COMMUNITY CLUBS

We know that strong healthy clubs support our participants to play the game they love. We will help more organisation meet the requirements of England Accreditation and thrive. We will build a trusted network to provide an early indication that a club may need help, and then we will help. We will use of expertise and oversight to make clubs as financially healthy and viable as they can be.

- **Ensure clubs grow opportunities and provide a quality experience through England Football Accreditation**
 - At least two additional Accredited Leagues (with associated clubs/teams); Further Two 3-star clubs
- **Help clubs to become more sustainable**
 - Build Monitoring Structure for early warning of clubs in difficulty
- **Support the current and future generation of club leaders**
 - Club finance support (consultant)

CONNECT & SERVE PARTICIPANTS

It's easier to support the game if our participants know who we are and what we do (and can do). We want more people to know how enjoyable football in the Amateur FA is. We want it to be easier to run clubs and find help and information. We have a plan to engage our participants better.

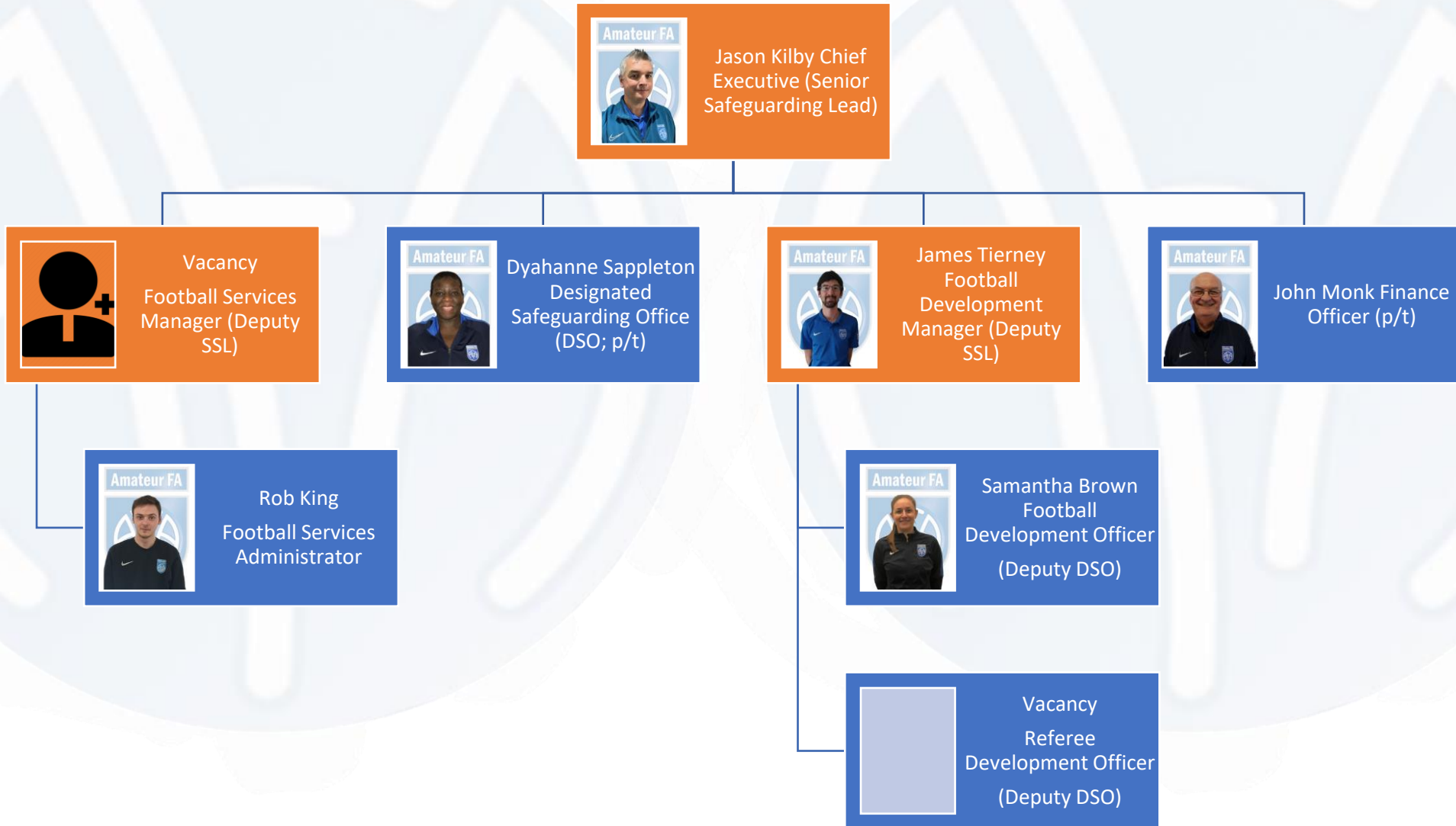
- **Make it easier to find information and opportunities to play, volunteer and learn**
 - Signpost – To self-service systems
- **Improve our customer service and communications**
 - Raise Profile/awareness, especially across own participants
 - Deliver our Participant Engagement Plan delivery
- **Explore digital opportunities to enhance the football experience**
 - Develop more digital tools to administer the game (RefSec)

PROGRESS THE GAME'S GOVERNANCE

We want to be better; we want our decision making to be more robust and reflect the needs of our participants. We want to make sure that we get the most out of your funds. We want to help our organisations improve how they represent their communities.

- **Promote the highest levels of governance across the grassroots network**
 - Achieve Code of Governance for CFAs
 - Cascade League & Club Governance Improvements
- **Evolve local Football Associations focused on supporting and developing football For All**
 - Lobby on benefits of Mixed Gender Recreational Football
 - Achieve Equality Standard Intermediate Level
- **Support the grassroots game to be financially robust**
 - Maximise – Use of the Amateur FA's assets
- **Support the game to be safe and well-run**
 - Review Amateur FA decision making structures

OUR STAFF TEAM



FINANCIAL RESOURCES



The Amateur FA will receive 80% of its market share funding in 2024/25 (£34,600 lower than market share). We are considering the best use of our office space since hybrid working has reduced its use.

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
Income					
Total Income	£375,262	£387,031	£402,381	£418,813	£460,900
Expenditure					
Total Expenditure	£71,878	£62,800	£64,006	£65,236	£66,491
Overheads					
Total Overheads	£320,814	£333,841	£329,038	£336,308	£343,757
Surplus/(Deficit)	-£17,430	-£9,609	£9,337	£17,269	£50,652

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Planned Reserves	£688,432	£662,907	£640,655	£618,067	£620,228	£644,258	£692,871	£734,228
Actual Reserves	£702,663	£695,643	£685,167					
Future Forecast				£689,522	£679,913	£689,250	£706,519	£757,172
Ahead/(Behind) Plan	£14,231	£32,736	£44,512	£71,455	£59,685	£44,992	£13,648	£22,944
Cash				£143,722	£138,113	£151,450	£172,719	£227,372
Cash cover of overheads (Months)				5.4	5.0	5.5	6.2	7.9

SAFEGUARDING 365

The Amateur FA have passed the last three assessments first time, we continue to gather evidence throughout the year, run fortnightly Raising Standards and quarterly Strategic Safeguarding Group meetings.

NSPCC independent assessors conducted both an in-depth analysis of evidence submitted to Smartsheet and a one day 'in person' assessment of the Amateur FA and concluded that the Safeguarding 365 criteria for 2023/24 had been fully met. In addition to evidencing that all specific safeguarding criteria were fully evidenced, the assessors identified a number of areas of good practice that are exceeding the standards outlined in the Safeguarding 365 criteria.

The Amateur FA should be commended for the work they have undertaken in the following areas;

- ▶ The AFA have started a fantastic initiative called the Safe Award, where clubs are rewarded for their good practice, this ensures that clubs are safe and prioritising safeguarding and good governance. The Safe Award will be renamed after John Bakker, this is a wonderful tribute to their former Board Safeguarding Champion who sadly passed away, and recognition for the work he did to drive safeguarding forward at the AFA.
- ▶ EDI is something that the AFA are very passionate about with both the CEO and the Chairman acknowledging the importance of this. The recent appointment of their Board Safeguarding Champion (BSC) demonstrates their commitment to progress this area of work as she will bring diversity to the Board as well as contribute to IAG meetings.

- ▶ The AFA have an excellent Youth Advisory Group, this is helped by having a successful recruitment drive once per year to keep things fresh. A member of the YAG also sits on the IAG, this demonstrates the AFA are aware that the voice of youth is critical in driving the safety of grassroots football forward.
- ▶ The team as a whole are doing excellent work around mental health, the chair was extremely passionate about this, and a health and wellbeing director has been appointed onto the board. The assessors were extremely impressed with the work the AFA are doing for adults at risk, this includes courses for clubs and working with various charities and organisations.

It was noted by the assessors that the team are extremely well bonded and close knit, the way that they all come together to support each other was excellent to see. The work they are continuing to implement should be commended and something they should be proud of. Being a small team does not hold them back and they are clearly committed to providing a safe and enjoyable environment for everyone to enjoy grassroots football.

Safeguarding is clearly embedded within the AFA, the CEO, Chair and the team as a whole should be congratulated for an excellent assessment.

CODE OF GOVERNANCE

A Board majority wish to put a case forward to the FA Code of Governance Project Board regarding:

- Number of Board Directors nominated by Council
- Voting rights of Life Council Members
- Open, publicly advertised Chair recruitment

We are making progress against our Action Plan.

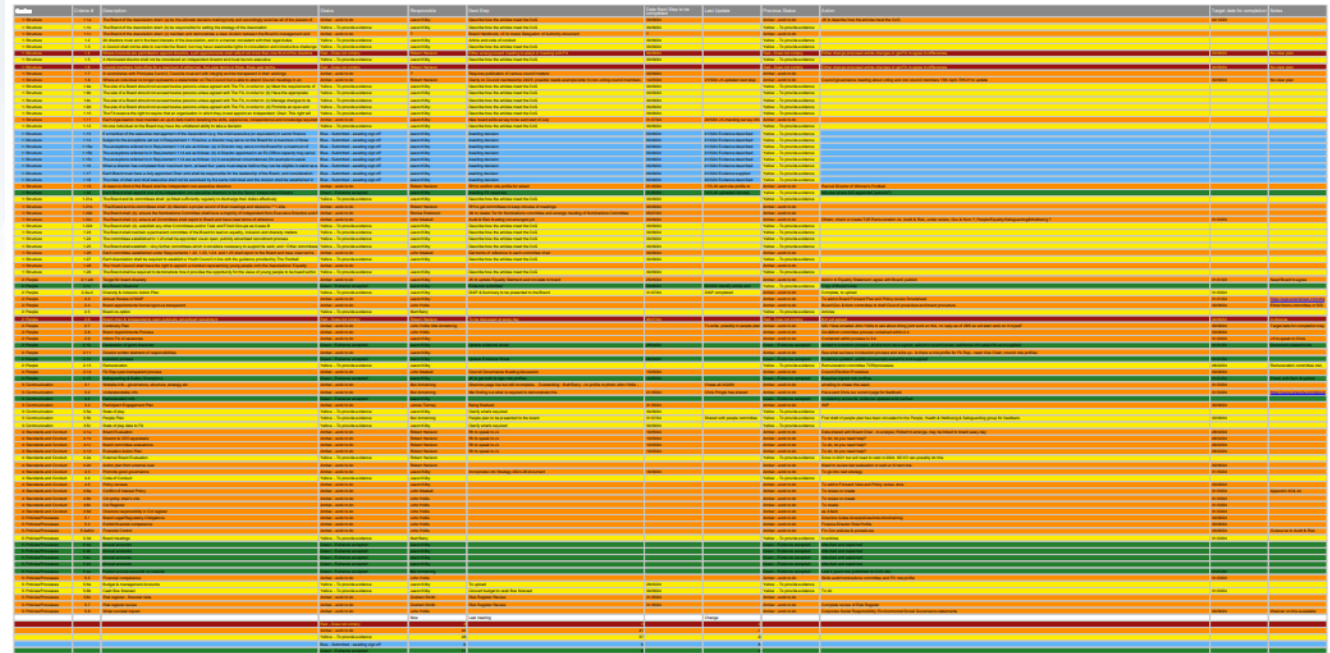
Green – Met

Blue – Submitted

Yellow – Acquiring Evidence

Orange – Being developed

Code of Governance 2.1 Action Plan Amateur FA



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

We have a strong Inclusion Advisory Group who support, check and challenge our work. We are finalising changes to our Equality Standard application for 30th June. Our Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan is embedded into our 2024-28 strategy.

Diverse Workforce

Referees

- Provide opportunities for female referees to sustain and grow the workforce
- Increase the recruitment and retention of Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage referees

Coaches

- Increase the recruitment and retention of Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage referees
- Provide opportunities for female coaches to sustain and grow the workforce
- Increase the recruitment and retention of Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage coaches

Administration

- Increase female participants from Amateur FA football on regional judicial panel
- Increase representation across Amateur FA Board, Council and Staff
- Increase the representation of females in club committee and key club officer roles

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



Environment For All

Governance

- Increase the number of clubs achieving the Football Leadership Diversity Code
- Increase the number of clubs and leagues signing up to the Kick It Out Equality Charter
- Increase the number of respondents that complete ED&I data, and feel comfortable to disclose their sexuality
- FA reporting processes visible on AFA website and shared through social media

Development

- Create an inclusive environment within leagues and clubs
- Equality policy is fit for purpose

Access & Opportunities

- Promote the refereeing pathway Increase 11v11 provision
- Develop female Just Play centres
- Increase walking football provision
- Increase and promote playing opportunities for Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage participants
- Increase opportunities within disability football
- Increase and promote playing opportunities for LGBTQ+ participants
- Improve customer website experience

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Raising Awareness

Equality

Promote and support the inclusion events throughout the year i.e. Play Safe weekend, Black History Month, Rainbow Laces, International Women's Day, South East Asian Heritage Month

Be transparent in how the County FA is promoting inclusion

Increase staff and board knowledge

Utilise the guidance from the Inclusion Advisory Group members and their community contacts Increase the number of youth leaders