



STEPPING OUT

**THE FA'S PLANS TO SUPPORT THE GROWTH
OF MEN'S AND WOMEN'S WALKING FOOTBALL**

Published: August 2018



UNITE THE GAME, INSPIRE THE NATION.



The above six words are The FA’s vision – what it wants to achieve.
But a vision is meaningless unless day-to-day action brings it to life.

This document exemplifies The FA’s vision coming to life – in this case around the growing format of the game known as Walking Football.

The game already has a national spread, and The FA’s direct involvement can inspire it to greater growth. It also needs uniting as it is currently being played to different rules in different locations.

Creating a common framework around the game is not to create ‘ownership’. It’s to make it enjoyable for everyone, now and long into the future.

“Most of all I enjoy getting out and doing a bit of exercise in the open air. I also love the camaraderie – we never stop laughing and everyone is so patient and understanding. No matter what your ability level is like, you feel welcome which means you can just focus on enjoying yourself.”

Christine, Ladies of Prestwood Walking Football team



Photograph: Simon Roe

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‘TOGETHER, LET’S REALISE WALKING FOOTBALL’S SPECTACULAR GROWTH OPPORTUNITY’

Creating one framework around Walking Football – one of the single-biggest growth areas of the game – is a perfect example of The FA fulfilling the reason for its existence. As the game’s governing body in England, we want to create a solid infrastructure for Walking Football, based around common Laws of the Game which everyone uses.

In many ways, it’s no different to the aims of the founding fathers of The FA back in 1863. At the time, there were various versions of the game being played. Producing one set of rules and having one governing body allowed the game to flourish – and it’s done so ever since.

Our hopes are exactly the same for Walking Football. Not to curb individual initiatives to grow the game, but to give it – literally – a national footing to co-ordinate its spectacular opportunity to grow exponentially.

More importantly, a unified structure without dispute maximises the opportunity to play the game in a safe and enjoyable way. And ultimately, having fun playing football is everyone’s goal.

It is in this spirit I urge you to digest this document. There’s no copyright on good ideas, and we look forward to working collaboratively to pass this relatively new format of the game to current and future generations.

Greg Clarke
Chairman, The Football Association



Photograph: Simon Roe

“WALKING FOOTBALL HAS MADE ME FITTER AND HAPPIER, INTRODUCED ME TO NEW FRIENDS, GIVEN ME SOMETHING TO GET OUT OF BED FOR IN THE MORNING.”

ANONYMOUS

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“I SAW WALKING FOOTBALL BEING ADVERTISED ON TV AND IN THE LOCAL PAPER...THE REST IS HISTORY! IT'S FUN, ENJOYABLE AND HAS SO MANY SOCIAL BENEFITS TOO! YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HAVING LOTS OF SKILL EITHER AS EVERYONE MAKES YOU FEEL WELCOME.”

ALAN SMITH, 67

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“I'VE LIKED FOOTBALL FOREVER AND WANTED TO GET BACK INTO IT. WALKING FOOTBALL CAME UP AND IT'S A GREAT WAY TO DO JUST THAT. I INITIALLY THOUGHT I'D LOOK SILLY BUT THEN I CAME TO THE SESSION AND ENJOYED IT SO MUCH, THE ATMOSPHERE IS SUPERB!”

KEN WARD, 76

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THE FA'S SEVEN-POINT PLAN

Every business, building or sport that's successfully stood the test of time has been based on firm foundations.

If Walking Football is to reach its undoubted potential its growth must be planned. For example, there's no point in attracting lots of players if we don't have enough referees. Similarly, competition will be unable to flourish fully if different parts of the country play the game to different laws.

The FA has drawn up a plan comprising seven structural areas which must be in place to ensure Walking Football's growth is co-ordinated and interdependent.

The seven areas are:

- 1. PARTICIPATION**
- 2. GOVERNANCE**
- 3. COMPETITION**
- 4. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**
- 5. MARKETING**
- 6. PARTNERSHIPS**
- 7. INSIGHT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**

From the outset of the 2018/19 season we will pursue the following actions under each area.



1. PARTICIPATION

We will:

- Define the current playing population and set year-on-year participation growth targets;
- Support growth of recreational Walking Football opportunities through the FA Mars/Just Play programme.

2. GOVERNANCE

We will:

- Define FA Laws of the Game for Walking Football for everyone to abide by;
- Establish a model for Walking Football clubs to affiliate to their County FAs and The FA, ensuring safe, high-quality provision.

3. COMPETITION

We will:

- Review Walking Football competitions in England and set out an FA calendar from 2019/20;
- Continue to deliver the nation's largest free-to-enter Walking Football competition, via The FA People's Cup;
- Produce and provide resources and guidance to establish local Walking Football leagues and tournaments.

4. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

We will:

- Launch a refereeing course specific to Walking Football, aimed at existing and new referees;
- Develop guidance to support coaches and activators to deliver Walking Football.

5. MARKETING

We will:

- Promote the game to new and existing audiences by:
 - Engaging existing players;
 - Appointing FA Walking Football Ambassadors;
 - Providing dedicated information and marketing resources on The FA's website (TheFA.com) and via the 'PlayFootball' search tool.

6. PARTNERSHIPS

We will:

- Establish partnerships with organisations who share The FA's vision for Walking Football;
- Galvanise additional support and resources for the game through these partnerships, whether financial or in other forms.

7. INSIGHT & QUALITY ASSURANCE

We will:

- Lead ongoing insight into Walking Football to inform its future growth and appeal;
- Set clear delivery standards for our network of 50 County FAs;
- Drive insight to better understand the impact of Walking Football on the individual participant and the wider community.

“I love how much you see of the ball and the fact that you play on a small pitch. I just find it so enjoyable and I'm so glad I signed up.”

Spencer Robinson, 78

WALKING FOOTBALL'S WIDER BENEFITS

The benefits of ensuring Walking Football's growth is steady and controlled are myriad. Part of this controlled growth is to start by attracting the audience most likely to participate: people aged 50+.



Sport England's 'Active Lives' survey has identified that there are:

- **7,780,700** 55+year-olds who are 'active' (i.e. undertake 150+ minutes of physical activity per week);
- **2,348,200** 55+year-olds who are 'fairly active' (i.e. undertake 30-149 minutes of physical activity per week).

This gives an instant impression of the initial 'market' for the game. It also provokes thinking about the benefits of Walking Football for the individual, the wider game, The FA and the nation.

For the individual:

- A great way to stay fit in later life, particularly – but not limited to – those who have played the game in earlier years.
- An excellent opportunity to continue a lifelong relationship with the game after the days of playing 'running' football are over.
- A wonderful way to stay in touch with friends – and make new ones.
- An effective way of regaining mobility, for example after illness or an operation.

For football:

- Related to the above, an opportunity for the game to retain an entire generation of players – and recruit new participants.

- A chance to reverse the recent decline in adult male participation in the game.
- An opportunity for the game to appeal to under-represented groups in some locations, e.g. women and girls, people with disabilities and the socio-economically disadvantaged.
- Shifting the organic growth of the game to date to a more structured growth plan will ensure its sustainability.

For The FA:

- The FA's stated ambition is to ensure the game is 'For All'. Walking Football will help fulfil this ambition, and reach players with limiting physical conditions, those recovering from injury, as well as new participants.
- One of The FA's strategic goals is 'to deliver flexible inclusive and accessible playing opportunities for everyone' by 2020. Walking Football is arguably the game's most accessible format, and can engage new and diverse audiences.
- A clear opportunity for the governing body to fulfil its leadership role and in line with one of its stated aims to communicate positively, pro-actively and consistently to promote opportunity.
- In line with the above, to have one set of Laws of the Game, laid down by the game's governing body in this country.

For the nation:

- Keeping the nation healthier in later life. In the process reducing the pressure on the NHS.
- Walking Football has a significant part to play in achieving three of the DCMS/ Sport England's stated goals for the nation: improved physical well-being, mental well-being and social & community development.
- Playing Walking Football will help 'normalise' physical activity in later life and play a part in facilitating healthier, more cohesive community life.



“MY LIFE HAS CHANGED THROUGH EMBRACING THE WALKING GAME. I FEEL GREAT, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY AND IT HAS LEFT ME WANTING MORE.”

ALAN WAKEMAN, WALKING FOOTBALLER AND NOW AN EX-DIABETES SUFFERER

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“MY EXPERIENCE OF WALKING FOOTBALL HAS BEEN INCREDIBLY POSITIVE AND I WOULDN'T HESITATE TO TELL OTHERS TO GET OUT THERE AND GIVE IT A GO.”

TONY MOORE, 62

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“PHYSICALLY I AM STARTING TO FEEL HEALTHIER BUT MENTALLY AND SOCIALLY IT HAS BEEN A REVELATION. THE PEOPLE I PLAY FOOTBALL WITH HAVE BEEN SO FRIENDLY, HELPFUL AND ENCOURAGING SINCE I ARRIVED.”

ANONYMOUS

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Photograph: UCLan

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FOR ALL

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