

Essex County Football Association Annual Report (2022/23)





CHAMPIONS!



@EssexCountyFA



EssexFootball

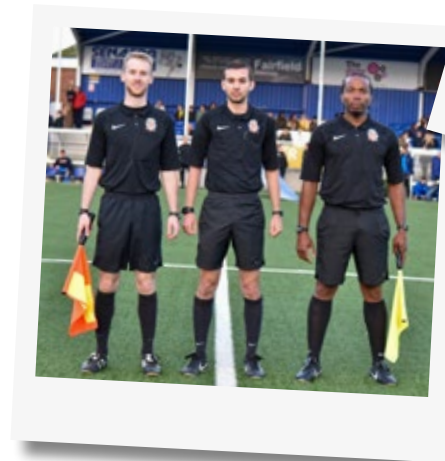


EssexFA

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Chief Executive's Report

The 2022/23 season saw the second full season of grassroots football return following the major disruption and recovery from the impact of Covid-19.

As the summer of 2022 began, there was a wave of enthusiasm and anticipation for the excitement of the UEFA Women's European Championships taking place in England at stadiums across the country. The inspirational performance from the England Women's Team propelled a positivity across the nation, with the Lionesses ending a 56-year wait for a senior trophy.

This success contributed significantly to an upward trend of participation at grassroots level for the female pathway, which was sustained throughout the entire 2022/23 campaign, and this has continued to grow. This performance, along with a continued appetite for the game across all formats, helped to inspire an upward trend in participation at grassroots level, with more than 5,180 teams affiliating, engaging more than 81,000 players.

This growth was particularly seen in the female pathway, with 445 teams affiliating for the 2022/23 season which, along with recreational programmes, engaged more than 8,300 players. The 2022/23 also saw another strong season of participation in the Essex FA County Cup programme, with total entries across all competitions of 1,548 teams, and a total attendance across all the county cup finals of more than 9,100 - a growth of 31%.

Another major milestone was achieved at the BBC Essex Women's Cup Final. This took place at Colchester United FC's Community Stadium - an English Football League ground - for the first time, with a record attendance of 2,044. This was a wonderful demonstration of the growth in the female game at a local level, and some fantastic finals took place.

At the Essex County FA, the overriding focus entering into 2022/23 was one of trying to continue to help the grassroots game continue to recover and grow. As part of this ethos, the **Essex County FA retained a strong financial position and used this to reinvest c£60,000 into the grassroots game by continuing with its policy to support its members with contributions to the cost of Legal Liability cover for member clubs, as well as providing a financial contribution towards Personal Accident Insurance for each team for 2022/23 with our new insurance partner, Sportsguard.**

The 2022/23 season was the second year of the refreshed and updated 'Moving Forward' Strategy 2024, which set a vision of: "Creating a united grassroots football environment which delivers football opportunity For All". The full strategy can be found at www.essexfa.com/about/strategy. This updated strategy continued to focus on important objectives set out in four strategic pillars. At the end of the 2022/23 season, the following progress had been made in each area:

Engagement: *'To develop new, and enhance existing, offers to engage all stakeholders and formats of the game by putting the participants needs at the heart of the game.'*

Engagement with our stakeholders, and the ability to grow and utilise modern communication platforms to engage with more participants, has been vital. During this period, we have grown our Twitter following to almost 36,000 followers, making the Essex County FA the most followed County FA in the country, as well as increasing our social media reach via alternative platforms, including Facebook and YouTube.

Our network of clubs and leagues continue to be critical stakeholders in the process of engagement and, through our award-winning Club and League Participation Reviews, we have been able to continue to utilise data and insight, helping to inform clubs and leagues with their own decision-making. This helps to engage more participants, demonstrating the ongoing growth of the game.

By the end of the 2022/23 season, this had contributed to a 3.5% increase in the number of teams playing football, compared to the 2021/22 season, with more than 5,180 teams playing football across Essex.

Corporate Governance: *'To be an inclusive, accountable and transparent decision-making organisation to develop, safeguard and support football.'*

Our work in this pillar focused on our progress towards achieving The FA's Code of Governance for County FAs (which you can find at <http://bit.ly/CFACOG>).

This work underpins all aspects of the organisation and changes to the Essex County FA's Articles of Association, which have seen the Board increase in size from five directors up to nine. There is also a new, open application process in place for Independent Non-Executive Directors (INEDs) to move directly onto Board, helping to enhance skills, knowledge and experience at Board level.

This allows for more business skills to be married with the football knowledge within the organisation, maximising the impact of the County FA and helping ensure good governance practices are in place.

In January 2023, a new INED, Andrew Macdonald, was appointed to the Board in the role of Legal & Governance. Andrew's background is as a qualified legal professional who has spent time in senior roles at Norwich City FC, as well as in the technology and computer games industry.

This complements the existing skill sets on the Board in commercial, finance and safeguarding, as well as the Inclusion Advisory Group (IAG) Chair, who links directly into the Essex County FA Board of Directors as an INED and ensures equality and inclusion matters are represented at the highest levels of decision-making.

The Essex County FA also continued progress against our Equality Action Plan Intermediate Status of the Equality Standard, with an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) education programme delivered for clubs and leagues.

This was in addition to raising awareness around exploring Neurodiversity, religious festivals including Ramadan, the Rainbow Laces campaign, Black History Month, Football vs Homophobia and International Women's Day. Additional Disability Football Ambassadors were also recruited to help grow the disability pathway.

Business: *'To develop a sustainable business model that promotes innovation and continuous improvement, attracting inward investment.'*

The business has remained in a very strong and secure position. We continue to undertake prudent financial management and budget planning across all our financial investments, whilst maintaining high levels of service towards grassroots football.

We have also developed strong partnerships with outside organisations, which have helped to drive inward investment, both into the Essex County FA, but also into grassroots football in general.

Operations: *'To be the strategic lead for football in Essex.'*

Each department has a specific department-focused strategy which aligns with the national FA Grassroots Strategy and drives their day-to-day and season-by-season activity at a local level. The focus across each department has been to use data and insight to drive decision-making. Our growth in specific areas has been significant and, at the end of the 2022/23 season, in comparison with the 2021/22 season, the following progress had been made:

- 5,183 teams affiliated across the male, female and disability pathways - a growth of 3.5% from the 2021/22 season.
- The male pathway had a growth of 7.3% above the target of 67,459 players, with 72,379 players. This amounted to an 8% growth in mini-soccer, whilst youth and open-age football stayed static. Veterans football increased by 10% and Walking Football grew by 13%.
- The female pathway had a growth of 34% above the target of 6,248 players with 8,381 players involved. There were 105 female mini-soccer teams, 2,676 female youth teams, 67 female open-age teams, and six women's Walking Football teams, supported by a recreational programme network of 86 Wildcats Centres, 22 Squad Girls programmes and 21 Just Play Centres.

- The disability pathway had a growth of two teams in comparison to the 2021/22 season, with 66 teams affiliated vs 64. This featured 694 players, which was down against the target of 765, as the pathway continued to re-gain confidence following the disruption of Covid-19.
- At the end of the 2022/23 season, the number of referees stood at 1,529 (including trainee referees), an increase from the 2021/22 season. Within that there was an increase in referees from ethnically-diverse communities, and the number of female referees.
- Our Coach Education Department continues the transition to the new model of delivery of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) delivery by developing our “On the Pitch”, “Your Club”, and “In-Focus” programmes. There were more than 1,803 instances of CPD, which was 28% above the 2021/22 season total and 39% above the FA target.
- Our Safeguarding Department continued to ensure a safe environment for grassroots football, as we continued to achieve the FA Safeguarding 365 Operating Standard from the March 2022 assessment.
- Our Football Services Department continued to support the rollout of technology, as well as supporting the game through the discipline process, with over 812 investigations undertaken. This represented an increase of 5.7% from the previous season, which illustrated a concern regarding on-field and off-field conduct. This led to the development and introduction of the #ThankTheRef campaign, which was launched in December 2021 (more information can be found at www.essexfa.com/news/2021/dec/02/thank-the-ref-campaign). This was recognised as a finalist in the 2022 County FA Recognition Awards, as was the ‘Matchday Environment Resource Pack’ for clubs, coaches, players, parents and spectators, which has had 150,000+ engagements since its launch (see www.essexfa.com/leagues-and-clubs/matchday-environment).

Essex FA	End of Season 2022/23	2022/23 Target	vs Target	% vs Target
MALE PARTICIPATION	72,379	67,459	4,920	7.3%
FEMALE PARTICIPATION	8,381	6,248	2,133	34.1%
DISABILITY PARTICIPATION	694	765	-71	-9.3%
COACH DEVELOPMENT SCORE	98	94	4.48	4.8%
REFEREE DEVELOPMENT SCORE	98	92	6	6.1%
FACILITIES	388	248	140	56.1%

These represent an example of some of the progress made, but there is more detail contained within this report, highlighting the excellent work which has taken place within each department.

As the 2022/23 season concluded, the focus turned to preparations for 2023/24, to build on the successes and progress made.

THE BOARD

Andrew Chaplin continued as Chairman, leading the Board in the 2022/23 season. Andrew was supported by Independent Non-Executive Directors (INEDs) Hafiza Patel (Finance & Inclusion), Matthew Clare (Safeguarding & Facilities) and Craig Leverington (Commercial). During 2022/23, Andrew Macdonald was appointed as the fourth INED (Legal & Governance).

Sheryl MacRae, Barry Fitzgerald and Andrew French, along with Andrew Chaplin, all continued as Council-Appointed Directors.

Work around the FA Code of Governance for County FAs also saw changes to the code, with a continued focus on an open application processes to recruit directors and engage additional INEDs, filling vacancies with a focus on legal and wellbeing. A recruitment process proved unsuccessful in identifying the best candidate for a wellbeing and people development focus, so it was agreed to review again in the 2023/24 season.

2022/23 Board Members: Andrew Chaplin (Council), Andrew French (Council), Barry Fitzgerald (Council), Sheryl MacRae (Council), Hafiza Patel (INED), Matthew Clare (INED), Craig Leverington (INED), Andrew Macdonald (INED).

COUNCIL

Andrew Chaplin continued as Chairman of the Council for the 2022/23 season. A review of Council was also undertaken during 2022/23 season (in conjunction with Council) to clarify its role and function and evolving the process of appointment to Council. This would broaden the areas of representation to better reflect the growth in the grassroots game.

This process led to the important role and function of Council as a key consultative body, to provide feedback on the local grassroots game and helping to inform decision-making, as well as to check and challenge the Board. The process of appointment onto Council transitioned to an application-based process, supported by members from the relevant Group Areas. New roles were introduced onto Council, including:

- increase from one Women & Girls Pathway Representative role to four, one each for Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4
- introduction of two Disability Football Pathway roles
- introduction of one Walking Football Pathway role
- introduction of one Futsal Pathway role

The evolution would take effect from the 2023/24 season, with recruitment for new and existing vacant roles, as well as those due for reappointment, taking place in the summer of 2023. Full details of the Council appointments can be found at www.essexfa.com/about/board-and-council.

Graham Hall also continued to serve as the Essex County Schools FA Representative for the 2022/23 season, though he would be replaced for 2023/24 by Phil Sammons. Andrew French continued as the Essex Referees Association Representative.

The volunteer Council Members again undertook their disciplinary, county cup and ambassadorial roles. Many were also involved in Council, disciplinary, refereeing, competitions and rules meetings throughout the 2022/23 season.

2022/23 Council Members: Morris Jeffers, Gordon Snell, Michael Hemsted, Edward Rhymes, Michael Game, Alec Berry, David Threadgold, Sheryl MacRae, David Emerton, Roger Crane, Barry Fitzgerald, Kevin Curran, Graham Hall, Andy Chaplin, Martin Berry, Kim Farmer, Danny Coyle, Micah Hyde, Andy French, John Meates, Rob Parker, Gemma Stubbles (Youth Forum Rep).

STAFFING

At the end of the 2022/23 season, the County FA employed 22 members of staff - 19 full time and three part time. In addition, we continued to have around 70 casual employees who carried out coaching, tutoring and physiotherapy roles on a needs-led basis.

During the 2022/23 season, there were some staff movements, which saw Chris Evans (August 2022), Jake Fairman (September 2022), Chloe Hookins (September 2022), Wayne Hickey (March 2023), Cairo Duncan (May 2023), Lawrence Gower (June 2023) depart to explore new opportunities within, and outside of, the football sector.

There were also a number of new staff members recruited to the Essex County FA throughout the season: Ellie Finneran (August 2022), Matthew Pointer (September 2022), Martin Angelo (October 2022), Ben Rolph (November 2022), Carrie Barfoot (December 2022), Emily Reece (March 2023).

2022/23 Staff: Brendan Walshe, Greg Hart, Fran Smith, Mark Wallis, Robert Craven, Chris Evans, Nick Emery, Lana Gillard, Emma Burden, Andrew Crawl, Helen Hever, Lawrence Gower, Lukas Wood, Jennifer King, Emma Froment, Jake Fairman, Karl Sear, Cairo Duncan, Jake Ling, Milly Morgan, Wayne Hickey, Ellie Finneran, Matthew Pointer, Martin Angelo, Ben Rolph, Carrie Barfoot, Emily Reece.

Football Services

Association Membership Figures

At the end of the 2022/23 season, the membership figures were as follows:

Affiliated Teams	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Open-Age Men	1,381	1,378	1,178	1,034
Women	77	79	196	44
Youth	3,414	3,329	3,155	3,192
Girls	268	220	196	178
Totals	5,540	5,006	4,725	4,448

Discipline

Discipline	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Cautions	12,342	16,984	11,399	13,103	17,265	16,457
NPP Caution*	355	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Misconducts	1,161	1,123	648	1,321	1,211	1,198
Standard	1,822	1,857	1,286	644	1,843	1,750
Total	20,680	19,964	13,333	15,068	20,319	19,405

NPP = Non-Playing Participant

Regulations and Sanctions

Appeals

Season 2022/23 saw 19 appeals against league decisions being lodged with the Essex County FA, compared to 28 in season 2021/22. For the 2022/23 season, we entered The FA's Regional Discipline Panel, and we utilise these members for appeals, as well as discipline cases. The decisions were: 13 upheld, 6 dismissed.

Player Registration

As required by The FA, all leagues utilised the player registration facility through the FA Club Portal during season 2022/23, with 80,101 (72,692) registrations created.















Refereeing Strategy

To recruit, retain, and develop a high-quality and diverse referee workforce to support football across Essex



2022/23 IN NUMBERS

Recruitment	Retention	Development	Workforce
 1,529 AFFILIATED REFEREES  399 LEARNERS ON FA REFEREE COURSES  105 FEMALE REFEREES	 71.00% OF TRAINEE REFEREES CONVERTED TO LEVEL 7 JUNIOR OR Y1 REFEREES  76% OF ALL 9v9 AND 11v11 GAMES APPOINTED WITH A QUALIFIED MATCH OFFICIAL  ONE OF FOUR COUNTY FAs INVOLVED IN THE FA's BODY CAMERA TRIAL	 100 REFEREE PROMOTIONS  34 REFEREES APPOINTED TO CUP FINALS AND PLAY-OFF FIXTURES FROM STEP 6 AND ABOVE BY THE FA  RE-LAUNCH OF THE ESSEX CORE PROGRAMME, WITH 54 REFEREES INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAMME	 214 REFEREE DEVELOPERS (MENTORS, MATCHDAY COACHES, OBSERVERS AND PERFORMANCE COACHES)  SUPPORTED THE PROGRESSION OF OBSERVERS FROM COUNTY FA OBSERVING TO FA OBSERVING  DELIVERED MATCHDAY COACHING AND OBSERVER WORKSHOPS TO UPSKILL THE CURRENT WORKFORCE

Referees

FA Referee Courses

This year we recruited and trained 398 trainee referees from across Essex, who all successfully qualified over the 20 FA Referee Courses held.

Detailed below is a short review of the total number of learners we trained from July 2022 to June 2023.

FA Referee Course

During the course of the 2022/23 season, 398 learners were trained to become a referee over 20 FA Referee Courses we delivered across the county, utilising the following venues: Philip Morant School & College (Colchester), Broomfield FC (Chelmsford), Aveley FC (Thurrock), Wickford Town FC (Basildon) and Frenford Clubs (Redbridge).

FA Futsal Referee Course and Refereeing Walking Football Workshop

During season 2022/23 we delivered two Refereeing Walking Football Workshops which saw 19 learners trained to become a walking football referee. These were both delivered at Wickford Town FC (Basildon).

During the 2022/23 season we didn't deliver any FA Futsal Referee Courses.



Promotion

Following the conclusion of the promotion season for 2022/23, the following referees were promoted to their new respective levels for season 2023/24:

Promoted to National List Assistant Referee: David Harrison (Basildon)

Promoted to Step 1 Assistant Referee: Richard Carter (Braintree) and Thomas Whay (Harlow)

Promoted to Level 2A Step 1 Referee: Aaron Farmer (Colchester)

Promoted to Level 2B Step 2 Referee: Ayrton Hursey (Colchester) and Eugene Robinson (Chelmsford)

Promoted to Level 3 Step 3&4 Referee: Daniel Baines (Southend-on-Sea), Ashley Butler (Braintree), Samuel Everitt (Basildon), Lee Markwick (Thurrock), Daniel Ripton (Southend-on-Sea), Charlie Roberts (Havering), Tolu Sangowawa (Waltham Forest) and Lukas Wood (Chelmsford)

Promoted to Level 4 Step 5&6 Referee: Richard Airey (Thurrock), Leeford Antwi (Harlow), Alfie Davidson (Tendring), Jack Good (Chelmsford), Adam Hatcliff (Rochford), James Latham (Epping Forest), Adam Miller (Southend-on-Sea), Kadir Nazif (Havering), Andrew Owen (Thurrock), George Payne (Colchester), Henry Steele (Brentwood), Archie Waine (Chelmsford), Andrew Wheaton (Uttlesford) and Craig Wood (Thurrock)

Promoted to Level 5 Senior County Referee: James Allaoui (Redbridge), Toby Andrews (Chelmsford), Paul Bennett (Chelmsford), Craig Blunt (Basildon), Simon Brickwood (Castle Point), John Caunt (Epping Forest), Katie Dorling (Harlow), Lewis Earl (Colchester), Richard Evans (Braintree), Adam Fox (Harlow), Joseph Greenleaf (Colchester), Simon Harwood (Southend-on-Sea), Oliver Headington (Chelmsford), Howard Mackler (Maldon), Jake Molloy (Colchester), David Owen (Colchester), Christopher Parkinson (Southend-on-Sea), Mitchell Rolfe (Southend-on-Sea), Daniel Squibb (Chelmsford), Oliver Townsend (Southend-on-Sea), Margarit Tsekov (Tendring), Christopher Wilding (Braintree) and Joe Wise (Basildon)

Promoted to Level 6 County Referee: Rasmus Adamah (Thurrock), Samuel Akande (Thurrock), Rui Baptista Almeida (Waltham Forest), Amelia Barrett (Chelmsford), Craig Blunt (Basildon), Dan Boulden (Castle Point), Simon Brickwood (Castle Point), Peirce Campbell (Colchester), Raymond Chapman (Harlow), Matthew Clark (Maldon), Raymond Crook (Chelmsford), Mark Davey (Braintree), Liam Dawson (Thurrock), Ashley Diamond (Barking & Dagenham), David Dice (Redbridge), Joe Dickson (Southend-on-Sea), Lewis Earl (Colchester), Mark Ellis (Epping Forest), Adam Fox (Harlow), Daniel Goodman (Colchester), John Grocock (Havering), Alex Hodder (Braintree), Spencer King (Havering), Nicholas Kinghorn (Thurrock), John Magill (Colchester), Norman Miller (Redbridge), Roderic Morrissey (Brentwood), Michael Newman (Epping Forest), Mihai Nitu (Redbridge), Nino Olaosebikan (Thurrock), Christopher Parkinson (Southend-on-Sea), Tim Punter (Havering), Christopher Rammell (Harlow), Amaan Ramzan (Havering), Mitchell Rolfe (Southend-on-Sea), Liam Spreadbury (Maldon), David Stacey (Chelmsford), Oliver Townsend (Southend-on-Sea), Stuart Tredget (Chelmsford), Reece Unwin (Thurrock), Thomas Vickers (Chelmsford), Michael Wallace (Colchester), Robert Willcocks (Braintree), Kurtis Williams (Braintree) and Justin Wiseman (Brentwood)

Promoted to Level Y2 Referee: George Davies (Thurrock) and Charlie Treacher (Southend-on-Sea)

Promoted to Level 3W Women's National Referee: Mackenzie Klessa-Smith (Thurrock) and Steven Martin (Colchester)



Referee Development

During season 2022/23, 34 referees were appointed by the FA in cup finals and play-off fixtures from Step 6 and above which included Garry Maskell being appointed as one of the assistant referees to the FA Challenge Vase Final at Wembley Stadium.

Jamie Pope was selected by The FA to head over to Denmark as part of an exchange programme within Futsal. Jamie was also part of the team which included Craig Barnett, Charlie Roberts and Peter Wilson to officiate the English Schools FA vs Northern Ireland Schools FA Under 18s fixture at New Lodge.

For season 2022/23, The FA hosted its first ever FA Referee Recognition Awards at Wembley Stadium in which Lily Priest won the Special Refereeing Recognition Award and Alfie Davidson won the Unsung Hero Award.



League Referee Coverage Report

With the Referees Department's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) switching from the number of referees registered in a season to referee coverage as part of The FA's National Game Strategy, we were asked to collate the leagues' referee coverage statistics.

Therefore, detailed on the right, is the 2022/23 referee coverage information, which has been collated into their respective categories from the responses, received from our affiliated leagues:

% Coverage Baseline Calculator	Baseline	76%
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Key: GP = Games Played, GC = Games Covered by Qualified Referee



League Name	GP	GC	Coverage	Difference
Open-Age Male (Saturday)				
Chelmsford & District Churches League	0	0	-	0
Essex & Suffolk Border League	1,013	1,013	100.00%	0
Essex Alliance League	918	918	100.00%	0
Essex Veterans League	1,114	1,062	95.33%	-52
Mid Essex League	569	568	99.82%	-1
North Essex Veterans League	0	0	-	0
ProKit UK Essex Olympian League	717	702	97.91%	-15
Southend Borough & District Football Combination	270	269	99.63%	-1
Open-Age Male (Sunday)				
Braintree & North Essex Sunday League	334	263	78.74%	-71
Brentwood Sunday League	411	391	95.13%	-20
Chelmsford Sunday League	608	547	89.97%	-61
Colchester & District Sunday League	287	287	100.00%	0
Essex Sunday Corinthian League	765	765	100.00%	0
Essex Sunday Football Combination	103	87	84.47%	-16
Harlow & District Sunday League	305	302	99.02%	-3
Sceptre Sunday League	445	398	89.44%	-47
Southend & Basildon Sunday League	336	330	98.21%	-6
Southend Borough Combination Veterans	418	355	84.93%	-63
Thurrock Association Sunday League	323	321	99.38%	-2
Youth				
Blackwater & Dengie Youth League	1,911	1,853	96.96%	-58
Brentwood Community Football Alliance	3,195	766	23.97%	-2,429
Colchester & District Youth League	2,042	1,739	85.16%	-303
Eastern Junior Alliance	2,492	2,266	90.93%	-226
Echo Junior League	2,915	1,936	66.42%	-979
Southend & District Junior Sunday League	2,644	1,631	61.69%	-1013
Open-Age Female and Youth Female				
Eastern Region Women's League (Essex-Based Clubs Only)	54	54	100.00%	0
Essex County Women's League	259	217	83.78%	-42
Essex County Girls' League	1,229	548	44.59%	-681
Overall Total	25,677	19,588	76.29%	-6,089

Representative Squads and County Cup Finals 2022/23

Women (Manager: Kim Coster)

Wednesday 8th March 2023

Middlesex (A) 0-2 (at Bedfont Sports FC)

Southern Counties Cup

Line-Up: Mackler, Z Smith, Bilson, Farmer, Ward, Fry, K Smith, Morgan, Box, Locke, Canny.

Substitutes: Lucus, D'Ath, Warner, Head.

COUNTY CUPS 2022/23

Essex Under 14s Girls Cup Final

Aveley 3-0 Dagenham & Redbridge

Sunday 26th February 2023

Kick-Off 10:00am at Aveley FC

Essex Under 16s Girls Cup Final

Bowers & Pitsea (Under 15s) 3-4 Bowers & Pitsea

Sunday 26th February 2023

Kick-Off 1:00pm at Aveley FC

Essex Under 18s Girls Cup Final

Billericay Town 0-5 Bowers & Pitsea (Reds)

Sunday 26th February 2023

Kick-Off 4:00pm at Aveley FC

Essex Veterans Trophy Final

Harold Hill (Over 45s) 6-1 Herongate Athletic (Over 45s)

Wednesday 15th March 2023

Kick-Off 7:45pm at Concord Rangers FC

BBC Essex Senior Cup Final

Braintree Town 2-0 Concord Rangers

Tuesday 21st March 2023

Kick-Off 7:45pm at Colchester United FC

Essex Saturday Veterans Cup Final

Harold Wood Athletic Veterans 1-1 Rayleigh Town Veterans (after extra time, Rayleigh Town won 3-1 on penalties)

Wednesday 22nd March 2023

Kick-Off 7:45pm at Heybridge Swifts FC

Essex Saturday Junior Cup Final

Heybridge Swifts (Under 23s) 1-0 Sandon Royals

Wednesday 29th March 2023

Kick-Off 7:45pm at Heybridge Swifts FC

Essex Sunday Veterans Cup Final

Rochford Sports & Social 0-4 Vincitori

Sunday 2nd April 2023

Kick-Off 10:30am at Great Wakering Rovers FC

Essex Women's Trophy Final

Southend United Community Sport Club 3-1 Toby

Sunday 2nd April 2023

Kick-Off 2:30pm at Great Wakering Rovers FC

BBC Essex Saturday Premier Cup Final

Shenfield Association 3-1 Wakering Sports Reserves

Wednesday 12th April 2023

Kick-Off 7:45pm at Billericay Town FC

BBC Essex Women's Cup Final

Billericay Town 1-0 Hashtag United Reserves

Thursday 13th April 2023

Kick-Off 7:45pm at Billericay Town FC

Essex Sunday Junior Trophy Final

Colebrook Royals 5-3 Valence United (after extra time)

Friday 14th April 2023

Kick-Off 7:45pm at Heybridge Swifts FC

Essex Sunday Junior Cup Final

Grays Athletic (Sunday) 1-2 Herongate Athletic (Sunday) (after extra time)

Sunday 16th April 2023

Kick-Off 10:30am at Bowers & Pitsea FC

Essex Sunday Premier Cup Final

Flyhouse Athletic 3-1 Hatch Lane United

Sunday 16th April 2023

Kick-Off 2:30pm at Bowers & Pitsea FC

Essex Saturday Junior Trophy Final

Felsted Rovers 0-1 Manford Way Reserves

Friday 21st April 2023

Kick-Off 7:45pm at Heybridge Swifts FC

Essex Cassels Under 16s Cup Final

Harlow Town (Hawks) 2-1 Hutton

Wednesday 26th April 2023

Kick-Off 7:45pm at Concord Rangers FC

Essex Under 12s Cup Final

Hannakins Farm (Blacks) 1-2 Wivenhoe Tempest (Blues) (after extra time)

Sunday 30th April 2023

Kick-Off 11:00am at Great Wakering Rovers FC

Essex Under 12s Girls Cup Final

Buckhurst Hill (Tigresses) 0-1 County Park

Sunday 30th April 2023

Kick-Off 2:30pm at Great Wakering Rovers FC

Essex Pelly Under 18s Cup Final

Chelmsford City 0-6 Concord Rangers

Wednesday 3rd May 2023

Kick-Off 7:45pm at Billericay Town FC

Essex Cordell Under 13s Cup Final

Bowers & Pitsea 3-0 Canvey Island

Sunday 7th May 2023

Kick-Off 10:00am at Aveley FC

Essex Andrews Under 14s Cup Final

Billericay Town (Blues) 1-1 Buckhurst Hill

Sunday 7th May 2023

Kick-Off 1:00pm at Aveley FC

Essex Rosser Under 15s Cup Final

Brentwood Town 5-0 Hashtag United (Yellows)

Sunday 7th May 2023

Kick-Off 4:00pm at Aveley FC



Male Pathway

As we head into the final year of the current strategy, the Male Pathway continues to grow across all formats and forms of the game, demonstrating a sustained appetite to participate and engage with the game. Boasting circa 4,500 teams, the male game in Essex is thriving.

Notably, it's experiencing an increase in open-age participation. Where, nationally, there is a decline, here in the county of Essex we are against the curve and showing growth across the adult male 11v11 game. This particular growth is a reflection of the great work which is being done across the county by our member clubs and leagues to ensure there is a game for all.

Mini-Soccer

Mini-soccer within Essex has grown by 8.83% (200 teams) during the 2022/23 season to 1,515 affiliated sides when compared to last season, representing 45% of youth football teams across the county over the #MovingForward Strategy.

This season saw all age groups experience growth in team numbers from the 2018/19 campaign, with an average growth of 33% at each age group. The largest growth was at Under 7s, once again, with an increase of 52% (123 teams).

All five of our affiliated youth leagues that offer provision for mini-soccer teams experienced growth in membership numbers across multiple age groups, with the biggest being 61% (38 teams) by the Echo Junior League, within their Under 7s provision.

As part of our continued support to our affiliated leagues, we were able to deliver our annual Youth Leagues Forum, where leagues came together to work with us, gaining support and key updates delivered by numerous departments of the County FA. This year's forum was attended by FA national staff members Andy Dyke (Male Pathway) and Nathan Batchelor (Leagues).

Youth Football

In the 2022/23 season, youth football represented approximately 75% of the County FA's overall affiliation. With twelve age groups from Under 7s to 18s, there were 3,322 teams affiliated, representing an increase from the previous season of 4.17% (133 teams).

More specifically, in the Under 11s to 18s category of youth football, there was a marginal decline of 0.11% (three teams) from the previous season. However, there was significant growth at Under 11s, 13s and 15s. The largest increase was seen within the Under 12s age group again, where an increase of 8.83% (21 teams) was recorded against the previous season.

Adult Football

Adult Male 11v11 (Open-Age to Walking Football, including Veterans)

Open-Age	831	788
Veterans	178	196
Walking Football	59	76
Total	1,068	1,060



Saturday Open-Age

Continued support toward open-age football providers across Essex took shape through the use of the England Accreditation programme, utilising the on and off-field benefits through the recent renewal period.

Our annual League Reports were also produced and shared with our respective Saturday leagues to provide them with valuable insight on club, team and player data. Within Essex, our Saturday open-age leagues were against the declining national curve again for the 2022/23 season. Experiencing a positive growth in team numbers, Saturday open-age team numbers grew by 7%, showing a clear appetite for players to continue, or take up, playing.

Of our five respective open-age Saturday leagues, 60% experienced either growth or the same number of teams participating from the previous year. One league showed growth of +22 teams from the previous season (Essex Alliance League).

Following the introduction of Regional Feeder Leagues for the non-league pyramid, our three Saturday leagues operating senior divisions with promotion opportunities are, season-on-season, seeing more interest and growth on senior sides.

In Essex, there are currently 54 men's senior teams competing within the FA National League System pyramid from Steps 6 to 1 (National League), with Dagenham & Redbridge and Southend United currently playing their football at the highest non-league level.



Sunday Open-Age

Sunday open-age football in Essex has shown positive growth since the pandemic. However, for the 2022/23 season, much like the national picture, there was slight decline from the second growth season of 2021/22.

Despite the decline of 25 teams across Sunday football, three of our affiliated Sunday leagues actually experienced positive growth. The Chelmsford Sunday League saw eleven new teams enter the league from the 2021/22 season, representing a 20% growth.

Our annual Adult Leagues Forum took place in early March, where our leagues from Saturday, Sunday and over-35s football came together to discuss their experiences of the season so far, as well as taking on key updates from multiple departments of the Essex County FA Team.

Veterans Football (Over 35s)

Veterans football in Essex continues to grow, and it has experienced a 10.11% (18 teams) growth during the 2022/23 season, now with a total of 196 teams playing across the county compared to the previous year's 178.

In Essex, two of our veterans' leagues have demonstrated sustainability within their team numbers across the #MovingForward Strategy. The Essex Veterans League and the Southend Borough Combination Veterans League both experienced growth for the 2022/23 season, representing 98% of the teams affiliated.



Walking Football

Walking Football in Essex has positively grown season-upon-season and increased the number of teams affiliated by 58 from the Essex Walking Football League's inception during the 2016/17 season.

More recently, the growth within Walking Football teams up to the 2022/23 season has increased again by 29% (+17 teams) from 2019/20. Walking Football in Essex is widely represented across the county, and the Essex Walking Football League continues to provide a competitive environment for the format.

The league is constantly looking at ways to provide opportunities and improve the playing experience for all, with ongoing discussions looking at introducing a County Cup competition in partnership with the Essex County FA.

Small-Sided

Small-sided provision across the country is becoming a more popular format of the game for adult players. This trend is representative of the number of affiliated small-sided providers within Essex.

The Essex County FA, during the 2022/23 season, affiliated 16 local small-sided providers, which saw circa 300 teams participating across those leagues and circa 1,000+ players participating within this format of the game, an increase of 116% (161 teams) from the 2020/21 season.

Leisure Leagues make up a large percentage of our county affiliations. The small-sided providers continue to grow and look for new sites to provide opportunities for players aged 16 and over.

Futsal

Here at the Essex County FA, we recognise that Futsal is a well-participated format of the game across the county, and there are many clubs and players who choose to play outside of their mainstream grassroots clubs. Futsal provides a great deal of development opportunities for players to improve their technical ability, which can be transferred into football.

Within the county, there are ten affiliated clubs who offer provision for ages as young as Under 7s through to Under 16s. For the second season in a row, we delivered local county qualifiers for the FA-affiliated Pokémon Futsal Cup for youth players. Improving on the success of last year's tournament, we saw a huge increase in participation and interest in competing. We also managed to host a full female tournament in the following age groups: Under 10s, 12s, 14s, 16s.

This year's competition saw 45 team entries, with circa 220 players competing across the boys' and girls' competitions. Age group winners were then entered into the regional competitions in June, representing their clubs and the county of Essex. We very much look forward to hosting more Futsal competitions in the future, and in the new season.



Female Pathway

Mini-Soccer

It was a memorable season, fresh off the back of the England Lionesses' momentous UEFA Women's Euro 2022 win, which saw the 2022/23 female mini-soccer figures finally exceed 100 teams, reaching 105 at the end of June.

This has only been possible with the hard work and determination of many clubs and individuals throughout the county, who have a passionate drive to ensure opportunities are both open and accessible for all age groups, regardless of geography, ability or age.

The Essex County Girls' League continues to thrive, with the largest percentage of female participants overall at 3,368, an increase of 1.4%. The Under 9s and 10s age groups were involved in a league programme of fixtures and an involvement within the fantastic Girls League Cup Finals Day!

An increase in the youth leagues adopting the Standard Code of Rules for Youth (SCORY) rule permitting girls' teams to play down a year group in mixed leagues was promising for some of our rural and urban teams within the county. Nationally, Essex continues to lead the way with the number of teams utilising the rule.







Season 2022/23 saw 229 teams across the country using this, an increase of 66 teams. 85 of those teams are from the Brentwood Community Football Alliance (an increase of 16 teams). 37% of the teams accessing this rule change nationally are from the BCFA. Since the introduction of the rule, 26 County FAs have been involved.

Many leagues are now promoting the rule change, which has, naturally, seen an increase in their female memberships. Hopefully, in time, the rule change will lead to more localised playing opportunities for all age groups and a shift in football culture where girls and boys are playing on the same pitch, and it is no longer a talking point.

Youth Football

Female youth participation figures continue to head on an upward trajectory. The county saw a growth of 65 teams this season, increasing from 380 teams to 445 female playing opportunities overall. 265 of those teams were from female youth.

The biggest increase was seen in the Under 12s, with an increase of 19 teams whilst the Under 11s and the Under 15s grew by eleven teams. There has been a 17% increase overall, with 265 girls' youth teams now affiliated. The table below demonstrates the number of girls playing as of the end of season 2022-2023 within each league:

Youth League	21-22	22-23	Change
	137	164	19% ↑
	44	76	72% ↑
	1269	1365	7% ↑
	3321	3368	1.40% ↑
	84	157	86% ↑
	129	121	6% ↓
	114	79	30% ↓

The growth within female participation has been supported by various initiatives, key partners and the tireless volunteer workforce driving the female game at a local level, to whom we are forever grateful. The following must all take credit for the growth the county is seeing:

FA programmes such as the Weetabix Wildcats and Squad Girls; the Barclays Girls Football School Partnerships; youth leagues adopting the SCORY rule change; Essex County Schools FA competitions taking place across numerous age groups; Essex County FA Under 12s, 14s, 16s and 18s Girls' County Cups.

Adult Football

Whilst the women's open-age figures plateaued and saw very small growth (with team numbers at 60 - a growth of one team), other areas of the female adult game saw some fantastic positives (this category includes Under 23s college teams).

The county's top-tiered female team, Billericay Town, had a successful first season playing in the FA Women's National League, placing a respectable sixth, whilst Hashtag United finished the season with a league win in the National League South-East Division One. They now join Billericay in Tier Three.

The Essex County Women's League continues to be the foundation within the county, with a Premier Division and two divisions below this. It is the platform for many new teams starting their journey in adult women's football.



Essex Women's Walking Football League

As March approached, and plans were afoot to celebrate International Women's Day, one group of females, who had worked tirelessly across the winter and Christmas months, were ready to launch the very first Women's Walking Football League.

The 'central venue' league took off at Melbourne Park's 3G in Chelmsford, with over 100 females involved. Teams from Great Wakering, Leyton Orient, Paringdon Pirates (from Harlow), Clacton Rhinos and Billericay were all involved in every league fixture, with the overall league winners, Great Wakering, taking first place.

Work is already underway to ensure the league is even stronger next season, with more participants and an extended pitch booking. It's a fantastic opportunity, increasing the female player pathway options for over-40s.

Recreational Football

The number of recreational opportunities has continued to increase across the county.

Snickers 'Just Play' Centres continue to grow, alongside key partners delivering localised, informal opportunities.

Each of Essex's four 'Group Areas' has at least one offer for women's recreational football:



Regional Talent Club

Essex's Regional Talent Club (RTC) remains a Tier 2 Licence of the Elite Female Player Pathway. RTC centres, nationally, remain at 29 clubs across three tiers.

The programme was in its tenth and final year at the start of the 2022/23 season, with the Football Association (FA) announcing a revamped women's and girls' pathway to discover a new generation of talent, coming into effect in the 2023/24 season. To aid with this transition, it was determined that the Under 10s and 11s age groups would not operate for the 2022/23 season.

Under 16s: Matthew Johnstone (Head Coach), Alan Ackrell (Assistant Coach):

Annabelle Webb, Chloe Scales, Erin Williams, Isabella Vernon, Isobel Hemmings, Jessica McCrae, Lexxie Blyth, Marcie O'Meara, Megan McAniskey, Mia Sanders, Millie D'Ath, Ruby Gaunt, Scarlett Lazarus, Skyla Smith, Tilly Jones.

Under 14s: Kevin Baker (Head Coach), Randeep Samra (Assistant Coach):

Abigail Barber, Alessandra Okonta, Autumn Wheaton, Camille Adams, Estelle Scherer, Evelyn Gauden, Freya Matthews, Georgia Banyard, Holly-Mae Elmes, Isla Hoskin, Libby Mitchell, Lily Brice, Lily Gaunt, Lucy Elliott, Phoebe Duffin, Tabitha Hellen.

Under 12s: Aaron Runnacles (Head Coach), Matthew Gibbs (Assistant Coach):

Aimee Prosser, Amelia Christmas, Amy White, Anya Durbin, Betsy Winney, Camille Catling, Fleur Bennett, India Small, Kayda Burdett, Lara Stebbings, Maria Bertoni-Smith, Reisha Patel.

Danielle Warnes (Club Manager)

Simon King (Technical Director)

Mark Cousins (Goalkeeping Coach)

Tracy Lewis (Physiotherapist)

Alex Barker (Sports Therapist)

Disability Pathway

The Disability Pathway has seen growth and development over the 2022/23 season. From the Essex Soccability League to the new Comets community programme, there are more opportunities to play in both impairment-specific and pan-disability Football.

Most notable has been the increase in adult Soccability teams participating within the Essex Soccability League. Developing into North and South Leagues, doubling the previous number of divisions has seen an increase in the number of open-age disability teams affiliated and playing within a sanctioned competition.

The work carried out by clubs across the county led to 66 affiliated teams at the end of 2022/23 season, an increase of 3% from the numbers seen in the previous season. An increase in clubs within the mainstream environment developing disability provisions has been supported by the transition from FA Charter Standard to England Football Accreditation.

Youth Disability Provisions

Affiliated youth disability teams within Essex has remained consistent with the previous season, with 17 affiliated teams.

The addition of two new provisions in youth age groups shows a marginal decline in retention from the previous season. The 2022/23 season brought a new Community Programme for the youth disability pathway: Comets. Across the county, we saw two providers enter the project of 52 pilot provisions. These Comets sessions have increased the number of recreational opportunities by 200%, with no recreational sessions the previous season.

We were able to deliver three Summer Youth Festivals in partnership with Colchester United FC's Community Foundation, offering an opportunity to play fun football to over 135 participants, demonstrating the appetite for regular fixtures within the youth teams.

Adult Disability Provisions

In the 2022/23 season, adult football approximately represented 74% of the County FA's overall affiliated disability provisions. There were 49 teams affiliated, representing an increase from the previous season of 4.3% (47 teams).

With existing disability provisions seeing a rise in players accessing their sessions, a number of clubs were able to affiliate additional teams for the 2022/23 season, evidencing a growing need for an increase in localised provisions, and a desire to participate within the pathway.

Impairment Specific Provisions

The 2022/23 season saw retention of existing Cerebral Palsy youth teams, as well as an increase in impairment-specific provisions through the addition of a Frame Football session.

Both provisions engaged with local and regional competitions to provide players with further opportunities to access football.



Essex Clubs in National Competitions

Aveley continued their upwards trajectory in 2022/23 by earning a place in National League South to compete in the sixth tier of English football for the first time in their history.

The Millers, who had won the Isthmian League North Division title twelve months earlier, beat two Essex clubs in the Premier Division play-offs to clinch promotion, edging past Canvey Island on penalties in the semi-finals before defeating Hornchurch, 1-0, in the final. They took the place of **Concord Rangers**, who were demoted after a decade-long stay in National League South.

There was play-off disappointment for two Essex sides in that division as both **Chelmsford City** and **Braintree Town** were thwarted at the first hurdle. The Clarets lost 1-0 at home to St Albans City whilst the Iron missed out on a semi-final spot after going down 2-1 at Worthing.

Southend United's bid to return to the English Football League at the second attempt saw them miss out on a play-off place by just two points and one position in the National League table. **Dagenham & Redbridge** also secured a top ten finish, but neither were able to join **Colchester United**, who finished 20th in League Two.

Bowers & Pitsea and **Brightlingsea Regent** were unable to retain their Step Three status as they both suffered relegation to the Isthmian League North Division, but there was success for Bowers' tenants at the Len Salmon Stadium as **Hashtag United** romped to the North Division title by securing 98 points and scoring over 100 goals.

The Tags will compete in the Premier Division for the first time in 2023/24, having only joined the National League System five years previously. **Heybridge Swifts** and **Grays Athletic** came close to joining them, but both were beaten by AFC Sudbury in the end of season play-offs.

Heading out of the Isthmian League North Division in the opposite direction were **Tilbury** and **Hullbridge Sports**, who returned to the Essex Senior League. For the Dockers, it ends a 17-year stay at Step Four. **Coggeshall Town** and **Great Wakering Rovers** were also demoted after losing to Winterton Rangers and Quorn respectively in the inter-step play-offs.

Harlow Town resigned from the Southern League Division One Central following issues with the pitch at their Barrows Farm home and will compete at Step Six in 2023/24 whilst, at the other end of the table, **Walthamstow** had an impressive season, finishing fourth and losing out to eventual play-off champions Didcot Town.

At Step Six, **Harwich & Parkeston** were another team to suffer play-off heartbreak as they were beaten 4-0 by Downham Town in the Eastern Counties League Division One North final whilst, in the Division One South final, **Stanway Pegasus** - who had beaten **Basildon Town** in the semis - lost out on penalties to Sporting Bengal United.

There were celebrations at **Frenford** who, having been founded during the Second World War in 1942 and only joined the senior ranks in 2018, were promoted to Step Five and the Essex Senior League for the first time in their history as Division One South champions. Another of the 2018 intake, **Coggeshall United**, folded after finishing bottom of the table.

In the female game, **Billerica Town's** first campaign in the FA Women's National League Premier Division Southern Division - the third tier - ended with them in sixth place, and they will be joined in 2023/24 by **Hashtag United**, who were crowned champions after winning 16 of their 18 Division One South East games. **Stanway Pegasus** and **Southend United** were promoted to the sixth tier, the Eastern Region Women's League Division One South.

Hashtag United also enjoyed a run to the Fourth Round Proper of the FA Women's Cup, one of only three fourth-tier teams to do so. The Tags overcame Bedford, Colney Heath and Dartford on the road, and Actonians at home, before bowing out at Championship club Coventry United.

In the FA Cup, **Dagenham & Redbridge** were the final Essex club to go out, losing 3-2 in a replay to League Two Gillingham in the Second Round Proper. **Chelmsford City** could also be pleased with their showing, defeating National League Aldershot Town 2-0 in the Fourth Qualifying Round before being edged out in a replay against Barnet in the First Round Proper.

Southend United made it to the last 16 of the FA Trophy before losing 2-0 at home to York City. The Minstermen had nudged past **Chelmsford City** in the previous round on penalties, whilst **Braintree Town** lost 1-0 to Eastleigh, also in the Fourth Round Proper.

Essex Clubs in National Competitions

In the FA Vase, **Romford** won ties against Potton United, West Essex, Newmarket Town, Little Oakley and Whittlesey Athletic before losing 6-0 to Jersey Bulls at the Fourth Round Proper stage. **Burnham Ramblers**, from Step Six, started in the qualifying rounds and were only beaten on penalties by Tring Athletic in the Second Round Proper.

In the FA Youth Cup, **Colchester United** and **Southend United** both made it to the Third Round Proper. The Us lost heavily, 6-0, at home to Cambridge United but the Shrimpers, who had joined in the Second Qualifying Round and triumphed over Billericay Town, Bowers & Pitsea, Kettering Town and Milton Keynes Dons, put up a strong showing before losing 3-0 to Category One Academy Middlesbrough at Roots Hall.

Clubs

During the 2022/23 season, over 50 clubs worked in collaboration with the Essex County FA Development Team to gain England Accreditation status, including Senrab Youth, Old Parkonians Youth and Brightlingsea Regent.

Alongside the #PlayYourPart Matchday Environment Pack, this season all clubs received a Club Affiliation Pack. This is a detailed, step-by-step guide to support members through the affiliation process, with detail of all competitions, facility providers, affiliation requirements, FA systems, FA campaigns and key contacts ahead of the new season.

The Essex County FA Club Report Programme also continues to grow, with an additional five clubs breaking the 20+ team threshold, taking the overall club count to 89. This means that the 89 largest clubs operating within the 19 local authorities received a data report, providing insight in their volunteer workforce, affiliation, community engagement and social media.



Coaches

Our Coach Development Programme continued to grow in the 2022/23 season, with an increased number of volunteer coaches supported across the county.

The volume of attendees for both in-person and online events was refreshing to see, and we'd like to thank the leagues, clubs and individual coaches who helped to promote the programme throughout the season.

With greater understanding of England Football Learning's coach education pathway, which has developed over the past two years, our Coach Development Team was able to better connect with clubs and volunteer coaches to offer an increasingly-localised programme of support, to complementing official qualifications.

Our Coach Development Team planned and delivered a range of events across the season, linked to the key strands below. A wide variety of formats were offered, including weekdays, evenings and weekends which, in-turn, increased access to additional support and learning for volunteer coaches.

On the Pitch: Practical coaching workshops, with an emphasis upon sharing top tips and advice for coaches to try in their own environment.

In Focus: Delivered by guest presenters and planned in partnership with organisations such as professional clubs and universities.

Your Club: Providing clubs with the opportunity to invest in the development of their volunteer workforce. This offer consists of a series of workshops, delivered at a club venue, with content designed to meet the needs of both the club and their coaches.

Online Discussions: These short sessions are designed to support coaches working within the grassroots game, and are delivered by our Coach Development Team, as well as guest speakers:

Coach Support Offer	22/23 season
On the Pitch	26 workshops, circa 500 attendees
Your Club	13 clubs, 24 workshops, 350+ coaches, circa 4,300 players within these clubs
In Focus	Three events: Mike Phelan Masterclass with Sensible Soccer; Dmitri Halajko (Colchester United FC) at the BBC Essex Senior Cup Final; Lucy Faraday (England Women's Under 17s Coach) at the BBC Essex Women's Cup Final
Online Discussions	13 sessions, 300+ attendees

We'd like to thank the fantastic support of facility providers cross the county, including some of our affiliated clubs, for helping us to plan our offer. We also extend our thanks to our team of Coach Developers, as well as The FA's Regional Coach Development Officers, Coach Mentors and Community Champions, who helped to bring content to life and provide valuable support to so many coaches across Essex.

The 2022/23 season ended with 88% of Essex's youth teams with a qualified coach. A focus over the coming seasons will be to increase this figure and ensure more children have access to coaching from qualified individuals. The target for the 2023/24 season is 90%.



England Football Learning

With all football qualifications now planned and delivered by The FA, through England Football Learning, we continue to signpost grassroots volunteers, as well as others looking to start a career in football, to this education programme.

The Introduction to Coaching Football Course, which replaced the FA Level 1 in Coaching Football in 2021, continued to be popular during the 2022/23 season, with 1,000 Essex-based coaches booking onto courses taking place between July 2022 and June 2023. The course consists of three live webinar sessions and E-learning modules, as well as exclusive access to the FA Coaching Community, where learners can share tips, discuss ideas and learn from other coaches.

Following the launch of the UEFA 'C' Licence in 2022, which has replaced the FA Level 2 in Coaching Football, the 2022/23 season saw another cohort of learners accessing this qualification in Essex.

The course is delivered through a blend of virtual and face-to-face learning, with FA Coach Developers guiding learners through the course, supporting them to tailor the content to the people they coach. The course lasts approximately 20 weeks, supporting the principles

of spaced learning and giving learners the opportunity to reflect and practice what they have learnt in real time.

Moving into the 2023/24 season, England Football Learning are planning at least six UEFA 'C' courses, which should open opportunities for at least 150 volunteer coaches to access the qualification. This number is due to increase over the coming seasons, to help meet demand and provide valuable learning opportunities for coaches to develop both themselves and others within their clubs.

Youth League Coach Support

In recent seasons, we have started to deliver workshops for new coaches operating within some of our youth leagues across the county.

During the 2022/23 season, we consulted with all youth leagues countywide and, as a result, we'll be working in partnership with all youth leagues to deliver a series of coaching workshops in 2023/24. This offer will include introductory workshops for new coaches in the early part of the season, followed by a range of other events, designed to support volunteer coaches with some of the most commonly faced challenges in the grassroots game.

"Really useful session on Neurodiversity. Wish it could've been longer, but I greatly appreciate you giving up your time & the advice given on such an important matter."

- Volunteer coach attending our 'Supporting Neurodiversity' workshop (May 2023)

"Great short intro into the world of professional coaching. Dmitri had a great knack of linking his issues from starting out with coaching to grassroots. Great event!"

- Volunteer attending our BBC Essex Senior Cup Final coaching event with Dmitri Halajko, Sporting Director at Colchester United FC (March 2023)

"Totally inspirational from all. A genuine feeling of wanting to be there and to support. Left feeling totally empowered and on a mission to share the positive feelings about women in football."

Volunteer attending one of our Female Coaching Community events (February 2023)

Equality and Inclusion

Equality Standard

Following the award of Equality Standard intermediate status to the Essex County FA in the previous year, the 2022/23 season saw us continue to ensure that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) was at the forefront of all conversations whilst assessing, improving and increasing our work across the EDI space.

The Equality Standard, managed by Plan4Sport, was launched by the UK sports councils in November 2004 to help address the inequalities which exist within the sports sector. It is a framework to guide sports organisations towards achieving equality.

As part of the project, and our ongoing work, we continued to develop our EDI education programme, offering training workshops for various football stakeholders. Work to create an EDI strategy document to sit alongside the #MovingForward strategy has been undertaken. The document will provide a focus for the equality plan, allowing the Inclusion Advisory Group to monitor work and ensure continued progress towards our action plan.

Inclusion Advisory Group (IAG)

Recruitment of an additional two members took place across the 2022/23 season, increasing the geographic area and demographics of Essex which the Inclusion Advisory Group represents.

The IAG continued to meet across the season to support the County FA and its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work, including checking and challenging strategy, policies and practices.

Projects and Programmes

Work continued to promote equality and inclusion throughout the organisation and the wider workforce, including the celebration of religious holidays and international days through our social media accounts. The launch of our EDI education programme also saw twelve leagues and 17 clubs attend workshops in 2022/23, representing over 200 teams across the county.

Workshops delivered by various partner organisations included 'Ramadan Awareness' and 'Creating an LGBTQ+ Inclusive Football Environment', alongside others. 20 individuals from 15 clubs committed time to furthering their learning on generic EDI workshops, providing a greater reach to education in addition to the league committee attendees in the previous season.

The Football Leadership Diversity Code was released for grassroots football, the women's pyramid, and the FA National League System, seeking to tackle inequality and improve representation of historically-underrepresented groups across senior leadership positions, wider team operations and coaching roles.

Over 490 clubs adopted the code in the 2022/23 season (53% of clubs across the county), committing to being 'Leaders in Football Diversity' and ensuring that they promote and deliver the highest standards across their club. Additionally, we recruited a Disability Football Ambassador to assist in the development of new provisions across Essex.

Over 200 laces were distributed as part of the Rainbow Laces project and the Essex County FA attended a county review on trans policy to provide feedback on the current process, whilst suggesting improvements to support an evolving society.

Special Dispensation Applications

During the 2022/23 season, we supported the highest ever number of applications for dispensation, with 28 applications supported and 24 applications approved. The increase from previous seasons shows a desire, and a need, to support players with uptake opportunities to remain within mainstream football.

Dispensations proved invaluable to a number of players across the county in the 2022/23 season, granting them the opportunity to remain within mainstream football whilst participating in a more appropriate age group than the one prescribed by date of birth. Feedback received from parents/carers and clubs showed the positive effects that dispensation can have on a player and their experience of the game.

Youth Forum

The 2022/23 season has seen the Essex County FA Youth Forum continue to evolve, with Sian Hillis as Chairperson and Gemma Stubbles as Vice-Chairperson. The Youth Forum are a group of young people aged 15-24 from all over Essex, with a shared passion and commitment to giving the youth voice a platform in football.

Currently, our Youth Forum is made up of nine members (Gemma, Adem, Evie, Matt, Alfie, Millie, Shifa, Will and Sian) who represent various areas of Essex. They meet on a bi-monthly basis, with both in-person and virtual meetings. The aim of the collective is to positively impact the number of children and young people playing and volunteering in football, alongside developing a network.

The group have supported Futsal events, schools competitions and representative team trials, and several young people have attended the FA Leadership Academy as participants, delivery team members and mentors. The group hope to continue spreading the youth voice and growing with the grassroots family.



Facilities and Funding

With Local Football Facility Plans (LFFP) in place for each of our local authorities, work continued to engage appropriate partners to take forward identified projects.

Across the season, meetings and calls were held with local authorities to revisit their respective LFFP, which acts as an investment portfolio across four investment pillars: 3G Pitch Provision, Grass Pitch Improvement, Changing Rooms/Pavilions, Small-Sided Football Facilities.

This engagement was aligned to Playing Pitch Strategy action plan work completed in conjunction with Active Essex, Sport England and the other national governing bodies (NGBs) to establish short, medium and long term priorities for grassroots football facilities. During 2022/23, five large capital projects were successful in applications to the Football Foundation (FF) panel:

- **Boxted Parish Council, King Georges Playing Field** - Pavilion Refurbishment (grant value £99,000)
- **Harwich & Dovercourt High School** - New Floodlit 3G 11v11/100x64m pitch (£895,746.36)
- **Thames Life Community Development Trust, Barking & Dagenham Local Authority** - PlayZone Portfolio (£23,460)
- **London Borough of Newham** - PlayZone Portfolio (£25,000)
- **Deanes School Sports Centre** - New Floodlit 3G 11v11/91x55m Pitch (£779,950 - in assessment)

FA 3G Pitch Register

There has been growth in the number of 3G pitches listed within Essex on the FA 3G Pitch Register during the 2022/23 season. It requires that all 3G Football Turf Pitches used for affiliated match play should meet the standards set in the FA 3G Pitch Performance Test.

This ensures there is a high-quality standard across all 3G pitches. There are now 64 pitches (of varying sizes) within Essex listed on the register (up from 30 during 2015). This has ensured football matches continue to get played in adverse weather conditions.

Protection of Football Facilities

The protection of existing football facilities is a key priority for football. Housing growth is playing a significant factor in the development of future facilities.

Disused football facilities can be at risk of being lost or reallocated for other purposes as part of local authority plans to identify key sites for housing growth, with submission to the Government for approval. Playing Pitch Strategies are an important assessment tool in the process.

We work closely with Sport England to comment on, and provide evidence in regard to, any sites which could be lost to football to ensure they are not lost or to ensure replacement facilities are developed to offset any potential loss of pitch stock. Over the course of the 2022/23 season, the Essex County FA supported with strategic comments on 23 different planning applications.

FA Grass Pitch Improvement Strategy

Across the 2022/23 season, the Essex County FA continued to drive The FA's Grass Pitch Improvement Strategy (which aims to improve 20,000 pitches over the next ten years) at a local level.

Clubs and Pitch Operators were supported to utilise PitchPower, the Football Foundation's Digital Pitch Assessment Tool, which was designed to support clubs and pitch operators to assess the quality of their pitches without the need for a visit from a GMA Regional Pitch Advisor. PitchPower is a web app which can be accessed on multiple devices, including smart phones.

During the 2022/23 season, **£447,360** of Football Foundation Grass Pitch Maintenance funding was received, supporting six clubs with investment into their grass pitches over the next ten years. As well as this, the FF issued grants up to **£138,476** to support clubs with new and upgraded maintenance machinery to support maintenance programmes across their pitches.

Local authorities continued to work under increasing budget pressures and constraints, which resulted in less intensive pitch maintenance programmes. The Essex County FA actively engaged with some of our local authorities to assess their pitches and provide them with some recommendations which could be implemented in their schedules to aid pitch improvement.

Football Foundation Small Grants

Alongside this, clubs and organisations also accessed some of the Football Foundation's smaller grant support.

The table below shows the breakdown in funding distributed, including the total project values. This has been accessed by circa 73 clubs and organisations:

Item	Grant Value	Project Value
Portable Floodlights	£60,613	£80,936
Fencing	£9,556	£12,759
Storage Container	£26,607	£35,503
Goalposts	£117,836	£204,170
Electric Supply	£25,000	£33,373.80
Total	£186,569	£366,741.80

Premier League Stadium Fund

Over the course of the 2022/23 season, Essex's senior status clubs received funding through the Premier League Stadium Fund.

This fund is there to support clubs playing within the FA National League System (NLS) to meet their ground grading requirements. The table below outlines the clubs who received investment:

Club	Project Detail	Grant Value	Project Value
Saffron Walden Town FC	New LED Floodlights	£48,156	£68,794
Buckhurst Hill FC	New Spectator Accommodation	£13,542	£31,980
Brightlingsea Regent FC	New LED Floodlights	£46,745	£66,779
Brightlingsea Regent FC	Refurbishment of Changing Rooms	£17,111	£24,444
Holland FC	Refurbishment of Clubhouse	£44,860	£50,860
Total		£170,414	£242,857

Howdens Game Changer Programme

Over the 2022/23 season, the Essex County FA, in partnership with England Football and Howdens Kitchens, have supported England Accredited grassroots clubs to access funding through this grant programme, which looks to provide better kitchen facilities to help clubs make their matchday experience more enjoyable and increase revenue opportunities.

- Academy Soccer Youth
- Buckhurst Hill Girls
- Heybridge Swifts Youth
- Maldon Saints Youth
- Witham Town Youth



Safeguarding & Welfare Strategy

Provide a safe and compliant football environment with a skilled and knowledgeable workforce



2022/23 IN NUMBERS

Workforce and Education	Safeguarding Compliance	Investigations	Environment
 <p>ARRANGED TEN CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) SESSIONS TO THE CLUB WELFARE OFFICER (CWO) WORKFORCE, COVERING A VARIETY OF TOPICS</p>	 <p>104 SAFEGUARDING VISITS COMPLETED</p>	 <p>REPORTS OF MISCONDUCT WERE MANAGED ACROSS THREE PLATFORMS OF INVESTIGATION</p>	 <p>PROMOTED THE FA'S NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING EVENT, PLAY SAFE</p>
 <p>SHARED SUITES OF RESOURCES ON BEST PRACTICE ACROSS THE GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY</p>	 <p>PROVIDED INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOR MEMBER CLUBS TO MEET LEGAL REQUIREMENTS</p>	 <p>SAFEGUARDING MEASURES WERE INTRODUCED TO EDUCATE COACHES AND MANAGERS</p>	 <p>ENCOURAGED AND SHARED CLUB AND LEAGUE BEST PRACTICE PROCEDURES</p>
 <p>NEW SAFEGUARDING & WELFARE SECTION OF OUR WEBSITE INCLUDES RESOURCES AND GUIDANCE ON A RANGE OF TOPICS FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS</p>	 <p>SUPPORTED RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS TO COMPLETE NECESSARY SAFEGUARDING QUALIFICATIONS</p>		 <p>DELIVERED AN INTRODUCTORY CPD SESSION FOR CWOs NEW TO THE ESSEX COUNTY FA</p>

Safeguarding and Welfare

This season, the Essex County FA Safeguarding Department saw the departure of our colleague Wayne Hickey, welcoming Emily Reece as Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer.

The department has been handling issues of low-level concerns and possible abuse, but it's important to also remember the high number of positive experiences in football. Young people are able to develop, laugh and have fun in the game. Players with additional support experiencing football and building their skills, not just in football, but with social interaction. This is all made possible by the dedication of volunteers across all formats of the game.

The department has seen a very busy year, with wide-ranging cases, many requiring intervention and referral. We work closely with both The FA Safeguarding Team, in referring serious cases, as well as liaising with Local Authority Designated Officers and other strategy agencies such as the police.

As many are aware, it is vital for successful safeguarding to work in partnership, and we are fortunate in Essex to have established very good relationships with volunteers and agencies. In total, the department dealt with 440 cases during the season.

The Welfare Officer network continues to embed and assist players, coaches, parents and carers. It is such a vital role, covering so many different aspects. During the season, we reached out to open-age football to share the importance of the role with 16 and 17-year-olds. We support the volunteer network - specific training and advice was provided, enabling individuals, teams, clubs, and leagues to be aware of the requirements and, additionally, where support and guidance can be obtained.

As part of the FA Safeguarding Strategy, all County FAs are audited to ensure safeguarding processes are embedded across the county. The first phase of the audit took place in May 2022, which the Essex County FA successfully passed. We continue to strive towards embedding compliancy across the game and take measures when necessary.

Another measure is for the Essex County FA to conduct safeguarding visits and, during the season, 52 clubs received a visit. These visits are unannounced, and enable us to cross-reference data with the actual individuals supervising and managing under 18s. This ensures under 18s are being supervised by individuals who have successfully completed the FA DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) process.



Marketing and Communications

Website

As our central information point for grassroots football stakeholders, the website at www.essexfa.com was regularly reviewed and updated with new and existing content to create key reference and resource pages on cups, players, referees, coaches, clubs, leagues, volunteers, facilities, safeguarding and inclusion.

News stories were the most regular additions, with maintenance of existing pages and new ones being added. As well as supporting our own strategy targets, our website promoted a number of FA campaigns and projects such as the Silent Weekend and the Play Safe campaign.

#SquadBooster, our portal to pair players with clubs, published 709 adverts in 2022/23, attracting visits by thousands of individuals and making it one of the most popular pages on our website. This was always backed by social media, particularly on the exceptionally-active Twitter hashtag.



Visitors: 177,404 individuals visited our website in 2022/23. Web traffic is impacted by a number of seasonal factors. In our case, these include the peaks and troughs of activity during a football season, County Cup results and finals, large events and spikes of publicity.

Traditionally, our best months are September to November when we have the most teams looking for County Cup results. The increased use of social media feeds such as Twitter and Facebook as ways of sharing news and information are also factors to consider. Grassroots stakeholders are now able to access our content in a wider variety of ways, also including E-Mail.

News: Another strategic target, which contributes towards our visitor statistics, is to promote at least 18 key priority football news items on a monthly basis. In total, there were 135 articles posted, which is short of the target due to a variety of factors throughout the season, including staff changes.

Our news stories are regularly picked up by newspapers, radio stations and websites, which has led to additional external coverage on sites such as TheFA.com and bbc.co.uk. BBC Essex have, again, been huge supporters of grassroots football during the campaign.

Customer Service: We continued to embed and integrate 'Freshdesk' functionality onto our website, improving our online query-handling capabilities. It offers enhanced support for our stakeholders and a constant means of access. Freshdesk allows us to monitor and analyse the volume and type of enquiries we receive, meaning we can create set responses to frequently asked questions.

Social Media

Twitter (@EssexCountyFA, @EssexReferees, @EssexCoaches), Facebook (EssexFootball, EssexReferees) and YouTube (EssexFA) have continued to be key engagement and promotional vehicles for sharing news and information in an increasingly online world.

These core channels have informed and educated grassroots football quickly and efficiently. We're interacting with stakeholders and evolving our presence every minute of every day, growing our audience and network.

Twitter: Regular activity on our social media feeds is growing the game to an extending network across a wider platform of partners. Some examples of these include member clubs/leagues, facilities, brands, referees associations and prominent coaches, plus safeguarding and inclusion groups. They regularly retweet, or interact with, our content on Twitter.

The #SquadBooster hashtag has continued to provide huge support to the player-to-club matching service on our website. An enhanced refereeing and coaching presence has also been achieved on Twitter through the @EssexReferees and @EssexCoaches accounts.

Amongst our most popular 'hashtags' (which group together tweets about a specific subject or conversation) were #SquadBooster and #CelebrateEssex, our volunteer competition proving very popular once more.



The monthly contest recognised local unsung heroes through a nomination and voting process across ten roles. It showcased personal stories, increasing their visibility as role models to engage new members and inspire newcomers to join the grassroots community as volunteers.

We attracted 1,127 new Twitter followers in 2022/23, showing continual growth as the most-followed County FA in the country. We had 35,690 followers by the end of a season in which 4,326 tweets were dispatched generating 10.4m impressions.

Facebook: By 30th June 2023, we'd reached 11,008 Facebook likes (206 new in 2022/23) - the highest of any County FA - demonstrating growth. 426 items were posted in 2022/23, which was down 14.8%, again to be attributed to a variety of factors, including staff changes.

YouTube: 17 videos were posted on YouTube, and these were viewed on 5,164 occasions, totalling a watch time of 252 hours. The total number of subscribers for the 2024 Strategy has already been achieved.

Communication

E-Mail: It is our strategic goal to deliver efficient and effective communication to all football stakeholders in Essex. In addition to our website and social media streams, we achieve this in a variety of other ways, including newsletters for key stakeholders across the footballing pathway.

The E-Mails were mainly for coaches, referees, clubs, leagues and welfare officers. The generic audience grew to 3,485 subscribers, partly supported by a new 'opt-in' which is a feature of online player registration. 45 E-Mails were dispatched in 2022/23, including the new department-led updates.

Publications: An Annual Report was produced and published, updating stakeholders on all of our key activities during the season. In addition, brochures were created for specific areas of the game, including club affiliation.

Branding and Commercial

Branding: It's important to maintain a defined image to help us achieve specific, strategic goals. In collaboration with a branding partner, we've produced and displayed infographics to use online and in hard copy, as well as banners and signage for events such as County Cup Finals.

Work has continued to nurture a defined image and a consistent, high-quality brand, which has been maintained alongside JB Studio. Projects are regularly undertaken to present a more professional-looking and consistent image to stakeholders.

Commercial: Our high-quality branding has contributed towards the maintenance of existing and new opportunities with a selection of partners, and provided a window for new external investment to support Essex grassroots football. This was progressed in 2022/23 with a partnership for County Cup Finals, with Essex brand Wow Hydrate providing drinks for all 22 of the season's finals.

Infographics: Visually-appealing infographics have been created which represent County FA activities and present information efficiently and concisely. Many infographics, documents and certificates were created in 2022/23.



Awards

England Football and McDonald's Grassroots Football Awards

Coach of the Year – Female Pathway: Catherine Perry Jones (Little Canfield Stars)

Highly Commended: Mark Gordon (FC Redwing)

Coach of the Year – Disability Pathway: Sonny Mara (Hashtag Inclusive United)

Coach of the Year – Male Pathway: Scott Crosby (Little Thurrock Dynamos YFC)

Grassroots Club of the Year: Witham Town FC Soccability

Highly Commended: Tigers JFC

Grassroots League of the Year: Blackwater & Dengie Youth League

New Volunteer of the Year: Laura Ingram (Great Notley FC)

Young Volunteer of the Year: Ria Lee (Ridgeway Rovers YFC)

Highly Commended: Elizabeth (Witham Town FC Soccability), Jack (Maldon Saints YFC)

Grounds Team of the Year: Paul Littleton (Harold Wood Cougars)

Highly Commended: Ray Beaumont (Dagenham United FC)

The Lioness Award: Frenford & MSA

Highly Commended: Jackie Wood (Essex Women's Walking Football League)

Positive Environment Award: Autistic FC

Highly Commended: Billericay Town FC Soccability, Tristian Edwards (Rowhedge Juniors FC)

Match Official of the Year: Alfie Davidson

FA 50-Year Award

Alec Berry (Referee, Woodstone FC, Thurrock Referees Association),
Wayne Deller (Referee, South Essex Sunday League),
Dale Sharp (Referee, Essex Referees Association, Thurrock Referees Society, Old Libertians, Old Romfordians)

Award of Merit (40 Years)

Norman Kelly (Oyster FC), **Graham Osborne** (Colchester & District Sunday League),
Jimmy Culleton (Mid Essex Football League), **Roger Crane** (White Notley FC),
Paul Rogers (Sunday Shrimpers FC), **Paul, Mallett** (Sunday Shrimpers FC),
Colin Rogers (Sunday Shrimpers FC), **Barry Fitzgerald** (Essex Alliance League),
Anthony Phillipps (Southend Borough & District Football Combination)

Outstanding Service Award (30 Years)

Simon Hearn (Shenfield AFC), **Stephen Finn** (Referee),
Derrick Pearson (Hashtag United FC), **Brian Waller** (Colchester City Ladies FC),
Geoff Lord (Feering Falcons FC), **Derek Collyer** (Billericay Town FC),
Richard Groves (Waking Sports FC), **Colin Henwood** (Benfleet Villa YFC),
Carol Henwood (Benfleet Villa YFC)

Exemplary Service Award (20 Years)

David Byrne (Referee), **Paul Falvey** (Referee), **Ralph Ricks** (Sandon Royals),
Alan Blanchett (Colchester & District Youth League), **Robert Bradley** (Referee),
Dean Clarke (Waking Sports FC)

Long Service Certificate (10 Years)

Kevin Carroll (Witham Town FC), **Richard Brenkley** (Corinthians FC),
Kayleigh Ayres (Corinthians FC), **Sam Wigington** (Referee),
Janet Packer (Grays Athletic FC), **Anthony Packer** (Grays Athletic FC),
Stephen Parsons (Heddinghams United FC), **Scott Brash** (Belhus Park Athletic FC),
Janice Maynard (Echo Junior League), **Brian Elwis** (Harold Wood Cougars YFC),
Michael Denden-Smith (Referee), **Zara-Marie Clarke** (Referee), **Steven Marr** (Referee),
Wayne Ratford (Referee), **Arron Graham** (Colchester & District Youth League),
Aynsley Davidson (Frinton & Walton FC), **Andrew Stead** (Essex Royals YFC)

#CelebrateEssex Volunteer Awards

Welfare Officer: **Helen Wilson** (Tendring District Youth FC)
Footie Dad: **Graham McCartney** (St Cleres Futsal)
Media Manager: **Rob Lilley** (Catholic United FC)
Coach (Youth): **Faye Ryan** (East Thurrock United YFC) and **Rich Carroll** (Perry Street YFC)
Footie Mum: **Victoria Crockford** (East Thurrock United YFC)
Treasurer: **Jodie Battersby** (Wivenhoe Tempest YFC)
Secretary: **Dave Lovell** (Basildon Town FC)
Chairperson: **Nick Webb** (Hatfield Peverel FC) and **Alan Day** (White Ensign FC)
Young Volunteer: **Max Young** (Tigers JFC)

Schools and Colleges

After a short break, by September, the Essex County Schools FA (ECSFA) were ready to enter the 101st season of schools activity.

The individual competitions were, again, well supported, although Secondary District numbers were down. The Under 11s Girls' District League had five entrants for its inaugural season. County trials for the six county teams were very well attended, and the ECSFA thank all the staff for their efforts. The Centenary 'Gofundme' reached its target of £1,000 and, during the season, the ECSFA were able to make further presentations to past players.

The ECSFA are grateful to all **Competition Secretaries** for their work, as well as **Aveley FC, Dagenham & Redbridge FC, Heybridge Swifts FC** and **Lakeside FC** for staging county finals. The English Schools FA also held an international at Billericay Town FC.

The ECSFA thank all **County Team Managers** who have, again, given freely of their time to provide county representation, and to London Playing Fields at Fairlop for facilitating many of these matches. Thanks also go to **Colchester United FC, Shrub End** and the **Colchester Garrison** for staging matches during the season.

Congratulations go to all the competing schools/colleges, and to the County Cup winners. To all the boys and girls who had the honour of representing their school, college, district and county. To the **Under 15s and 16s Boys and Under 14s and 16s Girls**, who were losing finalists in their respective South-East England Schools FA (SEESFA) Semi-Finals.

Thanks to: **Newham SFA**, winners of the Johnson and Finch Cup competitions; **Havering SFA**, winners of the Birmingham and Welsh; **Thurrock SFA**, winners of the Clark; **Chelmsford & Mid Essex SFA**, winners of the Finch Shield and the inaugural Under 11s Girls League;

Shenfield High School, who reached four national finals, the Under 13s Boys winning the Elite Cup whilst the Under 12s Boys, Under 12s Boys' B Team and the Under 13s Girls narrowly missed out on further success; **Redden Court**, winning the Under 13s Boys Cup in their first ever ESFA final; **Chiemela Ude**, who represented the county girls and English Schools' Under 15s.

Thank you to: **Graham Hall**, who has, again, worked tirelessly, dedicating hundreds of hours to provide football, not only to the students of Essex but also to South-East England in his role as Competition Secretary for SEESFA; **John East and family** - the ECSFA are pleased John accepted their invitation to become their Patron;

Brendan Walshe and all the staff at the Essex County FA for their help in so many ways during the season - special thanks to **Lukas Wood** for the appointment of match officials, to **Jake Ling and the Development Team** for their organisation of the small-sided competitions, to **Emma Froment** with the accounts, to **Helen Hever** for safeguarding matters and **Ben Rolph** with the website;

Emma Burden, for her outstanding work in developing the county schools representative programme since 2004 - in honour of her service, the ECSFA were pleased to name the new Under 12s Girls competition the Emma Burden Trophy; **Matt Double**, who steps down as the Under 16s Competition Secretary role after many years as a County Team Manager before his move to Cornwall.

It is also pleasing to be able to congratulate **Lotte Wubben-Moy** on her selection for the England Women's World Cup squad. Lotte was a member of the Under 16s squad in 2013/14 who reached the ESFA National Final. The ECSFA wish her, and her teammates, the best of luck.



In Conclusion

There are many achievements we can note as we look back through this report. Although the 2022/23 season has been another challenging year, we can reflect with real pride as huge progress has been made during the latest section of our strategy period.

We now focus on continuing this momentum as part of our 'Moving Forward' 2024 Strategy, which features ambitious goals and objectives which will ensure we continue to meet the needs of football in Essex. A strong team will support with this, underpinned by the volunteers who support their respective leagues, clubs and teams. The ongoing success of grassroots football in Essex ensures thousands of people get to play the game on a weekly basis.

We look forward to continuing to work as part of your team.

Brendan Walshe

Chief Executive and Company Secretary

In Memorium: We would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to members of the grassroots football community who we lost during the last year. Your legacies will live on.



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