

INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

2023-28





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INTRODUCTION

We are delighted to release the Herefordshire FA's first ever forward-facing Inclusion Action Plan, a key document which sets out both the work we do in this important area and, more importantly, what we want to achieve in the future.

Inclusion is an integral part of the HFA's operations, with our vision being 'A community united by the power of football, with football opportunities For All', our mission being 'To develop, promote and support positive, safe and inclusive football opportunities for the benefit of our community', and two of our key values being that we are 'welcoming' and 'open'.

To support this approach, we have an excellent Inclusion Advisory Group, formed mainly of external members, which helps us develop and deliver our work in this area. In 2020, we were successfully awarded the Foundation Level of the Equality Standard for Sport, however, we are always keen to continually develop and have therefore set achieving the Preliminary Level as one of our key strategic goals in this strategic cycle.

Whilst as an organisation we are happy with the progress being made, we always want to do more, ensuring that football is genuinely For All. At the HFA we are committed to ensuring that everyone is welcome to participate and that opportunities exist for everyone, no matter their background.

I hope you enjoy reading this plan, which sets out our work towards achieving this goal, together with what we have planned for the future.

Alan Darfi
Chief Executive Officer and Senior Safeguarding Lead

When we talk about football we talk about football being FOR ALL. Football has a place for anyone and everyone, it not only has physical but also mental and social benefits and we actively encourage mainstream and disability players to play recreationally and/or competitively.

Herefordshire as a County is forever changing and evolving with more people now living in the region from outside the UK than ever before, with new cultures and religious beliefs making the County more diverse than ever before.

Whilst we know good things are happening already within the Herefordshire FA we also know that we can always do better and be even more inclusive. This is something that we have identified and is being implemented at staff, Council and Board level, with support from our Inclusion Advisory Group (IAG).

We aim to deliver inclusive opportunities for those involved at Herefordshire FA, understanding barriers that we may face as a County and looking at ways to keep our clubs as inclusive as possible. Key projects include engagement with Ukrainian families, refugee and asylum seekers, dementia and Alzheimer's patients as well as several disability and recreational centres, with links with organisations such as the Hereford and Worcester Health Care Trust (NHS), South Mercia Police, Herefordshire Mind, several Armed Forces charities, local Councils and schools.

We will continue to be fully committed to developing and improving inclusive football within Herefordshire and I hope you enjoy reading this plan setting out how we aim to do so.

Scott Russell
Football Development Officer (Inclusion Staff Lead)



ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE – EXECUTIVE



Our aim is for inclusion to be genuinely embedded across the HFA, with core team members all being tasked with ensuring football within the County is as inclusive as possible across all characteristics.

Individuals from the Executive with specific responsibility include the CEO, who has overall responsibility for ensuring the HFA is as inclusive as possible and the Football Development Manager, who has responsibility for ensuring the Development team ensures this is at the forefront of the team's work programmes.



ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE – GOVERNANCE



The HFA Board sets the strategy for the HFA and has identified ensuring inclusion is genuinely embedded across the organisation as a key priority.

To support this, the HFA Board has set up an Inclusion Advisory Group ('IAG') made up of external individuals responsible for supporting the HFA Board and wider team in this area. The Chair of the IAG is appointed to the HFA Board and the Vice-Chair of the IAG is also an Independent Board member.

Inclusion is a standing agenda item at HFA Board level with regular reports being received from the IAG.



Inclusion Advisory Group (IAG)

The Role of the IAG

The Inclusion Advisory Group offers support and advice on all issues of diversity and inclusion within the strategic and operational workings of Herefordshire FA. Members of the IAG are voluntary and represent all demographics of Herefordshire covering a range of protected characteristics based on diversity of experience, knowledge and thought. The IAG Chair has a seat on the Herefordshire FA Council & Board, reporting directly to the Board.

Key Points For The IAG to Deliver

1. Provide support and advice on the HFA Operational Plan and the likely impact it may have on under-represented communities within Herefordshire FA; e.g. diverse ethnic communities, women and girls, people with impairments, LGBT, faith communities and people of all ages.
2. Advise on specific interventions to increase participation by the whole community to address gaps in provision and grow the game.
3. Foster good relationships with the local community so that football can be used to create positive sporting opportunities, bring diverse people together and increase participation for all.
4. Monitor and review the impact of the Herefordshire FA's work in relation to inclusion through the Operational plans and working towards achieving the next level of the Equality Standard.



KEY TARGETS

The HFA is clear in terms of its ambitions to ensure inclusion is embedded across the HFA and that the game is welcoming and accessible to all across the County.

- To achieve this, by 1 July 2024:
 - The HFA Board shall:
 - Have a minimum of 30% female representation
 - Have a minimum of 10% from historically underrepresented ethnic communities
 - Appoint the IAG Chair as a Director
 - The IAG shall be representative of local demographics
 - The Chair of the IAG shall be appointed via an open application process
 - Annual reporting on this Inclusion Action Plan shall be embedded in the HFA's annual calendar
 - The HFA website shall offer clarity and transparency on the HFA's inclusion activities
 - The HFA shall be awarded the Equality Standard Preliminary Level



PRIORITIES



INSIGHT

Generate greater data and insight into our members, to better serve their needs and to focus our resources appropriately

Objectives;



Work with partners, organisations & charities to conduct data, insight & research to better understand our football demographics and any barriers to involvement.

Confirm the demographics of Herefordshire and the demographics of the Herefordshire football community and see how they compare

Identify gaps within the country for participation & volunteering.

Engage with the local community to find out what people want from football, how often, where and when.

Utilise key partner inclusion plans to help inform our own, including FA, Sport England, SSAFA and City of Sanctuary.

Success to date:

- Worked with key partners (i.e. Dementia & Alzheimer's, Armed Forces, Mental Health, Council & NHS).
- Census Data 2021 reviewed & headline demographics collected from Herefordshire.
- Internal EDI audit for staff, council, board conducted, all results being reviewed.



ADVOCACY

Strategically lead Inclusion through the Inclusion Advisory Group. Identifying members as ambassadors for their roles in Herefordshire.

Embed inclusion into the workplace culture and employees' roles, holding all accountable for inclusion within their roles.

Increase wider representation throughout the CFA to ensure the voices of those we are representing are heard. HFA members to support driving Inclusion within other partner organisations including sitting on working groups when invited e.g. West Mercia Police IAG and local authorities.

Identify key ambassadors as EDI Champions within Herefordshire to advocate participation and drive forward changes, initiatives and insight.



Utilise the voice of young people to help drive positive change for inclusion locally.

Success to date:

- Quarterly communications and meetings with our IAG, discussing key issues and themes in line with the Inclusion Action Plan. IAG Chair is on the Herefordshire FA Board of Directors.
- HFA recruitment polices reviewed & updated.
- Internal EDI audit for staff, council, board conducted
- EDI embedded within the Herefordshire FA, operational planning, strategy, agendas and EDI training plan each season.



INTERVENTIONS

Utilise the power of football to engage communities and reach beyond the game.

Objectives;

Promote the reporting process for abuse, discrimination and poor behaviour. Install confidence in process via a Discrimination & respect awareness campaign.

Work in partnership with key organisations to raise awareness and support network such as Mental Health, NHS, Bluelight Service, Armed Forces & local authorities.

Increase the number of BAME coaches & referees registered within the County. Look to engage with the ever evolving cultural representation within Herefordshire.



Success to date:

- Working in partnership with a range of partners including Help for Heroes, FirstLight Trust, Herefordshire Mind, City of Sanctuary, West Mercia Police, NHS and Hereford FC.
- 3 Counties Ability Counts League (3CACL) a PAN disability league hosted and organised by Herefordshire FA, Worcestershire FA and Shropshire FA.
- Disability Football Ambassador appointed to work with schools and local clubs to create a pathway for disability players.
- CPD women only coaching workshops to encourage new female coaches to develop and improve.
- Refugee Recreational Football Centres run every Wednesday and a drop in and Play session on a Sunday.
- Ukrainian Project for families who now live in Herefordshire, offering children English lessons and a chance to play football.



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Maintain inclusive and accessible up to date Herefordshire FA website, social media channels and resources for all.

Raise awareness and celebrate good practice within football in Herefordshire.

Raise the profile of faith & awareness campaigns throughout the season.

Promote football opportunities for all.

Promote and Share Equality Standard for Sport and Inclusion Policies.



Success to date:

- Herefordshire FA website, EDI area updated and refreshed, in particular a useful resource area for Herefordshire Football members.
- Celebrated good practice and sharing positive case studies of Inclusion in Herefordshire.
- FA EDI Calendar readily available and key awareness dates celebrated and shared throughout Herefordshire FA networks.
- Equality Standard Application including Inclusion Action Plan made available and will also be made public annually.



PARTICIPATION

Establish key partnerships with local providers and communities to deliver Herefordshire football projects and initiatives.

Objectives;

Utilise the research and insight to proactively engaging new participants into football in Herefordshire.

Ensure the objectives within the Herefordshire FA Business Strategy and Operational Plan are delivered & embed inclusion throughout.

Work with the Football Foundation making sure key groups have been consulted from a female and disability provision, as part of the new facility projects.

Developing and lead Women's Coach Development Group in Herefordshire in partnership with the FA.

Success to date:

- Collecting and understanding insight to understanding player's journeys and to shape the future of the female pathway in partnership with City of Sanctuary (refugees), Help of Heroes, FirstLight Trust (both Armed Forces), Herefordshire Council (Ukraine), West Mercia Police , Hereford FC (Youth)
- Newly appointed Disability Football Ambassador, Equal Game Ambassador (female) and a Female Coach Mentor all appointed for the 2023-24 season.
- HFA Player Development Centre for both Girls and Boys currently being run at the Herefordshire FA 3G pitch, inviting grassroots players to attend extra sessions and to play competitive matches alongside their grassroots football so they don't miss out on local football.



EXAMPLES OF INCLUSION IN ACTION



CASE STUDIES

UKRAINIAN PROJECT

The Herefordshire Football Association run a weekly 2-hour session on a Friday evening (19:00 – 21:00) at the SSAFA County Ground in Hereford with something for all the family - football and non-football social activities, English lessons, food and drink and more.

Through funding we were able to pay for an English teacher and a translator, as well as provide all the children and some parents with new football boots. We have engaged with over 15 families and have created a real community hub for the Ukrainian families to catch up and be in a relaxed and safe environment. Through our engagement with the families, we have managed to get the children a bespoke 'team kit' so they would feel like proper club, as that is what the parents said they'd like to see, even designing their very own Ukraine/HFA club badge.

We have key partnerships with local Churches who engage with the Ukrainian families in Herefordshire and help share anything we would like the community to know about.

From listening to the families needs we understand that for any future projects we may need to look at transport to help those that don't drive or live within walking distance. Whilst the transport links are good in Herefordshire, those families who live in a rural areas can't attend evening sessions as the last bus from Hereford is normally around 6pm.



CASE STUDIES

REFUGEE & ASYLUM SEEKERS PROJECT

We are currently running a refugee project through FA Football Delivery Funding with the aim to engage with Refugee and Asylum Seekers who are residents at the Three Counties Hotel in Herefordshire, to encourage them to play football, experience our 3G facilities and to give them the tools to learn, develop and progress in life. We want to show that the Herefordshire FA is an inclusive organisation and how we actively encourage new people to play football in the County. As a central hub we are accessible and within walking distance from the hotel. With the help of our local Herefordshire Council and the City of Sanctuary Charity, who specialise in refugees and asylum seekers, we want to give these individuals an opportunity to do something different that they can do as a group.

Our sessions run every Wednesday for 30 weeks, with Hereford FC providing a coach to develop individuals skills for those that want to improve. We set out to engage with at least 10 individuals and as it stands we have engaged with over 70 with a weekly average of 25-30 who turn up for the sessions.

To date we have been able to provide over 50 pairs of football boots, playing kit and shin pads for those who have attended the sessions.

The refugees have also played a couple of 11-a-side matches against a Herefordshire FA select team which has seen them interact with local people.



CASE STUDIES

DEMENTIA AND ALZHEIMER'S

Over the last 18 months we have been delivering a Dementia and Alzheimer's project to over 4 care homes and home care visits in Herefordshire. This National Lottery funded project provides much needed support for both young and old adults in Herefordshire who are suffering from Dementia/Alzheimer's, whilst also providing elements of respite for their carers.

We are using the engagement strength of football to bring people together to take part in fun and engaging social activities based in the safe, inclusive settings of their care home/home. Every Friday we look to stimulate the adults by 'talking football' and through key moments in time can we trigger core memories for the residents. We have linked in with Herefordshire Dementia Action Alliance, Dementia Matters Here(fordshire) and Infinity Care Consultancy who provide HFA staff professional support and training to make sure everyone's experience is enjoyable.

We have also had the opportunity for Care Homes to visit the Herefordshire FA facility, have cake, tea and coffee. Through this project we have also support the Dementia Awareness Festival.

So far we have engaged with over 100 people/residents.





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