

KENT FA REFEREE STRATEGY

2023-2028



**DRIVING PERFORMANCE, EMBRACING
DIVERSITY, AND PROTECTING THE GAME**

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WELCOME



Denise Richmond
Chair

This refereeing strategy ensures we have taken the key elements of the National FA strategy, to focus on our local region and what we need to make happen to recruit, develop and retain match officials on their journey in Kent.

At all levels of the game, we have seen a drop in match officials along with poor and challenging behaviour from our players, coaches, managers and spectators. Whilst these are still in a minority it is having an impact on the game. This strategy is demonstrating how we'll expand our levels of support on the refereeing development pathway to ensure we provide the right support for all match officials in Kent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Darryl Haden
CEO

The Kent FA Referee Strategy 'Driving performance, embracing diversity and protecting the game' shows our commitment to developing a strong base of match officials across our County. Our aim through this strategy, is to raise the quality and profile of refereeing in Kent, ensuring that there are no barriers to anyone wishing to 'take up the whistle', and ensuring that all match officials in Kent receive the support that they require.

It cannot be underestimated the importance of match officials; without them, we simply do not have a game, therefore, it is imperative that we continue to recruit, develop, and retain referees to support the growth of our game.



KENT FA REFEREE STRATEGY

Welcome to the Kent FA Referee Strategy for 2023-2028.

The Kent FA governs, develops, promotes and protects grassroots football in the county, aiming to establish safe and structured football opportunities for all. The Kent FA is also determined to provide an inclusive football experience for anyone who wishes to play or support football, as we aim to build on our existing football strategy of

PLAY – PROTECT – PROMOTE.

We are passionate about the grassroots game and believe that football should be accessible to everyone in every capacity, with refereeing falling within. We want these experiences to be free from abuse and discrimination, and reflective of our diverse communities.

Match officials play an integral part in promoting a fair game and will help underpin this process, as we build on incorporating our key values of being **inclusive, progressive, passionate and innovative.**

It is vital that we continue to look at ways in which we recruit, retain and develop match officials across the grassroots game. The information detailed in this strategy will help detail our key focuses in the coming years. We know that we need to provide greater levels of support to all our match officials, and not just those within

our academy or development groups. We aim to support any match official, at any level, and through a variety of engaging methods.

In addition to this we are committed to enhancing the match day experience, through three key pillars:

- Enhancing performance,
- Improving the environment,
- Embracing diversity.

Our referee strategy will look to promote fair play, uphold the laws of the game, and promote a safe and enjoyable experience for all. We will aim to leverage advanced technologies and tools to enhance decision-making abilities, reduce perceived errors, and provide transparent and clear communication.

Ultimately we want to uphold the integrity of the game, and ensure that all of our match officials have an equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of their skill level or background.



THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

Our first referee specific strategy was released in 2016, which focused on supporting the majority and developing the ambitious; this was underpinned by The FA's refereeing DNA. As a direct result of this we successfully launched Kent Centre of Refereeing Excellence [CORE], a development platform which provided focus on both the majority and the ambitious officials.

In recent seasons, Kent FA have made significant movement in becoming the largest County FA across the Country appertaining to total registrations. At the conclusion of the 2022/2023 season, Kent FA had a total of 2,025 affiliated match officials, to which 1,770 were fully qualified referees; the highest number Kent has ever seen, but this has come at the expense of providing the valuable help, support and guidance required both on and off the field.

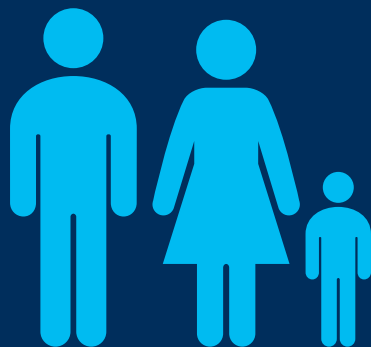
We have experienced an increase in poor participant behaviour towards match officials, as well as the playing environment becoming far less enjoyable. This information is reflected in the 'Positive Football Environment Data' (The FA, 2022), with some key headlines detailed below. Each of the following stakeholders identified their biggest frustration within today's game:

PLAYERS



Quality of refereeing
15%

PARENTS



Behaviour/conduct of Managers or Coaches
6%

COACHES



Behaviour/conduct of Managers or Coaches
8%

CLUB OFFICIALS



Availability of Match Officials
17%

VOLUNTEERS



Availability of Match Officials
9%

REFEREES



Behaviour/conduct of Managers or Coaches
12%

You told us you were not satisfied, have any of the below contributed to your overall levels of dissatisfaction - **Latest Wave (Sep-22)**
Sample Size: 10,407 Total - 2,060 Adult Players; 4,750 Parents of Youth Players; 1,797 Coaches; 843 Officials; 179 Volunteers; 778 Match Officials

The findings of the survey detail key drivers of dissatisfaction within the game; participant/spectator behaviour featuring heavily amongst the feedback. We understand the importance of creating a safe, inclusive, and high-performing environment in the game of football. Referees play a vital role in ensuring that the game is played fairly, safely, and with respect for all players, officials and spectators involved. As such, we will address some of those headlines by:

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF REFEREES.

IMPROVE THE BEHAVIOUR AND CONDUCT OF MANAGERS/COACHES/SPECTATORS VIA PROMOTING GREATER RESPECT VALUES.

RECRUIT MORE MATCH OFFICIALS TO INCREASE THE GENERAL AVAILABILITY TO COVER MATCHES.



OUR NEW VISION

Given the current environment, it is time to challenge our role in how we are enhancing performance, improving the environment and diversifying our workforce, as we look to create a supportive network, increase referee coverage and increase our visibility across the game.

Much of our work supports the grassroots game, and we will aim to build on previous successes around our total number of registrations, new referees coming into the game and the success of our academy. Success moving forward will be, ultimately, greater visibility within the professional game as well as continuing the growth within grassroots football.

The key drivers within this strategy will be to:

- ↑ **INCREASE TOTAL REGISTRATIONS.**
- ↑ **INCREASE REFEREE COVERAGE.**
- ↑ **INCREASE MENTORING SUPPORT.**
- + **CREATE NEW SUPPORT NETWORKS.**
- ✓ **CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE AMBITIOUS.**





REFEREEING PATHWAY - THE MEN'S GAME

County FAs are responsible for supporting referees from starting as a trainee right through to the top echelon of the grassroots game.

The Kent FA will help support any match official who has the aspirations and ambitions to progress. From initiating the journey as a trainee referee, we will help in the transition from operating within the grassroots game through to Level 4.

Promotion pathway candidates have opportunities to be promoted four times within the season, with there being great flexibility in match officials now progressing at varying points. Those on the Y1-Y2, Level 7 to 6 and Level 6 to 5 pathway will be allocated a Matchday Referee Coach [MDRC] on a one-to-one basis, with the MDRC aiming to watch a minimum of two games within the pathway

For the professional game, the PGMOL (Professional Game Match Officials Ltd) oversees the appointment, administration, support and development of referees in the Premier League and EFL.

At the top of the ladder are FIFA match officials, nominated by The FA and selected by FIFA, these referees are offered appointments to International tournaments and fixtures around the world.



REFEREEING PATHWAY - THE WOMEN'S GAME

The emergent women's game refereeing pyramid has a six-level system from trainee to FIFA match official. County FAs appoint youth and grassroots women's football referees.

The Kent FA will support any match official who would like to progress within the women's game. As a 4w match official, the next step is to commit to the 4w-3w pathway; at this point we will appoint observers to a number of your fixtures, assisting with your development and progression.

The FA develops and manages officials for the Women's Super League (WSL) Academy matches.

The PGMOL is responsible for match officials in the Barclays WSL and Women's Championship. The pinnacle is attaining the FIFA officials' list.

ADDITIONAL AND FUTURE PATHWAYS

There are pathways for other football formats (e.g. Futsal) and we will develop routes for those wishing to progress in disability football, walking football or to become a referee, tutor or observer. You can read more about these and other pathways in the professional game in Appendix 1.

START POINT







IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT

CREATING A SAFE AND ENJOYABLE PLAYING FIELD, WE WILL:



SHARE POSITIVE
SUCCESS STORIES.

ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE OF
DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES.



EMBRACE NEW
TECHNOLOGIES.

WORK WITH LEAGUES
TO CHALLENGE POOR
BEHAVIOUR.



ENSURE QUICK RESPONSE
TO MATCH OFFICIALS
EXPERIENCING ASSAULTS.

EXPLORE AVENUES IN
REDUCING POOR
TOUCHLINE BEHAVIOUR.

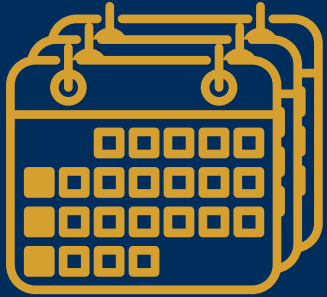


PROVIDE GREATER LEVELS
OF SUPPORT ALL MATCH
OFFICIALS.

WORK TOWARDS ENSURING
EVERY GAME OF FOOTBALL
IS COVERED WITH AN
INDEPENDENT AND
AFFILIATED MATCH OFFICIAL.



WE AIM TO...



PROMOTE A MINIMUM OF 8 POSITIVE SUCCESS STORIES.



INCREASE OUR DIGITAL/MEDIA PRESENCE BY CREATING NEW SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS.



INTRODUCE A NEW HELPLINE FOR MATCH OFFICIALS.



INCREASE REFEREE COVERAGE FROM 98% (ADULT) AND 69% (YOUTH) TO 99% (ADULT) AND 90% (YOUTH).



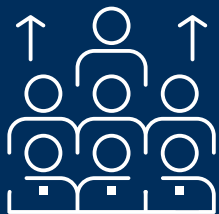
CONTINUE WITH SERVICE AWARDS AND RECOGNISE POSITIVE PERFORMANCES.



INCREASE MENTORING PROVISION FOR TRAINEE REFEREES FROM 58% (1 MENTORED GAME) AND 35% (2 MENTORED GAMES) TO AT LEAST 80% RECEIVING 2 MENTORED GAMES.



RE-EDUCATE MATCH OFFICIALS IN THE BENEFITS OF TEMPORARY DISMISSALS BY DELIVERING TWO CPD SESSIONS PER SEASON.



WORK TOWARDS 95% SATISFACTION EXPERIENCES OF THE EXISTING WORKFORCE.



EXPAND KENT FA STAFF PROVISION TO INCREASE SUPPORT.



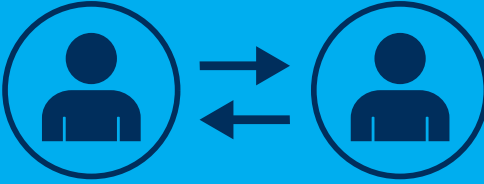

ENHANCING PERFORMANCE

MAXIMISING THE PROVISION FOR ALL TO REACH THEIR POTENTIAL, WE WILL:



INCREASE THE EXPOSURE OF THE FA'S PROMOTION PATHWAY.

ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES 'FOR ALL' TO BE PROMOTED.




CONTINUE WITH THE ALLOCATION OF MATCHDAY REFEREE COACHES (MDRCS) ON A 1-2-1 BASIS.

CONTINUE TO INVEST IN KENT CORE.



PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING FOR ALL.

CREATE REGIONAL NETWORK CENTRES.



INCREASE PROVISION FOR THOSE UNDER 18 TO FEEL VALUED AND TO FLOURISH.

WE AIM TO...



DELIVER A MINIMUM OF 12 DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS IN A SEASON.



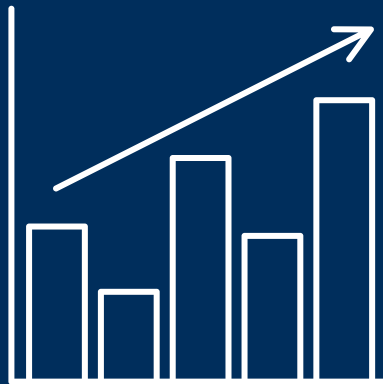
RETAIN AT LEAST 75% OF MATCH OFFICIALS WHO QUALIFIED THE PREVIOUS SEASON.



OFFER MONTHLY TRAINING TO IMPROVE ASSISTANT REFEREES.



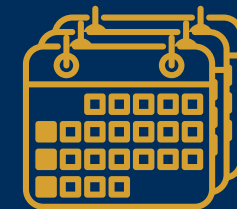
CREATION OF MONTHLY, REGIONALISED SUPPORT NETWORKS 'FOR ALL'.



ENSURE AT LEAST 10% OF ACTIVE MATCH OFFICIALS ARE PROMOTED EACH SEASON.

U25

RECRUIT 3 LEADS, SUPPORTING ASSISTANT REFEREES, OBSERVERS AND THOSE UNDER 25.



DELIVER MONTHLY DEVELOPMENT TO KENT CORE (ACADEMY), SUPPORTING THOSE MATCH OFFICIALS U25.

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE A DIVERSIFIED WORKFORCE, WE WILL:



CREATE LOCALISED PROGRAMMES IN ORDER TO ENHANCE AND MAXIMISE RECRUITMENT...

CONSIDER NEW BURSARY SCHEMES AND FUNDING AVENUES TO SUPPORT UNDER-REPRESENTED COMMUNITIES.



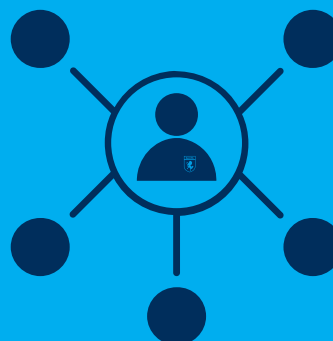
INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FEMALE REFEREES AND REFEREES FROM HISTORICALLY UNDER-REPRESENTED COMMUNITIES.

PROMOTE NEW SUPPORT MECHANISMS WITHIN REFEREEING.



TAKE POSITIVE ACTION IN CREATING A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD TO PARTICIPATION IN REFEREEING.

WORK CLOSER WITH KEY ORGANISATIONS TO PROMOTE REFEREEING OPPORTUNITIES.



SUPPORT THE EXISTING REFEREE WORKFORCE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR ROLE IN PROMOTING FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY.

WE AIM TO...



RE-LAUNCH FEMALE SUPPORT NETWORK.



DELIVER 2 COURSES PER SEASON SPECIFICALLY FOR FEMALE STAKEHOLDERS AND THOSE FROM HISTORICALLY UNDER-REPRESENTED COMMUNITIES.

2250

AIM TOWARDS IN EXCESS OF 2,250 AFFILIATED MATCH OFFICIALS BY END OF 2025/26 SEASON.



CREATE A SUPPORT NETWORK FOR MATCH OFFICIALS FROM HISTORICALLY UNDER-REPRESENTED COMMUNITIES.



COMMIT £2,500 A SEASON TO SUPPORTING REFEREES FROM HISTORICALLY UNDER-REPRESENTED COMMUNITIES.



CREATION OF A NEW 'KIT EXCHANGE' SCHEME TO SUPPORT MATCH OFFICIALS WHO MAY BE STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY TO PURCHASE KIT.



RECRUIT 2 LEADS, SUPPORTING ED&I AND FEMALES.



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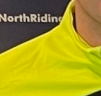
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NORTH RIDING

REFEREE DEVELOPMENT

Refereeing Exchange 2022



northridinggfa.com/referee





CLOSING COMMENTS

This is an exciting time to be a referee in Kent. Our aims, visions and goals help ensure we retain focus on developing all levels of referees. Not only will we be there to help support those at the grassroots level of the game, but we shall continue to unlock new potential and build a bright future. We aim to raise the quality and profile of Kent refereeing, ultimately benefiting the wider game.

Refereeing is a complex and evolving role. As such, it is important for the Kent FA to continuously push our refereeing workforce to consider the importance of self-improvement, promote new opportunities and sell the benefits of officiating. Ultimately we want to enhance the environment for all participants, starting with our referees.

The Kent FA is committed to supporting the development of football in our County by aligning our values with our 'Play, Protect, and Promote' pillars. Our referees play a key role in promoting the development of the game at all levels, and we are committed to supporting them in creating a positive and inclusive environment for all participants.



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Referee Development Lead





Kent FA



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