

Oxfordshire FA



YOUTH CONSULTATION

Report One - Returning to Play

MAY 2021



Oxfordshire FA



Introduction

Alongside our Oxfordshire FA Youth Leadership Team, we are excited to launch a new initiative where we will be regularly getting feedback from children and young people across the county to help make continuous positive improvements.

It is extremely important that as a County FA we get the views of young people and that these views are at the heart of future decisions made to further improve the game in Oxfordshire.

The aim of the first consultation, Returning to Play, was to understand what young people in Oxfordshire currently enjoy about the game and how we as a County FA can help make their football experience better for their return to play following lockdown and for the future.

This report provides the results of this first consultation which we will look to use as a basis to build on as we create and deliver our new 2021-24 Strategy.

I would personally like to thank everyone of the 241 young people who participated in this study and look forward to continuing to work with you all going forward as we shape the game together.

Michael Thurlow

Football Development Manager

“

It is so important that the young people of Oxfordshire shape the game in this county as they will be it's future.

”

Consultation Sample

Consultation was carried out online using Microsoft Forms with respondents completing one of three surveys based on their age; 6-11, 12-16 and 17-21.

A range of age appropriate open and closed questions were used.

241

Players Consulted

154

Aged 6-11

72%

Male Participants

28%

Female Participants

71

Aged 12-16

16

Aged 17-21

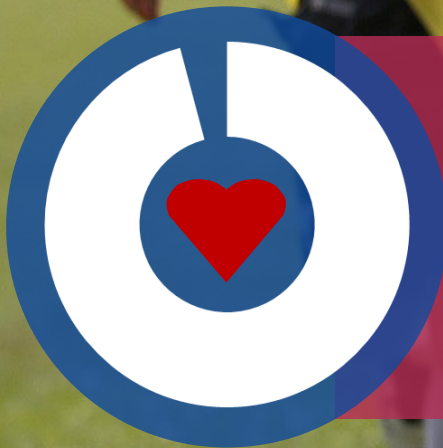
45

Clubs Represented

6-21 YEAR OLDS

For the Love of the Game

Do you enjoy playing football at your club?



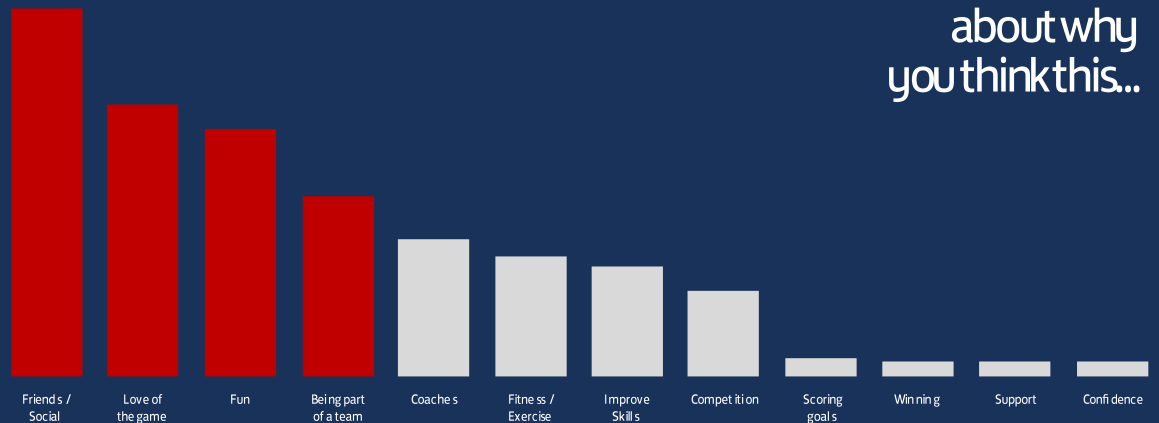
96%

of respondents overall selected 'Yes, I love it' when asked if they enjoyed playing football at their club.



Exploring the Reasons

Tell us a bit more about why you think this..



6 - 11 Year Olds

Top 6 themes

Friends / Social
Love of the game
Fun
Being part of a team
Coaches
Improve Skills

For the youngest age group in our study it is clear that a love of the game, fun and the social aspects of team sport are the key reasons for why they enjoy the sport.

There is little difference between the genders on this apart from girls referencing competition more than boys who focussed more on improving their skills as a reason for their enjoyment.

12- 16 Year Olds

Top 6 themes

Friends / Social
Love of the game
Being part of a team
Fun
Fitness / Exercise
Competition

Our middle age group are similar to the youngest with the four most referenced themes matching albeit in a slightly different order with less emphasis on the friendship and social aspect. Enjoying playing for fitness and or exercise is a theme that begins to emerge more strongly in this age group although not as much as the main themes.

The boys responses mirror the overall top six with a clear hierarchy whereas the girls place similar importance on all aspects.

17- 21 Year Olds

Top 6 themes

Fun
Love of the game
Coaches
Fitness / Exercise
Friends / Social
Improve Skills

Our oldest group mirror the two others in terms of placing a strong emphasis on enjoyment and their love of the game as key themes when expanding on why they like playing football. Unlike the younger ages however there is an increased focus on coaching and fitness and or exercise rather than the more social aspects of the game.

Fun and a love of the game came out as the strongest themes for the male respondents with female players referencing coaching and fitness and or exercise ahead of these.

Enjoyment

What could be done to help you enjoy football more?

Nothing

This was the theme most referenced in response to this question present in nearly a third of responses and the top response for both genders.

More Play

Responses under this theme were mainly centred around the desire to play more football. Within this theme training featured heavily and they want to do more of it. Those who elaborated on this wanted more fun, variety and a greater focus on skill improvement in sessions.

As well as training, matches also featured strongly. More opportunities to play in cup competitions, playing different teams, longer games and greater playing time were referenced here.



More other girls playing, I've only seen two others and we are better than the boys! Would like more games, more training. It's fun.



Better Facilities

Responses referencing the need for facility improvements were mainly focussed on training facilities. Players wanted to train outside and referenced the lack of facilities, quality of pitches and weather preventing this.



COVID-19

Given the timing of this study it is not surprising that the pandemic was a theme to emerge here. Players wanted to see the end of lockdown suspensions and the virus to end.

Side-line Behaviour

Responders who referenced side-line behaviour talked about the need for it to be more positive and encouraging with less shouting and bad language.

Fairness

There were a number of references made to the fact that some teams had all of the best players and ability was not spread fairly across teams.

The lack of allowance to play in different positions was also cited.

Officials

The impact of a lack of independent officials was raised as an issue. There were a number of references to bias from club or parent referees/assistants.

Female Provision and Representation

A need to have more girls playing, more girls teams and tournaments was referenced by several female respondents.

One respondent called for greater involvement from Mums in coaching and team support roles.



One Change

If you could make ONE change to the game of football that you play or for your age group that might play in the future, what would they be?

Officials

Officials were the most referenced theme in response to this question. Within this the key

issues raised surrounded the quality and consistency of officiating and a need for greater impartiality.

Nothing

As with the 6-11 year old age group changing nothing was one of the main answers to this question. Both male and female respondents felt they liked the game as it is.

Better Facilities

The focus for those who referenced a need for better facilities within facilities was on natural grass pitches.

Better pitches with improved maintenance was cited the most within this topic.

Behaviour

Respect and attitude were two aspects that emerged from this heading. Arguing with referees, bad language and the angry behaviour of coaches and spectators were all cited here as something that needs to change.

Professionalism, diving, attitude of some teams and the need to keep things more friendly were also referenced.

Rules

The offside rule was referred to the most under this theme. Respondents wished to see change in the rules in relation to throw ins.

Others wanted more physicality to be allowed in games, less stoppages for hydration and sanitising and a limit to the number of players being allowed to be involved in games.

Training

Respondents referencing this theme were fairly universal in wanting more, better quality training sessions. One response called for professional coaches to be made available to clubs.

“

Stop sexism within the game, anyone and everyone should be allowed to play the amazing game of football. ”

Equality

Responses under this theme all came from females and wanted to see girls treated the same as boys and have the same chances. This included moving to the 11v11 format at the same age the boys did.



Potential Barriers

Is there any reason you might stop playing football?

No
'No' was the response used the most in response to this question. This was largely down to it being the top response in the 6-8 and 9-11 age ranges and the

second highest answer in the 15-16 age group. Unlike the others this was only used once as an answer in the 12-14 age banding.

Injury

Injury was the second most used reason for stopping playing overall. This was the top answer for those aged 12-16.

Other Sports

A clash with other sports was the third most used response overall and was in the top four answers to this question for all age groups apart from 15-16 year olds.

For those who named another sport rugby was most cited with others referring to cricket and dance.

COVID-19

As with the previous question around enjoyment of the game COVID-19 appears to be a concern.

Each of the age groups referenced this at least once with 12-14 year olds citing it the most. All of the responses highlighting COVID were from boys.



Playing Time

This theme was raised by boys within the 9-14 age range. The references centred mainly about not being picked or consistently being put on the bench as a reason to stop playing.

The importance of regular and fair playing time was also highlighted.

Behaviour

This was raised mainly within the 12-14 year old age bracket. The main theme within this was the behaviour of adults on the side-lines with parents shouting at referees, coaches arguing,

swearing and anger all cited.

“

It can be very competitive sometimes with a lot of pressure and people getting angry.

”

Lack of Support/Progression

This was raised by both boys and girls within the 9-14 age range. References centred around

stopping if commitment and support was lost from teammates and or managers. A lack of progression opportunity was also highlighted by some.

Not winning and Loss of Fun

The loss of enjoyment of the game was identified as a reason that would stop some of the respondents playing.

There were some references to not winning as a reason to stop or change teams.

Jobs or University/Exams

These themes emerged as the third most referenced within the 15-16 year old bracket. Both were highlighted as a possible reason to stop playing due to not having the time.

Ability

This theme was raised both in terms of personal ability and the ability of others.

Some respondents said they would stop playing if they felt they were not good enough with one girl stating she would stop playing if games were not competitive or her team had to play their weaker players in important games.



Looking to the Future

What would keep you playing football for the next 5 years?

Enjoyment

Enjoyment was the most given answer for what would keep respondents playing for the next 5 years.

It was the top answer overall, for boys, girls and the 12-14 age

bracket. For the 15-16 year old age group it was the second most popular response given.

There was a clear love for the game expressed with fun and team spirit highlighted within this as reasons for continuing to play.

Friends

Friends emerge as the second most popular reason for continuing to play overall and for both genders.

There was an importance placed on playing in a team with friends and need for those teams and groups of friends to stay together.

Opportunity to Play

Opportunity ranked third overall in the most referenced theme and held the same ranking for boys.

It was the top response within the 15-16 year old bracket but appeared a far less important

factor for girls and 12-14 year olds.

The main focus of this response surrounded there being a team to be able to play for. A couple of respondents highlighted there being the need for there to be a men's team for them to progress to.



I can not imagine not playing. I would love the opportunity to progress my football and hopefully get scouted and a place on a academy team that is my goal for the next few years and I would love to be able to do something with my football but if it didn't happen I would still play for my current club then an adult team as I just love playing. ”

Progression

Progression was the second most popular answer for the 12-14 age range.

This theme emerged both in terms of personal progression of respondents own game as well as league and career progression.

Team Staying Together

This theme is similar to the friends response focussing on the team and coaches all staying together.

Playing Time

As with the previous question playing time was cited as an important influence on whether respondents would keep playing.

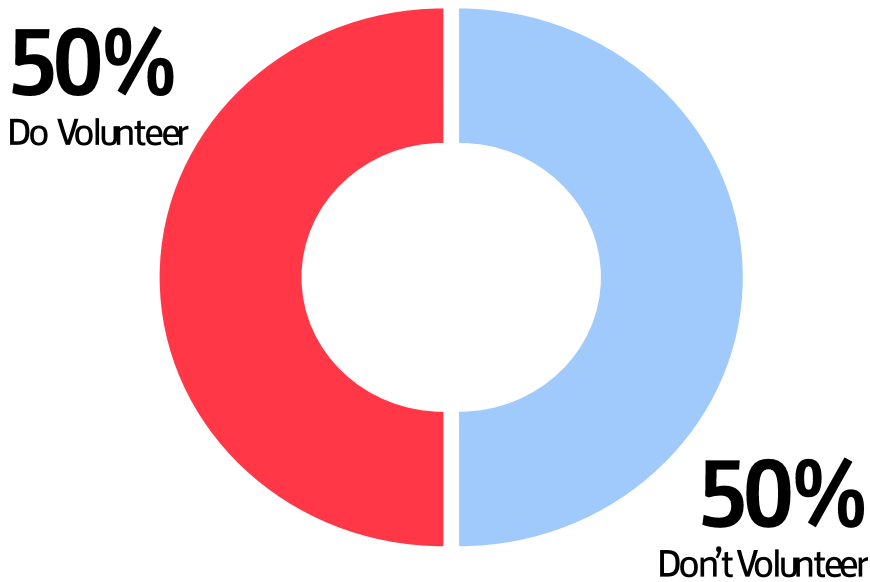
The key aspects of this were that there needed to be enough playing time and that it was fairly allocated within the team.

Not Getting Injured

A number of respondents felt that they would need to continue to keep healthy and avoid injury to be able to keep playing.

Volunteering

Do you currently volunteer in football at your club or place of education?



63%

Of those who volunteered were **male**

37%

Of those who volunteered were **female**

Further Support

What support would be useful to you as a young volunteer?

50%

Mentors assigned to support you at your club

50%

Virtual Training Sessions

37.5%

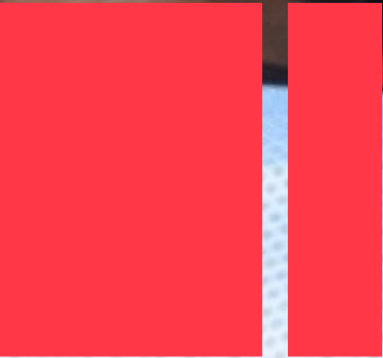
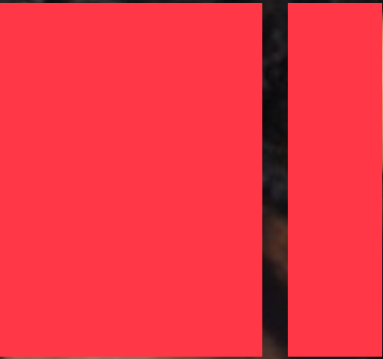
Youth forums to network with other volunteers

12.5%

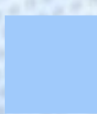
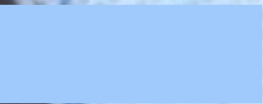
Quarterly newsletters with opportunities

12.5%

Not Sure



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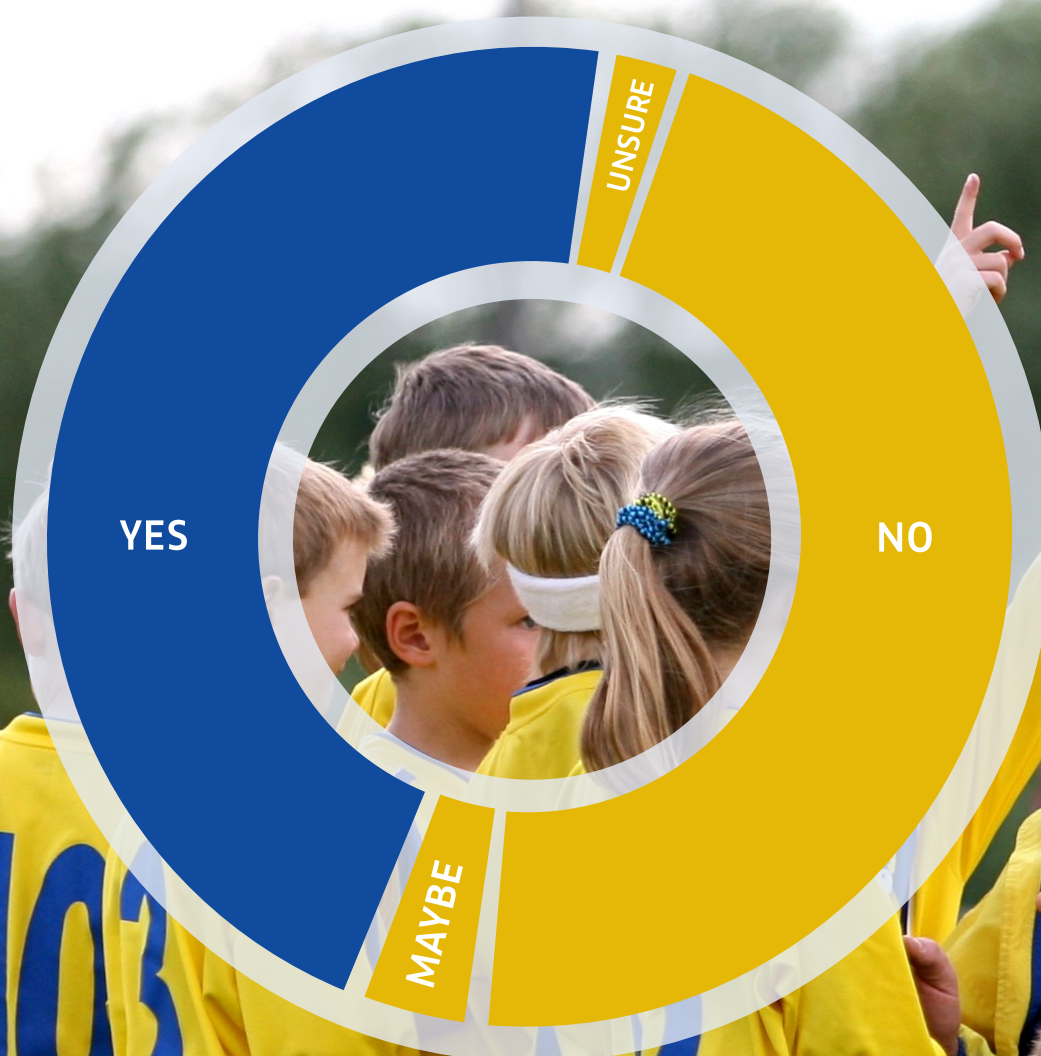
Making Contact

Do you know who your Club Welfare Officer is and how to contact them?

This question formed part of the consultation with the 12-16 and 17-21 age groups.

Of the 87 respondents 37% stated they did know who their Club Welfare Officer was and how to contact them.

37% reported that they did not know with just over 9% answering 'maybe' and nearly 6% 'unsure'.



Reporting Concerns

asked slightly different questions in regards to reporting concerns.

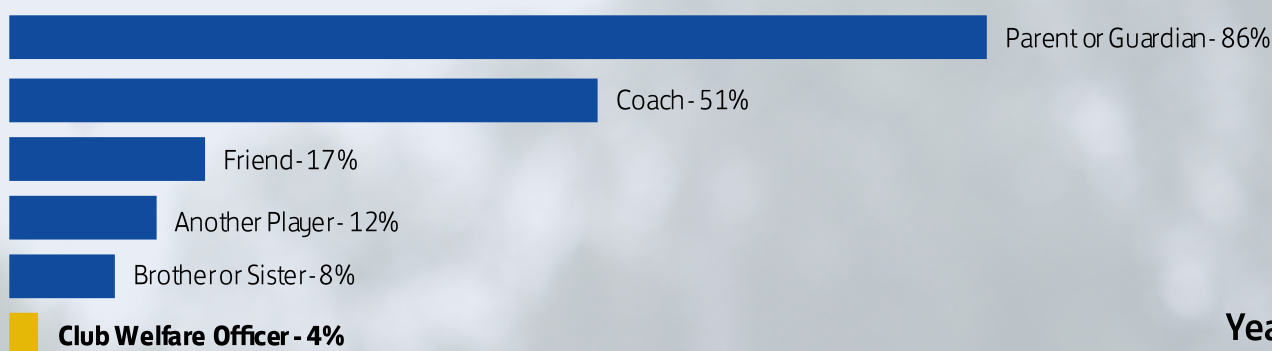
Although the questions differed the multiple selection of possible answers were the same.

Overall only **5.39%** of responders selected the **Club Welfare Officer** as someone they would report

concerns or unhappiness to. Largely there was no gender difference in terms of responses with the same roles emerging as the main points of contact for raising issues.

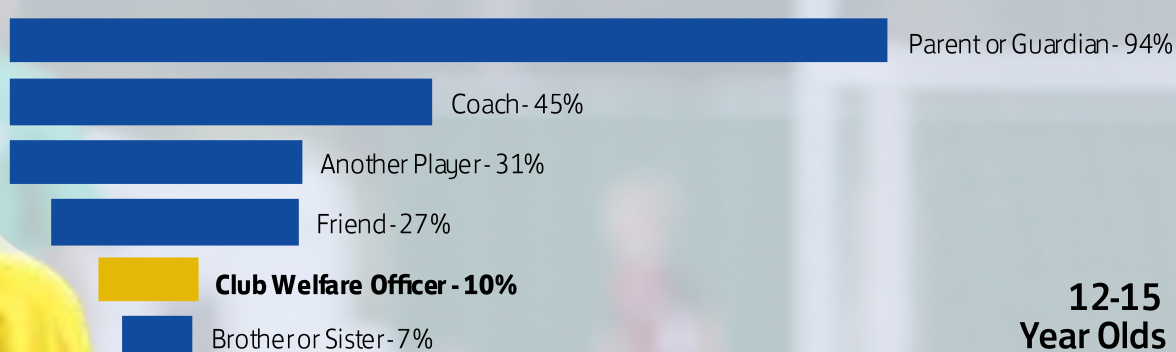
Given the sensitivities with language and age in this section each of the three age groups were

If you were unhappy at football who would you tell?



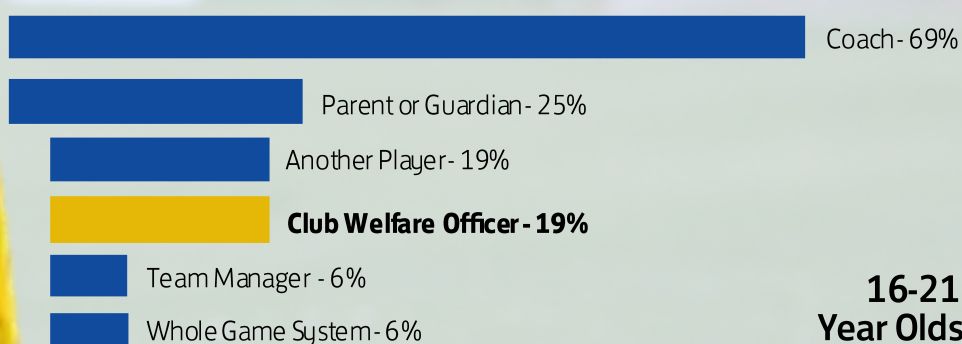
**6-11
Year Olds**

If you felt uncomfortable or unhappy who would you tell?



**12-15
Year Olds**

How would you report any concerns?



**16-21
Year Olds**



RESPECT