



INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

Year 1 Review & Report







Contents **3**

From The CEO **4**

Key Performance Indicators **5**

Case Studies **6**

Marketing & Communications **10**

Insight **11**

Advocacy **12**

Interventions **13**

Participation **14**

What's Next? **15**

REPORT



We are pleased to present the year one review of our Inclusion Action Plan in which you will see the progress being made in providing an inclusive environment where anyone can achieve their football aspirations.

The review reflects our commitment to fully and transparently communicate our progress in making the game truly 'For All'.

You will read about key work and case studies that are enabling us to make great strides towards inclusivity within Staffordshire Football.

We believe that this starts within the leadership of the game and as such we have made a number of important changes to our Governance Structure which will enable us to become more reflective of the local game and the Staffordshire community.

Whilst we have made a promising start, we have a long way to go before we can say that the game is truly 'For all' and this will be achieved through building confidence and where role models will play a vital role.

It is easy to hide behind strategies, plans and targets but success is ultimately measured through actions for which we must be accountable.

It is imperative that we use the power of the game as a vehicle for good and to encourage conversations about important and sometimes difficult subject matters.

Diversity of voices leads to healthier discussions, decisions and ultimately better outcomes for everyone.

Adam Evans
Chief Executive Officer

Taking part in football brings with it a wide range of physical, mental and social benefits, which is why it is important that everyone has the opportunity to get involved. You will see from the case studies contained within this review that there is already some great work going on that is breaking down barriers and making real changes to people's lives. Although we have made huge strides forward in terms of making football more inclusive and accessible, we recognise that there is still a long way to go.

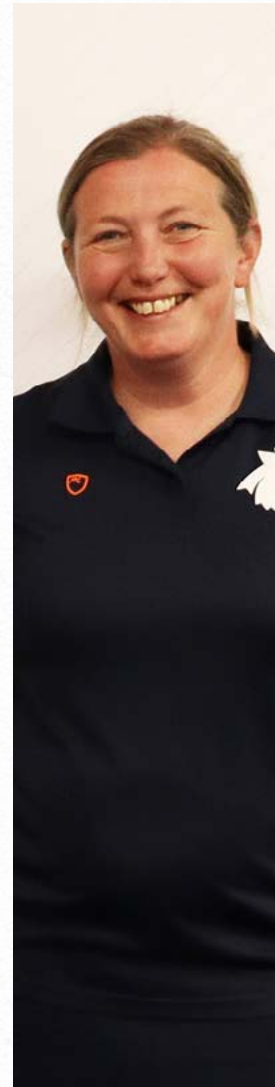
If we want football across Staffordshire to be representative of our communities, we need to be proactive, tackling barriers and all forms of discrimination head on and putting plans in place to diversify the game.

We have engaged in consultation with the football community across Staffordshire to identify training needs linked to equality, diversity and inclusion. This is an area of work that we will continue to develop to ensure that football clubs across Staffordshire are welcoming and inclusive.

We have recently set ourselves challenging targets for diversifying football across Staffordshire. We recognise that an important aspect of diversifying the game is ensuring that there is diversity in leadership. Bringing people together with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences will strengthen leadership within the organisation and create new ideas for developing the game. We have developed an insight driven approach to develop key actions that will aim to attract and support individuals from underrepresented groups into leadership roles with Staffordshire Football Association. Based on our insight we will increase the visibility of role models from diverse backgrounds, liaise closely with community organisations across Staffordshire, raise awareness of the opportunities available across more diverse platforms and ensure that recruitment processes are inclusive.

All change starts with small steps in the right direction and an unwavering commitment to reach a goal. We will be transparent and accountable as we work towards our targets in the Inclusion Action Plan. Through doing this we aim to make Staffordshire a truly welcoming and inclusive place to take part in football.

Kathryn Leflay
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Director



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Staffordshire FA KPIs		End of 22/23	Target 23/24	Difference
Registered male players		27,580	24,473	3,107
Registered female players		4,048	3,629	419
Registered disabled players		427	405	22
Youth teams with a qualified coach		83%	90%	-7%
CPD Target		569	750	-181
Good quality grass pitches		204	198	6
Referees	Recruitment	170	199	-29
	Retention	488	636	-148
	Conversion	205	119	86
	Progression	35	43	-8
Secondary KPIs				
Weetabix wildcats provider		33	69	-36
Squad provider		6	27	-21
Female league with full pathway		Yes	Yes	
% Adult teams with an England Football accredited club		32x Clubs	70%	
% Youth teams with an England Football accredited club		43x Clubs	90%	
80% increase in club and community opportunities* for girls from 2020-2024 (72% CFA, 8% national)		265 (Oct 22)	345	

CASE STUDIES

Autism Awareness In Staffordshire Football

Over the last 18 months Staffordshire FA have been driving forward an Autism Awareness project across the county, with the initial key objectives being:

- To raise awareness of autism through football within the grassroots game & the support networks, opportunities available within the county to participate/volunteer.
- To support grassroots members with training & resources to further support creating an autism friendly environment within grassroots football.
- To create an autism awareness campaign in football weekend in April (Annually), linked to World Autism Awareness Day. To promote the opportunities for participation, inclusivity & sharing positive role models and stories within Staffordshire.

We recognised that there wasn't enough understanding, awareness or education available to support individuals with Autism to participate within football whether this be playing, volunteering, refereeing but also the understanding for everyone else involved in how small changes or adaptations can have a big impact on the inclusivity for individuals. Thanks to external funding via the Staffordshire County Council & NHS we were able to implement or plans further.

- Working with Liberty Staffordshire & an individual with lived experience of autism to create & deliver an Autism Awareness workshop.
- [MSA LIBERTY STAFFORDSHIRE VIDEO](#)
- [IF MY AUTISM WAS A SUPER POWER VIDEO](#)
- Using feedback from individuals with Autism to create a recognisable branding and wide range of resources & infographics that Staffordshire Football members can use to educate their members and support individuals with Autism. All of which can be viewed and downloaded [here](#).
- In April 2022, an Autism Awareness in Football Weekend was launched. In April 2023, 35+ football clubs and leagues in Staffordshire supported Autism Awareness, promoting year-round awareness. Inclusion Champions received banners for perpetual display, featuring a QR code linking to our website. Resources like flyers, social media content, and sensory bags were shared, fostering discussions on supporting fans and families with Autism, evident at Port Vale Fanzone & Stoke City Women match days.
- We also dedicated all of our county cup finals to Autism Awareness, with captain armbands, subs bibs & banners all on display.

We are extremely passionate to ensure that we continue to build on this work and will be looking to create additional resources, support & awareness.



AUTISM AWARENESS IN FOOTBALL IN STAFFORDSHIRE

PLAY • COACH • REFEREE • VOLUNTEER

SCAN ME



**FOR MORE
INFORMATION**



CASE STUDIES

Inclusive Referee Courses



In the 2022-23 season, the Staffordshire Football Association embarked on a mission to reshape referee representation and diversity in the county. Armed with data insights and local expertise, the Association recognised the need for revamped referee recruitment. Through collaborative efforts with leagues, referees, clubs, and players, key findings emerged.

A stark gender disparity came to light as only 3.8% of registered referees in 2021-22 were female, with a mere 33 female officials in Staffordshire. The Girls & Ladies Leagues Referee panel also skewed heavily male. Concerns arose from Ability Counts Football Clubs about the lack of disability representation in the referee panel.

The Association responded by creating opportunities for disabled, impaired, female, and underrepresented individuals to become referees. This inclusivity aimed to enrich the football community and encourage broader participation. Funding secured from the FA's Football Delivery Fund fueled this project, aligning with set targets.

At the core was the Inclusive Referee Course, offering an accessible pathway to refereeing in Staffordshire. Beyond recruiting 60 new referees, the project aimed to inspire current officials to participate. Success stories and best practices were shared to break participation barriers.

Tailored courses were a highlight, addressing participants' unique needs. The project also aimed for personal development, leadership, and engagement. It empowered participants to showcase their skills, challenging stereotypes around disability and refereeing.

Staffordshire FA delivered two dedicated Referee courses, collaborating with Liberty Jamboree, a local disability charity. Seasoned tutors covered rules, communication, and understanding disabled players' challenges. Financial inclusivity was a focus, fully funding the course for those with long-term physical or mental conditions.

A Female Referee course recruited 32 officials, integrating 26 into the Girls & Ladies League Referee Panel, mitigating isolation issues. Female attendance surged, with 52 learners in total during the season. Female referee registration more than doubled to 77, showcasing significant progress.

The Staffordshire FA remains committed to inclusivity and disability integration. Ongoing support and mentorship await disabled or impaired referees, fostering skills and confidence. Promoting disabled refereeing benefits to the broader community will be a priority, highlighting the positive impact and personal growth.

The Association's success model will be shared, promoting collaboration with other County FAs and organisations. A new venture targeting the South Asian Community within Stoke on Trent is on the horizon, further extending diversity in football.

The Staffordshire Football Association's journey echoes a resounding commitment to reshape the football landscape, fostering a diverse and inclusive future for the sport.



CASE STUDIES

Period Project

During a County FA's Inclusion Advisory Group, there was a focused discussion on the barriers to participation within the female game which included a detailed discussion around period poverty, education & awareness.

The Staffordshire Girls & Ladies League were also looking to expand their support to their teams and so we wanted to ensure that we are working in partnership to get the best possible support package we could for our clubs.

This led to the Staffordshire FA, Staffordshire Girls & Ladies League, Period Power, and FabLittleBag have collaborated to provide free period products and the ability to easily dispose of them, to female teams in Staffordshire.

Meaning every affiliated Girls & Women's team in Staffordshire for the 2023-24 season will receive a stocked Period Starter Bag, thanks to this partnership.

Our main objectives are to:

- Provide everyone with a Period Starter Bag to kick start the conversation & provide initial support to all female teams in Staffordshire.
- Educate everyone within the club on how they can be more female friendly and provide a safe, inclusive environment for all involved.
- Create partnerships with local charities and organisations who can support all clubs with products & education to embed within their community.

During the 23-24 season we will be building on this work to continue to educate and raise awareness of understanding the barriers within the game and implementing change.

For further details regarding the support, resources and FAQ's please [click here](#).

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE CASE STUDIES](#)



MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Promote, celebrate & raise awareness of Staffordshire Football to unite the grassroots game in Staffordshire, driving inclusivity, diversity & transparency.

Objectives;



Success to date;

- [Staffordshire FA website, EDI area updated and refreshed, in particular a useful resource area for Staffordshire Football members.](#)
- Equalweb accessibility function added to website (both desktop and mobile friendly).
- [Celebrated good practice & sharing positive case studies of Inclusion in Staffordshire.](#)
- FA EDI Calendar readily available and key awareness dates celebrated and shared throughout Staffordshire FA networks.
- Inclusion Action Plan 2022-25 available & yearly review reports will also be made public annually.

INSIGHT



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

Objectives;



Success to date;

- Worked in partnership with Wolves University & their student modules to gain insight into the following specific areas: Autism Awareness, PAN Disability Provision, Discrimination.
- Census Data 2021 reviewed and headline demographics collected for Staffordshire.
- Internal EDI audit for staff, board, council conducted, data set provided & targets agreed. Strategic tactics created to work towards achieving these targets. These will be added to the Inclusion Action Plan.

ADVOCACY

To be a fully inclusive organisation that embeds representation of Staffordshire Football in all we do.

Objectives;



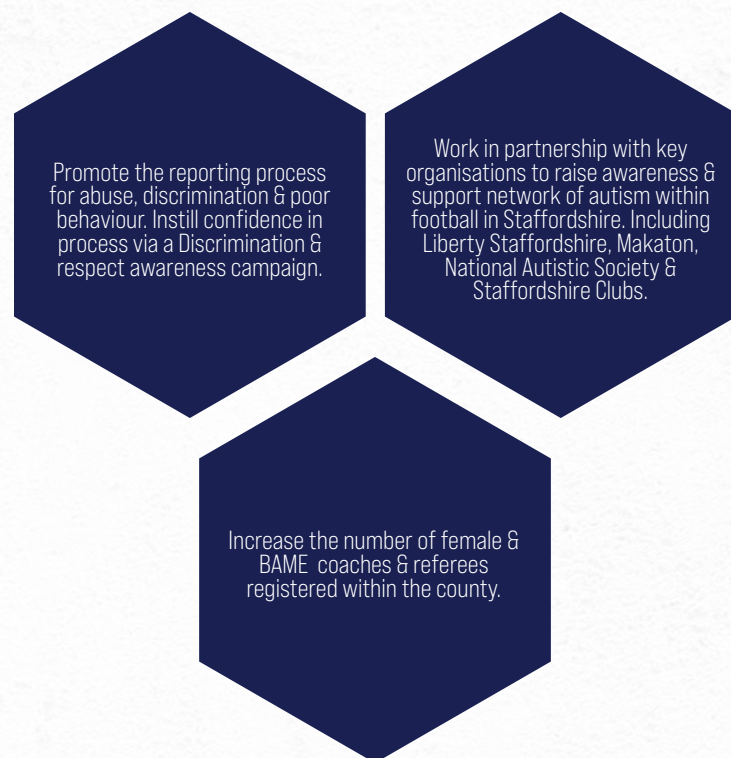
Success to date;

- Regular communication & meetings with our IAG, discussing key issues and themes in line with the Inclusion Action Plan objectives. IAG chairperson on the Staffs FA Board of Directors.
- Recruitment policies reviewed and updated.
- Internal EDI audit for staff, board, council conducted, data set provided & targets agreed to increase wider representation throughout the CFA.
- EDI embedded within the Staffordshire FA, operational planning, strategy, agenda's & EDI training plan each season.
- Inclusion Champion network successfully piloted, with representatives from 20 clubs/league's involved. EDI training package for the season for all Staffordshire members including generic EDI, Kick It Out, Autism Awareness, Dementia Friends, LGBTQ+. Plans to build on this for 2023-24.

INTERVENTIONS

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

Objectives;



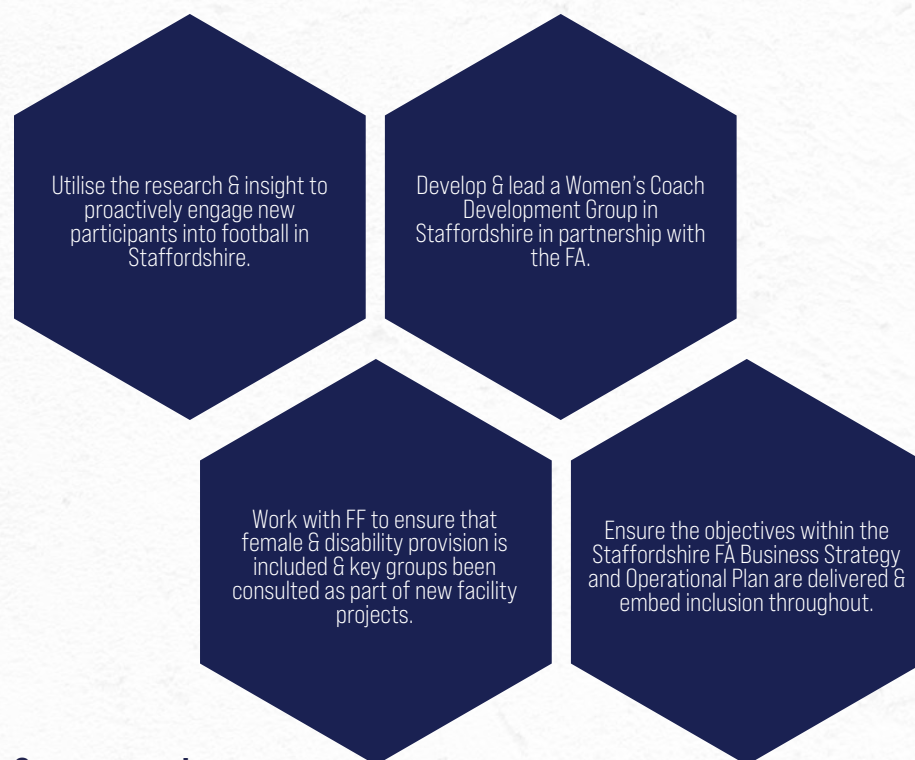
Success to date;

- Workshop delivered to clubs via Kick It Out promoting the importance and processes for reporting discrimination.
- Respect campaign highlighted at Stoke City Respect Fixture in season.
- Working in partnership with a range of partners including Liberty Staffordshire, Staffordshire Council, NHS, Staffordshire Clubs and Leagues to deliver an high profile autism awareness project within Staffordshire. [More details shared in the case study on page.](#)
- Delivered targeted referee courses to increase representation of referee's across the County, including 22x females, 12x individuals with disabilities & 12x South Asian volunteers all attending and completing the qualification.

PARTICIPATION

Establish key partnerships with local providers & communities to deliver Staffordshire Football projects and initiatives.

Objectives;



Success to date;

- Collecting and understanding insight to understand players journeys and shape the future of the female pathway.
- In partnership with CP sport, Stoke City CT, Staffordshire Cricket & Frame running, we delivered a CP multi sports event and have successful engaged new participants into CP football.
- In partnership wit SGLFL, Period Power & Fab Little Bag, we are prodiving a free period starter bag and education to every girls and ladies team in Staffordshire.
- Additional success's can be viewed via our [Annual Report](#).
- Newcastle Town opened their 3G Pitch at Roe Lane in June 2023. Their project will support existing Newcastle Town teams to provide a training and matchday venue, as well as a community facility that is open to other clubs and local residents. The project entails female and disability football focus, with a commitment to having equal access for girls using the pitch over the coming seasons, as well as the club developing their disability football offer and supporting Ability Counts football to take place on site.

WHAT'S NEXT?



Here are just a few examples in each strand that we will be a priority for the 2023-24 season:

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Create a detailed marketing and communication plan, to celebrate good practice, raise awareness of opportunities & demonstrate role models within the community that are reflective of the County.

INSIGHT

Create surveys, utilise focus groups & community engagement to understand how people want to get involved with football and the addressing barrier's that the community facing to get or stay involved in the game.

ADVOCACY

Building a diverse workforce through education, development and inclusive leadership and increasing representation throughout Staffordshire Football. Utilise the voice of young people to help drive positive change for inclusion locally,

INTERVENTIONS

Implement a Discrimination & respect campaign, to raise awareness and in still confidence of the reporting process for abuse, discrimination & poor behaviour.

PARTICIPATION

Utilise and understand insight to proactively engage new members within football. Upskill and encourage inclusion champion roles within accredited clubs to advocate inclusion across their communities.



ENGLAND
FOOTBALL

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