

DELIVERING THE YOUTH STRATEGY

FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

February 2019



Foundation

*Serving the community
through football*



Schools' Football

Let Them Play programme

The Irish FA Foundation is delighted to announce the recruitment of twelve new Let Them Play Officers that will deliver school, futsal and grassroots projects across Northern Ireland.

The twelve Officers have been positioned in each council area with two in Belfast. This recruitment is a further development in the Irish FA Foundation's objective to put strategic systems in place which will develop young boys and girls, whatever their background or ability level, and nurture them to reach their full potential.



Speaking about the launch of the programme, Jonathan Michael, Schools and Futsal Manager for the Irish FA Foundation said, "The launch of this programme is incredibly exciting as the Foundation continues to invest with the aim to increase the percentage of schools where football is played to 90% by 2020. The knowledge, experience and enthusiasm of the Officers is tremendous, and I believe this fun, safe and inclusive programme will inspire participants to develop a lifelong love of the game and will greatly serve the community through football and education."

The Officers will focus on delivering physical education sessions during curriculum and after school time to both primary and post primary school pupils. In addition, the Officers will support the delivery of school festivals, taster sessions, competitions and the assist schools in the completion of the Schools Quality Mark.

Michael Boyd, Director of Football Development for the Irish FA Foundation said, "The Irish FA Foundation works with partners across Northern Ireland to offer sports participation, health and education opportunities for more than 70,000 young people. We are committed to the successful delivery of our ten year youth football strategy Let Them Play and these new roles are critical to its roll out across the country".

The Irish FA Foundation's Player Development Programme will also be delivered by the Let Them Play Officers as the Foundation seeks to provide clear pathways for the best young talent, both males and females, to maximise their potential.

In terms of Futsal development, the Officers will also be responsible for establishing Game Changers centres across the country which will provide youth players with opportunities to expand their knowledge of the game and supplement their current football education provided through their clubs and the Small Sided Games programme.

The Let Them Play Officers will provide support to the Foundation's Regional Grassroots Development Officers in the delivery of Holiday Camps and Small Sided Games programme throughout the year. Youth football clubs will also receive benefit from the Let Them Play programme as the Officers will deliver several coach education awards and community relations focused workshops.

Danske Bank Girls' Finals

St Louise's Comprehensive College were in scintillating form as they won this year's Danske Bank Under-15 girls' 11-a-side competition.



The school from Belfast's Upper Falls strolled through round-robin games, scoring numerous goals along the way, navigated a penalty shoot-out to reach the final and then bossed the decider, defeating north Belfast school Mercy College 3-0.

In the semi-finals St Louise's struggled to break down St Joseph's and the game went to a penalty shoot-out, which St Louise's won 3-2.

In the other semi-final Laurelhill thought that they had done enough to progress, however a late Mercy goal was enough to force the tie to penalties. And Mercy prevailed 3-1 on pens in the shootout.

The final between St Louise's and Mercy College was a much tighter affair than their round-robin game, however St Louise's again came out on top.

The West Belfast school took the lead on the stroke of half-time when Caitlin Magill slotted the ball home. After the break Mercy pushed forward in a bid to get back into the game, however Chloe Davis scrambled in a second for St Louise's midway through the half.

And with what was virtually the last kick of the match Magill grabbed her second, with a well-placed low drive, to make it 3-0 to St Louise's.

Northern Ireland U18 schoolboys

A late penalty earned Australia's U18/U19 Schoolboys a draw against Northern Ireland's Under-18 Schoolboys in Larne on Tuesday.

The visitors had slightly more possession at Inver Park during a scrappy game which did not have much in the way of goalmouth action and finished 1-1.

A goal fest perhaps looked on the cards when Northern Ireland striker Callum Ferris opened the scoring after just two minutes but it never materialised.

Ferris latched on to a fine through ball from Mal Smith and smashed it through Australian keeper Levi Kaye's legs into the corner of the net.

Craigavon Senior High student Ferris, who plays his club football at Portadown, then had a golden opportunity to double the lead. He was brought down inside the area by the Australian keeper. Ferris stepped up to take the spot kick but his low drive was well saved by Kaye.

Northern Ireland, who were captained by Larne High student Liam Hassin, continued to press but lacked a cutting edge.

Paddy Burns could possibly have made it 2-0 midway through the half when he cleverly spun away from his marker to meet a corner, however his shot was off target.

The second half was pretty even with both sides really only threatening from set pieces, while a flurry of substitutions interrupted the flow of the game.

The main talking point came with five minutes to go. An Australian player fired in a low shot which cannoned off Northern Ireland defender Lewis McGarvey inside the box. The referee claimed the player had handled the ball and pointed to the spot despite protests from the Northern Ireland players. Maximillien Balard was unfazed by the protests and stepped up to slot the penalty into the net to make it one apiece.



Education and Employability Programme

The Education and employability programme is continuing to develop well. From January we have delivered two Level 1 courses (31 Pupils), two Futsal Level 1 courses (30 pupils) and a number of workshops to schools and colleges throughout the country. Over the next few weeks we are delivering the rest of our programme in current schools while also meeting new schools and putting plans in place next year.



One of our Education and employability schools, St Louise's held a primary schools tournament at Olympia Leisure Centre on the 31/01/19. They invited ten Primary schools from Belfast to attend a mixed (Male and Female) 7-a-side tournament which was a huge success and enjoyed by all. It gave the students on the course valuable hands on experience coaching and helping in the running of an event.

The Belfast Get Active Nutrition Programme is back up and running with two events completed to date and another three planned until the end of March. 142 young players and coaches have benefited from a Nutritional Workshop, Stadium Tour and a one hour Practical session at Olympia leisure Centre.

Futsal

Senior Women's Futsal League

This season's Women's Futsal League kicked off in October with 20 teams involved. This year's league gave the teams futsal over the winter months on the bigger court, with over 300 players participating in the annual league!



The teams played in a series of qualifying rounds which will culminate in a final between Foyle Belles and Crusaders Strikers on Friday 1st February 2019 at the Shankill Leisure Centre.

Crusader Strikers won the title convincingly with an 8-1 victory against Foyle Belles.

Junior Futsal Development Programme

The Female Junior Futsal programme has been running throughout January and February with 35 teams playing each week from an under 11, under 13 and under 15 age group being hosted at the Shankill Leisure Centre. In the ABC area the council have ran blitz days for U9, U11, U13 and under 15 while St Mary's FC have hosted two under-9 nights in conjunction to support the Futsal Winter programme.

Senior Men's International Futsal

Northern Ireland's senior men's futsal team took part in their first ever set of FIFA Futsal World Cup qualifiers at the end of January. In a mini tournament in Moldova, which acted as a preliminary round for a main round European qualification, they suffered two heavy defeats and narrowly lost to Wales who they had defeated back at the Home Nations Championship in December.

In their first ever Futsal World Cup Qualifier Northern Ireland came against Finland, a team ranked in the top 30 in the world. The gulf in class and experience quickly became apparent as the Finns, who had several professional players in their squad, rattled in



three goals in the opening eight minutes before Connor Millar pegged one back for Northern Ireland. As the second half progressed the Finns then stepped up a gear and netted another six goals to leave the final score at 9-1.

The second game was even tougher as hosts Moldova really turned the screw – backed by a vociferous home crowd. Moldova, who defeated Wales 8-4 in their first game, raced into a two-goal lead inside three minutes. Scott Gunn then pulled one back for Jonathan Michael's side, however that appeared to galvanise the Moldovans and they netted seven times before Connor Millar got Northern Ireland's second goal of the game.

The Moldovans, who also had several professional players in their ranks, continued to keep the pressure on, however, and scored another four before Millar grabbed a late consolation. Moldova went on to top the group after defeating Finland 2-1 in the final game.

The final game in the mini tournament for Northern Ireland saw them come up against Wales, whom they had defeated 2-0 in the Futsal Home Nations Championship back in December. Wales took a second minute lead through Naim Arsan before Connor Glenholmes equalised after 12 minutes.

Wales enjoyed a period of better of the possession and created good chances which forced Matthew McErlain in the Northern Ireland goal to be at his best. Pressure from Wales eventually paid off on 31 minutes when Christopher Hugh scored. Four minutes later the Welsh extended their lead through Craig Pritchard before Northern Ireland defender John Gibson made it 3-2 with 2 minutes to go. Northern Ireland struck the woodwork with seconds remaining, but the Welsh had done enough to win the game.

On their return from eastern Europe, Northern Ireland head coach Jonathan Michael said, "The Moldovans and Finns were different class, the professional futsal players in their ranks are operating at a much higher level than our amateur players. We are therefore realistic about what we can achieve at present, but this young group are still progressing, and we have all learnt a lot from this experience."

Jonathan added, "We were disappointed to lose to Wales, but we are now consistently competing well against the other three Home Nations. We also believe we have the measure of countries around our current world ranking status and we will see more positive results in the future. The experience of our first ever World Cup qualifying campaign will push the group onto another level and we are looking forward to performing well in the Home Nations Championship in England at the end of the year."

Grassroots And Youth Development

Ahead Of The Game

The Irish FA Foundation have launched the Ahead Of The Game programme with a video featuring Keith Gillespie. In the video the former Manchester United, Newcastle United and Blackburn Rovers star says it is good to talk about mental health issues.



Start the conversation

The foundation will be hosting 36 Ahead Of The Game workshops across Northern Ireland this year.

The workshops aim to support clubs and volunteers when dealing with mental health issues and focus on challenging stigma and preventative measures.

The programme is part of the UEFA Hat Trick funding for football and social responsibility and was developed in partnership with TAMHI (Tackling Awareness Of Mental Health Issues), Inspire and Train 2B Smart Soccer.

Nutty Krust Irish FA Easter Football Camps

Applications are now live for the Nutty Krust Irish FA Easter Football Camps. The three-day camps will be held in 30 locations across Northern Ireland throughout the Easter holidays and we're delighted to be working once again with Irwin's Bakery.

Last year over 7,500 children attended the camps which offer exciting opportunities for participants to develop and improve their football skills in a structured, fun environment with professionally trained and vetted coaching staff.

Dribbling skills, shooting, passing, attacking, defending, 1v1s and small-sided games are all included in a jam-packed three days of fun over Easter.



Disability Football

- Development Manager Alan Crooks attended Disability Access Officer Conference in Barcelona, Spain from 14-16 January. We are starting to make inroads into improving the experience of the disabled spectator at the National Stadium through the setting up of a disabled fans' forum and guidance from Disability Sport NI. We are hopeful of launching a disabled fans survey and National Stadium Access Guide during CAFE Week of Action in early March. Lisburn SERC Student Placement Jason Browning is working on a similar project with our senior domestic clubs.
- A new Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) walking football group started in Glenmore Activity Centre, Lisburn with seven participants. There are now four ABI walking football groups in operation now in Northern Ireland with others in Belfast, Ballymena and Craigavon. Over 40 players in total now enjoy this weekly activity.
- A walking football competition was held at Olympia LC on 24 January with six teams. The new walking football body (NIWFF) has organised competition around NI each month, January to May 2019. The next one is in the new Ards Leisure Centre on Tuesday 19 February.
- Alan Crooks attended the European Powerchair Football Conference in Dublin on 25 January and presented to all visiting countries on powerchair football in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Squad is training for three hours each weekend in preparation for Nations Cup in Finland in May 2019.
- Irish FA Level 1 Coaching Disabled Footballers Award delivered on 10 February at Hanwood Centre, Belfast to 23 coaches.
- Five inclusive clubs confirmed for 2019. The following clubs have started on our support programme setting up a disability section – Linfield, Larne, Lurgan Celtic, Greenisland FC and Dungoyne
- Two companies are also availing of our support package and starting participation football programmes for those with a disability – NOW and Inspire NI Youth.



**Student placement
Jason Browning**

Girls' and Woman's Football

Girls' Regional Excellence

The Girls' Regional Excellence programme restarted for 2019 in all four regions with a number of trials and the introduction of a 2008 squad as the 2003 squads were no longer part of the official programme. However, a number will stay involved with the U16/17 squads. It is hoped that there will be approximately 220 girls this year across the four regions. With the start of the programme the various development squads resumed, but the proposed blitz days at MUSA had to be cancelled due to the bad weather and will now take place later in February.

Women's International

The senior squad had their first squad session of the year when 22 players attended a three-day camp. Staying at the Hilton in Templepatrick on the Friday everyone went through a full batch of fitness tests at UUJ. On the Saturday they had pitch sessions based on fitness and intensity games and the weekend closed on the Sunday with an in-house game at Greenmount. Each evening there were team meetings outlining targets for the new year. The U17s travelled to Tenerife where they played Gran Canarias and Slovakia in a friendly tournament losing to Gran Canarias and beating Slovakia. The month ended with a weekend camp for the U17 and U19 squads where again a full batch of fitness tests were carried out and on the Sunday a game against a local top club side.

Elite Performance Academy

The programme returned when the students returned from their Christmas break with regular morning sessions and gym sessions. The focus now is on recruiting players for next year.

Schools' Programme

The programme is up and running again with a new school Dalriada becoming the next school to take advantage of the extra sessions for their regional excellence players.

A full calendar of events has been planned for all of the programmes in 2019.

Peave IV

Sport Uniting Communities

Work began to promote a new volunteer development which starts this month and continues throughout March.

PEACE IV Sport Uniting Communities
Volunteer Development Programme

PEACE IV Sport Uniting Communities have an opportunity for Football, GAA and Rugby clubs to participate in our Volunteer Development Programme for 2019.

The main part of the programme is a training day for your club volunteers (please see below for details). Other benefits include:

- Volunteer Handbooks
- Coach Equipment Pack
- Stadium Tours
- Cross Community Event for Your Club
- Gold Mark Volunteer Accreditation
- Ongoing Support

The programme is **FREE** and places are available on a first come first served basis. The only thing we do ask is full commitment for the duration of the programme. Please register using the contact details below.

Date	Venue	Time	Contact
23/02/19	Olympia Leisure Centre Blifield BT12 6PR	10am-1pm	nathan.murphy@ulstsc.com
02/03/19	Banbridge Home Centre BT22 2JY	9.30am-12.30pm	pietroc.caherty@ulstsc.com
03/03/19	Ballymaginnis Swifts FC BT71 6PP	10am-1pm	daniel.carson@ulstsc.com
03/03/19	University of Ulster Sports Centre Coleraine BT52 1SA	10am-1pm	daniel.chamberlain@ulstsc.com
08/03/19	Banmahon Centre Inverstown BT94 1EE	10am-1pm	protonas.akhour@ulstsc.com

ULSTER GAA Sport Uniting Communities Peace