

# DELIVERING THE YOUTH STRATEGY

FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT



Foundation

*Serving the community  
through football*



September 2020

Success indicators used to assess performance are dictated by the key objectives and targets set out in the Irish Football Association Let Them Play youth football strategy which covers the charitable objectives of the foundation.

## Target one – Participation and Football For All

Increase youth football participation rates by 100% by 2025, from 50,000 in 2015 to 100,000 by 2025.

2015: **50,000** participants

December 2018: **72,000**

1 September 2020: **62,000\***

2025 target: **100,000**



## Target two – Schools and Colleges

Revamp schools' and colleges' football by increasing the percentage of schools where football is played from 45% in 2015 to 90% by 2020 and increase the amount of young people playing in schools and colleges across Northern Ireland from 25,000 in 2015 to 60,000 by 2025.

2015: **25,000** young people playing in schools

December 2018: **29,230**

1 September 2020: **31,900\***

2025 target: **60,000**



## Target three – Club and Volunteer Development

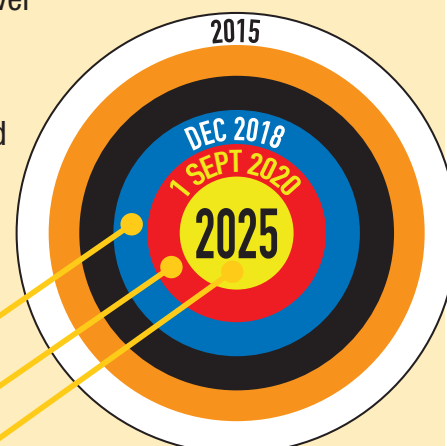
To embed a culture of club and volunteer development at grassroots level by 2025 that creates a fun, safe and inclusive environment throughout youth football. Supporting the development of youth football clubs that are run and managed by qualified, committed and Access NI authorised volunteers who encourage parents and young people to be attracted to and remain in the sport.

2015: **41** Accredited clubs / **50** volunteers

December 2018: **134 / 194**

1 September 2020: **165 / 320**

2025 target: **300 / 500**



\*Figures estimated to account for reduction in participation due to effect of Covid-19.



## Peace IV

Throughout the pandemic, Sport Uniting Communities has continued to plan and adapt our project to make it more Covid friendly. Even though we have faced many challenges we have overcome these and over the past few months we have:

- Reached 112 participants across a number of different programmes
- Hosted online webinars such as our Irish FA Inclusive Clubs programme
- Conducted our first ever online volunteer development programme
- Supported clubs through the People & Clubs accreditation
- Hosted a virtual Have A Go day through video challenges
- Organised our Youth Leadership Programme online and on the pitch



Our Have A Go days are designed to be delivered to people across the religious divide who don't usually get an opportunity to take part in these three sports and/or don't get an opportunity to come together. Due to Covid-19 restrictions we decided to run a virtual Have A Go day with players from Crusaders FC, Clonduff GAA and Cooke Rugby Club. Each club was given a football challenge, a GAA challenge and a rugby challenge to complete and upload. These clips were edited into a video which was put out on social media. We had 30 players from all three sports take part in the challenge.

## Youth Leadership Programme

During August and September, Community Sports Development Officers from the Irish FA and Ulster GAA ran a Youth Leadership Programme at Termon GAA club in Donegal. Due to Covid-19 restrictions the theory elements of the programme were delivered online using Microsoft Teams. With restrictions being lifted slightly and following the return to play protocols, we were able to deliver the practical elements of the course on the pitch. This was achieved over the course of two Saturdays. The participants were then assessed on their coaching by delivering a short coaching session.

The aim of the programme is for young people aged 12-24 to engage in training in volunteer/personal development, progressing through the Sports Leaders UK Level 1 award. 14 participants (11 male and three female) from the local area participated in the programme. They learned leadership skills and how to plan, deliver and evaluate coaching sessions. As a result we hope the participants will become ambassadors in their area, contribute to the projects's good relations events and learn lifelong skills to help them in the future.

As part of the Sports Leaders Award the participants will also complete volunteering hours at their club.



## Community Relations

**Tuesday 2 June saw the Irish FA Foundation's third webinar of this series, with the topic this time being community relations.**

The Foundation's Community Relations Officer, Chris Wright, delivered on the community relations work throughout the Foundation, from Stay Onside to the numerous outreach projects including Everybody's Game, our racism awareness and equality course, and our anti-sectarianism workshop, Show Me The Way.

Kris Lindsay delivered on the PEACE IV funded Sport Uniting Communities programme and commented, "It was great to be involved in the Irish FA's first community relations webinar. From a PEACE IV, Sport Uniting Communities perspective it was a great opportunity to highlight the work that the Peace team have delivered across the province over the last two years, and the work we continue to deliver to implement our key objective of bringing communities together, using the power of sport to unite."

Kris was followed by Jim Magilton and Marissa Callaghan charting their footballing journeys from the streets of Belfast to international stardom, in conversation with Thomas Niblock.

Chris Wright said, "It was great to deliver information on the many levels of good relations programmes we offer here at The Irish FA Foundation. During these challenging times we have continued to offer these programmes through online platforms and this webinar was the perfect opportunity to engage with many different clubs and groups to offer our continued support in good relations work."



It is especially pleasing to see so many clubs coming out of the webinar to register their interest in future digital delivery of our programmes. My thanks must go to Kris for his delivery of the fantastic Sport Uniting Communities programme, and of course to Jim and Marissa for giving up their time to speak about their football journeys, which was guided perfectly by Thomas Niblock. I also wish thank to all the attendees and I look forward to engaging with them all very soon."

Attendee, JP Austin from Duyun Football Group, China, said, "The webinar was great and engaging. The presenters were down to earth and the content was relatable. While viewing the presentation I was given ideas that could support my international projects and I would love to learn more from the Irish FA."

Joanne Patterson from Damolly FC added, "It didn't feel like the webinar lasted an hour (which is a good thing) and the level of information given on the programmes was just right for the length of the session. The lighter interview piece during the second half of the webinar was really interesting to listen to and it was great to have female representation, courtesy of Marissa. Short workshops like these are great to dip into and help keep your focus on developing players, volunteers, etc. within your club, which is particularly important during this lockdown period, so the timing of the webinar was on the button too. Keep up the great work."



## Good Relations Week 2020

The Irish FA Foundation was proud to support the Community Relations Council Good Relations Week in September with the following events:



Foundation

**COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS**

*Serving the community through football*



### 16 September, 7.30pm

Sport Uniting Communities presented a virtual conference via Zoom: **Becoming an Inclusive Community Club.**

### 14-18 September

Community Relations in partnership with South Belfast Alternatives presented the **Kick It** anti-racism programme across the week.

### 18th September, 6.30pm

Launch of our new anti-sectarianism club workshop via Zoom: **Show Me The Way.**

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## Disability Football

### Clubs

The majority of the 51 Clubs providing opportunities for players with a disability have returned to training under Covid-19 protocols. No official competition, the Irish FA/USEL Disability League and/or cups have returned as of yet but we are hopeful this will recommence before the end of 2020 after guidance from NIE/Irish FA Covid response group.

### Powerchair

The Northern Ireland Powerchair squad resumed training on 6 September at Ballysillan Leisure Centre, Belfast and will continue their training programme on a fortnightly basis at same venue. The 2020 Home Nations Championships for both seniors and juniors were cancelled so it may well be 2021 before any international fixtures are confirmed.

### Walking Football

The majority of clubs in the Northern Ireland Walking Football Federation are actively back playing with reduced numbers. The age demographic of the participants has resulted in a cautious approach to return to play for many in the current climate.

All other programs and coach education are at the planning stage with protocols, risk assessments and collaboration with facility providers in discussion.

## Stay Onside

**The Stay Onside team are back planning for the delivery of both prison and community programmes, both aimed at those in offending and at risk of offending. All partners have been supportive and very keen to re-engage after lockdown and refer participants.**

When the prison programmes recommence there will be delivery across all prison establishments, HMP Maghaberry to the general population and separated prisoners, HMP Magilligan to general population and to the males and females at Hydebank College. Discussions are ongoing with prison service staff regarding how all programmes will be delivered. The separated programme at HMP Maghaberry will also see the involvement of UUJ, who will be conducting an evaluation of the programme.

In the community the Stay Onside team have had planning meetings with PSNI and other partners. This will see the delivery of two schools' programmes in Ballymena and a community Good Relations programme in Carrick.

There are future plans for expansion in 2021 across all Irish FA Hub areas.

## Fresh Start Through Sport

Funding has now been received for the delivery of the Fresh Start Through Sport programme. DOJ, PSNI and PSNI have come together with the Irish FA, Ulster Rugby, GAA and Belfast Giants. The programme will focus on both males and females from ages 16-24 who are at risk of paramilitary involvement or organised crime. Two 16-module programmes involving 40 participants across the four sports will commence in October 2019, with East Belfast, Rathcoole and Carrick being selected as pilot areas. Further information will be made available along with a media launch.

## KickOff@3 BAME

Work continues to be developed with KickOff@3, PSNI and local BAME communities. This year's KickOff@3 tournament has been postponed but organisers are taking the time to build new and existing partnerships. In partnership with the Rio Ferdinand Foundation, plans are at an advanced stage to obtain funding and deliver a new programme in Northern Ireland. This links into the new Irish FA Community Relations Strategy.

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## Education and Employability Programme

The Education and Employability programme has started in schools and colleges for the 2020-2021 academic year. Despite the difficult circumstances, schools are keen to have the programme back and running.

The programme is currently being delivered in three schools from the start of September with an additional two schools and three colleges scheduled to start delivery before the end of the month.

This academic year sees the programme develop and continue its strong relationship with the schools and colleges involved. Most of the schools and colleges are now running with two cohorts (year 13 and year 14 students). The addition of a second cohort at Ashfield Boys High School sees the education officers part deliver a triple award



## Grassroots and Youth Development

DfC

**The Department for Communities, Sport – A Home for Lifelong Volunteering programme report for 2019/20 was published in June.**

The programme began in 2015 with the Irish FA, Ulster Rugby and Ulster GAA working in partnership and has continually catered for clubs, communities and volunteers nationwide. The funding, which is reviewed annually, was extended in 2019 to allow for the delivery of 2019/2020 programme.

Repeating the successes of previous years, the programme achieved all objectives and targets in 2019/20.

The continuous hard work and effort by the project officers from all three sports is a testament to the importance of working in partnership and of how effective this can be, not just in a sporting context but also across the voluntary sector and throughout our communities.



### DfC – Multi-Sport Youth Forum

The Irish FA, Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby hosted a multi-sport youth forum this week as part of the Department for Communities programme: Sport, A Home for Lifelong Volunteering.

The event, which was hosted online was attended by young volunteers from all three sports.

Young volunteers got the chance to hear more about the opportunities available to young people, the benefits of volunteering and what potential barriers they may face at times.

They also heard from other young people on how volunteering in sport had helped them to develop holistically, meet new people and gave them more confidence.

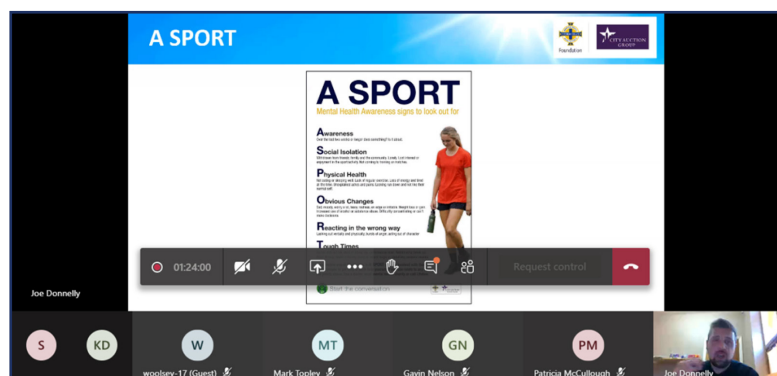
The evening also had interactive elements which gave the attendees opportunities to provide feedback on their experiences of volunteering in sport.

Gavin Nelson, Club and Community Development Officer at the Irish FA, said: “It’s always great for young volunteers from the different sports to get together and share their experience and knowledge. We want to continue to empower young people as they are the future of the game. It was brilliant to hear from young leaders how volunteering had had such a positive impact on them”.

Irish FA Young Leader, Ben Faulkner, added: “Last night’s webinar was eye opening for me. Listening to the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby was very interesting, hearing about their experiences and barriers into volunteering. It’s led me to add more transferrable skills to myself to make myself more employable in the future.”

## Ahead of the Game

**Individuals from clubs and leagues across Northern Ireland last night took part in an online version of Irish FA's flagship mental health awareness workshop, Ahead of the Game, sponsored by City Auction Group.**



The session, which marked Mental Health Awareness week, was delivered via webinar and welcomed 40 clubs on to a session led by the association's Gavin Nelson and Joe Donnelly from Tackling Awareness of Mental Health Issues (TAMHI).

The workshop explored a range of themes from coping with loss and suicide to promoting positive mental health through the prism of

football. The unique challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic were front and centre as the group engaged via a range of exercises.

"Football is so important to me," said TAMHI's Joe Donnelly, who's been leading on the programme for the past two years. "I've played, coached and now I work in the game from a mental health awareness perspective.

"Working on this programme has transitioned me from being a better player to being a better person. It fills me pride when I see the clubs in Northern Ireland, who have passed through this programme, and the work they are now doing particularly in light of the pandemic.

We've seen foodbanks being supported, football kits being sent to Africa, Easter eggs being distributed in communities and a range of grassroots work being done in the community. Our clubs are stepping up to the mark in every way and keeping positive mental health right at the forefront of people's minds."

One attendee was Patricia McCullough, a fundraiser and social media volunteer for Ards Rangers Football Club, who said: "The webinar was very informative. I have been getting involved in the policies and procedures for the club and am supporting our Irish FA accreditation process. Joe was very easy to listen to and captured my attention throughout. He shared his own experiences whilst giving us a lot of information about the signs to look out for and the steps we can take to support the mental health of our football community."

Nathan Woolsey a coach at Annagh United, was another who benefitted. "The webinar was extremely interesting and some of the topics mentioned really resonated with me. There exists a stigma around mental health, but this session with the Irish FA and Joe helped further my understanding of both the positive and negative sides of mental health," he said.

Having been highlighted as an example of good practice in UEFA's Football and Social Responsibility Report this year, the programme is continuing to develop and create more online resources for football clubs across Northern Ireland to access.

Michael Tomalin CEO of City Auction Group, and sponsor of the Ahead of the Game programme, said: "Given these unprecedented times, staying mentally fit and proactively looking after your mental health has never been more important so we're delighted that the Irish FA has arranged a special Ahead of the Game webinar. We would encourage anyone who wasn't able to make the first session to watch it back in their own time."



## Heads Up

**In June, the four home football associations along with leagues and other members of the football family in the UK signed a major declaration to promote mental health.**

The joint declaration is a commitment to make mental health a key priority at all levels of the game - as a lasting legacy of the Heads Up campaign.

The Irish FA's support for the initiative, alongside the FA in England, the Scottish FA and the Football Association of Wales, is being seen as an extension of Ahead of the Game, the association's mental health programme for football clubs at all levels across Northern Ireland.

The Mentally Healthy Football declaration sees governing bodies, leagues and organisations from across UK football recognising that mental health is as important as physical health and pioneering a 'team approach' on this important issue.

Together the UK football family will build on the important work that clubs and football organisations are already doing, working together to scale up these efforts across the football system and support the development of 'mentally healthy clubs' at every level of the game.

Irish FA chief executive Patrick Nelson said: "Through our Foundation we already strongly promote mental health awareness across our clubs, however this declaration is a commitment from us to extend that work further."

## People and Clubs Accreditation

**During the last few months, the following clubs have achieved their People and Clubs Accreditation via the online platform with support from Irish FA staff:**

22nd Old Boys, Ballinamallard FC, Ballymacash Rangers FC, Ballymoney United Youth Academy, Carniny Amateur and Youth FC, Draperstown Celtic, Fivemiletown United Football Club, Greenisland Football Club, Lisburn Rangers Football Club, Lurgan Town Football Club, Mid Ulster Ladies Football Club, Portavogie Youth Football Club, Ridgeway Rovers FC, St Malachys OB Youth FC.



## Coach Education

**230 people have accessed the new online Grassroots Introduction to Coaching Award.**

The new National Coaching Certificate (NCC) has been rolled out with a total of 35 candidates participating across two courses at Playball and Seaview. A further three courses are planned at Londonderry Park, Ballymacash and Richill with a total of 54 coaches booked on so far.



The new UEFA C Diploma was delivered at the Dub, Queen's Playing Fields from 24-29 August with 31 candidates. The UEFA accredited course prepares coaches for small-sided games, looking at principles of play in 5v5, 7v7 and 9v9 formats. Coaches are grouped in to a 'community of practice' where they go back to their club and share ideas. A coach education tutor will visit the club for a formative and summative 9v9 assessment.

## Girl's and Women's Football

**The Danske Bank Women's Premiership continues into its third week with the league table showing signs of a very competitive league. Four teams all share the same number of points at the top of the table.**

The BBC highlight show has been improved. There is now one main game of the week with match commentating from Nicola McCarthy. Match analysis is now also available via HUDL with each team receiving all the matches

Twelve players from five different Danske Bank Women's Premiership clubs were been selected in the Northern Ireland senior women's squad for the UEFA Women's Euro qualifier against Faroe Islands.

Glentoran are the best represented club with five players in the 20-strong panel, alongside three players from Linfield, two from Cliftonville and one each from Crusaders and Sion Swifts.

Sion forward Kirsty McGuinness who signed from Linfield this summer is back in the squad for the first time since June 2018.

Linfield Ladies defender Abbie Magee, Glentoran Women midfielder Joely Andrews and Glens striker Kerry Beattie all earn their first senior call-ups having represented their nation at under-19 level.

Glens goalkeeper Jacqueline Burns is also in the squad along with recalls for club teammates and midfield duo Nadene Caldwell and Samantha Kelly.

Magee's Linfield teammates Ashley Hutton and Rebecca Bassett are also in the fold, along with experienced duo Marissa Callaghan and Julie Nelson of Cliftonville and Crusaders respectively.

There are several distinguished alumni of the Danske Bank Women's Premiership also involved, including Birmingham City's Chloe McCarron who left Linfield this summer.

Demi Vance (Rangers, formerly of Glentoran) and goalkeeper Lauren Perry (now at Forfar Farmington, formerly of Linfield) are also included.



The new league will benefit from Electric Ireland Game Changers campaign, which includes initiatives with the Irish FA such as the Electric Ireland Excellence and Shooting Stars programmes. The campaign aims to change the landscape of female sport in Northern Ireland and encourage participation and elite opportunities for local players. The initiatives are helping sow the seeds of future success and creating an environment in which female sporting achievements are nurtured and celebrated at every age throughout a player's development.

The Electric Ireland Women's Academy League kicks off on Friday 18 September with the first fixtures as follows: Crusaders Strikers U19 v Linfield Ladies Swifts, Glentoran Women Reserves v Cliftonville Corinthians and v Sion Swifts Ladies U19 v Derry City Ladies U19.

### Female football Leaders programme

The programme continues via zoom on the last Thursday of each month. Currently completing OCN in football administration. 24 are currently attending.

### NIWFA

35 teams are competing in this years NIWFA league. Unfortunately due to Covid-19, eight teams did not enter this year.