



Mentally Healthy Football

DECLARATION REPORT

Welcome

Following the success of the Heads Up campaign, I was pleased that two years ago football took on the ambition to build a mentally healthy environment across the whole of the game. Through their signing of the Mentally Healthy Football Declaration, clubs, leagues and footballing organisations across the UK committed to raising the importance of mental fitness for years to come.

As this report outlines, the football community has collectively made significant strides forward since signing the declaration – whether that is the 10,000 people newly trained in mental health practices, or the needs of hundreds of players now better supported by wellbeing assessments.

Lasting change takes time to realise, and I'm encouraged that football has come together again to reaffirm its continuing commitment to instilling a mentally healthy culture at all levels, across all four nations. Only by doing this can we ensure a safe, supportive environment for everyone who engages with the game, whether that be in the changing room, the terraces, or from home.

HRH The Duke of Cambridge



The Mentally Healthy Football Declaration Commitment June 2020

The football family in the UK recognises that mental health is as important as physical health. We are proud to have supported the Heads Up campaign this season, and of the continued role that football plays in helping to change the conversation around mental health.

It is clear that Covid-19 will have significant and long-term effects on mental health, and that football will have an important role to play in bringing people together and supporting the wellbeing of fans and the football community. We will continue to lead positive change in football, and society more widely, by building on the important work clubs and football organisations are already doing; by working together to scale up these efforts in all parts of football right across the UK, and supporting the development of mentally healthy clubs at every level of the game.

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health – players, staff, managers, officials and coaches, as well as fans and our wider communities. That's why, as football moves forward during this unprecedented time, we are uniting to commit to making mental health and fitness a key priority within football's agenda in all affiliated clubs and organisations across the UK, now and for future generations.

As a collective, the football family will;

- **Lead from the top within our own organisations to help create a mentally healthy culture across the whole game.** This will include all signatories implementing their own mental health strategy or action plan during the course of next season.
- **Make awareness-raising, training, education and guidance available to all clubs.** This will include sharing and widening access to existing training, education and guidance for staff, players, coaches, officials and managers. In addition, we will continue to promote mental health as a focus each year after the Heads Up campaign has concluded.
- **Embed mental health within our existing policies and practices.** This will include working with the football family to include mental health and wellbeing within existing policy frameworks across the UK.
- **Support clubs and organisations to grow a mentally healthy culture through the provision of guidance and resources.** This will include providing tailored toolkits as part of our individual action plans to support mental fitness for players, and staff wellbeing. The toolkits will provide clear guidance on where to signpost those needing support.
- **Work together through a UK-wide mental health implementation group for UK football.** This will be formed next season to ensure we all drive progress towards these pledges and share best practice between ourselves.



Football is a team game and we recognise that every organisation will have a different part to play within it. Each of our organisations will adopt their own approach based on these common principles and commitments, building on the work we are already doing on supporting mental health. By coming together around one collective game plan for better mental health, we will be able to achieve our shared vision for football more quickly.

Now, more than ever, is the time for us to support each other and for all parts of society to prioritise mental health. We will do everything we can to play our part in this and help make football a mentally healthy environment, now and in the future.

SECTION 01

Lead from the top within our own organisations to help create a mentally healthy culture across the whole game

The English Football League (EFL)

In a groundbreaking new collaboration, the mental health charity, Mind, became EFL's Official Charity Partner from the start of 2018/19 season on an initial two-year basis. The 'On Your Side' partnership will conclude at the end of the 2021/22 season after four highly successful years.

With one in four adults affected by mental health problems, the EFL has been working with its network of Clubs and Club Community Organisations to promote Mind's message and services to millions nationwide.

Across the four year period, the partnership has focused on the following areas:

- raising awareness of mental health amongst fans and the wider public
- helping improve the approach to mental health in football
- raising vital funds to deliver life-changing national and local support.

In a first for English football, in 2018, the Mind logo was incorporated into the name and number designs of all shirts and replica kits throughout the EFL. That set the tone for the partnership, and in the work that followed there have been many successes along the way. These include EFL players and managers becoming 'On Your Side' champions, with some spending time at King's Cross station talking to commuters about the prevalence of mental health problems.

At the EFL's five flagship Wembley Finals per season, Mind have been a prominent presence in a number of ways, be it with displaying its brand and messaging across the stadium, ambassadors speaking to guests, or volunteers engaging with fans on Wembley Way.

The past two years have unfortunately seen many people's mental health impacted, as a result of the challenges faced during the pandemic. Following the easing of restrictions, EFL clubs opened up their stadiums to allow their local communities to do a 'Mile For Mind' – for many, this was the first time in over a year that they had set foot inside their beloved club's home grounds.



Throughout the partnership, Mind have worked closely with the EFL to ensure clubs have programmes in place to support the wellbeing of both staff and volunteers. With over 18 million fans attending EFL matches each season (and almost 42 million watching on TV), the partnership has made the topic of mental health more visible, and helped to increase awareness and understanding among new audiences.

In every corner of the country, EFL Clubs, their Club Community Organisations and local Minds have forged close links within their communities, leading to incredible initiatives being launched, which are making a tangible impact on people's lives.

The partnership has picked up seven industry award wins and nominations over the past four years, including Gold in the Football Business Awards 2019 (Partnership of the Year) and Silver in the Sports Business Awards 2019 (Best Sports Charity or best use of sport by a charity).

Both organisations will work closely until the end of the 2021/22 season to ensure there is a lasting legacy of the partnership embedded across the League, and stand by their commitment that whoever you support, we're here to support you.

For further information about the partnership and our collective achievements visit mind.org.uk/football

The Scottish FA

The Scottish FA has launched its first ever Mental Health Action Plan to help end the stigma around mental health in football and create an environment for people to talk openly about their mental health.

The physical health benefits of playing our national sport have been widely acknowledged. However, participating in football at any level and in any capacity – playing, spectating, coaching or volunteering – can also improve your mental wellbeing. The Scottish FA is committed to providing support for all its participants.

There remains a stigma to talking about mental health. The Scottish FA is committed to using football as a tool to break down this stigma and create a comfortable environment for people to openly discuss their mental health experiences.

The Scottish FA has long supported mental health projects, such as the creation of the world's first Mental Health and Wellbeing National League for people living with various mental health conditions, which provides a safe and nurturing environment to play and compete within football. In addition, a research project undertaken by the Hampden Sports Clinic in conjunction with UEFA, has led to a better understanding of the mental health challenges of senior professional players within Scotland. This resulted in the creation of 'Support within Sport', which provides confidential and immediate help for professional players and coaching staff.

The Mental Health Action Plan will promote good mental health across the game and provide appropriate education and signposting for all involved in the game, from players and coaches to our fans and their families. The Scottish FA will work closely with its partners to deliver these actions and build on the good work already being done within the game.

Governance, education, awareness and signposting are the four key pillars of the Mental Health Action Plan, which will run for four years and work in conjunction with the Football Unites programme. This aims to make Scottish football representative and reflective of the demographic of Scotland at all levels.

During the four years, governance will be assessed to determine what member clubs can contribute to ending the stigma around mental health, and what structures can be put in place to help people.

Education and awareness will also be assessed, along with signposting, which will aim to improve the level of support available for those involved in the game living with mental health conditions.



The Scottish FA's CEO Ian Maxwell said: "When the Royal Foundation's declaration was signed, we made a commitment to make a difference in people's mental health across Scotland. Through this action plan we believe this will help us achieve that.

"We know 10% of teenagers and 25% of adults will be living with mental health problems each year, and at the moment one in three GP appointments relate to mental health. 700 people in Scotland take their lives each year from suicide.

"It is very much a societal problem but football can have a positive impact on it.

"The Scottish FA has a duty of care to the players within the game, but we also have a duty to our clubs, our grassroots clubs and everybody involved in football in this country.

"Football has the opportunity to make a change within society, and this action plan has set out targets and a structure which will enable us to assist people involved in the game who are going through mental health difficulties.

"We look forward to working together with our partners and to engaging with stakeholders throughout football and the mental health community."

[View](#) the Scottish FA Mental Health Action Plan for 2020-2024.

CASE STUDY



The Football Association (FA) and Sporting Chance

As the governing body of English football, The Football Association (FA) has a responsibility to demonstrate what a mentally healthy culture looks like and wants to work with key stakeholders to set a strong example in this area to others across the English game. In recent years, the organisation has made significant progress in this space, making it a strategic priority by creating a four-year internal strategy to support the mental health and wellbeing of its employees and national teams.

This work includes the introduction of a platform housing guidance and access to specialist support and campaigns, as well as sharing content on a weekly basis, centred on how people can individually and collectively prioritise mental health and wellbeing. Mandatory training and education programmes are being delivered for employees, and for those representing England's national teams, The FA has embedded a comprehensive network of support to ensure everybody can access specialist mental health care. It has also introduced a Mental Health Ambassadors programme, which can be read about in further detail on P18.

Meanwhile, The FA is grateful for the support it receives from Sporting Chance, the sports mental health charity set up by former Arsenal and England captain Tony Adams MBE, to create a culture of openness around mental health and wellbeing across the whole organisation. The charity is central to the FA's support for England teams (Men's, Women's, Para and Development), ensuring that mental health and emotional support services can be accessed by every England player both in and out of camp.

Sporting Chance's support also extends to FA employees, providing professional supervision and one-to-one support for a growing number of employees. Those operating on the front line for major events are also offered a 24-hour helpline, recognising the challenging and high-pressure environment they can find themselves working in. The FA has also worked in collaboration with the charity on the development of a comprehensive e-learning programme containing six online modules that are offered to all employees to expand their awareness and understanding, and help signpost them to action where appropriate.



CASE STUDY



Southampton FC and Premier League

With support from the Premier League and guidance from the charity Sporting Chance, Southampton FC have developed a mental, physical and emotional wellbeing strategy that sits at the very heart of the club.

The strategy, which was introduced at the start of 2021, reinforces Southampton's commitment to supporting positive mental and emotional health from top to bottom - involving all staff, players, community participants and fans.

"It's really important that we have that overview in terms of what's our strategic direction, what's our commitment as a club and that we then articulate that", says Kim Mundy, Southampton's head of safeguarding and governance.

"The strategy was done in collaboration with every part of the club; football, Saints Foundation, HR, legal... everyone has an input so it's really fit for purpose."

The wide-ranging strategy includes support, training and raising awareness, as well as providing 20 trained mental health first aiders in various departments who act as a point of contact for anyone who is struggling with their mental health.

Kim believes that Premier League rules on mental and emotional wellbeing support for players is key to the accelerated work in this space. "The Premier League is

holding us to account and saying this is a really important area and you need to focus on it."

Tim Greenwell is Southampton's Board member for mental and emotional wellbeing, responsible for championing positive approaches and joining up areas of work across the club to support a collaborative response to mental and emotional wellbeing. Having clear leadership from the top is really important to making club-wide changes.

There is also a working group that includes all parts of the club, as well as representatives from the NHS and Sporting Chance, that ensures the club is aligned to key partners and helps to build engagement across departments as well as determining strategies, training needs and awareness campaigns.

"We can talk about the strategy which is our top-level commitment as a club, but if we're not living and breathing those values day to day, that strategy doesn't mean anything," Kim says. "So, trying to make it practical and relevant to every part of the club is key for us."

The Premier League gives us the opportunity to share good practice across the League and that's really important. I really like the fact that the clubs are not competitive, we might be on the pitch, but certainly not in this space. It's around making sure everyone's safe and well and knows where they can get support."



SECTION 02

Make awareness-raising, training, education and guidance available to all football clubs

League Managers Association (LMA)

The LMA's Wellness programme offers members and their families access to a full range of both physical and mental wellbeing assessments and services focused on both prevention and treatment. The programme is backed by a Medical Advisory Committee, which brings together a diverse team of eminent health professionals to guide and shape the bespoke services delivered at leading healthcare facilities across the country.

The LMA's 24/7 mental and emotional wellbeing programme is guided by our two in-house consultant psychiatrists, and supported by a team of clinical psychologists, who are available to provide confidential mental wellbeing advice and support by telephone and video call. The team also plays a pivotal role in expanding the LMA's wellbeing education programmes, including contributing to a range of new wellbeing resources, wellness events and online informational sessions.

Shining a light on suicide

The LMA recently launched a new partnership with the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, which aims to raise awareness of, and help prevent, suicide.

The partnership is designed to support the Shining a Light on Suicide campaign, run by Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership. The campaign aims to change how people feel about using the word 'suicide', so that everyone can comfortably and confidently start open and honest conversations about suicide and suicidal feelings.

In the first phase, the new partnership engaged a number of LMA members who have current or former connections - as a manager or player - to clubs in Greater Manchester, enabling them to use their influence to highlight that we all have a role to play in supporting those around us.

Phase two of the project was launched in conjunction with Mental Health Awareness Week 2022.

Suicide is the biggest killer of men under the age of 49, and of women aged 20 to 34. More than 200 people a year die by suicide in Greater Manchester alone, and research has shown that up to 135 people are affected by each death. Whilst many campaigns encourage people to talk about mental health and wellbeing, there is often little or no direct mention of suicide.



The LMA's high-profile partnership aims to address that. Research has shown that using the word 'suicide' allows other people to recognise it's OK to talk about suicidal feelings, and that the person asking is there to listen.

As part of our partnership, members of the LMA are given the opportunity to become 'suicide aware' by taking part in a 20-minute Zero Suicide Alliance training course, which is also available for free to the public through the Shining a Light on Suicide website.

The course trains all of us to recognise the signs that demonstrate someone may be thinking about suicide, and to understand where to get help.

When launching phase one of the partnership, Mayor Andy Burnham said: "Suicide is the biggest killer of younger men and women, yet it is a subject which we all find it very hard to speak about. The Shining a Light on Suicide campaign is a groundbreaking effort to save lives by breaking this taboo, and it is an enormous boost for the campaign that the League Managers Association and its members are throwing their weight behind it. Recent months and years have brought dark and difficult times for many people, and we know there is a growing mental health crisis. But we also know that people have been looking out for each other more, and that gives us something to build on. Just having a little bit of knowledge about suicide, and the confidence to speak about it in the right way, can help to save a life."

“Football managers have got so much to offer to this much-needed campaign and I am deeply grateful to them for having the courage to take it on. They are often great communicators; they are experts in reading what people are thinking, and finding a way of getting through to them. They are no strangers to high-pressure environments and coping with the ups and downs of life. I believe the brave decision of the League Managers Association to back Greater Manchester’s Shining a Light on Suicide campaign could be a game-changer in the national conversation about one of the country’s biggest killers.”

LMA Chief Executive, Richard Bevan, said: “The LMA is proud to be raising awareness of the Shining a Light on Suicide campaign.

“Football managers can have such a positive impact on raising awareness of important issues within society. It is crucial to communicate and help break down the barriers to talking openly about suicide, suicidal thoughts and suicide bereavement so that people feel able to request help when they need it most.

“A host of LMA members, with connections to Greater Manchester, have previously supported this partnership, and a further group of members were keen to support the national rollout of the campaign.”

During the campaign launch, former Manchester City manager and Manchester United forward, Mark Hughes OBE, said: “With my strong connections to both Manchester United and Manchester City, as a player and then a manager, I feel honoured to be supporting the launch of this outstanding partnership on behalf of the LMA’s members.

“Whilst it may not be an easy subject to talk about, it’s important to be direct if you’re concerned about someone. You don’t have to be a healthcare professional to help or even be close to the person, you just need to listen.”

“Together we can all work to encourage openness and honesty, which will ultimately empower everyone to play a part in preventing suicide.”

LMA Board member, Sir Alex Ferguson CBE, added: “The Shining a Light on Suicide campaign is so important and I am pleased, as an LMA Board member, to see the LMA partner with Mayor Andy Burnham to support this vital project.

“It’s essential that the topic of suicide is spoken about openly and we can all play a part in making this happen. The more we talk about suicide, the easier it is to ask someone if they’re having suicidal thoughts. Talking really could help to save a life.

“I am proud that so many LMA members have given their backing to the campaign.”

Chair of Greater Manchester Suicide Prevention Programme Board, Judd Skelton, said: “The Shining a Light on Suicide campaign encourages people to talk openly about suicide, which is crucial to break the stigma and give people the opportunity to open up about suicidal thoughts.

“By offering LMA members the opportunity to take part in Zero Suicide Alliance’s suicide awareness training, we are empowering football managers to take an active role in suicide prevention.

“The campaign is also an important reminder of the role we all play in raising awareness and preventing suicide. I urge everyone to take part in the 20-minute online Learn to Save a Life training, which is available to all. It gives you the skills and confidence to talk about suicide and really could help you save a life.”

To highlight the nationwide launch of the project, the LMA has produced a series of films which feature a number of LMA members, including LMA President Gareth Southgate and Mayor Andy Burnham. The films explore the following topics:

- **The importance, and benefits, of talking when you are struggling**
- **Keeping an eye out and checking in with people, as well as directly asking about suicide**
- **Using the right language if you are worried about someone**
- **Completing the Zero Suicide Alliance training to boost your confidence in talking about suicide, and to give you the skills you need to help play a role in saving lives.**

This second phase includes signposting to relevant national organisations and associated helplines.

Following phase one of the partnership launch, traffic to the Learn to Save a Life training page on the [Shining a Light on Suicide](#) website increased by 367%

Professional Footballers Association (PFA)

As the players' union, the PFA has always supported current and retired footballers with mental health problems, but players still had limited access to emotional and wellbeing support. To remedy this, the PFA created a dedicated Wellbeing department in 2011 and appointed Dr Michael Bennett as Director of Player Welfare. A retired professional footballer, Michael retrained as a counsellor and psychotherapist after leaving the game. He had been helping professionals from across the sporting world improve their wellbeing before joining the PFA.

A decade later, the current PFA Wellbeing department offers a range of mental health, wellbeing and emotional support services to current and former professional footballers. It has played a key role in shaping the mental health landscape in football and the wider field sporting world. This includes working directly with PFA members and former players facing wellbeing challenges, as well as industry-wide initiatives such as the PFA's annual Injured conference, which focuses on a different aspect of mental health each year.

Having supported the clinic's creation in 2000, the PFA partnered with Sporting Chance in 2012 to establish a national network of therapists, counsellors and psychiatrists to support members in need. The Sporting Chance clinic remains the only residential facility in the world that treats addiction in professional athletes, and is a vital resource for PFA members working through substance misuse and gambling issues.

To date, the national network includes more than 240 counsellors, some of whom are former professional sportspeople that understand the emotional rollercoaster PFA members might be experiencing. The therapists have a unique insight on elite sport, which helps them relate to players' challenges. They can draw from their own experiences, as well as their clinical training to support PFA members.



Just a year after creating the counselling network, the PFA implemented a 24/7 helpline so members could access free, confidential emotional support whenever they needed to. The line is answered 365 days a year so that any current, and former, players in crisis will be able to access immediate support.

PFA members who call the line will have an initial conversation with a member of the triage team, who will discuss their presenting issue, decide on the support required, and then place the member with an appropriate therapist. The helpline number is distributed to all clubs, players and club staff, and regularly promoted on the PFA website, social media channels and other communication touchpoints.

The wellbeing team also deliver thought-provoking workshops to first team and academy players at Premier League, Women's Super League and English Football League clubs. The workshops focus on what emotional and mental health looks like in a football-specific context. During each 40-minute presentation, players learn about the myriad of challenges they could face in modern-day professional football. They also learn how, as members of the oldest sportspeople's union in the world, they are entitled to tailored wellbeing support for the rest of their lives.

Each interactive session explores how individual personal characteristics can impact wellbeing. Participants are encouraged to identify the pressures and problems they have experienced within the industry and everyday life. The groups also discuss how to maintain positive wellbeing, industry- and personal-related hazards, and how positive attitudes, considered decision-making and support from the PFA can help negate the impact of common issues.

At the end of each workshop, players are asked to complete a questionnaire so the team can continue improving PFA wellbeing services in line with members' needs. They also receive a full rundown of the services provided by the PFA Wellbeing department, and information about how to access other union services they may find beneficial. Managers, coaches and club staff are always invited to take part in these workshops too, to ensure players are surrounded by teams that understand how to recognise mental health issues and, more importantly, how to support players properly.

Michael and the PFA Wellbeing department work tirelessly to elevate the profile of mental health and wellbeing in football, and the wider sports arena, and constantly update services to better support players. In recent years this has included launching a survivor-led support service for anyone who has suffered abuse in football with the FA, establishing an additional 24-hour helpline number that solely deals with online abuse, and specialist training to understand the wellbeing needs of PFA members from the LGBTQ+ community.

Speaking about his plans for the PFA Wellbeing department, Michael said:

"We've been to around 35 clubs so far this season, engaged with more than 1,000 players and conducted 650 detailed individual player wellbeing assessments, resulting in hundreds of interventions, including direct clinical wellbeing support. We aim to continue expanding and developing the support we provide to reduce the stigma around football and mental health, and ensure all current and former professional footballers know, no matter what they're going through, they can always count on support from the PFA."



CASE STUDY



Scottish FA — Online Learning

The Scottish FA has launched a Mental Health Coach Education online module that will be available to all coaches, volunteers and administrators within the game.

The module, which has been created by Hampden Sports Clinic in conjunction with Breathing Space, will take the form of an online educational course.

The Scottish FA has become the first of the home nations to create its own bespoke course which is an educational tool for all coaches, in order to help them understand the importance of mental health, along with advice on how to deal with the issue effectively.

The module is expected to educate more than 10,000 people across the game, per year.

Mental health problems affect 25% of adults in Scotland each year, and are something that 10% of teenagers across the country are currently living with.

This is the latest Scottish FA initiative put in place to help raise awareness of those living with mental health problems.

Dr Katy Stewart, from Hampden Sports Clinic, said: "In our society, there is still a stigma surrounding mental health.

There is often a fear around talking about mental health and how we feel.

"The main aim of this module is to equip people with the tools and techniques to effectively support their players and fellow coaches.

"We are delighted to work with the Scottish FA and Breathing Space in this pioneering initiative, and look forward to educating coaches in Scotland about mental health for years to come."

Greig Paterson, Scottish FA's Head of Coach Education and Development, said: "We are passionate about ensuring our coaches are as well-equipped as possible to continue their coaching journey once they have undergone their courses, and we want them to be as well-rounded as possible.

Integrating the mental health online module will add another string to the bow and help coaches and volunteers in the game gain more understanding about the importance of mental health within our society, especially in football."



CASE STUDY



Whoever you support, we support you.



The EFL — Mental Health First Aid Training

As part of our safeguarding training needs analysis with all 72 member clubs, it was clear that not only did very few Safeguarding Officers hold any form of mental health training, but also that this was something that they very much desired.

Safeguarding Officers often find themselves not only dealing with a safeguarding incident or disclosure, but also an individual whose mental health has been affected by the trauma/harm they have experienced. It is possible that a person in distress may disclose thoughts of suicide, or a plan for suicide, and therefore Safeguarding Officers need to have the confidence and relevant skills to deal with the situation.

The cost of completing the Mental Health First Aid Adult and Youth course can be prohibitive for some of our smaller clubs. Therefore it was decided that the EFL safeguarding team would train as Mental Health First Aid Instructors, and deliver free of charge throughout the organisation.

Course outline:

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an internationally recognised training course which teaches people how to spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill health, and provide help on a first aid basis.

Research and evaluation shows that taking part in an MHFA England course:

- raises awareness and mental health literacy
- reduces stigma around mental ill health
- boosts knowledge and confidence in dealing with mental health problems
- promotes early intervention which enables recovery.

Delivery:

Our priority for the 2021/22 season is for Safeguarding Officers to complete the training. Places have also been offered to Inclusion Leads and HR staff within clubs.

As of February 2022, 56 individuals have received training, and a further 75 are booked onto a course due to be delivered by the end of the football season in June 2022.

We will then look to widen the network of staff the course is available to, ensuring that all clubs have at the very least one Adult Mental Health First Aider and one Youth Mental Health First Aider.

Participant feedback:

- 01 “The course has been well received. Delegates are stating that upon completion they feel more confident on the subject of mental health, more assured to deal with any future mental health illness within their child or adult engagements, and that the course will help on wider club initiatives of reducing the stigma associated with mental ill health.”
- 02 “Course was informative and I learned a lot. Will encourage others in the workplace to complete it.”
- 03 “Excellent course, will recommend to my colleagues when I return to the club. Alex presented the course really well, and made it so we could understand. Participation was very good, getting us all involved.”

Questions asked (out of 10):

Confidence — before 5.33 after 8.30

Knowledge — before 6.20 after 8.50

Lead instructor rating — 9.25

Likelihood of recommending the course — 9.10



SECTION

03

Embed mental health within our
existing policies and practices

The Football Association (FA)

The FA is committed to ensuring that employees are able to experience positive mental health and wellbeing. As part of this commitment, the FA has recruited 27 individuals from across the organisation to become Mental Health Ambassadors in the first of an annual programme.

A Mental Health Ambassador is someone who proactively advocates for mental health in their department and their working environment. They are trained in how to promote positive mental health and wellbeing to their fellow colleagues, have supportive conversations, and signpost towards help when needed.

Supported by the FA's Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager, ambassadors may open up opportunities to connect with people across the organisation and talk about mental health. They may also share stories, promote internal wellbeing initiatives, and gather feedback on the content of materials.

Ultimately, ambassadors have the opportunity to help drive increased awareness, openness and supportive conversations about mental health for employees based at Wembley, St George's Park, or those who work remotely. Ambassadors play an important role in maintaining the wellbeing of the FA community, ensuring the organisation continues to build a culture which prioritises mental health just as much as physical health.

As part of their training in collaboration with Changing Minds, ambassadors attended a three-day workshop which helped to develop their knowledge, skills, and confidence in supporting mental health and wellbeing.

- **Day 1** looked at developing core knowledge, mental health awareness and human development
- **Day 2** focused on skills development, people and relationship skills and self-care
- **Day 3** was based on applying knowledge and skills to everyday interactions, understanding people's stories, appropriately responding to crisis, and considering the role in practice.

On completing the training, the community of ambassadors continue their development through monthly reflective practice sessions and regular communication with the FA's Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager. These sessions enable them to come together, reflect, learn, and receive support from supervisors on their experiences.



Dr Jenn Gandhi, the FA's Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager, said: "This programme demonstrates our commitment to prioritising mental health across the organisation. This is not a subject that is hidden away within the corridors of Wembley, St George's Park or for our home workers – we are building a culture and environment where employees feel comfortable to seek additional care. Our community of 27 ambassadors represent all areas of the business and are important advocates in this driving change. They're there to listen, to talk and to sign-post those who might be struggling. Support will come in many forms, but it is there for anyone who needs it."

Mark Foote, FA Mental Health Ambassador, said: "We're all human, people need support. We all have stresses we bring into work and vice versa. I'm hoping that the Mental Health Ambassador programme will mean more people feel confident that they can share their problems, and they are not alone or isolated. To my colleagues at the FA, I say 'reach out'. You're working for an organisation that wants you to come forward and wants to support you."



The Football Association of Wales (FAW)

The FAW continues to work on embedding a mentally healthy culture throughout Welsh football through the development of its own mental health strategy and action plan. The FAW has utilised the power of football to create awareness-raising campaigns on mental health that aim to engage with the whole of the Welsh football family.

Through video campaigns and educational content, the FAW aims to create an inclusive environment across the game where everyone can feel comfortable to share when they are struggling – and know how they can seek further support.

The FAW recognises the power and platform of not only the game, but that of its international and domestic players and managers. Their genuine support of the need to encourage conversation on mental health has proven incredibly impactful across the Welsh football family, as they serve as role models and a voice for positive change.

With the hope of further highlighting the importance of mental health awareness – and removing the stigma that surrounds it – the FAW teamed up with its official water supplier, Princes Gate Mineral Water, to release a video titled 'Don't Bottle It Up' in support of their charity partner YoungMinds.

The campaign video, which details how it takes strength and courage to seek help and admit that you are struggling, features players from the Cymru senior women's and men's teams. These include: Dan James, Natasha Harding, Ben Davies, Hayley Ladd and Ceri Holland, in addition to U12 players and walking footballers from Barry Town United AFC. This selection of players across different age groups were chosen to highlight how anyone can be affected by poor mental health, no matter your age or gender.

Barry Town United AFC are one of ten football clubs across Wales who deliver the FAW's 'We Wear the Same Shirt' (WWtSS) programme. This programme utilises football to both highlight the prevalence of mental health issues among young adults, as well as offer those who may be suffering the chance to exercise and socialise together in a safe and welcoming environment.

It is important for the FAW that the association looks to destigmatise mental health problems where possible. This includes utilising Cymru Manager Robert Page to share messaging detailing that it is 'OK not to be OK' and that



'having anxiety or depression does not make you broken, and it certainly does not make you weak' in a #FeelWellPlayWell campaign video.

The FAW joined UEFA for the #FeelWellPlayWell campaign which raised awareness of the physical and mental health benefits of playing football, and the importance of supporting young people's health, both on and off the pitch. In the video, the Cymru Manager reiterates how our mental health needs to be looked after just like our physical health.

Educating people on why mental health is as important as physical health is of the upmost importance to the FAW. The FAW Trust partnered with the Gwent Community Psychology Team to develop a series of interactive webinars for coaches. These were designed to help the Welsh grassroots football family better connect with their young players, to further understand their mental health and how they could best support them. Thus far, over 400 members of the grassroots Welsh football coaching family have accessed the webinars since they were posted.

Through communication and educational campaigns, the FAW want to reinforce the power of people checking in and ultimately talking about their feelings unashamedly with their teammates, coaches or fellow volunteers across the football family.

The FAW's motto reads: 'Gorau Chwarae Cyd Chwarae'. This, in effect, translates to 'team play is the best play' – and it is by supporting others and working together across the Welsh football family that the wellbeing of those involved will be made stronger.





Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL)

PGMOL has assembled a team to consistently raise awareness and support fellow colleagues around mental health and wellbeing across the organisation.

Following the successful completion of Mental Health First Aid courses last year, a group of volunteers formed the inaugural Mental Health Champion (MHC) group. Members of this group have the knowledge to advocate for positive mental health and the ability to recognise when someone may need support.

The MHC scheme was developed following consultation with mental health charity Mind, and forms a key part of our broader mental health and wellbeing strategy.

The scheme was launched in December 2021 after 30 MHCs passed a further introductory learning module and an induction meeting.

The group is comprised of individuals from all areas of the organisation: Select Group 1, Select Group 2, National Group, Step 1, the Women's Select Group and Observers.

To aid with their own development, all MHCs can access support from PGMOL's two Chartered Psychologists, who will also lead an end-of-season review and planning event with the group.

There is also a dedicated section on the PGMOL intranet page which contains contact details for all the MHCs and an extensive list of additional resources around mental health and wellbeing.

Paul Russell, PGMOL's Head of Psychology, said:

"Through this scheme, we are able to offer a completely confidential and supportive environment for our people to speak to the MHC team if they have any questions about mental health and wellbeing.

They will be able to support with anything needed in this area, including signposting to further relevant resources as and when necessary. We are committed to promoting a greater understanding of mental health and providing a mentally healthy workplace where everybody has the opportunity to thrive. The intention is to expand our MHC scheme throughout 2022 by recruiting and training additional volunteers."





Ammanford AFC — The Football Association of Wales

Officials from the Welsh football club Ammanford AFC, who play in the JD Cymru South, set up the charity the Jac Lewis Foundation following the sudden death of one of their players. Through the grief suffered by those at Ammanford came a determination to work together to prevent losing another member of the community to suicide.

In doing so, the Jac Lewis Foundation has since gone on to deliver over a thousand free counselling sessions to the local community. It has also worked in collaboration with Swansea City Football Club to set up the first football mental health hub at the Swansea.com stadium.

Liz Thomas-Evans, Director of Services at the Jac Lewis Foundation, said: "The opportunity to play sport is hugely important to mental health and wellbeing, from reducing levels of stress and anxiety to the social connections generated by football which reduce feelings of isolation.

Linking football and mental health support enables easy access to counselling services without stigma, which has a hugely positive impact on the local community."

Rob Thomas, Ammanford AFC Chairman, added: "As the ascendant sport in the community, we at the club have done a lot of work in engaging youngsters through football, including highlighting physical wellbeing benefits from an early age that tie in with our work with the Jac Lewis Foundation on mental health and wellbeing."



CASE STUDY



League Football Education (LFE)

In June 2021, LFE launched a player-centred initiative called the Alumni Player Voice. This provided a safe and confidential space for past apprentices to talk about experiences, mental health and wellbeing, best practices, and areas for development regarding the transition support provided by clubs and wider organisations. The online forums have initiated interesting discussions and provided LFE with valuable feedback on areas for improvement.

Former Charlton Athletic apprentice and England Youth international Tobi Sho Silva has attended all of the Alumni Player Voice sessions, and spoken about the impact it can have on developing a better experience for young footballers. Tobi said: "I have been involved in all the Alumni Player Voice sessions since its launch and I have thoroughly enjoyed them. The initiative provides a space to share first-hand experiences, good or bad, and will hopefully bring about positive change for the next generation of players coming through.

"I have found that there is a wide range of facilitated discussions on different topics which have an impact on the life of an apprentice. The topics vary from support during and after the apprenticeship, to discussions around the involvement of parents/guardians and best methods of engaging apprentices. The feedback from attendees and the proposed solutions of the feedback have been diverse, insightful and very practical.

"I think one of the most important aspects is that we are discussing our experiences openly, as it brings about awareness and a sense of togetherness from those who have previously walked the road that young players are currently on. This will benefit the next generation of young players as it is personal, which creates authenticity and relatability in response to current needs and allows an opportunity to discover solutions to the issues that young players might be facing.

"If this forum existed when I was a young player, I feel it would have given me insight from a variety of perspectives on how to better handle situations that I was experiencing at the time – or even those which I had not yet experienced."

Tobi, who plays as a striker for Carlisle United in League Two, is currently studying for a counselling qualification. He has also become a mentor to young players – this role sees him support LFE's wider Personal Development and Life Skills programmes.

He added: "The mentoring work that I am doing for LFE supports the development of life skills, which aims to equip young footballers with the knowledge to succeed both in and outside of football, from a relatable standpoint as I am still a current player. I am enthusiastic about this, especially whilst I am playing, as I am able to relay a vital message in a different voice, which may hit home in a different way simply because it is coming from a current player."

SECTION 04

Support clubs and organisation to grow a mental health culture through the provision of guidance and resources (Grassroots)

Irish Football Association

Ahead of the Game (AOTG) is the Irish FA's bespoke mental health programme for football clubs. It was established in 2017 and provides a toolkit of resources for clubs, which were developed in partnership with Tackling Awareness of Mental Health Issues (TAMHI), Inspire, Train 2B Smart Soccer, and Sports Chaplaincy UK. The toolkit then formed the basis of an AOTG workshop for clubs, in which a number of pilot deliveries took place at the end of 2018.

The course aims to support clubs and volunteers when dealing with mental health issues, challenging the stigma around mental health, promoting positive mental health and preventative measures. The AOTG programme focuses on the area and importance of starting the conversation around mental health.

AOTG has seen considerable success and participation from clubs in Northern Ireland. In 2019, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge got an opportunity to hear about the impact of the programme from clubs who attended the workshop, and have since promoted mental health awareness to their club and local community.

Since the beginning of 2019:

128 football clubs have attended the workshop

56 AOTG workshops have been delivered

Over 800 club members have participated



Many of the clubs involved have continued to raise awareness of mental health off the back of the AOTG delivery, and feedback from clubs has been positive. A wonderful example of a club that has developed greater mental health awareness for its members and local community is Ards Rangers. In June 2020, they set up a mental health team in the club to support the needs of their football community and beyond. 'The Good to Talk Team' is a group of volunteers who are available to chat and signpost those who need support, guidance and friendship. Ards Rangers has been a beneficiary of the AOTG workshop, and their initiative has been complemented by the resources provided through the AOTG toolkit.

The AOTG programme is developing further in 2022. Initially, the focus has been on helping football clubs' volunteers and coaches to feel equipped to start a conversation about mental health. From consultation with a number of clubs and other relevant stakeholders, the Irish FA is now working with TAMHI and Inspire to develop content for a youth Ahead of the Game workshop. This will be mainly aimed at young people aged 11-18, with a number of optional topics complemented by online resources for delivery that clubs and community groups can select.

The topics include:

- **Exam pressures and changing schools**
- **Resilience / Coping with grief**
- **Coping with anxiety**
- **Body image**
- **Bullying**
- **Sleep**
- **Gambling awareness**
- **Nutrition**





The spike of interest resulting from the AOTG programme has resulted in a nationwide search for Mental Health Champions, led by the Irish FA and backed by the CEO and President. The original call was for 13 volunteers, but due to the interest and impressive applications, 23 volunteers have been recently offered the opportunity to be Mental Health Champions. They will undergo mental health training to serve as a valuable link to clubs and local communities in their council areas across Northern Ireland. They will also assist on the delivery of the AOTG workshops to raise further awareness of the importance of good mental health and wellbeing in football.

"Ahead of the Game (AOTG) has been a fantastic strategy that has allowed our club to start conversations about mental health. From our senior men and ladies right down to our youngest U6 players, everyone at the club understands the importance of talking about their mental health. With the AOTG toolkit, we have been able to use the resources to provide more information and support, as well as create an environment where our members feel safe and able to share their worries. AOTG allows all sports clubs throughout the country to join together with one common goal: to remove the stigma surrounding mental health and to ensure nobody suffers in silence."

Ballynahinch United Youth FC

"The Irish FA's AOTG programme has helped us engage with our club and community by breaking down the stigma surrounding mental health, helping us signpost those in need of help, and raising awareness of mental health issues. It is a great tool for everyone in football."

Ards Rangers FC

"The AOTG course is excellent for making coaches and players aware of how they can have a positive impact on those around them by noticing the signs of poor mental health, and how they can act on this. It does so in a straightforward, easy-to-understand way, so that everyone can feel comfortable broaching the subject of mental health with their players and teammates. AOTG makes clubs more open to discuss their mental health and to encourage others to open up about their struggles. It is an excellent standalone programme, but it can be the start of a much more progressive and effective journey for clubs in supporting and promoting positive mental health."

22nd Old Boys FC



National League System — Sevenoaks Town

Mental health initiatives are being driven across the breadth of football's pyramid. This desire to drive societal change is brilliantly demonstrated by the Isthmian League's Sevenoaks Town, which sit in Step 4 of the National League System.

The Kent club has launched an initiative to support the mental health and wellbeing of its local community, and demonstrate the vital role football can play in helping people escape from their troubles.

The socially-conscious club launched their Friday night 'Wellbeing Football Sessions' in February 2022.

The mixed gender, free-of-charge sessions offer the chance for those in the community to come to the club, connect with others, enjoy physical activity and participate in relaxed and fun 5-a-side games – and then gather in the club house afterwards.

Open to all, the weekly sessions give a chance for people to switch off from the stresses of life, socialise, talk about how they might be feeling without judgement or agenda, and to enjoy all the mental health benefits of physical activity.

The sessions are being driven by the club's Chairman Paul Lansdale, who was inspired to help the community after his son suffered from poor mental health. The initiative is underpinned by the Sevenoaks Social Prescribing Links, supported by club volunteers and Kent County FA.

The initiative is still in its infancy, with the club willing to expand its commitment to helping others in the community where required.

Paul Lansdale, Sevenoaks Town FC Chairman, said: "More than ever, we've seen a greater number of people within the club flagging that they don't feel great, and we can see the real benefits that football can have in improving their wellbeing.

We can all run local mainstream football teams, but actually there's a lot of people who want to play sport just to help during a bad week, month or day. We see these sessions as an opportunity where they can come together, no questions asked. If we can help one person, then we've succeeded."





Draperstown Celtic FC

Draperstown Celtic are an amateur football club based in the village of Draperstown in Northern Ireland.

Founded in 1968, they currently have both male and female senior and junior teams playing in amateur leagues. Whilst the village of Draperstown only has a population of approximately 2,000, the impact of the football club has been seen across Northern Ireland.

Draperstown Celtic were named Club of the Year at the McDonald's Irish FA Grassroots Awards in 2020. They continue to grow their community impact, using football as a vehicle to promote better mental health awareness and wellbeing.

The club hosted an Ahead of the Game workshop run by Irish FA Foundation partners Tackling Awareness of Mental Health Issues (TAMHI) – and subsequently created a partnership with the mental health charity. The workshop provided the club with ideas that they could incorporate, and also gave them some great practical advice on what to do if someone approached them with a mental health query.

As a result of the workshop and the partnership, there is now more of a willingness in the club to talk about mental health, especially among the men, according to club chairman Paul McCallion.

He said: “The members know that we might not have all the answers, but we will do our best for them to find the right help. Most of all, they know they are not alone and the club will support them as best we can.”

With TAMHI's work spreading right across Northern Ireland, Draperstown Celtic wanted another mental health partner on a more local level that they could support and promote through the club for their members and local community.

This led to them developing a partnership with the charity S.T.E.P.S. Mental Health (Suicide. Talking. Educating. Prevention. Support.). They now liaise with S.T.E.P.S. Mental Health on a variety of different topics and look to promote them within the club.

The partnership started through the club identifying the limited funding support that the mental health charity was receiving. They then decided to fundraise for the charity through club events.

From there, S.T.E.P.S. Mental Health began to run awareness training in the club around suicide and mental health. The partnership has since been formalised, and the club continues to raise awareness for the charity.

Both TAMHI and S.T.E.P.S. Mental Health logos have been placed on the Draperstown Celtic football kits, which helps to highlight the two organisations to other clubs as well.

Most recently, to take the club one step further in support of mental health awareness in football, Paul McCallion has been appointed as one of the Irish FA's Mental Health Champions. Paul will join a team of more than 20 volunteers who will aim to promote and support mental health awareness in football clubs throughout Northern Ireland.

When asked why he wanted to be a Mental Health Champion for the Irish FA, Paul said: “There are probably people with mental health problems in most football clubs, however the stigma around mental health means that often people are not comfortable about talking about it.

“As someone who has had mental health issues, and who is involved in football in several roles, I believe that when someone with experience of mental health problems tells their story it can help challenge stigma around this issue.

“When players have a physical injury the club can arrange treatment for these members, but mental health problems are harder to see. The way that the committee, coaches and teammates behave can make things better or worse, so it is important for clubs and coaches to have an awareness of mental health.

“No-one expects coaches or clubs to be experts in mental health. However, club committees and coaches should at the very least have an idea of where they can direct members who need help.

“The more people we can educate around the impact of poor mental health, the more people can be helped. Many young children look up to and respect coaches – or coaches can sometimes be seen as role models – so these people are a good source of getting the message across.”

CASE STUDY



Newcastle United Foundation

Newcastle United Foundation's Be A Game Changer campaign is encouraging more males in the North East to discuss their mental health.

Supported with funding from the Premier League and PFA, it currently helps more than 800 men look after their physical and mental health through wellbeing activities, including workshops, Walking Football sessions, Over-40s NHS Health Checks, MAN v FAT and the 12th Man programme.

Andrew Cave is one of the men involved in the programme, having sought support after trying to take his own life last year.

Andrew finally opened up to good friend, Thomas Graham, a Health and Wellbeing Project Officer at Newcastle United Foundation, about how he had suppressed negative thoughts and feelings following years of bullying at school, the loss of his grandmother, and the knowledge that his mother had attempted suicide more than once.

"I've always put a brave face on so nobody else would feel the way I did or would even know how I felt," said Andrew.

"I knew Thomas was involved with the Be A Game Changer campaign and that it was about mental health. I play FIFA with him on the PlayStation and we were playing a game and I just blurted it out and told him what happened.

The Be A Game Changer online Facebook community group also looks to bring together like-minded people in a welcoming and compassionate space to share their experiences and advice for maintaining physical and mental wellness.

"To anyone else who feels as low as I did, just get in touch with anyone you can. Even if it's friends, family - look at me, I'm a perfect example. I waited too long and it led to that bad part of my life."

SECTION 05

Support clubs and organisation
to grow a mental health culture
through the provision of guidance
and resources (Professional)

Premier League

Collaborating with clubs and colleagues across football, the Premier League has further embedded mental health and wellbeing into its key policies and practices; aiming to underpin progress and support for clubs, staff, players and coaches (in first teams and academies), as well as to enhance work with fans, in local communities and in schools.

Premier League rules have been introduced requiring clubs to implement a Mental and Emotional Wellbeing Action Plan. These rules include the need for clubs to appoint mental health and emotional wellbeing leads to provide necessary support across the organisation, as well as them being responsible for actively championing related initiatives at Board level.

Other key Premier League frameworks have been updated to embed mental health and wellbeing requirements, including the independently evaluated Premier League Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Standard, which covers a club's culture, policies, and people. Clubs at all levels of the Standard must demonstrate effective leadership, accountability and a commitment to mental health and wellbeing.



The Premier League Charitable Fund, which disseminates central funding to 90+ professional Club Community Organisations (CCOs) across the Premier League, EFL and National League, has also added to its 'Capability Code of Practice' to include mandatory and recommended mental health and wellbeing requirements for these organisations.

A Community Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy and outcomes framework now also complements national Premier League programmes, delivered via these CCOs, in thousands of primary and secondary schools and community venues across England and Wales.



Proactive plans by the League to enhance mental health provision and support have been developed. This includes collaborative work across the professional game with players, managers, coaches, team staff and match officials (devised in consultation with the FA, EFL, PFA, LMA and clubs) on the League's Mental and Emotional Wellbeing strategy. Player advisory groups also help guide approaches to resource and training offers.

Guidance, Resources and Training

A wide offer of resources and guidance helps to support clubs to grow a mental health culture. This begins in club academies, where there is a comprehensive Lifeskills and Personal Development programme available, inclusive of training and services run via delivery partners such as Sporting Chance, If U Care Share and Chasing the Stigma.

Player and staff training, as well as education sessions, are available for all academy age groups (U9-23), plus first team, parents, host families and club staff. Additional webinars, a transition programme, player care staff and Academy Support Managers complement this. Good practice is also shared via club staff networks, which are regularly brought together at conferences, events and meetings e.g. Player Care staff, Academy Managers and Heads of Coaching.

A Premier League Player App for all current players, from scholars to the first team, brings together information from the League and other football stakeholders (including the FA, LMA and PFA). This includes direct access to support lines, signposting and advice on topics ranging from safeguarding and online discriminatory abuse, to mental and emotional wellbeing. Content covers issues such as stress, anxiety, addiction and depression. The Player Helpline, delivered via the PFA and Sporting Chance, is available for all players aged 16+, with further investment allowing confidential counsellor support in multiple languages.

To supplement this, the Premier League has worked alongside Sporting Chance to create a toolkit to support clubs in their aim to become mentally healthy. The toolkit outlines the support available to players and those who work closely with them, including injured players, those who are on loan or who have been released.

The network of 90+ Club Community Organisations supported via the Premier League Charitable Fund have also been increasingly supported to embed mental health and wellbeing in all they do. Hundreds of members of staff now engage each year in online 'spotlight' sessions and training with experts on topics including self-care, self-esteem, resilience and youth/adult mental health first aid.

Mental health and wellbeing has been incorporated as a thematic strand across all major national community programmes. For example, free resources, competitions, and lesson plans have been provided to support teachers and pupils in thousands of primary schools via PLPrimaryStars.com. This has included working with psychologists on curriculum-linked content, and the creation of wellbeing infographics, to encourage discussion on emotions and



feelings in the classroom. Additionally, in secondary schools, the Premier League Inspires education programme challenged young people to use social action to make a difference to the mental health and wellbeing of others in their local communities.

From the outset, the Heads Up campaign saw strong club support and engagement including players, managers and supporters, helping #KickOffAConversation to reduce the stigma associated with mental health. Building on this, the Premier League launched a #Staywell hub during the pandemic, with an initial focus on mental health. Resources were developed for fans and promoted to millions of people via the League's platforms. This encouraged people to get more information on maintaining positive mental health with tips and advice from experts and players, as well as links to NHS resources and Public Health England's Every Mind Matters campaign.

An 'Inside Matters' video series was also launched featuring interviews with players and managers such as Alan Shearer, Les Ferdinand, Roy Hodgson and Sadio Mane who opened up about challenges in their career, advice and simple things they found beneficial for a positive state of mind, as well as what they have done to help those around them.

Since then, the Staywell Hub continues to evolve to include further information on club activity in this space, and signpost to support that is available.

Head to www.premierleague.com/stay-well for more information

League Football Education (LFE)

LFE was established in 2004 by the EFL and the PFA, and is responsible for the education and welfare of EFL academy players.

LFE provides a range of personal development programmes for U18 academy players, delivered by an assigned Personal Development Mentor (PDM) with mentoring and lived experience. There is further training available for wider support staff, which includes face-to-face and online workshops, as well as Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training.

The objective of the personal development programme is to proactively support wellbeing, performance and transition experiences for academy players. It is understood that academy players develop an athletic identity, and whilst having a strong self-awareness of this is important, finding the right balance ensures there is not an overcommitment to the

role of an athlete. This directly affects mental health, emotions and motivations – and these are subjects addressed at various points throughout the academy journey i.e. induction and online modules, life skills workshops and individual progress reviews.

Through LFE's Personal Development Mentoring programme, academy players are encouraged to consider who they are, both inside and outside of football, as a whole person. The programme aims to provide a clearer understanding of why, how and what can be achieved through personal development. There is a blended learning approach of one-to-one support, group discussion, practical activities, self-reflection, a personal workbook, and interactive resources.

Workshop

Features

1 Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor journey • Challenges in football and life
2 Personal Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to wellbeing, performance and transition • Inspirational examples
3 Self-Awareness & Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflection • Characteristics and skills
4 Personal Development Plan (PDP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interests and opportunities • Support and signposting • Goal setting
5 Masterclasses and PDP Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence • Discipline • Focus • Leadership • Motivation • Resilience • Respect • Social competence • Teamwork

Feedback:

Has your wellbeing improved as a result of this programme?
100% (Yes)

Has your ability to cope with transitions and challenges
improved as a result of this programme? 100% (Yes)

“Personal development means being able to grow yourself
not only as an athlete but as an individual in society. You
must be a human that plays football and not a footballer that
happens to be a human.” (Leyton Orient, U18)

“Learning new things and improving different aspects of
important things in life has made me more confident, and has
increased my wellbeing.” (Mansfield Town, U18)

“It’s made me think a lot differently by looking at obstacles
and challenges more positively – and to look at ways to
overcome them.” (Fleetwood Town, U18)

“I have learned about developing skills to take into everyday
life and about seeing myself in a stable, happy and healthy
lifestyle.” (Notts County, U18)

“It’s helped me reflect and understand the different types of
emotions I feel. I have also improved my personality traits
too.” (Mansfield Town, U18)



Women's Professional Game

Player welfare and wellbeing is very much a strategic priority within the women's game, ensuring a player is prepared for the challenges of life in or out of the game.

The Barclays FA Women's Super League (WSL) Academies form an important part of the work to ensure that young players are equipped with the necessary tools and information to support their careers.

Working with 16-18 year olds looking for a pathway into the senior game, the Academy programme has a dual career approach, which balances equally a female player's football development and their academic, vocational or work-based aspirations.



So what does that work look like?

The FA has instructed all senior Barclays FA WSL clubs to develop a player care strategy, including mental health support and referral pathways, which are present within each WSL academy and senior team set up. This isn't just for players, but is also for staff.

All academies are also encouraged to take up an offer for the 'If U Care Share Foundation' to deliver three sessions to players, one to parents and one to staff annually. The charity provides workshops that address the effects of emotional and mental health issues, while discussing the importance of remaining mentally well. This season all academies engaged with this support, with follow-up sessions offered where required.

The FA also has a purposeful relationship with Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS), which provide a self-referral mechanism supported by 'Care First'. All academies also benefit from TASS-qualified Lifestyle Support Practitioners who support players in defining and managing the multiple different layers of football, education and personal endeavours.

Very much aligned to this work is the DiSE Player Care programme, offered through Loughborough College, which features multiple agencies such as Stonewall, Chasing the Stigma and Sporting Chance. This programme addresses some key factors that often impact mental health. Combined with the psychological provision from TASS, it provides a significant resource for players.

Finally, this will be the first season to feature a themed Cup Finals Days, which will put mental health at the heart of major academy events. This year will see the Player of the Match in the Academy Cup Final awarded for the first time with the Zoe Tynan Medal.

Zoe was a young player at Fylde, and formerly of Manchester City, who tragically took her own life at 18 years old.

CASE STUDY



Manchester United — Barclays FA Women's Super League

Manchester United are taking the approach that your time in their academy will be celebrated, regardless of the outcome when you 'graduate'.

All players are considered graduates, with every player's next step celebrated equally, whether that is with the senior first team, or within further education at university. Whatever the next step, they all receive a Manchester United certificate at a 'graduation' celebration, alongside one-to-one support for the next step in their journey. Those whose careers do not continue in the professional game are left with a sense of belonging, and a support network that lives beyond their time at the club.

Tony Fretwell, Manager of Women's Super League Academy, said: "The wellbeing of our academy players is paramount to the FA, and Manchester United have demonstrated that they too see the importance of creating a positive culture within the club.

"Staff aren't just challenged to develop players, they're challenged to develop people, and United have done a tremendous job in equipping their staff to deliver on this challenge.

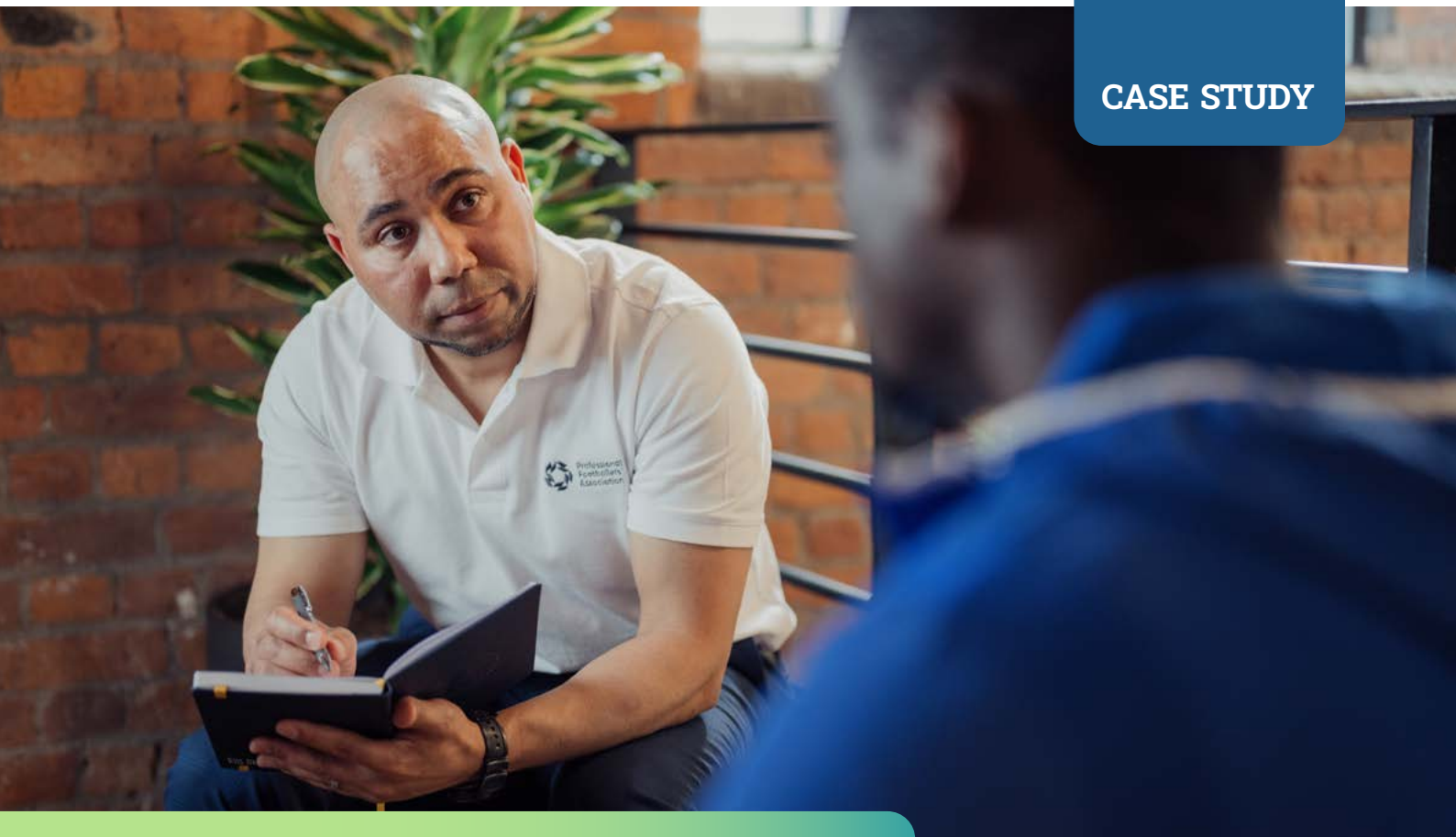
"I have been incredibly impressed with the work the club is carrying out to provide the necessary tools for their young players to thrive on the pitch, but equally, how they are preparing them for life after football – should that be a route they choose to take."

Charlotte Healy, WSL Academy Manager for Manchester United, said: "Here at Manchester United, it's pivotal to every young player's journey that we create an environment and culture that feels supportive and inclusive.

"Being a part of academy football is not easy, and whilst high challenge is important, high support is pivotal. It is vital that we provide our players with surroundings where they can not only excel, but can also learn and understand how to deal with the setbacks that may come in both football and life.

"We're proud of the work we have carried out, and we'll continue to dedicate the time, efforts and necessary resource to ensure we maintain high standards within the work we deliver, so that mental health and wellbeing support for our staff and players remains an underpinning foundation of our programme."

CASE STUDY



Professional Footballers Association — Mental Health At Work

In July 2020, the PFA signed the Heads Up Mentally Healthy Football Declaration alongside governing bodies, leagues and organisations from across football. As part of this commitment, the players' union commissioned Mental Health at Work to develop a programme to help PFA staff better understand how to manage mental health as an organisation. The aim was to improve staff confidence when talking to PFA members about mental health concerns, and to foster best practice guidelines that clubs could replicate.

Throughout August and September 2020, 47 PFA staff members, including all senior management, attended workshops to discuss mental illness, share lived experience and establish the building blocks of 'Understanding Mental Health'. As a result, staff reflected on their own generalisations about mental health and re-affirmed the PFA as a safe

environment, where conversations about mental illness would not be met with stigma or negative repercussions. The team also explored member support, how to facilitate open discussions, and talked about ways to improve their own mental health – something the leadership team said they rarely had time to consider.

Since participating in the workshops, mental health literacy has increased across the organisation, with staff feeling more comfortable discussing mental health in a more personal context, instead of solely focusing on member support. Additionally, the programme helped staff move closer to achieving parity between their approach to mental health issues and how they supported players working through physical injuries.

CASE STUDY



PGMOL — Mental Health Champion Mat Wilkes

Select Group 1 Assistant Referee Mat Wilkes' own journey has emphasised to him just how vital mental health is to everyday life.

Mental health has become increasingly important to the 36-year-old and he is keen to make a positive difference to help others after overcoming some challenges in his life in recent years.

Wilkes has received the all-clear after being diagnosed with Hodgkin Lymphoma in December 2019, to taking on a role as 'Mental Health Champion' and a return to officiating in the Premier League in March.

In his own words, he shares his story...

"How important is mental health? It's everything. Before December 2019, I thought mental health was something in the background, something that people talk about but maybe don't really know or understand what it is."

"Roll on just over two years and now I see it as one of, if not the most important, elements to me! Having been diagnosed with cancer at the end of 2019, I soon realised how mental health impacts everyday life."

"Mental health doesn't just impact you; it impacts your family and friends. During my cancer treatment, I tried to use every tool I had ever learnt from sport to help me get through. Be it goal setting or working hard to get through the next round of treatment."

"On my journey back to the Premier League, I went back to semi-professional football. After Covid and the challenges people have faced, I witnessed first-hand the impact that football has and can have. It's huge. It isn't about the 90 minutes on the pitch, it's about going to the game and socialising in a different environment and enjoying yourself. To see the smiles on people's faces was hugely gratifying to be a part of."

"Why I feel it is the most important element to me is because if I feel happy, or in a mental state which I am happy with, it helps me with my day-to-day activities. Be it dealing with family matters, training or allowing me to focus on making decisions on the pitch - all the little things which add up to help me perform to my best at 3 o'clock!"



PROFESSIONAL GAME
MATCH OFFICIALS



UK football family reaffirms collective commitment to Mentally Healthy Football — May 2022

The UK football family proudly came together to collectively support the Heads Up campaign in 2020, highlighting that mental health is as important as physical health. The campaign acknowledged the role football can play in changing the conversation around mental health and wellbeing, and in helping to raise awareness.

Players, staff, managers, officials and coaches, as well as fans and our wider communities, were encouraged to speak about mental health, helping reduce the stigma that is often associated. This included encouraging people to #KickOffAConversation as a first step to positive mental health, emphasising that it is 'okay to not be okay'.

The subsequent signing of a joint Mentally Healthy Football Declaration underlined mental health and fitness as a key priority for all levels of the game.

Since then, Covid-19 has undoubtedly had a significant long-term impact and placed even greater emphasis on mental health. In such challenging circumstances, the value to wellbeing and role of football in bringing people together was clear, including countless examples of support for those in need during the pandemic.

More than ever, it is essential to maintain a focus on making mental health and fitness a priority within football's agenda, across organisations and affiliated clubs throughout the UK. To mark Mental Health Awareness Week in May 2022, the football bodies and leagues involved have reaffirmed their collective commitment to lead and continue to promote positive change in football, and in society more widely.

Together, the goal of the football family is to keep the conversation on mental health going, to build on work underway, and enhance the positive impact in all parts of football — including, supporting the development of mentally healthy clubs at every level of the game.

Four key principles:

Spot

Building an understanding of mental health to enable people to spot the signs that they, a teammate or colleague might be struggling, and need particular help or support.

Speak

Promoting an environment where people feel more comfortable speaking about their mental health — and where speaking out is seen as a sign of strength, rather than weakness.

Support

Encouraging players and staff to look after and improve their own mental health, and providing them with the tools and support to do so.

Signpost

Knowing where help is available, and making it clear how people can access support both within and outside their organisation.

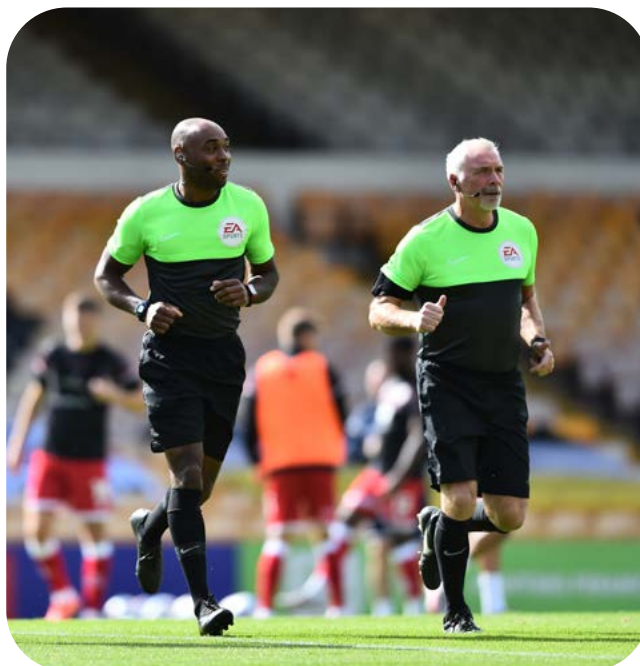
To deliver the above, as a collective, organisations will:

- **Collaborate through a UK-wide Mentally Healthy Football Working Group**

This group will continue to work together to drive progress towards the principles and focus areas highlighted here, and to enable the football family to share best practice.

- **Lead and prioritise mental health strategies across their respective organisations to help create a mentally healthy culture across the whole game**

This will include ongoing review and development of existing strategies and/or action plans.



- **Make awareness-raising, training, education and guidance widely available, including to all clubs**

This includes sharing and widening access to existing and/or new training, education and guidance for staff, players, coaches, officials and managers. Mental health awareness will continue to be promoted as a focus area each year.

- **Embed mental health within their existing policies and practices**

This includes working with the Football Family to include mental health within existing policy frameworks across the UK.

- **Support clubs and organisations to grow a mentally healthy culture through the provision of guidance and resources**

This will include providing guidance, resources and toolkits to support mental fitness for players, as well as staff wellbeing, with clear guidance on where to signpost those needing support.

Football is a team game, and it is recognised that every organisation has a different part to play within it. Each will continue to adopt their own approach, in line with the common principles and commitments identified above.

While much good work is underway, and progress has been made in many areas, it is recognised that there is much more that can be done. Therefore all organisations remain firmly committed to helping make football a mentally healthy environment, now and in the future. It is acknowledged that by working together, that shared vision can be achieved more quickly.



Mentally Healthy Football Signatories



The FA

The FA is the not-for-profit governing body of football in England. It is responsible for promoting and developing every level of the game, from grassroots through to the professional game, and successfully generates enough revenue to support investment of over £120m into English football each year. The FA oversees England international teams across men's, women's, youth and disability football. It also oversees the running of the National League System and FA Competitions, including the Emirates FA Cup and Vitality Women's FA Cup, and the world-class facilities of Wembley Stadium and St. George's Park — all with a purpose to unite the game and inspire the nation.



Scottish FA

The Scottish FA is the governing body for football in Scotland. It is a members' organisation, made up of 113 clubs and nine affiliated regional associations. There are seven affiliated national associations and six recognised leagues.

The Scottish FA is a member of UEFA and FIFA and holds a position on the International Football Association Board (IFAB), the body that determines the Laws of the Game.

The Scottish FA exists to promote, foster and develop the game at all levels in Scotland.

Founded in 1873, Scottish football's governing body has recently undergone the most radical changes in its history, enabling it to lead the game into a new era. The Power of Football: Scottish FA Strategic Plan 2021-25 outlines the vision, mission and values for the Association.

The Plan has six strategic pillars:

- qualify consistently and compete in major tournaments
- accelerate the growth of girls' and women's football
- inspire the nation through lifelong participation
- deliver a world-leading coach education and development system
- modernise the home of Scottish football
- connect Scottish football's diverse communities.





Football Association of Wales (FAW)

The FAW is the third oldest association in the world, having come into existence in 1876. The association has governed football in Wales continually since that date and has a duty to protect, promote and develop football in Wales.

'Gorau Chwarae Cyd Chwarae' (best play is team play) is the inspirational motto of the FAW. Team play is the driving force at the heart of Welsh football and connects all those involved in football in Wales – it unites Welsh players, volunteers, coaches, supporters under a single banner.

The FAW's 2021-2026 strategic plan for Welsh football shares a vision to create a leading football nation, one where the game is inclusive, accessible and successful. Underpinned by the FAW values of excellence, family and respect, the FAW's strategic plan is for a global, local Wales that centres across six strategic pillars:

- Wales on the world stage
- a flexible, inclusive and appealing offer
- a sustainable association for the future
- a diverse, skilled and engaged football family
- inspirational and fit-for-future facilities
- clear and effective pathways for progression.

For more information, visit www.faw.cymru and www.our.cymru for the FAW's strategic plan.

- Twitter: [@FAWales](https://twitter.com/FAWales) / [@Cymru](https://twitter.com/Cymru)
- Facebook: [FAWales](https://www.facebook.com/FAWales)
- Instagram: [@FAWales](https://www.instagram.com/FAWales) / [@BeCymru](https://www.instagram.com/BeCymru)



Irish Football Association

The Irish Football Association was founded in the Queens Hotel, Belfast on 18th November 1880. The Irish FA is the fourth oldest governing body in the world, behind the other three home associations.

In the last decade the organisation has delivered on three successful corporate strategies, all with a consistent vision of promoting, fostering and developing football for all across Northern Ireland. The latest of these, 'A Roadmap for Football', was launched in January 2020 – it pledges to become "an exemplar governing body, championing equality, diversity and inclusion".

The Irish FA has a strong history of uniting communities through the prism of football. The organisation marked 20 years of its Football for All campaign in 2020.

Originally funded by the Special EU Programme Body, with support from the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council which focuses on tackling sectarianism at Northern Ireland international games, the Football for All campaign evolved to become central to the Irish FA vision statement, and has been embedded in all aspects of football development.

The subject of mental health, like all of the equality strands, has been of increasing importance to the organisation. The Irish FA's Ahead of the Game programme for football clubs and volunteers, offers guidance and support when dealing with mental health issues, helps to challenge the stigma around mental health, and promotes positive mental health and preventative measures.





Premier League

The Premier League is the organising body for the top flight of English football, with responsibility for the competition, its Rule Book and centralised broadcast and commercial rights. It is home to some of the most competitive and compelling football in the world.

Launched in the 1992/93 season, the Premier League works proactively and constructively with its member clubs and the other football authorities to improve the quality of football and inspire fans, communities, and partners both in the UK and internationally.

The League's work with its member clubs goes far beyond the 90 minutes. This includes providing support and a framework for youth development, support to the wider game and community programmes, undertaking international development work and liaising with governing bodies and other leagues.

The Premier League is a competition for everyone, everywhere and is available to watch in 880 million homes in 188 countries.

The English Football League (EFL)

Formed in 1888 by its 12 founder members, the EFL is the world's original league football competition, and is the template for leagues the world over. The EFL is the largest single body of professional clubs in European football and is responsible for administering and regulating the EFL, the Carabao Cup and the Papa John's Trophy, as well as reserve and youth football.

The EFL is the largest single body of professional Clubs in European football, ranging from two-time European Cup winners Nottingham Forest to League Two side Harrogate Town, who in 2020/21, embarked on a season in the fourth tier of English football for the first time in their 107-year history.

EFL Clubs span the breadth and depth of England and Wales and it is not only on the pitch that our Clubs continue to thrive, with each club becoming the heart of their respective local communities and providing innovative and ground-breaking programmes through their Community Organisations.

The traditional league format, or pyramid as it is often referred to, is envied the world over as a system that allows all teams to prosper, with millions of supporters, both domestically and internationally, watching the drama unfold each season.

Promotion and relegation means that every eventuality is available to all Clubs, while knockout competitions such as the Carabao Cup and the Papa John's Trophy offer supporters the chance of tasting the cup final experience at the country's National Stadium, Wembley.





The National League

On the 6th of June 2015, the decision was made to rebrand the Football Conference to the National League.

The Football Conference was formed in 1979 from leading teams in the Northern Premier League and Southern League, and was originally known as the Alliance Premier League.

The Football Conference had a single division for the first 25 years of its existence, but since the 2004/05 season has consisted of three divisions. The original division was renamed Conference National, and two new regional divisions one level down were introduced: Conference North and Conference South. The new clubs were drawn from the Northern Premier League, Southern League, and Isthmian League, according to guidelines developed by the NLS Committee.

Women's Professional Game

The Women's Professional Game in England consists of two tiers that sit at the top of the women's football pyramid – the full professional Barclays FA Women's Super League (Tier 1) and semi-professional FA Women's Championship (Tier 2).

Both tiers are run by the FA and consist of 12 clubs, with teams having to meet specified criteria to be able to obtain a license to play in their respective division.

There is a clear pathway for players into the women's professional game, either through one of the 15 FA Women's Super League Academies that accommodate 16-18 year olds, or through progression from the FA Women's National League, which operates at Tier 3 and below.





Professional Footballers Association (PFA)

The PFA is the union for all current and former footballers and scholars in the Premier League, the FA Women's Super League and the English Football Leagues. It is the longest-standing sporting union in the world.

As the only football organisation that solely prioritises players' needs, the PFA provides a variety of educational, financial and wellbeing services for members, funds vital research and offers the extensive information, advice and support expected of a trade union.

The PFA advocates for its members, representing players' views at meetings with other football stakeholders such as the FA, Premier League, WSL and EFL. To ensure player welfare remains at the heart of the game, the players' union also sits on several committees and boards, including:

- The Professional Football Negotiating and Consultative Committee
- The Professional Game Match Officials Limited Technical Board
- The League Football Education
- FIFPRO
- The Professional Players Federation

Committed to helping players understand their purpose as both a player and a person, the PFA promises to protect and support its members, for football and for life.

League Managers Association (LMA)

The LMA is the collective, representative voice of all managers from the Premier League, the Sky Bet Championship, Sky Bet Leagues 1 and 2, and the FA Women's Super League and Championship.

Since its inception in 1992, the LMA has continued to develop its support and service offering to its members and its influence within the game. The LMA has become an integral and respected part of the football industry – and as football continues to present new challenges, the LMA will grow and adapt to achieve its aims.

The six major aims of the LMA are:

- To represent the interests of the professional football managers to the Football Association, the Leagues and all the game's other governing bodies and stakeholders
- To promote and publish the views of the professional managers on key issues within the game
- To protect the rights and privileges of its members
- To deliver and grow a range of support services to the managers both professionally and personally
- To embrace and deliver strong commercial relationships with the game's sponsors and partners
- To encourage honourable practice, conduct and courtesy in all professional activity.



Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL)

Formed in 2001 to improve refereeing standards, PGMOL manage the 600 match officials operating in the Premier League, EFL, Women's Super League and Championship, National League and FA Competitions.

PGMOL is responsible for the recruitment, training, development and mentoring of all match officials, focused on inclusive, multi-disciplinary support and elite performance.

PGMOL is a world-class organisation whose match officials are valued and trusted by the game, underpinned by our values: integrity, learn and grow, community, courage, accountability, and innovation.



League Football Education (LFE)

LFE was established in 2004 by the EFL and the PFA to deliver the Apprenticeship programme to 16 to 18-year-old players at EFL clubs.

LFE's responsibilities extend to the delivery of life skills to U9-U23 players, parents and club staff. LFE's Life Skills programme covers emotional wellbeing, equality and diversity, finance, cardiac and sexual health awareness, social media, talent transfer, resilience, personal development and lifestyle — as well as education on key subjects such as gambling, alcohol and drugs.

Support is also provided after the completion of the apprenticeship, including tracking and monitoring of all past apprentices, assessment trials to try to help out-of-contract players gain a club, assistance in securing USA Soccer Scholarships or university places and European links with clubs in Spain and Sweden.



Our Charity Partners



We're Mind, the leading mental health charity in England and Wales. We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets support and respect. We provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. We campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

We work with our network of around 110 local Minds to support people in communities across England and Wales. Their range of services includes supported housing, crisis helplines, drop-in centres, employment and training schemes, counselling and befriending, among many others.

Mind have worked with the sports sector since 2014 to use the power of sport and physical activity to build resilience, support and enable mental health recovery, as well as tackle mental health stigma. We support sports organisations to better understand mental health at all levels through training, resources. Our work is informed by research from grassroots programmes, such as Get Set to Go delivered with support of Sport England and the National Lottery, through to our Mental Health in Elite Sport research. We are a proud partner of Heads Up and the English Football League through our 'On Your Side' partnership, supporting football to change the approach to mental health in clubs and their communities.

To find out how Mind can support you and your organisation visit mind.org.uk/sport



Sporting Chance was founded in the year 2000 by then England and Arsenal captain Tony Adams MBE. Tony recognised the uniqueness of football and the demands that it placed on players' mental and emotional wellbeing. Sporting Chance as a charity continues to strive to achieve his original vision: "When any athlete has the courage to reach out for support with a mental health or emotional concern, there must be a safe, confidential and professional place for them to go – Sporting Chance can be that place".

Over two decades have passed and we have developed world class therapeutic and educational services to serve both players and those who work in professional sport.

Sporting Chance both values and continually develops our relationships with the key stakeholders in the football family and have been privileged to support Heads Up and the Mentally Healthy Football Declaration. In 2022, football still offers a unique landscape that can challenge the mental health and emotional wellbeing of those who play or work elsewhere within in the game. Mental Health support, education and treatment has made huge strides in the sport but there is still a long way to go. Sporting Chance will be here.



We're the Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) and we're here to unite the UK against suicide. 125 people take their own lives in the UK every week. We exist to change this - by offering life-saving support, creating culture changing campaigns, and bringing people together across the country to reject living miserably. All to make standing against suicide a way of life for everyone.

We believe football has a massive role to play in the way we deal with mental health and suicide. For us football is about being part of something. A reason to get together, do what you love and feel better for it. Because we know that when that whistle blows for kick off nothing else matters: not your job, not your stress, not your bills, not your relationships. And we want to make sure that after the final whistle goes we're all there for each other too.

That's why we're proud charity partners of Heads Together. That's why you can play as CALM on FIFA. And that's why we work with grassroots teams up and down the country to help them look after their teammates and show that there's always someone on your side if you're struggling.

We also share inspiring football stories and, through the CALM Football Collective, we make sure you can make your team a CALM Club. So whether you're watching your team, playing 5s on a weeknight or 11s on Saturdays, we're always here for you – and we help make sure you're all there for each other.

To find out more visit: thecalmzone.net/footballagainstlivingmiserably

