

**ROARS NOT
WHISPERS:
CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS AT
THE HEART
OF SCOTTISH
FOOTBALL**

**MAKING OUR
COMMITMENT
A REALITY**

**CHILD WELLBEING AND
PROTECTION STRATEGY
FOR SCOTTISH FOOTBALL
2024–2030**



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CONTENTS

04/
INTRODUCTION

06/
OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

08/
OUR CONTEXT

10/
UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AND SCOTTISH FOOTBALL

12/
DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

13/
THE BIG PICTURE

14/
GAME CHANGER: LEAD

16/
GAME CHANGER: VOICE

18/
GAME CHANGER: PROTECT

20/
GAME CHANGER: LEARN

22/
OUR ENABLERS

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **Roars not Whispers**, our child wellbeing and protection strategy for Scottish football. Football is Scotland's national sport. Our strategy is aligned to the aspiration of harnessing the power of football as an inspirational, transformative and inclusive endeavour which has the power to shape and change young lives for the better.



“PLAYING FOOTBALL IS MY FAVOURITE THING TO DO! MY TEAM IS FULL OF MY FRIENDS AND WE HAVE THE BEST TIME. IT'S GOOD FOR US AND KEEPS US HEALTHY AND HAPPY.”

(8-11/boy/survey)

Children and young people's involvement in football is wide ranging and includes playing, coaching, refereeing and supporting. Football also provides benefits to participants and communities by developing friendships, resilience, collaboration and empathy for others, as well as the obvious physical and mental health benefits.

The publication of our research report 'Getting it Right for Every Child in Scottish Football' in December 2023 offered us the opportunity to hear the views and opinions of children and young people and learn of their experience of playing football in Scotland. Children and young people told us overwhelmingly that they feel safe and that they derive a great deal of enjoyment and fun from their involvement in football.

The development of this second strategy has allowed us to reflect on lessons learned from the past and to continue to carry on the progress that has been made. We continue to take positive action to reduce the risk to children and young people. This includes comprehensive Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy and Procedures, complete with a wide-ranging suite of practice notes. Embedded across Scottish football is a learning programme that promotes Children's Rights as well as educates and informs those working with children and young people.

Our Youth Ambassadors of Change have charged us to 'be ambitious'; therefore our new strategy contains an ambitious task list. We want Scottish football to be a place where children's rights are learned,

understood and lived. Our new strategy comes at a pivotal time and launches at the same time as the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in Scots law.

We want children and young people to continue to feel safe and enjoy football, regardless of where or how this participation takes place. Our culture will define how we do this as well as provide us with an understanding of success. Prioritising Children's Rights and adopting a rights-based approach will allow us to strengthen the culture of safety and respect within Scottish Football.

Similar to our first strategy, this strategy is one for all of Scottish Football where the responsibility for the safety of children and young people must be everyone's prime consideration and their wellbeing placed above all else.

We would like to thank everyone who has given their time willingly to develop our second Child Wellbeing and Protection Strategy and look forward to continuing to build strong and powerful relationships to ensure our mission to make football a safe and fun environment where Children's Rights are championed by everyone becomes a reality.

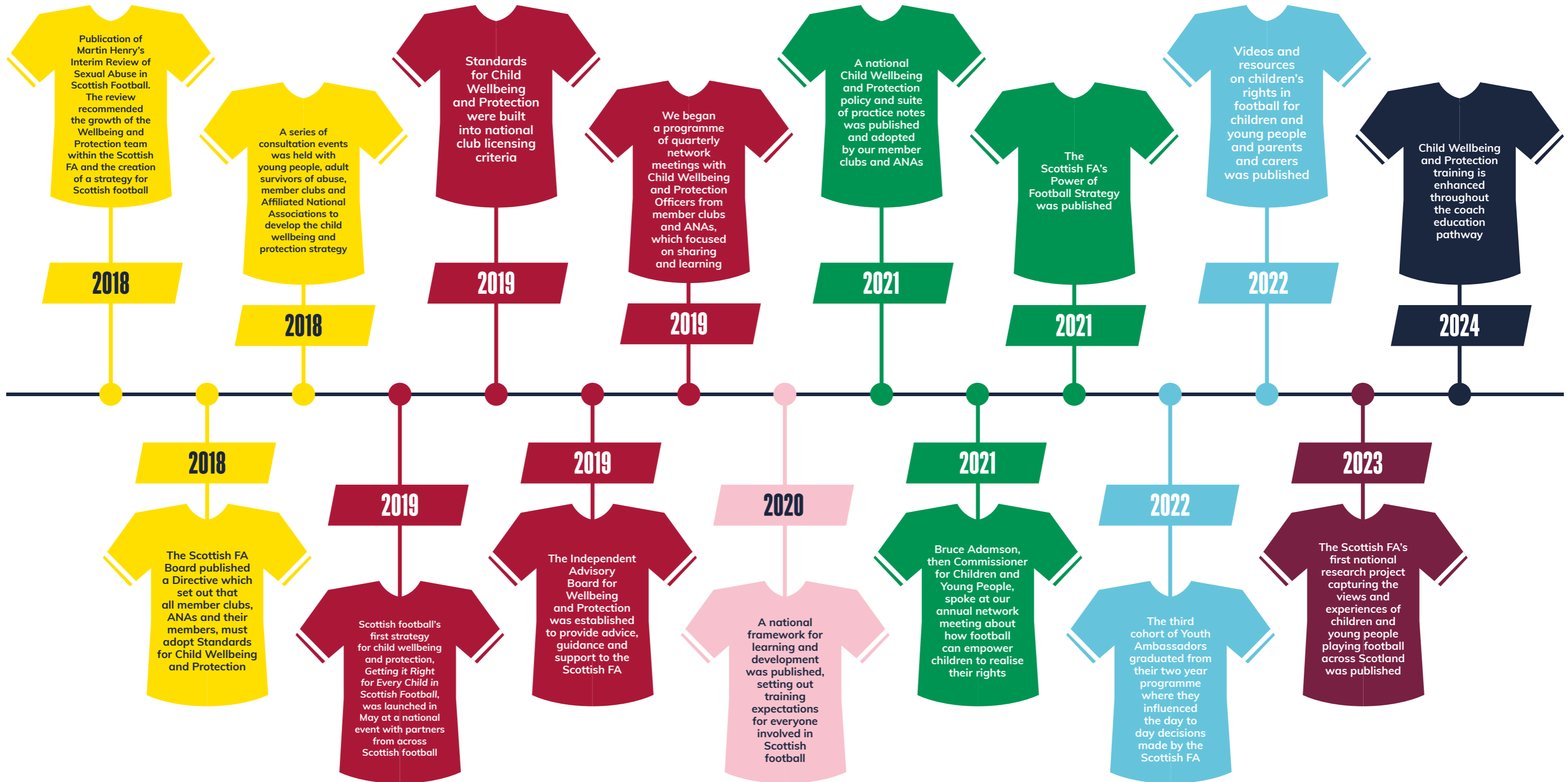
Ian Maxwell, Chief Executive, Scottish FA
Mike Mulraney, President, Scottish FA
Alan Stewart, Head of Wellbeing and Protection, Scottish FA

JARGON BUSTER AND DEFINITIONS

ABBREVIATION	0	00:00	0	DEFINITION
CWPO				Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer
UNCRC				United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
ANA				Affiliated National Association
IWPAB				Independent Wellbeing and Protection Advisory Board
CHILD				A child is defined as anyone who has not reached the age of 18

OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

97% OF CHILD WELLBEING AND PROTECTION OFFICERS FEEL CONFIDENT CARRYING OUT THEIR ROLE, A 17% INCREASE FROM 2019



OUR CONTEXT

To develop this strategy we have thought about the environment it sits within and how this impacts our work. This includes national legislation and policies in Scotland and the UK, as well as specific guidance related to sport. We have also considered the learning that can be taken from the various independent reviews that have taken place across sport, allowing us to continue to reflect and improve on how Scottish Football respects and promotes the rights and wellbeing of all children and young people.



UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD



UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AND SCOTTISH FOOTBALL

The UNCRC is the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced. Through a series of 54 articles, it sets out all the rights of children and young people, and outlines what they need to grow up happy, healthy, and safe. This includes their right to health and education, leisure and play, fair and equal treatment, protection from exploitation and the right to be heard.

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE LISTENED TO

I HAVE THE RIGHT TO PLAY AND REST

I HAVE A RIGHT TO LEARN NEW THINGS



“EVERYONE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO PLAY.”

(12–15/boy/survey)



UNCRC (INCORPORATION) SCOTLAND ACT 2024

In July 2024 Scotland became the first country in the world to incorporate the UNCRC into domestic law through the UNCRC (Incorporation) Scotland Act 2024. Our ambition is for Scottish football to be a place where children's rights are embedded at every level of the game, where decision making takes account of children's rights and all children have a voice and are empowered as rights holders.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?

The UNCRC (Incorporation) Scotland Act 2024 provides an exciting opportunity for Scottish football to consider and improve how children and young people experience their rights across the breadth of our game:

- ⚽ Are there **safe** facilities for children to take part?
- ⚽ Is the environment **inclusive** and **non-discriminatory**?
- ⚽ Are children's rights considered **in decision making** at every level?
- ⚽ Do we **teach** children, young people and adults about their children's rights?
- ⚽ Are adults informed on how to positively **support and encourage** children and young people to take part in a variety of ways?
- ⚽ Do we create a positive **learning environment** for children?
- ⚽ Are **children's views** always actively sought, listened to, taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate?
- ⚽ Do we give children and young people **information** they need to form a view?
- ⚽ Do we **explain** to children the reasons why decisions have been taken?

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

To deliver our strategy we will work collaboratively with our partners, staff and volunteers in our member clubs, recognised leagues, Affiliated National Associations and Referee Associations. The Child Wellbeing and Protection Officers working at all levels of Scottish football play a key role in leading change for children and young people.

“KEEP IT GOING AND KEEP IT SAFE AND HELP GIVE EVERYONE THE CHANCE TO PLAY FOR TEAMS AND HELP THEIR DREAMS COME TRUE.”

(12–15/boy/survey)

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We have robust governance and accountability structures in place to ensure that child wellbeing and protection is visible and prioritised across Scottish football.

CHILD WELLBEING AND PROTECTION IN SCOTTISH FOOTBALL



GAME CHANGER: LEAD



GOAL: DRIVE FORWARD A CULTURE WHERE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND WELLBEING ARE PRIORITISED AT EVERY LEVEL OF OUR GAME

Scottish football embraces its unique role to champion a culture where children's rights are respected, promoted and embedded across everything we do. Working together we will ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is everyone's responsibility.

We have robust governance structures in place across all levels of our game which hold us to account, and our values are visible in the decisions we make.



BY THE END OF THE STRATEGY WE WILL...

- Continue to be accountable for and prioritise child wellbeing and protection throughout our governance structures, ensuring it is well-resourced across Scottish football
- Promote the use of Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments across Scottish football and provide a range of resources to offer guidance and support to clubs and associations
- Draw on the expertise of our Independent Wellbeing and Protection Advisory Board (IWPAB) and the voices of adult survivors to influence and inform Scottish football's approach to children's rights and wellbeing
- Continue to build positive relationships with our partners across sport and the children's sectors to ensure we remain at the forefront of policy and practice

HOW WE WILL KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED THIS

- IWPAB minutes are reviewed by Scottish FA Board and child wellbeing and protection matters are discussed as required
- Committee and Board members across Scottish football undertake child wellbeing and protection training
- Regularly evaluate and report on progress made and associated allocation of resources to achieve outcomes

WHAT EVIDENCE WILL WE COLLECT?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| ✓ Minutes from Boards and Committees | ✓ Training records |
| ✓ Feedback from partners | ✓ Research with children and young people |

"GOOD LEADERSHIP FROM THE COACHES TO SHOW THAT THERE IS PEOPLE TO SPEAK TO THAT COULD RESULT IN YOU FEELING SAFE AT THE CLUB."

(16-18/boy/group session)

"I LOVE PLAYING FOOTBALL BECAUSE IT'S A TEAM PLAYING GAME AND YOU MAKE FRIENDS WITH CHILDREN FROM DIFFERENT PLACES. IT MAKES ME FEEL STRONG AND CONFIDENT. I HAVE NICE COACHES WHO MAKE ME FEEL HAPPY."

(8-11/boy/survey)

"FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE ME FROM POORER AREAS, WE HAVE FEW PITCHES AND THE ONES WE HAVE AREN'T TAKEN CARE OF OR THEY ARE LOCKED UP."

(16-18/girl/survey)

GAME CHANGER: VOICE

GOAL: CHAMPION CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO HAVE THEIR SAY IN ALL WE DO



We lead the way to ensure that Scottish football is a place where all children and young people are empowered as rights holders. We equip adults with the knowledge, skills and tools to create safe and inclusive spaces that empower children and young people to use their voice to affect real, meaningful change.

We work with senior leaders to ensure that the views and experiences of children and young people are at the heart of decisions we make at all levels of our game.



BY THE END OF THE STRATEGY WE WILL...

- Recruit, mentor and develop young people through the Scottish FA Youth Ambassador Programme
- Embed a culture of participation and engagement across Scottish football to ensure that children and young people influence and shape their environment
- Support clubs, ANAs and leagues to develop a rights respecting approach through a package of training, guidance and resources
- Capture and implement the views of children and young people on topics that matter to them, for example touchline culture, diversity and inclusion and facilities

HOW WE WILL KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED THIS

- Children and young people are more able to have their say in matters that affect them
- Children and young people demonstrate an understanding of what it means to be a rights holder within Scottish football
- Adults working and volunteering in football create space and opportunity for children and young people to express their views
- Children's views and experiences are visible in the decisions we make

WHAT EVIDENCE WILL WE COLLECT?

✓ Boards and Committee minutes	✓ Youth Ambassador projects
✓ Research with children and young people	✓ Club self-assessments, sampling and support visits

"A SAFE ENVIRONMENT IS WHEN EVERYONE IS ABLE TO SPEAK TO EACH OTHER AND JUST FEEL SAFE AND NOT FEEL DIFFERENT OR LEFT OUT."

(16-18/boy/group session)

"I HAVE ANXIETY PROBLEMS. FOOTBALL IS GOOD FOR ME TO MEET PEOPLE AND KEEP FIT. MY PARENTS HELP ME AND STAY WITH ME SO I FEEL SECURE TO JOIN IN. MY TEAMMATES AND COACHES ARE KIND."

8-11/girl/survey)

"IT'S GOOD AND I CAN EXPRESS MYSELF AND IT HELPS ME RELAX."

(12-15/girl/survey)

GAME CHANGER: PROTECT

GOAL: EMBED CHILD WELLBEING AND PROTECTION SYSTEMS CONSISTENTLY ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF SCOTTISH FOOTBALL



Our policy and standards frameworks are the foundation of our practice, establishing the behaviours and actions that keep children and young people safe in our sport. These systems and structures, which include safe appointment and selection, practice guidance and concern management, create a robust, consistent and proactive approach to safeguarding children and young people. Working together across our game, supporting the workforce of volunteers and staff, we ensure that children's rights are a lived experience for everyone involved in Scottish football.



BY THE END OF THE STRATEGY WE WILL...

- Implement and raise awareness of the national child wellbeing and protection policy and procedures consistently across all levels of Scottish football, ensuring that risk is managed, and the appropriate safeguards are in place
- Ensure that everyone knows how to share concerns, in the knowledge they will be heard, supported and respected, and their concern responded to in line with policy and procedure
- Continue to embed a robust child wellbeing and protection standards framework across Scottish football and measure compliance through a programme of audit, self-assessment, data collection and support visits
- Embed safe, values-based, appointment and selection processes across Scottish football, ensuring that the right people are in the right roles

HOW WE WILL KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED THIS

- Children and young people continue to report that they are safe, happy and respected when taking part in Scottish football
- Concerns are responded to in line with policy and procedure across all levels of Scottish football
- Staff and volunteers are appointed in line with our values-based appointment and selection procedures
- Adults across the game, including parents and carers, tell us they are confident and feel supported to carry out their role to promote and protect the wellbeing of children and young people

WHAT EVIDENCE WILL WE COLLECT?

- Member Club Licensing and Quality Mark
- Surveys with adults from across the game
- Research with children and young people
- Club self-assessments, sampling and support visits
- Analysis of reported concerns, including discrimination reporting

96% OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ALWAYS OR MOSTLY FEEL SAFE WHEN PLAYING FOOTBALL

“FOOTBALL IS GREAT WAY TO EXPERIENCE NEW THINGS. ADULTS CAN MAKE FOOTBALL SCARY AND NOT FUN BY SHOUTING AND SWEARING AT THE SIDE OR ASSUMING THE GENDER OF CHILDREN.”
(12–15/girl/survey)

“BEING TREATED FAIRLY AND EQUALLY — IT HAS AN IMPACT ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MORE THAN YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH.”
(16–18/boy/group session)

GAME CHANGER: LEARN



GOAL: GROW A LEARNING PROGRAMME THAT DEVELOPS THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE TO CREATE A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE FOOTBALL ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Our learning programme is fundamental to Scottish football's approach to child wellbeing and protection. Through our courses, information and resources, we equip learners with the knowledge and skills to ensure that children's rights are learned, understood and lived across our game. We foster a culture of continuous development, offering a blended learning programme which affirms our values, shapes the culture of our game and impacts behaviours and attitudes.



BY THE END OF THE STRATEGY WE WILL...

- Review and refresh our learning and development framework to ensure that all roles across Scottish football have the relevant knowledge and skills to promote and protect children and young people's wellbeing
- Develop and deliver a blended programme of learning and resources which are informed by research, evidence and feedback from across the sporting and children's sectors
- Build on our robust system of quality assurance to reflect, monitor, evaluate and improve our learning programme
- Create a learning programme which is inclusive for the needs and learning styles of all participants

HOW WE WILL KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED THIS

Learners are more knowledgeable, skilled, and confident to promote children's rights and wellbeing in Scottish football
Adults create a safe and positive environment for children and young people to learn and have fun
Children and young people know how their rights will be upheld in Scottish Football
Learners report positive feedback from the courses they attend

WHAT EVIDENCE WILL WE COLLECT?

✓ Learner feedback	✓ Research with children and young people
✓ Surveys with adults from across the game	

"THE COURSE WAS TAILORED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF ALL EXPERIENCES AND EVERYONE WAS ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE."
(Learner feedback)

"WE ARE DIFFERENT. UNDERSTAND HOW WE LEARN. I NEED TO SEE INSTRUCTIONS. [I] FORGET THEM WHEN [THEY] SPOKE TO ME..."
(8-11/boy/survey)

"COACHES TO UNDERSTAND AUTISM AND WE ARE NOT BEING DIFFICULT WE JUST DON'T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU MEAN. COACHES NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT I HAVE TO GO THROUGH IN MY HEAD BEFORE EACH TRAINING SESSION AND GAME."
(12-15/girl/survey)

OUR ENABLERS

Our enablers support the Scottish FA and our partners to deliver our game changers.

INSIGHTS

WE WILL EXPAND OUR USE OF DATA, RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF OUR WORK AND RAISE STANDARDS FOR CHILD WELLBEING AND PROTECTION.

“BEING A GIRL, I LOVE IT. IT’S BECOMING MORE POPULAR AND SO GOOD TO MEET DIFFERENT FRIENDS FROM DIFFERENT PLACES.”
(12–15/girl/survey)



TECHNOLOGY

WE WILL HARNESS TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION TO SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF OUR GOALS.

“DOESN’T MATTER HOW BAD OR GOOD THE PLAYER IS!! EVERYONE IN THE TEAM SHOULD GET A GAME. #LETTHEMPLAY”
(12–15/boy/survey)



PEOPLE

WE WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS SCOTTISH FOOTBALL, WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS TO ENSURE THAT THE PAID AND VOLUNTARY WORKFORCE ARE SUPPORTED IN THEIR ROLE

“PLAYING FOOTBALL MAKES ME VERY HAPPY AND CLEARS MY MIND ESPECIALLY IF I’VE HAD A BAD DAY AT SCHOOL.”
(8–11/boy/survey)





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