



Watford FC Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021 - 2025



CHAIRMAN & CEO OPENING STATEMENT

A true commitment to EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) is borne of actions much more than words. And the driving of those actions by dedicated and committed personnel who are passionate about achieving successful outcomes for everybody involved.

Here at Watford, we regard ourselves as 'The Original Family Club'. While it's a pleasant tag to use, it's a statement deliberately made to invite scrutiny and measure of our work to be as inclusive a club as Graham Taylor and Elton John showed football could be when they refused to erect hooligan fences in the 1970s and 80s and instead made Vicarage Road a place where football was enjoyed by all whilst retaining its competitive heartbeat.

Everyone, regardless of their background or beliefs, should feel truly welcome to be part of or be associated with our wonderful football club.

Our senior leadership team regularly draws on the club's history for putting people first so that we can commit to be at the forefront for greater equality within our sport, holding ourselves accountable for our progress at all times.

Our 'Watford Welcomes' initiative has allowed us not only to establish but to cement relationships with local groups representative of a wide range of beliefs, faiths and purposes. Our pledge is that we continue to better represent our local community's demographic among our club's workforce and supporter base.

Awareness and education are vital tools for positive change, and we use those as part of our 'We' campaign which encourages the calling out of all forms of discrimination – wherever they may occur in relation to the club's activities within the community.

There is no finishing line here. We have committed to an ongoing journey of inclusive development and we're proud to have set out ambitious milestones.

This is a club for everyone, with our EDI activities representing and engaging with the heart and soul of the community which surrounds it.

INTRODUCTION

Having been at the forefront of football's drive to be fully inclusive since Graham Taylor and Sir Elton John joined forces to put Watford FC on the map as the original family and community club, we are incredibly proud to have become only the ninth club to achieve the Advanced level of the Premier League Equality Standard.

This strategy document sets out our continuing commitment to grow and develop our processes, policies and priorities relating to all of the protected characteristics.

Our Equality Action plan will accompany this document to provide focus and enable us to measure our progress. This document and the action plan will also underpin our long-term strategy and will be reviewed and updated for each season.

The work we continue to undertake will underpin our submission to the Premier League Equality, Diversity and Inclusion scheme. At every level of the club, and our Community, Sports & Education Trust, we remain committed to retaining our advanced level status.

KEY STRATEGIES

The club's key strategies (listed below) demonstrate that equality, diversity and inclusion are business-wide priorities and that our Watford Welcomes initiative is supported by the Board.

- Build a common understanding of the purpose, vision and direction of Watford FC supported by the values and behaviours of Watford Welcomes and embraced by the Watford FC family.
- Develop a high-performance culture where people are respected, rewarded and empowered to reach their full potential regardless of the 9 Protected Characteristics.
- Develop a sustainable business model which reduces the dependency on media and match day income together as a whole team.
- Develop a team of disciplined, hungry footballers who are role models for young people of all backgrounds while playing a brand of exciting attacking football.
- Build a premier stadium with supporting infrastructure, thus being inclusive of our diverse fanbase and guests.
- Establish effective communication within the whole team, creating a united integrated team philosophy with equality for all.

EDI RESOURCE

In order to further our ambitions, we will increase our resources to include three new roles within our HR team with a strong focus on Equality, Diversity Inclusion. In addition to the HR & EDI Manager, the following posts will be created;

- EDI & Disability Access Officer
- HR Administrator (role to have EDI elements in the job description)
- Training & Development Officer

Our Internal Working Group will also include representatives from every area of the club and will meet regularly to review progress against our Equality Action Plan, which has detailed actions for each department.

WORKFORCE TARGETS

We have identified long-term targets in relation to our workforce, allowing us to measure success. These are centred around the most recent Census data for the town of Watford and are linked to our key equality priorities, reviewed on an annual basis. Our 10 year targets are aspirational and include 3 and 5 year check points, calculated via a yearly percentage increase.

We are keen to have a workforce which represents the community in which we operate and engage in. Our chosen areas for these targets are;

- Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage
- Female
- Disability

Actions in order to meet the percentage increases are detailed under the relevant section within our Equality Action plan. The plan will continue to grow and change over the years, in line with the growth of the town and as we continue to develop our workforce.

The tables below show our targets. We will measure our progress against the targets through the annual data collection window for our workforce, which will take place in September – November.

Female

| Year | | % Increase | % Target |
|------|----------|------------|----------|
| 2018 | Baseline | | 33.53% |
| 2021 | 3 year | 5.18% | 38.71% |
| 2023 | 5 year | 3.55% | 42.26% |
| 2028 | 10 year | 8.74% | 51% |

Disability

| Year | | % Increase | % Target |
|------|----------|------------|----------|
| 2018 | Baseline | | 5.88% |
| 2021 | 3 year | 2.31% | 8.19% |
| 2023 | 5 year | 1.55% | 9.74% |
| 2028 | 10 year | 3.86% | 13.6% |

Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage

| Year | | % Increase | % Target |
|------|----------|------------|----------|
| 2018 | Baseline | | 12.35% |
| 2021 | 3 year | 4.69% | 17.04% |
| 2023 | 5 year | 3.13% | 20.17% |
| 2028 | 10 year | 7.83% | 28% |

A blind recruitment process have We have also signed up to the Football Leadership Diversity Code, which has a focus on gender and race within recruitment.

SUPPORTER ENGAGEMENT

The 'Watford Welcomes' initiative launched at the start of the 2018/19 season and brings our historic family club ethos together with our ongoing work in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. In addition to our key strategies and workforce targets, our work under the Watford Welcomes initiative is driven by fan data, collated on an annual basis. This allows us to spot trends and make evidence-based decisions. The supporters data collection window is November – January.

We continue to focus on the following areas:

- Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage
- Disability
- LGBT
- Female engagement

Our External Equality Advisory group has played a key role, especially with our focus on people from Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage backgrounds. We will continue to consult with community groups within the town of Watford to advise, guide and support us as we gather a better understanding of different cultures. This will enable us to maintain the strong, day to day relationships we've forged with them, so they feel comfortable in being able to give advice and correcting us when needed.

The links we have built place the club at the very centre of our local community. The groups we've worked with have the confidence to recommend further ties with new groups and charities, while job vacancies are also shared with all groups to support our drive to meet the club's workforce targets.

Groups such as the Watford Muslim Youth Centre, Watford Indian Association, Bushey Synagogue, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Watford Chinese Community, Watford African Caribbean Association, Watford Polish Community, Watford Kenyan Association, Watford Gurdwara, Watford Women's Centre, Bhaktivedanta Manor and the Al Zahra Centre are all in regular in contact with our lead equality officer.

Since making our commitment to meeting the accessible stadia guidelines in 2015, our provision for supporters, workers and visitors with disabilities has dramatically improved and we welcomed a record number of supporters with disabilities at our last league fixture before the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the stadium being closed.

We will continue to identify further opportunities to enhance our provision and work closely with Watford FC Enables, the disabled supporters association, to manage our existing facilities and ensure they are involved in all discussions relating to accessibility. We will also work closely with Level Playing Field to support their activities and are planning to undertake a full access audit during 2021/22.

The Proud Hornets, our LGBT supporters group, have become one of our largest groups since forming in 2017. We continue to have a good relationship with them and will work closely with the group to continue our support for the Rainbow Laces campaign, London Pride & Herts Pride events and the 'Ask for Clive' initiative. We will also involve the group in all of our conversations and decisions relating to support for other campaigns.

WOW, a dedicated supporters group for Women who follow our mens first team, was created by supporters at the end of the 2020/21 season to give women more of a voice within the club and to inspire and empower future generations of female fans. We will work closely with the group to develop and deliver a range of initiatives to help them achieve their aims.

WATFORD FC WOMENS TEAM

Promotion to the FA Women's Championship will be the catalyst for further development of the Watford Women's first team and development squads. Regular use of the club's training ground already takes place and the team's social media accounts are also fully utilised to encourage more attendance at matches. From the 2021-22 season, a number of fixtures will be played at Vicarage Road Stadium.

All members of the Watford FC Women's team chose to select squad numbers that holds personal significance in relation to black history and the Black Lives Matter movement for the 2020/21 season. This was arranged with the full backing of club staff, who successfully lobbied the FA to allow them to adopt the numbers following early resistance to the idea.

The team also has a number of high profile players including Renee Hector, who was recently unveiled as a member of Kick It Out's newly-launched Player Advisory Board and Helen Ward, who holds the all-time goalscoring record for the Wales national team and has been involved in the 'Hope United' campaign. We will continue our full support for their involvement.

TACKLING RACISM AND OTHER FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

The club's We campaign was launched at the start of the 2019/20 season as a result of racist abuse aimed at our black players following the FA Cup semi-final against Wolves in April 2019.

The campaign provided a clearer route for supporters to report incidents, which led to an increase in reports received when compared to the previous season, from 11 to 20. Out of those 20 incidents, 11 were reported to and dealt with by the Herts Police Hate Crime Unit, who have partnered with us to support the campaign.

Three supporters went through an educational process which involved in-house meetings using the Watford Welcomes values. One supporter attended an external equality workshop with Blue Tulip Consultancy.

A further five supporters were banned from Vicarage Road for using discriminatory and/or abusive language and one of those supporters has also been charged with a racially motivated offence, which will shortly be the subject of a crown court trial.

Through the help of our supporters, we strongly believe these outcomes are a positive reflection of the processes we have put in place. We continue to encourage incidents to be reported to us on matchdays and on our social media accounts. All incidents are recorded to track progress and review areas of concern which may need more focus as part of our Action Plan.

Club and Trust Staff will continue to be strongly encouraged to use the We campaign to highlight incidents of discrimination in the workplace. First team players have met full-time and matchday staff in person, and participated in zooms calls, to discuss their own experiences first-hand and give staff extra confidence to report incidents. As above, all reports received from staff are recorded.

The Club is committed to continually providing a We Campaign summary each season.

We will also continue to support the Premier League's No Room For Racism campaign, as well as the work of Kick It Out and Show Racism The Red Card. We will also continue to find ways to help our players, staff and people associated with the club in vocalising and representing their views and beliefs.

WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITY, SPORTS & EDUCATION TRUST

Working closely with the Trust's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategic lead, we will continue to ensure that the Club and Trust remain aligned in order to achieve our goals. Members of Trust staff are included and participate fully in the club's internal equality working group, as well as managing their own sub-groups.

The Trust's action plans are regularly reviewed to ensure they accurately mirror the club's objectives wherever possible. The Trust are also audited independently, the Capability Code of Practice contains EDI elements and is managed by the Premier League Charitable Fund and links back to the Premier League Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Standard.

We will also work closely with the Trust to develop EDI knowledge and awareness for all staff. An EDI awareness and training calendar plan will be created, to document the areas we identify and help further embed learning and development into our processes.

The well-being of our staff is of paramount importance. Using the Trust's expertise in working with people experiencing mental health issues, we will appoint a team of mental health first aiders, to ensure that any staff members are given full support as well as raising awareness of issues across the business. A new employee assistance programme will also be implemented for Club and Trust staff.



Scott Duxbury
Chairman and Chief Executive
on behalf of the Board