



Oxford United FC  
**EFL FAMILY CLUB  
OF THE YEAR**  
Application 2018/19

## WELCOME

# OVERVIEW

Oxford United prides itself on being a family-centred, inclusive club and has been nominated and shortlisted for awards in this area every year since we rejoined the Football League in 2010.

This season we have again looked to grow and improve on initiatives from previous seasons, but have also launched schemes in a number of exciting new areas including providing a sensory room for our fans with Autism and other needs, as well as giving fans visiting the club for the first time an unforgettable day behind the scenes.

## OBJECTIVES

- To continue to build numbers and interaction with families throughout Oxfordshire
- To remove barriers which stop some fans with additional needs from enjoying football with the introduction of a sensory room
- Provide an amazing experience to new young fans to give them a special day as well as make them feel part of the Oxford United family from their first game
- Improve our online offerings to make it easier for those attending with families to find and gather the information they need for their day with us
- Increase our offerings for young fans within the match day programme with our "Kid-Zone" pull-out
- Re-engage with older fans by providing somewhere for them to get together to talk about their memories and experiences of the club as well as chat with legends past and present
- Continue the successful ideas from last season such as the 'Family Away Day' (scheduled for Coventry in March)



# KEY ACTIVITIES

Whilst continuing to work on, expand and improve many of the family friendly initiatives this club has introduced over the past few seasons, this year the club reached out to areas when there had perhaps been less of a focus to make these parts of the community feel valued and part of the Oxford United Family.

The introduction of a sensory room at the Kassam Stadium has been a big step towards helping those with alternative needs to come and enjoy matches with us. Working with local charities, the supporters trust as well as the stadium company we have been able to provide a safe area for these fans to be able to relax in a calm space with lighting, soft play and sensory items improving the match day experience for those with Autism and other additional needs and increasing their inclusion within the club environment.

We also recognised that every week we have new fans come to the stadium, whether they are young children of the existing fan base, new to the area or local people looking for an activity for their family who haven't previously engaged with the football club. With the 'First Time Fan' scheme we have been able to reach out to these fans to provide them with an extra special day giving them a behind the scenes tour as well as some special gifts from the club to make them feel at home right away.

In the summer there were a number of discussions around football about the match day programme, but at Oxford United there was no debate. Our award winning offering is very popular with fans, but we felt we could do more to encourage the younger generation to continue this trend. With that we expanded our specialist kids section to be an 8-page centre pull-out with exclusive content, posters as well as the usual quizzes and games.

Another area where we reached out to the wider Oxford United Community was with our over-60s Manor Club meetings. These monthly meetings are designed to bring fans together to talk about the club in a relaxed setting over some food. They also include a special guest to chat with fans and talk about their careers which have been a highlight of each month for a number of fans.

Our family highlight last season was the re-introduction of the family away day and we are delighted to be continuing that again this season. With a specialist coach taking only those booking with an U13 we will be running this popular event again for our match against Coventry City in March.

With Player visits, prizes and competitions on board the coach and goody bags for every child, last year's event was a huge success and this season's will grow from that.

Other activities this season have included:

- Local football teams to act as Guard of Honour and welcome the teams on to the pitch
- Pre-season trip to Dublin with hundreds of fans and many families enjoying three preseason games as well as our now traditional meet and greet session where the players and fans spend time together
- Half time entertainment and obstacle races with young representatives from each section of the ground including away fans
- Further expansion of the Family Room with arts and crafts and table football against the players



# SENSORY ROOM

This season the club were delighted to be able to introduce a sensory room as part of a joint project between our club charity Oxford United in the Community, supporters trust OxVox and local charity Jigsaw.

The room, located in the South Stand Upper, has been designed to support children and young people with Autism and other sensory needs to create a safe and stress-free space.

First conceived by Jigsaw, an Oxford-based parent carer support group, the room has come into being thanks to the OUFC Community Trust and the Oxford United supporters' group; OxVox. Crowds and loud noises can be challenges for some; the room provides a calm space and includes light projectors, soft play items, sensory mats and special seating.





## FIRST TIME FANS

This season we have introduced a new "First Time Fans" scheme for those bringing a fan under the age of 13 to their first ever Oxford United game. These fans are either contacted through the database after booking or contact us directly letting us know they are bringing a new fan and we have been able to offer them a behind the scenes tour to make their first time that little bit more special.

Fans are met by our Supporter Liaison Officer and presented with a club scarf and a certificate signed by both the Manager and Chairman before taking a look behind the scenes of the club through the player tunnel and out into the dugouts to watch the players come out for their warm-up and wish them luck. They then get a sneak peak at the changing rooms and often a chat with the manager before being shown to the family room to continue their match day.



## WEBSITE

# FAMILY SECTION ONLINE

Over the summer we revamped the club website updating much of the information and this included a big drive to improve the family section of the site. We have a dedicated Family Guide to download as well as lots of information for fans new or old looking to come to a match with children.

The guide gives detailed information about our Ox4Life kids scheme, maps for getting around the ground as well as timings of when activities such as player visits and activities happen in the family room.



## PROGRAMME

# 8 PAGE KIDS PROGRAMME

This season we expanded our kids offering in the match day programme with an 8 page pull-out section dedicated to our younger fans. There are specific tailored interviews with players, a Star Man poster, games and quizzes as well as a welcome from our club mascot Olly the Ox each week.



## GENERATIONS

# MANOR CLUB

Quite often family events focus on young supporters and the next generation of fans, but it is important not to exclude the older generations and our long time fans. For that reason we introduced the Manor Club.

The Manor Club meets once a month on a Wednesday lunchtime right in the heart of the historic home of the football club. Specifically for the over-60s, fans can get together for a buffet lunch, talk to like minded individuals and listen to club legends talk about their careers at United and beyond. Past special guests have included Cyril Beavon, Jamie Brooks, George Lawrence, Big Ron Atkinson and Les Taylor.



## FAN VOLUNTEERS

# FAN LIAISON OFFICERS (FLOS)

This season the club introduced Fan Liaison Officers or FLOs. These are specific fan volunteers who work with the club to help break down barriers for any new (or existing) fans looking for information around the ground on a match day.

Although there are many members of staff and stewards around the ground on a match day we received feedback from fans that they sometimes didn't use these avenues to get information they were looking for as they felt they had other duties to be performing. With that in mind we enlisted a number of keen, knowledgeable fans to help on a match day and guide other fans in a much more proactive way, looking out for those who need assistance or look lost, and we have found that this fan-to-fan contact has helped new fans feel welcome as well as helping them find their way and we hope to build on this scheme into next season.





# THANK YOU

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From everyone at Oxford United Football Club we thank you for your consideration for ELF Family Clubn of the Year 2018/19