



# Oxford United Football Club

Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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# Oxford United Statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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“At Oxford United we truly believe that football is for everyone. We believe that everyone should be able to feel part of our unique football community regardless of people’s background or beliefs.

As part of our on-going commitment, the club would like to remind all supporters that racial, homophobic, or discriminatory behaviour of any form is strictly forbidden and will not be tolerated. A true commitment to EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) is borne of actions much more than words. At the core of our commitment are our dedicated and passionate personnel including our players and staff across all departments.

Our senior leadership team draws on inspiration from the city of Oxford. A city world renowned for encouraging people from all backgrounds to excel and make the world a better place. We take inspiration from our great city so we can be at the forefront for greater equality within our sport. Our work in the community demonstrates our commitment to improving the lives of all within it, regardless of background or beliefs. Our pledge is that we continue to better represent our local community’s demographic among our club’s workforce and supporter base.

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.”**

The club has many affiliations, programmes and partnerships in place to support this statement of principles. These initiatives are outlined in the following pages of this document.

The club engages with the English Football League Code of Practice, otherwise known as ‘Playing for Inclusion’. This process audits the club every other year on its overall competence in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Our last submission was in April 2022. We are due to start the whole process again in May 2023. To be compliant we must demonstrate our competence in Accountability and commitment, Reporting and tackling discrimination, Data capture and insight, Policy and legal compliance and Education and training.

We also participate in the EFL ‘Together’ education programme that supports clubs in becoming truly reflective of the communities they serve.

# Club senior leadership, coaching and players

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## **Our commitment to equality, diversity and fairness in recruitment and opportunities for the club's senior leadership, coaches and our teams**

### Our Teams

Approximately a third of our male players are drawn from ethnic minorities and one of our women players is a practising Muslim. The work of our academies and the club's and community foundation's outreach work ensure that our future players are drawn from a broad social spectrum. The challenge we face, common across the whole of the EFL and Premier League, is to have a coaching and management team that matches the diversity seen on the pitch.

### Our senior leadership and coaching

Oxford United participates in the Football Association's Leadership Diversity Code, launched in October 2020. This was created in recognition of the fact that the leadership of football does not reflect the diversity seen on the pitch. There are 40 founding members drawn from across the Premier League and EFL in the men's game and in the FA Super League and Championship in the women's game. Clubs set targets for increasing the representation of women and minority groups in senior positions, within the executive leadership and coaching staff. In the first year of reporting, 2021/22, the club performed well against its targets, which are shown in the appendices. The club has appointed an administrator in the first team and at academy level to drive up performance.

The club will soon partner and participate in the 'Hive Program' from the English Football League. This program is designed to assist clubs recruit staff from a diverse background that accurately reflects the community demographic.

# Women and gender policies and action

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Oxford United is fully committed to the development and rapid growth of women's participation in football. Its women's first team was founded in 2014. The team has been a great success, recently finishing third in the 2022/23 season of the FA National Women's League Southern Premier Division. They play currently at the Court Place Farm ground of Oxford City FC, in Marston. The intention is that the women's team will play their home fixtures at the club's proposed new stadium at Kidlington, from the 2026/27 season.

The continued growth of the popularity of women's football will open up more opportunities for women to forge successful careers in the game. Oxford United cannot act in isolation but are committed to pressing the sport's governing bodies for more rapid change.

The club has participated in the #HerGameToo campaign in March 2022 and 2023, coinciding with International Women's Day. On 22nd September 2022 OUFC and #HerGameToo co-hosted an evening dedicated to celebrating the women that work at the club that included Amy Cranston, Lauren Haynes (former Women's Captain) and Kath Faulkner, the women's assistant manager.

March 2023 also saw two games dedicated to International Women's Day, the men's team versus Derby County and the women's team versus MK Dons.

The club promotes its women's team on Twitter (@OfficialOUWFC) and has an account dedicated to the #HerGameToo Oxford United campaign. See @OUFCHGT on Twitter for more information.

**Women and girls academy** – Oxford United runs its own academy to nurture young women players. In 2022 it was awarded a licence by the FA to run an Emerging Talent Centre, to offer girls aged 9 - 15 high performance professional coaching while still playing for their grassroots and schools clubs. Club players and coaches visit schools throughout Oxfordshire to encourage more girls to take up football.

The club does not have a specific policy on **transgender** female and male players' participation in football. The FA maintains a confidential register on players who can play in their affirmed (as opposed to natal) gender. The rules stipulate that players are assessed on a case by case basis. The full rules and procedures can be found on the FA's website <https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/policies/equality/lgbt-football>



## Race equality policy and action

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The club does not tolerate racist abuse and chanting directed at players, officials or fans.

The club works with the Kick it Out and Show Racism the Red Card to tackle racism and other forms of discrimination within the game. It participated in Kick it Out's week of action in March 2023.

The club's EDI lead has attended anti-semitism awareness training.

The club will soon partner and participate in the 'Hive Program' from the English Football League. This program is designed to assist clubs recruit staff from a diverse background that accurately reflects the community demographic.

## Sexuality policy and action

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We aim to act on all instances of abusive and discriminatory behaviour when we discover it during our media monitoring or when it is reported to us.

The club does not tolerate homophobic abuse and chanting directed at players, officials or fans. A supporter was recently subject to a banning order for posting homophobic abuse towards a player on Twitter.

In November 2021 and 2022 the club held a men's first team Rainbow Laces game where all players wore the laces in their boots. The captain wore a rainbow armband and the corner flags were also in rainbow colours, to show solidarity to LGBTQ+ fans. After the game the captain's armband and the flags were placed on auction with the proceeds being donated to Stonewall.

The Proud Yellows supporters group was founded in February 2023 to support members of the LGBTQ+ fan base. A series of events to raise the profile of the group will commence over the summer of 2023 including entering teams into a LGBTQ+ football tournament. The group has set up a Twitter account @ ProudYellows and looks forward to growing its membership during the 2023/24 season.

## Age policy and action

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Oxford United Walking Football Club was founded in 2017, to provide for people wanting to play the game at a slower pace. The men's teams are for men aged over 50, over 60 and over 65. The Women's team is open currently to all ages.

The teams play at the sports park on Horspath Road and at the Oxford Academy in Littlemore. More information on the clubs can be found at [www.ouwalkingfc.co.uk/history](http://www.ouwalkingfc.co.uk/history)

The Manor Club operates monthly as a social event for over 50's. Former players and other notable club personnel attend for a monthly get together.

# Disability, physical impairments, neuro diverse and mental health policy and action

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Oxford United has a dedicated Disability Liaison Officer who regularly attends training and conferences. The club holds regular disabled supporter forums. The most recent was on 14th April 2023, held online with approximately 20 attendees.

New for the 2023-24 season will be a dedicated Disabled Supporter Ambassador who will be responsible for liaising with all disabled supporters on a match day.

The club works with the charity Level Playing Field to make sure that all fans can enjoy an equal experience at live sporting events. A Level Playing Access Audit (awaiting results) has taken place this season with initial positive comments. A 'United for Access' game, organised by Level Playing Field, was played on 24th February 2023.

The current Kassam stadium has 50 wheelchair spaces for fans, including 12 for away supporters. Disabled supporters can also claim a free ticket for their personal assistant. There are 110 blue badge car parking spaces. The stadium also has accessible toilets (using the national RADAR key system) and low level counters at food stalls.

The Kassam also has a sensory room, operated with volunteers to assist neuro diverse children and young adults. The club donates 12 tickets per match for families with neuro diverse children to make football more accessible.

Sensory packs are available for children with sensory needs. Packs include ear defenders, fidget toys and other distraction items.

The proposed new stadium at Kidlington will be designed with accessibility as one of the core principles. The stadium architects and site master-planners will be working with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority. The stadium will have improved accessibility, exceeding national requirements. Assistance dogs are permitted at the Kassam and will be at the new stadium too.

Staff will receive training so that the new stadium will have dementia friendly status.

The club has supported Down's Syndrome Active Oxfordshire with coaching for Down's football teams for adults and children.

The club has a commercial partnership with 'Pub Talk'. This is a radio show/podcast that discusses mental health for men. The club's ballboys and girls wear branded clothing to promote them.

Oxford United supported World Mental Health Day in October 2022 with a game dedicated to the event. The club also hosted a mental health awareness evening in the city of Oxford at Metro bank. Oxford United in the Community partners with Mind to run mental health sessions. We will work in partnership with the proposed Joey Beauchamp Foundation to develop and implement a mental health and well being support programme.

Detoxford United is a football team affiliated to the club that helps its players and supporters live more healthier lives, tackling obesity. It takes part in the MANvFAT football tournament funded by Sport England <https://www.manvfatfootball.org/oxford>. Oxfordshire County Council also funds places with professional coaches.

# Oxford United in the Community, our record of contributing to social equity and tackling poverty and exclusion

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Oxford United in the Community is the charitable arm of the club. Its mission is to “harness the power of football to excite, inspire, involve and promote strong values of inclusion and citizenship.”

Working collaboratively with local and county-wide delivery partners, Oxford United in the Community uses the power of football to inspire the people and communities of Oxfordshire to have positive aspirations for their futures and to have the health, wellbeing, self-confidence, opportunities and resources to achieve them.

Whilst the charity’s work has traditionally focused on younger children in primary schools via Football in the Community programmes, their new strategy “**Oxfordshire – A Community United**” means that they are extending their reach, working to support all of the community across Oxfordshire aged from 2 to 92, with a more place-based approach.

The new strategy includes a goal to be operationally present in ten towns across Oxfordshire as well as the city of Oxford, adopting a ‘hub and spoke’ approach to reach more people and communities.

The charity is based at the OUFC Training Ground at Horspath Road, from where its Oxford-focused activities are run. There is also an established “town spoke” in Banbury. The charity is currently setting up and delivering projects in a further three “town spokes” in Abingdon, Bicester and Didcot. Work is ongoing to identify a further six community hubs, including Kidlington. The charity will begin to engage with potential local partners later in 2023.

The club and charity strive to make playing and watching football affordable for families who would otherwise be excluded. Tickets are donated regularly to struggling families and transport to matches is also covered. Club fans and supporters can fund tickets for donation to other fans via the club’s Play it Forward initiative, <https://www.oufc.co.uk/news/2023/may/play-it-forward/>

Old football kits are donated to deprived areas of North Oxfordshire via Cherwell Collective. The club and charity have a long record of action in Blackbird Leys. The move of our stadium will not diminish our commitment to Blackbird Leys, nor nearby Cowley and the rest of south and east Oxford. Our Training Ground will remain at Horspath Road and our current investment in improving the facilities there will enable us to enhance our local community programmes.

The charity works with newly arrived communities, using the global appeal of football to bring people together. A prime example is the Refugee Football Project, which is run twice a week in partnership with Asylum Welcome and Refugee Resource. The participants typically live in Blackbird Leys and East Oxford. One session is held at Greyfriars School and the other at Oxford Brookes University.



# Annexe

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## Our HR policy for OUFC players

Oxford United Football Club are committed to equal opportunities for all players, students and families who wish to use its facilities. In order to achieve this we will:

- Welcome players from all backgrounds, regardless of ethnic colour, gender, race, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, religion and academic ability.
- Seek to avoid any form of discrimination in all activities and treat members of staff, players, students or parents equally regardless of Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion and belief, Sex, Sexual orientation.
- Not tolerate any discriminatory language, behaviour or remarks by players, parents or staff.
- Accommodate religious and cultural preferences in food and activities.
- Seek to value each person as an individual, respecting his or her religion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background.
- Respect and will try to be aware of the major events and religious festivals in the player's/students' lives and welcome the diversity of backgrounds from which they come.
- Ensure that both males and females have full access to all kinds of activities and equipment and are equally encouraged to enjoy them.
- All members of staff are made aware of the Equal Opportunity Policy and are required to commit to its principles and contents.

