

Andover Football Club Achieve FA Charter Standard Community Club Accreditation

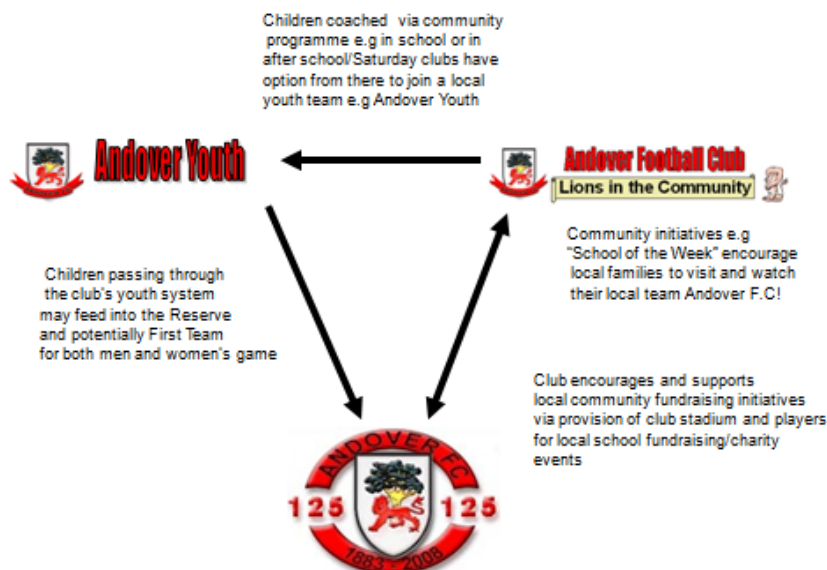
On Thursday 8th October Andover FC were officially awarded FA Charter Community Club status by Hampshire F.A's County Development Manager Sacha Nicholas and Football Development Officer Charlotte Brown.

As befits the award it seemed more than appropriate to hold the presentation during one of the club's community events and therefore members of the club, the youth section and the Lions in the Community coaching programme all converged on Portway Junior School in Andover for the launch of this season's "Fitness for Football Fun Days".

Andover FC have been working towards achieving this particular FA charter standard mark for the past three seasons. The club has been running a successful men's team for many years which currently plays in the Southern League South West Division One and has an established and thriving Youth Section headed up by Martin Mitty, Director of Youth Football, now moving into its 18th year. Football in the Community has been the relative newcomer to the club but under the guidance of "Lions in the Community" Director Cathy Devereux has expanded rapidly over the past three years and now plays an important role in providing connectivity between the club and its local community.

The interplay of the Club, the Youth Section and the Lions in the Community programme are key to achieving and maintaining a modus operandi that will enable the club to grow and flourish and to ultimately field both men and women's first teams brimming with "home-grown" talent. To this end the Club's 5 year development plan (a prerequisite for achieving Community Club accreditation) is key to achieving this, and to date all targets have been met within the time frame set. Regular monitoring and communication between the Directors of Youth Football and Football in the Community and the Club Chairman will ensure that this remains on track moving forward.

So what makes Andover F.C an F.A Charter Community Club?



Lions in the Community

The Club's community programme plays a pivotal role in generating interest and enthusiasm for football amongst our children throughout schools in Andover and the surrounding area. Sponsored by local businesses and main sponsor Simply Health the community team are working with boys and girls from as young as three to sixteen and the programme is fully inclusive with coaches working regularly with children in our special needs schools as well as those, who for one reason or another have been excluded from mainstream education.

The philosophy behind the scheme is quite simple;
"Making football fun and accessible to all"

Every event and element of the programme is planned with this philosophy in mind, and each has it's own set of objectives to aim for.

Saturday Soccer Club is a fun session for 3-6 year olds introducing them to the FUNdamentals of football, teaching basic yet key skills of agility, balance and coordination through age appropriate and exciting games. As their ability develops some may then be keen to move into our Youth Section proper and join the under 7 squad.

Lion Cubs is our Stannah sponsored programme for nursery, pre-school and infant children which aims to equip our youngsters with some basic coordination and balancing skills which are vital to try and develop from a young age and which will be of great importance for any sport they undertake moving forwards.

After School Clubs are totally inclusive and we take great care to ensure that these are not seen as clubs for the "elite" within the school. Through assemblies and newsletters we encourage both boys and girls to come along and have a go, for some it's a case of developing skill, whilst for others it's more about improving existing skill. The community team coaches are well equipped to deal with this differentiation as it is key to ensuring everyone achieves something from their session.

Team coaching is a regular feature within the scheme and coaches are working with teams in several schools within the Andover area. One particular project that the coaching team have undertaken is to form, train and organise inter-school fixtures for a team from one of our local Special Schools, Wolverdene School. This is giving these children the opportunity to learn to work as a team and to mix with mainstream children in different environments outside of the one they are most used to. This is proving to have significant benefits other than just on the pitch.

In addition to the above the Lions in the Community programme is committed to working very closely with both the Schools Sports Partnership and the FA Skills team. Through the close association with the Mountbatten School Sports Partnership the team provide an annual primary football festival for year 3 and 4 children for all the local secondary school clusters as well as currently delivering a programme of specialist girls coaching through Sports Unlimited backing. The Partnership in turn have been superb in their support for the further education of the team such that the majority of them are now fully qualified FA level 2 coaches.

The Hampshire based FA skills team are also working closely alongside the Lions in the Community team in our local schools as well as offering vital coaching support to local charter standard club youth teams in the area, amongst them being our own.

Cathy Devereux, Director of Lions in the Community is delighted by the club's achievement of Charter Community Club status: "We have worked extremely hard over the past 3 years to bring the club to the community and vice versa so it is wonderful to receive this award as a mark of how far we have come towards achieving our vision. This would not have been possible without the hard work and efforts of all those involved in this journey, from the club, the youth section and the community scheme, and not least to our generous sponsors, whose support is hugely appreciated by all."

Below are a couple of testimonials:

Hi Cathy,

I wanted to write to you to stress what a positive impact your work with Andover FC has had for us here at Anton Junior School.

First and foremost the experiences you provided for our pupils during our 'School of the Week' was brilliant. As your coaches said at the time, our children were so positive and enthusiastic during each of the activities. The kids still talk about 'Tom the Legend' now! The penalty competition was a particular favorite and I liked the way the coaches ensured that every pupil achieved some success, whilst also ensuring that the most talented boys and girls were rewarded with a 'final' on the pitch at the Portway Stadium. I know that your visit generated real interest in Andover FC and it has been great to see Anton pupils regularly attending your matches subsequently. In addition to this, as a result of your visit we saw an increase in the number of children attending our own school football clubs, so you guys obviously motivated a good number of kids to have a go!

On a wider level your School of the Week visit also inspired my teaching staff. Jodie Williams approached me afterwards about an idea for us to link to a different sports club each month of the school year in the way that you did. This initiative has been brilliant and we have now had visits from Andover RFC, Hockey Club, Eclipse Netball Club, Sweet Science Boxing Academy, etc

It has also been lovely to see the excellent work that your coaches have been doing with pupils from Wolverdene School using our all-weather pitch every Friday morning. I know that the group of year five pupils from Anton that have joined in have also really benefitted from it.

Tom Donohoe
Head Teacher
Anton Junior School

I am writing to say that the sessions provided by the community football coaching team have been invaluable to our school. As a small special school with very challenging primary pupils but with limited resources, you have opened so many doors for us.

Firstly, by coming into school with your programme you have given staff confidence and really enhanced our sport offer. Your coaches, being local and skilled, have had great credibility with the pupils and have really taught them important social as well as football skills.

Secondly, by working with us at Anton Junior school on a regular basis you have helped us to forge links with local mainstream pupils, hopefully to the benefit of both, and you have again coached these sessions expertly.

Lastly, by offering your local tournaments, you have given us something to aim for and yet again another integration/ inclusion opportunity. Also by giving awards for sportsmanship as well as success this has given positive messages to our pupils.

I cannot thank you enough for what you are doing in the Andover community and we as a special school are really reaping the rewards. I really hope you can continue to provide us with this superb service next year and into the future.”

Chris Lloyd
Head teacher
Wolverdene School