

7 March 2021

Dear Mr Bullingham,

THE FORGOTTEN GENERATION: LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND THE RIGHT TO PLAY

Our young people have faced an incredibly difficult time over the last year. Deprived of normal contact with friends, removed from the school environment, living in uncertainty, and sometimes hardship, and all too often, lacking in opportunities for play, the British Science Association has called them 'the forgotten generation'. In truth, we do not yet know what the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be on this group.

Despite this, the needs of children and young people have been consistently overlooked. The pandemic has demonstrated just how low a priority we assign to their voices, notwithstanding the clear obligations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to include young people in decision-making and to listen to their views.

We write to ask you to take action to remedy this by prioritising and embedding the following simple commitments within your organisation.

First, in line with Article 12 of the UNCRC, we ask you to confirm publicly that The FA believes that all children and young people have the right to be heard in all matters affecting them. The UNCRC Committee confirms that this obligation arises irrespective of age. We would ask you to identify ways to make this right real in practice through all your operations, including through your guidance to national staff, County FAs, as well as to clubs and leagues. This should also be embedded in coach education.

Second, we would invite you to prioritise and promote actively the right to play under Article 31 of the UNCRC. The UNCRC Committee defines play this way:

" Children's play is any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise. Caregivers may contribute to the creation of environments in which play takes place, but play itself is non-compulsory, driven by intrinsic motivation and undertaken for its own sake, rather than as a means to an end. Play involves the exercise of autonomy, physical, mental or emotional activity, and has the potential to take infinite forms, either in groups or alone..... While play is often considered non-essential, the Committee reaffirms that it is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development."

The FA is uniquely placed to promote football beyond formal structures like leagues, placing value on, and encouraging genuine child-led play, accessible and free, in our communities.

We look forward to your response and confirm that we remain, as always, very happy to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Debbie Sayers, Club Secretary, Salisbury Rovers FC

Eamonn Doherty, Chair, Salisbury Rovers FC

Paul Goodwin - Lytham YMCA FC

Stephen Kavanagh

Andrew Dearing U14 & U11 coach

Professor Paul Whitty (Wallingford Town AFC)

Mark Bacon, Coach @ Wilpshire Wanderers

Toby Bishop

Rob Atkin FA coach

Michael Butcher, Grassroots Coach

Owen Mooney - Learning & Games Development Coordinator and PhD Student

Joe Harman- Grassroots coach and Educator

Ashley Hughes

AFC Salisbury

Free Play Network

Farrell Monk

Paul Cooper Director, The National Children's Football Alliance

Steve Hooper

Annie Graves

James Fallon

Efrim Niccals

Keir Doherty, AFC Salisbury U16s

J A Ratsey

Pete Forster

Tim Holmes

Dominic Miller

Jonathan Adamson

Paul Crompton

Nathalie Allexant-Rowland

David Hanna, AFC Salisbury U16s

Gareth Allexant-Rowland

Gemma Paice

Francis Mallon

John Gibbons

Eamonn Doherty

Paul McManus

Lewis Shah

Craig Gladwin

George Donohue AFC Salisbury U16s

Aaron Joseph AFC Salisbury U16s

Major Steadman

Yvette Holmes

James Brown

Sian Wright

Stuart Armstrong

Ian Dutson

Luke Regan

Steve Merritt

Stuart Garnett

Kenny Carroll

Richard Holmes

Paul Thomas

Alperen Olmez

Matthew Williams (Harlequins Foundation)

Susanne Spence

Kyle McCulloch

Peter Prickett

Donna Harris

Sian Wright

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