10 years of teamwork: McDonald’s national grassroots football partnership 2002-2012: coaching the coaches, valuing the volunteers and growing the game: executive summary

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Executive Summary
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& Dr Steven Bradbury
MARCH 2013

YEARS OF TEAMWORK

McDonald’s national grassroots football partnerships 2002–2012

Coaching the coaches, valuing the volunteers & growing the game
Ten years ago, we took the decision to invest the majority of our UK sponsorship funds into football and crucially into the grassroots of the game.

We wanted to invest back into the communities that we, our customers and our people are part of: supporting the unsung heroes who make the game happen, attracting more people to play a part in the game and developing the coaching skills of tens of thousands.

We clearly couldn’t do that alone. To achieve any positive impact on grassroots football, we needed the expertise, organisation and vision of the guardians of the game in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The partnerships we established in 2002 with The Football Association, The Scottish Football Association, The Football Association of Wales and, in Northern Ireland, with the Irish Football Association were created with bold ambitions for grassroots football at their heart.

Our collective ambitions included the creation of tens of thousands of trained coaches, the promotion of higher standards at the grassroots level and more recognition for the hundreds of thousands of people who selflessly devote themselves to supporting the people’s game.

Speaking on behalf of the entire McDonald’s business, I can confidently say that we are immensely proud of what our partnerships with each of the Football Associations has achieved.

But football they say is about results, and that is the role of this report.

We asked the Institute of Youth Sport to audit our programme to assess what our Football Association partnerships have achieved over the past ten years; and, more importantly, in what way improvements and innovations could be made to achieve more in the future.

The publishing of this report is timely given the recent success of London 2012 and as we look to the future, I hope businesses, communities and Government can work together to create a lasting legacy for sport in the UK.

JILL McDONALD
UK Chief Executive, McDonald's
Ten years of Teamwork – executive summary

• Professional and amateur grassroots football in the UK is governed by the four national football associations of England: (The FA), Scotland (The Scottish FA), Wales (FAW/WFT) and Northern Ireland (IFA). UK FAs differ markedly in the size and scope of their financial and operational infrastructures. Since 2002, UK FAs have each drawn up a series of broadly comparable strategies designed to enhance grassroots football, featuring a strong emphasis on raising standards and the development of clubs, coaches, and young players.

• UK FAs report significant progress in increasing the quantity and quality of the coaching workforce in grassroots football over the past ten years. For example, The FA reports around 56,000 Level 1 and 14,730 Level 2 coaches at FA Charter Standard clubs in England. UK FAs also report a marked increase in clubs achieving recognised club accreditation status during this period. Whilst most accredited clubs are situated in England, work of this kind has recently gathered momentum in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. UK FAs also report a general rise in participation of children and young people at accredited clubs. In England there has been a 19% rise in mini-soccer teams and a 7% rise in youth teams at accredited clubs since 2008. All UK FAs report a rise in the number of girls’ teams at accredited clubs.

• McDonald’s has a longstanding relationship with football in the UK. In 2002, McDonald’s became the UK FAs’ official Community Partner and has since made a significant financial investment to support the development of the grassroots game. This investment is split proportionately across the UK FAs to support work to improve coach education and development, club and workforce development, and children’s and youth football.

• Since the mid-1990s, there has been a steady rise in the numbers of people involved in formal and informal volunteering, especially in sports. The 2000s onwards have been an encouraging period for youth sport despite the economic crisis that began in 2008 posing severe challenges. Supported by the government strategy Game Plan, the School Sports Partnership programme increased the proportion of children taking part in at least two hours of sport per week from 25% in 2002 to 90% in 2009. It also helped foster positive links between schools and sports clubs, including football clubs.

THE WIDER CONTEXT
Coach education and development

- Since 2002, the main focus of the McDonald's grassroots football partnership has been around coach education and development. McDonald's input has been designed to support the work of UK FAs to redevelop the grassroots coaching infrastructure and increase the quantity and quality of coaches and coaching practice.

- Between 2002 and 2006, McDonald's investment has been used by UK FAs to support delivery of entry level coaching qualifications by providing free or subsidised places at coach education courses for teachers and parents at primary schools in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and coaches at accredited clubs in England. Since 2006, all UK FAs have used McDonald's investment to subsidise access to Level 1, Level 2 and New Youth coaching awards at accredited clubs. In Wales, the WFT has provided ongoing mentoring support to coaches as part of a UEFA commended coach re-validation programme. Overall, this has enabled coaches to match aspirations with applicability of content across vertical and horizontal coaching pathways.

- The McDonald's grassroots football partnership has contributed to increasing the number and diversity of qualified coaches across the UK. Over the last ten years, the McDonald's partnership has supported 25,000 coaches to achieve Level 1, Level 2 and New Youth Award coaching qualifications, including a significant number of BME groups and women. The provision of financial subsidies has helped coaches to circumvent barriers of cost and increased accessibility to coach education courses. In particular, it has helped to engage large numbers of coaches with no prior experience of coaching and has enabled them to ‘open the door’ and take their first steps along the coaching pathway.

- Results have included a series of positive personal and social benefits for older and younger adults undertaking coaching qualifications. These include: increased self-esteem, confidence and communication skills and organisational, planning and problem solving skills. This is especially the case amongst young coaches whose participation in the sport as volunteer coaches and leaders has contributed towards increased social capital and a stronger sense of active citizenship.

- Improvements have been seen in the technical development of coaches and support delivery of new innovative coaching practice at local level. It has also supported efforts towards changing traditional coaching philosophies from a ‘win at all costs’ mentality, towards an approach which prioritises fun, inclusivity and the learning needs of children. This is enhanced through increased opportunities for social interaction and information sharing between coaches from different backgrounds and experiences at coaching courses.

- Accredited clubs have been supported in establishing more robust coaching infrastructures and increasing size and scope of coaching capacities, with particular regard to coaching children and young people. Increased quantity, quality and professionalism of grassroots coaches has heightened the appeal of accredited clubs to children, young people and parents.

McDonald’s input has been designed to support the work of UK FAs to redevelop the grassroots coaching infrastructure and increase the quantity and quality of coaches and coaching practice.
Ten years of Teamwork – executive summary

• Since 2006, McDonald’s grassroots football partnership has supported an increasingly expansive strategic and operational focus of UK FAs to develop clubs and voluntary workforces in accordance with nationally recognised club accreditation programmes. In doing so, McDonald’s has worked with UK FAs to develop a range of financial, educational and resource-based support to ‘skill-up’ volunteers and improve club infrastructures. These have included: CPD workshops, The FA Your Game website, the McDonald’s KickStart website, the McDonald’s KickStart grants scheme, the McDonald’s Club Twinning programme, provision of kit and equipment to accredited clubs, and the annual Community Awards programme for volunteers and coaches in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

• The increasingly expansive programme of support enabled by the McDonald’s grassroots football partnership has helped define the roles and responsibilities of UK FA regional development teams and quickened the momentum of club and workforce development in the UK. This has included increasing the capacity of UK FAs to deliver a greater number and range of CPD courses and increasing the quantity and quality of volunteers with key skills and responsibilities for club management, administration, and child protection and welfare issues. Financial support has increased access to kit, equipment and resources essential to training sessions and competition organisation.

• The work of the McDonald’s grassroots football partnership to develop a series of regional and national Community Awards events has provided an important conduit to recognise and reward volunteers in grassroots football, helping build closer relationships between clubs and local and national FAs and increased volunteer retention and club sustainability over time.

• The McDonald’s grassroots football partnership has helped clubs to establish stronger infrastructures and enabled a more professional approach to service provision at grassroots. Clubs have become more centrally positioned as community sports hubs with increased appeal to children, young people and their families.

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The partnership has helped UK FAs and clubs to quicken the pace of introducing new diverse formats such as mini-soccer, futsal and small sided games, helping to increase the number of children playing football.
Children and young people

- The McDonald's grassroots football partnership focuses on increasing and broadening participation and ensuring quality experiences of football amongst children and young people, underscored by assisting accredited clubs to establish child protection and welfare policies and increase and improve the quality of grassroots coaching infrastructures.

- Results have seen a rise in the amount, frequency and scope of football provision targeting children and young people and the growing numbers taking part in organised football at grassroots clubs. It has also had a positive impact on broadening the diversity pool of young participants, in particular the growth in girls’ football. Programmes such as Mums on the Ball – a scheme that created female only courses designed to get mums into the game and qualify as coaches – have increased the number of female coaches acting as positive role models for young female footballers.

- Increased participation has helped engender a series of positive social and personal benefits for children and young people involved in playing the game. For younger children, benefits include increased confidence, communication and inter-personal skills, whilst older children are reported as exhibiting increased motivation, improved attitudes and behaviour and a growing sense of personal responsibility.

- The McDonald’s grassroots football partnership has helped UK FAs and clubs to quicken the pace of the introduction of new diverse formats such as mini-soccer, futsal and small sided games and helped increase the number of children playing football. In England there are presently around 66,000 mini-soccer and youth teams at FA Charter Standard clubs. Further, the work of McDonald’s to support the delivery of football festivals at schools and clubs has provided increased opportunities for children and parents in fun, family orientated football activities in a safe, supportive and non-competitive environments.

- Improvements in the technical development and child-friendly skill sets of coaches has had a positive effect on improving the quality of experiences of football amongst children and young people, raising the standards of children’s and youth football in an inclusive learning environment for young participants.

Supporting the strategic aims and objectives of UK FAs

- McDonald’s contribution to grassroots football has had a beneficial impact on the work of UK FAs to meet a series of objectives within their respective strategies for the development of the grassroots game. This includes increasing the number and quality of accredited clubs, raising standards of coaching provision, improving the technical development of young players, and increasing participation to include previously under-represented groups, such as women and girls.

- Public relations input has significantly raised the profile and shone a positive light on the grassroots game. In particular, the work of McDonald’s and UK FAs to develop national Community Awards has meant increased recognition and reward for club coaches and volunteers involved in delivering and sustaining the grassroots game at the local level.
The wider social and sporting context

- Many UK households are experiencing a steady decline in living standards and a reduction in disposable income. Youth unemployment remains high, especially in regions already experiencing socio-economic deprivation. Since 2008, there has been a significant decline in rates of formal and informal volunteering.

- Since 2010, there has been a substantial reduction in funding for school sport. This is likely to halt progress in increasing participation in sport and physical activity amongst children. Whilst the most recent data from the DCMS Active People survey does show an increase in participation since the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games among those aged 26 or over, there has been no increase in participation among the 16-25 year olds in the six years since October 2006.

Coach education and development: priorities and challenges

- UK FAs continue to express strong commitment towards coach education and development in the medium term, with emphasis on increasing quantity and quality of coaches. The new FA Youth Development Review places further emphasis on the importance of Youth Awards and child centred coaching practice. The commitment of UK FAs reflects the aspirations of accredited clubs. Forthcoming priorities include: increasing the number and diversity of coaches; developing young coaches; further enhancing the skill-set of existing coaches; and engaging in wider coach networks to share best practice in coaching children.

- Challenges to coach education and development include balancing resource limitations with increasing demands on UK FA regional and county development teams to deliver a comprehensive service of coach education, especially at smaller FAs with limited funds and at larger FAs where rapid expansion of club accreditation programmes has increased demand for coach education. These challenges are exacerbated by economic recession and increasingly limited disposable income of coaches and clubs.
Club and workforce development: priorities and challenges

- UK FAs continue to express commitment to improving club and workforce development. In particular UK FAs are keen to assist more clubs to achieve accreditation and to support clubs to achieve ‘gold star’ status. Priorities for clubs include: attaining further accreditation; increasing the number and diversity of volunteers with emphasis on parents and young people; improved service provision to children and young people.

- Challenges to club and workforce development include: cost of CPD workshops and in-service training; decline in adult and youth volunteering; difficulties in recruitment and retention of new volunteers; over-reliance on a small number of ‘stalwart’ volunteers.

Children and young people: priorities and challenges

- UK FAs continue to focus on developing children’s and youth football. The new FA Youth Development Review provides an ambitious strategy which promises to build on existing good practice and further embed mini-soccer and small sided games as central pillars of children’s and youth football. The commitment of UK FAs and the new Youth Development Review has been warmly welcomed by grassroots clubs in these areas. Priorities include: increased focus on youth orientated coaching awards; delivery of more and better quality child centred football provision.

- Challenges to children’s and youth football include limited affordability, and the accessibility and quality of training and playing facilities. This is specially the case with reference to local authority cut-backs and poor pitch maintenance, lack of access to schools facilities, and the high cost of hiring private leisure facilities. Further challenges include the limited operational capacities of UK FAs, schools and local authorities to implement the practical considerations of the FA Youth Development Review, in particular the emphasis on additional material and resource support required to ‘bring to life’ this process.

Final recommendations

- In Section 5 of this the report, the IYS research team provides a series of recommendations designed to inform the potential future of work of McDonald’s and the UK FAs to continue to develop the grassroots game in the UK. Recommendations are intended to build on existing good practice, complement future priorities and circumvent those forthcoming challenges briefly alluded to above and discussed more fully in the main sections of this report.
4 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

10 years of teamwork

397 clubs
In Scotland have achieved Scottish FA Quality Mark status since 2006

400,000 Volunteers supported in the UK since 2001

1,000+ Number of clubs twinned with 784 McDonald’s restaurants

700+ New qualified coaches were created by McDonald’s and the Irish FA

12,000+ ‘After school’ football clubs were established in Wales between 2002 and 2006

1,000+
Number of clubs twinned with 784 McDonald’s restaurants
Increase in children participating in at least two hours of sport per week between 2002 and 2010

COACHING FACTS

Level 1 Level 2
56,000 14,730
Coaches qualified at FA Charter Standard Clubs in England

12,000 + Coaches across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland over a year take equivalent courses

10,000 coaches
Since 2006 have achieved further footballing qualifications thanks to support from McDonald’s

PLAYER STATS

19%
Increase in participation numbers for mini soccer teams since 2008

7%
Increase in male youth teams respectively

GIRLS ON THE UP

Increase in girls’ participation in football across the UK

15%

97%

27%

53%