



RiverSIDE BY SIDE

Annual Report 24/25





Welcome...

to the annual report for Middlesbrough Football Club's equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) commitment – RiverSideBySide.

The aim of this report is to share our progress on the EDI agenda over the last season, highlighting best practice case studies amongst our staff and supporters. At MFC, one of our core values is inclusion, and it is vital to us that all staff and supporters feel welcome and included whilst at our club.

In the past twelve months we were recognised with the Bronze, and then Silver levels of the English Football League's (EFL) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Code of Practice and in summer of 2025 we will be assessed for the Gold standard. Through their 'Together' strategy, the EFL's vision is that EFL clubs are reflective and representative of the communities that they serve at all levels of the game.

As outlined in our Equality and Diversity Statement of Commitment, at MFC we are **'committed to promoting equality by treating people fairly and with respect; by recognising inequalities exist; by taking steps to address them; and by providing access and opportunities for all members of the community.'**

We are committed to eliminating discrimination on the basis of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. We will ensure that we treat people fairly and with respect, and that we will provide access and opportunities for all. Football is a place for all.

RiverSIDE
BY**SIDE**



Working closely with independent charitable arm MFC Foundation, the RiverSideBySide campaign was first established in 2017 with the aim of making the club a more welcoming place for supporters, staff, and any other stakeholders. The campaign spans our club on a match day and non-match day and the work we deliver out in the Teesside community.

The campaign continues to be a huge success and this review provides some case studies on just some of those successes over the past 12 months.

As part of our commitment to inclusion, we run an internal EDI steering group, and have sub-committees including an ethnically diverse communities group, a deaf awareness group and mental health and wellbeing group within our Academy. This season, we are also creating a group which focusses on educating Academy players on race, and the effects of racism.

Through our internal EDI steering group, we carry out surveys every two years to understand the make-up and backgrounds of our staff and supporters. The data collected helps influence our strategies with an aim of ensuring that everyone feels welcome at our football club.

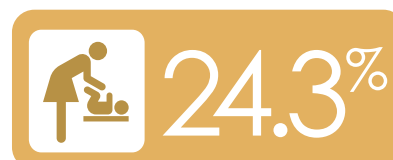
THANK YOU to all our staff and supporters who completed our survey.
The information gathered provides us with valuable data to drive inclusion across all areas of our club and ensure everyone feels welcome.

Our supporters

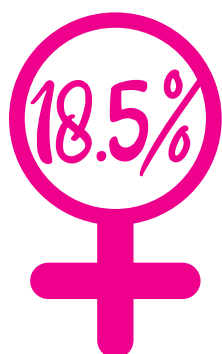
Over 3,000 supporters completed our EDI survey.
Thank you!



1.6% of our supporters are from an ethnic minority.



24.3% of our supporters know we have a Changing Places facility at our stadium.



18.5% of our supporters are female.



19.5% of our supporters are disabled, with the most common disabilities being mental health condition, long term illness, physical impairment (ambulant) and hearing impairment.



75.4% of our supporters said they know how to report inappropriate or discriminatory language or behaviour in the club.

We received some amazing feedback as part of our survey. We received hundreds of positive comments and ideas for us to take forward. We were also asked some common questions. *The answers are below...*

The Riverside has a purpose-built Changing Places facility

- a fully accessible toilet with a height adjustable changing bench, a hoisting system, a peninsular toilet, and additional space to accommodate a disabled person, their wheelchair and carer(s).

This facility is located in the concourse of the West Stand Lower, and our staff at the Ticket Office can advise where the best seating is for access.

To contact our Disability Liaison Officer, please email: **rosemary.berks@mfc.co.uk** or call: **01642 757661**.

To report discrimination on a match day,

please contact the MFC EDI text line by texting: **RSBS to 60777**, giving full details of the incident and which stand, row and seat it took place if possible. The text will be sent to the matchday safety team who will investigate via steward intervention as well as direct or remote observation. Alternatively, please contact a steward on the day, or email: **supporters@mfc.co.uk**



In partnership with students from Teesside University, we offer an audio-descriptive commentary service. The specialist commentary provides additional, detailed narration to help convey all the action of the match to blind or visually impaired supporters.

If interested, please email: **brian.robinson@mfc.co.uk** or call: **01642 757661**.

Our Prayer Room is located in the upper East Stand, near to our Foundation's offices in the Willie Maddren Centre. It is also accessible from any side of the stadium.


Please contact a steward if you would like to access it.



Our Sensory Room is available on a match day for any supporter who may require a quiet space, prior to, during or after the match. If you would like to access the Sensory Room, please email: **supporters@mfc.co.uk**



Did you know...

-  15 of our frontline staff have completed a 12 week course in British Sign Language, to enable us to assist supporters who are deaf or hard of hearing.
 -  In 2024 and 2025, MFC Foundation delivered a Ramadan football league from 9 - 11pm, during the month of Ramadan.
 -  MFC has a dedicated Disability Liaison Officer to support our disabled fans and staff.
 -  In 2025, MFC became a member of Her Game Too to promote inclusivity at football matches at the Riverside.
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Our workforce

12% of our workforce have a disability with the most common areas being mental health condition, long term illness and learning difficulty






6.8% of our workforce identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual

14.8% of our workforce are from ethically diverse backgrounds

44.8% of our workforce are female

40.3% of our workforce are aged 18 - 24 years old

Did you know...

-  MFC is a **Disability Confident Employer**, a government backed scheme which encourages employers to take positive action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop disabled people.
-  Over 300 of our match day staff have completed dementia awareness training and MFC is a Dementia Friendly employer.
-  20 young children, and leaders from Waterloo Road mosque visited our Academy this year, to learn about each other's cultures. Club and Academy players visited the same Mosque to take part in an Iftar event.
-  Across MFC and MFC Foundation we have 16 trained Mental Health first aiders who are trained to assist staff and supporters.
-  Supported by MFC, MFC Foundation deliver a monthly Dementia Dance at the Riverside Stadium for anyone living with Dementia, and their families.



JOE SCOTT - Case study one

As part of our Unite For Access fixture, championing our supporters with disabilities, lifelong Boro fan Joe Scott was invited to fulfil his dream of becoming our matchday PA for the day.

Joe, who has autism, was delighted to have the opportunity to read the teams out at the Riverside - and inspire others too.

"It was an amazing day from start to finish," Joe said. "I absolutely loved it.

"I have autism, so I think the expectation would be that I would be a bag of nerves, but I really wasn't.

"I do it at the wrestling shows, but the big difference is, that's maybe to around 400-800 people. There were about 20,000 inside the Riverside Stadium at the time I read the team out!

"My nephew is on the spectrum as well. He's only four years old. He's probably higher on the spectrum than me, but I kind of look at it as me needing to try and be an inspiration for him.

"I couldn't thank Middlesbrough FC enough, and to top it off, we got a great result as well! It was a day that I will never forget."

“My autism was never going to stop me realising my Boro dream”



GRAHAM HANSFORD - Case study two



Chief Steward Graham Hansford has worked for the club for approaching 25 years. He spoke out about his own experiences representing the club as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

“Whether you’re coming to the Riverside as a fan or coming to work, it’s a really big part of your life,” Graham said.

“Being able to be open and honest with who I am when I am here is really important to me.

“We have a lot of supporters who identify as LGBTQ+, a lot of families, a lot of women; we want them to feel safe here, we want them to enjoy football.

“It’s the reason I’ve been here as long as I have and the reason I am happy here. I don’t need to hide anything, I can be open with my team, I can be open with supporters and that’s great.

“We can’t and shouldn’t underestimate the solidarity between football and the LGBTQ+ community. The Riverside Stadium is a place where everyone is welcome, football is for everyone, and we want people to want to come here”.

“Being able to be open and honest with who I am at the Riverside is really important to me”

ISAAC OLAOLU - Case study three

Active Through Football is MFC Foundation's inclusivity-led health project, inviting participants from all walks of the Teesside community to take part in free sessions: not limited to football and also including a diverse range of activities from table tennis to tai chi.

Many of the group were signposted from the Foundation's previous 'Football Welcomes' initiative, helping to integrate refugees and asylum seekers, but the project caters to a wider remit.

Participant Isaac Olaolu is a great example...

"The Foundation was welcoming like a family to me," he said.



"If I was trying to talk to people they were always open. Every time you come to a session, someone's always there to say, 'hey, how are you doing?'"

"It's small things but it made me realise, oh, people do care about immigrants coming into the country.

"It takes things off you, because you have these small sessions where you can just be happy. It's really been helpful."

“MFC was welcoming like a family”



MARGARET BRADSHAW - Case study four

We're among a host of clubs across the country working with organisation Her Game Too.

Their ambition is to tackle sexism and promote gender equality within football: raising awareness of the issues female fans and participants face, engaging with the community, and offering educational initiatives.

We welcomed Margaret 'Mags' Bradshaw, a Teesside businesswoman and passionate Boro fan, as our first Her Game Too ambassador.

"Being an ambassador for Middlesbrough FC with Her Game Too is an absolute honour," Mags said.

"Sport is for all and Her Game Too is leading the way in ensuring that this is visible both on the pitch and off. I believe that sport unites a nation and therefore that is everyone so being able to take an active role in promoting that on behalf of such a wonderful football club is truly humbling and very exciting.

"Having been actively involved with the women's team at the club as a sponsor and vocal spectator, this role with Her Game Too will be such a great opportunity to share the message of inclusivity across both the men's and women's games."

“Such a great opportunity to share the message of inclusivity”



MFC and MFC Foundation Eid Party

The Riverside's first-ever Eid Party was as day of joy and celebration.

Working alongside Amal Project Teesside, six local primary schools were invited to attend the summer showcase, with representatives from Abingdon, Ayresome, Newport, North Ormesby, Priory Woods and Sunnyside filling the Legends Lounge.

The event coincided with Eid al-Adha, the second of the two main festivals in the Islamic calendar, as well as the fifth birthday of the Amal Project Teesside, which has remained a long-time partner of the club and MFC Foundation since our joint work supporting the Teesside community during lockdown.



Throughout the morning, students enjoyed a guided tour of the Riverside, an inclusive workshop and a range of activities including footgolf, table football and the Foundation speed cage in the Generation Red Family Zone.

On the menu for lunch was a meal box courtesy of Punjabi Kitchen, before a presentation led by Sahida Ditta, founder of the Amal Project, and national speaker Imam Wajid Malik celebrated the students' work, with each child having submitted a celebratory Eid card prior to the event.

Two giant banners exhibited the hundreds of entries, while the 18 winners were invited to the front for a commemorative picture and prizes. At the end of the event, all children received a designated MFC and Amal Project goodie bag.



South Asian community tournament

Boro's Academy staged a football tournament for the South Asian community with the aim of giving participation opportunities for young people in Middlesbrough, many of whom had not previously been encouraged or allowed to play football.

Over 40 young people between the ages of 7 and 11 took part in a tournament held at Teesside University.



Representatives from the FA shared information on how to get involved in grassroots football and how parents can support their children during their football journey.

Following the tournament, some of the young people were invited to take part in the Emerging Talent Festival in Loughborough, facilitated by the Premier League. Under 7s and Under 11s represented MFC on the day, competing with other EFL and PL teams.





For more information, please contact:

supporters@mfc.co.uk

enquiries@mfcfoundation.co.uk

