



WATERFORD

Football Club

FSR Strategy 2023-2028

#OneClubOneCommunity



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Opening Statement

Waterford FC is committed to engaging with different individuals, groups & organisations to make a positive impact in our community. We have employed a full-time FSR manager and have now developed a Football Social Responsibility Strategy. We are committed to being a genuine community club, where all our initiatives are open to everyone, no matter what club you support or what sport you play.

Our focus is on areas where we feel we can make a genuine positive impact, no matter how small, on the lives of people in our community. Using the club and all its resources as a vehicle to drive this we are very aware of our responsibilities, and we do not take that lightly. We aim to make a positive impact in the following areas: Health & Well Being, Modern Poverty, Football for All, Social Inclusion, Mental Health & Anti-Discrimination. As we grow, we can expand these areas and as society provides new challenges we can adjust our focus.

There are many challenges facing different age groups in our community and Waterford FC are able to provide support for some of those respective challenges. We have already made many positive impacts across our community and are committed to continuing and growing all the time. We are ambitious in what we want to achieve and we are constantly learning but our commitment to our community and specific challenges remains.

Yours in Sport,
Richy Walsh
General Manager





Our Goal

At Waterford Football Club we hope to cultivate the seeds of change by helping build the foundations of a thriving community. A community united and invigorated through the transformative power of football. We adopt a collaborative approach and explore ways to improve their circumstances. Our process is to actively engage with these groups and seek opportunities for beneficial development. By taking small steps, we can steadily move forward and make continuous progress. Our aim is to create a positive impact on people's lives with Waterford Football Club serving as the driving force behind this strategy, acting as a vehicle to bring about meaningful change.



Highlights to Date

- First LOI Club to provide an Autism Friendly Match Day Experience (AFME)
- First LOI Club to provide a permanent “Quiet Room” in a stadium.
- Use of the “Quiet Room” for children with additional needs outside of football related activities.
- WFC ASD “Football Friends” ongoing successful initiative providing a unique opportunity to be involved in a football related activity for children with Autism.
- Roy Butler Memorial Trophy - An annual half time penalty competition involving under 14 players from grass roots clubs
- Production of Monthly Publication to raise funds for community projects in our area
- Shortlisted for European Football Development Network (EFDN) #MoreThanFootball award
- Establishment of Permanent Community Boot Room structure in partnership with Suir Engineering
- Formation of over-50's Walking Football group
- Developed a 5-year Football Social Responsibility Strategy



Our Game Plan

This toolkit is essential for implementing our strategy. It is crucial to possess a strong knowledge base in order to effectively identify and select the appropriate action plan, thereby ensuring a successful outcome.

	PURPOSE	PROPOSED OUTCOME	PROCESS
FIXTURES	Identify areas that we can make an impact	Identify and engage relevant stakeholders and investigate the clubs role and ability to influence change	Investigate Internal & External framework and legislation. Explore funding
SCOUTING	Identify a list of issues where we can develop a positive change	Consider our framework with a view to achieve a sustainable initiative while knowing our limitations	Create our strategy development goals
TEAM SELECTION	Identify suitable team players and community partners with first-hand knowledge to meet the needs required	Build trusting relationships	Take on board advice given by our team players to create initiatives tailored to their specific needs with understanding and compassion
CLUB ANALYSIS	External issues identified and exploring the clubs ability to make a positive impact	Support from club management in the development of a solution	Validating issues identified and developing initiatives to close the gaps
TACTICS	Form a plan with objects and targets. Create a timeline. List clear and identified roles and responsibilities	Choose the correct team for specific roles to implement objectives in an effort to create ownership and success	Use the 'SMART' process - SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ACHIEVEABLE, RELEVANT, TIMELINE
MATCH RESULT	Measure impact and level of success in order to demonstrate accountability	Show that our team of stakeholders, pillars, community partners and management team have met all targets & objectives	Self-evaluation. Encourage feedback. Collect Data

Total Football

We aim to enhance connectivity and support for individuals through the football club, extending beyond the field.

This will be achieved by:

- Face to face community engagement fostering meaningful connections and understanding.
- Enhancing our skills and abilities ensuring that we are equipped with the necessary expertise to address the challenges at hand.
- Adhering to policies and governance. We will diligently follow established policy and governance protocols set out by the club, ensuring that our actions are in line with ethical standards & core values.
- Gathering comprehensive and reliable data to inform our future decision making processes enabling us to make well-informed choices and measure the impact of our initiatives accurately.
- Support from club management, volunteers and facilities within the community.
- Working with the RSC stadium management working collaboratively to successfully implement the strategy.

Our commitment to enhancing connectivity and support off the field is driven by our belief in the power of community and the positive impact it can have on individuals. We are dedicated to creating a football club that provides an engaging environment that fosters personal growth, inclusivity and a strong sense of belonging.

Waterford FC can use resources available to make a positive impact, following investigation here are five key areas where we strive to create such opportunities.

- 1. Health and Wellbeing**
- 2. Modern Poverty**
- 3. Football for All**
- 4. Climate Action**
- 5. Anti-Discrimination and inclusion**



Waterford FC Policies

Policy	Operational Protocols/ Practices	Specialist/ Expert Advise	Training Strategy	Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism
<p>Racism and Equality</p>	<p>Welcomes all supporters to its grounds and condemns any form of bigotry and discrimination in football. Waterford FC in all its activities will not discriminate or in any way treat anyone less favourably on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race or nationality, ethnic origin, colour, religion or belief, ability, or disability. Waterford FC does not condone hostile abuse of individual players, spectators, stadium staff or officials.</p>	<p>Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2008</p> <p>Employment Equality Acts 1998-2004</p> <p>Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Acts 1989</p> <p>Any amendments to these acts and any new legislation.</p>	<p>Development of a programme of ongoing training and awareness raising events and activities to promote the eradication of discrimination and promote equality in football and all football related activities.</p>	<p>Waterford FC commits itself to immediate investigation of any claims of discrimination where such is found to be the case, a requirement that the practice stop and sanctions imposed as appropriate. Those found to be involved in any such behaviour can face ejection from the ground and may face suspension from all Waterford FC matches & activities.</p>
<p>Equality, Diversion & Inclusion</p>	<p>Waterford FC is committed to achieving an environment which provides equality of opportunity and freedom from unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation. The Objective of this policy is to stop all forms of unlawful discrimination in line with all Equality Acts.</p>	<p>Equal Status Acts 2000-2008</p> <p>Employment Equality Acts 1998-2204</p>	<p>Ensure all staff can identify and prevent unconscious bias. Encourage all staff to be proactive in their approach. Explain why it is important for everyone to be treated and dignity and respect. Help others overcome barriers they have been faced with.</p>	<p>Implement a monitoring too such as using equality and diversity monitoring forms given to job applicants and employees. This will allow the measuring of diversity within the current workforce and allow equality improvements if required. Ensure all staff can identify and prevent unconscious bias and be proactive in their approach. Make adjustments to premises for accountability.</p>

Waterford FC Policies

Policy	Operational Protocols/ Practices	Specialist/ Expert Advise	Training Strategy	Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism
Environmental & Sustainability	To comply with, and exceed where practicable, all applicable legislation, regulations and codes of practice. To integrate Environmental & Sustainability considerations into all our business decisions. Ensure the promotion and education of our Environmental and Sustainability policy with a commitment to implement and improve. Make out partners are aware of our Environmental policy and encourage them to adopt sound sustainable management practices.	Waterford City and County Council	Ensure that all full-time, part-time staff & sports college students take account of environmental and sustainability issues. Include a copy of Waterford FC Environment and Sustainability Policy in all proposals to potential consortia partners.	<p>Environment Aims:</p> <p>Energy and Carbon: Waterford FC will work with Waterford City and County Council to save energy during club matches.</p> <p>Travel: Waterford FC will promote sustainable travel to employees and supporters where possible.</p> <p>Waste Management: Waterford FC follows waste hierarchy Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover where practically possible. Review and repport annually striving to improve our environmental and sustainability performance.</p>
Football For All	Waterford FC are committed to taking supportive action in all areas of concern within the community as we feel we have a responsibility to provide an accessible and safe environment for all regardless of age, gender, race, ability, sexual orientation and religion or belief. Development of ongoing initiatives will be rolled out following needs highlighted from community stakeholders. Recognising and removing obstacles preventing families of children with additional needs experiencing a football game first-hand.	Sports Ability Waterford. Sports Ability Ireland. 50 Shades of Exceptional. ASIAM. Autism Friendly Waterford. Age and Opportunity.	The collaboration or Waterford FC with community partners, stakeholders and services with view to investigate individual needs.	Implement a monitoring too such as using equality and diversity monitoring forms given to job applicants and employees. This will allow the measuring of diversity within the current workforce and allow equality improvements if required. Ensure all staff can identify and prevent unconscious bias and be proactive in their approach. Make adjustments to premises for accountability.

Waterford FC Policies

Policy	Operational Protocols/ Practices	Specialist/ Expert Advise	Training Strategy	Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism
<p>Child Safeguarding</p>	<p>Waterford FC is committed to safeguarding children by working under the guidance of our safeguarding principals and procedures set forth by the FAI and UEFA, and we align with national laws and regulations related to child protection and safety. We have implemented a comprehensive recruitment policy that include thorough background checks, interviews and assessments for all staff members. We have established a code of conduct that outlines expected behaviour for all staff members, ensure they act as positive role models for the children and young players. We actively communicate with parents, players and staff members to ensure compliance with our code of conduct and child safeguarding policies. We collaborate with relevant authorities, organisations and experts to improve our child safeguarding practicies.</p>	<p>FAI Child Safeguarding Policy. UEFA Child Safeguarding Policy. TUSLA.</p>	<p>Provision of access to Safeguarding training. All staff are trained in safeguarding, recognising signs of abuse and appropriate behaviour when working with children. Ensure adequate child to adult ratios.</p>	<p>Procedures for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct by staff or volunteers against a child availing of our activities. Safe recruitment and selection of all staff and volunteers to work with children in our activities. Procedure for reporting of child protection or welfare to Statutory Authorities. Following an investigation, if a person is found to have breached the Club, FAI Rules and committed an offence in relation to Child Protection and Welfare they shall be subject to disciplinary action. This may be Club level or at FAI level if appropriate who have the rights to liaise with Statutory Authorities. Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons in the relevant service who are mandated. Procedure for appointing a relevant person - the DLP. Waterford FC regularly review and update the code of conduct to ensure alignment with FAI, UEFA and any other relevant guidelines.</p>

Health and Wellbeing

Purpose

Focus on isolation, mental health and activity for older adults. Some older adults are at greater risk of depression and anxiety, because of dire living conditions, poor physical health or lack of access to quality supports and services according to World Health Organisation (WHO) 2022.

School visits to promote mental health awareness and health and wellbeing in students.

The topic of mental health has been identified as an area of concern within the community by schools and stakeholders. Following investigation, it was highlighted that “just 5% of Ireland’s total government health expenditure is allocated to mental health. Currently Ireland has 10 psychiatrists per 100,000 people according to Dr. Hyland Associate Professor of Psychology at Maynooth University that led a study consisting of a national representative sample, June 22”. According to the HSE there are currently 4,631 people on waiting lists for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) August 2023.

Waterford FC are confident in the ability to position ourselves within the framework to aid the community to reach positive mental health development goals. It is important to fully understand our role and create realistic expectations to maximise our impact and ensure that our efforts align with the community’s needs.

Proposed Outcome

Provide access to regular group exercise as it has a profoundly positive impact on mental health and loneliness. It also relieves stress, improves memory and boosts ones’ overall mood.

Improving social relations between age related groups and fostering a positive and productive environment influencing the overall satisfaction and success of its members.

Use KPIs set out by the FAI as opportunities for those who are isolated from society to connect into communities.

Encourage participants to appreciate and respect their differences and celebrating their similarities providing a space where all feel valued and accepted.

Proposed Outcome

Using community partners and stakeholder engagement - Identify groups within the community that are socially isolated.



Health and Wellbeing

(cont.)

Partake in school and club visits and programmes with staff members.

Secure outside funding to ensure sustainability.

Engage management and explore the value they can contribute to our objectives.

Deliver programmes that break down the barriers of isolation.

Gather feedback from participants to elevate the effectiveness and success of programmes.

Maintain attendance records to ensure that the programme delivered is well received and tailored to the specific needs of the community regarding the promotion of health and well-being.

Programmes

Programme	Timeline
Walking Football	Q3 2023 - Q1 2024
Football Memories	Commencing Q1 2024
Bingo	Commencing Q2 2024
Well Being Walking	Commencing Q3 2024
School Programmes	Q1 - Q4 2024



Modern Poverty

Purpose

To help remove financial barriers preventing individuals in the community from participating in football related sports. According to the University of Bristol “modern poverty is not simply about living on low incomes, but being unable to have what we all consider the basic necessities of life” (2011). As a result of inadequate income and resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities that are considered the norm for other people in society. Waterford FC aim to utilize KPIs and community initiatives/programmes to enhance accessibility to football related activities for community stakeholders. (One in eight people are living on an income below the poverty line (13.1% of the population), this equates to 670,000 people, according to Social Justice Ireland Poverty Focus 2023)

Proposed Outcome

The objective is to improve the accessibility of football for families with limited or no disposable income. Waterford FC firmly believes football should be accessible to everyone regardless of their financial circumstances.

Process

We aim to create opportunities that enable these families to engage in football activities without financial constraints.

Research which area in the community would benefit from football related activities where Waterford FC can make the greatest impact. This can be accomplished by building relationships with local community groups that have experienced modern poverty.

Provision of a breakfast club within local schools. 2023 saw the provision of 20 breakfast clubs in a school with an average of 42 participants attending each club.

The launch of a “Community Boot/Kit Room”.

Introducing a community boot room that is open to all, regardless of their sport or club affiliations. The boot rooms becomes a hub where individuals can come together and donate their unwanted sports gear united by their shared passion for sport and the desire to support one another. This will provide an opportunity for those in need to reuse these items. The positive impact extends beyond the community to collectively contribute to a more sustainable future where unwanted sports gear is given a second chance to serve a purpose and out of landfills.

Allocate tickets to families that experience economic challenges as identified by local schools and community organisations.



Modern Poverty

(cont.)

We will continue to gather data to demonstrate the club's ability to create a positive impact, both socially and economically, for those experiencing modern poverty. By following the core values and policies of the club, support from management and seeking guidance from community pillars, we will work together to achieve our shared goal.

(cont.)

Programme	Timeline
Breakfast Club	Q3 - Q4 2023
Boot/Kit Room	2024
School Programmes	Q1 inc. Q4 2024



Football For All

Purpose

Make match day accessible for all. Research by the National Autistic Society suggests that autistic people and their families are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness compared to non-autistic members of the community. This can be due to a lack of acceptance and understanding by society, making them feel excluded. The role of Waterford FC is to work in collaboration with the RSC and community pillars to make any adjustments required to the stadium to make match day accessible for all.

(The latest statistics from CDC 2023 shows that one in 36 children is now diagnosed with Autism)

Use community based initiatives/programmes in partnership with community groups and services that possess a deep understanding of the specific needs of individuals with autism to provide a football related activity specifically for children with Autism. Identify and select a facility that meets the necessary criteria to operate the chosen programme.

Improve accessibility to stadium and facilities for people with disabilities and additional needs.

Proposed Outcome

Accessibility should be a fundamental aspect for every football club. By prioritizing inclusivity, we can create an environment that caters to the needs of individuals regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

Provision of football related activities for children of all levels and abilities to attend.

Waterford FC plan to use the resources available to combat the loneliness and isolation among children and families affected by autism. Our goal is to increase awareness and promote a more inclusive and understanding community towards autism. We aim to encourage and inspire fellow football clubs to adopt practices that make match day more accessible to all, working together to create a more supportive and inclusive environment.

Process

Engage with local community groups and parents to inform us of what is required to make the stadium more accessible as their insights provide valuable guidance in identifying potential barriers and implementing effective solutions. Encouraging constant communication and feedback from parents to ensure we continue to meet requirements.

Talk to schools with ASD Units attached.

Football For All

(cont.)

Meet with different disability groups and organisations to see what other activities we can provide.

Recruit volunteers as Community Ambassadors. These volunteers work as a support for families of children with Autism on match night as part of AFME. Requirements of the role states it must be a person over the age of 18 that has experience of Autism either professionally or personally.

Research different funding options and community partners.

Explore the available support options provided by the clubs' management team. Collaboration with the stadium staff to identify potential modifications for enhancing stadium accessibility.

Early stage development of Visually Impaired Football.

It is crucial to gather data of attendees for these programmes, as it not only gauges their success but also showcases the club's ability to utilize available resources to ensure that football related activities and match nights are accessible to all. Regular feedback and communication between attendees and Waterford FC are essential for the continuous development of programmes that effectively meet the needs of participants.

Football For All Programmes

Programme	Timeline	Participants
AFME Autism Friendly Matchday Experience	Q2 2023 - ongoing	53 Families attended
ASD Football Friends	Q2 2023 - ongoing	484
Visually Impaired Football	Proposed 2024	-

Climate Action

Purpose

Following the National Climate Action Plan published by the government 2021, Waterford FC aspire to work in alliance with Waterford City and County Council following the plan to take decisive action to put Ireland on a more sustainable path. This will aid Waterford in the vulnerability of negative effects of climate change. This includes plans to partake in national lighting efficiency and the installation of renewable technologies at Local Authority sites. Waterford FC will work in partnership with Waterford City and County Council following goals set in our Environmental and Sustainability Policy to reduce our carbon footprint in the RSC. Climate adaption involves taking action to prepare for and adjust to the current and future impacts of climate change. The role of Waterford FC is to use the leverage, popularity and reach of football as a platform for educating and promoting awareness on ways to collectively reduce our carbon footprint.

Engage the fans, food vendors and partners in this endeavour.

Investigate how the watering of football pitches in the realm of climate action has garnered significant attention. Although essential for maintaining the quality of the pitch it has a negative environmental impact.

Proposed Outcome

Collaborating with the RSC, our local Community Climate Action Officer and Waterford City and County Council to explore ways we can effectively minimise our carbon footprint. Highlight our climate action efforts.

Engaging with food vendors in our climate action initiatives by raising awareness and educating them on the importance of our climate action strategy.

Awareness-Advocacy-Action. Highlight our sustainability initiatives and policies to engage, educate and empower our supporters and staff alike, encouraging them to contribute to a more sustainable future.

Proposed Outcome

Explore the stadiums use of renewable energy sources to power the stadium with the RSC and Waterford City and County Council. Focus on our energy efficiency by upgrading our stadium lighting, where needed, with more energy efficient led bulbs. This simple switch can significantly decrease our electricity consumption. Not only will this help to combat climate change it will also serve as a powerful symbol of our commitment to sustainability.



Climate Action

(cont.)

Encourage the use of reusable cups and containers reducing the reliance on single use plastic. It will be recommended that on site vendors be encouraged to provide discounts for customers who opt for reusable cup refills to promote the use of environmentally friendly practices.

Assist vendors in sourcing and utilizing recyclable materials for their products. Include a copy of our environmental and sustainability policy in all our proposals to potential partners.

Implementing a comprehensive waste management programme can divert a significant amount of waste from landfills. Partnering with local recycling facilities and waste management companies can ensure our efforts are effective and sustainable. Follow the waste hierarchy Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover where practically possible.

Investigate the irrigation methods employed for the maintenance of the pitch.

Ensure all individuals working/volunteering within all aspects of the club take account of environmental issues. Promote sustainable travel to employees where possible.

To review, annually report to evaluate targets to continuously strive to improve our Environmental and Sustainability performance.



Anti-Discrimination and Inclusion

Purpose

According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Census 2023 dual Irish citizens increased from 2,216 from 3,582 while non-Irish citizens accounted for 11% of the county's population. The Census also provided many new ethnic groups such as Roma, Indian/Pakistan/Bangladeshi and Arab that join other ethnic groups living in Waterford. Embracing diversity and ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their ages, sex, race or ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation and gender identity, ability or disability, education and income feel valued and respected is paramount. The role of Waterford FC as club deeply rooted in its community's history, is to evolve and accurately reflect the diversity of the surrounding area.

This will be achieved by Waterford FC by fostering an environment that supports the inclusion of minorities valuing their unique contributions and experiences utilizing community programmes and home games.

“No one is born another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite” - Nelson Mandela)

Proposed Outcome

Promote inclusivity in football by providing opportunities for individuals to play football related activities or support the Blues, regardless of age, sex, race or ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation and gender identity, ability or disability, education and income. By eliminating any barriers that may hinder their participation or enjoyment of the game, we can create a more inclusive and diverse football community. This will be achieved using resources available to the club. Waterford FC can utilise programmes to promote engagement from the stakeholders representing the diverse community residing in Waterford. All groups will come together under the banner of Waterford FC and strive to appreciate and respect individual differences.

Proposed Outcome

Ticket allocation to refugee rest house allowing us to unite on a single entity, regardless of our nationalities, to cheer on the Blues.

Community ticket allocation for minority groups and additional needs/disability groups.

Engaging with support services working with individuals with substance abuse recovery.

Funding for community work is provided in part by the sales of the “Blue Army”. This is a monthly publication that showcases the remarkable community initiatives that encompass various segments and



Anti-Discrimination and Inclusion

(cont.)

groups within our community. It highlights the diverse and impactful work being done. It provides a professional and engaging platform that not only informs but also inspires readers to actively participate in community-building activities. Explore funding opportunities from other sources and community partnerships to ensure sustainability.

Using the platform of Waterford FC programmes and KPIs, gather individuals from similar backgrounds in the community building a sense of unity and belonging. Seeking support from other clubs helps create inclusive football where participants get to showcase their skills and build relationships through blitzes and tournaments. The collaborative effort will contribute to the overall development and growth of the community.

Programme

Walking Football



Gallery



Gallery



Waterford FC Working in the Community In Partnership With

Viking Hotel Waterford	FAI	Waterford Food Bank	SETU
Samaratins	50 Shades of Exceptional	Subla Youth Reach Centre	Waterford News & Star
Tyre Youth Division Project	Butler Community Centre	Focus Ireland	J.P. O'Donohoe & Company
Waterford Regional Sports Centre (RSC)	Waterford Autism Friendly City	Mount Sion CBS	Blues Supporters Club
St. Angelas Secondary School	St. Pauls Boys National School	St. Saviours National School	BRILL Family Resource Centre
Waterford & South Tipperary Youth Services	Perennial Freight	Supermac's	GK Print
Stan Bergin Monumental Works	Waterford Sports Partnership	Healthy Ireland	Suir Engineering
Football For All	WLR FM	Waterford Foot Clinic	Little Blues Heroes
ezfees financial	Age & Opportunity	Waterford District & Junior League	Mattress Mick's

