Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Annual Report

Season 2025/26

Introduction

This report highlights Cambridge United Football Club's ongoing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and showcases the progress made across key areas of the Club during the reporting period.

In 2023/24, the Club achieved the EFL Bronze EDI Code of Practice award, recognising the significant work undertaken to embed EDI principles throughout the organisation. Building on this strong foundation, we continued to develop and strengthen our approach to inclusion across all areas of the Club.

Our commitment and progress were further recognised in 2025/26 when Cambridge United achieved the EFL Silver EDI Code of Practice award. This achievement reflects the collective efforts of our Board, staff, players, volunteers, supporters, and community partners to create a culture where everyone feels welcome, valued, respected, and able to thrive.

The Silver award is an important milestone in our EDI journey, demonstrating that inclusion is embedded within our governance, policies, recruitment practices, supporter engagement, community programmes, and day-to-day operations. It also reflects our determination to continually improve and ensure that Cambridge United remains a club that represents and serves the diverse communities connected to us.

This report reviews the impact of our work, highlights key achievements over the past year, and outlines our priorities as we continue to build a more inclusive Club and progress towards future EDI objectives.
As we look ahead, we remain committed to driving positive change, listening to our stakeholders, and ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion remain at the heart of everything we do, both on and off the pitch.

Clubs statement on EDI

Cambridge United Football Club promotes the principle of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and will strive to ensure that everyone who wishes to be involved in the Club whether as players, supporters (home and away), staff, Board members, participants in outreach programmes and other people engaged with the Club's activities (for example, suppliers, corporate partners):

- *Be treated under the Club's Equality & Diversity principles solely based on their abilities and potential, regardless of race (including colour, nationality and ethnic origin), religious or political belief or affiliation, age, sex, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital and civil partnership status, sexual orientation, disability, or any other inappropriate distinction.*
- *Can be assured of an environment in which their rights, dignity and individual worth are respected, and in particular that they are able to enjoy their engagement at the Club without the threat of intimidation, victimisation, harassment, bullying or abuse.*

Welcome from the CEO

At Cambridge United Football Club, we are firmly committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and creating an environment in which everyone can participate, contribute and thrive.

We believe everyone who engages with the Club should have a genuine and equal opportunity to do so, free from discrimination and with their individual ambitions, abilities and circumstances respected. This commitment applies regardless of age, disability, gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected and able to be themselves is fundamental to our culture. We are committed to protecting the dignity, rights and individual worth of everyone connected with Cambridge United and will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, bullying, intimidation or abuse.

We recognise that creating a truly inclusive culture is an ongoing process and one in which we must continually learn, listen and improve. We are committed to educating and supporting our employees, players, supporters, volunteers, partners and wider stakeholders on the importance of EDI and to engaging with people and organisations from across our diverse community.

Where barriers to participation or opportunity exist, we will seek to identify and remove them. Where appropriate, we will make reasonable adjustments and take practical steps to ensure that our facilities, activities, employment opportunities and wider engagement are accessible and inclusive.

Alex Tunbridge
CEO

Training

Mental Health Training
Four members of staff completed the mental health first aid course in March 2025 with an additional two members of staff undertaking the training in October 2025. The training has already been used to support members of staff.

Neurodiversity Awareness Training
The club safeguarding officer attended a webinar on neurodiversity awareness. This will be shared amongst the coaching staff during off season CPD sessions. The club are also investigating training events that can be shared with matchday staff and volunteers.

CPR/Defibrillator training
Club staff and Academy scholars undertook CPR and defibrillator training in April 2026. Staff found the session valuable.

Disability confidence

The club achieved the disability confidence Level 1 award in October 2024 and has sought to consolidate this moving forward. The Disability Confident Level 1 scheme is about committing to ensure our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible, offering interviews to disabled people who meet the minimum criteria for the job advertised, providing reasonable adjustments as required and supporting any existing employee who acquires a disability or long-term health condition, enabling them to stay in work. Now that we have had the time to embed this across the club, we will look towards progressing to Level 2 of the disability confidence scheme over the course of the next year.

Case Study - White Ribbon

Cambridge United supported the 'We Speak Up' campaign with our home match to Crewe Alexandra reaffirming our commitment to ending violence against women and girls.



White Ribbon is a global movement encouraging men and boys to speak out, challenge harmful behaviour, and promote respectful relationships. This work is put into practice via Cambridge United Foundation's partnership with Pledge United, the UK's first football-based programme addressing gender-based violence. Delivered in local schools, it uses football to spark honest conversations about respect, equality and the attitudes that can lead to harm.

The programme's core message is simple: gender-based violence is a male issue, and silence is part of the problem. While not all men are violent, many stay silent when faced with discrimination or unsafe behaviour. Reaching this silent majority is key to creating real cultural change. This aligns with the 2025 White Ribbon Day theme, "We Speak Up" – encouraging everyone to challenge harmful behaviour when it's safe to do so.

So far, we have reached 200 boys across five secondary schools and Cambridge United's U18 scholars, with an encouraging rise in confidence to speak up reported.

By the end of the academic year, it will reach a further 400 young men across three clubs, with plans to grow further.
How you can get involved:

- *Visit the White Ribbon stall in the North Habbin Fan Zone*
- *Reflect on your own behaviour and speak up when something isn't right*
- *Become a White Ribbon Ambassador and spread the message in your community*



Every action - big or small - helps prevent violence against women and girls. Change starts with all of us.

Jess Phillips, Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls at the Home Office said:

"I applaud Cambridge United for its leadership within football on tackling violence against women and girls.

We know that football and other sports can provide a unique pathway to reach young men in new spaces, for them to have different and more sensitive conversations.

The Government's new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, published today, will use every lever available to us to make a difference in this area and across wider society. We all have a part to play in tackling this issue and keeping women and girls safe."

Vicky Neal, Head of the Cambridge United Foundation said:

"We are proud of the leadership role Cambridge United Foundation has been playing in this vitally important area within football and are very grateful for the new funding from EFLiTC to help us expand Pledge United further.

This is an issue for all society to help address and we know we can play our own unique part in reaching boys and young men through the 'power of the badge' and what we represent. We remain very grateful to Jon Hamilton and Inspire Indonesia who developed this programme and have done so much to lead this work globally."

Dr. Harley-Jean Simpson, Senior Lecturer at Anglia Ruskin University and Head of Research at Cambridge United said:

"We are very pleased to be supporting Cambridge United in this important work. We know it is already making a difference in changing minds and attitudes, and we look forward to conducting a more formal piece of research through Anglia Ruskin University to see what more we can learn."



Women's Team

Cambridge United Women's Football Club is committed to upholding the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). We recognise the power of football to bring people together, create opportunities and help remove barriers to participation. Our female pathway continues to grow and develop each year, supporting the Club's ambition to create inclusive and accessible environments for all.

During the last season, more than 500 female players regularly participated across our pathway, representing the Club. Our players range from as young as six years old through to our oldest first-team player, aged 35. We recognise and value the differences between individuals and are committed to ensuring that every player has access to appropriate guidance and support to aid their development, both as a footballer and as an individual. To improve accessibility and provide greater opportunities for participation, we deliver our girls' programmes throughout the week across a range of venues in Cambridgeshire and the surrounding counties. Providing programmes at different locations helps reduce geographical barriers and gives more players and families the opportunity to access football within their local area. Alongside our regular girls' programmes, we host open trials and Talent ID events throughout the year at different locations. These events provide additional opportunities for players who are interested in joining our female pathway and help make the identification and recruitment process more accessible and inclusive for players and their parents or guardians. We also recognise that not every player is able to attend a weekly girls' programme. To support those players, we provide girls' football camps during school holidays, which are open to females aged 6–16. These camps provide flexible opportunities for participation and allow girls to engage with football in a supportive and inclusive environment. We understand that financial circumstances can also create barriers to participation. In response, we offer an instalment payment option for our girls' centres and JPL teams, allowing parents and guardians to spread the cost over several months rather than paying the full amount upfront. This provides greater flexibility for families and supports continued participation in our programmes.

Since gaining our ETC licence five years ago, we have worked in partnership with The FA to provide more accessible, high-quality opportunities for gifted and talented female footballers. Through the programme, we aim to create an environment and culture in which every individual feels safe, experiences a genuine sense of belonging and is empowered to achieve their full potential.
We are also committed to ensuring that our workforce reflects and supports the female pathway. We currently have four full-time members of staff responsible for managing the operations of our female pathway: two female and two male members of staff. This represents an equal 50% gender split within our full-time pathway workforce. Our casual coaching workforce consists of 26 coaches who are regularly involved in the Club's female pathway. Of these, 10 are female and 16 are male, meaning that women currently represent 39% of our casual coaching workforce. We recognise the importance of continuing to increase female representation within coaching and pathway leadership and will continue to seek opportunities to encourage and support more women to become involved in football coaching.

Overall, our approach to EDI is centred on creating meaningful opportunities for participation, reducing geographical and financial barriers, supporting individual development and ensuring that players, coaches and staff feel safe, valued and included. Through the continued development of our female pathway, we aim to ensure that every girl and woman has the opportunity to participate in football, develop their skills and reach their full potential.

Academy

The Academy places a high priority on EDI education. The Academy drives initiatives and champions an EDI culture across all practice areas. In line with key dates throughout the cultural calendar, training and awareness initiatives are provided to players to actively highlight religious and national holidays and observances involving special worship or obligations. This approach supports the Academy in promoting a positive EDI culture where 'difference' is respected and celebrated.

- *Some of the guest workshops delivered to the academy players during season 2025-26 are as follows: Troy Townsend (Racism and equality), The SLL Project (Identity), TrueMind, Sporting Chance and workshops delivered in partnership with LFE and internal delivery by Head of Player Care and Head of Education. All players also undertake a project during black history month coordinated and delivered by Head of Education and Head of Player Care.*
- *The academy also provides workshops for parents to ensure that they receive similar training to their children and can reinforce messaging delivered at home.*
- *The Professional Development Phase have a faith group "United in Christ" that is run by the Head of Player Care and Club Chaplain that meet every week.*
- *Mental Health awareness week is celebrated each year with workshops for academy players and infographics distributed to players and parents.*
- *The Club has implemented a Club-wide EDI working group. This group is tasked with driving and reinforcing the Club's EDI strategy and culture and ensuring the Club's practices fall in line with the FA and EFL requirements (EFL Code of Practice). Effective policies, procedures and key initiatives ensure that all staff feel connected to the Club, fostering inclusivity regardless of individual differences or protected characteristics. The Academy is represented on this working group by Head of Player Care and Academy Secretary.*
- *The academy also engages in projects alongside the Cambridge United Foundation to broaden the boys understanding of people and projects away from their own age and demographic. These include assisting with Senior's Afternoon Tea as well as player appearances at schools and other community projects. Our Scholars also undertake the "Pledge United Project" aimed at providing an awareness of misogyny and challenging themes that may come up for them.*







Cambridge United Foundation – Community Impact

Our Why

In the most recent Centre for Cities report, Cambridge was identified as the most unequal city in the UK, yet people tend to not associate poverty with a city world-renowned for its education, research, and technology. Evidence shows that a significant proportion of people are experiencing poverty, with 1 in 10 households earning less than £16,518 per year, concentrated in wards and neighbourhoods primarily in the Northern and East of the city. Centre for Cities identified the Cambridge population as having the highest level of qualification in any city in the UK, however is still scoring the fifth lowest in Social Mobility Index off all local authorities nationally based on outcomes for young people in terms of education, employment and housing. Shockingly, the average life expectancy for men and women in the most deprived areas of Cambridge compared to the most affluent ones is 11.6 years less (ONS, 2021). This is simply unacceptable.

The Abbey and Kings Hedges wards - on Cambridge United's doorstep - are amongst the 20% most deprived areas in the UK. As a football club based in the Abbey ward, we have an inherent responsibility to reduce these inequalities.

Our work takes myriad forms, from mentoring young people in schools to offering them open-access football, providing physical and social activities for older adults to keep them connected to their community and providing opportunities to those that experience barriers to accessing sport. We are determined to improve community wellbeing through this work. Enhancing lives with the football club on matchdays through ventures such as ticketing initiatives and our matchday KidsZone, we give greater access to the stadium and the chance to roar on the Amber Army in action.

Our Impact

Ongoing research carried out by Substance, commissioned by the English Football League (EFL), demonstrates that Cambridge United generates ***£1,324,952.25 of social value*** *and engages with over 11,000 Cambridgeshire residents on an annual basis. Cambridge United Foundation is in a unique position to serve our local community, especially those most vulnerable. We are committed to fulfilling this potential.*

Our target groups for support are:

1. *Older adults, by creating a social network for people to help tackle loneliness in later life and also help prevent hospital admissions, keeping them physically active and living independently for longer.*
2. *Adults who experience barriers to physical activity and education opportunities, by providing inclusive football sessions in their local area and offering volunteering experiences to boost their confidence and CV as they aspire to access work.*
3. *Young people, through sporting opportunities, making them free and accessible, as well as engaging with key schools in their area to offer mentoring and curriculum interventions to boost their future academic pathway.*

Our impact data is consistent with our vision and mission, to enhance lives through sport – and in particular focusing on improving physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, social connectedness and personal development.

We have had positive measures of success in each area of focus with all three target group engaged, however, more importantly, we captured some qualitative feedback from participants too, which again demonstrates the difference the work of the foundation to individuals that take part in one or more of our programmes. Some examples below:

"My coach treats all our players with respect, at all times, regardless of skill level"
Boy aged 13-15.

"It has given me hope not to give up and be more positive".
Female aged 18-30.

"Walking football rescued me from a very dark place".
Male aged 50+ participating in Forever United programme.

"Has allowed me to meet more people, around my age, in the village I live".
Female aged 50+ participating in Forever United programme.

Programme Highlight:

Training Ground

Our 'Training Ground' programme is a free mentoring programme for those aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment or training, giving these young people the tools they need to kick off their career.

The programme focuses on areas such as physical and mental health, work experience and volunteering opportunities, and developing key skills like team work, communication and goal setting.

This week, as part of the programme, participants had the opportunity to watch the first team in action, and then meet with and talk to players, and the manager, Neil Harris, followed by a tour.

We hope that the day was exciting and inspiring for all those involved, and are looking forward to what's next for our 'Training Ground' programme participants.



Cambridge United Foundation Awards

The Cambridge United Foundation Participants' Awards Ceremony took place ahead of the Cambridge United Women's fixture against London Bees at the Cledara Abbey Stadium. The event celebrates individuals and groups involved in the Foundation's community programmes, recognising their achievements, progress, and positive contributions.
Below is a list of all our award winners and why they were recognised by the Foundation.

Millie - Unbreakable Spirit Award



Isobel (left) receives "Strength in Adversity" award from Kieran Wood (right)

Isobel - Strength in Adversity Award
Both Millie and Isabelle faced osteosarcoma diagnoses at eleven years of age and are both keen athletes. The way they both faced their diagnosis, treatment and futures has been inspirational. Millie, as you know, faced an amputation, whereas Isobel received limb-salvage surgery, where they replaced the bones in her leg with metal rods.
Both of the girls have an infectious positivity, quick humour and a never-say-die attitude. They are both exploring new sporting ventures, including amputee football for Millie and rowing for Isobel.



Kieran Wood, Youth Engagement Officer at Cambridge United Foundation said:
"Getting to know them and play a small part on their journey's has been a privilege. Including seeing Millie have the bravery to stand up at the United for Cambridge event to speak about her journey in front of 200+ people."

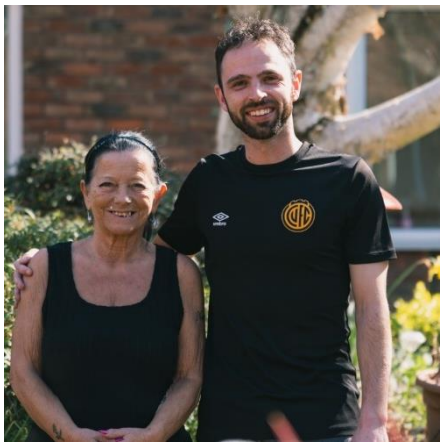
Jay - Outstanding Commitment Award
Jay has shown exceptional commitment to our Premier League Kicks programme over the last few years. He's there every week, even when its pouring with rain, arriving before anyone else, moving the goals so they are ready for everyone on arrival and generally has a really positive attitude at sessions, helping both staff and and other participants.

Karl - Outstanding Achievement Award
Karl joined Olive in year 9 as someone that had a short fuse, became aggressive and would have the other students push his buttons to get a reaction. Within the two years we have spent at Olive, his attendance and attitude to do work with us, rather than just mess about, sets an example to the rest of the school, and he has become a positive influence on peers now he is in year 11.
He is the first student to complete all qualifications we currently offer, and we are therefore having to look into other options for him. Alongside this, he is far better at regulating his emotions even when provoked.

Kayden - Rising Star Award
Kayden is an employability participant who has come on leaps and bounds since our first workshop. He always applies himself in the correct manor, doing tasks to the best of his ability. Whilst on the course, he has completed his playmaker course whilst writing a CV to use for future reference. He has even taken further steps outside of the workshops, applying to do work experience with the foundation.



Elaine - Community Leadership Award



Elaine has been attending the Strength and Balance class at Ditton Court since the session started at the end of 2024. She is a resident at the sheltered housing and is very well known amongst the group of participants. Every week Elaine sets the room up, helps seat everyone and makes sure the space is ready. She has taken on a leadership role within the group, and although she may not realise it, many others do look up to her and see her as someone who can help them.

Outside of the class she has attended other events the Foundation has hosted including, Christmas Lunch 2025 and helping to choose hamper recipients. She is also responsible for organising transport for other residents to attend Stadium held events.

Parability teams - Team of the Year Award

Cambridge United Foundation Black and Cambridge United Foundation Blue are our two disability teams that compete on Wednesdays in the Cambridgeshire FA Disability Leagues known as "Parability".
Over the past few years, the teams have battled hard through the tournaments and particularly this year have shown a real maturity in the way they play their football. We're really proud of the effort put into every tournament and their desire to do the best for the team. We have seen individuals' ability improve over the last few seasons and the team is much more focused and united.



EDI Events and Activation 25/26 Summary

Worked alongside Her Game Too and our female-fan supporters group, Amber Belles to deliver our Her Game Too Matchday: https://www.cambridgeunited.com/news/gillingham-fixture-designated-her-game-too-matchday

Put out video of first team players and Her Game Too advocates Liam Bennett and Beatrice Rogers discussing the impact of Her Game Too and experience of Women in Football to mark International Women's Day: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xpsMhdE5-0

Charity Partner of the Year launch: https://www.cambridgeunited.com/news/romsey-mill-chosen-charity-partner-season

Marked EFL PUMA Rainbow Ball iniative as a celebration of LGBTQ+ fans: https://www.cambridgeunited.com/news/rainbow-ball-returns-saturday

Launched ongoing matchday partnership with Cambridge City Foodbank: https://www.cambridgeunited.com/news/join-football-vs-hunger-fight-cambridge-city-foodbank-0

Time to Talk matchday: https://www.cambridgeunited.com/news/time-talk-matchday-saturday

White Ribbon matchday: https://www.cambridgeunited.com/news/us-back-white-ribbon-weekend

Together Against Racism matchday: https://www.cambridgeunited.com/news/us-stand-together-against-racism-campaign

Fourth shirt partnership with Fitzwilliam Museum and Romsey Mill to mark Black History Month – worn at Bromley game: https://www.cambridgeunited.com/news/cambridge-united-collab-fitzwilliam-museum-and-romsey-mill-launch-fourth-shirt

Summary

In 2020, Cambridge United became one of the first clubs to commit to the FA Football Leadership Diversity Code (FLDC), demonstrating its commitment to increasing diversity and inclusion across leadership, operational and coaching roles. The Code sought to improve equality of opportunity by broadening talent pipelines and encouraging more inclusive recruitment practices across football.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) remains a strategic priority for the Club and is embedded within our governance, policies, recruitment practices, supporter engagement, community programmes, and day-to-day operations. Board-level oversight continues to drive the Club's commitment to creating an environment where everyone feels welcome, valued, respected, and able to thrive.

Over recent years, the Club has strengthened its approach to EDI through improved workforce data collection, inclusive recruitment practices and targeted initiatives designed to increase representation and accessibility. The Club has also continued to demonstrate leadership through programmes such as the Premier League and EFL Player to Coach Scheme, while both Cambridge United and the Cambridge United Foundation have expanded their engagement with under-represented and diverse communities across Cambridgeshire.

The Club's progress has been recognised through the EFL EDI Code of Practice. Following a positive assessment in 2021/22, Cambridge United achieved the EFL Bronze Award in 2023/24 and built on this success to achieve the EFL Silver Award in 2025/26. These achievements reflect the collective efforts of the Board, staff, players, volunteers, supporters, and community partners and demonstrate the Club's commitment to embedding inclusion across all areas of the organisation.
The EFL EDI Code of Practice focuses on addressing under-representation across the protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010, while also placing particular emphasis on mental health and wellbeing and encouraging clubs to respond to the needs of their local communities.

Achieving the Silver Award represents a significant milestone in the Club's EDI journey. This report highlights the impact of our work to date, celebrates key achievements, and outlines our priorities as we continue to build a more inclusive Club and progress towards further excellence in equality, diversity, and inclusion.