

<b>Institution: University of Gloucestershire</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: UoA C-26 Sport &amp; Exercise Sciences, Leisure &amp; Tourism</b>
<b>Title of case study: Safeguarding and <i>Respect</i> in Children's Football.</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p><b>Dr Andy Pitchford's</b> research has been a significant influence on the development of policies and services at The Football Association in the period from 2008 to 2013. During this time, the Association's approach to children and the youth game has changed dramatically, culminating in a range of interventions, new training resources and a major system overhaul in 2012. These change programmes have been directly informed by academic research by <b>Pitchford</b> and colleagues, by commissioned evaluations and related media coverage.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The research for this case study has been carried out by <b>Pitchford</b> and colleagues at the University of Gloucestershire since 2000. Initially the work centred on the interests of Professor Celia Brackenridge in child protection and equality campaigns. Professor Brackenridge left the University in 2001, but continued to collaborate with <b>Pitchford</b> on <i>Goal</i> (2001, 2002), an evaluation of The Football Association's first child protection strategy.</p> <p>The aim of the research team during this period was to use the voices of children and young people in order to convince key stakeholders of the need for more child-centred, ethical and inclusive approaches to the delivery of youth sports. Data from this work were used as the basis for a series of journal articles (2004<sup>a&amp;b</sup>, 2005<sup>c</sup>); and then for a co-authored book, Brackenridge et al. (2007<sup>d</sup>). The book enabled <b>Pitchford</b> to develop a new conceptual approach to the analysis of young people playing the sport. This demonstrated the ways in which the Football Association's policies and practices were historically specific and contested, and not, as was previously assumed, based on decades of learning and refinement. In turn, this helped to show how youth football had become institutionalised, commercialised and commodified; processes which had led to widespread dissatisfaction within, and exclusion from, the sport.</p> <p>From 2004 onwards, <b>Pitchford</b> had begun to work with other football organisations on a research and consultancy basis. <i>A Training Needs Analysis</i> for The Football Association's Refereeing Department (2004), and a study of <i>Professional Cultures in Elite Sport</i> for UK Sport and The Football Association (2005), helped to shape policy and stimulate practitioner debate. This growing expertise around both referees and young people led The Football Association in 2007 to return to Brackenridge and <b>Pitchford</b>, who collaborated in order to conduct an evaluation of <i>Respect</i>, a major cultural change programme aimed at improving standards of behaviour at all levels of the sport. The 2008 and 2009 <i>Respect</i> evaluations helped to refine the <i>Respect</i> interventions and to shape associated products and services, including an online educational package for parents, <i>The FA Respect Parent Module</i>, for which <b>Pitchford</b> was the specialist advisor. Data from these reports then formed the basis for a journal article (2011<sup>e</sup>).</p> <p>Findings from the early outputs informed <b>Pitchford's</b> keynote presentation at the 2008 Youth Sport Conference at Loughborough University, through which he argued for a new approach to youth football that reflected the needs and demands of young people. In turn this led to contributions to</p>

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Radio 5 Live documentaries and local BBC Radio Gloucestershire discussions. In December 2012 he was a major contributor to BBC Radio 4's *Football's Home Fans*, a documentary assessing the role of parents in the youth game.<sup>1</sup> This continuing media profile led to further contract work with The FA, including the 2011 project *Drop Out in Youth Football*; and with a new charity, the National Children's Football Alliance (NCFA), for whom he conducted a stakeholder survey in the same year.

**3. References to the research**

Articles that have been published relating to the case study have been cited 521 times (464 since 2008) [ref: Google Scholar 22.11.13]. The case study is underpinned by the following peer reviewed publications:

- a. **Pitchford, A.**, Brackenridge, C., Bringer, J.D., Cockburn, C., Nutt, G., Pawlaczek, Z. and Russell, K. (2004) 'Children in Football: Seen but not Heard'. *Soccer in Society*. 5 (1): 43-60.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660970512331390994> (Journal Impact Factor: N/A, Cited = 16)
- b. Brackenridge, C., Bringer, J.D., Cockburn, C., Nutt, G., **Pitchford, A.**, Russell, K. and Pawlaczek, Z. (2004), 'The Football Association's Child Protection Research Project 2002-2006: Rationale, Design and First Year Results'. *Managing Leisure*. 9 (1): 30-46.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1360671042000182943> (Journal Impact Factor: N/A, Cited = 25).
- c. Brackenridge, C., Pawlaczek, Z., Bringer, J.D., Cockburn, C., Nutt, G., **Pitchford, A.** and Russell, K. (2005). 'Measuring the Impact of Child Protection through Activation States. *Sport, Education and Society* 10 (2): 239-256. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13573320500111853>  
(Journal Impact Factor: N/A, Cited = 14).
- d. Brackenridge, C., **Pitchford, A.**, Russell, K. and Nutt, G. (2007), *Child Welfare in Football*. London: Routledge. (Cited = 17).
- e. Brackenridge, C., **Pitchford, A.** and Wilson, M. (2011). 'Respect: Results of a pilot project designed to improve behaviour in English football'. *Managing Leisure* 16 (3): 175-191.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13606719.2011.583406> (Journal Impact Factor: N/A, Cited = 1).

**4. Details of the impact**

The key impacts of this research are the development of new professional standards, guidelines and training in order to support The Football Association's Safeguarding and Respect agendas; the introduction of a new educational pathway for professional and aspirant referees; the delivery of new forms of outreach in the local community and the development of new funded programmes as part of the FA's National Game Strategy.

The research (2004, 2005) and associated contract work on the FA's *Goal* Child Protection Strategy led to the development of resources for the FA's Safeguarding Course, which has been accessed by an estimated 150,000 people in the period from 2008 to 2013.<sup>2</sup> It also contributed to the development of Safeguarding Policies and Codes of Conduct at the 55,000 youth football clubs in

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England. Continued collaboration with Brackenridge at Brunel University led to further academic outputs and the invitation to contract further significant research for the FA. The 2008 and 2009 evaluations of the *Respect* cultural change programme stimulated adaptations to the Football Association's core interventions, which focused on new codes of conduct; communications and relations between team captains, players and match officials; and *Respect* 'barriers' or 'technical areas'. In total, 850 football leagues across England are now committed to *Respect* and all associated policies and practices. Data from the *Goal* and *Respect* projects was used in order to help shape The Football Association's *Respect* Parent Module,<sup>3</sup> an online educational resource that is now optional for parents who follow their children through the sport, but compulsory for all coaches. An estimated 30,000 coaches access the module each year as part of their professional development. The *Respect* programme now has a global reach. Both Holland and the USA have consulted with The FA on the development of their own behaviour management initiatives; UEFA have taken both the 'brand' and significant elements into the international arena and the Japanese FA have taken and copied the programme wholesale.<sup>4</sup>

In the UK, the *Respect* recommendations were considered by the key stakeholders in professional football including The FA Premier League, the Professional Footballers Association (PFA) and the League Managers Association (LMA). This led, in turn, to a report by the LMA in 2009 calling for the accreditation and professionalization of referee education and training. **Pitchford** has subsequently worked with both The FA and the Professional Game Match Officials Ltd (PGMOL) to develop a new educational pathway for elite referees, which builds on both the *Respect* data and the 2004 Training Needs Analysis. The new pathway was launched by the PGMOL in 2012 and is delivered by the University of Gloucestershire.<sup>5</sup>

**Pitchford's** interest in the structures and format of the sport was fuelled by research participants who consistently spoke about the intrinsic, rather than the extrinsic, benefits of playing. They sought a more playful, less pressurised version of the sport. In order to bring this to reality, **Pitchford** made a successful bid to The Football Foundation for £160,000 to fund a five year football development programme in deprived neighbourhoods in Gloucestershire. The project, called *Onside*, used flexible, adapted versions of football to raise participation amongst disengaged young people in challenging environments. *Onside* has connected with over 6,000 young people during 2008 to 2013, and acts as a source of data and experimentation for University staff and students looking to explore this realm.

In 2009, **Pitchford** helped to support the establishment of a pressure group, The National Children's Football Alliance (NCFA), which aims to work with the sport's delivery organisations in order to improve the experiences of children. The NCFA now has a reach of 200,000.<sup>6</sup> This work brought him into further contact with The Football Association and he was then commissioned to produce the *Drop Out in Youth Football* study. This work was widely utilised within The FA in order to stimulate debate about the traditional structures and format of youth football and was used to support the introduction of the national 'Vauxhall Mash-Up' programme, which aims to recruit and retain 14-18 year olds. The FA have recruited eight regional coaches who work full time on the programme, and have secured long term support from Vauxhall for the initiative.<sup>7</sup>

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'Mash-up' is now a core element of the FA's 2011-2015 National Game Strategy. The Strategy aims to make major changes to the experience of the 700,000 young people who currently participate in the sport, and to create safer and more respectful environments for players, spectators and volunteers. The research has contributed directly to this strategy through the stimulation of practitioner debate over a sustained period, through the introduction of new codes of conduct and professional standards, and through the development of educational and training resources for players, coaches, parents, spectators, officials and club administrators.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

1. BBC Radio 4; Football's Home Fans; 01/12/12 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01p2v1z>
2. Testimonial from The Football Association Safeguarding Manager. Held on file.
3. The Football Association Respect Parent Module: <http://www.thefa.com/respectguide>
4. Testimonial from Football Association Head of Respect Programme. Held on file.
5. Testimonial from Training Manager for the Professional Game Match Officials Ltd (PGMOL). Held on file.
6. Testimonial from Director of the National Children's Football Alliance (NCFA). Held on file.
7. Testimonial from Football Association National Development Manager (Youth Football). Held on file.