

PLAN A

ENGAGE

ENRICH

EMPOWER

PLAN A

2025/26 Campaign Review

PLAN A

Our mission is to Engage, Enrich and Empower young people to reach their full potential in football and in life.

This booklet showcases how 12 outstanding football academies turned that vision into real-world action during the inaugural 2025/26 Plan A season.



What is Plan A?

First launched in the 2025/26 season, 'Plan A' represents an alternative in how personal development, life skills, and transition readiness are delivered within academy football. Rather than relying solely on one-off workshops, Plan A assists clubs in building a sequenced, long-term approach that keeps personal growth at the very forefront of operations.

The core philosophy is simple: encourage players to put themselves first and actively design their own health, well-being, and future career pathway as their 'Plan A'. By leveraging the incredible platform of football, the campaign empowers young apprentices to acquire practical experience, build deep emotional resilience, and make a positive social impact in their communities.

How It Works and Funding Support

Clubs design a customised plan targeting awareness, community engagement, and developmental growth. Approved campaigns are reimbursed up to £2000 upon submitting a creative showcase (such as videos, presentations, or photo galleries) that documents their delivery and outcomes.

Delivering Success: The 2025/26 Cohort

In its debut year, the Plan A campaigns generated incredible engagement across the academy network.

- **29 clubs** actively engaged in initial consultations or drafted plans.
- **17 clubs** earned official approval from LFE to proceed with delivery.
- **12 clubs** fully completed their projects, provided a creative submission, and received full funding reimbursement.

These 12 clubs successfully delivered campaigns covering community engagement, mental health, transition support, teamwork, and career development. Their achievements are summarised on the following pages.

 BLACKPOOL FC	Culture & Equality: 'Culture World Cup Campaign'
 CARLISLE UNITED FC	Performance Psychology: 'Building the Mindset Behind Performance'
 COLCHESTER UNITED FC	Community Engagement: Supermarket Foodbank & Care Home Connections
 FOREST GREEN ROVERS FC	Structured Personal Development: Academy Workbook Programme
 LINCOLN CITY FC	The Communication, Resilience and Perseverance Campaign

 MIDDLESBROUGH FC	Inclusion & Diversity: 'The Taste of Africa' Campaign
 PLYMOUTH ARGYLE FC	Local Advocacy: Community Champions & Plymouth Soup Run
 PORTSMOUTH FC	Charitable Outreach: Supporting 'Sophie's Legacy'
 SHREWSBURY TOWN FC	Eudaimonic Well-being: 'De-Stress My Life' & Identity Exploration Campaign
 STEVENAGE FC	Social Action: Monday Food Bank Operations with 'Feed Up Warm Up'
 STOKE CITY FC	'Potters Pathways': On and Off the Pitch Careers Event
 SUNDERLAND AFC	'Beyond the Game' Transition Support Event

CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHTS



BLACKPOOL FC

CULTURE WORLD CUP CAMPAIGN

Targeting Foundation (U9–U11) and Youth Development (U12–U16) squads, Blackpool combined football excitement with cultural education to champion Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

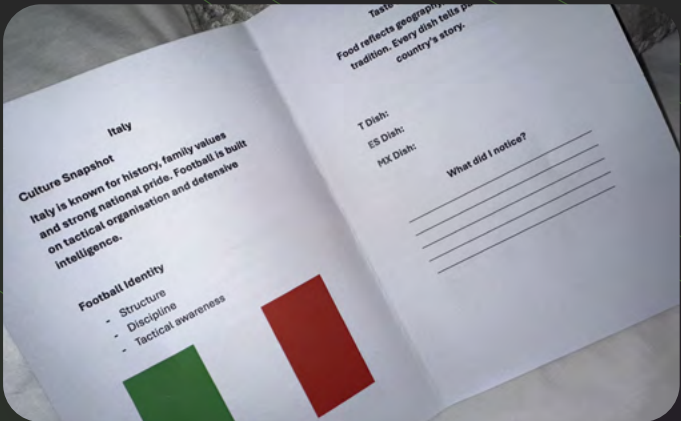
The Activity

Each age group was assigned a specific World Cup nation. Players participated in interactive workshops to explore their country’s culture, learn basic languages, and sample their cuisine. The campaign concluded with a celebratory mini World-Cup tournament.



Key Outcomes

The campaign successfully used sport as a vehicle to foster mutual respect, curiosity, and social confidence, perfectly aligning with Plan A’s focus on putting personal growth front and centre. The campaign provided the space to deliver key educational messages in a fun, relaxed environment. These lessons have a lasting impact on the players who can refer to the core messages in this campaign, in their day-to-day life.



CARLISLE UNITED

PERFORMANCE PSYCHOLOGY & THE 5CS FRAMEWORK

Carlisle United integrated performance psychology directly into daily academy life for their U14–U15 squads, creating a unified framework for growth.

The Activity

Over a 6-week cycle, the club brought the ‘5Cs’ framework (Commitment, Communication, Concentration, Control, and Confidence), which they created, to life through a collaborative ‘Performance Triangle’ involving players, coaches, and parents. The framework introduced alternative methods of mindset education from 3 different perspectives that contribute to an academy players daily life.



Key Outcomes

Coaches altered training constraints and matchday vocabulary to reinforce psychological concepts across all aspects of academy life.

Parents received dedicated support workshops to further understand their role, in support and integration of the 5Cs framework at home.

Players completed workbook activities that equipped them with vital mental skills for on-field performance and life outside of football. The framework was used to fuel attitudes in daily life, using the skills on and off the field.



CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHTS



COLCHESTER UNITED

COMMUNITY CARE & CONNECTION

Colchester United ran dual community-focused projects to support the local community and vulnerable residents while building core character skills in their U18 and U21 squads.

The Activity

U18 players partnered with the Colchester Community Foundation to advocate for the local foodbank, handing out flyers at supermarkets and sorting Christmas parcels. Meanwhile, the U21 squad organised and led an interactive social visit to Abberton Manor Nursing Home to spend time with residents.



Key Outcomes

The projects drove profound personal development. Players built empathy, leadership, and social awareness, learning to communicate comfortably with diverse generations and recognising the positive power of their club identity. For those supporting the foodbank they gained hands on experience on project delivery, interpersonal, and empathetic skills.

Furthermore, the nursing home team gained skills in organisation, communication and both projects learned valuable lessons in how the use of the club badge can have a positive impact on the wider social community.

CLICK HERE TO CHECK OUT ALL THE ACTION



IT HELPED US BY UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY, UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF HELPING OTHERS, AND UNDERSTANDING HOW TO SHOW LOVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Colchester United Apprentice



FOREST GREEN ROVERS

ACADEMY PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKBOOKS

FGR established a highly structured approach to emotional and mental development by embedding customised workbooks across their entire academy of 120 players (U9–U18).

The Activity

Through 9 structured workshops led by the academy’s sports psychologist, players mapped out goals and reflections regarding confidence, resilience, and emotional control. Parent sessions reinforced these lessons at home.



Key Outcomes

The workbooks successfully established weekly habits of ownership and self-awareness. Growth was exemplified by an U11 scholar who won the Foundation Phase Academy Manager Award for stepping out of his comfort zone and showing exceptional maturity. The lessons learnt through the campaign equipped players with the necessary skills to apply the core concepts in daily life.



IT HELPED DRIVE CONVERSATION BETWEEN ME AND MY SON AND GOT HIM TO THINK DIFFERENTLY.

Parent Feedback

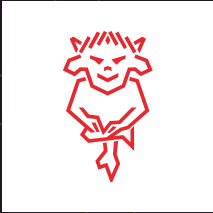
THEY (THE WORKBOOKS) HAVE BEEN AMAZING AT BUILDING MY SONS MENTAL AWARENESS AND CHARACTERISTICS.

Parent Feedback

IT OPENED HIS EYES TO HOW HIS MIND CAN HELP PERFORMANCE.

Parent Feedback

CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHTS



LINCOLN CITY FC

COMMUNICATION, RESILIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE

Lincoln City used their campaign to further develop self-awareness within scholars, challenging them personally and as a group on their perceived limits regarding perseverance, communication and resilience.

The Activity

A combination of U18, U16s, and club staff participated in this campaign, aimed at improving personal development skills within the club. Through a series of games and activities, communication, resilience, and perseverance were tested culminating in a residential trip putting the skills into action.

Key Outcomes

The project was a great success with players and coaches recognising the importance of key skills such as teamwork, communication, stepping out of your comfort zone, building relationships and supporting one another.



MIDDLESBROUGH FC

PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL WORKSHOPS

In response to internal academy issues, Middlesbrough partnered with the 'Taste of Africa' charity to design and run workshops promoting diversity and inclusion.

The Activity

A cohort of 55 academy players (ages 12-16) collaborated with Taste of Africa volunteers (ages 14-21) to co-create school presentations providing education on the importance of respect and celebrating and embracing diversity and inclusion. Twenty players then volunteered to deliver these workshops to two local primary schools and a secondary school.

Key Outcomes

The project turned a challenge into a massive positive. Participating schools lauded the players as outstanding role models, and the experience empowered the scholars to confidently lead conversations about inclusion and respect.



THE BOYS YOU BROUGHT TO WORK WITH THE STUDENTS WERE VERY SUPPORTIVE, KIND, AND WELL MANNERED. WE THOUGHT THEY DID A CRACKING JOB.

School Feedback

THE CHILDREN REALLY ENJOYED THE WORKSHOP AND HAVING THE BOYS FROM THE ACADEMY DELIVER IT REALLY HELPED GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS. THEY WERE PERFECT ROLE MODELS IN SHOWING HOW TO THINK, ACT AND REACT.

School Feedback

WONDERFUL EVENT.

School Feedback

CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHTS



PLYMOUTH ARGYLE FC

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS & LOCAL IMPACT

Plymouth Argyle delivered three distinct, age-specific projects focused on local pride, charitable initiative, and active community outreach.

The Activity

Foundation players (U9-U12) researched their club's history and naming heritage as part of their participation in a tournament. The players were tasked to create informative videos and presentations to feedback on their discoveries and educate their teammates on their chosen team's history and talking points.

The U13-U15 'Community Champions' initiated independent charity projects, highlighted by an apprentice who raised £700 by running 4 miles every 4 hours for 48 hours. Players were given the responsibility to create innovative ways of charity fundraising and have sole responsibility for the delivery and logistics of the project. The U18 squad packaged and delivered 80 food parcels for the Plymouth Soup Run.



Key Outcomes

Scholars developed deep civic pride, learned the strength of collective action, and took active ownership of supporting vulnerable local populations. Through 3 different community engagement projects, academy players learned valuable life skills which were reflected on as part of their Personal Development mentorship sessions, using the lessons learned as a tool for individual analysis on personal growth and attitude.

IT WAS A REALLY IMPORTANT EVENT FOR US TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY.

Plymouth Argyle Apprentice

HEARING THE BOYS TALK ABOUT THE SKILLS THEY HAD BEEN WORKING ON AWAY FROM FOOTBALL THROUGH THE SOUP RUN WAS GREAT TO HEAR.

Linvoy Primus - LFE Mentor



PORTSMOUTH FC

SPREADING JOY WITH SOPHIE'S LEGACY

Portsmouth used their campaign to partner with 'Sophie's Legacy', a charity dedicated to improving hospital experiences for paediatric patients and their families.

The Activity

In partnership with the Sophie's Legacy charity, U18 players handed out Christmas advent calendars to hospitalised children, organised a matchday bucket collection and tuck shop raising £300 for family essentials, and hosted a Saturday pizza-delivery night for hospital wards. Part of their fundraising efforts came at a Southampton vs Portsmouth youth game, using football as a tool to raise awareness.



Key Outcomes

Scholars experienced the immense positive impact of their club's 'badge power'. The moving, emotional visits inspired a profound sense of gratitude and community stewardship among the young players, who noted being more appreciative of spending Christmas with their families.

Additionally, the campaign highlighted the power of sport in making a difference to the community, as a traditional 'rivalry game' was used to raise much needed funds and awareness for a great cause, uniting communities from opposing teams.



SEEING FAMILIES LESS FORTUNATE HAVING TO SPEND TIME IN HOSPITAL OVER CHRISTMAS MAKES US GRATEFUL FOR THE LIVES WE HAVE AND MOTIVATES US TO WORK SO WE CAN BE IN A POSITION WHERE WE CAN ENJOY THE SIMPLE THINGS IN OUR LIFE AS WELL.

Portsmouth FC Apprentice

CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHTS



SHREWSBURY TOWN FC

EUDAIMONIC WELL-BEING & ‘DE-STRESS MY LIFE’

Shrewsbury addressed the risk of narrow ‘athletic identity’ by actively encouraging scholars to cultivate hobbies and interests outside of football.

The Activity

The ‘De-stress my life’ campaign introduced players to new, varied activities including structured guitar lessons, team DJ sessions, role-playing, and prison-themed escape rooms, combining players interests outside of football with meaningful, impactful workshops.

Key Outcomes

The campaign received glowing feedback from parents who saw their children return home recharged and inspired. It taught players crucial stress-management habits and demonstrated that maintaining diverse passions, away from football, supports long-term mental health and life balance, and the importance of committing to other interests.



“(THE WORKSHOP) REALLY HELPED A LOT, IT’S EXACTLY WHAT HE NEEDED AND HASN’T STOPPED TALKING ABOUT IT.”

Parent Feedback

“HE CAME HOME A DIFFERENT PERSON, AND IT HAS REALLY HELPED HIM.”

Parent Feedback



STEVENAGE FC

LEADERSHIP & OUTREACH WITH FEED UP WARM UP

Stevenage partnered with local homeless charity ‘Feed Up Warm Up’ to run a highly immersive, hands-on 10-week community support program.

The Activity

Seventeen academy players actively managed the setup and operations of the charity’s Monday evening food bank service, preparing hot meals, organising entertainment, and engaging warmly with service users.

Key Outcomes

This practical exposure tested and accelerated skills like leadership, communication, and empathy. Charity volunteers praised the players’ respectful, proactive attitudes, and scholars reported heightened social awareness and immense pride in ‘giving back’.

As a result of the success, Feed Up Warm Up invited the players back for additional services, demonstrating the immense passion and commitment delivered during the project.



CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHTS



STOKE CITY FC

CONNECTING CAREER PATHWAYS BEYOND THE PITCH

Stoke City hosted a specialised, informal careers event for their U18 scholars to proactively smooth the transition process out of professional football.

The Activity

The club brought in local businesses and top professionals from fields like fashion, finance, and barbering, all of which were industries previously mentioned by scholars. The event wrapped up with an honest, open Q&A panel featuring academy alumni who have successfully transitioned into second careers in and away from the game.



Key Outcomes

The apprentices discovered invaluable career inspiration, learning that exploring backup options does not compromise football focus. The massive success prompted Stoke City to permanently embed transition and career guidance into their standard academy operations.

The event inspired apprentices to be more open to transition pathways and more committed to following other passions outside of football.



I'VE LEARNT THAT THERE IS LIFE AFTER FOOTBALL, AND IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU TAKE UP OPPORTUNITIES.
Stoke City Apprentice

I THINK IT WAS VERY BENEFICIAL.
Stoke City Apprentice



SUNDERLAND AFC

BEYOND THE GAME TRANSITION SUPPORT

Sunderland recognised that successful transitions are a family effort, hosting an educational seminar for players and parents alike.

The Activity

A cohort of 12 U15 players, 6 U16 players, and their parents/guardians attended the 'Beyond the Game' transition event, featuring Q&As with guest speakers including professional rugby players, yoga instructors, and former scholars. Providing the opportunity for players, and their families, to interact with career professionals who may typically be out of reach!



Key Outcomes

The evening provided invaluable, real-world advice on mental health, scholarship paths, further education, and alternative careers. Parents felt highly equipped to guide their children, and scholars left feeling reassured, supported, and open-minded about their future possibilities.



Plan A Campaign Initiative: 2026/27 Launch and Application Process

Following the successful implementation of the initiative in the 2025/26 season, LFE is pleased to announce that Plan A is officially open for applications for the 2026/27 season.

The program remains dedicated to fostering long-term, integrated personal development, life skills acquisition, and transition readiness for academy players. Member clubs are invited to design and execute tailored personal development campaigns by submitting a formal proposal via the online ‘Plan A’ Application Form.

Campaign Compliance and Reimbursement Criteria

To qualify for funding reimbursement of up to £2,000 (an increase from the previous year), delivery clubs must meet the following requirements:

- Project Execution: Successful delivery of the campaign exactly as outlined in the club’s approved initial project proposal.
- Creative Reporting: Submission of a comprehensive creative output documenting the project’s delivery, engagement, and participant outcomes.
- Financial Reconciliation: Provision of valid expenditure receipts and a corresponding invoice addressed to LFE for up to the £2,000 maximum threshold.

Creative Submission Guidelines

The post-campaign creative submission serves as vital documentation of the project’s impact and facilitates the sharing of best practices across the academy network. To ensure a comprehensive review, submissions should incorporate the following standardised components:

- Identifying Information: Clearly stated Club Name alongside the official Title, Topic, or Theme of the campaign.
- Demographic Data: Specific details regarding the youth academy age groups engaged and the precise number of participants.
- Executive Summary: A concise narrative summary (200 to 400 words) detailing the campaign’s execution, core activities, and standout achievements.
- Visual Evidence: Two to three high-resolution images that effectively capture the campaign in action.
- Multimedia Integration: A supporting video segment highlighting participant engagement or key milestones.

The Centralised Plan A Portal

For the 2026/27 season, LFE has established a dedicated digital platform to serve as the central repository for all program resources. This centralised portal is designed to streamline administration and support clubs throughout the delivery lifecycle.

The platform provides direct access to:

- Official campaign application and delivery forms.
- An extensive archive of successful case studies to highlight best practices.
- Key operational dates, program timelines, and administrative updates.
- A comprehensive Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) database

**CLICK HERE TO CHECK OUT
OUR DEDICATED PLAN A PAGE**





Established by



Supported by

