



Strategic Plan

**2025
2028**





Welcome



When we first launched the Russell Martin Foundation as a registered charity back in 2017, our goal was simple yet powerful: to create a platform through which former professional footballers could give back and make a lasting difference in their local communities. Since then, that vision has grown into something truly remarkable.

Over the past eight years, the Foundation has flourished beyond anything I could have imagined. Our team has expanded to include passionate individuals from diverse backgrounds, all united by a shared commitment to improving lives across Sussex. Together, we have built programmes that inspire young people, support families, and strengthen communities, and we have done so in close partnership with schools, local authorities, and other organisations who share our values and drive.

Looking ahead, our Strategic Plan for 2025–2028 represents the next exciting stage of our journey. It sets out our ambition to build on everything we’ve achieved so far, while pushing further to meet emerging needs, broaden our reach, and deepen our impact. We will continue to place people and community at the heart of everything we do, ensuring the Foundation remains a positive force for change across Sussex.

I am immensely proud of what we have achieved together, and even more excited about what lies ahead.

Russell Martin - Founder



Strategic Overview



Our main focus over the next 3 years (2025-2028) is to build upon the charitable work we have achieved over the past few years.

This involves ensuring we are meeting the needs of our local communities in Sussex, and in some cases beyond. To be successful it is vital that we concentrate our energy on establishing what these needs are and ensuring that we work with a local partners to deliver sustainable provision to make lasting change.

To formulate this strategy, we have asked consulted a range of beneficiaries, local and national organisations and our own staff to establish a way forward. The initial stage of this was to undertake a gap analysis to see where we could improve and this has formed the basis of this document.

One vital thread that links all that we do is our drive for high quality in all of our provision which we know is crucial if we are to serve the local community to best effect.

This strategy document, which is underpinned by annual business plans outlines the way forward for RMF.

Alan Sanders - Chief Executive



VISION

For our local communities to thrive and prosper



MISSION

To work with partners in our local communities to empower individuals to improve their lives and environment



VALUES

Opportunity
Inclusivity
Quality
Sustainability





National Context

- In 2026-27, the FA will be launching a national initiative, to develop youth football across the county and to increase the quality and improve participation.
- Reduce Inequality.
- The Football Association (2024) state that over 100,000 football matches are cancelled annually due to bad weather.

Local Context

- Sussex FA will be taking part in the above national initiative.
- Promoting Inclusion.
- Adur District Council and the Football Foundation have committed investment into improving facilities in the Southwick area.

How We Will Measure

- Create better KPI measures linked to the budget sheet to track stability.
- Set individual and staff KPI's to ensure all employed staff are accountable.
- Set income measures to each role to generate a proportion of each team member's salary costs.
- Create a clear capacity measure to show available spaces at sessions.
- Capture the number of free spaces, free coaching hours and free events provided across our services.
- Share our positive outcomes more accurately with the team and show them the impact of their hard work.
- Create office-based slides to show progress and current position.

What We Want To Achieve

- o Sustain current memberships, improve pathways into the academy, extend our reach through our network of schools and session contacts.
 - Promote RMA midweek sessions to players at Saturday soccer schools.
 - Promote Saturday Soccer, holiday courses and academy to our school attendees.
 - Provide more benefits to annually subscribed members such as reduced rates for holiday courses.
- o Greater emphasis on younger age groups (Year 2 & 3).
 - Increase memberships
 - More likely to utilise other services such as holiday courses and school sessions.
 - Expanded network reaching and involving parent/coaches
 - Removing barriers to participation by competing with the free sessions offered by pro clubs.
 - Working to make session timings age appropriate.
- o Continue to promote equal opportunities for boys and girls.
 - Work with schools to offer girls the same provision as boys
 - Align girls academy fixture program with boys
- o Continue to develop the structure and quality of school football
 - School team provision is growing market
 - Support with kit and equipment sponsorship
 - Support school staff to understand the differences between competitive and development football.
- o Develop better relationships with feeder schools to our secondary school partners.
 - Free Year 5 & 6 football as engagement tool ahead of transition year.
 - Improve recruitment for partner school.
 - Recruitment to school football provision and wider RMA services.
- o Grow our holiday course provision, make it more cost effective and affordable to support families that depend on half term childcare.
 - Reduce our costs to ensure we can offer better value to parents.
 - Beneficial rates for RMA members
 - Better utilisation of staff and space to run promotional free football sessions.
- o Create more free opportunities for players to experience high quality football sessions.
 - Free football twice a year for younger age groups to gain engagement and recruitment for academy.
 - Free football twice a year in three locations linked to our secondary school partners.
- o Improve our social media output.
 - Align with market trends.
 - More positive posts linked to the good work our team provides.
- o Create a better framework for compliance to save staff more time.
 - We want a greater focus from our staff on creativity so need to free them up from non-value-added compliance tasks.
 - Ensure all compliance is easy to access and training is simple and effective.



National Context

- National trends show a significant decline in student engagement upon entering secondary school, with engagement dropping significantly in Year 7 and 8. Pupils show increased anxiety with negative outcomes such as lower attendance and attainment. National data shows 85% of teachers have experienced verbal abuse and 40% have faced physical abuse.
- Evidence shows that more children are struggling with their feelings and behaviour, which can make learning harder. Pupils find moving to secondary school difficult, leading to more worry and less learning. Children from poorer families often have fewer skills to manage feelings and language, which can affect school progress.
- In England around 2 million children identified as being from disadvantaged backgrounds are behind their peers academically, impacting their future life chances. 25% of disadvantaged pupils achieved grade 5 or above in English and Maths GCSE, compared with 52% of those not known to be disadvantaged.

What We Want To Achieve

- Improve student wellbeing, engagement in education and outcomes.
- Close the gap for disadvantaged groups, focusing in particular on deprivation and girls.
- Offer a range of tailored programmes to support: Transition from KS2, Girls Empowerment & Boys Pathway programmes, opportunities and education to prevent NEET and education and opportunities for adults.

Local Context

- Brighton and Hove, East and West Sussex indicate an alarming rise in school violence and dysregulated behaviours in and out of school. The number of young people with SEMH needs is predicted to increase, requiring enhanced provision support, alongside reduced funding.
- Significant inequality exists particularly in deprived areas of East and West Sussex. Girls in particular report higher levels of worry and anxiety with a high level of disengagement.
- The East Sussex Annual Report outlines a focus on improving literacy and oracy to support pupils transitioning from primary to secondary school. There is an awareness of weaker language skills impacting learning readiness.
- A recent report stated “Being NEET is also detrimental to a young person’s health, wellbeing and life satisfaction and increases the likelihood of ‘unhealthy behaviours’ such as drug taking and crime. Being NEET for six months before the age of 21 increases the risk of unemployment or low pay in later life.

How We Will Measure

- Monitoring during placements and for up to 1 year in school, using a range of tools such as SEW progress tools, pupil voice assessments and educational attainment.
- Producing programmes which support local need for disadvantaged groups, such as Girls Empowerment Programmes.
- Increase number of programmes being delivered, number of attendees engaging and the geographical reach of delivery.



National Context

- The NHS is embedding a life-course approach through Start Well, Live Well, and Age Well frameworks, with a focus on prevention, early intervention, and reducing health inequalities. Mental health remains a top priority, with £2.3 billion committed annually to expand services by 2024.
- Smoking cessation and obesity reduction continue to be targeted, with smoking still responsible for 64,000 deaths a year in England.
- Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), formalised in July 2022, promote place-based collaboration, giving the voluntary sector a growing role in delivering holistic, person-centred care.

Local Context

- In Sussex, suicide rates remain above the national average in several districts, with 11.0 deaths per 100,000 reported in January 2025.
- Brighton & Hove shows rising youth vaping and smoking rates, while rural older adults face chronic loneliness and limited service access. Over 21% of households live in poverty, often compounded by poor housing, unemployment, and low educational attainment.
- Local strategies prioritise mental wellbeing, health equity, and building inclusive, connected communities.

What We Want To Achieve

- We will embed mental health and emotional wellbeing across youth programmes, focusing on early intervention and trauma-informed practice.
- We will expand support for isolated older adults through social prescribing, linking them to meaningful community activities.
- Our health improvement work will be co-designed with residents and aligned to council priorities on housing, education, and employment. By fostering intergenerational connection and resilience, we aim to reduce harm and improve wellbeing across Sussex.

How We Will Measure

- We will continue using our SEW tools to assess emotional wellbeing in our youth programmes.
- For older adults, we will partner with social prescribing networks to monitor engagement and reductions in isolation. Our annual impact report will combine quantitative data with lived experience stories.
- We will also introduce regular community feedback sessions to ensure our programmes stay responsive, inclusive, and locally grounded.



National Context

Annual surveys between 2008-2020 (Statistics Research Department 2023) showed that the number of young people participating in dance has been declining.

- 11-15 year olds from 53% to 28.9%
- 5-10 year olds from 43.1% to 24.6%

Local Context

- In Eastbourne, Lewes and Rother there has been a drop in physical activity rates since 2022 (Active Sussex 2023-4).
- One of the main focuses for Active Sussex is to increase physical activity for children and young people.

What We Want To Achieve

- To successfully take oversee the Let's Dance performances in Eastbourne.
- To support schools in Eastbourne and the surrounding area to deliver dance to their pupils.

How We Will Measure

- To ensure that the Let's Dance performances take place on an annual basis.
- To increase after school and/or holiday dance activities for young people in Eastbourne and the surrounding area.

LET'S DANCE