

## **The RESPECT programme - how it all started**

The RESPECT programme is The FA's response to abuse and intimidation of referees and poor behaviour by over-competitive parents and coaches in grassroots football.

These issues were identified as the top priorities for the national game after a nationwide consultation undertaken by The FA earlier in the year. Following the consultations, the views of over 37,000 people were compiled, including players, coaches, referees, volunteers and fans.

The feedback confirmed that parental pressure is one of the main reasons why young players drop out of the game, while the poor behaviour of coaches, parents and players towards referees sees around 7,000 referees quitting the game each year.

Off the back of their research, The FA conducted a 10 week pilot scheme in 20 adult and youth leagues across the country during the second half of last season. This saw a number of new ideas being tested, including allowing only the captain to speak to the referee, erecting barriers along the touchlines to keep spectators back and displaying codes of conduct for everyone involved at the games to view. In total, over 300 teams, 150 referees, and 4000 players were involved in the pilot's.

Feedback from the scheme revealed that the new measures had a positive impact on behaviour, both on the pitch and on the sidelines, and formed the basis of the new RESPECT programme for the 2008-09 season.

Since then, the programme has been catapulted into the public domain having been launched nationally by The FA at the Community Shield. In the weeks since, both the Premier League and Football League have kicked off their respective seasons, with a reduction in bookings and sending's off during the

early part of the campaign offering an indication of the positive effect already being seen at the top level.