



**merlin**

promoting supply chain excellence

**Assessment Report**

**For**

**THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE TRUST**

By Andy Richardson

On behalf of emqc Ltd

Assessment Dates: 12/1/15 – 15/1/15

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## About the Organisation

The Football League Trust (FLT) is a national charity that “uses the power of football to change people’s lives”.

The FLT was created to unite and develop the wide range of activities delivered across England and Wales by the dedicated network of community trusts associated to the 72 Football League clubs. In 2014 The FLT engaged with over 1.5million people through football to improve health, provide education, reduce crime, increase participation and tackle many difficult social issues, for example drug abuse and homelessness. The FLT’s ambitions are built upon a foundation of four key themes, these being: sport, education, inclusion and health.

Each of the 72 Football League Clubs in League 1 and League 2 has created its own community trust and it is these bodies that create the primary customer base for The FLT. The charities have a combined annual turnover of over £44 million, with 2,500 members of staff, including teachers, coaches and professional health workers. Based in the heart of their communities, these club trusts use their club badge to connect with local people.

In this way, the FLT has a largely pre-defined supply chain given their role as the umbrella organisation supporting the 72 ‘football in the community’ programmes, each of which is attached to a Football League club. The FLT has been instrumental in developing a broad range of other social impact contracted work in partnership with a very wide range of partners including sports-based and non-sports based charities and organisations; and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations., This includes forming strategic partnerships with a range of organisations to deliver a number of larger, or more complex, contracts such as the Cabinet Office’s flagship National Citizen Service (NCS) programme. The FLT is also currently working with a small number of commercial and community organisations, as well as small local businesses and local authorities on the NCS programme.

By far the largest piece of work for FLT is the NCS contract, which represents two thirds of its overall programme provision.. The FLT acts as prime contractor for the NCS programme in the Yorkshire and Humberside region and as a sub-prime for four other primes nationally. Other significant contracts include the national Futsal programme (a football derivative, with its own unique set of rules), the Female Football Development (FFD) national programme and the ‘Every Player Counts’ scheme for people with disabilities, again offered across England and Wales.

The FLT is regularly audited and assessed by a number of external agencies and bodies and has recently been accredited against the **matrix** Standard, The Organisation has also been recently successfully audited by the NCS Trust (the overseers of the NCS programme), by the Football Association (FA) and by County Football Associations.

## Assessment Methodology

This assessment is The FLT's first assessment against the Merlin standard and was undertaken on an elective, rather than mandated basis. The scope of this assessment was based primarily on The FLT's NCS, as this represents two thirds of business. The assessment also factored in the Organisation's range of work outside of the NCS contract, including their approaches to the provision of advice, guidance and support centered on the engagement and health and wellbeing of end-users.

The team comprised of Andy Richardson (Lead Assessor) and two team assessors: Sally-Ann Harding and John Taylor

At an initial planning meeting between the Lead Assessor and senior representatives of The FLT, who were also acting as Coordinators for this Merlin assessment, a sample of Supply Chain Partners (SCPs) were identified that suitably reflected the make-up of The FLT's supply chain. In reality, this sample represented around 60% of the entire supply chain, given the low numbers of SCPs who are not a trust associated with a Football League club. From this sample, the Coordinators created schedules for each of the assessors, modified marginally over subsequent weeks to accommodate the availability of individuals.

During the assessment, assessors reviewed a diverse and substantial range of evidence, including written documentation and electronic systems. This was supported by face-to-face and phone interviews with representatives of FLT, including the Head Office and the Tier 2 and Tier 3 SCPs across England and Wales.

Each assessor completed the schedule of interviews over the first three days of this assessment, convening on day four to share findings and agree scorings for each criterion within the Merlin standard. These detailed findings were provided to The FLT's Senior Management Team (SMT), including the Director of Operations, at a feedback session on the afternoon of the fourth day. This feedback included the final outcome of the assessment and an overview of the key areas of strength and areas for consideration; as these could be used when it comes to continuous improvement moving forward; see below.

## Assessment Outcome

Overall %	66%
Overall Outcome	Satisfactory
Supply Chain Design	Satisfactory
Commitment	Good
Conduct	Satisfactory
Review	Satisfactory

## Strengths

A number of strengths were identified during this Merlin assessment and summaries of these are given below. The numbers in brackets refer to the criteria of the Standard to which the areas relate.

### ***Communications and Collaboration***

- ▲ Evidence of good, comprehensive, up-front communications, through presentations, group discussions and one-to-one dialogue, which enable prospective SCPs (referred to by FLT staff as Local Delivery Partners – LDPs) to see exactly what would be on offer throughout the contract in a transparent fashion. This included helping SCPs to understand the processes, payments mechanisms and reporting lines throughout the supply chain. There was strong evidence of the FLT working sensitively with the capacity and capability of each individual club trust SCP to help them further develop their own community businesses. All the SCPs interviewed commented that they have found there to be a much more open and flexible approach to the relationships over the last couple of years or so, giving rise to a partnership-orientated culture that better addresses the needs of individual SCPs.
- ▲ Nor are the positive relationships experienced confined to the supply chain; The FLT's relationships with other Prime contractors have enabled them to enter into joint working agreements as sub-Primes in a number of areas. In some cases, The FLT has also supported club trusts to submit applications to other Prime Contractors for direct contract status that excludes The FLT altogether, such is their altruistic ethos.
- ▲ There has also been significant investment made by The FLT in the strategic development of a number of SCPs, enabling the SCPs to remain viable and to perform to the standards expected within the contract. These SCPs were highly complimentary in describing the support made available to them over time.
- ▲ These approaches have equally been instrumental in building truly collaborative approaches and in supporting club trusts to work together to the benefit of service users, even when the football clubs themselves may be keen rivals.  
(2a.1, 2a.3, 2b.1 & 3b.1)

### ***Business & Commercial Integrity***

- ▲ All SCPs commented that they have found the ethos of The FLT to be fully in keeping with their own. At all stages and within all communications, these core principles drive both decisions and day-to-day actions. As a result, all SCPs interviewed commented that, without exception, pre-contract agreements had been honoured in the post contract reality.
- ▲ This, in turn, has led to some highly effective relationships at all levels across the whole of the Supply Chain. All SCPs commented that they have found staff at all levels to be both helpful and supportive, with many examples of people 'going the extra mile'.

(3a.1, 3a.3 & 3c.1)

### **Performance Management**

- ▲ Effective communications and positive relationships also allow for effective resolution of any problems arising. These mechanisms support clear performance expectations and all SCPs are clear as to the expectations that The FLT and their particular contracts have of them and that they can reasonably expect from The FLT in turn. The result has been to see The FLT rising to the top in performance terms when compared to other providers of the national contracts in which The FLT are engaged.
- ▲ Many SCPs interviewed were able to describe how additional support and the partnership approach taken by The FLT had helped them to improve their performance, even in some cases leading to some club trusts, who otherwise would have been forced to close, maintaining their financial viability.

(3d.2 & 3d.3).

## Areas for Improvement

The following areas have been identified as opportunities for the Football League Trust to improve and develop its approach to supply chain management. The comments should be seen as recommendations only and are not to be considered as 'mandated' in any way. It should be noted that the next Merlin assessment will review the Organisation's approach to these areas in order to establish progress as appropriate.

### Commitment

#### ***Collaboration, Cooperation and Communications***

- ▲ With The FLT working primarily with the 72 Football League's club trusts, there may be some merit to be gained in looking to segment and cluster these SCPs according to support need in a more structured fashion. In this way, those club trusts requiring the most support can be targeted and those, who perhaps have the better relationships with their host clubs and therefore need less support from The FLT, can be 'put on the back-burner' to some degree. This will help to maximise FLT's resources and prioritise support. (2a.2)
- ▲ A small number of SCPs commented that they are unsure as to who the funding partner is for the various contracts, ("**all I know is that the money comes through FLT**"). There may be something to be gained then in helping all SCPs to understand the various business relationships at play within their specific contract(s). This would constitute helping them make a conceptual shift away from 'activity provision' into the expectations of the originating funders in terms of contract 'outcomes' and possibly stimulate thinking about different ways that these might be able to be fulfilled. This will also help the SCPs to understand the network of relationships that lie behind most contracts and the specific contributions that they have agreed to deliver. (2a.4)

## ***Developing Supply Chain Partners***

- ▲ As identified above, good examples exist of where The FLT staff have aided and supported the strategic development of some SCPs. A couple of SCPs however, commented that they would like to be able to access a 'menu' of training options, in order that they can choose what they might wish to take advantage of in terms of helping them put together a structured programme for developing their own staff. There may also be advantages to be gained from looking to provide a little more personal development for SCP staff around such aspects as; data security, safeguarding and environmental sustainability etc., possibly through the introduction of a virtual learning platform, in order that SCP staff can undertake self-directed learning.  
(2b.3)

## **Conduct**

### ***Quality Assurance and Compliance***

- ▲ With a number of other bodies playing a part in quality assuring (QA'ing) their own contract delivery including the County FAs and the NCS Trust themselves, there is something of a reliance perceived by SCPs on these external agents to monitor the quality of the provision and a number of SCPs commented that they were not aware (or clear about) the quality assurance processes that The FLT had in place.. Having a more systematic and planned process to monitor contract delivery and capture customer experience could help to develop a better understanding of the customer journey that takes place on the ground. With SCPs offering a degree of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) available, it is also recommended that the SMT consider how quality IAG can be more robustly and comprehensively assured at this level.  
(3b.1, 3b.2 & 3b.3)
- ▲ Discussions with The FLT in regards to environmental sustainability revealed that this has not previously been high on the agenda for The FLT and its supply chain. It is therefore recommended that suitable metrics, including carbon emissions, waste to landfill, business mileage and energy consumption, for example, be rolled out across the supply chain in the form of specific targets to be achieved. These simple measures will help The FLT to describe in real terms the impact that the supply chain in all its forms is having on environmental sustainability and allow for ongoing monitoring to take place.  
(3b.7)
- ▲ Many examples of 'good' and 'excellent' practice were related to the assessment team throughout this assessment, and it is recommended that the SMT look to define, more clearly, what it means by these terms.. This will help SCPs to understanding why they are being kept up to date with certain aspects, as well as helping them to manage expectations by knowing what 'good' and 'excellent' practice looks like. There was a suggestion that The Community Club of the Year Award, presented each year by the Football League, could be used to identify good/excellent practice and to promote this across The FLT supply chain.

Club trusts gaining this award could be used as champions to promote and showcase their approach to other SCPs, for example at the annual FLT conference, or at the regional meetings.

(3b.8)

### ***Performance***

- ▲ Merlin is keen for organisations to be clear about the Value For Money (VFM) that Supply Chains are delivering from the perspectives of both the commissioners and the primes. At present the FLT has left it up to the SCPs to determine exactly what they are generating in terms of VFM. In reality, this forms a key part of the 'decision to engage' and it is recommended that The FLT set out to more clearly define what it sees as VFM for all principle stakeholders, including the commissioner, the service user and the SCP, as well as for The FLT. This clear picture should then be communicated to the supply chain in a consistent fashion over the next few months and again this could help inform decisions going forward. There would then be a clear message on how the contracts and the options represent VFM would also help to attract new SCPs as additional supply chains are assembled for any future contracts awarded. It would also help to identify where 'added value' plays a part and could be factored in to the Management Fee for new contracts.

(3d.5)

- ▲ The use by many SCPs of processes used to track individual service user progress on the various programmes provides an excellent opportunity for The FLT to now look to refine and monitor the 'distance travelled' by customers. For example, key metrics with which to measure performance along the journey for FLT and the SCPs could include volumes of customers at each stage, conversion rates, attrition rates and average length of time for each stage for the activity-related contracts and a variety of health-related and social interest engagement measures for other programmes. These metrics would then also allow SCPs and The FLT to identify where good performance exists and to share effective practices across the supply chain.

(3d.6)

- ▲ It is recognised that use of reporting from the Management Information System (MIS) is still in its early days and that some SCPs are still struggling with its use, nonetheless it is recommended that the SMT reviews the way Equal Opportunities data is collected, collated and analysed and then shared across the supply chain. This then will help SCPs put together a progressive plan as well as understand how they compare to the local, regional and national picture so as to identify where changes need to be made, e.g. in the engagement strategies used to attract participation from minority groups.

(3e.3)



## Supply Chain Review

- ▲ Recognising that The FLT action plan emanating from the annual review process could contain commercially sensitive information, it is nonetheless recommended that a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), targeted specifically at the supply chain, be produced in collaboration with the SCPs in order to create an effective understanding of the common areas planned for development over the course of the coming year and that will impact on SCPs directly.  
(4a.2)
- ▲ In order to design and develop a supply chain to meet, and have proof of meeting, the wider needs of the commissioners, it is strongly recommended that The FLT look to establish more *measurable* data on the impact activities are having on these social objectives, in particular Environmental Sustainability (see above). Driving these down to all SCPs will help them to identify their own contributions, as well as allowing The FLT to create a corporate view. It would also be prudent to look to other wider stakeholders to gain impact data, for example the National Housing Federation for homelessness data, NHS trusts for data on the impact on health and wellbeing and the judicial system for data on criminality, etc.  
(4a.2 & 4a.6)

## Areas Requiring Further Development

As The FLT has met the Standard, as described in the Section 'Assessment Outcome', there have been no areas for development identified as requiring immediate action in order to gain accreditation. However, the application of Merlin is very much seen by Commissioners as an on-going journey and The FLT should consider the above Section 'Areas for Improvement', in order to continue to seek excellence in all their supply chain management activities.

## Assessment Findings

### 1 Supply Chain Design

#### 1a) Supply chain design

Whilst founded on the 72 Football League club trusts, the scope and variety of the supply chain was found to be of a satisfactory standard with some additional representation from private and other third sector organisations forming the network used to deliver services. This use of a diverse range of delivery partners, including national associations, local organisations and other Prime contractors, enables the various commissioners'/funders' objectives to be addressed effectively, for example in the areas of health, well-being and social and civil engagement. In some cases the commissioners/funders themselves stipulate within the contract the scope of the supply chain they are seeking, for example, one contractor required the contract to be delivered across the City of Derby, as that is where they are based.

The organisations within the supply chain are able to deliver services to a range of customer groups with varying educational, social, and economic needs. Supply Chain Partners (SCPs) were initially, and continue to be, selected based on geographical coverage, experience and track record, as well as for their specialisms. Element 2c carries more detail of the selection process itself.

There is clear evidence that The FLT undertook research and consultation regarding local demographics and existing supply chains and delivery models, as well as commissioner/contractor and customer needs. In addition to an analysis of their own experiences in delivering a range of contracts, this research consisted of discussions with various Local Authorities, Health Trusts, Housing Associations, private companies, government departments, existing providers, the Football Association, the Football League and other key players in the areas covered by the various contracts. Particularly worthy of note are the relationships with the other Primes in the various regions and successfully assisting club trusts to forge other links outside their association with The FLT.

**“Every club needs something different from The FLT – for us who have infrastructure we need the national relationships with Funders”. (SCP)**

Over the course of the contract thus far, there is evidence of an evolving supply chain and examples were provided of a small number of new SCPs being brought in to reinforce and enrich the range of provision on offer, for example to provide additional support for people with health issues and to cater for the needs of particular sub-groups, including those citizens over 50 years old.

With a strong commitment to the support of the club trusts, these then are typically the starting point when it comes to the identification and selection of a new supply chain. FLT seeks the input of club trusts with regards to which contracts they want to become involved with. Where club trusts in a particular area are not willing able to participate, other providers outside the club trust network are then introduced.

These other partners are also used to provide further support of a more specialist nature and this was confirmed in some of the discussions with SCPs. Examples here include: Job Centre Plus, housing associations, borough and district councils, various police and medical support groups, other Charities with social agendas, the Professional Footballers Association (PFA), local colleges, Public Health and other groups who commission specialist disability, mental health and work with homeless people.

**“Many of the Trusts have made the shift from a bag of balls and bibs to having a broader social agenda”. (SCP)**

**“Over the last three years, The FLT has been a major force in helping us build proper Community Trust businesses”. (SCP)**

## 2 Commitment

### 2a) Collaboration, cooperation and communication

The procurement processes for SCPs within The FLT were found to be both effective and transparent. SCPs commented that they found the communications throughout the procurement process to be of high order and that pre-existing relationships are put to good use, for example in the identification of potential partners from outside the supply chain. The communication processes used pre-contract included presentations and events for all interested parties, together with emails, face-to-face discussions with existing networks and individual organisations.

The 'typical' process described by the club trusts was of The FLT almost acting as a business development department for the trusts, in that The FLT scans for contracted work opportunities and publicises these to the club trusts. The FLT then seek interest from the club trusts, using a very simple Expression of Interest process, to determine any interest in the type of work being tendered.

Thereafter, if enough potential take-up is shown, The FLT goes ahead and bids for the work (on behalf of the club trusts). Following this on-boarding process, work is contracted between The FLT and the individual SCP using a 'soft contracting' Service Level Agreement arrangement. In a couple of cases, club trusts commented that other SCPs had been introduced into the supply chain in their geographic area without any prior consultation, or notification. This they felt was outside the ethos of The FLT, however relationships have been rebuilt and now continue on a positive basis.

**"We usually get an email from the FLT about some or other initiative at least a couple or three times a week". (SCP)**

**"You are always able to contact them out of hours – it's a two way relationship". (SCP)**

Following procurement, communications continue to be good, with SCPs citing the effectiveness of discussions with their Coordinator and/or Regional Manager during frequent visits (typically monthly), as well as ongoing emails and networking events. SCP quarterly meetings in particular received very positive comments, with SCPs commenting that they found them to be open, honest and effective at challenging processes and identifying good practice currently in effect.

The FLT has certainly proved to the satisfaction of its SCPs that they listen and act on what they hear through the range of feedback opportunities and the 'strengths' section of this report identifies a more partnership based approach to managing relationships that has evolved over the last couple of years. A critical route to consultation with SCPs comes in the form of The FLT's Advisory Group that consists of club trust representatives who have a geographical 'constituency' of club trusts that they represent. Several examples were provided of papers from the FLT Advisory Group being presented to The FLT Trust Board and subsequently being endorsed and implemented.

Examples of feedback and consultation opportunities include Regional Supply Chain meetings, quality assurance feedback from external agencies such as regional and county FAs and The NCS Trust. This consultation has impacted on many aspects, including training for the SCPs and their staff and the redistribution of resources to better meet the needs of SCPs.

**"I genuinely do believe the guys are doing a good job – we do have a genuine opportunity to influence". (SCP)**

**"From my point of view, they are very proactive at seeking our comments and inputs. Not only do they ask our opinions, they're also quick to take action". (SCP)**

**"We do look carefully at the contracts to see what is practical to run with the staff we have on the books and the FLT is sensitive to our limitations". (SCP)**

There are many examples of SCPs working and collaborating for mutual benefit and the comments above are a clear indication of this. There are also examples of The FLT working with other Primes, for example as sub-Primes in three other geographic areas. Quarterly Partner Meetings are well received by SCPs as a vehicle to collaborate and have open participation and many commented on the participative efforts taken to develop the various programmes. Other examples of collaboration include the partnership approach to support club trusts in their efforts in working with other Primes and the sharing of approaches to address common issues, such as engaging with young people within schools.

**"We (SCP) were quite new to the supply chain and The (FLT) Trust put us in touch with a school down south who had some good connections with local clubs and had a lot of success in engaging with young people. That helped us a lot". (SCP)**

**"I think The FLT go out of their way to encourage us to collaborate, for example through the sharing of premises and other resources". (SCP)**

**"6 of us (Club Trusts) got together and ran a football tournament to raise money for our chosen charity" (SCP)**

**"The FLT set up a collaborative bid with \*\*\*\*, \*\*\*\* (Club Trusts) and the \*\*\*\* (County) FA into the 'Every Player Counts' Football Pools fund". (SCP)**

**"At the Regional Meeting, we heard about NCS good practice at \*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\* (Club Trusts) and went over to see them". (SCP)**

All those SCPs interviewed within this assessment were relatively clear as to the business relationships underpinning supply chain arrangements now in place and there was no ambiguity evident. All SCPs operate under a Service Level Agreement (SLA), where they contract with The FLT directly. SCPs all offer end-to-end provision and do not sub-contract to other partners, though they may signpost customers to other local providers, for example for further information, advice and guidance.

There were some instances where SCPs are unsure as to who the originating commissioners or the ultimate paymasters are, e.g. The NCS Trust, The FA, Educational providers, Atfutsal (the commissioners for the Futsal programme), etc. In a small number of cases, long standing relationships, for example with the now Director of Operations resulted in any and all contact being made through this contact point, regardless as to whether this is now the most appropriate route. This then may be worth further consideration by the SMT.

**“When you raise a problem you have with an FLT contract, they always get back to you – and usually solve the problem pretty quickly”. (SCP)**

**“I know where the contract comes from, but I’m not too sure on the defined role for the FLT’s Regional Managers – they’re very helpful though”. (SCP)**

With very effective working relationships in place at both senior and operational levels, the cascade of information was cited by all SCPs to be of high order. These relationships are founded on face-to-face discussions, for example at the quarterly regional meetings and the meetings with The FLT’s Regional Managers and Coordinators. Alongside these run the daily and weekly email and phone contacts.

All SCPs questioned commented that they found the communications to be open and honest, with some commenting on the ‘partnership focused’ approach taken by The FLT. Many SCPs commented that communications have improved over the last couple of years or so, citing the new management structure, the work of the SMT and the introduction of various new processes as major contributory factors.

**“Often I just need an answer to a query about things like start and finish dates or the evidence that has to be provided for a particular contract and it isn’t practical to wait for the Regional Meetings, so I just pick up the phone and talk to x, y & z (at the FLT) and it gets sorted”. (SCP)**

**“I think we have an honest and open relationship with The FLT – they’re very supportive and the relationship is of mutual benefit. They are tried, tested and trusted” (SCP)**

## **2b) Developing supply chain partners**

With pre-existing providers in the supply chain, many SCPs are already well-established and at an advanced state of organisational development, requiring little in the way of further development by The FLT. That said, The FLT did provide many examples of working with club trusts in order to help build capacity, develop strategically and remain viable. In one case, an SCP received hands on support to remain financially solvent and several SCPs commented on the support they have received in order to build capacity and maximise funding opportunities. Club Trusts, new into the Football League, (e.g. from the Conference) described high levels of ‘start-up support’ and help with fulfilling the FLT’s ‘capability’ criteria. Others cited personal development of senior staff in order to develop strategically, talking of staffing structures, financial modeling and performance management amongst other aspects.

**“They helped us in applying for charity status, as we needed to be a registered charity to be able to get the funding”. (SCP)**

**“I don’t think we would have survived had we not had the support of The FLT. They’ve been really great at understanding our business and showing us how to structure things to our best advantage”. (SCP)**

**“FLT have helped to raise the bar as far as standards”. (SCP)**

**“I think that the FLT strikes the right balance; it’s important that the Trusts don’t feel pressured into having to undertake contracts that aren’t on their own list of priorities”. (SCP)**

There is good evidence to show that additional funding streams have been brought to the attention of SCPs, e.g. through the various communication channels described earlier and that carry contact details and links to major funding streams. Several SCPs commented that they had been able to identify alternative funding streams of their own accord and in some cases they had shared this with other members of the supply chain. There was also some evidence to suggest that some of the SCPs themselves had accessed additional funding and that this had also been made known to the rest of the supply chain (e.g. Ferrero Rocher – funded health programmes), leading to improved engagement and retention of service users. For example, the Females into Football Development (FFD) programme brings clubs together to access funding and have regional steering group meetings e.g. Greater London Steering Group. This has proven to be particularly effective in identifying female role models who help with the engagement of young people in schools across England and Wales.

With regard to developing the staff within the SCPs, there are various examples of training being offered, in the main associated with systems and processes, but also including wider aspects such as data security and customer service, etc. It was also noticeable that SCP club trusts were at different stages of maturity in terms of the people management processes that they had in place (e.g. staff appraisals and training programmes) and there were some instances of the FLT encouraging further development of these.

The training offered thus far has been without cost to the SCPs and has been delivered either by The FLT’s own staff, or by drawing in retained specialists as required, for example to brief on data management and security issues. There are also examples of The FLT providing coaching and mini training sessions during meetings to help SCPs to fully understand processes and staff from both SCPs and The FLT have met up to share experiences. SCPs are also actively encouraged by their Regional Manager to raise areas where they considered that their staff would benefit from training or development activity not already planned by The FLT, though some commented that a more structured approach to offering training and development opportunities may be of benefit to SCP’s staff.

**“\*\*\*\* has asked us to attend a meeting in our region (South) to discuss ‘parenting’ classes; we would have never thought of getting involved with this sort of thing”. (SCP)**

**“We have had training sessions from The FLT and, more recently, organised a group session for our own staff built around The FLT webinar on using VIEWS (MIS) to record our activities.” (SCP)**

**“The FLT does offer information and training on some of the necessities but, having experienced the comprehensive programme that is available for Premiership staff (which we can still access – as can FL clubs who are in receipt of any direct funding from the Premiership), I think that the FLT could put together a more comprehensive and progressive CPD programme for staff in the Trusts”.**

**“We’ve done Safeguarding, Engaging with Young Peoples, Residential training, NCS Ethos and Principles, risk management and Dreamkey training. The FLT also provide access to stretch modules, which it publicises”. (SCP)**

With a number of developments planned and mixed views expressed by the SCPs, opportunities now exist for The FLT to expand the range of staff development available to supply chain personnel as this could provide a valuable source of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

## **2c) Contracting and funding**

The contracting processes have continued to evolve over time and are now considered to be fair and equitable by all those SCPs interviewed and, as identified above, communications are good throughout the process of recruitment and contracting.

Potential supply chain partners are identified through an established Expression of Interest (Eoi) process and applications are considered by the SMT, taking account of partner location, experience, infrastructure and previous performance. This process does tend to rely on pre-existing relationships and local knowledge amongst existing SCPs, e.g. club trusts are asked who they might recommend for The FLT to contract with where the club trust themselves are unable, or unwilling to take up an opportunity presented by The FLT.

Successful applicants are then put through a standard due-diligence process that included financial stability and this process was applied to all SCPs on direct contract to The FLT, including Tier 3 Partners (where The FLT acts as a sub-Prime).

All applicants are invited to seek feedback should they wish, regardless of them being successful or not.

**“I generally think ‘who gets what’ out of The FLT contracts relates to the ‘best fit’ criteria of the Trusts and therefore we are able to see the rationale for this”. (SCP)**

**“I think we all see The FLT as an honest broker who has the interests of the whole sector at heart and, at any one time, is willing to be an advocate for any of us.” (SCP)**

SCPs commented favourably on the fact that the communications had made the funding arrangements and payment structure clear from the very start.

This clarity, linked with the financial due diligence done as part of the selection and on-boarding process, has enabled SCPs to avoid any high risk financial situations, though funding to SCPs is always a roll down of the funding arrangements The FLT has with procurers/funders

**“We like the breakdown for the \*\*\*\* contract that The FLT have negotiated with the Partnership ..... with payment segments broken down into initial payment, attendance and attainment as this avoids the up-front cost problem we have had with other programmes” (SCP).**

**“We do trust the FLT over finance and I know that our book keeper has a good relationship with \*\*\*\*\* (FLT staff member)”. (SCP)**

SCPs confirmed that The FLT has devised and distributed basic level yet effective contract documents in the form of SLAs that set out to define the obligations of both The FLT and its SCPs. SCPs confirmed that they are operating under an SLA with The FLT and are clear on the obligations of all parties, with clear statements that SCPs feel are not too jargon filled, requiring a legal team to understand them.

**“Operationally in terms of contract, we concentrate on simple measures like making the targets on numbers of people attending sessions”. (SCP)**

**“We negotiated with \*\*\*\* (Prime) on behalf of the club trusts in order to reduce the financial risks of changes to their contract, even though we had no part in the delivery.” (FLT SMT member)**

Market share has been defined and agreed largely based on geographic areas, with a degree of flexibility when it comes to boundaries. All trusts are invited to put their preferred volumes forward as part of the bidding process described above. Some non-club trusts are presented with indicative figures based on estimations by The FLT and then they can negotiate. For example, one college was asked to provide 30 places, however as a result of discussions with The FLT, they finally opted to do just 20, which the FLT accepted.

‘Capability’ checks, performed as part of the due diligence process, also look to determine capacity and ability to perform. Specialisms also play a part and, as a result of the presentations and up front discussions in advance of contracts being issued, in which the delivery model was outlined, SCPs are aware of how market share was allocated. SCP awareness of market share is reinforced through the monthly performance statistics (for some programmes) that are published and accessible to all SCPs.

**“A number of Community Trusts identified that the split of funding arrangements within the Futsal partners didn’t reward our contribution fairly and The FLT is now working to renegotiate these”. (SCP)**

**“ I think we are all clear on the market share out – The FLT have been very transparent from the very start. If there’s any details you want, you just have to ask”.**



There is also further evidence to show that proactive negotiation took place regarding volumes and expectations, with examples being provided where numbers have been adjusted under contract variations to better reflect demand and capacities/capabilities.

**“The FLT gave us NCS volumes and we felt they were too big. We have now agreed a staged increase in numbers – I feel there is genuine negotiation”. (SCP)**

The transfer of funds throughout the supply chain is working effectively in the main, though there were a small number of examples provided by SCPs where payments had been delayed, though they understood this to be commonly down to The FLT receiving late payments from the Prime contractor, or in problems with the VIEWS system. A small number of SCPs who had experienced late payments commented that, whilst they understood the reasons once the payment was made, they had not received any communication beforehand with which to manage their expectations.

**“Payments are on time monthly”. (SCP)**

**“They pay on time and if there are any discrepancies, then they are explained to our satisfaction”. (SCP)**

**“There have been some payments issue in the past, though these seem to have turned round now”. (SCP)**

The initial presentations and discussions around procurement and onboarding have done an effective job and the all SCPs are aware that The FLT applies a management fee. Many SCPs when pressed could identify the purpose of the management fee in general terms, citing the management information system, staff training, The FLT' infrastructure, the development of systems and processes, communication tools and The FLT support generally. At least one SCP was aware of the level of the Management Fee, as he had asked the question, though the majority was not. That said, all SCPs commented that they were satisfied that The FLT would **“only take a reasonable Management Fee”** and this was not an area of concern for them. That said, this may be an area that the SMT may wish to clarify going forward, especially as further contracts are secured.

**“\*\*\*\* (SMT Member) justifies exactly why they take what for each contract and what value they bring”. (SCP)**

**“It does represent good value for money. We get lots of support and guidance from both our Manager (SCM) and others at The FLT”. (SCP)**

**“I'm not sure how much they take as their 'cut', but I trust them enough to think they wouldn't rob us blind.” (SCP)**

## 3 Conduct

### 3a) Demonstrating commercial and business integrity

The working relationships between The FLT and its SCPs are clearly effective at all levels and comments from the SCPs would suggest that this has improved, and probably become more 'professional,' over recent years. There are particularly good relationships between the SMT and SCPs and feedback from SCPs suggests that these relationships are fundamental to the effective working of the supply chain. The core principles and operating philosophy of The FLT have evolved over time in working with club trusts and now basically clones their ethos. Some SCPs described this parallel development of the principles and values that places football at the very heart of all activities. That said, a number of club trusts are now looking beyond football in a move to appeal to a wider audience of potential customers, whilst retaining the principles of health and wellbeing, social inclusion and engagement.

For many of the club trusts, The FLT is seen as responsible for encouraging the trusts to see themselves as organisations with the potential to have a broad social impact on their communities and for the mechanism for pursuing this being tendering for funded projects. Many club trusts mentioned that they found The FLT's strapline of 'tackling Society's greater goals' and the showcasing of this within The FLT's Annual Report as **"very useful to demonstrate to prospective commissioners and partners the breadth of social involvement that the Community Trusts now have which stretches far beyond the world of football"**.

**"Only as strong as weakest link so it has grown on the strength of the whole FLT network"**. (SCP)

**"The FLT have argued the case that more can be done if trusts push for growth and most of us now largely go along with pursuing a social mission which is larger than football"**. (SCP)

SCPs equally have their own sets of values and several commented that these are now more closely matched by The FLT's own and have clearly become embedded within daily working practice throughout The FLT at both strategic and operational levels.

With access to the HR Resources of the Football League (with whom The FLT share premises in Preston) **who at interview demonstrated** a good understanding of the TUPE processes and requirements, The FLT has demonstrated that it has the wherewithal with which to manage the transfer of staff between organisations should this be required in the future. This resource has already prepared a strategy for managing a TUPE situation as part of what turned out to be an unsuccessful bid for funding. This resource will act as the focal point for enquiries and provide one-to-one support, in order to assist TUPE'd staff to make the transition effectively and allay any concerns they might otherwise have.

As identified earlier in this report, the relationships and interactions between The FLT and its SCPs are wholly positive. Pivotal to these effective relationships are the Regional Managers and the SMT, supported by the Coordinators and support staff within Head Office.

**"This is definitely one of The FLT's strengths – we had some problems with \*\*\*\* (system) and \*\*\*\* (Staff member) helped us a lot in getting it sorted out. I can't believe the support she gave us, it was great". (SCP)**

**"We all feel part of the Football Family" (SCP)**

**"You can even ring the MD (Director of Operations in reality) at any time, night or day, or at weekends and you know you'll get a quick response". (SCP)**

**"We know pretty well all The FLT staff; we have regular visits from the Regional Manager and the Business Development Manager and \*\*\*\* (Director of Operations) is very accessible". (SCP)**

These interactions are supported by the monthly and quarterly reviews for performance and compliance purposes and reinforced through the quarterly SCP regional meetings.

Changes in legislation and statutory requirements are notified effectively through discussions and emails and these are again reinforced within the regular contact by the Regional Managers and Coordinators. The effective relationships and open dialogue provide for a high degree of understanding amongst SCPs regarding interpretation and implications of funding, regulatory and legislative changes.

**"In policy terms, we do have everything needed in place, as the FLT have made it clear that this is essential in order to get past first base with our tender PQOs" (SCP)**

**"The FLT do check though all our policies on an annual basis and have in the past made recommendations where these need updating". (SCP)**

### **3b) Quality Assurance and Compliance**

From discussion with The FLT staff and Delivery Partners, Quality Assurance (QA) processes and practices appear to be relatively informal, yet nonetheless satisfactory. Quality assurance is largely driven by the Regional Managers through the regular meetings and monitoring activity undertaken by a number of contracting/funding bodies supports these. Both the County FAs and the NCS Trust carry out a programme of observations, with feedback being provided to The FLT where any shortfalls in standards are evident.

**"Our KICKS stats showed low recruitment of women participants for our mixed soccer sessions and so we launched parallel 'women-only' sessions and monitored these resulting in dramatic increase in uptake of women's soccer in the city". (SCP)**

Customer/end user progression and feedback is also considered as part of the assessment to determine whether or not a quality product is being delivered and throughout these methodologies, the SCP has the opportunity to provide additional material for consideration and to suggest opportunities to improve performance where appropriate. Customers are also provided with the opportunity to have their say and many SCPs have suggestion boxes and feedback sheets.

Whilst these processes are proving effective for SCPs, it is recommended that the approach to quality assuring SCPs is reviewed by The FLT, with a view to improving robustness and consistency and to placing The FLT at the core of the Quality Improvement circle.

**“We get feedback from the NCS Trust when they come out to observe our delivery. Any comments they give us also get shared with The FLT and we then discuss that with our Regional Manager”. (SCP)**

**“They take a very supportive approach to any feedback we get. They’ll discuss what we need to do to improve quality and often give us ongoing support to put things into place”. (SCP)**

All results of QA activities and feedback are channeled through The FLT’s SMT, in order to identify trends and areas for development. SCPs commented that they find the informal processes for quality assurance by The FLT to be nonetheless effective and valuable in identifying additional areas for development.

**“The feedback we had (from the NCS Trust) was really useful for improving our delivery, as we had a couple of our people who were using some outdated methods and we’re seeing much better results from our young people (service users)”. (SCP)**

**“Quality is always reviewed and discussed at our monthly meetings with \*\*\*\* (Regional Manager). If there are any examples of good practice that he’s come across, he’ll share it with us and that helps our quality to improve” (SCP)**

With well established supply chain partners, many of whom having a long history in the field of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), The FLT is able to demonstrate that access to good quality provision is made available and promoted to customers at the point of delivery. The FLT itself has been assessed and accredited against the **matrix** Standard and all SCPs are being encouraged to hold this accreditation, though this is not mandatory at this present time. The FLT has also offered training sessions around effective IAG and publicised the main elements of the **matrix** Standard to the SCPs and offered support to club trusts who want to pursue this themselves. Some of the larger proactive club trusts, especially those working with health initiatives, had achieved **matrix** Standard accreditation themselves to cover their own work with their end users.

Through the various communication channels, networking approaches and one-to-one dialogue, all SCPs are aware of the IAG services available in their geographic areas, often providing this information to The FLT as part of the research undertaking as part of the bid-writing activities. A small number of SCPs commented that they would like to see some form of ‘directory’ of providers, in order to ensure they are fully aware of the local provision, and this may be worth consideration by the SMT at The FLT. With SCPs themselves offering a degree of the information, advice and guidance available, it is also recommended that the SMT consider how the quality of IAG can be more robustly and comprehensively assured at this level across all SCPs.

Data security within The FLT is currently undergoing a revision, with a newly appointed service provider coming on board to design and oversee the implementation of a re-engineered approach which will meet ISO 27001 standards. Data Security policies are checked during the due diligence process at the outset and at annual intervals thereafter as part of the performance, QA and contract renewal processes. The service provider appointed by The FLT now has a responsibility for ensuring that all parties are compliant and the overwhelming feeling amongst SCPs is that current measures to ensure information security are satisfactory, though several commented that they could be improved in their opinion. In one case, the nature of an SCP's work involved multi-site delivery and this presented an additional security risk that they managed by restricting the number of data access points and personnel.

**"We have to provide evidence that we have reviewed and revised all our policies each year and this includes Data security. The Regional Managers and the Business Development Manager do visit us quite regularly and I'm sure they would identify and mention if any of our practices were not meeting their standards". (SCP)**

Health and Safety policies are equally assessed at the initial stages as part of the procurement process and again reviewed as part of the monthly performance discussions between the SCPs and their Regional Managers. In the event of any shortfall, or corrective action being required, an action plan is drawn up by the SCP and agreed with their Regional Manager, supported by The FLT's specialist H&S advisors (part of the services provided by The Football League).

Discussions with the SCPs in this assessment would indicate there has been some specific training made available to SCPs on health and safety and further guidance is available through the Football League and its specialist team as required and requested.

Again, a similar situation exists for safeguarding, with initial checks on policies in place through the procurement processes and ongoing monitoring of SCPs for effective practices during the reviews and inspections by The FLT staff. A specified member of The Football League staff effectively acts as a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for The FLT and plans are in place to recruit a DSO as part of The FLT's own staff. With safeguarding having a high profile, many SCPs have developed their own approach and policies and many have undergone specific training in this regard, though several SCPs commented that despite some training being offered, this is a topic where further guidance and support could be made more widely available to them by The FLT.

Monthly management information returns capture related data, although there have been no reported, or identified incidents since contract start.

Whilst many of the club trusts have adopted their host club's environmental policies, The FLT has accepted that environmental sustainability has not been high on their own agenda in recent years, this despite having a contract with the Environment Agency 3/4 years ago. As a consequence, other than requesting sight of the SCPs' environmental policies as part of the onboarding process and providing SCPs with template policies if required, there are currently no targets defined for The FLT to improve performance against any broader metrics, such as carbon emissions, waste to landfill, business mileage or energy usage for example.

Nor have any similar targets been defined for SCPs specifically related to such issues, beyond those that the SCP organisations may have in place of their own volition. The collation and analysis of this data is also in its infancy at this time, although this forms part of the plans for The FLT moving forward over the next few months. This then is an area that requires some improvement.

**“We have our own Environmental Policy and we get asked to show it to FLT as part of our policies review each year, though I’m not sure what they do with it”. (SCP)**

Throughout this assessment, there are various examples of ‘excellent practice’ being shared and demonstrated, e.g. the exchange visit to each others’ sites, the collaborations with other stakeholders and the partnership arrangements entered into with a number of other Primes, The FLT at this time has not however, set out to define what the term actually means and consequently has not communicated with the supply chain in this respect. This leaves supply chain partners identifying what they believe to be good practice and sharing the same through the various formal and informal networking opportunities, such as the quarterly SCP meetings. Despite this lack of definition, comments made by SCPs were very positive when describing The FLT’s approach to identifying and sharing good/excellent practice. In particular, SCPs mentioned the Regional Meetings where, at each meeting, it was usually the case that one of the SCPs would be invited to talk about an initiative that they were championing which was showing successful results. Equally, many of the workshops at the 2 day national conference were led by SCPs and described: i) how they were engaging with their communities, ii) new sources of funding that they had managed to tap into; iii) how they were managing the relationship with their clubs and academies and iv) how they were managing particular projects.

**“One particular school down south has had a lot of success in working with local clubs and engaging with school children. The FLT made us aware of them and we arranged to go down and see them”. (SCP)**

**“We attended a workshop run by \*\*\*\* (Club) Trust where they had quantified the social value of their activities and projected how much enlarged premises would increase this. This then became the major rationale used to put together a funding partnership that led to the building of their new stadium. Our Trust struggles for space in which to house all our activities and so this example was a real eye-opener for us”. (SCP)**

There was a suggestion that The Community Club of the Year Award, presented each year by the Football League, could be used to identify good/excellent practice and to promote this across The FLT supply chain. Club trusts gaining this award could be used as champions to promote and showcase their approach to other SCPs, for example at the annual FLT conference, or at the regional meetings.

### **3c) Honouring Commitments**

The FLT has managed SCP expectations well with effective communication throughout the procurement phase and during live running. Expectations have been clearly defined from the outset and these have been communicated in both written format within the SLAs and variations and verbally through discussions.

Within this assessment, SCPs confirmed their understanding of these expectations and that post-contract arrangements reflect pre-contract agreements in all cases. All parties agreed that there is an open culture for communication that encourages and allows both The FLT and SCPs to voice their opinions and/or seek clarification where required. Any changes to the original agreements are covered diligently by variations to contracts, for example where original targets have been increased subsequently to reflect the growing maturity and improvements in capacity and capability of SCPs. Comments from the SCPs indicate that requests for changes to the SLAs are dealt with sympathetically and are usually supported by The FLT.

**“I’ve always found The FLT to be very supportive and more than willing to make reasonable changes” (SCP)**

At the time of this assessment, there have been no formal disputes registered through The FLT’s dispute resolution process. This process is included in the SLAs and is reiterated during the onboarding process for new SCPs. Only informal concerns have been raised by the SCPs at the time of this assessment and discussions with the SCPs concerned indicated that the issues did not require the need to escalate it to a higher authority. Otherwise, SCPs were generally aware of the dispute resolution processes and how to access it through their Regional Manager, or directly to the Director of Operations where this relationship exists, should the need arise.

The lack of formal complaints is due largely to the positive relationships existing between The FLT and its supply chain partners, with any concerns being addressed as they occur by the staff at The FLT, drawing in senior FLT staff as appropriate, where the issue determined that it be escalated to a more senior level, for example related to contracting or funding issues. Again, all the SCPs interviewed indicated a good level of satisfaction with regards to concerns being quickly addressed and in a positive manner.

The FLT senior staff also indicated that they would abide by any decision made by the Merlin Mediation Service (MMS), though the MMS was generally unknown to the SCPs, as in reality, these options have not been required to this point in time by any SCP.

As identified earlier in this report, expectations regarding processes, practices and standards formed part of the pre-contract presentations, workshops and dialogues with potential SCPs and these have been built into the SLAs as minimum service and performance levels. These expectations are regularly reinforced during dialogue and continue to drive the performance and quality reviews and are a key feature of the quarterly Regional Manager reviews and SCP meetings and informal reviews carried out periodically by The FLT staff.

**“I think we are all very clear on expectations, both in terms of the numbers we have to achieve and what the outcomes should be for the people on our programmes” (SCP)**

**“Expectations were very clear from the outset and I think both parties have honoured promises and expectations very well – it’s a good relationship that’s actually more like a partnership”. (SCP)**

It was evident in talking with SCPs that there are high levels of trust between The FLT and the SCPs and that this has been built up and sustained over time. This stems from The FLT and the SCPs existing as a permanent network that has other mutual business outside of the contractual relationship over NCS, Futsal and FFD.

### 3d) Performance

It is clear that the supply chain has been encouraged to work collaboratively, e.g. in the joint bidding processes, the various partnership approaches and in the sharing of best practice through the mechanisms mentioned earlier. Regular email and phone contacts, quarterly review meetings and attendance at SCP meetings also provided sound evidence of The FLT's approach to working in partnership and collaboration with its SCPs. These meetings infrastructure and effective relationships provide for SCPs to review and discuss developments and requirements across the network. The special nature of The FLT supply chain brings with it some obvious strengths. All members of the network are similar organisations i.e. Community Football Trusts in association to the FLT; and they are bonded together with many common interests, all as members of what was frequently referred to as the 'football family'. There is little doubt that within this 'unique' supply chain, there is a great deal of solidarity and support – both between The FLT and the SCPs and between the SCPs themselves, who don't at all see themselves in competition with each other.

**"The FLT are always looking at how partners can work better together, whether it's through sharing ideas and approaches, or working together to gain funding". (SCP)**

**"We don't really compete with each other; this is probably because we have an appreciation that at any one time, the cycles of football mean that a club (and therefore its Trust) could be in the ascendancy or hitting a very lean spot – and many of us have been in these phases quite a few times, and are willing to lend a helping hand". (SCP)**

The FLT has demonstrated a relatively informal approach to performance management processes and practices, primarily through the monthly and quarterly reviews with The FLT's Regional Managers and Project Managers. These reviews are used to determine progress against contracted service and performance levels, as specified in the SLAs. The FLT collects ongoing participation data from the programmes through the 'VIEWS' software and SCPs explained that they have to submit 6 & 12 month reports to The FLT detailing their performance against contract on their NCS programme. Opportunities exist for SCPs to raise issues and discuss concerns at these meetings and these are shared across the operational teams within The FLT in order to resolve them effectively. Lessons learned are also noted and shared across the network through weekly emails, ongoing discussions and the quarterly regional meetings; though at this time there is no central log of lessons learned in this fashion.

**"The approach they adopt is supportive but not threatening – they advise and offer help". (SCP)**

**"The Regional Manager does drop in pretty regularly (he doesn't live too far away) and we do have a chat about how the contracts are going in terms of numbers". (SCP)**



Any under-performance identified within an SCP results in an action plan being drawn up and agreed between the SCP and their Regional or Project Manager and this drives any subsequent reviews until such time as the shortfall is addressed. Innovation is discussed where it occurs, for example in the engagement of pupils in school (this has been shared to good effect across other SCPs). As with “good practice” identified above, the clarification of just what ‘innovation’ is within the contracts offered could well help The FLT to raise SCPs perceptions and understanding, leading to greater dialogue in this regard.

**“We were really struggling as a (club) trust not only to meet the expectations of our contract (SLA) with The FLT, but to stay afloat generally. \*\*\*\* worked with us a lot over a number of months to help us restructure our finances and to be able to start delivering some of the numbers we had originally agreed”. (SCP)**

Through good communication and effective monitoring and reporting, supply chain partners confirmed that they are very clear as to their performance expectations and that the review processes provide for effective analysis of such performance. Performance reports are produced weekly from the VIEWS (MIS) system by The FLT and SCPs are also able produce their own reports with which to monitor their own performance.

**“We’ve easily made our NCS numbers and will this summer be increasing these from x to y with similar proportional increases for the autumn and spring intakes”. (SCP)**

The VIEWS management information system is a relatively recent piece of technology that has the capability to store, analyse and report information in a comprehensive manner. SCPs commented that it allowed for accurate data to be maintained and reported upon and several commented that they had used the reporting features to good effect in analysing their own performance.

Performance information is shared across the supply chain during network meetings and is also available through the Regional Managers’ and Project Managers’ meetings with their respective SCPs. As with any system, there were a small number of SCPs who indicated that they found it to be difficult to navigate and that the constant updates and adaptations could actually inhibit effectiveness, though it is evident that The FLT is working to overcome these issues. In the main however, SCPs indicated that VIEWS was giving them good solid information in the form of data and charts with which to monitor and analyse their performance.

**“The reporting on VIEWS isn’t the easiest to work out, but we’re getting there”. (SCP)**

**“We recently appointed our own Information Officer (part-time) and they have formed a good relationship with XXX at the FLT and so our use of VIEWS has improved significantly” (SCP).**

**“If anything isn’t working, you can always ring (FLT) Head Office and \*\*\*\* gets straight on it. You always feel that The FLT are working hard to sort it out when it happens and we’re always well informed. It’s usually resolved pretty quickly”. (SCP)**

**“We trust it (VIEWS) 100% but it’s time consuming for staff to input” (SCP)**

**“We’ve had lots of training on VIEWS – it happens fairly regularly to be honest”. (SCP)**

**“Views is ..... good for managers, in that they can pull off lots of different reports, though it’s a bit monotonous for staff inputting all the data”. (SCP)**

With the focus of the payment system being participation and qualifications gained, where appropriate, for the end-users, those SCPs questioned were very clear that this is how they calculate value for money in their own minds, when compared to the cost of achieving these key performance indicators. SCPs recognise that bids are submitted in a competitive manner to win contracts and to optimise revenue. They also stated that they know that The FLT only look for business that adds value to individual trusts. There were also many discussions with SCPs around what can better be described as ‘added value’, rather than ‘value for money’. Here SCPs talked amongst other things about the support gained from the Head Office staff at The FLT, the funding opportunities identified and the strategic level support identified earlier in this report.

**“When you take it all together, I think they really do offer good value for money”. (SCP)**

**“Knowing how The FLT compares to our other providers, I’m very confident that they offer good value for money to all stakeholders”. (Commissioner)**

In looking to measure and encourage demonstrable outcomes and performance improvements, the main criterion is retention on programme and success at qualifications. There are examples of progression within all the coaching work that the SCPs do (the various levels of performance and movement between these) and this was also true of the FFD project. Within the BTEC L3 education programme (delivered in Schools, Colleges and internally within the SCPs who have their own Learning Centres), which is part of Futsal, there is progressive measurement of educational value-added set against a baseline established at the start of the programme. Equally, as part of the community health agenda, other contracted programmes in some of the SCPs do measure aspects like participants’ weight and BMI reduction.

The FLT are also aware of the importance of measuring Social Return on Investment (SROI) and there had been workshop which focused on this at the National Conference (facilitated by one of the SCPs) and The FLT is currently working with a software provider (the same provider as VIEWS) to develop tools for helping with this.

### **3e) Promoting Diversity and Equality**

Diversity and Equality (D&E) is seen as a key issue for all customers and stakeholders aligned to The FLT. All those within the supply chain are required to have and maintain a D&E policy that at least matches that of The FLT and compliance with this requirement is confirmed during the procurement process and is subject to the SCPs’ annual audit of policies. Thereafter, SCP briefings and training sessions have helped to define expectations all round and copies of model policies have been provided to some SCPs who were struggling to develop their own versions.

As stated previously, in designing the supply chain, The FLT were able to contract with SCPs that share its own beliefs and values, including those related to diversity and equality. The partnering Primes and other large stakeholders of The FLT have very clear guidelines and requirements in this respect leading to a high degree of visibility for this issue and, through The FLT, all SCPs are clear as to expectations.

The FLT VIEWS system is designed to capture diversity and equality data, though there were no examples of this data being reviewed by both The FLT staff and SCP staff on a consistent basis, though a couple of SCPs did comment that they could pull their own reports off the VIEWS system should they require any additional data. There are however, a number of The FLT funded programmes that are specifically focused on social issues, e.g. FFD, that focuses on women into football, disability, e.g. 'Every Player Counts' (funded by the Football Pools), which develops football opportunities for people with all types of disability (Down's Syndrome, Mental Health, Cerebral Palsy and Hearing-impaired groups) and also works towards up-skilling participants and signposting them to employment.

With specific contractual targets related to D&E in several cases, performance is being monitored in relation to these specific contracts, for the requirement to hit a number of minority ethnic groups, with 5% of funding being dependent on achieving this. This target was in reality unattainable for some trusts and, after discussion, The FLT have changed this requirement to be specific to individual club trusts who are performing well in this respect, thus enabling the overall targets to be achieved

**"We've looked to engage with a wide range of participants, especially minority groups, though some groups, for example Muslim women, are particularly challenging when it comes to getting them involved with football". (FLT Staff Member)**

With this as an emerging strategy, many SCPs are, as yet, unaware as to how The FLT will analyse this data to inform future service delivery, or how it links to the wider policy and objectives of the commissioner and this should become a priority for the future.

## 4 Review

### 4a) Supply chain review

Feedback has been collected from a wide range of stakeholders such as customers, club trusts, commissioners and through the Advisory Group that acts as the 'voice' for the 72 club trusts. The national NCS programme also operates a 'Youth Board' onto which regions can nominate representatives (from people who have attended an NCS programme) so that they can feedback about the programmes and suggest ideas for inclusion into future programmes; both the South East and the South West had had delegates who have attended the NCS Youth Boards.

These feedback mechanisms are further supported by regional quarterly SCP meetings, the annual Local Delivery Partner Conferences, the complaints and compliments processes and survey results, which also feed in to the supply of review data to good effect.

Effective relationships with these stakeholders all provide for a rich vein of information and feedback and there were several examples of this information giving rise to improvements being made to both practices and processes throughout the supply chain.

**“The Advisory Group acts as a ‘buffer’ between the club trusts and The FLT; we can usually pick up any things that are an issue and get a response to these.” (SCP)**

**“We have been asked to provide feedback upon the role that we want The FLT to carry out on behalf of the club trusts and our thinking on this has now been passed to \*\*\*\* (Director of Operations)”. (FLT Advisory Board Member).**

**“Enjoyment by the participants is probably what we look for most of all on our programmes” (SCP).**

In looking to adopt effective continuous improvement principles, The FLT undertakes a survey of SCPs on an annual basis. Contributing to this process are the discussions held with SCPs during the performance reviews, quarterly meetings and annual conferences. The outcome of this process is a series of action points, used by The FLT to drive development and improvement activities. The overarching report and plan are not currently shared across the supply chain network however, highlights are shared through the various communication routes, e.g. the performance reviews and various meetings as appropriate.

**“I know we complete an annual survey, though I’m not aware of what gets produced”. (SCP)**

**“I’ve had conversations with my (Regional) Manager in the past and he’s provided me with a brief summary of the main findings and that’s been a help in knowing what’s planned for the future”. (SCP)**

**“The annual conference is useful for getting together and discussing what’s going to happen in the future and what improvements are planned”. (SCP)**

Producing a more structured Self-Assessment Report and generating a Quality Improvement Plan and publishing them for access by SCPs could help to further the transparency of The FLT’s approach to continuous improvement. Providing an opportunity to include more Local Delivery Partners in the process could also effectively support this ‘bottom up’ approach, in order to increase the diversity and richness of the information collected.

There is a clear commitment within The FLT to the wider policy and objectives of the various commissioners. This is evident in the various programmes delivered and in the design of the supply chains and the use of external specialist providers that are brought on board to support the 72 club trusts.

Many of those SCPs interviewed showed a good understanding of the programme commissioner’s wider objectives, as well as the part they will be playing in contributing towards them in a demonstrable fashion, as the nature of most of the contracts are locally based and so local trusts are very aware of social objectives of their geographic area.

Many SCPs commented on the usefulness of the supply chain meetings, conferences and the discussions with Regional and Project Managers and Coordinators as vehicles for keeping them updated on the wider policy and strategy of the commissioners and affirmed that this is a subject often discussed at the supply chain meetings and performance reviews.

In terms of broader policy issues, there is largely agreement, in general terms, that the future role of the club trusts should heavily focus on the social issues within their local communities and they see a major part of their own funding future being generated by, and connected to, this agenda. The FLT have been largely responsible for the consciousness of the club trusts realigning to focus on this, with the result that the Trusts are now scanning in their local areas for more opportunities to access funding for this, whilst leaving the national contract picture to The FLT to pursue.

**“We get regular emails and The FLT use these to keep us up to date with the programmes and what the funders want from us”. (SCP)**

**“The funder’s social objectives basically become our objectives, as we get measured on these, for example inclusion”. (SCP)**

**“We have been told many times that the social impact of the club trusts are a ‘well concealed secret’ and a ‘hidden nugget’ and we see The FLT’s role to lobby at Government level to make sure that we jump into Commissioner’s minds as credible deliverers of large scale social impact programmes”. (SCP)**

All SCPs interviewed were clear on how they contribute to these wider objectives and many were able to give specific individual examples of impact, including the effects on Men’s Health, Obesity, engaging women in sport, those excluded from school, Chlamydia testing and engaging communities in regeneration areas. With the contacts and connections across a wide range of stakeholders, The FLT is now well placed to further develop this understanding of impact across the supply chain, possibly through the use of a regular bulletin.

**“We were able to quantify the total increase of social impact value (£xM to £yM) that would accrue from the increased capacity at our new stadium and this was key part of being able to put together and obtain funding from our Partners”. (SCP).**

**“We run drop-in sports and activity sessions at a group of all-weather pitches which are situated at a triangle of three known ‘problem estates’. This has had a big impact in taking young people off the streets at critical times”. (SCP)**

**“Girls Football (FFD) has had massive take up in our area and is impacting positively upon improving women’s health and fitness, just at the time when there seems to be social and peer pressure to drop out of participating in PE and sport”. (SCP).**

**“We’ve had reports from the health sector and the police that show we are making a positive difference to local people in communities and that’s very rewarding”. (FLT Manager)**

The introduction of various specialists from outside the 'football family' into the supply chain over the previous couple of years or so, for example to better meet the needs of specific sectors of society, including those from minority groups and with health challenges, are clear demonstrations of how the supply chain has evolved over time to better meet the changing needs of stakeholders of all types.

The vast majority of the club trusts saw growth and increase in capacity arising from developing more work under the 4 FLT banner headings of Health, Education, Inclusion and Sport. Focus and volumes within these are re-considered each year as part of the annual business planning process which is promoted and monitored by the FLT. Future initiatives varied depending on the geographical location of the club trust and the particular issues it faces.

**"The supply chain is moving away from a grant-funded situation and more towards a 'payment by results' model. This will require many partners to look at how they operate and make changes in the future". (FLT Manager)**

**"We see the majority of our sustainable growth in the next year or so coming from 'sports-flavoured' educational programmes, not just football" (SCP).**

**"We have been actively developing our international football education programmes, e.g. in \*\*\*\* (Country ) and this is a real area of growth for us" (SCP).**

**"We have developed a good understanding of how expand the delivery of health and fitness programmes for the elderly". (SCP).**

The design and activities of the supply chain have without doubt had a positive impact on such aspects as customer health and wellbeing, employability and homelessness, with some good statistical data to demonstrate local impact in some geographic areas. Opportunities therefore now exist to extend the range of data collection to other stakeholders, e.g. the NHS, the National Housing Federation, environmental groups (for environmental sustainability) and the various Police Authorities, in order to better understand the wider impact of the supply chain on these key social objectives on a more consistent basis.

**"Football teaches fitness but lets people understand the bigger picture/agenda". (SCP)**

## Conclusion

The Football League Trust has exhibited behaviours that fully meet the requirements of the Merlin Supply Chain Standard and a number of areas of good practice have been demonstrated and were evidenced to the Assessors.

It was evident to the assessment team that The FLT has, over the last 12 to 24 months, developed a much more proactive approach to managing its supply chain and that this has resulted in improved working relationships at all levels. These improved relationships have been accompanied by ever-evolving systems and processes, all developed with good consultation with SCPs; and this has led to improved performance all round.

Supply Chain Partners confirmed that The FLT has established and developed the positive behaviours that are expected of a Prime contractor organisation that is managing a productive and progressively improving Supply Chain - and that the strategies, policies and processes deployed since the organisational changes and critical staff appointments have resulted in a supply chain that can better meet the needs of the various stakeholders.

Good use has also been made of the supply chain partners in helping to inform the development and evolution of the supply chain and the support offered to some Local Delivery Partners has been instrumental in keeping them not only within the supply chain but in some cases, keeping them in existence as an entity.

Social impact is high on the agenda for The FLT and all its partners and the Supply Chain performs well when compared to commissioners' objectives, placing the Organisation high of funders' performance league tables on a consistent basis.

The inclusive and collegiate approach is also instrumental in helping The FLT to meet its constitutional obligations and clear values and business principles drive all day-to-day activities to good effect.