

Dorset County FA coaches undergo autism training from Autism Unlimited.

More than 60 football coaches and volunteers from Dorset County FA have improved their knowledge of autism with the help of [Autism Unlimited](#).

Autism Unlimited, based in Christchurch, provides education, independent living skills and career guidance for autistic children and young adults, and has developed a range of accredited training programmes to help organisations support their neurodiverse customers, clients, and employees.

The Dorset County FA coaches attended an interactive webinar entitled: ‘Autistic Inclusion in Football,’ which explored the benefits and challenges of football coaching from an autistic perspective and also equipped them with techniques and communication strategies to support accessibility and inclusion in their own team environments.

The session was delivered by Autism Unlimited Inclusion Training Specialist Becs Tridgell, who herself is autistic and Josh Green, a qualified SEN football coach with eight years’ experience working with autistic children.

Jemma Tewkesbury, Football Development Officer at Dorset County FA, and Centre Manager of Dorset Emerging Talent Centre (ETC) explained why the training was so important:

“Dorset County FA is seeing an increasing number of young players with diagnoses of autism and felt it would be hugely beneficial for us all to have the opportunity to upskill our knowledge of neurodiversity. We sent the invitation out to all our grassroots club members and received 60 immediate sign-ups, which was very encouraging.

“The Autism Unlimited trainers were extremely knowledgeable and Becs’ personal experience with neurodiversity and Josh’s football specific experience, shone through.

“I found it very beneficial, as the trainers not only enhanced my knowledge of autism, but they also discussed real-life scenarios and gave opportunities for those of us on the call to share our experiences of neurodiversity within football.

“The feedback from my other colleagues has also been 100 per cent positive, with coaches and volunteers saying the session was both relevant and informative and that they would recommend it to others.”

At least 15-20 per cent of the UK population is neurodivergent. The brain of a neurodivergent person functions differently from what is considered ‘typical’, so they may behave, think, and learn differently and have a different way of seeing and interacting with the world.

Jemma continued: “Undergoing this training will help us widen our knowledge and understanding of neurodiverse conditions, and in doing so provide safe and fun environments for all our players.

“We will be offering this course to more of our volunteers again in the future.”

Autism Unlimited’s Training Manager Claire Causley said: “Studies are increasingly showing that neurodiversity isn’t a barrier to overcome, but rather a unique profile of strengths and perspectives that sports can benefit from. We are therefore extremely pleased that Dorset FA share our commitment to being inclusive and to championing autism. We hope that others follow this great example soon.”

Other local companies and organisations which have sought training from Autism Unlimited include MoreBus, Dorset Police, BCHA and the local NHS.

Dorset Council has also enabled 2000 of its employees to receive Autism Unlimited's training.

Autism Unlimited's training can be tailored to an individual company's needs and can be conducted online or in-person.

For more information visit: [Autism Unlimited Training](#)

Ends

Picture captions:

[genericshot1/2] - Dorset County FA decided to undergo training with Autism Unlimited after seeing an increasing number of young players with diagnoses of autism.

[Jemma Tewkesbury] - Jemma Tewkesbury, Football Development Officer at Dorset County FA, and Centre Manager of Dorset Emerging Talent Centre (ETC) said she and the other coaches had found the autism training beneficial.

[JT coaching] - Jemma Tewkesbury, Football Development Officer at Dorset County FA, and Centre Manager of Dorset Emerging Talent Centre (ETC) is seen here coaching.

www.autism-unlimited.org

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