



[Chris Morley](#)

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Football and the union: it's all about the team

Chris blogs about how he's setting up a Walking Football team in his branch to improve physical and mental health, and remind everyone about the importance of teamwork.

Ever since being appointed to the equality and diversity role I've been keen to introduce a more active element to encourage good mental and physical health.

So when the chance came up during discussions with the regional development team at our office (Lynx House), I was straight in with football, as before our move "up the road" from Wingfield House, we had always had inter-office matches on a fairly regular basis, most of which I played in.

But how to open it up to everyone? Mindful of the fact we have a high percentage of older and disabled members - including myself, as I have a mild form of cerebral palsy - I decided we could try [Walking Football](#).

In walking football, the game is reduced to walking pace, there are no balls above head height (no headers are allowed) and physical contact is kept to a minimum, with no slide tackling etc. Although it's hopefully at least slightly faster than the over-75's priests' tournament as shown in the *Escape from Victory* episode of *Father Ted*!

Once it was agreed that football could indeed return "home" in a sense, our reps' stall in the office took on something of a school PE feel (the sign-up sheet is still hovering, for any interested local members reading this) and I could set to work on getting some post-Euros support from the Civil Service Sports Council (CSSC),

who ran a funding offer. After months of emailing, signing forms etc we were kindly given £200 and a bit of help to order kit (balls, bibs etc). It's now arrived and sits on top of my locker while things rumble on and a date/time is negotiated for us to go to Goals and prove Alan Hansen's adage from Match of the Day: *"you don't win anything with kids"*. Hopefully that proves to be absolutely spot on!

And as the "gaffer" on this - minus tracksuit - I'd like to thank everyone on our local branch executive committee for supporting me in running with it (no pun intended!) and also CSSC for their assistance and indeed funding. I hope this will mean more regular kickabouts as well as reminding everyone that in football, as well as union membership, it really is all about the team.