



THE BEATING HEART OF IT

November 2023



ACCREDITED
PART OF ENGLAND FOOTBALL



FOREWORD

Football in England matters. It has the power to change people's lives by bringing communities together, while improving the health of the nation.

Central to this is our thriving League and Club network. It's thanks to the dedication and passion of many thousands of volunteers that millions of players get their first taste of football and develop a lifelong passion for the beautiful game.

As an Accredited League or Club, **YOU** have positively changed the football landscape over the last 20 years, creating the ideal environment to nurture players, coaches and volunteers. The result is greater diversity and inclusivity throughout football and for this great achievement, I and all at The FA sincerely thank you.

The creation of England Football Accreditation is the next chapter in this amazing story as we look to unite even more communities by supporting Leagues and Clubs over the next 10 years.

Thank you again for everything you do.



James Kendall
Director of Football Development
The FA

CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Thank you and opening message	5
Why England Football Accredited exists	6
What is England Football Accredited?	7
Rewards and opportunities for being Accredited	8
What does England Football Accredited look like?	9
Club pathways raise stars	11
Transition	16
Stay Accredited	17
Eligibility criteria	18
Criteria for Leagues	19
Criteria for Clubs	22
League and Club Network Strategy 2020-2030	26
A Vibrant National League and Club Network	27
Support and services	28
Welcome to the Club House	29





THANK YOU

We want to wish a huge thank you to you, your League or Club, your people and your community.

As The FA Leagues and Clubs Services Team, it's been a real thrill to watch how you've united communities and created safe, respectful and inclusive pathways and environments. How you've made your League and Club the best place for all to play and enjoy the game. All thanks to football.

When you are Accredited you're not just part of it, you're the beating heart of it.

So, we welcome you to England Football Accredited. Being England Football Accredited means you stand proudly among the ace of clubs: the Leagues and Clubs that take the lead, set the tempo, raise the roof for football in England.

It is our privilege to be able to equip, empower and enable England Football Accredited Leagues and Clubs.

Our vision over the next decade is to create a vibrant national League and Club network to deliver inclusive local football that changes the face of the local community.

We look forward to connecting and collaborating with you, and to supporting you in your development.

Mick Baikie, Sarah Cummings, Tom Lee and Nathan Batchelor

WHY ENGLAND FOOTBALL ACCREDITED EXISTS

Leading by example. Raising the bar. Flying the flag for Respect and diversity.

Accredited Leagues and Clubs exist for the players and create opportunities for everyone to experience and enjoy the game we all love.

Every fan, parent and volunteer, how ever they support the game. Every player, referee, or coach, regardless of ability.

"A vibrant national League and Club network that delivers inclusive football for it's local community."



WHAT IS ENGLAND FOOTBALL ACCREDITED?

England Football Accredited is the new framework for League and Club Accreditation, and has replaced The FA Charter Standard.

It is an opportunity for The FA and County FAs to recognise all Leagues and Clubs who raise the bar and set the tempo for football to thrive in England. It enables us to work with our League network to offer modern competitions that meet the needs of today's game, while simultaneously creating maximum opportunities for everyone who enjoys the game to participate. Regardless of background, ability, skin colour, gender, sexual orientation or age: we unite everyone and strive to give the very best of ourselves.

As an Accredited League or Club, you have been automatically transitioned on to the new England Football framework.

It's there to keep things accessible, sustainable and safe, helping you to successfully run football off the pitch so that football is great on the pitch. Day by day, week by week, season after season: the very best footballing experiences for you and for everyone.





REWARD AND RECOGNITION

We know that players, coaches and volunteers who find themselves in an Accredited environment are more likely to stay in the game and develop a lifelong passion for it.

We recognise the significant impact our Accredited Clubs make. Therefore each season, we aim to reward both new and existing Accredited clubs with items such as Nike footballs, kit and equipment, certificates and marketing materials.

In addition to rewards we also align as many possible opportunities to Accredited Clubs. Here are just some of the opportunities available to Accredited Clubs:

- Tickets to attend Young Lions and Lioness fixtures;
- Funding for facility improvements;
- Access to commercial partner products or services;
- Access to the Club Programme and professional services
- Opportunity to run FA programmes such as Wildcats, Squad and Comets;
- Access to experts such as mentors, ambassadors and club consultants;
- Invitations to webinars, events and conferences;
- Access to the Club House, our online community;
- Access to In The Box, England Football Podcast and Extra:Time webinars;

It's all with the intention to recognise what being Accredited means and are all there to help you grow your way.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERYONE

WHAT DOES ENGLAND FOOTBALL ACCREDITED LOOK LIKE?

No matter how big your League or Club is, if your England Football Accredited, it shows that you're making a huge difference to your community:

Together, you offer all players – whether male and / or female and / or disability players – of all ages the opportunity to fully access the best of football in well run, high quality, safe and sustainable Clubs, and fit for purpose activity or League competitions.

Your infrastructure is sound, robust, efficient and effective. It centres around the Respect standards and behaviours needed to make football in England something we can all be proud to be part of.

Accredited is also a clear signal to your community that you value the importance of being sustainable and built to last off the pitch.

That you want the very best for everybody: your players, coaches, spectators, volunteers, and officials. Everyone counts. Everyone is valued.

As England Football Accredited Leagues and Clubs we will unite and work together to offer more opportunities for everybody – regardless of ability, background, gender or colour of skin. We'll create more opportunities to play and enjoy football to the highest possible standard that we can achieve. We will work and push forwards together: united in our love of football.



CLUB PATHWAYS RAISE STARS

On-pitch and off-pitch criteria is the foundation to providing safe, respectful and inclusive pathways and environments for the game of football in England.

In addition, we recognise Clubs that provide one or more of the Accredited player pathways, either for male, or female, or for disability players.

The star that a club achieves and is then recognised for, demonstrates that they have football teams within their set-up that support the three Accredited player pathways. It helps us to align the relevant support and services you need to become the best version of your Club.

You can find out more about how Accredited Clubs raise stars by watching this video [here](#).

So, where do the teams your Club offers sit on the new Accredited player pathways?

Clubs currently can affiliate teams as young as U7s through to open age and Veterans in FA sanctioned competitions. The Accredited player pathways are a minimum of what we will recognise as a 'player pathway' to create more opportunities and give more people the chance to play the game.

Wherever you sit across the one, two or three stars of accreditation does not take away from the quality of experience you provide your players, spectators and volunteers, but it recognises and champions you for the opportunity you give for everyone to participate across the male, female and disability game.

Some Clubs may already be able to deliver across one, two or three of the Accredited player pathways. Others may not. That's okay. We're all growing and improving together. And by striving to be the best we can be, we can ensure more opportunities and pathways are provided for everyone, thanks to Accredited Clubs across the community.

Some Clubs may want to collaborate and formally link in partnership to create more opportunities for people to play football.

The Club Partnership Agreement can be found [here](#).

Further guidance on how to link your clubs within the [Club Portal](#) can be found [here](#).



ACCREDITED CLUB ★

PART OF ENGLAND FOOTBALL

To be a one star Accredited Club, you must:

Offer a minimum of one affiliated male or female team at any age group playing within an FA sanctioned League competition. Or a minimum of one affiliated disability team.*

To understand what it takes to be a one star England Football Accredited club watch this video [here](#).

*Affiliated disability teams, will be recognised and do not need to be playing within a sanctioned competition.



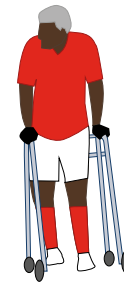
1 male team at any age

OR



1 female team at any age

OR



1 disability team at any age



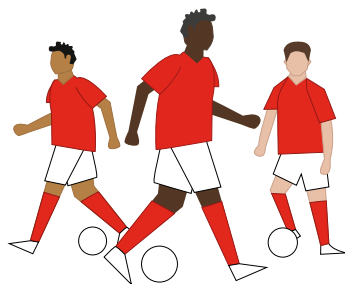
To be a two star Accredited Club, you must:

Offer a complete Accredited player pathway for either male or female or disability football, playing within FA sanctioned League competitions.*

In addition, offer a minimum of one team at any age group from an alternative pathway.

To understand what it takes to be a two star England Football Accredited club watch this video [here](#).

*Affiliated disability teams, will be recognised and do not need to be playing within a sanctioned competition.



Offer at least 1 team in at least 8 youth age groups (U7 to U18)

U7	U8	U9
U10	U11	U12
U13	U14	U15
U16	U17	U18

Offer at least 1 adult team from age groups U19 to Open Age

U19	U20	U21
U23	OA	

* Must have U7 or U8

* Must have U16, U17 or U18

* Must have 1 adult team, can be either U19, U20, U21, U23 or Open Age

** Max gap of 2 years between teams up to U15s.

AND



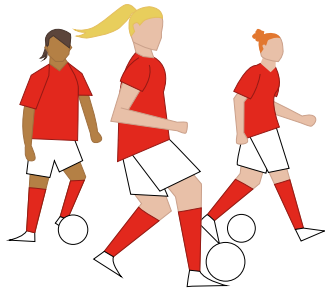
1 female team at any age

OR



1 disability team at any age

2 ★★ Accredited Clubs continued



Offer at least 1 team in at least 4 of these age groups

U9	U10	U11
U12	U13	U14
U15	U16	

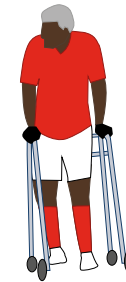
- * Must have U9 or U10
- * Must have U15 or U16
- ** Max gap of 2 years between teams up to U16s

AND



1 male team at any age

OR



1 disability team at any age



Offer at least 1 team in at least 2 age groups from any gender

U8	U12	U16
OA		

- * Under 8 can be U6 to U8
- * Under 12 can be U9 to U12
- * Under 16 can be U13 to U16
- ** All age groups included, U6 to U16 and Adult. See the [Club Portal](#) for more information

AND



1 male team at any age

OR



1 female team at any age



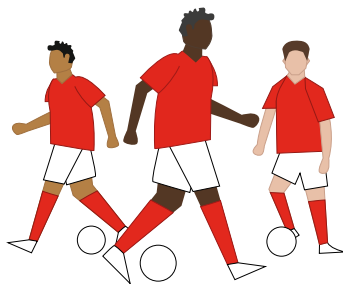
To be a three star Accredited Club, you must:

Offer the complete accredited player pathway for both male and female whilst offering a minimum of one disability team at any age group, playing within FA sanctioned League competitions.*

To understand what it takes to be a three star England Football Accredited club watch this video [here](#).

*Affiliated disability teams, will be recognised and do not need to be playing within a sanctioned competition.

MALE



Offer at least 1 team in at least 8 youth age groups (U7 to U18)

U7	U8	U9
U10	U11	U12
U13	U14	U15
U16	U17	U18

Offer at least 1 adult team from age groups U19 to Open Age

U19	U20	U21
U23	OA	

- * Must have U7 or U8
- * Must have U16, U17 or U18
- * Must have 1 adult team, can be either U19, U20, U21, U23 or Open Age
- ** Max gap of 2 years between teams up to U15s.

FEMALE



Offer at least 1 team in at least 4 of these age groups

U9	U10	U11
U12	U13	U14
U15	U16	

- * Must have U9 or U10
- * Must have U15 or U16
- ** Maximum gap of 2 years between teams up to U16s

DISABILITY



Must have at least 1 disability team at any age

TRANSITION

Following our transition from FA Charter Standard to England Football Accredited, we implemented a tolerance between the 2020/21 season to the 2023/24 season. We understand it has been a challenging period for Leagues and Clubs across the Country. There are many clubs among you who have not been able to retain or develop new teams as soon as they'd hoped.

As we approach the end of the transition period, we want to recognise Clubs based on the opportunities they are offering and their future ambitions. That's why during the 2023/24 season, we will review Accredited Clubs during the renewal period to reflect the position in relation to the one, two, three star framework as we remove the tolerance that supported the transition.

We will continue to support Accredited Clubs in collaboration with County Football Associations.

We aim to support the growth of teams across the male, female and disability pathways, but will prioritise resources to support Accredited clubs with the ambitions to grow the female and disability game.

It takes a network of Clubs having different teams in different age groups across the male, female and disability game, from youth through to adult, to provide opportunities for everyone to play and enjoy the game in their community.

So whether you are recognised as a 1 ★, 2 ★★, or 3 ★★★ England Football Accredited Club, it's ok, as Accredited Clubs regardless of their size are more resilient and sustainable.

Your star is something to be proud of and there is relevant support to grow and improve together.

Grow your way with England Football Accredited.



STAY ACCREDITED BE THE BEST

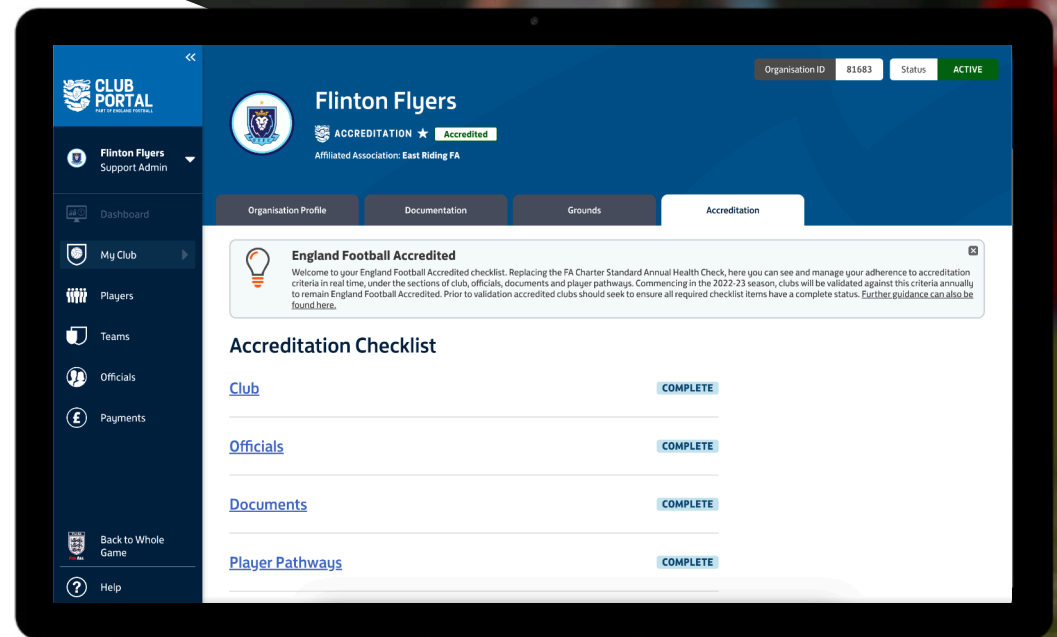
On the 1st November 2023, we will open up for Clubs to renew their Accreditation with the [Club Portal](#).

This means that clubs can continue to raise the bar as they are validated against the Accreditation criteria.

Clubs will have until the 10th March 2024 to submit their renewal, and once this has been approved clubs will be able to redeem their rewards through our fulfilment partners.

For support on how to complete the renewal process, head to the knowledge base [here](#).

When you are Accredited, you're not just part of it, you're the beating heart of it.



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Opportunity

England Football Accredited is open to both Leagues and Clubs. The following Leagues and Clubs are eligible to become England Football Accredited:

National League System steps 1 - 6

Step 7 feeder Leagues

Women's pyramid Tier 3 and below

Grassroots Leagues and Clubs

Leagues

All Accredited Leagues are recognised as an 'England Football Accredited League'.

Clubs

All Accredited Clubs are recognised as either a 1★, 2★★, or 3★★★ 'England Football Accredited Club'. The star a Club is recognised as, denotes the football provisions a Club offers on the pitch and how they are structured.

*All Leagues and Clubs must achieve the eligibility criteria to become England Football Accredited.
The criteria for England Football Accredited is in addition to the requirements for League sanction and Club affiliation.*



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CRITERIA FOR LEAGUES

Leagues must be sanctioned to a County FA or The FA

Through League sanctioning, Leagues will achieve:

Offer a minimum of one division at any age group for male or female or disability football.

Have in-date FA Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Checks (DBS) for all relevant levels.

All Youth League Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Welfare Officer, Registration Secretary roles are to complete Safeguarding Committee Members course.

Welfare officer mandated for youth football (male, female and disability), recommendation for adult football with U18 players.

With support from your County FA Development team you will achieve:

Evidence or adopt safeguarding policies relevant for the teams you offer competition for.

Evidence or adopt an equality policy.

Adopt The Football Leadership diversity code.

Adopt the Respect codes of conduct and implement the Respect activations relevant to your League.

Have a bank account in the League's name.

Provide evidence of last season's accounts if in existence for more than one season.

Have at least 60% of teams from England Football Accredited Clubs. After three years leagues must have a minimum of 85% of teams from an England Football Accredited Club.

Have a good disciplinary record within the Respect disciplinary code (if in existence for more than one season).

Operate within a set of League rules / constituted League.

Each season Leagues will continue to adhere to criteria and complete the relevant validation process to remain England Football Accredited.

England Football Accredited Leagues will achieve the following off pitch criteria:

Off Pitch

Complete England Football League annual delivery plan.

Accreditation and Respect as agenda items at League meetings.

Have an active link to another League to support transition of players, the Accredited player pathways and improve partnership working.

OR

Provide competition for a male, female or disability Accredited player pathway.

Encourage member clubs to become an England Football Accredited Club within one season on joining an England Football Accredited League.



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CRITERIA FOR CLUBS

Clubs must be affiliated to their local County FA

Through affiliation Clubs will achieve the following criteria:

Offer a minimum of one team at any age group for male or female or disability playing in an FA sanctioned competition.*

Have an in-date FA Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Checks (DBS) for all relevant officials.

Have a Welfare Officer for Youth Clubs (male, female and disability).

Safeguarding Committee Members course completed by Club committee members.

*Affiliated disability teams, will be recognised and do not need to be playing within a sanctioned competition.

Through the Clubs Portal, Clubs will achieve or evidence the following criteria:

Evidence or adopt a set of Club rules and be a constituted Club.

Evidence or adopt the relevant Club safeguarding policies.

Evidence or adopt an equality policy.

Adopt The Football Leadership diversity code.

Adopt the Respect codes of conduct and implement The FA Respect activations relevant to your club.

Have a bank account in the Club's name recommended for all Clubs and mandatory for Clubs with three or more teams.

Provide evidence of last season's accounts if in existence for more than one season.

Have a good disciplinary record within the Respect disciplinary code (if in existence for more than one season).

Through the Club Portal, Clubs will continue to adhere to the criteria and complete the relevant validation process to remain England Football Accredited.

England Football Accredited Clubs will achieve on pitch and off pitch criteria:

On pitch

Adult teams should have a named individual that has completed the **Introduction to First Aid in Football (IFAIF)**. If this person is a player, an additional person is required.

Youth teams to have at least one coach or manager with the **Introduction to Coaching Football (I2CF) per team, with in-date Introduction to First Aid in Football (IFAIF) and Safeguarding Children Course (SCC)**. A qualified coach or manager must be present at training and fixtures.

Have a coach:player ratio of 1:16 or less.

Off pitch

Complete the relevant Club development plan to support club development and sustainability.

Confirm Club meetings that take place and make sure they are recorded. Copies of minutes are available upon request.

Demonstrate that decisions made by the Club are informed by, and communicated to, it's members.

Processes

Teams with individuals that need to achieve qualification criteria can find the courses here: learn.englishfootball.com.

This will show against their records in the Club Portal for validation each season.

Clubs will evidence official criteria through the Club Portal processes or through The County FA Development Officers.



NETWORK STRATEGY

FOR LEAGUES AND CLUBS 2020-2030

Your Leagues and Clubs are the beating heart of our new grassroots football strategy.

During the next ten years, we are committed to making positive changes to improve the game for everyone. Here's how:

Male, Female and Disabled Participation

We will increase the number of male, female and disabled teams, putting pathways in place to deliver consistent and comprehensive opportunities to maximise the levels of enjoyment for all – regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin colour or ability.

Facilities

The Football Foundation will increase direct involvement into sites that are owned and/or operated by Clubs where it is needed most. All football environments, from training grounds to classrooms to changing rooms, will be made safe and positive places that thrive on inclusivity and respect, making them key parts of the local community.

Volunteers and Workforce

We will support, reward and diversify the grassroots volunteers and workforce, encouraging skills and diversity at all levels while developing the next generation. We will work to make football accessible for all, and for life.

Digital Products and Services

We will support all Leagues and Clubs in the use of FA technology to keep them on top of their game: for more effective and efficient management and administration, while building an effective and supportive online community to learn and grow together by sharing knowledge.

A VIBRANT NATIONAL LEAGUE AND CLUB NETWORK

Our offering includes graduated support to ensure positivity and progress **FOR ALL** Leagues and Clubs across England. This includes tailored support to 1000 leagues and 1000 clubs in recognition of their ambition and potential to grow across the male, female and disability pathways.



A robust and sustainable League and Club network with sound infrastructure.



A comprehensive offer for England Football Accredited League and Club activities.



High quality operations and accessible community facilities.



SUPPORT AND SERVICES

We're committed to supporting all the dedicated volunteers out there.

We recognise all you do for the good of our beautiful game, and it's our duty to support you with the very best resources, and the most up-to-date knowledge and information to help you run the game to the highest possible standards whilst supporting, encouraging and growing the next generation of volunteers.

We want Leagues and Clubs to be the very best versions of themselves with a vision to be the beating heart of their community. That's why we provide tailored support, recognition and reward for **every League** and **every Club**. You deserve the best so that you can be the best.



The Club Programme is here to help you achieve your Club's vision and ambitions. With great resources and a team of expert Club Consultants delivering the programme, your Club will have the help and support it needs to become the best it can be.

To find out more please visit: www.EnglandFootball.com/clubprogramme

Fill your boots

Learn more about English Grassroots Football, plus further information about England Football Accredited, and the Leagues and Clubs system. Go local - contact your [County FA](#) for support.

Visit EnglandFootball.com to get information and support on how to grow the game, in particular the female and disability game.

Visit [England Football Learning](#) for support on your coaching journey.

To find support, ideas, and all of the knowledge you need to succeed; visit our League and Club Hub on [YouTube](#). Home of In The Box the England Football podcast and Extra Time webinars for Accredited Leagues and Clubs.

Listen to In The Box on [Spotify](#) with new episodes available monthly.

Join our online community [Club House](#) to search for blogs and resources. You can even join in the team talk to get ideas from people in Leagues and Clubs just like you.

Take a look at www.EnglandFootball.com/accredited

***We're here for you.
For everyone. For the very
best in grassroots football.***

WELCOME TO CLUB HOUSE

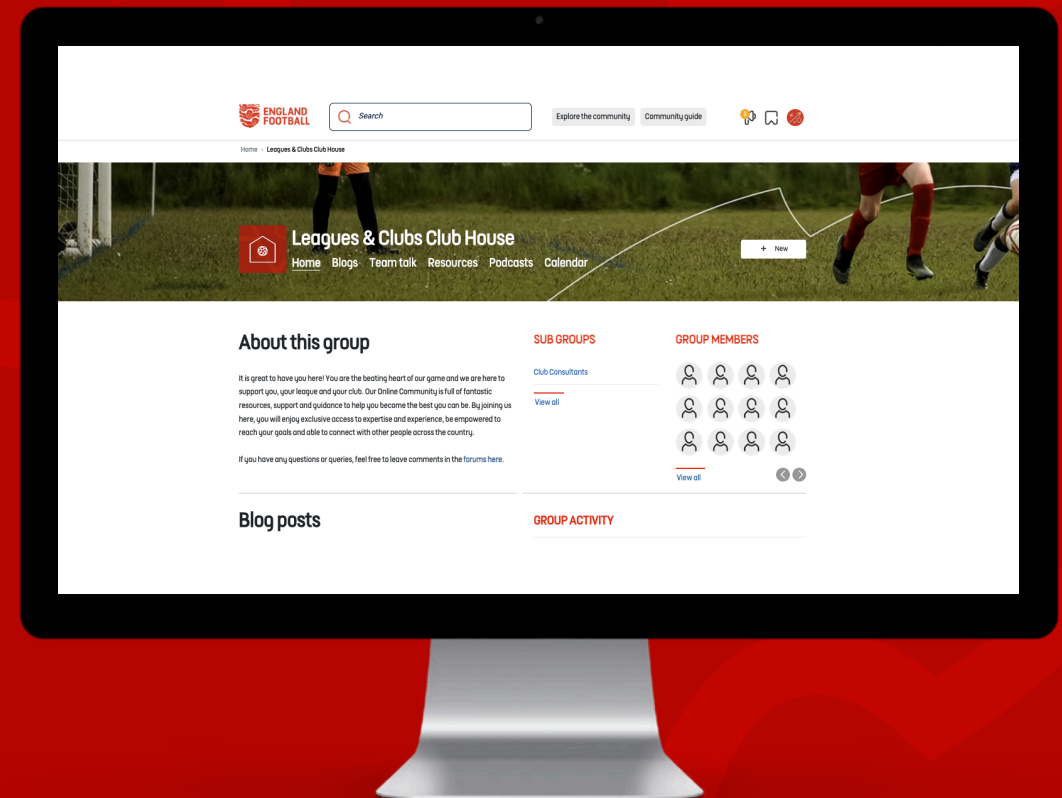
Our Online Community **Clubhouse**, is full of fantastic resources, support and guidance to help clubs and leagues become the best they can be.

By joining us here, our workforce can enjoy exclusive access to expertise and experience, be empowered to reach goals and able to connect with other people from areas across the country.

Volunteers can browse through our series of In The Box and Extra Time episodes, podcasts and webinars with peers, experts and leading industry figures with even more coming in the future as Clubhouse evolves to fit the needs and demands of the game.



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Twitter: @EnglandFootball

Facebook: @englandfootball

Instagram: @englandfootball

Web: englandfootball.com

Email: clubaccreditation@thefa.com
leagueaccreditation@thefa.com