



*The FA*  
**YOUTH LEADERSHIP  
AND VOLUNTEERING TOOLKIT**

A 'HOW TO' GUIDE FOR CLUBS AND LEAGUES ON WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

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## WHY YOUNG PEOPLE GET INVOLVED

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The biggest reason I volunteer is simply because I enjoy it. Putting smiles on faces, helping others out and sharing the passion for the beautiful game. What can be better than that?

”

- Chris

“

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My volunteering journey began with the English Colleges FA National Student Management Team and inspired me to take up further volunteering opportunities, which ultimately resulted in gaining my first paid role in Sports Development.

”

- Adrian

“

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The Youth Forum provided me with insight into Surrey FA, leading me to apply for my internship.

”

- Izzy

There are over 11 million young people aged under 18 in England and 20 million under 25.

Current projections suggest these figures will continue to rise and over the next 5-10 years young people will comprise a larger proportion of the population than any previous generation.

This situation is also reflected in football participation, with the majority of all football in England played by under 25s (estimated 70%). The FA's latest figures indicate that affiliated youth football continues to flourish with over 64,000 teams. However the health of grassroots football is dependent on its volunteers and there is a real concern around the renewal of an ageing (and retiring) volunteer workforce. There is a need to encourage and embed an ethos of community volunteering in a younger generation and bring through these young people into leadership positions in the community football structures of clubs and leagues.

The benefits of developing youth participation is often framed in terms of an investment in the future of the game but it is important to recognise, that youth participation in multiple settings as volunteers and leaders provides an array of benefits in the here and now. This generation of young people emerging are more connected to each other and to information than previous generations. They have new skills and approaches that have the potential to transform the way in which the game is run, organised and developed.

The FA's commitment to the value of this approach is set out in the Youth Charter contained in this document and we would encourage our County Football Associations and other Football Partners to undertake a similar exercise to consider how the potential of young people can be harnessed for the good of football. Actual examples of how this is being done are illustrated in this 'Tool Kit'. These are practical case studies – undertaken by clubs, leagues and County football Associations – just like yours. They illustrate what the energy, commitment and enthusiasm of young people can contribute to the current and future health of football.

**Dermot Collins**

**FA National Development Manager  
Youth Football**



“

Everyday I know that the work I am doing is actually changing lives which is amazing. It has also helped develop myself as a person, helping with my confidence, relationship building and presenting.

”

- Alex  
FA Youth Councillor

# THE FA YOUTH LEADERSHIP CHARTER

## **The FA's promise to young people aged 16-25**

Young people aren't just the leaders of tomorrow. They have the energy, skills and ideas to change football and the wider community for the better today.

The FA wants to establish a culture of involving young people (16-25 years) in the organisation of football. This approach will benefit young people, promote better informed and more representative decision making, and bring through a new generation of volunteers into the workforce across the grassroots game. For this approach to work it needs to be based on genuine youth-adult partnerships. Such partnerships should always implement the appropriate safeguarding requirements. See Appendix One 'The FA Relationship of Trust'

We will embed safeguards across all the activities u/18s are involved in ensuring that they feel confident and appropriately supported.

The FA and its Youth Councillors will also work with its County Associations and our football partners to encourage a similar commitment and approach across the Country.

To achieve this we will consult and involve young people. We will promote the concept and benefits of youth leadership and volunteering within the FA and with our football partners. We will deliver programmes and events created, directed and staffed by young people that demonstrate this commitment.

## CONSULT

- Involve young people in our policy-making and governance structures – specifically The FA Council, The FA Inclusion Advisory Board and the FA Youth Participation Committee.
- Build relevant communication channels to talk directly with Young people as to the opportunities available to them.
- Commission research to ensure that our programmes are relevant and attractive to the young people they seek to engage.
- Support the running of a National Youth Council as a key reference point for the FA's work with young people. The National Youth Council will in turn support the operation of County FA Youth Councils.

## INVOLVE

- Ensure the young people in our leadership programmes reflect football's diversity by reviewing our recruitment procedures and operating a Youth Forum drawing representatives from a wider range of organisations and backgrounds.
- Offer meaningful and salaried entry-level jobs and apprenticeships at the Football Association.

## PROMOTE

- Seek out and share good practice to demonstrate what can be done when young people are meaningfully engaged in the governance, organisation and development of football.
- Work with the football network to provide opportunities for young people to take leadership responsibility in clubs, leagues and other football programmes.

## DELIVER

- Use the events we stage (e.g. major tournaments, international matches, Cup Finals, etc.) to provide high quality volunteer staff to the organisers and leadership development opportunities for the young people involved.
- Run an annual FA Leadership Academy, framed and led by young leaders. The Academy will develop the skills of its participants and celebrate their successes in community football.

By adopting the approach and measures listed above we believe we can derive huge benefits to the young people engaged, the organisation of football and health and the wellbeing of wider society.

## **CASE STUDIES**

The FA's research shows that we have a variety of young people currently engaged in FA, CFA, Clubs or League structures in leadership positions.

They are involved in coaching, the management of teams, refereeing, event planning and management, University and College programmes, advising clubs, leagues, CFAs and the FA on the provision of football for young people. There is, however, so much more that could be done. The following examples demonstrate the benefits of planning for the meaningful involvement of young people. This is best done with an ethos of partnership. Their involvement should not be tokenistic nor confined to basic tasks but given a status that allows them to play a full part in the governance, organisation and development of the game.



## CASE STUDY ONE - WYRLEY JUNIORS CLUB

“

The workload of the club was being shared by the few, and so we embarked upon a period of identifying assistants to help with succession planning and reallocating jobs within the committee. To help that task and ensure new ideas and wider involvement, we launched a youth committee to increase the loyalty of young people and give them ownership of their club.

Each youngster has committed fully to this initiative (impressive when some are in the middle of GCSEs) and the impact is being felt immediately. I am confident it will grow further and become an integral part of the club.

”

**- Keith Hardy**  
**Chairman of Wyrley Juniors FC**

Wyrley Juniors is a grassroots football club that understands the benefits of incorporating young people within the club into the decision-making process, and has embraced that challenge.

The club has demonstrated a commitment to safeguarding its own positive future. In doing so, it is providing the young people involved with vital skills for their own futures, both inside and outside football. They have also eased the workload on existing administrative volunteers.

## **HOW?**

The club launched the new youth committee. This mirrors the main committee with each youth committee member linked to the main committee for support and advice.

The youth committee members collect feedback from players on their thoughts, hopes and concerns on the club's present and future. They meet together, discuss, and take forward ideas to the main committee to enable decision-making that represents all at the club.

The youth committee also plan fundraising and volunteering ideas to establish the club as a positive force in the local community.

They produce a half-termly newsletter to share ideas and success with everybody at the club.

# WHAT DID THEY DO?

## **A football fun day for an inner-city church youth group:**

The Church group struggles to find free open space to host events and activities; the youth committee believes the club's home ground would be the perfect space in which to host an event. Crucially, they believe this is a partnership that could be expanded in the future.

## **An afternoon tea for local elderly residents:**

The youth committee secured funding from an ASDA store and other local businesses to provide the refreshments to host an afternoon tea event for local elderly residents, including relatives of young people within the club. This demonstrates awareness that a grassroots football club can be the heart of a local community, even with non-sporting initiatives.

## **A litter pick in local area:**

Planned by the youth committee as an easy and effective way of giving back to the local community, and making a tangible difference. Local residents seeing the young players helping in such a way improves the goodwill towards the club instantly.

## **Setting up a youth committee Instagram page:**

Crucially allows the young people within the club to be represented on a platform that is designed for their demographic. This helps to create a sense of community within the club that will increase loyalty and ownership. Evidencing the positive work done by the youth committee will also increase the likelihood of others wanting to get involved.

Importantly, all of the above are tangible, real-world actions that make a difference to the local community and demonstrate the potential within young people to get involved in helping make that difference.

## CASE STUDY TWO - SHROPSHIRE FA YOUTH COUNCIL

“

As a youth council we invest in running events by young people for young people; to inspire and empower the next generation of football volunteers whilst also providing opportunities to develop and lay the foundations of fundamental skills transferable to numerous aspects of life.

”

**- Holly Davies**  
**Chair of Shropshire County FA Youth Council**

### **What are the aims of the Shropshire FA Youth Council's work?**

- Empower the next generation of football volunteers.
- Use football as a basis to provide young people with fundamental, transferable skills.
- Engage young people to take ownership of the future of their football clubs and the game in general.
- Educate young people on some of the football's core disciplines and the potential opportunities within these disciplines.
- Spread the message that football is for all and welcomes all.

## WHAT DO THEY DO?

The Shropshire FA Youth Council invest in running a range of football events and activities for young people, organised and managed by young people. They cover many different aspects of the game, on and off the pitch. The events and workshops run by youth council members for other young people used external speakers such as professional referees and coaches to give expert advice.

The initial day was so successful it has expanded with greater ambitions and sessions. Rather than a one-day event, it is now five events across the year to engage a wider and larger audience.

The growth of the event indicates both the appetite of young people to learn the skills provided by the events, and the quality and enjoyment of the sessions. The extension of the programme will help create a model that could be rolled out across the country.

### **Innovations:**

The youth council felt it appropriate to implement a reward system to incentivise attendance at their events. They organised a presentation evening to take place at the end of their five event days. All attendees of any event are invited to the presentation evening, where their involvement is recognised by the youth council.

### **Development:**

Thanks to the success of the youth council's work, many of its members have been given additional opportunities to support clubs, leagues and the county FA. They sit on committees to pass on their knowledge and experience, support campaigns such as Kick It Out and Rainbow Laces and have attended the FA National Leadership Academy and national referee development days.

## CASE STUDY THREE - SHEFFIELD AND DISTRICT JUNIOR LEAGUE

“

I am able to give my views from the perspective of a player and now referee and coach. I love being involved in the Committee, helping to shape the future of the game and I think people can see that I do have useful things to say regarding Youth Football.

I think it is important that other youth players get involved in the running of football because it is vital that the decision makers in the leagues listen to the youth voice who are involved. At the end of the day it is our game, and our opinions count.

”

**- Cameron Connor**  
Youth committee member

### What were the aims of the Sheffield and District Junior League?

Sheffield and District Junior League is one of the biggest youth leagues in the country, and a league that has truly embraced the importance of engaging young people within its structure. There has been a deliberate movement to integrate youth to the administrative side of the league, a recognition that the league - and the game - has to build a platform for the next generation.

Only by bringing in young people into those processes can they feel ownership of the league and in doing so feel represented. By promoting the notable success stories within the league they can enthuse others to follow their lead.

## CAMERON CONNOR

“

I went along to a committee meeting and the committee made me feel welcome straight away. They often asked my opinions on matters which affected the league, and my perspective from a young player's point of view was appreciated. I then started to represent the league at events, one at Lancashire FA and then the last two National Youth League Conferences.

”

**- Cameron Connor**  
**Youth committee member**

At the age of 10, Cameron attended the FA Skills programme. The lead coach was so impressed with his maturity when speaking about the game he suggested him as a candidate for the Sheffield & Hallamshire County FA Youth Council. Although too young to take part on that council, Cameron was offered the chance to join the Sheffield and District Junior League youth committee.

Cameron was consulted on issues that affected the league and its players. He was asked to speak to a panel of FA staff and delegates at the National Youth Leagues conference at St George's Park, and represented the league at events nationwide.

One of the most rewarding aspects of Cameron's experience is how attitudes towards him have changed. At his first FA conference, some attendees might have wondered who the young child was at an adults' meeting. By the second year, Cameron was welcomed and championed by all. As soon as he started engaging with people, they understood that he had valuable ideas and an experience of football as a young player that they needed to rely upon when making plans that would affect Cameron and his peers.

Cameron has been accepted to become part of the FIFA Fan Movement, a group of around 450 football supporters who are selected to contribute to fan issues that affect the game worldwide.

## **RYAN LEWIS**

Ryan, now 21, has been involved in the Sheffield and District Junior League for around five years.

He began as an age-group registrar, supporting the league secretary in arranging fixtures, helping organise referees and assisting clubs and club personnel with any issues that may arise.

Ryan's work earned individual praise from clubs in the league, who recognised that the help and assistance he provided merited special credit.

Ryan was invited to attend The FA's Youth Leadership Academy as part of his work, in order to gain a greater understanding of processes within the game and further his development.

In May 2019, Ryan was appointed as league secretary for the Sheffield and District Junior League despite his tender age. This was recognition for his tireless work and enthusiasm, and was well received by the clubs in the league.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The league is planning a Youth Onside conference, to which players from across the league will be invited.

The players will be canvassed for their opinions on particular matters, and potentially recruited to get involved in the work of the league. The idea is to stress to young people their importance in taking the league forward in the future, and giving them ownership of something dear to them.





“

The Sheffield and District Junior League is where I have played the most enjoyable football of my life. I wanted to give something back to the league and be part of the process in making football enjoyable for other players as well.

I would encourage anyone to take on voluntary positions with their local league for the rewarding feelings it provides and the experience that can be gained from it.

”



“

Every day football changes lives and being even a small part of this really is a privilege.

”

- Josh

## CASE STUDY FOUR - CORNWALL FA - YOUTH ONSIDE

Youth Onside has been set up by Cornwall County FA as a project to encourage clubs to listen to young people and make meaningful changes based on their ideas.

The County have created a tiered system which rewards clubs for getting more youth 'onside' and embedding a culture of listening across the club structure.

### What is the aim of Youth Onside?

Youth Onside aims to incorporate young people into the decision-making process in Grassroots clubs. Giving young people ownership of the direction of their club increases their loyalty to it and pride in it, and also allows them to understand the necessary administrative processes within the grassroots game.

It aims to provide young people with the chance to help shape the future of their club. It uses a reward system to motivate other clubs to follow the lead of their peer clubs.

“

The fact that we had 100% attendance from all the leaders suggests to me that the youngsters are finding this process very rewarding. As a club we are really looking forward to developing the Youth Onside group, in particular the lead representative will be attending Committee meetings, leading Youth Onside meetings and getting involved with younger player training sessions.

”

- **Hannah Martin**  
**Falmouth Community Youth Welfare Officer**

## WHY SHOULD CLUBS SIGN UP?

Clubs will be encouraged that the young people within their clubs are enthused about the future of the club with them as important stakeholders. They will see the benefits of the transparency of decision making and have greater confidence that they are meeting the needs of young people within their clubs.

In addition, a reward scheme exists to recognise their work in empowering the young people within their clubs:

- Digital resource package
- Certificate
- Youth volunteer leadership guides
- Leadership resources
- Local professional club match tickets
- £50 voucher for a course of the clubs choice
- Youth Leadership CPD to be delivered by a County Mentor at the club

## HOW?

Across the various clubs Youth Onside has:

- Appointed a youth representative to be a spokesperson for the club.
- Youth representative gathers feedback from young people this is collated and given to a designated person.
- The club uses feedback to make realistic changes to operational decisions.
- Youth representative feeds back to the young people the changes that have been made due to their voice.
- Some clubs have taken it a step further and appointed a youth representative onto the main committee who has a vote on club decisions based on their youth feedback.
- Another club has appointed a full youth committee to run and feed into the main committee.

# WHAT HAVE THE CLUBS ACHIEVED?

“

The youth committee children relate to me as a role model because I have grown up through the age groups and experienced negative and positive outcomes through playing football.

”

## ST. DAY YOUTH

- Full youth working group implemented.
- Countless changes made to club operation following feedback.
- Club has created culture of listening with buy-in at all levels within its structure.

## FALMOUTH COMMUNITY

- Full youth working group implemented, closely supported by Club Welfare Officer.
- Feedback from young people within the club that they love feeling that they have representation within the club. They are now more than just players.

## MOUSEHOLE

- Youth Representative appointed and given key role on the club's committee.
- Youth Representative used as the go-between for the youngsters in the club and the club's administration.
- Club is already in the process of expanding initiative by establishing a youth working group and achieving Tier 1 status.

# TOP TIPS FOR INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN CLUBS OR LEAGUES



Want to get more young people involved in your club or league? Here's how:

## **Start by looking around you**

As a club or a league the biggest advantage you have is that you already have a potential group of young volunteers in your own membership.

## **Truthful, accurate, honest - what's your offer?**

Be clear on what help you want from young people. Talk directly. Provide a realistic description of what's required rather than use a job title or jargon. Offer roles identifying tasks or projects that need to be done.

“

Help required for coaching, refereeing, awards night, website development, fundraiser, renovating a club house or hosting cup finals.

”

Remember this is likely to be their first interaction with the world of work. Words such as committee, AGM, league officer is unfamiliar language and overwhelming. Be clear that young volunteers will be supported and supervised by an appropriate adult.

## **Remove barriers**

Anticipate potential anxieties by explaining if travel expenses are covered, if training is provided and what commitment is required.

### **What's in it for me?**

Many young people will be looking for an opportunity to better themselves. To gain experience, learn a skill or even a qualification that helps with their personal or career progression. Much of the activity that takes place in a club or league can also be viewed as marketing, communications, management of events, sports administration, customer satisfaction. Just the sort of thing employees or universities are looking for in addition to academic qualifications.

### **Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat?**

Almost all young people are familiar with new technology, software and social media. A huge range of volunteering opportunities can be created easily with this as a springboard; get a young person over the age of 18 to manage social media sites, blog regularly or make and edit videos, photos and publicity – all of which can even be done remotely.

### **What do young people want?**

Have you thought about asking young people to form a 'Players' committee? With representatives from the different age group teams. The key role of this group is to provide ideas on how best to structure the football offer for young people.

There are a number of clubs that have gone down this route and found that their players have positive and creative ideas to contribute on all sorts of things - playing kit, training, award ceremonies, hospitality, referees and Respect.

There are examples of leagues that host a consultation event with young players at the end of each season combining pizza and flipcharts to gather their ideas as how the league should organise its football offer.

### **Have a Youth Ambassador**

Give your younger representatives status. Let it be seen that they are being taken seriously and in doing so let other young people aspire to similar roles. Club or League presentation evenings provide an ideal opportunity to allow young people recognition.

### **Take the time to train young people**

Once they are up and running check back in with them. Identify an appropriate adult who is approachable and is also DBS checked and safeguarding trained. Don't forget to prepare current staff and volunteers for working with young people – First impressions count and sometimes a grumpy or patronising response with other volunteers can put young people off for good.

### **Try before you buy**

Allow young volunteers to try out a job or task before they commit. Getting young people involved might require providing taster sessions for them or an initial short term involvement. This approach can reduce fears people might have about the role, their competence to do it or that they are going to get stuck doing something lame.

### **Smart Recruitment - Have you any local universities, colleges or schools with 6th forms?**

There are likely to be students studying relevant subject areas to your volunteering opportunity. If so – contact departments and course tutors to promote your opportunity and sell it to teachers or lecturers as an opportunity for students to gain real life practical experience. There are many universities with course requirements that their students spend time working in the local community. Get your club or league on the list of potential placements or projects.

### **Would you do it?**

Youth volunteering has to be more than putting up the nets or car park marshalling. Whilst these are jobs that need to be done in any club be careful to offer more than just the routine tasks. If they are not motivating to you then they are unlikely to motivate others. You could mix up some of the less interesting tasks with others to make the roles more enjoyable.

### **Everyone likes a pat on the back occasionally**

Sounds obvious, but we all like to be appreciated. Does your club or league have an awards evening in which you could include young people? Could you nominate a young person for one of The FAs or CFAs volunteering awards?

### **Be proud of what you're doing**

If clubs and leagues shout about what they are doing to support young volunteers, it will gradually become more acceptable to include young volunteers, and we can learn from one another's experiences. Use newsletters, social media and local schools or youth groups to publicise your good work.

### **Ensure insurance and welfare policies are in place**

Clubs and leagues will already have insurance policies and welfare practices that cover the involvement of young people. If working with u/18s be sure to implement these policies so that everyone is clear about what good practice looks like when working with children and how to report a safeguarding concern.

### **Go Dutch? What hidden skills can you reveal?**

Knowledge of the skills and networks you have within your membership can mean that you're able to do much more together than you ever thought possible. Your club or league could benefit from undertaking a 'skills' audit of your members. This can be incorporated into the membership process whereby members are asked what they do for a living and whether they have a particular skill or interest. Undertaking this exercise can reveal that you have a carpenter or physiotherapist, someone studying a Sports Development course or members who can help maintain the website or social media channels. This is the approach taken by many Dutch Community Clubs; if you sign up as a member you are required to commit to a number of volunteer hours.







**MAKE  
YOURSELF  
PROUD**



The FA  
**YOUTH  
LEADERSHIP**

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE.  
VOLUNTEER AND BECOME  
A YOUTH LEADER TODAY.**



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**MAKE IT  
COUNT**

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# THE FA RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST STATEMENT

Everyone who works/volunteers with children and young people (anyone under the age of 18) is responsible and accountable for the way in which they behave towards them. Every child has a right to be treated with respect and dignity.

- It's expected that all adult-child relationships maintain clear boundaries at all times, are supportive, positive and aimed at improving the young person's skills, development and progress. The adult-child relationships should all focus on the respective activity/event.
- No intimate or sexual relationship should take place while the member of staff or volunteer is in a position of trust relationship with a player.
- In addition, inappropriate, intimate or sexual relationships between an adult and a young player aged 16 and 17 may be unlawful, irrespective of gender and sexual orientation.

## The FA's Position

*"It is an offence for a person aged 18 or over to involve a child under that age in sexual activity where he or she is in a specified position of trust in relation to that child. This includes those who care for, advise, supervise or train children and young people (Sexual Offences Act 2003)".*

**The principle of this section of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 is applied by The FA. Therefore, if you engage in an intimate or sexual relationship with a young player it is a breach of The Football Association Regulations and as such may result in disciplinary action and where appropriate a referral will be made to the statutory agencies, including the Police, and applicable Local Authorities bodies, for example, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).**

Where a relationship of trust exists, it does not make any difference whether or not the relationship is consensual. The imbalance of power makes it an abuse of that relationship of trust.

## Taking positive action

- ✓ Maintain a relationship with all participants that are appropriate to your role and reflects positively on the organisation you work or volunteer for.
- ✓ As someone in a position of authority you should not seek or engage in sexual activity or sexualised communication with any U18s via social media including 16 or 17 year olds for whom you are responsible.
- ✓ If you think that a young person's behaviour indicates that they are seeking to develop or engage in an inappropriate relationship with you, immediately bring this to the attention of your Designated Safeguarding Officer or line manager. Be careful not to respond to the young person in any way that could be interpreted as encouraging them. Make a written record of your concerns and relevant details.
- ✓ If you suspect an individual with a specified role in football is abusing a position of trust, or may abuse, you should report this to the Designated Safeguarding Officer. Make a written record of your concerns and relevant details.
- ✓ If you feel your concern has not been dealt with appropriately, refer the matter directly to The FA Safeguarding Team via 0800 083 5902 or via email [Safeguarding@TheFA.com](mailto:Safeguarding@TheFA.com)
- ✓ Alternatively, you can seek advice from the 24 hour NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 5000



**FOR ALL**