

# Local Football Facility Plans

Small-sided facilities



Guidance note



— ■ FUNDING PARTNERS ■ —



## Introduction

Small-sided football is an umbrella term used to describe the different formats of the small-sided game; from teams & leagues to recreational and informal. It is an established and important part of the modern game with a significant market of 13.1m people in England.

This is a new priority for the national funding partners and will play a key role in achieving the goal to provide 'a great place to play football within 15 minutes from home'. This guidance document will explore how small-sided football will be managed during the LFFP process. It will provide examples and key messages relating to three priority facility types / locations:

- 1) Indoor facilities
- 2) Multi-use games areas (MUGA's)
- 3) Parks and open green spaces.

While we understand that much of small-sided football is played on 3G pitches, this is covered in the 3G FTP guidance document.

We have new insight into the small-sided football market and to gain an understanding of the different formats, customer segments and their preferred facility types, we recommend that stakeholders initially view these supporting resources: 1) Small-sided - Insight Report and 2) Small-sided - Insight Video.\*

As a new and emerging investment priority, the specific facility products and funding eligibility will be determined at a later stage. However, for the purpose of LFFPs, we will work with local stakeholders to identify local demand and the best locations for potential investment. We encourage people to use innovation and think creatively.

\*Please contact your County FA or KKP if you do not have access to these resources



## CLUBS & LEAGUE FOOTBALL



### Covers:

Football played in competitive league structures, with players registered to clubs – and clubs affiliated to a league and their County FAs.

### Example:

Adult (11v11), Youth (11v11 and other age appropriate formats).

## SMALL-SIDED FOOTBALL

*Small-sided Football (anything that is NOT 11-a-side) encompasses a broad spectrum of play, competition, format and size of team.*

LEVEL OF COMPETITIVENESS TENDS TO DECREASE



### Covers:

Football played in competitive league structures, typically with players registered to teams (affiliated to leagues and their County FAs).

### Example:

Small-sided affiliated leagues, other non-affiliated leagues, commercial small-sided leagues, futsal.



### Covers:

Football played where facilities are typically booked and there may be someone to help organise (shin pads/boots may be worn too but not always).

### Example:

Small-sided (non-affiliated), walking football, FA Just Play, casual pitch hire.



### Covers:

Football played in local parks and greens spaces – not organised, free and open access. Often played spontaneously (normal clothing worn - jeans and trainers).

### Example:

Kick-about, casual games.





## Quality

Good quality facilities are considered to be important to small-sided football players. However, it is essential that the different formats and various facility types they relate to are fully understood and catered for in the LFFPs.

Research suggests that small-sided players in teams and leagues and in recreational sessions prefer a 3G surface type because it replicates a good standard natural turf pitch. However, indoor facilities are also very popular and currently accommodate c.20% of football participation. Facilities should be modern, engaging, have clear line-marking and the correct size goalposts. Sports halls are most popular.

Players who participate informally prefer facilities that are open and free to access as this enables local opportunities to play that are often spontaneous. In these circumstances multi-use games areas (MUGAs) can be effective in areas of high urban population and limited green space. Such facilities can be modern, creative and engaging.

While LFFPs will work with local stakeholders to identify demand and the best locations for such facilities, the design and specifics of the facility type will be agreed at a later stage with Football Foundation staff when projects are ready to progress to the pre-application stage.



## **Inclusivity**

The varied formats of small-sided football offer a great opportunity to engage a diverse range of participants, making football accessible to a wide range of ages and abilities. Particular focus should be given to those from under-represented groups such as women and girls, disability, BAME groups and people from lower socio-economic groups.

Each project however does not have to engage every under-represented group and we encourage local stakeholders to understand the needs of priority groups in their local communities. In LFFPs, we will need your help to identify demand from these key user groups and the best locations for potential investment to meet their needs.

## **Engagement**

For projects that involve small-sided recreational football, we expect a balanced programme of use, including organised football activity such as walking football, Kicks and Just Play as well as other local programmes. We also expect that many projects will benefit from partnership work with their local professional football club community organisation to deliver a diverse programme of local engagement.

For informal football, the vast majority of time should be open-access and free to use, but it is possible to also have a programme of restricted access at fixed timeslots to enable activation sessions that engage specific local groups. It's otherwise free for people to turn up and use whenever they want to (without booking).





### **Sustainability**

While the facility operator will have responsibility for maintenance and repairs, we will have a common-sense approach that recognises the open and free to access nature of small-sided informal facilities. Following priority project identification in LFFPs, and when a project is ready to proceed, we shall work with the applicant to consider these factors.

### **Examples and case studies**

The following pages provide examples and key messages relating to three priority facility locations / types.



## Example

### Indoor facilities

As indoor facilities accommodate c.20% of football participation they are a key component of local provision and should not be overlooked. While we are highly unlikely to be the majority funder of a new indoor facility, LFFPs will focus on identifying priority projects for potential investment to refurbish and modernise existing facilities for small-sided football.

Important location types include sports halls at leisure centres and schools. They appeal to a wide range of players and potential users due to their accessibility and protection from bad weather. Sports halls often have established high-awareness levels in local communities and higher customer satisfaction levels compared to outdoor facilities. They are perceived to be accessible, friendly and are well-equipped to reach a broader audience. New players or hard to reach community groups often find indoor spaces feel safer and less intimidating.

Futsal is a popular and alternative indoor format of small-sided football and appeals to a broad range of participants. Investment priorities should focus on improving and refurbishing existing indoor spaces to offer futsal. Predominately, this requires line-markings and goals but some facilities may also require other refurbishment work to create a more modern and engaging environment.

Where appropriate, more diverse facility types such as community centres / halls should be considered. Likewise, all projects that improve outdoor football facilities (e.g. 3G / grass pitches), should also consider indoor environments for both facility improvement and/or participation programming to create a whole-site development plan that maximises all opportunities to develop small-sided football.

## Key messages

**20%**  
of football  
played indoors



**Sports halls**  
are important  
locations



**Refurbish**  
dated and unused  
sports provision with  
modern features, goals  
and markings for  
Futsal



**Whole-site**  
development plan  
including outdoor and  
indoor participation



## Example

### Multi-use games areas (MUGAs)

This facility type predominantly serves small-sided informal football. While MUGAs are open-access and free to use, it is also possible to have a programme of restricted access at fixed timeslots to enable activation sessions that engage specific local groups. MUGAs are otherwise free for people to turn up and use whenever they want to (without booking).

The national funding partners are currently investigating new and inspiring designs for MUGAs. While this work is still on-going, it is important to envisage a new era of modern and engaging facilities that will appeal to new, as well as current, informal participants. As part of the LFFP process we will work with local stakeholders to identify demand and the best location for such facilities.

Priority location types include areas with high-population and limited open green spaces for informal football. Areas within reach of a high number of people from lower-socio economic groups will also be prioritised. In addition to this, location types that offer high levels of usage / significant footfall will also be considered. Examples could include popular public parks and open green space.

While this type of facility will attract informal participants, it is also important to understand that it will not appeal to those looking for more structured and organised small-sided sessions (such as teams and leagues).

## Key messages

**Local**  
and free  
to access



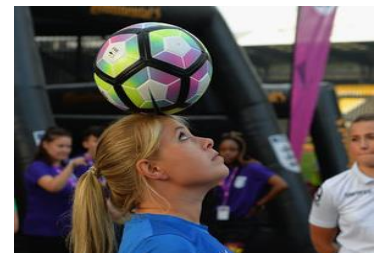
**Modern**  
and engaging  
design



**Activation**  
sessions to engage  
hard to reach groups



**High  
population**  
areas with limited  
green space





## Example

### Parks and open green spaces

Public parks and open green spaces are important spaces for local play. They often have higher public awareness levels than any other facility type. They are perceived as affordable, fun and accessible, especially to those less likely to engage in more structured formats of football. However, parks sometimes lack designated areas that encourage informal football activity.

While the national funding partners are currently investigating how parks and open green spaces can best encourage small-sided informal football, for the purposes of LFFPs we will work with local stakeholders to identify demand and the best parks and open green space locations.

Such locations will be local and easily accessed. Facilities will have designated areas that encourage informal football activity such as natural grass small-sided pitches or MUGA's. These areas must be maintained and protected from litter and dog fouling. They will have goalposts suitable for small sided football and are free for people to turn up and use whenever they want to (without paying or booking). While there will be no changing rooms, there should be existing public toilets that are available to use.

## Key messages

**Free**  
to use



**Designated areas**  
to encourage  
small-sided  
informal football



**Goalposts**  
to score  
a dream goal



**MUGAs**  
for ultra high  
use areas









Premier  
League



**FOR**  
**ALL**



Department for  
Digital, Culture  
Media & Sport

**Football**   
**Foundation**

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