

The FA 
FUTSAL.



**DEVELOPING
FUTSAL
IN YOUTH LEAGUES**

DEVELOPING FUTSAL IN YOUTH LEAGUES

The FA has placed an increasing emphasis on encouraging young people to play futsal as part of a varied playing programme to enhance their technical development. The FA recognises the value and benefits that futsal can play in helping to not only improve the skills and abilities of young people, but also the enjoyment and fun that they gain from playing this small sided format of the game.

The FA has worked with a number of youth football leagues from across the country over the past season to help them to coordinate and provide futsal to the youth clubs involved in their leagues. This has benefitted thousands of boys and girls across the country that due to the hard-work of their youth league and some funding from The FA, have been able to enjoy playing futsal. This has been particularly advantageous during the winter period, where indoor futsal provision has enabled the young players to continue playing some format of football even during the worse of the winter weather.

This document provides some examples and case studies of some of the successes of these youth leagues in delivering futsal to their clubs, with the hope that it will encourage more leagues and clubs from across the country to learn from these experiences and to deliver futsal to benefit the development of their young players.



Why Futsal?

Over recent years The FA have been advocating the need for young players to be playing a variety of small sided formats of the game with 11-a-side football being introduced at older age groups. The FA Youth Development Review and the FA Future Game coaching strategy recognises the importance of small sided games in supporting not only the technical development of young players, but also their overall enjoyment of the game.

Futsal is a more technical and skilful variation of 5-a-side football, typically played indoors in sports-halls with pitch markings and hockey sized goals and a smaller heavier ball. Futsal is played across the world and is recognised for playing an integral role in the development of world class football players that we admire for their technical brilliance; players such as Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar, Xavi and Iniesta to name but a few that grew up playing Futsal.

The FA has been introducing Futsal to England for the past ten years and is keen to encourage youth leagues and clubs to integrate the game within their playing and coaching programmes. As well as the technical merits of Futsal, there are also the practical considerations and benefits for taking children indoors during our cold winters that see many outdoor games cancelled. On top of all of this, the most important factor is that the kids really enjoy this format of the game!

To find out more about Futsal and how leagues and clubs can begin to factor it in as part of a varied seasonal playing programme at the youth age groups, The FA have produced a series of Youth Futsal Guidance documents on www.TheFA.com and www.EnglandFutsal.com.

What is the Charter Standard League Youth Futsal Development Fund?

The FA has been working with youth leagues and their clubs across the country to increase the opportunities for young people to play Futsal in England as part of a mixed and varied playing programme. The Youth Futsal Development Fund has assisted youth leagues in providing Futsal within their competition and playing programmes during the season by providing funding to overcome potentially difficult initial set-up barriers. The Fund is not intended to cover all of the costs for leagues to deliver Futsal, but The FA funding has gone some way to help with initial one-off costs (e.g. Futsal goals, line-markings, coaching courses etc).

Impact & Success of this Fund

Over the course of the 2014/15 season, The FA has invested over **£80,000** in **30 FA Charter Standard Youth Leagues** across the country to develop and establish regular futsal provision for their clubs during the course of the year. Each league was required to submit a simple plan as part of their funding application to The FA as to what they planned to deliver, and on average The FA granted approximately £2,500 to those leagues deemed to have a realistic and achievable project.

The Charter Standard Leagues used their FA grant in different ways, but typically it was used to contribute in the following areas to establish sustainable futsal provision for their clubs:

- Equipment such as metal futsal goals and futsal balls
- FA Futsal Referee Conversion courses
- Futsal Coach Education and futsal coaching workshops for clubs within the league
- Adapting sports-halls by adding futsal line-markings

Examples of what Youth Leagues have Delivered

Outlined below are a number of case studies and examples from FA Charter Standard Youth Leagues that have delivered futsal projects during the 2014/15 season. These examples may provide assistance to other leagues that are interested in establishing futsal within their league programmes.

This funding has resulted in over **10,500 young people** (boys and girls) and over **775 clubs** gaining the opportunity to play futsal on a regular basis during this season as part of their league's provision. In most instances the league decided to deliver their futsal provision during the winter months in place of their outdoor games.

These projects have resulted in nearly **500 coaches** attending the FA Futsal Level 1 coaching courses and **200 referees** attending an FA Futsal Referee Conversion course. These are important aspects to the Fund, as it helps to ensure that the quality of the futsal provision is central to what is being offered to the clubs and young people.

The feedback from FA Charter Standard Leagues that have been involved in this programme has been overwhelmingly positive, with all Leagues indicating that they will continue to deliver futsal within their league programmes for future seasons without the need of FA funding. In many cases the Leagues indicated that due to the positive experiences of delivering futsal during the season they were planning to significantly expand their futsal programme next season.



CASE STUDY 1: NEW FOREST & DISTRICT YOUTH LEAGUE

FA GRANT AWARD: £2,814

What was delivered?

In December the league invited a coach from each youth club within the league to attend a free FA Futsal Level 1 coaching course to help them understand the basic elements in playing and coaching futsal. This helped the coaches to recognise the values of the game and to be better prepared for coaching their players within the league's competition programme.

From January through to March, the league organised over 290 futsal league fixtures to take place at two central venues for 55 teams involving players aged 7-13 years old to play in bi-weekly fixtures in which each team played twice on a day. On the last two weekends of March, the league organised two full day trophy events with each team playing a minimum of three games.

The league, with the help of Hampshire County FA, established a relationship with a local futsal coaching company and Bournemouth University to assign students to referee the futsal fixtures and support the young players and the coaches to better understand the nuances of futsal.

What were the challenges?

There were minor challenges with one of the central venues with venue booking errors and the laying of the pitch markings, but these were teething problems that were overcome. But the main challenge involved those clubs that did not send a coach on the free FA Futsal Level 1 coaching course. These clubs were evident throughout the competition as these coaches were still very much geared toward 11v11 outdoor football, and this detrimentally affected their players by minimizing their opportunity for education.

There were also problems with the longevity and durability of the inflatable futsal goals for the volume of matches that were played.

What was the Impact?

Key Performance Indicator	Initial Target	Actual Outcome
No. of Players	486	522
No. of Clubs Involved	18	11
No of Teams Involved	36	55
No of Coaches attending FA Futsal L1 Coaching Courses	20	18

League's Reaction:

"The social atmosphere of the centralized venues created a very engaging offer the children thrived in without any of the usual pressure from the side-lines. The viewing balcony created a natural respect barrier in which parents could view the action but not interfere with play.

"Each competitive division was won by a different team to those who won the outdoor season with teams who previously struggled to compete physically excelling. The disparity of biological maturation between young players became all but null and void with the smaller players excelling with their lower centre of gravity and technical ability that had previously not been seen on a larger pitch. One overwhelming success of the league was the enjoyment factor had by all."

Matthew York – League Secretary

Clubs Reaction:

"100% positive from us coaches, parents & kids all loved it. My U10's told me they just want to play futsal for the rest of this season."

Annie Hancock – Highcliffe Hawks

"The children and parents have really enjoyed the quick and exciting games that have been played. It would have been great to have had the opportunity to play more games. We have had great feedback from the parents and players regarding Futsal and they will all be looking forward to playing more futsal next season."

Hugh Swan – Ringwood Town Warriors U10's

"Fantastic idea to have introduced Futsal, this time last year was a disaster with the delightful weather! Today was brilliant, a real buzz for players and spectators."

Philippa Miles – Ringwood Hornets U9's

What is the League's Plan for Futsal Next Season?

The league will continue to offer a futsal break next season and the plans to widen the futsal playing period during the winter months have now been approved by their member clubs. With more clubs looking to join the New Forest & District Youth Football League they plan to offer a "Get Into Futsal" taster festival in the summer for new teams and they will ring-fence funding to subsidize the cost of an FA Futsal Level 1 coaching course each December for new coaches within the league.



CASE STUDY 2: SHEFFIELD & DISTRICT JUNIOR LEAGUE

FA GRANT AWARD: £5,358

What was delivered?

During the winter months the Sheffield & District Junior League delivered a futsal programme for Under 7's through to Under 10's teams. Each age group had four weeks of futsal competition, and each age group was staggered to enable the league to provide enough resources and facilities to ensure all teams could be included.

Over 1,500 young players in 161 teams got the opportunity to head indoors during the winter period to play futsal in a child-friendly environment at a time of the year when normally much outdoor football provision gets cancelled.

To help ensure that the children were getting the best possible experience of futsal, the league organised three free FA Futsal Level 1 coaching courses for the coaches within the clubs to attend. 50 coaches attended these courses which helped provide them with greater insight to optimise the benefits of the futsal programme to support the development of their young players. And to aid the smooth running of the league programme, two FA Futsal Referee Conversion courses were held which attracted 30 referees to support the officiating demands.



What were the challenges?

The biggest challenge for the league was to identify suitable quality venues to stage the provision that provided an environment for not only the players and the teams to enjoy the futsal experience, but also for the parents and spectators. The demand for futsal from the clubs and players within the league unfortunately outstripped the number of quality facilities that were available within the Sheffield area.

The initial idea was to stage the referee courses prior to the futsal programme, but this was not possible which therefore made it very difficult when coordinating and running the fixture programme without many futsal qualified match officials. A key learning for other leagues would be to ensure the referee courses are factored in advance of the futsal provision. However, the subsequent two referee courses that the league has run will ensure that for next season there is a good supply of futsal referee's for the league to call upon.

During the first free futsal coaching course that the league offered to the clubs, ten candidates failed to attend. To avoid future similar occurrences on the next two courses, the league charged a small refundable deposit that helped to ensure all candidates attended and that the free coaching course places were not wasted.



What was the Impact?

Key Performance Indicator	Initial Target	Actual Outcome
No. of Players	1,000	1,501
No. of Clubs Involved	50	54
No of Teams Involved	200	161
No of Coaches attending FA Futsal L1 Coaching Courses	60	50
No of Referees attending an FA Futsal Referees course	30	30

League's Reaction:

"The futsal programme this winter helped create lots of knowledge and awareness of the game of futsal for our clubs. Futsal provided huge technical benefits which can only be a positive outcome for our grassroots and youth development."

Nathan Batchelor – League Secretary

What is the League's Plan for Futsal Next Season?

Next season the league will run futsal for Under 7's through to Under 11's, with two age groups running at any time to ensure that there is sufficient space within high quality venues to maintain a good experience of futsal for all involved and to ensure that there are sufficient referees to cover the games. Clubs will be charged a fee to take part in this optional element of the league programme; this fee will be line with what they would be charged for referee's fees for their outdoor fixtures.

CASE STUDY 3: GLOUCESTER COUNTY GIRLS LEAGUE

FA GRANT AWARD: £3,406

What was delivered?

The Gloucester County Girls League worked in partnership with the County FA, University of Gloucestershire and Hartpury College to deliver this project. The partners worked effectively together to ensure the quality of the project.

Prior to the commencement of the mid-winter futsal programme, the League offered a range of futsal educational opportunities to help the clubs and referees in the area to better understand the game. The League ran Introduction to Futsal sessions, FA Coaching Futsal - Level 1 courses and a Referee conversion course which were all well attended.

Throughout January and February the League encouraged all teams from Under 8s through to Under 16s to attend weekly futsal sessions being delivered across three different venues in the area. Each session was run by an FA Futsal Level 1 qualified coach for two or three teams at a time. The young players received some initial futsal coaching to help them understand the tactics, skills and the rules of futsal before futsal games and more competitive matches were introduced.

Over 300 players from 15 FA Charter Standard clubs took part in this project.



What were the challenges?

Any new programme or format change has some initial teething problems, and it was no different when introducing futsal to the Gloucester County Girls League. The main challenge came from coaches' initial reluctance to give their players the opportunity to try something different from the norm.

Other challenges that needed to be overcome were the futsal maximum squad sizes of 12 players prevented teams from including all of their players, which meant that initially some players were not able to participate. However, the League overcame this through the coaching sessions that encouraged players from different teams to play together and form new teams to play in the games.

The league organised one FA Futsal Level 1 course prior to the project but this became oversubscribed meaning that coaches from some teams were not able to benefit from this introduction to futsal. The League organised a second coaching course in March, which was not ideal but at least allowed all coaches to gain further knowledge of how to coach futsal.

The referee futsal conversion course did not have the level of interest and take-up that was anticipated. Mini soccer (female) referees enquired about attending the course but were not eligible to attend as they required their full refereeing qualification.

There was limited interest in futsal from the Under 8's age group, but this was overcome by encouraging all U8s players to merge teams and play together.

What was the Impact?

Key Performance Indicator	Initial Target	Actual Outcome
No. of Players	250	300
No. of Clubs Involved	15	15
No of Teams Involved	30	35
No of Coaches attending FA Futsal L1 Coaching Courses	40	27
No of Referees attending an FA Futsal Referees course	12	5

League's Reaction:

"The days of the winter football programme being cancelled due to the weather may be long gone. Youth football will definitely benefit with more leagues offering futsal provision to young players."

Guy Stirling Lee – League Secretary

"It's been great to be part of such a ground-breaking and successful project. Futsal can offer players an environment where they can express themselves and try things they would not necessarily try outdoors. That's what we have focused on with our delivery, and hopefully that will remain with the girls moving into the future with the rest of their season."

**Alex Cheal –
University of Gloucestershire**

What is the League's Plan for Futsal Next Season?

The League is planning to continue delivering futsal next season and will ring-fence money within the league accounts to ensure that it can be financed. The League will publicise the benefits of futsal more widely to all clubs and teams within the league to ensure maximum take-up and will ask those clubs who have a qualified FA Futsal Level 1 coach to partner with another club to help share their knowledge. The League also plans to book the sports-halls in the area early to ensure that they have the facilities required to deliver their intended programme.



CASE STUDY 4: STAFFORDSHIRE GIRLS LEAGUE

FA GRANT AWARD: £2,800

What was delivered?

The Staffordshire Girls League delivered four futsal development events to clubs across their U8, U10, U11 and U12 age groups during the 2014/15 season. Full-size futsal goals were purchased by the league which were stored at the Leisure Centre and used throughout the development events.

Ten of the League's young referees were chosen to attend a Futsal Referees Conversion course funded through the FA grant; the majority of these referees were aged between 16-25 years old.

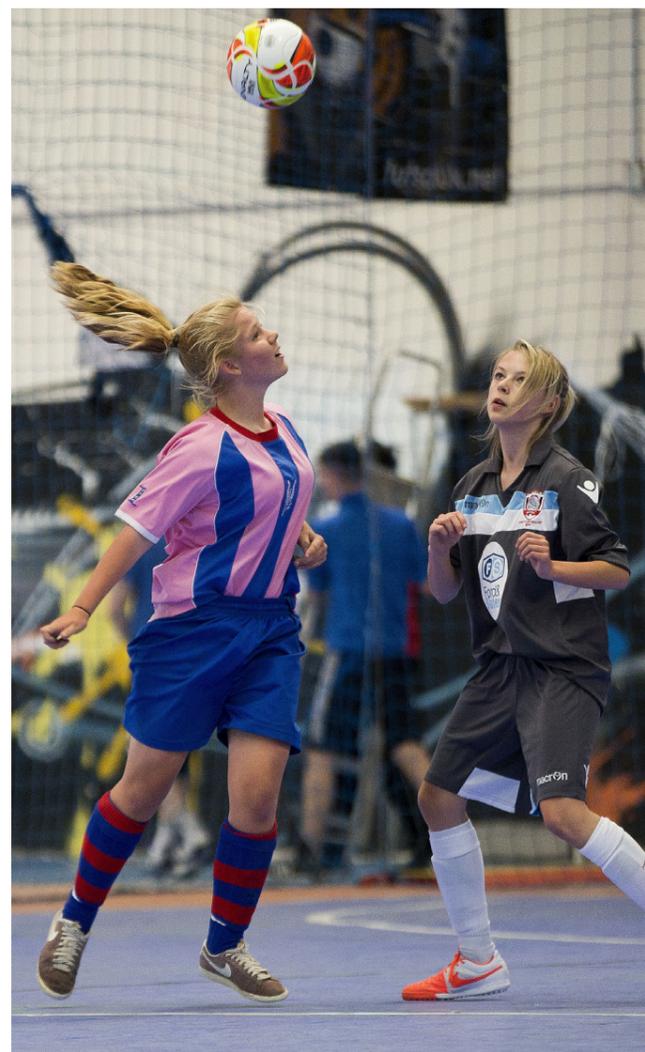
All clubs were invited to attend the first 'development focused' event in December where an FA Coach Mentor supported the coaches and players at the event to learn the basics of futsal. Although teams were provided with a background to futsal, including rules and guidelines prior to the first event, many of these players had not experienced futsal before and therefore the first event was focused on introducing players to the game while teaching them the rules and techniques involved.

Coaches were given a briefing around futsal from the County FA, and provided with a futsal pack containing more information on futsal, the events that the league had planned and coaching and referee courses. Each team was provided with two new futsal balls at this event to take away and use within the clubs training sessions. At the first event players were given a brief overview of the game, followed by some coaching sessions and then put into friendly games.

Following the first event, coaches were invited to attend an FA Level 1 Coaching Futsal course that was funded through this project. Although 24 coaches signed up to this course, 19 coaches completed the FA Level One qualification. All of these coaches are working with girls teams involved within the project.

Following this, a second and third futsal development event was coordinated by the league during January for all clubs to attend. These events were similar in structure and consisted of a re-cap on the rules for the girls and coaches, followed by friendly futsal games between teams. No results were recorded for these games and girls were encouraged to ask questions regarding the rules and techniques to support their development. Club coaches were encouraged to work with their teams between festivals to implement what they had learnt on their FA Level 1 Coaching Course.

The league delivered a final futsal cup for all teams on Sunday 17th May in which all clubs were invited to enter their teams into a futsal competition. All competitions were free for teams to enter and medals were provided for winning and second placed teams.



What were the challenges?

Since the funding was not available to cover venue fees, and the league did not have the ability to transport the metal futsal goals, we had to base all of our fixtures and events out of one leisure centre in Cannock. Although the venue was good for the delivery of the events, many of the league's clubs based in the North of Staffordshire would have had to travel 40 miles each way to access the venue. This caused limitations for some teams being able to access futsal on a regular basis.

Due to the funding being unable to cover the facility fees, the league had to coordinate day long bookings so that age groups could participate in the festival all on one day. This meant particularly long days for the festival coordinators, league volunteers and referees who were on site from 8:30am-5:30pm.

The league initially experienced difficulties with the older age groups having too many players due to their larger squad sizes. The league however allowed clubs to enter multiple teams within the same age group to ensure that each girl was given as much playing time as possible.

What was the Impact?

Key Performance Indicator	Initial Target	Actual Outcome
No. of Players	350	290
No. of Clubs Involved	13	11
No of Teams Involved	26	36
No of Coaches attending FA Futsal L1 Coaching Courses	24	19
No of Referees attending an FA Futsal Referees course	10	10

League's Reaction:

"The main success of the project is that we have demonstrated through the combined support of The FA, County FA, league and clubs that futsal can be successfully incorporated within a league fixture programme and actively benefit the development of players within it. The girls have enjoyed the festivals and have a keen interest in participating in futsal opportunities alongside their existing fixtures next season. We have already started discussing how futsal will be incorporated within the leagues fixtures programme next season, leaving a lasting legacy for futsal provision within the Staffordshire Girls League for the future."

**Jodie Allard –
Football Development Officer**

What is the League's Plan for Futsal Next Season?

The clubs wish to incorporate futsal within the Staffordshire Girls League next season and the league is currently in consultation with its clubs and the County FA to establish the most appropriate structure for this.

Ideally, the league would like to use futsal to sustain the team's involvement during the wet weather months when games are not being played. However, due to the requirements of booking venues in advance, and the unpredictability of the weather this is something the league are considering how best to approach. But futsal will definitely be delivered by the league next season.

The project has been embraced by clubs, players, coaches and league volunteers and plans are being formulated to ensure that futsal becomes a staple within the leagues fixture programme over coming seasons as a result of this funding.

CASE STUDY 5: NORFOLK & SUFFOLK YOUTH LEAGUE

FA GRANT AWARD: £2,725

What was delivered?

The Norfolk & Suffolk Youth League used their FA funding to introduce futsal to all of their age groups from Under 7's through to Under 16s. The league ran weekly sessions in two venues from the start of November continuously through to the start of March, replacing the league's outdoor winter development fixtures with futsal.

The league provided free places on FA Futsal Level 1 coaching courses for all clubs that took part in the futsal element of the league. This was received positively by the coaches along with initial support from FA Skills coaches in helping to educate the clubs in understanding futsal in the opening weeks.

The league organised ongoing futsal mini-leagues with each age group rotating on a three-weekly basis; the league also occasionally introduced fun futsal competitions and tournaments which were received very positively by the clubs and players. The league has run a futsal referee conversion course to help ensure that there are qualified referees to support the league's activities.

The league has publicised their futsal activity through their website and the local newspapers on a regular basis. This has helped generate the interest and enthusiasm from clubs to participate in the futsal programme and raised awareness for futsal in the local area with teams travelling great distances to be involved.



What were the challenges?

A challenge has been getting enough referees qualified to meet the demand for futsal and to ensure every match each week is covered. The league has been working closely with Norfolk County FA to assist and overcome this issue.

The interest for futsal from clubs in the area exceeded the league's expectations and this season the league did not have enough space due to the lack of venues to include all clubs that were interested. The league has identified additional venues to address this problem for next season to ensure that all clubs that wish to take part can.



What was the Impact?

Key Performance Indicator	Initial Target	Actual Outcome
No. of Players	200	404
No. of Clubs Involved	15	35
No of Teams Involved	30	35
No of Coaches attending FA Futsal L1 Coaching Courses	15	20
No of Referees attending an FA Futsal Referees course	16	7

What is the League's Plan for Futsal Next Season?

The success and the overwhelmingly positive response from clubs, coaches, parents and most importantly the players has led to the league looking to expand their futsal provision next season. The league intends to widen their mid-winter futsal programme through securing additional venues, but is also planning to offer mid-week futsal leagues throughout the season for those clubs that wish to play futsal on a more regular basis.

The FA **FUTSAL.**

To find out more about futsal and to
access further guidance and resources
visit either www.TheFA.com or
www.EnglandFutsal.com

