

## Top Tips on How to Engage Young People

- **Link with a youth football club:** by establishing a partnership with a youth club (ideally one with an U'18 team) not already linked to an adult club, then you can offer a pathway through for the players who do leave the area for university to continue playing in an environment they are accustomed to and familiar with.
- **Link with a local educational establishment:** by establishing a partnership with one or more local schools, colleges or universities you can build a relationship and demonstrate how your club is a means of playing regular football once they have graduated. Be proactive and offer to deliver assemblies or have a stand at induction week events; whilst if you can, reward those who join your club at a transition age: 16, 18, even 21/22. Links can also be built with organisations that provide graduate schemes, allowing those who may be new to the area to build a new cohort of friends.
- **Be flexible:** young people do not always tend to be awash with money and may feel the pressure of debts from university, etc and as such, a drive to be making money rather than spending it. As such, be flexible to them with your fees so you can bring them into the club and establish them long-term. This flexibility can also stretch to their levels of commitment, be it attendance at training or fixtures. Having an additional pool of players to call upon when you can and need to, is a better scenario than having none when your core group are unavailable.
- **Show the difference to youth football:** many young people have the desire to just get involved in the game, rather than do drills and tactics, etc. If your club operates in a manner where your training is less structured and filled more with game play, be sure to promote this when speaking to young people.
- **Have a recreational offer:** young people tend to enjoy the convenience and flexibility of different formats to engage with. By having a small-sided team or Just Play offer it can entice young people into the club who may otherwise may not have done so initially if 11-a-side was the sole format on offer. In turn, they will become familiar with the club ethos and culture, which can then subsequently cause a transition into playing for the 11-a-side teams.
- **Make them feel important:** young people want to feel valued and that will then make them more likely to return to you. Younger individuals can have higher fitness levels ("fresh legs"), making them an asset in the team; whilst if they have the time to commit regularly it enables them to become a leader within the group. Do not forget the benefits football can have physically, mentally and socially for them and the way they can develop individually by being involved in the game. Give them a reason to return!
- **Look beyond the sport-sphere:** there are several projects out there looking to engage with and work positively with young people, such as through the arts or media. Look to work alongside these so you can promote your club, whilst allowing these projects to promote themselves through your club as well. Young people have differing interests and you may discover young people who can support your club operations and administration as a result, as well as players.
- **Maximise all online platforms:** ensure you promote your club and all its services through as many online platforms as possible. Different demographics utilise different platforms more often than others, so what you may think is popular, may not actually be so with those individuals you wish to engage with. Ensure you promote and offer services through online platforms. Ensure ease of convenience.

- **Break the norm:** be different and try something new. You're looking to capture a new, modern, interactive audience who have a significantly greater number of different things fighting for their attention than ever before so you need to be able to stand out above the crowd and demonstrate that you are the best option and worthy of their time and money.
- **Foster the right environment:** young people still want to be appreciated and treated in the right way, so a welcoming and inclusive setting is key. In addition, it should be remembered that everyone is different and as a result, the triggers that get individuals engaged or driven to achieve success differ. So as such, your approach may need to be adaptable and flexible.

