

ENCOURAGING YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN YOUR CLUB

YOUR CLUB, YOUR VOICE



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**For every team, there is a volunteer dedicated to ensuring the enjoyment of the players.
For every club, a group of volunteers dedicated to ensuring the longevity of the club.
For every match, a volunteer dedicated to ensuring the game is played fairly.
Volunteers are the heart of football.**

Our figures indicate that youth football continues to thrive, with around 3,000 teams affiliated in Essex. However, the health of grassroots football is dependent on its volunteers.

As part of our 2018-21 Moving Forward Strategy, the Essex County FA look to engage young people in shaping the future of the game. This document has been created by the Essex County FA's Youth Forum, a group of 14 young people aged between 16-24.

The information contained within this document forms only some of the possibilities for young volunteer engagement in your club, and there is no one set way for success. Each club is different and has different requirements. As such, this document forms only the start of the conversation.

The future of football remains, as ever, in the hands of its volunteers.
The future of volunteering is in the engagement of young people.

Essex County FA Youth Forum

“Volunteering is a powerful tool to develop your footballing community, allowing more people to participate within the evolution of your club. Young people always want to gain new information, especially when it’s something they are passionate about. By handing them the chance to be more involved within your club, you will provide them with a new learning environment.”

Katie (Essex County FA Youth Forum)



CLUB VOLUNTEER SCHEMES

What is a Youth Volunteer Scheme?

A Youth Volunteer scheme can be as simple as a programme run by your club which encourages and rewards the efforts of young people wanting to get involved in volunteering at your club.

The programme can be designed by the club with young people. Found below is a successful youth volunteering programme at Tigers JFC.



TIGERS JFC FUTURES PROGRAMME

Tigers Junior Football Club decided to launch their Futures project in 2015 to give something back to the players that had played for them. The programme at Tigers gives young people the opportunity to develop a number of skills through active volunteering as well as gain some football qualifications on their journey.

Message from the chairman – Keith Di Palma

Tigers futures is the best thing we have ever done as a club . We have invested in this project so we can have a healthy amount of coaches and referees within the club and to one day be able to have an official qualified referee on every game. We would also like to be able to host our very own half term football schools.

How do the club recruit?

The club ask the players in the U14 & U16's team whether they would like to be a part of the Tigers futures programme and then they begin assisting with the cubs or girl's development. It's completely voluntarily and Tigers tend to have 6-10 each year from both the boys and girls teams, however this number is growing year on year.

How does it work?

The Tigers Futures Programme gives young people the opportunity to develop a number of skills through active volunteering as well as gain some football qualifications on their journey. The young volunteers are able to develop their skills by coaching the Cub's or Girls Development section at the club, when they feel ready they complete their Refereeing or Level 1 Coaching course. These courses are funded by Tigers JFC. This benefits the club because they have access to a wider pool of coaches and referees. The aim is to teach our young volunteers the Tigers DNA and to be able to pass on the club's ethos to the young players who are just starting on their journey with Tigers JFC. It is hoped that they will be able to use the skills they develop in their careers in the future as well as continue to contribute to grassroots football within Essex.

How do the club retain members?

The club retain their members by giving them a reason to stay, the investment into a young person is appreciated and as a result they want to give back to their youth club. The added opportunity allows young people to explore alternative ways to stay involved with football after they stop playing or even alongside their playing journey.

What are the benefits?

- Players feel a sense of belonging and ownership
- Increased amount of coaches and referees within the club
- Increased confidence amongst youth players
- Developing young people and inspiring the next generation
- Promotes the club as forward and positive thinking
- Clubs can retain player's through alternative ways than playing such as coaching or refereeing
- Teach the younger generation to continue the club's legacy



“Volunteering gives young people a confidence boost in areas which they may be lacking in and can help shape the individual to become a better person and overcome their fears. Furthermore, these volunteers have the potential to become more involved with the club.”

Mohammed (Essex County FA Youth Forum)



PLAYER COUNCILS

What is a Player Council?

- A Player Council is a committee of players formed with (ideally) a representative from each youth team within a club
- A suggestion is to have one to three players from each team and to keep it age-appropriate (we recommend Under 11s to 18s)
- Younger players could feel intimidated amongst older players and could need additional support
- Any player can be a representative - it doesn't need to be a captain or vice-captain, for example

What are the aims of a Player Council?

- To allow players to bring their ideas and opinions to the table, in order to validate or encourage improvements in the service the club provides for them
- Could encourage young people to get actively involved in the running of the club, which could open the possibility of bringing them onto the committee in the future
- The aim is to provide feedback to the club management team/committee, much in the same way managers would at a managers' meeting

What can the Player Council focus on?

This is ultimately dependent on the club. However, we suggest topics such as:

- Playing environment
- Quality of coaching provision
- Fundraising events
- Presentation events/awards evenings
- Club philosophy
- Respect initiatives
- Constructive feedback about the club (e.g. not just complaints).

Why have a Player Council?

- The service you provide can be tailored to fit the desires of your young members who, as youth clubs, are your primary audience
- Provides young people with a safe environment to share issues they may have within and around football
- Allows you to trade on the fact you are a youth-centred club, allowing your young members the opportunity to shape their experiences
- A benefit of having a Player Council is the inherent cycle of new and fresh ideas, ensuring that, as a youth club, you continue to meet the needs of your young members
- A big point to recognise is the potential for your young members to be the future workforce of your club - positive experiences and extended involvement at a young age is likely to encourage young people to continue volunteering at your club into adulthood

Tiptree Jobserve Player Council (Est 2019) - Case Study

Tiptree Jobserve Player Council was set up with the main aim of giving young people a voice and to provide valuable feedback to the committee on how to improve the club environment. The Player Council was formed in September 2019 and currently has 8 members from a variety of age groups. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic they haven't met in person, but this hasn't stopped them in having their say. A questionnaire was created and sent to all team managers to circulate, as a result of the feedback the club committee listed and renewed the goal nets at the start of this season.



“Youth volunteering should be encouraged because it can be some of the most rewarding work out there. It’s amazing seeing changes within your club, county or even country that occur as a direct result of your actions. Volunteers keep grassroots going, and that is why, as a collective group, we must contribute to what made our childhood memorable.”

Leigh (Essex County FA Youth Forum)

Important Things to Consider

Dates and Times of Meetings

- a couple of suggestions are: before/after training or half-terms/school holidays . Every club is different and will need to work with the young people involved to arrange suitable meetings.

Youth-Adult Partnerships

- an appropriate club representative should also oversee each meeting - this could be a club DSO (Designated Safeguarding Officer) or CWO (Club Welfare Officer), or even just a committee member or manager with the appropriate safeguarding qualifications (this could also be how the Player Council provides feedback to the club, although ideally the opportunity should be given to players to feedback themselves)
- clubs will need to think about a structure which allows the Player Council to report back to managers/committee, which could take the form of a Player Council Representative attending a managers/committee meeting
- Make sure everyone at the club is aware of this and understands the reasons why you have set one up.

Recruitment

- Clubs can recruit members through a variety of ways E.G. registration days, open application,
- nomination from team coach
- During recruitment, it should be made clear what the Player Council is going to be, in order to avoid people getting involved for either the wrong reasons or seeing players disengage through misunderstanding the purpose
- Effort should also be made to incorporate each youth section of the club (for example, if the club has each of boys, girls and Soccability sections, each should be represented)

Additional Opportunities

- Interaction with the Essex County FA Youth Forum or the wider Youth Council network

Contacts

If there are any queries you have about Player Councils which are not answered in this document, feel free to contact us via the contact details below, and we'll either answer directly or pass you on to an Essex County FA Youth Forum representative in your group area:

- **Rhys Elmer** (Youth Forum Staff Lead and Group 3 Development Officer), rhys.elmer@essexfa.com or (01245) 393099
- **Gemma Stubbles** (Youth Forum Chairman), gemma.stubbles@thefa.com
- **Leigh Gell** (Vice-Chair Person), leigh.gell@hotmail.co.uk

The future of football
remains, as ever, in the
hands of its volunteers.
The future of volunteering
is in the engagement
of young people.

Ciaran Whatley

Essex County FA Youth Forum

