

PARENT ZONE MALE PLAYER PATHWAYS



This is a guide for parents and carers to help define the different football environments there are within the County of Essex, from Grassroots Clubs to Professional Club Academies.



GRASSROOTS CLUBS



Provide a safe, fun, and engaging environment for all abilities to play football within their local area.

England Football Accredited clubs demonstrate that they are setting the highest standards across their club.

Mini Soccer: U7 – U10s / 5v5 & 7v7

No publicized league tables, teams will play within a group of similar ability level teams to experience playing organised matches.

Youth Football: U11s – U18s / 9v9 & 11v11

Introduction to larger formats, teams experience leagues from U12, adding an introductory level of competitive football.

Open-Age: 16+ / 11v11

Adult grassroots football which can be played on Saturdays & Sundays in various leagues within the county. The highest level of grassroots football is our Regional Feeder Leagues, which feed the National League System..

PROFESSIONAL CLUB ACADEMIES



Professional football clubs have Youth Academies aligned to them which is obtained through an Academy Licence.

Academies are governed by The Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP), categorised from 1-4 and cannot sign players until the U9s age group.

Below are the only 3 Essex Professional Club Academies.

Category 1 Academy

- West Ham United



Category 2 Academy

- Colchester United



Category 3 Academy

- Southend United



ESSEX COUNTY FA REP TEAMS



As a County FA, we provide opportunity for players aged U16 & U18 to represent their county, playing in the South East Counties Championship.

Selection is organised by Essex County Schools FA through a nomination process, as well as clubs having the chance to nominate players also.



DISTRICT FOOTBALL



Players aged U12 – U15 have the opportunity to represent their geographical District (District dependant).



Players will represent their District in which they go to school, not where they live.

For more information, please visit [Essex County Schools FA](#).

PROFESSIONAL CLUB 'PRE-ACADEMIES' & DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

Professional Football Clubs will also run Pre-Academies that act as talent identification for players aged U7 – U8.

Some of these clubs may also provide Development Centres for grassroots players aged U7 – U16, these may be delivered through their community programmes. Professional clubs that neighbour outside of Essex, may also provide opportunity within the county. Some examples may be:



There is a fee for parent/carers to pay for their child to participate within a Development Centre environment.

Other names used for this type of provision: Elite Centres & Shadow Squads.

FOOTBALL COACHING COMPANIES

Across Essex there are multiple opportunities for grassroots players to access external coaching and playing sessions outside of their more formal offers, such as their clubs and schools.

Like Professional Clubs, many coaching companies may brand their provision as an 'Academy' or 'Elite Centre', but this does not mean they are linked to a Professional Club or hold an Academy Licence.

Currently there is no national accreditation programme for individual coaching company providers. Therefore providers should acquire their own insurance policies and ensure all coaches undertake the required safeguarding checks. Essex FA is looking at providing a local accreditation scheme in this space, with information shared in due course.

Check out the Parent/Carer checklist below for more info on what to consider:



Parent/Carer Checklist: Are all coaches DBS checked? Do they hold FA Safeguarding & First Aid Qualifications? Does the provider have Public Liability Insurance? What FA Coaching Qualifications do they have? Have they conducted a Risk Assessment?

Creating a united grassroots environment which delivers football For All