



## NFA Guidance and Process for starting a New Club

Northumberland FA has circa 250 Clubs with teams affiliated. These are spread across the three Local Authority areas of Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, and Northumberland. Football in Northumberland FA's region has grown massively, with over 50% growth in teams from 1,486 teams in 2014/15 season to 2,237 teams at the end of 2023/24. In addition to Teams training and playing weekly, Clubs also have wider recreational offers with FA Wildcats, Squad Girls, Just Play, and Comets sessions. This is fantastic and is providing more opportunities for more people than ever before to play football. However, all of this adds to the demand on existing facilities and the support structures that help make football grow sustainably.

As football grows, so does the difficulty to provide appropriate facilities; strategically invest in new facilities; provide resource to support Club development; and ensure all Clubs consistently adhere to FA Safeguarding requirements with appropriate support to do so. These are very good problems to have, but they still require solutions and some changes to help the game continue safely and develop sustainably. In addition, more Clubs can inadvertently increase competition for the same players in a local area, sponsorship opportunities, and external funding. So, it is only right, and fair to football, that partnerships and building stronger clubs is explored before brand new clubs are established.

Following consultation via our 'Shape Your Game' events in 2023/24 season, the criteria that perspective new clubs must meet to register and affiliate teams from the 2024/25 season is changing. The strategic aim is to support Clubs sustain and thrive by increasing opportunities to play and volunteer in football. With over 33% of newly formed Clubs folding after their first season, there is no denying starting a new Club is extremely challenging and, therefore, a higher risk of available resource being lost and ultimately wasted. We are therefore setting out new criteria for 2024/25 and beyond for New Club Applications and introducing formalised support touchpoints for new clubs within their first two seasons.

**Criteria for proposed New Clubs will include:**

- Consultation to have been made with existing local Clubs who already have the infrastructure (e.g. Committee, Volunteers, Facilities, Finance, Safeguarding Policies and Processes) in place to facilitate football in safe environments. It is far more sustainable for an existing Club to add teams, than it is for a brand-new Club to form.
- Consultation to have been made with the facility owner of the sites the Club's teams will use for training and match play to ensure there is capacity for the Club's Year 1 plans, and that facilities can accommodate and planned increases in team numbers the club plans over their first 3-seasons.
- Coaches for all adult teams to have in-date FA Introduction to First Aid in Football (see below section for Youth Coach requirements).
- Clubs with Adult Teams – The Club Secretary, Welfare Officer (Adult Teams) and all coaches to have completed The FA Adult Player Welfare Course.

**Other Criteria that will be considered:**

- Individual Club Officials and Coaches previous proven FA Misconduct Charges in the last 3 years. Respect sanctions e.g. improper conduct against a Match Official, and Violent/Threatening/Abusive language/behaviour are examples of proven charges against individuals that would be considered in whether the applicants are suitable to start a new Club.
- Outstanding Football Debt. This includes individual Club Officials/Coaches and previous Clubs they have been at e.g. individuals who have folded a Club with outstanding debt would not be approved to start a New Club.

**In addition to the above, any proposed New Club with Youth Teams will require:**

- Coaches for all Teams and Development Groups to be affiliated by the Club will require:
  - FA Level 1/Introduction to Coaching Football,
  - in-date FA Introduction to First Aid in Football,
  - in-date FA Safeguarding Children
  - in-date FA DBS
- Club Committee Members have completed the Safeguarding for Committee Members.

**Additional support for new Clubs:**

- All approved new Clubs will be supported through affiliation on The FA Club Portal if support is wanted/required.
- Club Development Meetings/Calls at Month 6, 12, and 18.
- Plus, all other support as listed in the NFA Affiliation Guide.

## New Club Process:

1. Proposed Club Committee Members wanting to start a new Club consult with other local Clubs to establish if adding new teams with an existing Club is possible and would provide better and more sustainable outcomes for players and the local area.
2. Proposed Club Committee Members wanting to start a new Club consult with local facility providers/owners to establish if capacity exists for the Club to operate with its planned number of Teams and Development Groups in Year 1-3.
3. Decide your Club Name – this is at the core to the identity of your club.
4. Determine your Volunteer roles and Committee structure. As a minimum, this should include a Club Secretary, Chair, Treasurer, and Welfare Officer. For Clubs with youth teams, these positions must be held by a minimum of two people. Best practice is to have the four roles filled by four different people to share workload and increase a club's sustainability. Clubs may have additional roles as they chose e.g. Coach Lead, Accreditation Lead etc.
5. Create a realistic financial plan. Unfortunately, running a grassroots club is expensive and the majority of clubs are self-funded by their members.
6. Contact the league, or leagues, you are interested in your Club's teams playing in. Find out what requirements the respective leagues have and how you can apply to join.
7. Complete the [NFA New Club Application Form](#).
8. NFA Development, Safeguarding, Facility, and Discipline staff review New Club applications in bi-weekly review panel.
9. NFA may contact local Club's and facilities to check contact has been made, and establish that the New Club would benefit local football and participants with its new provision, not dilute local provision, create facility capacity issues, or limit available other resources to support safe football provision. This will be completed within 7-days of the review panel assessing the application.
10. NFA New Club Application is approved, further information requested, or rejected.

When approved, NFA will set-up the New Club onto The FA Club Portal. This will allow the Club to affiliate its teams, register players, and complete their England Football Accreditation.