



Suffolk FA Club Philosophy Toolkit

DEVELOPING
GROWING AND
SUPPORTING
YOUR GAME





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Introduction

Why would you have a club philosophy?

In recent years, Suffolk football has become more professional and expertly run by numerous volunteers across the county.

Clubs have seen a greater expectancy both locally and nationally to offer players the best football experience possible as well as greater constraints to be more business-like in their everyday running. With the number of opportunities for players

more than ever, it can be said that clubs are requiring a greater more robust recruitment policy to attract players to play for their football club. Within the county, we have seen some clubs grow significantly in recent years with a strong volunteer workforce and a high number of players from U7 – Open aged. It can be seen that these clubs have been able to define themselves, understand their demographic and create a unique selling point to attract players and volunteers alike.

Clubs have become organisations which not only understand 'what' they do but 'how' and 'why' they do it. Playing a key role within the community, clubs have recognised the importance of positive PR and giving the clubs an 'identity'. With being a relatively new concept for grassroots football, Suffolk FA has developed this document to support, enhance and develop club philosophies within the Suffolk Football Community. This toolkit will provide both practical and theory support for a club looking to develop their own individual philosophy. Best practice and examples has been sourced across the country as well as from many of our very own grassroots clubs.

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Defining your Football Club

What should you consider?

No two football clubs are the same. Regardless of geography, demographic and workforce it can be seen that all clubs have differences and core values that are unique to them. Before a club begins to produce a philosophy, it is important that club defines itself and identifies the key attributes that make their club unique. From here, a club can begin to identify its target audience and why the club operates the way it does. The following infographics below highlight some key considerations that will guide a club to develop its club philosophy.

Geography

**Club history and
tradition**

**Local
Demographic**

Teams

Workforce

Competition

Climate

Local GDP

Facilities

Club structure

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Definitions:

How does the following influence your football club?

1. **Geography** – Where is the club located? Is it in a rural or urban setting? How does this affect your club?
2. **Club History and Tradition** – When was the club formed? Does it have a particular tradition? Has it had 'successes'?
3. **Local Demographic** – What is the local population? What is the make-up of the local population?
4. **Teams** – How many teams does your club have? What age groups and gender are these teams? What format do they play?
5. **Workforce** – Is anyone paid at your club? Have you completed a skills audit?
6. **Competition** - What leagues do your teams compete in? What level of football is there available?
7. **Climate** – Does the weather influence playing time and facilities?
8. **Local GDP** – What can your members afford? What costs do the club incur?
9. **Facilities** – What facilities does the club have access to? How does this affect the club?
10. **Club structure** – What is the pathway in your club? How is the club administered and managed?



Developing your philosophy

Unique selling point

Once you feel you have sufficiently reflected and discussed the mentioned considerations; you should now be in a position to highlight what is your clubs unique selling point? What key factors separate your football club from the rest? What would make a parent want to take their 7 year old to your club? This is a key component when developing your club philosophy as it now only gives your club an identity but also creates for all members.

Below are some general themes which can be used as a starting point to identify what is your unique selling point:

Defining your USP

- Do you have a fair play policy and give equal playing time?
- Do you host events outside of football for your members?
- Do you cater for all ages, abilities and genders?
- Do you have a fantastic facility?
- Do you have a link with another club?
- Do you provide a variety of experiences for your players? (Futsal, Formats)
- Do you provide highly qualified coaches?

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Developing your philosophy

Club Vision and mission statement

Once a Unique Selling point has been identified it is now important to bring this into a living document. Although it may appear to individuals involved within the club that they understand the clubs values and USP, however is this communicated to the public?

This can be achieved through a 'mission statement' or a simple aims and objectives document which give the club an identity and persona of its own. This 'vision' can be done in a few sentences, bullet points or various visuals which help underpin the core values of the club. Without understanding the clubs values it can be increasingly difficult to shape a club philosophy and create a process which can be easy to follow for all members. Some excellent example of clubs 'mission statements' can be seen on the following page.

“The achievement of an organisation are the results of the combined efforts of each individual” - Vince Lombardi

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Examples



Suffolk FA

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This gives a clearly defined purpose and highlights ‘why’ the company does what it does. A ‘vision’ gives clubs support to gain a common theme to understand the purpose of their club and what is unique to them within their environment. In addition, this gives a clear focus and objective to drive the organisation forward.

Anyone FC

“To achieve and exceed all expectations both on and off the pitch by creating an enjoyable, developmental environment for all members and visitors of our club”

This highlights the ambition and aims of the club through the environment that it wishes to create. By a club having a long term vision it gives something to work towards and why the clubs wants to achieve what it does. It creates a starting point to create detail into your club philosophy

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Developing your Philosophy

Defining a playing style

After a club has defined its clubs values and unique selling point it is important to view how this will look in practical terms. The transfer to the grass not only brings your club philosophy to life but is also a valued marketing and PR tool. Opposition, both home and away can help create an impression and understanding of your club from the teams they are playing against. The teams playing style should reflect the whole values and philosophy of the club as this is where you will often liaise with the external public. One team can let down the whole impression of the club so it is key that the playing philosophy is adopted by all members. In contrast, this can also significantly contribute to the reputation and the recruitment of the club. A club seen as playing as an 'attractive' brand of football will create attention, admirers and potentially new members.

As previously stated all clubs are unique and defined by a number of key factors. This is no different with a clubs playing style. A Playing philosophy should underpin your values and unique selling point. However, it is important to understand how this can be implemented and what barriers you may face. Without comprising the clubs value, the challenge is to create a playing style which can be adopted and reflects the philosophy of the whole club. The following word diagram highlights key considerations which should be reflected upon and discussed prior to creating you're playing philosophy.



What level does the adult section of the club play?

What is the financial situation of the club?

Is the club inclusive
of players of all
abilities?

What level of coaching do you
have at the club?

Does the club put player
development first?

Is the club results driven?

What facilities do you have access to?

Creating a Playing Philosophy

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Defining a playing style

Once the considerations have been reflected upon and the club feels it is in a reasonable position to define a playing style, it is now crucial to develop this into a user-friendly, living document. A level of simplicity and coherency will enable the message to become more transferable to all members of the club and external partners. In addition, the playing philosophy needs to be adapted to all age groups from youth to adult. This will help with player transition as they go through the various formats of football and will also reinforce the clubs values and philosophy if all teams within the club are adhering to a specific playing style. The following examples highlight how a simple framework for players and coaches to alike to work from can be most effective.

“When you look at people who are successful, you will find they aren’t the people who are motivated, but have consistency in their motivation” – Arsene Wenger



Examples



1.

- To provide fair playing time for all players
- To aim to play the ball through the thirds of the pitch
- To provide different experiences for players through positions and formations
- To aim to win but not at all costs

2.

- All players to receive fair playing time during training, games based upon players commitment to development.
- All players to be comfortable with multiple playing positions and formations.
- All coaches to encourage players to possess and progress the ball through the thirds of the pitch
- All members of the club to promote an enjoyable learning environment.
- There will be transparency between all age groups with the holistic approach to move players between teams



Club Structure



Once a club and playing philosophy has been established, the directive moves to implementing this across your club and ensuring it becomes a 'living' philosophy rather than just a paper document. Therefore, before initiatives become more delivery focused, it is important to create a clear process and structure for the club. This will put the club in a much stronger position to implement their philosophy as individual roles will be defined and there will be a support mechanism within the structure. Therefore, it can be seen that this should be the starting point of all clubs when implementing a new club philosophy. All club structures will look different and will depending on the demographic and USP of that particular club. However, it can be seen there are a number of models which represent good practice and give clear examples of a proficient club structure. This next chapter will give you various examples of an effective club structure as well as highlight how to maximise the efficiency of the structure within the club.



Creating a Skills Audit



Many grassroots clubs face the difficulty of having enough volunteers within their committee. In addition, it is also important to have the 'right' people involved within the club and this makes it an even more difficult task to have an effective, efficient and organised club committee. However, it can be seen that this has been achieved by numerous grassroots clubs. A simple method of identifying individuals and support can be through a skills audit. An average grassroots club will have regular contact with a large number of individuals from a variety of professional backgrounds. If tapped into these can be a valuable resource and support mechanism for the club. This can also help create greater unity and cohesion within the club. With the right individuals across all age groups, the success of a club philosophy 'rolling out' across the whole organisation will become more likely. On the next page are a number of methods and initiatives which can be contributed to recruiting more and the correct individuals to support a club philosophy.



Identifying individuals

Needs Analysis

The initial step is to highlight what the club needs and what areas it needs strengthening in. This can be performed through a consultation period with the existing committee and seeking feedback from players and parents.

Skills Audit

Once you are aware of the needs of the club it is important to perform a skills audit to identify what individuals have the required experience. This can be achieved through parent questionnaires, club consultation and the registration process.

Recruitment process

Within volunteers it is important to ensure individuals commit to only what they are able to do. This takes away pressure and creates a better of quality of work as 1- 2 hours of specific work will be of a greater benefit to the club.

Advertisement

It is important to use a variety of outlets to attract volunteers. This can be done through open evenings, social media, local newspapers, emails, club handbooks, community initiatives and the FA Football Futures programme.

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Maximising your workforce

Once you have identified a sufficient number of individuals that can help shape and drive your club forwards, it is important to create a structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the club. This allows members to have a specific focus and accountability for their individual role. In addition, it helps create 'experts' on a specific field within the club and improves productivity. Individuals will dedicate time to designated tasks and assigned roles which will also maximise their experiences and expertise within a particular field. The following organigrams and examples below can be seen as suggestions which will help develop your workforce to support the implementation of a club philosophy. In addition, in the upcoming documents are definitions of key responsibilities within particular roles.

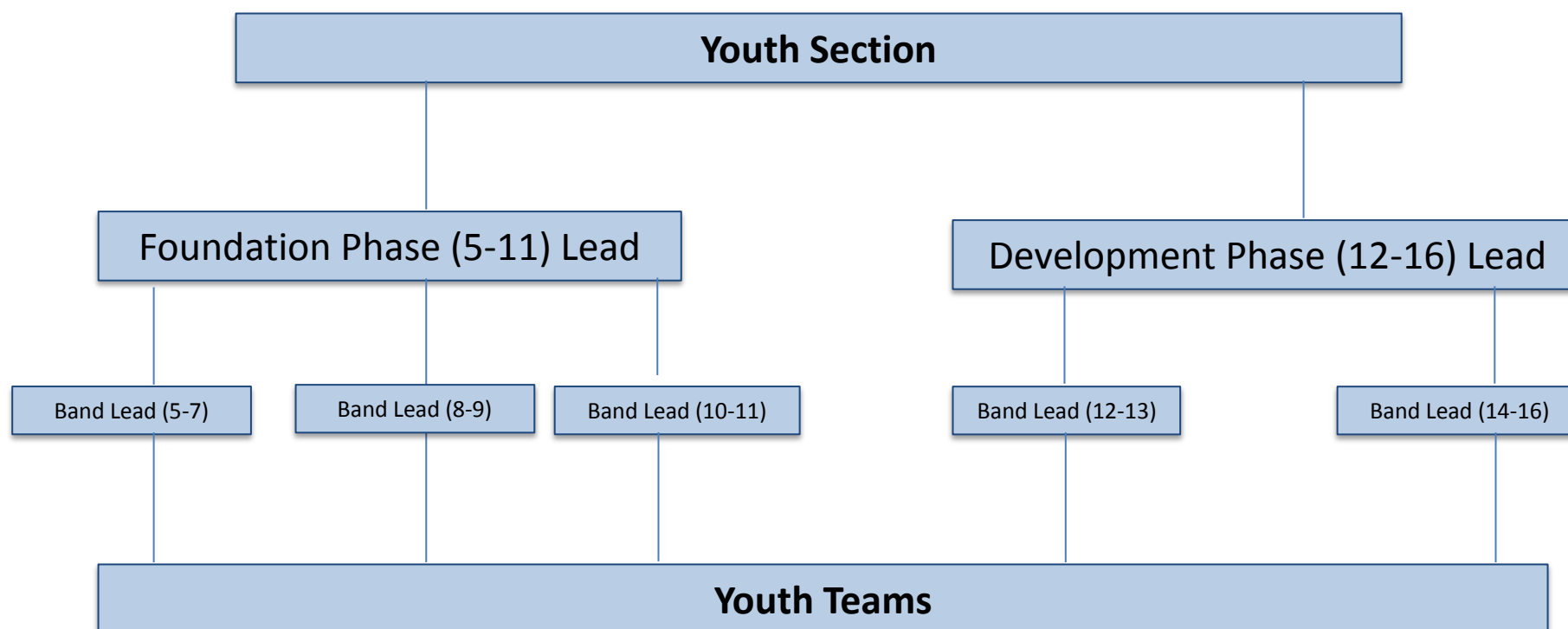
“The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.” – Phil Jackson



Organigram Examples

Anyone Football Club

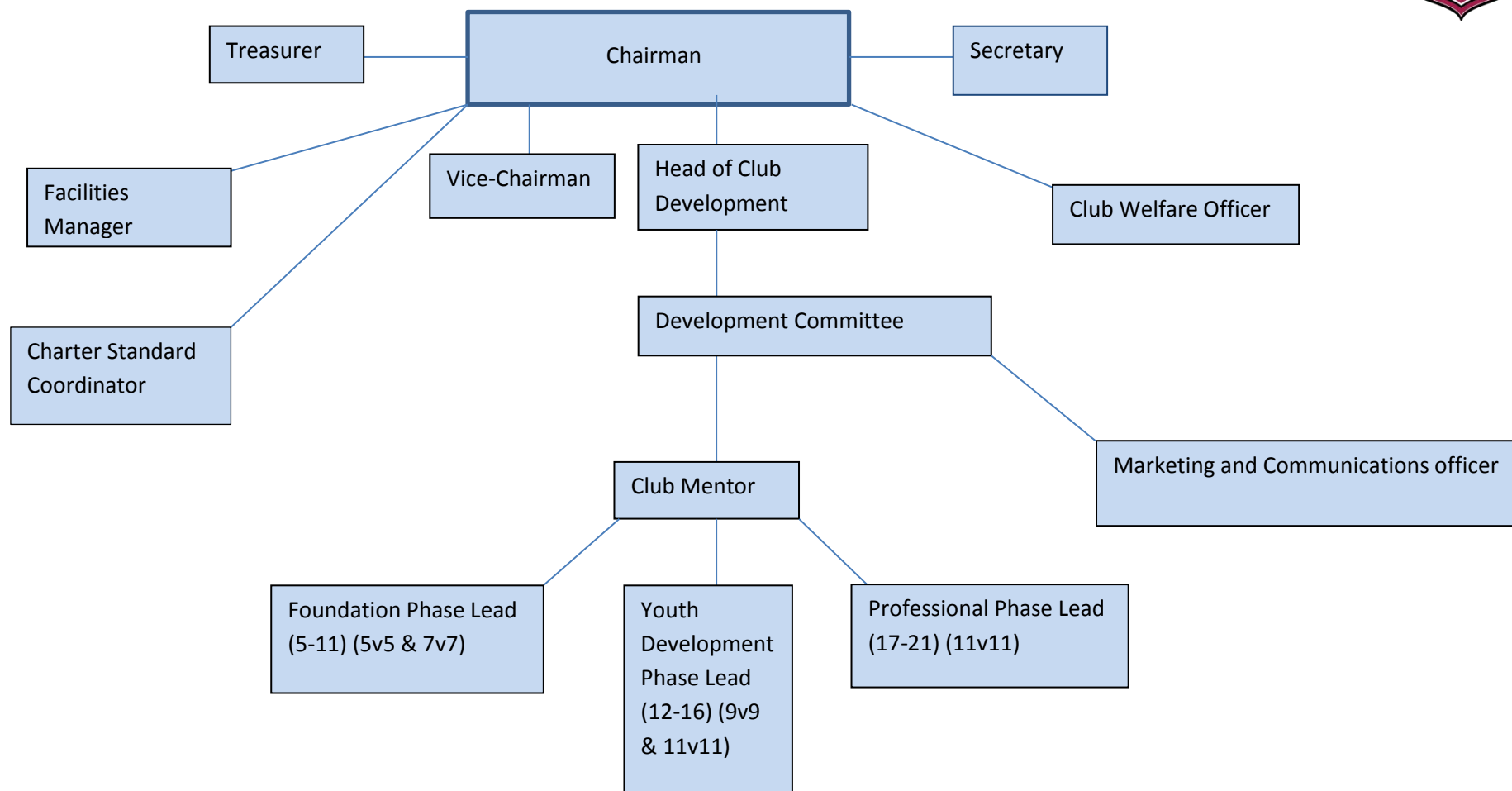
Club Structure (Youth)



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Club Structure



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Role Responsibilities



- **Head of Club Development (6 hours per week)**

- To organise internal coach mentoring programme
- To oversee development projects and initiatives
- To maintain itinerary of coach qualifications and CPD
- To encourage coach development and membership of LCC
- To maintain a coach resource bank including reference materials and development opportunities
- Develop links with schools and colleges to give opportunities for local young coaches

- **Heads of Phases (4 hours per week)**

- Point of contact for team coaches
- Organise internal CPD (formal/informal)
- Support mechanism for coaches
- Manage parent/player discipline on behalf of club
- Provides link between age groups and transition to adult section
- Support on Development projects

- **Club Mentor (4 hours per week)**
 - Oversee heads of phases and provide support
 - Point of contact for coaches
 - Oversees implementation of club playing philosophy and pathway
 - Provides club CPD
 - Performs personal development for coaches
- **Marketing and Communications Officer (2 hours per week)**
 - Responsible for club promotion
 - Liaise with local media outlets
 - Responsible for social media tools (twitter, facebook, Instagram)
 - Responsible for marketing strategy

“There is immense power when a group of people with similar interests gets together to work toward the same goals.” – Idowu Koyenikan



Marketing and Communications Strategy

Once a club philosophy has been established it is important this is communicated in a consistent and coherent manner. An effective marketing and communications strategy can not only support the implementation of a club philosophy but it can also support recruitment by raising the awareness of the club. It is important that an individual within the club is dedicated to this role and is able to communicate on a regular basis through various outlets. A strategy not only creates a focus and initiative for the club but it also results in a consistent format across the whole organisation. One of the key ways to communicate your message immediately and to a wide audience can be through social media. This not only gives you a visible presence but also may result the club in hitting a younger more relevant audience. Club information can be distributed in a live format as well as generic promotion. The infographics below list the various outlets which when used effectively can significantly enhance the perception of the club.

Social Media Outlets

Facebook

Twitter

Website

Instagram

Youtube

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Policies and Processes

Within a Marketing and communications strategy, it is important to create a clear process and agreed policies to ensure consistency for the club. This will help develop coherent lines of communication as well as give a clear vision of your targets and aims within the strategy. This will look vastly different for each club but the policies on the next page are some guidance and ideas which can be implemented into a marketing and communications strategy for a football club.



Examples

Twitter/Social Media

No direct debate with individuals. Tweets are positive and promote club activity. Allow discussion on club philosophy and provide information. Tweet at promotional events. Photos are promoted at parents' permission.

Website

Stories are updated on a regular basis. The club philosophy is highly visible. The website creates a 'snapshot' of the club. Generic club information is easily visible. Stories are reviewed by 2 people before posting.

Local media

Local media is received a weekly update of club activity. No direct comment on club criticism without discussion with committee. Local media partnership is reviewed and discussed on a bi-annual basis.

Branding

Consistent branding is used across the whole club. Whole club plays in same or similar kit to raise brand awareness. A variety of branding is used for all events (banners, visuals, posters etc)

Promotional Events

Branding is used at all club activity with a highly visible presence. Events are promoted through all media outlets developed within the marketing strategy. All external parties are communicated with at least 4 weeks' notice.

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Club Branding

In order to create a consistent message from the club and to create a greater awareness it is important to create generic branding for the club. This can be used across the organisation and should have a recurring theme and design. This can help support your club philosophy and develop recognition from the public of who you are.



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Examples



SUFFOLK FA | Comba van design concept 1



Rear view



Off side view



Near side view with sliding door

 **SUFFOLK FOOTBALL
ASSOCIATION**

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Developing your Marketing Strategy

When developing a marketing strategy, it can be seen that a number of key initiatives can be implemented to help ensure it underpins your club philosophy and also raises awareness of club activity. The strategy does not need to be longer than 2-4 hours a week of implementation as it will create a process and system which will allow regular activity. Recruiting a dedicated marketing officer is the beginning of this process however this can be developed through a number of important considerations. Below is a short list of a few of these factors.

- **Meetings** – Committee meetings should itemise ‘marketing and communications’ and ensure this remains on the agenda. This helps give a focus, reflection and an action plan
- **Targets** – Creating clear targets and objectives with your marketing strategy will give a focus and accountability to work towards e.g ‘500 twitter followers by 2016’
- **Feedback** – Using surveys, questionnaires and workshops with discussion around the marketing strategy will give you a greater opportunity to understand your demographic and target audience needs.

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Developing a Player Pathway

Playing Vision and USP

As previously discussed, a playing style will underpin a club vision and philosophy and can be equally used as a marketing tool for the club. This chapter explores the important considerations which should be implemented which will help bring your playing philosophy to life. It can be said that a playing style should be implemented right across the whole club to create a consistent message with your philosophy. This will also support your playing pathway and the transition for players moving to the adult game. A playing style can act as your USP and in order for this to be achieved it is vital that the correct structure for your club is put into place. The following questions need to be explored when defining a playing pathway structure.

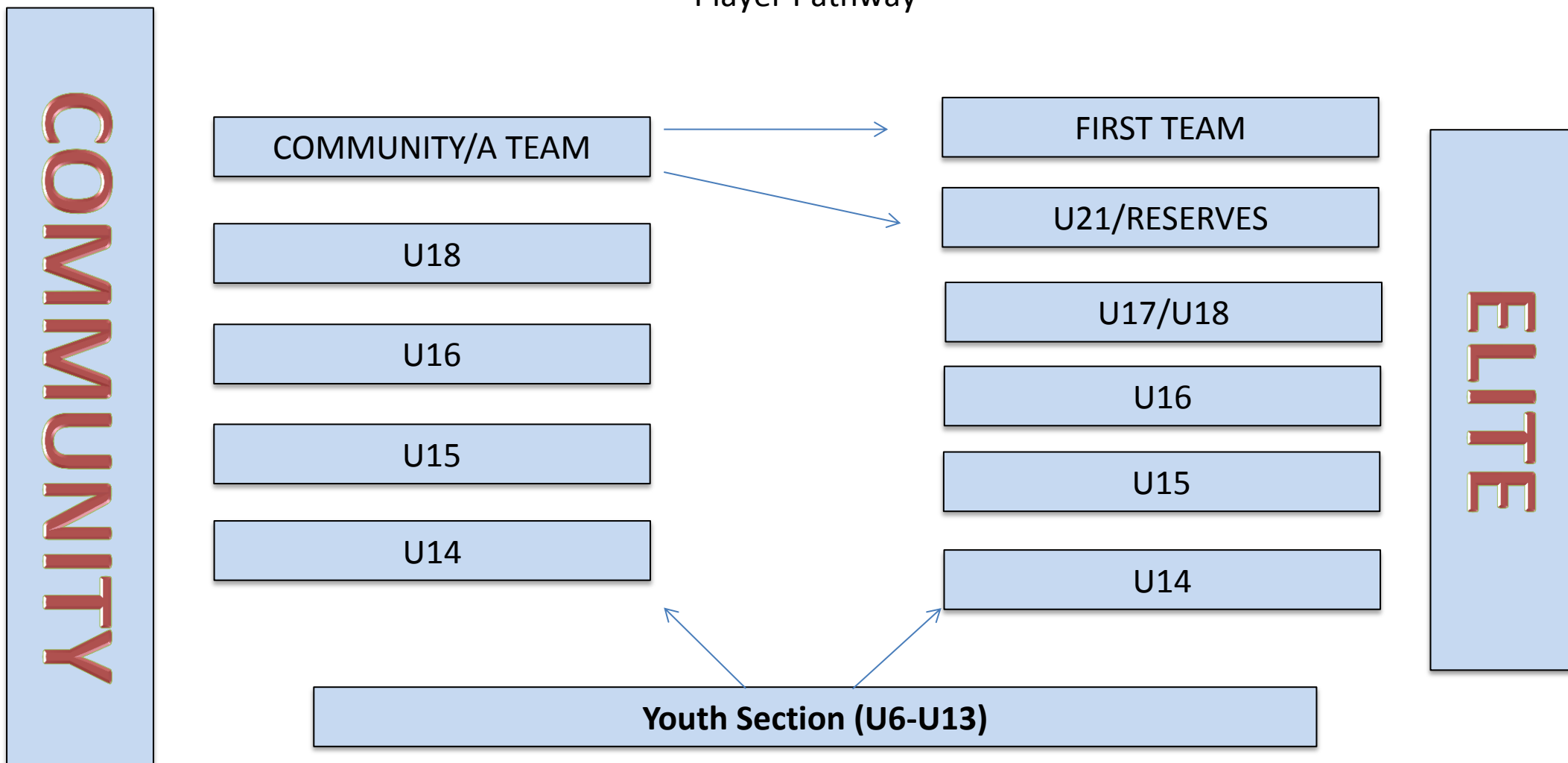
- How does this support your philosophy and overall vision?
- Is this relevant to the senior sections level of football?
- Is there a common theme between all age groups?
- Are there different opportunities for your players?

The examples on the next page highlight a recommended best practice pathway from Suffolk FA



Examples

Player Pathway



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Youth to Adult transition

In order to create a clear pathway for players and a consistent playing style to underpin your philosophy, it is important to support players on the difficult transition to the adult game. Clubs with an effective playing philosophy and a common link from youth to adult are often seen as the most successful in ensuring players 16+ stay within their club. The following methods can be seen as ways that can support this transition

- **Phasing in process** – Over the course of the season, select players can be ‘phased into’ the adult section. This can be through training sessions, game time and social events. If this happens over a period of time without immediacy it will give players time to adapt to a new team and environment.
- **Coaching** – It is important for players who are making that transition to be coached with a level of empathy and understanding. Individual coaching and creating an environment which allows them to make mistakes will help relieve the pressure when making that transition.
- **‘Buddying up’** – Within some teams, clubs designate youth players ‘buddies’ that are experienced adult players. This will help give them a support mechanism and gives an easier experience for them within that environment.
- **Club Policy/targets** – If a club has a policy or a target to have percentage of ‘homegrown’ players within the adult section this helps provides opportunities and gives the coach accountability to achieve this.





Implementing the Playing Philosophy

2) Workshops

- Workshops both internally and externally can help support the development of a playing philosophy. Specifically 'parent workshops' can help raise awareness of the message. This also gives parents an understanding of the long term goals of the club as well as what support they can give to the players. Hosting 'parents evenings' will allow for formal feedback and will also highlight to the parents the support mechanism of the club. As well as this, public consultation and in-service events from your County FA will all serve to support your club philosophy.

3) Coaching CPD

- To enable your coaches to deliver the clubs message, it is important to give them a support mechanism where they can develop. Organising internal CPD events based around the club philosophy will serve to reinforce the playing style. In addition, encouraging coaches to join the FA Licensed Coaches Club will again create some quality assurances and give coaches ownership for their personal development.



Implementing the playing philosophy

4) Assessment forms and Challenge sheets

- To give players constructive, positive and developmental feedback it can be seen that assessment forms and challenge sheets help give the coaches and players a focus. It puts player development at the centre of the club and creates tangible outcomes which is testing and realistic. In addition, it also gives players ownership for their own development and a directive. Beside are a few examples of challenge sheets and assessment form which help encourage player development. These can be created with the player to provide ownership and a focus. This can be seen as an effective method in giving players a learning focus and developing their individual role within the team

WAYS: Development at the heart of competition

Pitch Challenges:

(Tick when Completed)

1. Can the goalkeeper roll the ball out 3 times? ☐
2. Can the centre midfielder(s) switch the play twice? ☐
3. Can you try and do 3 different skill moves during one game? ☐
4. Can you successfully nutmeg an opponent? ☐
5. Can you play 3 first time passes during a game? ☐
6. Can you try and do 3 stepovers in one match? ☐
7. Can the defence play a forward pass to their midfield? ☐
8. Can you find the right time to dribble past an opponent successfully? ☐
9. Can you score from a cross or a corner? ☐



Assessment sheet

Putting the players first

DOB: _____ DATE: _____ REF NO: _____

Name: _____ Age Group: _____

Below are your targets we agreed for the period _____ based around the following 2 areas in relation to the 4 corners (physical, social, psychological, technical):

After Discussion with your coach –

A) Ring the score that applies to you (PR/PA/NI)

B) Write in the boxes how you think you have done

PR = Fully Reached = I have developed or improved at all of the skills

PA = Partly Reached = I have improved at some of the skills

NI = Not Reached YET = I have not yet improved at these skills

TARGET 1 – CONTINUE TO DEVELOP YOUR STRENGTHS	
Strength:	1.
	2.
	3.
PR – Fully Reached	PR – Partly Reached
TARGET 2 – DEVELOP THE FOLLOWING AREAS	
Strength:	1.
	2.
	3.
PR – Fully Reached	PR – Partly Reached
	NI – Not reached at all

Can you explain your score in the space below:

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Creating the Environment

In order to develop a philosophy for all involved within the club it is important to create an environment which facilitates this. It can be seen that the above initiatives and suggestions do support this important factor. However, what techniques can be used to implement across all ages for the club and most importantly within the match day? At this point the club should have all the key methods in place to create a club philosophy as well as bringing it to life. This final chapter highlights the importance of creating a positive learning environment within the club to support implementing a club philosophy and the role of this within the match day.

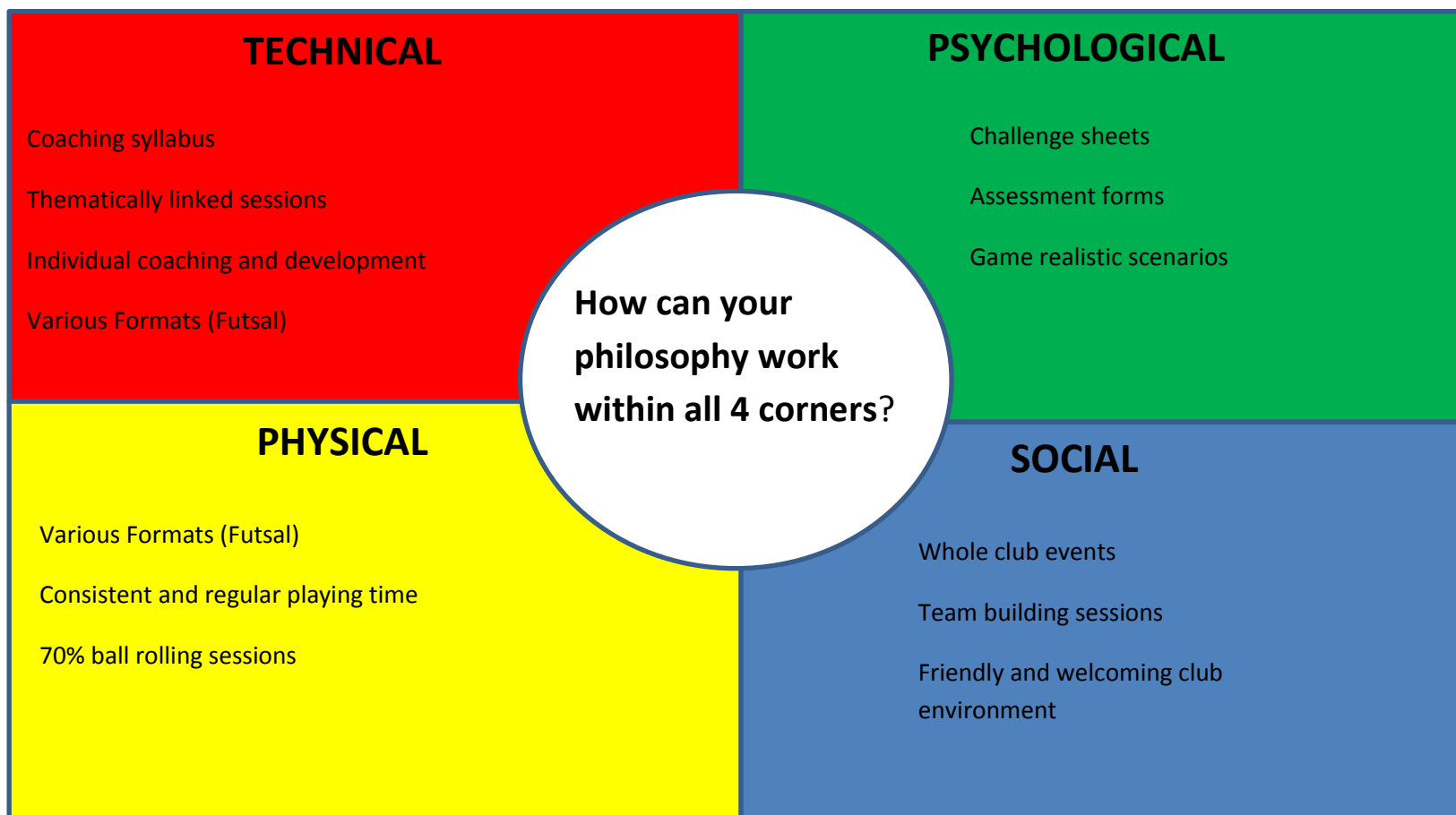
Working within the Four Corners

When discussing effective ways to create a positive learning environment in order to support your club philosophy, the 4 corner model can be seen as a measurable technique to aid player development. Within your club, it is without question that players do not just develop technically. The physical, social and psychological development is just as relevant and should be developed equally within the club. This helps create a more rounded player within an ability to develop all these aspects over a sustained period of time. Therefore within your club philosophy it is important that this model is taking into consideration. The next page highlight the 4 corner model and shows suggestions which can help support this valuable tool for long term player development.

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The Four Corner Model



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The Match day

As well as internally within the club, it is important that the environment and club philosophy is transferable to the Match Day. This allows external parties to gain an understanding of the club philosophy and helps reinforce, underpin and support the overall vision of the organisation. The next section highlights some best practice and gives practical advice which will help support the transition to the match day when implementing your philosophy across the whole club.

How to develop the environment

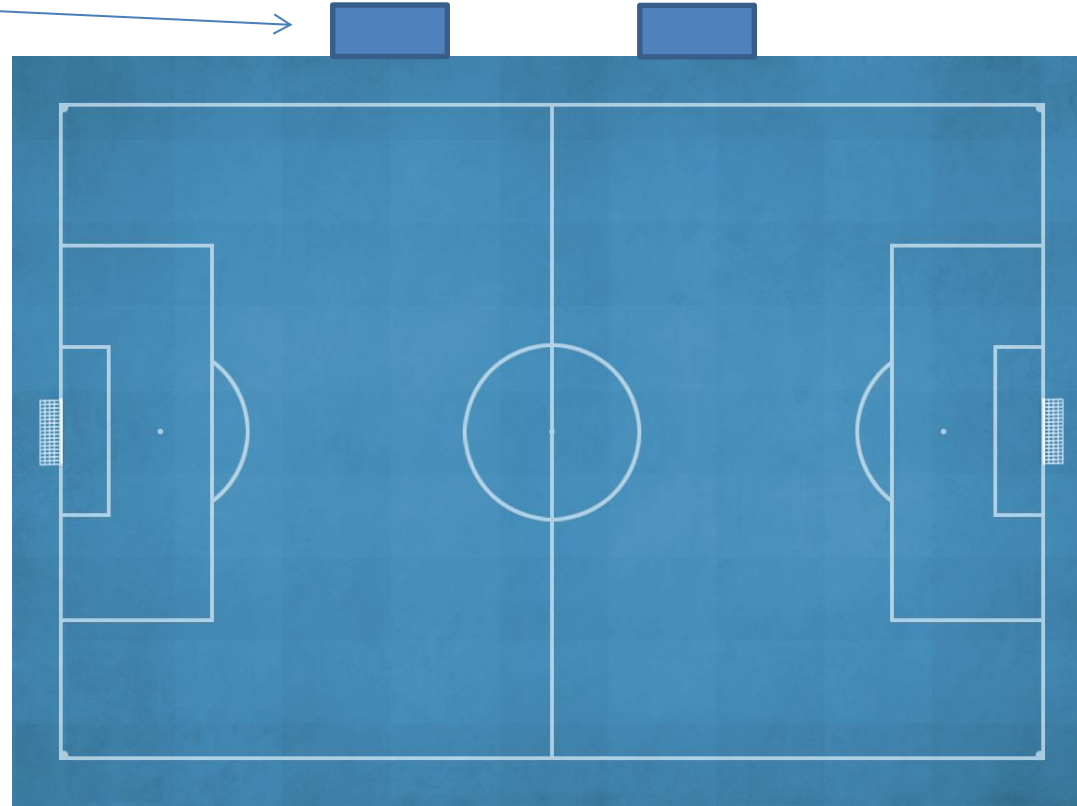
- *Keep a consistent topic and link with training*
- *Provide individual challenges for your players*
 - *Liaise regularly with parents/supporters*
 - *Allow the players to make decisions*
- *Do not let the result be the determining factor*
 - *Provide few and simple instructions*
 - *Enjoy the game*

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The Match Day Visual

TECHNICAL AREAS



Respect line

**Positive
environment**

**Encouragement
linked to a
challenge.**

**Let the players
play**

**Enjoy the
Game**

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Suffolk FA Support

In order to help you create and deliver your club philosophy we have numerous support mechanisms that are readily available to you. They are as follows:

1) Suffolk FA Staff

- Jodie Allard, Football Development Manager, Jodie.Allard@Suffolkfa.com
- Darren Scoulding, Senior Football Development Officer, Darren.Scoulding@Suffolkfa.com
- James Morley, Mini and Youth Football Development Officer, James.Morley@Suffolkfa.com
- Rebecca Bolton, Girls and Womens Football Development Officer, Rebecca.Bolton@Suffolkfa.com
- Nick Garnham, Marketing and Communications Officer, nick.garnham@suffolkfa.com

2) Website and Social Media

- For more information you can visit www.suffolkfa.com or visit @suffolkfa on twitter

3) Workshops

- We can provide numerous workshops both practical and theory on developing a club philosophy to suit your individual needs. For more information email info@Suffolkfa.com