

County Disability Leagues

The delivery of Sport England's Disability Club and Coach Project between seasons 2008-09 and 2010-11 represented significant additional investment into disability football at a local level.

The existing 'pan disability' regional leagues have either been reformed or are complemented by entirely new structures and represent a switch in emphasis from regional to county based provision. In season 2011-12 there will be 34 established County Leagues within England offering regular competitive opportunities for in the region of 700 affiliated teams. These leagues form the foundation of the disability player pathway and provide the environment in which players can participate on a regular basis. Through these structures, aspirations identified in the National Game Strategy can be realised (participating clubs provide an exit route for players making a transition from education based provision to community settings, talented individuals are signposted to performance environments and the volunteer workforce is developed to sustain and grow current and future activity).

In many cases, these County-based leagues have been established and supported by County FAs which deliver in partnership with a range of organisations to ensure that provision is both standardised and sustained.

Key information about County Disability Leagues

- County Leagues develop provision for five key groups of players playing 'pan disability' football (adult male, adult female, U16 males, U16 females and U13 mixed)
- County Leagues adopt the principle of 'ability banding' where there are enough participating teams and clear differences in the ability level of players
- County Leagues adopt a 5v5 or 7v7 format
- County Leagues deliver a programme of central venue fixtures between September and May annually. A minimum of six central venue fixture days per season are provided for each of the five playing groups
- County Leagues 'sign post' players that have the ability to participate in mainstream activity to the appropriate playing opportunities. Leagues focus their efforts on providing opportunities for players whose 'disability' prevents them from achieving their potential in mainstream football
- County Leagues also co-ordinate 'impairment specific' divisions e.g. wheelchair football or mental health divisions.

As mentioned above, ability banded competition has been established within regional and County league structures ('Premier League' competitions are often delivered on a regional basis with 'Championship' and 'League' divisions being delivered locally via County-based leagues).

Premier League level - players participating at this level are able to cope physically, have good levels of spatial awareness, excellent ability to understand tactics and good levels of physical strength and fitness.

Championship level - players participating at this level are mobile, have spatial and tactical awareness, knowledge of the Laws of the Game and have a good level of fitness.

League level - players participating at this level have limited mobility, spatial awareness and fitness