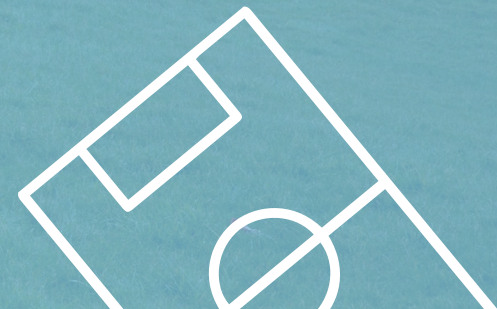
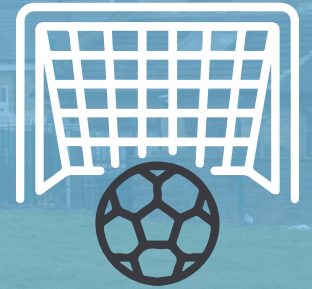


Local Trust
trusting
local
people

Starting your own community football team:

A COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: THE BENEFITS OF SETTING UP A COMMUNITY FOOTBALL TEAM



As well as being a lot of fun, starting a football team can bring multiple benefits to your community.

Having a community football team is a great way for people to meet and get to know one another, both within the team and for those supporting it. In addition to creating connections in your community at an individual level, being involved in team sports is good for people's physical and mental health.

For communities with little provision of sports facilities or community spaces, football can be a simple, inclusive and relatively low-cost way of providing opportunities for local people to take part in a sporting activity.



DID YOU KNOW?

Just over 15 minutes of physical activity a day has been proven to lift your mood.

(Source: ASICS' global state of mind study)



Above: Heath Big Local
Photo: Local Trust / Richard Richards

Communities across the country are already enjoying these benefits and having fun playing and cheering on their teams, week on week. **That's why we've put together this toolkit, to share tips and advice from people who have already done it, to help you bring the benefits of a community football team to your local area.**

THIS TOOLKIT WILL HELP YOU TO:

- Set up a team and get people involved
- Identify funding opportunities
- Locate and access space to practice and play
- Plan training sessions
- Understand safeguarding procedures
- Play against other teams and in local leagues
- Grow and make the most of your club



This action plan is based on learnings from communities that have already set up football teams, including the Woolavington Wanderers, supported by Villages Together Big Local in Somerset, and Clarksfield & Glodwick in Greater Manchester, with support from Clarksfield, Greenacres and Littlemoor, also known as Big Local Oldham. It also includes insights and resources from national sporting organisations and associations.



ABOUT BIG LOCAL

Through the Big Local programme, communities in 150 areas across England received just over £1million each to spend across 10 to 15 years, to create lasting change in their neighbourhoods.

Above: Clarksfield & Glodwick football team
Photo: Local Trust / Zia



CREATING OPPORTUNITY THROUGH YOUR COMMUNITY FOOTBALL CLUB

“ There have been challenges (to setting up our club), but the memories and benefits to the kids and our wider community have been huge. I would say ‘do it’ to anyone thinking of starting one. ”

Zia, Coach at Clarksfield & Glodwick Football Club in Oldham

Starting a community football team or club can have hugely positive impacts on the people that get involved. It can:

- be a way to help overcome isolation
- offer a social way to get more active
- bring people together for a shared purpose that didn't exist before.

If you want to start a team or club, it's worth considering early on which benefits you want it to bring to your community and for whom.



For Clarksfield & Glodwick, the decision to set up a football club for young people under 15 was the result of there being little else for young people to do in their area. They now have eight teams ranging from under-7s to under-15s playing for their club.



Right: Clarksfield & Glodwick football team
Photo: Local Trust / Zia

Deciding who your community football team will be for is important, as it will have an impact on many other aspects of the set-up process. This section explores some of the things you'll want to consider, so you can start off on the right foot.

To help you decide whether to set up a team and who your team (or teams) will be for, you could:

1. FIND OUT WHAT'S ALREADY ON OFFER

Understanding what activities are already available for local people and where there are gaps is a good place to start.

For both Clarksfield & Glodwick and Villages Together, a lack of opportunities and facilities for young people in their areas led them to want to start football teams for young people.

2. ASK YOUR COMMUNITY!

Before starting a team, you can understand interest in and appetite for one by asking the question through existing local groups and social pages. A message on a local Facebook group asking if anyone fancies a kick about in the park might be enough to get the ball rolling.

KIDS OR ADULTS?

Thinking about who your club is for will likely lead you to consider the age range you are providing for. Whether you're setting up a team for adults or children will have a huge impact on the steps that come after, from recruitment to safeguarding.

You might start with one age group and widen your recruitment later on, but having a clear idea from the beginning of whether your team is for adults or children – and deciding on the age limitations within that – will be useful as you move along your community football journey.



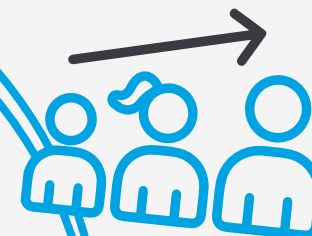
TOP TIP:

The Football Association (FA) states that all teams under the age of 16 should play as mixed gender teams, meaning no one gets left out!



PLAYING THROUGH THE AGES

For the Woolavington Wanderers, once a range of under-15s teams were up and running, it made sense to provide an onward journey for their oldest players. Rather than stopping post-15, the club decided to revive an old adult team, to allow players to play in an adult league when they are old enough.



FUNDING YOUR CLUB

Like many activities, setting up a community football team will cost money. Depending on what you're aiming for – for example, if it's one team you are setting up, or several as part of a club – costs will vary, but accessing funding is likely to be one of your first considerations.

There are numerous ways you can fund your team, but you'll want to keep in mind who you want to play in it, to ensure it remains accessible through the funding model you choose.

EXTERNAL FUNDING

Getting external funding can help to kickstart your club. Whether it's in part or fully, some options for external funding include:

Grants from local and national charities

- charities supporting the demographics of people who make up your club, for example if your club is for young people you can look at grant-making organisations supporting young people
- large football teams and stadiums in your region that might offer grants for smaller clubs
- national sporting charities – take a look at [Sport England](#) and [the Football Foundation](#) who run different funding opportunities for grassroots sport
- online grant databases such as [Grants Online](#), where you can sign up to receive alerts about relevant funding opportunities.

Sponsorship from businesses

Many football teams (including the England national team!) have their kit sponsored by businesses. You could approach local businesses or look to national businesses to see whether they have relevant funding opportunities.



Above: Clarksfield & Glodwick football team
Photo: Local Trust / Zia

QUIDS IN FOR CLARKSFIELD & GLODWICK

In Manchester, Clarksfield & Glodwick's community football team received funding from Big Local Oldham, some of which went towards their kits.

Then, in 2024, Zia (who runs the under-9s team) spotted the opportunity to apply for the [Poundland Foundation's Kits for Kids programme](#), to generate some extra funding for the squad. His bid was successful, and the team were awarded £750 for new kits.

PAY TO PLAY

Instead of – or as well as – external funding, you can charge for attendance. If you do decide to do this, it's good practice to be transparent about what the attendance fee pays for, as well as making it easy for people to pay in a way that works for them, whether that's cash, bank transfer, and/or offering an instalment option.

Many clubs have a blended approach to funding, allowing them to subsidise an attendance fee for players, to ensure being part of their community football team is accessible for people.



BUDGETING

Before you think about developing training sessions or inviting people to take part, you'll want to consider the expenses you are likely to incur.

Some things you may need to pay for or borrow, include:

- Training equipment (football, cone markers, bibs)
- Coaching
- Pitch access
- Kits
- Staffing
- Travel to away games



Having a rough idea of costs before looking for funding or advertising your club for people to join is a good way to manage financial expectations for attendees – and ensure you don't run out of money before you've even started. To start off with you could approach local organisations such as schools or leisure centres to see if they could lend you equipment initially.



(CREATING A SAFE, ENJOYABLE ENVIRONMENT TO PLAY

Now you've got an idea of who your club is for and how you might fund it, you'll want to think about putting together a team that can run it.

YES, COACH!

For many community football teams, things can start out quite informal. But to ensure you are providing players with a safe and valuable experience where they can develop their skills, it's a good idea to look for a qualified coach to run training sessions.

Having an FA qualified coach will bring multiple benefits and their foundation qualification is a great place to start.

FA Level 1 qualified coaches:

- have a foundational understanding of basic game formats and key rules
- run safe, structured training sessions where players can learn and build on their skills week on week
- have the correct first aid training
- have the required safeguarding certification.

When it comes to finding a coach, you could find someone who is already qualified. Clarksfield & Glodwick found their first coach by putting a call out on a local community Facebook page.



If there are people in your community who have an interest in becoming a coach, you could consider offering funding for the qualification. When the Woolavington Wanderers started, several people undertook the FA's Playmaker qualification for £60 each, helping them get training sessions started quickly and with the right safeguards in place. This can be a great opportunity to develop skills in your community and put people on a path of learning for the future.

DIY sessions

If you're keen to get started without a coach, or simply want to provide some informal training sessions to begin with (or between training), there are lots of helpful tools and guidance available online.

- [England Football Learning](#) has a library of resources where you can filter by skill and age.
- Social media channels such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram can be a great resource for user-generated content and creative ideas to run sessions.



Safeguarding

As well as ensuring you have a qualified coach to run safe, enjoyable sessions, you'll need to think about how you will ensure safeguarding procedures are in place for your club. Safeguarding ensures the health and wellbeing of individuals in your club is considered and protected.

The level of requirement for safeguarding will depend on the make-up of your teams. Safeguarding considerations for children, young people and vulnerable adults are particularly important.

You can find out about safeguarding requirements from [the FA](#).

KEEPING THE GAME SAFE AND ENJOYABLE FOR ALL

With eight teams made up of players ranging from age seven to fifteen, ensuring children are safe and happy is a number one priority at Clarksfield & Glodwick. As Zia explains:

“We have a designated Safeguarding Officer with whom we can raise any concerns, and as part of our FA affiliation as coaches we are required to undergo refresher safeguarding training and present our DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks on an annual basis.”

Whilst the FA ensures you have the correct measures in place to protect your players, your safeguarding policies and procedures will also depend on the nature of your facilities and environment as well.



SAFEGUARDING YOUR SPACE

The FA's guidance will help with general safeguarding procedures, but it may also be wise to implement more specific policies for your club. For example, the team at Woolavington Wanderers drew up a specific policy regarding their changing facilities to minimise the risk of members of the public entering the space. It's important to look at your spaces and environment and consider if they are safe and fit for purpose.

MAKING YOUR COMMUNITY FOOTBALL CLUB INCLUSIVE

In addition to general safeguarding, you'll want to consider how your club can be a safe space for people from different backgrounds and reflect your wider community.

Having general rules about positive conduct will help with this but you can take proactive steps to make sure people feel safe to be themselves regardless of gender, race, sexuality or any other protected characteristics. For advice and guidance, you can [visit the FA's inclusion web pages](#).

A PLACE TO PLAY

Having somewhere to play is essential. Many community football teams start off by practicing in their local park.



TOP TIP:

Find public green spaces in your local area by using [Fields in Trust's Parks and Green spaces finder >>](#)

If you opt to play on a purpose-built pitch, you'll need to book and pay for one. [The Football Foundation's Pitch Finder](#) is a useful tool which maps pitches and Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) across the country, with options to filter by facilities (changing rooms, etc) and size.

Having a proper pitch to play on is a good idea if you're thinking about joining a league and playing against other teams, even if your practice sessions are more informal.



GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED

Now you've decided who your team is for, how it will be run and funded, and where you'll play, it's time to get people involved!

As with promoting any opportunity, it's best to reach people on communication channels they're already on. If you're working with young people, you could reach out to local schools so they can let students know. Other places to promote your team include:

- **local community Facebook pages**
- **community magazines and newsletters**
- **word of mouth – talk to people and see if they're interested!**



What to share

As well as sharing the location of where you'll practice, you'll need to decide when you will train and play.

To make your decision, think about when your target group will be free. Lots of clubs for younger people will have one practice early evening on a weekday and then play in a league one day of the weekend. It's good to include information like this up front, alongside any costs, so people are aware of the commitments.



GETTING A TASTE FOR IT

At Clarksfield & Glodwick, potential new players are invited to come along for one or two taster sessions. This way, both the players and the team can see if it's a good fit and potential players don't feel like they must commit to something they don't know much about.

Getting your numbers up

Depending on the age of your players, there are different recommended team sizes.

For example, for younger players (below 13 years) teams tend not to be bigger than nine on each side. [The England Football website](#) has a run down of recommended team sizes by age for youth football.

You'll want to consider these sizes when putting together your team, and recruit more than the recommended number to allow for substitutions during games, as well as fluctuations in attendance week on week.



MAKING IT OFFICIAL



You've got your team, now who will you play against? Finding and joining a local league is the best way to ensure your team has regular fixtures.

To join a league near you, you'll need to become FA affiliated. Affiliation is the process referring to clubs registering with their County Football Association, allowing them to play affiliated football for the new season.

You can find out about the affiliation process on [the FA's website](#).

A LEAGUE OF YOUR OWN

Once you've affiliated, there may be a number of different leagues in your area that you are able to join, depending, for example, on the location, age and gender of your team.

Joining a league can enrich your community football club experience, allowing players to take part in competitive tournaments, visit new areas and meet other teams.



“When picking a league, you'll want to ensure any games you have to play are accessible for people. If you're expecting people to travel 50 miles on a weekend to play a game, then that might count out some of your players. You want to keep the game as inclusive as possible.”

Stuart, trustee of the Woolavington Wanderers

In 2024, Clarksfield & Glodwick's U14s team got to play their league final match in Salford Stadium. For many of the kids (and some parents) it was their first ever time in a stadium. It was a memorable experience for everyone, even before they won the East Manchester Junior League U14s cup!



Right: Clarksfield & Glodwick football team
Photo: Local Trust / Zia

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

To enter a league, you'll need a club name. Having an identity is also an important way to help your team unite. Here are some tips for coming up with a name for your club:

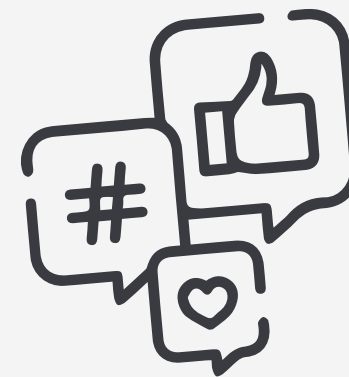
- **Consider what's important to your community:** Is there something notable or historic about where you'll play? An animal or figure that means something to your community? A local tale or legend that has made its way through the generations? Be inspired by your community's history and people.
- **Keep it local:** You can keep it simple and name your team after the place where you play.
- **Throw it in for suggestions:** Naming your team could be a great opportunity to get the players or your wider community involved. You could run a competition, or an online poll, to pick a name. Similarly for a logo or club crest, getting local people to design something can make people feel invested in your club.



HEADING ONLINE

With a name chosen and your team(s) playing in a league, you may want to consider setting up social media channels for your club. Having a social media presence can be helpful to:

- share news and information with your players
- celebrate successes and instill a sense of pride
- reach and recruit new players.



Remember! If you're sharing pictures of people online, you'll need consent from them to do so (or from their parents or guardians if they are children under 18). It's a good idea to include a consent form in the process of signing people up to the team and keeping it on file. The Child Protection Sport Unit has a [template you can use](#).



EXPANDING YOUR COMMUNITY FOOTBALL OFFER

Once your team is established and you've started playing in a league, it's time to think about aspirations for the future of your club.



TIME FOR MORE TEAMS?

For many community football clubs, having one team is just the starting point and expanding who your club is for can be a good next step. To help you grow your club, you can repeat some of the steps you took in the beginning, but also think about using your established team to reach new people and potential players. For example, you could:

- Ask existing players and their friends and families to spread the word that you're recruiting for new teams.
- Write to your local paper, sharing the successes and stories of your existing teams and noting that new players are welcome (if you can, include pictures to bring your story to life).
- Use your social media channels to promote taster sessions.

EXTRA TIME

With your club established, you'll probably find its benefits for your community reach far beyond the game. As a regular place for people to come together, you can utilise your club's community building capacity as well.

Lots of clubs organise extra-curricular activities, outside of weekly practice and games, to help build greater bonds in their team and the wider community. Some ideas for adding extra value at your club include:

- **Hosting award ceremonies:** Celebrating team and individual successes helps players and supporters feel invested and helps instil a sense of pride and community at your club.
- **Organising day trips and experiences:** Offering the opportunity of trips to larger football games is a great way to build relationships outside of the game itself. As well as offering this to team members, opening the opportunity to your wider community could also be a good way to raise funds for your club.



COMMUNITY FOOTBALL CHECKLIST

Quick steps to kicking off your community football club.

- ✓ Identify your age group(s)
- ✓ Research and identify funding
- ✓ Find a place to play
- ✓ Get qualified coaches on board
- ✓ Invite people to play
- ✓ Join a league
- ✓ Celebrate your successes!



Right: Clarksfield
& Glodwick football team
Photo: Local Trust / Zia





SPOTLIGHT ON: THE WOOLAVINGTON WANDERERS



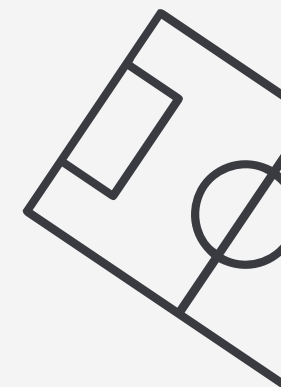
In 2023, a group of local dads in the village of Woolavington, Somerset, came up with the idea of starting a football club, to give local kids something to do.

Inspired by an unused pitch on the edge of their village, they approached the parish council with a proposal to use the pitch in return for helping with its maintenance. With the terms agreed, the group set about undertaking the FA's Playmaker training, so they could host training sessions and ensure the appropriate safeguarding was in place.

Once a date was set for the first session, word had got round, and without any formal promotion kids showed up to play – and kept doing so, with numbers growing week on week.

Initial sponsorship from Villages Together Big Local for the team's kit helped give them an identity. Their badge features an old mill, a nod to the windmills that used to stand at the top of the village. Their name is taken from the original local team, Woolavington United AFC, which was started in the late 1940s by a committee including the father of the parish council clerk.

A year later, the Woolavington Wanderers consisted of three youth teams, with plans to grow to four, and were playing in the Taunton District League. Meanwhile, local people had seen the impact, reflecting that the football club had helped to reduce anti-social behaviour. The community were also happy to see the pitch being used once more.



JUST THE BEGINNING

This action plan has been created to help you set up a community football team, with tips and advice from people who have already done it, to help you bring the benefits of community football team to your local area.



About Local Trust

Local Trust is a place-based funder supporting communities to transform and improve their lives and the places in which they live. We believe there is a need to put more power, resources, and decision-making into the hands of communities.

We do this by trusting local people. Our aims are to demonstrate the value of long term, unconditional, resident-led funding, and to draw on the learning from our work delivering the Big Local programme to promote a wider transformation in the way policy makers, funders and others engage with communities and place.

localtrust.org.uk

 @LocalTrust

About Big Local

Big Local is a resident-led funding programme, providing 150 areas in England with £1.15m each to spend across 10 to 15 years to create lasting change in their neighbourhoods. The programme is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

This community action plan was written by Jessie Powell.

Front cover image: Shadsworth with Whitebirk Big Local

Photo: Local Trust / Orrin Saint Pierre

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this licence, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>



Local Trust

Canopi | 82 Tanner St | London SE1 3GN | General enquiries 020 3588 0565
Registered in England and Wales | Charity number 1147511 | Company number 07833396

