COACHING AND PARTICIPATION

Introduction

Clubs provide opportunities for people to get involved in football. The number of participants that get involved and stay involved in a club is determined by many factors. To grow and maintain participation levels, clubs need to create an open, friendly and safe environment where players can reach their full potential.

An effective coaching philosophy in line with the FAI's Player Development Plan and delivered by certified coaches will shape the experience your players will have when playing for your club.

Coaching Philosophy

A coaching philosophy is a statement of the principles the club values and plans to implement through its coaching team. Implementing a philosophy should be a long-term project that covers how the club’s coaches will address player development and competition. The philosophy is a combination of the club’s player development values, approach and objectives. The FAI's Player Development Plan is fundamental when designing your club's coaching philosophy. A good philosophy will focus on player development and the enjoyment of the game.

A good coaching philosophy will do the following

1. Put players first.
2. Define coaching objectives.
3. Develop character and skills.
4. Set realistic and age appropriate goals.
5. Offer a challenging and supportive environment.
6. Create a team spirit.
7. Promote fair play & respect.

Player Development Plan

Player development is the core philosophy of the FAI's Player Development Plan. While understanding that children are naturally competitive, we need to focus on and understand the importance of player development versus winning at all costs. Winning at all costs inhibits player development. The result is secondary to the quality of play and the enjoyment of playing. It is essential that young players are free from the constant pressure of winning and are allowed freedom of expression on the pitch. As players get older, the process will become increasingly more team
oriented, with a greater onus on results.

The Player Development Plan is a player-focused model based on enjoyment and skill development. It includes restructuring the playing model for underage football (boys/girls), to a clear policy on the best age-specific formats of the game.

### Primary elements of the Player Development Plan include:

- Uniform pitch & goal size.
- Retreat Lines.
- Greater emphasis on respect & fair play.
- Minimum playing times.
- Age-specific team sizes.
- One size ball - four different weights.
- Roll off roll on substitutes.

For more information, please see the FAI Player Development Plan booklet.
www.fai.ie/domestic/player-development-plan/fai-player-development-plan

### Coach Education Pathway

The FAI offer a comprehensive coaching pathway to upskill and improve your club’s coaches. The FAI’s Coach Education Pathway 2017-2020 has been tailored to suit the needs of coaches whose ambitions are to work in different strands of the game. The pathway is based on the theory of reality based learning and is directly aligned with the FAI Player Development Plan. For more information on available courses please visit our coach education website (www.fai.ie/domestic/coach-education/latest) or contact the FAI Coach Education Department on (01) 8999500 or coached@fai.ie.
Participation Opportunities

A number of different opportunities exist to increase community engagement and participation rates in your club. The following list highlights some key areas in which your club can grow.

Club Nursery

Football is the global game and is very accessible and easy to start. While the FAI’s Player Development Plan begins with 4v4 games at the age of six, it is recommended that your club introduces a nursery for even younger kids to help them catch the bug. The higher the number of nursery participants at the club the greater the chance of maintaining strong participation numbers throughout the age groups.

Many clubs run a nursery on a Saturday morning for 4-6 year olds. The emphasis is on fun, enjoyment and learning the fundamentals of football.

Volunteer Recruitment Tip

Because parents stay around at this age, it is a great opportunity for clubs to recruit volunteers. Get the parents involved and get to know them and their backgrounds/expertise. Some future Child Welfare Officers or Secretaries could be found here.

Women’s / Girl’s Football

There are over 23,000 girls and women currently playing football in Ireland. A primary focus of the FAI’s Grassroots Unit is to develop the female game at club and league level.

If clubs are interested in introducing a girl’s section, then the FAI Soccer Sisters programme is a great tool to get them started. The Soccer Sisters programme has different strands; the Soccer Sister Easter Camp, the Soccer Sisters club programme, and the Soccer Sisters nursery academy helping clubs to target 5-8year olds.

For more information please visit www.fai.ie/domestic/fai-womens/latest or contact the FAI’s Women’s Department.
Email women@fai.ie or Tel: +353 1 8999501.

Football for All (FFA)

The FAI has a clear pathway to cater for players with various disabilities from club to country. The Football For All programme comprises of players from all groups and sporting bodies that cater for people with a disability who want to play football. There is a network of Football For All clubs through our existing community clubs across Ireland. These clubs provide opportunities for children with specific needs to develop as footballers and to join the club.

All clubs should encourage the inclusion of people with disabilities. However, due to limited numbers, not every club may have a football for all section. Each club can, however, be aware of other clubs in their area that offers footballing opportunities for people with disabilities. It is important that clubs signpost parents and members of their community to Football For All clubs.

For further information please visit www.fai.ie/domestic/football-for-all/football-for-all-programme, or contact the Football For All Department. Email: oisin.jordan@fai.ie, Tel: +353 1 8999 539.
Social Integration

The changing demographics in Ireland have given football a unique opportunity to support inclusion and reach out to new members of our community through the medium of football. This demographic change gives a chance for your club to potentially recruit more players, more volunteers, and more coaches.

The Intercultural Football Programme has a number of core participation programmes; these include among others school club link programmes, club open days/sessions, adult futsal programme/leagues and ‘volunteering in football’ information sessions. An important aspect of the programme’s work is to combat racism by working closely with clubs, leagues and affiliates at all levels of the game to ensure that football environments deal proactively with discrimination.

Clubs should also adopt a Club Equality Policy that ensures that the club takes a stand against inequality, racism and discrimination.

Please see Section 7, Appendix X for a sample equality policy.

For more information please contact Des Tomlinson Intercultural Football National Co-ordinator
Email: Des.Tomlinson@fai.ie Tel: +353 1 8999 571.

Schools

School-Club-Link

Clubs should strive to develop links with schools in their community. A good link with a local school promotes the club and encourages children from the school to join.

Creating a School-Club Link

1. Ask for a meeting with the school to discuss the benefits of a school-club link. This meeting can be used to build relationships and trust with the school. It is important to highlight the club’s standards through documents such as the club ethos statement, equality policy, club development plan, etc. Schools, in particular, will want to be assured that the club is reliable and child centred if they are planning to work together.

2. After the initial meeting, the club can ask the school to hand out flyers to the parents about the different teams they can join, times of training and who to contact.

3. If the club has the capacity, it can assist the school with running sports days and offer to deliver coaching sessions for a set period of weeks.

Beyond these initial introductions and promotions of the club within the school, clubs can also offer support to their local schools by helping to coach and organise school teams. This can encourage schools to get involved in local competitions and in doing so they grow the reach of your club and the game itself.

For assistance in creating a link with your local school, please visit www.faischools.ie/ or contact the FAI’s School Department.
Email: mark.scanlon@fai.ie Tel: +353 1 8999 326.
**Summer Soccer Schools**

The FAI Summer Soccer School programme has been running for over 20 years providing children between the ages of 6 and 14 the opportunity to attend a week-long football summer camp.

The benefits to your club as an official FAI Summer Soccer School are:

1. Generate much needed revenue for your club.
2. Full booking system and customer service team managed by FAI.
3. Support from FAI in marketing and promoting your camp using our Summer Soccer School brand.
4. Opportunity to recruit new young players for your club.
5. Increase your club engagement with local community, parents and players during the summer months.

To apply to host a Summer Soccer School or for more information, please visit: camps.fai.ie  Tel: +353 1 8999500   Email: sss@fai.ie

**FAI Club Mark**

Clubs operate in complex environment and overcome challenges every year to grow and develop. Well organised clubs with strong structures and strong volunteers are best placed to promote football. The Club Management Guide and the FAI Club Mark programme exist to support clubs with their governance, management and administration. The FAI Club Mark is an accreditation programme with two awards. The Entry Level Award and the One Star award.

The FAI Club Mark aims to;

- Identify minimum operating criteria for clubs.
- Provide clubs with a road map to best practice in club management.
- Provide support to clubs on their journey.
- Reward clubs that achieve high standards of club management.
- Improve links between clubs – Leagues – affiliates and the FAI.
- Assist clubs to operate effectively and improve the football experience in communities throughout Ireland.

With tailored supports and awards the FAI Club Mark initiative can help your club continuously improve in every area. For more information about the FAI Club Mark please visit www.fai.ie/domestic/fai-club-mark or contact the Club and League Department, Tel:+353 1 8999518   email vincent.foley@fai.ie.
DISCLAIMER

This guide has been provided as guidance material only and is not to be viewed as a required framework but rather a guidance document to assist clubs in the development of their policies and operating procedures. As this guide is a generic template, it cannot be considered specific to your organisation. It is, therefore, the responsibility of your organisation to adapt this document accordingly.

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