

Setting up a New Football Club



Welcome! We are excited you are looking to set up a new Club within our County.

Setting up and running a grassroots football Club takes a lot of hard work and dedication. It is important that effective structures and processes are in place to ensure that the responsibility of running the Club does not fall on one person and that the right mechanisms are in place to ensure its long-term sustainability.

This guide will take you through the key initial steps you will need to take to create a new football Club from scratch.

1. Contact the County FA to Confirm your Club Name

As a prospective member of the Berks & Bucks FA, you will need to contact us to confirm that you are allowed to use the proposed Club name. This is to ensure that you do not have a name which is too similar to an existing Club and could lead to confusion among other Clubs, Leagues and Referees. There are also certain terms which are formally defined by The FA (e.g. "Academy" and "Regional Talent Centre") which you are not permitted to use unless you can provide evidence you hold an FA License for such an organisation. It is recommended that you have several names in mind before you contact the County FA, and that the name is approved before the Club is officially formed.

2. Hold your First General Meeting

A General Meeting of all the intended members of your new Club should be called. Club Officers should be elected, together with other persons to form a management committee. The Club Constitution should also be approved at the first meeting. A Club Constitution is essential to ensuring that the Club is sustainable and has the appropriate mechanisms in place to respond to any governance issues which may come up. The Constitution should include provisions relating to membership, General Meetings of its members, the appointment and removal of officers (Management Committee), the financial management of the Club (including the annual auditing/verification of accounts), and provisions relating to dissolving the Club. The Constitution should also include a commitment to abide by The FA's Child Protection Policies, Codes of Conduct and Equality Policies. The County FA has the right to demand a copy of any Club's Constitution be provided at any time.

A copy of The FA's Standard Club Rules is included in this pack and can be used as a template.

3. Elect a Management Committee

One of the greatest risks to a grassroots Club is that there is one person responsible for all administrative and financial responsibilities. There are three key roles within a Club Management Committee, which must be declared to The FA at affiliation, and we recommend Clubs ensure there are at least two separate, unrelated individuals appointed across these three positions:

- **Chair**

The role of a chairperson is to oversee the running of the club/league and ensure that it is run efficiently and managed appropriately. They will lead club/league meetings and provide leadership in all areas such as club tournaments, etc.

- **Secretary**

The Secretary is one of the most important roles in a Club or League. They act as the main point of contact for the County FA, League and opposition team managers and perform the key internal administrative duties on behalf of the Club.

- **Treasurer**

The treasurer's role will be to ensure that the club stays financially sustainable, pay all expenses (including any invoices issued by the County FA or the League), and collect any monies owed to the club.

In addition to the three roles above, any Club which has Youth or Disability Teams must also appoint a Club Welfare Officer:

- **Club Welfare Officer**

The club welfare officer ensures that the club operates a safe, child friendly environment and promotes good practice in line with the club's Child Protection Policy.

Depending on the size of your Club, you may also wish to consider appointing individuals in to the following roles. There is no requirement to have these roles, however the more Club members that can be encouraged to get involved in volunteer roles, the stronger and more sustainable the Club will be.

- **Fixtures Secretary**

A fixtures secretary can be appointed to be in charge of organising pitches and referees for home games, and ensuring that the club's teams can play all of their games.

- **Age Group Coordinator**

If you have multiple teams operating within each age group, you may consider delegating internal administrative responsibilities for each age group (or a band of age groups) to an Age Group Coordinator. An Age Group Coordinator may take on administrative duties across several roles (for example collecting subscriptions, organising fixtures and so forth).

- **Team Secretary**

If you have sufficient volunteers, you may wish to consider appointing a Team Secretary to assist in match-day administrative work, such as coordinating players and volunteers, completing paperwork for the referee and League, and anything else that may arise which would otherwise distract the Coach/Manager from their responsibilities.

- **Player Registration Officer**

A large number of Leagues across the County require Clubs to register their players via the Whole Game System. Clubs can assign Team Secretaries or Age Group Coordinators as Player Registration Officers to assist with the administrative task of registering players with the Club and League.

4. Open a Bank Account

Your Club must open a Bank or Building Society Account in the Club's name. A record of all transactions must be kept by the Club, with the accounts being audited or verified on an annual basis. Financial arrangements should also be included in your Club Constitution, with a requirement that major expenses require at least two signatories. All income should be deposited directly in to the Club account.

5. Apply to join a Local League

There are over 30 Leagues sanctioned by the Berks & Bucks FA, catering to different age groups and abilities within their local area. Leagues are sanctioned by the County FA but operate as independent membership bodies, so you will need to apply directly to the League for membership. Depending on the league requirements you may need to meet with the league (either with their management committee or their full membership) to submit a verbal case for membership. Ultimately, it is the existing League members who will vote to accept a new Club to their League.

There are no restrictions of which Leagues Adult and Boys/Mixed Teams can enter, beyond the requirements of the specific League; however, please note that Girls Teams must request permission from their Parent County FA to play in a competition in another County. If you intend to enter a Girls Team into a competition under another County FA please contact Membership@Berks-BucksFA.com for the relevant application form.

Leagues hold their AGMs in May and June each year, so any application for membership will need to be made well in advance of this time. Please contact the specific League for more information on their membership process.

6. Put Together an Annual Budget

Operating a football Club can be expensive, as there are costs associated with annual membership of the County FA and League, weekly pitch hire and referee fees, and purchasing equipment or kits. This will allow you to determine how to generate income, for example through fundraising activities or player subscriptions. A sample budget is included in this pack as a template.

7. Affiliate to the County FA

Every summer, Clubs are required to affiliate to their County FA in order to play in FA-sanctioned competitions for the coming season. As a Club located within Berkshire or Buckinghamshire, you will affiliate to the Berks & Bucks FA. Please note this is separate and in addition to membership of a League.

The affiliation window dates vary slightly each year, however in general affiliation runs from late April/early May until the end of July. The County FA will still accept affiliations submitted after this date; however they will be liable to a Late Affiliation Fee, and we cannot guarantee entry to our County Cups. **Ultimately, you must be affiliated prior to participating in sanctioned football matches.**

We produce annual guides each season detailing specific requirements for affiliating to the County FA. As a minimum requirement all Clubs are required to provide details of what teams they will be entering in competitions that season, the coach and/or manager responsible for each team, their home grounds and if there are any changes to their key Club Officials. You will also need to provide evidence of appropriate coverage for both Public Liability insurance and Personal Accident insurance (see *Insurance* section below).

When your affiliation has been fully approved and completed, you will receive an affiliation number from the Berks & Bucks FA for the upcoming season. Once an affiliation application has been submitted to the County FA for review, it is locked for editing. Therefore if you wish to make any changes to the information provided, you will need to contact the County FA and request the records be updated.

8. Identify a Home Pitch

New Clubs will need to identify a home pitch as soon as possible. Most Local Authorities have pitches for hire, or you may find some larger local Clubs which own their own grounds will be willing to lease you their facilities. Your home pitch will need to be registered with the County FA and your League as your default home venue.

9. Purchase Insurance

Clubs must provide evidence that they have adequate insurance in place each season to protect both spectators and their players from accidents or injuries sustained through football participation. There are two types of mandatory insurance:

Public Liability Insurance –

Public Liability insurance covers accidents involving members of the public attending your events. This can be purchased from the County FA as part of the affiliation process or purchased separately with proof of coverage provided to the County FA. If you purchase the Public Liability insurance through the County FA, copies of the relevant coverage documents can be found on our website. If you elect to purchase Public Liability externally, it must provide coverage of at least £10m.

Personal Accident Insurance –

Personal Accident Insurance covers injuries to players, and has to be purchased separately by the Club, with a copy of the insurance sent to the County FA. Most providers offer various levels of coverage, so we are unable to include a standard package as part of affiliation. Your Personal Accident insurance certificate can either be uploaded as part of the affiliation application, or emailed to Membership@Berks-BucksFA.com.

10. Additional requirements for Youth/Disability Clubs

The FA and the Berks & Bucks FA are committed to keeping football a safe and enjoyable environment for young players and adults at risk. As such, there are various requirements for Youth and Disability Clubs to ensure that children and adults at risk are properly safeguarded.

Any Club which has youth or disability teams is required to have a Club Welfare Officer. The Club Welfare Officer is responsible for ensuring that the Club has adequate systems and procedures in place to safeguard young players/spectators and adults at risk, and is the first point of contact for any Safeguarding concerns. They must hold an FA-approved DBS issued within the past three years and have completed both the Safeguarding Children Workshop and Welfare Officer Workshop.

The Club Welfare Officer is also responsible for ensuring all youth team and disability team coaches also hold an FA-approved DBS issued within the past three years. To enable your Club Welfare Officer to carry out Criminal Record Checks on your club members, you need to have access to The FA's online DBS system. Please contact the FA CRC Team at fachecks@gbgplc.com for more information.

The length of time it may take for a DBS check to be processed can vary depending on the time of year. The majority of checks are renewed over the summer, which can cause delays in both the background check process and matching a completed DBS Check to an individual's FA record – and therefore in your affiliation application being approved. **We cannot stress enough how important it is that any DBS Checks expiring over the summer are submitted as early as possible.** If a DBS Check has been at "Stage 4" for over sixty days, the County can intervene and escalate the application; however we are not able to assist before this time.

Finally, all key Youth Club officials (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Welfare Officer) must complete an online Safeguarding for Committee Members course prior to the affiliation being approved. This course takes approximately 40 minutes and can be accessed [by clicking here](#).

New Club Checklist

The following checklist will help you ensure you have everything in place for your first season with the Berks & Bucks FA:

- ☐ Club name approved
- ☐ Club Constitution approved
- ☐ Key Officials appointed
- ☐ Club Bank Account Created
- ☐ League membership confirmed
- ☐ Club affiliation submitted and approved
- ☐ Personal Accident Insurance purchased
- ☐ Public Liability Insurance purchased (may be through County FA affiliation)
- ☐ Players Registered via Whole Game System (if required by League)

Youth/Disability Club Requirements –

- ☐ Club registered with GB Group to submit DBS applications
- ☐ Club Welfare Officer registered to verify DBS documents
- ☐ Youth Club Officials have relevant qualifications (see below)
- ☐ Girls team approved to play out-of-County

Youth Club Qualifications:

	Online Safeguarding for Committee Members	Safeguarding Children Workshop	Welfare Officer Workshop	DBS issued in last 3 years
Club Chair	☐	-	-	-
Club Secretary	☐	-	-	-
Club Treasurer	☐	-	-	-
Club Welfare Officer	☐	☐	☐	☐
Team Coaches/Managers	-	-	-	☐