TEAM GRASSROOTS

CLUB DEVELOPMENT SERIES / 01

Club setup check list

A practical route from your first idea to a safe, organised and sustainable club.

INFORM. SUPPORT. EQUIP.

Made for grassroots.

England edition | October 2026 | Version 2.0

START HERE / PRIORITIES AND PROGRESS

Your route to a new club

A new club needs a clear purpose, enough people to share the work and a realistic plan for its first season. This checklist develops the practical topics in TeamGrassroots' club setup article and updates the route for football in England.

First decision: could your team join an existing club? If that offers appropriate welfare, facilities and administration, it may be a more sustainable route. If starting independently, speak with the County FA before making commitments.

Stage	Priority	Evidence of readiness
Plan	Before spending or promising places	Local demand, viable venue, people and initial budget.
Organise	Before applications	Committee, constitution, bank arrangements and named leads.
Prepare	Before football activity	Safeguarding, suitable staff, first aid, insurance and venue controls.
Register	Before affiliated competition	Affiliation, league entry, player eligibility and registrations.
Launch	Before the first fixture	Communications, kit, emergency arrangements and final checks.
Review	During the first season	Player experience, finances, volunteer workload and renewals.

How to use the checklist

Assign every action to a person and record a deadline. Keep evidence securely. Use the action tracker for incomplete work. A safety-critical action must be completed before the activity it protects; a promotional task can wait.

Your County FA confirms governing-body requirements. The checklist also includes recommended club practices, such as budgeting and workload reviews, which are planning tools rather than an official affiliation checklist.

PRACTICAL CLUB SUPPORT

Start with a clear plan

Use this checklist at committee meetings. Record an owner, deadline and evidence for every action. A tick means the work is complete and checked, not simply discussed.

Club name / lead organiser / intended launch date

Scope: new grassroots clubs in England. Starting a team within an existing club may be simpler. Speak with local clubs and your County FA before deciding which route fits your community.

01 / Purpose and playing opportunities

☐ Define who the club will serve: ages, girls, boys, mixed, adult or disability football, and the local need.

☐ Agree your values and approach to enjoyment, inclusion, development and playing opportunities.

☐ Check demand, sustainable squad sizes and an appropriate playing format with the league and County FA.

☐ Confirm affordable, accessible training and match venues, availability and written booking terms.

02 / People and governance

☐ Recruit a chair, secretary and treasurer; identify welfare leadership appropriate to your teams.

☐ Adopt a constitution, record the founding meeting and agree who can vote and make decisions.

☐ Set role descriptions, deputy cover, conflicts-of-interest rules and a manageable committee meeting schedule.

PRACTICAL CLUB SUPPORT

Build the club foundations

03 / Finance and administration

☐ Prepare a start-up and season budget: facilities, affiliation, insurance, league entry, officials, kit, equipment, courses and contingency.

☐ Agree subscriptions, refunds, hardship support and how overdue payments are handled fairly.

☐ Open an account in the club name; arrange two-person approval for payments and monthly reconciliation.

☐ Record purchases, receipts, restricted grants and stock; avoid relying on one volunteer for financial oversight.

04 / County FA and competition

☐ Contact your County FA for the current new-club process; confirm name, officials, team information and role eligibility.

☐ Complete required training and role-appropriate checks; record renewal dates and eligibility confirmation.

☐ Confirm current public liability and team personal accident insurance requirements, cover dates, exclusions and any applicable exemptions; complete affiliation and retain confirmation.

☐ Apply to a suitable league separately; confirm entry, player registration, age eligibility, format and competition rules.

☐ Discuss England Football Accredited status and its criteria. Accreditation is separate from affiliation and league admission.

Evidence to retain: approved constitution, meeting minutes, budget, affiliation confirmation, insurance documents, venue agreements and a secure training/checks register.

2026-27 / VERIFY WITH YOUR COUNTY FA

Check the current season requirements

Affiliation, league membership and accreditation are different processes. Affiliation registers the club with its County FA; league admission and player registration follow their own requirements. England Football Accredited recognises club standards and development.

Youth football

Current FA affiliation guidance requires all youth managers and coaches to be named, to hold an in-date accepted FA DBS and to have completed Safeguarding Children learning. Confirm welfare officer requirements and required coaching and first-aid provision for each team. Retain secure evidence and renewal dates.

Adult and disability football

Adult clubs require a named adult-team welfare officer and relevant Player Welfare learning. Open-age teams with 16/17-year-olds have additional child safeguarding and DBS requirements. Adult disability teams require the appropriate welfare officer and Safeguarding Adults learning. Ask the County FA which rules and exemptions apply to your provision.

Insurance is more than a checkbox

Check public liability and team personal accident requirements for the season, plus whether planned training, matches, events and travel arrangements are covered. Discuss any gaps with the insurer. A policy does not replace risk management, and coverage must not be assumed from the club's affiliation status.

Keep a season compliance register: role and person; required course/check; accepted status; expiry or renewal date; person monitoring it; action required. Only authorised people should access sensitive check information. Use official systems where appropriate.

Source: FA affiliation requirements for 2026-27, checked 14 October 2026. Official guidance takes precedence if updated. See the reference page for the live link.

PRACTICAL CLUB SUPPORT

Make safety part of the setup

05 / Safeguarding and wellbeing

☐ Adopt the current FA safeguarding policies appropriate to children and adults at risk; publish welfare contacts.

☐ Use safer recruitment: role profile, application, references, interview and eligible FA DBS checks before relevant duties.

☐ Confirm qualified first-aid provision and emergency cover for each activity; check course validity requirements.

☐ Agree supervision, attendance, collection, changing facilities, transport and missing-child arrangements.

☐ Set approved communication channels with parents/carers; agree photography permissions and secure data access.

☐ Adopt codes of conduct, equality, complaints and disciplinary procedures; explain reporting routes to families.

06 / Facilities, equipment and emergencies

☐ Complete a venue/activity risk assessment, including access needs, shared-site users and safeguarding risks.

☐ Check pitch condition, goal anchoring and safe net fixings; follow manufacturer instructions and FA guidance.

☐ Prepare first-aid equipment, emergency access details and an emergency action plan; locate and check AED access.

☐ Agree weather and concussion procedures, incident recording and who can stop an unsafe session.

Safeguarding concerns must not wait for a committee meeting. Use the club welfare officer and County FA safeguarding route; bypass anyone implicated. If someone is in immediate danger, call 999.

PRACTICAL CLUB SUPPORT

Launch only when ready

☐ Confirm the correct kit, suitable equipment, safe storage and who maintains or replaces each item.

☐ Register players correctly; securely obtain emergency contacts and relevant health/support information.

☐ Brief families on fees, welfare contacts, behaviour, attendance, collection and playing-time expectations.

☐ Confirm coaches, first-aid cover, venue safety and emergency arrangements before the first activity.

☐ Plan a 30-day review: attendance, player enjoyment, volunteer workload, budget and outstanding actions.

Launch decision / committee record

Area	Evidence checked by	Ready / action needed
Affiliation, insurance and league entry	_____	_____
People, checks and training	_____	_____
Safeguarding and first aid	_____	_____
Venue, goals and emergency plan	_____	_____
Finance and player administration	_____	_____

Outstanding action / responsible person / deadline

Launch authorised by / date / next review

MAKE THE FIRST SEASON WORK

Fixtures, communication and early review

Before each fixture

☐ Confirm fixture status, venue, kick-off, officials and competition requirements with the relevant people.

☐ Check player registration, age eligibility, suspensions and any other competition restrictions. Ask the league or County FA if unsure.

☐ Arrange pitch access, kit, balls, safe goals and first-aid cover. Agree emergency and collection arrangements.

☐ Give families clear travel and timing information; check transport arrangements against club safeguarding procedures.

☐ Submit required results and match information through approved competition systems. Follow youth-result publication rules and photography permissions.

Build a club people understand

Introduce your officials and welfare contacts. Publish fees, behaviour standards, key policies and how to ask a question. Share positive club stories using approved imagery; make player and volunteer recruitment clear, inclusive and realistic.

Action tracker / copy for committee meetings

Action / evidence needed	Owner	Due	Status
_____ _____	_____	_____	_____
_____ _____	_____	_____	_____
_____ _____	_____	_____	_____

At your first review, ask: are players enjoying it, are costs manageable, are welfare arrangements working and is the workload fairly shared?

REFERENCE DESK

Use alongside current guidance

Checked 14 October 2026. Requirements can change. Confirm your club, team and competition requirements with your County FA before acting. For Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, use the relevant national association guidance.

TeamGrassroots - set up your own club
https://www.teamgrassroots.co.uk/setup-your-own-club/

Start a new club - Devon County FA
https://help.devonfa.com/support/solutions/articles/201000126187-how-do-i-start-a-new-club-

FA affiliation requirements 2026-27
https://grassrootsdiscipline.thefa.com/support/solutions/articles/48001235370-affiliation-requirements

England Football Accredited
https://www.englandfootball.com/participate/leagues-and-clubs/england-football-accreditation

FA safeguarding framework and policy templates
https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding

FA safer recruitment and DBS checks
https://thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/section-3-safer-recruitment-and-dbs-checks

FA goalpost safety
https://www.thefa.com/get-involved/goalpost-safety

TeamGrassroots helps grassroots football Inform. Support. Equip.
For news, club support, kit and equipment, visit teamgrassroots.co.uk.