



## **Football Pathway**

### **Policies & Best practice**

#### **Background**

Significant changes have been made in the development stages within youth football. Historically, the transition was straight forward and required 1 change from 7 aside to 11 aside. This has significantly changed as there are now 3 transitions, from 5 to 7, 7 to 9, and 9 to 11 aside.

What was a relatively straight forward process, with a certain degree of player movement now involves change taking place every 2 years (minimum) for a period of 6 years. The key aim of the new policies are to minimise or eradicate the number of unnecessary changes through the key development stages.

We have learned a lot of lessons from our 2016/17 Under 14s who were the first age group to go through the significant format changes. SUFC are therefore amending our policies to make the player development process easier and more enjoyable and minimising the impact of the numerous changes on our youngest players.

There is a degree of planning and education of coaches and managers required to understand that change is necessary and should be planned properly within a policy specifically for young footballers. Clarification, understanding and awareness of the significance of the process is key to making it as easy and as enjoyable for the children as possible. Understandably, there is a lack of awareness of the scale or impact the new format changes are having in the critical early development phase on a young footballer within our club.

It is now apparent that players will have to move regardless of streaming but this needs to be minimised and planned properly. Potentially new coaches may be required throughout the process as the number of teams expand through the format changes. It is clear that we need to communicate with our members in a more clear and consistent manner going forward in order to help with managing player, parents and coaches expectations. Awareness of this process is key to ensuring better buy in with the membership, managers, coaches and players.



## Development Pathway for young footballers at SUFC

Success comes from training and performing well over the long term rather than winning in the short term. The club expects all its members to enjoy working hard to improve and to take pleasure in recognising progress at both player and coaching level.

During both training and competition players should respect their team mates and opponents by playing to win, therefore doing the best they can. This should be done with good grace at all times.

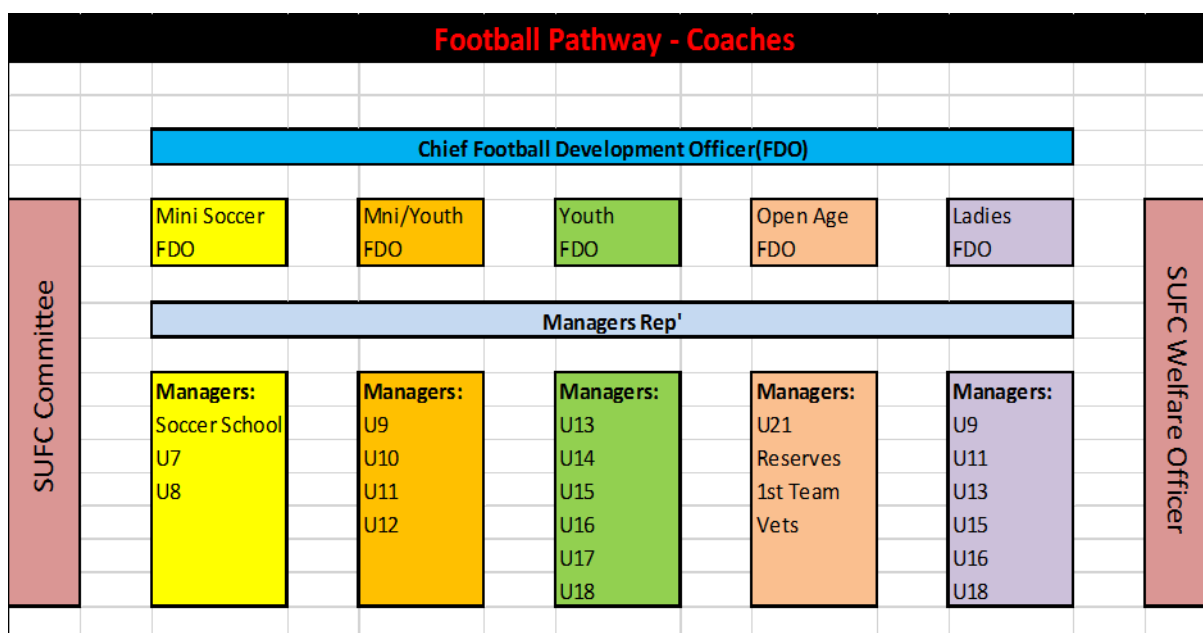
Players cannot always directly control who wins but they can determine how they play, train and how they interact with their team mates, opponents and the referee.

Playing to win does not mean that winning is the be-all and end-all.

Players should have fun taking part. If players are not enjoying themselves they are likely to give up on the sport.

## Player Pathway

- Soccer School
- Mini Soccer ( 5 & 7 aside)
- Youth Football ( 9 & 11 aside)
- Under 18
- Under 21
- Reserves
- 1<sup>st</sup> Team
- Vets
- Girls Section





### **Foundation stage - 5 aside to 7 aside**

The club is planning to reduce significantly the amount of streaming that takes place, particularly at the younger ages. During the early foundation stages (5 and 7 aside) coaches and managers will still have the opportunity to test their players in a more competitive manner occasionally by picking stronger and weaker teams, according to the opposition etc. This will be by exception rather than a rule.

Remember that the FA does not publish league tables during the early development years as the emphasis should be on fun and learning not the winning! In the second season of 7 aside squads and managers have the opportunity to put out more competitive teams through the Albert Steele cup and this should probably be the first opportunity for managers to assess their players in a more competitive environment.

***Policy: Foundation level (5 & 7 a-side teams to become Falcons, Harriers & Kites and leave the introduction of United & Eagles until first streaming at 9-aside)***

***Policy:*** Players will be allocated to teams based on friendship/school groups to the best of our ability.

***Policy:*** All coaches, parents and guardians will be asked to watch the Respect video as part of the introduction and membership of the club and at every format change or as deemed necessary.

***Policy:*** Managers will, in all probability, take the same squad through the 5 and 7 aside formats under the Sandbach United (team name) format. Maximum squad sizes will be imposed and adhered to as this has a significant bearing on the number of teams & coach required. More than 20 will require a new team at the 7 aside format change with coach and player recruitment required.

Any players wishing to join the club in excess of the maximum squad size will be deemed as train only until such a time that the FDO approves the membership or a vacancy becomes available. Managers have the right to make application for new players in excess of the squad size to the FDO.

***Policy:*** Managers can recruit up to **20 players only** with anymore players being defined as train only until such a time that coaches can be put in place to take on the new team.

***Best practice:*** Managers should take full ownership of their squads for the 4 years that they have them and recognise that their players are their responsibility and any new players arriving should not cause detriment to existing players. Managers should not assume that they can “move players on”.

***Policy:*** Players will be assessed on annual basis up to open age football to aid their development and assist the club in determining their future teams from U11 upwards.

***Policy:*** Streaming will not take place prior to U11 format.

***Best Practice:*** To forecast and review player numbers by age group on an annual basis to assist the process



**Policy:** All players should have equal game time (as practically as possible) regardless of how the result of the game is going or the ability of the player. The same players should never be substitute two games running. You should never leave all the weaker players off the pitch at the same time. Do not take the same player off at the same time in games despite how they are playing.

**Best Practice:** Every player must learn that they come off the pitch at some point in the game, never taking a young player off gives them the wrong message. No player is more important than the team or their team mates. All players are an equal part of the team. Don't be afraid to play players in different positions during a game and be consistent in how you make your substitutions. Teach players not to constantly ask to go back on. Teach them how your systems work and ensure it is fair to all players, don't be afraid to let all players play in goal at some point. Talk to the player coming off; give positive encouragement so they do not feel they have come off due to a poor display.

Avoid the temptation to sacrifice your substitution principles for the result of a game.

Age	Format	Pitch sizes (yds.)	Goals ( max size - feet)	Ball size	Maximum squad size
U7 - U8	5V5	30 x 20 - 40x30	Mini-soccer (12 x 6)	3	20
U9	7V7	50 x 30 - 60x40	Mini-soccer (12 x 6)	3	20
u10	7V7	50 x 30 - 60x40	Mini-soccer (12 x 6)	4	20
U11- U12	9V9	70 x 40- 80 x 50	9 v 9 goals ( 16 x7 - 21 x 7)	4	13
U13- U14	11V11	90 x 50 -100 x 60	9 v 9 goals ( 21 x 7 - 24 x 8)	4	15
U15 +	11V11	90 x 50 -100 x 70	Full size ( 24 x 8)	5	15



### **5-A Side – (18-20 player squads)**

**Falcons, Harriers & Kites structure with 3 differing teams each week. Overall player pool is 18-20 players with the optimum level being 18 (i.e. 5 players 1 sub)**

**Policy:** Its recognised that opposition managers occasionally elect to play stronger and weaker teams and as a club we recognise this is an acceptable part of the player & squad development however permanent teams within a squad is not acceptable

**Observation:** due to squad sizes and coach to player ratio, players now arrive with allocated time slots, previously arriving as 1 group

**Best practice:** Move to 3 coaches per squad to provide lower coach to player ratio at training during such key formative years. This aids the progression further down the line at 9 aside where more coaches are required.

**Best practice:** As and when the club can afford the investment the club will provide Level 2 or 3 coaches to coach in the first year whilst selecting appropriate coaches from the parent pool. As well as leading the coaching the senior coach will mentor and develop the manager & assistants in readiness to take the reins.

### **Move to 7 aside – (18-20 players)**

**Format change from 5 to 7 aside and remain as Sandbach United Falcons, Harriers & Kites.**

Minor period of change as Players move from 3 team structure to 2 team structure with each team now consisting of 7 players and 2/3 subs. Each Team now managing a 2 team structure with a squad of 18-20 players still.

**Observation:** Historically, an increase in player numbers at this stage has seen the introduction of a new squad, particularly as other teams in the locality reduce the number of teams they have.

**Observation:** First element of streaming taking place in the second year of 7 aside. U10 brings the first competitive tournament with the Albert Steele.

**Best practice:** Care needs to be taken if 'A' and 'B' teams are chosen for the **Albert Steele only**, to ensure a 'B' team is given full coaching support.



### **Move to 9 aside – 12-13 players**

Most significant change point of all as significant moves are required. As players move from the old squads to the new squads, new coaches are also required to manage the significant up-scaling of teams.

***Policy: Given that players are now playing competitive football and there is significant movement it's the right time to form United, Eagles, Falcons, Harriers & Kites.***

Squad reduction from 18-20 down to 12-13. Format will now require up to 5 teams and 10 coaches up from 3 or 4 teams and 6 coaches.

***Policy: First opportunity to stream given the ages of the players considering their physical, social, technical & psychological development. Social groups remain important but now the fact that competitive football starts to play a more significant part of the process***

***Policy: All coaches will undertake player assessments as part of the streaming process. Player assessments to be carried out and verified by FDO by reviewing, top, middle and bottom players within the squads to make sure process is consistent and fair. The FDO and his team will seek to calibrate the assessments from one team to another within an age group. Managers will be consulted in the process however the final say on squads will be determined by the age group FDO and FDO for the club.***

***Observation:*** The size of the change is so significant that the process needs to start early enough to understand which coaches will manage which teams and identify where the gaps are. Other age group coaches may be asked to assist in the process if required.

***Observation:*** Potential further recruitment of new players required to balance squads of up to 6 players or reduce the number of teams and therefore players if the decision is to go with a 4 or 5 team structure.

***Best practice:*** An element of forecasting should take place at the beginning of the season prior. Coaching parents (the majority) should be aware where their sons will fit and the obvious coaching gaps should be identified.

***Best practice:*** Player movements should be considered for 9 aside as well as 11 aside to avoid double movement of players where ever possible. Players have moved at 9 aside only to be moved back at 11s based on streaming, which can be avoided.

***Policy:*** All players should be allocated to the new teams first and then and only then should the coaches be allocated. Players will be allocated in the new structure based on the outcome of the assessment. We will place emphasis on ability as well as the balance of the overall team.

***Policy:*** Coach Allocation will probably cause some issues as there may be an imbalance of coaching resources based upon the allocation of the coaches' son. It maybe that there could be a situation whereby there is an excess of coaches in one team and a shortage in others. In this situation the FDO will need to interview coaches for certain roles whenever there is a surplus. The FDO will set specific criteria at the time but it will be based around experience; whether there has been a continued commitment to maintaining and developing their coaching qualifications as well as who may be best suited to take the team forward in the long term.



**Best practice:** In the situations where there is a shortage of coaches as a result of streaming then the FDO will work with the team either to appoint coaches from elsewhere in the club or train new coaches from within the parent group.

**Observation:** The practice of assessing players and forecasting player movements on a continued basis should minimise the need for short term actions/ decisions and therefore the resulting chaos.

### **Move to 11-a-side**

If squad sizes for 9-a-side were increased to 13 then the transition to 11-a-side would only require possibly 1 new player to be added per squad. Inevitably there are new players looking for clubs so this would give that flexibility without disrupting all the squads from the 9-a-side format.

**Best practice:** U13's onwards player movement should be far more infrequent and by exception. Teams should be given the opportunity to flourish with minimal changes any player movements should therefore be by agreement of the players, parents and coaches and be sanctioned by the FDO. The FDO will therefore have the opportunity to review the coaching structure in line with the player movement policy.

**Policy:** All coaches will undertake player assessments as part of the streaming process. Player assessments to be carried out and verified by FDO by reviewing, top, middle and bottom players within the squads to make sure process is consistent and fair. The FDO and his team will seek to calibrate the assessments from one team to another within an age group. Managers will be consulted in the process however the final say on squads will be determined by the age group FDO and FDO for the club.

**Policy:** The FDO has the right to review how the season has gone and make changes to the structure if it's in the best interest of the team.

**Policy:** Player movement (upwards or downwards) could impact the existing status quo and therefore trigger coach movement, this will therefore also be factored into the process.







## Coaches and their Qualifications

SUFC is a progressive club and understands that we need to ensure that we have the right coaches in place with suitable qualifications to take the club forward. Managers and coaches that follow the pathway set out by the club are more likely to succeed. We understand that our coaching structure is entirely voluntary however there needs to be in place mandatory qualifications for the protection of the children and we have now outlined more of the further requirements for our coaches throughout their time with the club. We envisage that the coaches that take more of the qualifications set out are most likely to provide a better player experience and therefore more likely to deliver success. Coaches that follow the pathways will be looked at favourably when and if there are vacancies within the club.

Age Group	No coaches	FA Level 1	SUFC disclosure	Emergency First Aid	Safe guarding certificate	FA licenced coaches club	Youth Module 1	Youth Module 2	FA Level 2
Soccer School	various	M	M	M	M	M	O	O	O
U7	3	M	M	M	M	M	O	O	O
U8	3	M	M	M	M	M	O	O	O
U9	3	M	M	M	M	M	P	O	O
U10	3	M	M	M	M	M	P	O	O
U11	3	M	M	M	M	M	P	P	O
U12	3	M	M	M	M	M	P	P	O
U13	3	M	M	M	M	M	M	P	O
U14	3	M	M	M	M	M	M	P	O
U15	3	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	O
U16	3	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	O
U17	3	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	O
U18	3	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	P
U21	3	M	M	M	M	M	O	O	P
VETS	NA	M	M	M	M	M	O	O	P
Reserves	various	M	M	M	M	M	O	O	M
First Team	various	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M

**M** = Mandatory

**P** = Preferred

**O** = Optional