

# Starting a junior

# section



**A guide for sports clubs on  
starting a junior section**

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Running Sport is a Sports Council initiative developed in partnership with the British Institute of Sports Administration, the British Olympic Association, the National Coaching Foundation, the National Sports Development Centres, the Sports Council for Wales, the Scottish Sports Council and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland. The programme is designed to improve the knowledge and skills of everybody working in sport, both voluntary and professional.

**A guide for sports clubs on starting a junior section**

## An introductory booklet in the Running Sport programme

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The Sports Council was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1972 and its main objectives are to increase participation in sport and physical recreation, to increase the quantity and quality of sports facilities, to raise the standards of performance and to provide information for and about sport.

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# Introduction

Sports clubs have a vital part to play in providing a range of sporting opportunities for young people. Many clubs already have a wealth of experience of coaching young people and running youth teams. They have coaches experienced in working with young people, suitable playing opportunities, coaching and practice facilities, together with administrative and organisational support. Many clubs are now concerned with not only attracting young people who are already competent performers, but with also introducing their sport to beginners and providing the first opportunity to participate and play with others.

There are a range of agencies who will be able to provide support to clubs wishing to develop a junior section; these include local authority departments and the governing bodies of sport, as well as schools, youth clubs, sports centres and other local agencies who come into regular contact with young people.

This booklet sets out to provide guidance to sports clubs which are thinking of starting a junior section or to those who are reviewing their current work and want to extend their work with young people.

Every sports club is different. In reading this booklet you will need to relate the information to the specific circumstances of your club, the organisation of your sport, the needs of the local community, and above all, the sporting interests of young people.

# Why a junior section?

What's in it for your club? You may have already made up your own mind that running a junior section would be a good idea. However, you may

have to convince others.

Running a junior section will bring a number of benefits:

- a regular supply of new players that will ensure a healthy future;
- increased membership, including the opportunity for parents and families to become non-playing members;
- many of these non-playing members may have sporting or organisational skills that will help your club;
- an increased public profile and interest in your club;
- opportunities to generate additional income;
- enhanced likelihood of grant aid;
- better access to local authority facilities and services, or to school facilities;
- the continued local development of your sport;
- an opportunity to contribute to the broader life of your local community.

**Young people are the future of your sport; they are the future of your club!**

# Are you ready?

You may be full of enthusiasm and ready to get started; you may be interested, but a little apprehensive. In either case you will need to consider

carefully the implications of starting a junior section, for example:

- how this will affect others in your club;
- the responsibilities of providing for young people;
- why young people want to take part in sport.

Starting a junior section will make demands upon the resources of your club. It will demand time, energy and enthusiasm. You will require suitably qualified and experienced coaches and facilities for practice and competitions. The organisation of a junior programme will require administrative support as well as a nominated person responsible for communication and liaison with schools and within your club.

Providing for young people brings certain responsibilities; they will be in your care and need looking after at all times. Although many parents will be supportive, some young people will be very reliant upon others, especially for transport. You will need to provide a welcoming, supportive and safe environment which has their interests first. It is important to remember that some youngsters may have special needs.

Sports clubs can play a vital part in helping young people to develop positive attitudes towards fair play and show respect for the many others involved in the local sporting community, including opponents and officials.

It is important that everyone involved understands that young people take part in sport for a variety of reasons, which may change from time to time. Many young people want to improve their sporting skills, perform well and reach the top. Others will be happy just taking part. Sport should offer the chance for young people of all abilities, to participate and develop their potential to the full. Some will have parental encouragement to take part and do well and some may not. It is for those who do not that clubs have a particularly important role to play.

**But, most important of all, young people will want to have fun – they want to enjoy sport!**

# Getting started

If you have made the decision to go ahead, the next step is to assess your current position and think about the particular circumstances of your own club.

Ask yourself – where are you now ?

A number of options may present themselves to you; from setting up a junior section from scratch to extending the scope of your existing work with young people. Your plans will clearly be influenced by your potential contacts with young people, the facilities and resources at your disposal. What resources and experience does your club have? These can include:

- a junior club co-ordinator/youth liaison officer;
- affiliation to the governing body of your sport;
- suitably qualified and experienced coaches;
- links with local schools, both primary and secondary;
- agreement and enthusiasm from senior club committees;
- appropriate equipment, playing and practice facilities;
- provision for male and female members;
- administrative and organisational support;
- links with local partners ( eg local authorities ) – essential for expansion.

Are you clear about exactly what it is you want to do? These are some of the options:

- run a single junior team;
- develop a junior section across different age ranges;
- work with young people of all abilities, introducing the sport to beginners;
- encourage competent performers from local schools to your club;
- set up a school of excellence;
- will the junior section cater for both boys and girls, or one or the other? Why?

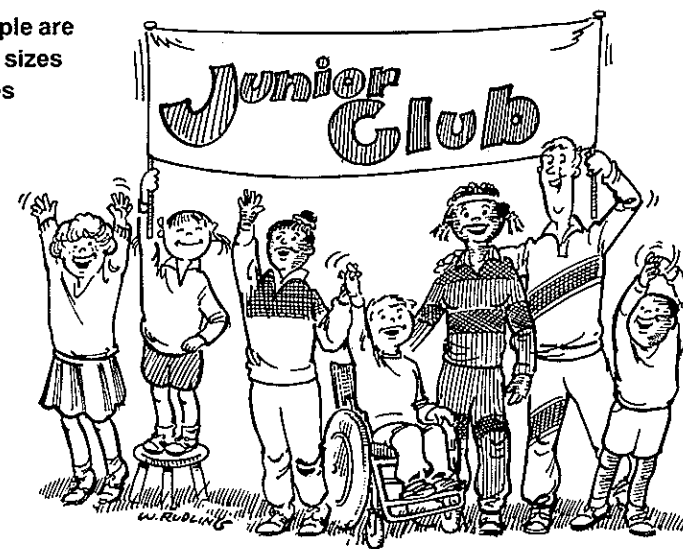
# Action planning

Once you have found out what is going on around you, it will be time to focus upon your own plans. A simple written action plan will provide you with the nuts and bolts of what to do, how you will do it, who will do it and by when. It does not need to be complicated, as the example below shows, but it should be shared by all concerned in the club, and it should include:

- a brief statement about why you intend to run a junior section (the why);
- some simple aims and objectives (the what);
- some methods to achieve these objectives (the how);
- responsibility for action (the who, including outside support);
- a target time for achieving the action (the when).

There will be organisational and resource implications as a result of your action planning. These should be made clear and included in the overall planning process.

Young people are all shapes, sizes and abilities



## Examples of action planning at work

Objective	Method	Responsibility	Target time	Resources
to run a junior team and enter the County under 14 league	contact with sec. schools, trials and practices	John (schools links) Ruth (coach) Main club (facility)	Oct this season	kit and equipment transport
to set up a junior section for young people aged 12-18	contact with schools governing body and publicity	John (schools links) Marie (publicity and liaison) Jane (coaching)	Mar next year	equipment facilities publicity
to run an annual primary schools festival	contact primary schools organise festival	John (schools links) Main club (facility)	May next year	facility prizes
to organise a league competition for local secondary schools	contact sec. schools governing body provide admin/officials	John (schools links) Mike (liaison) Sally (officials)	start Oct end Mar	administration prizes officials
to recruit and train three coaches to work with young people	gov. body and NCF course attendance work alongside coaches	Jane (coach) Roger (coach)	start Sept	scholarship fees
to provide two new coaching courses for juniors 11-4	provide courses in local sports centres	Jane (coaching) Sandra and Bob (local centres)	start Feb	facility hire coaches fees equipment

Throughout this process, it is critical that everyone is kept informed of development and progress. The senior section and those partners involved outside the club must all be kept fully in the picture at all times if conflicts of interest, uncertainty and apprehension are to be avoided.

# Responsibilities and roles

## Responsibilities

Providing for young people is a challenge in itself and brings with

it a number of responsibilities. Some of these relate to the Children's Act, concerning a 'duty of care', insurance issues and safe practice. Others may involve procedures for travelling or supervision. Your governing body will be able to advise on appropriate practice for your sport, but you may need to seek advice from local agencies as well, including those working with people with disabilities.

Your club will also have a responsibility to ensure that its work with young people is guided by a clear ethical framework, values and codes of conduct. These may focus upon attitudes towards fair play, appropriate coaching techniques and care and respect for the young people themselves and their fellow players and opponents.

## Fairplay



## Roles

To put your plans into action, a number of key roles and functions must be allocated that are vital to the success of your work with young people. How they are organised will depend upon the number of willing helpers you have. Responsibilities may be added to those of existing officials, merged or shared, but it is important not to give too much responsibility to a single person and to ensure that all the different aspects of this work are co-ordinated.

The key functions are:

- co-ordination of all the junior development activity in the club;
- coach and leader recruitment and education/training;
- coaching young people;
- competitions, administration and finance;
- liaison with the senior club;
- liaison with outside agencies and in particular with schools and the governing body of your sport.

## The junior co-ordinator

If your club is fortunate enough to have a person with sufficient time, being able to identify a junior co-ordinator will be a major step forward to ensuring that all aspects of your work with young people is planned, cohesive and co-ordinated. Such a person will need the confidence and support of everyone in the club including coaches, administrators and the senior club.

The junior co-ordinator's role is:

- overall responsibility for junior development;
- identifying the action to be taken;
- co-ordinating the action plan (no-one can do it all);
- liaison with other agencies, for example, schools, local authority, the governing body of your sport;
- supporting coaches;
- co-ordinating delivery, for example, coaching, competitions;
- monitoring and reporting on progress.

Junior club co-ordinator  
(does such a miracle  
worker exist?)



As well as being in a position to take a leading role within the club, the junior co-ordinator will also need the support of others in the club and could be helped by a small junior club committee.

## Agreement from your own club

The senior section of your club will be able to play an important part in making this happen. To support your work and that of the junior co-ordinator, they could agree to:

- a youth policy that has the agreement of the club members;
- the inclusion and integration of young people, not just on the playing side, but in all other aspects of club life, such as officiating, coaching and administration;
- access to club facilities for juniors, including social facilities (subject of course to licensing regulations);
- subscription, membership and incentive schemes for juniors that encourage sustained involvement and promote easy access to your club and, as they grow up, transition to the senior section;
- additional resources and support to help you on your way.

# Working with young people

## Attracting them to your club

Posters and information leaflets are helpful but they must include practical details such as home venue, meeting place, training and competition times, cost of taking part and, most important of all, a name, address and telephone number of whom to contact. You may have a display board or video of your activities to loan to schools. However, such information is only a part of attracting young people to your club. The most successful and effective ways of working involve bringing young people and the club together. This can be done by:

- giving a demonstration or exhibition of your sport during a local festival or carnival;
- visiting schools and organising club-led activity sessions after school;
- arranging a visit to the club for a school or group of schools during an open day or 'come and try' it event;
- organising or sponsoring a schools or youth competition or festival at your club;
- going into schools and youth clubs to work alongside teachers and leaders as part of the curriculum;
- inviting teachers, leaders and parents to the club for an open evening to discuss your plans.

## Getting them there

These are some of the questions that young people ask about joining a sports club. They need to know:

- what time they need to arrive, how to find their way;
- what to wear, what to take;
- where things are or who to speak to;
- how much they will have to pay and how to use the facilities;

- that they will be meeting new coaches;
- that they will be mixing with other young people;
- that they are good enough for your club, or that you will help them to reach that standard (clear selection criteria need to be available);
- what time they will finish.

## What to do when they arrive

The welcome to the club, the first experience, is one of the most important times for you, but for the young people involved it is vital.

They should be able to find:

- a warm welcome;
- someone who will tell them what to do and show them where things are;
- someone who will talk to them and their parents;
- someone who will look after them.

You will need the right people with the right attitudes to take care of young people.

## Welcoming young people (overcoming nervousness)



# Recruiting and training coaches

## Recruitment

Finding new coaches is always difficult and clubs have traditionally recruited from ex-players or have used PE teachers, many of whom leave college with governing body awards as well as experience of working with young people.

Many of those who undertake the demanding duties of coaching children do so because they have children of their own, wish to remain involved in sport or simply to help other hard-pressed organisers. Many youth sports sessions and competitions are well attended by parents and it is here that there is most potential for recruiting new coaches. Their sports experience may be limited but their commitment and responsibility are great!

Young people may also be a valuable source of leaders and coaches. Many governing bodies have developed leadership and coaching qualifications that are suitable for young people who, although not yet able to be responsible for groups themselves, may be able to provide valuable assistance to more senior and experienced coaches. The club may also have access to leaders trained through a Community Sports Leaders Award. This could be the start of a coaching career that would be of great benefit to the club.

## Training and educating coaches

The most valuable experience for those taking their first steps in coaching is for them to work alongside a more experienced and qualified coach who is familiar with all aspects of working with young people.

Where a club has coaches that are willing to help in this way, introductory sessions can be run by the club which might include safety aspects, basic organisational principles, simple activities and practices and elements of skill development and tactical play.

In addition to this 'hands on' experience, there are a range of courses and materials for the coach wishing to develop skills in working with young people:

- your governing body of sport will have its own coach education programme;
- the National Coaching Foundation has a range of resources, study packs and courses for coaches working with young people;
- developments in National Vocational Qualifications in sport and teaching recognise the specific skills and competencies required by coaches who work with young people.

The future aspirations and participation of young people depend upon the success and enjoyment that they get when they first start your sport. It is important that coaches and leaders are conscious of their own aspirations and goals for coaching and have some understanding of children as well as sport.

Children are not mini-adults and you should not assume that procedures suitable for coaching adults are necessarily appropriate for coaching children. Knowledge of the developmental needs of young people is fundamental to understanding their behaviour and providing a sound basis for teaching and coaching practice.

# Working with teachers

Developing links with local schools will be a key feature of your work and certainly critical to your success in attracting young people to your club. But there are other ways of working with teachers and they will probably wish to develop further such links. Your junior co-ordinator could develop links with specific teachers in local schools who are known to be interested in your sport, or who have been given a specific responsibility to liaise with the local sporting community.

Your club may be able to help by providing expertise and information about your sport which will enable teachers to include your sport within the school programme, even to the extent of inviting teachers on to your coach education and officiating courses.

Some club members may be available to work alongside teachers and parents to help in setting up school sports clubs or provide additional coaching. You may have specific technical and coaching expertise which teachers are unable to offer.

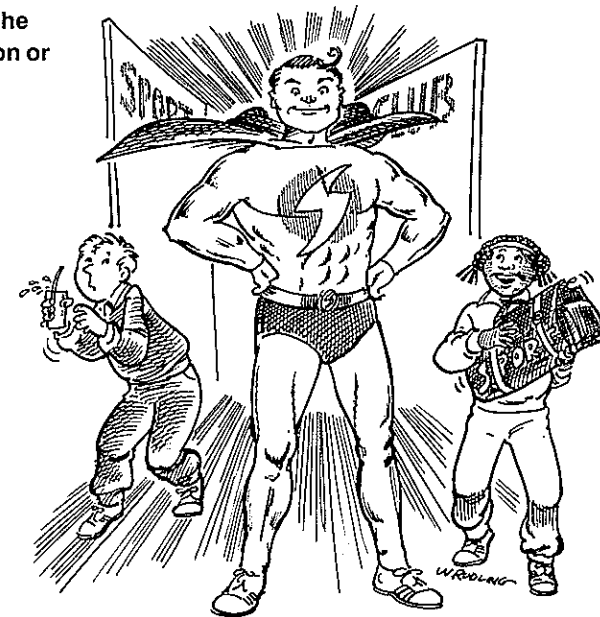
# Who can help?

## Your governing body of sport

Your own governing body of sport will be in a position to offer support, advice and guidance on setting up a junior section and working with young people. This is provided at a national, regional and local level. Amongst the support available you may well find:

- youth development plans and the advice and guidance of Sports Development Officers;
- a range of publications for your club to use in its work with young people;
- adapted and mini versions of your sport that meet the needs of young people at different stages of development;
- various awards, skills courses and membership schemes;
- a wide choice of competitive events;
- appropriate coach education.

The impact on the club (an invasion or a take-over)



### Who else can help?

There are many others who will be in a position to support your efforts:

- Your local authority may have special schemes to help clubs who run junior sections, including rate relief on facilities and concessionary schemes, as well as grant aid for travel and bursaries for coaches. Many local authorities have Sports Development Officers or Youth Sport Managers with a specific remit to develop sport for young people.
- A similar role is often undertaken by local development groups such as Sports Advisory Councils or Youth Sport Action Groups. These may also know of other grant aid organisations such as the many charitable trusts and foundations that support youth sport.
- Sports facility managers may also have concessionary rates for clubs with junior sections, space for additional coaching or 'come and try it' sessions, as well as including your sport in holiday programmes.
- Other clubs from your own sport or local clubs from other sports which have started junior sections will also be willing to share their expertise and experiences.
- Youth organisations such as local youth clubs or the Scouts and Guides may also be a fertile ground for recruiting new members or organising new activities.

# Thinking long term

Although your action planning will indicate the way in which you hope your junior section will develop, sometimes hiccups may occur. A number of situations may arise which may cause a few problems and will need some thought.

### Young people come and go

For a variety of reasons, junior membership is subject to fluctuation and changes of interest. Many young people, even those who have made considerable progress, want to try different sports and may change their allegiance. Others may need to devote time to the demands of school work or a part-time job. Leaving school and going into work is a major life change and an increasing number of young people are entering higher education.


These situations might be interpreted as a loss of investment and a waste of scarce resources, but many of your young players will carry on playing elsewhere. At the same time, your club will also need to keep an open mind about recruiting other young people who move into your local community or who want to take up your sport having left another behind.

### Additional support for your club

As your club continues to develop its work, additional demands will be made upon your scarce resources. As junior club membership, frequency of practice and competitions increase, so will the need for additional administration, coaching, playing facilities and resources. With an increase in playing standards, coaches may need to extend their own experience and education through appropriate training.

### Victims of your own success

This expansion, although very welcome, may also result in some headaches with possible pressures on your own playing, social and changing facilities. If you make regular use of local authority sports centres or pitches, you may be competing with other sports for facility use.



With success and an increase in playing standards, your younger players may be selected for representative honours in local, county and regional squads with additional demands upon their time. As a result they may be unavailable for club activity and, in some cases, encouraged to join clubs offering a higher standard of competition and play. If they remain with your club, the increased needs of those young people playing at the highest level will also make demands upon the valuable resources of your club. Don't be disappointed if these things happen – be proud that you have enabled them to reach a level of excellence in your sport.

### Planning for the future

You will find that, over a period of time, membership of your club will change and fluctuate. As young people get older and move on, you will need to look at ensuring a constant influx of new members. At the same time, if some of your coaches are parents, they also may move on when their own children leave. Think ahead and plan for these eventualities.

## Getting it right

After a period of time, you will want to take stock of your new work with young people. But how will you know if you are getting it right? The following gives some indication of the questions you might ask and the indicators that could be used to measure your success.

### Increasing activity

The first way to judge your success is to look at some obvious measure that will indicate an increase in activity at your club, such as:

- increased youth membership;
- an increase in the number of junior team players;
- an increase in coaching activity;
- additional involvement in competitions and fixtures;

- junior players successfully integrated into the senior club;
- an increase in the proportion of coaches qualified to work with young people.

### Higher standards

The second set of questions should relate to an increase in standards in your club. These should consider:

- the success of junior teams in competitions;
- the proportion of junior club members gaining representative honours at a local, regional or national level;
- the proportion of coaches progressing through recognised coach education schemes designed for young people;
- evidence of improved attitudes to fair play regarding rules, regulations, officials and opponents.

Publicly your club may well be judged, not only on its standard of play and successes, but also on the attitude of its young members to themselves, their opponents, the sport and your club.

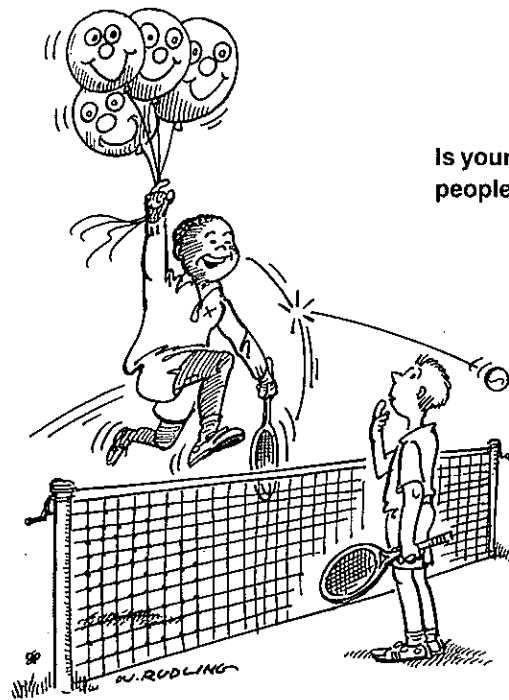
### Is your club 'young people friendly?'

The final way in which you can measure the success of your work is to ask the young people themselves – after all the programme is for them! You might ask them: "is your sports club young people friendly?"; "are juniors made welcome at the club?"

This list will help you to decide how much progress you have made.

At your club can your junior members:

- get a warm welcome?
- change in the warm and shelter from the rain?
- find an adult who understands them and to whom they can talk?
- have the proper equipment available and accessible?
- have someone to look after them if they are injured?
- buy a drink and chat with friends?



Is your club 'young people friendly?'

- watch a video or look at other visual aids?
- have somewhere convenient for their parents to wait?
- have a place to wait if their lift is late?
- get home easily and safely by public transport?

### How long will it take?

The programmes outlined provide no easy solutions and your work in establishing a junior section will take time. Be prepared to develop your ideas over an extended period of time with an annual review built into the process. The lessons learned, the views of your club and its partners, together with your successes will help you to adjust and shape your plans for the next stage.

Working with young people can be challenging, rewarding and great fun. Although this booklet will have set you thinking, it is now up to you to go for it!

# Running sport

This is one of a series of introductory level advisory booklets published as part of the Running Sport programme. Booklets in the series include:

- Running meetings – The role of the chairperson
- Running a club – The role of the secretary
- Getting things done – Recruiting and training volunteers
- Raising money – Marketing and fund-raising
- Looking after the money – Guidelines for treasurers
- Making a match – Organising sports teams and competitions
- Getting it right – Sports ethics, discipline and appeals
- Making your point – Presenting your views
- Managing the risks – Insurance guidelines for sports organisers, sportsmen and sportswomen
- Taxation and sport – a general guide for sports organisations

If you found this booklet useful and would like to learn more then you should consider attending a Running Sport short training course in your area. Courses are available, or are being developed, in the following subjects:

- Personal effectiveness
- Time management
- Leadership and delegation
- Motivation and team building
- Balancing the books
- Managing the money
- Effective networking
- Smart marketing
- Finding the funds

For further information or additional booklets, please contact:  
The Sports Council, 16 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0QP. Tel 0171-388 1277