

Small Sided Football

The growth in Small Sided Football has been a quiet revolution. With 4.6 million players, The FA is committed to supporting this vibrant format of the game.

The FA's Small Sided Football (SSF) programme seeks to support the significant growth of 5-, 6- and 7-a-side football in recent years. The FA's 2004 Football Trends survey revealed that 2.6 million people play SSF in the course of a year, with 2 million playing regular league or cup football.

The scale of this growth can be put down to changing work and leisure patterns, easy access to local facilities and a 'Pay and Play' approach that is welcomed by many players. These changes are long-term shifts in the way in which people choose to play football, and for this reason The FA and County FAs are taking increased notice of Small Sided Football.

The view has been put forward that this growth has been at the expense of traditional 11-a-side football. The FA's research does not support this theory – rather SSF affords many players the chance to train during the week and play at weekends. It also offers many people the chance to continue playing long after they are ready to leave the 11-a-side game.

The FA has revised and improved its affiliation and discipline processes and The FA Laws of the Small Sided Game so that they better reflect the way in which SSF is played and organised. 2005 saw the introduction of a new Small-Sided Referees' Qualification, a course designed to provide additional referees in response to the growth of Small Sided Football.

The FA has also launched its kite mark scheme for Small Sided Football, a two-level scheme available to SSF centres and competition organisers aimed at highlighting and extending high quality provision. As a consequence, players will have a clearer indication as to where they can expect a safe and enjoyable experience of affiliated football.

Futsal

One of the most exciting areas of the SSF programme is the growth of Futsal, a format played extensively throughout the world and recognised and supported by UEFA and FIFA. Essentially 5-a-side with a few twists, Futsal offers elite competition, with UEFA Club competitions and World and European Championships available to those players and clubs with the ability and ambition to progress.

To support the growth of the game, The FA initiated the FA Futsal Cup. In 2007, teams from 40 local leagues will compete for the 16 qualification places, the title of National Champions and a place in the 2007 UEFA Futsal Cup. This year will also see the introduction of a senior women's competition. As part of The FA's Education Programme, schools have the opportunity to experience Futsal and access free equipment. An Introduction to Futsal Coaching Course was introduced in 2005 and is proving to be popular introduction to this fast and skilful game.