

BRADFORD TOWN YOUTH FC STREAMING POLICY

RATIFIED: SEPTEMBER 2024
REVIEW: SEPTEMBER 2026



MISSION

To provide the youth of Bradford on Avon and surrounding areas with the opportunity to develop through playing football in a fun, safe, inclusive and respectful environment.

DEVELOPMENT

Coaches place player development above a culture of 'winning at all costs'.

Coaches and players are positive, friendly and supportive to all players of all abilities.

Players are encouraged to develop their skills and improve over time.



FUN



Coaches should inspire their players to:

- take an active part in the sport
- form relationships with teammates and work together as a team
- have a commitment to living a healthier lifestyle
- be positive about themselves and others
- strive to get better over time across the 4 corners; technical, psychological, physical and social
- appreciate and demonstrate good sportsmanship
- understand the laws of the game

We celebrate the achievements and progress of all players for the whole season.

SAFE



We are an FA Charter Standard club achieving this status for over 10 years in a row.

Our coaches are all volunteers, as a minimum, they are FA Level 1, CRC checked and required to maintain up to date First Aid and Safeguarding Children certificates. Coaches are encouraged to continue their development.

The decisions of coaches are respected and understood by parents and players.

We are affiliated to the Wiltshire FA.

The facilities we use are appropriate and fit for purpose and all equipment is maintained to the highest standard.

INCLUSIVE



We welcome all players regardless of:

- gender
- culture
- language
- racial origin
- religious beliefs
- sexual orientation
- disability

Players are able to participate in football whatever their ability.

Every player matters to their team and to BTYFC, they are listened to and valued.

Players, coaches, parents and supporters are encouraged to take on key roles and responsibilities within the club and support a sense of identity and community across the club.

Introduction

Streaming can be one of the more contentious activities undertaken at a grass roots football club. This document explains **why, what, when & how** we stream – offering guidance and support to coaches (and parents/carers) throughout the club – and has been created by BTYFC coaches, in conjunction with Wiltshire FA.

Our guidelines will help us ensure consistency and fairness in how we stream players, providing football for all, and are underpinned by the principles of review and flexibility.

Why do we stream?

- It is the responsibility of the football club to ensure all our players are offered the best chance of development.
- We take on the responsibility to coach our players with development at the forefront, and to measure success on player improvement and personal development rather than winning matches or trophies.
- If teams are streamed correctly, players are allowed to develop with teammates of similar ability, and results will generally look after themselves.
- Streaming should not be seen as disruptive, but as a positive move for the club and most importantly the players.
- Streaming is for the benefit of the players – not the parents/carers or coaches.

What are the benefits of streaming?

Some of the key things to consider when streaming:

The right level of challenge - playing with and against players of a similar ability level, and mentality to you, allows you to improve in a way that you won't if you're either way out of your depth or waltzing through every game scoring 6 goals a match. This also helps to keep players in the club.

Equal game time – even if your philosophy is/was that you rotated fairly, the reality is that a lot of the ‘weaker’ players may well have found themselves subbed off more than the stronger ones. Much easier for a coach, especially once football becomes competitive, to stick to equal game time if the players are all of a reasonably similar level and the team is playing at the right level.

Confidence - playing with and against similar ability players means the child who struggled to get in the game when they were one of the ‘weaker’ players in their previous team will find themselves contributing far more, which can do wonderful things for their confidence.

Making new friends - for long-term social development, being used to making new friends rather than staying in their ‘safe’ group of friends can be a great skill to acquire. When the children move to secondary school, having a wider group of friends through having played football with lots of different people is a huge advantage in terms of settling in.

Possible problems caused by not streaming

If you don't stream as an age group, you may have the following potential issues:

- Stronger players aren't challenged by playing against players of a similar (or better) ability level and end up being the superstar week after week, playing at a level that's too easy for them.
- Weaker players rely on their more able team mates to do everything whilst they get less of the ball and so don't develop. They may enjoy playing in a winning team, but ask yourself how much the player who stands at the back whilst their superstar teammate scores 6 goals a game is actually developing as a player?
- Frustration, loss of confidence, players blaming others who consistently struggle to contribute at the level you're playing at.
- Leagues being unable to place your teams in the appropriate divisions as they can't have you all in the same division and some divisions will be harder than others. Better to have stronger teams in stronger divisions and weaker teams in weaker divisions.
- Your best players potentially leaving to join a club that has streamed so they can play at a higher level, with and against better players.

Streaming guidelines

There are three defined stages of football at BTYFC,

1. The '**Play Phase**' (U5s + U6s) is about encouraging children in skills and learning that will eventually be useful not just in football, but in life. It makes learning fun, playful and creative, for lifelong benefits.
2. The '**Fundamentals**' or 'Mini-Soccer' (U7s - U10s) is about ensuring children develop a love of football, whilst supporting their personal development. With a clear focus on ball mastery and equality of opportunity (both game time and positionally), skills, ability and experience will start to show.
3. The '**Development Stage**' or 'Youth Football' (U11s - U18s) is when players will start to play on bigger pitches and incorporate more complex rules and strategies into the game. Ability will become clearer at this stage, with more fixed positions, and the football becomes fully competitive.

At BTYFC, where there is more than one team in an age-group, **streaming will happen when the children move to U11s** (9v9). At this age, rules such as off-side are introduced, and when they reach U12s competitive league tables are published. The U11s year will give the teams time to prepare for this.

Streaming guidelines, cont.

- Always concern yourself first and foremost with the welfare of the player.
- Long-service of players must be factored in; this is not an opportunity to recruit 'better' players.
- Players' ability, personality and character should all be considered when streaming.
- The FA's Four-Corner Model should be used to inform decision-making - <https://learn.Englandfootball.com/articles-and-resources/coaching/resources/2022/the-fa-4-corner-model> (see Appendix on the last slide).
- Streaming should be discussed within the age group and completed by the end of April so, we can ensure we enter teams into the correct division in the correct league.
- The process of streaming is up to each individual age groups coaches, but it must be fair to all players and inclusive of all appropriate coaches and will make use of the guidelines set out by the FA's Four-Corner Model.
- Age groups can hold streaming meetings and conduct independent trials when appropriate.
- New squads can compete in summer tournaments together.
- Any issues with players or parents can be resolved during the close season, ideally, through the age-group managers but, if necessary, the Coach Liaison and/or Committee can support.
- Any shortfalls in squads will be identified early and advertising can be done during the summer.
- Players can also be asked to play up a year group.

Finding a balance

Whilst there are a lot of very good arguments for streaming and continuing to tweak the make-up of each team as players develop at different rates, there are a couple of points to make with regard to not over-streaming too frequently and in some cases, not streaming at all...

1. It's very hard to build a team spirit and sense of identity as a team if the players are constantly changing. Once streaming has happened initially, small tweaks when players are blatantly too strong/struggling/unhappy are all that should happen or you run the risk of constantly undermining the work of the coaches and the confidence of players and their parents/carers. Movement of players between teams should only happen after the Christmas break, or at the end of the season, giving coaches the time to assess players over the course of a series of matches.
2. And this only works in one direction, some very good players just don't want to be streamed up. Don't force them. Explain the benefits to them and their parents, but it may be that they just love playing with their 3 best mates and want to stay with them. So let them. Football should be primarily enjoyable, and it isn't everyone's ambition to push themselves as far as they can by playing at a higher level.
3. There may be family reasons why certain players can't be streamed, e.g. twins where one player is much stronger than the other for example may simply mean both have to be in the same team as they can't both get to games otherwise.

Discussions with parents/carers

Each parent/carer can make a huge difference to their own child in terms of making the whole idea palatable to their kids. If the parents are onside with you and delivering all the positive messages about why their child is moving teams, the children are much more likely to be okay with it. Explaining to the parents/carers that this is going to be happening, getting their views on how best to approach it and being clear that you want their help in terms of helping the children to view it positively is seriously worth doing. If they're just "told" and feel no thought is being given to how their children might feel about this or told what the positives will be, then you may find some of them getting quite upset by the idea.

Openness, transparency and sensitivity when communicating with parents/carers is key to building successful and supportive relationships.

Talking with coaches

The other difficult aspect to this is going to be the coaches. If you're the coach of the new streamed strongest team, chances are you're very happy. But if you're going to be losing the best 3 players in your existing team and it's been decided you're coaching the 'weakest' of the new streamed teams, you may have worries about how your new team will fair and how you'll enjoy coaching them. Being involved in a 'weaker' team doesn't necessarily equate to a lack of enjoyment or success in the future.

How you decide who is coaching which team is often a difficult thing to navigate. Usually, it would come down to coaches' children and which team suited them. But it may also come down to the skills of the individual coaches - some people are very good at (and enjoy) developing 'weaker' players, whilst others find they struggle with that.

So, communication between the coaches and an approach that really looks at what is best for the children is an absolute must. There are plenty of folks who have been through it before who can offer advice and would be happy to do so.

Final points...

BTYFC would like coaches (and parents/carers) to remember, when considering the make-up of the streamed teams, the 'best' individuals don't always make the best team, and of course those who shone at age 10 aren't always the same ones who shine at age 13, so the whole thing needs constant **review and flexibility** to be effective.

At BTYFC we strive to provide the youth of Bradford on Avon and surrounding areas, with the opportunity to develop through playing football in a fun, safe, inclusive and respectful environment. However, no matter how much we try, we can't keep everyone happy, all the time. We therefore work on the principle that what's best for the majority of the team has to be what we go with.

Appendix – The FA 4 Corner Model

The FA 4 Corner Model provides a holistic approach to player development and encourages coaches to consider their team's progress within these key areas:

- technical/tactical
- psychological
- social
- physical



Each of these 'corners' is equally important, and no one corner works in isolation. For example, as your team work on their social skills, their psychological well-being may also improve.

The FA 4 Corner Model can be used with all players – regardless of age or ability. It provides a tool that coaches can use to:

- observe their team
- reflect on their ability
- make decisions that support development.

This approach helps to identify and meet the varied needs of different individuals. For example, some of your team may need lots of technical support, whereas others might need help in the physical corner.