



SUMMERTOWN STARS · AFC

# Summertown Stars Handbook 2019



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# 1. What's in this handbook?

This handbook is for all of you managers, coaches, team administrators, other volunteers, parents/carers and players involved in Summertown Stars.

It provides some basic information on the club, and gives advice and guidance on how to approach your role in the club, manage teams, and what to do in certain situations.

Importantly, this handbook also tells you about the club's ethos and philosophy. We have developed this ethos since the club was founded in 1974, and maintaining it is essential for the club's identity and success in years to come.

The handbook will be updated periodically.<sup>1</sup>

We hope you find it useful and enjoy reading it!

Gunnar Niels  
Chair of Summertown Stars AFC

July 2019

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<sup>1</sup> This is an update from the first handbook of May 2017. It has been put together with support from various club volunteers, and builds on discussions with past and current managers.

## 2. Who we are

Summertown Stars AFC is an amateur club in North Oxford providing football for more than 700 playing members, both boys and girls and men and women. We have over 50 teams, in every age group from U6 to adults. In the last five years we have seen a spectacular growth in girls' football, with female players now representing more than a quarter of the total.

Summertown Stars is an FA-recognised Charter Standard Community Club. To gain such status the club has to meet stringent criteria on facilities, coaching and safeguarding. This means that parents can bring their children along to Summertown Stars safe in the knowledge that they will be looked after by FA-qualified coaches who have been DBS-checked,<sup>2</sup> and who actively endorse a policy of encouragement, inclusion and player development.

Our home grounds are Cutteslowe Park, Five Mile Drive and, in the near future, Cherwell School, in the Summertown/North Oxford area. During the season (September–May) our teams train midweek at various flood-lit facilities including Phil & Jim, Cherwell School, Oxford Hawks, and Kidlington & Gosford.

We are proud to have players from over 60 primary and secondary schools, the largest providers being local schools Cherwell, Oxford High, Phil & Jim, Wolvercote and Cutteslowe. Players join from outside this catchment area as well, through friendships or the reputation of the club, although we do not actively recruit from areas that have their own local club.

Everyone aged five and over is welcome to join the club. The U6 girls and boys can join the weekly training sessions on Saturday mornings. New players in U7 and older will join a team, in coordination with the club and the managers in the age group. Sometimes we have a waiting list. The quickest way to reduce this is by a new parent/carer stepping forward as manager and creating a new team with support from the club.

Our official club colours are red-and-white-striped shirt, with plain black shorts and socks.<sup>3</sup>

During the season our teams play in league and cup competitions and trophy events organised by the Oxford Mail Youth Football League (OMYFL) for boys U7 to U18, the Oxford Mail Girls Football League (OMGFL) for girls U8 to U16, the Oxfordshire Senior League and Oxford City Football League for our men's teams, and the Thames Valley Counties Women's Football League for our women's team. Our teams also take part in indoor futsal competitions in winter and small-sided tournaments in summer.

Our yearly highlights are the club presentation event in May, when the whole club comes together, our primary school girls' tournament in May, and our annual 5-a-side tournament at Cutteslowe Park in June. The primary school tournament has been a key driver of girls taking up football in recent years. The 5-a-side tournament is an important fundraiser for the club, with more than 300 teams from all age groups participating over the whole weekend.

We aim to have close relationships with all the local schools, the City Council, local residents, local businesses, the various leagues, and the Oxfordshire FA (OFA). We have partnerships with a number of schools to promote girls' football, and we work with the OFA to promote female coaching,

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<sup>2</sup> Disclosure and Barring Service (which took on the functions of the Criminal Records Bureau).

<sup>3</sup> Legend has it that the club founders were inspired by 1973 FA cup winners Sunderland.

training of young referees, and disability football. With the OFA, City Council, schools and residents we collaborate on the development of facilities (pitches and pavilions). Local businesses support us through sponsorships.

Summertown Stars is run entirely by volunteers, including the club executive team, all team managers and coaches, and the many parents/carers who help out with their team and at the annual club events (we do have two paid part-time administrators). Continued parent volunteering is vital for the sustainability of the club, and we expect everyone involved in the club to offer up some of their time. The club is not a drop-off activity or a form of childcare.

The running of the club is financed through membership fees (currently £110 per year per player), which pay for expenses relating to pitch hire, training facilities, leagues, referees, and equipment. Teams are expected to find sponsors (or their parent base) to pay for their own shirts. Income from the 5-a-side tournament is used to build up capital reserves to invest in facilities.

You can follow club and team news on Twitter (@SummertStarsAFC) and Facebook (Summertown-Stars-Football-Club). Important club and team information, including on how to become a member, can be found on our website, [www.summertownstars.org](http://www.summertownstars.org). Teams communicate with their parents and players via email, text and other messaging, mobile phone, or our website.



### 3. Club ethos and philosophy

We believe that football should be a fun and positive experience, which builds players' confidence and encourages their personal development and teamwork. Winning can be fun, but should not be the purpose of youth football.

We are an inclusive club. We welcome all girls and boys from age five who wish to play football. We provide a safe and supportive community-based environment. All players have the opportunity to develop their footballing skills through appropriate coaching and being part of a team. We want to inspire young people to develop in football and in life.

We have had this philosophy since the beginnings of the club in the 1970s and have maintained it over the decades, as also chronicled in former chairman Jim White's famous book, *You'll Win Nothing with Kids: Fathers, Sons and Football* (2007)—although the club is now bigger than ever, and is as much about mothers and daughters as it is about fathers and sons!

We are the biggest club in Oxfordshire and have multiple teams in most age groups, allowing us to accommodate players at all levels. All it takes to create a new team is for a parent/carer to step forward as manager and obtain the right qualifications and support from the club.

Summertown Stars is a volunteer-run organisation. Parents and carers are expected to attend games and training (especially in the younger age groups), to support the manager on match days (setting up the pitches, running the line, etc.), and to help as volunteers at the annual club events and tournaments. We seek to encourage a culture where volunteering for the club is second nature.

Players and parents/carers are asked to sign up to the club's codes of conduct when becoming a member, respecting the decisions of match officials and positively encouraging players at all times. Youth football is about the experience of the child, not the ambitions of the adult. Summertown Stars encourages the pursuit of excellence, and embraces the nature of football as a competitive sport. But experience has shown that teams (and their supporters) who emphasise fun and learning over winning are generally happier and stick together for longer.

#### What the children say

Trying my hardest is more important to me than winning	294
I love playing football because it's fun	270
It's a really good game and I love it!	242
It helps keep me fit and healthy	211
I like meeting new friends through football	211
It's important to me I win the league	3
I like to show off my skills	1
Winning is more important to me than trying my hardest	0
It's important to me I win trophies and medals	0

Source: Nick Levett, FA Head of Youth Development, 'Why do you play?'



## 4. Parents and carers: it's your club too!

Everyone is welcome to join the club! Please contact [enquiries@summertownstars.org](mailto:enquiries@summertownstars.org) and we will direct you to the right age group and team.

U6 girls and boys can join the weekly training sessions on Saturdays. From U7 (for girls this is U7–U8 combined), players will join a specific team. This is subject to availability, and in some age groups we have a waiting list. If there are many on the list, the quickest way to reduce it is if a new parent/carer steps forward as manager and creates a new team (see section 5 below).

If there is a space, the manager will contact you about **registration**. There are two steps, as we need to register players with club and league (see also section 7). First, you provide some basic information: name, email, address, digital photo and proof of date of birth. Second, you will be asked to complete the registration and payment process online, at [www.summertownstars.org](http://www.summertownstars.org).

When you register as club member, both players and parent/carers sign up to the **club's codes of conduct and to our policies on privacy and photography**. These are essential to maintain the club's safe and positive environment, and are consistent with the rules on respect, safeguarding and data protection. You also get rights of voting membership (an AGM is organised in May/June each year).

With your **club membership fee**—£110 for the 2019–20 season—the club pays for the annual costs of running the football operations. The breakdown of these costs is shown below. The fee does *not* pay for football kit; teams are expected to get a sponsor or parents to pay for the shirts, and parents normally pay for their own shorts, socks and football boots. The club's investments in facilities are funded from reserves built up from the annual 5-a-side tournament and other fundraising activities.

How your membership fee is spent:

– Midweek training facility hire	36%
– Council pitch and pavilion hire	12%
– League fees	11%
– Referee fees	10%
– Kit and equipment	16%
– External coaching costs	3%
– FA courses and DBS checks	6%
– Paid admin support	6%



Importantly, as a club member you also take on a responsibility to contribute some of your time to your child's team and to the club. Bar two paid part-time administrators, Summertown Stars is run entirely by **volunteers**, including the club executive team and all team managers, coaches and administrators. The club is not a drop-off activity or a form of childcare. Parents and carers are expected to attend games and training (especially in the younger age groups).

There are plenty of things you can do to help! Support the manager during match days and training: set up the goals and respect barrier, take your turn as assistant referee, or find a team sponsor. Volunteer to help out at our events and tournaments. Become even more involved as a member of the committee or executive team, or helping out with specific projects such as the facilities or fundraisers. And come to the AGM to have your say. Every bit of volunteer support helps in making us the club that we are, allowing us to offer football fun to hundreds of children and adults!

## 5. Getting started as a manager

‘On the fourth Saturday, Doug gathered the half-dozen parents together at the end of the session and told us that he didn’t have time to run this group and that if a dad—or a mum, no one could accuse him of being sexist, he said—didn’t step forward and volunteer to take it on, he would have to disband it and there would be no football at all for our lads. As he said it, unlike everyone else gathered around, I must not have looked with sufficient focus at my feet. “Good, so you’ll do it?” he said to me. I didn’t react. “I said, so you’ll do it?” “Me?” I said. “Well do you want there to be football for these lads or not?” “Obviously I do, yeah, I mean ...” “So?” “Well OK, I’ll think about it.” ... Thus I was trapped. The following week, as we arrived at the ground, I told Doug I was prepared to do it. I had a list of conditions I’d thought of on the way there. But he never gave me a chance to air them. Soon as I told him, he looked at his watch, pulled his car keys out of his pocket and started to walk away. “Great”, he said, “You can start now. There’s some balls and cones in the clubhouse. I’ve got to dash.” ... Subsequently I learned that this was a trick Doug pulled at the start of every season. Tony, Paul’s dad, found himself running his older boy’s group under exactly the same circumstances. In this way, across the country are indulgent parents, anxious to ensure their offspring are not disappointed, suckered into management. It is the reluctant duty of fatherhood. Or at least that was what I told my wife. “Come off it”, she said, “You’re desperate to do it. You’ll love it.”’

From Jim White, *You’ll Win Nothing with Kids: Fathers, Sons and Football*.

We all need a bit of persuasion to step forward as coach or manager of our child’s team. But once you have made the brave decision, you won’t regret it! In the younger age groups it’s fantastic fun to work with excitable and enthusiastic children. In the older age groups you’ll find that the football team provides a (possibly rare) common interest between you and your teenager.

Any parent or carer with the right attitude can become a successful Summertown Stars manager or coach. The club will provide you with the right support. You don’t even need to know much about football—just take a look at the dozens of Summertown Stars managers who have come before you! Being a manager or coach at Summertown Stars is about developing and working with children—something you know more about than the average *Match of the Day* pundit.

Getting started can be broken down into six basic steps:





## Step 1: FAN number

You will need your own '**FAN**' number.<sup>4</sup> This is easy to obtain at [www.thefa.com](http://www.thefa.com) (go to sign in). You need this to sign up for FA courses, and also for online match reporting on FA Full-Time (see section 8 of this handbook). Inform the Club Welfare Officer of your FAN number so you can be put onto the relevant systems.

## Step 2: DBS check

Getting your **DBS check** (aka CRB or CRC check) is a mandatory requirement before coaching or managing children. It is FA policy and a fundamental aspect of achieving the club's Charter Standard Community Club status.

Doing the DBS check online (and renewing it every three years) is relatively straightforward, and we have all the required systems in place. Contact our Club Welfare Officer, who will send you instructions. The Welfare Officer is responsible for getting more than 100 DBS checks done periodically, and would therefore appreciate diligence from managers/coaches in fulfilling this requirement.

## Step 3: FA coaching qualification

As soon as practical, and certainly in your first year as manager or coach, you should obtain your **FA Level 1 coaching qualification**. This is an FA requirement and the starting point for managers and coaches to get a good idea of FA initiatives with regard to youth football, and to get on the FA coaching ladder. It also includes Emergency First Aid and Safeguarding Children modules (assistant managers/coaches should do at least these two modules).

The costs for the FA Level 1 course are paid for by the club. The course is not insignificant in terms of time commitment—basically four weekend days (or the equivalent in evening courses)—but it is highly rewarding to complete it. The OFA organises various Level 1 courses a year, and the club tries to organise one course a year to accommodate those who struggle to do weekends.

As we are a Charter Standard Community Club, each team must have a Level 1 qualified coach or manager. The DBS, Emergency First Aid and Safeguarding qualifications lapse after three years, so must then be renewed (we have to suspend your activities without a valid DBS check). The Welfare Officer will chase you!

## Step 4: coaching equipment

The club will provide you with the following essentials, via our Equipment Officer, who orders these things centrally:

- Footballs (plus bag)—rule of thumb is one football per registered player. Try not to lose too many footballs during the season, as each team gets new footballs only every two years! U6–U9 play with size 3 footballs; U10–U14 with size 4; U15 and older with size 5 (this holds for both boys and girls).
- Bibs—make sure you have enough and in at least two different colours; fluorescent colours are recommended for evening training.
- Cones—a set of flat cones will usually do, but some coaches like traffic cones as well.
- A first-aid kit—this is essential to have to hand at all times for matches and training.

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<sup>4</sup> FAN = Football Association Number (but people still say FAN number).

Some managers like to have additional equipment, such as poles or mini-goals. This would be at your own expense.

### Step 5: team kit

All kit should be ordered through Blue Blood Sports (<http://oxford-coveredmarket.co.uk/trader/blue-blood-sports/>). We have a preferential deal with Nike for this purpose. Managers should collate orders, and either contact Blue Blood Sports directly or order via our Equipment Officer.

The club does not pay for kit (except occasionally for new teams) as this is not provided for in the club membership fee. Teams are expected to find a sponsor who pays for the kit, or ask the parents to pay for it.

The typical cost of a shirt with club and sponsor logo and number is around £30, so you could ask a sponsor for £450 for your squad of 15 players. Sponsors get a prominent mention on our website, and of course exposure on sports fields across Oxfordshire every weekend for two or three seasons.

Please stick to the official club colours: red/white striped shirt, plain black shorts and socks. We have seen some colourful variants out there, but would really want everyone to use the official colours.<sup>5</sup> All shirts need to be numbered.

If your sponsors have some more money available, they could also pay for shorts and socks. Very generous sponsors might even pay for training jackets/hoodies for the whole team (which always impress the opposition), 'away kit' (which children love), and your very own manager kit!

### Some tips on kit from other Summertown Stars managers

**Tip 1:** Kit typically lasts two or three seasons. Try to coordinate purchases with the other teams in your age group. This makes reshuffling teams easier between seasons as you move up the age groups or wish to stream players.

**Tip 2:** Where kit is paid for by the sponsor, make clear to parents at the start of the season that if a player leaves after one season they must return the shirt so it can be given to new players.

**Tip 3:** Recycle kit across age groups. This can help other teams who have just formed or who have new players joining during the season.

**Tip 4:** Get some junior captain bands (they're cheap online), and rotate the captaincy in the younger age groups. They love it. Captain bands are required from U12 in the boys' league.

### Step 6: team communication channels

There are various ways you can communicate with your team about weekly fixtures, training and other matters. The most common are email and WhatsApp groups. We would recommend the FA Matchday app, which has several team admin and management functions, and is increasingly used

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<sup>5</sup> With the exception of the men's teams, who cannot play in black shorts due to a clash with the referee (apparently).

by our managers. As team manager you also have access to your team page on the club website ([www.summertownstars.org](http://www.summertownstars.org)), where you can upload fixtures, results, photos and news stories. Make sure the club can share your news stories and team photos through our social media as well.

In some teams the manager does most of the communication, and in others the team administrator. This is up to each team to decide.

You can get all the contact details for your team through the club, sourced from our database of registered members (see section 7 below). **Please ensure you do not use these details for any other purpose than team management**, in line with our privacy policy and GDPR requirements.

We get lots of questions from managers about communicating with children directly. From a certain age, youngsters tend to organise their own affairs. In the interest of safeguarding, do make sure you copy the parents into all communications with children.

## 6. Managers, you're not alone!

You're the team manager, but, importantly, you're not on your own.

First, **the club** is there to support you. As you can see in this handbook, the club provides you with substantial organisational support, advice and guidance. There is ongoing communication between you and the executive team during the season. Please feel free to consult the club about any issue related to running the team, child welfare, or disputes involving players, parents or other teams.

Second, you are one of over 50 **Summertown Stars managers**, all of them volunteers like you. We have a culture of sharing experiences and tips among managers through our manager meetings, specific age group sessions, and informal channels. More experienced managers can help newer managers. It is particularly important that managers within an age group communicate frequently with each other.

Third, there are **the other parents**. Make sure that your players' parents and carers are fully involved with the team as well. Try to establish a transparent and open line of communication with all parents (email group, one-on-ones). Get at least one or two of them to assist with coaching—they should also be DBS-checked and, ideally, attend the FA Level 1 coaching course. Other parents could do specific tasks such as the team admin/emailing, bringing the team water bottles to the match, or finding a sponsor. On match days, all parents should help setting up and taking down the goals, corner flags, technical areas and respect barrier—managers should not be doing that on top of everything else.

Finally, there are **the players**. They can provide a source of wisdom and support too. Ask them questions, and involve them in team decisions and analyses (see also section 10 on coaching development). When communicating with children, do bear in mind basic safeguarding precautions, such as copying the parents when emailing and avoiding situations where you are alone with a child.

You could organise a briefing meeting for parents and players at the start of the season to outline your expectations and the way that you will run the team. You could canvass opinions on various aspects of this. Share this handbook with them. Inform them that the club is not a drop-off activity or a form of childcare. During the season keep your parents informed of team developments and things that are happening at the club. Encourage them to follow the club on Twitter and Facebook. Stimulating parent/carer involvement from when children first join will develop a culture where volunteering for the club becomes second nature.

From time to time disagreements or disputes may arise between a manager and parents, players, or other managers. These usually get resolved between the parties concerned, but managers, parents and players should also feel free to contact the club executive team. The club can advise, mediate and, if necessary, decide on a particular course of action (see also section 15 of this handbook).

## 7. Managing your team: player registration

### New player enquiries and waiting lists

Everyone is welcome to join the club! New players can contact [enquiries@summertownstars.org](mailto:enquiries@summertownstars.org) and the club will direct them to the right age group and team.

The U6 girls and boys can join the weekly training sessions on Saturdays. From the U7s age group and above (for girls this is U7–U8 combined) each player will join a specific team. This is done in coordination with the club and the managers in the age group. While teams in some age groups are desperate for more players, in other age groups teams may be full, and the child may join a waiting list.

The club and the managers in the age group keep a close eye on this waiting list and proactively work together to try to accommodate players (taking into account length of time on the waiting list). The bottleneck is often the number of managers/coaches. The quickest way to reduce the waiting list is if a new parent/carer steps forward as manager/coach and creates a new team (with support from the club—see section 5 above).

### Player registration

Managers are responsible for ensuring that all players in their team are registered. Players have to be registered with (1) the club, and (2) the league (the U6s need to register only with the club). The club helps with the registration process for both. The best time to organise player registrations is between the end of the season and the start of the summer holiday (June–July).

**Club registration** is through our online registration and payment on the club website ([www.summertownstars.org](http://www.summertownstars.org)). The manager needs to ask parents/carers to register online. Once registered, the club will verify and send a payment request to the parent. That completes the club membership.

By registering, players and their parents/carers sign up to the various codes of conduct and consent to our policies on privacy and on photography (which are all welfare- and GDPR-compliant)—see sections 15 and 16 of this handbook.

**League registration** is through the FA's Whole Game System. This is a separate process from club registration and therefore involves some inevitable duplication for new players (existing players will automatically be rolled over from one season to the next). The manager needs to obtain the following information for each new player: name, email, address, date of birth, digital photo, digital proof of date of birth (e.g. copy of passport). The manager passes this on to the club administrator looking after registrations. At the start of the season, the administrator or Club Secretary will send each team manager their up-to-date squad sheet containing all their Whole Game System - registered players. The manager needs to have their Whole Game System squad sheet to hand on match days so the opposition manager can check if required.

## 8. Managing your team: fixtures admin and reporting

There is some important admin to do around weekly fixtures to ensure the smooth running of the teams and the league. This section provides some guidance on the main week-to-week tasks in relation to fixtures and match reporting. The leagues themselves also have useful guidance documents with more details on rules and procedures (see section 17 of this handbook for details).

We leave it up to you as manager how much of this admin you do yourself or outsource to one of the parents/carers as team administrator, and how you communicate about fixtures with your parent and player base (email, WhatsApp, text messaging, or the FA Matchday app).

### Fixtures and the Fixtures Secretary

You will find out about your **fixture dates and kick-off (KO) times** through the league websites, league emails, and our Fixtures Secretary.

OMYFL and OMGFL managers will normally get a weekly email from their league through the FA's Full-Time system, with details of the match and the appointed referee. See the example below. Please always double-check the Full-Time website (<http://fulltime-league.thefa.com/>) where you can find your league and division and check the scheduled fixtures.

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From: [donotreplyfulltime@thefa.com](mailto:donotreplyfulltime@thefa.com)

Subject: Oxford Mail Youth Football League – Games scheduled for next weekend

Please note there has been a Referee Appointment(s) for a Fixture that could affect you:

**Under 15 D**

**SUN 07 APR 2019 12:00, Summertown Stars AFC U15 Flares Stars -v- Kidlington**

**Youth U15 Status: Normal Venue: Cutteslowe Park #1**

Referee: Pierluigi Collina, 07000 700000 (M).

Assistant 1: None, Assistant 2: None

[Click here for full details of this fixture on Full-Time](#)

In case of query regarding a fixture please contact League Fixtures Secretary, Paul Lyon on [...] or [fixtures@oyfl.org.uk](mailto:fixtures@oyfl.org.uk) In case of query regarding a referee appointment please contact Referees Secretary, Andy Woodley on [...] or [referees@oyfl.org.uk](mailto:referees@oyfl.org.uk)

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The main role of the Fixtures Secretary is to schedule the use of pitches at Five Mile Drive and Cutteslowe Park, and ensure you get a pitch for your home games. In order to achieve this, the Fixtures Secretary may have to change the KO time for your game (within the parameters set by the relevant league). Given the number of teams we have, it is inevitable that from time to time you will have to accept a KO time not of your choosing. Please accept the Fixtures Secretary's decision as final.

The Fixtures Secretary will send round a weekly fixture schedule for all the clubs' home games ahead of the weekend. Please make sure you check this schedule and flag any discrepancies, as there are often unexpected fixture changes or cup ties. It's much easier to help you sort out any issues at this point rather than on the day of your match.



Note that the Fixtures Secretary ensures that every home team has a pitch available, but will not allocate teams to specific pitches. This can be coordinated on the day between the managers involved.<sup>6</sup> Just make sure you tell the opposition teams which pitch to go to as soon as you can.

## Contacting the opposition, the referee and the league

**Contact your opposition manager and their fixtures secretary** ahead of your home games, notifying them of the KO time and pitch location (and car park charges for Cutteslowe Park). The postcode for Five Mile Drive is OX2 8HT. Cutteslowe Park is at the end of Harbord Road, OX2 8LH. You must also send them a copy of the Emergency Action Plan for the relevant pitch location, which the club will provide to you at the start of the season (and is downloadable from our website).

Referee allocations will be made by the leagues during the week before the game, and this information will come to you through the league emails. **Contact your assigned referee** for your home games (if there is one), notifying them of the KO time and pitch location.

Unfortunately, an increasing number of games, especially in the younger age groups, have no referee assigned, which is due to a shortage of referees. If that happens to your match, you could try the list of club referees, or find a volunteer from among your parent base.

Pay the referee before the game. You can then make an expenses claim from the club (see section 9).

## Match reporting

This is another important part of the weekly manager admin, and needs to be done as soon as possible after the match. There are two steps: (1) texting the result; (2) inputting match stats into Full-Time.

The league will send you a text message which you can simply reply to straight after the game with the result. It will give you the code for the two teams—for example, Summertown Flares U15s (SF15) v Kidlington Youth U15 (KY15). If the game ended in a 4-4 draw, you send a reply text saying 'SF15 4-4 KY15'.

To **input match stats into Full-Time** you need to log into the Full-Time admin page with your FAN number and user details (<https://fulltime-admin.thefa.com/gen/Login.do>). On the main admin page click on 'Results/Stats' and it should direct you to the relevant fixture. Here you can input referee details and rating, details about the pitch and behaviour, and stats on players and goal scorers. Both the OMYFL and OMGFL provide further guidance on how to complete these stages.

## Procedures around match postponements due to player shortage

If you know in advance that you are going to be short of players, you can request a match postponement without having to concede the match (this applies to the OMYFL). This must be done by contacting the league fixtures secretary seven days before the match (or as early as possible), with a written (email) explanation from the parents/carers of each player who is unavailable. You can do this only if you are below the minimum number of available players (four for 5-a-side, five for

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<sup>6</sup> Because every team has a pitch, there should not be any problems (see below on what to do in case of pitches being unplayable).

7-a-side, six for 9-a-side, seven for 11-a-side). You can also try to agree directly with the opposition to reschedule a match, although in practice this can be difficult.

The OMGFL has a convention whereby, if you are short of players, the opposition team is encouraged to match your numbers if they feel it is fair and of benefit to all players, although this is not compulsory. The only exception to that is that, for U14 and above, a team can in certain circumstances register as a 9-a-side team (these age groups usually have 11-a-side teams) and, when playing such a 9-a-side team, then matching up numbers is compulsory. The minimum player numbers in the OMGFL are four for 5-a-side, five for 7-a-side, seven for 9-a-side, and nine for 11-a-side.

## Procedures around pitch inspections and match postponements

There are invariably some weekends each season when the weather is cold and wet and pitches risk becoming unplayable. This can cause uncertainty, stress, and wasted time for all managers, parents, players and referees involved (as well as for the fixtures secretaries). The leagues and the club have some basic rules aimed at making life a bit less painful for everyone during such weekends. We have issued the following guidance to managers.

Where we identify a risk due to dodgy weather forecasts, an early morning pitch inspection will be undertaken on the Saturday or Sunday morning by a qualified club referee (David Rundle), which will often (but not always!) provide clarity on whether your match goes ahead. The inspections are for Five Mile Drive and Cutteslowe Park.

Please note that it is still up to you as manager to communicate with (a) the opposition team; (b) your appointed referee; and (c) the league. It is therefore vital that you check your email on match day mornings.

- Step 1** Sometimes the Council calls off all games at Five Mile Drive and/or Cutteslowe. This is usually before the weekend. You will hear it from the club, but please confirm with your opposition manager and/or fixtures secretary and with your appointed referee.
- Step 2** Morning pitch inspections take place between 8.30–8.45am on match days when the weather forecast gives cause for concern (the club will communicate in advance if there is to be an inspection). You will hear from our Fixtures Secretary or Club Secretary what the verdict of this inspection is by 9am. Please contact your opposition team and appointed referee by 9.15am. The following are possible:
- (2a) All pitches are off all day—please confirm with your opposition manager and/or fixtures secretary and with your appointed referee via text, email or phone (also check with the opposition if reversal is possible).
  - (2b) All pitches are off in the morning, but playable later in the day—if you have a morning game it's off. Please confirm with your opposition manager and/or fixtures secretary and with your appointed referee via text, email or phone (also check with the opposition if reversal is possible). If you have a later game at 12pm or 2pm, go to step 3.
  - (2c) Some pitches are off, but some are playable. Go to step 3, unless you are explicitly told your game is off. Priority will be given to cup games.
  - (2d) All pitches are playable. Go to step 3.

**Step 3** If your game hasn't been called off in the morning inspection, just turn up as usual. You still need to go through the normal procedure where the appointed referee inspects the pitch. The referee may then still call it off, in which case you and the opposition managers should check if reversal is possible.

If the pitch inspector calls the game off this decision is final, and will be respected by the leagues. Please do not object or go against this decision. The inspections take place only in the mornings. In scenarios (2b) and (2c) there are no separate afternoon inspections.

### Organising midweek training and coaching

Teams normally have one **1-hour training session** during the week, and smaller teams in the younger age groups may also train together. The typical slots are between 6–9pm Monday–Friday, with the younger age groups given priority for the earlier times.

Training facilities with floodlights are scarce in Oxford. The club has preferential access to Phil & Jim and is working hard to get new facilities built at Cherwell School. We rent expensive pitches in other places including Oxford Hawks and Kidlington & Gosford. We normally use these from September to March. During summer time teams can use the parks.

We allocate slots at the start of the season through our midweek training coordinator. You can give your preferences to the coordinator, although they cannot always be accommodated.

The club pays for the facilities. Teams can book their own training pitch if they prefer, but the club then pays only the equivalent of our lowest fee, which is £15 per hour.

Teams can also indicate if they would like **external coaching support**. The idea is that you as manager or coach can learn from these sessions as well. Some of the coaches also come to matches.

The club can help with finding a coach as we have access to a number of organisations, including Oxford United and Brookes University. You may also have your own contacts. All external coaches are DBS-checked.

The club will fund up to nine external sessions at £20 each (total budget of £180). Thereafter it is up to the teams to pay. Communicate this clearly with your parent base at the start of the season so you can ask them to contribute to the costs.



## Tournaments

Many clubs, including Summertown Stars, organise a small-sided tournament in the May–July period. These are always fun and a good way to practise small-sided football skills (although you might also end up standing in the rain for the whole morning or afternoon).

The manager can decide how many tournaments the team enters—some teams hardly join any (though the Summertown Stars tournament is compulsory!), while the keener teams can play up to ten tournaments from early May to early July.

Tournament invites start arriving in February/March time, so check the emails from the leagues and from the Club Secretary and Fixtures Secretary. There are local tournaments most weekends, although it can also be fun to join a tournament in another county and play new teams. Check availability among your players when deciding whether to enter one team (less admin burden for you) or two (more football for more players).

## 9. Managing your team: claiming expenses

The club funds the following items for each team:

- External coaching, up to nine paid sessions per season at £20 each
- Referee fees
- Facility hire for midweek training
- Pitches for matches at the weekend
- Equipment (footballs, bibs, cones, first-aid kit)
- Coaching qualifications and courses including Emergency First Aid and Safeguarding
- Medals/trophies for the presentation evening.

Items which are not funded:

- External coaching sessions beyond the nine paid-for sessions
- Referee fees for parent/volunteer refs who step in when no league referee has been appointed (in these cases unpaid volunteering is much appreciated)
- Kit (except for the youngest age groups or new teams)
- Any fines from the various leagues
- Tournament entry fees.

**Registration fees:** Each manager is responsible for ensuring that their players are registered with the club through our online registration and payment system (see section 7 above). Players who have not paid their registration fee will not be allowed to play.

**Pitch fees:** Pitches for weekend games at Five Mile Drive and Cutteslowe Park are rented from the Council and paid for centrally. For midweek training, the cost of the facility is borne by the club and slots are allocated by the club. Teams can book their own training pitch if they prefer, but the club pays only the equivalent of our lowest fee, which is £15 per hour. Teams can also book their own pitch for weekend games outside Five Mile Drive and Cutteslowe Park, but would have to pay for this themselves.

**Referee fees:** Referee fees are reclaimable from the Treasurer. Please ensure that you provide details of referee's name, date and fixture for reclaiming your expenditure. Most managers send the Treasurer an expenses claim every two or three months. All claims for a season must be in by 30 April at the latest as that is the end of our financial year.

Referee name	Date	Fixture	Fee
Pierluigi Collina	Sunday 16 September	Wantage Town	£30

Failure to provide the above level of detail will delay the payment of the claim. Referee fees cannot be claimed for parents or carers who have stepped in when no external referee was available.

**Coaching fees:** Each team is entitled to claim the cost of an external coach to the sum of nine external sessions at £20 each (total budget of £180). When claiming your expenditure the details should be provided.

Coach name	Date	Team
Diego Simeone	Wednesday 12 September	U13 Cobras boys

## Fines

The leagues have to issue fines to keep functioning, and unfortunately the club and the teams end up paying large amounts of fines each season. Managers can avoid many of these fines by ensuring compliance with the league rules.

Examples of fines include:

- Failure to commence/complete fixtures: £25
- Failure to correctly register a player: £25
- Playing an ineligible player: £25
- Failure to number shirts: £10
- Delaying kick-off due to failure to provide required equipment: £15
- Failure to provide details on a fixture: £15
- Failure to play fixture: £20
- Late result notification: £10
- Failure to provide result: £10
- Results not being reported: £10
- Failure to provide referee mark: £10
- Yellow card: £10; red card: £30.

Any team that receives a fine from the league will need to fund it. The club does not have a budget to cover fines unless they are against the club itself.

The club pays fines once they are issued by the league so as to ensure compliance, but will then seek reimbursement from the manager, often by deducting it from that manager's next expenses claim.

Where a fine is due to a player being booked or sent off, the club will still seek the payment from the manager. It is up to the manager to collect the payment from the relevant player or parent.

Where the club is charged by the FA, by reason of the actions of a team or individual associated with the team, the club will liaise with the manager/coach of the team concerned, but ultimately it will be for the club to decide whether to plead guilty or not guilty to the charge. As above, any consequent fines will be recouped in the first instance from the team manager.



## 10. Club guidance: coaching development and style of play

### Coaching development

We encourage the continued development of coaches. Our internal and external coaching development coordinators can provide advice and guidance, and will organise specific skill and demo sessions through the season. And, if you are keen on further qualifications, the club will support you financially to do your FA Level 2 and beyond.

To improve your technical skills, we also recommend the FA Licensed Coaches Club and the FA Coaching Community Hive Learning websites.

Managers and coaches are expected to join the FA Licensed Coaches Club. The Licensed Coaches Club website<sup>7</sup> contains plans for core sessions for each of the 'England DNA' phases in the player development journey. The Hive<sup>8</sup> is accessible to anyone with a FAN, and contains a mixture of posts by FA Community Coaches (including example coaching sessions) and by other grassroots coaches like you, sharing their sessions, offering (or asking for) advice, etc. Both contain a wealth of help and information.

#### What the FA coaching mentors recommend to the club regarding parent coaching development

- Get them early!
- The biggest impact in terms of future resources is to get parents into good habits at U6–U7. Talk about the role of parents and get people involved at this age group. Parent education is even more important than player education at this stage.
- Try to identify and encourage potential coaches as early as possible at U6 and U7; it's easier to mentor new coaches at this stage than later.
- Doing this successfully has the knock-on effect of making the best use of the early years in terms of giving the players the best grounding.
- Use the enthusiasm of these early years to encourage coaches to move rapidly to FA Level 2 if they are interested (and fund them).

### The beautiful game

As an amateur football club we cannot really impose one style of play across all teams, like some professional clubs do. However, we strongly encourage managers and coaches to develop their players and teams in such a way as to do justice to the name 'the beautiful game', emphasising technical skills and passing football.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://facc.thefa.com/Users/Account/LogOn?ReturnUrl=%2fnews>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.hivelearning.com/thefa/>

Modern football coaching is all about technical skills and passing (yes, even in England ...), with a focus on time on the ball, and small-sided exercises and games (4v4, 3v3), with plenty of touches for each player. You will see this in your FA Level 1 course.

Try to persevere with this approach. It is highly rewarding, and fun for spectators to watch, if in a match your team manages to string four or five passes together, successfully play out from the back to the other half, or switch the game from one side of the pitch to the other. The goals will follow if your team plays like this, and your players will learn more.

We understand the challenges with this. Trying to play out from the back will cost you goals as your team are learning it, and sometimes the temptation—or spectator pressure—will be high to just boot the ball forward and take ‘route one’ to the opposition’s goal. Of course there is room for that too in any match, but do try and keep emphasising passing and technical skills.

## General coaching principles

**Have fun!** Always remember that when asked why they play football over 90% of junior footballers say ‘to have fun’.

**Performances matter, not results.** This is true even if your team is a competitive team pursuing league championships: concentrating on performance will lead to real player development, and ultimately improvement in performance is the sustainable route to results.

Be clear what success looks like and set that out in advance (otherwise results will become the apparent measure of success).

Re-set expectations at the beginning of every season. Involve the players in setting these expectations. Players can be given more responsibility as they get older, but can contribute from the earliest age. You’ll never know what you’ll get from them unless you ask.

Set objectives for the development of the team and of individuals and plan how to pursue them.

Players develop at different rates, and the area where a player needs to develop may not be naturally supported by the way the team plays. Giving players specific individual goals allows you to give them the opportunity for development while still fitting that into the development of the team.

**Review is essential.** In the ‘PLAN, DO, REVIEW’ model, the ideal is that you spend equal time on each. So if it’s a 40 minute training session, it’s 40 minutes planning and 40 minutes of review. In reality you rarely do 40 minutes of review, but it is essential that you do some review, even if it’s just a chat with the other coach about what went well and what didn’t go so well. Try to focus in the review on what went well or not so well in terms of the specific objectives you’ve set.

Familiarise yourself with the FA’s ‘England DNA’ project and what this means for the phase your team is at (most Summertown teams are in the Foundation Phase or the Youth Development Phase). In particular, make sure your sessions meet the minimum targets for each phase for time the ball is rolling.

**Interventions.** The real skill of coaching. This is where technical knowledge really helps, but the following points are a useful guide that will get the most of your interventions whatever your technical level:

- Plan in advance what key coaching points you want to make and think about what would be good times in the session to make them.

- Plan coaching points for individuals as well as for the team as a whole. Think in terms of three sessions: first session is basic principles; second session is aimed at units within the team; third session is targeted at individuals. (Sessions could mean phases within a single training routine, or three separate training days on the same topic, depending on how important the topic is and how much you have to say.)
- Be specific in what you ask players to do and in your observations about what is happening.
- Try not to intervene in matches.
- Apart from general encouragement and positivity, keep comments to players to when you need to make tactical adjustments (e.g. ‘Becky, push up into midfield’, ‘Josh, tuck in to help Hamza’, etc.). Give them clear instructions before the game and at half-time, and then let them play! In particular, avoid shouting continuous instructions at your players during matches—all they hear is noise—and especially avoid shouting at them in a negative or frustrated manner, which can be demoralising for them. Remember, this is youth football, not the Premier League!

### Additional coaching tips for the U6–U8 age groups

- The focus in these age groups is to develop technique, skills, and confidence on the ball, and to begin to develop decision-making.
- Build sessions around control and dribbling, and introduce an optional passing element as an extension—e.g. you get an extra point when you achieve your goal for every pass you’ve made doing it.
- The principle of ‘performances matter, not results’ is even more important at this age.
- Be realistic in what you expect from the players.
- Use game-related practice by giving the players a subset of the decisions they would have to make in a match. Make it competitive and make sure it’s realistically attuned to what will happen in a game.
- Educate and involve the parents. The more you do this at these age groups, the better the playing environment will be for the players and the easier your life will be!

### Some ideas for how to use match days for U7 and U8

- Quiet coaching is even more important at this age. Let them play!
- Be realistic. Don't worry that everyone's chasing the ball. They will start passing when they are ready.
- Give the players one thing to think about before a match and relate it to what you've done in training—e.g. if you work on crossing in training, you might say the target for the first half is to do five crosses.
- Think about how you are going to measure the success of that (the result in itself will not be a measure of success). One idea: print a sheet out with the goal set out, e.g. 'cross into the box', and get the subs to tick it each time they see it happen. Use it as the basis for the half-time analysis. (The subs can even lead the half-time analysis themselves.) This is a great way of keeping the subs involved and getting them watching the game closely.
- Think about what impact individual players can have on a match day and ask them to try it.

### Academy teams

A number of Summertown Stars players train at a development centre or academy. There are several such centres active in the area, including those run by Oxford United and Reading FC. Some centres are well-organised and serious; some are purely commercial and disappear after a period.

Joining a development centre can be a good thing. It gives the player extra training, which will also benefit your Summertown Stars team. The centres do not generally clash with grassroots football and players can continue playing for their club, except for the few players who are so skilled that they are signed up to academy team level.

It is entirely up to the parents/carers of these players whether to join a development centre. You as manager may be approached by scouts first (if the scout follows the right etiquette), in which case you can contact the parents. Useful advice to parents is that they should check the credibility of the development centre, and what the costs and time commitments will be.

And don't get carried away with any of this. From experience, youngsters ultimately just want to have fun playing football with their friends, and only a tiny fraction go on to play professional football. (Note that there are actually a few Summertown Stars players who made it to pros, including Ella Franklin-Fraiture, Joey Beauchamp, Niall Keown, Simon Stapleton and Horatio Hirst.)

## 11. Club guidance: substitution of players

Substitutions are among the most difficult decisions a manager has to make—you'll never get it right in the eyes of everyone! What a manager can do is communicate their approach to substitutions to players and parents. This handbook should help with that.

Having a few substitutes on match day is a good problem to have. It helps manage situations where players get tired or injured. There is nothing worse than having to play with too few players. In youth football rolling substitutions are allowed, so you can take players off and put them back on again.

In line with our club ethos, we follow an inclusive and fair approach towards substitutions. A basic principle is that any player who turns up on match day should get a substantial and fair amount of game time. So what does this mean?

- In age groups from U7 to U15 any player should ordinarily play at least two-thirds or three-quarters of the game.
- For U16–U18, minimum game time should be at least one-half of the game.
- The U7 to U10 age groups usually play a friendly after their 5v5 or 7v7 game, but every player should get a regular chance to play in the 'main' match.
- Over the course of a season, it should not always be the same players who get substituted (or who 'start on the bench').

There can be exceptions on specific match days when the squad has a very large number of substitutes. Substitution choices may also be driven by players' efforts during training, or their form or fitness or attitude on match day. In such cases, fair substitutions can be managed over a series of games throughout the season (for example, giving the substitutes greater game time in one of the next games).

Fairness issues often arise in younger age groups who play an official 5v5 or 7v7 league game followed by a friendly game, and for managers who enter small-sided tournaments with two teams. The good thing about playing post-match friendlies and entering two teams is that it allows managers to give all players a good amount of game time. However, in the spirit of inclusiveness, managers should avoid a perception of there being an 'A-team' and 'B-team' (and be mindful of the fact that the friendly game is inevitably seen by the players themselves as less important than the league game).

Anyone who has managed a football team knows the dilemma: you are holding on to a precarious 2–1 lead in a vital game, but it is player A's turn to be subbed off and he/she is your strongest defender; it is player B's turn to come on but he/she has less experience in defence. This sort of pressure on match day arises not just for competitive teams that have a chance of winning their league, but also for teams who have been losing 0–10 every week and could do with a win to boost team morale.

Nonetheless, Summertown Stars managers and coaches are expected to deal with such pressures sensibly within the spirit of our inclusive and fair substitution policy. We are not a professional or academy club where teams have their strongest 'starting 11' (or 9, 7, or 5) and make substitutions only for tactical reasons. We know from many years of experience that teams that take an inclusive approach are more fun, and more likely to stick together for many years.

## Some tips on substitutions from other Summertown Stars managers

- Communicate the approach to substitution and squad selection in advance to parents and players.
- Consider asking your players what approach to substitution they would like.
- Try to avoid the same players always starting as substitutes (while this may not matter for total game time, players often perceive starting on the bench as worse than coming off during the match).
- Try not to substitute a player just after a mistake; this will make them feel worse.
- All subs high-five the player coming off.
- Players often don't want to play in goal or defence—in such cases reward the goalie and defenders by giving them more game time. Players usually accept that the goalie plays the whole game.
- It is good for their development if players get to play in different positions.
- Choose the right time to sub, such as during slow periods like mid-first/second halves, or just after a goal.
- Do the maths. A 60-minute game of 9-a-side gives you 540 game minutes. If you have ten players, sub all of them off in turns every six minutes. Or use simpler rules-of-thumb: sub one player every ten minutes if you have ten (six subs in total); two players every 15 minutes if you have 11 (eight subs in total); or three players every 20 minutes if you have 12 (nine subs in total).
- Manage squad size—you always need extra players for the inevitable injuries and clashes with other activities. For 9-a-side you probably need a total of 13 players in the squad; for 11-a-side 15 (or up to 18–21 for older age groups). If really needed you can 'rest' players on particular match days (though that may not be ideal for team spirit, and children want to play football every weekend, even if their parents wouldn't mind a weekend off).
- Keep a record of substitutions. You may be more biased than you think. And if you're not, keeping a record helps you show to parents and players that you are less biased than they think.



## 12. Club guidance: splitting and streaming squads

Summertown Stars has the biggest number of players and teams in the boys' and girls' leagues in which we play. This is thanks to our reputation and our inclusive approach.

It begins in the U6/U7 age groups, with every season starting with a large number of players, both in the boys and the girls. It continues all the way up to the older age groups who play 11v11, where we often have two, three or even four Summertown Stars teams (currently more in boys' football than in girls' football).

This requires splitting age groups into teams. These days such splitting already happens in U7s for boys who play 5v5 league games (in the past, organised league football started in U9 in the 7v7 format, so the U7 and U8 squads could stay together longer). It happens for the girls in U8s when they start to play trophy events organised by the league.

The various managers in the age group should communicate and collaborate with each other. It may be helpful to appoint someone as the age group coordinator—alternatively, the managers must collectively coordinate team splits.

### Principles to bear in mind when splitting players into teams

- Bear in mind that team sizes increase when moving up through the age groups: 5v5 in U7–U8, 7v7 in U9–U10, 9v9 in U11–U12, and 11v11 in U13 and older (for boys); 5x5 in U8, 5v5 or 7x7 in U9, 7v7 in U10–U11, 9v9 in U12–U13, and 11v11 in U14 and older (for girls). It is therefore important to keep accepting new players in the age groups, as you will need more players later. For the boys we like to keep 40–50 players in each age group. You can have a waiting list if teams are full, but ideally if the waiting list is sufficiently long you would get another parent/carer to step forward as the manager and create a new team.
- When splitting teams, one practical consideration is that the managers must be split as well. Each team must have a qualified manager/coach, but sometimes your ideal split might have all three managers in the same team! In that case reconsider the split, or get other parents to volunteer. We do not recommend you managing a team which does not have your child in it—ultimately, you do this to enjoy time with your own children.
- Friendships matter to players, and children and teenagers usually just want to play with their friends. Try to take this into account. You can't please everyone, and football at Summertown Stars is a great way of making new friends from other schools as well. Consider canvassing opinions from the players, and try to make sure every player has at least a few friends in their team.

## Streaming players between seasons

There has always been some debate in Summertown Stars about streaming of players. By streaming we mean dividing teams within an age group by ability in between seasons. We do not mean treating players differently within a squad during the season—for this we refer to our guidance on substitutions and ‘A and B teams’ in section 11 above.

We believe that streaming from a certain age (U11+) is not inconsistent with the club philosophy that football is about fun and development. Its advantage is that it allows players to play at their own level. A strong player may wish to be pushed and learn more by playing in an A-division team. A less strong player may feel more confident and less pressured in a D-division team. Streaming can also be reversed—a player who moves to a lower-division team may develop very well (or even just grow taller) such that it may make sense to move them up again later.

In practice, streaming at Summertown Stars occurs to only a modest extent. We do not stream every age group in its entirety every season. Rather, players have moved between teams from time to time to match their level, and always in agreement between the relevant managers.

Streaming players has become more feasible in boys’ football in the last five years thanks to the large intake of new players every year and the large number of divisions within each age group of the league. With anything from one to six club teams in each age group, you can have one or two teams that play at a higher level.

In girls’ football streaming has been more difficult since we have only one or two teams in most age groups and the league has tended to have only one division per age group. But that is changing as girls’ football continues to expand, and we are now starting to see more than one division in more age groups.

Some degree of streaming may be appropriate from U11 in light of the above advantages, but it is not compulsory for age groups. Note that streaming is done before the start of the season. Once you have your squad for the season, the principles of fair substitution in section 11 of this handbook apply to the entire squad for the remainder of that season.

Streaming in the youngest age groups—from U7 to U10—is not advisable. At that stage it is difficult to predict how players will develop, and indeed streaming players too early can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In any event, any streaming from U11 must be done with utmost care and sensitivity. It must always stay in line with the club ethos. It must be done with close communication and collaboration among the managers in the age group. The approach to streaming must be communicated clearly to parents.

In practice, you and your fellow age group managers may take a pragmatic approach along the following lines:

- You don’t have to reshuffle all teams every season. You could do a degree of reshuffling every two or three years—perhaps as you move up to a bigger format (to 7v7, 9v9 or 11v11).
- You can stream ‘at the margin’, changing a couple of players to another team between seasons. This is less disruptive and easier to manage.

Streaming happens in both directions. Players will usually be thrilled to be asked to join a stronger team, but asking a player to join a lower-division team can make them feel like they’re being kicked out. You can point to the benefits of streaming for player development. The new manager can help

by making the new player feel welcome and emphasise how the new team will benefit from the player's experience. It also helps if two or three players are streamed to the lower-division team together so that no one player feels singled out.

Again, clear communication among managers is key, as is communication with the parents and players involved. We count on parents to support the decisions and help communicate them to the players.

There will not always be agreement among managers, or with the players or parents. The club executive team can help by giving guidance, and if needed act as arbiters in a dispute.

### Tips on splitting teams from other Summertown Stars managers

- **Tip 1:** Start the dialogue among the age group managers early, around April or May of the season before you anticipate making the change. This allows each manager to check how many of their own players will continue next season, and therefore how many teams you will have for the age group as a whole.
- **Tip 2:** Don't worry if you're short of players in May/June time. There are always new players contacting the club over the summer, given our reputation and inclusive approach. The children themselves can do some recruitment too (and the club can help). The biggest challenge is always finding a manager!

## 13. Football for all: girls, adults and inclusion

Summertown Stars has an inclusive approach, welcoming girls and boys age six and older. And we have created adult teams for men and women, in part by popular demand, and in part to ensure that the club has a pathway from youth to adult football.

### The growth of girls' football

Girls and women's football has seen a spectacular growth worldwide over the last ten years, and this has also been the case for Summertown Stars. More than a quarter of the club's playing members are female.

As well as a women's team (see below), we now have girls' teams in all age groups from U8 to U16, with training available from U6s. This represents a significant shift from a few years ago when many girls still played with the boys in the younger age groups (some of them successfully so, but we understand that girls mostly prefer to play other girls).

The club has worked hard to promote the growth of girls' football. For many years we have organised an annual girls' football tournament for the local primary schools, which has generated a lot of interest. We have engaged in formal partnerships with Oxford High and Cherwell School to promote girls' football in those secondary schools, and also to get girls involved in volunteering and refereeing.

More and more clubs in and around Oxford are creating girls' teams. This means that our Summertown girls' teams can play more teams from other clubs.

The next challenge is to get more women involved in coaching and management!





## Presenting the women's team: Summertown Ladies

Summertown Ladies play in the Thames Valley Counties Women's Football League and are currently in division 2 north. Alongside their league games through the season they also play in the A League Cup and County Cup.

The team has an age range from 16 to 50, which they are very proud of as this is how they like the team to be, creating a family atmosphere. Ability is not an issue. Summertown Ladies have players of all abilities training and playing for the team. Of course everyone loves to win, but the objective of Summertown Ladies is 'to enjoy the game we play'.

The team is very social and has given women of all ages a lot more confidence. They train hard but, more importantly, have a good time playing football. With more players they could consider a second team, but for now they have a comfortable 13–15 players every week. With the growth in the number of girls' teams up to U16 (currently the oldest girls' age group in the league), we hope that more girls will continue football beyond U16 by joining Summertown Ladies.



## Presenting the men's teams: Summertown AFC and Summertown Development

The men's teams are known in the men's leagues as Summertown AFC and Summertown Development AFC.

The Summertown AFC team plays in the Oxfordshire Senior League, which is made up of three divisions, with the Premier League being a step-7 league on the football pyramid. They compete in several County Cups, including the Senior Cup and Charity Cup.

The Summertown Development AFC team plays in the Oxford City Football League. Within the Development team there is an option for players to progress into the senior squad and develop their footballing ability.

Summertown AFC recruits players through the club website and by word-of-mouth. New players attend pre-season training and games throughout the summer period. When joining during the season, they will train with the team for a set number of weeks to assess their fitness and attributes.

The team then discusses with the players their goals for the season, and whether they are ready to join or would benefit from some extra weeks of trial. This has proved a successful strategy as the team has two first-team players who had never played 11-a-side football before joining the club.



### Summertown AFC's objectives

- We work with all players who join our club or come from our youth teams.
- We have a responsibility to develop potential young players both technically and personally in a challenging but safe and supportive environment. This is an area where they can develop and express themselves along the pathway to their personal goals. Players participating in our system will be treated fairly and with respect, and given advice in a manner which will produce young men and footballers we can be proud of.
- Ultimately our number one aim is to develop players who will progress and one day play for the first team. The players who do not achieve this will hopefully have benefited from their time at the club.

Summertown AFC has a team-bonding programme that it works really hard at. Everyone on the team is made to feel part of it. They arrange social meetings and use social media to communicate with each other outside of football, and stay in touch with former players. The players are very supportive of each other and welcome supportive comments during matches and at training.

Our men's teams champion good behaviour and respect in adult football, as witnessed by Summertown AFC winning the Fair Play Award for the entire Oxfordshire Senior League in the 2018–19 season.

There is a pathway from the U17/U18 age groups to the adult team. Managers of those teams are periodically asked if they have any players who would like to experience training or playing at the adult level (this does not mean that they have to give up the level they are playing at currently). It's a



valuable experience for them. The men's team is also planning to attend more youth games and training sessions in order to be seen as part of the club and not just an adult men's team.

### Supporting disability football and inclusion

Summertown Stars supports the OFA's initiatives on disability football and inclusion. For many years we ran our own team for the visually impaired, the Summertown Sabres. We are now working with the OFA to provide for disability football opportunities as part of the development of the new football hub at Cherwell School.

We also seek to promote inclusion and participation in football in the community. In addition to our successes in promoting girls' football, we are looking into enhancing participation among under-represented parts of the local community.

### Supporting football through charities

Through our massive parent base, Summertown Stars has always sought to support football in other parts of the world through charities. In the past we have sent used kit and football boots to a school in South Africa. In recent years we have successfully collected lots of kits and boots during the 5-a-side tournament for a charity in Myanmar. The PTH Foundation runs a football programme in Thaton, southern Myanmar, in which approximately 80 children aged 9 to 14 play several times a week (see photo). They have training and play matches. The programme also has many girls playing (culturally this is not always accepted in Myanmar, even if girls want to play). Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to the charity, and in particular the individuals who have collected and transported all the goods on their way to Myanmar!





## 14. The referee

The leagues normally appoint referees. Details are posted on the relevant FA Full-Time website and communicated via email from the Fixtures Secretary (see section 8 of this handbook).

Managers pay the referee before the match, and the club reimburses the manager. Referee fees are currently £25 for U7 to U12; £30 for U13 to U14 (and U15 boys); £35 for U15 girls, all U16 and over, and women's; and £40–£45 for the men's (not applicable if a parent volunteer referees the match).

There is a dire shortage of referees in Oxfordshire (and beyond). A major cause of this is the abuse and lack of respect that referees get every weekend, usually from adult spectators and managers and coaches rather than from youth players. Many young referees are demoralised by this and give up refereeing altogether.

Summertown Stars players, managers, coaches and spectators should at all times treat referees with respect, in line with our codes of conduct (see section 16 of this handbook). They should also endeavour to praise and encourage young referees after the game, even when they have made mistakes.

The club proactively encourages young players from the age of 14 to take part in the official FA Refereeing Course, which is regularly provided by the OFA. This not only helps the FA address the referee shortage, it also gives young players a different and healthy perspective on the game, and the opportunity to earn some extra money at the weekend!

Those taking the course often pay for it themselves, but the club is willing to pay on request, in exchange for refereeing four Summertown Stars games for free once qualified.

### Assistant referee guidance

For 9v9 and 11v11 football, teams are required to provide their own assistant referee for each match (aka linesman or lino). This is usually a parent. Each assistant referee runs the line on the side where their own team defend and the other team attack. To ensure the appearance of impartiality, assistant referees should not coach or provide partisan comments from the touch-line.

Decisions by the assistant referee, especially offside, can be as much a source of contention in grassroots football as in the Premier League. Again, players, managers, coaches and spectators are expected to treat assistant referees, who are considered match officials, with respect and accept that mistakes will be made.

## League guidance for assistant referees

Club assistant referees fulfil a vital role in ensuring that football is played in a fair and sporting manner. Their contribution to helping the referee fulfil his or her role should not be underestimated.

If you are one of the many who every weekend plough a furrow up and down the touch-line then the following are a few guidelines that will hopefully give you a better understanding of how you can help the referee and thus help you to enjoy your time with the flag. Please remember these are only guidelines, as each referee will have their own requirements.

Club assistant referees should report to the referee before the game and the referee will provide a flag. The referee will normally brief both assistants together to build a team rapport and to ensure consistency of information.

- **Touch-line:** ball out of play. Indicate when the whole of the ball crosses the touch-line, either on the ground or in the air, and indicate which side is entitled to the throw.
- **Goal-line:** ball out of play. Indicate that the ball is out of play. For goal kicks check that the ball is within the goal area. For corner kicks check that the ball is totally within the quarter circle. Stand behind the corner flag for all corner kicks—you will then be in an ideal position to judge ball in or out of play.

Referees may ask you to judge offside, but this is down to the individual referee.

Use your flag to indicate when an attacker is in an offside position, but, unless the referee instructs you otherwise, consider first whether the attacker is interfering with play because being in an offside position is not in itself an offence (e.g. an attacker on the left wing should not be signalled offside if the ball is passed to another attacker on the right wing). Also remember that a player is offside if they clearly attempt to play the ball even if they do not touch it.

Please note that the decision regarding offside is at all times made by the referee on the advice of the club assistant referee. If the referee decides not to give offside, they will acknowledge the club assistant referee's signal and the club assistant referee should then lower their flag.

Flagging fouls and misconduct is the prerogative of the referee. Club assistant referees must make no indications on such matters.

The running of the game of football is very much a team job between the referee and their two club assistant referees. It is an important job and, if carried out in the proper manner, the game will be better enjoyed by the players, spectators and the match officials. Remember that it is the club assistant referee's duty to assist the referee, but that only the referee makes decisions.

It is hoped that these few tips will help you as a club assistant referee, but the most important thing is that you enjoy this vital role in helping the referee.

## 15. Safeguarding and child welfare

Summertown Stars fully endorses the FA's safeguarding and child welfare policies. All children have the right to take part in football and the clubs and all adults involved are responsible for providing an environment that is **fun, inclusive and safe** for any child. Our full safeguarding and welfare policies can be found on [www.summertownstars.org](http://www.summertownstars.org).

Welfare includes protecting children from abuse, and covers all areas of discrimination, bullying, disability, physical and mental health, ethical behaviour, drugs and alcohol, and economic hardship, as well as the serious offences against children such as neglect and sexual abuse that are often reported in the press.

The following are key pillars to our approach to safeguarding, overseen by our Club Welfare Officer.

- First, we ensure that all coaches and managers who work with children have DBS checks—there are no exceptions to this rule.
- Second, as a Charter Standard Community Club we undergo an annual 'health check' to ensure that all coaches and managers have up-to-date certifications, both for Emergency First Aid and Safeguarding Children. We also have expert coaches and other professionals advising the club and team managers on a regular basis.
- Third, the club takes the FA Respect campaign very seriously and implements it at all home matches. It is about respecting everyone in the game, and actively tackling the aggressive culture that has marred youth football in the past. This involves everyone engaging in good behaviour—including managers and spectators on the touch-line—by respecting referee decisions and supporting both sides in the spirit of fair play. See also our codes of conduct in section 16 below.
- Finally, we must all stay vigilant. Any behaviour which leads to concerns of any sort, however trivial they may seem, should be reported in confidence to the Welfare Officer. The Welfare Officer works closely with the welfare team at the OFA, and also with the police or other authorities as necessary.

The welfare of our children is paramount. It is also the culture of Summertown Stars that we value fair play over winning and believe in developing the skills of our young players. This depends on all of us, both to maintain these standards and to ensure that football is played for the right reasons: for the fun of the game, and for the benefit of the players on the pitch.



## How we deal with any concerns or complaints

Managers, coaches, parents/carers and players are encouraged at all times to raise any questions or issues with the club.

We have a complaints procedure that seeks to deal with matters sensibly and fairly, starting with more informal approaches and then moving to more a formal process if needed.

The first stage always involves raising the complaint directly with the person responsible, as in many cases this is the quickest way to resolve issues, possibly with some guidance from the club.

Alternatively, people can raise the issue with the Club Welfare Officer or other member of the executive team, who will deal with the matter relatively informally in the first instance (in consultation with the executive team and all parties involved, and recording matters in writing).

If needed, the matter can move to a more formal stage where the Club Welfare Officer appoints a panel of club representatives to make a decision.

Cases may also (we would expect exceptionally) be escalated to the FA or Independent Football Ombudsman.

The full complaints procedure and complaint form can be found on our website:

[www.summertownstars.org](http://www.summertownstars.org).

## Emergencies and ambulances

All managers should have up-to-date first-aid kits, and should familiarise themselves with first-aid points at the venues they are visiting. Note also that all 999 or 112 emergency calls will request a postcode for the incident location.

Thankfully, serious accidents are unusual, but they do happen. In the event of an accident:

- Stay calm but act swiftly and observe the situation. Is there danger of further injuries?
- Listen to what the injured person is saying and alert the first-aider, who should take appropriate action for minor injuries.
- If an injury requires specialist treatment, call the emergency services.
- Deal with the rest of the group and ensure that they are adequately supervised.
- Do not move someone with suspected major injuries. Wait for the emergency services.
- Contact the injured person's parent/carer. Note: all managers must have contact details on file for all their players' parents/carers, and have these with them at training sessions and matches.
- Complete an accident/incident report and share this with the Club Welfare Officer.

There are emergency and ambulance action plans for both Five Mile Drive and Cutteslowe Park. These can be downloaded from our website. Managers should share these with opposition teams visiting these sites.

Defibrillators save lives, and every second counts with cardiac arrests. Make sure you and parents in the team know the location of the defibrillator at the beginning of the season. As a qualified manager, you might be the only first-aid-trained adult around in the event of a collapse or cardiac arrest, and if so, another adult needs to run and fetch the defibrillator. Training on its use is provided at the FA course, but if you would like to familiarise yourself with the club's defibs please contact [enquiries@summertownstars.org](mailto:enquiries@summertownstars.org).

At Five Mile Drive the ambulance can stop on the street reasonably close to the playing area. The postcode is OX2 8HT. The equipment container has an extra first-aid kit and a defibrillator.

For Cutteslowe Park, the A&E services have been issued with the bollard code to access the park. In any event, tell them they need to access via Harbord Road—the postcode is OX2 8LH. Usually the gate is not locked (note that it sometimes appears to be locked but isn't, so double-check this), but if locked call the Oxford City Park Rangers for assistance on 07711 439090—this number is connected to the duty manager throughout the weekend. The lower pavilion has an extra first-aid kit and a defibrillator.

The nearest A&E services are at the John Radcliffe Hospital. This is easy to reach from both sites. Drive down Banbury Road to the roundabout and junction with A40 (the ring road). Turn left and follow the A40 for around 2 miles. Leave the road at the first junction (follow signs for JR Hospital which are clearly marked) and join the B4150. Follow this road for 3 minutes until you reach the junction with Headley Way (B4495). After 2 minutes turn left into the hospital car park. Follow signs to A&E.

### Dealing with concussions

Concussions are increasingly recognised as a serious health and safety risk. The FA guidance is clear: 'If in doubt, sit them out.'<sup>9</sup>

A concussion is an injury to the brain. There are many symptoms of concussion, common ones being headache, dizziness, memory disturbance or balance problems.

All concussions should be regarded as potentially serious and should be managed in accordance with the appropriate guidelines.

Concussion can be caused by a direct blow to the head, but can also occur when a blow to another part of the body results in rapid movement of the head, e.g. whiplash-type injuries.

The symptoms of concussion typically appear immediately, but their onset may be delayed and can appear at any time after the initial injury. Loss of consciousness does not occur in the majority of concussions. If the person cannot answer questions like the following, this may indicate a concussion: What venue are we at today? Which half is it now? Who scored last in this game? What team did you play last week? Did your team win the last game?

Anyone with any concussion symptoms following a head injury must be removed from playing or training. There must be no return to play on the day of any suspected concussion. It is important that you as manager make this decision, even if it is a difficult one (and difficult for the player to accept).

In all cases of suspected concussion it is recommended that the player is referred to a medical or healthcare professional for diagnosis and advice, even if the symptoms subside. The player should not be left alone for the first 24 hours. As manager please ensure you communicate this clearly with the responsible parent/carer.

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<sup>9</sup> The guidance can be found on [www.thefa.com](http://www.thefa.com).

## Policy on headers

Following recent media coverage and discussions with managers and parents, and as part of our duty of care to protect the welfare of young players, Summertown Stars AFC has adopted the following policy on headers.

Concussions are a serious health and safety risk in football (as noted above), and headers are one potential cause of concussions. There is growing medical evidence on the dangers of heading the ball. The US Youth Soccer Association has banned heading in training and matches up to U11s and limited heading in training for U12–U13s. We understand that the FA is currently looking into the matter (it has been for a while!), but we feel that it is important to be proactive as a grassroots club.

Our policy is therefore as follows:

- We strongly recommend avoiding any headers in training and matches for girls' and boys' teams in the 5v5, 7v7 and 9v9 age groups (from U6s, to U12 boys and U13 girls).
- We recommend that 11v11 age groups (U13+ boys, U14+ girls) try to limit headers as much as possible in training and matches.
- We accept that unilaterally not heading the ball during matches may give some marginal advantage to the opposition. More competitive teams who wish to make use of headers are encouraged to limit these to situations like corners, but not, for example, long goalkeeper kicks (there are alternatives to heading that can be covered during training). They are also encouraged to teach players proper heading techniques.
- We recommend that teams use training and match footballs with a 'softer feel' (the club will try to identify these; the yellow Nike training balls have a soft feel). We also recommend that teams do not inflate training balls above 0.5 bar, and match balls above 0.6 bar (which is currently the FA-required minimum pressure).

## Data protection and privacy

Our data protection policy is published on our website. In a nutshell, at Summertown Stars we take your privacy very seriously.

You provide information about yourself when you register, and by filling in forms at an event or online, or by corresponding with us by phone, email or otherwise. We are the data controller, responsible for the processing of any personal data you give us. We take reasonable care to keep your information secure and to prevent any unauthorised access to or use of it.

The reason we need participants' and members' personal data is to be able to run the football club and arrange matches; to administer memberships; and provide the membership services you are signing up to when you register with the club. Our lawful basis for processing your personal data is that we have a contractual obligation to you as a participant or member to provide the services you are registering for.

When you become a member of the club, if you are a manager, coach or other volunteer with a role in the club or team, your information will be entered onto the Whole Game System database, which is administered by the FA. We also pass your information to the County FA and to leagues to register participants and the team for matches, tournaments or other events, and for affiliation purposes.

We have put in place appropriate security measures to prevent your personal data from being accidentally lost, used or accessed in an unauthorised way. We keep personal data on our participants and members while they continue to be a member. We delete this data as soon as

possible after a member has left, or sooner if specifically requested and we are able to do so. We may need to retain some personal data for longer for legal or regulatory purposes. The personal data that is stored on Whole Game System is subject to the FA's privacy policy so we advise you review that policy in addition to our own.

You have the right at any time to request access to, or rectification or erasure of your personal data. If you have any questions please contact the Data Protection Officer at [data-protection@summertownstars.org](mailto:data-protection@summertownstars.org).

### Policy on photography

The club recognises that, for certain specified purposes, the photographing and videoing of children is appropriate, but it also recognises the potential child protection and safeguarding issues arising when photographs or filming is undertaken.

To that end:

- as regards photography/videoing for or on behalf of the club, the club does permit playing members to be photographed or videoed for news, publicity and training purposes (which may include publication on social media), provided that players are not identified by name;
- when a player is registered with the club, the permission of that player's parent/carer is sought for their child to be photographed and videoed for those specified purposes;
- no child will be photographed and videoed other than in suitable clothing;
- any professional or press photographers invited to any club event will be expected to comply with NSPCC guidance on the taking, use and storing of photographic images;
- photographers will not be allowed unsupervised access to any players;
- as regards personal photography/videoing, where a parent/carer of any child seeks to take a photograph or video which includes another child, this is permitted provided that they are only for personal use, but, save with the express consent of all the children concerned and those with parental responsibility for them, such photographs or videoing must not be published or shared on any social media platform, and nor must any child be named.



## 16. Respect: codes of conduct

There is a significant respect problem in football. You can see this from the Premier League all the way down to grassroots children's football. It is mostly adults who contribute to the problem, not children. The FA continues to place strong emphasis on its Respect programme ('We Only Do Positive'): <http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/respect/we-only-do-positive>.

Summertown Stars fully supports the Respect programme. We have adopted Respect codes of conduct developed by the FA for (1) young players; (2) adult players; (3) coaches, managers and club officials; and (4) spectators and parents/carers. These codes are reproduced below.

The codes of conduct apply at all times to everyone involved in the club. Every player and parent/carer is asked to sign up to these codes at the start of each season when completing their membership registration. Managers and coaches, who will have signed these codes, will also sign any further codes of conduct required by the leagues, and are expected to set an example.

'Code of conduct' sounds rather formal, but really the rules on respect are about common sense and positive and respectful behaviour.

In addition to the codes of conduct, we fully cooperate with the FA and the leagues in their initiatives to enhance respect in the game. We sometimes have volunteer match-day delegates at our grounds to encourage respectful behaviour. We always put respect barriers up at matches for spectators to stand behind, which is good practice and now required by most leagues. Likewise, all matches must have a technical area for each team in which the managers, coaches and substitutes must remain.

Managers and parents/carers are encouraged to report any concerns about lack of respect during matches.

### Code of conduct for young players

When playing football I will:

- Always play my best and for the benefit of my team
- Play fairly and be friendly
- Play by the rules and respect the referee
- Shake hands with the other team—win or lose
- Listen carefully to what my coach tells me
- Understand that a coach has to do what is best for the team
- Talk to someone I trust or the Club Welfare Officer if I'm unhappy about anything at my club
- Encourage my team mates
- Respect the facilities home and away.

I understand that if I do not follow the Code, I may:

- Be asked to apologise to whomever I've upset
- Receive a formal warning
- Be dropped, substituted or suspended from training.

## Code of conduct for adult players

On and off the field, I will:

- Stick to the rules and celebrate the spirit of the game
- Always show respect to everyone involved in the game
- Never engage in public criticism of the match officials, and always abide by their final decisions
- Win or lose with dignity, and shake hands at the end of every game
- Be aware of the potential impact of bad language on others
- Never engage in abusive language, bullying or intimidating behaviour.

I understand that if I do not follow the Code, I may:

- Be asked to apologise to whomever I've upset
- Receive a formal warning
- Be required to attend an FA education course
- Be dropped, substituted or suspended from training
- Not be selected for the team
- Be issued a fine and/or asked to leave the club.

## Code of conduct for coaches, managers and club officials

On and off the field, I will:

- Always show respect to everyone involved in the game
- Stick to the rules and celebrate the spirit of the game
- Encourage fair play and high standards of behaviour
- Always respect the referee and encourage players to do the same
- Never enter the field of play without the referee's permission
- Stay inside the technical area
- Never engage in, or tolerate, offensive, insulting or abusive behaviour
- Be aware of the potential impact of bad language on others
- Be gracious in victory and defeat
- Respect the facilities home and away.

When working with players, I will:

- Place the well-being, safety and enjoyment of each player above everything
- Never tolerate any form of bullying
- Ensure that all activities are suited to the players' ability and age
- Work with others (e.g. officials, doctors, physiotherapists, welfare officers) for each player's best interests.

I understand that if I do not follow the Code, I may:

- Be required to meet with the club, league or county welfare officer
- Be suspended by the club from attending matches
- Be suspended or fined by the County FA
- Lose my position at the club, be asked to leave the club, or lose my coaching licence.

## Code of conduct for spectators and parents/carers

I will:

- Remember that children play for fun
- Celebrate effort and good play from both sides
- Always respect the referee's decisions, even I don't agree with them
- Stay behind the touch-line/respect barrier
- Let the coaches do their job and not confuse the players by telling them what to do
- Encourage the players to respect the opposition, referee and coaches
- Support positively, and offer players encouragement not criticism
- Never engage in, nor tolerate, offensive, insulting or abusive language or behaviour.

I understand that if I do not follow the Code, I may be:

- Issued with a verbal warning or asked to leave the match venue
- Required to meet with the club committee, league or county welfare officer
- Obligated to undertake an FA education course
- Issued a fine, requested not to attend future games, or be suspended
- Required to leave the club along with any dependents.

## 17. And finally ... some useful information and contact details

Details of the members of the club executive team and other club officials are listed on our website, [www.summertownstars.org](http://www.summertownstars.org). Here are some of the key email addresses. The enquiries email is for any general query, including about joining the club.

Enquiries	<a href="mailto:enquiries@summertownstars.org">enquiries@summertownstars.org</a>
Chair	<a href="mailto:chair@summertownstars.org">chair@summertownstars.org</a>
Club Secretary	<a href="mailto:secretary@summertownstars.org">secretary@summertownstars.org</a>
Treasurer	<a href="mailto:treasurer@summertownstars.org">treasurer@summertownstars.org</a>
Fixtures Secretary	<a href="mailto:fixtures@summertownstars.org">fixtures@summertownstars.org</a>
Club Welfare Officer	<a href="mailto:welfare@summertownstars.org">welfare@summertownstars.org</a>
Data Protection Officer	<a href="mailto:data-protection@summertownstars.org">data-protection@summertownstars.org</a>
Equipment Officer	<a href="mailto:equipment@summertownstars.org">equipment@summertownstars.org</a>
Club Administrator	<a href="mailto:administrator@summertownstars.org">administrator@summertownstars.org</a>
School liaison	<a href="mailto:school-liaison@summertownstars.org">school-liaison@summertownstars.org</a>

Our 5v5 and 9v9 pitches are located at:

The Recreation Grounds  
Five Mile Drive  
Oxford, OX2 8HT

Parking is available on Five Mile Drive itself (please respect the local residents).

Our 7v7 and 11v11 pitches are located at:

Cuttleslowe Park  
Oxford, OX2 8LH

Parking is available at the Harbord Road entrance to Cuttleslowe Park. Note that there is a car park charge of £2.00 for up to 3 hours (special arrangements apply to our annual tournament).

From the 2019–20 season we will be playing some games at the Cherwell School south site. The address is Marston Ferry Road, Oxford, OX2 7EF.

For club news follow us on Twitter (@SummertStarsAFC) and Facebook (Summertown-Stars-Football-Club). Important club and team information can be found on our website, [www.summertownstars.org](http://www.summertownstars.org).

League websites (where you can find relevant forms and check your fixture dates):

Oxfordshire FA <http://www.oxfordshirefa.com/>

Oxford Mail Girls Football League (OMGFL)

<https://fulltime.thefa.com/ff/LeagueDetails?leagueid=7702944> (for fixtures and leagues)

[www.ogfl.com](http://www.ogfl.com) (for rulebook, handbook, forms and other information)

Oxford Mail Youth Football League (OMYFL)

<https://fulltime.thefa.com/ff/LeagueDetails?leagueid=6306575> (for fixtures and leagues)

[www.oyfl.co.uk](http://www.oyfl.co.uk)  
(for rulebook, handbook, forms and other information)

Thames Valley Counties Women's Football League

<https://fulltime.thefa.com/ff/LeagueDetails?leagueid=9687504>

Kit contact: Blue Blood Sports, Covered Market, Oxford

<http://oxford-coveredmarket.co.uk/trader/blue-blood-sports/>

Jim White's *You'll Win Nothing with Kids: Fathers, Sons and Football* (2007) is available from Blackwells and Amazon.