



YOUTH FOOTBALL

FRAMEWORK

ROADMAP



Let them play.

Foundation-First Approach

Introducing new practices, policies and/or formats with the youngest age groups first.

Key Considerations

- Not pull anyone back a format
- Ensure adequate lead in time
- Time to transition naturally
- On-going monitoring and assessment
- Priority = Education (coach & parent)
- Increasing Youth Football Investment

Youth Football Framework Purpose

Guarantee an active game that generates maximum enjoyment and technical development for every child.

Framework Pillars

GAME

EDUCATION

ENVIRONMENT

GOVERNANCE

5 Years

Key Priority:

2024/2025

Youth Framework Workshops

2025/2026

Youth League Accreditation

2026/2027

National Coaching Certificate

2027/2028

Environment Implementation

2028/2029

UEFA C Diploma

GAME





GAME 2025/26

Age	6	7	8	9
Key Stage	Key Stage 1		Key Stage 2	
Sport NI	Physical Literacy			
Learning Environment	FUNdamentals			Learning the Game
3v3	✓	✓	✓	✓
5v5			✓	✓
7v7				
9v9				
11v11				





GAME 2026/27

Age	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19+
Key Stage	Key Stage 1		Key Stage 2			Key Stage 3			Key Stage 4		Further Education			
Sport NI	Physical Literacy			Community Based Sport & Physical Activity					Support for Sporting Excellence					
Learning Environment	FUNdamentals		Learning the Game			Talent Development			Elite Player Development					
3v3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5v5			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7v7					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9v9							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11v11									✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



EDUCATION



YOUTH FOOTBALL CHARTER

2025/26



Philosophy of Youth Football

Nine Children's Rights

Parents – Players – Coaches



EDUCATION





EDUCATION

2025/26

OUTFIELD

NIFL Academy	Age	Format	Youth Football
	6	3 v 3	Irish FA Introduction to Grassroots Football
	7	3 v 3	Irish FA National Coaching Certificate (NCC)

GOALKEEPER

NIFL Academy	Age	Format	Youth Football
	6	3 v 3	
	7	3 v 3	



EDUCATION

2026/27

OUTFIELD

NIFL Academy	Age	Format	Youth Football
	6	3 v 3	Irish FA Introduction to Grassroots Football
	7	3 v 3	Irish FA National Coaching Certificate (NCC)
	8	5 v 5	
	9	5 v 5	
	10	7 v 7	
	11	7 v 7	
	12		
UEFA B Youth Diploma	13		
	14		
	15		
	16		
	17		

GOALKEEPER

NIFL Academy	Age	Format	Youth Football
	6	3 v 3	
	7	3 v 3	
	8	5 v 5	Irish FA Grassroots Introduction to Goalkeeping
	9	5 v 5	
	10	7 v 7	
	11	7 v 7	
	12		
Irish FA Goalkeeping C Diploma	13		
	14		
	15		
	16		
	17		



EDUCATION

2027/28

OUTFIELD

NIFL Academy	Age	Format	Youth Football
	6	3 v 3	Irish FA Introduction to Grassroots Football
	7	3 v 3	Irish FA National Coaching Certificate (NCC)
	8	5 v 5	
	9	5 v 5	
	10	7 v 7	
	11	7 v 7	
	12	9 v 9	UEFA C Diploma
UEFA B Youth Diploma	13		
	14		
	15		
	16		
	17		
UEFA A Diploma	18		

GOALKEEPER

NIFL Academy	Age	Format	Youth Football
	6	3 v 3	
	7	3 v 3	
	8	5 v 5	Irish FA Grassroots Introduction to Goalkeeping
	9	5 v 5	
	10	7 v 7	
	11	7 v 7	
	12	9 v 9	Irish FA National Coaching Certificate (NCC) - Goalkeeping
Irish FA Goalkeeping C Diploma	13		
	14		
	15		
	16		
	17		
UEFA Goalkeeping B Diploma	18		



EDUCATION

2028/29

OUTFIELD

NIFL Academy	Age	Format	Youth Football
	6	3 v 3	Irish FA Introduction to Grassroots Football
	7	3 v 3	Irish FA National Coaching Certificate (NCC)
	8	5 v 5	
	9	5 v 5	
	10	7 v 7	
	11	7 v 7	
	12	9 v 9	UEFA C Diploma
UEFA B Youth Diploma	13	9 v 9	
	14	11 v 11	
	15	11 v 11	
	16	11 v 11	
	17	11 v 11	
UEFA A Diploma	18	11 v 11	

GOALKEEPER

NIFL Academy	Age	Format	Youth Football
	6	3 v 3	
	7	3 v 3	
	8	5 v 5	
	9	5 v 5	Irish FA Grassroots Introduction to Goalkeeping
	10	7 v 7	
	11	7 v 7	
Irish FA Goalkeeping C Diploma	12	9 v 9	Irish FA National Coaching Certificate (NCC) - Goalkeeping
	13	9 v 9	
	14	11 v 11	
	15	11 v 11	
	16	11 v 11	
UEFA Goalkeeping B Diploma	17	11 v 11	
	18	11 v 11	

ENVIRONMENT

2025/2026



**Scores /
League Tables**
U12 - U18



**Safeguarding /
Welfare**
Mandatory Policies



Spectators
Respect Barrier

ENVIRONMENT

2025/2026



**Scores /
League Tables**
U12 - U18



**Safeguarding /
Welfare**
Mandatory Policies



Spectators
Respect Barrier

2026/2027: U9 and below



Coaches
On the same side



Playing Time
50% Minimum



Tournaments / Festivals
Child Centred



Referees
U10 - U18



Seasonal Break
Rest / Reflection



Playing Out of Age
Learning Environment

ENVIRONMENT

2025/2026



**Scores /
League Tables**
U12 - U18



**Safeguarding /
Welfare**
Mandatory Policies



Spectators
Respect Barrier

2026/2027: U9 and below



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On the same side



Playing Time
50% Minimum



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U10 - U18



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Playing Out of Age
Learning Environment

2027/2028: U10 - U18



GOVERNANCE



GOVERNANCE



Irish FA



NISFA

Primary Schools
Post Primary Schools



NIYFA

Small Sided Game Centres
Youth Leagues

**Unaffiliated
Leagues**

2025/2026

All schools football affiliates
to Northern Ireland Schools'
Football Association

2025/2026

All youth football affiliates to
Northern Ireland Youth Football
Association

GOVERNANCE



Player Registration

Comet
25/26 = U9 +
26/27 = U6 +

Academy Licence

2025/26
NIFL Academy
Criteria Developed

GOVERNANCE



Discipline

2026/27
Enhanced Education
Interventions

Youth League Accreditation

2025/26
Co-Designed and
Developed

2026/27
Implemented