

Lawford Football Club

School Lane, Lawford, Essex, CO11 2HZ



STATEMENT OF DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS

Summary

- Drawn from Lawford and its surrounding area, more than 230 children, young people and adults enjoy playing at the Club in a safe and friendly environment.
- The Club seeks to make participation in football available to as many individuals as possible within the local community, providing a pathway from junior to youth and ultimately senior football.
- The Club supports the development of players, encompassing both physical and mental wellbeing. Central to the ethos of the Club is that participation in football is a positive experience.
- All sections of the Club have been accredited with FA Charter Standard status.
- The Club plans to build capacity for future growth through the development of an all-weather training surface to complement its existing facilities, enabling expansion of community participation and diversity.

Background

Lawford Lads was founded in 1949. While Lads was included in the name as most of the original players were aged under 18 years, the Lads evolved into a club for adult male players, but they also later introduced a Ladies team too. Lawford Juniors was established in 1975 as a club for boys and girls aged from 6 to 18. The two clubs rubbed alongside each other, sharing the same site at School Lane in Lawford.

As part of a football development plan agreed with Essex County Football Association, Lawford Lads, Ladies and Lawford Juniors came together in 2015 to form 'One Club', Lawford Football Club. Today the combined Club is thriving with 14 teams, including two men's teams, a women's team and eleven teams in the junior / youth age group together with a development squad of players aged under 6.

Community Participation

More than 230 children, young people and adults enjoy playing at the Club in a safe and friendly environment. Drawn from Lawford and its surrounding area, the current club membership includes -

Youth and Junior: 159

Men: 53

Women: 21

A key element of the football development plan was to provide a smooth pathway from junior to youth and ultimately senior football. Junior teams sustain youth teams and they sustain senior football. There is clearly a dependency on the development and retention of younger players to feed through and support the senior teams. This vision is now a reality.

The Club's current U18s and Reserves team train together, while several U18s players feature in the matchday squads for both the First Team and the Reserves. Helping to facilitate a smooth transition for players across the age groups has strengthened the sense of being "One Club" but also the Club's ability to provide the local community with an opportunity to participate in the sport.

The Club has always sought to make participation in football available to as many individuals as possible within the local community. Specifically, the subscription fee for junior and youth players are set at a low

level compared to other local football clubs, while ensuring that the Club is in a stable financial position and is also able to fund some investment in its further development.

The low level of subscription fees for senior players reflects a strong commitment to facilitate the transition from youth to senior football within the Club but is also recognition of the fact that some senior players could be paid on a semi-professional basis at other clubs in the local area.

Investing in People

Through participation in football the Club seeks to support the development of each player. This is more than simply improving a player's technical skills, it encompasses physical and mental wellbeing, helping to build confidence and resilience, developing communication skills, respect for others and working as part of team.

Training is provided for players at least once a week, while every player also has the opportunity to participate in weekly competitive matches or development games during the season. All players are provided with football kit (shirts, shorts and socks) for the season. The Club supports team managers and coaches including funding for FA (Football Association) coaching courses. The Club also funds the services of a professional trainer for some of the senior teams and the U18s team.

The Club supports the training and development of new referees. Match officials, are an essential element of any competitive fixture, ensuring that the laws of the game are followed in the interest of both fairness and safety. Over recent years several youth players have qualified as referees, with the Club helping fund course costs and providing development opportunities.

A Positive Experience as part of the local community

Central to the ethos of the Club is that participation in football is a positive experience for members.

Following the merger of Lawford Lads, Ladies and Lawford Juniors, the Club has produced a regular newsletter that shares information and experiences, helping to bind the new club together. Articles are often testament to the support the Club provides beyond football training. One recent edition recounted the welcome support to a young player who was dealing with a serious medical condition, and an article written by the parents of a child with diagnosed with ADHD. The latter wrote "the coaches showed patience, persistence and understanding which not only helped him but also reassured us as parents that we were at a football club that cared."

Each year the Club hosts a five a-side tournament, which is an important source of funding. In 2019 around 70 local teams and over 400 players participated in the tournament. This is regarded as one of the best organised competitions in the area. Visiting teams were kind enough to let the Club know that they had enjoyed the day with comments such as "Fantastic tournament, incredibly well organised and run" and "brilliant day and brilliantly organised."

The Club also supports events through which it helps contribute towards other good causes such as the Pink Ribbon Foundation, MacMillan Cancer Support and the Chris Clarke Challenge Cup.

Sound Foundations

All sections of the Club have been accredited with FA Charter Standard status. The FA Charter Standard is an accreditation scheme for grassroots football clubs. According to the FA "Clubs which achieve FA Charter Standard status can be proud to be the best place for people to play and enjoy football. They are able to demonstrate they offer positive football environments where people can develop their skills, keep fit and enjoy playing as part of a friendly, inclusive community."

The formation of 'One Club' has resulted in a stronger and more secure organisation. It has strengthened the breadth and depth of the management team and helped ensure that the Club remains in a solid financial position.

The Club continues to appreciate the support of Lawford Parish Council, who own the site at School Lane. Working with the Parish Council, the Club has developed excellent facilities at School Lane including a modern club house, award winning pitches and good car parking.

Planning for the Future

The current management team recognise for the Club to continue to thrive, not only does it need to offer a positive experience through participation in football today, but it also needs to plan for further growth. The single largest constraint on the development of the Club and extending community participation is a lack of sufficient winter training facilities.

With a small floodlit grass area, the Club is unable to support the training needs for all of their teams throughout the year at School Lane. Specifically, during the winter many teams are forced to train at all-weather facilities away from Lawford. Over the winter the Club uses seven different locations to train including East Bergholt, Manningtree, Colchester and Wivenhoe. Not only does training away from School Lane come at a significant financial cost to the Club, there are additional travel costs for parents and carers as well as being less convenient for all involved.

In partnership with Lawford Parish Council, Essex County FA and the Football Foundation, the Club is working towards the provision of an all-weather training facility at School Lane. This would enable the Club to increase the number of teams, extending community participation into areas such as dedicated girls teams, dedicated teams for disabled players, a veterans team, walking football and a local five a-side league.

The Club's campaign to achieve this has been named LFC@LFC. The initials LFC as well as being shorthand for the Club, represent the key objectives of our project to create a –

**Local & sustainable hub that is a
First class facility, supporting wellbeing &
Community-wide participation**

This encapsulates much of what the Club is proud of.

Lawford Football Club
February 2020