

THE BARNY WAY

*THE PHILOSOPHY, ETHOS AND
DNA OF OUR CLUB*

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BARNWOOD UTD AFC



Foreword

Chris Coward

Club Development Officer



When I first stepped into grassroots football coaching back in 2017, the aim was simple: to give kids in our local community a chance to fall in love with the beautiful game, and to build my child a pathway to adult's football. That journey began with just me and three children at Brockworth Albion on a cold Saturday morning. Over the years, that number grew to over forty, recruiting 8 or so coaches along the way. With the help of these coaches, we evolved that age group into something much bigger than I ever imagined. Football, when done right, has a habit of exceeding expectations.

In 2022 I brought my experience back to the club I love and, alongside Alex Dielt, I formed Barnwood United's first ever youth team. At the time, I'd not long taken on the role of Club Development Officer at Barnwood and this began a period of unprecedented growth that has seen us expand from 2 teams to 20 for the 2025/26 season. That kind of transition is testament to the commitment of our volunteers, the trust of parents, and, most importantly, the passion of our players.

But rapid growth brings with it new challenges. How do we maintain the heart of the club, the values and culture that made it special in the first place, when we are now working on a much broader scale? This document is our answer.

It sets out Barnwood United's footballing ethos; our guiding principles, our beliefs about what youth football should be and how players should develop into open age football, and the kind of environment we want to create for every child and adult who pulls on our claret and blue. It is regardless of gender and any disability. This isn't a set of rules or coaching instructions, it's a reflection of everything we've learned along the way, and everything we want to protect as we move forward.

It has been shaped not only by my own experience as a player, coach, and manager in youth and adult football, but also by the insight and input of people I trust deeply in the game. Coaches like Wez Sharpe and Nick Maiolo, both UEFA C coaches with countless hours invested into youth development and our senior sides. Respected professionals like Brett Salvage, a UEFA B licence holder and leading voice at Gloucester City's youth setup, who encouraged me to write this paper. Our female and disability pathway leads, Nikki Wakeman and Helena Cutler, ensuring it is universally applicable across our club. And of course, lifelong stalwarts of Barnwood United in Rob Sherwood, Darren Brown, Ross Hancock, Daniel Rosenberg, and several more, who have experienced and contributed to the wonderful culture of our club. Their inputs have helped sharpen and strengthen this document at every level.

Barnwood United has always stood for more than just football. We're about belonging, development, enjoyment, and community. This ethos will serve as our compass, helping everyone involved with the club – coaches, players, parents, and volunteers – stay aligned with what truly matters.

It's an exciting time to be part of Barnwood United. Let's make sure we never lose sight of why we started.



Chris Coward

Chairman of Youth, Female and Pan Disability, and Club Development Officer

4th August 2025



Introduction



The Barnwood United Footballing Ethos and the Influence of the England DNA

In 2014, The Football Association launched the England DNA, a long-term plan to build identity, clarity, and consistency across English football. More than just a set of coaching instructions, the England DNA defined a national playing and coaching philosophy, focused on five key elements: Who We Are, How We Play, The Future England Player, How We Coach, and How We Support. It was built on the belief that developing better players and teams isn't just about tactics or talent; it's about creating the right culture, values, and environment. That belief lies at the heart of this document too.

Barnwood United's youth section has grown at an unprecedented pace, from our inaugural team in May 2022 to 15 teams in May 2025. In addition, we have 5 adult teams and our club spans all 3 football pathways – male, female and disability. It has become more important than ever to clarify what we stand for as a football club. The England DNA has been a hugely valuable reference point in shaping this ethos. It gives us a framework that is modern, evidence-based, and aligned with the very best of English football development.

However, while we draw inspiration from it, this document is not a copy of the England DNA. This is our version – specifically tailored to reflect Barnwood United's identity, our local community, and the journey we're on.

At Barnwood, we don't have the resources of St. George's Park or any paid staff. What we do have is a passionate group of volunteers, coaches, players, and parents committed to doing things the right way. That means creating a positive, inclusive environment where young players can thrive – not just as footballers, but as people. It means being clear on how we want our teams to play, how we want our coaches to coach, and how we measure success far beyond wins and losses.

The England DNA helped us ask the right questions. This document provides our answers; rooted in Barnwood's culture, built for our coaches, and designed to guide every age group, from our youngest minis to our teenage squads and even into adulthood.

This is the Barny Way.



About Us

Barnwood United is a proud community football club with deep roots in Gloucester. Established in 1978, the club began as Vikings in Coney Hill, a suburb adjoining Barnwood. Formed by a group of local youth club friends, we've maintained the same community spirit, togetherness, and love of the game that defined our founders almost 50 years ago.

We are a club built on belonging. Whether you're five years old and pulling on the Barnwood shirt for the first time, or a senior player turning out for our veterans, you are part of something bigger. Our badge isn't just a logo - it represents a family, a history, and a commitment to doing things the right way. The club prides itself on inclusivity, serving as a network that encourages far reaching involvement on and off the pitch.

For much of our history, Barnwood United was a senior football club for men. Generations of local players have come through our ranks, many have stayed for a lifetime, others have gone on to play a higher level and returned in later years as coaches and volunteers. In 2022, we took a major step forward with the formation of our first ever youth team - planting the seeds for what has quickly become a thriving youth section. In 2024 we established girls and women's football, and in 2025 we founded our disability pathway. This expansion has been rapid, but intentional: every new team, every new player, and every new volunteer has been welcomed into a club that values inclusion, effort, development, and respect above all else.

We are not a win-at-all-costs club. We're here to help children fall in love with football, to give them a safe and supportive space to grow, and to build friendships that extend well beyond the pitch. We believe in long-term development, in playing the right way, and in coaching with purpose and care. We believe every child and adult deserves the chance to play, learn, and improve - regardless of ability.

While we're proud to draw influence from the FA's England DNA and best practices in coaching, we never forget who we are - a local club, run by local people, serving our community. Our history matters, and so does our future. And that future depends on staying true to the values that make Barnwood United special. We are the Barny Family.



Barny Values

Everything we do at Barnwood United is guided by a set of core values. These are not just words, they are the behaviours we expect from every player, coach, volunteer, and parent.

Belonging

Everyone has a place here. We welcome players of all abilities, backgrounds, and pathways.

Respect

For teammates, opponents, referees, coaches, and the game itself.

Effort

We value hard work above talent alone; we reward persistence and commitment.

Enjoyment

Football is a game. It should be fun. Even in competition, joy is essential.

Development

We measure success in growth, not just results.

Community

We are here for Gloucester, for our neighbours, and for the people around our club.



HOW WE PLAY

We want every Barnwood United team to play with the same hallmarks, regardless of age or ability.



BRAVERY ON THE BALL

Players are encouraged to receive, pass, and dribble under pressure.



QUICK TRANSITIONS

We react positively and decisively when we win or lose possession.



TEAMWORK

The ball moves quicker than the player; we value unselfish choices.



POSITIVITY

Mistakes are part of learning; we keep our heads up and play the next pass.

THIS STYLE IS ADAPTED TO THE AGE GROUP AND ABILITY OF THE PLAYERS BUT UNDERPINNED BY THE SAME DNA: BRAVE, POSITIVE, AND TOGETHER

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

We recognise four clear Barnwood United phases, each with its own priorities.



1

Foundation Phase (U5–U8)

Fun and fundamentals. Focus on physical literacy, ball mastery, and love for the game. Equal playing time.

2

Development Phase (U9–U13)

Game understanding and skill variety. Introduction to positions and simple tactics. Equal playing time over a period of weeks.

3

Progressive Phase (U14–U17)

Greater tactical detail, physical preparation, and performance mindset. Selection based on strongest team, though development remains important.

3

Competitive Phase (Adults)

Performance and winning, underpinned by respect, team cohesion, and the Barny values.



BARNY

ARMY

PROGRESSION THROUGH THE PHASES


Fun, Fundamentals, and Foundations

From U5 to U13, we are coaching players in the Foundation and Development Phases; critical years that shape their long-term enjoyment and involvement in football. At this stage, fun must come first. We embed physical literacy into our sessions, using games and activities that promote running, jumping, stopping, changing direction, balance, coordination, and agility. This not only improves football performance but also gives children the tools to enjoy all forms of movement and sport for life.

In matches it's crucial that we offer equal playing time and fair distribution of matchday minutes. For many reasons this may not be possible on a given day, and it's not an exact science, but it is our target over a period of weeks. This can be an emotive subject, particularly with parents who don't understand or respect our ethos, but even the youngest of children recognise inequality and will be deterred from football and can be impacted mentally. Many factors need to be considered, including behaviour, training attendance, fitness and injury, but during these early years ability is not a consideration in playing time – perceived 'weaker players' must be given opportunity to improve.

From Foundations to Performance: Adapting to Compete

As players move into the Progressive Phase (U14 to U17), the foundation we've built becomes their platform for greater tactical understanding, personal responsibility, and team contribution. This is where football begins to look more like the adult game, and while enjoyment and development remain central, there is a shift toward understanding how to win. Our ethos remains unchanged – we still recognise effort, encourage bravery, and celebrate good decision-making – but the context becomes more performance-focused. Sessions become more structured, players are challenged to think more deeply about roles and responsibilities, and training often includes scenario-based learning linked to real match situations.



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DEVELOPMENT MINDSET

We want our coaching environment to underpin how we play.



Creating Environments That Inspire Learning

At Barnwood United, our coaching philosophy is rooted in one simple truth: players learn best by doing. Football is a dynamic, decision-rich game, and our training reflects that. We aim for a minimum of 75% of training time to involve a ball, because the most effective way to improve football skills is by practicing football itself.

With limited time on the training pitch each week, we prioritise meaningful, game-relevant activity. Our job as coaches is not to work on players' fitness – we are here to help them grow as footballers. That means designing sessions that develop their technical ability, decision-making, and understanding of the game, all while keeping the experience fun and engaging. Applying this from the warmup to the end of the session.

Parents and Guardians

We treat parents and guardians as vital partners in the development journey, helping us in how we coach. We ask them to:



Support the ethos, even when decisions are hard.



Cheer for effort and good play, not just goals.



Trust the process, player development is long-term.

The Role of Coaches

At Barnwood United, we recognise coaches are:

- ✓ **Guides**, helping players find their own solutions, not just telling them what to do.
- ✓ **Role Models**, demonstrating the behaviours we want players to show.
- ✓ **Lifelong Learners**, actively developing their own knowledge and skills.
- ✓ **Protectors of Enjoyment**, making sure football remains fun, even when competition intensifies.

We encourage varied, game-related training, meaningful feedback, and an environment that rewards courage and creativity.

Learning in the 'Sweet Spot'

Great coaching happens in the space between challenge and success. We constantly observe and adapt our sessions, making drills more demanding as players begin to master the task at hand, or simplifying them when needed. Our aim is to find the 'sweet spot' of learning: where players are stretched just enough to grow, but not so much that they become frustrated or disengaged.

Other than the rare occasion, our players will not go on to an elite, professional level. But that doesn't lessen our ambition for them, however it does shape our definition of success. The score line, whether in training or matches, is never our only measure. A player showing resilience outside of their comfort zone, or making a good decision under pressure even if the outcome isn't perfect, deserves recognition. These are the moments that build confidence, encourage effort, and promote long-term learning.

By praising bravery, good decision-making, and perseverance, not just goals or wins, we give our players permission to take risks and grow. That's how we build better footballers and better people.

High Standards, Ongoing Learning

Barnwood United is a volunteer-led club, but we hold ourselves to professional standards. We set the bar above mandatory FA requirements:

- All lead coaches and team managers must hold the FA Introduction to Coaching Football qualification.
- If a lead coach is not planned to be present for at least 80% of training sessions, an assistant coach must also hold this qualification.
- We offer paid or subsidised development opportunities to all our coaches and actively encourage them to pursue further learning.
- Key coaches are identified and supported to complete more advanced FA diplomas, such as UEFA C and beyond.

We know that better coaching leads to better experiences for our players. That's why we invest in our coaches, because they're not just teaching football skills; they're helping shape the future of Barnwood United.

When we coach with care, purpose, and passion, we create something lasting. We build confident people, positive team environments, and a football club that truly lives its values.

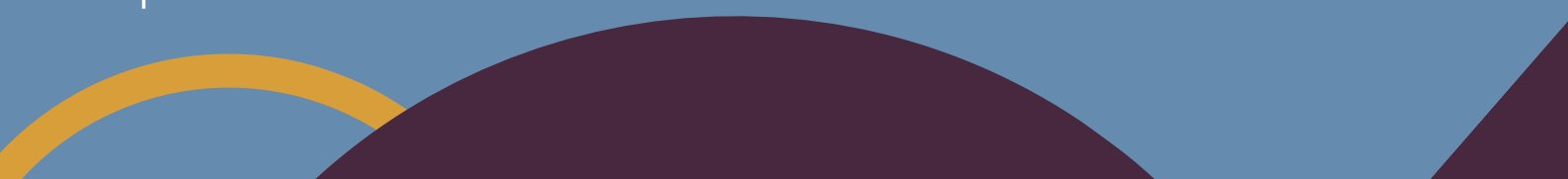
Team Development versus Individual Development

We never stop helping our players be the best they can be. But there is a distinct change in our coaching mindset when the transition is made from U13 to U14, into our Progressive Phase and how that links up into our Competitive Phase for open age football. The balance becomes more strongly about what we can achieve as a team, this is the first time our measure of success includes winning. The development focus is now on what's best for the club, as opposed to each individual player. But what does that actually mean? We'll answer that using our male pathway as an example, because it is our most mature pathway. But the principles apply across the female and disability pathways too.

- For our men's first team, it's quite simple – for the majority of the time the coaching team will select what they believe to be the strongest team available to them, with the best possible chance of winning the match.
- But for our men's Reserve and Third team, this is a more difficult challenge. The best selection for the club will, at times, necessitate helping develop a younger player to progress, or giving some match time to a first team player who is returning from injury. This means carefully managing the relationship with loyal players embedded in the Reserve and Third team, when playing time is at their expense.
- In the Youth age groups, from U14 upwards, this means continuing to be mindful of the individual, and considering where their football development may happen relatively late in proceedings. It means preparing their mindset for open age football and making some hard decisions:
 - Players are now selected for the strongest lineup possible, equal playing time no longer applies.
 - Conversations may be had about players leaving because they won't get much/any match time, as we no longer apply equal playing opportunities. We do offer cheaper training only membership plans where players wish to stay and fight for a place in the team.
 - Our coaches relationship with players and parents changes as a consequence and some coaches may need mentoring by colleagues who have successfully been through this previously.

In open age football, the Competitive Phase, players represent Barnwood United with pride in the adult game. While winning becomes a clearer objective, it is not at the expense of respect, sportsmanship, or the club's values. We expect players to compete, to commit, and to support one another, building on the habits formed during their youth development. Coaches continue to develop individuals, but also focus heavily on team cohesion, tactical discipline, and the mental aspects of competition.

By keeping our ethos consistent and adjusting our methods through each stage, we ensure our players grow with the game – supported, challenged, and always proud to be part of Barnwood United.



Collaborative Pathways

Player development is never a solo effort and it cannot be done if each team is working in isolation. While every team has its own identity, every coach is part of a wider coaching community within the club. We believe strongly in collaboration, shared learning, and collective responsibility for player development.

Our coaches are expected to regularly engage with the wider coaching network, attending club committee meetings and age-group discussions. These sessions allow us to share ideas, review best practices, and ensure our approach is consistent across all teams. This is particularly important as players move through our player pathway, helping us to provide continuity and a clear sense of progression for every child.

As players progress into the Progressive Phase (U14–U17), coaches play an increasingly key role in preparing them for open age football. At U16 and U17 level, collaboration with senior team managers becomes essential, creating opportunities for players to train with or step up into adult teams at the right time. This ensures a smoother transition and gives young players a clear vision of their future within Barnwood United.

Volunteering Togetherness

We also encourage our coaches and volunteers to contribute to the club beyond the touchline – whether by helping with events, supporting fundraising efforts, or identifying sponsorship opportunities to keep grassroots football accessible for all. While no individual is pressured to secure funding, those who can bring in sponsorships play a valuable role in strengthening the club's future.

Finally, we want all parents, carers, and volunteers to know that there are many ways to get involved beyond coaching. From administration and event planning to media, kit management, and safeguarding roles. We thrive on community involvement and by working together, we make the club stronger for every player who wears our badge.



OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION & IMPROVEMENT



Barnwood United proudly supports male, female, and pan-disability pathways. Every player, regardless of gender, background, or ability, deserves opportunity and respect. Inclusion is not an add-on; it's central to who we are.

The next chapter of Barnwood United will see us continue to grow responsibly:

- Investing in coach development.
- Strengthening our girls' and women's pathway.
- Expanding disability provision.
- Building closer links with schools and community groups.

The game will evolve. Our facilities will improve. Players will come and go. But our ethos will remain unchanged; football for all, development over results, and pride in our club and community.





COMETS PROGRAMME

Fun for Everyone!



Our FA Comets programme, where we affectionately refer to participants as Owlets, provides the entry to our Pan Disability Pathway.

The Programme is a recreational football initiative designed for girls and boys aged 5–11 years. Our offering aligns perfectly with the Barny Way ethos, focussing on the Foundation Phase (U5–U8) and a transition, at the right time for the individual, into the Development Phase (U9–U13) where they can experience competitive football.

The Comets programme ensures that children of all abilities are provided with access to football in a structured, safe, and inclusive environment. Centred on participation, enjoyment, and individual development. Here, we support each child to grow in confidence, build social connections, and develop fundamental movement and football skills.

Our Pan Disability pathway reinforces our commitment to removing barriers, promoting equality of opportunity, and ensuring that football is accessible to all within our community.