

Creating a five-year vision for Regional Junior Competitions Development

When we set out our long-term ambitions in the Volleyball England Game Plan 2020–2030, we committed to creating opportunities that inspire, engage, and retain people at every stage of their volleyball journey. Within that commitment sits a clear responsibility to nurture the future of our game our junior players.

Over the past last six months, Volleyball England has been working with the Ace Service Sub-Group, Competitions Sub-Group members, Hub staff, invited experts and members of the junior volleyball community to shape a five-year vision for junior competitions (2025–2030). Drawing on the [Let's Play Volleyball](#) (LPV) Development Framework and learning from the experiences of our clubs, regions, and athletes. We have identified three key priorities that will best support young players' growth physically, technically, socially, and emotionally through meaningful and inclusive competition.

This consultation paper presents the proposed vision and development plan for regional junior competitions. It is designed to strengthen the foundations of our sport, create clear and connected pathways, and ensure every young player can access positive, inspiring, and developmental experiences in volleyball.

We now invite our members to read the proposed vision, reflect on the priorities outlined, and share their feedback and ideas. Your insights are vital in ensuring that this plan reflects the needs of the whole volleyball community and provides the strongest possible platform for the next generation of players.

The vision focuses on three priorities:

- **Connect and enable a national junior competitions pathway**
- **Develop a consistent approach to the delivery of junior competitions**
- **Building the junior infrastructure to be sustainable**

What follows is an articulation of why these themes matter and the group's initial suggestions of how they could be translated into practical outcomes.

Priority #1 | Connect and enable a national junior competitions pathway

The future of junior volleyball in England depends on a pathway that is not only visible and consistent but also connected across all regions. Right now, opportunities look very different depending on where a young player lives some areas have established competitions and thriving clubs, while others face challenges with access, facilities, or volunteer support. To build a stronger and inclusive system, we must first connect the regions, listen to their needs, and create a shared approach that enables every young player to find their place in the sport.

This plan is not about imposing a single model from above it is a collaborative proposal designed to inspire and engage regions to work together with Volleyball England, shaping the pathway in ways that reflect local realities while moving us toward a collective national vision.

Proposed Action Plan for Year 1

1. Regional Engagement Visits

- Volleyball England will visit all nine regions to assess current U15 provision for Tier 2 competitions, junior clubs, and training opportunities.
- Each visit will include an analysis of junior participation and player pathways, ensuring that strengths and challenges are fully understood.

2. Create a Junior Competitions Working Group

- Each region will nominate a 4v4 Junior Lead to sit on the new Volleyball England Junior Competitions Working Group.
- The group will meet online 2–3 times during the season, with an in-person session at the 2025–26 Inter Regional Championships.

3. Audit and Map Existing Tier 2 Activity and Clubs

- Each region will provide data on U15 participation, Tier 2 events (location, frequency), and active junior clubs.
- This will feed into a national database and interactive map, hosted on the Volleyball England website, to spotlight opportunities across all 9 regions.

4. Coach and Referee Engagement

- Each region will identify at least one aspiring young coach and one aspiring young referee to attend the Inter Regional Championships.
- These individuals will receive mentorship, development opportunities, and referee upgrading support, beginning a visible workforce pathway for technical officials.

The Impact

By the end of Year 1, we will have a stronger understanding of the national junior competitions landscape, a new structure for regions to work together, and the beginnings of a visible and connected pathway. This foundation will allow us to set clear data-led targets in Year 2, foster workforce development, and expand participation in a way that is both equitable and sustainable. Most importantly, it will demonstrate to players, parents, clubs, and volunteers that junior volleyball has a clear direction, one that everyone is invited to shape.

Priority #2 | Develop a consistent approach to the delivery of junior competitions

Right now, junior competitions across England vary in format, frequency, and quality. While some regions have well established calendars and clear links to the player pathway, others lack the resources or structures to deliver consistently. This creates an uneven experience for young players and makes it harder to build a strong, recognisable pathway that parents, schools, and clubs can trust.

Our vision is to create consistency in how junior competitions are delivered across all regions. This doesn't mean every event looks identical it means that wherever a young player takes part, they encounter the same pathway stages (Volley 2s, 3s, and 4s), the same standards of delivery, and the same opportunities to progress. Achieving this will also require investment in venues, equipment, and the adoption of a unified junior competitions brand so that the pathway is both visible and inspiring.

This priority is about empowering regions, counties and clubs to deliver competitions confidently while connecting them under one national framework. By Year 3, we aim to have a recognisable, consistent approach to junior competitions across the country.

Proposed Action Plan for Year 3

1. Implement U15 Tier 2 Regional Calendar

- Each region to run a minimum of four U15 4v4 competitions annually, integrated into a clear regional junior calendar.
- Junior players will register as Junior Regional/Local members, ensuring accurate participation data.
- At least one county level event per year will decentralise access and reduce travel time.

2. Mentoring System Launch

- Deliver one Assistant Coach course and one Grade 4 Referees course annually in each region.
- Establish a regional mentoring scheme for young coaches and referees, with experienced mentors supporting 2–3 individuals each year.

3. Increase Club Engagement

- Achieve a 50% increase in clubs offering U15 volleyball compared to Year 1.
- Incentivise clubs to deliver Tier 2 volleyball through grants, CPD workshops, and recognition awards.
- Expand county-level events to reduce travel time and improve accessibility.

4. Pathway Communication

- Publish a clear Junior Volleyball Competitions Pathway document showing progression from club to county, region, and national level.
- Use digital marketing campaigns and school engagement to reach parents, teachers, and new players with simple messaging about opportunities.

5. Standardise Trials and Training

- All regions to implement consistent processes for IRC team selection and training, including clear communication timelines, schedules, and expectations for parents and players.
- Begin player tracking to inform selections and monitor individual development across the pathway.

The Impact

By Year 3, junior volleyball across England will look and feel more consistent, giving confidence to parents, teachers, and players that they are part of a clear national system. Clubs will have more support and recognition, competitions will be easier to access, and the workforce will grow through structured training and mentoring. The junior competitions brand will give the pathway a visible identity, helping young players feel part of something bigger. Ultimately, this consistency will help volleyball not only grow in numbers but also grow in quality and credibility.

Priority #3 | Building the junior infrastructure to be sustainable

For junior volleyball to thrive long term, it needs more than just competitions it needs the infrastructure to sustain growth and success across every region. At present, provision is uneven: some counties and clubs have access to facilities, equipment, and structured competitions, while others face barriers that limit participation. Without strategic investment in clubs, venues, workforce, and clear pathways, the growth achieved in the first years of this plan risks plateauing.

Our vision is to build a resilient and sustainable junior infrastructure that will outlast short-term growth trends and provide a consistent, inspiring offer for generations of players. By Year 5, the aim is for every region to have structured competitions, a clear pathway from county to national level, and a sustainable pipeline of coaches, referees, and volunteers to deliver it.

Proposed Action Plan for Year 5

1. Comprehensive County-to-Grand Prix Pathway

- All nine English regions to deliver structured U15 4v4 county leagues feeding into regional leagues and onward into the Volleyball England Junior Grand Prix (U16/U18).

2. Double U15 Participation in Tier 2 Events

- Achieve a 100% increase in U15 participation in structured Tier 2 competition compared to the Year 1 baseline.

3. Increase Junior Registrations

- Double the number of U15 players formally registered as Junior Regional/Local members or Junior Competition members.
- Registration will allow Volleyball England to promote opportunities directly to players and parents, strengthening engagement.

4. Fully Embedded Mentorship Model

- Every region to run an ongoing mentoring programme for coaches and referees.
- Target of at least five new young coaches and five new referees trained per region annually.

5. Elevated Inter Regional Championships (IRC)

- Transform the IRC into a flagship national showcase for U15 and U17 6v6 volleyball.
- Embed young coach/referee development within the event, integrate talent ID opportunities with Volleyball England coaches, and provide CPD for regional leads.

The Impact

By Year 5, junior volleyball will have the infrastructure to sustain growth across every region. Structured county-to-national competitions will create visible opportunities for progression, while workforce development ensures there are enough trained coaches and referees to deliver at scale. Parents and players will be more connected through registration and communication, and the Inter Regional Championships will stand as a national showcase of talent and community pride. With optional Regional Centres of Excellence, we can also begin bridging the gap between grassroots and elite, ensuring that the most talented players can thrive.

This sustainable infrastructure will secure the future of junior volleyball not just for the next five years, but for the next generation.