

FEMALE FOOTBALL TOOLKIT

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Providing practical advice for clubs to help develop an environment that encourages women and girls to get involved in football



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Change Starts Here

Football is our national game and we want to help make sure it is truly accessible for all.

Working with clubs and players across the country, we've found out helpful ways to encourage more female players to get involved.

To help get you started, The Football Association (The FA) have created this toolkit with advice and real life examples to help create a supportive and inclusive environment for your club to thrive. This guide is based on research that has been carried out by talking to football clubs, players and supporters across the country.

Together, let's make football a game for everyone to enjoy.



Club Culture

- **Build a team off the pitch**

Make sure you have plenty of team socials including end-of-season events, fundraising activities, dinners, or trips to matches. Support your own senior women's team, a local [Barclays FA WSL](#) match or the Women's FA Cup Final at Wembley Stadium.

- **Give your players a voice**

Ask the team what changes they'd like to see. This could be via an online forum or Facebook group.

- **Respect each other**

Encourage players to be respectful of one another on and off the pitch. By setting boundaries and encouraging positive behaviour, you'll create a better experience for players, coaches, volunteers and parents. Ask everyone in your club to sign a Respect [Code of Conduct](#) and make sure younger players fully understand it.

- **Be supportive**

Have awards for 'Best team player' or similar to reward effort and behaviour and regular prize ceremonies for recognising star players, as well as those most improved.

- **Workforce and role models**

Consider ways to highlight other career options in football beyond playing professionally e.g. increasing the number of female coaches, female referees etc. Try and involve players from your women's or senior girls teams in the running of the girls teams to help provide positive, aspirational role models.



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Club Culture

- **Use real stories to inspire**

Invite special guests to come and talk about their experiences. This could be an ex-club player who now plays professionally, or any other women who have made a career out of their passion for football, such as women who coach, referee, work in admin or who volunteer at the club.

- **Keep learning**

The best way for both yourself and your colleagues to develop is by attending training courses. Take a look at www.thefa.com/get-involved/coach for more information.

- **Celebrate colleagues who put in the extra mile**

By recognising colleagues' commitment and development, you'll encourage positivity to be carried through to the players. A good coach will be remembered for life.

- **Be open**

Regularly ask the team for feedback – see what changes they would like to see and openly share their feedback information.

- **Include parents**

Keep parents up to date with club messages, club ethos and development pathways

- **Representation**

It is important that the female teams have a voice in the running of the club. I.e. Does the female section have a role on the club committee?

ON-PITCH CONSIDERATIONS



On-Pitch Considerations



It's possible that girls will have had less exposure to the rules of the game, particularly those getting into football later in life.
→ Coaches should encourage the girls to try playing in different positions and help them find their niche.

Girls may also start with a lower skill set, so it can be effective to use drills where each player has their own ball to practice with. Improving the standard of play and boosting confidence should be the priority over winning, particularly when first starting out.



It's also important that coaches are aware of the psychological differences between girls and boys. Girls are often more curious and inquisitive during training so may benefit from hearing the rationale behind certain practices.

It's important that all coaches of female teams are aware of likely differences and nuances. This quality standard of coaching should be consistent across the whole club.



9-11 Coaching Considerations

Research tells us that along with the right environment young girls want sessions that focus on fun, fitness and friends

Consult with the girls and ask them what they want to do.

Leave time to plan a session
– We recommend spending the same amount of time planning your session as delivering. Decide what you would like to teach, build confidence in the girls by creating the right environment, encouraging ball mastery and time on the ball. Consider if these challenges will be the same for groups or individuals. Select games or activities that will help you achieve these.

Aim to develop relationships and a sense of belonging with the low engaged girls.

Review learning with the girls and gain their feedback on the session. Use this to help plan your next session.

Research tells us that at age 7 girls fundamental movements are less developed. Ensure that time is spent practising these through enjoyable fun games and activities.

When coaching try to include suggestions from the England DNA; the 'How we coach' element can be found here.

Play music alongside participation. You could allow the group to choose their own playlist (as long as it's suitable!).

Allow for 'social' time before and during your session – get to know your players and allow them to catch up with each other.

Run conditioned games i.e. matches that allow girls to use their hands and feet.

Allow the girls to have ownership for some parts of the session.

Don't be afraid to stray slightly from plan and amend activities to meet the needs of your players.

Plan festivals to aid learning and build confidence.

12 – 16 Coaching Considerations

- To help build safety and belonging within your sessions create a routine and have a pattern of what will happen and share what will take place. Be consistent with instructions and the environment. This will create a sense of security and belonging that will allow everyone to feel accepted and respected.
- Encourage and provide peer to peer learning opportunities. This approach is important as the girls have someone they can relate to, which in turn helps improve self-esteem, confidence, and enjoyment.
- Sessions need to be fun, and cognitively exciting. Variety is key. If a girl doesn't have the motor competence to engage in the complexity of the session ensure she is challenged mentally. This excitement can help long term continuity and encourage peer acceptance.
- Challenge the girls to set realistic goals. Just before they are achieved set the next but don't forget to celebrate the achievement of each goal once it's been completed.
- Coaches should focus on task orientated behaviours emphasising effort and personal improvement through positive reinforcement and supporting actions.
- Create an environment which encourages taking risks and celebrating mistakes – be consistent and ensure the young person feels safe to experiment.

OFF-PITCH CONSIDERATIONS



Your Club Facilities

To keep your team motivated and excited to come to play, it's important to try and ensure your club facilities are as welcoming as possible.

- Keep all communal areas clean, warm and tidy. See if the team would like to decorate the area themselves. You can contact your local women's league, Barclays FA WSL club or **County FA** to see if they have any posters to donate.
- If pitches are in demand, use a pitch rota system to make sure all teams get the same training time on the best pitches as other teams.
- Make sure there are photos in the clubhouse of both the female and male teams.
- Provide access to female toilets that have working locks, adequate lighting, toilet paper and are close to the pitch.
- When hiring a facility, make sure toilets and changing facilities are appropriate and talk to the facility operator about putting up posters to raise awareness of your club.

Visit the Football Foundation to see how they can help with possible funding: www.footballfoundation.org.uk



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Spreading the Word

You're proud of your club, so it's time to grow it! The best form of marketing is word of mouth, so having a friendly, welcoming and inclusive club environment will help enlist new players. Building support from the wider community is also a great way to spread the word.

- **Your club website**

A club website will keep the community up to date with news. Tell 'real-life' inspirational stories that other girls can be inspired by. Don't forget to shout about upcoming match days to get as many supporters as possible.

If you have images of teams on your website, make sure you're including images of both male and female players.

- **Keep it social**

Do you have a club Facebook, Instagram or Twitter? You should! It's a great way to share successes and keep your team up to date with announcements and games. It can also help boost morale and create a sense of community. Your players could even take over for the day to show their side of the game. You can set up a group on Facebook, post your goal videos on Instagram or share your latest news on Twitter. Set aside the time to have at least one channel where you keep all your information. Remember to use hashtags of your location so others can find your team.

- **Utilise Facebook**

There are lots of useful tools on Facebook to make sure your club page and posts reach the right people. For not much money you can boost your posts, and even target who sees them based on their location or interests. Have a look at Facebook guidelines for more help: <https://www.facebook.com/business/products/ads/ad-targeting>. - **Remember to follow advertising Ts&Cs for social channels to ensure you are not targeting children under age for these sites.** Visit www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding for safeguarding information and good practice guidance.

- **Enlist ambassadors**

Ask your players to act as club ambassadors by telling their friends and school about the club and handing out leaflets and posters. Why not offer 'bring-along-a-friend' to training, or free half hour taster sessions at after school clubs? Ask if they'll talk about their positive football experience at a school assembly, or perhaps talk at the assembly yourself! Keep parents up to date with the clubs progress with regular meetings and see if they can spread the word too.

- **Get support from other teams**

Put up posters or make announcements at men's local football matches. Try to set up meetings with other clubs to share knowledge and learn from each other.

- **Gain support from your local schools and community**

Make sure your County FA and local schools know about your club. Organise a festival for the girl's primary schools. County FAs can support your club at a local level. Talk to sports teachers so they are able to point potential talent in the right direction. Importantly, make sure you don't plan your training night on the same day as the school's girls team!



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Spreading the Word



Some Examples to Help You Spread the Word



Example Facebook posts:

Recruiting

- **Teens:**

Girls, are you ready? We are running free taster sessions this Tuesday night. It doesn't matter what ability you are, you just need to turn up with your trainers and a smile. Have a kickabout and make some new friends. We'll see you there!

- **Aimed at parents with little ones:**

Do you have a bundle of energy bouncing off the walls? Join us this Thursday as we welcome new girls under 7 years old for a friendly kickabout. Pitch side tea and homemade cake will be provided for parents and a few treats for the girls. You never know, you might unleash a little football star who loves to play!

- **Women's football club:**

There's no better way to make new friends, keep fit and unleash your competitive nature! No matter your ability, fitness levels, or knowledge of the game, you can come along to XXX football practice on Wednesdays to give it a go!



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● Match Day:

It's on! We have made it to the semi-finals and the girls have been training their socks off all week for this momentous day. Come armed with your loudest cheering voice to support our club and celebrate how far we've come!

● General:

It's the new season! If you are thinking of coming to your very first training session, we can't wait to meet you! If you're not sure what to expect and need some help on how to prep, take a look here for some tips: <https://forgirls.thefa.com/en/Article/Prepare-for-training>

We could not be prouder of our very own homegrown star XXX. She's recorded a little sneak peek behind the scenes, especially for us. Take a look as she prepares with her team for the league finals. - **Remember you must request consent from your featured player and they must be over the age of 16.**

We all need enough energy for our Tuesday training session, but what do the pros eat? Find out what our fave Lioness, Fran Kirby, eats before and after a big match: <https://forgirls.thefa.com/Article/Eat-Like-Fran-260717>



Example Press Release for the Local Paper:

Free football for girls in (INSERT TOWN)

Budding footballers between the age of 7 and 12 years old are encouraged to come to a free taster session next Thursday at 7pm at XXXX Football Club.

The number of girls who are getting involved in football from an early age has increased dramatically in the last few years, XXXX a coach from XXXX has witnessed the increase in numbers and explains her motivation for being involved in the game, she says: "When I was younger, I was the only girl that played football in my neighbourhood. The boys used to tease me until they realised I was better than most of them! We now have a huge opportunity to run football clubs, especially for girls and women. I want to be part of the movement that can prove no matter what your gender, age, fitness level or background, football really is a sport for everyone."

The free training session will be run by XXXX, and other qualified coaches. Existing members of the club will be taking posters and flyers into their schools to encourage their friends to come along to the event. The club currently has 20 girls but hopes to at least double this as the season gets underway.

One of the club's players who has been playing for them for the past four years explains how the club has helped her on a personal level: "Being part of the club has not only helped me stay healthy and make new friends, it's helped me be more confident in school. I love playing and going to matches with my team. Football will always be part of my life."

Contact XXXX directly for details about the taster training session at XXXX@XXXX.com For more information about other female football clubs go to www.XXXX.com



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Example Letter for Parents:

Free football for girls!

Dear [parent's name],

We'd love to invite your daughter to come join us at a taster session next Thursday at XXXX Football Club.

XXXX Football Club provide football opportunities for girls and boys aged from six years old, no matter what their ability, fitness level or experience in football. It's a chance for young people to make new friends, get fit and become part of their local community in a fun and engaging way. The club currently has 10 teams who participate in various local leagues.

The club delivers weekly training sessions for girls in Year 5 and we would like to invite your daughter to participate. The weekly sessions take place on:

Mondays, 6pm-7pm
Playing Fields on XXXX
Delivered by FA Qualified Coaches

The club has achieved The FA's reputable Charter Standard club status meaning that all of our coaches are FA qualified, have valid FA Safeguarding and Emergency Aid certificates, as well as holding an Enhanced FA CRB Disclosure. The club's main ethos is to provide safe football opportunities for all within their community and most of all ensure the players have fun!

If you'd like to find out more, please do not hesitate to contact me on: (Insert email and phone number here) or alternatively visit our website.

Please arrive 15 minutes early so we can register your daughter and get to know you both. Parents are welcome to stay for practice. There are also plenty of volunteering opportunities if you would like to get involved yourself!

Hope to see you there!

Kind regards,

XXXX



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Example Letter for Schools:

Dear XXXX

We are writing to let you know about the recent developments happening at XXXX Football Club.

We are now working with the XXXX County FA to inspire a generation of girls to become more active, confident and skilled for life through the great game. We believe there has never been a more important time for our football club to play its part in supporting girls to be physically, socially and emotionally well and are setting our sights on developing a Girls' Football section.

We'd love the school's support on encouraging participation and spreading the word. We enclose posters and flyers and we would greatly appreciate it if you could display these around the school.

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It would be great to meet with the appropriate person to discuss opportunities and build a partnership with the school with the aim to encourage more children to get involved. Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss this further or arrange a meeting.

Kind regards,

XXXX
(contact details)



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Inclusivity

Creating a fun, friendly, welcoming and inclusive environment is one of the best ways to get female players to join, and importantly, to keep coming back.

Football is for everyone and we're determined to break down barriers which get in the way of progress. Collectively, football has the power to inspire future generations. At The FA, equality, diversity and inclusion means valuing and celebrating our differences. Nurturing the right environment and culture means everyone thrives and can be themselves. For the game, it means everyone is welcome, ensuring differences between us do not create barriers to getting into football and staying involved. Differences can be something tangible like gender, race and ethnicity. Less obvious differences include heritage, religion, sexual orientation, unseen disabilities, family or social status and age. We believe embracing equality, diversity and inclusion makes us stronger, and better equipped to meet the challenges of the modern game. Despite our individual differences, one thing should never be different – the game is For All

How to be inclusive

Make sure both boys' and girls' teams are treated the same. Encourage both teams to cheer each other on and try training together to help friendships grow. Welcome girls with different physical and mental abilities and embrace differences and cultures. Take a look at The FA good practice guidance for 'Including and safeguarding deaf and disabled players' via www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding

Your club should have an equality policy in place which sends a positive message that football is for everyone. The FA runs a number of programmes on how to be a more inclusive club and ensure your activities are reflective of your local communities. Make sure any imagery you use in marketing communications is inclusive and representative of the diversity of the players within your club. For ideas of inclusion programmes that can be adopted visit <http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/inclusion-and-anti-discrimination>

TOP TIP:

Introduce a buddy system for new members providing peer-to-peer support for girls when they join.

When Thinking About Disability Engagement Consider:



My channel

Utilise relevant and trusted online networks and reach - it's the most popular and accessible channel



My values

Incorporate with other popular hobbies, music and socialising - focus on fun, friendship and enjoyment



My locality

Take the activity to the community group - engage with those who are isolated close to home e.g village halls



Me not my impairment

Use adverts to break down barriers with words like 'recreation' and suitable imagery - invest time in promotional activity and make sure it gives as much information as possible



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When Thinking About Disability Engagement Consider:



Reassure me

Recruit face to face to add personal element - have regular communications so that they feel comfortable when returning



Welcome me

68% have felt uncomfortable in the past - invest in good people who will shape the experience



Include me

Make it easy to get involved taking the first step can overcome psychological barriers



Show me

Make sport the norm through peers and role models - consider a peer buddy scheme



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Safeguarding

Safeguarding children and young people: maximising enjoyment and minimising risk

As a club running youth teams you will already have a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), also often referred to as a Club Welfare Officer (CWO). They will be key to getting safeguards in place as you work together to get more girls involved. Whether it's an end of season event, trips to watch matches, playing in tournaments, a local newspaper feature or setting up a Facebook, or WhatsApp group, they can advise and support you with the appropriate safeguards. Remember whether you are using online or offline activities to encourage more girls to get involved **safeguards must be considered and put in place.**

As you get more girls involved it's a great time to think about recruiting another DSO. Perhaps a new parent/carer will be keen to help. For more information on how to appoint a Club Welfare Officer, to access the Club Safeguarding Checklist and other practical advice and information go to: www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding

Always ensure new players and their parents/carers and any new volunteers know who your Club Welfare Officer is and how to report any concerns, should any arise for them.



Advice for Leagues

- There is a drop off in participation in the transition between youth and adult football so if you don't currently offer both girls and women's provision, look to partner with another local league to provide a full player pathway and support this transition
- Local playing opportunities will make participation in football more appealing for girls so if you'd like to develop girls football within your league speak to your County FA for local advice <http://www.thefa.com/womens-girls-football/get-involved/development-officers>
- Look at providing more flexible playing opportunities for girls - 5 v 5/7 v 7/9 v 9; monthly festivals; futsal. Kent Girls and Ladies League have used this to grow their provision.



Example Code of Conduct

Below is an example code of conduct that you can use for your players.

We all have a responsibility to promote high standards of behaviour in the game.

As a player, you have a big part to play. That's why The FA is asking every player to follow the Respect Code of Conduct.

When playing football, I will:

- Always play to the best of my ability.
- Play Fairly - I won't cheat, complain or waste time.
- Respect my team-mates, the other team, the referee and my coach/manager
- Play by the rules, as directed by the referee.
- Shake hands with the other team and referee at the end of the game.
- Listen and respond to what my coach/team manager tells me.
- Talk to someone I trust or the club welfare officer if I'm unhappy about anything at my club.

I understand that if I do not follow the Code, any/all of the following actions may be taken by my club, County FA or The FA:

I may:

- Be required to apologise to my team-mates, the other team, referee or team manager.
- Receive a formal warning from the coach or the club committee.
- Be dropped or substituted.
- Be suspended from training.
- Be required to leave the club.

In addition:

- My club, County FA or The FA may make my parent or carer aware of any infringements of the Code of Conduct.
- The FA/County FA could impose a fine and suspension against my club.

Other Useful Information and Resources

Resources

For club administrators:

Information about running your club

<http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/player/the-fa-charter-standard>

Your local County FA

www.thefa.com/about-football-association/who-we-are/county-fas

Information and help with funding

www.footballfoundation.org.uk/funding-schemes/grow-the-game

Youth Football guide:

www.thefa.com/get-involved/player/youth

For coaches:

Coach training and development

www.thefa.com/get-involved/coach

Resources to help Respect on the pitch

<http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/respect>

Online courses and workshops

learn.sportenglandclubmatters.com

Inclusivity advice

<http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/inclusion-and-anti-discrimination>

League information:

Barclays FA Women's Super League

www.womenscompetitions.thefa.com

Local league information

Full-time.thefa.com

We'd love to hear from you about your own experiences or if you have any more suggestions to get more women involved in football. Please email us at **womens.football@thefa.com**

