The FA's strategy for women's and girls' football: 2017-2020

• **DOUBLE PARTICIPATION**
• **DOUBLE FANS**
• **CONSISTENT SUCCESS ON THE WORLD STAGE**

### The FA's Vision and Mission

**Vision:**
Unite the game. Inspire the nation.

**Mission:**
Rebuild The FA as a world-class organisation

### Goal Targets

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Target</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Double participation</strong></td>
<td>Increase number of registered players from 5,000 to 12,000</td>
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<td><strong>Double fans</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Increase attendances:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- International matches: 12,000 to 22,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>- FA WSL average: 2,047 to 4,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Increase peak viewing: FA WSL: 40,000 to 100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Consistent success on the world stage</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Win top three countries across all age groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Potential to win 2023 FIFA World Cup</td>
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Source: FA strategic plan 2016
Women’s football is the biggest single opportunity we have to grow our game. This strategy will ensure we grasp that opportunity. At the heart of women’s football, from the grassroots to the elite, we will transform an amazing sport, and we will embed a lifelong love of men’s football in the heart and mind of our nation’s favourite game.

The global game had its genesis on these islands. The original Laws of the Game were codified here. Since then, the infrastructural around the game in England has become the blueprint for many football governing bodies, national and international. For the vast majority of the last 150 years, the focus has been almost exclusively on the men’s game. But now, society and attitudes move on and we are currently looking at the feasibility of doing just that as we have no doubt it would be an easy opportunity for us to grow our game.

This strategy sets out how we intend to do that, and as we have done in the men’s game over the years, we also want to play our role in the international stage, helping promote the sport everywhere and to everyone. Where we can, we would love to lend our experience to other countries and raise the profile of the game for the women’s players and the existing participant. We want to welcome every girl and woman to the game in this team game, to do that, and as we have done in the past, we will work tirelessly with the clubs in The FA Women’s Super League to create a truly inspiring moment for women’s football in England, setting a new football benchmark. By doubling the reach of the game for today and the future, we will ensure we grasp that opportunity for us to grow our game.

I am proud that on the back of well-targeted investment and capacity building in recent years, women’s football in England now stands comparison with the world’s best. But I am also determined that we can achieve more than parity – I believe the time is right to take it to a higher level – to set a new football benchmark.

In the meantime, whatever your role or remit in football, we’d love you on board as we set out to create a diverse, sustainable and successful women’s game for today and the future. Doubling its reach, transforming women’s football in England, setting a new football benchmark, will not be easy. It is, though, an opportunity worth grasping.

We need to change perceptions and social barriers to participation, create a strong and inclusive environment, and raise the profile of the game for the serious player and the casual participant. We want to welcome every girl and woman to the game in this team game, to achieve more than parity – I believe the time is right and the time is NOW!

In the meantime, whatever your role or remit in football, we’d love you on board as we set out to create a diverse, sustainable and successful women’s game for today and the future. Doubling its reach, transforming women’s football in England, setting a new football benchmark, will not be easy. It is, though, an opportunity worth grasping.

Greg Clarke
Chairman, The Football Association

Baroness Sue Campbell
Head of Women’s Football, The Football Association
## The vision for the women's and girls' game

### Our eight priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build a sustainable and successful high-performance system</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Improve commercial prospects in women’s football</td>
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### Key partners in the women's game

For more information
The vision for the women’s and girls’ game:

Whether competitively or recreationally, to be the no.1 team sport of choice for every girl and woman in England

Progressive: We believe it is time for the women’s game in this country to realise its full potential.

Respectful: We want to build on the success of the many people across the country working hard for the women’s game. In doing so, we will harness their experience, listen to their views and provide solutions to drive the game forward.

Inclusive: We believe football should be fun, safe and accessible for every girl and woman, embracing our multi-faceted society with its range of cultures, faiths and abilities. That’s whether they wish to participate, compete, coach, referee or play their part on boards at club, county and national levels, whether in a voluntary or paid capacity.

Determined: We believe that with the right vision and strong determination we can overcome all challenges.

Excellent: We will work together to ensure all players have an excellent experience. We will support those with the aspiration to achieve their potential to realise their dreams, represent their country and compete successfully with the best in the world.

This strategy document sets out how we plan to exhibit these values through the priority areas we have identified.
Our eight priorities

To create a World Cup-winning England senior team and double the player and fan bases, eight priority areas of work have been set:

These priorities provide tangible focus for everyone working in the women and girls’ football sector at The FA – and the game’s wider football workforce.

It means everyone knows their individual work is part of a collective drive. Everyone’s contribution – no matter how small – really matters.

1. Build a sustainable and successful high-performance system
2. Build a world-class talent pipeline
3. Increase the number and diversity of women coaching, refereeing and administering the sport at all levels
4. Develop participation opportunities and infrastructure
5. Change perceptions and social barriers to participation and following
6. Enhance the profile of the England team and players
7. Signpost opportunities to participate, watch or follow
8. Improve the commercial prospects in women’s football

The FA in numbers

2016 - 2017 season

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PLAYERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Male (5-16yrs)</td>
<td>8.9M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Female (5-16yrs)</td>
<td>2.9M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Male (16+ yrs)</td>
<td>6.46M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Female (16+ yrs)</td>
<td>2.05M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Disabled Players</td>
<td>48,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Total Affiliated Clubs</td>
<td>22,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Total Affiliated Men’s Teams</td>
<td>24,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Total Affiliated Women’s Teams</td>
<td>1,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Total Affiliated Boys’ Teams</td>
<td>3,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Total Affiliated Girls’ Teams</td>
<td>25,917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent Total Affiliated Youth Mini-Soccer Teams</td>
<td>2,066</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WOMEN’S GAME**

- Average WSL Attendance: 130,000
- Peak Audience BBC Women’s Football Show: 785,000
- Record Attendance: England v Germany: 45,619
- SSE Women’s FA Cup Entries: 259
- SSE Women’s FA Cup Prize Fund: £238,650

1. Source: AMS group - BARB viewing figures March 2016
The FA’s strategy for women’s and girls’ football: 2017-2020

To achieve this priority, we will:

• Appoint a Head of Performance, to:
  • Build the entire system, encompassing the FA WSL1 and FA WSL2.

• Create a well-rounded ‘England experience’, by:
  • Providing players in the England senior team and all age-group teams with world-class coaching, sports science and sports medicine services, as well as individual lifestyle and wellbeing support.

• Develop a ‘winning edge’ at the game’s elite level, by:
  • Establishing a high-performance multi-sport technical group.

• Review the competition pyramid and define the role and purpose of each level (from The FA WSL to the County Leagues), by:
  • Agreeing each level’s remit and responsibilities in relation to player development and/or recreational participation.

The elite level of the women’s game has developed rapidly over the last few years. The FA Women’s Super League (The FA WSL) has been established. Full-time England coaches have been appointed at senior and youth levels. There is greater broadcast coverage and central contracts have been introduced. The senior England women’s team was outstanding at the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup in Canada, finishing third.

The challenge is to build on these foundations. We need to create a world-leading, high-performance system for the women’s game with the player at the heart of it. A new focus for existing resources and some additional funding will be required to create the world-class system required to achieve our ambitions.

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The senior England women’s team was outstanding at the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup in Canada, finishing third.

• Develop strong partnerships with FA WSL and FA WSL2 clubs, by:
  • Renewing FA WSL licences with FAWSL clubs that meet the criteria and supporting those who join through promotion.

• Drawing up tailored partnership funding agreements which ensure effective management, improved marketing and high-quality player development. The agreements will also deliver centralised professional development to support club personnel.
Build a world-class talent pipeline

Right now, the England women’s senior team is occupying its highest-ranking to date in world football: no.5. This is a great achievement but we want to build on this and improve our ranking at every age group.

This will require a seamless talent pathway to allow our diverse and talented players to be developed and nurtured every step of the way. This talent pipeline will be supported by the best coaches, sports science and sports medicine. We will also ensure that the highest standards of welfare and safeguarding are in place for every player.

Alongside our provision for the development of our talent we want to build a comprehensive education programme to ensure that no young person has to abandon their education to achieve their dreams. This dual career of football and education/work will be key to the health of our game.

We want to develop the confidence of younger players to play at international level and embed a playing style that is common to all sides. This means transition to the next age group—and ultimately to the senior side—holds no surprises. Players can slot into a winning formula that runs throughout our international teams.

Source: FIFA December 2016

To achieve this priority, we will:
• Ensure every talented player in England has access to the talent pathway, and the opportunity to develop within it,
  - Providing high-quality coaching and performance support at every pathway level;
  - Ensuring every player can access a dual career pathway alongside football;
• Establish a comprehensive competition structure to support player development,
  - Providing clear profiles for players and coaches, whilst exploring talent transfer;
• Create 10 FA Women’s High-Performance Centres to support player and coach development,
  - Inviting universities to apply for selection as one of these Centres;
  - Ensuring a nationwide spread that captures players from all communities;
  - Providing ongoing quality assurance.
STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Increase the number and diversity of women coaching, refereeing and administering the sport at all levels

Effective leadership is imperative to deliver meaningful strategic change.

We must encourage and support more women from all backgrounds, to enter coaching, refereeing and wider leadership roles within the game. Coaching and refereeing in the women’s game should be a prized and rewarding experience for men and women.

The governance of the game at every level will benefit considerably from the inclusion of more women on boards. Over the past 15 years business research has consistently demonstrated that competent diverse boards create better, more successful businesses.1

To achieve this priority, we will:

• Develop our refereeing structure, by:
  • Appointing a Women’s Refereeing Manager. They will develop a supportive pathway to recruit, train, deploy and mentor more women and men to referee at every level of the women’s game;
  • Providing a comprehensive education and training programme for all referees (male and female) to ensure that the officiating of the women’s game is of the highest standard.
• Encourage more women to administer or serve as board members, by:
  • Harnessing The FA’s ‘State of Play’ equality monitoring tool to:
    • Identify strategic actions, (e.g. the creation of leadership programmes) to ensure board members are effective and board-ready;
    • Identify diverse talented women, who can add competence and different perspectives at board level.

MORE BETTER

“We must encourage and support more women from all backgrounds”

• Develop our coach development structure, by:
  • Appointing a Head of Women’s Coach Development to lead the recruitment, retention and deployment of more women coaches across all levels of the game;
  • Appointing 10 Coach Development Officers based in The FA Women’s High-Performance Centres to work in collaboration with the County FAs, FA WSL clubs, FA Charter Standard clubs, colleges and schools. The aim is to recruit, train and mentor more women and men to work in grassroots girls’ and women’s programmes;
  • Developing a foundation qualification for ‘football activators’ to encourage more people to lead and volunteer in grassroots girls’ and women’s football.

The FA's strategy for women's and girls' football: 2017-2020

For All
To increase the take-up of the game by girls and women, we need one coherent strategy that maximises the impact of all this work.

• Develop localised women’s football strategies, by:
  • Requesting a localised CFA-developed inclusive workforce plan to support more girls and women to volunteer, coach, referee and administer women’s football;
  • Creating a club toolkit for all clubs and other providers to ensure a safe, girl-friendly environment;
  • Providing appropriate training and support for people working with female players.

• Create a national network of programmes for girls to take up and continue to play football, by:
  • Working with the CFAs to identify partner organisations equipped to develop customised, local, safe and girl-friendly football programmes for primary-school age girls;
  • Establishing clear criteria around the operation and leadership of these activities – focused on friends, fun, fitness and family;
  • Ensuring clear exit routes into ‘girl-friendly’ clubs for a) those who wish to play more competitive football and b) those who want to play for fun, fitness and friendship.

• Launch an introductory programme for voluntary organisations and create start-up clubs in areas of deprivation, by:
  • Introducing a fun, entry-level programme of resources, equipment and training for voluntary organisations to motivate and inspire girls to play football for the first time;
  • Creating an incentive fund to encourage the development of sustainable new clubs in targeted areas of deprivation. These clubs are to attract new participants into the game, working in partnership with community groups;
  • Launching a ‘football activator’ qualification for leaders to support them in the organisation, planning and delivery of inclusive football sessions for novice players;

• Create new programmes for primary and secondary schools, by:
  • Developing playground-fun activity resources for primary schools to complement the Premier League ‘Primary Stars’ curriculum initiative;
  • Introducing a schools-based programme to support the increase of girls transitioning from school into community provision;
  • Launching a new curriculum-based football programme to be embedded in PE lessons, focused on the importance of teamwork and character development;
  • Introducing a ‘Football Youth Sport Award’ for secondary-school pupils to reward and encourage participation, leadership development and community volunteering.

• Invest in Further and Higher Education, by:
  • Supporting Further and Higher Education ‘football activators’ to provide innovative strategies to reach a more diverse audience and encourage greater participation in different football formats;
  • Developing more female student leaders, apprentices, coaches and referees to work in student sport and in the wider community;
  • Develop a research programme across The FA Women’s High-Performance Centres to inform and investigate innovative solutions to the challenges we face.
Change perceptions and social barriers to participation and following

Stereotypes are hard to break. Particularly ones embedded over generations. That’s why it’s taken a long time for women’s football to gain the acceptance level it currently enjoys. But there is so much more to do.

If we are to achieve our aims to get more women and girls playing the game – and more people watching it – we need to continue to challenge perceptions. We’ll do this by presenting the reality of women’s and girls’ football.

It’s fun, it’s easy to play, it keeps you fit – and is a great way of making new friends, as well as learning teamwork and communications skills.

We also need to highlight the personal stories of our elite players – and use the power of influencers via social media to talk to girls in ways that make sense.

But it’s not just girls to whom we need to appeal. Crucially, it’s their parents, carers and teachers, many of whom may still operate by the stereotypes we need to dispel.

To effect this cultural change, we are employing a dedicated Head of Marketing and Commercial (women’s football), with support from around the organisation.

STATEGIC PRIORITY

Change perceptions and social barriers to participation and following

'We need to continue to challenge perceptions. We’ll do this by presenting the reality of women’s and girls’ football.'

• Create an engaging brand proposition and narrative to attract young girls to football, by:
  • Using research and insights to develop and create distinct brands for girls’ and women’s specific programmes;
  • Supporting the girls’ participation programmes with appropriate marketing collateral for communication to girls, their parents, carers and teachers from all backgrounds;
  • Raising the profile of the Lionesses and FAWSL players to create diverse role models who inspire girls to play football.

• Co-ordinate messaging and promotions across existing and new partners and stakeholders, by:
  • Encouraging all stakeholders to consider looking at football ‘through a women’s lens’;
  • Working with commercial partners to amplify the narrative of women’s and girls’ football across the variety of audiences and channels;
  • Securing new and innovative commercial partnerships for women’s and girls’ football.

• Make the women’s game affordable and accessible for families, by:
  • Promoting The FAWSL as the affordable/accessible entry point for families into football;
  • Building the SSE Women’s FA Cup and particularly the Final as the ultimate event fixture in the women’s domestic calendar;
  • Positioning women’s matches as friendly and sociable with good player accessibility.

• Use influencers and advocates to change perceptions, by:
  • Building a diverse team of girls’ football advocates and influencers;
  • Developing inclusive content to challenge perceptions;
  • Accessing mainstream celebrities through new commercial partnerships;
  • Using social media to develop messaging to reach younger audiences.

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The FA’s strategy for women’s and girls’ football: 2017-2020

The FA’s women’s and girls’ football strategy

To achieve this priority, we will:

• Build the Lioness brand into one of the iconic national team brands, by:
  • Creating an integrated marketing, digital and communications plan to build profile and awareness;
  • Developing a distinctive Lionesses brand identity;
  • Producing toolkits and assets to support the Lionesses’ narrative.

• Improve engagement with elite players and build relationships, by:
  • Improving elite player support and liaison through a dedicated Player Partnerships Manager;
  • Supporting the lifestyle-training programme, specifically in the growing areas of social and digital media;
  • Proactively communicating in the critical pre- and post-event periods.

• Develop an engaging and interactive Lionesses Supporters Programme, by:
  • Creating a dedicated membership club with content, behind-the-scenes access and exclusive experiences and competitions.

Increase profile of the England team and players

The history of sport – any sport – shows that players at the elite level are uniquely positioned to positively influence the game at every level below them. They can be inspirational role models – and become spokespersons for the sport they love. Just look at how other sports have developed female participation and a following by ensuring those at the top are diverse, accessible, friendly and inspirational. And crucially, how they’ve remained engaged with the grassroots levels of their sport.

In the case of the women’s game in this country, the apex of the sport is the senior England team – the Lionesses. We want to build the Lioness brand into one of the iconic national team brands. We must, therefore, ensure the Lionesses are connected to their fans and grassroots players – and not separated from the game. We must also seek relevant and active commercial partnerships, that can help transmit key positive messages around the women’s game.

‘Players at elite level are uniquely positioned to be inspirational role models’

POSITIVE MESSAGES

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

The FA’s strategy for women’s and girls’ football: 2017-2020

To achieve this priority, we will:

• Engage and encourage commercial partners and broadcasters to activate the women’s game, by:
  • Developing assets for commercial partners to utilise;
  • Ensuring all new commercial partnerships include marketing value in-kind;
  • Working with key rights holding broadcasters to raise profile of Lionesses.

• Ensure we tap into the experience and profiles of former England players, by:
  • Creating an England ‘legends programme’, with defined benefits for former international players;
  • Encouraging former players to become ambassadors and spokespeople for the game.
To achieve this priority, we will:

- Develop a clear season-long narrative for the women’s game, by:
  - Re-launching the FA WSL season in autumn 2017 in order to have a strong regular schedule and accompanying competition narrative
  - Ensuring regular listings to promote all fixtures at national, regional and local levels;
  - Maximising use of social and digital media on relevant channels to reach the appropriate audiences.

- Deliver relevant content at relevant times on relevant platforms for target audiences, by:
  - Reviewing all women’s social and digital channels, and live-streaming games and content that are not on traditional broadcast media, providing a dedicated content series and production;
  - Developing new lifestyle and short-form content specifically around the Lionesses and FA WSL clubs and players.

- Create exciting, affordable, accessible, quality, family-friendly football experiences, by:
  - Working alongside commercial partners to improve the match day experience with a range of different activities for different age groups;
  - Developing and extending the existing FA WSL Sister Club programme into more clubs and schools;
  - Exploring new and innovative event formats that drive new and more diverse audiences to the game;
  - Reviewing the potential to bid to host major international events.
To achieve this, we will create separate commercial programmes for the men’s and women’s national teams, even though some sponsors may operate across both. Our partnerships with sponsors to girls’ and women’s football will include specific marketing support on both sides to achieve our goals. We will develop concepts and programmes to show women’s football as exciting, skilful and unpredictable – all the attractions which have made the men’s game the world’s dominant team sport.

Every successful enterprise needs a steady income flow— to maintain ‘business as usual’ and crucially, to grow. The women and girls’ game in this country is no different. Financial fuel is key to driving the game forward.

To achieve this, we will create separate commercial programmes for the men’s and women’s national teams, even though some sponsors may operate across both. Our partnerships with sponsors to girls’ and women’s football will include specific marketing support on both sides to achieve our goals. We will develop concepts and programmes to show women’s football as exciting, skilful and unpredictable—all the attractions which have made the men’s game the world’s dominant team sport.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Improve the commercial prospects in women’s football

To achieve this priority, we will:

• Create a dedicated women’s commercial programme, with separation of men’s and women’s international rights, by:
  • Creating a distinct and separate brand identity for the Lionesses;
  • Re-engineering the current usage of rights by partners with a view to create new assets and opportunities;
  • Evaluating the commercial structure of FA WSL assets to support clubs and deliver more value to new and existing partners.

• Create innovative broadcast and event propositions, by:
  • Working with all broadcasters to introduce new and innovative formats using social media influencers and short-form content to reach younger audiences and deliver commercial value for sponsors;
  • Working with clubs to provide regular and consistent fixtures for the domestic competitions;
  • Reviewing the format and timings of competitions and events to maximise commercial opportunities.

‘The women and girls’ game in this country is no different. Financial fuel is key to driving the game forwards and sustaining it.’

POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS
Key partners to the women’s and girls’ game

We would like to thank all the partners to the women’s and girls’ game. Their input is vital to grow and sustain the game.

Such organisations include ‘internal’ partners to the game such as all the clubs and Community Trusts in the game’s current structure – as well as the pivotal role played by County FAs. ‘External’ non-commercial partners include educational bodies at primary, secondary and tertiary levels – and of course, the various government departments and agencies, whose remit the girls’ and women’s game can help fulfil.
A one-stop look at the priorities and key activities that will create a World Cup-winning England Senior team and double the player and fan base.

**Priority** | **Aim** | **Key actions** |  
--- | --- | --- |  
**Build a sustainable and successful high-performance system** | Appoint a Head of Performance | Ensure every talented player in England has access to the England pathway and the opportunity to develop within it. |  
**Build a world-class talent pipeline** | Ensure every talented player in England has access to the England pathway and the opportunity to develop within it. | Establish a comprehensive talent management system and support player development. Create 10 FA Women’s High Performance Centres to support player and coach development. |  
**Increase the number and diversity of women coaching, refereeing and administering the sport at all levels.** | Develop a coaching development strategy. | Develop a coaching development strategy. |  
**Develop participation opportunities and infrastructure** | Create an engaging brand proposition and narrative to attract diverse young girls to football. | Develop a coaching development strategy. |  
**Change perceptions and social barriers to participation and following** | Signpost opportunities to participate, watch or follow. | Improve engagement and nurturing players and their clubs. |  
**Increase the profile of the England team and players** | Improve engagement and nurturing players and their clubs. | Improve engagement and nurturing players and their clubs. |  
**Signpost opportunities to participate, watch or follow** | Signpost opportunities to participate, watch or follow. | Signpost opportunities to participate, watch or follow. |  
**Improve the commercial prospects of women’s football** | Improve the commercial prospects of women’s football. | Create a dedicated commercial programme and platform for young audiences. |  

**Strategic priorities**

- **Build a sustainable and successful high-performance system**
  - Appoint a Head of Performance
  - Ensure every talented player in England has access to the England pathway and the opportunity to develop within it.

- **Build a world-class talent pipeline**
  - Establish a comprehensive talent management system and support player development.
  - Create 10 FA Women’s High Performance Centres to support player and coach development.

- **Increase the number and diversity of women coaching, refereeing and administering the sport at all levels.**
  - Develop a coaching development strategy.

- **Develop participation opportunities and infrastructure**
  - Create an engaging brand proposition and narrative to attract diverse young girls to football.

- **Change perceptions and social barriers to participation and following**
  - Signpost opportunities to participate, watch or follow.

- **Increase the profile of the England team and players**
  - Improve engagement and nurturing players and their clubs.

- **Signpost opportunities to participate, watch or follow**
  - Signpost opportunities to participate, watch or follow.

- **Improve the commercial prospects of women’s football**
  - Create a dedicated commercial programme and platform for young audiences.
If you or your organisation wants to know more about how to get involved in the women’s and girls’ game in this country, please contact your local County FA Lead Officer for women’s and girls’ football.

A list of the Officers can be found at:

If you need to contact someone at The FA then please email:
womens.football@TheFA.com The person most relevant to your enquiry will then respond.

For more information