



BE PART OF FOOTBALL'S FUTURE

THE FA WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE
LAUNCHING IN 2011





This is the new information pack for The FA Women’s Super League launching in 2011. It supercedes the earlier brochure ‘An overview of The FA Women’s Super League 2010-12’ which was published in February 2009. Please use this information pack and the documents on the new CD to complete your application.

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The attached CD contains the following documents to assist your application:

1. Club Development Plan Checklist
2. Club Development Plan Template
3. Club Income and Expenditure Model
4. Club Development Fund Model
5. Ground Grading Minimum Requirements
6. Medical Guidelines
7. Terms and Conditions



There is absolutely no question that women's football is on the up throughout the world. Participation and interest levels now have their own momentum.

Whether in business or sport, there's always a time when you have to really get behind an idea if it's going to fly. Now is that time for the elite level of women's football in England.

The England women's international teams are performing superbly on the world stage, and it's our duty to ensure they continue to draw from the best home-grown players that we produce.

Participation levels are at an all-time high here in England, as are the number of opportunities for girls and women to play. However, the structure at the top of the domestic game simply is not right. It isn't sustainable or capable of significant growth.

These factors are among the driving forces behind the new FA Women's Super League, scheduled to launch in 2011. When I joined The FA, the original Super League concept was sound, but I felt we needed to develop the framework so that it genuinely delivers on three fronts:

- Enables players to earn a good living from the game;
- Allows clubs to develop new revenue streams and support through women's football;
- Encourages broadcasters to see women's football as a new platform which has huge development potential.

The foundations are in place, but we must push on and set our sights high.

We hope the benefits of such a Super League will create an aspirational effect on the whole of the women's game. Our concept for the Super League is also designed to ensure talented players no longer have to move overseas to play competitive, professional football.

Of course, concepts need enthusiastic support if they are to become reality. So we're inviting potential Super League clubs to show their support by applying for membership by the closing date for applications: Friday 18 December 2009.

The membership criteria are demanding but the clubs likely to succeed are those which exceed the minimum criteria. If we are to produce a sustainable, high-quality competition, that's the way it should be.

The FA Women's Super League is set to kick-off in March 2011, with the next big international staging posts thereafter being the FIFA Women's World Cup later that year in Germany and the London 2012 Olympic Games.

This is a wonderful chance to do something new and different, and I believe a fantastic opportunity awaits women's football in England. The game stands on the threshold of a new era.

We're looking forward to receiving membership applications and then working together to create a dynamic league which can grow and innovate over the years ahead.



Ian Watmore
Chief Executive
The Football Association

OBJECTIVES
FORMAT
AND
COMMERCIAL
PROFILE



1.1 Objectives

Women's football has witnessed substantial growth in strength and popularity in the last decade.

It is now recognised as the no.1 female team participation sport in England.

There are:

- More than 150,000 affiliated players (FA databases);
- 260,000 women and 1.1 million girls playing the game for recreational reasons (Sport England's Active people Survey 2008);
- 331,000 girls currently not playing for a team who would like to (TNS Sport).

The existing cohesive structure for affiliated players allows talented players to develop to their full potential, from initial identification in grassroots clubs through to playing at Centres of Excellence and ultimately, selection for national teams.

To build on this success, grow the women's game, and take it to the next level, The FA's current Strategic Vision and Women's and Girls' Football Strategy identified some specific plans to raise the quality and competitiveness in the women's game.

The FA's investment at the elite level of the game is intended to fulfil the following objectives:

- To create a new competition. Its working title is 'The FA Women's Super League' and the new structure to support it should be in place for the League to kick-off in March 2011;
- To attract and retain England's most talented players;
- To create more paid career opportunities for players to play and work in football on a full time basis;
- To support and strengthen the commercial viability and sustainability of women's football;
- To improve the standard of football facilities available to women;
- To strengthen the player pathway and playing base of the sport.

1.2 Format and growth

The FA Women's Super League will begin in March 2011. The season will run from March to October (i.e. a 'summer' league).

The format has been designed to be as attractive as possible from competitive, broadcast and commercial standpoints. It will also help England players prepare and peak for international matches and tournaments as a summer league aligns better with the international competition cycle. The FA Women's Super League will be a semi-professional league. Ideally, it will initially operate with eight clubs. Only clubs affiliated to an English County FA can apply for membership of The FA Women's Super League.

Clubs who present the strongest applications will be awarded a two-year licence for the 2011 and 2012 seasons. The FA Women's Super League will be closed to new entrants during this period, as this will give the League and the clubs the best-possible chance of success in the start-up phase.

The intention is to expand The FA Women's Super League after the 2012 season, with clubs proving themselves in the national leagues and aspiring to membership of The FA Women's Super League when they – and the League – are ready.

Clubs will have to show they can raise their game on and off the pitch and meet required standards via a rigorous application process. Finances, standards, and performances permitting, the goal is to expand The FA Women's Super League to a maximum of 12 clubs between 2013 and 2016.

1.3 The FA Women's Super League season

The FA Women's Super League intends to play its matches between March and October – with a flexible schedule to dovetail with broadcast schedules and the international calendar.

A 'summer' schedule will give women's football a platform on which to build a new identity and also see the sport occupy a new space in the sporting calendar. It should enable the development of a niche product for football and value to commercial partners and broadcasters.

The summer schedule will distinguish the women's game from the men's with a unique property that will help it secure its own broadcast coverage. The schedule will be flexible enough to include mid-week, evening games. Summer games will be more family-friendly with the warmer weather and better facilities helping to attract larger audiences.

Fixtures are intended to include a 'Festival of Football' or 'Super League Sizzler', held at an attractive central venue on either the late May or August Bank Holiday weekends. All clubs will play two fixtures at this event, with the aim being capacity crowds and a range of family-friendly entertainment.

It is anticipated that all other English women's leagues will remain as 'winter' leagues (i.e. August to May), until The FA Women's Super League is firmly established. The long-term intention is for the summer game to grow and The FA Women's Super League to become an integrated part of the wider women's football pyramid.

Clearly, The FA Women's Super League must first demonstrate the measurable benefits of playing between March and October, and the wider game must then want to support such a move. Clubs and stakeholders will be consulted to ensure support before the women's pyramid moves to a summer-based game.

1.4 Commercial profile

Given women's football now has over 1 million participants – whether competitive or recreational – as well as those who watch and follow the game – it represents a significant marketing and sponsorship platform for commercial organisations.

The game has evolved in recent times, and is now considered a genuinely competitive spectacle. This is reflected by the following TV audiences for recent women's matches:

- 1.7 million audience on BBC Two for the England senior women's team competing in the UEFA women's Euro 2009™ Final;
- 182,000 viewers on Sky Sports 2 for The FA Women's League Cup Final 2008;
- 2 million average BBC One audience for The FA Women's Cup Final 2006, 2007 and 2008;
- 1.15 million lunch time audience on BBC One for the England senior women's team v USA (FIFA Women's World Cup 2007™);
- 8.2 million BBC Two audience for England's three group games at UEFA Women's Euro 2005™.

The above figures compare favourably with those achieved in the well-established men's game and demonstrate support for the women's game amongst the UK television audience.

Despite the collapse of Pay-TV operator Setanta, The FA continues to negotiate positively with UK broadcasters about The FA Women's Super League. All UK

TV options remain open, as well as more innovative approaches to broadcasting, including online platforms.

The FA recently and successfully experimented with this for the England Men's U21 game versus Macedonia in October 2009. It remains The FA's intention to ensure that participant clubs retain a number of audio-visual rights for their own platforms.

In addition to the previous broadcast figures, high-profile matches also attract very sizeable live attendances, for example:

- The FA Women's Cup Final 2008: 24,582;
- England's opening match at UEFA Women's Euro 2005: 29,092;
- The FA Women's League Cup Final 2008: 5,008;
- Arsenal LFC v Chelsea LFC, FA Women's Premier League match: 5,000.

The FA Women's Super League represents an opportunity for a national brand to become the lead commercial partner, with room for supporting partners and exclusive supplier categories.

As well as benefiting from a lead partner, The FA Women's Super League clubs will have a significant percentage of rights and inventory to sell and commercial opportunities to exploit. This will include club and match day sponsorships, 50% of perimeter advertising, hospitality and sale of official merchandise.

IN SUMMARY

The key features of The FA Women's Super League will be:

- A semi-professional league;
- Fixtures played between March and October;
- An optimum eight teams from 2011;
- Closed league in 2011 and 2012 seasons;
- Season start dates to suit broadcast schedules;
- Breaks to accommodate international fixtures;
- Fixtures to include a big football festival, involving all teams, on a Bank Holiday weekend;
- The FA Women's Super League clubs enter The FA Women's Cup as part of the last 16 in March;
- The FA Women's Premier League Cup continues to run for all FA Women's Premier League teams.

FINANCIAL
SUPPORT
AND
INVESTMENT



2.1 FA financial investment

Clearly, in the start-up phase of The FA Women's Super League, clubs who successfully apply for membership may need support from The FA.

With this in mind, The FA has created the Club Development Fund. Each FA Women's Super League club can apply for a maximum of £70,000 per season for the 2011 and 2012 seasons to support The FA Women's Super League and club development activities in specified areas.

To be eligible clubs must produce a two year Club Development Plan and demonstrate how they intend to raise their own or partner funds. It may be difficult for clubs to generate income before they know if they have been awarded a licence, and before a full broadcast and sponsorship programme has been announced by The FA. This will be taken into account by the selection panel when considering the applications.

A full guide to producing this Club Development Plan is enclosed, and it identifies requirements for clubs to present convincing strategies and actions to generate sponsorship, gate receipts and partnership income e.g. grants.

After the first two years of The FA Women's Super League, the Club Development Fund will be reviewed.

This Club Development Fund is designed to support clubs in three key areas:

1. Management, commercial and marketing services

This will enable clubs to generate revenue and promote sustainability (e.g. funding part-time business development/operations managers and putting in place outreach regional development/community work) which in turn should generate support for the club.

£25,000 maximum award per club per season

2. Coaching, medical and other football-related support services

This will enable clubs to improve quality and safeguard talent (e.g. funding of the recruitment, training and development costs for Head, Assistant and Apprentice coaches, alongside sports science, physiotherapy and other medical support services).

£25,000 maximum award per club per season

3. Facilities

This funding will enable clubs to pay a percentage of facility and associated costs (e.g. costs for leasing and maintaining better quality and more expensive summer pitches and training grounds, including the administration costs to manage a relationship with the ground provider).

£20,000 maximum award per club per season

Overall, these funds will allow clubs to develop the skills and infrastructure they require to generate income and become independent and sustainable during the start-up phase of the League in 2011 and 2012.

Within the total of £50,000 allocated under key areas 1 and 2 previously mentioned, The FA has specifically allocated a maximum of £12,000 to fund development roles in football for up to three club players. This is explained further in section 3.1. It is up to individual clubs to decide if they wish to apply for this specific funding.

As outlined above, when a club applies for an FA Women's Super League licence it will be required to present a Club Development Plan. Part of this plan requires the club to present financial information, including confirmation of the funding for which it wants to apply.

A key challenge for clubs in their application is to demonstrate how they will use this funding to secure longer-term financial viability by attracting other income.

After the announcement of the clubs who have successfully applied for The FA Women's Super League membership, The FA will confirm a recommended figure for each Club Development Fund award and will finalise this with each club as soon as possible. Clubs will be required to sign an annual funding agreement, to account for the monies awarded against specific activities.

2.2 Club investment and support

Clubs must demonstrate in their applications that they can at least match fund any Club Development Fund award made to them by The FA. However, it is our belief that in order to create a world class league with world class players, the most successful clubs will go beyond this – they will create part and full time paid roles for women to play football professionally. Ideally, these paid roles will combine playing football with work for the club and the community to help build the sport's commercial and spectator profile.

The number of players and the salaries they receive must comply with the salary cap rules for the The FA Women's Super League. These are further explained in section 3.2 and a Club Income and Expenditure Model is included in the application pack to help illustrate this.

2.3 Other forms of investment and support

As well as making financial investments in the clubs, The FA is also keen to support and work with them, as well as sponsors, broadcasters and other partners to give all parties and The FA Women's Super League the best chance of success.

Examples of these partnerships in practice include:

- Clubs and The FA signing up to the same strategic league and club objectives;
- Central administration provided and paid for by The FA to establish The FA Women's Super League;
- A central FA team, dedicated to The FA Women's Super League's development;
- Additional investment into workshops, education and training guides, toolkits and advice for The FA Women's Super League;
- The FA working in close partnership with the clubs and other stakeholders, via The FA Women's Super League management committee;
- Priority being given to negotiation of central broadcast and sponsor contracts for The FA Women's Super League and a commitment to excellent management of these relationships by The FA.

In the immediate future, The FA is committed to guide and steer all interested organisations through the application and bid process, as we embark on an exciting but challenging time of change together.

As you will see elsewhere, The FA has set up a bespoke Advice Line to help with any initial queries and to guide clubs through the application process itself.



Each club will be able to apply for a maximum of £70,000 per season for the 2011 and 2012 seasons to support club development activities in specified areas.

THE
COMPETITIVE
ELEMENT



If The FA Women's Super League is to be competitive and deliver its key objectives – to showcase the sport effectively, to attract and retain England's best talent, and to raise standards in the women's game – it is important the clubs are evenly-matched.

This means the 'top' players should play for different teams across the country and clubs should provide them with attractive career opportunities to play and work in football professionally.

The FA has considered many different ways of helping clubs and players engineer this – whilst ensuring fairness and avoiding onerous restrictions.

Rather than limit the number of senior national players registered with any one club or imposing a player draft system – at first glance the simplest ways of engineering strong competition – The FA believes The FA Women's Super League objectives can be achieved by a two-pronged strategy:

- By introducing a salary cap and encouraging clubs to contract and pay for a limited number of players within the salary cap budget;
- By creating FA-funded career opportunities for registered players in each club to work in football or club development roles. By matching FA funds clubs can make these career opportunities even more attractive.

3.1. Career opportunities for players

This initiative will enable some of the best players to work for each FA Women's Super League club, and be paid from the Club Development Fund.

Each club will be able to secure the commitment of at least two senior and one talented youth player per season, who can develop careers in football and support the clubs activities at the same time. £12,000 from the Club Development Fund is specifically allocated for this purpose - and cannot be used for anything else.

The three roles envisaged (no one player can assume more than one role) are:

'Ambassador - senior player' – for a talented senior player to assume public relations responsibilities and become a role model for their club.

- Maximum rate £6,000 per annum

'Ambassador - young player' – for the very best under-19 youth player registered with the senior squad to work alongside the senior ambassador on PR activities for the club.

- Maximum rate £3,000 per annum

Development Manager, Coach or Administrator – for a talented senior player to take an off-the-field role (coaching or administrative) with The FA Women's Super League club.

- Maximum rate £3,000 per annum

3.2. The salary cap

This will be set at a reasonable and fair figure, to prevent the wealthiest clubs stockpiling players. It will support the objective of developing a more competitive national league and help ensure the financial stability of The FA Women's Super League.

The salary cap will mean:

- Each club can only register four players who are paid more than £20,000 gross per player by the club in any one 'salary cap year';
- Each club will only be allowed to pay its remaining players a maximum of £20,000 gross per player in a 'salary cap year'.

The salary cap will include all financial payments and benefits (e.g. vehicle and/or accommodation payments) liable to income tax that a club or any of its associated partners makes to any individual who is registered to play for that club. This includes any payments for playing, and for other club and football-related activities that will benefit the club e.g. for paid work in development, coaching or administration roles.

Central contracts for England players were introduced in 2009. Payments made by The FA to players via these central contracts will not be included in The FA Women's Super League salary cap calculations. A central contract is currently worth approximately £16,000 per player per annum.

The FA will create detailed rules and regulations to ensure that the salary cap system is not abused. It will invest in a monitoring system to ensure clubs comply with these rules and regulations.

Clubs found to be guilty of non-compliance with the salary cap rules and regulations will be sanctioned, for example by a fine, points deduction or revocation of their FA Women's Super League licence, depending on the seriousness of the applicable breach, or any case of repeated offences by a club. A full list of possible breaches and sanctions will be provided within the relevant rules and regulations.

The FA, with The FA Women's Super League management committee, will closely monitor the effectiveness of the salary cap and may amend/adjust it accordingly or introduce further measures to ensure the financial viability and competitiveness of The FA Women's Super League.



Top players should play for different teams across the country and clubs should provide them with attractive career opportunities.

LEAGUE
MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION
PROCESS



The application process will be open and transparent and any new or existing club can apply, provided they are affiliated to an English County FA.

It is recognised that at this stage, 'club' could relate to an established club, or a newly-created club, entity or organisation, depending on the nature of the applicant.

Applicants are required to submit their application in the form of a Club Development Plan which references the minimum requirements to be satisfied.

Minimum requirements – as outlined in the Club Development Plan Checklist – must be attained in the following four areas:

1. Financial and business management
2. Commercial and marketing
3. Facilities
4. Players and support staff

Clearly, those clubs which exceed the minimum requirements will increase their chances of a successful application.

The FA would like the Super League to have optimum national coverage and this will be taken into account during the selection process.

Summary of Club Development Plan requirements:

Full details and guidance are given in the Club Development Plan Checklist which you will find on the enclosed CD. In summary, each must contain:

- Accounts and financial forecasts;
- The club's legal ownership and management structure details;
- Professional staff details, including management, administrative, coaching and medical personnel, with qualifications and CV's;
- Business development/marketing plan, incorporating target audience, historic evidence, objectives, action plans and budgets;
- Definition of the club's regional catchment area, details of its population density and maximum potential spectator base;
- Individual Club Development Fund applications to support staffing and activity in one or more of The FA's three key investment areas (section 2.1). Clubs must match fund FA investment and specify the clear outcomes which they will deliver. The FA will set measurable performance indicators so that return on investment can be assessed annually and adjusted;
- Facility details and ground maintenance plans with terms of occupancy and budgets;
- Indicative player list with summary of contract details, including total anticipated salary costs and details of further recruitment plans;

- Regional and youth development programme links, named Centres of Excellence and feeder/focus clubs for key relationship-building, with action plans and budgets.

A selection panel will assess the applications against minimum requirements. The adjudication system will be objective and as transparent as possible.

The FA will brief the selection panel and input on football matters. Reasons for the decisions will be given to the clubs. For those clubs who are successful, a two-year licence will be awarded, Club Development Fund awards made, and a Club Development Funding agreement will be drawn up by The FA, to be signed by both parties.

DEADLINES
AND
LOGISTICS



5.1 Immediate deadlines

The closing date for applications to be received is Friday 18 December 2009. This is the date by which clubs must have completed and delivered The FA Women's Super League application - in effect their Club Development Plan. The FA will support clubs through the process via the Super League Advice Line, workshops and one-on-one support as required.

The selection panel will sit in January and February and the announcement of the successful clubs to form The FA Women's Super League will be in March 2010, 12 months before the scheduled launch of the league.

Revised timeline

October 2009

Applications open

December 2009

Applications close 18 December 2009

January - February 2010

Adjudication

March 2010

Clubs notified of decisions

FA Women's Premier League clubs transferring to the Super League serve withdrawal notice on FAWPL by 31 March

April - June 2010

Club Development Fund awards signed

June 2010

FAWPL AGM agrees new format, depending on Super League membership

September - November 2010

Super League winter friendly fixture programme

March 2011

Launch of The FA Women's Super League

5.2. The effect on existing women's leagues

When the successful clubs are announced, it is likely to have a significant effect on the clubs in the leagues which sit below the new FA Women's Super League.

Whilst these non-FA Women's Super League clubs will continue to play in winter, the format of their leagues will only become clear at The FA Women's Premier League AGM in June 2010. Alternative league models have already been developed with the clubs and they will vote on their preferred choice at the AGM. The number of remaining Premier League clubs and their location will clearly influence the desired route.

Thereafter when these clubs commence their 2010/11 season, The FA Women's Super League clubs will be dormant and subsequently in pre-season training mode, including a short winter friendly fixture schedule provided by The FA. In addition, England players will continue to train and play in international fixtures.

The FA will work with clubs through the new FA Women's Super League management committee to confirm pre-season friendly fixtures and competitions in the run-up to the launch of The FA Women's Super League in March 2011.

5.3 Facilities

A major priority for The FA Women's Super League clubs is to secure a facility which satisfies minimum ground grading criteria, with security of tenure for at least one but ideally two years. The preference is for matches to be played on the very best grass pitches possible, but clubs will have the option to play on 3G surfaces to FA standards where necessary. Facilities will be secured by clubs with FA support. Clubs will be able to apply for a maximum of £20,000 from the Club Development Fund (as covered in section 2.1) for this.

A new grading category for The FA Women's Super League facilities will be introduced, details of which are enclosed. This is in line with the men's National League System 'Grade D' category. This will not however limit The FA Women's Super League to 'Grade D' men's football grounds, as grounds of a higher specification will be encouraged.

We are confident that there is sufficient capacity within the men's non-league game at pyramid steps 3 and 4 (ground Grades 'C' and 'D' under the current grading system), but the challenge is to identify the 'ideal' ground, rather than one which just meets the minimum specification.

Over and above the minimum grading criteria, clubs will also need to have a well thought through maintenance plan which ensures grass pitches are not over-played and are in good condition throughout the summer months.

Grounds should be suitable for broadcasting but in a realistic and pragmatic way. Some grounds, for example, may have to build towers, gantries and use scaffolding to get elevated views.

In addition, proximity to major population centres with good transport links to attract maximum spectators, modern club houses and family-friendly facilities will all help strengthen an application.

5.4 Player registration

The FA Women's Super League operational rules for players will require:

- Clubs to register a maximum of 20 players at any one time;
- The FA Women's Super League to maintain a register of players;
- Players to be defined as 'contract' or 'non-contract' with full details on each player. Players to register with one club for each season but with a transfer window;
- Details of all home-grown players who have played with a club in its regional catchment area for at least three years;
- Details of players who require work permits.

5.5 Further documentation

The FA is currently drawing up all the necessary funding and licence agreements, as well as the rules and regulations for The FA Women's Super League. These will be available shortly.

The closing date for applications to be received is Friday 18 December 2009.

The selection panel will sit in January and February 2010 and the announcement of the successful clubs to form The FA Women's Super League will be in March 2010.

HOW TO

APPLY

After you've read through the contents of this pack, if you have any questions or queries, please contact our dedicated Advice Line.

We appreciate how much work and consultation has already gone into getting the Super League and your club to this point. The FA is delighted that it can now formally invite you to apply to be part of this exciting new development in women's football.

The FA Women's Super League will keep the English game at the forefront of international developments and will provide an exciting and competitive English league for our most talented players. This will help give them the best preparation possible for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011 and the London 2012 Olympic Games.

To apply, please use the documents on the enclosed CD.

1. Club Development Plan Checklist
2. Club Development Plan Template
3. Club Income and Expenditure Model
4. Club Development Fund Model
5. Ground Grading Minimum Requirements
6. Medical Guidelines
7. Terms and Conditions

CLUBS MUST DELIVER APPLICATIONS BY 5PM ON FRIDAY 18 DECEMBER 2009 BY HAND OR BY COURIER TO:

Rachel Pavlou
The FA Women's Super League
Club Wembley Entrance
The Football Association
Wembley Stadium
Wembley
Middlesex HA9 0WS

NB Please **DO NOT** post applications to Wembley Stadium.

The FA looks forward to receiving your application and wishes you every success.

The FA Women's Super League Advice Line:

Tel: **0844 980 0380**

Email: **super.league@TheFA.com**

Visit:

www.TheFA.com



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