INSPIRING POSITIVE CHANGE

THE FA STRATEGY FOR WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL: 2020-2024

The FA

FOR ALL

Front cover shot: Connecting both ends of the women's and girls' pathway: England striker Ellen White joins in a Wildcats' session with 5-11-year-old girls.

INSPIRING POSITIVE CHANGE

GREENWOOD
3
FRANCE 2019

CONTENTS

06 FOREWORD BY BARONESS SUE CAMPBELL DBE

10 THE STRUCTURE OF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL IN ENGLAND

12 EARLY PARTICIPATION

16 DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION

20 FOOTBALL FOR ALL

24 CLUB PLAYER PATHWAY

28 ELITE DOMESTIC LEAGUES AND COMPETITIONS

32 ENGLAND

36 COACHING

40 REFEREEING

44 SHINING A LIGHT

46 ENDING WITH STARTING POINTS

51 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

EARLY INTRODUCTION OF GIRLS TO FOOTBALL

VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE CLUB PLAYER PATHWAY

ELITE DOMESTIC LEAGUES AND COMPETITIONS

ENGLAND SUCCESS

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY LEADERS

HIGHER STANDARDS OF COACHING

SUPPORTING THE DIVERSE WIDER WORKFORCE

GROWING THE FANBASE

INSPIRING POSITIVE CHANGE

Football has the power to change lives for the better. It can contribute to physical and mental wellbeing, it can provide opportunities to compete and collaborate with others and it can help to shape the place of girls and women in wider society.

Our strategy is based on understanding an individual's motivation to play - for learning, for recreation, for competition and for excellence. We want to ensure there is access and opportunity for every girl and woman to play, coach, spectate, officiate, manage or administer if they so wish and the game to be truly representative of our society across all protected characteristics[1] and social backgrounds.

We have built our long-term strategy around the following:

1. Giving every girl the earliest opportunity to have a fun, enjoyable introduction to the game in school and club.
2. Providing a well-signposted, inclusive and accessible club player pathway that supports the talented girls and young women who aspire to play in The FA Women's National League, The FA Women's Championship and the Barclays FA Women's Super League.
3. Being at the global forefront of women's professional sport and developing the best women sports leagues and competitions in the world.

[1] See here for a full list of protected characteristics and their definition.

4. Providing a 'Blueprint for Success' for our England players from under-14s through to the senior team so we consistently achieve international success in major senior tournaments.
5. Ensuring we have high standards of coaching practice throughout the women's game underpinned by a thirst for ongoing learning, critical thinking and knowledge sharing.
6. Providing football for all those who want to play for fun and recreation by developing local leaders from every community to motivate and organise opportunities to play for fitness and friendship.
7. Developing a diverse, well supported and highly skilled workforce including coaches, referees, sports development officers and administrators at every level of the game.
8. Growing our fanbase and extending engagement in our domestic and international competitions to build profile, drive brand value and ensure long-term financial sustainability.

Finally, we want to harness the inspirational power of a home UEFA Women's EURO Championships in 2022 as a catalyst for growth in every area.

To achieve all this, we will work in partnership with other football stakeholders and our growing range of commercial partners and broadcasters to inspire positive change for girls and women through football.

Sue Campbell

Baroness Sue Campbell DBE
Director of Women's Football

EARLY PARTICIPATION

DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION

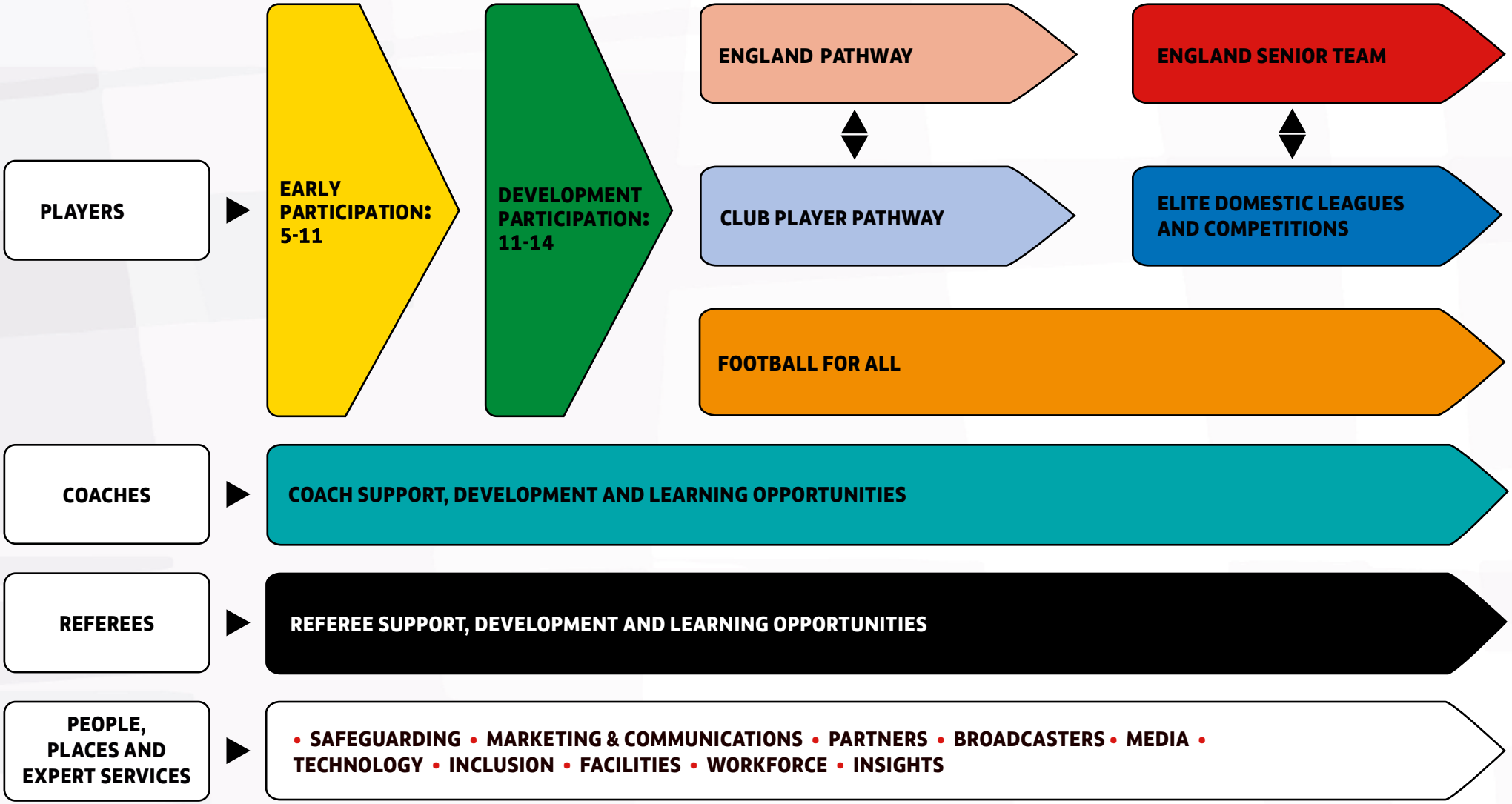
FOOTBALL FOR ALL

CLUB PLAYER PATHWAY

ELITE DOMESTIC AND COMPE

LEAGUES
ETITIONS
ENGLAND
COACHING
REFEREEING
SHINING A LIGHT

THE STRUCTURE OF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL IN ENGLAND



A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL IN ENGLAND

Focus

EARLY PARTICIPATION

Age group

5 – 11

Our 2024 goal:

Every primary school-aged girl to have equal access to football in school and in clubs

Giving girls the enthusiasm to be active and move with confidence is a vital building block in life's journey.

We want to help girls develop holistically and fall in love with our game at a young age. Providing a positive first experience for all is essential.

At a practical level, this means embedding football for girls in schools, as part of the PE curriculum and in after-school sessions.

As well as introducing a healthy lifestyle at an early age through football, we also want to create an appetite and an environment in which young girls carry on playing football into and through their teenage years.

Measures of success

By 2024 we want to see:

- Equal football access for all girls at 90% of schools (primary/secondary), with delivery in PE lessons, lunchtimes and after school;
- 90% of schools (primary/secondary) in England to be part of The FA Girls' Football School Partnerships network, supported by Barclays;
- Outside schools every girl to have a Wildcats'[1] session within easy traveling distance of their home;
- The majority of grassroots clubs nationally to have an offering for girls;
- Ensure all under-7 to under-12 girls have easy access to an inclusive club with an appropriate competitive pathway within easy access from home;
- Provision for disabled girls to be involved in everything we do, whether in-school or in recreational activities, such as Wildcats;
- Full compliance with FA safeguarding policy, procedures and safer working practice.

[1] **Wildcats** = a programme for girls aged 5-11 to try football for the first time and providing regular opportunities to play. Once a week, either after-school or at weekends. Open to everyone.

How we'll achieve our 2024 goal

Clearly, working in close collaboration with primary schools is vital. We'll provide training for teachers to run football sessions – either in-curriculum or after school – backed by physical resources and content. Potentially, we'll also provide funding where it's most needed.

Outside school, we'll work with grassroots clubs and community football providers, such as local authorities and professional clubs' community organisations.

With clubs and community providers, we'll work in partnership to embed a Wildcats' programme wherever practical – and provide training for those running Wildcats' sessions through our entry-level FA Playmaker supported by BT[2] course. We'll back this up with funding where necessary and technology provision, such as booking systems.

All the above will be delivered via our County FA network, with advice and resources made available across the grassroots landscape to create a national roster of female-friendly clubs.

And of course, we'll advise on safer working practice in every football setting.

The ultimate aim is for schools, clubs and community providers to be empowered to run engaging, fun and safe football sessions that link back to our main ambition in this age group: to provide every young girl with a great physical foundation for life.

Key to all the above will be strong campaigns, to ensure girls – and their parents/carers – realise that getting into football is easy, and its benefits are profound. Our messaging and signposting will be motivational, persuasive and easy to follow.

[2] **FA Playmaker supported by BT** = the entry-level course from FA Education that introduces everyone to the basics of making football happen.

“

We want to develop physically and emotionally healthy and active young girls in England.

Louise Gear,
FA Head of Development

DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION 11-14

Focus

DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION

Age group

11-14

Our 2024 goal:

Every girl to have equal access to participate, compete and excel in the game

It is well known that secondary school-age girls experience more barriers to football participation than boys, particularly in school curriculum time.

More grassroots clubs are developing girls' youth teams, but substantial work is needed to give girls the same level of opportunities as boys to participate in club football.

This is a critical age, when many girls experience declining body confidence and negative attitudes towards sport. So, removing barriers and making football more relevant to young girls' lives is essential.

Football can play a really important role in developing vital life skills such as resilience and self-confidence, as well as improving emotional and physical fitness during this key life phase.

Measures of success

By 2024 we want to see:

- Equal football access for girls at in 90% of schools (primary/secondary), with 75% delivering football in PE lessons and after school;
- 90% of schools (primary/secondary) in England to be part of The FA Girls' Football School Partnerships network, supported by Barclays;
- A teenage-girl-specific national football programme rolled out across England;
- Over 1,000 clubs across England providing a complete pathway[1] for girls;
- The delivery of the female-friendly club training programme across the country;
- A female-specific offer within 75% of clubs with youth sections nationally;
- Ensure all under-12 to under-16 girls have easy access to an inclusive club with a suitable competitive pathway within easy access from home;
- Provision for disabled teenage girls to be involved in everything we do, whether in-school or in FA initiatives;
- Full compliance with FA safeguarding policy, procedures and safer working practice.

[1] **Complete pathway** = mirroring the provision that boys enjoy. A club will provide a minimum of two-year age bands for girls (under-8, under-10, under-12, under-14, under-16 OR under-7, under-9, under-11, under-13, under-15, under-17), but with an aspiration of age groups for every year.

How we'll achieve our 2024 goal

In parallel with the 'Early Participation' phase, working with schools, other education providers and football clubs is fundamental.

We'll support those asked to teach football with specialist training, complemented by physical resources and content. We'll also provide leadership training for girls at this important life stage.

Away from schools, we'll roll out teenage-specific football programmes to grassroots clubs and other football providers in the community. Our ambition is that all girls have access to an inclusive club with a suitable competitive pathway, mirroring the provision that boys enjoy today.

Encouraging as many people as possible to take our new FA Playmaker supported by BT course will be key to all our activity. It teaches the basics of running fun and safe football sessions and if individuals want to progress, it can lead to football coaching qualifications.

Particularly with this transformative age group, we want to harness football's power to build and maintain self-esteem, alongside keeping fit, making friends and having fun. These are ends in themselves, but we will also have a defined pathway in place to mitigate girls dropping out of football in their teenage years through lack of opportunity to keep playing.

In parallel with the 5-11 age group, there will be campaigns and initiatives to encourage teenage girls to make football their long-term sporting and lifestyle choice. Communicating with this age group will be supported by senior England and club players, influencers and role models who will showcase the game and help inspire confidence in the future.

“

We’re committed to football playing its part in this country’s young women becoming physically and emotionally healthier, more resilient and self-confident.

Louise Gear,
FA Head of Development

Focus

FOOTBALL FOR ALL

Age group

14+

Our 2024 goal:

A motivated, diverse range of local leaders organising football for their communities

There is much to do to make football genuinely 'For All'. The level of engagement with females from diverse communities is not where it should be. We believe the route to change this is to identify, develop and support local leadership that is grounded in the lived experience of every girl to help us facilitate football for everyone.

We also want to actively recruit and train more leaders to help us increase the opportunities for disabled females to take part in our Wildcats programme and play football in schools, community organisations and clubs.

The FIFA Women's World Cup in 2019 inspired a nation and demonstrated massive growth potential in adult female recreational football, with thousands of older women from our 'missed generation' expressing an interest in the game. The new entry-level FA Playmaker supported by BT course presents a fabulous opportunity to recruit the next generation of football leaders to support this growth.

We also have a real opportunity to combat societal issues through football. For example, initial pilots of football-based activities with refugee/asylum-seeking women and female prisoners are having positive results. Working with relevant partners, we also plan to educate leaders to run these and other such programmes where most needed.

Measures of success

By 2024 we want to see:

- Leadership programmes for young women from every background, with a marked increase in ethnically diverse women being introduced to our game;
- A diverse network of FA Playmakers to bring football to every community group;
- More coaches completing the free to access FA Education modules introducing disability football, to increase the awareness, confidence and skills required to engage females with health conditions or impairments;
- All County FAs offering FA-developed 'fun' football opportunities so adult women can experience the game recreationally and/or competitively, e.g. Walking Football, Soccercise and Small-Sided;
- Opportunities for under-represented female groups to engage through a series of specific football-based interventions;
- Full compliance with FA safeguarding policy, procedures and safer working practice in every activity we undertake.

An Advisory Group has been started to guide our engagement with Asian women.

How we'll achieve our 2024 goal

Breaking the real or perceived gender barrier to football is a constant focus. However, beyond this, we will reach out to specific groups or communities, and identify and train influential football leaders.

That's why we'll be working with a range of specialist community groups in strategic locations. We'll offer the potential leaders we identify various development opportunities, including leadership camps, online training and courses, such as The FA Playmaker supported by BT. Resources and content will be provided, as well as guidance on safeguarding procedures and safer working practice in every setting.

We will also draw upon the insight and guidance of our many national inclusion advisory groups, such as The FA Asian Women in Football Advisory Group and The FA Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Football Network.

In parallel, we will analyse the level of diversity across the women's game so we can create bespoke, targeted interventions.

In addition, we'll work with grassroots clubs and community football providers to ensure they are truly inclusive. Apart from The FA's own experience in this area, we will facilitate knowledge-sharing across the football network.

Schools, Further Education and Higher Education providers will also be key partners in our work to ensure every woman and girl in England has access to our national sport and contribute towards our relatable leaders of tomorrow.

Campaigns with clear signposting will welcome those new to the game, from every community. We will harness the profile and power of the England squads in activity aimed at driving engagement with specific under-represented community groups. Working with external partners, we will also run programmes to encourage once-active participants to return to the game.

“

We want to change the lives of women and girls through football, delivering sustainable social impact and helping create more inclusive communities across the country. We will show over the next four years that football is ‘For All’ girls and women.

Rachel Pavlou,
FA Women’s National & International Development Manager

Focus

CLUB PLAYER PATHWAY

Age group

AS APPROPRIATE TO THE PLAYER

Our 2024 goal:

An effective high-performance, inclusive player-centred pathway

The continued growth of the women's domestic and international game will be driven by the strength of the youth development pathways which sit beneath it. The players involved in that pathway will not all reach the summit and we need to support and assist them to secure their futures. Those that do reach the summit will also need support.

We know players are primarily developed at clubs so we aim to invest in and build an inclusive and principle-driven club player pathway.

The club player pathway will support the recruitment, development and transition of players while considering player needs from tactical, technical, psychological, physiological, social and dual-career[1] perspectives, starting them on this journey when it's appropriate for the player.

As a result, the aim is that every player is better prepared for the needs of international and domestic club football – and in their wider lives, whatever their aspirations. We aim to develop great people. Because great people do great things.

[1] **Dual-career** = an environment which ensures academic learning continues alongside football development, so non-football career paths are an option a) should a professional football career not transpire, or b) once professional playing days are over.

Measures of success

By 2024 we want to see:

- Our vision to be implemented through our club structure and FA-approved player pathway, which:
  - Generates more England-qualified players in first-team starting line-ups;
  - Includes authentic relationships with FE and HE providers, ensuring a dual-career environment for players across all Tier 1 and 2 clubs[2];
  - Meets or exceeds a set of high-performance standards agreed with the clubs.
- Club player pathways featuring:
  - Players engaging at the entry point, through the community clubs;
  - More players from ethnically diverse backgrounds and socio-economically-deprived areas accessing the player pathways;
  - More coaches and club support staff from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
- A diverse and flexible competition framework with development opportunities for players and coaches throughout the framework;
- Every applicable club to have its own bespoke long-term player development plan and framework based on the 'Blueprint for Success'[3];
- Research, insight and benchmarking being utilised to support club environments to drive and impact performance;
- Safeguarding policy, procedures and safer working practice embedded across all club activity.

[2] **Tiers 1 and 2** = Barclays FA Women's Super League (Tier 1) and FA Women's Championship (Tier 2).

[3] **Blueprint for Success** = A defined curriculum of playing, coaching and operating philosophy at women's national team level which can be configured the domestic game, allowing players to move seamlessly through the pathway.

How we'll achieve our 2024 goal

Our 2024 goal will only be achieved by working seamlessly and supportively with clubs. Creating club-specific inclusive and accessible player pathways will involve a profound level of understanding of the challenges and opportunities each club faces.

For example, we will help clubs analyse the demographics of the area they serve. The gathering and interpretation of socio-economic, ethnicity and age data will be vital if the final player pathway is to really deliver for the community. We will then help each club to create its own unique 'Blueprint for Success'.

But at the heart of every pathway must be the player. At whatever point a player accesses a club pathway, we will work with clubs to support their players every step of the way, whether those steps lead to a career in the professional game, or a working life outside it.

A single competition would require a one size fits all approach. We aim to develop a framework which will empower clubs to develop a range of opportunities that deliver multiple outcomes which will allow them to control, raise and lower the challenge accordingly to meet the needs of their players at a given time.

In time the framework will support clubs in producing and delivering more highly skilled players who can fulfil their full potential to play in The Barclays FA WSL and FA Championship.

We will also encourage players to take coaching and refereeing qualifications to add to their skills and stay in the game. We will support clubs in developing their safeguards and safer working practice to support environments that compliment player wellbeing

We want to help young women be the best they can be for the rest of their lives.

Communicating the player pathway is fundamental to its success. We will use the most impactful channels to tell the stories of individuals at key pathway points, from the playground to the professional game.

“

Our priority is to prepare the future player to meet the needs of international and club football.

Lucy Wellings,
FA Senior Women’s Football Clubs’ Manager

ELITE DOMESTIC LEAGUES AND COMPETITIONS 19+

Focus

ELITE DOMESTIC LEAGUES AND COMPETITIONS

Age group

19+

Our 2024 goal:

The best professional women's sports leagues and competitions in the world

The advent of high-quality competitive women's football in England – and its increasing visibility – has challenged outmoded perceptions about women's role in sport and society.

We want to provide girls with the aspiration of becoming a professional footballer, an elite manager, a coach or a referee. We then want to turn these aspirations into a new generation of strong, healthy and active young women who can help drive our professional game forward.

Now the challenge is to continue to increase the quality of every aspect of the current women's professional game. To do so, we have established a new FA Board devoted to the Barclays FA Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship and developed a new strategy in collaboration with the clubs.

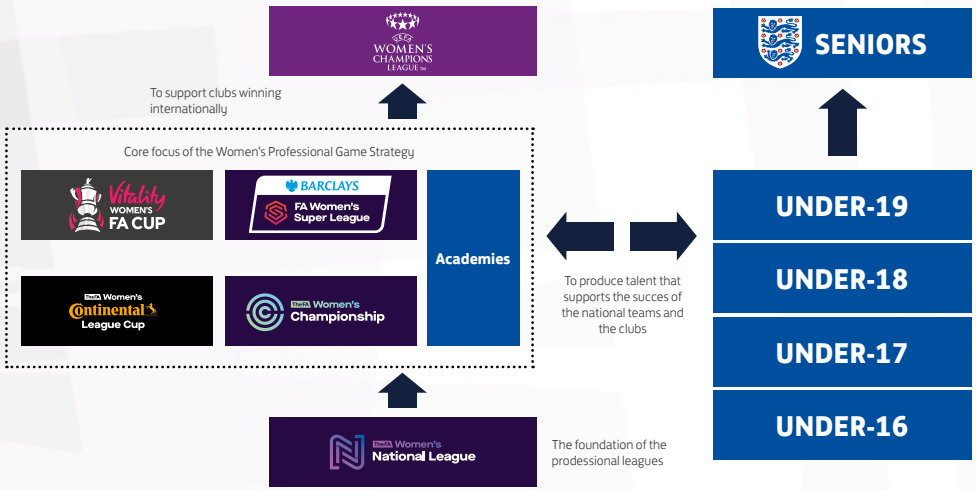
With this board steering the way we will look to attract and develop world class players; increase audiences, attendances and followers and grow commercial revenue to develop the best professional women's sports leagues and competitions in the world.

Measures of success

By 2024 we want to see:

- Clubs – and England – winning major international trophies;
- Increased average attendances at domestic league and cup matches;
- Higher viewing figures domestically;
- Increased broadcast reach of the domestic competition;
- New and bigger commercial partnerships across all competitions;
- A world-class workforce to meet the needs of the professional women's game;
- Improved stadiums and training facilities;
- The best levels of player welfare and wellbeing in a women's sports league in the world.

THE ELITE PLAYER PATHWAY



How we'll achieve our 2024 goal

We will simultaneously work on three key elements to turn our goal into reality: attract and develop world-class players, maximise and engage audiences through targeted marketing and communications campaigns and grow commercial revenue.

The latter in particular will drive the long-term sustainability of the professional game. And in everything we do, we will lead the game collaboratively to ensure we're all on the same journey, heading to the same destination.

We will actively showcase our ethnically diverse heroines of the league to demonstrate the power role models will have in driving more diversity to our league in the future.

Simultaneously, we will continue to develop the existing 'product' we offer – the quality of football people see on the pitch. That means working with clubs to recruit and develop the most talented players to enhance the competitive level of matches. Off the pitch we will be working hard to upgrade facilities for players and fans.

We want to make the Barclays FA WSL one of the most sought-after women's sports properties globally and become the most-followed women's football league. Alongside this, we will make The FA Women's Championship a league of genuine competitive quality, to underpin and feed the top flight.

In parallel, we will continue to build the profile of the Vitality Women's FA Cup, growing audiences and attendances throughout the competition and ensuring the Final becomes one of the biggest events in the sporting calendar with great TV audiences and a sell-out Wembley Stadium.

Working with broadcast and commercial partners, we will build the profile of domestic competitions, hit new attendance records and engage a new generation of young girls and boys to watch their favourite players and teams at their home grounds.

“

We have a powerful collective ambition to be at the global forefront of women’s professional sport and build the best women’s football leagues and competitions in the world.

Kelly Simmons,
FA Director of Women’s Professional Game

ENGLAND
14+

Focus

ENGLAND

Age group

14+

Our 2024 goal:

Win a major tournament

International football is the biggest development driver for the women's game.

Therefore, UEFA Women's Euro Championship or FIFA Women's World Cup success will inspire the nation and positively change the lives of girls and women in England.

Alongside this, our England players must be positive role models for young girls to admire and aspire to become, believing anything is possible.

All our work with the national teams is underpinned by the new England women's 'Blueprint for Success'[1]. This has player development at its heart and will create an environment for all England-qualified talent to pursue and fulfil their dreams.

[1] **Blueprint for Success** = A defined curriculum of playing, coaching and operating philosophy at women's national team level allowing players to move seamlessly through the pathway.

Measures of success

By 2024 we want to see:

- Tournament performance plans in place before every major international tournament in every age group. All geared to winning trophies;
- A long-term player development plan for all players so they're tournament-ready;
- Selection panels in place for all England teams;
- The England 'Blueprint for Success' delivered and fully operational;
- An England-qualified policy in place with the Barclays FA WSL and FA Women's Championship so the best quality and quantity of players are available for the national teams;
- A process for securing dual-nationality eligibility of players;
- Visibility and profile to drive sell-out attendances at home England matches;
- High standards of coaching practice throughout the Lioness pathway, underpinned by a thirst for ongoing learning, critical thinking and knowledge-sharing.;
- Full compliance with FIFA, UEFA and FA tournament safeguarding policies, procedures and safer working practice.

How we'll achieve our 2024 goal

Having a development model in place across the game – the 'Blueprint for Success' – is vital to the England Women's team reaching the apex of the game. The next summits are winning the England-staged UEFA Women's EURO Championships 2022 or the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, to be held in Australia and New Zealand.

We have already established the 'England DNA', which guides every aspect of how England teams are coached and play, as well as setting out the principles and standards we expect of our international players.

In addition, we will also have tournament-specific performance plans for every age group, all geared to trophy wins.

Whilst our focus is on high standards and success, our philosophy and infrastructure will champion player welfare and wellbeing.

However, having systems and plans in place is not enough. They will need constant fine-tuning by the right people to give ourselves the best-possible shot at the game's biggest prize.

In the meantime, on-pitch success will lead to a growth in credibility and visibility, helping drive commercial value. This will enable further investment towards increasing involvement in football, whether as player, coach, referee, fan or volunteer. And all the time we will continue to build the England brand, harnessing the positive power of our top international players as real role models to connect with the grassroots game and inspire the next generation.

Alongside all the above, The FA will continue to support the development of opportunities for female para-footballers in line with the International Federations. Over the next four years we will:

- Support the Deaf England Women's squad to attend the 2021 World Deaf Championship and the Great Britain squad at the 2022 Deaflympics;
- Host the 2021 Women's Blind workshop via The FA Para Football Unit, supported by IBSA (International Blind Sports Federation) and UEFA;
- Work with British Blind Sport to support its bid to host the 2023 IBSA Women's Blind World Football Championships.

“

We ask ourselves the question, what can we do better and differently to make winning inevitable? Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins trophies. We want to inspire the nation through world-class football.

Kay Cossington,
FA Head of Women’s Technical Development

COACHING
ALL AGE GROUPS

Focus

COACHING

Age group

ALL AGE GROUPS

Our 2024 goal:

Exceptional coaches at every level of the game who are representative of our society

For us to realise our ambitions for player participation and quality in the women's game, we are committed to developing coaches capable of operating at the highest standards throughout the player pathway outlined on pages 24-27 inclusive.

These coaches will represent all spheres of society and contribute to a culture that values everyone and actively encourages a greater number of female coaches to be part of our future. These coaches will become the role models for players transitioning into coaching careers in the years to come.

We will strive to equip every coach with the ability to deliver personalised, high-quality experiences. This will ensure our female players thrive, fulfil their potential and stay in the game for as long as possible.

Measures of success

By 2024 we want to see:

- High standards of coaching practice throughout the women's game underpinned by a thirst for ongoing learning, critical thinking and knowledge sharing;
- More coaches in the women and girls' game, with a greater proportion being female and from ethnically diverse backgrounds;
- An established coaching pathway throughout the female game, with personalised, connected learning experiences and CPD opportunities;
- A suite of coaching resources contextualised for the female game;
- A rigorous talent ID process to identify, and subsequently support our most talented coaches with bespoke individual development plans, facilitating and embedding succession planning in the coaching pathway;
- A high-performance programme for coaches in or aspiring to work at the game's highest levels, with 14 to 18 coaches on the programme each season, of which 75% are female;
- A high-performing, quality coach development workforce, representative of society, to support coaches in the female game;
- More women of all ages and backgrounds consistently and continuously engaging in development and taking entry-level FA coaching qualifications to sustain the grassroots game;
- More coaches completing the free to access FA Education modules introducing disability football, to increase the awareness, confidence and skills required to safeguard and engage females with health conditions or impairments. Using these initial modules to promote continuous engagement in this area, as we create new resources and experiences to support coaches.

How we'll achieve our 2024 goal

To ensure the women's and girls' game flourishes at every level, we will generate a plentiful cohort of coaches across three distinct domains:

- **Grassroots coaches:** empowered to run introductory and recreational programmes in youth and adult grassroots clubs.
- **Development coaches:** delivering great experiences to players, who really understand everything it takes to develop well-rounded talented footballers with aspirations to play professionally.
- **High-performance coaches:** working at the highest levels of the club and international game. Such coaches will have genuine leadership and management skills and understand what it takes to hone a talented player into one who can have a career in the professional game and represent the Lionesses.

Irrespective of the domain, the common thread will be bespoke, high-quality coach development underpinned by ongoing support. This means every coach will be offered formal learning opportunities such as workshops and CPD (online and face-to-face) specific to female football. For coaches at higher levels, we will provide 1:1 support and mentoring, alongside opportunities to share knowledge and enhance their own expertise.

We will raise the profile of female coaches across all levels, championing case studies and encouraging more women from diverse communities to take up coaching.

Ultimately, we want to ensure everyone has a positive football experience, whether they play or coach the game recreationally, in a grassroots club, player pathway club or at professional/international level.

“

We will empower the female football coaching workforce. Not only to normalise women in football coaching, but also to provide aspirational, relatable and credible female role models for future generations.

Audrey Cooper,
FA Head of Women’s Coach Development

REFEREEING
ALL AGE GROUPS

Focus

REFEREEING

Age group

ALL AGE GROUPS

Our 2024 goal:

Every female referee afforded high-quality bespoke learning and development opportunities from grassroots through to the elite game

Alongside the development of players and coaches, we are also committed to creating a new generation of female referees and referees specialising in the women's game.

As women's domestic football in England goes from strength to strength, the visibility and profile continues to grow. As a result, there is an increasing drive towards the professionalism of our match officials.

We are committed to the continued professional development of our top female referees and assistant referees through the creation of our CORE (Centre of Refereeing Excellence) women's programme and remain focused on creating a new generation of female officials.

The future generation will not only serve both the women's and men's game at every level but provide a talent pool that will progress throughout the game.

2019 saw the launch of a pathway for referees within the women's game that aligns with the traditional refereeing pathway through the men's game. Now is the time to create a solid professional development structure that complements both pathways at every level of the game and is accessible for all, reflecting our society across all protected characteristics and social backgrounds.

Inspired by existing referee role models, we will create a generation of ambitious, empowered female referees with the confidence to showcase their skills whether at grassroots, semi-professional, professional or international levels.

Measures of success

By 2024 we want to see:

- In the professional game:
  - English officials within the elite category on the international list of women referees;
  - A pool of committed match officials delivering world-class performances within the Barclays FA WSL;
  - A marked increase in club satisfaction in both the Barclays FA WSL and FA Women's Championship;
  - 100% of referees operating in The FA Women's National League (Tier 3) and The FA Women's Championship (Tier 2) to have bespoke personal development opportunities.
- In the grassroots game:
  - A female referee workforce that represents our society in social background and all protected characteristics;
  - 50% of trainee referees transitioning into an active referee role within the game;
  - Distance-learning available for every female grassroots referee;
  - Regular regional learning opportunities for ambitious grassroots female referees;
  - A talent ID system to ensure female referees with potential have the support and opportunity to progress to the higher levels of the men's and women's games.
- In the existing referee developer workforce:
  - A referee developer workforce that represents our society in gender, social background and all protected characteristics;
  - A committed workforce with the skills, knowledge and expertise to develop female referees for the women's game.

How we'll achieve our 2024 goal

We will establish a sustainable recruitment strategy embedded into local communities, clubs and higher/further education establishments. We will actively market our referees' course highlighting the opportunities it provides in developing people, developing players and providing an alternative career path within the game. We will provide guidance and support to create safe environments for young female match officials to develop their confidence and skills.

We will raise the profile of women's refereeing using our annual flagship development event and social media platforms to celebrate the achievements and successes of our female match officials, using the passion of our role models to inspire the next generation.

We will create regional contact centres that will offer a local hub of support for female grassroots match officials. Referees will become part of a community, driven by peer learning and support whilst receiving regular training opportunities and mentor support.

Through the use of The FA online learning platform we will provide tailored remote learning, development and education accessible to all grassroots referees.

We will invest in the professional development of our international female match officials. Working in collaboration with our major stakeholders, we will support their development to provide them with the best opportunities to excel on the international stage.

We will use the findings of our world-class evaluation system to enhance the technical and physical depth and frequency of training to our female match officials operating in the Barclays FA WSL and FA Women's Championship. We will establish a women's professional game refereeing review group, with our major stakeholders to ensure a collaborative approach in raising standards.

Development and education will be created and delivered to all our current and future developer workforce to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge, skillset and confidence to develop our female match officials. They will be afforded opportunities to use their expertise at the various development programmes throughout women's refereeing.

“

We aim to set a new world standard in the quality of women’s referee development – at every level of the game.

Jo Stimpson,
FA Women’s Refereeing Manager

SHINING A LIGHT

SHINING A LIGHT

The positive power and growth of women's football in England should not be our game's best-kept secret.

If we are to achieve our goals, we have to shine a light on women's and girls' football. That means explaining succinctly to every woman and girl, through engaging marketing and communications campaigns, that the game is open to them and we now have the framework to welcome them.

With the support of our domestic and international stars, the media, broadcasters and our commercial partners, we will inspire, motivate and change perceptions across every level and facet of the women's game.

A new generation of inspirational role models will emerge. The powerful stories of players, coaches, referees and volunteers will be told and inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

UEFA EURO 2022 and FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 will be key moments in time when the eyes of the nation will be on the sport. We'll be ready and waiting to leverage their power and reach to deliver transformational change.

Our goal is for women's and girls' football to be embraced as an integral part of this country's football fabric – whether it's played, led, watched or followed. In time, gender should be irrelevant. It's all football.

Commercial partners:

Broadcast partners

In addition, the reach and popularity of the game is boosted by our valued broadcast partners:

National delivery partners

The game is also flourishing thanks to several national delivery partners, without whom we could not implement various development programmes:

Non-commercial partners

Furthermore, the game's infrastructure is part-funded by dedicated non-commercial partners:

ENDING WITH STARTING POINTS

The following pages list the targets contained in an annual business plan to keep us on track. The 2024 targets are subject to review in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

EARLY PARTICIPATION (5-11)

Measure	As at 1 August 2020	2024 target
Schools offering football to girls in-curriculum/after school	TBC*	90%
Schools providing equal access to girls within PE lessons	TBC*	75%
Wildcats' session within easy traveling distance of every household	1,621	3,000
% girls with Special Educational Needs and disability in FA 'Shooting Stars' programme	17%	22%
# of disability-specific Wildcats' sessions	18	101

* Baselines to be determined early 2020/21 season

DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION

Measure	As at 1 August 2020	2024 target
% schools offering football to girls in-curriculum/after school	TBC*	90%
% schools providing equal access to girls within PE lessons	TBC*	75%
Develop, pilot and roll out a 'football for fun' offer for teenagers in England	N/A	Teenage offer available throughout England
% girls with Special Educational Needs and disability in FA 'Game of our Own' programme	15%	20%
Establish a high-quality girls' league offer in 100% of County FA areas	56%	100%

* Baselines to be determined early 2020/21 season

FOOTBALL FOR ALL

Measure	As at 1 August 2020	2024 target
Understand the baselines and set targets on gender, ethnicity and disability throughout the female game	Inconsistent data capture across the game	Consistent data capture across the game
% County FAs with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) plans specifically for the female game	70%*	100% of County FAs
# active new female leaders as a result of specialist FA leadership programmes for women from all communities	Unknown**	15,000
% County FAs offering FA-developed 'football for fun' opportunities for adult women from all communities	Unknown**	100% of County FAs

* County FAs currently author EDI plans for the full game. In parallel we're looking to develop female-specific plans

** Inconsistent data capture to be addressed by top target above

We commit to breakdown our ethnicity data further to understand the levels of representation across specific diverse communities.

CLUB PLAYER PATHWAY

Measure	As at 1 August 2020	2024 target
To ensure all clubs in Tiers 1 and 2 have formal relationships with FE and HE institutions to support the dual-career aspirations of players in their pathway	13	24
% increase in players living in socio-economically-deprived areas accessing the player pathways	20%	TBC*
% players transitioning from Academies into Barclays FA WSL/FA WC senior teams	N/A	TBC**
Player progression measures	N/A	Identified and tracked
% increase in player progression measures	TBC*	TBC*

* To be set post Player Pathway pilot year (20/21)

** To be set in 2021/22 season, following meaningful data collection

ELITE DOMESTIC LEAGUES AND COMPETITIONS

Measure	As at August 1 2020	2024 target
Barclays FA WSL attendances	3,092	6,000
FA WC attendances	410	1,000
Vitality Women's FA Cup Final attendance	2019/20: N/A* 2018/19: 43,264	Sell out Wembley
Most socially-followed women's football league in the world	#2	#1
Peak TV audience – women's league match	270k	TBC**
Peak TV audience – live Vitality Women's FA Cup match	2.2m	TBC**

* Vitality Women's FA Cup Final to be played within 2020/21 season due to Covid-19. Fan attendance TBC at time of writing.

** To be set post-broadcast agreement

ENGLAND

Measure	As at August 1 2020	2024 target
England Seniors – FIFA Women's World Cup	2019 – 4th	2023 – Winners
England Under-20 – FIFA Women's Under-20 World Cup	2018 – 3rd	2022 – Podium finish
England Under 17 – FIFA Women's Under-17 World Cup	N/A*	Qualification**
FIFA Rankings – Women's Seniors	6th	3rd
England Deaf Women: 2021 World Championships	5th***	Medal match
England Deaf Women: 2021 Deaflympics	4th (2017)	Medal match
England Deaf Women: 2023 European championship	N/A****	Podium finish
England Deaf Women: ICDS (International Committee for Deaf Sport) rankings	5th	3rd or higher
England Blind Women: 2023 World Championships	N/A****	Enter a team

* Didn't qualify – 2018

** Qualified by coefficient ranking due to Covid-19 impact on tournament

*** Previously competed 2008

**** Have not previously competed

COACHING

Measure		As at 1 August 2020	2024 target
Measures across the female game:			
% of coaches across the women's and girls' game who engage in at least two trackable learning opportunities who are:	Female	43%	55%
	From black and Asian origin	7%	14%
High-performance coaches: % of female coaches in manager/head coach roles and create a pipeline of coaches ready to succeed.		65%	75%
Professional game: Those enrolled in the Coaching Excellence Initiative:	Maintain % of female coaches	85%	85%
	Increase % of black and Asian coaches	7%	20%
Pathway: # coaches within club player pathway actively developed by the WCNDs (Women's National Coach Developers) and/or Women's High-Performance Football Centre CDOs (Coach Development Officers)		250	400
Pathway: % of coaches transitioning roles within the club player pathway		15%	30%
Female-specific measures across both male and female games:			
% of coaches across the game who engage in at least one trackable learning opportunity who are female		8%	10%*
% of females who take The FA Playmaker supported by BT course		0% **	15%

* 2021 target only. 2024 to be set at the end of 2020/21 season

** FA Playmaker is a new product for 2020/21 season

REFEREEING

Measure		As at 1 August 2020	2024 target
# registered* female referees		1,477	2,777
# trainee/Mini-Soccer referees		638	750
% of referees progressing through the women's promotion pathway		3%	7%
% of female Referee Developers		6%	9%
International list of women referees		0 x Elite 1 x Category 1	1 x Elite 1 x Category 1
Average decision-making scores in Barclays FA WSL		98%	99%
% FA WNL referees in a development programme		0%	100%
% FA WC referees in a development programme		0%	100%

* Levels 1-7 and Developers/Levels 1W-4W

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you or your organisation wants to know more about how to get involved in the women's and girls' game in England, please contact your local County FA Lead Officer for women's and girls' football.

A list of the Officers can be found at:
https://www.TheFA.com/womens-girls-football/get-involved/development-officers

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.

The Football Association
Wembley Stadium
London HA9 0WS
T: +44 (0)800 169 1863
F: +44 (0)800 169 1864
W: TheFA.com

19268