

**The Football Association**  
**Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)**  
**25/26 to 27/28**



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# Introduction

In November 2024, the Football Association published its third Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy – A Game Free from Discrimination.

A Game Free from Discrimination builds on our two previous strategies (A Game For All and In Pursuit of Progress) and sets out how we will deliver on our commitment to creating a game free from discrimination in an ever demanding and complex space.

Since launching, we have committed to working hard to continue to unite football. Collectively we can make a huge difference to boost representation, drive inclusion, and remove discrimination from our game. We hope that by setting the standard in what we do and the way we do it, we can inspire positive change in wider society too.

This Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) is designed to complement the A Game Free from Discrimination strategy and take a closer look at the Football Association as an organisation including our staff and leadership, governance structures, internal systems and processes.

**“Our ultimate purpose is to inspire positive change through football. Let’s make it happen.”**

Mark Bullingham, CEO, The FA

*“The FA’s A Game Free From Discrimination strategy places its workforce at the heart of change. A diverse and inclusive team ensures better decision-making, reflects the communities football serves, and fosters innovation. By increasing representation and embedding inclusion, we continue to develop a culture where difference is embraced, and every employee feels valued and empowered. Tackling discrimination and underrepresentation internally also strengthens the our credibility and leadership across the sport. This commitment isn’t just ethical—it’s essential for driving progress, building trust, and ensuring football thrives as a game for all.”*

Lee Rhoden, Head of HR, The FA



*“The FA’s role as the custodians of the professional and grassroots game means its leadership role in the EDI space is essential. By demonstrating that embracing equality, diversity and inclusion improves our outcomes both on and off the pitch, we help embed a better experience for every stakeholder across the game. Boosting representation, driving inclusion and tackling discrimination aren’t just about challenging and changing individuals, but trying cultural change that makes every element of our sport for all.”*

Yasir Mirza, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion Director, The FA

# Our EDI Commitment and Ambition

Our EDI commitment and ambition stems from the understanding that football has the power to unite communities, improve lives and inspire positive change, on and off the pitch. This understanding has led us to keep 'A Game Free From Discrimination' as one of the FA's top four game changer objectives. This commitment allows us to embed EDI principles at the heart of what we do for both the football community and our organisation including staff and leadership, governance structures, internal systems and processes.

## Delivering EDI for the football community

We recognise that when it comes to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), not everything is within our remit or reach—or our control. However, at The FA, our commitment to creating a game free from discrimination is as strong as ever. We must embrace the unique diversity of our country and continue to use football as a force for good.

The strategy will continue our work to unite people around football, with our three key pillars being:



By focussing on these we will be able to move the dial on six key deliverables.



Under represented groups are defined as: Women, Black, Asian, Mixed and other ethnic background, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, and lower socio-economic backgrounds.

For more information on this, please read [The FA's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028](#).

## Delivering EDI for the FA as an organisation

At the FA, we pride ourselves on being able to attract diverse talent, foster career growth and having a healthy, positive culture. We invest in high-potential individuals while prioritising mental health and wellbeing. We encourage clear communication to ensure colleagues feel inspired and heard and performance is recognised with fair pay and valuable benefits. Our policies uphold legal and ethical standards, reinforcing a positive, inclusive culture where people thrive. However, we recognise that we are still a work in progress and continue to work on diversifying ourselves and embedding a real spirit of inclusion in the organisation.

Since the launch of our first EDI strategy in 2018, we have continued to focus on achieving specific diversity targets and building a diverse workforce within the FA. We have continued to focus on inclusion through employee resource groups, delivering programmes focussed on embracing and valuing difference, and tackling discrimination where it crops up with our robust policies and processes.

In this sense, we have embedded and continue to embed principles of EDI at the heart of what we do to support our organisation including staff and leadership, governance structures, internal systems and processes.

### Spotlight on our Values

As a purpose driven and values-led organisation we take pride in our values and in January 2024, launched new values which built on the foundation of our PRIDE values which have served us well over the last eight years. These new guiding principles have been created by us, for us, to keep a common thread running through everything we do. They serve to keep us focused, to shape and simplify our decisions, and to really show what makes our culture special.



Aim **HIGH**  
Achieve **TOGETHER**  
Embrace **DIFFERENCE**

*Aim High – We set ambitious standards trying to improve ourselves and exceed our goals*

*Achieve Together – We have a shared passion to work together to deliver results better than could be achieved alone*

*Embrace Difference – Difference adds richness to what we do and makes us stronger as a team*



This DIAP is a culmination of our values and our EDI commitment and ambition taking the qualities from both strategy and values and turning into action plan focused on the organisation. It serves to take a close look at the actions and initiatives we have committed to over the next three years for the organisation itself to improve culture, inclusion, diversity across various aspects.

# Our Diversity Data

The FA understands and believes in the benefits that diversity brings. As the governing body for football in England, we want to be more reflective of the communities that we serve. We also understand that to reap the benefits of diversity, we need to create an inclusive culture, where everyone feels valued, respected and empowered to contribute and show up authentically.

To understand the make-up of our workforce, work to become more representative of our community and be able to make data-driven decisions, we collect diversity data for our employee workforce as well as our council and board.

While the FA's overall ambition is to be broadly representative of the communities we serve in relation to all protected characteristics, the data in this document focuses on up to four of the protected characteristics as defined in Equality Act (2010): Race (referred to as ethnic background), Disability, Sex (referred to as gender) and Sexual Orientation. We have specific targets related to these characteristics for our 2028 workforce demographics. These targets are generated considering the demographics of the communities we serve and the current demographics and initiatives within the FA.

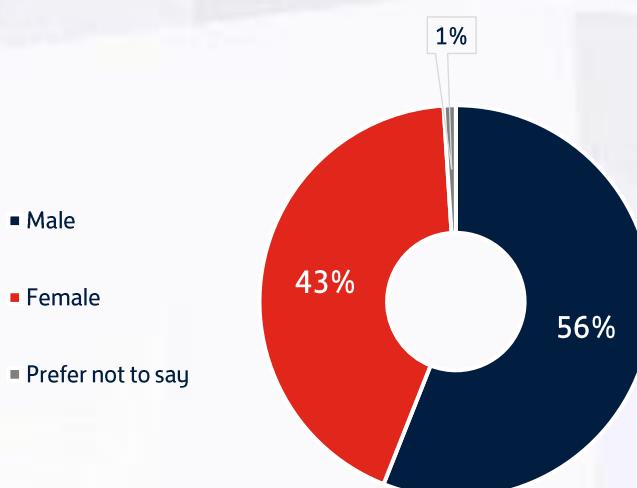
## Note on Completion Rate:

Currently the completion rate for all employees' diversity data averages around 53%. We are proactively working to increase this completion rate to get a fuller picture of our workforce.

## All Employee Diversity Data

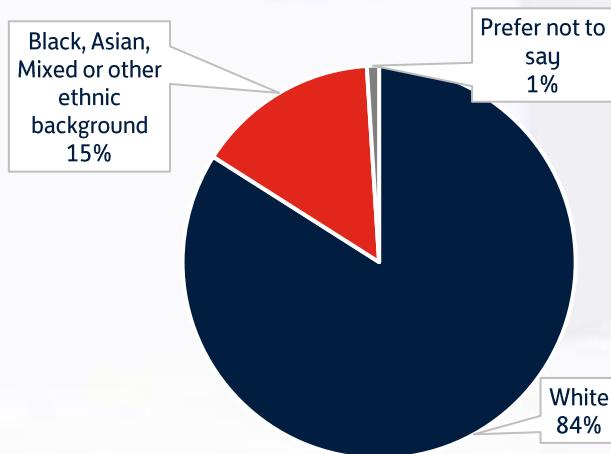
Please note, all data in this section is correct as of June 2025.

### What is your gender?



Our 2028 target for female representation is  
**50%**

### What is your ethnic background?

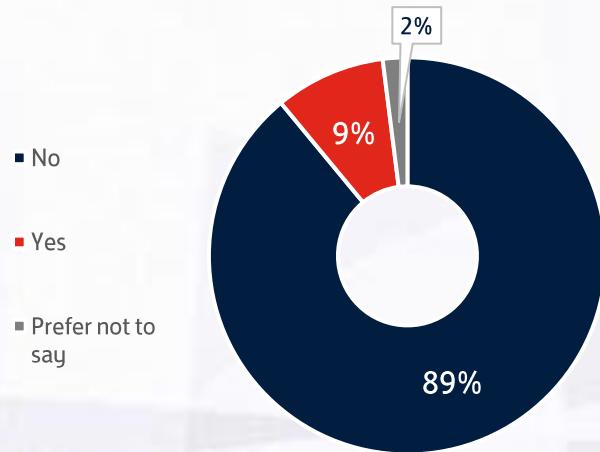


Our 2028 target for Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic background representation is

**20%**

We have a stretch target of 23%

### Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

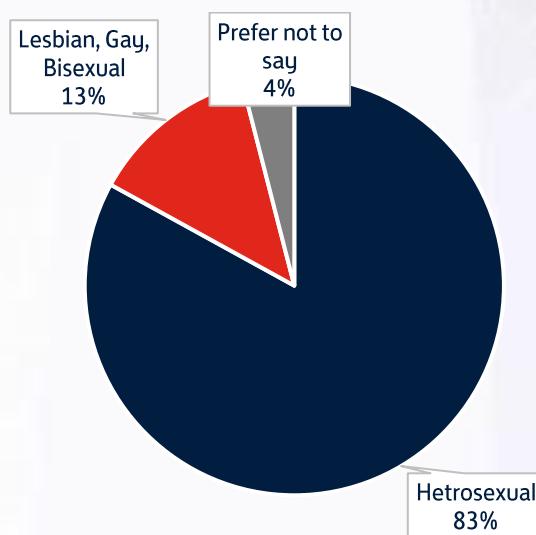


Our 2028 target for disability representation is

**12%**

We have a stretch target of 15%

### What is your sexual orientation?



Our 2028 target for sexual orientation representation is

**14%**

We have a stretch target of 16%

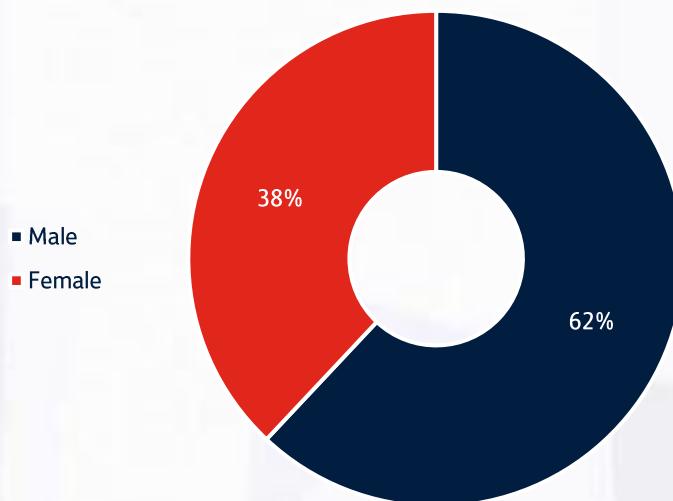
## Additional Diversity Data

As well as collecting data on all employees, we collect data on specific groups—leadership roles within the FA, the FA Council and FA Board. For these groups we have close to an 100% completion rate as the diversity of senior leadership and boards is a key priority area for us. Please note, that we cannot report on all four of the protected characteristics as we have done for all employees due to the size of the group and data protection laws.

Please note, all data in this section is correct as of June 2024.

### Leadership Roles

#### What is your gender?

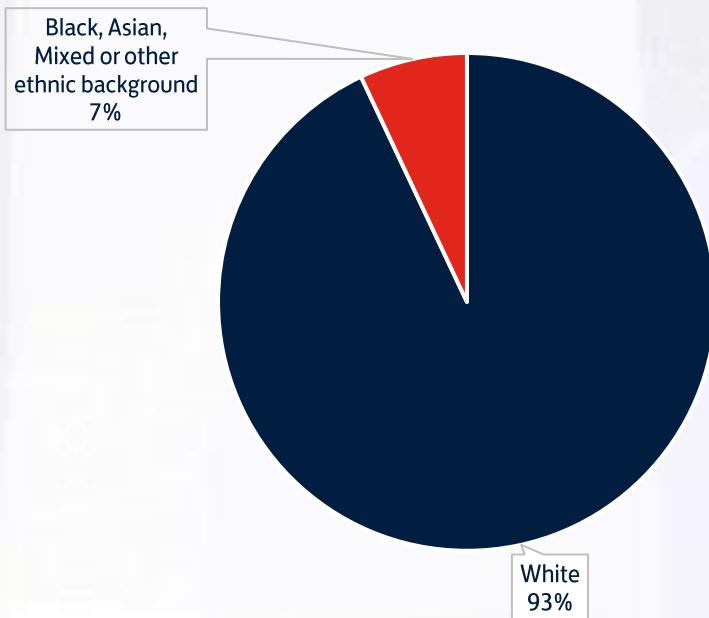


Our 2028 target for female representation is

**45%**

We have a stretch target of 50%

#### What is your ethnic background?



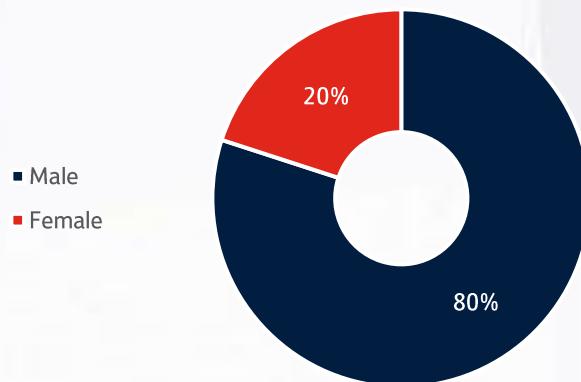
Our 2028 target for Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic background representation is

**15%**

We have a stretch target of 18%

**FA Council (The 92 elected representatives from across English Football. The Council meets to decide the major policies of The FA)**

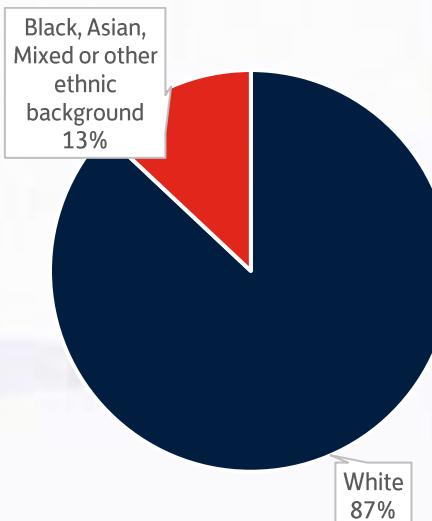
**What is your gender?**



Our 2028 target for female representation is

**30%**

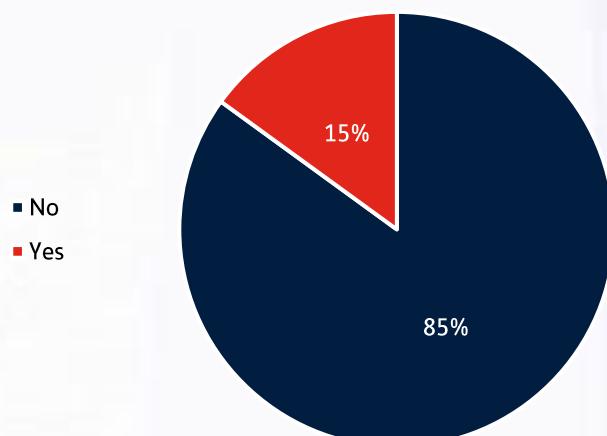
**What is your ethnic background?**



Our 2028 target for Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic background representation is

**16%**

**Do you consider yourself to have a disability?**



Our 2028 target for disability representation is

**18%**

## Our Action Plan

This DIAP aims to highlight and focus on the actions relevant to FA as an organisation, including our staff, systems and processes leadership, governance which will be completed within the time frame of 24/25 season to 27/28 season

A Game Free from Discrimination (the FA's EDI strategy) has 3 strategic pillars: boost representation, drive inclusion and tackle discrimination. This DIAP is complementary but a standalone document and has the following four pillars which align to but do not replicate the pillars in A Game Free from Discrimination. Under each pillar we have identified and committed to a set of actions and initiatives which we believe will support us in achieving our EDI ambitions over the coming years.



Pillars	Action	Outcome	Timeframe	Responsibility
Boosting Representation	<p>Continually evolve our employer brand, ensuring we can articulate why you would join and stay and ultimately be an employer of choice.</p> <p>Work to include website and recruitment marketing content, particular focus on EDI and associated recruitment marketing, employer brand activation.</p>	An improved, public facing employer brand that speaks consistently to the FA's strengths as an employer. This includes accessible and easily navigated career pages, giving potential candidates a clear understanding of our values, culture and the roles they are applying for. The planned outcome is an increased, more diverse pool of candidates who apply for roles at the FA.	Throughout	Recruitment
Boosting Representation	Work with specialist recruitment partners to ensure the FA's hiring processes are free from discrimination.	Working with a variety of industry specific recruitment partners in the EDI space, will help position us as an employer of choice for underrepresented communities and advertise live vacancies to an increasingly diverse audience. Example partners include Evenbreak, Vercida, Leaders Be The Lead (past partners Diversifying, BYP Network).	Throughout	Recruitment
Boosting Representation	Develop a social media attraction strategy.	By delivering a project to establish a structured and centrally owned social media strategy, we will ensure that we remain industry relevant and reach the broadest and most relevant talent pool whilst continuing to position our employer brand effectively and engage diverse, talented audiences in and outside of the game, in a digital and modern way.	Initiative to be launched in January 2026 and continue throughout	Recruitment

Boosting Representation	Review and refine our assessment framework, creating a consistent approach, embedded with our values that is fair, robust and inclusive in an accessible, digital format.	<p>Creating a consistent approach for assessment is crucial for enhancing the overall recruitment process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It helps to reduce unconscious bias in the process,</li> <li>• Improves fairness as each candidate is given equal opportunity to showcase their skills and experience,</li> <li>• Leads to more informed hiring decisions,</li> <li>• and creates a better candidate experience.</li> </ul>	January 2026 – June 2026	Recruitment
Boosting Representation	Launch a new aspiring leaders programme introducing a talented, diverse cohort, across the organisation	<p>By creating a bespoke aspiring leaders programme, we are aiming to tackle underrepresentation at the leadership level.</p> <p>This will bring cognitive and lived experience diversity to our organisation as well as create a new talent pool for potential leadership positions.</p>	Initiative to be launched in early 2026 and to continue throughout	Talent & Resourcing
Boosting Representation	Update our Apprenticeship Programme and Early Careers Support	<p>Our re-sized apprenticeship programme will start with 7 apprentices in the first instance. Apprenticeships have positive outcomes for both the FA and the apprentices.</p> <p>They bring in a wider pool of people to increase cognitive and socioeconomic diversity within the FA as well as providing a pathway for individuals to enter the workforce, gain practical skills without the financial burden of traditional higher education.</p>	Initiative launched in June 2024 and to continue throughout	Recruitment
Boosting Representation	Updated targets for increased diversity within all employees and leadership roles	At the FA we understand what having well thought out and considered targets improve the workplace outcomes of the groups they target.	Initiative launched in November 2024 and	EDI & Recruitment

		Having updated targets that we publicly commit to, communications with staff and training in this area helps us build the support and understanding of these targets within the FA which improves the likelihood of success.	continued throughout	
Boosting Representation	Built in tool in our applicant tracking system that highlights the language of our adverts to alert to offensive and/or bias language that would impact the talent we are able to attract	<p>Attracting the best talent is only possible when we have clear, concise and inclusive job descriptions and person specification.</p> <p>They should be written to reduce barriers to entry and draw from the widest pool of candidates from a range of backgrounds, experience and skill.</p> <p>It is critical to ensuring our recruitment and interview panels are able to select and evaluate candidates with consistency and objectivity, reducing the risk of possible unfair discrimination.</p>	Throughout	Recruitment
Driving Inclusion	All employees to complete the FAs Embrace Difference training	Employees will better understand and widen their understanding of the key concepts of EDI and how those link to the FAs values	October 2024 – September 2025	Learning & Development, EDI
Driving Inclusion	Create new initiative to listen and develop FA female staff within workforce	<p>In analysing our employee data, we recognised a need to create an initiative specific to female staff at the FA. This initiative will do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on our culture of inclusion across the FA</li> <li>• Serve as a support system on matters of interest unique to women in the workforce and the communities we serve</li> <li>• Support the professional development of female employees while facilitating the recruitment, retention and advancement of women within the FA</li> </ul>	Initiative to be launched in March 2026 and continue throughout	EDI, Learning & Development, Internal Communications

Driving Inclusion	Empower our Employee Resources Groups so they are able to support employees, act as a critical friend to the FA and an advocate for EDI	<p>The FA's Employee Resource Groups provide opportunities for employees to have their voices heard on a range of issues including policy and specific initiatives. This open line of communication creates a more inclusive culture with psychological safety at the centre of it.</p> <p>The Employee Resource Groups themselves help improve our culture by facilitating community and networks for employees themselves.</p>	Throughout	EDI, Employee Resource Groups
Driving Inclusion	Creation of EDI page for employees with resources, nudges etc. Educational fact sheets provided to all employees addressing key areas of inclusive behaviours and language	Providing a central resource and home for all employees to easily access is critical in answering every day questions people may have. It also allows other departments to easily check their work against best practice, ensuring alignment in language across The FA's publications.	July 2025	EDI, Internal Communications
Driving Inclusion	Continue and evolve manager specific training focusing on inclusive leadership, recruitment and mental health & wellbeing	Capable managers are essential in the workplace as they are often the 'backbones' of a company. By upskilling them in EDI topics and mental health and wellbeing we will increase their capacity and skills to create good team cultures, promote and protect the mental health and wellbeing of employees and be supportive mentors all of which contribute to an inclusive culture.	Throughout	Learning & Development, EDI, Wellbeing
Driving Inclusion	Redesign the induction process to enhance the new joiner experience	By improving the onboarding process new employees will better understand the company culture leading to an increased sense of belonging and alignment with the organisation's values.	October 2025	Learning & Development

		This will lead to higher job satisfaction, improved retention rates and facilitate connections between new hires and their colleagues which fosters teamwork and collaboration.		
Driving Inclusion	Continue to evolve our mental health infrastructure to more proactively promote and protect Mental Health & Wellbeing through preventative care by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing the Mental Health Ambassador program across all divisions</li> <li>• Increasing leadership capacity and skills to promote and protect the workforce's mental health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Ensure all employees have access to appropriate and targeted resources, education and skills</li> </ul>	At the FA we want to ensure that the football environment promotes and protects the mental health and wellbeing of those involved through enabling, connecting, collaborating and governing. This will continue to embed our culture of psychologically safety/	Initiative to be launched in March 2026 and continue throughout	Mental Health
Driving Inclusion	Revamp and streamline the approach to spotlight the EDI calendar to improve engagement of events and campaigns.	An EDI calendar of events and opportunities for colleagues to be involved ensures that colleagues can expand their knowledge on EDI.  By celebrating key days in the EDI calendar, we also show colleagues that we care about a wide range of issues and communities	Throughout	EDI, Internal Communications

Driving Inclusion	<p>Continue to embed new FA Values by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a framework and resources for each division to help them contextualise the values;</li> <li>• Providing a toolkit of activities/resources for divisions and teams to help embed values;</li> <li>• Prominently featuring the values in next FA People Awards</li> </ul>	<p>Our new FA Values are the shared beliefs and behaviours that we have agreed upon at the FA. By continuing to embed them, we will have the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A strong, inclusive company culture for the entire workforce</li> <li>• Improved employee satisfaction and more engaged employees are bought into shared values and understand how they fit into the whole picture</li> <li>• Open and honest relationships in the workplace and better more focussed decision making.</li> </ul>	Throughout	HR
Governance	<p>Increase diversity of our Inclusion Advisory Board by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting 2 new members onto the Inclusion Advisory Board</li> <li>• Increasing membership to 6, ensuring grassroots and diverse representation</li> <li>• Cycling off members whose terms have come to an end</li> </ul>	<p>The IAB is responsible for maintaining a strategic overview of the FA's EDI work. By having a board that mirrors the diversity of our football population, they are in a better place to understand and address their needs.</p>	Jan 2024 – Dec 2024	HR, EDI & Recruitment
Governance	<p>Develop and adopt updated targets for increased diversity within governance structures where appropriate</p>	<p>At the FA we understand what having well thought out and considered targets improves the workplace outcomes of the groups they target.</p> <p>Having updated targets that we publicly commit to, communications with staff and training in this area</p>	<p>Initiative launched in November 2024 and continued throughout</p>	EDI

		helps us build the support and understanding of these targets within the FA which improves the likelihood of success.		
Governance	Engage with our governance structures e.g. IAB, FA Council, FA Board on EDI and the DIAP and work with them on appointments from a balanced and diverse pool of candidates from all backgrounds and cultures.	<p>Open and inclusive recruitment is important for a number of reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It opens up new opportunities for candidates and ensures they are treated equitably</li> <li>• It combats recruitment bias and discrimination while removing barriers for underrepresented groups</li> <li>• It helps build diverse boards which foster innovation and creativity</li> </ul>	Throughout	EDI & Recruitment
Governance	FA Council and FA Board to receive EDI training throughout their tenure, to raise the benefits of diversity and assist with embedding the learnings into day-to-day operations across the organisation.	FA Council and FA Boards having a better and wider understanding of key concepts of EDI will allow them to tackle the key decisions in a more rounded way, have more comprehensive discussions and improve the decision-making process	August 2024 – August 2025	HR & EDI
Governance	Board members to review, amend where necessary and agree the DIAP on a yearly basis.	This is vital to ensuring senior leadership buy-in to the work we are producing and that we are held accountable for achieving the aims and targets set out in the DIAP.	Annually	HR
Data and Policies	Improve HR Reporting and data analytics capability Improved HR data reporting to inform business decisions	Better reporting and data analytics leads to greater data driven decision making. Making informed business decisions based on data improves the efficiency and removes bias in decisions.	Throughout	HR
Data and Policies	Continue to embed and develop our annual colleague engagement/culture survey	By continuing to develop our annual survey we further the develop the culture of feedback, reflection and action planning.	Throughout	HR

		This provides the opportunity for employees to feel heard and for the FA to understand where to continue to evolve to improve our culture and offering to employees.		
Data and Policies	<p>Continue to grow our demographic data set by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increasing completion rate of permanent workforce</li> <li>• Making it a part of the new joiner journey to encourage completion</li> <li>• Run specific campaigns highlighting the importance of different cultures</li> </ul>	By increasing the completion rate of demographic data, we are able to get a better picture of the makeup of the FA. This will enable us to identify any characteristics which may currently be underrepresented, be able to act upon the findings will enable us to act upon the findings and develop any needed initiatives e.g. setting targets and any changes in attraction and recruitment practices.	Throughout	HR & EDI
Data and Policies	Expand data collection capabilities to include the casual workforce and drive-up completion rate	At the FA, the casual workforce makes up a large proportion of the workforce. By expanding our capabilities to include them we are better able to identify any characteristics which may currently be underrepresented, be able to act upon the findings will enable us to act upon the findings and develop any needed initiatives e.g. setting targets and any changes in attraction and recruitment practices.	Initiative to begin in June 2024 and continue throughout	HR
Data and Policies	Keep up to date with changes in standard demographic questions	Standardising our membership and staff demographic data allows for bench marking and make direct comparisons to ensure we reflect the communities we serve. Enabling more rich and reliable insight to inform our decision making.	Throughout	HR & EDI

Data and Policies	Review and update, if necessary, all policies.	Regular review of company policies ensure that the FAs policies are compliant with new laws and regulations while also being consistent and effective.	Throughout	HR
Data and Policies	Continue to produce and externally publish yearly statutory gender pay gap and voluntary ethnicity pay gap reporting	<p>Pay gap data is an important indicator of EDI progress. It can help evaluate the success of our EDI strategies and show what needs to be changed.</p> <p>If there is no pay gap, it shows current and potential employees that the FA is an inclusive place to work.</p>	Throughout	HR