



FA WOMEN'S FOOTBALL, HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

VERSION 1 –SEPT 2019



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INTRODUCTION



We are at a very exciting time in Women's Football with record TV viewing and interest in the recent FIFA Women's World Cup, which we hope will translate into participation and increase the fan base. We have attracted significant new investment and are determined to improve access and opportunity for all girls and women who want to play, coach, referee or administer the game. The next 2 years continue to be a very exciting time in Women's Football, with successful qualification for a Women's GB team to play in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and England hosting the 2021 European Championships, making us the home of the best European sides. Participation numbers are increasing rapidly, we are attracting record numbers of spectators and the England team is ranked 5th in the world at the present time, showing how the game is growing in every respect.

We're building all the time. We are creating more participation opportunities for young people in the community with 1,288 SSE Wildcat centres and in schools we are implementing a range of programmes in both primary and secondary schools. We are also ensuring that young players with talent have a clear pathway from Regional Talent Clubs, to our new

Women's Super League talent academies, to our age group England teams and finally to our senior England team. At the top of the game we have restructured the top two tiers of the women's game to create a full time professional league (Women's Super League) and a semi-professional league (Women's Championship).

Our ambition is to create the most competitive and exciting league in the world and in parallel to achieve England success on the world stage.

Whilst players are at the heart of everything we do, it is essential we provide support and guidance to the parents and carers who make the progress of young players possible. By bringing that information into one place we aim to bring those key people closer to our work and enable them to be more active supporters of the work being done. I hope you find the contents of this handbook useful and assist you in supporting your daughter/ward on her footballing journey.

Sue Campbell

Baroness Sue Campbell
Director of Women's Football – The FA

SCHOOLS FOOTBALL

GIRLS' FOOTBALL IN SCHOOLS – FOR LEARNING

- The FA commissions the Youth Sport Trust, a national children's charity to strategically develop a network of schools to deliver a range of programmes to support girls to develop and play football while at school and create a pathway into grassroots football.

Barclays Girls' Football School Partnerships (GFSPs)

- There are currently 100 GFSPs across England with a reach of 6,600 schools. The Partnerships will work with families of schools at primary and secondary level to provide an educational-based setting to develop girls in and through football. The Partnerships will increase opportunities for girls to play the game both in and out of curriculum time. Teachers and school staff will receive bespoke training to support Physical Literacy, Character Education and Youth Leadership. Establishing close links with County Football Associations and other Education and Community Partners, the Partnerships will be able to signpost girls to community opportunities. Also, The FA Girls' Football School Partnerships will create the next generation of the game's behind-the-scenes workforce as volunteers. For further information please visit www.youthsporttrust.org/FA-partnerships

Girls' Football Programmes – the following provides an overview of the three programmes currently being rolled out across England.

- **The FA Active Play Through Storytelling** programme has been developed in partnership with Disney to help 'the beginner girl' aged 5 to 8 in improving their physical literacy and speaking and listening skills through the medium of creative play and storytelling
- Disney franchises such as Aladdin, The Incredibles 2 and Frozen 2 will be used to capture the girl's imagination to engage in physical activity. Through gaining confidence, learning to work as a team and work with their peer's girls are more likely to transition to Girls Football After School Clubs
- The FA Girls' Football, After School Club programme is for girls aged 5–8 and 9–11 using Marvel Franchises like Guardians of the Galaxy to inspire and empower girls through a fun and engaging football activities.
- **Game of Our Own** is a 'character education' through football initiative for secondary school-aged girls. The Game of Our Own programme aims to create a culture change in secondary schools by embedding girls' football and encouraging long-term participation. Training is delivered by The FA PE Unit and the Youth Sport Trust
- **The Girls' Football – Youth Sport Award** is a reward and celebration scheme which helps girls to evidence their learning, progress and achievement in and through football. It also supports them to demonstrate the impact their involvement in football has had on their personal development, including leadership skills, health and wellbeing and wider life skills.

Schools Football Competitions

The FA works collaboratively with the English Schools Football Association (ESFA) and Independent Schools Football Association (ISFA) and the Youth Sport Trust to provide high-quality competitions for girls across England at both a local and national level. For further information, please visit schoolsfootball.org, www.isfa.org.uk or www.yourschoolgames.com



GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

More than 125,000 female players currently play football through grassroots clubs and leagues across the country.

These clubs and leagues provide teams across various formats for all abilities. This includes playing opportunities from Under 5s girls only or mixed teams to Women's Football, plus walking football, ensuring that there is a way for female players of all ages to play football competitively.

Launched in 2001, The FA Charter Standard Programme supported by McDonald's is The FA's accreditation scheme for grassroots clubs and leagues. Its goal is to raise standards in grassroots football and support the development of clubs and leagues, recognising and rewarding them for their commitment and achievements.

With this in mind, FA Charter Standard accreditation is awarded to clubs and leagues rigorously adjudged to be well-run and sustainable – and which prioritise child protection, quality coaching and implementation of the Respect programme.

More information on The FA Charter Standard Programme can be found [here](#).

You can find your nearest FA Charter Standard Club [here](#) or contact your local County FA for further support. Contact details for County FA women's and girls' football leads can be found [here](#).

You can also find the Mini Soccer and Youth Futsal Handbook [here](#).

THE WOMEN AND GIRLS PARTICIPATION PATHWAY



DEVELOPING CONFIDENT, DIVERSE AND INDEPENDENT LEADERS



FOOTBALL FOR LIFE

Here are the methods of participation for years 5 to 25+

AGE	EDUCATION	RECREATION	COMPETITION	
25+ YEARS	JUST PLAY: SOCCERCISE	JUST PLAY: WALKING FOOTBALL		CHARTER STANDARD LEAGUES
	YOUTH LEADERSHIP	FLEXI-5'S SOCCERCISE		
20–25 YEARS	YOUTH LEADERSHIP CHARACTER EDUCATION (Game of our Own)		BUCS & AOC COMPETITIONS/ INTRAMURAL	
19 YEARS			WSL ACADEMIES	
			ESFA/ISFA NATIONAL COMPETITIONS	
			BUCS & AOC COMPETITIONS/ INTRAMURAL	
16–18 YEARS			WSL ACADEMIES	
	BUCS & AOC COMPETITIONS/ INTRAMURAL			
11–16 YEARS	WSL ACADEMIES			
	INTER SCHOOL COMPETITIONS & SCHOOL GAMES			
	SCHOOL FESTIVALS	TEENAGE OFFER (IN DEVELOPMENT)	INTRA SCHOOL COMPETITIONS & SCHOOL GAMES	
5–11 YEARS	SCHOOL FESTIVALS	SSE WILDCATS (COMMUNITY)	ESFA/ISFA NATIONAL COMPETITIONS & SCHOOL GAMES	
	AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS (Inspired by Disney)		INTRA SCHOOL COMPETITION	
	LUNCHTIME OFFER (Active Play through Storytelling inspired by Disney)			

SSE WILDCATS PROGRAMMES

What is an SSE Wildcats Centre?

SSE Wildcats Centres are designed to inspire girls aged between five to 11 to “Have Fun, Make Friends and Play Football”.

SSE Wildcats provides regular opportunities for girls to play football and take part in organised sessions in a fun and engaging environment. We educate our centres to develop girl's fundamental skills which will enable the girls to hopefully develop a love of not only football but sport, and a healthy lifestyle by being active.

The centres are accessible for all; running on a weekly basis either evenings or at weekends, utilising qualified coaches and local facilities. They provide a safe environment where girls with no football experience can have fun whilst engaging with the sport, developing fundamental skills and meeting new friends along the way.

What do parents think of SSE Wildcats?

“The sessions have been brilliant and it's such a great way to encourage girls and build their self-esteem, confidence and work as teams! I am happy to help out and train as a coach! I have a little football knowledge as I now live and grew up in a rugby household but am keen to learn!!”

Sophie's Mum – Parent

“Isabelle is loving it, she's only five but it's really improved her coordination and fitness levels. The coaches are all lovely but Chloe is her favourite and is a great positive role model. Thanks for setting up the scheme and offering girls this opportunity, some of the older girls are fantastic players!!!!”

Barbara – Parent

“Thanks for all your hard work at Wildcats, it's great to have a girls-only football session that's so well run.”

Martyn – Parent

“Dear Wildcats, firstly a huge, huge thank you to all involved in Wildcats. My daughter has absolutely loved it and it has been a great introduction and eye opener to her that girls can play football!!! It's been a great course, good value, easily accessible and brilliantly taught. Thank you.”

Rosie (Dotty's Mum) – Parent

Want to become a SSE Wildcat? Find your nearest centre online by visiting www.TheFA.com/play-football

Want to run your own SSE Wildcats Centre?
Contact your local County Football Association by visiting www.TheFA.com/about-football-association/who-we-are/county-fas

Or email us at Or e-mail us at ssewildcats.centres@TheFA.com for further information on how to get involved.



REGIONAL TALENT CLUBS

What is a Regional Talent Club? (RTC)

A Regional Talent Club (RTC) is an enhanced coaching centre for U10, U12, U14 and U16 age groups, and allows players identified as having elite potential the opportunity to access appropriate levels of coaching and support.

Who organises the Regional Talent Club?

RTCs are run by local organisations. They facilitate the organisation of the club and appoint appropriately qualified coaches for each age group. Each RTC has a Club Manager who administers the club, and provides players, parents and coaches with all the necessary information relating to the programme, e.g. trials, training venues/times, fixtures, etc.

What can players expect to receive at a Regional Talent Club?

Players will receive support to enable them to develop the key attributes required to play at the highest level; linked to the Long-Term Player Development four-corner model (technical/tactical, physiological, psychological and social). A minimum of three-hours training will be provided per week to each age group, and all players will take part in a fixture programme.

Where are Regional Talent Clubs located?

There are 33 RTCs spread across the country (excluding those regions where Advanced Coaching Centres are run). The clubs will run for a minimum of 30 weeks from July through to May of each season.

How do players access a Regional Talent Club?

Players should attend the closest club to where they live, and travel time to training must not exceed 90 minutes. Access to the RTC is gained through an open recruitment process; players can be nominated to attend an RTC recruitment event by their teacher, grassroots coach or they can apply directly to the club.

Who are fixtures played against in a Regional Talent Club?

U10 and U12 age groups participate in either a local Charter Standard Mixed Youth League (and play fixtures scheduled by the league) or a bespoke competition programme arranged by the RTC and local County FA in line with FA rules. U14 and U16 age groups play in an FA organised fixture programme, although only U16s play competitive fixtures, and take part in The FA Girls' U16 Youth Cup and Plate.

Why are Regional Talent Clubs tiered 1–3?

The new three-tier Regional Talent Club programme was launched for 2016/17 season to provide greater support to the clubs working with our most talented players. The previous Centre of Excellence structure showed that clubs require the opportunity to grow and develop at different rates according to their maturity and growth, as well as the grassroots infrastructure beneath them. Therefore the RTC programme operates across a tiered concept as opposed to a 'one size fits all' model in which the elements of funding and support are different across the three tiers that clubs were awarded.

Should a player be trying to get into a Tier 1 club over a Tier 3 club?

No. The purpose of the tiers is not a reflection of where the best players are as we fully encourage all players to attend their closest Regional Talent Club. The purpose of the tiers is to reflect where clubs are in terms of their individual growth and infrastructure. The opportunities to attend a Regional Development Programme, National Performance Camps and England Camps are the same for a player if she were to attend a Tier 1, 2 or 3 Regional Talent Club.

How long can I stay at a Regional Talent Club?

If asked to join a RTC, every player will be given a 'player agreement' for either one or two seasons (subject to continued funding and meeting licence criteria). At the end of the agreement period, players will be told whether they will be retained, required to re-apply or let go to return to grassroots football. A player may de-register at any time if returning to grassroots football or advancing to senior football. If a player wishes to move to another club during the season they can make an appeal to The Football Association.

What is the cost of attending a Regional Talent Club?

A fee may be charged by the Club which should not exceed £200 per season. This fee should include the provision of training and match day kit.

All Regional Talent Clubs and contacts are listed on our website

www.TheFA.com/womens-girls-football/england-talent-pathway

KEY REGIONAL TALENT CLUB CONTACTS

These are subject to change and were correct at the time of posting this online handbook. They will be updated with each version review but if you cannot access a contact, please contact the relevant person at The FA.

Regional Talent Clubs

- **Arsenal Ladies Tier 2** – Tessa Payne
tpayne@arsenal.co.uk
- **Aston Villa Tier 3** – Stuart Wilson
stuart.wilson@avfc.co.uk
- **Birmingham City Tier 1** – Cristina Torkilsden
Cristina.Torkilsden@bclfc.com
- **Blackburn Rovers Tier 1** – Katie Quinlan
Kquinlan@rovers.co.uk
- **Brighton and Hove Albion Tier 1** – George Parris
George.Parris@brightonandhovealbion.com
- **Bristol City Tier 2** – Marco Chiavetta
marco.chiavetta@bristolcitywfc.co.uk
- **Charlton Athletic Tier 3** – Alan Seamons
Alan@csoaching.co.uk
- **Chelsea Tier 1** – Dean Steninger
Dean.Steninger@chelseafc.com
- **Derby County Tier 2** – Kieron Wicks
Kieron.Wicks@DCCT.co.uk
- **Doncaster Tier 3** – Dav I Doone
Davdoone@hotmail.co.uk
- **Durham Tier 2** – Steve Common
rtctechnicaldirector@durhamwfc.co.uk
- **Essex FA Tier 2** – Steve Downey
downey_s@sky.com
- **Everton Tier 2** – Thomas Walsh
Thomas.Walsh@evertonfc.com
- **Gillingham Tier 2** – Natalie Curtis
ncurtis@priestfield.com
- **Leeds United Tier 1** – Paul Atkinson
karenatkinson71@gmail.com
- **Leicester City Girls' Tier 1** – Raffaele Long
Raffaele.Long@lcfc.co.uk
- **Liverpool Tier 1** – Martin Ho
Martin.ho@liverpoolfc.com
- **Manchester City Women Tier 1** – Martin Harrison
Martin.Harrison@cityfootball.com
- **Manchester United Tier 1** – Matt Johnson
Matt.Johnson@MUFoundation.org
- **Millwall Tier 3** – Colin Reid
reidfootball@live.co.uk
- **MK Dons Tier 2** – Paul Read
paul.read@mkdons.com
- **Nottingham Forest Tier 3** – Kevin Lock
Kevin.lock@nottinghamforest.co.uk
- **Oxford United Tier 2** – Vlad Cintic
vlad_cintic@yahoo.com
- **Reading FC Tier 2** – Phil Cousins
pcousins@readingfc.co.uk
- **Sheffield United Tier 2** – Richard Meek
Richardmeek@icould.com
- **Shrewsbury Town Tier 3** – Sian Jones
Sian.Jones@ShrewsburyTownInTheCommunity.com
- **Southampton Tier 1** – Sophie Dugan
SDugan@SaintsFC.co.uk
- **Stoke City Tier 2** – Andy Holmes
andyholmes69@yahoo.co.uk
- **Sunderland Tier 1** – Andy Grant
andy.grant@foundationoflight.co.uk
- **Teesside Sport Tier 2** – Sammy Leigh
SJ.Leigh@mbro.ac.uk
- **West Bromwich Albion Tier 3** – Lee Gardner
lee@hiretoolsales.co.uk
- **Wolves Tier 3** – Steve Cullis
stevecullis@wolves.co.uk
- **York City Tier 1** – Lawrie Pearson
lawriepearson28@hotmail.co.uk



FA WSL ACADEMIES

In the 2019/20 season, the second of the Barclays FA WSL Academy, 12 clubs will be part of the programme, geared towards balancing a young player's football development with their educational aspirations.

With strength and conditioning, physiotherapy and lifestyle provision provided by the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS), the Academy programme will support over 200 players aged 16–20.

The FA WSL Academy programme is effectively a dual careers programme. This means that it balances equally a player's football development and their academic, vocational or work-based aspirations. This brings numerous benefits. From a football perspective, players will eventually be able to train and study in the same location; therefore the amount of time they can spend training, rather than travelling, will increase. There are also the performance services being provided by TASS. Every player will receive enhanced medical support, a bespoke strength and conditioning programme and lifestyle support, to make sure they are balancing things as they should be. There will be a number of qualified people from multi-disciplinary teams available to help drive and guide the players effectively.

This of course differs from the Development Squads, that still are common outside of The FA WSL. The main difference is how 'success' will be perceived by this new system. With the development squads, it was purely and simply about the football and players had to fit their education around their on-field commitments. Academies will be held accountable not only by a player's football development but also by how well they progress in their chosen career and the learning that takes place on the journey towards that. A good academy may well produce players who will eventually progress up the pyramid, but it won't just stop there. A good academy will also ensure that the players achieve the goals set by the education partners and most crucially the

players themselves. Player choice is absolutely critical. Each Academy will have a Further Education partner with a wide range of BTEC and A level courses to choose from. Players will not be made to do a specific course. For those who wish to work part-time with training, that option is possible too.

The Performance Services Partner is TASS. There are a number of benefits to TASS being involved because they have such a good track record of success across multiple Olympic sports, team and individual. One of our key learnings from the development squads is that, physically, players were under prepared for the transition into The FA WSL. So by having TASS services provided by their qualified practitioners, each player will receive a bespoke programme that will make them athletically better. And when you add that to the technical and tactical work that they receive from the coaches, it should make each player an all-round better athlete and better prepared for the rigours of The FA WSL. Some clubs have the resources to implement this already, for those it's an enhanced portfolio of support, for the others it represents a significant raising of the bar. The lifestyle support is a really key aspect. Dual Careers aren't easy. Pressures come from the sport and the choice of study. Balancing that, supporting the players and ensuring they have the 'go betweens' to create flexible approaches will make a significant difference to their wellbeing, and in turn to what they can achieve.

First and foremost, we want players to come out of the Academy programme as better people. Some will go on to play in The FA WSL, perhaps become Senior Lionesses, and some will go on to enjoy a football career at a level relevant to their ability. But generally speaking, we are not yet in a position where The FA WSL players, (including England internationals), can retire from the game and never have to work again. We want to see players that come out

of the academies having their employability and career chances enhanced by having been part of the programme. We want a generation of former academy players to go on and be successful in the career path they choose.

The 12 clubs who will be part of The FA WSL academy programme are (listed with their relevant TASS delivery site):

- Arsenal/University of Hertfordshire
- Birmingham City/University of Birmingham
- Brighton & Hove Albion/University of Brighton
- Bristol City/University of Gloucester
- Chelsea/St Mary's University
- Ipswich Town/University of Essex
- Liverpool and Everton/Liverpool John Moores University
- Manchester City/Manchester Metropolitan University
- Manchester United/Manchester Metropolitan
- Reading/Buckinghamshire New University
- West Ham United/University of East London.

In addition, The FA East Region (in partnership with Ipswich Town) will also compete.



All Academies have an Academy Plan you can ask to see and every six months each Academy will undergo an accreditation visit to maintain standards. Academies will also undergo productivity measures to assess how well they are

doing in both Football and Education. Feel free to ask about those.

To find out more, contact the Academy Managers or The FA Women's Academy Manager.

ORGANISATION	NAME	EMAIL
The FA	Tony Fretwell	Tony.Fretwell@TheFA.com
Arsenal	Tessa Payne	TPayne@Arsenal.co.uk
Birmingham City	Cristina Torkildsen	Cristina.Torkildsen@BCFC.com
Bristol City	Marco Chiavatta	marco.chiavatta@bristolcitywfc.co.uk
Brighton	Kevin Tharme	Kevin.Tharme@bhafc.co.uk
Chelsea	Dean Steninger	DeanSteninger@ChelseaFA.com
Everton	Thomas Walsh	Thomas.Walsh@EvertonFC.com
Liverpool	Julie Grundy	Julie.Grundy@LiverpoolFC.com
Man City	Olivia Loughlin	Olivia.Loughlin@CityFootball.com
Man United	Charlotte Healy	Charlotte.Healy@ManUtd.co.uk
Reading	Rob Gier	RGier@ReadingFC.co.uk
Ipswich Town	Joe Sheehan	Joe.Sheehan@ITFC.co.uk
West Ham Utd	Myles Smith	MSmith@WestHamUnited.co.uk

FA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP AND FA WOMEN'S NATIONAL LEAGUE CLUBS ACADEMIES (TIER 2 TO 4)



Academies are not only attached to FA Women's Super League clubs. Some clubs in both The FA Women's Championship and FA Women's National League operate Academies. During the 2018/19 season work started to help guide and support these environments.

Academies are usually partnerships with colleges and clubs, though some may involve course providers. In these cases participants will have the choice of one course, often BTEC Sport and be able to combine this with football coaching.

These are not endorsed by The FA but this does not mean they should be avoided. Visit them and ask about the courses, who delivers them and what a regular week contains.

Some Academies will allow players to choose whatever course they want to do in the college alongside the football. As this supports player choice and doesn't make a player do a particular course, this is the chosen style of The FA and will be important as The FA shapes these offers in the next year or so.

Once these changes are active, this handbook will be updated and further details will be contained within it.

Finally, some players may choose to play in the part time FA Women's Championship or FA Women's National League and attend the college of their choice. This is absolutely fine and England players doing this will be provided with support. The hope would be that players will be playing at the highest level possible and studying a course of education they choose themselves.

For more specific detail you can contact The FA WSL Academy Manager and/or the relevant National Head Coach.

WOMEN'S HIGH-PERFORMANCE FOOTBALL CENTRES

What is a WHPFC?

The FA Women's High Performance Football Centres (WHPFC) are in place to support the Gameplan for Growth (Women's Game National Strategy). A key role for the centres is to support and drive The FA's ambition to increase the number of qualified coaches and to improve the quality of coaching, both central to the growth of the women's game.

The centres provide an educational and community-based setting to recruit, develop and deploy coaches who will lead and inspire player development in the women and girls' game. Having established a connection with the England Talent Pathway and with clubs within the women's game the centres can provide services such as coaching, sports science and scholarship opportunities.

In addition to this, the centres help to create the next generation of the game's behind-the-scenes workforce in a variety of roles such as volunteers, administrators or development staff.

Who are the WHPFCs and what is a CDO?

The FA have established a partnership with the below nine universities, which includes the appointment of eight Women's Football Coach Development Officer (CDO) roles. They come with experience and ability to deliver against six key focus areas including coach development and supporting the England Talent Pathway:

- Manchester consortia – Manchester Metropolitan University and University of Manchester
- University of Birmingham
- University of Chichester
- Northumbria University
- Nottingham Consortia – Nottingham Trent University and University of Nottingham
- Plymouth Marjon University
- Sheffield Hallam University
- St Mary's University
- University of Gloucestershire.

Across the nine university WHPFCs, the Coach Development Officers have worked with in excess of 600 coaches supporting them in different formats; from group workshops or seminars on specifics of coaching females, one-on-one work with coaches on their behaviours and philosophy or training and match observations of coaches in action. In addition to one on one support and group workshop support, the CDO helps prepare coaches to be ready for their next step on the FA coaching qualification ladder; whether that is a coach taking their first step at Level 1 or supporting coaches aspiring to achieve a UEFA B Licence.

Bursaries

The FA coaching bursaries are in place to help support the overall aim of increasing diversity among coaches in England. These are in place to help fund females and coaches from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background (BAME) through our courses.

For the UEFA B there is a £600 bursary available with 100 available to female coaches and 100 for coaches from a BAME background. Applications open every season through the FA website. For the UEFA A Licence a total of 25 bursaries are available for 90% of the course fee. Applications for the bursary are aligned to the course applications which open every season. For the Advanced Youth Award there are a total of 15 bursaries available again this is aligned to course application and acceptance. Finally in conjunction with UEFA, The FA are able to apply for up to two bursaries for The UEFA Pro Licence with the possibility of 90% of the fee of the course being covered.

For other courses such as The FA Level 1 and FA Level 2 in Coaching Football local County FA initiatives are in place to help support females coming through the coaching pathway.

COACH DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE WOMEN'S GAME

In addition to the WHPFCs and the appointment of eight CDOs who have been positioned to support coaches from Level 1 to Level 3, there are three Women's National Coach Developers who will provide exclusive support for women's pathway football coaches (male and female), primarily working and supporting coaches from Level 3 to Level 5. The roles have been created to support the women's pathway in two distinct areas:

Coaches going through their FA qualifications (primarily Level 3-B and Level 4-A Licence):

- Attending and delivering on course blocks
- Providing 'in situ' support between blocks.

Coaches who are between qualifications or are already fully qualified in their current role:

- Coaches with a B Licence aspiring to reach A Licence
- Coaches who already have their A Licence and have been identified as needing support or high potential coaches that are believed to have a promising future in the women's professional game and will benefit from the support.

Who will they support?

- Coaches in Tiers 1–3 of the women's pyramid (Women's Super League, Women's Championship and Women's National League)
- Coaches in the Female Talent Pathway (RTC Technical Directors and other A Licence coaches in the RTC/ACC network).

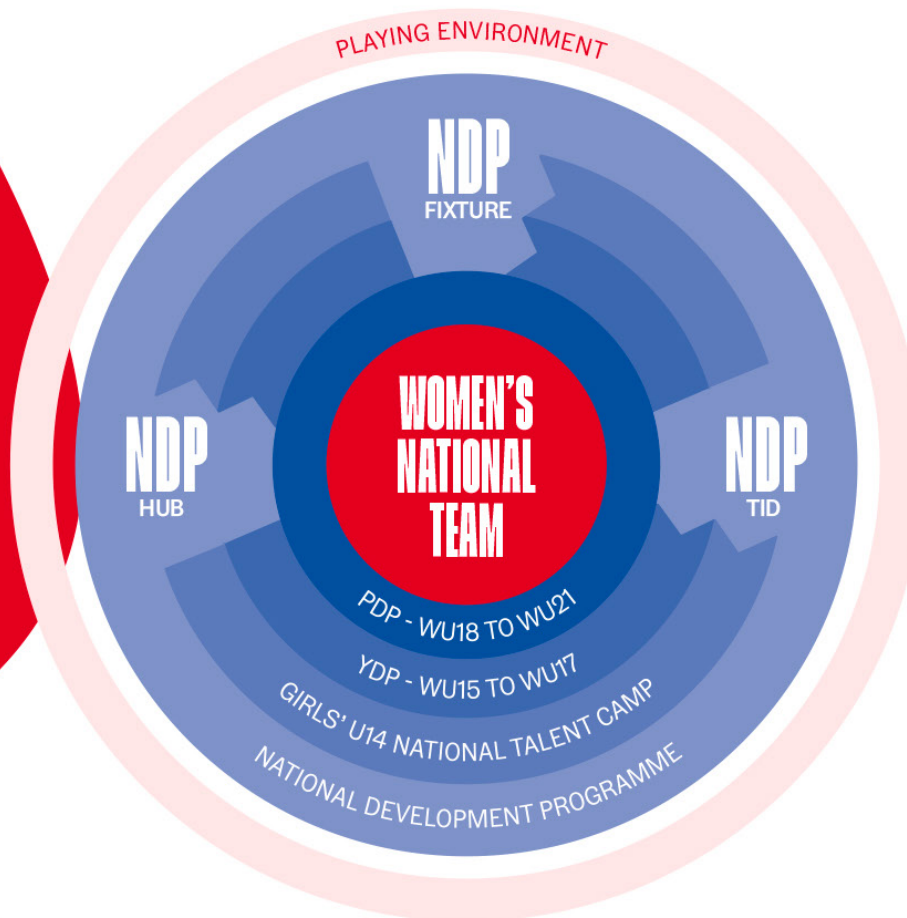
The WHPCs have now worked with 1700 coaches.



THE FA'S LIONESSE TALENT PATHWAY

The FA's Lioness Talent Pathway aids the identification and development of girls with footballing potential. The pathway ensures appropriate opportunities are in place to enable players to fulfil their potential and reach our ultimate goal of producing elite English female players to compete on the world stage.

Supported by investment from Sport England, the pathway aims to provide an accessible and inclusive route for players to progress. Entry to the FA's Lioness Talent Pathway may be through a range of playing environments. The pathway recognises that every players' journey is unique and allows them to access individualised support, providing the right opportunity to the right player at the right time.



PLAYING ENVIRONMENT

Girls from any playing environment or background are able to be selected to enter the Lioness Talent Pathway. Playing environments include Regional Talent Clubs and Advanced Coaching Centres.

THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (NDP)

The National Development Programme seeks to identify and develop our most talented young players in the U14-U17 age groups. This is in collaboration with the England Women's Youth teams. The NDP is a wrap around programme for players in England Youth Teams and those within the wider Lioness Talent Pathway.

It has three strands of delivery:

National Development Programme Hub

This is a regional individualised support for the player across 4 corners of development (Technical, Physical, Medical, Education & Wellbeing).

National Development Programme Fixture

This is a fixture opportunity designed to extend the competitive challenge for the player.

National Development Programme Talent ID

This is an opportunity to identify new and re-emerging talent for potential future support.

THE FA GIRLS' U14 NATIONAL TALENT CAMP (NTC)

The FA Girls' National Talent Camp seeks to identify U14 players who may possess international potential and to help prepare these players for the future.

ENGLAND WOMEN'S YOUTH NATIONAL TEAMS

Players will be identified through the FA's talent ID strategy to be selected for England youth squads. Our youth teams are organised by age into two distinct phases:

Youth Development Phase (YDP) - WU15s-WU17s

Professional Development Phase (PDP) - WU18s-WU21s

WHAT IS AN ADVANCED COACHING CENTRE?

The FA Girls' Advanced Coaching Centres (ACC) are part of a specifically designed programme operating in Cumberland, the South West and East regions to support the development and progression of female players in these areas.

What is the purpose of running an Advanced Coaching Centre programme in these regions and how will they benefit players with elite potential?

Due to the geographical challenges and limited playing opportunities in Cumberland, the South West and East regions, the FA provision has been adapted in these areas to ensure it is accessible as well as supportive and educational. Selected players remain in grassroots club football and participate in their fixture programme, whilst also attending the ACC one night a week to receive supplementary support.

What can players expect to receive at an Advanced Coaching Centre?

The ACC provides players with an additional night's training a week and a minimum of 6 fixtures a season against other ACCs or Charter Standard Youth teams.

Who organises the Advanced Coaching Centres?

ACC's are licensed to either the County FA or a Club within the county, who facilitates the organisation of the Centre and appoints appropriately qualified coaches for each age group. It is the responsibility of the organising body to provide players, parents and coaches with all necessary information relating to the programme e.g. trials, training venues/ times, fixtures etc.

Where will the Advanced Coaching Centres be located?

ACCs are specific to counties in the South West and East of England and Cumberland. Each County FA will operate an ACC for a minimum of 29-weeks operating between the months of August to May each season.

Who can attend the Advanced Coaching Centres?

Counties will operate squads at Under 12s, Under 14s, and either Under 16s or Under 10s age groups. Players will also be registered with a local grassroots club.

How do players access an Advanced Coaching Centre?

All ACCs hold a trial process in July. Players can be nominated for trials by their teacher or grassroots coach, or players can apply directly to the Centre. Trials can continue

throughout the season but this is at the discretion of the ACC.

How long can a player stay at an Advanced Coaching Centre?

Selection is on a seasonal basis, and players of an eligible age can remain at an ACC as long as they want, subject to reselection.

What is the cost of attending an ACC?

A fee may be charged by the ACC for attending training and fixtures. This fee should not exceed £115 per season.

KEY ADVANCED COACHING CENTRE CONTACTS

These are subject to change and were correct at the time of posting this online handbook.

COUNTY FA	NAME	EMAIL
Bedfordshire FA	Marc Di Carlo	Marc.Dicarlo@bedfordshirefa.com
Cambridgeshire FA	Katie Critchley	Katie.Critchley@cambridgeshirefa.com
Cornwall FA	Daniel Greenough	Daniel.Greenough@cornwallfa.com
Cumberland FA	Craig Lewis	Craig.Lewis@CumberlandFA.com
Devon FA	Matt Hodgson	Matthew.Hodgson@devonfa.com
Dorset FA	Jemma Tewkesbury	Jemma.Tewkesbury@dorsetfa.com
Gloucestershire FA	Alexis Lunn-Gadd	Alexis.Lunn-Gadd@gloucestershirefa.com
Ipswich Town	Paige Shorten	Paige.Shorten@itfc.co.uk
Northamptonshire FA	Chloe Brown	Chloe.Brown@northantsfa.com
Norwich City	Jordan Southgate	Jordan.Southgate@canaries.co.uk
Somerset FA	Rachael Lawler-Edwards	Rachael.Lawler-Edwards@somersetfa.com
Wiltshire FA	Tim Hall	Tim.Hall@wiltshirefa.com

WHAT IS AN U14 NATIONAL TALENT CAMP?

U14 National Talent Camps (NTC) have been put in place to support players who may possess international potential and prepare these players for the future. They are three day camps that provide players with the opportunity to train and play amongst other talented players from around the country. With guidance and support from FA technical staff, players are also given access to specialists from physiotherapy, physical performance and education/welfare disciplines to further aid their development.

How many National Talent Camps are held per season?

In total eight NTCs are run per season. A number of these are 'split' camps where we select one set of players in the first week, and then a different set of players in the second week. These split camps run in August, October and February and then two separate camps are held in December and April.

How do players access the National Talent Camps?

Girls from any playing environment or background are able to enter the Lioness talent pathway, so players can choose to play in the environment that is the best fit for them. Selection to the National Talent Camps are made following a formalised process with input from the FA Talent Technical Coaches and Women's Talent ID department.

When does a player have to be born to be eligible to attend a National Talent Camp?

Unlike the Regional Talent Clubs, Advanced Coaching Centres and grassroots football, the National Talent Camp's age group is based on the calendar year (Jan–Dec) in which the child was born as opposed to academic year (Sept–Oct) to fall in line with international camps. Only players whose birthday falls inside the required calendar year are eligible.

How many National Talent Camps will a player be invited to?

Players are selected on a camp-by-camp basis and involvement with one NTC does not guarantee involvement at the next or any subsequent events.

What is the cost?

No fee is charged to players for attending a National Talent Camp.



WHAT IS THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME?

The National Development Programme (NDP) facilitates the education and development of talented young players in the U14-U17 age groups and is structured to complement the England Women's Development teams as a wrap-around programme of support and opportunity. The NDP works with selected players in the England Development teams as well as those within the wider Lioness Talent Pathway. The programme has three strands of delivery; Performance Hubs, Fixtures and Talent ID Days.

What can players expect from the performance hubs, fixture and talent ID days?

PERFORMANCE HUBS: The aim of performance hubs is to provide a support mechanism to cater for the individual's needs; giving guidance and education across four corners of development (Technical, Physical, Physiotherapy, Education & Wellbeing). Players and their guardians will attend selected workshops at these one-day hubs in order to get support across different disciplines.

Performance hubs will take place four times a season in seven venues spread across the country. Players will be invited to attend their closest hub.

FIXTURE DAYS: Fixture days aim to deliver a games programme to challenge, extend and develop our most talented youth players. These will be held three times a season and allow players to compete with and against other talented players around the country.

TALENT ID DAYS: Talent ID days will be held twice a season and provide a playing opportunity to identify new and re-emerging talent for potential future support.

How do players access the National Development Programmes?

Girls from any playing environment or background are able to enter the Lioness talent pathway, so players can choose to play in the environment that is the best fit for them. Selection to the National Development Programme is made following a formalised process with input from Youth Development Phase National Coaches, Talent Technical Coaches and the FA Women's Talent ID department.

How many National Development Programme events will a player be invited to?

Each of the three NDP strands have different aims and purposes, and players will be selected to attend the event felt best to suit their needs. Therefore, players should not expect to attend all events taking place across the season. Invites will be offered on an event-by-event basis.

What is the cost?

No fee is charged to players for attending any National Development Programme event.

THE FA WOMEN'S TIER 1, 2 AND 3/4 LEAGUES

A NEW STRUCTURE. A NEW IDENTITY.



TheFA Women's Super League

The FA Women's Super League
The pinnacle of the league pyramid,
attracting the fiercest and most
competitive English players alongside
the very best from around the world.



TheFA Women's Championship

The FA Women's Championship
The springboard to the top tier
of English football. Players continue
to hone their skills with the drive
and determination to reach
the top of the game.



TheFA Women's National League

The FA Women's National League
A community of diverse regional
divisions brought together through
exciting and competitive football.

THE STORY SO FAR

- **2011:** The FA Women's Super League (FA WSL) was introduced – 8 teams across one division
- **2014:** FA WSL expanded to accommodate 18 teams playing across FA WSL1 (x8) and FA WSL2 (x10)
- **2018:** Significant changes to the top tiers of The FA Women's competition pyramid to support the growth of the women's game in England, including:

NEW league structure

MORE teams – 22 clubs across FA WSL and FA Women's Championship (FA WC)

FULL-TIME professional players in FA WSL

NEW brand identity

NEW commercial programme

TRANSFORMING THE WOMEN'S GAME

In 2018, The FA restructured the top tiers of the Women's Football pyramid as a central part of the 'Gameplan for Growth' strategy.

The restructure supports the work to build a successful and sustainable high-performance system in England and help transform the women's game.

Changes were implemented at the start of the 2018/19 season and included:

- The FA Women's Super League (FA WSL) expanded into a top tier, professional league of full-time players
- The FA Women's Championship (FA WC) established as a second tier – replacing FA WSL2 – to provide a semi-professional, part-time environment
- The FA National League (Tiers 3 and 4) maintaining a regional structure
- Promotion and relegation applicable across all levels of the pyramid for first time since FA WSL was introduced.



THE FA WOMEN'S NATIONAL LEAGUE

The FA Women's National League (FA WNL) is an FA branded league which covers Tier 3 and 4 of the Women's Football Pyramid. Tier 3 is split into two regional leagues, the Northern and Southern Premier. Tier 4 is split into four regional leagues, Division 1 North, Division 1 Midlands, Division 1 South West and Division 1 South East.

Each division contains 12 teams, and teams play home and away fixtures within the season. The season lasts from August until May. Alongside league fixtures, League Cup and Plate competitions take place, with finals held at Football League/National League stadia.

The two winners of the Tier 3 divisions meet in the final game of the season, The FA WNL Play-Off. This usually determines not only the overall winner of The FA WNL, but also who gains promotion to The FA Women's Championship. However, for the 2018/19 season the winners of both divisions will win promotion, subject to meeting licence criteria.

Clubs within the league vary between standalone women's clubs, grassroots clubs with strong women's sections, and larger professional clubs with growing women's sections.

Alongside the first team competition, The FA WNL also runs a parallel Reserve Section. This includes reserve teams from both FA WNL teams and also FA Women's Championship teams. As with the first teams, this competition is split into regional leagues with teams playing each other on a home and away basis, alongside a League Cup competition.

If a player is looking to join a club at this level they should visit The FA WNL website – <https://bit.ly/2Lm1lSk> – and identify a suitable club, before visiting the club's website and making contact.

The FA Women's
National League



The FA Women's
Championship



THE FA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

Part time semi professional

8–10 contact hours a week plus matches

Minimum standards for all support services





THE FA WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE

FA WSL Vision

"To be the most exciting domestic Women's Football league in the world"

FA WSL Mission

To support delivery of The FA's strategic objectives in the 'Gameplan for Growth' strategy (2017–2020):

- Double fan base
- Double participation
- Consistent success on the world stage.

Full time professional players

16–20 contact hours each week plus matches

Minimum standards for all support services

BALANCING FOOTBALL AND EDUCATION

The FA value the importance of education, and dual career planning is at the heart of TheFA Women's Super League (WSL) Academy programme. The young players will be encouraged to balance their education and football commitments equally.

As each player is unique, education options will include studying to achieve academic qualifications (e.g. A Levels, BTEC, Degree, etc.), but if formal education is not for them at this time, work-based learning (e.g. apprenticeships) can be undertaken. After leaving the development phase aged twenty, the emphasis on education and dual career planning will have eased and enhanced the transition to the senior game or an alternative career.

Every young person may attend the college/sixth Form or university of their choice; however, each WSL Academy is linked to a principal education provider for further education courses, which may form one choice/option.

These education providers are being recognised for their flexibility of approach and support of elite performers through the TASS Dual Career Accreditation process. An Academy will work with all education providers, universities or employers to allow flexibility in the timescales required to achieve qualifications. These partnerships ensure that more time can be allocated to academic study around examination periods, and equally, greater time may be allowed where appropriate for participation in training and development activities, e.g. tournaments, fixtures, etc.

CLUB	PRINCIPAL EDUCATION PROVIDER
Arsenal FC	Oaklands College
Birmingham City FC	Alderbrook School and Solihull College
Brighton & Hove Albion FC	Worthing College
Bristol City FC	South Gloucestershire and Stroud College
Chelsea FC	TBC
Everton FC	Carmel College
Ipswich Town FC	St Josephs
Liverpool FC	Rainhill Sixth Form
Manchester City FC	Connell Sixth Form College
Manchester United	Eccles Sixth Form and Wigan & Leigh College
Reading FC	John Madejski Academy
West Ham United FC	Chobham Academy

CONTACTS:

For any further enquiries regarding the balance of education and football, contact:

Caitlin Hawkins
Player Education Manager

Caitlin.Hawkins@TheFA.com

Sean England
Player Education Co-ordinator

Sean.England@TheFA.com



SAFE AND INCLUSIVE FOOTBALL ENVIRONMENTS: WHAT WE MEAN

Football is a safe and inclusive sport – that means everyone should be able to enjoy their time in football, knowing that rigorous safeguarding and inclusion procedures are in place and understanding everyone's role in keeping children safe and included.

Safe: organisations and individuals take a proactive approach to keeping children (under 18s) safe and have timely, high-quality responses to concerns and disclosures that prioritise the wellbeing of children. Safeguarding also applies to adults who are at risk of harm and cannot protect themselves. The FA promotes four key principles of safeguarding:

- The child's welfare is, and must always be, the paramount consideration
- All children have a right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual orientation
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- Working in partnership with other organisations, children, their parents and carers is essential.

You can access The FA's Safeguarding policy in The FA Handbook.

Note – this handbook is mostly for parents and carers who support teenagers. For this reason, we use the term 'young person' in this handbook. However, when someone reaches the age of 18, they are no longer considered a child under UK safeguarding legislation.

Inclusive: organisations and individuals include everyone and do not discriminate for any reason. Rather than treating everyone equally, inclusion means making reasonable adjustments as required, so that everyone can participate. This can be referred to as equality, diversity and/or inclusion. You can access The FA's Inclusion policy in The FA Handbook

As parents and carers, you have a responsibility for keeping young people safe and included, as well as empowering young people to keep themselves and others safe and included.

You can:

- Make sure the club/academy is signed up to The FA's Respect Programme. It outlines that a certain standard of organisation and behaviour is expected from everyone in football – whether as a league or club official, player, parent, coach or referee
- Ask to see an organisation's Safeguarding and Inclusion policies
- Make sure policies, guidance and details about the Welfare Officer are on display and easy to read. They should also be in formats that people with disabilities can access and there should be child-friendly versions

- If they are in place, ask if you can participate in existing club workshops and meetings that discuss how to create safer and more inclusive spaces, otherwise you can suggest helping the club to set one up
- Talk to the club or academy if you have suggestions or concerns about young people's safety and wellbeing
- Follow up: if you continue to have concerns, talk again to the club or academy, or alternatively you can contact The FA's Safeguarding Team for advice.

Useful websites:

- The FA: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding
- www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/best-practice-downloads
- CPSU: <https://thecpsu.org.uk/help-advice/introduction-to-safeguarding>
- UK Government: www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance
- The FA Handbook: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/lawsandrules
- The Respect codes of conduct: <http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/respect/play-your-part>
- Also for the latest on how you can support the FA Respect campaign, visit <http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/respect/we-only-do-positive>

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO KEEP THEMSELVES AND OTHERS SAFE

Young people know what makes them feel safe and unsafe; they can be the best safeguarding champions, given the relevant information and support. Girls, particularly during teenage years, face some challenges that are different to those that boys face. For example, girls start menstruating; they are more likely to self-harm; so information and support that is tailored to girls is important.

You can encourage girls to keep themselves and others safe by building up their knowledge. Safeguarding workshops are a good way to do this, as is accessing information online from reliable websites, such as ChildLine, the NSPCC and Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU). Other ways you can support young people to keep themselves safe is encouraging them to:

- Talk to friends, family, a Welfare Officer, GP, teacher or coach if they have any concerns, however small those might seem
- Learn how to stay safe online.
- Keep personal and professional boundaries separate, such as not socialising with a coach or private messaging online with them
- Ask clubs for regular safeguarding discussions. It can also be useful to map out locations they feel there are risks, such as changing facilities and the journey to and from training
- Look out for each other and check in with someone if they think they may not be ok
- Don't do anything that feels uncomfortable or doesn't feel right.

Useful websites:

- The FA: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding
- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk
- CEOP: www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre
- NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
- CPSU: www.thecpsu.org.uk

STAYING SAFE ONLINE

The Internet gives young people huge opportunities to learn and build friendships. However, there are also risks online – bullying, viewing inappropriate or illegal material, grooming and sexual exploitation. The online world is rapidly changing with new Apps emerging on a weekly basis. Young people know more about the internet than the majority of adults and they definitely know more about how they as young people use online spaces. So getting them involved in conversations about keeping themselves safe online is key.

Here are some top tips for helping young people stay safe online. Parents and carers can use these to discuss safe use of the internet with young people.

Top tips:

1. Be proactive: keep yourself safe online; and be responsive: report concerns as soon as you have them. You're not alone and there are people there to support you. There's some great information on CEOP's internet safety website.
2. Think before you post: don't share when you're emotional – anything you put into cyberspace stays there (even if you delete it).
3. Cover your webcam when you're not using it.

4. Avoid websites you're not sure about, particularly adult-only and pro websites (for example, pro anorexia; pro self-harm).
5. Don't chat to people online if you don't know them; if you do have a chat, don't share any personal information.
6. Change your passwords regularly and don't write them down.
7. Be aware when online gaming – it's easier to feel safe sharing things with avatars but it poses the same risks.
8. Don't give into peer pressure, blackmail or other threats: report them.
9. Seek advice from ChildLine/GP/teacher/coach/parent and report inappropriate/illegal web content.
10. Support your friends to stay safe online.

The FA has communication and Internet use guidance for all representatives (staff, volunteers, consultants and others representing The FA, clubs and academies). All representatives must:

- Always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of young people, including online.
- Follow The FA's Safe communication between U18 players and football representatives guidance.
- Follow The FA's Safe use of Photography and Video guidance.
- Report any concerns immediately to the Welfare Officer or FA Safeguarding Team.



Useful websites:

- The FA: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding
- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk
- CEOP: www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre
- NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
- CPSU: www.thecpsu.org.uk
- Child Net International: www.childnet.com/young-people
- The FA Handbook: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/lawsandrules

SAFE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN U18 PLAYERS AND FOOTBALL REPRESENTATIVES

The FA has clear guidance for all representatives (staff, volunteers, consultants and others representing The FA, clubs and academies) on safe and appropriate communication with under 18s. As a parent or carer you have an important role in reminding the young person you support of the below guidance and helping them to identify and raise any concerns. Making 'keeping yourself safe' a regular part of conversations with young people is important as it empowers them to safeguard themselves and others, as well as demonstrating that talking about concerns is encouraged.

If a representative is not following the below guidelines, The FA strongly encourages the young person, their parent or carer to report this to The FA Safeguarding Team.

- All communication to players should be made using an FA approved device. Under no circumstances should communication be from a personal phone, laptop or other internet enabled personal device
- Any off-camp communication with U18 players should be made via a parent
- Representatives should not 'follow' or send 'friend requests' to players from personal accounts. If representatives receive a request to 'friend request' or be 'followed' on their personal social media accounts, this should be declined and the Head coach/Welfare Officer advised
- Representatives should not communicate with players via personal accounts or private messages.

- When communicating to U18 players, ensure another representative is copied into the communication.
- The content should specifically relate to the message you are communicating and should be professional. Messages should not contain jokes, personal comments or in any way be ambiguous as to its content.
- Messages should be signed off in a professional manner, avoiding the use of emojis or symbols such as kisses (Xx).
- Representatives must not send anyone material that could be considered threatening, offensive, upsetting, bullying or that is illegal.
- Representatives must not send any picture of themselves or other representatives. Furthermore, representatives should not send any images or pseudo-images that could be considered inappropriate, obscene or indecent.
- Under no circumstances should representatives ask a player to send an image of themselves or another person.
- Under no circumstances should representatives ask or agree to meet a player away from a professional setting.
- All communication should be retained in its original format on the device. This is for integrity and audit purposes, should it be required at a later stage.

Note – Representatives are not permitted to contact under 16s via WhatsApp.

Useful websites:

- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk
- CEOP: www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre
- NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk

- CPSU: www.thecpsu.org.uk
- ChildNet International: www.childnet.com/young-people

INCLUSIVE FOOTBALL AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Football is for everybody. The FA is committed to safely involving all children and young people in football who want to play or volunteer – this includes children who are deaf or who have a disability.

The FA, clubs and academies can make reasonable adjustments that enable a young person to be involved in the sport. These can also be for ‘hidden’ disabilities, such as autism or anxiety. If you or the young person you support would like adjustments made, you should:

- Talk to the club or academy
- Provide a letter from a medical professional such as a GP or specialist outlining the required reasonable adjustment which will enable the young person to participate (on request from the club or academy).

Some adjustments require additional funding, which is the responsibility of the club or academy. However, many need small, low cost alterations, such as a designated disabled parking bay, large print signage, a safe space to take some time out, parents and carers volunteering to help out at games. A welcome induction where a young person and their parent or carer can highlight access challenges at the start enables clear communication on needs.

If a young person chooses not to share their disability, it is their right to do so. However, sensitive information will be kept confidential unless the young person chooses to share it, or there is a concern the young person is at risk of harm.





Some young people choose to talk openly about their additional needs; if the young person you support would like to do so to raise awareness, they should talk to the club or academy about this.

The FA has an inclusion policy that you can access in The FA Handbook and there are best practice guidance notes on The FA's website to help clubs and academies safely involve children and young people who are deaf or have a disability.

Useful websites:

- The FA: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/best-practice-downloads
- UK Government: www.gov.uk/government/publications/reasonable-adjustments-a-legal-duty
- UK Government: www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

CHANGING FACILITIES

Young people can feel uncomfortable changing in front of their peers, particularly when their bodies are changing. As a parent/carer, it is important you provide a safe space for the young person to discuss this with you and that you can brainstorm together ways they can feel safe and at ease during football. For example, a young person may choose to use an individual cubicle if there is one, change at home or work with you on how to handle unwanted comments or behaviour.

Young people are also more at risk in changing facilities, particularly of bullying from other young people, photos or videos being taken and unwanted physical contact. All changing facilities should have a no photography or video policy; if this is not being upheld, speak to the club or academy immediately.

The FA has clear guidance to all representatives (staff, volunteers, consultants and others representing The FA, clubs and academies) on acceptable behaviour in changing facilities. As a parent or carer, you have an important role in reminding the young person of the below guidance and helping them to identify and raise any concerns. Making 'keeping yourself safe' a regular part of conversation with young people is important as it empowers them to safeguard themselves and others, as well as demonstrating that talking about concerns is encouraged.

If an adult or child (under 18) is not following the below guidelines, The FA strongly encourages the young person, their parent or carer to report this to The FA Safeguarding Team.

- All representatives should ensure that they respect the privacy of players getting changed and do not enter the changing rooms unless in an emergency
- Representatives must not be in the changing room when either the player or representative is in a state of undress (if there is a reasonable exception for this such as required physiotherapy for a player, speak to the Welfare Officer and follow your club/academy protocol on this)
- Representatives should allow players time for changing and showering prior to engaging in coaching, medical or other support activities in changing rooms
- Wherever possible, there should be a separate cubicle or area where players can get changed in more privacy if they wish to do so.

- If a representative needs to enter the changing room, they should knock on the door and confirm everyone is dressed before they enter (unless there is an emergency).
- Where an alternative changing area is not available for staff changing, representatives should change before or after players enter.
- Where possible, changing facilities are assessed as part of a pre-tour risk assessment.
- Phones, cameras and computer equipment should not be used in the changing rooms unless there is an emergency; under no circumstances must it involve any form of image or video recording.

Useful websites:

- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk
- CPSU: <https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/best-practice/safe-use-of-changing-facilities>

SAFE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO

Recording a young person's journey through football can be important for parents and carers, as well as for young people themselves. However, there are also risks in taking, sharing and storing photos and videos. Guidance helps to avoid:

The inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images for use on child abuse websites on the internet (often incorrectly referred to as pornography sites).

- The identification of children when a photograph is accompanied by significant personal information that will assist a third party in identifying the child. This can lead, and has led, to children being 'groomed'

- The identification and locating of children in inappropriate circumstances which include: (i) where a child has been removed from his/her family for their own safety; (ii) where restrictions on contact with one parent following a parental separation exist for example, in domestic abuse cases; (iii) in situations where a child may be a witness in criminal proceedings; or (iv) other safeguarding children concerns.

The FA advises everyone to think before they post. We only use photography and video that respect the individuals in the photo/video and where there is written, informed permission to use the material from both the parent/carers and child (under 18); and we expect all individuals, clubs and academies involved in football to do the same.

Some basic guidance on taking and sharing photos and video:

- Don't take photos or videos that you don't want other people to see or hear
- Don't share identifiable information online such as surnames, where a young person lives, trains or studies
- Don't share sensitive information, for example, about a young person's health, beliefs, or feelings
- Encourage young people not to share their personal information, inappropriate images or post online when they have high emotions: whatever is posted online stays online
- Don't put photos or videos of people or tag them without their permission
- Keep photos and videos safely – and remember to wipe your hard drive when you get rid of your device.



When taking, sharing and/or storing photos or video, we ask all FA representatives to follow the below guidance, so if you're concerned that a representative is not following it, please inform us:

- **Justified:** is what you're doing justifiable in the circumstances, i.e. can you justify the need to collect/store/share/destroy the images you are handling?
- **Authorised:** are you authorised to do this? Or is someone else designated as responsible for managing this? Do you have or need written permission?

- **Proportional:** is what you are doing proportional to the purpose? Could you achieve it another way?
- **Auditable:** where are your actions recorded? Is there is evidence of your actions?
- **Necessary:** is what you are doing necessary or can the end result be achieved in some other way?

Useful websites:

- The FA: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding
- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk
- CPSU: <https://thecpsu.org.uk/help-advice/topics/photography/>

SAFE RECRUITMENT AND CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECKS

The FA takes safe recruitment extremely seriously. We conduct criminal record checks (DBS checks) on all relevant staff and volunteers and obtain two references. We also make sure people have regular supervision, support and training. However, we know this does not guarantee individuals are safe to work with children. Everyone has a vital role to play in putting safeguarding into practice and reporting any concerns, however small they might seem.

As a parent or carer, you have the right to ask if someone has an up-to-date criminal record check (this should be renewed every three years). If the individual is self-employed, you can ask to see the certificate; if the individual is employed by The FA or associated venue, you can ask for clarification that the individual has an up-to-date criminal records check.

If you are employing someone directly, for example as a coach, it is important to see their original criminal records check certificate and that you obtain two references from individuals and organisations that have known the person for at least two years. You should ask specific questions, such as 'do you have any concerns about this person working with children?' and 'have you had any complaints or concerns about this person since their employment?'. Just because someone has a good reputation, it doesn't guarantee they are safe to work with children.

Useful websites:

- The FA: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/best-practice-downloads
- UK Government: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service
- CPSU: <https://thecpsu.org.uk/help-advice/topics/safer-recruitment>

MENTAL WELLBEING

Football can be healthy and fun, as well as a potential career path for some. However, it can also be a source of stress and anxiety. Add in the pressure of schoolwork, exams, other extra-curricular activities such as representative schools football, time to socialise and there's a lot young people have to balance.

As parents and carers, you have a key role to play in supporting young people with their mental wellbeing. At The FA, we emphasise the importance of always prioritising mental health over football. Below are some tips for recognising mental ill-health and getting support; and ways to support young people to stay as mentally healthy as possible.

MENTAL ILL-HEALTH: WHAT DO WE MEAN?

The most common types of mental health problems are depression and anxiety. Depression can be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain or triggered by specific experiences or situations.

Some signs of depression are:

- Low mood lasting two weeks or more
- Not getting any enjoyment out of life
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling tired or lacking energy
- Not being able to concentrate on everyday things like reading or watching television
- Comfort eating or losing her appetite

- Sleeping more than usual or being unable to sleep
- Having suicidal thoughts or thoughts about self-harming.

Everybody worries about things – it is part of being human. Anxiety is when someone worries frequently, often about things they can't influence. This may also impact on how they think and act. Some signs of anxiety are:

- Appearing restless or worried
- Having trouble concentrating or sleeping
- Dizziness or heart palpitations.

Self-harm is when somebody intentionally hurts themselves. It can include cutting; burning; excessive drinking or drug-taking; or intentionally making themselves the target for bullying (including online). In sport, self-harm can also include over-training and training when injured. Self-harm (when there are not suicidal intentions) is often a coping mechanism to manage difficult emotions, including anxiety and depression. It is important that a young person is not prevented from self-harming before they are getting support for whatever is triggering them to self-harm.

MENTAL ILL-HEALTH: GETTING SUPPORT

It can be hard for someone to understand what is happening to them when they have mental ill-health, and even harder to talk about. There is some great help out there though, from information on the internet, to GPs and specialist mental health support. You can signpost young people to reliable websites – the NHS website is a good place to start, as is Mind, Young Minds and ChildLine. As parents and carers, you can let young people know that you are always there to listen without judging them, as and when they want to talk to you, but don't be offended if the young person





chooses someone else to share their concerns with at first. Knowing you are there when they are ready to share provides a stable source of support for them to tap into. If you're worried a young person may be thinking about suicide, it is important that you urgently contact mental health services, the GP or the police in an emergency.

Supporting young people to stay mentally healthy: there is some basic self-care that young people can do to maintain good mental health:

- Get enough sleep. At least eight hours a night
- Eat regularly and healthily – three meals a day, with snacks when training
- Have fun – spend time with friends and family
- Take time out – read a book, do yoga, meditate, go for a relaxing swim
- Talk about what's bothering them to a trusted adult – however small it might seem
- Learn about mental health – what it is, looks and feels like and how to get help, so they can support themselves and others.

Useful websites:

- Mind: www.mind.org.uk
- Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk
- The Samaritans: www.samaritans.org
- NHS: www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression
- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk

WHAT DOES OPTIMAL TRAINING LOOK LIKE?

If a young person is playing football in a team, the coach is the best person to tell you what optimal training looks like. It depends on the age of each child, as well as other physical activities they are doing, their abilities and other factors such as schoolwork requirements (see Balancing education and football).

It is dangerous for a young person to over-train: it can lead to chronic muscle or joint pain, elevated resting heart rate and decreased sports performance as well as a dislike of the sport.

As a parent or carer, you can:

- Work with the coach, club or academy and young person to develop and maintain an optimal training schedule
- Encourage the young person not to over-train and highlight the risks of doing so
- If the young person is worried about training, discuss with them ways to tackle stress and anxiety such as yoga, meditation, spending time with friends or reading (see Mental Wellbeing guidance)
- Encourage them to adopt a flexible approach to their schedule when required: for example, if they are returning to training after an illness or injury, training may need to be reduced or altered
- If you are worried your young person may be overtraining, speak to the coach and/or a GP.

The FA prioritises the health and wellbeing of everyone under 18 years old and expects all individuals involved in football to do the same, including clubs and academies. If you have any concerns or complaints, please contact us.

TRIPS AWAY

Trips away can be an enjoyable part of playing football and a chance to play other teams. To make sure trips away are as safe as possible, The FA requires some basics to be in place:

- All young people agree to go on the trip
- There is informed written permission from all young people and their parents/carers
- We know about any allergies, intolerances, relevant health and other issues before the trip and can work with you to manage them safely
- We have parents, carers and young people's up-to-date contact details
- All FA representatives (staff, volunteers, consultants and others who represent The FA) have criminal records checks, references and up-to-date safeguarding training
- There is the correct ratio of adults to children (staff should inform you about this before the trip, but if they don't, please ask)
- Transport and drivers meet all safety requirements (staff should inform you about this before the trip, but if they don't, please ask)
- The location(s) where the individuals or teams are travelling to has a safeguarding policy and procedures, or The FA's are applied. The location(s) are accessible for people with additional needs

- Everyone knows what the emergency procedures are, including fire exits and meeting points.

If the trip involves an overnight stay:

- The accommodation has been checked by an FA representative before the trip to ensure it meets health and safety standards
- Adults and children (unless the parent or carer) do not share a room together
- No adult enters a child's bedroom unless there is an emergency
- Boys and girls do not share a room together.

If the trip is abroad:

- The safeguarding requirements of The FA and UK law are upheld at all times
- A pre-tour risk assessment must be conducted
- All FA representatives and young people are aware of the country's emergency contact details and procedures, including the police and child protection services.

As a parent or carer, you can make sure you and the young person you support are comfortable and confident with the above procedures, you ask any questions you have before the trip and flag any concerns. It is really important that you, all young people and all FA representatives feel safe and confident before, during and after a trip away.

Useful websites:

- CPSU: <https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/best-practice/away-trips-and-hosting>
- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk

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HOME STAYS

It can be a big decision for young people and their parents/carers about whether they should live away from home to enable them to train in another location. It is vital that parents/carers, the young person and the club or academy discuss the pros and cons so that a decision that prioritises the wellbeing of the young person is reached. As a parent/carers, you should check in on the young person frequently to make sure they continue to feel safe and happy in the home stay arrangement.

The FA has detailed home stay guidance which is available here. It outlines the responsibilities of clubs and academies, parents, carers, young people and host families. If the young person you support is considering a home stay, contact the club or academy to arrange a meeting to discuss this further. We recommend the Welfare Officer is present in this meeting.

Useful websites:

- CPSU: <https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/best-practice/away-trips-and-hosting>
- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk

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BULLYING

Bullying is the use of physical and/or emotional aggression with the intention of hurting or upsetting another person, either face-to-face or online. It can include threatening to harm someone, name-calling, hiding kit, spreading rumours, teasing someone, ignoring or isolating someone for example.

Bullying is never acceptable; The FA emphasises that everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Everyone is responsible for reporting concerns about bullying and keeping all young people safe from harm. Clubs and academies have an Anti-Bully policy which you can ask to see. A parent, carer, the young person and club or academy can also refer to the policy if bullying is or has taken place to ensure good practice is followed when handling the concern.

If the bully is an adult in a position of trust (such as a coach or member of staff), the concerns must be reported to the Welfare Officer or FA Safeguarding Team as soon as possible.

You can support young people to handle bullying by encouraging them to:

- Talk to friends, family, a Welfare Officer, GP, teacher or coach if they have any concerns, however small they might seem
- Learn how to recognise, respond to and report bullying, both face-to-face and online
- Ask clubs and academies for anti-bullying workshops and discussions
- Look out for each other and check in with someone if they think they may not be ok
- Not do anything that feels uncomfortable or just doesn't feel right.

There's more information about bullying and a sample club anti-bullying policy on The FA website.

Useful websites:

- Bullying UK: www.bullying.co.uk
- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk
- The Samaritans: www.samaritans.org
- Mind: www.mind.org.uk
- Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk

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RECOGNISING, RESPONDING TO, REPORTING AND RECORDING CONCERNS – YOUR RESPONSIBILITY; OUR RESPONSIBILITY

The FA seeks to do everything it can to support a safe and enjoyable framework for football. This means, if standards ever fall short with poor practice or unacceptable behaviour, there's a framework in place to make sure we can deal with it. By reporting a concern, you can help us make sure that the youth game stays safe and strong.

Anyone who has a concern about the welfare of a child or the behaviour of an adult towards a child or young person under 18 years of age in football, is required to refer it to The FA Safeguarding Team. The Team is staffed by professionals who are experienced in dealing with these concerns.

Referring a concern can be done via your club or academy – they will have a Welfare Officer. Alternatively, you can email us directly via safeguarding@TheFA.com.

If the matter is urgent and you cannot contact your club or academy Welfare Officer, you can call The NSPCC 24-hour helpline on 0808 800 5000 – or if it is an emergency because a child or children are at immediate risk, then call the police or children's social care in your area.

If you are concerned that someone may be behaving inappropriately such as seeking to groom a child in an online environment, then use the CEOP reporting button that will take you directly to the team at the National Crime Agency, as well as informing the Welfare Officer or The FA via safeguarding@TheFA.com.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: doing nothing is not an option.

Useful websites:

- The FA: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding
- NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
- CPSU: www.thecpsu.org.uk
- CEOP: www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre
- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk
- The Samaritans: www.samaritans.org
- Mind: www.mind.org.uk
- Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk

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THE ROLE OF THE WELFARE OFFICER AND OTHER SAFEGUARDING PERSONNEL

Welfare Officers

Welfare Officers are present in all levels of football, from grassroots to elite. They help create safe and fun environments for everyone, offering advice and guidance on how to proactively keep children safe and included and respond to concerns and disclosures. They are your go-to person if you have any safeguarding or inclusion concern, however small it may seem.

Welfare Officers should be:

- Clear about everyone's safeguarding responsibilities and how everyone can actively play their part
- Visible and easy to contact
- Have great listening skills.

All Welfare Officers attend The FA Safeguarding Children and Welfare Officer Workshops and have an in-date FA Accepted Enhanced with Children's Barring List Check.

Other Safeguarding Personnel

Everyone is responsible for safeguarding. If you cannot or do not want to speak to the Welfare Officer, you may choose to speak to someone who has more training, knowledge and/or experience of safeguarding, such as a coach, club or academy committee member or The FA Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@TheFA.com).

Useful websites:

The FA: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/welfare-officers

The FA: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/county-fa-safeguarding-contacts

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WHISTLEBLOWING

Whistleblowing can be used as an early warning system or when it's recognised that appropriate actions have not been taken. This approach or policy is adopted in many different walks of life. It is about revealing and raising concerns over misconduct or malpractice within an organisation or within an independent structure associated with it.

Any adult or young person with concerns about a colleague can whistleblow by calling 0800 169 1863 and asking for The FA's Safeguarding Team, or via email on safeguarding@TheFA.com.

Alternatively, you can go direct to the police or Children's Social Care and report your concerns there, or to the Child Protection in Sport Unit via cpsu@nspcc.org.uk or the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line on 0800 028 0285 or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk.

Useful websites:

- NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
- The FA: www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/policy-downloads

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COMPLAINTS

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DATA PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is an EU law that outlines how personal information should be collected, used and stored. It highlights the importance of asking children for their permission to use data about themselves if they are competent to make or participate in decisions that affect them. It also clarifies that if someone has a child protection concern, this must be shared with the relevant safeguarding individuals and organisations whether permission is given or not. An organisation's child safeguarding and protection policy will outline their reporting processes.

Useful websites:

- <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/children-the-law#article-top>

INCLUSION, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE FEMALE GAME

Aim: To ensure that Women's Football is open and accessible for all

The FA launched its Gameplan for Growth in 2017 and outlined three big goals to transform Women's Football:

1. To double Participation.
2. To double the Fanbase.
3. To drive consistent success on the World Stage.

Great progress has already been made, driven by a collective effort across the football family – The FA, the County FAs, clubs, leagues and the education sector. Much-welcomed increased investment by the FA Board has also helped turbo-charge our efforts.

We are striving to ensure that ALL girls and women are welcomed and valued as players, coaches, referees and administrators. We are on a mission to:

1. Ensure that the pipeline of future leaders is diverse and upskilled.
2. Ensure that there are no barriers to entry or progression in refereeing, coaching, talent development or personal development pathways.
3. Ensure that the FA enshrines equality, diversity and inclusion in its day to day operations.

To achieve this we are committed to deliver the following:

- To work with our CFAs and their local partners, especially in schools and clubs, to increase participation and develop training for coaches, officials and volunteers for females from under represented communities
- To increase the number of female leadership opportunities throughout the game, by providing more training, apprenticeships and support
- To drive values and sporting integrity through enhanced teacher training and ambassador programmes
- To collect data on all programmes to identify the impact on a diverse range of girls/women
- To provide further development opportunities in both the Coaching and Refereeing pathways
- To clarify and develop clear guidance on building a distinctive culture around the girls' and women's game
- To develop a programme for 11–14 year old girls to support the development of characteristics to support emotional wellness
- To develop a dual career for girls and women throughout the talent pathway to ensure they achieve in football and in life
- To offer talent pathway access and opportunity to every young girl in England, regardless of social class, demographic or ethnicity.

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HAVING YOUR SAY: PARENTS, CARERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The FA, our clubs and academies care about your views. Parents, carers and young people can play a key role in shaping our sport by telling us your ideas about a range of topics, for example, how we can make the game more accessible; what matters to young people; what support and information would be helpful for parents and carers; how to make spaces safer and more inclusive.

As parents and carers, you and the young people you support can join in feedback meetings and workshops run by clubs and academies; ask the club or academy to set up feedback workshops if they don't currently have them; ask for a meeting to give one-to-one feedback; or write to the club, academy or FA. Child-friendly meetings and workshops can be held that are designed to be age-appropriate, fun and engaging.

If the club or academy is holding a workshop or meeting for young people without parents/carers present, you can ask what safeguarding procedures are in place to make the workshops safe and inclusive. This might include asking about the adult-to-child ratio; whether an adult the young people trust is present; to see the agreed code of conduct and reporting procedures for any concerns that arise; a clear outline as to what the feedback will be used for; and managing young people's expectations (outlining that not everything suggested can be implemented and if those that are implemented may need time to set up).

Useful websites:

- ChildLine: www.childline.org.uk

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This handbook content was reviewed in June 2019 – and then every three years, or if there is:

- A change in legislation and/or government guidance, or
- A requirement from the LCSB, or any other significant change or event.



RESPECT

The FA's Respect programme was launched in the 2008/09 season following a build-up of behavioural problems in the National Game.

The new FA campaign 'We Only Do Positive' is targeting coaches and parents within mini-soccer and youth football. A new strategic approach to The FA Respect programme will see us focus on this important area of the national game over the next three seasons.

In 2017/18 we carried out extensive research into football from U7s–U18s. This was to understand where Respect should be positioned to have the biggest impact over a mid to longer term approach. One clear piece of insight highlighted is that nine in ten children play better with positive encouragement. Research also highlights the negative connotations a negative experience can have on a child.

'We Only Do Positive' aims to promote and educate coaches and parents on their roles in creating a fun, safe and inclusive environment for all the players, ensuring they have great experiences throughout their football journey.

To access more resources including codes of conduct, social media assets and our hero video for We Only Do Positive, please visit our Respect page below.

Call to action – www.TheFA.com/Respect



CONCERNS AND ENQUIRIES

The purpose of this Handbook and the regular updates of it are to ensure that you are able to access the most up-to-date information possible.

We have aimed to give you as much information as we can to enable you to assist your daughter/ward in her footballing journey and to enable this to complement and fit alongside her education as best as it possibly can.

We have also aimed to include the rules, regulations and expectations.

If you have any concerns or enquiries about anything related to the contents of this handbook, please contact the relevant staff member who will assist if they can or pass your comment to another more relevant colleague.

We wish to work closely and in partnership with parents and carers so we thank you in advance for your correspondence.



KEY STAFF AT THE FA

Key relevant staff at The FA and authors of the handbook

David Faulkner

Head of Women's Performance

David.Faulkner@TheFA.com

Kelly Simmons

Head of Women's Football

Kelly.Simmons@TheFA.com

Kay Cossington

Head of Women's Technical

Kay.Cossington@TheFA.com

Louise Gear

Head of Women's Development

Louise.Gear@TheFA.com

Sue Ravenlaw

Head of Safeguarding

Sue.Ravenlaw@TheFA.com

Audrey Cooper

Head of Women's Coach Development

Audrey.Cooper@TheFA.com

Lucy Wellings

Women's Football Clubs Manager

Lucy.Wellings@TheFA.com

Tony Fretwell

WSL Academy Manager

Tony.Fretwell@TheFA.com

Sharon Brownlie

Regional Talent Clubs Manager

Sharon.Brownlie@TheFA.com

Caitlyn Hawkins

Player Education Manager

Caitlyn.Hawkins@TheFA.com

Sean England

Player Education Coordinator

Sean.England@TheFA.com

Nick Frith

Women's Leagues Officer

Nick.Frith@TheFA.com

Nathan French

National Respect Project Manager

hello@nathanfrenchconsultancy.com

Rachel Pavlou

National Development Manager for Women's Football

Rachel.Pavlou@TheFA.com



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For ALL

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

