



# WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' 16–18 DUAL CAREER FOOTBALL GUIDE

**FOR ALL**

In partnership with

**tass**★

SUPPORTED BY  
 SPORT ENGLAND  
LOTTERY FUNDED

Version: 1.1

Published: JULY 2020



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# 1

## INTRODUCTION





# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDE

The FA funded TASS to develop a dual career framework for the women's and girl's game. The guide explores the women's dual career pathway from age 14 to the professional level. The guide is divided into three separate documents by age-group: U14-16, 16-18, and 18+.

The guide covers all football, education, and potential work activities that players may engage in. The information provided offers advice around balancing football alongside education/work and can be used to help players make informed decisions around their dual career paths. The guide also outlines key stakeholders that can offer support for players within each specific age-group and provides information on transitions and potential challenges that players may face.

To generate the information included within the guide, TASS conducted interviews and focus groups with key individuals throughout the women's football pathway. These included players and their parents, football staff at club and FA level, education providers, and other key support services, e.g. TASS, PFA. In total, 103 people were interviewed.



## **1.2 PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE**

**This guide provides a framework that can be used by players, parents, and education/football staff to highlight all opportunities that are available within education and football, while pin-pointing key support services at each time-point. Each individual's dual career pathway is different. This guide provides a model that can support players in navigating their various transitions successfully and finding the dual career pathway that is most suitable to them.**

# 2

## WHAT IS A DUAL CAREER?



## 2. WHAT IS A DUAL CAREER?

### 2.1 DUAL CAREER: A DEFINITION

A dual career is the combination of an athletic career with education and/or work. Some examples of where football players are undertaking a dual career are as follows:

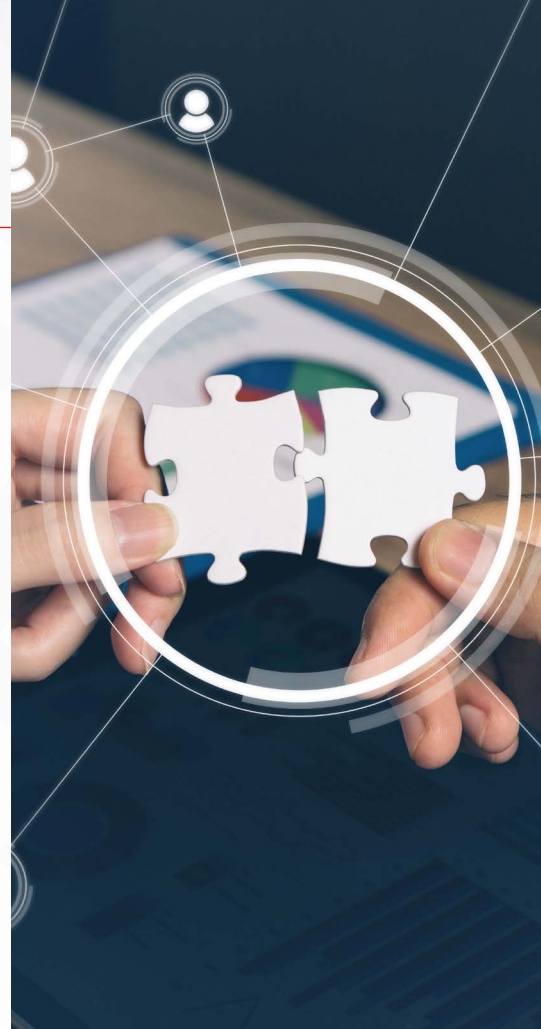
- Playing for an RTC and doing GCSEs.
- Playing for a Barclays FA WSL Academy and in further education/apprenticeship.
- Playing for a Barclays FA WSL Academy/ FA Women's Championship first team whilst studying at university.
- Playing for a Barclays FA WSL Academy/ FA Women's Championship first team whilst in additional part/full time employment.

**A dual career is the combination of an athletic career with education and/or work.**



### 2.2 A DUAL CAREER SHOULD...

- Be viewed as a pathway where sport and education are both valued.
- Be something that athletes are fully engaged in.
- Be promoted by the club and national staff.
- Be seen as an opportunity for an individual to reach their sporting, academic, work, and life potential.





## 2.3 BENEFITS AND VALUE OF A DUAL CAREER IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

By engaging in a dual career, players may see the following benefits:

- Expanded social networks and support systems;
- Reduced stress through being able to focus on different areas;
- Opportunity to develop identities in different areas;
- A more balanced lifestyle;
- More effective career/sport retirement planning;
- Higher employability prospects;
- Increased longevity in the sport.

Many of the skills players develop through football are transferrable into other areas of their life. If the dual career is appropriately supported, these transferrable skills can have positive effects on player's performance in GCSEs, further education, higher education and in the work environment.

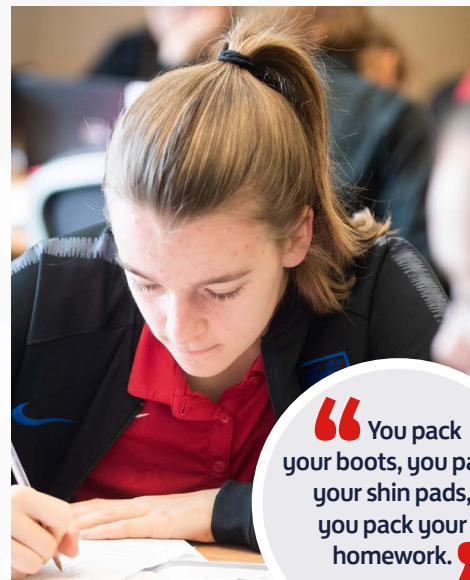
It is highly unlikely for women's footballers to make a living out of their sport. It is therefore crucial for players to engage in activities that prepare them for a post football career. This emphasises the importance of engaging

in education or personal development during a football career. Engaging in a dual career will not only have short-term benefits for players (e.g. expanded support systems) but will also have significant long-term benefits (e.g. possibility of having a good vocational career and financial stability).

Over the past few years, The FA has been striving to develop dual career environments in women's football. At the forefront of this is the continued development of the Barclays FA dual career Academies.

There is education support available for players, particularly for those that are a part of The FA Lioness Talent Pathway. Many coaches support the dual career philosophy, embracing the importance of engaging in another activity alongside football, e.g. education.

A number of clubs offer education support for their players and those who are a part of the England Lioness Pathway will receive education support whilst on camp.



**“ You pack your boots, you pack your shin pads, you pack your homework. ”**

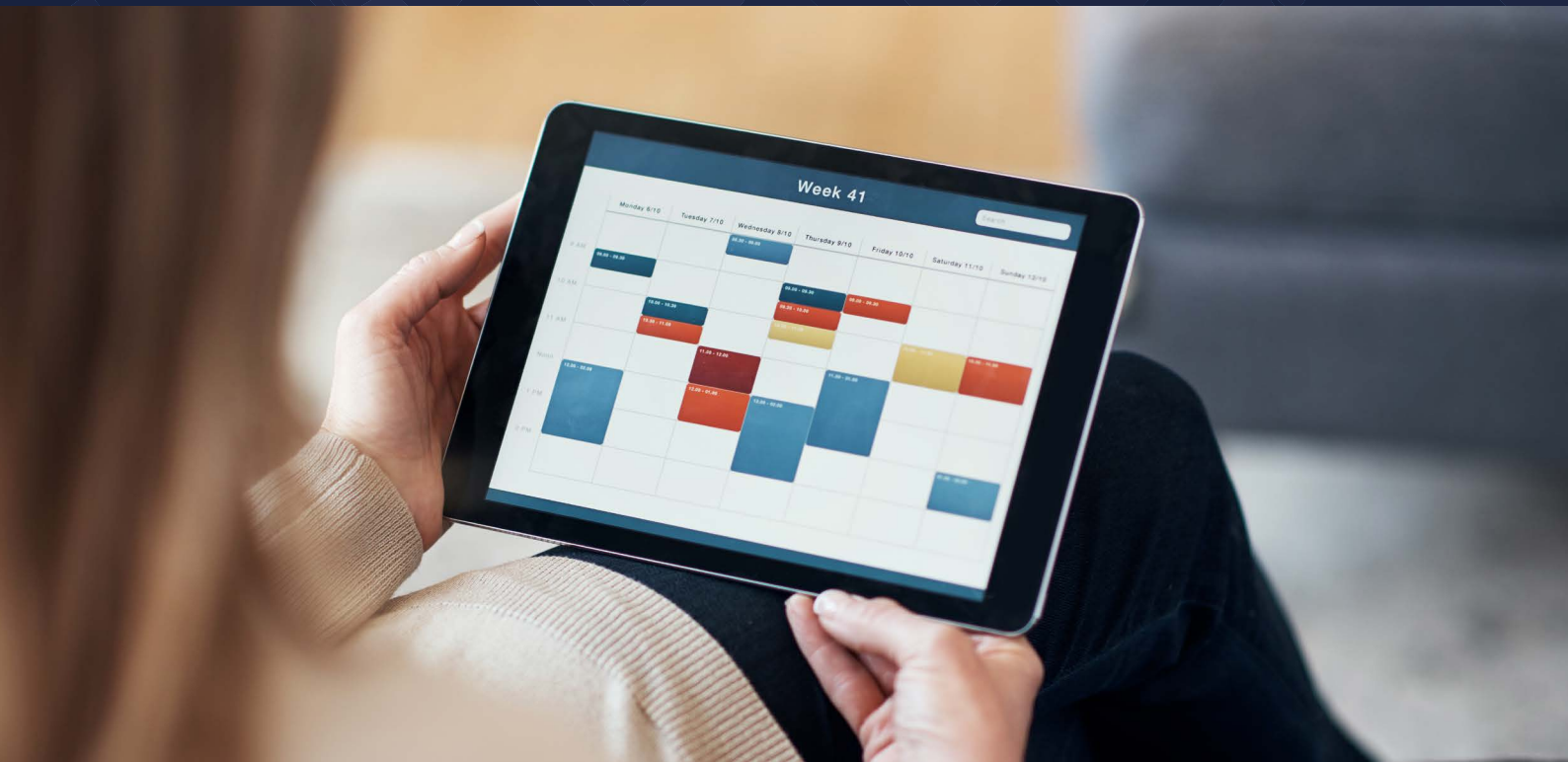
FA COACH

**“ It's huge, even just on my CV, I think being an athlete you've got a lot of transferable skills and then I've been in education as well...I'm really glad that it did because it's opened so many pathways. ”**

FORMER SENIOR LIONESS

# 3

## DUAL CAREER FRAMEWORK



# 3. DUAL CAREER FRAMEWORK

AGE GROUP		UNDER-14	UNDER-15	UNDER-16	UNDER-17	UNDER-18	UNDER-19	UNDER-20	UNDER -21	21+
AGE		13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
FOOTBALL	Club Football	Other Routes								
		Grassroots								
		RTC								
			Barclays FA WSL Academy							
			Barclays FA WSL/FA Women's Championship/FA Women's National League: Reserve/Development Teams							
			Barclays FA WSL/FA Women's Championship/FA Women's National League Premier Division/National League Division 1							
					Non-Contracted (Under-18)		Contracted (18+)			
	School/College/ University Football	School Football (Girls/Boys/Teams)			Further Education School/College Football			University Football		
	England Football	National Development Programme								
National Talent Camp					Youth Development Phase					
						Professional Development Phase				
					Youth National Teams					Senior National Team
EDUCATION	School Level	School Years 8-9 (Key Stage 3)								
			GCSE (Levels 1 and 2) (Key Stage 4)							
	Further Education				Further Education (Level 3) (Key Stage 5)					
					A-Levels					
					BTEC / CTEC					
					International Baccalaureate					
	Higher Education / Vocation						University			
							Foundation Degree (Level 5)			
						Bachelor's Degree (Level 6 - minimum 3 years)			Master's Degree (L7)	
						Higher / Degree Apprenticeship (Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7)				
	Compulsory Education									
						Compulsory Recognised Learning/Training/Employment in FA WSL Academy				

# 4

## 16–18 DUAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT





# 4. 16–18 DUAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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## 4.1 WHAT HAPPENS IN THE UNDER-16-18 PHASE?



This section will provide a brief overview of what happens from a football and education/vocational perspective within the 16-18 age group.

During this phase, players may combine their educational commitments with the following types of football:

### 4.1.1 GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL:

Women and girls grassroots football is defined as all football played in the 'For Learning' and 'For Fun' pillars. All competitive football from Tier 3 in the Women's Pyramid to Tier 7 is also included.



### 4.1.2 THE BARCLAYS FA WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE ACADEMY FOOTBALL



The Barclays FA WSL Academy programme includes 14 clubs and supports over 200 players aged 16-20. The Barclays FA WSL Academy programme is geared towards balancing a female player's football development with their educational aspirations.

Through partnership with the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS), Barclays FA WSL Academy clubs have the opportunity to receive a bespoke package of support services through a higher education institution, that may include: strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, lifestyle, psychology, and nutrition support. It is important to note that Barclays FA WSL Academies have the option to opt in or out of TASS support.

The Barclays FA WSL Academy clubs for the 2020/21 season are as follows:

- Arsenal
- Aston Villa
- Birmingham City
- Brighton & Hove Albion
- Bristol City
- Chelsea
- Everton
- Ipswich Town
- Liverpool
- Manchester City
- Manchester United
- Reading
- Tottenham Hotspur
- West Ham

Thirteen of the Fourteen Barclays FA WSL Academy clubs have a principle further education provider that they work in association with (for more information please see 4.1.8). Each Barclays FA WSL Academy has a different model of delivering support, some will train in the evenings and others will train within the day. It is important for players to research what their Barclays FA WSL Academy of choice offers and how they will manage the demands alongside education and other commitments.

The pathway into a Barclays FA WSL Academy follows a recruitment process, where clubs will look at players physical, technical, and tactical skills, as well as players psychology, coachability, attitude, and adaptability. Many clubs strive to retain their

players through their own system (e.g. recruit players from the RTC), however, there is the opportunity for those outside of the system (e.g. players from RTCs that do not have a Barclays FA WSL Academy, or grassroots players) to come in through an open trial process. Some clubs may have criteria in place, determining the level players must have played at to be eligible to trial for the Barclays FA WSL Academy.

Within Barclays FA WSL Academies, some players 'dual sign' for two clubs. This is a process whereby players are part of both a WSL Academy and another club. For example, a player may play for her Barclays FA WSL Academy club on a Wednesday and play with her FA Women's National League club on a Sunday. It is important for players to consult with both clubs if this is something they would like to pursue. Players should also consider whether or not they have the capacity to do this alongside their education commitments.

### 4.1.3 FA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL

The FA Women's Championship is the second tier of women's football. Some players will make the transition directly into FA Women's Championship football during the 16-18 age group.

For a full list of the FA Women's Championship clubs, please click the following [hyperlink](#).

The FA Women's Championship is a semi-professional league, with a part-time football environment. The FA Women's Championship team that finishes top of the division at the end of the season will be promoted to the Barclays FA WSL (providing they can meet the licensing requirements).

Some FA Women's Championship clubs have development squads that provide a stepping stone for players making the transition from RTC football into first team football.



### 4.1.4 FA WOMEN'S NATIONAL LEAGUE

The FA Women's National League sits at the third and fourth tier of women's football. This league is split into two divisions, the Premier Division (Northern Premier Division and the Southern Premier Division) and Division One (North, Midlands, South East, and South West). For a full list of the FA Women's National League clubs, please click the following [hyperlink](#).

The FA Women's National Premier League provides competitive first team opportunity for players of varying ages. Following RTC or Academy football, some younger players can use the FA Women's National League as a vehicle to get first team experience. The FA Women's National League also provides more experienced players with the opportunity to play at the semi-professional level.

Each season there is a play-off between the Northern and Southern Division champions, with the winner earning promotion to the FA Women's Championship (providing they can meet the licensing requirements).

### 4.1.5 COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Numerous further education colleges run footballing programmes that allow their students the opportunity to train and play in a competitive football environment. In some cases, these further education footballing programmes are partnered with a local club. Below are some examples of college football organisations that college football programmes may be a part of:

#### 4.1.4.1 English Colleges Football Association



An example of a college football organisation is the English Colleges Football Association (ECFA), the football delivery arm of the Association of Colleges (AoC) Sport. AoC Sport leagues are open to member colleges, schools, academies, and training providers that can demonstrate that they meet the entry criteria and minimum operating standards.

There are three categories of ECFA football: The National Premier League, The Championship League, and Regional Leagues. AoC Sport also provide the

opportunity for teams to compete in ECFA Cup Competitions, including: Women's ECFA Premier Cup (for colleges in the Premier League and Championship) and Women's ECFA Knockout Cup (for teams in regional leagues).

The ECFA also have a National Team, comprised of the best college footballers from around the country. All AoC Sport full member colleges are invited to nominate players for the England Colleges National Team. Nominated players are considered through a two-phased trial process. Players selected for the ECFA National Team are given the opportunity to attend training camps and play matches nationally and internationally. Playing for the ECFA National Team can help players in their development, giving them exposure to England age groups and the professional game.

In some cases, players will play both college and club football. For example, some Barclays FA WSL Academy players will also play for their college team. This does raise some challenges with regard to player load, match clashes, and standards of play. This feasibility of this is dealt with on a player by player basis.

It is important to note that there is a focus on education within college football. If players are not performing well academically, they may not be eligible for selection by their college and consequently not selected for the ECFA national team. Every college has their own criteria around academic performance and how this influences selection for matches.

**“ One of our players this year played for our England colleges national team, got called up to the England under-18s team. She hadn't had a call-up before and I'd like to think that her development at her college and playing through the ECFA national team gave her exposure and opportunity that she got picked up. ”**

**ECFA STAFF**

#### 4.1.4.2 English Schools Football Association

The English Schools' FA (ESFA) is the National Governing Body for Schools' Football in England. The ESFA runs over 40 National Schools' and Colleges' cup competitions, as well as County and District Association representative teams. The ESFA also runs an international squad for under-15 girls.

The ESFA's ethos is based on that of an educational establishment. They provide opportunities for players to progress and develop within football and education in England and reward those that choose to remain in further education with opportunities to continue to play at high levels.



#### 4.1.5.3 National Football Youth League



A second example of a college football league is the National Football Youth League (NYFL). The league was created to raise standards for and aspirations of talented football players in full-time education and outside of the Academy system.

The National Football Youth League is geographically split into South Premier Women and North Premier Women. The NYFL gives players the opportunity to play football

in a competitive environment whilst also carrying out their further education studies. (Information taken from the NYFL website).







#### 4.1.5.4 EFL Community and Education Football Alliance



The Community and Education Football Alliance (CEFA) is a football competition run for EFL Club Community Organisations. The league offers players

opportunities for players of all abilities, as well as the opportunity to play football in a league competition governed professionally by the EFL. The CEFA league is geographically split into Women's North Central and Women's South. As well as the league competition, there is also a women's Regional and National Cup competition.

Any player registered on a post-16 education course with their Club Community Organisation is eligible to play in the CEFA league. (Information taken from the CEFA website).

#### 4.1.5.5 Independent Schools Football Association



The Independent Schools Football Association (ISFA) is a body responsible for the development of the game in the independent sector (i.e. private schools). ISFA

encourages and assists its member schools to provide participation through regional tournaments, block friendly fixtures, internal school football, etc.

The ISFA have age group representative teams (under-15, under-16, under-18) that form the ISFA Representative Programme. The ISFA hold trials whereby the top players are selected for the various national and regional representative teams. To participate in the ISFA Representative Programme, players must be attending an ISFA member school.

At the under-18 level, a national trials day is held annually in September and girls wishing to attend this can be nominated by their school or parent. At the trial day, a squad of 18 players will be selected to form a National under-18 squad to take part in development camps and international matches during October – March. (Information taken from the ISFA website).



## 4.1.6 THE ENGLAND LIONESSE PATHWAY

### 4.1.6.1 England Youth National Teams (YDP and PDP)

The England women's youth national teams are organised into two distinct phases:

- **Youth Development Phase:**  
Women's under-16s - Women's under-17s
- **Professional Development Phase:**  
Women's under-18s - Women's under-19s.

National Development Squad age groups work on a calendar year basis (January – December). The 16-18 age group therefore covers one year of players in the Youth Development Phase and one year of players in the Professional Development Phase. The under-17 age group is the first competitive year for players, with results orientated fixtures in addition to friendly fixtures.

Within this age group, players will be required to complete numerous tasks prior to, during, and post national team camps. These tasks include written tasks, presentations, and game analysis. These tasks are set to support players in the development of additional skills and competencies outside of football (e.g.



confidence speaking in front of others). It is important to consider that these tasks will take some time to complete and players will have to think about how they will fit them in around their other demands, i.e. football and education.

Some of the major tournaments for players within this age group include:

- FIFA under-17 Women's World Cup
- UEFA Women's under-17 Championship

**During the 16-18 age groups, players may engage in the one of the following educational options alongside their footballing commitments:**

### 4.1.7 FURTHER EDUCATION/ APPRENTICESHIPS

Within the UK, education is compulsory up to the age of 18. Players within this age group will, therefore, be completing further education. This may include further education studies such as:

- A-Levels
- International Baccalaureate
- BTEC Nationals
- CTEC

Players may also be completing an apprenticeship (e.g. electrician, plumbing, or hairdressing), a combination of work and study, mixing on-the-job training with classroom learning.

For more information on the details of each of the above qualifications please refer back to the under-14-16 section, where an overview of these qualifications, the methods of assessment, and the study location is provided.

#### 4.1.8 PRINCIPLE FURTHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS THAT BARCLAYS FA WSL ACADEMIES ARE WORKING IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Thirteen of the 14 Barclays FA WSL Academy clubs have a principle further education provider. A benefit of these principle education providers is that players will have the opportunity to train and study in the same, or geographically close locations. As a result of this, the amount of time players can spend training and focusing on their education, rather than travelling, will increase. It is important to note that players who are a part of a Barclays FA WSL Academy do not have to attend their clubs' principle further education provider. Players do, however, have to be involved in a recognised programme of learning or training (e.g. further education, apprenticeships, vocational training). It is important that players enrol in a programme that is suitable for them, meeting both their football and education aspirations.

The Barclays FA WSL Academy clubs and their principle education providers for the 2020/21 season are as follows:

- **Arsenal:** [Oaklands College](#)
- **Aston Villa:** [Bishop Walsh School](#) and [Birmingham Metropolitan College](#)
- **Birmingham City:** [Alderbrook School](#) and [Solihull College](#)
- **Brighton:** [Worthing College](#)
- **Bristol City:** [South Gloucestershire and Stroud College](#)
- **Chelsea:** No Principle Education Provider
- **Everton:** [Carmel College](#)
- **Ipswich Town:** [St Joseph's College](#)
- **Liverpool:** [Rainhill Sixth Form](#)
- **Manchester City:** [Connell Sixth Form College](#)
- **Manchester United:** [Eccles Sixth Form](#) and [Wigan & Leigh College](#)
- **Reading:** [John Madejski Academy](#)
- **Tottenham Hotspur:** [Barnet and Southgate College](#)
- **West Ham United:** [Chobham Academy](#)

*Information on the details of each principle education provider can be accessed through the links to their respective websites.*

Some of the above Barclays FA WSL Academies provide a full-time dual career academy model. Within this model, all players will attend the same principle further education provider and they will undertake all education, football, and additional provision within the daytime. The remainder of Barclays FA WSL Academies provide a multiple education provider model. Within this mode, players at the academy will be at multiple further education providers, meaning that training cannot be accommodated in the daytime. Instead, players will attend education in the day and then fulfil their training commitments in the evening.

#### 4.1.9 DIPLOMA IN SPORTING EXCELLENCE (DiSE)



All Barclays FA WSL Academies are given the opportunity for their players to enrol on the Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DiSE). The DiSE programme is a government funded scheme designed to directly measure and enhance the skills, experiences, and knowledge that talented young players develop through football. DiSE is available to players age 16-18, with the content being delivered over two years whilst players are carrying out their further education. DiSE has recently been recognised by UCAS and completing the programme is the equivalent to achieving a C grade at A-Level (64 UCAS points).

The majority of the DiSE programme is made up of players training and match time, with a series of workshops forming the remainder of the qualification. Players work is evidenced through workbook portfolios that are completed throughout the duration of the programme. Some of the topics within the DiSE qualification include:

- Technical skills
- Tactical skills
- Physical capability
- Nutrition
- Psychology
- Lifestyle
- Career
- Communication
- Health and safety
- Culture, values and behaviour

The DiSE programme gives players additional knowledge, skills, and experiences that will support them not only within, but also outside their sporting career.



Please note that the DiSE programme is only available to players within Barclays FA WSL Academies. The programme can be shaped to the specific needs of each club (e.g. timing of delivery). In addition, some Barclays FA WSL Academy clubs may not take up the opportunity to be involved in DiSE. DiSE is not available to players who attend Independent Schools, with the diploma only available for those who are educated in a state school/ institution.

## 4.2 KEY INDIVIDUALS AND STAKEHOLDERS THAT CAN FACILITATE DUAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE 16-18 PHASE



A stakeholder is an individual who may influence the success of a player/team. This section outlines a series of key individual and stakeholders (in the under-14-16 age group) in both football and education, that players may come into contact with. It is important to note that the following list is not exhaustive, and players may also receive support from other stakeholders within their own environment.

### 4.2.1 PLAYERS PARENTS/CARERS

Parents/carers play a large role in supporting their daughter in both their football and academic pursuits. This includes financial support, transportation support, emotional support, and much more. Parents can help to create an environment that is both supportive and challenging, helping their daughter develop a number of skills that can be transferred into all areas of their life.



### 4.2.2 CLUB STAFF

Within players' clubs they will come into contact with various different members of staff. Please note that the titles of these members of staff will differ, however, the roles they have will be similar across clubs.

- **Club Manager/Technical Director:**  
Responsible for the running and functioning of the team.
- **Coaches:**  
Individual coaches working to support players physical, technical, tactical, and psychological development.
- **Education Officer:**  
Some clubs will have an education officer who is responsible for supporting players educational development, through collaboration with the player and their further education institution.
- **Wider Club Staff:**  
Some clubs will have a wider support network to provide additional support to players in a variety of different areas (e.g. welfare and medical support).

### 4.2.3 SCHOOL/COLLEGE STAFF

- **Head Teacher:**

Leader of the school, responsible for creating optimal conditions for students.

- **Dual Career Co-ordinator:**

Some school/colleges will have a dual career co-ordinator who is responsible for ensuring the institution follows a dual career approach, supporting elite athletes in balancing both their studies and their sport at the highest level. This is a requirement of further education institutions that are accredited through the TASS dual career accreditation scheme.

- **Individual Teachers:**

Individual teachers across the school in each subject area.

- **Personal Tutor:**

An academic member of staff who monitors student's academic progress and supports student's general welfare.

- **Coaches:**

Individual coaches working to support players physical, technical, tactical, and psychological development.

- **Wider College Staff:**

Some colleges will have a wider team of staff to provide additional support to players in a variety of different areas.

### 4.2.4 FA STAFF

Players that are a part of the England Lioness Pathway may encounter a number of FA members of staff in differing roles, covering both football and education/wellbeing.

#### EDUCATION:

- **Player Education Manager:**

Provides academic support/compensatory education to national team players (under-16s–under-19s). Co-ordinates the work of travelling teachers on events and communicates directly with players' education providers.

- **Player Education Officer(s):**

Supports the Player Education Manager in the above, working to provide education support to national team players.



#### FOOTBALL

- **Women's Development Phase Lead 15-17:**

Responsible for players aged 15, 16, and 17 within the England Lioness Pathway.

- **Women's Professional Development Phase Lead:**

Responsible for the under-18s - under-19s within the England Lioness Pathway.

- **National Team Head Coaches:**

Full-time head coaches are allocated to the youth national teams. The head coaches rotate through the age groups, meaning each coach will have three years to work with the same group of players.



#### 4.2.5 TASS STAFF

- **TASS Practitioners:** Players at Barclays FA WSL Academy clubs (that have opted into support) receive a package of support services from TASS and will come into contact with TASS practitioners in their area of speciality, e.g. medical, strength and conditioning, physiotherapy, lifestyle, nutrition, and psychology. In addition, players outside of the Barclays FA WSL Academies may also receive support through TASS in other capacities. Please see [section 4.6.3](#) for more details.



#### 4.2.6 DiSE DELIVERERS

- **DiSE Deliverers:** Players at Barclays FA WSL Academy clubs who take up the opportunity to be involved in DiSE will come into contact with DiSE member/s of staff who support the delivery of the programme of workshops. This person may be situated within the club environment or someone external that comes in to deliver.

#### 4.2.7 UNIVERSITY RECRUITERS

- **Recruitment Staff:** During this age group, players may begin to contact or be contacted by, university recruiters from a range of higher education institutions. These individuals may reach out to promote the opportunities available are their particular university.

#### 4.2.8 INTERMEDIARIES OR SPONSORS

- **Potential Intermediaries or Sponsors:** During this age group, players may begin to contact or be contacted by intermediaries (formally termed agents) or sponsors. These individuals may reach out to support players in potential upcoming contractual deals with clubs.



## **4.3 THINGS TO CONSIDER IN THE 16-18 PHASE**

### **4.3.1 TRANSITIONING INTO A BARCLAYS FA WSL ACADEMY OR INTO SENIOR FOOTBALL**

The transition of players from RTC football into a Barclays FA WSL Academy or senior football is a big step where players will have their first taste of a professional football environment. This may be a player's first experience of different support services, such as: gym based strength and conditioning sessions, lifestyle, nutrition, and psychology support. Working with different practitioners in areas that players have not experienced before can take a period of time to adapt to. Football within the 16-18 phase is a step up, with more training/game time, more physically demanding games, and more challenging opposition from a technical and tactical perspective. Each club has a philosophy that runs throughout from the RTC to the first team. Those players that are new into the club may take a while to adapt to the philosophy of the new environment.

The move into Barclays FA WSL Academy or senior football can provide players with some challenges regarding their confidence or lack of clarity around their role in a team. Players may now be in an environment where they are no longer the best player on the team, which for some players can knock their confidence. This is an adaptation that requires time as players begin to understand their new club environment and their role on the team.

The support systems embedded in senior football, and particularly Barclays FA WSL academies, are in place to guide players through this transition, ensuring they adapt to the new footballing environment as quickly and easily as possible.

### **4.3.2 THE ROLE OF PARENTS / CARERS**

Within this age group, parents play an important role in a player's development. The 16-18 age group is a critical stage, where players need a balance between support and independence. Many clubs are striving to increase their communication with parents, with some running a number of parent workshops across the season.

For those players in a full-time dual career academy model, the coaches and other club staff won't see many parents until match day. In some cases, staff will put together a monthly email to parents informing them on what is happening at the club and what events are coming up. This helps to keep parents informed, ensuring that they are receiving the necessary messages.

For more parent/carer guidance and information please refer to the FA Parent/Carers' Guide for Girls in Barclays FA WSL Academies. Please note that this guide is targeted towards parents and carers with a daughter in a Barclays FA WSL Academy.

### 4.3.3 LIVING WITH HOST FAMILIES / HOME SHARES



Within the 16-18 age group, some players relocate away from home to attend a club. When contemplating this decision, it is important for players and their family to consider the following:

1. Does the player want to move away from home or not?
2. Is there a club closer to home where the player can achieve their educational and football aspirations?
3. How will the player get to and from school/college and training? Will transportation be provided by the club?
4. Is the club willing to fund the home stay?
5. If the club is not willing to fund the home stay, does the family have the financial means to fund the home stay?
6. What would the impact of the relocation be on both the player and the family?
7. Are there any possible safeguarding or health needs that require additional support and how will these be accommodated?
8. Is the club the best option for the player in terms of education, football, and personal development?
9. Will there be a main contact for the player and parent to contact for support?
10. Is the relocation worth it?

#### 4.3.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOWING A DUAL CAREER PATHWAY

- It is important for players to be aware of the importance and value of engaging in their dual career. Regardless of whether a player is completing A-Levels, a BTEC, or an apprenticeship, if completed successfully this could open many doors for the player in the future (e.g. opportunity to attend university, increased career opportunities). A player's football programme should, therefore, give the flexibility for players to choose the education route they wish to take, and provide the necessary support to allow the education programme to be completed. It is important for players not to be afraid to share their aspirations outside of football, whether these are aspirations for studying a higher education course, or for their future career. Variation in education and career choice is something that should be celebrated, and players should not dilute their education because they think it will be easier to do alongside football. Players should seek their highest aspiration for their education.
- Engaging with education can, in fact, positively influence a player's performance on the pitch. Research suggests that being mentally stimulated and having the opportunity to focus on different areas can help players be more successful as both footballers and as people.

**“I wanted to do really well at school. I didn't want to go there and just pass; you know I still want good grades. And then again with football, I want to do the best that I can. I just try the best I can to balance and prioritise them both.”**

**BARCLAYS FA WSL PLAYER  
STUDYING AT UNIVERSITY**



#### 4.3.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE OF FOOTBALL AND FORMAL EDUCATION

It is important for players to engage in personal development outside of football and formal education. This personal development could include:

- Coaching or refereeing qualifications
- Online courses in an area of interest
- First aid or anti-doping courses
- Work experience/shadowing

Any course or qualification that increases a player's skill set will help develop them as a person, as well as adding depth to their CV. Many players will have a network that can help with finding these opportunities and experiences. For example, a player could shadow a member of staff at the club (i.e. a coach, administrator, media officer) to learn about the day to day workings of that role. A player could also take up a voluntary role within the club. For example, assisting with the running of a tournament for the youth teams, or running a fundraising campaign.

#### 4.3.6 IT WILL NOT ALWAYS BE A LINEAR PATHWAY

As players reach the 16-18 age group, it is important to note that the football journey will not always be a linear pathway.

Many high-performing players have faced setbacks throughout their career. These setbacks may include:

- Serious injury that requires a prolonged period of rehabilitation
- Non-selection for club or national team
- Poor academic and sporting performances
- Personal challenges preventing players from achieving optimal performance
- Appropriate pitch time and competition level

These setbacks can be really challenging for players and it is important for individuals to reach out to those within their support network. For more information on the types of support players may have access to, see section 4.6. It is these setbacks that make players stronger footballers and stronger people. Many of the lessons learned during a challenging period can be transferred into other areas of life moving forwards (e.g., coping with pressure situations in employment).

In addition, for players wishing to represent England as part of the England Lioness Pathway, there is not only one route that will lead to international representation. Players should follow the football path that aligns with their desired education/work choice.

**“ It's not always a linear progression, for example, injuries may hold players back. Some come in and out of the England system, others are in it from the beginning but can't sustain it in the older age groups or at the senior level. ”**

ENGLAND COACH



## 4.4 DECISIONS TO CONSIDER IN THE 16-18 PHASE



Within the 16-18 age group, players will experience a number of key decisions in both football and education and will be faced with a series of options to consider. This section outlines these decisions and the options that are available to players as they move into post-18 football and education/vocation.

### FOOTBALL

#### 4.4.1 FOOTBALLING NEXT STEPS

When players are choosing their next footballing steps, there are several factors to consider:

- Where are you going to be challenged the most?
- What position are you going to be playing?
- How many minutes will you get during match days?
- What is the coaching environment like?
- Will that environment suit you and make you a better player?
- What consideration do the club have for your education and your aspirations outside of football? (i.e., have the club considered how your training schedule might fit around education or work commitments?)
- How are they going to support an England development plan?
- Are they going to let you be released for England duty?

The questions above are a snapshot of what players should be asking clubs when they are considering the move. It is important for players and parents to recognise that 'top-flight' clubs may not necessarily be the best programme for that particular player.

A key point of consideration for younger players is whether or not they are going to get game time. Due to the increasing level of the game, many young players spend a large proportion of their time sat on the bench. To develop within football, these players need match experience. This is particularly important for players in the England set-up, where to be a high calibre international player, they will need hours of experience on the pitch.

Every players' pathway will differ and there is no ideal or perfect route for players to follow after the age of 18. The options available within this phase include:



OPTION	CONSIDERATIONS
<b>Barclays FA WSL Academy</b> <b>(The Barclays FA WSL Academy incorporates players aged 16-20)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The environment is focused around development. Learning opportunities are key, with a smaller emphasis on results;</li><li>• Dual career is embedded into the environment through partnerships with local universities;</li><li>• There is a package of support available for players through TASS (if the club wants to access this), that will vary depending on club infrastructure;</li><li>• The potential to have access to DiSE and the benefits that come from this;</li><li>• There are opportunities to move up to the first team environment and train/play alongside the senior players.</li></ul>
<b>Other Academy, Youth, Reserve, or Development Sides</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The environment is focused around development. Learning opportunities are key, with smaller emphasis on results;</li><li>• Some development sides will play in the reserves league, where they have the opportunity to play against other reserve/development sides;</li><li>• There are opportunities to move up to the first team environment and train/play alongside the senior players.</li></ul>

OPTION	CONSIDERATIONS
<b>Barclays FA WSL Academy First Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The environment is focused on performance and results;</li> <li>• The playing standard is higher, shown through a faster and more physical game;</li> <li>• There will be a cohort of international players that are contracted to the clubs;</li> <li>• It is likely that players will have access to the required support services;</li> <li>• It will be a full-time footballing programme. It is important to consider how education and personal development will be facilitated around this;</li> <li>• It is important to consider whether the club will allow release for England commitments.</li> </ul>
<b>FA Women's Championship First Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The environment is focused on performance and results;</li> <li>• The playing standard is higher, shown through a faster and more physical game;</li> <li>• Packages of support services available for players to access will differ;</li> <li>• It is likely to be a part-time footballing environment. It is important to consider how education and personal develop will be facilitated around this;</li> <li>• There will be a larger variety of ages of players, with many of these players combining their club commitments with education or work;</li> <li>• It is important to consider whether the club will allow release for England commitments.</li> </ul>
<b>FA Women's National League First Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some clubs will and others may not have packages of support services available for players to access;</li> <li>• It is likely to be an evening footballing programme (for example, two nights a week training and a game on a Sunday). For many players, this allows flexibility for education or work to be carried out alongside footballing commitments;</li> <li>• There will be a variety of ages of players, with many of these players combining their club commitments with education or work;</li> </ul>

## 4.4.2 EDUCATION NEXT STEPS

### 4.4.2.1 University

Going to university is an option for players once they finish further education studies or apprenticeships. Attending university can have numerous benefits for players, not only in enhancing future career prospects, but it also provides the opportunity to increase independence and develop players socially.

University is a great opportunity for players to socialise with other individuals outside of the football environment and is important for players to take the time to push themselves outside of their comfort zone (e.g. meeting new people, taking part in new societies). This can have a positive impact on players development and mental wellbeing.

There are numerous factors that players should think about when considering whether or not they want to go to university.



**“**University is great for so much more than the degree. It's that independence, there's so many more skills that they can then translate to the football pitch... communication, all kinds of things, you see people really come out of themselves. **”**

BARCLAYS FA WSL ACADEMY  
LIFESTYLE ADVISOR



## ***(1) Is university the Best Option?***

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### **Players should:**

- Explore all options that are available post-18 and do sufficient research to find the route that is best for them;
- Take time to figure out what they enjoy, what they are passionate about, and whether a university degree is what they really want to do;
- Think about their future career goals and whether a degree will be required;
- Consider what the decision looks like from a football, education, and social perspective;
- Consider the financial implications of going to university – the majority of university degrees will cost approximately £9,000 per year in tuition fees, alongside living costs. Players may be able to receive financial support through a sport scholarship or alternative bursary:
  - Students may have access to a student finance bursary, where they are able to borrow money to help pay for university fees and to help with living costs. The following link provides more information on student finance [here](#).
- Consider whether this is something they actually want to do – If a player is not motivated for academia and they are not passionate about the chosen subject, then studying at university is probably not the best option for that player.



## **(2) Where to go to university**

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### **Players should:**

- Choose a university that does the course they wish to study and check the entry requirements of this course:
  - University league tables that rank universities nationally in a range of subjects, can be a useful tool – For example: [here](#);
  - Players should also consider the Open University as an option that allows supported distance learning and flexible online study.
- Consider how their choice of university and subject can support their career aspirations;
- Investigate which universities offer scholarships that they may be eligible for;
- Consider the location of the university and examine the proximity to home and club;
- Attend an open day. This will give the player a good feel of the university and the various opportunities on offer;
- Talk to other athletes who have studied and trained at that university and ask them to share their experiences of combining university study with football.

Players should also consider the support services they will have access to at different universities. When looking into the dual career support available at university, players should consider whether they will have access to academic flexibility, academic support, and sport scholarship services. Some examples of these different types of support are listed below (please note, universities have different criteria in place regarding who can access this support).

### **Academic Flexibility and Support:**

- An online system where players can access missed lectures and view them at a later date;
- The ability to defer exams or coursework deadlines if a player is away from university at a major event;
- Methods of assessment can be altered to meet players' needs (e.g. group presentations changed to individual written assessments);
- Access to one-to-one tutor support;
- Opportunity to extend a degree (i.e. completing a degree part time, over a number of years) at no additional cost:

- The length of time a degree can be extended depends on the university, but this can be up to six years.
- Some universities allow athletes to extend a year of their degree over two years, for example, if the player thinks that their full-time university commitments may be too much to manage alongside their football demands.
- Some universities allow the opportunity for players to defer a year in the middle of their degree, i.e. take a year break to focus on football.

### **Sport Scholarship Services:**

- Many universities can now offer substantial sport scholarship support;
- This support can include strength and conditioning (S&C), physio, lifestyle, nutrition, psychology, performance analysis, medical testing/screening, financial bursaries, and financial packages.

### ***(3) What to Study at university***

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#### **Players should:**

- Choose a subject they enjoy;
- Explore different job sites and graduate career options to look for what they would like to do once they've finished their studies;
- Think about their future career goals and the qualifications that will be required;
- Take time to look through the UCAS subject guides to get an idea of the type of subject they could study, and the industries graduates go on to work in;
- Consider the entry requirements of the course at their chosen institution;
- Consider the type of degree they wish to study:
  - **Foundation Year:** An extra year of study at the start of a university course if a player does not have the required grades to enrol on their programme of choice. This also provides students with an alternative and more gradual route into university;
  - **Undergraduate:** An undergraduate degree is a minimum of three years or can be extended at the university's discretion.
- It is important for players to investigate the costs of the type of study they are interested in pursuing.





#### ***(4) Sport Scholarship opportunities available at university***

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Many universities in the UK offer sport scholarships or bursaries for students with high levels of sporting talent or potential.

The criteria for receiving a sport scholarship differs between each university. A number of universities have different levels of scholarship, with packages of support available to athletes at county/regional level and more enhanced packages available to those at national/international level.

The packages of support available to sport scholarship athletes also vary between university and between level of scholarship. A typical package of sport scholarship support includes:

- Financial bursary/support;
- Strength and conditioning;
- Physiotherapy, massage, and/or sports rehabilitation support;
- Psychology support;
- Lifestyle support;
- Nutrition support;
- Access to workshops;

- Free or reduced gym membership;
- Dual Career support, i.e. access to a personal tutor, flexible deadlines.

For more detailed information on the sport scholarship opportunities available at a number of UK universities (including information on football clubs linked to and within the university), please see the [\*\*HE Sport Scholarship and Academic Flexibility document.\*\*](#)

Universities have different methods for athletes to apply for a sport scholarship. For the majority of universities, application forms can be found on the university sport scholarship website. Once completed, applications can either be submitted online or via email.



## **(5) Playing British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) at university**



BUCS is the governing body for university sport in the UK. BUCS is responsible for organising inter-university sports within the UK. Within women's football, teams

compete in the Wednesday leagues and knockouts in the following Tiers:

- **Premier Tier** – North and South
- **Tier 1** – Scottish 1A, Northern 1A, Midlands 1A, Western 1A, South Eastern 1A
- **Tier 2** – Scottish 2A, Northern 2A and 2B, Midlands 2A and 2B, Western 2A and 2B, South Eastern 2A and 2B
- **Tier 3** – Scottish 3A, Northern 3A and 3B, Midlands 3A and 3B, Western 3A and 3B, South Eastern 3A and 3B
- **Tier 4** – Northern 4A and 4B, Midlands 4A, South Eastern 4A and 4B
- **Tier 5** – Northern 5B

The Premier Tier teams play 10 fixtures in the league season, which then qualifies them for the championship knockout. At this stage, they play nationally across the two Premier

Tiers in a knockout stage competition. These Premier Tier teams are likely to train twice a week, with possibly one day of strength and conditioning (S&C), and match days as well.

It is important for players to note that some universities will require their sport scholarship recipients to represent the university in BUCS' competition. This differs between universities, with some providing individual consideration for the suitability of BUCS' competition for each player. For detailed information on whether sport scholarship athletes are required to play BUCS, please see the [HE Sport Scholarship and Academic Flexibility document](#). It is important to also note that some clubs may not allow their players to play in BUCS, for reasons such as player load, injury risk, and clashes with club training.

For players that do play club football alongside university BUCS' football, it is important for there to be regular communication between the club coach and university coach to manage player load. In some cases, BUCS can complement a player's club football, increasing game time opportunities. BUCS' football is described

by many players as a fun environment, where they can enjoy the game and build friendships in a potentially less pressurised environment than that at the club level.

A large number of BUCS' teams will have access to the high-performance support services at the university. The higher education sector is a great opportunity for players to tap into the high-quality facilities and individualised support services.

**“The higher education sector is leading the way on a number of fronts in terms of facilities, athlete development, medical sciences, sports coaching, therapy, that kind of thing, these are performance environments in which there is the opportunity for an athlete to perform and develop from a player perspective but also study and gain education at the same time.”**

**BUCS FOOTBALL  
DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

## (6) UK university Application Process



The UK university application process through UCAS consists of a number of different elements. Below is a step-by-step guide to completing the university application.

- **Register to use 'Apply'.**
- **Sign in and fill in the remaining personal details.**
- **Submit additional information.**
- **Answer any required questions on student finance.**
- **Course choices** – Applicants can choose up to five courses (these can be the same course at numerous universities, or

different courses at the same university). There's no preference order to submitting course choices.

- **Enter full education history** – Applicants must enter all their qualifications from secondary education onwards, whether they have the result or they're still awaiting exams and results.
- **Enter employment history** – Applicants can enter details of any paid jobs (full-time or part-time).
- **Write a personal statement** – This is the chance for applicants to show universities why they want to study the course and why they'd made a great student. It is important for applications to share their personal statement with teachers, advisors, and family. It is a good idea to start writing personal statements early!
- **View the details** – If the applicant is happy with all details, they can agree to the declaration which allows UCAS to process the information and sent it to the chosen universities.

- **Get a reference, pay the application fee, and send the application to UCAS** – A reference is a written recommendation from a teacher, advisor, or professional who knows the applicant academically. The application fee is £20 for applicants applying to just one course, or £25 for applicants applying for multiple courses.

(Information taken from the UCAS website).

It is important to note that some courses may require an admissions test. Applicants should check the registration deadline for the test, when they will sit it, and what it includes, as well as the deadline for their UCAS application.

The application process has a couple of fixed deadlines, for example, for courses starting in 2020 the deadlines were as follows:

- 15 October 2019: Any course at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or for most courses in medicine, veterinary medicine/science, and dentistry;
- 15 January 2020: The majority of courses.

Following submission of a university application, the following process takes place:

- **Offers** – Wait to see if any of the applicant's university choices offer an interview or a place on their course. These offers will be either be unconditional if they've already met the entry requirements, or conditional if the offer is based on exam results.
- **Replies** – Once all the decisions are in, the applicant has to reply to their offers by a specific deadline. Applicants have the select a firm choice (first choice) and an insurance choice (this is a back-up choice in case they applicant doesn't meet the conditions for their firm choice. Applicants then decline any other offers.
- **Results** – If an applicant's place is unconditional, the place is theirs. If an applicant's place is conditional, the university will update their status when they have their exam results or other evidence that they have met the conditions. Applicants that are unsuccessful in their application (i.e. not meeting the conditions), can use Clearing to apply for more courses.

For more information on the university application process, please visit the

[UCAS website](#).

## ***(7) Preparation for university***

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Once a player has picked their university of choice and has had their UCAS' application accepted, there are a number of things a player can do to prepare for the move to university:

- If moving to live away from home, players should consult the university about accommodation. Some universities offer athlete only accommodation blocks which have many benefits for athletes, i.e. being surrounded by likeminded dual career athletes;
- Speak with their club about the university they have chosen and begin to plan a routine around training times and lecture times;
- Consider the support they will receive from their sport scholarship and how they can align that to their other systems of support;
- Speak to other footballers at the university to develop knowledge of what to expect, considerations to make, and what to do in advance of starting university;
- Consider the changes they may experience at university and the methods they will use to adapt to these (e.g., students must take more ownership over their academic development and plan when they will study outside of their lectures/seminars).

There are also a number of areas a player can develop themselves in, to make the transition to university a much smoother process.

### **This includes experience or knowledge of:**

- Cooking/doing a supermarket shop;
- Clothes washing;
- Budgeting – managing finances, bills, rent, food, budget for travel, etc.;
- Time management – understanding how to effectively manage time for football, education, and social commitments;
- Effective communication – i.e. how to structure emails.

### **This also includes knowledge of:**

- The area the player is moving to;
- How to make the most of their support network;
- Local funding opportunities (e.g., local council grants);
- How to travel between home, university, and training;
- How to manage stress and access support;
- Expectations from a football and education perspective.

### 4.4.2.2 University overseas

Some players may consider studying overseas. For players who may be interested in this route, it is important for them to answer the following questions:

- How does going to the overseas complement your long-term aspirations in football, academics, and socially?
- Have you considered all the options available in the UK before making this decision?
- What would you be going overseas for? Is it for a university degree? Is it to play football? Is it to experience the culture? Is it to meet new people? If players know the reason behind why they're considering the move, they can then make a decision.
- What does it look like in parallel with a future with England? Will you be available to participate with England over the next for years? Will you be able to make the transition to the seniors following several years overseas?

**Below are some key pieces of advice for players that are considering moving overseas for university:**

- Look extensively into the university that you are interested in, don't just believe

what you see on the internet or what a scout is telling you;

- Look at travel options, particularly if you are part of the England set up as you may need to fly back regularly – Is the university close to an airport? How expensive are the flights?
- Seek advice from peers and other players that have made the move overseas – Reaching out to players at the university you are looking at will give a good idea of what life at that university will be like;
- It is important to remember that it is your own decision – Keep in mind what is right for someone else may not be right for you;
- What is the university like from an educational perspective – Will the university enable you to reach your future career goals? Will you graduate with a highly valued degree?
- Speak to your coaches about the move and the impact it could have on future footballing opportunities. **Communication is key;**
- What will it look like from a well-being and psychological perspective – Bear in mind that you may be moving hundreds or thousands of miles away from your home and support network;

- Be wary of social media – For example, university scouts reaching out via Instagram or Twitter;
- Make sure you, as a player, are leading the decision process.

**For players who have committed to an overseas university, they should:**

- Research the area they will be moving to;
- Contact the university about accommodation options;
- Reach out to other players who have also committed to attending in the same university. Making friends early will make the transition smoother;
- Make plans with family on how they will keep in contact whilst overseas;
- If part of an England squad, make plans with staff about how they would like contact to be maintained whilst overseas (e.g. by sending regular training or match update videos);
- Contact the university to see if there is anything they have to do academically before making the move.

### 4.4.2.3 Higher Apprenticeships/Vocational Qualifications

Going to university following completion of further education studies is not the best option for all players. For some players, an apprenticeship may be better suited. On an apprenticeship, an individual combines working with studying to gain skills and knowledge in a specific job. There are four types or levels of apprenticeships available in England:

APPRENTICESHIP LEVEL	OVERVIEW
Intermediate Apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Level 2 apprenticeships generally considered to be the same level as five GCSE passes;</li><li>• Apprentices will study towards qualifications such as National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2 and a knowledge-based qualification such as BTEC Diploma and Certificate, relevant to the sector and job role.</li></ul>
Advanced Apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Level 3 apprenticeships generally considered to be the same level as two A-Level passes;</li><li>• Entry requirements will vary, but you usually need at least five GCSEs with grades 9-4, including English and Maths.</li></ul>
Higher Apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Level 4 qualifications or above. Most apprentices will gain an NVQ Level 4, a Higher National Diploma, or a foundation degree;</li><li>• A higher apprenticeship can take from one to five years to complete, and involve part-time study at a college, university, or training provider;</li><li>• Entry requirements can include at least five GCSEs grades 9-4, including English and maths, and Level 3 qualifications, including A-Levels, NVQs, or a BTEC.</li></ul>
Degree Apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Similar to higher apprenticeships but differ in that they provide an opportunity to gain a full bachelor's degree (Level 6) or master's degree (Level 7);</li><li>• Degree apprenticeships combine working with studying part-time at a university;</li><li>• A degree apprenticeship can take between three and six years to complete, depending on the course level.</li></ul>

(Information taken from the UCAS website)



**Apprenticeships are available in a wide range of industries and job roles, including:**



- Construction, planning and the built environment;
- Agriculture, horticulture and animal care;
- Arts, media and publishing;
- Business, administration and law;
- Engineering and manufacturing technologies;
- Education and training;
- Information and communication technology;
- Science and mathematics;
- Retail and commercial enterprise;
- Health, public services and care.

**Players considering whether an apprenticeship is right for them should consider the following:**

- They are ideal for those who have a clear idea of the career they would like to pursue;
- They are also beneficial for those who wish to explore career options and develop transferrable skills;
- Those enrolled have to be willing to commit to work and study;
- They are ideal for those who prefer a more practical and work-related approach to learning;
- They involve full-time work, so consideration should be given as to whether the apprenticeship will give the flexibility to training alongside it;
- They are paid – for those under 19 and/or those in their first year as an apprentice, they are entitled to a wage of £3.90 an hour. Apprentices aged 19 or over and who've completed their first year will be able to claim the National Minimum Wage, which is currently £6.16 per hour (for those aged 18-20) or £7.70 (for those aged 21-24).

**When choosing which apprenticeship to enrol on, players should:**

- Think about what they enjoy day-to-day and find an apprenticeship that will suit them;
- Start planning early and try to get some work experience in the sector they're interested in – This will give them a good idea of whether they will enjoy an apprenticeship in this area;
- It is important to do plenty of research to find out if they can reach their career goals through an apprenticeship, or if they need to study full-time at university or college;
- Consider the apprenticeship level that is most appropriate to them and their current qualifications;
- Consider which apprenticeships will give them the flexibility to train as well – Players should talk to employers to discuss the options here;
- Consider the location of the apprenticeship and the proximity to the players home and club.

4.4.2.4 Taking a gap year

Taking a gap year (a year out) following further education studies is an option for players, offering them the opportunity to reflect and focus on what they want to do next. A key area of consideration when taking a gap year is that players should engage in activities and experiences that will develop them outside of football, as well as within the sport. **Taking a year out isn't an option that suits everyone, and it is important for players to consider the following pros and cons:**

PROS	CONS
An opportunity to have a break from studying and return refreshed.	Some people find a year out becomes a distraction from their longer-term plans.
A productive gap year can be valuable on your CV.	An unstructured year out may not add much value to your future. Careful planning is essential.
The opportunity to use the year to gain experience and begin research in the players chosen area of study .	It can be harder to return to study or work after a year-long break.
Players have the opportunity to gain more independence if they don't yet feel ready for higher education or work life.	If players don't get organised, they may end up spending their gap year just 'thinking about what they want to achieve' and not actioning this.

(Adapted from the UCAS website)

**For players that think taking a gap year is the best option for them, it is really important to:**

- Form a plan of what they will do for the year;
- Begin planning well in advance;
- Contact employers about potential work experience or internship opportunities, focusing longer term on future career aspirations;
- Speak to their club about opportunities or support they could access;
- Identify whether their club will allow this (e.g., to be in a Barclays FA WSL academy, players must be engaging in either education, or some form of work or vocational training).



#### 4.4.2.5 Employment

For some players, moving into employment following further education may be the preferred option. Players should think about their career goals and the qualifications that will be required to achieve these goals. For some careers, individuals can progress through work-based learning/experience, for others, further study is required. A key area of consideration for players wishing to move into full-time employment is whether this will give the required flexibility to train and pursue goals within football if this is something the player is still interested in.

##### **When choosing which jobs to apply for, players should:**

- Choose a job they will enjoy and that will put them on a path towards reaching their future career goals;
- Consider applying for a traineeship or internship – This will give players a good idea of whether they will enjoy a job in this area;
- Do some research into jobs that provide on-the-job training, teaching a range of key skills that will help them progress within the industry;

- Consider the time demands of a particular job and whether it will give the flexibility to train – Players should talk to employers to discuss options here;
- Consider the location of the job and the proximity to the players home and club;
- Consider the major benefit of moving into full-time employment. This is the payment players will receive to help support themselves;
- Consider in-service training programme opportunities.

#### 4.4.2.6 Full-Time football player

For some players, the desired step following further education is to become a full-time football player. This is a step that players who are offered professional contracts within Barclays FA WSL teams may make. It is important to note that within women's football, the Barclays FA WSL is the only full-time professional league in England.

Full-time professional teams will train full-time during the day, this can include football training, strength and conditioning (S&C), recovery, sport science support etc. There are both pros and cons of training full-time, with

many considerations a player should make before deciding whether or not they wish to pursue this route:

- What will a player's life balance look like? What else will they engage in outside of football?
- Will the full-time focus on just football cause an increase in stress, particularly close to major events?
- How will training full-time impact upon the players future career goals in both football and outside of football?
- If the player became injured or was released from their contract, would they be prepared to enter a new pathway (e.g., full-time work)?
- What opportunities will a player have to socialise with other individuals outside of the sporting environment?
- For those that do make the decision to become a full-time footballer, it is important to develop in other areas outside of football. This can include doing some voluntary work experience, work shadowing, or an online/short course. This gives players the opportunity to further their personal and professional

development outside of football, developing necessary skills and experiences to add to their CV and increase future employment prospects for after their football career. It is important for players to speak to their club about what development opportunities are available, for example completing coaching or refereeing qualifications. Within a full-time football environment there is available time outside of football to do other things, and it is important for players to use this time wisely.

For more information on some of the unique challenges of balancing elite football with university (in the UK and overseas), apprenticeships, and full-time work, refer to the 18+ section. This section will also include detailed information on some of the challenges relating to being a full-time footballer.

## EXTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS:

### 4.4.3 INTRODUCTION TO INTERMEDIARIES, CLUB CONTRACTS, AND SPONSORSHIP

From the age of 18, players can sign a professional or semi-professional contract and receive payment for football. As soon as players become eligible to sign a contract, the role of intermediaries comes into play. An intermediary is a representative who handles the interests of players, i.e. negotiating club contracts and securing sponsorship deals. It is important to note that for those who are considering attending college in the US, any contact with intermediaries or any paid sponsorship activities will impact upon their scholarship eligibility.

There are numerous factors that players should consider when using an intermediary, as players may be vulnerable to signing contracts without having a full understanding of the implications. The following points outline some areas to consider when looking at intermediaries:

- Players must read the small print – Do they really know what they are agreeing to by working with a particular intermediary?

- What cost will the intermediary be taking for their services?
- Does the intermediary consider the players dual career aspirations, i.e. will potential contracts enable the player to study or work alongside football?
- Do they have the players best interests in mind? i.e. do they consider a players needs as a person as well as a footballer?

The following points outline some things to consider when looking at club contracts:

- As mentioned above, players must read the small print – Do they know what they are signing up to with a particular club contract, i.e. what is the salary, the duration of the contract, are there any clauses in the contract?
- Does the dream the club are selling match the reality, i.e. will the player get minutes on the pitch, or are they signing a four year deal to spend the majority of that time on the bench?

- Does the club allow the player to engage in a dual career by studying or working alongside football commitments?
- Is there a clause in the contract to allow the player to be released for England duty?
- What are the reasons behind why a player is signing this particular contract? Is the contract well suited to the players long-term football, career, and personal aspirations, or is it just seen an opportunity to sign for their dream club?

The following points outline some things to consider when looking at sponsorship deals/ brand endorsements:

- What will the player be required to do when endorsing or being sponsored by the particular company/organisation (i.e. promote products or services, wear particular boots, attend promotional events)?
- What will the player receive as part of the partnership, i.e. free products/kit, financial gain?
- Are there any clauses in the sponsorship deal?
- Is it a credible company/organisation that the player would be happy to represent?

- What are the terms of the sponsorship, i.e. how long is the sponsorship for?
- What are the renewal and termination regulations of the sponsorship?
- How will this sponsorship deal impact on any current sponsors or club sponsors?
- Have they provided a sponsorship agreement?

For more detailed information on intermediaries, club contracts, and sponsorship deals, refer to the 18+ section of this document.

**“ A real-life example, an 18-year-old signs a contract for a club. It takes her two hours to get there, and two hours to get home, she’s spending more time travelling than training. She doesn’t kick a ball competitively and her contract length is four years, with no immediate prospect of resolution. This is hard for an 18-year-old and shows the importance of selecting the right club. ”**

ENGLAND COACH





## 4.5 POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

### 4.5.1 DUAL CAREER CHALLENGES



#### 4.5.1.1 Further Education course choice

A challenge faced by some players within further education, is the differing nature of A-Levels and BTECs. A-Level studies are more demanding in terms of the exam nature of the assessment. Predominantly, all work culminates in the exam period at the end of the academic year. For those players who enrol in BTEC studies, there is more flexibility, with assessment being predominantly coursework based. For some players, there is the flexibility to complete coursework at quieter periods of the year, i.e. out of season. This can reduce the workload and pressure faced by these players during peak footballing periods.

This difference in the nature of studies can lead to challenges for some A-level students who compare their education with that of their peers who are studying BTECs.



*Best practice is for players to stay committed to their desired education route, regardless of what their peers are doing. Players should choose the route that is most suited to them and their further education/career goals. It is more than possible for players to balance elite football with A-Level or BTEC studies, regardless of the differences in methods of assessment, i.e. exams or coursework. For players who are finding it challenging to fulfil their programme of study alongside elite football, it is important to reach out to support systems integrated in both their school and club.*

#### 4.5.1.2 Exam and football clashes

As mentioned in the previous section, it is a possibility that exams will clash with football events, particularly those at the International level.

The FA Player Education department is now a JCQ approved exam host centre, meaning they can facilitate exams, such as A-Levels, whilst players are abroad during international tournaments. This requires careful consideration, and demands the consent of parents, support of the school and commitment of the player. The Player Education staff support the preparation and revision, and independent invigilators ensure the instructions for conducting examinations are adhered. This provides a level playing field for candidates and security of the completed exam papers.



*Best practice is for players to inform the FA Player Education staff of any exam dates as soon as possible, as well as informing their school of any footballing commitments. This enables any potential clashes to be identified in advance. Players should also ensure they take the necessary time to rest and recover following both training and study periods.*

#### 4.5.1.3 Missing school/college when invited to train/play with the First Team

Some players within Barclays FA WSL Academies may have the opportunity to train and play with the first team squad. Players identify this as a fantastic opportunity to train with their club's senior, professional players, however, it can raise some challenges in terms of missing school or college. Barclays FA WSL clubs are full-time and professional, with all training occurring during the day. For Barclays FA WSL Academy players to train with the first team, they have to get released from college.



*It is advised that students do not miss more than 15 days of school/college per academic year. Best practice is for players to arrange a suitable time with the school/college where they can take time off with as little educational impact as possible. Many further education institutions are flexible and will support players in adapting timetables to make it possible to attend first team training or matches. Many of the TASS dual career accredited sites have online access to lesson content and notes. This enables players to catch up if they do miss a day of school for footballing commitments.*

#### 4.5.1.4 Apprenticeship challenges

A unique challenge faced by players that are enrolled onto apprenticeships is that they tend to follow a 9am to 5pm model, where individuals are expected to be learning or working between those hours. The structure within some clubs (e.g. Barclays FA WSL Academies with a full-time model), make it very difficult for players to manage an apprenticeship programme alongside training. There are also some challenges for players who are a part of the England set-up, with apprentices having to take time off work for England camps and tournaments.



*Best practice for those players wishing to follow an apprenticeship route, is to find a footballing programme that fits around their programme of work and education. For example, for the duration of the apprenticeship it may be more suitable for a player to join a club that has an evening football schedule, i.e. a FA Women's Championship or FA Women's National League club.*

A challenge for the players that do follow the above, is that they will spend their days working within their apprenticeship and the evenings training. This leaves players very little free time to rest, socialise, and spending time doing other things.



*For these players, best practice is to create a timetable of the 'typical' weekly routine at the beginning of the season. This will allow players to pin-point times within the week where they can do other things outside of working and playing football. Regular communication with the apprenticeship employer and the club is extremely important to balance the load and ensure a sustainable balance is maintained.*



## 4.5.2 ADAPTING TO THE NEW POST-16 EDUCATION AND FOOTBALL ENVIRONMENT

Players may face challenges with the adaptation from GCSEs to further education/ apprenticeships. Further education/ apprenticeships are a step-up in level and time demands from GCSEs, and often requires students to be more independent.



*Best practice is for players to reach out to teachers, tutors, or other members of staff within their further education institution if they face any persisting challenges with the step up in education. Many schools/colleges/ apprenticeship employers will have systems of support in place to help players adapt to the new education environment. For example, a dual career co-ordinator at a TASS accredited site may offer an 'open door' policy to support any challenges that young athletes are facing. Students should also make efficient use of the space in their timetable for independent study.*

Regardless of what route a player has decided to take, be it The Barclays FA WSL Academy, The FA Women's Championship, or FA Women's National League, it may take time to adapt to the new footballing environment. Within the post-16 football environment, there are increased expectations, increased frequency of training, faster and stronger teammates, and more challenging games. A key challenge faced by players is the increased competition to be selected for match day squads. The age of players within these post-16 football environments is varied, with many older and more experienced players within each team. This challenge is increased further for young players at the Barclays FA WSL Academy level who are invited to train or play in the First Team environment.

**“You go from big fish to little fish.”**

BARCLAYS FA WSL ACADEMY  
PLAYER ON PLAYING WITH  
THE FIRST TEAM



*It is important for players to note that adapting to a new environment can be challenging and this is normal for players to experience as they make the transition into teams with older and more experienced players. This transition is integral to a player's development, not only as a player but also as a person. Best practice is for younger players to immerse themselves in the environment, asking the older players questions where necessary, and embracing their new role in a new team. Clubs are likely to have support structures in place to help make this transition as smooth as possible, and it is important for players to reach out to these support structures if necessary.*

### 4.5.3 TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES

Many families find transporting their daughter to and from training, college, and home a significant challenge, with some players having to travel long distances. Travel can significantly increase the demands faced by players and their family as a whole, with parents having to co-ordinate travel around work and family schedules.



*As mentioned in the previous section it is important for families to consider travel when choosing a club for their daughter to attend. Some clubs may have systems in place to support travel, for example, a travel allowance or organising and funding travel for players. Families should investigate whether any transportation support is available at their daughter's club. (please note that this only tends to be available in some Barclays FA WSL Academies for players who attend the principal FE site, it is not likely to be available in other footballing routes).*



**I literally get picked up at the door and then I get dropped off at the door, which is good. It is different depending on what club you go to.**



**BARCLAYS FA WSL  
ACADEMY PLAYER**

For those players that travel to and from school and training via public transport, this can raise some possible safeguarding challenges. This is a particular challenge for those under-18 who may be travelling through big cities late in the evening.



*It is important for families to consider the safeguarding challenges that may arise with young girls travelling via public transport. Best practice for players that do travel via public transport is to try and find a peer who is travelling a similar route so that players can travel together. It is important to know the alternative routes home if a particular service is cancelled. As mentioned above, families should investigate whether any transportation support is available at their daughter's club.*



*Best practice for families is to try and arrange shared transport with other players from their club or similar area. This can reduce the pressure on one family doing the journey both to and from camp multiple times a year. For some age groups, The FA may fund the mileage of travel, which can help with the financial aspect of travelling long distances.*

For those within the England set-up, there are additional challenges associated with getting to and from training camps. These training camps do not necessarily occur at the weekends, so parents may need to transport their daughter on weekdays. This may cause challenges for parents to arrange this travel around their work commitments.



#### 4.5.4 FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

As outlined above, some players are travelling long distances to and from training/England camps. This travel can come at a significant financial cost for some players and their families.



*Best practice is firstly to consider travel distance within the initial decision-making phase. Distance to training and education provider must be a key consideration for players and their families when determining a players next steps. A second consideration is whether arrangements can be made between players families to share travel where suitable, this way the cost can be split over two or more families, rather than just one. For players that travel via public transport, there are plenty of public transport discounts available to young players (e.g. a 16-25 rail card provides a 30% discount for train travel).*

Other costs associated with football at this age may include club fees, purchasing of kit, and funding of homestays (where applicable). A challenge faced by many players at this age is the difficulty getting part-time jobs due to training and playing commitments, as well as education demands. This means players are unable to earn their own money to help support their football, social activities etc.

There are a number of local council grants or organisation bursaries that are available for young, talented athletes. Best practice is for players and their parents to investigate what local opportunities are available to them and apply to those that they are eligible for. If a player is selected by The FA to receive a TASS or SportsAid Award, they will receive some funding that they can put towards these costs. All bursaries or grants mentioned above can go a long way in supporting families to fund their daughters' football.

#### 4.5.5 FINANCIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CLUBS

As women's football is growing and developing, there are differences between the finances and infrastructure of clubs at different levels of the pyramid. These differences are highlighted by the facilities that players have access to, the kit they are provided with, the medical support they can receive, and in some cases, the opportunity for team promotion (i.e. clubs must have a certain level of resource to meet the licensing requirements within some leagues).



*It is important for players to note that just because a club may have the best facilities and kit, it may not necessarily be the best choice for them. Players should continue to remember the variety of factors that should be considered when choosing a club (e.g. location, minutes the player will get on the pitch, the coaching environment, support for education, etc).*

## 4.5.6 NEXT FOOTBALLING STEPS (CONTRACTS AND INTERMEDIARIES)



A challenge faced by many players within this age group, is the decision making around their next footballing steps and the consideration of club contracts and intermediaries. Following the 16-18 age group, players are entering the remit of contractual football, where they may have the opportunity to sign a contract and receive payment for playing professional or semi-professional football.

This is an exciting time for many players but can also raise additional challenges such as the need for an intermediary prior to the player turning 18.



*Best practice for players and their parents, is to seek the necessary advice around whether an intermediary will be required at this stage. Intermediaries can support players in negotiating and securing club contracts, however, there are numerous factors to consider when using an intermediary. The 'decisions and options to consider' section (4.4) in this age group provides some advice on the factors that players should consider when deciding whether or not to use a particular intermediary.*

Players at this age may be faced with a variety of footballing opportunities, whether this is The Barclays FA WSL Academy, The Barclays FA WSL, The FA Women's Championship, FA Women's National League or other football. This can lead players and their families to feel a bit lost and unsure about which route to take.



*Best practice is for players to consider football within the bigger picture, assessing how each opportunity fits with their future football, education, and career goals. Players should reach out to support systems within their current club and England (where applicable) for advice on their next steps. Older peers can provide some great advice for players, so reaching out to these older players can be particularly beneficial.*

### 4.5.7 MAINTAINING A POSITIVE WELLBEING



The balance of elite sport and education within this age group can be a stressful time for some players who are managing multiple aspects of their life. If not managed appropriately, this stress has the possibility of negatively impacting players' mental health.



*It is important for players to pay attention to their general wellbeing, setting aside time for themselves to rest and recover both physically and mentally. There are many things players can engage in to manage their own wellbeing, for example:*

- *Make time to get a good night sleep – a regular bedtime and waking time, avoiding stimulants before going to bed (caffeine), ensuring that the bedroom is quiet and dark, and removing electronic screens from the bedroom can help with improving sleep quality.*
- *Meditation and mindfulness – there are plenty of apps that can support players in meditation and mindfulness processes.*
- *Spend free time socialising with family and/or friends.*
- *Engaging in new activities and hobbies.*

*If players do find that they are struggling with their mental health, it is important to reach out to those around them, for example, family, friends, school staff, club staff, England staff. By reaching out to these individuals as early as possible, the necessary systems can be put in place to best support players with their mental wellbeing.*

## 4.6 SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO FACILITATE PLAYERS DUAL CAREERS DURING THE 16-18 PHASE

### 4.6.1 SCHOOL/COLLEGE SUPPORT

Support at the school/college level around footballing commitments will vary. Players may have access to the following support.



#### Academic flexibility and support:

- Timetables arranged to allow time for training (e.g. ensuring the final period is free so players can get to training in time without missing any classes).
  - Some Barclays FA WSL Academy FE principal education providers will block subjects, so all players have their free time at the same time. This allows all players to attend strength and conditioning (S&C) sessions, psychology sessions etc.
- Some colleges allow players to have a Wednesday afternoon off to train or play fixtures (Barclays FA WSL Academy fixtures are played on a Wednesday afternoon). These colleges will have provisions in place to support players in catching up on any schoolwork they have missed.
- Additional curriculum support to allow players to do homework, coursework, or catch up on any missed work.

- Access to an online portal system where players can access their homework when they're away at training camps and tournaments.
- Teachers who have been trained, through personal development, on how to best work with talented athletes. These teachers will have a good understanding of the demands faced by players and will be able to tailor their practices to best support these players.

#### TASS dual career Accreditation Scheme:

- The TASS Accreditation scheme recognises an education institution's commitment to dual career support for talented athletes. These sites are assessed based on their ability to support talented athletes on the academic site off their development.
- These sites have a designated dual career co-ordinator who mentors the talented athletes and liaise with teachers around the necessary flexibility required.

- For more information on the TASS dual career Accredited further education sites and the dual career support they provide, follow the link to the document below.

It is important for players to note that the above support systems may be in place, however, this is not guaranteed at all institutions. Players should reach out to their education provider of choice as early as possible, to investigate whether any academic flexibility options can be put in place. In many cases this will be possible if arrangements are made early enough before term begins.

#### **School/college communication:**

- School/college communication with England education staff, allowing education plans to be made.
- School communication with parents, opening discussions on how players are doing and if there is anything else the players need to prevent anything from slipping.
- Some schools/colleges provide two-way dialogue between themselves and the players clubs. This can be through tutors who review academic and pastoral progress, passing this information onto the club who can then follow this up.

### **4.6.2 APPRENTICESHIP SUPPORT**

Some apprenticeship providers may have a programme in place for high-level athletes (please check with the employer). These athletes may have access to increased flexibility and the ability to take time off for training camps without affecting pay.

As mentioned above, it is important for players to note that this support may be available, but it is not guaranteed for all apprenticeship providers.



### **4.6.3 UNIVERSITY (PRE-TRANSITION) ORIENTATION PHASE:**

- Some universities provide an orientation phase where potential student-athletes can attend the university for a few days to understand what the environment would be like, and what the day to day timetable of a dual career athlete would be.
- This also gives players the opportunity to meet current dual career athletes and some of the support staff they may come into contact with if they attended the university.

It is important for players to note that the above support systems may be in place, however, this is not guaranteed at all universities. Players should reach out to their favoured university options and research the academic flexibility and/or sport scholarship support that will be available.



#### 4.6.4 PLAYER EDUCATION SUPPORT

The FA places emphasis on supporting players in their dual career. Dedicated Player Education staff are on hand to support players who are a part of the England National Development Squads with players having access to both off-camp and on-camp support.

- The education provider for every girl within the England National Development squads are contacted by the FA Player Education Staff. The initial contact explains who they are, what the process is, what they will expect, outline of potential fixtures, and the key point of contact if there are any issues or problems.
- After every event, the Player Education Staff send a feedback report to the education provider and parent of every player.
- On every event, two hours of education is compulsory for every day missed at school. After every event, education feedback is sent to the education provider and the parents. This gives detailed feedback about the players attitude towards learning, attendance, behaviour, respect etc. This is sent onto the education providers two days after the players return from camp.

- The FA Player Education team can provide the opportunity for mock examinations and internal progress assessments to be undertaken when attending any events.
- Where necessary, the Player Education Staff may help players to explore the next step footballing options that are available to them. England staff will not tell a player where to go, however, they will help to outline the pros and cons of particular opportunities, giving players the tools to then make their own decisions.

**“We say education first... sometimes we don't let players attend camps if we are aware they have important exams or deadlines coming up.”**

ENGLAND PHASE LEAD



## 4.6.5 CLUB SUPPORT

Within the club environment, the support that players will receive for their dual career may differ between clubs within different leagues, as well as differing within clubs in the same league. Players may have access to the following support.

### Communication with education providers:

- Communication with players schools/ colleges – Some clubs may contact the players schools/colleges, informing them that they've got a talented footballer that is part of an elite club, outlining what this looks like for the player.
- For those players that are a part of Barclays FA WSL Academy FE principal education provider, there is regular communication and collaboration between club and school/college.

### Flexibility:

- A number of clubs provide flexibility around missing the occasional training session if players need to work, study, or if they have other important commitments.

### Investment in education:

- An increasing number of coaches are supportive of players in their dual careers, allowing them to make decisions within their education that are optimal to their personal development.
- At the Barclays FA WSL Academy level, it is a requirement for Academy managers to be aware of the academic progress of players. This increases coach investment into the education of their players, allowing greater understanding of each individual outside of the football context.

“ If you fall behind  
in education, it's like  
falling behind at football.  
You're treated in the  
same way. ”

BARCLAYS FA WSL  
ACADEMY STAFF MEMBER



### Additional advice and support:

- Club Welfare Officers/Designated Safeguarding Officers can provide significant support where needed and every club will have one.
- Players may have access to other support providers, such as medical staff. The provisions at each club will vary, however, it is likely that clubs will have specific staff members to provide support in specialist areas.

For players who have made the transition into a new club environment, it is important to take note of the support structures embedded in the club as early as possible. This will help players to pin-point the necessary support mechanisms if required.

#### 4.6.6 TASS SUPPORT

The Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) is an athlete support programme for talented athletes in education. Each year, the TASS scheme supports hundreds of athletes from over 30 different sports across a network of TASS Delivery Sites (TDSs) across England.

TASS support women's football players through three different programmes:



##### **TASS Award:**

- Offered annually to select England Lioness Pathway players who sit outside of Barclays FA WSL Academies.
- This programme runs annually from September to August.
- Players on a TASS Award can have access to the following support:
  - Strength and conditioning
  - Physiotherapy
  - Lifestyle
  - Nutrition
  - Sport psychology
  - Medical scheme – A scheme that entitles players to claim for private treatment resulting from a sporting injury.
  - BUPA mental health support - Players have access to over the phone counselling for their mental health and wellbeing.
  - £500 award

##### **TASS Funded Place:**

- Offered annually to select players on the England Lioness Pathway players who sit outside of Barclays FA WSL Academies.
- This programme runs annually from September to August.
- Players on a TASS Funded place can have access to the following support:
  - Strength and conditioning (1 session a week)
  - Physiotherapy (up to four sessions if required)
  - Medical scheme and BUPA mental health support (not available to players under-16, but is available for players aged 17-21).

## The Barclays FA WSL Academy Programme:

- TASS delivers support services for the Barclays FA WSL Academies, with each academy having the option to partner with a TASS Delivery Site.
- This programme runs annually from August to April.
- Every Barclays FA WSL Academy is given the opportunity to receive the following three core support services:
  - Strength and conditioning
  - Physiotherapy
  - Lifestyle support
- Each Barclays FA WSL Academy and their TASS Delivery Site work together to develop a unique programme of support that suits the needs of the environment. This may include the availability of additional services such as nutrition and sport psychology.
- Players who are a part of a Barclays FA WSL Academy and are also part of the Lioness Pathway (aged 17-20) can also have access to the TASS Medical Scheme and BUPA mental health support.

- It is important to note that Barclays FA WSL Academies have the opportunity to opt-out of this support, so it may be a possibility that not all Barclays FA WSL Academies will integrate TASS support into their club environment.

For more information on the details of each support service, visit the [TASS website](#).

**“ The idea was, that we would have a partnership with a football club that enabled some of their best players who are reaching 17 and 18 to look at the university and be in a position where they could be at that football club, be at the university, play for the university on a Wednesday, and we could support their development as athletes. ”**

**UNIVERSITY  
DIRECTOR OF SPORT**



# 5 OVERVIEW





# 5. OVERVIEW

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This document provides an overview of the dual career options and opportunities that are available for women's footballers in England. It also provides an outline of some challenges players may face, as well as the support players may have access to. The document should be used by players and parents as a guide, however, for more individualised advice and guidance, players should consult the stakeholders they work directly with (i.e. teachers/university staff, club staff, and England staff).

The document is split into three phases (under-14-16, 16-18, and 18+). Players can, therefore, refer to the section that is most relevant to their age group. The 'decisions and options to consider' section within each phase looks ahead at players opportunities as they move forward within their dual career. If used correctly, this document should provide players with the confidence to overcome challenges, reach out for support, and ask the right questions when considering their dual career options moving forwards.

## EXAMPLE DUAL CAREER PATHWAYS OF FEMALE FOOTBALLERS



On the next pages are five examples of dual career pathways that notable female players have taken. The examples are there to demonstrate that each pathway is different for every player. Taking a certain route may be the right thing for one player and wrong for another. Be mindful that there is no 'ideal' path and players manage their dual careers in different ways.



# AIMEE PALMER

England Women's Under-20 Player

AGE GROUP		UNDER-14	UNDER-15	UNDER-16	UNDER-17	UNDER-18	UNDER-19	UNDER-20
AGE		13	14	15	16	17	18	19
FOOTBALL	Club Football	Norwich City Centre of Excellence						
				Norwich ACC and Wymondham Town United Boys				
					Bristol City Development Squad			
						Bristol City First Team		
							Manchester United First Team	
								Sheffield United First Team (On Loan from Manchester United)
	College Football				SGS College Football			
	International Football			England Age groups				
EDUCATION	School Level	School Years 8-9						
			GCSEs					
	Further Education				A-Levels (Biology, Chemistry, Psychology)			
	Higher Education						University of Salford (Part-Time Sports Science Degree)	



# EBONY SALMON

England Women's Under-20 Player

AGE GROUP		UNDER-14	UNDER-15	UNDER-16	UNDER-17	UNDER-18	UNDER-19	UNDER-20
AGE		13	14	15	16	17	18	19
FOOTBALL	Club Football	Local Boys Team Gornal Colts	Aston Villa Centre of Excellence					
					Aston Villa First Team			
						Manchester United (On Loan to Sheffield United)		
							Bristol City First Team	
	International Football			England Age groups				
EDUCATION	School Level	School Years 8-9	GCSEs					
	Further Education				College A-Levels (Sport, Sociology, Law)			
						Tutor - A-Level (Law) College - BTEC (Sport)		
	Break from Education						Year Break from Education	
	Higher Education							Open University Part-Time Course Criminology and Law



# KAREN CARNEY

England Women's Senior Player

AGE GROUP		UNDER-14	UNDER-15	UNDER-16	UNDER-17	UNDER-18	UNDER-19	UNDER-20	UNDER-21	SENIOR																
AGE		13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21+																
YEAR		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015-2019	2020								
FOOTBALL	Club Football	Birmingham City (Youth)																Retirement								
		Birmingham City (First Team)						Arsenal			Chicago Red Stars (US)			Birmingham City			Chelsea									
	International Football	England Age groups																								
						England Senior Lioness																				
FOOTBALL	School Level	School Years 8 - 9																								
		GCSEs																								
	Further Education				A-Levels																					
	Higher Education/Work					Loughborough University (Sport Psychology)									Online Course		Masters Degree		Internship at West Brom (psychology)		Trained in Trauma		Supported the Chelsea Youth Programme in Psychology		Work with England Youth Teams Punditry	



# LEANDRA LITTLE

FA Women's Championship Player

AGE GROUP		UNDER-11	UNDER-12	UNDER-13	UNDER-14	UNDER-15	UNDER-16	UNDER-17	UNDER-18	UNDER-19	UNDER-20	UNDER-21	SENIOR				
AGE		10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21+				
YEAR		1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008–2011	2012–2017	2018	2019	2020
FOOTBALL	Club Football	Grassroots Football and Basketball (Torbay Ladies/Plymouth Racers)						City of Sheffield Hatters Basketball (Division 1 and 2)					Lincoln Ladies Football (Northern Prem/WSL)	Doncaster Rovers Belles Football (WSL 1 and 2)		Liverpool Women (WSL) Sheffield	Sheffield United Women (Championship)
	International Football					England Junior/U20 Women			England Senior Women								
FOOTBALL	School Level	School Years 8 - 9															
	Further Education			GCSEs													
						A-Levels											
	Higher Education/Work							Sheffield Hallam University (BSc Sport Development and Coaching)				Sheffield Hallam University (BSc Sport Development and Coaching)					
												PE Teacher					
															Internship at West Brom (psychology)		





# NIAMH CHARLES

England Women's Under-20 Player

AGE GROUP		UNDER-14	UNDER-15	UNDER-16	UNDER-17	UNDER-18	UNDER-19	UNDER-20	UNDER-21
AGE		13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
FOOTBALL	Club Football	Grassroots							
			Liverpool Academy						
	International Football			Liverpool First Team					
				England Age groups					
EDUCATION	School Level	School Years 8-9							
			GCSEs						
	Further Education				A-Levels (Biology, Chemistry, Psychology)				
	Higher Education						Liverpool John Moors University (Sport and Exercise Science)		



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