

The FA Women's Super League 2014-18



- League development plans
- Launch of a second division
- How to apply



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Foreword

There are three key reasons why there has never been a better time to set new goals for the women's game in England.

Firstly, the London 2012 Olympic Games demonstrated the quality and depth of women's football. The Games provided renewed momentum for the nation's largest team sport for females and right now, media interest in women's football is at an all-time high.

Secondly, St. George's Park in Burton-upon-Trent, this country's first national football centre, has just opened. In time, it will produce better coaches and in turn, better players – male and female.

Thirdly, 2013 marks the 20th anniversary of when The FA took over the women's game. The FA will also celebrate its 150th anniversary – with a continued commitment to develop every aspect of the game, for everyone.

The new goals for women's football have been set out in a recently-published FA strategy, 'Game Changer', which will guide the women's game from 2013-18.

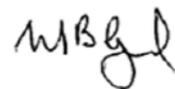
'Game Changer's' key strategic objectives are:

- **To expand The FA WSL**
From eight to a maximum of 20 clubs across two divisions.
- **To create an Elite Performance Unit**
Devoted to the women's game, based at St. George's Park.
- **To deliver a new commercial strategy**
Generating significant new revenues for women's football.
- **To grow participation**
Becoming the second-largest team sport in the country, after men's football.
- **To grow the fanbase**
Using innovative digital media techniques to engage our target audiences.

To support the overall women's game, The FA will also create a new women's league and competitions unit to oversee the development of The FA WSL, The FA Women's Cup and the complete women's football league pyramid.

The second division of The FA WSL will be launched in 2014 and this document explains the structure and sustainability behind it – and how your club can apply.

We look forward to receiving your application – and together building a bigger, brighter and better future for women's football.



Michael Game
FA Board Member and Chairman, The FA WSL



Be part of a bigger, better, brighter future

2012 has been an extraordinary year for women's football, even considering the growth in strength and support it has seen in recent years. UEFA and FIFA continue to run successful international tournaments and the international game is developing apace. The FIFA Women's World Cup has just been expanded to 24 teams to acknowledge the growth in standards throughout the world.

Women's football continues to be recognised as the number one female team participation sport in England, and the fourth-largest team sport overall with 253,600 women playing football every month. Now it has set its sights on becoming the number two overall team participation sport by 2018, behind men's football.

The FA Women's Super League was launched in 2011 as part of The FA's commitment to create winning teams, increase participation and create a clear pathway to develop players.

A new, semi-professional summer league with eight teams playing from March to October, The FA WSL provides a direct connection between the England teams and top-quality club football. It has revolutionised the women's game in this country and has delivered four significant benefits:

- A rise in domestic playing standards;
- Improvement in playing and other career opportunities for talented players;
- Growth in the profile of the game, including increased TV and media coverage;
- An uplift in commercial investment.

The FA WSL is now preparing to expand. After being closed for the 2011, 2012 and 2013 seasons, it will open to new clubs in 2014 and The FA WSL second division will be launched. Current and new clubs are invited to apply.

The future success of the league will depend on the quality and commitment of the best players, coaches and great English clubs wanting to be part of The FA WSL. We encourage all those with a passion for women's football and for excellence - and who share our vision for the future - to apply. This brochure tells you how.



“Women’s football is the area with the most potential for growth in the nation’s favourite game. We are determined to lead that development at every level and have created a robust plan for doing so using all our resources.”

David Bernstein

Chairman, The Football Association

Women's football highlights 2008-2012

- In March 2011 The FA launched The FA WSL, a new women's semi-professional league with eight teams playing from March to October;
- The FA WSL broadcast partner, ESPN, televised weekly highlights shows and a series of live games, creating an exciting new platform for women's football;
- The FA WSL's commercial partner, Continental Tyres, committed to the promotion of women's football, supporting 22 FA Girls' Football Festivals in 2012. Over 6,500 girls attended and the programme increased regional media coverage and awareness of the game;
- England players were granted FA centralised contracts and in 2012, 20 of those granted contracts were registered and played with FA WSL clubs;
- Women's football continues to be recognised as the number one female team participation sport and the fourth-largest team sport overall in England;
- The England women's senior team reached the final of the UEFA European Championship in 2009 and the quarter-finals of the FIFA World Cup in 2007 and 2011;
- The England women's senior team is currently ranked 8th in the world;
- Under the auspices of The FA, a Great Britain women's team participated for the first time in – and reached the quarter-finals of – the Olympic football tournament at London 2012;
- The total attendance across the 26 women's Olympic football games was 660,986 around the UK. 80,203 watched the USA beat Japan in the final – the second biggest attendance for a women's game in history – while 70,584 watched Great Britain beat Brazil at Wembley in an unforgettable performance in the group stages;
- TV viewing figures also provided proof that the Olympic platform introduced women's football to a whole new audience. A peak audience of 3.9 million watched Great Britain's 1-0 victory over Brazil, with an average of 2.3 million viewers;
- The number of female coaches has almost doubled. There are now more than 25,000 qualified women coaches in England, 200 of whom have achieved Level 3 qualification and 17 reaching Level 4;
- There are now 1,035 qualified female referees – an increase from 636 in 2008.

The FA WSL objectives

In its vital leadership role, The FA will help raise standards in the women's game at every level. It will work in partnership with clubs and other key partners (e.g. in education) so that women's football and its elite competitions thrive.

The FA will use The FA WSL to gain greater exposure for the women's game and financially sustain semi-professional women's football in this country. Greater success internationally, increased participation and new commercial investment will be three clear outcomes.



FA WSL objectives

- To raise the profile of women's football by offering high quality, competitive football at the top of the women's game in this country;
- To help create winning England teams;
- To attract and retain England's most talented players;
- For clubs to create more playing and non-playing employment opportunities for elite players so that they can become full/part-time athletes;
- To create clear and effective player pathways that link Centres of Excellence to The FA WSL and beyond to England selection opportunities;
- To support sustainable women's clubs forging powerful partnerships that strengthen their infrastructure and performance on and off the pitch;
- To gain greater media exposure for the women's game, attract more commercial and partner investment and financially sustain semi-professional women's football in England;
- To grow the fan base, increase attendances and grassroots participation through commercial and community programmes and the use of FA WSL ambassadors;
- For clubs to own modern, family and fan friendly home grounds at the heart of the community.





How The
FA WSL will work

Competition structure

1

The FA is committed to creating a summer football pyramid by launching a second division of The FA WSL. The pyramid will showcase the best English female footballers and drive England forward as a leading football nation. A maximum of 20 FA WSL licensed 'beacon' clubs will be selected across the two divisions who will work with FA Centres of Excellence to provide pathways for English talent.

The FA WSL first division (FA WSL1) is expected to remain at eight semi-professional clubs (maximum of 10, quality permitting), to concentrate talent and maintain competitiveness. Each FA WSL club will be licensed to ensure minimum standards are maintained.

The FA WSL second division (FA WSL2) will be launched in 2014 with a maximum of 10 clubs selected and licensed to different standards to FA WSL1 clubs but with the same fundamental objective: to raise standards in the women's game.

FA WSL2 clubs are likely to be a mix of amateur and semi-professional clubs committed to narrowing the gap with FA WSL1 clubs – both on and off the pitch.

All clubs are required to submit an application if they wish to become a part of The FA WSL. Any club can apply for a place in either division for the 2014 season and it will be the strength of their bid that determines if and where they are placed.

The current eight licensed FA WSL clubs will be required to re-apply for a 2014 licence and all applications, old and new, will be reviewed as part of the same process.

Any English affiliated club can apply for a place in either division for the 2014 season and it will be the strength of their bid that determines if and where they are placed.

Promotion and relegation will be introduced between FA WSL1 and FA WSL2 at the end of the 2014 season, with one club being promoted and one relegated. Otherwise, The FA WSL summer of football will be closed and separate from the winter pyramid. There will be opportunities for winter clubs to apply to The FA WSL, as the league expands and develops and should a club ever need to be replaced.

All new entrants will have to prove themselves via an application process to give the league and clubs the best-possible chance of success.

The FA is also funding a new women's Elite Performance Unit (EPU) at St. George's Park and will create the role of Head of Elite Women's Development.

The EPU will streamline the pathway from youth to senior football. The FA WSL is a crucial step in the women's pathway, providing elite players with regular, competitive football and providing a vital link between national teams and amateur football.



Competition format

2

The FA WSL1 and FA WSL2 will run from March to October inclusive, starting in 2014 and only breaking for senior FIFA and UEFA approved international competitions.

The summer schedule will continue to build the unique identity of women's elite football, growing the fan base and encouraging competitiveness, attracting broadcasters and commercial partners in an uncluttered calendar. It also helps England players prepare and peak for tournaments as a summer league aligns better with the international calendar.

All clubs will play home and away fixtures against their opposition in the relevant division as well as competing in The FA WSL Continental Cup and The FA Women's Cup.

The schedule aims to give all clubs at least 20 domestic league and cup fixtures per season, with UEFA Champions League and England international competition in addition.

The schedule will be flexible enough to include midweek, evening games to help secure the best spectator attendances possible.

All FA WSL1 and FA WSL2 clubs will be required to have a reserves team, which will play in The FA WSL reserve league, comprising all 18-20 FA WSL clubs but split into two regional divisions. Further details of The FA WSL reserve league fixture programme for 2013 will be provided as soon as possible.

In time this will develop into a youth/talent competition, transitioning players aged 17 plus, exiting the Centres of Excellence. This will be part of the talent pathway under the leadership of the Head of Elite Women's Development.

Longer term plans for the transition of this league to a youth/talent competition will be announced once the Head of Elite Development has been appointed and he/she has had a chance to assess the optimum way forward.



Partnerships

3

Whilst FA WSL women's clubs are required to contract with The FA in their own right to participate in the league, The FA encourages all FA WSL clubs and applicants to develop effective partnerships to strengthen their applications.

Since launching The FA WSL in 2011, we have witnessed a number of women's clubs forging successful partnerships which have improved the performance of the club both on and off the pitch. Clubs are encouraged to engage with committed partners to help increase efficiencies and strengthen their infrastructure with, for example, men's football clubs, commercial sponsors, facility and education providers.

Partnerships with men's clubs have proven to be very successful in the 2011 and 2012 seasons, where clubs share the values and the same ambition to grow the game for mutual benefit. Such committed partnerships will fast track the development of professional women's football in this country.

There are many benefits that clubs can experience through the right type of partnership including:

- Financial benefits e.g. through third party grants and new commercial revenues;
- VIK (value-in-kind) deals e.g. kit, training equipment, facilities, medical services etc;
- Increased profile, marketing and PR experience and support;
- Efficiencies on expenditure e.g. back office infrastructure and services;
- Additional personnel on hand to provide experience, guidance and support;
- Access to wider and new fan base and community networks.



Facilities

4

The long-term vision is for FA WSL clubs to own their home grounds: modern, family-friendly and at the heart of the community, welcoming 1,000 plus spectators to live games week in week out. The FA will work with clubs over the next decade to help achieve this.

To play in The FA WSL, clubs are required to secure facilities that meet the minimum ground grading criteria, as set out in the application pack. A new grading structure is being introduced for the women's game, which identifies the different levels of ground grading requirements for different leagues.

Clubs participating in FA WSL1 will need grounds that meet The FA Women's Super League Grade A. This is broadly in line with the men's National League System 'Grade C' category.

Clubs participating in FA WSL2 will need grounds that meet The FA Women's Super League Grade B. This combines elements of the men's National League System 'Grade D' and 'Grade E' categories.

Clubs are strongly encouraged to secure facilities with pitches of the highest quality and to forge effective partnerships with facility providers. Appropriate usage agreements, pitch improvement and maintenance programmes will be important so that FA WSL grounds are kept in optimum condition all year-round.

Another important factor when considering applications is the location of a club's ground and the potential fan base in the local area. Grounds with better access and in areas of higher population will be more likely to secure regular, higher attendances.



FA support and investment

5

In the first two seasons of The FA WSL, The FA has supported clubs via a Club Development Fund, providing clubs with money to fund specific areas of their Club Development Plans. This will also be the case in season three.

The FA will continue to support clubs selected for The FA WSL1 and FA WS2 from 2014, and clubs are invited to apply for this funding as part of their application.

Clubs must demonstrate in their applications that they can at least match-fund any Club Development Fund award made to them by The FA e.g. through sponsorship, gate receipts and partnership income.

After the 2014 season, the Club Development Fund will be reviewed annually. The Fund awards are predicted to taper down towards 2018. At that point clubs are expected to be sustainable and not be dependent on FA funds. Clubs should therefore forecast their revenues appropriately.

The Club Development Fund is available to support clubs in three key areas:

1. Management, commercial and marketing services;
2. Coaching, medical and other football-related support services;
3. Facilities.

Clubs can apply for a maximum amount in each area, as indicated in the table. The table identifies the ring-fenced items and amounts that the Club Development Fund is available to pay for. The award money cannot be spent on anything other than that stated, and it is up to clubs whether they wish to apply for this specific funding.

Within area 1, The FA has specifically allocated funds towards key staff to ensure clubs have the appropriate resource to achieve the ambitions for the league. Any FA award made to fund General / Business Development Managers must be match-funded by the clubs to create a meaningful paid role in this key area.

Within area 2, money is allocated to help fund coaches, sports science, physiotherapy and other medical support services. It is imperative for clubs to provide quality coaching and safeguard talent.

Full details of the Club Development Fund and guidance notes are provided in the application pack.

The FA Club Development Fund

	FA WSL1	FA WSL2
Maximum CDF Award available	£70,000	£30,000
1. Management, commercial and marketing services		
General/Business Development Manager (match funded by club to £25,000 for FAWSL1)	£12,500	£5,000
Digital Player Ambassador	£3,000	£0
Match Promotion/Marketing Officer	£14,500	£5,000
Sub-total available:	£30,000	£10,000
2. Coaching, medical and other football-related support services		
Contribution to coaches, sports science, physiotherapy and other medical support service costs	£15,000	£5,000
Contribution to reserve team costs	£10,000	£5,000
Sub-total available:	£25,000	£10,000
3. Facilities		
Contribution to home ground costs	£10,000	£7,500
Contribution to home ground pitch improvement/maintenance costs	£5,000	£2,500
Sub-total available:	£15,000	£10,000



To achieve league objectives and for clubs to become world-class with world-class players, clubs will need to exceed FA grant levels. You are strongly recommended to identify how you will achieve this beyond match-funding. The FA WSL is a semi-professional league with a mix of paid contract and non-contract players earning a living from the game, playing football and fulfilling off-pitch roles.

It is vital that clubs use any FA award and other revenues to develop the skills and infrastructure they require to generate income and become independent and sustainable entities. Financial information and plans demonstrating how clubs will use this funding to secure longer-term financial viability by attracting other income will be an important part of the application process.

After announcing the successful clubs who have applied for FA WSL membership, The FA will confirm recommended Club Development Fund awards and these will be finalised with clubs as soon as possible, at the same time as the club licences.

Other FA support available

The FA will provide support to FA WSL clubs in a number of different ways:

- Central management and administration of the league;
- New personnel and a bigger, dedicated women's league and competitions unit which will oversee FA WSL development and the complete women's football pyramid;
- Investment into training guides, advice and best practice workshops;
- Working closely in partnership with clubs and other stakeholders via The FA WSL management committee (includes two club members);
- Management of sponsor and broadcast contracts to ensure continued promotion of The FA WSL;
- Dedicated FA WSL marketing representatives at Wembley responsible for working with the officers each club will have in post;
- Centralised marketing budget available for attendance-driving marketing activity.

The FA is committed to providing ongoing support and guidance to all interested parties through the application process. This will include providing an Advice Line to help with any queries, the details of which are on page 29 of this brochure.

FA WSL commercial opportunities

6

The FA WSL is revolutionising the women's game in this country, allowing fans, commercial partners and broadcasters to engage with the sport all year-round. Building on this success, ambitious commercial plans for 2014-2018 will take The FA WSL to the next level, for the benefit of all those involved.

In 2014, for the first time in FA history, there will be a distinct commercial programme for women's football which will help establish a clear identity and maximise the impact for the women's game in a crowded sports marketplace. The FA WSL will form the core of this commercial programme, allowing sponsors and broadcasters access to high-quality domestic women's football.

Benefits of participating in The FA WSL

Clubs who participate in The FA WSL enjoy significant commercial and community benefits which include:

1. Media exposure

Participation in The FA WSL guarantees greater media exposure as part of league-wide broadcast and media agreements. The FA WSL has been broadcast live on ESPN since its launch in 2011 with weekly highlights shows profiling all league fixtures.

Whilst 100% of the commercial in-camera inventory is owned by The FA and allocated to FA WSL partners, the league hands back 40% to the clubs who can either sell on or give to existing sponsors/partners to enhance their own relationships.



"This is the right time to be developing commercial plans to bring new partners into women's football. The standards of football are high and we have to keep pace with the top female footballing nations both on and off the pitch. We need partners who will work with The FA WSL to raise the league's profile and really take the game forward. I'm convinced this is the right time for this plan to be put into place."

Alex Horne
FA General Secretary

2. Audience

Football is the biggest participation sport for females in England with 1.3 million female players. Participation in The FA WSL gives clubs access to a new and enthusiastic family audience. This demographic gives participating clubs the opportunity to develop new relationships with partners, commercial sponsors and brands for whom the men's game is not necessarily the right fit.

There has been an increase in FA WSL attendances of 604% compared to the previous winter 2010/11 domestic league.

Research post-Olympics found that 69% of the general public would consider going to see a live women's match, up 15% pre-Olympics. 36% of the general population is interested in The FA WSL, compared to 32% in the Europa League and 40% in The Championship.

3. Community

The FA WSL provides participating clubs a new and exciting route into their local communities. It offers the chance to engage with the many thousands of supporters of women's football through schools, local clubs and County FA networks.

The FA has committed substantial investment in The FA WSL which includes helping clubs to develop and grow their community relationships. An effective community programme reaching out to girls and women is a highly valuable commercial asset for FA WSL clubs.

4. Innovation

The FA WSL leads the way in innovative communications. These innovations have helped to create a new and exciting dynamic on matchday. They have also given fans a real sense of participation and ownership in the league and in their club.

FA WSL innovations include a new Digital Ambassador programme in 2012, which has seen eight FA WSL players successfully promote themselves, the league and their clubs via social media platforms. As a result, FA WSL Twitter following increased by 172% from 4,108 to 11,194 since April 2012.

Interactive marketing campaigns using Twitter and Facebook channels have allowed fans to get behind the scenes of the new league, talking to players directly and being kept up to date with all league information.

The FA WSL won the Football Business Awards 'Best Use of Social Media' 2012. It was also nominated for The PRCA Digital & New Media Award 2012.

Licensing and applications



The application process for FA WSL1 and FA WSL2 will be open and transparent. Any new or existing club may apply, provided they are affiliated to an English County FA.

Applicants are required to submit their application in the form of a Club Development Plan which clearly demonstrates how the club will meet the minimum requirements. These minimum requirements are identified in the application pack and are grouped into four key areas. They are mirrored in a club licence, which each successful FA WSL club will be required to enter into with The FA. Clubs will be monitored to ensure they perform to these standards. The four areas are:

1. **Financial and business management;**
2. **Commercial sustainability and marketing;**
3. **Facilities;**
4. **Players, support staff and youth development.**

The minimum requirements have been developed to advance league and club standards in line with the overall objectives for The FA WSL. Clubs are required to present:

- Accounts and financial forecasts;
- The club's legal ownership and management structure details;
- Professional staff details, including management, marketing, coaching and medical personnel;
- Business development and marketing plan, incorporating target audience and past spectator attendances;
- Definition of the club's regional catchment area, with details of maximum potential spectator base;

- Club Development Fund applications and how the club will match-fund this investment;
- Facility details and ground maintenance plans;
- Regional and youth development programme links.

A selection panel comprising independent members and FA representatives with relevant skills and experience will assess applications against minimum requirements. Clubs are encouraged to go beyond the minimum requirements in order to strengthen their Club Development Plan and increase their chance of a successful application.

All applications will be initially assessed against FA WSL1 criteria unless a club makes it clear it wants to apply specifically for an FA WSL2 licence. Clubs meeting FA WSL1 criteria will be considered for a place in the first division. Clubs that do not meet FA WSL1 criteria but do meet FA WSL2 criteria will be considered for FA WSL2. Clubs that do not meet the criteria for either division will not be eligible for a club licence.

Applicants are required to submit their application in the form of a Club Development Plan which clearly demonstrates how the club will meet the minimum requirements.

Where there are competing applications from the same regional catchment area, the panel will assess the region's capacity to commercially sustain more than one FA WSL club.

Clubs who present the strongest applications will be awarded a four-year club licence from the 2014 FA WSL season, subject to annual review, promotion and relegation.

The selection panel will assess clubs in April and the announcement of the successful clubs to form The FA WSL1 and FA WSL2 will be made by June 2013.



How to apply

An application pack is available for clubs wishing to apply for league status in 2014.

This includes:

Club Development
Plan Minimum
Requirements

Club Development
Plan Template

Club Development
Fund and financial
guidance

Ground
Grading Minimum
Requirements

Terms and
Conditions

This application pack can be downloaded from:

www.TheFA.com/FAWSL2014

Clubs must use the templates provided and be sure to address all items and questions.

Clubs are requested to provide five copies of their application in landscape format on A4 paper in five separate binders. Please do not use plastic wallets or other stationery. The paper should be clean and accessible.

Clubs should also save their application onto a memory stick and submit this with their hard copies.

All applicant clubs are deemed to have accepted the Terms and Conditions set out at www.TheFA.com/FAWSL2014 in full when submitting their application.

Clubs must deliver applications by
**4pm on Monday
4 March 2013**

by hand or by courier to:

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

NB: Please DO NOT POST applications to Wembley Stadium.



Countdown to launch

These are the monthly milestones for new applicants keen to join The FA WSL:

- December 2012:** Applications packs available and Advice Line open
- 4 March 2013:** Deadline by which applications must reach The FA
- April 2013:** Adjudication by independent panel
- June 2013:** Successful clubs announced
- July 2013:** Club licences and Club Development Fund awards offered
- December 2013:** FA WSL AGM
- March 2014:** FA WSL1 and FA WSL2 2014 season commences

The FA Women's Super League Advice Line:

Email: FAWSL@TheFA.com
Tel: 0844 980 0380
Visit: www.TheFA.com/FAWSL2014





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