

The FA WSL Club Development Plan: Minimum Requirements for FA WSL1 and FA WSL2

Thank you for taking time to read through the details and guidance notes for clubs wishing to apply to become part of The FA WSL in 2014.

This checklist is to be used in conjunction with The FA WSL 2014-2018 brochure, guidance notes and templates provided in the application pack. It outlines all the minimum requirements that a club needs to meet in order to be considered for a position in The FA WSL.

Any club that is affiliated to an English County FA and that meets at least FA WSL2 requirements can apply. All clubs are asked to work towards the higher minimum requirements set out for FA WSL1, as this will be necessary for any future promotion.

The purpose of the minimum requirements is to maintain:

- Adequate standards of financial and business management;
- High standards of commercial, marketing and community programmes;
- Adequate levels of management and organisation;
- High-quality infrastructure to provide players, staff, spectators and media with well-appointed, well-equipped and safe working environments.

Club applications should be in the form of a Club Development Plan for 2014-2016. A template is provided for clubs to use to construct their Club Development Plan, and for the sake of consistency, please can all clubs use this template.

There are four main sections in the Club Development Plan:

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

Clubs that exceed minimum requirements and provide additional information will increase their chances of a successful application.

Where there is more than one applicant club from any given region, the club will be marked first on merit against the minimum criteria. The FA will then assess the capacity of that region to commercially sustain more than one FA WSL club, taking into account in particular the commercial sustainability of the relevant clubs.

For current FA WSL clubs re-applying, consideration may also be given to progress made against the club's 2011, 2012 and 2013 Club Development Plans.

Successful new applicants will ordinarily be offered an FA WSL2 licence but if an exceptional application is made, an applicant may be offered FA WSL1 licence.

Club Development Plans will be annexed to club licences in 2014 and clubs will be regularly assessed to ensure they continue to meet minimum requirements.

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1. Financial and business management

1.1 Organisational structure

Clubs should identify their personnel and leadership structure:

- In the form of a club organisational structure chart, that clearly explains the governance structure;
- That includes all staff (management / administrative), coaches, players, and volunteers who provide regular services to the club;
- The structure should also identify new roles when/if the club expands.

Clubs should identify all individuals by name working for the club, including full-time and part-time employees and any key volunteers. A template contact list is provided for this. Please complete this and attach to your application in Appendix A.

1.2 Staffing qualifications

As a minimum, every club is expected to have a dedicated General Manager and/or a Business Development specialist (this could be a combined role). A list of key responsibilities for the General Manager is provided in the application pack.

In 2014, there will be money available from the Club Development Fund that is ring-fenced for the General Manager role. There will be £12,500 available for clubs in FA WSL1 and £5,000 available for clubs in FA WSL2. Clubs are required to match-fund the amount awarded from the Club Development Fund, to provide a total of at least £25,000 in FA WSL1 clubs and at least £10,000 in FA WSL2 clubs.

Every club is expected to have a Treasurer/Accountant. The Treasurer should have as a minimum one of the six Consultative Committee of Accountancy Body recognised qualifications; i.e. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, in Scotland, and in Ireland; The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants; The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants; or The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Evidence of this must be supplied.

In addition, clubs must also have a paid Match Promotion/Marketing Officer who works a minimum of 20 hours per week in FA WSL1 clubs and a minimum of one day per week in FA WSL2 clubs. This member of staff will be focused on driving commercial revenue and gate receipts in order to help the club become self-sustainable.

Clubs are required to provide copies of contracts of employment of such individuals if they have already been appointed, or in the event that they are not yet appointed, costed-recruitment plans to appoint each of them along with job descriptions and confirmation of when they are expected to be appointed.

1.3 Corporate governance

Applicant clubs must be a clearly identifiable, independent, legal entity with transparency of ownership, such as, for example, a private limited company.

This entity will be licenced as The FA Women's Super League Club and will receive any Club Development Fund award. Information supplied as part of the club's application should relate to this entity, unless otherwise specified.

The FA recognises that some existing clubs may not currently be in a position to fulfil this separate, independent legal entity requirement. In such circumstances, the club must be able to evidence clear progress towards being such a separate and independent legal entity and provide confirmation that the club will be a separate and independent legal entity by no later than 1 July 2013.

As evidence of compliance with this requirement, the club should provide the following as attachments to their application, along with any other relevant information:

- Certificate of Incorporation, the Memorandum and Articles, or Club Constitution for the relevant entity (in compliance with The FA's Rules regarding club articles and constitution).
- Explanation of its ownership structure (including parent companies/supporting partners, e.g. a university where applicable).

Clubs should also:

- Identify all shareholders of the club with a 10%+ shareholding;
- Identify all directors (or senior officers) in the clubs;
- Identify all shareholders in any parent companies or group undertakings of the club with a 50%+ shareholding (as defined in sections 1159 to 1161 of the Companies Act 2006); and
- Identify any change of club structure / trading company in the club in the previous three years.

1.4 Club policies

Whilst not a minimum requirement, the club should also provide evidence of its policies in the following areas, or evidence of how it is working towards approving and implementing these:

- Anti-doping;
- Equality and diversity;
- Equal opportunities;
- Health and safety and crowd safety;
- Risk management;
- Social Media.

1.5 Performance and projections

Clubs should use the template provided in Appendix B to provide income and expenditure figures for years ending 2011 and 2012. For merged or newly-formed clubs please provide historic accounts from which the new club has been formed, if relevant. The figures provided should marry with club audited accounts or financial statements already presented to The FA.

Clubs must also provide detailed financial forecasts within the same template (Appendix B) for two years from 1 November 2013 to 31 October 2014 and from 1 November 2014 to 31 October 2015 demonstrating:

- Solvency;
- Club Development Fund application (see section 1.7);
- Evidence and plans to at least match-fund anticipated FA investment and specify the clear outcomes that will be delivered with such investment;
- Clear proof of income or comprehensive evidence of plans to generate income.

NB Clubs should support the forecasts with explanatory notes within the template for each income and expenditure item so that the selection panel understands the basis of the calculations.

1.6 Solvency, revenue and overheads

Current and up to date evidence and information, so far as it is available, should be provided within the template provided for section 1.5 as follows:

- Salary costs broken down between playing and non-playing staff on a role by role basis with full financial information;
- Sponsorship income (two-year history, if applicable, and two-year projections);
- Attendance analysis (two-year history, if applicable, and two-year projections for gate receipts);
- Other income streams from third-party grants or funding, including funding in kind (e.g. from partner or host organisations, facility providers, professional men's clubs or

Sportsmatch etc). Please indicate any conditions which exist in relation to such income streams and compliance to date with such conditions (if any);

- Any current debts, specific intentions or plans to reduce these debts, and any security granted to any party in relation to any debt;
- Any recent insolvency in relation to the club or the withdrawal of core funding in relation to the club or any of its core funding partners e.g. a men's football club, which threatened the club's ability to continue operations, in the two years prior to the application.

1.7 The FA WSL Club Development Fund (CDF)

For 2014, there is a Club Development Fund of a maximum of £70,000 per annum available per FA WSL1 club, and a maximum of £30,000 per annum available per FA WSL2 club for the 2014 season. The fund is broken down into three investment areas:

	FA WSL1	FA WSL2
Maximum CDF Award available	£70,000	£30,000
1. Management, commercial and marketing services		
General/Business Development Manager	£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

* Note 1

* Note 2

* Note 1: The money available for reserve team costs can include coaching, medical, other football-related support services, facilities or travel costs.

* Note 2: Expenditure in this area can include significant ViK contributions from partners.

Clubs should:

- Confirm how much money they are applying for out of the CDF;
- Show how this money will be used to support staffing and activity in the three investment areas to promote club sustainability;
- Provide evidence and plans to at least match-fund FA investment and specify the clear outcomes the club will deliver with such investment;
- Provide evidence and plans to at least match-fund any FA investment towards the General/Business Development Manager;
- Provide detailed CDF financial forecasts for 1 November 2013 to 31 October 2014.

NB Clubs are provided with a CDF template to use when preparing your forecast for 2014.

2. Commercial sustainability and marketing

2.1 Personnel

Clubs applying to FA WSL1 must have a Match Promotion/Marketing Officer as itemised in section 1. The appointed person must have the necessary qualifications and/or experience, be approved by The FA and in post by 1 January 2014 to qualify for the available funding. He/she will attend monthly meetings at Wembley and relevant training and support will be provided by The FA. Further guidance on this role is provided in the application pack.

Clubs applying to FA WSL2 are not required to have a separate, dedicated marketing specialist, however £5,000 of the Club Development Fund is allocated to this area for paid work or services in order to raise the profile and drive attendances.

We recommend that FA WSL2 clubs combine the General Manager and Match Promotion/Marketing Officer roles and responsibilities and consider creating a more substantial paid (or hybrid paid/volunteer) role for one person to manage the club on a day-to-day basis and be The FA's prime point of contact.

2.2 Regional profile and partnerships

The club's catchment area and reach of activities and services should be defined in the application.

Evidence should be provided covering:

- Population size of catchment area;
- Geographical size of catchment area;
- Extent of transport links (major roads, railway lines, airports);
- Links with FA Girls' Centres of Excellence within the catchment area;
- Current national players (senior, U23, U19) playing within the catchment area; and
- Current FA Women's Premier League clubs in the catchment area.

Evidence should be provided of partnerships, networks and relationships with other clubs, football services and organisations in the catchment area e.g. universities etc.

Credit will be given for demonstrating clear and identifiable access to a catchment area which includes areas of high population density. This is so that each club, through its marketing, media and commercial plans can raise profile, generate income effectively and attract the maximum number of spectators possible to each game.

2.3 Spectator base

Clubs must provide independent research and/or robust evidence to confirm the following regular spectator attendance projections and the confirmed maximum spectator potential:

Season	FA WSL1	FA WSL2
2014	550 minimum	250 minimum
2015	600 minimum	300 minimum
2016	700 minimum	350 minimum
2017	800 minimum	400 minimum

An FA WSL2 club who is promoted to FA WSL1 will be set individual targets to support the transitional phase.

Clubs must also provide figures for historic spectator base from the club's previous two seasons, showing core/average attendances (except for a newly-created club), along with:

- Evidence or reason for lack of current/recent support; and
- If attendances peak / trough or fall below average, reasons should be provided.

See the financial guidance notes and club income and expenditure templates in the application pack to demonstrate expectations in terms of attendances, ticket prices, and the impact this will have on clubs' revenue streams. Clubs are encouraged to develop a four-year realistic ticket-pricing plan, steadily decreasing the number of complementary tickets issued and increasing prices. Credit will be given to clubs that show innovative ways in their Club Development Plans to achieve this. The FA will work with licensed clubs to agree a league-wide minimum ticket pricing policy and attendance driving plan for 2014 onwards with sufficient flexibility to accommodate regional variations.

2.4 Marketing, commercial and media plan

Clubs must provide a commercial, marketing and media plan for 2014 and 2015 seasons which aligns with and supports the financial forecasts provided. Yearly objective-focused marketing plans will be developed and delivered by The FA WSL and clubs will be required to do the same each season.

This plan should be submitted as part of the Club Development Plan and should demonstrate how a club will grow and retain its spectator base, develop its profile in its catchment area, and build its commercial revenue. The plan will include:

- Clear and measurable objectives to grow the fan base;
- How the club will ensure regular communication with fans and the wider community;
- The marketing/media budget per season;
- Detail of any existing or potential partnership / sponsorship packages and business development opportunities including merchandise and licenced products;
- Clear and measurable commercial income objectives, showing the sources (sponsorship, merchandise, advertising etc.);
- Commercial income and costs clearly shown in the accounts/projections supplied (see section 1.5 above).

Clubs should explain the strategies by which each of the above will be achieved, detail of any associated costs, and the personnel who will deliver each element of the plan.

3. Facilities

Clubs must provide confirmation of their primary home ground and an alternative home ground if the primary ground does not provide full availability from March to October. The following information is required for both grounds.

3.1 Ground grading and pitch maintenance

Clubs applying to FA WSL1 will need to provide evidence that the ground(s) meet 'The FA Women's Pyramid of Football Ground Grade A' ground grading minimum criteria (equivalent to Men's Grade C). The grading document is provided in the application pack. The long-term vision is for clubs to own their own grounds: modern, family-friendly and at the heart of the community, welcoming 1,000 plus spectators week in week out.

High quality pitches, and professional presentation of stadia is important to the league, its host broadcasters and commercial partners. However, it is also important that there is an exciting atmosphere at FA WSL matches, with crowded, busy stands, which present well on television and keep fans close to action.

Clubs applying to FA WSL2 will need to provide evidence that their ground meets 'The FA Women's Pyramid of Football Ground Grade B' ground grading minimum criteria (this is based on a combination of Men's Grade D and E grounds. This grading document is also provided.

Both FA WSL1 and FA WSL2 clubs will need to provide the following evidence:

- A comprehensive and fully-costed annual ground maintenance plan (containing details of remedial works, considerations for summer usage and any breaks required for maintenance) to ensure the pitch is maintained in the best-possible condition.
- Details of the ground staff, equipment or similar provision for ground maintenance, contractors/service providers who will implement the maintenance plan and evidence of the budget provision to deliver this.

Please note, to meet The FA Performance Quality Standard, a pitch should not accommodate more than 60 games per calendar year.

Prior to the start of the season, there will be IOG inspections at the grounds of selected FA WSL clubs. Clubs will be expected to meet any recommendation made by the IOG e.g. any necessary pitch improvement and remedial works.

3.2 Ground location

Clubs should provide evidence of the maximum potential spectator base within a 20 minute and a 40 minute travel time of the ground via identified transport networks. This should support the spectator base projections provided in section 2.

The location of the ground, in so far as its relation to the conurbation whose name the club bears, or is traditionally associated with, must meet with the approval of both The FA WSL Board Sub Group and The FA WSL Management Committee.

3.3 Occupancy

Clubs should evidence a minimum two-year security of tenure for grounds and training facility. Clubs should also evidence a pitch usage agreement setting out ground availability and terms of use between March and October 2014, including operational and management arrangements for match-day and associated costs. These should be in line with FA Regulations.

Additional credit will be given for longer tenure, with an optimum of ten-year security of tenure with a four-year break clause.

3.4 Broadcast facilities

The stadium should be 'broadcast-friendly' and clubs must provide confirmation that the primary home ground will meet broadcast requirements as summarised in and annexed to the ground grading requirements. These requirements, as updated from time to time with The FA WSL host broadcaster(s) will also be licence requirements.

Please see the ground grading documents for further information on broadcast requirements.

3.5 First-team training facilities

Clubs must provide confirmation of:

- The Club's primary training facility;
- Evidence of a minimum one-year security tenure and usage agreement for their training facility for the 2014 Season.

Additional credit will be given for longer tenure, and if the training facilities also contain any or all of the following:

- Floodlighting;
- Artificial surface;
- Gym;
- Team meeting rooms;
- Football staff offices;
- Medical facilities;
- IT facilities.

4. Players, support staff and youth development

4.1 The FA Women's Football Pyramid

Each club should provide details of its current status in the Women's Football Pyramid (please confirm if you are not an existing club within the Women's Football Pyramid).

4.2 Coaching staff

Clubs are to provide evidence that the following personnel are in place, or a clear written commitment to making such appointment(s) with detailed recruitment plans by 1 January 2014. Clubs should provide names, CVs containing details of relevant qualifications and experience, and job remits/responsibilities and terms of engagement for each of the following roles:

- All clubs must have a Head Coach with a UEFA A Licence;
- All clubs must have an Assistant Coach with a minimum UEFA B Licence;
- Clubs applying to FA WSL1 must have a Goalkeeping coach with a Goalkeeping Coaching B Licence. Clubs applying to FA WSL2 may have a Goalkeeping coach with The FA Goalkeeping Level 2 Award who is working towards The FA Goalkeeper Coaching B Licence by January 2015.

4.3 Medical staff

Clubs are to provide evidence that the following personnel are in place, or a clear written commitment to making such appointment(s) with detailed recruitment plans by 1 January 2014. Clubs should provide names, CVs containing details of relevant qualifications and experience, and job remits/responsibilities and terms of engagement for each of the following roles:

- Physiotherapist who:
 - Is a Chartered Physiotherapist;
 - Is a registered member of the Health Professions Council and the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy;
 - Has an Advanced Emergency Aid qualification;
 - Will be present for three hours at home games (set-up, treatment of players before game, warm-up and after-game), and at away games for three hours plus travelling time;
 - Will attend at least two club training sessions each week, which usually last two/three hours each;
 - Will provide two extra clinic/rehabilitation sessions on other nights separate from training which last two/three hours each.
- Doctor who:
 - Is fully registered and licenced to practice by the GMC;
 - Has appropriate medical indemnity to treat/advice FA WSL players;
 - Has an Advanced Emergency Aid qualification;
 - Will be present at all home matches; and
 - Preferably has a Diploma or Masters in Sport and Exercise Medicine.

Please see the medical regulations which summarise the full emergency equipment required and cost predictions for this equipment and physiotherapy/medical practitioners.

4.4 Player support staff

Clubs should provide evidence that a Strength and Conditioning Coach is in place, or a clear written commitment to making such appointments by 1 January 2014. The Strength and Conditioning Coach should have a BSc in Sports Science, plus a BAWLA award or UK Strength and Conditioning accreditation (UKSCA).

Clubs should provide a name, CV containing details of relevant qualifications and experience, job remit/responsibilities and terms of engagement for this role.

These details should also be provided for any other performance management, player welfare and sports science support staff.

4.5 Squad cap

The FA is keen to continue to develop The FA WSL as an exciting, high quality competition, whilst also ensuring club sustainability. The FA WSL 2014 will support this by continuing to impose a squad cap limiting the number players a club can register and combining this with a salary cap mechanism. The league will also limit the number of non-EU players a club can recruit and incentivise clubs to recruit home grown talent. Current FA WSL rules are available from the League Secretary.

4.6 Training

Clubs applying to FA WSL1 and FA WSL2 should provide a summary of a proposed weekly training programme for the 2014 season and confirm this will be maintained to ensure the club is providing full squad pitch-based sessions at least twice each week. FA WSL1 clubs are encouraged to have at least three pitch-based training sessions each week and clubs demonstrating this will be considered favourably.

Training programmes will vary from club to club and The FA International Department will provide guidance to clubs on programmes which will meet the needs of England international players and support elite player development. There will be a number of workshops hosted by the International Department and FA WSL clubs to discuss and agree this. Sample training programmes and club specific advice will be available on request during the application process.

4.7 Players

To evidence a robust squad, clubs applying to FA WSL1 are asked to provide information by completing the player information template included in the application pack in Appendix D. Please provide an indicative player list (named and anonymous where based on recruitment plans and intentions) including the following details:

- Duration and type of contract anticipated;
- Any non-contract players;
- Named players who are on long-term contracts or who are contracted with the club with an option to extend for 2014;
- Unnamed players targeted for recruitment;
- Any 'home grown' players who have transitioned to the club from a linked, regional centre of excellence or who have played with the club for at least three years;
- Any EU players the club is looking to secure;
- Any players the club is looking to secure who will need a work permit.
- Anticipated salary costs;
- Senior centrally-contracted players currently / anticipated to be registered in the squad;
- Under 23, Under 19 and Under 17 international players currently/anticipated to be registered in the squad.

4.8 Partnerships

Partnerships listed here should reflect those in section 2.2.

Within the club's stated catchment area, each application should evidence:

- At least one strong relationship with a lead FA Centre of Excellence;
- Strong links with your County FA;
- Links (existing and anticipated) with at least one Higher Education establishment;
- Links (existing and anticipated) with at least one Further Education establishment;
- Performance lifestyle support.

4.9 Reserves League

All clubs in FA WSL1 and FA WSL2 must have a reserves team with appropriate levels of and access to qualified FA WSL coaches, medical and support services. These teams will compete in The FA WSL reserves league.

The reserves league will be divided into two geographical divisions with each club playing a total of circa 16–18 fixtures (on a home and away basis), depending on the location of all 18-20 clubs. The Club Development Fund provides a contribution of £10,000 towards these costs for FA WSL1 clubs and £5,000 for FA WSL2 clubs in 2014.

NB The reserve league fixture programme (starting/finishing dates and fixture rounds) will be announced as soon as possible in 2013 for 2013/14. This will take into account the international calendar for youth /under 19s as it is anticipated that the reserve league will comprise many of these players. The league will overlap in part with The FA WSL season 2014, to allow reserve players the opportunity to be available for the first team competition.

Each application should evidence in the relevant section of Appendix D:

- An indicative reserve player list (as per section 4.7 for first team squad). As a minimum please provide named players where known, home grown players and any youth internationals;

Please also provide:

- Player recruitment plans and youth development philosophy including reference to The FA linked Centre of Excellence;
- Coaching, medical and performance support services available to reserves;
- Weekly training programme.