



TO GROW, GUIDE AND GOVERN

**THE FA REFEREEING STRATEGY 2023-26
YEAR 1 REVIEW**

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THE BIG 4 GOALS

1 MAKE REFEREEING AN ATTRACTIVE CHOICE

- » Halve the time it takes to reach the top levels
- » Slicker, easier online interaction via one system across the game
- » Mandate referee training across the men's and women's academy systems

3 ENHANCE REFEREE PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

- » Triple the number of online resources and training
- » Double the investment in our development system
- » Supercharge FA CORE programme with increased development opportunity

2 IMPROVE THE REFEREE EXPERIENCE

- » Reward and recognise our referees
- » Explore and implement behavioural change initiatives
- » Create community and connections across all levels

4 MAKE REFEREEING MORE INCLUSIVE

- » 50% Increase in referees from under-represented ethnicities
- » 50% Increase of women referees
- » Create networks to welcome and support under-represented groups



Year 1 of the FA Refereeing Strategy has demonstrated the benefits of creating a co-ordinated, and strategic approach to the biggest issues impacting refereeing. We are changing the narrative on what it is to be a referee by focusing on ways in which referees can feel valued, by making it an attractive proposition for people from all communities, and by setting up an infrastructure where all match officials can access development opportunities.

The increased visibility of diversity across all levels of the game and the unprecedented number of new match officials who have been attracted into refereeing are two of the highlights of the past 12 months but we realise there is still more to do. This is the start of the journey and we are already on our way to making further developments in 2024/25 to make refereeing more attractive, more inclusive, and enhance the access to ongoing development for all our match officials.

Peter Elsworth
Head of Referee Operations





Since the launch of the three-year Referee Strategy last year I have been delighted with the progress made in every area. Whilst the work in each pillar has been, of necessity, at different speeds, the overall achievement to date has been pleasing with more to come! Referees' Committee Champions have been appointed for each of the pillars to help with the encouragement and support of those delivering the various elements.

England is one of few countries in Europe where the referee numbers are going up, rather than down. This is, in no small way, down to the work done locally to encourage and support colleagues working in the grassroots game. Season 2024/25 will see the Referees' Committee looking at ways to enhance this support to the benefit of all. Rising numbers is more than pleasing and to be applauded. With that and the shortening of the career path refereeing as a whole, is in good place.

David Crick
Chair of FA Referees' Committee



“My first Cup Final.”

Elise Carroll-Mileham
Norfolk FA



“My daughter at a recent Cup Final.”

Parent of Youth Referee

“Pictures of my first season at Level 4 make me proud, topped with my AR appointment in the FA Vase Round 3.”

Jack Simpson
Derbyshire FA



“A pre-match photo before an Eastern Counties Football League game between NW London and Enfield Borough.”

Aseea Coombs
London FA



“AR1 on the Manchester Football League Cup Final.”

Chris Barlow
Manchester FA



"I've always wanted to referee in the Emirates FA Cup and this year I got a game in the first preliminary round."

Ross Steele
Sheffield & Hallamshire FA



"Receiving the Intermediate Cup Final appointment in the middle of my first season in Kent FA was a great achievement for me."

Ismail Hakan Isik
Kent FA

"Taking charge of FC Isle of Man v Chadderton in front of 1,037 fans. The first time I'd travelled on a flight to a game and first flight in almost 12 years."

James Milburn
Liverpool FA



"Officiating the Thurlow League Play-Off Final."

Bruno Marques
London FA

"I had the opportunity to officiate at a charity event for Disabled participants, although it was pouring with rain, I still loved the occasion."

Miya McManus
Liverpool FA



“The 2023/24 season has been a thrilling journey, marked by numerous memorable moments. While there were moments of triumph, such as being promoted to officiate at the highest level of the Women’s pyramid or being selected to officiate in a National League North Play-Off game, there were also setbacks and challenges to overcome. Despite the hurdles faced, I’ve learned valuable lessons that have fuelled my determination for the upcoming season.

“Looking ahead to the 2024/25 season, my goals and aspirations are clear: to build upon successes, address weaknesses, and strive for promotion to the next level up. Whether it’s refining skills, strengthening my professionalism on the pitch, or contributing more effectively to the team’s success on and off the field of play, I’m committed to pushing myself to new heights and making the next season even better than the last.”

Adewunmi Soneye

Level 1W, 3A & NGAR (Manchester FA)





“The 2023/2024 season has been one of my most enjoyable seasons so far as a referee. It has been my first year as a Level 4 on the Men’s pathway and second year as a 3W and 2WAR on the Women’s pathway, which has proved both challenging but rewarding. The first and main challenge throughout the season has been trying to balance my games, ensuring I am completing enough games on both pathways and that they are consistent so I can keep a rhythm and flow going. Through this I have had plenty of support from coaches at different levels, which has definitely helped whenever I have felt stressed or concerned about games. My biggest highs this season has been an appointment in the fifth round of the Adobe Women’s FA Cup and appointments to the WNL and PGA Cup Finals. I have established myself as a Level 4 and I want to grow from that next season and try to push onto the next level. On the women’s side my aim for the season was to improve on my performances from last season which I believe has happened and to become more confident in myself as an official. Going into next season my main goal is to continue enjoying officiating and never try to lose that enjoyment, whilst pushing on as much as I can to try and reach the next levels.”

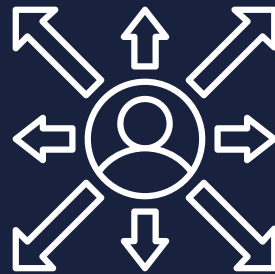
Julia Kings
Level 2WAR & 4 (Birmingham FA)

EXPERIENCE & ENVIRONMENT



We will ensure the safety and continued enjoyment of referees at all levels by reducing abuse and making referees feel truly valued on and off the pitch.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



We will build a culture that provides opportunities for all in refereeing by actively addressing barriers to inclusion.

PERFORMANCE & DEVELOPMENT



We will provide the tools and resources to help referees at all levels perform to their maximum ability.

FOCUS AREA 1

EXPERIENCE & ENVIRONMENT

We will ensure the safety and continued enjoyment of referees at all levels by reducing abuse and making referees feel truly valued on and off the pitch.



511

Nominations for Referee Recognition Awards



'Celebrating 2023/24'
X Campaign



Launch of the
BodyCam Pilot with 1500
matches part of the trial



Introduction of LMS for
2024/25 season agreed

74%

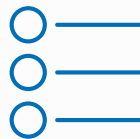
Satisfaction rating for Match
Officials on Positive Football
Environment Survey



A greater emphasis on
Participant Behaviour in the
Professional Game



Introduction of under-18s
armbands nationally during
2024/25 season



Points deductions
introduced in grassroots
game for poor behaviour



HOW WE ARE MEASURING SUCCESS:

IMMEDIATE:

1. Assess success of bodycam trial.
2. Implementation of an updated disciplinary approach to address poor behaviour across the professional and grassroots game.
3. Deliver a communication strategy portraying the positive benefits of refereeing.
4. Delivery of reward programmes and initiatives which celebrate and incentivise referees.

BY 2026:

1. Improved Positive Football Environment scores for referees and wider participants across the game.
2. Increased wider game understanding of referee structures and experience.
3. Create an education and training package to support a welfare officer programme across the grassroots game.



WHAT WE ARE USING TO MEASURE SUCCESS:



Number of games covered with BodyCams



Positive Football Environment survey scores for match officials and key stakeholders



Referee Recognition Award submissions



“I’m Head of Competitions for England Deaf Football on a voluntary basis. England Deaf Football is the only deaf-led football body in England that provides leagues and tournaments to Deaf clubs and players. EDF is recognised by The FA.

As a referee, my parent county is Birmingham FA. I have been a referee for three years now, currently a Level 5. My duty as referee is to ensure the games are fair and adhere to the Laws of the Game. I’m also an active Deaf and British Sign Language (BSL) user referee for Birmingham County FA and one of five active Deaf referees in England who are BSL users!

“A highlight for me this season was being an Assistant Referee at Wembley for England’s Deaf Women’s fixtures. I was also personally invited to watch England vs Belgium games in the royal box by The FA’s chair after she recognised my work within Deaf football. I was lucky enough to meet the President of the Belgian FA during my visit.

“I always see my volunteering as valuable for Deaf football, as I know I’ve changed over 500 Deaf players’ lives in England. I give them opportunities to play and allow them to find their Deaf identities in various ways and influence The FA and society with their perspective on Deaf football and the Deaf community. It’s rewarding, indeed!”

Sean Noone
Level 5 Referee

“My middle son has recently completed his first season as a Youth Referee. He is small for an under-15 and is mildly autistic. He has a specificity about rules and correctness, and he is passionate about the RESPECT agenda.

“The single biggest challenge that exists is the behavioural standards on and around a pitch. Fortunately, he is confident about three key things: his knowledge of the Laws of The Game, his ability to manage a game, and the support and knowledge he can draw on from his parents and his support group (local RDO, local RA, his mentor etc). This means that he has the confidence to play his part in the game!

“I would summarise this season as one of observing how a strength of knowledge, confidence and conviction to uphold standards can be a powerful thing. However what is clear is that a lot more education needs to happen, with coaches, players and supporters, regarding how negative actions not only undermine the game but also set extremely poor examples to the children on the pitch.

“We have a beautiful game. And although it is inherently competitive, it is also fundamentally about the development of young athletes and aspiring adults. We must never lose sight of this, at any level and through any pathway.”

Jon Potter
Parent of a Youth Referee



“The sessions delivered by the FA Referee Department at FA Women’s National League club meetings are an invaluable tool to support education of players and coaches, driving improved administration and behaviours. They are delivered in a positive, collaborative manner with lots of interaction, keeping the league up to speed on the latest refereeing developments each season.”

Nick Frith
Women’s League Operation Senior Manager



“It has been great to grow and develop my Walking Football refereeing. I find that refereeing this format is more enjoyable than a lot of the other formats of football that I referee.”

Megan Harley-Buller
Walking Football Referee, London FA

“A good Walking Football referee course and the training of Walking Football players and existing referees is very important. We have found that qualified referees have the game management skills and mind set to deal with situations, but not the understanding of the new format and its unique aspects. Walking Football players turning to refereeing games often have a better understanding of the sport, but not the necessary player management and communication skills.”

Mark Blythe
Walking Football Referee, Surrey FA



REFEREE RECOGNITION AWARDS 2024

170 people were attendance at the event, with 11 awards and multiple international caps handed out. Stephen Bradford picked up Outstanding Contribution to Refereeing and Refereeing in the Community awards for his service to the Sheffield & Hallamshire FA. Steve's passion for grassroots football and refereeing was highlighted, with several young players and officials also produced under his watch. In 25 years he has never taken a fee and only recently set up a fund to support and pay for referees who can't afford the course. Wendy Toms received the Special Recognition Award.

Wendy was the first female to be appointed as a fourth official in a Football league game in 1991 and six years later became the first woman to officiate in a Premier League match as assistant referee in Southampton v Crystal Palace. In 1999, she led the first all-female team of officials to take charge of a senior men's fixture, Kidderminster Harriers v Nuneaton Borough in the Conference. She concluded her five-year stint on the FIFA list by officiating France vs Italy at the 2005 UEFA Women's Championship. There were also a number of nominees who were highly commended at the awards.



OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO REFEREEING AWARD

Stephen Bradford

INTERNATIONAL CAPS PRESENTED

Peter Bankes
2021 - 2022

Alison Chapman
2002 - 2008

Jake Collin
2010 - 2017

Helen Fulcher
2009 - 2011

Mo Matadar
2005 - 2009

Tony Leake
1995



SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Wendy Toms



INSPIRATIONAL
ROLE MODEL

Paige Gowans-Smith



REFEREEING IN THE
COMMUNITY AWARD

Thomas Green



POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT
AWARD

April Wood



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD

Ernie Broughton



CHAMPIONING DIVERSITY
AWARD

Lorraine Humm



REFEREEING VOLUNTEER
SUPPORT OF THE YEAR

Thomas Viles



NEWCOMER
OF THE YEAR

Jessica Hodsdon



CLUB RECOGNITION
AWARD

Jack Daniels

NEW REFEREE DEVELOPER TRAINING

“I had the pleasure of being invited to the New Referee Developer training weekend at Warwick University which was led by Marc Birkett. Marc also had ‘The A Team’ with him for support. Over the course of the weekend, we all worked hard in our group, we had Derryl David and Kat Davey as our group support and their input was very helpful. It was a very well-structured event and one which I thoroughly enjoyed. I feel very privileged to have taken the first steps to being part of this fantastic team.”

Paul Sparrow
New Referee Developer



RDO DEVELOPMENT

“Direct support to the RDO network is vitally important for the success of The FA’s Referee Strategy as they are front and centre at the grassroots. Investment in personal development to this network helps to inspire the team to deliver consistent messages back into their counties.”

Marc Birkett
National Referee Manager County FAs

RDO INDUCTIONS:

All new RDOs visited in County FAs within first three weeks of starting. x1 Induction call & x1 Induction Developer Training (figures included above).

WEEKLY UPDATES:

30 updates since coming into post (November 2023).



RDO Networking Days: North, South East, South West & Midlands delivered in February, 36 attendees (30 County FAs)



RDO Conference @ Warwick University
41 attendees (36 County FAs)



4 online RDO catch-up calls

38

attendees (34 County FAs) attended RDO Conference @ Wembley Stadium



BODYCAM TRIAL

The FA BodyCam trial has developed further into the 2023/24 season covering just short of 1,500 games across the country providing us with some great insight into behaviour within the grassroots game. The feedback so far has been really positive, with no activations in the 2023/24 season.

We are currently working to extend our BodyCam trial into season 2024/25, with 4 further County FA's

coming on-board, to ensure we can gain greater insight and feedback of the benefits of BodyCams. It is hoped that by the conclusion of the 2024/25 season we will have data from over 4000 fixtures providing The FA with a significant amount of data to review the effectiveness of BodyCam's being utilised within a grassroots setting.

Ross Joyce
National Referee Manager

CELEBRATING 2023/24 X CAMPAIGN



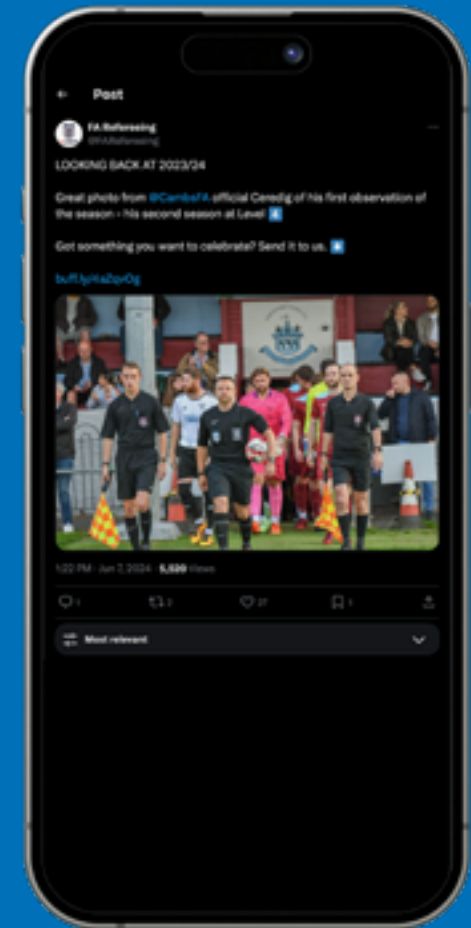
'Celebrating 2023/24'
X Campaign

57

Submissions

100K+

100,000+ engagements online
during the whole campaign



FOCUS AREA 2

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

We will build a culture that provides opportunities for all in refereeing by actively addressing barriers to inclusion.



3,139

Female Match Officials



Premier League debuts for
Rebecca Welch, Sam Allison
and Sunny Gill

3,527

Black, Asian & Mixed Heritage
Match Officials



Women's FIFA Badge alignment
to Step 1 AR or Step 2 Referee

23

Match Officials in CORE X



First ever English Referee team
appointed to UEFA Women's
Champions League Final

510

Match Officials accessed the
Bursary Scheme



The first Black English
Match Official appointed
to a European Final



HOW WE ARE MEASURING SUCCESS:

IMMEDIATE:

1. Number of courses delivered.
2. Number of referees from these courses actively refereeing.
3. Number of bursaries allocated.

BY 2026:

1. Net increase of 1000 referees from under-represented groups (across gender/ethnicity).
2. The proportion of referees from under-represented backgrounds through the referee development pathway to exceed the proportion of referees from the same background across all levels.
3. Equal representation of under-represented groups across all levels.



WHAT WE ARE USING TO MEASURE SUCCESS:



We utilise our ED&I dashboard to track number of referees from historically under-represented groups



All Match Officials have access to an ED&I form when re-registering which allows us to track the number of match officials from all backgrounds



We are working with the data team at The FA to create a 'Referee Promotion' dashboard that tracks all promotions and offers quantitative data related to promotions from under-represented groups



35

ETP Coaches

88

Match Officials

70+

Coaching Visits

1

Fitness Session

3

Online Development Sessions

1

In-person Camp

As we come to the end of Year Two for the Emerging Talent Programme, it is testament to the commitment and dedication of our regional leaders and coaches that the programme is on track to achieve what it set out to do... 'find our next generation of women professional match officials'. This spring we have seen nine emerging talent programme officials selected for Cup Final appointments within the FA Women's National League and Professional Game Academy Finals, and 50 have applied to be considered in the National Pool of officials for season 24/25.

We have also seen match officials from the programme receive development opportunities within The FA Women's Championship, the results are quite remarkable.

As the programme continues to grow, it is important that we maintain standards within the programme and ensure we identify and develop talent whilst offering additional opportunities for all women and girls regardless of their ambition.

Joanna Stimpson
Women's Refereeing
National Development Manager

“The Emerging Talent Programme programme has provided a positive support network for young female referees in the early stages of their career. Referees receive the support of a designated coach, a regional lead and the national manager through a point of contact, observations, training days and camps. From a coach’s perspective I have enjoyed being part of the journey and supporting young female referees to develop their refereeing. Looking towards 2024/25 the support will be even bigger and more tailored, allowing match officials part of the programme to feel even more valued.”

Lauren Whiteman
Emerging Talent Programme Coach



Pictured - Leoni Harland, ETP Coach



“As a referee, it is easy to feel isolated, but the Emerging Talent Programme has created a unique community, not only among the emerging referees, but also the more experienced coaches. We have regular in-person sessions within our separate regions, as well as an annual weekend where everyone across the country comes together. These sessions are not just about professional development; they’re about building lasting relationships that extend beyond the pitch. We share experiences and challenges with those who truly understand the unique position we’re in, and can learn from each other’s successes and setbacks to make us all better referees. It is a privilege to be part of the Emerging Talent Programme, and I believe my support network is extraordinary, with a strong relationship with my coach who I can go to for any issues, which is essential for success in our role.”

Sophie Perry
Emerging Talent Programme
Match Official

TARGET

Ensure the proportion of women referees operating within the men's professional game is equal to the proportion of women referees nationally.



8.4%

of all match officials are female as of 31st May 2024

13.5%

of Youth Referees are female, based on numbers at the start of the pyramid

6.4%

at Level 2A, meaning the number does decrease as we progress through the pyramid

20.4%

Is the increase in number of female Match Officials. At the conclusion of the 2022/23 season 2,605 match officials were female, however this number has grown to 3,139 for season 2023/24



“Being one of a very few females operating at Level 4, I have found that The FA and the coaches they employ have pushed me to maximise my potential. The games I have been given in my first season have reflected that and without the coaches I wouldn’t have been afforded these opportunities.”

Megan Wilson
Level 4 & 1W



“Operating on the Football League this season has been a dream come true. It has been hard work and made me a better match official by refining and developing my skills game after game. It has made me more resilient but also more confident in myself.”

Emily Carney
Level 1WAR & NGAR



“I’ve had an overall really positive start to life at Level 3! Clubs are really welcoming and do everything they can to make sure I feel both comfortable and supported at each one I’ve been to. Some clubs have better facilities than others and therefore have a few more options in terms of changing rooms etc. but every club I’ve been to has ensured myself and the teams I’ve worked with have been well looked after and made sure everything was in place that needed to be. The teams have been very receptive and I’d say have treated me no differently to my male counterparts (which is always a good sign!!).”

Grace Lowe
Level 3 & 2W



ED&I BURSARY SCHEME

“The Reflective and Representative campaign was formed to recruit 1,000 people from Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage backgrounds over the next three years and forms part of The FA’s wider refereeing strategy, To Grow, Guide and Govern.

“In collaboration with the County FA network across the country, the 2023/24 season has seen targeted Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage courses been delivered across Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Birmingham, Buckinghamshire, Derby, Essex, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Sheffield, Staffordshire, Surrey and West Riding.

“The FA launched To Grow, Guide and Govern in July 2023, which makes a significant commitment to diversify the refereeing pathway over the next three years through the delivery of a greater number of courses, bursary schemes, and enhancing diversity in supporting roles within refereeing.

“Since the launch of the strategy, over 500 people have accessed a referee course via the bursary scheme, while multiple County FAs have

hosted ‘Get into Refereeing’ events for over 250 people from historically underrepresented communities, showcasing the benefits of refereeing, delivering referee taster sessions, and highlighting the important role of parents and guardians for young referees.

“We recognise that the refereeing workforce is not ethnically diverse, and we know that action is needed to rectify this, which The Reflective and Representative campaign is tasked with. This is a strategic commitment for our organisation and it’s clear from what we’ve seen on our courses so far, is that there is great appetite from people belonging to Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage populations to take up refereeing.

“We know there are barriers to entry for many communities, whether that’s course locations or financially, but we feel that this campaign is overcoming such barriers. We want to keep delivering these specific courses to showcase that the referee pathway is there for those that wish to pursue officiating as a career option, supporting them in any way possible through training, mentoring and with financial support where necessary.”

Raj Randhawa
Refereeing ED&I Delivery Manager



“Birmingham FA was fortunate enough to deliver a referee course for under-represented groups back in February. 36 participants benefitted from the bursary scheme and were afforded an opportunity to get involved with refereeing. We were fortunate enough to have Sky Sports cameras with us throughout the course and learners were able to engage with role-models and experienced match officials over the two-day period.

“This project has allowed stakeholders to come together and collectively drive to increase representation within Refereeing, especially in Birmingham where BAMRef, Aston Villa Foundation and the County FA worked together to deliver this course.”

Keiran Forrest
Birmingham County FA
Referee Development Officer



“In the space of a few months since completing the course, I was unexpectedly appointed as referee to a local Girls’ League under-15 cup final and also as assistant referee in the under-16 Girls’ County Cup final. I have also been nominated for the emerging talent program by my RDO. I have had several young female players say to me that it is great to have a good female referee. Knowing I can positively influence a young players enjoyment of playing the game and be a positive role model is extremely rewarding. I have been blessed to have had other amazing refereeing experiences and opportunities thus far and have met a lot of great, friendly and inspiring individuals in the refereeing community.”

Adora



“I used to play competitive football on weekends, so initially, I was hesitant about transitioning to a referee, especially as someone from a Black, Asian & Mixed Heritage background. However, from the moment I officiated my first match in November 2023, it has been an incredible journey. The players, managers, staff and The FA have all been exceptionally supportive and welcoming. Naturally, you won’t get every decision right, but as long as you strive to improve and work hard to ensure fairness, that’s what truly matters. My advice to anyone considering becoming a referee is to take the plunge. You’ll learn a lot about yourself, and it’s a rewarding experience to see the game from a different perspective.”

Nuno

“When I first started the course I didn’t have any set ambitions in refereeing. I thought it was too late to achieve anything and I wanted to become a referee just as a way to keep fit and remain involved in the sport I love. However, this opportunity has connected me with other referees from backgrounds like myself who have gone on to become professionals and this has inspired me to remain open-minded and see what happens. I drove past Wembley Stadium the other day and thought to myself ‘hmm, who knows? Maybe one day’. I remain open to seeing what opportunities the future holds.”

Jesy



“After only three months and 12 games, following continued positive feedback and high marks, I was appointed as Assistant Referee for the Northants Combination League Division 3 Cup Final in April. An experience that has only increased my desire to keep on going. My aim is to reach or be close to reaching Level 4 by the end of the 2024/25 season and then see when I get there.”

Triston



CORE X

“The programme has helped my confidence in becoming a better referee and having access to PGMOL resources such as the coaching staff, diet & nutrition and physical demands by stretching myself to be the best I can.

“I have always considered myself different to other people and this group made me feel comfortable without any judgement.

“I would like to encourage others to consider being part of CORE X to benefit from the support and to be the best match official they can be!”

Minesh Gupta
CORE X Match Official

8

CPD Sessions with two delivered by Anthony Taylor and Natalie Simon



Multiple promotions at the end of 24/25 season

23

Match Officials

2

In-person camps (October and March)

40+

PGMOL Coaching Appointments



Access to LMS System for all members

“Summing up my season is very easy having been realigned to the men’s Championship in the summer and having the opportunity to Referee in the Premier League as the first female was a moment I will ever forget. For me, the people are what make my job so enjoyable and I have worked with some amazing individuals throughout the season both in the men’s pathway and in the WSL. Selection for the Olympics in April this year was the icing on the cake and rounds out a very enjoyable season!”

Rebecca Welch
Former FIFA Referee



5

Women’s Champions
League appointments



Premier League
debut



Women’s Champions
League Final

8

Women’s Super League
appointments

FOCUS AREA 3

PERFORMANCE & DEVELOPMENT

We will provide the tools and resources to help referees at all levels perform to their maximum ability.





Coaching Reports introduced at Level 7-5



The FA Women's National League

Introduction of new Level 3WAR



Step 1 merger with National List of Match Officials

50

New Level 4 Observers

100%

Observer coverage at Step 2

103

Match Officials invited to Assessment Days

500

Match Officials in FA CORE

497

Step 3 / 6 Match Officials attended Development roadshow events

355

Match Officials promoted between Level 4 and 1

24

ERDP Match Officials

12%

of Match Officials promoted mid-season from historically underrepresented groups

500+

Step 5/6 Referee Coaching Visits





HOW WE ARE MEASURING SUCCESS:

IMMEDIATE:

1. Three years as the potential time to progress from Grassroots to National Group. It's currently seven years.
2. Tracked use of online CPD resources and opportunities.

BY 2026:

1. 25% reduction in the average time for referees to reach National League Premier level.
2. Quicker progression from CORE to ERDP.
3. Create structures which provide a variety of routes to the top of the men's and women's games.

WHAT WE ARE USING TO MEASURE SUCCESS:



We are working with PGMOL to create more opportunities for match officials operating throughout the game



We are introducing a Learning Management System to form part of the promotion and reclassification criteria for season 2024/25 and beyond



We are looking to create a dashboard that allows us to better track the rate of match official promotions through the non-league system

“This year has been a pivotal year for me in my first full year as regional lead. Our coaching team are empowered to bring in modern thinking, approaches and new ideas to raise FA CORE to new levels. Our referees are challenged and flexibly seeking better results where marginal gains really do matter the most. We have looked back on our choice of venues, the development day lunches, our coaching team, our referees and our relationships to ensure our product to the sport is the very best out there. Our region has re-engaged with County FA RDOs to identify emerging talent and operating a ‘2 seat’ opportunity for Grassroots Referees to join us to sample FA CORE and we have successfully enrolled 4 new referees during the season to support them when at their peak form.”

James Campbell
 FA CORE Regional Lead

“As a coach the most important thing I need from any referee is the willingness to commit to the process and communicate. Over the past few seasons I have been fortunate to work groups of referees whose willingness to commit to the process, ability to communicate freely and openly, along with their resilience to bounce back from short term setbacks and drive to succeed, has been truly inspiring and drives me to be the best I can be to ensure their journey reaches the destination they desire.”

Phil Hardisty
 FA CORE Coach

5

Summer Camps in 2024



Reducing the ratio of Coach:Referee to 1:4 to allow for better development and coaching support

497

Match Officials for season 2023/24



Focusing on driving Fitness; Knowledge of Law; Effective Communication and On-Field Performance

8

CORE Trial nights open to the top 30% of match officials in every Level 3/4 Merit Table; creating greater diversity of participants. County FAs have been encouraged to nominate 6 match officials with 50% coming from historically under-represented groups



Upcoming development tour opportunities for match officials to visit National Academy Championship in Florida; Iber Cup and Premier League Academy Tournaments

STEP 2 MATCH OFFICIALS

“The Observer scheme implemented at Step 2 has shown that it is possible to set the same performance criteria for different levels of referee which has resulted in the Step 2 observer form being introduced across Steps 2, 3 and 4, providing continuity of expectation for referees as they move through the levels whilst allowing observers to judge performances based upon the same criteria using a standard report form.

“The FA Refereeing Department also made a commitment that there would be 100% observer coverage at every game at Step 2 which has seen a total of 1111 matches covered by an observer from the Step 2 Observer dedicated pool of FA Observers, providing a consistent and credible approach. “Refereeing at Step 2 can be challenging and

an inability or unwillingness to overcome challenges can lead to a dip in performance. During the past two years, a number of Step 2 Referee and Observer Coaches have been tasked with working with an allocated number of Step 2 Referees or Observers to offer help, support, and guidance. Each role was designed to share and seek views, motivate, inspire, and to offer different ideas in the quest to improve performance and not to review, judge or to criticise. Each Step 2 Referee/ Observer Coach has extensive experience in their field and have many years’ experiences working within the PGMOL and The FA. They have detailed knowledge of processes and practices, and have been tasked with building relationships, giving advice and guidance, be prepared to have constructive conversations, but



1,111

Matches Officiated by a Step 2 Referee

100%

Observer Coverage

50+

Matches attended by Observer Support Officer

25

Referees Promoted to Step 1 since 2021/22

12

Step 2 Observers Promoted to PGMOL

2,000

Match Changing Situations

most importantly, each have experience of providing ‘ideas for consideration’ rather than direction. This has proved to be an enormous success with obvious improvements being noticeable across the whole Step 2 workforce.

“Whilst we can identify and highlight many examples of success, there are always areas in which successful methods could be further enhanced, and we continue to ensure that each Step 2 Referee and Observer is offered support which will fulfil several different objectives, covering the technical, tactical, physical and mental aspects demanded by our game.”

Stephen Tanner
National Referee Manager Step 2

OBSERVER DEVELOPMENT

“We have worked to improve the professionalism of the observer workforce throughout season 2023/24. The streamlining of appointments under the leadership of The FA made for more efficient and consistent appointing processes whilst greater partnership working with County FAs resulted in the recruitment and certification of over 50 new Level 4 observers. Maximising the benefits of the observer pathway, 24 members of the workforce progressed from Level 4 to Level 3, each completing a comprehensive and detailed accreditation process along the way.

“Performance improvements within the existing observer workforce were achieved through an expanding quality assurance programme which was delivered through enhanced support and development structures built around the appointment of a team of Regional Support Officers.



“As part of these quality assurance measures, performance feedback, comprising over 125,000 individual records, was collected from match officials at the completion of each observation, highlighting good observing practice whilst also identifying generic training needs. Similarly, an extensive peer review programme delivered written feedback on over 500 submitted observer reports, whilst as part of their consideration of over 250 appeals across Steps 3-6, members of the Independent Appeals Panel used detailed written reasons to offer additional guidance and advice to match officials and observers alike.

“Consolidating these quality assurance measures will remain a strategic priority throughout season 2024/25 as will be the expansion of the observer pathway to include the Level 5/4 promotion scheme and an increased determination to provide more constructive engagement between the observer workforce and the match officials they support.”

Phil Knight
FA Observer Development Manager



ASSESSMENT DAYS

“The assessment day gave me an opportunity that I would not have had with the previous promotion process. It enabled me to show the leadership team my skills and attributes, and who I am as a person, rather than just being a name on the merit list. I was assessed in a number of key areas to show my overall profile as a referee. Without the assessment day process, I may not have been promoted and wouldn’t be developing and achieving as I am now.”

Ross Martin
National Group Referee

55

Match Officials
invited to mid-season
Assessment Day

24

Match Officials
promoted at mid-season
Assessment Day

48

Match Officials invited
to end-of-season
Assessment Day

23

Match Officials promoted
at end-of-season
Assessment Day

STEP 3/6 MATCH OFFICIALS

“During February and March 2024 we delivered our latest set of education and development events, reaching over 550 match officials within the National League System. During the sessions we held an open-forum and consultation with our match officials. Providing them the opportunity to provide open and honest feedback on how The FA can support them better in their role as a match official in the Semi-Professional game.

“Invaluable feedback was received from match officials which will help us shape our training, education and development plans for season 2024/25 and beyond.”

Ross Joyce
National Referee Manager Step 5 / 6



“Really enjoying the coaching role and found that both I, but more importantly referees, seem to have got a lot out of it. Almost without exception the referees I have seen have been really committed to their own development, shown by their willingness to have a post-match Teams call to go through some clips and discuss their thought processes at the time. I have found this really influential in getting them to think

about what they may do differently next time and probing the answers from their knowledge and experience. “Overall, it has been really enjoyable and the feedback I’ve seen and heard has generally been very positive. A lot of the referees have never had a coach before and they have definitely welcomed it and would want more.”

Ollie Williams
Step 5/6 Referee Coach

“Training and development events last season were robust, with regular assessments and feedback sessions aimed at improving performance. Workshops and seminars organized by The FA and the Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL) focused on aspects like game management, fitness and the application of new rules, ensuring that referees were well-prepared for the challenges on the pitch. Last season’s refereeing opportunities for Level 3 officials were comprehensive, providing a solid foundation for their progression within the game. These experiences not only enhanced their officiating skills but also contributed significantly to the smooth running and integrity of football at these competitive levels.”

Mo Matadar
National Referee Manager Step 3 / 4



PGMOL ERDP DEVELOPMENT GROUP

“Having joined the Development Group last season, I’ve found it to be an amazing experience and really developed my career in a holistic sense. The approach of PGMOL to coaching and further developing me as a whole person has been excellent. The support we have available to us through coaching and other aspects has allowed me to develop and improve my match day performance. The variety of content provided at training camps and the collaboration with other groups within the organisation has also meant I can learn and grow through from experience.”

Elliot Bell
Development Group Match Official



Multiple major Cup Final appointments for Development Group Referees

LEAGUE 1 PLAY-OFF FINAL

Sam Barrott

FA VASE FINAL

Will Finnie

LEAGUE 2 PLAY-OFF FINAL

Ben Toner

WOMEN'S FA CUP FINAL

Abi Byrne

FA TROPHY FINAL

Sam Allison

24

Match Officials

295

Coaching Visits

32

Games was the average per match official

149

Development Opportunity Games

760

Games Officiated by ERDP Match Officials

REFEREEING PATHWAYS



THE MEN'S GAME

With the deepest pyramid in world football, the men's game refereeing pathway provides a route to the top of the game for any official demonstrating the commitment and quality to ascend through its levels.

Our Refereeing Strategy, To Grow, Guide and Govern, has allowed the most promising of match officials to reach the peak of the grassroots game in under 12 months and then allows them to enter the Non-League System as a Level 4 Match Official. From here, match officials can specialise as a 4SAR or progress as a Referee to Level 3.

At the conclusion of the 2023/24 season The FA and PGMOL announced a merger between the National List of Match Officials and the Step 1 group, allowing for more fluidity between the levels within the professional game, thus creating greater development opportunities for more match officials.

Within the professional game, the PGMOL manage match official appointments, training and development and administration. The Elite Referee Development Programme has also resulted in significant investment in refereeing at the top of the game.

The pinnacle of officiating ladder are the FIFA match officials. Nominated by The FA and selected by FIFA, these constitute the best officials from the English game.

At the conclusion of the 2023/24 season, The FA is represented by 10 Referees, 10 Assistant Referees, 11 Video Match Officials and 3 Futsal Referees.



THE WOMEN'S GAME

The Women's Game pathway is forever growing and developing. This route is available to all match officials who have a commitment and passion for the Women's Game.

County FAs appoint match officials in the Youth and Grassroots game, with the most senior of County FA match officials officiating at Tiers 5 and 6. The FA appoints 3W Referees and the newly introduced 3WAR to fixtures in FA Women's National League. All 3W's are invited to be selected for the 3W-2W Promotion Pool, with the highest performing match officials selected following a rigorous selection process. The remaining candidates operate as 3W's, refereeing Tier 4 fixtures, and 3WAR's, Assistant Referees on Tier 3 fixtures.

Within the professional game (Barclays Women's Super League and Women's Championship) the PGMOL manage match official appointments, training and development and administration.

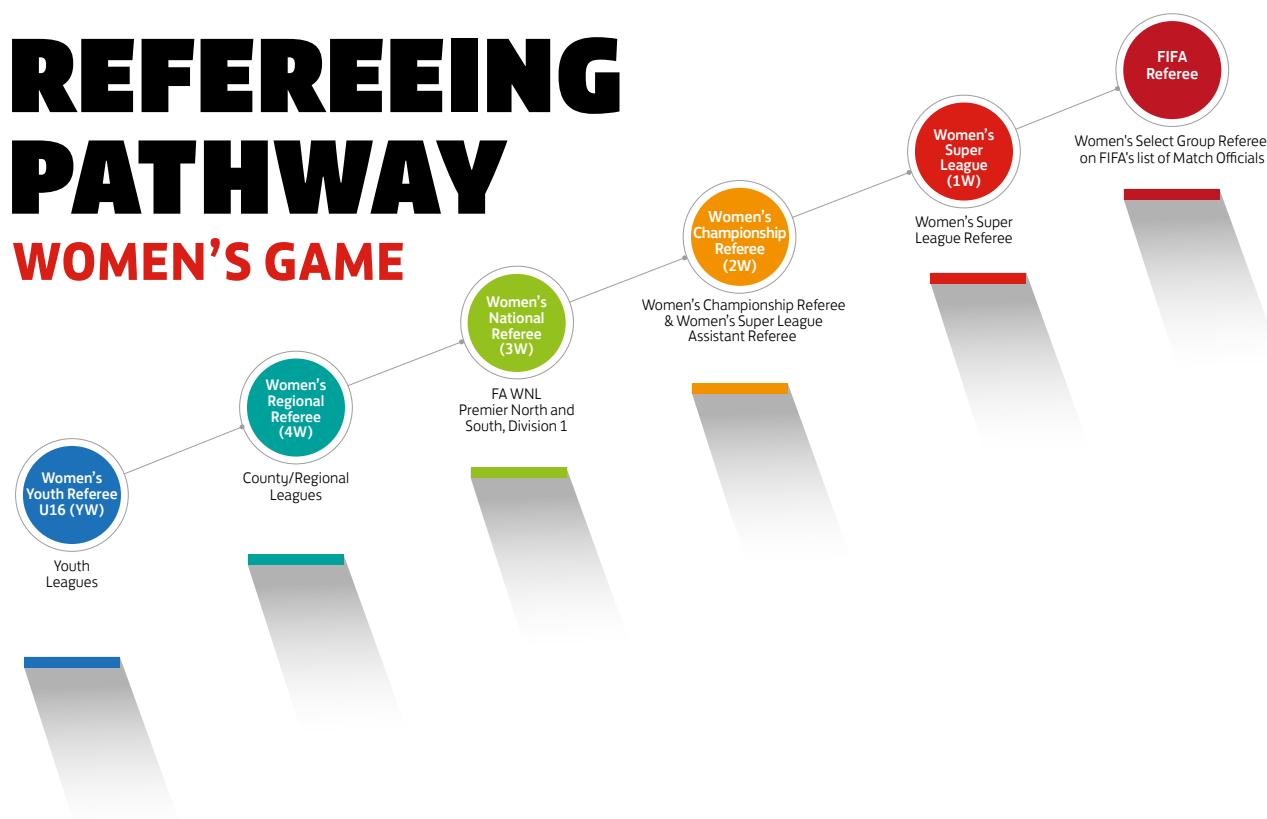
The numbers joining the Women's game is continuously growing year on year, and the Women's pathway provides a great opportunity for those with the quality and commitment to the Women's Game.

The pinnacle of officiating ladder are the FIFA match officials. Nominated by The FA and selected by FIFA, these constitute the best officials from the English game. At the conclusion of the 2023/24 season The FA is represented by five Referees and eight Assistant Referees.



REFEREEING PATHWAY

WOMEN'S GAME



COUNTY FA KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

89.5%

retention of match officials in the 56-65 age bracket, which is the highest out of all our brackets

63.3%

was the lowest retention of match officials, which is from the 18-25 age bracket

71.7%

of Female Match Officials were retained compared to 80.88% of Male Match Officials

77.8%

of Referee retained from season 2022/23. A record high!



RETENTION

“East Riding FA was able to achieve 87% of match official retention during the 2023/24 season. This was achieved through offering a personal approach to our match official team creating a 24/7 opportunity to contact the County FA team and discuss concerns with the RDO. This ‘personal-touch’ has allowed our workforce to feel valued in their role.”

Mark Brown
East Riding FA RDO

CONVERSION

“Manchester FA was able to achieve 100% conversion during the 2023/24 season. This was achieved through a number of tactics such as: all central venue leagues offering a league referee mentor. We also hold strong links with local academies to create ‘Football Learning Hubs’ where our mentors can offer support to new match officials. Furthermore, we engage with all parents/carers prior to the referee course to explain the process available to their child as well as offering a mandatory ‘call-back’ to check on match official progress.”

Conor Brown
Manchester FA RDO



6,557

total referees converted

603

more than originally set
out as a target

5,545

Male Match Officials were
converted to Level 7 from
a Trainee Referee

750

Female Match Officials were
converted to Level 7 from a
Trainee Referee

RECRUITMENT

“Berks & Bucks FA were able to exceed our recruitment target by 297%, Recruiting 713 match officials throughout the 2023/24 season! We worked with local authorities to create accessible courses across the County FA, offering 38 courses in total, this includes three courses aimed at under-represented communities and two Female-Only courses.”

Adam Parry
Berks & Bucks FA RDO



10,356

Match Officials recruited in the 2023/24 season

47.5%

more than targeted

1,303

Female Match Officials were recruited

4,893

new officials recruited in the 14-15 age bracket, our highest out of all the brackets

PROGRESSION

“Westmorland FA saw 21% of its match officials promoted in the grassroots game across season 2023/24. We hold monthly development sessions for all match officials which creates more development opportunities and furthermore we offer free promotion applications allowing more match officials to access the promotion scheme.”

Peter Leonard
Westmorland FA RDO

62

Female Referee promotions

11

promotions for match officials aged 65+

114

promotions for match officials under the age of 18

1,485

Referees were promoted across Level's 5-7 during the 2023/24 season





“The creation of regional support officers for observers has had huge benefit, with standardised practices across the six regions allowing better quality assurance, training and support for observers which can only help to ensure observers are better equipped and supported to develop match officials. With the aim being a continually improving observer workforce, ensuring the match officials get the best advice to further enhance their performances, allowing them to reach their goals.”

Neil Pratt
Observer Regional Support Officer

“FA CORE has been a guiding force in refereeing for me. Having a coach visit you three to four games a season offers a unique insight into your current refereeing ability and how you’re getting on against your goals. This has allowed me to focus and have an extra pair of eyes on my games. But the most significant advantage is that I now have a coach to ring after a match and soundboard my thoughts and feelings. My coach asks questions back to either help me see things differently or offer a vote of confidence on my decision and why I made it.”

James Alliband
FA CORE Match Official

“I have been with the programme since it’s inception and started with just five referees for season 22/23, increasing to 11 referees in season 23/24 and now 18 referees for season 24/25 from across the Midlands. I am responsible for aligning match officials with individual coaches, who provide wrap around support and guidance for match preparation, game reflections, post match administration, laws of the game and; who is able to attend at least two matches in person and provide them with a report containing their strengths (to continue) and areas for development (to focus on in future matches). I also plan and delivering two regional events (Oct/Mar).”

Lauren Impey
ETP Regional Lead

“I have found coaching at Step 2 this season a very enjoyable experience. I have particularly enjoyed the ‘hot coaching’ at half time when minor adjustments can be made if required and observations from a coach can be conveyed when they are really needed. I have had the opportunity to travel across the country with my team of referees, offering guidance and advice in a variety of environments. I have found all referees to be engaged and ‘buying-in to the process’ which has only enhanced my own experiences”

Ian Murphy
Step 2 Referee Coach



“I have been involved with futsal since 2017, and it is one of the best decisions I have made. I love the speed of the game and the amount of decisions to be made in a short space of time, which has also helped benefit my football refereeing.”

Harvey Newstead
Futsal Referee

“The opportunities through futsal are endless and I have experienced refereeing the Brazil National team, Representing The FA at European university competitions in Poland and Hungary as well as an exchange programme with the Danish FA.”

“My officiating experience the past 12 months has been the best of my journey so far. Full of amazing experiences that I’ve been lucky enough to be a part of, for example officiating at a sold-out Emirates Stadium and being AR in the Women’s FA Cup semi-final. Even with success comes challenges that I’ve come across. I missed out on promotion to Level 3. I’ve used these challenges and set backs to help me grow and develop as a match official. The events of the past year have given me the fuel to keep working hard with my coaches and make sure I am the best I can be and have motivated me to achieve even more next season!”

David Middleton
Level 4 and 1WAR

“Despite having served in the Armed Forces on operations in hostile environments, starting a new season operating at a new level, brings a very different challenge, and a new kind of nervousness. Will I sink or swim, will I be able to meet the expectations at this new level?”

“Upon reflection, there have been challenging games, whilst working with difficult players, yet my active reflection has allowed my personal growth, and made season 2023/24 an enjoyable one. As I approach 2024/25, it leads me to be hungrier for success whilst striving for continued improvement.”

Andrew Biggen
Level 3 Referee

OUR YEAR-BY-YEAR TARGETS

FOCUS AREA	MEASURE	AS AT 31 MAY 2023	2024 TARGET	2025 TARGET	2026 TARGET	CURRENT POSITION
Environment	Attain and maintain a Positive Football Environment Survey Satisfaction rating of 70% from our match official workforce (46% in May 2022).	Satisfaction: 66%	Satisfaction: 68%	Satisfaction: 70%	Satisfaction: – 70+%	74%
	Improvement in Positive Football Environment Satisfaction scores from other key stakeholders (adult players, parents of youth, club/league officials, volunteers).	67%	69%	72%	75%	65%
Diversity	Achieve a net increase of 1,000 Black and Asian referees by 2026.	1,800	2,100	2,500	2,800	3,527
	Achieve a net increase of 1,000 women referees by 2026.	2,500	2,800	3,100	3,500	3,139
	Ensure the proportion of referees from under-represented ethnicities operating within the men’s professional game is equal to the proportion of Black and Asian people nationally.	Black/Asian: 8% Overall vs 3% men’s Pro Game (PG)	Black/Asian: 9% Overall vs 5% men’s PG	Black/Asian: 9% Overall vs 7% men’s PG	Black/Asian: 10% Overall v 10% PG	9.47% Overall Vs 5.29% Men’s PG
	Ensure the proportion of women referees operating within the men’s professional game is equal to the proportion of women referees nationally.	Women: 8% Overall v 2.5% men’s PG	Women: 9% Overall v 4% men’s PG	Women: 9% Overall v 7% men’s PG	Women: 10% Overall v 10% men’s PG	8.43% Overall Vs 2.47% Men’s PG
Standards	25% reduction in the average length of time it takes match officials to reach the men’s professional game from completing the course.	14.34 years	14 years	13 years	11 years	12.57 Years
	Mandate the new Referee Course qualification for all men’s and women’s Professional Game academy.	N/A	N/A	Pilot	Implementation	N/A
Key BAU indicators	Number Referees Overall (1-7+Y+T+D)	31,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	37248

“To be appointed to referee The Emirates FA Cup Final was a dream come true. Like most other referees, I see it as the pinnacle of our domestic game. To be able to represent not only myself and my family, but also the other 37,000 referees in the country on the 25th May was a truly humbling experience. Thankfully the game went how we would have hoped for it too, and we were then able to enjoy the experience of ‘Cup Final Weekend’ with our families.”

Andy Madley
Emirates FA Cup Final Referee





“Walking out at Wembley Stadium was an incredible experience, a unique and surreal feeling. The atmosphere was enthralling but beyond all, having my family and the people that have supported me on my journey made it truly special. It made me realise that hard work, commitment and focus can take you anywhere in life. I was fortunate to achieve my dream!”

Nicoleta Bria
Adobe Women’s FA Cup Final Assistant Referee



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