



# THE GAMEPLAN FOR GROWTH

THE FA'S STRATEGY FOR WOMEN'S AND  
GIRLS' FOOTBALL: 2017-2020

# FINAL REVIEW AND REPORT



**FOR ALL**

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“There is no better feeling than seeing the smile on the girls faces and their excitement. I can't wait to see the game grow even more in the next three years.”

**Craig Sherrin**

Club Secretary, Buckhurst Hill FC.

Three years ago the club established its own Wildcats Centre for girls aged 5-11 and launched Buckhurst Hill FC Lionesses.





# WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO

## THREE GOALS:

GOAL NO.	2020 GOAL	2020 TARGET	2020 ACTUAL	GOAL ACHIEVED?
1	<b>DOUBLE PARTICIPATION</b>	12,000 registered <sup>1</sup> teams	12,640	✓
2	<b>DOUBLE FANS</b>	22,000: average attendance for home international matches	24,105: average attendance for England Women's matches played in England (November 2018 to November 2019 inclusive)	✓
		2,020: FA WSL average attendance	3,072: Barclays FA WSL average attendance	✓
		92,000: peak FA WSL TV viewing	270,000 (Chelsea v Tottenham Hotspur, September 2019)	✓
3	<b>CONSISTENT SUCCESS ON THE WORLD STAGE</b>	Within top three countries in all age groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current England women's senior team = 6th in FIFA world rankings; peaked at 2nd (March 2018)</li> <li>• Development teams:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Bronze medalists in the FIFA Women's Under-20 World Cup 2018;</li> <li>– Consistently qualifying for UEFA EURO age-group tournament finals.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	✓
		Potential to win the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup Semi-Finalists;</li> <li>• Research in July 2019 showed 82% of fans believe women's senior team have the potential to win the FIFA World Cup;</li> <li>• Production of a game-changing 'Blueprint for Success', focused on identifying and nurturing top-quality international players.</li> </ul>	✓

<sup>1</sup>Registered teams = affiliated teams + team equivalents from Mini-Soccer, Wildcats Centres and 'Premier League for Girls' satellite centres

# WHAT WE ALSO DID ON THE WAY

## Participation

- Players: 3.4m = 2.4m women (16+) and 1m girls (under 16);
- FA-qualified female coaches: 34,581 (+18% in last 12 months);
- FA-qualified female referees: 2,146 (+24% in last 12 months);
- Registered teams: 12,640 (+14% in last 12 months).

## Fanbase

- Attendances:
  - Domestic: Record Barclays FA WSL crowd: 38,262 (Tottenham Hotspur v Arsenal, November 2019);
  - International: Record crowd of 77,768 (England v Germany, November 2019);
  - Barclays FA WSL average peak-season attendances: 3,072 (+174% since 2016);
  - FA Women's Championship average peak-season attendances: 599 (+128% since 2016).
- FA Player: c100,000 subscribers in first season, with every Barclays FA WSL match shown live;
- Broadcast:
  - 11.4m peak audience for Lionesses' FIFA Women's World Cup Semi-Final;
  - 257% increase in domestic games broadcast from 2016 to now;
  - BT Sport audiences for women's football up by 119% from 2016 to now.

## Infrastructure

- 100+ FA Girls' Football School partnerships (supported by Barclays) reaching over 6,000 schools;
- Wildcats Centres: 1,600+ centres.

## England

- Women's senior team:
  - 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup Semi-Finalists;
  - 4th in UEFA rankings, 6th in FIFA world rankings (peaked at 2nd, March 2018);
  - Winners of the 2019 SheBelieves Cup, USA;
  - Lucy Bronze: Ballon D'Or runner-up 2019 and BBC Women's Footballer of the Year 2018 and 2020.
- UEFA Women's EURO 2022: Winners of the official bid to host the tournament across eight cities, with opening match at Old Trafford and Final at Wembley Stadium connected by EE.

## Commercial, Marketing and Communications

- Barclays wide-ranging partnership – the biggest sponsorship agreement in the history of women's sport in the UK;
- 12 other key commercial partners to the women's and girls' game – see chart on page 17;
- 170m reach for announcement of FIFA Women's World Cup squad, May 2019;
- First bespoke England Women's kit – designed by Nike for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2019;
- 400k+ social media followers for Lionesses;
- 18,000+ members in a newly-launched Lionesses Supporters Club;
- New brand identity for the top three tiers of league pyramid;
- In 2018 signed BT as lead partner across all England teams. As part of their '4-3-3' strategy they'll aim to bring more women into the game through offering volunteering, coaching and broadcasting opportunities.
- Brand awareness:
  - Lionesses: 65% - up from 56% in July 2018<sup>1</sup>;
  - Barclays FA WSL: 69% - up from 53% in February 2019<sup>2</sup>;
  - FA Women's Championship: 30% - no change from October 2019<sup>2</sup>;
  - Women's FA Cup: 71% - up from 51% in February 2019<sup>2</sup>.
- Dedicated women's football journalist at major media outlets;
- 165+ media representatives attended Lionesses' media day prior to FIFA Women's World Cup 2019.



# PURPOSE AND MOMENTUM IN THE LAST THREE YEARS MEAN WE'RE WELL PLACED TO BROADEN OUR AMBITIONS



**FOR ALL**



'The Gameplan for Growth' we published in March 2017 was a formal strategy for the development of women's and girls' football in England. To give it purpose and momentum, it had two main aims:

- **To set and reach some challenging targets by 2020;** and
- **To establish an infrastructure around which the game could flourish at every level.**

Although the first one above is the headline-catcher, I believe the second one is more important. Yes, it's great to say we've hit – and exceeded – targets, but having a firm foundation on which the game can grow is absolutely fundamental.

I am pleased we now have that foundation, a foundation that will be called upon more than ever. Little was any of us to know that Covid-19 would enforce a hard stop on our season. It's only with the infrastructure we have in place that we can now begin to plan for the future.

I want to thank everyone everywhere who has played their part in building the platform we now have. That includes players, coaches, referees, fans, clubs, leagues, tutors, administrators and of course our commercial, broadcast and public-sector partners. I've been in sport a long time and

am extremely proud of the team at The FA and the wider network of staff in County FAs who have dedicated their efforts to growing the women's and girls' game, as well as making it safe, inclusive and enjoyable on the way.

And yes, as this report demonstrates we hit the numerical targets we set. It all means we can now begin to broaden our ambitions as the new strategy we will publish in a few months will reveal. In everything we do, we must make it as easy as possible for women and girls to get into football, no matter their ability level, background or community. I am very confident we have the vision, the strategy and the people to make that happen.

*Sue Campbell*

**Baroness Sue Campbell DBE**  
Director of Women's Football

“  
Having a firm foundation on which the game can grow is absolutely fundamental.  
”



**PARTICIPATION:**

There are now 1,621 Wildcats Centres across the country for girls aged 5-11 inclusive.

**PARTICIPATION:**

The last year has seen increased funding for women's and girls' disability football, meaning more participation opportunities – and more inspiring moments.



**FANBASE:**

Average attendances at Barclays FA WSL matches are now above the 3,000 mark.

**COACHING:**

There were 5,180 new female FA-qualified coaches last year, bringing the total to 34,581. The coach in this picture is England U18s-U21s Head Coach Rehanne Skinner, who is currently completing The FA Level 5 (UEFA Pro) in Coaching Football, the highest coaching qualification The FA offers.



**REFEREEING:**

Thanks to an ongoing development programme, there are now more than 2,100 FA-qualified female referees in England, with a strong presence at the highest international level.





**ENGLAND:**

Viewing of the England v USA FIFA Women's World Cup Semi-Final on the BBC peaked at 11.7m.



**THE PROFESSIONAL GAME:**

In September 2018, the Barclays FA WSL became the only full-time professional women's league in Europe.



**EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION:**

The last year has seen the start of an FA National Asian Women in Football Advisory Group to guide our engagement work with Asian women (see page 16).



**PARTNERSHIPS:**

Barclays' sponsorship supports several key areas of the women's and girls' game. It's the largest investment to date in women's sport in the UK.



# PARTICIPATION

MEASURE	MARCH 2017	NOW
AFFILIATED TEAMS <sup>1</sup>	6,388	9,251
OTHER 'TEAMS' <sup>2</sup>	0 (did not exist)	3,389
TOTAL TEAMS	6,388	12,640
WOMEN AND GIRLS PLAYING FOOTBALL	2.9m	3.4m
NOS OF WILDCATS CENTRES FOR 5-11-YEAR-OLD GIRLS	0 (did not exist)	1,621

<sup>1</sup>Affiliated teams = Teams that are affiliated to their local County FA and can therefore take part in competitive football (i.e. leagues/cups) with the County FA area.

<sup>2</sup>Other teams = Groups of women/girls who play Mini-Soccer or attend Wildcats Centres and 'Premier League for Girls' satellite centres.

## OTHER STATS:

- 3.4m women and girls now play football;
- 2,000 Shooting Stars inspired by Disney programmes attended by 18,000 girls in primary schools;
- 147 FA Snickers Just Play centres for adults introduced in 2019/20;
- 88 Community Club Organisations in the professional game providing 55,800 opportunities to play for women and girls;
- 100+ FA Girls' Football Schools Partnerships supported by Barclays created and reaching 6,000+ schools.



## COMMENTARY:



"Expanding the number of places to play, creating innovative programmes and investing in people that organise and deliver football for women and girls has been crucial. Using high-profile competitions, such as the FIFA Women's World Cup, as platforms to inspire new and different participants to join the game has been a key part of our plan.

"For example, creating places to play football for fun such as Wildcats Centres for 5-11-year-olds and FA Snickers Just Play centres for adult women has been an important development.

"The FA Shooting Stars inspired by Disney programme was developed in line with community Wildcats to give girls a fun first experience of physical activity and football in school. These new programmes have given girls the confidence to try football for the first time.

"Developing a diverse workforce of people to deliver the game is ongoing, alongside providing female-friendly club training for people running affiliated football, ensuring we create fully inclusive club environments."

*Louise Gear, FA Women's Head of Participation*

## KEY PROGRAMMES:

- **Wildcats:** For girls aged 5-11 to try football for the first time and provide regular opportunities to play. Once a week, either after-school or at weekends.
- **FA Shooting Stars inspired by Disney:** Uses Disney storytelling to inspire primary school-aged girls to get physically active. In partnership with the Youth Sport Trust and National Literacy Trust.
- **FA Snickers Just Play:** For adults who wants a kickabout game of football. Casual, inclusive, informal fun.
- **FA Girls' Football Schools Partnerships – supported by Barclays:** A national network of schools committed to the growth of girls' football. In partnership with the Youth Sport Trust.

“Football really can be such a power for good. I'm delighted I'm bringing a community together through this beautiful game.”

**Jo Treharne** – Founder, Manager and Coach, Canterbury Old Bags United



# FANBASE

MEASURE	MARCH 2017	NOW
AVERAGE <sup>1</sup> INTERNATIONAL HOME MATCH ATTENDANCES	8,015	24,105
AVERAGE <sup>2</sup> BARCLAYS FA WSL ATTENDANCES	1,047	3,072
MATCHES BROADCAST <sup>3</sup> ON TV (INTERNATIONALS/BARCLAYS FA WSL)	22	50
PEAK TV AUDIENCE FOR INTERNATIONAL MATCHES	2.4m <small>(2015 FIFA Women's World Cup Semi-Final v Japan)</small>	11.7m <small>(2019 FIFA Women's World Cup Semi-Final v USA)</small>
PEAK TV VIEWING FOR BARCLAYS FA WSL MATCHES	46,000	270,000

<sup>1</sup>Average = March 2017 taken from period November 2016 to November 2017 (six home fixtures). 'Now' taken from November 2018 to November 2019 inclusive (seven home fixtures).

<sup>2</sup>Average = Match 2017 from 2016/17 season and 'Now': completed matches in 2019/20 season.

<sup>3</sup>March 2017 figure from domestic and international matches April 2016 to March 2017. 'Now' taken from domestic fixtures in 12 months before curtailment of 2019/20 season and internationals from July 2019 to June 2020.

## OTHER STATS:

### INTERNATIONAL

- 77,768 – record crowd (v Germany, Wembley, November 2019);
- 11.7 million viewers – FIFA Women's World Cup 2019 Semi Final;
- 18,000+ members of first-ever Lionesses Supporters Club;
- 400k+ followers to Lionesses' Twitter and Instagram pages.

### DOMESTIC

- 77,323 – the cumulative attendance in the Barclays FA WSL for the inaugural Women's Football Weekend;
- 38,262 – record Barclays FA WSL attendance (Tottenham Hotspur v. Arsenal, November 2019);
- Barclays FA WSL average attendances peaked at 3,072 in last three years (1,047 in 2016);
- FA Women's Championship average attendances peaked at 599 in last three years (443 in 2016);
- 257% increase in the number of domestic games broadcast in 2019/20 (compared to 2016);
- 231% increase in peak audiences for televised Barclays FA WSL matches (compared to 2016);
- 270,000 = record peak TV audience for Barclays FA WSL match (Chelsea v Tottenham Hotspur, September 2019);
- 2.2m – record peak TV audience for the Women's FA Cup Final, May 2019;
- c100,000 subscribers to The FA Player in its first season, from more than 150 countries;
- New audiences engaged via four new Barclays FA WSL broadcast deals (Mexico & Central America, Scandinavia, Australia and Israel).

## COMMENTARY:

"The effort and support given to creating a successful England Women's team has had a hugely positive effect throughout the game. The team's memorable runs to successive FIFA Women's World Cup Semi-Finals has powered fans' interest at international and domestic levels – whether in person or watching on TV.

"Live domestic league attendances have witnessed several 20,000+ crowds, and on TV live coverage has increased from 28 hours across BT Sport and the BBC in 2016 to 100 hours today.

"There is still a long way to go, but winning the opportunity to stage the delayed UEFA Women's EUROs in 2022 in England gives us another massive platform to attract new fans. We'll be ready!"

*Marzena Bogdanowicz, FA Head of Commercial and Marketing for Women's Football*



## KEY INITIATIVES:

- **Lionesses Supporters Club:** Offering access to England home match tickets, advance team news and announcements, exclusive entry to competitions, e-newsletters and much more.
- **FA Player:** The primary platform for watching Barclays FA WSL and FA Women's Championship matches, as well the Women's FA Cup, Continental Tyres League Cup and England women's internationals (subject to local broadcast agreements).
- **Facebook, Twitter and Instagram:** Sharing updates about the League, clubs and players. Also directing fans to watch live matches on The FA Player.

“The Lionesses team has raised the profile of women's football. I can't wait to continue supporting them and attending more games in the future.”

**Maisie Threadgold-Smith** – first-time fan at England v. Germany, November 2019

# COACHING

MEASURE	MARCH 2017	NOW
FA-QUALIFIED FEMALE COACHES	29,401	34,581
UEFA 'A' LICENCE FEMALE COACHES	41	82
FEMALE HEAD COACHES/MANAGERS AT BARCLAYS FA WSL AND FA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP CLUBS	3	13
FEMALE AND BAME COACH BURSARIES	49	204

## OTHER STATS:

- 18% uplift in new female coaches from 2017 to 2020;
- 204 female coaches granted bursaries, in partnership with Sport England, to improve access to UEFA 'B', 'A' and Pro-licence qualifications;
- Doubled the number of female coaches holding a UEFA 'A' licence;
- Coach Development Officers introduced to provide 1:1 support – engaging with 2,487 female and male coaches working at grassroots and talent pathway levels;
- Women's National Coach Developers employed to provide 1:1 support for 148 female and male coaches across Tiers 1-3 of the women's professional game and Regional Talent Clubs' (RTCs) technical directors;
- 34,581 coaching qualifications for female coaches from levels 1 to 5 – an 18% increase from 2017;
- 333% increase in female head coaches/managers in the Barclays FA WSL and FA Women's Championship;
- Five female head coaches with England's national teams.

## COMMENTARY:



"Three years ago, we set ourselves this task: to increase the number and diversity of women coaching football at all levels. We've made a lot of progress, as the stats on these pages show, but it's a never-ending journey.

"We had to start from the ground up and establish an effective coach development structure. We now have a range of workshops and modules bespoke to the female game which align with and complement our FA coaching qualifications.

"Considerable time has also been spent on identifying and nurturing talented coaches, with an emphasis on females and BAME communities. If we want to produce the best players for our national teams and professional leagues, we have to have the best coaches. We now have an excellent team of coach developers who will support the development of coaches right across the female game.

"Of course, the structure can always be refined, but the platform is built. We can enter the next phase of the game's development in England with confidence in the processes and people now in place."

*Audrey Cooper, FA Head of Women's Coach Development*

**“As a Barclays FA WSL manager there is a lot of pressure and responsibility within the role. However, I am so lucky to be doing something I absolutely love. Knowing I have the backing and support of The FA and other female coaches around me definitely keeps me motivated.”**

**Tanya Oxtoby** – Manager, Bristol City Women

# REFEREEING

MEASURE	MARCH 2017	NOW
FA-QUALIFIED FEMALE REFEREES	1,247	2,146
% OF MATCHES IN BARCLAYS FA WSL WITH A FEMALE REFEREE	52.5%	63%
NO. OF FA-TRAINED FEMALE REFEREES/ ASSISTANT REFEREES ON FIFA ROSTER	7	9

## OTHER STATS:

- 72% increase in female referees across all levels of the women's and girls' game since 2016;
- 20% increase over the last four seasons of Barclays FA WSL matches with a female referee;
- 25% increase over the last three seasons of FA Women's Championship matches with a female referee – now 55% of games;
- Match official evaluation scheme introduced to Barclays FA WSL;
- 98.3% correct decisions made by match officials in the Barclays FA WSL;
- 115 number of referees attending our grassroots development day in 2020;
- Four female referees and five assistant referees now on the FIFA list of match officials.



## COMMENTARY:

“When ‘The Gameplan for Growth’ was launched, we set out in 2017 ‘to increase the number and diversity of women refereeing football at all levels’.

“Initially, this meant establishing a structure to attract more women and girls to refereeing and through which they could progress. In parallel, we wanted to raise the standards of refereeing in the rapidly-evolving women's game.

“The structure is now in place, with a clear, bespoke pathway for female referees. The fact that we've seen a 71% increase in FA-qualified female referees in the last four seasons is testimony that it's working.

“We also now have a defined development programme for improving refereeing in the women's professional game, with 1:1 mentoring and the same forensic match evaluation system used by PGMOL in the Premier League. In addition, with four female referees and five assistant referees on the FIFA list of match officials, we have a set of role models on the world stage to inspire the next generation to follow in their footsteps.”

*Joanna Stimpson, FA Women's Refereeing Manager*



“As a referee it's an incredible feeling that The FA trusted my ability to put me forward for the biggest stage. I can't wait to get started and represent The FA and my country.”

**Stacey Pearson** – Barclays FA WSL Referee and now FIFA Referee, after her nomination to FIFA by The FA.

# ENGLAND

PRIORITIES	NOW IN PLACE
<b>TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE AND SUCCESSFUL HIGH-PERFORMANCE SYSTEM</b>	Lioness Player Pathway: a defined journey through the national development teams to the senior team. England women's 'Blueprint for Success': a guided development framework which can be configured to every level of the game.
<b>TO BUILD A WORLD-CLASS TALENT PIPELINE</b>	Women's Talent ID Strategy: now playing a key role in identifying the country's most talented players

## OTHER STATS:

### SENIOR TEAM ACHIEVEMENTS:

- FIFA Women's World Cup Semi Finalists 2019;
- SheBelieves Cup Winners 2019;
- Olympic qualification secured for 2021 Tokyo Olympic Games;
- Highest-ever FIFA world ranking – 2nd (March 2018);
- England awarded hosting rights for UEFA EURO 2021 (now 2022);
- Lucy Bronze voted Ballon D'Or runner up 2019 and BBC Women's Footballer of the Year 2018 and 2020.

### DEVELOPMENT TEAM ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Under-20s FIFA World Cup bronze medalists in 2018;
- Six under-20 bronze medalists from the above World Cup in the 2020 SheBelieves Cup squad;
- Consistently qualifying for UEFA EURO age-group tournaments finals;
- Under-19s – fifth at 2017 EUROS, sixth at 2019;
- Under-17s – sixth at 2017 EUROS, fifth at 2019.

## COMMENTARY:



"The Gameplan for Growth strategy was a framework. We still had to deliver. To do so, we needed to create systems which identified and nurtured future England senior players every step of the way – players who could go on to compete and achieve success on the world stage.

"Having a bespoke curriculum of learning alongside our England DNA is imperative to produce female players who can compete and win on the world stage, and therefore the creation of the England Women's Blueprint for Success to deliver this curriculum is a game-changer.

This Blueprint for Success also outlines our culture and values when developing our players and has a strong connection with our identity. It provides a clear mission statement for our workforce about what we want to achieve and I am delighted that it has been met with resounding commitment and passion.

"In the 20 years I have spent in women's football, this is the first time that we have built and created a system that is unique to the women's game and belongs to us."

*Kay Cossington, FA Head of Women's Technical Development*

**“I’ve been lucky enough to attend four World Cups and three European Championships, but I know we have more to give and want to do even better in the future. One thing is for certain; every time I put on that England shirt, the pride I feel gets stronger and stronger.”**

**Jill Scott** – England Women's Senior Player



# THE PROFESSIONAL GAME



## PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE

PRIORITIES	NOW IN PLACE
<p><b>TO ESTABLISH THE PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S GAME IN THE COUNTRY'S FOOTBALL CALENDAR</b></p>	<p>A 12-team, fully professional top-flight league</p> <p>Restructured competition pyramid, played in a winter season with improved scheduling</p> <p>Most attractive games in prime time slots, maximising use of best stadiums</p>
<p><b>TO ESTABLISH WORLD-CLASS PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS</b></p>	<p>A high-performance system to drive league standards and support England teams</p> <p>Updated licensing criteria across the Barclays FA WSL and FA Women's Championship to improve performance on and off the pitch</p> <p>The introduction of an FA WSL &amp; FA Women's Championship Board, with increased club representation to drive the strategic growth and development of the leagues</p>

## COMMERCIAL

PRIORITIES	NOW IN PLACE
<p><b>TO CREATE A PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME WHICH FORMS THE BEDROCK OF A FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE PROFESSIONAL GAME</b></p>	<p>Barclays' multi-million-pound title partnership of the FA WSL, the biggest ever investment in UK women's sport by a brand</p> <p>A new brand identity across the Barclays FA WSL, FA Women's Championship and FA Women's National Leagues</p> <p>Continental Tyres renewal as title partner to the FA Women's Continental Tyres League Cup</p> <p>A new partnership with Mitre to become the official football supplier across the Barclays FA WSL, FA Women's Championship and Women's FA Cup</p> <p>Women's FA Cup partners include Disney, BT and Deliveroo</p> <p>A £500k prize-fund in the Barclays FA WSL</p> <p>The introduction of Commercial Committees for the Barclays FA WSL and FA Women's Championship to help achieve increased financial sustainability for the leagues and clubs</p>

# THE PROFESSIONAL GAME (CONTINUED)

“It’s really important the professional women’s game has its own Board. It deserves its own governance; it deserves its own strategy and it deserves a group that is completely and utterly focused on the development of the women’s game.”

**Dawn Airey – Chair of the FA Women’s Super League & FA Women’s Championship Board**

## PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY:

“Setting high and challenging standards for performance and governance is all part of creating the best professional women’s league in the world.

“Apart from their coaching and technical abilities, to earn a licence to play in our top leagues, clubs must demonstrate top-quality levels of medical, physical, welfare, education, psychology and social support.

“It’s a collective journey with the clubs, and feeds into creating an England senior team to compete – and win – at the highest level. We want to provide talented players with a fulfilling career in football, but also prepare them for careers beyond their time in football.

“All the systems and pathways we have established need constant fine-tuning, but if we get this right, we’ll be reaping the rewards in domestic and international football for many years to come.”

*David Faulkner, FA Head of Women’s Performance*



## COMMENTARY:

“We knew from the outset that creating a sponsorship programme to attract big brands was going to be key to the financial future of the women’s and girls’ games. And as you’ll see from the chart on page 17, we’ve come a long way.

“Women’s and girls’ football is now a key medium through which top brands can now talk to a female audience.

“The live audiences at top-flight women’s professional matches is growing too. If you’d told me that within two years of taking up my current role I’d be watching a league fixture (Tottenham Hotspur v Arsenal) with over 38,000 other fans at one of the best stadiums in the world – I’d have dismissed it as wishful thinking.

“Covid-19 has taken its toll, and we’ve had some tough decisions to make, but we can face the future with confidence. We now have our own strong media and communications platforms, as well as the continued commitment of broadcast partners BT Sport and the BBC to grow the game.

“It all means we can realistically say our vision to make the Barclays FA WSL the best league in the world is becoming a reality – supported by the second-best league in the world, The FA Women’s Championship.”

*Kelly Simmons, FA Director of Women’s Professional Game*

Also see page 9 for how we are increasing the [FANBASE](#) of the women’s professional game.



# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



“Ensuring women’s and girls’ football is FOR ALL is a common denominator running through all the activity in this report. Whether it’s attracting players, coaches, administrators, referees, volunteers or spectators, we want to break down any barriers – real or perceived – to getting into our great game, and progressing within it.

“But our work in this area goes much further. We want to harness the positive power of football to have social impact and create inclusive communities.”

*Rachel Pavlou, FA Women's National & International Development Manager*

Here’s a summary of some of the equality, diversity and inclusion work we have supported in the last 12 months:



A joint FA and Football Beyond Borders Leadership Camp was held at St. George's Park in August 2019. Also attending was Lioness legend Rachel Yankey (bottom right).

## NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH:

- **Football Beyond Borders:** To develop more diverse, female young women to be leaders and role models in women’s and girls’ football. A national leadership camp at St. George’s Park has successfully taken place, with all of the attendees from BAME communities.
- **Amnesty International UK:** To employ a National Women’s Football Officer to support five initial projects that offer opportunities for women and girls from refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds to play and volunteer in football. Almost all the women taking part in the projects are from BAME backgrounds.
- **The Twinning Project:** To engage female prisoners in football-based programmes to improve their mental and physical health, wellbeing and to obtain a qualification which will help improve their life chances and gain employment on release. Projects with three prisons thus far.

## DISABILITY FOOTBALL:

- With the support of an FA National Disability Women’s Football Advisory Group, we:
  - Commissioned new research into female disability football;
  - Funded Cerebral Palsy Sport and The Wheelchair Football Association to increase female participation;
  - Established 25 disability Wildcats Centres;
  - Started a programme of regional women’s football festivals.



“The Football Beyond Borders Leadership Camp delivered at St. George’s Park in partnership with The FA was an experience that will stick with me for the rest of my life. My favourite memory was seeing the development of the young girls over such a short period of time. If we can continue to create more relatable role models it means that we can essentially continue growing the women’s game, because more young girls will want to aspire to be like the young leaders that came on the camp.”

**Debra Nelson – Football Beyond Borders Coach and Mentor**

# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (CONTINUED)

## ENGAGING THE ASIAN COMMUNITY:

- South Asian females are the least active ethnic group in England, in terms of playing sport. We have set up a strand of The FA Asian Inclusion Plan to address this issue specifically. An FA National Asian Women in Football Advisory Group now exists (see pic on page 7), providing priceless insight and guidance for our work in this area.

## ENGAGING OLDER WOMEN:

- Women's adult recreational football is increasing in popularity. We have funded 147 FA Snickers Just Play programme centres to offer various recreational football formats to older women, such as Soccerercise, Walking Football and 'Flexi 5s'.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:

- Following a successful pilot with the British Embassy in Tunis, we are working with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the national Football Associations in a number of African countries. These include Ghana, Malawi and Rwanda. An additional project is also being delivered with the Lesotho FA.

## WIDER WORK:

- Colleagues have also played a key role in wider FA work, such as engaging the LGBTQ+ community and in the 'Heads Up' campaign, aimed at creating more awareness of the importance of mental health through football – as well as providing tips to look after yourself and those around you.



The Wildcats' programme for 5-11-year-old girls has proved a popular way to engage girls from all communities and backgrounds.



# THE STRENGTH OF PARTNERSHIPS

The growth of the women's and girls' game in England in recent times has been partly-fuelled by **commercial partners**. We thank them for their ongoing support. At the time of going to press, these partners include:



In addition, the reach and popularity of the game is boosted by our valued **broadcast partners**:



Furthermore, the game's infrastructure is part-funded by dedicated **non-commercial partners**:



The game is also flourishing thanks to several **national delivery partners**, without whom we could not implement various development programmes:





**FOR ALL**

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