



MADE FOR  
This Game

# REACHING HIGHER

THE FA WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL STRATEGY 2024-28  
YEAR 1 UPDATE



# REFLECTING ON A LANDMARK YEAR

REACHING HIGHER YEAR 1

## 2025 will be remembered as a historic year for women's sport: we must use this momentum to drive the game forward.

The Lionesses once again captured the nation's hearts when they became back-to-back European Champions on that famous summer's night in Basel. That victory has ignited something powerful, strengthening a special connection with fans and driving more women and girls than ever before to play, coach, referee and get involved in football.

The impact was immediate, evident in the 196% increase in searches for female football playing opportunities the day after the UEFA Women's Euro 2025 final. By October, the impact of our Lionesses' success on the pitch was already being felt in communities across the country, with participation levels increasing by 5% from pre-tournament levels.

Knowing that most girls get their first taste of football in the playground or on the school playing fields, we set ambitious targets in *Reaching Higher* to continue the drive to unlock equal opportunities in schools. Originally set for 2028, the objective for 90% of schools to offer girls equal access to football through PE lessons at Key Stages 2 and 3 has already been met. 2.6 million girls now have equal access to football in PE – a 31% increase since the 2020/21 season.

But we know that there is still more work to be done when it comes to unlocking equal opportunities within our communities. That's why we launched our *Made for this Game* campaign earlier this year. Spanning every area of the game, *Made for this Game* shows every woman and girl, that no matter their age, ability or background, football is a sport where they belong.

As we reflect on the first year of *Reaching Higher*, there's so much to be proud of, but no room for complacency. We must use our successes to continue to develop and professionalise the game across the whole women's football pyramid and create environments and pathways where our female players and workforce can thrive. We know that the women's game is unique, something that we will lean into as we grow – looking for new and exciting ways to engage our fans and welcome more people into the fold.

The women's game is our big opportunity in football. Next year, we'll learn whether our bid to host the FIFA Women's World Cup 2035 has been successful. Securing the tournament would be a once-in-a-lifetime chance to transform the women's and girls' game on an unprecedented scale. We've already seen how hosting a major competition can drive participation – and this promises to go even further.

The Lionesses have gone above and beyond to put the women's game in the spotlight. Now, it's up to all of us – across every area of the sport – to keep building on their legacy, ensuring the game continues to thrive for generations to come.

**Sue Day**  
FA Director of Women's Football and Para Football





# IMPACT IN NUMBERS

REACHING HIGHER YEAR 1



## PARTICIPATION

**5%**

increase in the number  
of women and girls  
playing football from  
pre-tournament levels\*

**17,186**

female registered teams  
(+4% from  
pre-tournament levels)

**29%**

increase in the number  
of female registered referees  
compared to this  
time last year\*\*

**12%**

increase in female  
grassroots coaches compared  
to this time last year\*\*

## ENGAGEMENT

**15.9M**

viewers tuned in to watch  
the UEFA Women's Euro  
2025 final

**12%**

growth across Lionesses'  
social channels from  
pre-tournament levels\*

**76%**

girls said they are interested  
in women's professional  
football (+4% from  
pre-tournament levels)

**80%**

women say that they believe  
playing football is for girls  
and boys equally (+3% from  
pre-tournament levels)

## Lasting Legacy of EURO 2025

Where the Lionesses' win in the UEFA Women's EURO 2022 started a movement, this summer's victory served as a catalyst for the growth of the women's and girls' game across England, building on the incredible work of clubs and schools across the country who have been committed to driving the game forward.

From record-breaking numbers of grassroots participation to more female referees than ever before; it is evident that the Lionesses winning EURO 2025 has had a transformative impact.

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\*includes Instagram, X and Threads

\*6,152,423 pre-EURO 2025 v 6,476,326 post-EURO 2025

\*\* Oct 2024 v Oct 2025

# REACHING HIGHER: PROGRESS AND AMBITION

REACHING HIGHER YEAR 1

The end of the 2024/25 season marked the first full year of the *Reaching Higher* strategy, in what has been a memorable year for women's and girls' football across England. From the performances of our elite teams to the growing numbers of grassroots participants, from workforce development to fostering inclusive environments, important progress has been made against our strategic priorities.

The following pages show the progress that has been made across the game in the last season. Now, the focus is on continuing this momentum to strive towards, and beyond, the goals laid out in the strategy.



## Success for our England Teams

The 24/25 season marked another successful period for our England teams, from senior triumphs to youth progression, the pathway continues to produce world-class players and historic moments.



### BACK TO BACK EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS

the first senior England team ever to win a major tournament overseas



### SEMI-FINALISTS

FIFA WU17s World Cup 2024

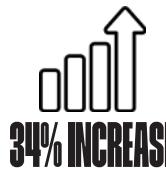


### QUALIFICATION

FIFA WU20s World Cup 2026  
UEFA WU19s Euro Finals 2025



30%  
players in WU15-WU19  
England youth teams from  
underrepresented groups



34% INCREASE  
in youth development investment by  
Professional Game Academies



1,908 NEW  
Discover my Talent referrals

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## Building the Pyramid

Sustainable growth across the women's football pyramid is a key focus, with last season seeing significant investment in leagues, facilities, and the quality of competition.



### 95% CLUB RETENTION

achieved across the Women's National League (WNL) and Regional Leagues



WNL Women's  
National League

£250,000+

in grants awarded to WNL clubs to enhance facilities and sustainability



240,000+  
spectators at fixtures involving WNL clubs



100%  
WNL clubs achieved safe to  
operate minimum standards



### UEFA FUNDING

approved for four years to support the growth and the development of the Regional Leagues (Tiers 5 & 6)

## Growing the Grassroots Game

The drive to deliver equal opportunities for women and girls to play continues, from advancing provision in schools to developing sessional football offerings.



**237,615**

affiliated female players  
(+5% v 23/24)



**18,038**

affiliated female-only sessional or  
team-based opportunities  
(+3% v 23/24)



**90%**

schools now deliver equal access in  
PE for girls at KS2 and KS3 - three  
years ahead of target



### NEW SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

piloted for KS2 and KS4 girls as part  
of extra-curricular offering



### EQUAL GAME

supported grassroots clubs in creating  
more girls' teams and embedding female  
health and well-being initiatives



**70%**

increase in Big Football Day  
events v 23/24

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## People & Workforce

From coaches to referees, volunteers to players, the 24/25 season's progress reflects The FA's deep commitment to developing, supporting, and empowering everyone involved in the women's and girls' game.



**484**

female coaches supported financially  
to enrol onto UEFA C Diplomas, and  
50 to enrol onto UEFA B Diplomas



### PLAYER TO COACH INITIATIVE

launched, with 25 players  
engaged from Tiers 2 and 3



**3,425**

female match officials, with a  
14% increase in numbers from  
underrepresented groups



**103**

women supported through the  
refereeing Emerging Talent Programme



**21,526**

female volunteers across the  
men's and women's game

Kickstarted the  
development of our  
**FEMALE HEALTH  
EDUCATION FRAMEWORK**



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# THANK YOU

The delivery of the *Reaching Higher* strategy would not be possible without effective and committed collaboration between ourselves and a range of partners:

- County FAs helping us to grow the game throughout England at regional and local levels
- Funding partners without whose financial investment many of our ambitions could not be realised
- National delivery partners who support our development programmes across the country
- Broadcast and commercial partners who grow the reach and interest in women's and girls' football.

Our collective thanks goes to all our much-valued partners, with whom we look forward to working throughout the next years of this strategy – and beyond.

