

# FOOTBALL YOUR WAY

THE FA'S GAMEPLAN FOR  
DISABILITY FOOTBALL 2021-24



TheFA



FOR ALL



### **Definitions:**

In the plan you're reading, you'll see reference to 'disability football' and at other times 'para football'. Both terms encompass all the football formats for disabled people.

However:

**Disability football** is predominantly the term used in the grassroots game.

**Para football** is the common term in the elite game – i.e. within the Talent Pathway you'll read about, and at international level. For clarity, 'para' is short for 'parallel' – i.e. running directly alongside the mainstream game.

You will also see the terms '**partially-sighted**' and '**visually-impaired**' used.

**Partially-sighted** is a specific format of the game (i.e. it's not blind football), whereas **visually-impaired** is a generic term for all sight loss.

**Safeguarding:** Creating a positive environment is crucial throughout disability and para football. This means observing the highest safeguarding practices, supported by FA policies, procedures and reporting methods. You can read more about all these [here](#). The FA will lead in this area, but safeguarding is *everyone's* responsibility.

# WE HAVE AN AMBITIOUS PLAN TO DEVELOP DISABILITY FOOTBALL IN ENGLAND

Football has the incredible power to bring people together, eradicate social barriers and be a force for good across all communities. This is why we're focused on doing everything within our power to create a game free from discrimination.

We have a tremendous opportunity to refocus our efforts to ensure the game can be accessed, enjoyed and played by all, and that means strategically co-leading our plan to take disability football to the next level.

This plan enables us to make sure we're creating and sustaining a culture across the game where disabled people have access to opportunities, feel safe and like they truly belong and where everyone can deliver their best on or off the pitch, whether they've been involved in football previously or not.

At The FA, we are clear that our commitments have to start with ourselves and that means creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce from the inside out, and from top to bottom. This plan isn't just focused on The FA and makes sure that we can have a positive impact across the entire disability football landscape.

In this plan, we strive to enhance awareness and visibility of our offerings and participants, committing to developing and growing disability football inside and outside The FA. This includes having ambitions for increasing participation for recreation or competition by developing a more inclusive and diverse talent pathway, providing world-class coaching and support services for our elite para players, increasing the number and quality of coaches working with disabled players and making sure that we raise the profile of the game at every level and across all formats and pathways.

Our plan delivers from the pitch to the sidelines, so that we can effectively support and inspire current and future generations by creating a game that meets the expectations of disabled people whether they want to work for The FA, are serious elite players, casual recreational players or coaches. The Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted disabled people more than most and we want to ensure that we can provide a platform to overcome setbacks that some may have faced.

We already know that much has been achieved within The FA and also at grassroots and international levels through the determination, courage and commitment of individuals. However, we know that so much more can be done by working together as one united team to achieve this ambitious plan for the development of disability football in England.

We know football can change lives for the better impacting physical and mental wellbeing, creating communities and friendships and providing platforms for challenge and competition – and we're committed to ensuring that disabled people have the opportunity to engage and participate in football, their way.



*Sue Campbell*

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



*Edleen John*

**Edleen John**  
International Relations, Corporate Affairs and  
Co-Partner for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Director

# FOOTBALL YOUR WAY

## THE FA'S GAMEPLAN FOR DISABILITY FOOTBALL 2021-24

### A CLEAR FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

I warmly welcome this plan because it provides a clear framework for the development of disability football for the years ahead. In the past we have relied on individual pioneers driving the game forward; now we have a clear overarching plan that brings all The FA's working divisions together on a common mission: to increase opportunities for disabled people to play, coach and administer the game locally and nationally.

The increased promotion and marketing will ensure that our role models will inspire many more people to realise that football is for them and they can choose how they want to be involved. We are proud of the work that has been done in the past, but this plan takes us to a new level of ambition and hopefully will deliver a brighter and better future for all disabled people, whatever their role in football, on and off the field.



**Colin Chaytors**

Chair, The FA Disability Football Committee



### IF YOU HAVE A DISABILITY, THERE'S A OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO PLAY THE GAME

This plan demonstrates our commitment to growing disability football by raising awareness, growing participation, and making the game available for all. There are many different ways for disabled people to play football – whether that's in recreational, mainstream or impairment-specific categories. We want to provide a genuine choice for everyone, regardless of age, background or ability – never more important given the significant impact the pandemic has had on the amount of disability football being played, which we are already responding to through our Football Your Way campaign.

We want to change perceptions and social barriers for people with a disability to play football, and send a clear message: if you have a disability there is a opportunity for you to play the game, whether that's socially for fun, at a local grassroots club or even playing for your country on the world stage. Beyond the field of play, we want to create awareness that opportunities also exist for disabled people to pursue every other role our great game offers, whether out on the field as a coach or referee or behind the scenes as a club official or volunteer.



**James Kendall**

Director of Football Development, The FA





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# THE CURRENT DISABILITY LANDSCAPE IN ENGLAND

## WHAT IS DISABILITY AND WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

Disability under the Equality Act 2010 applies to anyone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' adverse effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

**9.4 million**

people in England today fall within this definition. That's 1 in 5 of the population.

**Almost 75%**

of disabled people have more than one impairment<sup>1</sup>.

**Almost 70%**

of disabled people are aged over 50.

**55.6%**

of disabled people are female.

Sources: Sport England; Public Health England; Life and Opportunities Survey; Portas analysis

## THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS EXACERBATED THE ISSUES

**Before Covid-19: 40.4%**

of disabled people were inactive (v. 21.4% of non-disabled people).

**During Covid-19: 54%**

of disabled people are/were worried about leaving their home to be active.

**After Covid-19: 55%**

of disabled people want to increase their level of activity once restrictions are removed and Covid-19 is under control.

Sources: Activity Alliance, Active Lives Survey, Portas analysis

## DESPITE HIGH DEMAND FOR ACTIVITIES, THERE IS POOR PROVISION

**4 in 5**

disabled people want to do more activity than they do currently.

**Only 1 in 4**

disabled people take part in organised activity sessions.

**50%**

of those who do take part in activities do so alone.

Sources: Sport England, Mapping Disability; Activity Alliance; Portas analysis





# THE CURRENT DISABILITY FOOTBALL LANDSCAPE IN ENGLAND

## DISABILITY FOOTBALL HAS GROWN

**2,459**

affiliated disabled teams in 2020: a sixfold increase in 10 years (384 affiliated teams in 2009).

**45**

FA disability-specific development officers.

**36**

pan-disability County leagues in England.

Source: The FA

## THERE ARE THREE PATHWAYS OPEN TO DISABLED FOOTBALLERS:

### Mainstream:

This pathway is for anyone who can play without adaptations to the rules.

### Pan-disability:

This pathway is for players with a broad spectrum of impairments and health conditions.

### Impairment-specific:

This pathway is for players with the same type of impairments.



Pan-disability is the largest of the two disability-specific pathways. However, impairment-specific football offers opportunities from grassroots through to elite international teams.

Impairment-specific football comes in a range of formats, including those shown below, but there are not international teams for every format.

- Amputee
- Blind
- Cerebral Palsy
- Deaf
- Down's syndrome
- Dwarf
- Frame
- Learning disability
- Mental health
- Partially-sighted
- Powerchair



# THE CURRENT DISABILITY FOOTBALL LANDSCAPE IN ENGLAND (CONTINUED)

## PARTICIPATION IS BEHIND OTHER SPORTS...

Of the 9.4 million disabled people in England:



**21.9%**  
swim



**9.1%**  
run or jog



**5.6%**  
play golf



**4.5%**  
play football

Sources: Activity Alliance, Active Lives Survey, Portas analysis

## BUT NATIONAL TEAM PERFORMANCE IS GOOD

We currently run six senior England national teams in these disability football formats/genders:

Blind (men), Cerebral Palsy (men), Deaf (men), Deaf (women), Partially-sighted (men) and Powerchair (mixed gender).

We also run two England under-21 sides, both male: Cerebral Palsy and Deaf. As you'll read on page 20, we also plan to field two additional

England women's disability teams during the course of this plan: Blind and Cerebral Palsy.

Across the spectrum, teams have figured in the latter stages of European tournaments – for example, the Powerchair squad won their European Championship for the first time in 2019. And teams have regularly reached the semi-final stages in World Championships, as this chart reflects:

Disability Format	Current England teams	Last three competitions			
Blind Football 	 1	Best finish:	4th	Most successful nation:	Brazil 
Partially-Sighted Football 	 1	Best finish:	2nd	Most successful nation:	Ukraine 
Powerchair Football 	 1	Best finish:	2nd	Most successful nation:	USA 
Cerebral Palsy (CP) Football  1	 1	Best finish:	4th	Most successful nation:	Russia 
Deaf Futsal 	  2	Best finish:	5th (F) DNQ (M)	Most successful nation:	Iran Russia  

Source: FIFA, IFCPF, IBSA, FIPFA, English Deaf Futsal, Virtus, The Guardian, Portas analysis

\*Funding has stopped for Deaf Futsal. Note: DNQ = Did not qualify





# OUR FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC GOALS

To improve all aspects of disability football provision in England, we will focus our efforts on seven areas, each with a defined strategic goal(s):

FOCUS AREA:

STRATEGIC GOALS:

## 1. OUR PEOPLE AND FA CULTURE

- To increase the awareness, accessibility, engagement and inclusivity of The FA for disabled people.
- To increase the representation of disabled colleagues and enhance our culture, through increased understanding of disability.

## 2. PARTICIPATION

- To increase the number of disabled people taking part in football for fun and competition in schools, clubs and the community.

## 3. TALENT PATHWAY

- To expand and develop a sustainable and inclusive talent pathway for disabled people.

## 4. NATIONAL TEAMS

- To provide world-class coaching and support services for our England para teams.

## 5. COACH DEVELOPMENT

- To increase the quality and quantity of coaches working across disability football.

## 6. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

- To change the perceptions and social barriers for disabled people to play football.

## 7. PARTNERSHIPS

- To ensure sustainable funding and investment for disability football.

UNDERPINNING AND WOVEN THROUGHOUT ALL THE ABOVE FOCUS AREAS IS A COMMITMENT TO BEST-PRACTICE SAFEGUARDING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.





Focus area 1:

# OUR PEOPLE AND FA CULTURE

Our strategic goal:

- To increase the awareness, accessibility, engagement and inclusivity of The FA for disabled people.
- To increase the representation of disabled colleagues throughout the organisation and enhance our inclusive culture through better understanding of disability.

If we are to improve all aspects of disability football provision, the first mirror we must hold up is to ourselves. We must exemplify best practice in all we do in relation to our own people.

Key success measure:

By 2024, we aim to be an organisation where colleagues have significantly increased awareness and understanding of disability and long-term conditions, as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

One measure of progress, that speaks to the inclusivity of our culture, will be increased comfort in employees self-declaring their own disability or long-term condition. Increased employee declaration alongside other positive action will help to increase our disability representation from 3.3% to 10% over the three-year period.

To fulfil our goals, we will:	And here's how we'll do it:
<b>Ensure access and information from our organisation is accessible and inclusive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate the accessibility and inclusivity of current FA offerings.</li> <li>Ensure all FA/England Football and County FA websites meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 level, with AAA compliance.</li> <li>Improve the ease of translation of FA public documents, publications and websites into accessible formats.</li> </ul>
<b>Proactively engage with disabled people and disabled communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase awareness of the disability football offering and roles in The FA.</li> <li>Modernise the IT administration of the dispensation policy.</li> <li>Increase engagement with Level Playing Field<sup>1</sup> through the England Supporters Club.</li> </ul> <p><sup>1</sup>Level Playing Field = the charity which campaigns and advises sports bodies on disability issues, particularly supporter facilities.</p>
<b>Increase disability representation and monitoring within our workforce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve employee disability declaration data capture rates.</li> <li>Increase awareness on the workplace adjustments process and policies.</li> <li>Explore partnerships with disability-specific recruitment partners to widen our incoming talent pipeline.</li> </ul>
<b>Increase employees' understanding and awareness of disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create educational content on disability to sit alongside other relevant equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) content.</li> <li>Update 'An Introduction to Disability Football' coaching module.</li> <li>Deliver educational offerings on language/terminology, ableism and microaggressions, via external partnerships.</li> </ul>
<b>Embed disability into broader FA organisational measurement and metrics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include a disability target in our next public-facing EDI strategy.</li> <li>Embed disability representation measurement and consideration into relevant HR processes.</li> </ul>
<b>Enhance our commitment to a culture of inclusivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benchmark ourselves using an acknowledged evaluation process.</li> <li>Always include disability-focused examples and themes in specific events we mark (e.g. Mental Health Awareness Week, Time To Talk, Stress Awareness and International Day for Persons with Disabilities).</li> <li>Embed colleagues' own stories and showcase role models into our wider communications plans (see Focus area 6).</li> </ul>

“

As the national governing body for football, it is our ambition that people from every community benefit from and engage in football in a way that works for them. We value the different backgrounds and life experiences that disabled people bring to the table, and we want to make sure that we reflect and support the disabled community within our own organisation. Through increased education and awareness, we will strive to create a culture and an environment inside the FA where disabled colleagues are better represented, can truly be themselves and reach their full potential.”

**Rachel Brace**

FA Human Resources Director

## WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR BY 2024:

“

I feel really valued and supported at The FA. My colleagues understand my disability and I can always seek further support and resources whenever I need it. If it felt like tokenism or I was made to feel like a burden, I'd say so. Instead I'm truly an integrated member of the workforce and my different skills and approach are celebrated.”

FA employee

“

I access lots of information and websites for different organisations. The FA is right up there when it comes to proactively making sure that anything they put out is in an accessible format, which makes me feel closer to the organisation because they demonstrate that they think of people like me.”

Disabled person, age 25



Focus area 2:

# **PARTICIPATION**

**Our strategic goal:**

- To increase the number of disabled people taking part in football for fun and competition in schools, clubs and the community.

Initially, we will focus our efforts on increasing the number of disabled young people playing football, by widening opportunities to play, whether purely for fun or in competitive settings.

All our work to increase participation will be based on creating programmes, informed by insight into player needs and motivations. These programmes will then require linked opportunities in schools, clubs and community settings to open the doors to as wide a range of participants as possible.

The entire spectrum of our work will be fully inclusive, ensuring we appeal to people from historically under-represented ethnic communities, deprived areas and females.

**Key success measures:**

**By 30 June 2022 to have returned to pre-Covid-19 participation levels.**

**By June 2024 to have increased participation by 50% by offering 2,800 opportunities to play for disabled people of all ages across all disability football formats.**



To fulfil our goal, we will:	And here's how we'll do it:
<b>Work with primary, secondary and special schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure football is played as part of curriculum physical education, giving young disabled people the opportunities to learn when playing football.</li> <li>• Deliver inclusive extra-curricular opportunities, with a separate pan-disability programme for those who lack the confidence or capability to play mainstream football.</li> <li>• Offer young disabled people access to school competitions.</li> </ul>
<b>Work with our football clubs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create sustainable, safe, inclusive and welcoming environments by delivering a club-focused Disability Awareness Programme with associated training and resources.</li> <li>• Ensure all disabled football players are aware of competitive opportunities to play in mainstream, pan-disability and impairment-specific local teams.</li> <li>• Promote The FA's dispensation policy, enabling children with a disability or significant physical development delay (SPDD) the opportunity to play football better matched to their ability v. focused on age groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Work with sustainable community football providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a new boys/mixed pan-disability For Fun programme to align with existing girls' provision.</li> <li>• Evolve existing Weetabix Wildcats and Teenage For Fun programmes as fully-inclusive opportunities for young disabled girls.</li> <li>• Deliver a recreational football offer for disabled adults in hot spots for growth.</li> <li>• Recruit and train more leaders to increase opportunities for disabled participants.</li> </ul>

In all the above work, we will ensure that those working with children and adults at risk complete The FA's online 'Safeguarding Children' and 'Safeguarding Adults' courses respectively.

“

Insight shows that disabled people are twice as likely to be inactive than non-disabled people. So our national sport of football has a really important role to play. For those who played before the pandemic, it's a great way to get active again and reconnect with friends – when, where and how it suits the individual.

“And for those who have not played before, football's doors are fully open. We want to provide as many opportunities as we can for disabled people to enjoy our national game in fun, supportive and safe environments.”

**Phil Heap**

National Development Manager (Disability Pathway), The FA

## WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR BY 2024:

“ I didn't realise how many different types of disability football were on offer. I have been able to join in at my own pace and find the football that works for me. It's been great, has kept me fit and active – and I've made lots of new friends in the process.”

**16-year-old with cerebral palsy**

“ Football plays a really important part in my life. When I started playing it helped me come to terms with my disability and be fully myself. In many ways I don't think I play one of the forms of disability football – I play 'football my way'. I have the freedom to play to meet my individual needs and at my own pace.”

**Adult Powerchair footballer**



Focus area 3:

## TALENT PATHWAY

Our strategic goal:

- To expand and develop a sustainable and inclusive talent pathway for disabled people.

The pathway we plan will be more inclusive and diverse, and crucially, supported by the best coaches, sports science and sports medicine staff.

The England para teams have experienced increasing success in recent years (see chart on page 9). The frequent transition of young players from the Talent System has contributed to this, so now's the time to widen the pipeline – and increase its quality.

Integral to this – and in everything we do – is ensuring the highest standards of welfare and safeguarding are in place for every player.

Key success measure:

By 2024, a 25% increase in the number of players who have progressed through the Talent Pathway into England para teams.

“

We will create an inclusive Talent Pathway which ensures any and every young player can achieve their potential. Equally important, we will ensure the player experience whilst in the Pathway is positive, fun and personally rewarding.”

**James Watkins**

Talent Pathway Manager – Para Football, The FA

To fulfil our goal, we will:	And here's how we'll do it:
<p><b>Ensure players with the most potential are identified and recruited for the pathway</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how confident grassroots coaches and volunteers are in referring disabled players to the Talent Pathway.</li> <li>• Educate 500+ stakeholders (grassroots coaches, teachers, referees, league and club officials, academy scouts, etc.) annually on talent identification and classification.</li> <li>• Target talent inclusion recruitment projects across historically under-represented ethnic communities, deprived areas and females.</li> <li>• Utilise football's digital channels to make alerting The FA to a talented player as easy as possible.</li> <li>• Observe, assess and review 500+ eligible players annually.</li> <li>• Showcase role model participants in disability-specific pathways.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure talented players are supported to progress and impact future England team performance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a network of county, regional and national talent development programmes to ensure player transition into international para teams.</li> <li>• Apply an age-appropriate and impairment-specific '4 corner' performance support framework at national level.</li> <li>• Utilise grassroots and academy environments to provide meaningful, individualised training and competition plans.</li> <li>• Maximise player support via partnerships with Sport England, Sports Aid and TASS (Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure the Talent Pathway provides a positive and life-impacting experience</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise the physical and mental wellbeing of all players and the workforce in the Talent Pathway.</li> <li>• Implement individual development plans which reflect the age, stage and classification of players and their needs.</li> <li>• Promote a dual-career focus and player education.</li> <li>• Retain the experience and qualities of current players as coaches, ambassadors and role models.</li> <li>• Create a culture which recognises the unique journey of each para player and celebrates their successes.</li> </ul>

## WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR BY 2024:

“ I never imagined that my blind son would find a programme where his sporting passion and ability would be maximised. The FA has provided that programme.”

Parent

“ I am so proud to be part of the England Talent Pathway. The support I receive is amazing and, one day, I hope to wear the three lions.”

17-year-old player

“ I now realise I can play and achieve for both my club's academy and within the para football Talent Pathway”

12-year-old player



#### Focus area 4:

## NATIONAL TEAMS

### Our strategic goal:

- To provide world-class coaching and support services for our England para teams.

All our services will combine to build a player-centred, high-performing culture in support of our male and female England teams.

We're committed to using the England para football teams' podium success at European and world level as a platform for future success.

Our holistic performance services and support will cover all aspects of every player's development. This includes guidance on developing a dual career to ensure every player has employment opportunities beyond football. Within the period of this plan, we'll field two new England women's senior para teams: Blind and Cerebral Palsy.

### Key success measure:

By 2024, to have every England and Great Britain para football team competing for podium success at Continental, World, Deaflympic and Paralympic levels.

“

We will develop a world-class system through building a high-performing, player-centred culture. The system will be underpinned by holistic performance services and support, alongside offering dual-career employment opportunities beyond football. In addition, we will launch two new England women's para teams: Blind and Cerebral Palsy.”

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

To fulfil our goal, we will:	And here's how we'll do it:
<p><b>Ensure a high-performing culture in all England para teams</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure respect is shown to all players, the coaching workforce and officials.</li> <li>• Develop adaptable players to meet the demands of para football.</li> <li>• Develop players who are committed and have a winning mentality for England.</li> <li>• Ensure consistently high levels of contact and guidance to support players with their health, wellbeing and fitness through Individual Development Plans (IDPs).</li> <li>• Create a world-class performance environment based on honesty, integrity and regular open communication.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure holistic performance services support to all England para players</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a medical protocol is available to all players for the diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of injured players.</li> <li>• Deliver a physical performance and nutrition programme for all players to meet the demands of international football.</li> <li>• Ensure the wellbeing and mental health of all employees and players through proactive support on- and off-camp.</li> <li>• Establish a world-leading performance analysis programme to support IDPs for players and coaches to fulfil their potential.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure partnerships with leagues to provide players with competitive opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the impairment-specific national leagues to ensure as many appropriate competitive opportunities as possible.</li> <li>• Develop relationships and awareness with mainstream leagues in the football pyramid to identify genuine talent for England para teams.</li> <li>• Create a digital presence on England Football social media platforms to promote para football within mainstream football.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure enhanced dual-career support and opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify para football-friendly higher education establishments offering study opportunities alongside a player's football development, irrespective of their impairment.</li> <li>• Provide performance lifestyle support to enhance education and career development alongside para football.</li> <li>• Explore para football competitive opportunities within higher education.</li> <li>• Explore the benefits of having a player support body to represent para players' best interests, e.g. the PFA (Professional Footballers' Association) and BAC (British Athletes Commission).</li> </ul>
<p><b>General development of all women's para teams across the disability spectrum</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work closely with visual-impairment and cerebral palsy national partners to launch targeted talent identification and development events.</li> <li>• Develop regional programmes and activities for identified talented female players.</li> <li>• Build a performance framework to support Blind, Cerebral Palsy and Deaf female teams for international competition.</li> <li>• Create a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) to support all England para women's teams.</li> </ul>

## WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR BY 2024:

“It’s amazing that I’ve been able to fulfil my potential in the CP England Squad whilst being supported to play in mainstream club football.”

England Cerebral Palsy para player

“The off-camp local performance services have provided me the opportunity to meet the targets agreed with my head coach in my personal development plan. The services have also given me enhanced support when I have been injured.”

17-year-old player



Focus area 5:

## **COACH DEVELOPMENT**

**Our strategic goal:**

- **To increase the quality and quantity of coaches working across disability football at all levels.**

Firstly, we want to recruit and develop more coaches to work in disability football. In parallel, every coach working with our talented and elite disabled players will be supported with a development action plan and mentoring to support them to excel.

We also want to recruit and develop more disabled people to become part of our coaching workforce. We will also introduce a player-to-coach programme to support the transition of elite disabled players into the coaching system.

Safeguarding will be integral to this work, including the requirement for those working with disabled children or adults (e.g. coaches and mentors) to work to codes of conduct, and have completed the relevant safeguarding courses, briefings and checks.

**Key success measures:**

**By 2024 we will have:**

- **1,000 more coaches to work in disability football environments;**
- **Established a player-to-coach programme for talent pathway and international players;**
- **Implemented personalised development action plans for all national disability team coaches.**

To fulfil our goal, we will:	And here's how we'll do it:
<p><b>Ensure support for existing and new coaches working with disabled players is easy to access and simple to apply</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit all our coach and teacher development resources from a diversity and accessibility perspective to make it easier for disabled people to develop their coaching talents.</li> <li>• Embed our 'Introduction to Coaching Disability Football' module into our 'Introduction to Coaching Football Qualification'.</li> <li>• Develop standalone 'Coaching Disability Football' modules to support the existing coaching workforce.</li> <li>• Ensure that those working with adults at risk complete The FA's free online 'Safeguarding Adults' course.</li> <li>• Develop a disability football section within the England Football learning hub and online community to support coaches working with disabled players and enabling peer-to-peer learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure regular development opportunities for Talent Pathway coaches, empowering them to nurture players' unique potential</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a network of mentors to support Talent Pathway coaches, offering in-club/camp support and the provision of a development action plan.</li> <li>• Provide an annual programme of digital and face-to-face development opportunities for Talent Pathway coaches.</li> <li>• Develop a player-to-coach programme enabling players to transition from Talent Pathways and national teams into coaching.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure national coaching staff each have development action plans so they can be the best they can be and enable players to fulfil their potential</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development action plan in place for every national coach.</li> <li>• Establish a support network to enhance the impact of every national coach to the benefit of every player.</li> </ul>

“

We want to develop more skilful players, more inspirational opportunities and more transformational coaches throughout the disability football pathway.”

**Justyn Price**

Head of Coach Development and Insight, The FA

## WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR BY 2024:

“ I found it really easy to access regular learning opportunities and experiences to develop and support players to thrive within disability football.”

**Volunteer Grassroots Disability Football Club Coach**

“ I have enjoyed every minute of my playing career with the England Powerchair Football Team. Thanks to The FA's player-to-coach programme, I can see lots of new possibilities opening up for me to stay in the game and to play my part in supporting others to unleash their potential through coaching.”

**Current England para international**



Focus area 6:

# MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Our strategic goal:

- To change the perceptions and social barriers for disabled people to play football.

Emphasising our commitment to growing every aspect of disability football, we will undertake three key strands of work:

- Showcasing diverse role models to inspire participation.
- Raising awareness of the opportunities to play/coach/facilitate disability football, calling on commercial and broadcast partners to help us amplify our messages.
- Communicating a clear message that if you have a disability there is a pathway for you to achieve the dream of playing for your country within an environment in which you can flourish.

Key success measure:

**By 2024, to have doubled The FA's marketing and communications activity to promote disability football.**

“

Our goal is to normalise all forms of disability football, so they are not perceived as something 'different'. In the same way that women's football has been on a journey to become an accepted and valued part of this country's football landscape, we want to help take disability football on a similar journey, inspiring the nation with its excellence and promoting opportunities for all to play the game.”

**David Gerty**  
Head of PR and Campaigns, The FA

**Cat Rowley**  
Brand Lead for FA Competitions



To fulfil our goal, we will:	And here's how we'll do it:
<b>Drive visibility of England teams</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide communications support for England's para teams before and during major tournaments.</li> <li>• Ensure promotion of England's para teams is integrated into wider England Football campaigns.</li> <li>• Significantly increase frequency and quality of coverage on our England and England Football channels.</li> <li>• Tell the amazing stories of our current England team stars and those on their way to the top.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initially, support disabled players to return to football post-Covid-19 by promoting the Football Your Way campaign.</li> <li>• Thereafter, run one insight-led campaign per season focused on getting younger people into the disability football pathway.</li> <li>• Promote the FA Disability Cup every season as a showpiece event in the disability football calendar.</li> </ul>
<b>Drive visibility of disability football through partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage current commercial partners to help us amplify compelling moments and stories.</li> <li>• Encourage commercial partners to help build role models.</li> <li>• Explore collaboration opportunities with external stakeholders to promote and drive awareness of disability football.</li> </ul>
<b>Deliver the basics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successfully launch the plan you're reading.</li> <li>• Construct a disability football calendar, pinpointing key dates, milestones and opportunities.</li> <li>• Identify relevant FA spokespeople and deliver them appropriate speaking opportunities.</li> <li>• Create a framework for County FAs to identify disability football case studies.</li> </ul>

## WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR BY 2024:

“ My confidence was really knocked by the Covid-19 pandemic and I was really unsure about returning to football. Then I found the ‘Football Your Way’ hub on the England Football website and it helped me return at my own pace and in line with my abilities. I’m now back playing every week.”

**30-year-old Powerchair player**

“ The England para players I’ve read about in the media really inspired me to take up football. I’ve now joined a local club which runs teams for disabled people and I’m loving it. I’ve made loads of new friends too.”

**14-year-old cerebral palsy player**



Focus area 7:

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

**Our strategic goal:**

- **To ensure sustainable funding and investment for disability football.**

We will create disability-specific, purpose-led opportunities to match the goals of public sector funding bodies and commercial organisations. These opportunities will be underpinned by a coherent story which communicates the impact of disability football to prospective funders and investors – and the benefits they can accrue.

Right now, BT and Nike are The FA's pre-eminent commercial partners to disability football. Their contribution helps fund the delivery of our existing disability football provision.



**Key success measure:**

**By 2024 our ambition is to secure two additional major purpose-led partners in disability football, specifically to support:**

- **Infrastructure development to enable greater participation and engagement;**
- **Improved visibility and awareness of the game.**

To fulfil our goal, we will:	And here's how we'll do it:
<b>Develop propositions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with every stakeholder in disability football to identify barriers and opportunities.</li> <li>• Pilot and explore propositions with trusted partners.</li> <li>• Conduct research to identify sectors of the game that provide the greatest partner opportunities.</li> <li>• Identify the top four barriers in disability football which partners can help The FA address.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure our propositions are purpose-led</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a number of purpose-led areas in disability football which link to our broader strategic goals and which partners can amplify. E.g. more grassroots clubs offering disability football – competitive and recreational.</li> <li>• Align rights between the elite and grassroots disability football for maximum impact.</li> </ul>
<b>Target specific sectors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify business categories which have the strongest link to the identified purpose(s).</li> <li>• Create bespoke category-centric propositions.</li> <li>• Target brands in each sector with the greatest suitability and/or potential alignment to our goals.</li> <li>• In all cases, back our approaches with category-focused insight and research.</li> </ul>

If you're interested in partnership opportunities to take disability football forward, please email: [partnershipsales@TheFA.com](mailto:partnershipsales@TheFA.com)

“

Disability football provides an excellent platform for brands to make a difference. It will require considerable commitment from The FA and brand partners to jointly create purpose-led initiatives. The potential rewards are high and successful programmes will positively impact thousands of lives.”

**Richard Ames**  
Head of Partnership Sales, The FA

### WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR BY 2024:

“ In the two years of working with The FA, lots more disabled people have started playing football. It's very rewarding for our business to see this lasting impact on society.”  
Marketing Director, FA Partner

“ Part-funding The FA's plans to grow all aspects of disability football fits perfectly with our strategy to get as many people as possible active – helping the health and cohesion of the nation.”  
Strategy Lead, public-sector organisation



# OUR DISABILITY FOOTBALL DELIVERY PARTNERS

Disability football could not flourish without the day-to-day work undertaken by the County FA network – the primary regional deliverers of the game.

In addition, the disability game's infrastructure and general development is supported – and in some cases funded – by the organisations below:



## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

To see what disability football opportunities are available near you, visit our 'Find Football' service [here](#).

If you can't find something suitable, get in touch with your local County FA. You'll find contact details of every County FA [here](#).

To read more about all aspects of The FA's current activities in disability football and the policy framework around the game, visit [here](#).

To read A Game For All, The FA's wider anti-discrimination strategy, visit [here](#).







**FOR ALL**

The Football Association  
Wembley Stadium  
London HA9 0WS  
**T:** +44 (0)800 169 1863  
**F:** +44 (0)800 169 1864  
**W:** [TheFA.com](http://TheFA.com)