



GROWING THE GAME - MAXIMISING IMPACT

Girls' and Women's Strategic Plan
2019-2024



GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024





CONTENTS

President's Foreword	04
Values	05
Introduction	06-07
Progress Review	08-09
Facts	10-11
Building on Success	12-13
Objectives	14-19
International Football	20-25
Timeline	26-27

FOREWORD:

IRISH FA PRESIDENT

The Irish Football Association has invested heavily in girls' and women's football in Northern Ireland – and will continue to do so.

Over recent years the association has successfully staged a major women's international tournament - the UEFA Women's Under-19 Championship in August 2017 - and launched various programmes to increase participation levels.

Despite the many successes, however, the association is not one for resting on its laurels, hence the need for this new plan for 2019-2024 to boost girls' and women's football further.

This fresh vision is in keeping with the Irish Football Association's overarching strategy for the game we all love, which is to promote, foster and develop football for all.

Through the plan we want to build on the foundations laid in recent years and to establish new targets that will benefit the women's and girls' game here.

In developing the strategy we have consulted widely, taking on board the views of players, coaches, administrators, volunteers and fans as well as our own

staff who work day in, day out on supporting girls' and women's football.

As a result I believe this plan provides the necessary framework to strengthen women's clubs and their volunteer base, grow participation, improve infrastructure and to encourage more women to take up coaching and to climb the coaching ladder.

And there's also a collective desire to drive greater achievements at international level. This can be done through boosting performances on the pitch and providing greater support for elite players.

Ultimately we want as many girls' and women as possible to enjoy football, whether as a player, coach, referee, administrator or volunteer. And I believe that this plan will help us to do just that.



DAVID J MARTIN
PRESIDENT, IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

IRISH FA VALUES

The Irish FA's vision for Girls' and Women's Football:

'Growing the Game - Maximising Impact'

**How the Girls' and women's
game will demonstrate the
Irish FA's Core Values:**

PROFESSIONAL

We must be professional in all that we do, meticulous in our planning and execution to ensure development in Girls' and Women's football.

INCLUSIVE

We will continue to work to ensure that all individuals whether they wish to participate, compete, coach, referee, volunteer or take up administration roles are comfortable and welcome within the game.

TEAM

We will create effective working relationships with all key stakeholders to successfully promote and foster girls' and women's football in Northern Ireland

CARING AND CONFIDENT

The Irish FA must show a duty of care for all involved in the game.

HONESTY

We must strive to have honesty and integrity in all that we do in the girls' and women's game.

INTRODUCTION

This new strategy is aligned to the Irish FA plan 2017-2022, LET THEM PLAY, FIFA and UEFA's key objectives for the Girls' and Women's Game to grow participation and build the foundations. By 2024, we aspire to double the number of registered female players from 1,600 to 3,200.

The past 4 years have showcased significant development in Girls' and Women's football. So much has been achieved within Grassroots, Domestic and the International game. Key Highlights include:

- We have established a successful player pathway from McDonald's Small sided games centres to U17 leagues.
- The Electric Ireland Women's Challenge Cup saw record crowds at the 2018 Final at the National Football Stadium over 1000 spectators
- The NIFL Premier League is now in its 3rd season with match day coverage weekly from BBC online
- Over 90% of schools are now playing in Irish FA programmes
- National Football Academy for females established in 2017
- Tournament host for the U19 European Women's Football Finals (8 team tournament)
- Over 4200 record attendance at an international women's match N.Ireland v Spain 2017





● Domestic pathway

● Recreational pathway

● Player movement



PROGRESS REVIEW

SCORECARD (Year 4: May 2018)

GOAL 1:

Ensure that girls' & women's football is governed effectively & is integral to work of IFA

Key Performance Indicator	Target	Achieved	In Progress
1.1 Meetings between all affiliated bodies convened prior to the start of women's season.	1 meeting per group	Achieved	
1.2 Eight females undertaking & graduating from the Female Football Leaders Programme	8 female leaders	10 females graduated Jan 17	
1.3 10% increase in the number of office bearers working within girls' & women's football from 2014 baseline figure	Year 1 baseline : 85 volunteers Year 2 target: 94 volunteers	Achieved, 157	

GOAL 2:

To build a culture of lifelong participation by increasing & sustaining the number of players, coaches, administrators, referees & volunteers within girls' & women's football

Key Performance Indicator	Target	Achieved	In Progress
2.1. 10% increase in the number of registered players	Year 1 baseline: 1,116 players	Achieved 1600 league participation 2017/18	
2.2. 10% increase in the number of recreational players from 2014 baseline figure	Year 1 baseline: 100 players	Achieved	Back in the game 72, World UTD 12, Street Soccer 16
2.3. 30% increase in the number of girls' participating in the IFA Games Development Centres & Holiday Football Camps	Year 1: 552		715 in camps
2.4. 20% increase in the number of primary schools providing after schools programmes for girls' from 2014 baseline figure	Year 1 baseline figure: 4	34 schools & 629 girls'	
2.5. 10% increase in the number of girls' playing football in schools	Year 1 baseline figure: Primary = 680; Post Primary = 1,574	Achieved Primary 1,487, Post Primary 1,928	
2.6. 20% increase in the number of volunteers working within girls' & women's football	Year 1 baseline figure: 85	Achieved 157	
2.7. Minimum of 5 new girls' teams linked to boys / men's clubs	Minimum 5 teams	Achieved	
2.8. 20% increase in the number of women playing football within regional colleges & universities	Year 1: 1 regional college & 1 university	Achieved	3 regional college's & 2 universities
2.9. Delivery of 2 futsal leagues for women (Belfast & West of the Bann)	Minimum 2 areas; 16 participants in each	Achieved	
2.10. Delivery of FIFA Referee Education Programme for females	Minimum 20 participants	Achieved	
2.11. 20 female referees in Female Referee Development Academy	Minimum 20 participants	Achieved	

**GOAL 3:
To reach beyond the game - use the power of football for health,
education & social development**

Key Performance Indicator	Target	Achieved	In Progress
3.1. Delivery of mental health training & suicide awareness training to women's clubs	Minimum 2 workshops; 15 participants on each	Achieved	
3.2. Delivery of Mental Toughness Workshops to six women's clubs	6 clubs, 16 participants each	Achieved	
3.4. Education Programme delivered to 3 schools	Minimum 3 schools, minimum 20 participants in each	Achieved	

**GOAL 4:
To foster a balanced, flourishing & healthy domestic game**

Key Performance Indicator	Target	Achieved	In Progress
4.1. New Under 17 National League established	Minimum 8 teams, minimum 80 participants	Achieved	
4.2. New National League established	Minimum criteria established, weekend football introduced, increased number of spectators at matches, sponsor secured	Achieved	
4.3. 8 Premier League clubs to have achieved IFA Club Excellence Mark	8 clubs to achieve		Ongoing
4.4 Financial assistance for NIWFA Premier League to cover match officials	FIFA funding for all referees; UEFA funding for 2 match officials	Achieved	
4.5. 4 Club Development Workshops delivered for women's clubs	Minimum 4 workshops, minimum 15 participants on each	Achieved	
4.6. National Football Academy established	Minimum 10 students	Achieved	

**GOAL 5:
To put structures in place that will provide our players with the best opportunity to qualify for
a major tournament within the next 10 - 15 years**

Key Performance Indicator	Target	Achieved	In Progress
5.1. Planned schedule of sessions implemented		Achieved	
5.2. Minimum of four hours contact time with players		Achieved	

**GOAL 6:
To raise the profile of girls' & women's football**

Key Performance Indicator	Target	Achieved	In Progress
6.1. New brand devised for launch of new National League in April 2016	Sponsor secured, launch event delivered (all clubs to attend)	Achieved	
6.2. FIFA Live Your Goals campaign delivered	Minimum of 100 participants at each event	Achieved	
6.3 Coverage of women's Premier League on UTV & Irish Cup matches from 3rd round	Minimum 20 weeks coverage, IFA Cup Final streamed live	Achieved	
6.4 Filming of women's senior international matches and footage used on social media outlets	3 EURO qualifiers filmed	Achieved	

OUR FACTS

DOMESTIC

30% INCREASE


in the number of girls' participating in the McDonald's Small Side Games Centres

2014 → 22 teams 2018 → 62 teams
267 **723**

% INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF GIRLS' PARTICIPATED IN SCHOOL'S FESTIVALS

2015 2017
1,025 **4,700**



 I enjoy travelling somewhere new every Friday night to play against different teams from across Northern Ireland.


Kelsey Chambers,
Carnmoney Ladies U15

U11- U17

 **79** YOUTH TEAMS

 **50** WOMENS TEAMS




 I am proud to have coached Coleraine Ladies since 2002 and a highlight would be when we won the league and divisional cup Double.

Alison Nicholl,
UEFA Pro Licence Coach


NUMBERS OF WOMEN'S REFEREES:

2015 
5 female referees working in the game


2018 
10 female referees working within the local game (21 registered)



FEMALE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME:

 **42** graduates to date since 2013


COACH MENTOR PROGRAMME:

 **20** coach mentors working with in girls' /women's clubs

SPECTATORS

Since we hosted the U19s finals how many people came to watch our show case games? (2018 season)

NIFL league games:
2,100 

NIWFA TV:
 22 NIWFA TV shows
 59K views
 102K minutes watched

NIWFA Facebook followers:
 **5,000+**

NIFL Cup league final:

620

NIWFA cup finals:

1,000+

Irish FA Challenge cup:

 **1,000**

 **INTERNATIONAL**

COUNTY EXCELLENCE:

Players currently in the NI squads that have come through county excellence pathway:

12 out of 24 senior



21 out of 24 U19



21 out 24 U17



SENIOR: UEFA RANKINGS

32 CURRENT POSITION

MEDIA COVERAGE: (GROWTH)

4 Northern Ireland Women home games live on the BBC Red button with commentary

OVER

4,200 ↑

record attendance at an international women's match Northern Ireland v Spain 2017



JULIE NELSON →

First female to reach **100 CAPS** for Northern Ireland

Simone Magill →

Guinness Book of Records
Fastest Goal 11 seconds
V Georgia 3rd June 2016

“ For me there is no greater honour than playing for Northern Ireland. International football is the pinnacle of my career.



BUILDING ON SUCCESS

This Strategic plan provides the framework to grow participation, develop clubs and volunteers, strengthen player pathways and drive greater achievements at the International Level. In 2018 we held consultation meetings with FIFA, UEFA and across Northern Ireland which included players, coaches, administrators, volunteers and internally with Irish FA staff.

From 2019- 2024 this plan build's on the foundations laid in recent years and includes targets that will maximise impact in the girls' and women's game. In line with the Vision and Dream, for the first time we will have base line data to assist in tracking our participation numbers from grassroots to the senior game.





This strategy will be split into two sections Grassroots/Domestic and the International game. Each section will have key objectives with measurable targets that clearly outlines the working plan to reach our overarching aim of doubling participation at all levels. The fundamental importance of clubs and volunteers is at the heart of this strategy, as we know the positive impact empowered clubs and volunteers will have on us achieving our other 3 objectives.



4 OBJECTIVES

1

CLUBS AND VOLUNTEERS

Strengthen and grow clubs and volunteers that support Girls' and Women's football

2

PLAYER PATHWAY

Infrastructure that can support the retention and growth of Girls' and Women's leagues and recreational football

3

EDUCATION

Recruit and retain women in coaching, match officials and administration roles at all levels of the game

4

AWARENESS

Increase the profile of the Girl's and Women's Game



1. CLUBS AND VOLUNTEERS

Strengthen and grow clubs and volunteers that support girls' and women's football

CLUBS AND VOLUNTEERS				
Action (What)	Activities (How)	Responsibility (Who)	2019	Ongoing 2020-2024
Improve Club Infrastructure (On the field)	Coach education Irish FA Grassroots/Level 1 UEFA Coaching ladder Age specific Masterclasses Mentor Programme	Football for All Team and Coach Education department Girls' & Women's Domestic Manager	✓	✓
Improve Club Infrastructure (Off the field)	Club Development Plan McDonalds Community Football Day (Application) Tool kit/Advertising Club Mark European Licence Media and marketing relations with all leagues	Football for All Team	✓	✓
Increase the number of female grassroots teams per age band 5 per year	Shooting Stars programme McDonald's Football Fun 12 Hubs (1 in each council area) working with 2 female clubs per year Club Development/Mentoring New Club Starter Package	Girls' Participation Officers RGDO'S Girls' & Women's Domestic Manager	✓	✓
Joint club and International diary to ensure club development	Season long calendar agreed between leagues, clubs and International department to include training schedules	Girls' and Women's Domestic Manager International Manager	✓	✓
Increase Volunteer base from 51 to 100	Club development workshops 1 per hub per year	Irish FA Hubs	✓	✓

2. PLAYER PATHWAY

Create an infrastructure that can support the retention and growth of girls' and women's leagues and recreational football.

DEVELOPMENT CENTRES AND LEAGUES				
Action (What)	Activities (How)	Responsibility (Who)	2019	Ongoing 2020-2024
Develop an introduction to football for 4-7 year olds	Create a minimum of 1 Shooting Stars Programme per hub by 2019 Increase the number of Girls' Participation Officers by 1 full time staff Mc Donald's Fun Football	Girls' Participation Officers Irish FA	✓	✓
Establish single age band Mc Donald's Small sided games centres by 2024 in 4 regions	Each hub will have a specific target to achieve	Irish FA Hubs		✓
Strengthen the current 3 regions ABC – Southern League South Belfast Causeway, Coast and Glens	Tiered divisions by 2020 Support clubs developing from 7/9/11 a-side by development leagues Improve access to facilities	Football Development Department	✓	✓
More Structured competitions at regional and national level	Regional Competitions National Irish Cup – U13, U15 & U17	Football Development Department	✓	✓
Support retention and growth of NIWFA clubs	Develop service level agreement in partnership with NIWFA Committee Area 1 – Club Bursaries Area 2 – Media and Marketing Area 3 – Increase the age band from 14 to 16 NIWFA CPD – Annual workshop	Girls' and Women's Domestic Manager	✓	✓
Support retention and growth of NIFL	Develop service level agreement in partnership with NIFL Area 1 – Club Licencing Area 2 – Academy League Area 3 – Media and Marketing Area 4 – Progress in Champions League to the last 32 by 2024	Girls' and Women's Domestic Manager NIFL Club licencing Manager		✓



3. EDUCATION

Recruit and retain women in coaching, match officials and administration roles at all levels of the game

EDUCATION				
Action (What)	Activities (How)	Responsibility (Who)	2019	Ongoing 2020-2024
Clubs assigned mentor working with club coaches	Currently working with 20 clubs, we will increase 5 per year Develop female mentors 2 per year	Girls' and Women's Domestic Manager	✓	✓
Currently 204 Level 1 coaches and we will increase by 24 new coaches per year	2 new female participants per hub, Targeting current and ex-players	Coach Education and Football Development Team	✓	✓
Currently 3 UEFA B Part 1 coaches and we will increase by 5 per year	5 bursaries per year targeting those working with female clubs in Northern Ireland	Coach Education and Football Development Team	✓	✓
Currently 12 UEFA B Part 2 coaches and we will increase by 2 per year	2 bursaries per year targeting those working with female clubs in Northern Ireland	Coach Education and Football Development Team	✓	✓
Currently 1 UEFA A Licence coach and we will increase by 1 new coach per year	1 bursary per year targeting those working with female clubs in Northern Ireland	Coach Education and Football Development Department	✓	✓
Currently 1 UEFA Pro Licence coaches and we will increase by 1	Double the number of Pro Licence coaches by 2024	Coach Education Department		✓
Female Coach Educators	By 2024 we will have 2 Level 1 Female coach educators and 1 B Licence coach educator	Football Development and Coach Education Department		✓
Double the number of active female referees by 2020	Referee Development Programme Female only Referee Course Female Referee Educator	Referee Manager	✓	✓
Increase the number of schools achieving Quality Mark from 34 to 105 BY 2020	Hub Teams- 2 per year	Irish FA Hubs	✓	✓
Female Leaders Programme	Recruit 10 new participants each year Representation on Girls' and Women's sub group	Girls' and Women's Domestic Manager	✓	✓



4. AWARENESS

Increase the profile of the girls' and women's game

AWARENESS				
Action (What)	Activities (How)	Responsibility (Who)	2019	Ongoing 2020-2024
Create a Communications & Marketing plan for Girls' and Women's football	Specific publicity campaign yearly to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimum of 1 video and 1 article per month on the Girls' and Women's game - Website content and club map developed to support participation growth 	Football Development and Communications Department	✓	✓
Development of partnership with UEFA Together #weplaystrong	- create a plan to utilise and develop Together #weplaystrong initiative's with in grassroots and women's clubs	Football Development, Sales & Marketing and Communications Department	✓	✓
Use power of sponsorship activation with partners to develop #GameChangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain current partnerships - Seek additional investment for girls' and women's initiatives - Utilizes the power of partnership to achieve maximum coverage for the girls' and women's game at all levels 	Football Development, Sales & Marketing and Communications Department	✓	✓





54° 35' 59" N
5° 55' 56" W
U r ere



Together
#WePlayStrong

INTERNATIONAL

VISION

Growing the Game - Maximising Impact

INSPIRATIONAL DREAM

To inspire every child in Northern Ireland to be part of our football family and to dream of wearing the green shirt



OBJECTIVES

1

INTERNATIONAL

Improve performances and results at all levels.

2

PERFORMANCE ACADEMY

Increase the participation and performance levels of Women's football in Northern Ireland and Ulster University.

3

EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME

A programme which is player centred meeting the holistic needs of every player.

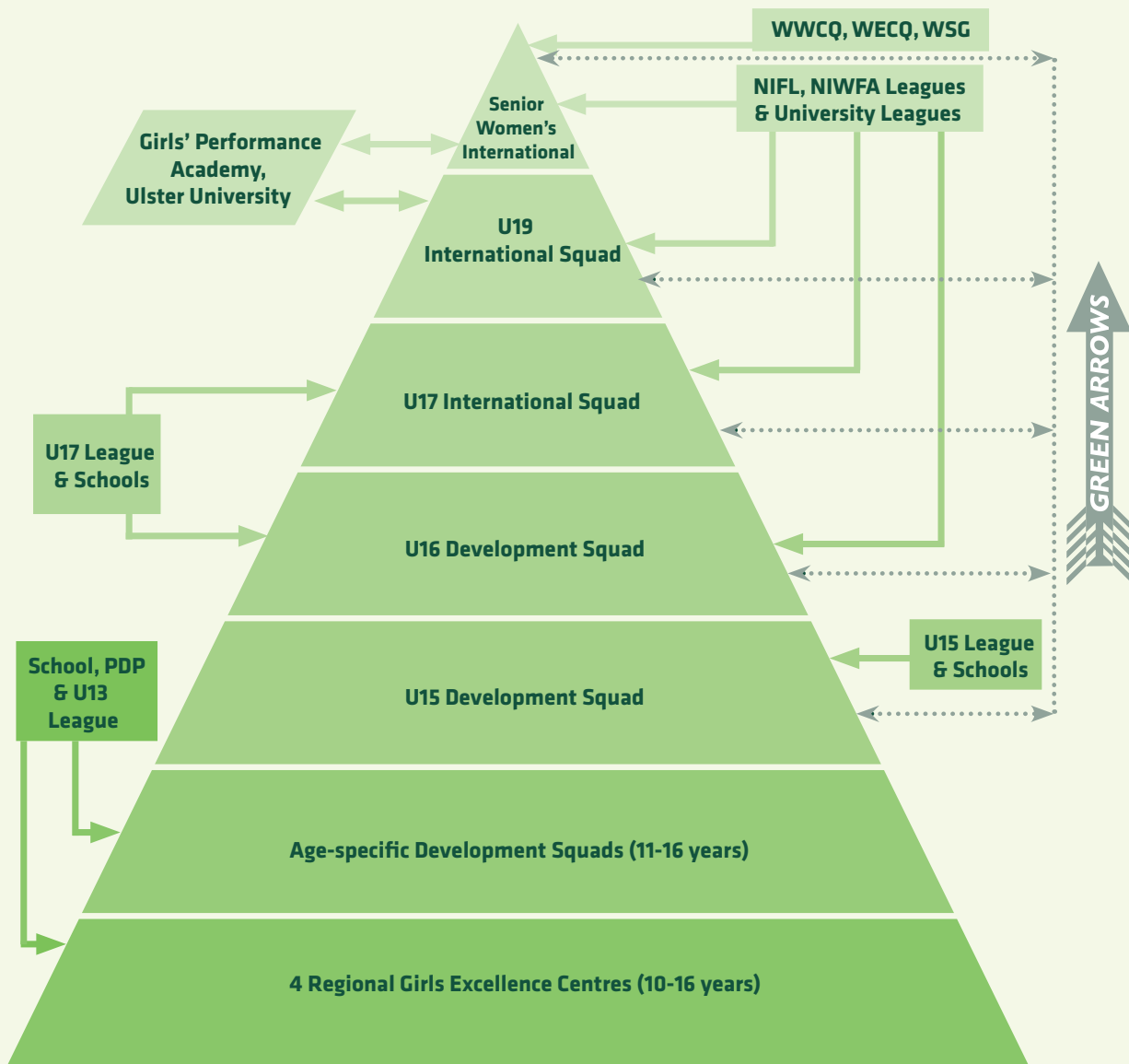


1. INTERNATIONAL

Improve performances and results at all levels.

INTERNATIONAL				
Action (What)	Activities (How)	Responsibility (Who)	2019	Ongoing 2020-2024
By 2024 the National A team will increase from 32 to 28 in the UEFA Rankings	Optimise preparation for international tournaments by setting- up an international calendar for national teams.	International Manager	✓	✓
Improved International Performances	Set up a professional support structure for National Teams that includes an individual player development plan. Partnerships with clubs - support services to include masterclasses and workshops.	International Manager and Head of Elite Performance	✓	✓
Raising Profile of Women's Football	Create a Communications & Marketing plan for Girls' and Women's International football	Sales & Marketing and Communications Department	✓	✓
Workforce Development	Develop a robust sporting workforce to progress and support our players throughout each stage of their development	International Manager and Head of Elite Performance	✓	✓
International exit programme	Develop a structured system to support exiting international players in the form of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scholarships - Education - Careers 	Director of Football Development		✓





2. PERFORMANCE ACADEMY

Increase the participation and performance levels of Women's football in Northern Ireland and Ulster University.

PERFORMANCE ACADEMY				
Action (What)	Activities (How)	Responsibility (Who)	2019	Ongoing 2020-2024
Player Performance	<p>International Programme with Preparation and Periodisation</p> <p>Annual programme of matches – Alignment to Irish Universities League Varsity competitions</p> <p>Opportunity to play in British University Competitions</p> <p>Recruitment, development and deployment of Academic mentors to support holistic player development</p>	International Manager Women's Football Development Officer	✓	✓
Player Education	<p>Academic mentors</p> <p>Currently 10 funded scholarships aim to increase by 10% each year</p>	Head of Elite Performance Women's Football Development Officer	✓	✓
Player's Career development	<p>Career development plan</p> <p>Coach education and qualification opportunities</p> <p>Work Experience Opportunities</p>	Head of Elite Performance Women's Football Development Officer Education & Employability Officers	✓	✓



3. EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME AND DEVELOPMENT SQUADS

A programme which is player centred meeting the holistic needs of every player.

EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME				
Action (What)	Activities (How)	Responsibility (Who)	2019	Ongoing 2020-2024
Wider and Deeper Talent Pool	Age specific regional development squads	Head of Elite Performance	✓	✓
Pathway Opportunities	U16 Development Tournament Bob Doherty Tournament Cross border matches Academy trips	Head of Elite Performance	✓	✓
Coach Development	CPD workshops Study group trips	Head of Elite Performance	✓	✓
DEVELOPMENT SQUADS				
Strengthen the elite player pathway	Support Elite players by ensuring the best coaches at each age band and the most relevant training methods, raise the quality of football by introducing individual player development plan to include training and match schedule.	Head of Elite Performance	✓	✓
Player Development	Interregional matches Workshops Strength and Conditioning, gymnastics Soccer Mindset Academy	Head of Elite Performance	✓	✓



TIMELINE

1. Club and Volunteers

McDonald's Development Centres and youth Leagues	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Grow and develop SSG centres						
Strengthen and expand youth leagues						
Regional and National Competitions						
Support the growth of NIWFA and NIFA League						

Club	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Improve club infrastructure (on the field)						
Improve club infrastructure (off the field)						
Support retention and growth of all girls' and women's clubs						

2. Player Pathway

Futsal and Recreational	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Create a new innovative programme for all ages						
Increase Futsal participation at all age groups						

3. Education

Coach Education	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Target number of new female coaches at every level up to PRO licence						
Research in recruitment and retention of female coaches						
Female Coach Educators						
Develop mentor programme						

Referee's	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Development of Referee structures						

Schools, further Education and University's	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Development of schools and university structures						

4. Awareness

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Media and Marketing Plan						
Research league structure						
Roles Models programme						

International						
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Top 28 of the UEFA ranking						
Strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders						
Exit plan for International Players						
Strengthen the Elite player pathway						
Raising the Profile of Women's International Football						



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