

CASE STUDY

WOMEN
SPORT

Measuring the impact of The FA
player appearances programme
2015-16



WHAT DID WE WANT TO KNOW?

The FA runs an established ambassador programme, enabling female football players to share their stories and inspire at a local level.

Female players have been visiting schools and community groups for a number of years now, but The FA needed to assess the impact of player appearances on growing female participation and raising the profile of the game.

Women in Sport embarked on a research project to explore the programme, while hoping to unlock influencer opportunities linking to our 'What Sways Women to Play Sport?' research released in 2015.

www.womeninsport.org/resources



WHO DID WE TALK TO?



WE TALKED TO GIRLS

attending the visits to find out what it was like to meet a professional player and understand their relationship with football.



WE TALKED TO PLAYERS

to explore their experiences of leading the visits and how they can have a positive influence on young girls being involved in football.



WE TALKED TO ORGANISERS

We recognised a need for organisers to prepare girls for the visits by researching the player. We have had input into the development of player profiles to maximise the experience.

WHAT DID WE FIND OUT?

We found out that the player appearances provide a really positive experience for girls in school and community settings. The research highlighted four key impacts:

RE-ENTHUSING/VALIDATING GIRLS, PARTICIPATION IN FOOTBALL

"If people don't think girls can play, we need to prove them wrong. You need to walk out there and do it, just be confident, not worry about what other people think."

Student, secondary school

INSPIRING GIRLS TO BELIEVE THEY COULD ACHIEVE IN FOOTBALL

"They have to have this belief that it can happen to anyone and she (player) was able to give them that sense... This is living proof that this can happen to normal people."

Visit organiser

ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY GETTING ACROSS POSITIVE LIFE LESSONS

"Hearing her (player) talk about university keeps the girls thinking that they can do education and sport."

Student, secondary school

DRIVES INTEREST IN THE WOMEN'S ELITE GAME

*"We'd love to go and see her (player) play a match, we could say we've met her."
"I've found myself much more interested in watching the women's game now."*

Visit organiser

ROLE MODEL VS INFLUENCER

From our insights we know that both higher profile role models and closer to home influencers are needed to encourage women and girls to play football



“I’m inspired to play football now - it’s made me think it’s a really nice thing to try out.”

Student, primary school

We recognised that the female players acted as inspirational role models during the visits. However, when speaking to the girls they revealed that the real influencers on their participation in football are those they see on a more regular basis and have a more intimate relationship with; older siblings, friends, dads, mums and teachers.

We now know that the female players can champion one of our spheres of influence* called ‘possibilities’: this is where players can help to ‘open the girls’ eyes to what she can do’.

This is a fundamental part of the visits as they can share their stories and show how it is possible to have a successful and fulfilling career in football. This then paves the way for the real influencers to capitalise on the fact girls are thinking about football and help them to start playing or watching the women’s game.

For a full report:
www.womeninsport.org/resources

WHAT ARE OUR RECOMMENDATIONS?

From our insights, we developed a series of recommendations to build on the current positive outcomes and encourage greater impact across all levels of football.

The FA has begun working through the recommendations and we have worked on implementing three key actions:



01

PROGRAMME MONITORING

It is clear that the player appearance programme needs to be continually monitored to assess impact. We have created some key measures for The FA to use linked to the programme aims. This will allow The FA to report on the number of girls benefitting from the programme, while providing a greater understanding of how the players can influence participation and raise awareness of the game.



02

GREATER ENGAGEMENT

The research showed there was support required during the question and answer element of some visits. We have developed a set of questions for young girls to ask and explored some responses for players to encourage greater engagement.



03

PLAYER RESEARCH

We recognised a need for organisers to prepare girls for the visits by researching the player. We have had input into the development of player profiles to maximise the experience.

NEXT STEPS

Women in Sport will continue to work with The FA to act on the recommendations to ensure the player appearance programme remains effective and impactful.



Our prioritised recommendations for 2016-2017 are:

- Create a regular training programme for players involved in appearances to develop them as effective role models
- Support players to develop personalised materials that help share their stories
- Developing materials and networks to ensure girls are made aware of local opportunities beyond the visit for engagement in football

WHAT DID THE FA THINK?

“Women in Sport’s commitment to raising the profile of female athletes in football has been terrific...”

“Women in Sport reviewed our player appearances programme through a series of qualitative research and focus groups. The results provided were very thorough and linked to research, offering sound advice for future improvements for players, organisers and recipients.

Women in Sport’s commitment to raising the profile of female athletes in football has been terrific and we’re hopeful that their work will have a real impact on the quality of the appearances we arrange for all concerned – providing a much smarter product. As a result of the player appearances review, we’re looking forward to our continual partnership with Women in Sport to devise performance measures for the programme.”

Women’s Football National Project Officer

For more information on women’s football visit:
www.thefa.com/womens-girls-football

To request a player appearance contact:
FAPlayerAppearances@sportcel.com

WANT TO WORK WITH US?

Are you interested in working with Women in Sport on a similar project or would you like to support the development of women's football?

If so, email info@womeninsport.org

