

HBFC DEVELOPMENT STRUCTURE: CREATING A CULTURE OF ENJOYMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The table below summarises the Hitchin Belles approach to player and team development from Under 6 all the way through to adult football.

On the following pages we provide further detail on the different approaches to development and pathway reviews in each phase, to help managers, coaches, parents and players understand how this structure affects them as players progress through the ages.

Phase	Play	FA Foundation Phase ‘The phase of developing a connection between the player and the ball in a fun environment’ Leagues are non-competitive = no published scores or league tables												FA Youth Development Phase ‘The phase of learning to play and compete in a team’ Leagues are competitive = published scores and league tables					Youth Transition Phase	Adult Phase		
Pathway Review Format	None	Informal Pathway Reviews Twice Per Season												Junior Pathway Review	Informal Pathway Reviews Twice Per Season					Youth Pathway Review	Repeat Youth Pathway Review	Informal Pathway Reviews
		Monthly mixed training encouraged						2 monthly mixed training encouraged							Players train in their teams							
Age	U6	U7	U8		U9		U10		U11					U12	U13	U14	U15	U16		U18	Women	
Format a-side	N/A	5	5		5		7		7					9	9	11	11	11		11	11	
Teams	None	B L U E S	W H I T E S	B L U E S	W H I T E S	B L U E S	W H I T E S	B L U E S	W H I T E S	R E D S	B L U E S	W H I T E S	R E D S		Blues	Blues	Blues	Blues	Blues		Blues	1st
															Whites	Whites	Whites	Whites	Whites		Whites	U23
															Reds	Reds	Reds	Reds	Reds			
																Purples						
Coaching Standards	To ensure coaching standards, at every age group all Hitchin Belles teams must have at least 1 coach who has completed the FA’s ‘Introduction to Coaching Football’ course																					

PHASES – HOW THE APPROACH TO TRAINING AND TEAMS CHANGES

Phase	Mini	FA Foundation Phase ‘The phase of developing a connection between the player and the ball in a fun environment’ Leagues are non-competitive = no published scores or league tables					FA Youth Development Phase ‘The phase of learning to play and compete in a team’ Leagues are competitive = published scores and league tables							Youth Transition Phase	Adult Phase
Age		U7	U8	U9	U10	U11		U12	U13	U14	U15	U16		U18	Women
Format a-side	N/A	5	5	5	7	7		9	9	11	11	11		11	11

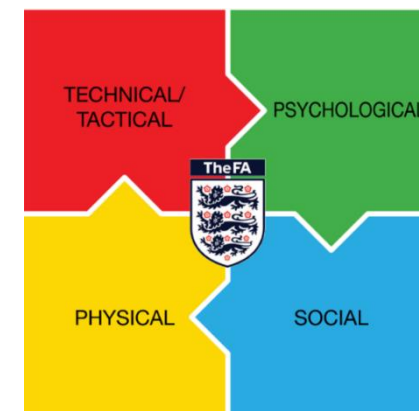
	Approach to training and teams (with credit to the resources provided by www.thecoachingmanual.com)
Play U6	• Introduction to physical activity. Touches on the ball in a fun, unstructured environment. • Players do not play matches against other clubs.
FA Foundation Phase U7 to U11	• Skill development in a structured, positive and fun environment. • Focus on technical development of passing, receiving, dribbling, finishing and 1v1 actions. • Leagues are ‘non-competitive’ with no published scores or league tables. • Players are encouraged to experience a range of positions to help develop a broad range of skills and understanding.
FA Youth Development Phase U12-U16	• Continue to develop individual skills, but added focus on developing teamwork, game and positional understanding. • Leagues become ‘competitive’, with scores and league tables published. • Continue to develop football-specific skills as players transition through 9 v 9 to 11 v 11, with increased focus on more position-specific roles. • Competition makes players want to win and give 100%, but the main focus is still on development. • Support players to meet the physical and psychological demands of competitive games.
Youth Transition Phase U18	• Continuing the development of previous years, but also preparing the players for the transition to adult football. • Develop players to meet the physical, psychological, and tactical demands of the game. • Training targets development and maintenance of technical and tactical skills.
Adult Phase	• Focus in training around player performance and winning games. • Maximise the psychological, physical, technical and tactical skills of the player as part of the team, to achieve team objectives. • Where the Club offer multiple teams, create pathways for high ability players to maximise their ability in an elite environment and social players to enjoy playing sport for the physical, social and mental benefits of participating in sport.

PATHWAY STRUCTURE – GETTING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PLAYER

Phase	Play	FA Foundation Phase ‘The phase of developing a connection between the player and the ball in a fun environment’ Leagues are non-competitive = no published scores or league tables					FA Youth Development Phase ‘The phase of learning to play and compete in a team’ Leagues are competitive = published scores and league tables						Youth Transition Phase	Adult Phase	
Pathway Review Format	None	Informal Pathway Reviews Twice Per Season					Junior Pathway Review	Informal Pathway Reviews Twice Per Season				Youth Pathway Review	Repeat Youth Pathway Review	Informal Pathway Reviews	
		Monthly mixed training encouraged			2 monthly mixed training encouraged			Players train in their teams							
Age	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11		U12	U13	U14	U15	U16		U18	Women

What is a ‘pathway’? In simple terms, if you imagine 10 x 5 year olds coming to training with the Minis, then fast forward 14 years when those same 5 year olds are all 19, they will all have taken their own individual ‘pathway’ through those 14 years of football. By reference to the FA’s 4 Corner Model (see right): technical/tactical ability will develop at different rates; physical strength and speed will develop at different rates; the importance of social aspects will change over time; and the players’ psychological approach will change over time. The Club’s overriding objectives are to give girls an opportunity to play football, create an environment where they enjoy football and develop as footballers, and keep as many players enjoying and playing football for as long as possible. To achieve those overriding objectives we need to ensure that the Club provides a range of playing environments to support players as they take their own ‘pathway’ through their years with the Club.

What is a ‘pathway review’? We review if a player is in the best environment for her development and enjoyment **at that point in time**. The leagues have divisions from U12 onwards, so for example a player might be struggling with the demands of playing in Division 1 at U12 and would develop, have more confidence and enjoy her football more by playing in Division 2 when she moves to U13, or perhaps a player playing in Division 3 needs to be playing at a higher level to challenge that player. The ‘best environment’ might change over time – a player might have great technical ability at U12 but be small for her age and struggle with the physical side, but by U14 she might be able to play in a more physical environment. Now the Club generally has 2-3 teams in each age group, this offers a huge advantage in that we are able to offer 2-3 different footballing environments at each age group.



The table below summarises the approach to Pathway Reviews at each age.

U6	No pathway reviews at this age as the objective is simply to create an environment for girls to try football.
U7-U11	No formal pathway reviews at this stage. Teams are allocated names for administrative purposes based on when they are formed, with Blues being the first, Whites the second, Reds the third and Purples the fourth. At U7-U9 with the training-emphasis being on skill development, where possible managers/coaches should provide regular and frequent joint training sessions (ideally at least once per month), so players and coaches get used to mixing between teams and a variety of experiences.

	At U10-U11 there are likely to be more team-specific training sessions as players start to develop tactical awareness, but managers are still encouraged to incorporate regular joint training sessions (ideally at least once every 2 months) to promote integration. Whilst match results and leagues are not published, the league try to ensure teams are placed in divisions of a similar ability, so matches are even rather than one-sided. There will always be a range of abilities across an age group and it's important that all players feel able to participate and contribute both at training and in matches. Managers should monitor player development and meet with other managers within their age group at least twice a year (eg pre-season and winter) to discuss player progress, using the FA's 4 Corner Model as the reference point, to identify developmental needs. For example, if a player struggles to be involved in matches, she might lose confidence and motivation, whereas a player will develop more quickly in an environment where she can enjoy being involved fully. Movement between teams is encouraged to ensure young players are in the right developmental environment, throughout their Hitchin Belles journey, so they remain engaged and motivated. If a parent or guardian feels that a player would benefit from playing in a different environment, then they are encouraged to speak to team managers. As U10 is the jump to 7-a-side, it's important managers co-ordinate to ensure squads have a balance of numbers. For example, if the Club finish U9 (5 a side) with 24 players spread across 3 teams of 8 each, then to move to 9-a-side it's likely those 3 squads would be merged to create 2 squads of 12 players each.
Junior Pathway Review	What? During the U11 season the Club's Development Officer and the U11 managers/coaches will discuss the Junior Pathway Review at the end of the U11 season. Parents will be provided with information and the usual plan would be to review player pathways once league games finish (normally around the end of April).
	Why then? At the end of U11 (year 6) players make the transition from primary to secondary school, so they will already be familiar with changes to friendship groups and their environment. In addition, this is the end of 7 a side football and the change to 9 a side football, which often means changes to squads.
	What's the process? It will depend on the number of teams in an age group. The U11 managers will meet with the Development Officer to plan what they think is the most appropriate structure and process for that year. Any process will be sensitive and fair. For example, at the end of the season the existing teams might merge and start mixed training. The players might play some matches between themselves and the coaches might review the players in light of the FA's 4 Corner Model. To the extent possible, the idea is to understand the best environments for the players and then match the different teams to those environments. For example, if the club finishes the U11 season with 2 teams in the same division, it might be that within the age group there are a group of players who would be best suited to a higher division and a group who would be best suited to a lower division. If the teams were left as they were in the same division, some players might not be sufficiently challenged and some might find it too challenging – in both cases this can produce frustration and damage motivation. In those circumstances, the Club would aim to compose 2 teams that are better aligned to the development of those players, one team in a higher division allowing those players to be challenged and one team in a lower division allowing those players to enjoy the relative freedom of that less competitive environment.
	What about friends? Socialising is an important aspect of why children play sport. However, as players get older other elements of the 4 Corner Model grow in importance, such as the tactical/technical aspects. Friendship groups naturally evolve over time and, as a result of integration at younger ages, we would expect players to form relationships in any new teams. Managers will be very alert to this and, where players move teams, there would of course be a training emphasis on integration.
U12-U16	No formal pathway reviews during this phase, but team managers should monitor player development and meet with other managers within their age group at least twice a year (such as pre-season and winter) to discuss progress, using the FA's 4 Corner Model as the reference point. In particular, U14 is the jump to 11 a side football, so it's important squads have a balance of numbers. For example, if the Club finish U13 with 36 players spread over 3 squads of 12, those squads are unlikely to be large enough for 11 a side, so it's likely they would be reviewed to 2 squads of 18 players. Communication between managers is critical during this period as players in these age groups might experience significant physical, social and psychological changes.

	It's important managers, parents and players understand that <u>a player's development pathway is not fixed</u> at the end of U11 and then not reviewed until the end of the U16 season – managers should continue to monitor and, within the age group, review the position at least twice a year. If a parent or guardian feels that a player would benefit from playing in a different team, then they are encouraged to speak to team managers.
Youth Pathway Review	What? During the U16 season the Development Officer will engage with the U16/U18 managers to discuss a pathway review in preparation for the U16s moving to U18.
	Why now? <u>Squad numbers</u> - There is no U17 league – we move from U16 straight to U18. This partly reflects the fact that, in both girls and boys football, more players tend to leave as they get older, therefore the '2 year' age group helps teams to ensure they have suitable squad sizes. As a result, the Youth Pathway Review allows us to merge players from 2 years, ensuring that the U18 teams have enough players. <u>A transition to adult football</u> – The Youth Pathway Review is focussed on older teenagers as they grow into adults. By this stage players are likely to have a firm idea of what level of football they hope to play in the future. In the 22/23 season the U18 league had 3 divisions with the Club entering 2 sides, one in Division 2 and one in Division 3. The long-term aim is to build on that, hopefully increasing to 3 teams in future years and, therefore, offering a broader range of football environments.
	What's the process? This year is particularly sensitive as the U16 (year 11) players will be sitting GCSE exams in May/June, therefore the Club is keen to ensure players can focus on their studies. The exact process will depend on the number of teams in the age group, but generally we would hope to run a series of training sessions in March where the U16 players would mix with the existing U18 players. Following the mixed training sessions in March, players can then concentrate on their GCSE revision and exams. In the background, the Development Officer would work with the U16/18 managers and coaches to review the pathways for the players wishing to play U18 the following season, with the intention of selecting preliminary squads. As well as individual players, the management team would consider the need to ensure the process produces balanced squads in terms of preferred positions. The Club will hold one final mixed training session after the exam period, typically at the start of July. The Development Officer, managers and coaches will then finalise the proposed U18 squads for the following season and offer places to the players, typically in the first week of July.
	What about friends? As U16 players will be mixed with U18 players, there will always be significant changes, so players will usually find that some former teammates will be in their new U18 team. In addition, this is an age where players will experience change as they pursue a variety of study options, so that is something that is also reflected in the football environment. Finally, the Club will try to ensure that U18 teams train at the same time, allowing ongoing socialising before and after training.
U18	As U18 is a 2 year age group, the U18 players will experience the Youth Pathway Review twice. As detailed above, U16 players will pass through the Youth Pathway Review as they prepare for U18 football. A year later, when those players are technically U17 (school year 12), they will experience the Youth Pathway Review again as the process is repeated for the new U16s moving up to U18. The repeat of the Youth Pathway Review is important as it allows movement within the U18 squads.
Adult	In the 2022/23 season the Club has 1 womens team but we hope to form further womens teams in the future. For adult football, pathway reviews will be informal and based on the needs of individual squads. Managers are encouraged to keep in regular contact to ensure that, if a player in one of the womens teams might develop better in a different environment, players might have the opportunity to try out at different levels, subject to the rules of individual leagues.