

May 2026



This month's update includes a number of important opportunities and sector updates across the BUCS Football network, including newly launched funding opportunities for Accredited Universities, reflections from the BUCS Football Development Network Day & Awards 2026, and a range of leadership, facility and workforce development opportunities for students and institutions. We're also pleased to welcome Kelvin Newell to the BUCS Football Development team and celebrate the graduation of the second cohort of the Emerging Club Leaders programme. Thank you again for your continued support, collaboration and engagement across the season, and we encourage you to review and share the opportunities below with relevant colleagues and students.

UPDATES:

1. **[Funding Opportunities Now Live – Applications Open Until 15 June](#)**
2. **[BUCS Football Development Network Day & Awards 2026](#)**
3. **[Applications Close Next Week: FA Leadership Academy 2026](#)**
4. **[Lionesses Here To Play Fund – Grants Available For Facility Improvements](#)**
5. **[BUCS IMS Football & Futsal Survey – Share Your Feedback](#)**
6. **[New Football Development Officer - Kelvin Newell](#)**
7. **[Emerging Club Leaders Cohort 2 Graduation](#)**
8. **[Football & Futsal Sport Advisory Group - Female Student Roles](#)**

[Funding Opportunities Now Live – Applications Open Until 15 June](#)

We are delighted to confirm that applications are now open for three BUCS Football Development funding opportunities for Accredited Universities. Institutions have until Monday 15 June 2026 (Midday) to apply for funding across the following areas, with universities encouraged to apply for multiple opportunities where relevant. Collaborative applications with nearby institutions are also encouraged across all three funding streams.

i. [Football Development Projects](#)

Funding to support participation-focused projects, with a targeted EDI focus on: Female participation
Inclusive participation Disability participation Successful projects will also contribute towards case

studies and sector learning opportunities showcased through BUCS channels and at future Network Days. For questions regarding Football Development Projects, please contact Alai Ayyakannu (Alai.Ayyakannu@bucs.org.uk).

ii. **Referee Development Hubs**

Funding designed to support referee recruitment and development, with a targeted EDI focus on increasing the number of female referees within higher education football. Institutions will also receive additional CPD support through The FA and County FAs. For questions regarding Referee Hubs, please contact Sean Lofting (Sean.Lofting@bucs.org.uk).

iii. **Coaching Hubs**

A new funding stream focused on coach development, with a targeted EDI focus on supporting female coaches. Successful institutions will benefit from additional CPD opportunities delivered by The FA and County FAs, alongside ongoing support through an online coach development platform. For questions regarding Coaching Hubs, please contact Beth Edwards (Beth.Edwards@bucs.org.uk). Please refer to the attached guidance documents for full eligibility criteria, application details and timelines.

[BUCS Football Development Network Day & Awards 2026](#)

The BUCS Football Development Network Day & Awards 2026 welcomed a record 83 attendees from 31 universities to The Slate, University of Warwick for a day focused on collaboration, innovation and celebrating the impact being made across higher education football and futsal. The event featured networking opportunities, Football Development Project showcases, panel discussions and sector updates, with key conversations centred around participation growth, inclusion, workforce development and enhancing the student experience. The day concluded with the BUCS Football & Futsal Awards 2026, recognising outstanding individuals, initiatives and institutions from across the sector. Congratulations once again to all award winners and thank you to everyone who attended, presented and contributed to making the event such a success.

Read more about the event and this year's award winners here: <https://www.bucs.org.uk/resources-page/football-development-network-day-awards-2026.html>

[Applications Close Next Week: FA Leadership Academy 2026](#)

Applications are now open for participants for the FA Leadership Academy (FALA) 2026. Delivered by the FA National Youth Council, FALA is a 12-month learning and development programme for young leaders aged 16-24.

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The programme begins with a four-day residential from Monday 27 - Thursday 30 July 2026 at Walton Hall, Wellesbourne, Warwickshire, where participants will develop key skills through a range of immersive workshops and activities. This is followed by a 12-month development journey, supported by the FANYC, a FALA26 mentor, and the FA, to deliver a project that creates positive impact within their football community. Find out more [here](#).

Applications are now open and close on **Monday 25 May 2026 at 12:00pm**.

The application form can be accessed here:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/019d436ca53b7e9e8e275020d36bfb84>

We encourage institutions to share this opportunity with their students. For further information, please contact the FA National Youth Council at nationalyouthcouncil@thefa.com.

Lionesses HERe to Play Fund – Grants Available for Facility Improvements

The Football Foundation's Lionesses HERe to Play Fund continues to support organisations looking to create more inclusive, safe and welcoming football environments for women and girls. Universities that provide facilities for wider community use may be eligible to apply for funding to improve their football environments and strengthen their women's and girls' offer.

Institutions can apply for grants of up to £25,000 (covering up to 75% of project costs) to support a range of facility enhancements, including:

- Female player and official changing spaces
- Changing room and clubhouse improvements
- External lighting and CCTV
- Toilets and shower
- improvements Baby change and breastfeeding facilities
- External covered spaces and signage

Applications should clearly demonstrate how the proposed improvements will benefit women and girls and support long-term participation growth. Universities exploring future investment into recreational football, female participation or community engagement are encouraged to review the fund criteria and guidance.

Further information and eligibility details can be found here:

<https://footballfoundation.org.uk/grant/lionesses-here-to-play-fund>

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BUCS IMS Football & Futsal Survey – Share Your Feedback

As BUCS begins planning for the future of Intramural (IMS) Football & Futsal, we are looking to gather feedback from institutions to help shape and evolve the offer moving forward. The survey aims to better understand current delivery models, challenges and future priorities across the sector, while exploring how BUCS can further support universities in developing and delivering their IMS programmes. The survey should take no more than five minutes to complete and feedback will play an important role in informing the future direction of IMS Football & Futsal within higher education.

Deadline: Friday 5 June 2026, 23:59

Survey Link: [BUCS Intramural Football & Futsal Offer Survey – Fill in form](#)

If you are not the most relevant member of staff to complete this, we would really appreciate it if you could share it internally with the appropriate colleague to help us gather as many responses as possible.

New Football Development Officer - Kelvin Newell

We are delighted to welcome Kelvin Newell to the BUCS Football Development team. He started his role on 18th May and is our new Football Development Officer. He joins us with experience at Kent FA and a year on the FA National Youth Council. He will be the point of contact going forwards for the following areas:

- Accredited Universities - becoming accredited, reporting windows, increasing star rating
- Emerging Club Leaders - coordination with universities and students for the programme
- Referee Development Hubs - coordinate the funding pot from recruitment to review
- County FA Working Groups - coordinate the 6 working groups we have with County FA's and universities in local areas

If you would like to chat with Kelvin about any of the above, or just introduce yourself to our newest team member, contact him on Kelvin.Newell@bucs.org.uk.

Emerging Club Leaders Cohort 2 Graduation

On Sunday 17th May, 24 students attended our graduation ceremony at Wembley Stadium for the second cohort of our Emerging Club Leaders programme. Thank you to all who attended the event and have supported students through the programme. A full event review will be published in the coming weeks, and information about the programme can be found on the [BUCS website](#).

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Football & Futsal Sport Advisory Group - Female Student Roles

We are recruiting for roles on our Football and Futsal Sport Advisory groups for the 2026-2027 season. We want to recruit one male and one female applicant for each group, and are extending the deadline for female applicants for another week until **Tuesday 26th May (5pm)**. Please share this with proactive female students who will still be in higher education in 2026-27. The role profile is attached to this email, please ignore the deadlines as this has now been extended.