

March 2026



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As we move into the final phase of the 2025–26 season, we are pleased to share a number of important updates and opportunities across the BUCS Football Development network. This month's update includes a welcome to our new Football Development Officer, details on the upcoming Football Accreditation reporting window, opportunities to engage with the Emerging Club Leaders programme, and invitations to key sector events taking place in the coming months. With award nominations now open and registrations for the BUCS Football Development Network Day launching soon, this is an exciting period for recognising the incredible work taking place across the sector. We also highlight new research on coaching environments for women and upcoming opportunities for professional development within futsal and coaching. Please review the updates below and share any relevant opportunities with your colleagues and students.

UPDATES:

1. **[New Football Development Officer - Beth Edwards](#)**
2. **[Football Accreditation Reporting Window](#)**
3. **[BUCS Football Development Team - University Visits](#)**
4. **[BUCS Emerging Club Leaders - 2026/27 Briefing Call](#)**
5. **[BUCS Football Development Network Day & Awards 2026](#)**
6. **[BUCS Football & Futsal Awards 2025/26: Nominations Now Open](#)**
7. **[New Research: Reimagining Sport Coaching- Designing a System That Works for Women](#)**
8. **[England Futsal Coaching Conference 2026](#)**

[New Football Development Officer - Beth Edwards](#)

We are delighted to welcome Beth Edwards to the BUCS Football Development team. Beth will coordinate the Women's Leadership Programme, Club Committee Leaders events and support other areas of Football Development delivery. If you would like to chat with Beth about any of the programmes, please contact her via email at Beth.Edwards@Bucs.org.uk.

[Football Accreditation Reporting Window](#)

The final reporting window for BUCS Football Accreditation will open on **Monday 23rd March** and close on **Thursday 30th April**. There is an earlier deadline for universities aiming to achieve 3*

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accredited university status of **Friday 10th April**. This is so that we can order the 3* accredited university plaques in time for Network Day and Awards in early May.

If you would like to discuss how to increase your accreditation star rating ahead of the next round of reporting, please contact Sean.Lofting@bucs.org.uk to arrange a meeting.

If your institution did not report in January, it is essential that you report in the next window to retain your accredited university status going into 2026/27.

BUCS Football Development Team - University Visits

As the BUCS Football Development team restructures, we are looking for opportunities to introduce our new team members to the network, as well as provide opportunities to collaborate together as a team in-person. If your university has any football or futsal events between March-July 2026 that you would like to invite us too, please contact Sean.Lofting@bucs.org.uk and we will aim to attend, either individually or as a team.

BUCS Emerging Club Leaders – University Applications Live

BUCS Emerging Club Leaders aims to make volunteering in Football a viable pathway for development for young people at university in off-pitch roles to drive the growth of community clubs.

This programme has 2 core elements:

- Placement at National League System (Step 2-6) or Women's National League (Tier 3-4) club in 1 of 6 roles
- Learning & Development Programme delivered by industry experts with both online and in-person CPD to support student's personal development

This programme is needed to provide a high standard of placement experience for students, universities and clubs. A key aspect of the programme is providing a consistent experience for all, no matter what club or part of the country the placement is taking place in. Delivery from trusted partners in The FA and BUCS plus the support, monitoring and evaluation ensure that all parties benefit from the programme.

Universities can now apply to be part of the 2026/27 Emerging Club Leaders programme. All information has been shared via email with accreditation leads, including a [recording of the Emerging Club Leaders](#)

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[Briefing](#). The deadline for universities to apply is 17th April. The attached guidance document details the process and how we will prioritise applications. [Universities should apply using the Emerging Club Leaders Application Form for Universities](#).

Please share the [student expression of interest form](#) with any students who you would like to apply for the programme, as this will support your universities' application.

To find out more information about the programme, please visit the [BUCS Website](#) or contact Sean.Lofting@Bucs.org.uk.

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

Football Accreditation Leads & Staff are invited to attend the 2026 BUCS Football Development Network Day, taking place on **Tuesday 5th May 2026 at The Slate, University of Warwick**. This annual event brings together universities from across the country to connect, collaborate and share best practice across the HE football and futsal landscape. The Network Day provides an important opportunity to reflect on progress across the sector, align on strategic priorities and strengthen collaboration between universities and partners and we look forward to welcoming you to Warwick in May.

Event registrations will open on 16th March 2026. Please click here to know more: <https://www.bucs.org.uk/events-page/football-development-network-day-awards-2026.html>

Please reach out to [Sean Lofting](#)/ [Alai Ayyakannu](#) if you have any questions.

[BUCS Football & Futsal Awards 2025/26: Nominations Now Open](#)

The BUCS Football & Futsal Awards will once again celebrate the incredible work delivered by Accredited Universities throughout the 2025/26 season. The awards recognise excellence across participation, workforce development, leadership, inclusion and innovation within university football and futsal.

Please click here to know more: <https://www.bucs.org.uk/events-page/football-development-network-day-awards-2026.html?tab=Award+Nominations>

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New for this year, we are introducing a dedicated award category for **Football and Futsal Club Committees**, recognising the impact, creativity and leadership demonstrated by student committee teams across the network.

Award nominations are now open until 12 pm, 7th April 2026.

We encourage institutions to push this on to individuals, initiatives and committees who deserve national recognition and celebration at this year's ceremony. Please reach out to [Sean Lofting](#)/ [Alai Ayyakannu](#) if you have any questions.

[New Research: Reimagining Sport Coaching- Designing a System That Works for Women](#)

Women in Sport has recently published a new research report, "Reimagining Sport Coaching: Designing a System That Works for Women," developed in collaboration with Leeds Beckett University. Drawing on insights from over 2,000 coaches and 67 senior leaders across UK sport, the report highlights the challenges many women face within coaching environments, including limited progression pathways, insecure roles, and environments where their voices and leadership are not always respected. As women's sport continues to grow in visibility and participation, the report calls for cultural and structural changes to create safer, fairer and more sustainable coaching environments. For universities supporting coaching development and leadership pathways within football and futsal, the findings provide useful insight into how environments can better support women entering and progressing in coaching roles.

You can read the full report here: <https://womeninsport.org/resource/reimagining-sport-coaching-designing-a-system-that-works-for-women/>

[England Futsal Coaching Conference 2026](#)

England Futsal will host its first-ever Coaching Conference on Thursday 9 April 2026 at Loughborough University (09:00 – 13:30), bringing together coaches from across football and futsal for a morning of learning, practical application and networking. The conference will feature a mix of on-court sessions and classroom workshops delivered by leading practitioners and academics, including Professor Leanne Norman (Loughborough University), Sion Kitson (England Futsal Head of Development & Technical), Dr Chris Yiannaki, Marc Forest, and several other national and international guest speakers. Attendees will gain valuable insights into modern coaching practices across both futsal and football environments.

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Conference tickets also include entry to the Lionesses' first-ever home futsal international against Slovakia (kick-off 14:00), along with lunch and refreshments during the event. Spaces are limited, so early registration is recommended.

You can find more information and register here: <https://www.englandfutsal.com/coaching-conference-2026>
