



To promote Over 30s we started with gala days and active recruitment. Some clubs have offered discounted registration to new female players and the establishment of a female football committee gave a voice to women and girls in the Association.

– Women's Football Survey Respondent

# STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN NEW FEMALE PLAYERS

## Barriers to football for females

There are a number of factors that can act as barriers to females playing football, including:

- ▶ Safety and comfort in a traditionally male dominated environment
- ▶ Influence of a females peers and parents
- ▶ Lack of confidence
- ▶ Lack of time/motivation due to other commitments
- ▶ Lack of awareness
- ▶ Family and social time limitations

## Recruitment Strategies

Some ways that you can address these barriers and recruit new female players to your club are:

- ▶ Encourage girls to bring their friends. Word-of-mouth is a powerful tool. Programme partners

report that over more than 50% of participants come from referrals from friends and this works towards addressing how comfortable new players will feel in an unfamiliar environment and ensuring the social element is not affected

- ▶ Host free 'come and try' female only days for players of all ages and ability levels, with no pressure on ability or results – the main emphasis for any players first foray into the game must be on the participant having a positive and safe experience
- ▶ Promote all the offerings that your club has for female football through as many avenues as possible, for example:
  - Partnerships with schools, religious institutions or other groups that serve girls
  - Flyers in public spaces where girls and their caregivers are likely to be
  - Existing players to bring their friends/family (and potential discounts for 'referrals' or family discounts)

- ▶ Promote to mothers the benefits of physical activity and playing football (studies have shown that increased physical activity leads to improved academics and football is a safe and inclusive sport for all) as mothers are generally the primary decision makers in a family. Mothers are also influencers of the activity of choice as they are often the ones who register their daughters and transport them to the chosen activity
  - Following on from this, ensure that your club is attractive to new mothers by promoting the social side and involvement that exists for parents as well
  - Mothers in Football' day – mums and daughters can play/be involved in football together
- ▶ Ensure that fathers are involved when new young female players start, such as a 'Father-Daughter football day'. Fathers are more involved as direct role models early in a girl's life and will have a big impact on their daughters experience (on the flip side, ensure that fathers are appropriately engaged and educated

on the focus of football and the importance of the type of experience)

- ▶ Offer a holistic range of options outside of football for new families, such as social evenings, trips to games, babysitting while children/parents are playing or anything else that will help them feel welcome at your club
- ▶ Offer a flexible variety of options at different stages of the season to ensure that people who miss registration/can't commit for the traditional season can still participate in football:
  - AIA Vitality MiniRoos for Girls Kick off programs
  - Social/Non-traditional football
  - 'Try football' training sessions with a professional coach/facilitator
- ▶ Promote that your club offers a wide variety of safe football offerings that cater to female needs and wants

By featuring female player profiles in our club newsletters, female only come and try days, development of female friendly areas (change rooms), female mentoring programs, female buddy programs and having a commitment to increase female participation at our club as outlined in our club's strategic plan, we are able to offer opportunities for both social and competitive needs to new and returning female players. - Maz Romandini, Glen Waverley Soccer Club