

The Premier League



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"We constantly strive to make the programme better and better"

An insight into the Premier League's education department and how the matrix Standard is supporting their work.

The Organisation

Since the formation of the Premier League in 1992, a lot has been done to improve players' experiences especially with the Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) which is now available to them as they go through the educational programme.

The Premier League, in partnership with the English Football League (EFL) and The Football Association (FA), developed the "Elite Player Performance Plan" (EPPP) in 2012, and it works across three phases: Foundation (Under-9 to Under-11), Youth Development (U12 to U16) and Professional Development (U17 to U23).

Players in the Professional Development Phase have the option of taking part in the Apprenticeship Programme to enhance their learning and development and is why the IAG provided must be of the highest standard. This is where the **matrix** Standard has been fundamental.

The Premier League's education department has had the **matrix** Standard accreditation for four years. The Premier League has provided its thoughts about the **matrix** Standard below.

Why did the Premier League want the **matrix** Standard accreditation?

The Premier League works with the Education, Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA). The **matrix** Standard is a requirement of the ESFA, which ensures that the IAG provided is of a high quality and standard. It is a quality mark and shows parents how good that institution is, and parents will know their son is coming into an environment where they are supported appropriately and given good opportunities, not just on the pitch.

Where does the Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) sit within the organisation?

As an education department it's one of the most important things for us ... it's at the forefront, the players have got to be well informed, well prepared, and also well supported and this starts from the induction meeting for the new players and their parents. They are informed about how the EPPP and Apprenticeship Programmes will work, what they can learn and how it will support their development. They receive an introductory handbook at these meetings which align with the criteria laid out in the Service Delivery element to the **matrix** Standard.

IAG is provided throughout the players time in an academy and the Premier League's education department wants to constantly improve their offering. The League has been rated "Outstanding" by Ofsted two reviews in a row and the **matrix** Standard has ensured high quality IAG is available.

While looking after players education is a top priority, the League takes a holistic approach to players wellbeing as part of their time in an academy. Player Care within the Football Development Programme includes a guide and support across a range of areas including Mental and Emotional wellbeing, Preparing for the Future, and finance. This framework is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the players and to reflect the world around them, making the IAG provided more important than ever.

What did the Premier League's education department IAG look like before Covid? And how has it changed over the last 12 months?

Before the pandemic the Education Support Managers (ESM's) would go out to venues to deliver inductions in person, and it would be an evening of information for the players and the parents.

Since March 2020 the ESM's have adapted their delivery to support players and parents via a digital offering. This enables staff to use the resources effectively to continue both the EPPP and Apprenticeship Programmes to deliver the IAG as laid out in the **matrix** Standard Resources Element criteria.

In moving online, we are now able to offer more one-to-one support for the players and their families in the early stages of their academy journey. The classes for the players were also all in person prior to the pandemic, and now are all held online which shows that our education department is effectively using technology to provide their IAG as outlined in the Continuous Quality Improvement element of the **matrix** Standard.

There have been many benefits to this as it has allowed the Premier League to deliver online learning resources for both the EPPP and the Apprenticeship Programme. This has enabled the players to access their education anywhere, so if they are away playing or training, their learning doesn't have to have a break.

How has completing the **matrix** Standard helped the Premier League?

The **matrix** Standard has helped enhance the framework for education and learning delivered to those in the Academy system, supporting the League to map out the criteria for achieving IAG goals for the Apprenticeship Programmes.

We constantly strive to make the programme better and better and in developing the support for the players, have met the Continuous Quality Improvement element of the **matrix** Standard.

How has the **matrix** Standard supported the improvement of the Premier League's IAG?

The **matrix** Standard criteria stipulate that the development of IAG must be measured and evaluated. During Season 2020/21, 98% of players surveyed rate the Overall Learning Experience at an Academy as Very Supported or Quite Supported.

Feedback such as this has led to the **matrix** Standard being reapproved for the Premier League, as it continues to provide high quality IAG.

Moving forward and what's next?

The Premier League continues to develop ways in which it can support players to remain in the industry after their playing career ends. This includes the development of an Alumni network, which continues to support individuals in their next steps. This work fulfils the **matrix** Standard's Continuous Quality Improvement element.

Summary

The Premier League's education department plays an important role in the continued development, support, and wellbeing of players. The **matrix** Standard has helped the department build upon and showcase high quality IAG to support every player's time in an academy.

Thank you to Julia Caunt, Head of Apprenticeships and Academic Progression for taking the time to share The Premier League's **matrix** Standard journey.

