



There will be 10 Tier 1 teams from 2027. Photo: Getty Images

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Eight Tier 1 Counties confirmed for 2025 and plans unveiled for four more women's professional domestic teams by 2029

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has confirmed the eight First Class Counties who have been successful in their bid to be awarded Tier 1 women's team status from 2025.

As a further outcome of the Tier 1 invitation to tender process, the ECB has also today announced the selection of two additional First Class Counties to expand Tier 1 from eight to ten teams by 2027, and an intent to grow to 12

teams by the 2029 season.

The eight selected Counties to compete in Tier 1 of the evolved women's professional domestic structure from 2025 are:

- **Durham**
- **Essex**
- **Hampshire**
- **Lancashire**
- **Nottinghamshire**
- **Somerset**
- **Surrey**
- **Warwickshire**

Joining them, by 2027, will be **Glamorgan** and **Yorkshire**, who have been named as the first two Tier 1 expansion teams.

To accelerate Glamorgan and Yorkshire's Tier 1 preparations between 2025 and 2027, and to enhance access for talented female players across the North East and Wales before such a time the clubs join Tier 1, both Counties will receive additional funding from 2025 to run their own "Tier 1 standard" talent pathway.

The ECB has also set the ambition to expand Tier 1 to 12 teams by 2029, given the rapid growth of the women's game and the level of passion and desire for the growth of women's professional cricket demonstrated across the FCC network during this tender process. No decision has been made yet as to where these further two teams would be based.

The plans – which could see an 80% increase in the number of professional

female players in England and Wales by 2029 compared to today – will further accelerate the growth of women’s cricket as a three-tiered domestic competition structure is introduced, and the ownership model underpinning the women’s professional game evolves.

To enable the expansion from eight to ten Tier 1 teams, the ECB is committing a further £3m a year from such a time Glamorgan and Yorkshire's women's teams are operational. It will mean a total of £8m new funding per year is invested into women’s domestic cricket by 2027 – taking annual investment in this area to c.£19m.

Richard Gould, ECB Chief Executive Officer, said: “Through this process we’ve seen a huge appetite from First Class Counties to have a women’s professional team, and a real commitment to growing women’s and girls’ cricket in this country.

“I’d like to congratulate those counties who have been successful in their bids. I’m also delighted that in light of the support we have seen and the strength of the bids we have considered, we can accelerate our plans, including new top tier professional teams at Glamorgan and Yorkshire by 2027 with and a further two being introduced by 2029.

“More professional teams means more women able to make a career out of being a cricketer, more role models to inspire future generations, and more of the country having a women’s professional team to follow nearby.

“I recognise today’s announcement will also be disappointing to those who haven’t been successful at this stage. But with the new three-tier structure we are introducing, there is still a huge opportunity for them to compete in the other tiers so together we can all realise the potential of women’s domestic cricket.”

ECB Director of Women’s Professional Game Beth Barrett-Wild said: “At the start of this tender process we challenged the First Class Counties to show us their vision for the women’s professional game and to demonstrate their desire and commitment to becoming one of our professional Tier 1 Clubs.

“Over the last couple of months it’s been brilliant to see the time and energy that has gone into the submissions, and I’ve been hugely impressed by the

quality and ambition of the bids.

“The decision to select two additional Counties – Glamorgan and Yorkshire – as the ninth and tenth Tier 1 Clubs by 2027, and our stated aim to move to 12 teams in Tier 1 by 2029, is testament to the strength of the bids and the pace at which we all want to move to effect change.

“It’s clear that the game is united in wanting to take the women’s professional game forward, and in wanting to produce commercially vibrant teams and competitions that excite fans and showcase the quality of our professional players.

“I’m energised about what comes next, for the Counties themselves, for the players, for fans and for everyone who wants to see women’s cricket continue its accelerated trajectory.”

All 18 First Class Counties and MCC were invited to tender to become a women’s Tier 1 Club, with the vast majority submitting bids. A panel comprising ECB Board members, Executives and independent members considered the bids which were assessed on four criteria:

- Vision and mission – Their passion, ambition and prioritisation.
- Quality cricket – Player development and squad composition plans, coaching and sports science and medicine provision, talent pathway activation and training/match day facilities.
- Passionate fans – Marketing, digital and communications plans, match day experiences and fan facilities.
- Long-term value – Financial investment, commercial strategy, governance, leadership and EDI plans.

First Class Counties who were not awarded Tier 1 status and, separately, National Counties will now be invited to be involved in a process to determine the composition of Tier 2 and Tier 3 in the new-look women’s domestic competition structure. It is anticipated that the outcome of this process will be confirmed by September 2024, ready to launch the evolved women’s domestic structure in full in 2025.

For the duration of the 2025-2028 seasons all three tiers will be 'closed', with no promotion or relegation.

The three-tier structure aims to build on the impact of the existing Regional Model, which has accelerated performance levels within women's cricket and laid solid foundations, to further grow the depth and reach of the women's professional game.

Notes to editors

This tender process represents the first step to evolve the women's professional game structure. Key aims of this work include:

- *Ensuring stronger ownership, accountability, and governance to support the growth of women's cricket.*
 - *Creating scale and visibility for the women's game to accelerate team and player fandom.*
 - *Establishing a more compelling platform to commercialise women's cricket, while enhancing existing arrangements for FCCs with commercial partners who want to sponsor aligned male and female sports properties.*
 - *Providing long-term stability and a deeper sense of belonging for the women's teams and female players.*
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