

Understanding and Supporting Neurodivergence in Elite Football



A workshop for professionals working in elite football

Around **1 in 7 people in the UK** are neurodivergent, meaning they think, learn, and process information differently from what is considered 'typical'. While some high-profile footballers have shared their experiences, these remain the exception rather than the norm.

To put this into context: in an academy of 300 players, **around 42 may be neurodivergent**.

As our understanding of conditions such as ADHD and Dyslexia grows, so too does the need to provide environments that nurture players and give them the right platform to succeed.

The **Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP)** in England places the young person's interests at its heart, emphasising holistic development and the balance between football and personal life. As the 2022 Premier League EPPP report states:

"It is the unavoidable reality of the pathway that the majority of young people will leave the Academy system without a professional playing career. The chances of progression represent the reality of elite sport rather than a failure of the Academy system. The Academy system aims to educate, equip and empower boys to transition to successful careers beyond a professional playing career."

However, many academies may **unintentionally disadvantage neurodivergent players** by:

- Misinterpreting traits as discipline or motivation issues.
- Not fully utilising inclusive coaching methods.
- Failing to provide psychological safety due to limited staff awareness.
- Relying on Talent ID systems that prioritise verbal or social fluency, disadvantaging players with ASD or ADHD.

As a result, talented players may exit academy systems for reasons unrelated to performance or ability.

How this programme helps

This workshop has been designed to address these challenges by:

- De-mystifying neurodivergence.
- Supporting staff and coaches to understand behaviours on and off the pitch.
- Providing practical coaching solutions.
- Helping clubs create inclusive environments through simple, effective changes.
- Offering direct guidance to staff, including support with IDPs for neurodivergent players.

Research and our own lived experiences – show that **creating conditions for neurodivergent players to thrive (clarity, flexibility, and psychological safety) also unlocks peak performance for everyone**. The benefits extend across squads, both on and off the pitch.

Why this workshop?

Developed by football professionals with lived experience of ADHD and dyslexia, the programme combines over **40 years of expertise across elite football** – including academies, men's, women's, and disability football. This unique perspective enables us to deliver practical, actionable insight into how clubs can better support their players.

Small changes to coaching, resources, and environments can make the difference between success and failure. With so much riding on player development and team outcomes, clubs cannot afford to overlook the importance of getting this right.

Workshops can be tailored to your club's needs, combining both theory and practical elements.

Price on application – To discuss further, please email paul@pbinclusivecoaching.com