



Developing a girl's section

Helping clubs develop and sustain their girl's sections – June 2013



Why have girls?

Introduction

Developing a girl's section may not be as daunting as you think.

In fact over the last five years, many clubs have achieved just that successfully creating a welcoming environment where girls can play and socialise.

As a result girls are now active in around 10% of all clubs in England and Wales and your club could easily become part of this growing and vibrant community

Every year The Cricket Foundations' Chance to Shine programme brings cricket to more than 150,000 girls ensuring there's no shortage of interest.

In many ways developing a Girls' Section is just like supporting existing junior sections, all you need is some awareness of the slightly different needs and ambitions girls may have.

This toolkit offers key information about how girls may want to access your services and what you can do, as a club, to encourage greater participation among girls. It's just as relevant to new or developing clubs.

Lets get started...



This toolkit has been produced by
ECB's Inclusion and Diversity
Department

Questions & comments? Email:

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Benefits of having girls at your club...

- More participants & volunteers
- Increased income
- Friendly and welcoming atmosphere
- People spend more time socialising
- Shows potential new members how you welcome all
- Potential sponsorship and wider community engagement

Club buy in

- Committee approval
- Inclusive development planning
- Whole club support

Planning

- Identifying need
- Types of activity
- Who should be involved
- Awareness of other commitments
- Understanding players and barriers
- Consultation

Attracting players

- Marketing
- Girls only sessions
- Flexible delivery
- Getting the right people involved
- Incentives of being involved
- Fun and sociable activity

Retaining members

- Welcoming facilities
- Equal access
- Quality experiences
- Competition opportunities
- Progression for players

Where are all the girls? Getting new members

THINK ABOUT:

- Other commitments
- Team equipment
- Marketing
- Employing the right coaches
- Social activities
- Session times
- Reducing costs of being involved
- Non cricket benefits such as social skills, health and wellbeing

Bringing in new members to either a new or existing section can be difficult so its worth considering the following:

Is there demand?

Are there enough girls who want to play? Are you in competition with a club nearby who is already catering for girls? Check with your County Cricket Board.

First impressions count

We're all affected by first impressions so make sure what you're offering lives up to their expectations or they won't come back. Think about the type of session you would offer, where this activity will take place and who they will interact with

Get into the schools

It's vital to get into schools where you have a captive audience and the Chance to Shine programme has shown girls want to play. Is your club involved in school delivery? Make sure your club is represented positively in schools and girls know cricket is a genuine option for them. If they don't know it's for them they won't come. Do you have the right person visiting schools? Remember first impressions count.

Show it's a sport not just for boys

Many think cricket is a sport just for boys. In order to change this be aware of the kinds of marketing and promotional material and pictures you use. And have a look at the different training and matchplay you offer as well and whether your facilities create the right environment for girls to train and play at

Get parents on board

It's essential to spend time with parents and siblings if you want to attract more girls to your clubs - they have a big influence. Most Mums won't have played cricket so be prepared to spend time explaining the many benefits cricket offers. You might have to work hard to change assumptions

Encourage signing up with friends or in groups

Girls want to play and socialise in groups so offering a girls' section isn't just about having the best players at your club it's also about having fun and encouraging everyone to join in. Try and encourage them to sign up together. That way they're more likely to stay and enjoy it

Get them onside and ask for their opinion

Engage girls right from the start by asking them what they want in sessions. That way they're more likely to take ownership of the activity and be proud of having helped develop it themselves.

Showing them they're not the first girl to play cricket

Don't underestimate the impact role models have. Highlight other women - both England and County players - who are playing including anyone from your club. Talking about female volunteers, coaches and players is a great way to show girls how actively involved women already are

Keeping girls interested.. Retaining your members

Make your sessions:

- Fun
- Social
- Inclusive through play and games
- Flexible

Have people involved that:

- Care
- Create Team spirit
- Promote involvement
- Build confidence

Great you now have girls joining... what do you do with them and how do you keep them motivated?

Plan activity carefully

Be aware of other commitments they have. Younger girls, particularly up to the age of 14, will be involved in many different things.

If cricket isn't their priority, and it clashes with other activities, they are less likely to come back. Be flexible and encouraging, even if they only come to part of a session. Always be aware of the demands of exam periods and be prepared to reduce commitments if you need to

Match school and club activity

There is no point in engaging and working in schools if you don't cater for the girls in your club. Be sure what you offer in your club for girls matches the age ranges you have targeted in schools

Promote your sessions well and make it relevant

It's essential to give the right impression about your activity and to market it in an appealing way. Look at what other clubs in your community do and ask the girls for help in designing posters or passing on information to peers.

When coaching girls – are there any differences?

Things to consider when coaching girls:

- Most don't mind if the coach is male or female*
- Always ensure coaches are approachable, friendly and skilled
- Girls like to build strong, honest relationships with their coaches. They are likely to expect more engagement and may discuss more social issues
- Girls often want to do well for their friends and group
- Create a fun, social and friendly atmosphere for team cohesion, retention and performance.
- Don't be afraid to set aside some time for fun and a bit of gossip in each session
- Some girls lack confidence especially when starting a new hobby. Be aware they may need additional support so provide regular, constructive feedback
- Be innovative and try inclusive formats like pairs cricket and softball

Competition

Competition and matchplay opportunities are vital if you want to retain players and motivate them to carry on. It's really important to increase learning through games and by frequently playing other teams. Make sure the level of competition is appropriate and the environment comfortable.

Think about what competition opportunities you offer girls – are they happy? Do they have chance to play?

*Some girls, especially those from different ethnicities and faiths may require a female only environment

What about your club – does it welcome new members

Recap on the challenges:

1. Condition of facilities
2. Girls not feeling welcome
3. Quality of people leading
4. Poor planning
5. Girls not being involved in decisions
6. Initial costs and equipment
7. Poor marketing
8. Lack of flexibility
9. Not enjoyable and social
10. Initial not for me attitudes

Facilities and the welcome girls get will make a difference... Girls leave clubs because they don't feel welcome or the facilities don't enthuse. Don't worry, there are little things you can do to make the most of your facilities

- It's not all about the cricket. If you provide a social environment and offer other activities to your members they are more likely to want to come and socialise outside cricket
- Don't treat a Girls' Section as an 'add on' or separate entity. Embed it into the full running of the club as then girls will feel truly welcome
- Don't hide the girls – run sessions when other members are there – so they can see the progress they are making. Some successful clubs have male players watching and supporting when girls are playing*
- Ensure you challenge inappropriate behaviour or language – make your members feel safe and respected
- Give girls equal access to facilities, times and pitches – always being sent to alternative pitches could mean they won't stay long
- Keep changing areas clean and tidy. Make your clubhouse as inviting as possible
- Make facilities safe and secure – girls will be concerned about safety – and have appropriate lighting or staffing to ensure girls don't feel threatened



Case Study.... They did it, you can too

ALBERBURY TOP TIPS

- Provide lots of competition
- Have good school links with teacher engagement
- Encourage active, supportive parents
- Have progressive opportunities for all
- Create positive role models
- Have whole club involvement
- Create a welcoming atmosphere

Introduction to Alberbury Cricket Club

Located on the Shropshire/Welsh border, Alberbury CC started welcoming girls in 2009. As a club with a reputation for being friendly, it seemed a natural progression.

How they did it

Having developed good links with schools and engaged teachers and parents, the club used parents to help support activities so creating a vital resource.

What they offer

Four years on the club now offers softball and hardball opportunities for U11 and U13 girls and is looking to progress and develop the U13s and U15s during 2014.

Although they also have mixed teams it was introducing a girls' section, with activities and sessions for girls, which enabled the club to retain players and grow

Biggest challenge

Catering to players with different abilities and interests, was the club's biggest challenge as some liked hardball, others softball. The solution was to create different playing options and use several coaches.

What worked for you

The club had a couple of talented girls who went on to become role models to other girls in the area. This helped increase membership and attract new players

Having a few talented girls had other benefits including creating more acceptance of girls playing cricket by the boys. As the girls were also competitive this raised the standard of play among the boys as they didn't want to get beaten by the girls



"I joined when I was 8 and was a founder member of the girl's squad. I went on to represent my county. I love playing cricket and prefer playing in girls only teams" Laura J



"I love playing sport particularly cricket. Playing in girls' teams has helped me improve my game, gain confidence and to be more competitive" Becky J

Frequently asked questions....



Can girls play mixed cricket?

Yes, without a doubt, but always ask them and provide options. Some girls are at ease playing with boys but others are not and could drop out if forced to mix. Research shows girls like to play with their peers, in other words other girls

I've heard girls don't like competition is that right?

No, that's not the case. Girls may want to play competitively but probably in a different way to boys. Being competitive, and playing matches, is important for girls but some won't like the aggressive behaviour that can come out when competing.

Competition actually helps with retention as it provides achievement and instils team ethos. So get the girls playing and do so increasingly frequently



Girls don't like the kit, what can I do?

Traditional "whites" may not be the best colour for girls so consider introducing coloured kit and clothing to your club and for competitions. With different coloured balls now readily available this is an easy option which doesn't cost any more and could actually be cheaper than old kit. It also helps with team cohesion and retention as girls will feel part of a team wearing your colours. Ask girls what they think.

Cricket is too expensive as a beginner – it just isn't worth it

Don't expect your new members and beginners to buy all the kit. Instead provide plenty of team kit, in good condition, as this will make it easier for girls to get involved. You may be able to benefit from the Lord Taverner's Cricket kit bag scheme which includes specifically designed kit bags for girls aged 15-18

<http://www.lordstaverners.org/cricket-kit-bags>

What are the progression opportunities for girls?

Not everyone will play for England but that doesn't mean you can't set realistic goals to help them achieve their potential. Keep the player informed and always be honest. As a coach your interpersonal and people skills will count for a lot when working with girls. Tell them of progression opportunities and share expectations with them. Every County Board will have a pathway for your talented players so talk to girls about their potential options

What should we do when moving girls into senior / open age group cricket – introducing adults

We know many girls in the 14-16 year age group regularly play in adult cricket. Make sure this is for the right reasons and not because it's the only option for them. We know, if possible, keeping a group of girls together to move into adult cricket works but if you're to sustain progression is essential to consider how you will introduce, and market, this change to them. This is the time when, potentially, they will drop out because of other life choices so it's worth spending some time recreating team ethos and spirit. Involve your players in this transition period – give them ownership and opportunities to help you develop new sections

We only have a couple of changing rooms so can't have girls playing here

This isn't true there are a variety of ways to solve the issue of changing facilities – come changed, allocate one as 'female only' or use a rota system at the venue. Be creative!