



INSPIRING GENERATIONS

THRIVING CLUBS, CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

ECB RECREATIONAL CLUB STRATEGY

2025 – 2029



A portrait of Richard Thompson, a middle-aged man with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue blazer over a light-colored shirt. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with trees and a building.

RICHARD THOMPSON INTRODUCTION

Clubs are where cricket begins, where individuals become teams and where communities are born.

Cricket is more than a sport; it is a shared experience that binds communities, creates lifelong friendships, and teaches skills that shape lives. At its heart are our clubs: places where the game begins, where values are learned, and where belonging is found. None of this would be possible without the dedication of thousands of volunteers, the unsung heroes who give their time, energy, and passion to keep our clubs thriving.

This strategy has been shaped by conversations across the recreational game. We've listened to clubs, their challenges, ambitions, and what they need to succeed. The message is clear: clubs want (and need) support that matches their ambition, respect for the unique role they play, and a future where they can confidently grow and welcome more people into cricket.

Thriving Clubs is a collective vision for the future. By safeguarding the best of club cricket and making it more sustainable and inclusive, we will unlock new opportunities for growth and connection. Central to this is a bold commitment to women's and girls' cricket, ensuring equal pathways to play, lead, and inspire.

The opportunity is now. Demand for cricket is growing, communities are changing, and more people than ever want to be part of the game. If we act together, we can build clubs that reflect and serve the diversity of modern society. Together, we will create stronger clubs at the heart of thriving communities, enable more people to discover the joy of cricket, and a sport that truly delivers on the ambition set out in Inspiring Generations; to make cricket the most inclusive team sport.

There has never been a better time to grow the game with real ambition and purpose. It's time to seize that opportunity. The time is now.

Be part of that change. Let's protect what we love, respect those who make it possible, and embrace this exciting future, so cricket continues to inspire generations for years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard Thompson".

Richard Thompson, ECB Chair

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cricket clubs are the foundation of the recreational game across England and Wales. Whether competing in ECB Premier Leagues, playing social cricket, introducing the game to young people through All Stars and Dynamos Cricket, or supporting the continued growth of women's and girls' cricket, clubs are uniquely positioned to bring communities together and inspire a lifelong love of the game. Increasingly, they are also the launchpad for sustainable junior cricket* - including girls-only teams - creating environments where young players can grow, feel connected, and be inspired to stay in the game.

BUT THEIR IMPACT GOES FAR BEYOND THE BOUNDARY. AT THEIR HEART, CLUBS OFFER:

- Vital community hubs that foster connection, identity, and shared purpose
- Safe, welcoming spaces where individuals can thrive and belong - on and off the field
- Inclusive participation for people of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities



We have a generational opportunity to deliver a step-change in the recreational club landscape - driven by new investment into the recreational game, rising participation across junior, women's and girls' cricket, and the momentum building towards hosting the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2026. Together, these forces create the conditions to ensure parity of opportunity for all and to harness this growth as a powerful catalyst for holistic club development.

To reflect the game's commitment to inclusive growth, we are placing a strategic focus on helping clubs build sustainable junior and girls' offers. These opportunities are not only vital for expanding access to the game, but they are also central to ensuring clubs remain relevant, resilient, and connected. This focus will be embedded across our **Club Development Pathway**, ensuring every club has the tools, resources and support to grow with purpose.

This is our opportunity to create a thriving club network that truly reflects the diversity of our communities, responds to the changing needs of participants, and secures the long-term future of recreational cricket across England and Wales. The ECB is committed to placing clubs at the heart of this vision - ensuring they are equipped, empowered, and supported to shape a strong, vibrant, and inclusive game.

By 2028, we will:

1. **Strengthen club foundations through Affiliation**
Use Affiliation as the foundation for engaging clubs in the ECB Accredited Club Status process, equipping them for long-term success by embedding shared standards, improving quality, and ensuring every affiliated club has access to the guidance, tools, and connections needed to thrive at the heart of its community.
2. **Support every club's journey through the Club Development Pathway**
Empower clubs to plan and progress with confidence through a clear, flexible development pathway, combining self-serve resources, tailored support, and expert insight from Recreational Cricket Boards (RCBs) to help every club reach its potential.
3. **Celebrate and share success through the Club Development Recognition Programme**
Recognise and champion clubs that exemplify excellence - whether through growth, inclusion, or innovation - shining a light on their achievements and inspiring others to follow their lead in strengthening the game for the future.



By embracing this momentum, we can reimagine clubs not just as places to play but as thriving community hubs that nurture talent, foster belonging, and inspire lifelong engagement with the game.

*Throughout this strategy, references to "junior cricket" encompass teams for both boys and girls, including girls-only teams.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Recreational cricket is built on a vibrant network of **5,704 active clubs** - **4,800** of which are affiliated - supported by over **70,000 volunteers** and providing opportunities for **1.2 million people to play club cricket each year**. As the national governing body, the **ECB is committed to championing grassroots cricket** by supporting clubs with the people, places, and practices they need to thrive.

At the heart of every club are the individuals who bring it to life: administrators, players, and volunteers - often wearing multiple hats - who dedicate their time, energy, and care, week in and week out. The strength of the club game is built on the values, relationships, and communities that underpin every club. When this foundation is supported by the guidance and partnership of the ECB and RCBs, it creates the conditions for meaningful progress, enabling clubs to realise their ambitions and grow sustainably.

We recognise that no two clubs are the same, and this strategy is not about making them so. Our approach is guided by shared principles of **club-led development**, empowering clubs to shape their own future. Through purpose-driven planning, connected support, inclusive design, flexible solutions, and shared learning across the game, clubs are given the autonomy to develop in ways that reflect their unique identity, ambitions, and context.

Our vision is to empower clubs to build strong foundations, define their own path, and grow through deep-rooted community connections.

We understand that sustainable club development can be challenging - particularly given the pressures on volunteers and facilities. We are committed to making it simpler for clubs to access the right guidance, information, and support when they need it, so they can concentrate on what they have told us matters most - their long-term success and sustainability.

We will work in partnership with clubs and RCBs to co-design practical solutions and offer clear guidance, tools, and expertise. Our aim is to strip away unnecessary complexity, shine a light on best practice, and elevate the voice of the **Cricket Collective - the army of volunteers who make cricket happen**.

By embedding these principles into everything we do, we believe clubs will be better equipped to flourish - on and off the field - and continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the game. Safeguarding that future means taking intentional steps to ensure every club can pursue its ambitions with a clear focus on long-term impact.

DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

This strategy has been shaped through engagement across the game to understand clubs' current realities, ambitions, and the key barriers preventing progress. It is grounded in real stories and shared ambition, built with the game and for the game.

Our approach:



We engaged **952 clubs** to listen, learn, and shape a future for recreational cricket - built with, not just for, the people who make our game happen



We heard from **167 leagues** to understand how best to support their role in shaping a thriving club ecosystem at the heart of the game



We spoke with **38 RCBs**, whose perspectives offered valuable insight into the challenges, innovations, and opportunities shaping recreational clubs



We met with **15 National Governing Bodies (NGBs)** and professional leadership organisations to draw on their insights and experiences, shape practical solutions, and align our approach with wider sector best practice



This strategy reflects a collective desire to reshape how we work together - resetting the relationships between clubs, leagues, RCBs and the ECB to better support shared ambitions, while making ECB guidance simpler, more coherent, and easier to access for everyone involved in the recreational game.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO SHAPE THE STRATEGY

Through this collaboration and consultation, five shared principles emerged that capture our collective understanding of what matters most in building and sustaining thriving clubs. Rooted in the voices and experiences of those who lead and participate in recreational cricket, these principles shape the vision, objectives, actions, and outcomes of this strategy - ensuring it reflects the shared values and priorities of the whole game.

1

CLUB-LED DEVELOPMENT

Empower clubs to shape their future

Every club is different. That is why development needs to start with a club's people, purpose, and vision. When clubs lead their own long-term planning - supported by tools and frameworks that fit their needs - they build the direction and resilience to shape their future, not just manage the present.

2

GAME-CONNECTED

Strengthening collaboration across the game

Clubs thrive when the whole game works together. Building stronger links between clubs, leagues, RCBs, and the ECB will ensure our efforts are aligned, our support is consistent, and every club feels part of something bigger. No club should ever feel they are working alone - success comes from connection, collaboration, and a shared commitment to helping the game grow.

3

INCLUSIVE BY DESIGN

Ensure support works for every club

Support should work for every club, regardless of size, structure or starting point. We are committed to designing things that are simple to use, accessible for all, and rooted in what matters to recreational clubs. This includes ensuring that clubs of all sizes have the tools and confidence to build sustainable playing opportunities, whether starting from scratch or scaling existing offers.

4

BUILT TO FLEX

Adapt to local needs and emerging challenges

Local needs change. New challenges emerge. Clubs thrive when they have the freedom to adapt without losing sight of their purpose. We will champion flexible solutions that help you respond, evolve, and stay future-focused.

5

LEARNING TOGETHER

Share best practices and replicate success

The best ideas come from peers collaborating, sharing what works, and learning from each other's experiences. We want to create space for clubs to connect, collaborate, and drive progress together. By spotlighting examples of successful development, we will enable clubs to learn from one another and adapt what works within their own communities - because building your club for the future should never be a solo journey.



CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

Participation lies at the heart of our sport, and the close of the previous strategic cycle paints a clear and encouraging picture of the recreational game. Feedback from clubs, leagues, and RCBs highlights a diverse and growing community of players, teams, and volunteers across all ages, genders, and abilities.

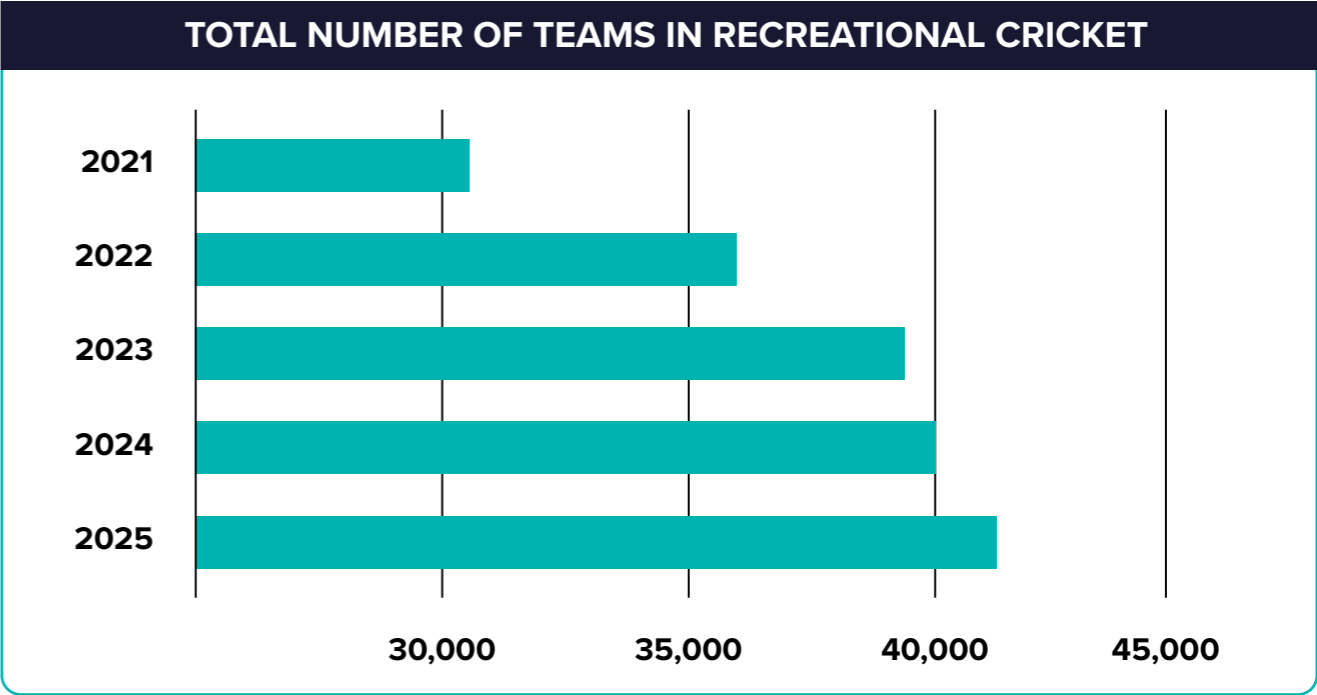
We are seeing increasing demand for play - particularly among women, girls, and juniors - alongside deliberate progress in inclusivity, as cricket becomes more accessible to a broader range of communities. This growth is powered by the ongoing dedication of volunteers, whose commitment and expertise continue to drive the game forward.

The participation data provides a clear view of the scale, makeup, and engagement across recreational cricket. These insights will guide our next strategic priorities, helping us focus on what works, tackle challenges, and support every club to move from surviving to thriving.

STRONG FOUNDATIONS:

PARTICIPATION METRIC	TOTAL NUMBER
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Participants	1.2m
Fixtures	195k
Active clubs	5,704
Teams	43,454
Open-age teams	20,830
Junior teams	14,794
Women's teams	2,602
Girls' teams	2,496
All Stars and Dynamos	100k
Disability Champion clubs	158
Volunteers	70k



As we entered the current strategic cycle, we did so on the back of steady and sustained growth, with team participation increasing consistently throughout – reflecting a vibrant and engaged community of players across all ages and abilities.



- Key Insights:**
- Junior teams (36% of total teams)**
Strong youth engagement demonstrates the continued appeal of recreational cricket, while clubs need support to meet growing demand.
 - Women's and girls' teams (13% of total teams)**
Positive progress in gender inclusivity, with targeted support essential to accelerate growth and strengthen pathways.
 - Open-age teams (51% of total teams)**
High adult participation underlines the scale and strength of the game, with ongoing focus needed to sustain participation.
- This data provides a clear picture of **achievement and opportunity**, forming a strong foundation for our next strategic priorities and continued investment in the recreational game.

Amongst team sports, **cricket ranks 2nd** for men for total participation levels

Amongst team sports, **cricket ranks 5th** for women for total participation levels

BEYOND PARTICIPATION

Beyond match days, many clubs are actively building the structures and support needed to keep recreational cricket thriving. **Strong governance** and **safeguarding create safe, welcoming environments**, while **volunteers** - through their engagement in **coaching, officiating, and other development opportunities** — bring the skills and expertise needed to deliver high-quality experiences.

Challenges remain, with some clubs needing additional support in governance, safeguarding, and volunteer development. Addressing these gaps is essential to ensure all clubs operate safely, inclusively, and effectively.

Over 70,000 people volunteer in recreational cricket clubs	1,700 clubs annually participate in Get Set Weekend
26,224 registrations across ECB Support, Foundation, and Core Coach courses between 2020–2024	3,842 people completed an ECB Umpire Course between 2023-2025
Over 2,100 clubs have achieved Clubmark accreditation	Over 4,000 clubs have been onboarded to SHMS
There are approximately 3,500 asset-owning clubs (this includes freehold, leasehold and long-term rental agreements)	Over 1,700 County Grant Fund applications approved in the last strategic cycle

Key Insights:

- Many clubs have strong foundations and a deep sense of community commitment; building leadership and confidence will help them maximise volunteer capacity.
- Clubs want support to turn ambition into action, embedding their values to create connected, welcoming environments.
- Broadening pathways from entry-level programmes, such as All Stars and Dynamos, into sustained participation will help more people stay involved for longer, strengthening the long-term future of the game.



CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

What we have learned from the available insight, and from **speaking directly with clubs**, is that there is no shortage of passion, commitment, or ambition across the recreational game. **But we also recognise that clubs face very real challenges** - from stretched volunteer capacity to ageing infrastructure - which can make progress feel uneven or hard to achieve.

Yet, where clubs have been able to focus on sustainable development, the positive impact has been clear: stronger foundations, greater confidence, and more opportunities for people to play and belong. Our shared task now is to help every club feel ready and able to take those steps. By strengthening collective readiness for sustainable growth, we can build a more vibrant, connected, and resilient network.

55% of clubs have no junior section, creating significant risk around their sustainability

A focus on junior cricket, from All Stars through youth teams, has strengthened the club as a whole by creating clear pathways for progression, engaging families and volunteers, and fostering a welcoming, 'family' atmosphere that has driven sustained growth in membership and participation across all sections.

Simon Cox, Head of Youth Cricket, Bear Flat CC (Somerset)

“ ”

Two-thirds of volunteers give their time for a purpose

Defining our purpose and vision means we are now on a really strong platform to continue to build and develop the club. The club community can see that we are developing and investing in the future, which motivates them and makes them want to return and contribute.

Ben Pearce, Chair, Nettleham CC (Lincolnshire)

“ ”

These stories demonstrate that when clubs take ownership - whether by investing in junior cricket, expanding opportunities for women and girls, strengthening governance, or connecting with their communities - they lay the foundations for lasting success. With the right support, clubs can turn ambition into action, creating environments where everyone feels welcome to participate. The opportunity is clear: by embracing purposeful development, clubs can be confident they are equipped for success, empowered to achieve their goals, and ready to offer more people meaningful ways to get involved.

75% of respondents believe that improved facility condition and quality would significantly enhance their satisfaction with the club

We knew our facility was holding us back from growing the club. With aspirations to offer junior cricket to enable the club to grow, we took on a full clubhouse refurbishment, funded through multiple sources and powered by our incredible volunteers. This year, we've launched Dynamos Cricket and entered junior competitions for U9 and U11s, with exciting plans for further growth ahead.

Richard Harland, Secretary, Thornton-le-Moor CC (Yorkshire)

“ ”

63% of clubs that have a junior section do not have a girls' section

Women and girls deserved more chances to play, lead and thrive rather than being in the minority at the club, so we made it a priority. Creating a space for them was not just about cricket; it was about building a club where everyone belongs. It is not a side project – it is part of who Millhouses Works CC are.

Becky Linsell, Chair, Millhouses Works CC (Yorkshire)

“ ”

55% of clubs have not yet demonstrated that they meet the minimum governance standards of club accreditation

Good governance is key to underpinning success – we can continue to grow, secure in the knowledge that we have a solid operational foundation for the club and be bright and optimistic about continuing to grow our cricket offering.

Sam Adkin, Head of Cricket, Grimston CC (Norfolk)

“ ”

65% of clubs express a desire to build stronger connections with schools, but fewer than half feel confident in how to make it happen

Building meaningful community engagement requires listening actively to local needs, being inclusive, and maintaining consistent communication. It is important to build trust over time, involve people at all levels, and create opportunities for everyone to contribute and feel valued. Flexibility and responsiveness to feedback are key to sustaining long-term relationships.

Sajid Sharif, Chair and Head Coach, Lutonian CC (Bedfordshire)

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CREATING A COHERENT CLUB JOURNEY

Rather than prescribing a single definition of success, we have created a coherent club journey designed to empower every club - regardless of size, capacity, or starting point - to define and achieve its own vision. Along this journey, support will be intentionally accessible, relevant, and achievable, available when clubs need it so they can feel confident, equipped, and inspired to deliver their ambitions.



FOCUS AREA 1: CLUB AFFILIATION

Empower clubs to build strong, well-governed foundations

Through **Club Affiliation**, we will introduce standards that help clubs grow sustainably and access new opportunities, ensuring they have the structures and practices in place to benefit from wider support, investment, and development programmes.

Through a clear, annual process, clubs commit to shared standards, confirm their governance credentials, and unlock tailored support and access **ECB Accredited Club status**.

This is the first key step in a club's journey, establishing the structure needed to protect participants and ensure long-term success.



FOCUS AREA 2: CLUB DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

Enable clubs to define clear priorities and deliver with purpose

The **Club Development Pathway** is an umbrella platform that provides clubs with tailored tools, guidance, and learning to build confidence and support progress, helping them move beyond short-term challenges by identifying and agreeing on their mid- to long-term priorities, with clear stepping stones in place to achieve them.

Built around what matters most - Playing Offer, People, Places, and Practices - the pathway maintains a clear focus on helping clubs grow sustainable participation opportunities as a cornerstone of inclusive development.

It will provide a roadmap shaped to each club's size, ambition, and capacity.



FOCUS AREA 3: CLUB RECOGNITION PROGRAMME

Recognise and celebrate club progress – on and off the field

Increased playing opportunities emerge when clubs feel confident and inspired - both in terms of making the most of existing opportunities and in realising the potential of future ones.

The **Club Recognition Programme** helps turn this confidence into momentum by highlighting what clubs are doing well and providing clear, accessible milestones that inspire next steps.

Designed to be practical and inclusive, with low-burden criteria, it empowers clubs of all sizes to reflect, celebrate achievements, and continue developing with purpose.

By providing a clear, accessible, and supportive journey, we aim to **empower recreational clubs to build strong foundations, shape their own future, and grow through meaningful community-rooted connections.**

CLUB DEVELOPMENT: FROM DEVELOPING TO THRIVING

Club development is rarely a straight line. Every club grows and evolves at its own pace, facing different challenges and opportunities along the way. That is why we are focusing on the four key development pillars - **Playing Offer, People, Places, and Practices** - to support progress through targeted guidance, practical resources, and meaningful recognition.

Clubs can be at different stages - Developing, Advancing, or Thriving - across each pillar, and our role is to help you understand where your club is now, celebrate what is working well, and focus support where it is needed most.

Whether you are looking to embed minimum governance standards through **Club Affiliation**, access learning via the **Club Development Pathway**, or be recognised through the **Club Recognition Programme**, we will provide the insight, structure, and tools to help your club grow with purpose - creating better experiences for everyone involved.



1

DEVELOPING

A club that is taking steps to grow its playing opportunities, welcome new volunteers and share responsibilities. Facilities are being cared for and improved through simple planning, and the club is starting to reflect on how it runs and where it can improve.

2

ADVANCING

A club that is offering a range of playing formats and actively growing participation. Volunteering is well-organised with a focus on keeping people involved and valued. Facilities are being upgraded with future use in mind, and the leadership team is engaged, plans ahead, and involves members in shaping the club's direction.

3

THRIVING

A vibrant, community-led club that is inclusive and drives participation across all levels. Volunteering is embedded in its culture, and its facilities are multi-use, supporting both cricket and wider community activities. Governance is strategic and outward-looking, with strong leadership and a clear vision that extends its influence beyond the club.

DEVELOPMENT PILLARS: SIMPLIFYING CLUB DEVELOPMENT

We recognise that clubs can be complex, with multiple stakeholders and operational challenges, so our aim is to make club development simple. Through research and consultation, we have identified four critical components that underpin success. While there is no single path to becoming a thriving recreational club, achieving balance across these areas puts clubs in the strongest position to grow sustainably, meet local needs, and contribute to the wider development of the game.



Thriving clubs are inclusive clubs - by widening opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to play, clubs not only meet growing demand but also foster greater diversity and inclusion, creating vibrant, community-rooted environments that support long-term success.

By focusing on these four key areas, we aim to simplify club development - making it easier for clubs to plan with confidence, for RCBs to direct support where it is needed most, and for the ECB to deliver tools and resources that truly make a difference. It is a unified, purposeful approach, powered by the **ECB Club Development Pathway**, to help turn ambition into action.



Playing Offer

A playing offer that is inclusive, accessible, and appealing to both current and prospective players



People

Effective leadership that inspires and empowers individuals to deliver high-quality experiences for all participants



Places

Well-equipped and welcoming facilities that are fully utilised to serve as vibrant and valued assets within the community



Practices

Uniting the entire club around a shared vision, core values, and strategic priorities that guide all activity



**Thriving Clubs,
Connected
Communities**

DEVELOPMENT PILLARS: CREATING A THRIVING CLUB

Across England and Wales, thriving clubs are already delivering outstanding experiences — driven by ambition, smart planning, and purposeful decision-making. Our aim is to make this the standard, ensuring every club has the confidence and support to succeed.

1. MACCLESFIELD CC (CHESHIRE)

The club is committed to creating inclusive, diverse, and accessible cricket opportunities for all. This has led to an expansion of its playing offer to provide opportunities for both competitive players and those seeking recreational engagement, ensuring cricket is available to everyone in the community.

It has focused on improving the transition of junior players into senior cricket and encouraging lifelong participation across all abilities and backgrounds. The club offers multiple ways to play, including hard ball and softball formats, junior and senior cricket, women's and girls' teams, disability cricket, indoor leagues, and social fixtures.

To support this varied offer, it has restructured memberships for flexibility, partnered with a local club to share resources, and established a Cricket Committee to guide development. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and the club has learned that cricket builds community when formats are inclusive and adaptable.

Their advice to other clubs: Build a strong internal structure before expanding and be persistent - especially when launching new sections like women's and girls' and disability cricket. The rewards are worth it.

2. BUCKLEY CC (WALES)

Buckley Cricket Club is a thriving, family-oriented club with a strong commitment to inclusion, diversity, and community engagement. The club offers a welcoming environment for players of all ages and abilities.

Recent years have seen significant growth and development across all areas of the club. The club has invested in improved facilities, including refurbished changing and social spaces, solar panels, and modern clubhouse upgrades, while also expanding its women's and girls' programme, which now boasts county and international representatives.

The club's collaborative spirit extends beyond cricket, working closely with local sports clubs and charities to host community events and fund raisers. Financially and socially, the club continues to go from strength to strength - supported by sponsorships, grants, and an ever-expanding membership base.

Their advice to other clubs: Invest in people, partnerships, and places - strong community connections are the foundation for lasting success on and off the field.

3. CARLTON TOWERS CC (YORKSHIRE)

The club was established in 1858 and is a thriving club with 180 active members and 13 teams across open-age, women's, junior, and girls' cricket. Driven by a culture of inclusivity and community, the club has embedded opportunities for women and girls into its wider growth strategy — starting with social softball and evolving into a full female pathway supported by school links, joint training, and modernised facilities.

The club has transformed its culture and infrastructure to reflect its growing, diverse membership, underpinned by new values (The TOWERS Way). With equal gender representation and strong female leadership emerging, Carlton Towers continues to invest in player development, coaching, and partnerships — setting a powerful example for sustainable, inclusive club development.

Their advice to other clubs: Just make a start. Once you know who your core is, build something around them, and they will generally drive it themselves. Work out what people want and how you can attract them; tie your offer to that and hook them in.

4. REDBRIDGE CC (ESSEX)

Established in 2015 in Essex, Redbridge CC is a thriving community-focused club with over 80 adult and 95 junior members. It offers a wide range of cricket formats, including open-age, social, junior, girls', and women's softball, fielding multiple teams across various age groups.

Its vision emphasises inclusivity, community engagement, and excellence in cricket, aiming to provide opportunities for all regardless of ability or financial barriers. The club actively supports local initiatives, such as knife crime awareness and first aid training, while continually improving its facilities.

Guided by a dedicated committee, Redbridge CC has grown significantly, fostering a welcoming environment and promoting cricket in the true spirit of the game.

Their advice for other clubs: Starting this journey is rewarding but requires patience, a strong committee, and belief in the vision and objectives. Collaboration and community support are key to achieving long-term goals.

5. BROADSTONE CC (DORSET)

The club has strategically prioritised inclusivity. By investing in women's and youth cricket, embracing diversity and disability access, and introducing walking cricket, it has broadened its membership and enhanced its overall offer.

Key governance updates have included appointing an 'EDI Champion' and involving a 'Youth Coordinator' in selection decisions, which has strengthened the club's structure. These improvements have also led to a committee that more accurately reflects the diversity of its membership.

Operationally, regular communications, active social media, and a focus on developing volunteer skills have helped foster deeper engagement and shared responsibility. These initiatives have resulted in better feedback across the club and helped position it for long-term success, with young players forming the heart of its future.

Their advice to other clubs: Yours is not the only opinion - everybody has one, if you take the trouble to ask.



FOCUS AREA 1

CLUB AFFILIATION

CLUBS WANT ASSURANCE THAT THEY ARE SET UP FOR SUCCESS

- **A foundation for growth:** Being a safe, well-run, and well-governed club sets the foundation for sustainability and growth, helping to attract members, retain volunteers, secure funding, and deliver positive experiences.
- **Confidence through governance:** Strong governance gives club leaders the confidence and clarity to make decisions and sustain progress. To support this, we are committed to ensuring all clubs meet key governance standards through clear policies, practices, and procedures.
- **A badge of trust:** Club Affiliation will become a badge of trust, demonstrating that clubs are safe, inclusive, and welcoming for everyone. Through this process, clubs meeting the required standards will achieve ECB Accredited Club status - a mark of quality that highlights their playing offer, activity, and contribution to the recreational cricket landscape.

ELEVATING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN AFFILIATED CLUB

Affiliation is not just a checkbox; it is a powerful demonstration that a club is being run in a safe, sustainable, and inclusive way. By affiliating to your RCB, and through them, the ECB, clubs make a real contribution toward cricket becoming the most inclusive team sport.

By affiliating, clubs will be able to:

Embed standards that set the tone for a thriving club experience

Meeting good governance and operating standards creates better experiences for everyone at your club - from players and parents to volunteers and visitors.

Access guidance to grow

This opens doors - from direct support by your local RCB to funding, safeguarding, and competition pathways - with tailored resources to help clubs build and sustain their playing offer to meet local needs.

Receive recognition

Clubs can proudly showcase their commitment to good governance, promoting themselves as an ECB Accredited Club - a recognised mark of core operational capability.

Recreational cricket comes with its challenges, but at the core of every great club is a commitment to being safe, well-managed, and inclusive. For me, playing for a club is about more than just the game - it's about being in an environment where everyone feels protected, valued, and supported.

Arun Joshi, Player, Lancashire

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OUR ACTIONS:

ELEVATING STANDARDS AND INCLUSION

We will promote consistent, inclusive environments by supporting all affiliated clubs to adopt the ECB Safe Hands Policy and Anti-discrimination Regulations, and by championing inclusive practices that underpin the sustainable development of their playing offers as a key marker of excellence.

DELIVERING CLEAR GUIDANCE WITH MINIMAL BURDEN

We will provide a practical affiliation toolkit to help clubs meet required terms and minimum standards - making the process accessible and manageable for volunteers.

EMPOWERING CLUBS THROUGH LEARNING

We will introduce practical guidance and recorded content shaped around real-world club governance issues, designed to build knowledge, confidence, and operational capacity among volunteers and committees.



Embedding the ECB Terms and Conditions into our club affiliation process in Buckinghamshire has enabled us to reach clubs we had previously had little engagement with. As a result, we were able to assist clubs in improving their governance structures and club development planning. This has helped clubs understand what it takes to create a safe and welcoming culture, empowering committees to manage any problems that arise quickly and effectively.

Emma Boswell-Harris, Head of Participation, Bucks Cricket CIO

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FOCUS AREA 2 CLUB DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

CLUBS WANT TO BE SUPPORTED TO DELIVER THEIR AMBITIONS

- **A strong sense of purpose:** Thriving clubs have a strong sense of purpose, bringing members together around a shared vision to ensure resilience, adaptability, and long-term success.
- **Empowered leadership and planning:** We believe that by creating clear, purposeful plans led by empowered leadership, clubs are enabled to thrive. Strong planning builds inclusive, engaging environments where players, volunteers, and members are valued and motivated to contribute to the club's ongoing success.
- **Access to support:** Clubs have told us they want better access to advice, guidance, and examples of good practice, so we are encouraging all clubs to engage with the Club Development Pathway - our platform that will provide tailored tools and learning.
- **Targeted support through insight:** Understanding each club's priorities helps build a clearer picture of the national landscape, enabling the ECB and RCBs to offer targeted support and timely interventions. It also creates opportunities for clubs with shared goals to collaborate, learn from one another, and support each other throughout their development journeys.

SIMPLIFYING CLUB DEVELOPMENT

We understand that club development can often feel complex. That is why we are introducing the Club Development Pathway to make access to support, guidance, and resources clearer and more streamlined. Instead of spending time navigating complexity, clubs can focus on making progress.

The Club Development Pathway will encourage:

Holistic club growth. This approach focuses on building sustainable playing opportunities.

By viewing the playing offer, people, places, and practices as one interconnected whole, the pathway enables clubs not just to grow but to strengthen from within - becoming more vibrant, resilient, and future-ready.

Insight-driven support

Use the Club Development Pathway to identify key opportunities, tackle challenges, and guide club progress. Backed by real insight and national data, it will provide clear steps, practical solutions, and tailored tools to help you plan and deliver with confidence.

Alignment to game-wide priorities

Centralised support that links together national and local priorities to help clubs expand inclusive playing opportunities and take focused, sustainable action. It unites programmes, guidance, and resources into one clear roadmap.

OUR ACTIONS:

BUILDING LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE CLUBS

We will deliver a training and education programme, reaching 1,000 recreational club leaders by 2028, to equip them with the skills, confidence, and tools to grow their clubs. This will include how to build and sustain junior and girls' cricket offers that reflect community needs and drive long-term engagement.

STRENGTHENING SUPPORT THROUGH SKILLED RCB STAFF

Continue investing in the professional growth of RCB staff – ensuring every club has access to expert, tailored, and proactive support to build resilience and plan for long-term success. This recognises the crucial importance of partnerships and local knowledge, which enable RCBs to work effectively with clubs.

PRIORITISING CLUB HEALTH THROUGH INSIGHT

We will make the digital experience smoother for clubs and volunteers by reducing admin and simplifying planning, while improving how key information is shared, stored, and accessed – to help clubs identify priorities and plan with confidence.

We have worked hard with our club network, encouraging them to develop long-term visions that enable our team of dedicated Club Support Officers to provide tailored support to turn these visions into reality. Our 'clubs first' approach to club development, which sees club support prioritised over other project work, has transformed the support offered. This has enabled significant club development outcomes within Surrey in recent years, and we are excited to see this develop further.

*Simon Hards, Assistant
Director of Cricket Participation,
Surrey Cricket Foundation*

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By providing more opportunities to play, we have a much more diverse playing membership in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity. The club has become more diverse and inclusive. We have more young families and players of families who haven't a history of cricket in their family. We have more coaches, activators and volunteers helping to run the club. The membership is more representative of the local communities that surround the club.

Howard Moxon, Chair, Flitwick CC (Bedfordshire)

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FOCUS AREA 3

CLUB RECOGNITION PROGRAMME

CLUBS WANT TO BE CONFIDENT IN PROVIDING MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

- **Inclusive, community-driven spaces:** Thriving clubs are inclusive and community-driven places where everyone feels welcome and has the chance to take part, regardless of age, background, or experience. They create opportunities not just to play, but to connect, contribute, and belong.
- **Recognition for real impact:** Clubs have told us they want to be recognised not just for meeting set criteria but for the real difference they make - on and off the field. That recognition should reflect their progress, their values, and their community impact.
- **A fresh approach to recognition:** That is why we are introducing the Club Recognition Programme: a fresh, inclusive approach that celebrates what clubs are doing well, helps them promote their achievements, and opens up conversations about future opportunities.
- **Driving meaningful dialogue:** It will be designed to spark meaningful dialogue between clubs and RCBs, helping to identify where support can make the biggest difference - especially in areas like junior cricket, which remains central to growing the game.

RECOGNISING THE CONTRIBUTION CLUBS MAKE

The Club Recognition Programme will empower clubs to celebrate their journey - including the development of sustainable junior offers - by highlighting the commitment, progress, and achievements of everyone who contributes to a thriving, inclusive club culture. By capturing and showcasing development across the four key pillars, it will build a powerful sense of pride and inspire continued involvement.

The Club Recognition Programme will provide:

Inclusion and Accessibility

Designed with inclusive criteria, the programme welcomes clubs of all sizes and backgrounds. It specifically recognises those expanding access through junior cricket, ensuring every club can engage meaningfully and be celebrated for its commitment to inclusive growth.

Three-Staged Recognition

Using a structured model - Developing, Advancing, Thriving - clubs are celebrated at the level that reflects their capacity and capability within each pillar.

Community Connection

Recognition helps clubs promote their unique offer and attract deeper engagement with their local community.

OUR ACTIONS:

CREATING SUSTAINABLE GIRLS' OPPORTUNITIES

We will develop a Girls' Club Cricket Accelerator programme to directly support recreational clubs in creating sustainable, inclusive, and thriving girls' cricket sections through structured development support.

SECURING LASTING CRICKET JOURNEYS

We will drive sustained junior participation by researching transition pathways from activation to ongoing participation, equipping clubs with practical guidance, embedding school-club links, and tracking success to celebrate progress and inspire wider adoption.

BUILDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We will enhance expertise within clubs in relation to community outreach, digital engagement, and partnership building. This will empower clubs to effectively connect with schools, community groups, and businesses.

Offering a wider range of playing opportunities helps make cricket a sport that truly belongs to everyone, regardless of gender, age, or background. When clubs welcome women and girls, they challenge outdated perceptions and open the door to the game's future.

The impact is powerful - broadening what clubs offer brings families together, connects generations, and builds clubs that genuinely reflect the communities they serve. It strengthens volunteer networks, expands skills, deepens community engagement, and fosters a culture where everyone feels they can contribute.

The clubs leading this change are trailblazers. The time, resources, and energy they invest are building something that truly matters. By celebrating their achievements and sharing their stories, we inspire others and send a clear message: cricket is for everyone.

*Grace Pearson, Head of
Women and Girls, Yorkshire
Cricket Foundation*

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Meaningful Acknowledgement Beyond Performance - recognition is not about league positions; it's about impact. Whether a club takes small steps or major leaps, the emphasis is on real progress: strengthening foundations, enriching culture, and fostering belonging. This should be delivered through regular contact with volunteers in their environment, acknowledging their valued contribution.

Steve Reese, Lead Officer, Shropshire Cricket

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cricket clubs are the foundation of the recreational game - where competitive ambition, community connection, and a shared passion for cricket come together. For many, their cricket journey begins at a local club, shaping a lifelong relationship with the sport. As part of the ECB's ambition to be the most inclusive team sport, we are committed to ensuring every club has the clarity, confidence, and support to thrive.

This strategy is our response to the core challenges clubs have raised - not by reshuffling existing activity but by providing deeper, more relevant support to address underlying barriers. It prioritises long-term change over short-term fixes, ensuring clubs are better equipped, more confident, and consistently supported in ways that make everyday operations stronger, not just different. Our goal is not to add more layers but to create better pathways and clearer expectations that genuinely enable clubs to thrive.

Our focus is on creating the conditions for every club to thrive. We want clubs to feel assured they are set up for success - supported through [Club Affiliation](#). We want them to be empowered to deliver their ambitions - enabled through the [Club Development Pathway](#). And we want them to feel confident in providing more opportunities for people to play and belong - celebrated through the [Club Recognition Programme](#). Together, these three aligned routes form a shared journey of growth, support, and celebration - helping every club realise its potential.



This strategy lays out an inclusive, practical approach shaped by the everyday realities of clubs of all sizes. With clubs at its heart, it ensures every club, whatever its starting point, has the tools and support to thrive and lead the recreational game forward. Together, we can build a sustainable, welcoming sport that truly reflects the communities it serves.

Every club holds the power to shape cricket's future.



INSPIRING
GENERATIONS