



Bringing People Together through Bowls – Evesham BC

Theme: Individual wellbeing / Community Development

“As a result of our involvement with the Club Development Programme, 2019 has become the most successful year for our club, across all of its sections. We had a net increase of 11 more members, and communication within the club is now much improved.”

Nigel Gould, chairman of Evesham Bowling Club

A club in a gradual decline

Evesham Bowling Club, in existence since 1907, has enjoyed many exciting years of bowling. Like most clubs, Evesham BC have not been recruiting enough members to replace those lost through relocation, illness, and work commitments. Despite being fortunate to have a proactive committee, the club realised that it takes more than an enthusiastic but piecemeal approach to turn things around. That is why, with a vision to grow and reach a much wider audience within the community, the club committee applied to join the Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) Club Development Programme.

A new beginning

The club became part of the programme in July 2018. After an initial meeting, a development plan co-created by the club and a BDA officer was put into place. The plan had two dozen objectives, with measurable and agreed time scales for implementation. The committee was fully on board from the outset. During their monthly meetings an update on progress was made against each item on the plan.

By the end of the year, the club improved the way they organise and advertise their open days, which brought them 13 new members in one summer. In addition, through the incredible fundraising work of the club secretary Jean Eldridge, the club raised just under £100,000 towards their new clubhouse. But above all, the biggest difference observed at the club was the much improved communication between the members. The different sections of the club now turn up to support each other at every game, even if it is pouring with rain. Consequently, the club registered its most successful year, results-wise.



Learning & Successes

- Evesham BC's declining membership and urgent facility improvement needs were posing a risk to its future. In order to succeed, the club had to mobilise their membership to support the committee in their work. With the help of the BDA, the club managed to recruit 23 newly trained club helpers to support their newly-qualified coach.
- The club also had to create a robust activity programme to allow every new and existing member an activity that suited their needs and ability.
- Perhaps the most unexpected positive outcome was how the magnitude of the task at hand and the enthusiasm created by the committee brought the small club's membership together. Members who have hardly used the internet before are now chatting on the club's new WhatsApp groups. Whilst before, a rainy match could only attract one or two spectators, now a dozen club members often come down to support their friends play.
- The club's success story provides another example of why clubs require a holistic approach to recruit, integrate and sustain new members.



The Club Development Programme

Created in 2017 as part of Bowls Development Alliance (BDA)'s four-year Sport England-funded Delivery Plan, the Club Development Programme offers bowls clubs across the country a unique support programme to develop and better sustain their membership numbers.

Every club involved in the programme receives direct support from the BDA to create a Club Development Plan that will help the club to not only provide the best experience for its present members but support new recruitment initiatives to increase their current membership.

There are now over 100 clubs that have been part of the programme since April 2017. It has so far contributed to the recruitment and integration of over 1000 new bowlers, 100 new coaches, 100 new volunteers and 650 new club helpers.



“We will continue to put in place improvements resulting from the development plan with the aim to continue to grow our membership.”

***Nigel Gould, chairman,
Evesham Bowling Club.***

Further information

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