

# CLUB DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME GUIDANCE NOTES



## THE 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 England and English Indoor Bowling Association affiliated clubs across the country a unique support programme to develop and better sustain their current membership numbers and recruit new members into the sport.

Every club that signs up to the programme will receive direct support from the BDA to create a Club Development Plan that will help the club not only to provide the best experience for its present members but support new recruitment initiatives to increase their current membership. Each club involved is allocated one of our club development officers who will be supporting the club committee throughout their engagement in the programme. The support offered is bespoke and will vary depending on the club's needs and present circumstances, but overall it includes:

- diagnosing the main challenges, the club is facing and how to go about overcoming them; identifying opportunities the club can tap into.
- sharing case studies and examples of best practice from clubs around the country.
- offering clubs a variety of templates, forms and other materials they can use either instantly or after bespoke modifications.
- linking clubs with influential local groups and organisations that they can benefit from.
- funding worth of up to £500 from the BDA to support the club with their developments.

## THE PROCESS

Our engagement with each club is unique, and depending on the needs, challenges and circumstances we offer a bespoke support package of direct advice and consultation, courses, workshops, templates, guides, examples of best practice and more.

Having said that, the core of our engagement with each club involves the following:



**Meeting 1** – during the first meeting the BDA officer outlines the Club Development Programme to the club committee and learns as much as possible about each club and its challenges.

**Meeting 2** – using the information gathered in meeting 1 and by undertaking additional research, the BDA officer presents a draft development plan to the club committee. The draft plan is discussed and agreed during meeting 2. The club will then receive its first cheque of £250 shortly after.

**Meeting 3** – this meeting is specifically dedicated to the preparation for the club open day, including how to advertise the open day, the organisation of the day and how to follow up after the event. All of this is done to maximise the number of people visiting the open day, which will boost the clubs chances of converting visitors into new members.

**Meeting 4** – the club development plan is signed off, ideas for the further development of the club are discussed and a second cheque of £250 is received.

## THE CRITERIA AND HOW TO APPLY

To be eligible to apply, clubs need to meet the following criteria:

- Clubs must be affiliated to either Bowls England or the English Indoor Bowling Association.
- Clubs must have seen a net membership decline of 3% or more over the past 2 years.
- Clubs must be willing to be proactive and take on tasks set out in a Development Plan.
- Clubs must have a demonstrable capacity for membership growth.

We encourage and welcome every club that meets the above criteria to apply to become part of the programme. The size and level of the club does not matter. We have worked successfully with a diverse range of clubs: indoor and outdoor, small and large, elite and social/recreational.

To apply, clubs need to fill in a simple online application form, which is also accessible as a word document on our website. To apply, register your interest or to ask for more information, email [clubdevelopment@playbowls.org](mailto:clubdevelopment@playbowls.org).

The application window remains open until further notice. As we are expecting a high number of applications, we encourage clubs to apply as soon as possible to ensure a timely start. For those clubs that do not meet the criteria, please be aware that the Play Bowls Package is available to all affiliated clubs via the twice-yearly application windows. Please visit our website for more information [www.playbowls.org](http://www.playbowls.org)

### **DOES THE PROGRAMME INVOLVE A LOT OF EXTRA WORK FOR THE COMMITTEE?**

One of the reasons the programme is bespoke is so that clubs can work on a development plan that is realistic and achievable. That is why development plans can look very different. Moreover, the club committee has a chance to discuss the proposed development plan and offer amendments, before it is agreed by both parties. The club committee will also have a chance to reconsider their involvement with the club development programme if they cannot agree on the original development plan or any suggested amendments.

### **DOES THE CLUB DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

The success of a club's recruitment drive depends on a lot of factors – some within, some beyond the club's control. That is why taking part in the Club Development Programme does not just by itself guarantee success. However, what we have seen so far is that the more proactively the club committee engages with and works on their development plan, the more the club gets out of the programme.

As an indicator, so far, the clubs that have completed the programme successfully have **managed to recruit on average 20 new members per year** – which is significantly more than these clubs achieved in previous years. To get a better understanding of the impact of the programme, you can see case studies showcasing the individual success stories of a number of Club Development Programme clubs: <http://playbowls.org/clubs/club-development-programme>

### **WHAT ARE THE CLUBS SAYING?**

A quote from the very proactive Oundle Bowling Club before they recruited 18 new members:

*"From the outset the Committee were impressed with the BDA officer's in-depth knowledge of the functioning of bowls clubs and his ability to engender enthusiasm. The Committee feels sure that with the help of BDA and the Development Programme the club will secure its long-term future", David Walker – Oundle Bowling Club Chairman and Membership Development Officer.*

Banbury Chestnuts BC is one of the oldest clubs in the country but were down to 23 playing members at the beginning of the year. This summer, with the help of the BDA they recruited 9 new members and stabilised their short-term future.

*"The Chestnuts are very pleased with the support from the BDA. The BDA have given structure and process to our drive to find new members (including pamphlet design, action planning and general stewardship)", Martyn Cooper, Banbury Chestnuts Bowls Club.*

*"We thank BDA for all their help and advice particularly over the Open Day which brought in 9 new members and advice over advertising and raising funds", Mick Barter – Club Secretary, Banbury Chestnuts BC.*

Oasis Indoor Bowls Club managed to recruit 43 new members this year, after working with the BDA.

*"We thank the BDA for all their support over the past year. Working with you has been wonderful and very educational for our club. We made a big leap in our development as a club this year and a lot of it is due to the BDA's positive influence", Richard Bridges, Club Chairman, Oasis Indoor Bowls Club.*

Studley Entaco Bowls Club, previously struggling to maintain their membership, have finished the last season with 6 more members than how they started it.

*"We needed a fresh approach for our efforts to recruit new members. Our past efforts have resulted in no new members... Anna Coulson [from the BDA] is very knowledgeable and positive thinking in her approach. Despite the many comments from our members of 'we have tried that before' Anna prompted us to rethink our ideas and offered a different view of how we might approach a problem," Mike Bell, Club Secretary, Studley Entaco Bowls Club.*

John Henwood, secretary of the Oxfordshire Bowls League and Oxfordshire's county coach co-ordinator, said: *"The Club Development Programme had a slow start in Oxfordshire, like most things in life people don't like change, but with the help and support of a Club Development Officer and some positive attitude from the committees of the clubs involved the effort has been well worth it. What I have noticed is that not only have the clubs all gained new members but the total ethos of the club has changed and every member has gradually taken some part of ownership of their club's Development Plan, which can only augur well for the future."*

Tony Allcock MBE, Bowls England Chief Executive, said: *"We are delighted that our clubs will benefit from this initiative. I am sure those clubs who do sign up to the programme will benefit from the specialist advice and support that will be available. We would encourage any clubs who are invited in future to take up this opportunity."*

Peter Thompson, EIBA Ltd Chief Executive, added: *"The English Indoor Bowling Association Ltd is pleased that there is funding and support available to our Clubs who are wanting to maintain and ultimately increase their membership. The opportunity to utilise the services and experience of dedicated development staff is a huge boost for the growth of the sport."*