

# WOMEN CAN BOWL

## CLUB INFORMATION PACK



## INTRODUCTION

There are many different factors that affect whether or not a woman decides to participate in bowls. In this resource, we explore the common reasons for participation as well as some of the barriers and what can be done to address them. When looking at designing your offer for women, it is important that as a club you take into account these factors.

## WHY DO WOMEN PARTICIPATE IN BOWLS?

Following consultation in four areas of the country, the most popular reasons for women wanting to participate in bowls are **FUN, FRIENDSHIP** and **FITNESS** as well as providing a challenge and a sense of achievement.

It is therefore important that when clubs are promoting bowls opportunities to women that the three words: **FUN, FRIENDSHIP** and **FITNESS** as well as appropriate imagery to support these words, are used to try to entice women into the sport.

Other reasons women identified were:



In addition, women also identified benefits of belonging to a club:

- As a woman, you can go there on your own and feel comfortable
- Extended network if you lose a partner
- Something you can do together as a couple if you want to
- Meet people you wouldn't usually meet – difficult to make friends and meet new people if you no longer work
- Opportunity to develop skills by being on committee or volunteering at the club

## HOW TO ADDRESS THE REASONS WHY SOME WOMEN DON'T PARTICIPATE IN BOWLS



### IMAGE OF THE SPORT AND STRICT DRESS CODE

To address the image that bowls is for older, retired people and is male dominated, it is important that clubs are continually adding to their bank of photos and images and then sharing on social media and their website (ensuring compliance with GDPR). With the introduction of colours into the sport, clubs have the opportunity through using appropriate imagery to present the sport as colourful and engaging.

Clubs can also assist in changing the image by relaxing the dress code as well as some of the more formal protocols around the sport. We are looking for bowls clubs to be welcoming places where people want to spend time away from work or home, safe places to relax, un-wind and socialise in.

More can also be done around increasing the aspirational nature of the sport through promoting playing at the highest level and sharing personal journeys of women who have had success to inspire and motivate others.

### COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE AND LACK OF INFORMATION

(Perceived lack of the “right” skills to participate, fear of embarrassing self and lack of confidence). The consultation revealed that some women haven’t participated in bowls because they are concerned about making themselves look silly and believe that everyone else will be better than them.



As a club you can address this by:

- Encouraging non-members to go along to social activities held at the club so that they can learn more about the club and remove some of their concerns, e.g. coffee mornings, club nights, bingo, music evenings, race nights.
- Making it clear that beginners are welcome and promoting beginner only opportunities
- Running Open Days and events to attract new members BUT making sure they are effective and people are trained and know their roles.
- When new members are recruited, the club has a plan on what to do next. Alongside a coaching programme, consider how the club will effectively integrate new members with strategies such as adopt a member, social events and new members leagues.
- Your club website is the shop window for your club. Does it convey how you would want your club to be perceived? It is important that the imagery is reflective of the wider community as well as having clear information on the club offer for beginners and how to join along with information on where the club is located, including their full address and any costs that may be involved.



### LACK OF TIME AND MOTIVATION/DON'T WANT TO COMMIT

Women cited lack of time as a big issue due to work commitments or child care and if retired, due to playing a more active role in the looking after grandchildren. Clubs should therefore consider running flexible opportunities which don't require commitment and run at a variety of times.

For those who do want to play more competitively, having a rota system so they don't have to play every week would be needed. On school holidays, having the opportunity to bring children/ grandchildren with them and the chance to play together or separately is also something for clubs to consider.

## HOW TO ADDRESS THE REASONS WHY SOME WOMEN DON'T PARTICIPATE IN BOWLS

### RELUCTANCE TO GO SOMEWHERE NEW ON OWN AND NOT KNOWING ANYONE

It can be very daunting to enter a bowls club on your own. Friends play a critical role in supporting female participation in sport. Friendship emerged as one of the most important reasons why women play bowls, to be with friends and to make new friends.



Therefore Clubs are encouraged to run and promote “Bring a Friend Day” where existing members are asked to bring non bowling friends to the club. The days would be mainly social based but with an opportunity to try bowls.



### COST

Cost can be a barrier for some women and a reluctance to join when they don't want to commit or that they aren't really sure if bowls is for them.

It is therefore important that clubs have a range of payment options giving the most flexibility. Ideas for clubs to consider include:

- Two free introductory sessions
- Pay and play with a price per session
- Introductory membership e.g. for three months
- Offer discounts for friends/family who join
- Offer current members a discount if they introduce a new member to the club
- Seasonal Social membership
- Seasonal Full playing membership

And

- Having a range of bowls which new bowlers can borrow
- Relax footwear rules or provide shoes that new bowlers can use
- Promote discounted equipment



### PROVIDING NEW FORMATS

Women are not all the same. Some are looking for competition, some to experience the traditional format of bowls, others want no competition and a more social, less formal experience. For bowls clubs to attract new female members club's should consider expanding the breadth of the offer they provide for women.

For clubs to attract more women, it is imperative that they have a comprehensive and varied offer for women of all motivations and abilities. Due to the competition heaviness of bowls, a varied and more flexible offer means introducing more casual, social formats that require limited or no commitment so that women can go one week but not the next. In terms of session length, Clubs should consider offering short and fun sessions for up to 1 hour, building up to existing more formal competitions which are up to 3 hours.

## CLUB OFFER:

ACTIVITY	FOCUS	COMMITMENT	PAYMENT	DURATION	UNIFORM
<b>NON BOWLS</b>					
Use of bar and facilities	Social	Low	Social membership	Any	Casual clothes
Attend social events such as BBQs, Race Nights etc	Social	Low	Social Membership	Any	Casual clothes
<b>SOCIAL</b>					
Turn up and access mats and jacks and play as you wish	Fun and friendship	Low	Pay and Play	Up to 1 hour	Casual clothes
Designated drop in & play sessions e.g. Tuesday 6pm-9pm – Womens Club Night Specific Women Only event eg Cocktail and Bowl see example case study for more info	Fun and friendship	Low	Play and Play	Up to 1 hour	Casual clothes
<b>RECREATIONAL</b>					
Bowls Drives Usually short, sharp games where individuals move on to play with different people in a different position every 6 ends	Relaxed games - own score kept	Mid	Playing member	Up to 2 hours	Bowling kit
Intra Club Leagues ** Sets play format ** Number of ends format ** Pairs/triples format ** Mixed or single gender	Relaxed Competition Team v Team	Mid	Playing member	Up to 2 hours	Bowling kit
<b>COMPETITION</b>					
Inter Club Leagues- club playing other clubs Club competitions	Partially serious Competition	High	Full member	Up to 2.5 hours	Club kit
County Competitions National Competitions	Serious Competition	High	Full member	Up to 3 hours	Club kit

Following consultation with a group of 16 women, we have piloted and tested a format which focus on the 'highlighted row above' as this is the part of the offer which most clubs don't tend to offer.

Consultation suggests strongly that women want **FLEXIBILITY** and **VARIETY**.

**FLEXIBILITY** means clubs should consider making it clear in any communication that women do not have to commit week on week and can come along with a friend(s) or on their own. A drop in session means that women aren't concerned about being late or walking in when everyone else has started.

**VARIETY** within sessions means providing a mixture of activities as well as game based opportunities. Some example activities can be found in this booklet. In short activities can be distance control based, aiming based or a combination of both. The most important thing is that they are **FUN** and **ENGAGING** and can be **DIFFERENTIATED**.

You can introduce competition to activities individually or team v team or by one group working together to improve their score each time.

Game based activities can take many forms – pairs, triples or fours and the number of bowls used per person can also be adapted. Two bowl pairs is often a good introduction as it is focused around drawing, involves walking to improve physical activity levels and is a quicker format where the outcome is achieved quickly. Different things could be introduced to keep the game dynamic such as being able to switch positions, having an extra bowl per game or powerplay where the score of the end is doubled etc. Play could be sets play with a one end tiebreak. Number of ends in the set would be determined by the time available. Clubs are encouraged to try different formats and take feedback from the group as to which format they most enjoy.

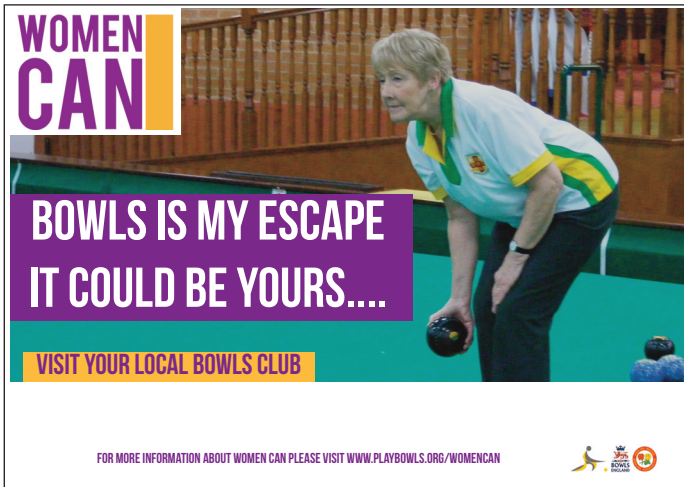
**MARKETING & COMMUNICATION**

How should the game market itself to women?

Primary messaging

- FUN
- FRIENDLY
- FITNESS

*Sample of A4 posters designed ready for you*



With sub messaging

- COME ON OWN OR WITH A FRIEND
- PLAY WITH FAMILY OR WITHOUT
- MEET NEW PEOPLE
- SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE
- GOOD WAY TO DESTRESS

All images should reflect the above and be bright, colourful and fun.



*Sample of gate banners available to purchase*

## WAYS TO CONTACT WOMEN

- **Word of mouth** - through friends or work - encourage existing members to bring friends or family members to the club
- **Social media** - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. Facebook in particular for local village groups and encourage existing bowlers to post about the sport and to get behind the Women Can campaign to reach their friendship group
- **Signage and banners** at the club so people can see where the club is and information on when they can drop in and play
- **Flyers/leaflet** drop to houses in the local area of the club, local shops, dentists, library
- **Contact your local Womens groups** and organise to visit and talk about the bowls offer
- **Schools** - encourage Family days
- **Visit other sports clubs** and promote open days
- **Promote club** in local shopping centre/supermarket on local activity boards, doctors surgeries, church hall and community centres
- **Ask local council/parish council** to promote the club in village/area newsletters and on what's on websites
- **Build a relationship with the local press** and send in information on social events as well as competitive success



# WOMEN CAN BOWL

For further information please contact:  
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