

## Guide to Starting a Junior Section

**‘With the growing popularity of bowls across the country, and the success of junior sections recently set up at Carterton & Charlbury Bowls Clubs within Oxfordshire, this is an ideal time for clubs to try something new. This guide is designed to help clubs within the County grow and diversify.**

Starting a junior section (7 years +) is an excellent way to re-energise clubs and can result in a significant increase in membership. (Both young people and their parents!)

This document outlines some key points which clubs wishing to attract younger members may find useful. Most important is a determined approach. The more youngsters recruited, the more likely they will remain if they have peers to compete and have fun with. Capturing the imagination of the parents and demonstrating the opportunities that bowls offers is key to this. How many sports can children play on an equal footing with their parents and grandparents? How many sports give a realistic opportunity to play for county / country?

### Prior Preparation

#### What are the key requirements for starting a junior section?

##### 1) **Enthusiastic Volunteers.**

A team of committed volunteers to act as coaches /mentors.

In an ideal world Level 1 coaches (as at Charlbury) but a cohort of experienced players can work just as well. (as at Carterton).

**It is essential** that all volunteers are DBS checked and have safeguarding training (provided by Bowls England). First Aid training also useful. The more volunteers the better.

##### 1) **Allocation of fixed times.**

It is important that the whole club embraces the inclusion of young people, aided by allocation of fixed times that do not clash with popular adult bowling times for junior development. (The after-school slot and Saturday mornings are good slots)

##### 2) **Publicity** to attract young people. The more publicity the better.

- Target local schools / sports leaders. Offer an after-school club taster.
- Village newsletters.
- Invite local groups for taster sessions – Brownies, Cubs, Young Farmers, Sports Clubs.
- Hire facilities to local organisations for events and invite guests to have a try.
- Stands at local events. Have bowls/ equipment/ videos on show.
- Big Bowls Bash/ Open Days geared to Families and children.

The successful recruitment of youngsters at Charlbury and Carterton has been aided by widespread advertising and engagement with local schools, sports groups and clubs. For example: Brownies and Cubs have attended taster events.

Carterton attend the annual May day celebrations in the town to promote bowls and showcase it to the wider community.

##### 3) **Engage with Families**

Welcome the wider family.

Encourage parents to participate with children in family days.

Keep parents/ carers informed on progress/ successes.

#### **4) Equipment**

Have a stock of bowls for small hands (beg, bought or borrowed) Junior bowls and 00 and 0 bowls.

Cones, Discs, Goal Posts, Targets – Improvise with whatever equipment you have to devise a variety of activities.

Grant applications at Charlbury have aided the purchase of junior/ small bowls, shirts, equipment and help with travel expenses. Carterton have used local sponsorship to facilitate their junior section.

#### **5) Keep it Simple**

Just turn up with a pair of flat soled shoes, everything else provided.

Ensure all aware of basic health & safety and green care.

#### **6) Low Cost**

Keep membership costs low, free introductory sessions, family memberships.

Charlbury offer a junior membership of £5 for first year increasing to £15 per year thereafter.

#### **7) Make it Fun**

- It is important to keep bowls vibrant and fun. Skills can be taught using games, targets, hoops, cones, goals.
- Keep things fresh, introducing a variety of exercises to suit short attention spans
- Both team and individual competitions
- Start on half-green and practice skills, gradually introducing traditional bowls.
- Lots of competitions with certificates.

Both Charlbury and Carterton Bowls clubs utilise a variety of exercises/ activities to sustain interest whilst building skills. These include both individual and team exercises to enhance bowls skills and team building.

For example: Charlbury play 'cricket'. One team bowl to knock down cones (Wickets), the batting team bowl over numbered discs (Runs).

#### **8) Competitive Bowling**

Youngsters thrive on competition and as well as internal singles, pairs, triples and rinks matches (sometimes not full length), introduce matches against other clubs.

Charlbury and Carterton play against each other home and away. This has been very successful.

Last year the advanced juniors played in adult matches and many people commented positively on their skills and behaviour.

#### **9) Image – Dress code.**

Try not to be too prescriptive –initially just flat shoes, and suitable clothing for ease of movement.

A junior dress code can be introduced as numbers have increased. (polo shirts with logo/ bowls shirts)

#### **10) Etiquette** – as well as fun we want the youngsters to develop good etiquette and sportsmanship. An emphasis on encouraging each other, shaking hands, praising good shots. Coaches/ volunteers demonstrate, promote and reward good sportsmanship and engagement.

**11) Incentives and rewards**

Certificates each session – For example Spider, Best Bowl of the Day, Achievement Certificate (for most engaged, supportive and encouraging bowler).

Competent juniors being introduced into friendly matches and league teams.

Matches against other clubs.

Club competitions.

PRAISE and ENCOURAGEMENT.

**12) County Matches**

Provide opportunities for Coaches to be invited to coach more advanced juniors.

Competent juniors to be introduced into county training events and competitions.

Some youngsters attended county training last year and were selected for games.

This year the OBA Under 25's team want all youngsters to be involved (when competently bowling) and they WILL be accommodated for (not waiting to be called up!), promoting a greater level of involvement and putting an end to an unwanted level of elitism.

**13) External Image**

Publicise successes. Where juniors achieve, send letters to the schools head teachers to read out in assembly promoting a positive image and pride in bowling.

Closed Club Facebook / websites used to promote junior achievements within the club.

\*Ensure signed permission forms obtained before sharing any child's information/ photos.

**14) Retention**

Recruitment of significant numbers and progression and success all aid retention.

Involvement of families in both bowling and social events are essential.

**15) Widening Participation**

Other clubs are already beginning to look at attracting youngsters, Burford have invited local schools to a few sessions across the summer.

We hope you find this guide useful, feel free to use as little or as much as you need. Oxfordshire has always taken great pride in its junior bowlers, and their development to the senior levels, and this is something we want to continue. We have an opportunity to grow and achieve much more if we work together.

A huge thank you to Cynthia Briant & David Pearce-Jones, for putting this guide together.

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