

Worcester Cricket Board strategies to provide kids with fun cricketing experiences

Over the last few years, cricket has been changing across all platforms from the international game all the way through to recreational cricket. However, we are still seeing barriers to participation in this great game due to a variety of factors such as; equipment, confidence and expertise. However, we at Worcestershire Cricket want to break these barriers and make cricket as accessible as physically possible to the county.

In 2019, cricket will take over the world and its focus will be funnelled towards England and Wales as we host the Cricket World Cup in June and July! This is potentially a once in a lifetime experience for a lot of people in the country and we want this tournament to start a passion for cricket once again! There are opportunities for everyone to catch the cricket bug this summer and this is most prevalent in schools.

The Chance to Shine Foundation provides cricket boards with a great incentive to begin working with schools in their county. The Foundation looks to provide funding for cricket sessions in state schools where the provision of cricket is low. The funding allows cricket board coaches to deliver 12 to 14 hrs of coaching in every school they visit over half term periods. This includes cricket coaching and play sessions, teacher development, learn sessions (classroom sessions based on curriculum lessons with cricket analogies used) and many opportunities for teachers to gain some valuable experience and CPD around the delivery of cricket. Every teacher that we interact with gains access to a Chance to Shine online portal where coaching plans and sessions are readily available and are designed alongside the national curriculum and Ofsted platforms. This is a great way to start your journey into cricket.

To continue from this, Worcestershire Cricket offer a range of coaching packages that cater for a schools individual needs. These packages range from bespoke packages such as after school club sessions and lunchtime clubs through to platinum packages that can confirm two hours of cricket every week for your school throughout the whole of the year! We look to develop a retention of cricket in the schools we work in and we want to create a lasting legacy of cricket in Worcestershire so this is an ideal tool to start you along the path to sustainable cricket.

Our summer cricket competitions run during the summer months for all age groups which allows the children's hard work and practice to be tested against the best from the other schools in the county. Students from year 4, 5 and 6 can take part in softball competitions with the prospect of reaching a finals day at the school games or on the outfield at BlackFinch New Road. There are also opportunities for our older children to play hardball cricket in the WSCA county schools fixtures played throughout the summer. Furthermore, we are in the process of trialling a new softball secondary school programme that will look to breach the gap between primary and secondary school cricket that will be fast, fun and frantic!

As the female game is growing everyday, we are happy to announce our continued support to the girls of the county with our successful Lady Taverners indoor competitions, our competitive year 6 girls softball competitions and our newly formed girls hub clubs that sees 13 clubs devote valuable time to developing the girls game in the county.

We also offer cricketing opportunities to less able and disadvantaged children too. As part of our Lord Taverners funded project to get more special schools playing cricket by involving them in Table Cricket coaching sessions which involves a term of free table cricket coaching and a chance to take part in the county table cricket tournaments with the winners having the chance to represent the county at regional competitions.

During the half term periods, we continue to offer a number of opportunities for kids to enjoy cricket. Our cricket Camps are designed to be fun, inclusive and developmental whilst providing amazing "money can't buy" experiences such as meeting county cricketers and the chance to step into the shoes of a county cricketer and see how players live off the field in the changing rooms and fitness suites. They run from 8.30-3.30 every day during half term periods at exciting venues such as BlackFinch New Road. We run a range of camps from softball for kids that are either beginning the sport and are more comfortable playing softball games through to hard ball camps for our more experienced cricketers. We also offer girls only camps to help provide a comfortable platform for our up and coming stars to show off their skills!

Finally, we run a range of community run programmes that look to engage kids who find it tricky to access the world of cricket clubs and expensive gear! Wicketz is a free community cricket programme initially targeting young people aged 8-16, living in deprived communities. By establishing sustainable

community cricket hubs, we provide year-round weekly cricket sessions with a focus on developing crucial life skills, creating stronger communities and enabling brighter futures for those taking part. Through cricket, Wicketz aims to tackle local issues affecting young people. Alongside cricket coaching and games, the young people taking part have the chance to learn from community leaders, local authorities and others. Specially designed workshops also boost wellbeing, social education, community awareness and develop new sporting and life skills. We also run street cricket sessions in Dudley and Redditch that looks to create communities through the identity of cricket. Street cricket is focused around a fast, frantic version of indoor cricket that sees teams battle their skills in 40-ball games!

Cricket is certainly not dead in the county and there are lots of opportunities to get your schools and your kids involved in this great game during 2019! We want to make cricket recognised in the eyes of the young kids of the county and this is the best time to do it! If you are interested in getting involved with some of our amazing cricket opportunities, please don't hesitate to contact me via Daniel.such@wccc.co.uk or 07741272581.

[Many people may not be aware that, many years ago (up to the 1950s?), Worcestershire County Cricket Club played one or two County fixtures annually in Dudley, quite close to the Town centre near the foot of Castle Hill. Whilst that ground is no longer playable there are a large number of clubs offering a good level of cricket locally. Worcestershire are anxious to attract young people into a game which used to be more popular in schools than it is today although the reason is far more to do with limitations of ground facilities than it is to do with enthusiasm for the game. The very references to indoor cricket and street cricket should enable us to identify ways forward – Ed]