Improving inclusivity and diversity in croquet
February 2021

Executive Summary

The Croquet Association is keen to promote the opportunities our sport can give to a wide range of people and to demonstrate to clubs that encouraging inclusivity and diversity in their membership can bring impetus and innovation and can invigorate their clubs and playing experiences.

Inclusivity is about making everyone feel valued and included. Diversity means recognising, valuing and embracing people's differences including their background, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, disability, skills and experiences.

It has been recognised that the CA knows very little about its members or other croquet players in clubs or elsewhere. Addressing this knowledge gap is an important first step in recognising how much, or how little, croquet players are representative of the population.

The purpose of this report is to look at different groups of people in our society, identify the main barriers discouraging or preventing them from taking up the sport and then suggesting possible solutions.

The working party was divided into sub-groups who each conducted their own research and consultation. The areas examined were Race and Religion; Disability and Long-term health conditions; Age and Gender; Background and Income. Age and Gender was split into Women and Girls, Young people, Working people, Older people and LGBT.

Many barriers have been identified but, as expected, there is a great deal of overlap so a barrier for one group could be a barrier to another or even all of the other underrepresented parts of the community. Specific recommendations are therefore given within this report for each of the key areas. These are then drawn together as a way forward for the CA, the Federations, our clubs and individual members.

<u>Summary of recommendations for the CA</u>

- Adopt and promote the Inclusivity and Diversity Policy.
- Improvements to the website to make it more outward looking and displaying inclusive images.
- Review marketing strategy and material so it is inclusive and diverse.
- Open dialogues with national associations, organisations, community leaders, Sport England.
- Policy review.
- Consider appointing National Disability Officer and National Ethnicity Officer.
- Up-skill coaches so they can adapt their coaching for each individual's needs and aspirations.
- Build up a library of experience and successes, probably via Gazette.
- Address the need for better, centralised data collection and instigate a survey to fill in gaps of knowledge.
- Prepare a guide for clubs to help them with the many aspects of becoming an inclusive club
- Consider an award for the club putting most effort into improving inclusivity and diversity.

Summary of recommendations for Federations

- Forge strong links with Active Partnerships.
- Hold discussions with regional or local branches of organisations representing specific or minority groups to see how croquet can be incorporated in their activities.
- Keep local grant and funding information up-to-date.
- Update websites and marketing material to be inclusive and diverse.
- Assist smaller clubs by promoting regional get-togethers.

Summary of recommendations for clubs

- Display inclusivity and diversity policy in a prominent place.
- Have welcome signs in different languages by the gate. Make everyone feel welcome who shows an interest.
- Make sure website and other communication channels show anyone can play and emphasise the sociable and competitive aspects of croquet as well as the benefits to physical and mental well- being.
- Get to know your own members and find out their interests, skills and contacts as well as their ideas for making the club more welcoming to themselves and others.
- Compare the demographics of the local area with the membership and identify the under-represented groups
- Make a plan that is achievable. Concentrate on one or two aspects rather than trying to do everything.
- Think about ways to introduce a more flexible pricing structure for subscriptions.
- Shout about your successes! Publish articles in Gazette and/or CA and Federation newsletters, as well as local websites, press, social media, radio and TV

Summary of recommendations for individuals

- A club is only as welcoming as all of its members.
- Helping with the things you enjoy makes a club run smoothly and creates a good atmosphere.
- Pass on contact details or offer to be a link with local community groups, schools, care homes, clubs.

It is expected that the recommendations in this report will be communicated to the croquet community by various means over an extended period. A webinar and Gazette articles will be the first step. It is hoped that a guide for clubs can be produced.

In conclusion, the CA and Federations should put the policies, support, publicity and marketing in place but it is the clubs and individuals who can make the biggest impact on inclusivity and diversity. Every club is different in terms of its facilities, its location, its membership and its local community and it is recognised that every club will not all be able to do everything. However, there are many ways that clubs can do something to broaden their appeal to underrepresented groups.

Not all barriers are difficult or require money to remove. Attitudes cost nothing to change and our sport is only as welcoming as all of its individual members.

Sport England's "Uniting the Movement" is about breaking down barriers and getting everyone active. Croquet has a golden opportunity to be part of this.

Acknowledgement

57 people have made a contribution, either directly or through one of the discussion groups, to this report. We would like to thank every one of them for their insight and input.

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Introduction

The Croquet Association is keen to promote the opportunities our sport can give to a wide range of people and to demonstrate to everyone involved with croquet, but particularly to clubs, that encouraging inclusivity and diversity in their membership can invigorate their activities and enrich their playing experiences.

The stereotypical image of a croquet player is that he or she is white, elderly and posh. Whilst this is certainly not true of all croquet players, there is an uncomfortable grain of truth in that. It has been demonstrated many times that the Victorian image of croquet persists in the minds of the media, politicians and the public, and this holds our sport back. Croquet, as a whole, would benefit from the impetus and stimulation of new ideas and fresh perspectives that a concerted effort to improve inclusivity and diversity would bring.

The background to this initiative was a growing sense within the CA community that we need to do more to make our sport be more inclusive:

- 'Black Lives Matter' and 'Show Racism the Red Card' have highlighted ethnicity issues. What are we doing to encourage more people of ethnic origin to take part in our sport?
- The Duke of Sussex has highlighted physical disability and the strength of sport to further inclusivity. What are we doing to encourage more people with physical disabilities to play croquet?
- There is a widely held view that sport can help people with mental health issues to enjoy a fuller life. What are we doing to support such an initiative?
- There is a public perception that croquet is a "toffs" sport. What are we doing, not only to dispel this preconception, but to actively encourage people from all walks of life to take up the sport?
- A number of sports activity centres encourage people with disadvantaged backgrounds as a means of integrating them into society. Can croquet help such people and what are we doing about it?

The effect of the covid-19 pandemic on sport and physical activity has brought a realisation from Government, the NHS and doctors, sports organisations, grass-roots clubs, communities and individuals that keeping people active is crucial for not just their physical well-being but also their mental well-being. Unfortunately the people who have been affected most by the pandemic are those marginalised groups who have least access to sport. There is a growing movement to equalise sport and bring it to everyone and it looks as though there will be funding to follow. This could be a golden opportunity for croquet.

The purpose of this report is to record the findings of the various sub-groups within the working party, identifying the barriers discouraging, or even preventing, take up of the sport for that particular group and suggesting possible solutions.

It is recognised that all clubs and Federations are different so it is definitely not the intention of this report to set quotas or targets for the CA, Federations or clubs. Rather it should provide the basis upon which all the layers within our sport can think about how representative they are of the community around them and then devise a plan, and possibly set some goals, for engaging with and encouraging those who are underrepresented to give croquet a try.

CA working party

The CA Council approved a top line draft policy and instructed the Executive Board to set up a working party.

A webinar held in August 2020 for all CA members was attended by 27 people. This introduced the topic and produced some lively discussion and feedback. The one message that came across more than any other was that the CA website was too inward looking and did not speak to large sections of the population.

A working group was established in October 2020, under the chairmanship of Beatrice McGlen, with a view to improving inclusivity and diversity, within four key areas of our sport as follows:

1. Race and religion
2. Disability and long term health conditions
3. Age and gender
4. Background and income

Ferzana Shan led the race and religion sub-group, Jonathan Toye headed the disability and long term health conditions sub-group. Alison Maugham initially agreed to lead the age and gender sub-group but she stepped down and this was taken on by Beatrice McGlen with Chris Alvey looking at Juniors. Regular input to the working group was provided by Eugene Chang, Alison Maugham and Paul Brown, and each sub-group formed its own consultation group. Background and income was a combined effort.

The sub-groups were established to identify the main barriers within each of these areas faced by people who may consider coming into the sport and to come up with suggestions for how to overcome them. This sounds like a simple remit but these are wide-ranging and complex problems and the solutions are likely to lead to incremental changes rather than quick fixes.

The intention is to breakdown possible solutions into those that the CA could do, those that Federations and clubs could consider and those that individuals could put into practice.

It was considered likely at the outset that this report would be the fact-finding stage and that significant overlap between the barriers and possible solutions would be found.

The CA Council set a very tight schedule for the working party to tackle a very complex subject as follows:

Agreement on top line policy	By 17th October 2020
Establishment of a working group	End October 2020
Initial plan presented to the EB	Feb 2021
Ratified by Council	End Feb 2021
Commence implementation of agreed elements	March 2021

Definitions

What do we mean by Inclusivity?

Inclusivity is about making everyone feel valued and included. It requires a welcoming culture which is the responsibility of everyone in the sport. It is also about identifying and removing barriers so that everyone can take part and enjoy our wonderful game.

An inclusive culture welcomes diversity and actively seeks to attract new people.

What do we mean by Diversity?

Diversity means recognising, valuing and embracing people's differences including their background, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, disability, skills and experiences.

Inclusive environments stimulate diversity and diverse environments encourage inclusivity.

How do Inclusivity and Diversity differ from Equality?

Equality is about creating 'fairness'. This fairness is enshrined in The Equality Act 2010, providing protection against discrimination on the grounds of 'protected characteristics'.

Equality involves making sure that we are treating everyone within croquet fairly and that everyone has equal opportunity to participate and fulfil their potential. It is not about treating everyone the same but ensuring that individuals or groups of individuals are not treated less favourably because of their protected characteristics.

Equality also means equality of opportunity: we must ensure that those who may be disadvantaged can get the tools they need to access the same, fair opportunities as their peers.

Equality is concerned with everyone in our organisation whether they are established players; newcomers to the game; social members; volunteers at club, Federation or CA level; or employees or contractors.

Inclusivity and diversity are concerned with recognising our organisation does not reflect society as a whole, and actively promoting, encouraging and welcoming under-represented groups to our sport.

Aims, aspirations and benefits

The first task of the working group was to identify what we wanted to achieve by increasing inclusivity and diversity, what our aims and aspirations would be and what benefits it would bring to clubs and the sport as a whole.

The aims and aspirations which we have for the Croquet Association, our Federations, our clubs and individual members are that we would be able to say with all honesty that:

We welcome people of different ethnic origins to take part in our sport.
We inspire people with physical disabilities and all other impairments to play.
We embrace those with long term health conditions to play the game.
We help people improve their mental well-being through playing croquet.
We assist people from disadvantaged backgrounds to play croquet.
We encourage people of all ages, gender and sexual orientation into our sport.
We dispel the perception that croquet is a sport for the 'posh'.
We have a robust inclusivity & diversity policy which is supported by an equally robust action plan

The benefits, to clubs, Federations and the CA, have been identified by the six **I**s:

Integration with the local community.

Influx of new skills and experiences.

Ideas and perspectives freshened up.

Increased membership.

Image of croquet enhanced.

Improved potential for funding.

In summary (and another 3 **I**s):

Invigoration, **I**mpetus and **I**ncome!

Inclusivity and Diversity Policy

Council approved a draft top line policy as follows:

> Croquet is both inclusive & diverse.
>
> The CA encourages a culture where inclusive leadership thrives.
>
> Inclusion and Diversity are embedded in the CA's culture.
>
> The CA takes a proactive approach to ensure that individuals are given the opportunity to achieve their potential within the sport.
>
> The CA uses positive action to encourage a wide cross-section of the communities where our member clubs exist, to play croquet.
>
> The CA abhors any form of discrimination and will rigorously uphold its Equality Policy.
>
> Each CA member club and Federation is encouraged to have its own inclusion commitment statement.

The working group felt that the language in this policy was not as clear and concise as it could be and therefore suggests that the policy wording that should be adopted is:

> Croquet welcomes and values people from diverse backgrounds and identities.
>
> Our leaders will promote and support inclusivity and diversity in all our activities.
>
> We will actively encourage everyone to reach their potential in our sport, no matter what challenges they may face.
>
> We will promote croquet across a wide range of communities.
>
> We will not tolerate discrimination.
>
> We expect the Croquet Association, the Federations, Academies and all our clubs to adopt and promote this policy and we urge everyone in our sport to support it.

What do we know about croquet players now?

The simple answer to this is 'very little'.

Unlike many sports organisations the CA does not ask for any details on joining other than name, contact details, handicap and club. There is no requirement to verify even this information upon renewal. Consequently it does not have the most basic of information such as how many members are male or female or how old they are (unless applying for Junior membership). Croquet players who are members of clubs but not members of the CA are an almost complete unknown – we cannot even be sure how many there are. There are probably many thousands of people who play croquet but never go near a club and we know absolutely nothing about them.

Most of the assumptions about the people who play croquet are extrapolated from the 5-yearly survey which has been conducted since 2002. The latest was in 2017 https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=ca/schemes/surveys/2017 and was completed by 1455 people. It is estimated there are approximately 8000 people playing in clubs, of whom roughly 6000 are now members of the CA (standard membership was introduced in 2018) so the 1455 responses, which is considered good for a survey of this kind, actually represents only about a quarter of CA members and less than a fifth of all club members.

Apart from the quinquennial survey, other information is collected on a piecemeal basis. For example the Marketing Committee ran a survey of clubs in late 2019 https://www.croquet.org.uk/history/archives/reports/club-survey-19-report-public.html ; the corona taskforce collected information from clubs in March 2020 relevant to the risk of lockdown on their lawns etc. However, none of this information is pooled in the central database.

Information about disability, long-term health problems, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation is completely missing, and data on age, gender, employment and education is extrapolated from the 2017 survey.

The CA, as the sport's National Governing Body, is therefore embarking on an initiative on inclusivity and diversity from a position that could at best be described as 'partially sighted'. If it is serious about broadening the appeal of the game to a representative cross-section of the population then it is considered essential that it must have a base-line from which to work and it must regularly update that data. Data-pooling is one of the recommendations for the CA. There are many advantages in having a central database, which includes analysing how inclusive and diverse our sport is and quantifying the impact of this initiative. Other advantages include shaping programmes for the future of croquet; improvements to policy and governance; identifying sponsorship and funding opportunities; and improvements to communications and marketing.

It would be helpful if, at the very least, gender and date of birth (or maybe just decade of birth) could be standard database requirements for every CA member and that all members are prompted to renew their details every year when they renew their membership. It is recognised that changes to the CA's Data Privacy Notice would have to be approved for additional information to be captured.

A survey is suggested to obtain the other information. It is essential that collecting information is accompanied by a clear and persuasive reason for why it is being collected and an explanation of what will be done with it. In order to engage with the highest possible percentage of club members, all our communication channels should be used to reach those members. The sensitive nature of some of the questions means that this will have to be entirely anonymous, although it would be useful to be able to break the information down by Federation.

The preference from this working party is that a survey should be conducted as soon as possible. It could be combined with a survey of how the pandemic has affected people and how croquet may have helped, or not helped, individuals through the dark times. A less satisfactory but feasible option would be to combine this with the next quinquennial survey in 2022. Some of the questions are very similar.

Appendix 2 gives a list of questions that the working party suggests would provide the data required. Some preliminary discussions have taken place about how such a survey could be conducted which includes the mechanics of collecting the data, anonymity, GDPR compliance and possible ethical approval.

It has been suggested that some sort of incentive should be provided to encourage clubs to get all their members to complete the questionnaire. Other sporting bodies offer discounts or equipment to clubs that get a good response rate. However, if the responses are anonymous a methodology would have to be found to judge a club's success rate. A reward to the Federations with the best response rate may be easier but possibly not sufficiently enticing to individuals to make a difference.

As for the thousands who are not club members, how about including a leaflet in all sales from the CA shop to non-members pointing them to the (up-dated) 'About Us' page on the CA website and telling them how to find a 'have a go' session at a local club. There could also be a link to a short questionnaire to see if we can get more information about these people such as age, ethnicity and location.

Key areas of consultation

Race and religion

Lead person: Ferzana Shan

Others in sub-group:

Eugene Chang, Klim Seabright

What barriers to entering or continuing in the sport have been identified for ethnic minorities?

Not seeing or identifying with people of similar background/visible ethnicity.

Self-exclusion based on previous experiences elsewhere of self or others.

Perceptions that this sport is for others.

Perceptions that they will not be welcomed and will be the 'other'.

Perceptions of costs.

Game is played at inconvenient times. Association croquet particularly is time consuming and does not suit communities where there are defined gender roles. Women would need to play shorter games and men will be working various hours/shifts.

Have you found examples of good practice already in overcoming these barriers?

Many organisations have overcome these issues by modernising their recruitment and other processes in line with expectations of modern and diverse communities. British Fencing, which suffers from many of the preconceptions that affect croquet, has done some amazing work getting Muslim girls into fencing MUSLIM GIRLS FENCE - home

What do you recommend the CA should do?

Support the clubs and Federations by providing a step-by-step-guide and webinars for:

- identifying local demographics and communities
- reaching out to these demographics
- modernising modus operandi
- IT and social media up-skill.

Lead by example thereby implementing all that is expected of the clubs e.g. on the CA shop website (and in the shop) have the Welcome sign in different languages

At a national level, reach out to national community leaders, MPs of different backgrounds and other celebrities to celebrate religious and national events. Promote the game by working closely with national community leaders of various back grounds including Ambassadors.

What do you recommend clubs should do?

Clubs should endeavour to be open and have training sessions during the day, evenings, and weekends.

'Welcome' signs in various languages should be put up regardless of local demographics.

Pavilions to have baby changing, children friendly environment where possible.

Facilities at the clubs, where possible, to be promoted such as Wi-Fi so freelancers, homeworkers, students and others can utilise and work and play. Many organisations are diversifying what they do in line with how modern people operate their lives.

Proactively reach out to local communities, being part of their celebrations and key events, inviting them to the club to celebrate.

Use social media to reach and stay in touch with local communities. Many ethnic minority groups use social media extensively.

Keep the diversity and inclusion policy printed and very visible in the pavilions. This should not be a 'read the boring small print' but rather a celebratory colourful document on display.

What do you recommend individuals should do?

Existing individuals to be consulted on what the club can do to make them feel included and become more inclusive for others.

Individuals should read, agree and abide by the club's inclusivity and diversity policy.

Disability and long term health conditions

Lead person: Jonathan Toye

Who has been consulted? Kathy Wallace, Miranda Chapman, Ruth Sisley, Andrea Widdison and George Lang formed a focus group with Jonathan Toye.

We outlined examples of good practice at our individual clubs (Downham, Nailsea, Nottingham, Ealing, Plymouth) and highlighted barriers that had been encountered by disabled players, suggesting ways of overcoming these or, preferably, of preventing them in the first place. In the course of our discussions and research just such barriers had been encountered when attempting to join a club. These personal reports have been included as they make a positive and wide ranging contribution to this important debate (see Appendix 1).

As the governing body, the CA needs to take a lead on the issues raised in this report, with a joint approach of the promotion of good practice – as shown by the many excellent examples in Appendix 1 to this report – along with guidance for those clubs who, unwittingly or otherwise, prevent someone with a disability or long term health condition from full enjoyment of our lovely sport.

Some recommendations from the disability sub-group

1. Level access to all parts of the club and lawns
2. A loo that everyone can use
3. Listen to disabled members' requirements
4. Clubs should be as welcoming, understanding and accommodating as reasonably possible for the individual needs of all players.
5. Promote all codes of croquet. There is some evidence that GC is better suited to certain groups of people who may find it more attractive and engaging.
6. It would make sense for the CA and clubs to contact organisations/services supporting people with disabilities or long term health conditions to explain the benefits of playing croquet. Examples being - Help for Heroes, Limbfitting Centres, local Mental Health Services, Social Services, GP practices.
7. It would be helpful for clubs to have a nominated point of contact for these bodies or for individual disabled people to get in touch with.

Age and gender

Women and girls

Lead person: Beatrice McGlen

Others in sub-group:

Carole McLoughlin

Who has been consulted and how?

Consultation via email group 'Women's Group' and via CA's e-newsletter. Responses received from 23 women and 3 men, covering AC and GC, a wide handicap range and with a good geographical spread.

The opinions fell into two camps: the first felt that there was nothing fundamentally different in recruiting and retaining women to recruiting and retaining men; the second, larger group, identified a variety of reasons why they felt the game could lack appeal to women and girls and some common themes appeared.

Exploration of this topic in November 2020 issue of USA Croquet News, and, maybe surprisingly, a very similar discussion in The Ringing World on 13th November 2020 forwarded by a female croquet player, was also studied.

What barriers to entering or continuing in the sport have been identified for women and girls?

Sport England estimates that 13 million women would like to participate more in sport and physical activity and 6 million of those are not currently active at all – this is a big potential market!

Barriers to entering:

Image; don't know about it; poor information on how to find out about it; concept of 'sport' rather than fitness or activity can put non-sporty younger women off (although it inspires others); caring duties for children/older relatives can reduce time but, conversely, this could be a positive escape; worries about attending clubs alone or travelling to other clubs. The barriers change with age.

Barriers to progression:

Lack of confidence prevents progression; perceived competition with partners; playing safe rather than taking risks can inhibit progress. Discouragement from others, sadly it seems particularly other women, is a significant factor in AC.

Examples of good practice already in overcoming these barriers?

No club has been identified as putting particular emphasis on getting more women and girls playing but some have tried various things:

Some family sessions mentioned but thought needs to be given in advance to entertaining young children and the mix with older members may not always work.

Ladies only sessions have been successful at some clubs e.g. Southwick in introducing women to the game and giving them some confidence.

Many clubs have hosted sessions from local WIs, some have hosted brownies, guides or other female groups but there are no reports of huge success in recruitment from these initiatives.

What do you recommend the CA should do?

Image and information essential.

After nearly 2 years, croquet has finally been listed on This Girl Can but Marketing Committee needs to sort out the pictures and the links to the website.

Identify particular target groups and provide marketing material, advice for clubs. Recognise that words like 'competitive' and 'sport' can be off-putting to some groups (e.g. teenage girls) but appealing to others (e.g. those who have given up other sports).

Consider some training sessions for existing coaches to teach them some of the 'soft skills' for different target groups.

Look into liaison with national organisations such as WI in similar way to our U3A liaison.

Lack of any significant success in recruiting from the many sessions held around the country for groups such as WI suggests there needs to be further work done on whether there is a potential for recruitment from these groups with better interaction.

What do you recommend clubs should do?

Women are generally more receptive to emphasis on certain aspects such as socialising, playing with the family, relaxing, de-stressing, as well as health and wellbeing, Women are particularly sensitive to feelings of being judged. Don't expect female players to ring round to find opponents – organised roll-ups or sessions are much more likely to succeed.

Consider offering a female only coaching session. Coaches don't have to be all female but good to have at least one female coach as a role model (this probably applies to all beginners coaching). If clubs are interested in promoting croquet to youngsters then family friendly coaching (and subscriptions) should be considered.

Consider personal security – women are more sensitive to this but it is important for anyone who feels a bit vulnerable. Getting to and from a club at dusk is important, particularly if people are playing after work. Women are very unlikely to stay at a club on their own or turn up if they are not sure if anyone else will be there, so pre-arranged sessions after work, for instance, are more likely to be successful.

How about taking croquet to the local WI, primary school, mother and toddlers, even shopping centres? Making people feel welcome is so important so try and ensure you have good communicators for each particular target group e.g. older women will not be encouraged if all your coaches are twenty somethings (probably not very likely!) but equally if you are targeting younger women try and get someone involved of a similar age. Taking croquet to them is likely to be much more productive than sending emails or leaflets.

Women are much more likely to turn up at Open Days with someone else than on their own, so encourage them to come with a friend. How about a 'members bring a friend' session with a picnic, afternoon tea or something sociable? Offering Open Days/taster session/ beginners' courses at different times of day will maximise possibilities. Supplement Open Days with a Ladies day. Many older women end up on their own so emphasising the 'meeting people' and the social side of the game can be appealing.

What do you recommend individuals should do?

Encourage each other. Words like difficult, boring, complicated should not be in croquet players' vocabulary and yet you hear them constantly – if these were replaced with intriguing, challenging, engaging, relaxing then you paint a positive picture rather than a negative one.

Talk about what you like about the game to friends, members of other groups or organisations that you belong to. Some quotes for press articles, stories for the club website all help promote a positive image.

For tournaments:

If you have entered a tournament ask if anyone else is interested in travelling and/or staying with you. Offering accommodation for matches or tournaments can help. Arrange to meet up after play for a meal (women often feel uncomfortable eating out on their own).

Young people

Lead person: Chris Alvey

Who has been consulted and how?
Consultation via email group with participants

The opinions include the use of the Junior squad members as recruiters, targeting Youth services, the scouting organisations, schools (mainly primary school and lower years of secondary). The encouragement of family and staggered membership rates that are age based. Giving them the ability to progress as they wish not a structured beginners programme (whilst some want to be pushed others need to try it at their own pace) and giving them others of their age to mentor them and play against them.

What barriers to entering or continuing in the sport have been identified for young people?

Barriers to entering:

The 2017 quinquennial survey showed that 12% of croquet players were first introduced to the game when they were less than 10 years old and 28% had first played by the time they were 20. This shows that young people are interested in playing, so what prevents them continuing:

Image; don't know about it; poor information on how to find out about it; concept of 'sport' rather than fitness or activity can put less competitive children off (though this is a double-edged sword as many want to be competitive but don't flourish in the more traditional school offered sports)

Barriers to progression:

The image of the sport can add to this, whites; elitist; cost of own equipment (which will change if they progress or get taller etc.)

Have you found examples of good practice already in overcoming these barriers?

Nottingham Model for a schools programme, summer school and junior club. (Gazette articles Issue 384 Feb 2020 and Issue 387 Aug 2020)

What do you recommend the CA should do?

Image and information essential – A focussed social media presence

Identify particular target groups and provide marketing material, advice for clubs.

It is being proposed that Club Level coaches will be required to re-skill in order to keep their qualifications and this is an opportunity to roll out more differentiated student led teaching. Engaging with younger players requires a somewhat different skills base than with adults and keeping it dynamic and interesting is something

that needs to be done at a club level. There is a wealth of skill and experience on the Coaching Committee and a toolkit populated from the ideas of that group to engage with new younger players would be invaluable.

From Lionel Tibble: *"Nottingham has had great success in this I would advocate asking the people there to develop the toolkit you describe. Then publicise it strenuously with further CA input to all Federations and clubs - even suggest that a Federation Youth officer be appointed specifically to get the Nottingham initiative duplicated in one school in each of the federations for 2021 (only one school initially so that the limited resources are not diluted, and the emphasis is all in one direction).*

Choose the club and school carefully; a croquet playing teacher at the school would be very handy but not necessary if they are keen to make it work. Make it a success and publicise it - you could ask Nottingham to publicise their effort more emphasising the win-win benefits to their club in getting youngsters into their club, raising their profile in the community and all the other benefits"

What do you recommend clubs should do?

Consider offering a younger member led only introduction session (Club level coach to assist). Coaches don't have to be "Junior" members but good to have at least one assisting the coach as a role model. If clubs are interested in promoting croquet to youngsters then family friendly coaching (and subscriptions) should be considered.

Don't think that state schools won't be interested. The key is speaking to the right person in the school, emphasising the inclusive nature of croquet, and being prepared to go to the school for some initial taster sessions.

As part of the getting children involved toolkit you need volunteers who want to work with children – not ones who will, ones that want!!

Have a few junior size mallets in the club stock. Wire hoops that can be made wide and a set of lighter weight balls are useful.

Be careful not to disenfranchise the older members who may not want the children around.

What do you recommend individuals should do?

Encourage friends and family to join, develop skills together. Challenge themselves – hit more targets, run more hoops each week etc. Join the Juniors group. Engage with CA members the same age, take part in the zoom meetings, play with the club coach as well as the members – if you want to develop a shot, ask.

Talk about what you like about the sport to friends, members of other groups or organisations that you belong to.

For tournaments:

If you have entered a tournament speak to other players regardless of their age (most are young at heart), watch other matches if you see something you don't understand ask your opponent or another off-court player. Take comments and advice on board after a match (whilst it won't all be good or useful you can discuss this with the juniors group or your club coach to find the best bits for you)

Working people

Lead person: Beatrice McGlen

Consultation: Focus group consisting of 6 AC and GC croquet players, of varying ability, who work full-time

What barriers to entering or continuing in the sport have been identified for working people?

The biggest barrier is time. Working people have restricted time slots in which they can take part in an activity and there are very many things that compete for that time. However, all those other competing sports and activities face the same problem.

It is possible that working from home will remain an option for many people once the current pandemic is over. This could give an opportunity to clubs to try and recruit on the basis of getting out of the house/fresh air/meeting people/doing something relaxing to de-stress.

There are many working age people playing croquet, but according to the 2017 CA player survey, they only form 9% of the membership. Some have first taken up the game in the 25-50 age bracket but many started playing when they were younger. These people have a U-shaped playing career with lots of play in the early days, declining time spent playing as family and financial pressures increase, and then returning to play upon retirement or as the family grows up. If a way can be found to make playing through those very busy years easier, then the curve could be flattened a little.

What do you recommend the CA should do?

Having limited time makes proximity of either workplace or home to a club important. The development of more clubs in croquet deserts is a long-term recommendation.

A suggestion, that could be explored further, is that CA Premium membership comes with say 5 tokens to play free of charge at another nominated club. So, for instance, a member at Edgbaston could chose 5 sessions at Nottingham where s/he could practice or play with other players of a similar standard at a mutually convenient time. In exchange the nominated clubs do not pay levy for Premium members and of course this creates an incentive for clubs to persuade more of their members to become Premium. Whilst this would be an advantage to working people with limited time it could also benefit any player at a smaller club where they find they do not have opponents of similar or better ability to play.

What do you recommend clubs should do?

Open Days held at a weekend or summer evening will often attract working age people. However, if all the follow-on is held during working hours those people will not come back. Try to offer at least some coaching sessions, whether they are formal courses, small group coaching or even one-to-one at weekends or evenings.

If people have children then holding some family sessions or junior sessions at the same time could encourage families. Making an effort to be family friendly can make a big difference to those with children. Have some child size equipment so that young children can take part, even if they are not on the courts themselves. Discounted family subscriptions may be worthy of consideration.

Tournaments that include working days are much less likely to attract this group. 2 day weekend or even 1 day weekend events will be more appealing.

Starting a game after work, say 6pm, is really only possible from mid-May to mid-August. If a club is in a position to consider floodlighting for at least one of their lawns this extends the evening playing season from 3 months to 6 or 7 months and it opens up far more opportunity to engage with those who are working during the day. This has been done successfully at many clubs in Australia, where players are asked to make an additional $5 donation each evening to cover the cost of electricity.

Access and parking should be considered if people are likely to be playing until, or even after dark if there are floodlights.

If the majority of members play during the day, it can leave the few who play at other times feeling somewhat isolated. Make sure that you have social events at times they can attend. Encouraging play into the evenings in high summer by having an evening roll-up or competition can help with integration.

If a club is close to a big employer then holding lunch-time sessions may be worthwhile. Offering to run a few 30-45 minute taster sessions at the place of work in a lunchtime could be even more successful in attracting working people to the game.

What do you recommend individuals should do?

Suggest meeting up with others at the club after work. A regular arrangement can be easier to fit into a busy schedule than ad hoc messages. Clubs can facilitate this by having members' details easily available and a good range of leagues/blocks/competitions to provide initial matches and introductions.

Older people

Lead person: Beatrice McGlen

Others in sub-group:

Consultation: Sally Slater

The 'recently retired' is the demographic that is most attracted to croquet. In considering extending the game to different groups it is important not to lose sight of the group that is our 'bread and butter'. These people are not only the backbone of playing members but they are also the backbone of the volunteer workforce in clubs, Federations and the CA.

The term 'older people' covers the full range of a diverse population so they can be from ethnic minorities, disabled, low income etc. The barriers to entry can therefore be the same as those identified in other groups.

What do you recommend the CA should do?

Sally Slater was appointed as U3A liaison. Unfortunately the pandemic has shut down most U3A ever since she took on the role but her insight below is useful in considering whether a similar liaison officer should be sought for the WI, Saga or other organisations aimed at older people.

Each U3A operates independently, although there is a central body to which they are affiliated of course.

There are approximately 75 U3A croquet groups. Each croquet group that I know about seems to have started from a member's interest, and this is very much the usual genesis of any group within any U3A. They play on cricket outfields, in sports clubs, in gardens and a couple in stately homes. One is in a NT house. I gather that they mostly use garden sets of equipment.

About 20 play at CA croquet clubs. It is difficult to be more precise because you cannot access full information from the U3A website.

It is hard to say what would make croquet appeal to members of a U3A. Firstly I suppose they need to know it exists as a thriving game, and that there is a club near them. Or someone who could help them set one up i.e. a development officer. Every U3A has a monthly meeting where members go along for coffee, and a newsletter

where ideas for new groups can be flagged up, but you do need an individual to do this, they would not let an organisation do it. But I'm sure that every croquet club has members of their local U3A who could be the rep. Chester has loads! It would be relatively easy to create some appropriate marketing materials.

A successful group tends to be successful because of its leader, who enthuses people to come along and play. I had an enquiry from someone who wasn't getting new members for his group and wanted ideas to drum up enthusiasm. I suggested the usual sources, monthly meeting, newsletter, demonstrations, taster session – it turned out he hadn't even contacted anyone who had put their name down.

There has been a huge debate recently (and on-going) within the U3A about how they present themselves and they have had a big makeover and changed their logo and strap line. Their magazine, sent to all members, has also had a makeover. They are also concerned with their profile re ethnic diversity particularly as it is a predominantly white middle class organisation. Disability not so much because of their age profile, there are a lot of disabled people within the organisation.

I think a liaison officer within SAGA and the WI would be a good idea. Anyone anywhere who can raise the profile of croquet has to be helpful.

What do you recommend clubs should do?

Clubs are probably already very good at catering for this older age bracket but having playing sessions during the day is attractive and 'roll-up' sessions can foster friendship groups.

Offering taster session, 'come and try' or formal coaching to local groups who cater for this age bracket is usually worthwhile, even if it is just raising awareness of croquet in your area.

Be careful of under-valuing what you offer. With the U3A the standard fee per session, where it was published, is usually £3 per person, though it is £5 per session at two venues and £7 at another. Liphook and Beverley charge per season £20 and £40 respectively but not sure what is included. The usual format is that the group turns up once a week, sometimes once a fortnight, through the season for a two hour slot and borrow the equipment and lawns. If this works out cheaper than your own members are paying then it is too cheap!

These seem to be harmonious arrangements and good value for money from the U3A standpoint, but mostly it seems that the croquet clubs don't get a lot of benefit from these sort of set ups, either in terms of income or attracting new members.

What do you recommend individuals should do?

Be welcoming and friendly. Try to avoid forming cliques.

LGBT

Lead person: Beatrice McGlen

Confidential consultation with 3 croquet players and 1 non-croquet player.

There are no particular barriers identified other than the ones that are faced in everyday life. With most of croquet not being gender specific, LGBT people do not face the same problems that they can encounter in other sports.

However, it has been noted that there can be a reluctance to challenge poor behaviour, inappropriate language and low level bullying

What do you recommend the CA should do?

A discussion has been instigated with the WCF and with Sport England about a transgender policy for single sex and mixed-sex (i.e. doubles requiring a male/female pairing) croquet competitions. A CA policy is currently being drafted.

The CA's complaints procedure should be able to handle cases of low level but longstanding bullying and poor behaviour.

Positive action towards the LGBT community, including portraying images such as Rainbow laces, would be a good start.

What do you recommend clubs should do?

Ensure members are aware of the CA's or the club's equality policy and its inclusivity and diversity policy.

Be prepared to tackle unpleasantness, don't accept behaviour or attitudes that make other people feel uncomfortable and be supportive or even protective to vulnerable members.

What do you recommend individuals should do?

Be aware of unconscious bias and micro-aggression. These can result in subtle but hurtful comments or actions, either intentional or unconscious, directed at marginalised groups.

Background and Income

The impression that croquet is 'posh' has persisted since Victorian times and is very hard to shake off. It is a barrier to our sport at many levels: individuals feeling that they would be looked down upon; entire sections of the community thinking it is not for them; good projects being rejected for funding; ridicule in the media and even in Parliament.

How do we get the message across that the sport is open to everyone? There is no simple solution to this, but there are many small things that can be borne in mind:

Image is everything. Pictures showing inclusivity, words in plain English; spokespeople with local accents help break down the 'posh' image

An advert for croquet sends a message simply by where it appears.

If recruiting is always targeted at certain people or places then you cannot be surprised if your membership only reflects those people from those places.

People on low incomes can face many barriers. Those who are unemployed, for example, may experience poverty, reduced social and community networks, and they are more likely to have long-term ill-health or a disability. Declining income can also affect people in later years, particularly if they find themselves living alone. Not everyone on a low income is unemployed or elderly though. Many people work in low paid jobs and stretched household budgets can mean that leisure activities have to be dropped. Children and mortgages can significantly reduce disposable income. The covid-19 pandemic will have a long term economic impact.

Croquet is not an expensive sport but it can be too expensive for many.

What do you recommend clubs should do?

Put inclusive information about your Open Days or taster sessions in community centres. Emphasise no equipment is required, other than flat soled shoes.

Advertise through social media as well as posters, leaflets and websites.

Make sure you have plenty of club equipment with different sized mallets to suit everyone. Ask your members if they will donate disused mallets to the club. If clubs are changing their balls or hoops then consider offering them to the Federation so they can be distributed.

People don't like to admit they may be short of money so asking for subscriptions as a lump sum can result in them simply not joining. Does the club actually need all its income at the beginning of the year or is it just more convenient for the membership secretary/treasurer?

Monthly standing orders could be the difference between retaining and losing members; 'pay as you play' could be the difference between someone with limited time joining or disappearing altogether; discounts for juniors, families, first and second years all encourage people to stay.

Get stories about different groups coming to your club in the media. Invite local councillors and politicians along to speak to some of the people they may not expect at a croquet club.

What do you recommend individuals should do?

Don't judge a book by its cover.

Going forward

Recommendations for the CA

- Adopt and promote the Inclusivity and Diversity Policy
- Website improvements to give a much more outward facing aspect. It should be our shop window so when someone hears something about croquet they can go to the CA website and find out all they need to know about the game, where to play it and how to find further information. Pictures should convey an inclusivity message.
- Marketing strategy needs a clear commitment to inclusivity and diversity. Advertising material, publicity, websites, social media, Gazette, newsletter etc. should show that croquet is open to everyone. Good quality photographs speak far louder than words. Take advantage of national campaigns e.g. 'We Are Undefeatable' is having its main 2021 campaign in June/July to get people with long-term health conditions to get active so CA and clubs should be ready for this.
- Discussions with national associations, organisations and community leaders to promote the game
- Dialogue with Active Partnerships about tailored support for the CA, as the NGB, around the inactivity agenda.
- Policies should be in place and regularly reviewed. A new child safeguarding policy has been written which should future proof the CA for the day when we have thousands of juniors! Adult safe-guarding is currently being drafted. Advice has been sought on a transgender policy for domestic competitions.
- National Disability and Ethnicity officers should be considered so that clubs can get advice easily.
- Coaches should be up-skilled so they know how to adapt their coaching for different participants, taking into account each individual's needs and aspirations.
- Library of experience of initiatives whether successful or not, should be built up, so that other clubs can build upon lessons learned. This would probably be via Gazette articles. Clubs should be encouraged to write about what they are doing.
- Data pooling is required in the CA for many reasons. Different pieces of information are held about clubs and members in different places and this all needs to be brought together in a central database. As the National Governing Body the CA should be able to show what it is doing to improve inclusivity and diversity so it needs to have a much better idea of where it is starting.
- Survey of existing members of croquet clubs would give the baseline. Suggested survey questions are shown in Appendix 2 but it would be sensible to combine this with the data pooling exercise so that the gaps in knowledge can be identified. A survey should then be repeated at a minimum of every 5 years and preferably every 3 years to monitor how the membership may be changing. A separate survey is recommended but could consider combining this with the quinquennial survey.
- Consider an award for the club putting most effort into improving its inclusivity and diversity.

Recommendations for Federations

- There are 43 Active Partnerships, mainly county based, in England and one of their main aims is to focus on inactive people and under-represented groups. The Active Partnerships work collaboratively with partners to try to achieve their mission of 'transforming lives through sport and physical activity'. They have in-depth knowledge of the needs of the local community and relationships for engaging with different sectors.

- The Federations should forge strong links with the Active Partnerships in their region so they can connect their clubs with the local organisations, groups and individuals who they would like to work with. This would help to raise the profile of croquet locally and would provide invaluable support to the clubs in broadening their appeal.

- Hold discussions with regional or local branches of organisations representing specific or minority groups to see how croquet can be incorporated in their activities. Put them in touch with interested clubs.

- Keeping up-to-date information for funding opportunities to help clubs is important. Many of the Active Partnerships keep regularly up-dated lists of funding opportunities in the sport and physical activity sector which can be received by email, free of charge, just by signing up.

- Some of the recommendations for the CA also apply to Federations such as their marketing strategy and ensuring their websites and other means of communication convey a positive image of inclusivity and diversity.

- Assistance to clubs, particularly the smaller ones, is essential. Promoting regional get-togethers for underrepresented groups e.g. juniors may help with integration.

Recommendations for clubs

- Recognise that improving inclusivity and diversity can bring benefits to your club and to your existing members.
- Display the inclusion and diversity policy as a bright colourful document for all to see.
- Have a welcome sign in different languages in a prominent position.
- Look critically at your club website, social media, noticeboards and publicity. Does it make croquet appear available and inviting to everyone? Is it clear when, where, and how someone can have a go? How and where you advertise will affect who sees your publicity. Can you offer something for everyone i.e. AC and GC, sessions at different times of day, easy access? Do you emphasise the social, physical and mental health aspects of your club and the game as well as the competitive and sporting?
- Get to know your own members and their interests. Speak to them and don't make assumptions. If, for example, you want to start a junior programme then members keen to coach and play with youngsters are essential. If you wish to make a difference then you need to know where you have started and what you have already. It is also really useful to know what skills, interests and contacts your existing membership has.
- The Office for National Statistics data provides comprehensive statistics on who we are, how we live and what we do at a national and local level. This includes information on age, ethnicity and cultural identity, health, employment, and socio-economic grouping. You can get a local area report from the ONS data at https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/ by entering your postcode or town/village name. You may be surprised!
- It won't be possible to achieve everything to make a club really inclusive within a few seasons so deciding where to focus is important. Building an overall plan or strategy will help identify what will be needed in terms of changes to the club's facilities, what requires capital expenditure and what requires volunteer effort. From this it is important to focus plans and concentrate effort. Doing one thing well is more important than trying to do everything and failing.
- Clubs need to recruit a reasonable pool of similar people to be able to make it attractive to newcomers. This applies whether that group is juniors, ethnic minorities or working people. Everyone taking up the game wants to be able to play others who are available at the same time and have similar interests and ability. This is probably one of the biggest challenges that small clubs face.
- Economic barriers can affect working people on low wages, unemployed people, students and some retirees and disabled people. Existing members may find themselves financially much worse off because of the economic consequence of the covid pandemic so clubs should be sensitive to the problem. It is worth considering that annual subscriptions can be prohibitive so discounts for juniors, families, first and second year members could help with recruitment. Also, staged payments over 6 or 12 months are much easier for many people. 'Pay as you play' is another option suited for those with limited time, community groups or for a trial period. Lower subscriptions limiting play to certain times is another way of persuading people to join that a few clubs have used
- Identify the things that could make a positive impact for your existing members since these will often be things that will improve your club for newcomers as well. If beginners do not come back try and find out what would have encouraged them to continue.

- Make a noise about what you are doing - send pictures and articles to the local press, put it on Facebook or your website and/or get it published in the Gazette, plus CA or Federation newsletters. If you are working with a particular group then get that group to publicise it as well. Success breeds success!
- Once you have addressed the barriers in your club, forget about them. Just concentrate then on encouraging and welcoming all the new people who will want to be a part of your club.

Recommendations for individuals

- A club is only as welcoming as all of its members. Newcomers in any situation feel a bit anxious about fitting in. A single rebuff or unthinking comment can undo weeks of effort by others in the club.
- Every club relies on willing volunteers. Offering to help with the things you enjoy will make a club run smoothly and happily, and newcomers will sense that atmosphere.
- Pass on contact details or offer to be a link with local schools, community groups such as those connected with places of worship or community centres, care homes, other sports clubs, and organisations such as WI, U3A, Mumsnet, Men in Sheds, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce etc.

Suggested action plan for implementation

- Adoption of Inclusivity and Diversity policy by the CA Council by end of February 2021.
- Establishment of an implementation group.
- Presentation of this report to Council in early March.
- Conduct a survey to give us our baseline data and to show where we excel and where the gaps are in our inclusivity
- Develop a strategy.

  This should have clear vision, aims and objectives for the next two seasons

  Identification of, and a plan for providing, the skills and resources required in the initial stages and further down the line
- A timetable and priority for the implementation of the recommendations for the CA should be decided after consultation between Council, the Executive Board and the relevant committees.
- Discussion with Federations about how they can be involved in implementation
- Webinar for clubs as a follow-on from the consultative one conducted in August 2020. Suggest that this should be in April 2021
- Templates to be produced for inclusion and diversity policy for clubs to display. Also a range of posters showing inclusivity and diversity. 'Welcome' in different languages for adding to club's own signs or some template signs.
- Concerted effort to update pictures and language on the CA website to give a much more inclusive and diverse image, particularly the home page, 'About Us' and 'Croquet Intro' pages.
- Articles for Gazette initially talking about the policy and the report. Later show-casing what is happening at Federations and clubs.
- Campaign on CA's Facebook.
- Press and media coverage of successful inclusivity and diversity initiatives or events.
- Ideally produce a 'Guidance for clubs' to give them as much information, advice and resources as possible to help them become inclusive and diverse. This would be a big piece of work.

Conclusions

Sport England launched its 10 year plan "Uniting the Movement" on 26th January 2021. The main theme is about breaking down barriers so everyone has access to sport and physical activity and has the opportunity to get active. Croquet has huge potential to play a part in Uniting the Movement – if we can all work towards the recommendations in this report.

Our sport and our clubs have a lot to gain by being more inclusive and diverse. It can invigorate clubs and playing experiences, bringing impetus and innovation. The benefits include:

Integration with the local community.

Influx of new skills and experiences.

Ideas and perspectives freshened up.

Increased membership.

Image of croquet enhanced.

Improved potential for funding.

All parts of our organisation have to work towards creating an inclusive environment. The CA and Federations should put the policies, support, publicity and marketing in place but it is clubs and individuals who will make the biggest impact.

Every club is different in terms of its facilities, its location, its membership and its local community but there are many ways that clubs can do something to broaden their appeal to underrepresented groups. Consulting with existing members could reveal how the club could be more welcoming and possibly connections with underrepresented groups. Creating an overall plan and setting short term achievable goals is then the key to success.

Removing barriers for one group can often help another group e.g. easier access for those with limited mobility also helps those with very young children; having easier payment terms for subscriptions helps those on low incomes as well as families; holding sessions at different times of day encourages ethnic minorities and helps working people.

If a barrier cannot be removed completely then maybe a small adjustment could make a big improvement.

Not all barriers are difficult or require money to remove. Attitudes cost nothing to change and our sport is only as welcoming as all of its individual members.

Becoming more diverse and inclusive will not be quick or easy. Be prepared to seek advice, to discuss failures and, most of all, to share successes!

Resources

General

The Equality Act 2010
Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Protected characteristics from The Equality and Human Rights Commission
Protected characteristics | Equality and Human Rights Commission (equalityhumanrights.com)

Sport England: Towards an Active Nation Strategy 2016-2021
sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf (activehw.co.uk)

Sport England: Uniting the Movement 2021-2030
A 10 year vision and strategy to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity
Uniting the Movement | Sport England

Sport England: Building an Active Nation.
Lots of information on engaging with your audience
Building an active nation | Sport England

UK Active
Committed to improving the health of the nation through promoting active lifestyles
ukactive | More People More Active More Often

Office for National Statistics
Local area reports on national census data (currently 2011 census). Typing in a postcode, local authority area or region will give information covering the hinterland of each club.
https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/

Active Partnerships
Locally based, strategic organisations working to transform people's lives through sport and physical activity. Links to 43, mainly county based, Active Partnerships.
Home | Active Partnerships

Club Matters
Advice on creating an inclusive sports club
Inclusivity In Sport - Club Matters Sport EnglandClub Matters Sport England

Race and religion

Muslim Women in Sport
Proactively promoting inclusion of Muslim women in sport
Muslim Women's Sports Foundation | MWSF

Sporting Equals
Raising awareness and promoting ethnic diversity across sport and physical activity
Sporting Equals | Home

The Asian Sports Foundation
Delivering projects which break down cultural and religious barriers and provide sporting benefits to the minority ethnic community.
http://asiansportsfoundation.org/

Disability

Sport England : We Are Undefeatable
Inspiring and supporting those with long term health conditions to build active lives.
We Are Undefeatable | Sport England

Sport England
Getting disabled people active. Research and links to further information.
Disabled people | Sport England

Activity Alliance
Works to help disabled people be active for life. Lots of very useful information, including a toolkit for club improvement.
Activity Alliance | Disability Inclusion Sport

Jiminy Wicket: Through Hoops to Hope
A programme to connect schools to people with dementia using croquet. Established in UK but now based in US.
HOME | Jiminy Wicket

Mind
Using sport to raise awareness, tackle mental health stigmas and support those with mental health problems to become more active.
Sport, physical activity and mental health | Mind

Help for Heroes
Using sport to aid recovery
Recreational sport - Help For Heroes

Disability Bowls
Advisory Guide available that has a lot of useful information about including disabled people which could be adopted by croquet clubs
Disability Bowls (playbowls.org)

Women and Girls

Sport England
Free online interactive guide to encourage women and girls to your club. A lot of the information is equally applicable to other groups.
Course: Creating a Welcoming Sports Club for Women and Girls (sportenglandclubmatters.com)

This Girl Can
Lots of information encouraging women and girls to take up a sport (including croquet)
This Girl Can and This Girl Can | Sport England

Women in Sport
A charity founded in 1984 with the goal of giving every woman and girl in the UK the opportunity to experience the transformational rewards of sport.
Home - Women In Sport

Older people

Sport England: Active Ageing
Using sport and inactivity to tackle inactivity in older people as well as loneliness, bereavement and dementia.
Active Ageing | Sport England

Age UK
Advice and information on being active in later years
Exercise advice for keeping active as an older adults | Age UK

Getting older people active. Research and links to further information.
Older adults | Sport England
Physical activity guidelines for older adults - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

LGBT

Pride Sports
Works to ensure LGBT people can have an enjoyable and rewarding experience in organised sport
Pride Sports | A UK organisation for LGBT+ sports development and equality

Sport Allies
Promoting diversity and inclusion in sport, with particular interest in homophobia and LGBT issues.
Sport Allies

Appendix 1

Disability and long-term health conditions. Sub-group members' individual comments

These views are personal and do not necessarily represent those of their clubs

Ruth Sisley, Ealing CC

I am a member at Ealing CC, who has worked alongside another member, Jennian Geddes, to promote inclusion. I have recently spoken to George Lang at Plymouth CC and Jean Healey at Maldon CC who have both been active in increasing participation from a more diverse group of players at their clubs. Below I have attempted to summarise what has been achieved and learned by the 3 clubs and ways in which we believe the CA could help croquet to become a more inclusive sport. (n.b. I have not included initiatives regarding ethnicity, religion, gender and age as these are being considered by others.)

Inclusion Achievements

Ealing CC

Adults with learning difficulties, Young people with autism, Referrals from NHS Social prescriber, Bowls Royce wheelchair trial.

Maldon CC

Stroke survivors, Alzheimer's, Down's Syndrome.

Plymouth CC

Parkinson's Disease, Dementia sufferers, Stroke survivors, Others with mobility issues. (see George's report below)

The Positives

· Croquet has proved to be suitable and enjoyable for a variety of groups who might be daunted by mainstream sport.

· Including a more diverse range of players creates goodwill with landlords and local authorities.

· Inclusion initiatives can help clubs financially as groups are often happy to pay for their games and funding applications are more likely to be successful if a club is seen to be inclusive. Demonstrating successful inclusion initiatives has been used to dissuade landlords from increasing the cost of leases.

· There are grants available for equipment and adaptions to sites.

· Provision of croquet activities by clubs can provide respite or opportunities to play croquet for carers and partners (see George Lang's contribution)

· Adapted wheelchairs allow those with mobility problems to play. Bowls Royce, trialled at Ealing – see Croquet Gazette Feb 2020 'Croquet on Wheels at Ealing CC' Jennian Geddes, and the adapted wheelchair donated by Peter Moore, SW Federation

· Inclusion provides opportunities for wider social interaction between different community groups

· It can be personally rewarding to share your passion for croquet with others and receive their appreciation for being 'open' and 'accepting'.

The Barriers/ Difficulites

· Fear of lawn damage

· Persuading all club members that including players who may not become full members or play competitively is worthwhile.

· Club members who fear it will 'spoil' their friendship groups and atmosphere.

· Access and adaptions to clubs required – ramps, toilets, benches etc. Clubs are not always aware of funding that is available.

· Finding sufficient, suitable, club members to staff and support players with additional needs - this often falls to a couple of members who may become exhausted or feel their own croquet play is being limited and their standard not improving.

· 'Selling' the idea to the community that croquet is a game for all is hampered by lack of availability of images of different players on CA website etc. Requirement by some clubs to wear whites etc. Emphasis on competitive play as opposed to social play. (see contribution sent by George Lang)

· Making contacts with local groups for those with disabilities is time consuming for individual club members and does not always lead to participation which can be disheartening.

· GC is an easier game to introduce croquet to those with additional needs and easier for some physically disabled players as it does not require so much bending etc.

What could the CA be doing?

If it aspires to help a wider population benefit from playing croquet, the CA should show leadership, not merely expect clubs to set up their inclusion initiatives in isolation. The CA needs to -

· Ensure that inclusion and diversity really are 'embedded in the CA's culture' and that there is no such thing as the 'right kind of player'.

· Write its Equality Statement/Inclusion and Diversity Policy in accessible and welcoming language.

· Understand that if croquet is to thrive it must include and welcome as wide and diverse a range of people as possible.

· Actively identify and remove barriers that prevent any group or individuals from playing; take action when clubs are found to discriminate.

· Appreciate that not all croquet players want to play competitively and that social play is equally valid.

· Consult those with physical disabilities and long-term health conditions in order to find out what their needs are.

· Contact national bodies such as Parkinson's UK and Stroke Association to promote the benefits of playing croquet, provide them with information leaflets and contact details of clubs so that their local branches/groups know who to contact.

· Inform clubs about grants that are available for them to adapt their site for those with physical disabilities

· Accept GC as equally valid as AC and realise its importance as a more accessible form of the game for many people.

· Include images of players with disabilities on the home page of the website and marketing material (as used on the planned 2020 National Croquet Week posters).

· Make the home page of the website generally more welcoming and informative for outsiders

· Introduce annual Inclusion Awards for clubs making a contribution.

Whilst some clubs might resist the kind of initiatives discussed here the CA should take the lead and actively encourage clubs to open up croquet to a wider population.

Kathy Wallace, Nailsea CC

I doubt if there is much, if any, active prejudice against any group in croquet clubs these days so it's a case of omission rather than commission.

The barriers for disabled people vary enormously across the range of disabilities and some of them are much more easily overcome than others. Adaptations to coaching methods can help those with hearing problems or those with attention/concentration difficulties or other cognitive issues. Physical disability would often require more on-going adaptations and sometimes considerable time and effort from club members.

Croquet and hearing difficulties

The biggest hurdle is probably at the learning stage. Depending on the level of deafness, and whether the tutees lip-read or not, coaches would have to adjust their teaching methods. Sign language would help some. The use of written, including online, material would need to be greater. Clips could be used when dealing with scenarios involving several hoops so that it's clear which hoops all the balls are due to run. I once asked for this when I was on an AC course but was told it wasn't the usual thing to do during a break so would not be done! It was a peeling break and would have helped me enormously. One-to-one tuition (ideally using an assistant to the main group coach) would always work best so that the tutee didn't get left behind in a blue fog. Use of phones to communicate would help on some occasions. Avoiding coaching in a noisy environment would always be helpful – away from traffic or a lively doubles GC game or game of Pirates.

Croquet, particularly AC, is a great sport for deaf and hard of hearing players. As an out- player, it is very restful for people who have to constantly strain to hear what someone is saying. It's usually safe to just smile when the double banker comes off muttering and you haven't a clue what he/she said. It almost certainly wasn't important! You do need to tell your opponent that they will need to come on to the lawn if they think you have committed an offence as you are unlikely to notice them speaking from the boundary. Conversation between opponents in a competitive match is minimal and usually non-essential so being completely deaf would not preclude an enjoyable match. Doubles could be tricky as tactical discussions might need to be louder than usual.

I don't play GC and I dread to think how two hard of hearing players would sort out Wrong Balls! I'm sure they would resolve the issue.

My worry is that club members and coaches are not necessarily able/inclined to put in the required extra effort. At clubs like my own (Nailsea) where members do all the lawn and buildings maintenance themselves, there is a constant stream of calls for effort. Many already spend a lot more hours "working" in one way or another than they do actually playing croquet.

The average age of members at the majority of clubs is high and is rising annually. I think very many clubs need to tackle that problem with urgency to keep clubs open - before they can think about actively improving the Inclusivity.

Following the suggestion about asking GPs “prescribe” croquet, I would like to offer the following: A group of GPs (Tyntesfield Medical Group) in Nailsea have sponsored a full time post for Glen Schmidt to run a Facebook group called Nailsea Active. The objective is to get the people of Nailsea fit both mentally and physically post Covid. Glen invited the Croquet Club to join and of course we did. I’m dripping posts in at the moment but will ramp it up in the Spring when we will hopefully have something more concrete to offer.

I’m sorry if that sounds negative in places. Be assured that I know exactly what it’s like to be disabled – my son has multiple disabilities so I have seen life from that side for 43 years. I’m just trying to be honest and realistic about what we can achieve. The relatively easy things that Miranda mentions should definitely be the first goal. I could write a book about the ways in which the organizations that my son has belonged to could have made life easier for him, but, instead, have unthinkingly made it impossible for him to take part.

Miranda Chapman, Nottingham CC

I think it would be useful for clubs to be aware that there needs to be scope for modifying some rules/etiquette etc. at a club level to enable the inclusion of all and that clubs need to find ways to actively include all, rather than put up boundaries to exclude people.

Just a thought... If croquet needs a boost of membership, is it worth exploring getting croquet 'prescribed' by GPs for long covid rehabilitation similar to things like gardening is prescribed for depression.

George Lang, Plymouth CC

At present Plymouth Croquet Club doesn't have any members with specific physical disabilities or long term challenging health issues.

These are my own personal statements and do not necessarily reflect my club’s committee and members’ views.

I Play AC, GC, Ricochet and Short croquet (not necessarily well!) . As well as being a Plymouth Club Member I regularly play in Australia, generally at Elwood Croquet Club in Melbourne but also at the Brighton Club in Melbourne.

Some of the experiences we have encountered include:

Parkinson's

We started with an afternoon visit from Tavistock Parkinson's Club. This was a group of about 36 people and their carers (often close relatives). Everyone played, including the volunteer bus drivers!

This was also a social occasion with cake etc. as the group self-support each other and this evolved one of their monthly meetings. We had one “faller”, but his wife dealt with it (it was a regular occurrence anyway).

It was interesting to see how many of the people with Parkinson’s stopped trembling once they had a mallet in their hand and concentrated on hitting a ball.

This has now become an annual event and word has spread. We now host Plymouth Parkinsons Club as well and this year had a booking from the Torpoint Club, though Covid has stopped that.

Don't expect a game of Croquet as we know might know it, but expect some great results with people enjoying something that they can achieve in in their own way.

Unlikely to find recruits from this group due to the care requirements needed, but good PR.

This first visit has led to annual visits and requests from other groups in the area.

Support Your Way

https://www.supportyourway.co.uk/

Before Covid, we had summer monthly visits of a small group from "Support Your Way" Plymouth. These are severely mentally disabled adults. They live in sheltered clusters and go out only with their carers, often one to one.

For some of these the ability to hit the ball with a mallet is a challenge, and to stroke a ball through a hoop is a major achievement worthy of group celebration.

A small number are extremely talented, and were they club members they would soon get their GC handicaps down into single figures. However with their severe communication issues and need for constant supervision this is unlikely to happen.

Working with this small group is intensive on the club members involved and is mentally and physically tiring.

Dementia

Stoke Dameral School / Jiminy Wicket: Through Hoops To Hope

https://www.coventry.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/31412/jiminy_wicket_-_through_hoops_to_hope.pdf

Stake Dameral School now use us rather than the school hall, on grass, outside with real croquet equipment! Again it is also a social occasion with lunch and cakes provided by the school. The school children do all the work, we sit back and keep a watch.

The school minibus's bring the dementia suffers in from local care homes. There will have been contact between them and the young students before as part of their school programme. The youngsters take their "guests" around the courts in a form of GC. We also set up our rougher practice lawn which is more accessible for some of the less mobile visitors.

The Jiminy Wicket US team came over to visit us on one of these days.

These visitors will not convert to members. However the visits can be beneficial for raising the game's awareness, creating goodwill with local authorities and in the community as well as possibly supporting grant applications.

Other issues are relevant to present and prospective members:

Playing after having a Stroke

Our experience with club members who have had strokes seems to shown that croquet can have a positive effect on those recovering from a stroke.

In one case a husband and wife couple, where the husband, a retired GP, has had a stroke played very early or very late in the day, when no one else was around. The need in this case was to afford some privacy.

In another case the person who had had a stroke was happy to play with other club members but would need the understanding of those he was playing with to ensure he was playing the correct ball and to the correct hoop. His skill as a GC player reflected in a handicap of 10 and he has played in SWF league matches, but only in doubles with a specific partner. The need here was understanding and support.

The combination of physical and mental exercise together with hand and eye coordination that croquet offers seem beneficial.

Mobility Issues

Another of our members developed breathing problems due to previous work as a stonemason. As a low handicap AC and GC who had played in tournaments around the country he was eager to keep playing. He would trundle a small trolley with an oxygen bottle on it around the court with, connect to him by Plastic delivery tubes. He would regularly need a rest between shots.

Again the need was understanding and support and a small portable seat that could go around with him. (It also needed a holder for the glass of red wine he also took round with him!) Brian played like this until just before he passed away and his mallet had pride of place on his coffin at his funeral.

Mobility Aids

We have had, from time to time, members or visitors in wheel chairs and mobility scooters or walkers, sticks or crutches. The issues here were generally of access across grass and into club facilities.

Playing from a wheelchair by a young disabled visitor was possible as her carer could push the chair around the court and she could, for brief periods, stand to take a shot.

We have had no experience with a fully wheelchair-bound player.

The issue is about “being precious” with the grass. With heavier mobility scooters which are heavier, it is mainly an access problem. We found by experience that wet grass can also cause problems with the electrics of these machines.

Hip Replacements,etc

We have had several members who have had replacement joints, be it hips or knees. Often they are refugees from Golf or Bowls. They usually have excellent skills and play well.

Seating around the courts may be a need.

As a team manager I learnt to be careful not to overplay these members as some could tire quickly but were very enthusiastic and would overextend themselves if not watched out for.

Bereavement

Like many clubs our age profile means that bereavement amongst members is quite common. A large number of our members are widowed and the club has an important place in their lives, providing social networking, fresh air exercise and “an escape from the lonely house”.

There seem to be two approaches:

One is a member who keeps playing because of the good memories that had been shared earlier. We have several such members.

The other is the opposite; that the club is a refuge that holds no memories at all of the person they are grieving for.

We have a new member who joined just after her husband died. There was no history of croquet. She plays many times a week and has declared her membership a “lifesaver”. As a club we need to be sensitive and understanding in these situations, especially if holding social events etc.

Caveat

It can be easy to get carried away and forget that at the end of the day we are a sports club, not an arm of the social services - although sometimes it can feel like it!

Many of the groups that visit have reasonable funding they can use for such visits and are more than grateful for the opportunity to visit us. We could offer many more visits but this would be at the expense of club members' use of the facilities. Also we have found that the burden of hosting tends to fall on a small number of volunteers; it is ever thus.

Other issues affecting inclusiveness are probably based on unconscious biases. These include:

GC and AC divide

The division between the games continues in a lot of clubs. Many still keep the divisions alive by having the different codes play on different games. Both games have their place.

It is easier to learn and get started playing Golf Croquet, and the skills learned in that game are needed in AC. Perhaps there is a reason why many top players are good at both games!

In some clubs the members never meet those playing the other code.

Whites

White in itself is an issue for many. It is a symbolic colour that puts off many.

I accept people want to be smart when representing the game but why white? As a colour it probably reflects a hidden unconscious bias and certainly it gives rise to a lot of hidden connotations that include elitism, cleanliness, superiority, etc.

A great number of sports are moving away from using white, both from a practical view point but also as many teams would like to endorse other things such as club, local or national colours. This happens at national and international level in Croquet already, why not actively and positively promote it right through the game?

Worryingly, some clubs demand whites are worn for every game on their courts. That's off-putting to many, although these clubs may be privately endorsing a form of elitism that suits their own agendas.

Social Play / Competitive play

I feel that the CA does not really understand that a great many club members are just not interested in competitions. This becomes clear from the bias in the Gazette and in the website. Some clubs uphold a similar attitude.

Many members want a club that gives them a chance to exercise in a safe and social environment. Many will not play in Club internal competitions let alone leagues or tournaments. Many are not really interested in handicaps, winning or losing is not the point.

Whether they understand this or like it or not the CA is happy to take their money through membership fees. Whilst these members generally accept this, there is no way that an arrogant CA should ignore them.

Other inclusivity issues

In terms of age we are predominately older, with a club annual age averaging about 73 with a standard deviation of 7. Our two oldest players being 95, whilst out youngest member would normally be a national tournament GC player in his mid-20s who has not joined this year due to lack of competitions and work issues.

We have tried liaising with schools but are repeatedly told there is no time in the schedule or place in the curriculum for such as croquet.

We have looked at the universities in the locality. The problem is that the timing is wrong. During the croquet season the students are either coming up to exams or leaving the area for the long summer break. Those from other areas that return "home" are busy working or on holiday, so are not interested.

On gender, we have a rough 50/50% split, which I think is probably reflected through the sport. As far as race and cultural spread, we reflect the local community here in the South West.

Jonathan Toye, Downham CC

We have found half-length mallets very useful for children and for wheelchair users. There are a number of wheelchairs on the market, designed usually for Bowls, which are ideal for use on croquet lawns such as Bradshaw Buggies (www.bbbugs.co.uk) and Bowls Royce (www.bushillbowls.co.uk). Having said that, the only sort of chair that causes damage to a lawn is the standard issue with small front wheels. Any self-propelled chair or power chair will be fine on the hallowed turf. Many people use a mobility scooter which is parked near the lawn whilst a break is played. Putting a wide ended rubber bung on the end of a walking stick provides more stability and prevents lawn damage.

As part of my job before retirement I conducted Access Audits of public buildings. I am willing to offer this service to clubs.

Andrea Widdison

Over the last few years my balance, stamina and mobility have deteriorated through having Multiple Sclerosis but I love croquet and want to continue playing as long as I can. Having been a keen tennis player and coach I needed a form of competitive sport and croquet fitted the bill. The plus of being able to use your mallet as a walking stick is a bonus!

I think that making clubs aware that croquet (in various forms) can be accessible if players have disabilities is a good start. Perhaps we can get some articles in various magazines that are aimed at people with disabilities, but before we ice the cake we need to bake it.

How can we make our sport inclusive? I can only speak from my experience. Here are a few of my observations all based on my mobility issues:

Accessibility

I expect clubs are worried that making things accessible is expensive! Information needs to be readily available for grants etc.

If new builds are happening then it's the perfect time to install things. Grab rails or hand rails and ramps need to be in place on steps and by loos. These adaptations can be quite expensive but maybe there are some other cheaper ways around this by using portable ramps (around £100) that can be moved when not in use and stored flat. We bought grab rails for £10 to fit at home, so things don't have to be dreadfully costly.

Also sometimes it is simply not being aware.... adding a smaller step next to a deep one helps.... don't build a ramp that's too steep, make sure that any wooden hand rails are splinter free etc.

One of the most frustrating things I've come across is when adaptations have been made without consulting the people who need to use them!

Loos

Gosh .... this is an important one! For people like me who have limited mobility, players that experience fatigue or for players with continence problems then the position and distance of a loo from the lawns is really important! It's obviously not possible to move loos but we need to make people aware if there is a trek to the loos as it will help them make a judgement if the club is suitable for them or not.

Often in competitions there is a time element involved between games... someone with mobility issues can't just 'nip off 'for a quick comfort break. Neither can players with stomas etc.

Support rails for wheelchair users aren't too expensive and fold flat.

Lawns

Let people with mobility/ fatigue issues play on lawns close to the clubhouse (and loos!!)

Perhaps benches near lawns should be encouraged although lots of clubs do have these.

Walkways

Tarmac looks ugly and pebbles/ gravel/ bark or long grassy paths look much nicer but they are a nightmare for people in a chair or using a wheeled walker (as I do) or even those relying on a stick. This never occurred to me until a couple of years ago!

Uneven and narrow paths also create issues.

Tournaments

Fatigue is often a real problem. Long tournaments where you can play up to 9 games in a day (I'm talking GC!!) can be a problem and a barrier that may stop some players entering. Also, the position of a bye during a tournament is important. Someone with fatigue issues doesn't need a bye first round or last round, but somewhere near the middle of a tournament.

Timed games

These can be difficult for people with mobility issues. It now takes me twice as long to cover the court so timed games make life difficult. Maybe allowing an extra discretionary 5 minutes would help?

Awareness when managing competitions

Perhaps the tournament manager could ask for anyone with a specific requirement to inform them in advance with their entry so that provision can be made (e.g. no secondary colours, avoid lawn 3 if it's miles away).

The Bowls fraternity have set something up already, though the fact that they have two separate groups doesn't seem very inclusive. We can learn from that, can't we?

Appendix 2

Suggested inclusivity and diversity survey of croquet players

This is not a final version and needs the mechanics of how it will be conducted anonymously approving before implementation. It shows the range of questions that would be required to give a reasonable picture of the inclusivity and diversity amongst croquet players.

The preamble explaining why this data is being collected is essential because we have to persuade people that it is worthwhile and in the interests of everyone in our sport. Possibly a couple of questions about the impact of the pandemic and how croquet has/ has not helped would be useful in sparking some interest.

Older people can be particularly reluctant to fill in questionnaires about themselves. A 'prefer not to say' or 'other' option should be included for each question

1. Do you consider yourself to be male/female: M/F

2. Age first played croquet : Under 18, 18-25, 26-40, 41-50, 51-65, over 65

3. Age first joined a croquet club: Under 18, 18-25, 26-40, 41-50, 51-65, over 65

4. Age now: Under 18, 18-25, 26-40, 41-50, 51-65, 66-75, over76

5. Code played: AC, GC, both

6. In which Federation is your main club: London & SE, SW, Southern, East Midlands, West Midlands, East Anglia: Yorkshire, NW, Croquet North.

7. How would you describe your ethnic origin:

White:
- British,
- Irish,
- other European,
- other

Asian:
- Pakistani,
- Indian,
- other

Far eastern:
- Chinese,
- Japanese,
- other

Middle eastern:
- Arab,
- Israeli,
- other

Black:
- African,
- Caribbean,
- other

Mixed race

8. How many are in your household?

Adults

Children (under 18)

9. Do you consider yourself LGBT+: Y/N

10. Are you currently:

At school, college or university on a full time course

Doing an apprenticeship

Unemployed/seeking work

Working part time

Working full time

Retired

11. Which of the following best describes your work (or your working life if you are now retired)?

Never worked/long term unemployed/student

Domestic duties

Unskilled or semi-skilled work

Technical, or skilled manual work

Supervisory, clerical, junior management

Middle management, administrative or professional

Senior management, chartered professional

Self-employed

12. Do you have a 'blue badge'? Y/N

13. Do you have any of the following (tick all that apply):

Visual impairment

Hearing difficulties

Difficulty walking short distances or with steps

Lack of stamina or breathing difficulty

Heart problems

Social or behavioural conditions such as autism, aspergers, ADHD

Memory loss

Depression or anxiety

Neurological disorder e.g. Parkinsons, multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease

Organ transplant

Other long-term (>12 months) health condition

Other long-term (>12 months) mental health problems

Other longstanding (>12 months) disability

14. Do you have any special requirements in order to play (tick all that apply):

Walking aid such as a stick or frame

Proximity to toilet

Level access
Wheelchair
Time limited or shortened games
Visual aids on hoops/balls
Specially adapted mallet

15. What was your main influence in taking up croquet:

Family member or friend already playing
Open Day
Saw it being played locally
Read about in press
Social media
Went with an organised group
Demonstration from local club
Picked up a leaflet
Looking for a sport after injury/illness/retiring from another sport
Looking for a pastime
Wanted to play sport but not interested in team sport
Relatively cheap
No specialist equipment required to begin with
Encouraged at school/university.

16. Reasons for enjoying playing (put in order of importance to you):

Good company
Friendly competition
Fresh air
Tournaments
Meeting people
Making friends
Exercise
Relaxation
Learning new skills
Mental well-being
Challenging yourself
Going to new places
Like-minded people
Rivalry
Keeping flexible
Good company

17. Please tell us about anything at your club that has helped include people who may not have thought about playing croquet previously (open ended)

Highest academic qualification and household income are questions that have been asked in previous quinquennial surveys and could be added to this.