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ECB invests in ACE programme to create more opportunities for young Black cricketers

The ECB is to support the continued expansion of the ACE programme so that it can provide opportunities for young cricketers from Black communities in more locations across England. ACE, which was originally established by Surrey Cricket Club in 2020, is now an independent charity designed to engage a new generation of children and young people from Black communities within the recreational game and talent pathway.

Following its successful expansion in Birmingham and, with support from Royal London, to Bristol during 2021, ACE will use the financial support from the ECB to establish programmes in four more locations (Nottingham, Manchester, Leeds and additional London boroughs) so that it can provide opportunities to more young people. In each of its locations, ACE aims to build grassroots cricket programmes, develop talent pathways and talent ID systems to increase access for those from Black communities.

The ECB will also fund a National Operations Manager role at ACE to support the delivery of the expansion plans. Since its launch in south London, ACE has already created cricketing opportunities for more than 6,000 young people through its community hubs, academy, elite programme, trials and schools' sessions. Over 10,000 young cricketers are expected to pass through ACE's Talent ID programme each year in the new areas, with over 40,000 school children due to participate in ACE school schemes annually, with sessions due to launch in both primary and secondary schools in those areas.

Ebony Rainford-Brent, chair of the ACE programme, said:

“This is a really significant moment for ACE. Although we started small in south London, we always envisaged this programme was going to have a big national impact. To be in six cities and on both sides of the Thames in London within two years of existence proves that our model is starting to change the game.

“ACE is focused on connecting the dots to help under-represented groups from the grassroots to the elite. We know this programme will help open up new pathways to do exactly that and are excited to partner with the teams at all these different counties to have an impact.

“We're really grateful to the ECB for this meaningful support, allowing us to build on our initial backing from Sport England and start taking ACE to the next level – a truly national organisation.”

Clare Connor, Managing Director of England Women's Cricket, added:

“The team at ACE are doing brilliant work creating opportunities for young people from Black communities to play cricket and develop their talent. After their early impact in south London, Bristol and Birmingham, we are really

excited to be helping ACE to increase access to cricket in more urban centres across the country. We know that targeted opportunities and support are vitally important in making cricket a game for everyone and ensuring that every young cricketer can fulfil their potential.”

Support for the expansion of the ACE programme is one of a range of actions that the ECB is setting out today in an update on the implementation of cricket’s game-wide plan to tackle racism and promote inclusion and diversity at all levels. The update also includes several other measures to address barriers experienced by players from diverse backgrounds in progressing into professional teams. Other immediate steps being taken include the expansion of the ECB’s Community Talent Champion programme, the offer of more than 3,000 bursaries to help more those from underrepresented groups to become cricket coaches or develop their skills, and the provision of £1 million of financial support for young people in the talent pathway.

More details can be found in the update [here](#).

Notes to editors

Under the ACE expansion, the programme will be established in Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Middlesex, Kent and Essex.

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