



Graham Gooch, Waltham Forest Council Leader, Clare Coghill & Lord Patel of Bradford, Chair of ECB South Asian Advisory Group open Leyton Cricket Hub

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## **SOUTH ASIAN ACTION PLAN MARKS ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY WITH URBAN CRICKET CENTRE OPENING**

England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) today celebrated the opening of the new Urban Cricket Centre, 'Leyton Cricket Hub', just over a year on from the launch of the South Asian Action Plan.

The opening of the ground-breaking Leyton Cricket Hub, created in conjunction with Waltham Forest Council and Essex County Cricket Club, is

the first Urban Cricket Centre of its kind. Designed to increase participation and encourage positive social cohesion, the facility will provide accessible and affordable cricket for the local community, brought to life through programmes such as Women's Soft Ball Cricket, All Stars Cricket and tape ball cricket.

Announcing the facility opening, Lord Patel of Bradford, Chair of the ECB South Asian Advisory Group said: "To mark the one-year anniversary of the South Asian Action Plan with the opening of the first Urban Cricket Centre is a landmark moment. Cricket has a unique ability to reach across diverse social, cultural and religious groups and this centre hopes to contribute to building a stronger, healthier community."

Today marks the launch of the first phase of the scheme, delivered in just six months, with subsequent phases to see the creation of a real food hub, which will feature a restaurant and cafe. Growing beds will allow local residents to cultivate food which will then be sold as part at a regular food market selling local produce on-site.

Speaking at the launch, Waltham Forest council leader, Clare Coghill, said: "We are absolutely thrilled to be launching the Leyton Cricket Hub today – the first in the ECB's plan to develop a network of Urban Cricket Centres.

"In Waltham Forest, we are totally committed to giving people the opportunity to pursue their passions, realise their ambitions and lead healthy and active lifestyles. Sport is a fantastic way of breaking down barriers to participation and this successful partnership with ECB is a real asset for our residents, adding to an already eclectic sport, leisure and cultural offer in our borough.

"Our strength in Waltham Forest is through our diversity and we take great pride in giving a platform for our South Asian communities to enjoy and participate for many years to come in a sport loved around the world."

Derek Bowden, Chief Executive at Essex Cricket, said: "This is a great project and the Club are proud to be part of the grand opening with Waltham Forest Council and ECB.

"The ground will always be a major part of Essex County Cricket Club's

history with many former players developing their careers there. The funding received will help give a boost to not only the facilities, but the London Borough of Waltham Forest's residents.

“We are dedicated to working with Waltham Forest Council to continue growing cricket in the area for all ages, and these new facilities will provide a hub for youngsters to develop their skills and become stars of the future.”

Adil Rashid, England cricketer, added: “This is an exciting facility that will help grow the game amongst the South Asian community here. It's important that people have places to play in inner-cities and this is a great example of how the sport can bring people together in the local area.”

In May 2018, ECB launched the South Asian Action Plan to engage more effectively with South Asian communities at every level of the game. It focused on 11 priorities spanning Recreational Cricket, Talent Development & Retention, Attendance, Administration, and Culture & Facilities. The plan was implemented to address several key gaps including a lack of opportunities for the South Asian community to engage with cricket, removing the barriers to participation and developing stronger relationships between stakeholders across cricket and the community.

One year on from the launch, the plan has already delivered a significant number of initiatives with many more to progress in the coming months & years:

- The Leyton Urban Cricket Centre has now opened

- £1.2m of funding secured from Sport England and invested in the recruitment and training of 2,000 South Asian female volunteers

- A pilot programme with the Springboard Foundation is creating life-changing opportunities for four talented young cricketers

- 50 female coaches have been trained and six new women's softball leagues set-up in urban areas

- 1,000 parents have been educated on the talent pathway for kids

-ECB T20 City Cup has expanded to 16 cities delivering greater reach

-179 street projects have been set-up through Chance to Shine with 4,100 children reached across the country

-110 non-turf pitches will be installed by the end of 2019

One of the most notable successes of the plan has come via £1.2m of National Lottery funding from Sport England to develop a network of 2,000 South Asian female role models to inspire the next generation of cricketers. The new volunteers are combining coaching and mentoring to support new players coming into the sport, helping to deliver All Stars Cricket - ECB's entry level cricket programme for five to eight-year olds, across seven cities in the UK: Birmingham, Bradford, London, Leeds, Leicester, Manchester and Nottingham.

Shruti Saujani, ECB City Programme Manager, who is leading the South Asian Female Volunteering Programme, commented: "This has the potential to make a massive difference to cricket in this country. We are already seeing some incredible stories of South Asian women across the country taking up the game and becoming role models for the next generation."

For more detailed information and to download the action plan in full, please visit [ecb.co.uk/southasiancricket](http://ecb.co.uk/southasiancricket) or contact us via [SouthAsianCricket@ecb.co.uk](mailto:SouthAsianCricket@ecb.co.uk)

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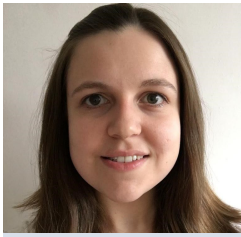
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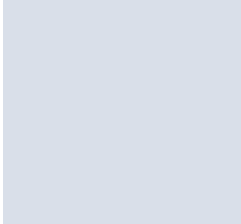


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