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Tens of thousands more state school children and Black and South Asian cricketers set to benefit from new partnerships to break down cricket's barriers

- Additional £2m investment in five charity partners to help realise ambition of being the most inclusive sport
- Work to tackle equity in state school talent and participation, disability, Black and South Asian communities
- Significant acceleration in work to support communities where

cricket has been hard to access

New and expanded ECB charity partnerships will provide free cricket to more state school children, open up talent pathways to young people from state schools and ethnically diverse communities, and help young British South Asian cricketers make their professional breakthrough.

An additional £2million injection over the next two and a half years stands to benefit tens of thousands more children and young people as part of efforts to make cricket the country's most inclusive sport and address barriers highlighted in the recent report by the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC).

The ECB will officially partner with MCC Foundation, African Caribbean Engagement (ACE) Programme and the South Asian Cricket Academy (SACA) to open up opportunities and talent pathways for state school, Black and British South Asian cricketers. Long-term partners Chance to Shine and Lord's Taverners will also receive extra funding to deliver cricket to more state schools with high numbers of children on free school meals and for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

State school cricket

Through partnerships with Chance to Shine, the MCC Foundation and Lord's Taverners, the ECB aims to offer cricket in more state schools to give children from underserved communities and students with special education needs the chance to play the game, as well as offering more opportunities to talented state school children who might currently struggle to access talent pathways.

Chance to Shine

Working with Chance to Shine, we will now take cricket into more state schools where at least 40% of the student population qualifies for free school meals.

Our long-term partnership already funds the delivery of cricket in around 4,000 state schools, and last academic year we expanded this specifically to target an additional 300 schools and 38,000 students who have the greatest

chance of missing out on the opportunity to play cricket.

Today's announcement will see this being extended further, offering up to 20,000 more students in another 150 schools the chance to pick up a bat and ball for free as part of the school day.

Lord's Taverners

An expansion of our work with Lord's Taverners will also see cricket delivered in more schools for students with disabilities or special educational needs.

Last academic year, through increased funding, cricket was delivered in 400 new schools for young people with special educational needs and disabilities, benefitting around 13,000 children. This expansion will see cricket delivered into another 200 schools, reaching another 7,000 students.

MCC Foundation

By partnering with the MCC Foundation for the first time, we will enable high quality coaching and match play to thousands more state educated young people, opening up access to talent pathways to youngster who might otherwise miss out.

MCC Foundation will be able to expand its network of hubs, increasing them from 77 at the moment, to around 150 in 2025 with funding from the MCC as well. These will provide free-to-access training and match play to around 2,000 more young people by 2025. Overall, over 5,000 places will be open to state educated young people aged 11-16 across the country by 2025 with up to 45% of these places for girls. There will be at least one Hub in every county, many located in some of the hardest to reach communities.

The Hubs focus on talent, helping promising youngsters who have been engaged through mass participation activities or non-traditional formats to join cricket clubs, develop their hard-ball skills, and access the formal talent pathways. The Hubs also have a transformational impact off the cricket pitch, helping participants to feel happier and more confident, and improving their focus and performance at school, including access to mentors for all participants.

As well as increasing the number of Hubs, MCC Foundation will also be investing in the quality and depth of the programme, providing participants with extensive match play opportunities, an increased winter coaching programme, and national competitions for all ages with finals to be played at Lord's.

Black and South Asian communities

Working with the African Caribbean Engagement (ACE) Programme and South Asian Cricket Academy (SACA), we want to break down barriers faced by talented youngsters from ethnically diverse backgrounds in reaching their cricketing potential.

African Caribbean Engagement (ACE) Programme

ACE, which aims to reverse the decline in Black participation in cricket, will become an official Charity Partner for the first time, with a new three-year funding plan to enable its work in six cities and to expand into additional London boroughs. With this the programme aims to engage over 42,000 young people from Black Communities. The funding arrangement will allow ACE to further support African and Caribbean cricket clubs nationally.

Since being established in 2020 by Ebony Rainford-Brent and Surrey County Cricket Club, the programme has supported over 20,000 budding young cricketers, providing elite academy programmes and scholarships as well as grassroots cricket programmes and developing coaches. The ECB previously funded its expansion to Birmingham, Bristol, Sheffield, Nottingham, Manchester and additional London boroughs.

South Asian Cricket Academy (SACA)

The ECB will also partner with SACA for the first time to address the disparity between British South Asian participation in recreational and professional cricket. While around 30% of recreational players are estimated to be from British South Asian backgrounds, this falls to around 5% of male professional cricketers coming from South Asian backgrounds.

SACA has been successful in providing a platform for British South Asian male cricketers who had previously missed out on contracts. Through training and

matches against Second XI teams, seven have already gone on to sign professional deals, with Jafer Chohan also becoming the first to be signed up for The Hundred.

New funding will now allow this work to be widened, with an expanded player showcase during the summer – with more games for a SACA First XI and regional fixtures providing a second tier of player development – as well as additional investment in winter training. It is expected that introducing regional fixtures could provide opportunities for a further 50 players.

The partnership builds on the work of its co-founder Tom Brown, with the ECB having part-funded his PhD researching the lack of British South Asian players and coaches progressing into the professional game.

Comments

ECB

Richard Gould, ECB Chief Executive Officer, said: “If we are to realise our ambition of making cricket the most inclusive sport, we have to break down barriers which have stopped children and young people from state schools and ethnically diverse backgrounds realising their potential. These five charity partnerships are focused on doing just that.

“These partners all have a proven track record, and by backing their expertise we can give many more children the chance to play and to reach their potential. By working together in a targeted way, we can make more of an impact in addressing some of the challenges identified by the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket.”

Chance to Shine

Laura Cordingley, CEO of Chance to Shine, said: “The ECB’s support will help thousands more children in schools to find a love for the sport, as we work towards our mission to give all young people the chance to play, learn and develop through cricket. With this work, we’re deliberately choosing those schools that need this support the most, where 40% or more of their pupils are eligible for free school meals.

“Research has shown that our programmes not only grow children’s love for the game, but develop vital life skills and lead to sustained play in schools across the country. In addition, our Street cricket projects will continue to give these young people a club to call their own in areas that often face barriers to accessing the sport. Our sincere thanks goes to ECB for their ongoing support and we look forward to spearheading a brighter future for the game.”

Lord’s Taverners

Mark Curtin, Lord’s Taverners CEO, said: “We’ve made phenomenal progress in first year of this partnership which has allowed us to bring cricket to thousands more young people – many of whom rarely get the chance to experience sport. We’re seeing and hearing every day from teachers, parents and carers the impact this crucial work is delivering – not just in the school environment but also the wider outcomes the programme is achieving.

“This increased funding will allow us to grow our reach into more schools and continue to deliver inclusive cricket to thousands more young people – none of which would be possible without this partnership and fantastic support we receive from the ECB.”

MCC Foundation

Sarah Fane, Director, MCC Foundation, said: “MCCF is passionate about breaking down the barriers to accessing hardball cricket and enabling thousands of young people to fulfil their potential through the game. We are delighted to receive this transformational funding from ECB to grow our National Hub Programme, doubling its reach and enhancing its delivery and all the opportunities it offers to young people.”

ACE

Chevy Green, Director of Programmes at ACE, said: “Agreeing a long-term funding deal for the next three years is brilliant for ACE as we continue to grow and we would like to thank ECB for their hard work in getting to this point.

“This new partnership will enable us to make long-term plans about the

evolution of ACE, the addition of new programmes as we continue to support underrepresented talent from the grassroots to the elite.”

SACA

Tom Brown, SACA co-founder, said: “SACA is thrilled to embark on this exciting new partnership with the ECB. This collaboration will provide us with much-needed resources to empower talented players with further opportunities to break into professional cricket. Together, we aim for this partnership to address the deficit of Asian representation in English professional cricket, fostering a more inclusive and diverse future for the sport.”

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