



West Chiltington & Thakeham Cricket Club

Youth Policy 2025-2030

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1. Introduction

1.1 Outline

This Youth Policy serves as a guiding framework for West Chilmington & Thakeham Cricket Club’s junior cricket initiatives. It emphasises creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment that promotes skill development, personal growth, and sportsmanship. The Club is dedicated to offering young players:

- Opportunities to learn and excel in cricket.
- A safe and friendly atmosphere for training and matches.
- The chance to build leadership, teamwork, and confidence.
- Lasting friendships within the cricketing community.

By fostering these values, the Club aims to nurture well-rounded individuals and a thriving cricketing culture.

1.2 Vision

West Chiltonington & Thakeham Cricket Club envisions becoming the premier choice for young cricketers in the region. By fostering a culture of excellence and inclusivity, the Club aims to:

- Provide top-tier coaching and facilities to nurture talent.
- Cultivate a welcoming environment for players of all backgrounds.
- Promote teamwork, respect, and a lifelong love for the game.
- Strengthen community ties through cricket and camaraderie.

This vision reflects the Club's dedication to the holistic development of its players and its role as a cornerstone of local cricketing excellence.

1.3 Equity

Equity is a core principle at West Chiltonington & Thakeham Cricket Club, ensuring fairness, inclusivity, and equal opportunity for all individuals engaged in cricket. The Club is committed to eliminating barriers and fostering an environment where every member feels valued and respected.

1.3.1 Club Definition

Equity means creating a level playing field where all participants, regardless of background, can access and enjoy cricket. It involves recognising and addressing inequalities to promote inclusivity.

1.3.2 Approach

The Club respects the rights, dignity, and worth of every individual. It is committed to providing equal opportunities for participation, irrespective of age, gender, ability, race, religion, or socioeconomic status.

1.3.3 Rights

All members have the right to enjoy cricket in a safe, welcoming, and harassment-free environment. The Club ensures that these rights are upheld and protected.

1.3.4 Responsibilities

Every member of the Club shares the responsibility to:

- Promote inclusivity and oppose discrimination.
- Respect and support diversity within the Club.
- Uphold the Club's values of fairness and equality in all activities and interactions. Members must oppose discrimination and uphold equality in accordance with Club policies.

1.4 Disability Policy

1.4.1 Physical Access

The Club will work hard, during the term of the Plan, with West Chiltington Parish Council to accommodate full access to the Club, its facilities and clubhouse.

1.4.2 Participation

The Club will ensure that its 'cricket for all policy' is thoroughly implemented and provides the opportunity for children with learning and/or physical disabilities to participate with other children wherever possible. Where circumstances prevent this, the Club will engage with other local clubs and build links with them to provide opportunities for participation.

2. ClubMark

2.1 ClubMark Accreditation

West Chiltington & Thakeham Cricket Club has achieved ClubMark accreditation, a prestigious recognition granted by Sport England and supported by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB). This accreditation ensures that the Club operates to the highest standards of:

- **Sports Safety:** Providing a secure environment for all participants.
- **Child Protection:** Adhering to robust safeguarding policies and practices.
- **Sports Equity:** Promoting inclusivity and fairness in all activities.
- **Club Management:** Demonstrating sound governance and effective leadership.

The Club's commitment to maintaining these standards reflects its dedication to providing an exceptional experience for all members, particularly the junior section.

3. Safe Hands Policy

3.1 Overview

The ECB's Safe Hands policy is central to West Chiltington & Thakeham Cricket Club's commitment to safeguarding the welfare of junior members. The Club ensures that all activities adhere to the highest safeguarding standards, creating a safe, friendly, and enjoyable cricketing environment.

3.2 Club Safeguarding Officer

The Club has designated a Safeguarding Officer responsible for addressing all child protection matters. This role involves overseeing safeguarding policies, acting as the first point of contact for concerns, and ensuring compliance with ECB guidelines.

3.3 Information Resources

Members can access comprehensive safeguarding information and resources through the ECB's dedicated safeguarding webpage. This includes guidance documents, policies, and toolkits to support best practices in safeguarding.

3.4 Training for All

The Club is committed to equipping all members involved with junior cricket with essential safeguarding knowledge. Training courses, including an introduction to safeguarding, are made accessible to ensure that every individual understands their responsibilities in maintaining a secure and supportive environment.

4. Youth Development

4.1 Policy

West Chiltington & Thakeham Cricket Club is committed to providing a safe, enjoyable, and development-focused environment for young cricketers. The aim is to nurture talent, foster a love for the game, and promote personal growth through cricket.

4.2 History

The Club's youth development program began in 2002 with informal cricket sessions during the summer. Since then, it has evolved into a structured initiative, becoming a cornerstone of the Club's success and growth. The introduction of a formal Youth Policy in 2004 further emphasised the Club's commitment to long-term junior cricket development.

4.3 Reviews

The Youth Policy and Development Plan are reviewed annually to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Key areas assessed include:

- Membership numbers and age group sizes.
- Coaching and playing capacity.
- Participation in leagues, festivals, and other activities.

4.4 Management

A dedicated Junior Management Committee (JMC) oversees youth cricket. The committee includes:

- Club Chairman.
- Youth Chairperson (U13-U18).
- Junior Chairperson (U5-U12).
- Girls' Chairperson.
- Coaches and Safeguarding Officer.

The JMC ensures smooth operations, compliance with Club policies, and alignment with the Club's vision.

4.5 Junior Coaching

4.5.1 Coaching Approach

The Club provides structured coaching sessions throughout the summer and selective off-season training where we partner with an external provider. The focus is on creating a supportive environment where players can develop their skills at their own pace.

4.5.2 Professional Coaches

Professional coaching was introduced in 2016 to enhance the quality of training. These coaches implement structured programs that benefit both junior and senior players.

4.5.3 Continued Development

The Club supports ongoing development by encouraging members, including parents, to undertake coaching qualifications. Funding is available for training courses to ensure a robust coaching framework.

4.6 Practice and Matches

The Club offers year-round opportunities for practice and competition, including:

- Indoor and outdoor nets.
- Friendly matches and league games.
- Fun cricket sessions for younger members.

4.7 Academy

Reintroducing the Academy program in 2025, the Club aims to nurture high-potential players in the u11s, U13 and U15 categories. The Academy will provide advanced coaching and prepare players for higher levels of competition.

4.8 Facilities

4.8.1 Main Ground

The Recreation Ground at West Chilton remains the primary venue, offering excellent facilities praised by visitors.

4.8.2 Second Ground

Acquired in 2019, the Thakeham ground supports additional teams, including juniors, and has undergone significant upgrades.

4.8.3 Grounds Improvements

Recent enhancements include new artificial wickets, grass strips, and net installations to support training and matches.

4.8.4 Investments and Additional Venues

The Club will continue investing in facilities and seek collaborations with local schools and clubs to meet future demands.

4.8.5 Playing Equipment

Ensuring high-quality equipment is always available, the Club prioritizes safety and accessibility for all players.

4.9 School Partnerships

The Club actively partners with local schools to promote cricket. Objectives include:

- Providing access to cricket programs for students.
- Introducing coaching expertise to school-level cricket.
- Building pathways for school players to join the Club.

4.9.1 Core Principles

All activities adhere to the Club's safeguarding and conduct policies, ensuring inclusivity and fairness.

4.9.2 Club Commitments

The Club supports schools by offering coaching assistance, promoting participation, and ensuring economic inclusivity through initiatives like the Tim Monday Fund.

4.9.3 Partnership Features

The Club encourages schools to integrate cricket into their curriculum and collaborate on shared development goals.

4.10 Recruitment

Recruitment efforts focus on engaging:

- Schools and communities without access to cricket.
- Other sports clubs, leveraging cross-sport collaboration.
- The wider community through social media, local press, and word-of-mouth campaigns.

These strategies ensure a steady influx of young talent and support the Club's growth.

Leveraging local resources and outreach to recruit future players.

5. Membership and Registration

5.1 Registration Form

All juniors wishing to join and participate in Club activities must complete the Annual Junior Membership and Registration Form. This form is available online via the PLAI system and requires details about the player, emergency contacts, and relevant health information.

5.2 Membership Fees

Membership fees are reviewed and approved annually at the Club's AGM. These fees must be paid before the start of each new season. Information regarding fee structures will be communicated to all members in advance.

5.3 Access to Registration Details

The Club securely stores registration details on its membership platform, PLAI. Access to this information is restricted to authorised personnel, such as team managers and coaches, who have undergone the necessary safeguarding checks.

5.4 Rights of Membership

Upon successful registration and payment of fees, juniors are entitled to:

- Participate in age-appropriate Club practices, matches, and events.
- Access Club facilities and equipment.
- Receive guidance and coaching from qualified volunteers.

Additionally, parents or guardians of junior members automatically become social members of the Club, enabling them to participate in its wider community activities.

6. Codes of Conduct and Safeguarding

6.1 Codes of Conduct

The Club upholds clear and comprehensive codes of conduct to ensure respectful and ethical behaviour across all roles and relationships. These codes apply to all participants, including officials, adult members, junior members, and parents/carers.

6.1.1 Club Officials and Volunteers

Club officials and volunteers are expected to:

- Prioritize the safety and well-being of all participants.
- Act with integrity and professionalism.
- Foster an inclusive and respectful environment.
- Adhere to the Club's policies and ECB guidelines.

6.1.2 Adult Members

Adult members are required to:

- Exhibit sportsmanship and respect towards officials, teammates, and opponents.
- Serve as role models for younger members.
- Abide by Club rules and conduct standards.

6.1.3 Junior Members

Junior members are encouraged to:

- Respect the rules of the game and decisions of officials.
- Support teammates and promote team spirit.
- Maintain a positive attitude and commitment to fair play.

6.1.4 Parents/Carers

Parents and carers should:

- Encourage their children to enjoy cricket and play within the rules.
- Refrain from criticizing players or officials.

- Foster a supportive and positive atmosphere during games and practices.

6.2 DBS and Safeguarding Procedures

6.2.1 Club Safeguarding Officer

The designated Safeguarding Officer oversees all safeguarding matters, ensuring compliance with ECB guidelines and acting as the primary point of contact for any concerns.

6.2.2 DBS Checks

All individuals working regularly with junior members must undergo Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. This process ensures the suitability of volunteers and staff for roles involving children.

6.2.3 Safeguarding Training

The Club ensures all relevant personnel complete ECB safeguarding training to stay updated on best practices and responsibilities. Refresher courses are mandatory at regular intervals.

6.3 Breaches of Policy

The Club is fully committed to ensuring compliance with its codes of conduct and safeguarding policies. Any breaches will be handled swiftly and fairly to uphold the integrity of the Club and ensure the safety and well-being of all members.

6.3.1 Code of Conduct Breaches

If a breach of the Club's code of conduct occurs:

- **Reporting:** Any member may report a breach to the Club Safeguarding Officer or another designated official.
- **Investigation:** The Club will initiate a timely investigation, involving relevant committee members. Individuals involved may be interviewed to gather facts.
- **Resolution:** Appropriate actions, such as verbal or written warnings, temporary suspensions, or other measures, will be decided based on the severity of the breach.
- **Appeals:** Members have the right to appeal decisions by submitting a written request to the Club's Management Committee.

6.3.2 Safeguarding Concerns

For safeguarding-related breaches or concerns:

- **Immediate Reporting:** Concerns must be reported directly to the Club Safeguarding Officer, who will act in line with ECB protocols.
- **Escalation:** If necessary, cases will be referred to the County Safeguarding Officer, local authorities, or other external bodies.
- **Confidentiality:** All reports will be handled with the utmost confidentiality to protect the identities and privacy of those involved.
- **Follow-Up:** The Club will maintain communication with relevant parties throughout the investigation and resolution process, ensuring appropriate actions are taken to address the issue.

These procedures ensure transparency, fairness, and adherence to safeguarding best practices in all Club activities. Safeguarding concerns should be reported immediately to the Club Safeguarding Officer. All concerns are treated with confidentiality and addressed according to ECB protocols, including escalation to external authorities if necessary.

7.0 Coaches and Qualifications

7.1 Coaches

Coaches play a pivotal role in the success of the Club's youth programs. West Chilton & Thakeham Cricket Club is dedicated to:

- **Recruitment:** Actively encouraging members, parents, and volunteers to train as coaches.
- **Qualification:** Supporting individuals in obtaining ECB-accredited coaching certifications.
- **Inclusivity:** Welcoming coaches of all backgrounds to contribute to the Club's inclusive environment.
- **Mentorship:** Providing opportunities for experienced coaches to mentor new recruits, ensuring continuous improvement in coaching standards.

By investing in the development of skilled and motivated coaches, the Club ensures a positive and enriching experience for all players.

7.2 Courses

West Chilton & Thakeham Cricket Club supports the continuous development of its coaches by providing fully funded access to essential training programs. These courses ensure that all coaching and support staff possess the knowledge and skills needed to maintain high standards of cricket education and safeguarding.

7.2.1 Coaching Courses

The Club encourages participation in a range of ECB-accredited coaching courses, including:

- **ECB Support Coach:** Designed for those assisting lead coaches in delivering cricket sessions.
- **ECB Foundation Coach:** Equipping individuals to lead coaching sessions independently.
- **ECB Core Coach:** Focused on player-centered coaching and advanced development strategies.

7.2.2 Safeguarding Courses

Safeguarding is a priority at the Club. All individuals working with junior members must complete ECB safeguarding training, which provides guidance on creating a secure environment for young players. Refresher courses are mandatory every three years.

7.2.3 First Aid Courses

To ensure player safety, the Club arranges first aid training for coaches and support staff. These courses provide the skills necessary to respond to emergencies during training and matches. The Club strives to have at least one first-aid-trained individual per age group at all times.

7.4 Insurance

West Chiltington & Thakeham Cricket Club prioritizes the safety and security of all participants by maintaining comprehensive insurance coverage. This includes:

- **Player Protection:** Ensuring all junior members are covered for accidents and injuries during Club activities, provided they are fully registered and paid members.
- **Coach and Volunteer Liability:** Covering the actions of coaches and volunteers who adhere to the Club's policies and ECB guidelines.
- **Facility Coverage:** Including public liability and accident insurance for all Club facilities.

The Club works closely with the ECB to ensure insurance policies meet or exceed the required standards, creating a safe environment for everyone involved.

7.5 Coach Register

The Club maintains a comprehensive register of all coaches to ensure compliance with ECB standards and to support effective management of coaching activities. The register includes:

7.5.1 Safe Hands Management System

The ECB's Safe Hands Management System (SHMS) is used to track the DBS status of all coaches. By accepting their roles within SHMS, coaches commit to adhering to safeguarding policies and Club codes of conduct.

7.5.2 Qualification Records

A manual qualification record is maintained to document:

- Coaching certifications and levels achieved.
- Safeguarding training completion dates.
- First aid qualifications with expiration dates.
- ECB Coaches Association membership details.

This register ensures that all coaches remain qualified and prepared to uphold the highest standards of safety and coaching excellence.

8. Junior Practice Sessions

8.1 Age Group Selection

Age group selection policies ensure that all junior players are assigned to teams appropriate for their age and skill level, promoting safety, development, and fair play.

8.1.1 General Policy

Players are expected to participate within their designated age group for both training sessions and matches. This policy supports equitable competition and developmental consistency.

8.1.2 Exceptional Circumstances (League)

In situations where a team cannot field a full lineup, players from adjacent age groups may be considered. Such decisions will prioritize player safety and compliance with league rules.

8.1.3 Exceptional Circumstances (Other Competitions)

For tournaments or special competitions, the Club may allow players to "play up" in older age groups based on exceptional ability or developmental benefits. These decisions require approval from the Junior Management Committee (JMC).

8.2 Indoor Nets

The Club offers winter indoor net sessions through an external provider to maintain skill levels during the off-season. These sessions are held at suitable local facilities and cater to different age groups and abilities.

8.3 Outdoor Nets

From spring through summer, outdoor net training sessions are organized at the Club's grounds. Sessions are led by qualified coaches and aim to:

- Enhance technical skills.
- Build game awareness.
- Foster team cohesion.

8.4 Helmets

The Club mandates the use of helmets for all junior players under 18 when batting, wicket-keeping (standing up), or fielding in close positions during hardball and Incrediballs games and training sessions. This policy aligns with ECB safety standards.

8.5 Junior Leagues/Matches

The Club actively participates in local and regional junior cricket leagues. Teams are selected to provide all players with opportunities to experience competitive cricket while upholding the "Spirit of Cricket."

8.6 Junior Cricket Festivals

Junior cricket festivals offer a platform for players to enjoy the game in a fun and less formal setting. These events focus on team-building, sportsmanship, and broadening cricketing experiences.

8.7 ECB Cup Competitions

The Club fields teams in ECB Cup competitions for U13, U15 boys, and U15 girls. These tournaments allow talented players to compete at higher levels, promoting excellence and development.

9. Sussex Pathway

West Chiltington will annually nominate players who meet the selection criteria established by Sussex. These nominated players will then proceed through the selection process.