

SOMERSET CRICKET FOUNDATION – CASE STUDY

[Somerset Cricket Foundation](#) have been working closely with local clubs in their area in order to provide improved mental health support for members.



The foundation, which has recently become an official charity highlighted three key areas of focus for their work, one of which was mental health.

The pandemic has given us time which has allowed us all to highlight the importance of people's mental health and wellbeing. This sparked the Somerset Cricket Foundation to develop their own programme in order to assist local cricket clubs in supporting the mental health of their members.

The foundation launched the *Mental Health Ambassadors* programme to achieve these goals. A small group of local cricket clubs were identified and chosen as the trial clubs for the programme, 16 volunteers were recruited to complete the relevant safeguarding training and a level 2 qualification in mental health first aid. The safeguarding officer at each club also undertook the relevant safeguarding training to help assist the ambassadors in their work.

After the relevant training had been completed by the volunteers, the foundations programme received ongoing support from other organisations including [Opening Up Cricket](#) (a mental health through cricket organisation) and [Well Wessex](#) (a mental health partner working within the local area). These organisations helped support the ambassadors by providing an enhanced learning environment through expert facilitation of training events, enabling them to be able to develop a mental health action plan for each of their clubs. Each plan is a simple list of aims and objectives related to the mental health and wellbeing of the members at each club, which can then be delivered to a club board for approval.

Throughout the development journey of the ambassadors, they have received frequent, professional support that they can access at any time to create the best mental health environment within their clubs.

Within the area of mental health, it is hard to gauge the impact that the programme itself is having on the members and clubs involved. However, with this in mind, many of the clubs working with the programme have highlighted that the visibility of mental health within the clubs have improved. This is important work that has been done by the Mental Health Ambassadors as this works towards breaking the stigma surrounding mental health. This will allow the ambassadors to create a welcoming, friendlier environment at the club for all their members, hoping that in turn they will feel comfortable to ask for help due to no longer feeling judged, or seen as not being able to cope.

The ambassadors are given the freedom to tackle the stigma in their own amazing ways. Several have engaged in one-to-one listening with club members supporting them individually, others have arranged events in aid of mental health raising funds for other charities tackling the stigma. Some have also set up a mental health information stand at club signing on night to help raise the awareness within their club.

Somerset cricket foundation's programme has been recognised as a working progress by themselves and that it's not a quick solution. Nevertheless, they have taken a massive step in a long journey to changing the cultures and environments within their local cricket clubs.

Looking to the future, the programme will see a second generation of volunteers recruited however, with a slightly different title. This will enable the programme to focus on the 5 ways to wellbeing, and develop these into tools which can be implemented into clubs creating and developing mentally healthy places to play cricket.

The work completed from this programme not only highlights the importance of mental health in general, but also the significance of creating welcoming and supportive environments at local clubs for all their members to access the help they may need in order to have a healthier mental wellbeing.

