



Churston Golf Club - Devon

Using GolfMark to get more women to take up golf and join the club

The Starting Point

Churston Golf Club was founded in 1890 and is an 18-hole parkland coastal course with breathtaking views across Torbay.

It was first awarded GolfMark in December 2010 and successfully renewed its accreditation in July 2017. While working towards this the ladies' section decided to use one of the tools, the Recruitment Action Plan, to promote women's golf.

Action

A 'Task and Finish' group was set up in November 2016 with the sole objective of encouraging more women to play golf at Churston. Paul Cloke, England Golf's South West Regional Manager was involved from the start.

The group worked closely with the head PGA professional Rob Butterworth and decided to run an eight-week Get into golf course specifically aimed at women.

It was promoted with specially designed leaflets and posters and by displaying an England Golf banner outside the clubhouse. Local schools and colleges were targeted to attract female staff.

An Open House evening was held at the end of March 2017 and 16 women signed up for the programme, which started in April, with the club providing all the necessary equipment.

The course – three stages

Get swinging – the first five, one-hour group sessions covered the basics of hitting a ball, chipping and putting on the practice area and using the simulator in the Coaching Centre.

Take it to the course - three 90 minute sessions when the women were taken on to the course by two club professionals to develop and expand their basic skills. Members of the Ladies' Section supported the pros and encouraged the newcomers.

Taster membership was offered to women who completed the programme, giving them full membership rights for two months. Existing women members arranged to meet the new players in the early evenings to play the Elberry short course to help develop their confidence.

Results

Ten women, over 60% of those who started the programme, took out the taster membership and some have already moved to Fairway Membership.

The future

The 'Task and Finish' was disbanded after successfully meeting its objective. The Ladies' Section is planning to set up a new group to target local women's sports groups - such as hockey, football and cricket - to encourage more women to play golf at Churston.

GolfMark

Churston has successfully achieved re-accreditation of both the GolfMark Award and Sport England's Clubmark. The process has been driven since the first award in 2010 by the hard work and commitment of former junior organiser Steph Francis. To achieve the latest accreditation Steph worked closely with the Club Manager and representatives of other sections of the club to ensure that all the criteria were met.

The Recruitment Action Plan is just one of the tools offered as part of the GolfMark process and the club's Board plan to build on the success by working closely with Andy Jack, England Golf Club Support Officer for Devon.

Kim: "I found the course to be inspirational! From the outset, we were guided and supported in order to really be able to get a true experience of the sport."

"Churston provided not only excellent tuition but also an opportunity to meet other women players and enjoy the camaraderie of the club. The structure of the course enabled us to build skills and the willingness of members of the Ladies' Section to mentor us gave us confidence and an insight into the pure enjoyment of golf. I know that will continue to play golf and this is solely due to the success of the programme."

Vicki: "It wasn't something I ever considered before this introduction but now I've started I wish I'd done it earlier, I love it! What I really like is that you compete against yourself, wanting to improve week on week. I've even made some new friends and we now play together regularly. I can think of nothing better than after work, on a lovely evening, playing a few holes with friends."

GolfMark is a national accreditation designed to support all golf clubs, however big or small, to achieve a distinct operating standard in four areas of their business activity:

- Recruitment & Retention
- Management & Sustainability
- Coaching & Competitions
- Safeguarding

By gaining GolfMark accreditation your club will also be recognised by Sport England, as you also receive the ClubMark award.

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