

# Promoting Petanque to Women



Prepared for: The EPA Management Committee

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on behalf of the Promoting Petanque to Women Group

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# Introduction

## Objective

The objective of this report is to explore ways of raising awareness and promoting petanque to women with a view to engaging and recruiting more women to participate at local, regional and national levels. An initial request by the EPA inviting women members to be involved in this initiative resulted in eight EPA members forming the group Promoting Petanque to Women (PPW). Following a teleconference and subsequent correspondence via emails the group identified key issues and ideas for getting more women to play petanque. Online research led to a useful document commissioned by Sport England entitled 'Go where women are'.

The Sport England document covers comprehensive research and examines current understanding of women, their relevant motivations, barriers and triggers to getting more active, and what this means for sports and exercise activities and initiatives. 'Go where women are' is about engaging women in sport and exercise on their terms and in their space whether physically or emotionally.

Many of the issues covered in the 'Go where women are' document are relevant for petanque and some of the solutions proposed can be easily adapted by clubs to engage more women and increase the number of female members locally, regionally and nationally.

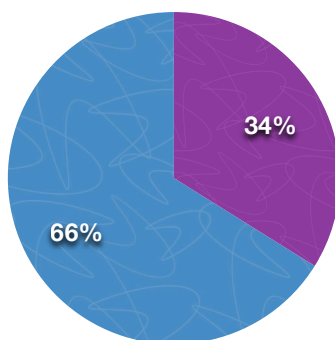
For the purposes of this report, we have used some of the headings from the Sport England document and teased out the most relevant aspects but the full review can be accessed via the link below or through the Sport England website:

[https://www.sportengland.org/media/10083/insight\\_go-where-women-are.pdf](https://www.sportengland.org/media/10083/insight_go-where-women-are.pdf)

## Context

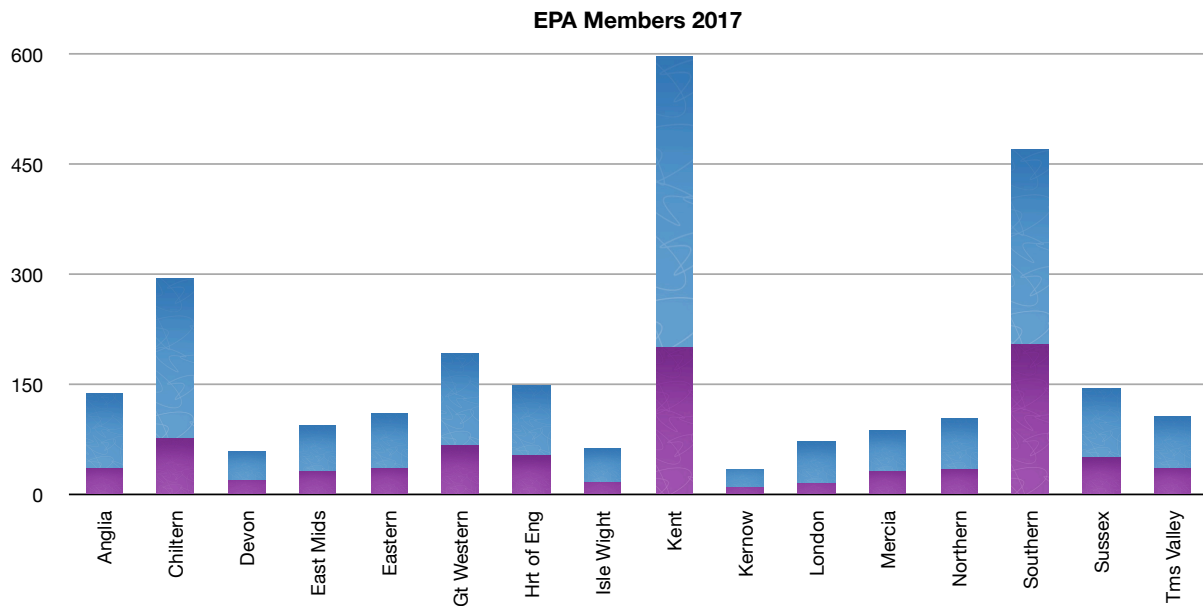
The EPA currently has a total membership of 877 women and 1819 men across 17 Regions. The gender gap in membership varies across the Regions but on average the majority have a 2:1 ratio of men to women. The breakdown at local club levels may vary significantly as some clubs may have women players who are not EPA registered as many of them prefer to play more socially as a pastime and belong to clubs that offer sessions during the daytime or early evening and are less geared towards the competitive aspects of the game. In examining the context of this initiative, the PPW Group identified a number of issues and barriers as to why fewer women are playing petanque.

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These included: difficulty in recruiting younger players due to conflicting demands on their time; some clubs are heavily male dominated and could be perceived as being intimidating; women are less keen to participate in competitions; fewer women sign up to play in club leagues due to lack of confidence in their skills; timings for club nights often unsuitable.

The Sport England's research highlights that there are 2 million fewer women than men regularly playing sport and this is applicable at almost every age group. So the opportunity to engage women is huge. When asked, 13 million women say they would like to participate more in sport and just over 6 million of those are NOT currently active.



### Regional Breakdown of Membership by Gender

As can be seen from the above, each Region within the EPA is different in size and gender breakdown of membership. There will be further differences in the age profile of players as clubs target and attract different types of players from those who may be retired and prefer the gentle, more social aspects of the game to others that want to play more competitively and anything in between. Most clubs currently have a majority of members who are over 50.

The need to attract and recruit women players may be less of an issue for some clubs if their focus is on recruiting younger people and therefore their effort is more on working with schools and universities.

### Purpose

This report examines the barriers, motivations and triggers that could offer some explanation to fewer women participating and gives an insight on how to engage women and so help to close the gender gap in petanque membership.

The report is presented using a combination of information from the 'Go where women are' document along with anecdotal evidence and experience of the PPW Group. Current members of PPW Group represent five Regions (Southern, Kent, London, Great Western, and Devon) and are diverse in their skills with varying years of experience of playing petanque at local, regional and national levels.

# Analysis

## Understanding our audience

Sport England's research identified six core values that are important to women which include: Looking Good; Feeling Good; Achieving Goals; Having Fun; Developing Skills and Nurturing Friends & Family. These determine how women prioritise and make decisions on how to spend their time day to day. The importance of each of these core values varies for different women, at different times of their lives.

Petanque can be relevant and applied in all six of these categories and when promoting petanque to women, clubs can stress some of the core values: For example,

**Being admired:** not just as a mum, grandma or partner but as themselves as they develop new skills and tactics of playing petanque.

**Nurturing Family:** Petanque is an excellent sport that can be played as a family across generations. Many clubs could offer times when parents, grandparents and children can play together.

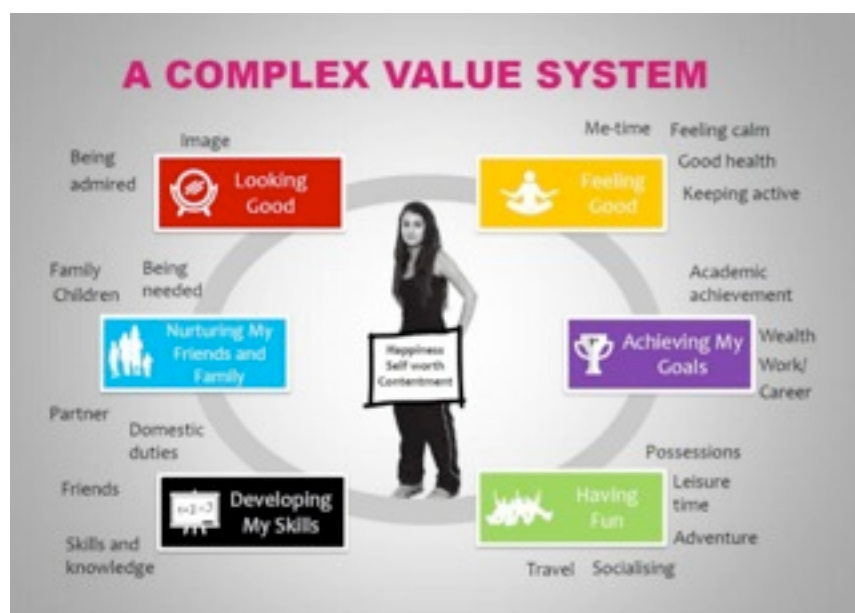
**Friends:** Petanque offers endless

opportunities to make new friends not only at local club level but across clubs in the region and also nationally. Some clubs even organise petanque holidays as part of their social diary.

**Me-Time:** Playing petanque allows women to have time for themselves and can be a great form of relaxation.

The PPW Group did attempt to clarify the target female audience for recruitment in order that this may influence the shaping of a future strategic National Marketing Campaign. However, it was soon established that each Region within the EPA is different in its composition, membership profiles and size and therefore different in its openness and approach to new members.

For some, recruiting younger women through local universities was seen as a good option, while others felt that their local clubs/regions would be more suited to older women or the emphasis is greater on engaging with local school to promote petanque to younger players. Whatever the emphasis, it is important to understand possible barriers, motivators and triggers that may be stopping women from joining their local petanque clubs and finding ways of addressing these.



## **Barriers: What gets in the way or stops women taking part**

- Fear of being judged
- Practical barriers of time, cost and information
- Conflicting commitments - balancing work, home and childcare
- Personal barriers like lack of confidence in ability to play well or take the first step towards joining a club.
- The word 'sport' and its traditional image can trigger negative associations and connotations. Quite often the image of taking part in a sport is seen as competitive, difficult, unfeminine, aggressive or not aspirational.

## **Motivations: What attracts women to take part and what will they get out of it**

- The need to exercise and a sense of being outdoors
- Emphasis on having fun, a sense of achievement or realising social benefits.
- Incorporating social benefits and opportunities for women to get more involved will motivate many.
- Being part of a social group with supportive coaches and regularly training sessions will help with retention
- Participation should make women feel good in mind and body; celebrated and rewarded

## **Triggers: What might spur women to join a local petanque club**

Whilst addressing barriers and motivations is important, a trigger is often needed to create the spur to take action at a specific point in time. These can include:

- A personal invitation by an existing member of a club;
- Possible change of life circumstance e.g. moving to a new area or loss of a partner;
- Extra time on hands through retirement or children grown up allowing for new routines and time for activities;
- Taking part in a 'trial' day organised for a community/women's group.

# Action

## Promoting Petanque - Getting more women on board

With an understanding of some of the values, barriers and motivators that affect women, the following key principles could be used as a guide to assist Regions and local clubs to plan activities that would help to raise awareness, promote petanque and encourage women to participate in playing the game.

### 1. Differentiate petanque by promoting the benefits

Petanque is a sport that can boast many significant benefits which are often missing in other sporting activities. When promoting petanque, these could be emphasised as some of the core highlights and appeal of the game. Petanque is a sociable pastime where people of all ages, shapes, sizes and background can socialise, make new friend and exercise at the same time. Specific benefits include:

- (a) A healthy way and opportunity to spend more time with a partner/spouse, friends and children.
- (b) A good way to catch up with friends or meet new people
- (c) An energiser before work, education or going out
- (d) An effective way to de-stress after work, education, or looking after the kids
- (e) An opportunity to be outdoors (even during the winter months!) and get plenty of fresh air
- (f) Friendly local clubs that welcome new players.
- (g) It can be played at any level that suits you: social, competitive, local, regional, national and International
- (f) Membership to petanque clubs is relatively inexpensive and is flexible to fit in with your needs.

### 2. Plan sessions to suit the women you are targeting.

Depending on the availability and access to your Club and volunteers, try to hold sessions that will encourage more women to participate. For example:

- (a) Morning sessions to suit women who are retired or have just dropped the children off to school
- (b) Early afternoon sessions for women before they pick up children from school
- (c) After school sessions for joint Parent/Children activity
- (d) Early Evening for those choosing to come straight from work.
- (e) Saturday morning sessions to suit couples and those wanting to spend time with partners doing an activity together.
- (f) Special coaching sessions for those that want to develop the skills of playing petanque and play more competitively.

3. **Seeing is believing.**

Making petanque the 'norm' for women relies on local women of all ages, sizes and faiths, becoming active, celebrating it and encouraging others to join in. There are a number of ways to promote petanque locally:

- (a) Take advantage of women's own networks and other community groups in your local area.
- (b) Use Word of Mouth to spread information about your club through existing members. This is consistently the most effective form of marketing.
- (c) Talk to community groups in a friendly manner, get to know them and then encourage 'having a go'.
- (d) Take petanque into the community by organising Roadshows, 'Open Days' and Family Friendly Competitions.
- (e) Offer to organise a Petanque Event/Party for groups who are often exploring new social outings for their members.
- (f) Put a 'buddy' system in place for all new members. This will help to retain new comers, motivate and encourage them to integrate in social and competitive aspects of the game.

4. **Use positivity and encouragement**

Encourage by 'telling your story' of how you became a petanque player. Inspire confidence and encouragement by creating a positive experience for new members. Use incentives to encourage and motivate women to keep going and thrive in their new found sport. Accolades are a great way to inspire individuals to participate and achieve more. If your club has the resources:

- (a) Present certificates to new players who have attended a certain number of sessions
- (b) Nominate Best New Player of the Month or Most Improved Player in the last quarter and give awards.
- (c) Host friendly 'new members' competition days with neighboring clubs to widen the social circle of new players.

5. **Make it easy for women to take part**

Address both practical and emotional barriers together to ensure that neither outweigh the motivation to be active. Make petanque easily accessible and consider creating conditions that are suitable. For example, some women do not enjoy driving in the dark or late in the evenings so it may be worth planning a club session that would suit them. Often, women rule themselves out from playing in leagues as it entails getting to different clubs for away matches. Having a lift or travelling with other players could easily alleviate this barrier.

- (a) Emphasise that petanque needs no special gear to play, just a pair of trainers and comfortable clothing.
- (b) Promote your petanque club via sporting websites such as Womens Sports Net [wsnet.co.uk](http://wsnet.co.uk) and [hermojo.co.uk](http://hermojo.co.uk)
- (c) Ensure them that all are welcome and create a friendly and safe environment.

6. **People make or break the experience.**

Anyone promoting petanque should be enthusiastic and friendly. Plan a consistently reassuring experience from start to finish.

- (a) Recruit Petanque Ambassadors and Group Leaders who don't necessarily need to be the best players but must be good communicators. Promote the idea that becoming confident in a sporting activity can spill over into other areas of work and life.
- (b) Consider introducing new members to friendly competitions in a relaxed environment by teaming them with experienced players in Doubles Competition who can also act as their Role Models and Mentors.
- (c) Ensure all new players have a good experience.
- (d) Empower and make new players feel proud, excited and inspired.
- (e) If you are selling your club as a 'friendly place', avoid activity characterised by competition and delivered in a semi-aggressive way.

This action list is not exhaustive and Regions and local clubs will have their own understanding of the barriers, motivations and triggers affecting women in their areas.

**Remember all of us are unique - tailor your approach with sensitivity.**



# Checklist

## Promoting Petanque to Women

### Start where women are - local women's groups and networks

- Use their language: friendly and clear information
- Use pictures and images of women of all ages playing petanque
- Show an understanding of real issues (conflicting priorities, timing of events, lack of confidence etc.)

### Show women what petanque can do for them personally

- Use role models and mentors

### Show women that petanque is a good use of their time socially - fun with their family and friends

- Communicate that this is a good use of their time and healthy for family unity

### Make it easy for women to play petanque

- Right Time: Organise a session that will suit women's lifestyle (work and family)
- Right Welcome: Make sure welcome is warm and consistent by all club members
- Right Gear: Provide Boules and give guidance on selecting and using other props (e.g. magnetic boule picker!)

### Keep them interested

- Once they have come along to the club, keep in touch with them
- Encourage Group participations e.g. social evenings, women with children meeting up etc.
- Allocate a 'buddy' to help them through the initial stages of learning new skills, being aware of the etiquette and quiriness of playing petanque.

# Way Forward

This report has been prepared following an initial request from the EPA Management Committee to explore the issues and ideas for engaging and recruiting more women to participate in petanque. We hope the Committee finds the contents as a useful guide for future promotion of petanque to women. However, whilst the report mainly offers practical steps to engaging and recruiting new members, it is important to note that not all clubs will feel the need or want to engage in promoting petanque. Many clubs have evolved over the years and enjoy the familiarity of all members having known each other for several years. The prospect of changes to the status quo and introducing new players can be threatening to the enjoyment of their regular pastime. To this end, it may be that the EPA identifies and initially works with Regions and Clubs that are more open to addressing the issues highlighted in this report and are keen on raising awareness and promoting petanque to a wider and more diverse range of players.

As a way forward, there are some steps that can be put in place relatively quickly and with little resources. We would suggest, the MC:

- (a) Produce a Good Practice Guide for Regions to promote petanque using the finding from this report. The Good Practice Guide need not be exclusively to recruit women, and clubs can be encouraged to use it as a guide for promoting petanque and tailoring to other groups.
- (b) Encourage Local Clubs via the Regions to develop a range of promotional activities to engage more women to participate
- (c) Promote the idea of local Petanque Ambassadors, Role Models and Mentors who are enthusiastic about the game and help spread the word within their Region and support new players.
- (d) Consider incentives for Regions and Clubs to encourage them to actively participate in promoting petanque
- (e) Consider formally setting up a core PPW group with members who have time and skills to undertake some of the activities that could include:

- Supporting local clubs and regions at promotional events

- Writing and Publishing positive articles for the media

- Setting up a Forum for sharing ideas and good practice

- Producing a quarterly e.Newsletter to promote successful stories from across all Regions.

- Conduct Market Research and Direct Marketing

- Explore funding options from grant making bodies e.g. Awards for All, Sport England to support the EPA

- (f) Consider ways of encouraging women to apply for Committee positions, acknowledging that this may currently be difficult with an all male committee. This would help to create a more diverse Board at a national level and encourage existing women members to become coaches, umpires, and referees. Visibly seeing women in these roles would be a big step towards a change in perception and image.

## **Promoting Petanque to Women Group:**

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