



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ACTION PLAN (DIAP)

2026–2027

BOWLS DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)

Public-Facing Summary 2026–2027

#BowlsWithoutBias

Introduction

The Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) is committed to ensuring that bowls is an inclusive, welcoming and accessible sport for everyone. This Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) sets out our priority areas for advancing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across the organisation and the wider bowls community for 2026–2027.

This public-facing DIAP is underpinned by a detailed internal DIAP including specific actions, responsibilities, timescales and measures which is reviewed quarterly by the BDA Board.

This updated plan reflects honest learning from our 2025–26 delivery: where we have made progress, where we have fallen short, and what we will focus on in the year ahead.

Statement from the Chair

Bowls has always been a sport that brings people together. But the data is clear: our sport does not yet reflect modern society. Over 70% of our participants are male, 97% are White British, and the majority are over 65.

We are proud of the progress we have made, improving Board age diversity, strengthening safeguarding, embedding EDI into our working group structure, and building inclusive community programmes. But we are also honest: ethnic diversity across our governance, leadership and workforce remains a critical gap that we must address with urgency.

This plan is not just a compliance document. It is our commitment to make bowls a sport where everyone, regardless of their background, identity or circumstances, feels genuinely welcome.

Ian McDougall
Chair – Bowls Development Alliance

Statement from the Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team is united behind this plan. We recognise that inclusion is the responsibility of every leader, every day not one department or team. In 2026–27, we will move from planning to delivery: embedding EDI into our recruitment, our communications, our programmes and our culture.

We will be transparent where we fall short and use evidence to drive decisions. Diversity is not a target to tick off, it is how we build a better, stronger sport.

Our Vision

A bowls community where everyone is welcomed, valued and empowered to participate — regardless of their background, identity or circumstance.

Our Mission

To transform bowls by embedding EDI principles into our governance, operations and community engagement, through evidence-led action, inclusive recruitment, stronger partnerships, and a culture that reflects the diversity of modern society.

Our Priority Areas (2026–27)

1. Inclusive Governance and Leadership



Our commitment

To provide visible, accountable leadership that embeds equality, diversity and inclusion into governance, strategy and decision-making at every level of our organisation.

Ethnic diversity in governance and leadership is our most urgent challenge. Despite a growing and diverse applicant pipeline, this has not yet translated into appointments at Board, leadership or staff level. In 2026–27 we will take concrete structural steps to address this:

- Formalise a two-stage interview process with a peer-led first round as a standing DIAP commitment.
- Introduce a shortlisting commitment ensuring ethnically diverse candidates are represented at interview for all vacancies.
- Support the current NED recruitment with the Inclusive Boards Recruitment Toolkit and proactive outreach to diverse candidates and networks.
- Explore a Board Observer or shadowing programme as a longer-term pipeline mechanism for diverse governance candidates.
- Complete the annual EDI knowledge audit across Board and staff.
- Ensure inclusive volunteer recruitment is aligned to the People Plan with measurable diversity targets.
- Maintain the EDI sub-group with cross-organisational representation, reporting to Board each quarter.

2. Data, insight and evidence-based action



Our commitment

To improve our understanding of who participates in bowls, who is underrepresented, and where barriers exist — and to use that insight to drive action.

We have made a strong start on data collection but need to go further — particularly in understanding participation beyond BDA staff and governance.

- Commission a new baseline participation survey in 2026–27, before the development of our new five-year strategy. The survey will allow disaggregated analysis by gender, age, ethnicity and disability and will update the 2022–23 Back to Bowls baseline (c.13,000 responses).
- Incorporate welfare and culture questions.
- Broaden demographic data collection beyond BDA Board and staff.
- Establish a cross-code participation data standard — consistent definitions, reporting timelines and shared infrastructure with NGBs.

3. Inclusive Community and Accessible Culture



Our commitment

To foster an inclusive organisational culture where staff, volunteers and partners feel supported to champion equality and inclusion at every level.

Culture change requires consistent action across every aspect of how we work — from how we communicate to how we train and develop our people.

- Finalise and distribute the Code of Conduct across all codes, with an active adoption strategy and an accessible, visual format suitable for club volunteers.
- Develop a formalised Inclusive Marcomms Strategy covering imagery, language and storytelling across all BDA and NGB platforms.
- Continue and expand Week of Learning delivery, incorporating peer-to-peer facilitation models which have generated stronger engagement than presentation-led formats.
- Launch a programme of monthly club drop-in workshops — informal, open online sessions connecting clubs directly with BDA staff and external speakers from charities, community interest companies and Sport and Recreation Alliance partners.
- Embed EDI expectations into staff induction, development and annual review processes.
- Use Club Health Checker data to identify and celebrate accessible clubs, and to target support where it is most needed.

4. Stakeholder Partnerships and External Engagement



Our commitment

To work collaboratively with counties, clubs, partners and communities to advance inclusion across the sport – with shared accountability and visible joint action.

Inclusion cannot be driven by the BDA alone. The strength of our partnerships, with NGBs, counties, clubs and community organisations, determines how far our work reaches.

- Decide on the activation model for #BowlsWithoutBias — whether as a shared sport-wide strategy, the brand identity for the club drop-in programme, or a BDA-led initiative and publish accordingly.
- Strengthen existing partnerships and identify new community organisations to extend our reach into underrepresented communities.
- Use County Roadshows to gather qualitative insight on participation barriers and feed this into delivery planning.
- Share good practice, case studies and learning across the network more systematically building on the community case studies section launched on the BDA website.
- Clarify transgender inclusion policy positions across all four codes, building toward a consistent cross-code approach.

5. Inclusive Participation Programmes



Our commitment

To ensure bowls opportunities are accessible, relevant and enjoyable for a wide range of people and communities, with a particular focus on groups currently underrepresented in our sport.

Our community programmes are among our strongest levers for inclusion. In 2026–27 we will sharpen the focus of these programmes toward the groups where the participation gap is greatest.

- Continue and scale Bowl for Health and community programme delivery, with improved outcome tracking aiming for 60%+ of participants continuing to play after the programme.

- Develop a dedicated approach to engaging young people and under-35s, currently just 5% of participants. This includes working with schools through the Youth Sport Trust School Games programme, and exploring social formats that appeal to younger audiences.
- Strengthen targeted engagement for adults with long-term health conditions, disabled participants and people from ethnically diverse and lower socio-economic backgrounds supported by the new marcomms strategy and the drop-in programme.
- Support clubs in improving the newcomer experience through accessible resources, Club Health Checker guidance, and case studies.
- Use Bowls Big Summer, the Commonwealth Games and other major moments to connect with new and underrepresented audiences at scale.

New Area of Focus for 2026–2027

Volunteer Diversity

Volunteers are the backbone of bowls. But our volunteer profile is as unrepresentative as our participant profile, and this affects the culture and welcome that new participants experience when they come to the sport.

In 2026–27 we will begin to address this through inclusive volunteer role descriptions, flexible pathways and development opportunities designed to attract a more diverse volunteering community.

Monitoring, Review, Accountability & Reporting

- Progress against the internal DIAP is reviewed quarterly by the BDA Board, with a standing EDI agenda item at every Board meeting.
- The DIAP is formally reviewed at least annually, in line with Code for Sports Governance requirements.
- Headline progress and commitments will be reported publicly through the BDA Annual Report and website including an honest account of areas where targets were not met.
- The EDI Working Group provides cross-organisational oversight of delivery and reports into Board each quarter.
- Learning and insight from delivery will be used to refine priorities on an ongoing basis.

Statement of Compliance

This Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan is published in line with Requirements 2.1–2.3 of *A Code for Sports Governance*. It demonstrates the Bowls Development Alliance's strong and public commitment to promoting, embedding and advancing equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation and the wider bowls community.



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TOGETHER FOR AN INCLUSIVE FUTURE.