

Request for ECF Funding Contribution to the 'Casual Chess' Café

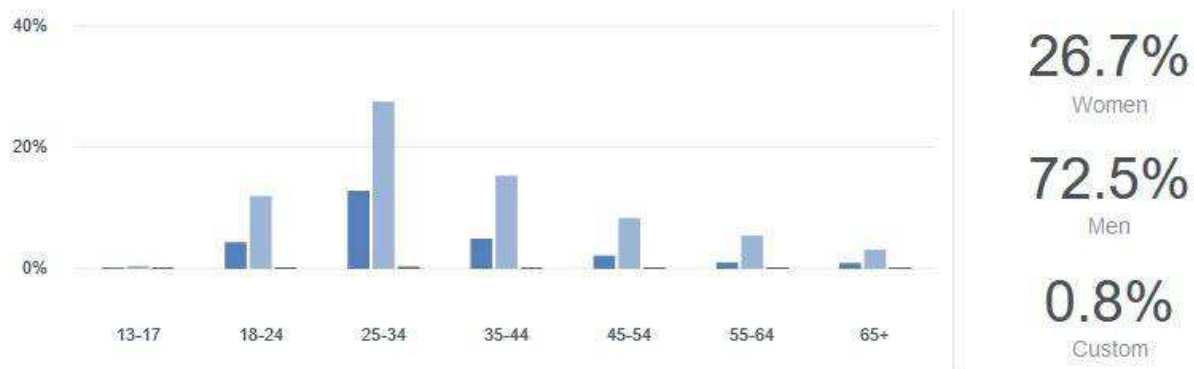
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Casual Chess was started in January 2015 by women, to create a friendly and inviting playing space for women (and people from other groups currently underrepresented in the broader chess community). It has become a unique, lively, popular central London chess venue, open for at least 25 hours per week, across four evenings.

Casual Chess attracts approximately 5,000 unique visits per year, mostly from much younger players than the average chess club demographic, with a much higher percentage of adult female players (below - make up of 1,345-member Facebook group, 19 March 2018).

Age and gender ?

26.7% Women 72.5% Men 0.8% Custom



Since April of last year, Casual Chess has offered more than thirty free chess lessons for women at two levels – absolute beginners (learn how the pieces move) and ‘improvers’ (for those with the basics, but without formal study). These successfully reached over five hundred women who have either never played chess, played at school then gave up, or who have only played casually at home or online.

The ECF is committed to getting more women into chess, as evidenced by the creation of a dedicated Executive Post. Unfortunately, this now appears to have been abolished, leaving a vacuum. The ECF Executive also correctly highlighted the importance of attracting and keeping younger players (most Casual Chess players fall into the 18-35 age range).

So far, Casual Chess has operated without any ECF funding, or charitable grants. Most of the out of pocket spending has been provided by the organiser, along with approximately 35 hours of volunteer time per week averaged out over the period. An attempt was made to create a formal chess centre together with the British Go Association, towards which a total of £500,000 was earmarked, 20% from the ECF. Unfortunately, that fell at the hurdle of a small kernel of opposition within the ECF, despite membership approval for the idea.

We request that members vote to make an annual grant of £6,000 to Casual Chess for

coming financial year, to be delivered in May 2018, in support of its work. In particular, in promoting chess to new female players, with the only condition that the money be spent encouraging new/returning female chess players. If, over the course of the year, we succeed in creating fourteen eventual new Silver ECF Members (paying £22.50 per year, over a playing career of twenty years, say), the ECF would at least recoup its initial investment (in something which should be supported in any case, in order to comply with the ECF's mission). The more female players we as a whole chess community succeed in attracting at this point, the easier it will gradually become to reach a 'biting point' where more women are attracted to chess tournaments, and we also succeed in retaining more Junior girls.

