

Development of Women's Chess
Progress Plan

Background

1. This document builds upon the paper "*Development of Women's Chess*" which was supported and its recommendations agreed by the ECF Board at their meeting on 7th June 2019 and reported to ECF AGM 2019 and which was then subsequently issued for consultation in November 2019 to all interested ECF Stakeholders and in advance of the Chess and Female Empowerment Conference, which was held in London in December 2019.
2. This revised document has also now been further updated to take into not only the responses to the 2019/20 consultation but also Covid-19 affects on English chess and also the non-appointment of a paid ECF Development officer.
3. The document outlines proposals for the planned course of action to be taken by the ECF to achieve revised objectives following the 2019/20 consultation.

Overview

4. Chess is a male dominated activity in England. This reflects chess demographics globally, albeit with national variations.
5. There are a number of implications which flow from this:
 - Achieving change will require fundamental changes to the way chess is played.
 - The changes needed are not fully understood and the understanding of what is needed will evolve.
 - That change cannot be achieved simply by edicts from the ECF Board. There will need to be cultural change at all levels of chess in England which will require engagement from clubs, counties, unions, schools and individual members.
6. Equally, achieving these changes will offer opportunities for transformational change, which could secure the future of chess.

Benefits could include:

- Increasing chess participation and the variety of opportunities for chess playing.
- Broader family participation.
- Embedding chess as the leading mind sport in England.

- Encouraging and facilitating chess as a social and competitive activity.
- Encouraging juniors to continue playing chess as they move into adulthood.

Objectives and Proposals

7. Consistently with this, the Board has developed a series of initial aspirational objectives. This paper sets these out with initial proposals for plans to achieve them.

30% female representation on the Board within 3 years.

8. Julian Clissold as Chair of the Board is leading an initiative to increase the level of female Board representation.

9. It is expected that this will include a number of actions:

- Reconsidering the nature of the roles within the Board and the availability of female candidates.
- In particular, encouraging one or more non-executives with broader skills than represented on the Board today, without a requirement for specific chess knowledge or background.
- Consulting with external experts on recruiting directors of voluntary organisations on the approach to broadening the diversity of candidates for Board positions.
- Developing a systematic plan for identifying those Board positions, which are likely to become vacant in order to target suitable recruitment for consideration by Council at an early stage.

Increase female membership of the ECF (including ECF Supporters) to 15% within three years.

10. This aspires to an increase in female members and supporters of a minimum of 1,000 people of all ages to include competitive chess players, online chess players and social chess players. It is likely that this increase would be mostly achieved by an increase in junior players as currently over 80% of female ECF Members are aged under 21 and the total female membership of the ECF is only currently 7.5%. That said, retaining a higher proportion of junior girls as adult members is critical to achieve a stable growing female member/supporter base in the longer term.

11. A number of measures will be needed:

- Active co-operation between the Director of Women's Chess other Board members and active engagement with other key members of the English chess community.

- Encouraging female family members of chess playing children and online players to become ECF supporters.
- Seeking expert marketing advice on making participation in the ECF more attractive to women, particularly teenagers and young adults.
- Encouraging and developing women's online chess.
- Providing support to clubs and other chess organisations in developing their female membership.

15% female representation at Council within four years.

12. The first steps were taken by encouraging female presence at the ECF Council AGM in October 2019, which was successful and by working with member organisations to encourage greater female representation at Council.

Achieve an additional WGM within 4 years

13. This will be targeted through the existing plans of the International Director in conjunction with the Board, identifying potential candidates and investing resources accordingly.

To improve our women's squad to get a rating of 2300 over the top six and always field a team of average 2250 or above in International competition

14. This will similarly require coordinated activity by all Directors through identifying potential candidates and then targeting resources accordingly.

Obtain regular funding for women's chess of around £30k per year by 2023.

15. A number of initiatives will be taken with a view to achieving this level of finance:

- Working with external experts to make a Lottery fund application in 2021 or 2022.
- Seeking sponsorship aimed specifically at developing women's chess.
- Increasing membership income.

International Action and Support

16. Support a network of International activity for women's chess with partners following the real gains of the London 2019 Chess and Female Empowerment Conference..