Grassroots sport and the importance of developing strategies to remove barriers to participation.

Fjordhus Reivers Hockey Club – Scottish Borders

The Fjordhus Reivers Hockey Club was formed in 2011 with the following underlying principles at the forefront of its ambition to offer hockey for all.

- Provide a club in the Borders that everyone can join regardless of age, gender or ability.
- Provide best practice in delivery of coaching regarding equality, inclusiveness and fair play.
- Provide a clear pathway for any player in the Borders wishing to join a club so all ages and stages can play at an appropriate stage either socially or competitively.
- Promote a ‘Family’ atmosphere using Tweedbank as our home with the new clubhouse as the ‘Hub’.
- Pulling coaching resources together to provide quality coaching at all stages and ages.
- Pulling umpiring resources together to ensure continuous umpire availability.
- Providing more structured Development and Education days.
- Better publicity opportunities, website, media, sponsorship.
- Drive forward ‘club’ hockey so regardless of school direction every child has an opportunity to play regular competitive hockey, regardless of gender.

The club has gone from strength to strength and is now one of the largest youth clubs in Scotland.

Fjordhus Reivers endeavours to increase participation and provide opportunities for all by innovative ideas and strategies. The club is a member of Tweedbank Community hub where most activities and games/training takes place.

Fjordhus Reivers has had invaluable support to expand and develop through sportscotland Direct Club Investment

1. The club holds Family Festivals at Tweedbank three times per year. The Christmas Family Festive Fun day on Boxing day in particular is hugely successful, with everyone turning out in fancy dress for informal mixed hockey and BBQ. Family Festivals are also held during the Easter and Summer holidays. From the youngest to the oldest member of the extended family is welcomed into the ‘hockey family’ at the club and the game is played in a relaxed and fun environment.
2. The GB initiative #hockeyfest runs along a similar line at the beginning of the season (this year will be 3rd September) where every club member and prospective members are encouraged to come along to Tweedbank for fun hockey, fundraising and registration.

3. As the Borders is a rural area, Fjordhus Reivers understands the difficulty of travel to Tweedbank to engage in hockey, therefore the club takes hockey to the community. The club runs a Participation Centre at Tweedbank, but also provides Participation hockey in other areas in their ‘satellite’ centres, Selkirk, Hawick, Jedburgh and Earlston to ensure that young players have the opportunity to participate. The club works closely with the Active schools coordinators in these areas to make sure all school children are aware of these opportunities.

4. The club then holds Participation Festivals around the satellite Centres, inviting all junior teams in the Borders area to experience the fun of playing Festival hockey.

5. All these centres are mixed boys and girls of Primary School age.

6. The club has recently worked with Toddleburn windfarm to gain funds to support coaching in the Stow area for 2017-18.

7. The club started out with 1 mens team and one Ladies team in 2011. The club now runs 5 Ladies teams, 1 mens team, 1 x u18 team, 2 x U16 girls teams, 1 x youth boys team, 3 x u14 mixed teams, who all compete in League Hockey. The newest addition in season 2016-17 was the Ladies 5s team which was entered in to East League 3. This team was made up of entirely 14 year old girls and an experienced player coach. These girls although receiving one hour a week of school hockey and the occasional weekend school game were keen to play senior 11 aside hockey, inspired by the Commonwealth and Olympic Games and their role models who have already reached International level through playing in the club. The club took a leap of faith to enter this young team, however the risk paid off and not only did they win the league, but the friendships and love of hockey will continue through their school years. The team initially started with 11 players, but word of mouth spread and the squad expanded to 24 players before the end of the season. Volunteers, quality coaching, a sense of belonging and parental support played a vital part in the success of this team.

8. A couple of issues with running a young team is transport to matches and financial cost. Away matches when many have working parents was often tricky however the club is fortunate that Fjordhus our sponsors have met the financial cost of transport this year.

9. Cost of playing sport has also been an issue, and with the ever rising pitch costs, club subs have had to rise. All club costs in the form of registration to Scottish hockey and pitch hire are met by subs. The aim is to keep the cost of subs down so that they meet these two needs.

10. Funds are raised in a number of ways. Summer Camps, where we ask high profile coaches to deliver over the summer holidays – often using past club
Internationalists (Sarah Robertson, Emily Newlands) from the club to raise the awareness and profile.

11. All club events have bake sales which are run out of the ‘hub’ building at Tweedbank.

12. The club holds regular meetings for parents to ensure they understand the vision of the club and the pathways for their children, both social and competitive. There is a clear pathway through from u12 – Masters Hockey and there are a number of players who have been successful in gaining National Honours. Season 2016-17

4 x U18 girls in the Scotland squad
2 x U16 girls in Scotland Squad
1 x u16 boy in Scotland squad
3 x Women’s Masters in Scotland squad

Due to nature of demographics in the Borders and no University opportunities, players will leave the club on completion of school to head to University, so there is a constant turnover of players. Although many club players move on to represent country at u21 and senior level, they do so from other clubs.

13. The club also has good links with Borders College and students from the HNC Sports Coaching and Development Course deliver U15, Summer 6s competition on Friday afternoons at a cost of £1 per player to meet pitch costs. This is a fantastic link and provides fun hockey throughout May. Many of the players attending are club players, but many come along from school to play for the first time with their friends and choose to join the club on completion of the 6 weeks.

14. The club also offer Back to Hockey session during the summer months, providing beginners or those returning to the game who wish to play fun hockey without the commitment of competitive league games. The aim of these sessions is to provide sociable, informal sessions where participants become more confident about their hockey skills, improve their fitness and have the opportunity to play small sided games. Many of these players however do become club members and play throughout the year.

15. The club provides the financial support for young players to become UKCC Level 1 club coaches. As a payback, these young coaches will assist with the delivery of u14 and u12 sessions, both on a weekly basis and during the summer holidays.

16. The club also provides umpire qualification for young players which can be delivered by the umpire convenor who is a member of the club.

17. The club has become a Silver accredited club with Scottish Hockey and a Registered club with Live Borders. The club also provides a robust CP
scheme through Scottish hockey and coaches are all qualified and PVGd. These provide ‘peace of mind’ for parents who are involved with the club and demonstrate a professional ‘image’ to those wishing to join.

The club strives to increase awareness of the club and the club’s successes by using the local media, in particular the Borders Telegraph and Southern Reporter who regularly include match reports and coverage of Festivals.

Volunteers play a crucial part in the success of the club. All parents are warmly welcomed and encouraged to play an integral part in the club and they are made to feel as much a part of the club as their children. They are encouraged to have a voice within the club and regularly bring good ideas to enhance the quality of the programmes that are run within the club. This feeling of belonging encourages them to take on many of the roles within the club.

The overall image of the club as a Family Friendly club with opportunities to play fun social hockey but which also provide a clear pathway which can lead to National success is what we believe makes the club successful and year on year increases the membership and participation.