SCOTTISH SQUASH

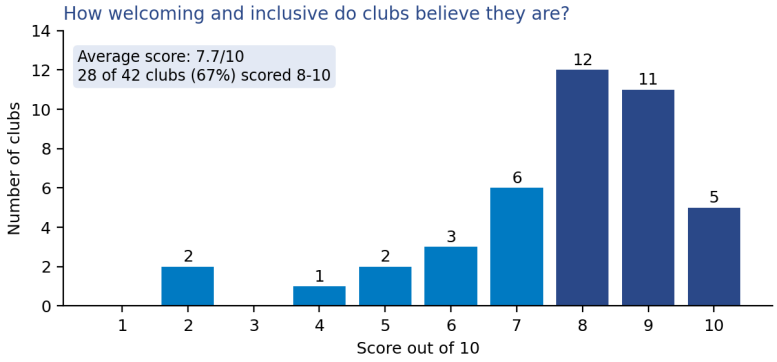
Women & Girls Club Toolkit

Supporting women and girls' inclusion in Scottish squash clubs

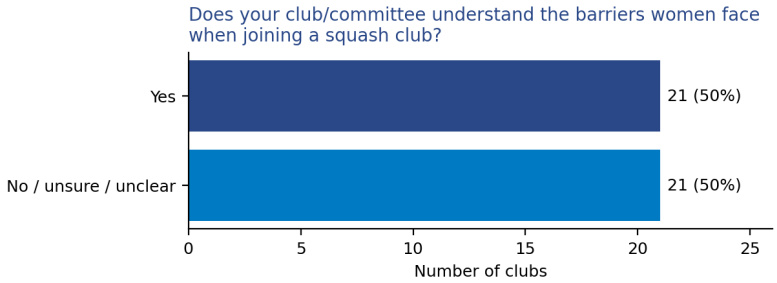
- Why do we need a toolkit for clubs?
- Why we want more women & girls in our squash clubs
- Understanding the barriers women face
- Securing funding for your club
- Getting women & girls through the door
- Creating a welcoming club culture and retaining participants
- Coach support and a guide to coaching girls through puberty
- Utilising social media
- Real-life examples of Scottish clubs excelling in the women and girls space

Why do we need a Women & Girls Club Toolkit?

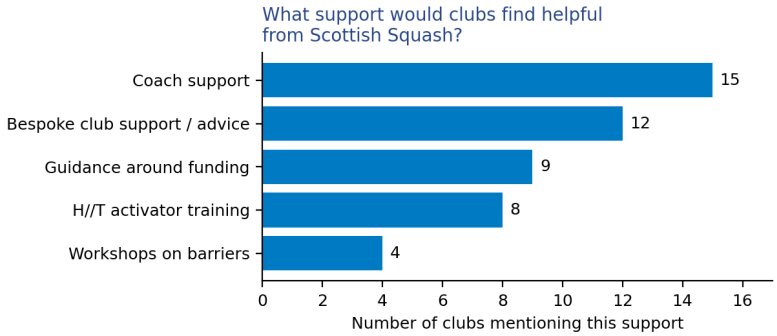
We surveyed Scottish squash clubs to understand where they are now and what would help. The results show a clear opportunity.



- **14 clubs** believe their club is less than 8/10 welcoming and inclusive.
- This toolkit looks at how to make your club even more welcoming and inclusive.



- Only half of clubs believe their club and committee have a good understanding of the barriers women face when joining a squash club.
- This toolkit looks at these barriers and how best to overcome them to encourage women to join.



- Support for coaches was identified as the most helpful support Scottish Squash could offer.
- This toolkit highlights best practice for coaches specific to women and girls' squash, including session plans and a ball guide.

Why do we want more women & girls in our squash clubs?

Benefits to clubs

- More paying members
- Diversity of members
- Likely to bring family members or children

Benefits to players

- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem
- A community 'third space' and the social benefits of meeting new people
- Improved aerobic and anaerobic fitness
- Mental health benefits
- Improved coordination and strength
- It is fun, and a chance to learn a new sport
- The opportunity to play at whatever level of the pathway suits you

Understanding the barriers women face in squash

This part of the toolkit looks at some of the key barriers women face in Scotland when it comes to playing squash – and, most importantly, how we can combat them.

- Male-dominated culture of sport
- Lack of visible role models
- Lack of time
- Self-confidence and body image
- Other societal barriers

BARRIER 1

Male-dominated culture of sport

Squash is traditionally a male-dominated sport, with women making up only 23% of Scottish Squash members. Being the only woman, or one of few, at a club can be intimidating and off-putting – especially given the physiological differences between men and women, which may mean a new player's ability and level are initially lower.

How can we target this?

- **Women's-only sessions** – only around half of clubs in Scotland currently offer them (see 'Getting women & girls through the door' for advice on advertising these sessions).
- When showing squash on your social media channels, show women of all ages and abilities playing.
- Encourage male members to be welcoming and friendly to new members.

SCOTTISH CLUB EXAMPLE: UIST SQUASH CLUB

Uist Squash Club recently launched women's-only squash sessions, where 20 women who are completely new to squash give it a go each week in a fun and welcoming environment.

BARRIER 2

Lack of visible role models

The male-dominated culture of sport links to a lack of visible role models for women and girls. Between April and September 2026, women's sport accounted for just 11% of the top 10 stories on the BBC Sport website – the lowest proportion in six years of tracking, compared with 18% in 2025 and 23% in 2022.

How can we target this?

- Celebrate successful women in your club.
- If you have imagery of squash and sport in your club, does it show an equal split of male and female players?
- If your club shows squash streams on TVs, this is a great opportunity to showcase women's squash.
- Offer women's-only beginner sessions, emphasising that no previous squash experience is required and equipment will be provided.

SCOTTISH EXAMPLE: GIRLS PLAY SQUASH

Girls Play Squash inspire young girls to play by focusing on friendship and effort, and use role models by inviting female professional squash players to attend their tournaments to inspire, show support and help with prize giving. Each team in the tournament is also named after a female squash legend!

BARRIER 3

Lack of time

Women carry out on average 60% more unpaid domestic labour (housework, childcare and so on) than men (UK Census, 2021), so getting away to take time for themselves can be challenging.

How can we target this?

- Offer parent and child sessions.
- Trial different session times to suit working parents – during school hours, or later on when children might be in bed.
- Offer shorter sessions.

SCOTTISH EXAMPLE: FORTHILL SQUASH CLUB

Forthill Squash Club offered Mum & Daughter H//T Squash sessions that proved highly successful. Some of the mums attending might not have been able to come if the sessions hadn't been offered to their children too.

BARRIER 4

Self-confidence and body image

Lack of self-confidence is also a barrier for women and girls in sport; girls tend to criticise their own performance and abilities more harshly than boys do (Women in Sport, 2009).

How can we target this?

- Put the emphasis on enjoyment, being sociable and working out – rather than on competition.
- Where possible, hold sessions at quieter times so there is more privacy for the people playing, and opt for hardback courts instead of glass-backs.
- Avoid comments about appearance, e.g. red faces from working hard or sweating.

SCOTTISH CLUB EXAMPLE: BRIDGE OF ALLAN SPORTS CLUB

Bridge of Allan Sports Club has high numbers of young girls in its junior programme. The coaches decided that no comments would be made about anyone's appearance, including red faces or sweating, and instead focus on praising effort and enjoyment.

BARRIER 5

Other societal barriers

Several other barriers significantly affect women's ability to take part in squash, and in sport in general, such as disability, ethnicity, religion and finances.

How can we target this?

- **Is your club accessible?** Do you have an accessibility guide on your website or social media platforms?
- **Is your club membership affordable?** Could you offer introductory offers, free sessions or pay-to-play options?
- Provide appropriate changing spaces, including a gender-neutral changing space.
- **Are you aware of cultural considerations** when planning sessions, e.g. avoiding prayer times?

Securing funding for your club

We appreciate that running sessions can be costly in terms of court hire, coach costs and equipment. However, sports clubs can access a range of funding from a variety of sources.

funding.scot

www.funding.scot hosts a database of funds, highlighting when they are open, what they fund and how to apply.

Other potential funders include:

- **Local ClubSport organisations** (most Local Authorities have their own), which fund equipment and project costs.
- **Local supermarket grassroots sports funds.**
- **Local Authority grant schemes.**
- **Awards for All** (National Lottery funding for community projects): tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/awards-for-all-scotland
- **Crowdfunding campaigns.**

Getting women & girls through the door

Advertising women's-only sessions well is the key to encouraging new women to walk through the door of your club.

- **Promote sessions across as many channels as possible** – all club social media channels, the club website, local community groups and Facebook pages, booking systems, your SportyHQ club page and regional SportyHQ pages.
- **Use real images** of women of all ages and abilities playing squash.
- **Include all the information** about the session, emphasising that participants don't need any previous squash experience.
- **Message everyone before the session** with where to go in the club, how to access changing facilities, what time to arrive, what to wear and bring, and who to look for or ask for when they arrive.
- **Highlight what it's about** – having fun, trying something new, staying fit and meeting new people. It doesn't have to be about competition or even trying to improve.
- **Include a social coffee** after the session as part of the advertising.

SCOTTISH EXAMPLE OF ATTRACTING NEW PARTICIPANTS: EDINBURGH SPORTS CLUB BROWNIES

Edinburgh Sports Club head coach Simon Boughton reached out to two local Brownies groups to arrange for them to attend a squash taster session. They were then offered Brownies girls-only sessions at the club, which 15 signed up for and attended. Try reaching out to local Brownies and Guides groups – this could bring lots of new juniors to your club!

Retaining participants

- **Follow up.** Having the coach or organiser send a follow-up message to new participants is a great way to keep them engaged and make sure they return for the next session.
- **Offer low-commitment options.** If people feel pressured to join and pay for a membership they may be less likely to attend, so offering pay-to-play for women or women's sessions is the best option.
- **Consider family memberships.** These could be a good way of encouraging all members of the family to keep coming to the squash club. Forthill Squash Club's Mum & Daughter sessions (see Barrier 3) are a good example of bringing a family along together.

SCOTTISH EXAMPLE OF RETAINING PARTICIPANTS: OBAN RAVENS LADIES SQUASH TEAM

The Oban Ravens coaches make it as easy as possible for participants to keep coming back and playing more squash. They send follow-up WhatsApp messages, add new players to group chats, make them feel part of a team by offering team kit, and even drive them to and from social events and competitions.

Coach support

Scottish Squash Women & Girls Coaching Network

The Women & Girls Coaching Network connects female coaches across Scotland who might otherwise not know one another. It is for anyone interested in coaching, whether an experienced coach employed by a club or a parent considering learning more about coaching to help out at their child's sessions.

Regional gatherings are held in each region to connect local coaches with one another (coaches don't have to be from that region if they're willing to travel). Participants learn new drills and exercises and technical coaching points for beginners, and share thoughts and tips with fellow coaches.

Read more about the network:
scottishsquash.org/women-and-girls-coaching-network

Encourage the coaches at your club to sign up!

Scottish Squash coaching pathway

Within our coach education pathway there is the opportunity to **host female-only coach education courses** at your club. Find out more:
scottishsquash.org/take-part/become-a-coach

H//T Squash

H//T Squash combines the basics of beginner squash with high-intensity exercises, designed by women for women. Bring H//T Squash to your club by encouraging women at your club to become an **H//T Activator**, so they can deliver the sessions to new beginners.

A guide to coaching girls through puberty

- **Hormonal changes.** When girls go through puberty (usually beginning around age 10–11) there is an increase in oestrogen and progesterone. These hormones are linked with the menstrual cycle and cause an array of emotional and physical changes, often causing lethargy, slowness and fatigue. By contrast, when boys go through puberty there is an increase in testosterone, which often results in them being faster, fitter and stronger, and so performing better in sport.
- **Drop-out risk.** Girls are more likely to drop out of sport and exercise during puberty, so it is really important that coaches and clubs create a positive experience to keep them involved in squash.
- **Body confidence.** During puberty girls can become less confident in their body and how it moves, due to the physical changes. To help them feel more connected with their body, try incorporating exercises such as resistance training and bodyweight exercises (crawling, changing direction, pushing, pulling – get creative!).
- **Balance and coordination.** Puberty can temporarily affect balance and coordination. Participants might feel clumsy or think they've lost flexibility or control, so it's important to be empathetic and validate what they are going through.
- **Fuelling and language.** Encourage proper nutrition, fuelling and hydration before and during sessions. Don't make comments about someone's appearance, including body composition, whether positive or negative.
- **The menstrual cycle.** Many women and girls experience symptoms such as cramps, lower back pain and increased anxiety. Create an environment where they can talk to you as the coach if they are experiencing any of these, so you can adapt the training if needed and they can continue to have a positive experience.

Coaching Girls Through Puberty | UK Coaching Club - UK Coaching

UK Coaching | A Hot Topic guide to supporting female participants during adolescent development

UK_Coaching

Learn more

Watch informative videos from industry professionals about coaching girls through puberty on the UK Coaching website. Create a free account and log in to access countless resources.

Social media guide

TOP TIPS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

1 Quality over quantity!

Aim to post content to your social media platforms that is visually engaging and consistent in your style and branding.

2 Clear, not cluttered!

Choose photos which are visually striking and of good quality.

Yes

- Smiling faces
- Action shots
- Close-ups

No

- Fuzzy or pixelated images
- Subjects who are far away
- Text that covers most of the photo

3 Be user friendly!

Ensure the key information you want your audience to get is easy to find and access. Below is a link to some templates which you are free to use.

You can update them with your information, add an engaging photo, change the colours to fit your brand (or leave as is!) and even add your logo.

Templates: **https://canva.link/nku9zgt5jregpts**

4 Don't use AI!

Often, AI creates graphics which are cluttered, impersonal and off brand. So please feel free to use the pre-made templates above if you need a little support.

5 Share the news!

Maximise your reach by tagging and/or collaborating with other organisations. Can you share it with other organisations, clubs, local authorities, charities etc., or even send it to people by email and ask them to post on their social media?

You've done the hard work – get the word out there!