



PRINCES RISBOROUGH TENNIS CLUB – UTILISING CLUBMARK TO MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF THE CLUB

PRTC is a small three court club based in Buckinghamshire. The club were initially considering taking on the accreditation in 2008 but at that time the committee felt like it was a fairly mammoth task and did not have the time or people resource available. However, in 2010, Stephen Biggs, a keen club player and committee member, decided to take on the challenge and elected to lead on the process, as he felt it would help professionalise the running of the club. PRLTC already had a healthy membership and an enthusiastic group of volunteers, but did not feel as though it was maximising its potential, specifically the tennis programme.

What does Clubmark involve?

Clubmark is split into four key areas; management, policies and procedures, programme and planning. The first task involved gaining a better understanding of the roles of the committee; each member was asked to provide an outline of their role and the associated responsibilities. Not only did this provide clarity for each volunteer, it also allowed the club to produce a set of mini job specs, which help the club determine the roles they need to advertise and ensures potential volunteers know what is expected for the role.

At the same time as clarifying the management structure, it is important to consider the club's purpose and subsequent action plan. Tennis clubs have a lot of competition, especially in small towns and villages where you are battling with other sports for the same members. It is therefore important to consider the 'offer' and the suitability and affordability of the membership package and tennis programme, as well as consider the long-term maintenance of the facility; poorly maintained facilities equals no members! At PRLTC, Stephen asked all committee members to choose their top 3 priorities from a list of possibilities that covered all aspects of the club, and from those results the club established an Action Plan of 6 main targets which they wish to achieve within set timescales. These now form the basis of committee meetings and discussions.

Underpinning the management structure and the programme are a transparent set of policies and procedures; child protection, equality and diversity, working with young people, club and coach agreement, sinking fund agreement and complaints policy. It is often felt that smaller, volunteer led sports club do not need formal policies and procedures, but having a set of clear operational policies helps any club run smoothly and ensures that members feel part of a transparent and operationally sound club. The policies are available to read in the club and on the club's website.

How have the club benefitted?

The programme is now offering a wider range of activity and the committee are actively encouraging the coach to enhance the offer wherever possible; newly established sessions include team practice evenings, rusty racket clinics and match plays. The junior programme runs in line with the national framework, so all competition results are submitted and count towards players' ratings, which highlights progress and assists in retaining members. One of the additional future actions is to set up some girl only groups to encourage teenage girls to remain engaged in tennis.

The committee meetings are more purposeful and focus primarily on the action plan items. As a result of the revamped job specs, smaller sub committees are managing tasks within their remit and reporting back to the committee, allowing more efficient use of everyone's time and in turn productive committee meetings. Clubmark has professionalised the club and set the standards, allowing the committee to be proactive and focus of developing further.

Stephen Biggs, committee member responsible for leading the Clubmark project said: "We are very proud of everything we've achieved at the club in a short space of time. It just goes to show that you don't have to be a massive club to offer tennis players in your area a great place to play."

LOCAL LTA SUPPORT

The Tennis Development Manager in your area can provide advice on engaging with the community

VOLUNTEER CONTACT

Stephen Biggs can be contacted with questions stephen.biggs@talktalk.net

CLUBMARK

Provides structure and guidance on the content of a [quality programme](#); coaching and competition

