

Top tips for golf clubs to retain golfers

Golf has enjoyed a recent boost in participation and membership, but the cost of living crisis may mean that this level of participation is under threat.

Golfing bodies across GB&I have therefore come together to produce this guide to assist clubs.

Within the guide, examples are given of how clubs could look to retain more people in the game of golf. While this guide is not exhaustive, it is hoped that it will provide some ideas as well as links to useful resources.



ENGLAND
GOLF



Scottish
Golf

Top tips for golf clubs to retain golfers

New member actions ►



1/

Once you have recruited a new member actively engage with them to understand their wants and needs in detail – retaining an existing customer is cheaper and easier than recruiting a new one.



2/

Offer induction nights where new members can meet existing members and the club staff and you can explain more about membership, rules, the history of the club and social events.



3/

Facilitate new social bonds by allocating times on the tee sheet for new members and introduce a 'buddy scheme' where new members are connected with existing members.



4/

Welcome new members in the club newsletter.



5/

Consider sending new members a welcome gift to give them a "wow" moment.



6/

Survey new members after six months to ask them why they joined the club, what they are enjoying about their experience and how it could be made even better.



7/

Within the survey, ask new members to give you a net promoter score and specific feedback – if there are aspects new members don't like, look to address these and tell them what you have done.

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Member benefits and providing value ►



1/

Always have in mind your value proposition – look to add value rather than discount price.



2/

Work to deliver a high-quality service in all aspects of the club – ask members for their feedback.

3/

Look to add on non-golfing extras and benefits as per member requests.



4/

Consider offering 9-hole green fees to members guests and visitors.



5/

If you have a swing studio, use it as a retention tool – invite low use members to use the facility and network with others.



6/

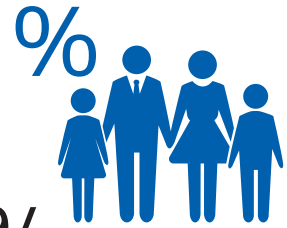
Offer social only events and encourage members to bring their family and friends – tell them about your membership options.

7/

Partner with your local driving range to offer social events there, especially in the winter months.

8/

Offer flexible membership packages to appeal to different audiences.



9/

Consider 'family membership', discounts for 'friends and family' and member referral schemes – social bonds and connections support retention.



10/

Ensure your practice facilities are of a high standard and open to all, consider a booking system and use for social events.



11/

Review your tee booking system and take feedback from members.

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Great communications and systems ►



1/

Run an annual survey for members asking for feedback on all aspects of the club – try and understand members wants and needs in detail.



2/

Address any issues raised and tell members what you have done.



3/

Ask members how likely they are to renew their membership and try and identify issues with particular profiles of respondent.



4/

The 18-30 year old category will often produce a high churn rate for membership renewal – try to actively engage with this group and find ways to meet their needs and retain them, consider putting on specific events targeted at this group and invite them along.



5/

Identify members who have not played for 6 months, get in touch and invite them in.

6/

Foster a sense of community and belonging through all of your membership engagement, establish links to the local community.



7/

Use a combination of newsletter, emails, texts and even whatsapp groups to keep in touch.



8/

Make the renewal process quick and easy, list the benefits of membership both playing and non-playing, emphasise the physical and mental health benefits, offer flexible payment options and call members who have not renewed and ask if they need assistance.

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Case studies

Llanishen Golf Club – fostering a sense of community and belonging



The club's membership strategy is to focus on under-represented groups such as juniors and women. Llanishen has had over 150 people take part in New2Golf programmes with 57 women joining as full members over the last 5 years; this has brought in additional revenue of over £100,000.

The club has also focused on retaining the existing junior members and encouraged their friends to join. The club offers weekly complementary junior coaching

sessions throughout the winter at a nearby driving range.

Throughout the summer months the course is reserved every Wednesday evening for juniors of all abilities, playing off junior tees, on a measured course with its own dedicated scorecard.

Building greater diversity of members has been key to ensuring a truly welcoming and family friendly golf club, which puts member retention at its heart.

 [LINK TO FULL CASE STUDY](#)

Millicent Golf Club – recruiting then retaining



In 2017, Millicent Golf Club had just 239 members which was not an adequate number to sustain the club moving forward. The club developed a marketing strategy which included a strong social media strategy, and hired a PGA Golf Professional to help drive growth.

The club was keen to recruit and then retain all golfers but especially women and juniors. Specific programmes were run to attract these audiences and the club now has 200 women and 150 juniors.

There is now a junior committee and juniors have allocated times at the weekend to play in family groups. The club also initiated Intermediate & Student membership categories, at a discounted price and these have produced another 150 members.

Retention is vital for the club's future prosperity, so from the time new joiners enter the club, a warm welcome is guaranteed with excellent bar and Pro shop provision and a course maintained to the highest standard.

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Case studies ▶

Pleasington Golf Club – ‘Good2Great’ strategy



Ahead of some major redevelopment work to its much-loved course, Pleasington committed to taking members on a journey, especially focussing on ensuring they all continued to have a voice throughout process.

The club launched a Members Experience survey in September 2021, receiving a 49% response rate from their 800-strong membership. The survey identified two clear areas for improvement that strongly influenced general satisfaction and, importantly, future loyalty of their members - these were related to the quality and price of the food and beverage offer. As a result, the club now has data to support its decision to invest in these areas, as well as the feedback on the course and other recent developments, as part of its 'Good2Great' strategy.

The club will continue to survey its members, enabling management to use consistent measurement and benchmarking to drive change. Critically, attention will focus on the two main areas identified from its survey results, as well as understanding more on the experiences of its current female members to support future recruitment and retention initiatives.

▶ [LINK TO FULL CASE STUDY](#)

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Case studies

Great Torrington Golf Club – welcoming juniors



Great Torrington Golf Club have a dedicated team at the club made up of volunteers, the club Manager and the PGA Professional who together create a welcoming environment for junior golfers in particular.

Outreach work with local schools and sixth forms has resulted in taster sessions being delivered to over 500 young people.

Junior membership fees at the club are set at a reasonable level and club kit is provided at a subsidised cost for families who struggle to afford it.

Wearing the club kit enables the juniors to feel pride and passion in themselves and the club.

 [LINK TO FULL CASE STUDY](#)

Downfield Golf Club – using membership surveys



Downfield Golf Club has continued to build towards a successful future after responses from a member survey in 2022 identified areas of key importance and helped to shape a new course report designed to improve the renowned championship venue.

The survey was well received by a membership base that has grown by 10% in the last two years with an

overall response rate of 61% and a positive net promoter score obtained in all categories.

With the condition of the course acknowledged as a priority for members, Downfield was able to tap into the survey data when devising a series of improvements to bunkering and pathways in preparation for the 2023 season.

 [LINK TO FULL CASE STUDY](#)

Useful links

For further information and support, click on the blue arrows to go straight through to useful websites.

England Golf

Retention Resources



<https://www.Englandgolf.org/resource-detail/retention#:~:text=Research%20shows%20that%20converting%20a,may%20choose%20to%20move%20on>

Golf Ireland

Membership Retention



<https://www.golfireland.ie/club-hub-listing/membership-retention>

Scottish Golf

Membership Recruitment & Retention



<https://www.scottishgolf.org/membership-recruitment-and-retention>

Wales Golf

Retaining Golfers



<https://www.walesgolf.org/retaining-golfers/>

Compiled on behalf of England Golf, Golf Ireland, Scottish Golf, Wales Golf, The PGA, The Golf Foundation, BIGGA, GCMA and the R&A.

