

Under embargo until 00:01 Thursday 21 May 2020

CRICKET FAMILY IS 'TOGETHER THROUGH THIS TEST' DURING LOCKDOWN

ECB launches campaign to celebrate over 200 cricket initiatives across the game supporting the nation during COVID-19

- **An emotional short film, narrated by cricket fan Stephen Fry, pays tribute to the response of the cricket family to the pandemic and thanks fans for their patience**
- **The ECB has created an online hub bringing together resources to support the game and the nation**
- **Initiatives from across the network include long-distance charity runs, delivering food to the vulnerable and a phone support service for those left isolated during lockdown**

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has today launched 'Together Through This Test', a nationwide campaign shining a light on the work undertaken by the game in response to COVID-19 and highlighting the resources available to the public.

Cricket staff, volunteers and players across the country – from both the professional and the recreational game - have already taken part in over 200 initiatives during lockdown. Projects include long-distance charity runs, delivering food to the vulnerable and a dedicated phone support service for those left isolated by coronavirus.

A powerful short film, narrated by cricket fan Stephen Fry, captures the spirit of the cricket community and celebrates the way in which society has come together during this difficult period.

The ECB has set up a COVID-19 resource hub on ecb.co.uk/covid-19 to offer assistance, focussing on:

- Providing physical and mental health support to the general public, with NHS information, a Vitality 'Fit 4 Cricket' series and a Lord's Taverners online hub for cricket-based activities
- Delivering fun and educational interactive resources for children in partnership with Chance to Shine
- Supporting the recreational game by providing emergency funds and resources

The key initiatives to date include:

- Running 21 programmes **providing food to NHS staff, the vulnerable and the homeless.**
- Supporting the **isolated and vulnerable with #MakeThatCall** where players, coaches, staff and former players ring older members and stewards from their club.
- Our cricket clubs being used for **COVID-19 testing and blood donations.**
- Three England Women's players have **offered their services to the NHS – Heather Knight, Tammy Beaumont and Sophia Dunkley.**
- We have produced social media content, including content of our players, to **keep families entertained and active** during lockdown with **over 90 million video views** to date
- The Lord's Taverners creating a free online hub to **support disadvantaged and disabled young people** with physical activity and mental wellbeing during lockdown.

- Running **49 fundraising initiatives**. These range from England's Physical Disability men's team collectively running a marathon a day for ten days, in aid of the Lord's Taverners, to a 5-year-old cricket fan from Cheshire doing the 1,000 Bat Challenge for the NHS after hospital staff saved his life.
- Launching **three financial schemes to provide immediate support** for our national network of cricket clubs and leagues and a financial toolkit created by NatWest.

From today, 5 to 11-year-old children and their parents can access **eight weeks' worth of curriculum-based educational resources** covering topics from maths & English to art & PE, delivered in partnership with Chance to Shine.

This hub is not only a resource to help people during lockdown but will also provide information and support to the cricket community when cricket is phased back into society. The ECB and wider cricket network will be launching and supporting further initiatives in the coming weeks including:

- The **Together through this Test auction** launching tomorrow (22 May) at 15:00 and ending Friday 29th May at 15:00. Run by Nottinghamshire CCC and involving all 18 First Class Counties, the MCC and the Professional Cricketers Association, it will raise money for local charities across England and Wales. The auction will be hosted on <http://www.cricketauction.co.uk>.
- **#DesignOurShirt competition**, in partnership with New Balance, inviting kids to create a new England shirt.
- **#RaiseTheBat**, an out-of-home campaign using billboards to celebrate key workers from the cricket family.
- **'Safe Haven'**, a programme offering club grounds as safe spaces for elderly and vulnerable people to exercise as lockdown eases.
- **NatWest CricketForce**, a nationwide campaign when lockdown lifts **to help the cricket network get back on its feet** and recognise the challenge we have overcome.

Eileen Whelan-Ash, aged 108, is the world's oldest international cricketer having represented England either side of the second World War. She said: "No cricket was played during the war, but the thought of it kept us going and gave us hope. I think it's the same now. Even without a ball being bowled yet this summer, I'm very proud to see the sport I've loved all my life playing its part to help people during this terrible crisis, keeping them hopeful of better times ahead."

Clare Connor, ECB Managing Director, Women's Cricket said, "Our sport means different things to different people but if this crisis has shown us one thing, it's the way the cricket family pulls together when times are tough.

"We are inspired by and grateful to the whole cricket family from the grassroots of the game right up to our elite teams for their incredible team spirit, for not just thinking about their own survival but also about how they can support the wider community. We hope this campaign will shine a light on the amazing work being done, help signpost people to the support they need and provide a feeling of hope and solidarity for cricket fans during this challenging time."

Stephen Fry said: "It's wonderful how patient everyone has been during this incredibly difficult time. Like many cricket fans, I long to hear the sound of leather on willow again, but while we wait it out, we do of course have to stick together and do what we can to support each other. It was a pleasure

to be able to read Jimmy Lee’s poem which so wonderfully connects the national game with the national spirit.”

For more information on the resources available, please visit www.ecb.co.uk/covid-19. To become a volunteer, please visit the website and contact your local county club.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITOR

The ECB would like to thank its broadcast partners, Sky and BBC, for the provision of footage for the film and their support with the campaign.

Jimmy Lee is an employee of the ECB



National

- Players, coaches, staff and former players from across the network ring older members and stewards from their clubs to check in and see if they are ok as part of #MakeThatCall
- England’s Physical Disability men’s team collectively runs a marathon a day for ten days to raise money for the Lord’s Taverners charity

East Midlands

- Nottinghamshire CCC works with local Sikh charity Guru Nanak to feed homeless, sheltered and vulnerable people in Nottingham
- Derbyshire’s Physio Fran Clarkson volunteers for the NHS to help those recovering from COVID-19

North West

- A cricket-mad five-year old from Cheshire, who was saved by hospital staff, takes part in a 1,000 Bat Challenge for ten days to raise money
- Lancashire CCC offers 5,000 tickets free to NHS staff

South

- Hampshire CCC launches a Call-Round campaign reaching over 150 older members to date
- Wiltshire Cricket creates an activity book to keep children entertained and educated during lockdown

South East

- Essex Cricket teams up with 'Supporting Humanity' to provide 1,000 hot meals for 13 NHS hospitals
- Kent Cricket and local clubs collectively run 8268km and raise over £10,000 for local hospitals
- Surrey's Amar Viridi helps cook and deliver food to those in need through Nishkam SWAT charity
- Merstham CC runs 'Cricket Tea with a Difference' to collect supplies for food banks and a charity
- Sussex Cricket run Sporting Memories sessions via Zoom with volunteers making regular phone calls to participants in need of a chat or some company

South West

- Shaldon CC pays tribute to the health service, shaving 'NHS' inside a heart into the grass
- Somerset CCC runs a competition inviting junior members to design a limited-edition shirt for the NHS

Wales

- Glamorgan's Strength & Conditioning Coach Tom Turner takes part in #GetFitWithGlam, creating fitness videos for all
- Cricket Wales runs *Question of Sport* in aid of Opening Up, a mental health charity

West Midlands

- Edgbaston Cricket Ground becomes an NHS testing centre
- Sentinel CC takes on the 3k challenge to raise money for the NHS
- Ben Cotton, of Porthill Park CC, is one of many cricketers backing the #SmashtheTache

Yorkshire and the North East

- England's Adil Rashid delivers food parcels to vulnerable people in Bradford
- Durham legend Graeme Fowler provides weekly video tips on 'Coping with COVID-19'