



ICC Cricket World Cup 2019 – bringing cricket to the heart of London

The ICC Cricket World Cup got underway last week at London's KIA Oval, one of the capital's most storied and iconic sporting venues.

Taking place in England for the first time in 20 years, the World Cup represents the pinnacle of men's one-day cricket (the Women's Cricket World Cup was contested in England just two years ago, with the home team memorably lifting the trophy after Anya Shrubsole's heroics in the final against India).

While the focus of the world will be on the planet's most talented cricketers doing battle across the country over the next six weeks, some of the most exciting developments in cricket are happening right at the grassroots level, with London right at their centre.

Across England, almost 1.2 million adults played some form of cricket in the past year – a figure which represents 2.6% of the country's adult population.

In London, that figure stands at nearly 216,000 or 3.1% of adult Londoners.

The capital, it is clear, forms a key hinterland for cricket participation. And so it should; the city itself is a melting pot of different cultures, different nationalities and different life experiences. It plays host to two County Cricket Clubs, in Middlesex and Surrey, and their homes at Lord's Cricket Ground and the KIA Oval. Cricket. Sitting at the heart of the capital, crosses boundaries; its global status ideally suited to a global city.

The popularity of cricket at a grassroots level is no accident.

While a cursory examination of cricket might conjure images of a village cricket green, cucumber sandwiches and long Sunday afternoons, beneath the surface it is a vibrant, youth-focused sport.

In particular, the England & Wales Cricket Board's development of the All Stars Cricket programme has seen new activities being developed to support children aged five to eight to have great first experiences in cricket. Across the capital, supported by the Greater London Authority, the programme has been taken out to non-traditional sites, including parks, schools, leisure centres, housing associations, Mosques, Gudwaras and Temples, to allow as many people as possible to access cricket, many of them for the first time.

The Cricket World Cup, then, offers a clear opportunity to further sharpen Londoners' enthusiasm for cricket. It also works to demonstrate the power that major events have to inform decision-making around the role of physical activity and sport in London.

In his recently-published sport strategy, *Sport for All of Us*, the Mayor of London made a commitment to ensuring that major sports events bring economic **and** social benefits to London.

The strategy promises to ensure that community engagement delivers against wider Mayoral ambitions to make London the most active and socially integrated city in the world.

Since the World Cup's last visit to London, the capital has changed immeasurably.

Major sport events offer an opportunity to continue to positively change the city now, and for the future. The work being done for grassroots physical activity and sport throughout the tournament, by the ECB and by partners involved, will remain right at the centre of those efforts.



The ICC Cricket World Cup takes place across England until 14 July 2019. For more information on the All Stars Cricket programme, visit www.ecb.co.uk/play/all-stars.