



SOFTBALL IRELAND 2011 CLUB CHARTER PROGRAM

For the 2011 season Softball Ireland will continue to help support teams with implementation of our Club Charter program. The Club Charter is designed to improve the health of teams and clubs and in by doing so will improve Softball play in Ireland overall. The Club Charter will layout plans for clubs to recruit and train new members, retain their current members and promote the sport to a wider audience of potential players. Clubs that meet the initial requirements will then work to meet improvements within their club that will help their own club as well as the Softball in Ireland.

The major change with this year's Club Charter program will be in its implementation. This year the Club Charter will be to allow clubs to begin participating immediately. Each team who signs on will need complete only the basic requirements in club structure and equipment. Once a team signs on, we will work on checking off additional club achievements that will in turn be rewarded by Softball Ireland with a variety of promotions and special prizes. The most important aspect of the Club Charter will be the improvement you will see in the running of your club and the advancement of Softball play in Ireland.

Each achievement will be awarded points based on a pre-determined level, and the club with the most points at the end of the season will receive a prize. In addition to the club winning for the most points there will be benefits all season long for participating clubs that will help teams with equipment, coaching, recruiting and training.

The first Club Charter benefit available to participating clubs will be the level 0 training session scheduled for May 7th at ALSAA where coaches from the USA professional Combat Softball team. For more information watch the Softball Ireland website for details or email clubcharter@softball.ie



How to Improve Your Club

Below are a few suggestions on how to maintain and improve your club with recruiting, organising, training and overall communication to members. While some of these are simple best-practice suggestions, some are club charter requirements. Softball Ireland will be there to support initiatives that will help clubs improve their structure as well as help promote softball play in Ireland overall.

Recruitment and Retention

There are several stages of recruiting players, and getting them down to training the first time is only the first step. It is the follow-up steps that are essential to retaining those new players. While there are plenty of ways to recruit new players; having existing players introduce new recruits is the easiest, but posting notices online, putting up posters in neighbourhood shops all can work quite well.

Once new players come down it is important that someone from your club takes them aside and works with them initially to allow them to understand the concepts of the game as well as giving them enough personal training that will allow them to play marginally well enough that they won't hurt themselves.

Make sure new players get playing time and are invited to social events to keep them coming back. The hardest part of keeping a new player is that when they are new and may not be proficient, you may not have a place for them on the field. You may want to consider entering a team into the business league if you have players not getting enough game time so that everyone is engaged and getting their game.

Club Structure

Each club must ensure it has sufficient administrators to enable it to function and to avoid placing too much burden on just a few individuals. Requirements differ by size and ambition of the club, but the key functions include a treasurer, a secretary, a chairman and a player representative.

Given the social nature of the sport and its community, this charter advises that a social committee is also put in place. Even a small number of social events make a big difference when it comes to inducting and retaining new members.

Administrative roles should be separated from coaching, captaincy and other on-the-field responsibilities.

Equipment

Maintaining high standards for club equipment, including matching club uniforms is critical on how we present our sport to newcomers and to the outside world. This is all about making an immediate impression on new recruits that the club is going to invest in them as players. While it is important to have spare club equipment available to all teams, it is more important that bats and gloves are always available to the lower division teams as higher division teams usually have seasoned players that have their own equipment.



➤ Bats

Each club should have 2-3 club bats, of varying weights (e.g. 26, 27 & 28 oz.), available to all teams. The bats must adhere to current standards (e.g. ASA certified with no dents). Clubs should not rely on players purchasing their own bats due to the cost involved for new recruits and the understandable reluctance of players to share their favourite, expensive bat. Bats should be replaced when they show signs of age, dents or are deemed illegal by Softball Ireland.

➤ Gloves

Each club should have 4-5 spare gloves of varying sizes and hand (e.g. 12.5" & 13.5", LH and RH) available to all teams for new players. Ideally the gloves should be loaned out to players for their rookie season with a deposit guaranteeing their safe return.

➤ Uniforms

The minimum requirement in the Softball Ireland byelaws requires teams to wear matching uniforms, and at a minimum that means a t-shirt of the same colour. However this is very much a minimum. The more club related clothing available and the more the members are encouraged to wear them, the better a brand the club will create. A team wearing clothing of a common colour with a club logo will find it easier to create new recruits from passers-by.

➤ First Aid

All clubs should be in possession of a first aid kit. The kit should be checked regularly and replenished when required. At least one member of the each team within the club should be qualified to administer first aid.

Advertising

Simple posters with contact details will inform locals of the presence of the club and the desire for members can go a long way to establishing an identity and bringing in new recruits. Investing in temporary signage to be put up where the club trains is another efficient method to attract passers-by. Again this should include contact details so that curious potential players can get in touch.

Coaching

Practice sessions should be relevant and engaging. Clubs should get involved in coach training programmes and ensure that all players must be catered for - a challenging prospect for multi-team clubs.

Each club should appoint a head coach to devise a coaching plan. However the burden of running the session must be shared, this is particularly important given that the majority of coaches also have playing roles. Experienced players should be encouraged to speak up and play a role in developing the newer recruits. The importance of sharing on the field experience cannot be over-valued.

Sessions must start on time and must be well attended. To this end clubs must find appropriate ways to encourage attendance by, for example, rewarding regular attendees with greater game time.



Most importantly beginners must be afforded one-on-one attention. The impact of taking beginners aside and teaching them the basic step-by-step through pre-season training sessions is immense both from a player development point of view and in the realm of player retention.

Communication

The club secretary and team representative(s) must ensure that regular email, text messages and phone calls are made to ensure that players are kept up to date with all club events. An email reminder 24 hours before practice will improve attendance. A phone call to a beginner 24 hours after their first appearance will reassure them of their stature in the club.

Players join clubs to play softball, but should immediately be made aware of the community behind the game.

Umpiring

Clubs must take advantage of umpire training schemes to advise new players on the rules and to provide umpires to other clubs. Clubs providing umpires will receive preferential treatment when umpires are assigned to their games.



The Role of Softball Ireland

By signing up for the Club Charter Program, Softball Ireland will in turn help support clubs with benefits, prizes and most important the resources to improve your club, and in turn the sport as a whole. The support will come in the form of coach & umpire training courses, promotional materials, and prizes.

Initial Charter Requirements

- Committee Structure: By maintaining a minimum of three administrative persons in the club structure, clubs can protect themselves from collapsing if one person leaves. Depending on the size of the club, one individual may fill more than one role, but a minimum of three different members should be involved with the club structure. The roles should include, but are not limited to:
 - Chairman
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Player Representative(s)
 - Social Officer/Committee
 - Team Captain(s)
 - Head Coach
- Active Club Bank account: Clubs must maintain a separate bank account with treasurer overseeing payments and two signatories for cheques.
- Uniform: Per the current SI byelaws it is required that all players take the field with matching uniforms.
- Club Equipment: All equipment must be legal, game ready and available at all official SI games. It is important that lower division teams have greater access to the club equipment, while players that have been playing longer should be encouraged to buy their own gloves and bats.
 - 2 club bats
 - 4 spare fielding gloves for the club
 - A first aid kit available for inspection by the umpire prior to the game

Level One Achievements (1 point)

- Active SI umpire: An active umpire is one who has taken charge of at least 3 SI sanctioned league or tournament games in the most recent calendar year. To support this endeavour SI will provide umpiring courses at no cost.
- Level 0 Coach: Have a level 0 club coach be recognised under the SI coaching programme. The “Head Coach” administrative role should initially be filled by an individual recognised by SI as at minimum a Level 0 coach.
- Maintain an online club presence: Minimally to include fortnightly club updates and a list of dates & venues of all games, practices and other club events.
- Attendance at SI & regional AGMs: At least one registered member of each club’s team should attend both the Softball Ireland AGM and your regional association’s AGM.



Level Two Achievements (2 points)

- **Club Social Event/Fundraiser**: Clubs hosting a social event as a fundraiser helps your club and helps to improve the social aspect of the sport.
- **Level 1 Coach**: Have a Level 1 club coach be recognised under the SI coaching programme.
- **ESF Level Active Umpire**: An active umpire is one who has taken charge of at least 3 ESF tournament games in the most recent calendar year. To support this endeavour SI will provide ESF umpiring courses at no cost.

Level Three Achievements (3 points)

- **Host a Blitz**: The organisation and promotion of a blitz is major undertaking and more games that are played in the country is better for the sport.
- **Level 2+ Coach**: Have a Level 2+ club coach be recognised under the SI coaching programme.



SOFTBALL IRELAND CLUB CHARTER - CHECKLIST 2011

Club Name: _____

Club Charter Contact: _____

Initial Requirements

- Min. Three Member Club Committee
- Maintain Club Bank Account
- Uniform
- Equipment

1st Level Achievements (worth 1 point)

- | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Additional Club Committee members | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Club Coach (level 0) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Maintain an Internet Presence | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| • Attend SI Umpire training | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Attend Softball Ireland/Regional AGM | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2nd Level Achievements (worth 2 points)

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Host Social Event/Fundraiser | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Club Coach (level 1) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • SI Certified Active Umpire | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3rd Level Achievements (worth 3 points)

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Host a Softball blitz | | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| • Club Coach (level 2) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • ESF/ISF Certified Active Umpire | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |