

## Outreach Information for Clubs

Outreach initiatives aimed at attracting underrepresented groups offer several valuable benefits.

### Benefits to the Club

#### 1. Membership Growth

- Fresh energy & ideas: New players bring enthusiasm and help sustain participation.
- Long-term sustainability: Engaging underrepresented groups (e.g. younger players, minorities, or people with disabilities) can ensure the club does not shrink over time.

#### 2. Community Reputation

- Inclusive image: A welcoming club is viewed positively by the community and local organisations.
- Partnership potential: Inclusive outreach can lead to collaborations with schools, community centres or cultural groups.
- Funding Opportunities: Many grants and programs prioritise or require diversity initiatives. There are a number of potential funding opportunities to support community integration. *See below for more information.*

#### 3. Skill Building for All

- Learning new strategies: Different players may bring novel approaches or styles to the game.
- Mentorship opportunities: Seasoned players benefit from teaching newcomers, while new players gain from the expertise.

### Benefits to Underrepresented Groups

#### 1. Social Connection

- Combats isolation: Bridge offers social bonding, especially beneficial for socially isolated groups.
- Supportive environment: Creating welcoming spaces reduces barriers to participation and builds confidence.

#### 2. Cognitive Engagement

- Mental stimulation: Bridge is known for improving memory, concentration, and strategic thinking.
- Healthy challenge: It's an engaging way to stay mentally active without pressure.

#### 3. Intergenerational Exchange

- Bridging age gaps: Game nights can bring young and older players together, breaking stereotypes and fostering mentorship.

## How can bridge clubs attract members from underrepresented groups?

### Key considerations:

- Intentional planning and action: attracting members from underrepresented groups requires intentional planning and action to create an inclusive, welcoming, and equitable environment.
- Balance diversity with inclusion: attracting diverse members isn't enough; they must feel valued and authentically included.
- Be patient and persistent: building genuine diversity takes time and care.

### Effective strategies your club can implement:

#### 1. Reflect and Define Your Purpose

Before outreach:

- Clarify why inclusion matters to your club.
- Define what diversity and equity mean in your context.
- Assess your Club's Starting Point: who is currently not represented and why?
- Review your Club's culture: Are any of your rules, norms, or meetings unintentionally exclusive?

#### 2. Inclusive Outreach and Promotion

- Use welcoming, jargon-free language in your promotions.
- Highlight the social, strategic, and community aspects of the game—these appeal across cultures and generations.
- Promote bridge as a brain-boosting and community-building activity to attract younger or diverse groups.
- Use diverse marketing channels that reach different communities.
- Post flyers in multilingual community hubs and local libraries.
- Use social media channels, including platforms like Instagram or TikTok, to showcase a diverse, fun side of the game.
- Showcase diverse representation in promotional materials.
- Partner with advocacy groups to help share your message.

#### 3. Build Relationships with Communities

- Ask existing members regarding any contacts they may already have with diverse social organisations or groups with a view to building on existing relationships.
- Councils should have a list of Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations in their area.
- Social prescribing link workers commonly refer people to activities such as art workshops, exercise groups and community clubs. Bridge fits the same category of

structured, socially engaging, cognitively stimulating group activity. *See below for more information.*

- Attend local community events or cultural gatherings with a message of collaboration.
- Partner with local community centres, cultural organisations and educational facilities to introduce bridge.
- Offer information sessions or open houses directly tailored to underrepresented groups.
- Create opportunities for informal interaction and engagement before asking for membership.

#### **4. Develop Inclusive Programming**

- Offer free introductory lessons geared toward absolute beginners.
- Run beginner-friendly tournaments with supportive, non-competitive atmospheres.
- Plan activities that appeal to a range of interests and cultures.
- Recognise and celebrate diverse holidays and traditions.
- Facilitate intergenerational bridge events - young and older players learning from each other.
- Offer financial aid or reduced rates if cost is a barrier for some groups
- Offer transportation support for groups that may otherwise have difficulties accessing the club.
- Ask for input from underrepresented groups on programming needs.

#### **5. Create a Welcoming Space and Culture**

- Ensure the venue is accessible and comfortable for all (consider mobility, lighting, noise).
- Make sure signage or instructions are available in different languages if needed.
- Create a buddy system where newcomers are paired with welcoming, patient members.
- Ensure that club values explicitly promote inclusivity.
- Train leaders and members on topics like unconscious bias and inclusive language.
- Establish a diversity or inclusion committee to keep efforts consistent.

#### **6. Training and Leadership**

- Train volunteers and club leaders on inclusion principles including topics like unconscious bias and inclusive language.
- Include diversity and inclusion goals in club policy and decision-making.
- Establish a diversity or inclusion committee to keep efforts consistent.
- Elect ambassadors from underrepresented groups once membership diversifies.

#### **7. Feedback and Growth**

- Encourage honest feedback through surveys or listening sessions to ask members (especially new or quieter ones) how the club can improve.
- Respond meaningfully and make changes based on input.
- Act on concerns regarding cliques, competitiveness, or microaggressions.

- Communicate changes and progress publicly to show commitment.

## Outreach Ideas

If you're considering practical outreach activities, here are some ideas:

- [Beginner classes / taster sessions](#) at community centres or libraries.
- [Partner with local schools or colleges](#) to introduce bridge in clubs or after-school programs.
- [Offer free trial sessions](#) or bring-a-friend days with refreshments.

## More information about Funding Opportunities

### Potential Funding Opportunities to Support Community Integration:-

- [Find Funding - Community First Yorkshire](#) – Contains useful funding information and lists lots of local funds which may be available for clubs in North Yorkshire.
- [SYCF Small Grants Programme | South Yorkshire's Community Foundation](#) – This is up to £1k and South Yorkshire Clubs with an income of less than £10k income would be eligible. They do not have to be a charity.
- [National Lottery Awards for All England | The National Lottery Community Fund](#) – Funding of £300-£20,000 which can be over 2 yrs. Funds projects that bring people together to build strong relationships in and across communities. Both charities and non-charities can apply.

### More information about Social Prescribing:-

Bridge has been explored and promoted as a potential social-prescribing activity, though it is not yet widely embedded in formal social-prescribing pathways. Research groups and bridge organisations in the UK have actively positioned bridge as a wellbeing intervention, and some local initiatives have trialled or discussed it in the context of social prescribing.

### What the evidence shows:-

#### Bridge is recognised as a wellbeing-enhancing activity

- The *Bridge: A MindSport for All (BAMSA)* research programme at the University of Stirling has documented how bridge supports mental stimulation, social connection, healthy ageing, and emotional wellbeing.
- Their work explicitly explores how bridge could be scaled as a community-based wellbeing activity, aligning closely with social-prescribing goals.

### Social prescribing in the UK includes activities like arts, community groups, and cognitive hobbies

- Social prescribing link workers commonly refer people to activities such as art workshops, exercise groups, and community clubs. Bridge fits the same category of structured, socially engaging, cognitively stimulating group activity.
- Academic reviews of social prescribing describe these kinds of activities as typical referral options.

## **Bridge organisations have advocated for its inclusion**

- The English Bridge Union and related research partners have highlighted the positive wellbeing effects of bridge, including improved mood, social engagement, and cognitive challenge.
- Their research is often framed in terms of public-health relevance, which is the same rationale used for social-prescribing interventions.

## **Has bridge been *formally* prescribed?**

- There is no evidence of bridge being widely or systematically included as a standard option in NHS social-prescribing directories.
- However, local pilots and discussions have taken place, and the academic literature positions bridge as a strong candidate for social prescribing due to its social and cognitive benefits.

## **Bottom line**

Bridge has not yet become a mainstream social-prescribing activity, but it has been seriously proposed, researched, and in some cases trialled as one. The infrastructure and evidence base exist, and organisations continue to advocate for its inclusion.

There's no evidence of a formal, NHS-recognised social-prescribing programme specifically built around bridge in Yorkshire, but the region *does* have strong social-prescribing infrastructure — and that means bridge clubs or community groups *can* be (and sometimes are) used informally by link workers when appropriate.

## **What exists in Yorkshire right now:-**

### **Strong social-prescribing networks**

Yorkshire has well-developed social-prescribing systems across:

- West Yorkshire Health & Care Partnership
- Community First Yorkshire (supporting VCSE groups to become social-prescribing-ready)
- Humber & North Yorkshire Health & Care Partnership
- Yorkshire Health Partners (East Riding), including youth-focused social prescribing
- South Yorkshire ICS, which includes Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham, Doncaster, and Bassetlaw

These networks routinely refer people to community groups, hobby clubs, and cognitively stimulating activities — the exact category where bridge fits.

But: no dedicated “Bridge Social Prescribing Programme”

None of the above organisations list bridge as a formal, structured social-prescribing offer. That means:

- No region-wide scheme specifically promoting bridge as a prescribed activity
- No official NHS-endorsed bridge pathway

- No published pilot in Yorkshire focused solely on bridge

However, link workers have wide discretion. If a local bridge club is welcoming, accessible, and suitable for someone's wellbeing goals, it can absolutely be used as a referral destination.

### **What *could* be happening informally**

In practice, link workers often refer people to:

- Community centres
- Social clubs
- Cognitive hobby groups
- Loneliness-reduction activities

Clubs already run beginner sessions, social play, or daytime groups, which are exactly the kinds of activities link workers look for.