Great Torrington Golf Club is a picturesque 9-hole course in North Devon, ideal for relaxed golf and improving players.

The junior section had dwindled to just five members and the club wanted to attract new, young players. Great Torrington doesn’t have a PGA professional or full-time members of staff but the club and volunteers were determined to do their bit to grow the game.

They met with England Golf and the Golf Foundation in February 2018 and decided to work towards becoming an HSBC Golf Roots Centre. They drew up an action plan with the aim of starting a junior academy and increasing the junior membership to 20 by August.
Great Torrington Golf Club
Devon

Action
The club got busy. Volunteers attended a workshop to learn about Tri-Golf; key volunteers took a safeguarding and child protection course and were DBS checked by England Golf; and a club welfare officer was appointed. A professional at another local club agreed to offer junior coaching at Great Torrington.

Over £800 was raised for junior development at a fund raising event supported by 64 members, each paying £6 and playing for prizes given by the local community and businesses. A prize draw was also held.

Taster sessions were run with five schools and a junior academy started on Tuesday evenings, supported by volunteers and the local professional. Parents are encouraged to stay and help.

Promotion and marketing
The academy was promoted locally with 1000 flyers, costing £100. Volunteers posted them in letter boxes and distributed to local organisations.

As a one off promotion, the first year’s junior membership was offered free of charge.

Each junior member also receives a hat, branded jumper, ball marker, tees and golf balls, funded by the development fund and a member’s business sponsorship.

A Facebook page will go live in the next month with pictures of the juniors and details of their achievements.

The Results
Almost 300 children have attended taster sessions and the club now has 50 junior members, aged six to 15.

Six parents have also joined the club as a result of the junior project, generating additional revenue of £2,490. Bar and catering sales have also increased during academy sessions.

The club has been approved by the Golf Foundation as an HSBC Golf Roots Centre and received £1000 funding and a bag of Street Golf kit.

Top tips
• Consistency is key. Offer the junior programme on the same day and at the same time each week
• Persevere. Keep smiling and trying
• Encourage involvement from the parents
• Always be enthusiastic around the juniors

Offer lots of praise. The club awards a Golf Foundation Skills for Life trophy each week which goes to the player who has tried the hardest. The juniors and parents take turns to decide who should receive it.

WHAT THE CLUB AND OTHERS SAID
“We faced many challenges initially but the enthusiasm of the volunteers made it happen and the support of Andy Jack from England Golf and Tom Sparks from the Golf Foundation proved invaluable.” Clarry Dunn, Golf Club Junior Organiser

“Without a PGA professional or full-time member of staff, Great Torrington faced many challenges. However the group of volunteers pulled together to overcome such barriers and produced some remarkable results. The club should be extremely proud of this achievement.” Andy Jack, England Golf Club Support Officer