



Annual Review 16-17

Message from the Chair



John Walmsley
BaseballSoftballUK Chair

I want to start this year's review by thanking two individuals for their outstanding contribution to not only BaseballSoftballUK but to the wider sports of baseball and softball. Jenny Fromer and Will Lintern are deserving not just of my thanks, but those of many others across the sports. Because of the size of our public grant from government for the next funding cycle, BSUK had to make some tough decisions with regard to staffing levels. That included saying goodbye to Jenny and Will after many years of service; however, they remain BSUK 'alumni', now and forever.

I also give credit to the rest of the permanent team, led so ably by John Boyd, BSUK's CEO. 2016-17 was the fourth and final year of the most recent Sport England funding cycle, and as can be read in this report, we delivered fully on participation growth, on talent development and on infrastructure improvements.

I was delighted to see us meet and exceed the four-year growth target for participants, hitting 23,811 by the end of 2016-17. Not every new player comes via BSUK, but through our work we enable an environment across teams, clubs and leagues that prepares the ground for good things to take hold. Examples include helping clubs build better governance, or helping them find and secure a field. We help with improving coaching standards, and through providing background checks to assure parents that clubs take safeguarding seriously. We support clubs with grant applications and in developing and hosting events. And yes, we teach people to play and help people to enjoy these great sports.

During the 2013-17 funding cycle we were able for the first time to access public money for talent development. This sits one level below national team programmes, but in many ways helps to support them, through getting young players ready for international competition via BSUK's High Performance Academy. I was delighted during the summer of 2016 to see the GB Under-18 Baseball Team have its highest-ever finish in the European Championship, and the GB Under-19 Women's Fastpitch Softball Team went one better, taking gold in Europe for the first time. Both squads contained players who had developed and improved through our HPA, and as a result, in the next funding cycle, our talent development money has nearly doubled.

Finally, Farnham Park continues to pick up positive comments from just about everyone I speak to. With additional capital funding in the past year we added a fourth fenced field (another baseball/softball combo), which makes the facility suitable for domestic and international tournaments and championships.

Over the following winter we completed the fit-out of the new Home Plate clubhouse and the Home Plate Bar & Kitchen, enhancing the facility as the home for British baseball and softball. A share of the catering and bar profits will be ploughed back into further facilities improvements.

BSUK is increasingly seen as a reliable and trusted partner by government agencies such as Sport England and UK Sport, and by the British Olympic Association as the sports re-emerge onto the Olympic stage for Tokyo 2020, as well as by our long-term friends at Major League Baseball.

In closing, I want to thank the many volunteers and casual staff who work alongside our permanent staff contingent to make BSUK such a success. This includes my colleagues on the Board, but also those who, like me, believe in a better future and who commit their sweat and intellect to propel baseball and softball forward across the UK. ■

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About BSUK

BaseballSoftballUK (BSUK) is the national development agency for the British Baseball and Softball Federations. BSUK was formed in 2000 to move baseball and softball forward in the UK by achieving operational efficiencies, approaching businesses for investment and by maximising investment from government.

Our job – developing the sports in this country – has been defined by our vision of a future where baseball and softball are ‘Played in Every Park’. To achieve this, we have centred our work programme on increasing regular participation in the sports. We believe that the most important measure of the health of the sports in the UK is the number of people who play them, regularly, in fully-formed teams. This key measure determines where we focus investment, time and effort.

In 2015, we launched a new participation programme, Hit the Pitch, that will be central to this work for years to come. Hit the Pitch is designed to provide tools, advice, guidance and a simple framework of support for people who run teams. The programme includes a website packed full of ideas and tools for new team captains, commercial arrangements to provide lower-cost equipment and uniforms, and Activator training opportunities – each helping to make the busy life of a team captain just that little bit easier. Hit the Pitch has given the BaseballSoftballUK staff a great deal of confidence and has allowed them to achieve significant efficiencies, even in the programme’s first couple of years.

Eight years ago, just 10,000 people played baseball and softball in the UK. In 2016, the number of people playing regularly had more than doubled to just under 24,000. Our commercial relationships also took significant strides forward, and 2016 was the third year of a partnership with the Italian restaurant chain Carluccio’s, for whom we ran a softball league of 30 teams.

Behind the scenes, our administration continues to offer professional support to the British Baseball and Softball Federations and our governance has once again passed the Sport England Self-Assurance process with a green rating. We have also continued to offer an appropriate safeguarding process to help clubs maintain suitable standards for the welfare of players. ■



The BSUK Board

The BaseballSoftballUK Board met eight times during the year, which included two additional meetings beyond the usual six. Beside the Board's usual monitoring of the company's finances and development approach, there were some notable items for consideration during 2016-17.

One of the additional meetings occurred in February 2017 when the Board made a final review of BSUK's 2017-21 funding submission to Sport England – a key topic that was, unsurprisingly, on the Board's agenda throughout the year.

Earlier, in July 2016, Directors met and conducted a Board Evaluation. This process is usually held annually in different forms and is designed to enable Directors to self-evaluate their individual and collective effectiveness as a company Board. This time, the process was led by two external consultants from Birkbeck College, University of London. Geoff Walters and Richard Tacon had worked with the BSUK Board a few years previously for a case study in an academic project on company governance. A written report and recommendations followed the working session held in July, with the BSUK Board looking at how it could incorporate the recommendations into future ways of working.

Another subject for Board review during 2016 was the outcome of the Efficiency Review that BSUK underwent in March 2016. The review was commissioned by Sport England and facilitated by KPMG, with BSUK being invited to be part of a pilot scheme that was expected to be rolled out across all the sports funded by Sport England. The overall message from the review was that BSUK runs an efficient operation in terms of its application of financial and staff resources, and there were few significant recommendations that could be made to improve that. KPMG prepared a report that was provided to Sport England and the BSUK Board. Again, the Board considered how it could adopt the report's recommendations.

During the year, three Directors retired who had served on the Board for a number of years: Earl Dix (BBF), Stella Ackrell (BSF) and Andy Bird (Independent). ■

BaseballSoftballUK Board Structure

Affiliation	Name	Position	Notes
Independent	John Walmsley	Chair	
BBF	Earl Dix	President	Resigned July 2016
BBF	Gerry Perez	Elected member/President	Elected BBF President November 2016
BBF	Cody Cain		
BBF	Lisa Janson	Elected member	Appointed August 2016, Resigned November 2016
BSF	Stella Ackrell	President	Resigned March 2017
BSF	Mike Jennings	Elected member	
BSF	Simon Wareing	Elected member	Appointed July 2016
Independent	Jon Deacon		
Independent	Cate Atwater		
Independent	Chris Greenhalgh		
Independent	Andy Bird		Resigned November 2016
Independent	Position vacant		
Independent	Position vacant		

Appointments after 1 April 2016. Resignations before 31 March 2017.

BaseballSoftballUK Staff Structure

Department	Name	Position
CEO	Jenny Fromer	Joint-CEO and Head of Operations
CEO	John Boyd	Joint-CEO and Head of Development
Development	Chris Rawlings	National Development Manager
Development	Will Lintern	National Development Manager
Development	Luis Arrebillagas	Regional Development Manager
Development	Patrick Knock	Regional Development Manager
Development	Liz Knight	Regional Development Manager
Development	Leah Holmes	Regional Development Manager
Development	Johanna Malisani	Fastpitch Officer
Operations	Tim Stride	Operations Manager
Operations	Bob Fromer	Communications Consultant
Operations	Trevor Greenaway-Clissold	Marketing, Communications and Events Officer
Operations	Mark Caress	Finance and Governance Officer



Safeguarding

Overview

In 2016-17, BSUK trained 24 new coaches and club Safeguarding Officers through Educare online safeguarding programmes.

A further 22 people were trained at three baseball/softball-specific Time to Listen face-to-face courses delivered by BSUK's Deputy Safeguarding Lead Officer Mark Caress. The Time to Listen course is our preferred training course as its format allows questions and answers and is considered more effective than online training.

We completed 147 DBS checks on coaches and Safeguarding Officers in clubs up and down the country during the past year. The DBS Update Service has been highlighted to coaches as an ideal way of keeping up to date and reducing the administrative burden of completing the checks, and 24 of these renewals utilised the Update Service.

We spent time preparing safeguarding information for BSUK's website re-design, which will go live late 2017 or early in 2018. There will be nine new sections on safeguarding and the information will be structured based on relevance to different users. There will also be a section aimed at young people, including topics they have suggested as relevant.

We have continued to send out our Safeguarding Newsletter on a regular basis to all safeguarding contacts, with emails going out bi-monthly throughout the year. This was especially useful as a means of communication to support Safeguarding Officers when the FA abuse scandal broke.

We continue to gather data on clubs and leagues that have youth players so we can fully support them with safeguarding requirements.

We are continuing to train coaches in safeguarding as part of our drive to increase the number of licensed coaches. The result has been a 50% increase, with 33 coaches now licensed.

2016-17 snapshot

- 147 DBS checks completed. 84 of these were renewals.
- 3 Time to Listen courses completed. 22 coaches and Safeguarding Officers were trained.
- 20 Educare courses completed. Four were for Safeguarding Officers.
- 52 Safeguarding Officers. 92% of teams that require a Safeguarding Officer have one.

Priorities for the year ahead

- Complete the BSUK website re-design and launch a new-look section on safeguarding.
- Upskill workforce members by training Safeguarding Officers through Time to Listen courses.
- Continue to communicate regularly with club Safeguarding Officers to keep them up to date and raise the profile of safeguarding.
- Require all clubs to complete permission forms for youth players.
- Continue to gather up-to-date information from clubs and leagues so we can communicate directly and effectively with them on safeguarding matters.
- Require all youth coaches to have safeguarding training. ■

Diversity

In 2016, BaseballSoftballUK undertook a detailed survey of its playing membership. This survey showed that baseball and softball are very reflective of the population as a whole, with playing demographics consistent with the general UK population in terms of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people, with disabilities and socio-economic categories.

However, at 14%, our LGBT membership is nearly twice that of Stonewall's estimation for the British population.

Our members are 43% female in softball.

Late in the year, BSUK undertook the bold move of forming an LGBT Advisory Panel, which will help shape our ongoing LGBT work within the sports. ■



Development

Overview

As the four-year 2013-17 funding cycle from Sport England came to an end, the number of people playing baseball and softball in the UK had risen to an all-time high of 23,811.

This meant that since 2009, when the playing baseline was first established, the playing population in our sports had more than doubled, adding 13,986 participants playing in 820 new teams. The past four years has seen 7,594 new players start to play, making it a very successful period for the growth of the sports in this country.

The past 12 months has seen the number of players increase still further, from 22,402 to 23,811. This means that over the year a further 1,805 players have joined the ranks.

This takes the critical mass of players to the next level and moves us alongside many other sports in the country in terms of playing population. The fact that baseball and softball are now played in significant numbers in the UK is an important step towards raising awareness levels and the profile of our sports.

Targets

Like all publicly-funded sports organisations, BSUK has been working towards participation targets agreed with Sport England over the past four years.

Increase target: 4,225 new players

	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Yearly target	1,100	1,250	1,450	425	4,225
Yearly progress	1,031	1,279	3,479	1,805*	
Cumulative target	1,100	2,350	3,800	4,225	
Cumulative progress	1,031	2,310	5,789	7,594*	
Cumulative position	-69	-40	+1,989	+3,369*	

*Players who play for teams active on six occasions annually, with a team name and a captain. Years run from 1 April to 31 March. 2016 figures are to 31 March 2017.

Growth target: 23,565 new players

	Base	2013	2014	2015	2016
Sport England target increase		1,100	1,250	1,450	425
Increase in players		1,031	1,279	3,479	1,805*
Sport England target total	19,340	20,440	21,690	23,140	23,565
Total players	16,613	17,644	18,923	22,402	23,811*
Difference	-2,727	-2,796	-2,767	-738	+642

*Players who play for teams active on six occasions annually, with a team name and a captain. Years run from 1 April to 31 March. 2016 figures are to 31 March 2017.

Company softball

BSUK worked in partnership with the restaurant chain Carluccio's to stage a company-wide softball programme in 2016. Working with Carluccio's Graduate Trainee Managers, a wide-ranging programme of softball events was staged in Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Bristol, Brighton, Slough and London. The winners of each event qualified for the Carluccio's Grand Final, this year staged in Hyde Park. After a fierce evening of softball, it was the Cheshire Furies that emerged as victors.

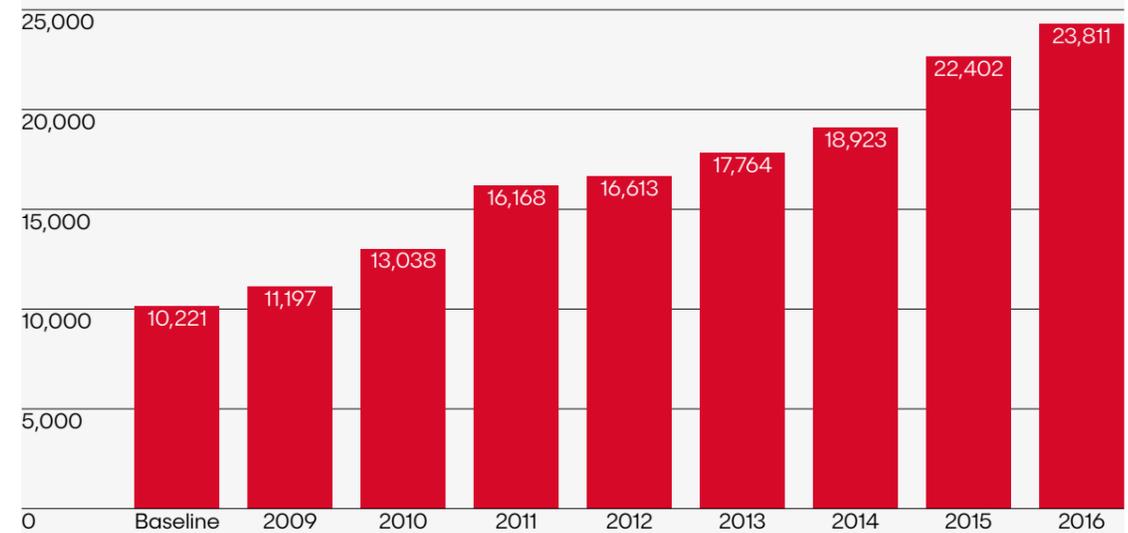
Other notable company programmes during the year included the Culham Science Centre Softball Programme, the Birmingham Workplace Challenge Softball Series and the continuation of our successful partnership

with Go Mammoth. Company softball will continue to be a focus for BSUK in the coming 12 months as we look to engage companies and businesses to help them achieve their aims and objectives while having a lot of fun in the process.

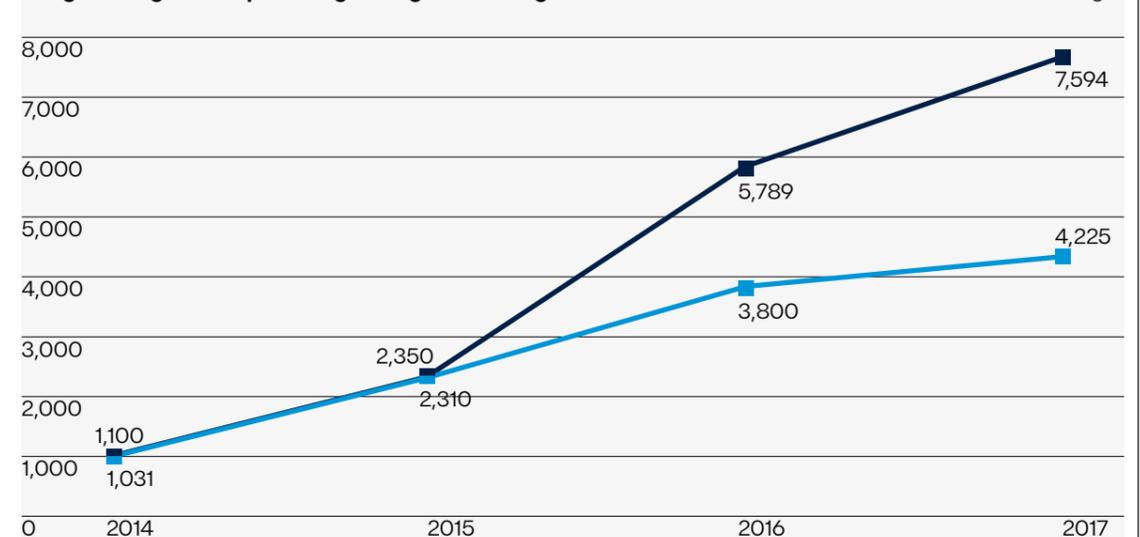
 [Cheshire Furies win Carluccio's Softball Finals. Read article here.](#)

 [Carluccio's launch bigger and better softball programme. Read article here.](#)

Increase in number of players



Progress against Sport England growth targets



Children and young people

The number of schools with baseball and softball programmes continued to grow throughout the past year. In total, this sector accounted for nearly a quarter of all new teams forming, with the School Games programme continuing to be a major focus through which to engage schools.

Twelve counties now include baseball/softball in their School Games programmes, giving our sports a significant presence. We have also continued to engage with the Youth Sport Trust in their Supply and Demand programme, running further programmes in London and Guildford this past year.

 *A successful year for softball at the School Games.* Read article [here](#).

Fastpitch softball

Johanna Malisani joined BSUK in March 2016 in the new post of Fastpitch Development Officer, and immediately began to make an impact both internally and in the fastpitch community.

Jo has instigated a schools programme in the area surrounding Farnham Park as well as being involved in the High Performance Academy, and has also been travelling the country staging player and coach clinics and supporting a new girls' fastpitch programme in the East Midlands.

Higher education

2016-17 was another record year in the development of both baseball and softball in the higher education sector. The total number of university teams increased to 69, from a total of 34 different institutions.

The National University Baseball and National University Softball Championships both saw record entry levels in 2016-17, with 15 teams entering the Baseball Championship and 16 teams entering the Softball Championship.

Loughborough maintained their domination of the softball crown for the fourth time in a row and University College London secured their inaugural baseball championship in March 2017 following Durham's victory in October 2016.

As well as regional university softball league play in the South East, the past year also saw the creation of the independent National University Baseball League – a further sign that university baseball is here to stay. There are plans to launch a softball version of the league in 2017.

BSUK also staged the second University Baseball and Softball National Conference in September 2016, in partnership once again with Volleyball England. Over 25 people descended on Kettering to discuss topics such as competitions, talent, and life in baseball and softball after university and had a chance to attend the BSUK Activators Course.

 *2nd University Baseball and Softball Conference.* Read article [here](#).

 *Durham claims first baseball Championship.* Read article [here](#).

 *Loughborough claims fourth straight softball title.* Read article [here](#).

 *UCL claims university baseball title.* Read article [here](#).

Coaching and workforce

Our partnership with Sport Structures continued in 2016-17, with a record number of courses staged and learners engaged.

The year also saw the introduction of the new BSUK Level Two Coach Award and a series of bite-sized CPD modules designed to offer coaches practical ideas to enhance their coaching delivery. Three Level 2 courses were staged in London, Nottingham and Bristol, with 29 learners attending over three days at each venue.

The new coach education structure (see diagram on page 14) also now includes a suite of nine Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Modules. These are either accessed as part of the Level 2 programme of study or as stand-alone events to help coaches with technical aspects of their delivery. In total, seven CPD modules were delivered, engaging a total of 46 learners.

Entries to National University Baseball Championships

October 2016	March 2017
University of East Anglia	University of East Anglia
University of Nottingham	University of Nottingham
Imperial College London	Imperial College London
University College London	University College London (winner)
University of Southampton	University of Southampton
Loughborough University	Loughborough University
Leeds Beckett University	Loughborough University 2
Durham University (winner)	University of Sheffield
	University of Oxford
	Durham University Dragons
	Durham University Bishops
	Queen Mary University
	University of Essex
	Coventry University
	Goldsmiths, University of London

Entries to National University Softball Championships

October 2016	March 2017
University of Portsmouth	University of Portsmouth
University of East Anglia	University of East Anglia
University of Nottingham 1	University of Nottingham Arrows
Loughborough University Thunder (winner)	University College London
Manchester Metropolitan University (Crewe)	Loughborough University Thunder (winner)
Oxford Brookes University	Oxford Brookes University
Loughborough University Swans	Loughborough University Swans
University of Nottingham 2	University of Nottingham Arrows
University of Manchester	University of Kent
University of York	University of Manchester
University of Southampton	University of York
University of Salford	University of Southampton
	Cardiff University
	University of Reading
	Loughborough University Sharks
	University of Essex

The new Activators Course proved to be extremely popular. This three-hour introduction to baseball and softball can be tailored for young people, teachers and community providers. In total, 13 Activator Courses were delivered, allowing 162 people to begin their coaching pathway in our sports.

Finally, the second BSUK Coach Summit was held in Birmingham in January 2017 with over 70 delegates attending a programme full of keynote speeches, workshops and discussion groups.

 *Coach Summit draws community praise.* Read article [here](#).

 *New courses ready for the 2016-17 offseason.* Read article [here](#).

Clubs and leagues

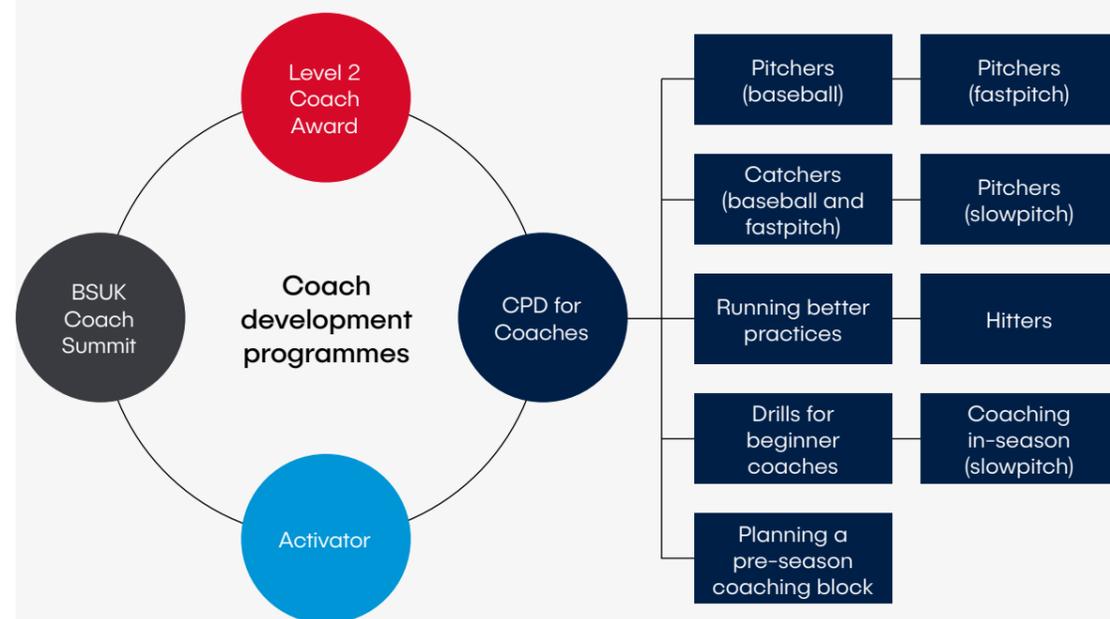
Clubs and leagues have again been at the centre of our development work over the past 12 months, as they are the heart and soul of the baseball and softball communities, accounting for over 50% of participation in our sports.

Whether it be a small but dedicated group running a single team, or a club with thriving adult and junior sections, each plays its own vital role in developing the sports. Through our Point Person system, BSUK development staff are able to help clubs and leagues in a variety of ways, including the following:

- Support to help clubs and leagues find, secure and improve their facilities.
- Support to help clubs and leagues improve and develop their coaches and volunteers.
- Support to help clubs and leagues improve their sustainability through improved governance.
- Support to help clubs and leagues develop partnerships with local institutions such as schools, colleges and universities.
- Support to help clubs and leagues access funds to help achieve their aims. ■

 *Clubs received over £100,000 in grant support in the last four years.* Read article [here](#).

Coach education structure



Academy and High Performance Academy

Overview

The 2016-17 Academy and High Performance Academy (HPA) training season was the best yet, with growth in both programmes. The Academy programme has had increased participation overall, and Academy Softball has added a Regional Midlands/North Academy. The HPA programme, where athletes are selected to participate, has expanded to include a more robust sport science offering, which included the addition of a mental performance coach and nutritionist as well as weekly Facebook Live sessions to support the athletes.

Academy

The 2016-17 Academy training season was launched on Saturday 1 October 2016 at Farnham Park Baseball and Softball Complex under rainy skies. The morning kicked off with Academy Director Will Lintern addressing both the Baseball and Softball Academy athletes about the ethos of the Academy and the goal for the 2016-2017 season to #MaximiseYourPotential. This was followed by opening statements from Liam Carroll, Head Coach of the Academy Baseball programme, and Robbie Robison, Head Coach of the Academy Softball programme. As the clouds gave way to sunny skies, with a record number of Academy participants present, the athletes took to the field and worked through various skill development stations throughout the day.

As in previous years, Academy Baseball had National Academy sessions as well as Regional Academy sessions in the South and North of the country. The Academy offering included 10 practices: six National Practices in Coventry at the Alan Higgs Centre and four Regional practices at Langley Academy in Slough for the Southern Regional Academy and at the Powerleague Trafford Sportsdome in Manchester for the Northern Regional Academy.

Softball, in addition to its National Academy Sessions in Coventry at the Alan Higgs Centre and the Southern Regional Academy at Langley, expanded its Regional Academy offering to the Midlands and the North, with two sessions at Charnwood College in Loughborough and two sessions at the Powerleague Trafford Sportsdome in Manchester.

Along with increased participation numbers, there was an increase in the number of volunteer coaches, including one of the biggest names in the Great Britain Baseball community, former Great Britain National Team player and BBF Hall of Famer Gavin Marshall. There were also several club team coaches on the baseball side to support Will Lintern, Liam Carroll, Zach Graefser and Cam McHarg.

On the softball side, former GB Women's Team standout and BSF Hall of Famer Laura Thompson joined the Academy coaching staff in addition to Joss Thompson, Alexis Markham-Hill, Chris Yoxall, Ian Tomlin, Paul Cooper, Lee Grafton, David Morris and Andrea Williams, in support of Jo Malisani, Robbie Robison and Rachael Watkeys.

High Performance Academy

We had several partnerships over the past year that made the Academy and HPA programmes possible. Those partnerships allowed us to build and grow the HPA programme to include a mental performance coach, a nutritionist, additional equipment and a player feedback app, as well as the addition of National HPA training days that brought both the baseball and softball programmes into one place to carry out training, testing and monitoring with sport science specialists.

With the help of our sponsors (the Clifton Road Games Company and Osbourne Stationery), partners (SportUpside), and donors, we were able to increase the number of contact days with the athletes, not only in a sport-specific context but also in terms of more regular strength and conditioning and mental performance time.

The HPA softball season kicked off on 2 October 2016 at Farnham Park Baseball and Softball Complex with trials, where athletes were tested on various sport-specific skills including baserunning, fielding, pitching, throwing and hitting.

The HPA baseball season kicked off 8-9 October 2016 at Farnham Park, also with trials, where athletes were put through their paces with various skills and drills testing their athletic and baseball-specific ability.

On 23 October 2016 the successful trialists for the HPA baseball and softball programmes opened up the 2016-2017 HPA training season with an athlete and parent introduction session in the morning, followed by strength and conditioning testing and some skills work once physical testing was completed. At the launch, HPA Director Will Lintern talked to athletes and parents about the ethos of the HPA, the goals and expectations of this year's programme, and what would be involved during the course of the training season.

Last year also saw the introduction of weekly Facebook Live session on Monday nights that discussed a range of topics including goal setting, strength and conditioning, nutrition, sport psychology, throwing, hitting, fielding and sport-life balance, as well as featuring special guests that included GB and San Diego Padres pitcher Jacob Esch and former UCLA softball star Tara Henry.

High Performance Academy staff

Sports science

Alan Dean

Lloyd Williams

Dr Andrew Friesen

Rebecca Jennings

Matt Naylor

Baseball

Will Lintern

Liam Carroll

Zach Graefser

Cam McHarg

Gavin Marshall

Josh Tomchesson

Softball

Robbie Robison

Rachael Watkeys

Johanna Malisani

Andrea Williams

Four players from the 2016-17 HPA softball sessions were selected to represent GB during the summer of 2017 at either the Women's European Championship in Bollate, Italy or the Junior Women's World Championship in Clearwater, Florida, USA.

Two players from the 2016-17 HPA baseball sessions were selected to represent Britain at Major League Baseball's European Academy Spring Tournament in 2017.



SportsAid

SportsAid is a registered charity that supports high performance and Olympic athletes, and provides scholarships for athletes from the High Performance Academy through its partnership with BaseballSoftballUK. In 2016 the following athletes received awards.

Softball:

- Laura Hirai
- Sian Wigington
- Marianna Casal
- Chelsie Robison
- Theo Longboy

Baseball:

- Max Asher
- Michael Anunobi
- Emmanuel Oloyede
- Connor Brown

TASS

The Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme is a programme designed to give university students in high performance programmes additional support through strength and conditioning and lifestyle management.

For the 2016–2017 cycle, TASS piloted a two-athlete programme with BSUK at Loughborough University, and Carlos Casal and Jacob Dean were both recipients of TASS scholarships. It is hoped that following the success of this pilot, more scholarship can be offered to both baseball and softball athletes in the future. ■

Facilities

The Farnham Park National Baseball and Softball Complex has continued to sit at the centre of our facility work over the past 12 months and has been the focal point for a great deal of activity, hosting the National University Baseball and Softball Championships, the UK Little League Qualifiers, the Great Britain Fastpitch League and season-ending National Championships for both baseball and softball.

It also continues to be home to the Farnham Park Baseball and Softball Club and hosts many of the teams in the Windsor and Maidenhead Softball League for league play.

By the end of the past year, we were close to opening a fourth field at the national home of baseball and softball, increasing our capacity to host tournaments on dedicated fields and improving the playing experience for everyone.

The Home Plate clubhouse and the Home Plate Bar and Kitchen was due to open in Spring 2017, offering on-site bar and catering services to the playing communities using Farnham Park.

Progress on a Northern facility has been slow, due mainly to delays from partners involved in the project. But we remain hopeful of eventually building this facility to serve our playing communities in the North of England. ■



Operations

Year Four of the 2013-17 Whole Sport Plan cycle was another busy one for the BSUK Operations Department. Alongside ongoing work, the department helped organise two new events, launched two new websites and further developed live webstreaming of major events at Farnham Park.

At the tail end of the previous year, BSUK had been asked to undergo an efficiency review as part of a Sport England pilot programme, which represented an unexpected challenge as we crossed over into the new year. This involved the Operations team – along with some other members of staff – meeting with representatives from KPMG, the company commissioned to run the review, to talk through and evidence the company's processes, with a focus on the use of financial resource.

The overall message from the review was that BSUK runs a highly efficient operation in terms of its application of financial and staff resources, and there were few significant recommendations that KPMG could make to improve efficiency or make cost savings without impacting effectiveness. KPMG prepared a report that was provided to Sport England and the BSUK Board to consider how any recommendations might be adopted.

On 1 May 2016, the first of two new events in the calendar was run. BSUK and Rounders England held a Challenge Day in which top female players from both sports played each other in a game of rounders and a game of slowpitch softball at Farnham Park. The softball team was made up of players from the GB Slowpitch and GB Fastpitch programmes, while the rounders team consisted of England players. The event was designed to highlight Sport England's innovative and successful This Girl Can campaign, which encourages women and girls to take part in sport. It also acted to showcase the elite aspect of both sports.

The second new event in the UK baseball and softball calendar was the CEB Federations Cup Qualifier, held between 21-26 June at Farnham Park. The tournament featured six European championship club teams, including the London Mets, the reigning BBF National Champions at the time. As well as providing financial support to the event, BSUK worked with the Mets as the host club and the British Baseball Federation to put on the tournament. It was an important opportunity for the UK – and BSUK's recently-built facility at Farnham Park – to host an official European baseball competition.

Building on activity in 2015, BSUK continued to develop live webstreaming of events from Farnham Park. This year, we offered the highest quality broadcasts yet, partnering this time with Webcast Sport to livestream one of the semi-finals and the final from the BSF Premier National Championship on 14 August. On the day, Operations staff worked with the Webcast Sport team to put on the broadcast, which included multiple camera angles, a live commentary team, slow-motion replays and post-game interviews.

Although live game streaming over the past couple of years has been an exciting development for the sports, it naturally comes with the financial costs involved in partnering with professional agencies. This needs to be measured against the potential benefits of staging these broadcasts, and going forward, both BSUK and the Federations will need to weigh this up carefully. BSUK has invested in trialling several different approaches, using two different companies, and we are still keen to investigate further, including looking at whether we could run a reasonable streaming presentation ourselves using affordable equipment.

In the summer of 2016, BSUK launched two new websites: a dedicated Academies website (academy.baseballsoftballuk.com) and a microsite for the ongoing Structural Review being conducted by BSUK and the British Baseball and Softball Federations (baseballsoftballunited.uk).

In addition to the specific projects above, the Operations Department continued to deliver extra-value functions such as a full events programme, media coverage of all key domestic and international competitions, support to the Federations through a Service Level Agreement, managing safeguarding provision across the two sports and supporting the BSUK Board and its standing committees.

There is also always an element of business as usual that comes with managing back-end delivery. There are core organisational functions that must be continually in place and managed around larger projects (finance, HR, communications, risk management, commercial activity and safeguarding). With a small team of four and a Communications Consultant, this is always challenging, but we are able to look back at 2016-17 as another successful year. ■

Communications

Overview

One of the key roles of the BSUK Operations Department is to create and manage internal and external communications for and about baseball and softball.

Much of this work is carried out on behalf of the British Baseball and Softball Federations, but a significant element is designed to communicate the content, progress and value of BSUK's development work to internal and external stakeholders.

During 2016-17, Operations staff were involved in a wide range of communication activities designed to report on and promote the sports and their development.

Website content

Historically, BSUK has managed its own website and those of the British Baseball and Softball Federations and posted almost all the content on these sites. The aim was to maintain a steady turnover of news stories, particularly on the Federation websites, and this has been successfully achieved (though there are no specific targets in this regard).

The Federation websites also contain various databases, including membership, registration and league and team management systems, which have been largely maintained and updated by BSUK's Operations Department, and the Operations Department also undertakes ongoing maintenance and development work on the three websites.

During the latter part of 2016-17, however, the British Baseball Federation largely took back the management of content provision on the BBF website, a situation which continues at the present time.

During 2016-17, a mini-site covering all aspects of our major development programme, Hit the Pitch, was enhanced and expanded. One of the key events of the year that received significant promotion and coverage was the second BSUK Coach Summit on 28 January 2017, two days of talks, seminars and hands-on clinics on baseball, slowpitch softball and fastpitch softball featuring high-level British and overseas coaches.

Website analytics

	Users	Page views	Page views per session	Sessions 2016-17	Sessions 2015-16	Variance
baseballsoftballuk.com	53,378	152,657	1.89	80,774	80,174	+600
britishbaseball.org	68,176	552,207	3.70	149,286	138,655	+10,631
britishsoftball.org	49,731	317,253	2.67	118,905	123,395	-4,490

Figures based on 01 April 2016 – 31 March 2017. Comparison is with 01 April 2015 – 31 March 2016.

Social media analytics

	Facebook likes	Facebook reach	Twitter impressions
BaseballSoftballUK	3,099	12,549	416,300
British Baseball Federation	NA	NA	NA
British Softball Federation	1,223	4,451	76,300

Facebook likes as at 31 March 2016.

The Operations Department, over a number of years, has also been the first responder to all queries directed to info@ mailboxes on each of the three websites. Targets regarding response times have been regularly exceeded by BSUK staff, and a new online CRM system, installed in 2015, provides better management of enquiries as well as other tasks. However, the BBF retains responsibility for managing queries to its website.

Basic figures on use of the three websites during 2016-17, with comparisons to 2015-16, are shown in the table to the left.

Social media

Another part of BSUK's communications remit in previous years had been to manage the social media output for the three organisations (BSUK, BBF and BSF), covering Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. In 2014, following discussions with the Federations, BSUK was asked to step back from managing Federation Twitter and Facebook feeds so the BBF and BSF could take greater control. This has seen mixed results, and going forward it looks like a partnership between BSUK and the BSF to use social media more effectively may be resumed.

Meanwhile, BSUK's Facebook reach and Twitter impressions have continued to increase. Much of the success in increasing BSUK's social media profile has been down to a change in communications strategy which involved a move away from news-based postings in favour of co-ordinated social media campaigns. A prime example of this over the year in review was the build-up to the second BSUK Coach Summit in January 2017.

Some basic analytics on our social media reach are in the table to the left.

Webstreaming

Visits to the BSUK YouTube channel increased after our first live webstream productions, created in the summer of 2015 in conjunction with JP Productions. In 2016, we worked with a different company, Webcast Sports, to create successful live broadcasts from the BSF Premier National Championships at Farnham Park in September, which had our highest-ever on-demand viewing figures after the event.

We have now acquired hardware and software that will allow us to originate more broadcasts of baseball and softball events from Farnham Park at a lower cost.

Hot Corner

Hot Corner is an e-newsletter designed to bring important news about baseball, softball and

BSUK development activities to subscribers who sign up through the BSUK, BBF or BSF websites. The number of Hot Corner subscribers has continued to grow since the publication was launched at the beginning of 2011.

The intention going forward is to produce Hot Corner once a month, but breaking news stories are promoted through single-topic Hot Corner Newsflashes. In 2016-17 we produced 13 issues of Hot Corner plus numerous Newsflashes.

Event coverage

Another communications function carried out by the BSUK Operations Department is reporting on significant baseball, softball and BSUK events, usually through stories on one or more of the websites. Events covered can range from meetings to development projects to domestic and international competitions involving British national or club teams.

In 2016-17, Operations Department members attended and reported (or commissioned and edited reports) on:

— **Meetings.** Both Federation AGMs, all monthly BSF Executive meetings, the BSF League Heads Forum and International Baseball and Softball Federation meetings attended by British representatives.

— **Domestic competition (baseball).** Weekly BBF divisional play through commissioned divisional reporters, plus the UK Little League Qualifiers, the London Tournament and the National Baseball Championships.

— **Domestic competition (softball).** The Great Britain Fastpitch League, the National Softball League, Single-Sex and Co-ed Slowpitch National Championships, the Softball World Series, slowpitch leagues via monthly round-up reports and a number of domestic open tournaments.

— **International competition (baseball).** The European Senior, Junior and Cadet Baseball Championships and the Great Britain Team at the World Baseball Classic Qualifier.

— **International competition (softball).**

The Schiedam Indoor Tournament in Holland in January, mixed fastpitch tournaments in France in March and October, the Zeisterslot Men's Fastpitch Tournament in Holland in May, the Women's World Championship in Canada, the European Junior Women's Championship where the GB Juniors won the gold medal, the European Men's Championship, the Massimo Romeo European Youth Cup for Under-13s, the Little League Fastpitch Championship in Holland, the European Slowpitch Cup and the WBSC Slowpitch World Cup in Florida.

— **BSUK events and programmes.**

Academy and High Performance Academy programmes, the Carluccio's Softball League, University Baseball and Softball Championships, the M1ST University Baseball League, Little League youth baseball, the BSUK Coach Summit and a wide range of other development programmes and initiatives.

UK Sport submissions

With baseball and softball confirmed as being back in the Olympic Games for Tokyo 2020, relations were resumed with UK Sport, the funding agency for Olympic and Paralympic sports.

Working with the British Baseball and Softball Federations, the Operations Department carried the main burden of preparing a comprehensive funding submission to UK Sport in the autumn of 2016, based on the prospects of the GB Baseball Team and GB Women's Fastpitch Softball Team for Olympic qualification and their prospects of winning a medal at the Games.

Image library

The BSUK Operations Department maintains an extensive library of still images covering all aspects of baseball and softball competition and development work, and the library is added to each year through images commissioned by BSUK or supplied through community or other sources.

The primary use for these images is to illustrate stories on the Federation and BSUK websites and in our printed publications, or to supply images of our sports to external agencies. A major reorganisation and updating of the image library was carried out over the summer of 2016.

BSUK also maintains a YouTube account and we are keen to increase the amount of video material available through that channel, including webstreamed telecasts of domestic competition.

Manuals and other documents

The BSUK Operations Department is responsible for the production (and sometimes content) of a wide range of internal documents and publications designed for current or potential members of the baseball and softball communities. These range from Minutes of BSUK Board and Committee meetings to coaching manuals, development programme materials and promotional materials such as flyers and posters.

External communications

While most of the communications work carried out by the Operations Department is aimed at the UK baseball and softball communities, some communications are directed to external agencies and stakeholders or to the general public.

We maintain a database of national and local media outlets, and a number of press releases are written and distributed to these outlets each year.

The Operations Department also produces this Annual Review each year, available in electronic and printed form, detailing the work carried out by BSUK during the previous 12 months. ■



Events



BaseballSoftballUK staged a number of high quality events in 2016-17.

One of these was the second BSUK Coach Summit in Birmingham in January 2017, with over 70 delegates congregating to listen to keynote speeches and engage in a varied programme of workshops and discussion panels.

The speakers included MLB Consultant Pat Doyle and Pittsburgh Pirate Instruction Coordinator Dave Turgeon for baseball, Team USA Slowpitch Coach Steve Shortland and, for fastpitch, former ISF Development Director Cindy Bristow and Jessica Moore, a current Team USA pitcher and pitching coach at the University of South Florida.

On Sunday, these coaches ran hands-on sessions with baseball and softball High Performance Academy players.

In June 2016, Farnham Park once again hosted the UK Little League Qualifier. This was the largest Little League tournament ever run in the UK, and featured 17 teams competing across five categories, including a new category of Under-11 Coach Pitch.

With the exception of the U11 age categories, the winners in each of the other age groups – U13, U15 and U17 – earned the right to represent Great Britain in the 2016 European Little League Championships.

Farnham Park was also the venue for the largest-ever National University Baseball and National University Softball Championships in October 2016 and March 2017 respectively.

University baseball and softball have shown dynamic growth over the past few years, and the National University Championships in both sports, which BSUK now runs twice each year, have become pinnacle events for university baseball and softball.

Finally, Farnham Park was also the scene of a Rounders v Softball Challenge Match in May 2016, organised jointly by BSUK and Rounders England, where the national teams from England Rounders and GB Softball played each other in each of the sports. Before the games were played, coaches from GB Softball and England Rounders held sessions to instruct players from the other sport in what for most of them was an unfamiliar discipline.

After a great day's play showcasing the best of women's sport, honours were even as each national side took the spoils in its own sport.

Towards the end of the 2016 season, BSUK again provided staff and grounds support for the BSF and BBF National Championships at Farnham Park, working with the Federations to make them top-class events.

We also organised the highest-grade version of webstreaming done so far for the semi-finals and final of the BSF Premier Nationals on 14 August, in conjunction with Webcast Sports. ■

- 📄 *Webstreaming available from BSF Nationals. Read article [here](#).*
- 📄 *Coach Summit draws community praise. Read article [here](#).*
- 📄 *Honours even in Softball v Rounders Challenge. Read article [here](#).*

Commercial Activity

With commercial deals in place for balls, equipment and apparel, the income generated from them helps us to reduce our reliance on public funding given to us by Sport England, as we are now required to do.

The three supplier deals are with:

- Balls: The Baseball Shop and The Softball Shop (Ransome Sporting Goods).
- Equipment: The Baseball Shop and The Softball Shop (Ransome Sporting Goods).
- Apparel: Aswani Sports International.

BSUK has prioritised all of these suppliers when delivering programmes throughout the year to capitalise on the deals in place and maximise the return to BSUK and the sports.

With apparel, Aswani has been working with new suppliers to be able to provide the baseball and softball community with bespoke uniforms, further enhancing the range of goods available to clubs. Aswani can now supply fully-decorated baseball/softball jerseys with tackle twill lettering or fully-sublimated jerseys for that unique fully-customisable look.

The number of clubs with team stores has risen to 21 baseball teams and 20 softball teams, not to mention national teams also utilising the team shop option. ■



Service Level Agreements

While development of the sports is BSUK's primary purpose, an important secondary role is to provide the two national governing bodies of baseball and softball, the British Baseball Federation (BBF) and the British Softball Federation (BSF), with administrative and operational support. Since BSUK became an incorporated company in 2007, the staff resources that we can offer to assist the BBF and BSF Boards have been described in the Service Level Agreement (SLA).

Two SLAs are drawn up and agreed each year – one between BSUK and the BBF; one between BSUK and the BSF. The SLAs outline the Federation activities that BSUK staff will work on during the year and for which the BBF and BSF Boards agree to pay an annual service charge, as this type of work is not funded by Sport England. During the year, the amount of time staff spent in each category of activity is recorded.

This enables us to report back to the Federation Boards on this activity during the year. Quarterly reports detailing this activity are reviewed at meetings of the BSUK Board's Finance Committee, which includes representatives from the BBF and BSF Boards.

SLA activities in 2016-17

SLA activity is handled by BSUK's Operations Department. As in the previous year, in 2016-17 BSUK staff spent a combined average of seven hours per week on BBF work and eight hours per week on BSF activity. Generally, SLA work is handled by the four members of the Operations team but occasionally by other staff members. The five areas we spent most time on for each federation during the year are outlined in the tables below.

British Baseball Federation

Description	Hours	%
Creation and publication of BBF-related articles on the website, including coverage of BBF events and Great Britain baseball national teams in European competitions	149	40
Administration and logistical support for Great Britain national teams	136	37
Support for organisation of BBF events	57	15
Administration of insurance policies and claims	8	2
Website and IT maintenance and user support	6	2

British Softball Federation

Description	Hours	%
Creation and publication of BSF-related articles on the website, including coverage of BSF events and Great Britain softball national teams in European and World competitions	183	43
Support for organisation of BSF events	137	32
Administration and logistical support for Great Britain national teams	44*	10
Administration and reporting of BSF meetings	32	8
Management and publication of softball events calendar	12	3

*plus an 35 additional hours purchased at an hourly rate.

Broadly, the proportionate split across categories of the total SLA hours was the same as in the previous year. One difference this year was that BSUK staff spent considerable time supporting the applications on behalf of both federations for new UK Sport funding for Great Britain baseball and softball programmes. This is reflected in the category 'Support for Great Britain national teams'. The time spent on these funding applications was treated slightly differently based on agreements with each Federation; the BBF allocated all of its support to the SLA, whereas the BSF split its support between the SLA and an extra 35 hours of staff time purchased separately.

This year both Federations used their full allocation of SLA hours and, in fact, used a small amount of additional hours purchased at the hourly rate (see table on page 32).

Value for money

Once the number of hours spent on SLA work is converted into a monetary equivalent (i.e., what this staff time represents as a financial cost to BSUK) it produces the result seen in the table below.

In the early years of the SLA, the value of staff time actually received by each Federation was hugely disproportionate to the annual service charge; in other words, both Federations frequently received a much greater level of services than they paid for. The knock-on effect was that this drew Operations staff away from providing support to BSUK's own development activities.

Since 2012, a revised agreement has been in place between BSUK and the two Federations. Each year, it sets an hourly rate based on an average of Operations staff salaries plus on-costs (in 2016-17 this was £18.62 p.h.), and starts with the principle that BSUK will provide a certain value of support to each Federation free of charge (in 2016-17 this was £3850, or 207 hours), provided that they top this up with some level of paid-for hours through the service charge.

With the agreed service charge added on top, this means that the BBF had available a total of about £6850 (368 hours) worth of services that it could call on and the BSF had up to £7860 (422 hours).

As shown in the table below, this has had the desired effect of establishing a better structure to the provision of services over the years and developing parity between the amount of staff time spent on SLA activities and how much is paid for in service fees. The past two years have seen both Federations able to make effective use of almost all their available hours.

Going forward

Moving forward, the Structural Review that the BBF, BSF and BSUK jointly began in 2014 is still under way. Any structural change will likely affect the nature of the SLA, including whether there is a need for it at all, in future. In the meantime, the three organisations have agreed to maintain the SLA in 2017-18 based on the same level of service charge and allocation of available hours as in the preceding year. ■

Service Level Agreement charges

Federation	Service charge	Value of staff time received In 2016-17	Value of staff time received In 2015-16	Value of staff time received In 2014-15	Value of staff time received In 2013-14	Value of staff time received In 2012-13
BBF	£3,000	£6,900	£6,900	£5,600	£8,300	£6,000
BSF	£4,000	£8,000	£7,300	£5,500	£9,800	£10,300

Financial Summary

Income	
Sport England	£706,969
Sport England transitional funding	£56,664
Sport England facility development funding	£20,601
Federation service fees	£20,754
Coach education	£12,414
Regional development programmes	£50,710
Other adult development programmes	£16,093
Baseball and softball Academies	£50,662
Baseball and softball events	£29,348
Corporate softball days	£3,116
Advertising, merchandising and commercial	£8,544
Farnham Park operating revenue	£39,090
Total income	£1,014,965
Expenditure	
Baseball and softball development activities	£429,293
Depreciation of Farnham Park and other assets	£24,846
Coach education	£10,206
Club development	£8,105
Academies and English Talent Development	£60,026
Baseball and softball events	£37,125
Corporate Softball Days	£2,522
Communications, news and event coverage	£53,240
Website development and maintenance	£2,709
Advertising, merchandising and commercial	£9,813
Operations, HR, infrastructure and governance	£298,281
Farnham Park opening and operating costs	£41,245
Total expenditure	£977,411

Full company accounts are available at www.baseballsoftballuk.com/company

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