



CASE STUDY

- How the clubs worked together
- Advice for clubs who want to develop a similar programme

Delivering a tennis programme to disabled people – a case study of clubs in Hertfordshire

In 2006, 3 clubs in Hertfordshire supported by the Tennis Foundation and Hertfordshire LTA got together to kick start a programme of tennis activity for disabled children.

Funding was secured from the Herts Sports Partnership by Hertfordshire LTA to expand the current tennis activities available in the county for players with disabilities focussed around Lister Tennis club, Stevenage; Potters Bar Tennis Club and Letchworth Tennis Club.





Here's how they went about it

Lister Tennis Club and Potters Bar Tennis Club were already delivering successful programmes for players with disabilities and Letchworth Tennis Club had recently relocated to a new site with indoor courts and were keen to introduce these activities to their programme.

It was agreed that the best way to kick start the programme at Letchworth and develop the existing programmes at Lister and Potters Bar, was to run a festival day. The day was planned in partnership with the Tennis Foundation who provided training for volunteers and coaches from the clubs.

The festival day was held at Letchworth Tennis Club on their indoor courts. 9 schools for children with disabilities attended on the day providing a tennis experience for over 100 children. All of the participants were aged between 8 and 16 and had a range of disabilities.

The young players had lessons in their school groups (6 -10 in a group). The sessions were run by 3 coaches who were supported by tennis volunteers and teachers from the school. Equipment was provided for all. At the end of their coaching sessions all of the children received a 'goody' bag which included a certificate and prizes donated by the clubs, the Tennis Foundation, Hertfordshire LTA and Total Racquet Sports.

The day was a great success and provided the clubs with a platform to deliver or expand their own programme. The after festival programme delivered back at the clubs was also supported through the funding secured from the Herts Sports Partnership.

Here is a bit more information about each club.

Lister Tennis Club

Lister Tennis Club is an inclusive, voluntary community based club in Stevenage. The club has worked hard to dispel the image that tennis is an exclusive sport, by providing affordable, flexible and inclusive access to tennis for all.

The programme

Many years ago the club ran a wheelchair tennis initiative that was very successful but mainly opened up the indoor courts to adults who already played tennis to some degree. It seemed a natural progression to use these great players as role models for young players who may have felt that tennis was not a sport available to them.

The club decided to establish links with local schools for young disabled people. This was done in conjunction with several other sports with which the club formed a partnership to deliver the first disability festival held at Stevenage Leisure Centre. External funding was secured by the partnership. This has gone on to be a regular event. It is now



called the Mini Olympics and is held twice a year. Lister Tennis Club coaches give their time on a voluntary basis to support these days.

Special schools also regularly access the clubs facilities. Children from these schools also access the main junior programme and are integrated where appropriate. Many of the children who have been involved in outreach projects are still playing at the club. Tuesday evenings are set aside for players needing extra attention and the club offers free indoor courts to those players.

How the festival day supported the programme

Although the club had a well established programme for young disabled players, Lister Tennis Club was pleased to be involved in the Hertfordshire festival day as it was fantastic for the young players to participate in such a fun day with access to so many more coaches. It reinforced the clubs commitment to local schools and their learners. It has also reinforced that tennis is not a one off fun session but that there are lots of opportunities should they choose the sport.

Coach education

All the clubs coaches have been on disability courses that have been run by the Tennis Foundation as well as some members of the support team (volunteers).

Letchworth Tennis Club

The club recently moved to a new site providing the club with 3 indoor and 7 outdoor courts and a fantastic facility. The clubs programme quickly developed providing a range of coaching and competitive opportunities for players of all ages.

The club recognised that although their on court programme was strong, no opportunities were being provided for children with a disability. Diana Hensman a member of the committee had always wanted the club to source funding in order to set up a programme that was inclusive and could attract all members of the community. This desire led to the club working with Hertfordshire LTA, Potters Bar Tennis Club and Letchworth Tennis Club to deliver the festival day which was used by the club to kick start their programme.

Alongside the festival day the club also made a funding application to Children in Need. The application was successful and enabled the club to deliver free coaching sessions for disabled children at their school and back at the club. The club now has one strong link with Woolgrove School and is looking to develop links with additional schools.

Potters Bar Tennis Club

In 2001 the tennis club secured funding from the Sport England Lottery Fund to develop their facilities. The club recognised the need to engage the local



community and attract new members particularly to groups not traditionally attracted to the sport. The club started their outreach programme to encourage adults and children with a disability to access the club. The club has managed to attract funding to support the delivery of the programme from Awards for All, the Herts Network Fund and Hertfordshire LTA.

The club has established strong partnerships with 2 schools for children with a disability and 3 organisations who support adults with a disability. Tennis sessions are delivered at the club on a weekly basis providing opportunities for members of the local community who have a range of disabilities to access and participate in tennis.

All adults and children in the programme become associate members of the club free of charge and some young players have been integrated within the club's junior programme.

The club coach has attended a Tennis Foundation course to support the delivery of the disability programme and all club coaches received training as part of the delivery of the festival day.

Although the club had an established disability programme prior to the festival day, the festival day has enabled the club to develop its programme further. They even ran their own festival day the following year.

Advice for clubs who want to develop a similar programme

- Clubs must genuinely want to deliver the programme.
- Volunteers need to be identified to drive the project.
- Create good links with local schools and groups - they can be of huge support.
- The club must be committed to having an open policy and free up court time.
- Create links with your county office – they will have lots of advice and support.
- Partner up with other clubs you can support each other.
- A festival day is a great idea. It engages coaches and gives schools a taste of what could be available each week.
- Ensure your coaches are appropriately trained; contact your county office for advice.
- Ensure that the club has appropriate facilities.
- Secure funding to subsidise the programme.
- Deliver sessions at the club not just at the school or facility and ensure that refreshments and after tennis opportunities are provided.

