



Sport England fund helps table tennis clubs

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Almost 30 table tennis clubs have received grants totalling more than £80,000 from the Sport England Community Emergency Fund.

The fund, made up of National Lottery money, was set up in March in response to the coronavirus pandemic and the impact it has had on sport and exercise.

It initially totalled £20million, which was later topped up to £35million, and provided awards from £300 to £10,000 to clubs and community organisations to help with immediate financial distress, such as paying bills while they have no income.

Out of 34 applications made by table tennis clubs, 27 were approved (just under 80%), with a total of £80,918 being awarded. The range of grants within the sport was £320 to £10,000 and the average award was £2,996.96.

Table Tennis England offered support to clubs to help with applications, including hosting an online webinar to guide them through the process, plus direct assistance from staff members where requested.

One club which benefitted from Table Tennis England guidance was Urban TTC in north London, which received a substantial amount to help meet running costs during the lockdown period.

Around 500 players aged between six and 85 take part in at least one out of 45 weekly sessions which the club runs, which last between one and three hours and are held at schools around north London, as well as the club's base at Barnet TTC.

The club's Head Coach and Sports Director, Gergely "Urfi" Urban, drew on guidance from Table Tennis England's National Delivery Lead, Jenny Leach.

Urban said: "Jenny played a massive role, giving a lot of guidance that was really helpful, outlining the process and advising us what information about our sessions and members to put in the application.

"We got more than we thought we were going to get and it will be a big help towards meeting our overheads."

Another club to benefit from the fund is Bath Street Marine Table Tennis Club in Crosby, Liverpool, which was awarded £3,766.

The grant will allow the club to fully meet its operating costs whilst closed, putting it in a position to immediately resume its vital daily social and recreational sport amongst the local community as soon as restrictions are lifted.

Club Secretary, Graham Turner, said: "This award is a godsend. In the eight months since we opened our new building on the Marine AFC site in College Road, we have seen massive growth of interest in daytime social and recreational table tennis, especially amongst the 'more mature' and children.

"We will now be able to immediately resume activities as soon as restrictions are eased, which will be a positive benefit to the whole community."

Greg Yarnall, Head of Development and Volunteering at Table Tennis England, said: "We would like to extend a massive thank you to Sport England for supporting the sport and our clubs since the outbreak.

"The financial support to our clubs through the emergency grant funding will help give our clubs confidence to return and enable the sport to come back stronger.

"This support illustrates the value of a National Governing Body such as Table Tennis England –and through us our affiliated clubs – having good relations with Sport England and being able to tap into this and other funding streams and sources of advice in both good and challenging times.

"If any clubs or leagues have questions or concerns about their financial position or about preparing to return to table tennis when the time is right, please contact help@tabletennisengland.co.uk and we will aim to support you as much as possible."

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