



Taking table tennis to the isolated and inactive

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Households across the country are being introduced to table tennis during the pandemic as Table Tennis England works in partnership to reach the most isolated and inactive members of our society.

Research commissioned by Sport England shows that older people, people living alone, those with long-term health conditions or disabilities and people in lower socio-economic groups have been less active during COVID-19, and the gap between their activity levels and the rest of the populations is continuing to grow.

Working alongside partners in Brighton, Liverpool, Leicester, Barnsley, Westminster, Blackpool, Nottingham, Hull and Richmond, as well as with Rackets Cubed (a charity that provides sports, education and food in areas of deprivation), almost 1,500 'Play at Home' packs have been sent to those in most need.

The packs include table tennis equipment alongside information on how to play and gain access to a wide range of online content that Table Tennis England have produced specifically for these audiences. In some areas, partners have supported additional local activation through Facebook Live events and Zoom calls.

The equipment is being distributed in a variety of ways – adhering strictly to social distancing measures – sometimes with food parcels or through local community hubs and, whilst the initial plan is for it to enable people to play at home, Table Tennis England is also utilising the network of outdoor public Ping! tables to support people to get more active too.

There are plans to try to increase the number of outdoor tables available to the public this summer and, by providing these in more localised communities, the hope is this will increase access for these marginalised groups.

Table Tennis England's Head of Mass Participation Keely Armitt said: "Undoubtedly 'lockdown' has been a very challenging time for many people, but it's been particularly hard for some and it's extremely sad and unfair that certain segments of our population have become even more marginalised by it.

"Providing table tennis equipment to households with the most need is our small way of trying to support and lift

the spirits of people, whilst at the same time enabling them to spend some time each day being active.

"Now that some of the lockdown measures are being eased, there are some fantastic opportunities for us to work with partners to engage people safely to use our outdoor public tables and, by providing them with their own bats and balls we hope this will be the beginning of them accessing the facilities regularly.

"We are excited to evaluate the first phase of this project and, potentially, expand it further over the summer."

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