



## Young athletes get Backing from SportsAid

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Seven young members of the England performance pathway and nine para table tennis athletes have received grants of up to £5,000 from the Backing The Best programme.

The pathway players are: Rhys Davies, Toby Ellis, Connor Green, Shem Lejarde, Jakub Piwowar, Thomas Rayner and Jasmin Wong and they are all part of the England Junior or Aspire squads.

The para players to receive awards are: Theo Bishop, Alex Bland, Marc Bonnar, Lucie Bouron, Jack Stockdale, Shae Thakker, Noel Thomas, Dylan Tynan and Lee York.

The Backing The Best programme, managed and delivered by SportsAid for Sport England, is backed by £5.5 million of new National Lottery funding over a four-year period. It aims to support athletes who would face difficulties progressing the talent development system without critical financial help.

The awards are worth up to £5,000 per year to help cover expensive costs such as travel, accommodation and medical bills. Table Tennis England performance staff helped the athletes and their families to apply for grants.

Table Tennis England Programme Manager Matt Stanforth said: "We're delighted these young athletes from two squads in our performance pathway have received a significant sum to help them on their journey to being the best they can be.

"These awards are so important to support our players, and have allowed them to access training and competition at the performance end of the sport in support of their journey to find out what they are capable of, as well as providing other support and resources to help them on the way.

"We would like to thank SportsAid for their continued support which has made a substantial impact on our players."

Backing The Best athletes also benefit from workshop and online support where they are given expert advice on a range of topics including performance lifestyle management, nutrition and telling their story through the

media – where they often record their first ever interviews on camera. Parents have their own specially adapted sessions focusing on these areas and are able to share their experiences and challenges with each other.

In total, Backing The Best is supporting 282 of the country's most talented young athletes across 40 sports in 2020.

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