



## Table tennis joins show of Gratitude to our emergency services

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Table Tennis England is supporting the Gratitude Games, a new sporting event to support the mental health of emergency service and NHS workers, which is today calling on the British public and businesses to donate to their fundraising appeal.

The first [Gratitude Games](#) will be hosted by the Cities of Manchester and Salford from April 27-May 29, 2022 at leading venues, including the iconic Etihad campus, home to Manchester City.

The Games will unite more than 20,000 emergency responders and their families, across 20 different sports including table tennis

The event will be open to all sporting abilities, and the triathlon and road running events (including a 5k and 10k), will also be open to the public.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzksmEmmsvQ>

According to mental health charity Mind, around one in four (27%) emergency service workers have considered ending their lives due to stress and other factors, and this has only been amplified by the pandemic, with 69% of emergency responders reporting that their mental health has worsened since the start of the pandemic.

Funds raised by the Games will be deployed through four existing specialist organisations – Police Care UK, The Fire Fighters Charity, The Ambulance Staff Charity and Duty to Care (NHS) – who collectively support all emergency responders to improve their mental health.

The Gratitude Games is the brainchild of serving Buckinghamshire fire fighter Mike Downard and sports industry veteran Simon Rider, who founded the charity UK Emergency Services Giving (UKESG) to help ensure every emergency responder has access to the tailored mental health support they need.

The expectations and demands placed on our emergency services and NHS workers are higher than ever and emergency responders witness more trauma on a daily basis than most of us do in a lifetime. It has been estimated that whilst most ordinary people will encounter serious trauma no more than three or four times in their life, for police officers it is 400–600 times.

Commenting on the issues that drove him to develop the Gratitude Games as the key fundraising platform for UKESG, Mike Downard said: "In my 18 years as a firefighter, I have seen first-hand the devastating impact that working on the front line can have on your mental health. You can be dealing with multiple traumatic events on a daily basis and that can really take its toll.

"The pandemic has affected the mental health of many, but especially those of us in the emergency services – so there is an urgent need to make sure the specialist support is readily available.

"To help make this a reality, we are calling upon the British public and businesses to get behind the Gratitude Games – by donating to the fundraising appeal and sharing the message of the Games to friends and family."

The Gratitude Games will raise public awareness of the mental health challenges faced by so many of our emergency responders, whilst enabling people to show their appreciation for the essential work they do.

Table Tennis England Chief Executive Sara Sutcliffe said: "Like everyone, I have been in awe of those working as emergency responders and on the NHS frontline during the pandemic – we all owe them so much.

"Everyone at Table Tennis England is proud to support the Gratitude Games, giving these heroes among us the chance to be treated like elite stars as they showcase their sporting talents."

To donate to the fundraising appeal, please visit: [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/gratitudegames](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/gratitudegames)

**The 17 Emergency Services included in the Gratitude Games are:** 4×4 Response; Air Ambulance; Ambulance; Blood Bikes; Border Force; Cave Rescue; Fire (including DFRMO); HM Prison & Probation Service; Lowland Rescue; Maritime and Coastguard Agency; Mountain Rescue; NHS; NHS Volunteer Responders, Police; RNLI; St Andrews First Aid; St John Ambulance; Surf Life Saving GB

**The 20 sports of the Gratitude Games are:** Angling; Archery; Athletics; Badminton; Road Cycling; MTB Cycling; Equestrian; Golf; Karting; Laser Run; Lawn Bowls; Road Races (10K, 5K, 1.5K, Wheelchair); Rowing (Indoor); Shooting (Clay); Squash; Swimming; Tennis; Table Tennis; Ten Pin Bowling; Triathlon.

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