



Board blogs: Priya Samuel

Author: Paul Stimpson

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2021 is a turning point for Table Tennis England's commitment to equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI). There are many people who want to play, coach, umpire table tennis and there should be opportunities available to do this.

We launched the '[Level the Table](#)' five-year EDI strategy which clearly sets out how and why the sport wants to be played by all, be open for all and enjoyed by all.

The strategy is one product that transparently demonstrates the sport's commitment to equalities. It is a culmination of collaborative working between participants in table tennis, including members and non-members, officers, Board and other stakeholders. It was essential to hear from all who wanted to contribute, using this year's membership survey which featured questions used to contribute to strategy discussions.

A number of equalities sub-groups were formed (LGBT, ethnic communities, disabilities, women and girls) to raise the feedback provided by the survey responses and discuss issues that affect each group's access to participating in the sport.

I was struck by the sheer honesty from members who shared their personal and difficult experiences, and I genuinely thank them for sharing these lived experiences to a group they did not know. These experiences have formed the backbone of our strategy. Together, we agreed principles and themes focussing on and improving access for a broader, diverse population to participate in the sport.

Importantly, for the first time **our** EDI strategy, recognises the spectrum of stakeholders involved in table tennis, that is: participants, county/regional associations, national council and Board and, how, each stakeholder has a part to play – individual goals to meet collective objective. This definitely is a step change as it places the ownership and responsibility upon everyone to commit to positive change.

The Table Tennis England Board received a proposal of the EDI strategy, with all Board members supporting to achieve its objectives from top-down. In reality this means a number of things including:

- Increasing diversity within the Board.
- Placing diversity and equality as a standard agenda item at Board meetings and sub-committee meeting and encouraging this good practice across the sport at all levels.
- Promoting and encouraging diversity and equality in all our work and across the sport from participation to performance.

The journey has started – we have a long way to go . . . Members of the table tennis community have [pledged](#) to support and encourage equality and diversity throughout the sport. Support is available to clubs through the launch of the [‘Level the Table grants scheme’](#) and the [‘Charlie Childs Coaching grant scheme’](#). In 2022, look out for new initiatives, resources and advice to support the table tennis community to make positive change.

As you’ll know from recent media coverage of other sports, equality is a major issue and I am really pleased to say, that, whilst table tennis is comparatively a smaller sport in England, it is a ‘big hitter’ leading the way to improve EDI.

I am very proud that Table Tennis England led a proposal to ITTF for a [change in clothing regulations for women and girls](#), allowing players to play the sport in loose fitting clothing that is comfortable for them. This proposal was unanimously voted in by member federations.

If you would like to know more, please contact Zoiey or myself through: Zoiey.smale@tabletennisengland.co.uk. Together, we can make positive change.

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