

Two new Talent Development Centres announced!

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Discovering and nurturing the elite players of tomorrow is the aim of Table Tennis England's two newest Talent Development Centres.

Greenhouse Sports and Urban Table Tennis have joined the TDC network, bringing the total number of centres in England to seven.

Both have well established table tennis programmes in their respective areas of London, working with hundreds of youngsters in schools and clubs.

The partnership with Table Tennis England will enable both to provide extra coaching and support for the best young prospects and create a pathway for them to join the England Youth Squad and hopefully continue on to the top of the world game.

Greenhouse Sports currently has 13 schools which feed into four hubs at The Bushey Academy, Capital City Academy in Willesden, Ernest Bevin College in Tooting and Raines Foundation School in Bethnal Green.



A Greenhouse session in full swing

The organisation is in the recruitment phase to identify the best prospects from the players who attend the four hubs. The aim will be to have 20 youngsters aged nine to 14 in the TDC group, which will be overseen by head coach Helder Neves.

Andries Pienaar, programme manager at Greenhouse Sports, said: "I definitely think the structure we have helps us – we have links with schools already, so we don't need to create those links. What we need to do is support the young people as much as possible to stick around in table tennis.

"If we talk three or four years down the line, there need to be some of our young people that are a part of the England Youth Squad.

"We are most probably the biggest table tennis deliverer in the country, so it makes sense for us to work with Table Tennis England and be part of their structures and not be seen to work on our own and outside of those structures. This is a great opportunity for us.

"It will really benefit our young people to be a part of this pathway – they can see the pathway right into England representation and that's something we are very excited about."

On the recruitment process, he added: "We've got a big push for girls' table tennis, so I would like the mix to be as close to 50-50 as possible."

Urban Table Tennis currently work in 28 schools, 18 of them primaries, with between 400 and 700 children playing table tennis every term, in breakfast and lunch clubs and after school and as part of the GCSE syllabus.

The club, which has eight full and part-time coaches, also works at Barnet Table Tennis Centre and Ellenborough Table Tennis Club and has teams in the French and Hungarian Leagues where players can sharpen their competitive and tournament play.

Regular training camps are held in France, Hungary and Romania.

Gergely Urban, head coach said: "We're really grateful for the opportunity. We've been working hard for the past 10 years with the children and working on our system, and it feels like we've been accepted and belong in the top seven TDCs that Table Tennis England trusts to get youngsters to European standards.

"We've delivered a good programme for the past 10 years and Table Tennis England see our qualities and have trust in us to give the players a chance to achieve their dreams.



Gergely Urban leads a session

"We are already running our system and getting the children into our clubs, what this means is we will be in a position where the top children can play more hours.

"All of them will have coaches assigned to them and we will provide extra one-to-one sessions and extra weekend sessions. We'll also get more sessions for the under-10s.

"It will be hard work because this a big challenge to recognised in Europe but we believe our structure is strong and ready for it."

Table Tennis England's Head of Coaching & Performance, Simon Mills, said: "The aim of the Talent Development Centre project is to significantly increase the quality and quantity of players in the England performance pathway, eventually contributing to sustained international success.

"Both Greenhouse and Urban have significant experience and expertise, backed up by outstanding infrastructure, making them ideal partners for us – we look forward to working with them to create sustainable success."

Both Greenhouse and Urban were chosen from a competitive tender process. Table Tennis England would like to thank all others for their bids and would like to continue to grow the network of Talent Development Centres over the coming year.

The other Table Tennis England Talent Development Centres are in Harlow, Nottingham, Ormesby (Middlesbrough), Plymouth and Bristol.

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