



Getting new players into the Loop

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Welcome to **Around the Table**, our regular look at the work Table Tennis England is doing to promote and support table tennis around the country.

In this edition, we look at how our Loop initiative is helping to attract new players to the sport.

What's Loop all about?

Loop is an initiative that has been designed to increase the number of adults playing table tennis socially and recreationally. It takes table tennis out of its traditional settings and puts it into the places people already spend time, including the workplace, pubs and cafes, sports clubs, universities and colleges, pop up 'ping pong parlours' and public spaces. Loop provides subsidised equipment to help organisations launch table tennis in those locations.

The project is initiated by Table Tennis England with Sport England funding and is being delivered in collaboration with a number of public and private sector partners. To date, two of the products in the suite have been launched; Loop at Work and Loop in the Clubhouse.

This suite of social table tennis 'offers' were developed through the insight gained last year, when Table Tennis England conducted a huge amount of research to enable us to understand the social table tennis scene.

Why target social players and why those locations?



By providing packages for workplaces, clubhouses, universities, colleges, bars and cafés, Loop opens up the

number and range of opportunities for people to play our sport. Both social and competitive players can take advantage of these opportunities and numerous examples have been seen already of ex-competitive table tennis players using tables in more recreational environments and reigniting their passion for the sport

All sports suffer with 'drop out' of players, and table tennis is no different. This happens at various points in an individual's life, usually at school transition ages, when young people go to college or university and when people first start work, relocate or start a family. Loop tries to provide opportunities to keep individuals in the game by taking the sport to them, even if this is in a less competitive environment for a while.

Furthermore, Sport England funds sports based on the number of people taking part and whether that is showing an upward trend. In order to continue benefitting from investment from Sport England (which is utilised across all areas of our operation), Table Tennis England must continue to grow participation numbers. An increase in the number of adults playing Table Tennis is important for a number of developmental reasons and, Loop provides the opportunities for this to happen.

What sort of response has Loop had?

More than 40 businesses have already invested in Loop at Work products. The initiative has also gained interest from a number of high-profile online and print publications and will continue to do so as it grows. The media are interested in non-traditional versions of sport and Loop enables table tennis to reach into different types of media, including lifestyle and business publications, allowing Table Tennis England to talk about the sport to a broader range of people. This in turn can increase interest in playing and becoming involved in sport and, generate commercial opportunities.

The strategy behind Loop includes the development of a social table tennis community. Since Loop's launch in May this year, a database of more than 1,000 names, email addresses and mobile numbers have been collected that enable us to talk to this group about opportunities to participate, as well as promote competitions, tickets to England games, social media accounts etc.

So if this is for social players, what has it got to do with current Table Tennis England members?

Loop provides the potential for an increase in club members, league players and members of Table Tennis England.

Research shows that over time a significant percentage of social participants may seek more competitive opportunities and/or may wish to access coaching. Once Loop becomes more established it is anticipated that it will create a swell in new and returning players into clubs and leagues.

Table Tennis England doesn't currently have a membership package that is suitable for all social participants. However, over time, we will look to address this. A growth in membership may lead to an increase in revenue for the sport and organisation.

And, of course, existing Table Tennis England members may choose to persuade their own workplace to join the Loop at Work scheme. Or perhaps your children are heading off to a university which might be interested in purchasing a Loop package.

By the way, why is it called Loop?

To enable the promotion of our social opportunities, branding and marketing that would appeal to potential partners and participants was required.

Our research showed that existing social participants referred to the sport as both table tennis and ping pong and therefore it was decided that one of these should not be included in the initiative's name. After much deliberation, Loop was decided on – a table tennis shot, but also a good word for using in communications and for helping to demonstrate an attachment with something bigger – a community of people – through slogans such as *Get in the Loop, join the Loop, keep in the Loop.*

Where can I find out more?

Simply visit www.keepintheLOOP.co.uk

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