



PATHWAY GUIDE

TABLE TENNIS ENGLAND PATHWAY & GB PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMES

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AIMS OF THE PATHWAY GUIDE

In short, the pathway guide aims to:

- Explain the pathway from club activity to the international stage, including the key transitions that players will face
- Outline the commitment and expectations of table tennis players at each stage of the pathway, from pathway development centres through to GB programmes
- Outline the support that may be available to players as they progress through the pathway
- Outline how players can combine their studies with table tennis
- Provide pathway examples of current performance players
- Outline key information for players and parents as they progress through the pathway

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first edition of the Table Tennis England & GB Performance Programme Player Pathway Guide. The player pathway has changed considerably in recent times, and whilst we anticipate that there will be continued change and development of our pathway over the next few years, this guide will highlight the fundamental areas that players, parents, and coaches should be aware of when it comes to how players can move through the pathway.

When it comes to player development, there is no one size fits all or perfect pathway that should be taken. We know historically that our best players have taken varied routes to success, but with many commonalities in their journeys. This guide will support players and their support network to make more informed decisions and actions when it comes to developing as a player. Whilst we would love for every player to achieve international success, we know this is not a reality, and we will endeavour to highlight how players can stay involved in the sport when they exit our pathway.

WHAT IS A TALENT & PERFORMANCE PATHWAY?

A talent pathway is how we describe the route of development of talented athletes and refers to all the moving parts that support the development and progression of athletes. Pathways are carefully designed to help develop optimal performance in players at senior international level. As athletes progress, they will meet several different milestones, for example, a change in age group or a desired performance level, where they must successfully navigate this change or new level to continue progressing on the pathway.

The Table Tennis England and GB talent pathway have a series of steps that will be outlined in this document. The programmes within the pathway are either overseen by Table Tennis England or GB Table Tennis.

As we move to align Home Nation pathway activity, and seek to achieve our Olympic ambitions, the GB pathway now aligns at around the emerging talent phase. This will be discussed in more detail.

Each step in the pathway has a series of standards that players should meet, and slightly differing levels of support.

Aims of the Table Tennis England & GB Pathway

The aims of our pathway for players are as follows:

Produce senior level athletes capable of podium success

We aim to produce players that are ready and robust to achieve success on the senior international stage. We know that junior success does not mean players will be successful at the senior level, and to combat this, we ensure that development environments are appropriate and progressive for the players' age and stage. Our aim is to win an Olympic medal, and therefore we must stay laser focused on this goal.

Provide meaningful life experiences for young players

Pathway experiences should be meaningful to athletes. An incredibly small number of players in our pathway will successfully establish themselves in the senior international team, therefore we will support players to understand the transferable skills they learn during their time as an athlete, and ensure that our players are actively involved in meaningful personal development activity outside of table tennis.

Support player exit pathways for meaningful long-term engagement in the sport

Since not every player will successfully progress through every pathway stage, we want to ensure that players are motivated to stay in the sport for life, and will appropriately signpost players to ways they can actively maintain their involvement in table tennis.

PATHWAY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Our pathway is underpinned by 8 guiding principles that we believe will help us to achieve our aims:**

SHARED GOALS & CLEAR OBJECTIVES

- Everyone in the pathway is clear what our goals are and how to get there

COHERENT ACROSS ENVIRONMENTS

- It's clear how players transition through the system, and stakeholders are aligned at the correct points

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE & PROGRESSIVE

- Tasks, activities, and benchmarking is appropriate for the age and stage of a player's development

PLAYER CENTRED

- We care about our players and their welfare and give them a voice to input back into the system

HOLISTIC

- Player development is shaped by the interaction between biological,

psychological, behavioural, social & environmental factors

LIFE BALANCE

- Consideration is given to how players' education and wider activities fit into their development. A renewed attitude on the role of personal development for talented table tennis players and the positive impact wider identity can have on performance

SMART IDENTIFICATION

- How we recognise capacity for development is smart and evidence informed

COLLABORATIVE

- Best practice sharing becomes commonplace, and the performance team is dedicated to working closely with clubs, schools, and other talent development environments



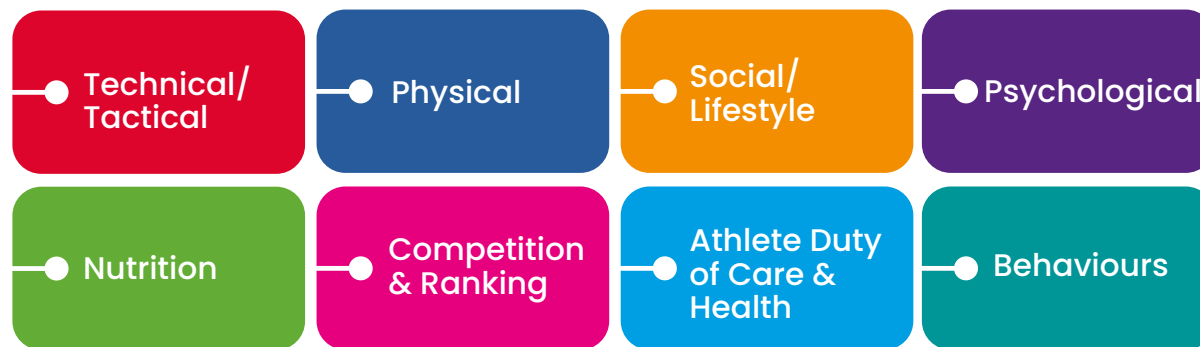
GB TABLE TENNIS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Before understanding the pathway, it's important to have an awareness of our player development framework. For more details on what players can expect to be able to undertake and face at each stage of the pathway, please refer to our [player development framework](#) (*launching soon*).

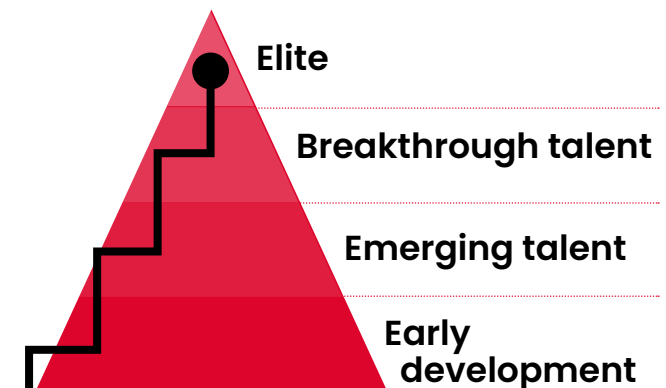
What is the Player Development Framework?

The Player Development Framework depicts a progressive pathway, that starts with the early development level, eventually building expertise and focus, until the player has reached an elite senior level. From a holistic perspective, the framework explains the areas of development and considerations that a young table tennis player entering onto the pathway needs to make to be able to successfully progress between stages. Whilst we understand that different players will progress at different speeds, the framework underpins the core areas that players, coaches, and their support network should be aware of.

Areas covered:



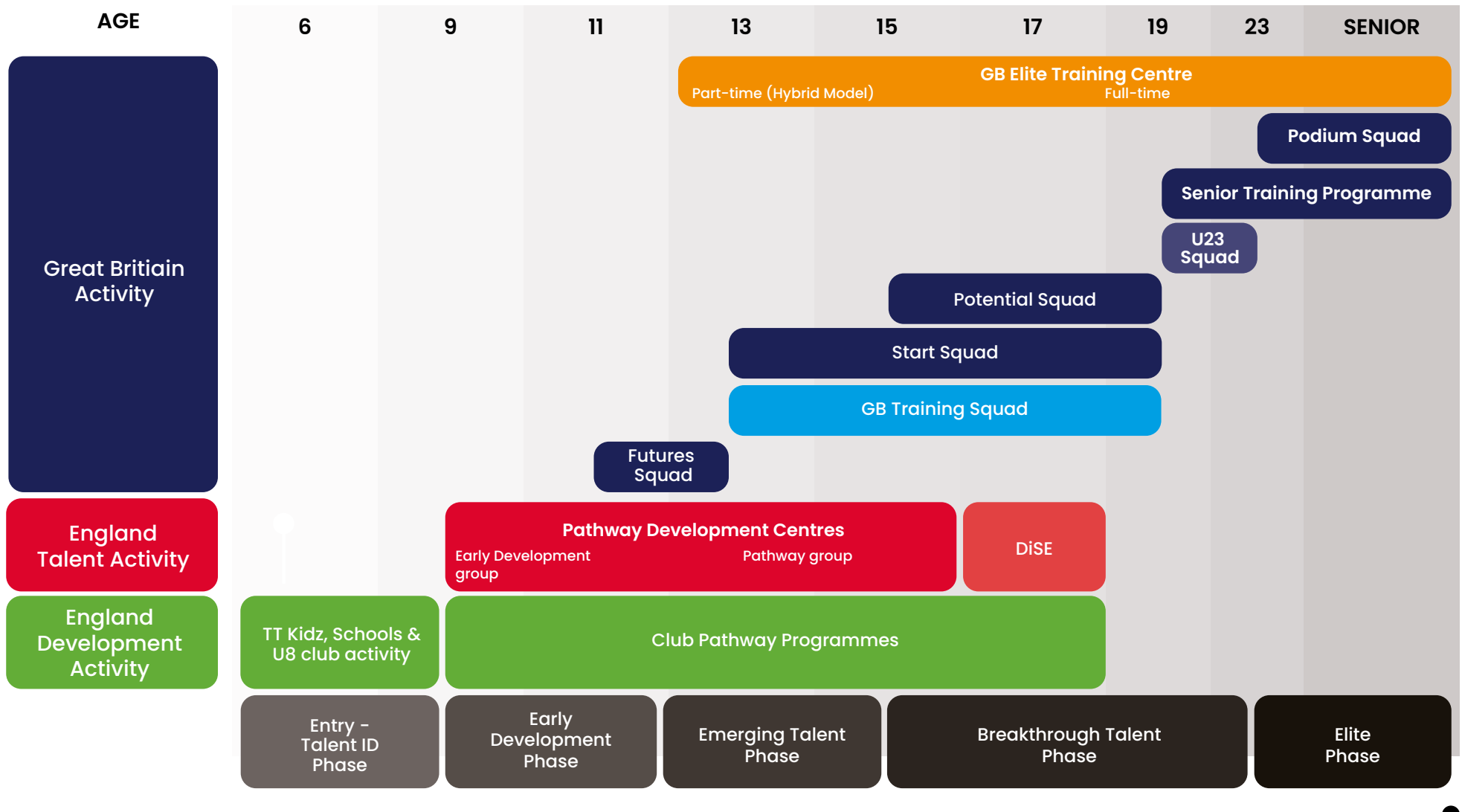
The framework will constantly be under review to ensure that it remains accurate.



Areas have been broken down into these four sections. Review the player development framework to understand what each stage means and how they link to the pathway stages detailed in this document.

PATHWAY OVERVIEW

The Table Tennis England pathway becomes a Great Britain focused pathway when players enter the Futures squad onwards. NB: these routes are not definitive, and players could enter or exit the pathway at varying stages. The pathway depicts possible exit routes for England development and talent activity. The ages highlighted are also approximate and could vary depending on the level and speed of progression of a player.

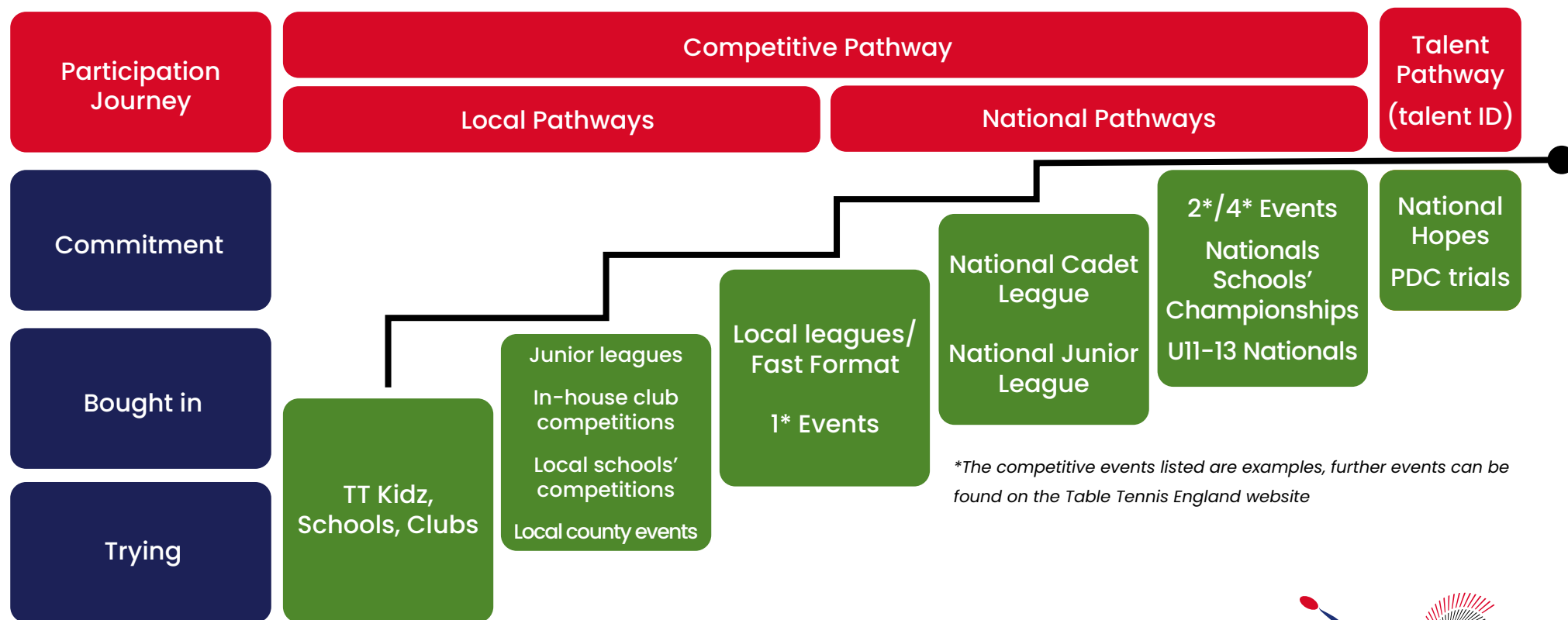


ENTRY: THE JOURNEY INTO TABLE TENNIS

Participation with a purpose

How do players get into playing table tennis, and what are some of the possible entry programmes that support their progression? There are various ways to get involved with table tennis. However, it's rare that a child would try table tennis for the first time and become super committed, rather they go on a journey that involves support from coaches, parents, and different event/training formats. This journey can eventually lead them to a point where they may have the appropriate skills and capabilities to progress into talent pathway activity. Table Tennis is a sport that needs to be specialised in relatively young, and we know that players across England and GB squads have typically started playing between 6-9 years of age.

What does the participation to commitment journey possibly look like for players?



TRYING TABLE TENNIS ●

At this stage, the aim is for players to have fun, and develop the appropriate table tennis fundamentals to progress into the next phase of the sport. Players can start through family or friend connections, through playing on holiday, school programmes, and more.

What's required at this stage:

- A coach they like instantly
- Easy access and low financial commitment
- Child friendly atmosphere where children can play and use energy
- Simple, short, snappy competitions
- Learn to play the game without too much technical jargon – serve, rally, score points
- To see success and efforts recognised through badges and certificates

The following pages highlight some of the ways that players could try table tennis for the first time.



TT KIDZ

TT Kidz is an inclusive and accessible programme, that children aged between 7-11 can enjoy. The programme is centred on teaching children the fundamentals of table tennis. They will learn new skills, meet new friends, get fit, and most importantly – have fun! This programme is available in table tennis clubs, local community centres, and schools throughout England.

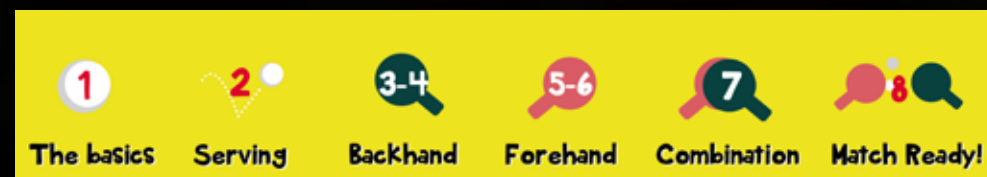
The TT Kidz awards scheme compliments both clubs that have delivered the TT Kidz programme and those that already have a strong U11 junior set up. The awards scheme has been developed to allow participants to progress at their own pace and is inclusive for all.

To find out more about the programme or how to access a session, visit:

ttkidz.co.uk



A TT Kidz Littles programme that focuses on introducing the sport to children aged 4-6 is also currently in a pilot phase.



CLUB STARTER PROGRAMMES

Many clubs across England deliver starter sessions for children aged approximately 4-8, that can be an excellent introduction to table tennis. Such programmes focus on building player fundamental and technical skills. To find a club close to you, visit: tabletennisengland.co.uk/table-finder/

CASE STUDY – Draycott and Long Eaton Table Tennis Club – 4-8 Programme

Example session content:

- Sessions often start with bat and ball skills (e.g., balancing & bouncing ball on the bat or bouncing the ball on the floor or table)
- Ready position and grip are reinforced each session
- There is a feeder player for all beginners and there are no more than 3 rotating on one end of the table
- Numbers and targets are used to support engagement and attention
- There are lots of games, such as “round the world” or 6 pin bowling with empty drinks bottles on the table
- Fundamental movement skills are essential at this age, e.g., ladder drills, moving and catching a ball
- Shadow play is a tool that can be used to support shot development
- To support service development, a regular drill at the start of the session is completed where the players throw a ball with their left hand, hit it up, and catch it again

BOUGHT INTO TABLE TENNIS

Players are now starting to become more committed to the game. They may only attend once a week but are regularly making progress and should be encouraged to start moving to twice a week. Players may start investing in kit such as new rackets or club training tops and start playing entry level competitions.

What's required at this stage:

- Regular time slot, coach, and friends in the session
- Players should start to be encouraged to play more than once a week (this may include entering into a club 'development squad' session to add in an additional practice opportunity)
- To feel like they belong and are recognised by coaches and club members
- To see progress - progression routes should be clearly outlined
- Game based skills improving their ability to serve, rally and score
- Familiarity with games, drills, and practices
- Opportunities to play and practice outside of their session
- Social activities - coming to the club for more than just table tennis lessons
- Simple events held locally throughout the year but infrequent enough to be seen as special events

Local Level Competitions

Once players have bought into the game and are showing progression, they can start to enter their first competitions, examples of these include:

- In-house club tournaments
- Schools' competitions (local)*
- Local junior leagues
- Local leagues/fast format leagues
- 1* events
- Local county events

*The competition pathway for schools in England is organised by Table Tennis England as part of its wider competition structure. Under the title English Schools Table Tennis, there are two National Schools Competitions – one for teams and the other for individuals. Fifty-one Schools County Associations affiliated to Table Tennis England hold qualifying events in their counties across England. The winners then represent their schools' counties in the Butterfly National Schools Competitions and depending on their success, can go on to represent England in the British Schools Championships. For more information on the schools' pathway, visit: tabletennisengland.co.uk/schools/school-competitions/competition-pathway/





● COMMITMENT TO TABLE TENNIS

This is the stage we want all young players to get to! Players will now be playing two or more times a week and are likely to be members of club squads and programmes where there is a clear progression route. Players will also start competing on a national level, possibly as much as once a month. Once a player is committed to the game and are visible on the competition circuit, there will be opportunities for them to be 'scouted' by national level coaches and staff.

What's required at this stage:

- More regular playing opportunities, more than 2-4 times a week so that players are improving quickly
- Practice partners that are better than the player are key (older junior members or adults)
- Inspirational atmosphere with role models for players to aim for
- Strong competitive outlet

National Level Competitions

Once players have started playing table tennis and are showing progression, they can start to enter their first competitions, this will support progression into national competition, including the National Championships. Examples of these may include:

- 2*/4* events
- Schools' competitions (national)
- National cadet league/National junior league
- U11-13 National Championships

● To find out more information about competitions in England, visit tabletennisengland.co.uk/competitions/

TALENT ID – NATIONAL HOPES

Each year, Table Tennis England plans to run a National Hopes Week. The aim of National Hopes week is to deliver a national talent ID campaign to spot future talented players that could excel into pathway programmes and excite the next generation of players to want to be part of the England and GB pathway.

Opportunities:

- Share details and insight into the player pathway
- Opportunity to scout players that possess the appropriate skills and characteristics to excel in the pathway
- Help us to ensure player potential across the country is not being 'missed'
- Create excitement and motivation amongst young aspiring players
- Track the success of the national hopes camp participants in generations to come

Activities during the week include:

- A national camp for invited players in the U11 age category
- Online education sessions for players and parents about the pathway
- Communication about the pathway, including sharing player stories
- Coach education activity about working with talented youth players
- Wider talent ID activity across different environments, such as the pathway development centres

The first National Hopes Week will be in 2025 – more details to be shared soon. We will also be hosting smaller 'GB Hopes' events, which will take place across the home nations, and look to talent ID players into the GB Futures Programme.



What is TALENT ID?

Talent Identification is a process of recognising players of a high potential. Table Tennis England are finalising development of an early **Talent ID Framework** called the 3 B's, that will support coaches and teachers to be able to identify players with the potential to progress in our pathway.

Keep an eye out for more details!

EARLY DEVELOPMENT TO EMERGING TALENT PHASE

This table summarises core features of the early development to emerging talent phase, which represent the first step into invested table tennis activity for young promising players.

	Pathway Development Centres (Early Development Group, 8-11)	Futures Squad
Who?	Clubs or other talent environments in England (Managed by Table Tennis England)	Great Britain
Age & education level	There are two age bands in the PDC. The age of the early development group is typically 8-11 years. Typically, players will be in primary school.	Players in the U12 age category Typically, players will be in primary school/first year secondary school
Programme Overview	<p>The Pathway Development Centres (PDCs) are a network of high-quality development hubs with the goal of supporting players to develop world class potential that are ready to excel into the next stage of the pathway (more info on the PDCs is in a separate section)</p> <p>Players in these environments will receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level coaching and sparring • Fundamental skills and physical development support • Access to a wider workshop programme that is age and stage appropriate 	<p>The first step on the GB performance pathway, this group includes the best U12 players across Great Britain.</p> <p>Players selected for this squad will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp-based contact time with national coaches & 1-1 club based support • Access to the BetterME holistic development programme • Exposure to a training camp abroad • Access to some age group funded events (such as Euro Minis)
Player commitment	PDC environments offer a minimum of 10 hours of training per week for players, however, players may be involved in wider training activity.	<p>Players are expected to be training at least 12-14 hours a week and will be on a camp-based model at clubs and at the elite training centre.</p> <p>Players may be exposed to international competitions, such as WTT U11 events.</p> <p>Events: expectations to play National Cup (or home nation equivalent), National Championships, and 2 mandated events from the start of the 24/25 calendar.</p>
Other table tennis environments player may be in	If the PDC is not the player's home environment, they may also be training in another club. The best players in the PDCs may be invited into GB squads.	Players within the Futures squad may also be training in a Pathway Development Centre depending on their current geographical location. Players may also be training in their home club.
Wider stakeholder support	Unlikely in this age group.	Subject to successful nomination, older players in the Futures programme may have access to Sports Aid or Backing the Best support (English players only).
Involvement in other sports	At this stage, players will likely be taking part in other sports, which is seen as a positive, since it can support the development of fundamental movement skills.	At this stage, players will be invested in table tennis as their main sport but should be encouraged to engage in other sports for fun, alongside fundamental skills training.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT TO BREAKTHROUGH TALENT PHASE

This table summarises core programmes during the emerging talent and breakthrough talent phase, where players will be selected for squads because they have been recognised as having elite potential. In this phase, wider stakeholders will begin to play an active role.

	Pathway Development Centres (Pathway Group, 12-15)	GB Training Squad
Who leads?	Clubs or other talent environments in England (Managed by Table Tennis England)	Great Britain
Age & education level	There are two age bands in the PDC. The age of the pathway group is typically 12-15 years. Typically, players will be in secondary school.	Players across all age categories from U13-19 Secondary school, further education/college & university (first year)
Programme Overview	<p>The Pathway Development Centres (PDCs) are a network of high-quality development hubs with the goal of supporting players to develop world class potential that are ready to excel into the next stage of the pathway (more info on the PDCs is in a separate section).</p> <p>Players in these environments will receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level coaching and sparring • Fundamental skills and physical development support • Access to a wider workshop programme that is age and stage appropriate 	<p>A group of periphery GB players who have demonstrated they have the potential to be accelerated into the GB Start programme.</p> <p>Players selected for this squad will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp-based contact time with national coaches at the elite training centre (currently 8 weeklong camps per year) • Introductory sport science and medical support in the system • Access to the BetterME holistic development programme • The chance to receive individual funding for international events through consistent high-level results at national events specified by the Performance Development team <p>At 4 of the camps, a trial event will be hosted, with the winning male and female player receiving a funded event and further support that you might expect in the Start programme.</p>
Player commitment	PDC environments offer a minimum of 10 hours of training per week for players, however, players may be training or involved in wider training activity for an approximate total of 12-15 hours a week.	<p>Players are expected to be training a minimum of 15 hours per week and will be on a camp-based model at the Elite Training Centre. There will be targets to meet from camp to camp, including physical benchmarking.</p> <p>Events: expectations to play National Cup (or home nation equivalent), National Championships, and 2 mandated events from the start of the 24/25 calendar.</p>
Other table tennis environments player may be in	If the PDC is not the player's home environment, they may also be training in another club. The best players in the PDCs may be invited into GB squads.	In the latter stages of being in the GB Training Squad, players may start to consider competing in leagues abroad. Players may also be in university environments.
Wider stakeholder support	<p>Sports Aid</p> <p><i>Support is subject to successful nomination/application</i></p>	<p>TASS (English players only) Sports Aid (English players only) Backing the Best (English players only)</p> <p><i>Support is subject to successful nomination/application</i></p>

	Start Squad	Potential Squad (<i>confirmation</i>)
Who leads?	Great Britain	Great Britain
Age & education level	Players in the U13-19 age categories Secondary school, further education/college & university (first year) and likely accessing flexible schooling to accommodate their training	Players aged 15-19 Secondary school, further education/college & university (first year) and likely accessing flexible schooling to accommodate their training
Programme Overview	<p>A group of players showing promise on the world stage, who are demonstrating the potential to reach or currently within the top 50 in their age group in the world ranking. This is the stage of the pathway when players begin to receive more individual investment.</p> <p>Players selected for this squad will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant contact time with national coaches • Exposure to training camps in Asia • Funding to a calendar of international competition (focusing on junior events) • Introductory sport science and medical support in the system • Access to the BetterME holistic development programme • An Individual athlete plan • A periodised calendar 	<p>A group of players showing promise on the world stage at the U19 level. These players are currently ranked top 30 in their age group in the world, are on a trajectory to be top 100 senior world ranked players and deemed to be 8 years away from a podium level performance. This is the stage of the pathway when players receive more advanced individualised investment.</p> <p>Players selected for this squad will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost full-time contact time with national coaches • Exposure to training camps in Asia • Access to a calendar of international competition (with an increased focus on senior international exposure) • Introductory sport science and medical support in the system • Access to the BetterME holistic development programme • An Individual athlete plan • A periodised calendar • Individualised psychological support • Individualised performance analysis <p>Players in this squad will be considered for Confirmation experience that will be supported through UK Sport investment. This experience includes access to senior competition exposure, the athlete medical scheme, extensive sport science and medical support, and an athlete financial award.</p>
Player commitment	Players are expected to be training a minimum of 18 hours per week of quality time on task. There will be an expectation to be training on a hybrid part-time model at our elite training centre. This should be combined with school or further studies.	Players are expected to be training a minimum of 18 hours per week. There will be an expectation to be training on a full-time model at our elite training centre. This should be combined with school or further studies.
Other table tennis environments player may be in	Players may have access to a home club environment, and may be spending time in foreign club environments, training, and competing in leagues.	Players may be spending time in foreign club environments, training, and competing in leagues.
Wider stakeholder support	<p>Sports Aid (if successful in nomination) Backing the Best (English players only) TASS (English players only)</p> <p><i>Support is subject to successful nomination/application</i></p>	<p>TASS (English players only) Sports Aid (English players only) Backing the Best (English players only) UK Sport – Confirmation funding (depending on level)</p> <p><i>Support is subject to successful nomination/application</i></p>

BREAKTHROUGH TALENT TO ELITE PHASE

This table summarises core programmes in the breakthrough to elite phase, where players are at the elite end of the sport and competing at the highest level.

	U23 Squad	Senior Training Programme	Podium Squad
Who leads?	Great Britain	Great Britain	Great Britain
Age & education level	Senior Players aged U23 Players in this squad could be in work, at university, or be professional players	Senior players aged 19+ Players in this squad could be in work, at university, or be professional players <i>Typically, players will progress from junior squads to the U23 squad if they meet the standards, however, players may skip this squad if on a higher trajectory</i>	No limit on age (based on performance level) but likely to be aged 19+ Players in this squad may be engaged in some level of education/personal development, however, they are likely to be professional players
Programme Overview	Transition to the senior level can be a big jump - this group helps to bridge the transition from the junior to senior level by providing training opportunities as a group and with senior players. Players selected for this squad will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camp-based contact time with national coaches • Part funding for a set number of senior international competitions/camps • Introductory sport science and medical support in the system 	This group includes the best senior players from across GB, likely to be selected for major senior international events. Players selected for this squad will have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact time with national coaches across camps/1-1 based support • Part funding for a set number of senior international competitions/camps • Sport science and medical support in the system • An Individual athlete plan • A periodised calendar • Individualised psychological support (depending on need) • Individualised performance analysis (depending on need) 	The highest possible squad a player could be in on the GB pathway, with members being an Olympic medal hope in the current cycle. Players at this stage will receive Podium level funding which is a full-time personalised programme.
Player commitment	Players at this stage are often training on a semi-professional or professional basis. They are expected to be training a minimum of 18-25 hours per week either in a part or full-time capacity internationally or at the elite training centre. This may be combined with work or studies. Players will also be competing internationally.	Players at this stage are often training on a semi-professional or professional basis. They are expected to be training approximately 18-25 hours a week in either a part or full-time capacity internationally or at our elite training centre. This may be combined with work or studies. Players will be competing internationally at WTT and major events.	Players are expected to be training full-time, which will be approximately 25+ hours a week. There will be an expectation to be training on a full-time model at our elite training centre. Players should be working towards a personal development plan that will support their exit from the sport. Players will be competing internationally at WTT and major events. The competition calendar will be focused on winning an Olympic medal in the cycle.
Other table tennis environments player may be in	Players may be spending large amounts of their time in foreign club environments, training and competing in leagues. Players may also be in a university environment.	Players may be spending large amounts of their time in foreign club environments, training and competing in leagues. Players may also be in a university environment.	Players may be spending large amounts of their time in foreign club environments, training and competing in leagues.
Wider stakeholder support	TASS (<i>English players only</i>)	UK Sport – Confirmation funding (depending on level)	UK Sport – Podium funding

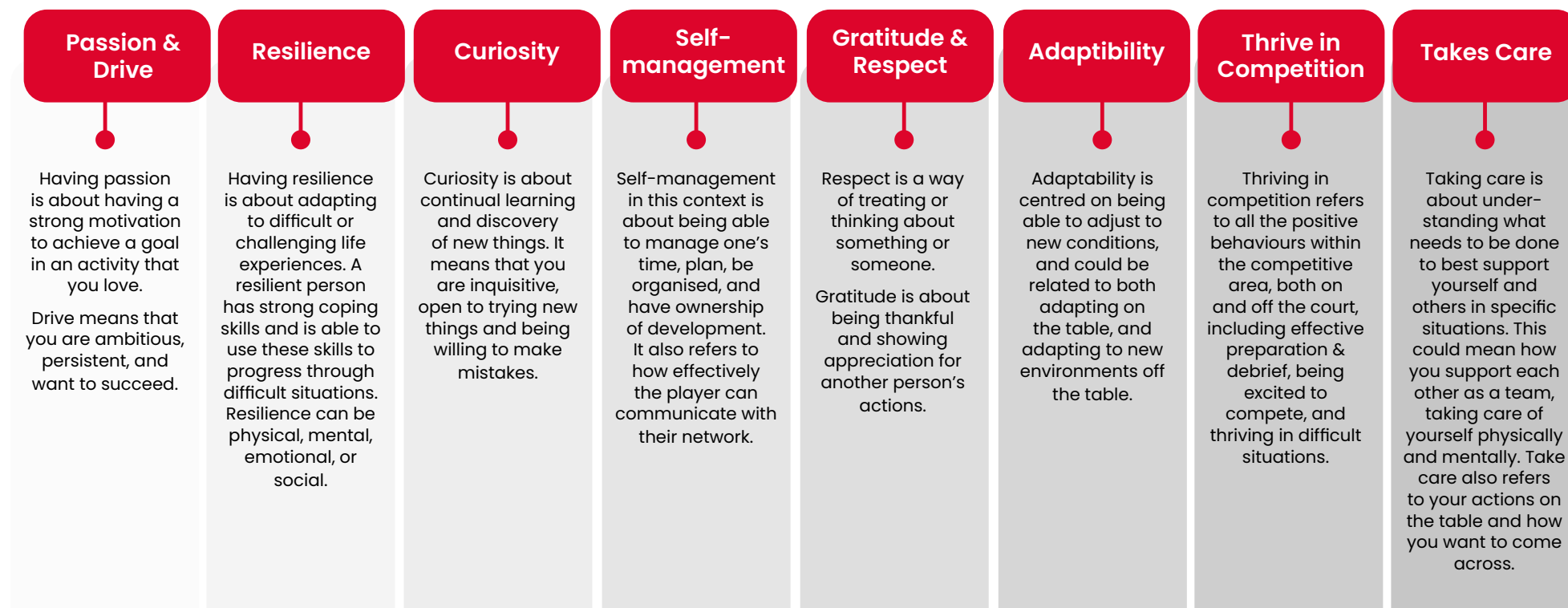
PERFORMANCE SQUAD SELECTION STANDARDS

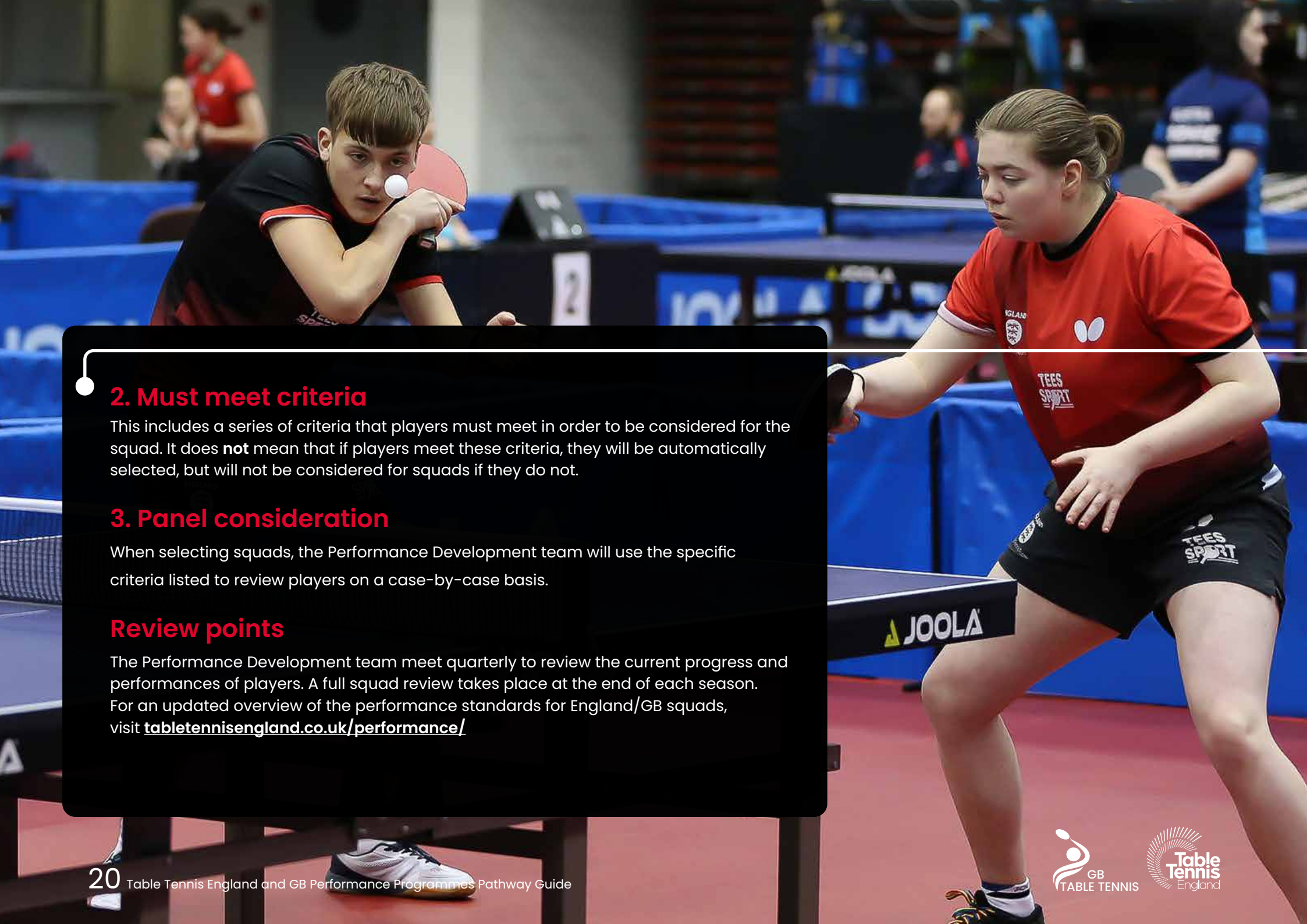
One of the key questions many players and their support network will be keen to understand is how to gain selection for GB performance squad activity, and how players progress between squads.

To be eligible, players must meet criteria set by the Performance Development team. We anticipate that these criteria will be reviewed regularly as our squads increase their level of performance and results on the international stage. There are three elements to our criteria:

1. Behaviours

The Performance Development team have outlined 8 core behaviours that we expect players to demonstrate when they are part of England/GB talent and performance programmes. It is important that all players aspiring to become part of our programmes are aware of these and what they look like in practice. Take a look at our player development framework (launching soon) for an explanation of what these behaviours mean and to understand what these different behaviours look like across age groups.





2. Must meet criteria

This includes a series of criteria that players must meet in order to be considered for the squad. It does **not** mean that if players meet these criteria, they will be automatically selected, but will not be considered for squads if they do not.

3. Panel consideration

When selecting squads, the Performance Development team will use the specific criteria listed to review players on a case-by-case basis.

Review points

The Performance Development team meet quarterly to review the current progress and performances of players. A full squad review takes place at the end of each season. For an updated overview of the performance standards for England/GB squads, visit tabletennisengland.co.uk/performance/



GB ELITE TRAINING CENTRE

GB Table Tennis have secured a new GB Elite Training Centre (ETC) at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield. This is a new venture that will be operational in March 2024. This section of the guide will contain further information shortly.

What is the role of the Elite Training Centre?

The purpose of the ETC is:

- To establish a world class programme that delivers high quality and regular training opportunities for performance squad players (accessing on a full-time or hybrid basis)
- To provide the opportunity for players to access world-class performance services to enhance their personal and sporting development
- To provide the opportunity for players to combine their elite training with age-specific educational options (school, FE/HE) and maximise their dual career aspirations
- To provide coach and practitioner development/training opportunities
- To provide opportunities for national events to be hosted in a high-quality environment
- To hold talent ID and pathway initiatives that help us to spot players with potential

Further details about the Elite Training Centre and its place in our pathway will be released shortly.

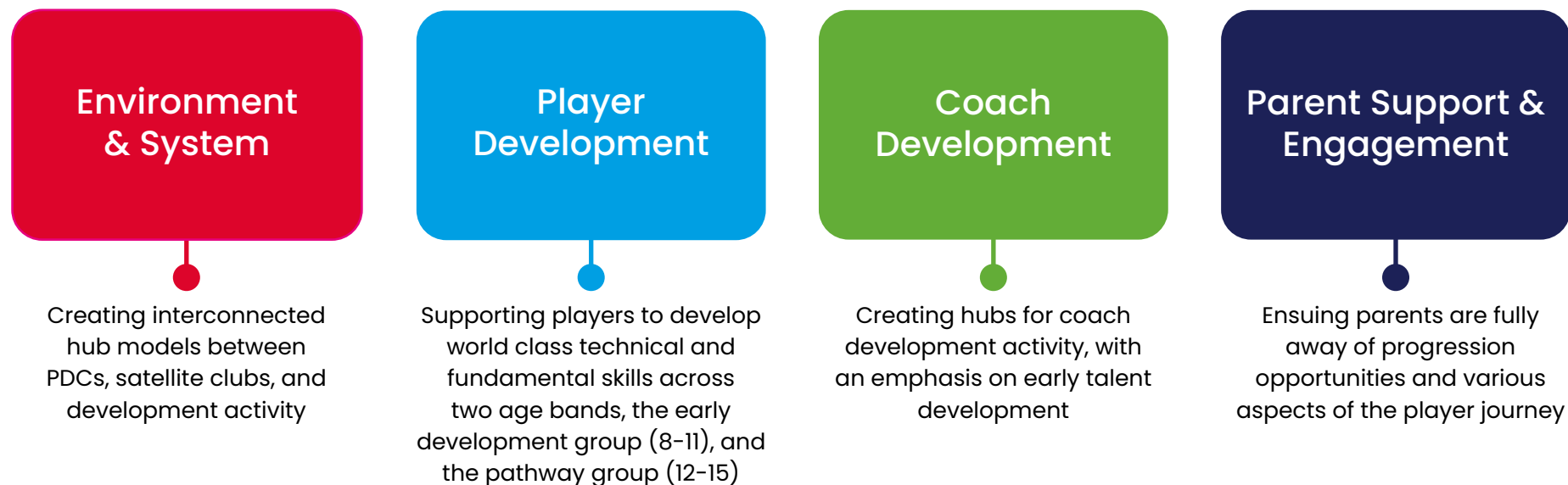
PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

The Pathway Development Centres, a new initiative that started in late 2023, are a critical step at the start of a player's journey to develop world class potential in a creative and engaging environment, bridging the gap from entry into pathway to GB programmes.

Overarching Aims

- Develop players with world-class technical and fundamental skills relative to their age, ready to excel in the pathway
- Develop creative and fun environments that keep players motivated
- Create an early investment in good habits and behaviours
- Support coaches to excel in developing elite youth players

The Pathway Development Centres (PDCs) focus on the following areas:



[View the interview with Gavin Evans & Emma Vickers discussing the aims of the PDCs](#)

OUR PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

PDC	ADDRESS	CONTACT FOR ENQUIRIES
Greenhouse Table Tennis Club (London Area)	Greenhouse Centre 35 Cosway Street London NW1 5NS	PDC@greenhousesports.org
Joola Plymouth Table Tennis Club (South West Area)	Eggbuckland Community College Westcott Close Eggbuckland Plymouth PL6 5YB	Joolaplymouthttc@gmail.com
Ormesby Table Tennis Club (North East Area)	Cargo Fleet Lane, Middlesbrough TS3 8PB	coachesormesbypdc@gmail.com
Kingfisher Table Tennis Club (South East Area)	Woodlands Avenue, Woodley, Reading, RG5 3EU	PDC@kingfishertabletennis.com

KEY PDC QUESTIONS

● Who are they for?

Selected players that meet the appropriate criteria between the ages of 8-15. The PDC sessions will include an early development group (8-11) and a pathway group (12-15).

Each year, the PDC coaches will look to recruit new players into the PDC from the neighbouring clubs and development activity.

Entry into PDC sessions is by invite only from the PDC lead coach.

The PDCs cater to around 12-16 players and will therefore be very competitive to enter. Current criteria that coaches will select from can be found here:

tabletennisengland.co.uk/pathway-development-centres/

● What can players expect in PDC sessions?

- 10 hours of high intensity training
- Multi-ball
- Fundamental skills training
- High-level coaching from the PDC coach and a designated national coach
- Sparring with high level players
- Wider development opportunities such as nutrition and psychology support
- The opportunity to be recruited into GB squads or be invited to national talent ID activity

● Do players have to be in a PDC to enter England/GB programmes?

No. PDCs will be one route into GB performance programmes that will give players good exposure and opportunities to progress to the next level.

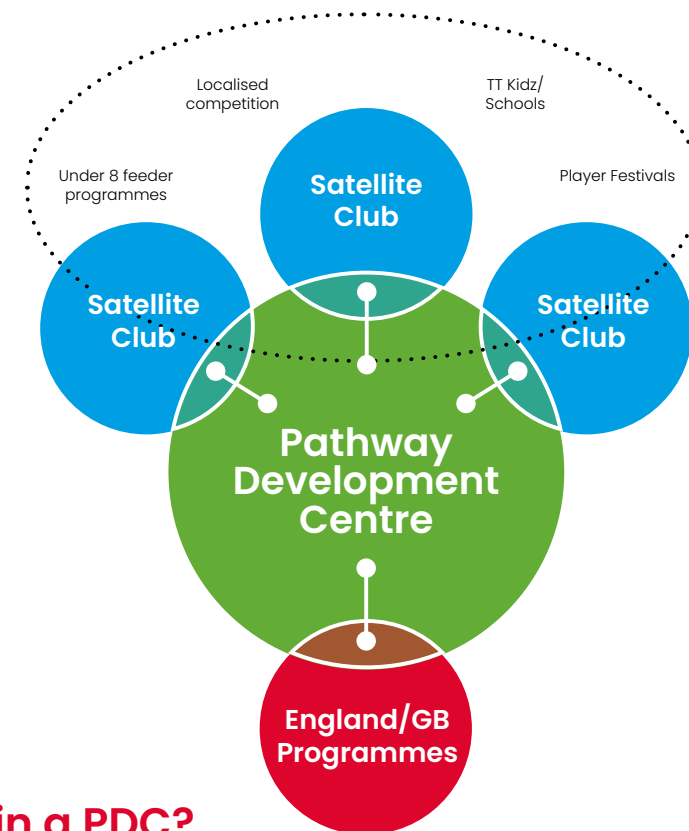
However, since the PDCs cannot meet every player's needs geographically, players can be selected from any environment should they meet the squad selection criteria.

PDC RECRUITMENT AND EXIT

Recruitment to PDCs could occur through a variety of ways, including (but not limited to):

- PDC outreach activities to satellite clubs
- U8 club feeder programmes
- Development activities such as TT Kidz
- National hopes week
- Localised competitions (e.g., 1* competition, schools' events)
- Recommendations of the Table Tennis England Performance Development team

Please visit the Table Tennis England website for up-to-date selection criteria. Selection is not automatic and is at the discretion of the PDC coaching team and Table Tennis England Performance Development Team.



What progression and exit routes are available for players in a PDC?



PATHWAY JOURNEY

To successfully progress through the Table Tennis England and GB pathway, there are a number of milestones that players will be required to meet. To do this, players will need to develop specific skills and demonstrate core behaviours that support their progression.

As previously highlighted, only a small number of players will successfully embed themselves into the senior international level of the sport and have a successful international senior career. This means that many players will at some point exit the Table Tennis England or GB pathway. We want to instil in players a lifelong love of table tennis and highlight some of the opportunities for players to stay involved in the sport long-term.

What is the typical length of a table tennis career?

To achieve elite levels of the sport, players typically will start playing around the ages of 6-9. A typical career in table tennis can span as long as 25 years, with many elite players playing at an international level into their mid-thirties (length of career may vary significantly depending on a variety of factors including style of play, injury risk, and wider lifestyle demands). Table tennis is a high repetition sport, with significant training hours required to achieve excellence. To excel on the international stage, players require a unique combination of support, development, and competitive opportunities. Although there is no perfect formula to creating a high-level player, looking at development from a holistic perspective (whole person) can support progression.



Olympic medal

INTERESTING FACT

The average age of a first time Olympic medallist in table tennis is **28**.

This means that the average time from initiation to major medal is approximately 22 years.



Approx. a 22-year journey

Initiation into table tennis

● Players must remember that:

There are several routes to take to achieve excellence in the sport – not every player's pathway will look the same. Athletes will progress at varying rates and sit across different environments.

There will be challenges along the way – challenge is normal for young developing players. When players are faced with difficulties, learning to navigate these, and finding solutions creates positive growth experiences for athletes.

It's normal to fail – No player journey from entry to the elite level is linear, and players will face multiple setbacks along the way. These setbacks may include not getting selected for a squad or major event, being deselected, and performance setbacks. Some of these experiences will be discussed in more detail.



PLAYER TRANSITIONS THROUGH THE TABLE TENNIS PATHWAY

During the pathway journey, players will be faced with several transitions that they must navigate to successfully progress to the next stage of their development. These can be viewed through the different phases of player development.

What is a Transition?

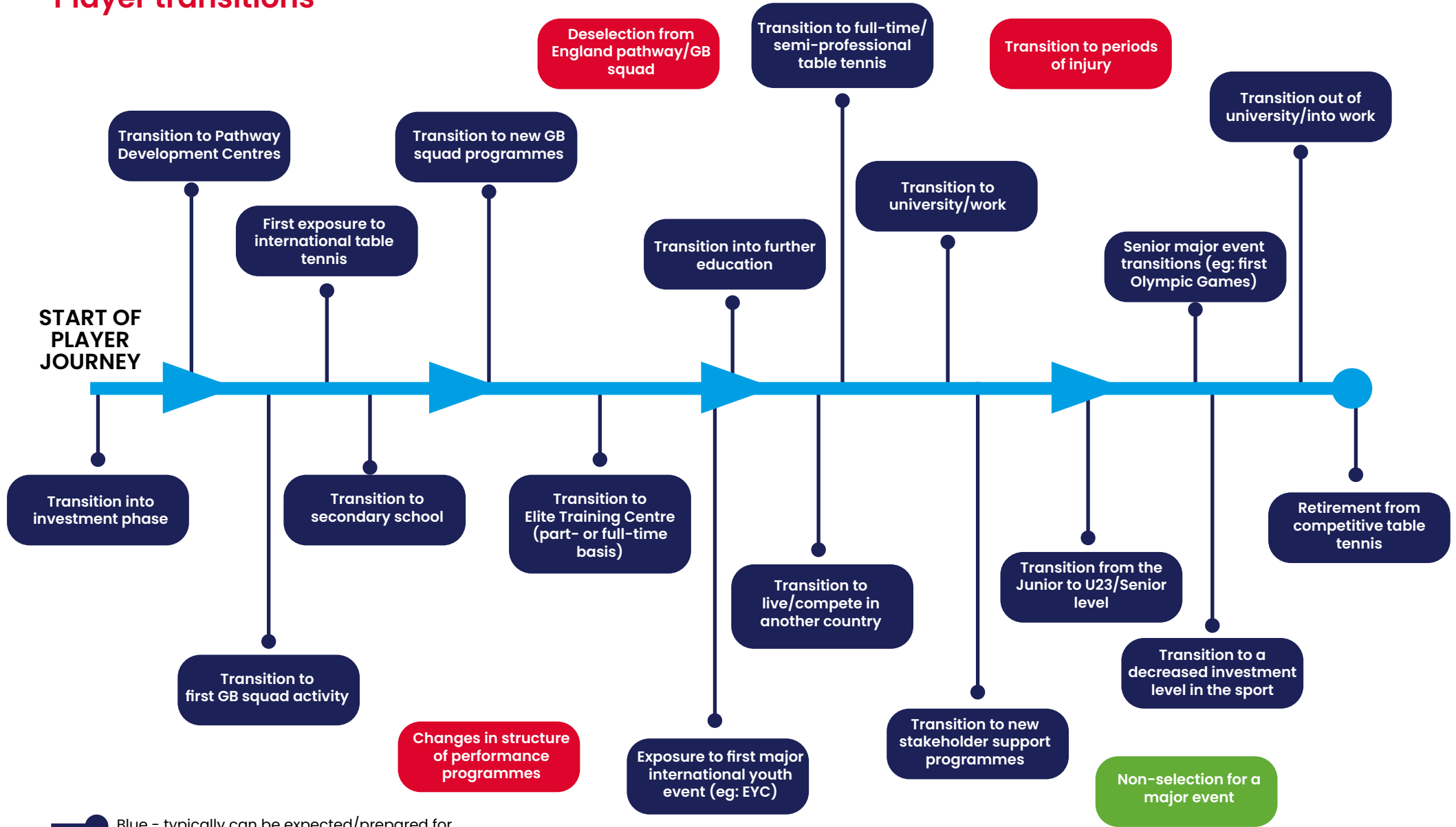
A transition is essentially a period of change. When undergoing transition, players will be required to adapt to changes in their day-to-day environments, changes in their identity, and changes in their support network. How well a player adapts can depend on how successful they are at transitioning through the pathway and successfully into the next stage of sport or life.

Transitions come in many different forms; they include:

- **Expected** - Expected transitions occur when a player enters a new stage of development that typically correspond with the 'normal passage' of one stage to another. This could be in sport or education/work (e.g., a move to university)
- **Unexpected** - Unexpected transitions are involuntary and it is not possible to predict when they will occur (e.g., a serious injury leading to exit from a programme)
- **Non-event** - An event that is typically expected to happen but does not take place (e.g., not getting selected for a squad)

When looking at transitions, it's important to look at them from a holistic perspective (i.e., changes across the sport, support team, education, financial etc.). In addition, many transitions happen at the same time, which can add increased pressure and stress on players, but can also lead to new and exciting opportunities. We have identified some of the possible transitions that players may face during their table tennis careers and have detailed these on the upcoming pages. It's important to remember that every player's journey will look very different depending on their performance level, goals, and personal circumstances, and therefore not every transition listed may occur.

Player transitions



- Blue - typically can be expected/prepared for
- Red - typically cannot be predicted
- Green - maybe expected but does not take place

Some of the transitions detailed on the pathway journey will now be discussed relative to the stage of player development they approximately sit within.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT–EMERGING TALENT TRANSITIONS (APPROX. U12)

Table Tennis

Transition into the investment phase

Although players may start playing table tennis at around 6–9 years old, they may also be involved in several other sporting activities. At some point, the player and their parents will decide to invest more time into table tennis, which may be due to a sudden increase in level and enjoyment of the sport, they may have been identified by a coach as having potential or have been selected for a club squad. However, it is important that players have wider exposure to other sporting activity outside of table tennis since this will support them to develop key fundamental movements and strength that is essential for their table tennis performance.

Entry into a Pathway Development Centre (PDC)

Players showing significant potential may be invited to train within a PDC environment. During this transition, players will experience an increase in required commitment, possible travel to and from training, number of training hours, intensity of training, and an introduction to a new

set of behaviours and expectations. Attending a PDC may also mean a player is exposed to a new coach and new training styles. In addition, players may be required to travel further and more frequently for events. The PDC transition may be the first step into organised pathway activity and is designed to support players to develop world class technical and fundamental skills, ready to thrive and make the transition to GB squad activity.

First step onto the GB performance pathway (Futures Squad)

The best players in GB within the U12 age group (should they meet the selection criteria) will be invited to become part of the GB Futures Squad. This will include a player's first experience of centralised training activity, including a series of weekend or weeklong camps. It may be the first time a player has stayed away from home without their parents, and they will be required to take more responsibility for themselves, including packing their bags, making food choices, and getting themselves up in the morning. Becoming part of the Futures Squad may also mean players are exposed to a high number

of training hours, which could limit their involvement in other weekend social or family activities. Players will also be exposed to a fundamental skills training programme, have their own individual athlete plan (a plan that the player, coach, and wider support staff contribute on that includes key goals, actions, and timelines for review), and may experience their first international events.

First exposure to international table tennis

Players in this phase may be exposed to their first international table tennis events/camps. Early exposure to a higher level of table tennis outside of England/GB is essential to player development. This exposure may include events organised via the Futures Squad, such as European Youth Series events, WTT U11 events, Euro Minis, ETTU hopes camps, and wider events organised across Europe. Playing internationally means players will be exposed to new playing environments, time zones, schedules of play, new foods, travel, and players with different styles. Players will be required to meet Table Tennis England's expected behaviours which will be used to inform future selection for international events.

Education

Transition into secondary school

During this phase, players will move out of primary school and into secondary level education. This is a huge personal transition, and will mean adapting to new teachers, classmates, subjects, and possible travel requirements. Players and their parents may be required to communicate with the school around possible time off to attend camps and events, which may mean that players have to catch up on schoolwork in their own time. For some players, the opportunity may arise to move schooling to be closer to a training environment or academy.

EMERGING TALENT–BREAKTHROUGH TRANSITIONS (APPROX. 12–19)

Table Tennis

Transition to new GB squads

Within this phase, if players meet the appropriate performance standards, they could make the transition into a number of different squads. When players progress into the next phase of the pathway, they will see an increase in the level of holistic support they are provided. Examples of squad transitions are included below:

- **Futures to Start Squad** – This is a move into a smaller and more personalised support programme, that may include a move to a different coach, an increase in expected training hours, a camp-based programme that is combined with other GB programmes, and a much larger international events calendar. Players will regularly be competing on the World Table Tennis (WTT) tour within their age categories, which will require extensive time away from home. At this stage, players may be missing a lot of school, and will need to either consider flexible schooling options, or have arrangements with their current school that allows players to miss time and catch up at a later date.
- **Futures/PDC into GB training Squad** – the GB Training Squad is an integral group of players that includes the best GB cadet and junior players. For some, this may be the first step into GB training activity, and players will be inducted by clearly

outlining the Performance Development team's expected behaviours, goals, and plans for the year. Players will be exposed to a programme of camps that are likely to take place at the Elite Training Centre and will be strongly encouraged to play internationally. Players at this level may also be nominated for stakeholder support, including TASS and Sports Aid awards. Players in the GB Training Squad will be fighting to prove themselves to gain a place in the GB Start programme.

- **Start Squad to Potential Squad** – this transition will again see an increase in the number of training hours and expected international events. Many of the players that are currently within this squad are engaged in distance learning, spend significant times training away (e.g., in Asia), and start to play in foreign leagues. With the transition comes an increase in expectations to attain a certain level and ranking, and more than likely, players in this squad will be based full-time at the Elite Training Centre, meaning they may face considerations around how to centralise their lives around the centre (e.g., living and education).

Transition and preparation for first major international event

Players in this phase will be exposed to their first major youth international event (e.g., the European Youth Championships). The event often includes significant preparation time (e.g., a 7–10-day

camp), and then includes being away for approximately 10–12 days for the event. Such events can be incredibly intensive and fatiguing and require significant mental and physical strength to continue performing to the best of your ability from the first to the last day. Players may face challenges with being homesick, feel under pressure, feel physically tired or have small injuries or niggles they may be required to play through, and not like the food or the hotel. However, players must be able to manage such issues to be able to successfully progress as an elite table tennis player.

Transition to live/compete in another country

Should a player want to move abroad to live and train full time, there are a number of considerations that will be discussed in a later section. There are many potential new demands during this transition including increased level and hours of training, new coaching and training styles, new food, a different language, and possible homesickness. If players want to remain in the country term, they will also need to make considerations around visas. This will be discussed in more detail in the living abroad section.

Junior to senior transition

The transition to the senior level of sport is often reported as one of the most challenging that athletes will face in their

careers. Players may have had success at the junior level, however, this does not mean they can expect to also face success at the senior level, since there are a host of new demands and challenges for players to progress through to establish themselves on the senior international stage. The level and field of players significantly increases when players leave the senior level, and players will be required to play more frequently on the international tour, with more pressure and expectation placed on them to win. In the initial stages of this transition, if players are struggling to adapt to the new level, it can be quite demotivating, and players may see a dip in performance and results before they see any progress. During this phase of the players career, they may also be faced with difficult decisions around their education and work status which can add further stress and pressure on the junior to senior transition. Exposure to playing at the senior level at an international level is important for players with elite potential from around age 17, and players should gradually be exposed to senior training opportunities.

Transition to full-time/professional table tennis

Depending on education, player level, and funding opportunities, players may make the decision to turn professional and train full-time. Turning professional can be a

huge lifestyle change for players, as they must navigate a busy international tour calendar, and increasing pressure on self to perform. Financial income will be key for players and therefore they may need to select more carefully the events they play and consider what income they can gain from playing professional league matches. As an individual sport, being an elite professional table tennis can a lonely experience, and players must be prepared for significant time away from family and friends. Although focusing time exclusively on table tennis may feel like a sensible decision for players if they are looking to excel, it is important for players to still have passions and hobbies outside of table tennis, and continue with their personal development (e.g., complete online courses, learn a new language). Research suggests that when athletes have strong interests outside of sport, this can actually positively impact on their sports performance.

Transition to the Elite Training Centre (ETC)

Transitioning to live permanently or semi-permanently at a national centre can be a big experience for any athlete but may vary depending on the age at the time of transition. For many, this will be the first time they have been involved in an almost full-time training programme, flexed around educational commitments, and will lead to increased training commitments and increased expectations on performance. Players moving to the ETC on a permanent basis may also be moving

away from home for the first time and have to contend with learning to live more independently (e.g., cook, wash clothes, clean, shop for food, manage budgets etc.). Players may also access support more frequently with practitioners and may be working with a new set of coaches on a daily basis.

Education

Transition to further education (exit from school)

Players will leave school during this phase, which means they will face decisions around their next steps within education. They may choose to undertake A levels, a BTEC, or vocational qualifications. Starting further education can lead to a higher level of academic work, different academic and training schedules, and possibly moving away from home for the first time to attend a further education institution closer to a training site.

Transition to university/work

If this route aligns to their future career aspirations, players in this period will make the move to university, which can lead to a number of new challenges, considerations, and opportunities. As will be discussed later on, players need to consider which university may best support their future vocational career ambitions and also align to their table tennis development. Before players go to university, they should consider applying for sport scholarships, reviewing the course schedule and how this will correspond with training schedules,

look at options around travel to and from training, and communicate with teaching staff about academic flexibility options. Moving to university may be the first time a player has lived away from home, buys, and cooks their own food, and takes more responsibility for their own schedules. This transition may also lead to new training groups, a new coach, different training hours, and more personal responsibility to do own work. A player does not need to go to university aged 18, they could consider

going at a later stage, or staggering a degree over an extended number of years. Some players may choose to combine their table tennis with full or part time work. This brings about new challenges, since players will need to consider the flexibility of their work which allows them to continue training and competing at a high level.



BREAKTHROUGH TALENT-ELITE TRANSITIONS (APPROX. 19+)

Table Tennis

Senior major event transitions (e.g., Olympic Games)

Attending a senior major international event such as the Olympic Games involves a number of key transition phases. These include a preparation phase for the event, transition into the event village and acclimatisation, and the transition out of the games. Preparation can be a stressful period, with a significant number of events and a lengthy training phase. Players may be required to up their training commitments and spend more time away from family and friends in this phase. When transitioning into the event, players will need to adapt to a new climate/time zone and undertake final preparation. There may be a lot of media hype around the players and mounting pressure back home. Following the culmination of the event, players need to transition back to 'normal life' after what may have included significant attention and support prior to and during the event. This phase may lead to a number of difficult decisions for both players (such as thoughts about retiring from the sport) and the national governing body (such as changes in funding).

Retirement from elite level table tennis

Retiring from elite level sport can be a challenging experience for any athlete. Age of retirement can vary significantly for players and can be impacted by factors

such as injury, financial circumstances, career goals, available support, style of play, and more. When a player must retire from table tennis, and it is involuntary (e.g., through a career ending injury), this can often be a more difficult and sometimes distressing experience. When the transition is prepared for (e.g., planned retirement after a major games), players often feel they have a greater sense of control over the decision and can make the preparation phase much smoother. When players have prepared for their retirement by exploring other career options, undertaking educational courses, and work experience, this can significantly support the process. When they have failed to do so, and a player's identity is solely centred on being a table tennis player, this can cause difficulties after the player has left the sport. Although retirement is often seen as a challenging process for players, it could also be seen as a relief and new opportunity.

Education

Transition out of university

If a player has decided to go to university, there are many different routes they can choose to take when they finish, these include (a) training and competing full time, (b) playing table tennis and starting a postgraduate degree (e.g., a Masters), (c) play table tennis alongside work (part or full time), (d) stop playing table tennis and take an alternative path. Playing at

university can often provide players with support to continue playing (e.g., sport scholarship programme, flexible training opportunities, flexible time to be able to compete abroad, a student bursary), and when they leave, this can sometimes mean players need to re-evaluate their position in the sport and find new ways to be able to continue competing at a high level.



TRANSITIONS THAT COULD HAPPEN AT ANY POINT IN THE PATHWAY

Transition to periods of injury

Players may face periods of injury during their careers when they are required to take time away from the sport. These periods can be particularly challenging, especially if the player is full-time and doesn't have any other core focuses in their life (e.g., education). Periods of injury that mean missing or lacking preparation for a major event can be particularly challenging, however, players can use the time wisely by focusing on their personal development (e.g., undertaking work experience).

Deselection from a GB squad

If players do not meet the performance standards, expected behaviours, or they breach the player code of conduct, they may be deselected from a GB squad. This can be a challenging period for players who may feel somewhat demotivated and frustrated by the decision. Players should view these experiences as a growth opportunity and endeavour to work even harder to come back into the squads.

Non selection for a squad or major event

Not being selected for a major event or a squad when a player is expecting to do so, can lead to anger, demotivation, feeling preparation has not been relevant, and a possible shift in performance goals. As outlined above, players are encouraged to use these experiences as motivation to come back stronger. High-level sport is not a linear journey, and all players will experience setbacks. The best players in the world are able to move past these setbacks and refocus on their goals.

Changes in the structure of the performance programmes

It is not uncommon for a national governing body to change the structure of their performance programmes, which may include changes in squad purposes, location/frequency of training, funding changes, squad sizes, and more. Such changes can mean players transition into and out of squads, or their position within a programme changes slightly. Players may also need to explore solutions around access to training, manage changes in hours training, and be exposed to different players.



PLAYER TRANSITION SPOTLIGHT

Retirement – Maria Tsaptsinos

“The transition from full-time player to essentially ‘retired’ from playing the sport has come with its ups and downs. I knew it was always going to be difficult giving up the sport that I love and that I had been involved with for 15 years, but I didn’t realise all the different emotions I would feel and the timeline they would appear. The first couple of months don’t feel any different because we all take “holidays” and “breaks” from the sport, so I was very content with my decision but after a while the enormity of not waking up every day with the mindset to challenge yourself in practice started to sink in. It was a huge lifestyle change and with that came lack of motivation for other physical exercise and more focus on the other aspects of your life that I’d had to sacrifice previously. While it was great to see friends and family and challenge my mind in a new career path, it was also difficult to see other athletes still travelling the world, having fun and pushing themselves physically. Mentally, I felt like I had to be fully happy with my decision to leave the sport and looking back was naive to think it would be so easy because ultimately 11 months ago I made the biggest change up in my routine probably my life has ever and will ever see and it was a much bigger deal to me than I let myself believe.

I think I’ve realised over the last 11 months that it’s okay to feel sad and distant from the sport you love, but that there are other challenges and motivations that can give you the same adrenaline rush and feeling that playing competitive sport did – you just need to find them. I’ve also learnt a completely new way of life and everything that comes with waking up for a 9–5 job and not having so much time to work on yourself mentally and physically. Now there is more time to work on other parts of my life like friendships, relationships and other interests and hobbies I had. I still keep in touch with all my former teammates and through that I still feel very connected to the sport – table tennis will never completely disappear from my life, and I am happy about that”

Maria Tsaptsinos (former Senior Women’s National Champion & Commonwealth medallist)



Injury – David McBeath

“Back in 2020, I had to have a hip surgery that required me to take almost a year out. With table tennis being such a big part of my life, managing this period away from the sport was difficult. However, I managed to stay focused on my goals and successfully completed my rehab to return to the sport with full fitness. Keeping my mind occupied with other personal development activities within this period was essential.”

David McBeath (Senior Men’s international & Commonwealth medallist)



TIPS FOR PLAYERS

HOW TO MANAGE PERIODS OF TRANSITION

How can a player maximise the chance of excelling through future transitions? See below for some important advice, and a few activities for players to undertake.

Awareness of the transitions you may face

How aware of are you of the upcoming transitions you could face in both your sport and life? By understanding the potential transitions that you might experience across the career (including those outside of sport) and when you might experience them, this can help prepare you for the experience and the challenges that this might bring.



Activities!

Draw a timeline and plot the potential changes you see in your future.

Reflect on a previous period of change. Consider
(1) what you did do prepare
(2) what challenges you faced
(3) what would you do differently next time?

Consider who in your support network can help you cope with periods of change. Prepare a set of questions.

Reflect on previous experience of change

An important way that you can prepare for upcoming change is to reflect on previous transition experiences. For example, have you experience changing clubs, entering a new squad, moving to a new location, leave school? By reflecting on what went well, and what could have been better prepared for during these periods of change can shape future transition decisions and how you prepare and adapt.

Actively use support available

Throughout a transition, the support that you receive might change. In some instances, the support will increase and in others, it may decrease. Therefore, it is crucial that you make the most of all the support and support services that are available to you. Your athlete lifestyle practitioner in particular is a key person to talk to help prepare for change. Reluctance to access support services on offer is a regret many athletes have later in their careers.



HELPFUL TIPS

PLAYER PATHWAY CASE STUDIES

Two different player pathways have been presented to help future England/GB players understand the different steps and milestones involved in a player's journey and some of the decisions and challenges they have faced.



PATHWAY 1: TIN-TIN HO

Current Senior Women's International

Age 5

Age 5: Started playing table tennis! Dad was a coach and therefore introduced the sport to Tin Tin and her brother

Age 7

Age 7-8: First entry onto England Pathway into a squad previously titled the Youth Development Squad

Age 8

Age 8: First England call up at the Euro Mini's event in France

Age 10

Age 10: Won a silver medal at the Euro Mini's U11 event

Age 11

Age 10: Won gold medals in the U11, U12, and U13 singles at the National Championships

Age 15

Age 11-18: Undertook secondary school full-time at the City of London School for Girls

Age 16

Age 15: Represented England at first World Table Tennis Championships in Paris

Age 17

Age 16-18: Competed A levels in Biology, Chemistry, and Maths achieving an A* result in every subject!

Age 18

Age 16: Competed in first Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, winning a silver medal in the mixed doubles with Liam Pitchford

Age 19

Age 16: Started playing in first foreign league in the elite division of the Swedish Women's league (Pingisligan)

Age 20

Age 17: Became England National Women's Champion for the first time!

Age 21

Age 18: Competed in final European Youth Championships winning a bronze medal in the junior girl's singles, and a silver medal in the mixed doubles. This brings her tally of European Youth medals to 5!

Age 18: Started studying Medicine at the University of Nottingham and moved to Nottingham full-time

Age 18-19: Experienced a period of injury with a sprained ligament and plantar fasciitis (out of action for 6 months)

Age 20: Competed in second Commonwealth Games in the Gold Coast, winning another silver medal in the mixed doubles, and a bronze medal in the women's team event.

Age 20: Became European U21 women's doubles champion with her partner Karoline Mischeck of Austria

Age 20: Took a gap year from university to focus on playing table tennis full-time. In this year, moved to Linz Austria to train full-time and compete for the club in the league.

Age 21: Experienced further injury with a series of problems with her back (out of action for 6 months)

Age 22

Age 22: Achieved a 1st class degree in BSc Biomedical Science from the University of Nottingham, and still currently completing her medical degree

Age 22: Took a second gap year during university degree to focus on table tennis in the pre-Olympic year

Age 22: Qualified and competed in first Olympic Games in Tokyo, becoming the first female player to do so since 1996

Age 22: Started playing for a club in Spain, traveling to and from Spain for matches

Age 23: Competed in third Commonwealth Games in Birmingham

Age 24: Took a final gap year during medical degree to focus on playing table tennis full-time, still based at the University of Nottingham

Age 24: Competed in first European Games, in Krakow, Poland

Age 25 (current status): Currently a full-time table tennis player on a gap year from her medical degree and will be returning back to university shortly on a part-time basis. Tin Tin has also signed up to play in the German Bundesliga for the 23-24 season.



● INTERVIEW: TIN-TIN HO

What does Tin Tin describe as her major setbacks in her table tennis career?

"I had a tough loss in the Youth Olympic qualification 2014 where I was 3-0 up in the final, with the winner qualifying, but unfortunately lost. This was the toughest loss of my career and found it very difficult to bounce back. I got through it by encouraging myself and making a pact that I would qualify for an Olympic Games. This helped me to keep playing and keep going!"

What are the major challenges Tin Tin has faced in her journey as a table tennis player?

"I have had many challenges with balancing studies and sport, especially during GCSE and A levels, as I wanted to achieve good educational results as well as good table tennis results. I managed this well by communicating effectively with teachers and being very organised. I would email teachers far in advance before international competitions to organise my work and to make sure I have a plan to catch up and stay on top of work."

"I have struggled mentally when I have had placements in hospitals at university as I was very tired when I practiced, and I could not practice as much as I wanted to. This is still a work in progress, but scheduling more rest days to recover has been important so that I can give my maximum effort with anything I do (university or table tennis), and also planning effective training sessions to make sure my time spent in the hall was productive."

"I have also experienced mental health issues with disordered eating and low mood. This was overcome and is being managed with therapy and talking to many friends about it."

What support has Tin Tin received from other stakeholders during her pathway?

TASS, Sports Aid, UK Sport, Westminster Council.

What are Tin Tin's major goals for the future?

"My table tennis goals are to qualify for another Olympic Games, win a gold medal in the Commonwealth Games, improve my WTT ranking to top 100 and eventually into the top 50. My life goals are to successfully complete my medical degree, have a good work-life balance, and do something fulfilling!"

● Interesting facts about Tin Tin:

Tin Tin has completed her Level 1 in British Sign Language, is grade 8 in piano and a grade 6 in the violin!

Tin Tin's advice for younger players:

"Being a professional table tennis player is not easy and may not always be fun. Always working hard is important because it can help create opportunities for yourself. Be respectful, to the sport, to yourself and to other people. Make the most of everything and enjoy it. We are lucky we can play this sport!"

PATHWAY 2: TOM JARVIS

Current Senior Men's International

Age 6

Age 6: Started playing table tennis! Got into the sport through a school club with brother

Age 9-10: Progressed onto England Youth Squad camps

Age 7

Age 8

Age 10

Age 11

Age 11: Won a gold medal at the U12 national championships – the first memorable win described by Tom

Age 11: First England international experience at the Euro Minis championships in France

Age 11-16: Attended school, finishing with 9 GCSE's (7 A*'s & 2 A's!)

Age 14: Experienced a change in coach after spending many years with the same coach

Age 14: Transitioned to a new coach after leaving childhood coach

Age 15

Age 16

Age 16: Move abroad to live and train in Halmstad, Sweden

Age 16-18: Taught himself Maths A Level whilst living and training abroad, flying back home to school to take exams. Tom also achieved accredited diplomas in Biology, Chemistry, and Marine Biology.

Age 18: Part of the England team that secured Bronze at the ITTF World Cup in 2018 on home soil in London!

Age 17

Age 18

Age 20

Age 20: Awarded the Hanson Scholarship from Commonwealth England – a bursary for talented young athletes looking to make their mark at the upcoming games

Age 20: Made the transition to live and train at Ochsenhausen, Germany

Age 20: Forced to take a break for a year to recover from a hip surgery

Age 22: Competed in first Commonwealth Games in Birmingham 2022, coming away with a bronze medal in the team event

Age 22: Moved back to live and train in Sweden, this time at a new club in Eslov

Age 23: Competed in first European Games, in Krakow, Poland

Age 23 (current status): Currently a full-time player, living in Sweden, but regularly travelling back to the UK for camps, and all over the world for events!

Age 21

Age 22

Age 23



● INTERVIEW: TOM JARVIS

What does Tom describe as his major setbacks in his table tennis career?

“The biggest one would be my hip surgery, where I had to take significant time away from the sport at a pivotal moment in my development.”

What are the major challenges Tom has faced in his journey as a table tennis player?

“When I was growing up, I lived 90 minutes away from my nearest club which meant significant travel every day after school. My Mum and Grandad played a big role in supporting this.”

“A further challenge was that I was not happy when I moved from Sweden to Germany, and you should always carefully ensure it is the right club environment for you.”

What support has Tom received from other stakeholders during his pathway?

Sports Aid, UK Sport, Commonwealth Games England.

What are Tom’s major goals for the future?

“My goals are to take medals in major events, and at some point, I would like to get a university degree.”



● Interesting facts about Tom:

Tom is currently in the process of learning Swedish!

Tom’s advice for younger players:

“Always finish your schooling – this is incredibly important to ensure you always have good options when your table tennis career ends. Also, ensure that you always look after your body from a young age!”

LIVING ABROAD – WHAT TO CONSIDER

Some players may make the decision to move abroad to train for period of time. This may be aligned to a specific club that the player is competing for.

✓ There are some benefits to living and training abroad, that include:

- High level coaching
- High level training and practice partners across a variety of styles
- Professional environments
- Learning to live independently
- Learning a new language and the experience of a new culture
- Playing in high-level leagues

If a player is interested in living abroad, they should talk to their respective national coach for support and advice.

The transition to live and compete abroad can present huge opportunities for players, however, there are a series of considerations that players should make before making this decision.

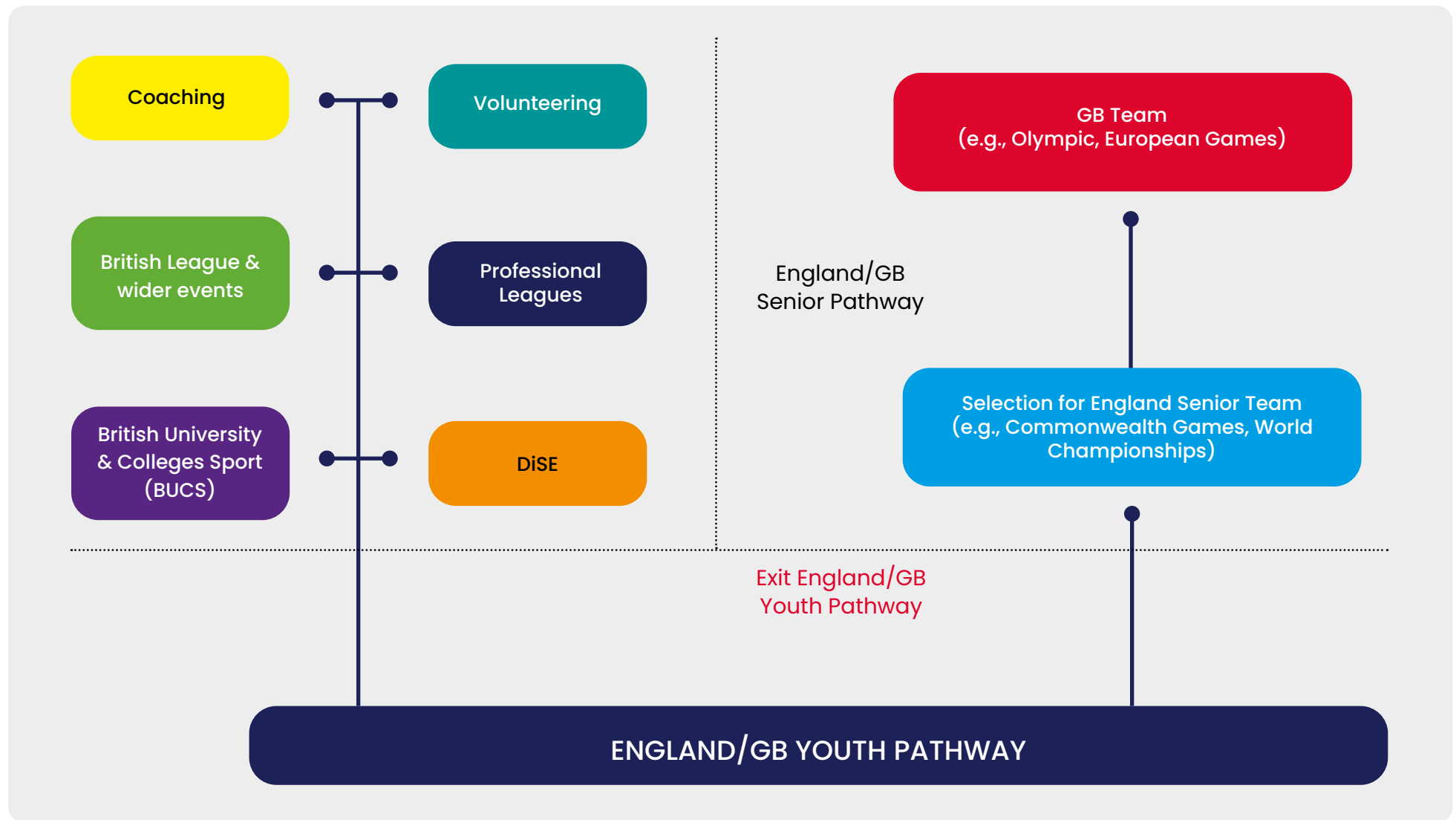
× Difficulties or challenges players may experience:

- A change in training demands (e.g., increase from 1 session to 2 a day)
- It can be a lonely experience depending on the environment
- Requirement to develop a new coach-athlete relationship
- Difficulties adapting to the new environment, including food, style of coaching, and living circumstances
- A possibility that the player could receive less individualised training than if they were in England
- A possibility of shortening the lifespan of a player's table tennis career due to overtraining, frustration, and isolation
- Homesickness
- Difficulty maintaining national team commitments, and lack of exposure in the UK environment
- Experience not as anticipated

Key questions players should work through before deciding to move abroad for table tennis:



EXIT FROM ENGLAND/GB YOUTH PATHWAY



Transition out of the England/GB youth pathway could happen at any point for players. We hope that when players exit the pathway, they are motivated to continue their journey within the sport. Depending on the level of the player and age of drop out, these options will vary. We have articulated below just some of the options that are available. There is nothing stopping players engaging in a number of these activities at the same time.

British University & Colleges Sport (BUCS)

BUCS is the governing body for university sport and provide an excellent competitive experience for players leaving England/GB programmes that have decided to go to university. Players compete for their university in a number of different leagues, including in team events and an individuals' championships. The individual championships is one of the largest table tennis events in the country, and includes singles, doubles, and mixed doubles. If players succeed in BUCS events, they could be selected for European or World University Games. For more information on BUCS, visit their website: <https://www.bucs.org.uk/>

British League & wider events

Table Tennis England run a variety of competitive opportunities for junior and senior level athletes that are an excellent opportunity for players to stay involved in competition if they leave the England/GB pathway. These include Senior and Women's British League, Grand Prix events, U21 National Championships, and more. See link for more information: <https://www.tabletennisengland.co.uk/competitions/>

Professional Leagues

Many players may choose to compete in professional leagues across Europe. Matches can vary in frequency from as much as 1-2 times per month to 6 in a calendar season, with many clubs paying for travel and providing match fees. Popular leagues for GB players have included those in Germany, France, Spain, and Sweden. If players would like advice or support on playing in professional leagues, the Performance Development team are happy to try and facilitate this.

Coaching

Many players who leave the England/GB pathway may be interested in starting their coaching journey. The Performance Development team are currently redesigning the coaching pathway, and within this, there will be considerations for performance players exiting into coaching. One such opportunity is the SHEcoaches initiative that started in 2024, that is targeted at finding the next generation of female talent and performances coaches.

Volunteering

There are numerous opportunities to stay involved in table tennis in a voluntary capacity, these may include: opportunities to join committees of Table Tennis England, support with youth development (such as coaching and sparring), support local competitions and clubs, support activities such as TT Kidz, and more.

DiSE

For players who do not meet the standards for GB performance squads, there is still the option to apply for the DiSE programme. DiSE is a two-year programme that gives the opportunity for current, aspiring, or previous performance players aged 16-18 who are in full time further education to access the Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DiSE) programme. This is a government-funded scheme designed to directly measure a players' ability to plan, apply, and evaluate their development in a performance context. Players that successfully complete the two-year programme will receive 64 UCAS points that they use towards entry into university. For more information, please visit: <https://www.tabletennisengland.co.uk/performance/england-16-programme-dise/> A new player intake takes place every July/August – look out for the application!

COMBINING TABLE TENNIS WITH EDUCATION

Every player's pathway will have slight nuances, but typically all players (until they reach the professional stage) will be combining their studies with education and/or work.

This section will explore:

- The benefits of following a pathway where a player is combining table tennis with other areas and the importance of having strong interests outside of table tennis
- Specific environments where players can purposefully manage table tennis with studies
- Key decisions players may face around their education and studies/work

The combination of sport with education and/or work is often called a dual career.

A dual career pathway in table tennis can refer to various different forms of education/work combined with table tennis commitments, for example:

- GB squad level and completing GCSEs (either in school or distance learning)
- GB squad level and undertaking further education (e.g. A Levels), or an apprenticeship
- Part of the DiSE programme and completing additional further education studies
- GB squad level and studying at university
- GB squad level and working part time

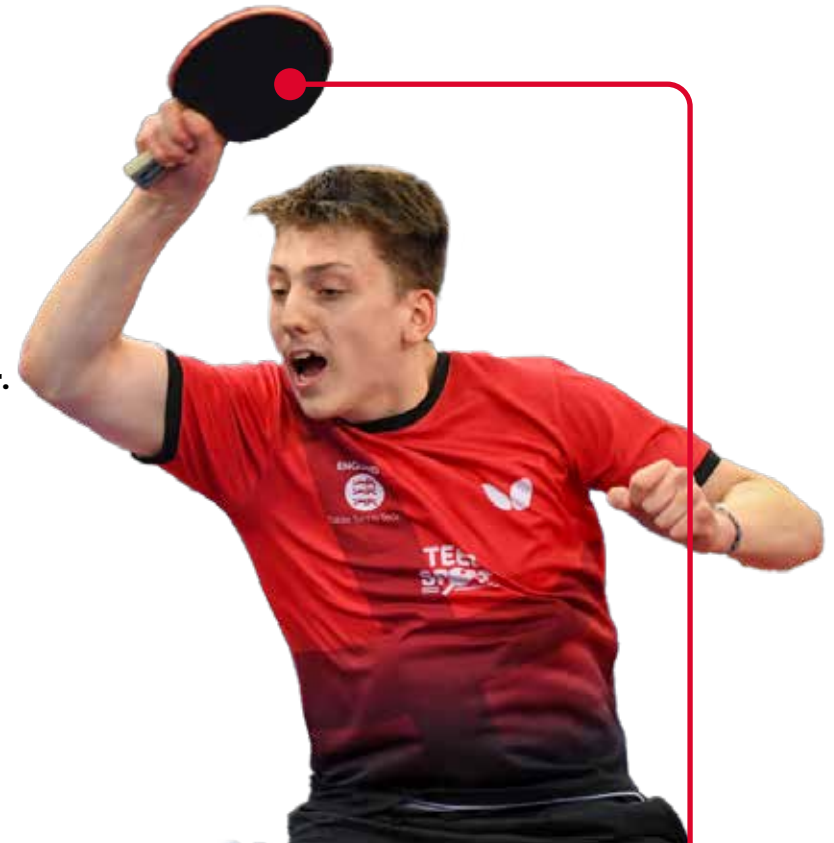


Table Tennis England embraces all personal development opportunities in and out of the pathway for players. We recognise that all forms of education and training play a fundamental role within a player's life and progression. We encourage the players within and outside of our pathways to have aspirations both on and off the table. This is because of the significant benefits this can have on wellbeing, future careers, and performance on the table!

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT PLAYERS COMBINE THEIR TABLE TENNIS CAREERS WITH OTHER INTERESTS AND PASSIONS?

There are many benefits of players engaging in a dual pathway for their sporting, educational, and life skills development.

These include:

- Expanded social networks – different peer groups outside of table tennis
- Wider support systems – possibly through scholarship programmes or bursaries
- Reduced stress through being able to turn focus onto different areas
- Opportunity to develop identities in different areas
- A more balanced lifestyle and possibly enhanced wellbeing
- A smoother transition when the player retires from competitive table tennis
- Higher employability prospects
- Increased longevity of table tennis career



School age table tennis academies

There are a few schools within England that have table tennis academies where players can combine their schooling with regular practice. Although Table Tennis England does not

recommend attending a specific school over another, a few examples are:

- Charles Read Academy (Grantham)
- London Academy (Edgware)
- Ackworth School (Pontefract)

SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT: CHARLES READ ACADEMY

Level of education

Secondary school – aged 11-16

Educational options (courses of study)

A variety of GCSE, BTEC and Cambridge Nationals options can be taken, for more information please visit:
www.charlesreadacademy.co.uk

Typical level of players

Since the Table Tennis Performance Centre launched in 2016, players of national and international level have attended the school. However, players of county level have also been part of the programme in the past.

Accommodation

Players usually live with host families in Grantham.

Hours of training

Players can access 6-8 hours of training per week at Charles Read Academy and can then train a further 15 hours at Grantham College Table Tennis Academy.

Coaching staff

Natalie Green – UKCC Level 4 coach
Former Table Tennis England Coach – Regional Coach; Former England U18 no.1, U21 National Champion, and representative of England at World, European, and Commonwealth Championships.

Application processes

Each person is considered on an individual basis; however, table tennis ability and academic levels are considered.

Competition support

There will be allocated coaching support at specific competitions throughout the season.

Costs associated

There are no costs associated with the coaching and training, this is funded by the David Ross Education Trust (DRET). There is a cost to live with host families depending on each individual's needs.

Player alumni

Connor Green, Mollie Patterson, Danielle Kelly, Louis Price, Dylan Tynan (GB para)

Link to website

www.charlesreadacademy.co.uk www.dret.co.uk

Other key information

Ofsted rated 'Good' February 2022 – 'This is a school where staff want the very best for all pupils. There is a strong sense of community. Leaders are ambitious for what pupils can achieve. The values and culture of the school are woven through every aspect of school life. Pupils are proud of the school and want to do well. Behaviour in the school is excellent. The atmosphere in lessons is calm. Pupils and staff treat each other with mutual respect. Bullying is rare. Staff deal with it well. Teachers provide good-quality teaching and support to help pupils meet any challenges in their learning. Pupils know what to expect in lessons. They settle quickly to their learning.'

FURTHER EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT: GRANTHAM ACADEMY

Level of education

Further Education & Higher Education courses

Educational options (courses of study)

BTEC, T-level, HND, HNC
A level options are available at local grammar schools

Typical level of players

Typically, players fall under the top 50 in the junior age group and top 20 in the cadet age group

Accommodation

Players over 16 can live onsite in student accommodation
Players U16 can live with host families in the local area that are registered child minders

Hours of training

Players can access 22-25 hours per week (slightly less if studying A levels)

Coaching staff

Head coach - Vidal Graham (UKCC Level 4, PGD in Elite Sports Coaching)
Assistant coach - Oly Tyndall (UKCC Level 1 coach, ex England junior international)

Application processes

Contact vgraham@grantham.ac.uk to discuss options depending on what course you would like to do

Competition support

Travel and coaching at all 4*, Grand Prix, and National Championships

Costs associated

Costs will vary depending on the chosen course

Player alumni

David McBeath, Tom Jarvis, Emily Bolton, Shayan Siraj, Connor Green, Max Stevens

Link to website

www.grantham.ac.uk/student-life/sports-academies/table-tennis-academy/

Other key information

Grantham Academy is there to support all athletes in both their table tennis and academic growth. Many players leave the programme with a greater understanding of the sport and themselves and go on to play in clubs abroad. AT the 2023 European Youth Championships, Grantham College Academy had 10 players playing for 6 different countries, including England, Wales, Germany, Jersey, Holland, and Finland.

UNIVERSITIES

Many universities in the UK offer sport scholarships, bursaries, or equivalent programmes for students performing at a talent or elite level in their sport. Players that are considering going to university should research the criteria to receive a sport scholarship at the universities they are interested in. This can often vary depending on the focus sports of the chosen university.

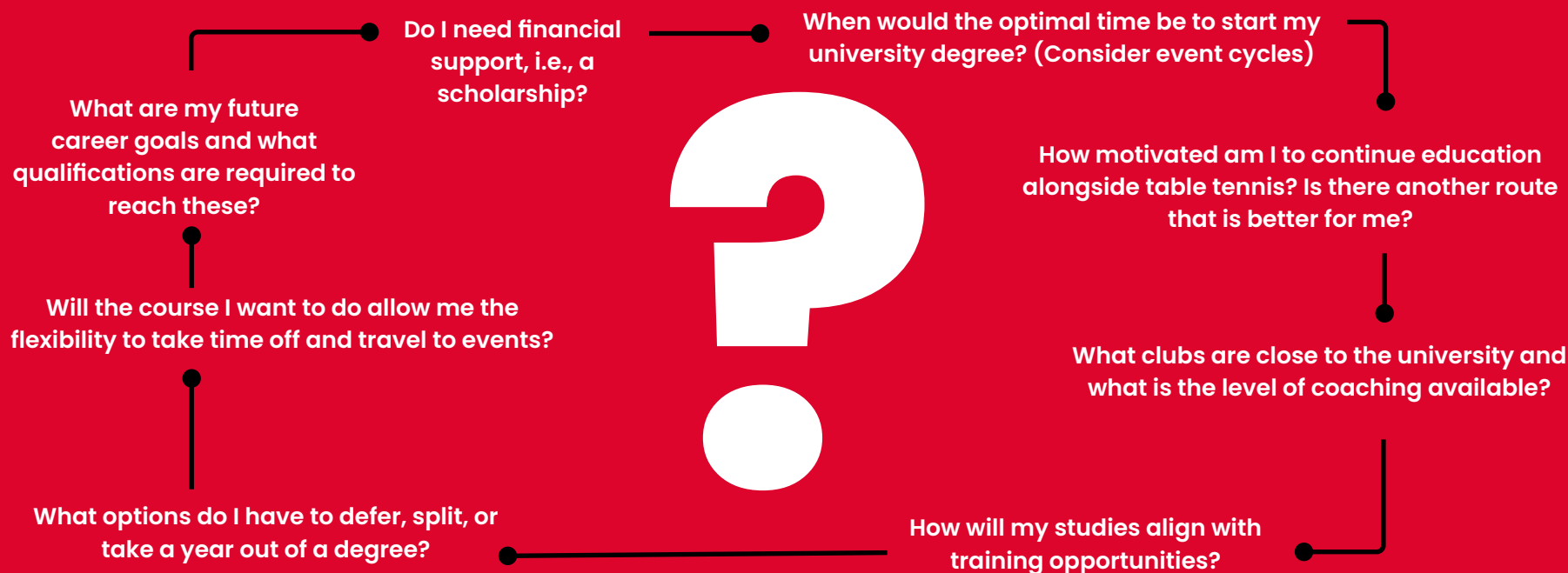
● A typical package of sport scholarship support may include:

- Financial bursary/support
- Strength and conditioning
- Physiotherapy, massage, and/or sports rehabilitation support
- Lifestyle support
- Psychology support
- Nutrition support
- Free or reduced gym membership
- Academic flexibility

It is strongly encouraged that players thoroughly research the sport scholarship opportunities available at their preferred universities and ask fellow players of their experiences.



Considerations that players should make before they choose to go to university include:



Examples of current universities that provide sport scholarships and training opportunities for table tennis players include:

- University of Nottingham
- Nottingham Trent University
- Newcastle University
- University of Central Lancashire (UCLan)

There are currently over 100 universities in the UK that offer sport scholarships to talented athletes. If you are interested in a

specific university, find the university's sports page, and look for:

- Information about how to apply for a sport scholarship
- Contact details of sport scholarship officers/managers
- Athlete testimonials/details about current athletes on the schemes

Squad players that require further support and guidance about university studies should seek support from the Performance Development team.

UNIVERSITY SPOTLIGHT: UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

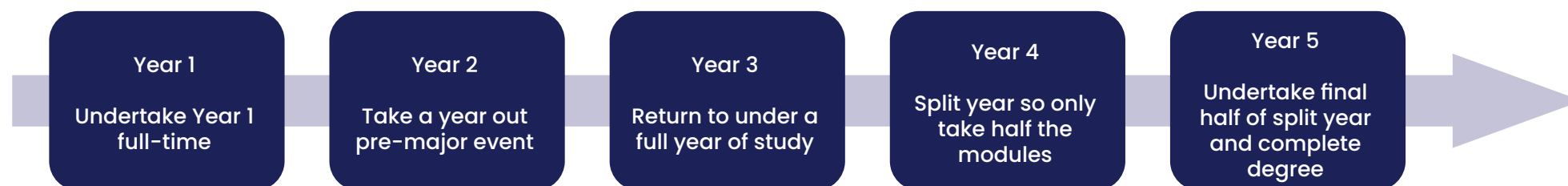
Level of education	Higher Education
Educational options (courses of study)	Undergraduate Courses; Postgraduate Courses; Research Opportunities; Apprenticeships; Preparatory English
Typical level of players	There are a large variety of players from top internationals to players who just want to play socially. The university of Nottingham table tennis club can cater for all.
Accommodation	Players can arrange accommodation through the relevant university channels where they can either choose to live on campus with all meals provided or they can choose to live off campus and fund their meals themselves.
Hours of training	Students can train up to 26 hours a week (depending on their timetable) – there are options to also practise at the weekend. Morning or afternoon sessions are hosted every day of the week. Students in performance squads have weekly strength & conditioning sessions 1-2-1 sessions and multi-ball training are provided for elite student athletes
Coaching staff	Head Coach – Kelly Sibley; Assistant Coach – Matej Mamut; Assistant Coach – Vishaal Sharda
Application processes	To apply for the university, you need to apply through UCAS. Step 1 – choose your degree Step 2 – register with UCAS and apply online Step 3 – write your personal statement Step 4 – maintain a school reference Step 5 – submit your application
Competition support and wider support	The UoNTT coaches will provide support at university-based events in the UK and internationally (e.g., The European University Championships) The University of Nottingham offer Sport Scholarships for elite athletes, this is on an application basis. Successful applicants can expect to receive services such as strength and conditioning, physiotherapy lifestyle, nutrition, and more. There are also other bursaries available through the certain faculties.
Costs associated	Sports memberships – £229-£279 UoN TT Membership
Player alumni	David McBeath, Tin Tin Ho, Denise Payet, Maria Tsaptsinos
Link to website	nottingham.ac.uk/sport/performance-sport/focus-sports/performance-table-tennis.aspx
Other key information	The Table Tennis programme is developing and becoming stronger each year. It is the perfect place to be for anyone who is wanting to continue with the sport at a high level whilst studying.

TOP TIPS TO CONSIDER – UNIVERSITY

- Attend university open days and speak to university sport scholarship staff/coaches about support options (try to visit 2 or 3 different options)
- Speak to other players who have attended university to find out about their experience
- Consider the location – how easy will be to get to and from training, and at what expense?
- Make sure you are making the right decision for you and are not being influenced by anyone else
- Deferring a year or taking a gap year can be an option if you have a detailed plan around how you will utilise the year off

Possible University Pathway for an Elite Player

Below is an example of how a table tennis player on an elite pathway could undertake a university undergraduate degree if they plan to spend significant time away training and competing or are looking to peak for a major event. There are numerous options to consider flexing a degree over a number of years. Additional costs should be considered when making this decision (e.g., living and tuition fees), and should be discussed with university staff in advance.



PREPARATION FOR UNIVERSITY AS A TALENTED/ ELITE PLAYER

● Logistical preparation

- Sport scholarship/bursary applications
- Review academic timetable and link with training schedule (foresee any clashes or challenges and consider solutions)
- Route to training (and any travel card or additional costs are considered)
- Sorting your accommodation (how close is it to training and your lectures)
- Map upcoming table tennis competitions for the year and foresee any potential clashes with the university academic calendar
- Ensure your coach/support team are aware of your upcoming plans and facilitate any collaboration that may be required between Table Tennis England and university staff

● Education and wider preparation

- Consider nutrition required for performance (learn to cook new recipes and make sure you are experienced doing a big food shop)
- Budgeting (do you know how to budget for yourself, consider aspects such as table tennis related costs, food, bills, rent, car, and more)
- Effective time management skills (how effective are you at prioritising and planning your time)
- Your support network (what support will you have access to at university and do you know how to utilise each support service)
- Knowledge of the city/campus (get to know your way around, including key transport links that may be required to get to training/events)



TABLE TENNIS DUAL CAREER FRAMEWORK

This model highlights how a pathway player's table tennis activity could coincide with educational/work commitments. The red box provides an example of the possible dual pathway of a player within the GB Training or Start Squad.

Age		7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	Senior
Table tennis	Junior table tennis	Pathway Development Centres			GB Training Squad						
		GB Futures Squad		GB Start Squad			GB Potential Squad				
									U23 Squad		
	Senior table tennis									Senior Training Programme	
	Elite Training Centre				Elite Training Centre						
	Club/school table tennis				Local club						
								International club			
Education	School	Primary school	Secondary school	GCSEs							
	Further education (16-18)							A Levels BTEC/CTEC Apprenticeships			
								DiSE			
	University (18+)							Undergraduate			
								Postgraduate			
Work	Vocational development							Full-time work			
								Professional player			

KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PATHWAY

As players progress through the pathway, there are a number of talent and elite sport stakeholders that they may support their development. An example of some of these stakeholders are illustrated below, outlining the 'typical' points in which the player may begin to access this support (although this could vary).





SportsAid is a charity that supports talented young athletes to achieve their ambitions in sport and life. SportsAid supports over 1,000 athletes each year – the vast majority aged 12 to 18 – by providing them with a financial award to help towards training and competition costs. These athletes are Great Britain's brightest sporting prospects. They are nominated to SportsAid by the national governing bodies of more than 60 sports based on set criteria from each.

The typical value of a SportsAid award is £1,000 with money generated through a combination of commercial partnerships, trust and charitable funds, and fundraising activities.

How do I get access to SportsAid support?

English players in GB squads will be nominated by Table Tennis England.



The **Backing the Best** programme, managed by SportsAid for Sport England, supports athletes who would face difficulties progressing through their sport's talent development system without critical financial help.

The award is valid for one year, after which Table Tennis England can nominate the athlete again (subject to meeting the eligibility criteria). An athlete is typically expected to move on to Podium Potential (or equivalent) funding after no more than three years of receiving a Backing the Best Award.

How do I get access to Backing the Best?

Table Tennis England can nominate a number of players each November to be considered for an award of up to £5000 per player. If successful, the award will be given from the following April to support the players programme up until 31st March the following year.

English players in GB squads will be offered the opportunity to apply to be nominated. Specific criteria (such as household income) must be considered during application.

Players that are part of GB squads will be provided with more details when the application processes open.



TASS (Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme) is a Sport England funded partnership between talented athletes, education institutions, and national governing bodies of sport. It caters to athletes who are at the top of the English talent pathway and helps athletes who are aged 16+ to balance their sport with the rest of their lives, whether they are in education, training, or another form of personal development.

Players selected for TASS will benefit from the following support services:

Strength & Conditioning, Physiotherapy, Lifestyle, Psychology, Nutrition, Mental Health Support, Medical Scheme.

How do I get onto the TASS programme?

Table Tennis England receive a certain number of places for TASS athletes each year and can add or remove athletes at two points in the year. Priority selections will be made to players who sit inside youth/U23 squads. Selections will take place during a panel review with Performance staff.

When will I leave the TASS programme?

You may be selected to leave TASS support if:

- Your engagement is low, or you fail to adhere to the Players Code of Conduct
- You leave England/GB programmes (unless at the discretion of the Performance team)
- You progress into the elite level of the sport and can access support elsewhere
- You stop playing table tennis

DiSE

DiSE (Diploma in Sporting Excellence)

is a programme that is part of the Table Tennis England Pathway. DiSE is a two-year programme that gives the opportunity for current, aspiring, or previous performance players aged 16-18 who are in **full time further education** to undertake qualification using knowledge and experiences from their sport. DiSE is a government-funded scheme designed to directly measure a players' ability to plan, apply, and evaluate their development in a performance context. Players that successfully complete the two-year programme will receive 64 UCAS points that they use towards entry into university.

Table Tennis England recruit a new player cohort every year around July/ August – look out for the application on our socials and website!

Typically, players will be selected who:

- Have exited talent pathway programmes (pre-16) and have aspirations to continue developing
- Ranked inside the top 60 U19s in the country
- Are part of the GB para pathway

The programme aims to support athlete development by enhancing the athlete's knowledge, skills, and competency in

their sport, whilst gaining a recognised qualification (worth 64 UCAS points).

The programme is run by Table Tennis England staff and support coaches, and typically includes:

- A programme of weekend camps (approx. 5-6 across the season)
- Educational workshops from expert practitioners in person on camps and online between camps, covering areas such as player lifestyle, nutrition, psychology, physical development, social media, career development, and more
- Q and A talks from elite table tennis players, and career talks from individuals spanning a range of careers in the sports industry
- Fortnightly check in sessions

To complete the qualification, players are required to complete a portfolio of work that is assessed by one of the DiSE coaches. Selection criteria for the programme and number of places varies each year, so please refer to our website for the most up to date information: tabletennisengland.co.uk/performance/england-16-programme-dise/



Adam Dennison – DiSE player on the 2022-24 programme

PARA PLAYER PATHWAY

British Para Table Tennis (BPTT) is the governing body for Para Table Tennis in Britain. They develop the sport in close co-operation with national governing bodies across Home Nations. Although BPTT have their own distinct pathway, there are para players that sit within England pathway programmes (e.g., DiSE), and train and compete alongside non-para players.

Membership

To be part of British Para Table Tennis, you must be a member. There are several different types of memberships available.

- Player Membership
- Associate Membership
- Cooperate Membership
- Friend of BPTT

Classifications

Para table tennis is split into a series of classifications that determine which athletes are eligible to compete and how those athletes are then grouped together for competition in order to minimise the impact of the athletes' impairments on sport performance. This is done to safeguard the integrity of fair competition.

There are 11 classifications in Para Table Tennis:

- Class 1-5 are wheelchair classes
- Class 6-10 are standing classes
- Class 11 is for athletes with an intellectual impairment



The Pathway

Below is the British Para Table Tennis Pathway structure from Futures level through to performance. The structure also highlights the role and support from coaches, clubs, and home nations, including how they can populate the pathway at a Futures level with athletes for BPTT to assess eligibility and potential.

Podium	Performance The performance programme is a full-time programme in which the funded athletes will receive an APA award from UK Sport. The athletes receive support from physiotherapy, psychology, strength and conditioning, performance lifestyle, and performance analysis
Academy	
Confirmation	
Pathway	Pathway The Pathway programme, including entry level athletes, are the next generation of athletes developing to become the next Paralympian
Futures	
Home Nations	The Home Nations through linking with clubs, coaches, and talent recruitment, help and support the development of athletes that can become part of the BPTT Pathway

British Para Table Tennis are the leading governing body for the development of Para athletes to represent Great Britain at Paralympic Games. There is always the potential to Fast-track athletes, for example, if a talented athlete is believed to have potential, they could progress onto the pathway at a higher stage.

Future Stars

BPTT Future Stars is an online recruitment initiative, aimed at individuals who are keen to play Para Table Tennis, and clubs who may know somebody who has potential. Future stars is set up to find future Paralympic Champions. To register for future stars, visit; britishparatabletennis.com/pages/contact

Wheelchair Classes

- Class 1:** No sitting balance with severe reduction of function in playing arm.
- Class 2:** No sitting balance with reduction of function in playing arm.
- Class 3:** Poor to no sitting balance, although the upper part of the trunk may show activity. Normal arms, although some slight motor losses can be found in the playing hand without significant effect on table tennis skills. The non-playing arm keeps the trunk in position.
- Class 4:** Sitting balance not optimal because of poor stabilisation of the pelvis. The amount of balance depends on the amount of intact abdominal and back muscles.
- Class 5:** Good to normal function of trunk muscles.

Standing Classes

- Class 6:** severe impairments of legs and arms
- Class 7:** very severe impairments of legs or severe impairment of playing arm or moderate hemiplegia or diplegia playing arm included or severe hemiplegia or diplegia with good playing arm or combination of arms and legs less severe than profile of class 6.
- Class 8:** moderate impairments of legs or moderate impairment of playing arm or moderate cp hemiplegia or diplegia with good playing arm.
- Class 9:** mild impairments of leg(s) or mild impairment of playing arm or severe impairment of non-playing arm or mild cp hemiparesis or monoplegia
- Class 10:** must meet minimal eligibility impairment level detailed below.
- Class 11:** Athletes must meet eligibility criteria governed by UKSA and VIRTUS.



Eligibility Days

To be classified in Para Table Tennis, first, it will need to be determined whether the player meets the minimal eligibility criteria. British Para Table Tennis run a series of eligibility days throughout the year that players can sign up for. These are based at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield. When players sign up, they should bring along their playing equipment, and your medical papers, and classifiers will be there on the day to determine whether you are eligible or not. In the likely case that they are unsure, BPTT will seek further guidance. For more information on these days, please contact Shaun Marples, BPTT Programme Manager; shaunmarples@britishparatabletennis.com

Eligible impairments

Impaired Muscle Power – Athletes with impaired muscle power have a health condition that either reduces or eliminates their ability to voluntarily contract their muscles in order to move or generate force.

Leg Length Difference – Athletes with leg length difference have a difference in the length of their legs because of a disturbance of limb growth or as a result of trauma.

Impaired Passive Range of Movement – athletes with impaired passive range of movement have a restriction or a lack of passive movement in one or more joints.

Short Stature – Athletes with short stature have a reduced length in their bones of the upper limbs, lower limbs and/or trunk.

Limb Deficiency – Athletes with limb deficiency have total or partial absence of bones or joints because of trauma (for example traumatic experience), illness (for example amputation due to bone cancer) or congenital limb deficiency (for example dysmelia)

Hypertonia – Athletes with Hypertonia have an increase in muscle tension and a reduced ability of muscle to stretch caused by damage to the central nervous system.

Ataxia – Athletes with ataxia have uncoordinated movements caused by damage to the central nervous system.

Athetosis – Athletes with athetosis have continual slow involuntary movements.

Intellectual Impairment – athletes with an intellectual impairment have a restriction in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour which affects conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills required for everyday life. This impairment must be present before the age of 18.

Non-eligible impairments

Please refer to page 72 of the ITTF classification rules for non-eligible impairments. ipttc.org/classification/Rules/ITTF-PTT%20Classification%20Rules%202018.pdf

Contacts

Website:

www.britishparatabletennis.com

Membership:

britishparatabletennis.com/pages/membership

Competitions:

britishparatabletennis.com/pages/competitions

Future Stars:

.britishparatabletennis.com/pages/future-stars

More information:

britishparatabletennis.com/pages/contact



ATHLETE VOICE – THE ATHLETE PANEL

Athlete voice and representation is extremely important to us, and that is why we have developed the athlete panel.

What is the Athlete Panel?

A group that represents the views of the players in the Table Tennis England Talent & Performance pathway.

This group will collect and share your thoughts, experiences, and feedback about being part of a TTE programme/squad **anonymously**.

Recommendations are made to the Table Tennis England Board & Performance Development team.

What does the panel do?

- Gather and review feedback from all squads in the pathway
- Discuss any concerns players have
- Keep the Board regularly informed of player's opinions on issues of major importance
- Provide anonymous feedback on decisions that impact players
- Make recommendations and help influence changes to the support provided by the Table Tennis England Performance Development team
- Actively promote the athlete panel and its purposes to other players

The panel is made up of U17/U19/U23/Senior squad players but represent the views of all athletes in performance Squads. Squad players are kept up to date on who is currently serving on the panel.



● Key Questions about the Panel

Will the coaches know what feedback I have provided individually?

No – the panel will keep EVERYTHING confidential.

How long will I be on the panel?

Two years – unless you leave the squad or no longer want to be on the panel.

Can parents feedback through the athlete panel?

No this is a group for the players, not parents.

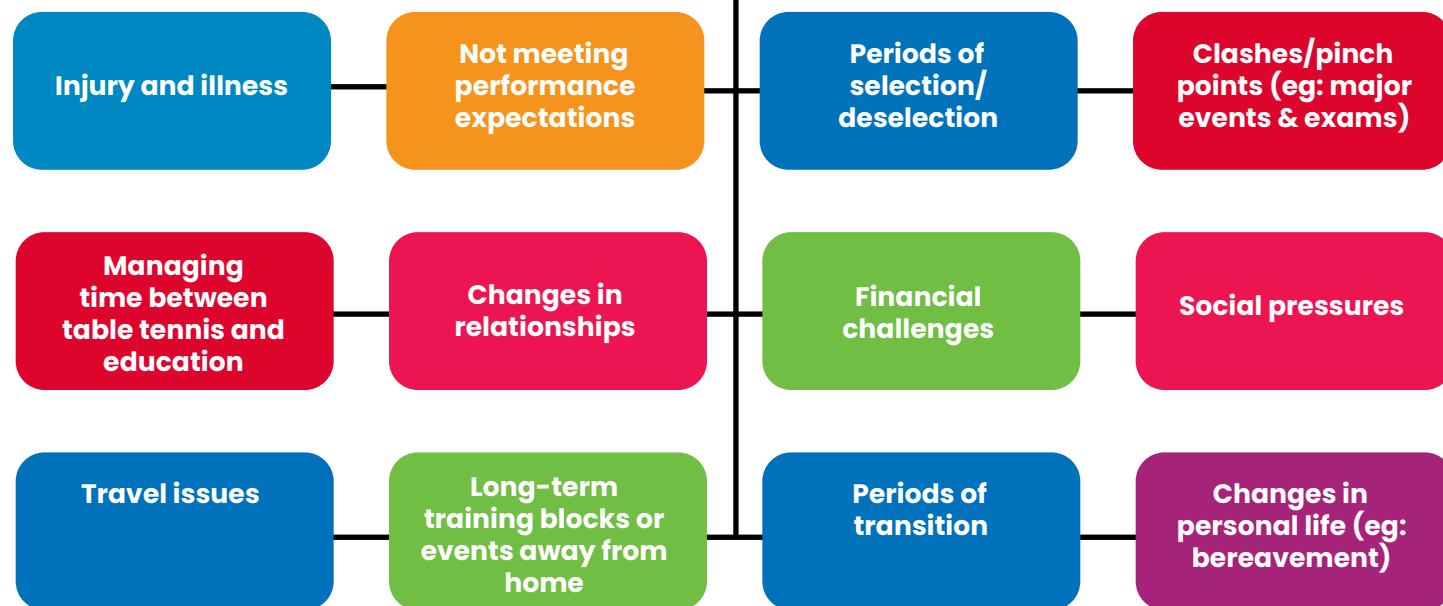
How do I provide feedback/thoughts if I am not on the panel?

The panel will ask you for your feedback directly (e.g., via a survey) OR you can discuss topics with them.

For Squad players who would like to email the panel directly, please contact: athlete.panel@tabletennisengland.co.uk

PATHWAY PLAYER WELLBEING

There may be a number of periods during a player's time on our talent and performance pathways that they feel stressed, under pressure, and struggle to balance the demands of table tennis and other activities (e.g., education, family/social commitments). Examples of these periods/situations are detailed here:



These periods have the potential to impact negatively on pathway player wellbeing. Many players will have developed skills to cope with stressful situations, however, when the balance becomes tipped (i.e., the player is failing to cope), aspects of the player's life, their physical and mental health can become negatively impacted. Parents, coaches, and sports personnel should ensure that they are able to recognise when the balance is beginning to tip beyond what the player is able to cope with and are able to advocate for positive change for the player.



Where can players go for support if they are struggling to cope with the pressures they are under?

Athlete lifestyle practitioners – if available, they can support players to understand their stressors and how to more effectively manage the demands they are facing.

Sport psychologists – if available, they can help players to restructure how they are viewing stressors and see them as facilitators.

TASS athletes have access to support from the charity Sporting Chance – a 24/7 hotline that players on the TASS programme can access if they are stressed, worried, or concerned about anything. Players will be assessed and referred to the appropriate support. The Sporting Chance hotline number and email are provided directly to TASS athletes.

GP – if players have serious concerns about their wellbeing and mental health, we urge players to speak to their general practitioner (GP) who can refer players onto further support mechanisms.

UK Sport World Class Programme – players in receipt of an athlete personal award (APA) through UK Sport can be referred for mental health support through the athlete medical scheme.



Helpful websites:
youngminds.org.uk
mind.org.uk

PARENTS OF PATHWAY PLAYERS

With the growing demands on young players to attend training and events, parents can often feel overwhelmed by the commitments that their child has and may feel that table tennis is taking over their life!

Parents are essential support sources in a young table tennis player's life. Parents play multiple roles when it comes to a player's development and are key influencers in both their day to day lives and long-term development as athletes. For parents of talented young players, there are many ways they can be supportive to development, but also ways they can hinder development.

Parents often provide their child with:

- **Financial support** – although some funding is available to athletes at certain points in the pathway (e.g., Backing the Best), many parents feel they must contribute significant amounts financially for their child to achieve in sport.
- **Travel support** – parents can often feel like they are taxi drivers, having to take their child to and from training, and to events on the weekends. Not only can this also be financially draining, but also very tiring.
- **Informational support** – parents may also offer guidance and information, perhaps from their own experience in sport, and support athletes to debrief after performances.
- **Emotional support** – sport is not a linear journey for any young athlete, and therefore parents may find themselves providing emotional support when performances haven't gone so well, or players haven't been selected for competitions/squads. When done right, it is associated with positive outcomes for young players, and can impact on confidence, competence, coping skills, and intrinsic motivation.
- **Nutrition support** – parents often have to learn the best types of foods to buy to support a player's performance, and can learn valuable information from sports nutritionists.



Advice and tips for parents

Consider whether you are a 'pushy parent'

Some parents can be considered 'pushy' and have a possible negative effect on their child's enjoyment of sport. This is a difficult topic since it's often the case that pushy parents want the best for their child. Consider whether your behaviour may be impacting negatively on your child. Ways that parents may do this include overemphasising winning and not focusing on the learning process, excessive criticism following poor performances in competition or training, or in the worst-case scenario, coercive behaviours.

Remember to be parents of a child, before parents of an athlete

As players progress through the table tennis pathway, they will interact with various different coaches, support staff, and stakeholders, however, a parent or guardian is one of the few roles that will remain unchanged. The opportunity here to remain a constant source of support, a psychological safe space, and as someone who the player can rely on regardless of their performances on the table is unmatched.

Recognise how support will change as a player progresses through the pathway

As a parent, you should have a good awareness about what the pathway could look like for your child in table tennis. Knowledge of what support is available at different points is helpful, so that players can maximise the support available to them. This guide document should help with this process.

Allow your child to have control of their goals

When setting goals, it's important to allow your child to be involved in this process so that they have autonomy over their decision making. Support your child to focus less on the outcome (e.g., winning an event), and set more process focused goals centred on progression. In conversations about performances, support your child to reflect on the process rather than the outcome.

Understand your boundaries in the performance environment

Although many parents are heavily involved in the sport, or have been players themselves, parents should always respect boundaries they have when it comes to coaching or providing performance input. If the player has a coach, let them do the coaching role, and show emotional support instead.



For further support:

tabletennisengland.co.uk/about-us/safeguarding/information-for-parents/

NSPCC video for parents in sport

[youtube.com/watch?v=ogXvILLuPpk&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogXvILLuPpk&t=2s)

ANTI-DOPING INFORMATION FOR PATHWAY PLAYERS

Table Tennis England enforces a stringent Anti-Doping Policy that adheres to guidelines recommended by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). The UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) agency plays a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of sports within the United Kingdom. Within the context of a performance pathway, UKAD is responsible for implementing and enforcing anti-doping rules and regulations to ensure fair and clean competition at all levels of sport. UKAD covers education, testing, medication use, and athlete support, while emphasising the consequences of doping violations and the importance of a clean sporting culture.

Across the performance pathway, players will receive bespoke (age and level appropriate) UKAD workshops and resources to support them with ongoing education surrounding anti-doping and the role it plays in their table tennis development.

These include:

- Clean sport values
- Introduction to the testing process
- Checking medicines and supplements
- Anti-doping rule violations
- Therapeutic use exemptions

Players can learn more about UKAD by:

Downloading the **100% me** App
or visiting ukad.org.uk

For further information:

tabletennisengland.co.uk/compete/antidoping/



SAFEGUARDING

Table Tennis England and GB Table Tennis work hard to ensure that all children, young people, and adults (including those that are part of the performance pathway) have a safe and enjoyable experience in the sport.

Please visit the Table Tennis England website for up-to-date policies and procedures around safeguarding: tabletennisengland.co.uk/about-us/safeguarding/

What's being done in the performance pathway?

- Coaches must undertake regular safeguarding training and have up to date DBS checks
- For funded events that include youth female players, there must be a female point of contact present
- Players are informed in advance if they are being funded or self-funded for events, those that are self-funding are required to arrange their own loco parentis (these players are also required to complete an event travel form, that is shared with the safeguarding manager)
- Information packs are shared prior to each international event which outline all information for the trip, including key contacts, such as the Safeguarding Manager
- During player and parent inductions, key information regarding the safeguarding of players is discussed, including key contacts and methods of reporting concerns

If you have any concerns regarding safeguarding, you can ring our Safeguarding team on 01908 208860, Option 3 OR report your concern here: tabletennisengland.co.uk/about-us/safeguarding/report-a-safeguarding-concern/



KEY CONTACTS

If you have any further questions about any of the content within this document, the contact details for certain members of the Performance Development team can be found below:

Gavin Evans (Head of Performance Development – England & GB) – gavin.evans@tabletennisengland.co.uk

Emma Vickers (Head of Pathway Development) – emma.vickers@tabletennisengland.co.uk

Evie Collier (Performance Logistics Officer – England & GB) – evie.collier@tabletennisengland.co.uk

tabletennisengland.co.uk/performance/team-england/coaching-staff/

