

Sharing the benefits

Grantham Tennis Club launched their Feeling Good project in May 2017. Project organiser Dale Wright says that the idea sprang from seeing first-hand how tennis was about more than improving their backhand for many members.

“We realised there were members getting a lot out of the club to help with what I call the ‘accidents of life’ – like divorce or people feeling lonely,” he says.

“We could see how they were meeting people, getting some fresh air and taking their mind off their troubles. We wanted to see if we could do something similar for non-members too.”

The project won financial backing through the LTA’s Open Court programme: an initiative to open up the sport to disabled people and those with long-term health conditions.

“Grantham Tennis Club is certainly one of our leading tennis venues in Great Britain opening up the sport to people from all walks of life, including those with mental health problems,” says David Hardman, LTA Disability Development Manager.

“We’re committed to continually supporting and educating tennis venues to provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone. The Mental Health Charter has been a clear and informative blueprint to help us achieve this.”

Soon Dale was able to set up a weekly two-hour session, featuring professional coaches and volunteers, open to anyone in the community who wanted to play tennis. The project started with seven participants – and by the end of the first phase this grew to 25.

Welcoming and inclusive

Dale says that the social side of the sessions are just as important as what’s happening on the court.

“We want to be welcoming, not judgemental,” he says.

“So it’s about coming along and enjoying yourself while validating and improving whatever physical skills you have. It’s giving people the opportunity to meet other people and let them develop their social skills.”



Offering refreshments and a chance to socialise is a big part of bringing people together. So is humour: the sessions may have a serious purpose but the coaches ensure they're fun and light-hearted too.

Professional support is also on-hand. The local authority provides a community support worker who joins the session to pick up any problems with group members.

The response

Benefits range from providing a positive focus for the day, to improving organisational skills and finding a new passion in life.

"We've seen that it's really helped people in all kinds of ways," says Dale.

"For example, there was one lady who wanted to pass her driving test so she could get around more. Being at the sessions was one of the things that gave her the confidence to do it."

A reliable resource

Dale says that one of the key things about Feeling Good is that it's reliable. People know that it's there for them at the same time week in, week out – whatever's going on in the rest of their lives.

“Being reliable is very important to us,” he says.

“We have it at the same time each week so people know that they can depend on it happening. We also offer transport to and from the session so people know they can get there.”

“This has done wonders for my mental health”

"I joined the project last year because at the time my mental health was not brilliant. I was really not in a great place due to my anxiety and my lack of confidence.

It has certainly helped meeting new people and gave me a sense of purpose that I was missing in my life. I have met so many nice, caring people who I didn't think existed. This has done wonders for my mental health and has got me into a sport that now I thoroughly enjoy participating in. I now feel a lot more confident in myself to go forward in life."

Jak, Feeling Good participant

For more information, visit...

<https://clubspark.lta.org.uk/granthamtennisclub/Community/FeelingGood>

