

ENJOY TENNIS - Summary

Enjoy Tennis is a project developed by Tennis Ireland in conjunction with service providers, including Stewarts Care, Carmona Services, St Michael's House, Cheeverstown, Festine Lente, Sunbeam and Lakers. The goal is to create access to tennis for 400 people with an intellectual disability by the end of 2016, and to do so in a way which enables the players to continue playing in their clubs on a long-term basis and become involved generally with their clubs.

Over 100 players have taken part in the **Enjoy Tennis** pilot schemes which took place in all four provinces, including clubs in Castlebar, Sunday's Well, Templeogue and the Boat Club, Belfast. The pilots have been evaluated and there was a very positive response from Service Provider staff and the players. Eight out of 10 players reported that they wanted to continue tennis after their initial eight week programme was complete.

Tennis Ireland and our partners are convinced of the value and impact that this programme is already starting to have and what it can achieve in the future. The evaluations demonstrate this but one only has to visit one of the coaching sessions to see the joy, fun and improvement in tennis skills that the players experience every week. We would invite you to see for yourself.

Tennis is ideally suited as a sport for players with Intellectual Disability as:

- It is a non-contact sport
- People can start playing at any age (a number of the pilot participant are aged 50+)
- A specially adapted form of the game has already been created (mini tennis)

Service providers report the following benefits:

- 1 Promoting health and fitness which decreases the risk of obesity
- 2 Improvements in co-ordination
- 3 Promoting positive mental health by reducing levels of anxiety among participants
- 4 Promoting healthy self- image through confidence building and positive interactions with others.

We want to spread this project as widely as possible. We have developed an approach which is sustainable in the long term – this involves building skills in the service providers and club volunteers. There are currently a range of clubs involved in the Programme including Glasnevin, Templeogue, Donnybrook, Shankill, St Mary's , Greystones, National Tennis Centre (Tennis Ireland), Co Wicklow and Wicklow Town.

Our partners include a number of units from St Michael's House, Cheeverstown, Festine Lente, Carmona Services, and Sunbeam.

Overleaf we set out some practical information for you if your club is considering becoming involved in this programme.

ENJOY TENNIS - How does it work?

Once the club decides if would like to become involved.

- The initial commitment is to allocate one or more courts to the group from a local partner, known as a “Service provider” for an hour a week. The club decides on what hours it can offer - typically off peak times like 2pm are selected.
- The groups can either be junior or adults depending on the nature of the Service Provider. Typically the group size is between 4 and 8.
- The club and service provider then discuss times and find one that suits the club, the coach and the service provider’s schedule.
- The programme starts with 7 weeks of coaching for the group which is funded at e35 per hour by the Enjoy Tennis Programme. The 8th week the players go to an Open Day , hosted by one of the clubs, to play with players from other clubs in the programme
- The club in conjunction with the Head coach decides which coach will teach the programme.
- The club also recruits a number of club volunteers to be hitting partners during the coaching session. Typically the players are beginners so don’t have the ability to rally with each other.
- The service provider selects the players and it is a condition of the programme that the service provider personnel are on court at all times with the coach and the club volunteers.
- After this period of funded coaching, the club can continue to offer the courts to the local group- and the sessions are then led by the service provider professional and the club volunteers. It is an important aspect of the programme that we’re not simply giving people a 7 week good experience but actually given the opportunity to start playing tennis into the long term.
- Insurance - this is provided by the Service Provider for their players and staff. It is good practice for the club to get written confirmation from the service provider of this
- Rackets - some players will have them- but particularly for beginners it is very useful if the club can collect perhaps some 2nd hand rackets from members.
- The club will be allocated a contact person within the Enjoy Tennis Implementation Group which is leading this project and which was formed by Leinster Tennis. This person can advise on any issues that arise.
- Support is available to the club coach in learning how to teach players with a learning disability. . In addition mentoring is available from one of the coaches who has experience in the area.
- Support is available to the service provider staff and the club volunteers in the basics of tennis coaching through the Tennis Ireland Play & Stay assistant programme - which involves working with a coach and doing online modules. To support the Programme Tennis Ireland have agreed to waive the fee for volunteers involved in the programme who are doing this.
- The club volunteers need to apply for garda vetting through the Special Olympics website.

ENJOY TENNIS

Creating the opportunity for people with an intellectual disability to learn and enjoy tennis in Ireland.

Click here for short video clip of interviews with service provider staff and players from the pilot of Enjoy Tennis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIFvt4ivYkA&feature=youtu.be>

Pilot Players at the graduation day from each of the pilot clubs hosted by Donnybrook Tennis Club.

