



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

New pilot programme launched to open up tennis pathway in Manchester

A new pilot programme has been launched by the LTA, the national governing body for tennis in Britain, and Manchester City Council to give more children from across the city of Manchester the opportunity to access junior tennis performance pathways.

The Manchester Aces Development Squad will work with communities across Manchester, giving more children the chance to get onto the junior performance pathway like those who play in more traditional settings such as tennis clubs. Festivals will be held in the city in the spring and summer, from which children will eventually be invited to join the Manchester Aces Development Squad. The squad will receive weekly training, equipment provided, and the chance to take part in local competitions.

The pilot was launched with an event at the Lexus British Pro Series Manchester ITF W50 tournament at Manchester Football and Tennis Centre. Pupils from local primary school Church of England School of the Resurrection visited the event to take part in a training session, led by local coach Andy Moss, who runs coaching in parks in Manchester with We Do Tennis. The kids also got the chance to meet British rising star Mika Stojsavljevic, winner of the 2024 US Open girls' singles who made her debut at Wimbledon last summer, who was taking part in the tournament, and have a hit with her on court.

Manchester City Council is the lead funding partner for the pilot, whilst leisure provider GLL will support with court access and coaching, and Tennis Lancashire will also provide coaching support. One of the pilot's biggest supporters is former British tennis star and Mancunian Naomi Broady. Broady, a former British number two and now a regular presenter on Sky Sports' tennis coverage, believes programmes such as this are vital in opening up the sport.

"Tennis has given and continues to give me so much but in Britain it has in the past been seen as an elitist and expensive sport. I'm so excited about this new programme in Manchester breaking down those financial barriers and offering children from any background, the opportunity to develop their skills.

This isn't just about producing future players, it's about opening doors and making opportunities accessible to everyone. I'm incredibly proud to support an initiative that reflects the spirit of Manchester, and shows that tennis can, and should, be for all."

In a city dominated by football, events such as the Davis Cup Finals group stages being held at Manchester's AO Arena, and initiatives such as FAGE LTA Youth Schools and the UK Government and LTA Tennis Foundation's Park Tennis Project have helped to bring tennis to a new audience, particularly children and young people.

With more than 100 schools signed up to the LTA's schools programme and 13 parks across the city having been transformed for their communities, children now have lots of opportunities to pick

up a racket and give tennis a go. For LTA Performance Director Michael Bourne, the Manchester Aces will provide the next step, giving more access to pathways to those children who wouldn't normally get the opportunity.

"The Manchester Aces Development Squad pilot is something we're really excited about," says Bourne. "A lot of hard work has been done in recent years to get rackets in children's hands both in Manchester and nationwide, and now this pilot will help us not only to give kids, wherever they play tennis, the chance to develop their skills and access the junior pathway, but also to see whether similar programmes could be replicated in other British cities in the future."

The pilot programme also aligns with one of the key themes of Manchester City Council's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, to ensure children and young people enjoy taking part in sport and physical activity.

Councillor John Hacking, Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure at Manchester City Council, said, "We're thrilled to welcome this citywide tennis pilot in partnership with the LTA. Using venues across Manchester and running city events to engage local children, especially those from underrepresented groups, ensures this pilot will both celebrate community tennis and feed participants into ongoing coaching and parks programmes.

"By creating a clear pathway into the Manchester Tennis Development Squad, we're inspiring the next generation of local tennis players, widening access to performance pathways, and embedding physical literacy, so every child can reach their personal and sporting potential."

Dates of events on the pilot programme and how children can get involved will be announced in the spring.

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For LTA media enquiries please contact:

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Image credit: LTA

ABOUT THE LTA:

The LTA is the National Governing Body of tennis and padel in Great Britain, governing and growing the sport from grassroots participation through to the professional game. Our vision is to open up tennis and padel, harnessing them and working with schools, volunteers, coaches and venues across the whole country to transform communities. We also represent the interests of over 2.5 million members, playing on more than 23,000 courts. The LTA runs and supports a network of 11,500 approved tournaments for players of all ages, the main cornerstones of which are the LTA's premier grass-court tennis events at The Queen's Club, Nottingham and Eastbourne, leading up to The Championships, Wimbledon. For further information about the LTA and tennis and padel in Britain, visit www.lta.org.uk or follow us on X, Instagram, Facebook, Tik Tok, and LinkedIn.