

**CONNECTING COMMUNITIES
AWARD FINALIST:
EMMANUEL FINNDORO-OBASI**



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Volunteer Emmanuel helped establish the Doncaster Community Tennis Programme, opening up tennis to underrepresented groups and driving positive social impact.

BACKGROUND

In 2021, Emmanuel Finndoro-Obasi noticed that the local park tennis courts were underused and deteriorating. Passionate about his community and possessing a strong desire to give something back, he decided to take action. Despite very little experience of leading or playing tennis, Emmanuel seized the opportunity to make the game accessible, inclusive, fun and free for the people of Doncaster.

On top of his full-time employment in international trade, Emmanuel has been the driving force connecting Doncaster Council, Flourish Community organisation and the LTA to develop a new programme of community tennis. A range of recreational sessions attracts around 30 players each week.

Emmanuel was a finalist in the Connecting Communities category in 2023; find out here why he stood out and what he has achieved.





INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Thanks to Emmanuel, free tennis provision has enhanced the lives of local people who previously had very little opportunity to take part in sport. The Doncaster Community Tennis Programme has introduced tennis to areas of the city classified as IMD 1 (the Index of Multiple Deprivation, with 1 being most deprived), where residents face challenging living conditions and minimal disposable income. Under-represented groups now enjoy tennis in Westfield Park, Hexthrope Park and in the south of Doncaster.

Nothing held Emmanuel back. He overcame resistance, negotiated with stakeholders and inspired others to get involved in supporting and playing tennis.



MAKING TENNIS SAFE, WELCOMING, ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE

As a qualified Level 1 Tennis Assistant, Emmanuel plans to complete Level 2 next year, and continue to provide a fun and safe environment for local players. He has a highly personable approach and ensures the sessions are welcoming, accessible and inclusive, remaining free of charge.

Two park tennis facilities in Doncaster will be refurbished in 2023 through the LTA Parks Investment Programme. Doncaster Council would only invest where there was strong evidence of demand for the sport in the local community. This has been satisfied thanks to Emmanuel's efforts in establishing the programme. As a result, court resurfacing will take place at Westfield Park and Haslam Park, helping retain players all year around.



ARE YOU INSPIRED BY EMMANUEL?

Free Park Tennis is a new programme that gives more people the chance to play tennis at their local park court. Free Park Tennis Activators work as a team to organise fun games and exercises that help more people get active for free and discover their love for tennis.

If you're passionate about introducing or improving tennis in your community, you could make a difference like Emmanuel has. Contact your county association or the LTA customer service team to get started, or find out about Free Park Tennis [here](#).

Emmanuel was nominated by Paul Sheard, LTA Regional Participation Development Partner.



POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACT

Once the initial tennis programme launched, the group connected with Doncaster Council and the LTA to establish SERVES sessions and procure equipment and resources. **Eight local participants completed SERVES Activator Training, enhancing their prospects and skillsets.**

All partners that contributed to the development of the tennis programme were delighted with the broader community engagement. In recognition of this, Doncaster Council were asked to submit a case study to the All-Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry into the cultural value of sport to the North's cities, towns and communities, choosing tennis as the focus.

Doncaster is being considered a pilot city for the new LTA LSEG Strategy, building on the programme to make tennis more accessible for lower socio-economic groups.



Emmanuel is an amazing individual with unquenchable passion and energy. The free tennis provision he helped establish continues to grow, creating opportunities for underrepresented groups who have never been able to access grassroots sport. He is a community hero."

Paul Sheard, LTA Regional PDP



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