

# SENIOR'S TENNIS PROGRAMME – 2019

## VENUE EXPERIENCE AND IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME ON PARTICIPATION



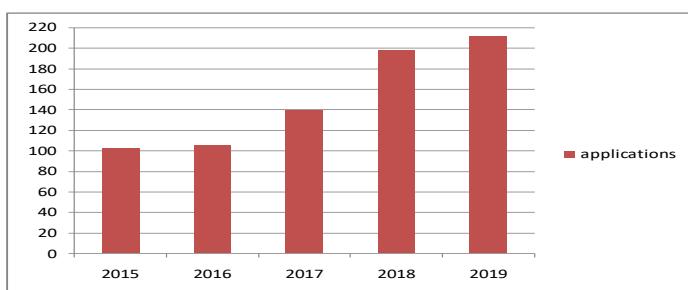
Falcon Tennis Club, Edinburgh

Eveline Traynor (Falcon Bowling & Tennis Club)

### Introduction & Executive Summary

This year Seniors Tennis GB in partnership with the LTA and a number of County Associations financially supported over 84 venues in arranging a ‘Senior’s Tennis Programme’, a decrease of 16 venues compared to last year. The programme, now in its fifth year, is aimed at 35+ year olds in order to drive participation. Venues are able to apply for a grant to contribute towards development and implementation of a plan that focuses on encouraging take-up of tennis by adults over the age of 35.

The scheme has proved to be extremely popular and the survey results show successful in meeting its objectives. 211 applications were received (compared with 102 in 2015):



The funding pot was less this year (£10,000 from the STGB/LTA plus amounts from Counties compared with £20,000+ in 2018) so it was decided to allocate less money but try to spread around as many initiatives as possible. Applications were received from 31 Counties, Scotland and Wales.

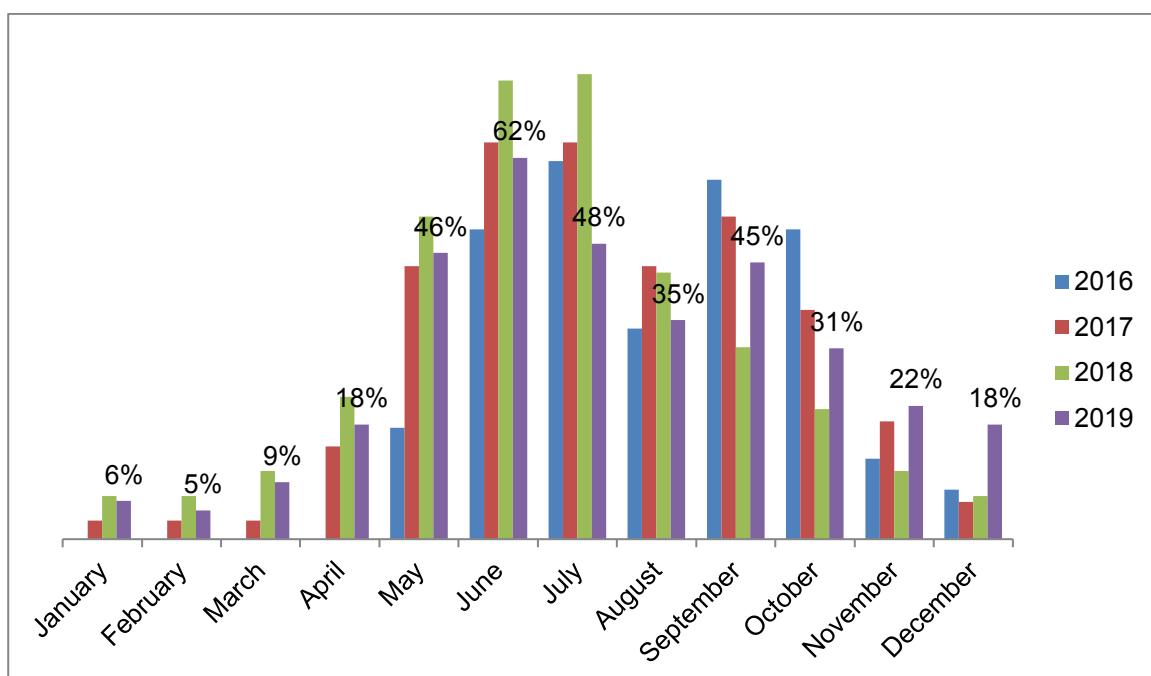
65 venues agreed to give feedback on their experiences, of which 40 were new to running the seniors' programme and 5 were in their 5<sup>th</sup> year of participating.

The programme was viewed as successful by 89% of participating venues. None of the 4 venues who were dissatisfied actively blamed the LTA or the programme for their lack of success and 3 of the 4 said that they would run the Senior's Programme again next year.

In terms of impact, sign up was consistent with 2018, however the conversion to membership of those that did was extremely strong, with venues indicating that one in three participants went on to become members. This was assisted by the generous membership discounts that venues offered and by their welcoming environments.

Going forward, venues will look to leverage the freedom afforded by the programme grant to improve their promotion for which they suggest a number of ways in which the programme can assist.

### Running of Senior's tennis programme



This year there were a greater proportion of courses undertaken between September & December, encouraging a longer playing period outside of traditional summer time, one of the key LTA objectives.



Zsuzsi Puskás (Thornhill Tennis Club)

#### Where grant money was spent

Since the funding, all but one of the clubs has, or plans, to use the investment that was provided to run a Seniors' Programme. The freedom afforded to funding spending was very much appreciated, with grant money spent on a variety of uses including:

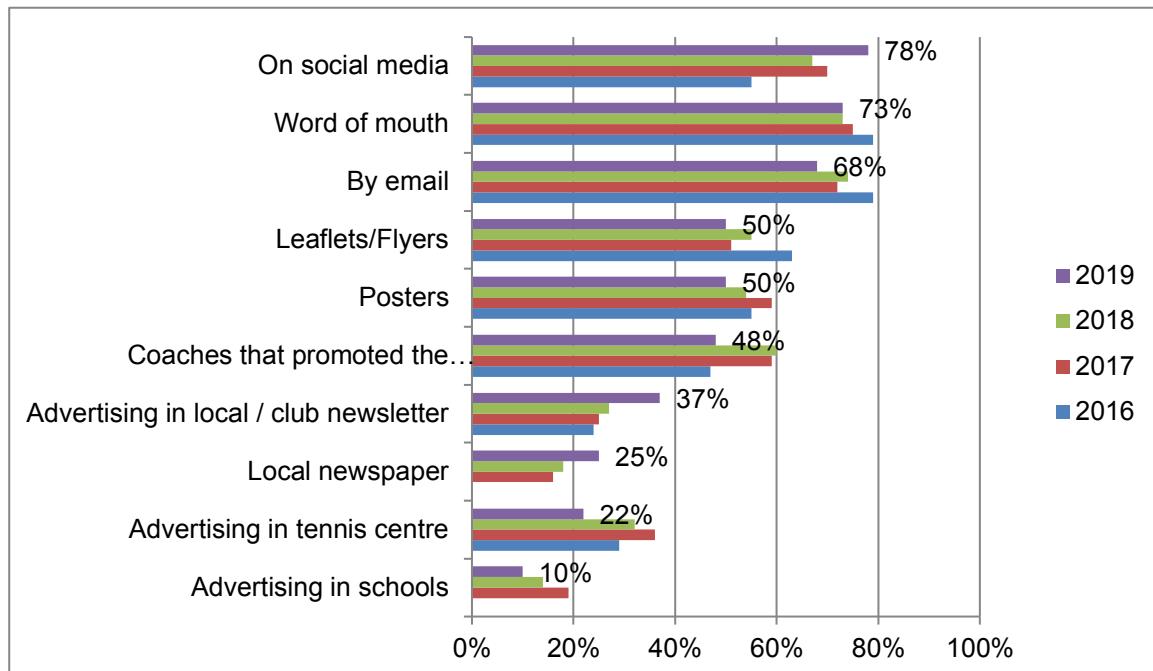
- Paying to cover coach & court costs
- Subsidising memberships and discounts
- Promotion and advertising (both traditional local advertising and social media)
- Signage
- Welcome events & competitions
- Tennis balls, for the club and for those completing the course
- New programme development (e.g. Walking tennis)

*"It was used to run a Bring a Wimbledon Watcher where a club member brought a non-member and they both joined in a coaching session"*

*"Tennis For The Terrified" Courses followed by Wimbledon Themed Doubles/Social Event"*

*"We put on subsidised group coaching sessions for those over 35. The money allowed us to ensure the coach earned the correct hourly rate, and to get players used to the idea that they need to pay something rather than getting it for free. But we made it cheap and enjoyable so that they became hooked and continued when the subsidy ended."*

## How programme was promoted/targeted



This year there was a shift in promotion strategies. Social media, previously the 3<sup>rd</sup> most common advertising method, is now the most common way in which venues are advertising. The shift in promotion is not just online though, with clubs also increasingly returning to traditional advertising methods, with more venues than ever taking advantage of advertising in newsletters and local newspapers. Whilst the digital usage was certainly appreciated by clubs, there were times when further assistance could have been utilised to make the most out of social media.

*“Some help with how to use social media would help us. We were delighted with the financial help offered, but sad that it did not seem to reap rewards.”*

*“Help from LTA on targeting - what channels work best and type of advertising messages”*

There were also some innovative venues who took to targeting their audiences.

*“Used Facebook demographics to target age, gender and location”*

*“We targeted parents of children attending coaching sessions. We left fliers at doctor’s surgeries locally.”*

*“Using contacts at local venues to target similar players at other clubs who may have an interest.”*

*“Flyers were also sent to Alzheimer’s Society and a local charity called FISH in the Richmond area.”*



## Anyone for Tennis?

Surrey Tennis Coaches Kate Maurici and Jane Burniston invite you to a free dementia friendly session of soft ball tennis at the Sheen Lane Centre SW14 8LP on

**THURSDAY 14th November  
11am to 12pm**

Whether you have played before or not come and have a try. We have small, light tennis racquets and sponge balls. You can play standing up or sitting down. All you need is comfy clothes and shoes and, if you have one, a filled water bottle.

Both Kate and Jane are dementia friendly tennis coaches so we encourage people living with dementia to join us.

No booking necessary. Just turn up.



This class is supported by FiSH

Jane Burniston (Sheen Park Tennis)

**Queries about the class to:  
info@sheenparkstennis.co.uk  
Or call Jane on tel: 07388 297430**

### Impact of the programme

Year	Total number within session	Average number of people per venue	% attendees who were already members	% who have signed up to lessons	% who have become members	% who have become LTA members
2019	1140*	20	29%	36%	34%	12%
2018	1690	21	25%	35%	25%	8%
2017	1273	19	22%	37%	26%	7%
2016	836	17	24%	28%	26%	8%
2015	517	17	17%	44%	29%	17%

\*total number of people was lower due to fewer venues taking part in the survey

This year we saw a very positive response to the programme. The number of people attending each venue was largely consistent with the conversion rate from these also strong. The average venue reported more than 1 in 3 of their course attendees became members of their venue and 1 in 8 became LTA members.

With the shift of courses to later in the year however, some clubs pointed out that it still could be too early to say for some attendees whether they would join as members, meaning that membership numbers could rise further.

Q: Approximately, how many people (over the age of 35) have become members of your venue as a result of participating in the Seniors' Programme that your venue ran?

A: *"It's too early to say."*  
*"Not applicable as yet."*  
*"N/A yet"*



Margaret Maiden (Shadwell Tennis Club)

#### Charge per session & follow on

Costs for participating this year remained stable from last year, building on the successful business model established in 2018, balancing sustainable pricing with building membership.

	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Did not charge</b>	47%	59%	42%	44%
<b>£1 - £3</b>	24%	23%	20%	19%
<b>£4 - £6</b>	21%	14%	33%	34%
<b>£7 - £9</b>	3%	1%	5%	2%
<b>£10+</b>	5%	1%	0%	0%
<b>Don't know</b>	0%	1%	0%	2%

In addition, 59% of venues accompanied the Seniors' Programme with discounts on either memberships or further coaching, contributing to the increase in membership signups after the course.

Many of the offers from clubs were extremely generous including reduced membership fees for new members, subsidised coaching sessions and cheaper court hire:

*"New Adult Full Playing Membership for £100 (instead of £144)"*

*"Two-thirds OFF £91 full Adult Membership"*

*"Normal adult membership is £330 - discount offer £150 and £130 second adult"*

### Future planning

Going forward, a large number of clubs are implementing retention strategies to keep these new members in, although there are some that have faith in their current system and are instead focusing on recruiting new members.

Some plans that are being proposed by venues to keep members include:

*"Introducing more organised daytime play"*

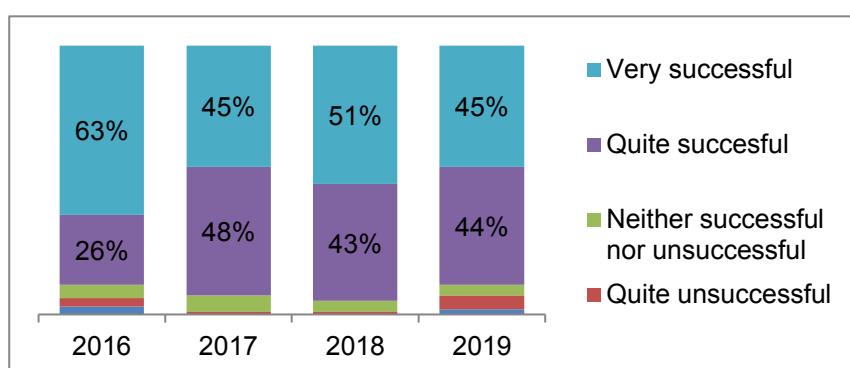
*"To continue running sessions aimed at members returning/starting tennis who do not feel confident to join in social sessions"*

*"Rusty rackets is popular and they form a group who contact each other. Attendance at Social events, tennis and non-tennis, is encouraged."*

*"We are using the new LTA periscope data to target the high demand amongst 'Senior Stalwarts' in the area"*

*"We offer a summer discount on membership."*

### Success of the programme



Overall satisfaction with the programme this year was high (89% very or quite satisfied) and largely in line with what has been seen in previous years.

*"The amount of new members and extra income generated for the club was a huge increase. Of the 17 new members, some of those actually joined as a family so although partners might not have taken part in the Seniors Tennis programme it effectively brought in more than 17 new. There were only about 4 people who took part in the programme that didn't then join the club"*

*"We got new people into the club which without this programme they may have never come. We have retained them and they want to come back for another block of coaching."*

*"We now have a regular rusty rackets session on a Sunday to supplement the midweek sessions. Sessions are well attended and we have some new members as a result. We have new attendees at social tennis and interested in team tennis"*

One thing to watch out for is that there were 4 clubs out of the 65 that responded who said they thought the programme this year was unsuccessful. However, among those who thought it was unsuccessful none attributed blame to the LTA, and generally lamented the lack of conversion from their initial promotions to retaining players for their course. As such, 3 of these 4 clubs said that they would still run the programme again next year

*"It was no fault of LTA. We got 300 plus engagements with ads, 30 likes, 2 turn up to coaching. Perhaps we needed to run ads longer"*

*"The coaching was very well received. The funding was very much appreciated. Everyone on the course said they would like to continue. When I sent the follow up reminder, they all had excuses as to why they couldn't make the sessions, everything from the weather to child care etc."*

#### Venues suggestions for improvement going forward

When asked to suggest anything to further improve the course, clubs had a different focus.

**Promotion;** This manifested in a number of ways. Some referenced promotion from the central LTA through assistance with regional or national campaigns, whereas many suggested alternative ways to position the programme.

*"Promoting the fitness and fun side of senior's singles and doubles and every level can enjoy the game."*

*"Yes - really look at broadening appeal to a wider audience with long term health conditions physical and mental health - involving the health services and charities -Walking Tennis really fits the bill ! 🎾"*

*"I do think that people who are 35 resent being called seniors. That word is more often used to describe people after they reach state retirement age. I think this terminology needs to change, frankly."*



**Publicity & Assistance;** On top of the wider promotion of the programme, there were requests for assistance in enabling clubs to develop and grow their own best quality publicity materials, for example perhaps some templates and logos alongside a handbook in how to use social media advertising tools.

*“Any help with publicity - logos we could use for example.”*

*“Some help with how to use social media would help us. We were delighted with the financial help offered, but sad that it did not seem to reap rewards.”*

*“Maybe a template for leaflets/Facebook with the senior’s logo. So that it looks professional and more eye catching.”*

*“Help from LTA on targeting - what channels work best and type of advertising messages”*

**Increase of initiatives;** Inevitably, there were some venues who requested further financial assistance.

*“More grants to encourage more initiatives to increase participation!”*

**Further training and resources;** Best practice and case studies are simple tools that were requested.

*“Help to equip coaches to deal with the complexities of an ageing population e.g. dementia training, funding for non-tennis facilities via partnership work, links with Carer and charities relating to the elderly.”*

*“Sharing of ideas around what has worked at other clubs would be really beneficial”*





John Price (Frome Selwood Tennis Club)



Ron Hamilton (Rainford Tennis Club)



Jane Burniston (Sheen Park Tennis)



Falcon Tennis Club, Edinburgh

Eveline Traynor (Falcon Bowling & Tennis Club)

## Participating venues

Wayfarers Tennis Club	Falcon Bowling & Tennis Club
Park Tennis Club	Fulwood Lawn Tennis Club
Frome Selwood Tennis Club	St Margaretsbury Tennis club
Kirkcudbright tennis club	North Mundham Tennis Club
Grundisburgh Tennis Club	Fulwood LTC
Brentwood Tennis Club Sheffield	Tudor Grange Leisure Centre
Yarm Tennis Club	Blackhall Lawn Tennis Club
Boston Tennis Club	Wayfarers Tennis Club
Winchmore Hill Tennis Club	Epsom and Ewell Community and Wellbeing Centre, Sheen Lane Centre (Sheen Parks), Abbeyfield House (Surbiton Racket & Fitness Club)
Codicote	Rothbury Tennis Club
Bethersden Tennis Club	Halton Tennis Centre
Woking Park Tennis	Frindsbury LTC
Ledbury TC	The Bourne Club
Shadwell Tennis Club	Inverness Tennis And Squash Club
Goodrich Tennis Club	Duxford Lawn Tennis Club
Spencer Lawn Tennis Club	Netherhall School, Maryport Tennis Club
Penzance Tennis Club	St Columbas Tennis Club
Penarth Windsor / Barry Athletic / Creigiau / Llantrisant	BSLTC
Chulmleigh Tennis Club	Wythall Tennis Club
The City of Peterborough Tennis Club	Haddington Tennis Club, Neilson Park, Haddington
Old Wilsonians' Lawn Tennis Club	Croftside Tennis Club
Holcombe Brook Sports Club	University of Bristol Coombe Dingle Sports Complex
Shrewsbury Lawn Tennis Club	Hutton Rudby Tennis Club
Skipton Tennis Centre	Needingworth
The Avenue Tennis Club	Sproughton
Wollaton Village Tennis Club	Cuckfield Lawn Tennis Club
South Ribble Tennis & Fitness Centre	Rainford
Craig Y Don Community Tennis Club	Inverness Tennis Club
Lancaster Tennis Club (Lancaster Cricket & Sports Club)	Dalkeith Tennis Club
Thornhill Tennis Club	Oxshott tennis club
Lilleshall Village Tennis Club	Yarm Tennis Club
Horncastle & District Tennis Club	Abingdon Lawn Tennis Club
Elstree Tennis Club	