



VI ADVISORY GROUP

Location Pocklington Trust Offices, London

Date and time 7th March 2019

Present

Kirsty Thomson (Chair)
 Matt Grover (Minutes)
 Jill Osleger
 Logan Gray (BBS)

Amanda Green (IBTA)
 Paul Gillett (South Rep)
 Neil Bates (Midlands Rep – Phone)
 Rosie Pybus (North & Scotland Rep)

Apologies: Louise Assioun, Roy Turnham

1. Welcome
 - Group welcomed Paul Gillett and Neil Bates onto the Visually Impaired Advisory Group.
2. Approval of minutes and review outstanding actions from previous meeting(s)

Action	Who?	Status?
Matt to send out again completed classification process on how to challenge the process of players with classifications.	Matt	Completed
Send locations out of all VI tennis sessions across the UK	Matt	Completed
BBS to ask Boots, Vision Express and Specsavers regarding the use of Logmar (if they have the capability)	Alaina	On-going
BBS to go back with feedback with regards to the eye shades and provide an answer to the group	Logan	Completed
Group to trial out a low B2 event in tournaments and report back to TF	ALL	On-going
Amanda to chase feedback regarding survey for international event and hopefully get this back to the group by September	Amanda	Closed
Glasgow regional – are players interested and will they be willing to travel up? Answers back as soon as possible	ALL	Completed
BBS projects: E-learning and see my voice to link in with TF to get more tennis players involved	Matt/Logan	Completed
Layman’s terms for classification	Amanda	Closed
Send out a guide on the protocol of a five minute warm-up	Kirsty	Completed

- Group approved minutes from last meeting
- Action around E-Learning module to come directly through the LTA rather than UK Coaching to gain credits for license points
- Action around Layman’s terms for visually impaired classification; Kirsty speak to Alistair Li.

3. Tennis Foundation transition into the LTA



Open Court Disability Tennis

- Tennis Foundation has now been fully integrated into the LTA to unify tennis to make it more accessible, welcoming, inclusive and friendly in line with the LTA's new vision and mission of 'Tennis Opened Up'.
- Jill and Matt move to central participation with Jill leading on Disability Development activities and Matt supporting the full participation directorate.
- Kirsty moves into major events, leading on all international disability events for the LTA.
- Claire/Liz will oversee all domestic disability competitions across the UK, including Deaf, LD and VI performance.
- TF colleagues have moved from an organisation size of 35 to over 200 which will open up new opportunities to grow disability tennis and increase the visibility of the work we do.
- Participation Directorate Regional Roles: London & South East, Central & East, South & South West, Midlands and North.
 1. Head of Region
 2. DDP – Disability Development Partner
 3. PDP – Participation Development Partner
 4. PDM – Participation Development Manager – London & South East region only
 5. WDP – Workforce Development Partner
 6. CDP – Competition Development Partner
 7. Regional Safeguarding Officer
- Players can still access the Tennis Foundation Website for up-to-date information, including find your local session finder. Andy Dodd is currently working with Marketing, Digital and Social Media teams to establish how TF website activities can be integrated onto the LTA website (this will take 6 – 8 months).

4. Growing the game in the UK

- Currently engage with 687 blind and partially sighted players on a monthly basis as part of the Open Court Disability Development Programme, seeing a 23% growth since 2015. 630 players in England with 222 of those playing in the North region.
- People with a visual impairment entering competitions have grown by 22% since 2016 with 286 entries into regional competitions in 2018. Looking to grow again in 2019 with the inception of a Glasgow regional event.
- Looking at trying to engage more local parks as part of a play and play process to increase the use of facilities as finding somewhere to play on a regular basis is proving difficult.
- British Blind Sport working closely with county football associations to map local services for people with a visual impairment to become more engaged with sport. Link in with tennis to find players
- Current player base update – Pay and Play process; parks, children and young people at earlier age, publicity and awareness with the, BBS mapping local services for people with a visual impairment with County FA. Tennis to be linked in through find your session and local player, looking to grow the engagement and sporting activity.

Planned Activities for 2019

- Three Junior Visually Impaired Tennis Festivals happening in 2019:
 1. Tennis World, Middlesbrough on 6th April
 2. National Tennis Centre on 18th May
 3. David Lloyd Worcester on 22nd September
- Visually Impaired Coaching Clinic:

1. Looking to provide a visually impaired coaching clinic for players which will be led by an experienced visually impaired tennis coach; working on the fundamentals of tennis, improving the ability of an individual to play the sport effectively. Players will also be encouraged to bring their coach(es) along as it will provide a good opportunity to up skill coaches and improve their coaching skills.
- British Blind Sport Activities:
 1. Blind Taster Day at Hereford College on 17th April.
 2. Neil Bates will be linking in with BBS around volunteers at various events.
 3. Have a go days: Belfast (18th May), York (May/June), Manchester (June), Leicestershire (15th June) Southampton (July), Wolverhampton (July or September), Norwich (August), and Cambridge (September).

Regional Plans & Feedback

1. North – Rosie Pybus

- Glasgow regional competition taking place in July, looking for players from all around the country to support the tournament so that it can be a success and be sustained for future years.
- Be aware of juniors at competitions in relation to evening entertainment at regional events. The LTA will look into this and work out appropriate course of action at future events.
- Query around an appropriate warm-up etiquette which the LTA will send out to players.
- Players unsure of official competition rules. LTA to send this out at in next correspondence email to players.
- Query around competition format as short sets are not long enough. LTA confirmed reason for format is due to the number of entrants into competitions. This is a common format in tennis and used at lots of competitions at all levels to allow for more matches to be played. If a longer format is used players will have fewer matches during a weekend. Group to find out if players would rather have a cap on the number of entries and a longer format therefore meaning fewer matches and less variety in the players who are in the draw or a shorter format, more matches and more players to compete against. Group to feed back at the next meeting.
- Query about combining categories at tournaments. Feedback previously received was that players did not want to combine categories at regional tournaments and the format needs to fit alongside the international format which is separate groups. Outside regional tournaments, especially at recreational tournaments, groups should be based on a player's ability rather than their sight category. This will allow for players to play different players outside of their classification group and hopefully lead to some well-balanced matches. Players expressed the feeling that National VI competition is a 'bigger regional tournament' and run the same way as a regional competition, so it did not have a different feel to this. The LTA expressed that the VI nationals are a festival of tennis to bring everyone together and celebrate a good year of sport. The LTA will look at whether it's feasible to hold another competition for the top players who are selection for the development or performance programme (if this is confirmed) to allow for more matches to be played at this level.
- Hosting B1 camps with the support of Louise Assioun. North to ensure these are correctly liaised with Matt Grover for additional support (if requested).
- Query regarding the points system and how points are fairly worked out when in some competitions genders or sight categories are combined due to low numbers. The LTA hope that sight categories are only combined on an ad hoc basis and not at many regional tournaments. However, if they combined more often than expected the LTA will review the points system so that it is fair at the end of the year.



Open Court Disability Tennis

2. Midlands – Neil Bates

- Feedback that new players attended the Loughborough regional event for the very first time which was excellent.
- Neil to link in more with the LTA and BBS around sourcing volunteers and coaches at events and competitions to build a better working relationship with partners and colleagues.

3. South & South East – Paul Gillett

- Second Regional Tournament going ahead in Brighton.
- Paul met with Dave Hardman (DDP) to look at starting up some new sessions in Maidstone.
- Linking with Portsmouth Tennis Club to increase VI tennis activity.
- Query regarding international competition info to be communicated sooner. The LTA confirmed this was delayed due to the integration of Tennis Foundation activities into the LTA. However, everything is being done now to meet deadlines.
- Cases around safeguarding of players, vulnerable adults and parents should now be linked in with your relevant LTA regional safeguarding officer. If an incident occurs at a regional tournament this should be reported to the referee and tournament organiser.

4. Metro – Amanda Green

- Currently looking at barriers of sport for people with a visual impairment. Producing a survey which will be sent out nationally.
- New CEO appointment and sport development officer
- Looking to start up DL Northwood session again. Metro to link with David Hardman (DDP)

LTA Coaching Level 3 Update

- The LTA is now looking at a specialised module for VI players including an insurance policy so visually impaired coaches can work with visually impaired players and receive the same benefits as other coaches do who currently hold an LTA level 3 coaching qualification.

British Blind Sport Update

- See my voice programme currently achieving good engagement as this is a platform for young leaders to have an opinion and support at sporting events, becoming more inclusive and accessible.
- My guide service is a programme looking at getting volunteers from the start line to door step in sport and have partnered with athletics find a guide service to increase the capacity for guide dogs to get more people in sport by using transport links effectively.
- Increase the recruitment of volunteers with BBS being a positive advocate for this, though the problem with this is finding the right opportunities for people to get involved with sport. BBS to link in with LTA and regions, including the PDP roles to grow more opportunities in sport.
- Successful in receiving a grant from Children in Need to engage 450 families over a three year period in sporting activity.
- E-Learning module won an international learning award for the positive use of accessibility.
- In May the national sport activity finder will be launching. The LTA will put the National Tennis Centre on their as a first step to get more clubs to sign up; thus improving the engagement of activities.

5. International activity

Performance



Open Court Disability Tennis

- Looking to develop a VI performance group for top players in the country which will then link to international events, such as the world championships. Selected players will be invited to one or two camps a year, headed by Louise Assioun and with the support of the disability competitions team.
- Group discussed about the process and selection for international events, such as the VI World Championships. Players would like some increased clarity on the process of selection. The LTA will be looking at this in more depth and will refer back to the group when appropriate detail has been confirmed.

IBTA

- Amanda has stepped down as GB country rep and also IBTA Technical Rep. Kirsty is going to fill the position as GB country rep until the end of the year until the integration of the TF into the LTA has been completed.
- Simon McFarland has taken over from Amanda as IBTA Technical Rep. Successful handover period with Amanda now stepping down from her role to take up further opportunities.
- Martin Etheridge is currently working with IBTA to make official umpire guidelines, such as rules and regulations officials will have to adhere to at international tournaments.
- Producing guidelines for ball assistants and creating a roles and responsibilities portfolio.
- A representative from the ITF will be going to the upcoming international event in Spain.

6. Any other business

- Jill announced she is moving on from her role as Disability Development Manager and will now be taking up the new role: Head of Region, Central & East. The group thanked Jill for her support and contribution to visually impaired tennis.
- Group congratulated and thanked Amanda for her contribution over the past 3 years both as The South East rep and IBTA rep.
- Leyman's terms for classification to be endorsed by area representatives to improve the VI experience at competitive events.
- Group confirmed actions from the meeting.

Action	Who?	Status?
Send a list of contacts covering LTA roles to advisory group	Matt	
Speak to IBTA about Layman's terms for classification	Kirsty	
National Sport & Physical Disability Panel invite to LTA in May	Logan	
Paul and Neil to write paragraph overseeing how parks can include VI tennis and their personal experiences. Including creating personal stories	Neil/Paul	
Send JVITF dates to VIAG	Matt	
University of Worcester link for volunteers with camps, preselmist school	Neil	
Gain GDPR Consent for Clubs of people delivering VI Tennis – send out to the group	Matt	Completed
Group to ask around limit of entries for regional events	ALL	
Competitions team to send out fair play procedures for competitions, rules document and warm-up etiquette	Kirsty to speak with Sophie	
Group to look at format and length of matches through asking other players opinions and feedback to the group accordingly	ALL	