



Participants celebrate at the end of outreach event in Brighton's Open Market to celebrate International Table Tennis Day 2017. Organised by Brighton Table Tennis Club

Active Integration

Brighton Table Tennis Club, Refugee Integration Project

Sport can provide an important social space for refugees as they adjust to life in a new country. Sport clubs offer a fun, safe space where refugees can meet people from the local community. Sport also offers platforms where dedicated individuals plan, run and referee activities that can actively encourage positive behaviours and build on 'teachable moments'. This active approach can promote the successful integration of refugees in sport clubs. This report to Sport England on the findings of the Brighton Table Tennis Club Refugee Integration Project is one of the first in the UK to look at how refugees can be integrated in host communities through sport. It highlights how a positive outlook and an active approach from coaches can provide a safe and fun environment where communities can interact. In such an environment, four of the five strategic outcomes of physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, and social and community development can be supported.



University of Brighton

**‘Active Integration’
Brighton Table Tennis Club, Refugee Integration Project
Final report, May 2018**

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List of acronyms

BHASVIC	Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College
B TTC	Brighton Table Tennis Club
ESOL	English Speakers of Other Languages
FFT	Friends, Family & Travellers
IOC	International Olympic Committee
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

All participants' names have been changed in the report to safeguard the anonymity of respondents.

Executive Summary



Two young players, one refugee from Sudan and an Irish Traveller, playing together in the BTTC FFT session.

- 130 Refugees & Asylum Seekers have played at BTTC sessions in 2017/18
- 8 Refugees & Asylum Seekers have qualified as Table Tennis England Level 1 coaches
- 1640 hours of volunteer coaching hours contributed at the BTTC by Refugee & Asylum Seeking coaches
- Above average improvement of ESOL grades for BTTC refugee players. Players spending more time at the BTTC have ESOL grades improving fastest.
- 90% of BTTC members strongly agree that it is a good thing that the BTTC welcomes refugees and asylum seekers and treats them as any other player at the club.

When arriving in a new country, particularly after leaving the homeland because of conflict, discrimination or extreme poverty, integrating into new communities can be difficult for refugees.¹ Refugees are often separated from their families, friends and wider cultural groups, often at a time when they need them the most. Taking part in a community sport club can help develop social relationships at an important time in a refugee's acculturation to a new community.

This report presents the findings of the Refugee Integration Project undertaken at the Brighton Table Tennis Club over the course of twelve months, starting from May 2017. The project incorporated sport, community integration and key skills (Maths and English). The project focused on refugee players, but it also involved players from different communities, genders, and age groups, including host community school-aged children, Irish Travellers, and players with learning disabilities and special educational needs.

¹ Please note that for the purposes of this report we will use the term refugee to describe anyone that is an

Sport can be an excellent vehicle for community integration because not only it provides a fun, safe and social space, it also has dedicated individuals who plan, run and referee activities. This report shows that the successful integration of refugees in sport projects comes from the **active approach** from managers, coaches and volunteers. These managers, coaches and volunteers actively encourage positive behaviours, organise events and programmes, and build on ‘teachable moments’ (those moments, conflicts and events that can teach participants lessons). Having this active and positive approach means that coaches provide a fun and safe space where individuals from different communities can interact. In such an environment, four of the five strategic outcomes of physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, and social and community development can be supported (Economic development was not explicitly assessed in this project).¹

This active approach is in contrast to coaching approaches that focus mainly on sport skills, with the hope that values, respect and wider integration just passively evolves through the shared activity. Whilst this can happen, our findings suggest that a more active approach where the coaches, volunteers and managers consciously manage integration is more beneficial and will have more positive outcomes. This finding calls for the introduction of community coaching qualifications and accreditation for voluntary and community work, as the success and failure of these projects often reside on the hard work, dedication and skills of the individuals running the sport activities.

“The club has been absolutely amazing, I can’t praise the club enough. I can’t imagine what it would have been like for us not to have Tim’s help.” Foster Carer

Summary of Findings:

- * **Active approach:** Within a sport club, integration is achieved when coaches, volunteers and employees take an active approach. This active approach means that sessions are designed to mix players from different backgrounds, and issues are addressed as ‘teachable moments’. “The main point is the ethos that everybody plays with everybody” Nick, Coach
- * **Inclusive narrative:** Having an ‘inclusive narrative’ around the club helps promote inclusive values to members, as well as promoting the inclusive image to the public. “The club is the most welcoming place I know. [...] But it’s not that table tennis as a sport naturally does it, it’s the club that has tried to nurture this environment” Sophie, Pingleish coach
- * **Welcoming environment:** To foster integration, coaches and volunteers treat all participants as table tennis players, removing differences ***“Now I see the club as my second home after I left my country... when I came I knew nobody in Brighton, I just knew my brother... and now when I joined the club I made friends, I have gone on***

between the players' origins, dis/abilities, etc. In this way, players are made to feel welcome. The welcoming environment is also conveyed by the physical space of the club, where 'Refugees Welcome' signs, and flags of members' countries are put on show.

holidays, I have gone swimming with them
Refugee Player

* **Sport as a social activity:** Actively working on the social aspect of a sport club promotes engagement with the sport, and helps foster integration as friendships are formed between members of the club.

"I know it's not a social club, but it has been used as a social club for these young people, because it is a place where they can meet, mix together, and meet people from other countries and a variety of other people" Foster Carer.

"At the club, I made a lot of friends from different countries and from the UK. I don't have friends from college or anywhere else, only the club. I see them outside the club too." Refugee Player

* **Sense of belonging:** Fostering an inclusive narrative around the club helps provide a friendly and welcoming atmosphere that gives players a sense of belonging. Being part of the club has helped refugee players find their own identity in the new host community.

"Sense of belonging is so important especially for a young asylum seeker who has lost his home and family. The club contributes to forging a new identity, they can proudly say 'I am a member of the BTTC'. He feels he is part of something" Foster carer

* **Safe space:** Sport clubs are a safe space where young refugees can relax, have fun and feel safe.

"It's been a game changer for a couple of the young people we work with. There's a couple that hadn't had fun for such a long time and then they went to the BTTC and they really had a great time. That's what they get from it." Elaine, Founder of the Hummingbird Project

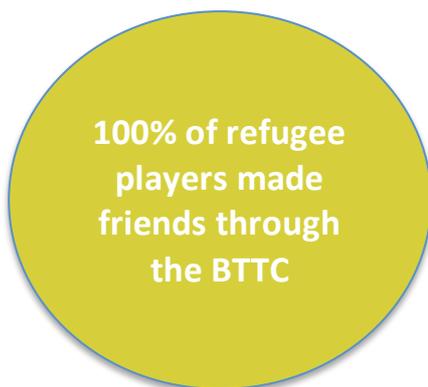
* **Improved mental health and well-being:** Creating a safe space is beneficial for mental health and those affected by trauma. Sport clubs can be a cathartic space where people can go to take their mind off their daily travails. By focussing on playing, meeting friends and acquaintances, and having fun, they can switch off and practise a form of mindfulness which improves mental

"He doesn't want to think about what's going on in his life at the moment. [...] He needs to process a lot of emotional things, the traumas of the past, the journey. [...] I think the club has really helped him through a difficult time in his life." Foster Carer

health.

* **Pinglish:** Combining language lessons with table tennis has been beneficial to those with limited English skills, older players who have less access to ESOL classes, or for those who arrive outside the registration period for attending school. “Pinglish sessions have been really good when it’s one-to-one and the player has a basic level of English.” Sophie, Pinglish coach

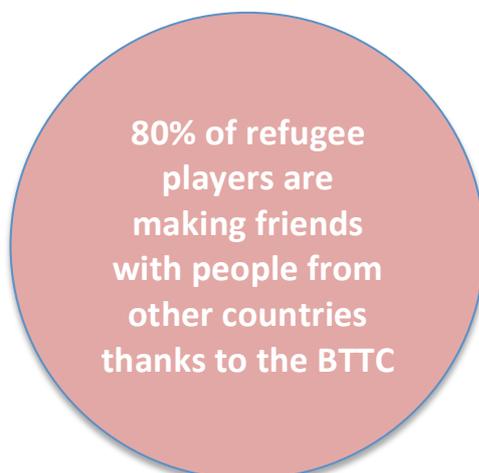
* **Networks of support:** It is very important for a sport club that works with refugees to be embedded in the local network of support services, NGOs, and community groups, as it provides a support network should issues arise.



100% of refugee players made friends through the BTTC



70% of refugee players always feel confident about themselves



80% of refugee players are making friends with people from other countries thanks to the BTTC

Recommendations for sport clubs working with refugees

Based on the lessons learnt from the BTTC Refugee Integration Project, the research team put together the following recommendations for sport clubs who would like to work with refugees:

1. Besides focussing on sporting skills, sport clubs should focus on **community coaching skills** based on interpersonal skills, diversity awareness and community outreach. Team-building programmes, social activities and teachable moments help build shared values away from the sport, that can then flourish in the sporting context.
2. Encourage and facilitate an **active role** for coaches, volunteers and managers. By taking an active role on 'teachable moments', coaches and referees should positively encourage integration for all sections of the community. This should be done through establishing community coaching awards, qualifications and accreditations.
3. Encourage clubs to be open, **welcoming places**. This can include having flags, posters and other decorations that recognise the diversity of players, make them feel at home, as well as becoming spaces to discuss differences in a safe environment.
4. It is essential to facilitate sport clubs to be **safe spaces**. Sport can help through fostering social relationships, helping players acquire skills, and cathartic switching off from personal troubles. This is beneficial to all players' mental health and well-being.
5. Recognising that coaches can become trusted individuals and consequently issues may be disclosed requires clubs and coaches to have clear places to **signpost and refer** these issues.
6. When working with any group with complex needs, including refugees, sport clubs have to work with other organisations to meet those needs. To provide the right support, sport clubs need to be informed about the services available locally and be able to refer refugees to these services if/when needed. Building relationships with social workers, NGOs, voluntary organisations and other interested groups (such as City of Sanctuary) helps build a wider network of support for refugee players. Being part of these networks should encourage clubs to refer refugee players to the right services.
7. Sport can help break down barriers if all players are treated as equals. Nevertheless, coaches and volunteers need to consider a nuanced approach to different players' needs, to adapt to the subtle differences between groups (e.g. older players to younger players, specific experiences of refugees, travellers etc.).

8. Female refugee players might be difficult to target. Refugee women's only sessions could be a way to encourage more female participation.
9. Incorporate language lessons into sport activities, create opportunities to build vocabulary as part of the game, and provide spaces for interactions to take place.

1. Introduction

1.1 Refugees and sport

When Rose Nathike Lokonyen, a track and field athlete from South Sudan competing for Team Refugees, bore the Olympic flag in front of the Refugee Olympic Team at the Rio Games in 2016, the IOC showcased the importance of sport in uniting people from around the world. Although there is a long history of people seeking refuge and safety, conflict in Syria brought the subject of refugees squarely into the consciousness of Europeans. 2015 was the year that witnessed the largest mass migration of people to Europe since World War II.² A record 1.2 million refugees sought asylum in the EU during 2015, which was more than double the previous year's numbers.³

Refugees live through traumatic experiences which lead them to flee, endure traumas on their journeys and upon their arrival in their new homes. Many of the refugees that arrive in the UK are not engaged in any structured physical activity. Their social isolation typically means they will not belong to sports clubs nor take part in physical extra-curricular activity. Sport can have a powerful role to play in the integration of host communities and refugees, given the right support and hard work of coaches, players and volunteers.

Across Europe, there are numerous examples of groups and organisations using sport to help refugees and communities to connect.⁴ In Britain, there is a long history of sport being used to help integrate young refugees. For example, young male refugees from the Basque Region in Spain were given exile during the Spanish Civil War in the UK and some of these players went on to become the first Spanish professional footballers in England.⁵ Often, football fans have identified the importance of football in engaging refugees and host communities.⁶

Sport is a social and communal activity and it has increasingly been recognised as a powerful tool to bring communities together, promote peace and integration, and combat anti-social behaviour.⁷ Whilst sport does not provide a complete solution, and it can create divisions around gender, ethnicity, sexuality, dis/ability and faith, if carefully managed, it can provide a space where these differences can be addressed and overcome.

This report follows Ager and Strang,⁸ and argues that integration is necessarily multi-layered and multidimensional. This contrasts with the dualistic approach outlined in the recent Green Paper on community integration (March 2018).⁹ As Professor John Sugden states, 'Sport is intrinsically value neutral and under carefully managed circumstances it can make a positive if modest contribution to peace building'.¹⁰

1.2 Brighton Table Tennis Club



Brighton Table Tennis Club (BTTC) was founded in 2007 with the mission to use Table Tennis as a vehicle for community integration and wellbeing. The values and mission of the club are 'Solidarity, Community, Respect and Competition'. Since 2015, the BTTC has been based at a dedicated site at the Fitzherbert Centre in Kemptown (Brighton) with space for 12 tables.

The club originally focused on engaging host community's young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. More recently, the diversity of club members has dramatically expanded thanks to outreach and growing reputation across the South East of England. The club currently offers a wide range of weekly sessions, including those for adults over 50, women-only sessions, and specific sessions for people affected by cancer, Down's Syndrome or mental health issues. BTTC also delivers outreach sessions in schools, colleges, centres for the elderly, prisons, a psychiatric hospital, as well as frequently participating in events across the country and abroad.

In the last ten years BTTC successfully engaged over 10,000 people from a wide range of disadvantaged and hard to reach communities. The club works with over 1,500 people a week. The club also has 984 registered members, with around 280 regular members (those who come more than once a week).

Since 2012, BTTC has run a weekly session in partnership with the Virtual School for Children in Care at Brighton and Hove Council. In January 2015, a social worker referred a 15 year old Vietnamese asylum seeker to the club who became a coach and made a brilliant contribution to the club and community. Since then, the refugee integration project has blossomed and BTTC has worked with the City of Sanctuary network, Brighton and Hove Sixth Form College and the University of Brighton to develop the program. In three years, the BTTC received the Community Integration Award from Migration Works UK (2016); the National Table Tennis Club of the Year (2015) from Sport England; and were awarded the title of the UK's first Club of Sanctuary from the City of Sanctuary network, welcoming refugees and asylum seekers.

BTTC aims to become a centre of excellence for social inclusion of marginalised groups, including refugees, and provide a model and framework that other sports clubs can follow.

1.3 The Refugee Integration Project

The Refugee Integration Project is a physical activity and educational project run by the BTTC in partnership with the University of Brighton, including its in-house NGO, Football 4 Peace International (F4P).

BTTC organised various activities in Brighton to promote the programme at public events such as TedX Brighton, Migrant Lives Matter (University of Sussex) and the Brighton & Hove Council's TAKEPART festival of sport (17th June – 2nd July 2017). The latter is a multisport day showcasing local clubs and projects at which over 10,000 people attended. BTTC took ten tables for the TAKEPART launch event, and promoted the BTTC Refugee Integration Project. The BTTC also organised events and trips with other table tennis clubs from London, Leeds, Cardiff and Glasgow to broaden the networks of clubs that work with refugees.

Since July 2015 when BTTC got its own full-time venue, the acceleration of the growth of the club has been quick. With this growth has come an increased reputation of the BTTC. The club received referrals for new refugee players from sources including social workers, foster carers, members of local community groups, foster carers and individuals who heard about the club through their networks. This informal system of referral greatly helped with outreach.

This project targeted its objectives through the delivery of three components where learning is achieved through physical activity. The development of these components resulted in a model that can be replicated and shared nationwide. The three project components are:

A. Technical and Life Skills Development

This component focused on the technical and life skills that can be developed through playing table tennis. It focused on players developing ability and mastering specific techniques, strokes and tactics whilst also developing social, interpersonal and leadership skills. For example, exceptional refugee players were identified to take formal coach training and earn accreditation from Table Tennis England. Eight refugee players and coaches also joined existing coaches and underwent training in the F4P methodology and gained 'Tier One Cross Community Sport Development Coach' certification from the University of Brighton.

B. Education

This component focused on key educational skills for asylum seekers, particularly addressing English language and Maths. This component was targeted because often a key barrier to integration is poor language skills.¹¹ This has been highlighted in the recent Casey Review (2016) which said in Recommendation 9, stated that 'A shared language is fundamental to integrated societies'.

C. Community Engagement

The final component focuses on encouraging the interaction of refugee players with other BTTC members, the wider Brighton community and other clubs locally and nationally. Social exchanges included regular training sessions with other players, participation in

competitions locally and nationally, and attendance at local community events. Through collaborative sessions in which the refugees are both coaches and students, the project aimed at building bridges and breaking down barriers between players.

2. Background/Literature Review

2.1 Why Sport?

When refugees arrive to a new society, they often struggle with marginalisation and exclusion, as well as lack of knowledge about the host society. The original indicators of integration identified four key markers: employment; housing; education; and health.¹² Sport and leisure was notable by its absence, although this is being addressed with new Home Office indicators. For those refugees and migrants who have sought or gained asylum in a new community, sport and physical activity can be a positive way of building a continuity with their former lives.¹³ Sport provides a 'universal language' that can translate across linguistic and cultural divides.¹⁴ It is a 'hook' whereby many different types of people can enjoy a fun, relaxing and engaging activity.¹⁵ By focusing on fun, positive shared experience in an informal environment, it brings together people regardless of their backgrounds, whilst the shared passion for sport emphasises similarities rather than differences between people from different communities.¹⁶

The academic literature is also beginning to show that sport can play a significant role in refugees' adaptation to challenges in a new environment.¹⁷ Sport serves as a significant site for civic engagement that can help recent migrants and refugees to develop social relationships, social networks and help them understand their new community. For refugees who struggle in social settings, sport can provide one positive experience where they can demonstrate competence and feel included.¹⁸ This can benefit their mental health and wellbeing, especially for those who have experienced trauma.¹⁹

As sites for socialisation experiences, sports activities may help cultivate a sense of belonging and reduce social isolation, especially when they are connected positively within the social fabric of local communities.²⁰ Their integration can be assisted through positive coaching and teaching them about the host community, which can be extended to teaching life skills and promote prosocial behaviour.²¹ These can then be transferable into non-sports context, which can help refugees interact with the wider community more effectively (Ha and Lyras, 2013). As Whitley and Gould highlight, participating in sport can give them the chance to build a trusting relationship with adult figures in their new country, which is important for their further socio-psychological development.²²

Many sport-for-development projects focus on football.²³ This is due to football's status as the world's most popular sport, it is relatively inexpensive, can be played virtually anywhere, is relatively non-violent and can be played by all genders. Most other projects involve team sports such as cricket and rugby as this provides opportunities to teach teamwork. There are few projects that focus on individual sports, with boxing being the notable exception. Table tennis therefore provides a unique case study.

It should also be noted that sport does not have causal powers. Coalter calls for caution of 'overly romanticised', 'communitarian generalisations'.²⁴ Sport has no intrinsic power in and of itself. 'For some', Spracklen et al argue, 'sport is indeed about fair play, team spirit, respect and discipline, but for others it is associated with winning at any price, top-down domination, exclusion, sexism, racism, homophobia, xenophobia and so on'.²⁵ Sugden states 'sport is intrinsically value neutral and under carefully managed circumstances it can make a

positive if modest contribution²⁶. Consequently, it is the people involved that help shape the process of participation and positive experiences. Ultimately, a combination of factors can explain success and failure.

Clearly sport is one small part of a much bigger picture. It is difficult to influence the existing structures of power or complex and underlying socio-political problems. This is important to keep in mind when addressing the refugee crisis – while sport interventions might help individual refugees on their way to final destination or in the integration in their new communities, as well as in raising awareness, sport cannot address the broader geo-political realities. Sport in itself is not a sufficient tool for refugee settlement and it can only provide benefits for refugees in the context of addressing other barriers for refugees' full participation and inclusion in the host society, including but not limited to: education and employment opportunities, language training, offering affordable housing and health services, supporting refugee families, and making sure the police and justice systems are fair and responsive.²⁷ Despite this, as Sugden says, "Sport alone will not change the world... but doing nothing may no longer be an option".²⁸

2.2 Integration

The primary focus of BTTC's Refugee Integration Project was the social integration of refugees. There is limited research on the role sport can play with refugees in sport. These broadly fall into three categories: access and barriers to participation;²⁹ integration and belonging;³⁰ and the physical and emotional benefits of sport.³¹ Due to the centrality of organised sport in its culture,³² many of these originate in Australia, which has taken an active role in utilising sport in project with recently arrived migrants and refugees.

Discussions around participation in sport identify that migrant and refugee participants are more likely to be less likely to participate in club-organised activities.³³ In focussing on sport, these studies often conceal other factors that may inhibit participation. Most notably, socio-economic factors, particularly costs of playing, equipment and transport to the club, can have an impact on any club participation, regardless of the citizenship status of the players.³⁴ Furthermore, these studies homogenise or generalise migrant and refugee players. In reality they are a heterogeneous group with many diverse ethnicities and approaches to sport.

Integration is a multidimensional process that is affected by both individual and structural issues.³⁵ It is seen as the ability and opportunity to fully participate in social, cultural, economic and political activities, whilst still maintaining one's cultural identity. This can be seen as a two-way process where 'settling persons become part of the social, institutional and cultural fabric of a society'.³⁶ This requires adaptation on the part of both the migrant and the host society. The danger with this approach is that it divides society into two: a host society and migrants³⁷. In reality, society is complex and multi-layered with integration with different groups and individuals within both host communities and recent migrants. Successful integration should recognise that participants within the host community also are integrated in different ways.

Much of the academic and policy literature takes a similarly dualistic approach; refugees and migrants integrate into a host society. The recent Green Paper on Integrated Communities falls into this trap. It highlights that '60% of minority ethnic pupils were in schools where minority ethnic pupils were in the majority'.³⁸ This obscures the fact that these schools will be multi-ethnic, so there are many different ethnicities integrating. The concept of super-diversity³⁹ looks beyond the focus of ethnicity, and assesses legal status, socio-cultural diversity and economic engagement. But these studies also predominantly focus on ethnic minorities and migrant groups. The one group that is the least integrated is the white 'host community'.⁴⁰ This presupposes that the host community is homogenous, with shared British values, when in reality there are many host communities with different identities, outlooks, politics, ethnicities, (dis)abilities, etc. Consequently, wider social issues, such as racism and socio-economic factors affect integration. Addressing integration holistically, which includes the diverse white populations, requires more analysis.

Expectations of host societies can impact on this process and actively impede integration. The 'rhetoric of sameness'⁴¹ makes demands that refugees and migrants speak the same language and adopt the values, culture and behaviours of the host society.⁴² This is not integration, but assimilation. Not all values will be accepted, such as drinking alcohol or clothing styles. Sport can be one of these areas where certain practises of 'Englishness' can exclude some communities.⁴³

Humans are emotional beings that strive to belong to a broader group. For this reason it is necessary to go beyond an instrumental perspective on how sports participation encourages integration of refugees or migrants into the new society. By considering the emotional, we can understand how refugees and migrants feel a sense of belonging to the club or wider community. Participating in sport can help players make meaningful relationships what help them build confidence, trust through a sense of belonging.⁴⁴

Integration is a continuous process. For some migrants and refugees, they are looking for to make sense of their new surroundings and potentially find a sense of belonging. A broader sense of belonging is built on existing traditions and practises from a refugee or migrant's home country to the new host community.⁴⁵ Sport provides this continuity and familiarity that allows integration to be developed. Initially, engaging in sport and leisure practises with other refugees or migrants that share their culture or language is a way of finding acceptance and can help rebuild social support networks.⁴⁶ Initially, sport can be a temporary respite from tense social situations elsewhere. Over time, it provides refugees a broader sense of belonging, and provides social relationships where they can meet with others with the similar experiences, and learn how to access social and material resources among family and ethnic networks.⁴⁷ Paradoxically, spending free time with other refugees can help them integrate with wider society as they learn about the host community.

Engaging in more multi-ethnic and multi-cultural sport programmes later can then facilitate wider relationships outside their immediate social group. Within this, common traits help build the social bonds, such as shared religion, ethnicity, language or gender. Engaging with people similar to you is easier because they have something in common or shared the same experiences.

Despite this, language can be a significant barrier to integration.⁴⁸ Sport can help language development through providing opportunities to speak with others from outside one's linguistic group. Werge-Olsen and Vik⁴⁹ found that everyday activities that refugees are familiar with, including sport, can help to maintain the connection between one's native culture and a new host community. This can be a powerful resource for language training. Teaching refugees a new language through active participation in familiar activities (learning by doing) helped them learn the language quicker, and contribute to their settlement in the society.

Sport can also be used to support values-based educational projects. With careful pedagogical support, sport can teach life skills and values such as team work, goal setting, leadership and initiative. These are transferable into the non-sport context, where they can help refugees integrate into wider society.⁵⁰ Whilst it is difficult to measure the effect of participation on interpersonal relationships and life skills, running sports programmes encourages refugees to take part in other educational and life-skills programmes as well.⁵¹ Encouraging refugees to volunteer or train as a coach helps empower them with additional life skills and potentially improves their prospects of finding a job and engaging with others.⁵² Yet these interventions should not only focus on refugees integrating with the 'host society', but also build on their own experiences and acknowledge the life skills they already have.⁵³ Actively involving them in decision-making and addressing the needs they raise themselves helps them become active agents of change on their own, whilst also sharing knowledge with the host community.

Much of the literature also makes the activity of sport a passive component within integration projects. They unconsciously reinforce the 'contact theory'⁵⁴ that suggests that if we put people from different backgrounds in contact with each other, then differences will disappear. Contact between different groups is likely to lead to reduced prejudice between group members and also a more positive generalised view of that social group. Certain conditions, such as equal status, common goals, inter-group co-operation, authority support and opportunities for friendship are important in this respect.⁵⁵ The intrinsic features of sport (shared activity, common focus, equality before the laws of the game) helps place sport as a space where contact theory can be put into practise. It has become a central feature of Sport for Development and Peace programmes across the globe. In arguing against social segregation of ethnic minorities, Dame Louise Casey recommended that meaningful contact could encourage community integration.⁵⁶ Casey, however, does not define 'meaningful contact', but it suggests that a more sustained set of interactions is required. Sport can provide the opportunity for 'meaningful contact', but active effort is required to manage the contact within the sport club. Differences have to be actively worked through.

Focussing solely on 'winning' can actually lead to negative developmental outcomes.⁵⁷ Vella et al have shown that the transformational leadership of the coach has a causal impact on positive developmental experiences of young athletes.⁵⁸ Although Vella et al focus on sporting success, rather than community coaching, they demonstrate the positive and negative influence of the coach. Sport provides a unique social context where different behaviours are displayed. This provides 'teachable moments'.⁵⁹ Sport also provides opportunities to interact, and in different ways different from other social situations. The

active role of the coach is not simply to facilitate teambuilding and teach skills, but it is also about reflecting in the role and actively seeking to develop one's own coaching skills.⁶⁰

Taking a 'passive' approach suggests that sport has some intrinsic power; in reality it is performed by people. These individuals engage in the sort of behaviours that include and exclude new players, regardless of their background. Integration (of whatever demographic) requires active engagement by coaches, volunteers and other players. Even critical scholars like Professor John Sugden underplay the role of coaches and volunteers in promoting values, peace or community participation.⁶¹ The role of the coach is fundamental in socialising players and imparting values; it is not just about skill development.⁶² Similarly, when working with vulnerable people, the cultivation of a 'safe space' requires an active involvement of the coaches, managers, and volunteers.⁶³ Nathan *et al*⁶⁴ therefore call for further research into how coaches' roles are defined, supported and developed in sports programmes for refugees, and what impact they have on refugees' behaviour.

2.3 Social Capital

The concept of social capital is still important in discussions of integration. Many articles on refugees, sport and integration draw on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Robert Putnam.⁶⁵ Broadly, social capital is the resources individuals can draw upon within networks of social relationships. Social capital therefore resides in the contacts, group memberships and interactions we have with others, both in formal (work, education) and informal settings. Sport becomes a key site for the formation of informal networks.⁶⁶ Each of these studies, however, focus on the social capital of the individual taking part, rather than the networks of the club or project. Accessing the wider networks of others often can be more rewarding. Furthermore, too much focus in academic literature is placed on social capital as a resource and forgetting about the participants' relationships with each other.⁶⁷

Further subdivision of the concept can be provided through bonding and bridging social capital.⁶⁸ Bonding social capital refers to the close social ties within a group, or 'strong ties'.⁶⁹ These can be very good at building homogeneity, team spirit and trust between participants. However, it can be inward-looking and exclusionary to outsiders with the formation of cliques and subgroups.⁷⁰ Bonding social capital can be useful for refugees as they acclimatise to their new community and build trusting relationships, but it can mean that they continue to be isolated from wider communities.

The focus on (bonding) social capital overlooks the importance of social relationships within the group (Nathan et al 2010). Promoting friendships and personal relationships can help overcome differences and develop prosocial behaviour. It is also important when building a new life in a new community and developing trust in others. This can also help overcome previous divisions, but needs to be carefully managed. Spaaij⁷¹ observed how clan affiliation continued amongst Somali refugees in Australia, yet sporting encounters put the importance of this clan affiliation aside. His interviewees argued that this enhanced the internal cohesion of the Somali community in Melbourne. Spaaij doesn't indicate how this was achieved other than through the 'passive' engagement in sport. There was no indication that these relationships were managed. If migrants and refugees self-organise, there is no intrinsic opportunity to overcome clan and tribal divisions. Khan⁷² observed that

clan/tribal division in the Afghan refugee diaspora in Brighton impeded their ability to form a Brighton Afghan community organisation through which they could organise sport programmes for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Active intermediaries can help overcome these divisions.

Bridging social capital is the links made with people beyond the bonding social capital of the immediate circle of family and friends. These 'weak ties'⁷³, expand the network and broadens the horizons of participants. This is where individuals acquire a wider range of potential contacts for information, job notifications and other resources, such as links to other institutions, language classes, legal advice, or support for children at school.⁷⁴ It is this type of social capital that is seen as more of a marker of integration. The wider the range of networks the individual can access, the theory suggests the more integrated they are. It should be reminded that this is still structured by social inequalities related to 'race' and ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status.

2.4 Benefits to physical, psychological and emotional health

In addition to participation and integration studies, sport can also support the physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing of participants. In contrast to voluntary migrants, refugees may have had no time to prepare mentally for their journey or potential adaption to a new community. In addition, the refugee experience is traumatic; it is "characterized by persecution, displacement, loss, grief, and forced separation from family, home, and belongings".⁷⁵ For women and young people, the refugee experience can be even more troubling as they are at a high risk of rape, abduction and trafficking⁷⁶, as well as other forms of exploitation. Boys mainly report physical abuse they experience by smugglers and government officials.⁷⁷ However, they are far more vulnerable to different types of exploitation than previously understood.⁷⁸ Refugee children often come to host countries with psychosocial development disorders linked to war or other traumatic events,⁷⁹ as well as linguistic, cultural, and educational experiences that may be vastly different from their host country.⁸⁰

Trauma can be a central feature of the refugee experience. Newly arrived asylum seekers show significantly higher levels of stress than other migrants. Sport programmes can be a potential for supporting those with trauma and stress.⁸¹ Sport can be cathartic. There is a 'mindfulness' in participating in sport that allows for the individual to focus on the immediate, embodied experience, rather than dwell on emotional or mental anxieties. 'In lives that are unfamiliar in so many other ways,' as Stone⁸² explains, 'this unthinking understanding of what is taking place during a match relieves the constant pressures of managing daily life. The emotions and experiences are carried through the week to provide positive means of reflection and anticipation'. The opportunity to play provides refugees a chance to take their minds off the stressful situation, engage in fun activities and form social bonds with other people.

Sport programmes, as opposed to self-organised sport, can provide a sense of structure and security in otherwise chaotic situations.⁸³ This regular, structured approach is important for those overcoming trauma.⁸⁴ Routine helps to entrench sport as a mundane activity. Healing from trauma can be facilitated by 'The re-establishment of daily patterns of living that

supply structure and support such as participation in work, school and community activities'.⁸⁵ Sport provides this structured environment and can help children overcome trauma (Henley 2005). Emphasising the routine can help bring normality back to participants. As Stone⁸⁶ states,

The routines and discipline attached to football help with the management of life from one day to the next. Football represents something like 'normality' amongst the unfamiliarity and inactivity that dominates life for new arrivals. Simple things like the exchange of 'banter' amongst teammates has the effect of just feeling like 'one of the guys'. Being mocked for missing a shot has nothing to do with the systemic oppression felt by many asylum seekers. It is both meaningful and meaningless within the mundanity of day to day life providing it remains within acceptable boundaries.

Just being a fan or player can help lessen the stigma of being an asylum seeker and reiterate the normality of daily life. This can help overcome some of the social and emotional dislocation experienced by refugees and asylum seekers.

Sport can help overcome trauma in three broad ways: play; skills; and strengths. Sport can enable a young person to develop skills and strengths that can build their self esteem.⁸⁷ 'Self worth comes from mastery within the context of the match', Stone argues.⁸⁸ Thus, the opportunity to acquire new skills through sport, or develop a mastery of those skills, can help develop confidence and can support those with trauma.⁸⁹

Sport can help bring symptoms of trauma to the surface. The combination of physical and verbal engagement in sport provides many potential flashpoints. Physical aggression, quickly escalating arguments and violence, or an inability to adhere to the rules when things go against the player can all be signs of emotional dysregulation. Symptoms of trauma can appear through the physical interactive aspects of sport. This can also surface through a social and emotional distance where the individual struggles to make friends or pro-social relationships with coaches or teammates. Attachment avoidance issues are also indicative of trauma related concerns. Yet these can be supported through sport. Safe space, acquiring skills over a sustained period through regular timetabled sessions can help participants gain some control over their emotional dysregulation.

Overall, there are many potential benefits of running sport programmes for refugees and recently arrived migrants. Many of these benefits affect the whole community demographic, rather than focussing only on refugees. Despite this, there are certain issues that are important to focus upon for refugees. Marginalisation and social isolation is a major factor. Sport can help overcome this, but the programme still needs to be able to access the networks to promote their activities. Sport provides social, emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing, which can have a positive impact on mental and physical health, particularly those affected by trauma. It also provides a space where different people can meet and potentially break down barriers, develop trust, learn about the wider community and key pieces of information as well as accessing additional support. Yet this is not a passive outcome from simply playing sport; it needs to be actively and carefully managed by project leaders, coaches and volunteers.

2.5 Gender

Gender is a significant area of focus for sport projects. Historically, sport has been seen as a masculine space, and certain sports become more masculine or feminine depending on cultural or religious norms. Sport allows men to prove their masculinity through bodily performances, which has been found to be an important aspect of male refugee settlement in a new society since it provides men with something familiar and comfortable. The case is even stronger for refugee families coming from very traditional Muslim societies, where gender boundaries are more difficult to be crossed.⁹⁰

Consequently, much of the research focuses on barriers to female refugees' participation in sports are: family responsibility, lack of sporting friends to go to trainings with, racism and chauvinism, wearing religiously appropriate clothing as a barrier to feeling comfortable, and particularly religious traditions of segregated gendered spaces.⁹¹

Scholars therefore support gender segregated SDP programmes for Muslim refugees if the tradition, culture and religion of the participants require doing so. Spaaij's⁹² research showed that while some refugee women do not want to take part in any organised sports programmes, some women, on the other hand, would like to take part in sport just like their brothers, fathers and other male relatives, in order to feel like they belong to the new society, to be physically active and healthy, and simply to meet other women and expand their social networks. As many scholars warn,⁹³ this issue signals the general need to listen to refugees' needs, expectations and their cultural and religious views prior to implementing the project.

3. Methodology



The project aims to measure the benefits of community integration and cohesion with refugee players. The evidence for this has previously been anecdotal. This project created an empirical framework for demonstrating how community integration work has an impact on young refugees. Data was gathered through surveys, structured observations, interviews and focus groups.

Evers and Nathan *et al* warn that sports interventions' mechanisms and routes to impact, as well as impact itself, require rigorous and comprehensive investigation.⁹⁴ They criticise purely quantitative approach based on rigid matrices and quantitative output data which do not capture the potential impacts on interpersonal relationships. On a micro level, psychological impacts such as personal development, life-skills, physical health, trauma relief, and self-confidence should be measured. The meso-level effects refer to changes in social networks, intra- and inter-group cohesion and relationships, social inclusion and acculturation. Lastly, macro-level of the impact evaluates changes in infrastructure, economic resources, and wider socio-economic systems and institutions that provide opportunities to marginalised and underprivileged communities.⁹⁵ This proposed quasi-experimental cohort study design is the most comprehensive approach to evaluating a sports intervention for refugees found in the literature.

In this research, participants' integration, social inclusion and well-being were measured through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Surveys were complemented by data drawn from interviews and participant observation. The views of key informants and the wider community were also solicited through interviews. The advantage of this approach is that it triangulates the various methods, while the majority of other programmes or researches have only focused on one or two main methods.

3.1.1 Quantitative data – Longitudinal study

Quantitative data was collected twice over the course of one year to detect changes over time regarding the refugee players' engagement with the sport, their physical and mental well-being, and perceived sense of belonging to the community. Quantitative data collected through surveys with **refugee players** aimed to specifically assess these areas:

1. Engagement with the club
2. Acquired skills through table tennis (Penglish and PingMaths)
3. Community integration
4. Social skills
5. Physical and mental well-being

Quantitative data collected through surveys with **non-refugee players** aimed to assess the following areas:

1. Engagement with the club
2. Engagement with refugees in the community in/out the club
3. Community Integration
4. Social skills

In the first round of surveys (November 2017), the research team collected a total of 114 surveys from refugee players and non-refugee players, and these results constitute the baseline of the project. In March 2018, a total of 120 surveys was collected.

3.1.2 Survey

The research team designed two separate surveys for the quantitative data intake, one directed at refugee players and one at non-refugee players. Surveys with refugee players were delivered in paper to gather more data simultaneously during sessions and minimise the disruption. The non-refugee players survey was uploaded onto the online tool Google Forms, and conducted on iPads, in order to gather and analyse data more quickly. Two rounds of surveys with refugee and non-refugee players were completed in November 2017 and in March 2018.

The research team worked closely with the BTTC Penglish coach to design the survey and simplify the language of the questions, so that refugee players with a very basic understanding of English could complete the survey autonomously. Nevertheless, given the very basic level of English of most of the refugee players, participants required one-to-one assistance with the completion of the survey.

The research team loosely based the design of the survey on Sport England 'The Wheel' categories of Confidence, Social Skills & Relationships, Emotional Skills, Health & Wellbeing, Aspirations & Achievement, Cohesion and Leadership.

To ensure that the survey questions took into account the complexity of the refugees' experiences and to follow strict ethical practises, the research team sought advice from experts in refugee child protection, such as Elaine Ortiz, founder and project leader of the

Hummingbird Refugee Project, a charity working with UASC in Brighton. After this consultation, it was decided that questions about seeking employment in this country should be avoided, as by law refugees without official status cannot be employed. Additionally, it was decided that questions about 'the future' in general should be reduced to a minimum, as refugees face a very uncertain future in the UK and some might be at risk of deportation. The research team considered insensitive to allude to future goals that might not be possible to realise given their uncertain situation in this country.

Through the questionnaire, the research team not only tried to find out the level of integration of refugee players, but also to investigate their perceived level of safety in their communities (i.e. Question 5, Section 2: 'Do you feel there are people around you who can help you to make future plans?'; Question 6, Section 2: 'Most days, I feel...' Choice of multiple options, such as 'Relaxed', 'Confident', 'Happy', 'Sad', 'Stressed', 'Lonely' etc.).

Initial drafts of the questionnaire were given to longstanding refugee members of BTTC to test the effectiveness of the survey. These members had a variety of levels of English and were asked how they experienced the survey. This feedback was incorporated into the final survey with minor adjustments to simplify language and structure.

A final discussion was held with the management of BTTC to ensure that the survey matched the requirements of the Sport England funding outcomes, as well as the requirements of the Club.

Ethical considerations were central in administering the survey. Surveys were administered by coaches and the Research Officer. Before the players completed the survey, the coaches and the Research Officer clearly explained the purpose of the survey and made sure the players understood that they should respond to the question as honestly as possible.

A group of Master's students from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) was recruited for data intake with non-refugee players at the club. They were trained by the Research Officer before they started data collection. They attended different sessions at the club to capture a variety of respondents.

3.1.3 Challenges

After the first round of data intake, it appeared clear that surveys are a problematic method to gather data with refugee participants. The main obstacle for data gathering is the language barrier. Some of the respondents required assistance from the coaches or the Research Officer in order to complete the survey. The close presence and assistance of the coaches and of the Research Officer during the completion of the survey might have impinged on the honesty of the responses given by the players.

Survey responses might not represent the reality of the respondents' English level either. For example, one respondent asked a co-national to help with translation, but they ticked 'Confident' in response to question number 3, Section 1 ('What do you feel your level of English is?').

In addition, research with refugees is infused with complex power dynamics. Refugees have to undertake a series of complex interviews in the host country (e.g. age assessment, asylum application, etc.), which might have upsetting outcomes. This demographic group are under pressure to present themselves in a positive light so that they can be successful in their asylum claim. Thus, surveys can be perceived as part of these assessments, even though it was explained to respondents that the surveys were not connected to these bureaucratic processes. Thus, the information provided in the surveys may be affected by these power dynamics.

After the first data intake, Master's students capturing data with non-refugee players reported that some of the questions in the non-refugee surveys should be modified, as respondents were having problems in answering them. Most of the issues related to the unclear meaning of 'community' and 'integration', for example in Q7 ('Do you feel that table tennis helps you integrate in the local community?'), or Q8 ('In your community, do you feel well integrated/integrated/not integrated/I don't know/I would like to be more integrated in my community'). Taking into account these observations and broader discussions about the complexity of terms such as community and integration, questions were clarified and modified in the second round of data intake. In addition, Q10 ('Is BTTC being a Club of Sanctuary, welcoming refugees and asylum seekers a good thing?') was also modified as Master's students reported that some of the respondents did not know the meaning of 'Club of Sanctuary'.

Initially, three rounds of surveys were scheduled, however due to the significant limitations that emerged during project progress, the research team agreed to limit the data intake to two rounds. Quantitative data does not fully capture the complexity of the refugee players' experiences, their level of integration in the community, nor their English language skills. Given the complex needs of the project participants, changes in behaviour and their level of integration need to be measured in a holistic way. The research team strongly agrees that outcomes for this project are best captured qualitatively rather than quantitatively. Qualitative data collected shows deep and meaningful outcomes that surveys cannot reflect.

3.2.1 Qualitative data

Qualitative data assessed the following areas:

1. Individual and social wellbeing

- Improved health and wellbeing (through physical activity and social integration)
- Increase self-confidence and self-esteem of participants
- Improved behavioural changes

2. Community Engagement

- Improved sense of community, belonging and identity
- Social benefits of participation
- Increased social networks of participants (social capital and trust)
- Increased understanding and mutual support between refugees and other members of the community

3. Improved language skills

- Increased fluency in English

4. Sustainability

- Increased levels of volunteering with participants volunteering their time at BTTC
- Number of new coaches trained

3.2.2 Structured observation

Structured observation (or participant observation) is a research method used in anthropology and by other social scientists, whereby a researcher takes part in the daily activities, interactions or events of a group of people, in order to learn the explicit and implicit aspects of their communities.⁹⁶ Participant observation is the foundation of ethnographic research, and it is part of qualitative research. Because qualitative research aims at understanding the different facets of a community, rather than looking at the scale and magnitude (quantitative research), the research team agreed that this was the most appropriate research method. In this project, through structured observations, it is possible to track language skills, behavioural changes of the individual players, as well as changes in group dynamics.

Participant observation was undertaken by the Research Officer on a weekly basis at the BTTC and at BHASVIC college, at events in Brighton, and during a trip to Cardiff in August 2017. Detailed observation notes were recorded using a field diary.

3.2.3 Interviews

Face-to-face interviews were conducted by the Research Officer with refugee players, the Pnglish coach, three BTTC coaches, the Club Director, organisations from the wider networks, foster carers and social workers. Interview questions were carefully designed for each interviewee, considering their role in the project and their experiences at the club.

All interviewees gave their verbal consent to be interviewed and recorded for the purposes of this project. Prior to interviews, participants were given the project information sheet to familiarise themselves with the research and the aims of the interviews. To guarantee confidentiality, in this report the research team omitted the names of the refugee players and of their foster carers.

Interviews were carried out in public spaces (cafés), at the BTTC and at the interviewees' homes. Interviewees suggested their preferred place to meet. In total, eleven interviews were conducted and transcribed.

Interviews were analysed using the principles of thematic analysis, which allows the organisation, detailed description and analysis of patterns of meaning in qualitative data. Coding frameworks were devised to reflect the theoretical focus of the project and the research questions as well as salient issues evident in the data to support the process of identifying, refining and interpreting key themes.

3.2.4 Challenges

The research team attempted to interview more participants involved in the project, but unfortunately these did not take place because of time constraints dictated by the interviewees' busy schedules.

As the research team is not an independent evaluator and the by the Research Officer has been frequently seen at the club, and hence she might be indirectly associated with the club staff, some of the participants might have felt under pressure to provide a positive feedback. This contention cannot be evidenced, but the research team is conscious that this might have occurred.

The research team is convinced that the structured observations have been the most effective methods to track changes in the individual players, particularly in terms of language skills, self-confidence and social integration. Neither surveys nor interviews could have captured the achievements of some of the players, as they involve language skills. Even though some of the players reached good level of English, they mostly feel comfortable using English in informal and social situations, particularly at the club. Although during interviews the refugee players were made to feel at ease, interviews are still a formal situation that require a more structured use of the language, and this might be a challenge for the refugees. As one of the interviewees put it during an interview:

“It’s hard to describe how the club has helped me, if we could speak Pashto I could tell you many more things but for me it’s hard to express this in English.”

4. REFUGEE INTEGRATION PROJECT: FINDINGS

4.1 Active Integration

Research findings suggest that the successful integration of refugees in sport projects comes from an **active approach** from managers, coaches and volunteers. When policymakers, academics and journalists refer to 'sport' supporting integration, they are suggesting that the activity of sport helps foster social interaction, understanding and integration. Yet, this report argues that it is not 'sport' that passively encourages these behaviours, it is the people within it. As John Sugden argued,⁹⁷ sport is a neutral space, but it can be managed in different ways. The success of integration projects often resides on the hard work, dedication and skills of the individuals running them. Sport managers, coaches and volunteers can actively encourage positive behaviours, organise events and programmes, and build on 'teachable moments'. Or they can simply coach skills and hope that values, respect and wider integration just passively evolve through the sport. This report argues that the active approach of BTTC coaches, volunteers and managers to consciously manage inclusive sport activities is central for the integration of refugees through sport.

"The club is the most welcoming place I've known ... But it's not that the table tennis as a sport naturally does it, it's the club that has tried to nurture this environment." Sophie, Pinglish coach

Importantly, BTTC managers and coaches have identified that integration does not simply involve an individual fitting into wider society. There are many different groups and identities to which an individual belongs. As outlined in the literature review, integration is multi-faceted and not simply a dualism between host community and migrants/refugees. Integration involves many different groups, also embedded within migrant groups and host communities.

At the BTTC, members are not one homogenous group, but the community that revolves around the club reflects the variety of people that live in wider society. The refugee players are one of the many groups within the club. Moreover, some refugees are young, others older, maybe female, or able bodied. They potentially fit into any one of a variety of 'labels', without making one of these 'labels' dominant. By breaking down these dominant categorisations, players are less restricted and more able to move and integrate across groups in the club.

"The BTTC and UK's 'host' community is richly varied with Travellers, players with disability, intergenerational and lots more. As are the migrant and refugee communities. The focus should be on integrating communities across all of these areas. That to me is what a strong community looks like." Tim, Co-founder and Director

A huge inspiration for BTTC and other Table Tennis social projects, including Greenhouse, was Jon Kaufman who founded and managed London Progress Table Tennis Club from 1990

for twenty years. The Club won the Senior British League Premier Division ten years in a row and inspired thousands of local young people at Willesden High School.

"What London Progress inculcated was a love of the game, a family affair. We had a sense of joy and so much of sport loses that joy. We were desperate to win, you know that, but there was a sense of fun and a sense of joy. If you lose that, pack up and go home." Jon Kaufman, March 2018

This approach can be seen in how BTTC operates, as well as the success of organisations such as Greenhouse that teaches table tennis to marginalised communities and where many of their coaches came through Progress under Jon Kaufman.

Together with the nuanced approach to communities, and the active approach to integration, the BTTC fostered an 'inclusive narrative' surrounding the club to encourage integration among players. As a result, **the club has provided a space where sport and community activities coexist**, and this is a very important element towards the integration of refugee players. The wider local networks of social workers and organisations noted that that the club has helped young refugees integrating in the local community quicker, compared to other young refugees who do not attend the club. The findings below will explain how the integration of these young people has been strengthened.

"We see the difference in our young people who engage with the club, they definitely settle into life quicker than the others who don't go to the club. They become part of the local community quicker."
Social worker, Brighton and Hove Council

"On the minibus to Cardiff, there are young BTTC players from all corners of the world: Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Kurdistan, Eritrea and the UK. Players and coaches are travelling to join an event that brings together other table tennis clubs from around the country. The young players (from 11 to 17 years old) are starting to be bored by the long trip, music choices have run out and stomachs are rumbling. Tim, the designated driver, can feel that the mood of the young people is plunging. To cheer spirits up, and to introduce Wales to the bored passengers, he puts on a famous song traditionally sung at Wales rugby matches. The song is fairly long, with a complicated vocabulary, but it has a relatively simple chorus, which gets played over and over again in the minibus. Slowly, all players start paying attention to the song and start singing it at the top of their lungs, some in broken English, some just imitating the sounds. Everyone in the minibus has their spirits restored and the song has already become the soundtrack of the trip!" (from the field diary)

4.2 The creation of the club's 'inclusive narrative'



The motto of the club is 'Solidarity, Community, Respect and Competition', and this vision is clearly driven by the founders and Director and it is actively re-enacted by coaches, volunteers and players. The 'inclusive narrative' of the club has been built over eleven years: for the first seven years, the club worked with disadvantaged local children and young people; more recently, the club has developed a reputation of working with players with Down Syndrome and refugees.

The inclusive narrative is based on the idea that all BTTC players are equal and that players are not labeled depending on where they come from, their physical and mental abilities and so on. As the Director outlined:

"Here in the club you are not a refugee, or a person with a disability, you are a member of the club. Everybody is equal."

The inclusive narrative gives staff and members a clear ethos to follow. At the same time, the narrative is taken up by members and it creates a firm foundation to embrace differences among players, but also enables them to be table tennis players first and foremost. **The focus on being a table tennis player removes boundaries between the different groups that attend the club.** This is reflected in the survey results. 58% (64% at baseline) of respondents stated that they met refugees or asylum seekers at the BTTC, 14% (15.5% at baseline) have not met a refugee or asylum seeker at the club, while 28% (20.6% at baseline) responded that they don't know. The relative high percentage of 'don't know'

responses might be due to the policy of the club to treat all players, including refugees, as equals, without making differences between members explicit. Therefore, when players access the BTTC they often do not know if there are refugees in the session. This aspect was highlighted in an interview with the Pingleish coach:

“A lot of the people who come to the club don’t know that some of the boys are refugees. One of the kids I worked with asked me if [a refugee player] was a refugee because he said he never realised that. It’s not relevant to the club members, they just go there to play table tennis.” Sophie, Pingleish coach

Nevertheless, club members have shown a ‘buy-in’ to the club’s narrative of inclusion. This is clear in the survey responses, where 90% of respondents strongly agreed with the following statement: ‘It is a good thing that the BTTC welcomes refugees and asylum seekers and treats them as any other player at the club’, 7% agreed, 2% were not sure and 1% disagreed.

90% of survey respondents strongly agreed with the following statement:
‘It is a good thing that the BTTC welcomes refugees and asylum seekers and treats them as any other player at the club’

Breaking down barriers and treating players as equals, does not imply not recognising differences. The club has celebrated members’ diversity through a variety of small, but powerful actions, such as hanging flags and maps on the walls of the club. Understanding and recognising different cultural norms is vitally important for social integration.

The inclusive narrative is not restricted to refugees, but it extends to all players. For example, during a session for adults with learning disabilities, two carers explained that the welcoming atmosphere at BTTC for people with disabilities is difficult to find elsewhere. They emphasised that the players for whom they cared were able to interact with such a range of different people as equals, something they do not experience in many other aspects of their lives.

The inclusive narrative has been recreated on a daily basis by the actions and activities within the club. This ‘identity work’ is a continuous process of repetition of a discourse that helps members distinguish between ‘us’ and ‘others. For players, the inclusive narrative helps create a clear boundary with the outside world, which in turn reinforced the sense of belonging to the club. One of the refugee players explained that outside the club he had experienced several encounters with ‘bad people’ who had treated him in an unfriendly way. He later mentioned that inside the club he had never felt discrimination and that he had made many friends since joining the club.

The inclusive narrative is also used by the BTTC to present a positive image of the club, of the players and of table tennis. The inclusive narrative tells a story about how table tennis can bring the local community together. As part of this narrative, the staff draw on narratives of empowerment and success within the club. They recount how new players arrive with little-or-no table tennis skills, quickly gain experience and confidence, make new friends from different walks of life, then become coaches who then train a variety of members of the community. The importance of empowerment will be addressed later, but

these narratives help present the club and its members in a positive light. Once again, this is an active action.

Easing tensions between antagonistic groups

The BTTC has hugely helped in the cohesion of some nationalities that have been extremely antagonistic elsewhere, by breaking down barriers between cultural groups. In particular, the research team is aware that in the ‘Jungle’, the informal refugee camp in Calais (France), Sudanese and Afghani groups have often clashed and at times have been violent with each other. However, the BTTC has fostered a culture of respect and inclusion and refugees at the club have completely overcome these tensions created along the journey, this is evident in the friendships formed between Sudanese and Afghani refugees at the BTTC. As one foster carer observed:

“Ahmed [Sudanese] made a few friends through the club, especially Khan [Afghani] is a bit of an older brother for him. I think Khan has really taken Ahmed under his wing.”



Afghani and Sudanese players have formed strong friendships at the BTTC.

4.3 Narrative in action: Working with differences

Management work hard to ensure that staff create the right environment where everyone is made to feel welcome and where differences between players are overcome. For example, rather than creating teams based on players’ origins, ages, dis/abilities, and so on, the club actively mixes players during sessions. This happens during competitions within the club, as well as within the local leagues. Integration is strengthened if table tennis sessions are structured in this way. As Tim, the club’s Co-founder and Director stated:

“We had a competition which was community inclusion. And we had teams of three from ten different sessions. A team of people who had cancer, a team of people who were homeless, and the atmosphere was brilliant. The next time we ran it we just seeded them from 1-30 and then paired people up with the strongest with the weakest, and so on, so the teams were completely mixed. It was much more interesting. The people are table tennis players before anything else.”

This competition was so successful that the club decided to run a monthly BTTC Community Cup which includes mixed teams of refugees, people affected by cancer, BTTC's best 8 year olds, players with Down's Syndrome, homeless people, players aged 80+, people with learning disabilities, Irish Travellers, people recovering from addiction and other groups that BTTC works with. Having sessions and tournaments that cut across these demographic labels helps break down the potential barriers between individuals, but also reinforces solidarity and respect between players.

As coaches work with a variety of members with different abilities and needs, being flexible and accommodating is central to their work. Good communication between the club and the players, foster carers and social workers, together with the adaptability of coaches, were mentioned by interviewees as important elements of the club. For example:

“It’s fantastic that they’re so flexible in terms of fitting in things when we need their help. They’re able to accommodate our requests on the spot. They’re willing to be flexible and change things for the individuals at the club. They adapt so that everyone can access the same things and participate. I’ve never received no as an answer from the club. I think that makes the young people feel that the club is available to them.” Brighton & Hove Social Worker

As highlighted in this quote, the club’s flexibility enforces the club members’ perceptions of the club as a safe space, as the club adapts to the needs of their members. This is particularly important when players, in particular refugee players for a variety of reasons, struggle to adapt to fixed timetables, rules and routines. Having a full-time club venue allows for flexibility, players come whenever they have free time and they are welcomed in and join in with whatever session is on at that time.

The club’s flexible approach also emerges in a variety of activities that they organise, such as the BTTCFC football team that takes part in local competitions. The establishment of this team has been driven by the needs of the young refugees who said that they wanted to play football. Since June, 2017 BTTCFC has played in the local 5-aside weekly league every Thursday night near the BTTC. It has been an excellent way of engaging new refugee players in the BTTC as they have spoken to friends and college about where they can play football and the club now provides that opportunity. At least ten players at the BTTC have come to the Club via BTTCFC and it has been a great hook for initial engagement. This also tells us about how these refugees felt a strong sense of belonging to the club, and they wanted to play football as a BTTC team, rather than simply joining a football club.

Some of the regular players are four local twenty-five year olds that were some of the original players at the BTTC 11 years ago, host community local young men who have never

had any contact with refugees. The integration and friendships between the BTTC football team have been very interesting and it is a great addition to the BTTC portfolio.

BTTCFC was promoted to the top division of the local Power Play 5 –aside league and has entered a second team. The players that have jobs pay £4 per game and the one that don't pay £1 or play for free.

“I always loved playing football. Growing up in Sudan, in the Calais Jungle and now in Brighton. It is good to play as a team and there is always a great spirit when we go up to our Thursday night matches. I am very happy that the BTTC entered a team in the local 5-aside when I said I wanted to play Football. We have a really international team it is great.” Ahmed, 17 years old.



BTTCFC April 2018. Players from England, Spain, Denmark, Nigeria, Chad, Italy, Sudan & Syria.

Aside from football, the BTTC has also organised friendly cricket matches in East Brighton Park. This is particularly enjoyed by the Afghan players, who are huge cricket fans. **Table Tennis is the main focus at BTTC, but it is great for building relationships to play some other sports and diversify activities.**



BTTC playing with the Hand in Hand team in August 2017. Including some serious Afghan cricketers and some Sudanese and Syrian players completely new to the game.

4.3.2 Narrative in action: Community focused coaches



The club policy is to employ **community focused coaches** with inclusive outlooks and community-facing skills, rather than elite coaches, to strengthen active integration. Community focused coaches help create the right setting and atmosphere for transformational opportunities in the club. Negative coaching may work for some players who aspire to be elite competitors, but for community clubs, positive and welcoming behaviours, combined with fun sessions, help create the social environment where participants will return, socialise and integrate. Too often the focus of coaches, and the coaching framework, is to focus on the elite model.⁹⁸

The vast majority of sport coaching is based in the community and requires a distinct set of skills, such as positivity, proactivity, reflection, and awareness that not all players want to be Olympic champions. As Wagstaff et al argue, recruitment is a key aspect of managing groups and subgroups within a sporting environment.⁹⁹ BTTC coach job descriptions clearly state that coaches should ‘strike a balance between fun and seriousness’ and that the coaching style depends on the players involved. This is done not only to perpetrate the ‘inclusive narrative’, but also to sustain this narrative and provide momentum, energy and vitality to the activities of the club. The job descriptions for BTTC’s coaches request that:

- a) All sessions need to be delivered in a warm and welcoming manner and with passion and enthusiasm
- b) Ensure sessions are appropriately designed for the players within it and effectively delivered to maximize returning player numbers. Striking the appropriate balance between fun and seriousness.
- c) Identify young people who would most benefit both socially and health wise from increased participation
- d) Actively recruit and give attention to players who come from marginalised backgrounds

Integration at the BTTC is strengthened by recruiting community-focused coaches, establishing clear norms of inclusive behaviour and exhibiting team-focused leadership. Actively deciding that this is how the club will operate provides support to coaches, volunteers and other players to actively intervene in order to promote these values.

“Tim made it clear when he started this: people are people, we’re here just to have fun and use table tennis to forget problems outside. We make people feel welcome, all our staff is friendly and not judgemental. I’ve been in four different clubs in my life, and I’ve never seen anything like it!” Pedro, Head coach

The community focused approach requires active interventions from managers and head coaches. Encouraging community-focussed and fun coaching becomes important when trying to nurture welcoming environments for new members, from whatever background. Integration does not simply emerge, but is developed along networks of teachers and mentors.

New BTTC staff and coaches experience the welcoming culture that exists in the club, but it is not enough for everyone to learn just by being part of the sessions and the atmosphere. In 2018, the BTTC have run staff and volunteer training and workshops on building positive relationships, behaviour management and also, most relevantly, run sessions on how to make new players feel welcome and foster a sense of belonging. This element is the key to getting hard to reach players back to the club and engaging them for the long term. In terms of player retention and engaging marginalised groups, this aspect of the club is what can be shared as good practice.

Nevertheless, the over-riding focus on elite skills performance means that sometimes tensions emerge between coaching styles. For example, the Club Director, Tim, recounted a situation where he had returned from a trip and discovered that two coaches were mainly focussing on the elite performance of the refugee players. The removal of the fun dimension, as well the focus on skills rather than social, upset the two young players. Tim actively intervened to rebuild the trust and relationships with the young players, as well as talking with the coaches about their responsibilities. This episode reiterates the interpersonal skills that are required to be a community coach.

This episode highlighted the club’s need to implement a mentoring and training programme. Training and certification for community coaching should focus on interpersonal skills, motivations and reflection in order to encourage community integration. Whilst Wagstaff et al highlight the importance of recruitment for positive coaches, ongoing training ensures that these skills remain explicit and up-to-date.¹⁰⁰ Often skills are seen as the explicit and active role of coaches, whilst team-building, values and relationships are implicitly and passively developed. Flipping the focus to making community coaches explicit and active teachers of values and relationships, with skill-development second can help produce positive environments for community integration.

4.3.3 Narrative in action: Welcoming space

“There’s a general welcoming environment and the club make it clear that refugees are welcome too. The fact that there’s signs in the club that say ‘refugees are welcome here’ opens a dialogue about refugees being part of the club.” Elaine, Founder of the Hummingbird Project

The inclusive narrative is enacted through the staff, as well as the physical space of the club. The welcoming environment of the BTTC is physically created through maps and flags from all over the world, through the ‘Refugees

Welcome’ graffiti in the main sports hall, and through photos of different members of staff and volunteers hanging on the walls. The ‘Refugee Welcome’ sign can potentially open up conversations between members about refugees, seeking to contrast the stories in the British media that portray refugees as ‘scroungers’ or terrorists.¹⁰¹

All new players are asked to put a pin in a world map where they are from and also in a map of Brighton and Hove to show where they live now. There are more and more pins across all over the world and this is celebrated as a positive thing at the BTTC.

The flags hanging on the walls not only do they communicate to new and existing members that BTTC is a welcoming club regardless of one’s national background, they also communicate to individuals that they are important and special. The combination of active positive behaviours and welcoming physical space helps players build a sense of belonging to the club. As illustrated in this quote:

“At the BTTC, he was made to feel special, there was a lot of emphasis on him at the beginning in terms of his flag being put up, he was really made part of it and he realised that he was good at table tennis which made him feel good about himself.”
Foster carer

4.3.4 Narrative in action: Cultivating a sense of belonging

The inclusive narrative of the BTTC provides a clear identity for the club, but also allows members to actively buy into the narrative of the club and contributes to shaping a sense of belonging.

For refugees, fleeing leads to a loss of ties in their home countries and a loss of identity. The BTTC, through cultivating sociality, organising trips, mixing players and organising matches, has given refugees ‘opportunities to belong’ and a deeper connection to the host country. Refugee players at the BTTC have made to feel welcome and accepted, and that has enormously helped with their integration in Britain.

“The club has given them a sense of identity and connection here, and that’s really important. They have connection to their birth heritage but also to here, they belong to something, and that’s huge when you’ve been travelling and you feel not welcomed here and had so many doors shut in your face. Having someone who opens the door and invites you in, it’s really important.” Social Worker, Brighton and Hove Council

Belonging to the club has been incredibly important for some of the refugee players, as they often do not have ties to the UK on arrival and struggle to forge relationships in the community.

"Now I see the club as my second home after I left my country... when I came, I knew nobody in Brighton, I just knew my brother... and now when I joined the club I made friends, I have gone on holidays, I have gone swimming with them" Refugee player

This sense of belonging emerges through the refugee players survey results too. 40% of respondents feel most connected to the BTTC (23% at baseline), 20% to friends from school (46% at baseline) and 30% to people they met in Brighton (38% at baseline). The data also reveals that respondents feel most connected to the city of Brighton (30%) than to the UK in general (10%). The data shows an increased sense of membership to the BTTC and connection to the club members.

Members are proud to identify with the club through the T-shirts and hoodies displaying the club logo. The club tops and tracksuits have become more of a feature of BTTC. Young people wear the kits when they come to play, they wear it around town, and it becomes a way of showing that they belong to a wider group.

"Sense of belonging is so important especially for a young asylum seeker who has lost his home and family. The club contributes to forging a new identity, they can proudly say 'I am a member of the BTTC'. He feels he is a part of something" Foster Carer

Cultivating this sense of belonging comes from developing interpersonal relationships with players. This moves beyond the traditional focus on sport skills. Belonging is a form of emotional attachment that relates individuals to other people or places.¹⁰² Studies have focused on broad forms of identification, such as national and ethnic identity, gender, and intersections of gender, nation, class and religion. What BTTC show is how individuals can have a feeling of belonging to a social activity.

4.3.5 Managing non-inclusive behaviours

Respect and solidarity between players are encouraged by coaches not just through the sport. Whilst coaches explicitly intervene in situations that relate to skills or possibly teamwork, the community-focused coaches at BTTC also intervene around other social interactions. In this way, they actively and explicitly teach about values, integration and provide a space where differences are talked about in a positive way. Sport produces 'teachable moments', and coaches identify these 'teachable moments' and use them in a positive and constructive manner. Addressing these teachable moments there and then helps players reflect, as Tim, the Co-founder and Director, states,

"If any issue came up, it would be addressed there and then, by whoever was running the session. This has happened implicitly. But it's rare that it happens. I once heard one of the 11-year old kids, who had a few issues at school, call someone else a 'spaz'. I had the conversation with him there and then about what that word might mean and who else might have heard it at the club and some people may find that word offensive. They think about it and it doesn't really happen again."

The coaches actively intervene to manage certain behaviours and issues. This active role means that when problems occur, they are ‘nipped in the bud’. As with any group, sub-groups and cliques can develop in sport. This can be pronounced in migrant communities as individuals gravitate towards those they instinctively feel culturally or linguistically linked. For refugees and migrants, this can mean spending time with people from the same clan, nation, religion or linguistic group. Initially, this does not necessarily represent a problem as it can help build an affiliation for the club and provide a sense of belonging. But in the long term, these sub-groups have to be actively managed:

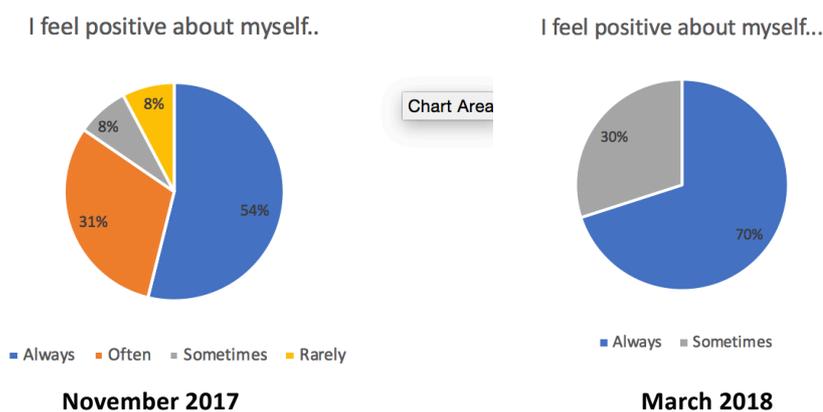
“The main point is the ethos that everybody plays with everybody, it can’t be cliquey. [...] Sometimes some people just want to play with their friends, [...] we tell them that they have to play with everybody.” Nick, Coach.

Clique and sub-groups inevitably form, but Nick highlights how BTTC staff actively mix players up and also communicates that the ethos is to “play with everybody”. This reaffirms the inclusive narrative of the club, but also helps to promote integration across different groups.

4.4 Improved confidence and wellbeing

The club has witnessed improvements in wellbeing and confidence of refugee players throughout the course of the project.

These improvements are visible in the survey results. 70% of respondents stated that they ‘Always’ feel positive about themselves (54% at baseline), while 30% feels rarely positive about themselves (8% at baseline). The data shows there has been an increase in respondents’ self-esteem over the months.



Refugee players’ self-confidence has been fostered by a welcoming environment and by the possibility to succeed at the sport. Through table tennis skills, players could appreciate ‘they were good at something’. Taking part in competitions and succeeding in the sport has

undoubtedly boosted the refugee players' individual and social confidence. As one foster carer put it:

“The club has been brilliant for him and it’s given him a lot of confidence because he found that he’s actually really good at something. He can be proud of it. It’s such a good starting point for his self-esteem, it’s such a good basis to build on knowing what he can do really well.”

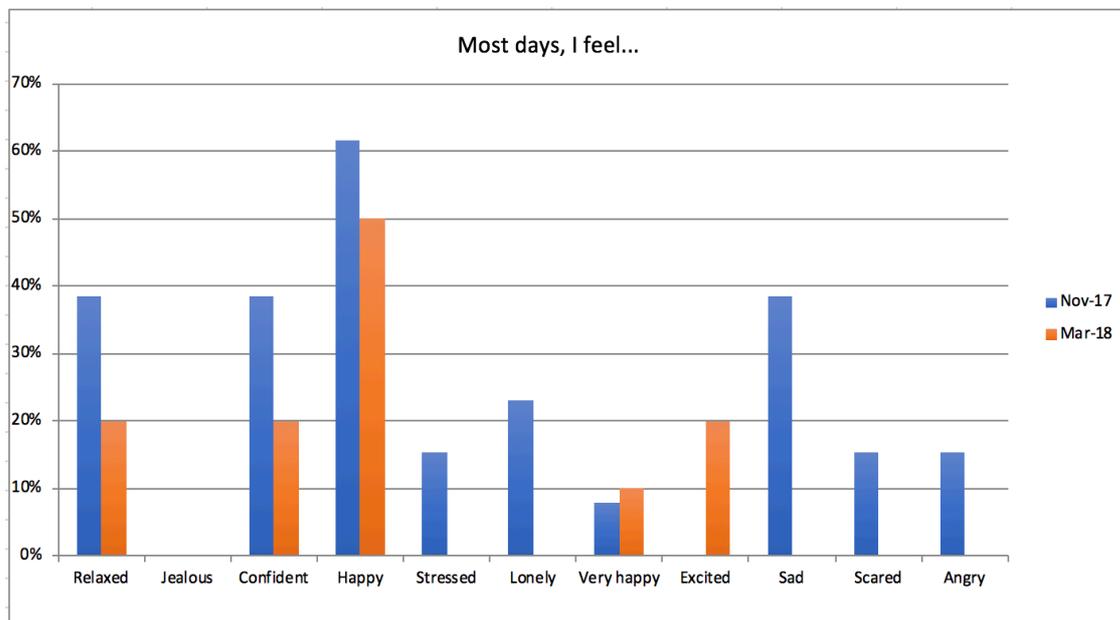
This is an invaluable achievement, particularly for young refugees who have been through particularly traumatic experiences and often have low self-esteem as a result of traumas. Table tennis has been a means for the young refugees to feel proud of themselves and to be proud of being refugees too.

“When I went to the Junior league in London with [another refugee player], we won the second place and we got medals. We were the only refugees in the league, that was the proudest moment for me.” Refugee player

This improved sense of self-confidence is clearly visible at the club, as refugee players socialise comfortably with other club members. Players not only have taken up the sport, but they also feel socially comfortable at the club and want to be part of the community formed around BTTC.

“Every single refugee that I met that has come to the club, has definitely become more confident, more smiley, seems happier, they’re less withdrawn, less inexpressive, they are laughing more.” Sophie, Pinglish coach.

These results are clear in the survey too. 50% of respondents stated that most days they feel happy (62% at baseline), 10% very happy (8% at baseline), 20% feel relaxed (38% at baseline), 20% confident (38% at baseline). No respondent feels sad (38% at baseline), lonely (23% at baseline), scared or angry (15% at baseline). Although feelings of happiness have decreased, negative feelings such as ‘sad’, ‘scared’ and ‘lonely’ have disappeared in the second round of data uptake. See table below.



Ahmed's Story

Ahmed is a 17 year old boy from Sudan, who arrived in the UK alone in May 2017. He was referred by social services to the BTTC immediately after his arrival. When he joined, he seemed to be very reserved, shy and withdrawn. His English language was enough to be understood but it was difficult to have a full conversation with him. He used to speak very quietly and avoid eye contact. He had never played table tennis before.

Since May 2017, he has been going to the club almost every day, training with the coaches as well as joining the social sessions offered at the club. Six months after joining the project, he has joined the BHASVIC team which reached the national school finals, and he participated in a variety of other competitions. He was offered the opportunity by the club to train in Level 1 coaching, and he is now he is helping other coaches train younger players in schools and at the club.

He has made many friends at the club and always joins extra activities, such as TedX Brighton, the Football 4Peace training, or BTTC 5 aside. Three months after arriving in Brighton, and being at BTTC, he was volunteering at BTTC's sessions at Brighton and Hove City Council's TakePART festival and was showing various people how to play table tennis.

Apart from his table tennis skills, he is now much more confident in English, he is very talkative and he looks much more comfortable in his own skin. When playing table tennis, he is very loud and very competitive. It is hard to imagine that only one year ago, he was the quiet boy in the corner.

4.5 The club as a social space

“Refugee players often sit and chat in the club’s social space, mixing with other players from all over the world. This time, around the table, there are refugees from Sudan, Afghanistan, Syria, Chad, other young players from the local community in Kemptown, older players, and coaches. They are chatting about table tennis, the next competitions, school and homework. The atmosphere is relaxed and pleasant, and everyone seems to be comfortable in the space. Refugee players laugh, joke and are involved in the conversation. Some of them have already spent a few hours here, playing table tennis, socialising and coaching other players.” (From the field notes)

Social interactions at the club introduce participants to a broader social network and help them form positive relationships with each other and with the wider community through the safe space of BTTC. At the same time, this engagement allows members of the host community to have positive interactions with refugees and asylum seekers.

For refugees, as for many younger and older people, forming social relationships can be difficult, especially if they are new to a country. The social aspect of sport cannot be overlooked. Although it involves physical activity, skills-acquisition and mental concentration, sport is primarily a social activity.¹⁰³ Much of the academic literature has focussed on either the integration or the development of social capital as a resource (see the Literature Review). These studies often forget about the importance of participants’ relationships with each other (Nathan et al 2013). This research focused on the relationships that have built inside the BTTC, including relationships between coaches and players, relationships across social groups, and relationships with external services, such as social workers, carers, and charities working with refugees in Brighton. The success of BTTC would not be possible without these relationships between individuals and the social events.

Providing a fun activity in a positive environment significantly helped refugees to find a place in the community, socialise and make friends.

Often members of the club, including staff, stay and socialise in the club beyond the hours of their sessions. For many, the BTTC is a place where they chat, eat, have coffee, play chess and so on. This social space provides opportunities for individuals to socialise and make friends before, during and after their sessions. This approach to social interactions clearly worked:

“We have a review with young people every six months and 90% of young people feature the BTTC as an important part of their lives in Brighton. They see it as part of their social world. Even if they’re not attending, they still see it as part of their social world and are aware of it or have friends who go there. They see it part of their community.” Social Worker, Brighton and Hove Council

Providing a fun activity in a positive environment significantly helped refugees to find a place in the community, socialise and make friends. The positive atmosphere at BTTC helps

contribute to positive emotions, and to shape a sense of belonging. The impact of this socialisation should not be underestimated:

“It’s been a game changer for a couple of the young people we work with. There’s a couple that hadn’t had fun for such a long time and then they went to the BTTC and they really had a great time. That’s what they get from it.” Elaine, Founder of The Hummingbird Project

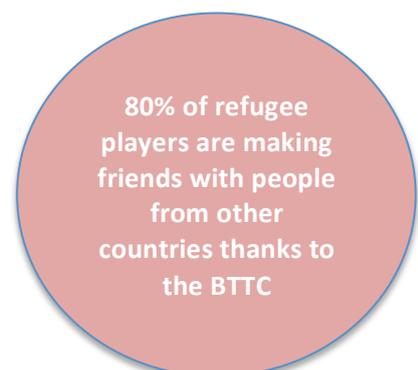
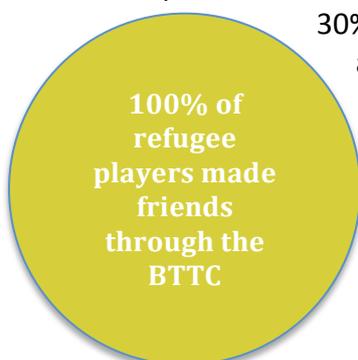
The BTTC also organised different social events outside the club, such as: local tournaments and showcases; external sport activities (friendly volleyball or football matches); support to other members when they compete; public talks; one attempt to break a world record; and a trip to Lords to watch the Afghanistan cricket team play the Marylebone Cricket Club. Through these events, players are able to meet and socialise outside the club’s physical space, forging stronger relationships between each other. **The social aspect of the club brings people together beyond the physical activity of table tennis.**

The individual and mobile aspects of table tennis also help mixing different players and strengthening the social aspect of sport:

“Table tennis is a good sport for socialising: you’re always swapping partners, you can do doubles and have a group dynamic. With table tennis, it’s nice for everyone to get a rally, everyone responds to each other. You match each other’s style, it’s a conversation. People who are just naturally less competitive, it’s just nice to play in a relaxed way. Those who are more competitive, they want to learn, they get really into it. It’s a very adaptable sport.” Sophie, Pinglish coach

Whilst team sports can facilitate the development of team building skills, they can also foster a competitive dimension focussed on scoring. Instead, rallies within table tennis foster a positive interaction between two players: it is a conversation. This way of playing can encourage actual conversations between players, especially as they can move around tables, and play with different individuals.

Survey results show how tennis table has been instrumental to improve the refugee players’ social skills. All respondents stated that they are making new friends (100% at baseline). 80% of respondents are making friends with people from other countries (92% at baseline), 30% are making friends with people from the UK (38% at baseline) and 20% from their own country (38% at baseline).²



² Note this was a multiple choice question.

Having the opportunity to socialise with people from the same age group, and who may have gone through similar experiences, helped refugee players to form meaningful relationships with other players. Young unaccompanied refugees, particularly when they first arrive in the UK, often face loneliness and isolation, as they do not have any relationship in the new country:

“After I arrived, I made a friend at the club, then life became easier for me. It’s really hard when you arrive and you don’t know anyone and you’re alone.” Refugee player

In addition, depending on the time of the year, young refugees might not be able to access school immediately. The club is a space where these new arrivals can go and spend their time when they are not yet enrolled in formal education, such as in the case of Ahmed:

“[Ahmed] arrived in April, and because of that time of the year he wasn’t able to go to college until September, so I was looking for extra classes for him or anything for him to do during the day, so that’s why I engaged with the BTTC. We were the first people to enrol in the Penglish programme. I got in touch with Tim and he said to go to the club straight away.” Foster carer

Refugee and non-refugee players regularly interact at the club and outside the club. Some of the refugee and non-refugee players started to meet to socialise and spend time with each other outside of the club. This is a huge success for the BTTC as the club’s welcoming and inclusive environment is fostering strong bonds between people in the local community. It is also a clear indication that the Refugee Integration Project is achieving its targets towards integration.

“At the club, I made a lot of friends from different countries and from the UK. I don’t have friends from college or anywhere else, only at the club. I see them outside of the club too.” Refugee player

The social aspect is not restricted to refugee players. 93% of non-refugee respondents (93% at baseline) stated that they are making new friends with table tennis, the 96% (92% at baseline) of respondents feel that BTTC and table tennis helped them to meet people they wouldn’t otherwise have met, and the 80% (92% at baseline) of respondents stated that the BTTC helped to make friends with people different from their circles. These numbers show that the BTTC has been a space where all members cultivate social relations, as well as sport. One member of the BTTC women’s session said that going to the pub after the sessions was a motivation for coming back. She said that, ‘It is social. I used to play in Hollingbury table tennis club, but here there is more people and I enjoy it more.’

Whilst some of these social activities can grow organically from the relationships that are formed through playing table tennis, the social space also is the result of the active role played by managers and coaches. BTTC actively encourages members to play different people and creates opportunities to make friends within the club. **The development of sociality within a sport club does not occur overnight, but it grows thanks to the hard**

work and dedication of coaches and volunteers. The social aspect of the BTTC has been made possible by the active engagement, promotion and interventions of coaches, managers and volunteers.

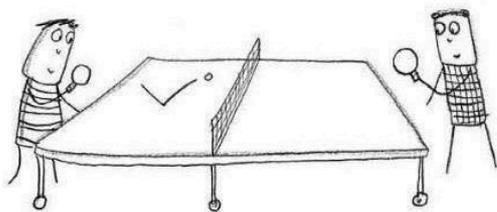
“Recently, I’ve been focusing on the integration side of things, encouraging people to speak to each other, mix with people they don’t know. They practice English just naturally through the conversation, they learn by talking.” Sophie, Penglish coach.

Refugee players are encouraged to play with all-level players and respect different abilities and capacities. Whilst Dame Louise Casey¹⁰⁴ recommended that meaningful contact can encourage community integration, the active involvement of managers and coaches helps to facilitate contact and thereby produce the opportunities for social relationships to form.

4.6 The club as a safe space

Table tennis, as well as sport in general, offers a way to switch off from everyday worries and anxieties. It has a mindful quality where the player becomes focussed on the activity, on their body and on their interactions, rather than on their thoughts, worries and traumas. Being able to express oneself physically, without having to know a language has been a really important opportunity for refugees to overcome trauma and social anxiety. Having a safe space is vital for supporting those who have been affected by trauma.¹⁰⁵ **When combined with the various aspects of BTTC, sport, community and a sense of belonging can make a small contribution to managing trauma.** At the same time, having a safe space and being able to just have fun played an important role in helping the emotional and mental wellbeing of young refugees.

HAPPINESS IS



*...sometimes no words,
just the sound of a ball.*

“This is a way of switching off of all the problems they have. They go there, they have fun and it is a way for them to be seen as a young person, not as an asylum seeker. For these boys, having that place where they feel safe, it’s so important.” Case Worker, Refugee Council

“He has tried other activities but nothing has stuck. [...] He stuck with the club because he knew that he could just go to the club and you don’t need to talk, there’s no people asking you things. [...] I think the sporting aspect of it has really done it for him.” Foster carer

Refugee players, especially boys and men, can express themselves in a different way and gain mastery of themselves and their emotions through physical activity. On top of these intrinsic qualities of sport, **the club created an environment that makes the players feel safe, empowered and supported.**

“A refugee boy came with his foster carer, he’s been in the UK two months and doesn’t have much English, he’s struggling to come out of his shell. We played some table tennis, he still wasn’t speaking much but he opened up a bit.” Sophie, Pinglish coach

Having a safe space is critical for the creation of an inclusive and equitable environment where positive social outcomes can be fostered.¹⁰⁶ Safe space is a combination of physical, psychological, sociocultural and political safety.¹⁰⁷ At the BTTC, members can freely participate and express their identities without fear of violence, exclusion or sanction. This has been achieved with the ‘inclusive narrative’, positive welcoming approach from staff, flags on the walls, and clear direction from the Director, founder and trustees. Within this environment differences can be explored, challenged and embraced safely:

BTTC coaches have also pivotal roles in the creation of this safe space. The role of the coach provides a trusted adult figure who can help guide the young person through their development. Coaches are role models who are seen as experts and frequently spend more time with young people than other trusted adults, such as parents or social workers. Through creating fun sessions and coaching with integrity, coaches help develop trusting relationships, particularly for young refugees in difficult situations. Survey with refugee players show that 30% of the refugee respondents stated that in case of need, they would ask for help to Tim, the club’s Director. This finding was also reported by some interviewees:

“The feedback I get from young people is that they feel very safe at the club. We have a lot of confidence that the club is a safe space for young people.” Social Worker, Brighton and Hove

“Tim has become a really important person to a couple of the young people I work with, they ask for his opinion or they are happy to share things with him. He will celebrate their joys and achievements but also he will give them a hug if there’s something upsetting them in their lives.” Brighton & Hove Social Worker

For refugees, the role of the coach is even more important because their experiences are likely to have been incredibly traumatic due to forced displacement, separation from home, family, and belongings. For young refugees, fleeing can be even more troubling as during their journeys they are at a high risk of rape, abduction and trafficking (Boyden et al. 2002; UNICEF 2017; Mougne 2010).¹⁰⁸ However, there is a variety of reasons why young refugees might not talk about these experiences. Some of this is cultural, some of this is might be due to their age, some will be due to language and having the linguistic and emotional literacy to express those feelings.

Coaches potentially can develop a trusted relationship where issues may be divulged, as they are in regular contact with the players and are in a position to spot potential issues. Sport can also provide opportunities where issues may be triggered and coaches may be able to identify these situations and use them as opportunities to understand more, or to refer the individual to specialist case workers.

“In one occasion, the club sent a referral to me, when they identified one boy who was having problems. I think it’s a really good environment to identify needs for these young people because the staff works with these young people every day. [...] The young people feel comfortable with the coaches, they spend a lot of time with them. Activities are fun and they trust people at the club. When you trust someone, you’ll be disclosing. I think the coaches are the best people to identify those needs, the young people might not say things to the social workers because they don’t feel that connection.” Caseworker, Refugee Council

Yet, the BTTC is not, and should not be, a counselling service. The club provides a safe space for young refugees to engage in a fun activity and switch off from their worries. In this way, table tennis can become part of the healing process, but it is not the responsibility of the club to provide psychological support. To ensure that any issues are signposted and potentially referred to caseworkers with the skills and expertise to help, it is important for the club to be embedded in the wider community networks available (see section 4.9).

4.7 Empowerment

BTTC players are encouraged to take on responsibilities, such as coaching, helping those with lower sport skills, or representing the BTTC at public events. For example, the club’s Under 15 Elite squad of players (12 players) coach refugee players one hour a week, and in turn the refugee players coach primary school students who attend after-school sessions at BTTC. This represents an opportunity for elite and refugee players to learn coaching skills, improve communication skills, as well providing an opportunity for cross-cultural interaction. This opportunity has made refugee players feel that they can contribute back to the club and to the community. All the players are encouraged to help each other and work together.

The BTTC vision is to strengthen solidarity and mutual aid through table tennis. The club believes that marginalised individuals need to be given opportunities to volunteer and contribute back to the community as soon as they are ready. Through coaching opportunities, table tennis and helping at the club, a sense of purpose is provided to many that do not find this anywhere else in their lives. The BTTC approach to empowerment provides players with the confidence to be assured of their own skills and capabilities and the agency to act either as individuals or with others to make change.

“Helping other people has been an important part of the club. He feels he can give back. He’s coaching younger players, or he is helping a younger Irish traveller. That was really special.”
Foster carer

This is a journey which all players are supported to undertake, regardless of background. For instance, BTTC now has three qualified volunteer coaches with Down’s syndrome, one of whom was the first accredited table tennis coach with Down’s syndrome worldwide. Many members have stated how much they had learnt from this coach and gained from playing with him. Not only has becoming a coach had a transformational impact on his own self-esteem, it has also taught them new approaches, as well as changing perceptions of other members. Individual empowerment, then, impacts the wider community in the Club.

All in all, the club has fostered a culture and environment where players are involved in a variety of activities to integrate all-levels players. The club describes this as an “exchange”, where players of all abilities play with each other and learn from each other. Fun and competition are incorporated into the ethos of the club that fosters both enjoyment and key skills. Thus, **the relationship between competition and community spirit are not mutually exclusive, but mutually supportive as the better the players become, the more they can give back to the club.**

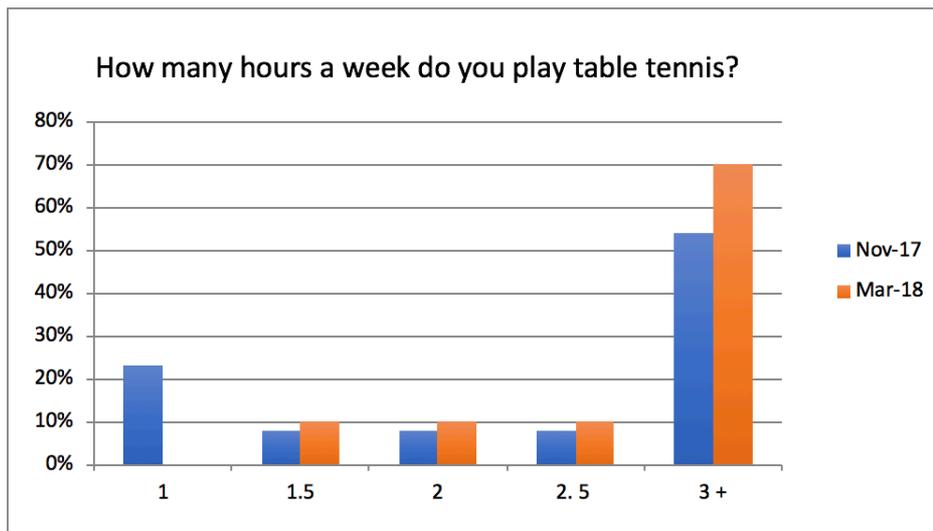


Two coaches at the BTTC playing doubles together. One a member of the Team GB Downs Syndrome squad and the other an Afghan refugee.

4.8 Learning to love sport - Engagement

130 refugee players have attended sessions run by the BTTC in the first 12 months of the project. 104 of these players have attended at least 10 sessions.

The March survey showed that 70% of refugee players play table tennis for 3 or more hours a week (54% at baseline), while 10% play 2.5 hours a week (8% at baseline), 10% 2 hours a week (8% at baseline), 10% 1.5 hours a week (8% at baseline), 0% 1 hour a week (23% at baseline). See table below.



Individual refugee players' progress

Through the longitudinal study, it was possible to track individual changes throughout the course of the project for 4 refugee players.

The majority of players (3 out of 4) play table tennis 3 or more hours every week. 2 out of 4 players have consistently been playing for 3 or more hours a week throughout the course of the project. 1 player played 2.5 hours a week in November, and played 3 or more hours in March. 1 player played 3 or more hours in November, but played 2.5 hours in March.

Through observations it was possible to witness that in a number of cases players were initially reluctant to play table tennis, as they said they were more interested in other sports, such as football or cricket. However, after only a couple of months, these same players have trained to be table tennis coaches and regularly play in local or national table tennis competitions.

Refugee players have been taking part in a variety of competitions, including local and national leagues. **The newly-established BTTC-BHASVIC team, formed by four players, one from Brighton and three refugees from Syria, Sudan and Afghanistan, reached the semi-finals of U-19 nationals in Bristol. This team is now in the top-12 college table tennis teams in the UK.**¹⁰⁹ What was remarkable about this team is how quickly the players picked up the sport. One of the players, from Darfur, started playing tennis in May 2017 and another player, from Raqqa, in August 2017. The club's Director observed that the key to

the refugees' very fast development was having access to a full-time venue where the staff are flexible and adaptable, and they can get high level practice.



The BHASVIC Team originally from L-R Brighton, Syria, Sudan and Afghanistan

Towards an Active Nation highlights that 'drop-out rates are high precisely because the talent environment can be tough, especially on young people with lots of other pressures and interests'. MacPhail and Kirk highlight how drop out can occur at all stages of engagement, but when there are certain factors when specialising in a new sport.¹¹⁰ These include athlete enjoyment, family influence and coaching. What BTTC have done is create a fun environment where engagement with the sport can flourish.

4.8.3 Gender considerations

At baseline, the refugee-players survey was completed by 92% self-identifying males and 8% self-identifying females. In March 2018, 100% of refugee respondents were male.

In March 2018, of the non-refugee players, 71% were completed by self-identifying males and 26% by self-identifying females (3% preferred not to say). This data helps to illustrate the players' gender ratio at the club.

Most Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) in the UK are male, so the majority of players at the BTTC are also male. Nevertheless, there are increasing numbers of refugee women and girls in Brighton. Ten women have been referred to the club for female only sessions in April 2018. However, it is too early to show results with this target group.

Care needs to be taken that the inclusive narrative of sports clubs takes account of gender. The majority of refugee players come from countries where gender relations are

different from Brighton, hence there needs to be a particular emphasis on the fact that all coaches must be respected equally.

4.9 The Club in the community: The wider referral and support network

B TTC worked hard to build relationships in the local community. The club is embedded in the local networks of community groups, charities, council services and local grassroots organisations, including Brighton and Hove Council’s Social Services, The Hummingbird Project, Voices in Exile, EMAS, the Virtual School, Sussex Syrian Community, BHASVIC college, Migrant English Project and Refugee Radio. These relationships have been forged over time:

“We started working with the Virtual School for Children in Care six years ago via a colleague at [a local school]. They wanted to do extra-curricular activities and set up a weekly dance group and said Tim could do a Table Tennis session. We’ve been going so long that the relationships – the number of relationships and the depth of relationships – people know about the club. The Virtual School is why we first got some young refugees referred to us. And that all came about because someone knew the club was good, was nurturing, was caring and would benefit the kids who were in foster care. So that wouldn’t have ever happened if it was just a table tennis club about technical sport. The club was founded to address disadvantage and it worked with local host community kids who were underprivileged and the same model worked with people with disabilities and looked after children and now with lots of other groups.” Tim, Co-founder and Director

The tight connection with the wider support network allowed the club to easily recruit new refugee players in the project. The close relationships between organisations also ensures that communication is quick among different actors. For example, new recruits are introduced to B TTC within days of arriving in the city, and they are incorporated quickly within the club.

“Quite often when new arrivals arrive and we’re starting to settle them, we would be promoting the B TTC, and I have taken young people there directly and have a game or just to see what is like.” Social Worker, Brighton and Hove Council

“The thing that works with the B TTC is the easy referrals network, they don’t need to see them first or assess them first, they’ll just say ‘Come on down, meet everybody and then we’ll do whatever assessment we need to do afterwards’.” Elaine, Founder of the Hummingbird Project

The ‘inclusive narrative’ of the club has facilitated referrals from members of the community themselves. Initial referrals came from institutions or local organisations, such as the Brighton and Hove Council, and the Hummingbird Refugee Project. Throughout the months, the club received a large number of referrals from friends of friends coming from various communities (e.g. Syrian and Kurdish community members). Granovetter has highlighted that important information and connections do not often come from close friends, but through ‘weak ties’ or friends of friends.¹¹¹ The club’s reputation has allowed players to introduce new players in a safe and trusted environment.

Nevertheless, when addressing specific communities, such as Irish travellers, refugees or the homeless, sport clubs need to actively reach out to those communities or groups working with them in order to attract them to the club.

“We wanted to reach out to different groups. We found a list of all the local refugee support groups, sent everyone an email who was working in this [the refugee] area and invited them to the club for one big meeting. There’s pockets of clubs with social goals but they don’t have the capacity to be outward facing because people are doing a full time job and then doing their table tennis club in the evenings and they just don’t have time to do that.” Tim, Co-founder and Director

Being embedded in a wider network of support services, both statutory and voluntary/charity ensures easy and regular referrals, as well as providing support if required.¹¹² Working with other organisations helped produce a wider social space. For example, on Christmas Day 2017 some of the refugees went to an event organised by the Hummingbird Refugee Project and in the afternoon they all went together to play table tennis at the BTTC. This network of organisations helped refugees build social relations outside the club and provided more opportunities for social contact.

5. Penglish and PingMaths

The BTTC piloted a unique method for teaching English through the Penglish programme. With the support of Sport England, the project facilitated the creation of a formal Penglish curriculum and the training of a specialist Penglish coach. Penglish was implemented with refugees from a variety of countries, including Afghanistan, Sudan, Vietnam, Eritrea and Iraq.

The curriculum for this programme was run in partnership with Brighton and Hove Sixth Form College (BHASIC). This college has a dedicated ESOL unit, which also teaches 16-18 year old refugee students. The Penglish coach delivered small group sessions at the college at lunchtime and after school. This activity also acted as a bridge to recruit players to BTTC. Some of these sessions were open to all the students at the college, in an effort to enable integration within the college, as often ESOL students do not meet the rest of the student body.

The Penglish programme ran sessions that combined English and table tennis. The Penglish coach developed activities based on her previous experience as a teacher, and adapted them to table tennis. It was reported that Penglish sessions have been most successful when they were structured as a one-to-one session and the player has a basic level of English. Penglish works best if the lesson is structured around learning individual words, individual phrases, or verbs. When playing table tennis with someone learning English, the coach made sure to use gestures when explaining things and ask questions to check players understand.

“The club is a happy and playful environment, that makes the learning process easier. When someone is relaxed and comfortable, they’ll learn much quicker.” BTTC volunteer

The Penglish coach reports that in general sessions were successful, particularly with those groups that came to the club at a regular weekly meeting time, which helped with group bonding and progression in English and table tennis. Combining language learning with table tennis means that those who are not proficient in the language can quickly improve based on the novelty and fun aspects of the activity. The fun element of table tennis clearly had an impact on language development.

The survey results show that 50% of the respondents feel ‘Confident’ in English (69% at baseline), 20% are ‘Developing confidence’, 20% have ‘Some English’ (21% at baseline) and 10% are ‘New to English’. This data shows the percentage of respondents who feel confident in English has declined from baseline, but respondents who are ‘Developing Confidence’ has increased (0% at baseline). However, these results significantly clash with data collected through observations, as the research team and coaches observed a clear improvement in the players’ levels of English.

The opinion of college tutors and external stakeholders was sought to understand if the refugee players made any progress in their English skills. The evidence of this progress is clear, according to all the interviewees. In particular, the ESOL department at BHASIC College reported very good improvements not only in the language skills of the refugee

students/BTTC players, but also in their social skills. Teachers have also reported that students mention things that have happened at the club or the trips they've been on. Below are some examples of the feedback provided by a BHASVIC college ESOL teacher on five refugees that she teaches, that have all engaged and become part of the BTTC community:

- Khan – more than above average improvement – amazing actually! Considering he started with very low level literacy indeed (I taught him as well as gave him 1:1 support weekly) he has made amazing strides. Orally he is highly communicative now and his literacy is above what would have been expected from a student with his educational background.
- Ahmed – above average improvement as moved from Elementary Group to Intermediate Group in first term. Has particularly improved in communicative skills and is kind and supportive of others
- Yad - Above average improvement – is one of the strongest in the Beginner Group and is working at Elementary a lot of the time. Also kind and supportive, respectful and interested
- Musa – above average improvement which I suspect will become more evident next year i.e. he is at top of the level in all skills and could go up or jump a level in some skills next year. He works hard and has excellent attendance and a good attitude.
- Abdul – is developing his literacy skills in a class where others are working above him (in literacy) and is not afraid to push himself. Orally he is on track. He works really hard and is excellent at applying himself to homework.

There is a positive correlation between the ESOL students spending more time at the BTTC, and the improvement to their ESOL grades. According to his teacher, Khan's English has improved fastest, he is on average at the BTTC 10 hours a week. Abdul comes less regularly to the BTTC and this is reflected in his progress.

Learning the language of the host community is key to integrating and is often the biggest barrier facing newly arrived migrants and refugees. Above average improvement to the ESOL grades of the players that have engaged most with extra curricular Table Tennis is hugely significant. Sports clubs should and could be utilised a lot more in the delivery of ESOL.

“The young refugees I work with say it's a fun way to learn English, when they started the Penglish lessons. One boy I work with goes to meet Sophie twice a week and he really likes it. He says that maybe table tennis is not his thing, but he likes the atmosphere and the way he's learning English there is being helpful.” Case workers,
Refugee Council

“Thanks again for your support. I have no doubt about the huge benefits BTTC has provided for our students – from a oracy point of view and a social one – and of course the diversity aspect. Splendid!”
BHASVIC ESOL teacher

What the club reports as having worked best to improve English skills is the social aspect of table tennis. Players that have come regularly to the club, some of which participated in Pinglish too, or participated in other club projects or went on residential trips, have clearly gained language skills and self-confidence. Their speaking and understanding has improved through natural conversation, they have become more willing to interact, and developed a level of trust in other people too. Table tennis is an inclusive sport that allows interaction without language, making it easier for people to feel comfortable around each other and eventually develop conversation in an unpressurised context.

The project also delivered numeracy skills through a sister programme called PingMaths. PingMaths targeted refugee players with lower numeracy skills and it was partially developed with a Brighton and Hove numeracy specialist. Survey results show there has been an overall increase in the level of Maths of refugee players. 30% feel 'Confident in Maths' (38% at baseline), 20% of the respondents feel that they have 'Some Maths' (46% at baseline), and 40% feel they have a 'Good level of Maths' (15% at baseline). 60% of the respondents take PingMaths lessons (77% at baseline).

PingMaths is being delivered successfully in three local primary and two local schools as a numeracy intervention with host community pupils with low-level numeracy. Table Tennis England and others are interested in seeing PingMaths develop. BTTC plan to produce more tutorial videos about how to deliver engaging PingMaths sessions.

5.2 Challenges

The delivery of the Pinglish programme encountered various challenges. Often, refugee players were turning up very late to sessions, not at all, or sometimes by surprise on a completely different day. This made planning sessions very challenging, and sometimes the coach would end up improvising a lot of the games. Even in a normal classroom, it is important that everyone is present at the beginning when the material is introduced; in a Pinglish session, it is even more important because the games are fast-moving. In the Pinglish coach's words:

"When we had regular groups where you'd get the same people across a few sessions, we'd start the session at the same time, so I could nicely introduce the material for the lesson. It worked really well, we did some warm-up activities together, they got an idea of what the game was, the students would ask questions relevant to stuff that we already talked about during previous lessons. But if the groups are less regular and if there's mixed ability groups, which even in a classroom would be a bit difficult, it's more difficult to keep the session together. Through Pinglish you always have to work on the spot and everyone has to be connected to everyone else. It's really difficult to do this if the language abilities are not similar. In terms of table tennis abilities, it doesn't matter that much because generally the players catch up with each other levels and that's quite nice." Sophie, Pinglish Coach

Pinglish sessions were optional, clearly intended to be fun (rather than aimed at passing exams) and without any repercussions to not showing up; if someone had a tiring day, for example, they would sometimes opt out last minute. Another issue was reported to be the language barrier to remembering meeting times, as well as the many appointments that

come up for many of these young refugees with solicitors, social workers, advisors and so on.

“Improving English comes quite natural at the club, we sit down at the table for a break and then people just interact with each other and you can just chat and refugees players improve their English this way. They practice English just naturally through the conversation, they learn by talking. They seemed really happy when they left.” Sophie, PINGLISH coach

Given the challenges encountered with PINGLISH, the club decided to pause the PINGLISH programme with the ESOL students at BHASVIC. However, the club still organised one-to-one English or PINGLISH sessions with newly arrived refugees, those with a low level of English or a delayed admission into college. If an English lesson is carried out in the social area of the club, other people wandering around or having a break are always happy to join in and help, which is a great chance to practise using different phrases and interacting with different people.

Additionally, there were some limitations in organising sessions in colleges, such as time clashes with lessons, students being tired after a long day at school, teachers being too busy to organise PINGLISH activities. At BHASVIC,

attendance of PINGLISH has been very variable and inconsistent throughout the months. After discussion amongst coaches and BHASVIC, sessions were changed from Thursday afternoon (15.45) to Friday lunchtime (11-13.00) with sessions open to everyone at the college. These sessions are now very well attended and meet the goals of the delivery plan which were about integration across the college.

Having PINGLISH included in the college timetable as an optional activity would increase accessibility and punctuality of students, and ensure that students from the same class and language level would attend each session. Even better, would be to have regular communication between college teachers and the PINGLISH coach, detailing what the students study each week, what they could use some extra help with, and what the topics for the next week would be. Collaboration between the club and the college is generally really important, as teachers see everyone almost daily and can remind them about sessions in person.

B TTC has found that refugee players aged 16-19 that are in full time ESOL education would prefer to come to the club, play and enjoy themselves, rather than study more English. Since April 2018 there have been new referrals of adult refugee players aged 20-65, that aren't getting ESOL provision elsewhere so are receptive and keen to learn through PINGLISH. It is particularly effective

One part of the Sport England Refugee Integration Project was for the PINGLISH teacher with a background in English teaching, to develop a curriculum. It is particularly effective with students with very low-level English with learning the alphabet, days of the week, months of the year etc. The B TTC PINGLISH coach has made a huge contribution to the wider club community, developed her Table Tennis coaching skills and has become an invaluable part of the B TTC team. B TTC plan to deliver more PINGLISH to new target groups in Year 2 of the project.

“The club is invaluable for developing the refugees’ communication skills in English, because it gives them the confidence to speak it amongst their peers. Having groups of young people who speak different languages helps them gain the confidence to speak English, because they’re not so worried about making mistakes. It’s nice they can do that in a social environment rather than in an education environment. A number of our young people have not had formal education before, so they struggle in colleges and schools because they find the formality of it quite difficult. The young people who go to the club, learn English quicker because the club builds the confidence to speak in social situations. One of the young people spoke in public at the event, and that’s a really big achievement.” Social Worker, Brighton and Hove Council

6. Conclusion



Sport can be a positive experience for refugees arriving in a new community. There are various aspects of BTTC which have helped facilitate the integration of refugees: the active approach taken by staff, the positive welcoming atmosphere and inclusive narrative, establishing the club as a safe space, fun activities and sociability. It is important to reiterate that there are many other factors that impact on an individual's integration in their community, namely education, employment, language, racism, and others (Ager and Strang 2008).

The main contention of this report was that successful integration of refugees in sport projects comes from an **active** approach from managers, coaches and volunteers. The literature on contact theory suggest that creating the right conditions to bring different groups into contact will help prejudices disappear. This theory infers that individuals reflexively change their perceptions based on meaningful contact with others. Whilst the literature shows this is likely to happen, the literature also shows that official projects are more successful because of the shared focus and the support of authority (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Yet in these projects, the presence of dedicated individuals is central to facilitate the contact. Likewise, much of the literature refers to sport and sport programmes as helping to foster social capital, integration or help teach skills.

Yet it is not 'sport' that passively encourages these behaviours, it is the people within it. Therefore, the success and failure of these projects often resides on the hard work, dedication and skills of the individuals running the project. These managers, coaches and volunteers can actively encourage positive behaviours, organise events and programmes, and build on 'teachable moments'. Or they can simply coach skills and hope that values, respect and wider integration just passively evolves through the shared activity. This is not to say that this does not happen. Our findings suggest that a more active approach where

the coaches, volunteers and managers consciously manage the situation is more beneficial and will have more positive integration outcomes.

The BTTC have looked at integration holistically. Fostering a welcoming environment and an inclusive narrative helps make all players, regardless of their background, legal status or age group feel that they belong in the club. By associating with the club, players developed a sense of belonging to the club and recreate the positive, welcoming identity BTTC seeks to cultivate. Actively developing a core image of their community club is a central feature of their integration activities and this helps build a sense of belonging for members.

Producing a fun environment, that explicitly treats all participants as valued members of the club helps promote integration for all members. Fun does not come at the expense of competition. Refugee players have taken part in competitions and have reached finals or won medals. Regular tournaments and opportunities to play in leagues also encouraged some to practise their skills and improve their performances.

The environment created at the BTTC produced a safe social space where players could go to enjoy themselves. Playing sport, as well as other social activities, produced solidarity amongst players.

Like sport, integration is a regular, iterative practise that develops over time. The regular, mundane interactions at a sport club like the BTTC build up into a new set of skills, outlooks and behaviours. The everyday, mundane but repetitive practises are really important at fostering friendships and trusting relationships.¹¹³ Sport clubs like BTTC provide the space and the opportunities to put these regular, repetitive exchanges into action. Following Robinson,¹¹⁴ 'the everyday is seen here as constituting the normal routines and the relationships and the transformative aspects of existence'. Consequently, the everyday and mundane can have transformative potential. This transformation can occur simply through the everyday relationships built at BTTC.

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