

## Creating New Partnerships through Ping Pong Parlours

*Theme: partnerships*

### Defining the Issue

Due to the struggling high street market, Table Tennis England's Ping Pong Parlour project has taken off – with more than 50 shopping centre's in England opening a Ping Pong Parlour. Table Tennis England need to ensure they maximise the impact of their projects, including making Parlours stand out and provide something unique. Working with various partners, both inside and outside of the sport and physical activity sector, can help Ping Pong Parlours stand out from the crowd.

### Background Information

Ping Pong Parlours turn otherwise empty retail units in shopping centre's into vibrant places for members of the public to play table tennis for free.

After a full redevelopment, the Landlord of the Harpur Centre in Bedford wanted to give something back to the local community, whilst having an addition to drive footfall and increase dwell time.

Whilst conversations were ongoing with the centre, Table Tennis England met with Bedford Borough Council's sport development team to identify ways in which they could get involved with the Parlour. It was agreed that a member of Bedford Borough Council's team would spend two afternoons a week in the Parlour, providing information to the public about other physical activity opportunities in the area, as well as interacting with the participants and running a weekly Bat & Chat session for people aged 50+.

In addition to this Terrence Higgins Trust, a sexual health charity, wanted to get involved as the National Chlamydia Screening programme is aimed at 15-23 year olds, and believed the Parlour would be a great way to access this target group.

The Ping Pong Parlour opened in February 2019 in a large unit in the main area of the centre.



## Partnership Work

Through creating partnerships with the Harpur Centre, Bedford Borough Council and Terrence Higgins Trust, the Ping Pong Parlour offers multiple opportunities for the local community in Bedford;

- Demi from Bedford Borough Council has been in the Parlour for two afternoons per week. She has been able to interact with visitors, signpost them to other playing opportunities and other physical activities.
- Demi has also helped to setup and run a weekly Bat & Chat session, which is for people aged 50+ and aims to reduce social isolation and loneliness.
- Terrence Higgins Trust have a regular slot in the Parlour on Wednesday lunch times, providing information to the community and offering screening to young people in Bedford.

*“The scheme encourages our shoppers to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle. It has been fantastic to see visitors of all ages playing together in a safe environment”*  
Harpur Centre Manager

*“We’ve had great feedback from service users and staff, with young people saying they appreciate us being there and that it counteracts the ‘embarrassment’ of walking into a clinic”*  
Terrence Higgins Trust



## The Results

Between February and July 2019, centre footfall has seen an average increase of 7.3%. The centre’s food establishments have seen the most benefit from additional footfall.

The Bat & Chat session attracts an average of 8 participants each week. One gentleman has said to Demi that playing at the sessions helps him to forget about his troubles and uses the time to relax.

Terrence Higgins Trust have seen numbers of those taking up the Chlamydia Screening increase, with roughly 6 people per week now completing a screening.

## Key Learnings

- Have a face in the Parlour at least once a week, to give people information about other local opportunities – Bedford Borough Council
- The Parlour is a great space for services to provide information and contact members of the community that are harder to reach, great for reaching your target audiences – Terrence Higgins Trust

## Further information

Find your nearest Ping Pong Parlour at [www.pingpongparlour.net](http://www.pingpongparlour.net)

[www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk)  
[www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)

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