

Improving Mental Wellbeing with Ping Pong Parlours

Theme: increasing physical activity, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development

Defining the Issue

Approximately 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem each year, with men arguably finding it more difficult than women to talk about their mental health struggles. Many studies have shown that physical activity improved mental health, which is what several men from Wellingborough found when they took up table tennis at their local Ping Pong Parlour.

Background Information

Simon and Idwal have been friends for over 20 years, having completed long distance running events together in the past. However both have struggled in recent years with their mental health, with Simon suffering from depression and social anxiety, and Idwal suffering from depression and alcoholism.

In June 2019, the pair were walking through Swansgate Shopping Centre in Wellingborough when they came across a Ping Pong Parlour. Idwal suggested they went in for a game and they have both been regulars at the Parlour ever since.

Simon and Idwal now visit the Ping Pong Parlour between 4-5 times a week, playing for between 2-3 hours each visit. They have also met new people through playing in the Parlour and have formed a Facebook group so that they can keep in contact and arrange regular meetings. The pair find that playing table tennis helps to break down the barriers that people with mental health conditions can have, and enjoy coming together with others and having fun.



Simon

- 37 years old
- Lives locally
- Night shift worker
- Has young children



Idwal

- 44 years old
- Lives locally
- Works part time



The Impact



"Generally speaking with my mood, I find table tennis is helpful. I find I suffer from depression... it's something I've struggled with all my life. Coming down to play, for me, is really important, because otherwise I'll sit at home and be miserable. Coming out and talking to people is good for me and my mental health."

"Me and some of my other friends... we don't really get out that much, so we find it hard to socialise. For people like myself with social anxieties, it really helps to be able to do this sport while socialising at the same time and increasing my social network."

"It's certainly helped with my depression... I get endorphins just from sheer exercise. My health levels have increased again, because they were really low. If you stay still for a few years and then try and do something physically active it's difficult. Now I'm quite happy and I might even get back into running soon."



"Although I used to run, I'd become very morose, literally waking up in the morning and thinking what's the point. I'd just go back to bed and wasn't doing anything. We discovered the Ping Pong Parlour and it's been part of our lives ever since."

Idwal and Simon have met others in the Parlour that also have severe mental health issues. Through playing table tennis and making new friends, these individuals are also starting to see an improvement to their lives and have also enhanced their mental wellbeing.

Andrew has been playing at the Parlour for a couple of months and tries to visit 4-5 times a week. Andrew suffers with schizophrenia and Asperger syndrome and is already seeing benefit from playing ping pong on a regular basis.

"It gives me something to look forward to everyday and it takes my mind off things. I've met new people and made new friends. I like that it improves my concentration, my hand-eye coordination and when I've finished I feel like I've achieved something."



Andrew

For more information on Ping Pong Parlours, visit www.pingpongparlour.net



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