

Improving Peoples Lives with Table Tennis – John’s Story

Theme: increasing physical activity, regular participation

Defining the Issue

Creating a regular participation habit can be difficult, with barriers such as lack of time, having other commitments and not enjoying sport or physical activity being key things that prevent people from being active and participating regularly. This is no longer a problem for John, who has become a regular at Northampton’s Ping Pong Parlour and has fallen in love with table tennis.

Background Information

The Ping Pong Parlour project transforms empty retail units within shopping centres into vibrant, exciting places for the public to play table tennis for free. Parlours attract thousands of people each week and challenge people’s perceptions of how sport and physical activity can be consumed.

The Grosvenor Shopping Centre in Northampton introduced a Ping Pong Parlour to their scheme in July 2017. Since it’s opening, the Parlour has enabled tens of thousands of people to participate in table tennis for free, as well as offering a space for regular visitors to meet, socialise and keep fit – including John.

John is a 78 year old retired carpenter and joiner, having moved to Northampton from Sheffield in the late 1980s. John has three children and five grandchildren and lives in a block of flats next to the Grosvenor Shopping Centre.

Before the Ping Pong Parlour opened in Northampton, John only played bowls during the summer and by his own admission wasn’t very active. The opening of the Ping Pong Parlour changed everything as John has fallen in love with table tennis and has become a regular at the Grosvenor Shopping Centre Ping Pong Parlour.



The Impact

John visits the Ping Pong Parlour for at least two hours, five times a week. John has made lots of new friends who he regularly meets up with and plays against in the Parlour;

“People become your friends, you see them in the street and in the Parlour. You look forward to seeing them in the Parlour and playing with them”

John is now more active than he ever has been and strongly believes that playing table tennis in the Ping Pong Parlour has prolonged his life;

“It’s the best thing that’s happened to me. I so look forward to it, I think I’m living my life longer because of my interest in table tennis... I’m healthier by playing, because it’s a keep fit game. I don’t want to have to go to the gym, my gym is in this Ping Pong Parlour!”

“Bowls is an old mans game, a lot of people play it but they aren’t really active people. But this [table tennis], you have to be active, you have to be fit.”

“My day starts at 10 o’clock in the Ping Pong Parlour, I can’t praise it enough!”



John has also volunteered his time at the 2019 Island Games in Gibraltar, where he arrived 2 weeks before it started to help with the set up of tables and preparation for the event – something John says he wouldn’t have done if it wasn’t for the Ping Pong Parlour in Northampton;

“Table tennis gives so much to me, I wanted to give a bit back. I’m more keen and more interested in table tennis day by day.”

The Ping Pong Parlour has become central to John’s life, and he also see’s the impact the project has had for others who are also regulars;

“It’s for everybody and all levels. I believe that table tennis will be coming up and up and up because of these places, because people have an opportunity to play. And if they like it, they’ll carry on coming and playing, and that’s exactly what’s happened here. People are coming here and playing and make a habit of coming as well.”

Top Likes

1. Availability and accessibility
2. Meeting lots of different people and making new friends
3. Living a longer, healthier and happier life

Further Information

Find your nearest Ping Pong Parlour at www.pingpongparlour.net



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