

Increasing Physical Activity - Ali's Story

Theme: increasing physical activity

Defining the Issue

Being physically active can be challenging when you have several health issues, with people possibly lacking the confidence and sense of ability to take part in sport and physical activity. This is something that Ali experienced, as she struggled to find the right activity for her – but this all changed when a Ping Pong Parlour came to her local shopping centre.

Background Information

Ping Pong Parlours turn otherwise empty retail units in shopping centres into vibrant spaces for the public to play table tennis for free. The project brings physical activity to where people are already spending their time, providing an opportunity for people to be access sport and physical activity in an informal, and easily accessible space.

In January 2018, the Sovereign Centre in Weston-Super-Mare opened their own Ping Pong Parlour. Since opening, it's estimated that the Sovereign Centre's Ping Pong Parlour has attracted over 75,000 people through its doors – including Ali Bracey.

Ali is a teaching assistant in an infant school. She has severe health issues including painful joints and high blood pressure, resulting in her being inactive. Ali used to go to the gym once a week, but stopped going because she didn't like going on her own. Before starting table tennis Ali only walked a short commute to and from work and sometimes walked around the town where she lives.

> Ali wants to be more active and get fitter, but it tires her very quickly and can make her feel dizzy and faint



The Project

Ali decided to take part in table tennis at the Ping Pong Parlour because it was a free opportunity located close to home. Ali plays with her husband, who both enjoy the activity and wanted to make the most of having the Ping Pong Parlour available.

The Results

Since her first visit to the Ping Pong Parlour, Ali now plays in the Parlour once a week with her husband. Having previously been inactive, Ali now participates in over 150 minutes of physical activity each week. Due to being more active, Ali feels fitter and healthier than she has in a long time.

"It's made such a difference to my life. We're playing for longer than we used to and feel better after playing!"

Changes can also be seen in Ali's attitude towards sport and physical activity;

"It's important to me to do sport/exercise regularly"
At first visit; Disagree
After 3 months; Agree



"I don't need to think about whether to do table tennis – I just do it"

Agree

"Table tennis is part of my routine"

Agree

"Table tennis is typically me"

Agree

Top Likes;

1. It's free
2. Accessible and close to home
3. Fun and competitive!

"It's the only sport I enjoy and therefore makes me exercise which is great!"

"It's so fun, we are quite competitive with each other – even though neither of us play particularly well!"

Key Learnings

1. Free activities located close to home make it easier to form regular habits
2. Provisions need to be put in place should the Parlour project at the centre end, to allow for continued participation
3. Table tennis is a suitable activity for people with health issues

Further Information

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



Sport England
21 Bloomsbury Street
London WC1B 3HF

sportengland.org