

Ping Pong Parlours Contribute to Individual Development

Theme: individual development

Defining the Issue

The sport and physical activity sector provides volunteers and employed staff with an opportunity to develop confidence and skills which can be taken into future employment and personal endeavours. One Ping Pong Parlour employs local college students to staff the Parlour, providing them with an opportunity to gain experience of the sports industry and advance their individual development.

Background Information

Ping Pong Parlours turn empty retail units into vibrant spaces for the public to play table tennis for free.

Four Seasons Shopping Centre in Mansfield opened their very own Ping Pong Parlour in August 2018, with the aim to utilise an empty retail shopping unit and provide an activity for shoppers. The centre management team wanted to have the Parlour staffed, due to initial concerns surrounding potential vandalism and anti-social behaviour. The centre therefore approached their local college, West Nottinghamshire College, to recruit 'lounge hosts' to staff the Parlour and provide a friendly face for visitors.

The local college advertised the opportunity to student's on sports courses, with three NCFE Level 3 Sport and Exercise Science students applying for the role, wanting to gain more experience of working within the sports industry.

Prior to starting in the Parlour, the students took part in an Activator training session, led by a member of Table Tennis England staff, to equip them with the basic knowledge and skills of table tennis, including;

- > Rules of the game
- > Table manners
- > Safety
- > Fun games to get everyone involved



case study

November 2019

The Results

Despite initial concerns, the Parlour has received little vandalism and anti-social behaviour. The centre have kept the lounge hosts in place due to the positive experience they create for visitors. Through their experiences within the Ping Pong Parlour, the students have been able to develop skills which they will be able to use in future employment and personal endeavours.

“I have increased my self-confidence allowing me to communicate effectively and successfully with customers who visit the Parlour”

“I have learnt communication is key as well as increasing my ability to speak confidently with other of all ages. My independence has also improved during this job as it has allowed me to open up and close the Parlour, meaning I am responsible for the cleaning, valuable items etc. It has also helped me develop skills such as time management and organisation”

Although Ping Pong Parlours attract thousands of people each week, they can also attract people who regularly return to the Parlour. A group of elderly gentleman, who used to play table tennis in their youth, visit the Parlour almost everyday and enjoy playing and having a chat with the lounge hosts.

“My favourite thing about working in the Ping Pong Parlour is the relationships built with particular customers. There are people that come to the Parlour regularly and being able to build a friendly relationship with them allows me and the customers to really enjoy ourselves”

These students have now left the college and moved onto university. However, the centre continue to employ local students to staff the Ping Pong Parlour and provide a positive experience to everyone who visits.

Key Learnings

1. Providing preliminary training to volunteers is important, both to equip them with necessary skills and setting a standard across projects
2. Other Parlours and partners such as Local Authorities see the benefit in having volunteers in Parlours.
3. As a result, we have developed an online ‘Community Champion’ training, for volunteers to complete before working on our projects

Further Information

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

For more information about our Community Champion Training, contact ping@tabletennisengland.co.uk



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