

Reversing Lapsed Participation – Pat’s Story

Theme: Lapsed participants

Defining the Issue

Creating a sporting habit for life can be difficult, with various barriers having the potential to lapse people’s participation in sport and physical activity. However, with the right support and opportunities these barriers will not be as significant and support people back into regular participation.

Background Information

There are many factors that can act as barriers to participation in sport and physical activity. Goretzki and Esser (2008) argue that causes for lapses in participation ultimately come from significant shifts in peoples’ lives – for example life-stage-driven lack of time and energy and the sense of having different priorities.

This was the case with Pat Johnson, aged 70, who played table tennis when she was younger and joined Bishop Auckland Table Tennis Club in 2013. Due to her husband and Father both becoming ill in 2014, Pat took on the role as carer and had to stop playing table tennis due to her caring responsibilities taking up all her time.

Towards the end of 2017 Pat’s doctor advised her to be more active, as her caring responsibilities were taking a toll on her physical and mental wellbeing.

“I needed to be more active and give myself some time as the caring duties were becoming overwhelming as I was doing everything and putting myself under great stress and making myself ill as well”

Since being advised to be more physically active, Pat has come back to table tennis with the support of her local Ping Pong Parlour and Bishop Auckland Table Tennis Club.



Steps Taken

- Pat started to visit the Ping Pong Parlour in Prince Bishops Shopping Centre in Durham, as it was between her Father's house and her own. The flexible and informal nature of the Parlour allowed her to pop in between visits to de-stress and make time for herself.
- As well as the Parlour, Pat also re-joined Bishop Auckland Table Tennis Club at their Friday evening session. During her time away from table tennis Pat had kept in contact with the club, with their friendly and understanding nature making it easy to go back.

“The Parlour really helped me stay active during my time caring and gave my time to relax between care duty's. The biggest thing for me is seeing the progress of others. Several people who I got to know have followed me to Bishop Auckland sessions and have started to show their passion for the sport. The people I've met and have developed relationships with in the Parlour have given me lots of stories to tell and great memories.”



The Results

Pat is now more physically active and enjoying playing table tennis regularly again. Her physical and mental wellbeing has improved and she is making more time for herself to de-stress

Pat now plays table tennis at least twice a week and enjoys having the opportunity to de-stress between her carer responsibilities.

Pat is now a female ambassador for Table Tennis England and is planning on completing her UKCC Level 1 Coaching Course soon.

Pat is becoming more active within Bishop Auckland Table Tennis club, having helped start a women and girl's session and generally volunteer more often.

Key Learnings

1. Having a flexible offer which requires little commitment can help to build up a regular commitment
2. A supportive club environment who understands your needs is vital
3. People can reverse their lapse in participation with a suitable offer and the right level of support – understanding your audience and participants is key

Further Information

For more places to play social table tennis, visit www.pingengland.co.uk

For your nearest club, visit www.tabletennisengland.co.uk



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