

Increasing Physical Activity – Ian’s Story

Theme: physical activity, mental wellbeing

Defining the Issue

Living with a mental health condition can be challenging, and can lead to people not being physically active despite the known benefits of physical activity on mental health. Ian has bipolar disorder and found it difficult to be active, until he stumbled across the Ping Pong Parlour in The Grafton Centre, Cambridge.

Ian is 37 years old, lives in central Cambridge and works part-time at Primark in Cambridge city centre. Ian used to be very active through playing various different sports, including football, rugby, tennis, badminton and cricket. However, a few years ago Ian’s mental health condition prevented him from being as active;

“I was diagnosed with Bipolar disorder, which prevented me from being active. I lost energy to do things because I was struggling in daily life. I went to work and didn’t want to do other activities, because I didn’t have the energy.”

A few months ago, Ian was walking around Cambridge before work and came across the Ping Pong Parlour in The Grafton shopping centre. He walked in and met Fred – a part-time Activator hired by Cambridge City Council and funded by Table Tennis England. Fred explained what the Parlour was all about and encouraged and supported Ian to pick up a bat and play table tennis for the first time.

Ian is now a regular face in Ping Pong Parlour every Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. He is able to play for between 30 minutes and an hour, usually before his shift at work.

“The Parlour is so close to where I work, so it’s really easy and convenient for me to pop in before a shift and have a few games. It’s also not far from where I live, so I can easily come in on my days off too”



The Impact

Playing at the Ping Pong Parlour has helped Ian to become more physically active, with him now taking part in at least 90 minutes of physical activity each week.

Ian has also been inspired to join a gym to build his fitness levels and generally feels more energetic since starting table tennis;

"Now that my medication is sorted out and I've got a purpose to come and play table tennis and get involved with people. Table tennis has given me more energy to do other things, so it's a double whammy!"

Ian also enjoys the sense of routine coming to the Parlour has given him, which helps him manage his mental health condition. Ian also enjoys meeting people in the Parlour and the social aspect the game brings;

"It's something for me to look forward to. On a Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday I've got the routine of knowing I can socialise with people in the Parlour"



Ian has also got involved with the taster sessions hosted in the Parlour by Cambridge City Council, including table cricket and boccia. Ian is keen to continue improving and developing as player;

"Even though I found the Parlour by accident, I like to play other people so I can improve my game. If I lose, I still want to improve as much as I can and get to the best level I can"



Top Likes

1. Having the opportunity to play a sport I've not played before
2. It's good exercise and good to get out and go somewhere
3. The mental aspect of the game, it focuses the mind

Further Information

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

For other places to play, visit www.pingengland.co.uk



Sport England
21 Bloomsbury Street
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sportengland.org