

Ping Pong Parlours Serve as ‘Activity Hubs’ for People to Try Something New

Theme: participation, inclusivity

Defining the Issue

Trying new activities can be daunting, from finding the time to try something new to finding out where you can take part. In the heart of Cambridge city centre lies the Ping Pong Parlour in the Grafton Centre, which has provided the perfect opportunity for people to try a new activity with taster sessions provided by the local council.

Background Information

The Ping Pong Parlour in The Grafton in Cambridge has proven extremely popular, having moved into a larger space hosting 10 tables and facilitating a successful weekly *Bat & Chat* session attracting plenty of regulars aged 50+.

The Grafton’s Parlour also hosts part time Activator Fred, who is employed by Cambridge City Council and funded by Table Tennis England through the Ping programme. Fred has been an invaluable asset to the Parlour, helping to re-establish *Bat & Chat*, discover powerful stories of the impact of the Parlour and being a friendly face.

As part of our partnership with Cambridge City Council, we wanted to run a pilot to see whether other activities can be offered in a Ping Pong Parlour to create ‘hubs’ of community activity. This led to several ‘come and try’ sessions for the public to try different inclusive sporting activities being hosted by Cambridge City Council in the Parlour.

Jenny, Active Lifestyle Officer at Cambridge City Council, felt that having taster activities in the Parlour could take the intimidation away from trying something new, as other people are in the Parlour are playing their own game. It was decided to offer one activity on particular days, including table cricket, boccia and indoor curling.

- > Local links with partner organisation in these activities already existed, meaning someone was available to deliver the sessions
- > The chosen activities are all fully inclusive, allowing people to take part seated or standing – fitting in well with the inclusive nature of table tennis.



The Sessions

- Sessions were advertised on the *Let's Get Moving Cambridge* social media pages and through Fred in the Parlour
- Sessions took place alongside the weekly *Bat & Chat* session for 1-2 hours. This meant there would be people in the Parlour who could be encouraged to try the activity, as well as having others playing table tennis whilst some took part in the taster sessions
- The local partner organisations provided delivers for the sessions, who explained the rules and helped to facilitate games and offer advice to participants who were taking part
- Should anyone be interested, other opportunities to continue to participate in these activities are available local to Cambridge
- The indoor curling session also provided an opportunity to promote an upcoming taster ice curling session in the city the following month
- The introduction of these taster sessions has created an 'activity hub' at the Ping Pong Parlour, where people can take part in activities in addition to table tennis



The Results

The sessions were well received, with an average of 6 people taking part.

As all the activities are easy to facilitate, Cambridge City Council are looking to recruit volunteers to help deliver more of these sessions – both within the Parlour and at other locations in the city where 'activity hubs' can be created

Jenny says *"It was great to see new people who came just to play these inclusive activities, but we also noticed how our weekly participants from the Bat & Chat session joined in too. The sharing of the space worked really well and encouraged everyone to have a go"*

Key Learnings

1. Parlours are great locations to offer other activities for the public to try
2. A clear pathway is essential for those wanting to continue to participate in the activity after the taster session
3. More promotion on future sessions would be needed, especially with disability organisations who help to promote activities and provide transport where necessary

Further Information

For more information on bringing table tennis to your community, visit www.pinginthecommunity.co.uk

For more information on activities in Cambridge, search 'Let's Get Moving Cambridgeshire'



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