

# TABLE TENNIS FOR PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S

## DELIVERER TOOLKIT



**Parkinson's UK**  
For every Parkinson's journey

## WHAT IS PARKINSON'S?

People develop Parkinson's because some of the nerve cells in their brains that produce a chemical called dopamine have died. Dopamine is needed within the brain to help transmit chemical messages between neurons. The lack of dopamine means that people can have great difficulty controlling movement.

Current research into Parkinson's is still yet to find what causes the condition. Researchers think it's a combination of age, genetic, and environmental factors that cause the dopamine-producing nerve cells to die.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The preferred term is Parkinson's. We don't use the word 'disease' because some people with Parkinson's have told us it sounds negative, or like an infectious illness. But unlike the flu or measles, you can't catch Parkinson's from someone.

There are over 40 symptoms of Parkinson's. But the three main symptoms of Parkinson's are tremor (shaking), slowness of movement and rigidity (muscle stiffness). Everyone's Parkinson's experience is different for each individual. If you have met one person with Parkinson's, you have met one person with Parkinson's, so it's hard to predict how symptoms may progress. It's important to remember that people might not experience every symptom.

You may hear Parkinson's symptoms referred to as motor symptoms and non-motor symptoms.

- **Motor symptoms** affect your movement.
- **Non-motor symptoms** affect you in other ways that may not be easily seen by other people.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**145,000**

**PEOPLE** in the UK are living with Parkinson's. [Click here to find out more.](#)

It is the **FASTEST GROWING NEUROLOGICAL CONDITION** in the world

MOTOR SYMPTOMS	NON-MOTOR SYMPTOMS
Tremor	Apathy
Rigidity	Depression/Anxiety
Mask like expressions	Memory problems
Muscle cramps and dystonia (repetitive muscle contractions result in twisting or abnormal fixed posture)	Speech and communication
Dyskinesia	Dementia
Freezing	Hallucinations
Fatigue	Guilt
Bladder and bowel	Compulsive behaviours



## BENEFITS OF TABLE TENNIS FOR PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S

Research and feedback continue to demonstrate the positive impact that Table Tennis has on the symptoms of Parkinson's. Table Tennis England has partnered with Parkinson's UK since 2020, working together to provide opportunities for People with Parkinson's to play the sport across England. More can be seen about our partnership journey [here](#).

Here's what table tennis players with Parkinson's say about the sport, what they enjoy and what impact the sport has on their lives, during our feedback survey at the end of 2024;

“ Meeting friends socially, mental and physical exercise, discussing the disease with fellow sufferers

“ Helps with symptoms of Parkinson's, something to look forward to, being part of a community



**When I'm playing I'm Jan the table tennis player, not Jan the person with Parkinson's**

Jan Fuller, Gold medallist at the Parkinson's UK Table Tennis Nationals



**It makes me forget I have Parkinson's**



**While I play it's like I have nothing wrong with me**

Feedback was also collected from deliverers of table tennis sessions for People with Parkinson's, showing what positive impact their have seen from their sessions;



**Good for confidence as there may be other sports that are hard to play for people with Parkinson's**



**Improved movement, improved hand-eye coordination, improved mental health**



**Alleviation of symptoms, reducing social isolation, emotional support**



**Mental and physical exercise, improving movement or at least try to delay the Parkinson's progress**



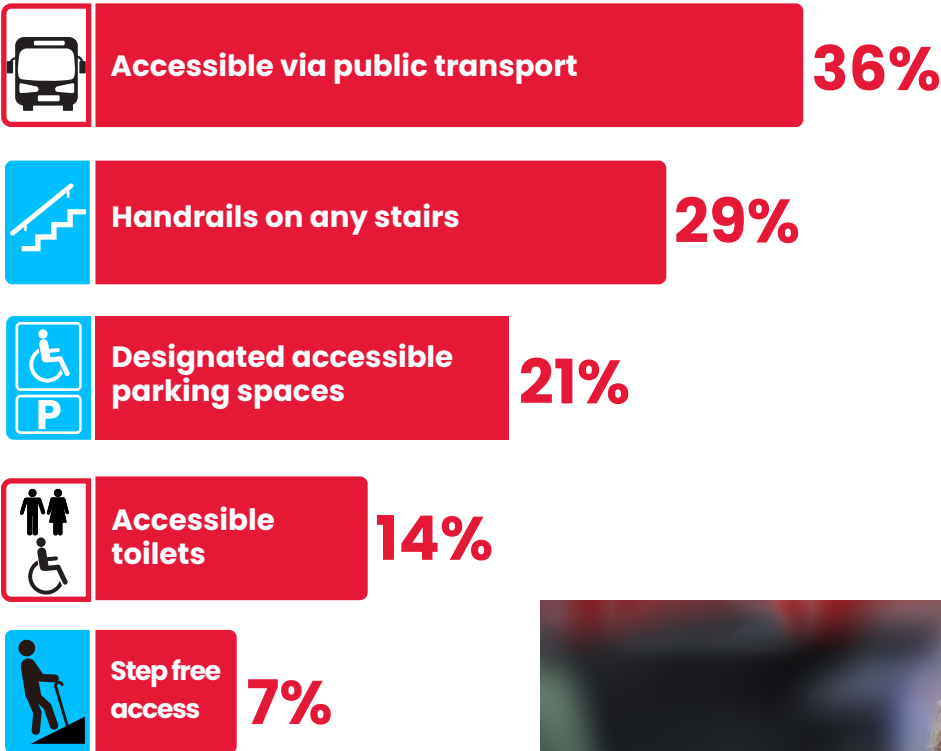
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZG4zdzewKnQ>

In December 2024 we were fortunate to attend Leeds Parky Ping, a table tennis session set up in 2022 specifically for People with Parkinson's by Rob – a Parkinson's table tennis player himself. Watch the spotlight on this fantastic project [here](#).

## DELIVERER TOOLBOX

Based on feedback from People with Parkinson's, here's some things to consider when organising your session to be inclusive for those with Parkinson's attending your sessions;

### VENUE ACCESSIBILITY



Here's some examples of how other deliverers have provided support for People with Parkinson's attending their sessions;



*Assistance in walking to the table or around the venue, players can be seated, players do not need to retrieve balls whilst playing, emotional support*



*Occupational therapist attends the session*



*Conscious of individual participants needs and facilitate*





## SESSION REQUIREMENTS

Of most importance to People with Parkinson's is receiving coaching tips, have a social element to the session, being competitive during the session and ensuring there is a break factored into the session.

**"Which of the below is important to you when attending a sport or physical activity session?"**



## SESSION TIME



The majority of people told us they would attend a session on a weekday morning. However, it's best to ask the people you are wanting to engage to understand what is best for them.

## LEARN MORE

Want to hear more about setting up a table tennis session, or find out if there is one local to you?

[Get in touch](#)