

Using Table Tennis to Build a Healthier, Happier City

Theme: communities, physical activity

Defining the Issue

According to the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities 21.9% of adults in Sheffield are inactive, with 15.3% of outdoor spaces being utilised for exercise or health reasons. To combat and improve these figures, Sheffield City Council have introduced an extensive table tennis project across the city.

Background Information

Between 2020 and 2021, Table Tennis England partnered with Sheffield City Council to deliver an extensive table tennis project across the city. The aims of the project included;

- Improving Sheffield spaces to promote opportunities for physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour
- Reduce health inequalities and inactivity
- Use active parks and open spaces to improve mental health and wellbeing
- Build a happier, healthier place to live

These aims were to be met through introducing new table tennis provision through outdoor tables and the Ping in the Community scheme, as well as promoting and supporting existing opportunities available in the city.

The project was led by Gareth Hayden, Community Projects Officer at Sheffield City Council. This case study looks at the impact the Ping in the Community project has had on various organisations involved in the project in Sheffield, including;

Darnall Education & Sports Academy (DESA), who aim to raise the aspirations through sports and education of young people from different ethnicities and backgrounds within the local community.

Heely City Farm, who offer a range of activities for the community including health and wellbeing services, youth activities, activities for people with learning disabilities, a community café and food growing sessions.

Sheffield Wednesday Community Programme, who support the development of cohesive communities around South Yorkshire and seek to increase engagement, training provision and support amongst its residents.

Pitsmoor Adventure Playground, who aim to keep families safe and adventure at the heart of the community.



case study

August 2022

The Project and Impact

DESA aimed to engage as many young people in the surrounding area as possible, offering inter-club competitions to improve community relations and increase table tennis provision. The group also offered girls-only sessions to engage girls from ethnically diverse communities who are the least physically active.

Over 100 young people have been introduced to table tennis at DESA



The project at Heely City Farm has supported those who attend the social café to be more physically active, offering a gentle exercise for many older users. Other groups have also made use of the activity on site, including a Men's Group, adults with learning disabilities and The Valeria Foundation who support people with dementia.

"A great way to have a social hour or so that is energising and gives a mental focus" - Participant

Pitsmoor Adventure Playground wanted to reinvigorate table tennis on site by installing a new outdoor table, subsequently increasing the number of people taking part and encouraging people to connect with each other. Table tennis is played everyday the playground is open and has brought people back together after tough times during the pandemic.

"The Ping project was like a breath of fresh air, it was a catalyst for change and inclusion. We used the project for positive participation and engaging families in activities to improve their health and mental wellbeing"
– Patrick Meleady, Charity Manager



"I have enjoyed playing table tennis whilst at youth club, because it lets me chat to the youth worker whilst having a laugh at the same time. It isn't too competitive or aggressive so I enjoy being able to relax whilst playing" - Participant

The Sheffield Wednesday Community Programme wanted to provide alternative forms of engagement across their existing projects, as they mainly focus on football. Table tennis has achieved this and provided a diversionary activity for young people who need a safe space and something fun to keep them busy. The project has engaged over 100 individuals.

Further Information

For more information on Ping in the Community, visit www.pinginthecommunity.co.uk

Sport England
21 Bloomsbury Street
London WC1B 3HF

sportengland.org

