

# Increasing Physical Activity amongst Stroke Survivors

*Theme: physical activity intervention*

## Defining the Issue

More than a third of the population lives with one or more common long-term health conditions, with these people being more likely to do little or no physical activity. Sport England have provided funding to eight health charities from The Richmond Group to help those with long-term conditions get active.

## Background Information

Stroke Association's funding from Sport England seeks to increase levels of physical activity amongst stroke survivors from the improvement of their wellbeing, better self-management and secondary stroke prevention. Chris Larkin, Zone Director for the North at Stroke Association, was looking to establish partnerships with National Governing Bodies to increase the physical activity opportunity available for people who have had a stroke and their carers.

As table tennis is a low intensity activity that anyone can participate in, regardless of age, ability or background, Table Tennis England felt they would be the perfect National Governing Body for Stroke Association to partner with. Specifically focusing on the *Ping in the Community* project, the partnership is hoped to increase the activity levels of stroke survivors and encourage them to take part in physical activity on a regular basis.

*Ping in the Community* provides table tennis packages to community organisations, designed to help bring members of a community closer together and inspire them to lead more active and sociable lifestyles, irrespective of ability or background. Social table tennis can have several benefits for people with long-term health conditions;

- > Improves mental wellbeing, cognitive function and builds self-esteem
- > Adaptable activity for all capabilities and limitations
- > Regular moderate exercise can reduce the risk of stroke by 27%



case study

August 2019

## The Project

The Mass Participation Team at Table Tennis England worked with Chris Larkin to identify a site to pilot the *Ping in the Community* project with. The chosen site in Preston was provided with a *Ping in the Community* table tennis package, which includes bats, balls and a range of printed resources to aid advertising and activation of the project.

Laura Coleman, Volunteering and Community Officer at Stroke Association hoped that the project would improve physical activity, provide an opportunity to do something new and bring people together. Table tennis takes many forms at Heartbeat Cardiac Clinic;

- Regular sessions at the end of communication groups, giving a chance to wind down and have fun after an intense session practicing communication skills
- Used by trainers within the specialist cardiac gym on a 1-to-1 basis with their service users
- Free play for people in the centre
- Staff games as part of their own wellbeing



## The Results

Social sessions attract an average of 10 participants.

Some service users used to be avid table tennis players but hadn't played since their stroke, they were able to use techniques to try and play despite the effect of their stroke.

People have loved taking part in a fun, no-pressure opportunity to come together and be more physically active. The activity is accessible for all and a great success.

*"People have often thought they couldn't do certain things due to the effects of their stroke... the sheer joy and pleasure it has given them the realise that they can has been a real motivator for people to get involved."* Laura Coleman, Stroke Association

*"I hadn't played table tennis for years and I wasn't sure if I could handle a bat and ball since my brain injury. I was really surprised that after a little practice I could play really quite well! It has helped with my hand eye coordination and it's a lot of fun."* Headway client

*"It's great to see class members doing different types of exercise, and table tennis is a fun and competitive way to be active"* Carl, Cardiac Rehab Instructor at Heartbeat

## Further Information

For more information on bringing table tennis to your community, visit [www.pinginthecommunity.co.uk](http://www.pinginthecommunity.co.uk)

For stroke support, visit [www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)



Sport England  
21 Bloomsbury Street  
London WC1B 3HF

[sportengland.org](http://sportengland.org)