



People with Parkinson's Partnership Review

Background

Parkinson's is a progressive neurological condition, typically associated with older people. Around 145,000 people in the UK live with Parkinson's. It's the fastest growing neurological condition in the world, around 5% of cases are known as young onset for those in their 40's and below. Currently there's no known cure for Parkinson's, nor a clear cause. There are lots of different treatments, therapies and support available to help manage the condition, which also differs significantly from person to person.

One of the best therapies for Parkinson's can be exercise, activity of any kind on a regular basis can help alleviate symptoms of Parkinson's, but there are particular benefits associated to participation in table tennis. Reasoning behind this extends to the belief that table tennis is not only aerobic, but requires fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination, balance and stimulates various parts of the brain.

In February 2020, researchers at Fukuoka University, Japan, found playing table tennis may help alleviate motor symptoms in Parkinson's.

"12 people with Parkinson's with an average age of 73 played a five-hour session of table tennis every week for a period of six months. The sessions were developed specifically for people with the condition by experienced table tennis players from the university's department of sports science. The participants were evaluated after three months and at the end of the study. At both evaluations, participants had reduced symptoms – showing improvement in speech, handwriting, walking and hand tremors."

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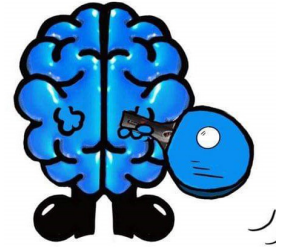


Table Tennis England (TTE) has a commitment to grow and retain participation among those living with a disability and/or long-term health condition. In 2021 TTE partnered with Parkinson's Table Tennis UK (PDTTUK) to raise the profile of the sport among People with Parkinson's (PwP), and to create and enhance opportunities for those with the condition to participate in table tennis.

PDTTUK support those with Parkinson's to play table tennis, exploring different ways to engage and support the Parkinson's table tennis community. Throughout 2021 their work included the development and delivery of community webinars, in a bid to maintain contact and commitment to the sport. TTE were fortunate to attend three webinars in 2021, in order to further engage with the PwP community and amplify our aim to provide relevant updates and detailing support available

Working together with partners such as PDTTUK, TTE's aim was to promote and enable more opportunities for players to engage in the sport, and for those who wish to do so, to feel comfortable to progress through to competitive play.

3. The journey of TTE and PDTTUK



MAR 2019



Initial exposure to benefits associated with playing table tennis, after a **story of a TTE member** using the sport to alleviate symptoms emerged.

FEB 2020



Research published by Fukuoka University, Japan, suggests Table Tennis may hold promise as a possible form of physical therapy for Parkinson's disease.

MAR 2020



Initial meeting to understand scope for development of table tennis project and partnership for people living with Parkinson's disease (in attendance Parkinson's UK, Ping Pong Parkinson's UK, British Para Table Tennis, Table Tennis England).

APR 2021



PDTTUK ran the first PingPongParkinson® Virtual Reality online world tournament (Oculus Quest + ELEVEN tt game), with 7 of the 14 global players being from the UK incl 3 TTE members.

NOV 2020

Rowhedge Table Tennis Club Pilot began.



OCT 2020



Plans began to create a partnership between Table Tennis England and Parkinson's UK, with support of PDTTUK.

MAY 2021



PDTTUK supported social sessions for PwP, launching at Britannia TTC in Ipswich.

JUL 2021



TTE & PDTTUK support launch of new sessions at Rowhedge TTC in Essex
PDTTUK demo stand at the Sport Parkinson's Try-athon, Worcester Warriors stadium

AUG 2021



Inaugural Ping Pong Parkinson's UK Championship held at St Neots TTC, with 24 players competing.

OCT-DEC 2021



TTE initiated and continue to support plans for PDTTUK to become formally constituted in order to expand and develop, enabling grant and tournament opportunities.

NOV 2021



Team Parkinson's and PDTTUK support launch of Peterborough Parkinson's Ping Pong.

SEP 2021



PDTTUK representation at the PingPongParkinson® German Open, attended by 3 UK representatives, each winning a medal.



Ping Pong Parkinson's World Championships in Berlin, with a UK team of 14 players and TTE providing support for 7 English representatives. The team won 8 medals in total.



St Andrews Church Hall, Leyland launch Table Tennis Therapy sessions for people living with Parkinson's or Dementia.

4. Achievements

- TTE featured in three PDTTUK webinars hosted by and for People with Parkinson's. TTE provided information about support available, through grant schemes, Ping in the Community and memberships.
- TTE support the first UK PingPongParkinson® National Tournament, held at St Neot's Table Tennis club on Sat 21 August. 24 players from England, Scotland and Wales attended.



[Further information and results](#)



[Images from event](#)

- Team of 14 UK representatives competed at the 2021 ITTF Parkinson's World Championships in Berlin in September 2021, taking home 2 Gold medals, 1 Silver medal and 5 Bronze medals



[Table Tennis England article](#)



[ITTF article](#)



[Images from event](#)



[Video of event](#)

- Creation of sessions specifically for People with Parkinson's at table tennis clubs and community groups, including:
 - Rowhedge TTC
 - Britannia TTC
 - [Peterborough](#)
 - [Leyland](#)
 - Barnet, NW London



tabletennisengland.co.uk



5. Casestudy

Table Tennis Supports People with Parkinson's

Theme: physical wellbeing, long term health conditions



Defining the Issue

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurological condition effecting around 145,000 people in the UK, with symptoms including tremors, slow movement, and stiff, inflexible muscles. In 2020, researchers at Fukuoka University in Japan found that playing table tennis may help alleviate motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease. The benefits of table tennis for people with Parkinson's are being advocated and experienced by a growing group of players, this is the story of *People with Parkinson's*.

Background Information

Andrew was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's disease in 2010 at the age of 44. Having played table tennis for many years, Andrew was keen to continue his participation despite his diagnosis.

Andrew's longstanding commitment to table tennis has resulted in him becoming a UK ambassador for PingPongParkinson, a not-for-profit organisation based in New York, who aim to create a global sports movement that is inclusive and supportive of people with a Parkinson's diagnosis.

Andrew's Story

Andrew created Parkinson's Table Tennis UK (PDTTUK), with the aim to create a team to compete at the ITTF Parkinson World Table Tennis Championships (PWTTTC), held in Berlin in September 2021. In preparation for the World Championships, Andrew together with volunteers from PDTTUK collaborated with Table Tennis England, St Neots TTC and 'Mind to Muscle' to host the UK's first

PingPongParkinson National Championship at St Neots TTC in August 2021. The event saw 24 players from across the country compete, with many of the players meeting for the first time. Andrew came away from the event with a silver medal and also managed to offer support from fundraising to any medal winners at the event to attend the PWTTTC in Berlin 3 weeks later. Four medal winners were supported, three of which attended the German Open in Nordhorn 10 days before the World Championships. Success continued in Nordhorn, with every player winning a medal.



case study
January 2022

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In September 2021, a team of 14 people with Parkinson's represented the UK at the PWTTTC in Berlin, including 7 English representatives. The UK team made their mark on the world stage, coming away with 2 Gold medals, 1 Silver medal and 5 Bronze medals.

As well as medal success, Andrew makes note of the incredible atmosphere at the event, which made the occasion feel even more special;

"The opening ceremony was fantastic, being an ITTF official tournament and just as impressive as any Paralympic event. There was such an amazing buzz and comradery throughout the whole tournament, despite the competitive element. Everyone there just wanted to play table tennis, whatever the result."

Since returning from Berlin, Andrew has been working towards hosting a PingPongParkinson National Championship event in 2022 and is holding informal weekly table tennis sessions for people with Parkinson's at Britannia Table Tennis Club in Ipswich.

Jan's Story

Jan started playing table tennis as a child, after being introduced to the sport through her parents, progressing to play in her local league as a teenager. At the age of 29, Jan stopped playing table tennis and squash took over as her main sport. Another 25 years past before Jan picked up a table tennis bat again.



In 2012 Jan was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. She wasn't taking part in any regular sport or physical activity, and in 2015 decided that she needed to be more active for her physical and mental wellbeing – so she decided to dust off her old table tennis bat. After visiting her old club in Essex and getting some coaching sessions under her belt, she was back to her old playing standard in a matter of weeks.

Since returning to table tennis, Jan now plays twice a week in league matches and plays to a higher standard than she ever has. Jan also qualified as a Level One table tennis coach herself, helping others to improve their game and become the best player they could be.

In summer 2021 Jan saw an advertisement for a table tennis session for people with Parkinson's in Ipswich. After attending Jan then competed in the PingPongParkinson UK National Championships in August 2021, followed by representing England at the ITTF Parkinson World Table Tennis Championships. Jan came away with a Gold, Silver and Bronze medal and the title of Ladies World Champion.

"Parkinson's has taken many things away from me, but finally I had through Parkinson's fulfilled my lifelong personal objective of becoming a great TT player, the best of the best"

Jan hopes to continue playing and improving for as long as possible, as well as looking into becoming a Women and Girls Ambassador and completing her Level 2 coaching qualification.

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

Gary's Story

Gary was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease after his hand froze during a finance exam. After his condition deteriorated to a point where he could not function properly, Gary was selected for neurological surgery which now allows him some semblance of life.

Just as Gary was regaining confidence, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, during which he realised his social circle had diminished since his diagnosis. This led to Gary suffering with depression, which he now manages with medication and meditation tools. During the pandemic, Gary saw an advertisement for a table tennis session for people with Parkinson's at a local club. Having played table tennis when he was younger, Gary was eager to get back into the sport, hoping to get more social interaction and to improve his health, which had deteriorated to a point where he struggled with general daily activities.



Gary aims to play table tennis at least once a week, depending on his Parkinson's as he can suffer with extreme fatigue.

He plays at Parkinson's sessions at clubs in Colchester and Ipswich and competed at the inaugural PingPongParkinson National Championships in August 2021, winning one category and coming runner up in another. He describes his attendance at the event as;

"... a very emotional and uplifting experience. When I walked through the door, I saw competitors wanting to win their games and not people with Parkinson's. They had left their condition at the door and for that one day all they had on their mind was to play table tennis to the best of their ability"

Gary finds that playing table tennis helps to reduce his fatigue symptoms and he enjoys socialising with others – particularly when playing doubles - and playing to a reasonable standard whilst managing his mobility and dexterity limitations. Gary is looking forward to playing at the next National Championships event and hopes to represent the UK at the next ITTF World Parkinson's Championships in September 2022, to be held in Croatia.





The Future

#LevelTheTable is Table Tennis England's new 5-year Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, supporting our commitment to tackle inequalities and ensuring that everyone involved in our sport is treated fairly and equitably, with dignity and respect.

We are proud of our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and confident that we demonstrate this through various programmes and guidance, meaning we'll continue to work with, extend support and provide guidance to engage people/players with long term health conditions, including people with Parkinson's Disease.

We'll therefore continue to work with and support PDDTUK, to become formally constituted and look ahead to coordinating the return of the UK Champs, potentially expanding to two events (North and South). A formal constitution would enable group to apply and distribute funding to new and emerging groups across the country.

Going into Spring 2022, we'll reconnect with partners such as Parkinson's UK and continue to work with PDDTUK, and bid to engage and reach new audiences through Ping in the Community packages and #Level the Table funding streams, supporting even more groups/venues to set up more Table Tennis sessions for Players with Parkinson's.

Findings from Membership Satisfaction (2021) and participation (2020) surveys show 65% of members are within the 45+ age bracket, of which 18% are living with a disability. Over a third (37%) of this group consider their disability to affect their mobility – which undoubtedly extends to those with Parkinson's.

We'll continue to work with existing clubs and venues to become more inclusive and engaging of those living with long term health conditions, including those with Parkinson's Disease, ensuring appropriate provision is in place and necessary resources – such as facility guidance, coaching support and training resources – continue to be made freely available.

From social participation at Ping! centres, to playing on the world stage, to volunteering and coaching, we endeavour to ensure that there is a place for everyone at the table.