



## Be TT: Club benefits from publicity Blitz!

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The power of publicity led to growing numbers at a Thursday night Bat & Chat session – and ensured Blitz Table Tennis Club could keep their club night going.

Steve Fox, the project organiser at the Gainsborough club, said: “We had a Thursday night club session where we really needed to increase the numbers attending or potentially lose that club night.”

Aiming to try new ways to attract new members to the club, Steve approached Table Tennis England Development & Volunteering Officer Mark Willerton and it was decided to submit an application for Be TT funding for a new Bat & Chat session.

The application was successful but a slow few weeks left the club wondering whether evening Bat & Chat sessions would work. Then a feature in *Gainsborough Life* changed everything.

*Gainsborough Life* is a monthly lifestyle and community magazine delivered to more than 17,400 homes and businesses within the wider Gainsborough area.

## Fire off a winner at Blitz Table Tennis Club

**Blitz Table Tennis** are a well-established local club, benefitting from professional coaches and standards that range from beginner to England representation. We are being supported by Table Tennis England in our initiative to provide Table Tennis facilities on a "Bat and Chat" basis, for people locally and over 50.

We hope that these sessions will be fun and informal, with an opportunity or some time off the table during each session, to have a drink and talk among fellow players. These will be social sessions and not too serious, but may have a range of standards mix together, from complete beginner to local league players.

Our aims with this initiative are to generally raise awareness of the fitness and mental health benefits of table tennis and to promote the social aspects and increased well-being benefits the game can bring.

Table tennis has been shown to be an excellent sport to play later in life,

some of the key reasons are below:

- It is a sport that you can play socially and competitively until late in life (up to 90+ years of age).
- It's a great sport to be able to play but also chat and share humour during the match (players are only five metres away from each other at either end).
- The sport has shown to have great health benefits with strong evidence to show playing table tennis helps to reduce the risk and slow down the effects of Dementia and Alzheimer's.

More specifically we hope that the Bat and Chat sessions will lead to increased membership generally and participation in our table tennis club and assist with the Club's sustainability longer term.

The Bat and Chat sessions are new to our club and we intend to use the Gainsborough Academy facilities on a Thursday evening for the session, as it is our Club's social night. The club is open from 6.30pm to 9.00pm and will



cost £3.00 per participant for each session. The tables and bats and balls, etc, will be freely available and all we ask is that any players wear suitable shoes, such as training shoes.

We are hoping to have at least 10 people at each of the sessions but can cope with 50 or more! The sessions will begin on Thursdays as soon as we have an expression of interest.

For further information, please contact Blitz Club Chairman, Steve Fox on 07920 041925, who will be happy to help with any enquiries.



The article in Gainsborough Life

The feature had an immediate impact, with 11 new members attending the session the following week, nearly all of whom had seen the article in the magazine.

Now the weekly Thursday night is going from strength to strength and head coach Paul Johnson said: "We knew there was interest for a social table tennis in Gainsborough, we just couldn't get people there."

Mark Willerton and Table Tennis England National Delivery Lead Jenny Leach recently visited the session and both enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere to play table tennis.

Mark said: "It's not a traditional Bat & Chat, in the sense that it attracts as many families as over-50s, but people really do make the session lovely, friendly and welcoming to all ages and abilities.

"It was fantastic to see mum, dad, brother and sister all playing together in a game of social doubles!"

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