



## From Ping Pong Parlour to club

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As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and temporary closure of facilities, there have been fewer opportunities for sport and physical activity. Where Ping Pong Parlours have been required to shut their doors to the public during recent times, regular attendees have had to find new ways to play and enjoy table tennis.

Ping Pong Parlours are 'pop-up' spaces for the public to play and enjoy table tennis for free. Since its opening, the Crompton Place Ping Pong Parlour in Bolton has proven to be a real success with local people. John discovered the Parlour in Crompton Place during his recovery from a heart attack and back surgery.

He said: "I was recovering from a heart attack and a spine operation, and I walked past the Parlour and I thought to myself 'oh, I used to play 50 years ago, I wonder if I'm still any good?' So I went in."

Playing at the Ping Pong Parlour, John rediscovered his love for table tennis and used this as a way of keeping active during his recovery.

He said: "I'd been going to a gym after my heart attack and I was quite happy going on the treadmill – it was a bit boring, but I needed the exercise. Then I found the Ping Pong Parlour and after that I didn't want to go to the gym."

"Before long I was playing regularly and I spent four or five hours a day playing table tennis. That to me is better than any workout."

As a result of the pandemic, all Parlours across the country were required to temporarily close and John said: "I'm sorry the Parlour's closed because it's been a Godsend for me and helped me no end."

Although the Parlour in Crompton Place has not yet been able to reopen, it is with thanks to Hilton Table Tennis Club in Horwich that John has been able to safely return to play.

He said: "I had a look on the Hilton website and thought I might start playing when they reopened, and I've been going for three or four weeks now."

As much as table tennis is an enjoyable form of exercise for John, he has also gained social trust through the sport.

“I’ve met a lot of people from all over the world and all different backgrounds in the last 18 months. It’s really helped me. I’ve met some wonderful people and I just love table tennis.”

For Hilton Table Tennis Club, the local Ping Pong Parlours have been a great launchpad for players wanting to play regularly within a more competitive setting. John is just one example of how the Coronavirus pandemic has assisted this transition.

Jean Smart, Treasurer and Caretaker at the club, said: “I think the Parlours have been a good idea. It puts the idea in people’s heads that they can play locally and it’s good to get them exercising and give them something to do. Everybody’s welcome at our place – we don’t ask where they’ve come from, we just try to accommodate them.”

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