



Figures show disability table tennis on the up

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Disability table tennis is flourishing, according to Sport England statistics out today.

The figures, for October 2014 to October 2015, show 29,100 people with disabilities play every month, up from 22,300 for the same time last year.

Continued growth of this figure is being supported by Table Tennis England initiatives including the Ability Club Support Scheme and Disability Table Grant Scheme.

More and more clubs around the country are working to get people with disabilities into the sport.

They include Brighton TTC, which runs a Grace Eyre Sports 4 All Session at the club, targeted specifically at people with learning disabilities – with new sessions for those with physical disabilities also planned.

St Neots TTC in Cambridgeshire are setting up a weekly session in the nearby village of Papworth Everard for people with disabilities helped by the Papworth Trust disability charity, which is based in the village.

And in Cheshire, Halton TTC have brought in an experienced disability coach to make their sessions more accessible, and are also looking to have a competition.

Table Tennis England Chief Executive Sara Sutcliffe said: "One of our key targets for the next 10 years is to increase the number of people with disabilities playing regularly.

"This shows that progress has already been made and we will be working hard to ensure this growth can be sustained in the years ahead."

Elsewhere in the Sport England statistics – known as the Active People Survey – the number of people aged 16 and over who are playing table tennis for at least 30 minutes every week stands at 93,500, down by 2,700 compared with the same period last year.

Despite this, Table Tennis England's own research supports the fact that more people are playing table tennis in workplaces, clubs and the education sector as well as socially through initiatives such as Ping!, but may not meet the current survey criteria for playing for at least 30 minutes.

Our research suggests that participation has increased among 14-to-16-year-olds, while the number of female participants has increased by 1,200 in the last six months – which co-incides with the release of the table tennis-specific advertising within the national This Girl Can campaign.

In addition, more than 80 tables have been placed in workplaces under the Loop at Work initiative. And with Loop on Campus and Loop in the Clubhouse also recently launched, more and more people are being provided with the opportunity to play table tennis.

Sara Sutcliffe said: “We know that more people than ever are engaging with Ping! – we had an estimated 500,000 unique players this summer – and with schemes such as Loop beginning to have an impact, we’re certain more people are playing than is perhaps apparent in the survey results.

“Driving up participation is a central part of our mission for the next 10 years and we will be working hard to get as many people as possible into a lifelong sporting habit through table tennis.”

For more information on the Loop initiative, visit www.KeepintheLoop.co.uk and for details on our disability initiatives, contact development@tabletennisengland.co.uk

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