



## Refurbished club looking to Bright-er future

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UK Down's Syndrome table tennis champion Harry Fairchild has officially reopened Brighton Table Tennis Club (BTTTC).

He cut the ribbon at the Fitzherbert Centre, Kemptown, marking the end of the first stage of a major transformation programme, which has seen a £400,000 investment of the renovation of the exterior of the building by the owners, the Parish of St John the Baptist and Canon Foley in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

With the help of a Table Tennis England grant of £100,000, the club will soon start work renovating the inside of the building.

Harry, who is the world's first qualified coach with Down's Syndrome, is one of the more than 300 people who play at the club each week. The club is open seven days a week to players of all ages and abilities and runs special sessions for people with learning difficulties, looked after children, under-16s and over-60s. Two women-only sessions are held each week.

Club founder-trustee, Harry McCarney said:

"The building has been transformed since July 2015 when we moved in. Having a secure base of our own has been central to the BTTTC's rapid development in the past year.

"We are now recognised as one of the leading table tennis clubs in England and an important community asset in Brighton and Hove that is bringing significant sums of money into the city to support sport.

"We thank Canon Foley and the Parish of St John the Baptist in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton for granting the club a long lease on the Fitzherbert Centre and for investing funds into the outside of

the building. We are also grateful to Table Tennis England for the grant, which will make the inside refurbishment possible.”



Harry Fairchild cuts the ribbon

The past year has seen the club become the UK's first Club of Sanctuary, for its work with unaccompanied refugee children and young people. It also won the first national Community Integration Award for the way it brings together young people from the city and from around the world – from Syria to Vietnam – through table tennis.

It has forged links with Brighton Housing Trust to provide table tennis and coaching for homeless men and women at the Trust's First Base Centre. Regular sessions are run for patients at Mill View psychiatric hospital. More recently, the club has begun working with the Youth Offending Team and its clients.

B TTC runs regular coaching sessions in five secondary and eight primary schools and more than 260 students play across three campuses each week at City College, where club provides coaches for six weekly sessions. More than 40 people play at the 50+ sessions at the King Alfred Leisure Centre each week. In addition, table tennis is played on the 30 outdoor tables scattered across Brighton and Hove.

McCarney added:

"Inexpensive to play, table tennis really is the People's Game. It brings communities together, helps end isolation and contributes to physical and mental wellbeing. The club's aim is to provide as many opportunities as possible for as many people as possible to come together in our city across a table tennis net."

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