

## **Brighton Table Tennis Club named first UK sports Club of Sanctuary for work with unaccompanied refugee minors**

Brighton Table Tennis Club (BTTC) has become the first sports club in the UK to be awarded Club of Sanctuary status. The award is in recognition of its work with 15 unaccompanied refugee minors during the last 18 months from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan and Vietnam. One of them is now a qualified coach and another is training for his coach's badge.

The award was made by Brighton and Hove's Sanctuary on Sea organisation, which is part of the national-wide City of Sanctuary movement. The other 70 member cities and towns include London, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Cardiff, Leeds, Belfast, Plymouth and Newcastle.

Said Tim Holtam, BTTC Director: 'We are greatly honoured to be the first club to achieve this recognition. We believe sport has a critical role to play in helping these young people to become part of our society. Table tennis is a truly accessible sport, and almost everybody had played it at one time or another. Our thanks go to the Brighton and Hove Virtual School and the city social work team who are hugely supportive of the club's work.'

The club recently received Table Tennis England's annual Equality Award for its work with unaccompanied minors, looked after children and people with learning difficulties. Club member Harry Fairchild is a national Down Syndrome champion, and the club takes part in international tournaments for those with learning difficulties in Sweden, Germany and Italy. The Grace Eyre Foundation, Special Olympics Brighton and Hove and the Sports for All Project Sussex, support the club in this work.

Women-only sessions and sessions for 50 plus players are also a central part of the club's work. 'We really are a sport for all organisation,' says Tim Holtam. The Club of Sanctuary Award will be presented tomorrow (12 May) by Jenny Landsell,

Chair of Sanctuary on Sea at 6pm at the Brighton Table Tennis Club, The Fitzherbert's Centre, 36 Upper Bedford St, Brighton BN2 1JP.

More information: Tim Holtam 07985141788 or Bill Randall 01273 626694

#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

**Brighton Table Tennis Club (BTTC)** at The Fitzherbert Centre opens seven days a week to players of all ages and abilities. A local community club and registered charity, it holds weekly sessions for a wide range of groups, among them primary school children, under 16s, over 60s, people with learning disabilities and looked after children. Two women-only sessions are held each week. It also works with refugee children.

BTTC also runs regular sessions in five secondary and eight primary schools in the city. More than 260 students play across three campuses each week at City College where BTTC provides coaches for six weekly sessions. The King Alfred 50+ session has an average of 40 players each week.

More information: [brightontabletennisclub.co.uk](http://brightontabletennisclub.co.uk)

**The Grace Eyre** charity helps people with learning disabilities in Sussex and Lambeth gain independence, obtain housing and find employment.

The men and women it works with are able to build a programme of sessions based on their own interests and aspirations through the [Active Lives](#) scheme, which promotes independence and learning a wide range of activities as well as giving people the ability to develop new networks and friendships. The activities include creative arts, work and skills, sports, leisure and healthy lives.

More information: [grace-eyre.org](http://grace-eyre.org)