

# ENGLISH CLUB

## ITT Buonarroti

B2 weekly topic for 23/12/2020\*:

### STAYING FIT, HEALTHY AND HAPPY

*Do you do anything to stay fit and take care of your health? Are there any diets you think can help? Do you play any sports or do exercise? How can your physical health influence your mental health?*

Local governments have had to take on a new responsibility; that of ensuring that people **stay fit and healthy**. Birmingham council is already **hot on the case**. For the past few years they have been encouraging local residents to enrol on the *Be active* scheme, which allows them to use local leisure services completely **free of charge**.

Participants must register to obtain a membership card. They can then use the **facilities** in leisure centres across the city at certain times of the day.

A total of 29 leisure centres are currently **signed up to the scheme**. Each leisure centre must offer a minimum of one hour of swimming time and an hour of gym time to *Be Active* members. In reality, in some establishments in the more deprived areas, 70% of opening hours are reserved for *Be Active* members. Exercise classes and badminton courts are also made available on top of the standard facilities. *Be Active* classes are also being **provided** in schools and community centres. There are guided bike rides, and even proposals **to roll out activities** in public spaces such as rounders games in parks, and buggy pushes for new mothers.

Since it was launched in 2008, a third of the local population, a total of 360,000 people, has signed up for the scheme. Of these, 60% are from minority groups, and the average age is 49, as opposed to 29, the figure for private gyms. The majority were not previously members of a sports club of any kind, half were **overweight or obese**, and a fifth considered themselves to be in **poor health**, indicating that the scheme is reaching the people who need it most. Research also shows that since the scheme was set up, there has been a rise in demand for information about **reducing alcohol intake** and **quitting smoking**.

Statistics show that for every £1 spent on the *Be Active* scheme, £23 is saved in the health service. Sadly, the scheme has suffered from **budget cuts**, and lately it has had to reduce the hours available to members. **Nonetheless**, other councils are interested in **the great strides made** by Birmingham council, and officials from Birmingham have been holding workshops with representatives from other councils **to spread the word** about what can be achieved.

\* If English Club does not take place on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, it will resume on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2021