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Basildon social media star on inclusive sports facilities

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Jenni has been enjoying Eversley Leisure Centre's Poolpod 3.0 (Image: Everyone Active)

By George Pizani

Trainee Reporter

@george_pizani

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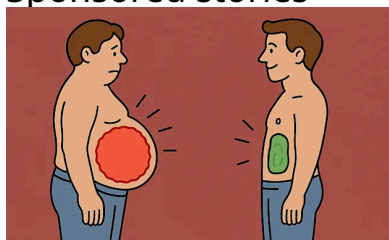
A SOCIAL media star has revealed how Basildon's state-of-the-art inclusive facilities have helped her regain her love of sport.

Jenni Pettican, 28, was diagnosed with chronic illnesses at just 20 and has been left regularly using a wheelchair since.

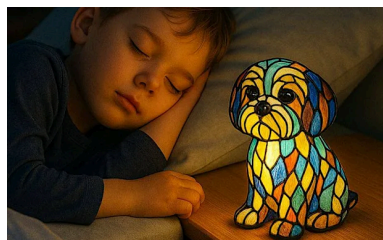
Despite loving sport as a youngster, she struggled to find accessible and inclusive facilities before being inspired by watching this summer's Paralympics.

Jenni has been documenting her experiences at Eversley **Leisure** Centre and Basildon Sporting Village, where she praises both leisure centres for their facilities – including the Eversley centre's wheelchair-accessible pool.

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Jenni has been trying a range of inclusive sporting activities (*Image: Everyone Active*)

"Before becoming disabled I was very sporty, playing varsity badminton, going swimming, taking place in dance sessions and more," said Jenni.

"But when I became disabled, I struggled to find accessible ways to exercise which didn't cause my chronic illnesses to flare up, so I haven't done much movement in the last eight years. I was inspired by the Paralympics to see what was out there for average disabled people like me."

Eight years ago, she was diagnosed with Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) and a fluid leak on her spine.

She has been sharing her positive experiences through her Average Disabled Jen vs Paralympic Sports' series on social media.



The Poolpod 3.0 allows wheelchair users to access the pool at Eversley Leisure Centre (*Image: Everyone Active*)

The sites, which are managed by Everyone Active in partnership with Basildon Council, offer an array of inclusive sporting facilities, including the state-of-the-art fully wheelchair-accessible pool.

The facilities have allowed Jenni to embrace activities that are often unavailable to those with disabilities.

She said: "Having access to specialist equipment like the Poolpod 3.0 [the pool wheelchair lift at Eversley Leisure Centre] and to amazing incentives like Sports for Confidence has allowed me to find new ways and new sports to take part in, in a way that is accessible for me,".

Shaun Beagle, area contract manager for Everyone Active across Basildon, said: "We are proud to be able to offer inclusive sporting facilities and activities to people like Jenni, who might not know how leading an active life is possible after a diagnosis.

"Wherever you may be in your journey, our team are on hand to support you and find an activity that works for you and your abilities, leading to a more active lifestyle, a happier mindset and the opportunity to connect with likeminded members of the Basildon community."

LEISURE