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Playing bridge helps to maintain 'brain fitness'

By **Tim Bugler**

A SCOTTISH university is to fund a doctorate in bridge after a major study showed the trick-taking card game keeps people smarter, happier and more social into old age.

The three-year PhD studentship in the sociology of bridge at the University of Stirling is part of a project aiming to look at what makes people take up bridge and keep playing all their lives.

It will also explore the role a hobby can play in friendships and personal communities, as well as how it creates a sense of belonging and collective identity within and across generations.

Academics invited people to join the newly-founded University Bridge Club, set up as part of a series of research projects into the health and wellbeing benefits of the game.

The first, funded by English Bridge Education and Development (EBED), compared the responses of more than 6,400 bridge players with over 10,000 responses from wave six of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing.

It found those playing bridge have higher levels of wellbeing than those who don't.

The new Stirling club will also help build intergenerational relationships within and beyond the university.

Professor of Sociology Samantha Punch – who is an international bridge



University will fund doctorate in bridge

player – leads the research with Dr Caroline Small, an honorary senior lecturer at Imperial College, London.

She said: "The club has the potential to enable people to maintain good health, through increased positive cognitive, social and quality of life outcomes.

"As well as contributing to healthy ageing and brain fitness, participation enhances social networks and a sense of belonging to a wider community."