

# Inclusive Athletics Guidance

**A resource to help athletics providers increase participation by disabled people**



## Introduction

This guidance aims to support athletics clubs, athletics networks and RunTogether groups to engage with disabled people and disabled people's organisations in their community to increase participation by disabled people as participants, coaches, officials and volunteers and to support them effectively in their club or group.

There are over 11.2 million people with a limiting illness, impairment or disability and who have a significant difficulty with day to day activities in Great Britain (Papworth Trust). Participation among disabled people in sport is significantly lower across all age groups than the overall population. Only 15.8% of disabled people (1.4 million) are involved in sports clubs and 77% of disabled adults do not take part in sport at all\*. It is therefore necessary to look at alternative and innovative ways of engaging disabled people to encourage them to choose to become physical active and want to try sport so that disabled people, like non-disabled people, are attracted, welcomed and supported into athletics. This factsheet provides some guidance and advice to support you to do this effectively.

\*data from Active People Survey 5

**The Equality Act 2010 states that anyone who has a physical\* or mental condition which is substantial and long-term can define themselves as a 'Disabled Person'.**

\*Physical includes sensory (hearing and visual) impairments

## Attracting New Members

You should consider using a number of ways to attract new disabled members:

- ◆ **Disability specific activity.** Activity which is aimed solely at disabled people and may be specific to a certain impairment type (e.g. people with a visual impairment or people with cerebral palsy) or pan-disability (all impairment groups together).
- ◆ **Integrated activity.** Activity in which disabled people are integrated into activity together with non-disabled people and necessary considerations are made to ensure all participants can be included.
- ◆ **Both.**

## Marketing and Engagement

For athletics opportunities to be truly inclusive they need to be marketed correctly and to the right individuals and organisations. You should therefore consider:

- ◆ **Use of inclusive imagery appropriate to the activity and the target group.** Using inclusive imagery can help disabled people identify that they are welcome at your club/group. Make sure the images are relevant to the impairment group the activity is for, wheelchair users for a wheelchair racing project for example, and the type of activity for example beginner/club/talent. If it is integrated activity then ensure imagery shows both disabled and non-disabled people together. Images are available from the England Athletics gallery: [www.englandathletics.org/photofolder](http://www.englandathletics.org/photofolder) or from the Sport England image bank: [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)
- ◆ **Ensuring information is available in accessible formats.** Make sure the information you provide about your club/group, specific sessions or events is provided in appropriate formats such as clear print or easy read. The England Athletics *Accessible Information Formats Guidance* gives further advice and examples of what sorts of information formats may be required for people with different impairments and where to get these formats from [www.englandathletics.org/disabilityathletics](http://www.englandathletics.org/disabilityathletics)

Further information can also be found on the English Federation for Disability Sport webpages: [www.efds.co.uk/resources/case\\_studies/573\\_inclusive\\_communications](http://www.efds.co.uk/resources/case_studies/573_inclusive_communications)

### ◆ Advertising activity with local and national disability organisations.

This is not an exhaustive list but here are just some of the examples of organisations that you might advertise your activity with:

#### Local/regional organisations in your community:

- ◆ County Sports Partnerships (CSP) with links to local disability groups
- ◆ Physiotherapy centres
- ◆ Limb fitting centres
- ◆ Schools (special and mainstream including those with specialist units, e.g. hearing unit)
- ◆ Spinal injury centres
- ◆ Local disability organisations (e.g. Actionaires groups, Metro, Trust, Mencap Gateway Active groups, mental health groups etc)
- ◆ Statutory Services (e.g. Children Services, Family services, Disabled Children's Team, Children's Disability Register)
- ◆ Health Services (e.g. Child Development Centres (CDC), Wheelchair Services)
- ◆ Adult and Social Care (e.g. Adult Social Care Team/Adult Contact Team, Housing Association and Housing Trusts)
- ◆ Rehabilitation/enablement Centres

#### National organisations (who may also have local contacts/groups):

- ◆ British Blind Sport – [www.britishblindsport.org.uk](http://www.britishblindsport.org.uk)
- ◆ CP Sport – [www.cpsport.org](http://www.cpsport.org)
- ◆ Dwarf Sports Association UK – [www.dsauk.org](http://www.dsauk.org)
- ◆ Mencap – [www.mencap.org.uk/sport](http://www.mencap.org.uk/sport)
- ◆ Special Olympics – [www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk](http://www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk)
- ◆ UK Deaf Sport – [www.ukdeafsport.org.uk](http://www.ukdeafsport.org.uk)
- ◆ WheelPower – [www.wheelpower.org.uk](http://www.wheelpower.org.uk)
- ◆ Limb Power – [www.limbpower.com](http://www.limbpower.com)
- ◆ Mental health charities (e.g. MIND [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk), SANE, Re-Think etc)
- ◆ National Autistic Society – [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)
- ◆ English Federation for Disability Sport (EFDS) – [www.efds.co.uk](http://www.efds.co.uk). EFDS have engagement officers working regionally who may be able to help you to link with local groups (contact your local CSP first): [www.efds.co.uk/about/staff\\_team](http://www.efds.co.uk/about/staff_team) They can also help you to promote any activity or events: [www.efds.co.uk/events](http://www.efds.co.uk/events)
- ◆ DotComUnity has a directory of disability services and organisations in each county. They can also advertise events and activity to disabled people: [www.dotcommunity.co.uk](http://www.dotcommunity.co.uk)

#### Other useful resources:

- ◆ WheelPower *Marketing Your Club to Wheelchair Users:* [www.englandathletics.org/wheelchairmarketing](http://www.englandathletics.org/wheelchairmarketing)
- ◆ National Deaf Children's Society *Publicity Factsheet:* [www.ndcs.org.uk/promote](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/promote)

## Supporting New Members

All participants want and expect a good experience in athletics. The information provided below will help you and your club/group ensure that any new or existing disabled members get the best and most appropriate experience. A smile and friendly welcome usually goes a long way but here are some other things to think about to make sure your sessions are inclusive:

### Membership forms

Disabled athletes should be members of a club/group and registered for competition like any other athlete. Disability isn't always obvious though so by asking the relevant question on a *Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire* (PARQ) or a membership form will enable you to provide the person with the relevant support and guidance.

Here's an example of some appropriate wording:

*The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a 'physical\* or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.*

*\*Physical includes sensory (hearing and visual) impairments*

*Do you consider yourself to have a disability?  Yes  No*

*If yes what is the nature of your impairment? .....*

*Our club/group is committed to supporting disabled athletes. By providing this information it will enable us to give you a better experience and support you with relevant guidance and advice if required. To discuss any specific support or reasonable adjustment required please contact [ADD INFO]*

It is important to highlight why you are asking for information about disability. The approach should always be positive to emphasise that disclosure simply allows for further support if needed from club/group members and leaders/coaches, information on potential opportunities and impairment specific pathways and the provision of information in relevant formats if needed. Make sure that there are both phone and email options available for making contact.

## Reasonable Adjustment

Under the *Equality Act* it is unlawful:

- ◆ to discriminate against a disabled person because of their disability
- ◆ for any organisation or service provider to treat disabled people unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability, unless such treatment can be justified.

Organisations and service providers must make reasonable adjustments for disabled people such as providing extra help or making changes to the way they provide their service and physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers to access. This duty to comply applies to all athletics clubs, groups and competition providers, regardless of size.

Make sure you have considered any reasonable adjustment in advance that might be necessary for all individuals to take part in your sessions (e.g. a blind person bringing a guide with them with no additional charge for the guide). This might also include any communication support that might be needed such as a buddy or interpreter.

England Athletics *Providing Communication Support Guidance* gives more information on providing communication support and can be found at [www.englandathletics.org/disabilityathletics](http://www.englandathletics.org/disabilityathletics)

For more information on the *Equality Act* (2010) visit: <http://homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities/equality-act> and [www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance)

## Leaders and Coaches

Friendly, approachable and knowledgeable leaders and coaches can often make the difference between someone taking part in athletics or not. You should ensure coaches, leaders and workshop deliverers are inclusive and if necessary plan and provide opportunities for additional support where necessary.

The technical models for coaching disabled athletes are the same as for coaching non-disabled athletes. As always leaders and coaches will need to adapt both the activity and their communication and coaching styles to suit the needs of individual athletes.

The principles of long term athlete development also apply to disabled athletes who should be encouraged to focus on training for all round development for the event groups relevant to them (for example a wheelchair user would do speed, endurance and throws).

The UK Disability Inclusion Training-Athletics course is available to provide leaders and coaches with generic awareness on how to include disabled participants. For more information visit [www.ulearnathletics.com/module/131](http://www.ulearnathletics.com/module/131)

Further information and guidance, such as *The Inclusion Spectrum* and *STEP Factsheet, Terminology Factsheet, SCUk Impairment Specific Factsheets* and other coaching resources can be found here: [http://ucoach.com/coaching/event\\_specific/#disability](http://ucoach.com/coaching/event_specific/#disability)

Your local Club and Coach Support Officer can also provide information and support (see contact details below).

## Facilities

Ensure the facilities you use are accessible and have appropriate equipment. This includes facilities for athletics activity, workshops and meeting venues. Consider more than just physical access but signage, parking, toilets, public transport etc.

The following documents give detailed information and guidance about making facilities accessible:

- ◆ Sport England *Accessible Sports Facilities Design Guide 2010* and *Access Audits* [sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/accessible-sports-facilities](http://sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/design-and-cost-guidance/accessible-sports-facilities)
- ◆ English Federation for Disability Sport *Access for All, Opening Doors* [www.efds.co.uk](http://www.efds.co.uk).

## Equipment and Funding

Most disabled athletes do not require any adapted equipment to take part in athletics. For those that do there is guidance available on what is needed, where to get it and how to access funding.

The England Athletics *Equipment and Funding* documents for *Running Blades*, *Wheelchair Racing* and *Throws* can be found here: [http://ucoach.com/coaching/event\\_specific/#disability](http://ucoach.com/coaching/event_specific/#disability)

## Competition

Disabled athletes can take part in a range of types of competition:

- ◆ Disability events which are only for disabled athletes. Some events will require classification.
- ◆ Open events which are for disabled athletes and non-disabled athletes. Disabled athletes may compete against non-disabled athletes or other disabled athletes. Classification not usually required.
- ◆ Integrated events which are for disabled athletes and non-disabled athletes but disabled athletes compete against other disabled athletes. Most events will require classification.
- ◆ Non disability events which are for non-disabled athletes and disabled athletes but disabled athletes compete against non-disabled athletes. No classification required.

The England Athletics *Disabled Athlete Pathway* shows the athletics pathway for disabled athletes. Coaches and classified athletes also have access to the Paralympic portal and the calendar of events. Contact [PS@britishathletics.org.uk](mailto:PS@britishathletics.org.uk) to be added to the mailing list.

### Classification:

Disabled athletes require classification for certain types and level of competition.

- ◆ For athletes with a physical, visual or intellectual impairment please contact [classification@uka.org.uk](mailto:classification@uka.org.uk) for more information.
- ◆ There is no Paralympic pathway for deaf athletes but international opportunities do exist through the Deaflympics.
- ◆ There is therefore no IPC classification system but athletes with a hearing impairment wishing to compete as a deaf athlete should complete an audiogram form by contacting: [office@ukds.org.uk](mailto:office@ukds.org.uk)

The England Athletics Classification Factsheet provides more information on classification and can be found here: <http://ucoach.com/video/an-introduction-to-classification-in-athletics/>

### Rules:

Information on specific rules for disabled athletes can be found here:

[www.paralympic.org/Athletics/Rulesandregulations/Rules](http://www.paralympic.org/Athletics/Rulesandregulations/Rules)

### Performance Level:

Quite often there are no other disabled athletes of the same age, gender, impairment and event in a club/group so it can be difficult to know what an athlete's performance level is. Rankings can help give some initial guidance. Athletes, coaches and leaders can find out information about UK rankings here: [www.thepowerof10.info/rankings/](http://www.thepowerof10.info/rankings/) and world rankings here:

[www.paralympic.org/Athletics/Results/Rankings](http://www.paralympic.org/Athletics/Results/Rankings)

## Long Term Participation

Disability events/activities should be linked to opportunities for long term participation in clubs or running groups and disability specific opportunities should provide a pathway into integrated activity.

## Further support

For further support please visit [www.englandathletics.org/disabilityathletics](http://www.englandathletics.org/disabilityathletics)

### Other Useful Resources

- ◆ England Athletics *Deaf Friendly Athletics Resource* [www.englandathletics.org/disabilityathletics](http://www.englandathletics.org/disabilityathletics)