

Safeguarding Deaf and Disabled Children in Sport: Inclusive coaching

Including Deaf and Disabled Children in Sport

Introduction

All children and young people have a right to access sporting opportunities in safe and supportive environments irrespective of their ability or circumstances. This guidance is provided to support staff, coaches and volunteers in sports clubs and other organisations to consider ways in which deaf and disabled children may be appropriately included in the mainstream activities they provide. In this guidance the term 'sports club' will be used to refer to any sports activity provider or organisation.



Inclusion

Research by the English Federation for Disability Sport¹ found that only 20% of disabled people take part in sport or physical activity, 70% wish to increase the amount of physical activity they take part in. This is against a back drop of 10 million disabled people in the UK¹. Sports clubs and activity providers can play a key role in taking on this responsibility and delivering inclusive provision, primarily by adopting a positive attitude to including disabled young people. There are an increasing number of funded programmes being introduced with a specific aim of increasing the numbers of disabled children involved in mainstream sport.

Whilst all young people have the right to participate in sports or activities of their choice, mainstream sports clubs may not always be the most suitable or safest environment for a child with some specific or complex needs. Clubs should be *willing* to include everyone, and if they can't immediately they should consider how they potentially could accommodate an individual. If inclusion genuinely proves impractical, then Clubs should sign-post the young person on to someone, or a sport/activity which will be accessible. It is in the interest of clubs to include disabled children and young people – why turn potential members away? Also, in many cases, it is against the law not to include them.

In some instances it may be more appropriate to refer a young person on to disability-specific clubs, sports or activities – some of which may also be available to non-disabled players (see Appendix 2 – Additional Information)..

¹ English Federation of Disability Sport, 2014. Engaging disabled people in sport and physical activity.t.

² English Federation of Disability Sport, 2011.



Inclusion here refers to those steps required to provide deaf and disabled participants with access to the activities. This includes giving consideration to the need to adapt and modify coaching practices, equipment and aspects of the activities to ensure all participants, regardless of their condition, have the opportunity to participate if they choose to (e.g. STEP – consider Space, Time, Equipment, and People). Motivated, well informed and supported coaches and sports clubs can often make relatively straightforward practical adaptations and modifications to create an environment that caters for many individual's needs.

Often people think that inclusion means everyone does everything in the same environment, with the same rules, the same equipment, and the same people - and this might be the case. But being inclusive is about creating something *meaningful* for everyone involved, so actually being *inclusive* means thinking about a **spectrum** of types of activity. Consider the AIM (Activity Inclusion Spectrum) where people can be in:

- an Open session (where the rules, equipment and environment are the same for everyone)
- a Parallel session (where children/young people are in the same environment but doing different sessions)
- a Modified session (where they are all in the same environment but things are changed so that everyone gets something challenging from the session, e.g. the rules are changed slightly for some individuals)
- or a Specific session (which might be specifically for people with certain functional abilities, sport classifications, or impairments).

Identifying the right environment in conjunction with the young person - listening to their views and aspirations, and working out what is right for everyone without making any assumptions - is what inclusion is all about. Put the children/young people first, find out what is needed, and create the best way to provide this!

What can sports clubs do to accommodate deaf and disabled participants?

The Equality Act 2010 (EA) which replaced much of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) requires sports clubs and others to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate disabled children (see Appendix 1 for information about the legal context).

Service providers, including sports clubs, have to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in the way they deliver their services. This is so that a disabled person is not put at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people in accessing the activities.

Examples of reasonable adjustments could include:

- installing an induction loop for people who are hearing impaired
- providing disability awareness training for staff
- providing larger, well-defined signage for people with impaired vision
- putting in a ramp at the entrance to a building which has steps
- thinking about how else you could deliver your sport so that more children and young people will come along and join in.

What is considered a reasonable adjustment for a large organisation may be different from a reasonable adjustment for a small club. It is about what is practical in the service provider's individual situation and what resources they may have.

It is very difficult to describe exactly how the term 'reasonable adjustment' should be interpreted by sports clubs in every case or situation, but the following provide some ideas.



What reasonable adjustments can organisations and clubs make?

Provide a welcoming environment

- Having a positive and welcoming approach is one of the most effective ways of encouraging disabled people to join a club, think about what CAN be done, rather than potential challenges to the inclusion of disabled participants.
- Check that the venue is accessible to children and young people with a mobility impairment or who use specific equipment (wheelchair, walking frame, crutches, etc.)
- Check that the signs around the venue are clear, easy to read and well directed. Include pictures or illustrations to clarify where possible.
- Does the club welcome, and positively encourage members from all sectors of the community?
- Check that the pictures and language used on your advertising shows disabled children and young people participating, coaching and/or officiating.

Talk to disabled people

- Consult with groups and individuals about their needs and requirements – don't make assumptions and don't be afraid to ask!
- The best way to find out about a impairment/condition and its implications is to ask the individual, as each person's impairment/disability is unique to them and this will be different for each individual you meet
- Remember that some young disabled people are more confident than others, and so it might be appropriate to bring other people into conversations at times - but make sure you check when to do this – don't just assume that you know best.
- Make links with local schools or other support/interest groups to ensure that young disabled people are aware of what is available for them to access.
- Contact the Local Authority Sports Development, Inclusion or Disability Officers or the County Sports Partnership for details about disability sport contacts and organisations in your area.

Develop and implement a policy

- Does the club have an open policy on membership?
- Ensure the club's constitution reflects an inclusive approach. An equity statement and policy will demonstrate a commitment to achieving this but make sure everyone is aware of these and the approach you are taking as a club. An example of an inclusion statement is provided²
- An organisation/club member could be appointed to lead on the development and implementation of inclusion policies - however, it is the responsibility of all members to understand and adopt this approach.

³ 'Our aim is provide an inclusive environment. Whilst we (name of club) appreciate that it may not be possible to accommodate every young person with a disability, we are committed to doing what we reasonably can in order to facilitate their inclusion. Our policy includes an initial meeting with the young person and parents/carers – to explore ways in which the club can support and include the young person in sports or activities. We also offer a 'trial' period which enables both the young person with a disability and the club to work together on a smooth integration and to learn from each other. We may also seek advice from specialist sports organisations to see what adjustments can and need to be made, or (in conjunction with them and their family) we may sign post the young person to Disability Sports Groups and Associations as this may prove to be a better option for the individual.'



Provide access to facilities

- Talk to the facility provider e.g. school or Local Authority about the provisions that they have in place to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010
- This should include car parking, toilets, changing facilities, access to buildings and other facilities.

Adapt equipment

- Introducing adapted equipment is not always expensive and can help disabled participants, e.g. a larger, softer ball may be useful for children with poor coordination, or a brightly coloured ball or pitch markings for those who are partially sighted
- Grips can be added to equipment to make it easier to handle and control
- Bats or rackets with a larger contact area can assist some disabled participants
- Remember that when you adapt equipment - this might be about making the task *harder* as well as easier (using smaller targets, adding rules which create tougher challenges in sessions, etc.).

Provide training opportunities for coaches, staff and volunteers

- Disability awareness/inclusion training can be provided for coaches, officials, committee members and club members.
- There are a variety of courses that can be accessed by those who wish to develop their skills in working with and coaching disabled children
- Information on some of these courses can be found in Appendix 2 - Additional Information.

Coaching deaf and disabled participants

Many people think that special skills or knowledge are needed to coach disabled participants. This is not the case. It is important for coaches to understand something about the implications and impact of a condition/impairment for a particular participant in order to ensure that their individual needs will be addressed. The basic skills of good coaching will go a long way to ensure that the inclusion of disabled participants becomes a natural part of coaching⁴.

There have been many attempts to produce a model to help coaches open up their sessions and ensure disabled people can be involved in ways that suit them as individuals. The AIM (Activity Inclusion Model) is the approach to the provision of inclusive activity which the 4 Home Nation Disability Sport Organisations recommend are used. This reflects the Stevenson and Black's⁵ (2007) Inclusion Spectrum and the WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. The focus is on what athletes can do rather than what they can't.⁶

⁴ Australian Sports Commission, 2011. *Inclusive Coaching* [Online] Available at: www.ausport.gov.au [Accessed October 2011]

⁵ Stevenson, P. (2007) *Including Young Disabled People and SEN Pupils in FUNdamentals and Multi-skill Opportunities*. Loughborough: Youth Sport Trust (unpublished draft document).

⁶ Many deaf people do not define themselves as disabled. and have never experienced 'hearing' as a usual activity. For this reason they will describe themselves as belonging to a particular cultural group with its own language (BSL) – often referred to as the Deaf community. This is one of the reasons that the term 'deaf and disabled' is used. In many documents the term D/deaf person is used to include all groups of deaf people. In this document, for simplicity, we will simply refer use the terms 'deaf' or 'deafness' to include anyone with any level of hearing impairment.



Tips for coaches working with participants with a disability

Many National Governing Bodies and other organisations already provide sport-specific guidance on including disabled participants for coaches and clubs – these should be accessed and implemented.

- Apply the basic principles of good coaching practice
- Each participant is an individual whose functional ability (what they can do) and needs should be assessed and addressed
- Talk to the participant first and their carer/s – they are the experts!
- Take steps to understand the implications of the particular condition/impairment for the specific activity, for example on: effective communication and understanding; safety considerations; other practical issues (like removing hearing aids before playing contact sports), and so on
- Focus on what the participant **can** do
- Assess each participant's aspirations, needs and ability and plan accordingly (include required adaptations to equipment etc.)
- Set realistic and challenging goals as you would for all participants

In a group coaching session, there may be additional issues to consider as athletes with similar conditions or impairments may nevertheless have very different needs and there is not as much time to devote to individuals. There is no magic formula for inclusive coaching, but it is also not rocket-science, and some athletes have combined and complex needs. The key is to keep communicating with those who are being coached.



Appendix 1 – Legislation and Guidance

The legal context

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 (EA) replaces the Disability Discrimination Acts (DDA) 1995 and 2005. The majority of the provisions of the Equality Act came into force on 1st October 2012.

The Equality Act has a uniform set of definitions of discrimination. These are:

Direct discrimination

Harassment

Combined discrimination

Discrimination arising from disability

Indirect discrimination

Reasonable adjustment duty

In the UK the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) protected the rights of disabled people in the United Kingdom. The DDA had the following effects on the sporting context - these remain relevant under the more recent Equality Act:

- It is unlawful for sports clubs to treat disabled people less favourably for a reason related to their disability
- Sports clubs are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people such as providing extra help or making changes to the way in which they provide their services
- Sports clubs will also have to make 'reasonable adjustments' to the physical features of their premises in order to overcome physical barriers to access

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child⁶ also outlines the rights of deaf and disabled children and young people. It states that they have the right to enjoy culture, recreation, leisure and sport on an equal basis to non-disabled people. Governments must take action to make sure this right is followed, including action to support the inclusion of deaf and disabled children in mainstream sporting activities and disability-specific sporting and recreational activities. This Article gives disabled children the right to participate equally in play, recreation and sporting activities.

⁶ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989



Appendix 2 - Additional Information

Examples of disability-specific sports websites:

UK Deaf Sport - www.ukdeafsport.org.uk
Action for Blind People - www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk/our-services/children-young-people-and-families
Youth Sport Trust - www.youthsporttrust.org/about-us/sporting-chance.aspx
Parasport - www.parasport.org.uk
Inclusive Fitness Initiative - www.inclusivefitness.org/gettingpeopleactive
Essex County FA - www.essexfa.com/development/disability
The disability football directory - www.disabilityfootball.co.uk
GB Boccia - www.gb-boccia.org
Disability Sport Wales www.disabilitysportwales.com
English Federation of Disability Sport www.efds.co.uk
Disability Sport Northern Ireland
Scottish Disability Sport

Relevant training courses include:

UK Coaching |(formerly sportscoachUK): www.UKcoaching.org

How To Coach Disabled People In Sport www.ukcoaching.org/workshops/workshop-search/results?term=How+To+Coach+Disabled+People+In+Sport

Inclusive Coaching: Disability

www.ukcoaching.org/workshops/workshop-search/results?term=Inclusive+Coaching+%3A+Disability

UK Disability Inclusion Training

UK Disability Inclusion Training (Coaches and Volunteers) <http://www.disabilitysportwales.com/uk-dit-coaches-and-volunteers/>
UK DIT (LSP) (Leisure Service Providers)
UK DIT (SDO) (Sport Development Officers)
UK DIT (NGB) (National Governing Bodies)

Sainsbury's Active Kids for All Inclusive Physical Education (IPE)

Sainsbury's Active Kids for All Inclusive Community Training (ICT)

<https://activekids.sainsburys.co.uk/parents-community/more-about-active-kids/active-kids-for-all>

(England only)

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CPSU 2017

