



Including People with Disabilities in Your Club

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INTRODUCTION

Northern Ireland experiences the highest prevalence of disability in the UK with 21%¹ of the population experiencing some form of disability or health related condition; that's one in five of the population.

However, because of a complex range of economic, attitudinal and physical barriers people with disabilities as a 'group' experience the lowest participation rates in sport. Indeed, a recent research conducted by NISRA² in July 2007 found that people with disabilities in Northern Ireland are half as likely to participate in sport and physical activity as non disabled people, with only 10% participating regularly. A further 5% take part occasionally, leaving an astounding 85% of people with disabilities who never take part in any form of sport or physical activity.

These guidelines have been prepared by Disability Sports NI to provide guidance to club officials and volunteers on how they can make their sports club more inclusive of people with disabilities.

SECTION 1: INCLUSIVE CLUB DEFINITION

A club which is inclusive of people with disabilities is one which has:

'Proactively planned the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of the club and has taken practical steps to bring about positive change'.

This means a club which has:

- Adopted a positive attitude about the inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Planned how people with disabilities can best participate in all aspects of the club's activities (e.g. playing, coaching and club administration).
- Pro-actively implemented an action plan.

¹ Northern Ireland Census 2011

² Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2007) The Prevalence of Disability and Limitations Amongst Adults and Children Living in Private Households in Northern Ireland

SECTION 2: INCLUSION GUIDELINES

In order to develop a more inclusive environment clubs should consider the following issues:

2.1 Planning

Although most clubs say they are open to everyone in the community, the reality is that very few people with disabilities are actually members of sports clubs in Northern Ireland. Although no research has been conducted in Northern Ireland, recent research in England found that only 12% of young people with disabilities are members of sports clubs compared to 46% of all young people (Sport England: Young People With a Disability Survey 2000).

It is Disability Sports NI's experience that in order to attract people with disabilities, clubs need to pro-actively plan the inclusion of people with disabilities in their programmes. Ideally, this should be done as part of the club's development plan.

2.2 Access to Buildings, Facilities & Equipment

Clubs need to consider if their buildings, facilities and sports equipment are accessible to people with physical, sensory and learning disabilities.

The following guidance document which provides advice related to the design and management of sports facilities is available from Disability Sports NI online (www.dsni.co.uk) and on request:

- Access to Sports Facilities for People with Disabilities: Design & Management Guidelines (2010 Edition).

Disability Sports NI understands that many smaller clubs will find it difficult to meet all recommendations, but clubs should be mindful that under the Disability Discrimination Act they are required by law to make 'reasonable adjustments' to their facilities to ensure they are accessible to people with disabilities.

Sample Physical Access Assessment Template

Club Name: _____			
Venue: _____			
Physical Barrier	Immediate Solutions	Future Solutions	Actions
Car Park			
Access to Building:			
Changing Rooms/Toilet Facilities:			
Access to Playing/Court Area			
Access to Social/Meeting Area			

2.3 Participation Options

From experience, Disability Sports NI believes that many people with disabilities can participate in most sports with little or no adaptations. However, it may be necessary to adapt some sports (rules, playing surface, court size etc) to ensure the full inclusion of people with disabilities, particularly those with higher levels of impairment.

Clubs should consult their governing body of sport or Disability Sports NI about the options for including different people with disabilities in their particular sport.

As an example some participation options for the sport of association football are provided below:

- **Mainstream Participation:** Players with disabilities training and competing in a mainstream club (e.g. A deaf footballer or an upper limb amputee playing for a mainstream club).
- **Integrated Participation:** Disabled and non disabled people participating in the sport with some adaptations to rules or equipment (e.g. children in a youth club playing a 'zoned' indoor version of football).
- **Disability Specific participation:** Disabled performers competing in a competition solely for that particular disability group (e.g. A seven a side football competition for players with cerebral palsy or five a side indoor football for visually impaired people – both of which are paralympic sports).

2.4 Information & Promotion

Clubs should encourage more people with disabilities to participate in their activities by consulting with local disability groups, and by specifically targeting people with disabilities when promoting the club's programmes and activities. Local disability groups, special schools and adult centres will usually help with this by distributing information on behalf of your club.

All club promotional literature should also make it clear that people with disabilities are welcome at the club. It is also a good idea to use positive images of people with disabilities participating in your sport.

2.5 Coach Education & Training

Although most coaches/volunteers have the skills to include people with disabilities in their particular sport, they often lack the knowledge or confidence to work with people with disabilities. To help overcome this knowledge/confidence

gap, clubs should encourage key personnel from their club to attend appropriate Disability Awareness Training.

Disability Sports NI runs a range of 'Disability Inclusion Training' courses including one course specifically designed for sports clubs. Further information on how to book a course is available from Disability Sports NI.

Club coaches should also complete their governing body's disability specific coaching module or course. If the governing body does not currently have such a course, the club should write to their governing body encouraging them to develop such a course.

In addition, Coaching Ireland has recently developed a 'Coaching People with Disabilities' workshop which is aimed at existing coaches. Further information on how to access this workshop is available from Disability Sports NI.

2.6 Club Administration & Management

In order to identify members with disabilities and any particular needs they may have, clubs are advised to include some questions on 'disability' in their membership forms. A template club membership form is included in **Clubmark NI Template 4**. By using this form clubs can capture relevant information and plan their programmes accordingly.

It is also good practice to use font size 14 in all membership forms to aid anyone who is partially sighted, as well as providing the forms in alternative formats on request (e.g. large print etc).

Clubs should also consider if their current **pricing policy** (e.g. membership fees) is disadvantaging people with disabilities. As most people with disabilities in Northern Ireland tend to be on benefits/low incomes, they may find it difficult to afford club membership fees. Ideally, Disability Sports NI recommends that clubs have a waged/unwaged pricing policy. If this is not possible they should consider alternative pricing policies or initiatives which encourage membership by people with disabilities.

SECTION 3: COACHING GUIDELINES

3.1 Inclusive Coaching Tips

Many people with disabilities will have the ability to participate fully in coaching skills and drills with little or no adaptations.

However, for some people with more limited functional ability or for those with limited experience of basic movement skills, it is important to adapt your skills sessions, drills and playing sessions to fully include them. Remember, if you are not sure what a person's ability level is, ask them what they can/cannot do and adapt your drills/sessions accordingly.

Generally speaking, this can be achieved by either modifying the rules used during training and/or competition or by adapting the equipment normally used in your sport. A list of general coaching tips is provided below but clubs should also consult their governing body of sport about coaching advice specific to their particular sport.

Modifying Rules

- Make the game easier or harder by altering some of the rules.
- Adjust the size of the playing area.
- Vary the size of the goal/target area.
- Create different zones for players of different abilities.
- Alter the ways to score.
- Allow the sport to be played from a seated position.
- Vary the distance that needs to be covered (bearing in mind that being closer to a partner when catching or passing allows less response time).
- Allow the practice of skills from a static position before introducing movement.
- Allow players to play in different ways (e.g. seated on the floor).
- Give players more reaction time by allowing more than one bounce before hitting is required.

Adapting Equipment

- Use larger or softer balls to make hitting, catching and throwing skills easier.
- Slow games down by using balls with less bounce.
- To aid partially sighted people use brightly coloured balls or balls with internal bells.
- To vary the speed of play use slower balls or objects like balloons, bean bags or sponges.
- To assist retrieval by people with mobility difficulties use balls that have a string attached.
- Use bats or racquets with a larger contact area to give participants quicker success.
- In racquet sports, use a tee stand so the ball can be served or hit from a stationery position.
- To facilitate wheelchair users, use longer hockey sticks or bats.
- Grips can be added to equipment to make it easier to handle and control.
- For those with very limited grip, bats and racquets can be strapped to the players hand or wrist.

See the following assessment template for Including People with Disabilities in Your Club Assessment

Including People with Disabilities in Your Club Assessment

Club Name:			
Disability Group	Equipment	Coaching	Modifications
Physical Disabilities			
Deaf/Hard of Hearing			
Blind/Partially Sighted			
Learning Disability			

3.2 Communication Tips

Good communication skills are vital in any coaching situation. When coaches are working with players/athletes with a disability they should consider the following points:

Communicating with People with Physical Disabilities

In general, coaches should communicate with people with physical disabilities in the same way as they would with anyone else. However, you may find the following practical communication tips useful:

- Speak in a manner appropriate to the age of the player/athlete. Be careful not to patronise adults by being simplistic or over familiar.
- When speaking to wheelchair users, do so at their eye level by crouching or by sitting on a chair. This makes communication easier and is regarded as being polite by wheelchair users.
- When adapting skills or techniques, discuss them with the player/athlete – the individual disabled person will know how his/her body moves best.

Communicating with People with Learning Disabilities

- Speak in a manner appropriate to the age of the player/athlete with a learning disability.
- Always ask the player/athlete for specific information. Only speak to their carer/parent if they are unable to supply the information themselves.
- When giving instructions, use simple straightforward words and language and avoid jargon. If possible, use symbols and colours instead.
- Break skills/drills down into easily learned steps and repeat them often and in a variety of ways.
- Avoid drills that rely heavily on numeracy skills.
- Always demonstrate skills/drills.
- Be patient and give participants time to learn skills.

Communicating with Blind or Partially Sighted People

- Remember most blind/partially sighted people have some degree of sight so the use of equipment/courts with good colour contrast will help most players/athletes.
- Use the person's name to gain attention and make sure the player/athlete knows when you are finished and when you are moving away from them.
- It is important that players/athletes hear your instructions clearly. To achieve this always face the person and speak directly to them.
- Before beginning your coaching sessions always familiarise the player/athlete with the environment. This includes explaining the layout of the area, the number and location of other participants and the location of potential hazards (equipment etc).
- Give clear, accurate descriptions of each task/drill and always ask the player/athlete if they understand your instructions.
- If possible, supply written information in suitable formats. For example, large print, tape, CD or Braille. Ask individual participants what format they find most suitable.

Communicating with people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Remember there are varying degrees of deafness. Some people have no hearing (deaf) but most have some level of hearing (hard of hearing).

Ideally, deaf people require an interpreter to ensure effective communication. However, if this is not possible you can still communicate with deaf players/athletes. For example, many deaf people can communicate by reading lips, by using a hearing aid, by making gestures and signs or by writing information down.

The following tips will be useful when talking to most deaf or hard of hearing people:

- Make sure you have the listener's attention before you start speaking.

- Position yourself in front of the player/athlete and maintain eye contact. Remember not to turn your face away from the person.
- Speak clearly but not too slowly and don't exaggerate your lip movements.
- Don't shout. It's uncomfortable for a hearing aid user and it looks aggressive.
- If someone doesn't understand what you've said, don't just keep repeating it. Try saying it in a different way and check they understand what you said.
- Where possible, use visual aids to explain technical points.
- Where possible, use demonstrations to explain skills/drills.

SECTION 4: LANGUAGE & ETIQUETTE

4.1 Language Guidelines

It is important to understand that some words and phrases commonly used to describe people with disabilities may increasingly cause offence.

Because acceptance of the language used in society differs between individuals and cultures and changes over time there are no hard and fast rules. However, the following guidance has been prepared based on what is currently found most acceptable by people with disabilities in Northern Ireland.

- Do not use medical labels to describe people with disabilities: (e.g. 'spastic', 'epileptic'). Medical labels are often misleading and tend to reinforce stereotypes of people with disabilities as 'sick' people dependent on the medical profession. Most people with disabilities find being described in terms of a medical condition as dehumanising. Instead, put people first, not their disability (e.g. 'a person with epilepsy' or 'a person with cerebral palsy').
- Use language and words which emphasises abilities not limitations. For example, say 'wheelchair user' rather than 'wheelchair bound'. Remember that a wheelchair can represent personal freedom for its user.
- Do not use emotional or sensational language to describe people with disabilities e.g. 'unfortunate', 'pitiful', 'afflicted', 'crippled', 'suffers from' etc. Remember the vast majority of people with disabilities have the ability to lead full and active lifestyles and to contribute fully to society.

Listed below are some words commonly used in Northern Ireland which many people with disabilities will find unacceptable or offensive, together with an alternative preferred by people with disabilities.

List of 'Unacceptable' Words and Phrases and Preferred Alternatives.

Unacceptable	Preferred Alternative
Handicapped/cripple/invalid/special needs	Person with a disability or disabled person
Wheelchair bound/confined to a wheelchair	Wheelchair user
Mentally Handicapped	Person with a learning disability
Deaf & Dumb/Deaf Mute	Deaf Person
Epileptic/Diabetic	Person with epilepsy/diabetes
Dwarf*	Person with restricted growth
Mental	Person with mental health difficulties
Spastic	Person with Cerebral Palsy

* Please note that in recent years organisations promoting sport for people with restricted growth have used the term 'Dwarf' e.g. 'Dwarf Athletics Association' and 'World Dwarf Games'. However many people with restricted growth continue to prefer the use of 'restricted growth' in everyday conversation.

4.2 ETIQUETTE GUIDELINES

- **Treat People with Disabilities as Adults:** Make appropriate contact with disabled people according to the situation. Do not be over familiar and only call a person by their first name if you are doing the same to others present.
- **Talk Directly to People with Disabilities:** Do not assume anyone accompanying this person is a 'carer'. Relax and talk directly to the disabled person.
- **Do not be embarrassed about using everyday expressions** such as 'see you later' or 'going for a walk' in the company of disabled people. Most disabled people also use these phrases.
- **Do offer Assistance to People with Disabilities**, but only if they appear to need help and always wait until your offer of help is accepted. Do not assume you know the best way of helping – ask the person and listen.
- **Do Not be Over-Protective.** People with disabilities are not fragile – do not underestimate their capabilities. If you are not sure ask the person concerned.

*Remember Be Open Minded –
Positive Attitudes Are Key To Change*

SECTION 5: ABOUT DISABILITY SPORTS NI

Disability Sports NI (DSNI) is Northern Ireland's main disability sports organisation. Established in 1997, the organisation is representative of the vast majority of Northern Ireland's disability sports clubs and organisations and works to promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities to take part in sport and physical activity at a level of their choice.

Disability Sports NI currently had 96 member groups made up of sports clubs, special schools and adult centres.

Disability Sports NI organises a wide range of projects, events and training courses, all designed to give people with physical, sensory and learning disabilities the opportunity to lead an active life through sport and physical activity, as well as supporting more talented disabled sports people to train, compete and perform in their chosen sport.

Further information on the work of Disability Sports NI is available from the DSNI website: www.dsni.co.uk.

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