

Disability Tips

Below are some simple reminders in relation to disability awareness that will help you think more inclusively when developing delivery plans for your organisation. The list is by no means exhaustive; you may wish to add further points that are relevant to your work or that of your organisation.

The Right Approach

- Sport should be considered an environment in which both disabled and non-disabled people can gain opportunity for participation, friendship, enjoyment and success, as well as develop other skills that will enhance many areas of daily life. Increased fitness and mobility provide greater independence, health and general well-being.
- To coach disabled people successfully, you need to get to know them as people who enjoy sport, want to participate and have varying abilities – just the same as non-disabled people.
- Do not assume all disabled participants are beginners and remember that skills learned in one sport are often transferable to another.
- There is no need to understand or determine the cause of impairment. If this needs to be discussed, the individual will tell you.
- By planning and, perhaps, making minor adjustments to the way they work, coaches and volunteers can be more effective in their roles, which will benefit everyone, including disabled people.
- The Inclusion Spectrum is an activity-based model that can contribute to the inclusion of disabled

participants into your sport and into sports sessions. It focuses on ability rather than disability.

- If anyone encounters difficulties communicating with a disabled person, they should tell the person that they do not understand and, together, work out the best way to communicate with one another.
- Coaches and volunteers should check with the participant about any support needs, prior to the activity. It may help to get in contact with the relevant national charity for generic information and best practice. The more pre-planning you do, the more positive an experience the disabled person will have.

Providing Choice

- Disabled people can face more barriers to participation than non-disabled people. For many disabled people, their level of attendance may not be a matter of choice but may be limited by factors such as access to transport, availability of a personal assistant, finance and so on.
- All disabled people should have the choice between accessing disability sport or mainstream sport. All facilities and activity programmes should be inclusive to welcome people of all abilities.
- How disabled people take part in an activity will depend upon their own motivation and how they wish to participate in the sport of their choice – they may not all choose (or be talented enough) to be Paralympians.
- Working alongside disabled participants, whether as a coach, sports leader, development officer or volunteer, will help to widen an individual's experience of working with people of all abilities.

(continued)

- The coach of a disabled participant should be aware of the various competitive opportunities that may be available and discuss these, as appropriate, with the participant. It would help if your organisation could clearly map out what opportunities are available centrally.
- If the disabled athlete or participant chooses to compete against non-disabled peers, it is important to check that any adapted or specialist equipment is permitted within competition rules.
- If attending a disability sports competition, all participants competing will need to have been given the correct classification or profile number before entering an event. You will need to determine this with the individual or talk to the appropriate disability sports organisation. If your sport does not have classification, the appropriate disability sports organisations will be able to advise you.
- Disabled participants should also consider becoming involved in other ways (eg coaching or sports leadership) and should also recognise the value of being a coach/referee/umpire.

Terminology

- Some assumptions about disability are based on a medical model (ie generalisations based upon the medical condition, such as 'everyone with Down's syndrome is overweight'). However, such generalisations have largely been rejected by disabled people as they focus on what disabled people cannot do, rather than on what they can do.
- The social model of disability points out that the environment, social systems and people's attitudes are, in fact, what disables people, not the person's impairment.
- It is better to think about what disabled people can do and not about any medical label. Also, think about what you or your organisation does so you can avoid disabling people by your actions, thoughts and rules. Provide a positive, welcoming environment where disabled people can develop their skills in a way of their own choosing and not by using the only option available to them.
- Disabled people may have their own personal way of referring to their disability. If a disabled person uses a certain term in relation to him or herself, which could be considered as not being positive to disabled people, coaches and volunteers do not have to adopt this same term when talking to/about him or her.



Further Information

Disability Contacts for the UK

Related sports coach UK Workshops

How to Coach Disabled People in Sport

Equity in Your Coaching

Coaching Disabled Performers