

# HOW TO ENGAGE DISABLED PEOPLE IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: A COACH'S GUIDE TO PRACTICE

## 1) Emphasise 'activity', not 'sport':

Many disabled people are not fond of traditional 'sport'. Therefore, coaches should adopt a more creative and inclusive approach to their practice with a focus on the physical activity.

"It would be absolutely great if we had days where you didn't have any expectations. You just go to these things and it's like you can try maybe a broad range of events and see what you can physically do."

"So put me on a dance floor, I'm fine, but ... I don't want to take part in sport. I've had the opportunity, I'm not interested."

## 2) Include a variety of activities:

Many disabled people do not always know what physical activities they might enjoy or have a talent for. Therefore, coaches should offer a range of activities to maintain interest and help disabled people realise their potential.

"I think it has to be gentle and not a scary prospect. Something that they would look forward to, and not be judged on."

"I have never been in this position before, I don't know what I can and can't do, will I be able to do that? Am I going to look like a complete dickhead in front of everybody and making an absolute fool of myself."

## 3) It must be fun! Many disabled

have not enjoyed their previous experiences of 'sport' and will look for any excuse not to do it! Therefore, coaches must absolutely ensure that fun is prioritised above all other agendas.

"I think people realise they need to do it, [but] I think we, as people, we're lazy, aren't we? So, if our priority isn't exercise - if that's not our number one hobby, we'll do lots of other things first, before we do our exercise."

"You don't know until you're doing it. That's the thing, if you've enjoyed something, yes, you'd want to carry it on, but if you're not enjoying it so much then you're not going to carry it on, are you?"

Generated from: 'Motivations and challenges for disability sport and physical activity in Buckinghamshire: A qualitative report' (December 2017)

Commissioned by: Buckinghamshire County Council and Leap With Us

Researched and written by: Dr Ben Ives and Dr Ben Clayton (Human Performance, Exercise & Wellbeing Centre, Buckinghamshire New University)



# HOW TO ENGAGE DISABLED PEOPLE IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: A COACH'S GUIDE TO PRACTICE

## 4) Create a supportive setting:

Many disabled people are worried about their athletic capabilities. Therefore, coaches should ensure that they create a welcoming, friendly, and supportive environment.

"I think that's the thing, when you go into that environment you're putting yourself up there in front of it to be noticed. You don't want that. You want to stay back and try it a little bit in the shadows."

"Basically, I'm just shit scared of going to these events and making a complete tit of myself in front of everybody. So I'll always find it a perfectly justified reason for not going."

## 5) Get to know disability:

Many disabled people worry that coaches will not acknowledge their anxieties or be able to accommodate their needs. Therefore, coaches should ensure that they engage with at least basic training in how to deliver physical activity for disabled people.

"People who do not have a disability... Sometimes they don't know how to approach you, they don't have that similar, sort of, empathy."

## 6) Signpost further opportunities:

Many disabled people at the same time desire and fear the idea of engaging in more mainstream sport and physical activity. Therefore, while coaches should adopt an inclusive, multi-activity approach when working with disabled people, they should also provide signposts to established disability sport clubs or mixed able-bodied / disabled recreation clubs for any participants that show an interest.

"Basically, people want to be like everybody else. They want to do what everybody else does. They don't really want to be doing a special sport, just for them."

"Personally, I think if I was to go with able bodied people, it's almost like it being rubbed in your face and fucked you up. I mean I don't know how anybody else feels, but that is my thing, it depresses me just thinking about that."

Generated from: 'Motivations and challenges for disability sport and physical activity in Buckinghamshire: A qualitative report' (December 2017)

Commissioned by: Buckinghamshire County Council and Leap With Us

Researched and written by: Dr Ben Ives and Dr Ben Clayton (Human Performance, Exercise & Wellbeing Centre, Buckinghamshire New University)

