



RunTogether

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SUPPORTING DISABLED RUNNERS

Guidance and information for RunTogether group leaders

Part of



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Introduction

This document provides guidance for RunTogether leaders to enhance their knowledge, confidence and ability to support disabled runners to take part in their groups.

There are over 9 million people in England with a long term disability or illness (Census 2011), that's almost 1 in 5 people or 17.6% of the population. However, participation among disabled people in running is significantly lower across all age groups than the overall population. Only 1.45% of disabled people take part in running compared to 5.82% of non-disabled people (Active People Survey). Over 70% of disabled adults do not take part in any sport at all (Active People Survey) yet seven in ten disabled people want to do more sport (EFDS Lifestyle report).

It is therefore important to proactively engage with disabled people to encourage them to choose to become physical active and want to try running. This document provides some guidance and advice to support you to do this effectively so that disabled people, like non-disabled people, are attracted, welcomed and supported to take part in running.

The following information is provided as guidance only, allowing you to be better informed in your approach to being more inclusive. No two people are the same; as such, please ensure your first step is always to speak to the person and never assume.



What do we mean by disability?

Running is a wonderfully diverse sport that offers something to all types of people. Your running group may include younger people, older people, men, women, beginners, experienced runners, non-disabled people and disabled people.

By disabled people we mean people who have **'a long-standing and limited disability or illness.'** These are impairments or health problems that limit or restrict activities in any way, in different areas of life.

So disabled people taking part in your runs could be someone:

- with a learning or intellectual disability
- with a mental health problem
- with a physical disability who uses a wheelchair e.g someone with a spinal cord injury
- with a physical disability who is ambulant (does not use a wheelchair) e.g. an arm amputee
- who is blind or partially sighted (visually impaired)
- who is deaf or hard of hearing
- with a health condition such as diabetes or asthma
- with another impairment or health condition (this list isn't exhaustive).

The majority of impairments are not visible – less than 8% of disabled people use wheelchairs

Each runner you meet is an individual and has a unique set of motives, needs and aspirations. You will need to identify these needs and motivations and adapt your running sessions to ensure these needs are fulfilled. Disabled people take part in running at all levels and for the same reasons as non-disabled people. It is important to find out in advance if any one attending your runs has a disability so you can discuss with them if, and how, this may impact on the activities that you are asking them to do. This will allow you to plan in advance and adapt any activities as necessary.

Making Reasonable Adjustments

(The Equality Act, 2010)

The Equality Act was introduced in 2010 to promote a change in attitudes and to improve opportunities for disabled people.

Under the Equality Act it is unlawful:

- to discriminate against a disabled person because of their disability;
- to treat disabled people unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability, unless such treatment can be justified.

For RunTogether leaders the Equality Act requires reasonable adjustments to be made to their groups and runs to ensure all disabled people have the opportunity to participate where possible. Many reasonable adjustments can be made very quickly and don't have any financial implications. Whilst, it is recognised that there may be situations where it will not be reasonable to make adjustments (for example if you run on a grass field you cannot change the surface from grass to tarmac, although you could consider another venue), it is the leader's responsibility to ensure that they have taken all reasonable steps to consider and implement any reasonable adjustments that could be made, whether to physical features of the run or more generally.

Disabled people are best placed to suggest what adjustments could be made to support them to take part so speak to them first!



Removing Barriers

Provide a welcoming environment

72% of disabled adults have at least 1 barrier to playing sport, compared with 54% of adults without an impairment

(Office for Disability Issues, 2011, ODI Life Opportunities Survey)

Establishing a positive and welcoming approach is one of the most effective ways of encouraging everyone to take part but particularly disabled people. Think positively about how you can include disabled people rather than focusing on potential barriers to participation.

- Include a statement in your group publicity or website etc. such as “RunTogether [name of group] welcomes disabled runners.”
- Encourage disabled participants to contact you in advance to discuss their needs and requirements to facilitate inclusion. Ideally a named contact should be provided on the event publicity with both telephone number and email.
- Ensure that any queries from disabled people are dealt with by someone who has a positive and inclusive attitude.
- Do not tell disabled people that they cannot take part without consideration of what reasonable adjustments might be possible to enable them to participate.



Practical considerations

Providing as much information about where your group runs will help disabled people decide for themselves if it is suitable or not.

When choosing a facility and route consider:

Location: Where it is, how easy is it to find, is there public transport?

Surface/terrain: Where you run is it road, dirt/gravel trail, grass, woodland, sand, other? Whether the surface is compact or loose. Runs may have more than one type of surface, you should supply information about the predominant one or all that significantly impact the route.

Profile: Where you run is it flat, flat/undulating, undulating, hilly, very hilly or varied?

Amenities: Provide information about parking, accessible parking, changing rooms, bar, restaurant/cafe, baby changing, accessible toilets, signage, public transport etc and the proximity of each to the run.

About the run: The more information you can provide, and the more concisely you can give it, the more likely someone will be able to decide if the route is accessible to them and therefore more likely to take part. Include details of; what sort of activities you will be doing, potential hazards such as traffic, whether there are any passing places, rest areas or benches, any obstacles such as steps, styles or gates, any signage, what it looks like and where it is, head height clearance such as any low hanging branches or trees, any cross-slope such as on any paths or parking areas, path width.

In general runs will be accessible to more people if they are somewhere which is/has flat, hard compact surfaces, accessible parking near to the meeting/finish point, accessible toilets, good path width (2m+), have opportunities for rest, do not have any steps, gates or styles, are traffic free with no road crossings, good head height clearance and easily accessible by public transport. We know that all of this isn't possible all of the time but RunTogether leaders should consider the potential implications on disabled people when choosing a venue and run location.

Existing routes/facilities

Where minor changes to where you run can be made they should (for example you might use a different part of a park where there are tarmac paths as well as grass areas, or flat areas as well as hills.

Social events

Disabled runners will want to take part in social events too, consider this when organising a post run coffee or Christmas meal and choose somewhere appropriate.

Positive Behaviour

(supporting disabled people during a run)

Below is some advice for RunTogether leaders when supporting disabled people from some of the different impairment groups.

General advice

- Where possible find out in advance what support might be required (if any)
- Do not make assumptions about any disabled person, if in doubt – ask!
- **Do what RunTogether leaders do best – make them feel welcome!**

Visually impaired runners:

- Identify and introduce yourself
- Do not presume someone with a visual impairment is blind. Check what type and level of sight loss the runner has and how much they can or cannot see
- If necessary allow the runner to take your arm and then guide them to the activity
- Give verbal descriptions during demonstrations
- Some people may not have seen other people perform basic motor skills, so don't make assumptions that they know how certain exercises or activities are performed
- Runners may need to run with a guide. Consider this when planning routes with long narrow sections as guide and runner run side by side.
- Remember as a leader you are responsible for the whole group so should not act as a guide runner whilst leading a run. Guide runners can be found at www.englandathletics.org/findaguide

Deaf or hard of hearing runners:

- Make sure the runner is able to see you clearly and don't speak whilst looking away from them
- Ensure there is limited external noise when giving instructions
- Give clear demonstrations
- Don't have anything in your mouth when speaking to the runner
- Keep a pen & paper ready to write things down if necessary
- Runners may have an interpreter with them, speak to the runner directly not the interpreter
- Safety signals should be agreed with the whole group, it is particularly important to include stop, wait, danger etc.
- Make runners aware of any areas of the route that has traffic, cycle paths etc
- Only cross roads at designated safe places.

Runners with dwarfism or restricted growth:

- Be aware that people with dwarfism or restricted growth may have specific needs due to possible skeletal and joint instability and their elbows, hips, knees and ankles especially can be unstable.
- Activities that apply 'shock' to the spinal area (e.g jumping or middle to long distance running) can be damaging to someone with dwarfism or restricted growth. Make sure any runners with these conditions consult their GP before taking part in any running activity and that you adjust the times/distances that they run for accordingly and allow plenty of rest.

Runners with a learning disability:

- Runners should take part in age appropriate activities alongside their peers
- Give clear, simple instructions and allow time for the runner to process information
- Check for understanding
- Repetition, structure and routine are often helpful
- Runners may find it useful to run with a buddy to support them
- Be aware that you may need to adapt your communication methods and leadership/coaching style to ensure the person progresses, for example – repetition whilst remaining positive and encouraging
- Someone with a learning disability might take longer to learn new things, so be patient.
- Think about the language that you use and how information is presented.

Wheelchair users

- Running activity can be adapted for wheelchair users pushing a day chair
- It may be useful for the wheelchair user to wear gloves to protect their hands from repetitive pushing
- Ensure you know the accessible routes around the venues that you use and where accessible amenities are located
- Do not touch a person's wheelchair and always ask permission before moving a person's wheelchair
- If a wheelchair user attends with a personal assistant, speak to wheelchair user directly rather than the personal assistant.
- Find out what level of function the person has, for example they may have a lot of upper body function or it might be quite limited depending on the nature of their impairment, remember some people use a wheelchair to take part in sport/physical activity but not necessarily all the time for everyday life

Runners with a mental health problem

- Understand that 1 in 4 people experience a mental health problem at any one time so you probably know lots of people who have/are experiencing a mental health problem
- Understand the nature of the mental health problem and the impact on the individual (e.g anxiety, depression etc)-Be aware of the potential effects of any medication on energy levels and weight gain
- Be aware of crisis contact details www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/crisis-services/useful-contacts to signpost people to if needed

Runners using a prosthetic limb (lower):

- In lower limb amputees, the energy required for daily living and sport activities increases the higher on the leg the amputation occurred. The person may grow fatigued more rapidly.
- May be more prone to falls
- Be aware of rubbing/sores developing especially when sweating more
- Liaise with their prosthetists regarding the most suitable prosthesis but a running blade is not necessarily required

Runners with Cerebral Palsy

- Cerebral Palsy (CP) may affect the arms, legs, trunk and/or head and can affect one side of the body more than the other or particular limbs more than others. CP affects all people differently. Verbal communication may be affected and speech can sometimes be slurred. Be patient when runners are speaking and ask for clarification if you have not understood them, encourage other runners to do the same. Runners with CP may be ambulant or use a wheelchair to take part.

Remember:

- The runner is the expert on their own requirements.
- No two people are the same, do not assume that people with the 'same' impairment have exactly the same needs or want to do things in exactly the same way.
- Not all runners will be able to do all activities, some athletes with a physical disability won't be able to jump up and down for example. This doesn't mean you should avoid the activity for the whole group but adapt it for the disabled person or give them another activity.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions.
- Do not make assumptions, if in doubt – ask!

For more impairment specific information please visit
www.sportscoachuk.org/resource/impairment-specific-factsheets

Terminology

Using correct terminology will have the knock-on effect of creating an inclusive environment for disabled people; this is a brief guide to correct terminology:

- **Paralympian / Paralympic runner** – someone who has competed at a Paralympic Games and therefore not to be used to describe all disabled participants
- **Disabled Runner** – a disabled person participating in running at any level
- **Congenital Impairment** – an impairment that a person is born with
- **Acquired Impairment** – an impairment that a person acquires at some point after birth
- **Disability** – the way in which the impairment affects the individual due to social constraints
- **Impairment** – physical description
- **Visually impaired** – people who are blind or partially sighted

Not appropriate	Appropriate
Person with a disability	Disabled person
Wheelchair Bound	Wheelchair user
Able-bodied Normal	Non-Disabled
Handicapped	Disabled
Mentally disabled Retarded/ Retard	Intellectual/learning disability
Mentally ill	Has a mental health condition (or state condition if known)
Para-Olympian	Paralympian
Suffers from...	Lives with/has... (state medical condition)
Disability	Impairment

For more information visit:

<http://ucoach.com/document/disability-terminology>



Adapting Activities

The following information, along with the impairment specific information above, should give RunTogether Leaders some guidance on adapting activities for disabled people. This can help to include runners of mixed abilities not just disabled people.

The Inclusion Spectrum incorporating STEP

This is an activity-centered approach to the inclusion of people of all abilities in physical activity. Inclusion can be achieved by changing the way in which the activity is presented.

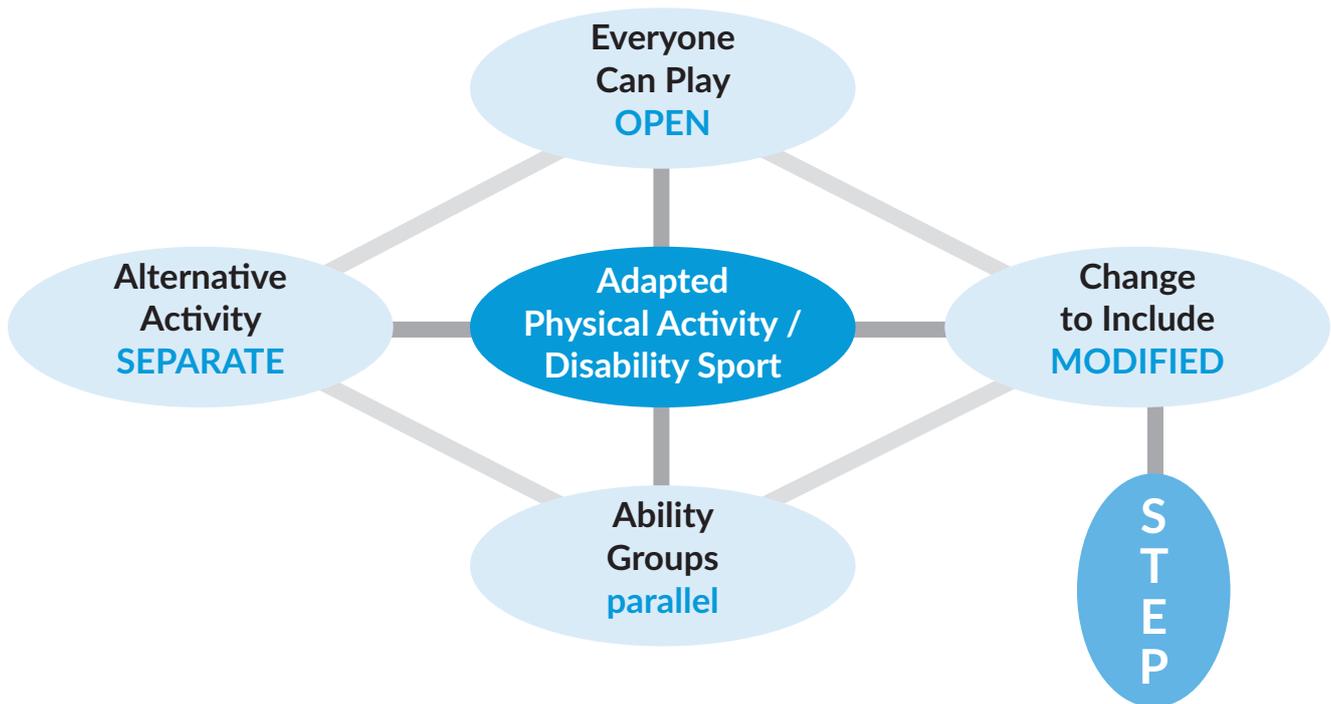
The Inclusion Spectrum provides leaders with different methods of supporting inclusion. By delivering activities differently we can balance different needs within the group and so helping to maximise the potential of all participants.

The Inclusion Spectrum Framework

1. **Everyone can play** – naturally inclusive activities based on what everyone can do with little or no modifications – e.g.
 - Warm ups and cools downs, where participants can find the level of participation that suits them; and/or
 - Collecting or gathering games – for example, gathering up objects scattered around the playing area and arranging them by colour.
2. **Change to include** – everyone does the same activity using adaptations to provide both support and challenge across a range of different abilities; the STEP model (space, task, equipment and people) can be used to provide a structure for adapting and modifying the activities (see the STEP section below).
3. **Ability groups** – participants are grouped according to ability – each group does a version of the same activity, but at a level which suits the individuals in each group – e.g.
 - Creating two or more versions of the same activity, (e.g. a standing version and a seated version).
4. **Alternate or separate activity** – individuals work temporarily on specific skills leading to more successful inclusion in the whole group; sometimes, in order to include someone more effectively, they need to practise separately first. Note: this should not be most of the time.
5. **Adapted physical activity and disability sport** – aspects of physical activity based on adapted physical activity or disability sport programmes can be included in all approaches; this provides specific opportunities for disabled people and a new challenge for non-disabled people - ‘reverse integration’ – e.g.
 - wheelchair racing

Note: when applying the Inclusion Spectrum model to practical situations, there will always be some individuals who will require an individualised approach.

The Inclusion Spectrum Framework



Pam Stevenson/Ken Black 2011

STEP

This can be used to support the Inclusion Spectrum 'Change to Include' approach. Changes in the way the activity is delivered can be made in one or more of the STEP areas.

- S** Can the **space** be altered to allow inclusion for all ie larger, wider, more confined
- T** Can the **task** be altered? Can you find another way of doing the task which makes it easier for some?
- E** Can the **equipment** be adapted to allow participation for all ie lighter, shorter, brightly coloured, lower
- P** Can other **people** be used to assist in any way ie guides, callers, buddies

Attracting Disabled People to Your Group

Marketing and Engagement

For your RunTogether group to be truly inclusive it needs to be advertised 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 group. Make sure the images are relevant to the people you are trying to attract, guides and runners for a visually impaired running taster session for example, and the type of activity for example beginner/improver etc. If it is integrated activity then ensure imagery shows both disabled and non-disabled people together.

Some images are available from the England Athletics gallery www.englandathletics.org/photofolder

Ensuring information is available in accessible formats.

Make sure the information you provide about your 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 (see Further Support and Information below).

The English Federation of Disability Sport Inclusive Communication Guide and video also provide further information www.efds.co.uk/how-we-help/resources

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 group or specific taster sessions/events with:

Local/regional organisations in your community:

- County Sports Partnerships (CSP) with links to local disability groups
- Physiotherapy centres
- Limb fitting centres
- 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, Mental Health Services)
- Adult and Social Care (e.g Adult Social Care Team/Adult Contact Team, Housing Association and Housing Trusts)
- Rehabilitation/enablement Centres
- Homeless charities

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

- British Blind Sport – www.britishblindsport.org.uk
- CP Sport – www.cpsport.org
- Mind – www.mind.org.uk
- Dwarf Sports Association UK – www.dsauk.org
- Mencap – www.mencap.org.uk/sport
- Special Olympics – www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk
- UK Deaf Sport – www.ukdeafsport.org.uk
- WheelPower – www.wheelpower.org.uk
- Limb Power – www.limbpower.com
- Mental health charities (MIND, SANE, Re-Think etc)
- National Autistic Society – www.autism.org.uk
- English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) – 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-us/team. They can also help you to promote any activity or events www.efds.co.uk/get-active/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

Other useful resources:

- WheelPower Marketing Your Club to Wheelchair Users:
www.englandathletics.org/wheelchairmarketing
- National Deaf Children’s Society Publicity Factsheet:
www.ndcs.org.uk/promote

Further Support & Information

There are no additional specific qualifications required to lead or coach a disabled runner. However, there are plenty of resources and guidance documents that are available to help you to further your knowledge and gain confidence.

Disability Inclusion Training

This is a general awareness course to support clubs and coaches to include disabled people in athletics and running. The workshop can be delivered as a one-day course, or as separate theory and practical modules, and is for anyone who is involved in a RunTogether group who wants to know more about including disabled people. The practical module is particularly relevant to coaches and leaders and the course is ideally designed for people who have little or no experience of working with disabled people and who aren't necessarily working with disabled people already.

www.englandathletics.org/disability-athletics/disability-athletics-coaching

England Athletics Resources

England Athletics have a number of resources that provide useful information for RunTogether leaders:

- Deaf Friendly Athletics and Running
- VI Friendly Athletics and Running
- Running and Sprinting with guides
- How to Organise a VI Taster Session
- Mental Health and Running
- Terminology Factsheet
- Accessible Information Formats Guidance
- EFDS Inclusive Communication Guide

All the resources can be found at

www.englandathletics.org/disability-athletics/resources

Courses/workshops

- Sports Coach UK – Effective Communication; Coaching Deaf People in Sport workshop
www.sportscoachuk.org/site-tools/workshops/about-our-workshops/effective-communication-coaching-deaf-people-sport
- National Autistic Society– Autism, Sport and Physical Activity online module
www.autism.org.uk/professionals/training-consultancy/online/sport.aspx
- Sports Coach UK – Inclusive Coaching: Disability
www.sportscoachuk.org/site-tools/workshops/about-our-workshops/inclusive-coaching-disability
- Mind- Mental Health Awareness in Sport and Physical Activity
www.mind.org.uk/about-us/our-policy-work/sport-physical-activity-and-mental-health/professionals-in-sport/

Questions and advice?

RunTogether leaders can contact disability@englandathletics.org if you ever have any questions or want further information or advice.



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