



ABILITY FOOTBALL

ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

This Toolkit aims to support you with understanding your audience, empowering people and creating new opportunities.

New sessions/teams?

Many clubs that we speak to have mentioned the desire to do more within their communities. A lot of people involved in clubs will also have some experience or know someone with a disability. Yet there is relatively few local clubs that deliver opportunities for disability football. Starting a new session or team is actually easier than you may think; you just need to plan ahead and provide some passion. The result will be the most rewarding thing your club has ever done! This toolkit will help answer some questions you may have and signpost you to your next steps.

Existing sessions/teams?

Whilst community sessions within clubs are few and far between, there are some fantastic examples in Bedfordshire. We couldn't be prouder of those involved in disability football locally. This toolkit has been designed around their stories and will hopefully connect each of them up as a tool for sustainable support.

Just good to know...

A lot of clubs and specifically youth teams will have players involved in their setups with additional needs. There is no reason why these children/players should not be playing in mainstream teams with their friends. However, as you may have experienced, these players can present challenges. One of the best traits of a good coach (and club) is adaptability. This toolkit can be utilised to support you with adapting to different needs and abilities. Have a look through and see where you could adapt your approach to benefit everyone.

Bit of Background

1 in 5
9.4

People in England
have an impairment
or health condition

Million
disabled people
in England

Terminology

Although 'disabled people' is widely used as a catch-all phrase, some groups/individuals do not identify with the term. Young people with learning difficulties most likely don't want to be associated with disability football because they do not see themselves as disabled. Which is quite frankly a fair point; so how can you alter your terminology to appeal to them?

Gaining local insight to understand your market

Successful engagement needs to involve disabled people directly, as well as their families and carers. They will provide better knowledge for what is desired within your community. Do not assume you are providing what people want. Get out and ask them!

What do you need to know?

It is not necessary for you to know or understand different impairments or long-term health conditions. It is much more important to understand the sort of things that prevent disabled people from taking part in sport. Do your research and don't be afraid to keep learning.



Target Audience

450 k

Adults with **Autistic spectrum disorders** in England. Half of whom have a learning disability.

Who do you want to target?

Be mindful that your session/team need not appeal or accommodate everyone. In fact, saying that an event is suitable for everyone is not generally true and can mean it doesn't appeal to anyone. Be realistic and set some boundaries... if it's youth football, we recommend 4 year age bandings (6-10 / 10-14 / 12-16). Be mindful that setting your target too narrow, such as a specific impairment, will limit your audience. Another reason to do your research and find out what your community wants/needs.

Location, location, location

Is your venue going to be accessible for those with mobility issues or visual/hearing impairments? It's important that the location is easily accessible by public transport. The venue should also appeal to players. Somewhere they can feel comfortable and enjoy their football could be the difference in them turning up and sticking around.

TIP: the majority of impairments are not visible.



A Flexible Approach

Flexibility will open your club to your community

PAN Ability Football

Opening your session/team to all (dis)abilities will help you recruit larger numbers initially but also support your goal for sustainability. PAN essentially means 'all'. Often there will be individuals who are clearly stronger than others both physically and technically. The coach should aim to adapt their session to support the vast differences. Not dissimilar to a youth session, just more significant.

For all means for you

Sometimes the only support needed is to know that they can go at their own pace. If they know they can take a breather whenever they like without fuss and the coach won't single them out, they won't be put under inappropriate stress. You'll likely find that disabled people are remarkably respectful to different people's needs. The focus of a session should remain flexible to the different abilities.

How does Age correlate with Disability?

The prevalence of disability rises with age. An estimated 0.9 million children have some form of disability compared to 11 million adults. Many clubs relate Disability Football in the community with children, however there is a vast market and demand for adult provisions. Have you thought about a session aimed at adults within your community? Is there anything else locally for 16+?

TIP: set individual challenges to support individual development.





Psychological Barriers

Play the biggest role in preventing participation

Breaking down the barriers

Research and feedback from disabled people shows that in order to appeal, do not focus on disability. Instead, try linking your provision to their values. Highlight enjoyment and the positives of a team environment. Coaches that are passionate about Disability Football are essential for creation and sustainability. They will prove invaluable in breaking down barriers to participation.

Accessible & inclusive communication

Your words, images, designs and websites all play a key part in encouraging engagement. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, as everyone is different. However you can ensure your promotion is; clear, visual, brightly coloured, showing other disabled people and easy to find. Can you be creative and promote to more than one sense (videos rather than photos)?

7 in 10

Disabled people have
not taken part in any physical
activity in the last month

Compared to
5 in 10
Non-disabled people



Effective Messages

How best to engage with people

What kind of messages are motivating?

Convey the emotions involved in your session | Being active feels great
Appeal to an existing passion | Love football? Want to tackle a new challenge?
Use humour to break barriers | I may not be Messi, but I score goals every week!

What kind of messages are less motivating

Urge or command them to do something | Take part! Get active! Get involved!
Suggest seriousness or competitiveness | Serious about football? Then why not play more?
Appeal to an individual's abilities to perform | Play with players just like you!
Focus on disability | Disabled? Want to join our football team?

What kind of images work best?

We have hopefully demonstrating effective use of imagery within this toolkit. All of the photographs have been taken recently and locally. We would advise that you show your activity clearly and in action. Facial expressions are great as they will look genuine and natural; especially if that person is enjoying themselves.

What kind of images won't help?

People find it difficult to engage with illustrations as they won't be able to visualise themselves being a part of your session. Abstract or really close up photos won't show the activity clearly. If the marketing only shows very fit or high speed activity you may put off a lot of people.

TIP: contact us for some initial images... we have so many!

Your Session

What will it look like?

What has worked elsewhere?

Initially, it is difficult to say what your session may look like as every one varies. There are some great examples of good practice around Bedfordshire. Why not get out and see for yourself? Most are more than happy to support you with some advice or experience. So ask around...

What does my club need to do first?

Start by driving awareness of what you hope to achieve... stay local. To engage your audience; do not lead with impairment, instead highlight their values. Offer support and reassurances. Make it easy for people to fit in and feel like they can enjoy football. It may sound obvious, but finding the right individuals to lead your sessions is essential.

First impressions

An unpleasant first experience can prevent anyone from taking part again. Ensure that the first experience is enjoyable and people will be more likely to come back. How can you achieve this? Why not engage other players in welcoming new people. Friendships could make all the difference and help promote it to others away from your session/team.

7 in 10 Disabled people
want to do **more sport**





Some Essentials

What do you need to ensure is in place?

Affiliation

Disability teams are required to be affiliated like any other grassroots teams. Affiliation includes insurance cover and the support of the FA. Without affiliating, your team will not be insured, supported by county staff or eligible for funding schemes. As a County FA we will only promote teams that have passed the affiliation process.

Staffing ratios

Ratios of volunteers to players should be based on a risk assessment of the needs of individual participants. Some players may benefit or require one-to-one support at times. As a minimum we would advise having 2 qualified coaches on site.

Registration right from the start

When any new individual joins your session/team, it is best practice to complete a registration form. All relevant emergency contact details and medical conditions should be included. This will also help coaches support the player. Review chats with parents are advised as its never too late to adjust support for the player.

TIP: find out what is needed to affiliate—www.BedfordshireFA.com



Equipment

What equipment will my club need?

Most will utilise a set of equipment very similar to that of a grassroots team.

However there are factors that should be considered when purchasing equipment. We would advise using bright coloured footballs such as yellow for the benefit of any player with partial sight. Bib colours could also be key; contrasting colours are better for everyone.

Worthwhile considerations

Something as trivial as wearing a bib can be complicated for some. Do not assume they know why they have to wear a bib in games... explain what it represents (or challenge them to come up with team names in relation to their bib colour). Utilising cones can also be confusing. Ensure you explain what they represent and why you use them for practice.

Specialist equipment

Impairment specific sessions may require equipment tailored to those needs. For example, blind footballers play with footballs that have bells inside, allowing them to utilise their heightened hearing. Contact us directly if you have any queries about such equipment. You could be eligible for funding support when purchasing specialist equipment.

TIP: explain everything! We're serious... do not assume they understand.



Supporters

Can play the biggest role in recruitment

What do we mean by supporters?

A supporter is someone who provides ongoing support to a disabled person. For example, helping them to go out and provide assistance with activities. A supporter could be anyone from a spouse, family member, friend or paid professional carer.

Why are supporters so important?

Research suggests that disabled people have much narrower social networks. Supporters have an essential role in helping them decide to take part in sport/activities. If you can engage with the supporter, they are more likely to encourage your session to those in their care. Most carers will influence other carers if your session is a positive experience. Often they will inspire other people to try your activity. For this reason, they are absolutely vital in your recruitment of players.

8 in 10

supporters **have some role** in helping a disabled person decide to take part or not.

Supporters pt.2

What do supporters need to know in advance?

Apart from the simple knowledge of a safe and enjoyable activity, there are some key details to provide a supporter with in advance. Painting a picture of the type of environment is important as they'll be worried that the person in their care will cope with a new activity. Find out any concerns they may have so you can reassure your session is not only suitable but will benefit players.

Stories giving examples.

Use examples of people you have already engaged with or have inspired the creation of your session. Feedback from other supporters will also help break down initial barriers a supporter may have. Stories help supporters sympathise with what you hope to achieve.

Where will supporters find my session/team?

Online searches are more often than not the first port of call. Maximise exposure by utilising the relevant platforms; Facebook and Twitter. If your club has a website, an advert that can be found via google search could make the difference. Word of mouth from supporters is key as stated previously. Posters and adverts could be useful if placed in public places that disabled people are likely to visit. Try; leisure centres, doctor surgeries, schools, council sites and anything popular locally.

TIP: make your session fun for a carer when they bring someone along.



PEOPLE'S CLUB



Statutory Services

Understanding children & young people's services

Early Years Special Educational Needs Service (EYSENIS)

The service is made up of specialist teachers and practitioners that support the inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Why is this significant?

Contacting this service could help you build relationships with the people who are in regular contact with the people you want to target. If they understand and believe in your project they will be able to market directly to your audience.

Education, Health and Social Care Plans (EHCPs)

EHCPs have replaced Statements of Special Educational Needs. Personal budgets are now an option, giving an individual the freedom to choose their activities and support. Sport needs to be an essential part of a disabled person's social, health and wellbeing. Local support organisations should be informed about local activities, so they can encourage involvement.

If you are on the agenda, people will be signposted your way.

TIP: do not neglect advertisement towards support organisations!

Network

Useful contacts for your records

Bedford Borough

Diane Boyd | SEND Team Manager | 01234 228 375 |
SENDteam@Bedford.gov.uk

Central Bedfordshire

Angela Perry | Team Leader | 0300 300 4484 |
Angela.Perry@CentralBedfordshire.gov.uk

Luton Borough

SENAT | 01582 548132 | SENAT@Luton.gov.uk

Local Offers

The purpose of local offers are to provide supporters with easy access to the information they need. Your club needs to ensure they have all the relevant information to place in their directory. Many of the provisions have local magazines that are sent out.

Parent Carer Forums

Each local authority has a voice for parent carers. Forums are an excellent way to engage with your target audience. Not only will you be able to advertise via these networks, you'll be able to utilise them as consultations within your local area to find out what people would like.

TIP: find your local forums—www.NNPCF.org.uk



Safeguarding

Background information

Our commitment to Safeguarding

Football can play an important role in helping people live fulfilling lives. We are committed to creating and maintaining safe and positive environments. We support our clubs in their responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children/adults at risk involved in football. This comes with a duty of care for those providing opportunities to ensure participation is free from abuse and neglect.

Minimum expectations and standards

We identify all children and adults playing within a PAN Ability session/team as vulnerable. Therefore understanding Safeguarding policies and procedures is a priority. All youth team coaches are required to complete DBS checks before involvement. We are supporting all coaches to have up-to-date FA Safeguarding Children qualifications as a minimum standard whether they are working with children or not. Much of this fundamental knowledge can be applied to working with adults at risk.

Important considerations

Location can have an impact on participation as stated, but consider how safe the venue will be. Are the toilets/changing facilities open to the wider public? You will need to plan ahead for anyone wishing to go to the toilet, without sending them off alone. If a player's carer is attending they could escort them, but do not assume carers will be present all the time. Any carers on site do not count towards coach ratios either.

TIP: ensure all of your coaches are Safeguarding qualified.





Safeguarding pt.2

How can Bedfordshire FA support you?

Policies and procedures

Your club will be required to have a safeguarding children policy. The Bedfordshire FA will also be able to support you with a 'Safeguarding Adults at risk' policy and procedures. This will provide guidance and essential information when working with adults at risk. A copy is available upon request.

Designated Safeguarding Officer at Bedfordshire FA

Sarah DaCosta is the lead for Safeguarding at the Bedfordshire FA. She is the best person to talk to about any concerns or questions you may have. Our Football Development Officers will also be able to support you. If required, they will signpost you to your local contacts at councils, where specialist teams can provide assistance.

Sarah DaCosta | Designated Safeguarding Officer | 07960 500723 |
Sarah.DaCosta@BedfordshireFA.com

TIP: remember there is always support for you. Contact us for advice.

FA Grants & Funding

Financial Support is Available

Grow The Game

The Football Foundation have a funding scheme for the creation of new disability teams. £1,500 is available for affiliated clubs spread out over 3 years. Applications are competitive so we advise that you contact us before applying.

www.footballfoundation.org.uk/funding-schemes/grow-the-game/

Sport England Small Grants

The Small Grants programme aims to support inactive people become active. Sums of £300 to £10,000 are available for application. Your club must be affiliated with us to be eligible to apply. Long-term and ambitious projects would be favourable.

www.sportengland.org/funding/small-grants/

Cash 4 Clubs

Provides funding for sports clubs throughout the UK for facilities, equipment and qualifications. Your club must be affiliated with us to be eligible to apply. Funding decisions are made 3 times a year for sums of £500, £750 and £1,000.

www.cash-4-clubs.com/apply

Local Authorities and Parish Council Funds

Most local authorities and Parish Councils will have funding schemes and charitable grants for community organisations to apply for. We would advise that you contact your local contacts individually to find out more but can assist if required.

TIP: contact and explore—www.teambedsandluton.co.uk/funding





Hotbed for PAN Ability

What are Beds FA doing within the community?

Commitment to support you

We are extremely proud and passionate about our PAN Ability leagues. There are over 300 individuals involved within various divisions. If you have ever experienced them first hand, you'll know just how magical they are; a powerful means to improving lives. We are committed to supporting you with setting up your own teams around the county with a vision of eventually providing opportunities for everyone.

Ability Counts Leagues

There are 3 adult divisions split by ability bandings. The Academy is aimed at SEN schools. There is now an 'Attitude Counts Cup' run in association with the English Schools FA. This provides football for children with additional needs from mainstream schools. Without our competitions, most of these players wouldn't be playing.

How can you engage with the leagues and cups?

Our pool of players is continually growing. Most of them would be interested in joining local sessions/teams. You could provide something so meaningful and rewarding. Whilst you'd be welcome to add teams to the leagues, most community setups do not. For example, your players could play in the leagues through their schools and then play locally at your club. It is important to find what works best for your club and community.

TIP: why not start a session for existing players and build from there?



Contact US

We're here to support you

Disability Football Lead at Bedfordshire FA

Josh Spavins is one of our Football Development Officers but also leads on all things Disability Football. Josh has years of experience with us, having run the Ability Counts Leagues, coached our Dunstable Dynamos sessions for adults at risk and supported the setup of our existing community teams. If you're interested in setting something up at your own club or just want to find out more, get in contact.

Josh Spavins | Football Development Officer North | 07432 700589 |
Josh.Spavins@BedfordshireFA.com

Thanks and credits

Special thanks and credit for the information provided in this local Engagement Toolkit are reserved for the English Federation of Disability Sport and Sport England.

Approximately
3 % Of affiliated teams are aimed
at people with disabilities.
This **could & should** be more.

Thought: what are you going to provide within your community?