**Let’s Get Informed – Inclusion Panel Q & A**

Inclusion Panel

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| **Lauren Mawdsley (LM)** – Middlesex FA | https://www.middlesexfa.com/ |
| **Conor McBrearty (CM)** – London FA | https://www.londonfa.com/ |
| **Louis Wickett- Padgham (LWP)** – Sense & Southwark Stars | https://www.sense.org.uk/get-support/arts-sport-and-wellbeing/sense-sport/ |
| **Adam McEvoy (AM)** – Wheelchair Football Association | https://thewfa.org.uk/ |
| **Alex Gibbons (AG)** – London Sport | https://londonsport.org/ |
| **Valerie Copenhagen (VC)** – UK Deaf Sport | https://ukdeafsport.org.uk/ |
| **Richard Kerr (RK)** – CP Sport | https://www.cpsport.org/ |
| **Connor Bagenal (CB)** – QPR Community Trust | https://www.qpr.co.uk/community/about-us/ |
| **Steve Daley (SD)** – FA Role Models | https://www.thefa.com/get-involved/player/disability/performance-pathway |

**Q. What challenges did you face when getting your coaching badges as someone with a visual impairment? (question asked to SD).**

**SD** – Main challenge is people’s perception and fear of being judged which made me want to hide my impairment. Tutors sometimes have a fear of being challenged by having to adapt to course to suit the needs of a disabled person and can stop a disabled person attending a course and getting their qualification, rather than working with the disabled person to understand what they might need adapting. Sometimes people make you feel you can’t excel which can be off putting before doing the course. You often feel uncomfortable or feeling like you’re a burden. However, disabled people need to go through this experience to open up more opportunities for disabled people to access courses in the future.

**Q. Why do you think disabled people are twice as likely to be less active?**

**AM** – Locations is one of the main barriers. As there are a reduced number of opportunities, some players will need to travel to the nearest club. There is also a lack of knowledge and awareness about opportunities available.

**VC** – 1 in 5 deaf people find communication is one of the main barriers. The impact of COVID-19 and the use of masks and restrictions is an added barrier. Due to this reason, the deaf community are missing out on the social aspect. More needs to be done to raise profile and awareness of deaf and disabled sport. Spotlighting our role models to inspire is one example of how we can do this. Coaches have a fear that they are not qualified in British Sign Language, however they don’t need to be. There are some simple communication techniques to make sure everything is inclusive and accessible.

**RK** – Finding the right opportunity. Mainstreet or pan disability session may not be the best fit for some disabled people and many want to play with people with similar disabilities and there might not be enough opportunity in their local area for specific impairment session and might need travel an hour away. Also are coaches willing and/or have the knowledge to adapt sessions to suit the needs of a specific impairment.

**CB** – Timing of sessions can stop participation. Particularly those in education, sessions can be too late and might not work with transport between the school and activity. Effective and suitable marketing and promotion is also key.

**Q. Do you think more needs to be done to raise the profile of disability football particularly within mainstream football**

**LWP** – We need to ensure disabled people are part of the workforce. By doing this clubs and organisations will therefore understand the needs to disabled people which would then increase longevity of activities and quality of sessions. Who better to understand the needs to disabled people then disabled people themselves? For those that don’t have a disability, we need to work on building their confidence by improving their education around working with disabled people.

**AG** – We can start by ensuring disabled people are part of the design and conversation of an activity (co-design and co-production). Whether that be disabled people helping design the session or being involved in strategies and funding rounds etc. Whatever is produced is more likely to appeal to disabled people.

**VC** – The deaf community sometimes don’t seem themselves as disabled, having a session targeting disabled people can alienate and push deaf people away. It’s important to think about language and market the opportunities available appropriately.

**Q.** **Sometimes the embarrassment of some children/young people’s parents if their child/ren does not engage as they think they should immediately has sometimes meant that parents, with the best of intention, do not give their child enough time/chance to settle in to a new sport/activity/session and withdraw them before they have really been given a chance (workshop participant)**

**SD** – Your environment and situations can have an impact, whether you went to a mainstream school, special school for example which can affect your own confidence at how well you can cope in a new environment. Parents should try and enable children/ young people to be independent as quick as they can. The older they get the harder it will be to adapt. Children/ young people need to understand their impairment and see what opportunities are available for that impairment and see their impairment as a positive not something that will hold them back. There is a fear factor around disability and impairment and getting it wrong, sometimes clubs need to get it wrong to learn from that. We need people with impairments and disabilities to get into roles of responsibilities (head coach, development officers, head of service etc) as it opens the door for other disabled people which we all collective have to do.

**Workshop participant** – Families, parents, coaches should ensure that a disabled person or someone with an impairment has as much experience in the mainstream world as they do in their own impairment world. It starts by working with families and changing their mindsets as they can’t do everything for their child, they should to support that child to be independent. If you work in the mainstream world and don’t come across disabled people, then you can’t claim to be that inclusive with whatever activities you provide

**Q. What are the main barriers for deaf and disabled people?**

**LWP** – For those with complex needs and/or multiple impairments engaging them in football is quite a challenge. Movement based activities and more individual based sports that they can do at their own pace work really well for those with these types of disabilities. Football still comes as a complex idea with lots of spontaneous things that can happen and the participative can become more passive and not activity involved in the activity, most of the time the support worker does most of the work. Sense is looking to upskill coaches, support staff and family members to be able to support the participant in their activity confidently. In addition, Sensory Football is being developed and will be used to take some of those sensory movements in the game of football by breaking down the key concepts of football and creating meaningful activities so that those with these impairments can actively be involved and get the benefits of an activity.

**AG** – Activity Alliance realised some research that spilt the barriers in physical, logistical and phychological

**Q. Do you think coaches not feeling confident to coach disabilities is partly a reflection of perceptions towards disabilities in society?**

**RK** – Emphasis on educating coaches with specific coaching qualifications so that they are ensuring they are taking the players individual needs into consideration. Rather than re-educating the game, the coaching courses should focus on educating how to adapt activity for the players impairment needs – this is the biggest key. Football is football, it’s the adaptions that are needed by learning how to link and engage individual to the activity

**SD** – The FA’S Coaching Disabled Footballers’ course is available. However, in a standard coaching qualification, participants are brought in to aid the learners qualification and have real life experience, however disability specific coaching courses usually do not use participants. There is no better education then being hands on then in a safe environment which is lacking in some disability specific coaching qualifications. Leaners may not feel confident or don’t go on to coaching disabled people after attending those courses therefore how can the county FA’s and The FA make the courses more realistic?

**LM** – There are plenty of coaching courses available to upskill coaches to adapt their sessions for different disabilities and impairments. A focus also needs to be on those soft skills and work on personal skills to ensure the player feels comfortable in the sessions, so they get a more positive experience when they go to sessions

**VC** – UK Deaf Sport have a course about adapting communications which is practical hands on and theory based. We need to understand what it is that coaches and volunteers aren’t sure about or not confident about. There are exciting opportunities to enable more deaf and disabled people to become coaches and volunteers and diversify the workforce and show it’s not a barrier for them to complete.

**CM** – Coaches shouldn’t feel afraid to ask parent, carers, support workers how is best to adapt for their participant.

**CB –** 41% coaches want to coach disabled people but don’t feel confident enough

**VC –** We need to keep talking about these issues and challenges. This year has provided more challenges then usual, however a lot more organisations have been using zoom and online platforms to talk more then they have ever done before, I hope that we don’t loose this flow of conversation