

Sportivate success with disability projects

Sport England is committed to securing a lasting sporting national legacy for people with disabilities. Sportivate already has some great example of how the needs of disabled people are being met in communities across the country.



Introduction

Sport England's new Youth and Community Strategy 'Building a sporting habit for life' sets out the need to arrest the serious drop off from sport after the age of sixteen among people with disabilities. Active People Survey results have shown considerably fewer young disabled people are participating in sport compared with their non-disabled peers, and in particular disabled girls and young women. Sportivate offers an opportunity to strengthen partnerships at a local level between agencies across the sector. Sport England, the English Federation of Disability Sport and National Sports Disability Organisations want to facilitate greater understanding of the needs of disabled people and better sharing of good practice.

"Young disabled people require a more positive, meaningful and accessible experience of sport. This will help participation rates to increase past youth into adulthood, allowing sport to become a beneficial lifestyle choice."

Barry Horne, Chief Executive - EFDS

Local innovation

Chiltern Hill Academy in Buckinghamshire ran a football project for girls with moderate learning difficulties. The sessions were delivered by a coach linked to Chesham Ladies Football Club who has experience of meeting the needs of disabled people. The girls board at a local special school and often go home for the weekend. Understanding this, the club organised midweek sessions and provided transport. The project retained all eight girls and the link between the school and club has been strengthened for the future.

Bath and North East Somerset Sport and Activity Lifestyles team organised Sportivate projects including archery with Crossroads young careers, and multi sports for young people on the Autism spectrum. The need for the projects was identified

The young people with autism really owned this programme and that is why it was a success” Lisa Perryman, Active Lifestyle Development Officer

through liaison with the council’s children and young people’s services team. The success of the two projects was attributed to taking the time to fully understand the needs of the beneficiaries. The Crossroads young carers programme was designed after direct consultation giving the young people the chance to choose the times, the sport and venue in order to fit in with their responsibilities. All five young careers still continue to meet on a weekly basis to participate in archery. The multi sport autism project was successful because the coach truly understood the different degrees of the autism spectrum and was able to adapt his delivery accordingly. The project engaged eleven and retained nine young people. The sessions have now become a club of which the young people have taken full ownership.

The Black Country Be Active Partnership target approximately 25.0% of its programme portfolio at young people with disabilities. A wheelchair basketball project was run in order to facilitate awareness of disability through sport. Westminster School caters for people with learning, emotional and communication disabilities and has links with with mainstream school St Michaels. The project, aimed at pupils who historically have had limited opportunities to experience these types of activities, surpassed its initial targets and retained 11 of the 21 young people engaged. The sessions have helped to bring the two schools together (both pupils and staff), have raised awareness of a

“This club has been a great success and has united two schools. The activities have given the kids something to look forward to in the week and they have learnt about disability at the same time” Project Manager – Westminster School

number of disability issues, removed the barrier faced by some by providing transport, and created links with local SMILE events (sporting events and inter school competition for young people with disabilities). Further funding has been sourced locally to purchase a small number of basketball wheelchairs to secure a long term future for the activity. [Warwickshire College Wheelchair Basketball](#) ran a similar programme to raise awareness of disability through the use of wheelchair basketball and was successful in building new links with a local wheelchair basketball club which could provide coaches and all important equipment.

[Madeley Sports Club](#) were providing U13 and U16 football to young people with disabilities but there was no provision for adults. As a result a project, supported by Shropshire FA, was set up to encourage disabled young people over the age of 16 to attend football skill based sessions. The project was a success with seventeen of the nineteen young people retained. The exit routes was clear from the outset and as a result a team has been taking part in the FA three counties disability league.

"I am delighted with the success of the projects. We have managed to engage with the 17-25 age group creating sustainable playing opportunities for young adult with disabilities with qualified FA coaches. We now have a brand new disability team created in Shropshire. Eve Bailey, Football Development Officer - Shropshire FA

[Football for All in Stoke](#) was a project aimed at the current and past residents of the YMCA to address the lack of structured football for homeless young men with a wide range of learning and physical disabilities and psychological conditions. The project involved a committed group of 22 young men who continued to attend despite internal pressures from aggressive and challenging behaviour from some attendees. The project has improved the (self reported) mental wellbeing of many that have attended the sessions as well as harnessing other soft skill such as communication, organisation, time keeping and conflict resolution. The sessions are now on-going and it is anticipated will continue to be part of the local YMCA offer.

"A very challenging yet successful set of sessions"
Mark Roberts - Project Provider.

[Scunthorpe Pisces Disability Angling](#), supported by the [Angling Development Board](#) and [North Lincolnshire council](#), was part of a wider

"Without this programme of angling lessons the fantastic outcomes obtained and sense of achievement and enjoyment in the young people would not have been seen " Dave Boreham, Learning Disability Development Officer - North Lincolnshire Council

programme of angling engagement in the Humber area. Delivered by a high quality proactive community club, the sessions provided a route to regular angling participation in a community club for young people with a disability. The programme engaged fifteen young people and retained fourteen of these. At the end of the programme each participant was able to fish competently. To support long term retention the club worked with the care organisations that supported the disabled participants to engage five carers between the ages of 21 and 25 to themselves complete the Sportivate course. They are now able to support participants and sustain them in the sport.

All Teed Up ran golf sessions for young people with disabilities and complex health needs from the Special Needs Objective Outreach Project (SNOOP) group based at the Hollybrook Centre in Bradford, West Yorkshire. Coach Andy Watmuff arranged a visit from 2011 Special Olympics Gold medallist Golfer Ben Holmer (whom he had previously



coached) to add inspiration and motivation to the sessions. The programme engaged eight young people and retained seven of which two are now having individual tuition at the local driving range.

The **Special Yoga Centre** in London is designed to provide a nurturing and peaceful environment for children and adults with disabilities and special needs. Following enquiries and requests for holiday activities from schools, social workers and occupational therapists, sessions were targeted at older teenagers with disabilities who would benefit from relief from stress and anxiety, physical and mental strength, well-being and positive self-image in a non-competitive environment. As a result two special secondary schools were targeted and twenty one young people were engaged and thirteen retained. To overcome the scepticism of some young males, organisers promoted yoga's popularity with Premier League footballers as a way of increasing flexibility and balance and improving football performance. Both schools have continued to engage with the **Special Yoga Centre**.

Sportivate projects can be integrated into work with broader age groups with the funding targeted at eligible participants. The programme can also give fresh impetus to wider efforts to reach marginalised sections of the community. **Notts County Football in the Community** worked with the Wells Road Centre - a hospital which treats men aged 18 and over who have varying degrees of enduring mental illness and personality disorders and have a forensic history. Staff at the Centre primarily champion the use of facilities within the community but the majority of clients are unable to access these whilst in-patients. Service-users can be hospitalized for extended periods of time (18 months to 5 years) and there is a real need for a varied programme, both within the hospital

and within the community. The barriers to participation include low motivation, lethargy and inactivity due to the side effects of medication. Ian Richardson, manager of Notts County Football in the Community visited the Centre prior to the delivery of the sessions to discuss the course content and ensure that the course was tailored appropriately to this client group. Coaches then visited each ward each week prior to the sessions to encourage and motivate patients to attend sessions. Three clearly defined exit routes were in place; the On the Ball Project, which runs free weekly sessions at the local Portland Leisure Centre for service users from across the whole of Nottinghamshire, Mapperley Rangers (formed by the Notts FA Disability Officer) which runs weekly training sessions and plays fixtures in the Positive Goals league, and pan disability football squads organised by Notts County Football In The Community. There is now, however, a need to educate more sports clubs and coaches to understand mental health issues so that this and other similar work can be integrated into mainstream community sport.

Critical success factors

- Identifying the need for provision by consulting with the target group, or at the very least those that know the target group very well
- Being clear about desired outcomes and how sport will improve the lives of beneficiaries
- Being realistic about engagement and retention targets – working with target groups often comes at a higher cost per head (in both time and funding)
- Having clear exit routes or setting up new ones that are appropriate for the client group
- Overcoming the obvious barriers including providing transport
- Finding funding for specialist equipment or finding project partners that can provide it
- Using coaches that are experienced at working with people with disabilities.

More needs to be done to provide fully inclusive activities but there are significant attempts to use the programme to reach people with disabilities across Sportivate

