

# Follow the signposts: Guidance for coaching disabled athletes

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## Disabled athlete

- **Clubs must not only provide a reassuring welcome to disabled athletes, they must support them effectively once they are a member.**
- **For mainstream coaches who seek more clarity regarding their responsibilities, extensive guidance is available online.**

It's time to take the plunge and go surfing if you feel you might lack confidence working as a coach with disabled participants.

These online resources will help you steer a perfect course towards learning more about inclusive coaching, and understand what responsibilities you and your club have with regard to the development of your athletes.

It serves as a 'next steps' follow-up to our [blog with former Paralympic gold medallist and now coach educator Esther Jones](#), which asked if enough is being done to remove participation barriers for disabled athletes wanting to join mainstream clubs.

Clubs may feel they are doing enough to welcome disabled athletes.

But are they supporting them sufficiently once they are inside their four walls, not just in terms of upskilling and meeting their own personal motivations, but by recognising what a talented disabled athlete looks like based on their 'functional ability', and then how they can access competition and develop into a performance athlete if this is what they want to achieve?

'Your responsibility is the same as with a non-disabled participant,' explains Sarah Milner, Sports Coach UK's Inclusion and Diversity Lead Officer.

‘Take competitions. The coach should have the information to be able to pass on to their athlete ahead of the competition. They must then understand and abide by the rules of that competition, which is upheld by the international committee for that sport, feeding into the national governing body.

‘So, ultimately, it is the governing body’s responsibility to disseminate the information and present it to their coaches but, if you flip that, it is the responsibility of the coach, if they are sending athletes and players to competitions, to be aware of the rules under which the competition is being run and in turn make their athletes aware of them.’

The Home Nation Disability Sports Organisations are a good first port of call for mainstream coaches who seek more clarity regarding their responsibilities. They are responsible for promoting and advocating sport and physical activity for disabled people.

All their resources are online and freely available:

- [English Federation of Disability Sport](#)
- [Disability Sport Wales](#)
- [Scottish Disability Sport](#)
- [Disability Sport Northern Ireland.](#)

Governing body websites are a mine of useful information, which coaches can filter down to their participants, not only in terms of general help and advice, but news of events and signposts to regional disability offices.

There also exists a group of impairment-specific organisations. These national disability sport organisations can support players and coaches, and also provide impairment-specific information on such things as competition and classification.

Further impairment-specific information for coaches and links to the appropriate organisations can be [accessed here](#).

Some of the larger governing bodies, like British Cycling, have disability hubs that are specialist centres for disabled people to go along and play sport or get active.

‘The [British Cycling hubs](#) have qualified and confident coaches but also the equipment to make the session as accessible and as positive as possible,’ says Sarah. ‘Equipment is a barrier to participation as well, because depending on the physical impairment or visual impairment someone has, that could impact on the type of bike that they use.’

The [Sports Coach UK website](#) has freely available resources that give awareness information around different impairment groups.

And they offer two coaching disabled people workshops.

- [‘How to Coach Disabled People in Sport’](#)
- [‘Inclusive Coaching: Disability’.](#)

[The DotComUnity Disability Directory](#), meanwhile, is a website that provides details of activities and events in your area, and includes listings of disability clubs up and down the country.

Sarah has also posted [some top tips to help you include people with cerebral palsy in your coaching sessions](#) on ConnectedCoaches. And more articles to help you improve your coaching are available in the [blogs section of this Inclusive Coaching Group](#).

If you are experiencing any challenges in your efforts to make sport more accessible or need any advice,

you can also [start a conversation](#) in the [groups forum](#) by clicking the share button on the menu. There are lots of members willing to share their experiences with you who will only be too happy to help.

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