



Disability

Discover Gymnastics

A guide to support your club
to become more inclusive

I'm the one who fulfils my potential

“7 in 10 disabled people want to take part in more sport and physical activity, and are looking for clubs where they can get active.”



This support guide has been developed to provide ideas on how your gymnastics club can become more inclusive and provide more opportunities for disabled people to participate in gymnastics. Much of the content has been developed in partnership with Activity Alliance, along with our own guidance which we would like to share with you.

Insight from Activity Alliance shows that less than half the number of disabled people participate in sport once a week, compared to non-disabled people. However, 7 in 10 disabled people want to take part in more sport and physical activity, and are looking for clubs where they can get active. We know that many gymnastics clubs want to be inclusive but are not sure where to start and often need support.

We hope that this guide will help you to offer high quality inclusive opportunities within gymnastics and ensure that you are confident to open your doors to disabled people of all impairments. The guide is designed to bring a range of useful resources and documents together in one place, and provide you with all of the ideas and information you need to welcome and include disabled people in your gymnastics club. By using this guide as a checklist, you can see how inclusive your club is, and then create a plan of action to get even more disabled people participating.



What do we mean by disability?

British Gymnastics is keen to promote that gymnastics is accessible to everyone; any disabled person can take part in our sport. The Equality Act definition of 'disability' is a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and negative effect on ability to do normal daily activities, for a period of 12 months or more. The definition is broad, and includes people who:

- have physical impairments
- have a sensory impairment, including a hearing impairment or a visual impairment
- have intellectual disability
- have other health conditions

How many people are disabled?

THERE ARE **11.5m**
DISABLED PEOPLE IN THE UK
(THAT'S 1 IN 5)

ONLY **18%** OF DISABLED PEOPLE
DO 30 MINUTES
EXERCISE PER WEEK

DISABLED PEOPLE ARE
TWICE AS LIKELY
TO BE PHYSICALLY INACTIVE
THAN NON-DISABLED PEOPLE

ONLY **4%** OF BRITISH
GYMNASTICS
MEMBERS
ARE DISABLED

What barriers are there in sport?

Activity Alliance suggests the main reasons many disabled people do not participate in sport is that they are not aware of opportunities available to them or that activities themselves are not appealing to them. Our research shows disabled peoples' perceptions of gymnastics can act as a significant barrier to them taking part, including:

- feeling that gymnastics is elitist
- marketing is not appealing or visible to disabled people
- lack of appropriate inclusive gymnastics activity

To encourage more disabled people to take part in gymnastics, it's therefore important that we support clubs to break down these barriers and provide high quality inclusive activities that are well promoted and available to everyone.



What do disabled people want from a gymnastics session?

Research conducted by [Activity Alliance](#), formerly [EFDS](#), highlights the factors that motivate disabled people:

HAVING RELATIONSHIPS

MAINTAINING HEALTH

PROGRESSING IN LIFE

INDEPENDENCE

HAVING FUN

**HAVING A
POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE**

Disabled people take part in gymnastics for all of the same reasons as non-disabled people, and we are keen to ensure that disabled people have an equal opportunity to access all the benefits of our sport.

The benefits of delivering gymnastics

Ensuring that your club is inclusive of disabled people can bring many benefits:

- Increased participation/number of members within your club
- New income streams
- Engagement with new organisations and people within the local community
- Your club is able to offer more opportunities for more people, improving the offer and service you provide.





Where to start...

The guide is made up of seven sections, identifying seven areas that your club may be able to develop in order to become more inclusive.

You may wish to create an action plan, or you could incorporate your inclusive actions into an existing action plan e.g. your Business Development Plan.

How can British Gymnastics support further?

By completing the [Support Request Form](#) you can request support from our dedicated Inclusion Team who can provide one to one support to you and your club, as well as provide financial resource to help you achieve your aims.

The guide is interactive...

Wherever you see underlined text, make sure to click and we'll take you straight to the most useful resources that will help you to get started. We've pulled together the most up-to-date documents and information from a range of organisations and put it all into one place, so you don't have to!

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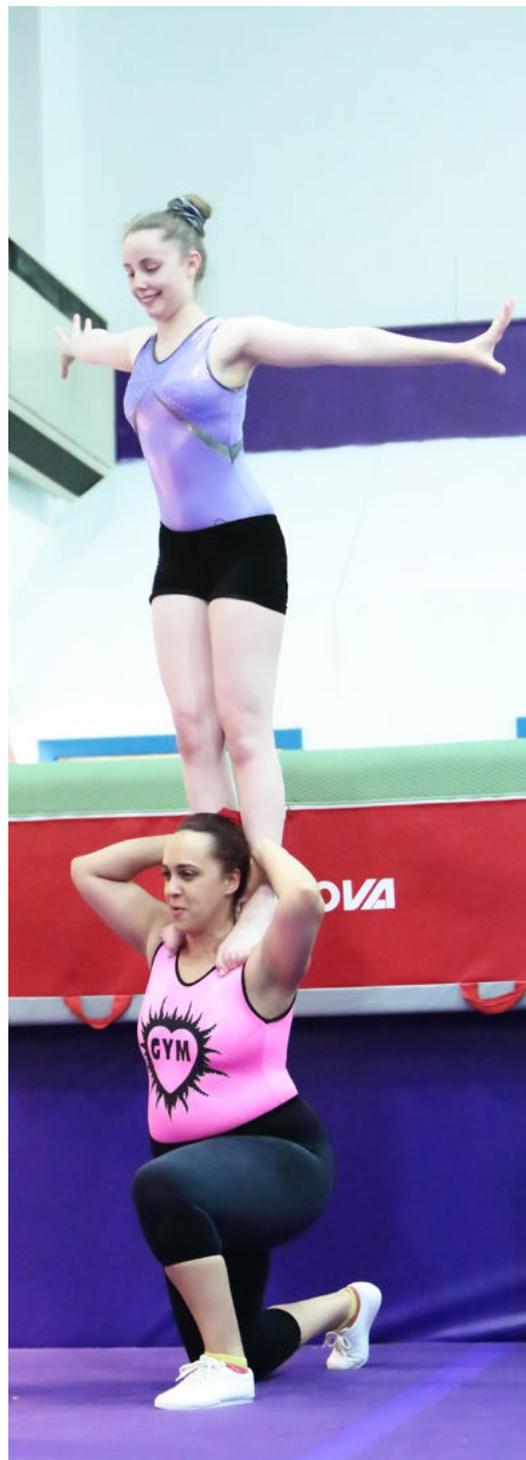
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Step 1

Policies

Policies and procedures are important for any gymnastics club; they send out clear messages to new and existing members about the way you run and what you value. You don't need to make big changes to the way your club runs in order to welcome disabled people, but there are a few simple things you can do to ensure the way you operate is inclusive.



Ensure your club is legally compliant with the Equality Act 2010

- **The Equality Act** was put in place to ensure that equal opportunities are offered to everyone without discrimination.
- The Act ensures that all organisations make reasonable adjustments to accommodate individuals with specific needs, it is important that your club's policies and procedures meet the requirements of the Act.

We've compiled some [Gymnastics Specific Equality Act](#) Guidance to help you understand exactly what it means to you.

Share your Equality Policy with your members

A good question to ask yourself is whether your club already has an Equality Policy.

If you do:

- Is it well communicated?
- Is it displayed prominently and within all of your club literature?

An Equality Policy is a valuable document to have in place, as this ensures that everything you offer is available to everyone. You should shout about your policy – make sure everyone in your club and local community knows you have one!

If you're not sure where to start, you may find it helpful to visit the Equality page on the British Gymnastics website. You can then direct your members to the [British Gymnastics Equality Policy](#) or even create your own using our [Club Equality Policy Template](#).

Step 2

Communication

It's important to tell people inside and outside your club about the great policies you have in place. By communicating within your club and connecting to the local community, you can ensure your club is inclusive and that people know it is.



Communicate with your whole team about inclusivity

- Ensure that everyone within your club is involved and committed to creating an Inclusive Gymnastics environment
- You could consider adding 'Inclusion' as an item on the agenda of staff meetings or committee meetings
- Decide as a team what it means for your club to be inclusive

You could put this into an Inclusive Club Statement – If you're not sure what this is and what yours might look like, check out our ideas on [how to word an Inclusive Statement](#).

Tell your existing members that you are inclusive

Once you have an Inclusive Statement, it's really important to shout about it and make sure everyone knows you are inclusive.

You could share your statement on all of your club resources and anywhere that your members may see it, for instance on membership forms, notice boards and on your club website. Think about putting up posters within your club, promoting any of your sessions that are inclusive or any dedicated disability classes that you may run.

Don't have time to create your own? Download our [Discover Disability Gymnastics flyer](#) and simply add your session details.

Step 2

Communication



Speak to disabled members about their needs

Do you know if any of your existing members are disabled? Is this something you ask participants at their first point of contact with the club?

To help you to ensure that you capture disability information from your new members, we've provided an example **additional needs request form**. It's important to communicate with all gymnasts that join your club to understand their needs and how you will be able to support them.

Think about whether all of your club communications are accessible to everyone; whether you could have documents available in large print or **EasyRead** and whether any of your participants require any additional communication support e.g. a BSL Interpreter.

Connect with disabled people in your local area

If you want to attract new disabled members to your club, you may need to contact new organisations and work with groups that you haven't previously been in contact with.

National Disability Sport Organisations (NDSOs) encourage more disabled people to take part in sport, and may be able to put you in touch with local Disabled People's Organisations. Your **County Sport Partnership** will be able to link you to organisations near you who are looking for activities for disabled people.

Additionally, you could consider contacting schools and colleges, rehabilitation units, social services, day centres and physiotherapists. We've found that putting posters about what your club offers in Doctors Surgeries and online in Parent/Carer Forums can be a great way to tell disabled people what gymnastics can offer.

You can also contact **participation@british-gymnastics.org** who may be able to put you in touch with local groups.



Step 3

Programme

You can achieve inclusion in different ways, but by communicating with members about their individual needs you will be better informed to make decisions about exactly what it is that your club will offer disabled people. Depending on what is appropriate for your gymnasts, you may offer a separate/dedicated Disability Gymnastics Programme, or you could include disabled people in your existing sessions. Either way, it's not too hard for your club to ensure all disabled people can experience all the same of benefits of gymnastics as non-disabled people.

Plan what sessions your club can offer

While some disabled people prefer classes specifically for disabled people, [Activity Alliance Active Together Research](#) shows that many want to take part in inclusive sessions alongside non-disabled participants. It's important to consider the needs and wishes of your disabled members when you plan your Disability Gymnastics Programme. Use this information to decide which type of session will be the best way forward, as well as

which activities you will offer and the number of participants per class. Your coaches should be aware of any additional needs within their classes so that they can plan their sessions to support each gymnast as best as they can.

Step 3

Programme

Are there any obvious gaps in your programme?

Consider your existing timetable; which sessions are already inclusive and are there any sessions that you could potentially make more inclusive, with only a few small changes to meet the needs of participants? Get feedback from your disabled participants to identify any additional sessions they might be interested in – would some of your disabled members be interested in trying a new discipline for instance? Contact participation@british-gymnastics.org who will be more than happy to look at your current timetable with you and support the development of any new sessions.

What opportunities are there for disabled people to progress within your programme?

Ask yourself what opportunities are available for disabled participants to take part in and what else you could offer to encourage them to continue coming to your club.



It doesn't matter whether you go down the route of dedicated disability sessions, inclusive sessions or both, but it's important to put your disabled members at the centre of your decision about what to offer.

Opportunities to perform and compete

For disabled gymnasts looking for something to work towards or somewhere to showcase their skills, the below events are fun and social ways of getting more involved:



Local Competitions

Many clubs include a disability section within their club championships, or offer friendly competitions for other clubs to take part in. You can use our [Gymnastics for All TeamGym](#) or [Introductory Aerobics](#) rules which are inclusive. These competitions are fun, friendly and very low level – the perfect place to get started.

Festivals

Festivals are a great opportunity for gymnasts to perform and showcase skills they have been working on, in front of a captive audience. If you're just getting started, your club could organise a mini festival within the club or with another local club, or you could enter [GymFusion](#); fantastic festivals held in theatre-like venues across the country. If your disabled gymnasts enjoy it, the opportunities to perform are endless, with a number of international festivals to aim for, including EuroGym, World Gymnaestrada and Gym4Life Challenge.

“Disability Gymnastics is a fantastic sport and has given me so many opportunities that I would recommend it to anyone.”

Regional and national disability competitions

Disabled gymnasts are able to choose whether they compete in our dedicated Disability NDP competition pathway or whether they want to take part in mainstream competitions; either option is great. Your Regional Gymnastics Association may be able to point you in the direction of Disability Gymnastics competitions in your area, and there are a number of national competitive opportunities across the gymnastics disciplines; more details including eligibility criteria are included within the National Competition Handbooks, in the ‘Technical’ section of the British Gymnastics website.

For more information about opportunities to perform and compete, contact participation@british-gymnastics.org

Step 4

Staff and volunteers

Your staff and volunteers are the first point of contact that disabled people have within your club and they have a large role to play in a participant's experience of gymnastics. There are a number of things you can do to support your team, and ensure they have the skills and confidence to include disabled people in everything they do. Here are a few things that you can do:



- Support your team of staff and volunteers by finding out if they require any additional training. Remember to consider all staff, from your front of house to those running the café.
- Designate one person to take a lead on driving Inclusion within the club.
- Encourage your disabled members to become a volunteer or a coach. All of the British Gymnastics Education Courses are inclusive so speak to the parent or participant to see if coaching or volunteering is something they are interested in. If you need help identifying funding opportunities to support disabled people to complete qualifications contact participation@british-gymnastics.org. A good starting point is the [UK Coaching Funding Advice for Coaches](#), and often [NDSOs](#) also offer coach training funding for individuals with specific impairments.

Training and support

British Gymnastics offers a range of resources and CPD opportunities that can support any coach or volunteer to develop their knowledge and confidence when coaching disabled participants. Here are a couple of opportunities:

- Disability Awareness Module – Designed for those coaches who want to understand how they can adapt their coaching to be inclusive of all impairments
- Inclusion Workshops – These are impairment specific workshops that are delivered by various NDSO's

British Gymnastics also has an array of support tools and resources available on the Inclusive Gymnastics Page on their website, including:

- Step Model Video
- FAQ documents relevant for your environment which include information on terminology, processes and protocols
- Gymnastics BSL Videos

In addition British Gymnastics now has a number of Inclusion Specialists who can support you and provide you with coaching advice in relation to specific impairments.

You can also find further information on the [UK Coaching website](#), [Activity Alliance Inclusion Club Hub](#), or via the [British Gymnastics Health and Safety Guidance Document: Coaching Practice](#).

Step 5 Venue

Whether based in a dedicated facility or a school hall, access to a gymnastics club can be a barrier for a disabled person. Without necessarily making huge changes to your training venue, there are three things your club can consider to ensure it is as accessible as possible.



Ease of journey from a person's home to your club

Many disabled people do not even reach a club venue because of barriers including transport, access routes and confidence to travel somewhere new.

So, how can you reduce these barriers?

- Provide transport information prior to arriving at the venue. This can include local transport links, bus stop information or a map of the club.
- Ensure your venue is well signposted
- You could provide a meet and greet service whereby a coach or volunteer is able to meet the participant and at a meeting point.
- You may need to consider the suitability of the immediate access routes outside your training venue.

For more ideas you can look at [Activity Alliance' Access for All: Opening Doors Guide](#).

Accessibility of the facility itself

There are a number of steps, big and small, that your club can put in place to improve accessibility once someone has arrived at your training venue. Consider completing an audit of your training venue using [Sport England's Accessible Sports Facilities: Audit Checklist](#), and see what more you can do within your club facility.

*** Take a look at our [Inclusive Venue Case Study](#), and see how making accessibility improvements to a facility has helped one club to include more disabled gymnasts.**



Space and equipment in your sessions

Within your sessions, the layout of your gymnastics equipment can have a big impact on the way that a disabled person can move around the gym. Think about the needs of the people who may access your club and try to eliminate as many physical obstacles as possible. This may be as simple as repositioning a piece of equipment or having a 'tidy-up rule' where mats and movable apparatus have a designated 'home' and are always tidied away after use so they do not block access routes around the gym.

Step 6

Promotion

With inclusive policies, programming and people in place, you're ready to promote your club's activities to a wider audience. Working with Activity Alliance, we're able to provide you with some tips and tricks for promoting activities to disabled people.



You may not need to reproduce everything you do in a variety of formats but it's important to think about who might be accessing your communications and what their needs might be. **Activity Alliance' Access for All: Inclusive Communications Guide** gives much more detail on how to make your promotions accessible. Impairment specific help guides are available from **Activity Alliance Access for All: Inclusive Communications Guide** and **RNIB** on accessible information for blind and partially sighted people.

Ensure your club is listed on our website **british-gymnastics.org/discover** as delivering Disability Gymnastics. Lots of people are looking at this site and linking to club websites/contact details. If it's not listed, visit **GymNet** and update your 'Activity' tab. This can be found under the 'Club Info' option in the 'Club Management' menu. If you have any problems, our Customer Support team will be able to help you on **0345 129 7129 ext. 2395**.

If you have a Facebook and/or Twitter account, announce the launch of your inclusive sessions here and continue to promote and talk about it. You can share the progress of your sessions in social media, which will encourage others. Feel free to share the 'Disability Gymnastics' page of the Discover Gymnastics website to show disabled people our great video and introduce gymnastics to them; just click the Facebook and Twitter icons on the page.

We've created some great Discover Disability Gymnastics flyers for you to use. Download and simply add your session details.

Step 6 Promotion

Here are some tips

- Use jargon-free plain English
- Have a plain Word copy of information available to email or print
- Use a variety of promotion channels e.g. email, website, printed copy, videos, phone calls and **Next Generation Text Service**
- Consider your use of colour (high contrast and simple symbols)
- Give enough information for disabled people to access your activity (e.g. start time, cost, equipment required, how to get there, transport links and contact details – both email and phone)
- Use positive images of disabled people taking part in entry level gymnastics. Contact **participation@british-gymnastics.org** for some great examples
- Try to appeal to people's values when promoting your activity; show that gymnastics is fun, a great place to meet friends and to get fit. **Activity Alliance's Talk to Me Research** will help you to understand how to encourage disabled people to take part



Show that gymnastics is fun, a great place to meet friends and to get fit





Step 7

Resources and evaluation

As you work through steps 1-6, you'll need to consider what resources you will need to put actions in place and how you might measure the great work you are doing. It's good practice to continually revisit and evaluate your plan, and always be one step ahead thinking what else you could do to make your club even more inclusive.

Increasing funds

You may need to consider whether you will need to source funding for any element of your plan, for instance if you want to improve accessibility to your facility or train new coaches to offer more sessions. Contact participation@british-gymnastics.org who will be able to support you to apply for local funding, and funding opportunities are also signposted on [Sport England's Funding Page](#).

Recruiting volunteers

It is a good idea to nominate a Volunteer Officer within your club who is responsible for ensuring that your club has enough trained volunteers to support any new sessions you are planning. You could consider setting up a [Leadership Academy](#) to encourage any of your gymnasts aged 11+ to undertake volunteer roles within gymnastics, or host a [Make a Difference](#) workshop to try and recruit new volunteers. The British Gymnastics website contains advice on [supporting volunteers](#), and our [Volunteering Team](#) will be more than happy to answer any specific questions you have.

Step 7

Resources and evaluation

Getting feedback

To ensure that your club is developing inclusion in the way that you hope, and is increasing the provision for disabled people, you'll want to consult disabled people regularly to get their feedback and views. Make sure to ask disabled members about their experience within your club and what you might be able to do to encourage even more disabled people to try gymnastics. Maybe hold a feedback session, have a comments box, or use our example [Participant Satisfaction Questionnaire](#).

Monitoring and reviewing your programme

It's important to review your programme and your inclusive action plan regularly to see what you have achieved and what the next steps are if you want to continue to develop disability gymnastics.



Common challenges and barriers

Here is an overview of the things to consider, and some frequently asked questions:

Do I need a specific qualification to teach disabled gymnasts?

- You don't need to attend a separate course to teach disabled participants.
- Any British Gymnastics coach can teach disabled participants skills that they are qualified to teach under their current qualification, whether in an inclusive session or dedicated disability gymnastics class.
- We recommend that coaches attend the British Gymnastics Disability Awareness Add on Module to build their confidence and knowledge when working with disabled people, but it is not a requirement.

How can I offer more Disability Gymnastics sessions when my timetable is already full?

- Many clubs feel that they don't have the time to be inclusive or offer Disability Gymnastics because they are already full.
- It's important to remember that you don't have to offer new sessions to become more inclusive, and you can encourage the inclusion of disabled participants within your existing sessions.
- If you're keen to offer more sessions, or a specific Disability Gymnastics session, you could consider establishing a **satellite venue**.
- You could also look at your current timetable to identify gaps where disability organisations might be able to bring groups to take part, or look at running two sessions side by side with a curtain separating them if you need to reduce distractions.
- For support to establish new sessions or build club capacity, contact participation@british-gymnastics.org.



Do I need any specific equipment to deliver Disability Gymnastics?

- No, you will be able to offer an inclusive gymnastics session using all of the same equipment as your mainstream gymnastics sessions.
- We've compiled some **examples of equipment** that clubs have found particularly useful in their own Disability Gymnastics sessions, if you are looking for some ideas, however you do not need to buy anything in particular.

Can I run a Disability Gymnastics session for a specific impairment group?

- A gymnastics club may run Disability Gymnastics sessions for a specific impairment only (such as visually impaired or blind people).
- This is absolutely acceptable under the Equality Act (2010) if your session encourages an under-represented group to take part in gymnastics.

How can we make our sessions more accessible for participants using a Personal Budget?

- [Activity Alliance](#) has some useful information about what a Personal Budget is and how you can engage disabled people who hold personal budgets within physical activity.

Do gymnasts with Down's Syndrome require medical screening prior to participation in gymnastics?

- Yes, British Gymnastics has an Atlanto-Axial Instability screening policy for all gymnasts with Down's Syndrome.
- As a coach, you must ensure that all gymnasts with Down's Syndrome are medically screened prior to taking part in any gymnastics activity.
- Our [Atlanto-Axial Instability Information Pack](#) includes all of the information you will need to know about the screening, and includes the form that will need to be completed and returned to British Gymnastics.
- On receiving the form, British Gymnastics assesses whether or not it is safe for the gymnast to participate based on the medical information supplied.

What can I do if a disabled participant needs a carer or additional support in the session?

- It's important to ensure that you have enough coaches to safely teach an inclusive gymnastics session, in line with [British Gymnastics' Health and Safety Guidance Document: Coaching Practice](#).
- If your disabled gymnasts need additional help within your session and you're unable to provide additional coaches to offer this 1-to-1 support, it may be that parents or carers are able to help.
- It is absolutely fine for carers or personal assistants who aren't qualified coaches to assist a disabled person, for instance on a trampoline, as long as this is in a non-coaching capacity (the coach must be in control of the session at all times).
- Parents or carers whose role is solely to provide 1-to-1 support for a disabled person would not be required to complete a DBS check or have British Gymnastics membership.

So would you like to offer disability gymnastics?

If you have been inspired and you are interested in establishing your Disability Gymnastics Programme, or would like to develop your existing programme then please contact British Gymnastics or alternatively complete the [Support Request Form](#).

Other useful documents

You can find out more about the successful case studies and Inclusive survey results by clicking on the links below.

[British Gymnastics website - Inclusive Gymnastics Inclusive survey results 2018](#)



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