



Disability

Discover Gymnastics

A guide to support your club
to become more inclusive of
disabled people

I'm the one who fulfils my potential

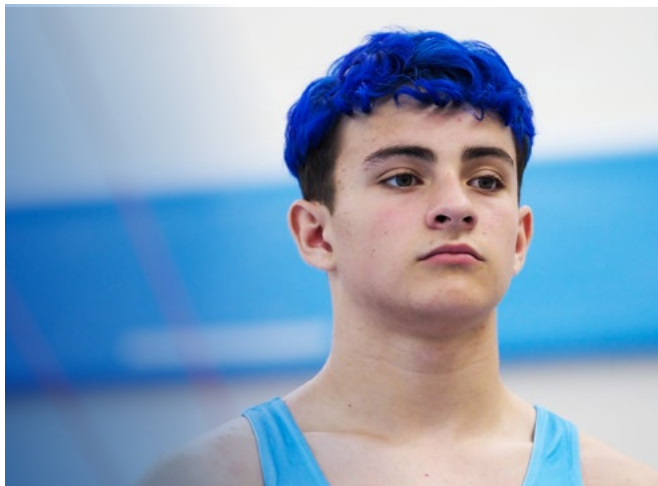
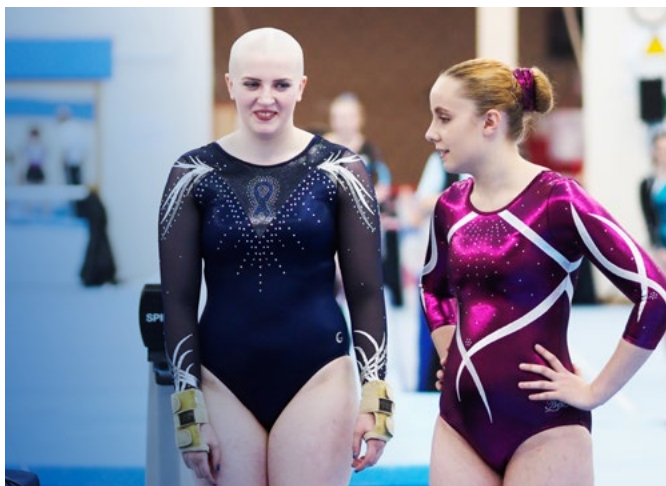
This support guide has been developed to provide ideas on how your gymnastics club can become more inclusive and welcoming of disabled people. Much of the content has been developed in partnership with Activity Alliance, as well as our own guidance which we would like to share with you.



“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.”

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:

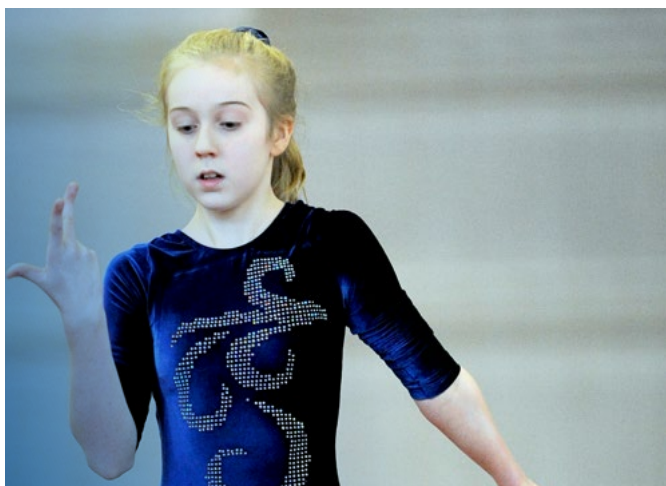
- have physical impairments
- have a sensory impairment, including a hearing impairment or a visual impairment
- have intellectual disability
- have other health conditions

How many people are disabled?

There are 11.5 million disabled people in the UK (1 in 5) however only 18% of disabled people do at least 30 minutes of exercise per week and we estimate that only 4% of British Gymnastics members are disabled. Disabled people are twice as likely to be physically inactive than non-disabled people.

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 that disabled peoples' perceptions of gymnastics can act as a significant barrier to them taking part, including feeling that gymnastics is elitist, that marketing is not appealing or visible to disabled people, and that there is a lack of appropriate inclusive gymnastics activity. To encourage more disabled people to take part in gymnastics, it's therefore really 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 7 sections, identifying 7 areas that your club may be able to develop in order to become more inclusive:

Follow these 7 steps and simply record any actions that you think your club could complete to improve inclusivity, marking a timescale for completion, as well as who is responsible for each task. You may wish to incorporate your inclusive actions into an existing action plan e.g. your Business Development Plan, or if you would like support from our British Gymnastics Inclusion Team you can complete the [Support Request Form](#). Alternatively, if it works best for you, keep it simple and write a To Do list for various members of your team.

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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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, and 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

It is important that everyone involved in the running of your club thinks about inclusivity and agrees that it is an important aspect of your club. If you hold club committee or staff meetings, consider including Disability Gymnastics as an agenda item to be discussed. As a team, perhaps you can agree on what it means for your club to be inclusive, and 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. 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

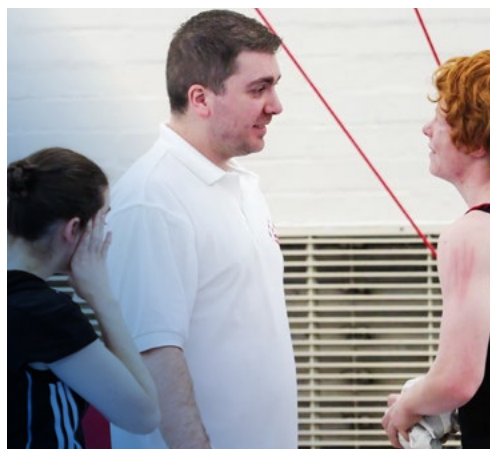


“Gymnastics teaches acceptance, patience
and life lessons that everyone has a
different ability yet everyone can still find
their own success in sport.”

Step 4

People

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.



Encourage your whole team to take responsibility for disabled people

To ensure that everything you do is inclusive and that your club experience is truly open to everyone, all of your team need to be responsible for disabled people. Whatever their role within the club, there are things that your team can do to make a disabled participant's experience of gymnastics a positive one. Consider writing inclusive actions into staff and volunteer role descriptions, or ask coaches to sign up to some key inclusive commitments – we've pulled together some examples, to help you get started.

Support your team's understanding of disability and inclusion

From your front of house / reception staff to the volunteers running your café, do you know what training your team needs and where they feel they need extra support? Often, people worry about using appropriate terminology when speaking to disabled people or when creating promotional material, as they want to ensure they send out a positive message without causing any offence.

Designate one person within the club to take the lead on Disability

Whilst we want to encourage everyone within your club to be responsible for inclusivity, it's good to identify one main Disability Contact who can be contacted by a range of organisations. Identify one person within the club to lead on Disability Gymnastics, and provide their contact details to all of the organisations you are working with, including British Gymnastics, Activity Alliance, County Sports Partnerships and your Local Authority Sports Development Officers.

Step 4 People



What training is available to you?

There are a number of training opportunities available for coaches within your club. British Gymnastics offer a range of CPD opportunities to all British Gymnastics coaches, including **Disability Awareness Add on Module** for coaches who want to understand how they can adapt their coaching to be inclusive of all impairments, and Inclusion Workshops which are delivered by NDSOs and other disability organisations focusing on developing impairment specific knowledge. If you would like to find out more about the Inclusion Workshops please contact **British Gymnastics**. **UK coaching** also offers a range of resources on inclusion which may enhance your knowledge. However, you don't have to spend money on training courses for coaches to be able to learn and develop. For instance, you may be able to set up a mentoring programme within your club, for less experienced coaches to help in an inclusive and/or disability specific session to learn from more experienced members of the team, hands-on. Additional support can be found in the **British Gymnastics' Health and Safety Guidance Document: Coaching Practice** which gives you some guidelines around specific impairments that may require expert medical advice prior to taking part in gymnastics.

Encourage disabled people to become coaches or volunteers within your club

All British Gymnastics Education courses are inclusive, and we're keen to support any disabled people within your club who want to take the first step on the coaching ladder. Ensure you speak to participants and parents within your club to see if coaching or volunteering in another role is something they are interested in. Activity Alliance have a great **Volunteering Fact Sheet**, to help you to support more disabled people to become volunteers. 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 Opportunities for Coaching**, but often **NDSOs** also offer coach training funding for individuals with specific impairments.

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. Before disabled people arrive at your venue, you can support them by providing transport information in your marketing material (e.g. local transport links, nearest bus stop, a map of your club) and ensuring your club is well sign posted. You may need to consider the suitability of the immediate access routes outside your training venue; with a number of ideas included within [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 [MENCAP on Easy Read Information for people with a learning disability](#) and [RNIB](#) on accessible information for blind and partially sighted people.

Disability Gymnastics page of the Discover Gymnastics website



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 Service 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' 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](#).

Measuring success

Consider keeping records of how disabled members within your club progress to ensure that you are offering enough opportunities; you could record attendance, skill progress and roles that they hold.

Gaining other ideas

If you need more ideas to help you include more disabled people within your club, [Activity Alliance Inclusion Club Hub](#) includes some valuable support. British Gymnastics can also provide signposting to mentoring support from a club with experience of supporting disabled members.

British Gymnastics are proud to announce the release of some new Gymnastics Communication videos using British sign language! Over 50 videos and signs have been created in partnership with UK Deaf Sport, covering a range of skills, equipment and generic signs to help your club become more inclusive.

To access the resource/videos for the first time, simply follow these 4 simple steps (please note that this resource is only accessible by British Gymnastics members):

- 1) First, [access the link for the enrolment page](#): (please note that you will need your British Gymnastics membership number and password to log in).

- 2) Once step 1 is complete, you will receive a confirmation email that will direct you to the British Gymnastics Academy. Log in to your British Gymnastics Academy account
- 3) You will find the resource/videos by clicking the 'Resources' tab and then selecting 'Gymnastics communication videos using British Sign Language'
- 4) Click on the start button to begin

We hope you find the resource/videos useful, and value any feedback you have! This can be provided by completing our very short survey linked to the resource, Enjoy!

Reviewing your actions

It's important to review your club 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. Once you have noted actions for the 7 steps suggested in the toolkit, ensure to set a date that you will review what you are doing with your club's committee and coaches.

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 2 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](#) have 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**](#).

We will be able to offer you support to get started, by linking you with disability organisations and other clubs who can share success stories.

You can read and find out more about the success stories by clicking on the link below

[**Case studies**](#)



British
Gymnastics