

Sport 21 Background Report no. 9

This is no. 9 in a series of background reports being prepared – or reproduced from other sources – during 2002/03 to inform the revision of *Sport 21*, the national strategy for sport in Scotland.

**Sport and People with a Disability:
Aiming at Social Inclusion
Summary**

Research Digest no. 57

A report for **sportscotland**

by

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Further Information

This is one of a series of background reports being brought together by **sportscotland's** Research Unit to provide contextual information for the revision of *Sport 21*, the national strategy for sport in Scotland. These background reports – and all **sportscotland's** research reports and summary digests – are placed on our website:

www.sportscotland.org.uk

Background reports placed on the website to date are:

- BR1 *Public attitudes towards the importance of excellence in Scottish sport.* (System Three survey of the general public for **sportscotland**)
- BR2 *Public attitudes towards the importance of sport in Scotland.* (System Three survey of the general public for **sportscotland**)
- BR3 *United Kingdom's sporting preferences.* Survey by BMRB for UK Sport. (Public attitudes to sporting excellence reproduced from UK Sport's website)
- BR4 *Attitudes to physical activity by low participants.* Scott Porter for the PATF. (Reproduced with permission from the Physical Activity Task Force website)
- BR5 [*Sport and the family.*](#) Survey by MORI for the Nestlé Family Monitor. (Attitudes of adults towards children's participation; website link)
- BR6 *Sport and local government in the new Scotland.* A Pringle & T Cruttenden. (An overview for **sportscotland** and COSLA)
- BR7 *Entrance charges and sports participation.* Fred Coalter for the PATF. (Reproduced with permission from the Physical Activity Task Force website)
- BR8 *Sport and minority ethnic communities: aiming at social inclusion. Summary.* (Summary of a report for **sportscotland** by Scott Porter)
- BR9 *Sport and people with a disability: aiming at social inclusion. Summary.* (Summary of a report for **sportscotland** by Scott Porter)

This report (BR9) summarises issues, barriers and recommendations relating to sport and people with a disability. The full report is available on the **sportscotland** website: [*Sport and people with a disability: aiming at social inclusion.*](#)

In conjunction with Scottish Disability Sport, **sportscotland** is hoping to focus efforts on sports participation by young people with a disability. It has commissioned a study to explore the availability and accessibility of registers of young people with a disability with a view to seeking baseline data on participation and providing information on sports opportunities. The results of this will be added to the website in autumn 2002.

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Introduction

*Sport 21*¹, the national strategy for sport in Scotland, identified the need to increase the numbers participating in sport especially by those with a disability.

As little research has been done on sports participation among people with a disability in Scotland, this target requires a three-stage approach:

- An exploration of the issues and barriers surrounding participation and practical guidance on how these may be overcome.
- Dissemination of the guidance to those involved in sports development for implementation as appropriate.
- Establishing a baseline and subsequently monitoring levels of participation in sport.

sportscotland commissioned Scott Porter to address the first of these stages. The study was carried out during April-July 2000 together with a similar investigation into sport and people from minority ethnic communities². The investigation, summarised in this document and discussed in full in the main report³, seeks to:

- gain an understanding of the issues and barriers relating to sports participation by those with disabilities;
- provide recommendations for overcoming the barriers; and
- identify examples of good practice.

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¹ *Sport 21* was published by the Scottish Sports Council – now **sportscotland** – in 1998 following extensive consultation throughout the country. A review process to identify progress on targets and realign policies reported in August 2000.

² A summary of the work on sport and ethnic minorities, also undertaken by Scott Porter, is published by **sportscotland** in tandem with this report: *Sport and minority ethnic communities: aiming at social inclusion. Summary*. (Research digest no. 58)

³ The main report of this study covers Scott Porter's parallel investigations into sport and people with disabilities and sport and minority ethnic communities and is published by **sportscotland** in autumn 2000. This includes full details of the study's methodology including types of survey and nature of the samples.

People with a Disability: Participants and Non-participants

Among people with a disability, the research identified three attitudinal types termed 'Dependents', 'Unconfidents' and 'Independents'. These were based on an individual's attitude towards their disability and on their levels of self-confidence, and are a key driver in their overall attitudes and behaviour with regard to participation in sport.

- **Dependents** view their disability as a severe restriction that impacts on all aspects of their life. These people tend to have lower levels of confidence in general, reflected in their perceived lack of ability to do sport. They are far less likely to be participating and require high levels of support and encouragement in a sporting context.
- **Unconfidents** represent the middle ground. These people are not as confident, nor independently-minded as 'Independents'. However, although their disability is sometimes allowed to define their behaviour, they do not feel as constrained or restricted by it as 'Dependents'. Whilst they lack confidence in their ability to do sport, they do not question whether or not they have the capability per se to participate. They do, however, seek some form of emotional support when undertaking sport.
- **Independents** are characterised by their very independent attitude towards their disability. They feel strongly that this does not define who they are nor that it should limit their approach to life, as far as is possible. In line with this, they see no reason why they should not be able to participate in sport like anybody else. They tend to have fairly strong preferences for particular activities and are more likely to participate in both mainstream and more niche sports.

Beyond these attitudinal types, a framework⁴ was used with the premise that changes requiring high levels of personal involvement come about in stages, termed **precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action** and **confirmation**. Barriers were identified within each of these stages of the behavioural change process, a few unique to that stage and others overlapping other stages, but crucially at each stage people are faced with a range of barriers requiring varying strategies to overcome them. Importantly, the majority of barriers identified were not specific to particular types of disability and, unless specified, were evident across the total sample.

Stage 1: Precontemplation

At this first stage in the process, individuals will not be participating in sport at any level. For these people sport is not even considered a possibility. Of the three attitudinal types identified above, Independents are the least likely to appear in this stage.

⁴ Based on: Alan R Andreasen *Marketing social change. Changing behavior to promote health, social development and the environment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bas, 1995.

Key Barriers at the Precontemplation Stage

Society's attitude towards people with a disability. Anecdotal evidence from the research suggests that negative attitudes towards people with a disability still permeate throughout certain sectors of society. These are seen to range from pity through to overt discrimination. This can act as a barrier in many aspects of this target group's lives, resulting in a lack of confidence and general reluctance to interact with the public at large.

The 'accepted' definition of sport. This is felt to inherently preclude people with a disability. The 'accepted' view is seen to centre around winning, playing to rules, competition, having a 'right' way of doing things and requiring mental and physical 'completeness'. As a part of this the media are seen to play a key role in shaping and reinforcing public perceptions by affording very little attention to disability sport and often portraying disability sport in a less legitimate way, such as a human interest story rather than sport in its own right.

More athletes should be publicised as athletes, not as a disabled person who has done this, that or the other thing. (Female, elite athlete, 16-40 years)

Lack of awareness of others 'like me' participating. This can reinforce the belief that it is not an appropriate, nor achievable, activity to undertake. It can be both at a personal or localised level or in a broader context such as lack of visible role models.

Lack of awareness of available facilities/activities. While not actively seeking sporting options at this stage, a lack of awareness of facilities or activities available can mean that sport has no profile in the context of their lives.

Overcoming the Barriers at Precontemplation Stage

In order to address the barriers at this precontemplation stage, there is a need for strategies that aim to achieve the following:

- Communicate the meaning of 'sport' in Scotland today, including:
 - community recreation and sports development; and
 - 'sport for all'.
- Promote the governing/coordinating body of sport for people with a disability, Scottish Disability Sport (SDS), by:
 - raising the external profile of the organisation;
 - raising the profile of sport for people with a disability; and
 - increasing awareness of sporting opportunities for people with a disability.
- Raise awareness of what people with a disability can achieve in sport at a grassroots as well as elite level, and include different levels of severity.
- Address parents' concerns about disability sport, including those of children without a disability.

Good Practice: *Scottish Disability Sport*

Aims

To provide facilities for and encourage the development of sport for people with a disability.

The Project

Scottish Disability Sport (SDS) is the governing and coordinating body of sport and physical recreation for all people with a disability in Scotland and has been operating for 30 years. SDS recently launched its development plan, *Changing With the Times*, and has identified three priorities for the immediate future: focusing on the needs of players and athletes; developing sporting opportunities for young people with a disability; and developing partnerships that provide opportunities and facilities. SDS delivers its programmes through an extensive network of branches and area development groups.

Good Practice Criteria

- Has a clear set of aims and goals and a strategy to achieve them
- Able to focus all of its attention and resources on increasing sporting opportunities for people with a disability
- Encourages a wider debate
- Ensures collaboration with other organisations
- Developed a national marketing strategy
- Instigated partnership working with key bodies, including local authorities and governing bodies of sport

Stage 2: Contemplation

At this second stage there is a raised awareness of sport and people may have been made aware of the possible benefits of participating. They are starting to consider it as a potential behaviour and will be weighing up the 'costs' against the benefits of doing so. All three of the attitudinal types are likely to appear in this stage.

Key Barriers at the Contemplation Stage

Fear of discrimination. Given people's experiences in other aspects of their lives they are reluctant to put themselves at risk of discrimination. This encompasses a range of potential attitudes or behaviours including being told that an activity is not possible due to their disability, a lack of understanding of their specific needs such as practical assistance, or being stared or laughed at in a sporting environment.

I don't want to turn myself into a spectator sport.

(Male, 16-40 years)

Lack of confidence. This is often experienced in relation to an individual's physical characteristics such as the way they move or the way they look and the way in which they communicate, as well as their self-perceived lack of sporting skill and ability. At

this contemplation stage, the risk of self-consciousness and embarrassment is perceived to be too great a barrier by some. Of the three attitudinal types, lack of confidence is most evident among Dependents and Unconfident.

Sometimes it's a bit dangerous. You could fall over and hurt yourself. (Male, 16-40 years)

Attitudes of 'significant others'. These include parents and professional carers. These people have an important role to play in shaping and influencing attitudes and behaviour, particularly where individuals are dependent on them for practical or emotional support. The types of attitudes creating a barrier at this stage are a fear of the person with the disability getting hurt (either physically or emotionally), resulting in a desire to protect the individual. There is also evidence in some cases of a lack of belief in the individual's ability to carry out the behaviour. These barriers are more likely to affect Dependents and Unconfident.

Parents may not want their kids going to a disabled club, because they don't want to see their kids as disabled or separate from society – so sometimes they miss out. (Female, 16-40 years)

Lack of awareness of appropriate sporting environments. 'Appropriate' may be related to being with 'people like me', the ability to participate either socially or competitively, as well as a desire for activities such as cycling not traditionally associated with disability sport. This lack of awareness is often due to a lack of easily accessible information, as well as the low profile of available facilities or a lack of publicity about sporting options.

You tend to just stumble over things. (Parent)

Overcoming the Barriers at Contemplation Stage

In order to address the barriers at the contemplation stage, there is a need for strategies to achieve the following:

- Create confidence that people with a disability can participate in sport by:
 - addressing perceived lack of (individual) ability; and
 - building confidence and self-esteem.
- Educate service providers to:
 - eliminate the discomfort of service providers; and
 - encourage positive consideration of integrated service provision.
- Educate professionals to:
 - ensure skilled and confident delivery of sporting activities; and
 - encourage positive provision of sporting choices.
- Positive communication of the range of appropriate environments, including:
 - social and competitive; and
 - segregated and integrated opportunities.

Good Practice: *Come'n'Try Sessions*

Aims

To expose young people in Scotland with a disability to a range of sporting activities and provide a fun and enjoyable day.

The Project

The Come'n'Try sessions are organised by branches of Scottish Disability Sport throughout Scotland including Aberdeenshire, Lothian, Tayside, Forth Valley and North Lanarkshire. Participants are offered a range of sporting activities to choose from over the course of a day. Parents are encouraged to come along.

Good Practice Criteria

- Emphasis on fun and enjoyment
- Addresses parents' concerns and creates a positive environment for parents and other family members who can see the benefits of people with a disability participating in sporting/recreational activities
- Children able to try a variety of different sports
- Links made with other local sports clubs and/or new clubs established

Stage 3: Preparation

At this stage people are still not participating in sport. They are, however, beginning to value the potential benefits of taking part and have made a decision to investigate what is available.

Key Barriers at the Preparation Stage

Difficulty in accessing information. This is generally due to a lack of awareness or knowledge of where to find out about sport, a lack of confidence in seeking out information, as well as a lack of ability to gather information using mainstream channels.

Attitudes and behaviour of others. This occurs at the preparation stage on a number of levels. These include a reluctance to provide information, due to a perception that the person was not able to undertake a specific activity as well as a lack of knowledge of specific needs relating to a person's disability and therefore an inability to provide sufficient or relevant information. In addition there is evidence of more overt negative behaviours such as stares or ridicule, either from the information-provider or the general public at the point of information collection. Of the three types, Independents tend to overcome this barrier while Dependents and Unconfidenters are more likely to be affected.

When I went to the local leisure centre to find out about it they said 'oh no, we're not insured for a blind person, you can't do it'. It was very off-putting. (Female, 16-40 years)

Lack of appropriate facilities or activities. These fail to meet the needs of the individual in ways ranging from access to a particular sporting activity through to the skills or facilities required and more generally to catering for people with a disability per se with, for example, transport. In some cases, they simply do not exist – in particular this is an issue in rural locations.

Leisure centres tend to cater for groups of disabled people and not for individual disabled people. I'm a wife and a mother and I like to go to these things with my husband and daughter – I don't necessarily want to go with a whole group of specifically disabled people. (Female, 40+ years)

Cost. This includes travel to and from a venue, the need for specialised equipment in some cases, as well as professional support such as the entrance fee for a 'buddy' or carer. For some, the financial cost involved is prohibitive.

Overcoming the Barriers at the Preparation Stage

In order to address the barriers at the preparation stage, there is a need for strategies that aim to:

- Provide readily accessible information on sporting activities by:
 - utilising a variety of channels; and
 - creating centralised and local access points.
- Encourage people with a disability to seek out or evaluate activities for themselves, where appropriate, thereby:
 - engendering involvement and ownership; and
 - creating confidence in their ability to access information.
- Address levels of knowledge and confidence of service providers in communicating information to potential participants.

Good Practice: *Disability, Exercise and Active Leisure*

Aims

To encourage young people with a disability to get involved in sporting activities.

The Project

DEAL ensures a coordinated approach to providing both information and sporting activities for young people with a disability in Coventry. Information packs about sporting opportunities for young people with a disability are provided and a database including details of clubs and sessions is available in local libraries. In addition, awareness training sessions have taken place for local clubs and sports facilities aimed at encouraging them to welcome young people with a disability.

Good Practice Criteria

- Participants are encouraged to take responsibility by being on the committee
- Brings together all the relevant partners to provide a coordinated approach to information and activity provision

- providing for different levels; and
- with different aims.
- Ensure facilities are accessible for regular participation, in terms of:
 - cost; and
 - transport.

Stage 4: Action

Individuals have now started participating in sport. They are experiencing the behaviour for the first time or first few times and are therefore still at a delicate stage in the process. All three of the attitudinal types are likely to appear in this stage.

Key Barriers at the Action Stage

Attitudes and behaviour of others. Attitudes and behaviour can have a very negative impact at this early stage of participation – particularly if the behaviour reflects what the individual had originally feared. This is likely to have most impact on those lacking in confidence and may result in immediate withdrawal from the activity.

The coaches can be as bad as other athletes – they think you can't do things because you're disabled. (Female, 16-40 years)

Lack of confidence. This can relate to an individual's appearance, their ability to communicate or to their sporting behaviour. When participating for the first few times, it can result in self-consciousness about, for example, having to be hoisted into a swimming pool or being in a mixed ability/mainstream environment. This issue is particularly relevant for Unconfident and Dependents.

Inappropriate facilities/activities. It may not be until trying out the activity for the first time that it becomes evident that the facility or activity is inappropriate for the individual. This includes a lack of expected support, an inappropriate level of activity such as a competitive element missing, or poor quality service provision such as superficial levels of access that do not extend beyond a ramp at the entrance.

Communication. This applies both to the individual's ability to communicate their needs as well as the service provider's ability or willingness to understand and accommodate the needs of the service user. Lack of communication can result in an inability to carry out the activity or a less than positive experience.

Stage 5: Confirmation

At the confirmation stage, people will be actively participating on a regular basis. Sport has been integrated into their lifestyle – as such, the value and benefits of sport have been verified. Independents are the most likely of the three attitudinal types to be represented in this stage. While most have been overcome, some barriers still exist.

Key Barriers at the Confirmation Stage

Loss of support or discontinuation of activity. This can include the withdrawal of transport to the facility or lack of time of carer or 'buddy'. The loss of emotional or practical support at the confirmation stage is a key barrier for people with a disability, particularly for those who have greater reliance on support networks. Unconfident and Dependents are less likely than Independents to overcome this barrier.

Attitudes and behaviour of others. This can persist as a barrier throughout. However, it is more likely to be overt discrimination that poses the greatest threat at this stage, given that an individual's level of confidence is likely to have increased over time. Additionally, if such discrimination has prevailed over a significant period of time some people may reach a point whereby they simply do not want to (or cannot) endure it any longer.

Cost. At this stage cost tends to be more of an issue for those looking to develop further in their sporting activity – such as moving on to a higher level of competition. This may incur additional financial costs due to a need for increased travel, including outside their local area, or a requirement for additional equipment.

Lack of infrastructure to support development in sport. For those looking to participate at a higher level there is often a lack of awareness as to how to proceed to the next stage, a lack of support or encouragement from either 'significant others' or official sporting bodies, as well as a lack of opportunities for identifying individual coaching or development needs.

Overcoming the Barriers at the Action and Confirmation Stages

In order to address the barriers at both the action and confirmation stages – the two stages where individuals are participating in sport – there is a need for strategies that aim to achieve the following:

- Provide a welcoming structure and environment for people with a disability.
- Ensure quality of delivery of sporting instruction at all levels from school to elite.
- Involve 'significant others' and volunteers in organising activities and pairing with participants.
- Involve participants in the organisation of clubs and activities, to secure:
 - greater feeling of ownership;
 - opportunities to run their own activities; and
 - development of leadership skills.
- Ensure that those who wish to can develop their skills in a competitive context or at an elite level.
- Where appropriate, provide the opportunity for integration into mainstream environments.

Good Practice: *Red Star Athletics Club*

Aims

To offer coaching and sports development to athletes with a disability.

The Project

Redstar Athletics Club operates out of Crown Point Sports Centre in Glasgow and has a membership of some 50-60 athletes. Athletes meet each week and receive coaching in their chosen sport. The club caters for athletes with all types of disability. Some of the coaching staff have a disability.

Good Practice Criteria

- Provides links for athletes with a disability into mainstream sporting clubs
- Encourages athletes with a disability to participate in the club at all levels, including as players/athletes and coaches
- Helps athletes with a disability to achieve coach accreditation at a national level
- Provides people with a disability with a facility for elite sports development
- Provides good role models in the wider community

Key Recommendations

At policy level:

- Long-term financial support for the development of disability sport at both national and local levels.
- The development of focused partnerships, working with key organisations within a local network.
- The forming of links with all bodies and professionals involved in the responsibility of care for people with a disability.

Effective and high-profile marketing activity is crucial, with key objectives:

- Raising the profile of the coordinating body for disability sport – Scottish Disability Sport – at both national and local levels.
- Raising awareness of the involvement and achievement in sport of people with a disability.
- Promoting role models at both an elite and grassroots level, utilising appropriate media.

Fundamental to increasing participation is the provision of ‘ information for all’:

- Using central and localised access points such as a central directory/website and local offices.
- Targeted to the needs of specific groups of individuals, such as by attitudinal needs or sporting interest rather than simply by disability type.
- Providing access through a variety of appropriate channels, media and formats to enable informed choice and a move away from a dependency culture where possible.

There is a need for a broad range of accessible and appropriate provision:

- Local delivery networks.
- A range of environments, both segregated and inclusive, at different levels and with different aims – allowing for individual choice.
- Developing strategies and structures for achieving integration, where appropriate and driven by individual needs.
- Providing a clear infrastructure towards elite attainment.
- Developing transport and pricing policies that do not exclude the target group.

Education and training is vital to the success of increasing participation levels:

- At all levels, including the general public, statutory bodies, volunteers, teachers, athletes, coaches and professionals.
- Working towards raising the quality of delivery of instruction in sport at a local level.
- The development and inclusion of specific modules on disability sport in (continuing) teacher and professional education.
- The development of strategies that allow entry into professional areas of coaching and leisure management to generate involvement at other levels of sport and create role models.

Conclusions

The nature of an individual’s disability does not, in the main, impact on their ability or propensity to participate in sport per se, although it may define specific needs. In line with this, the majority of the barriers identified were evident across all types of disability.

It is an individual’s own level of self-confidence (and overall attitude towards their disability) and external influences that create the greatest barriers. In addition, the current ‘accepted’ face of sport in Scotland inherently precludes this target group.

The negative attitudes and behaviour of the general public towards people with a disability contribute significantly to the low levels of participation in the current environment.

Importantly, these are also reflected in the attitudes of many service providers. This often appears to be due to fear (of the unknown) and ignorance (a lack of knowledge and understanding of the issues facing people with a disability).

The provision of appropriate facilities, activities and environments – and the subsequent promotion of these – is fundamental to increasing participation levels.

Approaches to Social Inclusion

Scottish sport is increasingly committed to the principle of equity: the equality of opportunity for all to participate and to develop in the sports of their choice.

Providers of opportunities for sports participation – including local authorities, clubs, governing bodies, commercial sports organisations – have an important role to play in overcoming the barriers to achieving equity. As the above summary indicates, these include practical issues such as appropriate facilities and activities. Even more important is overcoming the lack of self-confidence of those with a disability and overcoming ignorance and negative attitudes of providers. This can only be achieved through the implementation and enforcement of inclusive policies at all levels. The case study examples with the recommendations in this study provide a broad range of approaches that can be adopted by national and local bodies alike and implemented to meet the needs of the those with a disability.