
Achieving inclusive coaching: Learning Notes

Introduction

This document is based on the findings of the Evaluation of **sportscotland**'s support for coaches and coaching. It highlights the key findings and offers examples of what works and why in terms of developing inclusive coaching. Significant progress has been made but there is still work to be done. It is designed to assist in the development and implementation of inclusive coaching that takes account of the needs of different under-represented groups.

Objective

All sports coaching in Scotland should be provided in an inclusive environment. Coaches must have a thorough understanding of the different barriers that prevent people from participating. They can develop knowledge and skills to remove them at every stage of the pathway into and during sport participation. Achieving this will contribute to tackling health inequalities in Scotland.

The evidence

- It is clear that across its strategic and operational activities, **sportscotland** has committed resource and time to tackling inequalities in the Scottish sporting system.
- The coach education and development support has undoubtedly helped to improve the skills and understanding of some coaches. They have enhanced their knowledge and have applied it in the workplace.
- Despite this, there is still significant work to be done to ensure consistent and high quality inclusive coaching.
- There is also scope to enhance the reach and application of inclusive practices in to all settings and sports.
- Coaches often do not have a fundamental understanding of the structural barriers that lead to exclusion.
- There is frequently an over-optimistic assessment of accessibility which means that coaches do not always recognise the need to make changes to their practices.
- There is also a lack of understanding amongst coaches of the range of different needs, barriers and challenges faced by *different* groups with shared protected characteristics. For example, women face different barriers to people with physical disabilities.
- Understanding and responding appropriately to the needs of particular groups and people with shared protected characteristics is not straightforward.
- There is a wealth of data and information about equalities issues in sport and physical activity in Scotland, but it is not being consistently well used by all of the organisations who could benefit.

What works

- To reduce barriers, coaches must be supported to have the attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviours to fully understand the barriers and know how to remove them. This will mean that they are better able to provide genuinely inclusive coaching.

- To ensure consistency and position equalities at the centre of everything coaches do, equalities must be a cross-cutting theme, embedded in all coach education and development support.
- Adopting an asset-based, person-centred approach to coaching enhances inclusion, as well as enhancing coaching more generally. It focuses on what sport participants *can* do, rather than any limitations they may face.
- More diversity amongst sports participants will, over time, lead to more diversity within the coaching workforce.
- Using data about participation and barriers for people from under-represented groups is vital. It allows partners to take a strategic approach to planning and driving work to tackle inequalities in sports participation.
- Equalities is complex and drawing on the knowledge and expertise of equalities experts is critical. It is a strength of the approach taken by **sportscotland**.

Points to consider

- ***Use available resources effectively***

A strategic and joined up approach that harnesses all available resources and interventions is effective in tackling inequalities in sport participation. This multi-agency approach will ensure consistent messaging and approaches and will help to maximise the impact of the work of each partner.

- ***Make sure all planning and delivery is based on evidence***

Collating and sharing equalities data from all available sources means that inclusive coaching is planned and delivered to maximise its impact on tackling inequalities. Collating the data also helps to identify and address any gaps.

Using the data to monitor the impact of interventions helps to shape and drive future activities to better engage under-represented groups.

- ***Develop genuine understanding of barriers***

Coaches who have an accurate understanding of what accessible coaching is and what it is not are better able to deliver inclusive coaching. Understanding the subtleties and complexities of the range of barriers faced by different under-represented groups means that coaches can respond to the particular needs of people with shared protected characteristics.

- ***Make equalities a cross-cutting theme***

Embedding inclusion of under-represented groups and people with protected characteristics across all coach development content, design and delivery provides coaches with greater inclusion skills and knowledge. It demonstrates the importance of equalities, reinforces the messages and ensures that equalities is built in at every stage and level of coaching planning and delivery.

Encouraging and enabling people from under-represented groups to take part in sport leads, in time, to a more diverse coaching workforce.