

The Forest of Dean Athletic Club Inclusion Policy

The Forest of Dean Athletic Club is committed to ensure that athletes of all abilities are able to participate equitably within athletics. We will seek to develop a focus on inclusion, not exclusion, and ensure that we provide appropriate advice to members to ensure that disabled athletes can participate as fully as possible within athletics. We will seek to ensure that we comply with the Equality Act 2010 and encourage our members to do so.

1. Key aims

The key aims of the Inclusion Policy are:

- To guide and support the integration of inclusive practice into core club/group programmes and activities.
- To contribute towards growing and sustaining numbers of disabled athletes participating within athletics within affiliated clubs and Athletics Networks, Run England groups and AthleFIT sessions.
- To promote the inclusion of disabled athletes in athletics events wherever possible and in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act.
- To develop inclusive practice within competition.
- To provide support and guidance to athletes, leaders/coaches, officials, competition organisers and other club volunteers to promote the development of inclusive practice and to enhance participation.
- To promote the accessibility of the athletics club/group, premises and activity locations for disabled people including athletes, officials, coaches and spectators.
- To promote the development of knowledge and understanding of disability, equity and inclusion amongst athletes, leaders/coaches, officials, club volunteers and competition organisers by the provision of appropriate training and development.
- To promote close working partnerships with disability groups and organisations to support the development of inclusive practice within athletics locally.

2. The Equality Act 2010

2.1 Definition of a disabled person

The Equality Act (“the Act”) defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. For these purposes:

- Substantial means neither minor nor trivial;
- Long term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions); and
- Normal day-to-day activities include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.

People who have had an impairment in the past that meets this definition are also covered by the scope of the Act. There are additional provisions relating to people with progressive conditions.

2.2 The key provisions of the Act

Under the Act it is unlawful:

- To discriminate against a disabled person because of their disability; and
- For any organisation or service provider to treat disabled people unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability, unless such treatment can be justified (i.e. unless the treatment is a “proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim”).

Organisations and service providers must also make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in relation to both their service provision and any physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers to access.

In relation to reasonable adjustments, the law requires that organisations and service providers make reasonable adjustments in anticipation that they will have disabled members/participants. Thus, an athletics club/group or race organiser cannot wait until a disabled athlete makes a request to join the club or enter a race before taking action. They should instead identify what reasonable adjustments should be made to enable disabled people to participate and should then set out a reasonable timescale for the implementation of those adjustments.

Furthermore, to comply with the Act, organisations, athletics clubs and race organisers must consider what reasonable adjustments may be necessary to ensure that their club/group or race is accessible for disabled people who may wish to participate as coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators as well as athletes.

3. Inclusive Practice

The Inclusion Policy is not just about access to facilities but is intended to promote a change in attitudes and to improve opportunities for disabled people to participate in athletics. There are a number of measures that we will take to ensure that we are working under the guidance of the Policy and within the requirements of the Equality Act (2010).

3.1 We will provide a welcoming environment

Establishing a positive and welcoming approach is one of the most effective ways of encouraging disabled people to participate.

- We will think positively about how we can include disabled people rather than focusing on potential barriers to participation.

- We will consider how athletics in general and the club/group/event are promoted. For example, by positively welcoming and encouraging participants from local disability organisations, by providing information in formats which are accessible to disabled people and by using appropriate imagery.
- Disabled people will be encouraged to contact us to discuss their needs and requirements to facilitate inclusion and we will ensure we consider what reasonable adjustments could be made to enable them to participate.
- We will develop the knowledge and understanding of key staff, club/group or event officials, coaches, leaders and other volunteers, of disability, equity and inclusive practice by providing appropriate guidance and training.

3.2 We will talk to disabled people

- We will, so far as is reasonably possible, consult with relevant groups and with prospective disabled individuals about their needs and requirements.
- We will not make assumptions and will try to speak to disabled people about the reasonable adjustments they believe might be made to enable them to participate and to discuss how these could be made.
- If a risk assessment indicates that an event/activity might be unsafe for individuals with particular impairments we will where possible try and discuss with any disabled athletes wanting to participate.

3.3 We will provide access to facilities

- We will undertake a review of the accessibility of facilities including car parking, toilets, changing facilities, access to buildings and other facilities and discuss with facility providers e.g. schools or Local Authorities about the provisions that they have in place to meet the requirements of the Equality Act (2010).

3.4 We will make reasonable adjustments

- We will demonstrate that every effort has been made to enable disabled people to participate and that inclusion not exclusion has been the priority.
- If reasonable adjustments are required to make an event/activity accessible then we will make those reasonable adjustments. (By way of a general guide, an adjustment is thought unlikely to be reasonable if it is so drastic that it will change the nature of the whole event).
- Adjustments which require additional expense will still be deemed reasonable where the additional expense is relative to our resources. In these circumstances we will bear the additional expense.
- If we consider it is necessary to exclude a disabled person from participating in an event/activity we will ensure that we can justify this decision and any justification will be on the basis of fact, not assumptions, and will be supported by evidence such as a valid risk assessment or previous incidents/experience and discussions with the individual(s).
- If a risk assessment for the event/activity indicates that it is unsafe for a disabled person or persons then the person who has compiled the risk assessment will show that they have sufficient knowledge or experience in the area of disability or has consulted with an appropriate disability organisation or has been advised by someone with the necessary knowledge.

- Where a risk assessment indicates that having taken into account any reasonable adjustments which could be made, that the event/activity is unsafe for disabled people or if it indicates that the participation of disabled people will make the event/activity unsafe for other participants in the first instance we will generally advise rather than issue an outright directive prohibiting disabled people from taking part and only where absolutely necessary issue a directive.

A positive and sensible approach to risk management can and should in most circumstances encourage the inclusion of disabled people in most of our activities.