

Level Playing Field

www.levelplayingfield.org.uk



ANNUAL REPORT 2011 / 2012

Promoting Good Access for All Fans!

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Registered Charity No: 1079740

Level Playing Field is the working name of the National Association of Disabled Supporters

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Supported by:



Contents

President's Forward	3
Chair's Report	4
About Level Playing Field	6
About disabled sports fans.....	6
Aims of LPF:.....	7
Level Playing Field supports the Social Model of Disability	7
Key Achievements.....	8
Project Updates	10
Match Buddies Pilot Project – update from Miranda Walker....	10
Working Together - Clubs and Disabled Fans update	12
Treasurer's Report	15
LPF Roll of Honour – 2011 / 2012.....	16
Level Playing Field Honorary Officers and Ambassadors.....	17
Level Playing Field Trustees, Co-optees and staff	17



Level Playing Field Weeks of Action

To request a copy of this document in an alternate format please contact the LPF Administrator at info@levelplayingfield.org.uk or 0845 230 6237

President's Forward



In my 4th year as President, I am delighted to introduce you to the Level Playing Field's annual report which outlines the works undertaken in the last 12 months.

As this publication testifies, progress continues at some pace with the implementation of 2 key inclusion projects within football which are only possible with the funding support that is being provided by the Football Foundation's Fans Fund.

You will find information about the initiatives within these pages but I would like to highlight the critical platform that each provides in sharing good practice and by offering practical solutions to our clubs and their disabled fans. It is important that this funding support for both projects should continue over the coming years to ensure their successful delivery and long-term sustainable outcomes.

This is a landmark sporting year for London and the UK and it is especially pleasing to see Level Playing Field increasingly sharing its expertise and some of the good practice examples that already exist in football with other sports including London 2012 at home and more widely in football in partnership with the Centre for Access to Football in Europe.

It is clear that there is significant progress on all fronts which is helping to ensure that more disabled people can enjoy live sports but there is still much to do and I remain committed to working with the Level Playing Field team and my colleagues to help deal with the outstanding issues.

In closing, I wish to thank the Board of Trustees, my fellow Honorary Officers and the Ambassadors for their tremendous dedication and support.

Lastly, I wish you an exciting summer of sport and look forward to the year ahead with more positive progress to come.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Bernstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Bernstein - President, Level Playing Field

Chair's Report



This year's 14th AGM, takes place once again at the Palace of Westminster, this time at the House of Lords which seems a very fitting venue given the support shown by our 2 Vice Presidents, Lords Rosser and Faulkner who so kindly arranged the venue. It will be a poignant occasion as last year's event was hosted by the late Alan Keen MP who sadly passed away at the end of last year. Alan, who was Chairman of Parliament's all-party football group, was a dear friend and supporter of Level Playing Field and disabled supporters and a great believer in the work that we are doing. He was always on hand to offer his support and it is only fitting that we take a few moments to remember Alan.

Never has our work seemed more important than now, as fans across the country get ready for a spectacular summer of sports with the EURO 2012 Finals just around the corner and things warming up nicely for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games along with the upcoming test cricket series, Wimbledon and other events.

Given that London will soon host the most high profile sporting event on the planet, we should quite rightly expect there to be much focus on disability sports participation. But the inclusive experiences shared by disabled people and their families and friends who watch live sports can also act as a powerful force for change and for providing a sense of well-being. But for disabled people to be able to be part of that experience or any other for that matter, good access is absolutely critical.

So I would like to take the opportunity in this year's chair's report to publically request that the government and sports governing bodies agree to meet with LPF and our partners to pledge their commitment to ensuring equal access for disabled sports fans at all levels. We also seek a House of Commons Select Committee Enquiry on this subject which is something that we have asked for on several previous occasions.

I can no longer sit by and witness a situation which sees thousands of empty seats at stadia with disabled fans being turned away match in and match out quite simply because we don't provide sufficient accessible accommodation and services. Nor must we accept the claim that nothing can be done to improve existing stadia – it's not true and we have many real-life good practice examples to prove so. In any case, it's morally and legally the right thing to do. It is quite simply just not good enough in 2012 and it's ridiculous! Business is business and many clubs are missing the chance to attract much needed new custom or to recruit lifelong loyal fans in disabled people and their families and friends. Plus they'll be ensuring that their match day crowds are truly reflective of the whole community – the current situation just doesn't make any sense!

Of course, it isn't all bad news and there has been much progress over recent years with several new stadia built and a few existing stadia showing that it's very possible to provide good access at older venues with some smart thinking and a commitment at the top level. LPF has worked with the ODA and LOCOG over the last few years and the new Olympic Park should certainly be fit for purpose. It should also serve as a great legacy for disabled fans provided that access compromises aren't made after the Games.

But we are all kidding ourselves if we think it's a job well done or that things aren't too bad. Take it from me, and I live and breathe this stuff, we still have a great deal to do.

All that said; we were delighted to receive significant funding support from the Football Foundation Fans Fund in 2011 which has enabled us to appoint several new members of staff who are now working closely with the clubs and disabled fans to share good practice and to provide on-going help and support. I will leave Jackie and Miranda to tell you more about their respective projects, which are already having a significant impact, later in this report. The continuation of this funding is critical to our on-going works.

The Premier and Football Leagues have also provided further advice in recent publications, online resources and with seminars for their clubs.

Most recently, LPF attended the Rugby Football League's Equality Seminar for their clubs and we have been working very closely with them over the last year to ensure the best possible situation in the future for rugby league disabled fans; please look out for an exciting announcement about our increasing cooperation in the coming few weeks. I can't say anymore just now but it is great news.

The important works at the Centre for Access to Football in Europe also continue at some pace with the UEFA EURO 2012 Respect inclusion project in Poland and Ukraine dedicated to improving access at each of the host cities. You can find more information about this ground breaking project at <http://euro2012.cafefootball.eu/>

On a personal note, I was deeply humbled and honoured to receive an OBE in the New Year's Honours List for services to disabled football fans. This award is also a reflection of the hard work shown by everyone at Level Playing Field over the years and it reminds me of how much work we still have to do on all fronts to ensure real inclusion so that disabled sports fans in the UK can finally enjoy equal access.

In closing, I wish to thank the LPF team, my fellow Board of Trustees, the staff and volunteers, our President, Vice Presidents and the ambassadors for their incredible support and dedication. Without them and their predecessors, we would not be where we are today.

And finally, a huge thank you to each and every one of you who continue to work hard to ensure an equality of experience for all fans and to support us in pressing for continued access improvements – you know who you are and we salute you! Please keep up the great work whether it is at a local, national or international level.

Wishing you all a great summer of sports and a successful season ahead.

With warmest regards



Joyce Cook, OBE - Chair, Level Playing Field

About Level Playing Field

Level Playing Field (LPF) is the trading name for the National Association of Disabled Supporters. LPF, which was originally established in 1998, is the only national registered charity representing disabled supporters for all sports.

Our objective is to promote an inclusive agenda, to raise awareness and to enhance well-being through football and other sport by ensuring an equality of spectator experience for all fans. LPF changed its name to Level Playing Field in March 2011 as it felt it better represented the Charity's aims to promote inclusion and the Social Model of Disability.

It is considered good practice across the service industry, including sports governing and representative bodies, that there should be a user-led consultation or representative group such as LPF for each diversity and equality strand. It is a good practice solution that is well proven and LPF has both the expertise and a detailed understanding of how to provide equality and good access to sports stadia for disabled fans.

About disabled sports fans

There are over 10 million disabled people in the UK with a spending power of more than £80 billion per annum. Yet, disabled people remain significantly less likely to participate in cultural, leisure and sporting activities than non-disabled people.

LPF estimates that at least 30,000 active disabled fans regularly attend professional football matches in England and Wales and it is unknown how many more follow the game from home as 'arm chair' fans.

That is not enough when you consider how many people attend live football matches each season. For example, during Season 2010 to 2011 13,403,792 attended Premier League matches and a further 9,598,336 attended Football League matches.



LPF expects to see the number of disabled people wishing to attend live sporting events increase still further this year with the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Sports clubs looking to increase ticket sales and to encourage a more diverse fan base can tap into the new business opportunities offered by the "disabled £" and encourage more disabled supporters and their family and friends to attend live matches. Providing an inclusive stadium with equal facilities and services which enable disabled fans to sit together with their own fans, families and friends makes good business sense. LPF has many examples of achievable good design solutions for existing and new stadia and continues to work with the sporting family to promote further supporter/spectator inclusion.

Aims of LPF:

- **To be a voice for all disabled supporters and spectators**
- **To campaign for equality of supporter experience**
- **To enrich the lives of disabled people through football and other sports**
- **To raise disability and access awareness**

Level Playing Field supports the Social Model of Disability

In essence, the social model of disability states that people are only disabled by the existing barriers within our society. This model promotes the removal of those barriers (attitudinal, physical, sensory and intellectual) that prevent disabled people from participating fully in society instead of the medical model that proposed to try to 'fix' an individual's impairment or health condition. The social model is the preferred model for disabled people. It empowers disabled people and encourages society to become more inclusive.



Key achievements for 2011 - 2012

- This season's LPF Level Playing Field (LPF) weeks of action saw a number of clubs get involved up and down the country. LPF would like to thank all clubs that did take part in raising awareness around the work they do for their own disabled supporters.
- LPF continues to sit on the Kick it Out Advisory Group and the Chair, Joyce Cook has continued to be involved in supporting the Mentoring work of Kick it Out.
- We continue to represent disabled spectators of all sports. LPF is a user-led advisor to the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, LOCOG, London 2012 and also sits on the Community Engagement Team. We also continue to give user led advice to cricket and rugby.
- LPF has worked more intensively with Rugby Football League this season speaking about disabled fans issues and the importance of accessible facilities and services at their clubs equality seminar held at Salford City Stadium. Please look out for further exciting announcements about this important cooperation in the coming few weeks.
- LPF also provides advice and guidance to the leagues, clubs and disabled supporters. We receive queries mainly via email or phone but can also be contacted directly via the website. The Fans Comments pages on the website have seen many comments this year. These comments are being passed onto the clubs to which they relate for noting or response where appropriate. We make a point of forwarding all feedback as we recognise the importance of positive feedback and recognition for clubs doing a good job as well as taking up any complaints.
- LPF continues to hold an important user-led consultative role in the design and build of new stadia and stadia improvements with experience showing that this involvement has a real benefit. This requires a great deal of resource and takes up many volunteer hours; we would love to engage a full time access consultant to assist clubs and visit grounds as part of the LPF Audit programme (see below) but that would require further funding support to implement such a project. Please bear with us if you require assistance; in the last 12 months LPF has been advising on new stadia, stadia developments, improvements and advice at more than 39 clubs and football venues. To date, we have received no reimbursements for this area of work and have had to meet our own travel costs on many occasions. However, this situation can't continue.
- The LPF Access Audit programme is a joint venture between LPF and a number of NRAC registered Access Consultants. We have secured special rates with a small team of professional consultants who specialise in sports stadia access and the Audit is referenced to include the Accessible Stadia Guide, the Equality Act and good access in general. Each consultant is listed with the National Register of Access Auditors and Consultants (NRAC) as an accredited Access Auditor and Access Consultant. We have seen a growing number of clubs commissioning our audits across all sports. Within football, the LPF Audit is also accepted as part of a club's submission to the Kick it

Out Equality Standards. To find out more about the LPF Audit Programme please contact LPF at stadia@levelplayingfield.org.uk or call 0845 230 6237 or 01244 893584.

- LPF attended several sports and disability seminars over the course of the year including the Centre for Access to Football in Europe's Inaugural Conference – Total Football, Total Access in September 2011 which saw the launch of the new UEFA and CAFE Good Practice Guide – Access for All. See this link for further information <http://www.cafefootball.eu/Conference-2011.aspx>
- This season began with LPF receiving funding for two new projects from the Football Foundation's Fans Fund and you can find more details about both initiatives later in this annual report
- LPF were delighted to appoint June Wratten as the LPF Ambassador for the Fans Awards with the Disabled Fan of the season Award now dedicated to her son Joseph, a passionate disabled fan who lost his personal fight with terminal illness in 2010. June acts as the chair of the awards sub-committee in deciding who should receive the awards each season. Everyone at LPF is delighted that June agreed to become an Ambassador for the Charity.
- The 2011 LPF Fans Awards were presented by new LPF Ambassador, June Wratten at various matches during the season. The Joseph Wratten Award was presented to Kev Monks (a Coventry City disabled fan) and the Club Employee Award to Julie Pidgeon (DLO at West Ham) on 2nd January 2012 at Upton Park by both June and Jackie Newing, the LPF Development Officer. On 21st January 2012, Albert Boseley of Notts County was awarded the Volunteer of the Year Award at Meadow Lane by June Wratten and LPF Treasurer, Janet Ireland.
- LPF also made 2 special recognition awards this year to 2 Trustees for their many years of outstanding services to LPF and disabled fans. Both Gary Deards and Janet Ireland have shown incredible dedication and an unwavering commitment to the charity's works. Janet was presented with her award at Sheffield United on 17th March 2012 by June Wratten and LPF Chair Joyce Cook and Gary Deards has chosen to receive his award at this year's LPF AGM.
- Finally the year ended with further good news with Level Playing Field's Chair, Joyce Cook, being awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours' List for her services to disabled fans. Joyce has worked tirelessly to promote good access for all supporters and everyone at LPF was delighted that her contributions have been recognised.

Project Updates

Match Buddies Pilot Project – update from Miranda Walker

What is Match Buddies? Match Buddies is a one year LPF pilot project funded by the Football Stadia Improvement Fund (FSIF) Fans' Fund, following a successful grant application.

Principal objective: The principal objective of Match Buddies is to take a partnership approach to matching a disabled person with a volunteer 'buddy' who shares their passion for sport, for the purpose of simply enjoying the game, the socialising and the atmosphere together, just like anyone else.

During the pilot, Match Buddy schemes aiming to fulfil the principal objective will be set up in three geographical areas. There are numerous positive outcomes for all involved (as detailed below) including social inclusion through the breaking down of perceived barriers.

Project Overview (in brief)

- Research and evaluate existing buddy schemes
- Build a framework to roll the project out nationally
- Identify three regions and recruit all key partners (e.g. clubs, Primary Care Trusts, Learning Disability Partnership Boards, local charities, fans groups) willing to implement and support the project locally
- Extend the buddy partnerships to include fans with learning difficulties and mental health conditions. Look at the possibility of extending the buddy service to include other groups of disabled fans who may not currently be able to attend match days because they are unable to find someone to go with them as their PA/helper
- Complete partnership plans for each region and prepare a toolkit that can be shared with other regions wishing to implement a similar project
- Seek further funding (local and national) for year 2 roll out of Match Buddies in three regions.

Progress (in brief)

- Following both open and targeted calls for interest in the project and an on-going feasibility study (encompassing research/evaluation of existing buddy schemes), we are currently close to confirming three geographical areas in which we will set up Match Buddy steering groups, each comprising of football club/s and other key partners including disabled people, local council members, local and national charities/organisations and fans groups. We are currently engaged in positive

discussions with clubs in both the South West and the Midlands, with meetings imminent.

- Groundwork for the potential recruitment of other partners in these areas is currently being undertaken, both on a local and national level. For example, we are currently talking to the national organisation Guide Dogs about the possibility of partnering with their own pilot project, My Guide. The My Guide pilot scheme is a partnership between Guide Dogs and community organisations. It helps people with sight loss get out of their homes and back into the community by partnering them with a specially trained volunteer. My Guide aims to reduce the isolation that many partially sighted and blind people experience, helping to rebuild their confidence and regain their independence.
- Proposed steering group terms of reference have been drafted ready for consideration by the three pilot Match Buddies schemes. This will enable us to hit the ground running as we enter the next phase of the pilot and focus shifts from recruiting the steering group members to actively launching three schemes.
- Work on a Match Buddies good practice guide - which will be a central component of the toolbox - is underway.

Impact Match Buddies pilot will have (in brief)

- Connecting fans - social integration of disabled fans and in particular those with learning difficulties and mental health conditions into the wider community
- Positively raising disability awareness amongst wider fan bases
- Breaking down perceived barriers, stereotypes and the fear of the unknown by sharing and watching live sports together
- Educating and strengthening local communities
- Empowering disabled and non-disabled people and building their self-esteem
- Establishing lasting friendships beyond match days
- Acting as a catalyst to long-term education and employment opportunities by recruitment of volunteers and disabled people
- Delivering a robust and safe roll out plan for extending this important project to other regions with different local support frameworks
- Collating important evidence, assessing risks and key management points
- Gathering evidence for partnership recruitment and further funding

- Ensuring specialist local partners to support project delivery and on-going management
- Securing both national and local funding and commercial partnerships to ensure each Match Buddies scheme is sustainable

For more information on this project please contact LPF's Research and Development Officer, Miranda Walker at miranda@levelplayingfield.org.uk or by calling 0845 230 6237 or 01244 893584.

Working Together Clubs and Disabled Fans – update from Jackie Newing

What is the project? Working Together: Clubs and Disabled Fans is a three year LPF project funded by Football Stadia Improvement Fund (FSIF) Fans' Fund, following a successful grant application.

Principal objective: The principal objective of the project is for LPF to support clubs and disabled fans where no Disabled Supporters Association (DSA) currently exists to form pan disability, user led DSA's. This will help to improve the relationship, awareness and cooperation between disabled fans, clubs and non – disabled fans.

Project Overview (in brief)

- To help clubs and disabled fans to set up a self sufficient user led Disabled Supporters Association (DSA). Level Playing Field will work with clubs where no DSA is currently set up.
- To work with clubs to share current and future good practice to come as a result of working with Level Playing Field on the project.
- Level Playing Field will provide training and a tool kit for up to three individuals (two of whom should be disabled fans) to carry out disability awareness training locally. The tool kit will include a PowerPoint presentation, Trainers notes, Guidance sheets for delegates to take away on disability awareness, Evaluation forms.
- Level Playing Field will assist the club to recruit local Ambassadors to work with both the Club and DSA and attend events on their behalf to highlight the work being done for disabled fans.
- Level Playing Field will assist in creating links between the club and DSA with local community organisations and charities that provide alternative/accessible services such as Braille documents, audio commentary etc.
- Level Playing Field will assist the club in running an annual Disability Awareness Event working with local schools

- The next three years will see Level Playing Field working with a minimum of 9 clubs to set up a DSA.

Progress (in brief)

Since the commencement of the project LPF have employed a Development Officer, Jackie Newing, to manage the project and a Development Administrator to assist with the running of the project. Rachel Nickless is the Development Administrator.

LPF currently has two clubs on board who have set up their Steering Groups and are progressing nicely. A further two clubs have agreed they would like to go ahead and a dates have been agreed or are being agreed for LPF to go back and meet the supporters to guide them through the next steps for getting a DSA set up.

Meetings have taken place a number of other clubs who have expressed an interest in setting up a DSA and LPF are waiting to follow these up. The next 6 months will see LPF finding additional clubs to work with and progress and develop other areas of the project with those DSA's once formed.

Project Impact

- Better relationships and ongoing communication between clubs and their disabled fans
- Sharing of good practice between clubs, disabled fans and the local community
- Providing disabled people with new life skills that may lead to advocacy work in the wider community and/or help with future employment
- Improved disability awareness amongst disabled and non-disabled fans
- Ambassadors becoming positive role models within the local community
- Football clubs will become more accessible to disabled fans
- Clubs will proactively start to promote their accessible services and reach out to local disabled people who may become new fans, including those who may not yet be aware of the available facilities and match day services
- Clubs will also start to make best use of available local/community resources and build strong links between the club, its disabled fans, local disability organisations and the wider community

- Increased disability and access awareness using the powerful voice of football
- Increased access and independent living awareness amongst young people; social integration of disabled and non-disabled young people
- Annual Disability and Access Awareness Events
- Social integration and inclusion of the wider fan base
- A self – supporting and sustainable DSA.

For more information on this project please contact LPF's Development Officer, Jackie Newing at jackie@levelplayingfield.org.uk or by calling 0845 230 6237 or 01244 893584.



Treasurer's Report



Results for the Year August 2010/11

The accounts of the National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS), trading as Level Playing Field, for the year 2010/2011 reflect another challenging fiscal year for the Charity. A copy of these accounts is available separately.

During this period the Board of Trustees has continued to safeguard the good name and values of the Charity and to support our members, the football family and other sports with a modest level of funding and with an ever increasing membership. We continue to strive for an equality of facilities and services for all supporters.

Funding for our Administrator ceased in 2011 and the early part of 2011 was spent in applying for funding to continue this invaluable resource. In early summer, the football authorities decided to implement a new system for funding 'Fans Groups' on a matched project basis; this has been implemented by a new 'Fans Fund' which is operated by the Football Foundation. We are pleased to say that the Charity was successful in obtaining funding for two major projects.

We welcome the continuing support from the Football Association and Football Conference and very much hope that additional funding (from the football family and other sports) will be forthcoming to support our important projects and increasing levels of work.

Janet Ireland, LPF Treasurer

LPF is regulated by the Charity Commission and is a member of the Fundraising Standards Board. We prepare audited accounts each year and have an Inland Revenue charity reference number.



LPF Roll of Honour – 2011 / 2012

The LPF Board of Trustees wishes to warmly thank the following individuals and organisations who have generously raised funds and made donations to LPF in 2011/2012.

For generous Donations and Fundraising

The Football Foundation has continued to provide much need match funding support of £10,000.

Individual donations were received from David Munn, David Wooliscroft, Alan Montgomery, Flora Nelson, Steven Powell, Chris Johnson, FC United of Manchester, Gary Deards, John, Julie & Simon Gawthorpe, Colin Street, Leigh Hutchings, John Garbett, David & Sarah Lucas, William Dolman and Sanjay Chadha.

We also received a further donation of £1000 from the Football Conference. This donation was presented by the Football Conference Chairman, Brian Lee to LPF Vice-Chair, Gary Deards at the recent 2012 Play-Off Final at Wembley Stadium.

For generous in-kind donations and providing free services, advice and time:

For loans of venues and hospitality for LPF meetings:

Liverpool Football Club;
Regus, Herons Way, Chester Business Park, Chester, Cheshire, CH4 9QR;
The House of Lords, Westminster Palace

For legal advice: Bevan Kidwell Solicitors, Tel: 0207 843 1820 www.bevankidwell.com

For media and PR: Bird Consultancy, Tel: 0161 839 4846, www.birdconsultancy.co.uk

For annual accounts: Katherine Woods, ACA, Kavanagh Woods Consulting Ltd, Ash Grove, Royles Head Lane, Huddersfield

For data management system: Customers Really Matter Limited,
Tel: 0845 310 9973, <http://www.customersreallymatter.co.uk/>

Warmest thanks to each of you for your continued friendship and generous support.

Please accept our apologies if your name does not appear; there are so many of you now doing your level best to support us - to each and every one of you a very huge thank you.

Level Playing Field Honorary Officers and Ambassadors

President: David Bernstein

Vice Presidents: Lord Rosser of Ickenham; Lord Faulkner of Worcester; Andrew Shaw; Chris Bird; Chris Farnell; Phil Friend; Jim Froggatt

Ambassadors: Danny Wallace; Danny Mills; Steven Johnson; June Wratten

Patron of the LPF Weeks of Action: Trevor Brooking

Level Playing Field Trustees, Co-optees and staff to 30th May 2012

Trustees Served for the full year unless stated:

Joyce Cook, OBE	(Chair)
Gary Deards	(Vice Chair)
Janet Ireland	(Treasurer)
Anthony Taylor	(Secretary)
Rex Burton	
Christine Peacock	
Keith Graham	
Ron Cassidy	
Leigh Hutchings	

Staff

All part-time:

Jackie Newing	Development Officer
Rachel Nickless	Development Administrator
Miranda Walker	Research & Development Officer

LPF project volunteer: Elaine Browne

If you would like to volunteer, please contact Level Playing Field by email at info@levelplayingfield.org.uk or by calling 0845 230 6237 or 01244 893584.