



A level playing field

Making sports venues and stadiums accessible for people with a learning disability.

**The National Association
of Disabled Supporters**

Promoting a Level Playing Field for all Football Fans!



mencap

The voice of
learning disability

There are 1.5 million people with a learning disability in the UK. People with a learning disability find it harder to learn and understand things than other people, and often find it hard to communicate.

People with a learning disability should have the same choices and opportunities in life as everyone else. That includes being able to go to sports events.

This booklet will help explain why it is so important that sports venues and stadiums are more accessible for people with a learning disability and give some practical ideas about how this can be done.



Natalie, Manchester

Natalie is a young woman with severe learning disabilities who uses a wheelchair. Ever since she met David Beckham at a book signing five years ago, football has transformed her life.

“ Natalie always hated change, noise and strange faces. Now she is much more outgoing. On match days, Natalie can be found chatting with her many friends before the game and at half time.

She is much more willing to try new things and meet new people. And remarkably, following football has given Natalie the incentive to learn to read – something that the doctors said would never happen.”

Natalie's mum

Dean, London

Dean is a young man with a learning disability.

“ I would love to go to the snooker in Sheffield, but I wouldn't know how to get there. I need easy read information about how to get to events. When I have been to the football before I have found it really hard to find my way and then when I have got there I couldn't find the entrance.

I also like cricket, but I never know when and where England are playing because I don't find the internet accessible for information. By the time I know about matches it's too late to buy tickets. ”

Dean



Why should you make your sports venue accessible?

People with a learning disability are equal members of society. They should be able to participate in the life of their community by watching sports events just like everyone else.

It also makes good business sense to make your venue accessible. Disabled people have money to spend like anyone else and making your venue accessible will attract disabled customers and their families.

Your legal responsibility

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) means that it is illegal to discriminate against people with a disability. This means, for example, that people with a learning disability should be provided with information that is easy to understand and should be welcomed and supported in the venue. It also means that physical barriers that stop people with a disability from accessing venues should be removed.

For more information about the DDA contact the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Contact details are at the back of this booklet.

There are a number of other documents that explain your responsibilities, including British Standard BS 8300:2009 and the Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds and the Accessible Stadia Guide. Details of how to order these are at the back of this booklet.

Tips for making your venue accessible for people with a learning disability

1 Small things can make the biggest difference

Making venues accessible doesn't have to cost a fortune. Often it is the small things that make the difference to people's experience, like staff having a positive attitude and information being presented clearly.

2 Make sure that staff have a good understanding of learning disability

People with a learning disability may need support from staff at sports events. It is important that staff understand what kind of support people with a learning disability might need. This includes being patient and explaining things clearly.

Mencap can provide advice about learning disability awareness training.

3 Communicate effectively with people with a learning disability

Here are some tips for communicating with someone with a learning disability:

- Don't rush your communication
- Check with the person that they understand what you are saying
- Pay attention to the person's body language and facial expressions
- Use gestures and facial expressions to reinforce what you are saying

4 Provide the right kind of information

People with a learning disability often find information hard to understand. It is important to provide clear information about things like:

- when and where events are happening
- how to get to the venue
- how to buy tickets.

Information in print and on the internet can be made easier to understand by using clear words in large print (we recommend 16pt font size) accompanied by pictures. Video and audio tapes can also be used to provide information in an accessible way.

Mencap can provide advice about producing easy read or multimedia versions of your documents.

5 Make sure people can find their way around

To make sure that people with a learning disability feel confident visiting your venue you should:

- provide clear information about transport, arrival and the layout of the grounds before the event
- use signs with both words and pictures
- make sure there are clear signs from local public transport points to the venue
- use colour-coded tickets with clearly marked seat numbers
- make information points clear and easy to find.

6 Install a Changing Places toilet

People with profound and multiple learning disabilities have other disabilities – such as physical or sensory disabilities - in addition to a profound learning disability.

Standard accessible toilets (disabled toilets) are not appropriate for them as they need support from one or two carers to use the toilet or to have their continence pad changed.

They need Changing Places toilets – these are toilets with plenty of space, a height-adjustable, adult-sized changing bench and a hoist.

To be accessible for all, every sports venue should have a Changing Places toilet. To find out more about providing one, contact the **Changing Places Consortium**. Contact details are at the back of this booklet.

Simon, Cambridge

Simon is a young man with profound and multiple learning disabilities. He is a keen football supporter. But, as a wheelchair user who needs 24-hour support with all aspects of his care, Simon finds that football stadiums don't have suitable toilets for him to use. He needs a Changing Places toilet, with plenty of space, a height-adjustable, adult-sized changing bench and a hoist. Because football stadiums don't have suitable toilets for him to use, he often has to leave matches early, sometimes before half time.

“ It is horrible having to leave the stadium early. Often it is just as the atmosphere is getting really good that we have to go. It doesn't feel fair that Simon can't participate like everyone else. ”

Simon's carer



7 Provide the right seating

Some people with a learning disability are also wheelchair users. You should think about using integrated seating for wheelchair users so that people can choose where to sit.

Remember that some people with a learning disability have a fear of heights and others may have visual impairments too. It is also important to make sure that people can sit with their carer(s).

8 Consider offering concessions

Many people with a learning disability will need one or more carers to go to a sports event with them. Sports venues should have a clear policy on any concessions and reasonable adjustments, such as free carer tickets for disabled people, including people with a learning disability.

For further guidance contact the **National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS)** or the **Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)** helpline. Contact details are at the back of this booklet.

9 Work with people in your area

It is important to work in partnership with people with a learning disability when making your venue more accessible.

NADS can help you to do this and has groups located across the country.

10 Just do it!

“It is too easy to say ‘no, we won’t do that’. When we heard that some of our disabled fans needed a Changing Places toilet we thought ‘let’s do something about this!’”



Preston North End, who have installed a Changing Places toilet in their football stadium.

Suggested further reading:

Accessible Stadia Guide – [Football Licensing Authority](#)
Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds – [Football Licensing Authority](#)
Understanding Learning Disability – [Mencap](#)
Making it Clear – [Mencap](#)
Welcoming People to Your Venue – [Mencap](#)
Design of Buildings and their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People, BS 8300:2009 – [BSI](#)

Contact details of useful organisations:

National Association of Disabled Supporters

PO Box 2909, Reading RG1 9LD

Call (helpline): 0845 230 6237

Email: info@nads.org.uk

Go to: www.nads.org.uk

Mencap

123 Golden Lane, London EC1Y 0RT

Call: 020 7454 0454

Go to: www.mencap.org.uk

The Changing Places Consortium

Call: 020 7696 6019

Go to: www.changing-places.org

Football Licensing Authority

27 Harcourt House, 19 Cavendish Square,
London W1G 0PL

Call: 020 7491 7191

Fax: 020 7491 1882

Go to: www.flaweb.org.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

Call the helpline in England: 0845 604 6610

Call the helpline in Wales: 0845 604 8810

Call the helpline in Scotland: 0845 604 5510

Go to: www.equalityhumanrights.com