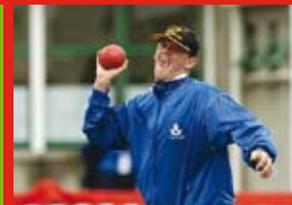




LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP  
COMHAR SPÓIRT NA LAOISE

# SPORT FOR ALL

Guidelines for Inclusion



This booklet is also available in tape/cd and electronic format,  
please visit our website for further details, **[www.laoissports.ie](http://www.laoissports.ie)**

# INTRODUCTION



Garrett Culliton  
Disability Officer

With the enormous success of the Special Olympics in 2003 people are generally more aware of the issue of disability. But a person with a disability such as dyslexia (difficulty in reading and writing properly) or deafness is not as easily identifiable and how do we deal with this if they present themselves at our club or facility?

This booklet was developed to try and broaden the knowledge level of people in our community about the issue of disability and make people comfortable when dealing with people with various forms of disabilities – physical, intellectual, sensory, mental health or emotional/behavioural difficulties.

It has been developed for use by anyone involved in a sports club – be they administrator, coach or player – for community groups and facility owners. The points addressed in the booklet have come directly from people with disabilities and are intended as an easy reference guide for people so that they are aware of the **(sometimes common sense)** elements that can make life more comfortable for all parties.

People with disabilities also have the fear of entering an environment where others may not understand their problems or how to address them properly. Knowing that the community is more aware can help to increase their confidence and willingness to integrate more fully in the community.

This booklet is not meant to be a medical journal or a buildings guideline and does not claim to have all the answers, but we hope that it will be a tool to break down the knowledge (and fear) barriers that exist and that it will serve to increase participation in sport and physical activity by people with disabilities in our community.

**LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP** has taken the bold step of employing a part-time Disability Officer – the first pan-sport and pan-disability post of its kind in the country! As a person who has participated as a player and coach on “both sides of the fence” – as an able bodied and disabled person – I am aware of the barriers that exist in trying to participate in sporting activity, not just physically but psychologically. It is essential to remember that people are people first and their disabilities are secondary.

I am looking forward to working with all the various disability groups, the sports organisations and the community at large in helping to ensure that everyone wins.

# PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL / LEARNING DISABILITIES

Like everybody else, people with intellectual disability enjoy social activities and meeting new people. Most people with intellectual disability are very able and value an opportunity for new experiences. Within these experiences the core values of offering choice and independence in relation to all elements of participation is of extreme importance.

As all people with intellectual disability are very individual, it is important in getting to know each individual to spend time with them and/or ensure that an overview of any specific needs the person may have is received from firstly themselves and then the person's family/support worker. There are some particular areas that people may need to be aware of. These include the following:-

- The person with intellectual disability may be trusting of strangers and may need to be accompanied by someone who knows them while playing or socialising.
- People with Down's Syndrome may have a circulatory disorder. They may also have poor co-ordination and difficulty with steps.
- Some people with intellectual disability may have a high pain tolerance. If they fall etc. it would be important to ensure an injury has not been sustained.
- People with intellectual disability who also have epilepsy may be prone to photosensitivity. Therefore flashing lights at a disco and some lighting from films may precipitate a seizure.
- Some people with learning difficulties may react negatively to change – most of it through fear of the unknown. It's best to introduce it very gradually i.e new coach or helper.
- Do not sensationalise the accomplishments of people with a learning disability. Respect their achievements as you would any athlete.

The above does not pertain to all individuals with intellectual disability and as already stated it is important to be aware of the above and to ensure time is spent getting to know each persons abilities as well as their needs.

# COMMUNICATING WITH AND MEETING PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

**Do** say what you want to say, clearly and simply

**Do** attract someone's attention by eye contact and calling their name

**Do** provide tasks within their abilities

**Do** break down tasks into simple steps

**Do** use plenty of repetition

**Do** show rather than tell people how to do a task

**Do** give praise and positive reinforcement

**Do** be patient if people do not understand something the first time you tell them

**Do** speak to the person with intellectual disability directly and not their carer or family member

**Do** be prepared to ask questions or give instructions in different ways if you are not understood first time round

**Do** make sure you are understood by asking them to explain what you have said in their own words

**Do** treat everyone as an individual and afford them the respect and dignity you would like yourself.

**Don't** use jargon

**Don't** just assume that they will know you are talking to them

**Don't** be afraid to make a mistake when meeting and communicating with someone with a disability

**Don't** insist on helping if your assistance is turned down.

**Don't** patronise adults with an intellectual disability by saying such things as "good girl/boy"

**Don't** use abstract language

**Don't** pretend to understand if you actually don't, just ask them to repeat it or show you what they mean

**Don't** expect all individuals to be able to follow written instructions

**Don't** assume that carers or family members are there to advocate and speak for the person with intellectual disability

**Don't** take some behaviours which are difficult to manage personally. Sometime people with intellectual disability are unaware that their behaviour may be offensive.

**Don't** be offended by lack of response or unconventional behaviour

**Don't** ignore inappropriate behaviour

# PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

Autism is a communicative disorder of the brain and spans a very wide spectrum from above average intelligence to mild, moderate and severe. All these groupings share impairments in social interaction, communication and lack of flexible thinking.

The following guidelines refer mainly to people with a mild or moderate diagnosis of Autism or people with Asperger's Syndrome which is a form of high functioning Autism. These are guidelines only and should be treated as such as each individual may have traits uncommon to others with the same condition.

- **Eye Contact** - People with Autism often make poor eye contact with teachers, sports coaches and people in general and often look away, giving the impression that they are not listening or are uninterested in what the person may be saying to them.
- **Clear Language** - People with Autism may often interpret things literally and may have a problem understanding the humour in jokes, puns, etc., due to their condition. This can sometimes cause problems for coaches and teammates alike. The rule of thumb is to keep it simple and use simple direct commands.
- There may be a difficulty for some people with Autism in **turn-taking** and some take losing badly. This can cause difficulty for teachers or coaches who might be unaware of this. Understanding this problem is half the battle.
- Some people with Autism have poor **motor skills** and may appear clumsy or awkward when participating in games or sports and may be easily discouraged if others make fun of them. Sports and games can help their hand eye co-ordination, motor skills and general fitness and thus boost their morale and self esteem.
- Some people with autism can lack social skills and tend not to mix very well and thus need encouragement to become part of a team. Some may prefer solitary sports altogether.
- People with Autism can have a very high **pain threshold** and this is vital to know in relation to sports injuries and they might try to continue a game or particular sport instead of seeking medical attention.
- Some people with Autism are **persistent talkers** and may talk endlessly about one subject. This may irritate team-mates or coaches but is something people eventually get used to.
- People with Autism generally dislike **loud noises**, crowds and strangers and value their own personal space.
- Some people with autism react negatively to change - they often function best when working to a routine so any little change can upset that routine.

# DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia - is a specific learning difficulty which makes it hard for some people to learn to read, write and spell correctly. It is estimated that perhaps 6-8% of the population are likely to suffer from it. Please try and ensure that the choices offered to them allow them equal access e.g. club rules are put on tape/CD, club notes are read out to them. A person with dyslexia may:

- have experienced early speech and language problems.
- confuse directions like left and right.
- have difficulty remembering common sequences such as the days of the week or the alphabet.
- have poor pen control and awkward handwriting.
- mix up the sound of words and order of numbers.
- be unable to pair speech sounds with letters and vice versa.
- confuse letters and words that look somewhat alike (e.g. b/d, p/q, m/w, n/u, was/saw, cat/act, from/form).
- have difficulty copying down words and numbers.
- have specific difficulties in arithmetic, such as place value.
- have problems recalling the names of words or objects.
- Older children (second-level) may have problems in getting their thoughts on paper. Spelling problems may persist and even reading aloud may still be difficult or embarrassing.

# DYSPRAXIA

Dyspraxia - is a difficulty with thinking out, planning and carrying out sensory/motor tasks. The person with dyspraxia may have a combination of several problems in varying degrees. These include:

- Poor posture and poor balance.
- Poor motor co-ordination.
- Difficulty with throwing and catching a ball.
- Poor awareness of body position in space.
- Poor sense of direction.
- Difficulty hopping, skipping or riding a bike.
- Sensitive to touch.
- Confused about which hand to use.
- Find some clothes uncomfortable.
- Difficulty with reading, writing.
- Speech problems - slow to learn to speak and speech may be incoherent.
- Phobias or obsessive behaviour and impatient.

Children with dyspraxia can be of average or above average intelligence but are often behaviourally immature. They try hard to fit in to socially accepted behaviour when at school but often throw tantrums when at home. They may find it difficult to understand logic and reason.

# PEOPLE WITH VISION IMPAIRMENTS

Contrary to popular belief, most blind or partially sighted people can see something. Just how much someone can see will vary from person to person. A minority of blind people can distinguish light but nothing else. Some people have no central vision, others have no side vision. Some people see everything as a vague blur; others see a patchwork of blanks and defined areas. There are a number of different eye conditions that can cause sight problems.

Some people are born with no vision or significantly reduced vision. Others lose vision due to accidents or the natural aging process. The actual effect of the vision impairment varies widely, depending on the condition, its progress and the person's coping skills. Therefore it is important to speak to the person about the effect of their visual impairment and how they cope, so that their individual needs can be met.

- Greet a person by saying your name in case the person does not recognise your voice.
  - Talk directly to the person rather than through a third party and there's no need to shout!
  - Don't be afraid to use terms like "see you later" or "do you see what I mean?" People with visual impairments use them too.
  - Always ask the person if they would like your assistance, and if so, allow them to take **your** arm.
  - When assisting, it is helpful to give a commentary on what is around the person.
  - If you are giving directions, don't point! Give clear verbal directions. It is also helpful to inform the person of steps along the route and whether it's a step up or step down.
  - Don't assume that because a person can see one thing that they can see everything. If necessary ask them.
  - Similarly, don't assume that a person using a white cane or guide dog is totally blind. Many partially sighted people use these.
- Always let a person know when you are entering or leaving a room, so that they are not left talking to themselves.
  - Don't leave a blind person standing in space - let them have contact with some object such as a chair, desk or a wall.
  - Never offer food, pat or distract a guide dog when working (i.e. in harness).
  - A person using a white cane with a red stripe has a hearing impairment as well as a visual impairment.
  - Bright colours, particularly yellow and orange, help when marking out areas.
  - Try to keep passageways, doorways and hallways clear, at all times, for easy access.
  - Large clearly defined signage on doorways is very helpful.
  - Where possible avoid sudden loud noises which could be upsetting to a guide dog.

# PEOPLE WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

- Make sure you are in front of or fairly close to (approx 3 – 6 foot) and on the same level as the person.
- Position yourself with your face to the light and avoid placing yourself in front of a bright window.
- Check that background noise is kept to a minimum.
- Do not shout.
- Speak clearly, maintaining a normal rhythm of speech.
- Remember that sentences and phrases are easier to understand than isolated words.
- If a word/phrase is not understood, use different words with the same meaning – rephrase.
- Allow more time for the person to absorb what you have said.
- Keep head still and stop talking if you turn away.
- Keep hands, pens, cigarettes, etc. away from your face while speaking.
- Do not eat while speaking.
- Avoid exaggerated facial movements, grimacing or inappropriate facial expression.
- Gesture can be helpful.
- Speak directly to the person themselves and not through any accompanying person.
- Make sure the person is looking at you – attract attention if necessary.
- If the topic is changed make sure the person knows.
- The first preferred language of many people who were born with a hearing impairment is Irish Sign Language and they may need an interpreter. The interpreter should ideally sit next to this person.
- Check the person understands you.
- Write things down if necessary.
- Remember lip reading can be very tiring.

# PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

- Speak to the person with the disability directly and not through their carer/personal assistant (PA) or anyone else that might be with them. Ideally speak to the person at a similar height level.
- There is no need to finish the person's sentences for them.
- Speak frankly to the person. Don't patronise, i.e. comments like 'It's great to see you out' or 'Fair play to you for getting involved' etc., or patting somebody on the head, are not ideal.
- If the person is using a communication aide, they can still be included in the conversation. You just have to be a little bit more patient as it may take a little longer to reply to questions
- If you do not understand what the person is saying, don't pretend to. Be honest and say you don't understand or ask the person to repeat themselves.
- Try to include the person in any conversation that is going on and show interest in the person's point of view.
- Don't assume that the person needs help. You can offer to help, or help if the person asks for it.

# PEOPLE EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES

Good mental health is the ability to live life in a positive way. Good mental health is having a general sense of well-being and being in control of your life, allowing you to make good decisions and participate in everyday life.

Our mental health will have ups and downs depending on what happens in our lives, but some people experience on-going problems that affect their ability to enjoy life and be in control over a long period of time. This could be referred to as having mental health illness or having mental health difficulties.

Some myths about mental health:

- People with mental health difficulties never get better - **NOT TRUE** Many people completely recover from a mental illness.
- Mental health illness is rare - **NOT TRUE** Mental health difficulties are fast becoming one of the most widespread illnesses in our society.
- People with mental health difficulties don't want to participate in the Community - **NOT TRUE** Lack of motivation is a frequently misunderstood part of mental illness. Medication can have side effects such as sedation, sleeplessness and physical restlessness. But these symptoms can be treatable.
- People with mental health difficulties are violent - **NOT TRUE** You are no more likely to get attacked by someone with a mental illness than anybody else.

Physical exercise is especially good for people with mental health difficulties as it releases mood-improving chemicals (endorphins) into the brain.

# ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, often called ADD or ADHD, is a diagnostic label given to children and adults who have significant problems in four main areas of their lives: **INATTENTION, IMPULSIVITY, HYPERACTIVITY** and **BOREDOM**. People with ADHD don't want to be inattentive, impulsive or aggressive, anymore than a person with asthma wants to wheeze, or a person with migraines wants a headache. They just can't stop themselves. It is essential to realise that ADHD behaviour is NOT wilful behaviour.

Some tips for coaching a person with ADHD;

- Physical activity does not decrease ADHD behaviour. Be aware of what the person with ADHD has done prior to the activity as previous actions may be followed by an increase in target behaviour during practice - if previously stimulated or fatigued it makes ADHD worse.
- Short time periods for short attention spans.
- Small groups and close supervision are optimal.
- Provide structure. People with ADHD respond best to routine.
- Praise. People with ADHD are in constant need of reward and praise.

# LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

Words matter – words can open doors, but they can just as easily create barriers or stereotypes. The following language guidelines are some general guidelines that have been developed to ensure that all people with a disability are portrayed with individuality and dignity.

## Appropriate terminology

- An individual has a disability rather than is suffering from, afflicted with or a victim of a disability.
- A person uses a wheelchair rather than is confined or restricted to a wheelchair.
- Distinguish between adults and children with a disability and treat them accordingly.
- A person is physically challenged or disabled rather than crippled.
- Do not use the term 'unfortunate' when talking about people with a disability. Disabling conditions do not have to be life defining in a negative way.

# CONTACTS

## **Laois Sports Partnership**

Portlaoise Leisure Centre, Moneyballytyrrell, Portlaoise, Co Laois.  
Tel 057 867 1248 Email [gcolliton@laoissports.ie](mailto:gcolliton@laoissports.ie) [www.laoissports.ie](http://www.laoissports.ie)

## **National Council for the Blind**

4 Peppers Court, Portlaoise, Co Laois Tel 057 866 0191 [www.ncbi.ie](http://www.ncbi.ie)

## **DeafHear**

14 Church Street, Tullamore, Co Offaly Tel 057 935 1606  
[www.deafhear.ie](http://www.deafhear.ie)

## **Special Olympics Ireland**

Tel 01 8823972 [www.specialolympics.ie](http://www.specialolympics.ie)

## **Irish Wheelchair Association Sport**

Orla Dempsey Tel 057 932 9823 [www.iwasport.com](http://www.iwasport.com)

## **Laois Offaly Families for Autism (LOFA)**

Tel 057 935 2094 or 057 873 1343

**People with Learning Disabilities** Sisters of Charity, Triest House,  
Portarlinton, Co Laois Tel 057 862 3055

## **Health Service Executive**

Midland Area, Regional Disability Services Tel 057 935 9919

**Dyslexia Association of Ireland** Tel 01-6790276 [www.dyslexia.ie](http://www.dyslexia.ie)

**Mental Health Services** Community Mental Health Centre,  
Bridge Street, Portlaoise, Co Laois Tel 057 862 2925

**RehabCare** Lower Main Street, Portlaoise, Co Laois Tel 057 866 0426

**Special Education Needs Organiser** John Moran Tel 057 868 2164



## LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

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### **Laois Sports Partnership**

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### **Laois Community Forum**

LAOIS COMMUNITY FORUM IS THE REPRESENTATIVE GROUP FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY GROUPS IN LAOIS.

Groups in the five electoral areas elect eighteen members to act as representatives of the community and voluntary sector.

The Forum priorities are to:

- Facilitate two-way communication between the community and voluntary sector and the public sector.
- Capacity-build the community and voluntary sector.
- Implement relevant strategies of the Laois County Development Strategy.
- Promote social inclusion.
- Play a representative role on other bodies that wish to have community sector representation.

### **To find out more please contact:**

Laois Community Forum c/o Áras an Chontae,  
Portlaoise, Co. Laois.

Tel 057 867 4336

Web [www.laoiscommunityforum.ie](http://www.laoiscommunityforum.ie)