

Case Study: Area of Focus 3



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Project: Inclusive Sport
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Author: Sarah Robinson

This paper provides the case study for *Motivate East* – an Inclusive Sport funded organisation that has overcome a significant barrier [or barriers] to participation for disabled people. The case study has been informed by interviews with the London Legacy Development Corporation, Wheelpower, Tower Projects and Pro-Active East London.

Background

The opportunities for disabled people to play sport are more limited than for non-disabled people. There are a number of barriers to participation in sport for people with a disability. Research by Mary-Anne Rankin (2012) for the English Federation of Disability Sport grouped barriers into three main categories¹:

- **Physical:** Adaptations and changes needed to support participation are not available / have not been implemented – this could be in terms of the facility, equipment or health and safety;
- **Logistical:** Logistics can include the location of activities/facilities, the expense of transport and/or of playing the sport, the support of others, communication issues and the suitability of a sport for a person's disability; **and**
- **Psychological:** Attitudes, opinions and perceptions preventing participation in sport. This can include personal perceptions, as well as the attitudes of others.

Motivate East, led by the London Legacy Development Corporation is an inclusive sports participation project for disabled people living in the Growth Boroughs [host boroughs] (Tower Hamlets, Barking and Dagenham, Greenwich, Newham, Waltham Forest and Hackney) inspired by the Paralympic Games. It has received funding from Sport England under the Inclusive Sport programme. The project has developed a unique way of overcoming several barriers to participation.

¹ Mary-Anne Rankin. April 2012. 'Understanding the barriers to participation in sport: Views and opinions of active and non active disabled people'. English Federation of Disability Sport.



Identifying the barrier[s]

Interviewees highlighted five main barriers to participation in sports experienced by disabled people in their local area:

1. Individuals found going to a centre with ‘lots of fit sporty people’ to be very intimidating;
2. Playing sports at venues currently used by disabled people for other activities [e.g. day centres / community halls] was viewed as difficult because of the lack of space or due to the fact that the area that could be used for sport was not sufficiently differentiated as a ‘playing space’ for example, a car park;
3. Transport to venues posed a significant issue to some charities and day centres working with disabled people, particularly where they had a number of individuals who used wheelchairs;
4. Sports venues were difficult to arrange at suitable times for disabled people’s schedules. For example, respondents stated that ‘good’ times for availability would be between 11am – 3pm. This time slot would allow for individuals to be brought to day centres by transport, receive medications and attend a sporting activity. It would also allow for individuals to return home via provided transport in time to receive care at home. However, these time slots are often utilised by local schools and are unavailable; and
5. Playing sport in public open spaces can also provide issues in regards to feeling ‘self-conscious’. Interviewees reported that people ‘staring’ and dogs trying to ‘join in’ had deterred some disabled people from wanting to use free public open spaces.

Consideration of these issues led to project staff wondering about the feasibility of creating a ‘throw down mat’ to take to day centres and community spaces:

Let’s take sports to them, make them feel [that they are] in a sporting environment.

Motivate East

Innovating the ‘participation mat’

The team consulted with a number of potential designers which resulted in them discarding the idea of plastic mats [due to safety concerns] and opting for a product akin to judo mats ‘but lighter’. The mats are brightly coloured and come in sections so they can be sized to fit most spaces.

They have Velcro lines which mean that you can mark them out for any sport. They can fit any space, so they’re kind of like a jigsaw.

London Legacy Development Corporation

They are useable indoors and out as they are waterproof. Velcro markings allow the mats to be defined for various sports including (but not limited to): Boccia, wheelchair basketball, sitting



volleyball, bowling and New Age Kurling. The mats are soft to 'break falls' but rigid enough to allow a non-slip surface and provide 'grip' for wheelchairs.

Figure 1: Mats set up for New Age Kurling



Really impressed. The mat has been phenomenal. So versatile, everyone wants to play on them. They can go on grass, hard outdoor and indoor surfaces...[The mats] have gone places where traditionally it has been difficult to access sport.

Motivate East

Impact of the mats

Tower Project is a day service, based in Tower Hamlets. They have 60 service users aged 19-45 years old with most being 24-35 years of age. There are a diverse range of abilities from complex to mild/moderate learning disabilities and people on the autistic spectrum. There is a high demand within the local community for sporting activities for adults with disabilities. Staff at the Tower Project are keen advocates of sport for providing positive mental health and they aim to ensure a sporting activity occurs every week at their centre. However, they find it difficult to maintain sporting fixtures in the local area for all their users because of transport issues [having 24 wheelchair users], the lack of availability of local venues at convenient times and dealing with the confidence and self-conscious issues experienced by disabled people when playing sporting activities where other people can watch them. Consequently, sport is undertaken on a rotational basis so not all service users can access the sport weekly, nor can they all play together and in some cases service users are unmotivated to participate.

The charity was approached by Motivate East to use the mats and have used them on loan, once a week, for the majority of the summer months to provide sporting activities for all their

service users. Motivate East brought the mats to the Tower Project, set them up and showed staff how to assemble them. The mats have been used in the project's outdoor space providing service users with:

A sense of freedom, fresh air, [it is not] stuffy [like indoor sporting venues] and [it provides] a safe environment.

Tower Project

[Which sports did you try?] We tried everything, we would like them permanently. When you have proper equipment they played on and on because they are all marked out and have a 'different feel'. [They are] bright colours, attractive, [everyone] wanted to take part – they had to take turns....before they just watched and didn't want to play....[The mats are] well laid out and very safe...[they have made sport] accessible for everybody.

Tower Project

The London Legacy Development Corporation works from the view that 'Inclusive Sport' is not only about including disabled people in sport but providing activities where both able and disabled people can participate together. The mats have allowed this to occur:

[The mats have] made it accessible for everybody. We mixed able bodied people with disabled to play together. Prior [to the mats] it was just small groups and rotating who goes [to sporting activities]. This allows everyone to go and get involved. Everyone was smiling...see people do things they wouldn't normally do.

Tower Projects

The innovative mats designed and produced for the Motivate East project have been very successful both in the Tower Project and across other services in the Boroughs. In addition, enquiries from across England have come to the project about loaning the mats.

Meeting the intervention outcomes

Taking the sport to the disabled person overcomes the barriers of transport and accessibility of a venue. It allows an individual to play sport in a safe environment that they are familiar and comfortable with, allowing them to enjoy participation in a positive manner.



The size of the mats ensures that numerous individuals can take part in a sport at any one time, allowing for more individuals to play frequently rather than on a rotational basis, as previously experienced by many.

The velcro strips that allow the mats to depict numerous different sports allows individuals to play sports that they enjoy rather than being restricted to only one type of sport on offer.

In all, Motivate East has understood the barriers experienced by disabled people in participating in sport, created a mat to overcome these and employed it in a manner that allows higher quality sporting opportunities for disabled people in a sport of their choice and at a venue of their choice.

For Further information

On the mats, please contact: info@londondlegacy.co.uk

On the Inclusive Sport Evaluation, please contact: Sarah.Robinson@cfe.org.uk

