



Department
for Work &
Pensions



Department
for Culture
Media & Support

The Inclusive and Accessible Stadia Report

Attending Spectator Sports:
Disabled Spectators' Experiences and Club Perspectives



Attitudes of club stewards and staff to disabled spectators

Accessible Stadia Project

The attitude and disability confidence of all customer-facing staff is essential to make the sporting event a positive experience for disabled supporters.

“Venue would not answer my questions on access needs. Not allowed to attend because I quote ‘Health and Safety’”

“Lack of awareness from service providers at the venue, for example, food and drink”

“Do not allow away fans”

“Leaving venue no one to help”



The experience of disabled people using sports stadia

Accessible Stadia Project

Difficulty in accessing venue and facilities not meeting needs were mentioned as a reason for respondents not attending all the sporting events they wanted to.

“Unable to sit as a family of four, disabled tickets limit it to two”

“Always at the front and open to the elements”

“Disabled toilets not clean and not easy to get to”

“Would have to sit with opposition fans. Which has been horrible in the past”

“Couldn’t see the event sometimes as on same level as sport and not able to watch the match I wanted because of seating”

“Many unsafe wheelchair viewing areas. Even in modern grounds”



#accessiblestadia

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Section 1: Introduction

This report presents findings from a small study undertaken by the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The aim was to collect information about the service disabled spectators receive when they attend a sporting event and issues around accessibility to ensure that their rights are properly recognised in this area.

This introductory section sets out the background and policy context to this study (Section 1.1) and then outlines the aims (Section 1.2). Section 1.3 discusses the project design and methodology and Section 1.4 outlines the structure of the report.

1.1 Background and policy context

Disabled people make up nearly one in five (19%) of the population. There are 11.9 million disabled people in the UK, of whom 6.0 million are adults of working age, 5.0 million are over state pension age and 0.9 million are children.¹ Not all impairments are visible or obvious, and not all will require any adjustment for attendance at a sporting event to be possible.

Table 1 shows the numbers of disabled people in the UK with different types of impairments. As many disabled people have more than one type of impairment, the numbers add up to more than 11.9 million. As the table shows, the most common types of impairment among disabled people are mobility, stamina/breathing/fatigue and dexterity.

Table 1: Disability prevalence disaggregated by impairment type, United Kingdom 2013/14²

Impairment type	Millions
Mobility	6.5
Stamina/breathing/fatigue	4.5
Dexterity	3.4
Mental health	2.1
Hearing	1.7

1 Family Resources Survey 2013/14

2 Family Resources Survey 2013/14

Impairment type	Millions
Memory	1.9
Vision	1.5
Learning	1.5
Social/behavioural	0.8
Other	1.8

Legislation and definitions

Disabled people can face a wide range of barriers that prevent them from fully participating in society. Legislation has developed over time, changing most recently in 2010, but maintaining the duty of reasonable adjustment.

The Equality Act 2010³

The provisions of the Equality Act 2010 replaced the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Provisions in the Equality Act 2010 (2010 Act) require providers of services to the public, such as a sports stadium, to make a 'reasonable adjustment' so that disabled people are not placed at a "substantial disadvantage" compared to non-disabled people.

The reasonable adjustment duty that applies to service providers under the 2010 Act is an anticipatory duty because it is owed to disabled people in general. This means that clubs are expected to anticipate the requirements of disabled customers and the adjustments that may have to be made for them, so that disabled people can access the service or facility in question. In the case of a sports ground, this could, among other things, require access for wheelchairs and an adequate viewing platform.

However, the legislation recognises the need to strike a balance between the needs of disabled people and the interests of service providers. Therefore, the 2010 Act only requires service providers to make adjustments that are reasonable in all the circumstances of a particular situation. What is 'reasonable' of course will vary from one situation to another, as factors like the practicability of making the adjustment, the cost of the adjustment and the resources available to the organisation will vary.

3 See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Given the reasonable adjustment duty has existed since 1995, a sports ground built or substantially redeveloped since that date would be under the greatest obligation to make an adjustment because there would be a strong argument that they should have anticipated that a proportion of spectators - whether home or visiting fans - will be disabled. This does not mean that older sports grounds are exempt from taking action - disabled spectators are entitled to ask clubs with older buildings to provide a reasonable adjustment.

Enforcement

Where it is considered that those providing goods, facilities and services (this would include a spectator sports club), has not made a reasonable adjustment by providing sufficient facilities, a disabled person may take a civil action against the club at the County Court (Sherriff's Court in Scotland).

Models of disability

Alongside legislation, different models of disability can help the understanding of the nature and dynamics of disability including what type of factors may disable an individual and what interventions could widen their participation. The two main models are the social model and medical model.

The medical model says that by fixing their body, disabled people will be able to participate in society like everyone else. This is an outdated model that is not supported by disabled people or their organisations.

The social model of disability says that it is not a person's impairment but society that puts barriers in the way of disabled people. Those barriers can be divided into three areas: the environment (including inaccessible buildings and services); people's attitudes (stereotyping, discrimination and prejudice); and organisations (inflexible policies, practices, and procedures).

Using the social model helps identify solutions to the barriers disabled people experience. It encourages the removal of these barriers within society, or the reduction of their effects. It is the preferred model for disabled people and encourages society to be more inclusive.

Other relevant legislation and guidance

Other legislation exists that would have an impact on the design and layout of a spectator sport stadium. For example, Part M of the Building Regulations states that where reasonable, the permanent

wheelchair provision for audience seating where there are 600 to 10,000 seats should be one per cent of total seating capacity rounded up.

There is also a wide range of guidance available to spectator sports to make sure that their grounds are inclusive and accessible and meet the needs of disabled spectators (see Annex A).

The Equality and Human Rights Commission also provide technical guidance on the Equality Act 2010.⁴

1.2 Aims of this project

While not intended to be representative of the population of disabled people as a whole, the aims of the study were to:

- capture an indicative picture of the issues relating to stadia accessibility,
- identify areas requiring further research, and
- inform future constructive conversations between disabled people and sports clubs as they work together to improve accessibility.

The need for further information was prompted in part by an article on the BBC website⁵ in March 2014 about the lack of Wheelchair user places at Premiership football grounds. In April the same year the Minister for Disabled People wrote to all professional football clubs in England and Scotland about the lack of Wheelchair user places in football grounds around the country.

In July 2014 the Minister for Sport and the Minister for Disabled People agreed to work together on the Accessible Stadia Project. The project aims to achieve a better understanding of the barriers that disabled spectators face when attending spectator sport events, ensuring that spectator sports clubs and venues have relevant information that sets out their responsibilities to make their grounds inclusive and accessible and to make sure that sports governing bodies raise the profile of access and inclusion in their sports venues.

With this in mind, ODI and DCMS decided to conduct a small survey in order to gain understanding of the needs of disabled people around attending spectator sports and to better understand any constraints regarding making visits to sports stadia accessible.

4 See www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/legislation/equality-act-2010/equality-act-guidance-codes-practice-and-technical-guidance#cop

5 See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/football/26662957>

To complement this, the Paralympic Legacy Advisory Group suggested that there should also be a survey of spectator sport clubs.

1.3 Project Design and Methodology

Two small-scale surveys were conducted between December 2014 and February 2015 comprising:

- An online survey of disabled spectators (see Annex B)
- A postal survey of clubs from football, rugby and cricket (see Annex C)

In order to make the survey as widely accessible as possible, LimeSurvey – a free, Open Source Software tool for web surveys - was used to make the disabled spectator survey available. This went live in December 2014 alongside a Ministerial letter which was sent to all members of the Disability Action Alliance. Disabled People's User Led Organisations (DUPLOs) used their member databases to pass the link to the survey to their users. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Press Office, ODI and Disability Action Alliance also tweeted a link to the survey.

The Paralympic Legacy Advisory Group was consulted about the project. They suggested that it would be useful to give the clubs the opportunity to explain the barriers they face in catering for disabled spectators. Consequently, in December 2014, the Minister for Sport and the Minister for Disabled People also wrote to all professional football clubs in England and Scotland, the top two divisions of both codes of rugby and the top two divisions of county cricket and asked them to complete and return a hardcopy questionnaire. In total, 223 clubs were contacted. The surveys received further publicity when they were officially launched by the Minister for Disabled People during a filmed appearance on BBC Breakfast, Sky News and ITV News in December 2014.

The survey asked disabled spectators to describe the barriers they faced when they wanted to attend a sporting event. The online survey closed on 28 February with 945 people responding. At the same time, a hard copy questionnaire was sent to 223 sports clubs across football, rugby (both codes), and county cricket. We received 88 responses from the clubs. While recognising that there are other types of sporting venues, we restricted our club survey to these as they are the main spectator sports in Great Britain.

The disabled spectator survey was designed as a self-completion, online survey. While there are limitations to the extent to which online surveys can provide representative findings, and we are aware that disabled people have lower levels of internet access than non-disabled people, such approaches can provide quick, low-cost, useful indications of the kinds of issues people face. Analysis of the responses to the surveys suggest the findings do broadly reflect what we have been told elsewhere by disabled people, sports clubs, Level Playing Field (a registered charity that promotes good access to fans across sports) and by the BBC report that prompted the survey.

For this report our approach has been to present the findings descriptively, rather than in a statistical format. There was an opportunity for respondents to mention their views in more detail in free text boxes and, where relevant, some of these have been included in the report and provide powerful personal testimonies of their experiences.

1.4 Report Structure

The remainder of the report looks at the responses we received from both surveys and makes recommendations to ensure all spectators have equal access to sporting venues and services, and that the owners of stadia are aware of their responsibilities towards disabled spectators.

Section 2 presents the findings relating to the barriers faced by disabled people when planning attendance at a sporting event.

Section 3 looks at the findings relating to issues around buying tickets.

Section 4 examines the findings relating to travelling to and from a sporting event.

Section 5 considers the findings covering the overall experience of disabled people being at a sporting event itself.

Section 6 looks at what aids and adaptations would help disabled supporters.

In each of these sections, we look at the responses from both the disabled spectators and clubs. Where relevant, we also make recommendations on areas for improvement.

Finally, Section 7 pulls together these recommendations.

Section 2: Planning attendance

The disabled people who responded to the study tended to say they would like to attend sporting events. Although football was the most frequently mentioned spectator sport, other sports including rugby, cricket, tennis, athletics and swimming were frequently mentioned too. Other sports less frequently mentioned included equestrian events, motor racing, ice hockey, basketball, American football, cycling, golf and darts.

Generally, those who responded had been able to attend a sporting event if they had wanted to. However, responses showed that some had not been to attend as many events as they would like and there were some people who hadn't been able to attend any sporting event in the last two years.

When asked why they had not attended a sporting event in the last two years, respondents mentioned a number of different barriers they faced which had prevented them. The most frequently mentioned barrier was that venues were difficult to access, with problems getting to and from venues and other transport problems, particularly parking, also cited.



Difficulty travelling to and from using public transport.”

Not enough disabled coaches supplying transport.”

Lack of parking for blue badge holders.”



Some respondents also mentioned feeling uncomfortable, anxious or worried about attending.

Each time I have been, I have never been on my own. I would not go on my own through fear of having too many issues.”

However, before some disabled spectators can make a decision about whether they can go to a sporting event, they need to know whether the stadium can cater for their requirements. A key concern when planning any trip is knowing whether the ground is accessible.

Some respondents said that they had to telephone the club before they bought tickets to find out about parking, the distance between parking and the venue, and whether they would have to wait around at the end before being allowed to go back to their transport. This was a specific problem when attending away games if the facilities were not familiar.



Difficulty accessing information about a venue's facilities for disabled people."

I can't just purchase a disabled ticket and turn up, I have to phone in advance, check parking, distance between car park & stand, how much earlier I have to be there (& stay around at the end)."

A lack of information about the facilities available and having to contact grounds in advance to check made planning more difficult.

Some respondents also mentioned they were concerned about the lack and quality of the information that was available.



Venue maps etc. no one takes account of colour blindness."

Venues would not answer my questions on access needs, not allowed to attend for I quote "Health and Safety."

Clubs' response

Clubs that responded to the survey tended to say that they provided information in advance about access and facilities at the venue with some saying they only provided information about access at the venue itself.

Recommendations

- Just a small adjustment may overcome the barriers that prevent disabled people attending sporting events. For example, better information about the facilities could be made available so that the disabled spectator can make an informed decision about whether they can, or cannot, attend a sporting event.
- Sports clubs and venues need to be aware that the information they provide on their venue for disabled spectators may not be suitable for all groups of disabled people. Clubs may need to provide this information in more than one format, for example, easy read, large print, maps in two contrasting colours, audio, British Sign Language etc.
- Clubs need to consider what information they make available to disabled spectators. The information should not only focus on the stadium but other information that disabled spectators might find useful, for example, distance from local parking, gradient of pavements, distance from coach drop off points, etc.

Section 3: Buying a ticket

Disabled spectators mentioned various issues they faced when trying to buy tickets for a sporting event, whether on a match by match basis, for away games or when buying season tickets. Those responding mentioned issues in a number of areas, from the limited number of wheelchair places, having no choice as to where they were seated, tickets for disabled spectators, not being available to purchase online and cost. Some respondents said they were unable to attend a sporting event at all because there were no appropriate tickets available for their needs.

The availability of wheelchair user places was frequently raised as an issue. Wheelchair-users found it hard to obtain tickets as there were a limited number of places and it could be particularly difficult when attending away matches - one Premiership club ground was said to have only three wheelchair user places for away supporters. There was also a view that wheelchair user places were not allocated on a fair basis.



Not all had wheelchair ballots for premium games.”

**Very limited wheelchair spaces available.
Sometimes all given to a ‘care home’.”**



Respondents who were wheelchair-users specifically mentioned concerns about not being able to use online booking systems for wheelchair user places. They could not understand why tickets were not available online for their seats like they were for general seats.

Can't use online booking system for wheelchair tickets, have to phone up.”

Some wheelchair-users also mentioned that they could not sit with their friends and family because the wheelchair user places only allow one space for a carer. That meant that they could be separated from the rest of their party. Some grounds won't allow children to attend a match unsupervised and this makes it doubly hard for a disabled parent, where the other parent has to go as a carer – in this situation, the child would not be able to attend.

The choice of where to sit was also frequently raised as an issue by disabled spectators more generally, even those who weren't wheelchair-users. Not being able to sit with family and friends and needing seats in a specific position (for example, at the end of a row, or close to the field of play) were both mentioned.



'Not being able to purchase tickets with my husband & my two children like non-disabled parents can... we have two young children who participate in sport yet cannot go to any sport venue as they have a disabled parent who is only allowed to sit next to her carer / husband. Told that the children must sit elsewhere which is unacceptable as they are young and also unacceptable as non-disabled parents would not have this issue'.



Difficult to select seats at end of aisle."

Visually impaired so no seats close enough."



Some respondents also expressed concern that, at some grounds, they couldn't sit with their own supporters when they attended away games. Not only did this have an effect on their enjoyment but had risks, as supporters from opposing teams are generally segregated.

Not being able to sit with the fans of my team and having to sit with sometimes very volatile fans from the opposing team."



Another concern was that the seating for disabled spectators was often either the wheelchair user places or general seating, with nothing in between. This was not helpful for those disabled spectators who needed extra leg room.

For me, the problem is the lack of room allowed. There is no room to put a stick, no room to sit comfortably. Because of the lack of space I shake constantly, especially my legs, which are usually up against whoever is either side of me... I'm sure it's unsettling for them that they have someone shaking against them. There's no option or alternative for those of us with a 'middling' disability that don't need a wheelchair."

There were some respondents who said they could not afford to attend sporting events at all, due to the price of the tickets and the cost of getting there, but generally, concerns about cost were with having to pay the same price as non-disabled supporters even though there was little choice of where to sit.

Clubs' response

Clubs that responded tended to say they provided the option for disabled spectators to purchase season tickets and match tickets. Of these, most could sell accessible tickets, either through a ticket office or by telephone. Fewer mentioned being able to provide an online service for disabled people to buy tickets. There were clubs who mentioned that their only way of selling the accessible tickets was for someone to purchase it in person.

One club responding didn't provide online ticketing for anyone, whether for a disabled or a non-disabled spectator. Another club mentioned only having a 'pay at the gate' policy.

A further issue raised by one club was that their online system was unable to provide a free carer ticket.

One club said they provided accessible ticketing by Type Talk and email for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Recommendations

- Clubs should allow disabled spectators to book tickets online as non-disabled spectators can, and in doing so be able to select and purchase seats that manage their impairment.
- Sports clubs, and particularly their ticket office staff, need to be aware of the wider adjustments that some disabled spectators might need. For example, often there is a requirement to buy an end of row ticket, if easy access to the toilet is needed.
- Clubs need to consider providing wheelchair / disabled spectators' seating that allows the disabled spectator to sit with family and friends. Where there are allocated wheelchair user places, adequate space should be provided to let more than one carer sit with the disabled person.
- Clubs should provide adequate numbers of spaces for both home and away wheelchair spectators in the appropriate parts of the ground. This should enable them to sit with the appropriate fans to maintain segregation and to allow for enhanced enjoyment of the game.

Section 4: Travelling to and from the venue

Some respondents mentioned they had experienced difficulty travelling to and from a sporting venue with some saying they were put off attending a sporting event as often as they would like because of problems with transport, or worries about how to get there.

The most frequently mentioned issue was that of parking and this was also a reason why some respondents said they were unable to attend all the events that they had wanted to. A number of difficulties were mentioned relating to parking. Some respondents raised the issue of a shortage of parking spaces for disabled people – and specifically near to the venue - including those for blue badge holders. One respondent mentioned disabled spaces being taken over by others.



Disabled parking bays used by TV crews and stretch limos or hospitality clients.”

The difficulty of parking nearby and then having a distance to get to the venue was also raised.

As with parking, some respondents mentioned the distance they would still have to travel from where they are dropped off at the ground if travelling by public transport. Some also mentioned other difficulties using public transport both to and from the venue such as having to use inaccessible stations.

Similarly, the distance from the drop off point of supporter’s coaches to the venue was raised as a problem by a number of respondents. One respondent said that in some cases, if the police knew that there was a disabled person on board they would allow the coach to park nearer the ground. Another respondent was concerned that there were not enough coaches that could cater for disabled people. There were also concerns that clubs were not providing enough accessible coaches for away fans.



No accessible supporters' coaches available and no guarantee of parking at the venue if you use your own."

One respondent highlighted the problems of police not letting home fans exit by a particular route because they want the two sets of fans to remain segregated. This means that some disabled spectators have to take a longer route to reach their transport. Another concern about this approach was that disabled people could be crushed in amongst other fans waiting to leave. The lack of support from stewards when a disabled spectator left the ground was also an issue.

Clubs' response

Of the clubs that responded, few said that they provided assistance with transport and getting to and from the venue. Where assistance was provided by clubs, the support included shuttle buses from the car park to the stadium and providing accessible transport for away games.

One club was working in partnership with other agencies to develop transport options to games. Another club had contacted several companies about assisting with transport to and from the stadium but none of them had been able to help.

Recommendations

- Clubs should provide up to date, appropriate and relevant transport information for disabled spectators about accessible travel to and from the venue.
- Clubs should consider alternative solutions to tackling transport barriers that prevent disabled spectators attending. For example, clubs can work in partnership with local transport providers to ensure that disabled supporters are not put off by transport and parking barriers.

Section 5: The overall experience

The experience for a disabled spectator attending a sporting event is not just about their seat, it starts as soon as they arrive at the ground. It includes their journey to and from the gate to their seat, getting around the concourse, experiencing the sporting event itself, accessibility of the toilets and any concession stands plus the interaction with staff, such as ticket office staff, stewards, and concession staff.

Facilities and accessibility

We asked respondents what aspects they had experienced difficulty with when attending a sporting event in the last two years. The difficulties most frequently mentioned were in accessing the venue, that the services provided didn't meet their needs and that they had difficulty watching or viewing the sporting event.

Difficulty in accessing the venue and facilities not meeting needs were also mentioned as a reason for respondents not attending all the sporting events that they wanted to. Some respondents said they could not attend all the events they wanted to because they would not feel comfortable, or would feel anxious or worried about attending.

Getting around the concourse raised a number of barriers for disabled spectators. Some mentioned venues not having lifts to the stands for ambulant disabled spectators, some that ramps were too small for mobility scooters, that flooring was slippery or a more general poor level of circulation around the concourse and stadium.

There were also barriers raised with the accessibility of concessions stands, including the lack of seating in the bars and refreshment areas, no orderly system for obtaining refreshments and difficulty with being served.



Almost impossible to buy a drink as a hearing impaired person unless you write it down and hand it to the bar staff.”

Some respondents highlighted the lack of facilities and awareness for sensory loss, including limited or no support for deaf spectators, no subtitles on the video screens, problems with actually viewing the big screen at some football stadiums and some clubs only showing replays on the big screen and not the whole game.



Visually impaired people want to attend football matches too, but most clubs, especially lower league and non-league clubs say they have low budgets and can't afford to provide audio description."

Accessible formats for other facilities were also mentioned and not having audio description or subtitles on screen had prevented people from attending a sporting event.



Programmes - not accessible. Should have them online - I am blind."

No audio description so no point in going."

Seating position

A number of barriers were raised in relation to where disabled spectators were asked to sit. These included a lack of wheelchair user places, disabled season ticket-holders positions being closed for financial reasons, poor sight lines because the seat was on the same level as the sporting event, always sitting at the front of stands so not sheltered from the weather and unsafe wheelchair viewing areas even in modern grounds.



Where I was a season ticket [holder] they took around 2 feet off the disabled bays so they could put advertising screens sky sports with big cameras sitting in front of wheelchairs."



Always at the front and open to the elements.”

Toilet facilities

The toilet facilities were frequently raised by respondents and not only by those who said they had continence issues. Problems raised included not having enough disabled toilets, restricting the use of disabled toilets, poor cleanliness and a lack of washing facilities. For some conditions, such as Inflammatory Bowel Disease, needing urgent access to either disabled or non-disabled toilets was an issue. Respondents mentioned the lack of access to clean toilets, and the lack of an adult bench to change pads, being a barrier to attending a sporting event.



Lack of disabled toilets for the use of non-wheelchair users - stewards stopped me using them despite having a RADAR key.”

Not enough disabled toilets access as a Crohn's sufferer I had to queue for 20 mins uncomfortable to use a toilet.”

Lack of clean toilets with basic washing facilities.”

Sometimes it can be the organisation of the event itself that presents difficulties. One respondent described his experience when he was at an event for the whole day.



Went [...] to watch snooker, only allowed to leave arena at the end of each frame. I have Crohn's so need toilet access at all times so spent 10 hours watching it on screens in the bar there, while my friends watched live.”

Club staff

The attitudes and disability confidence of all customer-facing staff is essential to make the sporting event a positive experience for disabled spectators. Some respondents mentioned that a lack of disability awareness among stewards and staff was an issue, including staff not being aware of the club's policy.



Stewards breaking simple promises made by club staff, no way to argue on the day.”

Other problems mentioned included getting stewards and staff to recognise the needs of disabled spectators with non-visible impairments, for example, autism and continence, a lack of awareness of other staff, for example, those working on the food and drinks concessions and the availability of help leaving the venue after the event has finished.



Difficulty in getting stewards/staff etc. to recognise the ‘invisible’ needs of a person with autism.”

Leaving the venue, no one to help.”

Behaviour of other spectators

Some respondents mentioned that the lack of disability awareness among other spectators was an issue. They mentioned issues such as people standing in front of wheelchair user place, standing up in the seating areas during the game and the lack of wheelchair places for away supporters meaning having to sit with home fans, all of which could result in disabled spectators experiencing unpleasant behaviour.



Fans continually standing in seated areas... When I have tried to reason with many of them they have been very rude in their reply.”



Would have to sit with opposition fans, which has been horrible in the past.”

Clubs' response

Clubs that responded tended to say they provided assistance for disabled spectators entering and leaving the venue and assistance moving around the venue. They also said they provided some adapted facilities and some accessible seating with adequate views of the field of play.

Most clubs also said they provided wheelchair user place and amenity and easy access seating. However, fewer said they provided these for both home and away fans. The provision of audio descriptive commentary was rare and said to be dependent on local radio. Few clubs said they provided hearing loops.

There was a wide range of other facilities that some clubs said they provided for their disabled spectators but the provision was not widespread. These facilities included match buddies, accessible match day programmes and podcasts, complimentary rain ponchos for those in uncovered wheelchair places, complimentary drinks for both home and away wheelchair-users, a personal catering service for wheelchair-users and a sensory room (a room that could be used as a respite away for the sporting event).

Although some clubs said they provided disability-awareness and/or Equality Act 2010 training for their staff, fewer provided information to raise disability awareness among spectators, although some did ask for feedback from disabled spectators.

A number of clubs said they had a Disability Liaison Officer or said they were in the process of recruiting one. Some said they held meetings with their disabled supporters or disabled supporters groups with some working closely with local disability groups, seeking their advice and input into everything they did.

Separately, in response to the letter the Minister for Disabled People wrote to professional football clubs about the lack of wheelchair user places, one club wrote back to express surprise that the number of disabled supporters attending a match would ordinarily equate to

20 per cent of the overall number of supporters attending any given match. (It should be noted that 20 per cent is around the same as the proportion of disabled people in the general population.)

Recommendations

- Match day and clubs stewards should receive disability-awareness / confidence training. This training should also be extended to every member of staff that comes in contact with the public at a sports venue. The training should be provided by disabled people who have the lived experience of having an impairment and should also make it clear that some impairments may not be obvious. Any such training must be regularly reviewed and updated.
- Negative and abusive attitudes and behaviour towards disabled spectators should not be tolerated. Stewards and other customer facing staff should be trained to recognise negative attitudes and then be supported to take action where appropriate.
- The standard and availability of toilet facilities for disabled spectators needs to be better understood and addressed by clubs.

Section 6: Aids and adaptations

We asked disabled spectators to consider what aids and adaptations they would require if they were attending a sporting event. The aids and adaptations cited by respondents fell into three main categories: physical features; accessible communications; and better and more accessible toilets.

Relating to physical features responses included mention of better physical access, flat walking surfaces, more seats at lower levels, lifts, more seating room, a safe place or a quieter area shielded from the crowds.



A recognition that disabled does not automatically mean wheelchair.”



In terms of accessible communications, responses included mentions of audio descriptive commentary, large screens to carry live subtitles, programmes in an accessible format and hearing loops.

I am completely blind – no sight- I would love to read a programme.”



Although, overall, respondents said they wanted easier access to and better facilities in the disabled toilets, they also mentioned other improvements that could be made. In terms of access, it was issues such as having more toilets available both to reduce queues and mean they would be nearby, toilets that were not restricted to wheelchair-users (for example, accessed via a RADAR key) and family-friendly toilets. In terms of facilities, a need for a changing bench was mentioned and a ‘Changing Places’ toilet plus, more generally, clean toilets with basic washing facilities.

Basic clean toilets with washing facilities. Enough for a large crowd!”

Clubs' responses

Clubs that responded tended to state that the design of the venue and buildings was their greatest challenge although some mentioned the location as well. Issues raised included the stadium footprint, the design of the stadium leaving little opportunity for improvement, the age of the stadium, the location of the stadium, for example, being in a residential / commercial district with little opportunity to make significant changes and obtaining permission to alter the stadium.

The location of the venue also had an impact on the provision of parking for disabled spectators. Clubs found it hard to balance the amount of accessible parking required, others found the location of the venue meant there was very little accessible parking available.

Some clubs did mention that finances and lack of money was an issue, although some were also concerned about the challenge faced due to their lack of knowledge and expertise about disabled people's needs.



It is really not so much a lack of finance that can make it difficult to cater for disabled supporters. But more the fact that other things can have higher priority for club spend.”

Recommendations

- Sports clubs must ensure that disability issues are considered at all levels of the business and ensure that a broad range of disabled people are consulted before any decisions that may affect them are made.
- Clubs must work with disabled supporters and local disabled people's user led organisations to co-produce any changes to the physical features, or club policies that might affect disabled spectators.
- Clubs should increase the number of wheelchair user places to match the minimum levels set out Part M of the Building Regulations which refers to the Accessible Stadia Guide for stadia with 10,000 and more seats.⁶

⁶ See <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partm/approved#Download>

Section 7: Recommendations

Planning attendance

- Just a small adjustment may overcome the barriers that prevent disabled people attending sporting events. For example, better information about the facilities could be made available so that the disabled spectator can make an informed decision about whether they can, or cannot, attend a sporting event.
- Sports clubs and venues need to be aware that the information they provide on their venue for disabled spectators may not be suitable for all groups of disabled people. Clubs may need to provide this information in more than one format, for example, easy read, large print, maps in two contrasting colours, audio, British Sign Language etc.
- Clubs need to consider what information they make available to disabled spectators. The information should not only focus on the stadium but other information that disabled spectators might find useful, for example, distance from local parking, gradient of pavements, distance from coach drop off points, etc.

Buying a ticket

- Clubs should allow disabled spectators to book tickets online as non-disabled spectators can, and in doing so be able to select and purchase seats that manage their impairment.
- Sports clubs, and particularly their ticket office staff, need to be aware of the wider adjustments that some disabled spectators might need. For example, often there is a requirement to buy an end of row ticket, if easy access to the toilet is needed.
- Clubs need to consider providing wheelchair / disabled spectators' seating that allows the disabled spectator to sit with family and friends. Where there are allocated wheelchair user places, adequate space should be provided to let more than one carer sit with the disabled person.
- Clubs should provide adequate numbers of spaces for both home and away wheelchair spectators in the appropriate parts of the ground. This should enable them to sit with the appropriate fans to maintain segregation and to allow for enhanced enjoyment of the game.

Travelling to and from the venue

- Clubs should provide up to date, appropriate and relevant transport information for disabled spectators about travel to and from the venue.
- Clubs should consider alternative solutions to tackling transport barriers that prevent disabled spectators attending. For example, clubs can work in partnership with local transport providers to ensure that disabled supporters are not put off by transport and parking barriers.

The Overall Experience

- Match day and clubs stewards should receive disability-awareness / confidence training. This training should also be extended to every member of staff that comes in contact with the public at a sports venue. The training should be provided by disabled people who have the lived experience of having an impairment and should also make it clear that some impairments may not be obvious. Any such training must be regularly reviewed and updated.
- Negative and abusive attitudes and behaviour towards disabled spectators should not be tolerated. Stewards and other customer facing staff should be trained to recognise negative attitudes and then be supported to take action where appropriate.
- The standard and availability of toilet facilities for disabled spectators needs to be better understood and addressed by clubs.

Aids and adaptations

- Sports clubs must ensure that disability issues are considered at all levels of the business and ensure that a broad range of disabled people are consulted before any decisions that may affect them are made.
- Clubs must work with disabled supporters and local disabled people's user led organisations to co-produce any changes to the physical features, or club policies that might affect disabled spectators.
- Clubs should increase the number of wheelchair user places to match the minimum levels set out Part M of the Building Regulations which refers to the Accessible Stadia Guide for stadia with 10,000 and more seats.⁷

⁷ See <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partm/approved#Download>

Annex A: Sources of help and guidance for creating an accessible stadium

The following guides give information on UK minimum access standards for new and existing stadia:

The provisions of the Equality Act 2010 replaces the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 that is named in many of the existing guidance documents listed below.

Access for All: UEFA and CAFE good practice guide to creating an accessible stadium and match day experience (2011)
<http://www.cafefootball.eu/en/access-all>. An accessible version of this guidance is also available.

'Spectator facilities - Layout criteria for viewing area for spectators with special needs' (2009) - the report cannot be downloaded but is available from: The European Committee for Standardisation, Management Centre, Avenue Marnix 17, B-1000 Brussels (Ref. No. CEN/TR 15913:2009) or see [CEN website](#).

Accessible Stadia (2003), published by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority
www.safetyatsportsgrounds.org.uk/sites/default/.../accessible-stadia.pdf
A good practice guide to the design of facilities to meet the needs of disabled spectators and other users. For both new and existing stadia.

Accessible Stadia: Supplementary Guidance (2015), published by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority
This is an update to the 2003 publication, providing information on current legislation and good practice, including a number of ways in which good design and management of new and existing sports grounds can reduce or remove barriers to access.

Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds - Fifth Edition (2008), published by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority
This publication provides guidance on measures intended to improve safety at existing sports grounds in terms both of their design and

safety management, while taking into account the constraints and difficulties which may exist at these grounds. The Guide contains guidance on disability issues, such as instructions on evacuation and sightlines for disabled spectators being matters related to safety.

The Premier League Guidance for Clubs on Disabled Fans and Customers

- D1 - Summary (2009)
- D2 - Who is disabled? (2009)
- D3 - DDA Duties (2009)
- D4 - Ticketing Issues (2009)
- D5 - Match Day Access (2009)
- Guidance re Ambulant Disabled Fans and Personal Assistants (2012)

The Football League Guidance

- Guidance on Disabled Supporters and Customers (2010)
- The Football League Code of Practice
- Guide to Facilities for Disabled Fans at Football League Championship Grounds season 2014/15
- Guide to Facilities for Disabled Fans at Football League One Grounds season 2014/15
- Guide to Facilities for Disabled Fans at Football League Two Grounds season 2014/15

The Football Association Guidance

- The FA DDA Guide - Guidance for Professional Clubs (published in September 2003)
- The FA DDA Guide - Guidance for Non-League Clubs (published in October 2004)

Level Playing Field Guidance

- [LPF Ticketing and Seating Management Guidance](#)
- [LPF helpsheet for ambulant disabled supporters](#)
- [LPF Deaf/ Hard of Hearing Help Sheet](#)
- [LPF and Mencap booklet: A level playing field \(2010\)](#)
- [Making Information easy to read and understand](#)
- [LPF Making your club more accessible: Top ten tips](#)
- [LPF Making your club more accessible to disabled people](#)

Other publications

- [Deaf Awareness Fact Sheet - Action on Hearing Loss](#)
- [RNIB Soccer Sight- A guide to providing a service for blind and partially sighted football supporters \(2008\) – RNIB](#)
- [Access to Sports Stadia \(2007\) - Guide Dogs for the Blind](#)
- [Action for Blind People Guide on producing written information - Action for Blind People](#)
- [Accessibility Guide - An Inclusive Approach to the Olympic and Paralympic Games \(2013\) – The International Paralympic Committee](#)
- [Access for all: inclusive communications](#) - EFDS
- Accessible Sports Facilities (2010) - Sport England

Annex B: Spectator survey

How interested are you in attending sporting events as a spectator – for example, to watch football, rugby, cricket, tennis matches?

- Very interested
- Fairly interested
- Not very interested
- Not at all interested
- No answer

Which sporting events are you interested in attending as a spectator?

Please tick all that apply.

- Football
- Rugby
- Cricket
- Tennis
- Swimming
- Athletics
- None – not interested in any sport
- Other

How often have you thought about attending a sporting event as a spectator in the last 2 years?

- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Not at all
- No answer

How often have you actually attended a sporting event as a spectator in the last 2 years?

- 10 times
- 5 to 9 times
- 3 or 4 times
- Once or twice
- Not at all
- No answer

What sporting events have you actually attended as a spectator in the last 2 years?

Please tick all that apply.

- Football
- Rugby
- Cricket
- Tennis
- Swimming
- Athletics
- Other

How easy did you find the process of buying tickets for the sporting events you attended in the last 2 years?

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Varied too much to say
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult
- Didn't need a ticket
- No answer

How easy was it for you to travel to and from the sporting events you attended in the last 2 years?

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Varied too much to say
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult
- No answer

How well did the facilities meet your needs at the sporting events you attended in the last 2 years?

- Very well
- Fairly well
- Varied too much to say
- Not very well
- Not at all well
- No answer

How would you rate the disability awareness and attitudes of the stewards or staff at the sporting events you attended in the last 2 years?

- Very good
- Fairly good
- Varied too much to say
- Fairly poor
- Very poor
- No answer

How would you rate the attitudes of the other spectators at the sporting events you attended in the last 2 years?

- Very good
- Fairly good
- Varied too much to say
- Fairly poor
- Very poor
- No answer

What issues have you experienced at a sporting event in the last 2 years?

Please tick all that apply.

- Difficulty travelling to or from the venue
- Expensive to buy tickets
- Difficulty with process of buying match by match tickets
- Difficulty with the process of buying season tickets
- Difficulty with buying tickets for away matches
- Difficulty accessing venues
- Facilities which did not meet your needs
- Services that did not meet your needs
- Difficulty watching/viewing the match
- Lack of disability awareness among stewards or staff
- Lack of disability awareness among other spectators
- Other

How often were you able to attend the sporting events that you wanted to in the last 2 years?

- As often as I liked
- A little less often than I would have liked
- Much less often than I would have liked
- No answer

Why couldn't you attend sporting events as often as you would have liked in the last 2 years?

Please tick all that apply.

- Too expensive
- Lack of time
- Problems with transport/Worried about how to get there
- Do not know enough about sporting events
- Would not feel comfortable/would feel anxious/worried
- No-one to go with
- Venues are difficult for me to access
- Venue facilities do not meet my needs
- Stewards or staff may not treat me with respect
- Other spectators may not treat me with respect
- No appropriate tickets available for my needs
- Other

Why didn't you attend a sporting event in the last 2 years?

Please tick all that apply.

- Not interested
- Too expensive
- Lack of time
- Problems with transport
- Problems with getting there
- Do not know enough about sporting events
- Would feel uncomfortable, anxious or worried
- No one to go with
- Venues are difficult for me to access
- Difficulty watching or viewing the match
- Venue facilities do not meet my needs
- Stewards or staff may not treat me with respect
- Other spectators may not treat me with respect
- Other

Sex

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Age

- Under 15
- 16 to 39
- 40 to 64
- 65 and over
- Prefer not to say

Do you have any health conditions or illnesses which affect you in any of the following areas?

- Vision - for example blindness or partial sight
- Hearing - for example deafness or partial hearing
- Mobility - for example walking short distances or climbing stairs
- Dexterity - for example lifting and carrying objects, using a keyboard
- Learning or understanding or concentrating
- Memory
- Mental health
- Stamina or breathing or fatigue
- Socially or behaviourally – for example associated with autism, attention deficit disorder or Asperger's syndrome
- None of the above
- Other

Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- No answer

Is your ability to carry out day to day activities reduced by your condition or illness?

- Yes, a lot
- Yes, a little
- Not at all
- No answer

What aids and adaptations would you need if attending a sporting event?

Please select all that apply.

- Vision – for example, aids or adaptations to help you see the event
- Hearing – for example, aids or adaptations to help you hear the event
- Communication – for example, aids or adaptations to help you communicate with others
- Mobility – for example, aids or adaptations to help you move about, walk or climb stairs
- Dexterity – for example, aids or adaptations to help you lift, grasp or hold objects
- None of the above
- Other

Please tell us about your employment status.

- Employee working full-time
- Employee working part-time
- Self-employed working full-time
- Self-employed working part-time
- Unemployed
- Retired
- On maternity leave
- Looking after family or home
- Full-time student or at school
- Long-term sick or disabled
- On a government training scheme
- Something else

Annex C: Club survey

Club name:

Sports that take place at your ground:

Are you aware that the law (the Equality Act 2010) obliges you to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that disabled spectators are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other spectators?'

- Yes
- No

How much do you feel you know about the UEFA / CAFE guidance 'Access for All'?

- A lot
- A fair amount
- A little
- Hardly anything
- Nothing but I've heard about it
- Haven't heard about it before now

How well do you feel that your ground meets the standards set out in the UEFA / CAFE guidance?

- Very well
- Fairly well
- Not very well
- Not at all

Although the information is aimed at football clubs, the general information may be useful for other spectator sports:
www.cafefootball.eu/~cafefoot/sites/default/files/contentfiles/pdfs/UEFAandCAFEGoodPracticeGuideENG.pdf

Have you ever had a professional access audit of your ground?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Which (if any) of the following provisions do you currently make for disabled spectators?

Please tick all that apply.

- Providing information in advance about access and facilities at the venue
- Providing information about access and facilities at the venue itself
- Providing option to purchase season tickets
- Providing options to buy match tickets
- Providing accessible ticketing online
- Providing accessible ticketing at a ticket office
- Providing accessible ticketing by telephone
- Help with transport and getting to, and from, the venue
- Assistance in entering and leaving the venue
- Assistance in moving around the venue
- Adapted facilities (e.g. ramps, lifts, signs) to enable venue access
- Accessible seating with adequate views of field of play
- Wheelchair users places
- Amenity and easy access seating
- Providing both home and away accessible seating
- Accessible services
- Audio-descriptive commentary
- Hearing loops
- Other (please specify)
- Staff training in disability-awareness and/or the Equality Act 2010
- Information to raise disability-awareness among spectators
- Information / feedback gathering from disabled spectators
- Other provisions (please specify)
- None

Which (if any) of the following do you feel have been particularly well received by disabled spectators visiting your venue(s)?

Please tick all that apply.

- Information provided in advance about access and facilities at the venue
- Information about access and facilities provided at the venue itself
- Providing option to purchase season tickets
- Providing options to purchase match by match tickets
- Providing accessible ticketing online
- Providing accessible ticketing at a ticket office
- Providing accessible ticketing by telephone
- Help with transport and getting to, and from, the venue
- Assistance in entering and leaving the venue
- Assistance in moving around the venue
- Adapted facilities (e.g. ramps, lifts, signage) to enable venue access
- Accessible seating with adequate views of field of play
- Wheelchair users places
- Amenity and easy access seating
- Providing both home and away accessible seating
- Accessible services
- Audio-descriptive commentary
- Hearing loops
- Other (please specify)
- Information/assistance provided during the fixture
- Staff training in disability-awareness and/or the Equality Act 2010
- Information to raise disability-awareness among spectators
- Information / feedback gathering from disabled spectators
- Other provisions (please specify)
- None

Which (if any) of the following challenges have made it difficult for you to cater for disabled spectators?

Please tick all that apply.

- Finances / lack of money
- Providing option to purchase season tickets
- Providing options to buy match by match tickets
- Providing accessible ticketing online
- Providing accessible ticketing at a ticket office
- Providing accessible ticketing by telephone
- Lack of time / too busy
- Lack of knowledge / expertise about disabled people's needs
- Lack of demand for provisions from disabled spectators / other spectators
- Attitudes of other spectators
- Attitudes of venue / club owners
- Design of venues / buildings
- Location of venues / buildings
- Distance from transport (e.g. rail/bus services)
- Other challenges (please specify)

What is your ground capacity for:

Home supporters

Away supporters

How many wheelchair places do you have for:

Home supporters

Away supporters

How many amenity and easy access seats do you have for:

Home supporters

Away supporters

How many disabled parking places do you have?



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Published by the
Department for Work and Pensions
Date: September 2015
www.gov.uk/dwp