

**Timetable,
Book of Abstracts
& useful information**

**Disability Sport:
Reimagining Physical Culture,
Health and Wellbeing**

13–14 July 2026
University of Worcester

TIMETABLE OF CONFERENCE

MONDAY 13th July 2026

Time	Activity
8.30am - 9.00am	Registration (tea/coffee available)
9.00am - 9.15am	Welcome and introduction from Lerverne Barber, Head of School
9.15am -10.00am	Keynote speaker – Dr Ian Brittain
10.00am - 10.30am	Tea/coffee break
10.30am -12.10pm	Presentations 1
12.10pm - 1.30pm	Lunch
1.30pm - 3.10pm	Presentations 2
3.10pm - 3.45pm	Tea/Coffee
3.35pm - 5.10pm	Presentations 3

Delegates are welcome to enjoy some free time in the evening. For those interested in a self-guided historic tour, please refer to the guide included in your delegate bag.

A selection of restaurant options has been provided (at the back of this booklet). If you would like to dine as a group, please join us at The Botanist at 7pm. The venue is fully accessible to all delegates. The Botanist is a 15min walk/push from the Arena: Address 9A, 6 High St, Worcester WR1 2QE



TUESDAY 14th July 2026

Time	Activity
8.30am - 9.00am	Arrival (tea/coffee available)
9.00am - 9.45am	Keynote speaker – Gary Callier
9.45am -10.55am	Presentations 4
10.55am - 11.30am	Tea/coffee break
11.30am -12.40pm	Presentations 5
12.40pm - 2.00pm	Lunch
2.00pm - 3.10pm	Presentations 6
3.10pm - 3.30pm	Tea/coffee break
3.30pm – 4.40pm	Presentations 7
4.40pm - 5.00pm	Closing and departure

MONDAY 13 JULY

KEYNOTE SPEAKER 09.15-10.00

Dr Ian Brittain

Dr Ian Brittain is an internationally recognised scholar in disability sport and one of the world's leading experts on the Paralympic Movement. His research explores the social, cultural and historical dimensions of disability sport, with particular emphasis on the development of the Paralympic Games, athlete experiences, and the wider impact of sport on inclusion, identity and well-being.

A prolific author, Dr Brittain has written and edited several influential books, including *From Stoke Mandeville to Sochi: A History of the Summer and Winter Paralympic Games*, *The Paralympic Games Explained*, and *The Palgrave Handbook of Paralympic Studies*. His work provides authoritative insights into the evolution, governance and socio-political significance of the Paralympic Games and disability sport more broadly. He has also published widely in academic journals, contributing to global debates on classification, legacy, representation and the transformative potential of sport for disabled people.

Dr Brittain has attended six of the last seven summer Paralympic Games and has developed one of the most extensive personal archives on early Paralympic and Stoke Mandeville history. He also serves as Heritage Advisor to World AbilitySport, supporting efforts to preserve and promote the heritage of disability sport internationally.

With a passion for challenging assumptions and re-imagining inclusive sporting cultures, Dr Brittain brings deep expertise and critical insight to discussions about the future of disability sport, physical culture, health and well-being. We welcome him as our keynote speaker and founder of this very conference!

PRESENTATIONS 1 10.30-12:10 – CHAIR: REBECCA FOSTER MBE

1. Dr Emma Richardson – *From Soldiering On to Rebirth and Resilience: How Disability Sport Reconceptualises Recovery Among Injured and Ill Military Veterans and their Families*
2. Asita Ajith – *Behind the Veil: Contextualising the Disability Experience of Para-Athletes of Kerala*
3. Dr Libby Steele – *“It’s Not Fair!”: Multisensory Reaction Time Differences Between D/deaf and Hearing Populations in Athletics Starting Systems*
4. Adam Dickinson-Shill – *Finding ‘me’ through wheelchair basketball: an autoethnographic study of finding acceptance of a new identity after acquiring a disability through surgical removal of sacral chondrosarcoma*
5. Kirsty Brown – *Neurodivergent Athletes’ Perspectives of Sport: A Scoping Review Guided by the PPCT Model*
6. Dr Jess MacBeth – *“Driving Change”: Exploring Barriers, Facilitators and Impacts of Golf in the Lives of Visually Impaired Players.*

PRESENTATIONS 2 13:30-15:10 – CHAIR: DR GYÖZŐ MOLNÁR

1. Dr Lesley Sharpe – *Bringing Science Live to the Stage: young People’s Reflections on Inclusive and Adapted Physical Education Through Creative Performance*
2. Dr Jacob Law & Dr Laura Davies – *Preparing Aspiring Practitioners to Deliver Inclusive Physical Activity: Early Insights from a Higher Education Intervention in Collaboration with Goalball UK*
3. Kelly Fellows – *Enhancing Inclusion in Initial Teacher Training*
4. Dr Lara Tonna Grima – *Two Voices, One System: Teachers’ and Parents’ Views on Inclusive Physical Education for Students with Physical Disabilities*
5. Brodie West – *Non-Disabled Secondary School Students’ Perceptions of Inclusion in Physical Education*
6. Claudia Stura & Torsten Wojciechowski – *Sports in National Action Plans on Disability – a Comparative Analysis of Austria and Germany*

PRESENTATIONS 3 15:35-17:10 – CHAIR: CHAIR: DR JESSICA MACBETH

1. Rebecca Foster MBE & Stuart Harrison – *“Unheard Potential”: How Underfunding Shapes Deaf Sport and Identity in the UK*
2. Heather Chapman – *A Critical Examination of Nutritional Advice Received by Mobility-Impaired Adults During Their Transition to Wheelchair (TW) and Subsequent Habitual Use of a Wheelchair*
3. Dr Motoaki Fujita – *Factors Determining Sports Participation Among Individuals with Disabilities: A Qualitative Study Based on 100 Interviews*
4. Becky Price – *Examining the Impact of Destination Deaflympics funded Have a Go Days*
5. Alissa Nehrlich – *Disability Inclusion: Shaping Accessible Practice*

TUESDAY 14 JULY

KEYNOTE SPEAKER 09:00-09:45

Gary Callier

A former Royal Engineer in the British Army and a serving police officer, Gary’s career is defined by service, resilience, and leadership, both in uniform and beyond. An accomplished Invictus Games competitor, he represented Team UK at the Invictus Games The Hague 2022 in Athletics Track and Field, and again at the Invictus Games Düsseldorf 2023, competing across Wheelchair Rugby, Wheelchair Basketball, and Athletics. His achievements include 3 Gold, 3 Silver, and 1 Bronze medals, alongside personal bests in 200m and 1500m wheelchair racing.

Beyond elite sport, Gary is a transformational leader shaping the future of inclusive physical culture. He is the Founder and Managing Director of Police UK Disability Sport (PUKDS), Founder and Operations Manager of the PUKDS Foundation, and Founder of the National Police Trust, organisations committed to breaking barriers, improving wellbeing, and creating meaningful sporting opportunities for disabled officers and staff across the UK.

Aligned with the conference’s focus on reimagining physical culture, health, and wellbeing, Gary’s keynote will be an interactive discussion exploring his transformational journey with sport, from the Royal Engineers to the Invictus Games and beyond. He will reflect on how sport can be a powerful tool for identity, recovery, performance, and systemic change, and how he has evolved from participant to leader creating inclusive sport pathways for others.

PRESENTATIONS 4 9:45-10:55 – CHAIR: DR CHRISTOPHER BROWN

1. Dr Libby Steele – *Trilingual Communication and Coaching in Welsh Sport: A Co-Production Case Study*
2. Becky Price – *Examining the Impact of the Destination Deaflympics Programme*
3. Caroline van Lindert – *Inclusion of Persons With a Disability in Mainstream Sports Clubs, The Dutch Case*
4. Diana Pérez Ruiz – *The Role of Kinematics in Sport Adaptation: Adapting Aikido Through Tokui Waza*

PRESENTATIONS 5 11:30-12:40 – CHAIR: DR EMMA RICHARDSON

1. Diana Pérez Ruiz – *The Rule of Kinematic in Sport Adaptation: The Practice of Aikido with Upper-Limb Deficiencies*
2. Arjo Wijnhorst – *A Cyclical Approach to Inclusive Sport Participation: Lessons from a National Dutch Ecosystem*
3. Christian Wilson – *Disabled Children & Young People’s Experiences in Mainstream Education and PE Context*
4. Helen Black – *Troubling the Practice of Inclusion and (Re)Homing Disability in Intersectionality: Physical Activity Experiences of Disabled Women with Multiple-Marginalised Identities*

PRESENTATIONS 6 14:00-15:10 – CHAIR: DR MOTOAKI FUJITA

1. Harriet Little – *Only Equal When Exceptional: Public and Media Perceptions of Disability Through the Lens of Paralympic Success*
2. Dr Chris Brown – *The Winter Paralympic Games: A Critical History and Legacy*
3. Chunhong Zhou – *Reproducing and Resisting Barriers: Women Wheelchair Users’ Digital Self-Expression and the Politics of Physical Activity in Post-Reform Socialist China*
4. Destry Indra Wibawa – *From Medals to Equal Rights: Disability Sports as Political Capital in the Indonesia Paralympic Movement*

PRESENTATIONS 7 15:30-16:40 – CHAIR: DR LESLEY SHARPE

1. Dr Amanda Farrugia – *The Demands and Coping Strategies of Athletes with Intellectual Disabilities in Team and Individual Sports*
2. Suzy Farthing – *From Tokenism to Untapping Growth: How Brands Should Use their Disability Sport Partnerships Authentically and Meaningfully to Achieve their Strategic Aims*
3. Helen Black & Christian Wilson – *“What’s Best for you?”: Using Cripistemologies as a Grounding for Participatory Research with Communities that are Non-Verbal*
4. Dr Emma Richardson & Chris Bright – *Physical Activity Experiences of People with Type 1 Diabetes across the Life Course*

1. From Soldiering On to Rebirth and Resilience: How Disability Sport Reconceptualises Recovery Among Injured and Ill Military Veterans and their Families

Emma Richardson, Győző Molnár and Don Vinson,
University of Worcester, UK

Operational deployments, training injuries, and chronic illnesses leave many UK military veterans and personnel with physical injuries and psychological trauma, including PTSD, moral injury, depression, and anxiety. These challenges are frequently compounded by family breakdowns, social isolation, and profound loss of identity, creating complex and multidimensional recovery needs that exceed the scope of traditional medical rehabilitation. Sport, particularly through high-profile initiatives like the Invictus Games, has been increasingly positioned as a powerful recovery tool for military veterans, active personnel, and their families. Yet despite widespread enthusiasm for sport-based interventions, limited research examines how participants themselves understand and experience recovery through these programmes.

This presentation draws on seven months of ethnographic fieldwork with Team UK during the 2023 Düsseldorf Invictus Games. Our methodology combined participant observation, surveys, in-depth interviews, and multimedia documentation to explore how the Games support recovery from participants' perspectives. By embedding ourselves within the Team UK experience – from training camps through competition and post-Games transitions – we developed rich, nuanced understandings of how veterans, personnel, and family members navigated their recovery journeys.

Our central finding reveals that participants' conceptualisations of recovery underwent profound transformation through Invictus Games participation. Initially, recovery was understood through the lens of "soldiering on" – a framework deeply embedded in military culture that frames recovery as returning to "normal" functioning or work readiness. This conceptualisation reflects military conditioning that valorises pushing through adversity, suppressing vulnerability, and rapidly restoring operational capability. Participants described investing tremendous effort in trying to "get back" to their pre-injury or pre-illness selves, measuring recovery against benchmarks of physical capability and psychological resilience that often proved unattainable.

When "soldiering on" failed to deliver anticipated outcomes, participants frequently experienced devastating feelings of loss, inadequacy, or chaos. The inability to return to previous identities as soldiers, partners, parents, or workers created existential crises that traditional recovery frameworks struggled to address. Medical discharge procedures, which often reinforce linear recovery narratives, exacerbated these difficulties by positioning participants as deficient rather than engaging with the complexity of their experiences.

Participation in the Invictus Games facilitated radical reconceptualisation of recovery as "rebirth" and "resilience" – a dynamic, non-linear journey involving reimagining self-identity, transforming relationships, and discovering new purposes. Rather than restoration to a previous state, recovery emerged as an ongoing, fluctuating narrative of becoming. Participants described learning to embrace changed bodies and minds, developing identities that integrated rather than denied their injuries and illnesses, and finding meaning through connection with others navigating similar experiences. Family members similarly

reconceptualised their roles, moving from supporting a partner's return to "normal" toward building shared futures that honoured changed realities.

This reconceptualisation has significant implications for how military organisations, healthcare providers, and sporting bodies support recovery. Our findings challenge dominant recovery frameworks that privilege medical models focused on symptom reduction and functional restoration. Instead, we argue for approaches that recognise recovery as identity reconstruction, relational transformation, and meaning-making. The Invictus Games' emphasis on community, shared experience, and celebrating achievement within changed circumstances creates conditions for this reconceptualisation in ways that traditional rehabilitation often cannot.

2. Behind the Veil: Contextualising the Disability Experience of Para-Athletes of Kerala

Asita Ajith and Sangeeta Sharma

Birla Institute of Technology and Science, India

Kerala's (located in the southwestern part of India) sporting landscape is known for its passionate fandom, particularly within the realms of football and cricket. Extant research shows that, with dedicated clubs for popular sports, the Kerala sports ecosystem has successfully carved out a niche for rising young talent, helping the state gain global recognition. While mainstream athletes make history, little visibility is given to the para-athletes from Kerala who have represented the country in various national and international competitions, including the Paralympics and World Championships, in the dominant sporting discourse of the state. This paper aims to bring the voices of para-athletes in Kerala to the forefront, who are often invisible despite their medal-winning performances on the international podium. Currently, para sports research in India is in its nascent stage, and the existing literature focuses on broad areas such as governance, the range of training facilities available to athletes, and the growth of Indian representation in the games. There is a lack of documentation of the nuanced, everyday lived realities of para athletes at the grassroots level across the country's states and regions, including Kerala, where their careers can rise and stall. The paper employs a qualitative methodology to examine the invisible lives led by the para-athletes.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 para athletes from the state to understand the multifaceted challenges they face in the pursuit of an athletic career. The required participants were identified through snowball sampling, which helped reach para athletes from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and sporting disciplines within the state. The interviews were conducted both in-person and online, providing a deeper understanding of the athletes' professional and personal journeys. Informed consent was taken from all the participants before the interviews. The interview questionnaire focused on understanding the athlete's journey to date, the infrastructural, financial and social challenges they face, the accessibility issues they encounter daily, and the support they have received from the state and other social institutions. Through this study, we aim to bring the unsung champions' voices and narratives into the mainstream, which are otherwise sidelined by the stories of able-bodied athletes, thereby addressing the absence of athletes' perspectives in the para sport research of the country. The findings point to the need for additional infrastructure and to the lack of state government funding for athletes, which stands as a hurdle for many in obtaining proper training and opportunities to compete on international platforms. The athletes also underscored the need for much broader, more inclusive media coverage of their athletic feats across both print and visual media that deviates from traditional inspiration-and-tragedy narratives. By foregrounding the athletes' voices, the study challenges the normative ideals of recognising athletic bodies based on physicality. The study lays the foundation for future interventions and policy recommendations to improve and revitalise the state's parasport ecosystem. Additionally, the suggestions reiterate the urgent need to initiate a statewide dialogue that will recognise Kerala's disabled athletes, a step that is long overdue.

3. “It’s not Fair!”: Multisensory reaction time differences between D/deaf and hearing populations in athletics starting systems

Elizabeth R. Steele^a, Gavin P. Lawrence^a, Michael A. Khan^b, Eleri S. Jones^a, Elizabeth A. Purbrick^c and Victoria M. Gottwald^{a,*}

^aBangor University, Wales, UK, ^bTrent University, Ontario, Canada, ^cEngland Athletics, UK

When competing alongside hearing athletes in athletics, D/deaf athletes are typically faced with variable starting systems (e.g., lights, flags, vibrating armbands), which run concurrently with an auditory stimulus to encourage inclusion. However, a lack of consistency with regards to technologies adopted has led to inequitable opportunities for fast reaction times (RTs) between D/deaf and hearing athletes. Given that RT is a critical element of performance in sprint events, the aim of the current series of studies was to determine whether current starting systems present a disadvantage for D/deaf athletes.

We tested RT differences between unimodal and bimodal – auditory, visual, and haptic stimuli across D/deaf and hearing populations in lab-based (Study 1) and field-based (Study 2) environments. Analyses for Studies 1 and 2 confirmed RT advantages for individuals able to access bimodal stimuli (e.g., hearing athletes accessing both auditory and visual stimuli).

Findings support a visual-haptic configuration as the most equitable (and fastest) stimulus composition between populations. We then used semi-structured interviews (Study 3) to comprehensively explore the insights and experiences of existing starting systems from key personnel (e.g., athletes, coaches, NGBs).

Three themes were developed using reflexive thematic analysis: (1) knowing when to go – experiences of starting systems; (2) organisational challenges; and (3) from awareness to action. Across the three studies, we provide insights into the limitations of current practice that culminates in a series of applied recommendations. Findings may be instrumental in informing UK Athletics and World Athletics policy regulations around starting systems to improve equity for D/deaf athletes.

4. Finding 'me' through wheelchair basketball: an autoethnographic study of finding acceptance of a new identity after acquiring a disability through surgical removal of a sacral chondrosarcoma

Adam J. Dickinson-Shill¹, Carolynne Mason¹, David W. Maidment¹, Carolyn Plateau¹, Ed Cope¹ and Emma V. Richardson²

1 Loughborough University, 2 University of Worcester

This study explores the first-authors experience of acquiring disability through treatment for sacral chondrosarcoma, a form of primary bone cancer. It examines the psychological, physical, and social impacts of this life-altering illness, particularly identity loss, and how wheelchair basketball, and the community surrounding it, played a transformative role in reshaping and accepting their new disability identity.

An evocative autoethnography approach was used to present subjective, raw, emotional realities to encourage readers' immersion, empathy, and reflection. This method highlights how sport can support identity (re)formation following life-altering illness.

This autoethnography consists of nine short stories detailing the first authors experiences through and beyond cancer treatment. These stories explore the disintegration and reconstruction of identity, culminating in the discovery and acceptance of a new identity through sport.

This evocative autoethnography provides insight into the lived experiences of disability acquired through cancer treatment. It explores identity loss, the transformative power of sport in the (re)discovery of identity, and the nuanced components that intersect to support patients to form new identities post-diagnosis. These stories may resonate with others facing life-altering illness or injury, offering reassurance that (re)discovery of self is possible.

5. Neurodivergent Athletes' Perspectives of Sport: A Scoping Review Guided by the PPCT Model

Kirsty R. Brown, Mary L. Quinton, Joht Singh Chandan and Jennifer Cumming

University of Birmingham, UK

Neurodivergent conditions such as ADHD and autism are becoming increasingly acknowledged in sport. Despite this, sport trails behind in awareness, research, policy and practice compared to other parts of society such as education and work. Recent editorials call for urgency in addressing the inclusivity of sport for neurodivergent individuals to avoid exacerbating the risk of poor mental health. Despite these recommendations, there is scarce research from the perspective of neurodivergent athletes themselves. There are, however, many media sources offering the perspective of neurodivergent athletes that likely provide valuable insights. To capture the complexity of these experiences, Bronfenbrenner's Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model will allow synthesis of this literature beyond an individual-focus.

The main aim of this scoping review is to map neurodivergent athletes' experiences in sport using the PPCT model. More specifically, this review will answer the following questions: (1) What are neurodivergent athletes' experiences of interactions with others in sport? (i.e., proximal processes); (2) How do athletes' view and manage their condition in relation to their sport engagement? (i.e., person); and (3) What are neurodivergent athletes' perspectives of the culture and inclusivity of sport? (i.e., context). By doing so, this review will provide a holistic lens by situating neurodiverse athletes within nested systems and over time.

Several methodological framework and recommendations will be utilised to ensure rigour of the review, namely: the Joanna Briggs Institute; Arksey and O'Malley's framework supplemented by Levac and colleagues'; and the PRISMA-P checklist. Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model will be used as a conceptual framework to inform the review and aid the analysis by situating the experiences of neurodivergent athletes from individual person-factors to the wider systems surrounding them. Articles from the perspective of neurodivergent athletes comprising those with ADHD, autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and Tourette's will be included. Both peer reviewed (e.g., qualitative and case studies) and grey literature (e.g., media articles) will be searched for and eligible for inclusion. At each stage of the review at least two reviewers will be involved to determine the eligibility of evidence.

By using the PPCT model to synthesize the existing literature from the perspective of neurodivergent athletes will help to identify the multi-level factors that relate to their well-being, development, and performance. This review will assist in exposing systemic barriers and where improvements are needed within the sporting ecosystem surrounding neurodivergent athletes. In turn, this will determine research priorities for this quickly evolving area of research to inform policy and practice.

6. “Driving Change”: exploring barriers, facilitators and impacts of golf in the lives of visually impaired players

Jess Macbeth¹ and John Fry²

1 University of Lancashire, UK, 2 University Centre Myerscough, UK

Visually impaired (VI) people are less likely to engage in physical activity and sport than sighted individuals. Whilst over two thirds of VI people want to be more active, only a quarter agree that sport is for ‘someone like me’. Furthermore, VI people are more likely than other disabled people to report lack of money, lack of inclusive and accessible facilities, and their impairment or condition as barriers to engaging in physical activity. Given that nearly 80% of people with sight loss in the UK are over 65 years old, sport and physical activity opportunities for VI people need to take age into account. In comparison to other sports, such as Goalball and football, golf is often overlooked as a sport for VI people, yet its adaptable nature and focus on skill makes it uniquely suited for inclusion, for all age groups. However, participation remains relatively low with VI people representing only 4.3% of golfers registered with the European Disabled Golf Association.

This presentation reports on the first phase of a larger research project on VI golf. Drawing on the social relational understanding of disability, we explored the barriers, facilitators and impacts experienced by VI golfers utilising an online questionnaire containing both closed and open questions and co-designed with England & Wales Blind Golf (EWBG). After being tested for accessibility needs, a link to the questionnaire was shared by EWBG to their members and completed by twenty-seven respondents who were predominantly male (96%), over 55 years (81%) and white (100%). Initial findings reveal significant wellbeing benefits: 96% of respondents reported improved physical health, 93% mental health, and 97% enhanced social life. Qualitative insights underscore these outcomes, with participants describing golf as a source of confidence, social connection, and renewed purpose for those with acquired sight loss. Demand for golf is strong, where 85% expressed a desire to play more, however barriers persist, the most significant of which is guide availability (81%), creating a paradox between independence and reliance on support. Additional barriers include transport (78%), limited local opportunities (67%), concerns about progressive sight loss (59%), negative attitudes (48%), cost (48%), lack of awareness (44%), confidence (33%). Facilitators of participation include strong social networks (family/friends, 85%), and governing bodies, such as England and Wales Blind Golf (85%). Motivation and enjoyment (81%) were key drivers, with respondents highlighting golf’s role in combating isolation and fostering friendships. Technology is also a promising enabler: two-thirds had used ‘TopTracer’ ranges, citing benefits for independence, though enhancements like audio feedback could improve accessibility further.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing discourse on disability sport by demonstrating golf’s potential to deliver holistic benefits and strengthen community ties.

7. Bringing Science Live to the Stage: Young People's Reflections on Inclusive and Adapted Physical Education Through Creative Performance

Lesley Sharpe and Simon Sanchez

University of Lincoln, UK

Historically, the voices of disabled and marginalised young people have been underrepresented in research concerning physical education (PE) and school sport. While participatory and creative research methods have increasingly been used to include young people in knowledge production, far less attention has been paid to how findings are shared back with the young people most affected by them. Traditional academic outputs remain largely inaccessible and often fail to resonate with the young people whose experiences they represent. Science Live on Stage was developed as an interdisciplinary response to this gap, translating sociological and critical disability research on PE, sport and inclusion into a live theatre performance for children and young people.

The study adopts a qualitative, arts-based methodological approach. Science Live on Stage was collaboratively developed by the lead researcher with expertise in critical disability studies and a practitioner in children's and young people's theatre and performing arts, using narrative, character, humour, and embodied storytelling to translate research findings via theatrical performance. To explore how this method resonated for young audiences, school-based focus groups were conducted with twenty ($n = 20$) secondary school students (11-13 years) who watched Science Live on Stage exploring how young audiences understood, engaged with, and constructed meaning from the performance.

Data collection and analysis are ongoing; however, the study is anticipated to generate insights into how young people interpret ideas regarding inclusion, disability, and belonging in relation to physical education (PE) and sport when research is encountered through live theatrical performance. Initial engagement, via a post-show survey, suggests that young people may use Science Live on Stage to reflect on their own experiences of PE, to explore understandings of difference within PE and sport, and to question taken-for-granted assumptions about ability and inclusion. Early insights point to the potential of creative performance to open up critical dialogue around adapted PE and inclusive practice in ways that are accessible, meaningful, and socially resonant for young audiences.

This study positions live performance as a method of research dissemination, beyond impact activity. Science Live on Stage demonstrates the potential of creative methods to extend inclusive research practices beyond data collection and into dissemination, offering important implications for adapted PE research, practice, and public engagement.

8. Preparing Aspiring Practitioners to Deliver Inclusive Physical Activity: Early Insights from a Higher Education Intervention in Collaboration with Goalball UK

Jacob Law and Laura Davies

St Mary's University, UK

Despite increased policy attention around inclusion, many early-career physical education (PE) teachers report limited confidence, knowledge, and practical experience when working with pupils with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairments (VI). Research suggests that VI students often feel isolated within PE settings, in which they report being made to feel incapable and excluded from activities, impacting their sense of belonging (Haegele, 2022; Meier, Hoger and Giese, 2023). This is compounded by discriminatory behaviour due to a lack of understanding and empathy from peers and adults, while teachers suffer from low confidence, knowledge and experience, further impacting the inclusion and engagement of VI students (Haegele, 2017). For example, Khadka, (2012) found that VI students enjoyed ball games but found these difficult to engage with and restrictions were often imposed by individuals supporting them rather than by the restrictions of the games themselves.

This paper presents early-stage insights from a pilot intervention that positions higher education (HE) not merely as a site of knowledge transmission, but as an active provider of scaffolded, real-world experiences through which aspiring practitioners can meaningfully develop inclusive practice. In collaboration with Goalball UK, the intervention centres on training undergraduate students enrolled on PE and sport-related degree programmes to become accredited Goalball Leaders, before supporting them to plan and deliver Goalball sessions with VI pupils from local schools. Crucially, the project is designed not only to increase access to disability sport for VI pupils, but to provide aspiring practitioners with authentic, supported teaching experiences that allow them to interrogate their own assumptions, pedagogical decision-making, and approaches to inclusion.

This paper will discuss Phase 1 of the research, which adopted a qualitative design focused on the experiences of undergraduate student practitioners. Data collection included pre- and post-qualification surveys alongside semi-structured interviews conducted post-intervention exploring confidence, preparedness, and perceptions of inclusive teaching. While analysis is ongoing, early insights suggest that immersive delivery experiences within supported environments play a significant role in developing students' confidence, adaptability, and reflexivity - qualities that are challenging to cultivate through classroom-based, theoretical learning alone. Participants describe how these encounters prompted critical reflection on normative PE practices and highlighted transferable, inclusive principles applicable beyond VI contexts.

By foregrounding undergraduate students as developing practitioners, this paper argues that universities can play a vital role in reimagining inclusive physical culture by creating opportunities that are not consistently available within school systems. The paper concludes by discussing implications for higher education and the design of future university–community partnerships in disability sport.

9. Enhancing Inclusion in Initial Teacher Training

Kelly Fellows

ParalympicsGB's Equal Play campaign highlights that only one in four disabled pupils regularly take part in Physical Education. Currently, 65.5% of PE teachers report that their initial training did not equip them to teach pupils with SEND. Inclusion 2028 is a programme grant funded by the Department for Education which aims to improve the chances and choices for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in physical education, school sport and physical activity. Led by the Youth Sport Trust, Inclusion 2028 brings together a consortium of experts from both education and sport, including Activity Alliance, nasen, Swim England, ParalympicsGB, educational practitioners, and young people with SEND. As part of Inclusion 2028, the Youth Sport Trust have been working in partnership with Activity Alliance, Association for PE and ParalympicsGB on a pilot project to improve the quality and quantity of teacher training to ensure the next generation of teachers have the skills and confidence to deliver truly inclusive PE.

SEND-specific support and training have been provided to two cohorts of students: one at Liverpool John Moores University and a second at Plymouth Marjons University. In addition to the in-person support provided at each university, both cohorts have been signposted to the Inclusive Education Hub to self-assess their current practice, invited to attend the Inclusion Live 2026 conference, and provided with links to the whole range of resources developed through the programme to support inclusive practice.

This pilot project is being independently evaluated. To assess the impact of the training and support provided to trainee teachers in the two settings, pre and post training surveys have been conducted with all students. The evaluation is ongoing and students will also be invited to take part in a follow-up focus group and key stakeholders, such as lecturers and course tutors will be invited for interview.

Evaluation feedback to date has shown that 82% of students strongly agreed the experience would have a positive impact on their future practice, while the remaining 18% agreed. Follow up research activities are due to happen in February 2026.

Qualitative insights have found, so far, that as a result of the support and training, one trainee has secured a placement at a specialist provision starting in January 2026, and a further four students from Liverpool John Moores have contacted settings to express interest in future SEND training and employment opportunities. This has supported the university to establish relationships between themselves and specialist provision settings in their local area.

To date insights, demonstrate the positive impact of this pilot project on trainee teachers. In particular, their confidence in delivering PE to young people with SEND and their understanding of how to differentiate their teaching to include all pupils ensuring they are physically active.

The evaluation is ongoing and further data is due to be collected in January – March 2026. This conference presentation will cover the full pilot evaluation and findings, including implications for practice and recommendations for future delivery.

10. Two Voices, One System: Teachers' and Parents' Views on Inclusive Physical Education for Students with Physical Disabilities

Lara Tonna Grima, Thomas Borg, Mathea Saliba and Joseph N. Grima

University of Malta

Malta's school inclusion policy, published by the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (2022), is grounded in a comprehensive framework that seeks to ensure every learner has access to high-quality education and appropriate support. The policy advocates a responsive and flexible approach, encouraging schools to adapt their pedagogical practices and professional mindsets to meet the diverse needs of all students. Within the Physical Education (PE) learning outcomes, one of the stated goals emphasises that all students, "irrespective of gender, race and ability," are to be accepted, and that differentiation should be implemented "so that each student feels a sense of inclusion and belonging" (MEYR, 2022, p.v).

This presentation explores the inclusion of students with physical disabilities in Physical Education within Maltese primary and secondary schools by integrating the perspectives of both teachers and parents. Using a mixed stakeholder approach, data were collected through two questionnaire-based studies: one targeting Physical Education teachers (n = 69) and the other parents of children with physical disabilities (n = 50).

Findings from the teacher dataset indicate generally positive attitudes towards inclusive practice; however, teachers reported low confidence in their ability to effectively include students with physical disabilities. Key concerns included insufficient training in inclusive pedagogy, limited confidence in talent identification for students with disabilities, and gaps in knowledge—particularly in differentiating between physical and intellectual disabilities. Structural barriers such as accessibility of facilities, limited equipment, and inconsistent Learning Support Educator (LSE) support were also identified.

Parental perspectives revealed varied experiences of inclusion within PE lessons. While some parents perceived efforts towards inclusive practice, many expressed concerns regarding teachers' understanding of their children's specific needs and the lack of differentiated teaching strategies. Parents similarly highlighted inadequate resources, insufficient adaptations within school facilities, and systemic barriers that hinder meaningful participation in PE.

When viewed collectively, the two datasets reveal a convergence of concerns around training, awareness, and structural support, alongside a clear disconnect between positive intentions and effective inclusive practice. The findings underscore the need for enhanced teacher education, improved communication between schools and families, and targeted investment in inclusive infrastructure. Addressing these areas may contribute to improved participation, quality of experience, and long-term engagement in physical activity for students with physical disabilities.

11. Non-Disabled Secondary School Students' Perceptions of Inclusion in Physical Education

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Educational policy increasingly promotes the inclusion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) within mainstream education, including physical education (PE). While research has examined the experiences of students with SEND, considerably less attention has been paid to the role of non-disabled peers, despite evidence that peer relationships, attitudes and interactions are central to the success of inclusive PE environments. This gap is particularly significant given the social and hierarchical nature of PE, where difference is often amplified and inclusion remains largely unrealised. This study conceptualises inclusion relationally, foregrounding students' feelings of belonging, acceptance, and being valued. Inclusion is therefore understood as something produced through everyday peer interactions, rather than solely through policy intent or teacher practice.

The purpose of this research is to explore how non-disabled secondary school students perceive the inclusion of students with SEND within PE classes, and to identify the social, cultural, and contextual factors shaping their perceptions. A qualitative research design is used, consisting of a series of focus groups (n=3) with non-disabled secondary school students (n=12) aged 11–16 from one mainstream secondary school in the East Midlands. To support accessibility and reflexive discussion, character-driven social stories are utilised to prompt dialogue around inclusive and exclusionary PE scenarios. This approach enables participants to engage with experiences from both their own standpoint and the perspectives of others, supporting ethical sensitivity and reducing pressure to disclose personal views directly. Data will be analysed using thematic analysis, allowing for interpretive and iterative engagement with patterns of meaning across the dataset.

Data collection and analysis are ongoing; however, the study is anticipated to generate insights into how non-disabled students interpret inclusion, negotiate difference, and position students with SEND within PE contexts. Emerging patterns are expected to highlight tensions and challenges between support for inclusion and the subtle social practices that may undermine it, including assumptions about ability, fairness, and participation. These findings are likely to reveal how inclusion is experienced not as a fixed condition, but as something continuously negotiated within PE environments.

This research contributes to disability sport and PE scholarship by centring peer relations as a critical yet underexplored dimension of inclusive practice. It offers practical implications for peer-focused inclusion strategies, teacher education, and policy development, and emphasises the need to understand inclusion as a relational and collective responsibility within PE.

12. Sports in national action plans on disability – a comparative analysis of Austria and Germany

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Based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, National Action Plans on Disability were implemented in Austria (in 2012) and Germany (in 2011) and updated later on (Germany: 2016 and subsequently, Austria: 2022). Both also include actions in the field of sport. However, there has been no comparative analysis of these, leading to the following research question: From a cross-country perspective, which sports-related actions can be identified in national action plans on disability?

Comparative analyses have a long tradition in sports science research. More than five decades ago, Allhardt (1970) examined methodological challenges associated with comparative sports research. Since then, comparative work has continued. Due to Austria's and Germany's historical commonalities and structural similarities, a comparison of both countries can be considered particularly fruitful.

The authors employed the Qualitative Comparative Analysis approach. The National Action Plans on Disability serve as the data basis, which are evaluated inductively and comparatively.

In Austria, the focus is on sports associations, training opportunities for coaches, and protective actions against violence and abuse, while Germany's plan prioritizes the development of sports initiatives that are inclusive and that promote the competitive engagement of persons with disabilities. The differences found present opportunities for further developing both two national action plans. For example, inclusive sports programs and protective measures could be more systematically anchored at all levels of organized sports.

The National Action Plans on Disability are a key governmental tool to promote participation of persons with disabilities within society, including the field of sports. Austria's and Germany's different priorities can facilitate mutual learning and a deeper understanding of inclusion.

13. “Unheard Potential”: How Underfunding Shapes Deaf Sport and Identity in the UK

Rebecca Foster¹ and Stuart Harrison²

1 University of Worcester, 2 UK Deaf Sport

There are approximately 12 million people in the United Kingdom who are Deaf or hard of hearing. This includes around 10.1 million in England, 1 million in Scotland, 610,000 in Wales, and 320,000 in Northern Ireland. Sport England’s Active Lives Survey found that individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing are the most likely to be inactive. The survey revealed that 42% of Deaf or hard of hearing people engage in less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week. This compares to 40% of disabled people overall and just 21% of non-disabled individuals. United Kingdom Deaf Sport (UKDS), the National Disability Sports Organisation for Deaf people is a charity and was established in 2003, their aims are to increase participation in sport among Deaf individuals throughout their lives and to support more Deaf athletes in competing on the global stage.

UKDS receives government funding specifically for grassroots Deaf sport. This funding supports staff whose primary role is to engage Deaf individuals in lifelong participation in sport. UKDS other key role is selecting and preparing and Deaf athletes for the Deaflympics. However, government funding does not support elite level competition or training unlike other disabled National Governing Bodies who are represented in the Paralympics.

The research was conducted collaboratively by me, a hearing academic with volunteer experience at UKDS, and Stuart Harrison, a Deaf individual and founding member of UKDS who currently serves as its Honorary President. Semi structured interviews were used to engage key volunteers who have been involved in UKDS either as a competitor, coach or volunteer for over 10 years, so have had significant contact in Deaf sport. Three male Deaf participants accepted the invitation and were interviewed. Two participants used British Sign Language (BSL) as their primary communication system, and another was oral. Stuart acted as interpreter. Interviews took place via Teams and were recorded and transcribed.

The findings show that Deaf sport experiences vary widely, with participants highlighting the significant personal, social, and financial commitment required to take part in the UK. All participants reported a lack of clear direction and purpose from UKDS at both grassroots and elite levels, largely due to limited government funding that restricts meaningful growth and development. Recommendations include increasing the number of Deaf coaches, expanding Deaf awareness training, and introducing BSL into the National Curriculum. Although Deaf sport can foster identity, belonging, and purpose, these benefits are frequently undermined by systemic barriers, especially insufficient funding and minimal public recognition at elite level.

14. A Critical Examination of Nutritional Advice Received by Mobility-Impaired Adults During Their Transition to Wheelchair (Tw) and Subsequent Habitual Use of a Wheelchair

Heather Chapman, Allain Beuno, Stacey Jones and Emma Richardson

University of Worcester, UK

Wheelchair users constitute a highly heterogeneous population with diverse impairments, activity profiles, and health trajectories. Despite increasing participation in disability sport and physical activity, nutritional guidance for wheelchair users is largely extrapolated from ambulatory populations. Existing research disproportionately focuses on individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI) or lower-limb amputation, who typically experience an acute transition to wheelchair use (TW). In contrast, a substantial proportion of the wheelchair-using population acquires impaired mobility progressively, undergoing a chronic transition to wheelchair use (CTW). This distinction is rarely reflected in nutritional research or practice, and it may have important implications for health, body composition, and participation in sports or exercise. Evidence examining how wheelchair users—particularly those experiencing CTW—access, interpret, and experience nutrition advice across healthcare, rehabilitation, and sport contexts remains limited.

This presentation reports early findings from the qualitative phase of a mixed-methods study exploring the availability, accessibility, relevance, and lived experience of nutritional advice among adult wheelchair users. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who had experienced a CTW, representing a range of impairments, wheelchair types, and activity levels, including engagement in disability sport and exercise. Interviews explored experiences of receiving nutrition advice, perceived gaps in provision, dietary decision-making, and the interaction between physical function, fatigue, and food practices. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Findings from this qualitative phase directly informed the design and content of a subsequent quantitative phase, which was delivered via an anonymous national online survey targeting 300 participants who had experienced either a TW or a CTW.

Three interrelated themes were identified. Nutritional invisibility describes the widespread absence of structured or proactive nutrition support within wheelchair services, rehabilitation pathways, and condition-specific care. Many participants reported receiving no dietary guidance following transition to wheelchair use or in response to changing physical activity and exercise demands. Contested advice reflected scepticism towards generic dietary recommendations, frequently perceived as physiologically inappropriate, overly restrictive, or misaligned with the lived realities of fatigue, pain, and reduced energy expenditure. Participants often described adapting or rejecting advice that failed to acknowledge impairment-specific needs. Adaptive self-management captured the development of self-directed dietary strategies to manage energy levels, weight change, and symptom burden. While these strategies demonstrated agency and resilience, they were commonly shaped by trial-and-error, online information, or peer networks rather than professional support. Participants reported variable effectiveness, with many subsequently developing health complications commonly associated with long-term wheelchair use.

Across themes, participants highlighted limited integration between nutrition, rehabilitation, and disability sport services, alongside uncertainty regarding how dietary needs evolve with wheelchair use, training intensity, and long-term impairment.

The qualitative findings indicate a substantial gap between existing nutrition provision and the lived needs of wheelchair users, including those engaged in disability sport. These findings informed the subsequent quantitative phase, designed to assess the prevalence and distribution of identified issues at a national level. Integrating personalised, impairment-aware nutrition support into rehabilitation and disability sport pathways may offer an important opportunity to enhance health, performance, and long-term wellbeing.

15. Factors Determining Sports Participation Among Individuals with Disabilities: A Qualitative Study Based on 100 Interviews

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1 Nihon Fukushi University, Japan, 2 University of Tsukuba, Japan, 3 Sasakawa Sports Foundation, Japan, 4 Doshisha University, Japan

Previous research on the determinants of sports participation among persons with disabilities has encountered several methodological limitations. Quantitative studies suggest that relationships between impairment type, timing of onset, and sports participation are complex, making it difficult to clarify actual patterns. Conversely, case studies often rely on small samples, which constrains generalizability. Accordingly, the present study aimed to identify key determinants of sports participation through interviews with 100 athletes with disabilities.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 100 athletes with disabilities. Interview topics included the timing of impairment onset, type and severity of impairment, and the processes leading to the initiation of sport participation following the onset of disability. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes on average. Verbatim transcripts were prepared, and a matrix analysis was employed to identify shared themes by constructing a table in which participants were arranged as rows and analytical perspectives as columns. The survey was conducted over a six-year period from 2019 to 2024.

The sample consisted of 62 males and 38 females. With respect to impairment type, 26 participants had amputations or limb deficiencies, 20 had spinal cord or cervical spinal cord injuries, 10 had cerebral palsy, 9 had other physical impairments, 27 had visual impairments, and 8 had hearing impairments. Regarding severity, 69 participants were classified as having severe impairments, 27 as moderate, and 4 as mild. As of 2025, participants' ages were distributed as follows: 24 were aged 20–29, 28 were aged 30–39, 27 were aged 40–49, and 21 were aged 50–69. Analysis of the interviews revealed seven features that were largely shared among participants: (1) prior interest in sport or at least a neutral or positive attitude toward sport; (2) access to information about disability sport; (3) initial opportunities to access disability sport settings; (4) the presence of environments that support continued participation; (5) continued access to sport environments; (6) social support (e.g., from family or workplaces) and financial support (e.g., for overseas travel, training camps, or equipment) appropriate to competitive level; and (7) sustained motivation through factors such as role models, coaches, rivals, major competitions including the Paralympic Games, or performance goals.

The interviews with 100 athletes clarified key conditions underlying sports participation among persons with disabilities. Notably, most athletes reported an interest in sport prior to engaging in para-sport. This finding suggests that maintaining existing interest in sport may be particularly important. In Japan, sports policy has tended to emphasize encouraging persons with disabilities who lack interest in sport to develop such interest and initiate participation. However, such initiatives often require substantial time and financial resources, and their effects may be slow to emerge.

16. Examining the impact of Destination Deaflympics funded Have a Go Days

Becky Price

UK Deaf Sport

Destination Deaflympics* is UK Deaf Sport's youth engagement programme, reflecting their vision of every deaf person active and inspired by sport and physical activity. Destination Deaflympics represents the charity's first engagement with the educational sector, the initial focus being on Deaf Schools and mainstream Deaf Resource Bases. This is the first UK wide work on raising activity levels in D/deaf young people. It represents change and opportunity, overlooked until now.

This research examines the results and potential impact of 'Have a Go Days', one of the programme's activities; discrete, funded, Deaflympic inspired sports events for D/deaf young people. Its purpose is to understand the impact of playing sport or doing physical activity with other deaf young people of a similar age, in a low stakes, accessible and comfortable environment with no barriers to participation.

Completion of an organisational survey was mandated for the 6 UK groups in receipt of the funding. A sample of 104 D/deaf young people within the target age range of 8-16 years was obtained. Age, gender, communication method, ethnicity and disability data were collected. Qualitative data around the need for such events, participant benefits and successes and learnings for future opportunities were also sought.

Key themes generated from the findings are: improved social connection; increased participation in sport and physical activity; raised aspirations; the value of stakeholder collaboration; the importance of harnessing expertise in adaptive and accessible coaching and tools.

Exploration and analysis of sub themes is informing a refresh of the funding programme, with an emphasis on understanding how Destination Deaflympics and the 'Have a Go Days' can be more targeted in delivering in areas of greatest need for participants. This placed based approach will offer localised insight to the challenges deaf children and young people face to being physically active.

It seems clear that funding organisations to run an initial event engenders confidence and ambition to develop and repeat the experience.

*Deaflympics - elite sport event for deaf athletes, founded in 1924. Older than the Paralympics, the UK is a founding member.

17. Disability Inclusion: Shaping accessible practice

Alissa Nehrlich

Independent Researcher

1 in 6 people globally are disabled with up to 1 in 4 people being disabled in the UK population. While a significant amount of people live with a disability, many sport offers are not accessible. Research shows that 49% of disabled people are not able to participate in sport due to access barriers (Disability Policy Centre, 2024). While accessibility of sports ground and transport play a part in this practitioners also do not receive accessibility training as standard. This further leads to sport offers being inaccessible. While some targeted programmes teaching accessible coaching practices are now available, there is no standard across the sport industry, medical or allied health professions education, training or CPD. However, as practitioners in the sports industry, we can shape our own practice and create more accessible and inclusive spaces.

The aim of the session is to raise awareness of different barriers disabled individuals may face and increase awareness of how to remove these. Attendees will gain knowledge on how to assess their practice on accessibility and take actionable steps to remove barriers. Further to this the session aims to invite reflection and collaboration between professionals.

The presentation will include an overview of barriers faced by disabled individuals at different levels of sport and activities. Including participating in organised sport, training individually, accessing sport related healthcare provisions and education. Further to this, the session will provide practical information and steps on how to make the sport industry more accessible. Covering access to sports facilities, accessibility of participating in sport, accessing information and identifying own limits. Attendees will be able to apply the provided knowledge to their respective profession.

The information provided will increase knowledge among participants which in turn will contribute to increasing the accessibility of the sports sector and start conversations around inclusion. The session will ask attendees to reflect on the accessibility of their professional practice and commit to improving this as best to their ability.

The presentation will provide a brief background into accessibility, barriers and inclusion within the sport sector. Attendees will receive practical steps to analyse their own work and improve the accessibility of this through actionable steps.

18. Trilingual Communication and Coaching within Welsh Sport: A Co-Production Case Study

Elizabeth R. Steele and Nia S. Jones

Disability Sport Wales

Within sport across Wales, there are few specific and consistent opportunities to participate in Deaf-led and Deaf-inclusive environments, meaning that many D/deaf and Hard of Hearing participants train and compete alongside hearing people. This presents several communication and social barriers and can often lead to D/deaf participants feeling isolated, misunderstood and connected, hindering the meaningfulness of their participation. Whilst there are Deaf-specific sporting bodies within Wales, such as Wales Deaf Rugby Union or Wales Deaf Football Association, they are often geographically restricted or default to training camps or competitions as the primary opportunity to meet, train and play. To address these barriers, as part of a Taith funded project, Disability Sport Wales have co-produced a trilingual coaching resource to integrate British Sign Language (BSL), alongside English and Welsh, to improve the communication between D/deaf participants and their coach and to improve the confidence of coaches when using BSL in an integrated environment.

Following a successful pilot launch of the trilingual resource, additional consultation with Welsh National Governing Bodies (NGBs), partners, local authorities, and coaches has resulted in an expansion of the resource. This expansion includes sport-specific terminology co-produced with NGBs and coaches, as well as a greater breadth, and depth of general coaching cues and phrases. The trilingual resource includes topics on numbers, colours, greeting phrases, instructional phrases, motivational and encouragement phrases, health and safety phrases and includes information on deaf awareness, disability inclusion models and water safety.

There are physical and online formats of the resource; the physical resource comprises of A6 cards on a lanyard, aimed to be a functional tool to use in real-world environments utilising 3D BSL illustrations, English and Welsh translations of each word or phrase. The online resource (accessed via a QR code on the physical resource, or via the Disability Sport Wales website) utilises BSL videos for each word and phrase as well as a voiceover and phonetic pronunciation for the English and Welsh.

Via the co-production with NGBs, it is intended for this to be a practical resource available and embedded across the entire Welsh sports sector and lead to a positive shift towards the inclusion of D/deaf and Hard of Hearing participants within sport and physical activity. By promoting inclusive communication and language between coaches and participants, we also expect to see benefits across Welsh-medium communication.

19. Examining the impact of the Destination Deaflympics Programme

Becky Price

UK Deaf Sport

Destination Deaflympics* is UK Deaf Sport's youth engagement programme and reflects their vision to see every deaf person active and inspired by sport and physical activity. Destination Deaflympics represents the charity's first engagement with the educational sector, the initial focus being on Deaf Schools and mainstream Deaf Resource Bases. This is the first UK wide work on raising activity levels in D/deaf young people. It represents change and opportunity, hitherto overlooked.

This research examines the impact of use of the Destination Deaflympics resources packs, the programme's main tool; a free, National Curriculum linked, Primary and Secondary differentiated activity pack aiming to increase activity levels and raise awareness of the Deaflympics* in D/deaf 8-16s in the UK.

A focus group was carried out at the Deaf Academy SEN specialist school in Exmouth in December 2025. Participants had engaged with the Destination Deaflympics resources across 6 weeks, completing approximately 30 fifteen-minute activity sessions on consecutive weekdays. The activity was referred to as DPA Daily Physical Activity within the school environment. The focus group comprised a sample of 11 D/deaf teenagers within the target age range of 8-16 years. Data collection took place face to face in a classroom with teachers present. 2 students and teachers were interviewed on camera separately.

Key themes generated from the findings are: increased self and social confidence and connection; growing physical confidence; increased levels of interest in activity and actual activity, both in and out of school; improvement in readiness to learn and focus in school; increased discrete skills such as leadership, turn taking.

Exploration and analysis of sub themes is informing a redesign of the programme. It is hoped that members of the focus group will form part of a user sample which will engage with the new content designers. It seems clear however, that enjoyment can be observed in young people who do regular physical activity together, with pleasure in not only their own development in confidence, communication and skills but also a positive societal experience in observing and encouraging these changes in others.

*Deaflympics - elite sport event for deaf athletes, founded in 1924. Older than the Paralympics, the UK is a founding member.

20. Inclusion of persons with a disability in mainstream sports clubs, the Dutch case

Caroline van Lindert, Angelina Gómez Berns and Janine van Kalmthout

Mulier Instituut, Netherland

Sports participation of persons with disabilities (pwd) is far behind the general Dutch population (Van Lindert & De Jonge, 2023). The national government developed a new strategy to create an inclusive sports environment for pwd. Organised sports is targeted as an important setting. In the Netherlands, sports clubs offer excellent opportunities to enjoy sports at a grass roots level. Local clubs may also be a place where Paralympic careers begin. Offering inclusive sport, however, is not always daily practice within sports clubs. Many of them experience barriers to include members with a disability. The Mulier Institute monitors the extent to which mainstream sports clubs pay attention to pwd (Gómez Berns et al., 2025).

Periodically, an online survey is conducted among Dutch sports clubs that are part of the national research panel of sports clubs, set up by the Mulier Institute. The panel is a representative sample (n=2.000) of Dutch sports clubs. On average, 400 clubs participate.

Over the years, the percentage of sport clubs with members with a disability has gradually increased. More than half of the sports clubs indicate they have one or more members with a disability. Mostly, it involves small numbers. When sports clubs have more than 10 members with a disability, they often have a special group and qualified instructors to support these members. 22% of clubs with members with disabilities have such special groups (2024). This means, in most clubs, a form of inclusive sport exists. Most sports clubs are willing to include (more) pwd in their clubs, but they often perceive barriers to do so, for instance a lack of (qualified) volunteers.

In recent years, inclusive sports has become an important national and local policy issue, following the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. But what does inclusive sport mean? In the Netherlands, participation in sport is possible across a continuum of possibilities (from separate, adapted/integrated to full inclusive) (Brittain et al., 2023). In Dutch sports clubs we see a predominant tendency to organise sports in adapted settings. We discuss whether this is a good development or a result of predominant ideas about disability (Brittain et al., 2023).

21. The Role of Kinematics in Sport Adaptation: Adapting Aikido Through Tokui-Waza

Diana Pérez-Ruiz and Fernando Cánovas Garcia

Catholic University of Murcia, Spain

Research in adapted physical activity continues to gain momentum, generating critical insights into how health, functional capacity, and participation can be enhanced across diverse populations with disabilities. Recent scholarship has highlighted both the need to expand inclusive sport opportunities and the importance of equipping coaches with the competencies required for effective inclusive practice, including within martial arts contexts.

Aikido, a Japanese martial art characterised by its non-competitive ethos and documented health benefits, offers distinctive potential for inclusive adaptation across heterogeneous populations, including individuals with disabilities. However, effective use of the hands is central to aikido practice, posing specific challenges for inclusion. Adapting aikido to provide meaningful participation opportunities for individuals with hand dysfunction requires technical modification while preserving the core martial principles and objectives of the discipline. The aim of this study was to propose an initial framework for adapting aikido techniques for individuals with hand dysfunction, informed by expert judgement.

Video recordings captured black-belt aikido practitioners performing core techniques under two experimental conditions: unrestricted bilateral hand use and unilateral hand restriction. Experienced aikido experts then conducted a congruence analysis to evaluate biomechanical consistency and performance quality across conditions.

The findings indicate that aikido techniques can be adapted for individuals with hand dysfunction while maintaining martial validity. Central to this process is a nuanced understanding of technique mechanics and the principle of *tegatana* (the conceptual use of the hand as an extension of the whole body, emphasising alignment, movement continuity, and intention rather than grip strength). These results suggest that aikido offers considerable scope for inclusive adaptation within a quality participation framework, with implications for coach education and the development of adapted martial arts practice.

22. The Role of Kinematics in Sport Adaptation: The Practice of Aikido with Upper Limb Deficiencies

Diana Pérez-Ruiz and Fernando Cánovas Garcia

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Adapted physical activity is widely recognised as an important resource for mitigating the physical, psychological, and social consequences of disability, with contemporary approaches increasingly emphasising inclusive and accessible forms of movement. While aikido has been associated with benefits for physical health and wellbeing, empirical research examining its therapeutic and adaptive potential remains limited, particularly when compared with activities such as swimming, where extensive biomechanical research has informed performance optimisation and rehabilitation practices. The aim of this study was to examine changes in upper-limb kinematics during aikido practice under a simulated gripping dysfunction condition.

Hand function was experimentally restricted using a splint-like device that immobilised the wrist and fingers. Aikido techniques were recorded and analysed using motion-tracking software to capture upper-limb kinematics. Differences between restricted and unrestricted conditions were examined using hypothesis-testing procedures for independent samples, assuming normality.

The results revealed significant kinematic differences between restricted and unrestricted conditions during the central phase of technique execution. Specifically, variables relating to vertical relative position, vertical relative acceleration, and both vertical and horizontal relative velocities showed statistically significant differences under the gripping dysfunction condition. No significant differences were observed during the initial or final phases of movement execution.

These findings indicate that simulated gripping dysfunction alters the biomechanical patterns underlying aikido technique performance. Future research should extend this work to practitioners with upper-limb amputations or hand-related disabilities and explore how these biomechanical adaptations can inform the design and evaluation of tailored aikido-based interventions aimed at promoting health, functional integration, and inclusive participation in adapted physical activity contexts.

23. A Cyclical Approach to Inclusive Sport Participation: Lessons from a National Dutch Ecosystem

Arjo Wijnhorst

Founder of Uniek Sporten and Fonds Gehandicaptensport, Netherland

Sport and physical activity are widely recognised as contributing to health, wellbeing and social inclusion. For many people with disabilities, however, participation in sport does not follow a linear pathway. Fluctuating physical capacity, medical conditions and energy levels often result in cycles of participation, withdrawal and re-entry.

Uniek Sporten is the national Dutch platform for inclusive sport and physical activity and a practice-based example of how a cyclical approach to sport participation can be designed. In the Netherlands, approximately 1.8 million people live with a disability. Uniek Sporten was developed as an integrated ecosystem that connects inspiration, guidance, practical support and opportunities for both organised and home-based physical activity.

This presentation will represent the participation journey of visitors, which often begins with orientation and discovery. Each year, around 720,000 unique visitors use the platform to explore suitable sport and physical activity options through accessible search tools tailored to location, interests and support needs, which are evolving towards more personalised, AI-supported guidance. Online orientation is linked to offline support: users can be connected to community sport coaches who provide personal movement advice and support steps towards suitable local activities. Through close collaboration with sport organisations and a nationwide network of 340 municipalities, Uniek Sporten supports access to local sport opportunities across the Netherlands.

Practical barriers are addressed by supporting access to adaptive sports equipment through borrowing options and financing, enabling participation while the system is being further developed towards a more sustainable model. A central element of the cyclical approach is Uniek Sporten Thuis (Unique Sports at Home). This free digital offer, developed together with rehabilitation centers and colleges, recognises that participation in organised sport is not always possible due to recovery, fatigue or temporary changes in health. It provides accessible and adaptive workouts that enable people to stay active and return to organised sport when possible. The platform supports over 4,000 users and has recorded more than 160,000 minutes of physical activity in less than two years.

Beyond access and facilitation, Uniek Sporten also plays a motivational role through storytelling, strengthening a sense of belonging and normalising sport participation for people with disabilities. Building on the same ecosystem approach, future developments explore additional support, such as transport options and sport buddies.

In conclusion, this case will illustrate that inclusive sport participation is better understood as a cyclical process rather than a linear pathway. By combining organised sport, home-based activity, practical support and inspiration within one ecosystem, Uniek Sporten supports sustainable engagement across changing life circumstances.

24. Disabled Children and Young People's Experiences in Mainstream Education and PE Context

Christian T Wilson

There are 16 million people living with a disability, 11% of those being children. This research aimed to review current literature and knowledge about disability and education, including physical education (PE) with the intention to provide key conclusions and recommendations for improving and developing practice moving forward. PE is important for improving your physical and mental health and providing a platform for a lifetime love of movement. Also, PE is important for improving social skills and enhancing learning. Good physical, mental health and social skills are especially vital for disabled people who are more likely to experience peer-led social isolation and bullying. Furthermore, "Disabled children and disabled young people are at increased risk of being typically inactive"

Forty peer reviewed research papers that had been published in the public domain from 2010 to 2023 were examined. The reasoning behind this was I wanted to compare and contrast a wide range of sources during my systematic literature review. Literature was found and selected using the search engine Google Scholar. The research conductor (RC) considerably and carefully researched different journal articles for the independent study. The RC researched different subject areas using the Google Scholar search bar, entering key words or sentences such as "the impact of bullying" and the "lack of disability awareness."

The key findings of the systematic review are that inclusion of students with special educational needs (SEN) in PE needs improving as students with SEN are feeling the impact of not being included in PE. For example, teacher attitudes and other education issues also acted as barriers to participation for students with SEN.

These findings highlight the complex interplay of physical, attitudinal and social that work to stop students with SEN equitably participating in PE, and having the opportunity to experience different forms of physical movement for physical and mental health. Teachers and educators need to improve and develop their practices to include children with SEN in PE, but this can only be done with wider support of policy, resources and training.

Inclusion of students with SEN in physical education needs improving as SEN students are feeling the impact of not being included in physical education. Teacher attitudes and other education issues acted as barriers to participation for students with SEN.

Teachers and educators need to improve and develop their practices. They could set disabled people up with a group of friends that all share the same type of experiences of SEN and disability. It's important to listen and support disabled people with the greater risk of bullying within physical education lessons and should include them in ways of tackling it.

25. Troubling the Practice of Inclusion and (Re)Homing Disability in Intersectionality: Physical Activity Experiences of Disabled Women with Multiple-Marginalised Identities

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Reports in disability physical activity research indicate that physically disabled individuals face heightened risks of poor physical, mental, and social health. Despite well-documented physiological and psychosocial benefits of physical activity, participation rates among disabled people remain low. Previous studies highlight societal ableism and “able-bodied” hegemony, revealing how the world is inadequately designed for inclusive participation. Research calls have urged policymakers and sport practitioners to enhance equitable access to physical activity by promoting accessible spaces, amplifying lived narratives, and validating exclusionary experiences to enhance physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

However, there is a significant gap in disability studies concerning social justice in physical activity access, particularly regarding the multiple and fluid intersectional identities of disabled individuals across sociodemographic factors such as age, sex, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. This study responds directly to Sport England’s “Uniting the Movement” initiative, which targets marginalised groups, specifically focusing on disabled women with additional oppressed identities.

The doctoral study’s objective was to identify physical activity inequities experienced by disabled women with at least one other marginalised identity and rigorously shape meaningful practice as those relate to physical activity employees. This presentation highlights disabled women’s lived experiences in leisure centres and gyms, using coproduction strategies to explore intersectionality in applied settings and propose strategies for inclusion.

Data was analysed through the six-stage reflexive thematic analysis, which has been commonly used in qualitative research with pluralistic approaches to identify patterns across the data produced. Inductive reflexive thematic analysis was deemed suitable to seek the understandings thoughts, experiences and behaviours across the data set, utilising the nuanced articulation of all participants and researcher positionality.

Preliminary findings indicate that disabled women often feel (i) “in the way” or like a “nuisance” in gym environments. Suggested improvements include cultural inclusivity measures, such as Ramadan specific membership offers and the sale of Muslim swimsuits. Additionally, all 5 women research partners emphasised the (ii) need for the feeling of community within physical activity spaces and the necessity of scheduling times that disabled members could meet with leisure centre employees. Other findings relate to the importance and impact leisure centre staff have within these settings when working collaboratively with disabled women and how intersectionality is key to understanding and creating equitable leisure spaces. The concept of Crip time and the ‘disabled body’ also questioned the normative perspectives held within these spaces and how coproduced knowledge exchange can remove barriers.

The involvement of disabled women and leisure centre staff, amplify voices that are typically missed within research, establishing an impactful, applied foundation that better reflects our complex and contemporary society.

26. Only Equal When Exceptional: Public and Media Perceptions of Disability Through the Lens of Paralympic Success

Harriet Little

Independent Researcher

This paper will explore how public and media narratives surrounding disability, achievement, and national identity help construct a culturally embedded hierarchy in which disabled individuals are often viewed—and come to view themselves—as unequal members of society unless they embody the exceptional status associated with a Paralympic gold medallist. Drawing on critical disability studies and media analysis methods, the study investigated how the United Kingdom’s celebration of Paralympic success simultaneously elevates elite athletes while reinforcing narrow definitions of worth, productivity, and belonging for the wider disabled community.

The project gathered data through questionnaires distributed on social media platforms. These were completed by 24 members of the public of varying ages and genders, all of whom had either a visible or invisible disability acquired at any stage of life. In addition, five media professionals working in disability broadcasting for the BBC and/or Channel 4 took part in semi-structured interviews conducted via video conferencing.

The research identified a recurring pattern: Paralympic gold medallists are frequently framed as inspirational icons who “overcome” adversity in service of national pride. While this narrative is intended to empower, it also constructs a standard of “acceptable” disability tied to physical excellence, resilience, and heroic accomplishment. Interviews and media discourse show that many disabled individuals—whether or not they participate in sport—feel excluded from this narrative and pressured to demonstrate extraordinary achievement to counter stereotypes surrounding dependency or societal burden. As a result, national visibility of Paralympians does not automatically translate into improved equality for the broader population of disabled people; instead, it can deepen existing social divides by positioning elite sport as the sole avenue to admiration and full social legitimacy.

Furthermore, the study highlighted how media coverage reinforces this dynamic by privileging stories of triumph rather than structural barriers, everyday discrimination, or the political dimensions of disability rights. This coverage shapes public attitudes, leading many to equate disability representation exclusively with Paralympic success. Participants reported feeling overshadowed by these high-performance expectations, which can marginalize those whose disabilities preclude athletic participation or whose lives do not conform to celebratory narratives of overcoming.

Ultimately, the paper argues that the elevation of Paralympic champions—while valuable in challenging certain prejudices—cannot substitute for broader cultural and policy changes required to achieve genuine equality. The research therefore highlights a need for, a more inclusive media landscape, one that recognises the dignity and diversity of disabled experiences beyond elite sport, and for societal narratives that do not demand exceptionalism as a prerequisite for full social belonging.

27. The Winter Paralympic Games: A critical history and legacy

Chris Brown

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This research critically appraises the history and development of the Winter Paralympic Games. The purpose of this study is to understand the origins of the Winter Paralympic Games and evaluate how and why the Winter Paralympic Games have developed during their 50 years of existence. The project has been created in partnership with the National Paralympic Heritage Trust. The study is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), through an award from the University of Hertfordshire's ESRC Impact Acceleration Account. The outcome of this project is a 20-minute visual and audio documentary that introduces the audience to the history of the Winter Paralympic Games. Great British Paralympic involvement in the Winter Paralympics is captured through archival material and interviews with British athletes who have competed at the Paralympics. The documentary critically reviews the social impact of the Winter Paralympic Games and the future direction of the event.

Data for the documentary was collected through document analysis and ten in-depth semi-structured interviews with former Winter Paralympians, administrators, and researchers in the Winter Paralympic field. It is argued three Winter Paralympic Games played an important role in shaping the development of the Winter Paralympic Games: 1976, 1998, and 2010. The 1976 Winter Olympic Games for the Disabled, as it was known at the time, was vital because it was the first Winter Paralympic Games. The event took place in Örnsköldsvik, Sweden, and was relatively small, featuring 198 athletes from 16 nations. The next significant Winter Games in the growth of the Winter Paralympics are the 1998 Games in Nagano, Japan. These Games are the first time the Winter Paralympics are staged outside of Europe, providing a global reach that was beyond the scope of the 1980 Games. Nagano featured 562 athletes from 31 nations, a record for the largest athlete delegation at the Winter Paralympic Games until the 2018 Winter Paralympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea. Nagano was the first and only Paralympics to officially include athletes with intellectual impairments as eligible competitors in the Winter Paralympics. The Vancouver 2010 Winter Paralympics are significant for several reasons. First, 2010 is the first time the same organising committee is used to organise the Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. Second, the Vancouver Games were the first Paralympics to deliberately plan for sport participation legacies. Finally, the 2010 Vancouver Winter Paralympics were a statement Games and led the way for the modern serious sporting competition that are the Winter Paralympics in 2026.

Contemporary challenges facing the Winter Paralympic Movement include a persistent gender imbalance among Winter Paralympic athletes, exacerbated vulnerability to climate change due to being held in March, and the status of athletes with intellectual impairments and the possibility of future eligibility in the Winter Paralympic programme.

This research offers important insights into an often neglected and poorly understood area of Paralympic sport.

28. Reproducing and Resisting Barriers: Women Wheelchair Users' Digital Self-Expression and the Politics of Physical Activity in Post-Reform Socialist China

Chunhong Zhou and Győző Molnár

University of Worcester, UK

According to China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF), there were 85.02 million disabled people in China by the end of 2010, with women accounting for 48.45% (41.19 million). The certified disabled population has grown from 10.05 million in 2009 to 38.05 million in 2021 (CDPF, 2023). Chinese official discourse (e.g., CDPF) and state media (e.g., Central China Television) both celebrate elite Paralympic athletes, highlighting national glory, triumph, and independence to serve nationalistic, neoliberal, and ableist agendas. However, everyday physical activity (PA) among ordinary disabled people, particularly women, has been marginalized. Academic research similarly focuses on Paralympic representation (Wang et al., 2025; Wu, 2024; Yang & Lin, 2023), children with intellectual disabilities (Yuan et al., 2021, 2022), and elderly populations (Xu et al., 2024), critically neglecting the PA participation of adult women with physical impairments, especially shaped by social media platform dynamics.

This study addresses these gaps by examining how structural and cultural PA barriers are represented, reinforced, and challenged through disabled women's digital self-expression in vlogs and audience comments, offering insights into inclusive digital environments and equitable accessibility and infrastructure for disabled women in China.

Using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019) grounded in feminist media studies and digital embodiment lens of disability (Senft, 2008; Albury, et al.; 2019; Lam, 2025), we analyzed PA-themed vlogs from ten adult Chinese women wheelchair users and audience comments posted on Xiaohongshu (internationally known as RedNote), one of China's most popular multimodal (image-, video-, and text-based) social media platforms.

Analysis revealed intersecting structural barriers (inaccessible facilities and transport, limited adaptive PA coaching, inadequate institutional and community support, stark urban-rural access disparities) and cultural barriers (aesthetic, functional, romantic, and normative ableism; stigma; commodification; emotional framing of disability; techno-solutionism; masculinized physical ideals). Vloggers navigated complex pressures including performative autonomy, internalized ableism, male surveillance, gender norm conformity, and platform algorithmic, censorship, and self-censorship politics. Crucially, digital spaces in China emerged as ambivalent sites where inclusion is simultaneously performed yet constrained, contested yet reproduced. Vloggers' self-expression and follower interactions both challenged and reinforced dominant narratives of ability, competence, and femininity, illustrating the layered digital power relations shaping disability and gender representation in China.

This research illuminates how digital embodiment simultaneously challenges and conforms to ableist and gendered norms in post-reform socialist China, revealing complex negotiations required for Chinese disabled women's online visibility within intersecting neoliberal, nationalist, and patriarchal contexts. It also calls for structural investment in accessibilities, adaptive PA training, and infrastructural equity, and stronger cultural inclusion of disabled women's everyday PA practices.

29. From Medals to Equal Rights: Disability Sports as Political Capital in the Yogyakarta Paralympic Movement

Destry Indra Wibawa

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Disability sport is often associated with health, rehabilitation, and social inclusion, yet such framings often overlook its political significance. This paper challenges depoliticised narratives by showing disability sport movement as a vehicle for rights advocacy and equality, focusing on the Paralympic movement in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This study explores how disabled athletes mobilise sporting achievement as a strategic resource to challenge discrimination, earn recognition, and influence state policy.

The analysis is grounded in the social relational model of disability, which locates inequality in social and institutional settings and is considered individual barriers in sports scope. Building on this, the paper draws on recognition theory and the concept of symbolic capital to examine how public sporting success reshapes social value and political legitimacy. From this perspective, Paralympic medals are understood as more than competitive outcomes, they are socially recognised achievements that can alter how disability is perceived and how disabled athletes are positioned within relations of power.

Based on empirical research conducted in Yogyakarta, the paper examines the experiences and strategies of elite disabled athletes and disability sport organisations. Prior to 2018, Paralympic athletes faced persistent inequality, including lower performance bonuses and limited institutional support, despite the higher costs associated with adaptive sports. Many athletes also came from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, where limited access to education and employment made sports one of the few available routes to recognition, economic security, and upward mobility.

Sporting achievement carried both symbolic and material significance. The findings show that medal success at national and international competitions was actively used as a form of advocacy. The National Paralympic Committee of Yogyakarta played a vital role in translating achievement into political influence by lobbying local government, building partnerships with universities to secure access to sports facilities, and collaborating with local non-governmental organisations. These strategies helped convert public recognition into tangible outcomes, including increased institutional support and the equalisation of performance bonuses after 2018.

By foregrounding athletes as political actors rather than passive beneficiaries, this paper reimagines disability sport as a contested space where physical culture, wellbeing, and citizenship intersect. Wellbeing is conceptualised not only in physical or psychological terms, but also as dignity, social recognition, and access to rights. While grounded in a regional case study, the analysis highlights broader national dynamics, suggesting that disability sport in Indonesia operates as a strategic arena for negotiating equality between the state and persons with disabilities.

This paper contributes to disability sport scholarship by extending debates beyond participation and health outcomes, offering a Global South perspective on how elite sport can be mobilised to challenge structural discrimination. It calls for recognition of disability sport as a political process central to reimagining physical culture, health, and wellbeing.

30. The demands and coping strategies of athletes with Intellectual Disabilities in team and individual sports.

Amanda Farrugia

MCAST – Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, Malta

Athletes with intellectual disability (ID) participate extensively in organised sport across recreational, developmental, and competitive pathways. Despite this growing involvement, their lived experiences within training and competition environments remain significantly underrepresented in disability sport research. Existing literature has primarily focused on performance outcomes, classification, or general participation trends, often overlooking the unique psychological, social, and contextual challenges faced by this population. Consequently, little is known about how athletes with ID experience and interpret stressors in sport, or how they navigate these challenges through individual and social coping strategies. This study addresses this gap by exploring the multifaceted stressors encountered by athletes with ID and examining the ways they cope with and adapt to the demands of sporting environments.

Situated within a pragmatic paradigm, the study adapted community-based participatory research (CBPR). Athletes with intellectual disability, their parents, and coaches were engaged as key stakeholders throughout the research process. Data were generated through prolonged field engagement, which included participant observations in a variety of sport settings, reflexive field notes capturing researcher reflections and contextual dynamics, and semi-structured interviews conducted within familiar training environments to enhance comfort and communication. Participants were recruited using criterion-based purposive sampling to ensure representation of diverse abilities, sport types, and support structures. Reflexive thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data, allowing for a rich and nuanced interpretation of the participants' perspectives.

Analysis generated four interrelated themes. The first, psychological experiences, highlighted athletes' fear of failure, challenges with emotional regulation, fluctuating self-perception, and sport-related behavioural responses. These experiences were often shaped by competitive pressures, previous negative outcomes, and communication barriers. The second theme, socialisation and inclusion, revealed difficulties related to peer interaction, experiences of bullying, limited social acceptance, and instances of marginalisation within sport and the wider community. Social dynamics were shown to significantly influence both athlete wellbeing and continued engagement. The third theme, knowledge and understanding, exposed gaps in awareness and competence among coaches, parents, and service providers, particularly regarding the cognitive and communication needs of athletes with ID. These gaps frequently resulted in inconsistent support, misinterpretation of behaviours, and unmet needs that affected athlete confidence and performance. The fourth theme, sport-specific contexts, identified environmental and organisational stressors, including distracting training environments, lack of routine and consistency, frequent changes in coaching personnel, and restricted access to suitable facilities and adapted resources.

Findings show that although athletes with ID encounter many of the same psychological and environmental stressors experienced by non-disabled athletes, these challenges are

intensified by broader issues such as social exclusion, communication barriers, limited disability awareness, and structural constraints within sport systems. The study offers practical direction for sport practitioners by underscoring the importance of targeted coach education that includes effective communication strategies, emotional support techniques, the establishment of predictable training routines, and the adaptation of instructional methods to meet diverse cognitive needs. The results also emphasise the importance of building inclusive team environments, strengthening peer relationships, and improving coordination between families, coaches, and sport organisations to provide consistent and reliable support.

31. From Tokenism to Untapping Growth: How brands should use their disability sport partnerships authentically and meaningfully to achieve strategic aims

Suzy Farthing

Co-founder of Untapped, Vice-chair of Lord's Taverners, Advisory Board member for WCWFC in the Community

Disability sport partnerships have proliferated in recent years, yet many brands struggle to move beyond superficial engagement that benefits neither disabled athletes nor their own organisational objectives. Drawing on 18+ years of experience across elite and grassroots disability sport, this presentation examines how brands can develop authentic, strategically aligned partnerships that create genuine value for all stakeholders.

The current landscape presents both opportunity and challenge. The 2026 Winter Paralympic Games demonstrated continued momentum for the Paralympic movement, while non-Paralympic sports like disability cricket are increasingly investing in elite and participation pathways. However, as we approach LA2028, the backlash against EDI initiatives in the United States threatens to undermine progress. This makes it more critical than ever that brands develop meaningful, defensible partnerships grounded in authentic commitment rather than performative gestures.

Central to authentic engagement is recognising and amplifying disabled people's voices throughout partnership lifecycles. Too often, disabled athletes and communities are consulted initially then excluded from ongoing strategy, activation and evaluation. This presentation examines how brands and rights holders can establish sustained mechanisms for incorporating disabled people's perspectives, ensuring partnerships remain responsive to community needs rather than being shaped solely by non-disabled decision-makers.

Common pitfalls illustrate the consequences of tokenistic approaches: featuring disabled athletes in marketing without meaningful investment in their development; launching short-term campaigns timed to Paralympic cycles without sustaining momentum; developing partnerships without disabled employees or advisors informing strategy; and measuring success solely through brand metrics rather than tangible community impact. Such approaches not only fail to deliver strategic value but actively harm disability sport by reinforcing perceptions that disabled athletes are props for corporate reputation management rather than elite performers deserving genuine investment.

In contrast, strategic disability sport partnerships offer substantial value. Evidence from partnerships with BT, Toyota, Channel 4 and the ECB demonstrates how thoughtfully designed collaborations can drive employee engagement, enhance customer loyalty, facilitate market expansion, and catalyse organisational transformation. Realising these benefits requires genuine partnerships: co-creating activation strategies with disabled athletes, integrating disability sport into employee engagement programmes, developing accessible products informed by insights, and committing to multi-year investment that enables sustainable sport development.

Effective measurement frameworks are essential for demonstrating value to both brand stakeholders and rights holders. This presentation shares practical approaches for evaluating partnerships across multiple dimensions: brand reputation metrics, employee and customer engagement indicators, tangible investments in sport infrastructure and athlete pathways, community reach, and evidence of organisational change toward inclusive practice.

Finally, maximising disability sport's potential requires building collaborative ecosystems connecting brands, governing bodies, charities, research institutions, and event delivery partners. Drawing on examples from the Paralympic movement, disability cricket, Lord's Taverners, and Premier League Foundation programmes, I demonstrate how cross-sector collaboration can leverage complementary expertise to create sustainable impact that transcends individual partnerships.

This session provides practical guidance for brands, rights holders, and intermediary organisations seeking disability sport partnerships that are strategically valuable, authentically inclusive, and genuinely transformative.

32. “What’s Best for you?”: Using Cripistemologies as a Grounding for Participatory Research with Communities that are Non-Verbal

Emma V. Richardson, **Helen Black**, **Christian T. Wilson**, and Rebecca Foster

University of Worcester, Worcester, UK

Participatory approaches are widely recognised as foundational within disability research, particularly in physical education and related fields. Despite growing commitments to inclusion, individuals who do not primarily communicate through spoken language, such as disabled people with Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Verbal Dyspraxia, or those within D/deaf communities, continue to be systematically excluded from research processes. This exclusion often stems from an overreliance on oral communication for recruitment, informed consent, data generation, and collaborative meaning-making. When “talk” becomes the default mode of participation, research unintentionally reinforces ableist assumptions about whose voices are legitimate and whose communication counts as knowledge.

We position cripistemologies as a generative grounding for reimagining participatory research with non-verbal communities. Cripistemologies challenge normative assumptions about knowledge production and invite researchers to “crip” research practices, that is to creatively disrupt traditions that privilege speech. By centring non-verbal ways of knowing, researchers can design studies that are not only accessible to non-verbal participants but fundamentally shaped by their epistemic contributions.

We focus on two key dimensions of cripistemological practice: acknowledging ableist baggage and embracing crip time. Acknowledging ableist baggage requires researchers to critically examine the implicit biases, disciplinary norms, and methodological habits that position verbal communication as superior. Christian shares his lived experience of cerebral palsy and verbal dyspraxia and his use of ‘text to speech’ assistive technology to communicate. He reflects on how being non-verbal shapes both the practical and emotional dimensions of his life, including experiences in PE where he was consistently chosen last and perceived as less capable than verbal peers. These reflections expose how communication norms shape inclusion, competence, and belonging. Reflexive engagement with such experiences enables researchers to recognise alternative communicative methods, gestures, assistive technologies, silence, and relational cues as meaningful forms of expression and data.

Crip time provides a temporal framework that resists the fast-paced, efficiency-driven expectations of conventional research. Crip time encourages researchers to slow down, adapt timelines, and create flexible processes that honour participants’ rhythms, needs, and communicative styles. ‘Crippling’ theory and methodologies requires that disabled people and disabled experiences are centralised at every juncture of research, from question generation to design, to data collection techniques and dissemination of results.

Drawing on our collective experiences, Christian’s lived experience as a non-verbal communicator and Emma, Rebecca, and Helen’s work alongside non-verbal communities, we illustrate how cripistemological principles can be enacted in practice. We share examples of adapting consent procedures, co-creating communication supports, rethinking data collection, and building relationships that prioritise trust, autonomy, and participant-led

decision-making. These experiences highlight the transformative potential of research informed by non-verbal individuals, for non-verbal individuals.

Recommendations include practical guidance for researchers seeking to make participatory work genuinely inclusive of non-verbal communities. Practical contributions include, using multiple communication methods, learning Makaton or sign language, allowing silence without pressure, respecting the pace of text to speech communication and consistently asking participants what works best for them. Grounding participatory research in cripistemologies expands whose knowledge counts, challenges normative expectations of communication, and contributes to more equitable and representative disability research.

33. Physical Activity Experiences of People with Type 1 Diabetes across the Life Course

Emma. V. Richardson¹, Christopher Bright², Daniel Farrow², & Hilary Nathan²

1 University of Worcester, UK, 2 Breakthrough T1D, UK

Type 1 diabetes (T1D) affects over 9.4 million people worldwide, including approximately 430,000 in the United Kingdom (UK), and is associated with significant losses in healthy life expectancy, underscoring the urgent need for strategies that support long-term wellbeing. Physical activity (PA) is widely recognised as a central component of T1D management, yet participation remains shaped by complex social, cultural, and structural barriers across the life course.

This study offers novel and significant insights to advance understanding, practice, and policy regarding PA across the lifespan among individuals with T1D in the UK. Drawing on data from a national mixed-methods project commissioned by Breakthrough T1D, and focusing specifically on qualitative survey responses, we utilised both medicalised and socio-cultural lenses to (1) examine the PA experiences of people with T1D; and (2) explore the meanings of PA across the life course. The qualitative testimonies of 311 participants aged 3–75 were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis across age-based case studies, enabling in-depth exploration of key developmental and transitional stages.

Findings were presented chronologically, capturing distinctive age-related experiences: always plugged in to monitors (0–17 years); medical and social transitions (18–24 years); continued stigma and its impact in early adulthood (25–34 years); T1D changes and physiological aging (35–44 years); T1D burnout and aspiring to live well (45–54 years); and combating the body and social stigma to keep active (55+ years). Across these stages, PA emerged not merely as a biomedical tool for glycaemic control but as a socially situated practice shaped by identity, relationships, institutional structures, and cultural narratives of health and productivity.

We identified why PA becomes particularly meaningful at specific life stages—for example, as a site of “normalcy” and belonging in childhood, identity negotiation during young adulthood, or resistance against physiological decline in mid-to-late life—and how experiences are shaped by intersections of diabetes technology use, social attitudes, healthcare transitions, body image concerns, work and caregiving responsibilities, and aging-related physiological change.

Across all ages, participants described navigating stigma, institutional misunderstanding, and internalised ableism, often intensified by neoliberal discourses of personal responsibility and “successful” self-management. Cumulative exposure to comments, exclusion, and moralised expectations of health contributed to diabetes-related burnout and, at times, modified or risk-laden PA practices. We conclude that the T1D community remains underserved by current approaches that prioritise metabolic outcomes over lived experience. We call for targeted policy reform, mandatory educator and practitioner training, and lifespan-oriented, equity-focused research that fosters inclusive, flexible, and empowering PA opportunities embedded within supportive social environments.

“Nice to Know” Places to eat in Worcester

Halal Restaurants (In Worcester city centre)

1. Anatolian Palace Turkish Mediterranean Grill Restaurant - <https://worcester.anatolianpalace.co.uk/> (Fully accessible)
2. Massala Lounge - <https://www.massallalounge.co.uk/> (check accessibility)
3. Fireaway Pizza - <https://fireaway.co.uk/> (Fully accessible)
4. Yeliz Blossom Room - <https://yelizturkishrestaurant.co.uk/> (wheelchair access at the rear of the building)

Lowesmoor is a vibrant, eclectic, and increasingly international hub. Instead of typical high street chains, visitors are greeted by a distinctive mix of global grocers, Eastern European delis, and independent specialist shops, complemented by modern supermarkets.

“Best of British” Food

1. King Charles House - <https://www.thekingcharleshouse.co.uk/> (not fully wheelchair accessible; rollator accessible ground floor, no access to toilets)
2. The Farriers Arms - <https://www.farriersarmsworcester.co.uk/> (not wheelchair accessible; rollator accessible)
3. Eagle Vaults – <https://www.eaglevaultsworcester.co.uk/> wheelchair and rollator accessible lower floor

“Best” Pubs

1. Paul Pry – <https://www.paulprywr1.com/> (not wheelchair accessible; rollator accessible). Cosy bar, bar snacks are wonderful, situated near the Hive.
2. Cocky Anchor - <https://www.cockyanchor.co.uk/worcester> (accessible, disabled toilet lower floor, very steep short ramp which could cause issues for power chair users). In the city centre, looks deceptively small but huge inside.
3. King Charles House - <https://www.thekingcharleshouse.co.uk/> (not fully wheelchair accessible; rollator accessible ground floor, no access to toilets). A must have if you like history. Great ales as well as beer.
4. Cardinals Hat - <https://www.the-cardinals-hat.co.uk/> (accessible outside, no disabled toilet). A ‘step back in time pub’ with a variety of ales and beers.

5. Oil Basin Brewhouse - (step free access downstairs, outside area shared with Triple B and Alcove – right next to each other). For the more sophisticated beer and ale drinkers who want something a bit different.

6. Triple B - <https://www.tripelb.co.uk/> (small step to enter, seating outside). Belgium beer, say no more.

7. Alcove - (step to enter, no disabled toilets, seating outside). Wine and cocktails.

8. Heroes - (not accessible). Situated in a 16th Century Tudor building, long flight of steps to arrive, but a funky vibe if you wish.

9. Arch Rivals - (level but a small ridge to get in and small toilet not accessible for most wheelchair users). Situated near the Arches on the way into the city (of you follow the guide).

10. Browns at the Quay – <https://brownsworcester.co.uk/> one step access, disabled friendly – closed on a Monday.

Worcester also has a variety of the favourites, McDonalds, Pizza Express, Popeyes, Five Guys, Zizzi, Ask Italian and many more, as well as some excellent independent places such as:

The Olive Branch - <https://olivebranchworcester.co.uk/> - not fully accessible.

Fuego - <https://fuegoworcester.co.uk/> amazing pizzas

Boleros - <https://www.bolerovenues.com/> fine cocktails and light bites, fully accessible.



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