

Level Playing Field

www.levelplayingfield.org.uk



ANNUAL REPORT 2014 / 2015

Promoting Good Access for All Fans

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Level Playing Field is the trading name of the National Association of Disabled Supporters

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Sheffield United and Bradford City DSAs celebrating this year's weeks of action

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President's Forward

This is my 7th year as President and I am delighted to once again welcome you to Level Playing Field's annual report. Since becoming President, I have always been particularly struck by the dedication and high standards set by everyone involved. The commitment of Joyce Cook and her team has been impressive and especially when balanced against the limited resources.



It is clear that there is still a great deal to do and as this year's report once again testifies, progress continues at a significant pace with key representatives now adding their support to the charity's aims and objectives to ensure an inclusive matchday experience for all fans.

Over the last period, the previous Secretary of State for Disabled People, Mike Penning and the Sports Minister, Helen Grant were both extremely supportive of Level Playing Field's aims and objectives to ensure proper access for disabled sports fans and Joyce and I are looking forward to meeting with the new ministers in the weeks ahead to seek their support in helping us secure lasting change.

We were also delighted to welcome David Davies as a new Vice President. David brings a wealth of expertise to the cause alongside my fellow Honorary Officers and we each remain committed to working with everyone at Level Playing Field to deal with the issues to improve the quality of facilities and services offered to disabled sports fans in this country.

In closing, I wish to thank the Board of Trustees, my fellow Honorary Officers and the Ambassadors for their on-going generosity and unwavering support.

I look forward to the year ahead and to ensuring lasting progress on all fronts.

With my very best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Bernstein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

David Bernstein CBE
LPF President

Chair's Report

I wish to start my report this year by warmly thanking LPF's President, David Bernstein and his fellow Honorary Officers on behalf of the LPF Board of Trustees and staff. Each has played a crucial part over the years in helping us to keep access and inclusion high on the agenda in sports and government and their support and friendship has been unwavering.



Lords Richard Faulkner and Richard Rosser have continued to press for change in the House of Lords with support from their peers including Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson and Lord Chris Holmes and I wish to thank them all for their amazing support.

I also wish to thank my fellow Board of Trustees and the incredible LPF staff. Often, when I meet new people and talk about the work we do, they imagine a charity with a sizeable workforce and they are taken aback when I explain that we are a very small team of just 4 staff (only 2 until the end of 2014) with voluntary trustees, officers and ambassadors. Further, that until last summer, we operated on annual funds of circa £50k only. That is gradually changing but we still need further funding and to grow our team of staff to meet the ever-increasing demands placed on this great little charity with a huge heart.

It was an absolute pleasure to be able to get the new year off to a great start with the appointment of Stephanie Gadd as our first ever Chief Executive. Steph is already having a significant impact in improving the day to day running of the charity, in delivering our core projects and in reaching out to new stakeholders in collaboration with her team. It is a joy to have Steph on board, she is doing a sterling job, and I look forward to working with Steph to further develop LPF's reach and our works in the years ahead.

In writing this summary, my thoughts naturally turn to our dear friend and colleague, LPF Vice Chair, Gary Deards who passed away in March 2014. And I have no doubt that Gaz would be pleased with the progress we have made over the last 12 months but that would be very much tempered with firmly reminding me of the huge amount we still have to do to ensure a fair and inclusive deal for all sports fans.

Looking back, I have been very fortunate to be in the driving seat at LPF for the last 8 years and there is no doubt that we have made significant progress and ensured that access and inclusion for disabled sports fans is now firmly on the agenda of the governing bodies, their leagues and their clubs.

There have been some tangible successes and clubs that have been willing to embrace change and to improve the situation for their disabled fans. LPF always applauds such progress and uses these examples to encourage others to make similar improvements at both new and existing venues. You can see a summary of LPF's many activities and works in collaboration with our stakeholders later in this report.

But, I can either spend the next few paragraphs congratulating everyone on what a great job we have all done or we can take a long hard look and ask ourselves, our organisations, our clubs, our leagues and our governing bodies – 'are we all truly committed to this topic'?

And have those with the power to do so, taken the tough decisions needed to get the job done - to ensure lasting and meaningful change for so many disabled sports fans who quite frankly still get a raw deal week in and week out. This situation has got to end – it is quite simply time!

As we go to print, we are awaiting meetings with Kick it Out and the Premier League to discuss their Equality Standards and how seriously accessibility and inclusion for disabled fans and guests will be taken in awarding these new football standards to clubs going forward.

Access and inclusion

Take it from me, when a governing body puts its full weight and power behind this topic – access and inclusion - the seemingly impossible quickly becomes the normal. I know because I am also privileged to head up our sister charity, the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE). To give you some tangible examples of what I mean and how the partnership with UEFA translates into meaningful and lasting change; as part of hosting the UEFA Finals, venues and their clubs have been asked to make significant access improvements:

The Allianz Arena, Bayern Munich now has 100 extra wheelchair user spaces in previously unused areas of the ground – taking their capacity to 180 from just 80 on the back of the UEFA Champions League Final. This has left a lasting legacy with an existing stadium making further access improvements where it was previously said to be impossible.

The national stadium in Bucharest, developed for the Europa League Final, hosted the largest gathering of disabled people at a public event ever in the history of Romania – all visible and included alongside their peers – by meeting the minimum standards first established by football here in the UK back in 2004.

And EURO 2012 ensured a high level of accessibility at each host venue in Poland and Ukraine, including the introduction of audio-descriptive commentary for partially sighted and blind fans at each stadium; leaving behind a lasting legacy for local disabled fans.

Yet most of our Premier League football clubs still fall woefully short on those same minimum standards according to independent reviews by the BBC and the Sunday Observer and as most recently reported by the Telegraph. How can that be with the amount of wealth now at hand in English top-flight football?

We must never forget London 2012 and the wonderful Games Makers – where inclusion and diversity were at the forefront of every stage of planning for the Games and the Olympic Park - the results were clear for the whole world to see. Disabled fans suddenly realised what they had been missing for so long.

Despite what you might hear repeated, it really isn't that difficult and there is also no excuse for older stadiums. Let's face it; many of the top clubs that hide behind this excuse have been virtually rebuilt from the inside out usually with significant additions to their VIP, hospitality and media areas. And they enjoy huge resources. Likewise, LPF has also been advised that clubs can't make the necessary access improvements as that would mean that non-disabled seats would be lost and that our fellow fans would object. Again – a myth that simply isn't true. Just ask our non-disabled peers; the fans groups are appalled by these apparent claims. Delivering proper access at sports venues is a straightforward matter of priority and will.

We have to be bold and to learn from our successes. But we all have to take responsibility too – this isn't up to the clubs alone as individual businesses. If we took that approach we'd have no rules and regulations in our sports and that simply isn't the case.

The time has come to consider access regulation as a condition of licensing alongside other aspects already acknowledged as priorities by football's governing bodies.

We have to take our heads out of the sand – many professional clubs are not meeting their legal obligations according to the Equality Act and we can either hide behind the old cliques or ensure that we do all that is required and reasonable to put this right.

Our humanity as change makers

So, we all know and recognise that improving access and inclusion to our sporting venues is one of our biggest priorities. The current situation for so many disabled sports fans, and at some of our most iconic sporting venues, casts a shameful shadow over us all. As mentioned earlier, many professional clubs are in breach of equality legislation - not my words – the words of leading figures in sports and government!

Let's be clear, when a disabled person is denied access or provided with a lesser service - that really hurts – it is painful and it is discrimination and exclusion in its worst form. That tells us as disabled people that we are somehow less important, less valued, less worthy. Is that what we really mean? Is that the reputation we wish for our sports, for our professional clubs, for each other? Or do we seek true inclusion. If so, it is time to step up.

And you can bet that the old cliques will be being churned out by those most at fault – that try to convince us that the current situation is OK because we have old stadiums. Well it isn't OK and it's simply not true. And it can't be about a lack of funds - our top sports clubs are amongst the richest in the world. But there also has to be a will to create an accessible venue – old or new.

Here in the UK, we would no longer dream of actively excluding someone from a sporting event because they are black or catholic or female or gay and so on – so why do we still find it acceptable to exclude disabled people whilst stadium access remains so inadequate?

Disabled fans are denied the right to buy season tickets and often have no choice but to sit with opposing fans (in football). They are unable to sit with family and friends and have to tolerate poor views. And, most club websites are inaccessible and lacking vital information for disabled fans according to a recent investigation by AbilityNet. <http://www.levelplayingfield.org.uk/news/disabled-football-fans-show-red-card-top-flight-club-websites>

Is this really all about money or is it about our priorities and values as human beings?

Each of us has a level of power – some have more than others – but every single one of us are influencers and some amongst us are the decision makers.

So, I challenge your humanity as change makers – please go back to your organisations to your decision makers. Please be bold – please ruffle a few feathers but most of all let's ensure we finally get the job done once and for all.

The solution

The solution is clear – it's not complicated. We all know what we need to do. We can spend the next decade convincing ourselves that this is impossible or it is someone else's job or we can each step up.

The FA Wales and Rugby Football League have already been bold in this regard with their top-flight clubs having undertaken professional access audits with agreed access plans for change and the ECB and Premiership Rugby are shortly to follow their examples. It is a step in the right direction.

In closing, Level Playing Field has called repeatedly for a **3 Part Plan of Action**:

It's very straightforward; to create a short-term fund (for clubs requiring some assistance); to provide working examples (most already exist) and expert advice to clubs; and finally to regulate through independent access audits and by making this a regulation and licencing requirement.

Our stadiums and sporting venues must be fit for purpose – it is 2015 for goodness sake. That means accessible and inclusive sporting venues that are truly welcoming to all.

I have got to know you over the years and I know you respect the work we do – you have told me so repeatedly.

But we need your help. We are not going to get this job done without you. **Please - it's time.**

In closing, to each of you that continue to support Level Playing Field and our works, from all of us - a huge massive thank you.

As always, with warmest wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JCW', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joyce Cook OBE
LPF Chair

Treasurer's Report - results for the Year Ended 31 August 2014

A copy of the full of the National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS), trading as Level Playing Field (LPF), for the year ended 31 August 2014 are available on request.

During this period, the Board of Trustees has continued to safeguard the good name and values of the Charity and to support our members, the football family and other sports with a relatively modest level of funding. We continue to strive for an equality of facilities and services for all supporters.

2014 saw the continued success of the Working Together Project with funding from the Football Stadia Improvement Fund 'Fans Fund' and the new award of "Core Funding" from the same source which has been most welcome.

The LPF Access Audit programme has gained momentum since appointing an in-house NRAC consultant and we expect the programme to grow and become self-sustaining over the next period with further commissions anticipated from rugby, cricket, football and other sports. In addition, we are currently redeveloping our Disability Awareness Training packages for re-launch in autumn 2015.

We also continue to seek further funding through other funding streams. In the current economic climate this is no easy task and whilst there is nothing definite to report, we remain hopeful that the Match Buddies and other LPF projects will receive funding support over the next few years.

In closing, we would also like to thank our funders namely the Football Foundation (Football Stadia improvement Fund – Fans Fund) and the Football Association and Football Conference who both provided charitable donations. In addition, we wish to thank our benefactors who have generously provided expert professional services to Level Playing Field in 2013/14 as a charitable pro-bono donation including; Bevan Kidwell (legal advice), Bird Consultancy (media and PR), Katherine Woods (accounting) and all those who have generously donated funds and/or their time during 2014.

We very much hope that additional funding from the football family and other sports will be forthcoming to enable us to continue with our important projects and core activities that see an ever increasing demand on the charity and its associated levels of work.

It is safe to say that 2014 has been another action packed year for us all at LPF and 2015 in shaping up to be the same as we continue to campaign for equal access and inclusion for all sports fans.

Looking to 2015-16, there has been an increase in LPF's core funding from the Football Stadium Improvement Fund – Fans Fund of £125k per annum over 3 years, and DCMS awarded a grant of £30k in April 2015 for a project to disseminate accessibility information and guidance to governing bodies and their clubs.

Rosie Perkins
LPF Treasurer

About Level Playing Field

Level Playing Field (LPF) is the trading name for the National Association of Disabled Supporters and was originally established in 1998. LPF is a registered charity acting as a campaigning and advisory organisation across England and Wales to its membership and other parties across all sports. We are recognised as the representative and co-ordinating body of disabled sports fans.

LPF is a democratically run charity led by a representative Board of Trustees that has been elected by its members. LPF is further supported by its President and Vice Presidents (Honorary Officers), including key persons within the Football, Disability and Political arenas, who act in an advisory and ambassadorial capacity. LPF also has a small team of staff and consultants who collectively provide specialist access and inclusion knowledge, support key projects and manage the day-to-day running of the charity.

LPF has a wide range of members including professional clubs, disabled supporters associations and individuals. Our key objectives are to promote an inclusive agenda, to raise awareness and to enhance wellbeing through sport by ensuring an equality of spectator experience for all fans. LPF supports the Social Model of Disability, which states that people are only disabled or excluded by the existing barriers within our society.

LPF also provides support services and expert advice to its members and stakeholders, and represents the views, issues and concerns of disabled supporters to football and sports governing bodies, and government. We provide independent expert advice on all matters related to accessible sporting venues and inclusive match and event day experiences for disabled fans. Our works encompass a wide range of support services and our stakeholders include architects, local planners and access officers, clubs, managers of sports stadiums and other venues, policy makers, politicians and all party groups, media representatives, other fans groups, equality and disability organisations and not least disabled people, disabled sports fans, disabled supporters associations and their advocates.

We are extremely proud of our achievements to date and the impact and influence we have had in improving the match day experience for so many disabled people who enjoy watching live sports or aspire to do so, but there is still so much more to do to ensure 'Equal and Inclusive Access for All Fans'.

Issues Facing Level Playing Field

There are more than twelve million disabled people in the UK, approximately 12% of the population. Disabled people and their households have an estimated spending power in excess of £90 billion per year. Yet disabled people remain significantly less likely to participate in cultural, leisure and sporting activities than non-disabled people.

The London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics set a standard of best practice for disabled sports fans with accessible venues provided across the Olympic Park alongside the Games Makers who were on hand to ensure an inclusive welcome to all. That experience has given disabled people a taste of just

what is possible with the right intention and commitment to ensure sporting venues are fit-for-purpose.

In comparison to their non-disabled peers, the number of disabled people attending live sports matches and events is extremely low, even at professional levels of the game. For example, LPF estimates that around 30,000 disabled fans regularly attend professional football matches in the UK but when you compare that number with the 14 million fans who attended Premier League matches in the 2013 / 2014 season, it quickly becomes clear that there is a huge disparity in terms of the number of disabled people attending live matches.

There is an overall shortage of wheelchair accessible viewing areas, insufficient and / or poorly identified easy access and amenity seating for ambulant disabled supporters. There is also a lack of accessible toilet facilities and other amenities at some grounds and a disparity between ticketing policies for disabled and non-disabled fans. Much of the disabled seating is at pitch side with no alternative choice available, hospitality areas are often inaccessible, and the views or sightlines can be appalling.

It isn't all bad news of course and there has been good progress at some clubs. This often occurs at clubs with proactive Disabled Supporters Associations (DSA's) that are democratic and independently representative of the views of all their disabled fans and where there is a good working dialogue between the DSA and the club. LPF works closely with Disabled Supporters Associations and their at clubs and has been instrumental in helping to set up nine new DSA's in the last two years with many more first stage steering groups now established under the 'Working Together Project'. We will continue to support clubs and groups of disabled supporters to establish and sustain their local representative DSA.

We recognise that LPF has a responsibility to campaign on behalf of disabled supporters, to raise disability awareness and to strive for an equality of supporter experience. To do this we need to continue to work closely with sports governing bodies and government and the clubs themselves and to grow our membership. We need to further raise our own profile in influential circles and to continue to offer and develop LPF's specialist mediation and advice services and Access Auditing programme (specifically written for sports stadia), our Design Appraisal service, and to help clubs write and achieve their Access Plans. In addition, we intend to develop other areas of our works including Disability Awareness Training.

Level Playing Field relies on funding from the Football Stadium Improvement Fund, Fans Fund, and the Football Association, along with membership fees, ad hoc donations and pro-bono services. We very much welcome this funding and the recent increase to our core funding. However, the demands on LPF increase year on year and we are under increasing pressure with the resources at our disposal.

In the past twelve months we have taken steps to ensure the long term sustainability of the charity by undertaking more self-funding work such as expanding our Access Audit and Design Appraisal services and reviewing our Disability Awareness Training package in a bid to make it more appealing to clubs and other partners.

Aims & Objectives

The aims of Level Playing Field remain very clear and they are to ensure that football and other live sporting events are fully inclusive and welcoming to all fans in England and Wales.

- To be a voice for all disabled sports spectators
- To campaign for equality of spectator experience
- To enable more disabled people to enjoy live sports
- To enrich the lives of disabled people through football and other sports
- To raise disability and access awareness



Chief Executive Report

Appointment of LPF's new Chief Executive – Stephanie Gadd

The New Year brought about a significant development with the long awaited appointment of a new Chief Executive in January 2015. Steph Gadd introduces herself to the members below:

As a long time admirer of LPF and the important work it does and having worked in football and the charity sectors, I was delighted to be offered and to accept the position as LPF Chief Executive and to embrace the challenges that lie ahead, both personally and professionally.

My plan is to help lead LPF into an exciting new era, building on the progress and successes achieved so far with a continued strategic approach to growing our reputation and core business, whilst ensuring our long term sustainability. Above all, I intend to help deliver the LPF Board's vision of equal access and inclusion for all disabled sports fans.

We are pleased to host our 17th AGM very close to our new offices at the Brent Civic Centre and I wish to thank all those involved in helping us to welcome our members this year and I am very much looking forward to meeting some of you at my first AGM.

To summarise, I have greatly enjoyed my first four months at LPF and I relish the opportunities and challenges to come.

With all best wishes

Steph Gadd
Chief Executive

To follow is a summary of LPF's key activities and projects over the last twelve months.

Review of the year 2014 / 2015

Relocation to London

It has been another very busy year for everyone involved in Level Playing Field. The year kicked off with the long awaited office move to London in June 2014. This was a hugely significant move for the charity and one that epitomised our desire to grow and develop as an organisation. Everyone was delighted to welcome the Sport Minister, Helen Grant who officially opened our new office, which we share with our sister charity the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE), in October with guests including key representatives from across the sports sectors. The move was not without its challenges and we are delighted to have happily settled in our new office at No 1, Olympic Way in

Wembley, which sits in the shadows of Wembley Stadium. As hoped, being in London has enabled us to be at the heart of the sports industry and has improved our connectivity with key partners, stakeholders and fans.

Government Fans Survey

LPF welcomed the announcement in January 2015 that the Government had taken the decision to commission a nationwide survey that was specifically aimed at gathering the views of disabled sports fans. The purpose of the survey was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the treatment of disabled fans at sports grounds across the country to help inform future planning around improving access to sports stadia. The survey, which closed on 28th February 2015, was the largest ever survey of disabled sports fans across the UK and provided them with an opportunity to have their say about their experiences, both as seasoned fans or those who aspired to attend live sport matches.

LPF wishes to thank you to all those that took part in the survey and helped promote it amongst their networks. We look forward to the results of the survey which are due to be released soon, and hope that the newly elected Government continue to push the access and inclusion agenda in order to improve facilities and the match day experience for disabled fans.

House of Lords debate - Accessible Sports Stadia

On Monday 9th February, the House of Lords met with Lord Stevenson of Balmacara who asked what steps the government is taking to ensure sports stadia in the UK are made fully accessible for disabled spectators. Lord Gardiner of Kimble responded by saying the government had commissioned a survey of disabled sports fans (see above) and went on to say “it is very important that the momentum of the further work that needs to be done is continued very strongly”. Lord Holmes of Richmond asked what the government believes “should be done to clubs which choose actively to flout the law and not make their stadia accessible?” Lord Faulkner of Worcester added that in regard to the many clubs that fall short of accessible stadia guidelines, “is it not the answer that the government must legislate to make those guidelines mandatory?” He added, “Does the Minister agree that the one alibi which cannot work for the Premier League clubs is shortage of money?”

Lord Gardiner of Kimble replied that the government will keep the issue of accessibility to sports stadia on 'every meeting agenda' with all sporting bodies and acknowledged the need to “remedy what has been unsatisfactory for too long”. He also added that the government “hope that what we are doing now will be part of a cocktail of activity that ensures that legislation is not necessary, but if clubs of Manchester United’s wealth are not prepared to do better, then everyone will have to think about that.” It was a lively debate around our topic and moving forward, gave assurances of the government’s intentions to address the issue of access and inclusion at sports stadia.

High profile new projects

In the last year, LPF is delighted to have been appointed as access consultants on a number of high profile projects including working with the England 2015 team advising them on accessibility for the Rugby World Cup, providing access advice for the Olympic Stadium project which will become the new home of West Ham United Football Club, as well as being commissioned by the Football Association of Wales, Rugby Football League and England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to undertake large scale access audit programmes for each of their Premier clubs, Championship clubs and First Class cricket grounds respectively.

We have also worked closely with our colleagues at the Sports Ground Safety Authority to put together the new supplementary guidance for Accessible Stadia. Accessible Stadia brings together the background information central to designing new sports venues and providing for disabled spectators at existing stadia. It lays out clearly the requirements and obligations of equality law, related codes of practice and key sources of reference. The publication provides an invaluable source of information for developers, designers, stadium managers, and access consultants and sets out the minimum access standards for all sporting venues (both new and existing).

Our roots are in football and it remains a large part of our work, especially in terms of mediation with clubs and fans, but in securing the aforementioned projects, we have begun to significantly increase our scope and reach into other sports and to spread the message of equal access and inclusion to new audiences and fans bases.

New staff appointments

In response to the growing nature of LPF and the increased demand for our services, we have recently recruited new members of staff to the LPF team. In December 2014, we appointed two new members of staff. We welcomed Chris Summersell as our new Admin and Communications Officer. Chris oversees the day to day administration of the charity as well as managing the LPF newsletter, the LPF social media accounts and the LPF Weeks of Action.

We also welcomed Kieran Reynolds to the team in December 2014, our new Project Coordinator for the Working Together project. Kieran leads on the Working Together Project, which is aimed at bridging the gaps between clubs, and supporters by creating user led Disabled Supporters Associations (DSA's). We are delighted to see the project thriving under his leadership and influence.

Ruth Hopkins, an NRAC Access Consultant, is our Access and Development Manager. Ruth has been extremely busy over the last twelve months coordinating and managing the Access Audit programme with clubs and increasingly, with National Governing Bodies such as the ECB. To ensure we are able to meet the increasing demand for our specialist access auditing service, we have recently taken the decision to recruit a new Access and Development Officer and hope to appoint someone over the summer. We hope that this new appointment will enable LPF to resolve complaints quicker and more effectively, and increase our capacity to undertake access audits, design appraisals and to deliver Disability Awareness Training.

LPF Weeks of Action

This year's campaign had a theme of 'access and inclusion', with a particular focus on fans and spectator engagement as opposed to participation and players. The 2015 Weeks of Action, which took place between 18th April and 3rd May, proved to be our most successful to date. This is largely due to having a dedicated team of staff to drive the planning and delivery elements of the campaign and to assist our partners in the organisation of LPF themed events.

The campaign itself was also underpinned by a strategically planned and targeted social media campaign through our Facebook and Twitter accounts, and the LPF website which sought to raise awareness of LPF, who we are, what we do and tackle myths around disability. Our Twitter Thunderclap (scheduled tweet) alone reached nearly 200, 000 people.

It was very pleasing to see that there appeared to be a real appetite for the topic of access and inclusion at all levels of professional sport. We had a number of professional clubs actively support our LPF Weeks of Action including Tottenham, Arsenal, Manchester City and Luton Town, as well as several Disabled Supporters Associations and endorsements from high profile people such as Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson, former Everton goalkeeper, Neville Southall and former Scotland rugby captain, Mike Blair. On behalf of LPF, we wish to thank everyone who got involved and showed their support.



Pablo Zabaleta and Arsene Wenger with Steph celebrating Weeks of Action

Please visit the LPF website for further details on this year's Weeks of Action
<http://www.levelplayingfield.org.uk/lpf-weeks-action>

Working Together Project

The Working Together Project is going from strength to strength under the leadership of our new Project Coordinator Kieran. Two new DSAs have already been established in 2015, at Bradford City and Newport County respectively. This is addition to seven DSAs that had previously been

established at Swansea City, Tottenham Hotspur, Norwich City, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Portsmouth, Chester and Wrexham. LPF has also assisted with the creation of new DSA's at Tranmere Rovers, Luton Town and Crawley Town.

We continue to work closely with existing DSA's and circulated a questionnaire between December 2014 and January 2015 to identify what support they needed. LPF is now working further with DSA's to offer our support where needed.

We were delighted that fourteen DSA's took part in this year's LPF Weeks of Action. This was a significant increase from last year and something we are looking to build on in 2016. Again this is testament to the close working relationships we have created with club based fan groups.

The Working Together project is due to end in October 2015 but we will be seeking additional funding to ensure we can extend the project in light of its success to date. In the meantime, we are hopeful that more DSA's will be established over the coming months. We are also working hard to establish regional DSA forums so DSAs can share their experiences and best practise as a legacy to the project.

LPF in the media

This year has seen several high-profile media articles underlining the current state of the game in football with the focus placed largely on Premier League clubs. The Guardian and Sunday Observer's, David Conn investigation picked up on the BBC storyline first published in early 2014. Most recently, the story has also been covered by sports writer, Jeremy Wilson in the Telegraph and other local and national publications.

LPF Website, Fans Comments and Social Media

The LPF website continues to be popular in terms of our news stories and signposting people towards specialist advice and guidance on access and inclusion. In order to keep up with the times and make our website more user friendly we have recently invested in a more 'responsive' mobile compatible version of our website which means it can now be viewed on numerous platforms including smart phones, tablets, laptops and desktops. We hope this will enable fans and other stakeholders to access our services and information more easily, especially whilst on the move or at live games.

Moving forward, we hope to increase the functionality of the website, particularly for Disabled Supporter Associations so they can use it as a platform to interact with their members. We are also in the process of updating all the information on the website ahead of the new season, particularly around club contact details and transport information.

The Fans Comments section of the club pages of the website continue to be of great value and enable us to give excellent user led feedback to clubs, both positive and negative. The fans comments posted give us an opportunity to work with clubs, whether it be as part of our ongoing mediation work around issues at sports grounds, or to share best practice and congratulate clubs on

the improvements they have made. We are grateful to those fans who take the time to post their post match comments and encourage fans to continue to use the Fans Comments facility.

Since the arrival of our Admin and Communications Officer, Chris Summersell, we have taken steps to ensure we have a much greater presence on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, in order to keep people updated with our ongoing work. This has paid dividends in terms of reaching new audiences, forming new partnerships with other organisations and spreading the message of access and inclusion across all sports.

Our Services

LPF now offers a range of services for clubs, fans and our partner organisations. This includes professional Access Audits designed specifically for sports stadia and venues, a Design Appraisal service for clubs looking to build new facilities or redevelop existing ones, a mediation service to assist disabled fans with their complaints, and Disability Awareness Training aimed at clubs, volunteers and paid staff who work in the sport and/or the disability sector.

Demand for these services has grown considerably in the last twelve months. This can largely be attributed to our move to London, investment in extra resources particularly with regard to expanding the LPF team, and funding given to National Governing Bodies by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) for the purpose of assessing accessibility in their sport.

This growth in demand has led to a need for a comprehensive review of these services to make them more user friendly and attractive to clubs, partners and fans. This review has ensured our services have become a more viable source of income, whilst maintaining the charitable objectives of the organisation, and are a step towards the long term sustainability of the organisation.

We aim to launch our new Disability Awareness Training package this summer ahead of the new football season. We also have a number of large Access Audit projects which are due to be delivered over the next year including auditing seventeen First Class cricket grounds for the England and Wales Cricket Board and plans to audit fifteen rugby grounds on behalf of Premiership Rugby. We are seen as industry leaders in terms of the LPF professional Access Audits we offer. Our Access Audits look beyond just the built environment and focus on the entire spectator experience and journey through the venue, giving Clubs and venue manager's feedback on the match day and non match day experience. All of which is underpinned by the knowledge and expertise of our in house Access Auditor, Ruth Hopkins who is registered with the National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC).

In addition, we have been commissioned as access consultants to work on some exciting new design appraisal projects at AFC Wimbledon, Tottenham Hotspur FC, Northampton Town FC, Cardiff City FC and Portsmouth FC respectively. We continue to offer a critical mediation and advice service in representing disabled fans who face issues or discrimination when attending live matches or visiting sports venues. This service is offered to all disabled sports fans and LPF always respects the wishes of those that prefer to remain anonymous.

Day to Day Running of LPF

We have continued to work with sports governing bodies and their clubs throughout 2014 / 15 to ensure more accessible facilities and services for disabled supporters and welcomed the opportunity to meet during the year with the Football Association, Premier League, Football League, Conference League, Independent Football Ombudsman, Football Association of Wales, Rugby Football League, Rugby Football Union, the England & Wales Cricket Board, the Wheelchair Football Association, Sport England, England 2015, the Sports Ground Safety Authority, the EHRC, and government (Department of Work and Pensions and the Department of Culture Media and Sport).

Level Playing Field continues to work in partnership with like-minded disability and equality organisations both within sports and the wider disability sector and during the last twelve months we have developed new and our existing relationships with Attitude Is Everything, the National Deaf Children's Society, Colour Blind Awareness, Guide Dogs for the Blind and the National Autistic Society. We have supported research projects related to accessibility in sport at Leeds Beckett and Loughborough Universities.

LPF continues to sit on the Kick It Out Professional Game Guidance Group to advise on disability access issues. Joyce Cook, LPF Chair is a member of the Football Association's Inclusion Advisory Board, providing independent advice on disability access and other areas of equality across all levels of football. LPF also works closely with the Football Foundation to ensure that accessibility issues are considered as part of any grant application to the Football Stadium Improvement Fund (FSIF).

A huge 'thank you' to all our supporters

We share an office and a close bond with our sister charity, the Centre for Access to Football in Europe (CAFE) and greatly value that relationship and the advice and support they give us as part of our ongoing works.

Level Playing Field wishes to thank our President, David Bernstein and our Vice Presidents, Ambassadors and volunteers for their unstinting support for LPF. A big thank you to all the LPF staff whose commitment, energy and expertise has helped LPF grow in stature and to ensure that the needs of disabled fans continue to be at the forefront of our work with our partners.

We would also like to thank our funders and sponsors namely the Football Foundation (Football Stadia Improvement Fund – Fans Fund), the Football Association and the Football Conference and the following benefactors who have so generously provided expert professional services to Level Playing Field as a charitable pro-bono donation in the last year including; Bevan Kidwell (legal advice), Bird Consultancy (media and PR), Katherine Woods (accounting).

Finally, thank you to all those who have generously donated funds during the past year and to all who have given their time to support our aims.

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Ends.