



Level Playing Field

Promoting Good Access For All Fans

**Making your rugby
club more accessible**

TO DISABLED PEOPLE



Making Your Rugby Club More Accessible to Disabled People

Level Playing Field was originally established in 1998 and is the only registered charity representing disabled supporters of all sports. Our objective is to promote an inclusive agenda, to raise awareness and to enhance well-being through rugby by ensuring an equality of spectator experience for all fans.

There are four identified barriers to inclusion - access, awareness, social participation and transport.

As a service provider, rugby clubs have a legal requirement to be accessible to disabled people but there are also ethical & commercial reasons to improve social inclusion and evidence shows that being accessible also makes good business sense.

There is a whole new/untapped market of over 12.4m disabled people in the UK with an estimated spending power of over £80bn per annum. 1 in 4 families has a disabled person and disabled people can and do influence choice. Becoming accessible doesn't necessarily involve significant costs and here we list some simple, practical and achievable ways to help make your club more inclusive.

Appoint a Disability (Access) Liaison Officer

Allocate access, inclusion and equality issues to a senior member of staff (director or senior executive) to oversee provisions at the club / venue and to appoint a disability or access liaison officer (DLO). The DLO will provide day-to-day guidance and take responsibility for providing accessible provisions and services at the club / venue. He or she will be someone who has undergone disability and access awareness training and will have a good understanding of disability and equality legislation and practice or a willingness to learn. They should try to put access, inclusion and equality on the agenda of all departments of the business. The DLO will act as a contact point for both colleagues and disabled visitors and supporters, and should ensure that their contact details are easily accessible - have a dedicated phone line or email address and try to avoid premium phone rates.

Access Audit

An Access Audit is the first step to helping organisations meet the requirements of the Equality Act. It will demonstrate a commitment to improving access for disabled people. If used properly will increase custom and turnover and could help to mitigate clubs against claims of disability discrimination. Level Playing Field is uniquely placed to provide a professional Access Audit designed specifically for sports environments. The Audit helps to get an overview of accessibility.

The comprehensive report shows where there are barriers for disabled people (both physical and procedural) and makes common sense recommendations for improvement. We also acknowledge where things are being done well. The report will serve as an action plan for future spending, staff training and reviewing policies and procedures relating to disabled people.

More information can be found at: www.levelplayingfield.org.uk/access-audits



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Accessible Toilets and Changing Places Facility

Ensuring accessible toilets are available and kept clean, well serviced and supervised on match days should be a priority. Check the emergency assist alarm works and staff are trained to respond. When replacing door locks and taps choose the lever type to ensure easier access.

Would your club be able to provide a “Changing Places” facility ? Changing Places toilets are different to standard accessible toilets with extra features and more space to meet the needs of people who need additional hygiene facilities when away from home.

More information can be found at: www.changing-places.org

Assistance and Guide Dogs

An increasing number of disabled people have Assistance and Guide dogs to help them live more independently. Your club should be able to accommodate these dogs in all areas. Additional space beside seats for the dog to lie down, water points and an area for the dog to relieve itself will all help your club be more inclusive.

More details on this area can be found at: www.levelplayingfield.org.uk/sites/default/files/contentfiles/guide_dogs_for_the_blind_-_access_to_sports_stadia.pdf

Audio Description

Could your club provide audio description during the match for blind and partially sighted supporters ? There are a number of economical ways to provide this including access to live local broadcasts.

Please contact LPF for more details: info@levelplayingfield.org.uk or see: http://www.levelplayingfield.org.uk/sites/default/files/contentfiles/rnib_soccersight.pdf

Car Parking and Drop Off Points

Try to ensure at least 6% of the total car park spaces are clearly designated for disabled supporters. These should be located near to the accessible entrances with sufficient space around them to safely enter and leave the vehicles. An accessible drop-off and pick-up point should also be provided close to accessible entrances

Coaches and mini buses carrying disabled supporters should have safe areas for people to disembark near to the accessible entrances and extra time may need to be allowed for disabled people to return to the vehicles after the match. It is helpful to advise where there are shelters and toilets outside the ground.



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Colour Schemes

When redecorating good colour contrast can assist all supporters and especially partially sighted people - try to contrast walls and floors so they can navigate the space more easily. The implementation of small changes such as dark skirting boards and door frames, coloured grab rails and toilet seats can make a big difference. Team colours can be used to provide good colour contrast to obstacles, pillars and doorways.

Disabled Supporters Association

Communication is key to achieving accessibility and being inclusive. Setting up a user-led Disabled Supporters Association (DSA) run by willing volunteers will provide invaluable insight. Level Playing Field can help guide you through the process of setting up a DSA with templates for the Constitution, committee job descriptions and advice.

Doors

Doors should have glazed panels and if not automated should have lever handles. Door closers should be regularly checked to ensure they meet guidelines and wayfinding signage should be clear and consistent.

Employment

Employing disabled people in roles at all levels of your club can be an important step in removing barriers to inclusion.

Handrails

Handrails will benefit many people - install them alongside steps, stairwells, ramps and inside toilets and lifts.

Hearing (or induction) Loops

In ticket offices, shops and information areas a hearing (or induction) loop is recommended but having staff trained to speak clearly, having areas well lit and a pen and paper available will also help. New venues should also be built with induction loops that operate within the stadium bowl.



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Level Playing Field

Join Level Playing Field - LPF is a membership-driven charity which is managed by an elected Board of Trustees. Visit our website for information on club and individual membership rates and support the work we do.

www.levelplayingfield.org.uk

Lowered Counters

A lowered counter can make a big difference to a disabled person at reception and customer facing areas but a low cost solution could just be having a clipboard available with a member of staff stepping out from behind the reception desk to offer assistance. Make sure any lowered counters are kept clear - they are not there for floral displays or to locate the computer - but to provide access to wheelchair users and other disabled people.

Match Day Ambassadors

Match day volunteers can provide additional assistance on a busy day. Make sure they are easily recognised with coloured jackets or tabards. Consider providing a match day information and contact point. If suitable, match day ambassadors could take refreshment orders and deliver them to disabled spectators who request the service. Please note that some disabled people may prefer to be independent.

Match Day Programmes

Consider providing match day programmes in different formats on request (i.e. large print and audio formats). Local colleges and charities will often welcome the opportunity to be involved and can transcribe at favourable rates.

Ramps, Stairs and Thresholds

Making sure a wheelchair user can travel freely around the ground makes a huge difference to their visit and / or match day experience. Temporary ramps and bridged thresholds can be a low cost but effective solution. Steps should have colour contrasting edges (nosings) to assist partially sighted people.



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Seating

Most disabled supporters place “sitting with their own fans, friends and family” as a priority. We recommend there is always a choice - elevated and pitch side for wheelchair users. Adjacent companion seats should also be provided. Ambulant disabled people and partially sighted and blind supporters should be able to sit anywhere but you might want to identify areas throughout your stadium where access is easiest - easy access seating. Easy access seating may be at the end of a row or the front or back row of a block of seating and should provide minimal or no-stepped access with some seats with extra leg-room (e.g. to store walking aids or with space for an assistance dog).

Minimise interference with viewing from pitch side by reducing pedestrian traffic in these areas and requesting stewards are considerate. Well designed elevated viewing platforms located in areas throughout the stadium are often preferred to ensure good sight lines. Disabled supporter seating should be available in both the home and away sections of the stadium.

Shopping

Ensure your club shop is accessible - with level or ramped access, powered doors, clear circulation routes, a hearing (or induction) loop, dropped counter, trained staff and a floorwalker to assist.

Signage and Wayfinding

Ensure that signs are logically placed to be viewable to all visitors and matchday supporters. Wayfinding signage needs to be consistent, clear and contrast sharply with the background. Test your signage by inviting someone who has never been to the ground before to find their way around to certain points. Use international symbols; this will also assist visitors from other countries who may not understand local language.

Staff and Volunteer Training

Ensure all customer facing staff are trained in Equality, Inclusion & Disability Awareness. Your Match Day Ambassadors and stewards should be approachable and knowledgeable and there to help and assist matchday supporters. Level Playing Field can offer Disability Awareness Training Courses.

For more information, please contact info@levelplayingfield.org.uk



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Ticketing

Ensure your ticketing policy does not discriminate against disabled people. Personal assistants / carers should be admitted free of charge where a disabled supporter requires an assistant to attend the match. Try to provide various methods of purchasing match tickets - via the website, by telephone, by text phone and in person. Level Playing Field has produced a template ticket policy - if you would like to use/tailor this for your club,

please contact info@levelplayingfield.org.uk

Travel Distances

If your stadium and its surrounding allow, consider providing golf buggies from the gate and car parks to seating areas for people with limited mobility. If this is not possible, a low cost solution may be to provide assistance using volunteers / Match Day Ambassadors with wheelchairs (redundant chairs may be available from the local ambulance service / Red Cross). Ensure frequent rest points at entrance points, in concourses and on routes from the car park. For example, redundant fold-down match seats could be fixed to concourse walls.

Unobstructed Routes

Keeping circulation routes clear is not only a safety issue but it also helps disabled people. Blind and partially sighted people may feel confident about the space around them at ground level but routes beneath staircases, banners and hanging signs are all significant risks.

Website

Make sure your disability policy and accessible facilities are known by including them on your website. Check your website is accessible. Consider colour, contrast, adjustable font sizes and text only options. Moving images can create a barrier to some users. If you can't control your own site / don't have full access, why not use a link to a page on the LPF website where we can host your access information?

Support the Social Model of Disability

The social model states that people are only disabled by the existing barriers within our society. It promotes the removal of those barriers (attitudinal, physical, sensory and intellectual) that prevent disabled people from participating fully in society. The social model empowers disabled people and encourages society to become more inclusive. Always use the correct positive language e.g. 'Accessible Toilet', not 'Disabled Toilet', 'blind and partially sighted', not 'visually impaired'.

Supported by:



Department
for Culture
Media & Sport

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Remember:

- **An accessible stadium is more sustainable, economical and flexible for all.**
- **An accessible stadium will demonstrate your commitment to your whole community.**
- **The smallest changes can have the biggest impact.**
- **Enhance customer experiences and they will be more likely to come back.**
- **Always try to involve the disabled person when making any decisions.**
- **Form a DSA - user-led consultation group at your club.**
- **Don't make assumptions based on a person's 'disability'.**
- **There is no 'one size fits all' solution to being fully inclusive.**
- **The Equality Act is an evolving duty.**

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