

***The National Association  
of Disabled Supporters***

*Promoting a Level Playing Field for all Football Fans!*



**‘STATE OF THE GAME SUMMARY 2007’  
(PREMIER LEAGUE REVIEW)**

***Registered as a Charity***

***No: 1079740***



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## Notes



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## **Introduction**

### **Striving for a Level Playing Field**

The National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS) was established in 1998 and is the only national registered charity representing all disabled football supporters. Our objective is to promote an inclusive agenda and ensure a parity of supporter experiences for all fans. NADS represents the views, issues and concerns of disabled football supporters to football and governmental authorities and provides independent advice on disability issues as they affect the football community. NADS also heads up the disabled branch of englandfans.

NADS is an umbrella organization recognised as the representative and co-ordinating body of all disabled football supporters and their carers/advocates. We estimate that 30,000 disabled fans regularly attend football matches in England and the success of the disabled branch of englandfans shows that this passion naturally extends to the national team.

Time and again we receive testimonies of how following football has had such a positive effect on the life of a disabled person, offering a sense of belonging, pride, passion and belief. Strides have been made over recent years to improve facilities for disabled fans that most of us take for granted – as simple as a decent view, under cover and with your own fans, accessible toilets, bars, club shops, museums and accessible media (club TV and literature) and web sites. In most cases however there is still a clear deficit between the match-day and overall supporter experiences of disabled and able-bodied fans.

The new Wembley is on the other hand an excellent example of a stadium that has incorporated the needs of disabled supporters into its design. NADS was consulted throughout the design, planning and building stages and was able to highlight the required facilities throughout. The result is a modern stadium with world class disabled facilities, standing as a benchmark of best practice to which others must aspire.

We would urge all supporters and stakeholders in football, able bodied and disabled, to support us in our aims and objectives by becoming a member of NADS.

For more information and to join go to [www.nads.org.uk](http://www.nads.org.uk) or call our helpline on 0845 230 6237.



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## **NADS Political and Management History**

- 1990 - Final Taylor Report: Hillsborough Stadium Disaster.
  - Taylor's assessment of facilities for disabled supporters concluded that there should be provision for safe, spacious seating for wheelchair users with a seat alongside for a companion, protected from weather, accessible to disabled toilets and easily reached from a car park. Facilities should also address needs of ambulatory disabled, visually and hearing impaired.
- 1991 - Revision of Part M of Building Regulations, further revised in 1992.
  - Reasonable provision shall be made for disabled people to gain access to and use the building.
  - Pitch side facilities should be avoided and instead integrated in stands. Wheelchair users should be able to manoeuvre easily and have a clear view of the event. They should be able to sit next to disabled and able-bodied companions.
- 1992 - Publication of Guidance by Football Stadia Design Council (Taylor Recommendation), *Designing for People with Disabilities*.
  - A guide offering technical advice to help football clubs comply with principles of Taylor and part M.
- 1992 – Football Trust sponsored surveys of disabled supporters; 'Fans at the Track Side' and 'Leaving the Trackside'.
- 1995 - Disability Discrimination Act passed by parliament, with full force from autumn 1999.
  - Part III deals with provision of goods, services and facilities and makes it an offence to offer a service or provide goods and facilities, impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to use.
- 1997 - Publication of Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) - 'Green Guide'.
  - Corrects failures of Part M; giving clear guidance on numbers of wheelchair spaces and design and quality of viewing accommodation, including unrestricted views in positions throughout the sports ground.



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## **NADS Political and Management History (continued)**

- 1998 - 'Improving Facilities for Disabled Supporters' - Football Task Force Report.
  - Notes lack of clarity in Part M and seeks to put right and set mandatory requirements on minimum numbers of wheelchair spaces, and seats for blind, deaf and ambulatory disabled people in new stands and stadia. Recommends revision of Part M, Section 5 in accordance with Green Guide.
  - Recommends that government draw a similar minimum sliding scale for ambulant, visually and hearing impaired seats.
  - Recommendations for improvements for fans of all disabilities in line with DDA, including views, shelter, access, toilets, refreshment bars, parking, ticketing and stewarding.
  - Recommendation Football Trust (now Football Foundation) should make it a specific condition of grant aid that all new grounds, new stands and extensions to facilities provide wheelchair spaces as per Green Guide. Recommends that NADS should be consulted as a condition of funding.
  - Annual visit of 'hit squads' to all grounds to conduct audits of facilities and to monitor progress on improvements; proposes NADS should carry out these assessments.
- 1999/2001 - Grounds assessments of all league clubs carried out by NADS.
  - Detailed assessment of each club, looking at facilities and provision for wheelchair users, ambulatory disabled, visually and hearing impaired.
- 2002 - Publication of NADS Guide to Grounds in England and Wales.
  - Printed in hard copy format and published on NADS website.
  - Including club disabled liaison contacts at each club, summary of disabled facilities, numbers of wheelchair spaces and seats for ambulatory disabled, visually and hearing impaired.
  - Used as a reference to this day by disabled fans, their carers and advocates and football clubs and authorities.
  - Provides a clear and precise benchmark of evidence of disabled facilities and provision from 1999 to 2002.

## **NADS Political and Management History (continued)**

- 2003-2004 - Publication of FSIF/FLA Sports Grounds & Stadia Guide No.1 “Accessible Stadia” – A good practice guide to the design of facilities to meet the needs of disabled spectators and other users.
  - NADS were a major contributor to this document which provides detailed technical guidance on designing and building sports stadia fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 2004 – Accessible Stadia Guide imbued into Part M of Building Regulations.

**FOR DETAILED NADS RECOMMENDATIONS SEE APPENDIX ONE.**

**Table of current disability provision (Premier League)**

	Wheelchair spaces*			Ambulant			Accessible Stadia Guide Recommendations (ASG)	
	Total	Home	Away	Total	Home	Away	Wheelchair	%
ARSENAL FC	241	229	12	69	60	9	251	96.07%
ASTON VILLA FC	83	75	8	28	24	4	215	38.57%
BIRMINGHAM CITY FC	88	66	22	73	68	7	180	48.88%
BLACKBURN ROVERS FC	282	262	20	unlimited	unlimited		184	153.18%
BOLTON WANDERERS FC	183	160	23	176	166	10	174	105.39%
CHELSEA FC	103	100	3	100	100		214	48.11%
DERBY COUNTY FC	171	152	19	n/k			191	89.63%
EVERTON FC	114	101	13	n/k			210	54.2%
FULHAM FC	38	31	7	n/k	2		164	23.20%
LIVERPOOL FC	89	81	8	12	10	2	221	40.32%
MANCHESTER CITY FC	198	189	9	n/k			225	87.82%
MANCHESTER UNITED FC	120	108	12	42	40	2	283	42.40%
MIDDLESBOROUGH FC	115	100	15	10			195	58.88%
NEWCASTLE UNITED F.C.	205	197	8	81	79	2	235	87.32%
PORTSMOUTH FC	39	34	5	4		4	151	25.81%
READING FC	86	74	12	107	107		162	52.93%
SUNDERLAND AFC	200	180	20	n/k			268	74.63%
TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR FC	56	51	5	25	23	2	199	28.18%
WEST HAM UNITED FC	121	115	6	8	6	2	195	61.91%
WIGAN ATHLETIC FC	56	42	14	6			165	33.85%

**Half of all Premier League clubs @ < 50% of ASG recommendations.**

\* Numbers as advised to NADS end of October 2007.



**Table of current disability provision – Visual Impairment**

<u>CLUB</u>	<u>Stadium Capacity</u>	<u>Total*</u>	<u>COMMENTS*</u>
ARSENAL FC	60,432	n/k	Full audio descriptive commentary service
ASTON VILLA FC	42,593	n/k	Radio receivers - not trained
BIRMINGHAM CITY FC	30,009	10	Hospital radio service
BLACKBURN ROVERS FC	31,367	22	Radio signal receivers - not trained
BOLTON WANDERERS FC	27,879	30	Radio receiver only available in limited areas for home fans
CHELSEA FC	42,055	n/k	Digital TV radios
DERBY COUNTY FC	33,597	n/k	Hospital radio- limited to areas of the ground
EVERTON FC	40,170	50	Hospital radio, home fans only - not trained
FULHAM FC	24,600	n/k	Radio signal receivers – not trained
LIVERPOOL FC	45,362	60	Hospital radio – not trained
MANCHESTER CITY FC	47,726	120	Radio receivers (not good for away fans) - commentators trained
MANCHESTER UNITED FC	76,312	21	Radio receivers – not trained
MIDDLESBOROUGH FC	35,100	n/k	Portable radios offered
NEWCASTLE UNITED F.C.	52,387	22	Radio signal service (home fans only) – not trained
PORTSMOUTH FC	20,224	2	Hospital radio only 2 receivers for home fans
READING FC	24,161	12	Hospital radio – not trained
SUNDERLAND AFC	49,000	40	Local radio
TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR FC	36,240	22	Club radio - not trained
WEST HAM UNITED FC	35,146	65	Full Audio Descriptive commentary service
WIGAN ATHLETIC FC	25,138	100	No dedicated service

**Only 2 Premier League clubs have a full dedicated audio descriptive commentary with headsets supplied.**

\* As advised to NADS end of October 2007.

## **Arsenal F.C.**

### **THE EMIRATES - A SUMMARY OF FACILITIES:**

- Wheelchair seating at or near maximum capacity.
- Wheelchair carers sit behind, limiting easy access/ assistance during game.
- Visually impaired and ambulant disabled seating is often severely oversubscribed.
- Disabled access lift to car park is also used by hospitality, press, etc. causing long delays.
- Pedestrian access to stadium has a non compliant ramp.
- Limited disabled parking is available.
- Excellent sightlines, sheltered seating and good access.
- Excellent stewarding of disabled facilities.
- Dedicated audio descriptive commentary.
- Induction loops in key areas.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The Emirates is a brand new stadium with good overall disabled facilities and services. There were a few early issues which are being reviewed and updated. In the main disabled ticketing supply matches demand and equates to able bodied status. This stadium meets **96.07% of Accessible Stadia Guide recommendations**. Originally the stadium did meet 100% of recommendations; however we understand that due to design oversights and with further supporter consultation, the number of disabled spaces has had to be reduced. NADS would have preferred for these alterations to have been part of the original design process.

## PHOTOGRAPHS.



**Figure 1: View from wheelchair platform**



**Figure 2: Wheelchair Platform**

## **Chelsea F.C.**

### **STAMFORD BRIDGE - A SUMMARY OF FACILITIES:**

- Club claim 200 home supporter seats, 100 of these are for carers.
- 50 wheelchair seats are FOC and 50 sold on match by match basis.
- Must join membership to apply, which is capped at 600 wheelchair users plus 600 carers.
- Only 3 wheelchair seats for away fans at most games.
- Wheelchair seats are mainly pitch side (only 4 elevated) with only partial cover and poor sightlines in some areas (Figures 3 & 4).
- Severely oversubscribed for each game, at least 6:1 and this could be much higher in view of capped membership.
- Ambulant disabled and visually impaired accommodated in wheelchair section which restricts numbers.
- No dedicated audio descriptive commentary.
- Induction loops in key areas.

### **CONCLUSION:**

An older stadium with a deficit in disabled facilities overall and severely limited disabled ticketing availability, no parity with able bodied. NADS is concerned that Chelsea will not be relocated and the only real chance for reconciling ASG recommendations is for the club to convert current seats or extend stands; currently meets **48.11% of Accessible Stadia guidelines**. NADS believes that the club is planning to add a further 8 wheelchair spaces for away fans, which will be elevated in the away area.

## PHOTOGRAPHS



Figure 3: View 1 from pitch side wheelchair bays



Figure 4: View 2 from pitch side wheelchair bay with stewards standing.

## **Fulham F.C.**

### **CRAVEN COTTAGE - A SUMMARY OF FACILITIES:**

- Excellent stewarding, with two stewards trained to use sign language.
- Remote disabled parking, with club providing an accessible shuttle bus to stadium.
- Disabled porta-loo has been replaced with a permanent structure.
- Away disabled facilities refurbished during summer 2007, apparently without disabled supporters being consulted.
  - Wheelchair platform has been lowered making access more difficult via a non compliant ramp and adverse camber.
  - Carers sat behind wheelchair users with little room and no easy access to disabled supporter.
  - Sightlines obstructed by the near stand and supporters standing to the front and side. This affects both wheelchair and ambulant supporters.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The club meets only **23.2% of Accessible Stadia Guide** recommendations. This is an older stadium with space limitations; however there has been a refurbishment to improve facilities for away fans this year. Although welcomed, conditions are reported as worse in terms of access and sightlines. NADS would advise that disabled supporters are always consulted prior to any adaptations.

## PHOTOGRAPHS



**Figure 7: Disabled away supporters' area, new platform and ramp.**



**Figure 8: Disabled away area, obstructive view of pitch.**

## **Manchester United F.C.**

### **OLD TRAFFORD A SUMMARY OF FACILITIES:**

- Dedicated Ability Suite for match days.
- Good access to all disabled areas, toilets, bars, club shop and museum with excellent stewarding.
- Home and away disabled supporters located within same section.
- Must join club membership scheme for ticket qualification, 1800+ members (940+ disabled), 735 wheelchair users, 90 VI and 115 ambulant disabled members.
- Match day home wheelchair allocation of 21 season ticket equivalents and 60 per game on a 1:3 Rota system (180 in total Rota scheme). Remaining tickets (including those members on non-Rota games) are allocated via a phone in procedure. Games severely oversubscribed with demand for each game at up to 4 times availability.
- Wheelchair and carer tickets FOC, which differs from other disability groups.
- Poor sightlines on lower wheelchair platform caused by fans standing at key points of game in front rows; club has tried to solve this by installing TV monitors.
- Hearing loops in Key areas.

### **CONCLUSION:**

This is a club that offers considerable support to its disabled membership. However disabled seating, especially wheelchair is severely oversubscribed with club at only **42.4% of Accessible Stadia Guide recommendations**. This is especially disappointing as the club has recently added two new quadrants and could have gone some way to addressing this issue at the time. Trafford Council has advised NADS that they had no authority to insist on more than minimum numbers related to seat additions (16 extra wheelchair seats) and that the club consulted disabled supporters. We are concerned by this, as we believe that most fans would have voted for more disabled seats. NADS feels that the poor sightlines on the lower tier are not adequately reconciled by the addition of TV screens as most fans would prefer to see the pitch action at a game. We would prefer to see an increase in elevation to this platform to improve sightlines.

There are strong rumours of a planned addition to the South Stand and NADS hopes that if this is the case, the club will use this opportunity to reconcile disabled seating numbers in keeping with the spirit of the Accessible Stadia Guide.



## PHOTOGRAPHS



Figure 5: View from Level 1 wheelchair platform.



Figure 6: View from Level 1 with fans obstructing view.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### ***NADS Detailed Recommendations***

#### **1. The Accessible Stadia Guide disabled supporter seating recommendations**

The challenging issues that remain are highlighted in this document, not least is the number of Premier League clubs (half of all Premier League clubs) who still provide less than 50% of the recommended numbers of seats for disabled supporters. There are several other concerns that deserve consideration including those clubs who will not be moving to new stadia in the near future and those that have or are extending or adding to existing stadia.

Where clubs are not currently meeting The Accessible Stadia Guidelines then it seems reasonable that in planning extensions or new quadrants, they should be expected to reconcile the deficit in keeping with the spirit of the guide. This is not happening in practice and there needs to be clear guidance to ensure that this does not continue. Manchester United FC is an example where two new quadrants were recently added with only the minimum numbers of disabled seats provided for the new seat additions. There was an opportunity to reconcile the Accessible Stadia Guide percentages for the whole stadium (42.4%) and this was therefore disappointing from a club who has shown such a proactive approach to other areas of supporting its disabled fans. We can only assume that financial and design constraints applied and these should perhaps have been better considered at planning stage. NADS believes that the supply and demand at this club for wheelchair users in particular is up to fourfold.

NADS wishes to see an equality or Level Playing Field for all supporters and asks only that a parallel of supply be made available. We are aware that some clubs, especially those in the Premier League have supply and demand ticketing issues for able bodied fans, however this is not as acute as is currently experienced by the disabled community.

Further NADS believes that clubs should now be moving towards reconciling disabled seating supply and demand and the guidelines. Some clubs are trying to move in the right direction with Everton FC recently adding further wheelchair seats to its ageing facilities. This is in addition to plans to move to a new stadium and is to be applauded.

**NADS would like to raise the question of legislation. Will clubs proactively address the current deficits in disabled seating numbers based on guidelines? NADS believes that it is time to consider similar legislation to that applied in the USA. With an ageing population and modern health care, the demand for disabled seating at football stadia will undoubtedly increase.**

NADS feels it is important that clubs meet these demands whether they are in the business of building new facilities or not. It may be that with the pressures exerted by owners and shareholders to maximise profits, the only way forward will be through government intervention and clear legislation.

**2. Home and Away Segregation – Disabled Supporters should be able to sit with their own fans**

Many clubs still sit the disabled away fans in the same areas as home supporters usually as a result of inadequate disabled facilities; for example all wheelchair users are placed together irrespective of home and away segregation. This has led to increasing ‘flash points’ for crowd trouble with disabled fans often being removed from the game to solve a problem with least resource and/or crowd impact. This is not league specific although several Premier League clubs have been involved.

Disabled supporters are as passionate as any fan and in their goal celebrations there is often an extreme reaction from surrounding home fans. Incidents have included spitting, verbal abuse and threats of violence and in fairness some disabled supporters are guilty of verbal retaliation. The obvious solution is adequate segregated disabled facilities for home and away fans.

**3. Representative Pan Disability Consultative Groups**

The Accessible Stadia Guide also recommends that disabled supporters are themselves consulted and we believe there may be incidents where this is creative or selective. NADS feels that there should be a more independent approach to this issue with a local Pan Disability Supporter Consultative Group and NADS being involved in each project. Fans often find it difficult to challenge their own club and they are sometimes worried (probably unfounded) that they will be penalised in the future for any criticism. For example ticketing may be handled by the Disabled Liaison Officer and not more generally by the ticket office.

**4. Sightlines for wheelchair users and ambulant disabled and elderly**

Another issue is seating at pitch side, which is mainly related to wheelchair provision, although ambulant disabled and visually impaired may also be placed pitch side at some clubs. Sightlines can be poor if the pitch side is lower than field of play and with stewards, TV crews and other officials blocking the view. There is also often no protection from the ball and of course disabled supporters by their very nature are not easily able to get out of the way.

Other spectators can be a problem with persistent standing in front of disabled seating areas. The Accessible Stadia Guide provides for adequate sightlines in all areas of the stadium, however in practice this is a real issue at both older and some new stadia. Disabled supporters often miss the most exciting parts of the game as everyone jumps up to watch a free kick, corner or goal mouth action. Some of these issues could be addressed by design and proactive retrospective measures to existing stadia. Raising a platform by as little as 100mm could solve this problem at a number of clubs.

## **5. Facilities for Visually Impaired Supporters**

Full dedicated audio descriptive commentary is only available at two Premier League clubs as the enclosed table shows, with some clubs providing headsets for local, hospital or club radio. This is a relatively low cost provision that can change the match experience for the visually impaired and NADS is concerned that this is not more readily available.

## **6. Review of the 1998 Football Task Force Recommendations**

Among the recommendations to improve disabled facilities at football clubs, it was advised that there should be an annual visit of 'hit squads' to all grounds to conduct audits of facilities and to monitor progress on improvements. The FTF suggested that NADS should carry out these ongoing assessments.

The FSIF provided a welcome grant in 1999 for such a project across all leagues which stands as a benchmark and from this a NADS Guide to Grounds for Disabled Supporters was published.

NADS continues to seek funding to conduct further assessments with a full 'State of the Game' project of all league clubs almost a decade on. So far we have been awarded grants from Lloyds TSB Foundation and a livery company totalling £7000. We estimate costs to be in the region of £40,000 for this project.

**7. Plan to reconcile disabled facilities deficits**

NADS is asking all stakeholders to invest in a plan for change which will ensure that an equality of facilities and services is reached in the shorter term. It has now been almost a decade since the Task Force Report was published and there has been much to celebrate and applaud in terms of best practice. However NADS is concerned by the numbers and profile of clubs who still fall short of recommendations and guidelines. We ask all stakeholders; government and football authorities, clubs and supporters to commit to a final push to bring about equality in supporter experience for all.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **NADS BLUEPRINT**

#### **Aims of the Association**

1. To improve access to all services and facilities at football stadia for disabled supporters by providing advice, support and expertise on all matters concerning disability access.
2. To encourage **all** football clubs to appoint a dedicated Disability Liaison Officer (DLO).
3. To ensure that all football clubs have a disability policy that details the clubs' policies, practises and procedures for all aspects of the clubs' operations.
4. To encourage and enable all disabled supporters to set up their own Disabled Supporters Associations (DSAs).
5. To encourage clubs to enter into discussions with their own disabled supporters on facilities, policies and future plans.
6. To build on existing relationships with the football authorities and build new ones with other supporter groups and governing bodies.

#### **Join NADS Today!**

ANY DISABLED OR NON-DISABLED FAN WHO WANTS  
TO HELP NADS ACHIEVE ITS AIMS CAN BECOME A  
MEMBER BY CONTACTING NADS AT  
[WWW.NADS.ORG.UK](http://WWW.NADS.ORG.UK) OR TELEPHONE 0845 230 6237.

FOR MORE INFORMATION EMAIL NADS ON  
[INFO@NADS.ORG.UK](mailto:INFO@NADS.ORG.UK)

## **APPENDIX 2 (Continued)**

### **NADS BLUEPRINT**

#### **NADS Blueprint**

1. All supporters must be able to enjoy a parity of experiences when attending a football match or event.
2. All club staff and officials should have received disability equality training.
3. All clubs should appoint a dedicated Disability Liaison Officer (DLO).
4. All clubs should have a disability policy that details the clubs' policies, practises and procedures for all aspects of the clubs' operations.
5. All clubs should have fully accessible information services that include web sites, TV channels, and information that is available in alternative formats.
6. A senior member of the management board at each club should have a responsibility for all disability issues.
7. All clubs to meet every aspect of Accessible Stadia.
8. Every club to meet the 'Green Guide' recommendations for numbers of disabled people in every category.

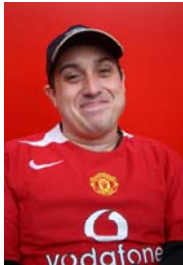
## **APPENDIX 2 (Continued)**

### **NADS BLUEPRINT**

#### **Minimum Standards**

1. Every disabled supporter to have the opportunity to sit with/alongside own supporters
2. All disabled people to be treated with respect by all members of the club staff and match day stewards.
3. Wheelchair users;
  - a. unobstructed view of pitch at all times,
  - b. to have shelter from the weather,
  - c. all seating areas to be positioned in safe areas.
4. Visually Impaired;
  - a. choice to sit anywhere in the ground
  - b. all clubs to provide a dedicated audio descriptive commentary with suitable equipment,
  - c. clubs to make provisions for Guide Dogs,
  - d. information available in alternative formats.
5. Hearing Impaired;
  - a. choice to sit anywhere in the ground,
  - b. text phone in ticket office,
  - c. induction loop in ground.
6. Ambulant;
  - a. a recognised definition of an ambulant disability
  - b. accessible seating, with good sightlines and extra leg room.





### **Gareth Clarke - Case Study.**

Gareth is a 28-year-old man who loves his football and has followed Manchester United ever since he can remember, although he never dreamed that it would be possible to actually get to the games. He has Spina Bifida and uses a wheelchair to get around.

In 1998, he contacted Manchester United Disabled Supporters Association and armed with the knowledge that he'd be able to get into the stadium in his wheelchair he began to go to matches. Gareth has Spina Bifida and says that going to watch United play has turned his life around. The match days give him something to look forward to and he enjoys getting together with other fans for a chat.

Gareth soon found that being a member of MUDSA gave him opportunities beyond those of going to football matches and he began going to the social events that MUDSA hold. He found that he was making friends and really starting to enjoy life, his confidence was growing and things were on the up. He started venturing out on his own, something he'd never felt happy to do and a few years ago he finally moved into a place of his own. He's now living with his partner Rachel; they are happily engaged and plan to marry in 2007, as soon as they can save enough money for the big day.

At a match day last season, Gareth was given a flyer from Learn Direct who were running courses at the Ability Suite at Old Trafford to help disabled people to gain skills towards finding employment. He was quick to grab this opportunity and within one week he was enrolled to do courses in IT, Maths and English. He has now completed these courses and has the qualifications to show this. Gareth hopes that he'll soon find a job, which will make saving for that wedding a little easier and in the meantime feels pleased to have improved his skills.

Gareth says that his life has never been better and he reckons that he is the happiest man alive. He feels that disabled supporters facilities are really important and that every club should give their fans the sorts of chances that he's had from following United. Lots of disabled people would like to go to football and things need to change, so that everyone feels safe, included and part of the beautiful game.



### **Thomas Johnson - Case Study.**

Thomas was born 17 years ago and has Cerebral Palsy. He was 8 weeks premature and spent 5 weeks in the *Special Care Baby Unit* at Withington Hospital. His destiny was sealed when the first song that was played on the radio in the unit was “Mr Blue” and the fact that his Dad is a life-long City fan!

He has always loved football but has never felt confident or competent enough to compete. He loves nothing more than a kick around with his mates at home.

He was able to go to a couple of games at Maine Road with his Dad, but was really impressed with the new stadium at Eastlands but never dreamt that he would become a season card holder. Thanks to the National Association of Disabled Supporters who kick-started the process and helped guide us along the way he now has his very own season card and attends all City’s home games with his Dad. Thomas feels that this has given him fun in his life and something to look forward to. He loves the ritual of match days – the walk to the ground, the buying of his programme and sitting in his seat with a brilliant view of the match. It has also given him confidence and something to talk about and discuss with his mates and fellow students at college.

Being involved with football as part of Manchester City’s Disabled Supporters group has given Thomas a focus in his life and offers social opportunities and, through City’s Disabled Community Training scheme, the chance to train with people of similar abilities.