

Breaking Barriers Toolkit – Section Four

Guidance for coaches, PE teachers and volunteers



In partnership with:

This section of the Breaking Barriers toolkit equips coaches, PE teachers and volunteers with key tips on how to adapt sessions and foster a fun, non-judgemental environment for disabled teenage girls. Research highlights the crucial role that coaches, PE teachers and volunteers play in promoting disabled teenage girls' participation and enjoyment of sport and exercise.

Guidance on adapting your session:

Embrace the Social Model of Disability

This model focuses on removing societal barriers that hinder inclusion, without focusing on girls' impairments. Focus on a strengths-based approach. Drawing on areas of strength and passion, while creating a flexible and adaptable environment where everyone can participate. This might include offering a variety of equipment, modifying rules or providing different levels of support.

Adopt child-first coaching

Employ a child-first coaching approach, ensuring you facilitate opportunities for disabled teenage girls to use their voices and express their views about how they want to take part in a session. This may mean you need to use different ways to communicate depending on their support needs and confidence levels.

Meeting individual needs

Adapt to meet individuals' needs when required, rather than just adapting from the off. You can also provide girls with a choice of equipment to use so they can choose the adapted equipment that they feel works best for them.

Consider your use of space

Ensure you have plenty of space for an activity. Smaller indoor spaces can often mean noise levels are higher and those taking part are closer together, which can often adversely affect those who are more sensitive to noise or are less confident in group settings. Larger spaces allow disabled teenage girls more physical space, so they don't feel too close to other people, noise levels are lower and, if needed, girls have space to take a break on the side of an activity.

Creating a fun and judgement free environment

1. Set clear expectations in advance

Provide information about the venue's accessibility, session plans, what to wear/bring and who to contact. Include photos of the venue and coaches. This will help to personalise the experience and alleviate any anxieties.

2. Supportive environment

Focus on creating a supportive environment where learning and participation are the priority. Avoid situations where they might feel singled out or concerned about being directly compared to others. Meaningful positive reinforcement will help boost their confidence and is more effective than generic feedback.

3. Let them lead the fun

If it doesn't look like they're having fun, ask them 'How can we make this activity more fun/exciting/interesting' – they know best!



Useful resources

For more guidance on how to adapt your offer for disabled teenage girls, please explore the links below:

[Scope – Social Model of Disability](#)

[Play Their Way, Child-first approach](#)

[Us Girls – How to... ‘choose between different facility settings when planning activities for young women’](#)

[Access Sport – STEP and SMILES Model](#)

[Greenwich Frame Running Club – Example Club Information Pack](#)

[Access Sport – Inclusion Passport: how to gather support needs from participants](#)

[Play Their Way – Girls Just Wanna Have Fun: How to Plan Engaging Coaching Sessions for Girls](#)

Here are some ideas about how to make sport and exercise sessions accessible:

- [Activity Alliance – Activity Cards](#)
- [Youth Sport Trust – Girls Active: Getting Started Training](#)
- [Youth Sport Trust – SEND Sport Resources](#)
- [Youth Sport Trust – Supporting Girls with Autism](#)
- [School Games – Activity Resources](#)

Training on getting girls active in schools can also be accessed by clicking the link below:

[Youth Sport Trust Active in Mind: Resources](#)



Good practice

Here are some great examples of how to create an inclusive environment for girls to play sport and exercise. Click on the links below to find out more.

- [Play Their Way – Empowering Her Game: Understanding the Nuances of Coaching Girls in Sport](#)
- [Women in Sport – Coaching for Gender Equality in Sport](#)
- [Autistic Girls Network: Embracing Neurodiversity](#)
- [This Girl Can, Anoushe's Story](#)
- [Street Games, Us Girls](#)

There are also some great examples of coaches, PE teachers and volunteers creating inclusive offers. Click on the links below to find out more.

- [Access Sport's Inclusive Club Network, Neuroinclusion Webinar](#)
- [This Girl Can, Sophie's Story](#)
- [Thinking Outside the Box, Bamber's Inclusive Swimming](#)
- [ADHD Foundation, Ten Top Tips for Sports Coaches: Working with children and young people with ADHD](#)
- [National Autistic Society, Sport – a guide for sports coaches and clubs](#)
- [Sense, Information about living with complex disabilities](#)

