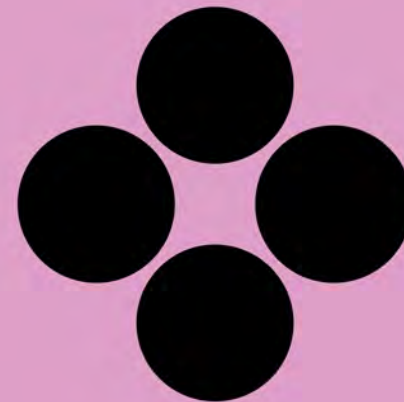
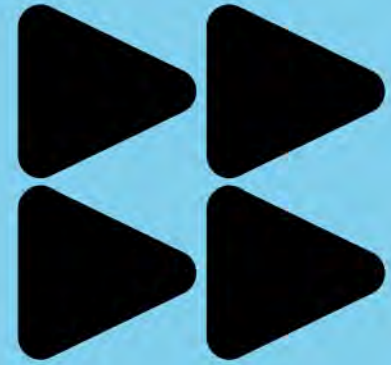


Building Stronger Communities

Club Resource – The Features in Practice



Resource Purpose

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This resource builds on the University of Bath and Access Sport’s Building Stronger Communities research.

The research is focused on understanding how sport and physical activity contribute to community engagement, a sense of belonging, and, in turn, the building of stronger communities.

The research identified five key features that contribute to creating an inclusive community-focused environment.

This resource is for coaches, volunteers and those running community sport clubs and physical activity sessions.

It outlines practical ways you can create an inclusive, community-focused environment based on the five key features.

The examples are all provided by clubs within Access Sport’s Inclusive Club Network.

The 5 Key Features of an Inclusive Community Sport Club

1. Know your participants
2. Be flexible and responsive when session planning
3. Focus on individual, incremental improvement in participants
4. Provide support for volunteers
5. Integrate parents/guardians into the club.



Five Key Features in Practice

Feature 1. Know your participants

The Feature in Summary



What is it?

- Investing time and effort to get to know and understand the needs, preferences and challenges facing the participants.
- Providing explicit opportunities within sessions to build authentic relationships, as well as more informal opportunities for quality interactions.

Why is it important?

- Enables deeper social connections and rapport to be made.
- It can create an environment to build social bonds and support belonging.

Feature 1. Know your participants

The Feature in Practice



Practical ways to get to know your participants:

- Provide an Inclusion Passport for new participants to get to know needs of participants in advance.
- Communicate effectively with participant's and their families/guardians. Ensure you are aware of each participant's situation and needs.
- Understand who can't attend your club by knowing potential access barriers to your club (i.e., financial, travel, mobility).
- Greet every participant on arrival to make them feel welcomed.
- Set up a buddy system between coaches/volunteers and participants.
- Ensure you have enough staff or volunteers so each participant can receive close attention, and you can respond to needs quickly.

Feature 2. Be flexible and responsive when session planning

The Feature in Summary



What is it?

- Design activities or offer opportunities for participants to take ownership of how they engage.
- Provide space for play and for participants to be expressive and/or creative is important.

Why is it important?

- Involving participants in the decisions in the design of activities can improve their sense of belonging.
- Flexibility of sessions help participants to stay engaged with the activities.

Feature 2. Be flexible and responsive when session planning

The Feature in Practice



Practical ways to be flexible and responsive when session planning:

- Ask for participants' feedback on the session, to identify what they liked and how the session can be improved.
- Provide participants with different pathways to choose from, so that they can enjoy activities which suit their skill levels and abilities.
- Communicate with participants on arrival to understand their expectations of the session.
- Incorporate older or more developed participants to be leaders and involve them in session planning.
- Make sure there is always someone who can support each participant and can create a safe space to make mistakes.

Feature 3. Focus on individual, incremental improvement in participants

The Feature in Summary



What is it?

- Encouraging opportunities for participants to develop and improve their skills at their own pace.
- Integrating a learner-centred approaches to session – i.e., participants set their own objectives.

Why is it important?

- These approaches prolong engagement in a club which in turn helps to create a sense of belonging.

Feature 3. Focus on individual, incremental improvement in participants

The Feature in Practice



Practical ways to focus on individual, incremental improvement in participants:

- Set personalised and achievable goals based on each participant's starting point, so that they can feel a sense of progress and ownership.
- Focus not only on short-term goals but also year-long (longitudinal) goals to reduce pressure.
- Take things slowly and keep things informal to make them feel comfortable to experiment and ask questions.
- Use a strengths-based approach (recognise and build on what participants can already do well) to build their confidence.
- Celebrate personal progress rather than outcomes to develop participants' motivation.
- Encourage self-reflection to help them realise their own strengths and growth.

Feature 4. Provide support for club volunteers

The Feature in Summary



What is it?

- Making volunteers feel valued is as essential to creating an inclusive environment.
- Checking on their mental and physical wellbeing regularly.
- Provide opportunities to access training and qualification, where possible

Why is it important?

- Volunteers are the lifeblood of community sport club and are often the key point of contact between participants and the club.
- Providing support makes volunteers feel valued and help their engagement.

Feature 4. Provide support for club volunteers

The Feature in Practice



Practical ways to support volunteers:

- Provide mentors to understand each volunteer's needs and areas they want to develop.
 - Provide and pay for upskilling opportunities e.g. education, training, qualifications.
 - Offer opportunities to share learnings across volunteers.
 - Set up network of volunteers e.g. WhatsApp group.
 - Feature volunteers on the club website.
- Host volunteer-focused events e.g. social, festival, awards.

Feature 5. Integrate parents/guardians into the club

The Feature in Summary



What is it?

- Making parents and guardians feel welcome in your community sport club.
- Provide families with opportunities to build friendships, share information and connect with their community.
- Offer sessions to enable parents to be active participants or provide a social area for parents to congregate and connect.

Why is it important?

- Engaging with parents/guardians can ensure participants' ongoing involvement.
- Parents/guardians may possess important transferable skills which can be put to good use by the club

Feature 5. Integrate parents/guardians into the club

The Feature in Practice



Practical ways to get to know your participants:

- Create a WhatsApp group and/or mailing list to keep parents/guardians updated.
- Offer volunteering opportunities that match parents'/guardians' interests and availability.
- Set up specific classes targeted parents/guardians as well as informal events (i.e., coffee mornings, end-of-term celebrations) to build a connection between other parents/guardians.
- Provide workshop on inclusive sport to help them understand how your club supports individual improvement and creates a safe environments for all participants.
- Seek out and action their feedback to make them feel valued.

Further information

You can learn more about the Building Stronger Communities research by clicking on the links below.

- [Summary Report](#)
- [Playbook](#)
- [Full Report](#)





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