

# England Athletics Inclusion Policy

England Athletics is committed to ensure that athletes of all abilities are able to participate equitably within athletics. England Athletics will seek to develop a focus on inclusion, not exclusion, and ensure that it provides appropriate advice to affiliated members to ensure that disabled athletes can participate as fully as possible within athletics events. England Athletics will seek to ensure that it complies with the Equality Act 2010 and encourages its affiliated members to do so.

## 1 Key Aims

The key aims of the England Athletics Inclusion Policy are:

- ◆ To guide and support the integration of inclusive practice into core England Athletics programmes and initiatives aimed at clubs and coaches such as the Local and National Coach Development Programmes and Athletics Networks.
- ◆ To contribute towards growing and sustaining numbers of disabled athletes participating within athletics within affiliated clubs and Athletics Networks.
- ◆ To promote the inclusion of disabled athletes in athletics events wherever possible and in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act.
- ◆ To influence the development of inclusive practice within competition both in England Athletics competitions and within other competition providers.
- ◆ To provide support and guidance to affiliated clubs, Athletics Networks and race organisers to promote the development of inclusive practice and to enhance participation.
- ◆ To promote the accessibility of athletics clubs, premises and event locations for disabled people including athletes, officials, coaches and spectators.
- ◆ To promote the development of knowledge and understanding of disability, equity and inclusion amongst England Athletics staff, athletics clubs, officials, coaches and race organisers by the provision of appropriate training and development.
- ◆ To promote close working partnerships with disability groups and organisations to support the development of inclusive practice within athletics.

## 2 The Equality Act 2010

### 2.1 Definition of a Disabled Person

The Equality Act ("the Act") defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. For these purposes:

- ◆ Substantial means neither minor nor trivial;
- ◆ Long term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions); and
- ◆ Normal day-to-day activities include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.

People who have had an impairment in the past that meets this definition are also covered by the scope of the Act. There are additional provisions relating to people with progressive conditions.

## 2.2 The key provisions of the Act

Under the Act it is unlawful:

- ◆ To discriminate against a disabled person because of their disability; and
- ◆ For any organisation or service provider to treat disabled people unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability, unless such treatment can be justified (i.e. unless the treatment is a “proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim”).

Organisations and service providers must also make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in relation to both their service provision and any physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers to access. This duty to comply applies to England Athletics and to all athletics clubs and race organisers, regardless of club/event size.

In relation to reasonable adjustments, the law requires that organisations and service providers make reasonable adjustments in anticipation that they will have disabled members/participants. Thus, an athletics club or race organiser cannot wait until a disabled athlete makes a request to join the club or enter a race before taking action. They should instead identify what reasonable adjustments should be made to enable disabled people to participate and should then set out a reasonable timescale for the implementation of those adjustments.

Furthermore, to comply with the Act, organisations, athletics clubs and race organisers must consider what reasonable adjustments may be necessary to ensure that their club or race is accessible for disabled people who may wish to participate as coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators as well as athletes.

## 3 Inclusive Practice

The England Athletics Inclusion Policy is not just about access to facilities but is intended to promote a change in attitudes and to improve opportunities for disabled people to participate in athletics.

There are a number of measures that England Athletics, athletics organisations, athletics clubs and race organisers can take to ensure that they are working under the guidance of the Policy and within the requirements of the Act.

### 3.1 Provide a welcoming environment

Establishing a positive and welcoming approach is one of the most effective ways of encouraging disabled people to participate. It requires England Athletics, affiliated athletics clubs and event organisers to think positively about how they can include disabled people rather than focusing on potential barriers to participation.

England Athletics, clubs and race organisers should consider how athletics in general and the club or event are promoted. For example, do they positively welcome and encourage participants from all sectors of the community? Is the club or event promoted in formats which are accessible to disabled people?

Disabled people should be encouraged to contact clubs/race organisers to discuss their needs and requirements to facilitate inclusion. Disabled people cannot be told that they are not eligible to participate without there having been consideration of what reasonable adjustments could be made to enable them to participate.

England Athletics, clubs and race organisers should develop the knowledge and understanding of key staff, club or event officials, coaches and other volunteers, of disability, equity and inclusive practice by providing appropriate guidance and training.

### 3.2 Talk to disabled people

England Athletics, clubs and race organisers should so far as is reasonably possible consult with relevant groups and with prospective disabled athletes about their needs and requirements. It is important not to make assumptions and to try to speak to disabled athletes about the reasonable adjustments they believe might be made to enable them to participate in athletics clubs or events and to discuss how these could be made.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is also available to provide help and advice ([www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)) where necessary.

With this in mind, if a risk assessment indicates that an event might be unsafe for athletes with particular disabilities the organiser should where possible try and discuss with any disabled athletes wanting to participate.

### 3.3 Access to facilities

Clubs and race organisers should undertake a review of the accessibility of facilities including car parking, toilets, changing facilities, access to buildings and other facilities. England Athletics, clubs and race organisers should discuss with facility providers e.g. schools or Local Authorities about the provisions that they have in place to meet the requirements of the Act.

### 3.4 Reasonable Adjustments

England Athletics, clubs and race organisers have an obligation to demonstrate that every effort has been made to enable disabled athletes to participate and that inclusion not exclusion has been the priority. If reasonable adjustments are required to make an event accessible then those reasonable adjustments must be made.

Adjustments which require additional expense will still be deemed reasonable where the additional expense is relative to the resources of the organisation. In these circumstances, the additional expense must be borne by the organiser. By way of a general guide, an adjustment is though unlikely to be reasonable if it is so drastic that it will change the nature of the whole event.

If England Athletics, clubs or race organisers consider it is necessary to exclude a disabled athlete from participating in an event they must ensure that they can justify this decision and any justification should be on the basis of fact, not assumptions, and be supported by evidence such as a valid risk assessment or previous incidents/experience.

If a risk assessment for the event indicates that the event is unsafe for disabled athletes then the person who has compiled the risk assessment must show that they have sufficient knowledge or experience in the area of disability or has consulted with an appropriate disability organisation or has been advised by someone with the necessary knowledge.

Where a risk assessment indicates that the event might be unsafe for disabled athletes, the organiser should generally advise rather than issue an outright directive prohibiting disabled athletes from competing.

As indicated above, there may though be some circumstances where a directive does unfortunately have to be issued, for example where the assessment indicates, having taken into account any reasonable adjustments which could be made, that the event is unsafe for disabled athletes or if it indicates that the participation of disabled athletes will make the event unsafe for other participants.

**A positive and sensible approach to risk management can and should in most circumstances encourage the inclusion of disabled people in most activities.**

## 4 The International Paralympic Committee Classification System

### 4.1 Classification

UKA has adopted the International Paralympic Committee Classification System for disability athletics. This is a comprehensive classification system for disabled athletes who participate in paralympic competition under the rules of the International Paralympic Committee. Classification is an integral part of disability athletics to ensure fair competition and operates in parallel to mainstream athletics.

Each group is subdivided into classes depending on the level of impairment. There are strict criteria attached to each class and the following are the basic guidelines for eligibility for groups that are currently included in the Paralympic Pathway:

T/F	11-13	Athletes with a Visual Impairment
T/F	20	Athletes with a Learning Disability
T/F	31-38	Athletes with Cerebral Palsy
T/F	40-46	Amputee & Les Autres (including Dwarf Athletes)
T	51-54	Wheelchair Racers
F	51-58	Seated Field Athletes

T = Track F = Field

The classification process identifies the athletes' functional ability in relation to the event group in which they are competing. The athlete undergoes a series of mobility tests and is seen in competition by IPC (International Paralympic Committee) qualified classifiers.

### 4.2 Athletes with a visual impairment

Classification for athletes with a visual impairment involves an eye test that must be carried out by an Ophthalmologist / Optometrist. The athlete will receive an official classification and must bring this information to competitions. Only athletes who receive a classification of T/F 11 - 13 through this system will be eligible for IPC Competition.

### 4.3 Athletes with a Learning Disability

Classification for athletes with learning disability in the UK is done by either UKSA or INAS-FID. The process involves an IQ test and collating and presenting specific evidence of the learning disability. All athletes who meet the eligibility criteria and are classified will be given either a UKSA or INAS-FID classification number.

### 4.4 Eligibility

The IPC system operates purely to enable fair competition between disabled athletes and if an athlete is not eligible for the Paralympic Pathway they may still compete within mainstream athletics as appropriate.

*Revised December 2010*