



Suffolk Disability Sport Academy

Disability Sport Showcase Day 16th September 2006 Evaluation Report



“One picture is worth a thousand words.”

Fred R Barnard -1921

Foreword

The London Paralympic Games have already had a positive impact on disabled people in the East of England, six years ahead of the opening ceremony.

Optua, based in Ipswich, has established the Disability Sport Academy, creating pathways for disabled people to get involved with grassroots sports. The Academy co-ordinates taster days to enable people who have never tried a sport before to have a go, with qualified coaches on-hand and local elite disabled athletes there to encourage them.

Having found a sport they enjoy, disabled people can join a beginner's course to build their skills in a safe and supportive environment. For those that develop a desire to follow the sport, they are introduced to their local grassroots clubs who are supported in making adjustments and buying equipment to ensure full participation.

Not everyone will get to stand on the podium in 2012. But already disabled people are discovering new abilities, new passion and new self-confidence through sport.

I hope that this evaluation report on our first Showcase Day will inspire our supporters and potential supporters to enable us to widen the number of people who can be given this opportunity. Without the financial support already so generously given, none of this can happen. Our grateful thanks goes to all those who have backed us.

Colin Poole,

Chief Executive, Optua

Background

London being awarded the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has acted as a catalyst for Optua to become more involved in competitive disability sport and ensure disabled people in Suffolk don't miss out.

Since 1996 Optua Leisure has enabled disabled people living across Suffolk to take part in a full range of leisure activities, including sport, by working with mainstream leisure providers.

Optua Leisure is a central point of contact for disabled people interested in sport and leisure. We campaign to improve access to leisure and sport for disabled people and help people to take part in the activities of their choice.

In November 2005 we launched the Suffolk Disability Sport Academy which aims to encourage more disabled people to become interested and involved in grass roots competitive sport. This will have several key benefits:

- It will help to improve their skills and abilities
- It will promote healthier lifestyles and general wellbeing
- It will raise awareness of disability and disability sport.



Disability Sport Showcase Events

During 2006 we arranged a variety of taster days in sports such as archery and sailing. In September 2006 we held our first major disability sport event in Ipswich. The Disability Sport Showcase Day at Northgate Sports Centre in Ipswich was a great success with over 130 people with a physical, sensory or learning disability coming along to try a range of Paralympic sports.

Those taking part could take part in up to four different sports from the ten on offer - archery, football, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair tennis, table tennis, athletics, boccia, goalball, sitting volleyball and powerlifting.

The event was probably the largest disability sport event ever held in the county. Top coaches from the region and other parts of the country came along to the event to run the sports sessions including Keith Lound from British Blind Sport who provided the Goalball sessions; Kwok Ng, Regional Volleyball Coach; Warner Duff, Disability Liaison Officer at Ipswich Town Football Club and Neil and Ann Thomas, World Powerlifting Champions.

We were able to help some disabled people onto a pathway to further involvement in a particular sport that they were inspired by. For example the archery was so successful with some that we were able to arrange a further beginners' course for those attending the taster day. Some people also joined the Orwell Panthers Athletics Club as a result of their taster sessions on the day. We were also able to support the addition of specialist powerlifting equipment at East Bergholt Sports Centre for those who wanted to take up this sport.

The Disability Sport Showcase Day was so successful that we're now planning the next one on Saturday 28th April 2007.



What they said about the Showcase Day:

David Finn, Optua Leisure Manager:

“The day was a tremendous success and everyone who took part thoroughly enjoyed themselves. It was great to be able to provide such a wide range of sports so people could take part in popular sports like football and athletics but also less well known ones like goalball, boccia and powerlifting.



“Following the event, ten of those taking part in the archery taster session, signed up to our beginner’s archery course and eight of these are now going to continue their interest by joining a local club. Orwell Panthers found a young girl who excelled at long jump and we also found two potential athletes for Powerlifting. Our main goal however is to get more disabled people into sport - if we can produce a Paralympian for 2012 that would be the icing on the cake.”

Adam Baker, Manager of Ipswich Borough Council’s Team Ipswich project:

“Team Ipswich was delighted to be involved in the Disability Sport Showcase Day at Northgate Sports Centre. The event was well organised, extremely well supported and much needed. Most importantly a significant number of disabled people have gone on to join clubs as a result of attending the day.”

Jane Hannah, Sport England:

“An excellently organised event with so much to offer to the participants, everybody was well looked after and enjoyed their day.”

Terry McEntee, Operations Manager, Suffolk Sport:

“The range of sports on offer and the skills and enthusiasm of the organisers really captured the attention of all who attended. For many participants this represented a first time experience and I’m confident that many will continue to take part beyond the day.”

Anthony Hines, Chairman of St Edmunds Trust, who helped to fund the Showcase Day:

“We were very pleased to sponsor the Showcase Event which proved so successful. It offered such a wide range of sporting activities in which people with disabilities living in Suffolk could take part. We were delighted that the day received extensive and well placed media coverage which must have encouraged the participants and heightened the profile of Optua and what the charity is trying to achieve.”

“Caroline Ruffell who represented the Trust on the day gave us very positive feedback. She was impressed with the professional, inclusive, caring, happy and safe atmosphere which the staff and volunteers had created and with the attention to detail in preparing for the day – for the enjoyment of participants and spectators alike.”

What the participants said:

“A huge thank you to everyone who made the day possible, I had a fantastic day.”

“Lots to choose from on the day, great fun to try new things I’ve not done before.”

“Fantastic day, loved the powerlifting which I have never done before.”

“Staff and coaches were excellent with me. I’ve done things I’ve never done before.”

“It was the first time I had used a sports wheelchair and it was so cool!”



What their families said:

“You have encouraged my son to try sports he may never have even considered.”

“A big thank you from all our family. My son had a wonderful time and thoroughly enjoyed taking part in such a range of sports.”

“The idea that you could try a number of sports on one day is a sound one - My son certainly enjoyed the wheelchair tennis and the archery, but was able to discover that the volleyball was too difficult for him. That disappointment doesn't matter when there are a number of other things you can try and succeed at.”

What the clubs said:

“Great day. Sessions well attended, would be more than happy to support future events.”

“Very well run event. We highlighted four people who have ability to compete at National Level!”

“Was great to have participants of different ages and abilities. We all had a great time.”

An overview of the sports represented at the Showcase Day

Archery:

Provided by Maureen Hatton – County Archery Coach
Contact: (Via Optua Leisure), 01473 836770, leisure@optua.org.uk

Athletics:

Provided by Orwell Panthers Athletics Club
Contact: Ann Negus, 01473 254050.

Boccia:

Provided by Cathy Churchyard
Contact: (Via Team Ipswich), Danny Thorrington, 01473 433542

Football:

Provided by Ipswich Town Football Club Disabled Football Team and Cornard Dynamos
Contact: Warner Duff at ITFC, 01473 400553.
Cornard Dynamos, Andy Millar, 07855 259412.

Goalball:

Provided by Keith Lound, British Blind Sport
Contact: 01926 424247, info@britishblindsport.org.uk

Powerlifting:

Provided by Neil and Ann Thomas
Contact: (Via B-Active Project), Greg Cooper, 01473 826640.

Sitting Volleyball:

Provided by Kwok Ng, Regional Volleyball Coach
Contact: (Via Optua Leisure), 01473 836770, leisure@optua.org.uk

Table Tennis:

Provided by Stowmarket Table Tennis Club
Contact: Geoff Brook, 01449 774154.

Wheelchair Tennis:

Provided by Kesgrave Tennis Club
Contact: Dick McDonald, 01394 384791.

Wheelchair Basketball:

Provided by The Bury Bombers Basketball Team
Contact: Jill Anderson, 01284 728458.



The future

Our plan is to hold at least two disability sport showcase days in Suffolk each year leading up to the Paralympics in 2012. We are also working with our colleagues across the East of England to introduce the concept of the Disability Sport Academy to many hundreds more disabled people. We hope to see these events replicated in each county. We are identifying partners to promote the academy and deliver the concept. We want to enable disabled people to take part in amateur competitive sport but this requires more clubs and teams to be created, better facilities to be provided and disability sport given a higher profile. The Academy model contributes to all of these goals.



The aim of the showcase days is to :

- Enable people to try out more than one sport at a time
- Provide opportunities for representatives of paralympic sports to engage with new participants and nurture the growth of their sport locally
- Help disabled people discover the fun and sense of achievement which can be achieved through sport
- Develop new skills through taking part in the sports on offer and enabling the sharing of knowledge and experience
- Promote healthy living and improved physical and mental health through sport as a medium

Showcase days need to be held in various venues countywide to reach as many people as possible from across Suffolk and beyond. Any venue being used for disability sports needs to be fully accessible to disabled people to promote inclusion and we will be working to identify appropriate locations across Suffolk.

Accessibility of these events is vital to ensure they are as inclusive as possible to all disabled people. Apart from the physical accessibility issues faced by many disabled people, many also remain socially and rurally isolated in Suffolk and we must work to make sure we reach them with this project.

People will be encouraged to take part from all areas of Suffolk. We are particularly aware of the issues of transport. For instance people living in west Suffolk will be looking for suitable sporting venues in their local area without having to travel long distances to take part in the activities of their choice. We will aim to work with clubs and leisure centres to raise awareness of accessibility issues, appropriate equipment and practical facilities such as changing rooms and toilets.

We want these events to encourage and enable people to be better informed. We hope to reach as many disabled people as possible and unlock their potential to take part. We want to give people the inspiration to take part, be successful and have fun.

“To make an Olympic champion takes eight Olympic finalists

To make an Olympic finalist takes 80 Olympians

To make an Olympian takes 202 national champions

To make a national champion takes thousands of athletes

To make an athlete takes millions of children around the world inspired to choose sport.”

(From the London 2012 bid opening film presentation, Singapore)

Acknowledgements

The Showcase Day could not have gone ahead without the help of several key organisations and people. We would like to thank St Edmunds Trust, Ipswich Town Football Club, Team Ipswich, Waitrose, Britannia Building Society, The Hedley Foundation and the Bruce Wake Charity for their financial support. We'd also like to acknowledge the hard work of everyone who made the day such a success, including the staff of Optua who volunteered on the day and the Optua Leisure team who organised the event so well.

For more information about Optua's Disability Sport Academy and Showcase Days please contact Optua Leisure on 01473 836770, email leisure@optua.org.uk or go to www.beyourbest.org.uk



