Football for Disabled People in Scotland

This fact sheet provides an overview of Football for disabled people in Scotland. It also provides useful contact details to signpost you to your local club to develop your skills and start to play, volunteer or coach disabled people in Football.

The Development of Football

Perhaps the world’s best loved sport, Football is played by millions of people across the globe, whether just in the local park or a national stadium.

Football is a team sport that offers excellent opportunities for people with a disability to enjoy physical exercise, social interaction and develop individual skills within a safe and exciting environment.

The Disability Programme is an important part of the Scottish Football Association’s (SFA) commitment to encouraging those with disabilities/special needs – physical sensory or learning disabilities or a mix of all three - to participate in football. It is important to note that no matter a person’s ability or disability they can access the game across Scotland. Programmes are being further developed to ensure that “barriers” to disability participation can be overcome.

Cerebral palsy 7-a-side football was introduced at the 1984 New York Paralympic Games and Blind 5-a-side football was introduced to the 2004 Games in Athens. Great Britain (GB) entered teams for the first time in Beijing 2008 at both events.

Scotland has a strong tradition of players being selected by Team GB at the Paralympics. In Beijing 2008 four players were selected and four players were also selected for London 2012.

A Powerchair Football League has also been established with teams competing across Scotland. A number of clubs have been awarded the SFA Disability Club Award and the Disability Inclusive Club Award.

There is a National Disability Development Officer and also Football Development Officers in 27 Scottish local authorities who have a remit to promote and develop disability football.

Scottish Disability Sport (SDS) is represented in the GB Disability Football Association. All players selected for Paralympics GB come through SDS structures.

Scotland have direct entry into European and World Championships and have performed very well over recent years in these tournaments. At the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association (CPISRA) European Championships in 2010 and World Championships 2011 the team finished 5th and 6th respectively.

Significant funding has been secured from the Scottish Football Partnership to support the disability football programme. The Scottish FA and Scottish Disability Sport wish to continue the development of disability football in Scotland and offering a greater opportunity for players to reach their full potential.
The Classifications
Disability Football includes pathways for a number of levels from grass roots through to international representation.

5-a-side is only for players who are visually impaired.

7-a-side is for players with cerebral palsy, stroke or acquired brain injury who are ambulant.

Sport Class FT5 – FT8 – (lower number indication a higher level of impairment) in order to ensure fairness between team, each team (7 players) has to have one FT5 or FT6 on the field of play at all times and is not allowed to have more than two FT8 players on the field.

Learning Disability Football
The Scottish FA in partnership with Scottish Disability Sport organise friendlies and national 5’s, 7’s and 11-a-side football competitions annually. For further information on these events please contact the SDS head office on Telephone: 0131 317 1130 or email admin@scottishdisabilitysport.com.

Wheelchair Football
In conjunction with the Wheelchair Football Association, The Scottish FA is currently setting up opportunities for wheelchair footballers. For further information on the Wheelchair Football Association please follow the link: www.thewfa.org.uk/index.php.

Sensory Impairment Football
The Scottish Deaf Football Association organises league and competitive fixtures for teams and players who are Deaf within Scotland.

In conjunction a number of regional partners the Scottish FA is currently setting up opportunities for Visually Impaired and Blind Footballers.

To register an interest or enquire about these sessions please email opportunities@scottishfa.co.uk.

Coach Education
Coaching Footballers with a Disability (6 hours) allows coaches a better understanding of the needs for a disabled footballer to develop skills and allow these players to reach their full potential.

Disability Football Awareness course (3 hours) gives coaches from a mainstream environment the opportunity to better understand how the coach can include a disabled player within a mainstream football environment.

To access the Scottish FA Coach Education brochure and course application process or contact: coaching@scottishfa.co.uk.

A major development will see the inclusion of three hours of disability content within the UEFA B Licence.

Helpful Resources
Scottish FA – Disability Football Opportunities
A detailed explanation of the various disability classifications.

Some Facts & Figures
- There are over 40 clubs offering distinct Disability Activity – 28 being Disability Inclusive.
- 50 teams took part in the 2013/14 National Championships.
- Scotland are currently ranked 8th in the World within Cerebral Palsy Football (2014).
- The Learning Disability Squad has won the last 2 Home Nations Championships.
- Scotland made up 33% of the GB squad for the London 2012 Paralympic Games.
Leading Performers

Jonathon Paterson (Motherwell), Craig Connell (Glasgow), James Richmond (Stirling) and Blair Glynn (Tranent) were selected for the London 2012 GB 7-a-side team.

Competitions

SFA Regional Schools League has extended to include the North Region now covering 6 regions in total. SDS and the Scottish FA run an extensive National Events Programme which includes the following:

- National 5-a-side Championships,
- National 7-a-side Championships
- National Schools League for Players with a Learning Disability.

A League fixture programme is now in place for powerchair football as well as a PAN Disability League.
Key Contacts

Scottish Football National Disability Manager – David McArdle david.mcardle@scottishfa.co.uk

Head Office
The Scottish Football Association
6th Floor, Hampden Park
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Key Websites

The Scottish Football Association – www.scottishfa.co.uk
Scottish Disability Sport – www.scottishdisabilitysport.com
British Paralympic Association – www.paralympics.org.uk
IPC – www.paralympic.org

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