



**English Federation
of Disability Sport**

EFDS Good Practice Club Case Studies

SportsAble was created in 1975 from the dreams of a few and has developed to its current unique status through the commitment and labour of many – disabled and non disabled people alike.

This club talks about how it supports all members from recreational to elite athletes.

General background

Club name. SportsAble.

Sports: Air Pistol, Air Rifle, Archery, Boccia, Golf, New Age Kurling, Pool, Rowing, Short Tennis, Swimming, Table Tennis, Ten Pin Bowling, Wheelchair Basketball.

Type of impairment the club offers sport for: Physical and sensorial

Affiliated to?

We are registered with EFDS for ClubMark purposes and are affiliate members of WheelPower.

We are also registered with:

National Small-bore Rifle Association

Archery GB

Boccia England

Disabled Golf Association

Great Britain Kurling Association

English Table Tennis Association

British Table Tennis Association for People with Disabilities

British Wheelchair Basketball

Where is the club based?

Purpose built facility in Maidenhead, Berkshire.

When, how and why did the club start?

SportsAble was founded in March 1975 by an active group of disabled people whose aim was to establish a network of sports clubs for disabled people throughout Southern England. In 1982, with an expanding membership and following early successes at the Paralympics and national and regional sports events, the sports centre, the first of its kind in the UK, was opened by HRH Princess Anne having raised funding of £140k via the local community and fundraising. In 1996 we completed a major extension to the centre having gained a further £330k funding with the help of the National Lottery, local community support and endless fundraising schemes. HRH The Duke of Edinburgh opened the new extension in April of that year.

Ten years later a second sports hall was added which was opened by Shaun Edwards OBE in November 2006.

Following further membership expansion, the addition of more sports and a need to move to a 7 day a week operation, we commenced employing part-time staff to operate the centre. We now employ eight part time staff.

1. Engagement

Were disabled people included from the start?

Yes, this was very important for us and is why we feel we are so successful.

Do you link with other disability groups / clubs / schools?

We link with other disability sports clubs for competitions. We also have regional links with Local Authorities, schools (main stream & special), County Sports Partnerships and the British Paralympic Association.

Our links to the community are important to us and we have an extensive Outreach programme which takes disability sport out into the community.

Do you have disabled people on your committees?

Disabled members sit on all our committees as this reflects the membership of the club. We are keen though to ensure that integration with non disabled people remains, this is part of the philosophy of our club. Most sports involve non disabled people as do our committees and the board.

2. Funding

Is funding an ongoing area to work on?

Yes, we have to raise £250k a year in order to operate, which is all self funded. We have an active fundraising committee and we rely heavily on our Annual Marathon Wheelchair Push, street collections, sponsorship, community donations, sport facility hire and our social bar & conference facility hire, all of which are highly dependent on the support and effort of our members and volunteers.

What funds have you successfully applied for?

Our successful applications include: National Lottery; Awards for All; Sport England; Berkshire Community Foundation; Masonic, Lions & Rotary groups; local companies and many other private foundations and charities.

Do you have a designated fundraising person on your committee?

We have a fundraising committee who meet regularly to organise numerous events per year.

Please give us your top fundraising idea.

The Wheelchair Marathon Push is an annual community event which has been running for over 30 years and regularly raises over £10K on the day!

3. Club management and facilities

What are the facilities like? Are they fully accessible? Is this important for your club members?

Yes as most of our members are physically disabled, a fully inclusive facility is important. The centre was designed around the needs of our members.

Is the social side important at your club?

Yes, the bar was built in 1985 and brings the opportunity for more leisure pursuits such as board games to be added as well as fundraising on site. It also brings in an income.

All our fundraising events are planned to be fun and sociable. At SportsAble we aim

to support all sports people whether elite or those who just enjoy taking part.

Have you had help from a National Governing Body of Sport or County Sports Partnership regarding your club's policies?

We had help from the County Sport Partnership to ensure that all of our policies were ClubMark compliant.

The NGBs in particular help with coach development and administrative updates. They are also crucial regarding high level pathways for performance development.

Have you achieved ClubMark or are you working towards it?

ClubMark accreditation was achieved in July 2013 with support from EFDS and our County Sports Partnership.

4. The Playing Programme

How did you chose the sports you offer?

Many of the sports chosen are Paralympic sports and members also suggest what they would like to do. There is a natural lean towards those with defined athlete pathways and those specifically designed for people with a disability.

How do you ensure people can progress in their chosen sport?

Through our own development programme and pathways to higher levels.

Many of our sports members compete in non disabled leagues and regional & national tournaments.

5. The people

How valuable are your volunteers?

Because of the scale of our sporting activities, our volunteers are essential to us. We encourage a large number of volunteers and have welcomed for example, young people working towards their Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

Do you use qualified coaches?

Coaching is an essential ingredient for our success. SportsAble not only provides a gateway to sports but also develops pathways to performance. Coaches are trained and certificated by their NGB and work within our general framework of good practice. We also support their ongoing development by refunding the cost of courses and associated travel. All coaches are required to be CRB cleared. We are proud of the fact that we help non disabled coaches to gain practical experience coaching disabled people at SportsAble.

Over half of our coaches are themselves disabled.

Do you offer incentives to coaches and volunteers?

Not monetary, but we do recognise our helpers at an annual reception, through special awards at our Annual Awards Dinner and by nominating them for local, regional & national Volunteer Awards.

Do you offer training to your coaches / volunteers?

Yes and this is essential. Our dedication to supporting volunteers resulted in us being awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service in 2006.

6. Promotion and marketing**How did you get your members in the first place?**

By press activity and extensive networking.

How do you attract new members now?

We have a strong committee which focuses on both marketing and fundraising. Attracting new members is important and we make full use of all community communication channels and seek the support of various medical centres. We have good links with the local press and regional radio broadcasting.

Our policy of integration (with non disabled people) also helps as competing in local leagues means playing at venues other than our own.

Do you have a person assigned as a media contact for your club?

Yes, we have a part-time Marketing Manager.

Do you have a club website / newsletter?

Yes we have both and this informs existing members and contacts as well as encouraging new people to come forward.

We also have a professionally produced magazine which supports our wider promotional activities.

What is your yearly membership? Cost per session etc

We keep these costs deliberately low so cost is not a barrier. Our membership fees are: Sports Member £40, Sports Member (Family) £120, Social Member £15, Social Member (Family) £45. There is no additional charge for the vast majority of sport sessions.

SportsAble website: www.sportsable.co.uk