Paddle-Ability Starter Sessions
Tips and Ideas for Clubs and Centres

Paddle-Ability Starter Sessions offer clubs and centres the ideal opportunity to introduce disabled people to paddlesport offering the flexibility to run activity to suit them and the club/venue as well as the disabled people taking part.

Who is the session for?

There are a variety of factors which will influence what you can offer such as; venue, type of activity you traditionally run and equipment you have available. Do not be afraid to identify a target impairment group to work with depending on these factors and the experience of those who will be running the session. Equally, if you know of a local club or activity group for disabled people near you, it might be helpful to create links with them and see how you could tailor a session to suit their needs. The Inclusion Club Hub is a useful tool for identifying current strengths within an organisation: www.inclusion-club-hub.co.uk.

Who can come to the session?

While Paddle-Ability Starter sessions are primarily focused on providing activity for disabled people you may want to consider opening up the session for family and friends and ensure that your advertising states this, for example; family, friends, parents welcome. This will not only make the session more attractive to potential attendees, particularly if it is their first experience, but it can also help give you more hands on support before, after and during the session.

Register your session

Registering your session through the Go Paddling scheme will help publicise your event to a greater market and will give you access to the support of the Go Paddling resources.

Publishing your Event

According to the Activity Alliance Lifestyle Report disabled people's priorities for taking part in sport and recreational activity are; to have fun, get fit, improve health, and to be able to join in sessions with friends and family. It was also highlighted that information such as start and finish times and what to bring with them needed to be clear. When considering what language to use, do not be afraid to be clear about who the session is aimed at by using phrases such as 'this session is for disabled people, and their friends and family'.

Organisation

Consider what you want your first session to look like, while an ergo session might be a good first step, particularly to build confidence; there can often be a big mental step to getting onto the water. On the other hand, some attendees may be disappointed as they wanted to get onto the water straight away. If you have access to a swimming pool this may offer an excellent bridge allowing people to experience activities indoors. It is therefore

important to ensure what type of session will be offered is communicated beforehand, in order not to disappoint or put people off.

Consider the meeting point and venues- are they appealing? Try to give as much information about the venue as possible, such as access to disabled parking bays, the name of the lead person who will be running the session, is there somewhere where parents/carers/helpers can congregate while the session is running, if they are not taking part. While not completely practical on the water, wearing a name badge in the initial part of the session will help. The Activity Alliance Access for All: Opening Doors guide can help centres to identify their current capacity:

Consider what group size you are able to cater for and if you need to put on more coaching or support provision. Make sure you allow for more time organising equipment at the beginning and end of the session and think about the session length, a shorter session may be more desirable for groups susceptible to the cold or with shorter attention spans. Encourage attendees to bring a partner/carer/parent or buddy, this may give them more confidence to attend and can boost participation numbers, at the very least it will be an extra pair of hands to support you.

Equipment

Don't Panic! Depending on what impairment groups you are working with and the level of their ability specialist equipment may not be required. More often than not, when coaches are asked how they resolved an equipment problem, they tell us they used some gaffer tape and foam blocks! Although it can be hard to identify what equipment would work best, where ever possible try to find out what kind of needs individuals might have before the session. Those attending the session will appreciate that each individual can be very different and they will probably be more than happy to work with you to find a solution that works for them.

Feedback

Gaining feedback is always important, it allows you to see how well the participants enjoyed the session, what worked well, what could have been done better and can then be used to plan future sessions. Consider what is next- once someone has been to a Starter session what are they going to do next? Ensure that you have their contact details and are able to provide some information about the next steps, perhaps inviting them back to another session.

Gathering feedback and statistics on the number of people attending session is also very important for us and Sport England. The information you provide will be used to help demonstrate the success of the activities running and secure future funding in the sport. Therefore we will ask you to send us back some basic feedback on the participants that attend your sessions and whether they are interested in receiving further information about Go Paddling.

Finally.....

Sing about it! With the participants consent, take lots of photos and tell people about the good work you have done. Email photos and reports about your sessions and projects to mediaenquiries@britishcanoeing.org.uk as well as to www.activityalliance.org.uk/contact-

us and local press. Use social networks to talk about the sessions you have run and the sessions that you will be holding in the future.