



# English Federation of Disability Sport Media Guide: Reporting on disabled people in sport

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**English Federation  
of Disability Sport**

Making **active lives** possible

[www.efds.co.uk](http://www.efds.co.uk)

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# Forewords

**Barry Horne,**  
**Chief Executive, English**  
**Federation of Disability Sport**

From previous English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) research, we know that psychological barriers are the most significant in preventing disabled people from being active.

The news we consume can affect everyone's perceptions of themselves as people and, for the talented few in sport, as athletes. This means that it is particularly important that coverage is positive if it is going to encourage disabled people to access opportunities and take part. That is why we all have an obligation to improve our reporting and articles about disabled people in sport.

In our first research project on this topic, we commissioned ComRes to explore people's views on disability sports news. It is promising to hear that those involved in the research noted the improvement over the years. Importantly, we sought the views of, amongst others, disabled people themselves. There are over nine million disabled people in England, that is one in five who consider themselves to have an impairment or health condition- a large proportion of everyone's readership.

The way we access news is extremely diverse and it gives us incredible choice.

With more options, we need to be mindful of the high number of our population who would also look for accessibility and inclusivity when revisiting sites or buying papers again.

We are delighted to present this new Guide for journalists and others who write news on disabled people in sport. The additional support from the Sports Journalists' Association and British Paralympic Association has been invaluable in its promotion and we will continue to work with them to expand this work.

Although we are well placed to support journalists and sports providers before the most recognised event in disability sport, the Paralympics, it is paramount that, all year round, we address the issues raised. Our Guide is a useful tool to have nearby to continually help with your reporting and remind you what readers would prefer to read about.



## Andy Elliott, Chair, Sports Journalists' Association

With the Rio Paralympics just around the corner, a best-practice Guide for journalists reporting on disability sport is timely.

However, as our friends at the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) will testify, this is not just about a once-every-four-years requirement. We hope this Guide, and similar advice from the British Paralympic Association, will help inform media every day, every year.

The research EFDS commissioned has been conducted among the Sports Journalists' Association (SJA) members and readers at large.

It's gratifying to know that as an industry we have improved since 2012 and that the majority of articles that report on sport for disabled people use positive language. But the research makes it clear that more can be done.

There are challenges to growing coverage. Journalists spoken to identified a number of barriers to reporting on disability sport, ranging from not being aware of the timing of events to lacking confidence on language and the classification system.

This Guide seeks to help overcome those challenges and provide key resources to enable journalists do their job ever better when they write about disabled people.

The research tells us that journalists need to make small tweaks to the language they use, use social media more, and understand what type of content plays best. The Guide also covers the importance of being open and clear about the sport and the athlete being reported on, even in terms of the athlete's impairment or health condition.

The SJA is delighted to play its part in supporting EFDS and this important Guide will help sports journalists maintain momentum to increase coverage of disability sports at all levels.



## Lisa O'Keefe, Director of Insight, Sport England

With the thrills of the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games soon to get underway, it's safe to say that disability sport will offer column inches of the ecstatic highs and heart-breaking lows that can only come with sport.

While undoubtedly a fantastic showcase of heights which can be achieved, the Paralympics only show one half of the disability sports' story, with millions of disabled people playing sport far away from the glare of the Paralympic flame.

The Guide offers an invaluable insight into how the media can enhance their coverage of disability sport on a regular basis. Encouragingly, research shows that there is overwhelming support for seeing more coverage.

What's more, both disabled and non-disabled people agree that the reporting of sport and physical activity for disabled people has improved greatly over the last ten years, which leaves us with a strong platform to build on.

London 2012 is regarded as a watershed moment for sport and physical activity, with many disabled adults reporting that this is the first time they have taken a real interest or followed the coverage in the media. Notwithstanding this, the reality is that disabled people are still less likely to be active than non-disabled people, and this has to change. The media can play a vital role in helping us to bridge this gap by showing a greater willingness to cover sport for both disabled and non-disabled people.

Providing helpful advice and tips, this Guide also highlights the need for sports providers to engage better with sport journalists to promote activities. There are many fantastic stories to tell in disability sport and this Guide can help us all tell them better.



## Tom Mludzinski, Director of Political and Social Research, ComRes

It was a landmark year in 2012 for Paralympics coverage. Like many of you and the wider public, I was gripped by the coverage of the Games, and the successes and stories emerging from the historic event.

This year the Paralympic Games will be even more significant. Building on the success of 2012 is essential in ensuring that the coverage of disabled people in sport and physical activity is maintained throughout the year, and possibly even help to develop more stars of the future.

As such, we are pleased to work with the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) and to present this Guide for the media and other stakeholders involved in the sports sector. Over the last few months we have been conducting research among three key audiences: disabled and non-disabled adults with an interest in sport, and sports journalists.

Together with EFDS, we developed an innovative and thorough research framework, including in-depth interviews and a media monitoring programme. It has allowed us to explore the key stories and themes involving disabled people in sport, and to understand the types of news articles that are most likely to be reported. This ran over the course of major sporting events, including the 2016 Invictus Games, Wimbledon and the run-up to the Paralympics.

Over the course of the research, respondents noted that media coverage of disabled people in sport and physical activity has increased since 2012, and there were also very few examples of negative news reporting. However, feedback also suggested that more could be done to increase the parity of coverage between disabled and non-disabled people in sport, as well as citing potential resources that could help journalists, and sport and activity providers, to write more engagingly and accurately about disabled people in sport.

We hope you find this Guide useful and informative. We believe it can become a valuable tool if used positively and representatively to present sports news about disabled people.



# Research summary

The English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) commissioned ComRes to develop a research plan to assess views of how the media portrays disabled people in sport.

As well as media monitoring, we conducted research among both disabled and non-disabled adults interested in sport. ComRes also interviewed sports journalists working for national, local and individual sport specific publications. By incorporating the views of those who help to create sports news, and those who are most likely to consume it, we sought to provide a detailed benchmark of reporting.

It is important to mention that the research found all audiences noted the increased and improved coverage of disability sport during the Paralympics in 2012. But they felt this has not been maintained since then, and that there is a latent demand for more reporting and visibility in the media.

You can download the research report on [www.efds.co.uk](http://www.efds.co.uk)



# Guide summary

We have compiled this Guide for journalists and those who provide news content, to help shape the way disability sport news is reported. It is broken down into six key sections, summarised below.

Section	Guide summary
<b>1. Tailoring content to the sport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sports for disabled people that are traditionally played more by disabled people (e.g. Boccia) are less likely to be in the public consciousness, and therefore articles on these sports require more of an explanation for the reader, particularly when reporting on results.</li><li>• Competition/match reports and interviews should outline the classification or level of the sport in the report, and include a guide of what constitutes 'good' performance in the sport.</li></ul>
<b>2. Types of story</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Features and in-depth articles are seen to provide a good 'hook' to attract readers to the sport. It is seen as the responsibility of both the journalist and the provider to deliver accurate and relevant information.</li><li>• When 'human interest' stories focus on the athlete, there is an opportunity to include wider details on their achievements, training regime and so on, rather than a focus on their impairment or challenges they face.</li></ul>
<b>3. Style and placement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To ensure parity, disabled sports people should feature in the same section of the newspaper or website as non-disabled participants.</li><li>• At a local level particularly, the quality of images depicting disabled people in sport could be improved to increase wider interest.</li></ul>



Section	Guide summary
<p><b>4. Language</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While the vast majority of articles use appropriate and considered language when interviewing or profiling a disabled athlete, the individual should be consulted on how they want their impairment or condition to be referenced.</li> <li>• Journalists need to be careful to avoid using language that may be inadvertently patronising.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Use of different media formats</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online articles are seen to be the most likely format for increasing and sharing wider coverage of disabled people in sport. Newspapers, by contrast, are restricted by space.</li> <li>• It is important for providers and sports clubs to develop relationships with journalists of all levels to share information in order to increase coverage.</li> <li>• Social media and other forms of ‘non-traditional’ media provide an opportunity to gauge the popularity of specific articles on disabled people in sport, and to help create informal forums for those interested in the sport.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Ambassadors</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambassadors promoting sport for disabled people are universally seen as beneficial in advancing general public interest in disability sport.</li> </ul>

# Terminology

## Disability sport and disabled people in sport

Throughout this Guide, you will see a mix of the terms 'disability sport' and 'disabled people in sport'. Traditionally the term 'disability sport' is widely used and recognised by many so we have used a collection of both.

Everyone can play and enjoy sport and we have purposefully avoided using the terms 'disabled sport' and 'non-disabled sport' as they infer that the people who play sport define it.

At development and elite level, sport can often be referred to as 'para-sport' or para followed by the sport e.g. 'para-athletics'. The advice in this Guide is not limited to formal competitive sport and often applies to the whole physical activity spectrum e.g. exercise.



## Definition of disabled people

You are disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

What ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ mean:

- **‘Substantial’** is more than minor or trivial. E.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed
- **‘Long-term’** means 12 months or more. E.g. a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection

## Classification (taken from the International Paralympic Committee explanatory Guide [www.paralympic.org/classification](http://www.paralympic.org/classification))

“Classification provides a structure for competition. Athletes competing in para-sports have an impairment that leads to a competitive disadvantage. Consequently, a system has to be put in place to minimise the impact of impairments on sport performance and to ensure the success of an athlete is determined by skill, fitness, power, endurance, tactical ability and mental focus. This system is called classification. Classification determines who is eligible to compete in a para-sport and it groups the eligible athletes in sport classes according to their activity limitation in a certain sport.”

The first step in disability sport classification is to determine if the athlete has an eligible impairment. The Paralympic Movement offers sport opportunities for athletes that have an impairment that belongs to one of the ten eligible impairment types identified in the “Policy on Eligible Impairments in the Paralympic Movement.”

Each Paralympic sport defines which impairment groups they provide sporting opportunities for in their classification rules. While some sports include athletes of all impairment types (e.g. **athletics, swimming**), other sports are specific to one impairment type (e.g. **goalball**) or a selection of impairment types (e.g. **equestrian, cycling**).

It should be noted:

- Not all sporting opportunities involve classification systems. At a grassroots level, disabled people do not need a classification to take part or enjoy recreational activities.
- Not every impairment or health condition is included in each classification system.
- There are other international events such as Deaflympics, Special Olympics World Games and INAS Global Games.

# Disability in England facts

- **1 in 5** people in England have an impairment or health condition. That is **9.4 million** disabled people. (Census 2011)
- **17%** of disabled people play sport once a week, compared to around **40%** of non-disabled people. (Active People Survey June 2016)
- **7 in 10** disabled people want to be more active. (EFDS Lifestyle Report 2013)
- The prevalence of disability rises with age. Around **6%** of children are disabled, compared to **16%** of working age adults and **45%** of adults over State Pension age. (Family Resources Survey 2010/11)
- **75%** of people have more than one impairment. (Sport England Disability Mapping Resource 2016)
- Less than **8%** of disabled people use wheelchairs – the majority of impairments are not visible. (NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency)
- The most commonly-reported impairments are those that affect mobility, lifting or carrying. (Family Resources Survey 2011/12)
- Nearly two-thirds (**65%**) of people have admitted they avoid disabled people because they don't know how to act around them. (BT Ready, Willing and Disabled Event 2011)



# The Guide

We do not intend this Guide to be prescriptive or provide pointers on what 'must' be included in reporting. However, the research shows that the way the media represents disability sport has wider effects on individuals' perceptions of disability.

Those involved in the research generally saw stories on disabled people in sport as 'inspirational' and just as engaging as stories about non-disabled people.

But many add that sometimes these stories can be taken too far and can appear clichéd. As such, there are different approaches that can be employed to create the most relevant and engaging content. We have highlighted these approaches on the following pages.



# 1. Tailoring content to the sport

Where disability and non-disability sports share broadly the same set of rules, match reports or feature pieces can focus directly on the content of the story without needing to give detailed background explanation. If a disability sport receives a relatively high amount of coverage in the media, the public are more likely to be familiar with it and require less explanation.


In comparison, a greater introduction and explanation for the reader is required when reporting on sports that are more distinctive or niche like impairment-specific sports including goalball and athletics events with multiple classifications. These sports are less likely to be in the public consciousness and as such, they require more explanation for the reader, particularly when reporting on results.

Similarly, this also applies to sports which are adapted for disabled players and have different rules e.g. wheelchair rugby, which is an adaptation of the game in terms of player points and rules.

These differences should be highlighted to provide a better understanding of the sport.

Competition reports and interviews are also seen as an essential element of reporting on disabled people in sport. Reports should outline and explain the classification being covered, for example, athletics classifications like T40/F40, T11, or particular skill level. Also, provide a guide to previous records or performance in the sport where applicable.

Databases and benchmarks on performance at elite level (including records) should be shared with the media more widely. This allows journalists to refer to good scores and successes more accurately.



"[When asked about covering niche sports] it's tricky, but I guess we take the view that you've got to try and offer something for everybody..."

**Sports Journalist**

## 2. Types of story

All groups viewed feature articles as particularly positive. They serve as a good 'hook' for the reader to learn more about the sport and its participants. Therefore, it is seen to be the responsibility of both the journalist, and the provider who shares content with journalists, to deliver information that is both accurate and relevant when explaining a particular sport.

"So accuracy is really high up on the list of things to get right and then probably on a broader level, I would say that the writers could also always tell the readers something they don't know. That's really important."

**Local sports Journalist**

"If it's an athlete who's not as well-known then we would probably tend to use a bit of the space to tell the reader a bit more about their background. Whereas in comparison, for someone like Usain Bolt, everybody would know about them anyway... For a relatively unknown athlete, we would try to use some of the space to tell their life story so far, how they started in the sport, who coaches them, and where they live and if they do a job part-time..."

**Sports Journalist**

While a mixture of inspirational and 'superhuman' articles are seen as useful in increasing coverage of disabled athletes and the sports they take part in, reporting needs to steer clear of coming across as patronising. We refer to this further in the language section of the Guide.

When writing stories profiling individual athletes, focusing on their achievements, rather than their impairment or how their condition can affect their lives, should generally be the norm.

Although not focused on disability, there may be some explanation of their impairment in relation to the sport classification system. There is an opportunity here to include details about the following:

- Their personal life
- Their training regime
- Their diet; and
- Their wider team, including their physio, family and coaching team.

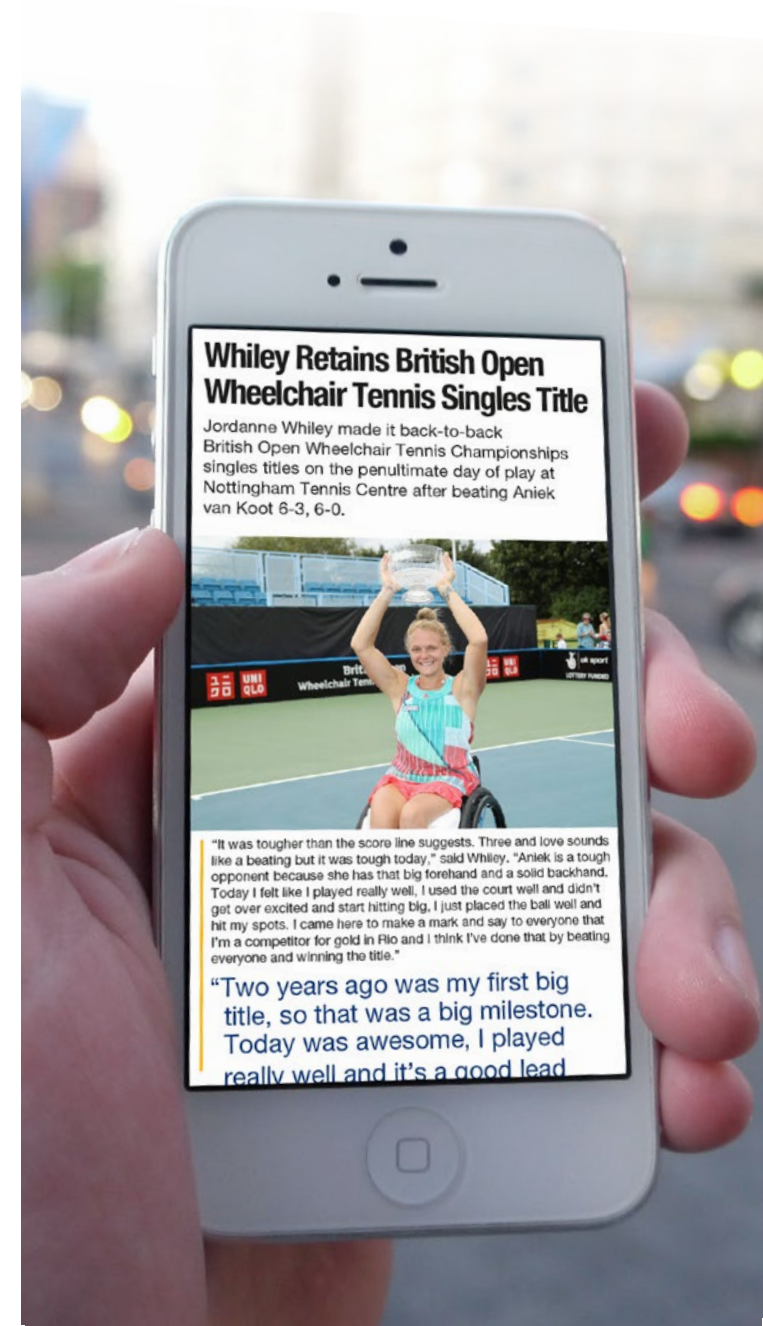
There is also appetite for more media coverage about the rules and regulations of sports and activities for disabled people. This is particularly in relation to the classification system or sports where there is no equivalent for non-disabled people such as goalball. These types of articles were relatively rare in the media monitoring, indicating there could be a gap to fill.

**“That’s the most impressive thing... the fact that they [the disabled participant] are achieving, and now doing what they’re doing, rather than focusing on what they’ve been through.”**

**Sports Journalist**

**“Sometimes you don’t know all of the athletes. There are new athletes coming up all the time. Sometimes it’s nice when they commentate and tell you a bit about where they come from - what their previous titles are.”**

**Disabled adult**





# 3. Style and placement of articles

To help ensure parity, disabled people in sport should be in the same section of the newspaper or website as non-disabled people in sport.

Competition reports and post event interviews should feature in the sports section alongside non-disabled people in the sports where possible. Similarly, articles with more of a 'lifestyle' or 'human interest' focus should go in the other appropriate sections of the paper or website.

**Do not excessively focus on 'inspiration':** Although 'inspirational' is used frequently in reporting on disability sport, overly focusing on the inspirational nature of disabled athletes in competition reporting is not appropriate. But it can be used when talking about the athlete's story.

## Headlines

Headlines are key to attracting readership of articles. They need to be clear, concise, appropriate and tailored to the content of the article. Some guidance on the use of headlines, and feedback received on aspects of headlines, is below:

**Avoid acronyms:** Avoid acronyms: Not everybody is familiar with disability or sports language. For example, 'IPC' might be clear to those in the sports sector, but beyond it there can be low awareness.

**Keep it concise:** Readers choose which articles to read in a short space of time. Examples such as team announcements, or citing the competition and the sport, were popular among research participants.

## Imagery

The research shows that visual content is important in any form of communications. As such, the use of pictures in articles and releases referencing disabled people in sport is necessary. This applies to news articles and the providers (e.g. National Governing Bodies of sport, sports clubs etc.) who interact with journalists and are responsible for drafting media releases.

"It doesn't matter if they're disabled or not, it's sport. Obviously as a sports fan, the back pages are where I go to first, and that's where I like to read the sport."

Disabled adult

### Sport provider tip

National Governing Bodies of sport (NGBs) should note that, at a regional or local level in particular, ensuring the images used are of a high quality will mean they are more likely to be included in an article. The research found this was important because at a local level:

- Photos are less likely to be taken of disabled people taking part in sport.
- When they are used, they tend to be of a lower quality; and
- Action shots of the sport increases recognition of athletes competing, and provide a better understanding for those new to the sport.

Sport and physical activity providers should note that if there is no image, or a low-resolution or poor quality image, readership of the article is likely to be lower, with journalists less interested in the story.

Demand is highest for an 'action shot' of the participant mentioned in the article. However, if this is not possible, a stock image can suffice.

There are a number of free image libraries available, listed at the back of this **Guide**.

“Because we are so tight [for space] for sport, if [at a local level] you have a package with a nice high-resolution picture and some well-written words, you can, for want of a better word, literally slap it onto a page. If you get something where the picture's poor quality, it's not as easy.”

**Sports Journalist**



# 4. Language

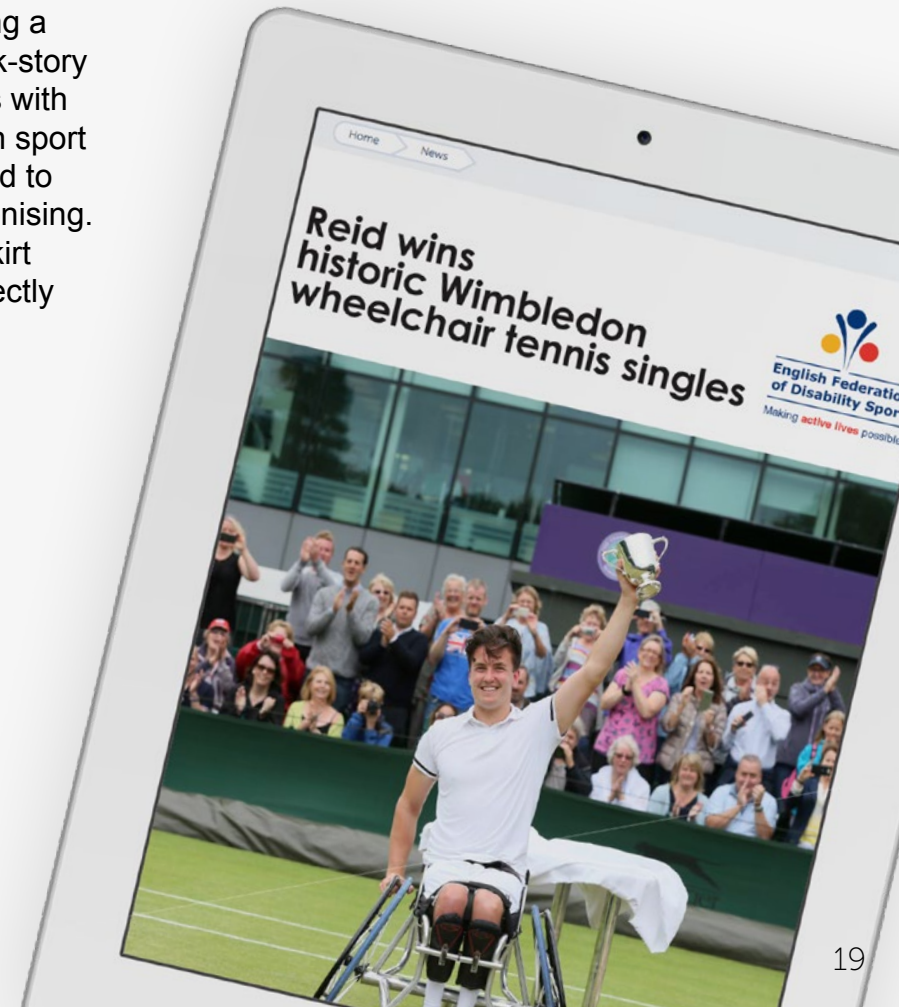
We found in the media monitoring and interviews that the language used to describe disability and disabled people in sport, in the vast majority of articles, was appropriate and respectful. Both disabled and non-disabled adults noted that, over time, the media has improved its coverage of disabled people in sport in this respect.

Accurate use of language is important when reporting on disabled people in sport. Principally, this is to ensure that different disability sport classifications are explained accurately, but also to shape wider public perceptions of disabled people.

Consistency in language used is also essential, particularly when referencing the sport's conditions or technical classifications.

If possible, when interviewing or profiling a disabled athlete, writers should consult the person on how they should refer to their impairment or condition. While it is important to write tactfully on sensitive subjects, journalists and sports organisations should not be afraid to refer directly to the athlete's impairment when required.

This is particularly relevant when writing a feature or release on the athlete's back-story and journey. Feedback from interviews with disabled adults who have an interest in sport and physical activity highlights the need to ensure that language used is not patronising. But also important is that it does not skirt around referencing the impairment directly if it is relevant to the storyline.



“Language is very important in these stories and making sure that they are not inadvertently degraded is difficult.”

**Disabled adult**

“[When asked about words they have seen in media coverage] Sufferer... trapped, confined. They are all quite restrictive, they’re all quite negative. It’s about someone’s ability and what they can do, rather than what they can’t.”

**Non-disabled adult**

“I would say the word ‘brave’ shouldn’t be used in any sporting context really, because sometimes that can come across quite patronising, I think...With a disabled athlete you might use the word ‘brave’, where you would use the word ‘talented’.”

**Sports Journalist**

“It’s important to mention the strength of those people, how they came to overcome their limitations, but never ever try to hide their real difficulties. A lost limb, a vision impairment, hearing impairment, it’s very important to still be honest...It’s much better than if you appear to be trying to hide that information from people.”

**Disabled adult**

“Achievement-based positive vernacular should be focused on. The word inspirational has become clichéd and new synonyms should be found that are evocative, but not patronising or at risk of being overused. Avoid too much description of ‘overcoming challenges’, etc. - the reader can immediately imagine what that entails, although fact based detail, for example how the physical act of taking on the sport requires a different approach, is good.”

**Non-disabled adult**

# 5. Use of different media formats

There are opportunities to include different types of stories and increased coverage in each format type.

Participants in the research see online articles as the communications channel that will most likely increase coverage opportunities of disabled people in sport. There is an opportunity online to include links and references to:

- Other articles and previous stories on the disabled people in sport
- References to the relevant national and international sporting body
- References to the relevant national and international sporting body
- Information on how to get involved in the sport.

“I think there’s more scope to include content online. Definitely, because obviously you haven’t got the limits of space that you have in the newspaper.”

**Sports Journalist**

Journalists are foremost the reporters of news, but they also have an element of responsibility and can have an influential role in promoting disabled people in sport and physical activity. However, it is important for providers and sports clubs to share useful information with journalists, and develop these working relationships.

“They [the sports club] send stories over because we use it. They’re always absolutely delighted to see it in the paper, so that builds the relationship from there.”

**Sports Journalist**

## Sport provider tip

Sports organisations should note that this is particularly relevant at a local level, where resources are more limited. Providers therefore have a role in supporting sports clubs and associations. This may include advice on how best to share information and develop working relationships with media outlets and also, emailing sports correspondents.

It could also involve sending interesting sporting profiles for the wider public as well as prospective members to read.

Social media and online readership analytics provide a useful opportunity to 'test the water' and identify which sports and stories including disabled people are proving the most popular with readers. Article styles that are successful and popular, particularly based on certain events on a seasonal calendar, should provide a useful indicator of coverage.

**"[We are informed by] Reader feedback, looking on Twitter, taking a look where the British team are doing well in terms of medals and competitions... You know, when they're doing well it gets more coverage, and people tend to be more interested."**

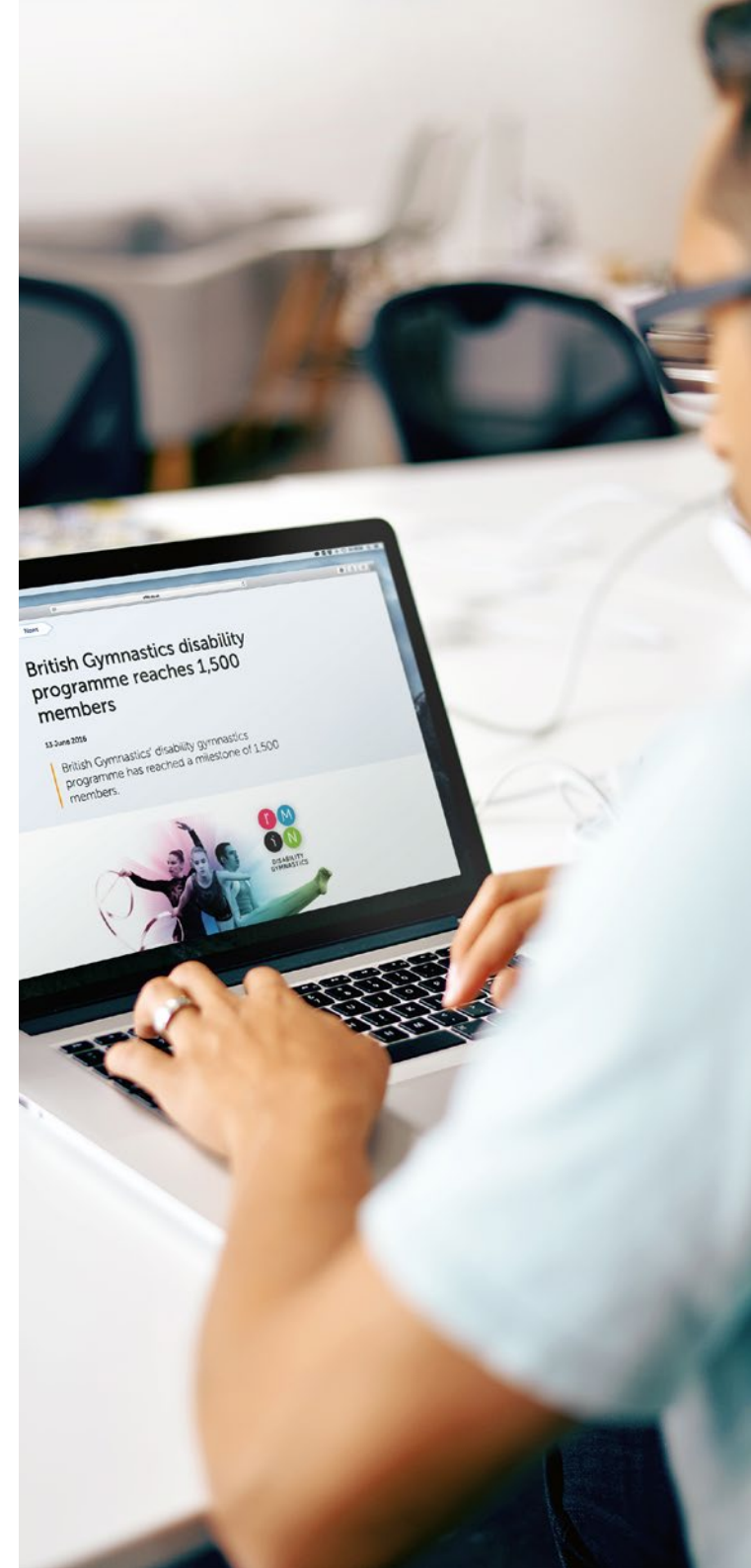
### **Sports Journalist**

There are also wider benefits to non-traditional media, including catch up television. These can produce a 'domino-effect', where a consumer (based on recommendations) can follow other stories or forums created within this group that share information.

Journalists and sports organisations can help to increase interest and subsequent coverage of disabled people in sport by increasing opportunities for readers and viewers to access wider information.

**"[Speaking about the Invictus Games] It actually started with social media, and Prince Harry with the Queen doing that boom thing on YouTube... that connected us to the BBC News page. Then we saw there was a programme about it on iPlayer – that gets us watching that, and that leads to watching the actual games. I suppose it's a media bread crumb trail, it shows the power of social media to draw you in."**

### **Disabled adult**



# 6. Ambassadors

Athletes and celebrities from various backgrounds can play an important role in promoting sport and physical activity for disabled people. It is important to show the reasoning for selecting an ambassador and the role they will have in media coverage and promotion. This gives credibility and validity to their position and responsibilities.

"I think if they're appointed as an ambassador, they really need to do something, and it can't just be a title. I think sometimes people are given titles because they're a well-known name in the media...they need to go the extra mile and visit schools and centres and encourage people into sport. But not just 'You could be a Paralympic athlete', because not everybody really wants to reach that level."

**Sports Journalist**



Ambassador type	Benefits and cautions
<p><b>Disabled athletes or former Paralympians</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Former or current athletes can provide a unique insight into the training preparation and routine during a competition. They can explain what a disabled athlete is experiencing, and explain the sport in detail if necessary.</li> <li>• This gives disabled athletes a greater voice in the mainstream media. It also enables more disabled athletes to develop into media ‘experts’.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports people do not motivate all readers, so we should not expect a disabled athlete to be any different. Those interested in sport will be more likely to relate to sports people etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Non-disabled sports advocates</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-disabled athletes can act as advocates for their sport more widely, increasing awareness across all elements of the sport.</li> <li>• Bringing together Olympians, Paralympians and other sports people can help to celebrate the achievement of athletes, regardless of whether they are disabled or non-disabled.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think carefully about advocate and the sport they represent. If involved in interviews, you may need to brief the advocate to ensure they are not unintentionally patronising or off message.</li> </ul>



Ambassador type	Benefits and cautions
<b>Celebrities from other industries and sectors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar to Prince Harry’s role in the Invictus Games, a true ‘champion’ of the sport takes an active interest in the participants and the way the sport works at an elite and local level.</li> <li>• Advocates from outside the sporting world can help to raise the profile of the sport among those who may have not previously engaged with it.</li> <li>• For less active audiences, this may provide a better connection.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research will steer you to which advocates are better for your target audience, and sometimes more affordable. Again, if involved in interviews, you may need to brief the advocate to ensure they are not unintentionally patronising or off message.</li> </ul>
<b>Internal media ambassadors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is demand to see more disabled people in the media - in sports reporting, commentary, journalism and beyond.</li> <li>• This are multiple benefits to demonstrating that disabled people have critical roles beyond the Invictus Games and the Paralympics. These ambassadors can help report on disability sport in a more accurate and appropriate way.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled ambassadors within your own organisation or outlet help to build a more diverse workforce, but not only in disability sport reporting. Do not presume that a disabled journalist, for example, would or could automatically be the reporter for disability sport. Non-disabled employees within organisations can also help to champion more inclusive reporting.</li> </ul>

## Media Guide: Reporting on disabled people in sport

“It’s even better to see that there have been some disabled commentators covering the [Invictus] Games too, as it does give a greater insight into the preparations the athletes have to do.”

**Sports Journalist**

“We should be giving it to the people who have disabilities that can actually talk about that sport and not just Clare Balding or whoever- those who are always on TV. Give it to the people who have the disabilities and let them take the show.”

**Disabled adult**



# Checklist

Ask yourself	For more information
<b>Have you clearly explained how the sports or activity works? Many readers know little about some disability sport and the adaptations.</b>	Section 1
<b>What is the ‘hook’ to the story? Is it sufficient to interest your readers or journalists?</b>	Section 2
<b>Are you focusing on achievement, rather than impairment?</b>	Section 2 Section 3
<b>Is the language used appropriate, easy to understand and matched by an equally appropriate headline?</b>	Section 3 Section 4
<b>Are you using high-quality images that compliment your story?</b>	Section 3
<b>Do you know how the disabled participant would like their impairment to be described? Take care to avoid patronising language.</b>	Section 4
<b>Can your article be reproduced in multiple formats and be seen by the widest possible audience?</b>	Section 5
<b>Provider additional question: Have you thought of involving an ‘ambassador’ or other high-profile individual to act as a promotional tool?</b>	Section 6
<b>Provider additional question: Have you supported your clubs to develop a relationship with local media organisations?</b>	Section 5

# Conclusions

This research has allowed us to develop a comprehensive understanding of attitudes across many different groups. We are grateful to the sports journalists, disabled and non-disabled adults who took part in this work. It adds to previous studies on media coverage of disability sport, incorporating the views of journalists and public alike.

The research findings and this complementary Guide enable others to maximise their news potential. They highlight how important the different types of media coverage are for disabled people in sport. As well as attracting possible participants, it provides a voice to disabled athletes and a focus on the sports they represent. Therefore, the need for accurate and appropriate reporting will be significant during and beyond the Rio Paralympic Games this summer.

Opening lines for better communication between National Governing Bodies of sport, local sports associations and journalists would be beneficial for many. Sharing more information on events, records, performance benchmarks, as well as providing photos and reports of players are all useful to media outlets.

It is crucial to portray disabled people in the media as they would like to be represented, using their language to explain their impairment and reflecting their personal story appropriately.

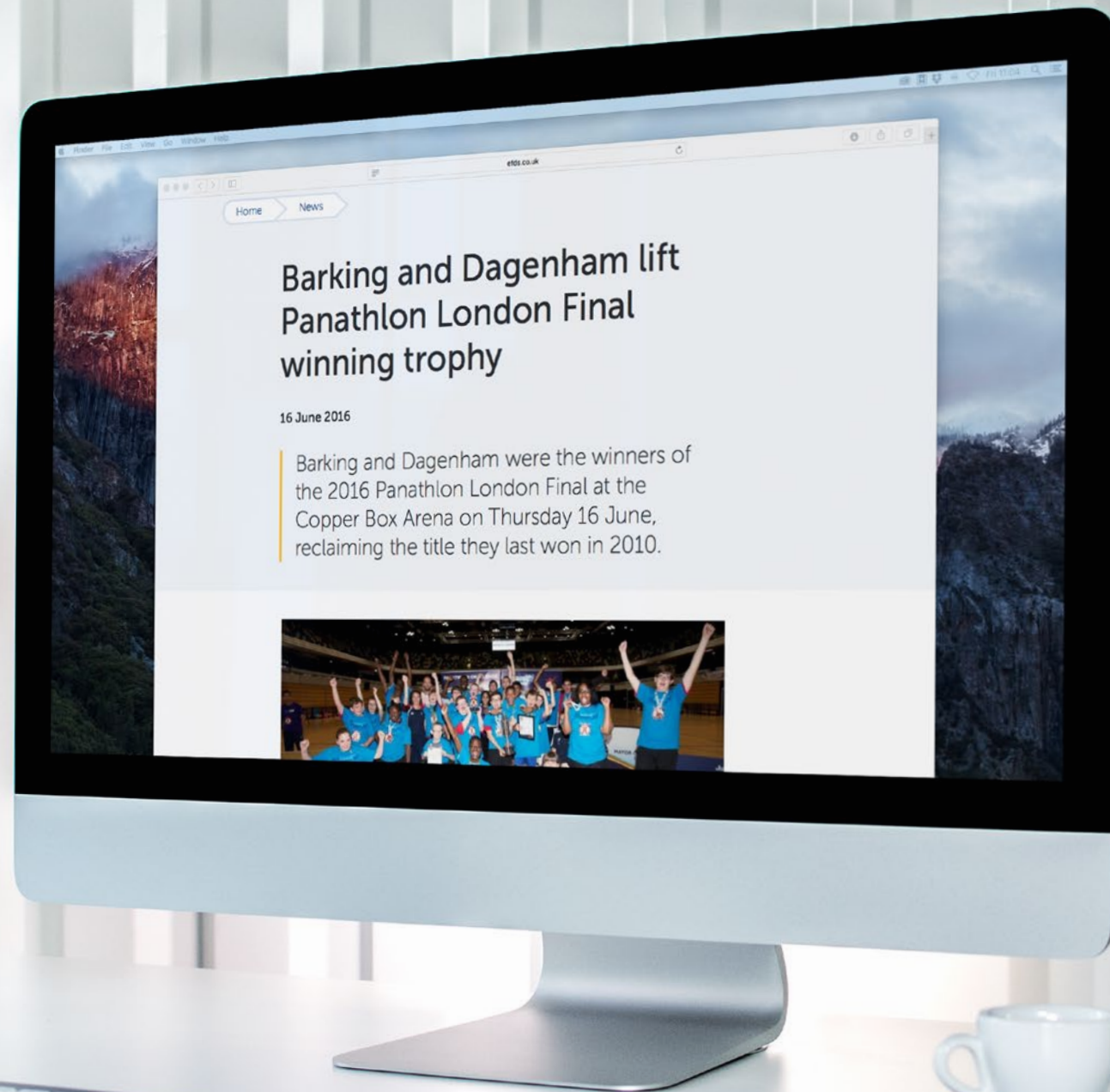
As mentioned, it is not our intention to dictate what the media or the provider should do when reporting about disabled people in sport. Instead, we hope that this work can support you to increase coverage and be more confident when sharing news on disabled people in sport at all levels. Fundamentally, we want to encourage and inspire more people to be and stay active. News has an influential role in helping to achieve this.

“A lot of what people think it is appropriate for how to refer to disabled people is through what the media say.”

**Disabled adult**

“We hear it again and again, that old thing of treat others as you would like to be treated. That’s the mantra for reporting on disabilities. If you lost your limbs tomorrow or got a mental health condition, how do you want to be treated? How do you want to be portrayed?”

**Disabled adult**



Home News

# Barking and Dagenham lift Panathlon London Final winning trophy

16 June 2016

Barking and Dagenham were the winners of the 2016 Panathlon London Final at the Copper Box Arena on Thursday 16 June, reclaiming the title they last won in 2010.



# Further information

## Calendar of events

Referring to an events calendar is a useful reference point and helps to build interest, particularly ahead of major events. This can also apply at a local level too, with the relevant National Governing Body providing a calendar by region.

Calendars of major disability sports events can be found:

- On the BBC Sport website [International]  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/disability-sport/20271169>
- BBC Get Inspired activity finder  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/get-inspired>
- EFDS events page <http://www.efds.co.uk/get-active/events>
- On the Paralympic events page [International]  
<https://www.paralympic.org/events>
- Visit the relevant National Governing Body of sports website. Sport England includes links to the bodies they recognise on their website. <https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/national-governing-bodies/>

## A guide to classification

Over the course of the research, we received feedback that there was a lack of clarity over the different classifications used in disability sport. The International Paralympic Committee has a detailed classification guideline document, which is broken down by individual sport.

Lexi decoder LEXI unlocks the complex world of classification in Paralympic sports. The online guide gives a further breakdown to LEXI seen on Channel 4. <http://paralympics.channel4.com/>

Although most people will be familiar with the Paralympics, there are other international events to note, such as:

- Deaflympics <https://www.deaflympics.com/>
- Special Olympics World Games  
<http://www.specialolympics.org/>
- CPISRA World Games <http://cpisra.org>
- IBSA World Championships and Games  
<http://www.ibsasport.org/>
- INAS Global Games <http://www.inas.org/>
- IWAS World Games <http://www.iwasf.com>
- World Dwarf Games <http://worlddwarfgames2017.org/>

## Language and terminology guides

There are also specific resources dedicated to providing advice on the best language and terminology to use when reporting on disability sport.

- EFDS Inclusive Communications Guide on [www.efds.co.uk](http://www.efds.co.uk)
- The British Paralympic Association has a brief guide on language to use before and during the Paralympics.  
<http://paralympics.org.uk>

## Image library

As well as many National Governing Bodies having images of disabled people taking part in their sport, there are libraries to access images.

- Sport England  
<https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-features/image-library/>
- Make Sport Fun <http://promotingactivity.smugmug.com/>

## Conducting interviews

Particularly relevant for journalists with little or no experience conducting face-to-face interviews with disabled adults, Media Wise produced a one-page document providing guidance on this.

<http://www.mediawise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Interviewing-people-with-disabilities.pdf>

The British Paralympic Association also includes better practice advice in their guide to reporting on Paralympic sport.  
<http://paralympics.org.uk>

# Further information

## Facts and statistics

Many websites have statistics about disability, disabled people and sports participation.

Sport England's report, **Mapping Disability: The Facts** offers an in-depth look at the vast range of impairments experienced by people in England. It also includes comprehensive data on disability by categories such as region, gender and age.

Download the report here  
<https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/disability-sport/mapping-disability/>

## About EFDS

The English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) is a national charity that exists to make active lives possible.

To do this we enable organisations to support disabled individuals to be and stay active. Established in September 1998, EFDS has a vision that disabled people are active for life.

Visit [www.efds.co.uk](http://www.efds.co.uk)

## About ComRes

ComRes provides specialist research and insight into reputation management, public policy and communications. It is a founding member of the British Polling Council, and its staff are members of the UK Market Research Society, committing it to the highest standards of research practice.

Visit [www.comres.co.uk](http://www.comres.co.uk)

For more information on the Sports Journalists' Association

Visit [www.sportsjournalists.co.uk](http://www.sportsjournalists.co.uk)



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