

It's Okay to Play



Engaging people with cerebral palsy
and associated physical impairments
in sport and physical activity

www.cpsport.org

Contents

Purpose	2
Cerebral Palsy Sport	3
Cerebral Palsy and Associated Impairments	4
Describing Cerebral Palsy (CP)	5
Importance of Sport and Physical Activity	6
The Cerebral Palsy Spectrum	7
The Inclusion Spectrum	8-9
STEP Principle	10-11
Adapting Sport and Activity	12-13
Engaging people with Cerebral Palsy and Associated Physical Impairments	14
Further information	16

Purpose

This resource has been developed to help professionals and volunteers who want to engage people with cerebral palsy (CP) and associated physical impairments into sport and physical activity.

The resource describes how CP can affect the body, posture and movements. It highlights the needs for adapted activity based on individual need and provides guidance to effectively make adaptations.

Cerebral Palsy Sport

Cerebral Palsy Sport is the country's leading national disability sports organisation (NDSO) supporting people with cerebral palsy and associated conditions to reach their potential, by putting people with cerebral palsy and their families at the heart of everything we do.

Our vision is to support people with cerebral palsy to reach their life potential through sport and active recreation.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for people with cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities through sport, physical activity and active recreation.

Our aim is to raise aspirations, promote inclusion and support people with cerebral palsy and other disabilities to play, participate and enjoy sport and active recreation.

Cerebral Palsy Sport provides a range of opportunities at a local grass roots level. Working with a range of partners from local clubs, schools, the health sector and National Governing Bodies of Sport to provide participation opportunities appropriate for those with cerebral palsy.

To find out about the range of opportunities and further support offered by CP Sport visit the website:

www.cpsport.org

Cerebral Palsy and Associated Physical Impairments

Cerebral palsy is an umbrella term for a number of neurological conditions that affect the development of movement, coordination and posture, causing activity limitation. (Rethlefsen. S.A et al (2010) Classification Systems in Cerebral Palsy).

There is often the misconception that cerebral palsy is a singular condition, however any condition that is as a result of damage to the brain, at any stage of life, can come under the umbrella of cerebral palsy including;

- **Traumatic brain injury**
- **Stroke**
- **Dystonia**

Cerebral palsy is not progressive; the injury to the brain does not change. However, the effects may change over time for better or worse. This is where being active can have a really positive impact.

Cerebral palsy cannot be cured, however physiotherapy, medication and when appropriate, surgery can often help people with cerebral palsy become more independent.

It is important to remember that no two people will be affected by their cerebral palsy in the same way. Everybody is an individual.

There is often no single cause of cerebral palsy. The most common cause is as a result of a combination of events either before, during or shortly after birth. These include:

- **Infection in the early part of pregnancy**
- **Lack of oxygen to the brain**
- **Abnormal brain development**
- **A genetic link (although this is quite rare)**

Describing Cerebral Palsy (CP)

Where the neurological damage has occurred will affect the type of CP a person will present with. The image below describes the three main types of CP and the resulting movement.



SPASTIC: 80-90%.

Most common. Muscles appear stiff and tight. Arises from Motor Cortex damage.

DYSKINETIC: 6%.

Involuntary movements such as dystonia, athetosis and/or chorea. Arises from damage to the Basal Ganglia.

MIXED TYPES:

A number of children with CP will have two motor types present e.g. spasticity and dystonia.

ATAXIC: 5%

Shaky movements. Affects balance and sense of positioning in space. Arises from Cerebellum damage.

These are the 3 most common diagnosis:



SPASTIC QUADRIPLEGIA / BILATERAL

Both arms and legs are affected. The muscles of the trunk, face and mouth are often also affected.



SPASTIC DIPLEGIA / BILATERAL

Both legs are affected. The arms may be affected to a lesser extent.



SPASTIC HEMIPLEGIA / UNILATERAL

One side of the body (one arm and one leg) is affected.

Please note that you can also get monoplegia - one area / limb affected, and Triplegia - three areas affected.

Credit: Cerebral Palsy Alliance.

Importance of Sport and Physical Activity

Sport and physical activity has many benefits; physically, emotionally and socially.

Physical benefits	Emotional benefits	Social benefits
Better posture	Increased confidence	Sense of belonging
Increased strength	Increased wellbeing	Friendship groups
Increased movement	Positive thoughts	Development of life skills
Able to be active for longer periods	Improved self esteem	Positive impact on communities
Helps in physiotherapy	Improved self-perception	Breaking down barriers / stigmas
Increased ability	Tactical thinking	Positive impact on family life

These will support their ability to do everyday activities and reach fundamental milestones. Including:

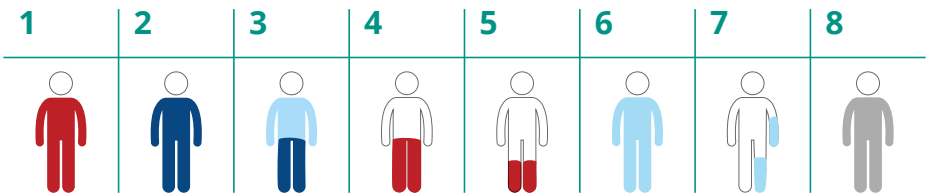
- Moving head in response to sound and light
- Holding small objects such as balls, pens and pencils
- Moving freely and confidently

It is important to get to know the individual(s) you are working with and we would recommend speaking to any other professionals that work with them, such as physiotherapists, so that you can individualise your sessions as much as possible.

The Cerebral Palsy Spectrum

People with cerebral palsy are individuals and each have their individual limitations and strengths, this is why activities need to be adapted to meet ability level.

The diagram below illustrates the range of cerebral palsy you need to consider when adapting sport sessions and activities. 1 is the most complex, this would be someone who uses a wheelchair and has a lot of support in everyday life. 8 is the least complex where the cerebral palsy is very minimal, having little effect on everyday life and tasks.



To put this into context the diagram below showcases the football opportunities across the spectrum.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Powerchair Football		CP Frame Football		CP Football (Ambulant)			

The Inclusion Spectrum

Using the above 1-8 process will help to provide (where possible) opportunities for all levels of CP. However, you may have a mixture of impairments in the group you are working with, or there may only be one person with a physical impairment. It is vital to be able to effectively include everyone in sessions.

The Inclusion Spectrum details five types of activities to enable inclusion.

1. Open Activity -

this is where everyone in the group does the same activity and tasks, with little to no modifications in place.

2. Modified Activity -

this is where the group all do the same activity, however there would be modifications and adaptations to rules / equipment / space to suit the ability of each person in the group. For example you may allow an extra bounce in tennis for those who have limited mobility.

3. Parallel Activity -

here participants are grouped based on ability. The whole group will be working on the same activity, but tasks will be different to meet individual need and there may be adaptations and modifications

to rules / equipment / space in place. For example if working on throwing and catching, you could have one group using a large soft ball throwing and catching with both hands. The next group will be using a smaller ball and just using their dominant hand. The final group would be using a small ball using their weaker hand.

4. Separate activity -

here groups or individuals will do a different activity. This might be at a different time or in a different place to the rest of the group. For example the group may be working on volleyball. Those without a physical disability will play the standing version of the game. Those with a physical disability will play an adapted version such as sitting volleyball.

5. Disability Sport Activity

- this is sometimes called reverse inclusion. Here the whole group will take part in the adapted version of the sport. For example wheelchair basketball, boccia, new age kurling or table cricket. This provides those without a disability with an understanding of how their peers participate in sport.



STEP Principle

The STEP principle is used to ensure that activities being delivered are inclusive and meet the need of the individual / group you are working with.

The STEP principles focus around the main activity and objectives being worked on. Each element is then considered to ensure any adaptations and modifications have been made and appropriately included.



- **Space** - the environment / areas that sessions and tasks will take place. These can be larger or smaller based on ability and tasks being performed.
- **Task** - do the tasks that participants are completing meet their ability level and individual need? Tasks may need to be broken down more for some of the group, with more difficult tasks given to the rest of the group.
- **Equipment** - ensure equipment can be used by all participants and make changes where necessary; larger balls or rackets, taking the net away.
- **People** - know the participants and their abilities. Speak with them and try different tasks.

The STEP principle should be used throughout planning and delivery of sessions to continuously ensure all participants are included.

Facts and Figures



It is estimated that there are 30,000 children and young people with cerebral palsy in the UK (2016).



1 in 400 babies are born with cerebral palsy.



36% of the disabled population have a mobility issue with the majority of this being cerebral palsy. (Sport England Mapping Disability 2017).

Adapting Sport and Activity

There are a number of support aids that you will come across when including people with CP and associated physical impairments in sport and activity.

**Power
Wheelchair**

Sports Chair

Walking Frame

RaceRunner

Crutches

People may change the support aid that they use when taking part in different activities. Always allow participants to choose how they participate.

As always you should complete the appropriate risk assessments before delivering any activities, the support aids used by participants should be included in this. Ask the participant, their family / carer or support worker about anything you are unsure of.

Additional to the standard health and safety principles, there are a number of factors to consider when working with individuals / groups with CP and other physical disabilities.

- **Temperature** - being too hot or too cold can have an impact on ability to make movements and perform tasks.
- **Additional needs** - find out if there are any additional conditions that need to be considered such as epilepsy.
- **Reactions** - the reaction time of someone with CP may be delayed, give time to allow information to be processed.
- **Movement restrictions** - flexibility and balance may be affected. Be aware of what participants can do and areas to work on when planning tasks.

- **Memory** - someone with CP may experience short term memory loss. Reiterate instructions, or buddy up with someone to provide support.
- **Hearing and visual impairments** - can be associated conditions. Be aware and ensure that these are considered when planning activity, it is key to ensure you can communicate with each individual.

To get the best out of each participant ask what they feel they can and cannot do, what areas they want to develop / improve and how do they want to participate.

Find out what they do with their Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist and where appropriate include this within sessions.

Engaging people with Cerebral Palsy and Associated Physical Impairments

Understanding the participants you are trying to engage is key. Adapting sport and activity to meet their need will allow individuals to take part in a meaningful way, as well as ensuring progress and personal development. However, there are things that can be done prior to this that will enable engagement;

- Be clear and honest with what you can offer / how you can support individuals.
- Effective promotion
 - ensure images and messages on posters / leaflets / social media / web pages make it clear you want to engage disabled people.
- Make opportunities as local and easy to travel to as possible. Provide travel route and public transport details.
- Provide contact details so that disabled people / family members / carers can speak with someone prior to the sessions.
- Speak with participants so that they feel valued, understand their wants and needs and consider these when planning activities.
- Ensure that all participants, their families / carers are welcomed. Offer opportunities for siblings to take part.
- Speak with organisations and charities outside of the sporting landscape.
- Be confident that your offer will meet the need of each individual. Be prepared to adapt and change. You may not always get it right first time, this is ok!

Further information

For further advice and guidance please contact Cerebral Palsy Sport via **info@cpsport.org** or visit **www.cpsport.org**.

There are a number of other organisations who can provide resources and support. The below organisations may also have information regarding local disability sport sessions.

www.activityalliance.org.uk

www.ukcoaching.org/resources

www.youthsporttrust.org

www.sportengland.org/our-work/disability/

www.limbpower.com

www.wheelpower.org.uk

www.dsauk.org

www.britishblindsport.org.uk

www.ukdeafsport.org.uk

www.mencap.org.uk

www.specialolympics.org

www.activepartnerships.org

General enquiries, please contact:

info@cpsport.org

Registered charity number: 1088600

Cerebral Palsy Sport

cp_sport18

@CP_Sport

Cerebral Palsy Sport