

Positive parental involvement

Parents may be wary of their son or daughter joining a sports group, especially if this is to be a totally new experience. However, as with many new experiences (through childhood into adulthood) some forward planning is likely to lead to a better outcome.

Getting to know me

When and where possible:

- ✓ Meet parent/carer and the person with Autism beforehand.
- ✓ Learn more about their strengths and interests.
- ✓ Find out what is most likely to motivate them.
- ✓ Find out what is rewarding for them.
- ✓ Learn as much information as possible about the individual's support needs.
- ✓ Find out what is likely to cause them anxiety or stress.
- ✓ Invite their advice on calming strategies.
- ✓ Ask, if they have any sensory difficulties. If so, how best to support them.
- ✓ Acknowledge a parent's anxiety. They may dearly want this inclusion with sport to succeed—just as you do.
- ✓ Encourage parents to bring the child to the venue and watch the activity for a short time, at least once, before they are expected to participate.
- ✓ Acknowledge a parent's experience and expertise about their own child, while showing your own confidence in helping their child to take part in the group.

Everyone is different

Depending on the age and ability of the person with Autism, consider discussing with a parent the potential value in (coach or parent) talking to the group about the idea “everyone is different”: how we're all good at some things, but may need help with other things. For example, “‘Jack’ needs help with sport and with making friends; but he's very good at doing puzzles”. Other children could be invited to tell what they are good at and where they may need help. This approach can lead to very positive interaction amongst a group of children. They have some understanding of why ‘Jack’ sometimes wants to be apart; and why sometimes he gets extra praise. Taking time for positive engagement with parents is likely to be time very well spent!

