



## CLUB SUPPORT FACTSHEET

# DISABILITY TERMINOLOGY

**Using appropriate terminology shows respect and understanding. This is vital to ensure that all disabled people involved in athletics are respected and valued.**

With the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 we formally moved from a **Medical Model** to a **Social Model**.

The Medical Model concentrated on what a person 'can't do' because of their impairment.

The Social Model, developed by disabled people, encourages society to be aware of the responsibility to create an inclusive environment - not just the physical environment, e.g., ramps for wheelchair users, but also the need to change attitudes so that that disabled people are not discriminated against.

In athletics, we must ensure that disabled people are included and integrated so that everyone can take part to their full potential. Using correct terminology will have the knock-on effect of creating an inclusive environment for disabled people.

✘ Not appropriate	✔ Appropriate
Person with a disability	Disabled person
Wheelchair bound	Wheelchair user
Able-bodied/Normal	Non-disabled
Handicapped	Disabled
Mentally disabled/Retarded/Retard	Intellectual/learning disability
Mentally ill	Has a mental health condition (state condition if known)
Para-Olympian	Paralympian/Paralympic athlete
Suffers from...	Lives with/has... (state medical condition)
Disability	Impairment

### The correct terminology

- **Disability athletics** – the sport in which a disabled athlete competes at any level, which may or may not be adapted for the athlete to take part.
- **Disabled athlete** – a disabled person participating in athletics at any level.
- **Paralympian/Paralympic Athlete** – someone who has competed at a Paralympic Games
- **Paralympic Pathway** – pathway open to classifications and related events in the Paralympic Games
- **Impairment** – physical description
- **Congenital impairment** – an impairment a person is born with.
- **Acquired impairment** – an impairment acquired after birth.
- **Disability** – how the impairment affects the individual.
- **Visually impaired** – people who are blind or partially sighted.
- **Learning disability** – a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities which affects someone for their whole life.
- **Learning difficulty** – affects the way information is learned and processed but occurs independently of intelligence e.g., Dyslexia, ADHD, Autism or Aspergers.

### Choosing language with care

Bear in mind that disabled people might refer to themselves or other disabled people using terminology which would be unacceptable if a non-disabled person used it. Although language or words may not necessarily cause offense, there might be a more appropriate word or phrase to use.

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