



ASSOCIATION OF
BRITISH CLIMBING WALLS

An Accessibility Guide for Indoor Climbing Walls



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Front cover Image:

Matthew Phillips
(climber)
© Gary Phillips



Hannah Baldwin (climber) © Unknown

Introduction





Marcus Twine Delivering Workshop @ Aim 2 Change © Claudia Cibelli

Our mission:

The ABC promotes the professionalism, safety, growth and diversity of indoor climbing.

Accessibility and inclusion for disabled, neurodiverse and deaf climbers has the power to affect all four pillars of our mission and in turn improve the experience provided for everyone that engages, and wishes to, with indoor climbing.

The language:

Under the UK's Equality Act of 2010 disability is defined as 'a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term (over 12 months) negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities'.

Though this definition encompasses many of those who identify as disabled, it does not encapsulate all people who may need accommodations within climbing walls, nor do all of the people who fall within this definition require accommodations.

The language we use when talking about disability is important. This document follows the Social Model of Disability, which recognises that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or health condition.

These barriers can be environmental, attitudinal, or institutional. Examples include inaccessible buildings, discriminatory attitudes, or inflexible policies and practices.

In line with this model, within this document we use the term 'disabled people' rather than 'people with disabilities', and refer to those without a disability as 'non-disabled' people.

When describing climbers specifically, this translates to terms like 'disabled climbers' 'para- climbers' and 'non-disabled climbers'.

The data:

In the UK, 1 in 4 people (25%) were classified as disabled in a 2023/24 survey by DWP; approximately 16.8 million people, up from 11.9 million (19%) in 2013/14, a trend which is forecast to continue ([Department for Work and Pensions, Family Resources Survey 2023/24](#)).

When it comes to physical exercise, disabled people are twice as likely to be inactive compared to non-disabled people (40.8% vs 20.7%). Yet this is not out of lack of want or trying; three-quarters (76%) of disabled people express a strong desire to be more active (Sport England, Active Lives; Activity Alliance, Disability and Activity Survey).

Disability can affect anyone at any stage of life, and many of the suggestions outlined in this document also benefit those who are injured, older, or temporarily disabled, as well as non-disabled people.

Investing in accessibility within the indoor climbing industry not only enriches participants' experiences but also creates a positive ecosystem of financial support, collaboration, and social impact and is essential for meeting industry standards and legal requirements. It also enables businesses to access the "purple pound"; the estimated £274 billion annual spending power of disabled households each year in the UK alone (See wearepurple.org.uk, 'The Purple Pound').

This guidance aims to help climbing walls understand and implement change to remove potential barriers disabled people may face throughout their customer journey and provide a more inclusive experience for everyone.



Jesse Dufton (climber) © James Hawkins

Pre-Visit Information & Digital Access

Touchpoints



- ▶ Climbing gym website
- ▶ Social media
- ▶ Marketing materials
- ▶ Third-party listings

Potential barriers



1. Accessibility information is unclear, insufficiently detailed, difficult to locate on the website, or may not be available at all.
2. Marketing materials and media lack captions, alt text, and clear, easy-to-understand wording, and do not reflect a diverse range of climbers.
3. Inaccurate, incomplete, or out of date third-party listings (e.g. Google Maps, event platforms).
4. Lack of information on local accessible travel options, such as step-free train stations, nearby bus routes and pavement access to the centre.

Solutions



Accessible and user-friendly website and digital communications:

Aim for the climbing gym website and social media accounts to be intuitive, easy to navigate, and aligned with the latest [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#).

Key considerations include:

Navigation:

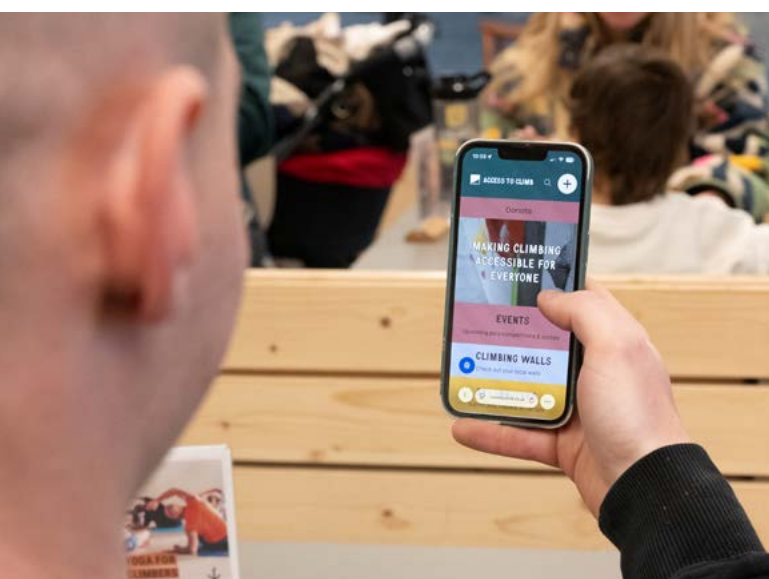
Ensure content is presented in a meaningful order, there are clear section headings which clearly describe topic or purpose, and that all functions are navigable through the keyboard in addition to cursor or touchscreen usage.

Fonts:

Use accessible sans serif fonts, such as Arial, which are widely available. A minimum font size of 12pt is recommended for readability, along with line spacing of at least 1.5 times the font size. Maintain high contrast between text and background colours. Tools can also be embedded on the website to allow users to adjust text size.

Assistive Technology:

Check your website and booking systems are compatible with assistive technologies such as screen readers. You can use external tools such as [screen reader simulators](#) to test accessibility and identify any barriers users may face.



Access To Climb Website © ABC

Media:

Add subtitles to all videos with audio, consider BSL interpreted versions - BSL is its own language with its own syntax and therefore is not the same as English captions. Ensure audio is clear with limited background noise, at a slow and deliberate pace and that written information remains on-screen long enough, especially in regards to instructional content. Provide alternative text for icons and images. Avoid flashing content. Include audio descriptions where needed.

Language:

Use clear, respectful, and inclusive language; avoid jargon, idioms, and relying on colour alone to convey meaning (e.g. red for “important”). Keep text uncluttered, avoid end-line hyphenation, and ensure accessibility across all materials. [Easy read documents](#) combine short, jargon-free sentences with simple, clear images to help explain the content.

Representation:

Represent a range of climbers, disabled and non-disabled, those of different ethnicities, genders, and ages in visual media to foster an environment of inclusivity and accessibility.

Review:

Use tools such as [Silktide](#), to review and assess accessibility for a range of different people. There are also a range of experts and consultancy services which can help with this process, such as [AbilityNet](#).

Comprehensive Accessibility Information and Visitor Support:

Access statements:

Provide an up to date, detailed and easy to find access statement on your website. For guidance on writing this statement [see page 9](#)

Pre-Visit Information:

Offer a virtual or video walkthrough of the facility on your website/social media, along with a map to help users navigate the space before visiting to and help people who feel more at ease when they know what to expect from a new environment.

FAQ's:

Include a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section on the website or your social media e.g. What to bring and what to expect from a session to help first time visitors feel more confident before arriving.

Team introductions:

Include a “Meet the Team” section outlining staff members and their roles within the center to increase familiarity and to help visitors know who they might meet.

Conduct regular updates:

Maintain transparency about accessibility provisions by sharing regular updates on social media and other channels, helping users stay informed of any changes to the facilities, environment or available support services. e.g. when route setting will create a louder than usual environment, or building works could block step free access. Ensure that third party listings such as google maps are kept up to date and relevant.

Accessibility Information

Background

For disabled people a lot of consideration is needed when deciding where and when they exercise. [A 2018 survey by Accessibility and You](#) highlights found 76% of disabled respondents said they have not visited somewhere due to a lack of accessibility information while 98% searched for accessibility information in advance.

This underscores the importance of making accessibility information readily available. A common misconception is that if a centre lacks step-free access or a lift, it is entirely inaccessible and as a result detailed accessibility information does not need to be provided. However, specific details, such as the number and location of steps, and the presence of a hand rail can be crucial for many disabled people.

It's important to avoid labelling spaces as 'completely accessible', as individual needs can vary greatly, and it's unlikely a space is meeting every requirement. Instead, aim to be transparent, giving specifics allows the disabled person to have the autonomy to decide whether the space is accessible to them. This openness can also encourage open conversations, making people feel more comfortable reaching out for further details or support.

When writing an Access Statement it is also important to consider that access does not begin and end when the climber enters your centre. The public transport options, parking, surface of pavement/walkway on the lead up to the centre as well as changing, toilet and water/food provisions at the centre also have a huge effect.

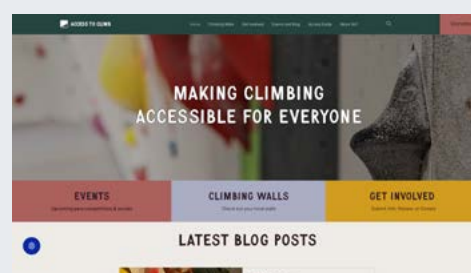
Wall Recommendations

- ▶ Each wall to write up a site specific access document, ensuring existing members are aware of the accessible facilities you have and aiding those who have not been previously due to lack of information.
- ▶ Updating the document annually or after any large refurbishments/changes made to the centre and its surrounding areas. This includes temporary conditions for instance, building work which increases noise volume in an area, dust levels in the air or blocked walkways.
- ▶ Make the information readily available on the website and brief reception teams, so they can provide accurate and detailed information to customers.

ABC Access Statement Template: [Here](#)



[Access to climb](#) is a CIC providing a centralised data platform for the climbing community to serve the community by tackling the current information gap. The ABC encourages walls to submit their details here to help bridge this gap.



Bookings, Pricing & Customer Support

Touchpoints



- ▶ Online booking system
- ▶ Communication channels
- ▶ Registration & check-in processes

Potential barriers



1. High costs and limited financial assistance information for climbers, PAs, carers, or guides
2. Negative attitudes, assumptions, and stereotypes about disabled people's capabilities can create a hostile environment and discourage people from accessing the wall or returning
3. Staff lack knowledge on available support, leading to inconsistent or inadequate assistance and information sharing
4. Booking and registration processes that are inflexible and difficult to navigate

Solutions



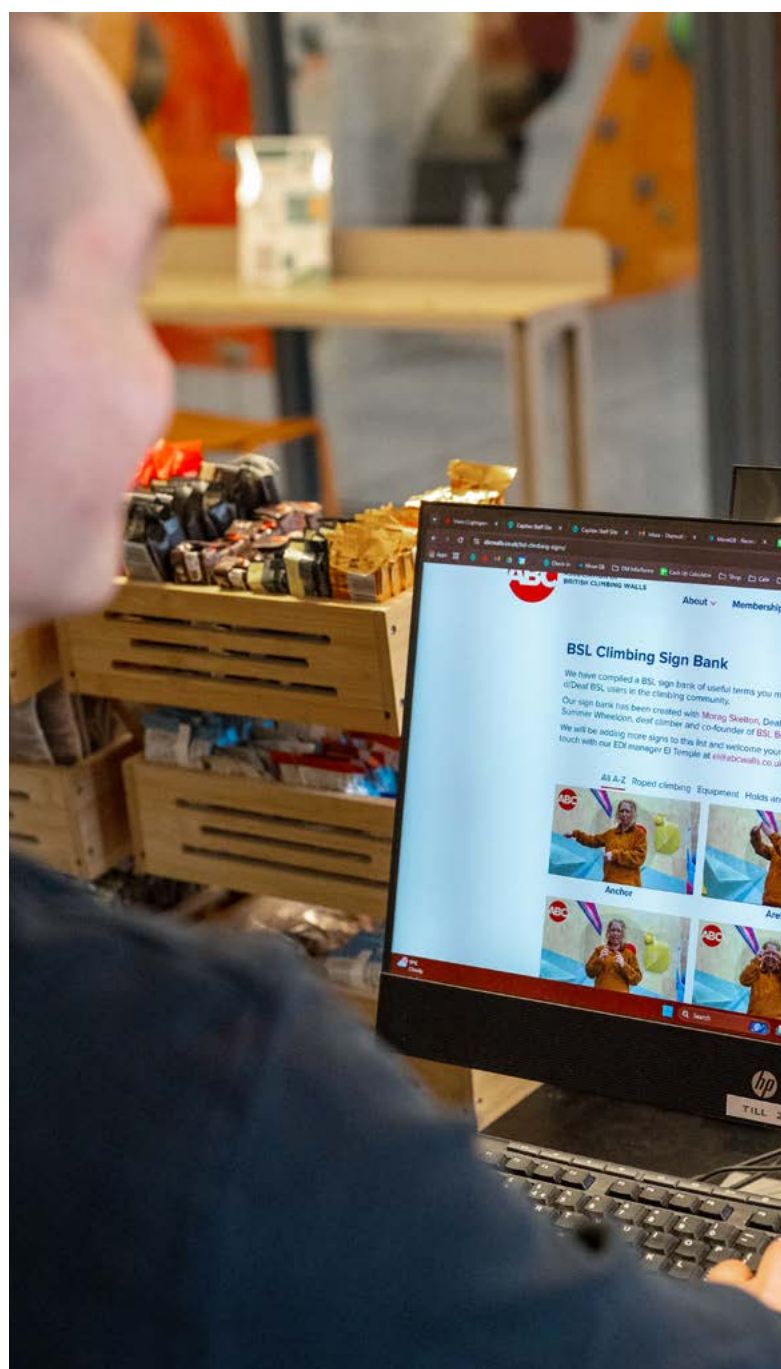
Inclusive pricing structures

Clearly communicate financial assistance options, such as sliding scale fees, discounted entry and free entry for carers/ Personal Assistants (PAs)/guides, during booking to reduce barriers.

Customer service:

Attitudes:

It's important for staff to avoid making assumptions about what individuals can or cannot do. Staff should also recognise that disability affects everyone differently, the best approach is to ask each person if and how they need assistance.



BSL Climbing Sign Bank © ABC

Hidden disabilities:

Just because a disability isn't visible doesn't mean someone won't benefit from support, adjustments, or inclusive provision. These measures often improve the experience for all customers, not just those with a diagnosed or disclosed condition.

Patience:

Allow customers extra time for asking questions, communicating, and completing tasks such as payment or Acknowledgment of Risk forms when needed. Staff should be mindful of individual needs and avoid rushing, even if others are waiting. Avoid interrupting or finishing sentences for someone.

Communication:

Speak to customers facing them, even when they may be using an interpreter or having someone else help communicate for them. Do not cover your lips, and make sure your face is well-lit for lip reading. Use body language and gestures, and

check for understanding. If something isn't understood, try rephrasing or use pen and paper or a text on device screens.

Knowledge:

Ensure that all staff are well-informed about the facility's provisions and sessions available for disabled climbers. This enables staff to handle enquiries with confidence and ensures customers are not left feeling overlooked, uncomfortable, or delayed due to gaps in knowledge. Make this information easily accessible to customers as well, if people don't know what's available, they may be unable to make use of it.

Awareness sessions and training:

Many charities and organisations offer both online and in-person sessions to help staff build confidence in inclusive customer service. This training raises awareness of diverse needs, improves communication skills, and equips staff to provide respectful, informed, and tailored support to all customers.



Access Sport Delivering Neurodiversity Training @ Aim 2 Change
© Claudia Cibelli



Access Sport

Access Sport aims to make inclusion the norm in community sport by delivering training that creates welcoming, inclusive environments.

Booking Processes:

Multiple booking channels:

Offer a variety of ways to book, this may be via phone call, email, online web enquiries/chats, text and in-person.

Inclusive booking policies:

Offer flexible cancellation and/or rescheduling to accommodate unforeseen circumstances that may disproportionately affect disabled users.

Provide opportunities to share information during registration:

Provide opportunities for participants to share relevant information about health, access needs, or support requirements through open-ended questions. This allows centres, instructors and coaches to prepare appropriately in advance and start a conversation with the individual to ensure needs are met from the very start.

Data collection:

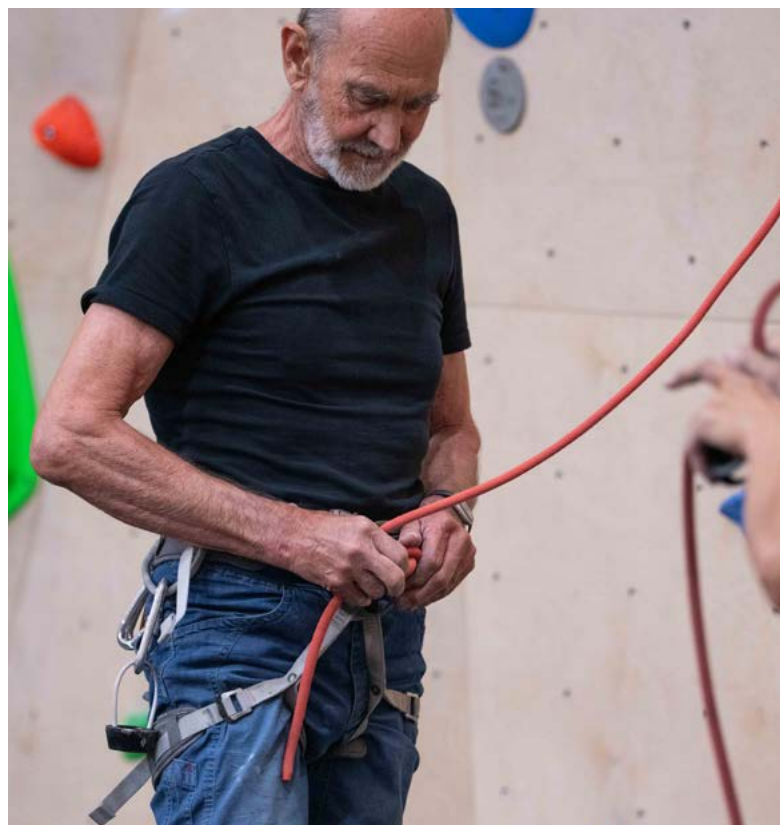
Integrate demographic information, such as disability status, gender, LGBTQIA+ identity, ethnicity, and religion, into the sign-up process to monitor and report on diversity. This insight will support progress against EDI KPIs and guide evidence-based interventions, especially in areas where under-representation or engagement gaps emerge.

Independent climbing and supervision:

Competency tests:

Because disabilities are not homogeneous nor uniform to each individual, these situations should be handled on a case-by-case basis with an inclusion-first mindset. Walls are encouraged to consult their Technical Adviser (TA) and the [ABC team](#) to discuss individual cases and find the best solutions.

Proactively consider potential scenarios before they arise: For example, What is your wall's policy if a visually impaired climber wants to act as a supervisor? Are your duty managers familiar with best practice around seated belaying, so they can confidently support customers and assess competency when needed? Having these conversations in advance helps ensure you can respond confidently and inclusively.



Man tying into harness © Adam Cooledge

Concession Guidance for Walls

Background

Disabled people face significant financial barriers to accessing sport, with [Scope's 2024 Disability Price Tag](#) analysis revealing that disabled households require an extra £1,010 per month to achieve parity with non-disabled households, a figure expected to rise to £1,067 per month when adjusted for inflation. Disabled people are nearly three times more likely to experience material deprivation, struggling to afford essentials like housing, healthcare, and nutrition. Half of all people in poverty are either disabled or live with a disabled person (UK Poverty 2019-20 report from Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

These financial pressures make it harder for disabled people to afford climbing gym entry, compounded by transport costs, specialised equipment, and assistance fees. To support increased diversity in indoor climbing, from grassroots participation to leadership, the ABC advocates implementing concession entry rates for disabled people.

Proof Of Entitlement

To administer concessions, venues may need to verify disability status, but the UK lacks a universal disability ID system. Commonly accepted proofs include:

- ▶ Blue Badge
- ▶ Disabled Persons' Freedom Pass or Rail Card
- ▶ National Disability Cards (e.g. DID, Access Card)
- ▶ Disabled Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) letters
- ▶ Medical letters from professionals

While eligibility checks can prevent misuse, they must balance privacy and accessibility. Requiring proof may discourage participation, raise privacy concerns, or impose financial and bureaucratic burdens. Sensitivity is crucial to ensure inclusivity.



BMC Paraclimbing Event © James Hawkins

Alternative Approaches:

1. **Monitor Uptake:** Track the use of discounts. If uptake exceeds reasonable thresholds, implement respectful validation processes supported by staff training.
2. **Enhance Accessibility:** Ask visitors about additional accommodations to improve their experience, reducing barriers beyond financial concerns.
3. **Community Partnerships:** Collaborate with local disability groups to offer discounts and validate needs through group registration.
4. **Clear Messaging:** Use inclusive language, e.g. "If you have a disability that impacts your finances and access, please speak to staff." This highlights genuine needs and deters misuse while fostering understanding.

These measures promote fairness, accessibility, and trust while maintaining inclusivity for disabled individuals.

Wall Recommendations

The approach to concessions is up to individual walls but we would recommend the following could be considered:

- ▶ Financial discount e.g. 25% off standard price
- ▶ Off Peak offers and discounts
- ▶ Multi-day, monthly and annual sales discounts
- ▶ Free shoe and/or harness hire
- ▶ Free 'companion' ticket
- ▶ Free (accessible) parking
- ▶ Only charging for one instructor for coached access sessions (some disabled people require more help)
- ▶ Investigate funding routes that could be used to subsidise costs



BSL Bouldering @ Yonder © ABC

Facility design & Sensoryscape



Route Setting @ Mile End © Claudia Cibelli

Touchpoints



- ▶ Parking and drop-off points
- ▶ Building layout
- ▶ Signage and navigation
- ▶ Changing facilities and toilets
- ▶ Sensory environment



Matting Ramp @ Big Depot Manchester
© Adam Cooledge

Potential barriers



1. Limited accessible parking, unclear step-free routes, changing rooms or toilets without appropriate equipment or space.
2. Poor signage and wayfinding, making it difficult for visitors to navigate confidently.
3. Obstructed pathways with ropes, equipment, or clutter making it hard to move through or around the space.
4. Overwhelming environments, including loud, crowded, and overly bright spaces.
5. Lines with overlapping routes of similar colours, limited grade variety, and lack of clear downclimb options.

Solutions



Outside building:

Parking:

Multiple onsite accessible parking spaces are recommended, the number of which is dictated by law, dependent on the size of the facility and spaces in the car park and varies by local authority. These should have the required access aisles on either side, and be located near the main entrance. Additionally, consider providing a drop-off/pick-up point and bike parking that accommodates adapted cycles.

Transportation:

It can be useful to outline and provide information on local travel options, such as the nearest bus stop, train/tube stations with step free access, on-street parking and walking distance to the center from each.

Approach:

Choose ground surface materials that are smooth and slip-resistant, especially in wet conditions, and avoid uneven surfaces like gravel. Ensure ramps have an **appropriate gradient**, and include handrails for stairs where needed. Good lighting and CCTV can also contribute to a safe and accessible approach to the facility.

Inside building:

Reception:

Design counter tops to include a lowered area with clear lines of sight to staff. Consider a fast track system for people unable to stand or wait for extended periods and provide seating in these areas.

Entrances/Exits:

Ensure turnstiles and heavy doors are wide enough to accommodate mobility aids and have power assistance where required.

Surfaces:

Ensure flooring is accessible by using anti-slip mats in wet areas (such as entrances or near water fountains), incorporating tactile flooring to guide visually impaired users, and providing strong colour contrast between floors, walls, and step edges to aid visibility.

Pathways:

Design **hallways and pathways** wide enough for wheelchair users and keep them clear of obstacles. Provide adequate storage for customers such as lockers to avoid obstructing pathways.

Accessible toilets and changing rooms:

This includes providing adequate turning space, grab rails, emergency pull cords that reach the floor, lowered fixtures and lever-style taps and door handles.

Signage:

Carefully located at visible height and considering reach when using tactile or braille features. Clear text with a strong contrast to the background and printed on non-reflective surfaces. Text should be simple, incorporate graphic symbols to convey meaning, and use arrows to provide clear directional information.

Matting:

Provide walkways through raised boulder matting so all sections of the wall have minimal travel distance from a wheelchair accessible pathway. Have a clear policy on the use of different mobility aids on the mats

Ground anchors:

Provide ground anchors at all climbing lines, positioned for safe and easy access.

Rest:

Consider comfortable seating options within the gym, warm up/cool down/stretching spaces and viewing areas.

Temperature:

Maintain a consistent and comfortable temperature within climbing spaces, as some disabled individuals are more affected by temperature extremes or drastic changes in temperature. Consider additional heating and cooling systems, particularly in seating areas and warm-up/cool-down zones.

Good ventilation:

Increased respiratory activity during exercise can lead to higher exposure to airborne particles, which particularly affects individuals who are immunocompromised or have respiratory conditions. You can find the ABC's guide, Workplace Exposure to Chalk, in the [members' portal](#), along with our other guidance.

On the wall:**Downclimbs:**

All bouldering problems should include a clear and safe downclimb, using visually distinct jugs that are within reach.

Reach:

Considering move height for climbers with shorter stature or limited range of movement.

Colour:

High-contrast hold colours can improve visibility, and avoid similar colour gradients on overlapping lines. When grading routes by colour, it is recommended to include additional markers such as shapes, icons, or written grades to accommodate individuals who are colour blind.

Setting:

Consider setting routes with an awareness of asymmetry to accommodate climbers with limb differences and power imbalances.

For detailed guidance on category-specific para route setting, refer to the [IFSC Paraclimbing Routesetting Guidelines](#).

Neuroinclusive spaces:**Sound:**

Create 'quiet' sessions with reduced noise, minimal or no music, and no setting or drilling activities. This might be during typically quieter times in the day, and whilst no large groups/sessions are running.

Lighting:

Fluorescent lights can emit a 'humming' sound; this can be reduced by using high-frequency fittings. Additionally, be mindful that strobe lighting can be problematic for individuals who are partially sighted or have photosensitive epilepsy.

Be aware:

Some equipment may act as sensory triggers for some individuals, for example, the texture or fit of harnesses, shoes, hold surfaces, or the feel of chalk. Where possible, offer alternative options to support comfort and accessibility. This might include using liquid chalk instead of powder, or providing a variety of harness styles and fits and wearing 'outdoor trainers' as an alternative to climbing shoes.

Crowding:

Introduce one-way systems in narrow or high-traffic areas, such as pinch points and hallways, to reduce crowding. Ensure exits are clearly marked and easily accessible for those who may need to leave quickly. Consider creating additional open space where possible, and avoid placing seating, storage, or equipment in key circulation routes.

Sensory scape:

Multiple stimuli can build in layers and have a cumulative effect, especially when they are unexpected, sustained, or unavoidable,

and may lead to sensory overload in some individuals. For these individuals it is important to have a plan in place that enables them to regulate and respond in ways that suit their needs, with agreed support strategies where appropriate. The National Autistic Society offers [further support and advice](#).

Want to know more?

[Accessible and inclusive sports facilities \(AISF\) guide](#)

This in depth resource, developed by Sport England, supports the design and operation of safe, welcoming, accessible and inclusive sports and leisure facilities.

[Design for the mind](#)

This document provides guidance on designing the built environment for a neurodiverse society, addressing sensory needs and approaches to creating and managing neurodivergent-inclusive environments.



UKPC © UKPC



Spotlight Resource:

[UKPC Accessibility Guide](#)

A guide developed by disabled climbers detailing recommendations for creating inclusive and accessible climbing environments, developed by the UK Paraclimbing Collective.

On The Wall Support & Inclusive Coaching



NICAS Ascend in testing, Access Sport @ Summit Up © NICAS

Touchpoints



- ▶ Available equipment
- ▶ Staff knowledge
- ▶ Programme delivery

Potential barriers



1. Limited staff training in how to deliver adaptive sessions
2. Staff not permitting seated belaying or being able to provide guidance on safe practice
3. Limited understanding of safety and emergency response procedures in relation to d/Deaf, disabled, and neurodiverse individuals
4. Rigid coaching structures focused on rapid skill development, not accommodating the diverse needs of all participants or individualised support



Aim 2 Change Workshop © Claudia Cibelli

Solutions



Coached Sessions:

Ask questions, don't assume:

Prioritise open, respectful communication that helps the customer feel comfortable. Be prepared to ask clarifying questions rather than making assumptions, even if the conversation feels unfamiliar to you.

Use visual communication methods:

Demonstrate techniques and use body language, instead of only verbal instructions. Video footage can provide helpful visual feedback. Use tools such as communication cards and [Makaton](#) (a form of communication using symbols, signs, and speech) to support understanding.

Keep instructions clear and concise:

Break tasks into smaller, manageable steps when needed, checking regularly to make sure climbers understand, and let them progress at their own pace.

Think visibility & audibility:

Position yourself so you're within the participant's visual and audible range for better communication. When not, using tools such as laser pointers can be used to highlight specific holds or routes on the wall, both before and during climbing.

Personalisation:

Success is highly individual; work with the climber to establish personalised goals. This may include alternative challenges such as reaching a set number of holds or developing coordination. Keep the focus on the individual's motivations, this might be enjoyment, exercise, or rehabilitation, rather than exclusively on pushing grades.

Flexibility:

Embrace different movement styles and learn alongside each climber, allowing them the space to explore how their body moves on the wall. Rather than prescribing specific techniques, encourage natural movement and adaptation.

Additional Support:

Offer one-on-one or small group sessions where additional support is needed. If further assistance is required, create a support network around the individual by accommodating extra staff or familiar support, such as a parent.

Communication:

Consider providing information as to the lesson plan, aim or content ahead of time, as well as an introduction to the instructor leading the session, aim to give plenty of notice if either the intention of the session or coach is going to change from that previously discussed.



NICAS Ascend

[NICAS Ascend](#) is a climbing award scheme designed for, and tried and tested with, disabled and neurodivergent climbers.

Technical skills:

Training:

There are a variety of technical approaches that can support climbers with different access needs. These include parallel climbing, vertical hoist systems, wheelchair abseils, and visually guided techniques. Training on these can be delivered in person by a range of providers.

Want to know more?

Climbing for All

Climbing for All is a national CPD module developed in partnership with the BMC and Mountain Training. It introduces the learner to the foundations of inclusive practice, adaptive climbing techniques, approaches and technical hoisting systems.

Safety first

Expertise:

Engage Technical Advisors (TAs) with expertise in accessibility to provide ongoing support for staff and programme development to adopt an inclusion focused approach. Ensure duty managers know how to appropriately assist disabled climbers in the techniques they are using.

Solution oriented:

Avoid default assumptions that accommodations are “too difficult” or “impossible” to implement. Instead, work proactively with advisors to find solutions that maintain safety standards compliance while prioritising inclusivity.

Individualisation:

Make adaptations on an individual basis, this might include exceptions to your standard operations. For example children with sensory sensitivities or cochlear implants may not be able to wear a helmet, or it may be safer for them and those around them not to.



Assisted climbing system @ Big Depot Manchester © Adam Cooledge



Feedback & Community Engagement

Touchpoints



- ▶ Feedback forms
- ▶ Newsletters
- ▶ Community partnership
- ▶ Demographic data collection

Potential barriers



1. Lack of different formats for providing feedback, making it difficult for disabled climbers to share their experiences and resulting in underrepresentation of their experiences and needs in the process.
2. Lack of response to feedback, delayed accessibility improvements and poor communication around decision making can lead to frustration and disengagement.
3. Poor community outreach and insufficient involvement of the paraclimbing community and disability groups, leaving their experiences and needs out of the conversation, and hindering inclusive decision-making and progress.
4. Lack of disability-focused clubs and socials, and limited integration of disability in mainstream practices, such as the absence of para categories in local competitions.

Solutions



Feedback:

Culture:

Foster a culture of openness and learning amongst staff, where it's okay to get things wrong. Train staff and leadership to actively engage with feedback, demonstrating openness to learning from mistakes, taking action and encouraging a two way conversation.

Be proactive:

Actively seek feedback through multiple accessible channels such as online surveys, in-person conversations, and suggestion boxes. Reach out to the community to engage climbers and make it easy for individuals to share their thoughts.

Demonstrate listening:

Once feedback is received, ensure it leads to visible change. Set up a clear process for making improvements based on feedback and communicate plans and progress transparently to customers. If a change cannot be made, clearly explain why and outline any alternative steps or considerations that are being made.

Community engagement:

Paraclimbing sessions:

Establish or host regular paraclimbing sessions in collaboration with the community, these can be great for fostering connection, sharing experiences, and building supportive peer networks.

Competitions:

Ensure that paraclimbing categories are integrated into comps and events, providing disabled climbers with equal opportunities to participate. Accessible comps offer opportunities for disabled and non-disabled climbers to connect and engage with the broader community, raising visibility for paraclimbing athletes and promoting disability inclusion within mainstream climbing.

Community engagement:

Partner with local organisations, including disability networks, inclusive sports groups, SEN schools, community centres, councils, and rehabilitation services, to increase visibility and promote your sessions. These trusted groups offer valuable insights into local needs and can help shape more inclusive offerings. For individuals who may view climbing as inaccessible or have had discouraging past experiences, outreach through familiar and credible organisations can build trust, raise awareness, and open doors for collaboration on events, training and community initiatives.



BIC Fest © TCA

Frequent Accessibility Audits:

Regularly assess the accessibility of your facilities and programs, focusing on physical access, equipment, and communication. Bring in a diverse group of paraclimbers to provide feedback on current accessibility levels and to identify new areas that need attention.

Funding Opportunities:

If appropriate, research and apply for grants, government funding, or sponsorships to support the implementation of accessibility measures. Funding could cover the costs of adaptive equipment, staff training on disability inclusion, and infrastructure improvements that enhance accessibility.

Spotlight Resource:

Effective engagement factsheets for inclusive physical activity.

The Activity Alliance has a series of engagement factsheets to support providers in thinking about how they include disabled people. From planning opportunities to measuring impact, these resources help organisations embed inclusive practice and engage more disabled people in being active.

**activity
alliance**
disability
inclusion
sport



ABC Conference © Adam Cooledge



Funding & Grant Opportunities

Walls, whether large or small, may be able to apply for a range of funding grants to provide financial support towards EDI goals, offering an alternative source of funding. The availability, eligibility criteria, and level of support for these grants will vary depending on factors such as whether the wall operates as an independent business, part of a wider company, or as a charity or community group, as well as the region in which it is based. By securing appropriate grants, organisations can develop and deliver plans to improve accessibility, implement initiatives that foster a more inclusive workplace culture, diversify their coaching and participation offers, and engage more effectively with underserved communities.

Here are some suggestions:

Sport-System Funding / National Sports Councils (Sport England / Sport Scotland / Sport Wales / Sport Northern Ireland)

These national sports councils provide funding and support for sports initiatives and projects. In particular they aim to address inequalities through funding and particularly encourage applications for projects that support people who have poorer health outcomes and lower activity levels. Funded by the National Lottery, eligibility for different grants varies; contact the respective council for details.

- ▶ [Sport NI](#): Creating Opportunities with Crowdfunder UK
- ▶ [Sport England](#): The Movement Fund, Small Grants Programme
- ▶ [Sport Wales](#): Be Active Wales Fund, A Place For Sport Crowdfunder Matching
- ▶ [Sport Scotland](#): Awards for All, Sport Facilities Fund, Coach Education Subsidy Funding

Local Authorities and Regional Support Services

Regional and local infrastructure organisations provide place-based support, working closely with local authorities to help organisations access funding, build capacity, and navigate government programmes. These organisations are often the first stop for identifying both local and national funding opportunities.



Accreditation Plaque © Adam Cooledge

CVS and Volunteer Centres (England)

Councils for Voluntary Services

(CVSs), sometimes referred to as local infrastructure or voluntary sector support organisations, operate alongside and in partnership with local authorities. While they are independent organisations, CVSs are often commissioned or recognised by local and national governments to support the voluntary and community sector. Operating at a borough, district or county level, CVSs act as a key link between local government, funders and community organisations. Through this role, CVSs are particularly valuable for identifying funding opportunities at both a local and national level. They combine strong local knowledge with an understanding of wider government and funder priorities, helping organisations navigate council-led funding, national grant programmes and partnership-based opportunities, as well as providing practical support with applications and collaboration.

Active Partnership Network (England)

Active Partnerships are independent, regional organisations across England that work to increase participation in physical activity and sport. There are 43 Active Partnerships, covering England. Their work focuses on tackling inequalities, improving access to sport for underrepresented groups, and supporting grassroots organisations to grow and sustain participation.

Third Sector Interface (Scotland)

Specific to Scotland a Third Sector

Interface is a regional or local organisation that supports charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations within a specific area. TSIs act as a central point of contact between the third sector, the local authority, and national government. They help strengthen community organisations by offering guidance, training, funding support, partnership building, and strategic coordination.

County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) (Wales)

County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) are local organisations in Wales that support and represent voluntary, community and social enterprise groups within their counties. As part of the Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) network, CVCs provide practical services such as funding advice, training, governance support, volunteer recruitment, and opportunities for networking and collaboration. They act as the key link between local third-sector organisations, public bodies and national policy, ensuring that community voices are heard and that groups have the resources they need to operate effectively.

Council Community Support Units (Northern Ireland)

In Northern Ireland, [local councils](#) typically operate dedicated Community Support or Community Development Units. These units serve as the primary interface between local government and community organisations across the 11 council areas. They provide a range of essential services, including the administration of community support grants, capacity-building training, and advice on governance and best practices.

Government Backed Initiatives

Access to Work Scheme:

[Access to Work](#) is a UK government programme that provides financial support to disabled individuals and their employers to help cover the cost of reasonable adjustments in the workplace. This support can include funding for assistive technologies, adaptations to equipment or the working environment, support workers, travel to work, and other accommodations that help overcome work-related barriers due to a disability or long term health condition.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme

[The Holiday Activities and Food \(HAF\) Programme](#) is a programme open to all eligible children aged 5-16. The HAF programme provision and activities are inclusive of all children and young people, including disabled young people. The local areas had differing approaches to referrals and bookings but all facilitators should be considered how to make these inclusive to be eligible.

Corporate Sponsorship and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Climbing walls can also explore funding through corporate sponsorship and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes by approaching businesses that are either industry specific or based in the local area. CSR refers to the way companies take responsibility for their social, environmental, and community impact beyond profit, often through funding, partnerships, or staff involvement in projects that deliver clear public benefit. Many organisations allocate dedicated CSR budgets each year which can be assigned to financial support, sponsorship, or in-kind donations to projects that promote health, wellbeing, inclusion, and community participation. Walls can propose initiatives such as inclusive climbing sessions, facility upgrades, or community outreach programmes, highlighting the social impact, community benefit, and alignment with the company's CSR goals. In return, companies gain marketing and advertising, brand building and brand alignment with visible community impact and reputational benefits.



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Grants

Charitable grants can be a valuable funding route, particularly for registered charities, CICs, community groups, and in some cases individuals. While eligibility varies between funders, these platforms and search engines offer comprehensive listings of UK-wide opportunities and are a good starting point for identifying suitable grants. Using these platforms can help identify new or lesser-known funding streams that align with project objectives, whether that's event delivery, accessibility initiatives, inclusion programmes, or support for underrepresented communities.

Community fundraising

Never underestimate the power of your own people. Community fundraising can take many forms, from small-scale internal activities such as cake sales, raffles, or sponsored events, to larger initiatives like

crowdfunding campaigns. These efforts not only generate additional funding but also help to engage your community, raise awareness, and build support for your projects. Encouraging staff, volunteers, and participants to get involved can create a sense of ownership and excitement around the activities you're delivering.

Gift Aid

Gift Aid is a simple yet powerful way for registered charities to increase the value of donations by 25% at no extra cost to the donor. Every eligible donation can be boosted by HMRC, making it a highly effective tool for maximising charitable income. While it only applies to organisations with charity status, it is worth factoring in as part of your fundraising strategy, particularly when running donation drives, membership schemes, or fundraising events.

Search Tools:

► Get Grants (UK)

Provides a regularly updated directory of UK funding opportunities, including small community grants, sport and wellbeing funds, and training opportunities for improving bid-writing skills.

► Funding Wales (Wales)

A dedicated search engine listing funding sources for organisations working in Wales, run by Third Sector Support Wales. It includes national, regional, and local grant schemes.

► SCVO (Scotland)

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations offers a searchable database of grants specifically aimed at charities, voluntary organisations and community groups operating in Scotland.

► The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) (N Ireland)

They provide regular, reliable, and up-to-date funding information to support the sector, offering resources to help organisations' funding applications succeed

Partnerships

Sometimes you might not have direct access to funding, but partnering with an organisation that does can be just as effective. By forming strategic partnerships, your organisation can take on the role of delivering projects, activities, or initiatives while leveraging your partner's access to grants, charitable funding, or community

support. This approach is particularly useful for commercial organisations that may not be eligible for certain funding streams. By collaborating with a charity, community group, or other non-profit partner, you can contribute your expertise, resources, or facilities, while your partner secures the funding.



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