



PARKS ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE

LTA DISABILITY DEVELOPMENT TEAM 2023

A GUIDE ON HOW TO MAKE YOUR PARKS INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE TO DISABLED PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION

For disabled people to be able to play tennis in parks, tennis requires inclusive and accessible facilities that cater for all. Disabled people and those with long-term health conditions are 10% less likely to play at a park court than non-disabled people (35% vs 45%). However, insight shows that parks are where disabled people are most likely to play tennis (LTA Tracker, 2019-21), making it crucially important that general access and programmes in parks are easily accessible for disabled people.

Improving facility access can sometimes be a costly and time-consuming task. However, through recent research, we have collated some best practice principles that will give you the tools to make parks tennis accessible and engaging for disabled people, whilst helping you prioritise some key initiatives that will create a more inclusive parks offer.

This guide provides local authorities (LA's) and parks operators with the following:

1. Benefits of being more inclusive and accessible to disabled people
2. Best practice principles to engage more disabled people at your park
3. Further considerations when planning improvements to accessibility

BENEFITS OF BEING MORE ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE TO DISABLED PEOPLE

Whilst diversifying who you engage with allows you to create a varied and comprehensive tennis offer, there are some specific benefits that targeting disabled people will have for your park:

- **A largely untapped market**
 - There are 14.6 million disabled people in the UK (Scope , 2021)
 - 78% of disabled people would like to be more active (Activity Alliance, 2021)
- **Improved facilities** – accessible facilities don't just benefit disabled people; they open up tennis to the whole community (e.g. accessible toilets can be used by everyone)
- **Reputation** – having inclusive facilities can often be a unique selling point in your local area, often giving both disabled and non-disabled people a reason to choose one facility over another
- **Improved coaching offer** – if your park has coaching activity as part of its offer, having both disability-specific and inclusive sessions will give opportunities to a new audience and likely improve the quality of the overall coaching standard (97% of coaches say that coaching disabled people improves their coaching generally - LTA, 2019)

BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES TO ENGAGE MORE DISABLED PEOPLE AT YOUR PARK

Through our current research, there are four key recommendations we believe you should prioritise when aiming to improve accessibility and inclusion in a park setting.

1. Complete an Access Audit

Completing an access audit is the first step in assessing and understanding the inclusive design issues of your parks tennis facility. The audit should be carried out by a suitably qualified professional, such as an NRAC Consultant, who will be able to highlight access issues that need addressing. Whilst we appreciate not all access improvements will be practically feasible, our research suggests that the below factors may have the best impact on making a park more accessible to disabled people:

1. Ensure car parks (or drop off zones as a minimum) are available, have 6% designated accessible parking and bays are left clear for those who genuinely need them
2. Ensure accessible changing and toilet facilities are on site, in good condition and available for the public to use

Should it not be feasible to pay for a qualified professional in the first instance, you could assess your facility using our Checklist. However, it is recommended you work directly with an expert in the long term.

2. Detailing accessibility provisions and shortcomings on your website

Providing as much information on your website about how accessible your facility is to the public is vitally important for disabled people to understand their journey to the park, as well as getting to and on the courts once there. We recommend including the following information as a priority:

- Access from entrance/car park/drop off to courts
- Parking availability, including accessible spaces
- Transport routes and nearest stops
- Toilet and changing facilities – Are there any? Are they open? Are they accessible?

Top tip: Be honest about the accessibility of your park. If there are any shortcomings, make them clear. If the access is good, be specific about what makes it good!

3. Educate your workforce

Improving accessibility isn't just about the physical and digital make up of your facility. It also encompasses the attitudes and capabilities of your staff, coaches and volunteers to cater for disabled people appropriately.

Having everyone involved in the operation through to the on-site engagement (e.g. coaching) complete disability-inclusion training will give both your staff and disabled people themselves confidence that different needs will be met all the way through the customer journey. A wheelchair tennis player we spoke to as part of our research said, 'A warm and friendly welcome can make such a difference when attending a park and whether to return back or not'. Simple gestures like this are important aspects of customer service generally but can be even more impactful when engaging disabled people.

The LTA has an online disability-inclusion module called 'Open Your Doors' open to anyone who wants to make their venue more inclusive. It takes around 45 - 90 minutes to complete and is free

for any venue looking to onboard onto our LTA Open Court programme (see further info below). Follow the link below to find out more about Open Your Doors: <https://www.lta.org.uk/roles-and-venues/coaches/development/courses/>

4. Use targeted interventions to encourage disabled people to use park courts

To be truly inclusive, you need to be making disabled people aware of the opportunities your park courts have to offer and use incentivised schemes to attract and retain them. Interventions could include:

- Concessionary offers for disabled people and disability organisations e.g. providing discounted or free access to the courts, for the year
- Adaptive equipment made available for disability organisations via the coach, café, storage containers on site or equipment packs for groups to loan and keep. Inclusive equipment can be available via the LTA Open Court programme
- Support community organisations to upskill their own workforce with LTA Activator Training to be able to facilitate fun and engaging parks tennis.
- If coaches are available, develop coach-led programmes for people of a similar impairment

The LTA can support your organisation with interventions you look to carry out via our LTA [Open Court](#) programme. Adaptive equipment, funding and general advice are some of the ways in which we can look to support via our local LTA regional teams. We would also recommend involving the appropriate local authority department(s) who may be able to support in actively promoting opportunities to certain audiences.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Although this document outlines some of the priorities that should be made when making your park more accessible and inclusive, there is so much more you can do to ensure your facility is the best it can possibly be for disabled people. Sport England provide extensive guidance on how to make your facilities as accessible as possible, whilst ensuring you are conforming to building regulations and the Equality Act 2010. We have also included a link to our full research report below which includes other useful tips to improving accessibility and inclusion in parks tennis.

We hope you found this document useful and please do reach out to your regional LTA contact should you wish to discuss your plans in further detail.

Useful links

- [Sport England Accessible Facilities](#)
- [LTA Disabled Access Guidelines 2017](#)
- [Research Report: Accessible and inclusive parks facilities 2022](#)
- [National Register of Access Consultants](#)
- [LTA Open Court programme](#)
- [LTA Open Your Doors E-Learning Course](#)