

London charity using sport to support disabled people wins prestigious award



A charity which uses sport to help people with a disability get active, improve their health, and make new friends has won one of London’s most prestigious sports awards for its work reducing social isolation.

Disability Sports Coach works with hundreds of people across the capital, with regular sessions taking place at more than a dozen venues, including hubs in Hackney, Wandsworth, Brent, Lambeth, and Southwark. It also provides weekly online sessions for people unable to attend in person, and trains sports coaches across the city, with the emphasis on making sport accessible to all.

With recent data from Sport England showing people with a disability are almost twice as likely to be physically inactive compared to people without a disability, and with a separate study by the leading disability charity Scope finding more than 50% of disabled people feel excluded from society, the work being done by Disability Sports Coach is providing vital support to people across London at a time when historic health inequalities have been exacerbated by the recent pandemic and cost-of-living crisis.

Earlier this week the charity won the Uniting London Award at the London Sport Awards supported by the City of London Corporation, with judges praising its on-going efforts to reduce the many barriers preventing people with a disability from being active – and the positive impact that work has on the long-term mental and physical wellbeing of the people the charity works with.

Meagan Leggett, one of the charity’s trustees, knows better than most how important Disability Sports Coach’s work is to Londoners of all ages. Her daughter was one of the first people to attend its community club in Wandsworth and she has seen her thrive ever since.

She said: “The club has given her a sense of community and the motivation and tools to get physically active. She’s been able to try so many new things which I was so glad to see her enjoy.

“Because there is such a wide variety of activities and equipment, there will always be something you can do. The coaches are also so well attuned to participants' individual needs and are quick to act if they can see something isn’t working well.”

Providing such an adaptive programme and supportive environment has been successful in dismantling many of the barriers disabled people have traditionally faced in sport. And it is having a lasting positive impact on people's health.

Since 2021, 100% of the charity's participants have reported an improvement in their physical wellbeing and 70% have said that they feel more confident.

It was a track record the London Sport Awards' judges couldn't ignore, despite compelling nominations coming in for an array of other fantastic London-based organisations.

But what does it mean to Disability Sports Coach to win?

A delighted Meagan said: "I think it's great to have that spotlight on disability. It's been hidden away and now we are visible and seen. This is such a nice acknowledgement."

For more on the London Sport Awards, visit: www.londonsport.org, or to learn more about Disability Sports Coach, visit: www.disabilitysportscoach.co.uk.