






# Mixed Ability

# Squash






## Starter Guide





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## Who are IMAS?

Founded in 2014, International Mixed Ability Sports or 'IMAS' is a not-for-profit organisation promoting the Mixed Ability model around the world. Our vision is to change the world through Mixed Ability sports. Starting in Rugby Union, Mixed Ability is now delivered across many different sports including: rowing, bowls, tennis, golf, swimming and Squash!

Organisationally, IMAS works with national governing bodies, charities and grassroots sports clubs to help spread the Mixed Ability message and increase the participation offer. On top of the multiple sports available in England, Mixed Ability continues to grow around the world!

## Who are England Squash?

England Squash are the national governing body for squash in England and lead the development and delivery of the sport on both a national and local level. There are around 600 affiliated clubs and 1000 coaches that England Squash support. England Squash are committed to enhancing the diversity of the game and increasing participation and their vision for the future of squash in England is a thriving, diverse and growing community.

## The Mission

England Squash and IMAS are working in partnership to support coaches and clubs in establishing their own Mixed Ability programmes, helping to embed regular sessions with disabled and non disabled participants within clubs across the country.

In 2022/23, England Squash and IMAS helped 18 squash clubs with funding and support to start their own Mixed Ability Squash sessions. Clubs across England worked with IMAS's team of regional managers to promote themselves, deliver sessions and introduce new players to the sport of squash.

**The fundamental commitments and considerations of IMAS are detailed within our manifesto, these include:**

### **MEMBERSHIP AND BELONGING**



Mixed Ability recognises the right of everyone to participate in community sports without being separated, classified or labelled.

### **EQUAL PARTICIPATION**



Mixed Ability is a social movement within sports, actively promoting inclusion and equality through a sense of belonging and membership to a group, team or club.

### **RULES AND REGULATIONS**



Mixed Ability Sports follows the same rules and regulations of mainstream sports without adaptations, and only minor adjustments to take into account individual participant needs.

### **BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS**



In breaking down these barriers Mixed Ability Sport creates opportunities for marginalised communities to challenge the established status quo and affirm their right to equal participation.

### **HEALTH AND HAPPINESS**



Sport has the power to transform lives making us healthier and happier, and yet there are people excluded or segregated because of stigma, prejudice or personal perceptions of their capability.

### **INCLUSION AND EQUALITY**



Too often sport is seen as the prerogative of elite athletes or established majorities. Grassroots sport can also be responsible for excluding minorities allowing access only to charitable or segregated activities.

## What is Mixed Ability

Mixed Ability stemmed from the lack of opportunity for disabled people to take part in mainstream community sport, as equal members, without being separated, classified, or identified.

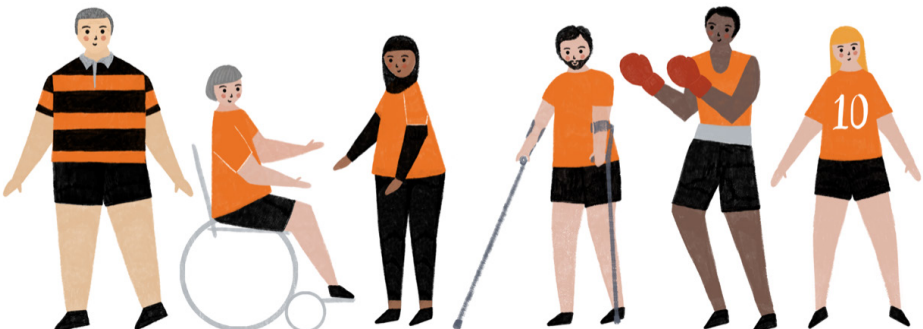
Just like disabled people, too many individuals and groups are still excluded or segregated because of stigma, prejudice, or personal perceptions of their capability.

**This needs to change.**

Mixed Ability recognises the right of everyone to participate in community sport and benefit from its transformational power. Mixed Ability includes people facing a whole range of barriers to participation, including physical and learning disabilities, mental and physical health conditions, age-related impairments, low confidence, or other personal circumstances alongside people that don't experience any of these barriers.

**“I like the fitness, it gives me confidence, and I like the way that I feel part of the group”**

**Mixed Ability participant**



**Mixed Ability Rugby****Mixed Ability Squash****Mixed Ability Rowing**

## **How Mixed Ability Squash benefits your club**

**We believe that Mixed Ability sports have the potential to positively impact any club, regardless of size or playing level. There are numerous benefits which are summarised in the graphic below. With specific regards to squash clubs the following also apply:**

### **DIVERSIFYING YOUR PLAYING OFFER**

Although squash clubs may be welcoming, they are unlikely to specifically promote to disabled people. By offering Mixed Ability and showing that you are opening the doors to everyone, you will attract new players to your club.

### **INCREASING MEMBERSHIP INCOME**

As with any new team, new members means an increased level of income via membership fees and other revenue streams such as the bar and club kit.

### **TACKLING STEREOTYPES**

With no specific 'para' offer, squash may previously have been viewed as inaccessible to disabled people. Mixed Ability Squash shows that this is not the case!

### **IMPROVING FACILITIES**

We have found that Mixed Ability sessions will inevitably help you to identify any barriers created by your existing facilities. As with previous clubs, we would be happy to support any funding bids to help increase the physical accessibility of your club/ courts.

### **UPSKILLING YOUR COACHES**

For many coaches this will be their first experience of working with disabled people. Doing so will improve their coaching practices, enabling them to become more adaptable in delivery whilst also working with a whole new cohort of members.





**NEW MEMBERS**

Fresh input into the club.



**FEEL GOOD FACTOR**

Create a new family within the club.



**DIVERSITY**

Be more representative of the local community.



**LOCAL RECOGNITION**

Strengthen the club position in the community.



**CLUB HERITAGE**

Re-engage founding members.



**SUSTAINABILITY**

Re-engage and retain new and returning members.



**MOTIVATION**

Older participants want to get involved.



# Breaking boundaries

**In August 2023 the meeting of the first two Mixed Ability Squash teams happened, Pontefract Squash Club hosted the Ponte Pirates vs The Calder Crocs! Following the delivering of more Mixed Ability Squash sessions in England the goal would be to see a network of Mixed Ability Squash teams hosting other teams for fun and inclusive squash activity.**

## Session tips





### ARON HARPER-ROBINSON

England Squash Consultant, Regional Development Manager - IMAS

- Keep things simple and fun.
- Be friendly and welcoming – have some snacks and drinks available (if possible).
- Encourage everyone to take part – parents/carers should join in too, it's Mixed Ability after all.
- Do a quick assessment of standard with some arrival skills games.
- Multiple coaches and courts to give all players a chance to get involved.
- Be adaptable, you may be expecting 10 people and get 1 or vice versa.
- Have a range of fun games in your back pocket (this is often the best part of any session).
- Don't get too bogged down with the rules and technical stuff.
- Enjoy yourself! If your smiling people will smile back!

## Appropriate language

We understand how important using appropriate language is to both participants and deliverers. The table below provides a few examples of terms that may be useful when introducing Mixed Ability to your club. Whenever possible, call everyone by their name. Never use the impairment to describe the person.

TERMS WE USE 	TERMS WE AVOID 
Disabled People	(The) Handicapped/ Disabled
Non-Disabled	Able-Bodied
With a learning disability	Mentally Handicapped/ Retarded
Wheelchair User	Wheelchair Bound

## How can IMAS help?

**Our team have over a decade of experience in sports development and 30+ years in teaching, much of which has been spent working with disabled participants and learners. We are also fortunate to have a highly enthusiastic and passionate 'Inclusion in Sport' class who help us to co-produce our resources. As a result, we are able to assist grassroots clubs in a range of ways.**

### LINKING WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS

We have links and contacts across numerous disability service providers and can help to ensure your Mixed Ability sessions are shared with all of their members.

### CREATION OF GUIDES AND FLYERS

In order to make promotion of your Mixed Ability sessions a little easier, we create guides such as this one for you to share with both new and existing club members.

### ADDING YOUR CLUB TO THE MIXED ABILITY NETWORK

Although Mixed Ability Squash is the newest sport within our network we have links with a range of grassroots clubs in multiple sports, all of whom we have assisted previously. Many of these clubs will be happy to share their experiences with you.

### ONGOING ADVICE AND SUPPORT

As with any team, there will inevitably be challenges when you get your Mixed Ability sessions started. To help with this we will share contact details for your nearest IMAS Regional Development Manager (RDM). All our RDMs have started their own Mixed Ability teams and therefore have plenty of experience to draw upon.

### MIXED ABILITY CERTIFICATION AND ACCREDITATION

Once your Mixed Ability team has been established we are happy to offer both certification and accreditation. Both of these are designed to upskill your club volunteers whilst also providing you with a plaque to showcase that you are an inclusive Mixed Ability club.

## FAQs

**For the many clubs, this will be their first experience of Mixed Ability Squash! It is understandable to be nervous but, by following Aron's tips on the previous page, we are sure that clubs will be able to create a positive experience for their new members. In order to help, we have compiled some of the questions that other squash clubs have raised when getting started.**

### **Q: Should disabled players pay less than non-disabled players?**

**A:** No, they should pay the same for Mixed Ability sessions. However, it would be worth considering how much court time the Mixed Ability team use and tailoring your membership price accordingly.

### **Q: What if new players don't have the right footwear?**

**A:** Some clubs have bought a number of cheap pairs of shoes or asked existing members to donate old pairs. Alternatively it may be that you relax your footwear rule for the taster sessions, it is up to you!

### **Q: How long should we run taster sessions for?**

**A:** You should run a minimum of two taster sessions. However, you should have a date in mind for the regular sessions so you can refer new members to their next playing opportunity.

### **Q: How long will it take to get a team started?**

**A:** This can vary between clubs and sports. For a sport like Rugby Union that requires 15-20 players we recommend 12-24 months. For a sport like Mixed Ability Squash this may be reduced to 6-12 months due to the smaller squad size. But remember, its not always about getting a team, for some people it's playing for fun.

### **Q: Do I need any specific qualifications to coach Mixed Ability?**

**A:** The coach should have appropriate coaching qualifications, such as a Level 1 coaching award and have an up to date DBS, Safeguarding certificate. There should also be a first aider present. There are no additional qualifications specific to Mixed Ability but look out for any training that might help you.

## Next Steps



Making the decision to become a more inclusive club is always a positive step. For many, Mixed Ability Squash will be their first experience of working with disabled people. We would also recommend that you are compliant with the requirements of England Squash e.g. ensuring any coaches who are leading the sessions will be DBS checked.

**Most importantly, enjoy it!** Mixed Ability will bring new groups and individuals to your club that may not have previously felt squash was accessible to them. By offering Mixed Ability within your club you are removing this barrier and helping us to change the world through Mixed Ability sports!

**If you have any questions please get in touch**

✉ [contact@mixedabilitiesports.org](mailto:contact@mixedabilitiesports.org) or [participation@englandsquash.com](mailto:participation@englandsquash.com)



PONTE PIRATES  
MIXED ABILITY SQUASH 07  
EST 2023








# Mixed Ability




# Squash

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