

# LEICESTERSHIRE DISABILITY ATHLETICS DEVELOPMENT GROUP



## LDADG 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Report - Sept 2022 - August 2023

### C O N T E N T S

<b>Introduction by the Chair</b> <b>(Reporting progress on our 2022 goals)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Publicity</i></li><li>• <i>Support and Management</i></li><li>• <i>Equipment Storage</i></li></ul>	<b>Pages 1-2</b>
<b>Competition Events in 2022-23</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Sportshall Athletics Series</i></li><li>• <i>Cross Country Championships</i></li><li>• <i>Disability Athletics Championships and Festival</i></li><li>• <i>Primary Parallel "QuadKids" Athletics Championships</i></li><li>• <i>National Junior Disability Athletics Championships, 2021</i></li></ul>	<b>Pages 2-6</b>
<b>Partnerships</b>	<b>Pages 6-7</b>
<b>Financial Summary</b>	<b>Page 7</b>

#### **Introduction: Our Commitment to Improvement**

In the last annual report (2020-22) we identified three major goals and our progress is reported on below; they deserve early mention in this report due to the importance we continue to place on them.

##### **1. PUBLICITY**

We successfully moved from our basic individual, school, college and work contacts to a wider distribution on new dynamic major social media platforms (thanks largely to the voluntary efforts of Louise). Additionally, the first full year of the Inclusion Hub within the Inspire Together Leicester Schools Network contributed to a greater commitment within the school system, particularly within the city networks.

- ✚ We will continue to attempt to raise awareness within the further adult education and college/university sector, as well as the growing independent education sector.
- ✚ We will continue to seek support from coaches and clubs, but despite a commitment from the mainstream structures for more than a decade, we find only a few local coaches and clubs willing to take on our more successful ambulant athletes (or to learn from the few who are one experienced frame and wheelchair racing coach).

## 2. STORAGE AND INSURANCE

We were finally able to find a new "home" for the majority of our equipment at Crown Hills College in Leicester which made it more easily accessible for the Inclusion Hub team to use it without the restrictions at the athletics stadium. We have found new homes for some equipment as well as finding options for our wheelchair racing equipment but we have been unable to locate some equipment which may have migrated into general usage at the stadium or may have been condemned as unsafe by the stadium staff. We still have eight racing wheelchairs (damaged by the "clean-up" by the council), a throwing chair and a special starting device for hearing impaired athletes - all of which have now been promised to better storage in the coming months. next year.

## 3. GROUP MEMBERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Our original group members still contribute to delivering our programme of events and developments. Illness, distance and a lack of funding have necessitated a lesser practical contribution from them. The first full year of having a dedicated Inclusion Development Officer (Tom) within the Inspire Together (Leicester Schools) team has helped to balance this loss with a commitment to a more embedded system within the School Sport system. The various city and county wide partnerships which have existed for more than 20 years have all changed their names and often their staff. These organisations changed their names to Active Together (county-wide partnerships) and Inspire Together (city-wide Schools partnerships) but we are fortunate to benefit from their strong support particularly for competitions. The voluntary contributions of the remaining group members continue to ensure that our purpose, publicity and administration are given priority across Leicestershire, Rutland and the wider East Midlands.

- ✚ We will continue to strive to involve more people in the group to assist with its development. We are all too aware of the declining numbers of people willing to be involved in the long-term development and sustainability of all voluntary groups, no more so than in sport generally. We are fortunate to have the support of many loyal individuals for "on the day" help, but it is much harder to find those willing to commit to our longer term development needs.
- ✚ We made considerable strides with our commitment to integrating the competition events with the County Schools Athletic Association structures in the early part of 2022-23. Sadly the internal difficulties of the Schools Athletics Association meant we had to start again. However it is possible that the new structures may make this easier in the future. Similarly, although it is over 20 years since the County Association (L&RAA) had included disability athletics in its competitions, we have not been able to sustain this commitment to integrated competition without the individual dedication of some of our group members.

On behalf of our group, I hope you will enjoy reading the rest of this report, the next section of which describes next the more visible aspects of our work - our athletics competitions.

## Competition Events in 2022-23

- We returned to a full programme of competition delivery.
- A plethora of improved performances by our Leicestershire athletes.
- Athletes selected for the UKA Para Talent Programme (Steph and Tieron) competing in the English Schools second wheelchair racing competition (both improving their PBs).
- A higher number of county and city school athletes qualified for the National Disability Athletics Track and Field Championships.
- Some schools unable to return to full programme due to the pandemic aftermath (illness, staff changes) and teachers' strikes.
- Our organisation and delivery affected by availability, maintenance, and safety issues at our "regular" athletics venues.
- Stalwart group members (John and Dan) used creativity and ingenuity in overcoming consequent spatial issues with alternative indoor sessions.
- Our amazing UKA track and field officials (led by Cherie) ensured that timetables and events were altered for safety and practicality.
- Maplewell Hall School (especially Rob) re-worked the cross-country competition course whilst providing a supportive environment.
- Participation by county schools remained low, but our experience of virtual event participation during the pandemic showed that travel and staffing logistics are a crucial aspect of participation and opportunity for disabled pupils.

The tables below illustrate the range of participation by individuals and organisations at each type of competitions.

<b>COMPETITION ENTRIES</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary/Adults</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>EVENT</b>	<b>Age 8-11</b>	<b>Age 11+</b>	
Sportshall Athletics (4 events*)	91	203	<b>294</b>
Cross Country (1 event)	0	55	<b>55</b>
Track and Field Athletics (3 events)	213	197	<b>410</b>
<b>Total Competition Entries</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>759</b>
*Excluding the two Level 3 County events			

<b>Schools/Organisation Participation</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Clubs</b>	<b>Midlands</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Sportshall Athletics (4 events*)	28	14	0	1	43
Cross Country (1 event)	0	7	0	0	7
Track and Field Athletics (3 events)	21	12	2	5	40
<b>TOTAL (8 events)</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>90</b>
*Excluding the two Level 3 County events					

### ***Sportshall Athletics Series (November 2022 - April 2023)***

Our Sportshall Athletics series continued to be our flagship participation competition series with 294 pupils from 43 schools involved. The standard increased again, with increasing numbers achieving the UKA Gold, Silver or Bronze National standards.

Our work with Active-Together (the old Leicester-Shire & Rutland Sport Partnership) continued to provide qualifiers for the Level 3 Schools Games County Finals. We were proud to sustain an "All Stars" Guest Team for all age groups at the Level 3 events - ensuring representation at the higher-level events from sensory, physical and intellectual disability range. The Primary Schools Level 3 event took place as part of the ParaSport Festival at Loughborough University for the first time this year. The "buzz" of the many sports enhanced the experience of the seven qualifying teams and the Primary Schools "All Stars" team.

### ***Cross Country Championships (March 2023)***

This event has previously struggled to maintain its presence in the calendar due to adverse weather and the difficult terrain. The standard though remains high and is a great indicator of potential progression to middle-distance running at the National Level. The event has been in existence for disabled athletes for **more than 25 years** in Leicestershire (firstly organised by Sandra at EMIT on Braunstone Park for East Midlands participants), then by Leics & Rutland AA within the county cross country county championships, and then by LDADG for over 10 years at Aylestone Park (a short 1Km course for ambulant or wheelchair athletes) and the longer distances at Maplewell Hall. Enthusiasm, perseverance and determination of pupils (and staff) is remarkable.

The course at Maplewell Hall School is hilly and the 2Km was a challenge for some of the 33 pupils; the 3Km course, even more gruelling, for a further 22 pupils. We hope, in 2024 to include pupils in Year 6 as originally intended and will consider other ways to involve them in or distance running (virtually or through the tiring distance relays of the past (World Relay Marathon or World 5000m). These historically were fiercely contested in local mainstream primary schools and could easily include pupils with disabilities.

### ***Track and Field Athletics (May-June 2023)***

Our three outdoor track and field competitions have traditionally been: a Festival (for those new to athletics or had more challenges with traditional athletics events) adaptations; an Open Regional Disability Athletics Championship event (for those more competent and had the potential to compete at national level); a primary school parallel athletics championship event (akin to the local mainstream primary athletics championships with just four events). With two lanes out of action and safety issues with the throws and jumps, these events were a challenge for us as organisers (but were overcome with some creative and judicious alteration of events

and timetables). There were 410 participants from 40 organisations at these outdoor athletics competitions.

### ***Festival and Championship for those aged 11 and over (May 2023)***

Our 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Disability Athletics competition provided competition and fun for 150 Championship athletes and 47 Festival athletes (we combined the two events thus ensure the latter's financial and staffing viability).

The competitions are a logistical time and spatial challenge in providing opportunities for all disabilities, whilst ensuring the events meet the UKA competition rules and standards of venue and officials.

We offered track races (100, 200, 400, and 800 metres for wheelchair and ambulant athletes); field events (Javelin and Long Jump); specialist wheelchair events of Slalom and Height Throw; as well as shorter sprint races and adapted throwing and jumping events in the Festival. We increased our regional representation with 30 of our 137 entries for the Regional Championship event were from schools and individuals in Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire schools and individuals. Sadly, several of our local "regulars" were unable to attend. There was heroic participation and perseverance by everyone on the day (particularly from our young leaders/helpers, the Inspire Together team and our UKA officials). Although most schools brought just 8 pupils, there were others bringing between 16-24 pupils - the coordination and communication skills of the staff were much admired by me!

### ***Championship ("Quadkids") Athletics for those aged 7-11 (June 2023)***

The event was our 9<sup>th</sup> primary school athletics championships, retaining its popularity across the city and county. There are 4 events on offer (with the addition of adapted events for wheelchair users). Although there is less choice on offer, it is harder to timetable the events as most schools want their group to stay together for events during the day. We attempt a rotation of events as far as possible, but time is always at a premium, whilst trying to maintain the standards.

### ***National Disability Athletics Championships (July 2023)***

Local athletes have competed (supported by John and Nicky) for **more than two decades** in the Stoke Mandeville Competitions, the Mencap Athletics Championships, and the National Disability Junior Athletics Championships. It was not until 2011 that we began as a group to look at a pathway from local competition to nationals and this was highlighted in two articles in the Leicester Mercury that same year when nine pupils achieved the qualifying standard and many more every year since then. The Mencap Athletics Championships were also a favoured (and less formal) annual event for both our Special Schools and local Special Olympics groups. Sadly, Mencap no longer host a championship event.

Without doubt the calibre of our local top athletes with a disability is good enough to compete on a national platform - the "medal haul" over the years has been second to



none (32 medals in 2012, rising to more than 50 medals in recent years). Despite this, there are very few schools, teachers and parents available to support the pupils at these competitions. In most cases the funds are not readily available for transport and entry fees, and we can no longer help with funding for the competitions. We know that most teachers who attend do so in their own voluntary time and cost. There is little or no support from local athletics clubs and coaches for the event and it has been hard for us to promote and support the disability classification of our best athletes by UKA. We were able to get 22 of the 30 pupils (age 11-19) from 5 secondary schools and 7 of the 16 pupils from 9 primary schools to enter in the National Championships on July 1st/2nd in Coventry - this is the highest ever for us in this U12 (age 9 or 10) category.

- ✚ There is a lack of local school staff awareness of the prestige and higher performance level of these events and we need to raise awareness of the participation of current and past Paralympians at these events. There are also always UKA talent spotters to identify potential for the future at the event.

## Partnerships

During this past two years (the Pandemic era) we maintained contact with most schools and organisations - importantly the individual teachers who work hard to ensure that opportunities are provided and who do their best for their pupils to compete. We occasionally struggle to keep up with email changes (due to school name changes, or new staff members, or new school sports structures).

Our partners include those who organise and support the delivery of our events and the main partners are therefore the "Inspire Together" City School Partnership with Tom and Dan providing the important leadership. We have also had the benefit of three county colleges providing Leaders to officiate at events - Lutterworth High School, Charnwood College and Maplewell Hall School. The continuity provided by Lutterworth High School Leaders (trained by Celine), being at all our events was an additional bonus adding to their individual excellent support for disabled pupils. The county wide "Active Together" team supported our events as well as helping to deliver the Level 3 Sportshall Athletics events.

**Secondary Schools/Colleges (22):** ALP Leicester, Ash Field Academy, Ashmount School, Babington College, Birch Wood School, Birkett House/Thomas Estley School, Catmose College, Crown Hills Community College, Dorothy Goodman School, Ellesmere College, Forest Way School, Gateway College, Judgemoor CC, Maplewell Hall School, Nether Hall School, West Gate School, Lutterworth College, Lutterworth High School, Sir Jonathan North Girls College, The Shires College, Soar Valley CC, and Wigston Academy.

**Primary Schools (PS) and Primary Units (32):** Ash Field Academy (Primary), Ashmount School (Primary), Avenue PS, Beaumont Lodge PS, Birch Wood Vale (Primary), Braunstone Frith PS, Burbage PS, Captain's Close PS, Desford PS, Dorothy Goodman

School (Primary), Ellesmere College (Primary), Forest Way School (Primary), Hazel PS, Highcliffe PS, Inglehurst PS, John Wycliffe PS, Linden PS, Marriott PS, Merrydale PS, Millfield LEAD Academy, Mountfields Lodge PS, Nether Hall School (Primary), Overdale PS, Sherrard PS, Sherrier PS, Sketchley Hill PS, Spinney Hill PS, St Peter's PS, Hinckley, Stokes Wood PS, West Gate School (Primary), and Woodcote PS.

**Midlands Schools (3):** Bladen House, Burton, Gamston PS, Notts, and St Andrew's School, Derby.

**Athletics Clubs across the Midlands (7):** Charnwood AC, Derby AC, Huntingdon AC, Notts AC, Peterborough AC, Saffron AC, and Wreake & Soar Valley AC.

**Partner Organisations:** Active Together Leicestershire & Rutland Team, Charnwood College Leaders, Inspire Together Leicester Schools Partnership team, Lutterworth High Leaders, Maplewell Hall School Leaders, Molly's Gift (for Trophies).

### Financial Summary Information 2022 - 2023

- **Competition Finances** The aftermath of the pandemic and the new school partnership structures led to some difficulties for invoicing and payments for previous entries. Added to this there had been delays in invoicing us for various resources We still have not paid stadium charges for summer 2022 events. We have gradually ensured that income and expenditure is up to date for the competitions. The invoicing is now up to date and our bank balance is healthy. We continue to apply for grants where appropriate.
- **Equipment** We were able to replace worn out Sportshall Athletics equipment.
- **Molly's Gift (Trophies)** were awarded at all our competitions as a result of the grant they gave us. We hope to find a way to continue to do this when the grant expires.

**Further information/photos of our work are on our social media pages:**

 - (formerly Twitter)	<a href="https://twitter.com/LeicsAthletics">https://twitter.com/LeicsAthletics</a>	
 - Instagram	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/leicsathletics/">https://www.instagram.com/leicsathletics/</a>	
 - Facebook	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086986467487">https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086986467487</a>	

Report prepared by Cherie D'Silva, Chair of Leics Disability Athletics Development Group

LEICESTERSHIRE DISABILITY ATHLETICS DEVELOPMENT GROUP (LDADG)  
9<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL REPORT 1/9/22 - 31/8/23

