



# Pandemic Positivity

*A Mixed Ability Response, co-produced  
by the IMAS Inclusion in Sport Class*

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**imas**  **INTERNATIONAL  
MIXED ABILITY  
SPORTS**



## Introduction

**Mixed Ability was conceived to promote social inclusion and a meaningful interaction between individuals and groups who wouldn't necessarily share paths in their local communities. At least not in 'normal' circumstances.**

Many of our participants have experienced – or still experience – exclusion, social isolation and segregation on a daily basis because of their perceived diversity, and Mixed Ability is one of their main assets. An asset to their physical, social and mental wellbeing, a space of equality, rights and equal opportunities.

With the situation created by COVID-19, this asset is under threat.

It is important we keep working together. Of course, we must abide by the official advice from the experts, keep a high alert on social interactions and maintain physical distances.

But we believe 'physical distancing' shouldn't turn into 'social isolation'.

This is the time when we need one another most. We all must stay connected, share ideas, fight the fear of the unknown, whether this is inside or outside ourselves. In the old days, it was called solidarity.





# Additional barriers we faced



## NEW RULES

New rules disrupted consolidated routines for many people. The understanding of the physical distancing rules was complex. The rules have been changing frequently and not always explained in plain terms.



## COMMUNICATION

The network of informal communication many people were relying on broke down. Even communication with key/core services became more difficult as people were on furlough and working from home.



## DIGITAL DIVIDE

Many activities have moved online but not everyone has the skills, abilities, support or right equipment to stay connected. Also, video calling makes it much more difficult to understand body language and pick up clues.



## COSTS

During lockdown the costs of home equipment soared. Gym equipment became very expensive. Home broadband is not always good enough for video calling and sometimes upgrades are required to fully participate.



## TRANSPORT AND VENUES

Many disabled people or people facing financial barriers to participation rely on access to public transport, public venues and live in areas not easily accessible to or far from parks or green areas.





## Multiple interventions needed

This requires us to look a lot further upstream at the determinants of health and wellbeing, working collaboratively across sectors. It is likely that a lot of small actions will make a greater impact on people's lives than a single magic fix.

These include:

Valuing people, creating worth, purpose and belonging

Improving access to healthy environments

Supporting healthier lifestyles

Making good reasonable adjustments

Working together as equals

and not seeing people with disabilities as passive recipients of service





# Making things better



## STAY SAFE

First of all, stay safe! Follow the rules in place at the time in your area.



## STAY CONNECTED

Talk to people, stay connected, let's help each other. If you can't connect by being in the same space together, there are plenty of other ways to communicate.



## DIGITAL DIVIDE

Check on friends and family. Not all contact needs to be digital. Make a phone call, post a card.



## FIND A HOBBY

Do something you enjoy every day. Try new things that you've always wanted to try.



## SUPPORT

Provide people with individual support they need, different people need different support.





## Call to action

Mixed Ability Sport can help. Involvement with Mixed Ability Sports improves mental and physical wellbeing, builds social capital and belonging, creates networks of empowered advocates.

Mixed Ability Sport has the power to transform cultures and systems. We could call this “re-humanising”. When people see each other as teammates with common goals, other labels disappear, and we begin to see the person again. We begin to understand our shared responsibility to find solutions based on people’s strengths.





## Sign the Manifesto

IMAS values are upheld in its Manifesto.

To find out more about Mixed Ability Sports, and sign the Manifesto, visit the website: <http://www.mixedabilitysports.org/mixed-ability-manifesto>

## Thank you to our funders



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