



# The Aawaaz project

Report summary: for young people and parents

Meeting the leisure needs of young people with a learning disability from South Asian communities

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# Acknowledgements

This report is dedicated to all the young people and parents who participated in the research. We would like to extend our gratitude and we hope they will find the information provided useful.

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# Introduction

Young people with a learning disability from black and minority ethnic communities experience barriers in accessing leisure services. The Aawaaz project gave young people with a learning disability from South Asian communities in Bradford the chance to consult with their peers, parents and service providers about shaping the kind of leisure services that they want and need.

A total of 24 young people and 17 parents from a South Asian background were involved in the project. They met in groups to discuss views about leisure activities. Seven young people were also trained as co-researchers to lead other groups of young people, with the help of the researcher. We found out their views about the type of leisure activities they enjoyed, the problems they faced accessing leisure and how they thought access to these services could be improved. The young people were trained as facilitators and parents also spoke to service providers about their needs.

We hope that service providers will improve leisure services for people with a learning disability as a consequence of this research. Service providers agreed to work towards specific goals in an action plan – this plan is included in the main report.

This report was commissioned by Mencap and funded by the National Lottery.

# Key findings

The young people and parents involved in the Aawaaz project highlighted a number of barriers which either prevented access to leisure or caused concerns about using leisure facilities. They also identified a number of key areas which could help to increase access to leisure services and improve provision. These are summarised below.

## Barriers

- Young people expressed the view that having a physical disability and taking medication made it difficult for some young people to engage in leisure activities.
- Young people were also aware of family concerns about safety, lack of transport, and distance from the bus stop which prevented them from accessing leisure opportunities independently.
- Young people identified lack of individual support, lack of information, and limited number of friends as key barriers to accessing and using leisure services.
- Parents reported a general lack of information about leisure provision and were not always aware of the leisure activities provided by various services. Parents stated there was a lack of leisure pursuits for young people over 16 years of age.
- Parents were concerned about the lack of engagement by staff with the young people and the lack of stimulating activities.
- Parents reported a lack of community leisure provision and expressed their concern about the lack of appropriate funding for leisure services for young people.
- Parents said they were anxious about the vulnerability of young people and their safety when travelling and interacting with others.
- Parents said that leisure settings do not make the adaptations necessary to ensure they are suitable for people for South Asian cultures.

# Key areas to improve access to leisure opportunities

- Young people expressed the need for greater support particularly with transportation, help with taking medication, writing, using money, doing things at the right time, and knowing where and when to go.
- Some of the young people expressed the need for female-only groups in certain leisure pursuits, for example swimming.
- Some young people expressed the need for support when faced with bullying.
- Parents argued for greater awareness of disability issues by staff in leisure provision, and stressed there was a requirement for a better understanding of individual needs of young people.
- Parents reported a need for individual support for young people to use leisure services.
- Parents were concerned about the use of mixed sex leisure activities such as swimming and football and wished for single sex options.



## Involvement and participation

- Young people from South Asian communities, like other young people, were interested in a wide variety of leisure activities. This included activities such as swimming, cricket, football, tennis, snooker, bowling, boxing, going to the cinema, dancing, listening to Asian music, relaxing with friends, watching movies, sailing, going out to eat, ice-skating, henna tattooing, beauty therapy, arts and crafts.

## Consultation

- Young people enjoyed their role as co-researchers and their participation in the various stages of this project enabled them to hear the views of their peers, parents and service providers.
- Young people from South Asian communities felt that they needed to be consulted by service providers in planning leisure services.
- Young people expressed the need for a social support group.
- Parents reported benefits from meeting other parents and suggested the need to form a parent support group for South Asian families.
- The service providers welcomed the opportunity to engage with the young people and the parents and carers.
- An action plan was formulated as a result of the meeting with young people and the parents and carers (this plan is available in the main report).



# The views of young people

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“The family doesn’t let them go because they worry about them if anything may happen to them.”

“My parents won’t let me go to the shop on my own because it’s too dangerous.”

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The young people from South Asian communities reported a number of barriers in accessing leisure services. These included having a physical disability, taking medication, family concerns about safety, lack of transport, distance from bus stop, lack of support, lack of information, and limited friendships.

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“Get more people in activities.”

“Ask people if they want to play.”

“Working as a team.”

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They were also able to identify facilitators to accessing leisure activities. These included getting support with medication, support from bullying, support in doing things at the right time, support with money, support with writing, knowing where to go and when, a mobile in case they get lost, leaflets, support to get there and a female-only group. Young people were enthusiastic in becoming more involved and helping other young people like themselves to become involved.





# The views of parents

Parents raised a number of concerns and identified problems they'd encountered accessing leisure opportunities for young people. Some parents said that leisure staff lacked awareness of disability issues. They also said that disability awareness training for staff was necessary because there is poor awareness of these issues, especially about autism. Parents expressed the view that young people with any kind of disability should be respected.

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“I can't blame the youth centres as well as they are not trained to deal with autistic children with special needs. That, I think, is one of the barriers.”  
A mother

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It was also very important to parents that services respected cultural and religious needs and provided activities which were appropriate. For example a situation in which alcohol was served at an organised outing was considered inappropriate. Separate swimming classes were also important for females. The staff did not have to be from South Asian communities as long as sensitivity to cultural and religious needs was considered.

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“I have always wanted to take him swimming but because of our Asian culture I can't go in the pool with my son. He wasn't allowed to go because he is quite tall for his age. We tried going to \*\*\*\* pool but I can't go there because there are fathers in the pool with their children.” A mother

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Parents had concerns about bullying on public transport, vulnerability of the young person, and the young person's behaviour towards others were concerns. Expense was an issue as some summer schemes charge for transport. Other parental commitments, safety issues and young person's lack of confidence to travel independently were also discussed.

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“Someone has to stay with the child, watch them, if the child is unaware of danger or if he doesn't know the way to go.” A mother

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Most parents expressed the need for one to one support. Lack of confidence in the young person, and a need for support with understanding money and change was also expressed.

Parents complained that there was a lack of provision for young people over 16. They also expressed that in some activities offered, staff did not engage with young people, and lacked stimulating activities. Overall it was expressed that there was a limited number of clubs for young people with a learning disability.

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“Children under 16 have the opportunity to get different services but over 16 there is nothing available. When they reach adult age the need is greater. Children under 16 have access to services but over 16 they decrease.”  
A father

“Mainstream kids have more clubs but not special needs kids.” A father

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Parents also reported a general lack of information about leisure provision and were not aware of activities provided.

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“I am not aware of services available. I need more information and access to different activities.” A mother

“There is a lack of information. I don't know what is available.” A father

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These issues expressed by young people and parents were discussed with service providers. The purpose of the meetings was to facilitate communication and consultation in order to improve services and inform long term planning. The list on page 12 provides contact details for organisations currently available in Bradford which may provide leisure opportunities or assistance in meeting some of the needs highlighted in the research.



# Recommendations

There are a number of recommendations that we put forward for service commissioners and providers from this project.

## Involvement and participation

- Involvement of young people should progress beyond a tokenistic representation of people with a learning disability by of readily available representatives. This would allow for wider representation of views from people with a learning disability from different ethnic communities.
- Peer support groups will provide young people with a learning disability from South Asian communities the opportunity to form friendships and build support networks. This will provide the young people with a united voice in shaping the leisure services.
- Young people with high support needs from South Asian communities require the opportunity to engage in leisure activities offered by mainstream providers. These young people require additional support. Therefore, services should focus on better utilisation of resources. It is also important for young people to have access to mainstream activities, as exclusive involvement in severe and complex learning disability groups will only continue to hinder social inclusion.

## Engagement with local communities

- Greater participation in local communities should be facilitated to build stable networks and to promote social inclusion. Resources should also be put into building more community-based activities. This might ease the transport problems and increase access.
- Engagement with young people and carers from South Asian communities is vital to fostering links with this community. Reaching perceived 'hard-to-reach-groups' can only be accomplished through active involvement and engagement with these local communities. This will help to break down barriers and to dispel myths held about these various minority groups.

- Conducting home visits and using interpreters when necessary may help to forge stronger relationships between professionals and families. Parents and other family carers should have the opportunity to meet service providers face to face so that they can directly engage with them in relation to their concerns and opinions. This will help to build confidence in the service and to feel reassured that the young person will be adequately supported and supervised.
- Training should be provided about cultural diversity and the need for cultural competency to service commissioners, service providers and support workers to enhance their understanding of the religious and cultural needs of the young South Asian people and their family carers. Staff training should aim to increase awareness of how individuals differ from one another within ethnic and cultural groups. Awareness and understanding of cultural myths and assumptions and their influence in the negative shaping of attitudes and behaviour should be promoted.
- Young people and their families require help and support with transport.

## Consultation

- Services need to regularly engage in consultation with young people from South Asian communities and families in planning and shaping leisure services. Services need to show their commitment and willingness to engage with the young people and families by establishing flexible and creative communication networks with South Asian communities.
- Services need to invest in fostering and facilitating community links, and in building trust with the local South Asian communities, which will help to facilitate the growth of stronger relationships and positive partnership working.
- The formation of a South Asian family support group/ network has been suggested by parents. This will help to strengthen wider contacts amongst the families and young people. This will also act as a forum for information exchanges about leisure services.



### Inclusive services

- Mainstream leisure services should be more inclusive of young people. This may include providing disability training to staff and raising awareness. Training in techniques to make leisure activities more accessible to young people with severe disabilities is also imperative.

### Information and communication

- Information about services in accessible language and pictorial format should also be provided to the young people so that they are able to make informed choices. Information may also be provided in the form of videos, DVDs and accessible websites.
- Information should not just be provided in leaflets as some of the Asian languages spoken in Bradford do not have a written format (e.g. Mirpuri (Punjabi) and Sylehti (Bengali)). Providing information on Asian radio stations and also through local places of religious worship such as temples, Mosques and Gurudwaras and churches may reach out to more people.
- The utilisation of professional interpreters to assist the families from South Asian communities to communicate appropriately with service agencies should be standard practice for services operating in a multicultural society.

# BIRMINGHAM SPORTS CENTRE





# Leisure providers and other disability services and organisations in Bradford

## **Bradford Disability Sport and Leisure**

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Tel: 01274 437 093 (ask for Rob Cooper)

They offer various activities:

- Monday leisure club  
Mondays at the Richard Dun sports centre  
Age: 16 +
- Wednesday leisure club  
Wednesdays at the Keighley leisure centre, Keighley  
Age: 15+
- All Stars Club  
Mondays and Thursdays at the Whinfield community centre
- Ten-pin bowling  
Tuesdays (every other week) at the Keighly AMF
- Golf  
Tuesdays (every other week) at the Shay Grange golf centre
- Swimming  
Fridays at Shipley swimming pool
- Ten-pin bowling league  
Saturdays (every other week) at the Keighly AMF
- Power-lifting  
Sundays at Armely, Leeds
- Bradford Disability football club  
Sundays at Nab Wood sports centre (athletics on Sundays too)
- Physical activity for disabled people  
Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Richard Dunn sports centre

## **The Inclusion project**

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The project runs schemes for children with special needs and complex health needs during school holidays (in conjunction with social services and Bradford Disability Sport and Leisure)

Age: 8-19

Tel: 01274 734 018

## **Bradford youth service**

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The service runs a variety of youth groups in communities across Bradford.

Age: 13-19

Tel: 01274 432 431

## **Bradford youth centre**

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The centre runs various health and equality groups:

- The Equality Project (Disability)  
Tel: 01274 481 183
- South Asian girls and young women  
Tel: 01274 431 715
- Wednesday leisure club  
Tel: 01274 431 715
- Young People Too  
Tel: 01274 420 464
- Bradford – Keighley Youth Parliament  
Tel: 01274 431 849 (ask for Narinder or Jenny)

## **Play Partners**

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An early years and childcare service supporting disabled children and young people to access play and leisure activities.

Tel: 01274 431 571

### **Children's Information Link**

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An early years and childcare service providing detailed information on a range of services and activities throughout the district.

Tel: 01274 437 503

### **Disabled Children's Information Service**

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An early years and childcare service providing a free quarterly newsletter for parents of disabled children, containing news, events, guides and features.

Tel: 01274 431 776

### **Keighley Leisure Library**

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Tel: 01535 602 204

### **Mind the Gap**

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A theatre outreach group working with artists with a learning disability

Tel: 01274 729 575

### **Out there club**

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A social group for adults with a learning disability in Keighley

Tel: 01535 770 118

### **Other disability organisations**

#### **Mencap**

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Tel: 0808 808 1111

#### **Mencap local group – Bingley and Shipley**

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Tel: 01274 493 320

#### **Barnardos Queens Road Project (CHOICES)**

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Bradford

Tel: 01274 481 183

#### **Sporting Voices, Federation of Disability Sports**

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Runs sports committee training

Tel: 01924 279 305 (ask for Tony)

### **Bradford People First**

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Tel: 01274 744 151

### **Bradford and District Autistic Support Group**

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Tel: 01274 721 932

### **Travel Training Unit (for people with a learning disability)**

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Tel: 01274 436 199

### **Downs Syndrome Support Group**

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Tel: 01274 496 573

### **SNOOP**

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Tel: 01274 621 066

### **Contact**

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Support for disabled people

Tel: 01274 494 121

### **Bradford Alliance on Community Care**

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Tel: 01274 482 590

### **Disabled Peoples Forum**

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01274 482 590

### **Bradnet**

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01274 224 444

### **Asian Disability Awareness Action in Bradford**

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01274 223 223

### **Additional groups/services**

#### **Actionnaires**

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A sports club for blind and partially sighted people

Tel: 01642 233 439 or email [lesley.inganni@actionforblindpeople.org.uk](mailto:lesley.inganni@actionforblindpeople.org.uk)

### **VI Support Group**

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A support group for Asian mothers and carers of visually impaired children  
Tel: 07717 002 369

### **Parent Partnership**

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The service provides neutral advice, information and support to parents and carers of children who have or may have special educational needs.  
Tel: 01274 481 183

### **Family swim sessions**

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Bowling pool's sessions for disabled children on Wednesdays from 7.30pm to 8.30pm.

### **Down Syndrome Support Group**

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Charity run by and for parents and carers of children who have Down's syndrome  
Tel: 01274 496 573  
Email: office@downsyndromebradford.co.uk  
Web: www.downsupportbradford.uk.com

### **Crank It Up – Cycling Opportunities for All**

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An innovative voluntary project that provides cycling sessions for all  
Web: www.crank-it-up.org.uk

### **Disability Equipment Bradford**

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A specialist demonstration centre for disability equipment, offering advice and an opportunity to try out equipment for yourself.  
Tel: 01274 589 162  
Web: www.disabilityadvice.org.uk

### **Sibs**

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Sibs is the UK charity for brothers and sisters of people who are disabled or who have a chronic illness.  
Tel: 01535 645453  
Web: www.sibs.org.uk

### **Cygnets Group**

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A training programme for parents and carers of people aged 7-18 with an autistic spectrum disorder diagnosis.  
Tel: 01274 481 183

### **Contact a Family**

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Provides information, advice and support to parents of all disabled children.  
Tel: 01274 668 922

### **Bradford Toy Library**

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Lends toys and games to families of disabled children.  
Tel: 01274 365 463

### **LS29 Group**

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A support group for families with young children and young adults with special needs, living in LS29.  
Email: LS29groups@yahoo.co.uk  
Or call:

- Karen on 01943 609 861 (pre-school and primary age children)
- Julie on 01943 602 479 (teenagers)
- Margaret 01943 607 253

### **Aware**

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A parent support group for families who have a child or children with an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD).  
Tel: 07764 432 933

### **Barnardos Seen and Heard Group**

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The group provides children and young people with disabilities or complex health needs under the age of 18 have disabilities with a forum to express their views about issues that are important to them.  
Tel: 01274 531 466

**Mencap**

123 Golden Lane

London EC1Y 0RT

Telephone: 020 7454 0454

Fax: 020 7608 3254

Email: [help@mencap.org.uk](mailto:help@mencap.org.uk)

**[www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)**

Learning Disability Helpline

**0808 808 111**