



The Puffins Club

Dacorum Sports Club for Adults with Learning Disabilities

The Puffins Club opened its doors on 31st May 1981, since that time it has been run solely by volunteers, we offer adults (from the age of 18) with learning, physical or sensory disabilities the opportunity to have fun, make friendships and strive for a healthier lifestyle through sporting activities. Initially it was created by a local family man, Chris Clapham who became frustrated that there was little exercise for his disabled daughter to do over the weekend, hence The Puffins Club was born.

Although we are a small club, we believe that the impression on our members is great with a sense of belonging, inclusivity and inspiration achieved.

We offer a variety of activities to accommodate a range of abilities and choices. Disability does not mean inability. These include curling, cricket, badminton, table tennis, and snooker. We also provide table top activities. Every event boosts different skills. Whether this is hand eye co-ordination fine or gross motor skills.

The club not only benefits our member but also our team of volunteers get great satisfaction and joy in the support they provide. We meet on most Saturdays from 11am to 1pm and it is this time that they graciously give to support the members and run the sessions but also, the sometimes many hours of work that happens behind the scenes to ensure the smooth and safe running of the club. We have a club mascot "Huff'n'Puff" a porcelain Puffin, so named because we all huff and puff doing our exercise.

Our base is the Hemel Hempstead Leisure centre, where the club enjoyed 40+ years meeting rent free. In the light of present-day financial constraints this has come to an end, Everyone Active have introduced us to renting our space, at the moment this is heavily discounted but will gradually increase upto the full price. This has in turn meant an increase in our members contributions, so far this has not affected our loyal membership. When not at the leisure centre we have outings like tenpin bowling, canal trips. We also took part in the Hertfordshire Disability Games, sadly this event no longer occurs.

Not so many years ago people with disabilities were expected to be seen and not heard and shut away in institutions (many still are). BUT we feel that people with disabilities deserve opportunities, support and the right to access the community. They have a voice and it is our duty to nurture their enthusiasm and if necessary, become their voice. A holistic approach is paramount. These people have a zest for life even though life has thrown rubbish at them. Of course, government's funding and bringing it to the public attention has helped but we still have a way to go.

It is not our place to judge but to become advocates and help them live by making life suit them.

We are therefore extremely fortunate to be able to continue to offer the opportunity for adults with learning disabilities to socialize in a fun, safe and sport -centered environment.

Empowerment, Inspiration and Wellbeing with Fun, Fitness and Friendship through Sport