

3 INCLUSIVE EXPEDITION PRACTICE

Suresh Paul and Karen Darke

The standard image of the explorer or field scientist suggests that venturing into remote and challenging parts of the world is an activity only for those who are physically strong. However, this is far from the case and there are many individuals with a wide range of disabilities who are actively involved in expeditions and fieldwork. Examples include circumnavigation of the UK by sea kayak with a visual



Figure 3.1 *Iceland field trial* (© Suresh Paul)

INCLUSIVE EXPEDITION PRACTICE

Figure 3.2 *Up among the rigging on a Raleigh International expedition* (© Paul Harris)



impairment, journeying by electric wheelchair across Iceland, hand-cycling through central Asia, the Himalayas, and Iceland by paraplegic and amputee explorers, a range of Himalayan projects that have included people with learning disabilities in both planning and implementation stages, scientific fieldwork in the Andes – to mention just a few.

Building on these scattered inspirational examples, the first Disabled Explorers' Conference was held by the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers or IBG) in 1995 and was ground-breaking in setting the tone and standard for inclusive practice in the expedition world. Also in 1995, the Disability Discrimination Act came into force in the UK, ensuring that the rights of disabled people are protected by law, and helping to remove both the physical and attitudinal barriers faced by disabled people.

Since then, there has been a noticeable growth in the number of expedition and fieldwork projects being undertaken in an inclusive format (involving both disabled and non-disabled members). There have been several successful expeditions with inclusive teams that have attracted media attention, and so raised the profile of what disabled explorers can achieve. In addition, expedition providers are increasingly open to the meaningful involvement of disabled people in their activities.

One noticeable area of development in inclusive outdoor opportunities in the UK

EXPEDITION HANDBOOK

has been through the “Adventure for All” group of outdoor centres, which have developed a range of opportunities for disabled people to participate in outdoor activities. There are also a number of initiatives that have focused their efforts on providing opportunities for specific disability groups: BackUp, focused on people with spinal cord injury, and Adventure Guide Dogs for the Blind, to name but a few.

National governing bodies of individual sports within the UK have also been working towards an inclusive mainstreaming agenda for a number of years. The concept of mainstreaming is simply making it possible for disabled people and other minority groups within society to be able to access sport as part of a mainstream club or at a standard facility, be it a club house, or outdoor or leisure centre.

The RGS–IBG now include a strong input from disabled explorers in their annual expedition planning conferences, supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of exploration. An “inclusive expedition” project being run at the RGS–IBG is challenging the barriers faced by disabled people when seeking full inclusion in expedition opportunities and offers a range of practical resources and support networks for disabled explorers and expedition planners.

This all sounds very impressive, and there have certainly been big changes in the last decade regarding inclusive opportunities, but there is still much that can be done.

KEY PRINCIPLE: A PEOPLE-CENTRED APPROACH

People are central to any project; being able to understand the needs of the team is arguably the key to the success of any team. Our understanding of people and their needs starts from our understanding of our past experiences and ourselves. It can therefore be daunting when considering the needs of people from a different cultural, racial or physical perspective or background. When organising an expedition or fieldwork project, each one of us faces specific barriers, which need to be overcome to make the project happen. To facilitate this, there needs to be a common language.

Language and terminology

Language is a powerful tool. The need is to ensure that the language used by the team is inclusive, both in the way in which it is used within the team and in the way the image of the project is presented to the outside world. Current terminology falls into two main categories: “people with disabilities” and “disabled people”. Neither is wrong; intention and context are everything. Some of the models of disability summarised below may help in developing understanding and thus appropriate use of language.

Medical

In the past, disabled people were all too often considered to be a problem

INCLUSIVE EXPEDITION PRACTICE

requiring a medical solution, with individual personalities and achievements hidden, and the person being defined purely by the medical nature of their health state.

Social

In the social model of disability, the whole person is considered, with the emphasis on the removal of barriers and the view that it is the environment that creates the disability, not the individuals themselves.

Functional

The functional model is the favoured and current model used by the World Health Organisation. This leads on from the social model and accepts that barriers to participation are created by society. The aim is to understand the nature of a person's needs in a practical manner to ensure that positive actions can be taken to create new and progressive opportunities for all. There is no blame on an individual, environment or society. It encourages a partnership approach by providing a structure that promotes an understanding of an individual's impairment. Table 3.1 shows a comparison of the social and medical models of disability.

TABLE 3.1 COMPARISON OF THE SOCIAL AND MEDICAL MODELS OF DISABILITY

<i>Social</i>	<i>Medical</i>
Owned by society as a whole	Owned by an individual
Not preventable	Preventable
Solution is to eliminate discrimination	Solution is to find a medical cure
Disabled person is valued	Disability is a problem to be solved

Development of an understanding of a person's needs can be partly achieved by training and reading, but there is no substitute for working with the person concerned. An open, positive and direct approach is often most effective in achieving partnership, understanding and workable solutions to any challenges faced by the team.

Definitions of disability

Disability means the loss or limitation of social opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others resulting from physical or social barriers (Barnes, 1992).

The word "impairment" is used where there is a functional limitation within the

EXPEDITION HANDBOOK

individual, the cause of which may be physical, mental or sensory. In broad terms, disability can be broken down into the following areas:

- learning disability
- educational and emotional disabilities
- sensory impairments – visual or hearing
- communication disabilities
- physical impairments.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

We all face problems or require additional support in particular areas to make it possible for us to participate in a particular project. The barriers that a disabled person will face when seeking full inclusion need to be considered at the earliest stages of planning and organisation – not just before you start the field phase. Most of the barriers to participation fall under following headings:

- **Environmental:** physical access to the urban, rural or wilderness environment (see access model below).
- **Attitudinal:** managing the attitudes of team members, any linked institutions such as schools or “controlling” bodies, and also external societal attitudes.
- **Legal:** check that any insurer is aware of the nature and make-up of the team. Be specific to avoid complications in the future should the worst happen.



Figure 3.3 *Model of access and inclusive participation* (© Suresh Paul)

INCLUSIVE EXPEDITION PRACTICE

A useful model of access and inclusive participation is illustrated in Figure 3.3. It involves three key factors:

1. **Presentation:** marketing of the project should include positive language and images.
2. **Preparation:** there should be open discussion with the individuals to ensure that needs and personal objectives are understood.
3. **Organisation and planning:** balance the needs of the project and the needs of all the individuals concerned.

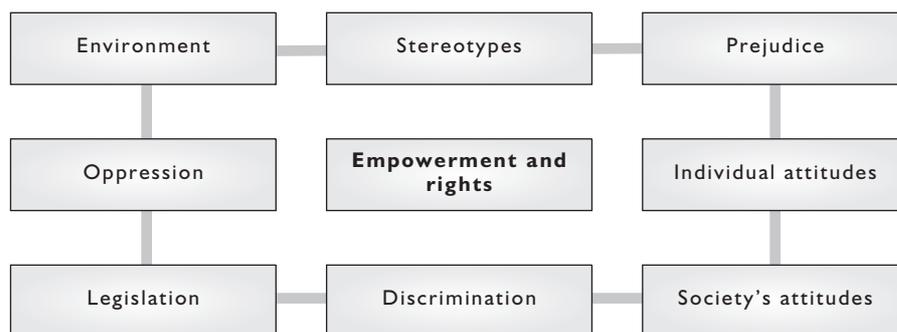


Figure 3.4 *The cycle of oppression*

Working with the “cycle of oppression” (Figure 3.4) is a helpful way to overcome barriers and create a positive inclusive experience for all concerned. Barriers can become cumulative, creating an ongoing negative experience for the individual and team unless the cycle is challenged in as many ways as possible.

PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL INCLUSIVE EXPEDITION

Expedition planning can be viewed as a matter of balancing the needs of the team, task and individuals, but often this is done without considering the social implications of the project or the background to the individuals concerned. Project planning is often seen as just a “straight-line process” either task led or team led.

Successful inclusive planning is indeed a matter of balancing the needs of the team, task and individuals. Consider planning as a circular process, with problem-solving, negotiating and researching, and then reassessing and redefining as the project evolves with the team. The need as ever is for good communication from the outset. This will lead to good planning and therefore a successful expedition.

EXPEDITION HANDBOOK



Figure 3.5a *Karen Darke on the Interventure Canada to Alaska Sea Kayak Expedition* (© Suresh Paul)



Figure 3.5b *Alistair Hodgson on the Coppermine River Expedition, Canada* (© Suresh Paul)

The team

The need is always to treat the individual as an individual, but there is a requirement to consider how the needs of each of the team members interrelate. It can be useful to consider and discuss ways in which each of the team members is able to support the others. Consider also the balance of the team and the ability of the individuals to work in partnership (e.g. buddying) to ensure that both the project objectives and the individual and team needs are met.

Communication

The aim of communication is to ensure that the intentions of all are understood. This can be challenging enough with a group of individuals with differing life experiences, dialects and backgrounds. It can be even more daunting when there is an added dimension such as a group member with a disability. Prioritise the information that you wish to share and set up the appropriate environment. A range of approaches that allow the team members to focus, understand, absorb, reflect and react in a positive way should be used. To assist in this communication process, you may want to consider the following:

- the environment for the session and its accessibility to all of the team
- the use of practical sessions to demonstrate techniques (e.g. safe moving and handling)
- background noise, especially for team members with hearing impairments
- the use of colour coding or tactile marking (various textures or sensations) for



Figure 3.6 *Interventure Canada to Alaska Sea Kayak Expedition*
(© Suresh Paul)

- team members with visual impairments
- if appropriate, learn Basic Sign Language
- structure and content of the session
- timing and duration.

Talking about physical issues

Physical impairments vary enormously, and so it is important to understand some of the specific ways in which an individual's disability affects them physically. It can be helpful to structure your communication about needs and the possible challenges that an individual and the team may have to face in a particular environment, and this also ensures that partnership and openness evolve with the project.

These conversations should consider factors such as muscle strength, endurance, levels of physical control, sensory function and the likely effects of the environment being visited.

Explore the project goals and ways of working that will ensure that all of the team are able to contribute and participate to their fullest. One of the hardest things is to decide that a particular option or activity is not suitable for all the team. However, if the options have been explored in practical terms, it can be much easier to say no without disappointment.

EXPEDITION HANDBOOK

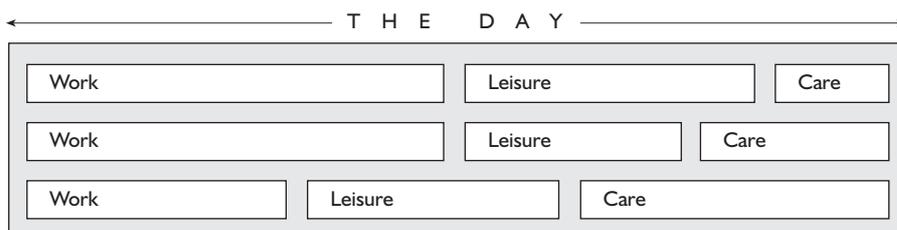


Figure 3.7 *Diagram of "The Expedition Day"* (© Suresh Paul and Graham Kay)

Time management

It is worth taking some time to consider the daily needs of the individual members to ensure that work and personal needs are balanced. Team members with a disability may need more time for personal care, so schedule activities so that all team members have time and space to cater for their own needs. This does not mean doing jobs for people. The need is for greater efficiency and flexibility by all to ensure that the team continues to function as a whole and is not split into subgroups. An understanding of everybody's needs within the team is important so that no one feels that they are wasting their time and not achieving. It can be tempting to force the pace or just get jobs done, but this achieves little. The team will develop only if it is able to adapt to ensure that all of the team is able to contribute.

Safe handling (Table 3.2)

In the field it can often be difficult for people with mobility impairments to move around independently. It can be tempting to address the problem by using the team to provide assistance, but this is not an optimum solution – the individual may feel dependent and it may also put the team at risk. Therefore, try to choose a field site that reduces the need for assistance and promotes independence.

This cannot always be achieved, and if the environment dictates a large amount of moving and handling take time to consider all the aspects of the process. In such a highly changeable environment it is difficult to offer absolute rules, but consider training the team in safe handling techniques and acquire any equipment that may be useful before you depart. When on location, always check, "Is lifting really required?", "Can I get some help?", "Share the load?" The following points may be useful to help ensure that your team works safely together.

INCLUSIVE EXPEDITION PRACTICE

TABLE 3.2 **SAFE HANDLING**

<i>Plan – SAFE</i>	<i>Consider – LITE</i>	<i>Execute</i>
S top	L oad	S pine in line
A ssess	I ndividual	S lide
F ormulate	T ask	B alance the load
E xecute	E nvironment	R isks

© Suresh Paul 2002

Equipment

The packing, storage and transportation of equipment should be made as simple as possible, to help team members as well as border guards and customs officials. Consider the following:

- The size and shape of individual packages to make them easy and safe to handle by as many team members as possible.
- Pre-expedition familiarisation and briefing with regard to more complex pieces of equipment.
- Colour coding and differentiation (between the background and object), numbering and texture to help identification of individual packages by any team members with visual or hearing impairments.

Note that colour and texture can be useful for people with hearing impairments because the appropriate use of colour can reduce the number of signs or simplify the language used by the team when talking about the equipment or organising packages.

Legal issues: consent and risk

The legal issues surrounding safe and responsible expedition practice are no different whether or not your project includes disabled people. However, some fear and confusion remain about the issue of consent. As with any expedition project, the need is for all team members to maintain control over the risks that they take and the hazards to which they are prepared to be exposed:

- Ensure that your research and preparation for the project identify all the potential hazards to the team members and the project. Assumptions and not confronting issues during the planning stage can only lead to trouble while in the field.
- When in the field it is important to ensure that the hazards within a given

EXPEDITION HANDBOOK

operational environment are minimised and the risks to the team explained in such a manner that all concerned are able to understand.

- If, as a leader, you are in a position where you hold a higher duty of care, it is important that you explain your actions and hold discussions to ensure that the team is able to work with you to best effect.

If there is a need to simplify the situation or to ensure that it is possible to keep a situation under control, it can be useful to categorise risk. One model used in Outdoor Education is the “traffic light model”, which can be explained and reinforced during the planning and preparation by the team:

- **Green:** very low or little risk, which allows all those involved in an activity to relax and accept a balanced but open challenge; this in turn allows the team the possibility for exploration.
- **Yellow:** medium risk activities; close to appropriate help if required.
- **Red:** areas or activities that, if not conducted in an appropriate manner, may cause harm and therefore require direct monitoring.

This model can be used as a basis of an exercise that helps the team develop a greater level of understanding of the nature of risk and what can be considered as successful risk assessment.

BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EXPEDITIONS

This chapter is written as a start point to help you prepare and implement an inclusive expedition. It has focused on possible tools to dissolve barriers and lead to a successful experience for all involved. It is worth remembering the many benefits of an inclusive expedition. A successful inclusive expedition is a powerful way of challenging social barriers, encouraging participation, promoting access to science and adventure, and removing stereotypes of disability.

The nature of the challenges encountered by an inclusive team often require creative thinking, innovative problem-solving and flexible team working which all contribute to the personal development of those involved.

MEDICAL ISSUES AND HEALTH CARE IN THE FIELD

Regardless of disability, the key principles of health care and first aid remain the same. Casualties in the outdoors will still suffer from the effects of the environment. The need is still for prevention. Good nutrition, equipment, appropriate clothing, good hygiene and sanitation are still the priorities. Do not replace your thinking and experience in this area, but build on first-aid principles and common sense, working

INCLUSIVE EXPEDITION PRACTICE

with individuals during the preparation phase of the project to ensure that they are able to develop their own daily living strategies:

- Try not to make everything a medical matter.
- Work to ensure that a team member is able to maintain independence as far as possible.
- Ensure that you have the correct permissions and paperwork to carry any non-standard medication, dressings and medical supplies, and include letters from your consulate or country representative in the area in which you are staying.
- If an individual team member requires regular medication or equipment, try not to package all the supplies into one bag, to help ensure that an emergency is not created if the pack is lost.
- Package medical supplies appropriately.
- Consider the need for a grab-and-go bag containing the vital supplies for an individual team member should the worst happen and an evacuation is required.
- Test any specialist medical equipment under “simulated” environmental conditions before departure (e.g. for a polar expedition, do catheters freeze in very cold conditions?).

There are an increasing number of people in society who have a wide range of conditions that are not obvious at first glance. The need is to ensure that you know about the medical conditions of all of your team members. Use a well-worded and confidential pre-expedition medical questionnaire backed up by a one-to-one interview. This should allow you to explore issues such as coping with hidden disabilities like diabetes and epilepsy when in the field.

CONCLUSION

The key to successful inclusive expedition practice is understanding the needs of the team, task and individuals, and fostering open communication from the outset.

In the planning stage, remember to consider:

- sharing information and understanding team member requirements
- time management
- safe moving and handling
- grouping and buddying
- appropriate use of equipment
- thoughtful packing
- consent and risk assessment tools
- insurance.

EXPEDITION HANDBOOK

Inclusion is a process and not necessarily an end result. Challenging barriers is a natural part of exploration. Vision is the key to good planning and inclusive practice is the key to visionary team work.

FURTHER INFORMATION

RGS–IBG Inclusive Expedition and Fieldwork Practice website

Since the first RGS–IBG Disabled Explorer's workshop in 1995 much has been achieved to make field science and exploration accessible to disabled people. A partnership between the RGS–IBG and Shell helped provide practical support and encouragement for inclusive fieldwork practice, under the guidance of Shell secondee Dr Karen Darke. This project was driven by legislative requirements surrounding access to education for disabled people. Further details and information sheets on this topic can be found at www.rgs.org/inclusive

Suggested reading

Barnes, Colin (1992) *Disabled people in Britain: a case for anti-discrimination legislation*. London: C. Hurst and Co.
 Duke of Edinburgh's Award (2003) *Special Needs: Over to You*. The Award Scheme Ltd. www.theaward.org.
 Gregory, W. (1996) *The Informability Manual*. London: HMSO.

Access

Centre for Accessible Environments (1999) *Designing for Accessibility Environments*. London: Centre for Accessible Environments.
 Fieldfare Trust (2001) *BT Countryside for All*. Sheffield: British Telecom/Fieldfare Trust
 Royal National Institute for the Blind (1995) *Building Sight*. London: HMSO.

Fieldwork

Geography Discipline Network: www.glos.ac.uk/gdn/disabil/
Issues in Providing Learning Support for Disabled Students Undertaking Fieldwork and Related Activities.
Providing Learning Support for Students with Mobility Impairments.
Providing Learning Support for Blind or Visually Impaired Students.
Providing Learning Support for Deaf or Hearing Impaired Students.
Providing Learning Support for Students with Mental Health Difficulties.
Providing Learning Support for Students with Hidden Disabilities and Dyslexia.

Inclusive canoeing

Smedley, G. (1995) *Canoeing for Disabled People*. West Bridgford, Notts: British Canoe Union.
 Ripley, K. and Scandrett, S. (date of publication not known) *Signs for Canoeists*. Avon Deaf Children's Society, 8 Fairlawn Road, Montpellier, Bristol BSA6 5JR.
 Wortham, A. and Zeller, J. (1990) *Canoeing and Kayaking for Persons with Physical Disabilities*. American Canoe Association, 7422 Alban Station Blvd., Suite B-232, Springfield, VA 22150, USA. Tel: +1 703 451 0141, website: www.acanet.org

Safety

Bailey, H. (1994) *Leisure Activities – Safety Guidelines*. SCOPE.

INCLUSIVE EXPEDITION PRACTICE

Putnam, R. (1994) *Safe and Responsible Expeditions*. Newark, Notts: Young Explorers' Trust.

Sports and activity coaching

Bremner, A. (1992) *Coaching Deaf Athletes*. Australian Sports Commission.

Goodman, S. (1995) *Coaching Athletes with Disabilities*. Australian Sports Commission.

Goodman, S. (1996) *Coaching Wheelchair Athletes*. Australian Sports Commission. Australian Sports Commission, PO Box 176, Belconnen, ACT 2616. Tel: +61 262141111, email: asc@ausport.gov.au, website: www.ausport.gov.au

Goodman, S. (1998) *Coaching Athletes with Cerebral Palsy*. Australian Sports Commission.

Hokey, K. and Goodman, S. (1992) *Coaching Athletes with Vision Impairments*. Australian Sports Commission.

Nunn, C.J. (1994) *Coaching Amputee and Les Autres Athletes*. Australian Sports Commission.

Useful addresses

Adventure for All (AfA). Website: www.adventureforall.org.uk

AfA is a group of leading residential outdoor activity centres that are primarily for people with disabilities or special needs.

Equal Adventure Developments Ltd, Glenmore Lodge, Aviemore PH22 1QU. Tel: +44 1479 861372, email: suresh@equaladventure.co.uk, website: www.equaladventure.co.uk

The Centre for Accessible Environments, Nutmeg House, 60 Gainsford Street, London SE1 2NY.

Tel: +44 20 7357 8182, fax: +44 20 7357 8183, email: cae@globnet.co.uk

The Centre for Accessible Environments is a charity that provides architectural information to make the built environment easier to use for people with a wide range of impairments – the team has produced a range of information sheets and publications for architects, planners and project managers.

English Federation of Disability Sport, Manchester Metropolitan University, Hassall Road,

Alsager ST7 2HL. Tel: +44 161 247 5294, fax: +44 161 247 6895, email: federation@efds.co.uk, website: www.efds.co.uk

The umbrella organisation that develops and coordinates sport for disabled people in England.

The Fieldfare Trust, 67a The Wicker, Sheffield S3 8HT. Tel: +44 114 270 1668, email: info@fieldfare.org.uk, website: www.fieldfare.org.uk

The Fieldfare Trust has campaigned for the development of access to the countryside for disabled people. The charity has run a number of national schemes in the UK that have challenged barriers; the

Trust's team possess a wide range of resources for those wishing to make a field centre or non-urban site accessible to all.

Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, 12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London EC1V 8AF.

Tel: +44 20 7250 3222, fax: +44 20 7250 0212, email: radar@radar.org.uk, website: www.radar.org.uk

The umbrella body that represents disability issues nationally in the UK.

SCOPE, PO Box 833, Milton Keynes, MK12 5NY, England. Tel: +44 808 800 3333, email: cphelp@scope.org.uk, website: www.scope.org.uk