



Roche Dupuis (bottom) and Antony Palmer of Step Change Studios perform at the London Sport Awards 2020

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World Down Syndrome Day 2020 | Amid the covid-crisis, we must not forget to listen to disabled people



Ahead of World Down Syndrome Day 2020, Alex Gibbons, London Sport's Specialist Advisor for Disability reminds us of the importance of listening to, and

working with, deaf and disabled people during times of crisis.

When something good comes out of a difficult situation, we tend to say, “it was meant to be” but I’m not a fan of that expression.

When a positive comes from a negative, it’s usually because of our remarkable ability to adapt to the world around us, however confusing and challenging that world might be.

These are “strange times” (as I’m seeing written across several WhatsApp groups on a daily basis!) but they’re also hopeful times; a real feeling of comradeship and community is developing. Everyone is holding common beliefs – to look after ourselves and each other.

Harnessing the power of this more unified society will be vital in the coming months as our sector continues to promote the importance of being physically active during this time of crisis.

One of the challenges during this time is we know that during difficult life events physical activity can be one of the first things to go, particularly for deaf and disabled people who often face several additional barriers.

However, at times like this it becomes [even more vital to maintain good physical and mental well-being](#) - easier said than done when people are being asked to stay inside and not mix with others!

I have learnt that it is not possible to tackle difficult challenges without harnessing people’s insight, creativity and expertise. During times of crisis it can feel quicker and easier to make decisions without them. We need to avoid this at all costs and ensure we take the time to meaningfully involve people.

It seems particularly relevant that tomorrow is [World Down Syndrome Day](#), given its theme for 2020, “we decide”.

When things are tough it can become more difficult to listen to others, but it is more vital than ever to do just that.

I said earlier that we have a remarkable ability to adapt but only if we’re listened to and empowered to make decisions based on our unique

experiences.

At London Sport one of our [guiding principles around disability inclusion](#) is that deaf and disabled people are central to all decisions relating to matters that affect their lives.

At a time of great uncertainty, it is more important than ever to enable that to happen. The reality is for many, physical activity and sport will seem like less of a priority right now.

We need to listen to why this is, let people decide what's most important for them, but then show how the benefits of being active can be part of these priorities.

The challenges we are all facing are unique, and for some deaf and disabled people who already feel unsupported the coming months may feel particularly isolating. We can only meet these upcoming challenges by meaningfully and fully involving people in our responses.

I'm confident the positive societal impact and feelings of community, solidarity and care for each other will continue. I don't think it's meant to be, but I do think we'll make it happen.

For more information on our work in disability inclusion, contact Alex Gibbons on alex.gibbons@londonsport.org

To find out more about World Down Syndrome Day 2020 visit <https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/>

About London Sport

London Sport is a charity working to ensure more Londoners live happier, healthier lives through access to sport and physical activity. Supported by Sport England and the Mayor of London, we collaborate with those that share our vision, running and supporting projects that help children, young people and the least active adults to embed sport and physical activity into their

lives.

For more information on London Sport, visit www.londonsport.org

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