

Canoeists with special needs

Disabled? Able bodied? Special needs? Canoeing can be a hobby, passion, sport, even a job, for all. The sport is so varied that there is literally something for everyone. Paddling allows family and friends to experience exercise and challenge that is therapeutic for both mind and body. More importantly, canoeing is pleasurable and fun! Together, able bodied and disabled can share all aspects of the sport. Remember, everyone floats the same in a buoyancy aid!

The British Canoe Union promotes 'canoeing for all' and aims: -

- To ensure that all people have a general and equal opportunity to participate in canoeing.
- Not to disadvantage any individual by imposing any conditions or requirements that cannot be justified.
- To promote and develop canoeing for disabled people, the British Canoe Union uses the concept and term 'Paddle-Ability' to encourage participation in canoe sport and canoe recreation.

Paddle-Ability focuses on the individuals' ability in canoeing rather than disability. Paddle-ability races, which recognise the needs of disabled competitors, form part of mainstream competitive events. In particular, Paddle-Ability events are available in Sprint and Marathon competitions and take place at the National Regattas.

Want to know more?

There is a very good chapter in the BCU Handbook on Inclusive Canoeing and Kayaking. A very thorough, but slightly dated, book, *Canoeing for Disabled People* by Geoff Smedley is available from the BCU.

Or contact your home association to find out which clubs and centres welcome disabled paddlers.