

# Minister for Disabled People Backs University's Inclusive Sport Plans



Monday, 22 June 2015

**The Minister of State for Disabled People, the Rt Hon Justin Tomlinson MP, has praised Worcester's existing commitment to inclusivity, after the University launched the campaign for an ambitious new International Centre for Inclusive Sport.**

Mr Tomlinson, who grew up in nearby Kidderminster and is now MP for North Swindon, was among those to attend an event at the [University of Worcester Arena](#) last Friday, during which the plans were announced.

The International Centre for Inclusive Sport brings together the University's work to educate the next generation of teachers and coaches and provide training facilities for elite level and recreational athletes in order to make sport truly inclusive regardless of age, ability or income.

As part of the Centre, the University plans to expand its existing indoor facilities at the University Arena and Riverside buildings, with purpose-designed space for blind football and blind cricket, among other sports. The vision for an indoor cricket centre is a partnership between the University with Worcestershire County Cricket Club, Worcestershire young cricketer's academy and Worcestershire Cricket Board.

The Centre aims to become a powerful contributor for the development of women's cricket and to promote outstanding facilities in disability cricket – blind, deaf, learning disability and physical disability.

After hearing about the plans, Mr Tomlinson was given a tour of the University Arena as it hosted the University's annual Inclusive Sports Day, which brings together school children from across the region.

He said afterwards: "This is an amazing facility; it's so busy, and there's so much fun being had. I work with so many disability groups and charities who time and time again tell me that all they want is to have the same opportunity as their friends. Right here, we are seeing a Premier League example of exactly that.

"As someone who loves sport, it doesn't matter what your ability is. I work hard on things like the Disability Confident campaign, on making sure there are opportunities for people with disabilities to enjoy the same lives that everybody else can expect.

"Sport plays a major part in making sure that there are opportunities for people with disabilities, whether you're going to go on and win a gold medal or you just simply want to lead a fun, healthy, active lifestyle. Right here today, we are seeing that happening. This is brilliant; I wish I could scoop it up and take it back to my constituency."

The University has established a solid reputation as a centre of excellence for disability sport in this country. Worcester is home to the first dedicated degree programme in [Disability Sport Coaching](#) and, since opening just over two years ago, the University Arena has been embraced as the benchmark for inclusive sport facilities.

The venue is home to British Wheelchair Basketball, and the [European Wheelchair Basketball Championships will be staged here in August and September](#). Mr Tomlinson believes that the commitment to inclusion within sport has helped to 'put Worcester on the map'.

"Worcester can be proud," he added. "It's put Worcester very much on the heart of the map. It's something which everybody can be incredibly proud of. I listened to presentations today from the great and the good who made this happen, and there are so many people making a real difference. It's just an amazing thing to see."

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