



Mixed Ability Sports

MAGIC 2025

Transferability Toolkit

Transferable lessons from MAGIC and IMART 2025



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About This Toolkit

This Transferability Toolkit is compiled from the lived experience and independently evaluated results of two landmark events in the Mixed Ability (MA) Sports movement: MAGIC 2025 (Mixed Ability Games, Inclusion and Coproduction), a multi-sport inclusive event held under the Erasmus+ programme, and IMART – the International Mixed Ability Rugby Tournament, which most recently culminated in Pamplona 2025. Both events represent the gold standard for community-led, values-driven inclusive sport at an international scale.

This document distils the transferable lessons, practical dos and don'ts, and targeted guidance for the key groups involved in planning and supporting similar events. Whether you are a grassroots sports club, a national governing body, a local authority, a funder, or an individual participant, this toolkit is for you.



What is the Mixed Ability Model?

Mixed Ability Sport brings together people of all abilities including those with physical and learning disabilities, mental health conditions, age-related impairments, or low confidence as equal participants in mainstream sport. It follows the same rules and regulations as mainstream sport, with only minor individual adjustments. It is not disability sport or charitable provision: it is full membership and full participation, for everyone.

Core Principles of the Mixed Ability Model

- **Membership and Belonging.** Everyone participates without being separated, classified or labelled.
- **Equal Participation.** Inclusion and equality through a genuine sense of belonging.
- **Breaking Down Barriers.** Creating opportunities for marginalised communities to assert their right to equal participation.
- **Health and Happiness.** Sport transforms lives. No one should be excluded because of stigma or prejudice.
- **Rules and Regulations.** The same rules as mainstream sport, minor adjustments only.
- **Inclusion and Equality.** Grassroots sport must not exclude anyone.



1. Vision and values: the foundation of everything

Every successful Mixed Ability event begins with a clear, shared vision that is deeply rooted in inclusive values. The evidence from both MAGIC and IMART is unambiguous: when values are placed at the centre of every decision from strategic planning to daily volunteer briefings the event remains resilient, innovative, and purpose-driven even when conditions become difficult.

"IMART is a great opportunity to grow the culture of inclusion through the values of sport."

IMART Participant

What this means in practice

- Set out a clear, co-owned vision at the very start. Make it simple enough for every volunteer to articulate.
- Let values be the measuring stick for every decision not convenience or cost alone.
- Embed values in all communications: event branding, briefing documents, volunteer training, and daily meetings.
- Be firm on values, but flexible on method.
- Don't be afraid of difficult conversations early. Tensions around competitive sport versus full inclusion, or around community engagement, are better raised in planning than discovered during an event.

From MAGIC 2025: inclusion vs. competition

- A recurring theme in participant feedback was the dynamic between competitive settings and fully inclusive environments.
- Recommendation: introduce clear, explicit briefings before competitive matches explaining the event's core tenets and principles.
- Consider on-site champions whose specific role is to support inclusion during activities
- Future editions should ensure the event's values are throughout the schedule.

2. People and leadership: champions at every level

Mixed Ability sport is a people-powered movement. The expansion and sustainability of events like MAGIC and IMART depends on identifying and empowering champions individuals with lived experience of disability or other barriers to participation who drive the vision forward, as well as on building teams where leadership is distributed, not concentrated.

Building your core team

- Map your community assets first. Who has relevant expertise, networks, or lived experience?
- Play to people's strengths. Don't place people in uncomfortable roles matched responsibilities produce better results and stronger morale.
- Ensure those with key roles are fully committed. With volunteers, establish clear expectations upfront and check capacity honestly.
- Appoint a dedicated, committed and diverse Project Team. MAGIC's success was significantly boosted by relying on a blend of experiences and expertise, from lived experience of disability to specific professional and volunteering skills.
- Care about people's wellbeing. Events of this intensity carry a real risk of burnout. Acknowledge it and build in recovery time.

Distributed leadership

Both MAGIC and IMART demonstrated that leadership works best when it flows through an entire team, not just from the top. Every team member should feel ownership of the project's success.

- Give everyone a chance to input and genuinely act on that input.
- Co-opt specialists (communications, fundraising, operations) as the project scales.
- Use trust and shared values as the glue. In the MAGIC team, openness and a shared vision meant even high-stress periods did not break relationships.



3. Community and allies: building your network

No Mixed Ability event exists in isolation. The most impactful events such as MAGIC 2025 succeed in large part because they are deeply embedded in their local communities while simultaneously building a global network of allies. This 'glocal' approach is central to long-term sustainability.

Building your network

- Make sure your vision stems from real needs and aspirations in your community not from an external blueprint.
- Use existing community assets: local sports clubs, community groups, schools, disability organisations, and informal networks.
- Ask your champions to identify trusted people in their community and bring them on board early.
- Acknowledge and celebrate each individual contribution no one person can deliver this alone, and feeling valued keeps people engaged.
- Build alliances with local and national governments, sports federations, NGOs, educational institutions, and commercial partners.

Sponsorship and funding

MAGIC raised nearly €500,000 locally through corporate sponsorships and public partnerships, matching the Erasmus+ support from the European Commission. This was achieved by offering bespoke, tailored experiences for each sponsor aligned with their values, involving their staff, and creating genuine win-win outcomes.

- Don't offer generic sponsorship packages. Tailor each partnership to the sponsor's own inclusion and social responsibility goals.
- Involve sponsor staff as volunteers or participants this deepens the relationship and multiplies impact.
- Position Erasmus+ or other European/public funding as a foundation, not a ceiling. Local fundraising can and should match it.

Local community engagement

From previous experiences, we knew that local community engagement was an area for development. Events should feel like they belong to the host city, not just to the international Mixed Ability network.

- Plan parallel activities alongside sporting events, such as a Fringe programme, informal exchanges, cultural activities, open sessions for passers-by.
- Engage local media, associations, and federations from the outset.
- Involve volunteers from the local community not just from within the MA movement.
- Consider city-wide interventions beyond the main venue to spread visibility and engagement.

MAGIC 2025 Stakeholder Recommendation

- Participants gave strong support for parallel activities around events (using time before, during and after competitions).
- Suggestions included informal exchanges, reflection spaces, and community-facing activities like reuse/sustainability initiatives or fringe educational events.
- One response emphasised the value of on-site experts who can explain the Mixed Ability model to passers-by and newcomers.



4. The person-centred approach and co-production

Co-production is not a bolt-on to the Mixed Ability model it is the engine that drives it. IMAS was founded on the principle that the people most affected by exclusion from sport are also the people best placed to redesign it. This section sets out what co-production means in practice, why it matters, and how it should be embedded in any event or organisation working in this space.

What co-production means

Co-production is an approach to different groups working together in equal partnership for equal benefits. It leads to more equitable outcomes precisely because it includes groups typically excluded from decision-making. It involves respecting, valuing and blending different types of knowledge, dismantling power imbalances, and making sure ideas and outcomes are genuinely relevant to those they affect.

For IMAS, co-production is not a method applied to an otherwise conventional organisation. It is woven into every activity from weekly internal team meetings to external presentations to healthcare professionals, sports clubs, and local authorities. The IMAS Trainers' Group experts with lived experience of disability is the living heart of this approach.

"We recognise that co-production involves us, and we want to get involved and make changes in things that affect us."

IMAS Co-Production Statement

The four co-Production values in IMAS' work

IMAS research identifies four core values that must be present for co-production to be meaningful rather than tokenistic. These are directly applicable to any organisation seeking to plan and deliver Mixed Ability events.

1. Growth, progress and change

Co-production must be a continually evolving process, not a one-time consultation. IMAS functions as an 'engine for change', constantly reflecting on its internal structures, language, and power dynamics.

- Rename roles to reflect what people do. IMAS renamed its 'Inclusion in Sports Class' the 'IMAS Trainers' Group' recognising Trainers as experts sharing knowledge, not students receiving instruction.
- Leaders should move from 'educator' to 'facilitator' roles: providing structure without dominating decision-making.
- Regularly review internal language and processes with all members. If something no longer reflects the values of the group, change it.
- External engagement should aim to push for change to challenge perceptions about disability and social difference not simply raise awareness.

2. Social connections and relationship-building

Meaningful co-production is built on trust, and trust is built through genuine relationships. IMAS has developed an expansive network across the disability, education, healthcare and sports sectors and the evidence shows this has profound personal impacts as well as organisational ones.

- Build social networks intentionally. Presentations, panels, placements, and taster events are all relationship-building opportunities, not just promotional ones.
- Create space within your team or group for social bonds to form not just task-focused meetings.
- Trust within a group enables communal decision-making and genuine reciprocity. Without it, co-production becomes performance.

"Before getting involved with IMAS, I didn't speak to anyone outside my family."

Ella, IMAS Trainer and NED.

3. Empowering and building autonomy

Successful co-production strives for social justice by empowering individuals and groups traditionally excluded from shaping agendas. For IMAS, this means ensuring that everything information, discussion, decision-making is fully accessible to all members, regardless of their support needs.

- Make accessibility a non-negotiable standard, not an afterthought. Formats used by the IMAS Trainers' Group include sign language, easy-read versions, visual aids, and rewording for clarity.
- Ensure everyone can be equally involved in decision-making regardless of communication style or support need.
- Build Trainers' and participants' autonomy actively confidence developed in one context (e.g. sport) carries into other areas of life.
- A 'wellbeing check-in' embedded into regular meetings creates a safe space for people to discuss challenges and support each other. This is both an output of co-production and a tool that enables further co-production.

"[IMAS has] helped me a lot with my confidence, because in everyday life I don't have that confidence... it's made me understand that I can do these things."

Dan, IMAS Trainer

4. Challenging power hierarchies

Meaningful co-production takes a radical egalitarian approach that actively disrupts top-down power structures. This is especially important when working across sectors sport, health, social care, local government where institutional hierarchies can be particularly entrenched.

- When IMAS Trainers deliver presentations to healthcare practitioners, the Trainers are positioned as the experts. Healthcare professionals are there to learn from people with lived experience not the other way around.

- Use placement and shadowing opportunities to flip conventional knowledge hierarchies. Students and professionals gain more from observing and listening than from instructing.
- Recognise and address power imbalances within your own organisation. IMAS identified a gap in disabled representation in its governance structures and is actively addressing it without being tokenistic.
- Co-produced risk registers, event plans, and evaluation frameworks are more comprehensive and more legitimate than top-down equivalents.

Co-production guidelines for event organisers

Drawing on the IMAS model, the following guidelines apply to any organisation seeking to plan and deliver Mixed Ability events in a genuinely co-produced way.

Co-production guidelines: what to do

- Involve people with lived experience of disability and barriers to participation at every stage from initial planning through to post-event evaluation. Not as consultees, as co-designers.
- Make every meeting, document, and discussion fully accessible. Do not assume a standard format works for everyone.
- Embed a wellbeing check-in or equivalent reflective practice into your regular team meetings.
- Review your language and role titles regularly. Words carry power use them to reflect your values.
- Position participants and community members as experts by experience when engaging with statutory bodies, sponsors, or local government.
- Co-produce your risk register, evaluation framework, and communications strategy not just your programme schedule.
- Actively seek disabled representation in governance and decision-making. Identify the gap, then address it without tokenism.
- Support the independence and confidence of your co-producers beyond the event itself this is part of the social impact.
- Create feedback loops: after every event or activity, ask what worked and what didn't, involve everyone in the answer, and act on it visibly.

Co-production: what to avoid

- Treating co-production as a tick-box exercise or a one-time consultation at the start of a project.
- Assuming that having disabled participants or volunteers is the same as co-production: participation and power-sharing are different things.
- Using inaccessible formats for meetings, documents, or events without offering alternatives.
- Positioning professionals or organisers as the experts and people with lived experience as the learners.
- Adding disabled representation to governance structures as window-dressing without giving those representatives genuine influence.

- Moving on to the next event without sharing what was learnt: the movement depends on honest, public knowledge transfer.



5. Planning: do it again, and again

The sheer scale and complexity of MAGIC include multiple sports, international delegations, thousands of participants, volunteers, and spectators, meaning that thorough, iterative planning is non-negotiable. The time invested in planning is time saved when activities happen.

Planning Principles

- Begin planning far earlier than feels necessary. MAGIC planning began in 2022 for a 2025 event.
- Use structured project management tools: a project management log with dated deliverables, owners, and statuses; a day-planner/schedule for the event itself; and a risk register updated regularly.
- Hold regular, focused project meetings with clear agendas and action ownership.
- During the event, hold daily on-site briefings with security, volunteers, and event control to adapt in real time.
- A good test of your planning is not whether everything went perfectly it's how well you handled your Plan B. And to have a plan C and D at hand!

Risk Management

Risks are inherent to events of this scale. The goal is not to eliminate risk which would itself exclude participants but to identify, assess, and mitigate it in a way that preserves the full Mixed Ability experience.

- Create a risk register with participants and stakeholders, not just the organising committee. Co-produced registers are more comprehensive.
- Rate risks on likelihood and impact. Prioritise accordingly.
- Identify whether risks are shared with other stakeholders (venue, NGB, local authority).
- Remember: black swan events do happen. Plan for the best; prepare for the worst.
- Risks extend to culture and vision, not just logistics. Protect your values as deliberately as you protect your budget.

A Note on Inclusion and Risk

One of the most common reasons given for excluding disabled people from mainstream sport is 'duty of care'. The Mixed Ability approach takes a different view: the right to participate including the right to accept the inherent risks of sport belongs to everyone. Robust briefings, appropriate safeguarding, and adherence to governing body protocols are the answer, not exclusion.

"I supported my local rugby team for years. They would not let me play because they thought I could get hurt. Of course I can get hurt it's part of the game!"

Anthony Brooke, Founder of the Bumble Bees Mixed Ability Rugby Team

6. Communication: shout from the rooftop

Marketing and communication are not optional extras; they are fundamental to the sustainability and growth of the Mixed Ability movement. Visibility creates interest; interest creates participation; participation creates change. Both MAGIC 2025 and IMART demonstrated that authentic storytelling, strategic digital communication, and transparent scheduling dramatically multiply impact.

Storytelling first

- Lead with real voices and real stories from players, volunteers, families, referees, and local communities.
- Storytelling doesn't need to be polished. Personal, honest accounts hold dignity and inspire action.
- Participants who feel they own the event will become its most powerful communicators. Social media, books, podcasts, and videos created by participants extended MAGIC reach to 11m interactions.
- Different audiences speak different languages. Tailor communications for sports NGBs differently from how you communicate to disability organisations, corporate sponsors, or local government.

Digital and social media

- Post consistently throughout the project lifecycle, not just during the event. Weekly content (news, photos, short videos) keeps momentum alive.
- Make schedules and event information publicly accessible online and via social media in advance.
- Consider daily newsletters during the event to keep participants, families, and fans informed.
- MAGIC 2025 feedback indicated a preference for in-person experience over digital engagement use digital tools to amplify the physical event, not to replace it.

MAGIC 2025 recommendation: digital communication

- Participants supported enhancing communication and visibility through digital tools and social media.
- Specific suggestions: dedicated communication team, regular social content, transparent online scheduling.
- Strategic use of digital platforms is needed to grow visibility and attract new organisations and participants.
- Avoid letting communication become a 'marketing exercise' keep authentic voices at the centre.

7. Impact and legacy: beyond the final whistle

The most important measure of a Mixed Ability event is not what happens during it, but what it leaves behind. MAGIC 2025 has demonstrated that events of this kind generate lasting change in individuals, organisations, communities, and the broader movement when they are designed with legacy in mind from the very beginning.

Individual impact

MAGIC 2025 stakeholders reported that the programme contributed significantly to personal development, inspiration, and mental health consistently among the highest-rated themes across all assessment periods. Physical activity levels were rated at 8.5/10 on a sustained basis. Participants described experiences that 'become embedded in the very fabric of our beings.'

- Design events to create experiences participants will carry forward, not just consume in the moment.
- Allow participants to tell their own stories in their own voices.
- Recognise that the deeper internal impact of inclusion is often experienced by everyone involved not only those with disabilities.

Organisational impact

MAGIC 2025 inspired participating organisations to set new goals and strategies (4.5/5), encouraged innovation (4.4/5), and helped organisations meet their aims and policies (4.5/5). The programme provided fresh language and frameworks for inclusion that organisations could translate into their own contexts.

- Build in structured reflection and knowledge exchange for participating organisations.
- Create opportunities for organisations to observe and learn from each other not just from the event organisers.
- Consider follow-up mechanisms (online platforms, newsletters, forums) to sustain organisational learning after the event.

Movement-level legacy

IMART has grown from 12 teams and 450 players in Bradford 2015 to 32 teams, 1,700 players, and 24 nations in Pamplona 2025 thanks to MAGIC. The event strengthened connections within the Mixed Ability movement and generated multiplier events including a rowing event in Turin and local agreements in Pamplona, Luxembourg, and Cork.

- Document and share everything photos, videos, evaluations, personal accounts to build a legacy that outlasts the event.
- Build additional opportunities to keep the momentum going.
- Actively support multiplier events in participating countries and communities.
- Celebrate every success, small and large. Gratitude builds the movement.

"MAGIC has the potential to be a very powerful seed that will lead to future actions around the world."

MAGIC 2025 Participant

8. Guidance for specific audiences

The lessons from MAGIC are relevant to a wide range of stakeholders. Below we offer targeted guidance for each key group.

For grassroots clubs and community organisations

- Start with vision, not logistics. Agree your values and your 'why' before anything else.
- You don't need to be a large organisation. MAGIC was delivered by IMAS Spain as an NGO and Iruña Rugby Club. Ambition is not the preserve of the elite.
- Identify your local champions people with lived experience of barriers to participation and build the team around them.
- Begin planning much earlier than feels necessary.
- Build local partnerships first. Local authority, schools, disability organisations, and community groups are your foundation.
- Design your event so that participants feel it belongs to them because it does.
- Plan for inclusion during competitive activities, not just in the programme overview.
- Celebrate and document everything. Your event's story will inspire the next one.

For funders

- Fund the whole ecosystem, not just the event. Capacity-building, travel support for less-resourced countries, and post-event legacy activities are as important as the event itself.
- Economic barriers are the primary obstacle to participation for marginalised groups. Targeted funding for underrepresented communities is essential.
- Multi-year funding enables genuine planning horizons. One-year grants do not allow the kind of long-term relationship-building that MAGIC require.
- Support evaluation from the outset. The MAGIC 2025 evidence base gathered by an independent external evaluator is what makes this Toolkit possible.
- Co-financing models (like Erasmus+ matched by local corporate and public funding) are highly effective. Facilitate and incentivise this approach.
- Require and fund communication and documentation activity. The movement grows through visibility.
- Value in-person participation above digital reach. Funding that supports travel and accommodation for participants from all countries creates more equitable outcomes.

For local authorities

- Engage early and commit fully. Tokenistic involvement is visible and damaging to trust.
- Provide practical in-kind support: venue access, transport infrastructure, waste and logistics, and local media connections.

- Champion the event publicly: political endorsement significantly boosts credibility and commercial support.
- Help connect the event to broader city or regional social inclusion, health, and economic development strategies.
- Support community engagement activities beyond the main venue. The event should reach residents who would not otherwise attend.
- Consider the long-term: what local structures, clubs, or policies can the event help create or strengthen?

For National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of Sport

- Actively engage with and endorse Mixed Ability participation within your sport. This is not a niche offer. It is a model for growing your sport sustainably.
- Ensure your safeguarding and duty-of-care frameworks enable, not obstruct, participation by disabled people.
- Provide technical and regulatory support for Mixed Ability competitions within your mainstream structures.
- Share your networks: clubs, coaches, officials, and facilities are all invaluable resources for Mixed Ability events.
- Celebrate Mixed Ability achievement within your sport's mainstream communications, not just in separate disability sport channels.
- Support policy change: MAGIC 2025 stakeholders rated policy change as one of the most important contributions of the programme (4.3/5).

For Participants and Volunteers

- You are the event. Your energy, stories, and commitment are what make Mixed Ability sport meaningful.
- Take ownership suggest improvements, flag problems early, and share your experience publicly.
- Understand the Mixed Ability principles before and during the event, especially in competitive settings.
- Be an ally: look out for fellow participants who may be finding competitive or social dynamics difficult.
- Share your story. Your social media post, your conversation with a friend, your illustrated book (like Elliot Smith's IMART account) these carry the movement forward.
- Give feedback honestly. The MAGIC evaluation process depends on frank, confidential responses to improve future events.
- Celebrate other people's achievements as enthusiastically as your own. Inclusion is a team sport.

9. Dos and don'ts: quick reference

DO	DON'T
Anchor everything in clearly articulated values.	Compromise on values to reduce cost or complexity.
Appoint a dedicated, committed, knowledgeable, diverse Project Team.	Rely entirely on volunteers for strategic coordination.
Start planning significantly earlier than feels necessary.	Underestimate the planning horizon for international events.
Build a co-produced, participatory risk register.	Treat risk management as a tick-box exercise.
Embed explicit inclusion briefings into competitive settings.	Assume Mixed Ability values will self-enforce during competition.
Invest in authentic storytelling and real voices.	Let communication become a marketing exercise disconnected from participants.
Engage local communities with parallel activities and city-wide presence.	Allow the event to feel like it belongs only to the international MA network.
Offer bespoke, tailored sponsorship packages aligned with partner values.	Use generic sponsorship tiers without personalisation.
Make schedules and information publicly available online in advance.	Assume participants and spectators will find information themselves.
Celebrate every contribution, small and large.	Move on to the next event without reflecting on and sharing what was learnt.
Support multiplier events and local follow-up activity after the main event.	Treat the event as a self-contained episode rather than part of a movement.
Give all teams the opportunity to play, regardless of competitive outcome.	Allow qualification structures to leave teams with very few matches.
Embed co-production from day one, involve people with lived experience in planning, not just delivery.	Treat consultation as co-production. Being asked once is not the same as having genuine power.
Make all meetings, documents and discussions fully accessible (easy-read, plain language).	Assume a standard format works for everyone.
Position people with lived experience as experts when engaging sponsors, government, or funders.	Default to professional or institutional voices as the primary authority on disability and inclusion.
Build in a regular wellbeing check-in or reflective space for your team.	Treat team welfare as separate from the real work of event delivery.
Seek genuine disabled representation in governance and give it real influence.	Add disabled representatives to committees as window-dressing without decision-making power.

Closing thought

MAGIC 2025 and IMART have proved, beyond reasonable doubt, that world-class inclusive sporting events can be built from the ground up, led by communities, and sustained over time. The evidence is clear: participants are satisfied, organisations are developing, the movement is growing, and the appetite for expansion is strong.

This Toolkit does not pretend the road is easy. The challenges around sustainability barriers, different cultural approaches, communication gaps, organisational coordination are real.

With continued focus on inclusion, stronger community engagement, strategic expansion, and the honest sharing of lessons like those gathered here, the Mixed Ability movement is well-positioned to transform sport, and through sport, society for everyone.



For more information visit mixedabilitysports.org or contact contact@mixedabilitysports.org

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