

Edinburgh Leisure want you to dance like no one is watching

Scotland's Learning Disability Week 2019 takes place from Monday 13th – Sunday 19th May. This year's theme is 'community' – whoever we are and wherever in Scotland we live, we can all be part of a community.

Communities can mean different things to different people but they all have one thing in common – a thriving community is one in which everyone feels connected, included and able to contribute. They play an important role in preventing us from feeling lonely or isolated by bringing us together with friends, neighbours and people with shared interests, helping us to build a support network, and creating a sense of belonging.



2019 Learning Disability Week

We are all aware of the health benefits that sport and physical activity brings, from helping to prevent and manage a range of health conditions, to strengthening muscles and bones, to helping to maintain a healthy weight. But did you know that being physically active is also a great way to feel part of a community?

Sadly, people with learning disabilities often face

significant barriers to physical activity, including a lack of confidence, feeling unwelcome, feeling unsafe, and local venues and activities not being accessible. Although the national physical activity guidelines are the same for adults with a learning disability as adults without, recent studies show that adults with a learning disability are twice as likely to be inactive.

However, at Edinburgh Leisure, a charity dedicated to creating opportunities for everyone in Edinburgh to lead happier, healthier and more active lives, they are proud to provide support to people in the community who face the greatest barriers to being active, including people affected by physical, sensory and learning disabilities, through a range of projects and classes designed to protect their health and wellbeing.

They believe that people with learning disabilities make a valuable contribution to the communities they live in and should enjoy equal opportunity to be physically active. That's why they launched Danceability, an inclusive dance class for adults with additional support needs to explore movement and dance to music, at the Royal Commonwealth Pool in April 2018. The classes proved to be so popular with the community that they now have three running across the city each week – at the Royal Commonwealth Pool, Leith Victoria Swim Centre and Gracemount Leisure Centre.

Danceability focusses on inspiring and empowering people with additional support needs to be active through dance by giving everyone the chance to participate and contribute to the choreography. It helps them to improve their fitness, balance and mobility, as well as supporting them to create social connections and feel part of a community.

Friends Stacey and Jessie, who both have learning disabilities, take part in Edinburgh Leisure's Leith class with instructor Roz. Earlier this year Edinburgh Leisure

supported them to gain a Zumba instructor qualification and recently they've been working with Roz to put together some choreography and teach a few tracks in class. Stacey loves being on stage teaching the most whereas Jessie likes to work on her technique and get the choreography just right. The change in the girls since they started playing such an active role in the class has been stark – their confidence has improved, they are more active than ever and they've really started to come out of their shells.

If you or someone you know would like more information on Edinburgh Leisure's Danceability classes, contact Sara Kemp at sarakemp@edinburghleisureco.uk