

# Winchester Personal Bests 2025



**WINCHESTER  
PERSONAL BESTS**

 **Active LD**

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025  
Winchester Sport and Leisure Park  
University of Winchester Athletics Stadium**

# Personal Bests Executive Summary

The Winchester Personal Bests event continues to show how inclusive sport can empower individuals, build confidence and create lasting change within communities. Bringing together people with learning and physical disabilities for a day of celebration, achievement and connection, Personal Bests is about recognising every effort and valuing each person's journey – not just their outcomes.

At its core, Personal Bests champions individuals to achieve their own personal best, supporting participants to develop confidence while forming meaningful connections with local sports, coaches and clubs. These relationships play a vital role in encouraging ongoing participation in physical activity and helping local providers become more accessible and inclusive for the learning disability community.

The 2025 Winchester Personal Bests experience marks an important step forward in how the event is planned and delivered. Participants have played a crucial role in shaping the event, contributing their ideas, feedback and lived experience to ensure it reflects what matters most to them. This participant-led approach has strengthened the quality of the experience, particularly for athletes with autism, and reinforces our commitment to listening, learning and evolving.

Alongside this, the event continues to focus on creating a strong local legacy, supporting regular physical activity, and providing education and training opportunities for instructors and volunteers.

Together, these elements ensure Personal Bests remains inclusive, sustainable and genuinely centred on the people it exists to support.

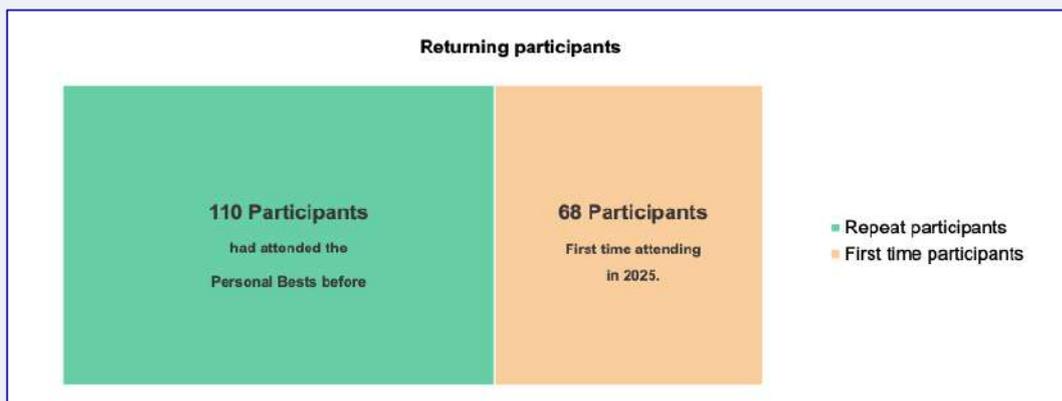


# Participants

178 participants attended Winchester Personal Bests, with twenty local learning disability groups represented, alongside 33 independently registered participants and one new organisation (Enham Trust). 207 registrations were received before the event, resulting in a 14% drop-out rate. While slightly higher than the annual target (10%), this remains within an acceptable range for large-scale inclusive events. One group was unable to attend due to last minute staffing shortages, while other non-attendance reasons included college commitments, wheelchair service issues, ill health, anxiety and concerns linked to the weather forecast. These factors reinforce the importance of proactive anxiety management and clear communication - measures strengthened this year through welcome videos, advance information packs and closer coordination with day services and family carers.



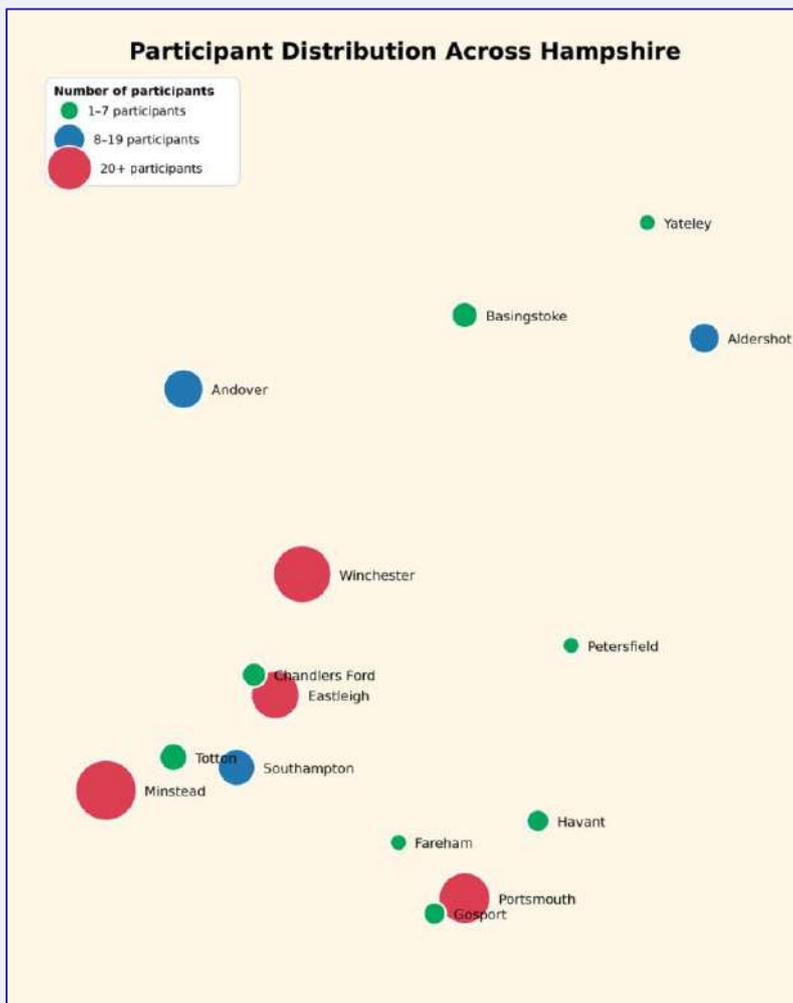
Encouragingly, 68 participants were new to Personal Bests, demonstrating continued reach and appeal, while 110 returning participants highlight strong retention and satisfaction. The event's wider impact is also evident, with 13 former Winchester participants attending the inaugural Chichester Personal Bests in July 2025, supporting our focus on sustained engagement beyond a single event.



Participants travelled from across Hampshire to attend the Winchester Personal Bests.

This map shows the geographic spread of 178 participants across Hampshire.

Larger circles indicate higher participant numbers, with strong representation in Minstead, Eastleigh, Winchester, Andover and the Southampton area, demonstrating both urban and rural reach.



The PBs is my favourite day of the year! It's brilliant.

*Piero, Participant*

It was lovely to see everyone again.

*Claire, Participant*

I enjoyed seeing old friends and making new ones.

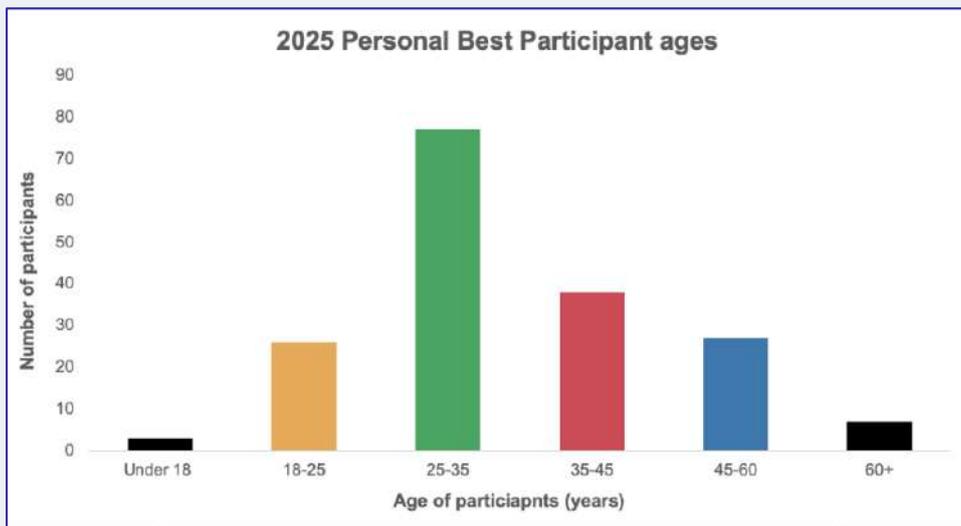
*Morgan, participant*

Fantastic day!

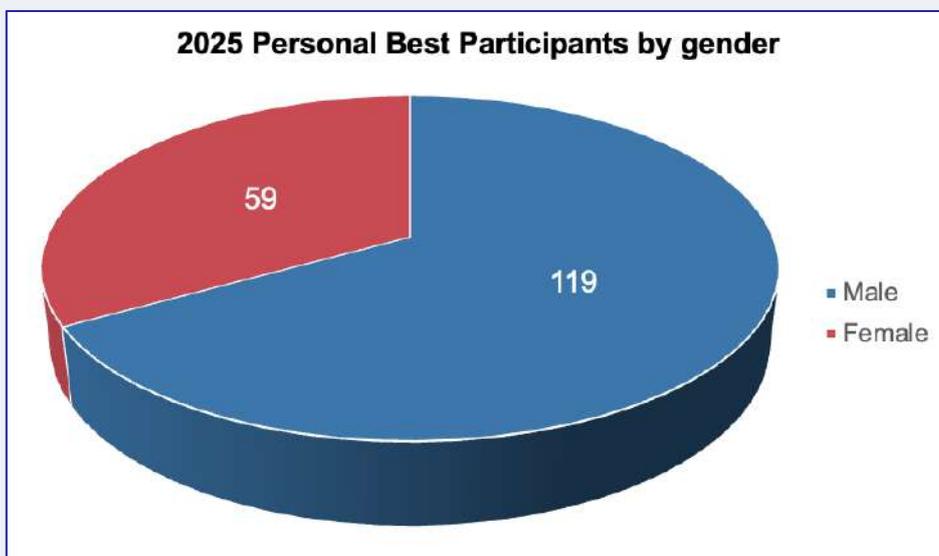
*James, Participant*



Age distribution remained consistent with previous years, with a notable and planned increase in older participants: 7 attendees (4%) were aged over 60, more than double last year. This growth reflects improved inclusivity and supports our objective to reach groups at greater risk of physical and mental health inequalities.



Gender participation closely reflects local learning disability population data (Hampshire JSNA), with a 2:1 male-to-female ratio, indicating representative engagement.





It was a day that participants were celebrated for being themselves. No pressure to fit in. Surrounded by others who have similar experiences to them. A day where they were in the majority.

It was inclusive and brilliant. I've never been to an event like it. I loved it.

*Member of support staff, James Place Eastleigh*



Thank you once again for offering this wonderful opportunity to the Parkside Service Users. The group had another fantastic day and were very excited when they returned to Parkside to showcase their medals, T-shirts, and more.

*Angie Morris, Deputy Manager, Parkside Aldershot & District*

## Volunteers

The introduction of a new online volunteer sign-up form streamlined recruitment and strengthened data collection. In total, 84 volunteers registered, with 64 attending on the day, resulting in a 23% drop-out rate. Strong registration reflects the continued growth of employer-supported volunteering (ESV). While corporate volunteers contributed to a higher drop-out rate, communication ahead of the event from volunteers who were unable to attend improved significantly when compared to previous years, enabling more effective planning, role allocation and contingency management. Common reasons for non-attendance included diary clashes, work pressures, injury, childcare and changes in personal circumstances, predominantly among corporate volunteers.

The event continues to benefit from a high level of volunteer retention, with 37 volunteers (54%) having supported Winchester Personal Bests previously. This consistency highlights volunteer satisfaction and commitment; and plays a vital role in ensuring smooth delivery and a welcoming, inclusive environment. For many, Personal Bests is a valued fixture in their annual calendar, and their experience contributes directly to event quality.

I just wanted to say thank you for the best, most fulfilling, and humbling day.

I was on the athletics, helping the throwing, Andy the coach was brilliant, and it was just lovely to meet everyone. There was no judgement, and everyone tried their best.

My colleagues and I would be interested in volunteering again, everyone made us feel so welcome.

*Liz, Virgin Media volunteer*

Corporate volunteering remains a key strength, accounting for 60% of the volunteer workforce. We were pleased to welcome 41 corporate volunteers whose support continues to strengthen delivery, partnerships and inclusive practice. The following organisations provided volunteer support:

- Bupa
- Cardo Group
- Quilter
- Simplyhealth
- Strategic Solutions Financial Services
- Virgin Media O2

32 volunteers (47%) have personal experience of learning disabilities through family or friends, strengthening the sense of community and shared understanding which is at the heart of Personal Bests. For over half the volunteers the Personal Bests was their first experience of people with learning disabilities, demonstrating the event's ongoing commitment to community engagement and inclusion.

Thank you so much for organising such a fantastic event!

I am truly so pleased to be part of it and will definitely reach out for next year and any future events.

*Tayla, Simplyhealth volunteer*

This year has been the best well managed event so far.

Everything was so under control, and the teams were so lovely.... I will look forward to 2026.

*Garry, experienced Personal Best volunteer*



Learning disabled volunteers led meet and greet and timekeeping roles, reinforcing Personal Bests as a user-led event shaped by people with lived experience.

They [volunteers] were very good at encouraging me to take part

*Taylor, James Place participant*

They [volunteers] are like good friends. I recognised some of them from last year's PBs.

*Mikey, Reach out Caring participant*



I loved every aspect of volunteering at the Personal Bests. I want to do it again next year.

*Matthew, LD Advisor and volunteer*

I really enjoyed the PB. I like being busy and helpful.

*Dave, LD Advisor and volunteer*



## Coaches

All activities were extremely popular, demonstrating the value of high-quality, participant-centred delivery and meaningful choice. Sessions were led by local-based organisations with strong experience in inclusive coaching and adapted to meet a wide range of needs. Delivery partners showed clear commitment to ongoing accessible provision, strengthening pathways from Personal Bests into regular community sport.

Coach	Activity	Organisation
David Howells	Athletics	
Andy Fisher	Athletics	
Ben Harris	Football	
Michael Powell	Cricket	
Rob and Sonia Volpe	Circuits	
Glyn Parkin	Boxing	
Lorna Chapman	Yoga	
Brian Ward	Squash	 (freelance squash coach)

We were delighted to welcome Winchester Boxing Club to deliver our first boxing activity, led by experienced coaches who created a safe, inclusive and confidence-building environment.



Football, cricket, athletics, boxing and circuits already provide established routes into inclusive, regular sessions. In addition, Personal Bests directly contributed to the creation of new opportunities. With the support of Everyone Active, squash coach Brian Ward has committed to launching regular accessible squash sessions for two day service groups, Reach Out Caring and James Place. This outcome demonstrates the event's impact beyond the day itself, supporting sustainable participation and long-term engagement in physical activity.

Squash was excellent, we had time and it was not rushed.

*Josh, James Place Eastleigh*



## Fundraising and Finance

The delivery of Winchester Personal Bests is made possible through the generous support of our partners and sponsors; without this support, the event would cost approximately £13,500 to deliver. Everyone Active and the University of Winchester kindly donated the use of their facilities, while Winchester City Council provided valued support across planning, marketing and delivery.

We are especially grateful for Simplyhealth's continued commitment, whose support and volunteer involvement remain central to the event's success.

Cardo Group also provided generous sponsorship in 2025, funding volunteer t-shirts, medals and trophies. Collectively, our partners enable Personal Bests to grow sustainably, maximise impact and continue delivering high-quality, inclusive opportunities for the learning disability community.

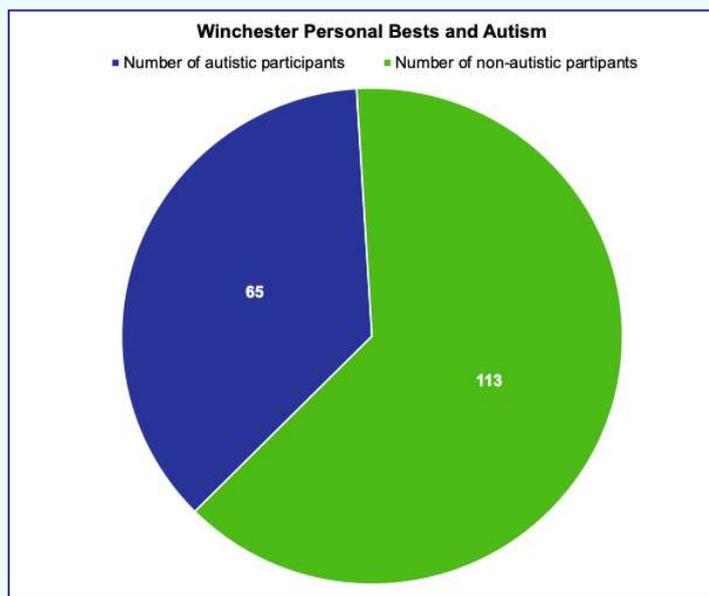
We have a separate finance pack for detail of budget, spend and supporting evidence (invoices and receipts) – available on request.



## Autism Awareness

In March 2025, Winchester Personal Bests became the first event in the UK to achieve Autism Friendly accreditation from the National Autistic Society. This accreditation formally recognises the event's commitment to creating an environment that is accessible, welcoming and inclusive for autistic and neurodiverse people, and reflects best practice in inclusive event delivery.

Autism is common within the learning disability community, with approximately one in three people with learning disabilities in the UK identifying as autistic. The proportion of participants at Personal Bests who identified as autistic closely reflects this national picture, demonstrating the event's ability to reach and support autistic individuals effectively.



Accreditation was awarded in recognition of a range of practical, participant-led adjustments designed to reduce anxiety and support communication. Small changes make a big difference to accessibility and inclusion for autistic (and other neurodiverse) individuals. At the Personal Bests these include Quiet Spaces, detailed welcome packs for participants, carers, volunteers and coaches, welcome videos, clear signage and site plans, widget boards, communication cards and fidget toys. Participants, carers and professionals also had access to a participant co-produced autism awareness webinar, supporting shared understanding and inclusive practice.

Together, these measures ensure all participants can engage confidently, feel supported and have a positive event experience.

## Outcomes

After the 2024 Personal Bests, we set ambitious and measurable goals to strengthen inclusion, participation and impact. In 2025, our Personal Bests event delivered on every commitment, turning plans into tangible, accountable outcomes.

 Autism Friendly status
 Communication boards
 Pre-event and post-event videos
 Online registration and online resources
 Participant involvement (LD advisors and LD volunteers)
 Develop the Personal Bests reporting and impact measurement
 More opportunities for the LD community to engage in accessible sessions.



For the second-year running, Winchester Personal Bests was shortlisted as a finalist in the UK Active Awards. Being recognised nationally is a significant achievement.

Exceptional work on learning disability inclusion. The Personal Bests event demonstrates clear participant growth, strong volunteer engagement, and thoughtful expansion plans.

Key strengths include Autism Friendly recognition and the creation of accessible pathways into regular, ongoing physical activity.

There is also strong evidence of inclusive practice embedded in programme design.

*Judging panel at UK active AWARDS*

## Impact summary

For anyone who has experienced the Personal Bests (as a participant, volunteer, coach, carer or supporter) it's positivity and joy is instantly palpable. More significant is the lasting impact in connecting people with learning disabilities to regular physical activity.

Winchester Personal Bests is so much more than a sports event - it is a celebration of inclusion, belonging and community. Through autism-friendly design, meaningful reasonable adjustments and participant-led delivery, the event creates a safe, welcoming space where people with learning disabilities can connect, build confidence and find lasting friendships. By bringing together participants, families, volunteers, coaches and local clubs, Personal Bests strengthens community connections and opens pathways into ongoing physical activity, ensuring everyone feels valued, included and part of something bigger.



It was a privilege to attend and see first-hand the joy, energy, and inclusivity that your team has fostered over the years. Most importantly, the event is inspiring so many individuals with physical and learning disabilities to take part in sport and exercise regularly, not just on this special annual occasion.

*The Mayor of Winchester, Cllr Sudhakar Achwal*

## Future Plans

Our ambition is to build on the success of Winchester Personal Bests by turning fun and inspiration into lasting change. We will continue to strengthen partnerships with local clubs and coaches, supporting the growth of high-quality, inclusive opportunities that enable people with learning disabilities to be active in ways that work for them.

Participant voice will remain at the heart of our approach. We will expand participant-led training, working with universities and guest facilitators to share lived experience, challenge perceptions and raise confidence in inclusive delivery across sport and physical activity.

In 2025–26, we will launch regular accessible squash sessions in Winchester, delivered with local coaches and day services, and develop an accessible walking group leader pathway, creating welcoming, low-barrier opportunities within local communities.

Above all, we will continue to explore new and creative ways to support more people with learning disabilities to be active more often; increasing choice, removing barriers and strengthening connection, confidence and belonging through inclusive physical activity.

“Our colleagues really value supporting the Personal Bests through volunteering, in particular meeting new participants, as well as reconnecting with familiar faces every year. Supporting our local learning-disabled community ensures that we’re making physical activity more accessible and subsequently improving participants overall wellbeing and health outcomes. The events are always expertly organised, well-attended and they have become a regular and highly anticipated feature of our community and colleague calendar.”

*Charlotte Cook, ESG Lead, Simplyhealth Group*



# WINCHESTER PERSONAL BESTS



**Together we're active and able**