

Motivate me:

**Understanding what motivates and appeals to disabled people to take part in sport and physical activity**

May 2014

**Prepared for the English Federation of Disability Sport  
by 2CV**

Report findings based on market research conducted in December 2013 – March 2014 by  
2CV on behalf of the English Federation of Disability Sport.

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## Foreword



It is the stark reality that disabled people are still half as likely to be active as non-disabled people. However, we know from this research that a great majority of disabled people are more likely to respond to opportunities to get active which tap into the things that matter to them most including: building friendships, maintaining health, becoming more independent and progressing in life.

**Activity which helps to develop a positive self image and simply having fun is what most of us seek out when wanting to improve our sense of well being and feel more fulfilled in life. More often than not disabled people are looking for opportunities which are as likely to appeal to their non-disabled friends and family and which enable them to get active wherever and in whatever sport or activity they choose.**

**We hope you find this report useful for your own development work and look forward to learning more about how you use the findings.**

Barry Horne  
Chief Executive  
English Federation of Disability Sport



The English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) is dedicated to providing research to support others who are working to improve sport and physical activity provision for disabled people. We work hard to ensure every piece of research we release not only supports the work we have done previously but also provides new and additional insight to help the sector.

**As a small national charity, we aim to use our expertise and influence to make sure that others can embrace the opportunity of responding to the aspirations of the many millions of disabled people who want to become active. We are always interested in sharing the lessons from our programmes, our work and our engagement with disabled people and the sport and fitness sectors.**

The research builds on the previous Lifestyle Report released in 2013 and has allowed us to present a more robust picture of the things disabled people enjoy and find important. This provides us with a strong basis for understanding how to make sport and physical activity more appealing to them.

This report is another step closer to better understanding what needs to improve in the sector to increase participation. It focuses on understanding how best to engage with disabled people and make sport and physical activity appealing to them.

**Emma Spring**  
**Research and Insight Manager**

**English Federation of Disability Sport**

## Introduction

**Currently less than 2 in 10 disabled people (18 per cent) in England are taking part in sport once a week. That means disabled people are more than half as likely to be active as non-disabled people (39 per cent).<sup>1</sup> The English Federation of Disability Sport has a simple long term vision: “disabled people are active for life”.**

The English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) provides the sports sector and other providers with support to increase and improve opportunities for disabled people. As the strategic lead for disabled people in sport throughout England, EFDS strives to be at the forefront of understanding the following:

- Disabled people’s lifestyles and to what extent sport and physical activity play a role
- The type of sport and physical activity opportunities disabled people find interesting and attractive
- Different profiles of disabled people, grouped together based on their motivations to take part in sport (market segments)
- How best to attract and retain disabled people in sport and physical activity. This can include changing and amending offers available or by improving and updating marketing communication methods

Disabled people’s views and experiences are a crucial part of our insight work. We also advise all our partners to involve more disabled people in their planning and delivery within sport and physical activity. As this research involves speaking to disabled people directly, language throughout the report does use “them”, “their”, “they” on some occasions. This is for the purpose of relaying the views of the individuals involved in the research and should not be used as a general view of all disabled people.

This report is based on the findings of a research project conducted by 2CV on behalf of EFDS. It provides insight into how to amend and adapt sport and physical activity opportunities to make them more appealing to disabled people.

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<sup>1</sup> Active People Survey 7, Sport England, December 2013

## Research Objectives

### The study was designed to:

- 1. Explore how sport and physical activity fit into disabled people's broader lifestyles**
  - What are the key barriers and motivations?
  - What/who are the key influencers on their relationship with activity (past, present & future)?
  
- 2. Enrich understanding of how different groups of disabled people are participating in sport and physical activity (or not)**
  - What drives these differences (beyond demographic characteristics)?
  - Do the identified groups share any common ground/ transcending motivations?
  
- 3. Uncover the opportunities to get disabled people more active**
  - How to move disabled people through the behaviour change journey towards sustained activity (and are certain activities more suitable as 'entry' points to activity?)
  - Identify who are the most likely target groups for growth in participation
  - What are the optimal interventions/ communication channels/ services/ products to reach and activate the identified target groups?
  - What are the clear implications and recommendations for National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport, partners and deliverers to increase participation?

## Methodology

**The study ran from December 2013 until March 2013 and consisted of four different stages:**

**a) Collaborative scoping, secondary analysis and hypothesis generation**

Gathering information already available to better understand the sector

**b) Insider interviews**

Telephone interviews conducted with eight people with varied experience and knowledge of providing sport for disabled people

**c) In home interviews with disabled people**

Face to face discussions with disabled people with a variety of different impairments. A number of different creative techniques were used to assist in the discussion and make people think differently about the questions being asked. The interviews were filmed, with video clips created to help support the main findings of the research.

**d) Online Hub**

Online discussion forum ran over two weeks asking participants to complete set tasks and feedback their experiences

## Sample and demographics

**The sample was made up from 'insiders', people who have experience and knowledge of providing sport for disabled people and a mix of active and inactive disabled people**

**Eight insider interviews were conducted with a mix of people who have different levels of exposure to and experience of providing sport for disabled people**

- John Amaechi OBE- sports psychologist and EFDS vice president
- Jess Bool- ambassador and manager at WhizzKidz
- Penny Broomfield- physiotherapist and founder of the profiling system
- Brett Smith- Reader in Qualitative Health Research at Peter Harrison Centre, Loughborough University
- Ricky Stevenson- director of sport at Powerchair Football Association
- Cath Walker- senior lecturer in sport development at John Moores University
- Alex Gibbons- relationship manager at Interactive
- Isabelle Clement- director at Wheels for Wellbeing

**14 disabled people took part in face to face discussions and an online hub.** There was a mix of age, gender, location, impairment and current level of activity in sport and physical activity. In addition a mix of congenital (born with) and acquired (disabled after birth) impairments were recruited as previous research has identified this as playing a significant role in the opinions and views of sport and physical activity

The 14 disabled people who were involved in the research were:

- Gary, 35, visual impairment (acquired)
- Gerrard, 45, physical impairment (acquired)
- Richard, 32, physical impairment (congenital)
- Liam, 23, physical impairment (congenital)
- Juliet, 50, physical impairment (acquired)
- Francesca, 27, learning disability (congenital)
- Ken, 57, physical impairment (acquired)
- Akhil, 38, hearing impairment (acquired)
- Dani, 18, social impairment (congenital)
- Pip, 45, physical impairment (acquired)
- Eleanor, 18, learning disability and physical impairment (congenital)
- Daniella, 50, social disability (congenital)
- Doug, 52, visual impairment (acquired)
- Jade, 20, hearing impairment (congenital)

## Executive Summary

**This research identified that the majority of current sport and physical activity initiatives and promotions aimed at disabled people are failing to effectively engage them. This is because they tend to focus on disability or impairment and therefore disabled people do not associate with them.**

Disabled people are restricted by their impairments to different degrees, from having no impact on their lives to having a significant impact on their ability to complete daily tasks. In addition to this, the extent to which disabled people identify with being impaired or disabled varies significantly too.

Whilst a disabled person's impairment can cause them to face challenges in all aspects of their lives, it is generally not something which inspires them in their daily lives. Their attitudes and motivations are more likely to be driven by one or more of six key values:

- Having relationships
- Maintaining health
- Progressing in life
- Independence
- Having fun
- Having a positive self image

Therefore, in order to motivate disabled people to participate in sport and physical activity, opportunities need to connect with the values that are important to them, rather than focus on their impairment.

To encourage disabled people to take part in sport and physical activity, providers need to do three things. Firstly they need to increase awareness of the opportunities they have available for disabled people. Secondly they need to make sure that when promoting their opportunities they do so in ways connect with disabled people's values, therefore more likely to appeal to them. And finally, they need to make sure that they provide enough information so that disabled people feel confident they will be adequately provided for when taking part.

## Section 1: The context of the audience

**The society we live in creates barriers in daily living for various populations, especially disabled people. This means disabled people can be restricted in different ways and to certain degrees.**

For some disabled people, day-to-day activities can require more support, effort or energy. What may be perceived as basic tasks for some non-disabled people, like getting out of bed and getting dressed, can be difficult and more time-consuming for disabled people. Perhaps certain household chores prove problematic or leaving the house and travelling around outside can be challenging and frustrating.

From a social perspective, some disabled people may feel that there are limited opportunities available to them to socialise with people with similar hobbies and interests. They are also frustrated with the limited work and education opportunities available to them.

As evidenced in previous reports and supported here, disabled people with acquired impairments tend to feel these challenges more acutely. This is especially prevalent if they acquired their impairment as an adult. This is because they are more likely to be able to remember their life as a non-disabled person without many barriers in their lives and make comparisons. For this audience, it can often feel more difficult to achieve goals, believing that some things are no longer possible. This can lead to a sense of low self-worth, giving up and a lack of motivation, which in turn sometimes lead to low confidence as well as depression.

### **What does this mean for the sport and physical activity sector?**

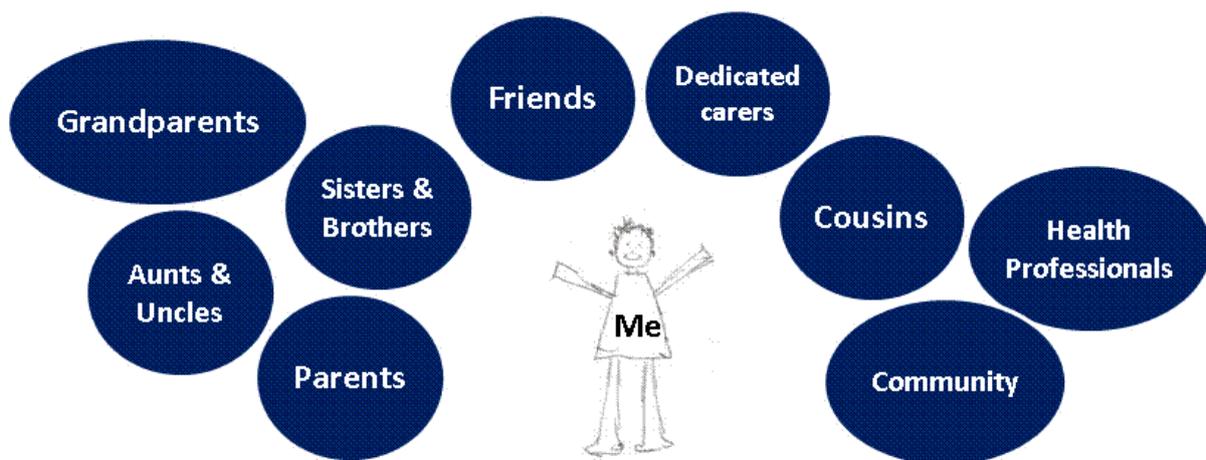
The challenges that disabled people face in everyday life can mean that they see sport and physical activity as something which is beyond their reach. This can be especially prevalent among disabled people who have acquired their impairment and the transition from daily living as a non-disabled person can prove limiting.

Although taking part in sport and physical activity may have barriers, the benefits that disabled people can gain from it can be significant. It is therefore important to break down more barriers in participation, support disabled people to understand these benefits and increase their motivation to take part.

## Disabled people can often be very dependent on other people.

Depending on the way in which, and the extent to which, disabled people's impairments impact on their daily living, they can require support to complete different tasks. This support comes from a variety of sources; from a family member or friend to a dedicated personal assistant to health care professional.

**Figure 1: The different people we depend on**



Some disabled people require physical support in helping them to complete tasks. Others require emotional support, asking people for advice and reassurance regarding decisions they are making.

### **What does this mean for the sport and physical activity sector?**

Due to this increased level of dependence, it is often the case that disabled people do not have a choice in, are not allowed to or are less likely to make decisions on new activities independently.

Therefore, there is an opportunity to use disabled people's support networks to help motivate and encourage their participation.

## **Disabled people can often live in a small world**

The world in which some disabled people live in can often be quite small. Where they travel to, whom they spend time with and the opportunities available to them can often be limited and quite narrow.

Geographically they may not travel very far from home. Some disabled people get anxious thinking about going somewhere new. How will they get there? What will the facilities be like when they get there? What will the staff like? Therefore, disabled people can become very loyal to certain places, preferring to return to a venue or location where they feel comfortable instead of trying new and different things.

The social circles of disabled people can also be quite small. They have fewer opportunities to meet new and different people. This can mean that often their families play a much more significant role in their lives.

In terms of employment and training disabled people can also face barriers. They can be frustrated as they feel there are limited opportunities available to them to train or work.

### **What does this mean for the sport and physical activity sector?**

By taking part in sport or physical activity, a disabled person can expand their environment and the opportunities in their lives. It can open up the chances to meet new people and enjoy different experiences.

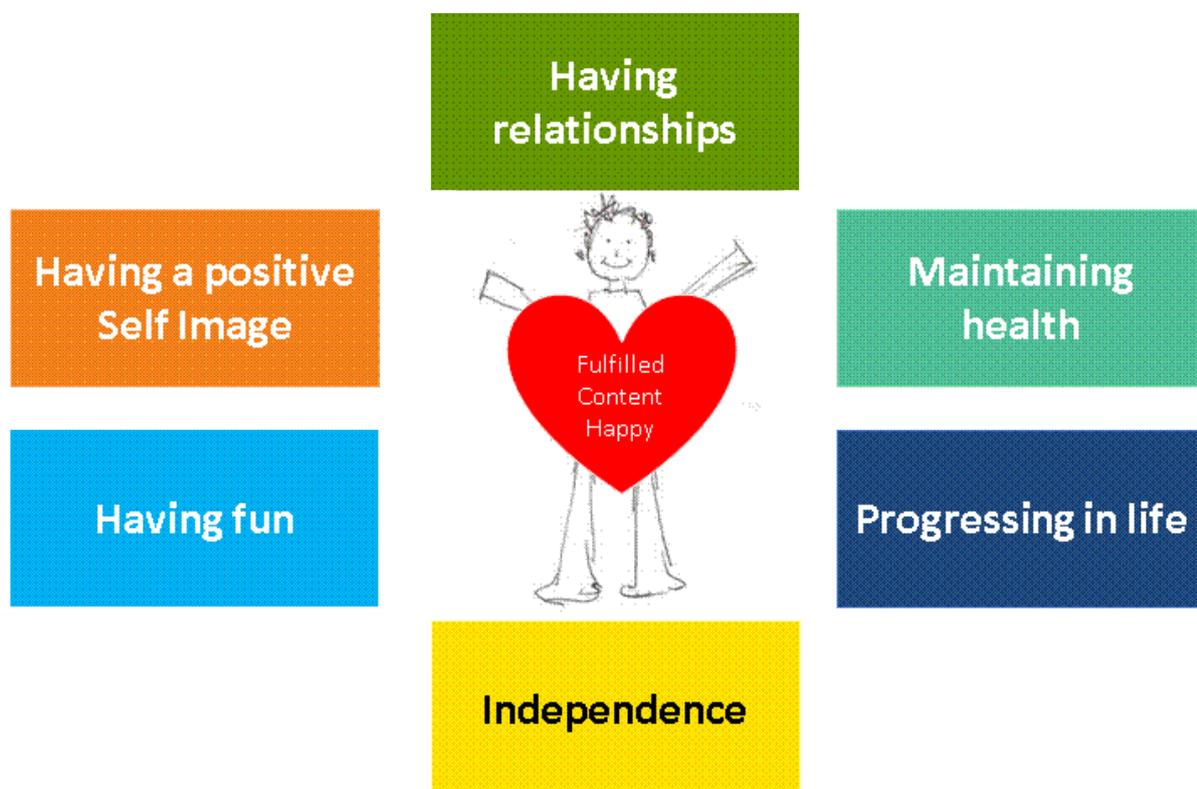
However, sport and physical activity providers must take into account that the things that restrict disabled people being part of a wider world may also act as barriers to them taking part in sport or physical activity.

## Section 2: What is important to them

### Disabled people are people first and their disability does not define them

There are lots of things that disabled people find important in life; the things that help them to feel fulfilled, content and happy. They are motivated by these things and their disability or impairment is generally not considered one of them. Their impairment may have an impact on what they can achieve but it is not something that they live for.

Figure 2: What is important to them



### 1. Having relationships

Not only can a disabled person's social circle be smaller, they can often be more dependent on the people around them. Therefore, the relationships that they have can be very important to them.

They can have especially strong relationships with family as they can play an important role in their day-to-day lives. They can provide both functional and emotional support, assisting disabled people to complete everyday tasks as well as motivating and encouraging them to do things.

“My mum is always there for me- we go shopping, we walk the dog, we go for lunches. She gets me through everything.” (Daniella)

“What would I do without my friends? They keep me grounded; they keep me sane!” (Jade)

## **2. Maintaining health**

The disabled people in this research were keen to keep on top of their health- to try and minimise the impact that their impairment has on their life. Certain activities can have a positive effect on the extent to which their impairment has an impact on their lives.

“I get quite stiff a lot of the time. It’s important I keep doing these exercises to try and reduce the pain and keep mobile.” (Juliet)

Whilst exercise and diet are the most common ways in which these disabled people say they maintain their health, they also use a variety of other methods to maintain physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Some use alternative therapies such as acupuncture or aromatherapy. Having ‘me-time’ to relax and unwind is also seen as important as well as having enough sleep. Also, regularly seeing a doctor and attending hospital appointments is important.

“I try to follow a balanced diet. My medication can make me feel tired and crabby so keeping on top of this helps me sleep better and balance my mood.” (Pip)

## **3. Progressing in life**

These disabled people liked to take part in activities that allow them to meet personal goals and aspirations, build upon current skills and develop new ones. They want to push their own boundaries and challenge themselves. They gain satisfaction from conquering something new, with a feeling that not everything is out of reach.

“I’m hoping to get onto a computer course next year - this will put me one step ahead and help to get a better position at work” (Akhil)

It is worth noting that the boundaries for these disabled people, due to restrictions placed upon them and their perceptions of what they are able to achieve, may be narrower than for non-disabled people. A challenge could be something like getting out of bed unaided or just ensuring that their impairment does not mean they cannot complete a training course.

“I’ve always loved kids. My condition sometimes disrupts my college routine but I’m determined to finish my course and get a job in a nursery” (Eleanor)

#### **4. Independence**

Whilst being independent and being able to do things on your own is important to almost everyone, it is particularly important to these disabled people. They face so many restrictions and challenges in life, and often rely heavily on others, that the need for independence is incredibly strong.

Being able to have control over the choices in their lives is crucial for expressing and maintaining identity and feeling a sense of freedom. They therefore actively pursue different hobbies and interests, which allow them to do this, such as going shopping, driving, or taking public transport alone; a lot of tasks that non-disabled people take for granted.

*“Just being able to go out and ride my bike on my own. I feel so free and alive”  
(Eleanor)*

Being able to participate purposely in activities that mean they are acknowledged and recognised as a ‘person’ (not ‘disabled’) is extremely important.

*“It actually upsets me when I feel I have to rely on my husband; I just want to get in my car and drive wherever, whenever” (Juliet)*

#### **5. Having fun**

This research showed, just like anyone else, disabled people want to have fun. It helps them relax and unwind and to not get overwhelmed by everyday life.

*“I love meeting my mates and going down the pub to watch the football - we just have a laugh, it’s what I look forward to” (Gary)*

*“I love being with my friends and going to the park for a kick about” (Liam)*

Having fun is at the centre of motivation and engagement. People seek to connect with activities that they find thrilling and exciting.

#### **6. Having a positive self-image**

Developing and sustaining a positive self-image is very important for the disabled people involved in this research. Regardless of age, gender, or impairment, wanting to feel confident and comfortable with different aspects of their appearance and self-image is a priority.

It is not just about maintaining or improving physical appearance, but also about feeling good about themselves. Some disabled people take part in alternative therapies and counselling to help improve their mental and emotional well-being.

“The main reason I run is to keep toned. My friends all kinda want that ‘beach body’ look. All the girls at school do” (Dani)

“My friends come over and we swap therapies – they give me a massage and do reiki” (Ken)

### **What does this mean for the sport and physical activity sector?**

In order to emotionally connect with disabled people, it is important to resonate with their values, the things that are important to them and what motivates them. By connecting to these values the concept of taking part in sport or physical activity will be more appealing and meaningful to them.

Sport and physical activity providers need to evaluate how they can link their offer to the values that disabled people find important in order to become more appealing.

**Having relationships:** By taking part in sport and physical activity, disabled people can form new relationships built on a common interest.

**Maintaining health:** Taking part in sport and physical activity can have health benefits for everyone. However, there may be specific benefits that can be emphasised. For example, the effects that taking part can have on a disabled person’s daily life and their impairment e.g. taking part can improve your inner core muscles meaning you are able to sit up.

**Progressing in life:** Taking part in sport and physical activity provides an opportunity to set individual goals and targets that when reached leads to a sense of achievement.

**Independence:** Taking part in sport and physical activity offers an individual the chance to do something with others for a common purpose, giving them a sense of belonging and freedom.

**Having fun:** Taking part in sport and physical activity provides another avenue where disabled people can have fun.

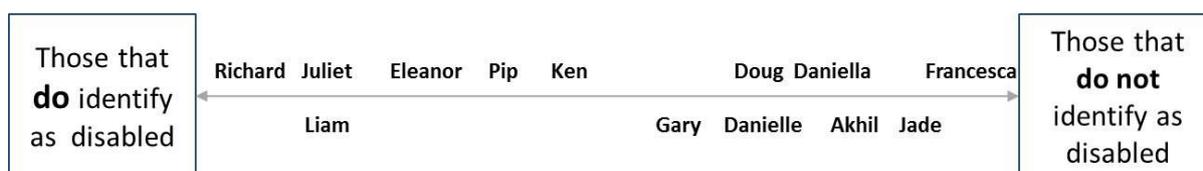
**Having a positive self-image:** Not only does taking part in sport and physical activity provide potential physical improvements to self-image, it can also give disabled people a chance to be successful, giving them a sense of well being

## Section 3: Living with an impairment

### The extent to which disabled people identify with being impaired or disabled varies.

The disabled people in this research tend to sit somewhere on a spectrum between those people that do identify with being a disabled person and those that do not.

**Figure 3: Extent to which people identify with being disabled**



Some people strongly identify with being a disabled person. They visibly embrace their impairment. They are more likely to be involved in support groups or online communities aimed at people with their impairment. This is more prevalent among people with a congenital impairment (born with). They see their impairment as being part of whom they are; something they have identified with from a young age.

Some people identified with being a disabled person some of the time. For the majority of their life they do not think about their impairment or wish to draw attention to it. However, on occasion, they actively identify with being a disabled person. This is usually on occasions where the person wants to provide a quick indicator in the environment they are in.. For example, the use of a white stick in a crowded place for someone with a visual impairment so that people are aware and are more considerate.

Some people do not identify with being a disabled person at all. This is more prevalent in people with an acquired impairment, especially among people recovering from an operation or with a long-term health condition, which impacts their life (such as MS). They instead see themselves with a medical condition rather than as a disabled person.

### The extent to which people's impairment impact their daily lives varies.

Although people may not identify with being disabled as such, they do acknowledge that their impairment limits their ability to perform certain activities on a day-to-day basis. The limitations that are experienced are very individual. Each person has their own set of unique needs.

**Figure 4: Extent to which impairment impacts upon life**



For some disabled people in this research, the impact that their impairment has on their day-to-day life is minimal. They can perform the majority of activities with very few adjustments. There is little outward evidence of their impairment.

For many disabled people though, the impact their impairment has on their daily routines is much more intermittent. Their impairment is more restricting during specific activities or specific contexts and scenarios. At other times it barely impacts their day to day life. People in this situation have a fairly strong perception of what they can or can not do and have adapted their life to suit.

For some disabled people, their impairment has a significant impact on their day-to-day life. It affects many elements in their life and how independent they can be. Often people in this situation perceive themselves as fairly restricted in what they can do and because of that they tend to live a more confined life.

### **What does this mean for the sport and physical activity sector?**

People who do not class themselves as disabled are less likely to emotionally connect to things targeted at disabled people. This should be taken into consideration when developing new opportunities for disabled people in sport and physical activity, and the types of initiatives and communications involved.

## Section 4: Sport in disabled people's lives

### Some sports/activities are seen as more accessible than others

Due to the limitations that disabled people's impairments can place on them, some disabled people see certain sports and physical activities as more appropriate for them.

**Figure 5: How appealing disabled people perceive certain activities**



The activities which these disabled people perceive as more accessible to them are generally things which they can take part in alone. They prefer this as it means they do not risk the embarrassment of not being as good as others. They generally believe there is a lower level of skill required to take part in these activities and that the activity can be tailored to suit their ability. These activities give the individual more control. They do not need to learn rules. Less equipment and organisation is required to take part and there are fewer safety concerns.

Activities which are generally less appealing to disabled people can often involve having to participate and compete with others. This increases the risk of showing they are not as good or as capable as other people taking part. There is a belief that a greater level of skill is required and that you need to learn rules to take part. More specialised equipment and a greater level of organisation is required and there are some safety concerns about taking part.

There is a lack of awareness of potential adaptations that can be made to certain sports in order to make them more suitable and relevant (e.g. different equipment).

Although disabled people may make a judgement of how relevant activities are to them, this does not mean that they dismiss activities that they deem as less suitable. There is still a wide level of interest in other activities, which is often derived from things that they used to do when they were younger or before they were disabled. Watching sports and activities on television can also increase interest. There may also be sports that they are aware of that they have always wanted to but have never managed to try.

“I love the idea of going canoeing, going really fast in the water is so exciting- I like the thrill of it!” (Eleanor)

“I was a football coach....football was my life. I still watch it and sometimes watch coaching on YouTube, which brings a tear to my eye. If I could play again I’d be ecstatic but I get too fatigued” (Gerrard)

### **What does this mean for the sport and physical activity sector?**

The limitations that disabled people’s impairments place upon them impacts their perceptions of how suitable and appropriate different sports and activities are to them.

It is important to emphasise what can be achieved by taking part in sport as well as highlighting the different adaptations, which ensure people can take part.

Raising awareness of what is available and how people can take part will help to increase disabled people’s enthusiasm to try new activities.

Consideration should be given to providing guidance and support so disabled people can take part by themselves as well as addressing the concerns and limitations of taking part in group activities.

### **Perceptions of their own ability, the logistical challenges of taking part and a resistance to change are significant barriers to participation in sport and physical activity**

The main barriers preventing disabled people from taking part in sport and physical activity are similar to those that non-disabled people face, but can often be more pronounced.

#### **Perceptions of their own ability**

Often disabled people feel that they will not be able to take part in sport or physical activity because of their impairment. They worry that they will not be able to keep up or compete at the same level.

“I have taken part in classes for older people as I know I will be able to keep up with them” (Gerrard)

In a team situation, disabled people can be concerned that they may let the team down. They do not want to take part in something where they may stand out, feel different, or risk feeling humiliated.

“I’m just not very confident I’m going to be able to do the class” (Pip)

### **Logistics**

The logistics of taking part are also a primary concern to disabled people. Getting to the venue can be the first hurdle. It is helpful to know what transport is available and at what cost. Once there, it is helpful to know whether specialised equipment is needed to participate and whether it is provided or participants must bring their own.

“I wish I could convey to you what it takes for me to even get up in the morning, let alone go swimming. It’s a logistical nightmare” (Richard)

Disabled people can often need someone to go with who can help and support them such as a partner, friend or carer. These disabled people need to know that their supporters are welcome at the activity, perhaps even take part in some way.

Another worry is the level of support that will be available once they get there. What trainers, coaches or staff will be present and what level of training and experience do they have to support disabled people in sport?

“If the staff don’t know how to ensure that I can participate safely, with everyone else, then it’s difficult” (Gerrard)

“Coaches need to be trained to be able to deal with your impairment without making a big deal of it” (Liam)

### **Resistance to change**

Given the limitations that disabled people can face in their day-to-day lives, there can be a strong sense from some that life is hard enough anyway, before considering starting something new. They are not willing to put in the extra effort needed to take part in sport or physical activity.

“I tend to think, if I do that I’ll probably make things worse. Taking that first step is hard” (Juliet)

For some disabled people, it may be physically uncomfortable or painful to be more active. For others, they could have spent time living in a smaller world, a safe environment with limited experiences. This makes them less confident in going outside of their comfort zone and trying something new.

“We see people who say ‘I can’t cycle can I?’ as our challenge. We’re all about removing the barriers to cycling... We see cycling as an agent of change” (Isabelle Clement, Wheels for Wellbeing)

## **Lack of awareness of opportunities also prevents disabled people from taking part**

Many disabled people are simply unaware of what activities are available for them in their area. They often dismiss ‘standard’ sports as being unsuitable and are unaware of adaptations that can be made to sports and activities to make them more suitable to their needs. They do not know that opportunities exist for ‘people like me’.

“I tried searching for handball sessions in my area ‘cos I know there is one but I couldn’t find it. I searched for hours online” (Richard)

“I don’t know of any opportunities to play (football) with people with MS and I can’t imagine how it would work – don’t you have to be active to play? I’ve never heard of wheelchair football – maybe I would give that a go” (Gerrard )

## **In order to motivate disabled people to participate they need to be able to connect things to their values**

For the majority of disabled people in this research, taking part in sport and physical activity is seen as something that helps people to fulfil the ‘having fun’ and ‘maintaining health’ values.

“My yoga class gives me that positive attitude, it helps me to target and alleviate all my stress” (Pip)

“I’d love to play a team based sport – I’d love the camaraderie and fun” (Richard)

These disabled people do not currently associate sport and physical activity with other values as much.

### **What does this mean for the sport and physical activity sector?**

There is a clear need to improve the level of communication about what opportunities exist for disabled people. The communication not only needs to promote what is available, but needs to be effective in engaging disabled people and making them think that the activity

would be suitable and relevant to them. It is important not only to embed inclusive communication principles but also to ensure promotion is accessible to more people, it needs to break down the barriers and overcome concerns.

The English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) has produced a guide to inclusive communications. It provides essential better practice guidance on planning, terminology and language, it explains the purpose of accessible formats and shows how providers can get the best from their communications.

[http://www.efds.co.uk/resources/case\\_studies/2697\\_access\\_for\\_all\\_efds\\_inclusive\\_communications\\_guide](http://www.efds.co.uk/resources/case_studies/2697_access_for_all_efds_inclusive_communications_guide)

### **Perceptions of ability**

Highlight that activities are suitable for people regardless of ability. Show imagery of different people taking part. This is not only people with different impairments, but various levels, interactions etc. Emphasise different adaptations that support the activity to ensure everyone can participate.

### **Logistics**

Provide detailed information on the venue facilities and transport links to help people make informed choices about whether they can attend.

Emphasise that everyone is welcome, so the disabled people know that they can bring their personal assistants or family/partners, who may even be able to get involved as well. Highlight whether or not specialised equipment is needed and will be provided, and if not, provide guidance on where it can be sourced and the expected cost.

Provide information so that disabled people feel comfortable that the staff, trainers and coaches are comfortable with and capable of providing a quality experience for disabled people.

### **Resistance to change**

Emphasise messages about the activity, which will appeal to the disabled people's values, to make it more appealing. Highlight the social aspect of taking part or the benefits to self-image.

Providers need to raise awareness of their activity, ensure that they emotionally connect to disabled people and emphasise that they will be suitably supported when taking part

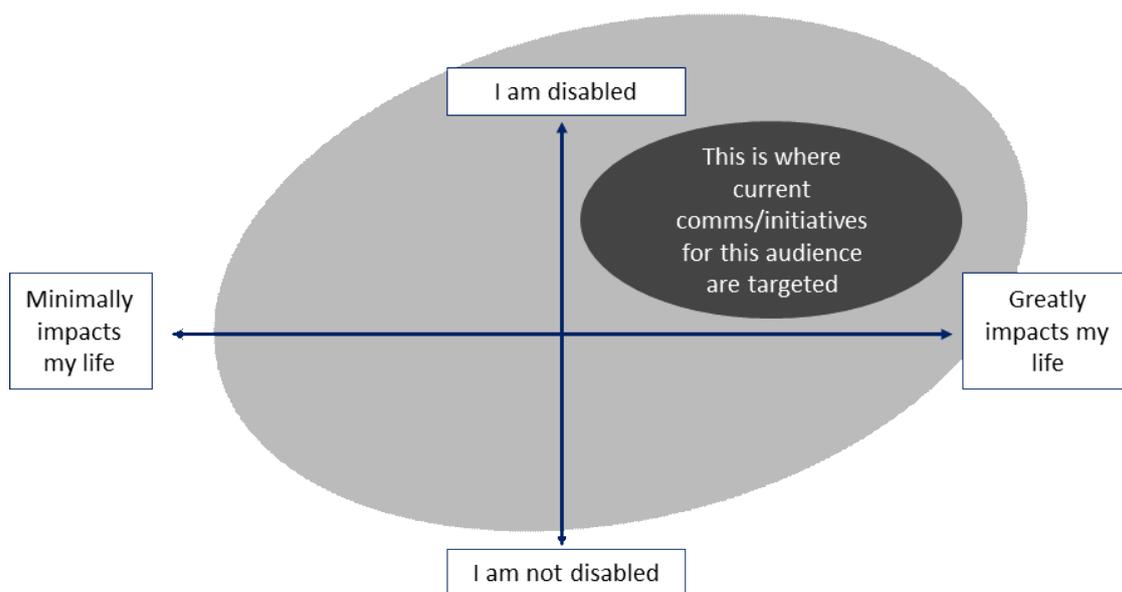
## Section 5: Response to current marketing and initiatives

### Current sport and physical activity promotion and initiatives may be focused too narrowly to capture the widest audience

Current communication and initiatives for disabled people are not as effective as they could be because they can often focus on the wrong things. Promotion is often disability focused. It often fails to emotionally connect to the end user by not linking to their relevant values. And it often provides little or no information to help disabled people understand how their needs will be supported.

By emphasising activities are for disabled people, or people with specific impairments, it can be off putting, or prevent things from appealing to people.

**Figure 6: Where current communication and initiatives for disabled people are currently focused and where they should be focused**



People who do not class themselves as disabled are less likely to emotionally connect to things targeted at disabled people. Therefore, promotions are not appealing to a significant proportion of the targeted audience.

Even among those disabled people who do identify with being disabled, these promotions can still lack appeal. Their impairment is not one of things that motivates them in life and does not drive them to try new activities. In order for sport or an activity to appeal, they need to link with the things that are important to disabled people and play to their values.

Disabled people have many concerns about the suitability of an activity, and whether the limitations that they face from their impairment, will be adequately supported. They choose activities so that they are confident they will receive the right level of support or will not stand out and feel different.

“I look for classes for older people as I’m more confident and I’ll be able to participate” (Gerrard)

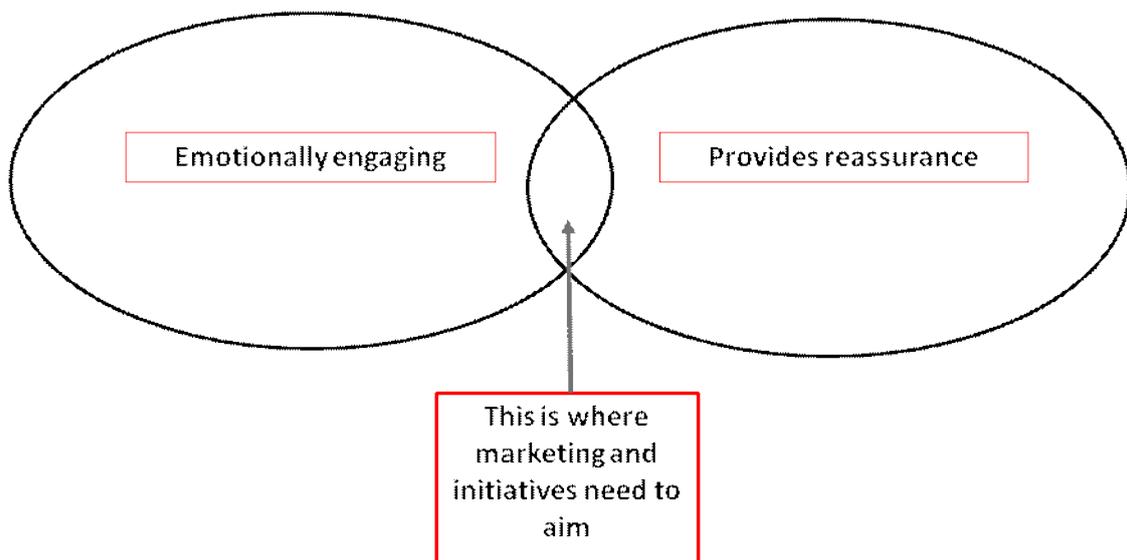
“I feel comfortable going to limited movement classes with my mum as I know I will be able to keep up with everybody” (Eleanor)

The extent to which the instructor or coach is able and willing to support them is also important.

“I went trampolining and the coach was trained in special needs so I could go with my friends, and the coach would treat me differently but the same. I would have different actions but I felt included” (Liam)

Many current initiatives and communications struggle to emotionally connect and provide reassurance.

**Figure 7: Current promotion for sport or physical activity for disabled people struggle to emotionally connect and provide reassurance**



## In order to be more appealing, sport and physical activity opportunities need to ensure to cover three main areas

1. To increase participation among disabled people, sport and physical activity providers firstly need to increase awareness of what they have to offer.

**Figure 8: Three things that providers need to do to improve participation among disabled people. Raise awareness, emotionally connect and provide relevant support**



2. Any activity and associated promotion needs to emotionally connect with disabled people. It needs to connect with one or more of their values to inspire and motivate them to take part.

“Crown green bowling is something I have thought about in the past. It looks fun! My concern with doing this sport would be the balance issues I have with my MS” (Gerrard)

“I would love to try canoeing if I think I would have the confidence to have a go” (Eleanor)

3. Information must be available to ensure that disabled people are confident that they will receive enough support to be able to take part.

“I have wanted to take part in badminton activity before. It was just finding someone to play with me” (Francesca)

“I do quite like the idea of Zumba but know it is quite fast paced and not sure if I would be able to do this with my health problems (back, neck, hip)” (Juliet)

## Section 5: Recommendations

### Increasing awareness of opportunities is a priority

To increase participation, disabled people need to be made aware of what is available. Providers need to start thinking about the amount and types of channels that they use to communicate their opportunities. To maximise exposure it is important to communicate opportunities through the channels, which are most likely to reach disabled people. Simply putting something on your own website once and hoping participants find you is not a good marketing practice with any audience.

“Promotion through people who work with them is key, such as physiotherapists. It’s about creating connections” (Ricky Stephenson, expert)

To maximise exposure sport and physical activity, providers should capitalise on the touch points that disabled people engage with regularly such as:

- Doctors or other health care professionals
- Community support groups
- Peer support groups
- Carer groups
- Charities
- Educational establishments
- Shopping centres, cinemas etc.

Touch points around the health sector provide a particular opportunity as they can be seen to be a credible source of information that people will listen to. An additional advantage of working with people in this sector is that they often have regular contact with disabled people over which time they build up strong and trusting relationships.

### It is important to emotionally connect with disabled people by aligning sport or physical activity with their values

Disabled people are more likely to feel that the sport or physical activity is ‘for them’ if it talks to a number of aspects within their value system. By playing to more than one value through initiatives and marketing, you are more likely to talk to people holistically and therefore be more impactful and relevant.

“The most important thing to know about a team of under-18 male wheelchair basketball players is that they are teenage and male -that’s the most important thing to recognise first.” (John Amaechi OBE, expert)

To minimise alienation, you should not address this audience as ‘disabled’ or focus principally on grouping people with certain impairments. Rather than referring to their impairment, a stronger approach would be to reference relevant restrictions that they could face, using language that cuts across audiences. For example, you could promote an exercise class as for people with ‘limited movement’. This could be just as suitable for non-disabled people with a temporary restriction.

“You need to target disabled people but also need to ‘normalise’ the communications. It shouldn’t look and feel like we’re in a disabled bubble.” (Isabelle Clement, expert)

- Promote activities through social ‘hubs’ like workplaces, parent groups, or in pubs. Locations which are not defined by disability.
- The activities provided should have a mixture of disabled and non-disabled people to take part together where possible.
- Offer amends and alternatives that acknowledge limitations, but allow people to play alongside each other, e.g. all play golf but with fewer holes, all play wheelchair football.

## **To maximise and retain participation there are six keys areas providers need to consider**

To maximise the appeal and to retain disabled people once they do attend, there are six things that providers should take into consideration:

1. Training coaches, instructors and staff in providing for disabled people
2. Providing a range of sessions to suit different needs and ability levels
3. Showing what is possible
4. Providing and promoting accessible local facilities, clubs and venues
5. Encouraging friends, family and supporters to take part
6. Providing a range of equipment to suit different needs

### **Training coaches and staff in providing for disabled people**

Providers should think about providing staff with training in how to welcome and include people with a variety of impairments. This should result in them feeling more confident, relaxed and comfortable when working with disabled people. Training should not just be focused on instructors or coaches, but should be made available to all staff that disabled people may interact with.

For front of house staff such as receptionists, training should focus on how to provide good customer service- how to ensure a welcoming and comfortable environment. For example, disability awareness, communication better practices (developing practices for people with various impairments), venue tours for all new members/guests (This is a good practice for people with a visual impairment this gives them a sense of the layout and makes them more comfortable moving around independently, for others it means they do not have to find their own way around).

For coaches and instructors, training should include guidance on how to be supportive during a session; what questions to ask, ways in which to demonstrate adaptations without making disabled people feel isolated. Examples should be provided of adaptations that can be made depending on the limitations of those people taking part. Also, encourage coaches and instructors to think above and beyond the actual activity, perhaps calling people after a session to see how they found it. This is a good customer service practice for any activity and any attendee as it provides valuable feedback.

“The role of the coach is important – they need to know how to talk to a person with a disability” (Penny Broomhead, expert)

Another good way to improve the experience of disabled people within the activity is to implement a buddy or ambassador scheme. Give responsibility to more experienced members of the group or team to follow up with disabled people to see how they are enjoying it and whether there can be any improvements made.

### **Provide a range of sessions to suit different needs and ability levels**

To maximise participation it is best to offer a range of activities for different ability levels and to ensure that it is clearly communicated what each activity or session offers.

Be clear as to whether the activity is for beginner or people with more experience. Is it a solo activity or something done in a team? Is it a casual activity, something done for fun, or something more serious with a specific end goal? What day of the week do different activities take place? Providing this information ensures that people can make an informed choice of whether that activity is suitable for them.

Offer different ways in which people can take part. Have non-committal drop in sessions where people pay as they attend. Provide courses for set periods (eg. six week sessions) that people pay for up front. Organise trials or one-off taster sessions so people can come and see whether they like the sport and are able to take part without any long term commitment. When playing in teams or competitions try and skill match to ensure a game is fair.

It could be that people are unaware or unsure of your sport and the time, effort and energy it would take to come and try is a barrier to participation. Work with other local providers to offer mixed activity sessions, to make it more appealing for people to make the effort to come and try different things. They may not like your sport, but have the chance to try others.

### **Show what is possible**

A good way to get disabled people to understand that a sport or activity is for them is to enable them to visualise it. Make it more tangible and believable that they are able to take part.

“You have to visually show what’s possible and who can participate. Provide testimonials of participants and encourage positive word of mouth” (Isabelle Clement, expert)

Use case studies, testimonials, videos and pictures of people who already take part that disabled people can relate and connect to. Do not focus on a person’s impairment or disability, but rather the reasons for taking part and the benefits of the actual activity. Try and identify with the values that disabled people hold important.

Use demonstrations so people can see what it is like to take and part and the adaptations that can be made. The use of ambassadors or mentors, (who do not have to be elite athletes as not every disabled person relates to this top performance level) at demonstration days to tell their story and demonstrate using equipment can also be powerful.

### **Provide and promote accessible local facilities**

One of the main barriers to participation is the logistical complications of finding and getting to suitable and accessible venues. For disabled people to be motivated to take part they need to know that when they arrive at a venue they will be able to gain access and move around easily.

Be descriptive about what facilities (and the sessions they will take part in) will be like to help people visualise the environment and be reassured that it will cater to their needs.

Provide photos and videos on your website, which give a sense of scale so people can understand what the facilities are like.

Pay attention to the details of facilities, from accessible changing rooms for people in sports wheelchairs, to the location and distance from the building where the accessible car park spaces are. Offer detailed information on the local transport links and how people might be able to find you.

You can find more information on the kinds of changes and adaptations that can be help in the English Federation of Disability Sport's 'Access for All, Opening Doors' guide [http://www.efds.co.uk/resources/case\\_studies/2317\\_access\\_for\\_all\\_opening\\_doors\\_a\\_guide\\_to\\_support\\_sports\\_clubs\\_to\\_improve\\_physical\\_access\\_for\\_disabled\\_people](http://www.efds.co.uk/resources/case_studies/2317_access_for_all_opening_doors_a_guide_to_support_sports_clubs_to_improve_physical_access_for_disabled_people)

Once you are confident you are providing enough relevant information about the venue and facility, ensure that you promote it widely. Use local links and online tools to ensure people can easily access the relevant information.

### **Encourage friends, family and carers to come along**

Disabled people can be much more reliant on friends and family to support them in taking part in hobbies and interests. Therefore, to increase participation among disabled people, encourage their friends and family to join in or include them in activities too.

Where appropriate and possible, let disabled people's supporters take part in the sport. Do not single them out as 'supporters' but rather as additional team members. This not only increases the participation of disabled people but also non-disabled people too, therefore improving the well-being of a wider audience.

If taking part in the sport is not suitable, or they are not interested, think about other ways in which the supporter could participate. Can they be assistant coaches or volunteer in the activity? Make the time that they spend at the activity enjoyable for them too, so they want to return for themselves, not just as a supporter.

### **Provide a range of equipment to suit different needs**

The need for adapted or specialised equipment can be a barrier to participation, but past research has shown it is not the biggest barrier. Be clear as to what equipment is needed to take part and the variety for different limitations. If relevant, make it clear that use of equipment at clubs is free. If a cost is involved, be clear as to what that is. However, be aware that making activities or equipment etc. free does not necessarily mean disabled people will want to take part.

If individuals must bring their own equipment, provide guidance on where they can find it and at what costs. Or give examples of equipment that can be adapted or amended to suit the needs.

**For more information on this survey or report, please contact Emma Spring at EFDS.**

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**The report is available to download on [www.efds.co.uk](http://www.efds.co.uk)**

**Twitter [@EFDSInsight](https://twitter.com/EFDSInsight)**

### **Join our insight panel**

EFDS is always looking for disabled people's support on our insight projects. There are many occasions we may get asked to help with other organisations' research or for our own development plans.

If you would like to join our panel of disabled people, please contact us on [research@efds.co.uk](mailto:research@efds.co.uk) or 0161 2005442. It will be mainly communication via email or telephone, so you do not have to commit to any unnecessary time or travel.