



# Achieving Fairness

**Activity Alliance Strategy 2021-2024**

[activityalliance.org.uk](https://activityalliance.org.uk)





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Barry Horne

# Foreword by our Chief Executive

In a year like no other before, we consulted with our members and partners to inform our new strategy's development and future direction.

Building on the successes from the last strategy, our new vision is more ambitious than the previous one and calls for **fairness for disabled people in sport and activity**. There needs to be an increased commitment from organisations across various sectors to support disabled people and provide greater opportunities to be active. We need to improve outdated views about what disabled people can and cannot do, to new co-designed ideas. The negative attitudes about disabled people will only prevent us from seeing any rapid growth in participation.

In addition to this it was clear that our immediate focus must be on how we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has greatly impacted our country in so many ways and hit disabled people the hardest. Our three-year strategy acknowledges this situation. It recognises that there is much to do as a nation.

Disabled people must feel welcomed in and reassured and excited about the opportunities in sport and activity. For that to happen, the people providing opportunities must also feel confident and skilled to return better than ever before. We must strike fast and target in the right way to ensure we recover, rebuild, and thrive together.





Fairness is central to our strategy because our society, quite simply, remains unfair on so many levels for disabled people. The pandemic has widened pre-existing inequalities at pace, and we must join forces to prioritise disabled people's inclusion in sport and activity.

This includes disabled people taking part for fun as much as it is for elite competition. It includes current or potential disabled leaders, officials, and coaches. We know change will not happen overnight. Positive intent must be turned into positive action if we are to meet the needs of the least active group in the country.

Our strategy acknowledges the need to tackle the challenge head on. We want disabled people to be at the heart of the recovery. Disabled people's lived experiences are essential to rebuilding fairer opportunities in sport and activity.

Activity Alliance faces a very testing period in coming years - our role just got more important. We will not settle until every disabled person can reap the same physical and mental health and social benefits as non-disabled people.

# Introduction

We have a clear ambition. It is not right or fair that disabled people are the least active in our society.

Sport and activity play an important role in our nation's health so must be a level playing field for everybody. Therefore, we have refreshed our vision to be **fairness for disabled people in sport and activity**.

Disabled people participate less than non-disabled people and they are also twice as likely to be inactive. We call this the **fairness gap**, and we aim to close this gap within a generation by focussing on these two key goals:

1. Embedding inclusive practice into organisations.
2. Changing attitudes towards disabled people in sport and activity.

We know that our collective efforts were making a difference before the pandemic struck. Since 2017, there had been a 3% decrease in the proportion of disabled people who are inactive\*, from 43.3% to 40.4%<sup>1</sup>. Yet despite this positive advancement, disabled people remained almost twice as likely to be inactive as non-disabled people.

Our research and insight leads the way in helping us to understand the barriers to sport and activity for disabled people. It includes insight on the pandemic, such as disabled people feeling they have less opportunity to take part<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it is crucial that we can motivate organisations to respond to not just the pre-existing barriers but those heightened or created by COVID-19.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has led to increasing inactivity levels for everyone, there has been a bigger increase for disabled people. During the initial lockdown period (March to May 2020) statistics show 10.3% more disabled people were inactive, compared to the same period in the previous year. This is compared to 7.1% more for non-disabled people<sup>3</sup>. This worrying increase indicates that much of the positive progress achieved in recent years has been reversed by the pandemic.

The reality is that disabled people remain the least active group in society and we must all do more to change this negative picture. Our 2021-2024 strategy is ambitious and recognises the work in hand. Everything we do in the next three years will be shaped by our determination to overcome the extra challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our consolidated response to the COVID-19 pandemic will ensure that the voices of disabled people can be embedded within the recovery. Activity Alliance will continue to push for inclusion to be at the heart of all plans in sport and activity and disabled people prioritised, locally and nationally.

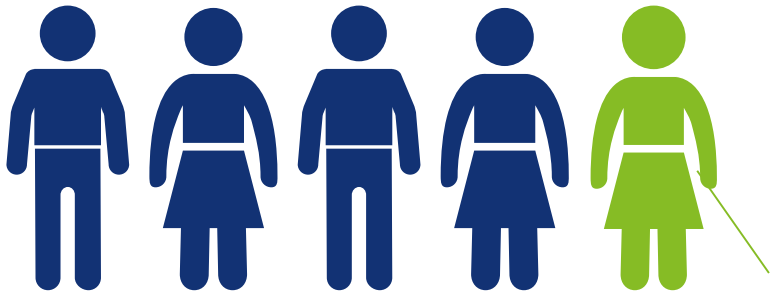
We recognise that we cannot achieve our vision alone and we would like to take this opportunity to thank our key funders and supporters. These include our primary funding partners Sport England, Spirit of 2012, and the London Marathon Charitable Trust. Our individual supporters and volunteers, and our members are essential to build a powerful movement for change.





# Who we work for and why

One in five people in the UK considers themselves a disabled person - 14.1 million people<sup>4</sup>.



This represents a large proportion of our population, living within our communities, with diverse thoughts and experiences.

When we consider closing the fairness gap for disabled people in sport and activity, we must look at much more than individuals' impairments or health conditions. In all our work, we recognise the diversity of disabled people. Everyone's intersectionality – their characteristics and lived experience should not be overlooked. We are all motivated by different experiences,

beliefs, influences, and desires. By positively embracing this diversity, we understand that everyone's desire to be active is driven by much more than disability.

Our plans recognise disabled people as individuals and that one size does not fit all. We all need to look proactively at what motivates disabled people to be active and less on inspirational stories. Our research tells us that activities should connect to people's values<sup>5</sup>. There is more connection in having fun, feeling healthy and progressing in life. Our latest Annual Survey indeed showed that improving or maintaining health is the top motivation (67%)<sup>6</sup>.

## Seven in ten

disabled people  
are motivated to be  
active to improve or  
maintain their health.







We know that insight has shown the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of isolation and loneliness<sup>7</sup>. Sport and physical activity have an important role to play in responding to people's desire to be better connected. We must ensure then that everyone feels part of the communities in which they live and that they have fair access to all opportunities. Sport and activity can be a powerful tool in breaking down these barriers and changing attitudes.

Sport and physical activity must be open to all whatever the personal motivations. It also presents a platform to demonstrate that everyone has a role in wider societal change. That is in social and community development, improving access to physical and mental well-being, and driving economic development.

Disabled people must feel they belong in all aspects of sport and activity. We must have disabled people in roles that involve decision making and leadership, and in influential roles such as coaches, teachers, and leaders. Genuine change will only happen if the decision makers are as diverse as the people that they serve.

Our work is informed by the social model of disability. The social model, developed by disabled people, focuses on barriers to disabled people being created by society, for example the built environment and people's attitudes. We identify disabled people as active citizens whose role in sport and activity is just as important as non-disabled people.

Disabled people must have equal opportunity to access the benefits that being active offers, as individuals, as a community and as a society. Our strategic focus is therefore on ensuring that disabled people can get fair access to these benefits.



For more information about our work visit: [www.activityalliance.org.uk](http://www.activityalliance.org.uk)

# Our vision

Fairness for disabled  
people in sport and activity





# Our organisational goals

We will close the gap between disabled people's level of inactivity and that of non-disabled people. We will make that change within a generation by:



**Embedding inclusive practice into organisations**



**Changing attitudes towards disabled people in sport and activity**







# Who we work with

To achieve fairness, we know we need to work with multiple stakeholders who will unite with us to make our vision a reality. This is an important mix of organisations and individuals across various sectors, who can support and influence disabled people's activity.

Disabled people and their networks lead our insight and development. We will ensure that the diverse voices and lived experience of disabled people are used to inform decisions. This co-creation and co-production will empower our work and our delivery will help us and others to target more effectively.

Working closely with our members we shall collectively respond to disabled people's needs, finding new ways to increase engagement levels in sport and activity. As providers, we will support more traditional sporting partners' delivery as well as developing new partnerships to reach new audiences.

Our new strategy will call on innovation and embedding the learning from our successful programmes to date. As we push to change attitudes, there will be an increased focus on raising our profile. Maximising our visibility and ability to influence will be essential, so in sport and activity, disabled people are considered more within policy and decision making.



# How we work

Activity Alliance is the leading voice for disabled people in sport and activity.

We will:



have a passionate commitment to working with partners to remove barriers and unlock the value of sport and activity,



be guided in all our work by insight and disabled people's lived experience,



drive internal organisational improvement, and



shape and align all our work to achieve our organisational goals.







# Our values and behaviours

We continue to strengthen and embed a dynamic culture built solidly on our shared values. These shared values shape our behaviour.



## We care

We are passionate about what we do, and who we do it for.

- We actively listen and understand people as individuals, with diverse needs and aspirations.
- We go the extra mile to make a positive difference to disabled people's lives.
- We take pride in our work and face challenges head on.



## We unite

We collaborate with others to achieve greater outcomes.

- We see the strength in others and value our members as part of our extended family.
- We co-create ideas and solutions, putting disabled people at the heart of everything we do.
- We enjoy getting to know others and hearing their stories.
- We recognise that things can go wrong but welcome the learning and support from each other when they do.



## We champion

We recognise everyone's voice must be heard if we are to provide equitable places to live, work and thrive.

- We respect and promote people's authentic voices and experiences.
- We follow our own advice and behave as we expect others to.
- We celebrate positive changes, no matter how big or small.
- We celebrate difference, actively seek diversity, and embed inclusion.

# Strategic objectives

We are ambitious in our vision and have clarity in our purpose. Our strategic objectives steer the organisational direction and ensure a clear line of sight between our vision and measuring our impact.

**Our teams' work will focus on these four strategic objectives:**

## 1 **Champion disabled people's voices** and maximise Activity Alliance's visibility

- Ensure disabled people's diverse voices and experiences inform our work.
- Increase our media engagement.
- Advocate and influence change.

## 2 **Use high-quality expertise and insight** to educate and inform decision making, and influence policy

- Expand and embed sector-leading research and insight.
- Deliver bespoke resources, programmes and events for our target audiences.
- Inform inclusive practice through robust evaluation.

## 3 **Address inequalities through collaboration**, improving engagement and delivery with and for disabled people

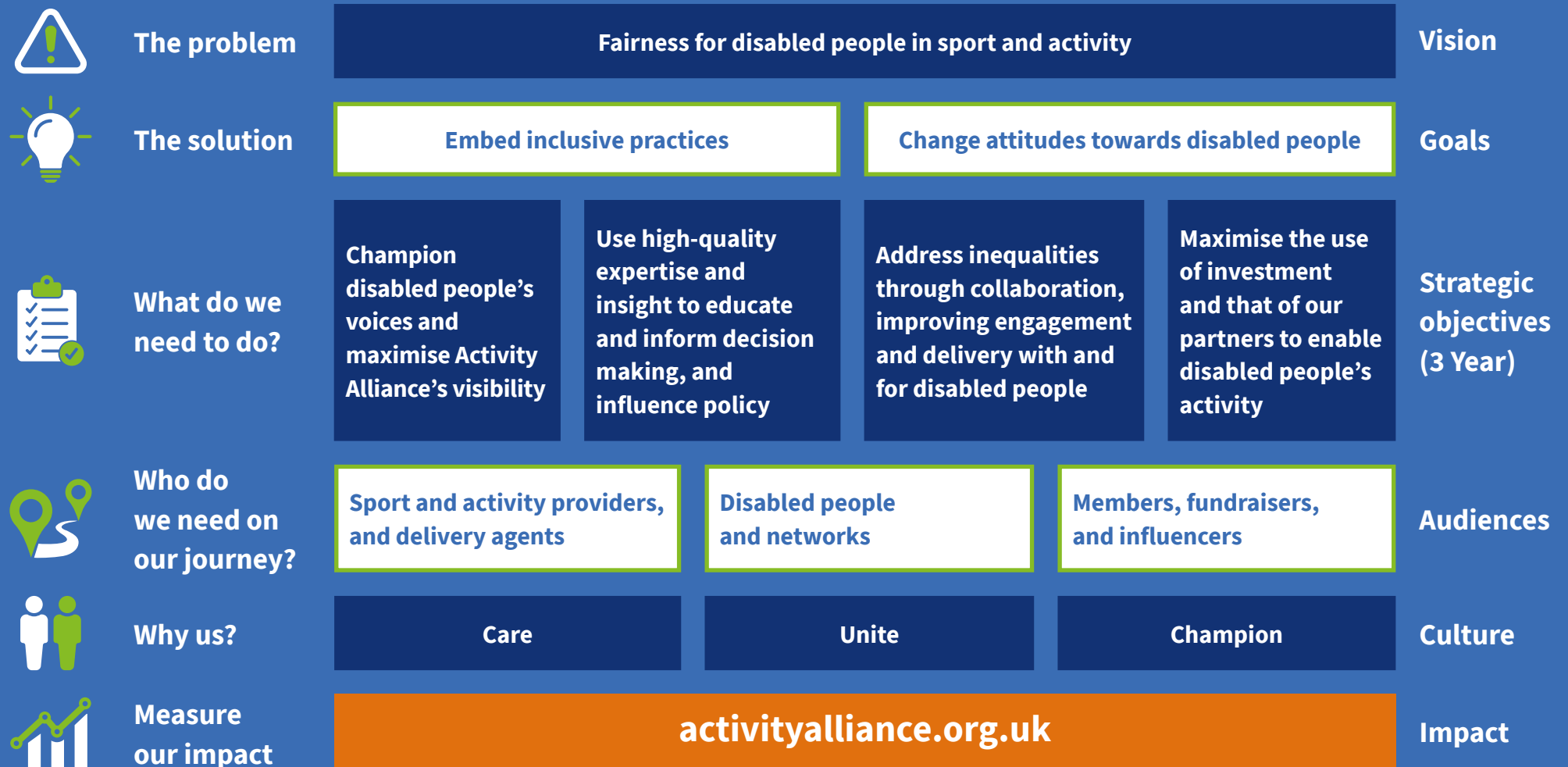
- Encourage organisations' continued improvement so more disabled people can be active.
- Co-create with disabled people, members and partners to build an influential movement.
- Ensure our work is relevant to a diverse range of people with lived experiences, by encouraging conversations with all disabled people, including young disabled people.

## 4 **Maximise the use of investment** and that of our partners to enable disabled people's activity

- Increase our charity investment, influence partner investment decisions, and diversify our income streams.

# Our Theory of Change

This Theory of Change diagram sets out the framework which guides all our work. Our operational plan sits beneath this framework and we will use this to drive and evaluate our progress.





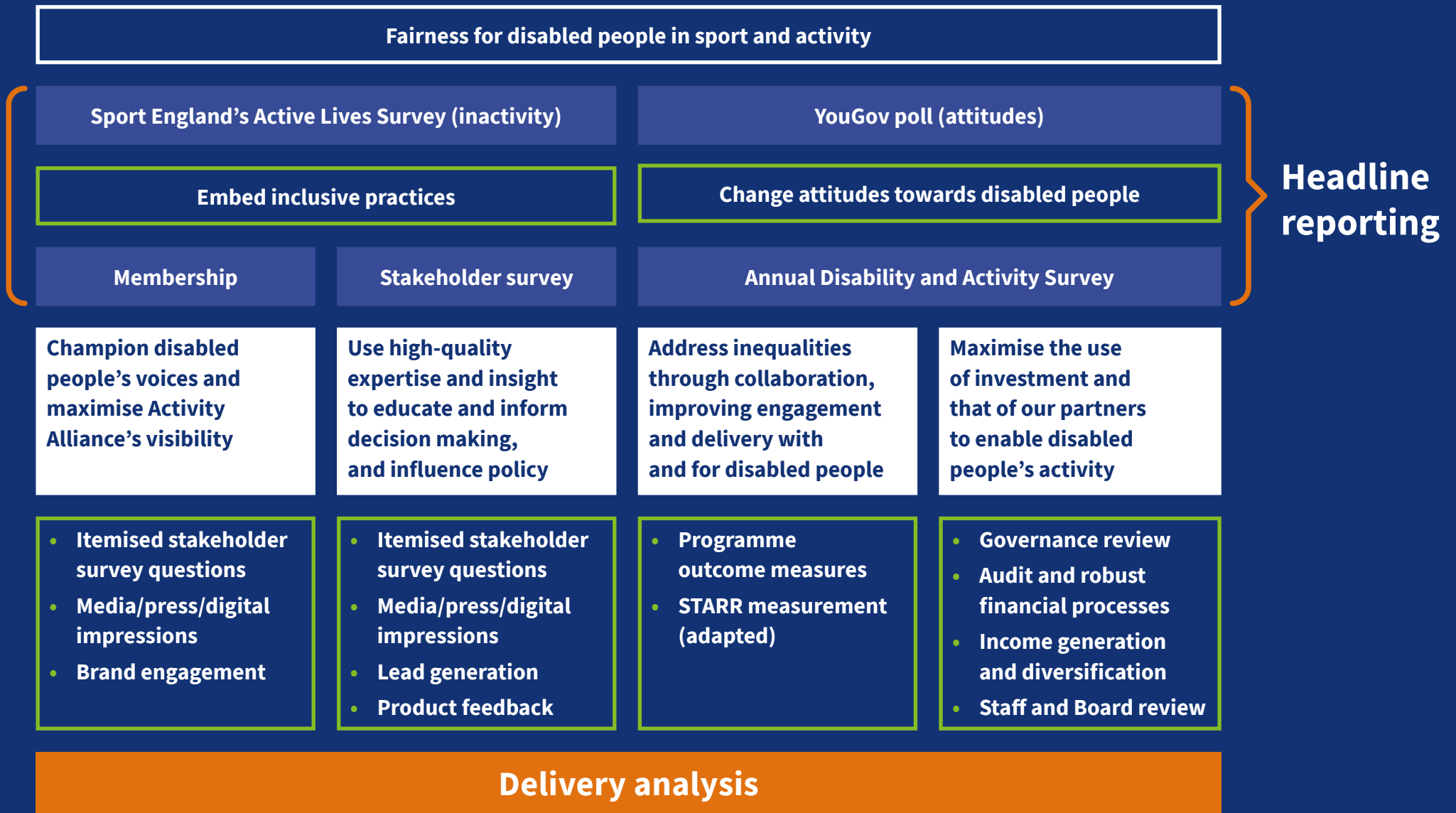
# Reporting and measuring success

We continue to take great pride in demonstrating our delivery impact and ensuring that our activities have a positive effect on our vision.

The framework featured on page 19 sets out how we shall evidence and measure our impact. It is underpinned by our continued learning, so our delivery remains the highest quality, relevant and reflective of our audiences' needs.



# Measuring our impact



# References

1. Sport England, Active Lives Survey May 19-20 (2020)
2. Activity Alliance, Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2020-21 (2021)
3. Sport England, Active Lives Survey May 19-20 Coronavirus Report (2020)
4. Department for Work and Pensions, Family Resources Survey 2019/20 (2021)
5. Activity Alliance, Motivate Me (2014)
6. Activity Alliance, Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2020-21 (2021)
7. Office for National Statistics, Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain (2021)

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 @AllForActivity

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Activity Alliance is the operating name for the English Federation of Disability Sport. Charity Registration Number: 1075180.