Intersectionality in place-based sports and physical activity systems:

Thinking and Practice

activity alliance | disability inclusion sport

LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
CARNEGIE SCHOOL OF SPORT

The research:

To better understand how intersectionality is applied and used in the sport and activity sector, Activity Alliance and Leeds Beckett University worked in partnership to gather insights from 104 surveys and 18 interviews with strategic, operational and delivery roles within place-based working.

What is intersectionality?

It recognises a person has multiple identities (e.g. gender, disability, ethnicity, sexuality) that combine and interact with systems and structures (e.g., laws, policies, media, education) to shape experiences, barriers and opportunities.

Example: A Muslim woman with a visual impairment encounters different barriers to a non-Muslim woman with a visual impairment and a Muslim woman with no impairments. These dimensions of their identity make each woman and her experiences unique.

Meet Jo:

Jo is an Activity Co-ordinator who is beginning to plan for next year. Jo has multiple factors to consider when planning for the diverse community their team works with.

"I need to chat to the team to see what other chair-based activities we can offer in the community cafe."

"I have to introduce myself to the new School Sport Partnership lead and get an invite to the next meeting if we want to offer more for young disabled people in the north of the city."



"I must get the new bus timetables before scheduling the morning yoga sessions at the community centre."

"The new walking group has started off well but it would be good to see a broader diversity of people. I need to link back in with the local mosques."

Key findings:

Intersectionality is predominantly explained as being identity based → Although the workforce recognises that 'one size fits all' approaches are limited in successful engagement.

When explaining intersectionality there is less focus on wider systems and structures → Although, the workforce recognises the importance of using resources, developing partnerships and being well connected to its local communities to develop effective programmes and delivery.

Intersectionality is not a significant feature of policy, strategy or everyday language → The workforce wants more support, resources and training on understanding intersectionality and how to apply this into practice, as this is currently limited.

Recommendations:

Organisations can create fairer and more inclusive opportunities for everyone by recognising the different barriers people experience and by responding to the whole person, not just a single aspect of their identity.

- Ensure Continual Professional Development and resources reflect real life examples of intersectionality in action.
- Review current policy, strategy and programmes to see if they include core ideas of intersectionality or use intersectional language.
- Advocate an intersectional mindset that is curious about individuals' experiences, needs and challenges.
- Intersectionality matters because local and national conditions like unemployment, the cost of living and changing demographics are always evolving.

For the full report please email: **research@activityalliance.org.uk**

For further details about the research please contact Professor Hayley Fitzgerald: **h.fitzgerald@leedsbeckett.ac.uk**

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