



**English Federation
of Disability Sport**

Understanding the barriers to participation in sport

April 2012

Views and opinions of active and non active
disabled people

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www.efds.co.uk

Presentation content

- Objectives
- Sample and methodology
- Key findings
 - Perceptions of sport and physical activity
 - Benefits of sport
 - Barriers to participation
 - Overcoming the barriers

Objectives

Business objective

Use qualitative research to provide a depth of understanding as to why, when asked in the Active People Survey, why they do not participate in sport, the main reason disabled people give for not participating is their disability or health

Research objectives

- How do participants define 'sport' and 'physical activity' and what is the difference between the two?
- What benefits do those active in sport gain through their participation?
- What are the barriers that prevent disabled people from taking part in sport/physical activity such as:
 - Health/impairment
 - Logistics
 - Facilities
 - Communication
 - Behaviour/attitude of others
- What changes are needed to overcome these barriers?
- To what extent is the internet used as a source of information?

Sample and methodology

- 4 impairment specific focus groups, held in Manchester, duration 2 ¼ hours

Impairment	Number of participants
Deaf (no hard of hearing)	5
Learning disability*	7
Blind or partially sighted (1 with hearing loss)	10
Physically impaired (6 wheelchair users, 1 with hearing loss)	8
TOTAL	31

**2 support workers and 1 parent also played a contributory role in the learning disabilities focus group.*

Profile of participants

- Aged 18-63
- 16 male, 15 female
- A mix of white and BME participants
- 20/31 participants are currently active in some sort of sport
- Sports participated in included: Zumba, Football, Cycling, Cricket, Athletics, Wheelchair Dancing, Hand Biking, Wheelchair Dance Sport, Swimming, Gym, Football

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Sport suggests something social, that is fast paced and energetic, whereas physical activity is more relaxed and individual

Sport

Dynamic, energetic and competitive
 Something done as part of a team
"Something done as part of a team, in order to have fun with others"

Competitive Atmosphere
Habit **Social** *Team work*
Camaraderie *Integration*

Striving for something more
Dominance *League*
Competition
Adrenalin *Success* *Challenge*
Records *Perseverance*

Power *Fitness*
Health
Energy *Exercise*

Entertainment
Esteem *Confidence*
Fun
Enjoyment *Thrill*
Excitement

Physical Activity

A generic term, something more relaxed
 Activity done on an individual basis

Exercise *To lose weight*
Health *Fitness*
To improve yourself

Enjoyment
Leisure
Getting out of the house

For people with a physical impairment:

"Physical activity is something that you do just to do your day to day life" (Physical impairment)
Exercise **Daily Life** *A lot of pain!*
Getting out of bed *Going shopping*

The numerous benefits of participating in sport can be grouped into three main categories

Benefits of sport

Socialising/Inclusion

- Being able to do things with friends and family
- Making new friends
- Encourages you to leave the house
- Develops social skills

"I am less socially excluded, I feel happy within myself and this makes me want to undertake more sporting activities wherever and whenever possible" (physical impairment)

Health and fitness

- Keeping fit and healthy
- Makes you feel good – releases endorphins

"The benefits have been so great for me [wheelchair] dancing is now in my medical care plan" (physical impairment)

Empowerment

- Being able to do something
- Enjoyment
- Bettering yourself
- Provides a sense of achievement
- Improving so you can do sport better

"Winning or losing is nothing as long as you are having fun doing it" (learning disability)

Competition

- Whilst competition is not a priority, disabled people welcome the opportunity to be competitive

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The barriers to participation can be categorised in three groups logistical, physical and psychological; with the psychological barriers strongest

Physical

Adaptions and changes needed to support participation are not available/have not been implemented

Facility

Equipment

Health and Safety

Logistical

Adaptations have been made but have not been implemented effectively

Geography

Expense

Support of others

Communication

Suitability

Psychological

Attitudes, opinions and perceptions preventing participation in sport

Personal perceptions

Attitudes of others

Psychological

The beliefs and perceptions of the disabled people themselves and the attitudes of non disabled people are the biggest barrier to participation

Personal perceptions



- Lack of confidence and self belief prevent disabled people from even considering trying sport or physical activity
 - Attitudes often linked to bad experiences in past
- Lack of awareness of the opportunities and possibilities that exist
 - Can lead to disabled people believing there are unable to play sport

"I used to get humiliated during sports – 80 people laughing at me because I can't see the shuttlecock in the air – that is not a nice feeling when you are 11 or 12 – it knocks more than confidence. That has always stuck with me" (visual impairment)

Attitudes of others



- Lack of awareness of the opportunities for disabled people
 - And the changes and amends needed to allow them to participate
- Hide behind 'health and safety' as an excuse not to make changes

"I used to go swimming but they shut down the pool. I have not yet got the courage to look elsewhere to see if there is anywhere that would not throw up accessibility issues. I fear, when applying to clubs, that staff will be dismissive" (visual impairment)

Physical

Often if disabled people overcome the psychological barriers, lack of suitable facilities and equipment prevent them from participating

Facility



- Either adaptations have not been made meaning facilities are inaccessible or 'accessible' facilities are only partially suitable
 - Accessibility often focuses on wheelchair access but does not consider other impairments
 - In some instances some adaptations are provided but often do not cover everything

Equipment



- Often not provided due to high cost and low demand or advance warning must be given to ensure that it will be available
- Often not adapted for all needs
 - Accessible gyms focus on physical impairments but not visual
- Expensive, so difficult for individuals to buy their own equipment

Health and Safety



- Adaptations or changes not made or provided due to 'health and safety concerns'
 - Seen as an excuse to try and make changes
- "More and more we are finding that Health and Safety is thrown up as a reason to exclude us" (blind)

Logistical

In some instances, where provision has been made, inefficient implementation limits participation

Geography

- Centrally located provision difficult/expensive to attend
 - Preference for local clubs, however due to lack of demand they are often Difficult/expensive to attend

Expense

- Equipment, travel, and cost of actual sport often above and beyond budgets
 - Sport often not covered by healthcare provisions

Support of others

- Support to attend / take part often not available / restricted
 - Family members/carers unable/unwilling to support
 - Additional support such as sign language interpreters / people trained to use hoists often not provided/must be pre-booked/have restrictions on when they are available

Communication

- Ability to find or promote information about sporting opportunities is inherently difficult, especially after leaving school
 - No obvious central resource to look for or promote opportunities
 - Low priority for majority of disabled orgs who focus on improving daily living
 - Not available in relevant/ accessible format
- Inability to communicate effectively prevents disabled people from attending mainstream events

"I want to be involved in hearing groups but I am wary because of the communication [difficulties]" (Deaf)

Suitability

- 'Inclusive' sport opportunities are not always suitable/applicable
 - Mixing different impairments or disabled and non disabled people is not appealing/applicable

Whilst the majority of barriers were consistent across impairments, there were some impairment specific frustrations

Deaf

- Deaf people do not see themselves as disabled, physically they should compete mainstream
 - Lack of adaptations prevent this
- *"I am not disabled, I am Deaf. A disabled event would not be for me" (Deaf)*
- Restricted by communication barrier
 - Lack of interpreters prevent participation
 - When available are limited and costly
 - Presence of interpreter can alienate Deaf people from group interaction

Physical impairment

- Lack of spontaneity
 - Need to book transport, notify facilities that special equipment is needed, ahead of time
- *"I can go swimming as long as I give them notice so they can put the hoist in" (physical impairment)*
- Limited physical accessibility
 - Often provision does not cover all needs,
 - As facilities are not used often, not maintained
- Lack of provision of support
 - Help to get into/out of pool / get dressed prevented by health and safety

Blind / VI

- Most concerned about appropriate level of inclusion
 - Often unable to compete fairly with non disabled people, making them feel deflated
 - Potential injury when playing with non disabled people
- Low confidence in doing sports in new facilities
 - Attitudes of staff in showing them around limits appeal

Learning Disability

- Main goals of sport is socialising and having fun
 - Mismatched from mainstream clubs where progression and success are main aims
- Lack of consistency in staff/coaches
 - Reduces familiarity and level of comfort
- Attitude of care workers can prevent participation
 - Dislike outdoor sports

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Overcoming the psychological barriers by improving awareness is the critical first step in increasing disabled people's participation in sport and physical activity

Improve awareness

What is achievable and how it can be done

Improve communication

Who provides the opportunity and where it can be found

Improve provision

Where and how it is delivered

Both disabled and non disabled people need educating on the possibilities and capabilities of disabled people in sport to increase confidence

To improve awareness...

Disabled people need...

- To **know** the sporting **opportunities available**
- To **understand what is possible** and what they can achieve
- **Information** at the **earliest** opportunity
 - At school/as part of the standard information given when registered disabled
- **Continued information** and support
 - Often difficult to find out about opportunities once people leave school
- To be encouraged to work with and speak with sports providers / non disabled people to **highlight their needs**
 - Provide guidance on the information do they need to provide to sports providers so that they can help

Non disabled people need...

- To be **aware of the opportunities** and possibilities for disabled people in sport
 - Understand what disabled people can achieve
- To **understand the impact their attitude and perceptions** have on participation
- To **not be afraid to ask disabled people how they can help**
 - Understand what questions should be asked to gain a better understanding of disabled people's needs
- Be **given adequate and relevant training** to enable them to provide excellent customer service
 - Focus on the adaptations and changes needed to make disabled people comfortable and confident in the sport/physical activity

"[When taking part in wheelchair dancing] the staff from the sports centre come and watch, amazed. They can't believe what we are doing. They didn't think it was possible" (Physical impairment)

Improving communication channels and identifying key resources is critical to ensure the relevant information is available and accessible

To improve communication...

Disabled people need...

- To be provided with **information in a relevant and understandable format**
 - Easy read / braille / audio / text messages
 - Appropriate messages and role models they can associate with
- **To provide guidance** and assistance in how to communicate when playing the sport
 - Adaptations that can be made (e.g. signs) which will allow them to play in a team
- To **know where to look for information**

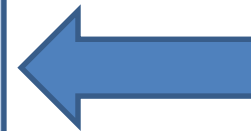
Non disabled people need...

- To know **what information is needed and in what format**
 - Information must be obvious, clear and provided in the relevant format
- Be **aware of communication barriers** when playing sport
 - Work with disabled people to develop communication methods to incorporate disabled people in the team
- To know **where to place the information**

Disabled person wanting to play sport



Central resource where information can be shared



Provider of disabled sports opportunity

Once awareness and communication are improved, localisation of sporting opportunities and reduction of red tape allowing spontaneous attendance should be the key changes in provision

To improve provision...

- Be aware of the wide ranging requirements from accessibility
 - Think about the needs of visually and hearing impaired and the adaptations required for them
- Provide opportunities in local communities at times which are more accessible
 - Making events easier to attend
- Make attendance easier
 - Making membership and joining a simple and easy to complete process
 - Reducing red tape around the processes involved and having relevant support in place to allow spontaneous attendance (so people do not have to plan ahead)
 - E.g. people do not have to notify the sports centre that they will be coming as the equipment /support they need is already available
- Staff /coaches provided with relevant training to allow them to feel comfortable in including disabled people in the sport/physical activity
 - Awareness of adaptations and amends they can make to their attitude and teaching style to be more inclusive

Changes that disabled people would like to see

- Easily available Information about sports opportunities
 - Given as part of the standard information packs when registered disabled
 - Include information on availability, relevant adaptations and assistive technology
 - Provided to school leavers to identify sporting opportunities once they leave
- A central resource where people go to seek information on disabled sport
- Awareness around disabled people embedded in sports colleges'/universities' curricula
 - Sports science and sports education to standardise courses and include references to disabled sports and adaptations, making it consistent and constant – to be accepted
- A more relevant disability awareness training
 - Developed with the input of disabled people, focusing on customer service
 - Identifying issues that disabled people face, communication techniques, what speciali equipment is available and how it is used.
- Reducing red tape to allow spontaneous participation
 - Less 'health and safety' restrictions to allow providers to assist and help disabled people without being scared
 - Membership forms are simple and easy to complete
- Fairer scheduling of sports
 - Held at locations and times which are more suitable to the community, although acknowledged that lack of demand can often impact the ability to deliver this
- Taster sessions of different sports (perhaps at a disability conference)
 - To increase awareness and demand

"When trying to find out information you are often passed from pillar to post. It is very frustrating" (blind)

"You go to the local club and they look at you 'like you have descended from Mars'. They don't know how to teach you. Imagine his face when I turned up for circuit training!" (physical impairment)"



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