

Delivering activity to disabled people: **The workforce perception gap**



This report investigates perceptions among people who deliver sport and active recreation sessions, from coaches, instructors and teachers to volunteers and community sport leaders. In particular, it looks at their experiences and perceptions of delivering to disabled people and of inclusive activity, in which disabled and non-disabled people take part together.



Activity Alliance has undertaken a number of studies as part of a full review of perceptions among those with an influence on disabled people's activity. These have covered disabled people

themselves, non-disabled people and disabled people's supporters.

This study was undertaken by 2CV Research on behalf of Activity Alliance.

This two-stage qualitative and quantitative study revealed the following findings:

A large gap in perceptions exists between two key groups identified in the sample: those who have knowingly delivered to disabled people and those who have not.

- Almost **nine in 10 (87%)** participants recruited through Activity Alliance and its partners' channels had experience of delivering to disabled people, compared with just **a quarter (23%)** of those sourced via a national panel.

The level of awareness and experience of delivering to disabled people and the spectrum of impairments is low among the general population of activity deliverers.

- Many use the most available information to create a 'picture' of a disabled audience, including: personal experiences, professional experiences of a particular impairment, media stories or stereotypes of disabled people.

This leads to low levels of confidence and interest in delivering to disabled people.

- **Three in five (60%)** of those with experience of delivering to disabled people said that they would feel confident doing so compared with **a quarter (24%)** of those without. Similar results were found for 'capable' (**58% vs 27%**) and 'comfortable' (**56% vs 27%**).

- Those with experience of delivering to disabled people are more likely to be confident delivering to a range of demographic groups, including children, older people and LGBTQI* people, perhaps demonstrating the broader application of 'inclusivity'.
- These confidence levels correlate with the interest providers have of delivering to such groups.

Awareness of 'inclusive' activities is inconsistent and often does not include disabled people, with age and ability raised by deliverers.

- The idea of providing inclusive activity is something many deliverers have not even considered: it's not top of mind, included in their training or part of their professional conversation.
- **Three in five (59%)** of those without experience of delivering to disabled people said they had run inclusive sessions, again highlighting confusion around the term.
- Those without experience are much less likely to think inclusive sessions are suitable for disabled people.
- Those without experience are more likely to believe disability-specific sessions are more appropriate.
- Lack of knowledge is the biggest challenge among those without experience of delivering to disabled people.

* Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex.

- Concerns also included fear of a negative impact on non-disabled participants and the nature of the sport being challenged.
- Insufficient support and resource was much more likely to be raised by those with experience of delivering to disabled people, although concerns around health and safety were present in both groups.

Deliverers who have had a good experience of delivering inclusive sessions have generally followed a four-point journey to success.

1. Awareness: They have awareness of inclusive sports and disability e.g. through peers who are involved in inclusive activities. They know what is possible and how to adapt their sports sessions successfully.

2. Exposure: They have seen inclusive activity in action or been around disabled people in or out of sport before. They recognise that inclusive sessions can be just as fun, competitive and physical: an 'inclusive session' does not need to be a 'compromised session'.

3. Trial: They have had a go at adapting their sport for someone who is disabled to make the sport inclusive.

4. Reward: They have personally experienced the benefits up close and have a sense of pride when an inclusive session works well. They have perhaps felt a greater sense of reward over and above non-inclusive sports delivery and even relish the challenge of providing inclusive sessions; for example as a chance to develop different skills.

- However, many deliverers' experience of inclusive sessions follows a less-linear path, jumping in at the 'trial' stage and ending up with a lot of trial and error.

Deliverers need support to help them increase their confidence and interest.

- There is a hunger for more training and information about including disabled participants - a key reason for low confidence.
- **52%** of those who were not currently interested in delivering inclusive sessions said they would be much more interested if relevant training were available. A further **38%** said they would be a bit more interested.
- Providers want both general information on the spectrum of impairments and practical guidance around differentiation and adapting sports.

Four-point journey to success diagram



Recommendations

The study has revealed a number of areas for action that fall broadly into three categories:

1. Work toward inclusive sport being second nature.

Influence communications and shape campaigns to:

- Put inclusive sport on deliverers' radars
- Make it the default, not an optional extra
- Demonstrate what it is and who it involves

Ensure positive representation of disabled people being active (and competitive)!

2. Help to build comfort and confidence.

Provide tips, tools and training options on communication, differentiation and managing social dynamics, supporting the four-point journey to success (awareness, exposure, trial and reward):

- Access to **Inclusive Activity Programme** (IAP) and more training included in level 1 and 2 coaching qualifications via the sport and physical activity workforce **Professional Standards** (supported by CIMSPA and UK Coaching).
- Mentoring for activity deliverers and more collaborative working e.g. through **Get Out Get Active** programme.
- Use of **Activity Alliance resources**, including the **Talk to Me 10 principles**, **Inclusive Communications Guide** and

Roadmap to supporting disabled people to be active. They provide practical guidance on how to create accessible communications and inclusive provision for all audiences.

- Sharing of better practice and experiences.

3. Provide practical advice on how to create inclusive sport and activity environments, organisations and opportunities, including adapting sport.

Facilitate and encourage support between providers of sport and active recreation. Provide practical advice via Professional Standards, Quest Modules** and programmes like IAP on:

- Managing risk
- Resource requirements
- Equipment adaptations
- Differentiation and adaptation within the sport and active recreation session itself.

**Relevant modules include GPLUS37 for Active Communities and GPLUS37 for Facilities:

More information on Quest NBS website

The full research report can be found at:
www.activityalliance.org.uk/research





01509 227750



info@activityalliance.org.uk



activityalliance.org.uk



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This document is also available in Word format.
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