

# Delivering activity to disabled people: The workforce perception gap



**activity  
alliance**  
disability  
inclusion  
sport



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

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Based on a study undertaken by 2CV on behalf of Activity Alliance

**Activity Alliance** brings its members, partners and disabled people together to make active lives possible. Collectively, we continue to challenge perceptions and change the reality of disability, inclusion and sport.

Activity Alliance is the operating name for the English Federation of Disability Sport.

## Foreword

Disabled people remain twice as likely to be inactive as non-disabled people. It is not right or fair that so many disabled people still do not have equal access to sport and active recreation.

To create these opportunities, those who deliver sport and active recreation on the ground must feel both competent and confident in providing for disabled people. This report shows that there are still significant improvements to be made and organisations must act to ensure that inclusive activity – disabled and non-disabled people taking part together – is the default, not an optional extra.

The aim here has been not just to expose the issues that remain, but also to form recommendations that can be acted on by organisations. While these recommendations are challenging, they are achievable. Activity Alliance exists to enable organisations to support disabled people to be and stay active for life. Together, we must continue to challenge perceptions and change the reality of disability, inclusion and sport.

Elliott Johnson

Research and Insight Manager

Activity Alliance

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## 1.0 Executive summary

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 two-stage qualitative and quantitative study, undertaken by 2CV Research on behalf of Activity Alliance, 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<sup>1</sup> 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.**

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<sup>1</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex.

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.
  - 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.

**1.1 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 \(IAP\)](http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/training/inclusive-activity-programme)<sup>2</sup> and more training included in level 1 and 2 coaching qualifications via the sport and physical activity workforce [Professional Standards](http://www.workforce.org.uk)<sup>3</sup> (supported by CIMSPA and UK Coaching).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/training/inclusive-activity-programme>

<sup>3</sup> [www.workforce.org.uk](http://www.workforce.org.uk)

- Mentoring for activity deliverers and more collaborative working (e.g. through [Get Out Get Active](#)).
- Use of Activity Alliance [resources](#),<sup>4</sup> including the [Talk to Me 10 principles](#),<sup>5</sup> Inclusive Communications Guide and Roadmap to supporting more 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](#)<sup>6</sup> and programmes like IAP on:

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

## 2.0 Introduction

Since 2012, Activity Alliance has undertaken a series of research projects that have contributed to a full understanding of how to enable disabled people be active. This approach has resulted in both underpinning insight and a series of resources that are now being used to help the sport and active recreation sector to be more inclusive.

Previous studies have investigated the views and experiences of disabled people themselves, non-disabled people and disabled people's supporters. This project, which investigates perspectives of inclusive activity among those who (potentially) deliver it,<sup>7</sup> was the final piece in our initial review to be undertaken.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/resources>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/1910-talk-to-me-principles-in-action-november-2014>

<sup>6</sup> Relevant modules include GPLUS37 for Active Communities and GPLUS37 for Facilities: <https://questnbs.org/module-guidance>

<sup>7</sup> 'Deliverers' include everyone who deliver sport and activity on the ground, from coaches, instructors and teachers to volunteers and community sport leaders.





## 2.1 Research objectives

To identify and understand:

- Current provision among deliverers on the ground of sport and active recreation for disabled people
- Deliverers' perceptions and attitudes around inclusive provision
- Deliverers' perceptions of barriers to inclusive provision
- Means of encouraging and supporting deliverers

## 2.2 Method

The study comprised two stages.

Stage one employed qualitative methods and established key underlying themes associated with delivering inclusive sessions:

### **Anonymous opinion box**

- Short online survey
- 50 responses
- Different sports / different deliverer roles

### **Eight depth interviews**

- Four providers who felt comfortable delivering to disabled people, four who did not

### **Three two-hour exposure sessions**

- Eight participants per session – four who had delivered to disabled people and four who had not

Stage two sought to build on and quantify the qualitative stage through an online survey:

### 589 responses to online questionnaire

- 253 recruited from panel sample
- 289 from Activity Alliance and partner contacts
- Use of techniques to get implicit responses

## 3.0 Awareness of and experience of delivery to disabled people

The quantitative section of the study identified two key audience groups: those with experience of running sessions for disabled participants and those without. The key differences between the groups are identified in the table 3.1 below. Those with experience of delivering to disabled participants were almost three-times more likely to have been involved in sport for longer than five years than those without (67% vs 24%), a third more likely to have formal sport training (80% vs 60%) and almost three times more likely to have had specific disability training (60% vs 23%). Interestingly, and with implications for those engaging in research with disabled people, 81% of those with experience came from Activity Alliance and its partners' channels, while 84% of those without came from 2CV's partner research panels.

Table 3.1: Key differences between groups based on whether they have delivered to disabled people or not<sup>8</sup>

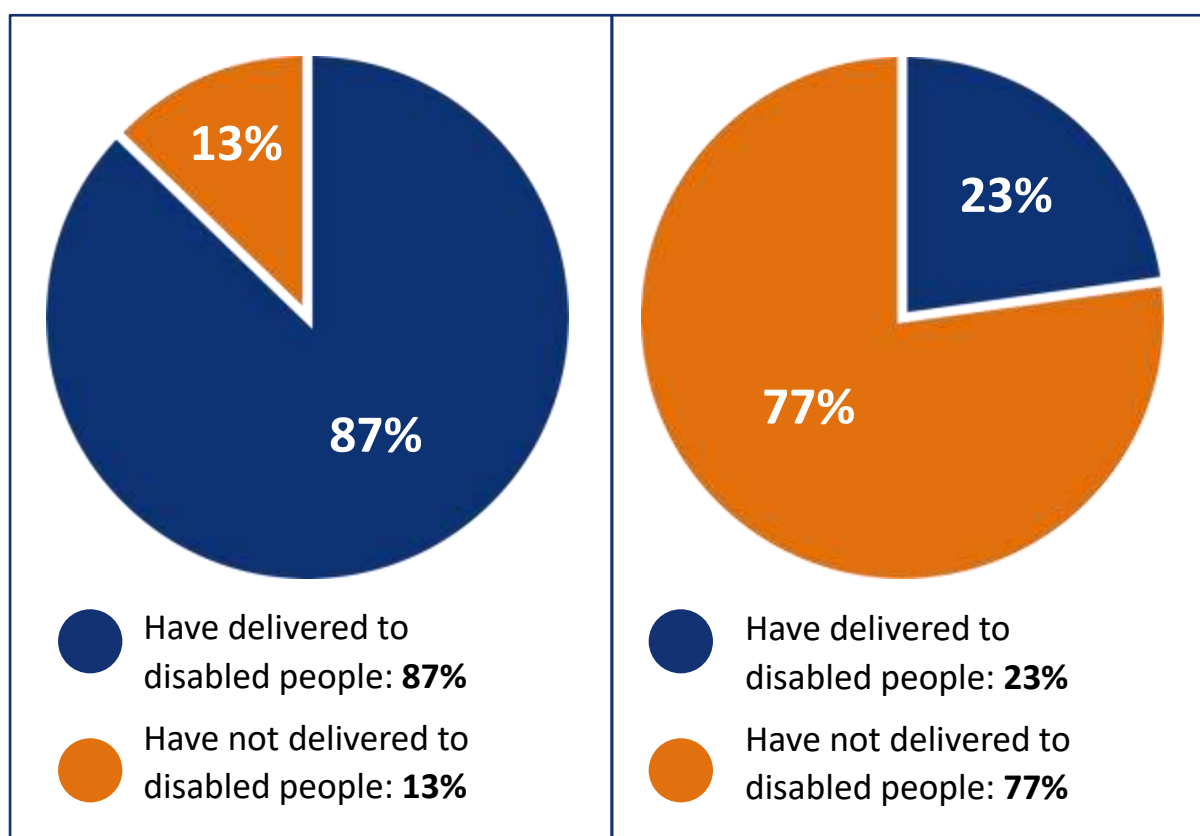
Have delivered to disabled people	Have not delivered to disabled people
Most likely to have come from Activity Alliance and partner sample <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>81%</b> with experience accessed this survey link</li> </ul>	Most likely to come from 2CV's partner panels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>84%</b> accessed the survey this way</li> </ul>
More likely to have been involved in sport for longer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>67%</b> had been involved in sport more than five years</li> </ul>	Less likely to have been involved in sport for longer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>24%</b> had been involved in sport for more than five years</li> </ul>
More likely to have a formal qualification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>80%</b> completed formal training to work in sport</li> </ul>	Less likely to have a formal qualification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>60%</b> completed formal training to work in sport</li> </ul>
More likely to have had disability training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>60%</b> had specific disability training</li> </ul>	More likely to not have had disability training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>23%</b> had specific disability training</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> Q5: Based on this definition, which of the below best describe your experience of inclusive sports sessions? You can select all that apply; Q9: Firstly, which of the following best describe your experience of activity sessions with disabled people? You can select all that apply; Base: All respondents (542)

As Activity Alliance and its partners' contacts are likely to have at least an interest in delivering to disabled people, it is probable that the sample sourced from 2CV's panel partners is more representative of the general population of deliverers.

Almost nine in 10 (87%) of those in the Activity Alliance partner sample had experience of delivering to disabled people compared with just under a quarter (23%) of those in the panel sample (figure 2.1).

Figure 3.1: Percentage of participants with and without experience of delivering to disabled people by recruitment channel<sup>9</sup>



Among deliverers in the study, there was a significant lack of understanding and awareness of the full spectrum of disability and impairments. Deliverers draw on **the most available information** to them to create a 'picture' of a disabled audience:

- Personal experiences of a particular impairment e.g. own experience, a disabled friend or family member
- Professional experiences of a particular impairment
- Media stories – a recent thing they have read or most attention-grabbing news story
- Or just stereotypes of disabled people - usually physical impairment / wheelchair users

<sup>9</sup> Q9. Firstly, which of the following best describe your experience of activity sessions with disabled people? You can select all that apply; Base: Panel sample (253), Partner sample (289)

However, this can create a narrow frame of reference and a focus on particular impairment types which does not help deliverers understand the broad spectrum. Without a more rounded understanding of the target audience, it is difficult to encourage them to deliver sessions that are inclusive of these groups.

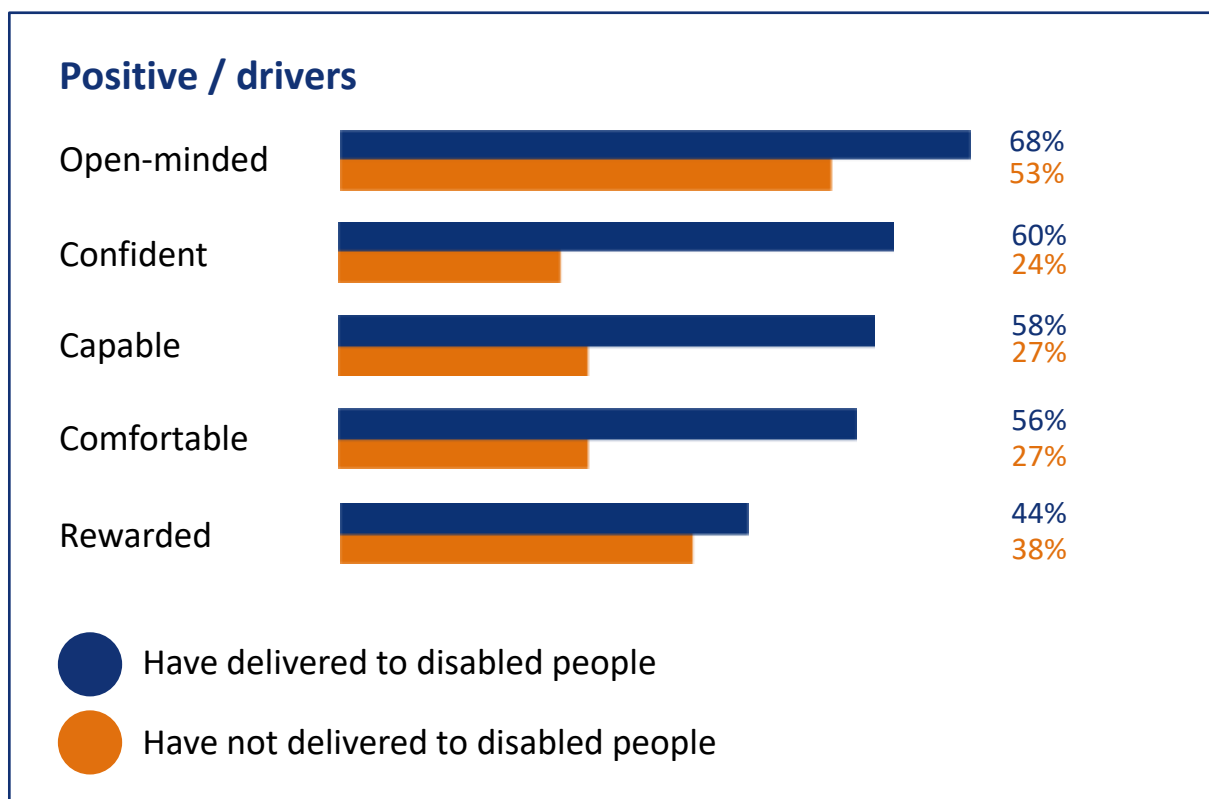
“There are assumptions that you make... and you assume that they won’t be able to do something.”

– Tennis deliverer, London

#### 4.0 Perceptions and confidence around inclusive delivery

Figure 4.1 shows that those with no experience of delivering to disabled people were much more likely to associate barriers with such delivery and less likely to associate positive drivers than those who had. Three in five (60%) of those with experience 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%). Almost half (46%) feel challenged, but this is not necessarily a negative.

Figure 4.1: How deliverers would feel offering a session to a disabled participant by whether they had run a session for disabled participants or not<sup>10</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Q10: How would you feel including a disabled participant in your session?; Base: Have experience (310), Don’t have experience (242)

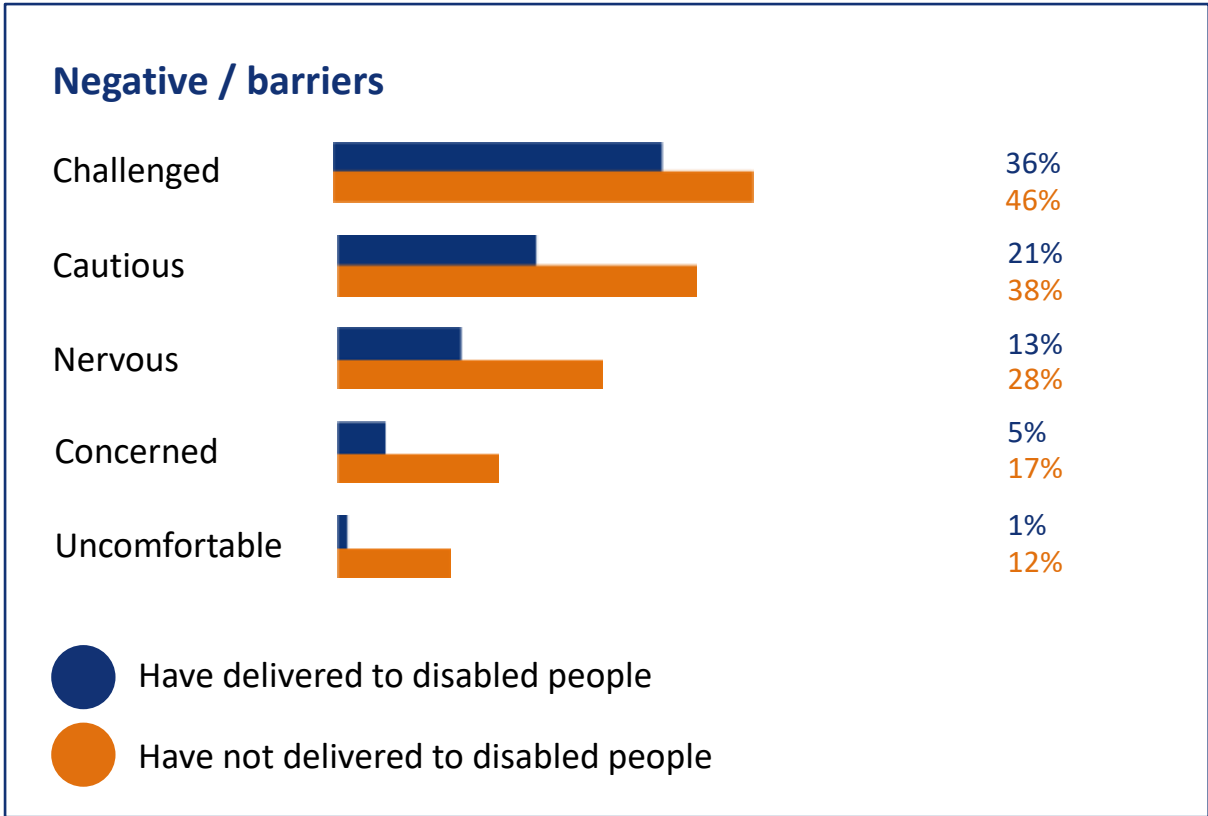
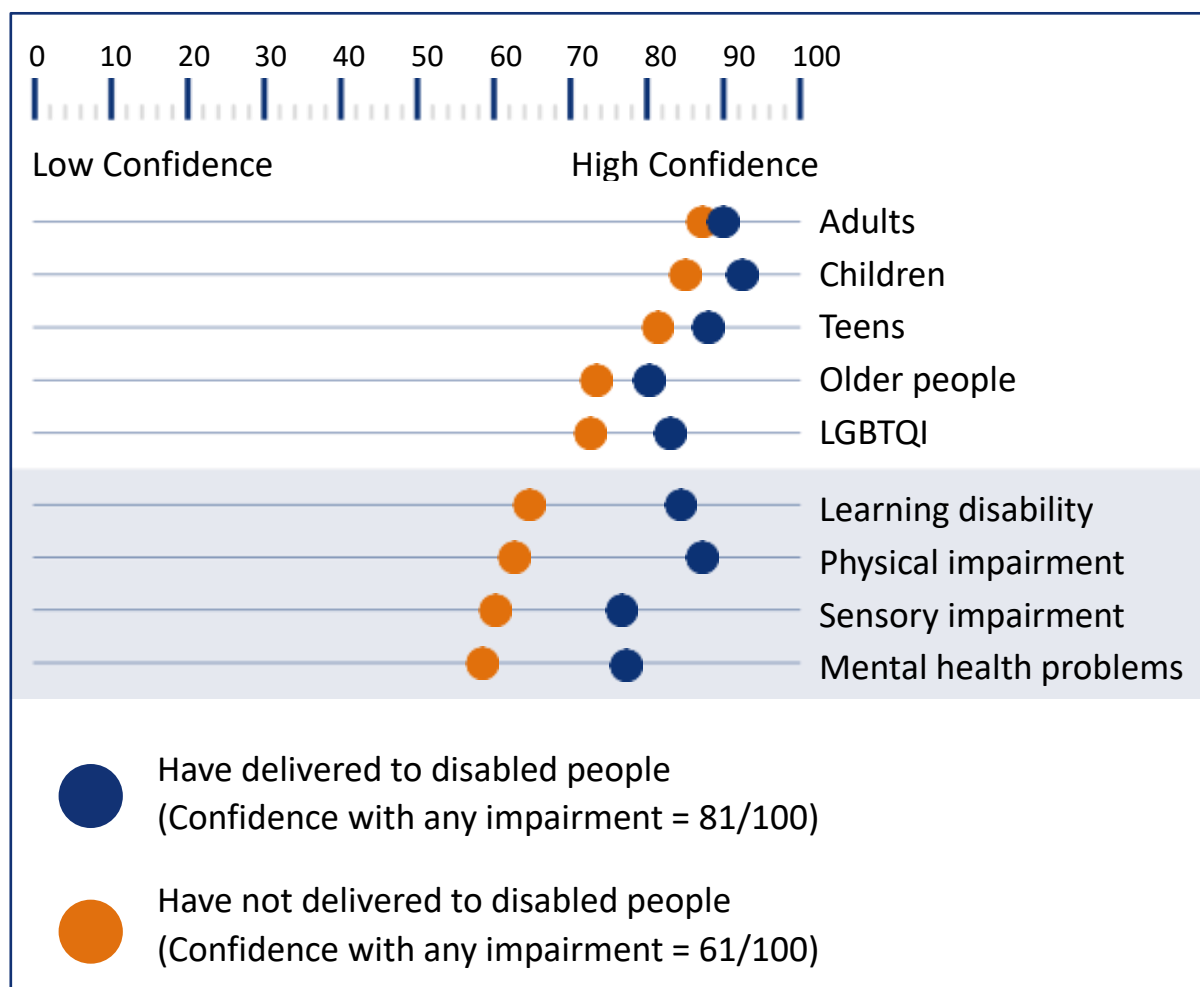


Figure 4.2 displays the average level of confidence in delivering to each audience group among deliverers with and without experience of delivering to disabled people. This was a ‘push/pull’ question, in which respondents were able either to pull the group displayed toward them if they felt confident or push it away if not. This translated to a point on a 100-point scale and was then averaged across the entire group.

Prior experience of delivering to disabled people is associated with confidence in providing inclusive sessions. It is also associated with delivering to other groups, including children, older people and LGBTQI people, perhaps suggesting that experience leads to more open-minded delivery and a broader understanding of inclusivity.

Figure 4.2: Average confidence point chosen on a 100-point 'push/pull' scale for each audience group among those with and without experience of delivering to disabled people<sup>11</sup>



Lack of experience with disabled people can create a sense of fear and discomfort around potential interactions. Critically, a fear of saying or doing the wrong thing inhibits action.

Deliverers suggested that they did not want to embarrass themselves by saying something 'stupid', using the 'wrong' language or by being seen not to know the correct way to behave or communicate. They also do not want to offend others by pointing out their being disabled or by not being 'politically correct'.

This creates a real barrier to including disabled people in sport or active recreation sessions with some deliverers preferring not to risk 'doing it wrong' or feeling awkward. It is difficult to encourage deliverers to change their behaviour when the consequence may be social embarrassment. Deliverers must feel empowered to interact with disabled people openly and easily with 'permission' to 'get it wrong'.

Some quotations that highlight these themes came out in the study:

<sup>11</sup> Q7: How confident you would be to offer an activity session for....; Base: Have experience (310), Don't have experience (242)

### Perceived lack of knowledge or skill

No one wants to feel out of their depth, I'd be scared if someone came with severe epilepsy... I **wouldn't feel capable** that I was doing a good enough job to look after that person

– Kayak deliverer, Nottingham

Hard to include when you don't have the resources or the knowledge....there is a lot more work and you have to know more, I **was out of my depth**

– Running deliverer, London

### Fear of not being politically correct

You wouldn't know whether to mention their disability

– Netball deliverer, Manchester

### Fear of changing 'nature' of sport

I **don't think most sports can easily be mixed**...I'm not saying it can't happen at all...it's just not easy

– Running deliverer, London

I'm concerned about how the disabled person would fit in and their performance in the sport... they could pull everyone's potential back and people are going to be upset

– Kayak deliverer, Nottingham

### Self-consciousness

I was **walking on eggshells** when I first started teaching them

– Wakeboarding coach, London

### Worried about delivering to everyone's needs

The able-bodied people in the group can feel they are slightly missing out because of the adaptations

– Stand up paddle boarding deliverer, London

### Fear of causing offence

No one wants to sound patronising to disabled people and there are a lot of **social taboos**....you don't want someone to arrive at a session and say they can't do it because they're disabled

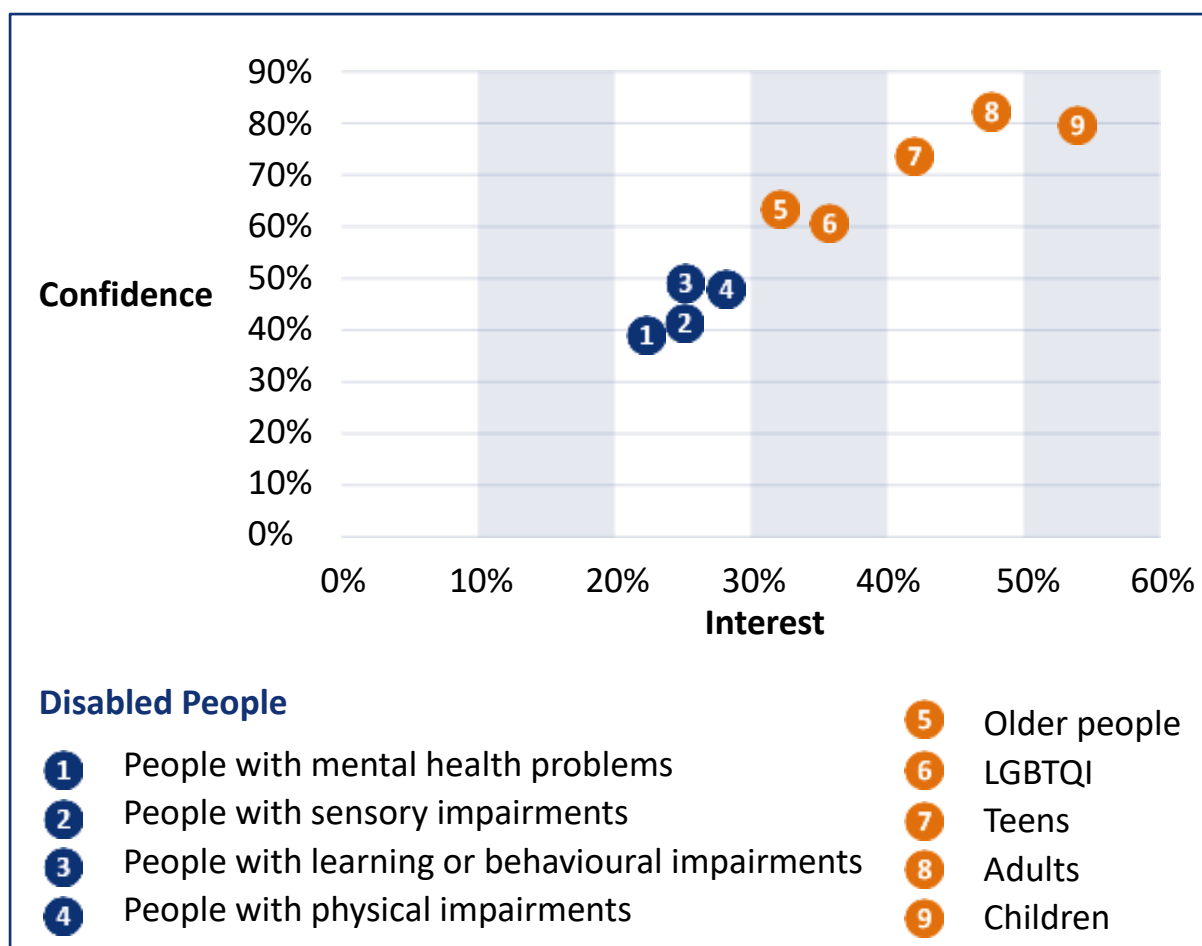
– Kayak deliverer, Nottingham

People are absolutely **petrified of saying the wrong thing** and are very, wary about talking to disabled people

– Tennis deliverer, Nottingham

Figure 4.3, below, shows that there is a strong correlation among deliverers between confidence in delivering to a particular group and interest to deliver. The percentage of the experienced group very interested in delivering to those with any impairment was 76% compared with 40% of those without experience.

Figure 4.3: Correlation among deliverers between confidence and interest levels in delivering to different groups<sup>12</sup>



## 5.0 Awareness of inclusive delivery

Findings from the qualitative stage of the study, in particular, highlighted that for many, delivering inclusive sessions that involve disabled people is not even on their radar. Rather, their focus is on other aspects of sport delivery. This emerges from three key drivers:

1. It's not top of their mind – their focus is on other aspects of sport delivery
  - They are not aware of any relevant awareness campaigns
  - Disability is not recognisably part of national sports marketing campaigns

<sup>12</sup> Q7: How confident you would be to offer an activity session for.... Recoded into 4 point scale, showing TB. How interested would you be in offering inclusive sessions to these audiences. Showing TB; Base: All sport providers (542)



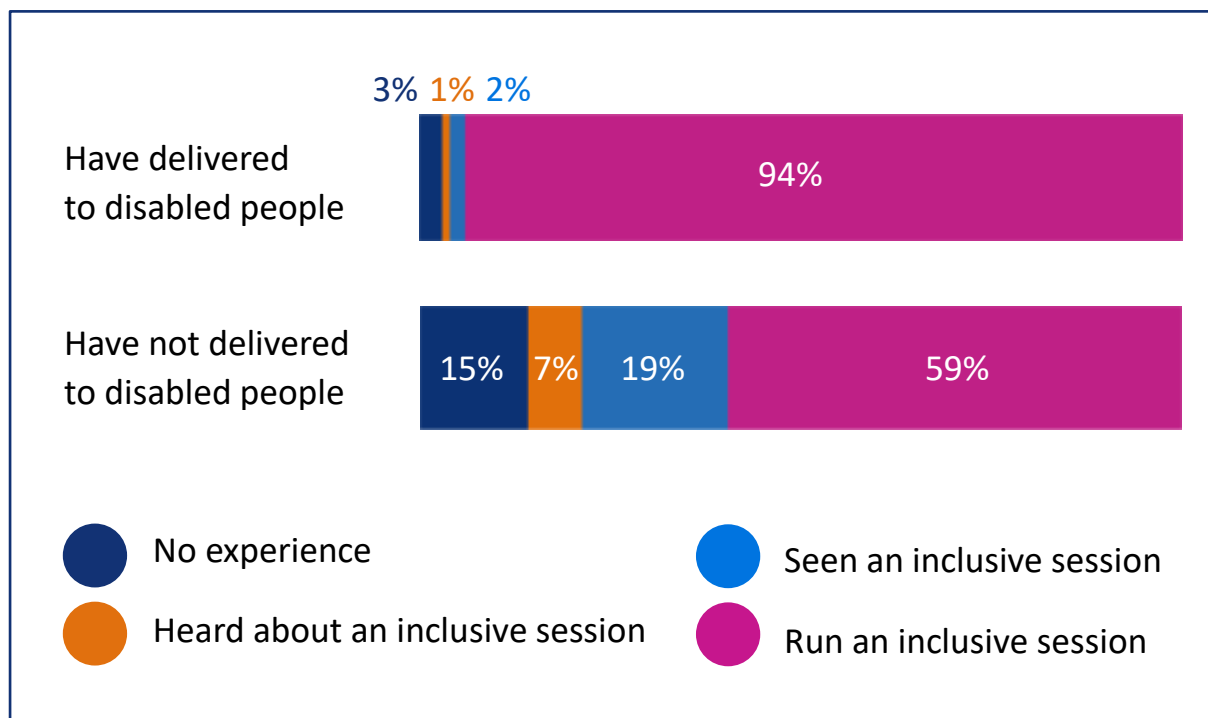
2. It's not part of their training
  - Coaches do not routinely receive inclusivity training as part of their level 1 or level 2 coaching qualifications from National Governing Bodies
  - For the more casual deliverer there is also very little training
3. It's not part of their professional conversation
  - Not talked about with peers
  - Not a hot topic

“This isn't something I've ever learnt about in any training sessions I've had.”

– Running trainer, Manchester

The confusion around disabled people being a core part of inclusive sessions is apparent in figure 5.1, which shows that three in five (59%) deliverers who said they had no experience delivering to disabled people had run an inclusive session.

Figure 5.1: Percentage of deliverers by whether they have delivered to disabled people or not and whether they believe they have offered inclusive activity sessions and what this involved<sup>13</sup>



<sup>13</sup> Q5: Based on this definition, which of the below best describe your experience of inclusive sports sessions? You can select all that apply; Q5a: Could you please tell us a little bit more about the inclusive activity sessions you have experienced?; Base: Have experience (310), Don't have experience (242)

Figure 5.2, which shows the words associated with inclusive delivery by how often they were mentioned by deliverers, highlights that understanding of what an ‘inclusive’ session is varies significantly and is often not linked to disability.

People are unsure of **who** is being referenced in ‘inclusive’ sessions, with a range of options mentioned, including that they are for ‘everyone’, ‘mixed ability’, ‘men and women’ and ‘older and younger’ people. Only some referenced disabled people.

Deliverers are also unsure of **what** inclusive means. Most do not associate it with disabled and non-disabled people participating together at the same time and some believe it means separate disability sessions.

This confusion presents a fundamental issue when trying to encourage deliverers to provide inclusive activities: they are unsure of what these sessions ‘look like’ and therefore how they could offer them.

I set up a running group just for people with depression, is this inclusive?

– Running deliverer, London

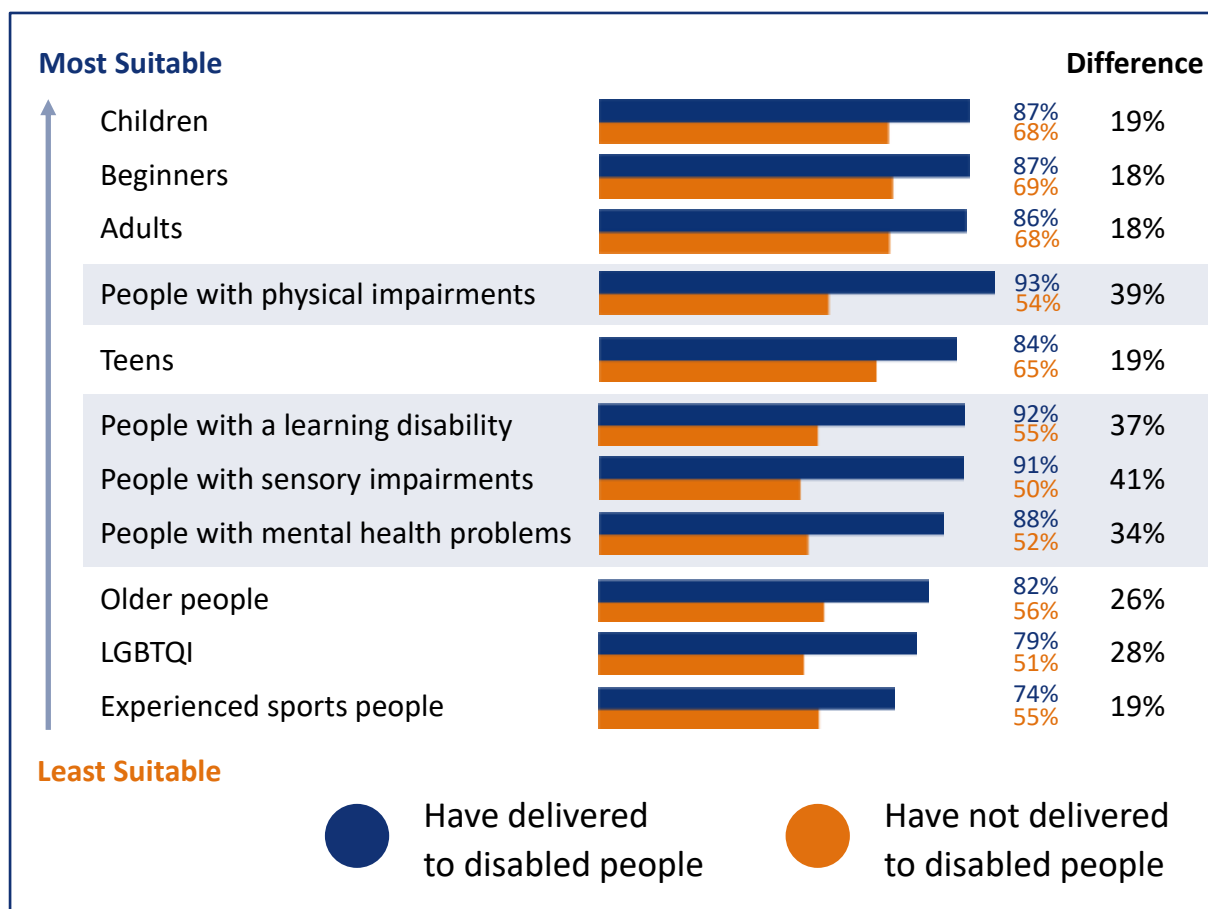
Figure 5.2: Words associated with 'inclusive' sessions among deliverers by how often they were mentioned<sup>14</sup>



<sup>14</sup> Q1: What does an ‘inclusive activity session’ mean to you? Open ended question; Base: All respondents (542)

As figure 5.3 shows, the perceptions of who inclusive sessions are suitable for varies significantly by the experience of the deliverer and the group concerned. Only around half (54%) of deliverers without experience of delivering to disabled people feel that inclusive sessions are suitable for people with physical impairments, compared with almost all (93%) of those with experience. Inclusive sessions are seen as suitable for people with sensory impairments (50%) or a mental health problem (52%) by an even smaller percentage of those without experience. Even those with experience are less likely to see inclusive sessions as suitable for those with a mental health condition (86%) than other impairments. Overall, 95% of those with experience of delivering to disabled people selected any of the impairment groups as suitable for inclusive sessions compared with 65% of those without.

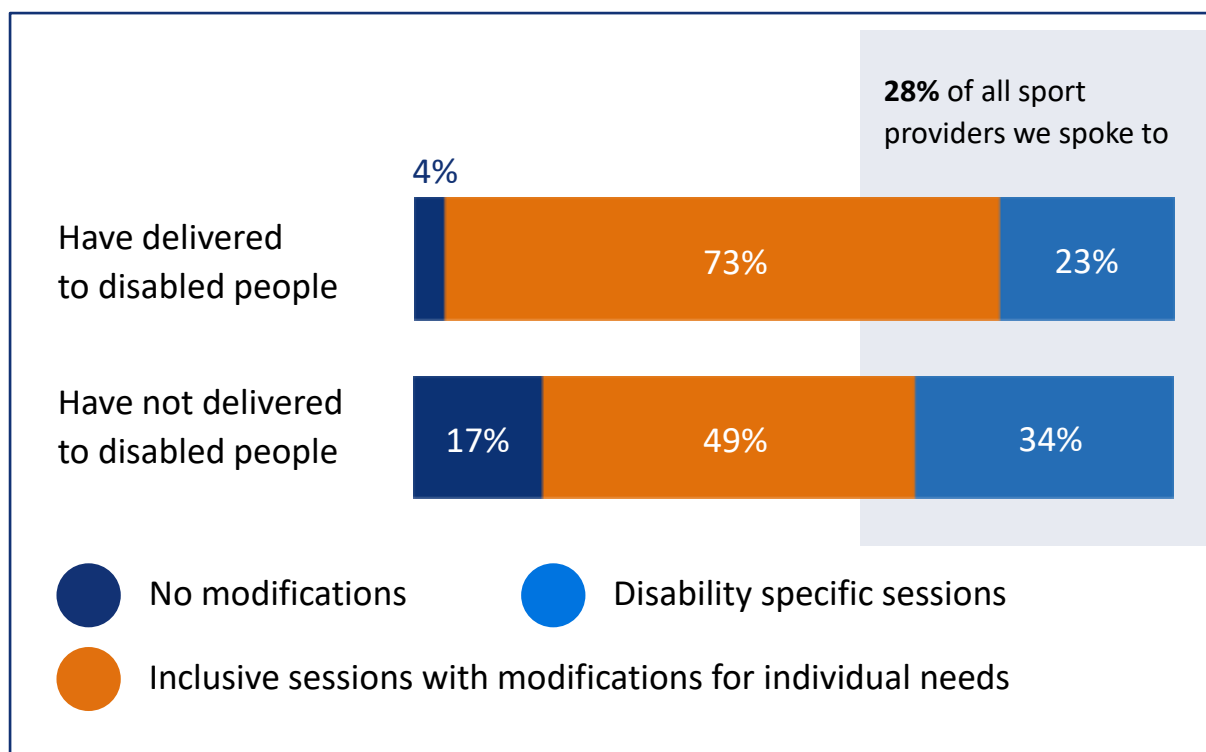
Figure 5.3: Percentage of deliverers by whether they have delivered to disabled people or not who feel that an inclusive session is suitable for each audience group<sup>15</sup>



<sup>15</sup> Q3: From the list below, who do you think an inclusive activity session would be suitable for? You can select as many as you like; Base: Have experience (310), Don't have experience (242)

Activity Alliance’s ‘Disabled People’s Lifestyle Report’<sup>16</sup> found that two-thirds (64%) of disabled people would prefer to take part in sessions with both disabled and non-disabled people taking part together. This study found that deliverers without experience of delivering to disabled people were more likely than those with to believe that disability-specific sessions are more appropriate for disabled people (figure 5.4). However, the largest percentage in each group believed that inclusive sessions were most appropriate, including around three quarters (73%) of those with experience and almost half (49%) of those without.

Figure 5.4: Percentage of deliverers by whether they have delivered to disabled people or not and how they feel disabled participants would best be served<sup>17</sup>



## 6.0 Concerns around inclusive delivery

Deliverers with and without experience of delivering to disabled people expressed a range of concerns around inclusive delivery (figure 6.1). Two-thirds (64%) of those with experience and almost three quarters (72%) without felt there were health and safety implications in making their sport inclusive. However, those without experience were much more likely to feel that inclusive sessions would change the fundamental nature of their sport (56% vs 31%) and that they would negatively impact non-disabled participants (43% vs 13%).

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/1873-disabled-peoples-lifestyle-report-september-2013>

<sup>17</sup> Q4: How do you feel disabled people would be best served in your sport?; Q12: How much do you agree... Showing T2B; Base: Have experience (310), Don't have experience (242)

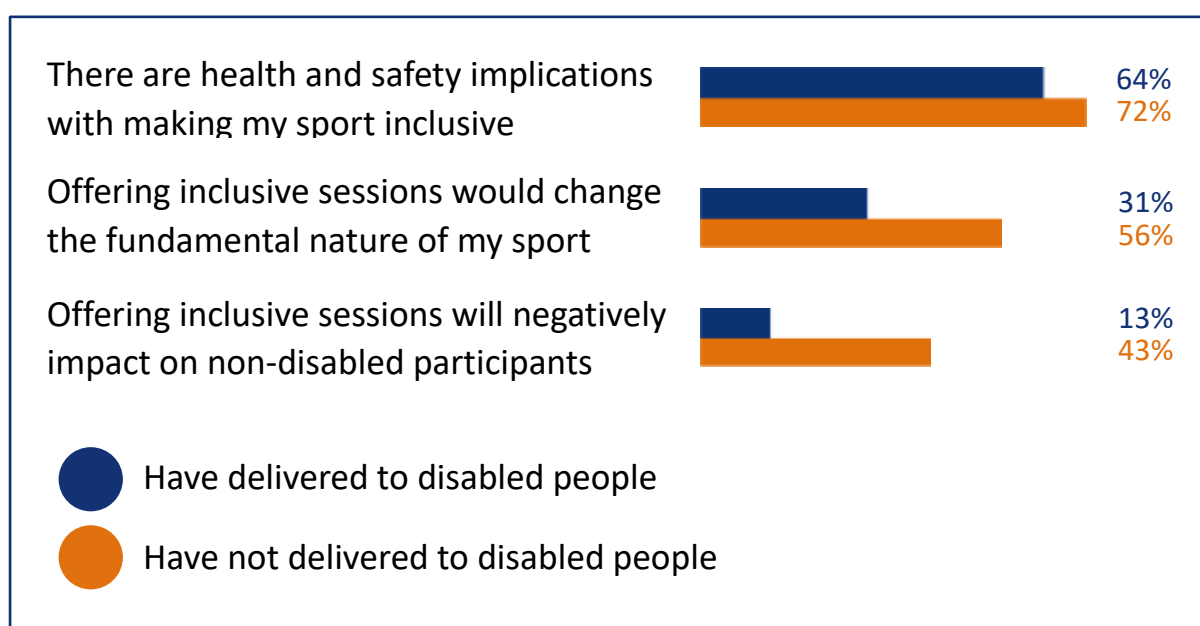
The able-bodied people in the group can feel they are slightly missing out because of the adaptations

– Stand Up Paddle Board deliverer, London

I'm concerned about how the disabled person would fit in and their performance in the sport... they could pull everyone's potential back and people are going to be upset

– Kayak deliverer, Nottingham




Figure 6.1: Percentage of deliverers by whether they have delivered to disabled people or not expressing each concern about inclusive sessions<sup>18</sup>



In terms of broad themes of challenges to inclusive delivery, those with experience of delivering to disabled people were most likely to select insufficient support, including extra cost, not having enough support or resource from colleagues and not having the right equipment (Table 6.1). Those without experience were most likely to choose lack of knowledge, including reaching the audience, knowledge around different impairments, adaptation and differentiation and communication.

<sup>18</sup> Q12: How much do you agree... Showing T2B; Base: Have experience (310), Don't have experience (242)

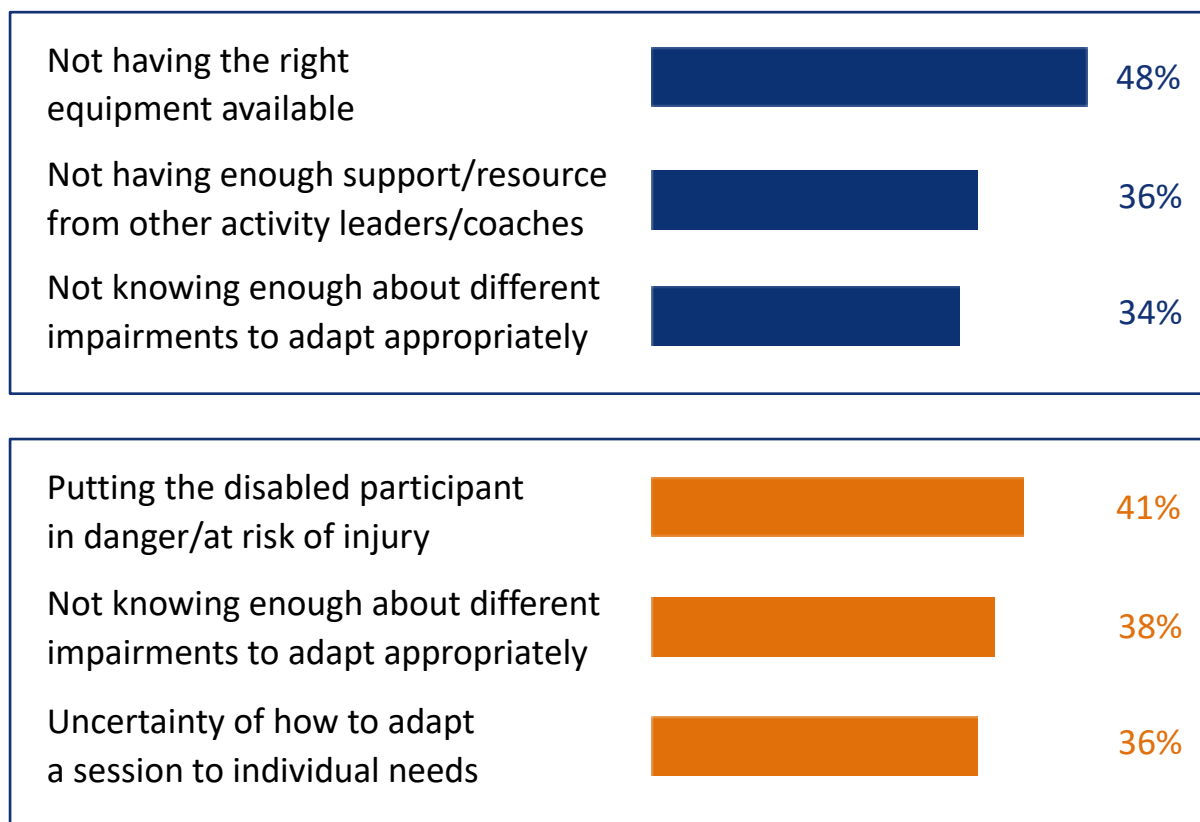
Table 6.1: Percentage of deliverers by whether they have delivered to disabled people or not who chose each broad theme as a challenge to inclusive delivery<sup>19</sup>

Insufficient support		Lack of knowledge		Fear of negative result		Risk of harm	
64% ★	47%	54%	68% ★	42%	50%	31%	43%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra cost</li> <li>• Not enough support / resource from colleagues</li> <li>• Not having equipment</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching audience</li> <li>• Different impairments</li> <li>• Adaptation / differentiation</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing enjoyment for others</li> <li>• Embarrassment</li> <li>• Offending disabled participant</li> <li>• Lack of support from other group members</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting the rest of the group in danger of harm / injury</li> <li>• Putting the disabled person in danger of harm / injury</li> </ul>	
 Have delivered to disabled people  Have not delivered to disabled people				 No. 1 challenge for experience group			

More specifically, while those with experience of delivering to disabled people referenced not having the right equipment (48%) or support (36%), those without had health and safety concerns, including putting the disabled participant in danger (41%). Both groups, however, felt a lack of know of impairments and adaptation were significant challenges (figure 6.2).

<sup>19</sup> Q11: What might make it difficult for you to ensure you could include this disabled person in your session?; Base: Have experience (310), Don't have experience (242)

Figure 6.2: Percentage of deliverers by whether they have delivered to disabled people or not who chose each specific challenge to inclusive delivery<sup>20</sup>



The qualitative stage of the study revealed further insight into the five themes deliverers are concerned about.

**How to communicate**

“Questioning them on their ability would be difficult, knowing how to approach that would be constructive”

**Managing social dynamic**

“I think the highest ability person in the group would feel frustrated or try not to be as good and it would hold them back. You want to be with people of your level”

**Health and safety**

“You have to be knowledgeable about their disability and know the risks attached”

**Resource and equipment**

“It’s about knowing that there is specially modified equipment available”

<sup>20</sup> Q12: How much do you agree... Showing T2B; Base: Have experience (310), Don’t have experience (242)

## How to adapt my sport

“If you adapt too much, you take away the essence of the sport. If you want people to enjoy it you have to adapt to keep the buzz”

### 7.0 The journey toward success

The study found that deliverers who had been successful in providing inclusive sessions had followed a particular path.

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

‘I know you can adapt all sports. For example, netball with a softer ball or a smaller team or a smaller court.’

- 6. 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’.

‘I’ve seen sessions run – it helps to give you ideas and build your confidence.’

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

‘Sometimes it’s just about coming up with an idea and trying it out and not being afraid. Or laughing about it if it doesn’t work too well.’

- 8. 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.

‘When there are people with disabilities within the session, everyone tends to express themselves more. It can break down a lot of barriers and everyone joins in.’



Figure 7.1: Four-point journey of developing successful inclusive provision



However, many deliverers do not follow this process in a linear manner, often jumping in at the ‘trial’ stage without having much awareness or exposure to inclusive sessions or working with a disabled audience. This can mean that there is a lot of trial and error and is likely if a disabled person turns up at a session and wants to take part without the deliverer having been aware of or exposed to inclusive delivery beforehand. This lack of experience with inclusive sport or disabled people can limit chances of success, with the deliverer not knowing how to interact with the new participant or adapt their provision to meet their needs. This can mean that they do not get to the ‘reward’ stage and experience the benefits.

However, when they personally experience success it becomes a stepping-stone to offering more inclusive sessions. Their sense of personal satisfaction and reward can fuel a desire to run more sessions. It is important to consider how deliverers can be assisted to build confidence in a controlled manner to encourage them to consider inclusive delivery the default option.

These issues are highlighted in the following case studies.

#### 7.1 Case study one: Successfully following the four-stage process – Chris, 50, rugby club chairman, responsible for business development of the club as well as coaching

**Before:** was not sure ‘how we would cope’ and people in the club had a narrow view of disability.

**Awareness:** disabled military veterans started to turn up at the club wanting to play inclusive sessions, triggering Chris to look into running them.

**Exposure:** the club had a day dedicated to educating coaches and trainers about mixed-ability sport and disabled people gave presentations.

“The biggest challenge was to get the lads to understand about the broad range of disabilities”

“The [disabled] lads presented exactly what they wanted. They want to be with other players, they want to go for a drink afterwards, they want to be accepted”

**Trial:** he realised going into the first inclusive session that he may have to adapt and try out different methods, but also keep the essence of the game so the disabled people felt the same as everyone else.

**Reward:** the day helped to ‘take the taboos and fears out of the lads’ in delivering inclusive sport. They now offer inclusive activities and the club had their first fixture over two months ago. For the disabled people ‘the difference it made in their life was huge and people were moved by it’. It was incredibly rewarding for the deliverers to see them as part of their community.

## 7.2 Case study two: Trial and error leading to success – Zac, 19, Wakeboarding Coach in London

‘Someone turned up with a prosthetic leg, and I had to adapt the session to meet their needs... The mental barrier was one of the biggest barriers to overcome, both for me and the disabled person, but I had to wing it...

I had to go through a process of trial and error and mix and match before we both felt comfortable...

Patience and humour are useful to make sure there is no barrier between us...

I’m now more confident as a coach and gained more knowledge around disability and wakeboarding’

## 7.3 Case study three: Trial and error not resulting in success – Lucy, 26, Run Leader in Manchester

‘We have a woman with down syndrome who comes along. She always comes with her carer. I think she enjoys it, she keeps coming back. I’ve spoken to her carer a few times but I don’t really chat to the woman with down syndrome. I feel a bit uncomfortable and find it easier to talk to her carer.’

While there is clearly a chance of success without following the suggested path, the risk of deterring a disabled person from engaging again following a disappointing experience should be avoided if possible.

## 8.0 Support needed by deliverers to increase confidence

In addition to investigating the barriers deliverers face in providing inclusive activity, the study also highlighted some of the support they feel would assist in reducing these.

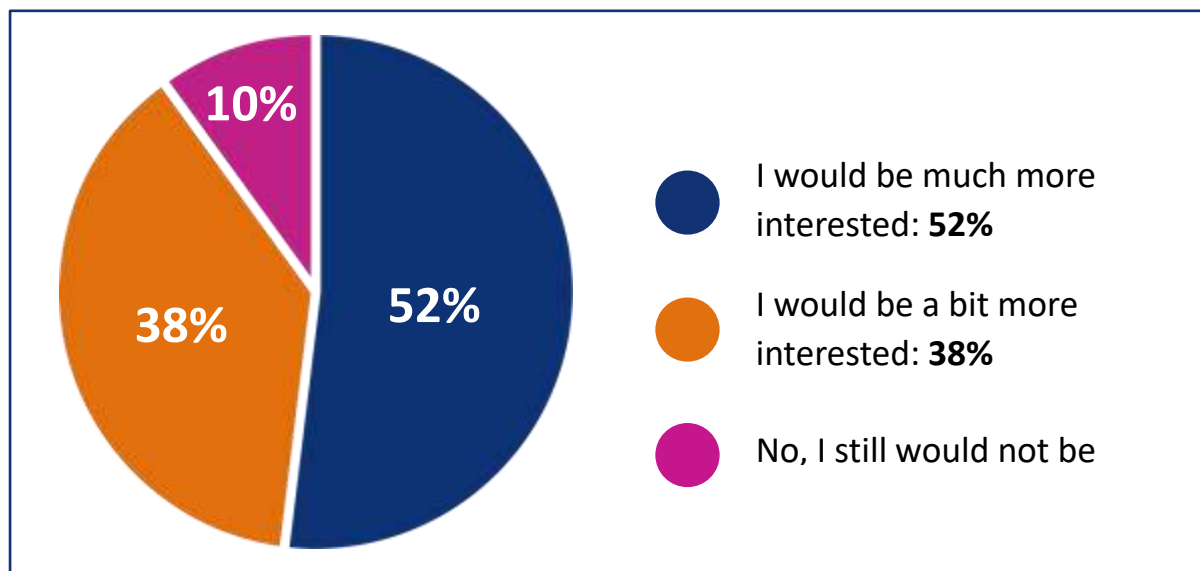
Figure 8.1 shows the reasons mentioned by participants in the quantitative survey for their lack of confidence in delivering to disabled people with (lack of) training and experience some of the most common reasons.

Figure 8.1: Reasons for lack of confidence in delivering to disabled people among deliverers by how often they were mentioned<sup>21</sup>



Figure 8.2, below, highlights the substantial impact that more effective provision of training and information could have on deliverers. More than half (52%) of those who said they were not currently interested in delivering sessions to disabled people felt they would be much more interested if given relevant training and information and a further two in five (38%) said they would be a bit more interested.

Figure 8.2: Percentage of deliverers not interested in delivering sessions to disabled people by whether they would be more interested or not if given relevant training and information<sup>22</sup>



<sup>21</sup> Q7a: Why would you not feel confident offering an inclusive sports session for those with a disability?; Base: All sport providers (542)

<sup>22</sup> Q8b. If you were given relevant training and information, would this change your interest in offering inclusive sessions for those with a disability? Base: Those not interested in delivering sessions to at least one disabled audience (141)

Figure 8.3 shows the percentages of deliverers who feel that each form of support and training would be useful. Training in adapting activity with guidance and practical techniques is seen to be most useful.

Figure 8.3: Percentage of deliverers by whether they have delivered to disabled people or not who felt each aspect of support would be useful<sup>23</sup>



<sup>23</sup> Q15: And how useful would the following be, in helping you to feel confident to provide inclusive sessions? Showing T2B; Base: Have experience (310), Don't have experience (242)

## 9.0 Conclusion and recommendations

The study has highlighted the need for practical, hands-on training for deliverers to make sure that they are more confident and therefore interested in providing inclusive opportunities for disabled people. This training must assist in the first two stages highlighted as part of the journey to successful inclusive delivery – awareness and exposure. It also needs to ensure that participants can experience some of the aspect of trialling adaptation and inclusive delivery.

Below are three key themes that emerged from the study as important areas for action. Activity Alliance and the sector more broadly must act on these recommendations in order to ensure more widespread availability of inclusive activity opportunities.

### 9.1 Recommendations

#### 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 \(IAP\)](#)<sup>24</sup> and more training included in level 1 and 2 coaching qualifications via the sport and physical activity workforce [Professional Standards](#)<sup>25</sup> (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](#),<sup>26</sup> including the [Talk to Me 10 principles](#),<sup>27</sup> Inclusive Communications Guide and Roadmap to supporting more 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.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/training/inclusive-activity-programme>

<sup>25</sup> [www.workforce.org.uk](http://www.workforce.org.uk)

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/resources>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/1910-talk-to-me-principles-in-action-november-2014>

### **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](#)<sup>28</sup> and programmes like IAP on:

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

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<sup>28</sup> Relevant modules include GPLUS37 for Active Communities and GPLUS37 for Facilities:  
<https://questnbs.org/module-guidance>

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This document is also available in Word format.  
Please contact us if you need more support.

Activity Alliance is the operating name  
for the English Federation of Disability Sport.

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