## **Activity Alliance logo**

Inclusive re-opening research project brief

# January 2022

## **Background**

Activity Alliance is a national charity which brings organisations and disabled people together to achieve our aim of fairness for disabled people in sport and physical activity.

With the lifting of restrictions, we want to understand disabled people’s experience of returning (or not) to physical activity. Over the course of the pandemic, many research projects have shown how disabled people have been negatively affected in terms of wellbeing, health, support, and physical activity levels[[1]](#footnote-1). We have a detailed understanding of the past motivations and barriers for disabled people (as well as their supporters) but recognise that the pandemic has led to a new landscape for disabled people and activity providers. [Sport England’s Active Lives May 20-21 Survey](https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/data/active-lives) shows the ongoing negative impact on activity levels for disabled people[[2]](#footnote-2).

Previous research shows the challenges that providers and deliverers experience when engaging with disabled people[[3]](#footnote-3) and how providers and deliverers can best engage with disabled people[[4]](#footnote-4). More recent research shows the challenges to the sector caused by the pandemic[[5]](#footnote-5).

The project will complement our [Annual Disability and Activity Survey](https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/annual-survey), which provides a comprehensive comparison between disabled and non-disabled people’s attitudes towards and involvement in sport and physical activity. Key findings from this research indicate that a higher percentage of disabled people feel like the pandemic has greatly reduced their ability and opportunity to be active. The research highlighted new barriers to being active that are likely to be ongoing, such as fears of contracting the virus and the impact of the pandemic on their health.

## **Project aims**

We want to conduct a forward-looking project that explores how disabled people can be supported and included in organised activities as restrictions ease and we recover from the pandemic.

1. We want to understand how and why disabled people have been impacted, recognising that as sport and activity reopens there may be many indirect implications of the pandemic. The project will develop a set of recommendations, co-produced with disabled people. These will aim to inform the sector as to what they can do to ensure reopening is inclusive and what needs to be done to ensure this. The embedding of the authentic voices of those most disproportionately impacted upon by the pandemic must be presented across the study. We need to ensure the sector can work to mitigate against any further disproportionately negative impact.
2. Supporting the above aim, understanding the perspective of providers would help provide a cohesive narrative for the experience of disabled people. We would like to explore what organisations are offering to disabled people, the challenges faced during this time of change, and the support and tools they need to be more inclusive. Providers, including our member organisations, programme partners, and grassroots organisations, can provider further insight into the reality of providing organised activities at this time.

While informal and at-home physical activity is important, this project should focus on organised activities. By ‘organised’ we mean an activity session run by an organisation or a trained person. For example: a team sport session, a fitness class, activities at a leisure centre or community centre, a jogging club, or using a personal trainer.

## **Potential research topics**

**For disabled people:**

* How have attitudes and circumstance for disabled people changed during the pandemic (building on previous research).
* Experiences of taking part in organised activities as restrictions have ended – what are the current and future challenges, barriers, and motivations?
* What decisions and factors affect different groups of disabled people?
* What are the support needs of disabled people when taking part in organised activities?
* What are the concerns, hopes and expectations of disabled people when considering being active at this time?

**For providers**

* How are providers currently being inclusive of disabled people?
* What are the key future challenges in ensuring an inclusive reopening?
* How do providers view the perception of disabled people at this time?
* What tools, support, capability building could help organised sport physical activity providers become more inclusive of disabled people?

## **Suggested methods**

We propose a predominantly qualitative methodology that gives detail on the ongoing experience of disabled people as lockdown eases, and as a lesser focus, the perspective of activity providers. We would also be interested in statistics that address new knowledge gaps (e.g. for providers) ,. Methods could include, but are not limited to:

* Desk-based research to ensure the project builds on current knowledge and to provide cohesive messages and recommendations.
* Digital ethnography with disabled people (and offline alternative)
* Interviews with disabled people
* Survey with activity providers
* Co-production/consultation between disabled people and activity providers.

### **Sample**

**Disabled adults (16+) in England:**

* Range of impairment types:
  + Breathing or stamina
  + Chronic health condition (for example, but not limited to, diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, epilepsy and hypertension) – include those who do not meet the definition of disabled to understand differences.
  + Dexterity (for example lifting and carrying objects, using a keyboard)
  + Hearing (for example deafness or partial hearing)
  + Learning or understanding or concentrating
  + Long term pain
  + Memory
  + Mental health
  + Mobility (for example walking short distances or climbing stairs)
  + Social or behavioural (for example, but not limited to, associated with autism, attention deficit disorder or Asperger's syndrome)
  + Speech or making yourself understood
  + Vision (for example blindness or partial sight)
* Diverse demographics and geographic spread
* Range of activity levels
  + Active pre-pandemic – active now
  + Active pre-pandemic – not active now
  + Not active pre-pandemic – active now
  + Not active pre-pandemic – not active now

The agency would be expected to recruit the sample of disabled people. We have networks that may assist with recruitment but are more likely to provide active/engaged disabled people.

**Activity providers**

We would provide contact details for activity providers (to include a range of provider types– leisure centres, NGBs, community organisations, national programmes, sports teams, or clubs) and activity types (inclusive activities as well as disability-specific).

### **Timings**

* Proposal issued on 4 January
* Proposals to be delivered inline with tender requirements by 17 January
* Shortlisted agencies invited for online meeting in w/c 24January
* Selection of preferred bidder in w/c 31 January
* Report to be launched in April 2022

### **Considerations**

* Accessibility and inclusivity of the research methods.
* How to include those who are digitally excluded.
* Optimising the use of co-production and understand what can be learnt through its practice for Activity Alliance and its partners.
* How circumstances might change during the pandemic – context/tone needs to stay relevant.
* Applications will be assessed on: understanding of the brief; approach/methods; accessibility; understanding of the sector/relevant issues; team experience; value for money; ability to deliver.

### **Outputs (suggested)**

* Engaging report and short exec summary.
* Actionable recommendations and solutions to help disabled people be active (including guidance for providers)
* Presentation to key stakeholders to finalise report.
* Additional qualitative outputs to maximise the input disabled people have provided during the research (e.g. case studies, video outputs)

### **Budget**

* £60,000 + VAT
* Additional budget to be earmarked for accessible formats and proofreading.

# Contact

Jessica Flavell

[jessica@activityalliance.org.uk](mailto:jessica@activityalliance.org.uk)

Direct Line: 0161 200 5442

1. Activity Alliance, ‘Impact of COVID-19 on Disabled People’ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Sport England, ‘Active Lives’ May 2020-21 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Activity Alliance, ‘Delivering activity to disabled people: The workforce perception gap’ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Activity Alliance, ‘Ten Principles’: https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/ten-principles [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Sport and Recreation Alliance, ‘Returning to Action: Evaluating Organisational Preparedness in the Wake of the Covid-19 Pandemic’ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)