How to engage disabled people to be more active

Using research findings on a practical level

www.efds.co.uk
Purpose of today

To present research findings and give you guidance on how and where you can apply them practically in your day to day role

Share some best practice of how to make sport and physical activity accessible and appealing for disabled people
10 key principles to help drive participation

1. Use the right communication channels
2. Put the activity in the right place
3. Do not focus solely on disability
4. Link to individual values
5. Appeal to different values over time
6. Reassure them that they can do it
7. Reassure them that they will fit in
8. Allow people to share their needs / experience
9. Be welcoming
10. Give examples people can relate to
1. Use the right communication channels
2. Put the activity in the right place
1. Inclusive Communications

September 1998

EFDS
English Federation of Disability Sport is founded.

Vision
Disabled people are active for life

We want to increase the number of opportunities for disabled people to be active for life.
2. Put the activity in the right place:
What does this mean
Choose locations where people feel comfortable
As travelling can be challenging for disabled people
provide activities close to home

There’s already so many struggles with taking part in sports without having to worry about getting there-I need something local to me, somewhere I know I can get to easily and not have to worry. Elizabeth

Physically local
• Local park / green spaces
• Local leisure centre
• School and community centres
• Local shopping areas

Digitally local
• Local blogs
• Local Facebook pages
• Local Twitter feeds
• Local online forums
Stay local to me in practice

Case study

RYA Sailability recognised the importance of staying local to young disabled people and building a relationship of trust by utilising familiar locations. Undeterred by an assumed restriction of needing to get people to a suitable body of water they introduced indoor sailing.

Inclusive Indoor Sailing (at Levels 1 and 2) takes place with both disabled and non-disabled young people in a sports hall. It is based on a real sailing race, learning the principles and skills involved, just without the water.

Indoor sailing helps introduce disabled young people to sailing in a comfortable, accessible local environment, it builds trust and confidence which leads to getting them out on the water in level 3.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhFEQ92IFWM
3. Do not focus solely on disability
What does this mean

- Our research has shown that a large proportion of disabled people do not identify with being disabled
  - Friends and parents also shy away from things which focus on disability
  - However professional carers may look for this specifically

- Leading communications with images and words which talk explicitly to disability and impairment can fail to inspire or motivate disabled people

- Communications and marketing need to look beyond the impairment to appeal and motivate more people
  - But it depends on who the target is
Think of your unique selling point

Case study

Liverpool Lions wheelchair rugby team were struggling to attract non-disabled people. To try and boost numbers, the manager of the team approached the local under 16s rugby league team and asked them if they wanted to come and try wheelchair rugby and use it as part of their training.

The team manager said “We told them it would be good for their coordination. It can also give them a really good upper body workout.”

By highlighting the benefits that the sport can provide, 5 or 6 members of the under 16s team now regularly take part in the wheelchair rugby sessions as an additional training session.
4. Link to individual values
5. Appeal to different values over time
What does this mean

Link your activity to the things that disabled people find important

- Family and support systems
- Having fun and feeling free
- Friendship and connections
- My health
- Mental strength and wellbeing
- Fulfilled
- Happy
- Sense of self-worth
- Progressing in life
- Happy
- Sense of self-worth
- Fulfilled
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- My health
- Mental strength and wellbeing
- Friendship and connections
- Having fun and feeling free
- Family and support systems
Make people feel confident your activity is for them...

6. Reassure them they can do it
7. Reassure them they will fit in
What does this mean?

• Disabled people can be less likely to consider activities because they feel they’re beyond their capability

• The fear of ‘standing out’ can be more disabbling than their impairment

• Communications need to reassure participants that they will be welcome and that activities are suitable for them

I don’t like going to disabled only classes, but when thinking about going with people without impairments I think I’m not going to be able to keep up with everybody else- sometimes I know I’m being silly but it really puts me off. I don’t want to be singled out but I want other people to make me feel welcome regardless of my ability.
How do you do this?

I want the other people there to be rubbish at it. Marie

Consider using...
- Images of different ages, sizes and abilities
- Video/photos showing what the experience is like and who attends
- Trial ‘have a go’ sessions
- Case studies of others - the journey they’ve made
- Word of mouth / social networks.

Avoid using...
- Images of elite sports men/women
  - Although aspirational, they’re less effective in direct comms as hard to identify with
- Images of people in team kit
  - Can feel exclusive.
  - Gives a sense of standing out before they’ve even joined

“On the ad was ‘we will get you on a bike no matter what’ - that made me think ‘if they’re saying that let’s see how serious they are’, and I’m still there today!”
Case study

Access Dorset is a user led organisation and registered charity, run by disabled people, older people and carers.

They have a website where they advertise suitable activities for disabled people to take part in. On this website they have a number of videos which demonstrate the different activities available.

http://www.accessdorsetcentre.org/fit-for-life-films/

The videos film the activities taking place and include interviews with participants and the activity leader. People can watch them and get a better understanding of what to expect and the kind of people who attend.
8. Allow people to feedback
What does this mean?

• Disabled people and supporters like to be able to share their concerns with instructors about limitations which may impact their ability

• However openly declaring their needs can be embarrassing

• And past experience of sharing has led to exclusion

• So methods are needed for instructors to hear specific needs without singling people out and reassuring that by declaring their needs they won’t be excluded
Make it easy for me to tell you my needs:

Case study

Offering disabled people an opportunity to give feedback on how you can better meet their needs is essential. A leisure centre in Greater Manchester gives their users various ways in which to share their views.

- Online surveys with their members
- Encouraging members to speak to staff about anything that they think has been done well or needs improving.
- ‘You say’ wall - a mobile pop up feedback wall which is moved around the facility and people are encouraged to add feedback to it. They don’t have to write their name, it gives them an anonymous forum to share their views.
9. Be welcoming
What does this mean?

• An uncomfortable or awkward first experience can put people off coming back again

• ‘First experience’ includes
  – Arrival and getting there
  – All staff
  – Going to the changing rooms
  – Meeting everyone for the first time
  – Meeting the ‘instructor’
  – The suitability of the class for their skill level

I went swimming and just getting from reception to the changing room was so hard. There was no one there to help me. It really put me off going back. **Alasdair**
Ensure my first experience is good:

Case study

A tennis club in the North East implemented a follow up email scheme when people registered to take part in a visually impaired tennis session they provided.

The email contained lots of useful information including:

- Confirmation of the date, time and location details of the session
- Detailed information on how to get to the session, train times, distance from the station, cost of taxi, information about facilities in the local area.
- Other participants details so they could arrange to meet and travel together
- Explanation of how the session would be ran: timings, breaks, refreshments, instructor experience
- Information about what to do if they intend to bring a guide dog
- Providing a variety of different contact methods (email, two phone numbers and twitter contact) for people to get in touch

“It definitely worked as they had a conversion percentage from sign up to attendance of 100% (which has never happened before) and then the highest number of attendees ever on a VI Camp (46)
10. Show me
Encourage me via your existing advocates
What does this mean?

- Those already involved are often very passionate about their experiences.
- They have made the journey so can relate to others.
- Opportunity to harness the enthusiasm and empathy and use it to encourage new members.
- Example: Buddy Schemes.
Bob and Ali are coaches at a canoe club based in Amble in Northumberland. They paddle everywhere together on rivers, lakes and sea.

They are both wheelchair users and have decided to tell their tales through a series of talk shows delivered to coaches and paddlers across different events in the North East.

**Advert on a canoe club website:**
Saturday evening: Talk by Bob ‘n’ Ali - ‘Canoes, kayaks and wheelchairs!’ - no rivers unaccessible!

They have inspired many through their humour and wit and sheer determination to get on with it and enjoy their paddling. They tell of their experiences, close shaves and what works well for them and what can be done to help others.
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