



Leisure factsheet 9

Programming and participation

**activity
alliance**

**disability
inclusion
sport**

Inclusive programming creates activities that invite, encourage, and enable participation.

This means being responsive to people's motivations for engaging in activity, while addressing the barriers they face. Successful programming helps to meet everyone's needs and get more disabled people and people with long-term health conditions active.



What makes your programming and participation inclusive?

2

Organisations with effective and inclusive programming and participation strategies typically:



Embed inclusive activity in all current and future programme planning.



Give people choice through diverse and well-balanced programming options.



Prioritise engagement, community outreach, and inclusive communications.



Take a person-centred approach, listening and acting on people's values and motivations to take part.



Co-produce the design, delivery, and development of activities to truly meet the needs of disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.



Demonstrate innovative and flexible approaches. They are not afraid to consider alternatives and try new things.



Monitor their programmes effectively to sustain participation and evidence impact and learning.



Consider your existing programming and ask yourself:

- Is it fit for purpose for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions?
- Are local disabled people fully involved in shaping your programming offers?
- Does your programming cater for all participants with accessible referrals, exit routes, and development pathways in place?



Developing inclusive programming and participation

3

A positive and proactive approach is vital to create programming which meets the needs of disabled people and people with long-term health conditions:

Build a flexible approach based on core principles

Your programming strategy should focus clearly on the outcomes you want to achieve. It should also define core inclusion principles to guide your work. It is important to recognise that improving accessibility will include all aspects of your programming. For example, pricing, booking processes, marketing, monitoring, staff training, and community engagement.

For ideas on effective inclusion principles see our [Get Out Get Active programme learning resources](#) titled **What is Get Out Get Active?** and **How we built an inclusive framework for engaging the least active.**



Top tip: Remember, it is not all about the new. Focus on improving the offer and appeal of existing activities, only introducing new activities where demand allows. This helps to achieve more sustainable outcomes.



Focus on engagement first

Disabled people and people with long-term health conditions must be a genuine part of the design, delivery, and development of activities. This avoids assumptions and makes sure activities are designed around the needs of real people. Try to focus on engagement first and delivery second. Ask yourself:

- How do you engage and empower local people to influence your programming?
- Do you listen to, understand, and work together with disabled people and people with long-term health conditions in your community to shape activity offers?
- Who can you collaborate with to reach and engage the least active disabled and non-disabled people?



Top tip: Don't rush into delivery. Consult, engage, and consult again to fine-tune a co-produced activity offer. Keep things fun, friendly, social, and welcoming.

Consider all your activities

Some disabled people will prefer to take part in disability-specific sessions. But being inclusive is more than just providing disability-specific activity in your programme. Not all disabled people relate to the term 'disabled', consider themselves to have a disability or want to access disability sports.

Genuinely inclusive programming offers people a choice of activities which meet their needs, often through a mix of audience-specific and inclusive opportunities. Consider:

- Does your programming offer choice to disabled people and people with long-term health conditions? Think about your membership and pay as you go options, courses and classes, sports clubs, and targeted initiatives.
- How are disabled people included within all your targeted offers, for example sessions aimed at families, children and young people or ethnically diverse communities?



Top tip: Be innovative in your programming. Don't forget to consider the needs of people with a range of impairments and health conditions, including people with complex needs.

Developing inclusive programming and participation

5

Tap into values and motivations

Consider how you can reach, attract, and retain disabled people and people with long-term health conditions into your programmes. Tapping into people's values and motivations is a powerful way to engage them. Check out our [Get Out Get Active programme learning resources](#) titled **Making activity more accessible and appealing** and **Engaging different community groups** for ideas. Don't forget to use [Activity Alliance's inclusive communication resources](#) when planning and delivering activities to help you reach more people, including more disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.



Top tip: When embedded effectively [Activity Alliance's Ten Principles](#) can help providers deliver more appealing activity programmes for everyone.

Review regularly

Identify what works well through regular programme monitoring and feedback. Remember to include ongoing opportunities for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to influence your offer. Grow and upscale successful activities where possible.

New activity can take time to grow, so be patient when trying to increase participant numbers. But also recognise programme limitations. Be willing to adapt and consider alternative programming if required.



Top tip: Be bold and creative. Try new things, embrace different approaches and delivery methods.

Useful resources

Activity Alliance has a suite of resources and services that can support you with developing effective programming and participation.

- Our [Get Out Get Active programme learning resources](#) support organisations to engage inactive disabled and non-disabled people in activities. Take a look at the resources titled **Creating activities that put people's needs first** and **Becoming active: The participant journey so far**.
- The [Inclusion Club Hub](#) is an online tool to help sports clubs to include more disabled people in their activities.



activity alliance | disability inclusion sport

This factsheet is part of our leisure resource.

View the full resource on our website:

activityalliance.org.uk/resources

 activityalliance.org.uk

 01509 227750

 info@activityalliance.org.uk



This document is available in Word format. Please contact us if you need support. Activity Alliance is the operating name for the English Federation of Disability Sport. Registered Charity no. 1075180.