

Effective engagement

There is not only one way to engage disabled people and no set plan to ensure disabled people can take part in sport or active recreation.

What really matters is that your process is fully inclusive for disabled people. It should be accessible and lead to increased involvement within your local activity development. In turn, meeting your organisation's objectives.

We have created a number of engagement resources that encourage you to think about the ways you include disabled people. This sheet provides top tips on how to be more effective in your engagement.





The engagement ladder

Take a look and see how you can take the next steps to improve your offer to disabled people.

The ladder to the right is useful when planning the engagement required for different projects or programmes. It is a framework for understanding different levels of participation and is adapted from the Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969).



Gold Star

Devolving

- Decision making is led by disabled people and their support networks when it comes to creating or improving opportunities to engage in physical activity locally.



Great Work

Collaborating

- Working in partnership with disabled people and communities to design and develop programmes or opportunities into real action.
- Sharing organisation resource, joint bids, ambassadors.
- Working with disabled people and communities to ensure needs and views are consistently heard, taken into account and feedback is given.

Involving

- Forums, networking events.



Good Progress

Consulting

- Collecting views and opinions from disabled people and their support network on current opportunities as well as suggested improvements.
- Surveys, focus groups, informal conversations.



Fair Start

Informing

- Giving disabled people and communities information about future plans, initiatives or available opportunities.
- Website, social media, newsletters.

Sherry R. Arnstein, 'A ladder of citizen participation',
Journal of American Planning Association, Vol. 35, No 4, July 1969, pp. 216 - 224.

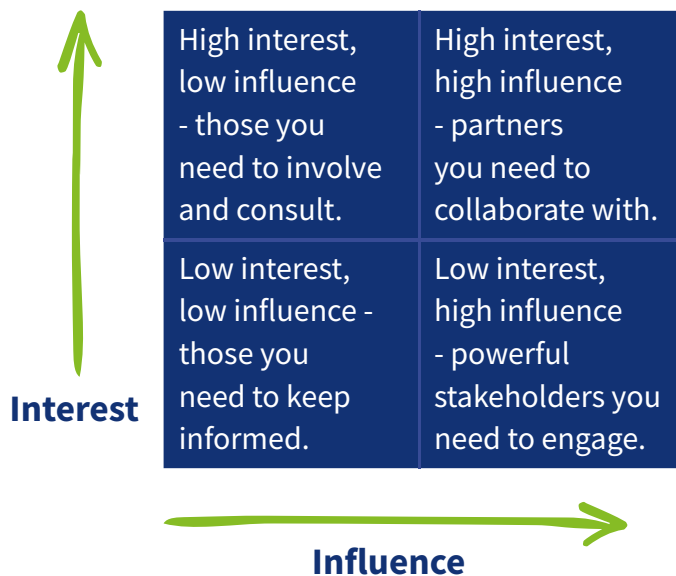


Understand the market

Understanding who, why, when and how to target your audiences can help you to plan and prioritise your work. A good place to start is with your stakeholders.

People (stakeholders)

A good method to understand who your stakeholders are is to divide them into four groups:



Once you have understood your stakeholders, below are a few further things to consider to actively engage with disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

Insight - Understand the audience and make up of your geographical areas of reach before planning any engagement. (There is a separate sheet on insight so you can build on this).

Networks - Scan existing networks across sport and physical activity and consider engaging with groups or organisations who are part of sport. You could build a relationship to support your engagement, understand disabled people's needs better through their experiences and be aware of those that are, or have the potential, to encourage disabled people to be active. Remember these could be your future community champions, advocates - possible Board members.

Location / Accessibility - How do disabled people currently access your services or offer? How can you learn from existing people that access your services? Consider and evaluate the suitability of facilities. This includes leisure centres, community/village venues, educational facilities, outdoor spaces. You may need to be flexible in your approach to location - maybe even take your services to disabled people.

Inequalities - Almost half (48%) of people in poverty in the UK are in a household with a disabled person or have a disability themselves - Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2016.

Inequality is not unique to just disabled people although statistics show a higher likelihood of being affected. This can play a huge part on how you engage with individuals and what potential barriers they face in getting active. These barriers may not be in relation to a person's impairment or long-term health condition. But it could be to do with finance/benefits, housing, family support, transport or health. These factors can be much harder for individuals to overcome.

Top tip

Consider working in partnership with a Disabled Person User-led Organisation (DPULO), a charity or a non-sport organisation that may have accessible facilities that you could jointly use. Not only are you tapping into their networks but you are also building a new relationship!

Improve your communications and reach more people

Accessible and inclusive communications enables you to reach more people, not just disabled people. Disabled people are a large proportion of our population, so are an important audience to consider when communicating.

Everyone can play a part in embedding accessible communication, no matter what your role is. Activity Alliance provides guidance on using social media to promoting activities, posters to websites. Simple changes can have a large impact on what and how you offer activities.

Read more on [Activity Alliance's inclusive communications page](#).

Performance measurement and learning

No longer can we only evaluate the inputs - the number of courses we run or meetings we attend. We have to understand the outputs or outcomes. Here are some considerations:

- Measure impact - There are two areas: organisational and specific project/programme.
- Data collection - Look at your current data collection/membership and analyse this. This will help you to understand your market and potentially identify gaps or areas for improvements.
- Sustainability - Embed the learning you have collated and understood. Ensure you have a system that allows you to learn from the data you collect.
- Share impact - Do not be afraid to shout about the good work you do, the more people that know, the more people that will be attracted to your service.

“ Project success means different things to different people. You need to establish what your stakeholder community perceives success to be for them, in the context of project delivery. ”

Strengthen your workforce

You can make your workforce stronger by developing ideas like professional standards, career pathways, qualifications and training opportunities.

Organisational improvement

To be a more effective and engaging organisation, you should adopt an inclusive culture. Embed and practise inclusion across the whole organisation, including at Board level, operational and those delivering activities.

Ask yourself:

- Does the Board consider inclusion as a way of working that runs through the organisation and its strategies?
- How much do development officers understand the needs of disabled people?
- Are coaches, leaders, volunteers competent and confident in working with disabled people? Can they give a positive, welcoming experience?

Suggested solutions:

- **Activity Alliance's LEAD (Leading Equitable and Accessible Delivery) improvement toolkit.** This supports an organisation to self-assess their offer for disabled people under a range of key themes. These include strategy, leadership, community engagement and people management.
- **QUEST G+37 Active Communities & Facility Managers** (Engaging with disabled people and people with long-term health conditions).

- **Inclusive Activity Programme** - Equips people with the skills to engage disabled people and people with long-term health conditions more effectively in activities. Funded by Sport England National Lottery funding, Activity Alliance is working with UK Coaching.

Non-sport sector improvement

You should also consider upskilling those who deliver or have the potential to deliver activity to disabled people within their services.

Suggested solutions:

- **Inclusive Activity Programme**
- **Activity Alliance Road Map** - Details the sporting landscape and signposts you to contacts.
- **Activity Alliance Being Active Guide and videos** - Support disabled people and networks to start being active, understand the benefits and learn from other people.

Find all our research on our website, this sheet is part of our engagement resource.

Read all the sheets here activityalliance.org.uk/engagement

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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