

Supporting people with long term health conditions to be physically active

Resource pack for the sport and physical activity sector

March 2022



The
Richmond
Group
of Charities



Contents

1	Introduction	3
	Who we are	3
	What is this pack?	4
2	Four ways you can make a difference	5
3	About physical inactivity and long term health conditions	6
	About long term health conditions	6
	The facts about inactivity	7
	Barriers to physical activity	8
4	Why addressing physical inactivity is important	9
	Mohan's story	9
	Physical activity benefits	10
	Tackling inequalities in physical activity participation	11
	Physical activity is safe	13
5	Resources	14
6	Case studies	16
	References	17

Introduction

Who we are

The Richmond Group of Charities is a coalition of health and care charities working in partnership with Mind, MS Society, Parkinson's UK and Sport England. We are united in our commitment to:

- support the least active people living with long term health conditions (LTCs) to be more physically active;
- encourage health and care professionals with long term health conditions to be active;
- ensure consistent, person-centred conversations about physical activity are a routine part of health and care interactions;
- see supportive, inclusive and accessible physical activity opportunities and facilities prioritised by the sport, leisure and physical activity sector.



What is this pack?

This pack for the sport and physical activity sector provides:

- Four ways you can make a difference and help people with long term health conditions be more active.
- A summary of essential information about physical activity and long term health conditions and an outline of why it's important for the sport and physical activity sector to engage with and support more people with long term health conditions to increase their physical activity.
- Resources and case studies with more information and inspiration from good practice.

Four ways you can make a difference

1

2

3

4

5

6

What you can do to support more people with long term health conditions to be active

1 Prioritise inclusive physical activity

Continue to make tackling inequality a priority by ensuring people living with long term health conditions are a core audience for your work and integral to your business strategy.

2 Increase engagement and knowledge

Commit to engaging people with long term health conditions in the design, delivery and review of services. Use available insight to help understand the barriers and motivators of people living with long term health conditions. Sign up to the We Are Undefeatable Supporter Hub for regular updates. Support the development and dissemination of appropriate training and support for the sector workforce, for example, UK Coaching, Parkinson's UK Awareness Training and Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity+. Check out case studies about how other organisations are engaging people with long term health conditions.

3 Enhance inclusivity of messages

Review communications and marketing to consider its inclusivity and accessibility, using We Are Undefeatable insight, Activity Alliance's Inclusive Communications resources or other resources here.

4 Improve accessibility

Help your partners and networks assess the inclusivity and accessibility of services and facilities and signpost them to support such as the Alzheimer's Society Dementia Friendly Guide, Activity Alliance Inclusive Activity Training and Quest. For more resources and support visit our resources section.

About physical inactivity and long term health conditions

About long term health conditions

Long term health conditions are chronic conditions that require ongoing management and treatment over a period of years or decades. These can be mental or physical conditions, and increasingly people are living with multiple (two or more) physical and mental health conditions.

A few examples of long term mental and physical health conditions are depression, anxiety, dementia, type 2 diabetes, back pain, Parkinson's, asthma, arthritis, and cardiovascular disease.

Long term health conditions are more prevalent amongst older people. They are more common (and more likely to be severe) in those from lower socio-economic groups, who are also more likely to live with multiple conditions, including a mental health condition.¹

Estimates for the percentage of people living with multiple long term health conditions in England vary from 15% to 30% according to different national and local sources. In the UK this number is expected to rise to 68% in 2035.²

In England, 43% of the population has at least one long term health condition³

30% of people with 4+ conditions are under 65 years of age, and this percentage is higher in disadvantaged areas⁴



The facts about inactivity

2x

as likely to be inactive with a long term condition as without.⁵

1 in 6

UK deaths are due to physical inactivity – it is one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality.⁶

40%

of long term health conditions could be prevented by reducing inactivity.⁷

64%

of people living with long term health conditions would like to be more active.⁸

- People with multiple long term health conditions are less likely to be active than those without, as are people from ethnic minority groups, lower socio-economic groups and older people.⁹
- **The cost of inactivity to the UK economy is estimated at £7.4 billion annually**, not just through its contribution to ill health and driving up healthcare costs, but also by reducing the health and productivity of the workforce.¹⁰ In addition to this, **it has been estimated that sport and physical activity in the community generate £9.5 billion of value** through improved mental and physical health, including £5.6 billion of healthcare savings and £1.7 billion of social care savings.¹¹

Percentage of people who *are active* with long term health conditions¹²

56%

with one form of impairment

48%

with two forms of impairment

37%

with three or more impairments

Barriers to physical activity

- There are significant barriers to people with long term health conditions being physically active. Often these are condition related, such as fear of making conditions worse and struggling to build a routine due to the unpredictability of health conditions. However, these are also compounded with common barriers of lack of motivation, time and social support.¹³
- The **COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the issue of physical inactivity** further, making the inequalities starker and exacerbating the existing complex web of barriers and challenges that make it harder for people with long term health conditions to become and stay active. Research conducted by DJS Research on behalf of the We Are Undefeatable campaign highlighted that 14% of people with a long term health condition cited COVID-19 as a barrier to being active. **This has led to a decrease in general strength and fitness**, particularly amongst older people which the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities predict will result in a higher number of falls.¹⁴

57% of people fear activity will make their condition worse¹⁵

52% of people with long term health conditions lack motivation to be active¹⁶



Why addressing physical inactivity is important

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Mohan's story

Mohan has dementia and his family support him to be active through him helping around the home, and by taking him to accessible chair-based activity groups. Find out more about Mohan's story at [We Are Undefeatable](#).



Physical activity benefits

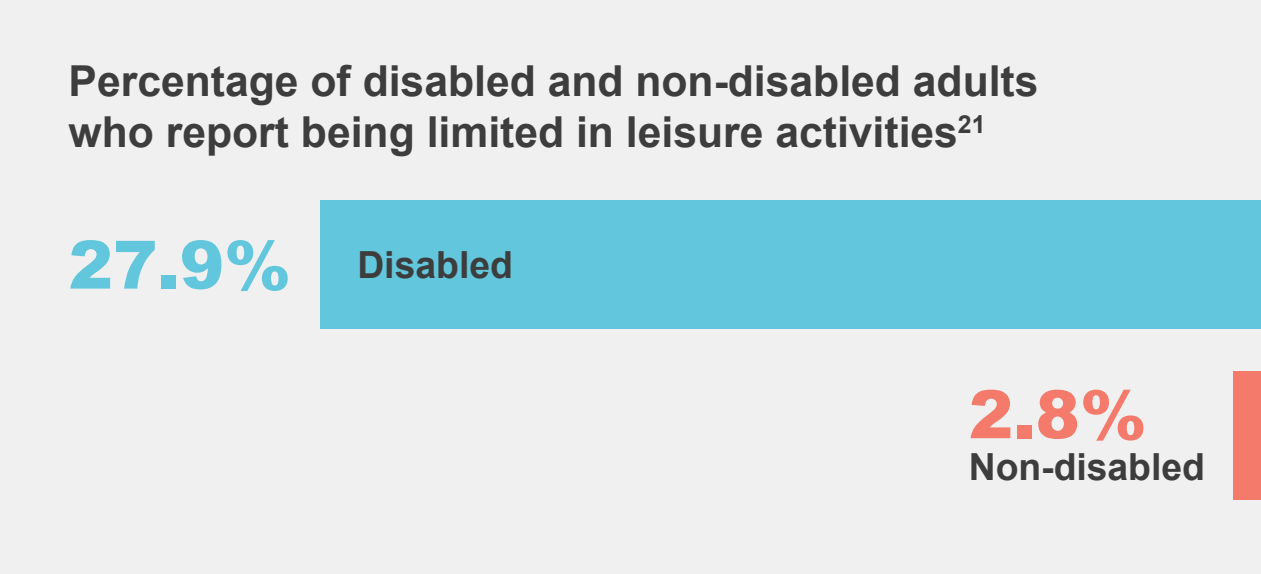
- The UK Chief Medical Officer Physical Activity Guidelines (2019) suggest that adults should aim for 150 minutes of moderate intensity (e.g. brisk walking, cycling) physical activity a week but also recognise the various barriers that prevent many people being more active. Therefore, the guidelines recommend “for good physical and mental health, **adults should aim to be physically active every day. Any activity is better than none**”.¹⁷
- The guidelines also identify that the **greatest benefits to health come from the least active people** (i.e. those that do less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity a week) **increasing their physical activity**. These are the people most likely to require support to make sustainable changes to their behaviour and this support will be unique to each individual.
- Reducing inactivity could prevent up to 40% of long term health conditions.¹⁸ It also can help **improve quality of life and sleep and manage stress**.¹⁹ Evidence also suggests that physical activity can also help reduce social isolation.²⁰
- Being active means different things to people and many assume they need access to equipment, memberships, clothes or facilities to get the benefits. However, it’s **about finding what works for the individual** and while for some that may mean being directed to exercise referral classes or structured activity programmes, for many it will be about **building movement (ideally a mixture of aerobic and strength) into everyday life**.

Examples of this everyday physical activity are taking stairs as opposed to lifts or escalators, walking on the spot or wheelchair dancing while watching TV, or carrying shopping home.



Tackling inequalities in physical activity participation

- A significant proportion of the population may not be adequately served by the current range of physical activity facilities, services and provision on offer, as demonstrated by the 2012–14 report by Equality and Human Rights Commission which highlighted that disabled adults were much more likely to report being limited in leisure activities (27.9%) than non-disabled people (2.8%).²¹
- Addressing inequity in access to services and facilities is something that should be a core part of the sport, physical activity and leisure sector’s work. As the sector continues to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, **expanding the number of people able to use these services would also be of direct financial benefit to providers.**
- Despite increased awareness in the sport and physical activity sector of the need to address inequalities, physical activity messaging and imagery is often still geared towards communicating structured sport and exercise, doesn’t respond to audience needs and lacks consistency, which creates a barrier for many people who don’t relate to this approach or perceive themselves as ‘sporty’. This is compounded by **inconsistent inclusivity and accessibility of services and lack of awareness of person-centred support** from some sector professionals.²²
- Using We Are Undefeatable insight and **engaging with people with lived experience** of long term health conditions could improve the way that physical activity opportunities are designed, promoted and provided to better meet their needs.



- As of early 2022, the physical activity and sport sector is currently still struggling after COVID-19 restrictions but is in a position to **reinvent delivery and services**. To promote a broader and more inclusive range of activity, we should make it clear that sitting less, moving more, and moving more often are important. Doing this in tandem with **improving the accessibility and inclusivity of activity and sports facilities and provision** as well as enhancing staff training would engage wider populations of people, and not just inactive people living with long term health conditions. This could result in significant benefits for the sport and physical activity sector including:
 - **an uplift in service utilisation through increased choice;**
 - **sustainable recovery of the physical activity and sport sector following COVID-19 through improved facilities, better engagement and increased spend by customers;**
 - **more opportunities for the workforce including attracting a more diverse and representative workforce and volunteers;**
 - **improved profile within the local community potentially leading to engagement with new audiences, resulting in more sustainable income streams;**
 - **helping organisations deliver against possible contractual targets related to inclusion and attract collaboration opportunities with other organisations and funders.**

Improving accessibility and inclusivity engages wider populations



Physical activity is safe

Medical consensus published in November 2021 by the Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine (FSEM) is that physical activity is safe. The findings of the review of risk and subsequent creation of the Medical Consensus Statement on Risk challenges the need for pre-participation medical clearance for people living with stable long term health conditions before increasing their physical activity levels and recognises it as an unnecessary barrier to physical activity.

The FSEM recommend that the **need for medical guidance, as opposed to clearance, should be determined by people living with long term health conditions who are concerned about their symptoms**, not by pre-participation screening questionnaires such as the physical activity readiness questionnaire (PAR-Q) or health commitment statement.²³ This viewpoint is echoed by the World Health Organisation in their 2020 Physical Activity Guidelines.²⁴



Resources

1 2 3 4 **5** 6

For the sport and physical activity sector to engage and support people with LTCs to be active.
For more resources and information visit our [resource and knowledge hub](#).

Data

Public Health England [Public health profiles](#)

Sport England [Active Lives survey of physical activity in England](#)

Sport England [Target groups data](#)

The health & care sector knowledge and tools

King's Fund guides to how the health and care sector is organised

[Making sense of the health and care system](#)

[Quick watch guides to health and care](#)

Health Education England [elearning for healthcare module on physical activity, behaviour change and health](#)

Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine [Medical Consensus Statement on Risk of physical activity for people with long term conditions](#)

Inclusive activity support and messaging

We Are Undefeatable [Supporter Hub with campaign messaging tools, image library and evaluation reports](#)

Sport England [Tackling Inactivity Design Principles](#)

Alzheimer's Society [Dementia Friendly Guide](#)

Activity Alliance [Inclusive Communications](#)

We Are Undefeatable [Local Activation Areas Learning Events](#)

Disability Rights UK [Get Yourself Active Resource for inclusive physical activity](#)

Rethink Mental Illness
[Rethink Activity Toolkit for peer support groups](#)

National Centre for Sports and Exercise Medicine
[#EasierToBeActive](#)

Facilities

[Quest NBS G Plus 37 module for facilities](#) Leisure industry scheme to improve facilities and provision, this module supports engagement with disabled people and those with long term health conditions to specifically remove barriers and improve leisure facility use.

Activity Alliance [Opening Doors Guide](#)

Workforce

UK Coaching [We Are Undefeatable Workforce Guide](#)

Mind [Mental Health Champions Toolkit](#)

Mind and UK Coaching [Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity+](#)

Parkinson's UK [Awareness training for those who promote physical activity to people with Parkinson's](#)

Activity Alliance [Inclusive Activity Training](#)

CIMSPA [Professional standards for long term conditions](#)

Provision

Activity Alliance GOGA project [Disability and inclusive resources](#)

Activity Alliance [Adapting activity](#)

Activity Alliance [STEP tool for adapting physical activity](#)

Make Your Move [Physical activity videos for multiple conditions](#)

Swim England [Dementia Friendly Swimming](#)

[Manchester That Counts campaign](#)

[Liverpool Fit For Me programme](#)

[Move More Sheffield programme](#)

Evaluations, insight & learning

Disability Rights UK [Get Yourself Active evaluation](#)

Mind [Get Set To Go](#)

Social Return on Investment of Sport [Sheffield Hallam project](#)

Sport England [Why investing in physical activity is great for our health – and our nation](#)

Sport England [Measuring economic impact](#)

Sport England [Evaluation and learning library](#)

We Are Undefeatable [Local Activation Areas Learning](#)

Richmond Group of Charities [Physical activity insight](#)

Royal Society for Public Health / UK Active [Workforce Report](#)

Sport for Development Coalition and Mind [Moving for Mental Health Report](#)

Case studies

There are good examples of inclusive physical activity opportunities and campaigns, and accessible facilities for people with long term health conditions all over the country. Find out more in our [case study pack](#) about:

- Total Wellbeing Luton
- The Alzheimer's Society: Dementia-friendly sport and physical activity guide
- SASP: Moving Miracles in Somerset
- STEP tool: Boccia England



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For more information:
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Imagery on pages 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 18 courtesy of [We Are Undefeatable](#)



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