

Institution: Buckinghamshire New University		
Unit of Assessment: 24 Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism		
Title of case study: Improving provision and access to disability sport and physical activity in Buckinghamshire		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: March – August 2017		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Ben Clayton Dr Ben Ives	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior Lecturer Lecturer	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: Nov 2002 – present Sept 2015 – Dec 2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2017 – June 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>The research identified new approaches to engaging disabled people in order to increase and sustain sport and physical activity participation. Some of the recommendations made are unique and are now being adopted by a number of disability organisations. Through the research and dissemination processes, new connections have been established among the local authority, sport providers, and disability support charities and organisations, who are now working together to create sustainable sport and physical activity for disabled people in Buckinghamshire. Further, national dissemination of ideas has prompted pledges to improve opportunities for and experiences of sport and physical activity for people with disabilities.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>In late-2016, the Human Performance, Exercise and Wellbeing Centre at Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) was approached by Buckinghamshire County Council and Leap With Us (the Bucks and Milton-Keynes Active Partnership), to initiate connections with local disability support organisations and design and conduct research into the reasons why people with disabilities were not engaging with sport and physical activity. Working to the Government's Sporting Futures: A New Strategy for an Active Nation and Sport England's latest strategy, both Bucks CC and Leap With Us wanted to increase sustainable participation among people with disabilities, but highlighted previous failed attempts to engage this hard-to-reach population despite trying to remove barriers to participation established through existing quantitative research.</p> <p>Therefore, we conducted research that sought to go beyond a simple statistical understanding of participation and non-participation issues by speaking to local non-sporting disability organisations and their memberships so that we might hear about sport and disability in their own words. This way, while individual issues and barriers may still be highlighted, the overall narrative might also reveal more complex and contingent reasons for non-participation.</p> <p>In total 24 disabled people and eight salaried or volunteer staff/facilitators from three disability support organisations were recruited and engaged in semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The research concluded that lack of enjoyment was the key factor influencing non-participation and that physical activity and sport needs to be redesigned to for disabled people. Many of the findings simply confirmed some of the commonly reported barriers to participation, such as cost of transport and activities, ineffective communication and advertisement, preconceived images of sport as competitive and judgmental, and anxieties about athletic</p>		

abilities and performances. However, the study also concluded that these reported barriers – although important – often masked a lack of enjoyment for participants and were used as excuses by disabled people. Consequently, attempts to remove external barriers, such as costs and transport issues, will always be fruitless unless providers can first ensure that sport and physical activity is attractive to disabled people and makes them want to come back.

Speaking with industry professionals who help deliver physical activity and sport provision for disabled people in Buckinghamshire, and with the Bucks Disability Task Group, a number of recommendations were made. The researchers suggested moving away from ‘sport’ in favour of ‘activity’ and to place emphasis on creating a welcoming, inclusive and non-judgemental environment. They also recommended using a multi-activity approach to allow disabled people to find out what they enjoy and to blend physical activities with non-physical activities, such as coffee-drinking and lunches to help promote social interaction and wellbeing. Further, the researchers suggested that coaches should receive basic training in how to deliver sport and physical activity for disabled people and, going forward, needed to liaise with and train-up people working in disability support organisations so that they themselves might take on sustainable delivery in the future. This was especially important, because by delivering sport and physical activity in a familiar setting, where disabled people already attended, removes many of the external barriers and anxieties reported by those disabled people.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

Underpinning qualitative research was funded by Buckinghamshire County Council and the Bucks and Milton Keynes Active Partnership, Leap With Us (£5374) leading to the below outputs:

Conference paper: Clayton, B. and Ives, B. ‘The everyday realities of sport and physical activity for non-sporting disabled people: An initial exploratory study’, Disability Sport: What Will its Legacy Be? Coventry University, Coventry, September 2018.

Conference paper: Ives, B. and Clayton, B. ‘Understanding the motivations and challenges for disabled residents to get involved in physical activity and sport’, Bucks and Milton Keynes Physical Activity and Sport Summit, Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Aylesbury, May 2018.

Report: Ives, B. and Clayton, B. (2017) Motivations and challenges for disability sport and physical activity in Buckinghamshire: A qualitative report. Aylesbury: Buckinghamshire County Council/Leap With Us. <http://bucks.repository.guldh.ac.uk/id/eprint/17265>

Journal article: Ives, B., Clayton, B., Brittain, I. and Mackintosh, C. (2019) ‘I’ll always find a perfectly justified reason for not doing it’: Challenges for disability sport and physical activity in the United Kingdom, *Sport in Society* i-first Doi: [10.1080/17430437.2019.1703683](https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2019.1703683)

Web article: Ives, B., Clayton, B. and Mackintosh, C. (2020) Removing barriers and bringing back the enjoyment factor in disability sport [online]. Sportanddev.org. Available from: <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/article/news/removing-barriers-and-bringing-back-enjoyment-factor-disability-sport>

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

To date, the impact has been seen in the local community, although through a successful webinar, ‘Enabling Disability Sport and Physical Activity’, hosted by BNU, the reach has been increased nationally. The webinar culminated in ‘pledges’ from the attendees to incorporate and

trial the recommendations of the BNU research. While it is too early to determine the impact of this, pledges were made – and will be followed-up – by a number of sport development and disability sport practitioners and included the Chair of the Wheelpower Sport Development Committee, who took particular interest in the research and pledged to include the recommendations in the forthcoming Wheelpower sport development strategy.

The local community impact can predominantly be seen through the work of two organisations:

Active in the Community (AitC) are a sport development organisation serving Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire and were awarded a contract by Buckinghamshire County Council to create a pilot programme to be built on the findings and recommendations of BNU's research [5.1].

Talkback are a learning disabilities and autism support charity and were one of many local disability support organisations engaged in the generation, consultation, and/or dissemination of the BNU research. Inspired by conversations with the research team and the recommendations made in the final report, Talkback established their own sports academy with an aim to run daily inclusive sports sessions for all their members [5.2; 5.3; 5.4].

Demonstrable impact created by these two organisations falls under three broad headings: Impacts on understanding, learning, and participation, impacts on health and wellbeing, and impacts on practitioners and professional services.

Impacts on understanding, learning and participation

The AitC programme offered bespoke multi-activity tasters that could be tried on the same day, delivered at facilities known to the disabled community, with clearly signposted opportunities to continue participation with mainstream disability sport providers in the area. While not wholly committing to the recommendations of the BNU research, the programme nonetheless provided a starting point and benefitted a number of disabled people. With 256 unique individuals engaged over a six-week period, including 102 (40%) who were classified as previously inactive.

The establishment of Talkback's sports academy built on one of the most fundamental findings and recommendations of the BNU research, to provide sport and physical activity in a setting familiar, delivered by people who are knowledgeable about disabilities and known to the disabled people. In doing so, the most commonly noted barriers to participation – cost and logistics of transports, knowledge and awareness of availability of activities, and anxieties about new people and places – can be removed, and sustainability is inbuilt. A wide range of activities are offered to the disabled people, but following the recommendations of the BNU research, Talkback manager, Helen Krauze says that 'the emphasis is on fun, inclusion and engagement, rather than 'sport', which can be intimidating for some'.

In 2017/18, Talkback delivered sport to 96 of its members, the vast majority of whom were previously inactive. By 2019, every disabled person at Talkback (n160) had been exposed to sport. Regular participation by 44 members was recorded throughout 2019, where five sports sessions per week were provided.

Impacts on health and wellbeing

While no participant feedback was generated by AitC during or following their programme, participants in the Talkback sports academy have noted the benefits felt by participating in physical activity. Testimonials from some of the disabled people include:

'We play gently, it makes me feel clever'.

'I make friends at sport. It makes me feel happy'.

'I feel that I have achieved a lot of skills – new skills. I am becoming a natural. I always feel happy taking part. I am type-2 diabetes so sport and exercise means a lot.'

'I didn't know how I would feel about it. I just needed to try something – but I did it and I really enjoyed it.'

According to Talkback manager, Helen Krauze, 'we discovered that sport is a powerful means of enabling physical and mental wellbeing as part of a healthy lifestyle, it creates opportunities, inspires confidence and self-esteem and most of all helps people to feel good about themselves' [5.2].

Impacts on practitioners and professional services

The AitC programme set targets to recruit and educate (in disability sport delivery) a number of volunteer coaches, instructors, and leaders in the community to take the project forward after the initial funded period. In all, 37 volunteers were upskilled and educated to deliver disability sport and physical activity, and were linked with schools and other community providers to continue to offer new opportunities into the future. Partnering with the Bucks and Milton Keynes Active Partnership's (Leap With Us) coaching development programme, Talkback staff and volunteers were trained as sports leaders and coaches, and now train new members in-house. Furthermore, the disabled people themselves can train to become assistant coaches. Helen Krauze noted the significant impact this experience has on the disabled people, seeing them 'thrive in the role' and 'outlook[s] become very positive', and the members learn how to support each other.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1 Active In the Community 'Physical activity opportunities for disabled residents in Buckinghamshire project'- Final project report to Buckinghamshire County Council (PDF supplied).
- 5.2 Factual statement/summary of sport academy activity by Helen Krauze (leader) at Talkback (supplied)
- 5.3 Presentation about Talkback sports academy, delivered at the BNU webinar 'Enabling Disability Sport and Physical Activity' (powerpoint supplied)
- 5.4 <https://talkback-nclude.com/nclude/day-opportunities/#sports-academy>