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Background

Active Disability Ireland

Active Disability Ireland are a national pan-disability organisation committed to creating an Ireland where people with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in physical activity of their choice.

National Sports Inclusion Disability Charter

In 2018 we engaged with 140 people with disabilities across 22 counties, who were both active and inactive. We asked about their experiences, challenges and needs in relation to their participation in sport and physical activity. From the vast feedback we received, we have developed the Sport Inclusion Disability Charter, which clearly outlines the five key areas people with disabilities are asking all organisations to consider in making active and healthy lifestyles possible for them. The Charter provides organisations the opportunity to showcase their pledge to inclusion by signing the Charter and committing to:

- ✓ **Openness:** Being open and understanding of people with disabilities
- ✓ **People:** Accessing training for staff/volunteers to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities
- ✓ **Activities:** Developing and delivering inclusive activities
- ✓ **Facilities:** Reviewing facilities/venues/ equipment to ensure they are accessible to all
- ✓ **Promotion:** The promotion of inclusive activities, events, programmes and initiatives in a variety of formats

Xcessible Programme

Following on from this research the Xcessible programme was created. The Xcessible programme is an inclusive programme designed for National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) to positively and meaningfully provide opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sport and physical activity. The primary purpose of the Xcessible programme is to enable NGBs and LSPs to function inclusively through a structured, staged programme and therefore provide high quality participation opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sport and physical activity in any capacity.

Xcessible Club Toolkit

Following the success of the Xcessible programme for NGBs and LSPs, Active Disability Ireland with the support of Sport Ireland, developed an Xcessible Club Toolkit. The toolkit aims to support sports clubs to overcome the challenges experienced by people with disabilities who want to engage in sport and to develop and sustain inclusive practice within their club to ensure that people with disabilities in Ireland can access and enjoy regular participation in sport and physical activity at club level. Inclusive sports clubs will be able to facilitate the many benefits that people with disabilities can enjoy within their community such as; belonging to a group, the opportunity to volunteer, to make new friends, to learn a new skill, to develop leadership & coaching expertise as well as improving social, physical and mental wellbeing.

The purpose of this survey is to recognise the current position clubs are in, in relation to inclusion and to identify what is needed internally and externally to make them more accessible for people with disabilities.

Introduction

This survey aimed to gather insights into the supports needed by sports clubs to create more inclusive opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sports and physical activities. The objective was to understand the current state of inclusivity, identify challenges, and propose recommendations to enhance accessibility. The survey was conducted between June 26th and August 26th 2023, and we received a total of 191 responses from 31 sports/activities. The survey was distributed directly to clubs that have signed the Sports Inclusion Disability Charter and to NGBs who work with Active Disability Ireland to distribute to their associate clubs.

Methodology

The survey consisted of ten questions, including multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The following questions were asked in the survey:

1. Does your club have members with a disability?
2. Does your club provide any inclusive activities for people with disabilities?
3. Has your club signed the Sports Inclusion Disability Charter?
4. Is your club aware of the Active Disability Ireland Xcessible Club Toolkit?
5. Does your club have an inclusion officer or similar role?
6. Have your club members, coaches, volunteers, committee etc. completed any disability inclusion specific training?
7. What barriers do you face in implementing inclusive practices within your club?
8. What resources or supports do you feel are needed to assist sports clubs in becoming more inclusive?
9. Would your club be interested in attending an inclusive club training workshop that will support the Xcessible Club Toolkit implementation?

10. What sport does your club represent?

The questions were then put into the following categories for analysis:

1. Current Inclusion Practices
2. Challenges Faced
3. Supports Needed
4. Recommendations for Improvement

The survey was distributed to sports clubs, organisations, coaches, and individuals who signed the Sport Inclusion Disability Charter and to National Governing Bodies of Sport to distribute to their affiliated clubs. This ensured that a varied representation of perspectives and experiences were captured.

Key Findings

1. Currently Inclusive

Provide Inclusive Activities: 73% of respondents indicated that their sports club had taken steps towards providing inclusive activities. However, 27% mentioned they do not yet provide these opportunities for people with disabilities.

Signed the Sports Inclusion Charter: 75% outlined that they have signed the Charter whilst 25% have highlighted that they are yet to sign it.

Inclusion Officer or Similar Role: 55% of clubs have stated that they currently do not have someone occupying an inclusion role within their club. Only 45% of clubs say that they do have someone within that role.

Disability Inclusion Specific Training: 46% of respondents indicated that they have not received any training in disability inclusion. However, 54% of respondents stated that they have received some level of inclusion training.

2. Challenges Faced

Lack of Accessibility: Participants highlighted accessibility issues in facilities.

Limited Resources: Respondents mentioned budget constraints affecting inclusive efforts.

Training: Clubs identified a need for more disability awareness training.

3. Supports Needed

Respondents expressed the need for the following specific supports.:

- Accessible facilities
- Specialised training for disability and inclusion

Clubs have also emphasised the importance of the additional support of financial assistance.

4. Recommendations for Improvement

Training and Education: To provide more opportunity and awareness of the importance for inclusion training for coaches, trainers, volunteers, committee members and staff.

Survey Findings

Q1. Does your club have members with a disability?

Findings:

It was discovered that 151 respondents answered that they did have members with a disability within their club. A total of 26 clubs stated that they did not have any club members that had a disability with just 14 clubs outlining that they were unaware if their club had people with disabilities.

Recommendations for clubs:

Clubs should record information on their registration forms relating to disability. This will help inform future planning for the development of inclusive programmes, events, and initiatives. Please see guidance on the Active Disability Ireland website.

Support link: [Resources](#)

Recommendations for NGBs / LSPs:

Reach out to clubs to encourage them to develop methods of identifying and recording data relating to members of the club that have a disability.

Q2. Does your club provide any inclusive activities for people with disabilities?

Findings:

The responses showed that most clubs do provide inclusive activities for people with disabilities with 73% of respondents saying they do provide inclusive activities and 27% saying that they do not currently.

Recommendations for clubs:

Create inclusive participation opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sport and physical activity. To find out more on how to do this, visit [Active Disability Ireland](#), to find our Disability Inclusion for Programmes and Events resource. Or click the link below.

Support link: [Resources](#)

Recommendations for NGBs/ LSPs:

Lead by example and show clubs how your organisation is ensuring it is inclusive and encourage clubs to download the Xcessible club toolkit to help support them in developing, embedding and sustaining inclusive activities, events, programmes and initiatives.

Support links: [Xcessible Programme NGBs/LSPs](#) / [Xcessible Club Toolkit](#)

Q3. Has your club signed the Sports Inclusion Disability Charter?

Findings:

We have identified that 75% of clubs have signed the Sport Inclusion Disability Charter and only 25% of respondents have not yet signed it.

Recommendations for clubs:

Signing the Sports Inclusion Disability Charter is a great starting point for any club or organisation to become more inclusive. Clubs are supported with a range of guidance documents, templates, and resources to help create a sustainable inclusive environment.

If you have not signed the Charter yet, click here to sign now.

Support link: [Sign the Sports Inclusion Disability Charter](#)

Recommendations for NGBs/ LSPs:

NGBs/ LSPs to reach out to clubs within their network who have not signed the Charter, encouraging them to sign it. The Charter can be used within funding or programme criteria to ensure that clubs and activity providers understand the importance of creating inclusive participation opportunities. Once the Charter is signed clubs will be provided with a library of resources, guidance and supports to help implement the Charter headings.

Q4. Is your club aware of the Active Disability Ireland Xcessible Club Toolkit?

Findings:

The respondents highlighted that 25% of them are aware of the Xcessible Club Toolkit whilst 75% of them are not.

Recommendations for clubs:

The Toolkit can be downloaded on our website or using the link below. The Toolkit is a great resource to guide your club through a structured staged approach to develop, embed, and sustain inclusive practices.

Support link: [Download the Toolkit here](#)

Recommendations for NGBs/ LSPs:

Support the promotion of the toolkit to clubs nationally and locally ensuring that clubs are aware of this free resource and understand how it will support them in creating a more inclusive club. Provide support and guidance on the toolkit implementation based in NGB/LSP experiences through their own Xcessible programme journey.

Q5. Does your club have an inclusion officer or similar role?

Findings:

55% of clubs reported that they do not have any person in place occupying an inclusion related role within the club and that 45% of the clubs do have a person in this position.

Recommendations for clubs:

Clubs should appoint someone with responsibility for disability inclusion within the club.

Reach out to the local community to see if anyone with living experience, interest or expertise in this area would support the club committee in creating more inclusive opportunities for participation.

A sample job description can be found on our website or by clicking the link below.

Support link: [Sample job description](#)

Recommendations for NGBs/ LSPs:

Encourage clubs nationally and locally to appoint an appropriate person in this position to help support the club to become more inclusive. Ensure that clubs are aware of the network of Disability Sport Originations nationally and Sports Inclusion Disability Officers locally who can offer advice and guidance.

Support link: [Support organisations](#)

Q6. Have your club members, coaches, volunteers, committee etc. done any disability inclusion specific training?

Findings:

56% of clubs have responded that their club has done some level of disability inclusion specific training, whilst 46% responded that their club has not done any training in this area.

Recommendations for clubs:

Identify what training is available within the sector and who within your club should complete it. Connect with your Local Sports Partnership and National Governing Body of Sport to keep up to date on any funding opportunities or grants that may be available. Active Disability Ireland training workshops can be found on our website or on the link below.

Support link: [Active Disability Ireland Training](#)

Recommendations for NGBs/ LSPs:

Promote training and education workshops to the clubs in your area or network. A list of training that Active Disability Ireland provide can be found below.

- Autism in Sport Workshop
- Sport Inclusion & Disability Awareness Workshop
- Inclusive Fitness Training Workshop
- Disability Inclusion Training Workshop

Ensure that any funding/ grants that become available are communicated effectively to clubs.

Q7. What barriers do you face in implementing inclusive practices within your club?

Findings:

The main barriers that were identified by respondents were:

- Facilities – Respondents said they could not facilitate adequate support for people with disabilities to participate in their sport/activity as their facilities were not sufficient to do so.
- Training – Clubs highlighted that one of the main barriers was training. Clubs highlighted that they were not confident enough and trained to support the inclusion of people with disabilities within their sport/activity.
- Funding- It was also outlined that the reason for the above barriers was a result of insufficient funding available for disability inclusion.

Recommendations for clubs:

Connect with your Local Sports Partnership and National Governing Body of sport to keep up to date with opportunities to address these barriers and use the Sports Inclusion Disability Charter and Xcessible Club Toolkit to support the club in making small changes that will create a big impact.

Support links: [LSP Finder](#) / [NGB Finder](#)

[Charter](#) / [Xcessible Club Toolkit](#)

Recommendations for NGBs/ LSPs:

Work alongside clubs to support them in addressing barriers to inclusion. Link them to national disability sporting organisations who can further support and advise. Ensure any opportunities for further training or funding that become available are communicated directly to clubs.

Q8. What resources or supports do you feel are needed to assist sports clubs in becoming more inclusive?

Findings:

The two main supports that were highlighted in the survey correlate directly with the barriers. These were that clubs need support with funding and that their staff need disability specific training.

Q9. Would your club be interested in attending an inclusive club training workshop that will support the Xcessible Club Toolkit implementation?

Findings:

92% of survey respondents said that they would participate in a workshop around the area of the Club Toolkit to further assist their club in becoming more inclusive. Whilst only 8% said they would not be interested.

Recommendations:

Active Disability Ireland to develop a workshop to help support clubs in implementing inclusive practices. The framework of the Charter and the Xcessible Club Toolkit could be used as the basis of the training. This would give local clubs across multiple sports an opportunity to engage directly and help create more inclusive participation opportunities for people with disabilities.

Q10. What sports does your club represent?

The following sports were represented in the survey:

Archery	Chess	Handball	Kendo	Scouts
Athletics	Cricket	Hockey	Lawn Bowls	Snooker
Badminton	Fishing	Hurling/Camogie	Multi	Soccer
Basketball	GAA/LGFA	Indoor Bowling	Rowing	Swimming
Boxing	Golf	Judo	Rugby	Taekwondo
Canoe Polo	Gymnastics	Kayaking	Sailing	Tennis

Key Findings for Active Disability Ireland

The survey shows there is a clear interest in sports clubs attending an inclusion workshop to support their inclusive journey of creating more participation opportunities for people with disabilities.

The sector is seeking further funding to support the ongoing development of disability inclusion within the club environment.

There is huge scope for further promotion of the Xcessible Club Toolkit. Many sports clubs are unaware of this resource and how valuable it would be for developing, embedding, and sustaining inclusive environments.

Conclusion

The survey results have provided valuable insights into the supports needed by sports clubs to enhance inclusivity for individuals with disabilities. By acting on these findings, we aim to create more inclusive opportunities and promote a diverse and accessible sports environment.

We extend our gratitude to all respondents for their valuable input. Your feedback is instrumental in our ongoing commitment to inclusivity in sports.

For further inquiries or discussions, please feel free to contact Adam Somers.

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