

Guidance for healthcare professionals

**activity
alliance**

**disability
inclusion
sport**

Activity Alliance is a national charity and the leading voice for disabled people in sports and activities. We know health and care workers are the most trusted source for disabled people to seek advice about being physically active and can assist in developing ideas.

We want to equip health and care workers so they can give disabled children and adults the best information and accurately signpost to a wider choice of activities. This will help to improve the population's health and wellbeing outcomes in all age groups and reduce loneliness levels. It also means in time that more disabled people will feel closer to achieving the UK Chief Medical Officers' recommended guidelines for physical activity minutes per week.

This resource is built from research on healthcare professionals' role in supporting disabled people into physical activity.

Our research explored the role of healthcare professionals in supporting disabled people to be more physically active. We found showing good practice, of what, how and where this is working well helped to achieve this.

For healthcare professionals to successfully support disabled people into activity, personalisation, connections, and being a trusted messenger is important, alongside specific clinical knowledge.



Top tips for healthcare professionals when supporting disabled people

- 1. Know the right time:** The key time to support a patient into physical activity may be after they have space and time to adapt to the change in their condition or impairment. Give time and support for this process but bring in conversations about physical activity in a timely way, before their health or condition may start to decline.
- 2. Build relationships through common ground:** Be sensitive and build a human connection with disabled people as patients. This can be through a shared background or culture, love of sport, or another interest.



- 3. Be a community connector:** Find out what is available in your local area, so you can connect people into physical activity and communities that are accessible and right for them. Taking part in physical activity yourself can help you understand what is available locally too.
- 4. Show impairment or condition specific clinical knowledge:** Show the patient that you understand their specific condition, the effects, and how physical activity can help in this context. Give an evidence-based understanding of why physical activity can help 'someone like them'. Explain how exercise has helped other people with their impairment and/or condition, and what positive impacts they can expect.
- 5. Build a personalised support plan with gradual progression:** Find out what they enjoy and direct them to ideas and activities that will be fun for them. Make a manageable plan that is realistic and starts slowly, so they will not be discouraged. Follow up to ask about progress and give advice and encouragement to continue.

Visit the [research section on the Activity Alliance website](#) to view our healthcare research report and complementary case studies.

Further reading

Activity Alliance provides training and resources to support people in various roles. We have outlined some useful links below.

- Our **Learning Hub** provides training, workshops and courses to empower you with practical tools, creative ideas and resources to be more inclusive for disabled people in sport and physical activity. [Visit Activity Alliance's Learning Hub.](#)
- Our **Taking a person-centred approach resource** explains the concept of 'intersectionality' in relation to disabled people and how this can influence their activity levels. Find this resource in the [resources section on the Activity Alliance website.](#)

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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.