

The Activity Trap

Disabled people's fear of being
active

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Background

1 in 4 people in the UK are disabled

2 x more likely to be inactive (41% vs 21%)

4.4 million people of working age are in receipt of Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance



Background



Commissioned by the Dwarf Sports Association UK in 2017/18.

- Aim to understand and quantify a fear among disabled people of losing benefits as a result of being active.
 - Stage 1: quantitative
 - Survey with 206 physically disabled people
 - Stage 2: qualitative
 - Online platform with 26 participants: Question board and a private 'diary' area
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The findings



Being active is important to disabled people

Four in five disabled people in the study:

- Would like to be more active (83%)
- Think it's important to be active (84%)

Activity helps them to:

- Manage impairments and pain
- Keep fit
- Improve mental health
- Gain autonomy over health
- Facilitate social opportunities



Disability benefits are critical in enabling disabled people to be active

Almost two thirds (65%) of people in the study said they rely on benefits to be active

Without such support they would be unable to afford:

- Travel
- Paid-for exercise
- Specialist equipment



They anticipate becoming more reclusive and likely to stay at home due to conditions and pain worsening.

However, a fear of losing benefits is preventing disabled people from being more active

Almost half (47%) are fearful of losing their benefits if they are seen to be more active.

Almost half (48%) fear being seen as 'too independent' for a disabled person



'I don't take part in [any] form of physical activity at this moment in time as I am scared that it would have an impact on my disability benefit.'



Disabled people would be likely to be more active if there weren't a risk of benefits being taken away

More than half (55%) said they were likely to be more active if benefits weren't at risk of being taken away.



'I have a lot of concerns when it comes to benefits and the constant fear of them being taken away or worry of being reassessed. It then impacts my life and any involvement in sport and physical activity which is none at the moment due to the concerns I have and not wanting my benefits to be taken off me.'



Fears are driven by perceptions of government agencies and personal experience and awareness

More than a third (34%) have had or know someone who has had benefits sanctioned or removed as a result of being physically active.



I'm always afraid of doing too much... I had a friend who tried doing a little more than I do now, to try and help with her pain management, and they took away half her benefits and told her she was capable of going to work as she was capable of doing so much exercise – despite her having regular fits!



Disabled people find the process of applying for benefits daunting, ambiguous and lacking in clear sources of advice

Almost half (46%) found it difficult to find information about the availability of benefits.



Commonly used sources of information:

- Online searches (34%)
- Friends or family (28%)

Citizens Advice (10%) and jobcentres (8%) used by just 1 in 10.

Disabled people find the process of applying for benefits daunting, ambiguous, and lacking in clear sources of advice

Almost three in five (57%) find the application process difficult:

- Length
- Confusion about detail
- Day-to-day differences



Most reported having to seek assistance from someone else to complete forms.

Appeals cause worry, stress, frustration and negative impacts on conditions.

There is confusion around whether there are restriction on what benefits can be spent on

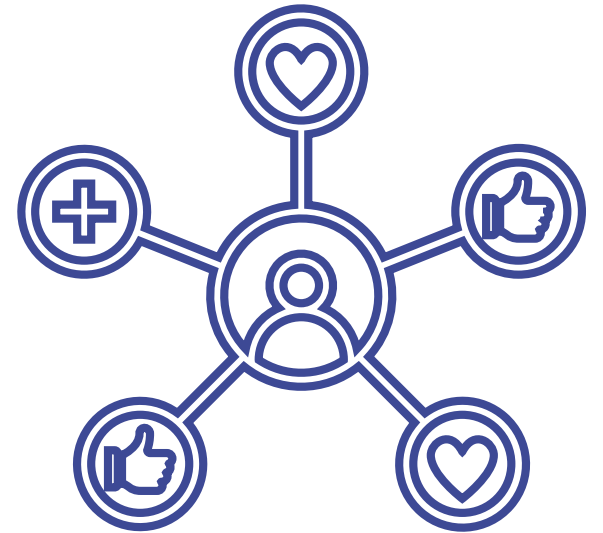
One in five (19%) didn't know if there are any spending conditions associated with their benefits or financial assistance.

A further one in five (21%) said there are restrictions



Key findings

- **65%** of disabled people in the study rely on benefits to be active
- **47%** are fearful of losing their benefits if they are seen to be more active
- **34%** have had, or know a disabled person who has had, benefits sanctioned or removed as a result of being physically active
- **55%** are likely to be more active if benefits couldn't be taken away



Recommendations

1. Drive stronger alignment between public health agencies, the NHS, DCMS, DWP and local government.
 2. Offer clear advice and guidance on being active and how its connection to the benefits system.
 3. Promote positive media stories about disabled people being active.
 4. Provide clarity about how benefits and government financial support can be used to support access to sport and physical activity.
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Thank you

Any questions?

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