



**Include Me  
West Midlands**



**West Midlands  
Combined Authority**

# Improving the life chances of disabled citizens in the West Midlands by being active Report

May 2019

A large, stylized hexagonal graphic in the center of the page. It features a dark blue hexagon with a purple-to-blue gradient border. Inside the hexagon, the letters 'IM' are stacked above 'WM' in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

**IM  
WM**

# Foreword



“

The report pushes for a more inclusive approach in how we approach sport design and delivery and how people of the West Midlands live, work and play together.

”

**Cllr Caan, Cabinet Member for Health and Sport, Coventry CC  
& WMCA Political Physical Activity Champion.**

When I took on my WMCA role, I was aware of the huge challenge we face in working together to get a more inclusive approach to getting people active. Also recognising how we make a better case to address some of the issues that impact on people's active lifestyles such as employment and skills, transport and societal values. We have an opportunity to make a real difference especially given Coventry being the City of Culture in 2021 and the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

In January 2018, I agreed with the West Midlands Mayor to take a hard look at how we can improve the life chances of disabled citizens and what is needed to become an exemplar region in the number of people who are active. My working group has expertly pulled together this report setting out 10 West Midlands priorities, not just for sport but those wider issues that impact on disabled citizens' lives. Above all, the report pushes for a more inclusive approach in how we approach sport design and delivery

and how people of the West Midlands live, work and play together. I would like to thank the Working Group members, advisers and everyone who have contributed so positively to this work and their commitment to making this report happen.



“ By working in partnership, we will address the long-term barriers to physical activity for disabled people and empower the fitness and leisure sector to provide a more inclusive offer. ”

### Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson, Chair UKactive and Working Group Member

I am delighted to support the West Midlands Mayor's 'Include Me' report which highlights the importance of supporting more disabled people to be physically active.

Disabled people can face a vast number of psychological, logistical and physical barriers to getting active. This is not just about the accessibility of a local leisure centre, but as much about a well-trained and inclusive workforce, better transport options, access to services, and inclusive messaging and imagery.

The work of the West Midlands Mayor resonates strongly with the "Everyone Can" programme: an initiative by ukactive and Sport England designed to change perceptions around disabled people's participation in physical activity and support the sector to become more inclusive.

It is clear that the West Midlands Mayor is committed to improving the health of residents by building the foundations to get more people, more active,

more often. By working in partnership, we will address the long-term barriers to physical activity for disabled people and empower the fitness and leisure sector to provide a more inclusive offer. I look forward to working with the West Midlands Mayor and other leaders in the West Midlands to develop these sector partnerships which will help us to improve the health and happiness of disabled people across the region.

### Disability:

The Working group has worked to the following disability definition: Long standing disability and illness. Anything that is experienced over a long period of time or that is likely to be experienced over a long time (12months+). Long standing and limiting disability or illness:

impairments or health problems that limit or restrict activities in any way, in different areas of life. Where a limiting disability or illness is referred to it should always be referred to as long standing. We acknowledge the wider complexities that impact on disabled citizens' life styles

and taking part due to age, where people live; age, lower socio-economic groups, gender, minority ethnic groups and LGBT. By Citizens, we refer to the disabled people living or working in the West Midlands Combined Authority geography.

# Executive Summary

This report brings together the views of disabled citizens in the West Midlands, disability, health and physical activity organisations and the academic evidence base on the issues and opportunities that impact on disabled citizens' lives including their physical activity. The report is set in the context of the WMCA's inclusive economic growth agenda and West Midlands on the Move Physical Activity Strategic Framework. It is the first amongst combined authorities.

In preparing the report, the working group recognise that there is lots of good practice that we can learn from but also many underlying issues and challenges that need to be addressed if we are to improve the life chances of disabled citizens and become an exemplar region in those who take part.

The working group also acknowledge the complexities of looking the issues of disabled citizens, the challenges people face, the resilience people have to achieve and perceptions as to how being disabled impacts on their lives. Yet, the research was conclusive that we need a more inclusive approach to how services are planned, promoted and delivery.

This can be achieved by making changes to policy and practice and some funding to test out some work and the opportunity to deliver actions West Midlands wide. To achieve this we need the commitment of many organisations including Government and Sport England for example as how we can work better to deliver the priorities set out in the report. For instance, how we can draw on the expertise of the Disability Minister's Disability Champions to learn from best practice and inform and influence practice.

We recognise there are some many of the priorities will take a long time to change and needs commitment, policy change and resources to make this happen. The Working Group is committed to working with the WMCA to make this happen.





# Introduction

The West Midlands Mayor's Renewal Plan<sup>1</sup> set out ambitions to “make the West Midlands a centre of excellence for women's and disabled sport for example supporting the “This Girl Can” initiative<sup>2</sup>. In January 2018, the West Midlands Mayor tasked stakeholders to set out what is needed to improve the life chances of disabled citizens by becoming an exemplar region in the number of citizens who are active.

This ambition is rooted in the WMCA's inclusive economic growth priorities at is in its West Midlands on the Move Strategic Framework (2017)<sup>3</sup>, which aims to make physical activity and active citizenship the norm. It also relevant to skills, mental health, housing and transport.

The working group, consisting of disabled citizens and organisations led an extensive review of evidence both academic and with policy and practitioners and consulted disabled citizens and their user group members on the issues and opportunities which impact on their active lifestyles. This included people who declared that they were quite active and those who have some or little interest.

This report provides 6 priorities for action developed from consultation which the group know will help to improve life chances by getting more people active. The WMCA thank Cllr Caan who chaired the group, working group members and all people and organisations who contributed to this report.

The West Midlands Mayor tasked stakeholders to set out what is needed to improve the life chances of disabled citizens by becoming an exemplar region in the number of citizens who are active.

# Why Include Me?

The Working Group strongly believe that we should have a West Midlands commitment to delivering an inclusive approach to service design and the delivery of opportunities, which will raise standards, awareness and build confidence and reassurance. “Include me” is about ensuring that everyone benefits from being active and services and systems are designed to be more inclusive. This is how we can have the greatest impact.



## Where are we now?

The 2011 Census identified that more than 10m people in the UK reported to having activity limited health problems<sup>4</sup>.

- 1 in 5 people across the West Midlands have a long term health condition or impairment that limits their day to day activities. 75% of disabled people have more than one impairment.
- We recognise the breath of disability with 167,000 people in the West Midlands suffer from any sight loss, over 73,000 West Midlands adults have limiting or non-limiting forms of dementia
- The employment rate of people without disabilities is 81% and 50.7% for people with disabilities. The WM employment rate is just below England average (August 2018). There is no available information on the number of disabled people employed in the sport and physical activity sector.

- The West Midlands Mayor’s Diversity and Leadership “leaders like you” report identified that the barriers faced by people with disabilities in gaining leadership positions included: job security, personal development, perceived capacity to lead and travel to work place difficulties<sup>5</sup>.

With reference to Sport and Physical Activity in the West Midlands:

- 1 in 3 adults in the West Midlands are physically inactive and 48.9% of West Midlands adults with disabilities are inactive. There is no data on disabled children and young people’s activity.
- 48.6% of adults with limiting illness or disability take part in sport or physical activity in Birmingham alone compared to 56.7% in England<sup>6</sup>.

**1 in 5 people across the West Midlands have a long term health problem or disability that limits their day to day activities**

## Understanding People's perception of being disabled and the impact it has on their lives.

Understanding disability and the impact it has on individuals is also very complex. The collation of evidence and the listening events recognised the significant range of opinion on the number of disabled citizens who:

See themselves as disabled and it significantly impacts on their lives

See themselves as disabled, but their disability does not significant impact on their lives

See themselves as disabled, but it only moderately impacts on their lives

Dont see themselves as disabled, but it does significantly impact their lives

Dont see themselves as disabled and it does not impact on their lives

This is compounded by inequalities that disabled citizen's experience because of gender, ethnicity, age, etc.

Along with the evidence, this has informed priorities.



## Government Guidelines on the Benefits of Physical Activity for Disabled Adults.

In October 2018, the Chief Medical Officer produced the findings of its evidence review on the benefits of physical activity for disabled people, highlighting that “there is no good evidence base that suggests being active is a risk for disabled people (Public Health England 2018).

The Government has recently issued this infographic highlighting the benefits of physical activity. Although the guidelines are welcomed, our research showed that there are individual and societal, organisational issues that hold people back from realising these benefits.



## Talk to Me Report Activity Alliance (2014)

In October 2014, Activity Alliance released the Talk to Me report<sup>7</sup>, which outlined ten principles developed with disabled people that sport providers should follow to help their activities to be more appealing. This was positively referenced in the Government’s 2015 strategy, “Sporting Futures”. If the guidelines are embedded within planning and delivery, the principles can be the vital ingredient for your activities that will support disabled people to be and stay active for life. If we are to see a change in delivery and in response to evidence this is about moving the 10 principles from guidance into a self-improvement tool.

## The 10 principles

During research published in our **Talk to me report**, disabled people told us:

### Principle 1

#### My channels

Use communication channels that I already trust e.g. social media, local media.



### Principle 2

#### My locality

Travelling to get to activities can be a significant barrier for disabled people. I would much prefer opportunities to be closer to home.



### Principle 3

#### Me, not my impairment

Many people do not identify with being disabled and are put off by advertising that focuses on disability.



### Principle 4

#### My values

Everyone has values. Understanding what my values are and linking an activity to these can make taking part more appealing.



### Principle 5

#### My life story

As people grow older our values change. Keep me interested over time through new ideas.



### Principle 6

#### Reassure me

Some disabled people fear standing out and need to be reassured that any activity we attend will be welcoming and suitable for our needs.



### Principle 7

#### Include me

Some disabled people need to know we are good enough to take part. Providers should make sure that people with varying ability levels feel included in sessions.



### Principle 8

#### Listen to me

Disabled people can be limited by our impairment and should be able to discuss our needs in a safe and private environment before starting an activity.



### Principle 9

#### Welcome me

An unpleasant first experience can prevent anyone from taking part again. Ensure my first experience is enjoyable so I'm likely to return.



### Principle 10

#### Show me

Engage disabled people who are already involved in your activity to promote it to others.





# West Midlands Good Practice

The group's research and consultation identified good practice across the West Midlands working with disabled citizens, removing barriers which are impacting on their life chances. The working group recognise that there are many more examples and wish to continue to collect further examples. The following examples provide an illustration of just some of the work across the West Midlands:

- **Portway Lifestyle Centre, Oldbury**  
—providing a building that is easily accessible for people with disabilities which brings together health, leisure and social care under one roof. The centre attracts over 55,000 disability visits per year including 1,800 Sandwell residents with a disability who are Active members enjoying free access to a range of opportunities. [www.slt-leisure.co.uk/ourcentres/portway-lifestyle-centre](http://www.slt-leisure.co.uk/ourcentres/portway-lifestyle-centre)
- **Midland Mencap's parkride** is a fun, free & flexible inclusive family cycling project which has been developed in response to the lack of opportunities for children & families with special educational needs, part funded by Sport England. Launched in June 2018, Parkride has engaged over 150 individuals with a variety of needs and opened up a variety of referral routes from GPs to colleges. [www.parkride.co.uk](http://www.parkride.co.uk)
- **Sport Birmingham Inclusive Festivals (BISF)**. BISF encourages families and carers to come together to celebrate inclusion, social action, opportunity and fun activity in an inspiring community space. The events offer FREE and fun sports taster sessions, a marketplace and wellbeing workshops, plus a chance to informally connect with others. The festival advocates and raises the profile of disability-friendly and inclusive recreational activities across the city encouraging more people to participate.

BISF also provides a consultation opportunity to better understand what support is needed to make sport and physical activity accessible and to increase the quality of delivery.

[www.sportbirmingham.org/inclusive-sports-festival](http://www.sportbirmingham.org/inclusive-sports-festival)

- **Westcroft Special School, Wolverhampton**

A school which develops a culture that permeates through all staff, parents and the young people of themselves regardless of disability. Emotional, social and physical well-being is our priority to ensure that our young people have the best chances in life. All young people leave us for positive destinations and we have had great success in a few of our young people gaining apprenticeships in physical activity, health and sport.

[www.westcroftschoo.co.uk/](http://www.westcroftschoo.co.uk/)

- **The Albion Foundation**

The Foundation wants to provide exactly the same opportunities to players with disabilities and learning difficulties as those without. We are led by the needs of the player and their parents and will provide an inclusive opportunity if that is their wish or a disability specific opportunity. The players and parents feel part of our Club creating a family atmosphere built on trust and respect where the players feel valued and can develop at whatever level is appropriate for them. This covers the full spectrum of ability from social play to elite international athletes. The increase in social interaction, physical fitness, confidence and self-esteem is significant across this spectrum. [www.wbafc.co.uk/albionfoundation](http://www.wbafc.co.uk/albionfoundation)

# Barriers



The Group's Call for Evidence and listening events gave a west midlands picture of some of the common barriers and issues that impact on disabled citizen's lives and their levels of activity, reinforced by academic evidence.

This ranged from people's anxiety about being active, what provision was available and how mixed views on how they were welcomed and supported by sport coaches and staff. In addition, many consultees highlighted that transport, employment, fears about losing benefits, where they lived were some of the wider barriers which prevented them from being active.

Although there were some positive examples, a broad range of individual, societal, organisational/institutions barriers were identified. References are detailed in the Research documents which are available on request:

**“Generally transport is a big barrier. For visually impaired people routine is key, but they keep changing the bus stops and routes with little or no warning which puts me off and disorients me”**

**Listening event participant 2018**

**“Very few coaches ... have the knowledge and/or resources to be able to meet the individual needs of (disabled) people, with a lack of formal training being a particular issue”**

**Block & Moran 2013**

**“Much is made of ensuring access for (disabled) people...but little is explicitly done to support people with mental health problems, who in many cases would benefit from being physically active”**

**Call for Evidence respondent**

**“When I left school, I found it hard to find suitable activities and had no choice by to become more inactive”**

**Listening event participant**

**“The main area for improvement would be creating more provision allowing progression...”**

**Call for Evidence respondent**

**“Almost 47% of disabled people on benefits are fearful of losing their benefits if they are seen to be more active”.**

**Activity Alliance 2018**

The working group felt that its collective energies should focus on addressing some of these barriers which prevented people getting active and build on the good practice in the West Midlands. The better sharing of practice and learning with disabled people was seen as essential and this is reflective in the priorities.

# Our shared ambition

To improve the life chances of disabled citizens in the West Midlands by being an exemplar region in the number of disabled people who are active.

The research highlighted a number of actions covering awareness, service delivery, housing, employment and skills and transport. The immediate priorities have been identified which will lead how we collaborate, make a difference to people's lives and the promotion and delivery of services.

This does not mean that other actions will be not be delivered, but this is where our collective energies will lie.

The delivery and the learning will be the gauge on progress and impact and in making the West Midlands the place where we deliver inclusive growth.

## Priorities

The Working Group identified immediate priorities where there is the opportunity to make the biggest impact.

The following sets out the Working Group's priorities for action:

**Priority 1: To deliver an Include Me West Midlands Campaign taking positive action in delivering a more inclusive approach to getting people active from Spring 2019.**

**Why?** whilst there is positive practice, disabled people told us that too often they are unaware of opportunities available to them or said what is offered is not appealing or accessible enough. Disabled Citizens also told us about their fears about being active and for some that many coaches and leisure staff were not aware as to how to work with disabled people and provide inclusive programmes which they can take part in. Many of the issues are reflected in the 10 principles,

which many of our Local Authorities and stakeholders agreed that by embedding these principles would make a significant difference.

**How:** In partnership with Sport England, Activity Alliance, the WMCA will lead a campaign to get sport and physical activity providers to adopt the Activity Alliance "10 Principles" making their programming and provision more appealing. This will include the promotion of the Include Me West Midlands brand and self-assessment tool, training and an awareness campaign.

The WMCA will endeavour to work in partnership with UK Active to best connect its "Everyone Can" campaign with leisure operators in the West Midlands.

**Impact:** More disabled citizens active and a more welcoming, appealing and inclusive approach to planning and delivery of sport and physical activity.

## Priority 2: To get up to 5000 people working in the sport and physical activity sector trained in inclusivity and mental health awareness by 2022.

**Why?** Our consultation highlighted that customer service provided in the sport and physical activity sector was very important in reducing anxiety, building confidence and encouraging more inclusive opportunities. Our call for evidence told us that as “much is made of ensuring access for people with physical impairments, little is explicitly done to support people with (for example) mental health problems who would benefit most...”

This is about applying the “10 principles”. Consultees and academic evidence told us that there was a lack of an inclusive workforce, “someone like me” which people could identify with. Currently 402 people in the sector have received training in inclusivity or mental health.

**How:** In partnership with Sport England and training providers such as Mind, Mental Health First Aid and Activity Alliance, to support organisations achieving Include Me West Midlands by delivering a West Midlands training programme on inclusivity programming, mental health awareness and inclusive communications and understanding the impact this has had on user experience and service provision. This will be the sector’s contribution to the Thrive West Midlands target of 500,000 people who have improved their knowledge of mental health and how they can support each other by 2027.

The WMCA will join up with Streetgames, the Sports for Development Coalition, Mental Health First Aid and other partners delivering the “21by21” campaign getting 21000 coaches and volunteers working with children and young people trained in mental health awareness.

Work in partnership with Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, Newman University, Sport Birmingham and other partners, the WMCA will aim to deliver an annual symposium on “Mental Health through Sport” to share learning

**Impact:** A more diverse and inclusive West Midlands workforce and a sport and physical activity sector workforce that is inclusive and listen to and positive respond to disabled citizens’ needs.

## Priority 3: To support the development of regional awareness campaigns for health and social care practitioners to promote and encourage disabled people to be active.

**Why?** Whilst recognising a lot of positive work that is taking place in some Local Authority areas and through national and local initiatives, our research told us that one of the biggest barriers was the lack of physical activity advice and referrals by health and social care professionals to people adopting an active lifestyle. Many consultees felt that they would feel less anxious about whether physical activity was for them if they were referred to activity.

**How:** By working in partnership with Sport England, Activity Alliance, NHS, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Public Health England, local partners and professional bodies to make every contact count by providing training in inclusive physical activity for targeted professions: social workers, social prescribing Link workers, occupational therapists, optomologists and eye care link workers. This will raise awareness of the benefits of physical activity and in adopting a more inclusive approach.

**Impact:** More disabled citizens encouraged to adopt active lifestyles and referred to local provision. More health and social care practitioners aware of the benefits of physical activity responding to the disabled citizens values.



**Priority 4: Work with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) to encourage public transport and active travel to be the preferred choices for disabled citizens to encourage them to be active.**

**Why?** The WMCA and TfWM research identified that the lack of access and availability; anxiety about travelling and the location of services in relation to public transport routes were seen as some of the significant barriers. This created anxiety for many consultees despite travel planning guidance. Many consultees outlined their concerns about how their disability was stigmatised by using public transport which caused greater anxiety such as the lack of seats, not knowing when to get off.

This is about applying the “10 principles”. Consultees and academic evidence told us that there was a lack of an inclusive workforce, “someone like me” which people could identify with. Currently 402 people in the sector have received training in inclusivity or mental health.

**How:** With Sport England and Transport for West Midlands we will trial how we can use digital technology to support travel planning improving confidence and awareness by Summer 2020 sharing the learning and user experience.

Work with partners to support the expansion of Midland Mencap’s “Parkride” inclusive bikes scheme.

**Impact:** more disabled people confident in using public transport to get to places to be active and cycling for leisure and wellbeing.

**Priority 5: To establish an Include me West Midlands Network working with disabled citizens in everything we do, strengthen networks and bring in expertise to help us deliver change.**

**Why?** Insight gained from disability organisation’s user groups and individuals has been instrumental in shaping these priorities, many who have no remit for sport and physical activity but had many views. The Working Group wants to build on this, as disabled people told us of their concerns that more often than no opportunities are developed without any or limited direct consultation. Also that there is a lack of consistency in the West Midlands sport and physical activity sector on local support mechanisms to truly understand and respond to the needs of disabled people. We have also learnt from the WMCA’s good practice in establishing a Mental Health Commission Citizen’s Panel which steered the development and delivery of Thrive West Midlands.

**How:** Launch the Citizen’s Network by Summer 2019 with stakeholders, networks and disabled citizens delivering co-design, co-production and co-evaluation.

Work with academic experts to strengthen the evidence base on the impact of projects and programmes in getting more disabled people active and the behaviour and system influence and change.

**Impact:** A connected West Midlands network which is listened to informs, influences and holds stakeholders to account, which reflects disabled citizen’s values, life stories.

Use the Citizens’ Network to provide the forum for exchanging practice, sharing learning and its impact on disabled people’s experience, customer service, practice and policy.

## Priority 6: To give disabled children and young people the best start by getting them and their families active.

**Why?** Consultation and research told us the importance of getting disabled children and young people with their families to build healthy and active habits from a young age is so important. Also, that we need to raise awareness of inclusion in schools and improve the links between school and community sport. We also need to encourage families to be active together. We also recognise the impact that childhood adversity can have on young people's wellbeing.

**How:** The other 5 priorities above are covering all age groups, but we recognise that subject to resources and commitment, we will work collectively to see how impactful projects can be replicated across the West Midlands. This includes how we can promote the physical activity benefits of and opportunities to families and early year providers.

We also want to review the impact of the impact of the Primary School PE and Sport Premium<sup>8</sup> and in delivering more inclusive PE and School Sport and its impact on strengthening inclusivity and resilience in children and young people.

**Impact:** more disabled children and young people achieving their goals and being active.

### How we will deliver?

The WMCA will bring in expertise to drive the implementation of this work, reporting to the WMCA's Wellbeing Board and Physical Activity Networks. Many of the priorities are based on building on what is already there and making practice better and building awareness.

This is also part of our collaborative and distribute leadership approach extending the close working between academics, policy makers, practitioners and disabled citizens and distributing leadership to people and communities. Our work will be rooted in evidence, customer view, quality of experience and evaluation. Having the evidence on what works and why sharing the learning on those work streams that have not.

We know funding is important and this is why we are working with Sport England and other agencies to provide some funding to kick start this work.

The impact and learning gained from what we do will inform future working and investment priorities.

### Working Group Members

Chair, Cllr Caan, Cabinet Member for Health & Sport Coventry CC & WMCA Physical Activity Champion.

Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson, Chair UK Active

Barry Horne, Chief Executive, Activity Alliance  
Blind Dave Heeley

Amy Bird, Sport Birmingham (rep. County Sport Partnerships)

Juliet Grainger Physical Activity Manager, Coventry CC (rep. Local Authorities)

Richard Day, KPMG

Rob Lake, Chief Executive Albion Foundation  
Dave Rogers, Chief Executive, Midland Mencap

Amanda Gatherer, Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

Prof Brett Smith, Birmingham University  
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### **Consultees**

The WMCA thanks every organisation and individual who has been contributed to the development of this report via submissions of call of evidence, attendance at listening events and sport events and the making it happen meetings.

The List of consultees is available on request.

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<sup>1</sup> Andy Street's Renewal Plan for the West Midlands 2017

<sup>2</sup> [www.sportengland.org/our-work/women/this-girl-can/](http://www.sportengland.org/our-work/women/this-girl-can/)

<sup>3</sup> [www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/public-service-reform/west-midlands-on-the-move/](http://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/public-service-reform/west-midlands-on-the-move/)

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics

<sup>5</sup> [www.wmca.org.uk/media/2218/leadership-diversity-in-the-west-midlands\\_-002.pdf](http://www.wmca.org.uk/media/2218/leadership-diversity-in-the-west-midlands_-002.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Sport England Active Lives Survey 2018

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/1878-talk-to-me-october-2014>

<sup>8</sup> [www.gov.uk/guidance/pe-and-sport-premium-for-primary-schools](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/pe-and-sport-premium-for-primary-schools)



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