

## **Written evidence submitted by Get Yourself Active at Disability Rights UK (PHS0238)**

*Get Yourself Active is a programme run by [Disability Rights UK](#). Since we began in 2015, we have worked tirelessly to create system change to increase Disabled people's participation in sport and physical activity so that everyone can experience its benefits.*

*Disabled people have a right to get active, and we want everyone to have the chance to feel good and have fun wherever they are.*

### **The nature of the issue that the committee should explore**

Disabled people's organisations should be supported so that the activity they provide becomes a legitimate and equal partner in health and care systems.

The latest Census data shows that one in every five people in the UK identifies as Disabled.<sup>1</sup> Yet we are one of the most inactive groups in the UK, with the evidence showing that activity is less common for Disabled people or those with a long-term health condition (45%) than those without (66%).<sup>2</sup>

Many of us have experienced being excluded from taking part in physical activity. Our research has shown that the health and social care system needs to support us to be as active and independent as we want and deserve to be.<sup>3</sup>

We know there are powerful networks of Disabled people's organisations (DPOs), community-based clubs, charities, and organisations delivering for and in their local areas. They can provide more for their communities with more support, resources, trust and the right strategy.

### **Why it deserves attention from the committee now**

We know that physical activity has many benefits, including:

- improving physical and mental health
- supporting life skills development
- building the capability to be engaged in post-pandemic recovery at home using online tools

And yet just four in ten Disabled people feel they can be as active as they would like.<sup>4</sup> The fact that so many Disabled people cannot access these benefits threatens our ability to live independently.

In our interviews with Disabled people, the message was clear: inactive people want to become active. A key issue is the poor connection and fragmented information channels between health and social care workers and DPOs about physical activity, its importance, and how and where Disabled people can get active. This is preventing Disabled people from being as active as we would like.

Research has revealed that Disabled people identify social workers as important advocates and professionals in promoting physical activity, but they do not yet understand how to better work with DPOs in their local community.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Census 2021, Health, disability and unpaid care, <https://census.gov.uk/census-2021-results/phase-one-topic-summaries/health-disability-and-unpaid-care>

<sup>2</sup> Sport England's Active Lives report 2022, (2022), <https://getyourselfactive.org/active-lives-report-2022>

<sup>3</sup> Smith, B. & Wightman, L. (2021). Promoting physical activity to disabled people: Messengers, messages, guidelines and communication formats. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 43(24), 3427–3431.

<sup>4</sup> IBID

<sup>5</sup> Smith, B. & Wightman, L. (2021). Promoting physical activity to disabled people: Messengers, messages,

The committee needs to view physical activity through a health and well-being lens for Disabled people. Despite their expertise, lived experience and representing our community, few local authorities and funders other than Sport England's Together Fund prioritise DPOs in commissioning tenders and funding. This is an especially pertinent issue for the committee as [Sport England's Together Fund](#) closes in March 2023. This will leave hundreds of grassroots organisations like DPOs without the funding they need.

Through our own provision of Sport England's Together Fund funding, we've seen how 85 DPOs have been able to directly affect 3,500 Disabled people. They reported positive health outcomes as a direct result of this physical activity, with 95% of participants reporting an increase in self-esteem due to the activity provided by a DPO.<sup>6</sup>

The committee must investigate how DPOs can be sustainably funded and empowered to continue to deliver the three key pillars that enable the unlocking of the benefits of physical activity:

- Prescription
- Promotion
- Provision

#### **How Government policy in this area could be developed or improved**

We know that DPOs can be key partners in tackling inactivity and prevention – filling the gaps in care and support for Disabled people where social care falls short. Under pressure as a group, we need long-term, sustainable funding to provide the required support.

DPOs are a lifeblood of local community knowledge and often provide bespoke activity with major health benefits; they provide more than £1000 of social value for every £ invested.<sup>7</sup>

The committee needs to investigate how all of these groups can be enabled to work better together in their localities to prescribe, promote and provide physical activity to Disabled people. This would be an integrated approach which sees DPOs as legitimate actors who provide the beneficial, bespoke activity Disabled people want and need s

The evaluation of such a process would enable other social care and health disciplines to work with DPOs to prescribe and promote physical activity. We have started to examine this through the Moving Social Work Programme with Durham University and Sport England with support from Social Work England and others.

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guidelines and communication formats. Disability and Rehabilitation, 43(24), 3427–3431.

<sup>6</sup> Evaluation of the Together Fund, Disability Rights UK, INTERNAL Document available on request

<sup>7</sup> Blackmore, The State of the UK DPO Sector, 2021, <https://www.disabilitycornwall.org.uk/about-us/research#dpo-report>