

## WheelPower sport and physical activity survey case studies

### Case study one

Beth is 44 and uses a manual wheelchair. She has a tethered spinal cord which she had no problems with until she was 32. Before this Beth played squash, did mountain biking and went to the gym. She then had a five year gap between having surgery and starting to take part in sport and physical activity again. After she had recovered Beth was looking for any kind of sport to play. She started with wheelchair tennis.

***"I got very determined I would get back into it"***

***"I went to a mobility roadshow where there was a wheelchair tennis demonstration; I had a go and fell in love with it"***

Wheelchair tennis is Beth's main sport. She plays four times a week, is a member of a club and competes mostly as an individual. Beth doesn't get involved in the clubs social tennis but she would like to if it was in the day and if she had time. To get to tennis it takes Beth an hour but she feels that's close as where she lives she has to travel far to get anywhere.

Before joining her current club, Beth was travelling 2 hours to play with the club she saw at the demonstration. She did this for 18 months, but after a shoulder injury decided to look for a club closer to her. She found there were no existing local wheelchair tennis coaches; however, she was lucky to find a coach who wanted to learn. The coach went on wheelchair tennis coaching course and they learnt together.

The cost of playing wheelchair tennis is a potential barrier for Beth as she has to fund the lessons, courts, tennis wheelchair maintenance, competition fees and competition expenses herself. She has won an award for her wheelchair tennis achievements and had her tennis wheelchair partially funded but feels more could be done.

Beth thinks promotion of wheelchair sport would be best via social media and she has mixed views on the terms which would be used for promotion, especially disability sport, as Beth doesn't consider herself to be disabled.

***"Disabled sport is fine. If I saw disabled sport I would look, but I don't feel disabled"***

***"I am disabled I know it, but I don't feel it"***

## **Case study two**

Ryan is 45 and has osteoarthritis affecting mainly his neck, hip and hands. Ryan currently uses a walking stick and has a wheelchair in his car for when he is out and about as his mobility varies day to day. Following advice from a consultant he is trying to put off using a wheelchair full time.

Ryan used to be very active; his main sport was rugby but he cycled, swam, ran, windsurfed and also did some powerlifting. Due to pain and mental health problems Ryan hasn't taken part in sport or physical activity for the past 3 years.

In the future Ryan is interested in archery, canoeing/kayaking, gym, sailing, shooting and wheelchair rugby, however, there are barriers which are stopping him from taking part. His main barrier is funding as to take part in wheelchair rugby he needs a sports wheelchair which he cannot afford alone. Ryan has applied for funding but hasn't been successful. Confidence is also an issue for Ryan.

***"I can't afford a sports wheelchair alone so need to get funding"***

***"Some sports accessibility has been an issue; shooting and archery are in fields and I can't get there in a standard wheelchair"***

***"There are lots of trusts for children and their engagement, which I understand, but why can't a 45 year old be able to play rugby? It's all aimed at younger people"***

***"Need to overcome barrier of confidence", "It's so tough to get out there and get started again"***

Ryan plans to get involved with one sport to start off with and then, once he's comfortable, explore other sports and activities. Being part of a club is important to Ryan as he'll be able to socialise and meet peers, get his family involved and receive the support he needs to improve. Ryan doesn't mind who he takes part in sport and physical activity with, he's just keen to get involved.

***"You get more support in a club or team to improve etc, help would be automatic and you wouldn't have to keep asking"***

Ryan doesn't think there is enough information available on disability sport and that posters and leaflets in the right places eg. doctors would be best to advertise it. He thinks all the terms on the survey (wheelchair sport, disability sport, adaptive sport and inclusive) were good for promotion but thought adaptive sport sounded more helpful.

### **Case study three**

Joshua is 21 and is currently studying at university. In July 2015 Joshua had his left leg amputated below the knee so he now uses a prosthetic leg and a manual wheelchair for sport and physical activity. He currently takes part in angling and swimming whilst at home, both of which he has an interest in before his accident, and wheelchair basketball whilst at university. Joshua takes part in wheelchair basketball twice a week, every week as part of the university club. Joshua did not realise that wheelchair sports were open to him until he saw a leaflet for the club in the university disability centre.

***“As I’m walking with a prosthetic and not a permanent wheelchair user I didn’t know I could play wheelchair sports”***

***“Saw leaflet in the university disability centre which said it was open to everyone”***

The club started in September 2015 when the Occupational Therapy department applied for the wheelchairs for training purposes, then demand grew the club was formed. The club now has 18 wheelchairs and the team takes part in competitions and tournaments including the University championships, which Joshua attended.

***“The feeling when we went to the championships being surrounded by non-disabled people, disabled people and wheelchair users and being accepted was amazing. It was normal to be disabled”***

In the future Joshua would like to take up more sports and physical activities that he had an interest in before his accident but said that he needs to test the limits of his prosthetic first to see if it’s possible. Other barriers for Joshua are finding a venue nearby and the cost of participating.

***“Would want to get my own chair but they’re a small fortune. I’ve applied for funding but have heard nothing”***

Joshua doesn’t mind who he takes part in wheelchair sport and physical activity with. The university wheelchair basketball club is mostly non-disabled people and there are no full time wheelchair users.

***“Once you’re all in wheelchairs and playing I’m no different to any non-disabled people playing”***

### **Case study four**

Edward is 43, has Spina Bifida and is a full time wheelchair user. Edward used to use a manual wheelchair but changed to a powered wheelchair 11 years ago as health problems meant it became more difficult to push. Although using a powered wheelchair has improved his quality of life, he has lost muscle as a result. Edward hasn't taken part in sport or physical activity for 30 years, since school physical education classes.

When Edward completed the survey he didn't plan on taking part in sport or physical activity in the future, but has since decided he wants to get involved. He has a friend who competes in boccia which gave him confidence. Edward isn't specific about which sports or activities he would like to do in the future and would be open to trying different sports in different settings to see what he enjoyed.

***"Would be good to get active and meet other people"***

***"If they can do it, I can do it"***

***"As long as I'm accepted for who I am"***

Edward would consider joining a club to take part in sport and physical activity as he thinks it would give support, advice, a new outlook and a sense of togetherness.

The main barrier for Edward is finding a local accessible venue. There is a gym local to Edward which he would have gone to a long time ago but there is no lift. Edward is now able to use trains and has become more independent. He hopes this also will allow him to become more active. A lack of confidence is also stopping Edward from taking part as he hasn't been active for a long time.

Edwards thinks wheelchair sport is best for promotion as he comments "it is what it is".

### **Case study five**

Natasha is 14 and has spastic diplegia. Until recently Natasha used a manual wheelchair full time, however, she now has a powered wheelchair as she had episodes where she was unable to push herself and also finds that the doorways at school difficult to negotiate alone. Her mother, Rosie, hopes the powered wheelchair will increase her independence.

In the past 12 months Natasha has taken part in archery, boccia, basketball and wheelchair dancing. This has been through school, taster sessions and a local disability specific sports club. Natasha attends the sports club once a week during term time which has different sports available on a rotation. Natasha is the only wheelchair user in the club and doesn't use any specialist equipment to take part.

***"We've learnt to adapt things to make it work"- Rosie***

It takes half an hour to get to the sports club, which is manageable, however, to take up any wheelchair specific sports or physical activities travel would be over an hour which limits Natasha's involvement. In turn, this means Natasha doesn't have the opportunity to socialise with other wheelchair users her age.

***"There isn't anything like it around us" – Rosie***

***"Look on anything [to find sport] and all for disability tends to be about an hour drive. It's unfortunate" - Rosie***

***"She'd prefer to be with other wheelchair users"- Rosie***

***"[Natasha] doesn't get the opportunity to meet people in wheelchairs of the same age group"- Rosie***

When Natasha has attended taster sessions for wheelchair users, her mum Rosie, thinks this has been very beneficial.

***"After Whizz Kidz [wheelchair tennis camp] [Natasha] is more motivated and confident" – Rosie***

### **Case study six**

Robert is 33 and a manual wheelchair user. At 15 Robert contracted meningitis and had to have both his legs amputated below the knee. Before his amputation, Robert was into more extreme sports such as BMX and skateboarding which he found himself unable to do after surgery. It wasn't until Roberts early 20's that he got back into sport and physical activity. Roberts's wife saw a wheelchair basketball demonstration in a shopping centre and took him to a session. Without this Robert wasn't sure if he'd have gotten into wheelchair sport, especially as none of Roberts friends were disabled. The setting Robert would prefer to take part in sport and physical activity has changed over time.

***"I didn't think it would be for me. Thought maybe it was below me"***

***"I may have fallen into it eventually but didn't go looking for it and initially didn't want to go"***

***"When [I] first started maybe it was good to be with other wheelchair users as we are all in it together but now just get on with it"***

Robert has since taken part in a number of sports and physical activities. He started with wheelchair basketball, which he continued for 3 years. During this time he got a second hand racing wheelchair and entered some races to try and raise money for a sports wheelchair for basketball. Robert was then headhunted for wheelchair rugby and went on to play at the top level in the UK and competed in the 2012 Paralympics. In 2016 Robert has taken part in the Silverstone half marathon, London Marathon for charity and also became the first disabled person to climb Mount Kilimanjaro without assistance. He did this using an adapted mountain trike and when that couldn't cope; he climbed on his hands and knees wearing special protection pads.

At the moment Robert is happy with the level of sport and physical activity he is doing so can't see himself trying any new sports. Despite his active lifestyle and achievements, Robert wishes he had taken part in wheelchair sport and physical activity earlier.

***"I regret not doing it earlier"***

***"I wish I had tried it when I was younger – could have done so much more"***

***"Sport changed my life"***

### **Case study seven**

Pamela is 59 and uses crutches and walking sticks. When she completed the survey Pamela wasn't using a wheelchair but has since started using a manual wheelchair in certain circumstances, such as on holiday or going shopping. In the past 12 months Pamela has stopped swimming recreationally as she found it became too difficult due to the venue and the amount of time it takes up.

***"The venue has got disabled facilities but it's a fuss to do it"***

***"By the time I've swum and sorted myself out the whole morning has gone. It's too much effort and time"***

The only physical activity Pamela now thinks she can do well is wheelchair walks, however, she often finds the walks that are marked as accessible can have slopes which are too steep for actual use.

Pamela wants to take part in wheelchair sport and physical activity in the future but commented that she doesn't feel her wheelchair skills are good enough and she thinks this is also a barrier for others.

***"Feel wheelchair skills need to be better than they are at the moment"***

***"What would be really good, when you first start using a wheelchair, there's nobody, unless you're a child, to teach you to manoeuvre well. I want to go down curbs etc and I see people who are so skilled and I want to learn but there's nothing"***

***"It's putting people off as they think their skills won't be good enough to do sport"***

The sports and activities Pamela would like to take part in are gym and fitness, handcycling and powerlifting. She was undecided on how likely it was that she would actually take these up because as well as not feeling she had the wheelchair skills, she finds access to facilities is an issue.

***"Have to always think about access and assistance but don't want to, want to do it on my own. I want to be independent"***

To promote wheelchair sport and physical activity Pamela thinks it would be best to advertise in relevant magazines such as the Motability magazine as she finds it difficult looking online as there are so many options.

Pamela thought 'Disability sport' was the best term for promoting wheelchair sport and physical activity. She was put off by 'Inclusive sport' as she thought this sounded too competitive or like you'd be joining a team at a certain level.

### **Case study eight**

Nina is 55 and has been using a manual wheelchair for 10 years. She has inflammatory demyelination poly neuropathy which affects her walking and balance. Nina cannot stand unaided so where necessary she uses her wheelchair for sport and physical activity. She currently takes part in archery and carriage driving.

To start her search for which wheelchair sports and physical activities to get involved in, Nina looked online and came across archery. Her son had been interested in archery when he was younger so it was familiar to Nina. She had an 8-week trial, where she took part once a week, and has now been taking part for the past 5 years, 2-3 times a week. Nina competes individually in archery and gets involved in the social side of the club. The club is a mainstream club with two wheelchair users – Nina doesn't mind this.

***"I don't mind about the setting as long as I get to do it"***

From a young age Nina had an interest in equestrian sports but she had to give up her horses. She later started riding with 'Riding for the Disabled' and was put forward for the Paralympic dressage team, who she trained with for two years. Unfortunately Nina had a bad accident which resulted in her fracturing her skull – consultants subsequently advised her to stop riding. Nina now takes part in carriage driving with Riding for the Disabled once a week during the summer months. She would like to do more carriage driving and be able to compete, however, the distance, club facilities and cost are limiting her.

***"It's 40 miles driving to carriage driving at the moment and to find another one is another 40 miles on that", "Just the way it is"***

***"Had a falling out over the winter as they have people come and exercise the horses and I asked if I could come and exercise them as well but was told I can't as I'm a disabled member"***

In the future Nina would like to do more of her current sports and would like to take up some new ones as sport and physical activity gives her something to strive for. Nina doesn't consider herself to be disabled.

***"It's something to make me get up in the morning"***

***"Just because you lose the ability to walk it doesn't change the person inside"***

## **Case study nine**

Ben is 55, has psoriatic arthritis and has also had two hip replacements and a right knee replacement. He has been using walking sticks to aid his mobility for the past 6/7 years, but if he is covering a long distance and has far to walk, he'll try and use a manual or powered wheelchair.

Prior to Ben's mobility issues he was very active. Ben was an elite rower, played rugby and took part in other sports, but after his diagnosis, he found himself doubting his capabilities.

***"Found myself wondering what to do, where to do it and whether I could do it"***

***"A lot of it was my mental thinking; I thought I couldn't do anything"***

When Ben completed the WheelPower survey he hadn't taken part in any sport or physical activity for over three years, however, this has since changed as Ben's son wanted to take up archery and asked for Ben to go with him for the taster evening. The advertisement said disabled people could take part so Ben decided to join in. Initially he thought he would stand as he wouldn't have to walk far, but this did cause stresses and strains throughout the evening. Ben plans to continue taking part in archery but next time Ben will use a wheelchair as he has seen it's possible.

***"Saw a man on a scooter doing archery in the taster session and it was no problem for him"***

***"It's encouraged me there is a sport out there and is a place for someone like myself"***

Ben would like to take part in adaptive rowing and swimming in the future and thinks this is more likely now that he has taken part in archery, and realised that his disability isn't as restrictive as he thought. He would also consider joining a club and would now take part with different people.

***"Before thought maybe for security you're among other people who understand what you're going through and they can help", "Open night encouraged me and it was a mix of people"***

Ben is motivated to take part in sport and physical activity but his confidence acts is a barrier.

***"The first hurdle is getting through the front door"***

***"It's about breaking through thoughts you think you can't do anything"***

### **Case study ten**

Marie is 77 and has been using a wheelchair since September 2013. She sometimes uses a manual wheelchair to keep up her strength but mostly uses a powered wheelchair as it's more convenient. In the last 12 months Marie has been on two separate week long courses through the Back Up Trust which have enabled her to take part in archery, canoeing/kayaking and snow sport.

She spent one week in the Lake District on a multi-activity course with the Calvert Trust where she did activities tailored to her; all of the equipment, outdoor and support were provided. The other week was in Sweden doing snowsport which Marie thought was great. She was in a sledge which she could steer and stop and there was a skier behind who guided her in case of an emergency.

The Back Up Trust fund the courses and invite attendees to make a contribution if they're able to. As Marie has already been on two Back Up courses she thinks it's unlikely she would be accepted to do another so she doesn't think she will take part in the sports and physical activities again.

In the future Marie would be interested in going to the gym and fitness classes, but there are barriers stopping her such as the travel, the support required and the lack of accessible facilities.

***"I live out in the sticks so the nearest gym is 13 miles away but I can't drive anymore to be able to get to it"***

***"People like me need help from people who know what they're doing with those with a spinal injury"***

***"If I knew there was a sport [nearby] I would go if I had transport"***

Marie would consider joining a club to take part in sport and physical activity but would prefer this to be with people with similar disabilities.

***"[Would be] self-conscious with non-disabled people"***

Marie found out about the Back Up trust when she was in hospital. If someone hadn't approached her she doesn't think she would have ever known about it. She thinks promotion of sport and physical activities would be best by using flyers in gyms, with occupational therapists and physios as they would be in touch with people 'like her'. She also thinks it's important to explore opportunities by herself.