

# Case Study: Area of Focus 5

**Client:** Sport England  
**Project:** Inclusive Sport  
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This paper provides the case study for *Choices 4 U* – an Inclusive Sport funded project that exhibits the greatest level of sustainability beyond the funding period.

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## Background

The Choices 4 U project, run by South Gloucestershire Council, aims to increase sports participation among adults with learning difficulties in the areas of South Gloucestershire, Bath, and Bristol. The Council has extensive experience of working with disabled people and historically has worked with a wide range of organisations to provide sporting provision for people with disabilities and learning difficulties. The first Choices 4 U site was set up around four years ago with a second site added. The Inclusive Sport funding is being used to expand provision into the neighbouring authorities of Bristol and Bath and North East Somerset (BANES). The project is run through a series of regular day sessions based at Leisure Centre ‘hubs’, now established at Kingswood, Yate and Bradley Stoke Leisure Centres.

The demand for this project was identified as local authorities have significantly reduced day-provision services as part a national shift towards personalised budgets. This has led to provision now increasingly being delivered by private companies. A large majority of private companies are perceived to not offer any structured physical activities which is leading to an increase in sedentary lifestyles.

## Project delivery

The project works by giving clients a taster session in a broad range of different activities and then supporting their continued participation by linking in to relevant local clubs. The

programme offers half or full day provision of leisure activities and participants can select the extent to which they wish to be involved on a daily or weekly basis. So they could attend three half day sessions a week for example.

*So if we did, say, football, for example, there is a local disability football club that our clients can access, so we would do some taster sessions and if they like it we would then give them the opportunity to then go on Sunday to the football club. Several of our clients play football down there on a regular basis, so increasing their social activity levels.*

*Other things we are going to be doing would include swimming. We've got a swimming club that takes part in various swimming competitions throughout the country, so they would try swimming, if they want, we would try swimming on a more regular basis, and we have a list of clubs that they can then attend. **Choices 4 U***

Choices 4 U requested funding from Sport England – equating to 10% of total costs – to facilitate the expansion of their service. Once complete the leisure centre hubs are designed to be self-sustainable.

## Sustainability

Funding is typically provided over a time-bound period so being able to provide a sustainable delivery model beyond the funding period is always a high priority. Inclusive Sport has a number of intervention outcomes, two of which pertain specifically to sustainability:

- *To create sustainable and effective partnerships between the disability and sport sectors; and*
- *To sustainably increase participation in sport by disabled people by achieving an improved understanding of innovative practice and 'what works'.*

Choices 4 U have fulfilled the first of the two outcomes early on in the funding period. They have created a number of partnership types:

1. **Partnered with sporting and/or disability organisations in the local area:** this has provided a suitable variety of sporting opportunities. Examples include: *CycleAbility* – a disability cycling company based in Bristol and a recent engagement with a newly opened rock climbing centre;
2. **Formulated internal partnerships:** At South Gloucestershire Council, partnerships have been formed with commissioning, sports development, social services, communications and community care teams. These partnerships provide referrals, marketing and PR and negotiation of fees for the service.
3. **Created external partnerships:** Partnerships have been forged with equivalent teams to Choices 4 U in the Bristol and BANES Councils, with sports facilities such as Parkwood Leisure and SLM and with other key stakeholders such as the Circadian Trust and the Bristol and South



Gloucestershire Union of Disability Sports. These collaborative relationships help achieve long term sustainability of the project because they help to reduce the financial burden by reaching long-term agreements such as reduced venue hire fees.

However, sustainability is not restricted to partnerships and increasing participation requires a holistic approach to counter the barriers that disabled people face in participating in sport. Sustainability can also include the ability to self-finance beyond the funding period or establishing the utilisation of community venues to ensure local buy-in and support for projects set up during the funding period. South Gloucestershire's Inclusive Sport project provides a number of avenues in which to secure a sustainable approach beyond the funding period.

1. **Utilisation of community based sites:** Choices 4 U base their activities in local leisure centres. Participants have full access to facilities such as inclusive gym equipment, hoists and changing beds/rooms.
2. **Embedding activities into mainstream sessions:** Disabled people are able to participate in mainstream sessions, for example, aqua aerobics – this level of inclusivity is seen to assist in breaking down 'real and perceived barriers' surrounding disabled people's participation in sport.

*What you've got to remember is that we're actually also based in a leisure site, so we're in the community, we're not hidden in some room. We're actually in the community. We're actually engaging the community at all times, and I think one of the benefits for the leisure centres is having that continuous disability presence creates a better understanding for their staff and for the people who live and work there, but also the customers that come in because our clients are always there. I think that, along with the fact that we have such great relationships with the centre staff, is what makes us a great, sustainable project.*

*Choices 4 U*

3. **Offering multiple activities to participants:** Ensuring that a variety of activities are available on a programme enables individuals to try a variety of sports or physical activities and identify one that interests them enough to continue. Choices 4 U offer a range of activities including fencing, scuba diving, cycling, orienteering, Boccia, table tennis and badminton. The variety provides an engaging programme of events that encourages interest levels to be maintained whilst ultimately providing a client-led service:

*So the whole point of Choices 4 U is that it's client led. So every six to eight weeks they get to pick what activities they want to try and then, following that, they would then give that a try and then there would be options that they could go off and do that independently if they want to. If not, they've tried a new activity and they would then go onto the next thing.*

*Choices 4 U*



4. **Enabling access to venues:** A key barrier to sports participation for disabled people is transport. This barrier can manifest in a number of ways: lack of access to transport, lack of confidence in utilising available transport, lack of knowledge of routes to access venues/sporting opportunities etc. Choices 4 U works with their clients to support them to travel independently to venues wherever possible. In this way, participants will gain confidence and have the knowledge of how to access their activities without necessarily requiring assistance;
5. **Providing a full ‘health and wellbeing’ approach:** Although the main thrust of the programme focuses on increasing sports participation of disabled people, it also offers a more holistic line-up of services to improve an individual’s health and wellbeing. The focus is primarily on leisure but also expands to assisting individuals with support into volunteering and employment too:

*In regards to what we’re offering, we’re offering opportunities to live a healthy, fulfilled lifestyle, as much as can be, the same as everybody else and it doesn’t necessarily have to be a sporting activity, we are a leisure provision. So although I’ve come from a sports background, and a lot of what I do is around the sporting field, the majority of what my clients do is working around what they want to do. So it could be that they want to increase their arts and crafts, it could be that they want to support their CV. We link in with employment services to help include that side of things. I think that’s more our uniqueness.*

**Choices 4 U**

6. **Financially affordable provision for participants:** Due to collective commissioning, Choices 4 U is able to offer a pricing structure for activities that are lower than those offered at other providers. This helps attract participants and offers a competitive and affordable service for disabled people. In addition, the project links directly with the direct payments scheme:

*One of the reasons why we are so sustainable is because we link in with direct payments and we link in with being commissioned. Within what we do, we have a set number of people that we need to work with to make the sessions sustainable (and some sites cost slightly more than others) but, depending on the site, if we’ve got seven people attending that session, our site is fully sustainable on the costings that we currently have.*

**Choices 4 U**

The costs at which Choices 4 U can provide the activities are a third to half those offered by alternative providers. For example, a half day of full activities is £21 and a full day is £42 – alternative providers range from £60-100 for a full day.

## Meeting the intervention outcomes

It is clear that the Choices 4 U project has implemented a multitude of processes and actions in order to ensure that they will be sustainable beyond the funding period. Key factors to achieving this clearly revolve around:



- *Obtaining high interest levels;*
- *Providing client-led activities;*
- *Ensuring finance for activities is not generated from a singular source; and*
- *Developing strong local partnerships to achieve commissioning clout.*

## **For further information**

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