

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation, like any piece of communication, should be designed with your audience in mind.

Done well, this will increase response rates and give you better data and stronger evidence. But done poorly and it can put people off taking part in your evaluation – or worse still, in the project itself.

Accessible Evaluation is about designing evaluation that is suitable and inclusive for the people who will take part in it.

This is particularly important for people with specific communication requirements. This applies to audiences such as disabled people or those who do not use English as a first language. Accessible evaluation is vital to collecting good data, so we can support these audiences to be active.

Accessible Evaluation can be very challenging to get right. Every audience will have different needs – sometimes down to individual level. Each evaluation is different, and it can be tough to strike the right balance between accessibility and data quality.

This guide includes advice on designing accessible evaluation, a list of external resources and contacts, and two case studies that demonstrate how accessible evaluation can work in practice.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback on this guide please email us at se.evaluation@sportengland.org.

ADVICE ON DESIGNING ACCESSIBLE EVALUATION

Design your evaluation	<p>Like any evaluation, design it well and design it early. Our Evaluation Framework offers tools, resources and guidance to help you design your evaluation, set outcomes, identify your measures, collect data, use the findings, and more.</p>
People come first	<p>Your project participants come first. Make the evaluation as good as it can be, but don't allow it to compromise anyone's individual experience.</p>
Understand your audience	<p>Accessibility can relate to sight, hearing, mobility, cognition, mental health, physical health, culture, language, age... The first step is to understand your audience and what their accessibility needs and preferences are.</p>
Involve your audience	<p>If you can, involve your audience in designing the evaluation approach. Speak to them, ask their views, test your materials and recruitment channels, and find out what works for them.</p>
Venue and location	<p>Think about physical access and transport to any venues you use (e.g. for focus groups). Would in-home research work better?</p>
Show the value	<p>Explain to your participants why the data is important and how you will use it. Knowing that it can help improve or expand a service can motivate them to take part in the evaluation.</p>
Collaborate	<p>Speak to other organisations who work with your audience and use their insight and expertise.</p>
Adapt standard measures	<p>It's ok to adapt standard measures for a more accessible evaluation. Recognised or validated questions can provide rigour and consistency if they're suitable for the audience, but there's no point using them if they can't be understood or answered accurately, so don't worry if you have to change or remove them.</p> <p>Such changes do not weaken your evaluation: they strengthen it – by making it as valuable and meaningful as it can be for your project and your audience. Your evaluation and the judgments you make from it will be better as a result.</p>
Care with comparisons	<p>If you adapt standard measures, make this clear in your reporting and avoid directly comparing results with other projects that use the original (or different) measures. This is because changes to wording or format can affect how people respond, meaning you won't have a like-for-like comparison. Only compare results directly if they use the exact same measure.</p>

ADVICE ON DESIGNING ACCESSIBLE EVALUATION

Language and length	<p>As with any communication, aim to write in plain English with short, clear sentences. Remove or replace jargon and technical words, and explain acronyms. Simplify or adapt the language as much as you need to for your audience. Consider getting an Easy Read translation produced, and don't make it too long – shorter is usually better!</p>
Format and design	<p>Design questionnaires and forms carefully. Are the font, text layout, design, use of images and use of colour suitable for your audience? If not, change it.</p> <p>Be prepared to provide materials in alternative formats. For example, large print, braille, a different language, or a different format – such as converting a written form into a British Sign Language video. You may not be able to provide every format, so consider what is feasible with your resources: e.g. how much it would cost, how long it would take and who would do it.</p>
Adapt your tools or method	<p>Be creative in changing or adapting your evaluation method. Here are some examples to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Use images or emojis in place of descriptive text or numbered scales● Include an option to complete surveys over the phone● Consider alternatives to questionnaires, like hands-up surveys or focus groups
Support and independence	<p>Offer support if needed, but aim for independence. Completing surveys independently is more accurate as answers aren't interpreted by somebody else, and can build more confidence in participants. If parents, friends, carers or support staff do provide help, ensure they are as objective as possible.</p> <p>If someone completes a form on behalf of someone else, note this on the form to help with your analysis.</p>
Versatile and inclusive	<p>Even within a given audience, accessibility needs will vary. You may need two or more different versions of your evaluation materials in order to include as many people as possible.</p>
Data collection	<p>As for any evaluation, consider how you can maximise your data collection – read our guide on how to do this.</p>
Learn and share	<p>Learn and share from your experience. Use it to improve your next evaluation, and to raise awareness of how others can make evaluation more accessible.</p>

USEFUL RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

Activity Alliance has lots of useful resources to enable you to support disabled people in sport and physical activity. This includes advice on inclusive communication, research and insight, performance measurement and learning, and engaging disabled people:

- The [Talk To Me report](#) sets out 10 principles to improve the service you provide to disabled audiences
- Their [Resources](#) page includes an Inclusive Communications guide and checklists

The **Government** has published posters on the [Dos and don'ts on designing for accessibility](#) covering low vision, D/deaf and hard of hearing, dyslexia, physical disabilities, users on the autistic spectrum and users of screen readers. They also provide guidance on developing [accessible communication](#) formats such as Braille, Audio and Easy Read.

We recommend contacting organisations who work with your audience, activity or in your sector who may be able to help. The [National Disability Sports Organisations](#) can provide impairment-specific advice. Other organisations might include the Youth Sport Trust, National Governing Bodies of sport (NGBs), charities such as Age UK, Mencap or Sense, as well as other national and local organisations.

Note: Most of the resources and organisations listed above provide guidance on inclusive **communication**, which is a critical aspect of accessible evaluation. There is limited specific guidance on **accessible evaluation** (hence this guide) – but if you are aware of some please let us know by contacting us at se.evaluation@sportengland.org.

Thanks to the following organisations for consulting with us on the development of this guide:

Activity Alliance, British Blind Sport, Cerebral Palsy Sport, Dwarf Sports Association, LimbPower, UKDeaf Sport, WheelPower, Access Sport, Sense, Special Olympics GB and the Stroke Association.



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March 2019

ACCESSIBLE EVALUATION: CASE STUDY 1

Tackling Inactivity in Colleges: Adapting an evaluation survey for students with additional learning needs

Sport England's Tackling Inactivity in Colleges fund is supporting 49 colleges to help their students be more active and achieve better physical and mental wellbeing.

To aid evaluation we produced a questionnaire that students completed, on paper or online, at two points – before they started the programme to collect their baseline wellbeing and activity levels, and then three months later to show if anything had changed.

Collecting evidence like this helps Sport England build a case for investing in audiences who are less active and find out what sorts of projects are most effective, so it was vital the evaluation worked well.



On trialling the questionnaire, one of the colleges found some of the questions unsuitable for many of their students with learning disabilities, as well as those who use English as a second language.

The challenging questions included credible, validated measures in the Single Item Measure for Physical Activity, and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale. But this rigour counts for nothing if the audience can't understand the questions.

Specific issues included:

- **The survey took too long to complete** – Students found it hard to concentrate for long enough and if they needed support it took up a lot of staff time.
- **Students found the number of ways to respond confusing** – Questions had to be answered in a variety of ways, including a tick box, a rating scale, a written response, and others.
- **The questions included challenging concepts** – Such as feeling happy, satisfied, and that life is worthwhile, which were often hard to understand.
- **Students found it hard to recall how much physical activity** they had done in the previous week.



To address this, Sport England contracted the disability charity Leonard Cheshire to redevelop the survey so that it was more accessible for students with a range of language and learning needs.

Leonard Cheshire was chosen as it was clear they **understood the audience**, and would place the **students at the centre of the process**.

They designed two surveys – one that could be completed by students independently and a second for students with higher support needs that involved using an emoji paddle and could be completed with support.

Leonard Cheshire then developed a detailed brief for a testing session involving 20 students with varying needs at Lewisham Southwark College in South East London.

In the morning, staff from Leonard Cheshire and Sport England spent time doing activities with the students and college staff to develop rapport and trust. This was an important first step and led into an afternoon of testing the survey and gathering feedback from the students and support staff that was used to develop the next version of the survey.



What we learned:

- **Shorter is better:** The length of the survey needs to be short and snappy. Students and support staff (if used) need to concentrate for the duration – if either lose this focus, the quality (and accuracy) of the response quickly decreased.
- **Offer support, but only if needed:** Surveys should be completed independently where possible. This improves the accuracy of the information as it hasn't been interpreted by somebody else and can increase a student's confidence. But if support is needed, provide it.
- **Keep support impartial:** If you provide support to fill out questionnaires, it's vital that the person helping is as objective as possible and does not steer the student to answer in a particular way. If another person has completed a survey on behalf of someone else, note this down to inform any analysis and interpretation of the results.
- **Make complicated things simpler:** Our physical activity question asked on how many days students were active, for at least 30 minutes, in the last week. Thirty minutes was difficult for them to quantify, so we removed the reference to an amount and left it to their interpretation what 'being active' meant. We also tried listing the days of the week to aid recall but realised we didn't know what day to start with as the question might be completed on any day. So we left it as a 0-7 days scale.
- **Highlight the value of good evidence:** We explained to students, teachers and support staff how the evaluation data is used to help improve the project and potentially make it available to more people. Helping them understand this value motivated them to complete it and provided reassurance that it wasn't about being intrusive or collecting personal information.
- **Get to know your audience:** Building rapport and trust with the students through doing activities together created an open and welcome environment for discussion and feedback.
- **Make it relevant to them:** Some of the questions were hard for students to understand, even after we'd simplified the language. So we talked through the questions with them, and gave examples relevant to them and their life. Knowing the individuals was important here.
- **Clear and consistent design:** This applied to the format, layout, and to how we used symbols and emojis. In our first draft a smiley face represented 'happy' in some questions, and 'yes' in others. This was confusing, so we swapped in a 'thumbs up' and 'thumbs down' sign for 'yes' and 'no' answers instead.

This process showed how important it was for us to involve the audience in the design of the evaluation, and to use Leonard Cheshire's expertise to help us do this effectively.

[Here's a link to the final questionnaire](#), which we are now using to collect data and carry out an accessible evaluation of this important project.

We would like to thank the students and staff at Lewisham Southwark College, for their feedback, enthusiasm and time, and to Leonard Cheshire for all their valuable help and expertise.





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March 2019

ACCESSIBLE EVALUATION: CASE STUDY 2

In October 2017 we, [Living Options Devon](#) were awarded funding from Sport England's Volunteer Opportunities fund to deliver the Deaf Get Active and Volunteer project, working in partnership with [Active Devon](#).



Deaf Get Active and Volunteer aims to work with deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users and physical activity providers to offer accessible opportunities for deaf people to take part and volunteer in physical activity. To achieve this, the project is training volunteers, who are deaf, as Activity Champions who will encourage more deaf people to be active and volunteer. It is also training and deploying volunteer deaf coaches to deliver coaching across Devon. As well as sporting opportunities, volunteers will also have access to other roles, such as video production and social media, to encourage more deaf people to volunteer.



As part of the funding, Sport England requires Living Options Devon to evaluate our project locally, and contribute to a national evaluation process so they can understand what impact the funds are having on volunteers and the communities they are engaging.

There are three elements to the national evaluation process:

- 1 Registration Survey for all volunteers to complete when they join
- 2 'Experience Survey' for all volunteers to complete every six months
- 3 Volunteer Tracking System for recording volunteer hours

The Deaf Get Active & Volunteer project team faced the challenge of ensuring these tools were accessible for our deaf volunteers. As an organisation working with disabled and deaf people, it is vital that we ensure all aspects of Living Options Devon's services, including evaluation, are inclusive and fully accessible.



The Steering Group (which includes deaf people) and the project team reviewed the surveys, and concluded that in their standard format they could present a barrier to deaf BSL users getting involved and volunteering. BSL is a visual gestural language with a distinctive grammatical structure and syntax. It is not dependent or strongly related to spoken or written English. For many deaf BSL users, spoken and/or written English is their second or even third language. While some of our volunteers may be fully bilingual with BSL/English and able to complete the surveys independently, this would not be possible for the majority.



Our initial solution was for our project manager and project administrator (both BSL users) to offer face-to-face support to help our volunteers complete the forms. However, it became clear that this wouldn't be sustainable once we had recruited more volunteers. So, the project team produced an 'Easy Read' deaf-friendly version of both surveys, using images and deaf friendly language. The Registration Survey was trialled at an induction session for volunteers, which highlighted some issues. For example, many of the questions had to be answered using a horizontal 1-10 scale, but feedback from the group showed that a vertical scale would make more sense for deaf people.

At this point we spoke with Sport England to understand their expectations for the evaluation and discuss how we might adapt the survey further. And we sought the views of [UK Deaf Sport](#), who provided expert advice. Based on this guidance, and on a shared principle of putting the volunteers first, we further modified our Easy Read surveys to address all of the issues that had been raised.



Our final versions of the surveys are now in use and appear to be effective. We are still able to provide face-to-face support to complete the surveys but so far this has not been necessary. We have also considered filming some BSL clips to accompany the surveys and support understanding, but at this stage the adapted surveys are working well.

The project team also reviewed the Volunteer Tracking System and introduced a range of tools to make it easier for volunteers to record and submit their volunteering hours. This included Easy Read timesheets, online forms, text messages, Facebook and email. We are now using a combination of these methods, which is working well, but we continue to look for alternative and less time-consuming methods.

By working together with the deaf community, our partner organisations and our funder, we achieved an accessible evaluation that places the volunteer's experience at the heart and collects valuable data about the impact of our project.

You can click on this [link to see some of the questions](#) in the original and adapted survey and compare the two.



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