**The GM Moving Podcast**

**Episode Four: Taking the lessons of lockdown to ensure a more inclusive future**

**Intro:** [00:00:00] This podcast has been brought to you by GM Moving part of GreaterSport. We're here to help the people of Greater Manchester get moving and to improve lives through physical activity.

**Eve Holt:** [00:00:33] Hi so I'm Eve Holt, I'm the Strategic Director at GM Moving. So this is about us sharing ways of moving, learning, leading, and staying connected during the Covid crisis. So I'm really pleased to be joined by Sarah today, who's one of our trustees, at GreaterSport and is doing some fantastic work to help disabled people stay active, both with us at GreaterSport and in her own day job. So, go on Sarah do you want to introduce yourself and a little bit about what you're doing?

**Sarah Brown-Fraser:** [00:01:03] Okay, I'm Sarah Brown-Fraser, I'm the marketing communications manager for Activity Alliance. Activity Alliance is a national charity and we work with organisations to support disabled people to be active for life. But obviously I've been a trustee, for GreaterSport, for about two years now.

**Eve Holt:** [00:01:19] And so why, why do you think your work is important?

**Sarah Brown-Fraser:** [00:01:24] Activity Alliance, we obviously understand that disabled people are the least active group amongst our society. So it's really important that we get organisations to think a bit differently, a bit more about disabled people and the gaps and barriers that there might be that they could actually help with. One in five of us are disabled in society so actually a lot of our audiences will always be disabled people. So we need to start thinking a bit more creatively and inclusively about the way we deliver programmes, research, marketing, to really try and fill those gaps because it shouldn't be the case that disabled people are twice as likely to be inactive as non-disabled.

**Eve Holt:** [00:02:11] That's such a stark statistic, isn't it really? It just shows absolutely the inequities in our current system that prevent people from having those, that activity and those healthy lives and, you know, longer healthy lives that we want for everybody. So that must be particularly, well, it feels particularly stark at the minute. Those current inequalities in Covid light make it much harder for some people to stay active and to keep moving. There's been a lot of noise, a lot of the stay in and work out and some people have been more active at the minute than they would normally. But I think there's a big disparity between, you know, those that can get out, those that can stay active, those that can access, use YouTube videos. So what, I'm interested in your insights through your work in terms of what are the current, I guess, challenges, but also the opportunities for disabled people at the moment

**Sarah Brown-Fraser:** [00:03:02] We already know that, from our own research that psychological barriers are the biggest barrier that prevents disabled people from being active. And that's disabled people themselves, as well as the attitudes towards disabled people. We're hearing obviously the information we get through our own channel, we're hearing a lot more about the creative ways that you can be active in the home. Um, and for years now, I mean, I feel as a disabled person is that actually getting out the door can be an issue for a lot of people.

So moving activity into the home has been really interesting, especially for me. In that, you know, a can of beans can be used instead of some weights. That people will actually do, you know, boccia which is game usually, which you can see the Paralympics, they're actually reinventing that game and doing things that they can do in the garden. They're doing things like sofa superheroes, where it's a disabled fitness instructor delivering those fitness classes from the sofa.

I've been really intrigued and delighted to see that people are actually considering the way you can be active in the home. Which for a lot of people is a really important factor because not all of us can, you know, get on public transport, go into our local gym. And even when we get to our local, gym you might need support there. And will that be available? Can we afford to even do these sports, you know, and activities that are out there? So I think, it'll be really important to see how these ideas and creativity carries on, past the crisis that we're in it right now.

**Eve Holt:** [00:04:51] Absolutely. I mean all those ideas, all that creativity, we've seen lots, you know, you said the cans of beans to all sorts of different ways of creating weights and assault courses and ways of motivating each other to stay active. So what would you, I guess, what would you like to see happen? What do you think are some of the opportunities for the future that those, what seeds have been sown at the minute that we could really look to water and continue?

**Sarah Brown-Fraser:** [00:05:16] Definitely being active in the home. I think, you know, it's as if it was always a forgotten kind of area of actually, should we be doing more programmes that are actually involving activity in the home. When we do online fitness classes, should we be thinking about the tools and the space that we've got in our own homes. But I think there's still a stark reality in terms of digital communications. Cause my job as marketing manager, I still consider the inclusive marketing angle. And as much as we are embracing the new channels and you know, the digital communications that we all have. Not all of us do, so there is still a barrier, and if we think about older age groups or there's certain impairment groups won't necessarily have the access to digital communications that you or I do. And there are still barriers in those digital communications. So our websites still aren't as accessible as they should be. Our video calls haven't got subtitles. There are so many good accessible platforms out there. I really hope that when we come out of this, that we continue to use them and actually embrace inclusion in a digital way because there's so much more that we can do in sport and physical activity and health that we're just not doing right now, and it's really embarrassing for us as sports organisations to not really think about the end users' barrier.

**Eve Holt:** [00:06:45] Absolutely. So designing in for inclusion much earlier in all those different spaces, far more consciously feels like it's absolutely needed. And I share, you know, at points definitely that embarrassment when I've, you know, you see some things and you think why, how is it possible in the 21st century. When we know, like those stats, that you pointed out at the beginning, that you're twice as likely to be inactive, if you're disabled. And the impact that has on people, on their contributions, on their life. You know, we are literally talking about people's lives. So what's, what, can you see, you know, how can we make that happen Sarah? Yeah, how do we make that happen?

**Sarah Brown-Fraser:** [00:07:28] I think it's probably what you've just said as well. You know, we always advise, we do a lot of work on inclusive marketing and communications. And we always sit back and when we see websites that are built or campaigns that are built, and you go in afterwards and you say, well, I would have done this, or I would change this, or I would add this from the beginning, from the get go. We need to think about inclusion and accessibility. And that means when we do begin those planning stages that we actually involve disabled people or people who have certain barriers, you know, different age groups, different communities in our work that actually can help us plan effectively and inclusively and accessibly. Because what happens is the end of that project, or the end of that website at the end of that campaign and somebody says, "I can't access it, cause of this" and then it costs you more to fix that because you haven't done it from day one. So I think it just means putting inclusion at the heart of everything we do from now. If you haven't done it already, you need to ask yourself and your team some questions about, have we got the right platforms? Are we spending enough money on making it inclusive? Are we realistic in actually the audiences they're trying to reach? Because not everyone's digital and not everyone wants to be digital. Not everyone's sitting there holding their smartphone to try and to be active, that some people might want a leaflet through the door. There are those people still exist in our society. So, let's think a bit more creatively and actually not think about what we need as an organisation, but what the end user needs.

**Eve Holt:** [00:09:14] Yeah. So designing in from the very beginning and that co-design and making sure that, and again, we've got the full diversity because being disabled means very different things, doesn't it for different people and the needs then that come with that. The opportunities, the strengths that come with that are, you know, hugely diverse. So it certainly isn't one tick box solution where you're gonna solve that for everybody. So having that inclusive approach from the very beginning and not an afterthought, which sometimes is how it feels. And we've seen that, I guess over the last few weeks in terms of, you know I've seen some of the changes from the government last week in terms of additional exercise for people with autism and potentially other, sort of neuro-difference. And I pictured back when I was a lawyer working with families with children who were autistic or ADHD, and they've been very much on my mind over the last few weeks thinking, my goodness, you know, if you're in, particularly if you're in crowded conditions, if you don't have a garden and you yourself or a child or somebody else you're looking for, you know, has those particular needs, this could be absolutely exasperating on top of anxiety, on top of uncertainty, on top of all those changes to normal structures, normal habits, normal support. You know, that's, that's very real, isn't it, for some families. So that was, you know, it was good to see that change, but it was an example of something that was a change several weeks in, you know, it wasn't from the beginning. It clearly wasn't at the forefront of decision makers minds at the time that they were initially legislating around the lockdown. So we need to have people around the table, don't we? We need to take the learnings from now forward.

**Sarah Brown-Fraser:** [00:10:55] And I would say also that, you know, involving disabled people is a really, really good change for your culture as an organisation. And you know, the employment rates are still low for disabled people. But you go into organisations and you ask, how many disabled people do you have working with you? Because I know in marketing, the first people I ask are people with different impairments because I go, "do you like this? Is this accessible?". The internal insight you can have by involving disabled people, employing disabled people is massive. And I really hope one of the impacts, positive impacts that come out of it is actually people see that disabled people are really adaptable, really effective in terms of giving solutions. Because we're used to these sort things, we're used to not being able to get out the door and we're used to like having to interact digitally or, you know, in a different formal channel. But, would that not be nice, you know, when we come out of this that we embrace that?

**Eve Holt:** [00:11:57] I really hope so. And I know we had, before we started the interview, a bit of a conversation around the level of kind of humanity and empathy and understanding and the opportunity at the minute for people to maybe recognize that actually, you know, have a sense of what other people's lives are like. So people are going, "well, isolation feels really hard" and yes, how many disabled people put their hands up and go, "uh yeah, this is, this is my life actually, I can't get out every day, always", you know, for some people. So how we really hold onto that and enable more people to understand each other and then remove those barriers really that we have that stop, that get in the way don't they of people being able to contribute and be involved and participate.

**Sarah Brown-Fraser:** [00:12:40] And I think, I mean, I'll say, I say it every day, that I really hope when we come out of, whatever we're coming out of and when we come out of it, that we don't forget that social isolation still exists. This might be a real thing to a lot of people who've never experienced it before, but we really need to get a grip of what it means to those people who are still gonna be socially isolated. And it affects their activity ratings. So, you know, when we talk about, I'm always saying "active people, stop telling me to be more active" because you might not understand how I feel as a less active person, or what my barriers are. So I feel like we need to really come out of this with some kind of ongoing discussion that actually still considers disabled people to be socially isolated and, you know, use the solutions we've used for the last few weeks and continue those solutions.

**Eve Holt:** [00:13:40] Absolutely. Thank you. So how do you like to move and has that shifted at all over the last few weeks as we've seen people have to create new habits and for some people, their levels of activity have gone up and for others you know, it's very dramatically gone down. So what does that look like for you personally?

**Sarah Brown-Fraser:** [00:13:58] I'm not kind of like the active bunny that probably people think when you work in sport or physical activity. Certainly for me, it's more of a physio thing, so the movement is more important for me, for my muscles to keep working. So I've been intrigued by things like the sofa workouts that you know, that are existing and different inclusive dance routines that you can do online. I'm quite fortunate because my husband is a sports therapist anyway, so he's always got some kind of contraption around the house that you can use or, you know, lift this and lift a can of beans instead of a weight. So I'm quite fortunate with who I live with and who I'm married to. But certainly I've been doing more of the physio elements of it. It's not like I'm going, you know, around the garden and, you know, doing a hundred laps like Captain Tom, he kind of puts me to shame right now. But, certainly I'm probably doing as much activity as I did before.

**Eve Holt:** [00:14:59] And so that point you make there about how fortunate you are in terms of your partner. I'm sure in many ways, without embarrassing him, but in terms of, you know, that support that we all rely on. And I know just in terms of my own family in terms of trying to get my kids moving, but also them inspiring me to be honest and reminding me, have I done my press ups for the day. So, you know, again, if you're living on your own, that must be so much harder at the minute. So are you getting sort of feedback through your work, through your networks and about what that looks and feels like for people right now?

**Sarah Brown-Fraser:** [00:15:35] I mean, as much as there is a negative side to it, and definitely there are people out there that are feeling quite low right now, being active is not a priority. You kind of forget we put all these, you know, lots of, you know, messages out there about come on and be active that hour a day. Well for some people, they're quite low right now, and that's not just disabled people. And trying to encourage them like, oh, just be active, it's good for you. It was those, kinda like feeling a bit more positive about my life, but it's not a priority. So, we are hearing negative stories, obviously in terms of people feeling quite down and isolated and without support to do things. But we're also hearing really nice stories about, actually, I've now got a wealth of activities I can do that I'm doing my own thing with. So the things like Joe Wicks, as much as he hasn't put on, I mean, an inclusive PE class for children in the morning. There are families that know how to adapt those classes and are doing it themselves. So I've seen brilliant videos of, you know, children who are disabled, just changing it a little bit, changing that routine that Joe Wicks delivers and making it good for themselves. I've seen, I've heard from people that have never been active before, suddenly being active because they've got access to it online. And those, and also there's a lot of people, whether disabled or not, but feel quite self-conscious. So actually doing it in your home when you can boost your confidence a bit more possibly is a good thing in terms of actually the next step might be getting out and doing it in the local leisure center because you've got rid of those sort of initial feelings that you may, you don't feel that confident in, you know, being active. Or will it look silly when I do it? So there are positive sides to it. I just think we all need to be very conscious that there are, there's quite a lot of people that, you know, still feel that activity's not for them.

**Eve Holt:** [00:17:37] In that messaging, which obviously you're an expert in, which is why I'm so grateful to have the conversation, but also to have you on our GreaterSport board because it is such a challenge, isn't it? I'm constantly, whether it's as an organisation we're thinking about our marketing and comms, but you know, every time I send a tweet I'm kind of going, Oh, you know. Absolutely, I firmly believe that it's right that doing your daily dose of exercise is up there, along with medication and access to food. We know that the stats, tell us, you know what this means in terms of helping the nation stay fit and healthy. You know how important that is now both your physical and mental health. How that enables us to sustain isolation for much longer if we're able to stay physically active. And how that will also in the end, well ultimately could save lives because, you know, whether it's another, if it's Covid in another form or it's something else, you know, what we've seen is that if you're fit and active, you're more likely to be able to, have, your symptoms are likely to be lower and likely to have less of an impact and may even be lifesaving for you. So it does feel important. It's hugely important, but as you say, that can feel like a preachy message can't it really. It can land completely wrong. It can feel like your shaming people. It can feel that if you're living in very difficult circumstances and just getting food to you and to your kids, if you're in cramped household, you know, the idea of lifting a can of beans, you know, and somebody telling you on Twitter, here you go, here's some nice moves, here's a good dance, can feel so incongruous with your, the realities of your life. So how to get that balance of, you know, reminding people that it is important it shouldn't be a luxury just for some, it absolutely is something that everybody should be able to access, but recognizing, yeah, the realities for people really, and messaging that reaches different people in all their diversities. It's a challenge.

**Sarah Brown-Fraser:** [00:19:34] I think it really depends on who delivers that message too. So, you know, you can have the Olympians and Paralympians of the world who are brilliant, and there will be definitely that percentage of people that want to go on and, you know, do some elite sport, you know, become medal winners. But there's a whole heap of us who are just rubbish at sport, but just what to find that activity for our muscle movement. You know, we like to say that disabled people have the right to be as rubbish at sport as anybody else. But being active is a good thing. We know that, we know the benefits, the physical and mental benefits of what we can do. But the phrase "people like me", we need to find those people like me. Who you know are a bit chubby, but still actually want to be active, but have experienced life as we do in our daily lives. It's really important that those people come through and actually deliver those messages for us. That could be anybody. That could be, that could be a health professional, it could be your local GP, but it could be also, you know, somebody who runs your local church, or it can really vary, but we all have different people that we listen to. It's not necessarily the people that we think should deliver those messages. And we need to do a lot more work on those messages.

**Eve Holt:** [00:20:54] So there we go, we need to involve from the very beginning at the heart of everything, have that inclusion. Absolutely leading the way and not an afterthought. And then also making sure that we're seeing, you know, you can't be what you can't see. And in the end, we need that diversity of people to be giving those messages, are key advocates out there and they're far more persuasive than, you know, any one of us trying to reach a whole host of different people in their different households right now. So, let's make it happen. Let's see this, I love your positivity. You know, it's absolutely great. And I know there are a lot of challenges at the minute for lots of people, but as you say, there are these, you know, positive things that are happening at the minute, and opportunities really to make sure that we take that learning and embed it in the ways of the future and really, you know, close that gap. So we're not saying that you're twice as likely to be an active, if you're disabled. Let's shift that. So thank you very much for your time. Lovely to talk to you as ever. And I hope, yeah, the next few weeks go well. And I look forward to catching up really and talking about, well, what next? And taking all that learning and going how do we make sure, you know, at GreaterSport and GM Moving really that we put those things in action and work with you to do that.

**Sarah Brown-Fraser:** [00:22:22] Yeah, great.

**Eve Holt:** [00:22:23] Cheers.

**Outro:** [00:22:24] If you've enjoyed this podcast, why not share it or tell a friend about it? And if you've got feedback or ideas for future episodes, please get in touch with our team at GreaterSport using the links that you'll find on our podcast page.