

Exploring the Healthy Athletes Programme with Special Olympics Suffolk

Project goal

Working alongside people with a learning disability to develop an understanding of how to appropriately implement the Healthy Athletes programme at a large-scale Special Olympics Suffolk event on 22/9/24.

Context

Physical inactivity is one of the leading risk factors for noncommunicable diseases mortality, with people who are inactive having a 20-30% increased risk of death compared to people who are sufficiently active. Furthermore, physical inactivity has negative impacts on health and social care systems, the environment, economic development, community well-being and quality of life (World Health Organisation, 2020). This research relates to a population in which high levels of physical inactivity and health inequalities are consistently reported, due to the experience of significant barriers to accessing sporting activities and healthcare (Emerson & Hatton, 2014). Special Olympics Suffolk (SOS) aims to use sport to empower people with a learning disability to enhance their health and wellbeing.

The Healthy Athletes Programme

Provides SO athletes with free health screenings, education, and referrals for follow-up care in a fun, welcoming environment that removes the barriers people with ID often encounter during a visit to a healthcare professional. In addition, each event trains healthcare professionals and teaches them how to treat people with ID in their own practices.

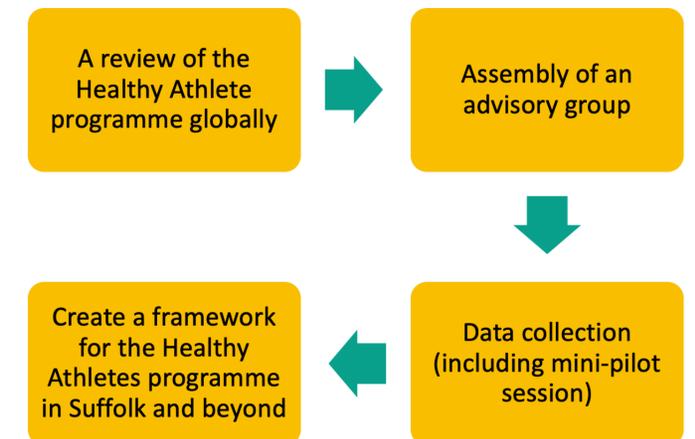


Participatory Action Research

Relevant co-researchers are actively involved in every stage of the research process, from planning to dissemination, to ensure that lived experiences, perspectives, and needs are central to the research.

The intentionally political dimension of PAR pays attention to who holds power, how power is gained, who benefits from it, and vicariously, who is harmed or disadvantaged from the lack of power (Breda, 2014)

Methods



Implications

This research will not only impact the lives of the co-researchers engaging in the process as researchers but will have an impact to those involved in the wide-reaching Special Olympics Suffolk event, as well as the potential to impact on the delivery of the Healthy Athletes program globally.