

## PACC Blog – March 2021

### Starting again? A reflection on getting back to some sort of normality.

A report published by the Activity Alliance [‘My Active Future’](#) in March 2020 highlighted how many disabled children report low confidence and feeling uncomfortable as being key barriers to being active. They later followed this up with their [‘The impact of COVID-19 on disabled people’](#) report which further explores the challenges families faced in accessing support and remaining active during the lockdown in spring 2020. Both reports clearly identify the issues families have in supporting their children with disabilities to remain physically active, then factor in the time away from participating in activities during the lockdown period and if they have needed to shield, and we have entirely new and more challenging barriers presented.

Adjusting to the changes over the last year has been difficult for many of us, but we now face the new challenge of returning to normal. For some families this will be welcomed, but for many there will be worry and dread at the idea of yet more change to come. Some of our children and young people are desperate to get back to their clubs and activities with their friends and the people they enjoy seeing. However, some will have become very comfortable with spending their Saturdays lounging in front of the TV, or playing on their devices, or spending time with the people they live with. For us as parent carers we are now having to weigh the pros and cons of reintegrating our children into their old routines or finding new ones. And some of us will welcome the lower stress levels in the home that comes with less running around to activities and clubs, and perhaps we are enjoying the time with our children at home too.

With society becoming more accessible again over the next few months, it is important to consider the role clubs and activities play in our lives. We are very fortunate in Shropshire to have programmes like [All In Short Breaks](#) that provide safe spaces for children and young people to try new activities. With the evidence showing how difficult it is to maintain good physical fitness we need to think about how we reintroduce good experiences that support our children and young people to be healthy, make friends, and try new things. The links between lower activity levels and poor physical and mental wellbeing are identified in both reports mentioned above, and while it may seem overwhelming to add more change to our period of adjustment, it could be a really important decision to make. These opportunities not only provide a place for our children and young people to explore new skills and try new things, but it can also offer us a bit of a break too. The time they spend building friendships, communicating with different people, all provides us with an opportunity to let them take the lead on what they want to participate in and develop a sense of independence, both of which are important.

No one is saying that starting again is going to be easy, in fact we expect it will be pretty tough for many families. But we should think about introducing activities again at the right time for our children. It may take longer, or be bumpy to begin with, but with a bit of

patience, some honest conversations with the activity coordinators or session leads, and perseverance we will all get back to some sort of normality.

To register your child to access the All In Short Breaks programme, which provides sports, arts, and social opportunities for children and young people aged 0-18 with SEND, please visit the [Shropshire Council All In Short Breaks webpage](#). If your child/young person is over 18, please visit [Shropshire Choices](#) to find out more about local activities and opportunities near you.

Sarah and Zara

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