



## **Corporate Plan 2015 - 2020**

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# **Equality Impact Assessment Final Decision Report**

**Board Approved: 16 June 2015  
Board Paper: SNI/15/34**

**Preamble:**

Further to the Statutory Duties as contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI) has committed to carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on each policy or programme where screening indicated that there may be significant implications in relation to one of more of the nine equality grounds.

This report presents the results of an equality impact assessment on Sport NI's Corporate Plan for 2015 – 2020, and the decision reached by Sport NI.

This document is available in other accessible formats on request and on-line at [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Further to the Statutory Duties as contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI) has committed to carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on each policy or programme where screening has indicated that there may be significant implications in relation to one or more of the nine equality grounds.

This report presents the results of an EQIA on Sport NI's Corporate Plan for 2015 - 2020. The report follows from the draft report that was presented for public consultation on 23 January 2015.

The draft EQIA consultation report is still available from Sport NI and details policy information, consideration of data and available research, the identification of potential adverse impacts and preliminary recommendations and monitoring for adverse impact in the future.

There was one response received during the consultation on the draft EQIA consultation report (see Appendix A), and the issues raised have been taken into account in reaching a final decision.

Sport NI believes that the proposed actions attaching to this EQIA will have a positive effect in terms of the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations, and we would like to thank all those who have contributed to this EQIA.

**Chief Executive**

**Chair**

## **1: INTRODUCTION**

Section 75 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that Sport NI shall, *“in carrying out its function relating to Northern Ireland, have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity”* between the following nine Section 75 categories:

- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Men and women generally;
- Persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Persons with dependents and persons without.

In addition, and without prejudice to these obligations, Sport NI is also committed to having due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Our revised Equality Scheme was approved by the Equality Commission in April 2013. Our scheme sets out arrangements as to how Sport NI proposes to fulfil the statutory duties determined through Section 75 legislation and its implementation. The Equality Scheme acknowledges the commitment to carry out EQIAs and policy reviews on existing policies and to develop new policies as required.

In December 2014, the Corporate Plan 2015-2020 was screened and at this time it was decided that the Plan should be subject to a full EQIA, which duly commenced in January 2015.

## 2: AIM

Sport NI's Corporate Plan 2015-20 operates within the context of our vision:

***'Northern Ireland: renowned as a place where people enjoy, engage, and excel in sport.'***

Sport NI's business is designed to provide people, especially young people and under-represented groups, with pathways and options for lifelong sporting and personal development. The Corporate Plan aims to ensure that due consideration is afforded to all people at corporate, programme and project level. The aims are described within the context of the stated strategic objectives and priorities for action for Sport NI over the next five years:

<b>SPORTING COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>To increase and support the number of people adopting and sustaining a sporting lifestyle.</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. We will lead, co-ordinate and invest in the development and delivery of grassroots sport, extending choice and quality sporting opportunities which engage all.</li><li>2. We will increase participation in grassroots sport with a target on young people, disabled people, women, older people and people living in areas of greatest need.</li></ol>
<b>SPORTING CLUBS</b>	<b>To enable more people to develop and reach their sporting goals through a structured environment .</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. We will invest in the sporting workforce to enable sports clubs to develop and deliver quality sporting experiences so that people can enjoy and sustain a sporting lifestyle.</li><li>4. We will invest in quality sports facilities that engage communities, support achievement of sporting goals and develop future champions.</li></ol>
<b>SPORTING WINNERS</b>	<b>To help more Northern Ireland athletes to win at the highest level.</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. We will prioritise those sports and athletes who have the potential to achieve success and excel at the Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games.</li><li>6. We will work strategically with the sports (including culturally significant sports) to invest in our high performance expertise where it is most needed to ensure success.</li></ol>

### **3: BACKGROUND**

Sport NI's Corporate Plan 2015-20 recognises that people do not constitute a unitary and homogenous group, and that some are particularly vulnerable to discrimination.

We recognise that the needs of all people must be addressed from the outset in all policy development in order to deliver against strategic objectives, and to comply with legislation.

*"Sport embraces much more than traditional team games and competition. 'Sport' means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels"* (Council of Europe, European Sports Charter).

Sport can have a profound effect on peoples' lives, whether it's our future athletes being inspired by world-class performances or schoolchildren becoming more active. It also plays a crucial role in improving health, education and confidence.

Sport provides a positive platform for communities to come together – not only helping to address community relations but also strengthening community infrastructure. In addition to sport's intrinsic importance, it is also instrumental in contributing to other government agendas, such as: education and skills; community cohesion; social inclusion; neighbourhood renewal; Northern Ireland's image at home and abroad; and the economy. In fact, sport's greatest contribution to other government objectives is its positive impact on public health.

Preserved within the Corporate Plan's strategic objectives is the intention to:

- Promote equality of opportunity and good relations and avoid discrimination against people on Sport NI funded programmes; and
- Encourage the stimulation and engagement of other organisations in promoting a climate of inclusion and the promotion of equality of opportunity for all.

The Corporate Plan promotes the inclusion of all people in sport, thereby mainstreaming Section 75 and anti-discrimination legislation throughout the business of Sport NI.

### Sports Sector

Through its Corporate Plan, Sport NI will continue to work closely with organisations including governing bodies of sport, community and voluntary groups, district councils and other bodies to implement, monitor and review the impact of Sport NI's policies.

We will aim to ensure that everyone will have the opportunity to increase participation in and access to activities, places, events, services and jobs within sport.

We will ensure that the needs of everyone where possible is addressed in the early stages of programmes and intervention development; that people involved or affected are appropriately consulted with and are actively involved in this process, and that the impact of these policies are measured.

We will facilitate the accessibility of information and resources, communication, the environment and mainstream activities.

We will actively promote equality of opportunity for all. This will include promoting policy and practice which aims to ensure that equality measures are mainstreamed throughout Sport NI.

#### **4: RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

While all anti-discrimination legislation is relevant to the carrying out of this EQIA, in the development and operation of this policy the following principal legislative provisions (as subsequently amended) have been duly referenced:

- Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75 and Schedule 9);
- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976;
- Equal Pay Act 1970;
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997;
- Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998;
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006;
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006;
- The Human Rights Act 1988; and
- European Directives.

## **5: CONSIDERATION OF DATA AND AVAILABLE RESEARCH**

Within Northern Ireland, research has been carried out into the participation levels in sport and physical activity, although previous research has also highlighted significant gaps in existing data sets across a range of sports and activities. This deficit is currently being addressed through the implementation of Sport NI's Monitoring Policy and including the requirement placed on funded projects to collate and manage participant data relevant to Section 75.

In carrying out the EQIA, Sport NI took into account a wide range of existing data and research. This has included the following in-house sources:

- Sport Northern Ireland's Equality Scheme;
- Completed and ongoing EQIAs;
- Sport Northern Ireland's Disability Action Plan 2012-15;
- Sport Northern Ireland's Annual Reports; and
- Sport Northern Ireland's Corporate Plan 2012-15 & Business Plan 2014-2015.

### Monitoring Data

A uniform equality monitoring system has been developed to track the future impact of policies and programmes and is now in place to collect appropriate data from organisations supported through Sport NI investment, such as:

- Investment into Disability Sports NI;
- Capital Programmes;
- Active Awards For Sport;
- Active Clubs;
- Active Communities;
- PerformanceFocus; and
- Athlete Investment Programme.

### Sport Northern Ireland Research Reports 2012-15

Sport Northern Ireland has also continued to publish a number of research projects to provide improved qualitative and quantitative data, including:

- Sport Northern Ireland Research Strategy 2013-17 (2013);
- Sport Northern Ireland Stakeholder Survey (2013);
- The Northern Ireland Sport and Physical Activity Survey (SAPAS) 2010: A Baseline Report (2011);
- Sports Policy Factors Leading to International Success [SPLISS] Research Report (2012);
- International Sports Events Programme Impact Evaluation (2014);
- Your School: Your Club Publication (2014);
- Promoting Fair Play in Sport – a Guide to Sport and the Equality Legislation in Northern Ireland (2012); and
- Transsexual People and Competitive Sport (2014)

## **6: INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Sport NI feels that the implementation of this Corporate Plan in its entirety will have a positive and long-lasting effect on mainstreaming equality of opportunity into sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland.

There is an ongoing need to have due regard to all Section 75 considerations in Sport NI's corporate business. Given the financial stringencies being imposed on the sector by government, some policies or programmes as developed under this Corporate Plan could adversely impact on the amount of available and limited funding for organisations. Sport NI will ensure that Section 75 principles will continue to inform the distribution of scarce resources.

Furthermore, as part of the wider government agenda and social policy initiatives, Sport NI will continue to promote the following core values through its Corporate Plan;

1. **Promoting Equality:** Working in accord with government directives, Sport NI will aspire to promote equality and good relations through its corporate business;
2. **Tackling Poverty:** Sport NI will ensure that its activities provide opportunities to people and areas that have experienced inequality and social need; and
3. **Tackling Social Exclusion:** All sections of the community will be given equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the work of Sport NI<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Priority will be afforded to older people, women, people with a disability and people from minority ethnic communities as revealed by Sport NI's research and monitoring.

## 7: CONSULTATION ON EQIA RESULTS

The EQIA report was made available to the public on 23 January 2015 for a three month consultation period, making clear that Sport NI was keen to consult as widely as possible on the findings of the EQIA which included the following actions:

- The report was made available on request in alternative formats.
- The report was emailed to Sport NI's list of consultees.
- Prominent advertisements were placed in the Belfast Telegraph inviting the public to comment on this matter in accordance with normal practice (Appendix B)
- A copy had been posted on Sport NI's website.

### Written Submissions

Sport NI received one response to its consultation from Disability Sports Northern Ireland (DSNI), attached at Appendix A.

A fulsome response to the various issues raised by DSNI is provided below, with Sport NI's responses (black text) included alongside DSNI's comments (blue text).

<b>DSNI's COMMENTS</b>	<b>SPORT NI'S RESPONSE</b>
2.2 Disability Sport NI is concerned that the fact that people with disabilities are the most under-represented group in sport and only half as likely to participate as non-disabled people is not highlighted and prioritised as the most important equality issue in sport throughout the	While recognising that people with a disability are identified as one of four prioritised groups within the Corporate Plan, Sport NI would contest the assertion that people with a disability should be afforded yet higher priority. The available evidence would suggest that a

<p>EQIA document.</p>	<p>number of Section 75 groups continue to be under-represented within sport and these groups all require special consideration. Hence Sport NI is not minded to afford yet higher priority to this group. It should be borne in mind that Section 75 includes nine grounds of difference, including 'people with a disability and people without'. To divert a disproportionate amount of available funding to one group, people with a disability, would have an adverse impact on other Section 75 groups, and including people without a disability, and is unlikely to be justifiable, thereby raising further Section 75 concerns.</p>
<p>2.3 Disability Sport NI is concerned that the lack of progress in addressing the under-representation of people with disabilities in sport, over the period of Sport NI's last corporate plan, is not recognised and highlighted in the EQIA document. That is, although the Continuous Household Survey data provided on page 16 of the document indicates a welcome increase in participation in sport by all groups in society, the data also shows that people with</p>	<p>Sport NI would argue that the EQIA does recognise DSNI's concern (see p.16 of the EQIA) and re-emphasises the planned investments and interventions during the period which Sport NI intends to implement in order to address under-representation across various Section 75 groups and including people with a disability.</p>

<p>disabilities are still half as likely to participate as non-disabled people.</p>	
<p>2.4 Disability Sport NI is greatly concerned that Section 4 of the EQIA 'Consideration of Adverse Impact' does not state the adverse impact that Sport NI's proposed reductions in funding, during the first year of the new corporate plan, will have on sports opportunities for people with disabilities. A proposed 10% cut in Sport NI's 'Disability Mainstreaming' funding combined with broader cuts in Sport NI's funding of Disability Sport NI's core programmes, will have a devastating impact on the sports opportunities available to people with disabilities in Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>Sport NI shares DSNI's concerns regarding the impact of budget cuts on future capital investment. Unfortunately, the Sport NI budget reductions impacting on DSNI for 2015/16 are beyond Sport NI's control. The total value of the Sport NI grant cut to DSNI in 2015/16 was approximately £16,000, a reduction in grant that was broadly in line with economies made across all Sport NI investment programmes. Sport NI has confirmed an investment of £146,250 in DSNI in 2015/16, together with a further investment in DSNI of approximately £100,000 in 2015/16 through its Active Clubs programme.</p> <p>In these times of economic stringency, Sport NI would strongly maintain that the proposed future level of investment in sport for people with a disability is fair, reasonable and proportionate, while at the same time continuing to work hard to make good any shortfall. By way of example, and duly recognising the concerns expressed by DSNI in</p>

	<p>terms of specific service reductions, Sport NI has already submitted two funding proposals to the NI Executive June Monitoring Round, via DCAL, to support DSNI's Five Start Challenge and Community Events programmes; the total value of the bid is approximately £75,000.</p>
<p>The reduction in funding will mean that Disability Sport NI will have to cut its range of services and programmes throughout Northern Ireland by approximately one third, providing 7,000 less opportunities than last year as explained in detail in Appendix 1.</p>	<p>Sport NI would strongly contest that Appendix A represents an accurate reflection as to how the budget cuts would impact on the ground. Please see below for Sport NI's comments on each point.</p>
<p>However the adverse impact of the reduction in funding is not stated anywhere in the EQIA document. This is despite the fact that the adverse impact of the reduction in funding is clearly stated in the 'Sport NI - Participation Programme Budget' section of the ongoing DCAL 'Draft Budget 2015-16' Consultation as 'High Risk' – stating that the cuts will cause the 'Potential Closure of Disability Sport NI and loss of staff, skills and knowledge/experience'</p>	<p>As noted above, Section 75 makes reference to people with or without a disability. Sport NI believes that to impose people without a disability with a relatively higher proposed cut in funding would also be regarded as unfair and could lead to a potential concerns under Section 75.</p>
<p>2.5 Disability Sport NI is greatly concerned at the quality of the information provided in Section 5</p>	<p>Sport NI strongly challenges the assertion that the EQIA is 'incorrect and misleading'. The EQIA was wholly</p>

<p>'Preliminary Recommendations / Measures to Mitigate' of the document as it contains incorrect, misleading and outdated information.</p> <p>The paragraph on 'Disability Sport NI' on page 31 is incorrect and misleading as at the time the EQIA was released, Sport NI had not engaged the services of Disability Sport NI to support the implementation of the Disability Mainstreaming Policy, for the 2015-2020 period as indicated.</p>	<p>accurate at the time of publication but inevitably has been superseded by more recent developments in what is a highly dynamic policy domain.</p> <p>By way of example, two interventions have occurred since the EQIA was published.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sport NI has recently developed a new policy on participation priorities 2016-2020, to complement the implementation of its Corporate Plan 2015-2020. Sport NI is currently consulting on this new policy (Everybody Active 2020). It should also be noted that the draft policy identifies people with a disability as a priority target group for Sport NI interventions over the period 2016-2020.</li> <li>2. Sport NI has also recently initiated a collaborative project with the wider disability sports sector in Northern Ireland, to develop a 'Sector-Wide Disability Sport Action Plan' (working title only). The purpose of the Plan is:</li> </ol>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To bring focused direction to the development of disability sport across NI;</li> <li>• To provide a framework for strategic investment in disability sport;</li> <li>• To gain consensus across the sector on the priority areas of progression for the next 4 years;</li> <li>• To encourage strategic and joined up working; and</li> <li>• To determine where the sector would like to be by 2020 and provide a guide for how to get there.</li> </ul> <p>It is hoped that this draft Plan will be available by 31 March 2016. DSNI has been engaged in the drafting of the project plan and will also be a member of the Project Board.</p>
<p>Sport NI have subsequently agreed 'to engage the services of Disability Sport NI', with the organisation receiving a 'Letter of Offer' on Thursday 12th March, 2015. However, as the funding provided has been reduced, the programmes and services provided to people with disabilities will be much less. As explained earlier this situation,</p>	<p>Sport NI contests the accuracy of the analysis as presented by DSNI (see Appendix A) as to how the budget cuts would impact 'on the ground'. Please see below for Sport NI's comments on each point.</p>

<p>combined with broader cuts in Sport NI's funding of Disability Sport NI's core programmes, will have a devastating impact on the sports opportunities available to people with disabilities in Northern Ireland, as outlined in detail in Appendix 1.</p>	
<p>Disability Sport NI is particularly concerned that the series of 'Measures to Mitigate' outlined in Appendix 2 of the EQIA document are outdated as they refer to measures undertaken in the past and therefore are not relevant to the implementation of Sport NI's Corporate Plan for the 2015 – 2020. The information provided also includes some incorrect and misleading information.</p>	<p>Sport NI strongly disputes this assertion. As DSNI is aware, Appendix 2 of the EQIA Draft Consultation Report is titled 'Sport NI's Section 75 Action Plan 2012-15'. This action plan, within Sport NI's Equality Scheme, was approved by the Equality Commission in April 2013. The appendix was included to set the future Corporate Plan in context and remains a valid and valuable data source.</p>
<p>Disability Sport NI believes that Sport NI has a responsibility to include in the EQIA document a comprehensive list of 'measures to mitigate' for the 2015- 2020 period. These should include the introduction of a 20% 'disability' target for the Active Communities Programme.</p>	<p>The EQIA document includes this information at Section 5 titled 'Preliminary Recommendations / Measures to Mitigate'. As noted above, Sport NI has recently developed a new policy on participation priorities 2016-2020.</p>
<p>2.6 In summary, Disability Sport NI believes that Sport NI is in breach of their equality scheme in that they have failed to identify the adverse</p>	<p>Sport NI strongly contests DSNI's assertions that the EQIA is in breach of Sport NI's Equality Scheme. The EQIA was up-to-date and accurate at</p>

<p>impact of the policy on people with disabilities and have failed to put in place appropriate mitigating measures.</p> <p>2.9 Disability Sport NI is also concerned at the quality of the information provided in the document as it contains a number of inaccuracies, omissions and misleading information.</p>	<p>the time of publication but has been superseded by subsequent policy developments which have now been referenced as footnotes in an amended Draft EQIA Consultation Report in order to avoid further confusion.</p>
<p><b>Appendix 1: Disability Sport NI - Impact of Reductions in Sport NI Funding</b></p> <p>Disability Sport NI Estimates 7,000 less participants in 2015/16 as a result of reductions in it's funding as summarized below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fermanagh Inclusive Leisure Project closed - 2000+ less participants.</li> </ul>	<p>This project was originally funded via the Building Sport (Revenue Tail) Programme and, on conclusion of the Programme, in 2013-14 was sustained via funding from both Fermanagh District Council and Sport NI. In 2014-15 DSNI sourced funds to sustain the post and in reaction to the current economic climate and during a re-structuring exercise in 2014, DSNI ended the contract for the staff officer managing this project in 2015.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grassroots Wheelchair Basketball Activities ceased – 100 less participants.</li> </ul>	<p>Following the 10% reduction to DSNI's core funding award in 2015 grassroots wheelchair basketball activities previously carried out were removed, in consultation with DSNI, from the work programme for this award. However, some support for wheelchair basketball clubs continues</p>

	<p>via the Active Club's Co-ordinator (physical disability), employed by DSNI and funded via Sport NI's Active Clubs Programme and DSNI, with also a Performance Officer for Wheelchair Basketball, funded via Sport NI's Performance Focus Programme.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Boccia Programme – clubs, league and squads ceased – 100 less participants.</li> </ul>	<p>Following the 10% reduction to DSNI's core funding award in 2015, the NI Boccia Programme as previously facilitated was removed, in consultation with DSNI, from the work programme for this award. However, some support for Boccia clubs continues via the Active Club's Co-ordinator (physical disability), employed by DSNI and funded via Sport NI's Active Clubs Programme and also through the Active Communities coaches employed by DSNI, funded via BCC under Sport NI's Active Communities Programme.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NI Community Events Programme – 8 annual events ceased – 1,050 less participants</li> </ul>	<p>Following the 10% reduction to DSNI's core funding award in 2015 the NI Community Events Programme, as previously facilitated, was removed, in consultation with DSNI, from the work programme for this award.</p> <p>NB: Recognising the concerns</p>

	<p>expressed by DSNI in terms of specific service reductions, Sport NI has submitted two funding proposals to the NI Executive June Monitoring Round, via DCAL, one of which will support the delivery of the NI Community Events Programme in 2015-16 and a Wheelchair Sports Development Programme (wheelchair sports activities for people with the highest levels of physical disabilities in the three sports of Boccia, Wheelchair Basketball and Wheelchair Rugby).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The '5 Star Disability Sports Challenge' Education Project ceased – 3,500 less participants.</li> </ul>	<p>This project has been funded in previous years using in-year uplifts to DSNI's core funding award (mainly secured through applications to Department monitoring rounds).</p> <p>NB: Recognising the concerns expressed by DSNI in terms of specific service reductions Sport NI has submitted two funding proposals to the NI Executive June Monitoring Round, via DCAL, one of which will support the delivery of the 5 Star Disability Sports Challenge Project.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sports Facility Access Service ceased.</li> </ul>	<p>It is Sport NI's understanding that this service provision has not ceased but is now being delivered under a different business model which is</p>

	'demand led'. Sport NI is supporting DSNI to assess the feasibility of continuing to run this service, costing it appropriately to be built in to capital project costs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Governing Bodies supported reduced from 10 to 6 – 300 less participants.</li> </ul>	Sport NI notes this reduction as a result of budget cuts across the sector.

## **7: DECISION ON THE EQIA**

Taking into account the one response from the consultation exercise, existing data and recommendations as presented in the draft EQIA report, in response to the outcome of the EQIA Sport NI will commit to taking the following actions:

- High level consultation and monitoring will continue to underpin the implementation of the Plan.
- Reasonable and proportionate funding and support will be made available to implement the Plan, mindful of the needs and circumstances of all Section 75 grounds;
- Sport NI will continually be responsive to needs of groups attached to Section 75 categories and will operate appropriate positive action measures to address adverse impacts as and when appropriate.

## **8: MONITORING FOR ADVERSE IMPACT IN THE FUTURE AND PUBLICATION OF THE RESULTS OF SUCH MONITORING**

The Corporate Plan outlines the principles, values and approach to delivering Sport NI's policies and programmes. Sport NI monitors the impact of these policies and programmes through the annual Business Plan and programme reviews.

If this monitoring shows that the revised policy has resulted in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, Sport NI will ensure the policy is revised accordingly.

### **CONTACT DETAILS**

If you have any comments on this decision or any other matter relating to this EQIA then please contact:

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **DISABILITY SPORT NI's RESPONSE TO SPORT NI's CORPORATE PLAN 2015-2020 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

#### **1. Disability Sport NI**

Disability Sport NI is Northern Ireland's main disability sports charity working with children, young people and adults who would like to participate in sport and physical recreation.

We work with people with physical, sensory and learning disabilities of all ages and with schools, disability groups, sporting organisations and clubs to ensure that everyone can benefit from the health, social and education benefits of sport and physical recreation.

We believe that every person with a disability has the right to participate in all aspects of life and are committed to building a more inclusive society where people with disabilities have the same opportunity as non disabled people to lead a full, active and healthy lifestyle through sport and physical recreation.

Launched in 1998 by a number of small disability sports groups to address the under representation of people with disabilities in sport, we have gradually grown to represent the vast majority of disability sports groups and clubs in Northern Ireland.

We currently have over 100 member groups made up of disability sports groups, schools and adult centres and organise a range of participation programmes, events, training courses and education projects all designed to improve the health and wellbeing of people with disabilities. Last year our programmes directly benefitted over 20,000 people across Northern Ireland.

Although the majority of our work is concerned with developing grassroots sports and recreation opportunities, we also work closely with Sport Northern Ireland and Governing Bodies of Sport to ensure that talented disabled sports people have the same opportunity as their non disabled peers to train, compete and excel in their chosen sport on the world stage.

Disability Sport NI is a limited company with charitable status and is recognised by Sport Northern Ireland as the key body responsible for the development of sport and physical recreation opportunities for people with disabilities in Northern Ireland.

The organisation is a member of the British Paralympic Association, GB Boccia, the UK Sports Association for People with Learning Disabilities, Disability Action and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action. Disability Sport NI also maintains close links with Paralympics Ireland.

Further information on the work of Disability Sports NI is available at [www.dsni.co.uk](http://www.dsni.co.uk).

## **2 Response to Consultation**

- 2.1 Disability Sport NI welcomes the opportunity to respond to the EQIA consultation and met with Sport NI officials John News and Paul Donnelly on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2015 to clarify some information contained in the consultation document before making this written submission.
- 2.2 Disability Sport NI is concerned that the fact that people with disabilities are the most underrepresented group in sport and only half as likely to participate as non disabled people is not highlighted and prioritised as the most important equality issue in sport throughout the EQIA document.
- 2.3 Disability Sport NI is concerned that the lack of progress in addressing the underrepresentation of people with disabilities in sport, over the period of Sport NI's last corporate plan, is not recognised and highlighted in the EQIA document. That is, although the Continuous Household Survey data provided on page 16 of the document indicates a welcome increase in participation in sport by all groups in society, the data also shows that people with disabilities are still half as likely to participate as non disabled people.
- 2.4 Disability Sport NI is greatly concerned that Section 4 of the EQIA 'Consideration of Adverse Impact' does not state the adverse impact that Sport NI's proposed reductions in funding, during the first year of the new corporate plan, will have on sports opportunities for people with disabilities. A proposed 10% cut in Sport NI's 'Disability Mainstreaming' funding combined with broader cuts in Sport NI's funding of Disability Sport NI's core programmes, will have a devastating impact on the sports opportunities available to people with disabilities in Northern Ireland.

The reduction in funding will mean that Disability Sport NI will have to cut its range of services and programmes throughout Northern Ireland by approximately one third, providing 7,000 less opportunities than last year as explained in detail in Appendix 1.

However the adverse impact of the reduction in funding is not stated anywhere in the EQIA document. This is despite the fact that the adverse impact of the reduction in funding is clearly stated in the 'Sport NI - Participation Programme Budget' section of the ongoing DCAL 'Draft Budget 2015-16' Consultation as 'High Risk' – stating that the cuts will cause the '*Potential Closure of Disability Sport NI and loss of staff, skills and knowledge/experience*'

- 2.5 Disability Sport NI is greatly concerned at the quality of the information provided in Section 5 'Preliminary Recommendations / Measures to Mitigate' of the document as it contains incorrect, misleading and outdated information.

The paragraph on 'Disability Sport NI' on page 31 is incorrect and misleading as at the time the EQIA was released, Sport NI **had not** engaged the services of Disability Sport NI to support the implementation of the Disability Mainstreaming Policy, for the 2015-2020 period as indicated.

Sport NI have subsequently agreed 'to engage the services of Disability Sport NI', with the organisation receiving a 'Letter of Offer' on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2015. However, as the funding provided has been reduced, the programmes and services provided to people with disabilities will be much less. As explained earlier this situation, combined with broader cuts in Sport NI's funding of Disability Sport NI's core programmes, will have a devastating impact on the sports opportunities available to people with disabilities in Northern Ireland, as outlined in detail in Appendix 1.

Disability Sport NI is particularly concerned that the series of 'Measures to Mitigate' outlined in Appendix 2 of the EQIA document are outdated as they refer to measures undertaken in the past and therefore are not relevant to the implementation of Sport NI's Corporate Plan for the 2015 – 2020. The information provided also includes some incorrect and misleading information.

Disability Sport NI believes that Sport NI has a responsibility to include in the EQIA document a comprehensive list of 'measures to mitigate' for the 2015- 2020 period. These should include the introduction of a 20% 'disability' target for the Active Communities Programme.

- 2.6 In summary, Disability Sport NI believes that Sport NI is in breach of their equality scheme in that they have failed to identify the adverse impact of the policy on people with disabilities and have failed to put in place appropriate mitigating measures.

2.9 Disability Sport NI is also concerned at the quality of the information provided in the document as it contains a number of inaccuracies, omissions and misleading information.

Submitted by:

**Kevin O'Neill**

CEO

Disability Sports NI

16<sup>th</sup> March, 2015.

*Appendix 1*

**Disability Sport NI - Impact of Reductions in Sport NI Funding**

Disability Sport NI Estimates 7,000 less participants in 2015/16 as a result of reductions in it's funding as summarized below:

- **Fermanagh Inclusive Leisure Project** closed - 2000+ less participants.
- **Grassroots Wheelchair Basketball Activities** ceased – 100 less participants.
- **Northern Ireland Boccia Programme** – clubs, league and squads ceased – 100 less participants.
- **NI Community Events Programme** – 8 annual events ceased – 1,050 less participants (see list below)
- The **'5 Star Disability Sports Challenge' Education Project** ceased – 3,500 less participants.
- **Sports Facility Access Service** ceased.
- **Number of Governing Bodies supported** reduced from 10 to 6 – 300 less participants.

**Northern Ireland Community Events Programme events which will cease:**

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NI Junior Paralympics Fun Day – Multi Sports Event,

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Northern Ireland Special Schools New Age Kurling Championships

Nationwide NI Swimming Championships for people with disabilities

Northern Ireland Senior New Age Kurling Championships

Northern Ireland Special Schools Boccia Championships

NI Regional Senior Boccia Championships

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**NI Special Schools Sports Hall Athletics Championships (Lisburn)**

**NI Special Schools Sports Hall Athletics Championships (L/Derry)**

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Note: The events are held at Leisure Centres throughout Northern Ireland

## **APPENDIX B**

### Belfast Telegraph Advertisement



**Consultations**  
**Section 75 Equality Screening**

In accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and commitments made within our published Equality Scheme, Sport Northern Ireland currently is consulting on the equality screening of a number of new or significantly revised policies and plans.

Relevant documents and screening information can be sourced as follows:

- Visiting [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)
- Email: [edelcosgrove@sportni.net](mailto:edelcosgrove@sportni.net)
- Telephone: (028) 9038 1222
- Write to the address below

Responses should be submitted to:  
Dr Paul Donnelly  
The House of Sport  
2a Upper Malone Road  
Belfast BT9 5LA

If you would like the opportunity to meet with a member of Sport Northern Ireland to discuss any of the policies, please contact Edel Cosgrove on (028) 9038 1222.

The closing date for submissions is  
**Thursday 23 April 2015 at 4.00pm.**

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