



# Get Active-Stay Active

*Disability Sport*

 **SPORT**  
Northern Ireland  
**LOTTERY FUNDED**

The lead agency for developing sport in Northern Ireland

*Sport Northern Ireland is keen to promote the message that sport and physical activity are for everyone and that the benefits of an active lifestyle should be fully embraced and enjoyed by all.*

It is widely recognised that there are differences in participation rates in sport and physical activity among certain groups within the population. We know generally that:

- Men participate more than women;
- People without a disability participate more than people with a disability; and
- Younger people participate more than older people.

We all therefore need to do more to provide additional opportunities that promote and maintain active lifestyles and encourage lifelong participation in sport and physical activity.

#### **Did you know that in Northern Ireland...?<sup>1,2</sup>**

- 21% of the adult population have some form of disability (6% of children).
- Women have a higher prevalence (23%) of disability than males (19%).
- 8% of boys aged under 15 have a disability, compared with 4% of girls.
- 40% of households include at least one person with a disability.
- The incidence of disability increases with age - 60% amongst those aged 75 and above.
- There are over 219,000 deaf and hard of hearing people.
- There are over 47,000 blind or partially sighted people.
- There are over 35,000 wheelchair users.
- There are over 33,000 people with a learning disability.
- Only 23% of people with a disability achieve the recommended amount of weekly physical activity (30 minutes, 5 days a week) compared with 35% of the population.
- Only 2% of people with a disability spend 30 minutes 5 days a week doing moderate intensity sporting activity.
- 81% of people with a disability never participate in sport.

<sup>1</sup> Northern Ireland Adult 'Sport and Physical Activity Survey' (SAPAS), 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Northern Ireland Statistical and Research Agency (NISRA) Demography and Methodology Branch, Resident Population Estimates Mid 2007.

## Getting Active: About the Sport in Our Community Programme

Sport Northern Ireland invested £3.6 million to deliver the Sport in Our Community Investment Programme from 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2010<sup>3</sup>.

Among the aims of the programme was a desire to support and deliver creative and innovative projects resulting in an increase in participation in sport and physical activity among underrepresented groups, specifically people with disabilities.

**121,171 people took part in Sport in Our Community projects. 6% of the total participants were participants with a disability,** as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Number of Participants with a Disability**

	SPORT IN OUR COMMUNITY PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS					TOTAL
	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	
Total number of participants	15,226	24,295	37,162	40,224	4,264	121,171
Total number of reported participants with a disability	551	1,264	1,961	2,421	528	6,725
% of reported participants with a disability	3%	5%	5%	6%	12%	6%

The number of people with a disability participating in activities delivered by Sport in Our Community projects increased annually throughout the programme. In Year 4, 2,421 (6%) of programme participants were reported as having a disability – a 3 percentage point increase on Year 1.

Participants with disabilities were involved in 31 of the 34 projects, either through mainstream opportunities or through parallel or adapted provision. This is reflective of the increase in the number of people with a disability involved in mainstream programmes or programmes specifically targeting people with a disability as shown in Table 2.

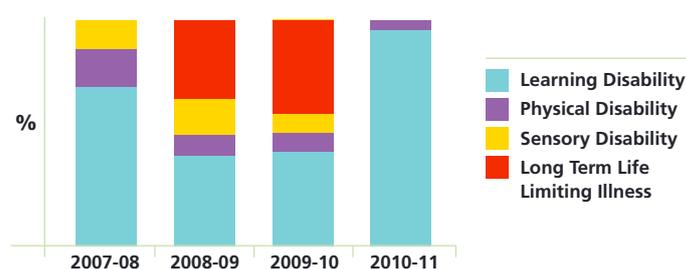
**Table 2: Breakdown of Programme Provision for People with Disabilities**

	SPORT IN OUR COMMUNITY PROGRAMME PROVISION			
	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
Disability Specific	10	15	17	15
Mainstream	9	9	13	16
None	6	1	4	3

<sup>3</sup> Investments made to the Education and Library Boards were extended through to the 30 June 2010, to coincide with the school year. These three month extensions are included as Year 5 2010-11.

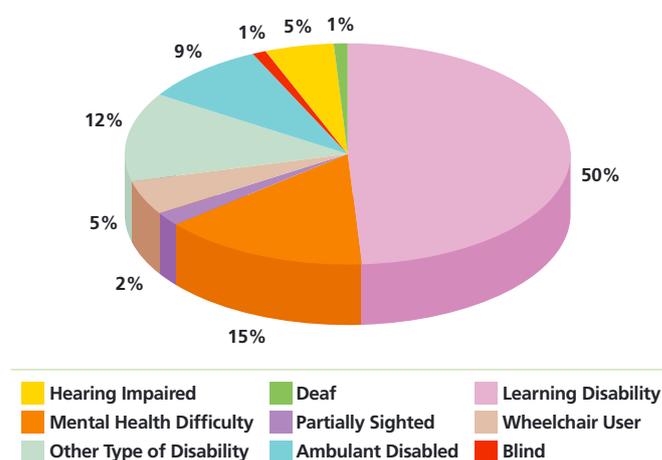
An analysis of participants by disability classification reveals a number of programmes being delivered by projects targeting participants with a wide range of disabilities. Figure 1 provides an indication of the percentage of participants by disability type by programme year<sup>4</sup>.

**Figure 1: Percentage of Programme Participants by Disability Type by Programme Year**



Many projects delivered programmes targeting young people with learning disabilities in addition to programmes delivered by the three Education and Library Boards in special schools. This accounts for the relatively high percentage (50%) of participants reported as having a learning disability. 27% of participants with a disability were reported as having a long-term life limiting illness which may be reflective of the increase in individuals being referred to sport and physical activity programmes by health professionals as a primary health enhancement tool. Figure 2 shows a further breakdown of the percentage of the total reported programme participants by specific disability type.

**Figure 2: Total Percentage of Programme Participants with a Disability by Type of Disability**



<sup>4</sup> Data on disability type was not reported 2006-07.

## **Staying Active:** At home and in your community

*Sport Northern Ireland's investment in 34 Sport in Our Community projects enabled the development of specific programmes aimed at getting people active, and helping them to stay active.*

### **Pan Disability Boccia League Craigavon Borough Council**

Craigavon Borough Council promotes a competitive monthly league that aims to create opportunities for participants with a range of disabilities to meet others, to be active and to develop their Boccia skills.

Disability Group leaders are also given the opportunity to take a Boccia Level 1 qualification so that the sport can be played on a regular basis in their own centres. Participants are also offered training to enable them to referee Boccia.

Participants have developed their skills in playing the sport and have also reaped the benefits of being part of a wider social network – impacting positively on confidence, mood and self-esteem. One participant with a severe disability found the programme to be the pathway back to self-confidence and community participation, so much so that he is now actively involved in the work of a community organisation.

*"The physical aspect of life is very important to me as a disabled person but it is the social aspect that is really good and has built my confidence."*

Many health professionals recognise the benefits of Boccia. They often refer patients to the sport, and numbers of those involved in the sport has



increased. The Craigavon Pan Disability Boccia League has now developed links with the Sport Northern Ireland Active Communities coaches in the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon area.

### **Action on Disability Programme Upper Springfield Development Trust**

This weekly programme was developed in partnership with Action on Disability aimed at developing programmes for adults with learning disabilities to take part in sport and physical activity.

Fifteen adult men with learning difficulties meet weekly and along with setting up and coaching a football team, participants also have the opportunity to participate in armchair aerobics, basketball, boccia, new age kurling, sports hall athletics, swimming, tennis, walking, and weights training and circuits.

Participants not only have the opportunity to take part in regular physical activity but there are also positive social aspects to the programme – including improving participants self-esteem and confidence.

### **Disability Friday Club – Inclusive Games Cookstown and District Sports Forum**

The programme was developed in partnership with Cookstown Adult Centre, Children First and The Base drop in centre. The programme began as a summer camp for participants aged over 13 years of age with learning or physical disabilities and was held weekly in July and August. Thirty participants took part in a range of fun games and tasters of various sports and day trips.

The success of the programme has led to the development of an Inclusive Games Club running from October - December and January – March and the establishment of a Special Olympics Club in the Cookstown area.





## Matthew's Story

Matthew has a disability called Dyspraxia that affects both his gross and fine motor movements. Matthew joined the Wildcats Activ8 Multi-Skills Club whilst at primary school and has been through all five levels of the programme. When Matthew first joined the Wildcats Activ8 Club he had poor physical coordination and could not catch a ball.

As he progressed through the Wildcats Activ8 stages, Matthew has been able to try a number of sports including hockey and badminton. Spurred on by the new found confidence that Wildcats Activ8 gave him in his physical abilities, Matthew undertook extra exercise every week to help improve his coordination. Matthew's school teachers have commented on his improving physical abilities and, in particular the significant improvement when in his PE class.

For Matthew the Wildcats Activ8 Club offered a way of engaging with non-disabled children that was just not possible before. He worked diligently to learn all the rules of the games that he played and has developed into an excellent team player, is more comfortable in social settings and made a lot of friends.

## What we know now

### Five key learning points:

1. Involving participants in programme planning is key to delivering successful initiatives.
2. Coaches need to be trained and experienced in disability sport.
3. Training project leaders and volunteers assists in making projects sustainable.
4. Delivering inclusive opportunities assists in sustaining activities.
5. Socialisation, fun and building confidence is an important element of participating in sport and physical activity.

“ I have had MS and arthritis for many years. I had nowhere to go, I had nothing, no interaction with other people - interaction is important for your health too. I was isolated then but now with the sport I have fun - without it I don't what I would do; I would be lost. ”



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About Sport  
Northern Ireland

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Sport Northern Ireland is the leading public body for the development of sport in Northern Ireland. Its corporate vision is: *"a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport which contributes to a peaceful, fair and prosperous society"*.

Sport Northern Ireland promotes the benefits of lifelong participation in sport and physical activity and the value of an active lifestyle for all – and especially among people with disabilities.

The full report Get Active-Stay Active: Impact of the Sport in Our Community Programme is available to download at: [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

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

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