

**SPORT NORTHERN IRELAND**

**DISABILITY ACTION PLAN**

**2018 – 2022**

If you require this plan in an alternative format (such as in large print, in Braille, on audio cassette, easy read or on computer disc) and/or language, please let us know.) Requests for alternative formats can be made to Sport Northern Ireland using the following contact information:

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**Foreword**

Welcome to Sport Northern Ireland’s (Sport NI) Disability Action Plan 2018-2022, which sets out how we intend to meet our statutory obligations and also how disability issues will be more effectively mainstreamed; by making sure they are central to policy and decision making within Sport NI.

This Disability Action Plan is a statement of Sport NI’s commitment to meeting its statutory obligations to have regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

1. **Introduction**

**1.1** Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), Sport NI is required, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

* promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
* encourage participation by disabled people in public life (‘the disability duties’).

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, Sport NI is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a **Disability Action Plan** showing how it proposes to fulfill these duties in relation to its functions.

**1.2** Sport NI is committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this Disability Action Plan. We will allocate all necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money), in order to implement effectively this plan and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual operating plans.

We will also put appropriate internal arrangements in place, to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this Disability Action Plan is effectively implemented. We will ensure the effective communication of the plan to staff and to providing all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the Plan.

We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual report to the Equality Commission, on the implementation of this plan, as well as carrying out a five yearly review of this Plan. We also commit to consulting fully with disabled people and their representatives when implementing and reviewing our plans.

Responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this Disability Action Plan and the point of contact within Sport NI will be:

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**1.3** We confirm our commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a five year review of this plan, or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the five year review period. A copy of this Plan, our annual progress to the Equality Commission and our five year review of this plan will be made available on our website at: <http://www.sportni.net/about-us/equality>

**Functions**

**1.4** Outlined below are the range of functions of Sport NI:

Sport NI is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Communities. It was established on 31st December 1973 under the provisions of the Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1973, with its main objective being the furtherance of sport and physical recreation.

Sport NI’s mission statement is: ‘We are passionate about maximizing the power of sport to change lives. By 2025, we want the power of sport to be recognised and valued by all.’

**Strategic Priorities**

**1.5** Sport NI aspires to provide people, including disabled people, young people, and under-represented groups generally, with pathways and options for lifelong sporting participation.

Our Corporate Plan 2015 – 2020 and Corporate Plan 2021 – 2026 covers the period of this Disability Action Plan and aims to ensure that due consideration is afforded to all people, including those with a disability. Sport NI also aims to support the aspirations of people in Northern Ireland for sport and physical recreation, as expressed in ‘Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009-2019’ and the new Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity in Northern Ireland.

In order to achieve Sport NI’s mission statement the following strategic priorities and outcomes have been identified:

**Corporate Plan 2015- 2020 plus extension to cover COVID 19 period to 2022:**

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| **SPORTING COMMUNITIES**  **(CP 2015-20)** | **To increase and support the number of people adopting and sustaining a sporting lifestyle.**  We will lead, co-ordinate and invest in the development and delivery of grassroots sport, extending choice and quality sporting opportunities which engage all.  We will increase participation in grassroots sport, targeting young people, disabled people, women, older people and people living in areas of greatest need. |
| **SPORTING**  **CLUBS**  **(CP 2015-20)** | **To enable more people to develop and reach their sporting goals through a structured environment.**  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.  We will invest in quality sports facilities that engage communities, support achievement of sporting goals and develop future champions. |
| **SPORTING WINNERS**  **(CP 2015-20)** | **To help more Northern Ireland athletes to win at the highest level.**  We will prioritise those sports and athletes who have the potential to achieve success and excel at the Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games.  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. |
| **RESPONSE TO COVID 19**  **(C19)** | **Sport NI provided a strategic response to COVID 19 to enable the sporting sector to survive, to sustain and build back better.**  This involved meeting immediate hardship (Sports Hardship Fund and COVID Safe Sports Packs), to sustain the sector (Sports Sustainability Fund and existing programme extensions) and Supporting Sport to Build Back Better. The provision of a Wellbeing Hub And associated services, Return to Sport guidance and a Learning Hub were component elements of this response. |

**New Corporate Plan 2021-2026:**

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| **Outcome 1** | People adopting and sustaining participation in sport and recreation. |
| **Outcome 2** | NI Athletes among the best in the world. |

Sport NI recognises that people do not constitute a unitary and homogenous group, and that some, including disabled people, are particularly vulnerable to discrimination. Sport embraces much more than traditional competitive team games and competition, indeed it can have a profound transformative effect on peoples’ lives. It also plays a crucial role in improving wellbeing and health, education and confidence, particularly empowering for disabled people.

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 in general.Therefore, Sport NI shall, ‘in carrying out its functions in Northern Ireland, have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity’ to ensure that all experience the benefits of sport.

Sport NI is committed to bringing our Corporate Plan Cornerstones (2016/21) of equality and good relations; inclusion; and duty of care to all in the sports system to life, ensuring that we support wellness and well-being for all involved. Sport NI has therefore taken a systems based or mainstream approach to equality and inclusion; to realise long term sustained change in participation for under-represented and Section 75 groups. The mainstreaming of equality and inclusion through this systems model ensures that increasing equal representation for under-represented groups or Section 75 groups is not limited to entry level output measured initiatives but drives toward longitudinal system change and lifelong participation rate change, with accessibility to all roles in the sporting system for Section 75/under-represented groups. This includes disabled people.

Sport NI’s draft Corporate Plan 2021-26 (including associated policies and measures), with these cornerstones, is predicated on achieving equality in participation and performance for under-represented groups, including disabled people. Preserved within our corporate strategic objectives and corporate strategic outcomes is the intention to:

* Build a sporting system that positively influences and captures autonomous participation and creates accessible ways into clubs for socially isolated and underrepresented groups;
* Build an accessible inclusive sporting system with connectivity and transition management;
* Improve physical literacy and reverse the reduction in childhood participation in sport and physical recreation, reduce drop-out rates among school aged children and address the inequalities associated with the drop-off between boys/girls and those with/without a disability;
* Improve culture and well-being within the whole sporting system, including the enabling of equality mainstreaming that will impact on the quality and performance of the system we deliver;
* Create a ‘level playing field’ so that accessibility and inclusion is felt and experienced in a real “lived” way by those who have traditionally been excluded from sport;
* Support governing bodies of sport to embed a positive and inclusive culture in their clubs;
* Advocate for and support the delivery of a modern fit for purpose physical sports infrastructure to meet the local and regional needs of communities, and sports clubs in delivering increased, inclusive and safe sustained participation in sport and physical recreation.

The need to improve (mental) well-being and reduce obesity levels is also a pressing issue, as is the need to improve Curricular PE, school and after-school sport to improve physical literacy levels in young people to sustain lifelong participation in sport. Sport NI would also advocate the need to develop a diverse and inclusive volunteer and professional workforce in sport without whom sport will not develop and to create safe sporting environments for all participants.

To further achieve this outcome, it is important that Sport NI specifically understands the demography of our Talent and Performance Pathway and can begin to widen representation across Northern Ireland. A focus on inclusivity within our pathways will ensure that athletes are identified more often within a particular sport based on ability, suitability and opportunity. A more systematic approach with a fully inclusive pathway will enable us to maximize the sporting potential in our small population and achieve greater sporting success in the future.

Sport NI works closely with funded Governing Bodies of Sport in Northern Ireland.  Sport NI’s role is to provide advice and guidance to support Governing Bodies of Sport in the management of their sports, including areas such as strategic planning, raising performance standards, sourcing funding and governance good practice.

**Public Life Positions**

**1.6** Operating as a Non-Departmental Public Body under the aegis of the Department for Communities (DfC), Sport NI has limited responsibilities for appointments. Public life appointments to positions, including the Board, are the responsibility of DfC. However Sport NI has established a Celebrating Diversity Panel to represent and communicate the views, experiences and creative ideas of under-represented groups; to inform and enhance the work of the Sport NI and the sporting system. The Panel members will represent and provide a voice for under-represented groups from every corner of society. The Panel will be a consultative panel and not a delegated decision making committee of Sport NI.

**Previous Measures**

**1.7** Outlined below are the key measures which Sport NIhas already taken to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

Sport NI took the lead role in developing the regional strategy on disability sport, ‘Active Living: No Limits’ 2016-22. This included wide scale consultation and engagement during 2015-16 in order to establish a realistic action plan.

**2. Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people**

**2.1**Sport NI has taken the lead in enhancing the profile and experience generally of disabled people in sport, both as athletes, participants, spectators, volunteers, and representatives throughout the sporting system. Through these actions, and the heightened profile afforded to disabled people in sport generally in Northern Ireland, more positive attitudes towards disabled people have been encouraged.

Listed below are a few actions that have helped to promote positive attitudes:

* Training: A priority for all Board Members and employees. Sport NI staff have completed annual disability awareness training, which is an ongoing commitment. This training is to be rolled out to all governing bodies in due course.
* Community Events & Participation Initiatives: Participation based competitions and participation initiatives have been provided that have benefited over 900 disabled people per annum.
* District Council Partnerships: Partnership projects with District Councils that have resulted in the development and maintenance of six sports participation projects that have benefited at least 6,600 disabled people per annum.
* Disability Sports Club/Group Development Programme: DSNI supported clubs, schools and groups actively delivering participation programmes for disabled people has increased from 84 to 90.
* Inclusive Sports Facilities (ISF): In 2012, Sport NI developed and launched the Inclusive Sports Facilities (ISF) design criteria in partnership with DSNI. This information is widely disseminated and freely available. Sport NI continues to work with relevant capital projects to support them achieving the DSNI ‘ISF’ accreditation.
* Sport Centres & Pavilions: At least 12 new or existing sports centres and pavilions in Northern Ireland have become fully inclusive for disabled people, and all had successfully achieved ISF accreditation by March 2015.
* Sports Stadia: Inclusive Stadia Advisory Group (ISAG) has been established and Inclusive Stadia Design and Management Guidelines have been developed and published. An Advice Service was provided to DfC and project sponsors in relation to the inclusive design and build of Ravenhill Park, Casement Park and Windsor Park stadia with all redeveloped stadia having provided improved accessibility for disabled people by March 2015.
* Disability Access: More generally, Sport NI has taken all reasonable steps to ensure equality of access is available, both in terms of physical access to buildings and facilities, and access to appropriate information, in a format that is suitable to meet individuals’ circumstances, abilities and needs.
* Section 75: All Sport NI policies are screened to ensure they comply with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, 1998. This practice will continue and where adverse impact or potential adverse impact is identified, appropriate corrective action will continue to be taken.
* Sport NI has increased the provision of sporting opportunities for disabled people through its investment in DSNI, Special Olympics Ulster and across other investment programmes e.g. Active Communities, Awards for Sport. These investments have led to a significant improvement in disability sports provision in Northern Ireland.
* Sport NI continues to work closely with Building Control to ensure that building regulations are complied with. Assistance is provided to all applicants for Sport NI support and enquiries are dealt with to ensure all specific needs receive the appropriate attention. However, Sport NI is aware that building regulations alone are not high enough to provide adequate access to sports facilities for disabled people, particularly in the case of wheelchair users and large numbers of sports chair users, or to provide the facilities required for some other ‘disability specific’ sports.

**Encourage the participation of disabled people in public life**

**2.2**Sport NI continues to encourage and support the participation and representation of disabled people at all levels of sport within the sporting system. This is achieved through our Disability Mainstreaming Policy and associated action plan, which promotes mainstreaming as the end goal through a ‘twin track’ approach that accommodates athletes with a disability in either disability-specific sport, or in mainstream sport activities, according to personal choice.

It is generally recognised that, universally, disabled people are under-represented in sport, and this remains the most fundamental challenge to be addressed in the short term. For example, according to the Continuous Household Survey 2018-19, while 64% of people without a disability have participated in sport in the last 12 months, only 35% of disabled people have a similar experience.

Sport NI is committed to working closely with our Governing Bodies to enhance the diversity within performance pathways, as well as our partners across the UK and Ireland to share best practice and insight. Sport NI is currently collaborating with our UK Colleagues (UK Sport, Sport England, Sport Wales & Sports Scotland) to uncover a UK Wide perspective on the demography across our Talent and Performance Pathways. The insight gained through this project will provide a rich source of data to inform decision making in the area, evidencing development needs/priorities and enabling Sport NI and partners to put appropriate support in place to ensure our Performance Pathways are as inclusive and diverse as possible. We currently have limited data in relation to the demography of our Talent and Performance Pathway. Only once we have a clear picture of the reality through this UK Wide Inclusion Project can we begin to put plans, policies and interventions in place to enhance the diversity within our pathway and therefore maximise the potential success of our Sporting System in the future.

Engagement and participation in sport in time will translate through to increased engagement of more disabled people in the formal structures of sport governance but this may be a longer term aspiration. In the first instance, a Disability Sport Infrastructure must be established to provide opportunities for engagement in public life. This has been consolidated through the Active Living: No Limits Strategy, based on the following delivery agents:

* National Governing Bodies;
* Disability Sport Organisations;
* Disability Sport Clubs;
* Sport Clubs;
* Youth and Community Organisations;
* Public and private Facility Providers; and
* Schools.

Sport NI remains committed to enhancing the profile of disabled people in the public life of sport. To implement the policy, Sport NI has continued to engage the services of Disability Sport NI (DSNI) through a competitive tendering process. Some achievements to date include the following:

* Consultation: As part of the development of the regional strategy and action plan on disability sport (Active Living: No Limits 2016-22) a series of consultation events were held across Northern Ireland during 2015 and 2016 to gather the views of those with a disability. More recently, a new initiative targeting mental illness and sport is being developed in conjunction with representatives from across this sector.
* Community Sport: Over 100 new athletes attracted annually. 14 new clubs established by March 2015, to increase the total number of clubs to 78; 150 new volunteers enlisted per year with over 600 new volunteers by 2015; new coaches attracted into Special Olympics Clubs, with a total 490 (56 new) coaches by March 2015.
* Education Workforce Training: 36 Sainsbury’s Active Kids for All Inclusive PE course delivered to 540 teachers, trainee teachers and classroom assistants.
* Sports & Leisure Workforce Training: Inclusive coach education, training and sports leadership courses delivered to 2,160 leisure services staff, coaches and sports leaders.
* Employment: It is Sport NI's policy to provide employment equality to all existing and potential employees, irrespective of disability. All employees and applicants for employment (actual or potential), are treated fairly and selection for employment and promotion is on the basis of aptitude and ability. Sport NI is fully supportive of the duty to make reasonable adjustments in relation to a person with a disability during recruitment and selection and whilst in employment.
* Sport NI has established a Celebrating Diversity Panel to represent and communicate the views, experiences and creative ideas of all under-represented groups from every corner of society; to inform and enhance the work of the Sport NI and the sporting system.

**3. Action Measures**

Outlined overleaf are the measures which we propose to take over the period 2018 - 2022, together with performance indicators or targets.

The Action Plan can be made available in alternative formats on request by contacting John Hart, Head of Policy and Innovation (see above for contact details).

Signed by:

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Chair Chief Executive

**Sport NI**

**Disability Action Plan 2018 - 2022**

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| **DUTY: PROMOTE POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS DISABLED PEOPLE** | | | | |
| **Action Measure** | **Key Performance Indicator** | **Timeline** | **Outcome** | **Senior Responsible Owner** |
| 1. Staff/Board members training on both disability equality legislation and disability awareness: 2. Two hour training session for new staff/Board Members 3. One hour refresher training for existing staff/Board Members | 95% of existing staff to have attended refresher training  95% of new Staff / Board Members trained within 12 months of appointment | Annually | Disabled people are supported by a strong, well-coordinated disability sport sector. | Chief Operating Officer |
| 1. Gather feedback on staff/Board training and establish information to identify were specific disability awareness training is most needed (e.g effective communication, providing an accessible service or more in depth awareness training on a specific disability such as mental health awareness, autism awareness, deaf awareness etc.). 2. Monitor progress and adopt recommendations where appropriate. | Those trained provide a positive evaluation of training received. For example did it increase:   * Their knowledge and understanding of disability legislation; * Their awareness of the needs / experiences of disabled people and the barriers they can experience; * Their confidence in communicating with disabled people.   Number of recommendations made to improve training being implemented. | Annually | Disabled people have positive experiences as a result of changed public attitudes and a greater understanding of disability. | Chief Operating Officer |
| 1. Recruitment and selection policy and procedure reviewed and updated in line with best practice. | Recruitment and Selection Policy to be reviewed. | Triennial | Disabled people have positive experiences as a result of changed public attitudes and a greater understanding of disability. | Chief Operating Officer |
| 1. Review existing recruitment and selection procedures within Sport NI to encourage applications from disabled people, and to remove any identified obstacles, e.g.:  * Are there reasonable adjustments that we could make as part of our recruitment process that would enable you to enjoy equality of opportunity in getting a job/working with us | Undertaken as part of Recruitment and Selection Policy review. | Triennial | Disabled people have positive experiences as a result of changed public attitudes and a greater understanding of disability. | Chief Operating Officer |
| 1. To gather appropriate quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. exit interviews) to establish any existing ‘chill factors’ for those with a disability working in Sport NI | 1. Number of disabled people applying to work in Sport NI being shortlisted 2. Number of disabled people applying to work in Sport NI being selected. 3. Feedback and barriers on the recruitment process identified and positive action measures introduced as appropriate (e.g. Guaranteed interview scheme) | Annually | Disabled people have positive experiences as a result of changed public attitudes and a greater understanding of disability. | Chief Operating Officer |
| 1. Staff from relevant units to implement all action measures and Disability Mainstreaming Policy, backed by material/ financial resources as required. | Separation of staff time to disability action time, to include at least 100 staff hours. | Annually | Disabled people have positive experiences as a result of changed public attitudes and a greater understanding of disability. | Chief Operating Officer |
| 1. Production and dissemination of high quality articles, publications and case studies which promote good practice associated with Sport NI’s Disability Mainstreaming Policy[[1]](#footnote-1), including:  * Challenging negative stereotypes of disabled people and portraying disabled people positively. * Promoting the participation of disabled people in public life by highlighting the benefits of and encouraging consultation with and involvement of disabled people. | A minimum of four per annum | Annually | Disabled people have positive experiences as a result of changed public attitudes and a greater understanding of disability. | Chief Operating Officer |
| 1. Develop an infrastructure that enables and supports the delivery and monitoring of the sector wide disability sport ‘Active Living: No Limits’[[2]](#footnote-2) action plan. | A robust monitoring and evaluation framework implemented which reports on the 13 Sport NI specific action measures | Annually | Disabled people are supported by a strong, well-coordinated disability sport sector. | Director of Sport |
| 1. Lead in a co-design project designed to produce a regional strategy on mental health, wellbeing, sport and physical activity, thereby furthering understanding and awareness for disabled people by: 2. Organise meetings of strategy steering group 3. Development of Action Plan. 4. Consultation on Action Plan | Display of more positive attitudes towards people with mental ill health.  Positive feedback from individuals with mental ill health / organisations representing people with mental ill health  Extent of involvement of people with mental ill health in design of strategy, e.g. participation on strategy steering group, number of individuals with mental ill health and representative organisations participating in consultation on strategy. | Quarterly  September 2018  2018 | Disabled people are supported by a strong, well-coordinated disability sport sector. | Chief Operating Officer |
| 1. Provide structured support to Governing Bodies of Sport, mainstream sport clubs and community organisations to identify and remove barriers and provide high quality active recreation opportunities. | An annual case study will be produced and shared for an inclusive sports club / Governing Body of Sport to promote good practice. (At least one with a focus on positive engagement with / involvement of disabled people in the governance of a club) | Ongoing | Disabled people lead active lifestyles and have improved health and wellbeing through involvement in sport and active recreation. | Director of Sport |
| 1. Develop, resource and deliver an AL:NL media and social media strategy to raise both awareness and the profile of disability sport and active recreation and change attitudes. | A bank of both inspirational active disabled people and high performance disabled athlete will be identified and engaged as AL:NL ambassadors | Ongoing | Disabled people are supported by a strong, well-coordinated disability sport sector. | Director of Sport |
| 1. Develop a network of quality multi-sports hubs across Northern Ireland which are fully accredited, accessible to everyone and offer and actively promote inclusive dedicated sport and active recreation opportunities | Disability sport hub with pools of sports chairs and inclusive sports equipment for other impairment groups will be established in each District Council area  4 watersports hubs established  One sliding submersible platform installed in each of the 11 District Council areas | Annual/ ongoing  Ongoing  Ongoing | Disabled people lead active lifestyles and have improved health and wellbeing through involvement in sport and active recreation.  Disabled people have equality of choice and consistency of accessible activities and sporting facilities. | Director of Sport |
| 1. Play an active role in the development and implementation of the ‘Wellbeing in Sport’ Action Plan 2018-2023 | Agree and publish a ‘Wellbeing in Sport’ Action Plan 2018-2023.  A robust monitoring and evaluation framework implemented which reports on Sport NI specific action measures. | October 2018 | Disabled people are supported by a strong, well-coordinated disability sport sector. | Director of Sport  Chief Operating Officer |

**Note: Aligned to Active Living: No Limits**

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| **DUTY: ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION BY DISABLED PEOPLE IN PUBLIC LIFE** | | | | |
| **Action Measure** | **Key Performance Indicator** | **Timeline** | **Outcome** | **Senior Responsible Owner** |
| 15. Provide support for the implementation of the UK wide Equality Standard for Sport[[3]](#footnote-3), an accreditation framework which supports sporting organisations promote equality and equal opportunities | Equality Standard included under Sport NI’s Sporting Clubs/Winners programmes: | Annually | Disabled people have equality of choice and consistency of accessible activities and sporting facilities. | Director of Sport |
| 16. To increase engagement in sport and physical activity among disabled people through Sport NI investment into a number of disability sports organisations | 1. The total number of disabled people participating in sport and physical activity through Sport NI funded programmes. 2. Monitoring and evaluation of targets through progress reports. | Annually  Quarterly | Disabled people face ‘No Limits’ in sport and active recreation | Director of Sport |

1. [An impact review of Sport NI’s Disability Mainstreaming Policy (2010)](http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/DMP-1.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Active Living: No Limits (2016-21) ‘A plan to improve health and wellbeing for people with a disability in Northern Ireland through participation in sport and active recreation](http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Active-Living-No-Limits-Action-Plan-2016-2021.pdf)’. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [The Equality Standard for Sport: a framework for assisting sports organisations to widen access and reduce inequalities in sport and physical activity from under represented individuals, groups and communities](http://equalityinsport.org/equality-standard-for-sport/). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)