

Disability Sports NI Discussion Paper on Sport Matters Target PA10 Tuesday 15th October 2013

1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to consider progress in relation to Sport Matters Target PA10, a 6 percentage point increase in participation in sport and physical recreation by people with disabilities by 2019.

2. Context

In order to address the under representation of people with disabilities in sport, a disability specific target PA 10, to increase the participation of people with disabilities in sport and physical recreation by 6 percentage points by 2019, was included in the Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport & Physical Recreation 2009 - 2019, Sport Matters.

The baseline for the target was the Northern Ireland Sport & Physical Activity Survey 2010 (SAPAS) finding that 19%¹ of people with disabilities had participated in sport of at least moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes in the previous seven days.

To achieve the disability target therefore will require an increase in participation by people with disabilities from 19% to 25% by 2019.

3. Current Provision of Disability Sports Opportunities

As assessment of the current provision of Disability Sports opportunities for people with disabilities in Northern Ireland over recent years is summarised below:

3.1 Disability Sports NI: The number of people benefitting from Disability Sports NI's range of participation, performance, training and education programmes has increased incrementally over the last number of years, increasing from 10,700 in 2009/10 to 18,300 in 2012/13.

3.2 Special Olympics Ulster: Special Olympics Ulster runs a Sport Northern Ireland funded participation programme involving approximately 1800 people with learning disabilities each year.

3.3 District Councils/Active Communities Programme: Very successful disability sports participation projects are now well established in the Fermanagh District Council, Craigavon Borough Council and Newry City Council areas. In addition six disability specific 'Active Community' coaches are successfully working at a grassroots level in four District Council Consortia areas and the remaining network of Active Communities Coaches are also actively including people with disabilities in their programmes.

3.4 Health & Social Care Trusts: Although a number of trusts run training and participation programmes which target people with disabilities, they remain

¹ SAPAS 2010, Figure 24, Page 46

limited in scale, with the notable exception of the 'Fit 4 You' project in the Southern Health & Social Care Trust.

3.5 Governing Bodies of Sport 'Performance Pathways': Disability 'Performance Pathways' have been established or are currently being developed in the 12 sports of Archery, Boccia, Athletics, Badminton, Cycling, Football, Table Tennis, Swimming, Sailing, Wheelchair Basketball, GAA and Rugby. This is compared to 6 sports in 2009/10.

3.6 Performance Sport: There has been significant progress at a performance sport level, with talented athletes with disabilities now routinely accessing Sport Northern Ireland funding and the support services of the Sports Institute for Northern Ireland. Evidence of how much the disability sport performance system has improved was demonstrated at the London 2012 Paralympic Games, when eight athletes from Northern Ireland qualified for the games, securing a total of 7 medals, making the games the most successful in history for athletes from Northern Ireland. There are also currently 15 athletes with disabilities in receipt of Sport NI Athlete Investment Programme (AIP) funding.

In summary then there has been a significant increase in the provision of participation opportunities for people with disabilities across Northern Ireland, as well as a welcome improvement in the performance of talented sports people with disabilities.

4. Research

In terms of available research, the latest data from the Continuous Household Survey (CHS) 2012/13 found that people with disabilities in Northern Ireland remain highly underrepresented in all aspects of sport. For example:

- 26%² of people with a disability participated in sport (excluding walking) in the last year compared to 63% of people who do not have a disability.
- 15%³ of adults with a disability achieved the recommended 150 minutes or more of moderate intensity activity each week compared to 38% of adults with no disability.
- 4%⁴ of people with a disability volunteered in sport compared to 7% of people without a disability.
- 9%⁵ of people with a disability were members of sports clubs compared to 26% of people who do not have a disability.

In relation to establishing if target PA10, an increase in participation by people with disabilities from 19% to 25% by 2019 is achievable, it is difficult to say as the SAPAS research has not been repeated since 2010. In the absence of

² DCAL: Experience of Sport and Physical Activity by Adults in Northern Ireland. Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2012/13; Table 1, Page 31

³ DCAL: Experience of Sport and Physical Activity by Adults in Northern Ireland. Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2012/13; Table 6, Page 39

⁴ DCAL; Participation in Culture, Arts & Leisure by Disability Findings from the Continued Household Survey 2011/2012 Table 1.1 Page 10

⁵ DCAL: Experience of Sport and Physical Activity by Adults in Northern Ireland. Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2012/13; Table 7, Page 40

updated SAPAS research, the only available alternative research is the CHS research which is carried out annually.

This research taken over a 4 year period does initially indicate a significant increase in participation by people with disabilities in 'sports and physical activity on one or more days per week', increasing by five percentage points from 16% in 2009/10 to 21% in 2012/13.⁶

However when examined more closely the findings show a very large 9 percentage points increase from 16%⁶ in 2009/10 to 25%⁶ in 2010/11 before falling again by 4% percentage points to 21%⁶ in 2012/13. It could be argued therefore that we have experienced a downward trend in participation by people with disabilities since 2010/11.

It should also be noted that measuring progress against the SAPAS 2010 baseline figures using different research, i.e. the CHS survey may be questionable.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

As described in Paragraph 3, there has been a significant increase in the provision of participation opportunities for people with disabilities across Northern Ireland as well as a welcome improvement in the performance of talented sportspeople with disabilities.

However, in the absence of a repeat of the SAPAS research it is Disability Sports NI's view that there is no clear statistical evidence to indicate that participation opportunities are being provided on the scale required to achieve with any degree of certainty the Sport Matters target PA10, a 6 percentage point increase in participation by people with disabilities by 2019.

With this in mind it is recommended that the SMIG Participation Committee consider the following:

5.1 In the absence of a repeat of the SAPAS research, do the findings of the CHS survey provide valid and comparable evidence to indicate that we are, with some degree of certainty, on track to achieve target PA10.

5.2 Should the status of Sport Matters target PA10 be changed from 'Green' (i.e. 'On track for achievement') to 'Amber' (i.e. 'On track for achievement but with some delay or uncertainty').

⁶ DCAL: Experience of Sport and Physical Activity by Adults in Northern Ireland. Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2012/13; Page 26