

Supporting Sport To



Build

Back



Better

## Guidance for New Applicants

Recommendations from the Sport NI  
Children & Young People's Task & Finish Group





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## Build Back Better

### Guidance for New Applicants

Based on recommendations from the Sport NI Children & Young People's Task & Finish Group

#### Background:

The Sport NI Board have approved the development of a new National Lottery investment programme '**Supporting Sport to Build Back Better**' to respond to the needs of the Sports sector following the Covid-19 pandemic. Within the new initiatives to be delivered a clear need for a focus on **Children and Young People** has been identified.

Sport NI established a Task and Finish group to provide **recommendations** for working towards ensuring that children and young people are able to access **quality sport and physical recreation** post Covid-19; and the Outcome that All Children & Young People (to 18 years) are participating in 60 minutes of sport and physical recreation every day.

Members of the Task & Finish Group included representatives from primary, post primary and SEN schools, higher & further education, governing bodies of sport, sports clubs, disability sport, district councils and community & voluntary sector organisations providing sport.

#### The Task:

The initial task (Phase I) set at the end of Lockdown 1 and prior to the re-opening of schools after the summer break was to identify challenges for children accessing quality sport & physical recreation post Covid 19, provide potential solutions to overcome these challenges, consider how the outcomes might be achieved including what resources & partnerships would be needed to deliver the solutions effectively.

**Phase II** took place after the Halloween break when schools, clubs and community organisation had some experience of the reality of operating within Covid 19 restriction. This element focussed on **physical literacy**; and explored the live **challenges** to accessing quality sport & physical recreation since education had resumed under new restrictions and Club & Community sport was in a state of ongoing review of restrictions.

The group also looked to:

- uncover the **reality** of how **children & young people** are now accessing sporting opportunities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide potential innovative <b>solutions</b> and consider how the outcome might be delivered in practice.</li> <li>• Identify the <b>partners</b> needed to deliver the outcome</li> </ul>
<b>Considerations:</b>	<p>During the task the group considered the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of Covid-19 on children &amp; young people</li> <li>• Access to PE in schools, school sport and after school sport</li> <li>• Children &amp; Young People in areas of greatest need</li> <li>• Rural, urban and city dimensions</li> <li>• Children &amp; young people with disabilities &amp; additional needs</li> <li>• Females</li> <li>• The role of the sports club in the community</li> <li>• Availability of volunteers, coaches and officials</li> </ul>
<b>Future Considerations:</b>	<p>Since Phase II was completed Northern Ireland have now entered a third Lockdown scenario &amp; schools have again shut to all children (Except those of key workers &amp; vulnerable children), club &amp; Community sport is again paused and therefore we are now in a phase of preparing to “Live with Covid 19” and should be mindful of the ever evolving situation &amp; ensure future plans are cognisant of this potentially changing picture.</p>
<b>Guidance</b>	<p>Following online consultation with the Children &amp; Young People Task &amp; Finish Group Phase I &amp; II Sport Northern Ireland have compiled the following Guidance for new applicants preparing to Support Children &amp; Young People within their proposed plans. Please use these guidelines to help you to shape your application for Supporting Sport to Build Back Better. Together we can maximise the power of sport to change lives.</p>
<b>Pre-existing Challenges</b>	<p><b>Summary of Challenges prior to Covid 19</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties engaging with children who are not involved in the likes of school-facilitated Clubs.</li> <li>• Children who have had bad experiences of P.E. and also parents who for various reasons are indifferent towards their children’s physical activity experiences.</li> <li>• Existing data sources show good School Club environment – 85-90% participation but female interests tends to focus more on individualistic activities, whereas boys are more interested in team-based sports. Diversification away from traditional sports is possibly where we need to go.</li> <li>• Participation issues: academic pressures trumps everything else and 2 hours of P.E. is tolerated Clubs may have no capacity to take on new / more members.</li> <li>• Lack of opportunities/support for children with disabilities in mainstream clubs</li> </ul> <p><b>Rural and urban division</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real divide between rural and urban access to sport. Rural programmes are under threat because of low numbers and small villages get left out.</li> <li>• Reliance on “People Power” in clubs in rural areas &amp; support for (coaches, volunteers, resources) are needed</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact of screen-time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children not growing up in an environment of easy access to sport and increases access to devices. Challenge of changing the focus back towards engaging in sporting activities vs Gaming.</li> </ul> <p><b>Financial cost for parents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After-school activities are often first-come-first-served as well as often having a cost attached which excludes some children from participating.</li> </ul>
<b>Live Challenges</b>	<p><b>Summary of the Live Challenges facing the sector in providing access to quality sport &amp; Physical recreation for Children &amp; Young People under evolving restrictions at School/Community &amp; Club/At home</b></p> <p><b><u>Schools</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid 19 restrictions have limited what can be delivered within the school setting significantly.</li> <li>• Sports halls often unavailable for physical activity due repurposing due to Covid 19 restrictions.</li> <li>• Classes have had to narrow down choice of activities, and under pressure the simplest option (walking) is the option of choice. This lack of choice is causing demotivation for many of the children and children are getting accustomed to not exercising.</li> <li>• Extra-curricular activities also ceased in the majority of cases when schools were open. Challenges may present around getting children involved again in the extra-curricular activities once restrictions are lifted.</li> <li>• Children may disengaged with afterschool activities, adapting to leaving school earlier and not having to ‘fit in’ additional activities into their free time.</li> <li>• Children who are not normally easily engaged in sport will be affected most by the restriction on sport. Those interested in sport will be less effected but still may have lost some fitness &amp; motivation.</li> <li>• Primary schools have been effected differently from secondary schools where individual classes are limited to interacting within their class ‘bubble’. No interaction with other classes is causing lack of opportunity for after school sports. The tight class bubbles are taking away the social aspect for children, not seeing friends from other classes.</li> </ul>

- **Secondary schools have seen increasing engagement from girls due to now being allowed to wear PE kit to school and not having to change in school**
- **One positive is the emerging traditional games being re-introduced back into the playground.**
- Sports coaches re-engaged by schools have been offering alternative activities in primary and post primary schools.
- Delivering alternatives to walking for example dance showed good level of engagement however restricted by space and bubbles.
- Other alternative activities such as Pilates and aerobics have seen poor uptake therefore the picture is varied across the school system. This may be due to the fact that restrictions are being interpreted differently from one school to another.
- The school cannot be seen to compromise other structures put in place to adhere to Covid restrictions in order to introduce activities.
- Children are losing the 'habit' of engaging in sport and filling their time with other activities.
- Remedial support will be needed to re-engage children in sport.
- **May be some advantages for 'sporty' children reducing training time- less injuries, more rest time may be beneficial.**
- It must be realised that with other challenges and competing priorities within schools at the minute, physical activity may be well down the priority list.

#### Community/Club

- There is demand for outdoor sport from clubs/community but inappropriate weather conditions are leading to health and safety hazards in winter with no option of moving inside due to restrictions.
- **Number of community projects ongoing in Phase II on par with previous years showing there is an appetite for the sports sector to reengage and get back to playing and training.**
- Willingness from the community to get back to a sense of normality.
- Lack of clarity regarding regulations has caused confusion of liability.
- Coaching has become more challenging due to temperature checks, PPE equipment and sanitisation concerns. Monitoring the situation can be challenging with so many guidelines to follow.
- Coaches and volunteers feel uncomfortable with the ever changing regulations
- **Parents are now more willing to offer assistance and get involved.**

- Forced to do less with more (e.g. more pitch time required as less people able to gather at any one time).
- Additional layers of paperwork, Risk Assessments required, filling out questionnaires, taking temperatures, Covid-19 Officers etc.
- Roles of volunteers & Coaches within clubs has been affected. Could lose volunteers. Need to consider ways to attract volunteers back to clubs and retain them. Once people are out of the habit of attending the club few nights per week and weekend day, may not be keen to return to this.
- Clubs may have to change their environment to make it more attractive. There is a requirement for proactivity to create an environment to attract children and encourage them to return.

#### At Home

- New 'working from home' can mean parents struggle with childcare issues and the time-constraints with introducing sporting activities to the working day.
- Not everyone has space – people in the country have no issues but others in congested areas may have no garden or find that their local parks are locked down again.
- Parents with children and young people attending various sporting clubs on different days and times may have welcomed the break. Realisation may set in that children do not need to be attending as many clubs as they had been prior to lockdown. This may lead to a reduction in the number of clubs children attend on a weekly basis
- Mixed response for online programmes, due to varying skill levels with use of technology & competing demand or lack of devices.

#### **Solutions & Guidance**

**Summary of suggested innovative solutions to ensure our Children & Young People can assess opportunities and guidance for new applicants for Supporting Sport to Build Back Better**

#### **Bespoke integrated (Schools/Clubs/Communities) solutions based on local hubs**

Each area of Northern Ireland has a very different need depending on its infrastructure including significant differences in urban and rural settings. Therefore it is critical to design a "hub" based approach where the bespoke needs of an area can be addressed using local knowledge, partnerships, expertise, people and places.

**\*\* Therefore it is important that application's show how local needs and existing expertise, people and places (in particular schools, club**

and Communities) will be connected and utilised to maximise an integrative and effective approach.

#### Shared spaces

Links between community centres, clubs and schools is more important now than ever due to Covid 19. Local facilities sit empty during the day and could be utilised by schools who are having sportshall access issues or other groups.

**\*\*It is important that applications show a strong partnership approach and include solutions to reduce impact of lack of space within schools & clubs by utilising other available spaces.**

#### Non-traditional methods

Novel ways of working were required during lockdown including use of videos to capture and relay messages, online training and fitness classes (EG Joe Wicks) where essential to keep people engaged & active during lockdown.

**\*\* It is important that applications show novel ideas and plans of how to maintain connectivity and participation even when face to face sessions cannot take place. This may also include the use of new technology, media and resources and upskilling others in using these tools.**

#### Schools

There is strong support behind the use of schools as the primary driver of quality Sport & Physical Activity for Children & Young People. This includes support for building capacity and opportunities within school time & through extra-curricular activities. New messaging is required to maximise the understanding and wider impact & benefits of sport to enhance academic performance and well-being which should be integrated into a wider educational message through the taught curriculum.

**\*\*It is important that applications show how schools will benefit from easy access to opportunities in a variety of formats and using alternative and novel sporting/ physical literacy experiences that will reengage a wider number of Children through more meaningful unique, holistic, socially inclusive sporting experiences. Some thought must be given to how these experiences will be coordinated with as little demand on school staff time as possible and show incentives to participation for children, staff and the School as a whole.**



**Summary**

There was a strong consensus that Children & Young People have been disengaged with Sport, Physical Activity & Physical literacy during the pandemic through various challenges and changes. It is believed that future work should be based on a collaborative sector wide strategy, using Return to Sport as momentum and a reset button with a renewed recognition of the importance of physical literacy.

Re-engagement of children should be the priority and for this reason a “New Offer” from all partners needs to provide a fresh appealing environment for all to ensure reengagement.

With this comes a need to educate the sector on how to create this new appealing offer (meaningful experience) including capacity building for schools, coaches, parents & volunteers that is easily accessible to all.

There is also clear evidence pointing towards need for ‘active/healthy schools programme’ in Northern Ireland using a whole school approach linked to Community & Club. This should develop an ethos to ensure Physical literacy is meaningful, personal, inclusive and fun. Physical literacy should be re-introduced in an educational way to make it sustainable and adopted into curriculum and daily school life and awareness of additional academic, mental health benefits raised. A Designated staff member could take responsibility/co-ordinator role with a possible funding bonus as an incentive.

**Looking ahead**

Sport Northern Ireland are currently involved in a partnership project with Sport Ireland and a number of key research partners to design a consensus statement on Physical literacy. We are hoping to make the statement available for consultation early in 2021. This statement will not only help to shape policy (including Sport Northern Ireland’s new corporate plan) for the Sport and Physical Activity sector across the island but across all sectors so that we can become a more physically literate population.