

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

1ST JANUARY 2025 - 31ST MARCH 2026

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Richard Archibald,
Interim CEO

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Foreword

Sport Northern Ireland's (Sport NI) **Disability Action Plan 2024-2026** sets out how we intend to meet our statutory obligations and 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.



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.





Active people with disabilities

Sport NI recognises that people with disabilities are underrepresented in terms of access to and/or participation in Sport

Research

Research tells us that people with a disability participate in sport and physical recreation less than non-disabled people



Sport NI is committed to effectively implementing the disability duties in this Disability Action Plan. We will allocate all necessary resources (in terms of people, time, and money), to effectively implement 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 effective communication of the plan to staff and provide all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and its implementation.

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

Brian McKimm

Chief Operating Officer
Sport Northern Ireland
House of Sport
Upper Malone Road
Belfast BT9 5LA

E-mail: info@sportni.net
Tel: [028 9038 1222](tel:02890381222)

Sport NI confirms its commitment to submitting an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a review of this plan, or plans submitted to the Equality Commission over the period of the plan.

A copy of this Plan, annual progress to the Equality Commission and review of this plan will be made available on the Sport NI website at: <http://www.sportni.net/about-us/equality>

Our functions



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.



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Sport NI is the lead public body for the development of sport in Northern Ireland and is an **Arm's Length Body** of the Department for Communities (DfC). **Sport NI** provides a range of functions and services, including:

- Sports expertise, primarily to DfC, but also to other government departments to support policy development and delivery through our key activities and partnerships;
- Leading, supporting and coordinating the efforts of key partners to promote equality, tackle poverty and social exclusion and contribute to the achievement of the high level targets within the Department for Communities led Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity 2020 - 2030;
- Investing in and supporting key delivery partners to increase sports participation with a specific focus on those groups in society less likely to participate;
- Delivering tailored performance sport programmes and providing expert support services to our high performance athletes through the Sports Institute;
- Quality training opportunities to a wide range of sports participants and people working in sport;
- Conducting high quality research which contributes towards evidence-based decision making in sport;
- Advocating the contribution sport makes to wider health, social and economic outcomes; and
- Maximising the impact of sport in Northern Ireland following key sporting events and partners' investment.



> Statutory Functions

Sport NI's statutory functions, defined by the Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 are as follows::

- On matters relating to sport and physical recreation, to advise the Department and other Government departments, Education Authority (EA), District Councils and other bodies interested in sport and physical recreation;
- To encourage the provision of facilities for and participation in sport and physical recreation;
- To assist in the provision of administrative services, equipment, coaching and instruction by bodies providing facilities for sport or recreational activities or organising such activities;
- To assist in the organising or supporting of, or participating in, international or other events, by bodies providing facilities for sport or physical recreation or organising such activities; and
- To assist bodies providing supportive services in connection with sport and physical recreation.



13% of disabled people

were a member of a sports club compared to 32% of non-disabled people in 2023/24.

Sport NI's Corporate Plan 2021-26 'The Power of Sport' outlines the mission, vision and values of Sport NI and be found here

https://www.sportni.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/sSportNI-Corporate-Plan-2021-26-2_compressed.pdf

Sport NI

Mission Statement



"We are passionate about maximising the power of sport to change lives. By 2026, we want the power of sport to be recognised and valued by all."



Public Life Positions

Sport NI does not have direct control over public life positions, but will work with Department for Communities in conjunction with the office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments to focus on broadening the pool of applicants to encourage and promote diversity on the Sport NI Board and Committees.

Sport NI will promote, through its engagement with partner organisations (for example governing bodies of sports), the inclusion of people with disabilities in leadership roles, for example Boards. Sport NI will seek to broaden the pool of applicants from which governing bodies select their Board members from.

Action Measures

Outlined below are the measures which we propose to take over the period of this disability action plan (January 2025 – 31 March 2026), together with performance indicators.

Sport NI recognises the disparities in participation, represented by the number of disabled people participating in sport and physical activity one or more days per week is at 28% in 2023/24. (Continuous Household Survey).

Sport NI also notes that Continuous Household Survey indicates disabled people are less than half as likely to be a member of a sports club. In 2023/24, 13% of disabled people were a member of a sports club compared to 32% of non-disabled people.

Sport NI recognises that disabled people in Northern Ireland are half as likely to participate in sport and physical activity as non-disabled people. In 2023/24, 28% of disabled people participated in sport and physical activity one or more days per week compared to 56% of non-disabled people.

Disability Consultative Panel

The Disability Working Group formed to develop this Disability Action Plan will be extended and maintained to improve design of action measures to better optimise the two thematic areas below.

Encouraging participation by Disabled People in Public Life

	Measure	Indicator	Frequency	Intended
1	DAP CONSULTATIVE WORKING GROUP To extend the DAP working group to provide ongoing consultative advice to Sport NI on policy, programme and project design regarding improving disabled people in public life positions.	Qualitative report of items of business and actions implemented as a result of the group.	Quarterly	Improved policy, programme and project implementation to improve participation by disabled people in public life, proxy measured by GB Board and/or applicant board and volunteer memberships.
2	Internal Training 2Carry out a review of the current Sport NI Board to determine the current 'baseline' in terms of representation by members with a disability.	Review of Sport NI Board members to determine number with a disability.	Annual review, and upon appointment of new members.	Number of Sport NI Board members with a disability to be known. This will enable Sport NI and DFC to consider whether the Board is reflective of society as a whole and the sports sector – and to take actions to address within its authority. Sport NI will consider whether it is appropriate to proactively 'promote' those members with a disability – to show as leadership 'role models' to the sector and to NI society.

	Measure	Indicator	Frequency	Intended
3	INTERNAL BOARD: Engage with the Department for Communities to proactively seek to consider suitable qualified people with a disability to the Board of Sport NI.	Agenda item for DfC meeting, once baseline review completed.	Annual item for discussion with DfC, and before any appointment exercises for new Board members.	Sport NI, and DfC, to demonstrate that the Board is reflective of society as a whole and the sports sector – and to take actions to address.
4	EXTERNAL: GBS BASELINE PUBLIC LIFE: Engage with invested governing bodies to determine the current 'baseline' of people with a disability in leadership roles in partner organisations.	Review of invested governing body Board members to determine number with a disability.	Annual Review.	Number of governing body Board members with a disability to be known. This will enable Sport NI to consider whether its invested governing bodies' Boards are reflective of society as a whole – and to take consider actions to address within its influence.
5	EXTERNAL: DISSEMINATION OF BASELINE FINDINGS AND PROMOTION OF PUBLIC LIFE POSITIONS: Inform the sector of the findings of the baseline exercise (#4 above) in order to raise the profile of under-representation in public positions, and to promote organisations which are representative.	Communication with the sector – through, for example, Comms activity, direct emails, website resources and events.	Ongoing activity through the year, following the annual review (as at #3 above).	Highlighting to the sector any issues identified with regards to under-representation and promoting positive work around disabled inclusivity with partners.

Promoting Positive Attitudes towards Disabled People

	Measure	Indicator	Frequency	Intended
6	DAP CONSULTATIVE WORKING GROUP To extend the DAP working group to provide ongoing consultative advice to Sport NI on policy, programme and project design regarding promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people.	Qualitative report of items of business and actions implemented as a result of the group.	Quarterly	Improved policy, programme and project implementation to improve positive attitudes towards disabled people, proxy measured by improved participation and experience.

	Measure	Indicator	Frequency	Intended
7	INTERNAL TRAINING: Training for all staff and Board members on disability equality legislation and disability awareness. Training to include, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Discrimination Act and Disability Discrimination NI Order 2006; • challenging stereotypes, and unconscious bias; • awareness of barriers facing disabled people; • appropriate language to use in relation to disability and etiquette when engaging with different types of disabled people. 	Training delivered for all staff and Board members. Training evaluations to be completed to evidence staff/ Board members feeling more informed in regards to disability and more confident in being able to address the barriers faced by disabled people. Evaluation to consider further training that would benefit Sport NI staff and Board members – being role specific, issue specific or further more general awareness.	Annual general disability awareness training session for all staff and Board members. More specialist training on specific disabilities to be considered in future years and/or on a rolling basis – based on feedback on areas of need, e.g. deaf awareness training, autism awareness., visual impairment awareness.	Sport NI staff and Board members better understand the disability duties and how these sit within disability legislation. Sport NI staff and Board members will have greater awareness of issues experienced by disabled people and greater confidence in addressing these, and generally have a more positive attitude towards disabled people.

	Measure	Indicator	Frequency	Intended
8	EXTERNAL TRAINING AND LEARNING. Disability awareness training and knowledge resources will be provided on the Sport NI Digital Learning Hub - for staff as well as available externally to the sector.	Resources available through the Sport NI Digital Learning Hub.	Ongoing updating over the period of the DAP.	Staff, and the sector, will have increased knowledge of disability and greater awareness of issues experienced by disabled people. This will lead to greater confidence in being able to address these, and generally a more positive attitude towards disabled people.

	Measure	Indicator	Frequency	Intended
9	EXTERNAL PROGRAMME OF WORK: To consider the promotion of opportunities for disabled people and the promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people through Sport NI programmes of work, including investment funds, partnerships and service delivery.	Qualitative report of: A. Eligibility and assessment criteria, specific conditions for investment funds and monitoring framework to measure baseline and target measures for disabled people as standard. B. Service intervention actions. Partnership action measures e.g. education; PHA etc	Annual reporting	Investments, partnership arrangements, services that measure creation of opportunities and promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people.

	Measure	Indicator	Frequency	Intended
10	SPECIFIC FUNDING: Provide specific funding to sports' governing bodies and community/charity organisations to increase the number of people with a disability participating in sport and physical activity.	Partner organisations evidencing increased numbers of people with a disability participating in sport and physical activity.	Ongoing over the period of the DAP.	Disabled people leading healthier, more active lives.
11	PROMOTION OF POSITIVE ATTITUDES Promote case studies, awareness and events that foster positive attitudes towards disabled people through the Sport NI website and social media channels.	Good practice/positive case studies promoted and sign-posting to relevant events organised by third parties.	Ongoing over the period of the DAP.	Increased public awareness of disability and positive action to improve the lives of disabled people.

	Measure	Indicator	Frequency	Intended
12	<p>INTERNAL RECRUITMENT</p> <p>Review of the Sport NI Recruitment and Selection Policy to ensure that it reflects current best practice. Review to include, for example: unconscious bias training for staff sitting on interview panels; developing an outreach action plan to encourage more disabled people to apply for jobs in Sport NI; guaranteed interview for disabled people meeting minimum job criteria; offering work experience placements to disabled people.</p>	Policy reviewed and updated.	Initial review, followed by scheduled review every three years afterwards, and/or when legislation relating to this is updated.	An increase in the number of applicants with a disability, leading to an increase in the number of employees with a disability.



Department for
Communities



Sport Northern Ireland

House of Sport
2a Upper Malone Road
Belfast BT9 5LA

T (028) 9038 1222

E info@sportni.net

W www.sportni.net

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