



SPORT NORTHERN IRELAND

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

CONSULTATION DRAFT

2026 – 2031

Accessibility Statement

If you require this plan in an alternative format, please let us know. Any requests for alternative formats can be made to:

Write to: Operations Division
 Sport Northern Ireland
 House of Sport
 Upper Malone Road
 Belfast BT9 5LA

E-mail: info@sportni.net

Telephone: 028 9038 1222

Contents

Section	Page
Foreword from Interim Chief Executive, Richard Archibald	4
1. Introduction	5
2. Sport NI: Background and Functions	6
3. Corporate Plan	7
4. Public Life positions	7
5. Action Measures	7
6. Encouraging Participation by Disabled People in Public Life	8
7. Promoting Positive Attitudes Towards Disabled People	10

Foreword from Interim Chief Executive, Richard Archibald

This Disability Action Plan 2026-2031 sets out Sport NI's commitment to fulfilling the statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A and 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006).

In addition to compliance, it demonstrates how disability issues will be mainstreamed by making sure they are central to policy and decision making within Sport NI. We will allocate all necessary resources (in terms of people, time, and money) to 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.

This Disability Action Plan is a clear 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.

Sport NI is committed to effectively implementing the disability duties in this Disability Action Plan.

1. Introduction

As a public authority, Sport NI under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), 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

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. This plan is a description of procedural and practical arrangements that Sport NI has committed to.

Sport NI will submit an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carry 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>

2. 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 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 'Active Living – the Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity for Northern Ireland'.
- 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 athletes through the Sports Institute.
- Quality training opportunities for 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.

The functions of Sport NI, defined by the [Recreation and Youth Service \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1986](#)

3. Corporate Plan

Sport NI developed its Corporate Plan after extensive engagement with stakeholders across sport, health and wider communities, 'The Power of Sport' focuses on two strategic outcomes:

- People adopting and sustaining participation in sport and physical activity
- Our athletes among the best in the world

Sport and physical activity are powerful tools to support emotional, mental and physical well-being as well as education and social cohesion.

Participation in sport must be regardless of ability. Specifically, we work closely with Disability Sport NI, Special Olympics Ireland and other para-sport organisations to ensure that sport is truly inclusive and welcoming to all. Our Sports System Investment programme supports Governing Bodies of Sport to better understand who is participating in their sport and how to improve access and opportunities for people with a disability.

Through the development of Sport NI's next Corporate Plan, we will continue to rely on our values of Excellence, Integrity, Collaboration and Learning.

4. Public Life Positions

Sport NI seeks to fulfil the duty set out in section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

To achieve this Sport NI 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. This aims to broaden the pool of applicants from which governing bodies select their Board members.

5. Action Measures

Outlined below are the measures which we propose to take over the period of this disability action plan (April 2026 – 31 March 2031), together with performance indicators.

Encouraging Participation by Disabled People in Public Life

Sport NI is committed to actively encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life, particularly through representation on the Board of Sport NI and other leadership roles within the sports sector. The following measures are being implemented to ensure that people with disabilities have equitable opportunities to contribute at the highest levels of decision-making and governance.

Intended Outcome(s)	Objective	Action	Frequency	Senior Responsible Officer
Equality in Public Appointments.	Improved diversity in public appointments	<p>At the outset of each public appointment competition, Sport NI will liaise with the Department for Communities to proactively seek suitable qualified people with a disability to the Board of Sport NI.</p> <p>During new recruitment ensure that reasonable adjustments are proactively offered and there are no unnecessary barriers in appointment criteria.</p>	As new Board members are recruited.	Chief Operating Officer
Work with partners to promote public life positions.	Demonstrate governing bodies' Boards are reflective of society as a whole and the sports sector.	Sport NI will liaise with governing bodies to promote the inclusion of qualified people with a disability to Boards positions, encouraging participation by disabled people in public life.	At the outset of each recruitment competition	Head of Sports Systems
Representation of people with disabilities in high performance sport and medal success to promote public life positions.	Athlete progression and representation through sporting pathways.	<p>Recognise role of current and former disabled athletes in leadership and public life.</p> <p>Provide support services to athletes with a disability, enabling them to maximise their potential and compete at the highest level.</p>	Annually	Director of Sport

		Monitor and report on the representation of disabled athletes within the performance system in Northern Ireland.		
Expand our outreach with people with disabilities and ensuring equality of opportunity for people with a disability in applying for public life appointments.	Outreach to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.	Publish vacancies for Sport NI on our website.	As part of each recruitment competition	Chief Operating Officer
		Publish vacancies for Sport NI on key stakeholder websites, e.g. DSNI, NISF etc.		
		Continue to ensure reasonable adjustments are proactively considered and made available.		
		Include an affirmative action welcoming statement in recruitment advertisements.		
Equal access to public information.	To ensure the new Sport NI website is fully accessible and inclusive of disabled people.	During the redevelopment of Sport NI website, ensure compliance with digital inclusion and enhancement of accessibility.	By April 2027	Head of Policy and Corporate Services
		Ensure in the development of the new website that disabled people are portrayed positively	By April 2027	
		Seek Feedback from Disabled users during accessibility testing where practicable	By April 2027	

Promoting Positive Attitudes Towards Disabled People

Sport NI recognises the importance of fostering positive attitudes toward disabled people. Through targeted training, awareness initiatives, and resource development, the organisation aims to create a more inclusive environment and address discriminatory practices.

Intended Outcome(s)	Objective	Action	Frequency	Senior Responsible Officer
An open and inclusive workplace culture which displays respect for those with mental ill health.	An inclusive workplace for all.	Sign up to Mental Health Charter and work to ensure compliance with the Charter's Commitments.	By April 2028	Head of Policy and Corporate Services
		Introduce mental health first aiders in line with the Mental Health Charter.		
Staff training and awareness on disability and diversity issues.	All staff will have access to training and opportunities to attend training on disability and diversity. Staff to be aware of barriers faced by people with disabilities. Promote inclusiveness to encourage staff to feel more confident/transparent about hidden disabilities	All levels of staff have access to the HR Connect "Links" online training resources and webinars and complete mandatory diversity and inclusion courses, as appropriate.	Every two years	Head of Policy and Corporate Services
		Specific disability-related training, as needed, e.g. unconscious bias training for recruitment panels.	As required	
		Work with staff to identify training requirements as part of their objective setting, mid-year and end-of-year planning.	Tri-Annual	
		Sport NI staff to receive Disability Inclusion Training, delivered by DSNI.	By April 2027	
		Arrange for the delivery of training by ECNI on Section 75 and disability duties for staff.	By April 2027	
		Make resources available through the Sport NI Digital Learning Hub to staff.	By April 2027	Head of Sport Systems

Raise awareness of the lived experience of people with specific disabilities and conditions.	Increasing staff awareness in a range of disabilities and conditions.	Sport NI's e-zine publication 'Inside Track' issues weekly to all staff to be used as a mechanism to raise awareness of and promote Diversity and Inclusion.	Quarterly	Head of Policy and Corporate Services
To improve the health and well-being for disabled people in Northern Ireland through participation in sport and physical activity.	Address the under-representation of disabled people in sport and physical activity.	Invest in organisation's to support building capacity and capability in the sports sector, increase participation by disabled people, and remove barriers to participation, e.g. DSNI and Special Olympics.	Annually	Director of Sport
		Support Active Living: No Limits forum.		
		To gather insight and data into participation in sport and physical activity by people with disabilities and where possible publish verified data.		
An inclusive and supportive sporting system for all.	To embed equality, diversity and inclusion and drive changes in practice.	Progress proactive inclusionary practices with its partners, such as the "Moving to Inclusion" equality framework, website and resources. Ensuring that legislative and sectoral context in Northern Ireland is considered.	Annually	Head of Sport Systems
Accessible sports and physical activity facilities.	Ensure sports facilities meet optimum, best-practice accessibility standards.	Where Sport NI are involved in the design phase of any capital investment, those projects will be required to achieve Inclusive Sports Facility Award Scheme as part of terms and conditions of award.	As required through project development	Director of Sport
		Sport NI will work with partners and stakeholders to improve accessibility to new and existing sports facilities.		

<p>People with disabilities have positive experiences due to changed public attitudes and a greater public understanding of disability.</p>	<p>Actively promote disability inclusion and positive attitudes in public life</p>	<p>Publish real-life example of disabled people in public life positions, via case studies and images/social media videos. Use case studies to show how our funding is breaking down barriers and creating opportunities in disability sport.</p>	<p>Minimum Quarterly</p>	<p>Head of Policy & Corporate Services</p>
<p>Greater communication, consultation and interaction with sector.</p>	<p>To inform policy making and appropriate engagement with the sector</p>	<p>Use of appropriate communication methods during consultations and engagements.</p>	<p>During consultation process as required</p>	<p>Head of Policy & Corporate Services</p>
		<p>Carry out pre-engagement prior to formal consultation and consider outreach pre-engagement with disability community-based groups, as appropriate.</p>		
		<p>Update and review consultee list to ensure appropriate interaction with the disability sector.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	