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Sport and disability in Northern Ireland

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This research examines Northern Ireland's sports and physical activity participation rates for those with a disability. The second part of the paper provides details of key challenges for disability sport, how relevant organisations are tackling those challenges, the resulting impacts and future plans.

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Key Points

- Comparing participation levels between 2010 and 2020, people with disabilities in Northern Ireland (NI) are still almost half as likely to regularly participate in sport and physical activity as non-disabled people.
- The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) recommends 150 minutes of physical activity over the course of five days each week. The CMO's guidelines also suggest that the risk of progression of disabilities affecting the basic activities of daily life is almost halved in those who undertake regular moderate intensity physical activity, compared to those who do not.¹
- People with disabilities in NI have the lowest sport participation rates compared with other jurisdictions in the UK and Ireland. NI has the highest prevalence of disability in the UK. According to the Labour Force Survey, one in every five adults (21.7%) aged between 16 and 64 years old has a disability. The UK proportion of people with a disability is 17.4%.
- A six percentage point increase in disability sport participation levels was targeted in the former Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure *Sport Matters 2009 – 2019* strategy. This target appears to have been achieved². However, the gap in monthly sport participation levels *between* people with disabilities and non-disabled people has remained static.
- Sport NI's investment in elite disability sport has increased by five percentage points since 2013. The number of NI elite athletes competing in the Paralympics increased from three to eight participants between 2000 and 2016. Medals won has risen from 1 to 6.
- According to Disability Sport NI, access to sport facilities has improved in response to legislation. Since 2014, twenty facilities have been awarded DSNI's Inclusive Sports Facility Accreditation Scheme, 10 NI Governing Bodies have an Inclusive Sport Award and all 11 District Councils have a 'Disability Sport Hub'.
- Despite this investment, the Continuous Household Survey demonstrates that the gap between disabled and non-disabled members of sports clubs is widening. The 2019 Sport NI Club survey³ reported that 3% of 128,587 club members were people with disabilities. Club access for people with disabilities was noted as a barrier by 12% of sports clubs with outdoor facilities and 7% with indoor facilities.
- Recent research has shown that COVID-19 restrictions have had a particularly negative impact on sporting and physical activity participation levels for those with a disability. Over one third of applicants (33%) to Sport NI's COVID-19 Hardship Grant reported a disability.

¹ UK Gov. Chief Medical Officers Physical Activity Guidelines 2019 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/832868/uk-chief-medical-officers-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf Page last accessed 22.01.2021

² DfC Sport Matters 2009-2019 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/sport-matters-strategy>

³ Sport NI Sport Club Survey 2019 <https://indd.adobe.com/view/16e5cc1b-4497-4f06-a80d-e074cea1b9f7>

Executive Summary

The first part of this research paper examines Northern Ireland's (NI) sports and physical activity participation rates for those with a disability and compares some of this data with sport participation surveys from other jurisdictions. The second part of the paper explores the challenges for disability sport in NI. And the last section addresses how relevant organisations, such as Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) and Disability Sport Northern Ireland (DSNI) propose to tackle those issues, given the current legislative and strategic contexts.

Similar to findings highlighted in a 2014 RalSe research paper⁴, people with a disability in Northern Ireland exercise significantly less than those without a disability. In 2019/20, 28% of people with disabilities participated regularly in physical activity, compared with 52% of non-disabled adults. This means that people with a disability are still around half as likely to participate in sport as others. This is similar to findings in 2010. The 2011 Census and the Office for National Statistics Labour Force survey for 2019/20 have indicated that around one fifth (or 360,000) of the population of Northern Ireland are considered to have a long-term limiting illness (currently used as a working definition of 'disability'). It has been stated that this figure represents the highest prevalence of disability in the UK. Also, people with disabilities and aged over 50 are least likely to be physically active. This is against a context where the median age of the population is increasing and where the adverse medical consequences of physical inactivity⁵, are becoming increasingly understood. The risk of progression of disabilities affecting the basic activities of daily life is almost halved in those who undertake regular moderate intensity physical activity, compared to those who do not.

Barriers to participation in sports and physical activities for those with disabilities, often mirror the barriers for broader participation in society. As outlined in a research briefing produced for the former Culture, Arts and Leisure (CAL) Committee in 2010, barriers fall into three themes⁶;

- Environment - access to facilities, lack of transport and poor community capacity;
- Social - attitudes that might restrict sport for certain groups and resulting actions of leisure managers and policy makers;
- Personal - lack of money, time, poor confidence and a negative body image.

Sport NI, in partnership with DSNI, aimed to increase participation rates in sport and physical recreation among people with a disability by six percentage points between

⁴ NIA RalSe Sport provisions for people with a disability 2014

http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2014/culture_arts_leisure/14214.pdf

⁵ Ruth Hunter and Mark Tully Inequalities in Sport KESS Policy Briefing 2015

http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/knowledge_exchange/briefing_papers/hunter-and-tully_inequalities-in-sport-briefing.pdf

⁶ NIA RalSe Barriers to sport and physical activity 2010 <http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/researchandlibrary/2010/1810.pdf>

2011 and 2019⁷. Although this target appears to have been met, the size of the gap in participation levels between people with disabilities and those without has remained static. Ireland's sport and physical activity strategy has aimed to reduce these gaps as well as increase overall participation levels. According to DSNI, access to sport facilities has improved in response to legislation. Since 2014, twenty facilities have been awarded DSNI's Inclusive Sports Facility Accreditation Scheme, 10 NI Governing Bodies have an Inclusive Sport Award and all 11 District Councils have a 'Disability Sport Hub'. However, DSNI have also recently reported that more sports and more places in Northern Ireland need to be made more accessible.

One recommendation from the mid-term review of the Sport Matters strategy, suggested a collaborative approach to achieving the 6% point increase in participation. In May 2015, Sport Northern Ireland invited a number of key stakeholders from the Departments of Health, Education and Communities, as well as representatives from Disability Sport NI and Disability Action, to discuss current and future disability sport provision in Northern Ireland. In 2016, the *Active Living – No Limits 2016-2021* strategy was published. This provided a co-designed framework for £1.1million of investment and a strategic project board to oversee the achievement of the 17 actions identified, following consultations with people who have disabilities and their carers. Despite this investment, the Continuous Household Survey demonstrates that the gap between disabled and non-disabled members of sports clubs is widening. The 2019 Sport NI Club Survey⁸ reported that 3% of 128,587 club members were people with disabilities. Club access for people with disabilities was noted as a barrier by 12% of sports clubs with outdoor facilities and 7% with indoor facilities.

The number of NI athletes competing in the Paralympics has increased from three to eight participants between 2000 and 2016. And the number of medals won by NI athletes at the Paralympics has risen from one to six, within that same timescale. Funding for disability sport has increased almost tenfold since 2009. Most has been invested in elite sport. Sport NI's Disability Action Plan aims to fund at least 13 athletes over the course of three years. According to Disability Sport NI's 2018 Annual Report, five athletes received funding during a twelve month period.

COVID-19 restrictions have had a particularly negative impact on physical activity levels for those with a disability. Over one third of applicants (33%) to Sport NI's Hardship Grant reported a disability. Sport NI's 2020-2024 corporate plan was out for consultation at the time of writing and publication of the Department for Communities' new sports strategy has been postponed due to COVID-19. International conventions and New Decade, New Approach recommend that, when developing disability sport policies, consultation and co-design *with* people with disabilities should be central to any policy development process.

⁷ Sport NI. Sport Matters Implementation Group Progress Report 2018. See PA 10. Pages 20-22. <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/sport-matters-implementation-group-progress-report-oct17-sept18.pdf>

⁸Sport NI Sport Club Survey 2019 <https://indd.adobe.com/view/16e5cc1b-4497-4f06-a80d-e074cea1b9f7>

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1 Context - Definitions, measures and recommendations

1.1 Defining disability

The Continuous Household Survey findings are those that are referred to by the Department for Communities when reporting on adult sport participation levels in Northern Ireland. According to NISRA, the questions used to understand whether or not a person has a disability are harmonised with the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010 (NB. The Equality Act does not apply in NI). This states that;

*'...a disabled population is classified on the basis of having a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness which has a substantial⁹ effect on a person's ability to do day-to-day activities.'*¹⁰

The Council of Europe has developed recommendations and resolutions to support participation of people with disabilities, since the 1960s. A collection of handbooks of good practices were published in 2016.¹¹ These included current policies and practices throughout Europe with specific recommendations for; running campaigns, educational tools, sports development, and community building events as well as organisation development. The former Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure as well as Sport Northern Ireland refer to the definition of sport used by the Council of Europe charter, in the *Sport Matters 2009 -2019 strategy*;

1.2 Sport

*'Sport means all forms of physical activity, which through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels'.*¹²

1.3 Disability Sport

A research paper published in 2015 for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister's Equality Directorate Research Branch analysed 'Sport and Social Exclusion in Northern Ireland'. It stated that '*...there is no commonly accepted definition of*

⁹ 'substantial' means more than minor or trivial, e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed; and 'long-term' means 12 months or more, e.g. a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection.

¹⁰ UK Gov. Government Statistical Service harmonized definition of disability. <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010> Page last accessed 22.01.2021

¹¹ Council of Europe Disability and Sport in Europe 2013 <https://edoc.coe.int/en/people-with-disabilities/6958-disability-sport-in-europe.html>

¹² Council of Europe. 2001. <https://rm.coe.int/16804c9dbb> Page last accessed 22.01.2021

disability in sport in NI. A suggested definition included in the Charter of Europe's handbook on Disability and Sport in Europe stated;

*'...disability sport is used as an umbrella term describing sports activities that have been created or developed for the specific benefit of, or are specifically practiced by, people or athletes with disabilities, including opportunities for them to practice sports with or against other people or athletes with disabilities and/or non-disabled people and athletes.'*¹³

2 Measuring disability

One in every five people in Northern Ireland has a disability. This equates to approximately 360,000 people.¹⁴ NISRA's data on the percentage of adults reporting a disability in Northern Ireland is sourced from the Labour Force Survey and uses the UK Government statistical service harmonised definition of disability (see Definitions section above).

Overall, 21.7% of respondents aged 16-64 in Northern Ireland (Apr-Jun 2017) reported a long-term life-limiting illness. In the UK the overall figure was 17.4%. According to the Family Resources Survey 2018/19, 45% of the pension age population have a disability.

Recent research¹⁵ has suggested that increases in the numbers of people with disabilities may be attributed to;

- improvements in healthcare and medical advancement which has led to people living longer. Old age increases the likelihood of disability;
- improvements in survival rates for premature and low-birth weight babies;
- expansion of the definition of disability over time; and
- increased mental health problems.

3 Recommended physical activity levels

3.1 World Health Organisation

In 2015, the World Health Organisation (WHO) made global recommendations on physical activity for health. WHO defined physical activity as;

'...any bodily movement produced by the skeletal muscles that uses energy. This includes sports, exercise and other activities such as playing,

¹³ Council of Europe. Disability Sport in Europe. 2013 <https://edoc.coe.int/en/people-with-disabilities/6958-disability-sport-in-europe.html> Page last accessed 22.01.2021

¹⁴ Disability Action <https://www.disabilityaction.org/> Page last accessed 22.01.2021

¹⁵ NI Cohort Longitudinal Aging Study QUB <https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/NICOLA/FileStore/Fileupload.783215.en.pdf> Page last accessed 22.01.2021

walking, doing household chores or gardening. Depending on an individual's relative level of fitness, examples of moderate physical activity could include: brisk walking, dancing or household chores.'

WHO also suggested that examples of vigorous physical activity could be: running, fast cycling, fast swimming or moving heavy loads. The goal of 60 minutes per day or 150 minutes per week can be achieved by performing activities in multiple shorter bouts spread throughout the day or week. For example, to meet the goal of 60 minutes of physical activity daily, children can do two bouts of 30 minutes in different times of the day. Likewise, adults can meet the 150 minutes weekly goal by doing 30 minutes of physical activity five times per week. Doing some physical activity is better than doing none. Inactive people should start with small amounts of physical activity and gradually increase duration, frequency and intensity over time. Inactive adults, older adults and those with disease limitations, have added health benefits when they become more active

3.2 Chief Medical Officers' Guidelines

Similar to WHO, the UK Chief Medical Officers recommended 150 minutes of moderate physical activity over the course of 5 days per week. These recommendations were largely based on studies of male subjects who do not have a disability. However, the guidelines stated that the recommendations were applicable to all and '*...any myths about physical activity being inherently harmful for disabled people should be dispelled.*'¹⁶

According to the Continuous Household Survey for 2019/20, 8% of respondents with disabilities participated in sport five or more days in a given week, compared with 15% of those who did not have a disability. However, this figure excludes walking and physical activities such as cleaning and gardening. In 2010, an in-depth analysis commissioned by Sport Northern Ireland, called the *Northern Ireland Sport and Physical Activity Survey (SAPAS)*, reported that 23% of respondents with a disability achieved the recommended 150 minutes of activity each week.¹⁷

¹⁶UK Gov. Chief Medical Officers Guidelines 2019

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/832868/uk-chief-medical-officers-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf Page last accessed 21.01.2021

¹⁷ Sport NI SAPAS NI 2010 <http://www.sportni.net/research/research-online/> Page last accessed 21.01.2021

4 Strategic objectives

4.1 Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

In 2010, a previous Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure conducted an inquiry into sport and physical activity participation levels in Northern Ireland. Key recommendations regarding sport for people with disabilities included;

21. We recommend the expansion of specific programmes aimed at increasing participation among women, people with disabilities, older people, people from low income groups, and people from ethnic minorities.

24. We recommend that local authorities enhance training for staff at leisure centres on how to best provide services for women, people with disabilities, older people, people from low income groups, and people from ethnic minorities.

4.2 Sports Matters strategy 2009 – 2019

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure's Sports Matters 2009 -2019 strategy included a target to increase the participation of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity by at least 6 percentage points between 2011 and 2019.¹⁸ According to DfC's website, officials have been developing a new strategy for some years and continued during 2020, despite the constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is an expectation that the final outcome of the co-design and consultation process will conclude in early 2021.

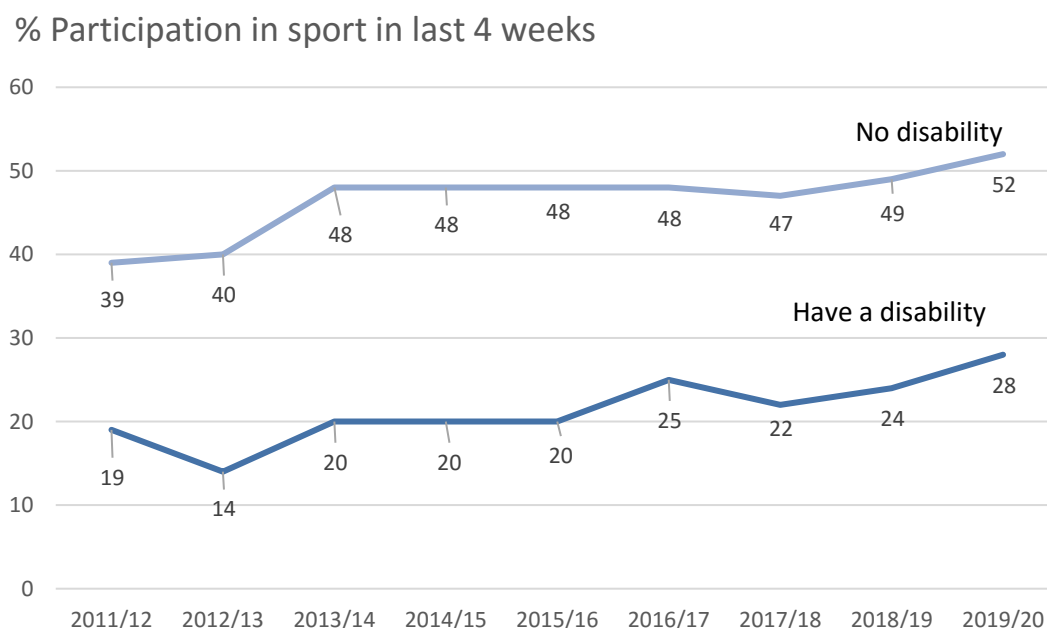
¹⁸ DfC Sport Matters 2009-2019 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/The-northern-ireland-strategy-for-sport-and-physical-recreation-2009-2019.pdf> Page accessed 22.01.2021

5 Sporting participation levels

The 2011 Census¹⁹ and the Office of National Statistics Labour Force²⁰ survey for 2019/20 have indicated that around one fifth (or 360,000) of the population of Northern Ireland are considered to have a long-term limiting illness (currently used as a working definition of 'disability'). This figure represents the highest prevalence of disability in the UK.

5.1 Adults

Figure 1 Percentage participating in sport in last 4 weeks 2011 - 2020



Source: DfC Experience of sport by adults 2011 - 2020

As highlighted in Figure 1, between 2013/14 and 2019/20, the increase in participation in sport, for respondents of the Continuous Household Survey was approximately 8%.

²¹ However, as Table 1 illustrates, in almost all question categories (apart from walking for recreation), people with disabilities in NI are almost half as likely to participate in sport and active recreation compared to people without disabilities. ²²

¹⁹ ONS Census 2011 Disability Analysis <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability>

²⁰ ONS Labour Force Survey December 2020

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/singlemonthlabourforcesurveyestimates/december2020>

²¹ DfC Experience of sport by adults 2019/20 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/experience-sport-by-adults-northern-ireland-201920.pdf> Page accessed 22.01.2021

²² Sport NI Active Living: No Limits 2016-2021 <http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Active-Living-No-Limits-Action-Plan-2016-2021.pdf> Page accessed 22.01.2021

Table 1 Experience of sport by adults in NI for 2019/20

Experience of sport by adults in NI Continuous Household Survey 2019/20	People with a disability	People without a disability
Have participated in sport in the last 12 months	38%	64%
Have participated in sport in the last four weeks	28%	52%
Normally participate in sport on one or more days per week	34%	60%
Be a member of a sports club or organisation	15%	30%
Walked for recreation within the previous year	43%	59%
Have attended a live sports event in NI within the previous year	22%	38%

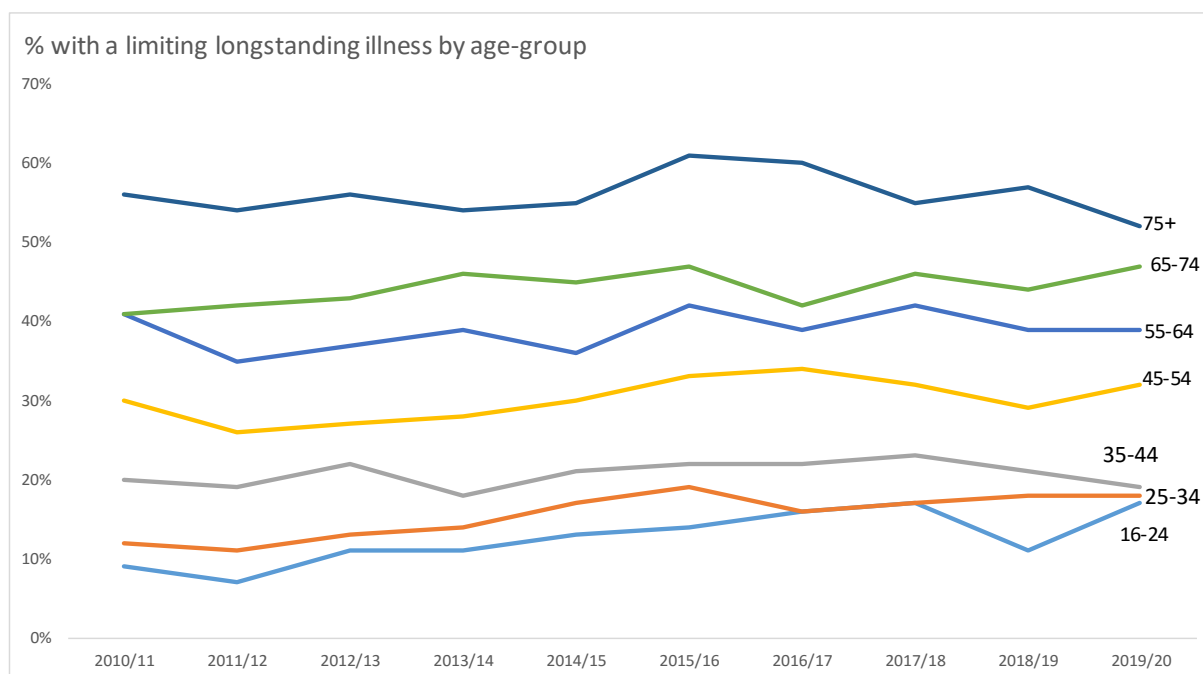
Source: DfC Experience of sport by adults 2019/20

According to the Family Resources Survey in 2018/19, 45% of the pension age population in the UK have a disability.²³ This figure is comparable to the NI Department of Health’s survey, illustrated in Figure 2.

5.2 Older adults with disabilities

Initial analysis from longitudinal studies such as the Northern Ireland Cohort for the Longitudinal Study of Aging (NICOLA) suggested that on balance, the older we become, the more likely we are to have a disability. This finding is supported by the Department of Health’s survey, illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Percentage of age-group with a limiting longstanding illness



Source: Dept. of Health NI <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/health-survey-northern-ireland-first-results-201920> .

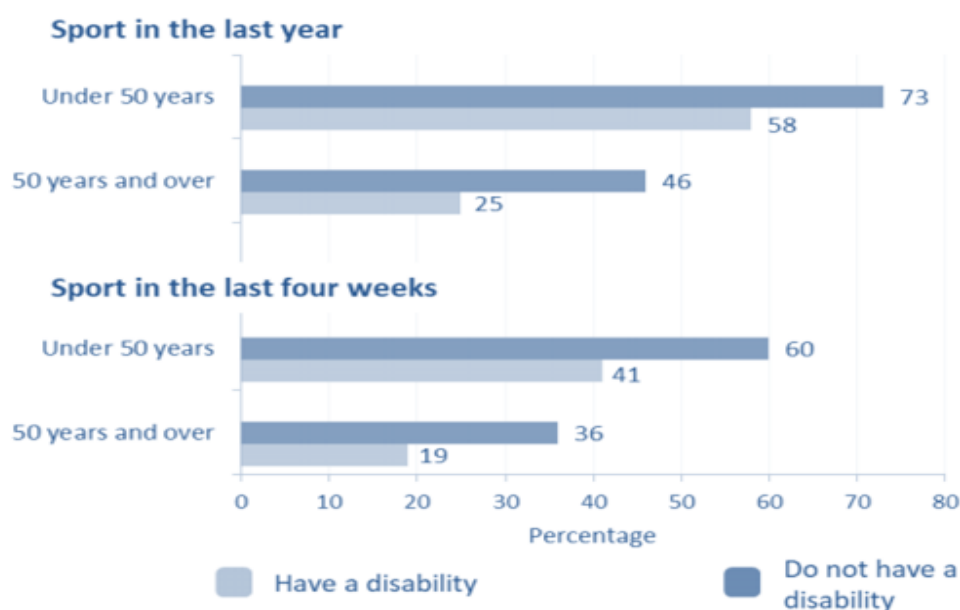
²³ UK Gov. Family Resources survey 2018/19 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-201819>

Results from the Continuous Household Survey have also demonstrated that the older we get, the less likely we are to participate in sport. As Figure 3 highlights, disability compounds this effect.

Comparing those under and over the age of 50, both younger and older adults who have a disability were less likely to participate in sport than those who do not have a disability. And those over 50 with a disability are less likely to participate in sport, compared to over 50s without a disability.

Therefore, policy interventions should continue to address this problem, given the rising median age of the population.

Figure 3 Comparison of people under and over the age of 50 for 2019/20



Source: DfC Experience of sport by adults 2019/20

According to the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines, the risk of progression of disabilities affecting the basic activities of daily life is almost halved in those who undertake regular moderate intensity physical activity, compared to those who do not.²⁴ Research suggests, other benefits of physical activity for older adults with disabilities includes;

- Greater bone mineral density;
- Reduced risk of cognitive impairment and dementia; and
- Halved odds of experiencing depression.

²⁴ UK Gov. Chief Medical Officers Physical Activity Guidelines 2019
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/832868/uk-chief-medical-officers-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf Page last accessed 22.01.2021

5.3 Example initiatives targeting older adults with disabilities

5.3.1 Inclusive Walking Programme

Disability Sport NI delivered the Inclusive Sport and Leisure Initiative in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council Area. Through consultation with local groups, it was agreed that walking would be the most accessible opportunity for people with a disability to get out into the fresh air and enjoy active recreation in a social setting. In 2013 an Inclusive Walking Group was established at Lurgan Park, with the help of a number of volunteers. The group was open to anyone with a disability, as well as family and friends and a number of routes were offered to accommodate all walking abilities. DSNI worked alongside the Parks Development Officer to ensure that scooters would be available to participants who were unable to walk unaided.

5.3.2 Love to Move²⁵

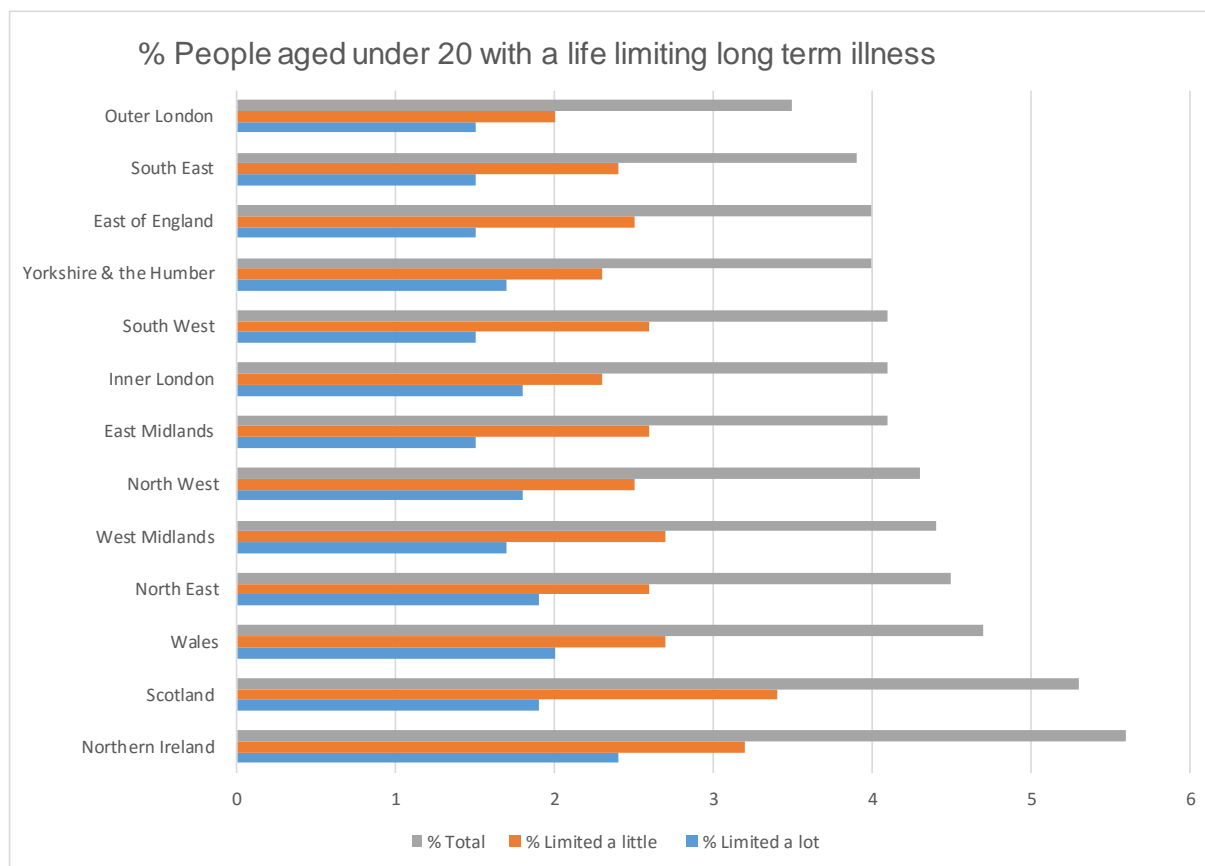
According to DfC, one programme that has been effective in helping to improve the physical activity of older participants is the 'Love to Move' Programme, run by Springfield Charitable Association in Belfast. Funded by Sport Northern Ireland for older people, many of whom living with dementia. 'Love to Move' helped to recover and develop the participants' motor skills and hand to eye co-ordination through a range of fun-based light activity sessions.

5.4 Children with disabilities

Six percent of children in Northern Ireland have a disability. Figure 4 compares 2011 Census data across the UK. Further analysis of this data by the charity *Contact* reported that Northern Ireland and in particular, Belfast, had the highest proportion of children with a life limiting disability in the UK.²⁶

²⁵ DfC Active Living: No Limits – Love to Move <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/active-living-no-limits-love-move> Page accessed 22.01.2020

²⁶ Contact Caring More than Most <https://contact.org.uk/about-us/resource-library/?k=&s=all&t=all&f=all&n=5140&l=all> Page accessed 22.01.2021

Figure 4 Percentage proportion of children with a disability

Source: Contact <https://contact.org.uk/caring-most>

According to the 2019 Young Person's Behaviour and Attitudes Survey, 98% of young people in Northern Ireland who have a disability participated in sport within the last year and 92% had participated in sport within the last week. Compared to those who do not have a disability, 99% of young people had participated in sport in the last year and 96% in the last week.²⁷ Also, young people who have a disability are less likely (54%) to participate in 2 hours or more of school PE lessons, compared to young people without a disability (64%).

A study of girls with a disability or long term illness, in NI schools, was published by the Youth Sport Trust in 2016.²⁸ Key findings included;

- girls with a disability or long-term illness are much less likely to say they like taking part in physical activity; 63% compared with 77% of those who have not reported a disability or long-term illness;

²⁷ DfC Experience of sport by young people 2019 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/experience-sport-by-young-people-northern-ireland-2019.pdf>

²⁸ Youth Sport Trust 2016 Girls Active NI pilot report <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/system/files/Girls%20Active%20Northern%20Ireland%20pilot%20report.pdf>

- 39% of girls with a disability or long-term illness believe physical activity is an important part of their life compared with 55% of girls who have not reported a disability or long-term illness;
- 8% of girls with a disability or long-term illness meet the Chief Medical Officer's activity guidelines of 60 minutes of activity every day, although this is the same as for girls with no disability or long-term illness; and
- over half (55%) of girls with a disability or long-term illness take part in no sport or physical activity outside of PE lessons.

5.4.1 Example initiatives targeting children with disabilities

In 2012, the *Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance: Children and Young People Manifesto*, identified a number of cross-cutting issues to be addressed by the government in Northern Ireland, including priority funding for children with disabilities and young people accessing services.

The Active Living: No Limits 2016-2021 action plan considered this as part of its consultation process. In Annex 1 of this paper, action 14 of the Active Living: No Limits action plan recommended that the Department for Education, Council for Curriculum, Examination and Assessment, and Disability Sport NI;

“Develop and publish guidance to schools on the inclusion of children with disabilities in school sport and P.E.”

As well as the guidance, by March 2018, a research project was to be included within the Active Living: No Limits research plan to establish baselines and attitudes to sport and physical activity within the education system.

An update from officials on progress regarding these actions would be beneficial.

5.5 Sports Club Membership

The 2019 Sport NI Club survey²⁹ found that 3% of 128,587 sport club members were people with disabilities. Disability access was noted by survey respondents as a barrier to participation by 12% of sports clubs with outdoor facilities and 7% with indoor facilities.

Illustrated in Figure 5, although membership of sports clubs increased by 5 percentage points for those people who have a disability between 2011/12 and 2019/20, the gap between those who have a disability and those who do not, has remained constant.

²⁹Sport NI Sport Club Survey 2019 <https://indd.adobe.com/view/16e5cc1b-4497-4f06-a80d-e074cea1b9f7> Page accessed 22.01.2021

Figure 5 Membership of Sports Clubs

Source: DfC Experience of sport by adults 2011 – 2020

As part of the action plan resulting from Sport NI's Club Survey, Action 5c stated that Sport NI committed to;

'...develop and implement a Club Infrastructure programme with a particular focus on supporting and enabling more women/girls, people with a disability and those in areas of high social need to start and sustain participation in sport and physical recreation.'

6 Barriers to Participation

As outlined in a research briefing produced for the former CAL Committee in 2010, barriers to participation fall into three broad themes³⁰;

- Environment - access to facilities, lack of transport and poor community capacity;
- Social - attitudes that might restrict sport for certain groups and resulting actions of leisure managers and policy makers;
- Personal - lack of money, time, poor confidence and a negative body image.

Similar to the barriers females experience with regards to sports participation, research suggests that self-consciousness and low levels of confidence influence the attitudes

³⁰ NIAR 18/10 RaISe Barriers to sport and physical activity 2010
<http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/researchandlibrary/2010/1810.pdf>

and motivations of those with disabilities to participate in sport. More specific barriers include, feeling able to 'fit in' at sports facilities and having the confidence to ask for help and assistance.³¹ According to research³², those with disabilities who are without the support of others are likely to feel excluded from participating in almost all physical activities.

7 Social Exclusion

Studies of physical activity levels of adults with disabilities across the UK have shown that men over the age of 55, from more economically deprived areas, are the most likely demographic of people to be physically inactive.³³

Section 7.1.2 summarises key points raised by researchers in a social exclusion study for the NI Executive Office in 2015. The study included an analysis of challenges with regards to disability and sport participation.³⁴

7.1 Key Issues for policy considerations

- 71% of people with disabilities experience exclusion due to access to facilities and equipment;
- the highlighting of 'different kinds of provision' may reinforce negative differences between people with disabilities and non-disabled people;
- a lack of specialist staff who understand the needs of those experiencing disability and can facilitate involvement in activities;
- the cost of participating. For example, sports that require specialist equipment and additional staff support;
- transport availability to sporting venues and competing time constraints of caregivers and helpers;
- segregation between governing and funding bodies e.g. Disability Sport NI and Sport NI. In 2015, 25 sports had representative disabled committees or associations and 100 clubs were affiliated to Disability Sport NI; and
- lack of media representation. Coverage tends to be restricted to competitive sports at national and international levels. This creates an impression that disability sport is only for those at the elite end of the spectrum.

³¹ Dowling, F., Fitzgerald, H., & Flintoff, A. (Eds.). (2012). Equity and difference in physical education, youth sport and health: A narrative approach. Routledge.

³² Shields N, Synnot AJ, Barr M. Perceived barriers and facilitators to physical activity for children with disability: a systematic review. *British journal of sports medicine*. 2012 Nov 1;46(14):989-97.

³³ UK Gov. Physical Inactivity <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/health/diet-and-exercise/physical-inactivity/latest> Page accessed 22.01.2021

³⁴ OFMDFM Social exclusion and sport in NI 2015 <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/social-exclusion-and-sport-northern-ireland>

8 Health and economic benefits of sport and physical activity

Research³⁵ has repeatedly shown that the benefits of sport and physical activity are;

- physical fitness and improved health;
- improved mental health and psychological wellbeing, leading to the reduction of anxiety and stress;
- positive personality development via improved self-confidence; and
- empathy, integrity, tolerance, cooperation, trustworthiness and the development of social skills.

The Chief Medical Officer's guidelines suggests that the risk of progression of disabilities affecting the basic activities of daily life is almost halved in those who undertake regular moderate intensity physical activity, compared to those who do not.³⁶

According to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)³⁷, the estimated direct cost of physical inactivity to the NHS across the UK is approximately £1billion (bn) per year. Public Health England estimates that the wider economic impact to society is £7.4bn. Also, Sport Northern Ireland has estimated that the benefits of outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland generates an annual income of £83m. For every £1.00 that the public sector invests in outdoor recreational activities, there is a return of £1.77.³⁸

9 Comparing participation levels in other jurisdictions

Data for other UK jurisdictions is gathered and reported separately. Each country presents its data in a different format and level of detail. Differences in the way the data is calculated (e.g. measured vs reported data) mean that caution should be taken when comparing jurisdictions. Table 2 highlights that the gap in participation levels between those with a disability and those without in each jurisdiction, ranges from 14 percentage points in England and Ireland to 24 percentage points in NI, Scotland and Wales.

³⁵ Ruth Hunter and Mark Tully. Addressing inequalities in sport. 2015. KESS Policy Briefing http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/knowledge_exchange/briefing_papers/hunter-and-tully_inequalities-in-sport-briefing.pdf Page accessed 22.01.2021

³⁶ UK Gov. Chief Medical Officers Physical Activity Guidelines 2019 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/832868/uk-chief-medical-officers-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf Page last accessed 22.01.2021

³⁷ NICE Physical Activity and the Environment 2018 <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng90/chapter/Context#key-facts-and-figures>

³⁸ Sport NI. ASSESSING THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OUTDOOR RECREATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND, 2019 <http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/OREI.pdf>

Table 2 Comparison of % sport participation rates between neighbouring jurisdictions

Have participated in sport in last 4 weeks	People with a disability	People without a disability
England (2018/19) ³⁹	29.4%	43.5%
Scotland (2018/19) ⁴⁰	30%	54%
Wales (2019/20) ⁴¹	38%	62%
Northern Ireland (2019/20) ⁴²	28%	52%
Ireland (2019) ⁴³	33%	49%

9.1 Examples of different jurisdictions interventions

9.1.1 UK

Increasing participation in sport for people with disabilities is part of the UK Government's 'Sporting Future: a new Strategy for an Active Nation' and Sport England's 'Towards an Active Nation' strategy.

9.1.2 England

In 2018/19, Sport England invested over £3 million in 8 national disability sports organisations. Additionally, more than 70 individual projects received investment, supporting disabled people's participation in sport alongside their families, and to increase the number of disabled people volunteering in sport. In November 2017, plans were published for a cross-sector scheme to give disabled people and those with long-term health conditions better access to physical activity opportunities across the leisure sector. The scheme was led by ukactive, Sport England, Disability Rights UK and the English Federation of Disability Sport in partnership with PureGym, David Lloyd Leisure, Everyone Active, Virgin Active, Greenwich Leisure Limited and Places for People.

9.1.3 Northern Ireland

The Departments for Communities, Education and Health in Northern Ireland in collaboration with Disability Sport NI, Sport NI and Disability Action, developed the Active Living: No Limits (ALNL) Action Plan in 2016. Following recommendations for increased collaboration in the mid-term review of the DCAL Sports Matters strategy⁴⁴,

³⁹Sport England Active Lives Survey 2019/20 <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-10/Active%20Lives%20Adult%20May%202019-20%20Report.pdf?AYzBswpBmlh9cNcH8TFctPI38v4Ok2JD>

⁴⁰Scottish Household Survey 2019 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-household-survey-2019-annual-report/pages/9/>

⁴¹National Survey Wales 2019/20 <https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales-results-viewer>

⁴²DfC Experience of sport by adults in NI 2019/20 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/experience-sport-by-adults-northern-ireland-201920>

⁴³Sport Ireland Irish Sports Monitor 2019 <https://www.sportireland.ie/research/news/2019-irish-sports-monitor-mid-year-report-shows-good-early-progress-towards-meeting>

⁴⁴DCAL Mid-term review of Sport Matters 2009-2019 strategy. 2015 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/deposited-papers/2015/dp1431.pdf>

the ALNL action plan aimed to improve health and wellbeing for disabled people in Northern Ireland through participation in sport and active recreation. An investment of up to £1.1 million was budgeted to establish 11 multi-sports facilities for disabled people in each of the Council areas and provide specialist equipment for these venues. More details are included in Annex 1 of this paper.

9.1.4 Scotland

£12 million was invested by 'sportscotland' in the redeveloped National Sports Training Centre in Inverclyde. The first building of its kind in the UK, it provided an inclusive residential sports training centre for disabled sport users.

9.1.5 Wales

In 2002, there were 30 disability sports clubs in Wales. That number had risen to over 750 by 2021. According to Disability Sport Wales (DSW) the growth in participants can be attributed to grassroots investment and the Paralympic legacy. For example, following London 2012, membership in disabled sports clubs passed the one million mark in 2013. The number of coaches rose from 1,621 to 1,766 in 2012. In the year following the 2012 Paralympics and Olympics an additional 160 people volunteered.

9.1.6 Ireland

The 2019 Irish Sports Monitor (ISM) found that the participation gap between those with disabilities and those without had decreased to 17 percentage points from 18 percentage points in 2017. Although 81% of sports club members reported that their club welcomed all participants including those with a disability, 85% agreed with the statement that their club would benefit from having more information and support to assist them in including people with disabilities. Also, 74% of volunteers reported that they had not been provided with support or training in relation to working with people with a disability. However, 28% of club members reported that their club had a club volunteer or staff member with a disability. This is higher than the proportion of the overall population with a disability (22%).

The ISM also reported that participation in sport declined among the population as a whole between the age groups of 16 to 24 and 25 to 34, the decline is particularly severe for those with a disability. This trend has been identified in previous ISM surveys and suggested a persistent issue that warrants further consideration from a policy perspective.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Sport Ireland Irish Sports Monitor 2019 <https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2020-09/irish-sports-monitor-2019-report-lower-res.pdf>

10 Sport provision for those with disabilities in NI

Academics, such as Patterson and Hughes⁴⁶ have stated that disability has;

'...been transformed from an individual or medical problem into a civil rights issue' (p.30) which means it is becoming conceptualised 'not as an outcome of physical impairment but as an effect of social exclusion and discrimination' (p.35).

Also, Brittain in the Journal of Sport and Social Studies⁴⁷, reported that this has had a significant influence in disability and sports research. He notes that the introduction:

'...of the social model of disability has attempted to move the spotlight of research away from the medical model theories of disability toward an investigation of the impacts of societal perceptions of disability upon people with disabilities' (p.429).

DSNI has previously reported that the improvements in access to sports facilities in Northern Ireland has been in response to legislation.

10.1 Legislation

The Equality Act 2010 does not apply in Northern Ireland. The laws safeguarding the rights of people with disability in Northern Ireland include;

10.1.1 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006)⁴⁸

This Act places duties on public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have regard to the need;

- (a) To promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities; and
- (b) To encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life.

As outlined in the 2014 RaISe paper, the Sport NI Disability Action Plan 2012-2015 described a wide range of measures designed to fulfil Sport NI's statutory commitments, including the development of a disability mainstreaming policy⁴⁹, and contracting the services of Disability Sports Northern Ireland (DSNI) for the delivery of various aspects of their disability action plan.

⁴⁶ Patterson, K. and Hughes, B. (2000) Disabled bodies. In: Hancock, M.T. et al (eds.) Body, culture and society: an introduction. Buckingham: Open University Press.

⁴⁷ Brittain, I. (2004) Perceptions of disability and their impact upon involvement in sport for people with disabilities at all levels. Journal of Sport and Social Issues, 28, 429-452.

⁴⁸ Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2006/312/contents>

⁴⁹ Sport NI. 2011. *An Impact Review of Sport Northern Ireland's Disability Mainstreaming Policy*: <http://www.sportni.net/NR/rdonlyres/0EFF464A-0F12-4938-B4F6-8191359DE932/0/DMP.pdf>

10.1.2 Section 75 of Northern Ireland Act 1998⁵⁰

Section 75 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires that Sport Northern Ireland shall;

‘...in carrying out its functions in Northern Ireland, have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity for persons with a disability and persons without.’

Initiatives to support equity for disabled citizens were strengthened by the ratifying of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the UK Government in June 2009. This introduced a legally binding requirement to ensure that discrimination against people with disabilities is eradicated.

10.1.3 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁵¹

In 2006, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) established among its general principles that those with a disability shall have;

‘...full and effective participation and inclusion in society, and ‘equality of opportunity’.

More specifically in the area of sport, Article 30(5) states the following:

5. With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

(a) To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels;

(b) To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organize, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources;

(c) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues;

(d) To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system;

⁵⁰Northern Ireland Act 1998 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/contents>

⁵¹ UNCPRD 2006 <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

(e) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organization of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.

These obligations go beyond the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, which provides for access to facilities alone, advocating instead provision for;

'...an opportunity to organise, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities'.

In 2019, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Commission drafted a 'Declaration on Sport and Human Rights'.⁵² Five sports bodies in Northern Ireland adopted the Declaration: the Belfast Giants, Irish Football Association, Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council, Ulster GAA, and Ulster Rugby. In June 2019, the first meeting of the Northern Ireland Sport & Human Rights Forum took place and a work plan has been developed.

10.2 Policy Approaches

10.2.1 Mainstreaming

Studies⁵³ have shown that progress in developing sports for individuals with a disability often encounters barriers that limit or impede people's participation. As previously discussed, barriers occur because of an individual's personal circumstances. These can include; insufficient financial resources, time, friends, awareness of programmes, and type of disability. For sports organisations, certain practices and procedures create additional barriers that limit participation. These include inaccessible facilities, inaccessible transport, unsuitable programmes, inadequate planning, insufficient support, and outdated social perceptions held by both staff and wider stakeholders. Policies have tended to focus on merging disability sport organisations and their participants into non-disabled sporting organisations through mainstreaming.

Research also suggests that segregating disability sports from the mainstream has been found to result in a double-edged problem. A narrow range of disability sports being visible in the media, can marginalise it. Whereas restricting coverage to serious or more competitive sport, tends to give the impression that disability sport is accessible only to the elite.

⁵² NI Sport and Human Rights Forum. Declaration on Sport and Human Rights' 2019

<https://www.declarationonsportandhumanrights.com/webedit/uploaded-files/All%20Files/document.pdf>

⁵³ OFMDFM Social exclusion and sport in NI 2015 <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/social-exclusion-and-sport-northern-ireland>

Academics such as Francis⁵⁴ has described the differences between two principal movements in sport for people with disabilities. He noted that when considering the Paralympic movement;

‘...the goal is to develop highly competitive, highly visible, and economically viable sporting events for elite athletes with disabilities’ (Francis, 2005, p. 130). Whereas the Special Olympics “...by contrast, emphasize the self-development of the individual athlete... the result is that athletes are encouraged to improve in competition against those who have had very similar achievements’ (p. 131).

There is no ‘one size fits all’, depending on how it is organised and the philosophy underpinning it. Sport for people experiencing disability has the potential to foster both inclusion at both grassroots and elite level, as well as individual health and well-being.⁵⁵

Academics, Donnelly and Coakley⁵⁶ have stated that inclusive sports and physical activity programmes should have a number of features including;

- affordability;
- appropriate scheduling of activities;
- strong policies on violence, harassment and equity;
- skilled and sensitive leadership; and
- a role of participants in decision making

Mainstreaming is a policy of integrating the responsibility for disability sport provision into non-disabled sports organisations. Sport NI introduced a disability mainstreaming policy in 2006. This policy encouraged;

- the promotion of disability sport;
- the provision of equitable access to participation opportunities for people with disabilities;
- the offer of full consultation in future sport policy;
- development of programmes and policies that are targeted to specific needs; and
- positive actions to redress the historical marginalisation of persons with a disability.

A 2019 study by Ulster University⁵⁷ examined the implementation of Sport NI funded mainstreaming policies by Ulster Rugby, the Irish Football Association and the Ulster Gaelic Athletic Association. Conclusions resulting from this analysis included;

⁵⁴ Francis, L.P. (2005) Competitive sports, disability and problems of justice in sports. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 32, 127-132.

⁵⁵ Right to Play (2008) *Harnessing the power of sport for development and peace: recommendations for governments*. Sport for Development and Peace, International Working Group.

⁵⁶ Donnelly P. and Coakley, J. (2002) *The role of recreation in promoting social inclusion*. Toronto: Laidlaw Foundation.

⁵⁷ Kitchin, Paul & Peile, Charlotte & Lowther, Jim. (2019). *Mobilizing capacity to achieve the mainstreaming of disability sport*. *Managing Sport and Leisure*. 24. 1-21

- poor interpretation of mainstreaming possibly due to a lack of any specific targets and an overall strategy to support funding recipients on ‘how’ to approach implementation;
- awareness of the mainstreaming policy within the sporting organisations was either superficial (IFA, Ulster GAA) or non-existent (Ulster Rugby).
- none of the three organisations had fully consulted with people with disabilities. Strategic targets around consultation could have enhanced performance.
- programmes offered by disability type (e.g. blind football) limited options for individuals with specific impairments, rather than an offering that is available to a broader spectrum of disabilities.
- the performance framework only loosely articulated what success would look like, which relied heavily on output targets, such as the number of training sessions delivered.

The study also noted that differences emerged once the mainstreaming of funding was discontinued. Gaelic sports and Association football sustained their programmes and incorporated them into their wider sport development offerings, while rugby discontinued their provision, including ending the contract of the manager.

Since Ulster University’s study, the Northern Ireland Sport and Human Rights Forum was created and launched in May 2019. Ulster GAA, Ulster Rugby and the Irish Football Association are among its members. The Forum was set up to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practice on sport and human rights issues.

An update on its work plan and achievements with regards to sport provision for people with disabilities may be beneficial, particularly in light of evidence emerging of the more negative impact COVID-19 has had on people with disabilities.

10.3 Sport NI’s investment in Disability Sport

An independent review of Sport NI’s *Disability Mainstreaming Policy* in 2011 found that investment by Sport NI in disability sport had increased by 45% between 2006 and 2012.⁵⁸ Table 3 includes funding information referred to in a research paper produced by RalSe for the former Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure in 2014.⁵⁹

Table 3 Sport NI Investment in Disability Sport 2009 - 2012

Year	£
2009/10	159,800
2010/11	169,920
2011/12	179,740

⁵⁸ Sport. 2011. *An Impact Review of Sport NI’s Disability Mainstreaming Policy*. Belfast:

<http://www.sportni.net/NR/ronlyres/0EFF464A-0F12-4938-B4F6-8191359DE932/0/DMP.pdf>

⁵⁹NIAR 876-13 RalSe. Provision for those with a disability.

http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2014/culture_arts_leisure/14214.pdf

Figures included in Table 4 are from Sport NI's 2018/19 Annual Report.⁶⁰ Comparing the figures in Tables 3 and 4, there appears to have been almost a tenfold increase in funding between 2009/10 and 2018/19. Yet, the gap between participation levels for those who have a disability versus those who do not, has remained static.

Table 4 Sport NI Exchequer Funding for Disability Sport NI in 2018/19

Payments in Year	1,166,258
Grants Awarded in Year	769,098
Balance at 31 March 2019	341,630

Sport NI reported in 2013 that this increased investment resulted in increased opportunities, although the most notable advances were in the areas of elite performance.

10.4 Elite Sport – Disability Sport NI

In 2013, an audit of elite sport provision in Northern Ireland was completed by Sheffield Hallam University.⁶¹ According to the report published by Sport NI in 2013, in 2010 the expenditure on all elite sport specifically in Northern Ireland from the Northern Ireland Executive and the UK-wide National Lottery was £11.5m. The elite sport funding budget was spent primarily on non-disabled sport with some £129,221 (1%) spent on disability sport in 2010.

Funding for elite sport in Northern Ireland grew from £2.0m in 2001 to £6.7m in 2006. The elite sport budget of £11.5m in 2010 was contributed primarily by Government (£8.5m, 74%). The remaining £3.0m (26%) came from the National Lottery.

In 2018, the elite sport expenditure of £4.31m was contributed primarily by National Lottery sources (67%) with the remaining coming from Government. Of the £4.31m, £240,000 (6%), including a share of Sport NI Sports Institute services, was spent on disability sport.⁶²

Elite athletes with disabilities applying for funding, do so through the 'Sporting Clubs and Sporting Winners' investment programme 2017 - 2021. Sport NI's Disability Action Plan aims to fund at least 13 athletes over the course of 3 years. According to Disability Sport NI's 2018 Annual Report, five athletes received funding during a twelve month period.

⁶⁰ Sport NI. Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19. <http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Exchequer-2018-19-Final-Accounts-Laid.pdf>

⁶¹ Sport NI. Sport Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success (SPLISS). An audit of the Elite Sport Development System in Northern Ireland 2013. <http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Splissreducedwebversion.pdf>

⁶² Sport NI. Sport Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success (SPLISS). An Audit of the Elite Sport Development System in Northern Ireland, 2017-18. (Yet to be published as of January 2021)

10.4.1 Paralympic Games Participation

The number of elite NI athletes competing in the Paralympics has increased from three to eight participants since 2000. And the number of medals won has risen from 1 to 6, within that timescale.

Table 5 Summary of NI's performance at the Paralympic Games 2000 - 2016

Paralympic Games	NI Athletes	Medals
2016 Summer Games, Rio	8	6
2012 Summer Games, London	8	7
2008 Summer Games, Beijing	8	4
2004 Summer Games, Athens	3	0
2000 Summer Games, Sydney	3	1

Source: Disability Sport Northern Ireland

10.5 Disability Sport Northern Ireland (DSNI)

An interactive mapping tool of disability sports opportunities in Northern Ireland is provided on the [Disability Sports NI \(DSNI\) website](#).⁶³ As of January 2021, there were 216 opportunities listed on the map. In 2014, 120 opportunities were listed as available in NI.⁶⁴ Annex 2 includes a summary of activity reported by DSNI in its 2018/19 annual report. It included outcomes of some of the strategic disability sports initiatives resulting from the £1.1m investment in the Active Living: No Limits 2016-2021 action plan. More detail about the Active Living: No Limits 2016-2021 action plan is included in the 'Strategies and initiatives' section below and in Annex 1.

In 2014, RaISe published a briefing paper titled '*Sport provisions for those with a disability in NI*'. The research noted that one facility in 2011 had achieved Disability Sport NI's (DSNI) *Inclusive Sport Facility Accreditation* and that six more facilities were under assessment. By the start of 2021, 20 sports facilities had been accredited as *Inclusive Sport Facilities* by DSNI.

DSNI has also produced a series of *Design & Management Guidelines*. This resource offers details of good practice in terms of access for people with disabilities. It covers details for new or refurbished sports facilities, covering pavilion buildings and sports stadia.⁶⁵

⁶³ DSNI website Find a Disability Sports Club <https://www.dsni.co.uk/community-sport/find-a-disability-sports-club> Page accessed 22.01.2021

⁶⁴ NIA RaISe Provision for sport for those with a disability 2014 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2011-2016/committee-for-culture-arts-and-leisure/archive/research-papers/research-papers-2014/provision-for-sport-for-those-with-a-disability/>

⁶⁵ Disability Sport NI Design Management guidelines <https://www.dsni.co.uk/sports-facility-access/design-management-guidelines> Page accessed 22.01.2021

Since 2014, DSNI activities to develop disability sport provisions have included;

- publication of an Active Living No Limits Strategy 2016 – 2021;
- a ‘Disability Sport Hub’ in all 11 District Councils;
- an Inclusive Sport Award achieved by 10 NI Sport Governing Bodies;
- improved wheelchair basketball and boccia programmes; and
- Inclusive Sport Facility Accreditation for 20 sports facilities.

According to DSNI⁶⁶, despite these achievements, people with disabilities still remain half as likely to participate in sport and physical activity as non-disabled people in Northern Ireland. Disability Sport NI recommended that momentum is needed to sustain and build on previous achievements by scaling current activity, offering people with disabilities more of the same, i.e. access to more sports and in more places.

Also, targeted support for inactive older people is a key issue, given the particularly low participation levels of people who are over 50 years of age and have a disability (see Figure 2). Particularly as recent evidence has suggested a disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the sport and physical activity participation levels of people with disabilities in Northern Ireland (see Section 12).

11 Strategies and initiatives

According to the mid-term review of DfC’s Sports Matters strategy, the target for disability sport provision in Northern Ireland was;

...to deliver at least a six percentage point increase in participation rates in sport and physical recreation among people with a disability by 2019⁶⁷

The March 2015 mid-term review of Sports Matters recognised that ‘...achieving this target needs to be a genuine partnership approach’.

In 2016, the ‘Active Living: No Limits 2016-2021’ action plan was published on behalf of a strategic project board, that included officials from the Department for Communities, Department of Education, Department of Health, Disability Action, Disability Sport NI, NI Sports Forum, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and Sport Northern Ireland.

Active Living – No Limits 2016 -2021 (ALNL) included the views of more than 250 individuals and organisations. Contributions were gathered from 123 people with a disability and carers, 71 support organisations and 61 Governing Bodies of Sport, as well as Health and Social Care Trusts, Schools and District Councils.

⁶⁶ Disability, Sport and Human Rights webinar. Dec. 2020 <https://www.dsni.co.uk/latest/news/disability-sport-and-human-rights-discussion> Page last accessed 22.01.2021

⁶⁷ DfC Sport Matters strategy 2009 – 2019 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-strategy-sport-and-physical-recreation-2009-2019> Page accessed 22.01.2021

The Active Living: No Limits 2016 - 2021 Action Plan included recommendations from a combination of strategies, such as;

- *Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation (2009 - 2019)*
- *Northern Ireland Executive: A Strategy to improve the lives of people with disabilities (2012 - 2017)*
- *Department of Health's Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy and Action Plan (2012 – 2015)*
- *Northern Ireland Executive: Active Ageing Strategy (2016 - 2021)*
- *Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance: Children and Young People Manifesto (2012)*

A strategic project board drew up terms of reference and established a cross-departmental disability sport forum to create links and enable a networking and information sharing platform between relevant government departments, agencies and organisations within the disability and sports sectors. A Northern Ireland Active Living: No Limits Forum was also founded to support the delivery, monitoring and realisation of the outcomes of the Action Plan.⁶⁸

The engagement process resulted in an action plan with five outcomes, 17 actions and 66 time bound outputs, under three action themes. Annex 1 includes a table summarising the 17 actions and their corresponding outputs. The ALNL action plan was launched in 2016 with £300,000 of DfC support.⁶⁹

According to the Disability NI website, to date the ALNL has delivered;

- over 1 million pounds of disability sports equipment shared between every council area of Northern Ireland, funded by Department for Communities and Sport NI to develop a Disability Sports Hub in every council area;
- 11 pool pods, a submersible platform lift for people with a disability to access swimming pools;
- 'All Out Trekking' - 18 battery operated outdoor buggies for people with a disability to access the forest trails at Gosford Forest Park;
- 4 water sports projects;
- 11 new power chairs to support the development of two new power chair football clubs; and
- a platform lift to support people with a disability in accessing horses at Coleraine RDA.

⁶⁸Sport NI Active Living: No Limits 2016 <http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Active-Living-No-Limits-Action-Plan-2016-2021.pdf> Page accessed 22.01.2021

⁶⁹ Northern Ireland Sport Forum £300k investment ALNL 2016 <http://www.nisf.net/latest-news/300000-investment-to-kick-start-the-active-living-no-limits-action-plan-givan/> Page accessed 22.01.2021

According to the Sport NI 2018/19 Annual Report, Sport NI continued to support and contribute to ALNL on project delivery. Collaborators included district councils, Disability Sport Northern Ireland, Special Olympics Ireland, Angel Eyes, British Gymnastics Foundation and MENCAP.

11.1 ALNL participant feedback survey

Results from an ALNL participant feedback survey can be summarised as follows;

- 74% of adults and 68% of 12-17 year olds (with a disability) surveyed, reported an increased frequency of participation in sport and active recreation;
- 85% of adults and 79% of 12-17 year olds (with a disability) reported improved confidence; and
- 80% of volunteers working with athletes with a learning and/or sensory disability reported increased confidence.

The ALNL action plan deadlines have all since passed. Most had a deadline of either 'March 2017', 'March 2018', 'March 2019' or 'Ongoing'. An update from the ALNL strategic project board on the impact of this strategic initiative as evidence to support future plans and spending, may be of value in supporting the Communities Committee to review future disability sport policies and strategies.

11.2 Every Body Active

Every Body Active 2020 is a four year lottery funded programme aimed at getting people more active, more often, through sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland. Sport Northern Ireland invested £6.2 million in the 11 District Councils across Northern Ireland to increase opportunities for targeted groups to increase participation in sport and physical activities across key life-course transitions (for example children moving from primary school to post-primary, young people leaving education, having a family, or retiring from work) and among traditionally underrepresented groups, including people with a disability.

Sport NI's 2018/19 Annual Report included an analysis of key performance indicators for the Every Body Active 2020 programme of £593,000 investment of grants.

Table 6 Every Body Active 2018 - 2020

Year	KPI	Target	Actual
2018/19	Participants with a disability	2,775	2,687
	% Participation	15%	9%
2019/20	Participants with a disability	16,020	15,027
	% Participation	18%	16%

The top five Every Body Active sports people with disabilities participated in for 2019/20 were;

1. Chair based exercises
2. Boccia
3. New Age Kurling
4. Walking
5. Dance

68% of respondents to the Every Body Active satisfaction survey reported that their frequency of sport participation had increased since taking part in Every Body Active in 2019/20. Also, 39% of participants with a disability reported that taking part has made their health and fitness 'much better' and 40% reported feeling 'slightly better'.

11.3 Uniting Communities (T:BUC)

Uniting Communities is a cross community youth sport and creativity programme delivered by the Department for Communities (DfC). Uniting Communities uses sport to build good relations between young people from different community backgrounds. It is delivered in both urban and rural settings to young people aged between 11-24 years and it focuses on youth engagement and leadership training. It seeks to deliver on the following outcomes;

- Engage young people in sport, physical and creative activity that brings communities together and helps create the next generation of community leaders;
- Positive attitude towards those from different political, religious, ethnic, and marginalised backgrounds; and
- Increased community capacity and capability.

Section 1.34 of the T:BUC strategy document refers to the '*Strategy to improve the lives of disabled people – 2012 to 2015*' and states that T:BUC seeks to build on the actions included in this document.

The 2018/19 T:BUC strategy update does not include information on the number of people with disabilities engaged in the sport programmes listed in the update report.⁷⁰

12 Impact of COVID-19

According to Sport England's Active Lives survey for 2019/20, prior to the full lockdown in mid-March 2020, there had been an increase in activity levels among people with disabilities in England. However, with the introduction of new restrictions in the last

⁷⁰ NI Executive Office TBUC 2018/19 Annual Update https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/tbuc-annual-report-2018-19_1.pdf Page accessed 22.01.2021

quarter of 2020, physical activity participation levels of people with disabilities dropped by almost 10%.⁷¹ Insight reports⁷² created by Activity Alliance (previously known as the English Federation of Disability Sport), concluded that;

‘...disabled people are less likely to feel they have the ability to be active because of coronavirus’.

Activity Alliance also noted the emergence of new inequalities for people with disabilities, due to COVID-19 restrictions. These included;

- People without access to outdoor space;
- People living alone; and
- People living in urban areas.

More than 50% of people with disabilities reported feeling worried about leaving their home to be physically active, compared to 36% of non-disabled people.

Recommendations for overcoming COVID-19 challenges included;

- plan for and provide safe opportunities to be active for those who are comfortable;
- provide online physical activities that are designed to increase connectedness, providing social and mental health benefits;
- connect with community organisations to help people be active at home (including those without digital access);
- provide clear information on safety and risk using Government and Sport NI guidelines;
- use inclusive communication and accessibility guidance;
- ensure inclusion is at the heart of any redevelopment plans using guidance such as Sport NI’s Recovery Framework;⁷³
- recognise that many people’s health or impairment have become harder to manage due to COVID-19 and lockdown; and
- inspire those who are less motivated by connecting with wider values and new needs (e.g. managing mental and physical health, social opportunities).

According to Sport NI’s COVID-19 funding dashboard, as of 8 January 2021, 33% of the 778 applications to the Sport NI Hardship fund were for disability sports.⁷⁴

Also, the coaches from the Every Body Active programme created a series of online activities that can be carried out at home.⁷⁵

⁷¹Sport England Active Lives Survey 2020 <https://indd.adobe.com/view/793b48d5-bbcd-4de3-a50f-11d241a506b3>

⁷² Activity Alliance COVID-19 Insights Report 2020 <http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/research/5854-covid19-and-disabled-people-snapshot-september-2020>

⁷³ Sport NI COVID-19 recovery framework 2020 <http://www.sportni.net/news/a-framework-to-guide-progression-towards-a-resumption-of-sport-and-physical-recreation-in-northern-ireland/> Page accessed 17.12.2020

⁷⁴ Sport NI COVID-19 Sport Hardship Fund Dashboard <http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/SHF-Summary-08.01.21.pdf> 20.01.2021

⁷⁵ Every Body Active Annual Report 2019/20 Page 22 <https://indd.adobe.com/view/920f2a62-5140-48cb-b6de-d3d9308ac37a>

13 Future plans

13.1 DfC's new sport and physical activity strategy

According to the DfC website, a new 10-year sports and physical activity strategy will be cross-departmental and focus on linkages between sport and physical activity and other policies of the Executive, such as physical and mental health and well-being, education, transport, urban and rural regeneration, good relations, community safety, social inclusion and economic and social equality.

Officials have been developing a new strategy for some years and continued during 2020 despite the constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is an expectation that the final outcome of the co-design and consultation process will conclude in early 2021.⁷⁶

13.2 DfC draft disability action plan 2020 – 2024

The DfC draft Disability Action Plan 2020 – 2024, included reference to sport provision for people with disabilities in Actions 2 and 3, as follows:

Table 7 DfC Draft Disability Action Plan 2020 - 2024⁷⁷ NB Sport related measures

Action Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicator
2. To continue the promotion of disability inclusion and the improvement of life experiences, health and well-being of people living with physical, sensory and learning disabilities through participation in sport and physical activities	31/03/2021 and annually thereafter.	The percentage of people with disabilities participating in sport and recreation (to encourage at least a 6% increase against the 2011 baseline of 23%. Sport Matters 2009-2019)
3. To raise awareness of, and encourage involvement from young people with disabilities on the T:BUC Uniting Communities programme, using sport and creativity to engage in activities that support increased participation in public life	31/03/2021 and annually thereafter	The number of participants engaged with a disability; 2018/19 (baseline): 35% The number of young leaders who have undergone disability awareness training; 2018/19 (baseline): 55 Qualitative and quantitative information on any Uniting Opportunities projects which specifically target young people with a disability (numbers engaged, activities undertaken, increases in confidence and self-efficacy levels, and e.gs of further engagement in community activity.)

Source: Department for Communities <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/communities/dfc-disability-action-plan-2020-consultation-plan.pdf>

⁷⁶ DfC New sport and physical activity strategy 2020 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/new-sport-and-physical-activity-strategy> Page accessed 22.01.2021

⁷⁷ DfC Draft Disability Action Plan 2020 <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/communities/dfc-disability-action-plan-2020-consultation-plan.pdf> Page accessed 22.01.2021

13.3 Sport NI Draft Corporate Plan 2020 – 2025

The consultation process for Sport NI's draft Corporate Plan was due to complete in February 2021. As part of the development process and in line with Sport NI's Disability Action Plan 2017-2020, an equality impact assessment was completed. This is part of Sport NI's statutory duties attached to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The draft corporate plan included two high level outcomes, committing Sport NI to lead and contribute to positive 'population based' change, through;

- lifelong participation in and enjoyment of sport and physical recreation (Outcome One); and
- by celebrating sporting success at the highest level (Outcome Two).

Acknowledging the barriers to sport for many people and groups in society, including people with a disability, Sport NI's commitment to '*closing the participation gap*' is listed as a continued priority for the Department for Communities and Sport NI.⁷⁸

Indicators listed, included;

- % of adults & children participating in sport & physical recreation, including those from under-represented groups (women/girls, people with a disability and those living in areas of highest social need);
- % of adults & children who belong to a sports club;
- % of adults who have volunteered in sport in the last 12 months; and
- % of adults who have coached in the last 12 months.

As of January 2021, specific targets and timescales have not been published.

⁷⁸ Sport NI Equality Impact Assessment 2020 <http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Equality-Impact-Assessment-Sport-NI-Corporate-Plan.pdf> Page accessed 20.01.2021

Annex 1

Summary of Active Living – No Limits Plan 2016 - 2021⁷⁹

Actions	Outputs
<p>1. Develop an infrastructure that enables and supports the delivery and monitoring of this Action Plan.</p>	<p>Linked to community planning, 11 District Council led Forums (potentially Every Body Active 2020 Reference Groups) will be in place which include a remit for Active Living: No Limits and which support the delivery of this Action Plan.</p> <p>At least two Active Living: No Limits networking events; one of which will be funding themed, and will be held per annum to support and inform relevant organisations and stakeholders within the sport and disability sport and active recreation sectors, and to identify joint working opportunities</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Active Living: No Limits Forum will provide an advocacy and challenge function, including lobbying for investment to support this Action Plan.</p> <p>A disability sport and active recreation research plan will be published that identifies at least five priority research topics to improve understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the disability sport sector</p> <p>Partnerships will be formed to encourage and develop an 'inclusive outdoors' e.g. to influence Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Plans or to engage with relevant Government Departments such as the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs</p>
<p>2. Develop, resource and deliver an Active Living: No Limits media and social media strategy to raise both awareness and the profile of disability sport and active recreation and change attitudes.</p>	<p>a. Develop and deliver a media and social media strategy including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Active Living: No Limits headline campaign rolled out. • Media / social media training delivered to disability sport organisations, inclusive sports clubs, and other stakeholders • A range of media partnerships established • Publish a series of positive articles on people with a disability engaged in sport and active recreation <p>.b. A bank of both inspirational active disabled people and high performance disabled athletes will be identified and engaged as Active Living: No Limits Ambassadors</p> <p>.c. A range of sports based education initiatives will be delivered to increase children's understanding of disability and challenge and address negative attitudes about people with disabilities</p>
<p>3. Develop and promote a fully accessible Active Living: No Limits website (and explore a phone app) with a robust, custom search engine to ensure people with a disability can access information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive active recreation opportunities and events • Inclusive sports clubs 	<p>An appropriately qualified organisation / agency will be commissioned to complete an audit of existing inclusive opportunities and support services and a database established to drive the Active Living: No Limits website</p> <p>b. An Active Living: No Limits website will be developed, launched and publicised.</p> <p>c. A site management plan will be developed and key site manager appointed.</p>

⁷⁹ Sport NI Active Living: No Limits 2016 <http://www.sportni.net/sportni/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Active-Living-No-Limits-Action-Plan-2016-2021.pdf> Page accessed 22.01.2021

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive recreation and outdoor recreation facilities. • Recreation specific training opportunities. • Recreation specific support services. • Disability Sport and Active Recreation Outreach Officers 	<p>d. Relationships will be developed to ensure links to the Active Living: No Limits website feature on District Council and other key stakeholders' websites.</p> <p>e. An alternative methodology will be developed and employed to ensure this information is also accessible to those who do not have access to technology</p>
<p>4. Establish a partnership with health care services to inform inactive people about opportunities</p>	<p>a. First points of contact within health care services (including GP Surgeries, Day Opportunities Programme, Social Work Teams, Occupational Therapy, Outreach Workers, Physical Activity Coordinators, Disability Teams, Promoting Wellbeing Teams, etc.) will be informed of the Active Living: No Limits website to enable them to signpost and encourage individuals to use this service.</p> <p>b. Links will be made with providers of the Regional Physical Activity Referral Scheme to share information and promote tools such as the Active Living: No Limits website.</p>
<p>5. The health and wellbeing benefits of sustained participation will be promoted to encourage people with disabilities to adopt and sustain active healthy behaviours</p>	<p>a. A review of existing health promotion materials / publications will be completed and those identified as relevant will be amended and/or reproduced in accessible formats and publicised, through both established and innovative channels, in particularly targeting the hardest to reach impairment groups i.e. people with physical disabilities, blind and partially sighted people and people who are deaf or hard of hearing.</p>
<p>6. Increase awareness of local accessible community transport schemes to reduce barriers to participation in sport and active recreation opportunities</p>	<p>a. Relationships with local community transport schemes will be established and information on appropriate services shared with potential users.</p> <p>b. Community planning bodies will be influenced to include transport / access to sporting facilities and opportunities as a priority.</p> <p>c. Resourcing of existing community transport schemes and potential opportunities arising from new proposals such as the Integrated Passenger Transport Project and the Accessible Transport Strategy will be explored</p>
<p>7. Increase aware-ness of and the availability of Inclusive Sports Facilities (ISF) across Northern Ireland</p>	<p>a. A register of ISF accredited facilities will be developed / updated and publicised via the Active Living: No Limits website and other means.</p> <p>b. The ISF and all other agreed accreditation schemes will be promoted widely to agreed target groups e.g. District Councils, and encouraged as best practice</p>
<p>8. Governing Bodies of Sport and stadia operators will be encouraged and supported to develop more inclusive stadia and increase the number of spectators with disabilities</p>	<p>a. Inclusive stadia design and management guidelines reviewed and promoted.</p> <p>b. Sports facility access advisory group established and facilitated.</p> <p>c. Larger stadia encouraged to produce spectator development plans designed to increase the number of disabled spectators</p>
<p>9. Develop a holistic local recreation plan, linked to the Active Living: No Limits Action Plan, that ensures a range of needs-based high quality sport and active recreation opportunities for people with disabilities are delivered, in each of the 11 District Council Areas.</p>	<p>a. A gaps analysis of sport and active recreation opportunities will be undertaken, using the findings from action 3a.</p> <p>b. 11 District Council Area Plans will be developed, with guidance, and delivered to increase the choice, consistency and availability of high quality, inclusive opportunities, across Northern Ireland, for people with a disability to participate in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability specific activities • Impairment specific activities, especially for the hardest to reach groups i.e. people with physical disabilities, blind and partially sighted people and people who are deaf or hard of hearing. • Activities with their non-disabled peers <p>c. 'Wheelie Active Clubs' will be established in each District Council Area.</p> <p>d. The potential for disability sport and active recreation outreach officers, in each District Council Area, specifically to support and engage inactive</p>

	<p>people with disabilities and encourage life-long participation will be explored and resourced where possible.</p> <p>e. Roles of existing Sports Development Officers, to Countryside Officers, etc. will be influenced to enable them to identify and refer participation opportunities and potential access improvements to appropriate bodies / organisations.</p> <p>f. Relationships will be developed with private providers, e.g. organisations managing public leisure facilities, to support the delivery of the local plans.</p> <p>g. Each District Council Area Plan will consider and take account of its own local recreation plan</p> <p>.h. Inclusive outdoor projects / initiatives will be developed with relevant outdoor recreation providers to complement and/or support the delivery of the local plans</p> <p>.i. Links will be established and opportunities explored with the Education Authority's Standing Committee, appointed to encourage, facilitate and promote the community use of school premises</p>
<p>10. Provide structured support to community organisations and mainstream sports clubs and Governing Bodies of Sport to identify and remove barriers and provide high quality active recreation opportunities.</p>	<p>a. Support at least 15 Governing Bodies of Sport to provide a range of inclusive taster opportunities per annum, ensuring links are provided to sustained participation opportunities.</p> <p>b. Support to sports clubs to provide a range of inclusive taster opportunities per annum, ensuring links are provided to sustained participation opportunities.</p> <p>c. Support to link new and existing opportunities for people with a disability to both active and inactive potential participants. d. Support to build capacity of Governing Bodies of Sport and sports clubs to reduce barriers for people with a disability participating in their sport and strengthen existing disability sections.</p> <p>e. Support to sports clubs to obtain ClubMark.</p> <p>f. Support to Governing Bodies of Sport to obtain the 'Inclusive Sport' Award.</p> <p>g. An annual case study will be produced and shared for an inclusive sports club / Governing Body of Sport to promote good practice.</p> <p>h. A range of inclusive sport and active recreation good practice and guidance tools will be identified and/or developed and promoted.</p> <p>i. Access to outdoor recreation will be improved through engagement and collaboration with the NORF.</p>
<p>11. Provide structured support to disability specific sports clubs to build capacity, develop relationships and provide high quality active recreation opportunities (including provision of fully accessible support and guidance tools).</p>	<p>a. Support will be given to build capacity of existing disability specific sports clubs to strengthen and grow their clubs and ensure people with a disability can sustain participation in sport.</p> <p>b. Support will be given to establish new disability sport clubs.</p> <p>c. Support will be given to clubs to obtain ClubMark.</p> <p>d. An annual case study will be produced and shared to promote good practice.</p> <p>e. A range of fully accessible, inclusive sport and active recreation good practice and guidance tools will be identified and/or developed and promoted.</p>
<p>12. Develop a network of quality multi-sport hubs across Northern Ireland which are fully accredited, accessible to everyone and offer and actively promote inclusive dedicated sport and active recreation opportunities.</p>	<p>a. Multi-sport fully accessible, ISF accredited sports facilities, with trained staff, will be established in each District Council area.</p> <p>b. New accreditation schemes, which may complement or provide additionality to ISF, will be: (i) explored, e.g. the 'DEAFinitely Inclusive' Accreditation Scheme; or, (ii) developed e.g. a recognition and/or accreditation scheme for outdoor recreation facilities and providers</p>

	<p>.c. All agreed accreditation schemes will be encouraged as an essential requirement in all publicly funded facilities.</p> <p>d. One 'Disability Sports Hub' with pools of sports chairs and inclusive sports equipment for other impairment groups will be established in each District Council area and will offer inclusive, sustained dedicated opportunities, which have fully considered communication support.e. Each 'Disability Sports Hub' will become renowned for supporting disability sport, housing sporting trophies and memorabilia.</p>
13. Develop a skilled and inclusive workforce in the sport, leisure, education and outdoor recreation sectors by providing a range of courses in Disability Awareness, Diversity and Social Inclusion, and Inclusive Continuous Professional Development (CPD).	<p>a. A range of tailored toolkits and training courses will be identified or developed for each target group and delivery will be supported.</p> <p>b. Training delivered by people with disabilities e.g. Disability Equality Training will be supported</p> <p>c. A 'Disabled People Workforce' Programme will be developed and resourced to recruit, train and employ people with disabilities as coaches and other roles within the sport, leisure, education and outdoor recreation sectors.</p> <p>d. Volunteer recruitment and development programmes will be supported to engage both disabled and non-disabled people in leadership and volunteering activities</p>
14. Develop and publish guidance to schools on the inclusion of children with disabilities in school sport and PE.	<p>a. Guidelines for schools on the inclusion of children with disabilities in school sport and PE will be developed and published, in partnership with relevant bodies.</p> <p>b. A research project will be included within the Active Living: No Limits research plan to establish baselines and attitudes to sport and physical activity within the education system</p>
15. Develop and promote clear participation pathways across a minimum of 15 sports to ensure people with disabilities can participate and compete in organised sport at a level that is appropriate for them.	<p>a. Partnerships will be developed with a minimum of 15 Governing Bodies of Sport, and also the disability specific sports of wheelchair basketball, Boccia and wheelchair rugby, to develop pathways and ensure talented disabled athletes are supported.</p> <p>b. An annual good practice report will be published documenting case studies to promote and share good practice (to include those detailed in actions 10g and 11d).</p> <p>c. Guidance on talent identification and sporting pathways for young people with a disability will be provided to teachers via guidelines to be developed at 14a.</p> <p>d. Governing Bodies of Sport and disability sport organisations will be supported to develop competition structures and deliver a number of recreational and formal competitive events for people with disabilities (both regional and Northern Ireland wide)</p>
16. Disability Sport High Performance Centre established to support the development of the disability specific sports of wheelchair basketball, Boccia and wheelchair rugby	<p>a. Potential sites will be explored and a Disability Sport High Performance Centre will be established within an existing or new build multi-sport facility.</p> <p>b. Relationships will be established to support the development of a Disability Sport High Performance Centre</p>
17. Establish partnerships to facilitate the hosting of at least one annual disability sporting event.	<p>a. A list of target sports will be identified, based on their capacity and capability of supporting legacy participation opportunities.</p> <p>b. A list of potential sporting events, within the target sports, will be created and partnerships explored and developed to ensure five events are hosted within Northern Ireland between 2016 - 2021</p>

Annex 2

Summary of Disability Sport NI initiatives 2018/19⁸⁰

Initiative Description	Locations	Outcomes
Inclusive Sport Facility Accreditation Scheme	Omagh LC Tollymore National Outdoor Centre Glenravel SCC LORAG, Shaftesbury CRC Torrent Complex Vale Centre RDA Causeway Coast Arena Bready Cricket Club Beragh Red Knights GAC Bangor Aurora Aquatic and LC Ballymote Sports and Wellbeing Centre Lakeland Forum Dungiven Sports Centre Foyle Arena	14 centres accredited Dungiven Sports Centre and Foyle Arena became first centres to achieve Excellence level
Inclusive Sport and Leisure Initiative	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	1016 participants, 72 trainees, 4 inclusive sports days at schools
Everybody Active 2020 Programme Developing the Belfast Disability Sports Hub North/West and South/East Belfast active recreation sessions National Lottery funded to support sustainable active recreation opportunities for people with a disability	Belfast City Council	1233 participants 2486 participants
Disability Sports Hub Projects 3 year partnership with Progressive Building Society to fund a part time Activity Leader in every council area of NI. Three new disability sports clubs will be developed in each council area	11 council areas	24,883 participation opportunities to 3696 participants across 11 hubs
Women and Girls in Sport Project. Funded by DfC through Sport NI		1327 female participants 49 FitHer Programmes for 387 participants 22 My Sport, My Story Workshops to 573 post primary pupils 283 pupils from 10 special schools and 10 mainstream schools 54 tickets for disabled spectators through the Female Spectator Initiative 30 coaches and girl guide leaders received Disability Inclusion Training

⁸⁰ Disability Sport NI Annual Report 2018/19 <https://indd.adobe.com/view/3cad0b37-51e4-4c62-b695-9024f46e9f21>

Get Out, Get Active Programme Funded by Spirit of 2012, supporting disabled and non-disabled people to get active together	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Derry City and Strabane District Council	1323 participants
Community Events Disability Open Swimming Championships with Swim Ulster Schools Boccia Championships	Newry Leisure Centre Girdwood Community Hub and Craigavon Leisure Centre Girdwood Community Hub	94 participants 140 participants
Senior Boccia Championships	Girdwood Community Hub Foyle Arena and Craigavon Leisure Centre Lagan Valley Leisureplex	46 participants
Schools New Age Kurling Competition		191 participants
Sports Hall Athletics Tournament		80 participants
All Out Trekking funding from DfC for £449,000 to purchase 18 specialised inclusive buggies and 10 mainstream mountain bikes and refurbish storage facilities	Gosford Forest Park	
6 Poolpod submersible platform lifts	Joey Dunlop Centre Antrim Forum Cookstown Leisure Centre Lagan Valley Leisure Centre Seven Towers Leisure Centre Banbridge Leisure Centre	
Athlete Support		Kelly Gallagher – Alpine Skiing Claire Taggart – Boccia James MacSorley – Wheelchair Basketball
Pupil to Paralympian Training to help teachers signpost children with disabilities to appropriate sports participation and competition opportunities		Delivered to 18 teachers
Mary Peters Trust – DSNI facilitated applications to the Mary Peter Trust for athletes competing at a UK or Irish level		Conn Nagle – Wheelchair Basketball Jayne Milligan – Boccia

Active Clubs Programme funded by Sport NI and National Lottery, working with mainstream clubs and disability organisations on developing regular and sustainable inclusive sports for people with a disability		569 participants
Inclusive Sport Award recognises governing bodies of sport who make a commitment to creating an inclusive sports environment	7 Governing Bodies Irish Football Association Athletics NI Ulster Rugby Swim Ulster Ulster Tennis RYA Judo Fed RYA NI	3 more awarded in 2019 – RYA NI, Ulster Tennis and NI Judo Federation Inclusive Club of the Year Awards Inclusive Disability Club of the Year = Fermanagh Lakers Boccia Club Inclusive Mainstream Club of the Year = CIYMS Tennis Club
Wheelchair Basketball Programme through Sport NI's Sporting Winners and Active Clubs programmes		James MacSorley represented the GB and NI Men's Senior Team at the World Championships and won gold. NI U19 squad came 4th in Elite 8s in April 2018 3 NI players represented NI in U23 GB and NI squad
Boccia Delivered through Sport NI's Sporting Winners and Active Clubs programmes		Claire Taggart represented GB and NI in Boccia World Championships in Liverpool Claire Taggart secured Gold and Silver in European Regional Open and won Gold securing the UK Championship title 2 athletes selected to progress to Boccia UK's Performance Transition Programme Three medals secured at the 201 Scottish Int'l Open
Education and Awareness Projects provided for 1350 children and adults	Disability Awareness Activity Sessions Council Disability Awareness Events and Sessions in 4 council areas 5 star Disability Sports Challenges	856 participants 449 participants 45 participants
Training Programmes for sports leaders, coaches, leisure services staff and teachers to better include people with disabilities in sport and active recreation	16 Disability Inclusion Training 6 Autism and Sports Coaching 10 Games for All / Inclusive Skills and Games 2 Wheelchair Sports Skills 1 UKCC Level 1 Boccia Officials 4 Medical talks to NHS Staff 1 Inclusive Climbing 1 Wheelchair Track Racing Workshop 1 Archery Specific Community Instructors Course	64 courses 939 participants 61 volunteers

	1 Boxing Inclusion Workshop 1 Goalball Leaders Award 4 Boccia Leaders Award 3 Sight Loss in Sport 2 Tandem Pilot Training 1 Pupil to Paralympian 10 Sainsbury's Inclusive PE	
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Source DSNI Annual Report 2018/19

[https://www.dsni.co.uk/files/DSNI Annual Report 2019 Print Version PREVIEW.pdf](https://www.dsni.co.uk/files/DSNI%20Annual%20Report%202019%20Print%20Version%20PREVIEW.pdf)