



SPÓRT ÉIREANN
SPORT IRELAND

Sport Ireland Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities





Purpose

The document externalises much of what has been implicit in our work with the sport sector for many years and explicitly sets out our position in relation to the participation in sport and physical activity by people with disabilities. Thus it provides a clear policy context for the promotion of sport for people with disabilities and a basis for an enhanced and more concerted approach by us and the organisations we work with in this regard.

Sport Ireland

Sport Ireland was established on October 1 2015. It is the authority tasked with the development of sport in Ireland. This includes participation in sport, high performance sport, anti-doping, coaching and the development of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus. Thus, our remit ranges from encouraging excellence in “competitive sport” to facilitating increased participation in “recreational sport” throughout the population. Our long-standing vision for sport is one where:

- sport contributes to enhancing the quality of Irish life and everyone is encouraged and valued in sport
- young people see sport participation as an integral and enjoyable part of their busy lives
- individuals can develop their sporting abilities and enhance their enjoyment, limited only by their talent and commitment
- Irish sportsmen and women achieve consistent world-class performance, fairly

Thus our statutory remit and strategic vision require that we take account, and serve the needs, of people with disabilities across the sporting spectrum.



Our Commitment

We are committed to the equal treatment of people with disabilities when it comes to their participation in sport and physical activity in line with Article 30.5 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which states:

“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 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;
- e. To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organisation of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.”

Rationale

The rationale for our commitment is relatively straightforward. Enhancing the proportion of the population engaging in regular physical activity is beneficial for the individual, the community and wider society. Even with our efforts to date and those of other organisations to increase participation in sport and physical activity among people with disabilities, participation levels are still considerably lower than those among the general population; also people with disabilities are significantly more likely to be sedentary than people without disabilities (see Research Background below). There is therefore a policy imperative to further focus the efforts of Sport Ireland and relevant sport and physical activity organisations to address these disability gradients.

This policy imperative is recognised in Ireland’s first-ever National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland (NPAP, 2016) which aims “to increase physical activity levels across the entire population thereby improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland...” The NPAP took account of the Toronto Charter for Physical Activity: A Global Call to Action (2010), among whose nine principles two are particularly relevant to this current document:

- “Adopt evidence-based strategies that target the whole population as well as specific population sub-groups, particularly those facing the greatest barriers; and
- Embrace an equity approach aimed at reducing social and health inequalities and disparities of access to physical activity.”

It is also important that in terms of the promotion of high performance sport, that Sport Ireland continues to support and acknowledge the contribution of athletes with a disability.

Benefits of Physical Activity

There is a substantial body of research evidence demonstrating that being physically active is beneficial to individuals in terms of their physical and mental health, well-being, cognitive function, increased longevity, etc. In turn, these individual benefits contribute to positive outcomes for the community and for wider society through health savings, social engagement, greater productivity, etc. The benefits apply to individuals whether or not they have a disability, a sentiment acknowledged by the Expert Committee set up to provide the scientific evidence underpinning the development of the first ever US Guidelines on Physical Activity in 2008. In communicating the Guidelines to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Expert Committee noted that

“The health benefits of being habitually physically active appear to apply to all people regardless of age, sex, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status and...people with physical or cognitive disabilities.”

Given this, what do we know about the participation rates of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity in Ireland?

Research Background

There are a number of sources available to look at the participation of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity in Ireland. These include the 2006 Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS), the Irish Sports Monitor (ISM 2007 – 2015), Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) and The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA). While these surveys use different methods and questionnaires to record participation in sport and physical activity, some consistent messages have emerged from them including the following:



- Among adults, individuals with disabilities are significantly less likely to participate in sport and exercise than those without disabilities. The QNHS recorded that 38% of adults with disabilities participated in sport and exercise compared to 66% of those without disabilities while the 2015 ISM recorded that 27% of adults with disabilities participated in sport compared to 49% of those without a disability. Relatively speaking, the differentials from both surveys are very similar;
- Persons with disabilities have similar motivations to those without disabilities for taking part in sport and physical activity. The three main motivations among both groups are improving health and fitness, spending time with friends and family and controlling weight (ISM 2013);
- Individuals with a disability are significantly more likely to be sedentary and less likely to be highly active than people without disabilities. In the 2015 ISM, 23% of individuals with a limiting disability were sedentary and 20% were highly active compared to 10% and 32% respectively of those without a disability.

Current Provision

Sport Ireland currently funds (see Appendix A) and works with a range of organisations providing and promoting opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sport and physical activity. Included among these are:

- National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) both catering exclusively for people with disabilities (Deaf Sports Ireland, Irish Wheelchair Association, Special Olympics Ireland and Vision Sport Ireland) and some mainstream NGBs (i.e. those which have the capacity and capability to include people with disabilities in their programmes);
- Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) primarily through the work of the Sports Inclusion Disability Programme;
- CARA advocates for the inclusion of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity, encourages a national vision while supporting local provision, and builds capacity through education and training programmes. CARA also supports Local Sports Partnerships and National Governing Bodies in relation to their inclusive policies and practices; and
- Paralympics Ireland, the lead agency in the support of high performance athletes with disabilities.

In turn these organisations engage with others in delivering programmes, in promoting and advocating inclusion, and in developing capacity and capability all with the aim of increasing participation in sport and physical activity among people with disabilities. Such organisations include, at national level, the Health Service Executive, National Disability Authority, the National Council for the Blind, Enable Ireland, Inclusion Ireland, Disability Federation of Ireland, Local Authorities and Ireland Active; and at local level, those organisations which provide direct services to people with disabilities. Through the work carried out at the Sport Ireland Institute and by Sport Ireland Coaching, and the sports facilities managed at Sport Ireland National Sports Campus, Sport Ireland is also directly providing services for people with disabilities in respect of participation and high performance sport. This includes the support of high performance athletes via, the Disability NGBs and Paralympics Ireland, as they take part in World Games and Paralympic Games.

The above body of work represents a significant contribution to the advancement of people with disabilities in terms of their participation and performance in sport and physical activity. Much of it will continue. However, we believe that there is a need to underpin the work with a greater sense of policy coherence and coordination, and with enhanced transparency and accountability, hence the evolution of this document. Some guiding principles are required to underpin and shape our role and future efforts to ensure that there is greater clarity within the sector around what we are trying to achieve and to ensure that the delivery of the sector's efforts are more effective and accountable.



Our Principles

In our efforts to deliver on the overall commitment set out above we will:

- Adopt an inclusive approach across the entire organisation and in our interaction with organisations and individuals. We will also actively promote such an approach throughout the sport and physical activity sector;
- Include the voice of persons with disabilities in our deliberations and programme development;
- Work collaboratively with organisations and individuals seeking to enhance the participation of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity and promote a collaborative approach throughout the sport and physical activity system;
- Promote good governance throughout the organisations to ensure provision for the participation of people with disabilities;
- Provide funding based on clear criteria and conditions to those organisations and account for that funding transparently;
- Look to increase the capacity of the sector by promoting organisational development through education and training of all personnel;
- Adopt an evidence-based approach to our efforts in promoting active and social participation among people with disabilities in sport and physical activity;
- Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions, achievements and successes of our colleagues and stakeholders in the disability sector;
- Ensure that all sports facilities directly managed or State-funded are fully accessible in terms of physical and programme access;
- Fully engage with the disability sector in developing policies and programmes.

Our Actions

In implementing this policy in line with the principles articulated above we will:

- Internally, establish a working group to assist and advise on our work in relation to people with disabilities in sport and physical activity and designate a support role to a staff member;
- Include in all future strategies our specific commitments for the disability sector including targets across participation and high performance;
- Include in our annual reports a detailed accounting of our activities in relation to the disability sector for the previous 12 months;
- Provide training for all our Board members and staff around disability awareness in sport and physical activity;
- Complete the internal review of the Sports Inclusion Disability Programme and ensure that the review's recommendations are implemented;
- Commit all grantees to sign up to a Disability Sport Inclusion Charter;
- Develop grant criteria and conditions to encourage implementation of the Charter throughout sport, acknowledging that a phased approach will be required which takes account of the different levels of resources available to, and readiness of, NGBs and LSPs;
- Support organisational development of agencies in the disability sport sector;
- Support the education and training of personnel, including coaches and other physical activities leaders;
- Designate CARA as the supporting organisation to assist with the implementation of Sport Ireland's policy commitments in relation to participation in sport and physical activity among people with disabilities;
- Continue to support Paralympics Ireland as the lead organisation for high performance sport in the disability sector;
- Ensure that the Sport Ireland Institute and high performance service providers sign up to the Disability Charter;
- Include disability issues in sport and physical activity in our research programme and liaise with the disability sector and other relevant agencies (for example, Central Statistics Office) to ensure that participation in sport and physical activity by people with disabilities is regularly monitored and reported on and is evidence based; and
- Promote sport and physical activity for people with disabilities through our communication activities.



Appendix A - Sport Ireland Funding to the Disability Sport Sector 2017

LSP SIDO and Non-SIDO Allocations 2017

LSP	SIDO and Non-SIDO Allocation
Carlow	€8,000
Cavan	Shared with Monaghan
Clare	€25,000
Cork	€25,000
Donegal	€25,000
Dublin City	€2,000*
Fingal	€2,000*
Kildare	€24,000 (Sharing with South Dublin)
Kilkenny	€25,000
Laois	€17,500
Leitrim	€2,000*
Limerick	€12,500
Longford	Sharing with Westmeath
Mayo	€25,000
Meath	€25,000
Monaghan	€20,000 (Shared with Cavan)
Offaly	€14,719
Roscommon	€2,000*
Sligo	€25,000
South Dublin County	Sharing with Kildare
Tipperary	€2,000*
Waterford	€16,126
Westmeath	€25,000 (Sharing with Longford)
Wexford	€2,000*

*Non-SIDO Allocation

Funding to Disability NGBs, CARA and Paralympics Ireland 2017

NGB	2017 Core Allocation
Deaf Sports Ireland	€61,000
Vision Sports Ireland	€35,000
Irish Wheelchair Association	€249,000
Special Olympics Ireland	€1,200,000
Paralympics Ireland	€375,000 (Core) €665,000 (High Performance) €45,000 (Cerebral Palsy Programme)
CARA	€75,000 (Dormant Accounts €180,000)

Carded Athletes 2017

NGB	Athlete	Category	Funding
Cycling Ireland	Colin Lynch (para cycling)	Podium	€40,000
Cycling Ireland	Eoghan Clifford (para cycling)	Podium	€40,000
Cycling Ireland	Katie George Dunlevy + Pilot (para cycling)	Podium	€60,000
Cycling Ireland	Damien Vereker + Pilot (para cycling)	World Class	€30,000
Cycling Ireland	Declan Slevin	International	€12,000
Cycling Ireland	Peter Ryan + Pilot (para cycling)	International	€18,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Jason Smyth	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Michael McKillop	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Orla Barry	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Noelle Lenihan	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Niamh McCarthy	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Greta Streimikyte	World Class	€20,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Deirdre Mongan	International	€12,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Orla Comerford	International	€12,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Patrick Monahan	International	€12,000
Paralympic Swimming Ireland	Ellen Keane	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Swimming Ireland	Nicole Turner	World Class	€20,000
Paralympic Swimming Ireland	James Scully	International	€12,000
Paralympic Swimming Ireland	Ailbhe Kelly	International	€12,000
Paralympic Table Tennis	Rena McCarron	International	€12,000
Paralympic Canoeing	Patrick O'Leary	International	€12,000



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