

Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024

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Disability
Sport NI

Be active.
Be the best.



Claire Taggart,
Boccia Paralympian



Schools Sports Hall Athletics Championships, Lisburn

Contents

About Us 5

The Challenge 6

Our Vision, Mission and Strategic Outcomes 8

Our Values 9

The Benefits of Sport and Active Recreation10

Our Definition of Sport11

Our Sport and Active Recreation Participation Model..... 12

Our Five Strategic Priorities 15

- **Strategic Priority 1:**
Improving Health and Wellbeing
- **Strategic Priority 2:**
Developing Sporting Talent
- **Strategic Priority 3:**
Inclusive Sports Facilities and Outdoor Places
- **Strategic Priority 4:**
Communications, Training and Engagement
- **Strategic Priority 5:**
Governance and Income Generation

How We Will Measure Success 23

Conn Nagle, Wheelchair Basketball Athlete



Antrim Wheelie Active Club



About Us

Disability Sport NI is Northern Ireland's main disability sports charity working to improve the health and wellbeing of disabled people through sport and active recreation.

We work with people with physical, sensory and learning disabilities of all ages and with schools, disability groups, sporting organisations and clubs to ensure that everyone can benefit from the health, social and education benefits of sport and active recreation.

We believe that every person with a disability has the right to participate in all aspects of life and are committed to building a more inclusive society where people with disabilities have the same opportunity as non-disabled people to lead a full, active and healthy lifestyle through sport and active recreation.

Launched in 1998 by a number of small disability sports groups to address the under representation of disabled people in sport, we have gradually grown to represent the vast majority of disability sports groups and clubs in Northern Ireland.

We currently have 117 member groups made up of disability sports groups, schools and adult centres and organise a range of participation programmes, events, training courses and education projects all designed to improve the health and wellbeing of disabled people.

We also work closely with Governing Bodies of Sport and British and Irish performance sports organisations to ensure that talented disabled sports people have the same opportunity as their non-disabled peers to train, compete and excel in their chosen sport on the world stage.

We have also developed a strong partnership with our main funders Sport Northern Ireland and the Department for Communities and continue to work with them and other government departments and District Councils to develop and implement strategies and programmes designed to further reduce the underrepresentation of disabled people in sport and active recreation.

Disability Sport NI is a limited company with charitable status and is a member of the British Paralympic Association, Boccia UK, Disability Action, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and the Northern Ireland Sports Forum. Disability Sport NI also maintains close links with Paralympics Ireland.

The Challenge

There has been a welcome improvement in the provision of sports and active recreation opportunities for disabled people in Northern Ireland over the period of our last strategic plan from April 2016 to March 2020.

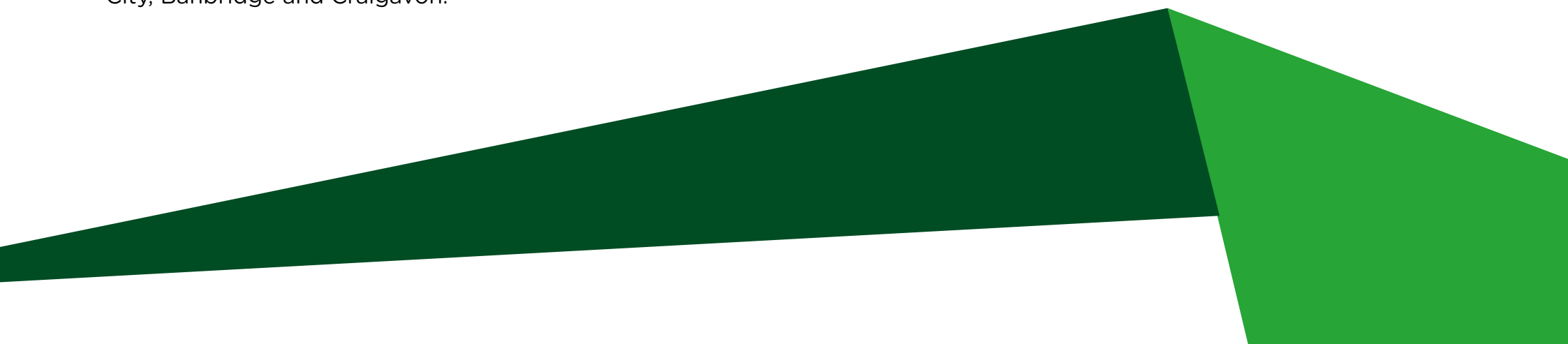
Most significantly a joined up inter-agency approach to improving the health and wellbeing of disabled people through participation in sport and active recreation was adopted in Northern Ireland for the first time with the launch of the Active Living: No Limits Action Plan in 2016. During the period there was also a significant increase in the number of participation projects and initiatives for disabled people throughout Northern Ireland.

District Council sports and leisure projects have increasingly targeted inactive and disabled people with specific disability focused projects successfully delivered by councils in partnership with Disability Sport NI in three areas; Belfast, Derry City & Strabane and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon.

A number of Governing Bodies of Sport have also become much more proactive in including disabled people in their programmes and talented athletes from Northern Ireland once again excelled in competition on the world stage including at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

Indeed these welcome improvements in provision are reflected in Northern Ireland wide statistics which indicate a 4% increase in participation in sport by disabled people over a four year period.

However despite this success the reality remains that opportunities for disabled people to participate in sport and active recreation in Northern Ireland are still not being provided on the scale required to give people with disabilities the same opportunities as non-disabled people to live a full, active and healthy lifestyle.



Indeed statistics show that disabled people in Northern Ireland remain half as likely to participate in sport and active recreation as non-disabled people:



One in five people in Northern Ireland has a disability or long term health condition – that's **21%** of the population.

(Census 2011)



Disabled people are **less than half** as likely to participate in sport as non-disabled people, with **24%** participating in sport in the last four weeks compared to **49%** of non-disabled people.

(Experience of Sport in Northern Ireland. Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2018/19)



Disabled people are **half** as likely to be a member of a sports club or organisation, i.e. **14%** of disabled people compared to **27%** of non-disabled people.

(Experience of Sport in Northern Ireland. Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2018/19)



Disabled people are **much less** likely to attend a live sports event in Northern Ireland – that's **22%** of disabled people compared to **36%** of non-disabled people.

(Experience of Sport in Northern Ireland. Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2018/19)

The Challenge during the period of this plan then is to build on the success of our work to date both in community and performance sport but also to have a greater focus on:

- **Collaborating** with District Councils to sustain existing and develop new sports and active recreation projects which improve the health and wellbeing of disabled people and people with long term health conditions.
- **Supporting** more Governing Bodies of Sport to develop inclusive sports programmes.
- **Developing** more impairment specific programmes, particularly for people with sensory disabilities, in partnership with key disability organisations.
- **Meeting the need** for access related services in the sports sector.
- **Effectively communicating and engaging** with more disabled people, disability groups and the wider community.

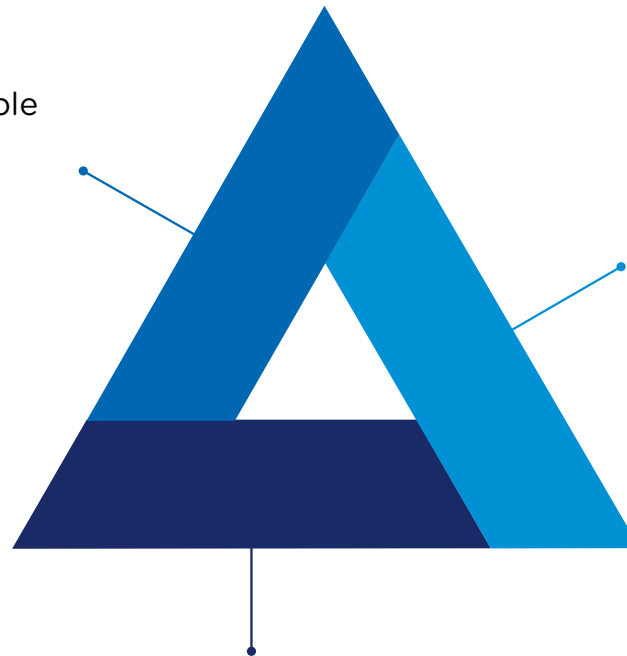
Our Vision, Mission and Strategic Outcomes

Our Vision for the future is:

An inclusive society where disabled people fully participate in all aspects of life, including sport and active recreation.

Our Mission is:

To develop sports and active recreation opportunities which give disabled people an equal opportunity to live a full, active and healthy lifestyle.



Our Strategic Outcomes are:

- A more equal and inclusive society, where more disabled people participate, compete and excel in sport and active recreation at a level of their choice.
- The improved health and wellbeing of disabled people.
- Equality of access for disabled people to participate in sport and active recreation throughout Northern Ireland.

Our Values

Inclusion

We believe that disabled people have the right to be fully included in every aspect of society, including sport and active recreation.

In sport and active recreation, we believe that for most disabled people inclusion can be best achieved through mainstreaming, that is the inclusion of disabled people in **mainstream** sports sessions, clubs and participation programmes alongside their non-disabled friends and peers.

However, we also believe that true inclusion also requires the provision of **parallel and disability specific** activities and programmes where required.

Equality

We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and will carry out our work in a manner which promotes equality of opportunity between disabled people and non-disabled people, between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, race, age, marital status or sexual orientation, between men and women generally and between persons with dependants and persons without.

The Social Model of Disability

We are committed to the social model of disability. That is, we believe that disability is caused by the barriers that exist in society and by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. The social model of disability is concerned with removing barriers so that disabled people can participate in all aspects of society and live full and independent lives.

Excellence

We are committed to excellence in everything we do and will strive to achieve the highest possible standards in our programmes, services and governance.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

We are committed to developing a culture and approach that promotes the positive mental health and wellbeing of our staff, volunteers, participants and athletes.

The Benefits of Sport and Active Recreation

At the heart of who we are is the belief that participation in sport and active recreation at any level is a positive and transformational experience. Sport and active recreation not only has the power to enhance the quality of life of the individual, but it can also be a tool for positive social change.

We believe the benefits of sport are:

- > **Lifelong Enjoyment and Fulfilment:** Whether it's the fun and enjoyment of taking part, the thrill or challenge of competing, or the opportunity to socialise and make friends, sport and active recreation offers participants lifelong enjoyment and fulfilment.
- > **Improved Health and Wellbeing:** Regular participation greatly improves the general health and fitness of participants. It can also play a vital role in improving public health, by contributing to reductions in the effect of long-term health conditions.
- > **Increased Academic Achievement:** There is growing evidence that active involvement in sport and active recreation can help improve children's academic performance.
- > **Social Inclusion:** In a society where disabled people are marginalised, participation in sport can help build confidence and self esteem and create opportunities for disabled people to play an active role in their local community.
- > **Changing Attitudes:** Sport provides an ideal vehicle to showcase the abilities and achievements of disabled people, thereby challenging and addressing commonly held negative attitudes and misconceptions about disabled people in society.

Our Definition of Sport

We adopt the following broad definition of sport as defined in 2003 by the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace:

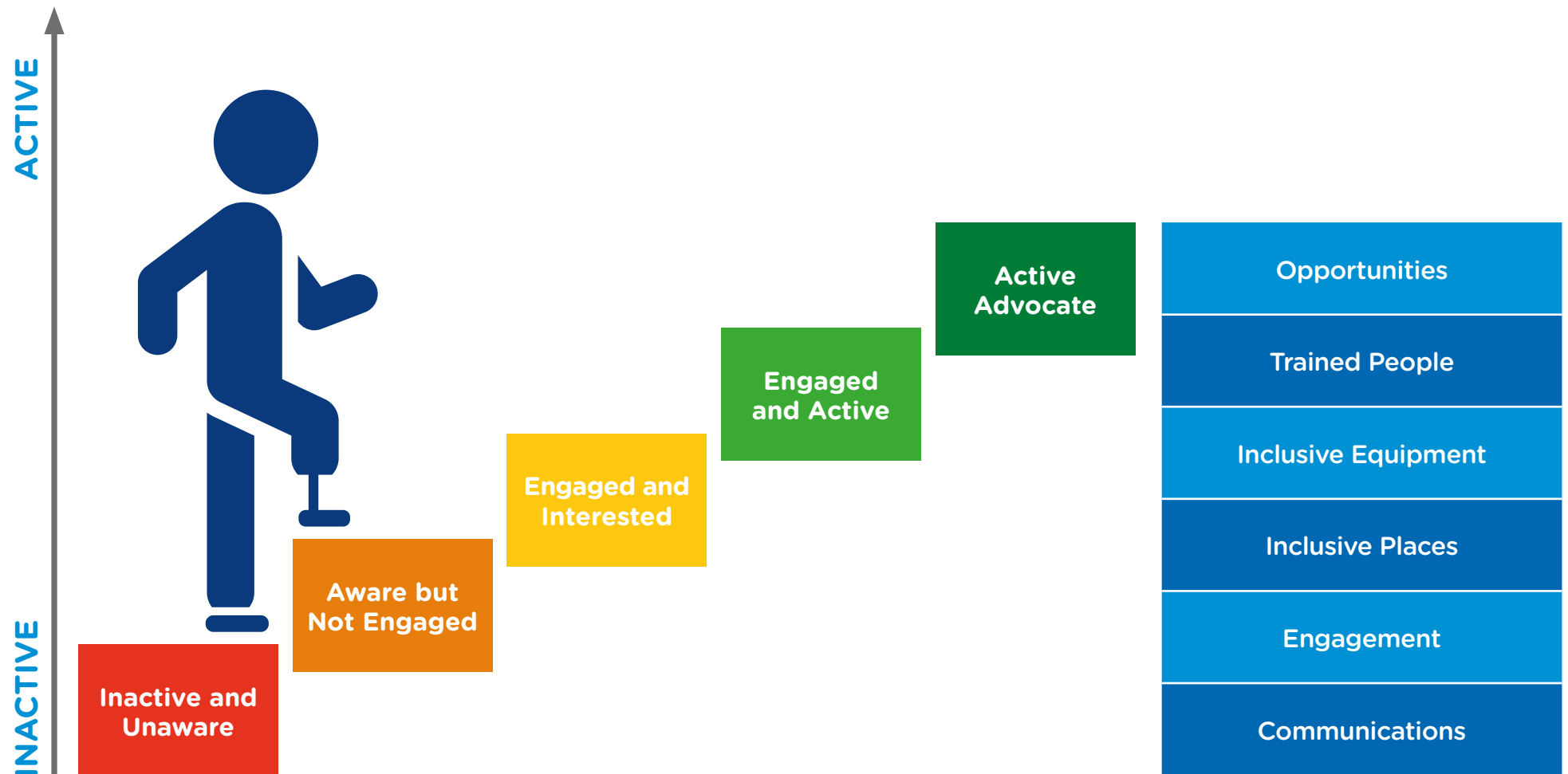
“All forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. These include: play; recreation; organised, casual or competitive sport and indigenous sports and games.”

To better reflect our broad definition of sport we use the words sport and active recreation throughout this document.

Kelly Gallagher MBE,
Alpine Skiing Paralympian
with guide Gary Smith.



Our Sport and Active Recreation Participation Model



Our Sport and Active Recreation Participation Model explains the key 'building blocks' that we believe need to be in place to support individual disabled people's journey from inactivity to full participation in sport and active recreation:

- > **Communications** - Effectively communicating with disabled people through a range of marketing and digital media channels about the benefits of sport and active recreation and the opportunities available.
- > **Engagement** - Effectively engaging with disabled people, disability groups and the wider community to encourage, support and facilitate the participation of individuals and groups in sport and active recreation opportunities.
- > **Inclusive Places** - Accessible sports facilities and places designed and managed to be fully inclusive of disabled people.
- > **Inclusive equipment** - Although inclusive equipment is not required for many sports and activities, its provision is essential to facilitate full participation in some sports and activities. Examples of inclusive equipment include sports wheelchairs, adapted bikes, inclusive gym equipment and submersible platform lifts for swimming pools.
- > **Trained People** - Coaches, sports leaders and volunteers with the knowledge and skills required to fully include disabled people in sport and active recreation.
- > **Opportunities** - A range of sports opportunities in easy to get to venues. As well as traditional sports delivered by governing bodies and clubs, there is growing evidence that inactive people are more likely to first participate in 'low level' activities like walking, cycling, swimming, tai chi, movement to dance and group fit activities.





Parachute Station,
Sensory Mile

Our Five Strategic Priorities

Over the period of this plan Disability Sport NI will have five strategic priorities:

1 Improving Health and Wellbeing

To improve the health and wellbeing of disabled people and people with long term health conditions through increased participation in sport and active recreation opportunities in every area of Northern Ireland.

2 Developing Sporting Talent

To lead the development of performance pathways and support programmes which enable talented athletes with disabilities to achieve higher levels of performance in their sport including continued international medal success.

3 Inclusive Sports Facilities and Outdoor Places

To develop access services which encourage and support the development of sports facilities and outdoor places which are inclusive of disabled people.

4 Communications, Training and Engagement

To inspire, facilitate and encourage disabled people to participate in sport and active recreation by engaging with disabled people and the broader community, by delivering inclusive training and by promoting the social model of disability.

5 Governance and Income Generation

To manage an effective well governed organisation with the capacity to lead the development of disability sport and active recreation in Northern Ireland.



Mid and East Antrim Poolpod Launch



North West Wolves
Wheelchair Basketball Club

Strategic Priority 1: Improving Health and Wellbeing

To improve the health and wellbeing of disabled people and people with long term health conditions through increased participation in sport and active recreation opportunities in every area of Northern Ireland.

Our Objectives

1.1. Disability Sports Hubs: To further develop and sustain a programme of disability sports activities, including impairment specific programmes, at the eleven disability sports hubs, in partnership with each District Council.

1.2. Inclusive Sport and Active Recreation Projects: Through our Community Interest Company Live Active NI and in collaboration with District Councils and disability organisations to sustain existing and develop new sport and active recreation projects which improve the health and wellbeing of disabled people and people with long term health conditions.

1.3. Inclusive Clubs: To encourage and support mainstream sports clubs to be more inclusive and to support the development of existing and new disability sports clubs.

1.4. Inclusive Outdoor Recreation Opportunities:

To manage, sustain and further develop the 'All Out Trekking' project and to support the development of new outdoor recreation projects which are inclusive of disabled people.



Strategic Priority 2: Developing Sporting Talent

To lead the development of performance pathways and support programmes which enable talented athletes with disabilities to achieve higher levels of performance in their sport including continued international medal success.

Our Objectives

- 2.1. Inclusive Governing Bodies:** To support Governing Bodies of Sport to develop performance pathways, coach education programmes and clubs which are more inclusive of disabled people.
 - 2.2. Wheelchair Basketball:** To continue to develop and implement a strategic plan for the sport of wheelchair basketball in Northern Ireland which further develops the network of local clubs and supports local talented players to compete and excel nationally and internationally.
 - 2.3. Boccia:** To continue to develop and implement a strategic plan for the sport of boccia in Northern Ireland which further develops the network of local clubs and supports local talented players to compete and excel nationally and internationally.
 - 2.4. Athlete Inclusion and Wellbeing:** To support the inclusion and wellbeing of disabled athletes in performance sport programmes.
 - 2.5. Major Events:** In partnership with National Governing Bodies of sport to host national and international disability sports events in Northern Ireland.
 - 2.6. Representation:** Through the maintenance and development of effective working relationships with UK and Irish performance sports organisations to ensure that talented athletes from Northern Ireland have the opportunity to access national performance programmes.
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Strategic Priority 3:

Inclusive Sports Facilities and Outdoor Places

To develop access services which encourage and support the development of sports facilities and outdoor places which are inclusive of disabled people.

Our Objectives

- 3.1. Inclusive Sports Facilities & Stadia:** To encourage and support designers and operators to design, develop and manage sports facilities and stadia which are fully inclusive of disabled people.
- 3.2. Inclusive Equipment Projects:** In partnership with other organisations to facilitate and support the provision of inclusive equipment which improves access to sport and active recreation opportunities.
- 3.3. Outdoor Places:** To encourage and support the design and development of outdoor places which are fully inclusive of disabled people.
- 3.4. Inclusive Sports Centre:** In partnership with other sports organisations to develop a sports facility which will include a community disability sports hub for the Belfast City Council area, a home for disability sports clubs, and 'High Performance Centres' for wheelchair basketball, boccia, and other disability sports.

- 3.5. Disability Access Community Interest Company:** In collaboration with other organisations to explore and if feasible establish a specialist Community Interest Company to develop and manage a range of sustainable disability access services designed to support and facilitate the full inclusion of disabled people in society.





Wheelchair Tennis Skills Development Session

Strategic Priority 4:

Communications, Training and Engagement

To inspire, facilitate and encourage disabled people to participate in sport and active recreation by engaging with disabled people and the broader community, by delivering inclusive training and by promoting the social model of disability.

Our Objectives

- 4.1. Marketing and Social Media:** To develop and deliver an effective marketing and digital media plan which successfully engages with disabled people and the wider community.
- 4.2. Inclusive Training:** To develop, market and deliver training courses which provide the knowledge and skills required to fully include disabled people in sport, active recreation and physical education.
- 4.3. Education Initiatives:** To deliver disability sport inspired education projects which increase understanding of disability and challenge negative attitudes and misconceptions about disabled people.
- 4.4. Community Engagement:** To increase awareness of our charity's work and promote the social model of disability by engaging with disabled people and the wider community.

4.5. Volunteers: To train and manage a network of volunteers to support the work of Disability Sport NI and Live Active NI.

4.6. Research and Insight: To develop, conduct and collate research and insight that clearly demonstrates the impact of Disability Sport NI and Live Active NI's work.



Strategic Priority 5: Governance and Income Generation

To manage an effective well governed organisation with the capacity to lead the development of disability sport and active recreation in Northern Ireland.

Our Objectives

- 5.1. Governance:** To achieve recognised levels of good governance and to effectively manage risks to the organisation.
- 5.2. Income Generation:** To secure sufficient funds from the statutory and corporate sectors, charitable trusts and the public to resource the work of Disability Sport NI and Live Active NI.
- 5.3. Policy Development:** To support the inclusion of disabled people in sport and active recreation by positively influencing policy and approach at both a Northern Ireland and local government level.



How We Will Measure Success

We will measure the success of this plan by adopting the performance management system currently being adopted by public bodies in Northern Ireland. This system of 'outcome based accountability' (OBA) focuses on impact rather than simply activity levels.

In line with this performance management system we will evaluate each area of our charity's work by using three OBA questions:

- **How much did we do?**
- **How well did we do it?**
- **And most importantly is anyone better off?**

We will also measure how our work has contributed to:

- **Our three strategic outcomes provided on Page 8**
- **The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport**
- **Active Living: No Limits 2016-2021 Action Plan: A plan to improve health and wellbeing for people with a disability in Northern Ireland through participation in sport and active recreation**
- **The Northern Ireland Programme for Government outcomes framework**

This information will help us, our member groups, funders and supporters understand the positive difference our work is making to the lives of disabled people but also the contribution it is making to high level government outcomes.



Ribbon Station,
Sensory Mile Event



Disability
Sport NI

Be active.
Be the best.

Disability Sport NI

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