



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Research Paper

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# Grassroots sport in Northern Ireland: A summary of participation and potential challenges

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This research paper seeks to describe current levels of participation in grassroots sport in Northern Ireland, and to highlight some potential issues and challenges.



## Key Points

- The term 'grassroots' sport is used in this paper to refer to sport played either recreationally, or in the context of local competitions, as opposed to elite sport.
- Survey evidence suggests that participation in sport has begun to rise again after some years of decline in Northern Ireland, though there remain groups within society which participate somewhat less than the average. For example, 34% of males but just 18% of females achieve the recommended 2.5 hours of activity per week.
- Participation in team sports has fallen slightly in recent years, with individual forms of exercise (such as swimming, jogging or going to the gym) on the rise.
- The *Sport Matters* strategy noted that in terms of sporting facilities, 'Northern Ireland is under-provided for in comparison with other regions in the UK and Europe'. It also stated that at the time of writing (in 2009), 35% of the population lived more than 20 miles away from an accredited, high quality facility.
- Information from Sport NI indicates that over the last three years, £68,143,471 has been provided in sports funding, with around 47% of this allocated to grassroots projects.
- There has been much focus by commentators on the legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. One of the assumed effects of a major sporting event is that sporting participation will rise. A Scottish study has questioned this effect, stating that this can only happen where there is a high level of community engagement in legacy planning, and good institutional organisation with clear roles and responsibilities defined across the different bodies involved.
- Volunteering, and particularly coaching, is cited as an essential component within grassroots sport. A survey of the coaching workforce has found that coaches find it difficult to find the time to increase their coaching qualifications. It also found that some sports, such as cricket, hockey and rugby union, coach those with disabilities rather less than the average.
- In terms of provision for grassroots sport, the 2009/10 CAL Committee inquiry into participation in sport highlighted the extent to which local councils are responsible for shaping grassroots sport within their areas, particularly in terms of facilities. Around 18% of funding for sporting facilities is provided by district councils.
- Arguments have been made that given the wider health and social benefits of physical exercise, other government departments have a significant role to play in providing for grassroots sport. Indeed, the CAL Committee inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity recommended that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should invest 'more of its budget in preventative health measures which involve participation in physical activity'.
- A European work plan for sport was agreed by the EU in 2011, with a number of actions designed to enhance public health through sport, use sport to increase social inclusion, and to increase the sustainability of funding for grassroots sport.



## Executive Summary

The term 'grassroots' sport is used in this paper to refer to sport played either recreationally (ie in a non-competitive manner), or in the context of local competitions. In this sense, grassroots sport contrasts with elite sport, which is used to refer to competitive sport that occurs on a national or international level.

Survey evidence suggests that participation in sport has begun to rise again after some years of decline. The latest Continuous Household Survey indicates that 50% of people had participated in sporting activity in the last 12 months. This figure is a statistically significant increase on 46% from 2009/10, and 45% in 2008/09.

However, there are groups within the overall population who participate much less than the average. For example, there is a strong disparity between male and female participants, with 34% of males but just 18% of females achieving the recommended 2.5 hours of activity per week. Significantly fewer respondents living in the most deprived areas participated in sport (38%) compared with those living in the least deprived areas (62%). Those with a disability, older people and those who are unemployed all participate less than the average in sport.

Twenty-one percent of respondents said that they belonged to a sports club or centre, a figure which has also increased slightly. Those who are members of sports clubs are also significantly more active than those who are not, and are more likely to be involved in coaching, competitions and spectating. However, on the whole there has been a slight fall in participation in team sports in contrast to individual sporting activities such as swimming, jogging or going to the gym.

The Sport NI and DCAL's *Sport Matters* strategy includes specific targets for increasing participation rates among a number of under-participating groups, and a previous CAL Committee inquiry has made recommendations about increasing the level of sporting engagement among under-participating groups.

The *Sport Matters* strategy noted that in terms of sporting facilities, 'Northern Ireland is under-provided for in comparison with other regions in the UK and Europe'. It also stated that at the time of writing (in 2009), 35% of the population lived more than 20 miles away from an accredited, high quality facility. The *Active Places* survey in 2009 also identified 'a significant under-provision in key sports facilities'.

Information from Sport NI indicates that over the last three years, £68,143,471 has been provided in sports funding, with around 47% of this allocated to grassroots projects.

There has been much focus by commentators on the legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In England, a ten point plan has been conceived which focuses on building stronger links between local sports clubs and schools. A *Youth and Community Sport Strategy* so that all secondary schools who wish to do so will be supported to open their sports facilities for local community use. An 'England

Talent Path' programme will be available to at least 30 sports to identify potential elite performers from grassroots level.

In Scotland, a legacy plan has been formed for the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games involving the creation of 'Community Sports Hubs'. Two examples are provided in this paper of clubs which have sought to improve and expand their activities to become community centres, offering facilities and training for a range of sports rather than just one.

One of the assumed effects of a major sporting event is that sporting participation will rise. A Scottish study has questioned this effect, stating that this can only happen where there is a high level of community engagement in legacy planning, and good institutional organisation with clear roles and responsibilities defined across the different bodies involved.

Volunteering, and particularly coaching, is cited as an essential component within grassroots sport. The *Sport Matters* strategy contains three targets on this issue, and in 2010 a survey of the coaching workforce in Northern Ireland found that coaches are very largely volunteers. While voluntary coaches are keen to develop their coaching skills and most hold a valid coaching qualification, opportunities to increase their qualifications can be hampered by a lack of time amid the conflicting demands of family life and paid employment.

The survey also found that 35% of all coaches stated that they work with participants with disabilities. There are some significant variations between sports, with a much lower proportion of coaches working with the disabled in cricket (22%), hockey (16%) and rugby union (17%).

In terms of provision for grassroots sport, the 2009/10 CAL Committee inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity highlighted the extent to which local councils are responsible for shaping grassroots sport within their areas, particularly in terms of facilities. Indeed, once the Review of Public Administration is complete and planning functions are devolved to local councils, local government will then play a more direct role in implementing *PPS8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation*.

The *Sport Matters* strategy states that it is 'essential' that district councils retain existing, and develop new, income streams, in support of sport. The strategy presents a breakdown of relative investment, with district councils indicated as providing around 18 percent of overall funding for places for sport.

Arguments have been made that given the wider health and social benefits of physical exercise, other government departments have a significant role to play in providing for grassroots sport. Indeed, the CAL Committee inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity recommended that the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should invest 'more of its budget in preventative health measures which involve

participation in physical activity as a means of reducing obesity related illness and the associated financial cost to the health service over future years’.

The European Union has taken an increasing interest in sport in recent years. An EU work plan for sport was agreed in January 2011. In terms of grassroots sport, there are a number of actions designed to enhance public health through sport, use sport to increase social inclusion, and to increase the sustainability of funding for grassroots sport.

A House of Lords Select Committee inquiry looked at how EU legislation could be applied to sport in order to ensure the sustainability of grassroots sport, particularly its revenue streams from the broadcasting of professional sport. For example, it was noted that the UK Sport and Recreation Alliance’s voluntary Code of Conduct on the reinvestment of broadcasting revenues into grassroots sport had recently been strengthened.

Finally, the inquiry also recommended that EU funding should be better publicised to grassroots sporting groups.



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Annex 1: Unmet demand in sports halls across 26 council areas



# 1 Context to date: participation, policy and investment

The term 'grassroots' sport is used in this paper to refer to sport played either recreationally (ie in a non-competitive manner), or in the context of local competitions. In this sense, grassroots sport contrasts with elite sport, which is used to refer to competitive sport that occurs on a national or international level<sup>1</sup>.

## 1.1 Participation in grassroots sport

The Continuous Household Survey provides some indication of participation rates in sport<sup>2</sup>. The latest survey, from 2010/11, indicates that 50% of people had participated in sporting activity in the last 12 months. This figure is a statistically significant increase on 46% from 2009/10, and 45% in 2008/09. A significantly higher proportion of males (57%) than females (44%) participated in sport over the previous 12 months. Of those who had participated in a sport, 65% said that they were 'fairly' or 'very satisfied' with sports provision in Northern Ireland.

Also of interest is the fact that significantly fewer respondents living in the most deprived areas participated in sport (38%) compared with those living in the least deprived areas (62%).

In terms of the proportion of people who regularly achieve the 2.5 hours per week of moderate physical activity recommended by the Chief Medical Officer, 25% of respondents to the 2010/11 Continuous Household Survey said that they achieved this level. Again, a strong disparity between male and female is notable, with 34% of males but just 18% of females achieving 2.5 hours of activity.

Fifty-five percent of people stated that they normally do not spend any time during the week participating in sport or physical activity; this includes 61% of females.

In terms of those who are members of a sports club, leisure centre or health club, 21% of respondents stated that they held such a membership. This category of participation has seen an increase, with just 19% reporting membership of a club in 2008/09 and 2009/10. Five percent said that they volunteered at a club.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a separate survey, the Northern Ireland Sport and Physical Activity Survey (SAPAS), found that sport participation among people who are members of clubs is high, with 73% having participated on at least one day in the last week. Club members are more involved in other aspects of sport also; they are more likely to participate in competitions (49% compared to 10% among non-members); provide coaching to other participants (17% compared to 3%); carry out sports

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<sup>1</sup> These definitions are taken from Lunn, P. 2008. 'Getting out what you put in: An evaluation of public investment in Irish sport', in T Callan (ed) Budget Perspectives 2009: Research Series Number 4: p57: <http://nia1.me/16r>

<sup>2</sup> DCAL. 2012. Experience of Sport and Physical Activity in Northern Ireland: Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2010/11. DCAL Research Findings 8/2011: <http://nia1.me/165>

voluntary work (21% compared to 5%); and watch live sporting events (56% compared to 32%).

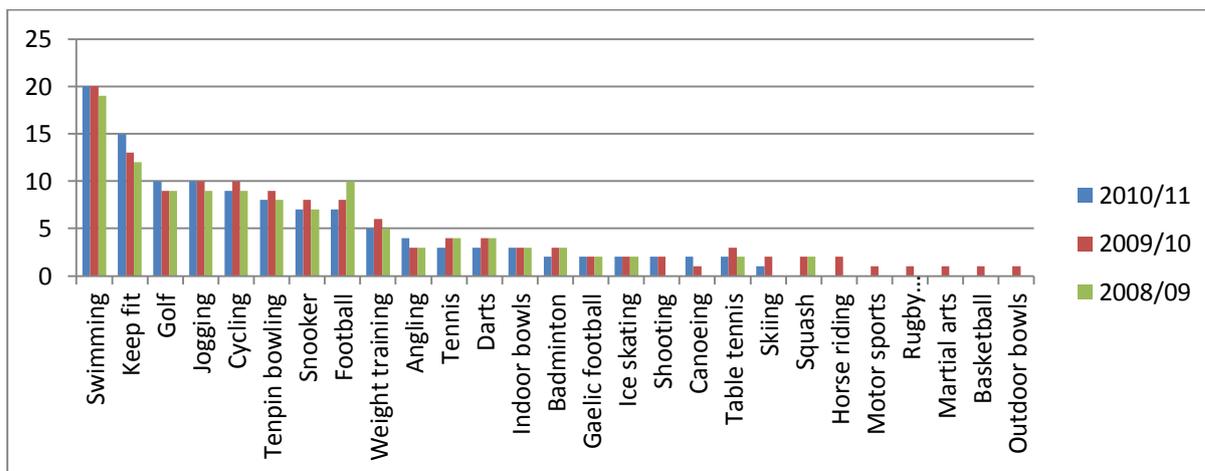


Figure 1: Sports most frequently participated in, from the Continuous Household Survey

It is noteworthy that there has been a fall in recent years in some team sports and a rise in individual sporting activities. For example, participation in football has fallen in each of the last three years, while there has been a slight rise in activities such as ‘keep fit’, swimming and angling.

The SAPAS survey in Northern Ireland also found that the five sporting activities which people are most likely to have participated in over the last seven days are walking, exercise bike/running machine/other, swimming or diving, jogging, and weight training/lifting/body building. The highest placed team activity, football, was ranked sixth by the survey.

Elsewhere, surveys of sporting participation in Ireland have also indicated a rise in exercise which can be carried out as an individual, and a slight fall in team sports<sup>3</sup>.

### 1.2 Under-represented groups in sport and physical activity

Sport NI has reported through the Northern Ireland Sport and Physical Activity Survey (SAPAS) that people with disabilities fall significantly behind the recommended threshold for physical activity, with just 23% achieving 150 minutes of exercise per week<sup>4</sup>. This compares with an average of 35% achieving the threshold for the adult population as a whole.

Survey evidence would also suggest that participation by women, older people and the unemployed is lower than average, both in terms of the frequency of sporting participation and the time spent on those activities. In addition, those from an ethnic minority background are less likely to take part than others.

<sup>3</sup> Lunn, P. 2008. ‘Getting out what you put in: An evaluation of public investment in Irish sport’, in T Callan (ed) Budget Perspectives 2009: Research Series Number 4: p70: <http://nia1.me/16r>

<sup>4</sup> Sport NI. October 2011. *Survey of Sport and Physical Activity: Factsheet disabled people*. SAPAS data (23 July 2009 – 10 August 2010), total sample size: 4,653. Sample size disabled people: 1,325.

The Sport NI and DCAL's *Sport Matters* strategy includes specific targets for increasing participation rates among a number of under-participating groups by 2019, including the following:

<b>PA8</b>	By 2019 to deliver at least a 6 percentage points increase in women's participation rates in sport and physical recreation (from the 2011 baseline).
<b>PA9</b>	By 2019 to deliver at least a 6 percentage points increase in participation rates in sport and physical recreation among socio-economically disadvantaged groups (from the 2011 baseline).
<b>PA10</b>	By 2019 to deliver at least a 6 percentage points increase in participation rates in sport and physical recreation among people with a disability (from the 2011 baseline).
<b>PA11</b>	By 2019 to deliver at least a 6 percentage points increase in participation in sport and physical recreation among older people (from the 2011 baseline).

**Figure 2: Targets within the Sport Matters strategy aimed at increasing participation in sport among under-participating groups**

During an inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity conducted by the previous CAL Committee, evidence was gathered which suggested that a number of groups are under-represented in sport, particularly older people, people with disabilities, women, people from disadvantaged areas, and people from black and ethnic minority communities. The Committee recommended 'the expansion of specific programmes aimed at increasing participation' among those groups<sup>5</sup>.

### 1.3 Policy context

*Sport Matters*<sup>6</sup> (the Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009 – 2019) was developed by DCAL in partnership with Sport NI, and was approved by the Northern Ireland Executive in December 2009.

The strategy states that 'using this framework, and led by the Minister responsible for sport and physical recreation, Government will...support governing bodies of sport, sports clubs and local communities'.

A set of 26 targets are included in the strategy, structured around the themes of participation, performance and places. Of the eleven targets relating to participation, eight have a direct relevance to grassroots sport.

A *Northern Ireland Sports Facilities Strategy* is mentioned in *Sport Matters*, and it is noted that 'Northern Ireland is under-provided for in comparison with other regions in the UK and Europe', and that, at the time of writing<sup>7</sup>,

*...approximately 65% of the population in Northern Ireland live within a 20 minute travel time of an accredited, high quality multi-sport facility. The purpose of the Sports Facilities Strategy will be to ensure that future provision meets regional needs more effectively.*

<sup>5</sup> Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2010. Report on the Committee's Inquiry into Participation in Sport and Physical Participation in Northern Ireland: NIA 73/09/10R: <http://nia1.me/er>

<sup>6</sup> DCAL & Sport NI. 2009. *Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland strategy for sport and physical recreation 2009–2019*.

<sup>7</sup> *Sport Matters*: p44.

*Sport Matters* has a target in PL25 to increase this provision substantially as follows:

*By 2019 to ensure that 90% of the population have quality accredited, multi-sports facilities, that have the capacity to meet demand, within 20 minutes travel time.*

The *Active Places* survey in 2009 identified ‘a significant under-provision in key sports facilities’. Examples of under-provision include an estimated shortfall of 2,221 acres in grass or synthetic pitches, and 1,759 square metres of swimming pool. The survey also found that there is one outdoor tennis court per 3,700 people in England and Scotland, but one per 6,200 people in Northern Ireland.

It was concluded that such under-provision means that,

*...many user groups do not have access to some sports facilities at appropriate times. This has resulted in limited development opportunities for large numbers of sports and their governing bodies.*

Sport NI is currently in the process of reviewing progress towards this target.

#### 1.4 Current levels of investment in grassroots sport

Information provided by Sport Northern Ireland (Sport NI) on the nature of its funding allocations indicates that the largest share of awards it has made over the last three years has been on grassroots, as opposed to elite, sport<sup>8</sup>.

Financial Year	Elite Sport	Grassroots Participation	Other	Grand Total
2009-10	£7,631,017	£15,940,708	£2,829,012	£26,400,737
2010-11	£7,364,836	£8,794,590	£5,466,127	£21,625,553
2011-12	£11,565,948	£7,530,236	£1,020,997	£20,117,181
Grand Total	£26,561,801	£32,265,534	£9,316,136	£68,143,471

Table 1: Total Value of SNI Awards (2009-12)

Financial Year	Elite Sport	Grassroots Participation	Other	Grand Total
2009-10	29%	60%	11%	100%
2010-11	34%	41%	25%	100%
2011-12	57%	37%	5%	100%
Grand Total	39%	47%	14%	100%

Table 2: Percentage of SNI awards to each Area (2009-12)

These figures suggest that there has been a declining proportion of funding allocated to grassroots sport. As can be seen from the table below, this is likely to be due to the

<sup>8</sup> Information provided by Sport NI as a result of an information request by the NI Assembly Research and Information Service, 15.11.12; the figures represent awards as recorded on SNI's grant management information system; SNI's awards to North Down Borough Council for the 50m Pool have been categorised as "Elite Sport"; and the "Other" category refers to capital and revenue awards (primarily capital) to improve safety at major sporting venues.

rolling out of the three stadia programme, with planned expenditure of £110m over the Comprehensive Spending Review period.

In terms of overall capital investment, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has provided the following information regarding its investment in capital infrastructure for sport in the years 2010/11 to 2014/15:

	2009/10 £k	2010/11 £k	2011/12 £k	2012/13 £k	2013/14 £k	2014/15 £k
50 Metre Pool	829	2,000	7,000	4,621		
Safe Sports Grounds	1,859	2,662				
Soccer Strategy	2,239	664	506			
Sport Strategy Implementation	12,774	8,656				
Sport NI Capital Assets	326	365		133	69	41
Tollymore National Outdoor Centre	3,927	340				
Sport Matters Community Sport Programme			2,500	2,000	5,000	750
Building Sport Programme			520			
Mourne Mountain Bike Track			150			
Sport Matters Capital & Equipment Programme			76			
Regional Stadium Development			1,000 <sup>9</sup> *	20,000	20,000	69,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,954</b>	<b>14,687</b>	<b>11,752</b>	<b>26,754</b>	<b>25,069</b>	<b>69,791</b>

**Table 3: Breakdown of the Sport Capital Programme spend actual and projects 2009/10 to 2014/15<sup>10</sup>**

A study conducted in Ireland which compared government expenditure on sporting facilities with the nature of demand within the community concluded that the policy of spending large sums on facilities will not necessarily increase participation markedly<sup>11</sup>. Of the funding provided to grassroots sport in Ireland the large majority is spent on facilities, and yet participation surveys suggest that around 1% of non-participants in sport cited lack of local facilities as the main reason for not participating. It was found that time, motivation and health problems are more likely to influence a lack of participation.

<sup>9</sup> DCAL has indicated that Sport NI identified slippage of £567,000 of the £1,000,000 allocated to Regional Stadium Development in 2011/12.

<sup>10</sup> Information provided by DCAL following an information request (DCAL ref: GM/1206/2011).

<sup>11</sup> Lunn, P. 2008. 'Getting out what you put in: An evaluation of public investment in Irish sport', in T Callan (ed) Budget Perspectives 2009: Research Series Number 4: p57: <http://nia1.me/16r>

## 2 Improving and increasing grassroots sport

### 2.1 Legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

#### England

In England, a ten point legacy plan is being pursued following the London Olympics<sup>12</sup>. As part of this plan, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) launched a 'Places, People, Play' strategy in 2010. This is a flagship policy, delivered by Sport England, and is designed as a 'mass participation legacy' programme involving £150 million of funding to 'drive up participation' in sport. Among the various initiatives within the strategy are the following:

- 'Inspired' grants involving £65 million for 732 smaller-scale local club facilities projects;
- 'Club Leaders' initiative providing free training and support to volunteers involved in the day-to-day running of community sports clubs;
- In its first year, Places, People, Play facilitated 80,870 people aged between 14 and 25 to take part a six-eight week coaching sessions in a sport of their choice through the 'Sportivate' programme;
- Around 22,000 sports makers have committed to volunteer for at least 10 hours to support sports participation;
- Investing £8 million in tackling the barriers faced by those with disabilities who want to play sport;
- Up to 1,000 local sports venues will be upgraded, including £30 million to support a regional network of major sport and leisure centres;
- Recruiting, training and deploying 40,000 'sports leaders' to organise and lead grassroots sporting activities;
- A club leaders programme which aims to reach at least 10,000 sport clubs.

A further policy initiative pursued in England is the *Youth and Community Sport Strategy*.<sup>13</sup> This strategy, aimed at 14 to 25 year olds, is intended to use both Lottery and Exchequer funding to create stronger links between schools and community sports clubs. Among the measures planned within the strategy, all secondary schools within England will be offered a community sport club on its site with a direct link to one or more National Governing Bodies, depending on the local clubs in its area.

Funding has been allocated within the *Youth and Community Sport Strategy* so that all secondary schools who wish to do so will be supported to open their sports facilities for local community use. There will also be 150 'College Sports Makers' working across most of the 347 general Further Education colleges, and a minimum of 30 sports will

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<sup>12</sup> Official Report, House of Lords. 8.10.12: Column WS148: <http://nia1.me/179>

<sup>13</sup> Sport England. <http://nia1.me/16n>

have 'England Talent Pathways' to ensure that particularly talented young people are selected and guided through to elite level.

Furthermore in April 2011, *London 2012: A Legacy for Disabled People* was published by the Office for Disability Issues<sup>14</sup>. The document sets out three priorities, to transform the perception of people with disabilities in society, particularly their economic contribution to society; to support opportunities for those with disabilities to participate in sport and physical activity; and to promote greater participation in the community through the Games.

### Scotland

As part of its plans for the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, the Scottish Government is creating a series of Community Sports Hubs (CSHs) throughout Scotland. Based in local facilities such as sports centres, community centres, club pavilions, the natural environment and schools, the aim of CSHs is 'to bring local people together and provide a home for local clubs and sport organisations'. The intention is for these to operate on a flexible model that can be shaped to suit local circumstances.

Two examples of Community Sports Hubs include Inch Park in Edinburgh and Kilmallie Shinty Club in Caol<sup>15</sup>. Inch Park is a collaborative enterprise between the three main clubs who were using the park: Lismore Rugby Football Club, Edinburgh South Football Club and Edinburgh South Cricket Club. A fire-damaged clubhouse was redeveloped with the intention of offering a location for both community and local club activities. The club encourages youth participation via an Active Schools programme, hosts coaching sessions, and delivers community activities based around sport, such as dance classes, yoga and keeping fit for over 50s.

Kilmallie Shinty Club invested in a youth development programme. Working with the local primary schools in the area, the club provides coaching, training and skills sessions for children with the intention of generating interest in the sport and the club. The result was an increase in club membership, with the club gaining a squad of players of various ages and stages of skill some of whom were able to compete at a high level. Fundraising activities led to the club being able to replace the changing facilities, building a two-team changing pavilion, complete with changing area, integrated showers and a dedicated club room. The aim is that the new pavilion will make the club more attractive to the local community and other sports clubs (such as football or rugby).

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<sup>14</sup> Office for Disability Issues. 2011. *London 2012: A Legacy for Disabled People*: <http://nia1.me/16o>

<sup>15</sup> These examples are taken from Scottish Parliament Information Centre paper, *Community Sport*: p23: <http://nia1.me/17c>

### Northern Ireland

For Northern Ireland, DCAL published the *Northern Ireland Strategy for the 2012 Games* in 2007. This strategy states that:

*The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games present Northern Ireland with a unique opportunity to participate in and benefit from a truly global event. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity: it is essential that Northern Ireland rises up to the challenge that this opportunity brings.*

The strategy includes a commentary on seven key policy areas: sport, culture, tourism, volunteering, business, education, and skills and employment. It also presents a governance structure and outlines financial plans. Under each policy area a goal is provided, along with a description of key measures of success and a number of projects. In terms of encouraging grassroots sport,

Goal(s)	Measures	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A world class start and lifelong participation in sport and physical recreation for young people.</li> <li>▪ World class performances by teams and individuals.</li> <li>▪ A sustainable sporting and physical recreation infrastructure and culture that contributes to wider government objectives.</li> </ul>	Various, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No. of children in Northern Ireland over the age of 8 years with the opportunity to participate in at least two hours per week of extra-curricular sport and physical recreation.</li> <li>▪ Percentage increase in participation in sport by adults, women, people with a disability, people who live in areas of high social need.</li> <li>▪ No. of FTE coaching posts established at community, club and high performance level.</li> </ul>	Sport NI and Disability Sport NI are taking the lead on this theme. Some actions are outlined in the <i>Sport Matters</i> strategy, but the 2012 Games strategy describes the following intentions specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing physically literate young people</li> <li>▪ Lifelong participation in sport</li> <li>▪ Development of the coaching workforce</li> <li>▪ Talent identification and athlete development</li> <li>▪ 'Fit for purpose' governing bodies</li> <li>▪ Facilities</li> <li>▪ Events and pre-Games holding and training camps.</li> </ul>

**Table 4: Examples from the *Northern Ireland Strategy for the 2012 Games* of relevance to the issue of grassroots sport**

## 2.2 Relationship between elite and community sport

As stated above, Sport NI expenditure on grassroots sport over the last three years has been between 37% and 60%, with the current three stadia project increasing the level of investment in elite sport.

A similar study of sports expenditure in Ireland has suggested that a somewhat higher proportion of focus has been placed on elite sport expenditure. Although differentiating the funding for each can be problematic as sporting bodies and facilities can sometimes benefit *both* forms of participation, the study concludes overall that around 62% of the current sport budget in Ireland goes to elite sport. Of that which goes towards grassroots sport, the majority is used to fund facilities.

The Carter Report in the UK examined the policy frameworks within countries which have successfully raised levels of participation within sport. The report noted that two common aspects to policy frameworks in such countries as Canada and Finland are the constant monitoring of participation and the use of long-running public awareness campaigns which promoted the benefits of sport and exercise<sup>16</sup>.

The London bid for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, though ostensibly concerned with securing the largest elite sporting event in the world, included a strong focus on legacy, and particularly the idea that the Games would inspire more people to take up sport. In the final bid presentation it was stated that,

*We can no longer take it for granted that young people will choose sport. Some may lack the facilities. Or the coaches and role models to teach them. Others, in an age of 24-hour entertainment and instant fame, may simply lack the desire.*

*We are determined that a London Games will address that challenge. So London's vision is to reach young people all around the world. To connect them with the inspirational power of the Games. So they are inspired to choose sport<sup>17</sup>.*

However, a review of the existing evidence for sporting legacy from previous major sporting events, conducted in advance of the forthcoming 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, concluded that 'there does not appear to be an inherent direct link between elite sporting events and positive legacy outcomes'<sup>18</sup>. It also stated that there is no clear evidence of increased physical activity being inspired by previous major sporting events, either the so-called 'demonstration effect' (ie watching elite athletes inspiring others to take up sport) or the 'festival effect' (ie a general desire to participate in the event in some way which could translate into a desire to take part in community sport)<sup>19</sup>.

The review stated that rather than a 'trickle-down effect' occurring naturally, long-term legacy impacts need to be carefully planned and implemented, with special attention paid to the processes and steps that link the event explicitly to positive outcomes. One of the studies which was reviewed found that community involvement in legacy planning can increase enthusiasm and commitment<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Carter, P. 2005. *Review of National Sport Effort and Resources*. Report for HM Treasury and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport; cited in Lunn, P. 2008: p64: <http://nia1.me/16r>

<sup>17</sup> Excerpt from the London 2012 Olympic Games bid presentation, delivered in Singapore on 6 July 2012: <http://nia1.me/16q>

<sup>18</sup> Owe, E. 2012. *Legacy Lessons from Past Large-Scale Sporting Events: Review of Evidence*. Scottish Government Research Findings No 1/2012: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0040/00406065.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> McCartney, et al. 2010. 'The health and socio-economic impacts of major multi-sport events: systematic review', *British Medical Journal*, 340: c2369.

<sup>20</sup> Weed et al. 2009. *A Systematic Review of the Evidence Base for Developing a Physical Activity and Health Legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games*. London: Department of Health.

In addition to community engagement, this review of evidence also highlighted the importance of good institutional organisation, and particularly clear roles and responsibilities across different bodies.

### 2.3 Coaching and volunteering

Volunteers, and especially volunteer coaches, play a significant role in the delivery of grassroots sport. Indeed, a study of sporting volunteers in Scotland concluded that the effective involvement of volunteers in sport is crucial to the continued sustainability of sport in Scotland<sup>21</sup>.

Indeed it is estimated by the Scottish Government that there were 90,000 coaches and 150,000 volunteers in sport in Scotland in 2010, and yet there are still shortages of volunteers in many of the sports clubs and organisations across Scotland<sup>22</sup>.

In Northern Ireland, the *Sport Matters* strategy contains a number of targets for enhancing coaching systems here:

<b>PE16</b>	By 2019 to have implemented nationally recognised coach accreditation systems for all Sport Northern Ireland funded governing bodies.
<b>PE18</b>	By 2019 to have accredited at least 700 appropriately qualified, full-time coaches available to meet demand across all aspects of sport and physical recreation.
<b>PE19</b>	By 2019 to have 45,000 appropriately qualified, part-time and volunteer coaches available to meet demand across all aspects of sport and physical recreation.

**Figure 3: Targets within the Sport Matters strategy aimed at enhancing coaching**

The *Sport Matters* strategy also identified the need to establish baseline data on coaches and coaching in order that the workforce and structures may be described and understood.

A *Coaching Workforce Survey* was published in 2010. Among its many findings are the following points:

- The survey found that sports coaching in Northern Ireland is very reliant on volunteers, particularly in the club context. A relatively small number of paid staff in the workforce are employed mainly by governing bodies and local authorities.
- The survey found that coaches are keen to develop their coaching skills. Most coaches possess a valid coaching qualification and, of these, 39 percent are qualified at Level 2 or above but many coaches would like to achieve higher level qualifications.
- The majority of coaching is done on a voluntary basis by people who are married and hold down full-time jobs, generating conflicting demands.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Scottish Parliament Information Centre paper, *Community Sport*: p20: <http://nia1.me/17c>

<sup>22</sup> Scottish Government. 2010. *A Games Legacy for Scotland: Annual Update 2010*: <http://nia1.me/17d>

- The dominance of three sports in terms of participation is reflected in the survey. Coaches in football (176), Gaelic football (211) and rugby union (229) accounted for 42% of responses to the survey.
- Survey responses confirm the importance of clubs in providing facilities and coaching opportunities for adults and juniors: 84% of coaches deliver sessions in a club setting.
- 35% of all coaches stated that they work with participants who are disabled. There are some significant variations between sports, with a much lower proportion of cricket (22%), hockey (16%) and rugby union (17%) coaches delivering to disabled participants.

More recently, Sport NI has begun a pilot mentoring programme, in partnership with Sportscoach UK, Hutton Consulting, Cricket Ireland, Ulster Hockey and Ulster Rugby.

This resource 'aims to explain how to set up and run a formal mentoring programme' in order to 'support governing bodies of sport, local authorities and other organisations to plan, implement and review their programmes effectively'<sup>23</sup>.

## 2.4 Local authority provision

The *Sport Matters* strategy states that it is not the sole responsibility of DCAL to invest in capital infrastructure for sport and physical activity. It describes district councils, as well as the 'private, community and voluntary sectors', as significant investors also<sup>24</sup>. In particular, the strategy describes it as 'essential' that district councils retain existing, and develop new, income streams, in support of sport. *Sport Matters* presents a breakdown of existing expenditure on sport (at the time of writing in 2009), with district councils providing around 18 percent of overall funding for places for sport.

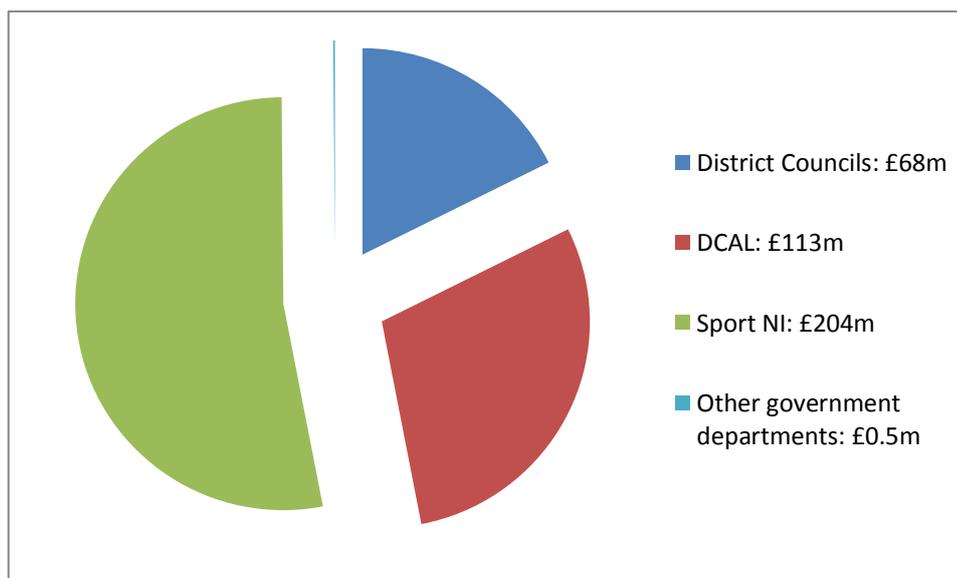


Figure 4: Proportion of funding for places for sport from different sources, in 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Sport NI. 'Planning and managing a mentoring programme in sport': <http://nia1.me/17e> Page accessed on 16.11.12.

<sup>24</sup> *Sports Matters*: p7.

Indeed the CAL Committee inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity highlighted the extent to which local councils are responsible for shaping grassroots sport within their areas, particularly in terms of facilities. For example, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) described some of these forms of provision in their submission, including the following:

- Sports/leisure centres including swimming pools;
- Sports pitches;
- Sports development programmes;
- Sports coaching and activity programmes.

Furthermore, in terms of indirect responsibilities, local councils may also seek to provide for grassroots sport through the following,

- Access to the countryside schemes;
- Public parks and open spaces;
- Lobbying as consultees within the planning process;
- Encouraging the provision of cycle routes in urban transport planning.

Once the Review of Public Administration is complete and planning functions are devolved to local councils, local government will also play a more direct role in implementing *PPS8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation*.

The *Active Places* research report, referred to above, examined the degree to which sports facilities of various kinds in Northern Ireland meet demand<sup>25</sup>. As an example of the degree of variation within provision across local council areas, Annex 1 reproduces a breakdown of unmet demand for sports halls.

Oral evidence provided by NILGA to the CAL Committee inquiry into participation in sport highlighted the degree to which pricing structures set by local councils can have an effect on the degree of engagement with grassroots sport<sup>26</sup>.

## 2.5 Cross-departmental collaboration

The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Union examined the degree to which European Union objectives with regard to sport can be pursued within the UK. One of the conclusions it reached was that, particularly with regard to what the European Commission refer to as the 'societal role of sport', it would be 'desirable' that sport is mainstreamed into wider funding and policy, such as health, education and social initiatives.

Indeed, the CAL Committee inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity made a number of recommendations for other departments beyond DCAL, and indeed for the

<sup>25</sup> Sport NI. 2009. *Active Places Research Report 2009: Bridging the Gap*: [www.sportni.net/activeplaces](http://www.sportni.net/activeplaces)

<sup>26</sup> Oral evidence provided to the CAL Committee inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity by NILGA (paragraph 176): <http://nia1.me/177>

Executive in general, regarding increasing participation in sport. With regard to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) in particular, it was recommended that it 'invests more of its budget in preventative health measures which involve participation in physical activity, as a means of reducing obesity related illness and the associated financial cost to the health service over future years'.

Similarly, a Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety inquiry in 2007/08 into the prevention of suicide and self-harm made a number of recommendations which recognised the positive contribution which participation in sport can make to mental health. For example, one of the recommendations stated that,

*We call on the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explore with the Minister for Culture Arts and Leisure how Sport NI and other sports organisations can fully participate in delivering the suicide strategy.<sup>27</sup>*

## 2.6 EU sports policy and grassroots

The European Union has taken an increasing interest in sport in recent years. The Lisbon Treaty states that the European Union 'shall contribute to the promotion of European sporting issues'. More particularly, Article 165 of the Treaty of Lisbon states that EU action will be targeted towards:

*...developing the European dimension in sport, by promoting fairness and openness in sporting competitions and cooperation between bodies responsible for sports, and by protecting the physical and moral integrity of sportsmen and sportswomen, especially the youngest sportsmen and sportswomen.<sup>28</sup>*

An EU work plan for sport was agreed in January 2011 – *Developing the European Dimension in Sport* – to be undertaken throughout 2012 and 2013<sup>29</sup>. Some aspects of this have a relevance for grassroots sport, and particularly a work area which will examine 'the societal role of sport'. Under this heading, a number of specific work areas are defined, including the following:

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<sup>27</sup> Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety. 2008. *Report on the Inquiry into the Prevention of Suicide and Self Harm*: <http://nia1.me/4q>

<sup>28</sup> European Union. 2010. *Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*. (Also referred to as the Treaty of Lisbon): p121.

<sup>29</sup> European Commission Communication. 18.1.11. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: *Developing the European Dimension in Sport*: <http://nia1.me/r/>

<b>THE SOCIETAL ROLE OF SPORT:</b>
<b><i>Enhancing health through sport</i></b>
Commission and member states: based on the EU Physical Activity Guidelines, continue progress toward the establishment of national guidelines, including a review and coordination process, and consider proposing a Council Recommendation in this field.
<b><i>Social inclusion in and through sport</i></b>
Commission and member states: develop and disseminate standards for accessibility of sport, leisure and recreation organisations, activities, events and venues through the European Disability Strategy.
Commission and member states: promote the participation of people with disabilities in European sporting events as well as the organisation of disability-specific events, in particular through supporting transnational projects and networks. In this context, support research related to specialised sport devices for persons with disabilities.
<b>ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF SPORT:</b>
<b><i>Sustainable financing of sport</i></b>
Commission and member states: based on the results of the EU study on the funding of grassroots sport, consider best practice among existing funding mechanisms for transparent and sustainable financing of sport.
<b><i>Regional development and employability</i></b>
Commission and member states: fully exploit the possibilities of the European Regional Development Fund to support sport infrastructure and sustainable activities in sport and outdoors as a tool for regional and rural development, and of the European Social Fund to strengthen the skills and employability of workers in the sport sector.
<b>ORGANISATION OF SPORT:</b>
<b><i>Promotion of good governance in sport</i></b>
Commission and member states: promote standards of sport governance through exchange of good practice and targeted support to specific initiatives.

**Table 5: Actions set out for the European Commission and member states in *Developing the European Dimension of Sport* which may have a relevance for grassroots sport.**

A series of expert groups has been established to help carry each work area forward, and a timetable has been set for implementation. The work plan will be reviewed at the end of 2013, with a view to establishing a full programme from 2014 onwards. It is also expected that a draft decision will be announced soon regarding the establishment of a new Sports Programme funding stream.

In terms of the potential implications of *Developing the European Dimension in Sport* for the UK, the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Union conducted an inquiry on grassroots sport and the European Union in 2011<sup>30</sup>. The report notes that the potential of sport is under-exploited at both EU and national level despite its ability to deliver on core policy objectives in the health, education, employment and social spheres. It considers how the EU can maximise the potential of sport in its own policy making and delivery, and help member states to do likewise.

A number of key recommendations emerged from the Select Committee report, such as the integration of sport into wider EU policy making and funding streams.

The Committee concluded, for example, that,

<sup>30</sup> House of Lords, European Union Committee. 2011. 'Grassroots sport and the European Union': <http://nia1.me/fu>

*We believe that the EU could gain most from the new competence, particularly at a time of financial constraint, by regarding sport not as a peripheral policy area but as a powerful and effective tool in the delivery of objectives across the policy spectrum, notably in the health, social and educational spheres.*

In particular, the Committee found that sport could make a 'strong contribution' to three of the five headline targets in the Europe 2020 Strategy, namely employment; education and poverty; and social exclusion, and that 'increasing levels of participation in grassroots sports should therefore be a priority'.

A recommendation is also made in the Select Committee report that initiatives to promote participation in sport, particularly in groups which traditionally are under-represented, should be shared between member states, and that joint-working should take place to measure not just economic outcomes but 'social returns' also.

One of the issues examined by the Select Committee on the European Union is the issue of finding sustainable financing models for grassroots sport. In particular, the EU workplan states an action point for the Commission and member states to carry out as follows:

*Based on the results of the EU study on the funding of grassroots sport, consider best practice among existing funding mechanisms for transparent and sustainable financing of sport.*

The EU study to which this action refers recommended in February 2012 that policy makers and sporting bodies focus on securing, increasing and diversifying the revenue sources allocated to sport in general, and to grassroots sport in particular. It was also recommended that financial solidarity between elite sport and the grassroots level be enhanced.

The House of Lords Select Committee inquiry looked at how EU legislation could be applied to sport in order to ensure the sustainability of grassroots sport, particularly its revenue streams from the broadcasting of professional sport. For example, it was noted that the UK Sport and Recreation Alliance's voluntary Code of Conduct on the reinvestment of broadcasting revenues into grassroots sport<sup>31</sup> had recently been strengthened. Some major sports governing bodies have pledged through the code to reinvest at least 30% of their net UK television broadcasting revenues in grassroots sport<sup>32</sup>.

The inquiry examined the relationship between gambling revenues and grassroots sport. The Committee took note of a levy model operated in France where a set

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<sup>31</sup> Sport and Recreation Alliance. 'Broadcasting and the Voluntary Code': <http://nia1.me/rk> Accessed on 23.2.12.

<sup>32</sup> The bodies which have made the pledge are The FA, the Lawn Tennis Association/All England Lawn Tennis Club, the England and Wales Cricket Board, UK Athletics, the FA Premier League, the Rugby Football League, the R&A and the PGA European Tour.

percentage of money derived from betting transactions is paid into a fund and is then allocated by the French government among grassroots sports.

Finally, the inquiry also recommended that EU funding should be better publicised to grassroots sporting groups.

## Annex 1: Unmet demand in sports halls across 26 council areas

Council area	Shortfall by population
Moyle	3.11
Derry	2.69
Down	2.43
Armagh	2.29
Ballymoney	2.02
Antrim	1.87
Ballymena	1.82
Coleraine	1.80
Ards	1.80
Banbridge	1.79
Craigavon	1.72
Newry & Mourne	1.66
Cookstown	1.60
Magherafelt	1.59
Lisburn	1.53
Newtownabbey	1.50
Belfast	1.48
Carrickfergus	1.40
Castlereagh	1.36
North Down	1.36
Dungannon	1.22
Fermanagh	1.12
Strabane	1.11
Larne	1.04
Limavady	0.82
Omagh	0.66

Unmet demand for sports halls in Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This information is taken from: Sport NI. 2009. *Active Places Research Report 2009: Bridging the Gap*: [www.sportni.net/activeplaces](http://www.sportni.net/activeplaces)