



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

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# Support for Elite Athletes in Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions

## 1 Introduction

This briefing paper provides information on measures in place for the financial and non-financial support of elite athletes in Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

## 2 Northern Ireland

### **Athlete Investment Programme**

Elite athletes in Northern Ireland are supported by Sport NI. Sport NI offers an Athlete Investment Programme (AIP). This programme offers financial help for elite athletes towards sports costs. Governing bodies are responsible for identifying athletes and teams for the Athlete Investment Programme.

Applications for the AIP are submitted by governing bodies. For the 2013/2014 programme a total of 33 applications from 32 organisations requesting £2.67 million were submitted in respect of 249 named athletes and teams. Sport NI has proposed investments of up to £935,654 in 30 organisations towards sports costs, for example, coaching, sports science support, personal training and preparation costs. However this is subject to the approval of the business case by DCAL. The total value of investment is based on 94 individual athletes (29 at World Class level, 24 at International level, and 41 at Developmental level).<sup>1</sup>

Sport NI considers applications lodged by governing bodies on behalf of athletes and teams. Sport NI assesses the athletes and teams against the agreed performance standards and the following criteria:<sup>2</sup>

- The extent to which the listed athletes and teams have met performance standards and previously agreed KPIs in the 2012/2013 AIP, where relevant; and
- Best performance results of athlete(s)/team(s)

### **Funding Levels**

Different levels of funding exist within the Athlete Investment Programme. Levels of funding are determined by the performance level of the athlete. Within the AIP, athletes and teams are categorised into three groups as follows:

- World Class
- International; and
- Developmental

The category of each group is determined by the performance standards which the sports agree with Sport NI. An athlete meeting the minimum performance standards is not in itself a sufficient guarantee of any Sport NI investment. Levels of funding allocated are displayed in (Table 1).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Direct correspondence with Sport NI, April 2013, *Athlete Investment Programme*, [AIP NI Assembly response April2013 FINAL.docx](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

*Table 1: Levels of funding available for elite athletes*

Category	Funding
World Class	£15,000
International	£9,000
Developmental	£3,000

### 2013/2014 Living Costs

Sport NI also offers financial assistance towards living costs. Living costs funding is additional to the funding awarded for sporting costs.

The assessment of sports costs applications determines which athletes (normally World Class and International) are eligible to apply for living costs. This funding can only be allocated after sports costs awards have been confirmed.<sup>4</sup>

The level of living costs investment is determined by the financial need demonstrated by the athlete. Living costs investment is additional to investment received by governing bodies and is paid directly to the athlete(s).<sup>5</sup> The maximum living costs award available to athletes is £23,452. However, Sport NI to date has never awarded the maximum level of funding. In 2012/2013 the average award for athletes was £7,730, with awards ranging from £950 to £14,323.<sup>6</sup>

## 3 England

Sport England does not deal directly with the funding of elite athletes. Instead this responsibility falls to UK Sport.<sup>7</sup>

## 4 UK Sport

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport provides funding to UK Sport. According to the UK Government website, 'UK Sport will give £125 million to the UK's elite athletes every year before the next Olympic and Paralympic Games at Rio 2016, so they can train full-time in their sports and concentrate on performing at future competitions'.<sup>8</sup>

### Athlete Personal Award

UK Sport offers elite athletes the opportunity to apply for an Athlete Personal Award (APA) to athletes from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and also to a small

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Direct Correspondence with Sport NI, May 2013, [AIP Follow Up Questions.docx](#)

<sup>7</sup> Direct correspondence with Sport England, April 2013

<sup>8</sup> Gov.uk, *Maintaining and Improving Britain's Elite Sports Performance*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/maintaining-and-improving-britains-elite-sports-performance/supporting-pages/funding-uk-sport-to-support-elite-athletes>

number of athletes from Jersey and the Isle of Mann. This award is a contribution towards living costs and personal sporting costs incurred whilst training and competing as an elite athlete.<sup>9</sup> This award is 100 per cent funded by the National Lottery. No athlete who receives an Athlete Performance Award from UK Sport will also be receiving financial support from their local sporting body.<sup>10</sup>

Each Athlete Personal Award is offered for a maximum of 12 months. The amount of APA varies depending on athlete performance category and any other income received. Development level APA maximums are determined by the National Governing Body and therefore vary between sports.

The levels of financial assistance and category of athletes for Podium level athletes to which funding is awarded under the Athlete personal award is detailed in (Table 2). According to Sport UK the average APA award for Podium level athletes is approximately £18,500 and the average award for developmental athletes is approximately £7,500.<sup>11</sup>

*Table 2: Maximum award levels under the UK Sport Athlete Personal Award<sup>12</sup>*

Category	Type or Athlete	Maximum Award Levels
Band A	Medallist at Olympic or World Championship level	£27,737
Band B	Top 8 finish at Olympic or World level competition	£20,804
Band C	Likely to be major championship performers, but flexibility given to individual sports to set their own criteria	£13,869

UK Sport also funds some World Class (podium athletes) from Northern Ireland, largely those who work and or reside in other parts of the UK benefit from UK Sport funding through their respective governing bodies as athletes and directly from the systems established in other parts of the UK, such as, rowers and hockey players. Other athletes from Northern Ireland, also members of UK bodies who are not yet classed by UK Sport and their respective governing body as World Class but are World Class potential or Podium potential also receive funding from UK Sport through their governing body.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> UK Sport, *Athlete Personal Awards*, <http://www.ukssport.gov.uk/pages/athlete-personal-awards/>

<sup>10</sup> Direct correspondence with UK Sport , May 2013

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Direct correspondence with Sport NI, May 2013

## Performance Programme

In addition to offering elite athletes the opportunity to apply for the Athlete Personal Award UK Sport provide funding to sport governing bodies to provide a range of programme support services to each athlete such as, training facilities, world class coaches and sports science and medicine support.<sup>14</sup> This support is typically worth approximately £55,000 per athlete per annum at the podium level and £30,000 per annum at the developmental level, depending on the sport.<sup>15</sup>

## UK Sport World Class Pathway System

UK Sport's World Class Pathway is an athlete pathway with three distinct levels, Talent, Development and Podium. Funding is allocated to elite athletes in accordance with these levels to reflect the journey of the athlete. UK Sport defines the three levels to help classify athletes as follows.<sup>16</sup>

*Table 3: Level and definition of athletes on the UK World Class Pathway System<sup>17</sup>*

Level	Definition
Podium	Athletes with realistic medal winning capabilities at the next Olympic/Paralympic Games (i.e. a maximum of four years away from the podium).
Talent	Designed to support the identification and confirmation of athletes who have the potential to progress through the World Class pathway with the help of targeted investment.
Development	Comprising athletes whose performances have suggested that they have realistic medal winning capabilities for 2016 and newly funded sports that are demonstrating the ability to be competitive by 2016. In general terms it is not expected that athletes in individual sports would spend more than 3 to 4 years at this level.

## 5 Scotland

Sport Scotland Institute of Sport provides expertise to sport and athletes in Scotland through the following approaches:<sup>18</sup>

- Fully managed programmes
- Jointly managed programmes
- **Targeted athlete programme**
- Project/service level agreements
- Outsourcing placements

<sup>14</sup> UK Sport, *How the Funding Works*, <http://www.uk-sport.gov.uk/pages/how-the-funding-works/>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> UK Sport, *World Class Pathway*, <http://www.uk-sport.gov.uk/pages/world-class-pathway/>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Sport Scotland, *Levels of Support*, <http://www.sisport.com/sisport/58.674.html>

The targeted athlete programme is a personalised programme targeted around identified athletes managed by Sport Scotland Institute of Sport (SIS) or National Governing Body/ Sports Governing Body.

### **Sport Scotland Athlete Personal Award**

Sport Scotland offers the Sport Scotland Athlete Personal Award (SAPA). This funding initiative is aimed at providing financial support to potential medal-winning athletes for Glasgow 2014. This is a three year programme which commenced in 2011 and will end in August 2014.<sup>19</sup> The grants that Sport Scotland provide are intended for athletes who are not eligible for UK Sport funding, typically because they do not meet the performance criteria.<sup>20</sup>

Nominations for the SAPA are made by the Scottish Governing Bodies of the Glasgow 2014 sports. Nominations are considered by a panel of Sport Scotland staff. Awards and panel decisions are made annually between the months of May and June.<sup>21</sup>

There are three categories of award that can be used towards athlete training, competition and living costs. The total number of athletes' awards grants will be based on the medal winning potential. The three categories of financial awards available are as follows:<sup>22</sup>

- £3,000
- £5,000
- £10,000

The level of assistance awarded to athletes is not solely based on category but includes other factors, such as financial need.

## **6 Wales**

### **Elite Cymru**

Sport Wales offers an Elite Cymru grant for elite athletes. This scheme has been in place since 1997. However, in 2006 UK Sport took over the funding of Olympic sports through the UK Pathway System.<sup>23</sup> The UK Pathway system is outlined above.

The Elite Cymru grant covers only non-Olympic sports, for example, karate, snooker and Commonwealth Games sports such as bowls, shooting and squash. It also covers sports with worldwide competition, such as golf.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Sport Scotland Institute of Sport, *Athlete Personal Awards*, <http://www.sisport.com/sisport/7803.797.html>

<sup>20</sup> Direct correspondence with UK Sport (May 2013)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Sport Wales, *Elite Cymru*, <http://www.sportwales.org.uk/funding--support/athlete-funding/elite-cymru.aspx>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

General standards for receiving Elite Cymru support are as follows:<sup>25</sup>

- Number one in Wales in age group and discipline; and
- At least number three in the UK (however, Sport Wales look at each sport and application on its own merit and specific entry standards for consideration have been agreed with each National Governing Body in order to tie in with the other UK jurisdictions).

Athletes should apply for the Elite Cymru grant through their Governing Body as applications will need to be endorsed by the relevant governing body before consideration by Sport Wales.<sup>26</sup>

### **Talent Cymru**

Sport Wales also offers a Talent Cymru grant. This grant was established in 2007 to help support athletes in Olympic and non-Olympic sports gain entry onto the UK Pathways System for Elite Cymru within two/three years. Not all relevant sports are yet signed up to the grant as the scheme is relatively new. Applications for this grant should be made through the relevant governing body.<sup>27</sup>

### **SportsAid Wales**

SportsAid Wales is a charity advertised on the Sport Wales website. This charity aims at 'helping the next generation of young sports stars to succeed'. SportsAid has helped some of the UK's most successful Olympic Games winners including Olympic gold medallist Nicole Cooke.<sup>28</sup>

## **7 Republic of Ireland**

The Irish Sports Council (ISC) is the national governing body for sport in the Republic of Ireland. The Irish Sports Council is the body responsible for allocating funding to the different sporting organisations in the Republic of Ireland through High Performance Funding, Core Grant Funding and funding to elite athletes via the International Carding System.<sup>29</sup> The Irish Sports Council will receive €43.153 million in grant aid from the Government in 2013.<sup>30</sup>

Minister of State for Tourism and Sport Michael Ring has announced an investment package of €33 million for Irish sport in 2013 by the Irish Sports Council.<sup>31</sup> This funding

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Sport Wales, *Talent Cymru*, <http://www.sportwales.org.uk/funding--support/athlete-funding/talent-cymru.aspx>

<sup>28</sup> Sport Wales, *SportsAid Wales*, <http://www.sportwales.org.uk/funding--support/athlete-funding/sportsaid-wales.aspx>

<sup>29</sup> Direct correspondence with Athletics Ireland, April 2013

<sup>30</sup> The Irish Sports Council, 2013, *Minister Ring Announces Irish Sports Council Funding Plans for 2013*, [http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Media/Latest\\_News/2013/Minister\\_Ring\\_Announces\\_Irish\\_Sports\\_Council\\_Funding\\_Plans\\_For\\_2013.html](http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Media/Latest_News/2013/Minister_Ring_Announces_Irish_Sports_Council_Funding_Plans_For_2013.html)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

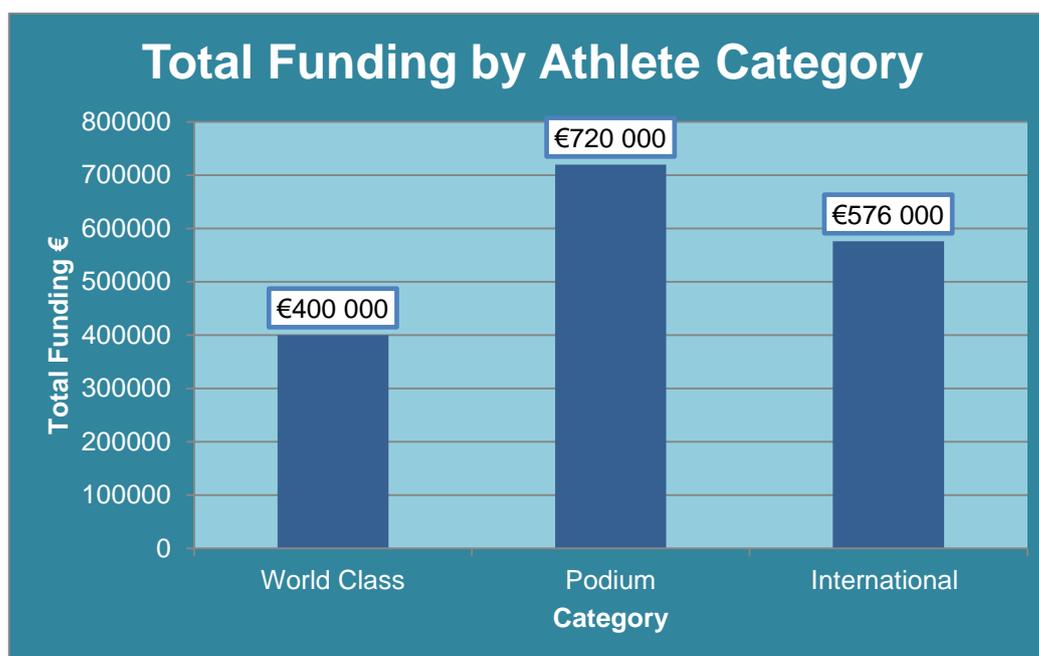
includes €19.3 million for National Governing Bodies of Sport, €5.1 million for Local Sports Partnerships and **€8.6 million for High Performance Sport.**

86 athletes will receive individual grants totalling €1.7 million under the international carding system.

### International Carding System

The International Carding Scheme introduced in 1998 and reviewed in 2012 provides support, both financial and non financial to assist the Republic of Ireland's elite athletes. The scheme provides financial assistance for general living expenses not already provided by the relevant governing body. The scheme also provides non-financial support, such as sport sciences and medical support.<sup>32</sup> Funding provided by the International Carding System by athlete category in 2012 is displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Total funding allocated by the International Carding System by athlete category 2012<sup>33</sup>



Players and athletes who meet the requirements of the International Carding System are eligible to submit an application form to ISC via their relevant governing body. Each application must be endorsed by the relevant national governing body before being submitted to the ISC.

<sup>32</sup> Archery Ireland, International Carding Scheme for Players and Athletes, <http://archery.ie/site/index.php/documents/high-performance/international-carding-scheme-for-players-and-athletes/>

<sup>33</sup> Irish Sports Council, 21 March 2013, *Carded Athletes*, [carded\\_athletes.txt](#)

For athletes to remain on the International Carding Scheme they must show progression, for example, improvements in world rankings and quicker timings in addition to meeting the required criteria.

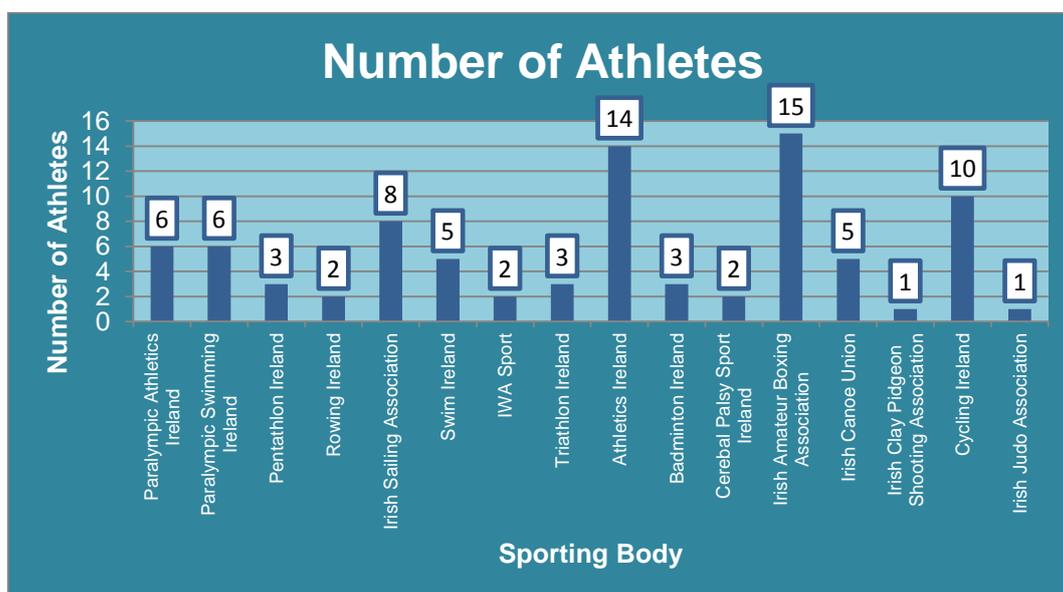
Three general classification categories are used to determine the levels of support for which athletes may be eligible. The categories are as follows:<sup>34</sup>

- Podium (Olympic/Paralympic medal zone athletes)
- World Class (Olympic/Paralympic finalists) and;
- International (qualification for the Olympics/Paralympics)

The ISC may, on a case-by-case basis, review the eligibility of athletes who have for a cumulative period of five years, at any categories received financial assistance or other assistance from the ISC pursuant to the terms of the scheme.<sup>35</sup>

Figure 2 displays the number of athletes per sporting body in the Republic of Ireland in receipt of funding under the International Carding Scheme 2012. In accordance with these figures, Table 5 provides detail on the amount of awarded funding per sporting body in the Republic of Ireland under the International Carding Scheme 2012.

Figure 2: Number of supported athletes per sporting body in the Republic of Ireland<sup>36</sup>



<sup>34</sup> The Irish Sports Council, 2013, International Carding Scheme Guidelines, [Carding\\_Scheme\\_Guidelines\\_2013\(1\).txt](#) p.4

<sup>35</sup> Ibid p.4

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

*Table 5: Total financial assistance awarded to sporting bodies in the Republic of Ireland via the International Carding System in 2012<sup>37</sup>*

Sport	Participants	Total Financial Assistance
Athletics Ireland	14	€220,000
Badminton Ireland	3	€36,000
Cerebral Palsy Sport Ireland	2	€24,000
Irish Amateur Boxing Association	15	€336,000
Irish Canoe Union	5	€92,000
Irish Clay Pigeon Shooting Association	1	€12,000
Cycling Ireland	10	€272,000
Irish Judo Association	1	€12,000
Sport	Participants	Total Financial Assistance
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	6	€184,000
Paralympic Swimming Ireland	6	€128,000
Pentathlon Ireland	3	€44,000
Rowing Ireland	2	€32,000
Irish Sailing Association	8	€168,000
Swim Ireland	5	€68,000
IWA Sport	2	€24,000
Triathlon Ireland	3	€44,000

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

## Annex 1: Summary of financial support available for elite athletes in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland

<p>Northern Ireland</p>	<p><b>Programme:</b> Athlete Investment Programme</p> <p><b>Levels and categories of funding available:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developmental - £3,000</li> <li>▪ International - £9,000</li> <li>▪ World Class - £15,000</li> </ul> <p>Living costs allowances can also be applied for. Potentially 'World Class' athletes may receive funding totalling £38,452 (maximum attainable for sports costs and living costs combined)</p>
<p>England</p>	<p><b>Programme:</b> Athlete Personal Award (provided by UK Sport);</p> <p><b>Levels and categories of funding available:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Band A - £27,737</li> <li>▪ Band B - £20,804</li> <li>▪ Band C - £13,869</li> </ul>
<p>Scotland</p>	<p><b>Programme:</b> Sport Scotland Athlete Personal Award</p> <p><b>Levels of funding available:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ £3,000</li> <li>▪ £5,000</li> <li>▪ £10,000</li> </ul> <p>*N.B information on categories for funding is not available</p>
<p>Wales</p>	<p><b>Programmes:</b> Talent Cymru and Elite Cymru</p> <p><b>Levels and categories of funding available:</b> Information is not available</p>
<p>Republic of Ireland</p>	<p><b>Programme:</b> International Carding System</p> <p><b>Levels and categories of funding available:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Podium</li> <li>▪ World Class</li> <li>▪ International</li> </ul> <p>*N.B information on levels of funding is not available</p>