

**From: The Minister**

Cara Hunter MLA  
Northern Ireland Assembly  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw, Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Cara

**AQW 29633/22-27 – DETAIL THE AMOUNT OF FUNDING THAT HAS BEEN ALLOCATED TO SPECIFICALLY SUPPORT AND PROMOTE THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN SPORT AND ATHLETICS IN EACH OF THE LAST TEN YEARS.**

You recently submitted an Assembly Written Question AQW 29633/22-27, asking that I detail the amount of funding that has been allocated to specifically support and promote the involvement of children with special educational needs in sport and athletics, in each of the last ten years.

I have arranged for this information to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Yours sincerely



**Gordon Lyons MLA**

**1<sup>ST</sup> September 2025**

## ANNEX A

**Detail of funding that has been allocated to specifically support and promote the involvement of children with special educational needs in sport and athletics, in each of the last ten years.**

**as per AQW 29633/22-27**

### Sport NI Response

I have sought the requested information from the Chief Executive, who has advised me of the following information:

*“Please see table below for funding allocated to support and promote involvement of children with special educational needs in sport and athletics from April 2015 – March 2025.*

| <i>Fiscal Year</i> | <i>Organization Name</i>                 | <i>Fund</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Project Title</i>                                   | <i>Project Description</i>   | <i>Grant Amount</i> | <i>Decommitted Amount</i> | <i>Paid Amount</i> |
|--------------------|--|-------------|-------------|--|--|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 2015/16            | Special Olympics Ireland                 | Exchequer   | Revenue     | Inter Departmental Investment 2015-16                  |  | £545,000            | £0                        | £545,000           |
| 2016/17            | Special Olympics Ireland                 | Exchequer   | Revenue     | Inter-Departmental Core Funding Investment into SOU Y1 | To support the delivery of a Special Olympics Programme across NI and support Special Olympics Ulster to contribute towards the delivery of the Active Living: No Limits Action Plan for NI 2016 – 2021. | £513,989            | £0                        | £513,989           |
| 2016/17            | Abbots Cross Special Olympics Club (SOC) | Exchequer   | Revenue     | AED PROJECT  | NI Executive initiative offering AEDs. £700 Individual cost of AED & Training  | £0                  | £0                        | £0                 |

|         |                             |           |         |   |  |          |    |          |
|---------|-----------------------------|-----------|---------|---|--|----------|----|----------|
| 2016/17 | Down SOC                    | Exchequer | Revenue | AED PROJECT   | NI Executive initiative offering AEDs.<br>£700 Individual cost of AED & Training   | £0       | £0 | £0       |
| 2016/17 | Special Olympics Ireland    | Exchequer | Revenue | Inter-Departmental Core Funding<br>Investment into SOU Y2 | To support the delivery of a Special Olympics Programme across NI and support Special Olympics Ulster to contribute towards the delivery of the Active Living: No Limits Action Plan for NI 2016 – 2021. | £514,796 | £0 | £514,796 |
| 2016/17 | Special Olympics Ireland    | Exchequer | Revenue | Inter-Departmental Core Funding<br>Investment into SOU Y3 | To support the delivery of a Special Olympics Programme across NI and support Special Olympics Ulster to contribute towards the delivery of the Active Living: No Limits Action Plan for NI 2016 – 2021. | £609,549 | £0 | £609,549 |
| 2016/17 | Special Olympics Ireland    | Exchequer | Revenue | Inter-Departmental Core Funding<br>Investment into SOU Y4 | To support the delivery of a Special Olympics Programme across NI and support Special Olympics Ulster to contribute towards the delivery of the Active Living: No Limits Action Plan for NI 2016 – 2021. | £590,649 | £0 | £590,649 |
| 2016/17 | Sensations Learning Support | Exchequer | Revenue | Balance ability   | To help children with special needs and their siblings under 7 engage in the balance ability scheme. Many of the children have balance, co-ordination and sensory difficulties                           | £4,968   | £0 | £4,968   |

|         |                         |           |         |  |   |         |        |         |
|---------|-------------------------|-----------|---------|--|---|---------|--------|---------|
|         |                         |           |         |  | <i>and as such mastering the task of cycling is a lot harder.</i>   |         |        |         |
| 2018/19 | MENCAP NI               | Exchequer | Revenue | The World Around Us (Pilot)  | <i>Pilot project will deliver new, innovative, immersive technology through virtual reality tools to replicate the leisure centre, gym, sports club and stadium environment by simulating physical presence</i> | £30,000 | £0     | £30,000 |
| 2018/19 | Special Olympics Ulster | Exchequer | Revenue | AED R5 IGAM  | <i>NI Executive initiative offering AEDs. £700 Individual cost of AED &amp; Training</i>  | £0      | £0     | £0      |
| 2019/20 | Gaelfast                | Exchequer | Revenue | Increasing Sustained participation supporting the implementation of Community Planning - (ADAPT) Pilot | <i>Autism Disability Activity Project</i>   | £4,000  | £140   | £3,860  |
| 2019/20 | MENCAP NI               | Exchequer | Revenue | The World Around Us Pilot  | <i>Pilot project will deliver new, innovative immersive technology through virtual reality tools to replicate the leisure centre, gym, sports club and stadium environment by simulating physical presence</i>  | £48,000 | £6,000 | £42,000 |
| 2019/20 | Mae Murray Foundation   | Lottery   | Capital | Everybody Active 2020 Outdoor Spaces-Groomsport  | <i>To enable wheelchair users and their families to disembark safely at the</i>   | £28,717 | £59    | £28,658 |

|                |                                       |                  |                |   |  |                 |               |                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|---|--|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
|                |                                       |                  |                |   | <i>Benone beach public amenity area in a zone 'fit for purpose.'</i>   |                 |               |                 |
| <i>2020/21</i> | <i>Down SOC</i>                       | <i>Exchequer</i> | <i>Revenue</i> | <i>Covid Safe Sports Pack</i>                         |  | <i>£0</i>       | <i>£0</i>     | <i>£0</i>       |
| <i>2020/21</i> | <i>Lisburn 2gether SOC</i>            | <i>Exchequer</i> | <i>Revenue</i> | <i>Covid Safe Sports Pack</i>                         |  | <i>£0</i>       | <i>£0</i>     | <i>£0</i>       |
| <i>2020/21</i> | <i>Newry City Afc SOC</i>             | <i>Exchequer</i> | <i>Revenue</i> | <i>Covid Safe Sports Pack</i>                         |  | <i>£0</i>       | <i>£0</i>     | <i>£0</i>       |
| <i>2020/21</i> | <i>Ripples SOC</i>                    | <i>Exchequer</i> | <i>Revenue</i> | <i>Covid Safe Sports Pack</i>                         |  | <i>£0</i>       | <i>£0</i>     | <i>£0</i>       |
| <i>2020/21</i> | <i>Special Olympics Ireland</i>       | <i>Exchequer</i> | <i>Revenue</i> | <i>Investment in Special Olympics Ireland 2020-21</i> | <i>To deliver sporting activities to people with learning disabilities across NI, with a particular focus on participation in sport, improved physical and mental health, improved education, supporting volunteers and raising awareness of social inclusion.</i> | <i>£689,936</i> | <i>£2,851</i> | <i>£687,085</i> |
| <i>2020/21</i> | <i>Special Olympics Ulster Office</i> | <i>Exchequer</i> | <i>Revenue</i> | <i>Covid Safe Sports Pack</i>                         |  | <i>£0</i>       | <i>£0</i>     | <i>£0</i>       |
| <i>2021/22</i> | <i>Special Olympics Ireland</i>       | <i>Exchequer</i> | <i>Revenue</i> | <i>Investment in Special Olympics Ireland 2021-22</i> | <i>To deliver sporting activities to people with learning disabilities across NI, with a particular focus on participation in sport, improved physical and mental health, improved</i>   | <i>£719,761</i> | <i>£0</i>     | <i>£719,761</i> |

|                |                                 |                  |                |   |  |                 |           |                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------|------------------|----------------|---|--|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|
|                |                                 |                  |                |   | <i>education, supporting volunteers and raising awareness of social inclusion.</i>   |                 |           |                 |
| <i>2022/23</i> | <i>Special Olympics Ireland</i> | <i>Exchequer</i> | <i>Revenue</i> | <i>Investment in Special Olympics Ireland 2022-23</i> | <i>To deliver sporting activities to people with learning disabilities across NI, with a particular focus on participation in sport, improved physical and mental health, improved education, supporting volunteers and raising awareness of social inclusion.</i>               | <i>£724,600</i> | <i>£0</i> | <i>£724,600</i> |
| <i>2023/24</i> | <i>Special Olympics Ireland</i> | <i>Exchequer</i> | <i>Revenue</i> | <i>Investment in Special Olympics Ireland 2023-24</i> | <i>To deliver sporting activities to people with learning disabilities across Northern Ireland, with a particular focus on participation in sport, improved physical and mental health, improved education, supporting volunteers and raising awareness of social inclusion.</i> | <i>£719,540</i> | <i>£0</i> | <i>£719,540</i> |
| <i>2024/25</i> | <i>Special Olympics Ireland</i> | <i>Exchequer</i> | <i>Revenue</i> | <i>Investment in Special Olympics Ireland 2024-25</i> | <i>To deliver sporting activities to people with learning disabilities across NI, with a particular focus on participation in sport, improved physical and mental health, improved education, supporting volunteers and raising awareness of social inclusion.</i>               | <i>£659,000</i> | <i>£0</i> | <i>£659,000</i> |

|       |  |  |  |  |  |            |        |            |
|-------|--|--|--|--|--|------------|--------|------------|
| Total |  |  |  |  |  | £6,402,505 | £9,050 | £6,393,455 |
|-------|--|--|--|--|--|------------|--------|------------|

Additional Information:

Sport NI's Sport System Investment in Governing Bodies (SSI-GB) for 2025/26 has a funding strand for retention and growth. **Retention & Growth** includes the ambition of sports to grow participation (not just members) in their sports and increase opportunities through sport, targeting under-represented groups or communities, including women and girls, people with a disability and those in later life.

Under SSI-GB Sport NI are currently aware that Rowing IRL via the get going get rowing programme funded through SSIGB investment delivers SEN sessions. Sport NI are not aware of the cost associated to this is, however, Rowing Ireland currently invest £44,650 for Retention and Growth. £20,350 is to be spent in capital to purchase new row ergs for the programme which aims to increase the number of classes being offered to Special Schools and special needs groups within schools by 25% during 2025/26. There were 300 opportunities for special needs individuals to participate in classes in 2024/25, and Rowing Ireland are targeting 400 opportunities to participate in 2025/26.

Sport NI are aware that other sports are developing disability sport projects for 2025/26 using SSI-GB 2025/26 funding and that these may include SEN projects. However, as these are in the development stage Sport NI does not have detailed information on these initiatives at this time.

Available Funding

Sport NI would also advise that Creating Opportunities investment programme is currently open and Sport NI would welcome applications from members of the Special Educational Needs community. Guidance information on how to apply can be accessed via <https://www.sportni.net/funding/creating-opportunities/>