

From: The Minister

Justin McNulty MLA
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw, Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Justin

AQW 53663/22-27 – INFORMATION TO BE PLACED IN ASSEMBLY LIBRARY

You recently submitted an Assembly Written Question AQW 53663/22-27, in which you asked me for an update on any steps my Department is taking to reduce drop-off from sports at a certain age in schools.

Sport NI have sent me information regarding its initiatives to address this. Due to the volume of information provided, I have arranged for the detail to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Yours sincerely



**Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities**

Sport NI have provided the following information regarding its initiatives as follows:

“Children’s Sport and Physical Activity Survey

Sport NI has funded The Children’s Sport and Physical Activity Survey. This is the most comprehensive survey of physical activity, organised sport, and Physical Education engagement among youth aged 10 to 19 across the island of Ireland.

The most recently completed study in 2022 is available at [CSPPA.ie – The Children’s Sport Participation & Physical Activity Study 2022](https://csppa.ie/csp-pa-2022-infographic-northern-ireland/) with a summary for Northern Ireland available at <https://csppa.ie/csp-pa-2022-infographic-northern-ireland/> which shows that the level of physical activity between 2018 and 2022 increased.

The next iteration of the survey is currently underway with Sport Ireland.

Your School Your Club

Schools are embedded within local communities and serve as natural focal points for their communities, making schools ideal hubs for wider community sport and physical activity. Schools own 47% of the total sports facility provision in Northern Ireland. For many children and young people, particularly those living in areas of disadvantage, schools provide the most accessible and affordable opportunity to engage in sport. Without appropriate local provision, barriers such as cost, transport, and limited availability can reduce participation levels.

Since 2017/18, Sport NI has invested over £7million in 48 school sports facilities through the ‘Your School, Your Club’ investment programme. Funding has enabled these sports facilities to open for community use outside of core school hours (including evenings, weekends, and holiday periods). A further £3million has been allocated for 2026/27.

Sport NI’s funding has created multiple links between school and community sport organisations, ensuring opportunities for children and young people to remain involved in sport and physical activity. As a result, investing in school sports facilities is not only an investment in infrastructure, but an investment in the life chances and long-term outcomes of young people.

Creating Opportunities

Children and Young People aged 11-18 years are one of the target groups in Sport NI's Creating Opportunities investment fund. Since 2024/25, 128 projects have been awarded a total of £575,147. See Table 1 below for details:

Table 1: Creating Opportunities investment in Children & Young People

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>C&YP related projects</i>	<i>C&YP related funding</i>
<i>2024/25</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>£105,346.00</i>
<i>2025/26</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>£349,757.50</i>
<i>2026/27 to date</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>£120,043.85</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>128</i>	<i>£575,147.35</i>

Sport Systems Investment – Governing Bodies

In 2025/26 Sport NI invested £4,350,704 into the Retention and Growth strand of the Sport Systems Investment – Governing Bodies investment fund. The Retention and Growth strand focuses on increasing club membership, reducing dropout rates from sports, and building inclusive participation pathways across Northern Ireland.

The programme did not solely target school age participants but all sport participants including those of school age.”