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Our ref: AQW 55136/22-27
Date: 2 November 2026

Patsy McGlone MLA
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw, Stormont
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Dear Patsy

AQW 55136/22-27: SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND NERODIVERGENT NEEDS

You recently submitted an Assembly Written Question AQW 55136/22-27, in which you asked me to detail support for participation opportunities for children and young people with disabilities and neurodivergent needs.

Sport NI have sent me details of the organisations support for these groups, as this response contains sizable detail, I have arranged for it to be made available in the Assembly Library.

Yours sincerely



Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities

AQW 55136/22-27 **Annex A**

Response from Sport NI Regarding Support for Participation Opportunities for Children and Young People with Disabilities and Neurodivergent Needs.

Sport NI have provided the following information regarding its support for participation opportunities for children and young people with disabilities and neurodivergent needs:

In 2026/27, Sport NI has awarded £1,211,670 to disability sport. Please see Table 1 below for details. Please note lottery funding to DSNI, is for the sports of Boccia and Wheelchair Basketball and includes athlete awards.

Table 1: Funding 2026/27

Organisation	Fund	Type	Description	Grant Amount
Disability Sport NI	Exchequer	Revenue	Funding to deliver business case objectives	£361,950
Disability Sport NI	Lottery	Revenue	System Partners Investment – NGB Programme 2026-27	£350,470
Special Olympics Ireland	Exchequer	Revenue	Funding to deliver business case objectives	£494,250
Coleraine Cougars Special Olympics Club	Lottery	Revenue	Creating Opportunities	£5,000

Total	£1,211,670

Sport NI supports local district councils, clubs and community groups to improve access to inclusive sport facilities for children and young people with disabilities through a combination of funding, standards, partnerships, and capacity-building.

Of the grant funding Sport NI provides to Disability Sport NI, a percentage is used to develop and operate the Inclusive Sports Facilities (ISF) Accreditation. This Accreditation Scheme encourages and recognises excellence in the design of sports facilities and is awarded to facilities that successfully meet the recommendations outlined in Disability Sport NI's '*Accessible Sports Facilities Design Guidelines*'.

On a programme-by-programme basis, projects receiving capital investment are encouraged to meet ISF accreditation standards when developing sports facilities. Support includes access audits, specialist design advice, and training for facility managers.

Through programmes such as Get Active NI and community planning partnerships, funding is allocated to council areas to design and deliver inclusive physical activity projects, prioritising children, young people and people with disabilities. For example, Sport NI engaged with Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council regarding Get Active ABC for Wheely Boat sessions and Inclusive Paddleboarding. These programmes require collaboration with community and voluntary groups and are focused on removing barriers to participation, ensuring local facilities are accessible and actively used.

Sport NI has also provided financial support to DSNI to develop and publish a wide range of access guides which includes Accessible Outdoor Places Design Guidelines and Accessible Sports Clubs Design Guidelines.

In 2026/27 Sport NI opened Creating Opportunities for a third year, and the Olympic Legacy Fund (OLF) for a second year. Creating Opportunities remains open, and supports the following groups:

- Clubs
- Community / Voluntary Sector Organisation
- Charities
- PTAs

The key element of Creating Opportunities is that it must be some form of new/additional participation project that is clear and specific and must address one of Sport NI's areas of underrepresentation in sport (*participants with a disability is one of them*). The programme is accessible via the Crowdfunder website. To date one inclusive basketball project aiming to help people with learning disabilities get active, connect and belong has been funded.

Sport NI will deliver the OLF in 2026/27 where applicants must meet one of the following criteria:

- A sports club, community group, or charity that delivers or enables 'recognised' sport and/or physical activity as your primary focus.
- Your sports club, community group or charitable trust is based in Northern Ireland, and benefits people living in Northern Ireland.

Sport NI welcome applications for projects seeking to develop opportunities for disabled and neurodivergent children to participate and develop in grassroots sport.