

# Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

## 13th Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Tuesday, 30 November 2021

### Sport and physical activity

### Introduction

1. At its meeting today the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee will take evidence from a panel of stakeholders on sport and physical activity.

### Background

2. The Committee had an initial discussion about work programme priorities at its Business Planning Day on 30 August 2021.
3. The Committee subsequently discussed its future work programme on 5 October 2021. At this meeting, the Committee agreed to undertake a number of one-off evidence sessions including one on sport and physical activity.
4. Ahead of the evidence session the Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport seeking an update on:
  - progress in implementing the Active Scotland Delivery Plan;
  - the most recent data on progress towards achieving the six Active Scotland outcomes and against the National Performance Framework (NPF) indicator on physical activity;
  - an assessment of what impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had or is likely to have on current and future progress; and
  - an assessment of whether, in light of the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, these outcomes and indicator remain the right ones or may need to be revised.
5. A response was received from the Minister on 29 October. The full letter is available at Annexe A.
6. Two witnesses have provided written evidence ahead of the formal session. These are attached at Annexe B.

**Clerks to the Committee, 18 November 2021**

Gillian Martin MSP  
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

29 October 2021

Dear Gillian,

**Update request: 2018 Active Scotland Delivery Plan**

Thank you for your recent correspondence informing me that the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee plans to hold a one-off evidence session focused on sport and physical activity. I welcome this session as an opportunity to hold a constructive discussion on the importance of physical activity and sport to the physical, mental and social wellbeing of people in Scotland with particular emphasis on the impact of the pandemic.

Sport and physical activity remains a policy priority for the Scottish Government. Our approach, as described in our Outcomes Framework and in the Active Scotland Delivery Plan, is based on the firm belief that we can only achieve progress through continually improving partnership working between all sectors of society. The World Health Organization sees this 'whole system' approach as key to success and recognises Scotland as one of the forerunner countries in its implementation.

While we have made steady progress in implementing the actions in the Active Scotland Delivery Plan through this collaborative approach, we also recognise that the pandemic has undoubtedly had an impact in this sphere, as it has in all others, and that further support is required. We also believe that physical activity and sport can be central to Scotland's recovery from the pandemic, providing the boost we all need to our physical and mental health, and bringing us together within our communities. We have therefore committed to doubling investment in sport and active living to £100 million a year by the end of the Parliament, ensuring more people can enjoy active lives as we recover, improving physical, mental and social health.

You note that the available data on progress towards achieving the six Active Scotland outcomes and against the National Performance Framework indicator on physical activity is from 2019. This remains the latest available data. This is due to the impact of the pandemic on the conduct of the two main surveys (Scottish Health Survey and Scottish Household Survey) that provide the large majority of the data for the indicators in the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework. Traditionally these have been conducted by face-to-face interviews with those responding. This has not been possible during the pandemic leading to a change in methodology which has impacted comparability to previous face to face data. Analysts have advised not to include the methodologically different 2020 data in our Active Scotland Outcome Framework indicator trend lines.

Both surveys plan to publish 2021 survey data in Autumn 2022. It is currently too early to comment on whether these results will be able to be incorporated into trend lines. However, it is proposed to include links on the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework website to the relevant published 2020 and 2021 Health Survey and Household Survey published data.

Although the 2020 data cannot be used to update the indicators, it does provide some suggestion of the impact of the pandemic. It is clear that some groups in society have been particularly affected by the pandemic itself and by the essential restrictions which were put in place. For example, data from Scottish Health telephone survey Aug-Sep 2020 show that those who were asked to shield at the beginning of the pandemic were less likely to meet the Chief Medical Officers recommended levels of physical activity in Aug-Sep 2020 than individuals who were not asked to shield. That is why our new investment and our ongoing work will have an even greater focus on addressing inequalities in opportunities to participate amongst disadvantaged groups. We are fully committed to breaking down the barriers that keep too many people from leading active lives.

We do want to ensure that the actions we take and the ways that we assess our progress is kept under review. The National Indicator is the proportion of the population meeting the recommended level of physical activity indicated by the UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines. Given that this is a standard measure of progress shared by many countries across the world, there would seem to be no reason to change this. The more detailed indicators which support each of the Active Scotland Outcomes have been significantly expanded and revised since 2018 and we will continue to develop these as new sources of data become available.

Our Active Scotland Delivery Plan was always intended as a dynamic document. We recognised that the actions would necessarily require to be adjusted and new actions taken forward over time, particularly where the latest international evidence suggested different approaches. The impact of the pandemic creates new conditions and opportunities and we recognise the need to consider the extent to which the existing plan is still appropriate as we emerge from the difficulties of the last 18 months. We are working closely with our partners to examine this issue and I would be happy to update the Committee at a future date on the results of that exercise.

I look forward to keeping the Committee informed of future progress, and thank you and the Committee members for your continued interest in the role of physical activity and sport in improving the health and wellbeing of Scotland's people.

Regards,

Maree Todd MSP

## Scottish Disability Sport written submission: Sport and Physical Activity

### Purpose

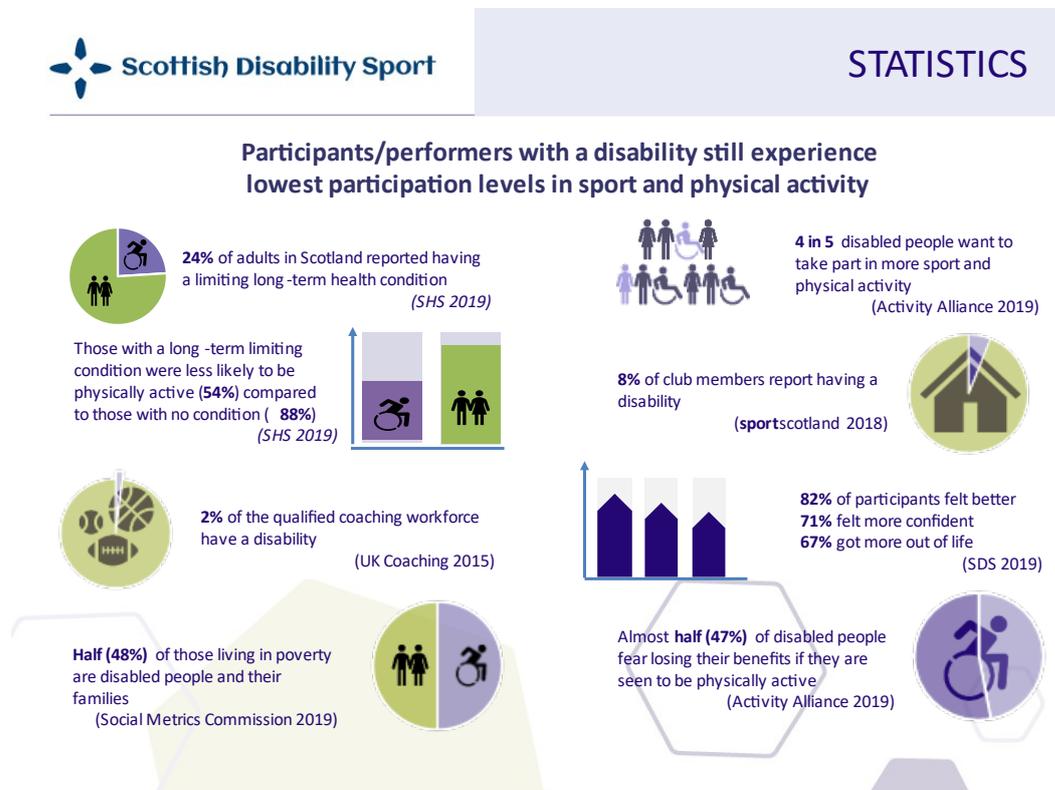
The purpose of this paper is to provide insight into the impact of Covid-19 on participants and athletes with disabilities in relation to sport and physical activity and to highlight interventions designed to support a safe and effective return.

### Context

Scottish Disability Sport (SDS) is the Scottish governing of all sports for people of all ages and abilities with a physical, sensory or learning disability. SDS has the vision of a Scotland where physical activity and sport are welcoming and inclusive for participants with disabilities and contributes to UK and international initiatives. SDS is also the recognised governing body for the sport of boccia.

### Physical Activity and Sport Statistics

Participants and athletes with a disability still experience the lowest participation levels in physical activity and sport and face unique and significant barriers to participation. The statistics below demonstrate how people with disabilities continue to be marginalised in relation to participation in physical activity and sport.



## Impact of Covid-19

We know that people with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Research undertaken by the BBC in June 2021 highlighted the devastating impact the pandemic has had on their lives. Most said their disability had worsened and more than 2,400 said routine, often vital, medical appointments had been cancelled. The findings paint, for the first time, a comprehensive picture of a hidden fallout of Covid-19 and disability charities have said the findings confirmed that disabled people's needs "had been forgotten".

- 2,604 said mental health had got worse
- 2,427 said their disability had deteriorated
- 683 had seen all of their appointments cancelled/unable to attend
- 241 had not left house at all

*BBC research 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021: 3,351 disabled people questioned*

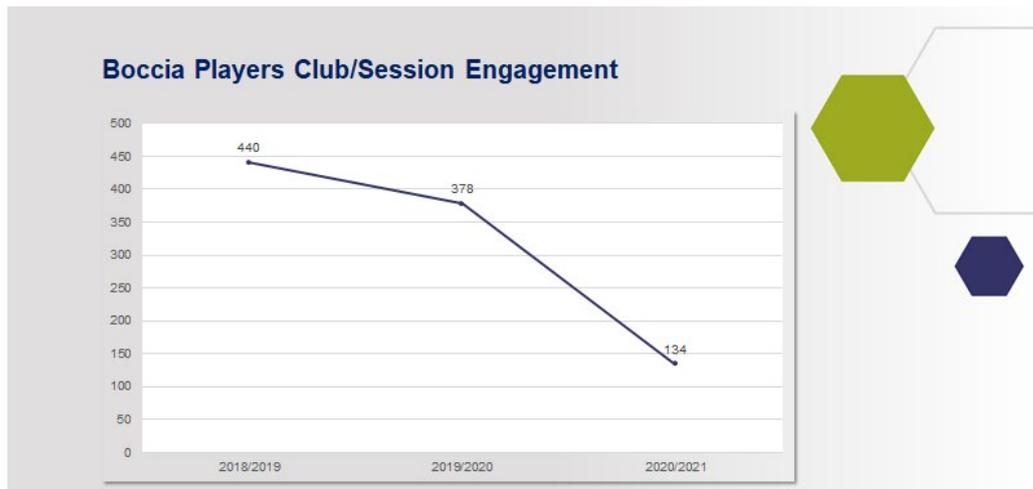
These findings align closely with the experiences of SDS during the Covid-19 pandemic and we are now seeing a significant hesitation to return to physical activity and sport and a tangible loss of confidence with large number of participants with disabilities. We are also experiencing incidents of participants and athletes not being able to return to physical activity and sport due to reductions or withdrawal of care services which for many are vital to ensuring reengagement.

Since October, SDS has gradually returned to the delivery of face to face activities with the appropriate processes, protocols and mitigations in place in relation to Covid-19. The table below shows the number of participants pre and post Covid-19 attending events run to date in 2021 and highlights the continuing impact on participants with disabilities;

Event	2019/2020	2021/2022
Senior National Athletics Championships	225	87
National Lawn Bowls Championship	85	61
Scottish Closed Boccia Championships (BISFed Classes)	22	10
Scottish Open Boccia Championships (Non BISFed Classes)	115	37
National Indoor Bowls Championship	49	35
Senior Gala for Swimmers with a Physical/Sensory Disability	60	45

These figures demonstrate the significant amount of work and dedicated support that is required to see us return to pre pandemic levels of participation, yet alone reach figures that are truly reflective of the Scottish population.

The sport of boccia has been especially impacted as participants often have severe and complex disabilities and may have underlying health conditions. They may also be dependent on care support to enable them to participate in their chosen sport. The slide below highlights the considerable impact on this group and the real need for significant support to ensure their re-engagement;



[www.scottishdisabilitysport.com](http://www.scottishdisabilitysport.com)

## Partnership Working

SDS works in partnership in order to develop opportunities for people with a disability, and without these partnerships our impact would be significantly diminished. SDS works with the 14 local SDS Branches, 37 Scottish Governing Bodies of sport and all 32 Local Authorities as well as partners within Health, Education and the third sector, in a variety of projects and programmes, to engage more people in physical activity and sport. This is achieved by meeting the individual needs of disabled people, ranging from making clubs more accessible to bespoke training and from supporting athletes on their journey to staging engagement days throughout Scotland.

SDS has works tirelessly with this extensive partner network in an effort ensure a smooth and supported return to physical activity and sport across Scotland. Interventions designed to support this return have included;

- SDS Branch Conference, Forum, Steering Group and regular communications.
- Return to Sport Advice Resources
- Return to Sport Videos
- Separate Local Authority and Scottish Governing Body Professional Officer Groups
- 61 sports clubs and sessions, along with all 7 boccia Clubs, supported to return to sport
- 100 individual participants supported to return to sport

The SDS Be Active, Be Well and Get Out Get Active programmes was developed to support the physical, psychological and social wellbeing of our community. Self-isolation and lack of access to physical activity and sport has had a significant detrimental impact which is further compounded by a decrease in personal care. For people with a disability, physical activity and sport can be their only connection to social engagement and friendship as well as a focus for physical and mental

wellbeing. These programmes have supported people to overcome some of these barriers during this challenging time.

SDS also moved swiftly to establish a comprehensive programme of online learning, participation and engagement opportunities at the start of lockdown. A sample of these can be viewed in the links below;

[SDS COVID - 19 Activity Paper](#)  
[Be Active Be Well Evaluation](#)

### Activity Inclusion Model

SDS launched its new strategic plan, “Inspiring Through Inclusion: 2021-2029” in April and has developed an Activity Inclusion Model (AIM) which will continue to be used widely across Scottish sport to ensure an inclusive approach to the development of strategy, education and participation:



[Activity Inclusion Model \(animated version\)](#)

### Conclusion

SDS is delighted to contribute to this conversation and recognises that there is still much to be done to support the re-engagement of participants and athletes with disabilities. SDS will continue to work to support the engagement and re-engagement across Scotland. Sport and physical activity must play a pivotal role in the social, physical and psychological recovery from the impacts of Covid-19.

## **Scottish Sports Association written submission: Sport and Physical Activity**

The Scottish Sports Association (SSA) thanks the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee for the invitation to this evidence session.

The SSA exists to represent, champion and support Scottish Governing Bodies (SGBs) of sport as the independent and collective voice for SGBs. SGBs are responsible for the governance, development and delivery of their individual sports and provide a formal structure for the over 900,000 individuals in Scotland who are members of Scotland's 13,000 sports clubs. Most of these organisations are run on a not-for-profit basis and are managed by volunteers. They provide coaching, competition and participation development opportunities for their local communities and most of the 200,000 people who volunteer in sport do so within the club structure. The SSA has, as usual, compiled this submission based on input from our Members.

### **Context**

SGBs, sports organisations and sports clubs have worked tirelessly to mitigate the challenges brought by the pandemic. In many instances sport has gone above and beyond to service and support their local communities, reinforcing the connecting role of sport and the vital function of clubs in resilient communities.

The phased easing of restrictions has had differing impacts on sports based on the environment, nature and structure of the sport. Golf and tennis, which were among the earliest sports permitted to restart, have seen significant increases in membership, allied with an efficient and effective delivery of new developments to enhance the sports. In contrast, some indoor and particularly contact sports have been unable to participate in the traditional sense and have had to find alternative ways to support participants to train within the guidelines.

A key focus for all SGBs for many years has been reducing barriers to sport and reducing inequalities. Members are concerned that the pandemic has moved these agendas backwards. For example, the pandemic has had a disproportionate and compounding impact on people with a disability, and both participation and volunteering rates in sport and physical activity for people with a disability remain a significant concern.

### **Opportunities**

While working tirelessly to support their members, provide clear guidelines and communication and develop innovative ways for people to engage in their sports within the guidelines, Members have shown agility and flexibility to develop their approaches, including:

- Increased and more inclusive engagement with members via online provision
- Wholesale move of coaching courses, learning and session delivery to online
- Access to new and different funding streams (e.g. Bowls Scotland supported their clubs to bring in ~£6.5m of new funding to support clubs)

Modernisation of governance, operations and systems. Additional opportunities have been presented to sport and physical activity more broadly, notably:

- A government and population-wide focus on wellbeing and mental health and the contribution of being physically active to these outcomes
- An enhanced approach to flexible working, allowing people to be active within traditional working time
- Increasing recognition that regular physical activity enhances the immune system, along with the prioritisation of boosting immune-response
- Enhanced awareness of the importance of vaccinations and increased recognition that regular physical activity increases the potency of vaccination
- Where there were existing relationships, sports organisations were entrusted with the delivery of their sports as the priority – bureaucracy was minimised and monitoring was focused on essential elements.

Our Members were pleased to see the enhanced recognition for sport and physical activity within the Programme for Government 2021/22, noting:

- Doubling of the active living budget to £100m by the end of this Parliament – our Members are keen to understand the definition of “active living” and to be engaged in discussions as to the best use of this investment
- £650,000 investment in Health Boards to support children under 5, including through physical activity – our Members are keen to be engaged in discussions as to the optimal use of this investment
- Active Schools (AS) programmes to be free for all children and young people by the end of this Parliament – our Members are keen to ensure that the investment to support this gets to the clubs and community groups who enable this work and to identify easier access to the AS network, including one point of contact to help to distribute materials and offers of support
- A multi-year funding model for the voluntary sector – sport is a key part of the voluntary sector and our Members are keen to ensure that this commitment includes sport and is for multi-year and core funding.

### **Challenges**

While Members have worked hard to deliver positive outcomes, the pandemic has brought new challenges and exacerbated existing issues:

- Financial pressures are significant - many sports clubs and SGBs refunded or rolled member subscriptions, lost members due to a lack of permitted activity and/or have not been able to conduct traditional events or fundraising activities, resulting in significant reductions in income
- Reduced access to community facilities (including the school estate) remains a considerable barrier for community clubs
- Reduced sports participation and volunteering by people with a disability, long term health condition and/or older adults – including exacerbated concerns about accessing disability benefits from the DWP
- Restriction on sports clubs/organisations accessing grant/trust funding
- UK Government taxation of its own grants to sports clubs
- Concern around the delivery of regular, quality PE, especially for young people with a disability.

### **Potential Solutions**

Discussions with our Members have highlighted a number of solutions to these challenges:

- Introduce free (or at least affordable) access to the school estate for all community clubs/organisations and a programme management system which promotes, encourages and prioritises community use
- Ensure sports clubs/community groups have a voice in shaping the strategy and management of public facilities (including the school estate) through more holistic Community Planning Partnerships, local planning and new facility advisory groups
- Make the provision of accessible, affordable and fit for purpose sports facilities, pitches, parks and greenspace a mandatory consideration for any new planning request
- Establish a programme of 'wellbeing employers' and 'wellbeing educators' at the heart of a wellbeing economy; all employers and education establishments offer protected time, flexibility and opportunities for people to be active and to volunteer within the working/school week and to encourage all employers and education establishments to reflect the Active Scotland Outcomes as part of their organisational KPIs
- Conduct a strategic review of the key measures we use for sport and physical activity and agree aspirational measures for other stakeholders to focus their supporting contributions
- Increase accountability of Local Authorities for the ~90% of investment in sport that goes through them
- Recognise sport as a fundamental part of the fabric of our communities through a new sports club governance model which works for sports clubs and gives parity of benefits to charities and other voluntary organisations (e.g. rates exemptions, access to grant funding and Gift Aid)
- Ring-fence new investment from the Barnett consequentials from the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham/income from the implementation of the sugar tax to support sport and physical activity
- Introduce a new strategic ambition for Scotland, incorporating an ambition to optimise the benefits of sport and physical activity across a broad range of government policy, including achieving real cost benefits of preventative spending, to achieve a step change in sport and physical activity contributions to wellbeing and inclusion KPIs and to build a reputation for Scotland as a healthy, active and sporting nation.

Fundamentally, we need to embrace this opportunity to value health and wellbeing by resourcing sport and physical activity as an investment, not viewing it as a cost; recognising sport and physical activity as a fulfilment to enrich lives and its role in enhancing the health and wellbeing of individuals and the population.