



Performance Improvement Department
Craigavon Civic and Conference Centre,
PO Box 66. Lakeview Road,
Craigavon Co. Armagh
BT64 1AL

Via: performance@armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk

5 April March 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Draft Performance Improvement Objectives 2022 to 2023.

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland welcomes the opportunity to respond to Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council's consultation on performance improvement objectives.¹

We particularly welcome proposed actions outlined in objective one - developing more inclusive services for those with autism and their carers; and objective two - increasing the number of people participating in sport and physical activity from groups least likely to participate. We would seek to comment on these objectives in the context of the United

¹ <https://armaghbanbridgecraigavon.citizenspace.com/performance-audit/new-draftperformanceobjectives2022-23/>

Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The Equality Commission, together with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, has been designated, under Article 33 (2) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), as the Independent Mechanism for Northern Ireland (IMNI) to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention in Northern Ireland.²

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is an international treaty which identifies the rights of disabled people as well as the obligations on Parliament and the NI Assembly to promote, protect and ensure those rights. It aims to ensure that disabled people enjoy the same human rights as everyone else and that they can participate fully in society by receiving the same opportunities as others.

By ratifying the UN Convention in 2009, the UK is committed to promoting and protecting the full enjoyment of human rights by disabled people and ensuring they have full equality under the law.

² [ECNI - UNCRPD - Addressing Inequality, Equality Commission NI \(equalityni.org\)](https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI-UNCRPD-Addressing-Inequality)

Article 9 of the UNCRPD addresses the issue of **Accessibility** and states that: *‘To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.’*

Article 30 addresses **Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport** and states that: *‘With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:*

- a) To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels;*
- b) To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organize, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources;*
- c) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues;*
- d) To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system;*

(e) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organization of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.

Proposed Performance Improvement Objectives

The Commission welcomes the Department's plans to improve the availability of more inclusive services for those with autism and their carers. We note that progress towards the full implementation of an Autism Friendly Action Plan will be monitored via reporting to the Council's Autism Friendly Working Group.

The Commission also welcomes the Department's plans to increase the number of people participating in sport and physical activity from groups least likely to participate. We note that the Council seek to establish a baseline of current physical activity interventions offered by the Council by March 2022.

People with disabilities in Northern Ireland have the lowest sport participation rates compared with other jurisdictions in the UK and Ireland at 28% compared to Wales which is the highest at 38%. Comparing participation levels between 2010 and 2020, people with disabilities in Northern Ireland (NI) are still almost half as likely to regularly participate in sport and physical activity as non-disabled people.

Research undertaken by academics at Ulster University published in 2019³ examined the implementation of Sport NI funded mainstreaming policies and highlighted the importance of developing specific targets and an overall strategy, as well as fully consulting with people with disabilities to ensure that opportunities for participation is available to individuals across the broad spectrum of disabilities.

If we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Drury', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Brian Drury

Equality Policy Officer

E: bdrury@equalityni.org

³ Kitchin, P.J., Peile, C. and Lowther, J. (2019): [Mobilizing capacity to achieve the mainstreaming of disability sport](#), *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 24:6, pp. 424-444 (accessed 23 December 2021).