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1. United Kingdom: An inclusionary approach to sport

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1.1 Introduction

The sport system in the United Kingdom (UK) differs in several areas from other countries' organisation and political regulation of sport. In the UK, sport is a devolved issue that is dealt with by the home countries with some overlap with the national government for elite sport provision. Furthermore, the UK has adopted an inclusive approach to the organisation and regulation of sport which makes it difficult to separate disability sport structures from the non-disabled sport structure. The overall sport system in the UK and its home countries (excluding Northern Ireland, see chapter x) is discussed in this context with significant emphasis on how this relates to disability sport provision. The chapter draws on data from the literature, policy documents and research conducted by the authors which included surveys and interviews with stakeholders.

<INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE>

Figure 1. Map of the United Kingdom

1.2 Country profile

Characteristics of the UK

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) has comprised of four home countries (nations) since 1921: England, Scotland and Wales (which collectively make up Great Britain), and Northern Ireland. As Northern Ireland is covered elsewhere in this book, it might seem straightforward to just cover Great Britain. However, the UK is a complex state that saw an important change in 1999 when devolved powers were awarded to the home countries: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, while England remains the only home country that has no devolved powers and is ruled by the UK government. Furthermore, as Great Britain has no legislative powers, it remains important to discuss the UK rather than Great Britain in this chapter.

Devolution is important as it gave greater powers to the devolved nations for the development of sport. However, this also makes the UK a complex country with various levels of decision-making and fragmented responsibilities for the provision of sport. While joining the European Union in 1973 had significant impact on the provision of sport, the UK left the European Union on the 31st of January 2020. The implications of Brexit on sport provision in the UK is uncertain, and it has renewed calls for an independence referendum in Scotland, while also reigniting talks about a united Ireland.

Today, the UK can be described as an aging multicultural society. While 13% of the population belongs to an ethnic minority (Crouch & Minhas, 2017), multiculturalism is more an English phenomenon than it is a UK one because the majority of ethnic minorities live in England, and more precisely in the inner city areas of the former industrial cities. The largest minority groups are from countries of the former British Empire such as Pakistan and India. Similar to most European countries, the UK is seeing an aging population, with 18% of the population aged 65 and over (Office for National Statistics, 2019a) and this is projected to increase to 24.8% of the population by 2050. Those aged 85 years and over, the fastest growing segment, are projected to make up 5% of the population by 2050 (Office for National Statistics, 2019a). As life expectancy is steadily increasing and the likelihood of becoming disabled increases with age, the time people spend in poor health has also increased (Office for National Statistics, 2019a). These trends, coupled

with a slow annual growth rate of 0.5%, will have significant implications for the sports delivery system in the UK. Table 1 shows some of the key facts and characteristics of the UK.

<INSERT TABLE 1 HERE>

Table 1. Facts and characteristics of the UK

a) English and Cornish; b) English and Welsh; C) English, Gaelic, Scottish and British Sign Language

The regions in the UK are made up of 9 English regions + Scotland, Wales and Ireland. However, the nations of Wales and Scotland recognise their own regions.

Sources: Eurostat, 2018; ONS, 2019b; World Bank, 2018; edited by Christiaens M.

Sport in the UK

As sport is a devolved issue in the UK, sports participation is measured separately by each nation. This results in some comparison issues, as each sport organisation responsible for this has adopted different measures. The biggest differences are found in terms of sport frequency (e.g. once a week in England compared to once in the last four weeks in Scotland), duration of activity and the activities included (there is a growing trend to include walking). Additionally, abrupt changes in methodology¹ have taken place within England (2016-2017) that resulted in a massive increase in sport participation from 36% to 75% in the same year. This makes any comparison within the UK or with other countries in the EU difficult. Despite these differences and changes to methodologies, it could be argued that sport participation in the UK has remained fairly stable between 2007 and 2019 (Christiaens, 2018). Furthermore, it is clear that disabled people (DP) have a lower sport participation rate throughout the UK. A sports profile for the UK can be found in Table 2.

<INSERT TABLE 2 HERE>

Table 2. Sport profile of the UK

- a) Sport participation at least two times in the last 28 days.
- b) Sport participation three times or more per week
- c) Sport participation at least once in the last 28 days.
- d) In the UK NGBs are the equivalent of national sport federations. Furthermore, as sport is a devolved issue, it is the home country's sport council that is responsible for recognition of NGBs. This explains the difference in number of NGBs across the home countries.
- e) This figure is only for sport
- f) This figure is a sum for libraries, culture, heritage, sport and recreation
- g) This figure is a sum for sport facilities and other recreational activity and sport spending

Sources: Active Lives; 2020 Allison, 2002; Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2019; European Commission, 2018; LeisureDB, 2019; National Governing Body CEO Forum, 2015; Office for National Statistics, 2018, 2019b, 2019d; Scottish Government, 2019; SIRC, 2013; Sport England, n.d., 2012a, 2018, 2019a, 2019b; Sport Wales, 2018, 2020; Sportscotland, 2019a; StatsWales, 2019; Welsh Government, 2020; edited by Christiaens M.

Since others have dealt with mainstream sport policy in greater detail elsewhere (e.g. Bergsgard, Houlihan, Mangset, Nødland, & Rommetvedt, 2007; Coghlan & Webb, 2003; Collins, 2010; Green & Houlihan, 2005; Houlihan, 2005; Houlihan & Lindsey, 2013), Table 3 provides a short summary of the sport development policies in the UK. This overview illustrates that the government's approach to the funding of sport has not

¹ The changes to methodology include a broadening of the definition of what constitutes physical activity and a loosening of the timeframe in which people need to be active and for how long.

changed much since the 60s with a prioritisation of elite success and school sport over community sport with intermittent focus on underperforming groups and social inclusion (e.g. sport for DP). However, there was a significant shift in the sport structures when the Sport's Review Group decided in 1989 that a shift was necessary from disability sport clubs towards the inclusion of DP in non-disabled sport clubs (Minister for Sport Review Group, 1989). The Sport's Review Group expected national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) and other mainstream agencies to provide DP with the same opportunities for participating in sport as non-disabled people enjoyed. It was their belief disability sport organisations did not have the resources to do so adequately. As a result, the government takes an "inclusive" approach to sport which makes it hard to separate mainstream sport from disability sport policy.

<INSERT TABLE 3 HERE>

Table 3. Sport priorities in the UK

Source: Adapted from Christiaens, M. (2018).

Disability in the UK

In the UK, the Equality Act 2010 (EqA 2010) defines disability. According to the EqA 2010, a person is disabled if they: have a physical or mental impairment and if the impairment has a substantial and long-term (12 months or more) adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (Great Britain Parliament, 2010). People with certain severe or progressive diseases are also covered by the Act, but these are not systematically counted within the "core disabled" population.

Following the definition of disability provided by the EqA 2010, the prevalence of disability in the UK is about 21% (see table 4 below). However, there are significant regional discrepancies which can partially be explained by the link between disability and age, education and socio-economic status (Blackburn et al., 2010; Braithwaite & Mont, 2009). For example, children show a disability prevalence of 8 per cent, while almost half (45 per cent) of 65+ (pension age) has a disability. There are also differences between the nations, with England (20%) having the lowest prevalence of disability compared to Scotland (23%) and Wales (25%), but even within these regions there are significant differences, for example, within England itself the North East region which is one of the poorest (21.6 per cent) had the highest percentage of activity limitations and London which has a significant lower mean age (14.2 per cent) the lowest (Office for National Statistics, 2014).

<INSERT TABLE 4 HERE>

Table 4. Disability prevalence in the UK

Source: Department for Work & Pensions, 2019

In terms of terminology used in the UK, the government provides a useful guide on inclusive language. This guide is made to provide a framework to both businesses and individuals to normalise social interactions. Besides giving some general advice such as: "Avoid medical labels", "Use positive descriptors" and, "address disabled people [sic] in the same way as you talk to everyone else", the government has created a list of words to use and avoid, see table 5 (below).

<INSERT TABLE 5 HERE>

Table 5. Disability terminology

Source: Office for Disability Issues, 2020

Emergence and rise of disability sport in the UK

Historically, DP had limited opportunities for organised sport (DePauw & Gavron, 2005) and there is little evidence of organised sport for DP prior to World War II (WW II) (Brittain, 2012). People with hearing impairments were the first group to have access to sport and to formalise sport participation in clubs. The

earliest known and established sport club for DP was the Glasgow Deaf and Dumb Football Club established in 1872 (Le Clair, 2012).

The World Wars of the 20th century greatly influenced society's view of disabilities and brought rehabilitation to the foreground (Huber, 1984). Ludwig Guttmann, Director of the Spinal Unit at Stoke Mandeville hospital, was key in the development of disability sport as he recognised the physiological and psychological values of sport within rehabilitation (McCann, 1996). He was the first to introduce sport as part of a rehabilitation programme and would later organise the Stoke Mandeville Games (Brittain, 2012). The Stoke Mandeville Games were a great success and have transformed into the second largest multi-sport event in the world, the Paralympic Games.

With such an achievement it is easy to forget that Guttmann was at the forefront of another important development in the UK. He was a key influence in the development of disability sport structures in the UK. In 1948, as a result of the Stoke Mandeville Games, Guttmann established the British Paraplegic Sport Society (BPSS) (DePauw & Gavron, 2005). In an attempt to manage the plethora of organisations emerging, Guttmann founded an umbrella organisation, the British Sport Association for the Disabled (BSAD) in 1961 (Thomas, 2008). BSAD was later restructured into three regional organisations: the Activity Alliance in England, Scottish Disability Sport and Disability Sport Wales.

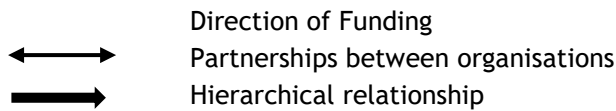
Over the years, the strategic responsibility for disability sport has shifted towards the sport councils (the arm's length bodies responsible for mainstream sport) as well as an increasing emphasis and responsibility for the NGBs. Yet, the evidence suggests that disability sport remains at best loosely and differentially integrated into mainstream sport. While there is commitment from the national disability sport organisations (NDSOs) towards the inclusion of disability sport, in practice this is a lot harder to achieve and greatly depends on the willingness of the mainstream NGBs.

1.3 The disability sport system

Historically, the role of the central government has been interwoven into the sporting landscape but, as a result of devolution, there has been a noticeable shift from a strong, hierarchical government, to governance through networks and partnerships (Rhodes, 1990; Skelcher, 2000). This shift in governmental structure has caused power erosion and weakened the state's ability to deliver policy (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006, 2008; Skelcher, 2000). This has resulted in the creation of non-departmental public bodies who operate at an "arm's length" from the government. This led to the creation of "sport councils" who have executive, administrative, commercial and regulatory functions. However, while this assures their independence, they are almost completely funded by the government and are accountable to it. The creation of such a myriad of multi-agency policy delivery leads to confusion and overlap between the various organisations, bodies and councils involved in policy delivery (Phillpots et al., 2010). This historical development has led to increased fragmentation and complexity of the sport structures in the UK, with a government that is reluctant to intervene in matters of sport. Figure 2 provides an overview of the (disability) sport system in the UK in terms of its structure and sport funding.

<INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE>

Figure 2. The (disability) sport structure in the UK



BOA: British Olympic Association
BPA: British Paralympic Association
NGBs: National (sport) Governing Bodies
NDSOs: National Disability Sport Organisations

Structure of disability sport

As a consequence of the Sports Review Group in 1989, a gradual shift is noticeable away from a dispersed and fragmented disability sport structure towards the inclusion of disability sport within non-disabled sport provision. This was borne out of a belief that disability sport organisations did not have the means nor the resources to provide adequate sporting opportunity. As such, NGBs and other mainstream agencies were expected to provide the same opportunities for DP that non-disabled people enjoy. This development has blended mainstream and disability sport structures, which makes it largely impossible to distinguish between them.

Sport in the UK is structured around two competing ideologies, “sport for all” and elite sport. While elite sport is mainly a national responsibility of the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), community sport is a devolved matter for the regional governments (i.e. the Welsh Assembly Government, the Scottish Government and the DCMS for England). Both elite sport and community sport are led by sport councils who work in partnership with the regional disability sport federations (Activity Alliance, Disability Sport Wales and Scottish Disability Sport). Here below we discuss the governmental, intermediate and non-governmental agents in the UK.

Governmental agents

Sport in the UK is very much a *multi-departmental* responsibility, with various departments contributing to the overall strategy and funding of sport. For instance, the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government set budgets for the devolved governments who in turn, use part of this funding to support their regional sport councils. On the other hand, the Department for Education supports school sport through the Youth Sport Trust, while the Department of Health has a crucial role in funding (disability) charities, involved in supporting sport activities, and funding National Disability Sport Organisations (NDSOs), who provide and support sporting opportunities for specific impairment groups (see table 6). As a result, the governing of sport is grounded in the principles of independence, partnerships and collaborations between actors at all levels.

Local authorities play a central role in the provision of community sport and recreation facilities. Local city town councils enable a huge range of leisure activities and sport to happen. They also have an important role in facilitating and supporting partnerships in the sport sector. Some of the key priorities of the local councils are to remove barriers to participation, improve the local sport delivery system, and invest and maintain sport facilities. However, there is no legal requirement for local authorities to provide facilities or sporting activity.

<INSERT TABLE 6 HERE>

Table 6. National disability sport organisations (NDSOs) in the UK

Source: Activity Alliance, 2020b

Intermediate agents

Sport in the UK is largely organised through the arm’s length principle. The sport councils (UK Sport, Sport England, Sport Wales and Sport Scotland) and the Youth Sport Trust (YTS) work together to influence sport policy, but also to fulfil the vision set by the government through a shared goal of maximising sporting success in all its forms (Sport England, 2016b). Each organisation has its own area of responsibility and targets within the sport landscape and these will now be explored further.

UK Sport is responsible for elite sporting success in the UK. They work closely together with the British Olympic and Paralympic Associations (BOA/BPA), the Commonwealth Games Council, the English Institute of Sport and the National Governing Bodies (NGBs). The primary role of UK Sport is to strategically invest National Lottery and Exchequer (direct government funding) income to maximise the performance of the athletes in the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the global events which precede them (Cushion et

al., 2010). They operate two streams of funding, central funding for NGBs and direct athlete funding. However, athletes with disabilities remain less frequently funded compared to non-disabled athletes, with only 25% of the 1,125 athletes in receipt of direct funding (UK Sport, 2019). This is a direct result of their funding criteria that only funds DP who are perceived to have a strong potential to win a gold medal at the Paralympic Games compared to being a medallist at the Olympic Games².

The regional sport councils, Sport England, Sport Wales and Sport Scotland are responsible for the community sport system in the UK. They are also responsible for strategically investing lottery and Exchequer income to sustain and increase sport participation levels, and to increase equality in the sport sector. The main investment streams are NGBs, facilities and standalone sport projects. It is important to note here that funding is awarded in accordance with the strategic objectives, which tend to change every four years. All regional sport councils have inclusion expectations written into their current strategy and link, at least to some extent, funding to inclusive objectives (Sport England, 2016a; Sport Wales, 2019; SportsScotland, 2019b).

Youth Sport Trust is a key organisation with a focus on sport for young people through a school sport delivery system. To achieve this aim, YST focusses on the delivery of quality physical education, satellite sport clubs for after school delivery, and to help schools open their facilities during weekends, holidays and after school hours. Furthermore, since the Warnock report in 1978, the government has encouraged the integration of DP into mainstream schools, making school sport an integral part of DP lives.

Non-governmental agents

The sport organisations and sport clubs, many being not-for profit charitable entities, play a pivotal role in the delivery of sport across the sector. At a *national level* the British Paralympic Association (BPA) and the Commonwealth Games Council work closely together with the NGBs in the delivery of elite sporting success. Their role is seen as identifying talent, supporting performance development, and delivering competitive success of athletes with disabilities.

The *national governing bodies* are the UK-equivalent of sport federations elsewhere in Europe. NGBs represent a specific sport or sometimes combine multiple sports that are closely affiliated. They are responsible for managing their sport in terms of administration, coaching, mass participation, elite sporting success and, in the last 30 years, an increasing responsibility for the delivery of sport for DP. In the UK there is no single recognised legal structure for NGBs. Therefore, they exist in a range of legal forms, including incorporated association, limited company, community interest company, trust, and charitable incorporated organisation. While NGBs are independent entities, the majority of their funding comes from either the sport councils or the national lottery. As a result, they are in a power-dependence relationship in which they are held accountable, based on key indicators linked to the governmental sport strategy. To be eligible for funding, NGBs need to gain recognition by the regional sport councils. In essence, the NGBs fulfil a central role in the sport landscape in which they are being pulled in all directions, often with competing objectives.

The *National Disability Sport Organisations* have a key role in the delivery of sport for DP. They are organised around specific impairments and seek to provide advice, support and opportunities for people within these impairment groups. Their mission is to improve the quality of life for DP through sport and physical recreation. They offer a low barrier entrance to sport through the organisation of events and work actively across the sport landscape to advocate and support disability sport provision. Additionally, they provide knowledge, information and experience to NGBs and other organisations in the sport landscape.

² Band A – Medalists at Olympic Games or Senior World Championships or gold medalists at Paralympic Games or Senior World Championships. up to £28,000 pa
Band B – a minimum of a top 8 finish at Olympic Games or Senior World Championships or medalists at Paralympic Games or Senior World Championships up to £21,500 pa

UK Coaching is a charitable organisation tasked with the professionalisation of the sport landscape through the development and implementation of a world-leading coaching system. Competent coaches are key in the delivery of (inclusive) sport for DP and their experience within sport is often dependent upon the competences of their coach (Christiaens, 2018). UK Coaching has recognised this gap and has attempted to make coach education more inclusive in addition to organising workshops focussed on coaching DP.

Disability Sport Federations (DSFs), operate at a regional level (Activity Alliance, Disability Sport Wales and Scottish Disability Sport) and strive towards a society where DP are just as likely to be active as non-disabled people. They have a difficult past, as they were supposed to be the umbrella organisation for disability sport (including NDSOs) in their regions but ended up alienating organisations within the disability sport landscape due to funding priorities from the sports council (Thomas, 2003). However, it seems the DSFs have evolved into knowledge institutions with meaningful partnerships across the sport landscape. They are a key partner of the sport councils and are an important voice in shaping sport policy and a funding partner in terms of sport delivery for DP.

At a *local level*, the UK sport sector is characterised by a plethora of voluntary *community sport clubs*. The UK sports system has more small, single-sport clubs than any other country in Europe except France (Harris et al., 2009). These sport clubs are often managed and run by volunteers and have a unique culture that is directly influenced by the values and motives of their volunteers. As a result of the voluntary nature of their involvement, their obligations and loyalty lie with the club rather than with government policy. This independence is further enhanced by the way funding is allocated in the UK, from the centre to NGBs, while rarely making its way to the sport clubs. It makes it possible for sport clubs to decide for themselves and, if deemed necessary, to resist or oppose other actors such as central government, the sport council and their NGB. This highlights one of the biggest difficulties of sports development in the UK as sport clubs are found to ignore central sport policy and focus on their own survival (Harris et al., 2009; May et al., 2013). This has been one of the major barriers in terms of translating the inclusionary vision of sport from the central government, sport council and NGBs into practice (Christiaens, 2018).

Steering of disability sport

Legislative framework

Compared to other European countries that have a civil law system, the UK operates under a common law system. Common law is not codified and heavily relies on judicial precedents which are binding. As such it would be possible to refer to the law system as “case law”. While it is impossible to discuss and cover the full extent of case law in this chapter, focus will be given to government legislation affecting the sports landscape in the UK.

In terms of sport, the UK government has adopted a non-interventionist approach to sport and, in contrast to some European countries, there is no general law of sport. Sport bodies are treated as autonomous independent organisations that have a tradition of self-regulation through their international federations and the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). However, there are important pieces of legislation, coming from other areas, that impact sport. Additionally, while scarce, there has been direct state intervention by means of legislation and/or other regulatory mechanisms. This interference includes issues of: public safety and order at sports events (e.g. following the Hillsborough disaster of 1989); the legal rights of the participants (e.g. discrimination); commercial decisions in relation to sport (e.g. Hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012); and in protecting the integrity of the sport (e.g. match fixing, corruption and doping).

For DP seeking to engage in sport or physical activity, the *Equality Act 2010* (EqA 2010) is the most important piece of legislation. This act defines disability and makes it unlawful for service providers to treat DP less favourably because of their disability. Service providers (e.g. sport clubs) must make “reasonable adjustments” to the way they provide their services by removing the barriers preventing DP from accessing them. However, there is fierce criticism of the vague and ambiguous language (Goodley, 2014; Lockwood

et al., 2012) and, in practice, this has often led to an understanding of inclusion as the removal of physical barriers (Christiaens, 2018).

In addition, disability benefits are critical in enabling some DP to be active. Without such support, some would be unable to afford travel, pay for exercise and/or specialist equipment. Disability benefits are regulated through the *Welfare Reform Act 2012* which saw the introduction of a universal credit and the *Social Security (Personal Independence Payment [PIP]) Regulations 2013*. Further relevant laws and regulations can be found in table 7, below.

<INSERT TABLE 7 HERE>

Table 7. Additional laws and regulations in the UK

Sources: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>; <https://www.ohchr.org/>

Policy framework

As community sport is a devolved issue in the UK, this section will discuss the policy framework for the devolved nations separately. This discussion will focus on the two most important entities in creating, influencing and implementing sport policy: the government and the sport councils who have a responsibility for both mainstream and disability sport. However, it must be noted that the sport councils work closely with the disability sport federations in creating their sport strategy.

In *England* the DCMS is responsible for setting out the government strategy for community sport and does so through its publication *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation* in 2015. This strategy was highly influenced by the government being displeased with the sport participation figures, which have shown a decrease since the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 (UK Government, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015). This highlighted the need for a “new” approach for sport through the identification of five desirable outcomes which are: physical wellbeing; mental wellbeing; individual development; social and community development; and economic development. However, the broad government strategy has not changed with a continuous focus on elite sport and increasing sport participation, as indicated in this strategy:

“For more than a decade, the government’s policy on sport has been to get more people participating in sport and to win more Olympic and Paralympic medals. Both of these are valuable, and will remain part of this new strategy.” (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2015, p. 16)

The new strategy has renewed interest in underperforming groups, recognising the participation gap of DP (who are twice as likely to be inactive as non-disabled) and the elderly, showing the intersectionality between these groups. This strategy does bring a number of new elements. It emphasises a move away from funding the active population in an attempt to make them more active, towards funding focussed on the inactive population. It broadened the remit of Sport England so that it became responsible for sport outside school from the age of five rather than 14, believing that a person’s attitude towards sport is shaped before they even reach the age of 14.

It also emphasises the role of Sport England in realising the objectives as outlined in this strategy. Accordingly, Sport England’s strategy, as outlined in the publication of *Towards an active nation: Strategy 2016-2021*, emphasises the aim of increasing sport participation, particularly in relation to under-represented groups including DP. Furthermore, they are trialling a new approach towards engaging DP within sport. They partnered up with a mental health charity, Mind, which had over 36.000 formerly inactive people taking part in physical activity. This clearly shows the intent of Sport England to work closer with charities and non-sport organisations to meet its targets. Additionally, there is a focus on more local delivery, and they are piloting local physical activity strategies in a number of selected geographic areas.

In *Scotland*, the government have aligned their strategy with the World Health Organisation (WHO) *Global action plan on physical activity 2018-2030: more active people for a healthier world*. The government has outlined their strategy in *A More Active Scotland: Scotland’s Physical Activity Delivery Plan 2018*. A first key point in this strategy is the high emphasis the government puts on promoting walking as

recreation but also as part of active travel. The government has created a specific strategy, *Let's get Scotland Walking - The National Walking Strategy 2014*, and works with Paths for All to fulfil this ambition. Secondly, there is a desire to address barriers faced by groups at risk of inactivity through supporting opportunities for DP. This is supported by *A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People 2016* which created an action plan for sport participation amongst other areas. This is strongly supported by SportScotland which has a strong commitment to inclusion that underpins all desired outcomes of their strategy *Sport for Life: A vision for sport in Scotland 2019*. Core to their strategy is making sport more accessible for people who do not take part and aims to achieve this through working together across and beyond sport partners.

The Welsh government created an ambitious 20-year plan, *Climbing Higher 2005*, to tackle inactivity in Wales. This is the first and only Government strategy for sport in Wales since it has become a devolved matter. Climbing higher sets out a clear, radical and inclusive vision for the future of sport and active recreation in Wales for the next twenty years. The essence of this strategy is to maximise the contribution that sport and active recreation can make to well-being in Wales across its many dimensions. This ambitious plan spans across areas of health, economy, culture, society, environment and Wales on the world stage. It is clear that this strategy focusses on “sport for good” in addition to a focus on elite sporting success and hosting major sporting events. To achieve its goals, the Welsh government and SportWales are focussing on investment in facilities.

Since the devolution of public health from the National Health Service (NHS) to local authorities in 2013, many local councils have taken the opportunity to integrate physical activity into public health policy as part of a wider shift from a system that treats ill-health to one that promotes wellbeing. As part of a nationwide shift towards engaging non-sporting partners there are calls for working with Health Providers. Through physical activity referral programmes, the local governments hope to support and engage the inactive population in physical activity. This approach follows advice from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) which recommends that those working in primary care should identify adults who are not meeting the UK physical activity guidelines. Those on the physical activity referral programme receive discounted access to professional coaches and physical activity group sessions.

Financial, governance and managerial support

Financial framework

Sport is a major contributor to the UK economy contributing around 2.1% of the Gross Value Added (GVA) (see table 8) and 1.2m jobs or, 3.7% of all jobs in the UK (SIRC, 2017b). The Olympic and Paralympic sector (not including sports such as football and golf for which the Games are not considered to be the pinnacle of their sport) provide more than half of sport-related economic activity with a GVA of £18.9bn with the summer Olympic sports generating £16.1bn (85%) of this GVA and Paralympic sport contributing £2bn with wheelchair basketball alone being worth £42m to the country (SIRC, 2017a). The GVA is largely following the pattern of participation (or demand) among sports. For this reason, the sector is driven by Athletics, Swimming and Cycling which have the highest engagement rates.

<INSERT TABLE 8 HERE>

Table 8. The economic importance of sport in the UK

Sources: SIRC, 2013, 2017a, 2018b, 2018a; edited by Christiaens, M.

The contribution of sport-related economic activity highlights the importance of investing in the sport sector. As the UK has integrated disability provision within the mainstream structures, it is often difficult to separate the funding streams for disability sport from sport for non-disabled people. This is further complicated as the revenue streams for sport organisations are varied and dependent on the type of organisation. While arm's length organisations are almost fully funded directly or indirectly by the government (e.g. Sport England and Activity Alliance), funding for the voluntary sector (the community

sport club level) shows more mixed revenue streams and comes through donations, grants, public sector contracts or trading income. For NGBs, much depends on the funding priorities of the sport councils. For example in England, 46 sports were funded between 2013-2017 with a total value of £493m (Sport England, 2013). However, the newly proposed funding cycle 2017-2021 will cut the amount of NGBs funded to 25 sports with a total value of only £102m. As for the provision of disability sport opportunities, voluntary community sport clubs can often apply for grants that are offered by the sport councils, the NDSOs, sport federations and disability charities. These grants are often limited in nature and cover a specific investment (e.g. purchase of equipment, a specific inclusive programme, etc.).

Local authorities have traditionally been a big investor in the sport landscape contributing over £1bn in funding year on year through complex multi-departmental funding streams. However, since the 2008 financial crisis, austerity has hit the local authorities and the third sector economy hard and continues to dominate government policy. Austerity is "...a form of voluntary deflation in which the economy adjusts through the reduction of wages, prices, and public spending to restore competitiveness, which is (supposedly) best achieved by cutting the state's budget, debts, and deficits" (Blyth, 2013, p. 2). The Department for Communities and Local Government, responsible for funding local authorities has seen overall funding cut by 51% between 2010 and 2015 (Parnell, Widdop, et al., 2015). A further 56% reduction in funding was planned between 2015 and 2020 (HM Treasury, 2015) and 168 councils did not receive any grant funding from 2019 onwards while having to contribute to the central government instead (Local Government Association, 2018).

One of the groups most affected by austerity is DP. Arguably, public spending cuts disproportionately focus on the poorest members of society (Blyth, 2013; Duffy, 2013). In addition to a direct reduction in social benefits, it is estimated that reforms to disability benefits will result in 1.25 million people losing some if not all of their disability benefits (Beatty & Fothergill, 2015). This compounded by a reduction of the investment in the tertiary sector, such as disability charities, on which so many DP rely for (sport) services.

DP are further disadvantaged as austerity has resulted in funding uncertainty and budget cuts for sport, leisure and physical activity (Local Government Association, 2018; Parnell, Millward, et al., 2015; Widdop et al., 2018). This has resulted in a reduction by two thirds over the last decade on council-run sports facilities which are often frequented by DP. Furthermore, spending on sports development and community recreation which often focusses on inclusion and vulnerable groups has fallen 64% to £93 million in 2018 (Ellson, 2019).

Governance and management support

The UK Government has seen the professionalisation of sport as key in the realisation of its sport strategy. This has resulted in political commitment to strive towards excellence through the professionalisation of sport structures in the UK (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2001, 2008, 2012, 2015). This has focussed on two areas in particular: improving and establishing good governance, and professionalising the work force with a specific focus on coaching.

To support this, Sport England and UK Sport have developed a Code for Sports Governance that will apply to all organisations within the UK, in addition to the governance frameworks of the other sport councils. While these codes have traditionally been voluntary, the new Code for Sports Governance details a mandatory set of requirements for organisations seeking government funding (Sport England & UK Sport, 2016). However, it is not only funding which could be hit if authorities do not comply with the code. The government could also take other punitive measures - including the withdrawal of the support sporting bodies need when bidding to host major events. One of the big pillars of the governance code is improving diversity throughout the organisation as sport organisations should better reflect the public it serves.

The UK coaching system is built on volunteerism, accounting for 78% of the coaching body (Sports Coach UK, 2011) and relies heavily on the "goodwill" of these volunteers (Taylor & Garratt, 2008). Coaching has seen significant investment over the years (e.g. investment of £16 million as part of the Olympic and Paralympic Legacy goals), while other initiatives, such as Sportivate, focussed on inspiring young people to become a coach (Sport England, 2012b). In recent years, sport coaching has seen diverse projects to increase

coaching competences in coaching DP. Disability Sport Wales has introduced a Disability Inclusion Training course (UKDIT) to support the professional development and up-skilling/learning of sports professionals, coaches and volunteers. Coaching UK runs various continuing professional development (CPD) workshops focussed on disability inclusion training and the Activity Alliance has partnered up with supermarket chain, Sainsbury, to deliver the Sainsbury's Inclusive PE Training Programme. These programmes are much needed as DP experience a lack of skills and knowledge amongst coaches, which has a negative impact on their wellbeing and sport participation (Christiaens, 2018). Furthermore, coaches are increasingly asking athletes to pay for their services with DP most often targeted under the presumption that they require more effort and/or are more time consuming to coach or in need of one to one coaching (Christiaens, 2018).

Lastly, in the UK, DP are keen volunteers with 47% currently engaged with volunteering which is higher than the non-disabled population (34%) (English Federation of Disability Sport, 2017). However, DP predominantly volunteer in disability related organisations and in local community groups and not so often in sport, a fact that may be attributable to people being involved in local groups relating to their disability (National Centre for Volunteering, 2003; Scope, 2005).

Level of integration or inclusion

In 1989 the UK abandoned the separation of sport provision for DP. As a result, the sport structures were reformed to integrate disability sport delivery. Indeed, the Sport Councils and NGBs are now responsible for the delivery of sport for DP. However, the UK remains characterised by ableist structures which is evidenced by the approach to, and perceived importance of disability by some NGBs who still prioritise non-disabled sport over sport for DP (Brittain & Beacom, 2016; Christiaens, 2018). This is despite most NGBs being in receipt of Sport England funding to provide for DP. Furthermore, the power and funding structures in the UK mean that the voluntary community sport clubs have much freedom and independency often resulting in tension and rebellious tendencies against (inclusive) policy from above. It is then perhaps not surprising that only 1% of sport club membership is a DP (Christiaens, 2012) and that DP remain the largest underperforming group when it comes to sport participation, which will be elaborated on in the next section.

1.4 Sport participation by disabled people

Monitoring and evaluation

The physical activity and sports participation of DP aged 16+ is monitored by Sport England's Active Lives Adult survey (Sport England, n.d.). For children and young DP (5-16 year-olds), physical activity and sports participation is assessed by Sport England's Active Lives Children and Young People survey (Sport England, n.d.). The surveys monitor and evaluate physical activity and sport participation of young people and adults in England, in line with the government's Sporting Future strategy (Sport England, n.d.). The Active Lives surveys are national surveys conducted by market research company, Ipsos MORI, who manage the data collection and analysis process on behalf of Sport England (Ipsos MORI, 2019a, 2019b).

Active Lives Adult

The survey sample is randomly selected from the Royal Mail's Postal Address File. Online completion is encouraged, but paper versions of the survey are available to respondents. Of the 177,876 people that completed the 2018/19 survey, 5.8% self-identified as having a limiting disability or long-standing impairment. In this survey, sport participation is defined as having participated twice in the last 28 days.

Active Lives Children and Young People

The survey sample randomly selects schools listed on the Department for Education's list (Ipsos MORI, 2019a). Special schools, schools specifically providing education opportunities for children with special educational needs or disability, were excluded from the sample (Ipsos MORI, 2019a). Physical activity and

sport participation data for children and young DP were only available to primary, secondary, or independent schools with pupils identifying as having a disability.

A total of 109,503 schools completed the survey. Data on the number of children and young DP that completed the survey was not available. In this survey, three measures are used to represent physical activity: Less active (Less than an average of 30 minutes a day); Fairly active (An average of 30-59 minutes a day); and Active (60+ minutes a day).

Sport participation

The data discussed in this section focuses on Active Lives data from England. Sport participation of DP from Wales³, Scotland⁴, and Northern Ireland⁵ present a similar picture of a participation gap between DP and non-disabled people. The Active Lives data in England is the most comprehensive dataset. Therefore, this will be the focus of the remainder of this section.

Sport participation (adults aged 16+)

DP (41%) are more inactive than non-disabled (20%) (Sport England, 2019b). Inactivity increases with the number of impairments an individual has. For example, 31% of people with one impairment are inactive compared to just under half (49%) of individuals with three or more impairments (Sport England, 2019b). The sport participation of DP is low compared to the rest of the population. Just 18 percent of DP participated in sport at least twice in the last 28 days, compared to 39 percent of non-disabled people (Active Lives Online, 2020).

Since the first round of data gathering for Active Lives Adult in November 2015/16, DP participating in sporting activities at least once in the last year has increased from 36.8% to 41.8% in November 2018/19 (Sport England, 2020). When reviewing increased levels of sporting activity across the same time period, the data has remained fairly stable. In November 2015/16, 18.8% DP participated in sporting activities at least twice in the last 28 days compared to 18.9% in November 2018/19 (Sport England, 2020). Brown and Pappous (2018a), in their analysis of sport participation since the 2012 Paralympic Games, found DP sport participation peaked a year after the 2012 Paralympics, but subsequently declined in 2016 to levels just above sport participation rates recorded in 2005.

Sport participation (children and young people aged 5-16)

A smaller participation gap exists between DP and non-disabled children and young people compared to adults aged 16+. Children and young DP are more inactive as they get older (34% for ages 11-16) compared to their early years (22% in ages 5-7) (Sport England, 2019a). This is a similar picture for non-disabled children and young people (31% for ages 11-16; 17% for ages 5-7) (Sport England, 2019a). In the past 12 months, levels of inactivity for children and young DP decreased for those aged 7-16 by approximately 4.1% (Sport England, 2019a). It is unclear why a decrease occurred and more data is needed before any meaningful trends or conclusions can be inferred from the data.

Sport participation by sport type (adults aged 16+)

³ Please see 'National Survey for Wales 2018-19: Sport and Active Lifestyles - State of the Nation Report' for further information. The report is available from: <https://www.sport.wales/content-vault/sport-and-active-lifestyles-survey/>

⁴ Please see 'Disability and sport' report for further information. The report is available from: <https://sportscotland.org.uk/media/2592/learning-note-disability-and-sport.pdf>

⁵ Please see 'Experience of sport in Northern Ireland 2018/19' report for further information. The report is available from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/535077/sport-participation-northern-ireland-uk/>

According to data from the Active Lives Adult survey, fitness class activities (9.4%) are the most frequently participated activity by DP, regardless of impairment type. Swimming and cycling (7.3%) are amongst the most popular activities for DP (Active Lives Online, 2020). While cycling is popular across the spectrum of impairment quantity, swimming is more popular for individuals with two or more impairments. The difference in popularity between sporting activities is small and therefore the order of importance should be viewed with caution. DP participate in a range of individual sports (such as swimming [7.3%], cycling [7.3%] and running [5.8%], more often than team sports [2.5%]).

Sport participation by region (adults aged 16+)

The UK has one of the widest income gaps, and inequality has been found to reduce the likelihood of participation in sport (Collins, 2010). Regional participation in sport and physical activity by DP is consistent with wealth distribution across the country. The south east and south west regions have the highest median total household wealth in Great Britain, whereas the north east region has the lowest (Active Lives Online, 2020). Similarly, participation of DP in sport and physical activity at least twice in the past 28 days is highest in the south east (67.7%) and south west (65.6%) regions, but lowest in the north east (58.5%).

Sport participation by impairment (adults aged 16+)

Individuals with behavioural impairments (23%) participate in sport the most (Active Lives Online, 2020). People with impairments listed as other⁶ (22.9%), mental health (21.9%), learning (21.6%), and speech (21.6%) comprise the top five impairment types for sport participation at least twice in the past 28 days in England (Active Lives Online, 2020). People with hearing (12%) and visual (12.5%) impairments participate in sport the least (Active Lives Online, 2020). See figure 3 for an overview of inactivity by impairment.

<INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE>

Figure 2. Inactivity by impairment type

Source: adapted from Active Lives Online, 2020

Sport participation by club membership (adults aged 16+)

The disparity between the sport participation of DP and non-disabled people is even steeper when looking at participation in club association. Data from the Active Lives Survey (Active Lives Online, 2020) shows that of those who are active, 44.8% of non-disabled people participate in club association compared to 29.4% of DP. However, when looking at club membership of non-disabled sport clubs, who are now required to deliver equal services to DP, data from athletics and swimming show that only 1% of club membership is formed by DP (Christiaens, 2018).

Barriers and facilitators

Barriers

Research has found ableism to be a significant constraining factor in the sport participation of DP in the UK. Brittain, Biscaia and Gérard (Brittain et al., 2020) claim ableism creates internalised oppression limiting the ability of DP to access sporting opportunities, due to a denial of accumulation of social, economic, and cultural capitals and the ability to self-determine. The ableist environment of the UK sporting system is

⁶ Sport England defines this impairment category as people without the following impairment types: behavioural, mental health, learning, speech, long term pain, dexterity, breathing, chronic health condition, mobility, memory, visual, and hearing (Sport England, 2016).

evident by many sporting opportunities failing to promote the social benefits of sport participation, instead promulgating the normative notions of competitiveness and body ideals (Ives et al., 2019). Furthermore, a number of sporting organisations lack experience and knowledge of providing sport participation opportunities for DP, stemming from a failure to consider disability as a consumer market worth focusing on (Brown & Pappous, 2018a; Christiaens, 2018; Johnson, 2019). Indeed, a perceived lack of appropriate sporting opportunities and awareness of sport provision can constrain some individuals from participating in sport (Brown, 2019). A lack of awareness of opportunities can stem from inaccessible or inefficient communication channels being used by providers (Activity Alliance, 2020a; Christiaens, 2018; Ives et al., 2019), indicative of an ableist mindset within organisations.

The systematic reduction in welfare and public services available to DP in the UK has been a significant barrier to sport participation. Austerity measures implemented by the UK Coalition government and the Conservative party had a detrimental impact on the physical, social and mental health of some DP (Brittain & Beacom, 2016; Cross, 2013). The combination of negative and prejudiced characterisations of DP in the UK media (Crow, 2014; Briant, Watson, & Philo 2013), austerity measures and the mobility component of PIP have prompted some DP to fear losing welfare benefits if seen to be active (Activity Alliance, 2020a; Brown & Pappous, 2018a, 2018b; Christiaens, 2018; Johnson & Spring, 2018). Nearly half of the people in Johnson and Spring's (2018) study were worried about participating in physical activity as they believed this would make them look more mobile and thus "less disabled" than they actually are. This in turn could lead to a reduction in their disability benefits and, in essence, punish them for participating in sport and physical activity (Brown & Pappous, 2018a; Christiaens, 2018; Johnson & Spring, 2018).

Facilitators

Research has emphasised the importance of activities prioritising fun and enjoyment as a facilitator for increasing sport participation (Ives et al., 2019; Sport England & English Federation of Disability Sport, 2016). Indeed, communications from trusted sources, such as medical professionals or disability organisations, may be more effective if the social benefits of sport are championed, rather than medical benefits (Sport England & English Federation of Disability Sport, 2016). In addition to positioning sport participation around fun and enjoyment, it is important organisations provide sufficient information about the activity. This can help reduce potential anxiety about what to expect when attending the opportunity (Sport England & English Federation of Disability Sport, 2016). Information about activities can include, but are not limited to, activity-related imagery, videos, and written communications which, if delivered through trusted communication channels, can help reduce unease about participation in sport (Sport England & English Federation of Disability Sport, 2016). It is important DP have a choice of suitable sport participation opportunities (Brown, 2019; Christiaens, 2018; Ives et al., 2019; Sport England & English Federation of Disability Sport, 2016). Inclusive sport sessions are a popular option for sport participation (Activity Alliance, 2020a), and providers who have been successful engaging DP in sport generally have knowledge and experience of inclusive sport (Johnson, 2019). Notwithstanding the preference for inclusive sport, organisations who provide increased sporting options for DP in the form of impairment specific sessions is important too (Sport England & English Federation of Disability Sport, 2016). Impairment specific sessions may be particularly appealing to DP who might be uncomfortable participating with non-disabled people because of perceived competency deficits or lack of confidence. In sum, the best way to facilitate sport participation for DP would seem to be to provide a compelling sporting offer, through diversity of choice and information.

1.5 Conclusion

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, the UK disability sport system is highly complex and fragmented as a result of devolution. With integrated sport structures, the UK is unique within Europe. However, as this chapter has shown, this has not necessarily translated in bridging the disparity between physical activity of DP and non-disabled people. Moreover, despite NGBs having to deliver for DP, their sport participation remains disturbingly low in non-disabled community sport clubs.

While the process of inclusion started in 1989, this was largely based on a voluntary approach that did not change much in practice. It is only much more recently, with the introduction of the EqA in 2010 and the adoption of coercion methods by the government, that the sport sector started to introduce significant change. The overall objectives of the government have not changed much over the years and have focussed on elite performance on the world stage and increasing physical activity with a changing focus on target groups. The government, who operates through its arm's length sport councils, is increasingly looking to NGBs and other sports organisations to deliver its policy objectives. However, community sport clubs feel detached from their NGBs and unpersuaded by the government to deliver against their objectives. This is not surprising as community sport clubs, contrary to their NGBs, are financially independent from the government and rely heavily on volunteers who have very different motivations than those of the government.

The sport sector in the UK is looking ahead to uncertain times. First of all, despite the government claiming an end to austerity, this is unlikely to have a direct impact on the sport sector. On the contrary, the sport sector has not recovered from previously imposed austerity measures. Moreover, with dwindling local budgets and local council debts spiralling out of control, sport provision through local councils is looking at gloomy times. Secondly, the implications of Brexit on sport have not been fully assessed yet but it is almost certain this will impact in a number of ways. Lastly, the outbreak of COVID-19 has brought many aspects of social life to a halt with many sporting events being cancelled and sport clubs closing their doors as they are seen as a highly contagious environment. The financial and social impact of COVID-19 on the sport sector is uncertain at this point. Furthermore, the Coronavirus Act 2020 further curtails the rights of DP and, in England, the 2020 Act relaxes the rules and standards for social care services, suspending the Care Act 2014 to the extent that they constitute a violation of DP's most basic human rights (Human Rights Watch, 2020). With the pandemic increasing in severity, the National Healthcare System (NHS) has adopted a controversial "scoring system" to decide who receives critical care and who does not. This scale is based on the "Clinical Frailty Scale" and treats DP as a "sub-class" of the population putting DP at risk of treatment (Boyd, 2020; Ryan, 2020). There have also been stories reported where DP are pressured into signing "do not resuscitate" forms and stories of "do not resuscitate" orders where "learning disabilities" or "Down's syndrome" have been given as the reason (Ryan, 2020). This evidences the ongoing structural and institutionalised ableism within British society.

To conclude, despite an inclusive approach to the sport structures in the UK, it remains a struggle for DP to engage in physical activity and sport. The sport participation levels have stagnated and not much has changed between 2007 and 2019. The sport sector remains dominated by an ableist culture that makes it difficult and/or unpleasant for DP to engage within the non-disabled sport landscape that is supposed to cater for them. Furthermore, changes to disability benefits has some DP scared of engaging in physical activity despite the clear benefits physical activity has for DP.

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