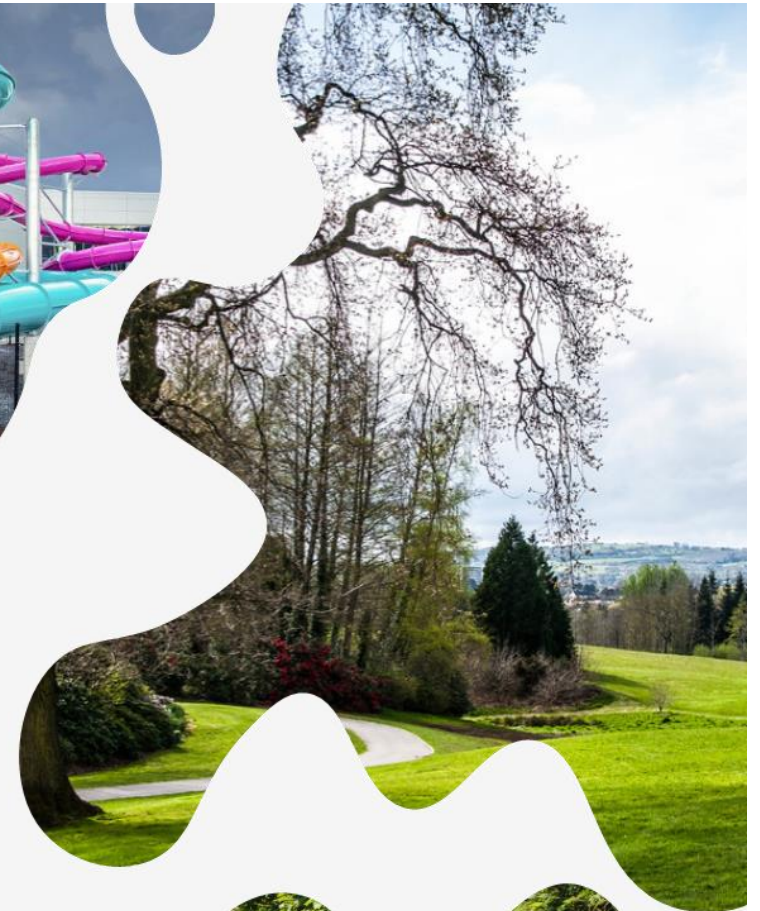


Belfast's Physical Activity  
and Sport Development  
Strategy

# Our More Active City

A Draft Report By Strategic Leisure Limited

September 2023



# Our More Active City

## *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

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Our More Active City  
***Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy***

Foreword

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# Our More Active City

## *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

### Introduction and Context

Belfast, capital of Northern Ireland, has a thriving cultural and social scene, high quality sporting facilities and many excellent examples of natural and built heritage. Belfast has been ranked in the top five cities in the UK for having the best quality of life.

The City boasts:

- A significant number of **modern community leisure facilities**
- Many **open spaces, parks, gardens, pitches, courts and greens**
- **The Great Outdoors** – hills, rivers and lough
- **Major sporting assets** – including the The National Football Stadium, Casement Park GAA Stadium (awaiting construction), Ulster Rugby Kingspan Stadium, the Mary Peters Track
- A wide range of **sports events**

In recent years there has been significant investment into Belfast City Council's indoor community leisure facilities; there is planned investment in new and existing University sports facilities (Queens University and Ulster University) and across the city new active travel routes and cycling hubs are being developed.

Well designed, managed and accessible open spaces provide a range of health, economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits. In Belfast the city parks and gardens, and the wider outdoors has huge potential for more informal activity and active travel opportunities. From the beautiful Victorian setting of the Botanic Gardens to the natural grandeur of Cave Hill Country Park, the lawns of the City Hall Gardens, to the smallest of local play areas, they all add to the overall quality of our environment and contribute to our city's own unique identity. Covering around a quarter of the city's total area around 2,390 hectares (ha), our open spaces are a significant resource. Our Vision is that by 2035... Belfast will have a well-connected network of high-quality open spaces recognised for the value and benefits they provide to everyone who lives in, works in and visits our city. <sup>1</sup>

This includes the blue and green infrastructure in the City.

**Despite this impressive physical activity infrastructure, the City has some of the poorest health outcomes in NI e.g., high levels of inactivity and obesity across the population.**

**There are some areas of high deprivation in the city. Young people in particular are exhibiting high levels of mental-ill health e.g., depression (particularly relating to post-Troubles trauma), suicidal tendencies etc.**

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Belfast Open Space Strategy (BOSS)

## Our More Active City

### *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

More specifically, and mirroring NI as a whole:

- Men participate more than women, but overall, a quarter of our adult population is inactive
- People without a disability participate more than people with a disability;
- Younger people participate more than older people, but in the city around 30% of our children and young people are inactive (Source: Public Health England Everybody Active, Every Day 2014)
- People living in more deprived areas participate less than those living in less deprived areas

Clearly there is a need to do more to encourage, enable and support all our residents to be more active every day to contribute to improved community health and well-being and reduced health inequalities. Given the limited resources available for physical activity provision it is crucial to target resources where they will have most impact.

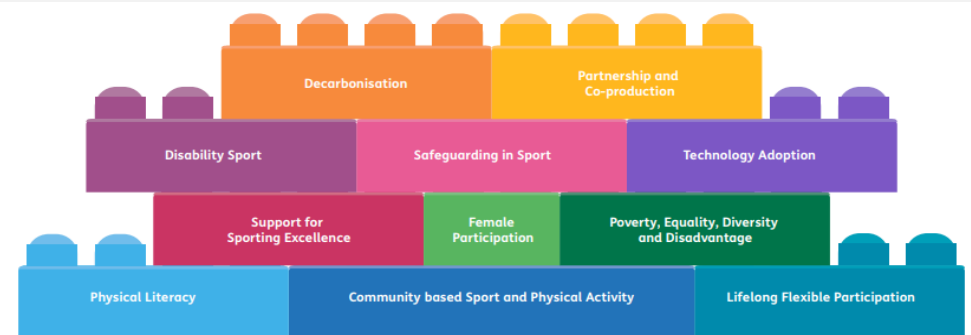
There is also both need and opportunity for physical activity provision, and particularly built assets, to contribute to the City's priorities for decarbonisation and reduced impact on climate change.

We need to do this together in partnership and a different landscape where a range of places and spaces e.g., parks, gardens, open space, rivers, and hills are more accessible and available for physical activity for more people alongside the formal built assets; a different approach of system-wide co-ordination and collaboration, aligned to identified priorities and outcomes.

Our ambition reflects that set out in the DfC Active Living: The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for NI 2022:

**'Lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity will deliver an active, healthy, resilient and inclusive society which recognises and values both participation and excellence.'**

**The DfC Active Living: The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for NI 2022** highlights the importance of promoting an active lifestyle and continued involvement in sport and physical activity from a young age through to adulthood and later years.



Foundation Blocks for the Strategy

## Our More Active City

### *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

The DfC Vision is underpinned by 6 key principles, and visualised below:

- Key Theme 1: Recovery from the impact of the pandemic on sport and physical activity.
- Key Theme 2: Promoting participation, inclusion and community engagement.
- Key Theme 3: Promoting excellence in sport.
- Key Theme 4: Promoting partnership and integration.
- Key Theme 5: Providing inclusive and shared spaces and places.
- Key Theme 6: Promoting the benefits of sport and physical activity.

This pragmatic ambition is in line with local authorities in England, who are moving to delivery of 'active well-being services' as set out in Sport England's 'The Future of Public Sector Leisure' (December 2022), and similar to the approach being developed by Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council.

The key drivers and context for our re-focused approach in Belfast already exist in NI:

#### **NI Draft Programme for Government 2016 – 2021**

This strategy sets out the outcomes framework to be achieved across NI. Key principles include:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Giving children the best start in life</b>      | <b>2. Protecting the environment</b>         |
| <b>3. Being fair to everyone</b>                      | <b>4. Having long, healthy, active lives</b> |
| <b>5. Giving people the chance to do well in life</b> | <b>6. Having a good economy</b>              |
| <b>7. Being safe in our communities</b>               | <b>8. Supporting people</b>                  |
| <b>9. Living, working and visiting here</b>           |  |

**Principles 1, 2, 4 and 5 set a context for the future where physical activity and moving more everyday provide the foundation for active, healthier lives.**

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**NI Government Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026:** 'If we are to support everyone to lead long, healthy, and active lives, we need to change the focus of our services, and how and where those services are delivered.'

#### **Belfast Agenda 2035**

**Our vision for Belfast in 2035:** Belfast will be a city re-imagined and resurgent. A great place to live and work for everyone. Beautiful well connected and culturally vibrant, it will be a sustainable city shared and loved by all its citizens, free from the legacy of conflict. A compassionate city offering opportunities for everyone.

A confident and successful city energising a dynamic and prosperous city region. A magnet for talent and business and admired around the world. A city people dream to visit.

#### **Vision for 2035 - Our outcomes**

The five things people want by 2035:

- where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy
- that is a welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive for all
- where everyone fulfils their potential
- where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing
- that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable

#### **Everyone in Belfast experiences good health and wellbeing**

By 2035, everyone will live a healthy lifestyle and will experience the best possible physical health and emotional wellbeing. Health inequalities will be reduced and those who suffer from poor health will receive the care and support they need in a compassionate city.

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#### **Health NI - Making Life Better Strategic Framework 2013 – 2023**

**Vision and Aims:** Through strengthened co-ordination and partnership working in a whole system approach, this framework will seek to create the conditions for individuals and communities to take control of their own lives and move towards a vision for Northern Ireland where – **“All people are enabled and supported in achieving their full health and wellbeing potential.”**

The aims of the framework are to: **“Achieve better health and wellbeing for everyone and reduce inequalities in health”**

The consultation document Fit and Well – Changing Lives proposed a life course approach to reflect the Marmot Review findings, and structured action around five life course stages, with underpinning themes of “sustainable communities” and “building healthy public policy”. The document also proposed two strategic priorities – Early Years and Vulnerable People and Communities..

In light of this feedback the Framework has been re-structured around the following themes:

- Giving Every Child the Best Start
- Equipped Throughout Life
- Empowering Healthy Living
- Creating the Conditions
- Empowering Communities and Developing Collaboration.

#### **Get Active – Belfast Health and Social Care Trust**

- Physical activity is essential for good health and wellbeing.
- In Northern Ireland at least 7 out of 10 people are not physically active enough to benefit their health. This inactivity is associated with numerous causes of disease and disability in Northern Ireland such as stroke, obesity, colo-rectal cancer, stress and lower back pain.

#### **Department for Infrastructure - Making Belfast an Active City – Belfast Cycling Network 2021**

Active travel provides people with a healthy, cost-effective and enjoyable means of incorporating physical activity into their daily routine. The number of people who can benefit from this is considerably greater than the number who currently do so.



## Our More Active City

### ***Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy***

#### **Belfast Open Space Strategy**

To make sure our open spaces are fit for the future, BOSS established seven strategic principles (SP), providing the roadmap for achieving the vision. Belfast's open spaces will:

1. Provide welcoming shared spaces
2. Improve connectivity
3. Improve health and well-being
4. Support place-making and enhance the built  
1. environment
5. Increase resilience to climate change
6. Protect and enhance the natural environment
7. Be celebrated and support learning

SP 2 and SP 3 provide the strongest link to the focus of this strategy. <sup>2</sup>

#### **Belfast City Council's Green Blue Infrastructure Plan (GBIP)**

Belfast City Council's Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan sets out a strategic framework for the future delivery of green and blue spaces.

GBIP Strategic Principle 2 - Planned Interconnected Networks states: To maximise the benefits of green and blue infrastructure it needs to form an interconnected network. Doing so requires strategic planning to target delivery against the needs of the local communities.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Belfast Open Spaces Strategy

## Our More Active City

### *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

## Why do we need a Physical Activity Strategy for Belfast?

There is a national focus on physical activity and health and wellbeing, as supported by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and Sport NI. The intrinsic link between health and wellbeing and physical activity is now well recognised and it is now seen as an important function of local government provision and support for the third sector. Developing a strategic framework to support and promote collaboration in terms of physical activity provision will strengthen the Belfast offer and support the targeting of opportunities to communities that will benefit most from being more active.

Nationally a more active population is not only healthier, but also impacts positively on the current cost of social care for a range of conditions, including mental health, and dementia. The 2019 study by Sheffield Hallam University for Sport England showed that for every £1 invested in sport, £4 of value is returned. Community sport and physical activity is worth £85.5 billion annually; £71.7 billion of this figure is social value, including physical and mental health, mental wellbeing, individual development, and social and community development, including reduced crime, stronger communities, educational attainment, and of course healthier people. £13.8 billion of this overall figure of £85.5 billion is economic value. The report also estimates that increased activity levels could reduce GP visits nationally by 30 million a year.

This report recognises the value and importance of physical activity; the investment in the Council's public health, leisure, open spaces and active travel services underpin this recognition. Belfast Council also has outsourced leisure providers (only for some of its built sports facilities), high quality outdoor environments, and a network of sports and physical activity clubs. There is a real understanding of the need to focus on increasing activity in those least likely to participate and embedding active living (i.e., embedding activity into everyday lives), into communities in an inclusive way.

Physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality accounting for 6% of deaths globally. People who have a physically active lifestyle have a 20% to 35% lower risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and stroke compared to those who have a sedentary lifestyle. Regular physical activity is also associated with a reduced risk of diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and colon and breast cancer and with improved mental health. In older adults, physical activity is associated with increased functional capacities. The estimated direct cost of physical inactivity to the NHS across the UK is over £0.9 billion per year.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of physical activity for individual and community health has been highlighted through the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic which has also exacerbated health inequalities across the UK. It has become more important than ever to focus on preventative health measures, including physical activity and to invest in those people who need it most. In Belfast, circa 25% of the adult population and approximately 30% of children and young people are inactive.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Social and economic value of sport and physical activity' August 2020

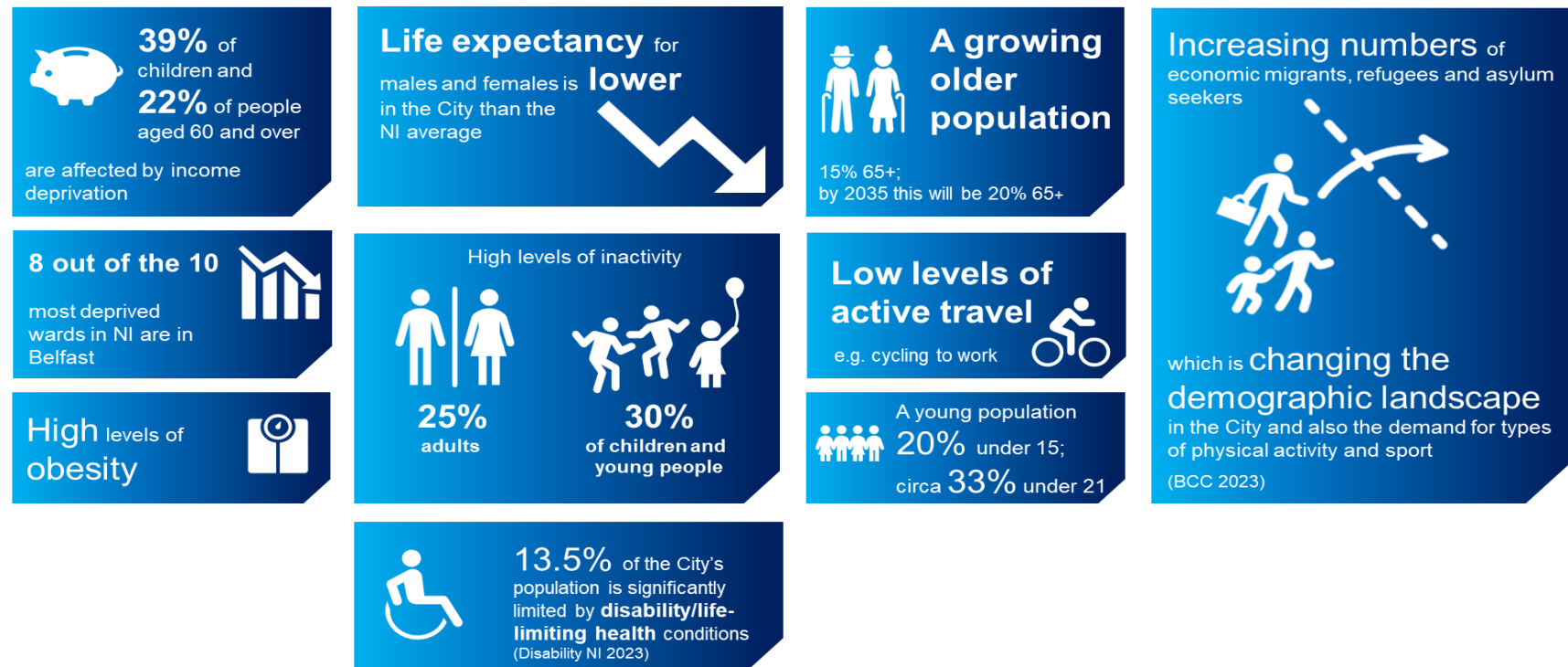
## Our More Active City

### *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

#### Our City Demographics <sup>4</sup>

Belfast has both a young population, and a growing older population:

Figure 1: Demographic Summary



In Belfast there is clearly an opportunity for change to contribute to improving the above, and in so doing, reduce health inequalities and improve life chances for our residents.

Our vision reflects national, regional, and local policy as well as local insight identified through the development of our strategy.

<sup>4</sup> Source NISRA 2020 unless otherwise stated

## Our More Active City

### *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

## Our Vision

**'Our inclusively active City: where, throughout the life course, everyone is able to take part in sport and physical activity, to benefit their health and well-being'**

Moving more as part of everyday life is recognised as an essential component of our physical and mental wellbeing and supports us to learn, work and enjoy life to the full. Our population is ageing, people live more sedentary lives and health inequalities have increased. In order to challenge and address inactivity in Belfast our **Shared Outcomes** are:

- **Active Communities** – supported and developed community assets and activities, to increase physical activity levels, and build community resilience
- **Active Environments** – built and natural environments, that support and facilitate every-day physical activity, for everyone. Built facilities (existing ones that are enhanced, or new buildings) should be fit for purpose, appropriately resourced and inclusive. The Belfast Open Spaces Strategy, Blue/Green Infrastructure Plan and Active travel investments all contribute to a more active environment.
- **Healthy Individuals** – increased awareness and capability among people who are less active to increase physical activity levels long-term, with a focus on decreasing inequalities
- **Partnerships and Collaborative Working** - enhance partnership working to increase physical activity opportunities and participation, in a range of activities across our City

Our new approach will contribute to our Belfast Agenda 2035 targets of:

- An increased proportion of adults who undertake at least 150 minutes of physical exercise per week
- An increased proportion of people who rank themselves as having high levels of well-being
- A reduced proportion of the population of adults or children who are obese

The starting line in Belfast is:

- aligning the Council's limited resources to the City's clear priorities for community health and wellbeing and investing in physical activity where it will have most impact on reducing health inequalities
- moving from a 'traditional club and sport-led model of provision' to an emphasis on being more active, everywhere, for everyone
- working through strategic collaboration with multiple partners in the City

## Our More Active City

### *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

## Our Strategic Priorities

To cross our starting line, and achieve our strategic outcomes, our six key priorities are:

Figure 2: Our 6 key priorities



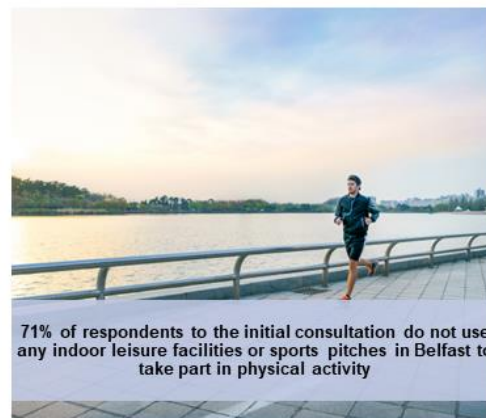
# Our More Active City

## *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

### Strategic Priority 1 - Physical Activity and the Participation Journey

Why this is a Strategic Priority

Our City has:



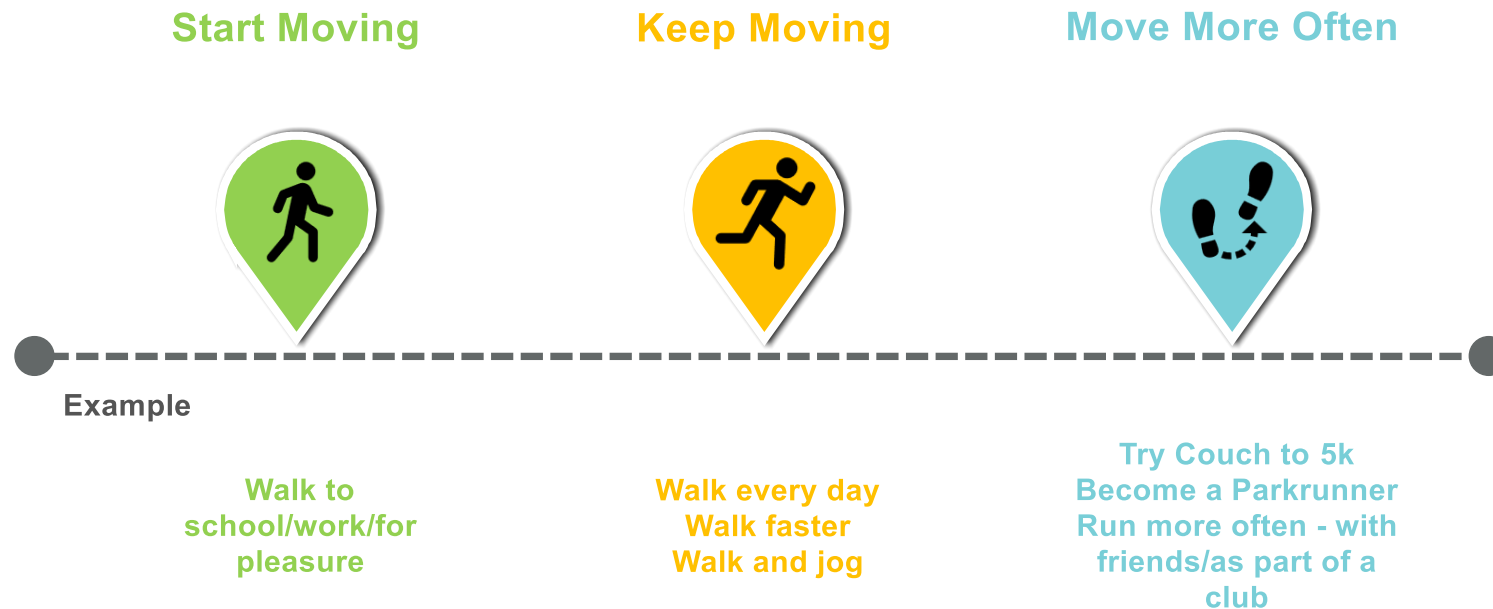
## Our More Active City

### *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

#### Objective

To increase levels of regular physical activity across our City communities and enable everyone to move more, every day (Start Moving, Keep Moving)

Figure 3: Our City Participation Pathway



#### Actions

1. To facilitate opportunities to be more active every day.
2. To promote our participation pathway within communities to demonstrate how individuals can become active.
  - e.g., start walking regularly; increase walking pace to jogging; complete Couch to 5k; try Park Run; take part in a 10k run
  - learn to ride; start cycling as a regular means of travel; join an informal cycling group; join a cycling club; take part in water confidence sessions; learn to swim; swim a length; take part in recreational swimming; join a club
3. To create more opportunities for active travel in our City.

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### ***Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy***

4. To improve access to our parks and open spaces:
  - Longer opening hours (would need to be supported by revenue budgets, and a prioritised investment plan e.g., to provide appropriate lighting)
  - Make it easier to use these resources for events (the Green Blue Infrastructure Plan states: *the need for green infrastructure to be supported with appropriate ongoing maintenance and investment to ensure that they are able to continue to function effectively and provide benefits for all* - Blue Infrastructure networks and Greenways referenced in GBIP are also relevant they *provide dedicated movement corridors free of motor vehicles to provide a safe environment for walkers, runners and cyclists to move around the city*).
5. Raise awareness of all available places and spaces for physical activity in the City (this strategy could support improved open space connectivity and improved standard of facilities for formal / informal recreation:
6. Alignment to BOSS SP 2 Improve Connectivity - Well-connected and accessible, our open spaces will form a green network to support safe and sustainable movement across the city.
7. Alignment to BOSS SP 3 Improve health and wellbeing Offering a wide range of facilities for formal sports and informal recreation, our open spaces will be the preferred option for exercise, relaxation and enjoyment).
8. Develop a City-wide incentive scheme (in partnership) rewarding regular participation in physical activity (in facilities or using other spaces)



## Our More Active City

### *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

## Strategic Priority 2 - Sport Development

### Why this is a Strategic Priority

Our rationale is to work with specific sports in the City, linked to strategic priorities, so that available resources can be better allocated, and long-term partnerships can be developed with Governing Bodies and clubs. Key principles for working with specific sports are:

- Taking part can contribute at every level of our City pathway (See Figure 6)
- Specific sports can engage with those who are less active to support them into activity
- Sports programmes, and participation opportunities help us to make best use of our sporting assets
- Sports events in our City are used to inspire and encourage more people to take part
- A strategic fit between the City's physical activity priorities and those of the Governing Body

Working with Governing Bodies and sports clubs we want to develop programmes, leading to long-term and sustainable participation pathways, which support individuals and teams to reach their potential based on our pathway.

We also want to support and develop our City clubs. Sports clubs have told us they face challenges in affording facility hire costs, that often facilities do not meet their needs and that they cannot always book times they need for training or competition. There is a need to improve the quality of existing council recreational facilities within our parks and open spaces, e.g. grass pitches, synthetic pitches, tennis / basketball courts / MUGAs, BMX Tracks, community greenways etc. Investment is needed in both existing and new facilities and Infrastructure. A costed plan will be needed. BOSS/Blue/Green Infrastructure/active travel are clearly relevant to this e.g.,.

BOSS SP 1 - Provide Welcoming Shared Spaces Our high-quality open spaces are inviting and safe for everyone to use. There will be enough space to meet the needs of our growing city and our open spaces will be used to encourage community cohesion and social interaction.

BOSS SP 3 - Improve health & Wellbeing - Offering a wide range of facilities for formal sports and informal recreation, our open spaces will be the preferred option for exercise, relaxation and enjoyment.

### Objective

Working with Governing Bodies and sports clubs our priority will be to work with a range of sports to deliver an increased range of participation and development opportunities from beginner to winner.

## Our More Active City

### *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

#### Priority Sports

Sports will be selected based on criteria which respond to inclusivity and increasing participation, particularly amongst women, girls, older people and those with a disability. We anticipate working with partnership sports who can contribute to our Vision and pathway because they are sustainable (growing participation base) and well-governed (financially, strategically accountable, with inclusive, up-to-date policies reflecting relevant guidance), and have strategic goals aligned to those in the City, as well as those sports supported by the BCC facility base.

**Table 1: Priority Sports**

Partnership Sports	Sports supported by BCC Facility Base
Badminton	Aquatic sports, including water polo
Basketball	Athletics
Boxing	Cycling
Cricket	Disability Sports
Gymnastics (inc. trampolining)	Football
Hockey	Gaelic
Netball	Rugby
	Tennis
	Lawn Bowls

#### Actions

1. To build partnerships between schools, clubs, GBs and BCC, focussed on increasing regular participation in identified sports, particularly at beginner level.
2. To create participation pathways which enable participants to develop from beginner to winner.
3. To increase availability of participation opportunities for those with a disability.
4. To provide appropriate support for clubs in attracting and developing coaches, leaders and volunteers.
5. To work alongside specific sports to develop improved governance within the sport.
6. Continue to support talented individuals to develop in their chosen sport.
7. To continue to develop and deliver a range of sports events in the City.

## Our More Active City

### ***Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy***

## Strategic Priority 3 - Partnerships

### Why this is a Strategic Priority

Working with City partners will enable a strategic and collaborative approach to delivery of physical activity opportunities. Available resources will be better co-ordinated and invested, and we will work together towards our shared Vision and outcomes.

### Objective

To develop citywide strategic and collaborative partnerships to deliver our identified physical activity priorities.

### Partner(s)

Our key partners in the City are:

- Department for Communities (DfC)
- Health NI
- Sport NI
- Disability Sport NI
- GLL
- Governing Bodies of Sport
- Education (Ulster University and Queens University are key partners; working with schools to increase levels of participation and address the loss of the extended schools programme will be vital moving forward)
- Community Organisations
- Sports Clubs

### Actions

1. Establish a citywide Physical Activity Forum to implement the Strategy.
2. Identify all available resources and who is best placed to deliver identified priorities.

## Our More Active City

### ***Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy***

## Strategic Priority 4 - Accessibility

### Why this is a Strategic Priority

Accessibility to the opportunity to be active relates to two issues:

1. Can I get to a place to be active and can I do what I want to do when it is convenient for me? (BOSS SP 1, 2 and 3 are relevant here i.e.,  
Under SP1 - target areas of inaccessibility; create temporary or meanwhile uses (could be for formal / informal recreation); improve safety and security  
  
Under SP2 - Better Connected Open Spaces; Enhanced Greenway networks; improved connections to the Countryside; reduced barriers and the creation of shared space facilities  
  
Under SP3 - Target areas of health deprivation; **Provide and invest in our outdoor sports facilities**; promote our open spaces and programmes (e.g. Parkrun) or play facilities).
2. Can I get into the place or space to be active i.e. is there the right physical access? Can I afford it?

Initial consultation feedback identifies three key issues:

- Affordability is a barrier to taking part in physical activity; this is more pronounced for those with less money and those with a life-limiting illness or disability
- There is a lack of awareness of all City places and spaces where physical activity opportunities exist
- Those with a disability are less physically active

### Objective

To ensure that all city places and spaces delivering physical activities/where there are opportunities to be physically active are inclusive and accessible (linked to the BOSS Strategic principles and the GBIP Principle 2 - Planned, interconnected network - *In order to enhance and extend the green and blue infrastructure network to maximise benefits it needs to be strategically planned. These networks need to transcend political boundaries and extend out from our city centre to the Belfast Hills, Lagan Corridor, Belfast Lough and Castlereagh Hills. It provides an overarching structure for future creation and enhancement of the green and blue infrastructure network. There is further potential through the reopening of the Lagan Navigation as an existing inland waterway and onward linkages to the Sustrans National Cycle Network*).

## Our More Active City

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#### Actions

1. To target subsidised access to leisure facilities citywide, not just BCC facilities, on those where this will have most impact in reducing inactivity.
2. To work towards all city leisure facilities providing inclusive access.
3. To publish online and make available through various media/in different languages, up to date information on citywide leisure facilities, programme, partnerships and activities.
4. Work with partners e.g., Sustrans/DFI & Physical programmes/ City Centre Regeneration to develop a network of active travel routes around the City (BOSS, Blue/Green Infrastructure plans key along with LDP. Capital expenditure will be required on Council assets to facilitate development of this network).

## Our More Active City

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## Strategic Priority 5 – Physical Activity Facilities

### Why this is a Strategic Priority

Future investment in physical activity facilities is a priority to ensure those who are already active can continue to participate using good quality places and spaces, and those who will become active have access to inclusive, fit for purpose provision aligned to the BOSS strategic principles, prioritised and planned investment and appropriate resourcing. i.e., BOSS SP 3 - **Provide and invest in outdoor sports facilities** – *We are the biggest provider of sports pitches in Belfast with around 130 pitches across 35 locations. These facilities offer opportunities for a variety of sports for example football, Gaelic games, cricket, tennis and bowling. Our parks and open spaces also provide opportunities for informal recreation. We need to continually invest in these facilities to keep them fit for purpose. Our Physical Investment Programme is the primary source of funding for improving these facilities. With the challenge of decreasing levels of capital investment going forward, we will continue to maximise both the use of the existing open space network and funding from other sources.*

Key issues in the City include:

- Future provision and operation of physical activity facilities need to contribute to the City's priorities for de-carbonisation and reduced climate change impact
- There is a lack of some facility types in the City
- Some existing facilities are not inclusive
- There are currently insufficient pitches available (rugby, GAA, football) at peak times of demand for both competitive use and training to accommodate existing demand from men's, women's and girls' teams and clubs across the city. Demand for pitches is increasing not reducing across the city as a result of growth in women's and girls' participation, that of culturally diverse communities and continued growth in junior and adult male participation). Use of education pitches could help address lack of demand if community access is secured through partnerships with schools. Ensuring capacity is increased is critical to avoid inequity of opportunity to take part in specific sports.
- There is also growing demand for different pitch sports as a result of the changing demographic landscape in the City e.g. cricket
- There is an under-supply of all pitch types, including all-weather
- Many pitches lack floodlights which means their use is limited in winter months
- There is a lack of indoor venues where women can train safely
- Many school facilities are not available for community use; these are assets that should be optimised for community benefit
- Parks and outdoor spaces have capacity to be better used for informal physical activity; to achieve this they need to be open for longer, be safe, well-lit, welcoming, and easy to access (inclusive, easy to use and book spaces for everyone)
- There are opportunities to create more active travel links and routes around the city which could also be used for informal running, jogging, cycling (alignment with GBIP and Active Travel Strategy. BOSS SP2 - enhanced greenway networks and improved access to the countryside for informal recreation e.g. Belfast / Castlereagh Hills, North Foreshore and LVRP).
- Community buildings could offer more physical activity opportunities but to achieve this there needs to be better co-ordination over management and access

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### ***Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy***

- Planned and proposed facility investments, indoor and outdoor, will need to reflect the City's priorities for physical activity to contribute to the shared outcomes for reduced inactivity and health inequalities e.g., Proposed pitch developments at Stormont, facility re-development for Queen's University, proposals to broaden the offer at Ulster University's new campus, any future investment in BCC facilities that remain to be modernised

#### Objective

#### Actions

1. To work towards all spaces and places for physical activity being inclusive, carbon neutral, bio-diverse and more energy efficient
2. To target capital investment where it will have most impact on increasing levels of physical activity; this is a specific priority for BCC facilities which have not yet been modernised (alignment with BOSS SP3 - Improve Health & Well-being **Target areas of health deprivation** – *There is a correlation between the level of recreational open space (parks and play areas) and health deprivation. Figure 9 BOSS highlights where the areas of highest health deprivation (orange) correlate with areas of the least accessibility to parks and play areas to identify hotspots (red). These red hotspots highlight areas that would benefit from improved access to open space and prioritised health programming in existing spaces. At a city level these zones are indicative and need to be interpreted in detail at a neighbourhood level*).
3. Consider importance of 'Play' as part of early years physical activity - traditional playgrounds or perhaps support for more natural play facilities - links to BOSS SP3 delivery plan. Outdoor gyms and trim trails are becoming more popular and valued by local users.
4. Identify and create opportunities for natural and informal play.
  - Continue to encourage passive recreation by providing appropriate facilities (such as seating areas and shelters) across the open spaces network.
  - Continue to maintain, invest and source funding to keep our sports facilities well maintained and affordable
  - Continue to encourage active recreation in our open spaces e.g., walking, running, cycling, outdoor gyms, growing food and outdoor play.
  - Encourage schools to use parks for active recreation and provide greater access to their sports facilities by local communities.
5. Work with the Department for Education and city schools to open up facilities, and particularly pitches, for community access (aligned to BOSS SP3 - Encourage Partnerships re: schools pitches etc). It is recognised that enabling discussions will be needed to ensure the appropriate conditions are in place to support this approach e.g., people, funding, booking systems
6. Introduce an inclusive online booking system for all BCC outdoor physical activity facilities
7. Work with partners to develop a network of active travel routes around the city

## Our More Active City

### *Belfast's Physical Activity and Sport Development Strategy*

## Strategic Priority 6 - Resources

### Why this is a Strategic Priority

To deliver identified physical activity priorities, there is a need for resources:

- People
- Capital
- Revenue

Resources required, irrespective of who provides them, need to be strategically aligned to delivery of our identified shared Vision and outcomes. There are a number of existing grant support programmes in the City which are not aligned to specific strategic outcomes. The Mary Peter's Trust is an external grant scheme as is the national GLL Foundation. Through Support for Sport BCC funds 4 different programmes - small and large grants to clubs/groups, individual grants for talented athletes and hospitality grants. Moving forwards such awards should reflect the strategic priorities for physical activity in the City and focus on supporting the resources working towards these.

### Objective

To align resources with our Vision and strategic priorities for physical activity.

### Actions

1. To review the existing BCC resources (people, capital and revenue) for physical activity and sport development and where appropriate restructure internally (BOSS delivery plan seeks to *Facilitate stronger community involvement in the management and enhancement of open spaces e.g., by working in partnership with Friends' groups, volunteers, community groups and user groups*). This approach may also be relevant to some formal / information recreational facilities.
2. Re-allocate available revenue funding so it better reflects identified strategic priorities for physical activity i.e. is focussed on reducing inactivity to realise community health benefits. (**Developer Contributions Framework** - S76 Developer Contributions are referenced under BOSS delivery plan - relevant to the development of new / improved recreational facilities. Generally under the planning process new sports / recreational facilities could be included as part of some regeneration proposals).
3. To review and re-align existing City grant aid to this Strategy; this should re-frame support to focus where it will have most impact on, and contribution to, our shared outcomes