

IFRCS49 Fiona Reid, Chief Executive Officer, Disability Sport Wales

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Ymateb gan: Fiona Reid, Prif Swyddog Gweithredol, Chwaraeon Anabledd Cymru |
Evidence from: Fiona Reid, Chief Executive Officer, Disability Sport Wales

The Federation of Disability Sport Wales (otherwise known as Disability Sport Wales (DSW)) are the lead organisation for disability sport and physical activity (including sport) for disabled people in Wales and recognised by Sport Wales as a National Partner Organisation.

DSW share the Sector Vision for Sport where Wales becomes an 'active nation where everyone can have a lifelong enjoyment of sport'. Our charitable objects are to create an environment (by developing opportunities, raising standards, assuring best practice, and promoting (locally and internationally) the opportunities and successes in disability sport in Wales) where disabled people are as likely to have lifelong enjoyment of physical activity (including sport) as non-disabled people.

We are a hybrid organisation who primarily act as a partner organisation to all delivery agencies (Local Authorities, Regional Partnership, Third Sector Organisations, National Governing Bodies, Clubs, etc) within the physical activity (including sport) sector; but also function as a Welsh Governing Body for para sports in Wales who do not have a governing body (Boccia, Wheelchair Basketball, Wheelchair Rugby, and Goalball).

We act as a partner organisation and governing body by:

- Supporting cultural change to enable inclusive delivery of grass-roots sport and active recreation.
 - Providing education and training opportunities to the workforce (sport, education and health) to enhance inclusive planning, delivery and thinking.
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- Facilitating performance development for individuals who have the potential to compete and succeed.
- Enabling the transfer of athletes into UK and GB programmes to compete in Paralympic and Para Commonwealth Games events.
- Supporting other organisations to strengthen pathways to the Deaflympics, Virtus and Special Olympic events¹.

We are in receipt of National Lottery (for both national partner support, and performance and succeed) and Welsh Government Exchequer funding. Our total income for 2024/2025 is £1.13m and in 2025/2026 (assuming the similar income outside of grants) could fall to approximately £966k. Disability Sport Wales receive 86% of our total income from Sport Wales, with the remaining 14% coming from corporate sponsors, education and training, and other programme specific investment. We are not a membership organisation and therefore there is no scope to generate income through a paying membership. We are committed to ensuring that this remains the case, for the reasons we will touch on in this document, but also because disabled people should be NGB, club or partners members, not members of DSW.

To underpin the achievement of our strategic priorities (<https://www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/about/our-strategy>) we have a range of programmes and resources available to partners:

- insport programmes (www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/programmes/insport)
- Get Out, Get Active (www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/programmes/goga)
- UK Disability Inclusion Training (www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/education-and-training/uk-disability-inclusion-training)

¹ National Lottery performance and succeed funding is limited to Paralympic, Olympic and (Para) Commonwealth Games athletes and events. However, DSW work proactively within the limits of our resources to support participatory, competitive, and performance development opportunities for athletes who are eligible for Deaflympics, Virtus and Special Olympic events. We would advocate for further investment, outside of performance funding, for Welsh organisations (Wales Deaf Sport, the Intellectual Impairment/Learning Disability Sport Alliance, and Special Olympics Wales) who lead impairment specific delivery.

- Performance Pathway Hubs (www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/programmes/performance-pathway)
- SPAR insport Series Events (www.insportseries.co.uk/)
- Play Together (www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/education-and-training/play-together)
- Health Disability Activity Pathway (in partnership with all Welsh Health Boards) (www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/programmes/health-disability-activity-pathway)

Our approach is summarised in our mission

influence, include, inspire, insport

Disability Sport Wales are very aware that this is not achievable through our actions and vision alone, the key to success will be bringing existing, as well as new partners on the journey; and in influencing and supporting inclusive cultural change across the sector. DSW's approach is to challenge and support partners and the wider sporting landscape to embed inclusion, and in so doing provide even greater levels of activity for disabled children, young people and adults. The future of inclusive sport in Wales is not Disability Sport Wales, but it needs Disability Sport Wales to get there. We recognise that to get to that point we need to transform from the organisation we are today, to one which is deliberately and determinedly assimilated into the sport sector, Sport Wales and other Welsh Government-funded agencies. However, we need the pace of this change to be right, not because it is financially easier.

Funding decisions related to DSW:

- Sport Wales have been working with partners to identify new funding models. The funding model for partner organisations was communicated in July 2023 and implemented in April 2024.
 - DSW were impacted financially in the following ways:
 - a. Over the next two financial years Disability Sport Wales will receive a reduction in funding of £99,986 (£19,997.35 in 2024/2025 and £79,989.40 in 2025/2026) applied to our community lottery and exchequer funding. This reflects a 13.6% reduction to this area.
 - b. Lottery (Performance) was not reduced and represents 30% of our overall investment amount from Sport Wales.
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- c. There was also a further 10.5% reduction communicated in January 2024 of which 3.5% was passed on to the sector and applied across all areas of DSW's investment amount (Lottery (National partner support and Performance), and Exchequer).
- d. In addition to our partner investment sum from Sport Wales, DSW also receive Grant in Aid (GIA) reflecting 1.2% of our overall offer. This is an allocation which can only be used for facilities, accommodation and our office space in Sport Wales National Centre.

Background context relevant to 'disability' and the impact of funding reductions for sport in Wales:

- 21.1% of Wales reported having '... physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more' (Census, 2021).
- 397,000 Welsh households (29.5%) include one disabled person, and 114,000 Welsh households (8.4%) include 2 or more disabled people (Census, 2021).
- 25% of disabled people in Wales report being in 'bad' or 'very bad' general health (Census, 2021).
- Almost 50% of the 13 million people in the UK living in poverty is either a disabled person or lives with a disabled person (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2020²). In 2022-2023 25% of disabled people lived in a household in material deprivation (Clifford, 2023³).
- 10%⁴ of the ParalympicsGB team in Paris (at the 2024 Paralympic Games) were Welsh or live in Wales. At the time of submission, the Games were still ongoing, but Welsh athletes and athletes living in Wales had won 16.67% of gold medals, 3.5% of silver medals, and 15.8% of bronze medals (a total of 10 medals from the 84 won (06.09.2024)).
- A Social Return on Investment identified that for the Get Out, Get Active Programme (a UK-wide programme delivered in Wales between 2016 –

² www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2020/february/nearly-half-everyone-poverty-either-disabled-person-or-lives-disabled-person

³ Clifford, S. (2023). The goal for a more equal Wales. www.gov.wales/wellbeing-wales-2023-more-equal-wales.html#:~:text=on%20this%20trend,Disability,a%20household%20in%20material%20deprivation

⁴ Approximately 4.7% of the UK population live in Wales (ONS)

2024) for every £1 spent there was a £4.60 social return⁵ (also see the 'GOGA Call to Action for Wales'⁶).

- Disabled people are disproportionately impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, especially where intersectional communities are further considered (disabled women, disabled younger people, disabled people from Global Majority Communities and those with 5 or more impairments (Activity Alliance Annual Disability and Activity Survey, 2023 – 2024⁷)

1. What impacts has reduced funding had on your organisation and sector so far?

Reduction in resources for programmes

With a declining budget resource available for the delivery of programmes in partnership are significantly impacted.

DSW are committed to ensure inclusive cultural change within the sector, where disabled people are present within all decision making, planning and delivery; and we have developed a range of tools to support this including:

- insport
- UK Disability Inclusion Training (UK DIT)
- Performance Pathway, and
- insport Series Events

However, for this to happen for the long term and to creating lasting and enduring change, support is still needed (and at a higher level than is currently resourced) if DSW are to be phased out in the future.

Broader impact on allocation to equity and diversity

⁵www.getoutgetactive.co.uk/assets/000/001/148/26862_Activity_Alliance_GOGA_Impact_Report_Accessible4_original.pdf?1721216253

⁶www.disabilitysportwales.com/application/files/1417/2182/5328/GOGA_Call_to_Action_for_electronic_distribution_FINAL.pdf

⁷www.activityalliance.org.uk/assets/000/004/907/Activity_Alliance_ADAS_Report_23-24_Accessible_original.pdf?1717772028

Alongside DSW funding reduction was the reduction of investment to other National Governing Bodies of Sport, Partner Organisations and Local Authorities. This therefore has a compounding impact on access to opportunities for disabled people.

For some organisations there is a continuing assumption that provision to disabled people and athletes is in addition to the provision to non-disabled people and athletes, costs more, and cannot be done without resource beyond that which they receive. Sport Wales are communicating and reinforcing the priority for equity, diversity and inclusion within all their messaging, but there is a risk that if 'EDI' is considered an 'addition' that it is one of the areas which reduces in priority where budgets are reduced.

Where additional support is required to build capacity (outside of that provided by National Partners and Sport Wales through the Moving to Inclusion Framework), knowledge and/or experience within a team, a reduction in budget may jeopardise priority for this area of learning and/or development both because of wider impacts on the capacity of the team (if the team has reduced in size due to redundancy) or because bringing additional expertise in (via consultants) is no longer financially viable.

Risk to Staff retention

The DSW HR partners (Ashton People Solutions) conducted a salary review prior to a restructure, and they highlighted that whilst most salaries were 'reasonable' for the roles, they were at the lower end of the scale. There is a risk that DSW (and the wider sector) will see an attrition of staff for roles outside the sector where salaries are at a more competitive level.

Whilst staff within DSW are not looking to leave because of the role or value they see (and is seen) in their work, they may leave to other roles where salary and benefits are higher.

Pressure to seek commercial partnerships

DSW have worked with commercial partners since 2013, and value the additional resources, value-in-kind, volunteers, and brand alignment that these partnerships bring. However, in a climate where every partner is seeking non-lottery or exchequer investment the environment is becoming increasingly competitive.

It takes time, resources, specialist knowledge and experience to create and cultivate contacts and develop the resources required by the potential partners,

and often does not result in additional resource. This is something that DSW are growing capacity for, but where resources are reducing this is a challenge.

The work that DSW do, and the programmes which are delivered are critical to support inclusive cultural change. Having these dependent of transient resources is a risk to longer term impact and success.

2. What measures have you taken in light of it, such as changing what you do and how you do it?

Changed organisational structure

DSW have restructured twice over the last two years, first was linked to changes to resources to local authorities and this year was to ensure greater resilience for the future.

The most recent restructure intends maximising capacity, and (alongside a strategy review) prioritisation of focus into the areas which will need to make most difference over the next Paralympic and Commonwealth Games cycle.

Reviewed all roles (redefined and updated all role descriptions) to add greater clarity for colleagues and aid retention

(www.disabilitysportwales.com/application/files/8617/1864/7044/DSW_Organogram_June_2024.pdf)

Changed working conditions and contracts

Reduced a full-time working week from 37.5 to 35hrs (pro rata) without reduction in salary. Allowed us to increase hourly pay without adding to the staffing budget.

Added 2 wellbeing days for all staff so that we could reinforce team value and recovery, and embedding a Wellbeing Framework

(www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/about/diversity-and-equity/wellbeing-framework)

Flexible working hours (including compressed hours) to ensure colleagues can manage other commitments outside of work.

Streamlined the DSW strategy (confirmed in 2024)

Some ambitions have been streamlined but with a continued focus on supporting the development of inclusive culture for partners (intersectional

inclusion of disabled people), supporting active pathways for disabled people and performance development for disabled athletes, and ensuring corporate and charitable governance as well as the wellbeing of our people is a high priority (www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/about/our-strategy).

Ensured that there is strong connectivity into the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Healthy Weight, Healthy Wales

Shared services

DSW are proactively working with Sport Wales and the sector to identify ways in which we can share services, generate revenue and create greater efficiencies.

DSW and Welsh Athletics are sharing an employee who works part-time for each organisation; and we share equipment (safely and with GDPR as a priority), removed additional recruitment costs, and established development and knowledge growth opportunities for the individual and both organisations.

3. To what extent will these impacts be irreversible (e.g. venues closing, or specialist skills being lost rather than a temporary restriction in activities)?

Inevitably reduced investments to Local Authorities will mean difficult decisions about whether to keep facilities and venues for sport open, or whether the costs (because of increasing fuel costs, reducing budgets, cost of living, etc) are too great and cannot be offset through other revenue.

Should this happen the impact on disabled people will likely be:

- A likely disproportionate impact on the distance required for travel to the next accessible facility (hoists, ramps, accessible gym equipment, etc), or facility in which accessible sport is provided (wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, goalball, boccia, etc).
 - increased costs to disabled people for travel (higher fuel or charging costs)
 - the facility is not on a public transport route.
 - the public transport used is not accessible on the route that passes that facility
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- additional requirement for Personal Assistant time to accommodate travelling further (if support is required)

Clubs may not be able to move to other facilities because there is no availability in the halls/pool/courts/pitches to accommodate them.

Facility costs are increasing to cover the rising operating costs, which makes access to sport unaffordable for a significant proportion of disabled people.

4. What interventions would you like to see from the Welsh Government, beyond increased funding?

Focus on bringing Government departments together so that funding can be combined and streamlined into organisations who impact beyond 'sport'. For DSW this would be primarily, but not limited, to Health, Education, and Transport, and coordinate:

- access to resources (access to shared services, access to and coordination of digital technology and resources (Hwb, shared software solutions))
 - integration of programmes (National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) x Health Disability Activity Pathway (HDAP); Get Out, Get Active (GOGA) and Health Weight, Healthy Wales initiatives; Play Together; UK Disability Inclusion Training (UK DIT): Education; insport Series: Education (www.disabilitysportwales.com/en-gb/education-and-training/insport-series-education))
 - the provision of free to access training (for Education and Health staff)
 - Co-production of materials and resources for professionals within the areas to support their inclusive delivery of active recreation and physical activity (including sport), and raise awareness of opportunities across Wales for disabled people
 - research, insight and learning (collaborating on questions used, streamlining data collection between organisations, share data (safely), ensure disabled peoples voices are reflected in all data collection)
 - co-employing or creating stronger links between staff in DSW (and sport) and the agencies identified above, resulting in enhanced cross organisation and inter-agency working.
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Longer term indicative funding budgets (6 years ideally to reflect complete Paralympic/Olympic and Commonwealth Games cycles)

An inclusive Framework and Action Plan for physical activity (including sport) for Wales, including:

- key stakeholder review of the vision for Sport (redefining as physical activity), and
- clear directives for leadership, delivery and resourcing⁸

5. To what extent do the impacts you describe fall differently on people with protected characteristics and people of a lower socioeconomic status?

For some individuals and intersectional communities of disabled people physical activity (including sport) is not even considered as an option:

Disabled children are:

- More likely to be inactive outside of curricular time than non-disabled children (42% v 35%)⁹
- not included (excluded) from PE lessons at school (75%)¹⁰
- likely to experience ‘almost double’ the impact on their wellbeing of doing physical activity than non-disabled children (the same is so for children receiving Free School Meals (FSM))¹¹
- less likely to be active at a park, leisure centre or friend’s house¹²

⁸ This should not ignore overlap and areas where there needs to be a multi-agency approach and resourcing.

⁹ School Sport Survey (2022)

¹⁰ Equal Play (2024)

<https://storage.googleapis.com/paralympicsgb/ParalympicsGB%20Equal%20Play%20Schools%20Policy%20Paper.pdf>

¹¹ Youth Sport Trust (2024). The social value of free physical activity in schools.

www.youthsporttrust.org/media/01ulxcan/value-of-school-sport-youth-sport-trust-and-state-of-life.pdf

¹² Activity Alliance (2020). My active future: Including every child.

www.activityalliance.org.uk/assets/000/003/371/Activity_Alliance_My_Active_Future_full_report_FINAL_original.pdf?1584360616

- Disabled adults are:
- less likely to be physically active than non-disabled people (43% v 59%)¹³
- less likely to be of a healthy weight (31% v 42%)
- less likely to play sport if they are female (35%), identify as part of the LGBTQI+ communities (1%), or are from global majority/ethnically diverse communities (6%)¹⁴

Disabled people were disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic¹⁵, and now similar is true with the cost-of-living crisis (39%¹⁶ of disabled people identified that the cost of living has reduced how active they are¹⁷).

Disability Sport, sport for disabled people and inclusive sport is (like all activity), dependent on volunteers. However, the volunteer workforce has declined post-Covid¹⁸ which means clubs and sessions which rely more on the support of higher numbers of volunteers, or paid professionals, are likely to find it harder to thrive in this climate.

Forty-four percent¹⁷ of disabled people agree that 'when money is tight, the cost of being active is one of the first things they look to reduce' (p.22).

¹³ National Survey for Wales (2022 – 2023)

¹⁴ DSW (2024). Inclusive Club and Session Survey Report.

www.disabilitysportwales.com/application/files/9917/2528/7871/Inclusive_Club_and_Session_Survey_Report_-_Sept_23_and_Mar_24.pdf

¹⁵ Welsh Government (2022). Locked out: Liberating disabled people's lives and rights in Wales beyond Covid-19. www.gov.wales/locked-out-liberating-disabled-peoples-lives-and-rights-wales-beyond-covid-19.html

¹⁶ And this is 41% for disabled women, 69% for older disabled people (65+), 62% for disabled people from ethnically diverse/Global Majority communities, and 54% for disabled people with 5 or more impairments.

¹⁷ Activity Alliance (2024). Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2023 – 2024.

www.activityalliance.org.uk/assets/000/004/907/Activity_Alliance_ADAS_Report_23-24_Accessible_original.pdf?1717772028

¹⁸ Sport England (2024). The rising cost of living and its impact on sport and physical activity.

https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2024-01/Cost%20of%20living%20impact%20report%20-%20full%20report%20%28January%202024%29.pdf?VersionId=IQuDAqP3GeKUCyPw_7c45zMs5xbJaBJA

It is critical that reduced resources do not further impact on the access to, involvement in and the benefits of physical activity (including sport) for communities of disabled people.

6. Do you have any other points you wish to raise within the scope of this inquiry?

Summary

Disabled people continue to be less represented across Welsh sport than non-disabled people, and this increases when intersectionality is considered. The challenging financial climate experienced by disabled people, the organisations involved with providing physical activity (including sport) (NGBs, Sport Wales National Partner Organisations, Local Authorities/ Regional 'Sports' Partnerships, facilities providers, clubs/sessions), and the sector workforce (paid and volunteers) is resulting in a perfect storm of reduced opportunity, support, availability and priority. If resources are further reduced, the risk to disabled people (from intersectional communities) of experiencing increased challenges to participation (in addition to those that have been summarised throughout this submission), reduced opportunity, and less choice will be greatly heightened.

Disability Sport Wales recognise the current high financial pressure Welsh Government are facing, and their desire to ensure that, despite this, Welsh people thrive. However, we would ask for further consideration regarding the disproportional impacts on disabled people, and the greater social value of proactively investing into physical activity (including sport) as a mechanism to address some of the broader health, education and accessibility challenges experienced by these same communities outside of physical activity (including sport); as well as for **strong** encouragement for more cross portfolio and multi-agency working, to coordinate and align opportunities for more (disabled) people in Wales to be able to choose to be involved in physical activity (including sport).
