



WOMEN IN SPORT

STRATEGY 2022-2025



TOKYO
TOKYO 2020
PARALYMPIC GAMES
Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games logo featuring a checkered arc and the Paralympic symbol.

RGK

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MESSAGE FROM CEO

We are delighted to present the first ever Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) Women in Sport Strategy 2022-2025.

From our establishment in 1960 to date, IWA has a long and proud tradition of exceptional female athletes and leaders in our organisation. The first Irish Paralympic medal was won by Joan Horan in Rome, 1960 and since then we have grown to provide many sporting opportunities for our members of all ages all over the country.

We want to achieve more and this strategy expresses our commitment to providing more opportunities and raising the profile of women with a physical disability in sport in Ireland. It builds on the progress we have made and it sets out clear and ambitious aims and actions for the next four years which will enable us to move from a place where women with a physical disability are absent, or engaging on inferior terms, to a place where women with a physical disability are fully recognised, catered equally for and visible at all levels in their own communities and for as far as their aspirations take them.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the development of this important strategy and we look forward to seeing each other as we bring it to life.

Rosemary Keogh
CEO, Irish Wheelchair Association



This strategy expresses our commitment to providing more opportunities and raising the profile of women with a physical disability in sport in Ireland.

MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR OF SPORT

We are delighted to present a Women in Sport Strategy for Irish Wheelchair Association. We have undertaken this important piece of work because we want and need to do more.

The facts are striking. The evidence is available that tells us people with disabilities are underrepresented in sport in comparison to people without disability. In Para sport specifically, in comparison to men with disabilities, women with disabilities remain underrepresented at all levels and in all structures including participation, coaching and officials, leadership and visibility.

Furthermore, disabled women with higher support needs are disproportionately underrepresented in these areas.

In IWA we can demonstrate equality in a number of participation programmes and in coaching and officiating roles in our children's clubs and programmes but this is not consistent across all sports, and more importantly this is not sustained as our young Members enter their teenage years and progress into adult sport.

In terms of leadership, we are performing well and females are strongly represented at club committee level, on our Sports Executive Committee and on our Board. With regards to Visibility, we have a really positive story to tell our young female members, our teenagers, our women in their adult years and our older women.

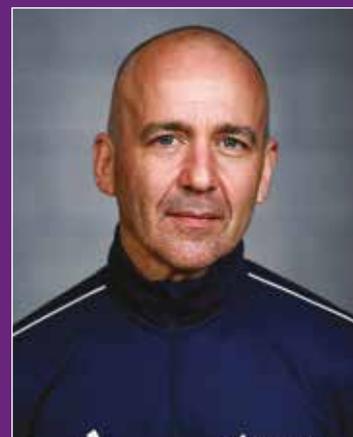
The message is simple, sport, physical activity, coaching and refereeing is one of the most important life choices you will make. Our members have informed us in our main strategy, having fun matters and involvement in sport gives a sense of purpose, belonging and empowerment.

As a multi sport organisation, we deliver programmes all around Ireland and we intend to increase these opportunities during the lifetime of this strategy. We must also consider in the consultation phase of this strategy our Members told us they want more local participation opportunities in local sports clubs and Local Sports Partnerships and to that end, together with the other Irish Disability Sport organisations we will collaborate and provide the required support.

I would like to thank the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and Sport Ireland for their continued support through a range of funding schemes and programmes which is essential to the delivery of our work. Of particular note is the Women in Sport initiative in Ireland and for specifically making a commitment to supporting women with a disability in sport.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the IWA Women in Sport story since our foundation. There is much to celebrate throughout our history, and we look forward to supporting many more females with their sporting ambitions.

Nicky Hamill
Director of Sport



BACKGROUND

Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) supports people with physical disabilities to live active, equal and independent lives. Irish Wheelchair Association Sport (IWA-Sport) is a leading National Governing Body (NGB) in Ireland for people with a physical disability. The organisation has led the way since its foundation in 1960 in providing participation opportunities across a range of sports and activities at all levels, from first time participants to elite athletes. The strong tradition as a provider of sport, physical and recreational activities, and associated services, for people with a physical disability in Ireland continues today. IWA-Sport is the National Governing Body for Para Powerlifting, Wheelchair Basketball and Wheelchair Rugby.

IWA-Sport has a proud and celebrated history and has supported many females to develop their character and self-esteem and to engage in their communities in a meaningful and long-lasting capacity. IWA-Sport helps improve both physical and mental well-being of individuals and by supporting females with the specific tools required to participate in their communities in a positive fashion they in turn will be inspirational role models for others.



In this strategy we aim to bridge the gap with our male counterparts by delivering sustainable participation programmes, building volunteer capacity through coach education and training programmes, raising the profile of female participants and delivering a number of leadership initiatives.



Strong, diverse and gender balanced leadership brings a breadth of perspective, better decision-making and creates stronger organisations.

Females with a disability are underrepresented in Ireland in decision-making roles within sport and active recreation; specifically in management, coaching and governance roles. Strong, diverse and gender balanced leadership brings a breadth of perspective, better decision-making and creates stronger organisations. Opportunities for females in sport and active recreation are not always equal; those with a disability have fewer opportunities and more barriers to overcome.



Increasing the visibility of females with a disability as athletes, participants, coaches and leaders, not only provides role models for the future but demonstrates that society values their contribution.

Females and their achievements are less visible, and are frequently stereotyped in the media. Increasing the visibility of females with a disability as athletes, participants, coaches and leaders, not only provides role models for the future but demonstrates that society values their contribution. The activity base across all sports must be broadened to include more women including those with a disability which would help to stimulate a higher level of active participation overall in Ireland.

In this strategic process, IWA-Sport has consulted widely and listened carefully to the issues that are impacting females with a physical disability participating in sport. Against that backdrop we have committed to a number of ambitious initiatives that will ultimately have the long term outcome of significantly improve the chances for lifelong involvement for girls and women in sport and physical activity.





IWA WOMEN IN SPORT MISSION

To develop and promote sport, physical recreational and leadership opportunities for females with a disability to reach their full potential.

IWA WOMEN IN SPORT VISION

We aim to be acknowledged as at the forefront of Irish sporting bodies for inclusion and promotion of females with a physical disability in all areas of sport and physical activity.

OUR VALUES

Visionary

Building on our legacy, IWA strives towards finding new ways of doing things to meet the current and future needs of people with disabilities. We are deliberately ambitious as a leader in our sector, driving positive change by listening and being creative in supporting and empowering disabled people to live the life they choose.

Integrity

IWA is proud of what we do and how we do it – we always behave in ways that are authentic and trustworthy.

Excellence

IWA's commitment to excellence underpins our quality services adherence to best practice governance, partnership and relationships in all areas of our work.

Courage

IWA fearlessly says what needs to be said and does what needs to be done. We are not afraid to fail and try again. We are resolute in championing the rights of people with disabilities.

Fun

IWA believes in creating an environment and culture of fun and enjoyment in all that we do. IWA is a community in which people belong.

Equality

Aligned with the UN on the rights of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) IWA believes in a fair and inclusive society. We work actively to ensure that every person with a physical disability in Ireland can achieve their right to an independent life, with equal access to opportunities, services and supports within their communities.

Openness

IWA is open to new ideas, new ways of working and to building new and existing partnerships to achieve our vision. We are committed to working in a truly transparent way.

SHAPING OUR STRATEGY

This strategy has been developed in line with the key pillars outlined in the current Sport Ireland Women in Sport Policy. The policy expresses Sport Ireland's commitment to women in sport and builds on the significant work which has already been undertaken in this area within the sport sector to date.

To that end, the pillars of - Active Participation, Visibility, Leadership and Governance, Coaching and Officiating have helped us to shape our strategy, but it is specifically tailored to address the needs of our female members with a physical disability throughout Ireland.



POLICY AND KEY PARTNERS

The following stakeholders were involved in the consultation process and/or have been identified as key partners with the successful implementation of the strategy.

INTERNAL		
National Sports Executive Committee		
IWA Sports Representatives IWA Sports Clubs IWA Members IWA Volunteers IWA Staff		
EXTERNAL		
Sport Ireland	Coaching Ireland	Healthy Ireland
HSE	Media	Paralympics Ireland
Local Sports Partnerships and Sports Inclusion Disability Officer Network		
CARA Sport Inclusion Ireland	Government Departments	Irish National Governing Bodies
International Sporting Federations	Erasmus Programme	European Platform Sport Innovation
Education Sector	Irish Disability Sport Working Group	Ex Well Medical

This strategic plan has been informed by government policies including the following:



National Sports Policy
2018 - 2027



Policy on Participation in
Sport People with Disabilities



Sport Ireland Women in Sport Policy



Sport Ireland High Performance
Strategy 2021 -2032



CONSULTATION

A full consultation process took place from November 2021 to January 2022 with relevant key stakeholders. We met and listened to you. We held three focus groups including representation as follows: Youth, Leaders, Athletes, Coaches, Members, Parents and our Staff. Over 20 people participated at our focus group meetings and over 20 others were consulted with during one-to-one meetings including: NGBs, LSPs, Sport Ireland, athletes and media. A number of publications were reviewed as part of the consultation process.

113 people replied to the on-line consultation survey, providing feedback across a broad range of areas. Your combined feedback has formed the basis of this strategy. We acknowledge and thank everyone who contributed during the consultation stage and to all our stakeholders for their continued support and assistance. Furthermore, you are invited to play a part in bringing this strategy to life.

What Females with Disabilities Want

Specific female focused programmes .

To have fun and socialise.

To feel safe to participate.

Don't want to be judged.

Build skillset on leadership programmes to step up.

Activities to fit around other time commitments.

Appropriate facilities.

To be the best that they can be.

**What We
Need To
Improve**

*Need to collectively collaborate
between all organisations.
Increase overall visibility and promotion of girls with disabilities.
Women need to be supported in putting themselves
forward in leadership positions. Regular consultation.
Understanding reasons for teenage drop out. Education of parents.
Data gathering required and measured on gender.
Stand alone programmes for women and girls.
Working with media to promote work
and participation in the area.*

**What We
Are Doing
Well**

*Principle of equal status.
Visibility – giving more prominence
of females in social media.
Getting the ball rolling by focusing on females.
Some locations are areas of best practice.
Committed staff team.*

SURVEY STATISTICS





WHERE WE ARE NOW

Our Women in Sport in Numbers

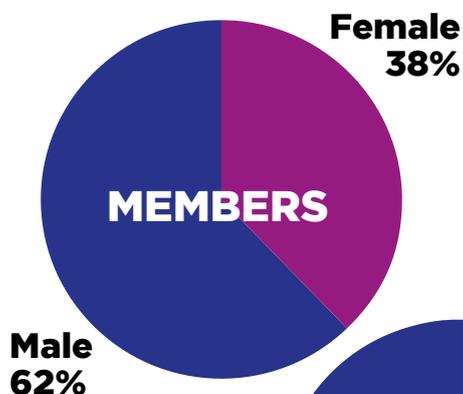


Figure 1: IWA members by gender

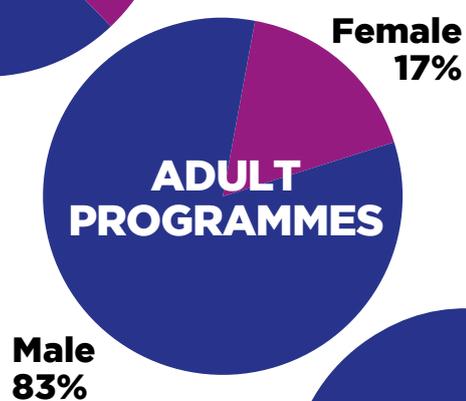


Figure 2: Adult programmes by gender

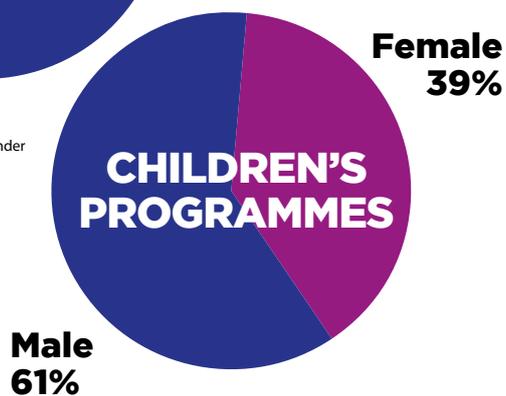


Figure 3: Children's Programmes by gender

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	Female
Gender balance of Committees in Junior Clubs	64%
Gender balance of Committees in Senior Clubs	24%
Gender balance of Committees in Multi Programme Clubs	52%
High Performance Management Teams	40%
CEO	1
IWA-Sport Staff	40%
Senior Management Team	40%
Board of Directors	46%
National Sports Executive Committee	63%

Table 1: IWA Leadership by gender

“
We don't hear the voice
of the female athlete
with disability unless
during Paralympics
”

“
It's great we are doing
this plan to put a
focus and a spotlight
on women with
disabilities in sport
”

“
As parents we
tend to want to
protect our daughters
with a disability and
push our sons
forward
”

“
Coaching only lip service
*“if you can't see it you
can't be it”* so poignant
in this area
”

“
Travel will always be a
disincentive – how can
we make programmes
more local
”

“ Great work being done but the time is right to start focussing on girls dropping out of sport ”

“ Would like to see, hear and read more about females with disabilities participating in local as well as national media ”

“ We need more female officials to be in leadership positions ”

We need more collaboration between organisations

“ Every time we add a layer it makes it more challenging to excel in any area of sport – gender - disability - sexuality ”



STRATEGIC PILLARS



**Active
Participation**



Visibility



**Leadership
and
Governance**



**Coaching
and
Officiating**

Through national policies, and recognised national research, the pillars of **Active Participation, Visibility, Leadership and Governance, Coaching and Officiating** have helped us to shape our strategy. We will we deliver on the commitments in this strategy through the following **Aims and Actions**.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Aim	Action	Timeline
1 Establish gender specific data for effective measurement.	<p>Develop appropriate internal reporting system with specific KPIs.</p> <p>Determine other methods of garnering statistics with Sport Ireland (ie via Central Statistics Office).</p>	2022
2 Support our club network to promote themselves as female friendly.	<p>Develop an IWA Women in Sport Charter that will outline key principles for the IWA-Sport Club network to adopt.</p> <p>Design, develop and circulate a club toolkit (including a promotional resources).</p>	2022
3 Develop and deliver age and level appropriate participation programmes for young girls.	<p>In addition to our current local club programmes, we will develop, deliver and uniquely celebrate, focused programmes as follows:</p> <p>Junior programmes (5-12 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Para Athletics fun games ■ Wheelchair basketball junior blitz ■ Wheelchair Rugby TRY it out Games <p>Teen programmes (13- 19 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Para Athletics teen games ■ Wheelchair Basketball teen blitz ■ Wheelchair Rugby TRY it out Games ■ Para Powerlifting – Empowered 	<p>2022</p> <p>2022</p>
4 Deliver specific participation and high performance programmes for young women to compete at international level.	<p>We will develop, deliver and uniquely celebrate, focused programmes for our female athletes to compete internationally as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Para Powerlifting – (U20 & senior level) ■ Para Athletics (U23 & senior level) ■ Wheelchair basketball (U23 team) ■ Collaborate on the delivery of participation programmes for IWA Service Users in with ExWell Medical and Age and Opportunity 	2022
5 Conduct specific research on drop out rates for females with a physical disability.	Agree research plan with key stakeholders and develop plan to address issues identified.	2023
6 Health benefits case study.	We will illustrate the benefits of sport and physical activity for girls and women in sport.	2023
7 Improve the membership gradient over the lifetime of this strategy.	Grow by 10%.	Annually
8 Improve the participation gradient over the lifetime of this strategy.	Grow by 5%.	Annually

VISIBILITY

Aim	Action	Timeline
<p>1 Utilise the launch of this strategy to maximise publicity in objectives to maximise publicity of strategic objectives.</p>	<p>Utilise launch to highlight and communicate the stated aims of the strategy.</p>	<p>2022</p>
<p>2 Advocate for improved visibility of para athletes in all national campaigns, policies and strategy documents.</p>	<p>We will advocate for increasing the visibility of sports women with a physical disability, in all national campaigns, policies and strategy documents with the following agencies and organisations: Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Sport Ireland, LSPS, NGBs.</p>	<p>2022</p>
<p>3 Deliver promotional regional roadshows showcasing Para Sports opportunities in Ireland.</p>	<p>Collaborate with LSPs and NGBs to deliver regional roadshows showcasing Para Sports opportunities in Ireland.</p>	<p>2023</p>
<p>4 Raise the profile of our Women in Sport campaign and associated elements through a range of targeted promotions.</p>	<p>Develop unique webpage to host all related IWA Women in Sport content and run targeted marketing campaigns to promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participation opportunities ■ Health benefit information ■ Improved profile raising (celebrate all stories) ■ Leadership programmes 	<p>2023</p>
<p>5 Rollout a recruitment campaign to encourage new female participants.</p>	<p>Social media campaign highlighting current female participation programmes and female friendly clubs.</p>	<p>2023</p>
<p>6 Communicate progress on this strategy on an ongoing basis.</p>	<p>Communicate and engage with the wider female community on progress completed on a regular basis.</p> <p>Prioritise female participation, accomplishments and development of our communication channels.</p> <p>Produce and publish progress reports for key stakeholders as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ WIS Committee – monthly ■ NSEC, IWA Board, IWA Services – monthly ■ General public - bi annually ■ Sport Ireland – bi annually 	<p>Annually</p>
<p>7 Promote females with disabilities in all areas of media.</p>	<p>Work with local and national media to specifically promote active participation of females and physical activity.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Aim	Action	Timeline
1 Ensure oversight and delivery of this strategy.	Establish and support an IWA-Sport 'Women in Sport' committee who will have the responsibility to oversee, support and monitor the implementation of this strategy.	2022
2 Develop specific education and training for current and prospective female Leaders in IWA.	Collaborate with NGBs on the delivery of a Women in Sport leadership Programme. Deliver Leadership training for our young female leaders with a physical disability.	2022
3 Establish a network of female with disability leaders.	Establish network to support each other in leadership roles. This network will provide support to all female leaders.	2022
4 Work and collaborate with other organisations both in Ireland and Internationally that promote female inclusion in sport .	Through an existing Erasmus project, progress the 'Empowering Women in Sporting Events' project up to the end of 2023. Explore opportunities for further collaboration with Irish partners to progress elements of this strategy.	2022 & 2023
5 People are at the centre of everything we do. We are one IWA, with a culture of diversity, belonging & Inclusion .	Define quantifiable metrics for Diversity, Belonging & Inclusion. Extend Diversity, Belonging and Inclusion Policy to all internal stakeholders (sports clubs/sections).	2023 2024
6 IWA's advocacy, with and on behalf of females with physical disabilities, progresses the achievement of their equal rights underpinned by UNCRPD	Work independently and with partners to influence policy and decision-making at EU level to ensure the voices of females with physical disabilities are heard. (2022)	Annually

COACHING AND OFFICIATING

Aim	Action	Timeline
1 To clearly define a pathway for coaches and officials in para sport in Ireland.	We will set out a clearly defined pathway for female coaches and officials in para sport in Ireland to include our own sports and those governed by other NGBs.	2022
2 Increase the number of women officiating and refereeing.	Through the Sport Ireland Dormant Account fund under the Volunteer training scheme we will fund a bursary scheme to incentivise women to undertake officials training from IWA-Sport, other NGBs or international bodies.	2022-2025
3 Increase opportunities for Coach Education and ensure gender is incorporated into the IWA-Sport coach education programmes.	<p>Deliver and/or collaborate on the delivery of the following coach education courses annually:</p> <p>Wheelchair Basketball – level 0 & 1 Wheelchair Rugby – level 0</p> <p>Collaborations Para Powerlifting Weightlifting Ireland & IWA- Sport</p> <p>Para Athletics Athletics Ireland & IWA Sport Little athletics & Level 1</p>	2022 -2025
4 Educate the Irish Sports sector with current trends in the world of disability sport coaching.	Deliver a disability sport coaching conference to inform and educate our coaches with current trends in the world of disability sport coaching.	2023
	Understand and communicate the need for advancement in knowledge of classification rules and procedures in different sports related to women.	2024
5 To improve the disparity of male to female coaches over the lifetime of this strategy.	Increase by 5%	Annually
6 To improve the disparity of male to female officials over the lifetime of this strategy.	Increase by 5%	Annually
7 To broaden the coaching base from grassroots coaching to high performance coaching, within female and males sports.	Through the Sport Ireland Dormant Account fund under the Volunteer training scheme we will fund a bursary scheme to incentivise women to undertake coaching awards from IWA-Sport, other NGBs or international bodies.	Annually

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

In order for this strategy to be a success, we will work in collaboration with a number of partners across the different projects, these will include - Sport Ireland, National Governing Bodies, Local Sports Partnerships, the Federation of Irish Sport, Ireland Active, other Disability Agencies in Ireland, CARA and others.

WOMEN IN SPORT LEAD

In 2019 IWA-Sport made a commitment to pursuing a focused approach towards a Women in Sport initiative. Sport Ireland subsequently supported our application which included a comprehensive work plan and the appointment of a Women in Sport Coordinator for the first time.

Shannon Pollock was appointed to the role and holds the main responsibility for the delivery of the work area and is supported by the wider IWA-Sport team, the proposed Women in Sport Committee and the broader Volunteer network. The purpose of this role is to project manage and ensure the implementation of current and future programmes, while developing strong relationships and providing expertise and support to women and girls with disabilities.

FUNDING

The implementation of this strategy will be primarily funded by the Sport Ireland Women in Sport Programme. Additional funding will be allocated from the Sport Ireland Dormant Accounts fund and through collaboration with other National Governing Bodies, Local Sports Partnerships and Erasmus funding. Funding will be sought from existing strategic partners already listed in this strategy and from new commercial funders.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This plan will be monitored and reported on by the IWA-Sport Women in Sport Coordinator and reviewed in line with the Terms of Reference of the proposed IWA-Sport Women in Sport Committee.

SUMMARY

IWA is committed to ensuring equality in all areas of our sports. We are determined to lead by example and ensure women have an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential, while enjoying lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all those who responded to the survey or gave their time in the consultation for this strategy. The clubs, volunteers and athletes who make up IWA. Thanks to Lisa Clancy Clansult Ltd for coordinating the strategy working collaboratively with IWA Women in Sport Lead Shannon Pollock, Nicky Hamill and Paul Ryan.





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