



CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

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**A Quality Framework for Sports  
Clubs in Northern Ireland**

**June 2008**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sports clubs play an essential and significant role in the development of sport in Northern Ireland. As part of our commitment to the development of quality sports clubs, Sport Northern Ireland is working towards the introduction of a new framework that will identify, support, recognise and reward those clubs working towards and achieving high quality standards.

The need for this work is emphasised within the Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport & Physical Recreation 2008-2018 which outlines the identification and accreditation of 1,200 quality sports club as a key component of delivering success.

Following a period of consultation and research, this consultation document outlines Sport Northern Ireland's commitment to the development of quality sports clubs and outlines 'how', working with you, we can achieve the targets outlined within the Strategy for Sport & Physical Recreation 2008-18. The proposals recognise the strategic role of Sport Northern Ireland and empower other stakeholders to identify and address local need. The proposals reflect the strategic context of sport in Northern Ireland, not least in relation to the Strategy for Sport & Physical Recreation 2008-18 and the ongoing Review of Public Administration.

The successful implementation of a quality framework and the subsequent development of quality sports clubs will depend on effective working partnerships among a number of key stakeholders. You, and your organisation, are key stakeholders. Experience tells us that this process will only 'deliver' with your buy in.

Accordingly, I invite you to consider the consultation document, and to provide your response in relation to the proposed quality framework for sports clubs in Northern Ireland. Sport Northern Ireland look forward to receiving and considering your responses, and to working with you to create *"a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport"*.

**JOHN NEWS**  
**Participation Manager**

## **BACKGROUND**

In 1999, the (then) Sports Council for Northern Ireland launched 'Junior Clubmark', an accreditation programme to recognise and reward quality sports clubs in Northern Ireland. Junior Clubmark played a pivotal role in the development of sports clubs by identifying quality standards, providing support and guidance for sports clubs to achieve those standards, and emphasising the significant contribution of sports clubs to the development of sport in Northern Ireland. Between 1999 and 2006, 124 clubs received the Junior Clubmark award. In 2004, the Sports Council for Northern Ireland commissioned an independent review of Junior Clubmark, which recognised that "the scheme has the potential to deliver positive outcomes, however, some aspects need to be amended". Accordingly, Sport Northern Ireland has initiated a fundamental review of the way forward for club development in Northern Ireland.

Sport Northern Ireland has reviewed many existing accreditation schemes and has facilitated a series of consultation events and processes. With the aim of creating a quality framework that will address the needs of sports clubs in Northern Ireland.

In November 2007, a series of workshops were held as part of the Sport Northern Ireland 'Playing Your Part' Conference at the Ross Park Hotel in Kells. Over 80 organisations including governing bodies, district councils, area partnerships and community and voluntary organisations took part in the workshops.

Throughout December 2007 and January 2008, a consultation programme provided further opportunities for feedback and input from governing bodies, district councils, area partnerships, community and voluntary organisations, and other organisations involved in sport. 18 responses were received.

The consultation provided an opportunity for input in relation to some of the following key themes:

- Key characteristics of quality clubs;
- Training, resources and support;
- Roles of stakeholders;
- Benefits;
- Management structure; and,
- Framework Implementation.

A series of site visits and meetings have also been facilitated with the following organisations:

- Knight, Kavanagh & Page;
- Sport England;
- Ulster Council GAA;

- Gymnastics Northern Ireland;
- Cricket Scotland;
- Scottish Football Association;
- Culture & Sport Glasgow;
- Disability Sport Northern Ireland;
- Child Protection in Sport Unit; and,
- Irish Sports Council.

Finally, a desk review was undertaken of a selection of club development and club accreditation schemes that are currently being delivered throughout Ireland and the UK.

## **A NEW QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR SPORTS CLUBS IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Based on the consultation and research that has been undertaken, the following proposals have been developed with a view to identifying, supporting, recognising and rewarding those clubs working towards and achieving high quality standards.

### **The Way Forward**

*It is proposed that Sport Northern Ireland will:*

- (1) Create a Club Development Scheme; and,*
- (2) Provide guidance, support and endorsement for new and existing accreditation programmes.*

### **A Club Development Scheme**

A new Club Development Scheme will be developed and managed by Sport Northern Ireland. This scheme will consist of a website developed and managed by Sport Northern Ireland, which will provide the following information and resources:

- Sports club updates;
- Guidance on starting a sports club;
- Guidance on developing a sports club;
- Examples of best practice in relation to club development;
- Funding information; and,
- Club development templates (Appendix 1).

Therefore, the Club Development Scheme will provide important and useful information that is accessible and relevant to sports clubs throughout Northern Ireland.

### **Guidelines for the Quality Accreditation of Sports Clubs in Northern Ireland**

In addition to the development and management of a Club Development Scheme, Sport Northern Ireland will play a key role in the accreditation of sports clubs in Northern Ireland.

Guidelines have been developed for the Quality Accreditation of Sports Clubs in Northern Ireland (Appendix 2). The guidelines provide advice and guidance in relation to the following key areas:

- Minimum Operating Standards for Sports Clubs;
- Assessment Process;
- Monitoring and Evaluation; and,
- Resources and Support.

The guidelines outline minimum operating standards required for quality sports clubs, and identify necessary procedures, support and resources that must be provided by governing bodies of sport and / or district councils to receive endorsement. Sport Northern Ireland will implement appropriate quality assurance procedures within the framework.

Sport Northern Ireland will endorse new and existing accreditation programmes operated by governing bodies of sport and / or district councils, subject to alignment with the Guidelines for the Quality Accreditation of Sports Clubs in Northern Ireland. By maintaining a strategic role, Sport Northern Ireland will empower governing bodies of sport and district councils to play an active role in club development by identifying and addressing the needs of local sports clubs.

Sport Northern Ireland will also play an active role in supporting the development of new accreditation schemes by providing a sample Information Pack that can be utilised and /or adopted by governing bodies of sport and / or district councils.

## **Benefits for Sports Clubs**

The new framework will provide many benefits for sports clubs throughout Northern Ireland. These benefits will include:

- *Providing Support & Guidance*  
*The information contained within the Sample Information Pack will provide information and guidance for sports clubs in relation to Effective Management, Quality Coaching & Competition, and Safety In Sport.*
- *Developing the Club*  
*Accreditation will encourage clubs to adopt and implement effective policies and procedures, to deliver relevant and appropriate opportunities for participation, and to provide a safe environment for young people to take part in sport. It will support the development of effective partnerships that will enhance the capacity of sports clubs.*
- *Increasing Membership*

*By gaining accreditation, clubs will enhance their ability to recruit new members and to increase membership in relation to players, administrators, volunteers and coaches. Recognition as a quality club will provide reassurance for parents / guardians.*

- ***Developing Administrators, Coaches & Volunteers**  
Accreditation encourages clubs to identify and address the needs of administrators, coaches and volunteers, identifying suitable policies, procedures and training opportunities that will have a positive impact on the personal and professional development of individuals within the club.*
- ***Raising the Club's Profile**  
Accredited clubs will be listed on a national database at [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net). Clubs will receive an award to recognise their achievement which will also be highlighted by Sport Northern Ireland.*

Sport Northern Ireland, governing bodies of sport, and district councils will have a shared responsibility to maximise the benefits of the framework by identifying additional extrinsic benefits. For example, it may be that:

- Future Sport Northern Ireland investment programmes will be aligned with the framework;
- Governing bodies will consider quality accreditation as a condition of membership;
- District councils will consider quality accreditation as a condition as an eligibility criterion for club support services (e.g. reduced facility hire costs, priority bookings, small grants programmes).

## **RESPONSES**

Please send your responses to the following address:

Simon Toole  
Performance Consultant (Coaching & Clubs)  
Sport Northern Ireland  
House of Sport  
2a Upper Malone Road  
Belfast  
BT9 5LA  
T: 028 90383860  
E: [simontoole@sportni.net](mailto:simontoole@sportni.net)

**Responses must be received no later than 4.00pm on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> August.**

As a key stakeholder with a vested interest in the development of sport and sports clubs in Northern Ireland, we would appreciate your written comments in relation to the proposals outlined in this consultation document.

Responses to this Stage II period of consultation will help to inform and shape the development of a final policy to create, improve and acknowledge quality sports clubs in Northern Ireland. The result should see an agreed way forward and a coordinated effort to provide young people with positive sporting experiences through sports clubs that operate safely and effectively. Sports clubs play a key role in the development of lifelong participants, performance athletes, coaches and administrators making them an essential element for the development of sport in Northern Ireland and the delivery of the Strategy for Sport & Recreation 2008 – 2018.

It is anticipated that the club development scheme and guidelines for the quality accreditation of sports clubs will be launched in November 2008, dependant on the responses from this period of consultation.

Clubs accredited through the previous scheme 'Junior Clubmark' will be subject to reaccreditation through their governing body or local authority for accreditation through the new scheme. It is thought that those clubs will have in place many of the policies and procedures that would be required to gain accreditation under the new guidelines.

Sport Northern Ireland would like to thank those who have been involved in Stage I of the consultation on this policy, for their valuable contribution thus far, which has been greatly appreciated.

# APPENDIX 1

## Club Development Templates

<b>Template 1</b>	<b>Constitution</b>
<b>Template 2</b>	<b>Equity Policy Statement</b>
<b>Template 3</b>	<b>Junior Membership Form</b>
<b>Template 4</b>	<b>Introductory Letter</b>
<b>Template 5</b>	<b>Club Partnership Form</b>
<b>Template 6</b>	<b>Club Development Plan</b>
<b>Template 7</b>	<b>Job Description – Lead Coach</b>
<b>Template 8</b>	<b>Job Description – Assistant Coach</b>
<b>Template 9</b>	<b>Child Protection Policy</b>
<b>Template 10</b>	<b>Code of Conduct for Coaches &amp; Volunteers</b>
<b>Template 11</b>	<b>Code of Conduct for Children &amp; Young People</b>
<b>Template 12</b>	<b>Code of Conduct for Parent / Guardians</b>
<b>Template 13</b>	<b>Risk Assessment Form</b>
<b>Template 14</b>	<b>Accident &amp; Incident Guidelines</b>
<b>Template 15</b>	<b>Accident &amp; Incident Report Form</b>
<b>Template 16</b>	<b>Coaching Attendance Register</b>
<b>Template 17</b>	<b>Useful Contacts</b>

## APPENDIX 2

# Guidelines for the Quality Accreditation of Sports Clubs in Northern Ireland



**GUIDELINES**

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**Quality Accreditation of Sports Clubs  
in Northern Ireland**

**March 2008**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sports clubs play an essential and significant role in the development of sport in Northern Ireland. As part of our commitment to the development of quality sports clubs, Sport Northern Ireland are committed to identifying, supporting, recognising and rewarding clubs that are working towards or achieving high quality standards.

These guidelines identify the minimum operating standards for sport clubs in Northern Ireland in relation to the following three key themes:

- Effective Management;
- Quality Coaching & Competition, and;
- Safety In Sport.

By incorporating these minimum operating standards and by implementing effective assessment and quality assurance procedures, organisations may receive the endorsement of Sport Northern Ireland to assess and accredit quality sports clubs.

Accreditation can support many benefits for sports clubs including:

- The development of effective policies and procedures;
- The implementation of a quality coaching and competition programme;
- The creation of effective partnerships;
- Increased membership;
- Raised club profile, and;
- The development of coaches, volunteers and administrators.

Sport Northern Ireland is dedicated to recognising and rewarding quality sports clubs, so that those clubs achieving and maintaining high quality standards can enjoy the associated benefits.

## **QUALITY ACCREDITATION OF SPORTS CLUBS**

In order to obtain endorsement from Sport Northern Ireland, organisations must demonstrate a commitment to the standards identified in relation to:

- Minimum Operating Standards for Quality Clubs;
- Assessment Process;
- Monitoring and Evaluation, and;
- Resources.

### **1 Minimum Operating Standards for Quality Clubs**

The following minimum operating standards have been identified for quality sports clubs in relation to Effective Management, Quality Coaching & Competition, and Safety In Sport:

#### **EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT**

The club must:

- Hold adequate Public Liability Insurance for all activities undertaken;
- Be affiliated to the appropriate Governing Body of Sport;
- Have an open and non discriminatory constitution;
- Ensure that at least 2 club members have attended the Sport NI *'Equity in your Coaching'* workshop;
- Ensure that at least 2 club members have attended the Disability Sports NI *'Including People with Disabilities in your Club'* workshop;
- Have adopted and be compliant with an Equal Opportunities / Sports Equity policy;
- Have a specific membership fee and pricing policy specific for children and young people;
- Communicate with parents / guardians on an appropriate basis;
- Have appropriate contact with at least one local school;
- Have appropriate contact with the district council;
- Ensure that at least 2 club members have attended the Sport NI *'Junior Club Development'* workshop, and;
- Demonstrate a commitment to ongoing development in an annual Club Development Plan.

## **QUALITY COACHING & COMPETITION**

The club must:

- Ensure that all coaches operating on behalf of the club hold appropriate professional indemnity insurance to cover all activities undertaken;
- Provide a structured coaching programme for children and young people, as determined by the governing body;
- Ensure that coach: participant ratios reflect governing body guidelines;
- Provide suitable intra and / or inter club competition, in accordance with governing body guidelines;
- Employ and / or deploy suitably qualified coaches, in accordance with governing body guidelines, and;
- Have job descriptions for coaches and volunteers outlining roles and responsibilities.

## **SAFETY IN SPORT**

The club must:

- Have adopted a suitable Child Protection Policy and be compliant with the associated procedures, in accordance with governing body requirements;
- Be committed to ensuring that all club coaches and volunteers have attended or will attend Child Protection - Awareness Training (or equivalent);
- Ensure that at least 2 club members have attended Child Protection – Designated Officer Training (or equivalent);
- Have adopted a Code of Conduct for coaches and volunteers;
- Have adopted a Code of Conduct for children & young people;
- Have adopted a Code of Conduct for parents / guardians;

- Ensure that venues and equipment are safe at all coaching and competition sessions, meeting governing body requirements where they exist;
- Provide access to First Aid at all coaching and competition sessions;
- Have adopted clear procedures for managing accidents & incidents;
- Hold an attendance register at all coaching and competition sessions;
- Hold contact details of parents / guardians and emergency contacts, and;
- Hold information on any medical conditions of children & young people, and communicate the details on a need to know basis.

Additional criteria may be applied to recognise and account for sport specific requirements. For example, governing bodies may identify specific standards for coaching programmes, coach: participant ratios, competition and coaching qualifications within section 2. Similarly, governing bodies may also wish to add additional criteria that reflect the requirements of the respective sport.

## 2 Assessment Process

In order to obtain endorsement from Sport Northern Ireland, an organisation must demonstrate it's commitment to undertaking the following stages of assessment within the accreditation process:

- **Club Registration** – the organisation must demonstrate that policies are in place to record information of clubs that have registered an interest in achieving accreditation;
- **Application** – the organisation must produce an application form that can be used to effectively assess the minimum operating standards identified. The application form should also be used to request evidence required and should be signed by the main contact for the application, a lead officer within the club, and a representative from the governing body;
- **Club Visit** – the organisation must incorporate a club visit within the accreditation process to assess the club in action, and;
- **External Verification** – Sport Northern Ireland may externally verify any club that has achieved accreditation.

### 3 Monitoring & Evaluation

The organisation must implement effective monitoring and evaluation procedures to support validity of accreditation. Therefore an organisation must be committed to *one of the following* processes:

- **Limited Period of Validity** – accreditation may only be awarded for a maximum period of three years, or;
- **Reaccreditation** – accredited clubs will be subjected to a reaccreditation process at least once every three years, or;
- **Health Check** – accredited clubs will be subjected to a health check at least once every two years.

Any organisation wishing to receive the endorsement of Sport Northern Ireland must also confirm a commitment to amend accreditation criteria subject to legal or policy changes that may affect the programme.

### 4 Resources & Support

The following resources and support must be made available to clubs working towards accreditation:

- **Introductory Meeting with club** – to assess where the club is now, and identify relevant actions to be undertaken in order to achieve accreditation;
- **Ongoing Support** – provision of ongoing support, guidance and advice for clubs throughout the accreditation process;
- **Information Pack** – explaining the rationale, significance and need for the inclusion of criteria;
- **Identification of Support Materials** – identification of templates and examples of best practice to assist the club, and;
- **Club Award** – clubs must receive an award to recognise the achievement of accreditation.

Sport Northern Ireland will provide a Sample Information Pack and Resources to assist and support organisations seeking Sport Northern Ireland endorsement. A dedicated Club Development Officer will also work in partnership with organisations to ensure continuity and compliance with the guidelines.