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**Belfast City Council  
Parks & Leisure Department**

**EQIA of Playing Pitches Strategy  
and Action Plans (Years 1-3)**

**Final Report**

**March 2012**

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## **Access to Information Statement**

This document has been developed in Arial 12 point with 1.5 spacing. As part of our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, we want to ensure that everyone is able to access the documents we produce. We would therefore be happy to provide any of the information in this document in alternative formats on request.

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## **Further information**

Please note that copies of all relevant background documents can be found on the Council's website at [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/sportspitches](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/sportspitches).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Belfast City Council has been developing a Playing Pitches Strategy and associated Action Plans since 2008. There have been three main phases:

1. A report by consultants Strategic Leisure, including the findings of an assessment of supply and demand for association football, Gaelic football, camogie, cricket, rugby union and hockey, which was carried out in 2008.

2. The draft Playing Pitches Strategy which was the subject of public consultation in January-March 2011 and agreed by the Council on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

3. The Action Plans (Years 1-3), including the proposed investment priorities, which were the subject of public consultation in July-October 2011.

2. At each stage of the development of the strategy the Council has paid particular attention to the need to promote equality of opportunity and an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was undertaken in 2011 and made available for public consultation in parallel with the Action Plans. The EQIA report included an analysis of available data and research and an assessment of the potential impacts which showed that there was potential for people in a number of Section 75 groups to be differentially affected, in that they might have less opportunity to benefit from the provision of new and upgraded facilities. The groups identified were:

- people from a Protestant community background;
- Black and Minority Ethnic people, Eastern European migrants, refugees and asylum seekers;
- children and young people;
- older people;

- single parents;
- women and girls;
- people with disabilities
- people with dependants (including carers and those with dependent children).

3. The EQIA report noted that the investment priorities had been established as a result of applying the prioritisation matrix in the Strategy, which was the subject of extensive consultation in January-March 2011. Any differential impacts caused by the selection of sites (principally to people from a Protestant community background) were justified in that the highest deficiencies/needs identified by Strategic Leisure were in respect of Gaelic sports.

4. At the close of the consultation period a final EQIA report was prepared for the consideration of the Council. This included a summary of the comments made by consultees and an updated analysis of data and research including information provided by some consultees. The conclusions of the EQIA in respect of the potential for people in some Section 75 groups to be differentially affected were unchanged and the following mitigating actions were proposed:

#### ***Sports development***

The development of a new sports development programme as part of the Action Plans which will specifically address the under-representation of certain Section 75 groups in team sports activity, including older people, women and girls, people with disabilities and people with dependants. The programme will include targets for increased participation by these groups.

#### ***Junior pitches***

The lack of facilities across the city for small sided (or junior) games which directly affects a range of under-represented groups was highlighted during the consultation process. The Council intends to

continue to examine the potential to convert underused full size pitches into junior size pitches and to develop a programme of joint working with the Irish Football Association.

### ***Wider initiatives***

It will continue to be important to view the Playing Pitches Strategy and Action Plans in the context of the wide range of initiatives currently being taken by the Council to benefit people in particular Section 75 groups. These include programmes aimed at children and young people and older people.

5. The final EQIA report was considered by the Parks and Leisure Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2012. The Committee was asked to:
  - note the findings of the EQIA
  - agree the proposed additional actions relating to the provision of junior facilities included in the final Playing Pitches Strategy and Action Plans.
  
6. The Committee gave particular attention to the proposed mitigating actions and some Members felt that they were not sufficient to deal with certain differential impacts identified. However, after further discussion, the Committee accepted the findings of the EQIA and this decision was ratified by Council on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012.
  
7. The attached report is the final EQIA report considered by the Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2012. The full minute of the Committee meeting can be accessed on the Council's website at:  
<http://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=14911>

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## **1. Background**

**1.1** Belfast City Council is in the process of developing a Playing Pitches Strategy and associated Action Plans and has determined that an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) should be undertaken and subjected to consultation.

**1.2** The Strategy has been under development since 2008 and there have been three main phases –

1. A report by consultants Strategic Leisure, including the findings of an assessment of supply and demand for association football, Gaelic football, camogie, cricket, rugby union and hockey, which was carried out in 2008.
2. The draft Playing Pitches Strategy which was the subject of public consultation in January-March 2011 and agreed by the Council on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2011.
3. The Action Plans (Years 1-3), including the proposed investment priorities, which are currently subject to public consultation.

**1.3** The report by Strategic Leisure paid attention to the needs of people in some of the nine categories listed in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (specifically children and young people, men and women, people with disabilities and black and minority ethnic people). In developing the Playing Pitches Strategy, the Council was mindful of the need to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and it was agreed that a full EQIA should be undertaken once the implications of the Strategy in terms of investment priorities for pitches across the city were known.

**1.4** An EQIA report was prepared in July 2011 including a full assessment of the potential equality impacts on people in each of the S75 categories. The

EQIA report considered whether the potential impacts are likely to be beneficial or adverse and made recommendations for actions to eliminate or reduce potential adverse impacts.

**1.5** The EQIA was then subjected to consultation in parallel with the Action Plans (Years 1-3), which included the investment priorities. This final EQIA report includes the results of the consultation process.

## **Section 75**

**1.6** Belfast City Council is committed to the implementation of the statutory duties imposed by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 which require that the Council, in carrying out its functions in Northern Ireland, must have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity –

- between persons of different
  - religious belief;
  - political opinion;
  - racial group;
  - age;
  - marital status;
  - sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

**1.7** Without prejudice to these obligations, the Council is also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

**1.8** Schedule 9 of the Act sets out the detailed procedure for the implementation of these duties including the conduct of screening exercises and EQIAs of policies.

**1.9** Screening and EQIAs are conducted in accordance with the guidance issued by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI); the relevant guidance currently in place includes –

- Guide to the statutory duties (April 2010)
- Practical guidance on equality impact assessment (February 2005)
- Promoting good relations – a guide for public authorities (October 2007).

**1.10** The guide to the statutory duties makes it clear that ‘policies’ is a broad, inclusive term which covers all the ways in which an authority carries out or proposes to carry out its functions relating to Northern Ireland.<sup>1</sup> The development of Action Plans and investment priorities as part of the Playing Pitches Strategy is regarded as a policy and subject to the statutory duties.

### **EQIA methodology**

**1.11** When undertaking an EQIA, the Council closely follows the ECNI guidance which recommends that there should be seven steps in the EQIA process :

- Step 1 : Definition of the aims of the policy
- Step 2 : Consideration of available data and research
- Step 3 : Assessment of potential and actual impacts
- Step 4 : Consideration of measures
- Step 5 : Formal consultation
- Step 6 : Decision and publication of the results of the EQIA
- Step 7 : Monitoring for adverse impact.

**1.12** This report includes all the information provided to consultees during the formal consultation phase (Step 5), the results of the consultation and the final recommendations. Once final decisions have been made, the decisions will be incorporated into the report and it will be published in accordance with the provisions of the Council’s Equality Scheme. The final EQIA report will be

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<sup>1</sup> Guide to the statutory duties, ECNI, April 2010, page 30.

made available through the Council's website. Information will also be made available to publications and media associated with the Section 75 categories. The Council will ensure that information is available in accessible formats in a timely fashion, paying particular attention to the special needs of particular groups within each equality category.

## **2. Aims of the policy**

### **2.1** The overall aim of the Playing Pitches Strategy is –

To contribute to improved health and wellbeing in Belfast by enabling adequate outdoor sports facilities and, working with partners, seek to maximise the provision and use of safe, accessible and quality outdoor leisure facilities.

### **2.2** The Strategy has three high level objectives which are supported by a number of sub-objectives. These are –

#### ***Objective 1 – Capital investment***

To deliver and, working in partnership, enable a programme of capital development, enhancement and maintenance investments which address identified deficiencies and protect existing playing pitch provision.

#### ***Objective 2 – Management***

To implement and monitor a range of management options with community and statutory partners, so as to maximise people's participation in team sports activity.

#### ***Objective 3 – Sports development***

Working in partnership, to develop and deliver a sports development programme to maximise people's participation in team sports activity. This will include under-represented groups, such as females and those with disabilities.

### **2.3** The intended beneficiaries of the Strategy are current and future participants in team sport activities in Belfast (including those people who live outside the city but use pitches within Belfast). Objective 3 specifically addresses the need to maximise participation by under-represented groups.

**2.4** The Playing Pitches Strategy Action Plans (Years 1-3) contain proposals for –

- investment in new 3G hybrid pitches, cricket squares and changing facilities;
- small scale investment in educational facilities (mainly floodlighting) to secure an increased community access to educational sites;
- a review of facility management agreements;
- development of a new sports development programme.

**2.5** Consultation on the Action Plans was carried out between July and October 2011, focusing on the local impact of the development of pitches. The prioritisation matrix set out in the Strategy was used to identify proposed sites for 3G hybrid pitches and cricket squares and the following proposals were subject to consultation –

<b>3G hybrid pitches</b>	<b>Cricket squares</b>	<b>Changing facilities</b>
Woodlands	City of Belfast playing	Ballysillan (new)
Cherryvale	fields (new)	Waterworks (new)
Cliftonville playing fields	Blanchflower Park	Musgrave Park (new)
Falls Park	playing fields (upgrade)	Dixon Park (upgrade)
Ormeau Park		Victoria (upgrade)

### 3. Data collection

**3.1** Prior to consultation, the Council collected and analysed existing quantitative and qualitative data and research by relevant equality category in order to make a judgement of the extent of the likely impacts. Information on equality issues relating to the use of sports pitches was collated from the Playing Pitches Strategy itself, published research and responses to the previous consultation process. Information was also collated on the population of Belfast by S75 category. The results of the analysis of this information (as presented in the EQIA report issued for consultation) are set out below.

#### Playing Pitches Strategy and published research

**3.2** The Playing Pitches Strategy contains a detailed analysis of the deficiencies in existing playing pitch provision in Belfast and the under-representation of various S75 groups in team sports activity (*Section 5.7 – page 19*). This information has not been duplicated in this EQIA report but the key issues are summarised in the table below, together with additional information from published research sourced for this EQIA.

**Table 1: Analysis of available data and research**

<p><b>Religious belief/ Political opinion</b></p>	<p>The greatest deficiency identified by Strategic Leisure was in the provision of pitches for Gaelic sports (football and hurling) consisting of a shortage of 38 pitches across the city under all types of management or a shortage of 64 pitches if only Council owned pitches are considered. Gaelic sports are traditionally played by people from a Catholic community background. The Ulster GAA Council has a specific strategy for Belfast (Ardú Bhéal Feirste) 2009-19 which includes a diversity and inclusion theme designed to raise awareness of Gaelic Games among communities which would not traditionally be involved, but the number of people from a Protestant background participating in these sports is very small.</p>
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<b>Racial group</b>	<p>Research commissioned by the UK Sports Councils in 2009<sup>2</sup> concluded that that inequality and discrimination persist in the provision of and access to sport and physical recreation opportunities by black and ethnic minority (BME) communities. These communities are poorly represented at decision making levels and face a range of barriers to sports participation. Key barriers include: material constraints, concerns about racial discrimination, and access to culturally-appropriate sport and physical recreation opportunities.</p> <p>The Strategic Leisure data collection process showed that a growing number of teams across all sports have members from a minority ethnic background.</p>
<b>Age</b>	<p>The Sport England Active People Survey 2009/10 showed that 75% of those who play team sports on a regular basis are aged under 34. Activity declines with age for both men and women; by the late 30s family commitments become the greatest barrier to regular participation in sport.</p> <p>A British Heart Foundation study published in 2009<sup>3</sup> highlighted the differences in physical activity between boys and girls and showed that physical activity levels of girls decrease with age with a particular drop-off after the age of about 10 years.</p>
<b>Marital status</b>	<p>The Sport England Active People Survey 2009/10 showed that single people are likely to have a high level of participation in sport. However, the key barrier to participation is family commitments which may have significant impacts for lone parents.</p>

<sup>2</sup> A Systematic Review of the Literature on Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Sport and Physical Education, 2009

<sup>3</sup> Couch Kids: the Nation's Future, 2009

<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Research commissioned by the UK Sports Councils in 2009 <sup>4</sup> concluded that there is no reliable evidence to allow analysis of the extent to which Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) people undertake different levels of sports participation but that there was anecdotal evidence that non-inclusive attitudes, homophobia and self censorship exist.
<b>Men and women generally</b>	<p>The Sport England Active People Survey 2009/10 showed that the greatest difference between men and women is at age 19 when double the proportion of men than women take part in sport on a regular basis. The survey also showed that between 2008/09 and 2009/10 there has been a particular decline in participation by women. (It should be noted that the survey is based on a sample of people aged over 16.)</p> <p>The British Heart Foundation study published in 2009 found that boys are more physically active than girls across the 2-15 years age range and that young people's perceptions of their own levels of physical activity mirror these gender differences.</p> <p>Research by the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation<sup>5</sup> indicates that there are significant emotional barriers to sporting participation for women, notably low levels of body confidence. In addition there are practical barriers for women in disadvantaged communities which include cost and the time of day at which sports are played. The same research showed that there are barriers faced by women caring for children under 16 which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ child care;</li> <li>▪ lack of time because of competing priorities/interests;</li> <li>▪ the quality of ancillary facilities, e.g. changing rooms;</li> <li>▪ the length of opening hours.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> A Literature Review of Sexual Orientation in Sport, 2008

<sup>5</sup> Physical Activity and Mothers, 2005

	<p>The Strategic Leisure data collection process showed that pitch sport participation is dominated by male teams and that female teams make up only 19% of the total number identified.</p>
<b>Disability</b>	<p>The Sport NI 2009 Active Places Research Report stated that sports facilities in Northern Ireland have generally been built to the standards required by building regulations but, in reality, are unable to accommodate the needs of many sports people with disabilities, particularly in relation to team sports.</p> <p>Disability Sports NI estimates that only 10% -15% of people with disabilities in Northern Ireland regularly participate in sport or physical activity, a figure well below the participation levels for the population as a whole, yet there is an increasing demand from people with disabilities to take part in sport.</p> <p>The British Heart Foundation study published in 2009 showed that children and young people with a disability take part in sport less frequently and their experiences are less positive than their non-disabled peers.</p> <p>The Strategic Leisure data collection process showed that, of the 86 clubs who responded to the questions about disabled members, 14 currently had disabled people involved in their activities.</p>
<b>Dependants</b>	<p>The Sport England Active People Survey 2009/10 showed that women aged 25-34 with children at home are half as likely as women the same age without children to take part in sport on a regular basis, the main barrier being lack of child care.</p>

### Profile of Belfast City by S75 category

**3.5** One of the Government's targets, as set out in the Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation (2009-2019), is that, by 2019, 90% of the population should have quality accredited, multi sports facilities, that have the capacity to meet demand, within 20 minutes travel time. In addition the Fields in Trust good practice guide "*Planning and Design for Outdoor*

*Sport and Play*” recommends a catchment radius of 5 miles or 20 minutes travel time. It is therefore assumed that the catchment area for each facility includes everyone within 20 minutes travel time. Clearly this is a variable parameter, but the distribution of the proposed sites for 3G hybrid pitches suggests that most of them would be accessible to everyone in the city within 20 minutes travel time.

**3.6** A profile of the city by S75 category is attached at Appendix A. In brief, this shows that –

- There is a fairly even proportion of people from the two main communities but many neighbourhoods comprise people almost exclusively from one community background.
- In the last Council election (May 2011), 29.4% the highest percentage of first preference votes were cast for Sinn Féin (29.4%) followed by the DUP (23.5%).
- According to the 2001 Census, the largest minority ethnic groups in Belfast are the Chinese community (0.5%) and the mixed community (0.3%); there are also a significant number of migrants, mainly from Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.
- Belfast has a lower percentage of young people (aged under 16 years) and a higher percentage of older people (aged over 60 years) than the NI average and population projections suggest that this gap will increase over the next 10 years.
- A relatively high percentage of Belfast residents are single at 41.3% compared with the NI average of 33.1%.
- The 2001 Census showed that one in four (24.2%) of Belfast residents has a limiting long term illness, health problem or

disability which limits their daily activities or the work they can do, compared with the NI average of 20.3%.

- Belfast has a high percentage of households consisting of a lone parent and a dependant child or children (11.0% compared with the NI average of 8.1%) and over 94% of the lone parents are female.

### **Previous consultation**

**3.7** The draft Playing Pitches Strategy was the subject of public consultation between January and March 2011 (a period of 8 weeks). A number of comments were made which are relevant to the EQIA process, including the following. (The comments are quoted verbatim.)

#### ***Shared facilities***

- Certain areas of the City would not be suitable for the training and playing of Gaelic Games/Camogie.
- The sectarian nature and geography of North Belfast needs to be accounted for when referring to accessibility to provision. Whilst pitches may be adjacent to communities, it usually is the case that sectarian and safety reasons prevent some sports from using the nearest facility.
- Under represented sports and those sports focusing on community inter-relations should be encouraged.
- Any multi-sport facility must meet the minimum requirements for the playing and training of Gaelic Games alongside the others sports and must have safeguards in place to ensure that Gaelic Games get equal and appropriate use of any shared facility.
- The choice of venue for sporting facilities as 'shared space' must take cognisance of the views of all participants.

***Deficiencies in existing provision***

- It is also important to note that there is a shortfall in the provision for underage soccer in the city and this needs to be addressed also.
  
- There are difficulties concerning current pitch allocation for grassroots football, boys' football, schools' football and women's and girls' football, as well as bookings for junior and intermediate football. In order to meet the needs of these users, there is a significant shortfall in pitches.
  
- Our (Camogie) primary aim is always to increase our juvenile girls and young women membership and participation. Lack of facilities hampers our development.
  
- It is not necessary to create new pitches exclusively for very young children. Many sporting bodies are also moving away from competitive leagues at Under 10 and Under 12.

## 4. Consultation on the action plans and EQIA

### Consultation process

**4.1** Belfast City Council is committed to consultation which is timely, open and inclusive, and conducted in accordance with the Equality Commission's Guiding Principles. The consultation process in respect of the action plans and the EQIA report was conducted over a 12 week period from 25<sup>th</sup> July to 14<sup>th</sup> October 2011. This process included –

- an on line questionnaire;
- opportunities to comment in writing;
- a series of 4 independently facilitated public meetings (*September 2011*)
- consultation with the NI Youth Forum (September 2011) and the Council's Youth Forum (*October 2011*); and
- consultation with the Council's Section 75 Forum (*November 2011*).

**4.2** Arrangements were in place to ensure that all consultation documents could be made available in hard copy and alternative formats on request on a timely basis.

**4.3** All Equality Scheme consultees were notified of the availability of the EQIA report and invited to comment. The EQIA report (and all associated documents) were made available on the Council's website and the Council made it clear that comments will be welcomed from any individual with an interest in the proposals and that comments would be accepted in any format.

### Responses received

**4.4** The Council received 5 written responses to the on-line questionnaire from:

- the Ulster Council GAA;
- the Irish Rugby Football Union (Ulster Branch)/Ulster Rugby;
- the Irish Football Association;
- Bredagh GAC; and
- a concerned individual.

**4.5** Four public meetings were held in September 2011 in local venues in the north, south, east and west of the city. These events were widely publicised and over 200 sporting clubs and societies were also invited. A total of 35 people representing a wide range of organisations attended. The focus of the meetings was to seek views and comments on any perceived local impact and the impact on under represented groups.

**4.6** The focus of discussions with the Northern Ireland Youth Forum and the Belfast City Council Youth Forum was the issue of encouraging greater participation in sports generally and opening up parks and public spaces to children and young adults. Separate workshops with each forum were held in late September/early October 2011. 9 young people attended the NI Youth Forum workshop and 12 young people attended the Belfast Forum event.

**4.7** A full report of the public meetings and the Youth Forum workshops is available as a separate document. The comments made in relation to equality impacts are included in the summary of comments below.

**4.8** The Council's Section 75 Forum was also consulted in November 2011. The Forum was set up in 2004 and meets twice a year to contribute to consultation on new policies and the screening of policies and discuss any other issues relating to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations in relation to Council services. Four organisations representing people in specific Section 75 categories attended, i.e. NICEM, Rainbow Project, Cara Friend and Shopmobility.

### **Responses to the on line questionnaire**

**4.9** The questionnaire provided an opportunity for consultees to comment on the Action Plans and included specific questions on the EQIA. The responses are set out in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Comments on the EQIA**

Question	Responses
Do you agree with the potential impacts for each Section 75 group identified in the EQIA report?	Four respondents agreed. One respondent neither agreed nor disagreed. Bredagh GAC offered comments on accessibility (see below).
Do you agree that the suggested measures to be taken to address the adverse differential impacts identified are sufficient and appropriate?	Four respondents agreed. One respondent neither agreed nor disagreed.
Are you aware of any further data and/or research which might be relevant to the EQIA?	Three respondents offered no response. The IFA and Bredagh GAC suggested additional sources of data (see below).
Do you have any further comments on the EQIA report and/or the consultation process?	Four respondents offered no response. The IFA suggested some additional consultation measures (see below) and offered their support in relation to sports development for under-represented groups.

### **Accessibility**

**4.10** Bredagh GAC requested that consideration be given in the plans for pitches to the needs of supporters who attend Gaelic games in big numbers. They indicated that access for wheelchair users and those with mobility issues (usually elderly people) is limited in Cherryvale at least and suggested that any improvements for these under-represented groups would greatly improve their participation in Gaelic games.

**Additional sources of data**

**4.11** The IFA suggested that useful information might be obtained from the Community Relations strategies currently being developed by the Belfast based Irish Premier League Football Clubs. They also indicated that they regularly obtain feedback from their Grassroots community projects in East Belfast.

**4.12** Bredagh GAC commented that, within Gaelic sports, the number of female teams is increasing dramatically. In their own club, for example, the percentage of female teams is 42% of the total number of teams which is considerably higher than the figures suggested in the EQIA report. They also explained that they have a number of initiatives in place to encourage the involvement of girls and women, the newest initiative being a programme for mothers which is attracting mothers aged 30-50+ into team sport for the first time.

**4.13** Bredagh GAC also suggested that consideration should be given to the needs of supporters and volunteers, as participation in games should not just be viewed as playing games. For example, volunteer training could be provided to assist under-represented groups to contribute to local sports clubs.

**Additional consultation measures**

**4.14** The IFA suggested that the Council should consult with World United, an intercultural football project based in Belfast. They also offered to facilitate consultation with homeless people through their Community Relations Department, which works in partnership with local community groups to support the Belfast Homeless Street League.

**Comments made at public meetings**

**4.15** Most of the comments made at the public meetings were specific to the action plans and their effect on the local area. However, in relation to participation in team sports by under-represented groups, there were comments about the current situation as follows:

**Women and girls**

- there is a focus on football and Gaelic games for girls and women during the day;
- ladies Gaelic games is a growth area and this is putting pressure on the use of pitches and facilities;
- women's football is being supported (the IFA has women's programmes running throughout the year) but there is a question of access and availability of pitches;
- there is growth in mini-rugby which is played by women and girls;
- there are mixed teams in younger age groups particularly in small sided games.

**Disabled people**

- disability groups have mid week 8 aside soccer events;
- the Rugby Governing Body is doing work with people with learning disabilities;
- individuals and teams with learning disabilities/Cerebral Palsy are supported on small sided pitches or indoor facilities;
- football for disabled people is particularly strong and there are discussions about wheelchair rugby;
- there is poor access for disabled people to Cherryvale, Grove and Victoria Park.

**Black and Minority Ethnic people**

- Futsal is being more widely developed and may be attractive to minority ethnic people. (NB. Futsal is a variant of 5 aside football that is played on a smaller pitch, mainly indoors).

**4.16** The key point made was that there is a lack of facilities across the city for small sided games which particularly affects under-represented groups. It was suggested that the Council might look at differentiating pricing for under-represented groups, particularly for the use of 3G pitches. It was also suggested that there is a need for education around sharing of sports to encourage better acceptance of multi-sport facilities.

## Comments from the Youth Fora

**4.17** Young people at the Youth Forum workshops identified some of the barriers to participation in sports by children and young people as:

- gender (concerns around body image for girls and young women);
- limited changing facilities;
- the attitude of schools, and specifically P.E. teachers, to competition and the emphasis on winning;
- the support of the best and talented to the detriment of the many children and young people.

**4.18** It was suggested a more positive attitude might be encouraged with a greater emphasis on fun and play supporting more varied activities in parks e.g. softball, rollerblading, track sports.

## Comments from the Section 75 Consultative Forum

**4.19** The organisations represented at the S75 Consultative Forum provided further information on the participation in team sports of under-represented groups as follows:

- the NI Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers organises a soccer team (mostly made up of people from the Sudan and Somalia);
- NICEM knew of 4 basketball teams, an international football team and a softball team among the Black and Minority Ethnic Sector; and
- NICEM also mentioned a 'futnet' league which plays at the Shankill Leisure Centre – this is mostly played by people from Eastern Europe.

**4.20** It was pointed out that lack of funding is a major restriction for all these groups as they do not have sufficient resources to book facilities for training and matches.

4.21 Shopmobility indicated that they have a transformer wheelchair that can be adapted to play different sports, hand cycles and all terrain wheelchairs that are under utilised. She suggested that Shopmobility would be willing to work with the Council to increase the use of these resources, perhaps within Ormeau Park where mobility scooters are already provided.

## **5. Key findings**

**5.1** The EQIA process is designed to identify the aspects of the proposals under consideration which may have an impact on various people, whether the impacts are likely to be differential in respect of people in the nine categories defined in Section 75, and whether any of the differential impacts are likely to be adverse.

**5.2** The following assessment is based on the analysis of available data and research and the findings of the consultation process. It is set out under the categories in Section 75, but it is acknowledged that the effects of the proposals will be different for each individual person and will not necessarily relate to a specific Section 75 characteristic.

**5.3** Overall the Council considers that the Playing Pitches Strategy and Action Plans will deliver significant improvements in facilities for team sports which will benefit current users and encourage non-users to participate. All the new pitches will be capable of staging junior (small sided) games as well as full size adult games, increasing provision for children and young people and other under-represented groups. The improvements to changing facilities should also be beneficial to both young people and women.

**5.4** However, it is accepted that the need to prioritise investment will result in some users benefitting more than others. The analysis below identifies the key issues for people in the various S75 categories.

**Table 3: Assessment of impacts**

<p><b>Religious belief/ Political opinion</b></p>	<p>The greatest deficiency identified by Strategic Leisure was in the provision of pitches for Gaelic sports and the investment priorities in the first three years therefore focus on reducing this deficiency. As the majority of people who play Gaelic sports are from a Catholic community background, it is likely that they will benefit more from these proposals than people with a Protestant community background.</p> <p>However, the selection of sites was made using the prioritisation matrix in the Strategy (which was amended as a result of the first phase of consultation); this gave an agreed and appropriate weighting to need. The Council therefore considers that the differential impact is justified.</p>
<p><b>Racial group</b></p>	<p>Research shows that people from black and minority ethnic communities generally have reduced access to sport and physical recreation opportunities. However, the Strategic Leisure data collection process and comments made during the consultation process showed that there are a number of teams made up of members of the Black and Minority Ethnic community (e.g. football, basketball, softball, futnet) and a growing number of BME people in mixed teams across all sports. The consultation process indicated that the main barriers to access to sports pitches experienced by BME people in Belfast is lack of funding.</p>
<p><b>Age</b></p>	<p>Research shows that the majority of people who play team sports on a regular basis are aged under 34; the Council's Strategy may therefore be of less benefit to people aged 35+. A further issue of concern is the drop in physical activity levels of girls aged 10+ compared with boys.</p> <p>During the development of the Strategy and Action Plans, Councillors raised queries about pitch provision for juveniles, particularly junior association football, and expressed concern that needs across the city were not being met. The</p>

	<p>consultation process also highlighted the lack of facilities across the city for small sided games which specifically affects children and young people. There is therefore the possibility that children and young people may benefit less from the Strategy than adults.</p>
<b>Marital status</b>	<p>Family commitments have been shown to be the key barrier to participation in team sports (particularly for women). Single parents may therefore have less opportunity to benefit from the Strategy.</p>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<p>There is very little available research on participation in team sports by LGBT people and the Council is not aware of any specific barriers to access to sports pitches experienced by LGBT people in Belfast.</p>
<b>Men and women generally</b>	<p>Research (including the Strategic Leisure data collection process) shows that men are more likely to take part in sport on a regular basis than women; this trend emerges from a young age and peaks at age 19 years.</p> <p>The public consultation indicated that there is growth in ladies Gaelic games, women's football and mini rugby (which is played by women and girls) but that this is increasing the demand for pitches, especially those used for small sided games.</p> <p>It is therefore likely that the development of new facilities will benefit men and boys more than women and girls.</p>
<b>Disability</b>	<p>Disability Sports NI estimates that only 10-15% of people with disabilities in Northern Ireland regularly participate in sport or physical activity and there is an increasing demand for appropriate sports facilities.</p> <p>The public consultation indicated that there is ongoing development of team sports for disabled people, especially in football and rugby. However, access for disabled people is a problem at some locations (Cherryvale, Grove and Victoria Park were specifically mentioned).</p>

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	<p>It is therefore likely that people with disabilities will have less opportunity to benefit from the Strategy than those without disabilities.</p>
<b>Dependants</b>	<p>Child care has been shown to be a major barrier to participation in sport on a regular basis; people with dependant children are therefore less likely to benefit from the Strategy. As a group, carers tend to have less time available to participate in leisure activities and they are less likely to benefit from the Strategy than people without dependants.</p> <p>The public consultation identified a new initiative which is successfully attracting mothers aged 30-50+ into Gaelic games for the first time.</p>

## 6. Conclusions

**6.1** The EQIA shows that there is potential for people in a number of Section 75 groups to be differentially affected by the Playing Pitches Strategy and Action Plans on the basis that they may have less opportunity to benefit from the provision of new and upgraded facilities. The groups identified include:

- People from a Protestant community background;
- Black and Minority Ethnic people, Eastern European migrants, refugees and asylum seekers;
- Children and young people;
- Older people;
- Single parents;
- Women and girls;
- People with disabilities;
- People with dependants (including carers and those with dependent children).

**6.2** The investment priorities have been established as a result of applying the prioritisation matrix in the Strategy, which was the subject of extensive consultation earlier this year. Any differential impacts caused by the selection of sites (principally to people from a Protestant community background) are justified in that the highest deficiencies/needs identified by Strategic Leisure were in respect of Gaelic sports. However, the Council has acknowledged that the baseline information on which the assessment of deficiencies was made needs to be updated on a regular basis. The Council intends to re-assess the audit within the first two years of the implementation of the Action Plans.

### **Mitigating actions**

#### **(a) Sports development**

**6.3** An important element of the Action Plans is the development of a new sports development programme which will specifically address the under-representation of certain Section 75 groups in team sports activity, including older people, women and girls, people with disabilities and people with

dependants. The programme will include targets for increased participation by these groups.

**6.4** The sport governing bodies and others who responded to the public consultation suggested additional ways to involve people from under-represented groups, including:

- improve access for disabled people at Cherryvale, Grove and Victoria Park;
- include supporters and volunteers in the sports development programme as this is an alternative way of involving under-represented groups, for example, by providing volunteer training;
- consider the use of differential pricing (particularly for 3G pitches) to attract under-represented groups;
- introduce an education programme around sharing of sports to encourage better acceptance of multi-sport facilities by those in the majority groups;
- develop a programme with a greater emphasis on fun and play supporting more varied activities in parks to attract more children and young people e.g. softball, rollerblading, track sports.

**6.5** All these suggestions will be taken on board as the action plan on sports development is implemented and the Council will continue to liaise closely with the sport governing bodies, clubs and organisations which expressed an interest in participating in the development and roll out of the plan.

**(b) Junior pitches**

**6.6** A key point raised during the public consultation was the lack of facilities across the city for small sided (or junior) games which directly affects a range of under-represented groups. This point was also raised by Councillors during the development of the Strategy, particularly in relation to facilities for junior association soccer.

**6.7** The Council intends to continue to examine the potential to convert underused full size pitches into junior size pitches. It also intends to develop a programme of joint working with the Irish Football Association to plan for junior provision in line with best practice.

**(c) Wider initiatives**

**6.8** It is important to view the Playing Pitches Strategy and Action Plans in the context of the wide range of initiatives currently being taken by the Council to benefit people in particular Section 75 groups. For example:

- The Council already offers a wide range of programmes aimed at specific groups within its leisure centres, including children and young people and older people. The Sports Development Action Plan includes a commitment to ensuring that the leisure development programme is aligned to the Playing Pitches Strategy. Particular attention will be paid to the potential to run junior and adult team sports activities in parallel to encourage those with dependent children to participate.
  
- One of the priorities in the Council's Healthier City Plan for 2011-2012 is "Active Belfast"; this involves working across services, sectors and in partnership to create an active city to improve the quality of life for people in Belfast through improved urban design, participation in physical activity programmes and other health and well-being initiatives. This priority particularly targets children and young people and older people. Co-ordinated action built around local physical assets will promote physical activity and wellbeing and will link with other partners' programmes and services.

**Monitoring for adverse impact**

**6.9** The Action Plans include the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for all pitches which will include regular consultation with pitch users. When this framework is developed, due attention will be paid to the need to monitor the equality impacts of the Council's decisions in order

to find out the effect on the relevant groups and sub-groups within the equality categories. The monitoring framework will include both quantitative and qualitative information gathering processes.

**6.10** During the public consultation, the IFA offered to share the findings of its own monitoring programmes with the Council and to assist in facilitating wider consultation and monitoring (for example, with World United and homeless people). The Council welcomes the opportunity to work with the sport governing bodies and clubs to share monitoring information and ensure that vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups are able to contribute to the ongoing development of the Playing Pitches Strategy and Action Plans.

**6.11** The results of ongoing monitoring of the equality impacts will be reviewed on an annual basis and included in the annual review on progress to the Equality Commission. This review will be published on the Council's website.

**6.12** If the monitoring and analysis of results over a two year period show that there has been a greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the Council will take steps to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

**Appendix A****Belfast City Profile (by Section 75 category)****Religious belief**

There is a fairly even proportion of people from the two main communities with 47.2% of residents from a Catholic community background and 48.6% from a Protestant or other Christian related community background<sup>6</sup>.

However, there are many neighbourhoods comprising people almost exclusively from one community background; in the 2007 Council public survey, 78% of residents described their area as mainly one religion<sup>7</sup>. In the Council's 2010 public survey, 51% of those surveyed stated 'that their local area is a place where people from different religious and political backgrounds get on well together'. 4.2% of the population has indicated that they are of a non-religious persuasion or a member of other non-Christian religions<sup>8</sup>.

**Political opinion**

In the last Council election (May 2011), 29.4% of first preference votes were cast for Sinn Féin, 23.5% for the DUP, 13.8% for the SDLP, 12.7% for the Alliance Party and 8.6% for the UUP.

**Ethnic background**

There is a slightly higher proportion of people from a black and minority ethnic background in Belfast at 1.4% compared with 0.8% in Northern Ireland (NI). The largest minority ethnic groups in Belfast are the Chinese community (0.5%) and the mixed community (0.3%)<sup>9</sup>. The Census data relates to 2001 and does not take account of the influx of migrants over the last 9 years, particularly from the eastern European countries which joined the European Union in 2004. A study commissioned by the Council in 2006<sup>10</sup> estimated that approximately 7500 migrants had settled in Belfast during the previous 2

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<sup>6</sup> NISRA (2001) Census of Population

<sup>7</sup> Ipsos MORI (2007) Survey of Belfast Resident Population

<sup>8</sup> NISRA (2001) Census of Population

<sup>9</sup> NISRA (2001) Census of Population

<sup>10</sup> Jarman, N (2006) New Migrants and Belfast

years, mostly people within the 18-34 age range. Most new migrants to Belfast come from Poland, followed by Slovaks, Filipinos, Indians and Czechs.

### **Age**

Belfast has a lower percentage of young people (aged under 16 years) and a higher percentage of older people (aged over 60 years) than the NI average. In 2001<sup>11</sup>, 21.7% of Belfast residents were under 16 years (compared with 23.6% in NI as a whole) and 19.7% were aged over 60 years (compared with 17.6%). Population projections for the 15 year period ending 2021 indicate that the percentage of young people is likely to fall to 18.8% and the percentage of older people is likely to rise to 22.3%<sup>12</sup>.

### **Marital status**

A relatively high percentage of residents are single at 41.3% compared with the NI average of 33.1%. There is also a higher percentage of widowed people at 9.3% compared with the NI average of 7.8%. Conversely there are fewer married people at 36.9% compared with the NI average of 48.5%<sup>13</sup>.

### **Sexual orientation**

Approximately 1% of the NI population identify themselves as gay or lesbian<sup>14</sup>; however, the Council currently has no data specific to Belfast.

### **Gender**

Belfast has a predominantly female population (53.2% of residents). This is slightly higher than the NI figure of 51.3%<sup>15</sup>.

### **Disability**

The Census showed that one in four (24.2%) of Belfast residents has a limiting long term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily

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<sup>11</sup> NISRA (2001) Census of Population

<sup>12</sup> NISRA Demography (2005) Population Projection 2021

<sup>13</sup> NISRA (2001) Census of Population

<sup>14</sup> ARK (2003) NI Life & Times Survey

<sup>15</sup> NISRA (2001) Census of Population

activities or the work they can do, compared with the NI average of 20.3%<sup>16</sup>. Most people underestimate the prevalence of disability in NI; 92% of respondents to a survey in 2002 thought that the figure was lower than it actually is<sup>17</sup>.

### **Dependants**

30.4% of households in Belfast include dependant children, compared with the NI average of 36.5%. 11.0% of households consist of a lone parent and a dependant child or children, compared with the NI average of 8.1%. Over 94% of lone parents in Belfast are female<sup>18</sup>.

At the time of the Census, 11.8% of people said that they provided unpaid care for a dependant person; this is slightly higher than the NI average of 11.0%<sup>19</sup>.

### **Multiple deprivation**

On many measures of socio-economic performance there has been a narrowing of the gap between the Belfast region and UK averages; however, on most measures a gap remains. As the Northern Ireland Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey noted, exclusion remains a fact of life for a large section of the regional population with Belfast containing more than its proportionate share<sup>20</sup>. About 46% of the Belfast population live in the most deprived Super Output Areas in NI and Whiterock 2 is ranked as the most deprived area in NI. 35% of the Belfast population are identified as income deprived (compared with 25% in NI as a whole) and 16% identified as employment deprived (compared with 13%)<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> NISRA (2001) Census of Population

<sup>17</sup> Equality Commission NI (2002) Survey into Public Attitudes to Disability

<sup>18</sup> NISRA (2001) Census of Population

<sup>19</sup> NISRA (2001) Census of Population

<sup>20</sup> OFMDFM (2008) Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey

<sup>21</sup> NISRA (2010) NI Multiple Deprivation Measures