# RNIB Response to Scottish Disability Sport consultation on their proposed strategic plan 2021 - 2029

## Date

18 May 2020

## Questions

### What three words best describe what SDS does?

Empowers, Enlightens and Inspires

### SDS Vision – An Inclusive and Active Scotland?

RNIB agrees with this vision. We feel it aligns with our vision that children and young people with vision impairments can be fully included in sport and leisure activities.

### These are the five key impact areas within the current strategic plan.

### Should they stay the same? Yes

### Engage and Participate

RNIB agrees with these 5 key areas. We are keen to continue working with Scottish Disability Sport to hep young people engage and participate in sport. RNIB proposes to support this through promotion of SDS to families in Scotland and inclusion of SDS workshops in our “Shape and Share” events, which we hold throughout Scotland for children and young people with vision impairment and their families.

### Progress and Perform

Beyond initial participation, RNIB fully supports the idea that children and young people with vision impairments should have the opportunities to progress and perform in sport. We fully recognise the challenges faced by young people with vision impairments who try to do this, such as financial and transport challenges. We feel that the SDS Visual Impairment Sport group is an excellent partnership model where we can all work together to find ways to address these challenges.

### Coaching, Education and Learning

RNIB also agrees that coaching, education and learning are central to the SDS strategy. For low incidence disabilities with specific support requirements, such as vision impairment, there is a greater need for high quality training resources delivered by experienced and expert staff. This is an area where RNIB sees the role of the Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired as being instrumental in supporting SDS to include this group of young people participation in sport.

In April 2020, a joint project began between RNIB, VIEW, Vision Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) at University of Birmingham, and Thomas Pocklington Trust (TPT), to establish a UK wide specialist curriculum for children and young people with vision impairment (VI).

The project will identify and catalogue a wide range of resources that have already been developed to deliver elements of the specialist VI curriculum. The fact that Physical Education needs to be taught in a specific way to children and young people with a vision impairment could mean that training materials developed by SDS and QTVI services are useful additions to this bank of resources.

### Governance

RNIB agrees that good governance is vital to any organisation and is therefore a key factor in any strategic plan.

### Communication

Communication plays a vital role in the success of any strategy. RNIB agrees with SDS that target and effective communication is the most effective. For children and young people with a vision impairment, access to information in a format that they can read is one of the greatest barriers to their participation. RNIB campaigns to ensure that any information available to the public from websites and apps to leaflets and flyers is designed inclusively to meet the needs of those using screen reading and magnification software. The role of the VI Sport group is instrumental in sharing good practice and learning with the wider sport sector as well as ensuring that children and young people with VI get access to the information they need to fully engage with SDS clubs.

### Where do you see disability fitting within the wider inclusion agenda?

Disability is one of the 9 characteristics listen within the Equality Act 2010. It overlaps with all the other characteristics and this can often compound the barriers faced by people with disabilities. For children and young people, the low incidence of vision impairment can mean that a child with VI may be the only one in their school and if barriers to their participation are not addressed their levels of isolation can increase. Full inclusion can never happen where the rights of people with disabilities to participate fully in society are not recognised and respected. All organisations should consider disability as a key area of inclusion in their service delivery.

Given that 48% of people living in poverty in Scotland are disabled people and their families and that only 20% of people with disabilities take the recommended amount of daily exercise, it is clear that we must do more to ensure that barriers to inclusion in sport and exercise are broken down.

The VI Sport Group should continue to campaign for inclusion at both local and national level, lobbing for better support and services from the Scottish government when required. RNIB as a wider organisation can assist with campaigning work under our strategic aims of both independent living and creating an inclusive society for people with sight loss.

### Do we still need explicit targeting and messaging in Strategy, procedures and delivery or has the culture of Scottish Sport progressed?

### SDS have worked tirelessly with many governing bodies for specific sports in Scotland and although this has been well-received, there is always more work to be done.

### Since only 20% of those with disabilities are exercising at the recommended amount, we can only conclude that specific barriers such as poverty, lack of disability awareness and geography/transport issues are still preventing disabled people from participating and excelling in sport. RNIB will continue to work with SDS and other partners to make the case at both government level and local level that people with sight loss, including children and young people, should have greater access to sporting activities.

### What added value does or could SDS bring?

SDS brokers relationships between those planning sports taster sessions on and it signposts service users to quality sessions. SDS provides a platform via their VI Sports Meetings for stakeholders from across the education, health and social care sector, third sector organisations and the sporting industry, enabling them to work in partnership with other organisations to offer training and support within the coaching and education sector.

SDS brings its own expertise and experience in disability sport to the table, with professional, helpful and committed staff who strive to improve sporting opportunities for people with disabilities.

### Five key impact areas of work

### What does SDS do well?

### SDS is skilled in partnership working. The VI Sports group is a key example of this. SDS sources supportive organisations, integrating their sessions into events for people with disabilities and working with partners at a strategic level to ensure disability is on the agenda for sporting organisations.

### What could SDS do better?

SDS could focus their efforts to sustainable sporting activities and participant retention. Whilst “Have A Go” days are important, it is also crucial in order to make these efforts meaningful, that support is in place for clubs to provide long term, inclusive and meaningful opportunities for participants with a vision impairment to thrive. It is important that clubs and coaches feel confident in their ability to provide such opportunities for people with a disability or additional support need. Much of this work could be supported by stakeholders from across the board and perhaps by exploring links to external funding for transport, providing travel support or one to one support at a club where required.

### What should be our priorities within this new plan?

### Like many other organisations finding their way through the current Coronavirus challenges, SDS may need to prioritise any planning to carry out some of their coaching sessions in an outdoor setting, or indeed in a socially distanced indoor setting. Social distancing causes many challenges for people with disabilities, who often need access to hands on support. SDS could bring their expertise to guidance documents, such as guidance issued for schools, community venues and disability organisations to ensure that people with disabilities can have access to sporting opportunities.

### Is there any other feedback you would like us to consider?

Given the current situation with Coronavirus and the lockdown, it would seem an ideal opportunity to encourage more providers to consider how inclusive their online classes are. If coaches and instructors can conduct a session using only vocal cues, or vocal cues which accurately describe visual gestures, then there may be a lot of crossover here for coaching people with a vision impairment who themselves may rely more on verbal than visual cues. It would also be good way to explore further partnership working opportunities, such as the potential of delivering a parents' session at one of RNIB’s “Shape and Share Family Days” and linking in with Guide Dogs Habilitation Specialists and Eye Health Specialists to explore a holistic approach to encouraging the participation of sport.

RNIB looks forward to our continued work with SDS and we appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important consultation.