



# Equality Policy

April 2007

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Northumberland County Sports Partnership works with a range of organisations, aiming to ensure people in the county can access and enjoy quality sporting and physical activity opportunities. Northumberland Sport is fully committed to the principles of equality of opportunity and is responsible for ensuring that no job applicant, employee, coach, volunteer or participant receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, gender, disability, race, ethnic origin, nationality, colour, parental or marital status, pregnancy, religious belief, class or social background, sexual preference or political belief.
- 1.2 The Northumberland Sport Partnership accepts that it has a responsibility to promote sports equity. This means giving everyone a fair chance to access sport and to achieve their potential, including pro-active measures to improve access by groups that are under-represented, for example people living in urban and rural priority areas, disabled people, women and girls and people from ethnic minorities.

## **2. Purpose of the Policy**

This policy is intended to have the following impacts;

- 2.1 Recognition that certain sections of the community have been affected by past discrimination and may as a consequence have less opportunity to participate equally and fully in sport at all levels. This policy has been produced to prevent/tackle discrimination or other unfair treatment, whether intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect, against its employees, members and volunteers.
- 2.2 Encouragement for partners to take a strategic approach to the planning, provision and development of sports and physical recreation opportunities for all sections of the community.

- 2.3 Increasing the level of awareness amongst partners, agents and the community as a whole of Northumberland Sport 's principles and practices of sports equity.
- 2.4 Increasing the number of people participating in sport from groups that are under-represented through lack of opportunities due to social and economic disadvantage, poor access, or prejudice and discrimination.

### **3. Vision Statement**

*“To develop and increase participation in sport, building healthy and successful communities”*

- 3.1 We want Equality to be at the heart our vision.
- 3.2 Equality of opportunity is one of the five core values which underpin our vision for Northumberland Sport. We aspire to improve opportunities for all to participate, advocating equality of opportunity to work and participate in sport, free from discrimination. We would like to ensure children and adults in Northumberland are given the opportunity to succeed and participate in sport whether as a participant, coach, volunteer or paid employee.

### **4. Aims of the Policy**

- 4.1 Take action to eradicate discrimination and promote equality when delivering services and when working in partnership with external agencies.
- 4.2 Fulfil our obligations by adopting legal, national and local guidelines that seek to ensure equality of opportunity, eradicate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for all within sport.
- 4.3 Set challenging equality objectives and targets in relation to employment, service delivery and the carrying out of our functions.

- 4.4 Consider the needs of all communities and groups in the methods we use for communicating with employees, partners, coaches, clubs and volunteers.
- 4.5 Improve current practice and ensure equality is embedded in the heart of the partnership, values, practices and policies.
- 4.6 Provide leadership and advocacy on equality to all partners within and linked to the sports environments in the County.

We will do this by:

- Achieving and working through the various levels of the policy
- Meeting all our responsibilities in reference to legislation
- Tackling all forms of bullying and harassment
- Taking positive action to tackle inequalities in sport within the Northumberland Sport Partnership.
- Making equality the responsibility of every single member of the partnership from participant, volunteer, coach and Board member.

## **5. Who is covered by the policy?**

- 5.1 This policy will direct the work and practice of Northumberland Sport Core Team (inline with Northumberland County Council Policy), while seeking to influence the work of the six districts, School Sport Networks, Sports Coach UK and National Governing Bodies. Employees, coaches, volunteers and participants will be protected and covered by the policy and protocols in their host organisations. Please refer to detail of contacts and protocols in section 11.

## **6. Legal Requirements**

6.1 Northumberland Sport is required by law not to discriminate against its employees and recognises its obligations under the following legislation:

1. Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005

2. Disability Rights commission Act 1999
3. Equal Pay Act 1986
4. Sex Discrimination Act 1986
5. Sex Discrimination (Gender reassignment and burden proof) Regulations 1999.
6. Race Relations Act 1976
7. Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
8. Human Rights Act 1998
9. Code of Practice on Age Diversity in Employment 1999
10. The Civil Partnership Act 2004
11. The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) regulations 2003
12. The Employment Equality (Sexual orientation) Regulations 2003
13. The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

## **7. Defining Equality, Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation**

### **7.1 Equality**

Equality is about making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. Equality is not about treating everyone in the same way, but recognising that needs can be met in different ways. Equality focuses on those areas covered by the law, namely the key areas of race, gender, disability and more recently, religion or belief, age and sexual orientation.

### **7.2 Discrimination:**

Discrimination occurs when someone, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or group because of their race, colour, national or ethnic origin; sex, pregnancy or marital status; age; disability; religion; sexual preference; membership of a trade union activity; or some other characteristic specified under anti-discrimination or human rights legislation.

Direct discrimination: This means treating someone less favorably than you would treat others in the same circumstances.

Indirect Discrimination: This occurs when a job requirement or condition is applied equally to all, which has a disproportionate and detrimental affect on one sector of society, because fewer from that sector can comply with it and the requirement cannot be justified in relation to the job.

### **7.3 Harassment:**

Harassment occurs when someone is made to feel intimidated, insulted or humiliated because of their race, colour, national or ethnic origin; sex; disability; sexual preference; or some other characteristic specified under anti-discrimination or human rights legislation. It can also happen if someone is working in a 'hostile' - or intimidating - environment. Northumberland Sport is committed to ensuring that its employees, members, participants and volunteers are able to conduct their activities free from harassment and intimidation.

### **7.4 Victimization:**

Is defined when someone is treated less favourably than others because he or she has taken action or a stand against Northumberland Sport under one of the relevant Acts/regulations (as previously outlined) or provided information about discrimination, harassment or inappropriate behaviour.

Northumberland Sport regards discrimination, harassment or victimization, as described above, as serious misconduct and any employee, volunteer or member who discriminates against, harasses or victimizes any other person will be liable to disciplinary or other appropriate action.

## **8. Main groups who often face discrimination and disadvantage**

### **8.1 Disabled People**

In Northumberland, there are 24,000 (representing 7.8% of our population) disabled people and this number is growing as our population gets older and the prevalence of infirmity increases. It is accepted that disabled people are under-represented in sport and can have less opportunities for active lifestyles. A survey by Sport England, 'Participation in Sports Hall and Swimming Pool Activities in England' (1997) showed that people with a disability accounted for only 6% of visitors to swimming pools and 4% of users of sports halls and that inequalities exist which explain this. Northumberland Sport acknowledges that barriers to participation

by disabled people have as much to do with the design and delivery of services, based on the non-inclusion of disabled people in sport, than with lack of interest or ability on the part of disabled people.

**Legislation:** Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Disability Discrimination Act 2005

## 8.2 Women and Girls

Northumberland Sport acknowledges that women do not participate in sport on an equal basis with men. The issues that prevent women taking part in sport and physical activity are based on institutionalised views of women's role within society generally and the family in particular. There is also a lack of awareness amongst providers that women are not a homogenous group and that barriers to participation differ from individual to individual. Women are also discriminated against in the workplace, which may result in unequal pay, inequality of access to services, and development opportunities. Women may also be discriminated against as a result of caring responsibilities, marital status or general prejudice.

The Women's Sports Foundation has produced a National Action Plan for Women and Girls' Sport and Physical Activity. Northumberland Sport will ensure that its plans are complementary to this national action plan and aid delivery of its aims in the following areas; Equality, Leadership, Education, Training and Research, Young people, Facilities and Participation, Information and Resources.

**Legislation:** Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986, Equal Pay Act 1970.

## 8.3 Black and Ethnic Minorities

Approximately 1% of the population of Northumberland are black, Asian or from other ethnic minorities . National research has shown that people from ethnic minorities have lower levels of participation in sport and physical exercise compared with the white population. Such research also has also shown that levels of participation are not equal for all ethnic groups indicating that barriers to participation vary between groups.

Northumberland Sport will seek to consult with individuals and groups, such as Sport England to ensure the benefits of the programmes we organise are accessible to people from all ethnic minorities.

**Legislation:** The Race Relations Act (1976), The Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000)

#### **8.4 People living in disadvantaged socio economic areas**

Communities in Northumberland are characterised by:

- Higher density (urban) areas in the South East (communities established on declining or now ended traditional industries) with a high proportion of wards displaying indicators of high levels of deprivation
- Low density of population other than in the South East of the county, leading to a high proportion of small dispersed communities
- Variable access to facilities and services
- Variable levels of car ownership
- Extremes of income

Information from former government departments and non departmental government bodies show that approximately 45% of the population lives in rural or urban priority wards (Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) and Natural England).

A slight majority therefore live in rural wards and face barriers to participation in sport linked to lack of local facilities, transport infrastructure and changes in the rural economy. Much of rural Northumberland has been covered by a Rural Development Programme since 1995. The most recent Northumberland Rural Development Strategy was produced in 1999. The main areas of the strategy are aimed at addressing rural decline including; strengthening local economies, ensuring sustainable development, community regeneration and improving access to jobs and services.

Social surveys such as The General Household Survey and other specific research conducted by Sport England have consistently identified an under representation of low-income groups participating at all levels in sport. The Sport England Lottery Strategy has identified the need to target resources in priority areas to address these issues.

## 8.5 Religion and belief

We recognise that people may experience discrimination in sport because of their religion or beliefs, and we respect the rights of our employees and individuals within the community, to practice their religion or beliefs. We will take reasonable steps to meet the needs of employees or participants who wish to practice their religion, belief or culture, and this will be taken into account in our services and communication practices.

**Legislation:** The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003.

## 8.6 Sexual Orientation and Transgender

Lesbian women, gay men and bisexuals may also experience discrimination in trying to gain access to sporting opportunities and education and training within the workplace. We recognise that lesbian women, gay men and bisexuals have the right to be open about their sexuality, but equally have the right not to disclose this. We also recognise that there are issues for transgender people that may or may not overlap those of people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual.

**Legislation:** The Sexual Orientation Employment Equality Regulations 2003, The Sex Discrimination Regulations 1999, The Civil Partnership Act 2004.

## 8.7 Older and Younger People

The Northumberland Sport Partnership recognises that young and older people face discrimination including institutional discrimination. This discrimination is known as ageism and particularly affects people seeking employment or services.

**Legislation:** Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

## 8.8 Travelling People

For a relatively small proportion of the population nationally, travelling as a way of life means staying for various periods of time in different locations, in order to earn a living. This has been a way of life for this community over many generations. Gypsies and

Travellers are protected from discrimination by the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Human Rights Act 1998, together with all ethnic groups who have a particular culture, language or values. Travelling people often face discrimination and harassment in society, when attempting to access services and leisure facilities. Northumberland Sport recognises the direct and in indirect discrimination faced by this group and will endeavour to challenge attitudes and beliefs held within the partnership.

## 8.9 Looked After Children

Children who are in the care of local authorities are described as 'looked-after children. There are approximately 350 looked after children in Northumberland. Looked after children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The majority of children who remain in care are there because they have suffered abuse or neglect. Northumberland Sport recognises that looked after children may experience discrimination and often miss out on opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity. Northumberland Sport will continue to challenge this discrimination, while proactively ensuring the needs of these children are catered for in the services delivered by the Partnership.

**The Partnership recognises some groups are faced with discrimination, we do not believe that one form of discrimination is more important than another. We recognise that an individual can be faced by multiple discrimination and therefore suffer a greater disadvantage, we are committed to tackling discrimination across all groups and recognises individual needs, as well those of certain groups.**

## 9. Implementing the Policy

### 9.1 Equality Standard for Sport

We will implement this policy by working through the Equality Standard for Sport, Foundation and Preliminary levels. This will result in the production of an Equality Action Plan, leading to specific actions to address inequality and promote equality.

### 9.2 Equality aims are reflected in all plans

This will include our Marketing and Communication Plan, Workforce Development Plan, Sport and Physical Activity Alliances Action Plans, Safeguarding Children and Young People Plan and any other relevant planning activities across the work of the partnership.

### 9.3 Communicating the policy

The Policy will be communicated to all partners including; Board members, sports professionals, coaches, volunteers, and participants. The policy will be officially launched and training will be provided for partners working under the remit of Northumberland Sport. The Policy will also be provided in a leaflet form to give to coaches, volunteers, participants and employees. It will be included in staff and volunteer induction training and will be made available on the Northumberland Sport website.

### 9.4 Who is responsible for the implementation:

**Board-** to set a constructive framework for equality within the partnership, ensuring targets are met and equality is promoted.

**Executive Director-** to ensure the policy is implemented, that equality issues are integral to all aspects of the partnership's work and that performance is monitored within these areas.

**Managers:** to promote equality of opportunity for all in services and organisational processes, taking positive actions, and actively promoting the policy ensuring all projects developed, delivered or commissioned by the partnership reflect our aims.

**Other Employees and Coaches:** to take active steps to challenge discrimination, report instances of discrimination, support managers in the implementation of equality, undertake appropriate training.

**The Equality in Sport Group:** in June 2006 we established a working group for equality to progress the work across the partnership. This has representation from each district, School Sport Partnership, National Governing Bodies of Sport, Sports Coach UK and the Womens Sports Foundation. The group may extend membership as and when other organisations have identified personnel whom we believe can contribute to our aims. The group's remit is to develop, coordinate, support and monitor the work of the Equality Standard, embedding equality into all areas of work, including policy development, procedures and services, and the development of an Equality Action Plan for Northumberland.

## 10. Monitoring and Reviewing the Policy

Implementation and impact will be monitored by and reported to the Northumberland Sport Board.

The Action Plan will be monitored through the Equality in Sport Group.

The Policy will initially be reviewed in December 2007 and annually thereafter.

## 11. What to do if something goes wrong - Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

To safeguard individual rights under the policy, an employee, volunteer or member who believes he/she has suffered inequitable treatment within the scope of the policy may raise the matter through the appropriate grievance procedure.

Disciplinary (or other appropriate) action will be taken against any employee, volunteer or member who violates Northumberland Sports Equality Policy.

Clubs, Volunteers and Participants

Depending upon where the activity is based and delivered you can talk to the following people:

1. **Northumberland Sport Core Team:** Contact Kaye Scott the Business Support Assistant on 01670785020, following our normal complaints procedure.
2. **Alnwick:** Contact Steve Paige 01665 605030
3. **Berwick Upon Tweed:** Contact Tim Kirton 01289 301823
4. **Wansbeck:** Contact Kelly Handyside 01670 843202
5. **Castle Morpeth:** Contact Richard Bealing 01670 794789
6. **Blyth Valley:** Contact Nathan Rogerson 01670 542257
7. **Tynedale:** Contact Kathie Keady 01434 613219

**Employees working in the Partnership**

If you are concerned about any equality issues relating to your employment you can speak to your line manager, or to your Human Resources team.