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Reports that have been submitted to Council can be downloaded from
www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny.



Preface

By Cllr Jack Deakin, Chair of the Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity Overview and Scrutiny Committee



The Commonwealth Games brought people from diverse backgrounds across business, sport, leisure, and our wider communities. It provided us with fantastic economic and social benefits for our city, introducing different types of sports to people who have gone on to continue spectating or partaking in them. It reminded our region, the UK, and the world that Birmingham truly is on the map and the place to be, with people who had never visited our city before now returning to experience Birmingham in all its glory.

As Brummies, we should be exceptionally proud of our city and look to build on our success as a theatre for major events, with the World Blind Games coming to Birmingham this year in August, and with the World Trampoline Championships in November. Looking ahead, we will also host the European Athletics Championships in 2026, and our city continues to look further afield at attracting significant events to help boost our economy, attractions, and opportunities for our citizens. Not only is it vital for our city for it to thrive economically, but it's vital socially as it provides opportunity for marginalised and disadvantaged groups that they may not otherwise have.

Whilst hosting any significant event is always a big win for our city, it will always come with its challenges, but it may also inspire us to consider what we may not have considered before. Our inquiry into disability access into sport & physical activity from the perspective of spectators and participants, that I was proud to chair, with Cllr Gareth Moore as Vice-Chair and joined by Cllrs Rinkal Shergill, Deborah Harries & Mick Brown sought to address a challenge and criticism levelled against the Commonwealth Games.

The Birmingham Games were lauded by many for being the most accessible in history, with the biggest programme of para-sports ever at a Commonwealth Games. As councillors, we saw the efforts that went into this, with organisers going above and beyond to deliver for the athletes, spectators, and residents during the Games. However, we do know that there were some shortcomings, and through this inquiry we have discovered that there are far more disabled people not meeting the NHS and government recommended physical activity each week compared to those who aren't disabled.

It's a travesty and one which not only needs to be addressed because it is the right thing to do for those who are impacted by it, but because it makes sense economically as well as socially. Birmingham City Council can play its part in encouraging and working to deliver higher levels of increased physical activity engagement across our city, and we must work to ensure it is Everyone's Battle & Everyone's Business.

Our inquiry has been conducted with a cross-party group of councillors, and that sense of cross-party working has been entrenched from the start with an opposition councillor being made Vice-Chair of our inquiry. With contributions from all councillors on the inquiry, we have lived the ethos of 'Everyone's Battle & Everyone's Business.'

Thanks must be provided to the Executive for constructive feedback which provided robust debate back and forth, and within our inquiry group. Appreciation and extreme gratitude must also go to the Scrutiny



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team and in particular, Amanda Simcox and Amelia Wiltshire who facilitated, communicated, and ensured the smooth running of our inquiry.

Finally, and most importantly, together with all of the Task and Finish Group, I would like to thank all disabled people, carers, organisations, and Elected Members who have taken time to contribute to this inquiry.

Cllr Jack Deakin

Chair of the Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Summary of Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Develop and adopt a new inclusive Sports strategy and a Physical Activity strategy, which will both be informed by the experiences and insight of all citizens including disabled citizens, and their needs designed in from the start rather than add them in at a later stage.b) Provide an outline of how the insight and experience of disabled citizens will inform the new Sport and Physical Activity strategies.c) Define measures of success within the strategy specific to the disabled community including improving participation levels.d) Continue to build upon the new partnerships developed through the CWG, and work with the Birmingham Disability Sports Forum to maximise the impact of the strategy and understanding the range of activity on-going in the citye) Involve members of the disabled community in the monitoring of the strategy and outline how this will be achieved.	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	<p>April 2024</p> <p>September 2023</p> <p>April 2024</p> <p>October 2024</p> <p>April 2024</p>
R02	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities to:</p> <p>Set up a cross-Council Insight Community focused on equalities issues, picking up all the protected characteristics including disabilities. This will support future</p>	Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities	November 2023



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	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
	decision making in relation to major sporting events (see Recommendation R04).		
R03	<p>Council asks the Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage and Tourism to:</p> <p>Ensure the Birmingham City Council Legacy Portfolio supports projects which kickstart accessible fitness and wellbeing for people with disabilities.</p>	Leader/ Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage and Tourism	April 2024
R04	<p>Council asks the Leader to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review the lessons learnt and best practice gained from the Commonwealth Games 2022 as it relates to disability and ensure this is incorporated into future major sporting proposals. b) Convene a cross- Council Insight Community focused on equalities issues, picking up all the protected characteristics including disabilities for all future major sporting events such as the upcoming European Championships 2026 (See Recommendation R02). c) Outline Accessibility and Inclusion commitments at the initial planning stages of all major sporting events for spectating and grassroots participation (including spectating at the upcoming European Athletics Championships in 2026), and actively explore free or discounted tickets for carers/ personal assistants when accompanying those with disabilities. 	Leader	<p>November 2023</p> <p>April 2024</p> <p>April 2024</p>



R05	<p>Council asks the Leader to:</p> <p>Adopt the Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard (BIG standard) for future volunteering programmes</p>	Leader	November 2023
R06	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Transport to:</p> <p>Work with Travel for West Midlands/West Midlands Combined Authority and event promoters/organising committees to review the transport offer for spectators as it relates to people with disabilities for all major upcoming sporting events including the European Championships in 2026.</p>	Cabinet Member for Transport	April 2024
R07	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities to:</p> <p>Provide information on the Council website where non-Council venues can access information on Disability Discrimination Act requirements and be signposted to more specialist organisations.</p>	Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities	April 2024
R08	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Encourage Sport Birmingham to develop a single assured website where people with disabilities may access the information which they need about physical activity opportunities. The information on this site should be in an accessible format, and with a clear plan how to make the website sustainable in the future. b) Promote the new website to relevant services including Sports Service, Wellbeing Service and Adult Social Care. 	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	<p>April 2024</p> <p>April 2024</p>



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	c) Ensure information on the Birmingham City Council website is accurate and kept up to date.		July 2023
R09	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to:</p> <p>Deliver specific training programmes to improve disability awareness for all staff in Birmingham City Council leisure sites (Sports Service and Wellbeing Service including sites managed through commissioning arrangements), and supporting services (for example, strategy and policy, building teams). This training should be tailored to the specific needs of people with disabilities in a leisure setting.</p>	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	October 2024
R10	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to:</p> <p>a) Review all Birmingham City Council leisure centre sites (Sports Service and Wellbeing Service including those managed under commissioning arrangements) and identify feasible measures that can be implemented to exceed DDA compliance. This should consider both inside and outside the venue (i.e., including the car park).</p> <p>b) Ensure this review is informed by the cross-Council Insight Community outlined in Recommendation R02.</p>	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	<p>October 2024</p> <p>October 2024</p>
R11	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to:</p> <p>Actively explore the introduction of free or discounted access for carers and Personal Assistants accompanying people with</p>	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	April 2024



	disabilities to leisure centre sites (Sports Service and Wellbeing Service including those managed under commissioning arrangements) with free access being the preferred option.		
R12	Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to: Review the programme offered in leisure centre sites (Sports and Wellbeing Service sites including those managed under commissioning arrangements) for people with disabilities and how it is promoted, and actively look at how the programme can be made more inclusive for those with disabilities.	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	April 2024
R13	Tracking Council agrees that the Executive members report on progress towards achievement of these recommendations no later than October 2023. Subsequent progress reports will be scheduled by the Committee thereafter, until all recommendations are implemented.	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	October 2023



1 Introduction

1.1 About Overview and Scrutiny

- 1.1.1 Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) is an essential part of the governance arrangements within the Council. It fulfils the statutory function as set out in the Local Government Act 2000 as amended by the Localism Act 2011¹. The Council's vision for Scrutiny is outlined as follows:

'To ensure effective democratic accountability and oversight of the Council's executive. This will be achieved by a Member-led Scrutiny function which is held in high regard by its many stakeholders, and which adds value for the people of Birmingham. This vision recognises that Scrutiny is a core component of the governance structures of the Council, and that Scrutiny Members, the Executive and senior officers will all work to create the right culture and lead the way in making the vision a reality. Ensuring good Scrutiny in Birmingham is a common endeavour across the council²'.

- 1.1.2 To achieve this, Scrutiny will follow the nationally agreed 'Four Principles of Good Scrutiny'³ :

- Amplify public voice and concerns.
- Drive improvement in public services.
- Provide constructive "critical friend" challenge.
- Be led by 'independent minded people' who take responsibility for their role.

- 1.1.3 There are eight Overview and Scrutiny Committees that scrutinise and contribute towards policy development on key issues identified by Elected Members. In depth scrutiny (an Inquiry) enables Members to consider complex issues in significant detail over a longer period of time. Through these Inquiries, Members are able to make recommendations which should deliver improvements in public services.

- 1.1.4 A Task and Finish Group have led this Inquiry comprising Members from both the Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee and the Health and Social Care O&S Committee. This Task and Finish Group was chaired by Councillor Jack Deakin with Councillor Gareth Moore as Vice Chair. Other members of the Task and Finish Group were Councillors Mick Brown, Deborah Harries, and Rinkal Shergill.

¹ Section 9F of the Localism Act 2011, HM Government, accessed 8 February 2023

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/schedule/2/enacted>

² Overview and Scrutiny Framework, Birmingham City Council, April 2021

³ Overview and Scrutiny: Statutory Guidance for Councils and Combined Authorities, HM Government, 7 May 2019
[Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils and combined authorities - GOV.UK](#)



1.2 Why did Members Choose this Inquiry?

- 1.2.1 During July and August 2022, Birmingham hosted the 22nd Commonwealth Games (the Games), the largest multi-sport event to be held in England in a decade. Thousands of world class athletes competed across multiple events with over 1.5 million spectators⁴. The Games had the largest programme of para-sport in a Commonwealth Games to date with 42 events across eight sports.
- 1.2.2 From the outset, Birmingham promised to 'seize this moment to invest in the future of our city and our young people'⁵. This statement makes clear that this was not just about delivering the Games but about delivering a legacy for the citizens of Birmingham. The city aimed to 'capture the benefits of hosting this world class event while supporting the acceleration of the City Council's ambitions to respond to the city's challenges'⁶. The Commonwealth Games 2022 Organising Committee (OC) and the Council both published legacy plans highlighting how this will be achieved⁷.
- 1.2.3 This Inquiry acknowledges that reviewing the full impact of the Games and its legacy for the city may take years before information is fully available. Nevertheless, and acknowledging the potential information limitations this may present, Members felt there was particular value in exploring, even at this early stage, if and how the Games has delivered positive outcomes for the city's disabled community, specifically around encouraging increased participation in physical activity at a grassroots level and providing improved experiences to watch major sporting events. They felt this was a timely and valuable opportunity to influence the city's new Sport and Physical Activity Strategies, which are being developed in 2023-24, as well as capture learning for upcoming sporting events. This is especially the case as the ambition for the Games had been to 'host the most accessible and inclusive Games yet'⁸.
- 1.2.4 The Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee has been focused in recent years on holding the Executive to account on preparations for the Games and how they are realising legacy benefits. A report outlining its key findings was presented at the meeting of the City Council on 15 March 2022 by the former Chair of the Committee, Councillor Mariam Khan⁹.

⁴ Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games: the highlights, HM Government 2 September 2022

⁵ Delivering a Bold Legacy for Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, December 2021 page 5

⁶ Delivering a Bold Legacy for Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, December 2021, page 8

⁷ Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Legacy Plan, Birmingham 2022, March 2021; Delivering a Bold Legacy for Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, December 2021

⁸ The Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard (The BIG Standard), Birmingham 2022, September 2020 page 3

⁹ Scrutiny Business Report, Appendix 1, Birmingham City Council, 15 March 2022



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1.3 Strategic Framework

- 1.3.1 In Birmingham City Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2026, the Grand Challenges and Be Bold Outcomes for the city are set out¹⁰.
- 1.3.2 This Inquiry contributes specifically towards addressing:
- Grand Challenges: Equalities and Inclusion, and Health and Wellbeing.
 - Be Bold Outcome: A Bold Healthy Birmingham and its priorities:
 - Tackle Health Inequalities.
 - Encourage and enable physical activity and healthy lives.
 - Improve outcomes for adults with disabilities and older adults.
- 1.3.3 The Inquiry also contributes towards other Grand Challenges, for example, Improving Opportunities for Children and Young People.
- 1.3.4 This Inquiry will also contribute towards commitments within the Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business Action Plan, which supports the Council's drive to embed a focus on diversity and tackling inequalities in everything the Council does¹¹.

1.4 Scope of Inquiry

- 1.4.1 The Terms of Reference for this Inquiry was agreed by the Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee on 12 October 2022.
- 1.4.2 The key question for this Inquiry was:
- ‘How will the legacy from the Commonwealth Games improve access to physical activity opportunities (both participating and spectating) for our disabled citizens and communities?’
- 1.4.3 The outcomes for this Inquiry are:
- Improve participation levels in sport and physical activity by the disabled community.
 - Improve the experience for disabled spectators at sporting events.
- 1.4.4 The Task and Finish Group identified the following key lines of inquiry:

¹⁰ Birmingham City Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2026 identifies 6 Grand Challenges: Equalities and Inclusion; Unemployment, Skills and the Local Economy; Health and Wellbeing; Community Resilience, Cohesion and Living Standards; Climate Emergency and Opportunities for Children and Young People. The Plan also outlines 5 Be Bold Outcomes: A Bold Prosperous Birmingham; A Bold Inclusive Birmingham; A Bold Safe Birmingham; A Bold Healthy Birmingham and A Bold Green Birmingham.

¹¹ Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business Action Plan 2022/23, Birmingham City Council, September 2022



- Explore the profile of disability in the city, and the level of participation/spectating for sport and physical activity from this community.
- Compare Birmingham to other core cities, and capture learning.
- Understand the experiences of disabled citizens in participating in physical activity and sport in our city.
- Understand the experiences of disabled spectators in accessing the Games and its sporting programme, specifically venues.
- Understand the experiences of disabled spectators in accessing other sporting events and activities.
- Identify the barriers the disabled community faces to participate and spectate.
- Understand what 'good looks like' to support inclusion in participation and spectating, and the solutions presented by the community to get there.
- Understand how the Games identified a legacy for the disabled community in terms of participation and spectating, and how it has measured its impact upon this (including early indicators).
- Identify the key activities the Games has undertaken to affect change for the future.
- Benchmark the Games to previous Commonwealth Games or other multi-sport events in terms of legacy for the disabled community.

1.5 Definitions

Disability

- 1.5.1 The Equality Act (2010) defines a disability as a 'physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities'¹². This has been the Inquiry's guiding definition. The Inquiry has considered the full range of disabilities including neurodiverse conditions. It also wanted to consider the views of people with disabilities and with other protected characteristics.

Models of Disability

- 1.5.2 'Leaders in the disability rights movement have constructed two distinct models of how society views disabilities: the Medical Model and the Social Model. These models provide a framework for how people perceive those of us with disabilities. While the Medical Model is a helpful way of understanding illness and loss of function, people in the disability community have largely rejected it in favour of the Social Model. The Social Model promotes the idea that adapting social and physical

¹² Definition of Disability under the Equality Act 2010, HM Government, [Definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/362822/Equality_Act_2010_-_Part_1_-_Definition_of_disability.pdf)



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environments to accommodate people with a range of functional abilities improves quality of life and opportunity for people with and without impairments¹³.

Physical Activity

- 1.5.3 The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines physical activity as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. Physical activity refers to all movement including leisure time, for transport to get to and from places, or as part of a person's work. Both moderate and vigorous intensity physical activity improves health¹⁴.
- 1.5.4 This Inquiry has focused on recreation from low impact through to competitive sport. This can be done at any level of skill and for enjoyment by everybody.

1.6 Call for Evidence

- 1.6.1 The Call for Evidence for this Inquiry consisted of three parts: Members, the Public and organisations. A list of contributors can be found in Appendix 1.
- 1.6.2 Public – the Inquiry wanted to capture the views and experiences of disabled citizens and their carers about participating in physical activity and visiting the Commonwealth Games. This was primarily undertaken via the Council's Be Heard consultation hub¹⁵. It launched on 15 November 2022 and was open for eight weeks. Citizens also had the opportunity to speak to Members from the Task and Finish Group for this Inquiry to provide additional information through individual follow up sessions. The results from this survey are in Appendix 2.
- 1.6.3 Members – all Members of the Council were invited to contribute to the Inquiry, including providing details of organisations who may be able to provide evidence.
- 1.6.4 Organisations – organisations were invited to provide written evidence to the Inquiry. The following organisations were also invited to provide information in person:
- The Council's Adult Social Care Directorate.
 - The Council's Sports Service – they also hosted a site visit to Alexander Stadium in Perry Barr.
 - Sport Birmingham.
 - The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWs).
- 1.6.5 A schedule of the Inquiry's activities is provided in Appendix 3.

¹³ 'Medical and Social Models of Disability'. Office of Developmental Primary Care, University of California, San Francisco. [Medical and Social Models of Disability | Office of Developmental Primary Care \(ucsf.edu\)](https://ucsf.edu/medical-and-social-models-of-disability)

¹⁴ 'Physical Activity'. World Health Organisation. [Physical activity \(who.int\)](https://who.int/physical-activity)

¹⁵ 'Health & Wellbeing Legacy of the Commonwealth Games'. Be Heard, Birmingham City Council. <https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/economy/health-wellbeing-legacy-of-the-commonwealth-games/>



2 Background and Context

2.1 The Commonwealth Games 2022

2.1.1 On 21 December 2017, Birmingham was awarded the 22nd Commonwealth Games. The Games took place during July and August 2022 supported by an extensive cultural and legacy programme taking place in the run up to, during and also post Games. At the outset, Birmingham's ambition was to be the most inclusive Games yet. On 1 December 2021, the Council published its plan to maximise the benefits as host city - Delivering a Bold Legacy for Birmingham¹⁶. This plan is built around how the Games would accelerate the Council's response to the challenges facing the city and aspirations for its citizens, outlined as follows:

1. The Games can enable a THRIVING city, creating opportunities accessible to all.
2. The Games can open up opportunities to which our younger population can ASPIRE to achieve.
3. Games initiatives and facilities will support the development of a HEALTHY society, both physically and mentally.
4. Hosting the Games creates a platform for a more WELCOMING, diverse place to live and invest.
5. The Games can and will accelerate our GREEN GROWTH plans to grow Birmingham in a sustainable and resilient way.

2.1.2 This Inquiry specifically contributes towards understanding how any emerging legacy from 'Games initiatives and facilities will support the development of a HEALTHY society, both physically and mentally' (A Healthy City).

2.1.3 In addition to Delivering a Bold Legacy for Birmingham, the Organising Committee (OC) for the Commonwealth Games also published a Birmingham 2022 Partner Legacy Plan¹⁷. In this plan, partners agreed to combine efforts for maximum impact in five ways:

- Bring people together.
- Improve health and wellbeing.
- Help the region to grow and succeed.
- Be a catalyst for change.
- Put us on the global stage.

¹⁶ Delivering a Bold Legacy for Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, December 2021

¹⁷ [Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Legacy Plan](#), Birmingham 2022, March 2021



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2.1.4 At this stage, the OC has produced an updated legacy plan highlighting the emerging impacts from the Games¹⁸. An interim independent evaluation has also been published, which considers the economic, social, and environmental impact of the actual Games itself and not the legacy programme¹⁹. An evaluation report reviewing the post Games legacy will be published later in 2023.

2.2 Birmingham City Council and its Legacy Programme²⁰

2.2.1 The Council is establishing a new Commonwealth Games Legacy Portfolio to co-ordinate resource and the continued delivery of the Council's legacy ambitions. There are two principal objectives for this Portfolio:

- Inspire, oversee and assure projects which will fulfil the Council's commitments and ambitions to realise a legacy value for the city of Birmingham, arising from hosting the Commonwealth Games.
- Compile a single view of the benefits achieved for the city (and the cross-partner programme) as a result of delivering the Council's Legacy Plan's "bold promises".

2.2.2 This Portfolio will not be responsible for project delivery but will provide a structure for the oversight and assurance of any legacy projects delivered as a result of any additional funding. It is proposed it will operate for a defined initial period of two years.

2.2.3 The introduction of the Legacy Portfolio will increase the likelihood of the Games realising benefits for this city including disabled people, and at grassroots level.

2.3 Commonwealth Games 2022 City Ambition – A Healthy City

2.3.1 The Council's commitment from the Games was to 'build programmes and community projects to kickstart an accessible fitness and wellbeing boom'²¹. It identified four key objectives for how it intends to use the Games to address health inequalities in this city. These objectives are:

- Inspire and enable Birmingham citizens to improve and sustain their levels of physical activity.
- Use the power of the Games to improve mental wellbeing and accelerate mental health awareness.

¹⁸ Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Our Legacy, Summer 2022, Birmingham 2022

<https://www.birmingham2022.com/about-us/our-purpose/our-legacy>

¹⁹ Interim Evaluation of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, January 2023. This report has been prepared by KPMG LLP, supported by 4GLOBAL Consulting Ltd. and Dr Shushu Chen of the University of Birmingham, solely for DCMS.

²⁰ Outline Business Case for the Commonwealth Games Legacy Programme, Birmingham City Council Cabinet 14 February 2023

²¹ Delivering a Bold Legacy for Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, December 2021, page 5



- Improve access to leisure and community infrastructure to increase physical activity opportunities for local communities.
- Demonstrate the benefits of green and blue infrastructure and habitat creation.

2.3.2 These objectives were supported and underpinned by a range of short-term programmes (covering the period up to, and including, the Games), medium-term goals (up to one year after the Games) and long-term aspirations (two-plus years after the Games).

2.3.3 As its flagship initiative for this ambition, the Council committed to launching a new Sport Strategy linking health and wellbeing approaches to a broader sporting agenda, developing sporting pathways and making best use of assets. There was also £1 million investment into a Community Fund for Physical Activity.

2.4 Commonwealth Games 2022 – Venues

2.4.1 The ambition for the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 was to 'host the most accessible and inclusive Games yet'²². Their intention was to make the Games available to as many people as possible, either as competitors, officials, volunteers, or spectators. Legislative requirements are laid out in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (updated in 2005) and the Equalities Act 2010.

2.4.2 The Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 Accessibility and Inclusion Commitment outlines the strategic approach taken to embed inclusion and accessibility into the sports programmes, planning processes, Organising Committee and Games as a whole²³. This statement makes clear that accessibility and inclusion are not about treating everyone the same - it is about being able to meet people's individual requirements in the most appropriate way possible. To achieve this, additional and/or dedicated service provision would usually be required to provide a quality and positive Games experience.

2.4.3 Birmingham 2022's Commonwealth Games' strategic approach to accessibility was:

- Setting Standards – Defining standards and setting levels for accessibility across the Games using 'The BIG Standard'.
- Create an 'Accessibility Advisory Forum'.
- Improved Games Accessible Information.
- Commit towards reducing the Disability Employment Gap.
- Gain Certification – Achieve recognised certification which shapes and promotes accessibility and inclusion across the Games.

²² The Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard, Birmingham 2022, September 2022

²³ Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Accessibility and Inclusion Commitment, Birmingham 2022, June 2020



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- 2.4.4 In July 2021, the Council approved its Major Sporting Events Strategy 2022-2032²⁴. This aimed to use the Games as a platform to attract future events that have a purpose and a social value of benefit to the city²⁵. It is aligned to the UK Sport's Strategic Plan 2021-2031²⁶. Birmingham's Strategy highlights that major sporting events will need to work with the city's 'diverse communities to ensure they are inclusive'²⁷.
- 2.4.5 The World Blind Games (August) and World Trampoline Gymnastics Championships (November) are both scheduled to be held in the city in 2023. In November 2022, Birmingham was announced as the host city for the European Athletics Championships 2026, the first time the UK has hosted the event.

2.5 Physical Activity and Disability

- 2.5.1 Regular physical activity is proven to help prevent and manage non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and several cancers. It also helps prevent hypertension, maintain healthy body weight, and can improve mental health, quality of life and wellbeing²⁸.
- 2.5.2 Disabled people are much less likely to regularly access and take part in physical activity and sport than non-disabled people²⁹, which means this community is less likely to benefit from the health and wellbeing impacts. The UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (as they refer to disabled adults) is based on new evidence on the substantial health benefits for this community³⁰.

2.6 National Disability Strategy

- 2.6.1 The National Disability Strategy was published on 28 July 2021. It sets out the actions the Government will take to improve the everyday lives of disabled people. One of the key areas highlighted within the strategy is 'Leisure: widening access to the arts, culture, and the great outdoors'. Specifically for this area, the strategy aims to:
- Widen participation in arts, culture and sport.
 - Improve access to paths.
 - Make playgrounds more inclusive³¹.

²⁴ Major Sporting Events Strategy 2022-2032, Birmingham City Council, July 2021

²⁵ [New strategy sets out major sporting events legacy from Commonwealth Games | Birmingham City Council](#)

²⁶ [UK Sport Strategic Plan 2021-31.pdf](#) UK Sport, May 2021

²⁷ Major Sporting Events Strategy 2022-2023, Birmingham City Council, July 2021

²⁸ [Physical activity \(who.int\)](#)

²⁹ Sport England's Active Lives Survey, April 2021

³⁰ UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, HM Government, 7 September 2019

³¹ National Disability Strategy, HM Government, July 2021



2.6.2 To achieve this, Sport England planned to³²:

- Invest £20 million in the financial year 2021-22 through its Tackling Inequalities Fund (which was later re-named Together Fund³³). This fund is designed to impact upon under-represented groups with a specific focus on disabled people.
- Find new ways to address inequalities in physical activity levels between disabled and non-disabled people in partnership with the Design Council.
- Develop and pilot a new training programme to better enable social workers to promote physical activity to disabled people.

2.6.3 This Strategy also acknowledges the enjoyment which live sport offers, not only watching from home but also the shared experience of being there and feeling part of it. It emphasises that sports venues have a duty to provide an environment that is welcoming and inclusive of everyone, irrespective of disability³⁴. It also highlights that approaches to disability should 'consider disability from the start', to embed inclusive and accessible approaches and services and avoid creating disabling experiences from the outset.

2.6.4 On 25 January 2022, the High Court's judgment declared the strategy to be unlawful due to failures in the consultation process and the Secretary of State has since been granted permission to appeal the Court's declaration. A new Disability Action Plan will be consulted on and published in 2023 and will set out the practical action ministers across government will take over the next two years to improve disabled people's lives³⁵.

2.7 National Picture

Lived Experience during the Pandemic

2.7.1 Sport England's annual Active Lives survey in 2021 concluded that the majority of physically active adults had maintained these habits (although the numbers had reduced) despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it had also led to a worrying increase in the number of people who were inactive – doing less than 30 minutes of activity per week or nothing at all. Not all groups were

³² National Disability Strategy, HM Government, July 2021, page 80

³³ The Together Fund is a continuation of the Tackling Inequalities Fund (TIF) that was set up in April 2020 as part of Sport England's support package to help the sport and physical activity sector through the coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis. An additional £20 million of National Lottery was committed to help the groups that are being disproportionately affected by the pandemic and it was significantly impacting their ability to be physically active. TIF's £20m was invested in four key audiences and the money from the Together Fund has been spent in the same way - these priority audiences are: lower socio-economic groups; culturally diverse communities; disabled people and people with long term health conditions. Since its launch, TIF has enabled community groups to continue to exist and engage with their communities, supporting people to be engaged and active. TIF funding ended in December 2022, with the new Together Fund investment running to March 2023 and intended to help further growth and recovery of community organisations working with our target audiences.

³⁴ National Disability Strategy, HM Government, July 2021

³⁵ [The National Disability Strategy 2021: Content and reaction - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/libraries/commons/commons-library-publications/the-national-disability-strategy-2021-content-and-reaction)



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affected equally though. Decreases were the greatest during the initial lockdown phase amongst those with a disability or long-term health condition. This may be attributed to the requirement for those with health conditions to shield³⁶.

- 2.7.2 In the Active Lives survey 2022, the overall numbers of adults who are physically active had started to recover and rise again (a rise of 3%). However, there remain concerns about the level of physical activity for adults with disabilities or long-term health conditions. The levels of physically active disabled adults fell more sharply during the pandemic, and they are not returning to physical activity as the pandemic recedes³⁷.

Census 2021

- 2.7.3 There has been a change in the way information has been collected about disabled people in the Census 2021 compared to the Census in 2011, and this may have an impact on the number of people identified as disabled and how figures are compared across the decade. The question respondents answered in the Census 2021 changed in order to align more closely with the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010³⁸.
- 2.7.4 The Census 2021 was also undertaken during the coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic, which may also have influenced how people perceive their health status and activity limitation. Therefore, this may affect how people chose to respond.
- 2.7.5 In England³⁹, in 2021, a smaller proportion but larger number of people are disabled - 17.7% (9.8 million), compared with 2011 19.3% (9.4 million). The English region with the highest proportion of disabled people was the North-East with 21.2% (567,000).
- 2.7.6 In England, the census data on disability within households shows that:
- In 68.0% (15.9 million) of households, no people are disabled.
 - 25.4% (6.0 million) households include one disabled member.
 - In the remaining 6.6% (1.6 million) households, two or more people are disabled.
- 2.7.7 Households with two or more disabled people ranged from 5.1% (175,000) in London to 7.8% (92,000) in the North-East. The English Local Authorities with the highest proportion of two or more disabled people within a household were East Lindsey (10.3%), Bolsover (9.6%) and Knowsley (9.5%).

³⁶ Sport England Active Lives Survey, published April 2021

³⁷ Sport England Active Lives Survey, published April 2022

³⁸ Census 2021 Question: 'Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?' If this question was answered yes, a further question was asked: 'Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?'

³⁹ Census 2021, Office for National Statistics. Census 2021 results – [Census 2021](#)



2.8 Local Picture

Census 2021

2.8.1 The Census 2021 indicates for Birmingham that:

- The number of people not disabled under the Equality Act was 82.7% (946,951).
- The number of people disabled under the Equality Act was 17.3% (198,079).
- The number of households with no people disabled under the Equality Act was 65.5% (277,484)
- The number of households with one person disabled under the Equality Act was 26.5% (112,067)
- The number of households with two or more people disabled under the Equality Act was 8.0% (33,891)⁴⁰.

Other Information

2.8.2 Sport Birmingham advised that only 13.5% of disabled people in Birmingham regularly access physical activity and sport. This is despite the fact that 55.7% of adults who are inactive would like to take part in some form of sport or physical exercise. Across all cultural facilities in Birmingham, lower proportions of Black, Minority Ethnic and Asian (BMEA); disabled and low-income residents tend to participate in physical activity than do nationally. Furthermore, 44.6% people in Birmingham with a disability or long-term health condition are inactive (less than 30 minutes a week) compared to 28.0% with no disability or long-term health condition⁴¹.

Responses from the Public

2.8.3 The Inquiry received 37 responses from members of the public (Appendix 2). Of these responses, 46% participated in sport or physical activity; 54% of respondents did not.

2.8.4 Respondents who did participate highlighted numerous benefits associated including calming their condition, managing their condition, strength building and weight management, better mental wellbeing, improving confidence, socialising, and making friends.

⁴⁰ Census 2021, Office for National Statistics. Census 2021 results / [City Observatory, Health, Disability and Unpaid Care, page 13](#)

⁴¹ Sport Birmingham evidence presented to Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee meeting on 11 January 2023



2.9 Learning from other Multi Sport Events

London 2012

2.9.1 The House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts published 'Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity' in January 2023⁴², this report is currently pending Government response. The relevant conclusions from this report are:

- While the 2012 Olympic Games delivered substantial economic benefits to the UK, its participation legacy fell short of expectations. National participation levels in sport declined the three years following the Olympics, and then the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) stopped tracking participation legacy from 2016 in order to focus on its grassroots strategy⁴³. Sport England acknowledges that elite sport success does not necessarily inspire activity at a grassroots level.
- The DCMS has applied some, but not all, of its learning from the 2012 Olympic Games to the hosting of the Commonwealth Games 2022. It aimed to create a legacy from the Games at a local level, including a £3 million programme in the West Midlands to tackle inactivity. But it has no mechanisms in place to monitor the long-term participation legacy from the Games. It is however developing a revised framework to assist future major event organisers in delivering a legacy⁴⁴.
- Sport England has not yet translated its understanding of the barriers to participation into action to enable inactive groups to participate in sport and physical activity. Sport England recognises three key requirements to get inactive groups to participate: motivation, confidence, and opportunity. It recognises that some groups face greater barriers to participating in sport and physical activity, including women, lower socio-economic groups, and disabled people. Among inactive groups, which did not have targets, activity levels among the over-75s and disabled people increased before the pandemic, but there was no such increase in activity levels within Black or Asian ethnicity groups⁴⁵. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated some of the existing inequalities in activity for the least affluent, Asian people and disabled people.

⁴² 'Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity', thirty-second report of sessions 2022-23, House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 8 January 2023

⁴³ The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has the overall policy responsibility for maximising participation in sport and physical activity. It directs most of its spending to develop grassroots sport and get more people active through Sport England, its arm's length body created in 1996. Sport England spent an average of £323 million a year between 2015–16 and 2020–21. Government strategies for grassroots sport and physical activity have highlighted how this can help achieve its other objectives such as tackling obesity. Community sport and physical activity brought an estimated contribution of £85.5 billion to England in 2017–18 in social and economic benefits, including £9.5 billion from improved physical and mental health.

⁴⁴ Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity, thirty-second session 2022-23, House of Commons Committee for Public Accounts, published 8 January 2023

⁴⁵ Between November 2016 and November 2019, activity levels among disabled people saw statistically significant increases of 3.6 percentage points respectively.



- The DCMS does not know if leisure facilities are financially sustainable or are delivering the sports facilities that communities need. These concerns are long-standing but have been exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and rises in energy bills⁴⁶. Nationally, many types of sporting facilities have an average age of more than 30 years and are in poor condition. In response to these challenges, this reports highlights that some 70% of councils are considering scaling back their leisure services in response to these financial pressures. There is currently no national strategy in place to maintain or develop leisure facilities. Although the report highlighted that there was acknowledgement about the fragile financial position of some leisure providers, there is a lack of understanding of the support the sector may need.

2.9.2 This report outlined three specific recommendations of interest to this Inquiry⁴⁷:

- Recommendation 3: In its new strategy, the DCMS should set out the specific outcomes it is aiming to achieve with inactive groups, what targets it is working towards, and how it will measure progress.
- Recommendation 4: Sport England should, by June 2023, write to us (the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts) with details of the barriers for the least active groups, and what action it is taking to address them to ensure people have the motivation, confidence, and opportunity to participate in physical activity.
- Recommendation 7: The Department should urgently review the condition of leisure facilities and, working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and other government departments, take action to ensure their financial sustainability. The Department should write to us (the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts) with an update on this review by June 2023.

⁴⁶ The energy bill for the leisure sector is expected to rise from £500 million in 2019 to £1-1.2 billion for 2022 (Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity, thirty-second session 2022-23, House of Commons Committee for Public Accounts, 8 January 2023).

⁴⁷ Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity, thirty-second session 2022-23, House of Commons Committee for Public Accounts, 8 January 2023



3 Key Findings and Recommendations

3.1 Partnership Working

Projects

- 3.1.1 The Inquiry heard evidence from Sport Birmingham⁴⁸, The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS)⁴⁹ and the Council⁵⁰ about a range of activity which has been undertaken in recent years focused on providing greater opportunities for the disabled community to increase their levels of physical activity in the short, medium, and longer term⁵¹.
- 3.1.2 The Council's Community Legacy Fund for Physical Activity has been a major contributor toward funding this activity⁵². However, funding linked directly to the Games has not been the only source of funding. For example, the Together Fund (formerly Tackling Inequalities Fund) has people with disabilities as one of its four key workstreams; Sport Birmingham has managed this funding⁵³. Activity to improve levels of participation amongst the disabled community has therefore been taking place beyond the Games initiatives. However, this is on short term funding streams.

Collaboration

- 3.1.3 Sport Birmingham acknowledged how the Games had acted as a catalyst for further joint working, which could deliver benefits in the longer term. For example, they are working with partners to create a single on-line platform where disabled citizens can be signposted to the information which they need to access sport and physical activity opportunities in the city. This new signposting service had been identified as a gap and has arisen from dialogue from the increased collaboration and networking across organisations and with the disabled community due to the Games. However, improved collaboration across the sports and disabled network of organisations may be at risk without the focus on the Games. Andy Craddock, Birmingham Wheelchair Basketball and Make Change Inclusive Sport Programme highlighted how:

⁴⁸ Sport Birmingham: for more information, see Appendix 4

⁴⁹ The Active Wellbeing Society: for more information, see Appendix 4

⁵⁰ Birmingham City Council: for more information, see Appendix 4

⁵¹ The Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee meetings on 7 December 2022, 11 January 2023, and 1 February 2023

⁵² Birmingham City Council's Community Fund for Physical Activity was a £1 million fund [Council finalises details of £6million Commonwealth Games Community Fund | Birmingham City Council](#)

⁵³ Sport Birmingham advised that as of 11 January 2023, they had committed £74k in Birmingham. This has been allocated primarily to Central and South Birmingham, where they have received the majority of their applications.



‘The Games was an amazing opportunity, and we need to maintain the momentum. However, we still do not know what the legacy will be, and that we will be supported to continue to support the legacy’⁵⁴.

- 3.1.4 Sport Birmingham also highlighted the Birmingham Disability Sports Forum, which meets quarterly and is chaired by Sport Birmingham. This forum was created before the announcement that Birmingham was hosting the Games. Sport Birmingham described it as a ‘platform to share best practices and get feedback from community groups and organisations around some of the barriers and challenges for disabled people to access physical activity’⁵⁵.
- 3.1.5 The Forum works with a range of sporting and non-sporting partners to influence and advocate a more collaborative approach to increasing the number of disabled people participating in physical activity and sport. These strategic and operational partners include National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs); sports clubs, specialist charities, disabled user-led organisations, and community groups who are passionate about opportunity for all and in sharing best practice. Its overarching aims are to:
1. Advocate, promote and raise the profile of disability-friendly recreational activities across the city.
 2. Increase the number of needs-led activities so more people with a disability can take part in physical activity and sport.
 3. Develop existing provision and increase the quality of activity delivery by helping mainstream clubs and other organisations to become more inclusive.
 4. Consult with service users and the general public to better understand the current (and predominant) barriers to participation and find the best approach to address/overcome these barriers.
- 3.1.6 The Commonwealth Games Accessibility Forum was a partnership created to support the delivery of the Games and ensure it can deliver an accessible and inclusive Games. This was an example of organisations and people coming together, who would not otherwise have done this.

Strategy

- 3.1.7 The Council’s Sports Service outlined its commitment to deliver a new Sports strategy and advised that Public Health Division are also developing a new Physical Activity Strategy; these strategies will go live in 2023-24. A new strategy is the flagship project for the ‘A Healthy City’ ambition in the Council’s legacy plan⁵⁶. There is currently no live strategy in place.

⁵⁴ Inquiry Task and Finish Group Follow up session with Andy Craddock, Birmingham Wheelchair Basketball and Make Change Inclusive Sport Programme, 23 Jan 2023: for more information, see Appendix 2

⁵⁵ The Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee meeting on 11 January 2023

⁵⁶ Delivering a Bold Legacy for Birmingham, Birmingham City Council, December 2021



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- 3.1.8 The two strategies will be aligned and will share underpinning delivery frameworks. The intention is that the two strategies complement one another to ensure the city achieves the overall vision to create a whole system approach to physical activity. It is not clear at this time due to their stage of development how equality, inclusion and diversity will inform them.
- 3.1.9 Both strategies are being delivered in partnership with Sport England, National Governing Bodies (NGBs), Sport Birmingham, the Active Wellbeing Society and other strategic partners.
- 3.1.10 As part of the Sports Strategy, challenges and barriers will be identified, with clear strategic priorities for grassroots sports provision, inclusion and accessibility outlined.

Key Findings

- The Games has enabled improved networking and partnerships and activity to grow, which should improve the inclusivity and accessibility of physical activity opportunities for the city's disabled community.
- There has been activity taking place independent of the Games, but this is based on short term funding streams, which are at risk if priorities change, such as the Council's Community Legacy Fund for Physical Activity or the Together Fund.
- If this partnership working is effectively nurtured, harnessed and supported, it should start to influence system change and make a significant step in improving participation levels from the disabled community.
- Disabled people need to be at the heart of shaping strategy and grassroots activity.
- The new Sport and Physical Activity Strategies provide a golden opportunity to build upon the success of the Games and deliver a more inclusive future.

Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to: a) Develop and adopt a new inclusive Sports strategy and a Physical Activity strategy, which will both be informed by the experiences and insight of all citizens including disabled citizens, and their needs designed in from the start rather than add them in at a later stage.	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	April 2024



	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Provide an outline of how the insight and experience of disabled citizens will inform the new Sport and Physical Activity strategies. c) Define measures of success within the strategy specific to the disabled community including improving participation levels. d) Continue to build upon the new partnerships developed through the CWG, and work with the Birmingham Disability Sports Forum to maximise the impact of the strategy and understanding the range of activity on-going in the city e) Involve members of the disabled community in the monitoring of the strategy and outline how this will be achieved. 		<p>September 2023</p> <p>April 2024</p> <p>October 2024</p> <p>April 2024</p>
R02	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities to:</p> <p>Set up a cross-Council Insight Community focused on equalities issues, picking up all the protected characteristics including disabilities. This will support future decision making in relation to major sporting events (see Recommendation R04).</p>	Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities	November 2023
R03	<p>Council asks the Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage and Tourism to:</p> <p>Ensure the Birmingham City Council Legacy Portfolio supports projects which kickstart accessible fitness and wellbeing for people with disabilities.</p>	Leader/ Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage and Tourism	April 2024



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3.2 Accessible Venues

3.2.1 The ambition for the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 was to 'host the most accessible and inclusive Games yet'⁵⁷.

Responses from the Public

3.2.2 The Task and Finish Group was also aware of media reports during the Games highlighting some accessibility issues including '[Lad in wheelchair cranes neck in vain to see basketball heroes - triggering Commonwealth Games frustration](https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/sport/birmingham-commonwealth-games-frustration-2022-2022-08-03)' - Birmingham Live ([birminghammail.co.uk](https://www.birminghammail.co.uk)) on 3 August 2022.

3.2.3 38% of respondents advised they attended sporting events at the Games. The majority of these stated they 'had a good experience in the venue', the 'venue and view were excellent', 'the facilities for disabled people were excellent', it was 'amazing and inspirational', and 'so much fun'. However, some respondents highlighted ways their experience could have been improved.

Before the Games:

- Better communication when they were booking their disabled seats and requested disabled parking.
- Understanding whether the tickets they were booking suited their needs.
- A need for family seating near accessible seats which can be booked at the same time.
- Increased costs as they had to buy a ticket for a carer / personal assistant to accompany them.

During the Games:

- The distance between drop off points (shuttle bus or accessible parking) to the venue.
- Massive queues for food and lack of food options, and the need for more vendors and rest areas.
- More parking on site, and more buggy transport from the car park to the stadium.
- They did not get any help, and more help was needed.

Commonwealth Games and the BIG Standard

3.2.4 Birmingham 2022 was the first Commonwealth Games to recruit a Head of Inclusion and Engagement to deliver an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) programme and extensive training offer for staff in relation to accessibility, neurodiversity, inclusive language, and mental health⁵⁸. Birmingham 2022 was a member of Include Me West Midlands (a programme with the intention of

⁵⁷ The Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard, Birmingham 2022, September 2022

⁵⁸ Interim Evaluation of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, January 2023. This report has been prepared by KPMG LLP, supported by 4GLOBAL Consulting Ltd. and Dr Shushu Chen of the University of Birmingham, solely for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.



delivering more activity that is inclusive for disabled people, headed by West Midlands Combined Authority⁵⁹) and holds Silver Deaf-friendly Standard certification. The Games is also a Disability Confident employer, which requires guaranteed interviews for applicants who qualify as having a disability according to the Equality Act 2010.

- 3.2.5 Birmingham 2022 developed and put in place the Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard (The BIG Standard)⁶⁰ to respond to accessibility and inclusion in the hosting of the Games. The BIG standard used current legislation, regulations, and best practice as a base to develop design requirements and solutions for wheelchair bays and easy access seating, assistive technology, pedestrian screening areas and queueing systems, and accessible and changing place toilets. Innovative practice included a 'relaxed site' for disabled people and neurodiverse conditions in Selly Oak.

Accessibility Forum

- 3.2.6 The Accessibility Forum aimed to ensure that all venues, services, processes, and facilities of the Games were designed, operated, and delivered to follow the three fundamental principles of Equity, Dignity and Functionality. Their specialist advice and insight informed the delivery of the Games. They contributed towards⁶¹:

- Accessibility strategies and initiatives.
- Venue design, overlay and operations.
- Transport routes and mode enhancements.
- Accessible facilities.
- Assistive technology.
- Security.
- Accessible ticketing.
- Marketing and communications.
- Workforce and training.
- Issue review and resolution.
- Accessibility reporting.
- Legacy outcomes.

- 3.2.7 The Accessibility Forum has produced the Guide to Accessibility Panels based on their experiences and learning from the Games; this aims to support other areas in setting up Accessibility Panels⁶².

⁵⁹ 'Include me West Midlands', West Midlands Combined Authority, [Include me West Midlands \(wmca.org.uk\)](https://www.wmca.org.uk)

⁶⁰ The Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard, Birmingham 2022, September 2022

⁶¹ Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 Accessibility and Inclusion Commitment, June 2020

⁶² Birmingham 2022 Guide to Accessibility Panels, Birmingham 2022, September 2022



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Alexander Stadium and the Games sites

- 3.2.8 £72 million was invested into the renovation of Alexander Stadium to make it 'Games ready'. Other venues were used across the city and region including Smithfield and Sutton Park.
- 3.2.9 The Task and Finish Group visited Alexander Stadium on 25 January 2023. They were advised about the development of the new stand and how accessibility requirements were incorporated into the designs. Changing Places toilets were installed, and access routes to the venue were levelled (there is now a 14m difference in the height of parts of the ground from before the Games). A priority for the venue was to enable disabled people to get as close to the venue as practicable from their transport links. Wherever possible, the intention was to exceed the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements. For example, the entrances to the toilet facilities were made even wider to better accommodate the needs of wheelchair users. There were 154 accessible bays in total at Alexander Stadium.
- 3.2.10 The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Legacy Plan Summer 2022 highlighted that the Games had proactively designed barrier free ways to access the Games and surrounding events⁶³.
- 3.2.11 Following the end of the Games in 2022, the venue is now being made ready for non-Games use and to be handed back to the Council. The Council's Adult Social Care team are working with the Alexander Stadium to have a full guide available for disabled people who want to visit and use the venue.
- 3.2.12 The Council's Sport Service indicated there was no specific team in the Council who had a specific focus on equalities and inclusion from a building perspective, and who could provide specialist advice and guidance to the Alexander Stadium in the future.

Wider Infrastructure

- 3.2.13 The Inquiry recognised that the venue itself is just part of the experience. Disabled people face increased challenges to travel to venues, and concerns about this may deter people from choosing to watch sport and be part of it. In the Inquiry's survey, transport and accessible parking was given as a reason some people do not watch sport in person. Feedback from members of the public highlighted improvements could have been made around accessible parking, and connections between shuttle buses, parking, and the venue.
- 3.2.14 One of the benefits from hosting major sporting events is that it attracts thousands of visitors to the city. The Council's Adult Social Care Directorate highlighted how they were working with the Council's Tourism team and AccessAble⁶⁴ to identify further opportunities to make city sites more accessible to people with disabilities⁶⁵. This was also referenced in the feedback on social media when the

⁶³ Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Legacy Plan Summer 2022

⁶⁴ [Home | AccessAble](#)

⁶⁵ The Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee meeting on 1 February 2023



public survey was launched when a resident highlighted the need for an accessibility strategy across all Council services⁶⁶.

Volunteers

- 3.2.15 Birmingham 2022 aimed to deliver the most inclusive Commonwealth Games volunteering programme ever, and to create an inclusive blueprint for large scale volunteering programmes that could be considered for future Games⁶⁷. The Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard recognised that 'ensuring a diverse and inclusive workforce along with associated processes and procedures was integral to ensure Games opportunities were accessible to all'⁶⁸. This is also relevant for volunteers.
- 3.2.16 The Inquiry heard how the Council's Adult Social Care Directorate organised webinars so citizens and community organisations could learn more about volunteering and other Games opportunities such as jobs and mass participation events (opening and closing ceremonies).
- 3.2.17 Moving forward, the Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard provides a framework, which Birmingham can use for volunteering programmes for major sporting events. The Inquiry heard how Sport Birmingham will be leading on the co-ordination of the volunteering programme for the 2023 International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) World Games. This will incorporate this best practice, and also their own learning from the See My Voice programme, a sports leadership volunteer programme for young people with a disability.

Key Findings

- A major sporting event which considers how to deliver an inclusive Games will deliver a better Games for everyone.
- The work undertaken by the Accessibility Forum and the OC pre-Games ensured there were less issues encountered by disabled spectators during the Games itself. The role of the Accessibility Forum and their lived experience and insight was essential to achieve this. Despite this, there were still a few issues which emerged during the Games.
- A similar approach should be undertaken with all future major sporting events in the city, and this will also have to be refreshed at the time to ensure it meets the needs of disabled people at that time.
- The new stand at Alexander Stadium should set a standard for other Council sporting facilities.
- Physical improvements are not enough – inclusion in venues needs to extend to all aspects of the experience. Volunteers can inform this.

⁶⁶ @bhamscrutiny reply, 14 November 2022

⁶⁷ Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Legacy Plan Summer 2022

⁶⁸ Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard (The BIG Standard), Birmingham 2022, September 2022



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Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R04	<p>Council asks the Leader to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review the lessons learnt and best practice gained from the Commonwealth Games 2022 as it relates to disability and ensure this is incorporated into future major sporting proposals. b) Convene a cross- Council Insight Community focused on equalities issues, picking up all the protected characteristics including disabilities for all future major sporting events such as the upcoming European Championships 2026 (See Recommendation R02). c) Outline Accessibility and Inclusion commitments at the initial planning stages of all major sporting events for spectating and grassroots participation (including spectating at the upcoming European Athletics Championships in 2026), and actively explore free or discounted tickets for carers/personal assistants when accompanying those with disabilities. 	Leader	<p>November 2023</p> <p>April 2024</p> <p>April 2024</p>
R05	<p>Council asks the Leader to:</p> <p>Adopt the Birmingham Inclusive Games Standard (BIG standard) for future volunteering programmes</p>	Leader	November 2023
R06	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Transport to:</p> <p>Work with Travel for West Midlands/West Midlands Combined Authority and event promoters/organising committees to review the transport offer for spectators</p>	Cabinet Member for Transport	April 2024



	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
	as it relates to people with disabilities for all major upcoming sporting events including the European Championships in 2026.		
R07	Council asks the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities to: Provide information on the Council website where non-Council venues can access information on Disability Discrimination Act requirements and be signposted to more specialist organisations.	Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities	April 2024

3.3 Barriers to Participation and Watching Sport in Person

3.3.1 In their evidence to the Inquiry, The Active Wellbeing Society emphasized how removing barriers to participation should be considered from the outset of all projects. They described it as a 'design in' approach rather than treating disabled people as an 'add on.' This approach removes the need to respond to people with disabilities as their needs have already been considered⁶⁹.

3.3.2 The Active Wellbeing Society also highlighted the impact of well-designed programmes through Jenny's story*:

"Jenny has suffered from depression and uses a wheelchair. she felt that there was nothing available that could support her, and she was just living from day to day until she was referred into our seated exercise group.

Being a part of the group has already helped her in countless ways, including with her physical fitness and weight loss journey. the group is so much more than an opportunity for her to be active. Coming to our sessions is an important way she can meet up with others, in a safe environment.

At the moment, it is the only time she is without her carers and out and about, but it is helping build back her trust and confidence so that in the future she can

⁶⁹ Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee meeting on 1 February 2023



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do more. Jenny says because of the nature of the group, the location, and the instructors she feels comfortable being there, and included in the sessions”⁷⁰ .
(*Not her real name)

- 3.3.3 The Inquiry has identified a number of challenges which acted as a specific barrier for disabled people to participate in physical activity or watch sport in person. These challenges are explored below.

Information

- 3.3.4 The Inquiry was advised that the availability and quality of information about physical activity provision for disabled people needs to be improved.
- 3.3.5 The public responses to the survey highlighted the need to provide information and signposting through mainstream routes. The Task and Finish Group found multiple websites providing information on what is available in Birmingham, however there were concerns that there were too many sites and no assurance on the quality and accuracy of this information. Information on the Council’s own website was incomplete and out of date. The Council’s Sports Service acknowledged this needs to improve and highlighted how work being undertaken with AccessAble could address this.
- 3.3.6 The Inquiry also heard from Sport Birmingham about how they have recognised this gap too. They are developing a single platform where people with disabilities can be signposted to, and which will provide all the information they require to make choices about which activities are suitable for them. They also intend that this will signpost to quality provision where they are confident the experience of users will be positive. This is scheduled to be launched shortly. Sport Birmingham highlighted unresolved concerns about how this web platform can be kept accurate for users, promoted widely and therefore become sustainable in the future. The Inquiry was concerned that the Council did not appear to be linked into this.

Location

- 3.3.7 The Inquiry was advised that if activities are not taking place near to where people live, this may make it harder for disabled people to access them, as their disabilities may make it harder or more expensive to travel. Responses from the public survey, Sport Birmingham and The Active Wellbeing Society reinforced this.

Quality of Experience

- 3.3.8 The Inquiry was advised that the service offered to disabled people needed to be more inclusive and based on an understanding of what works for this community. Sport Birmingham highlighted that

⁷⁰ The Active Wellbeing Society presentation at Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee meeting on 1 February 2023



feedback from people they had engaged with indicated that some people tried to access physical activity but then did not return as the poor quality of their experience put them off.

3.3.9 A range of factors were identified as contributing towards the overall quality of experience:

- Co-design – how have disabled people been engaged with to inform the delivery of these services? The Active Wellbeing Society highlighted the need to build and create trust and co-create interventions with the community.
- Understanding need and experience – the Council's Sports Services advised that data on disabled people using their services is not currently captured. This is being addressed by the introduction of a new leisure management system, Gladstone. This will enable effective measuring of visitor levels to inform future service delivery.
- How easy is the venue to access? – the responses in the public survey highlighted concerns about insufficient numbers of accessible parking spaces.
- How easy are venues to navigate? – responses in the public survey suggested ensuring there is adequate space between equipment to transfer, and for people with suppressed immunity to feel more comfortable. The Active Wellbeing Society also highlighted how spaces are neurodiverse sensitive. They also referred to their virtual sessions as a way for some people to feel more comfortable getting involved.
- Do venues offer taster sessions? – Sport Birmingham suggested this as a way to get people to try activities and reassure them.
- Are staff supportive and understanding of the needs of disabled people? – the responses to the public survey highlight how the attitude of staff is important. Sport Birmingham and The Active Wellbeing Society highlight the value of a qualified workforce, which understands the needs of disabled people. The Active Wellbeing Society also pointed out how services and staff need to ensure their communication is inclusive.
- Carers and buddies – some disabled people will need to be accompanied by a carer; other people may want a buddy to be provided at the time. Sport Birmingham and the responses to the public survey both referred to this.
- Other users not being supportive – this was highlighted in the responses to the public survey.

Financial Cost

3.3.10 The Inquiry was advised that there may be increased costs for disabled people to get involved with sport or physical activity to meet specific needs which the able-bodied community does not need to consider. For example, some disabled people need to be accompanied by a carer or personal assistant, so they need to pay for two people. Other costs highlighted included the actual cost of the provision in a cost-of-living crisis, and transport to get there (taxis are expensive).



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Key Findings

- There are significant physical, emotional, and social benefits for disabled residents of all ages when they take part in physical activity. However, there are specific barriers which they need to overcome.
- Disabled people experience different barriers to the able-bodied community.
- Barriers around accessibility seems to be a recurring theme, especially for people who do not present with a physical disability such as sensory impairments. It should not be assumed that increasing accessibility is just about removing physical barriers.
- We need to listen to the experiences and insight of disabled residents and involve them proactively in co-designing services.
- We need to make it easier for disabled people to find out what is available to suit their needs.
- We need to improve the experience of disabled people when they access physical activities.
- The Games has not addressed these barriers but provides an opportunity through a focus on sport and physical activity to address them in the future. It provides an opportunity to do things differently and better.

Recommendations

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R08	Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to:	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	
	a) Encourage Sport Birmingham to develop a single assured website where people with disabilities may access the information which they need about physical activity opportunities. The information on this site should be in an accessible format, and with a clear plan how to make the website sustainable in the future.		April 2024
	b) Promote the new website to relevant services including Sports Service, Wellbeing Service and Adult Social Care.		April 2024
	c) Ensure information on the Birmingham City Council website is accurate and kept up to date.		July 2023



	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R09	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to:</p> <p>Deliver specific training programmes to improve disability awareness for all staff in Birmingham City Council leisure sites (Sports Service and Wellbeing Service including sites managed through commissioning arrangements), and supporting services (for example, strategy and policy, building teams). This training should be tailored to the specific needs of people with disabilities in a leisure setting.</p>	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	October 2024
R10	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review all Birmingham City Council leisure centre sites (Sports Service and Wellbeing Service including those managed under commissioning arrangements) and identify feasible measures that can be implemented to exceed DDA compliance. This should consider both inside and outside the venue (i.e., including the car park). b) Ensure this review is informed by the cross-Council Insight Community outlined in Recommendation R02. 	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	<p>October 2024</p> <p>October 2024</p>
R11	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to:</p> <p>Actively explore the introduction of free or discounted access for carers and Personal Assistants accompanying people with disabilities to leisure centre sites (Sports Service and Wellbeing Service including</p>	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	April 2024



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	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
	those managed under commissioning arrangements) with free access being the preferred option.		
R12	<p>Council asks the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care to:</p> <p>Review the programme offered in leisure centre sites (Sports and Wellbeing Service sites including those managed under commissioning arrangements) for people with disabilities and how it is promoted, and actively look at how the programme can be made more inclusive for those with disabilities.</p>	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	April 2024
R13	<p>Tracking</p> <p>Council agrees that the Executive members report on progress towards achievement of these recommendations no later than October 2023. Subsequent progress reports will be scheduled by the Committee thereafter, until all recommendations are implemented.</p>	Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care	October 2023



Appendix 1: List of Contributors /Witnesses

Cllr. Mariam Khan, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

Graeme Betts, Director for Adults Social Care & Legacy Lead, Birmingham City Council

Megan Byrne, Health Delivery Programme Manager, The Active Wellbeing Society

Mike Chamberlain, Chief Executive, Sport Birmingham

Nikki English, Development Manager – Inclusion, Sport Birmingham

Maria Gavin, Assistant Director, Quality and Improvement, Adult Social Care, Birmingham City Council

Chris Jordan, Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods, Birmingham City Council

Erica Martin, Director, The Active Wellbeing Society

Cat Orchard, Head of Community Partnerships, Birmingham City Council

Dave Wagg, Head of Sport and Physical Activity / Alexander Stadium Redevelopment, Birmingham City Council

There were also 37 respondents to the on-line survey. This included Andy Craddock, Birmingham Wheelchair Basketball and Make Change Inclusive Sports Programme. He also attended a follow up session with the Task and Finish Group to explore his survey responses further.



Appendix 2: Public Survey Summary

3.3.11 Total number of responses received = 37

Equalities Information

3.3.12 Responses by Gender:

- 35% responders were male.
- 57% responders were female.
- 8% responders did not answer the question.

3.3.13 Table1: Responses by Age Group:

15-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80+	Did Not Answer
3%	19%	22%	16%	24%	6%	5%	5%

3.3.14 Responses by Ethnic Group:

- 75% responders identified as White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British.
- 11% responders identified as Black African/Caribbean/Black British.
- 11% responders preferred not to say.
- 3% responder identified as Asian/Asian British.

3.3.15 Responses by Sexual Orientation:

- 73% responders identified as heterosexual or straight.
- 21% responders either preferred not to say or did not answer the questions.
- 3% responder identified as bisexual.
- 3% responder identified as other.

3.3.16 Responses by Religion:

- 43% responders identified as Christian.
- 32% responders identified as no religion.
- 11% responders either preferred not to say or did not answer the question.
- 8% responders identified as Muslim.
- 3% responder identified as a Buddhist.
- 3% responder identified as other.



3.3.17 Responses by Disability:

- 76% responders identified as having a disability.
- 16% responders identified as not having a disability.
- 8% responders either preferred not to say or did not answer the question.

3.3.18 Of the 37 responders:

- 57% responded on their own experiences.
- 43% responded on behalf of a disabled person.

3.3.19 They had a range of disabilities / impairments – physical (including blindness, mobility, and breathing issues), mental health, autism, and learning disabilities, etc.

Participated in Physical Activity or Sport

- 46% participated in physical activity or sport and 54% did not.
- The types of physical activity or sport were swimming, aqua classes, tai chi, tennis, gym, Pilates, yoga, walking, hockey, running, football, exercise and dance at a day centre, ice skating, cycling, trampolining, and rock climbing.
- The benefits to those that undertook sport and physical activity included improved physical health (for instance, it helped with managing their condition, calming their condition, pain management, strength building, keeping fit and weight management), better mental wellbeing, improved quality of life and confidence, and socialising and making friends.
- 62% had previous negative experiences, 27% had not, and 11% did not answer the question.
- 30% had been involved with physical activity or sport outside Birmingham, and on the whole found they were better outside Birmingham.
- The reasons why respondents were not involved in physical activity or sport or did not attend sporting events, where not covered in the table 2 below, were because of their medical condition, mobility problems, lack of confidence and stigma.



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Table 2: The Biggest Challenges and What would Increase Participation

The Biggest Challenges and what would Increase Participation	
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of provision. • Funding for carer/personal assistant. • Transport (taxis can be expensive). • Cost of living challenge.
Signposting & Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for signposting accessible opportunities / provision in mainstream. • Need to showcase what is available and what disabled people can do to get active.
The Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully inclusive events. • The need for more sports centres that include all different types of activities. • Special times set aside for disabled people and their carers. • Free activities aimed solely at the disabled community. • Enable participation with able-bodied people and disabled people. • Times to suit disabled people. • Winter indoor activities as the weather can be a barrier. • Some activities can be pitched at a level which is too challenging for disabled people, and these could be broken down into small manageable chunks.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to be relatively local, with suitable parking (includes problems with non-disabled people parking in disabled parking bays).
Venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to be accessible with suitable equipment and adequate space between equipment to transfer and allow good physical spacing between participants for people with suppressed immunity. • Problem with broken lift.
Staff in Venues / those Running the Activity & Other Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff need to be supportive, have disability awareness and be understanding. • Attitudes of staff and other users was important.
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff need to be DBS checked. • There needs to be safety in green spaces and parks. • Parking along footpaths results in wheelchair / scooter users having to go into the road.

Commonwealth Games and Other Sporting Events

- 38% did attend sporting events during the Commonwealth Games.
- There were mixed experiences with some having excellent / good experiences. Things that could have been improved included:
 - Better communication when they booked disabled seats and requested disabled parking, issues with tickets and booking to ensure this suited their needs, the need for family seating near accessible seats which can be booked at the same time, and cost as they had to pay for the carer and themselves.
 - The need for enough accessible parking and more buggy transport from the car park to the Stadium.



- The distance to walk and the shuttle bus for disabled visitors dropped them off at an entirely different location on return.
- Better seats, in terms of comfort, more legroom, and less steps.
- Lack of food options and massive queues for food.
- They didn't get any help, and more help was needed.
- 30% had visited venues to watch sport (apart from the Commonwealth Games).
- 32% had watched sport outside of Birmingham and there were mixed answers as to whether they were better or worse in Birmingham (50/50).

Not Visited Venues to Watch Sport

3.3.20 The reasons for not visiting venues to watch sport and what would encourage them to do so included:

- Not interested in sport.
- Cost of tickets, accessible tickets go fast, and their disability may mean they have wasted the cost of a ticket if not able to go.
- Low confidence, they need a buddy, and motivation.
- Lack of provision and being unsure of the provision for disabled people in certain venues.
- Accessibility, including distance of toilets, and issues with steps and stairs.
- Sufficient and comfortable seating and carers and/or family can sit next to / with them.
- Transport and accessible parking issues.
- Most sports are at outdoor venues and some kind of enclosure would be ideal, lack of tolerance from other spectators, and safety when going out in green spaces.

Additional Information

3.3.21 Respondents were given the opportunity to expand on the information they had already provided. Cllrs. Jack Deakin, Mick Brown, Deborah Harries, and Rinkal Shergill attended an on-line meeting with Andy Craddock, Birmingham Wheelchair Basketball, and Make Change Inclusive Sport Programme, and the additional information provided included:

- He had told the Organising Committee about accessibility issues, which they took on board. However, he was aware of a young lad that went to watch wheelchair basketball but could not see because of the height of the barrier. He was offered a refund, or the option to return to watch another game.
- They were involved with 36 community roadshows and supporting the legacy.



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- A lot of their volunteers have disabilities, and they were phoned to check whether a volunteer could cope because of their disability. This was dealt with, but it should not have happened in the first place.
- The Games was a steppingstone to change things and it has been very positive.
- The Games helped raise their profile and that of wheelchair basketball.
- The Games was an amazing opportunity, and they need to maintain the momentum. However, they still do not know what the legacy will be and if they would be supported to continue to support the legacy.
- They were working with the community, trying to support events, and were still working on Bring the Power.
- There were a lot of organisations and groups that help people, but they do not all work together, and they may have different agendas.
- Make Change works in Leicester and Birmingham, and they were looking at inclusive sport in schools and universities.
- When they go into schools it breaks down barriers as pupils do not see disability, and the young people enjoy themselves.



Appendix 3: Inquiry Activities

Date	Session	Evidence
12 October 2022	Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Council's Commonwealth Games Legacy Update
15 November 2022	Call for Evidence survey launched	
7 December 2022	Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee Meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Cabinet Member for Health and Social CareThe Council's Sports Service
11 January 2023	Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sport Birmingham
13 January 2023	Call For Evidence survey closes	
23 January 2023	Call for Evidence Follow up Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Birmingham Wheelchair Basketball and Make Change Inclusive Sport Programme
25 January 2023	Site Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Alexander Stadium
1 February 2023	Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS)The Council's Adult Social Care Directorate

Birmingham City Council: Adult Social Care

3.3.22 Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities have duties to make sure that people who live in their areas⁷¹:

- Receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming serious or delay the impact of their needs.
- Can get the information and advice they need to make good decisions about care and support.
- Have a range of high quality, appropriate care services to choose from.

Birmingham City Council: Sports and Wellbeing Services

3.3.23 The Council's Sports Service is responsible for strategically positioning and leading Birmingham in all aspects of sport, driving partnerships to ensure residents benefits from the services on offer, delivering a wide range of leisure functions and creating an environment to re-position Birmingham at the forefront of sporting excellence for the United Kingdom.

3.3.24 Its key service priorities are:

- Improving the health and wellbeing of local communities through continued and increasing levels of participation.

⁷¹ [Care Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)



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- Exploring and developing partnerships with other organisations where these will benefit the community and/or provide affordable and sustainable local sporting services.

3.3.25 Its service delivery is achieved via three core business areas:

- Strategy – the sports services strategy team are responsible for citywide strategy and sports development, overseeing the recovery of one of the country's most historic swimming pools in Moseley, and delivering an elite swimming and gymnastics programme.
- Operational – the sports service operational team are responsible for the direct management and delivery of three sports specific centres and support more than 10 facilities that have been asset transferred to local community organisations. The team oversee the Alexander Stadium, which has just undergone a £72 million renovation over almost three years to ensure it was Commonwealth Games ready.
- Contracts – the sports service contracts team are responsible for the contract management with the Council's externally operated sports and leisure services. This covers the operations of 11 leisure centres, seven golf courses and the delivery of a wellbeing service for residents across the city. Through partnership working, a total of five brand new leisure centres have been opened in the last five years, two of which have won national recognition.

3.3.26 The Council's Wellbeing Service consists of six wellbeing centres and three wellbeing hubs that remain in the direct management of the Council.

3.3.27 These facilities are located in the most deprived areas of the city where residents suffer the poorest health outcomes. The focus of the service remains on providing residents with local access to sport facilities, and support to engage in and increase their physical activity and maintain healthy lifestyles. Their service offer is a combination of 'pay and play' activities but in addition residents can access other activities free of charge every day through the Be Active scheme; this is possible due to £2.9 million funding from Public Health.

Sport Birmingham⁷²

3.3.28 This is the 'Active Partnership' for Birmingham, part of an England-wide network of 43 partnerships, significantly funded by Sport England as a 'System Partner' to help address inactivity and particularly inequalities that exist in the provision of sport and physical activity through partnership working⁷³.

3.3.29 Sport Birmingham's mission is to improve lives through sport and physical activity based on the values – Collaborative, Inclusive and Adaptable. Their strategy Uniting Birmingham 2021-2026 outlines their five priorities and how they are delivering them. These five priorities are:

- Improve physical and mental wellbeing by reducing inactivity.
- Grow and develop a workforce for the sport and physical activity sector.

⁷² [Sport Birmingham | Connect Sport](#)

⁷³ The Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee meeting on 11 January 2023



- Connect communities through sport and physical activity.
- Improve life skills and prospects through participation and engagement.
- Make sport and physical activity inclusive and accessible to all.

3.3.30 Sport Birmingham aims to collate and share best practice in disability equality across the city, and work with our various partners to find a collaborative way forward to improving and increasing opportunities for disabled people to access physical activity and sport.

The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS)⁷⁴

3.3.31 The Active Wellbeing Society 'is a community benefit society and cooperative working to develop healthy, happy communities living active and connected lives.' It works with communities mainly in areas of high deprivation to tackle inequalities and promote community wellbeing. Originally from the West Midlands, they work with a range of partners across the UK, sharing what they know, working towards a kinder, more inclusive, and just society. Their goal is to collaborate with partners and communities, to rebuild the social fabric that is damaged by inequality and create the conditions for a society where everyone can thrive⁷⁵.

3.3.32 Examples of their projects include free activity programmes – learn to ride, group exercise, walking, running, growing and arts and craft; food support including distribution, community cafes, cooking skills and outreach services; community support and engagement – active travel, activating spaces and community conversations and health, social prescribing, and primary care-based services, Listen and Connect and Community Connect support services.

⁷⁴ [The Active Wellbeing Society – Happy Healthy People Living Active and Connected Lives \(theaws.co.uk\)](https://theaws.co.uk)

⁷⁵ The Active Wellbeing Society Prospectus



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