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## STRATEGIC GUIDANCE LETTER FOR 2023-26

I am writing to set out my Ministerial priorities to run until the end of this parliamentary term (2026), to provide you with the strategic policy framework in which to develop your work. As you know, the previous Ministerial priorities covered the last parliamentary term and we have been due to update these.

While the 2022/23 Programme for Government and Emergency Budget Review focused on supporting the people of Scotland through the economic crisis, our priorities from the 2021-22 Programme for Government and the Bute House Agreement remain undiminished. Although not covered in the strategic priorities below, I also expect sportscotland to contribute to the priorities set out in the First Minister's Vision for Scotland ([Equality, opportunity, community: New leadership - A fresh start](#)) which was published on 18 April 2023, and included the commitment to continue to increase physical activity through investment in sport and active travel. This also provides the opportunity to demonstrate your contribution to our net zero targets and public service reform.

I appreciate that re-phasing the commitment to double investment in sport and active living may impact on the delivery of priorities over the parliamentary term. I would ask that your work on inequalities is prioritised wherever possible.

The Active Scotland Outcomes Framework is the key policy framework for delivering a more active Scotland and I know that you remain firmly supportive of this. Your corporate strategy, Sport for Life, continues to remain relevant and consistent with Scottish Government priorities, with inclusion at its heart.

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We are all aware of the power of sport and physical activity, not only in improving physical health and thereby reducing inequalities, but also in improving mental wellbeing, strengthening communities, improving confidence and employability, and more generally in improving an individual's life chances. We therefore need to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from sport and physical activity if we are to reduce inequalities more generally.

The Care and Wellbeing Portfolio is the overall strategic reform policy and delivery framework that the Scottish Government is using within Health and Social Care, which brings oversight and coherence to the major health and care reform programmes designed to improve population health, address health inequalities and improve health and care system sustainability - the key objectives set out within this letter align well with the overall aims of the work of the Portfolio.

Given this context, and the aspirations we set out in Programme for Government 2021-22, which remain undiminished, your strategic priorities over the current parliamentary term are as follows:

### **1. Focus on reducing inequalities in sport and physical activity.**

Reducing inequalities remains a priority for this Government. Given the pandemic has exacerbated inequalities within sport, and wider society, a specific focus on addressing those inequalities is vital. This should include work to:

#### **a) Tackle racism and racial inequality in sport.**

We need to ensure the sporting system is inclusive to all, and for processes and systems to support this. Implementation of the recommendations from the Tackling Racism and Racial Inequality in Sport (TRARIIS) review and the Changing the Boundaries review of Scottish Cricket will help to ensure change is effective and sustained in cricket and sport more widely. This should include working with stakeholders who have expertise or lived experience of racism, to ensure work is informed and genuine collaboration is achieved.

#### **b) Reduce cost barriers to sport.**

We know that those living in the most deprived areas of Scotland are considerably less likely to be active than those living in the least deprived areas. I would like you to consider the cost barrier to sport and opportunities for alternative solutions to provide low or no-cost activities to widen access to sport.

#### **c) Increase participation and visibility of girls and women in sport.**

I recognise the good work across the sporting system to engage women and girls in sport and physical activity. However, we know that women and girls are less physically active and less likely to take part in sport than men and boys. It is a Scottish Government priority to address this gap.

### **2. Work with partners to provide accessible and inclusive opportunities for children and young people to be active in the schools and education environment.**

As you know, the education setting is critical for providing the opportunity for physical activity, especially for those children and young people living in more deprived areas. It is also a critical time for establishing good habits to improve health, such as being physically

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active and eating well, which can contribute to our aim of halving childhood obesity by 2030, significantly reducing diet-related health inequalities. This should include work to:

a) **Ensure that the Active Schools programme is free for all children and young people by the end of this parliament.**

One of the key commitments in the 2021-22 Programme for Government was to ensure that the Active Schools programme is free for all children and young people, thus removing the cost barrier that means some children and young people cannot afford to take part. Providing free access will ensure more children and young people have the opportunity to be physically active and realise the many benefits this brings.

b) **Work with key partners to contribute to the development and delivery of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport (PEPAS), as part of the Health and Wellbeing curriculum.**

This will include supporting the 2 hours/2 periods of PE for all school aged children and young people. Working with national and local partners sportsotland can play a role in contributing to improving the quality of PEPAS within the school and community setting.

c) **Support schools with water safety and learning to swim.**

The work with Scottish Swimming, Education Scotland, and Scottish Water is a good example of how we can understand and consider different models and approaches to support schools with water safety and learning to swim.

### **3. Support sports clubs and community organisations to provide accessible and inclusive sport and physical activity opportunities.**

This is important to benefit active communities and to provide opportunities for more people to be physically active. This should include work to:

a) **Strengthen Community Sport Hubs.**

Community Sport Hubs (CSH) are an important component of this work as they support and empower local people to improve the sport and physical activity offer available in their community, depending on the community's needs. I am confident that CSHs play an important role in getting more people, more active, given their work to understand barriers and develop inclusive approaches that suit the local community. I hope to see these continue to be targeted to more deprived communities in Scotland where they can have the greatest benefit.

b) **Work with communities and key partners to facilitate and support the provision of accessible, inclusive, and sustainable facilities.**

Local accessible facilities are important to benefit active communities and to provide opportunities for more people to be physically active. I expect your Sports Facilities Fund to continue to support this aim. I am also confident that the Cycling Facilities Fund will provide a tangible legacy for communities from the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships. I am looking forward to seeing these projects and the Transforming Scotland Indoor Tennis Fund projects progress. We have discussed the longer-term challenges around an ageing sporting estate, which will need a significant capital investment programme in due course. I would welcome work to undertake a review of the sport facilities estate.

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**4. Place inclusion and welfare at the centre of the high performance sport environment that prepares and supports athletes to deliver consistent success on the world stage at the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games and the Victoria 2026 Commonwealth Games.**

Scotland can be proud of the performance of our athletes on the world stage. We want to see every athlete given the opportunity to fulfil their potential and become the role models for future generations. Particularly where public money is being invested in performance sport, it is important that performance pathways are inclusive and balance performance ambitions with care for the welfare of athletes, coaches, volunteers, and staff. This work should include:

- a) Support a diverse and inclusive performance sport environment.** Everyone should be able to progress to their full sporting potential regardless of background.
- b) Prioritise the welfare of athletes and others involved in performance sport.** Our commitment to sporting success must be matched by a commitment to the health and wellbeing of athletes, coaches, volunteers, and staff involved in performance sport.

**5. Provide leadership to develop and sustain strategic partnerships that help sportscotland to deliver your our joint vision, including partnerships with non-traditional partners.**

If we are to achieve our aim of a more active Scotland, we need to adopt a whole system approach and work collaboratively and in partnership to ensure physical activity and sport is embedded across sectors and environments. I continue to be supportive of sportscotland's work to develop and drive strategic partnerships. Your ongoing support at the National Leadership Group for Physical Activity and Sport and your contribution towards the updated Delivery Plan is key to ensure the success of the whole systems approach.

I will look to our regular meetings and annual review, as well as your quarterly and annual reports and equality mainstreaming and outcomes progress report, for evidence of how sportscotland ensure these ministerial priorities are being delivered, as well as how you are delivering against the Active Scotland Outcomes Framework.

I am looking forward to working closely with you to achieve our shared vision of a more active Scotland.



**MAREE TODD MSP**

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