



**UK Deaf Sport**

**Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan**

## The Issue Status

The Issue Status is indicated by the version number in the footer of this document. It identifies the Issue Status of the 'UK Deaf Sport Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan'.

When any part of this document is amended, a record is made in the Amendment Log shown below.

The 'UK Deaf Sport Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan' can be fully revised and re-issued at the discretion of the UK Deaf Sport Board.

Issue	Amendment	Date	Initials	Policy Owner	Approving Body	Date Approved by Approving Body	Review Date
1.0	First version						
2.0 - 2.12	Reviewed and updated following AKD Solutions, FARG and EDI Lead Director feedback, and Board discussions.	February 2024	DB	JC	UKDS Board		January 2025
3.0	Agreed version	March 2024	DB	JC	UKDS Board	13 March 2024	March 2025

# Contents

Statement from the UK Deaf Sport Chair .....	3
Statement from the UK Deaf Sport CEO .....	3
Statement from the UK Deaf Sport Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead Director .....	4
1. Introduction .....	5
2. About UK Deaf Sport .....	8
3. Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan Aims.....	9
4. Monitoring and Review.....	11
6. Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans .....	12
Priority 1 Leadership .....	12
Priority 2 Participation.....	15
Priority 3 Performance .....	17

## Statement from UK Deaf Sport Chair - Nick Brookes



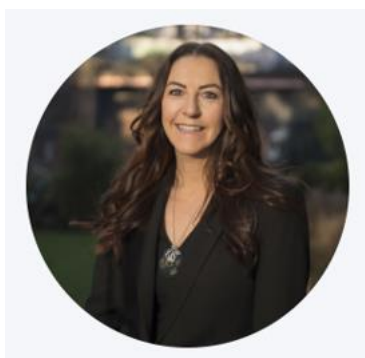
UK Deaf Sport (UKDS) has a commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion (EDI) across all that we do and aim to achieve as an organisation. As Chair, and as a Board of Directors, we understand, prioritise and embrace the importance of diversity and inclusion as a crucial factor for the success of our organisation and our work. We have appointed a Lead Director for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion on the UKDS Board to ensure we remain focused on achieving our aims.

We recognise that UKDS's Board and workforce should be fully reflective of the wider deaf sports community we serve and be appropriately representative. We also recognise that it is our responsibility to help ensure that every deaf person has equal opportunity to take part in sport and physical activity at whatever level they choose.

We will ensure that the diverse deaf sports community is fully represented in our leadership across our Board of Directors, Advisory Groups and Committees to support us to exercise strong decision-making and help achieve our vision of "every deaf person active and inspired by sport". We are also committed to achieving gender parity and greater diversity such as representation from ethnically diverse communities. We will initially undertake some scoping work to see where we need to improve our diversity across the organisation and help us set targets for this. The same commitment is there for our workforce.

This Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan sets out our commitment to delivering our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy over the next 3 years in line with the delivery of our strategic objectives around leadership, participation and performance. On behalf of the UKDS Board, I commit to delivering the aims and objectives outlined in this plan and welcome UKDS becoming a stronger organisation in all that we do because of it.

## Statement from UKDS CEO - Joanne Cholerton



At UKDS we are committed to ensuring that every deaf child, young person and adult have an equal opportunity to participate and excel in sport and physical activity as their hearing counterparts throughout their lives and at all levels whether that be in their local community or on the world stage. At the moment that simply isn't the case.

Activity levels in the 12 million (1 in 5 adults) deaf community across the UK are one of the worst in our society. Being deaf should not be a barrier to taking part and reaching your potential in sport and physical activity at any level. UKDS are here to work with our partners to inspire, signpost and ensure the deaf community are aware of, and have opportunities to, get active. We also educate, collaborate with and support individuals and organisations to be more inclusive and campaign for fairness.

In November 2023, we launched our Fair Play for Deaf Athletes campaign in Parliament calling on Government to end the discrimination against elite deaf athletes and fund and support them as they do Olympic and Paralympic athletes and support the DeaflympicsGB Team. We need to tackle the inherent unfairness that currently sees no

funding or support for elite deaf athletes and DeaflympicsGB compared to the hundreds of millions supporting their Olympic and Paralympic counterparts. Deafness is the only disability Government do not support at the elite sport level and this is inherently unfair.

As CEO, I am also committed to ensuring our workforce is representative of the deaf community and ensuring our recruitment processes do not present any barriers for deaf people who wish to come and work or volunteer for us.

Delivery of this Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan will enable us to strengthen our leadership and delivery and increase our impact across the whole of the deaf community enabling deaf children, young people and adults whoever and wherever they are, to feel the social, mental and physical health benefits of being active.

### **Statement from the UKDS Equality Diversity and Inclusion Lead Director - Lara Lill**

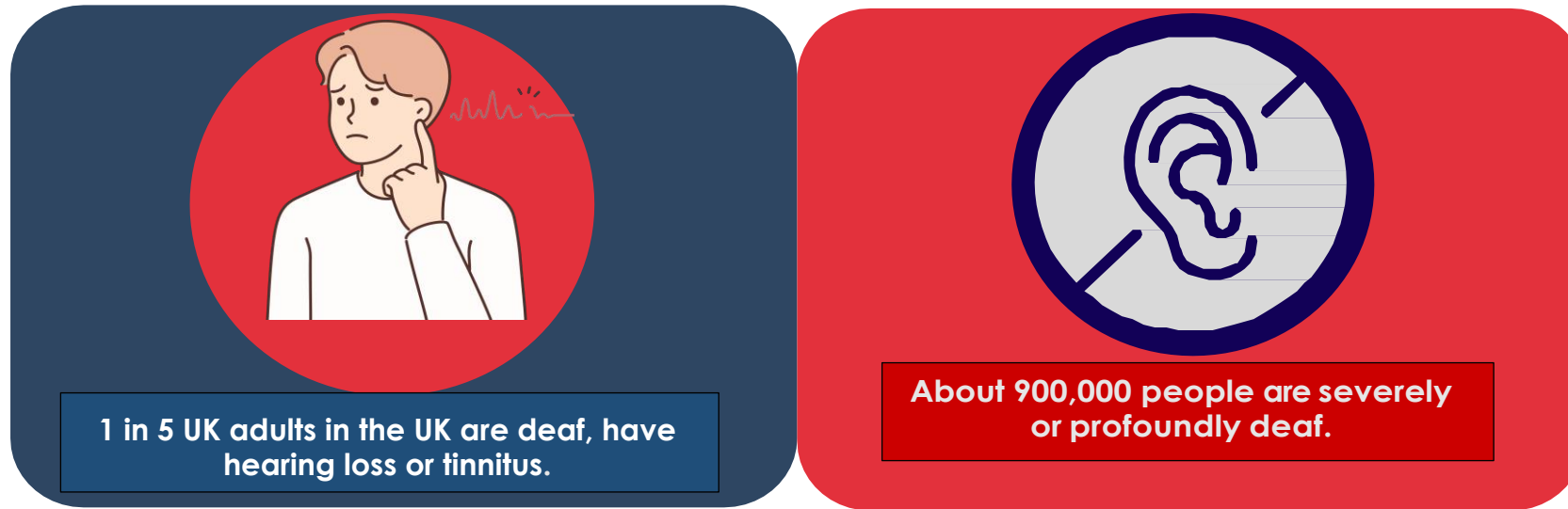


As the Lead Director on the UKDS Board for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion I welcome the development of this DIAP. Such a strong framework will help UKDS to ensure we remain focussed on the changes we wish to see throughout our organisation not only in diversifying our leadership but in our workforce, delivery and collaborative working.

Monitoring the delivery of this Action Plan and ensuring the delivery of our commitments in our Equality and Diversity Policy will play a core part of the Board's agenda moving forward. I commit to monitoring the progress we make in ensuring our Board and workforce is representative and inclusive of all of the different parts of the deaf community and that every deaf person has the opportunity to be active and inspired by sport and physical activity.

Some of our aims set out in the DIAP will be more challenging to achieve than others but we will ensure we keep our end goal in our sights at all times. The delivery of this plan will help us achieve greater diversity in support of our mission, increasing the strength of our leadership and the participation of deaf people in sport and physical activity at all levels.

## 1. Introduction



1.1 Statistics from the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) <sup>1</sup>website report that:

1.1.1 There are 12 million adults (1 in 5) in the UK who are deaf, have hearing loss or tinnitus.

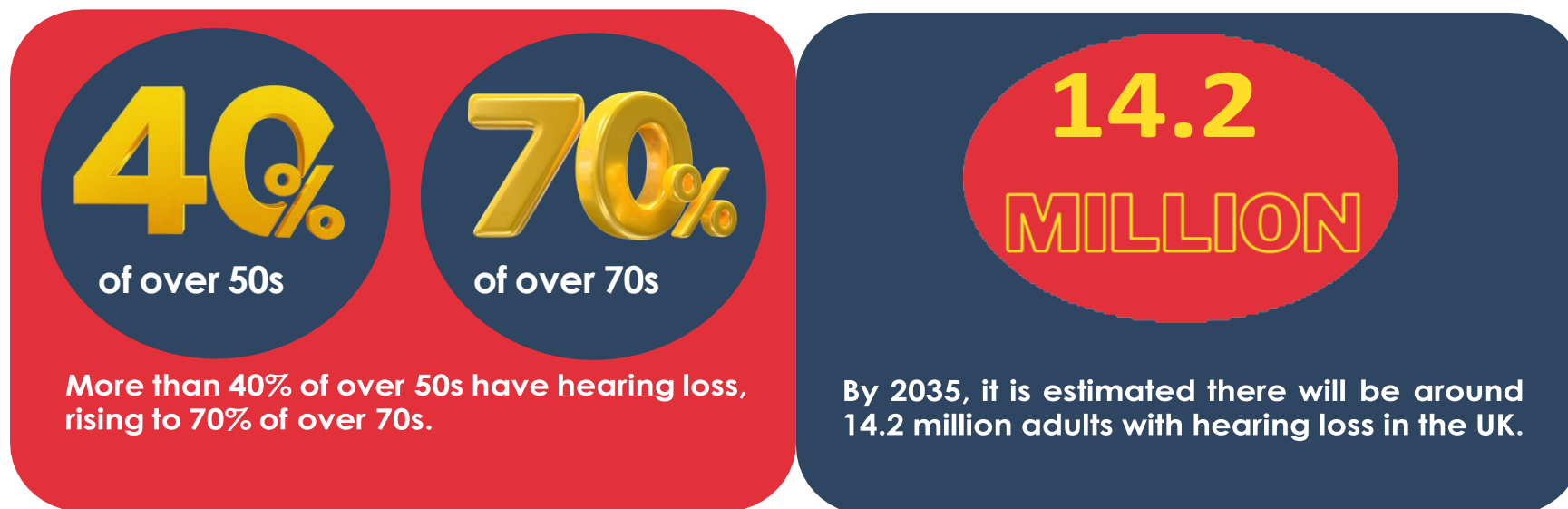
1.1.2 About 900,000 people are severely or profoundly deaf.

1.1.3 In the UK more than 40% of over 50s have hearing loss, rising to 70% of over 70s.

1.1.4 By 2035, it is estimated there will be around 14.2 million adults with hearing loss greater than 25 dB HL across the UK.

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://rnid.org.uk/get-involved/research-and-policy/facts-and-figures/prevalence-of-deafness-and-hearing-loss/>  
<https://rnid.org.uk/get-involved/research-and-policy/facts-and-figures/facts-and-statements-on-health/>  
<https://rnid.org.uk/get-involved/research-and-policy/facts-and-figures/facts-and-statements-on-employment/>  
<https://rnid.org.uk/get-involved/research-and-policy/facts-and-figures/prevalence-of-british-sign-language/>



- 1.1.5 An estimated 1.2 million adults in the UK have hearing loss severe enough that they would not be able to hear most conversational speech.
- 1.1.6 There are at least 50,000 children who are deaf in the UK.
- 1.1.7 People who are deaf or have hearing loss are twice as likely to experience mental health problems compared to people without hearing loss.
- 1.1.8 People who are deaf or have hearing loss are more likely to have multiple medical conditions and overall worse health status compared to those without hearing loss.
- 1.1.9 Deaf people and people with hearing loss are less likely to be employed than the general population.
- 1.1.10 The total number of people in the UK who use British Sign language is estimated to be around 151,000 and, of these, 87,000 are deaf.

1.2 Despite the large number of people with hearing loss in the UK, they are one of the least active groups. <sup>2</sup>The Sport England Active Lives Survey 2023 shows that in 2022:

1.1.1 Only 67.3% of people with a hearing loss participated in sport or physical activity in the last year, compared to 94.7% of people without a disability or long-term health condition.

1.1.2 42% of people with a hearing loss did not participate in any sport or physical activity in the last year compared to 11.6% of people without a disability or long-term health condition.

1.1.3 53.2% of people with a hearing loss were inactive - participating in less than 30 minutes of sport or physical activity per week - compared to 20.9% of people without a disability or long-term health condition.

1.1.4 Children with a hearing impairment are just as likely to be active as those without a disability, but of those children who are less active, 43% of deaf children participate in no activity at all compared to 26% of children with no disability.

1.2 This Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) sets out the actions UK Deaf Sport (UKDS) intends to take over the next 3 years to ensure that the deaf community has equal opportunity to participate and excel in sport and physical activity as their hearing counterparts from grassroots to elite level. Its delivery will also ensure that the UKDS leadership and workforce reflects the diverse deaf community that we serve.



---

<sup>2</sup> Source: Sport England, 2023: [www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/research/disabled-people](http://www.sportengland.org/research-and-data/research/disabled-people)



## 2 About UK Deaf Sport

2.1 UKDS is the National Governing Body for deaf sport in the UK. Our vision is *Every<sup>3</sup> Deaf Person Active and Inspired by Sport and Physical Activity*. Our mission is for more deaf people to participate in sport throughout their lives and more deaf athletes to perform on the world stage.



2.2 UKDS works in partnership with key organisations to ensure that deaf children, young people and adults have equal opportunities to participate and excel in sport and physical activity as their hearing counterparts from grassroots to elite level. This includes working with decision-makers and professionals such as national sport governing bodies to support them to remove the challenges and barriers that prevent deaf people taking part in sport and physical activity. For example, in 2023 we funded a Deaf Southeast Asian’s Women’s Walking Group.

2.3 UKDS is also recognised by the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (ICSD) as the International Federation for Deaf Sport in the UK. We are responsible for ensuring good governance including the administration and coordination of deaf sport teams competing abroad at both a British and Home Nation level. UKDS is also responsible for the selection and management of the DeaflympicsGB Team, the official team that represents Great Britain at the Summer and Winter Deaflympics. The ICSD requires UKDS to have deaf people in leadership positions, including a deaf Chair/President.

---

<sup>3</sup> UK Deaf Sport use the term “deaf” to represent all people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a hearing loss, whether this is acquired or from birth. UK Deaf Sport acknowledges that the term ‘deaf’ covers a range of definitions of deafness, including those who are profoundly deaf, have severe, moderate or mild hearing loss or are hard of hearing whether acquired or from birth. This includes the use of the terms Deaf and deaf whereby the use of a capital D in Deaf may denote those who identify as having a cultural and shared experience of being Deaf. The International Committee of Sport for the Deaf (ICSD who govern the Deaflympics), set their own criteria for eligibility which is a hearing loss of at least 55dB in the better ear (3 tone frequency average of 500, 1,000 and 2,000 Hertz, ANSI 1969 standard). DeaflympicsGB athletes will meet this standard.

2.3.1 As a full member of the ICSD UKDS is required to have a deaf president and a majority of deaf members holding executive positions. UKDS recognises the need to be fully representative of the deaf community and the requirement for 51% of Board members to be deaf as the minimum requirement that UKDS will at all times strive to exceed.

2.4 UKDS has a small team of employees who carry out the day-to-day activities of the organisation and support the delivery of the Operational Plan 2023-2027. The work of UKDS is directed and overseen by the UKDS Board. It is responsible for setting the strategy, providing leadership, ensuring good governance and acting as the ultimate decision-making body. It oversees overall performance in meeting the strategic and operational goals of UKDS as well as oversight of finance, risk management and equality and diversity.



### 3. Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan Aims

- 3.1 The UKDS Board has an ambition and commitment to improve the diversity of the Board, its Committees and Advisory Groups and workforce to reflect the diverse deaf community that it serves. UKDS use the term 'deaf community' to represent all people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a hearing loss or anyone who has a lived experience of deafness such as family members, friends, allies, colleagues and other professionals. Achieving greater diversity across our business will increase the strength of our leadership and the participation of deaf people in sport and physical activity at all levels.
- 3.2 The UKDS Board approved an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (EDIP) in November 2023. This Policy set out the Board's commitment to:



3.2.1 Appropriate representation of the deaf community at all levels of the organisation. This includes Employees and a Board that is representative and inclusive of all of the different parts of the deaf community, including women and those from ethnically diverse communities.

3.2.2 Promote the inclusion of the deaf community in all sports and physical activities from grassroots to elite level. We will work with our key stakeholders to address any barriers that may impede deaf people from accessing any sport or physical activity.

3.2.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion in all our activities. This includes ensuring our policies, practices, events and decision-making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation.

3.3 This DIAP is the Action Plan that sets out how UKDS will deliver against our commitments in that EDIP. The DIAP is structured around UKDS's three strategic objectives:

1. *Leadership*: strategic, well governed leadership and workforce for deaf sport that is diverse and inclusive.
2. *Participation*: more deaf children, young people and adults trying, playing and supporting sport and physical activity.
3. *Performance*: more deaf athletes competing on the world stage.

3.4 We will create an inclusive and diverse environment where different groups within the deaf community feel they have equal opportunity to be part of the leadership of UKDS and participate in sport and physical activity at all levels.

## 4. Monitoring and Review

- 4.1 UKDS will regularly monitor progress of the actions included in the DIAP. For example, after a recruitment drive and following the completion of surveys and research.
- 4.2 Progress will be regularly reported to the Equality and Diversity Lead Director and UKDS Board so that any further or additional action needed to deliver the DIAP can be considered and agreed.
- 4.3 The Board will formally review the DIAP on an annual basis, but the impact of its delivery should be visible on an ongoing basis in everything that we do. This process will be overseen by members of the Finance, Audit, Risk and Governance Committee (FARG) and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead Director with support from the Governance and Insight Manager. All updates, changes and progress on delivery will be reported to the UKDS Board.
- 4.4 The DIAP and any subsequent changes will be shared on the UKDS website.



## UK Deaf Sport Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

### UK Deaf Sport Strategic Priorities

UKDS has 3 strategic priorities:

1. *Leadership*: strategic, well governed leadership and workforce for deaf sport that is diverse and inclusive.
2. *Participation*: more deaf children, young people and adults trying, playing and supporting sport and physical activity.
3. *Performance*: more deaf athletes competing on the world stage.

An Action Plan has been developed for each of these. Links to actions in the UKDS Operational Plans 2023-2027 are also noted.

<b>Priority 1: Leadership</b>	<b>Strategic, well governed leadership and workforce for deaf sport that is diverse and inclusive.</b>	<b>Links to Operational Plan: A1, A7, A8</b>
-----------------------------------	--	--

Headline Actions	Timeline	Resource Required	Measure of Success	Lead
<b>Short Term (0-12 months)</b>  1. Analyse the current diversity of UKDS Employees, Board, Advisory Groups and Committees to provide a baseline, including the number from the deaf community, to measure from and set targets for diversity as required.	Quarter 3 2024	Governance and Insight Manager time	A baseline of the diversity of Employees, Board, Committee and Advisory Group Members including the number from the deaf community.  The number of Board members from the deaf community, with 55+ decibels hearing loss, exceeds the ICSD 51% requirement.	Nominations Committee

Headline Actions	Timeline	Resource Required	Measure of Success	Lead
<p>2. Review current recruitment methods including advertising platforms and amend as required to ensure they are inclusive and target the deaf community and other communities we are seeking.</p>	<p>Quarter 3 2024</p>	<p>CEO</p>	<p>SMART targets set for Employees, Board, Advisory Groups and Committees for representation of the deaf community and intersectionality requirements (for example, women, ethnically diverse communities) as informed by the data and ICSD requirements (relevant skills and experience will be required).</p> <p>30% of Directors are either female/male (ICSD requirement).</p> <p>The diversity and number of applicants for Employee, Board, Committee and Advisory Group member roles is improved, with an increase in applications from the deaf community and individuals with the characteristics as identified above in targets from Action 1.</p>	<p>Nominations Committee</p>
<p>3. Ask applicants for Board, Advisory Group and Employee positions for feedback on the recruitment process (both successful and unsuccessful applicants) to identify any improvements needed to ensure they are inclusive and accessible. Implement any improvements required.</p>	<p>Quarter 3 2024</p>	<p>Information Support Manager Time</p>	<p>As above in 2.</p>	<p>Nominations Committee</p>

Headline Actions	Timeline	Resource Required	Measure of Success	Lead
<p><b>Medium Term (0-24 months)</b></p> <p>4. Based on data from Action 1, identify/implement a development/mentoring programme to increase the diversity and deaf community representation on the Board, Advisory Groups, Committees and Employees as required.</p>	<p>Quarter 1 2025</p>	<p>Data from Analysis in Action 1: Governance and Insight Manager Time</p>	<p>The diversity of Employee, Board, Committee and Advisory Group Members meets targets set in Action 1.</p> <p>The number of Board members from the deaf community, with 55+ decibels hearing loss, exceeds the ICSD 51% requirement.</p>	<p>Nominations Committee</p>
<p><b>Medium and Long Term (0-36 months)</b></p> <p>5. Analyse diversity of Employees, Board, Committee and Advisory Group Members</p>	<p>Quarter 2 2025</p>		<p>The number of applications from targeted groups including the deaf community are increased.</p> <p>Board, Committee and Advisory Group members reflect the targets set in Action 1.</p> <p>The number of Board members from the deaf community, with 55+ decibels hearing loss, exceeds the ICSD 51% requirement.</p>	<p>UKDS Board</p>

<b>Priority 2: Participation</b>	<b>More deaf children, young people and adults trying, playing and supporting sport and physical activity.</b>	<b>Links to Operational Plan: A2, A4, A5, A6, B1, B2, B3</b>
--------------------------------------	--	--

<b>Headline Actions</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Resources Required</b>	<b>Measure of Success</b>	<b>Lead</b>
<b>Short term (0-12 months)</b>				
1. Use already available insight and undertake a survey of deaf people to get a clear baseline of their involvement in sport and physical activity and their awareness of opportunities to get active and participate in sport and physical activity.	Quarter 3 2024	Governance and Insight Manager time  Cost of survey provider e.g. Survey Monkey	Data on the barriers and issues faced by different sections of the deaf community in accessing sport and physical activity to inform action to improve the participation and awareness.	Governance and Insight Manager
2. Gain an understanding from the survey of the intersectionality of deaf people and any additional barriers they face due to their gender, ethnicity etc.	Quarter 3 2024	Governance and Insight Manager time  Survey support of £5k	Clear data leading to understanding of the intersectionality of the deaf community and the barriers faced by them due to level of deafness, ethnicity, gender etc.  A clear baseline set to measure progress over time.	
<b>Medium Term (0-24 months)</b>				
3. More sport organisations and activity providers to access the "Deaf People's	Quarter 2 2025		Increase in number of individuals completing the Deaf People's Inclusion in Sport Training.	Partnerships Manager: Participation



Headline Actions	Timeline	Resources Required	Measure of Success	Lead
<p>Inclusion in Sport" training modules and based on information from Action 1, develop any additional training resources and/or support needed to improve the participation of deaf people in sport and physical activity.</p>		<p>Partnerships Manager: Participation</p>	<p>Bespoke resources developed, including advice on best practice/ promoting sports/clubs as being accessible and welcoming for deaf people.</p> <p>Deaf sport organisations access training to improve the participation of deaf people in their sport/physical activity.</p>	
<p><b>Medium and Long Term (0-36 months)</b></p> <p>4. Use survey insight from Action 1 to inform actions to get more deaf people involved in sport and physical activity: including collaboration and support to National Governing Bodies, Active Partnerships, leisure industry providers and Local Authorities to grow the number of inclusive opportunities for deaf people to participate in sport and physical activity.</p>	<p>Quarter 4 2026</p>	<p>Governance and Insight Manager time</p> <p>Partnership Manager: Participation Time</p> <p>Complete survey annually.</p>	<p>Survey data on levels of participation in sport and activity increased from baseline set in 2024 (Action 1).</p> <p>Follow up surveys show that more deaf people are accessing sport and physical activity compared to the initial baseline.</p>	<p>Partnerships Manager: Participation</p>

<b>Priority 3: Performance</b>	<b>More deaf athletes competing on the world stage</b>	<b>Links to Operational Plan: C1, C2</b>
------------------------------------	--	--

<b>Headline Actions</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Resources Required</b>	<b>Measure of Success</b>	<b>Lead</b>
<p><b>Short Term (0-12 months)</b></p> <p>1. Continue the “Fair Play for Deaf Athletes” campaign lobbying Government to get funding for elite deaf athletes and DeaflympicsGB and create strong and successful deaf athlete pathways that mirror those of their Olympic and Paralympic peers.</p>	Quarter 4 2024	CEO Time Board Chair Time Deaf Athletes	<p>Government recognition, funding and support for elite deaf athletes in line with Olympic and Paralympic peers.</p> <p>Systemic change where elite deaf athletes are recognised by UK Sport and can access their support and programmes.</p> <p>Sustainable deaf athlete talent and performance pathways to world class deaf sport competitions and Deaflympics in place.</p>	CEO/Chair
<p><b>Medium Term (0 -24 months)</b></p> <p>2. Secure £500k funding to send DeaflympicsGB Team to Tokyo 2025 (DCMS and/or commercial partnerships).</p>	Quarter 2 2025	Deaflympics Organising Committee Chef de Mission Tokyo 2025 CEO/Performance Lead	Deaflympics GB Team have a safe and successful mission to Tokyo in 2025.	CEO/Performance Lead

Headline Actions	Timeline	Resources Required	Measure of Success	Lead
<p><b>Long Term (0-36 months)</b></p> <p>3. Work with mainstream and deaf National Governing Bodies to integrate elite deaf athletes into performance programmes for Deaflympic sports. Current talents pilots with x 4 NGBs.</p>	Quarter 4 2026	CEO/Performance Lead	Deaf athletes core part of performance programmes in mainstream National Governing Bodies.	CEO/Performance Lead

