



Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE1335](#)

Main Petitioner: Maggie Tervit

Subject: Support for the National Cerebral Palsy/Acquired Brain Injury Football Team.

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take action, including making representations to the Scottish Football Association, to bring Scotland more into line with England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to adopt the Scottish national team for footballers with Cerebral Palsy/Acquired Brain Injury.

Introduction

The petitioner raises a number of issues regarding the differences in the funding arrangements of the CP/ABI national teams in Scotland, England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The main concern is that members of the Scottish CP/ABI national team have to personally contribute towards costs on a regular basis for international tournaments etc. when their counterparts in other national teams do not.

Development of Scottish Disability Football

[Hitting the Target 2006-2010- the Future of Disability Football](#) outlines the SFA's strategic framework for disability football in Scotland. The framework states that its aims are to increase participation in football amongst disabled people by developing training and competition programmes for footballers with disabilities as well as a 'pathway' to allow footballers with disabilities to compete at the highest level.

The plan also states that the SFA will strive to raise the standard of coaching available to players with disabilities and raise the profile of disability football by providing appropriate structures that support the programme both centrally and locally. Football for players with a disability, up to international level, is available for a range of disability groups in Scotland.

[Scottish Disability Sport \(SDS\)](#) is the Scottish governing and co-ordinating body of all sports for people of all ages with a physical, sensory or learning disability. The SFA in partnership with SDS currently have two pathways in place for international disability football. Further information on the pathways can be found in the following links:

[Cerebral Palsy/Stroke/Acquired Brain Injury National Team Learning Disability under 19 Scotland Squad](#)

In 2005, the SFA in partnership with SDS created a post for a dedicated development officer with responsibility for disability football. A National Centre for disability football was also established in 2005 at the University of Stirling, allowing footballers with a disability to access specialised coaching, sports science support and lifestyle management.

The National Cerebral Palsy/Stroke/Acquired Brain Injury Teams

Players with CP/ABI have the opportunity to access international football through the Cerebral Palsy International Sport and Recreation Association (CPISRA), the world governing body for Cerebral Palsy (CP) football. Players with CP/ABI play a seven-a-side version of the game outdoors, utilising a smaller playing field and reduced sized goals. The Scottish national CP/ABI team was formed in 2006 and is supported by the SFA in partnership with Scottish Disability Sport (SDS). The Scottish team is currently ranked 7th in the World¹ and competes in international friendlies, Home Nations Championships, World Championships, European Championships and invitational tournaments. There are also currently three SFA regional squads for players with learning disabilities and cerebral palsy in Scotland. The CPISRA awarded the 2010 European CP Football Championships to Glasgow in August 2010.²

The [English Football Association](#), [Northern Ireland Football Association](#) and [Football Association of Ireland](#) support their own respective CP/ABI international football teams. The levels and type of support and funding available to these teams differ. The Welsh Football Association does not currently directly support a national CP/ABI team.³ Further information of the range of disability football teams supported by the different football associations can be found in the link below:

<http://www.disabilityfootball.co.uk/Fa.html>

Public Funding and Governance Arrangements

Scottish Government sports funding is distributed through [sportscotland](#), the national sports agency. As indicated above, the national CP/ABI team is supported by the SFA in partnership with Scottish Disability Sport (SDS).

Sportscotland have advised⁴ that their investment in SDS directly supports disability football including, part-funding an assistant football development officer to support development work in the lead up to the European CP Football Championships in 2010 and supporting disability football programme costs. They have also advised that the national disability development

¹ See CPISRA world rankings list: http://www.cpisra.org/files/sports/football_7-a-side/Football_7-a-side_CPISRA_World_Ranking_List.pdf

² <http://www.scottishfa.co.uk/resources/documents/footballdevelopment/Disability/Cerebral%20Palsy-Stroke-Aquired%20Brain%20injury%20football.pdf>

³ <http://www.welshfootballtrust.org.uk/grassroots/football-for-the-disabled>

⁴ Personal Communication 11/06/2010.

manager is also supported by SDS's assistant national football development officer who has responsibility for raising awareness and increasing participation in disability football. This post also helps deliver national road shows, the regional squad programme and the regional schools learning disability league. SDS also funds a post within the SFA with responsibility for managing the national cerebral palsy football team.

In 2009-10⁵, sportscotland invested £538,500 in Scottish Disability Sport (SDS), which is distributed across sportscotland's [Corporate Plan](#) priorities as follows:

- Coaching - £45,000
- Performance Development - £363,500
- Strong Partners - £130,000

In terms of investment that directly supports disability football, they also note that:

- £15,000 of the Strong Partners investment part-funds the assistant football development officer post
- £66,500 of the Performance Development investment supports programme costs associated with boccia, bowls, football, swimming and wheelchair curling.

Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government has advised⁶ that this is a matter for sportscotland:

“as the agency who forward Ministerial policy and priorities, sportscotland enters into investment agreements with sports governing bodies. In this particular instance the SFA is the governing body for football and through its partnership with Scottish Disability Sport (SDS), the governing and co-coordinating body of all sports for people of all ages and abilities with a physical, sensory or learning disability, they work together to support footballers with disabilities.”

Scottish Parliament Action

Issues relating to the funding of disability football have not been previously discussed by the Parliament. In April 2009, a PQ relating to the broader issue of funding for the development of sporting activities for disabled people was lodged by Frank McAveety MSP:

[S3O-6533 - Frank McAveety \(Glasgow Shettleston\) \(Lab\) \(Date Lodged Thursday, April 02, 2009\)](#): To ask the Scottish Executive what funding it provides to support sporting activities for disabled people.

⁵ Personal Communication 11/06/2010

⁶ Personal Communication 14/06/2010

Answered by Shona Robison (Thursday, April 02, 2009): The Scottish Government provides funding for disability sport through sportscotland to Scottish Disability Sport (SDS), the governing body. Sportscotland has informed me that last year they awarded £276,750 towards coaching; performance development; administration, and advice and guidance on the development of facilities for athletes with disability. I understand that sportscotland is currently discussing the funding requirements for 2009-10 and hope to inform SDS of the outcome shortly.

Lisa Taylor
Senior Research Specialist
17 June 2010

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