



cara | **our strategy**



We are a national organisation providing a collaborative and partnership platform to enhance sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.

“The social side of it is so important, to feel that you’re part of a team. Each week having your routine of going off to a club. Fulfilment, empowerment, you are part of something!”

- I’m In Too Focus Group Participant

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a message from sport ireland

Everyone should have the opportunity to partake in sport no matter what their circumstances are. Sport Ireland is committed to the equal treatment of all people when it comes to their participation in sport.

This commitment was formalised through the publication of Sport Ireland's Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities. This policy outlines strong guiding principles ensuring the delivery of the sector's efforts is more accountable and effective.

Sport Ireland currently funds and works with a range of organisations providing and promoting opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sport and physical activity. Currently, every Local Sports Partnership in Ireland has the support of a Sport Inclusion Disability Officer to assist with and support developments for the inclusion of people with a disability in sport in their county.

I very much welcome Cara's first strategy, which outlines their commitment to enhancing participation opportunities to people with disabilities in sport. Cara was established in 2007 with the support of Sport Ireland and the Institute of Technology, Tralee. Since then Cara has provided support to people with disabilities to be active, increased the capacity in the sport sector via education and training and supported agencies in the sport sector to become inclusive.

This first strategy builds on the excellent work achieved to date and clearly defines the role of Cara in encouraging more opportunities for people with disabilities. As with all strategic planning processes, the published document is simply the final phase and it is the consultation, evaluation and debate carried out during the process which gives life and value to this strategy.

This strategy is both welcome and timely as it clearly articulates how Cara will support the National Sports Policy 2018 - 2027 and the Sport Ireland Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities. I would like to thank all those who contributed to the strategy process, in particular the staff and Board of Cara. I would also like to thank everybody involved in Cara for their continued excellent work and I wish them all the best for the future.

John Treacy | Chief Executive

our message

As Chairperson and Managing Director of Cara, we are delighted to present the Cara Strategic Plan 2019 - 2021. It is the result of an extensive review and consultation process involving a broad range of stakeholders. It will provide a route map to guide and focus our work over the next three years. Cara has set a clear vision with ambitious outcomes which we hope will be shared and will result in increased awareness, increased opportunities and ultimately increased participation by people with disabilities in sport and physical activity throughout Ireland.

This is our first strategic plan and while a range of factors has shaped its development, one of the key drivers has been our desire to strengthen and consolidate Cara's position within the sport and physical activity sector. We welcome the significant role identified for Cara in both the National Sports Policy 2018 - 2027 and Sport Ireland's Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities. We are confident that this strategic plan is the first step in realising the objectives outlined for Cara in these important national policies.

This strategic plan outlines a clear commitment by Cara to work in collaboration with our partners at both national and local level in enhancing the range and quality of participation opportunities available to people with disabilities in sport and physical activity. This plan ensures the voice and needs of people with disabilities will always be at the forefront of Cara's work. It also recognises the need to strengthen Cara's operational capability and to ensure that our work is always carried out in an open, transparent and accountable manner.

Central to the success and growth of Cara over the past 10 years has been the support and investment from our partner organisations, namely Sport Ireland and the Institute of Technology Tralee. Both of these organisations have been instrumental in making our journey possible and successful. As we assume a greater leadership role, sustainable levels of funding will be critically important to enable us to deliver our stated goals and objectives. While there is a clear need to consolidate and increase existing funding streams, we also need to explore new opportunities.

We look forward to strengthening our growing relationship with the Health Service Executive and we welcome the opportunity of further engagement with key government departments specific to the goals and objectives of this strategy. We are extremely grateful for the support and generosity of our

corporate sponsors, Hyundai Ireland and Transitions Optical. We look forward to continuing to nurture and grow these partnerships while relishing the opportunities to encourage new sponsors to align with our vision.

We would like to thank the Board of Directors and the Steering Committee of Cara (past and present) for their continuous support and contribution to our growth and success. A special word of thanks is due to the dynamic Cara team who work tirelessly to support the sectors and who will play key roles in driving the successful delivery of this strategy.

Many people have contributed to the development of this strategy and we would like to thank you all for your invaluable time and input. In particular we would like to thank Humphrey Murphy and Ger Deegan for their vision, direction and support.

In delivering this plan, we recognise that there will be many challenges ahead over the next three years but we are confident that, with the help and support of our partners and stakeholders, we can have a positive impact on enhancing the opportunities available for people with disabilities to experience the joy and benefits of participating in sport and physical activity throughout Ireland.

Niamh Daffy | Managing Director
Pat Flanagan | Chairperson

introduction

“Everyone no matter what their background or circumstances should have the opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity at a level of their choosing.”

- Brendan Griffin T.D., Minister of State for Tourism and Sport

Sport and physical activity are central to the fabric of life in Ireland. There is a growing awareness and understanding that peoples’ lives can be enhanced through participation, especially by improving health and wellbeing, increasing social interaction and empowering people to be the best they can be. As citizens of this state, people with disabilities deserve to have equal opportunities to experience the benefits that participation in sport and physical activity can bring. This we believe is a basic human right.

Over the past number of years there have been many positive developments in the provision of sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities here in Ireland. Research indicates however, that people with disabilities continue to be less likely to participate in sport and physical activity and are more likely to be sedentary than people without a disability. It is also clear that people with disabilities want to be fit and active and enjoy the benefits of an active and healthy lifestyle.

Cara is a national not-for-profit pan-disability organisation working with a range of organisations to ensure people with disabilities have equal access to, and awareness of participation opportunities in sport and physical activity of their choice. Founded in 2007 through a partnership between the Institute of Technology Tralee and Sport Ireland, Cara’s initial focus was to coordinate and support the Local Sports Partnership Sports Inclusion Disability Programme. Over the last ten years, Cara’s remit has broadened into a leading role in advocating for the inclusion of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity, encouraging a national vision while supporting local provision and building capacity through education and training.

In developing this strategic plan, it was important to review Cara’s position with

a view to identifying strengths and needs and agree priorities for this new plan. This review process was extensive and a summary of its findings is presented in this document.

This strategic plan will provide a blueprint for our work covering the period 2019 - 2021. It identifies a clear vision, mission, belief and value system, which underpins four key goals and associated objectives. It is focused on enhancing both the range and quality of community sport and physical activity opportunities available to people with disabilities, while ensuring that their voice and needs are at the core of this work. It also recognises the need for Cara to strengthen its own operational capability as a prerequisite for achieving these key goals. The successful delivery of this plan will require increased levels of resourcing and effective implementation and review procedures to be put in place. These, along with the key role to be played by Cara staff and Board of Directors are clearly outlined.

Cara is clear on the challenges that lie ahead in delivering on this strategy. While we believe in our own ability, we also recognise that we need help and support from across the sectors. Partnership and collaboration will be essential elements of our approach, working with a range of agencies, organisations and stakeholders at both national and local level. We believe that this strategy and our work in collaboration with our many partners will prove successful in bringing about positive change in the lives of people with disabilities here in Ireland.

strategic review

A key element in the development of this strategic plan was the opportunity to review our current position with a view to identifying our strengths as well as the challenges and opportunities facing us both presently and going forward. This process involved a review of relevant national and international strategies, reports and policies as well as consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. A number of other key factors including relevant developments in political, economic, social and technological environments were also taken into account.

The strategic review process highlighted the following strengths

- A proven record of delivery on projects.
- Committed, passionate and talented staff.
- Strong links to national and international Adapted Physical Activity experts, research opportunities and international collaborations and partnerships.
- A positive developing profile.
- Established and developing sponsorship associations.
- Positive engagement at a political level.

A number of significant needs for both cara itself and the broader disability sports/physical activity sector were also identified -

Needs specific to Cara

- Increase brand awareness.
- Adopt a strategic approach to work.
- Enhance organisational capability in the areas of governance, financial management, compliance with relevant legislation and regulatory codes.
- Identify and secure stable/sustainable funding.

Needs specific to the broader sport/physical activity sector

- Identify a shared vision.
- Implement a co-ordinated approach to training and education.
- Establish a leading advocacy agency to represent the needs of people with disabilities specific to participation in sport and physical activity.

The review concluded that while Cara must continue to build on its existing strengths, it must pro-actively address either as a matter of urgency, or over the next three-year period the significant needs that exist. Key focus areas for the delivery of this strategic plan 2019 - 2021 will include -

- Increase the awareness and understanding of Cara's role.
- Collaborate with partners in developing a shared vision for the sector.
- Ensure that the voice of people with disabilities is heard.
- Promote and support the provision of enhanced opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sport/physical activity.
- Develop organisational capability with accountability.

vision

Putting disability sport and inclusive physical activity at the heart of our nation.

mission

To work in collaboration with the disability, sporting, community and statutory bodies to provide people with disabilities with enhanced opportunities to participate in the sport and physical activity of their choice.

core beliefs

Cara's work is guided by the belief that people with disabilities should have the opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity within their local community, and that -

- Opportunities should be provided for all people with disabilities, irrespective of the nature / degree of their disability.
- People with disabilities should have choice in relation to activities, and the setting in which they take place - i.e. on a continuum running from fully segregated to fully integrated.
- Access to lifelong participation must be facilitated.

guiding values

Cara recognises that the manner in which we approach our work will be of critical importance in realising our goals and objectives. Our approach will be underpinned by the following values -

partnership

Recognising that buy-in, collaboration and practical involvement of people must be encouraged and valued across all aspects of our work.

engagement

Ensuring that the voice and needs of people with disabilities will be at the core of our engagement, decisions and actions.

advocacy

Advocating and raising awareness of the benefits, opportunities and gaps in provision in relation to the participation in sport and physical activity of people with disabilities.

empowerment

Focusing on how we can enable and empower the actions of others in enhancing increased opportunities for people with disabilities.

quality focused

Promoting quality delivery and outcomes as key elements for sustainable development.

capability with accountability

Ensuring effective operational systems are in place to enable the delivery on our objectives in an open, transparent and accountable manner.

our goals

goal one

Provide strategic leadership and support in the development and delivery of enhanced opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sport and physical activity of their choice.

goal two

Represent the needs of people with disabilities in relation to their experiences in sport and physical activity, while also developing their awareness of the benefits and opportunities to participate.

goal three

Enhance the quality of sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.

goal four

Build effective organisation capabilities to enable Cara respond to present and future needs through open, transparent and accountable operations.

goal one

Provide strategic leadership and support in the development and delivery of enhanced opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sport and physical activity of their choice.

Objectives

one. Build effective relationships with key state agencies, government departments and relevant stakeholders to identify a shared vision for enhancing sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities while increasing awareness of Cara's supportive role.

Measure of Success - A shared vision for the inclusion of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity identified, with Cara recognised as the leading pan-disability organisation to provide strategic direction and support.

two. Provide guidance and support to the Local Sport Partnerships and National Governing Bodies of Sport to enhance their development and delivery of participation opportunities for people with disabilities.

Measure of Success - Increased number of Local Sport Partnerships and National Governing Bodies of Sport enhancing and promoting sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.

three. Provide guidance and support to community based organisations (clubs, leisure/fitness centres, schools, third level colleges, adventure providers and disability organisations) to enhance their capacity to facilitate increased opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sport and physical activity.

Measure of Success - A range of resources developed and available to support community organisations in the development and delivery of enhanced opportunities for people with disabilities in sport and physical activity.

four. Identify and support a suitable structure to ensure the ongoing sustainability of Camp Abilities Ireland.

Measure of Success - Camp Abilities Ireland adopted, embedded and coordinated by an external organisation.

goal two

Represent the needs of people with disabilities in relation to their experiences in sport and physical activity, while also developing their awareness of the benefits and opportunities to participate.

Objectives

one. Provide appropriate channels for people with disabilities to share their experiences, challenges and needs in relation to participation in sport and physical activity.

Measure of Success - A range of communication channels actively capturing the challenges and needs of people with disabilities in relation to participation in sport and physical activity.

two. Provide focused and relevant recommendations to a range of stakeholders to enhance participation opportunities for people with disabilities.

Measure of Success - A Sport Inclusion Disability Charter will be embedded within the sport and physical activity sector.

three. Support people with disabilities in developing their awareness of the benefits, opportunities and pathways that exist in sport and physical activity.

Measure of Success - A range of promotional and educational resources available to people with disabilities in relation to participation in sport and physical activity.

“For me, it’s a huge part of my life and for us as a family to be able to go to an event and cheer him on, the way we can do with his brother.”

- I’m In Too Focus Group Parent

goal three

Enhance the quality of sport and physical activity opportunities available to people with disabilities.

Objectives

one. Identify the training needs across the sport and physical activity sector specific to the participation of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity.

Measure of Success - Robust Inclusive Training and Education Framework developed.

two. Develop a coordinated approach to Cara's inclusive training and education workshops.

Measure of Success - Streamlined process for the coordination, delivery and evaluation of Cara's inclusive training and education workshops implemented.

three. Develop a nationally agreed set of standards to support all organisations in providing sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.

Measure of Success - National standards of inclusion developed to enhance sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.

four. Enhance the recognition and promotion of quality inclusive practice across the sport and physical activity sector.

Measure of Success - Broad range of initiatives implemented to recognise and promote quality inclusive practice in sport and physical activity across Ireland.

**“You need the right person with
the right training in the right place.”**

- I'm In Too Focus Group Parent

goal four

Build effective organisational capability to enable Cara to respond to present and future needs through open, transparent and accountable operations.

Objectives

one. Strengthen organisational leadership and governance.

Measure of Success - Compliance with the Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations.

two. Maintain and strengthen sustainable income streams through effective engagement and partnership with statutory, corporate and philanthropic sectors.

Measure of Success - Secured sustainable income in line with agreed annual budgetary targets.

three. Increase awareness and strengthen the profile and positioning of Cara.

Measure of Success - Cara is recognised as the national brand in relation to advocating for and facilitating an increase in sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities.

resourcing

Effective resourcing, especially in the area of human resources and a suitable work environment will play a critical role in the successful delivery of this strategic plan. A number of key initiatives have been identified -

- Two new staff positions to be put in place to support the existing staff team, namely an Assistant Manager post and a Marketing and Communications post.
- Upskilling and training of staff to meet the developing needs of the organisation.
- Volunteers have played a key role in the development of Cara over the last ten years; however; this is an area that will take on added importance across all aspects of our work over the duration of this strategic plan. Towards this end a more targeted and coordinated approach to the identification, recruitment, support and recognition of volunteers will be implemented.

The move in 2019 to our offices at the newly developed Kerry Sports Academy at the Institute of Technology Tralee will be an extremely positive development. It will provide both staff and volunteers with a quality work environment while our office at Sport Ireland's National Sports Campus in Dublin will continue to ensure a place for Cara at the hub of Sport in Ireland.

implementation and review

This is an ambitious plan which will pose challenges. Its successful delivery will require a well thought out approach to its implementation, monitoring and review.

This will be characterised by the following -

- Development of a detailed three year operational plan informed by the strategic objectives and approved by the Cara Board of Directors.
- Annual project plans developed and monitored by the people responsible for their delivery with budgets assigned.
- Bi-annual review of strategic objectives by an internal Strategic Review group with updates to the Cara Board of Directors in relation to progress and any required changes.
- Final strategic review to take place in year three will form the basis for subsequent strategy development.



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