

# Vision Sports Ireland

*2023 Vision*

Revised Strategy 2018 – 2023



Revised January 2021

## **It's all about reach**

*Vision Sports Ireland Revised Strategy 2018 – 2023 outlines that over a five-year period there will be a continuing rise in participation in sport, leisure, and physical activity for blind and vision impaired people in Ireland by 50%.*

*In March 2020 Vision Sports Ireland merged with the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI), a merge which builds resilience, sustainability and creates significant new opportunities.*

*Covid-19 has transformed the landscape of the sector during 2020 and 2021, hence a mid-term strategy review was necessary and undertaken in early 2021.*

***Vision Sports Ireland aims to leverage new capabilities to reach more blind and visually impaired people through education and collaborative pathways to participation in sport and physical activity.***

# Contents

<b><u>It's All About Reach</u></b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>It's all about reach</b> .....	1
<b>About Us</b> .....	3
<b>Our Mission</b> .....	3
<b>Our Values</b> .....	4
<b>Key Drivers</b> .....	4
<b>Our Objectives</b> .....	5
Strategic Priority 1:.....	5
Reach .....	5
Strategic Priority 2: Development .....	6
Strategic Priority 3: Education .....	6
Strategic Priority 4: Collaboration.....	6
Strategic Priority 5: Sustainability.....	7
<b>Strategic Priorities Ambitions and Objectives</b> .....	7
Strategic Priority 1: Increase Reach .....	7
Strategic Priority 2: Development .....	8
Strategic Priority 3: Education .....	8
Strategic Priority 4: Collaboration.....	9
Strategic Priority 5: Sustainability.....	9

## **About Us**

Vision Sports Ireland, a subsidiary of the NCBI, is the Sport Ireland national governing body for sport for blind and vision impaired people in Ireland.

Founded in 1988 Vision Sports is a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity. In quarter 1, 2021 Vision Sports will fully sign off on the Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in Ireland.

Vision Sports Ireland promotes a variety of activities including athletics, golf, football, judo, swimming, tandem cycling, tennis, triathlon, walking, water-skiing and much more. It facilitates all levels of fitness and abilities.

### ***Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles***

#### **Our Vision**

To provide blind and vision impaired people in Ireland with physical activity and wellness opportunities tailored to their specific needs. This should include social engagement initiatives through sport and recreation. Vision Sports Ireland aim to build capacity and remove barriers to participation in communities across the country.

#### **Our Mission**

To provide blind and vision impaired people with the opportunity to participate fully in sport and physical activity of their choice. To facilitate a participation pathway should they wish to climb the sports and leisure ladder. Vision Sports Ireland will endeavour to deliver on this mission through collaboration and innovation.

## **Our Values**

1. **Inclusive** - All individuals can participate in sport and recreation.
2. **Empowerment** - Empowerment, confidence, and belief in one's self will grow with increased accessibility in sport and recreation.
3. **Health and Wellness** - Physical and mental health and wellness can be improved by extending access to sport and recreation for those with vision impairments and blindness.
4. **Inspiring** - Helping those with visual impairment become more involved in sport and recreation not only benefits the individual, but also those around them. Development of positive role models for children who are visually impaired, through sporting participation and success, can provide inspiration and confidence required to encourage participation, consequently increasing reach and positive impact.

## **Key Drivers**

To guide the development of Vision Sports Ireland's strategic development over the coming five years, consultation within the community as well as an analysis of our business model was completed.

To support development of the Vision Sports 2023 Strategy a series of consultations were undertaken.

- In May 2017 Vision Sports held TalkFest, a national conference with the theme 'Vision Sports 2020 and Beyond'. 80 members representing all core sports attended while speakers included representatives from the GAA, Sport Ireland, Sport for Business, Vision Sports Ireland, Cycling Ireland, Tennis Ireland, and Irish Blind Golf.
- In the Autumn of 2017, Vision Sports in collaboration with the UCD Quinn Business School, carried out an analysis of the position of Vision Sports, and the viability of our business model. This analysis indicated a vibrant, unique, collaborative charity and sport NGB which grew from the vision impaired community in Ireland. However, this analysis also highlighted that we are not well known outside the sport and vision impaired community, which may be limiting our success and potential for external investments.

## **VISION SPORTS Strategic Plan 2018-2023**

- The first phase Strategic Plan was prepared by a Vision Sports sub-Committee in mid-2018.

Vision 2022 was unanimously adopted by the Board of Vision Sports Ireland at its meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

In late 2020 and early 2021 the Strategic Plan was revised by the Vision Sports Executive to reflect the NCBI/Vision Sports merge as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The revised and extended *Vision 2023* plan is designed to operate in tandem with the NCBI 2021-2023 Strategic Plan.

### **Our Objectives**

As a member and subsidiary company of the NCBI Group Vision Sports Ireland, aims to facilitate the development and growth of sport and physical activity for individuals with blindness and vision impairment in Ireland. We identify five critical strategies to support ongoing development:

- 1. Reach**
- 2. Development**
- 3. Education**
- 4. Collaboration**
- 5. Sustainability**

#### **Strategic Priority 1: Reach**

To increase reach, we must increase awareness of Vision Sports Ireland and promote the benefits of physical activity for people who are blind and vision impaired.

Brand awareness has increased in recent years especially in key collaborate activities such as parkrun, tennis, and triathlon. While media coverage has grown new opportunities need to be explored.

Alongside community ground-level work, we must continue promoting sport and leisure for people who are vision impaired through traditional and digital media channels.

At end of September 2018, we directly supported 800 unique vision impaired sports participants. In the coming years, we propose to increase membership and participation supports by approximately 10% cumulatively year on year.

### **Strategic Priority 2: Development**

Create engagement and pathway development opportunities within our core sports model. Working with existing and new sport National Governing Bodies (NGBs) explore the roll out of sports and recreational activities in different geographical areas throughout Ireland. Such activities should consider the lifecycle of those who avail of our services for example 60% of people with a vision impairment are over the age of 65 years (Census 2016).

The Vision Sports/NCBI merge creates an exciting opportunity to maximise membership potential.

### **Strategic Priority 3: Education**

We recognise sport as a key passport to social inclusion, building confidence, understanding, and supporting community networking. Participating in sports not only results in improved health and wellbeing, but also supports community participation, education, and life opportunities. We will continue to support the removing of barriers which prevent vision impaired people from participating in the community. Being innovative and increasing capacity in the community is core to participation growth.

### **Strategic Priority 4: Collaboration**

To continue to drive the development of sport in Ireland Vision Sports will build on its success as an ace collaborator.

Vision Sports will continue to collaborate and forge strong relationships with key partners, including all agencies linked to education and welfare of blind and vision

impaired people. Similarly, the organisation will further develop its relations with national sport governing bodies, including Tennis Ireland and Triathlon Ireland with direct Government Dormant Account Funding.

Networks including CARA, Local Sports Partnerships, the Department of Education Visiting Teachers and Disability Officers at third level institutions will also be included to maximise reach.

Embed Vision Sports operations into the offerings of NCBI services through internal collaboration. Foster relationships with existing and new NGB's to provide a club support structure that acts as a community participation vehicle.

### **Strategic Priority 5: Sustainability**

Consolidating and building sport for vision impaired people requires finance and human resources. Vision Sports has been successful in recent years with fundraising initiatives such as the Maynooth Students for Charity Galway Cycle and several member and corporate initiatives. However, it is imperative that sustainable funding streams are sourced to support the growth of operations.

## **Strategic Priorities Ambitions and Objectives**

### **Strategic Priority 1: Increase Reach**

**Ambition:** Increase the number of vision impaired people in Ireland participating in sport at all levels. Against clear annual growth targets, aim to increase individuals supported/participating by approximately 10% cumulatively year on year. By the end of 2023, we aim to support 1,200 core members.

**Objective 1:** Develop sustainable structures, including membership categories, that support participation growth across the lifecycle of the vision impaired population.

**Objective 2:** Establish Information Technology hub to support membership engagement through programmes, resources, fitness tech and mapping.

**Objective 3:** Establish Youth Forum to foster the next generation of Vision Sports Ireland participants, coaches, officers, and directors.



**Objective 4:** Identify key communication channels to connect with the vision impaired population and provide a menu of programme offerings to members which should include sport specific and general physical activity initiatives.

**Objective 5:** Increase general awareness, both inside and outside the sports sector, of the capabilities of blind and vision impaired sports participants through digital and mainstream media, at national and local levels, always promoting the Vision Sports Ireland and NCBI brands.

### **Strategic Priority 2: Development**

**Ambition:** A development framework will exist to facilitate blind and vision impaired people in Ireland to pursue sport and recreational activities of their choosing.

**Objective 6:** Create clear development pathway from early years followed by sport specific opportunities through to Age Friendly programmes.

**Objective 7:** With our partners increase the quality and quantity of organised events for blind and vision impaired people at all levels of sport. Further provide opportunities for competition, development, and goal setting. Promote community involvement where blind and vision impaired people participate together.

**Objective 8:** Alongside our existing core offering aim to support development of one new sport, per annum, where resources allow.

**Objective 9:** Establish Health and Movement programmes for early years and older adult population groups.

### **Strategic Priority 3: Education**

**Ambition:** To have a training and Education Framework that offers clear opportunities for participants, parents, coaches, teachers, and volunteers to increase their knowledge on Vision Impaired Sports and activities.

**Objective 10:** Establish e-Learning Training and Education platform

**Objective 11:** Develop sport educational and awareness programs to assist in removing stigma and access barriers.

**Objective 12:** Support sport disability awareness training to facilitate high quality coaches and personal trainers to support vision impaired people in sport.

### **Strategic Priority 4: Collaboration**

**Ambition:** To further bond, develop and formalise relationships with our partners in the sectors of sport, recreation and education and blind/vision impairment welfare.

**Objective 13:** Further develop relationships with NCBI services teams to embed Vision Sports Ireland into NCBI Services.

**Objective 14:** Availing of NCBI knowledge base and facilities gather and collate annual participation data by blind and vision impaired people.

**Objective 15:** Collaborate further with National Governing Bodies to grow vision impairment and blind programmes. As required develop Memorandums of Understanding.

**Objective 16:** Collaborate further with partner disability and educational services to promote Vision Sports Ireland initiatives.

**Objective 17:** Develop and formalise the build of infrastructure and national register for guides/pilots to support blind and vision impaired people to participate more fully in sport.

### **Strategic Priority 5: Sustainability**

#### **Ambition**

Seek avenues to increase core and new sports development funding to cover development staffing and administration, coaching and participation.

**Objective 18:** Engage with NCBI Foundation to explore feasibility of shared projects to involve and benefit Vision Sports and NCBI participants.

**Objective 19:** With NCBI Foundation support identify and seek Corporate Social Responsibility engagement as well as private sector sponsorship, grant aid, foundation donations and any other similar funding.

**Objective 20:** In addition to endeavouring to secure much appreciated and highly beneficial Sport Ireland funding engage with all other relevant public sector agencies to maximise grant aid assistance.

**Objective 21:** Promote and develop general local and national Vision Sports member fundraising.

## **Conclusion**

This strategy details the organisational change of Vision Sports Ireland and documented the key strategic objectives set to be achieved by 2023. Focusing on leveraging new capabilities to reach more blind and visually impaired people is crucial to have greater impacts in the community. As highlighted in this strategy the key pathways to increasing participation in sport and physical activity are through education and collaboration.