

Guidance for Sports Organisations

UK Equality Standard

Resource Pack



The Equality Standard
A Framework for Sport



equalityinsport.org

Guidance for sports organisations

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1. Introduction

1.1

Background

The Equality Standard: A Framework for Sport (the Standard) was launched by the UK sports councils in November 2004 to help address the inequalities that exist within the sports sector. It is a framework to guide sports organisations, including: governing bodies of sport, county sports partnerships (CSPs), sports councils and national sports organisations towards achieving equality.

¹ Sport England:
Active People Survey 4
Diagnostic 2011
Sport Wales: Active Adults
Survey 08/09
Scottish Household Survey
09/10
The Northern Ireland
Sport and Physical Activity
Survey 2010

Research shows¹ that there are significant inequalities in sports' participation in the UK at all levels (including participants, coaches, officials, volunteers and employees). These inequalities can be linked to characteristics which are now protected under equalities legislation. Across the UK these characteristics include: gender, disability, ethnic

origin, sexual orientation, age, social background, gender reassignment, religion or belief, political opinion, marital/civil partnership status and dependents. Research indicates that there are various barriers which hinder sports participation by people from these under-represented groups. Through the development of robust action plans, the Standard is a vehicle

for widening access and increasing the participation and involvement in sport and physical activity by under-represented individuals, groups and communities. The Standard supports sports organisations to develop and implement equality-proofed policies and practices.

The Standard is endorsed by a range of agencies. Please visit the Equality in Sport website, www.equalityinsport.org, for the latest list of these.

All the sports councils are committed to:

1. Continuing to develop the Standard so that it supports the promotion of equality within sport in an effective and non-bureaucratic way;
2. Supporting organisations in whom they invest to implement the Standard as part of their work to achieve and promote equality; and
3. Implementing the Standard.

Implementation of the Standard varies in each home country in regard to the level and type of support provided to organisations, and whether achievement of the Standard is an investment requirement or not. All recognised governing bodies of sport, including those that do not receive investment from sports councils, are encouraged to implement the Standard.

The Standard has been developed to ensure it reflects current legislation. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) promotes and protects equality and has jurisdiction in Wales, Scotland and England. In Northern Ireland, the legislation is structured differently, but the spirit of the legislation is the same.

Legislation across the home countries outlines protected characteristics that individuals and groups of individuals share. This ensures that people who share these characteristics are protected from discrimination and harassment. In addition, public sector bodies, such as the sports councils and local authorities, must comply with certain general and specific duties. These differ in various parts of the UK and, if you need to know what affects public sector bodies relevant to you, then contact your sports council.

The Standard is one mechanism through which the sports councils are able to meet their public sector body equalities duties. It also supports sports organisations to consider and engage with equality, both within their internal structure and process, and in the form of developing actions and initiatives which encourage participation in sport by people who share one of the protected characteristics.

This guide is primarily aimed at sporting organisations that are applying, or are likely to apply, for a level of the Standard. It is part of an overall suite of guidance material containing four other documents:

- Designated support lead (DSL) process and guidance;
- Equality standard assessor (EQSA) process and guidance;
- Equality Standard requirements and assessment forms;
- Glossary of terms.

1.2

Benefits of the Equality Standard

There are key benefits to your organisation of working through the Standard. The Standard:

- Provides a framework for achieving equality in sport;
- Helps to ensure democracy and sound governance of the sport;
- Increases participation by reaching new audiences;
- Mitigates against legal action and helps to meet legal duties;
- Enhances the skills and knowledge base of staff and volunteers;
- Increases involvement in equality at all levels of the organisation;
- Improves equality practices through monitoring, evaluation and review;
- Builds on existing equality good practice;
- Guides in assessing and reviewing equality performance and achievements;
- Helps to open sport up to all sectors of the community;
- Encourages more potential administrators, coaches, officials and volunteers;
- Provides a positive public image;
- Appeals to funding providers and sponsors.

1.3

Equality Standard: management structure

This diagram shows the structure, management and implementation of the Standard, and equality work across the five sports councils.

Sports Council Equality Group (SCEG)

Lead equality officers from:

- UK Sport
- Sport Northern Ireland
- Sport Wales
- Sport England
- sportscotland

Functions:

Decision making in relation to all aspects of the Standard, including:

- Development and review
- Implementation
- Resourcing
- Communication

Other functions:

- Shared best practice
- Collaborative research
- Dissemination of information
- Equality advice and support

Protocols:

- Quarterly meetings
- Shared operational contributions
- Decisions and key outcomes communicated

Other support partners
(for full list see equality
standard website):

- Womens Sports and Fitness Foundation
- Sporting Equals
- English Federation of Disability Sport
- Disability Sports Northern Ireland
- Scottish Disability Sport
- Disability Sport Wales

2. Assessment process

The Sports Council Equality Group (SCEG) will maintain comprehensive and up-to-date guidance documents, templates and good practice and ensure that these are promoted and accessible to organisations working through the Standard.

Assessment will take place on a quarterly basis. Each quarter, sports council equality leads will update SCEG on the progress and projected submission dates of organisations in which they invest. This will allow each sports council and SCEG to schedule EQSAs, who will provide an independent evaluation of the submission.

There will be two phases to the assessment process:

- Self assessment by the applicant sports organisation, supported by the DSL;
- Independent evaluation of evidence by an EQSA or auditor (for sports councils using self assurance).

If you wish to work through a level of the Standard, then approach your sports council to establish whether funded support is available. Alternatively, your sports council may approach you to discuss how and when you should aim to progress through the Standard.

Once organisations have achieved a level of the Standard, it is recommended that they either progress to the next level within 3 years, or if they have not done that, they resubmit for their current level. This is not mandatory and the accreditation will remain, but it is regarded as best practice to progress or resubmit within a 3 year period, as it ensures all evidence is up-to-date.

2.1

Support – Designated Support Lead (DSL)

It is mandatory that organisations have the support of a DSL as part of the application. Your sports council will assist in obtaining a DSL and will outline the support that this DSL can provide. The type and level of support from the DSL will also be determined by each sports council, but may be provided by:

- Sports council’s partnership managers;
- Equality partners (e.g. Sporting Equals, Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation, English Federation of Disability Sport);
- Equality standard advisors.

Whilst an organisation is applying for a level of the Standard, the DSL will:

- Provide advice and information as appropriate;

- Ensure the minimum requirements (including evidence) are met;
- Sign the assessment form prior to this being emailed by the organisation to the EQSA.

2.2

Self assessment supported by the DSL

The process of working towards a level of the Standard involves the organisation gathering all the evidence listed in the “requirements and forms” document for that level. During this work, the organisation will be supported by the DSL in the most appropriate way, as agreed jointly with the DSL and the relevant sports council.

When all required evidence is in place organisations will complete an assessment form. The DSL is required to sign off the assessment form; this confirms to their appropriate sports council equality lead that the organisation is ready to submit.

The organisation is responsible for formally informing the relevant sports council that they are ready to be assessed and the sports council will then allocate an EQSA, to whom the organisation will submit the assessment form along with the appropriate evidence. Each sports council will maintain a pool of QSAs and allocate these in line with that sports council's policy.

2.3

Independent evaluation by the EQSA

The EQSA shall be required to conduct an evaluation of the assessment form and three pieces of supporting evidence for the appropriate level of the Standard, and prepare written feedback and recommendations for the organisation. The relevant three pieces of supporting evidence for each level can be found in the "requirements and forms" document.

Once the EQSA has initially reviewed the assessment form and relevant supporting evidence, the following actions are required by the EQSA:

Foundation level

Optional telephone conversation with the organisation equality lead. This will only be needed if the EQSA is in any doubt concerning the final recommendation and requires further clarification or information.

Preliminary level

Mandatory telephone conversation to discuss action plan and review process, with the equality lead for the submitting organisation.

Intermediate and Advanced levels

A mandatory visit to the organisation with a view to meeting the relevant individuals from across the organisation as determined by the EQSA, this may include the following: equality lead, board chair and chief

executive. The purpose of the visit is to verify whether equality is embedded in the organisation.

2.4

EQSA feedback

The EQSA feedback will summarise and evaluate the evidence that the organisation has submitted to demonstrate that it has achieved the outcomes appropriate to that level of the Standard. Sufficient detail will be provided on the assessment form by the EQSA to support their recommendation and this will be sent to the relevant sports council once the assessment is complete.

The EQSA will objectively and consistently interpret and judge the evidence submitted, using the assessment criteria as a guide. The EQSA will include on the assessment form:

- Detail of the (a) strengths and (b) areas for development within the evidence submitted;
- A recommendation, along with a justification, as to whether the organisation has successfully met the appropriate level of the Standard. If they have, the recommendation will be “achieved”. If they have not, then the recommendation will be “continues to work towards the level”;
- If the recommendation is “continues to work towards the level”, specific guidance as to what is required prior to the organisation resubmitting;
- Note of any good practice that is worth sharing with others.

Recommendations from the EQSA as to what will be required from the organisation in order to progress to the next level of the Standard.

The Equality Standard process

2.5

After assessment

Should the recommendation be “continues to work towards the level”, the DSL may be requested to continue to assist the organisation as follows: plan how it will provide further evidence at the re-submission, implement the EQSA specific guidance, or provide practical assistance in gathering this evidence. Once all required evidence is in place, the organisation should amend the original application form and then follow the same submission process used for the initial application.

2.6

Communicating achievements

The relevant sports council shall communicate the decision and provide a copy of the report to the organisation. The outcomes of each quarter’s assessments will be reported to SCEG.

SCEG will be responsible for ensuring that up-to-date information on organisations that have achieved the Standard is maintained on the Standard website.

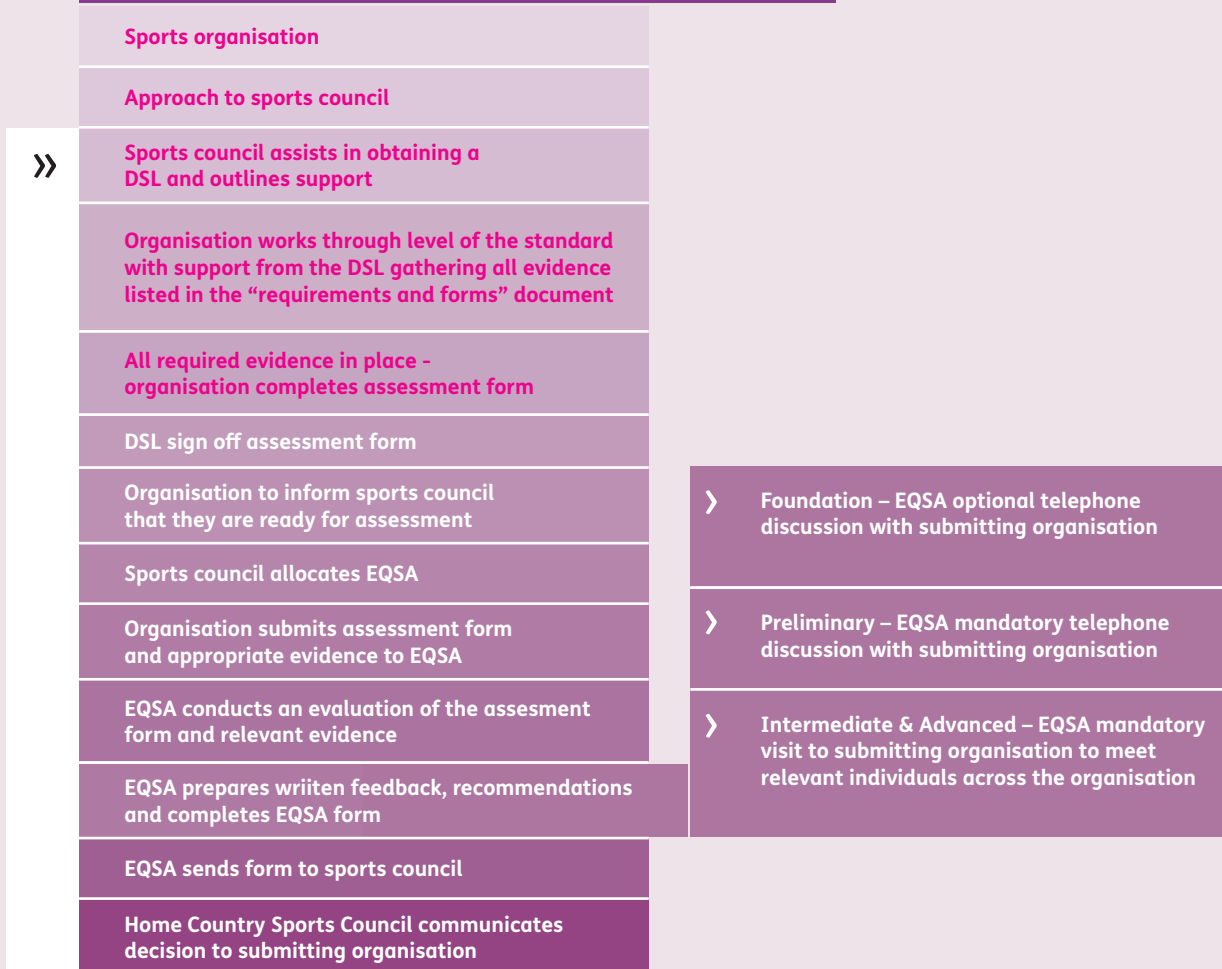
2.7

Appeals

The relevant sports council will deal with any appeals from organisations against the EQSA decision, in line with that sports council’s appeals process.

2.8

The Equality Standard process



✓ **Level achieved**
– move onto next level

X **Level not achieved –**
continue to work towards the level

2.9

Self Assurance

Some organisations can achieve the Foundation level through their sports council's self-assurance process. Such organisations should comply with the timescales and procedures of their sports council's self assurance process².

- Maintain a record of the application and assessment activity that captures recommended improvements to the process and templates;
- Maintain regular communication with all parties regarding the Standard.

2.10

Quality Assurance

To ensure that the credibility and consistency of the application and assessment process is upheld, individual sports councils or SCEG will:

- Provide appropriate training to all DSLs and EQSAs based on individual need;
- Conduct an annual review of a sample of assessment forms, which will help to maintain consistency and monitor the process;
- Provide guidance to all involved in the submission and assessment process;
- Offer appropriate levels of monitoring and support;

2.11

Confidentiality

All data and information about the organisation that the DSL and EQSA has access to is owned by the organisation and will be treated confidentially for the sole purpose of achieving a level of the Standard.

Organisations will have their own data protection policies which DSLs and EQSAs are required to adhere to when handling sensitive data.

2.12

Complaints

These will be dealt with by the relevant sports council in line with their complaints policy.

² At the time of writing, the self-assurance process is an annual process for Sport England and UK Sport funded NGBs, which requires these organisations to complete an online process on a number of governance areas. The equality requirements mirror those outlined in the Foundation level of the Standard

3. Further information

As a minimum, readers of this guidance should also read the “requirements and forms” document. This contains all essential evidence, the relevant assessment forms and the assessment of evidence criteria checklist.

The latest information regarding the Standard can always be found on the Equality in Sport website

www.equalityinsport.org

