

CGNI Athlete Selection Policy for Birmingham 2022

Introduction

For most of Northern Ireland's athletes, the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will be the pinnacle of their career. The purpose of this document is to outline the selection process to be used to ensure that every athlete is treated fairly. It must be remembered that selection for a representative team usually follows years of hard work and the disappointment for those not selected can be severe.

Team selection is a difficult, and often thankless, task. It is, however, an essential part of sport which should be treated with certainty and consistency. This is no different from the standards set on-field where an athlete will seek certainty and consistency in equipment, venues, officials etc. Athletes expect, and deserve, a selection process which is clear, transparent, unambiguous, and administered fairly and consistently.

This selection policy is in place to support the objectives of Commonwealth Games Northern Ireland's (CGNI) Strategic Plan which is aimed at delivering athletes to the Commonwealth Games who are capable of top 8 finishes either at Birmingham 2022 or at future Games.

The Birmingham Nomination and Selection Process

Each Governing Body (NGB) will make a number of presentations to CGNI during 2020, 2021 and 2022. These presentations will outline the relative strengths of the sport and give an indication of athletes who may be included. CGNI recognises that some sports may wish to include younger athletes who are on a developmental pathway.

The NGB is required to implement a robust process to identify those who will be nominated to CGNI. Final selection to the Northern Ireland team will be made by CGNI based upon the nominations provided by the sports.

Places Available

The number of athlete places allocated to Northern Ireland is limited, and at the behest of the Commonwealth Games Federation and the Birmingham 2022 Organising Committee. These athlete places are awarded under three distinct schemes.

1. Open allocation. For Gold Coast 2018, CGNI was awarded 70 athlete places which were distributed across member NGBs. Initial indications are that 59 open allocation places will be available for Birmingham 2022.
2. Team sports. This is based upon Commonwealth ranking which may be subject to adjustment to accommodate participation from global regions. High ranked teams receive an invitation, from the CGF, to participate. The inclusion of team sports does not affect the number of open allocations.
3. Direct invite. This is based upon Commonwealth ranking. For Birmingham 2022, this will be used for all Para-Sport, Table Tennis and Weightlifting. Named athletes receive an invitation, from the CGF, to participate. The inclusion of these athletes does not affect the number of open allocations.

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Principles of the Selection Policy

The policy sets out the basis for making decisions while taking into account the rights of governing bodies and athletes. The policy is in writing and will be distributed to all NGBs entitled to be involved in the Birmingham Games. It will also be more widely available to those within member sports.

CGNI relies on nominations being made by NGBs. CGNI will therefore be restricted to communicating with NGBs and will not communicate directly with athletes regarding the selection process. Any athlete who has a query regarding nominations made by their NGB should contact the NGB directly.

Natural Justice

The principle of natural justice is core to the selection policy. Natural justice within this process requires the following:

- The NGB must know exactly the selection process. This means ensuring that they are aware of the criteria that have to be met.
- The NGB will be given an opportunity to appeal a decision.
- The selectors, and those involved with any subsequent appeal, must act without bias. They must not allow external pressures to influence their decision making. This is seen as 'acting in good faith'.

Transparency

A 'fair' system can only be applied when the entire process is transparent and accountable. Therefore, all elements of the process are available in an easy to understand format so that NGBs and athletes know exactly what is expected.

There are certain actions that will undermine transparency:

- with-holding information from NGBs, athletes and coaches
- changing the rules during the process
- applying inappropriate criteria
- implementing anything that is outside of the written policy
- asking NGBs or athletes to do anything that is unreasonable

CGNI will give consideration to the points above to ensure that a transparent process is evident.

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Timescales

This Policy has been published more than two years before the Birmingham 2022 Opening ceremony. This ensures that NGBs, athletes and coaches have an opportunity to seek clarification on anything within the Policy on which they may be unclear.

March 2020	Publication of a draft Selection Policy. A two-week window will be available for feedback from NGBs before the Policy is ratified by the CGNI Board.
September 2020	Games Preparation Meeting – Round 1
December 2020/ January 2021	Selection guidance workshop for NGBs. This will involve external expertise and will promote good practice and offer advice on the development of a Nomination Policy.
December 2020/ January 2021	Information session at which the process will be presented to NGBs. Opportunity for NGBs, coaches and athletes to seek clarification on any aspect of the Policy.
February 2021	Games Preparation Meeting – Round 2 NGBs are provided with an indicative number of athlete places
July 2021	Athlete 'Long List' opens.
September 2021	Games Preparation Meeting – Round 3 NGBs are provided with an updated indicative number of athlete places
December 2021	Games Preparation Meeting – Round 4 NGBs are provided with an updated indicative number of athlete places
January 2022	Selection by CGNI begins, based upon nominations received from NGBs
May 2022	Games Preparation Meeting – Round 5 NGBs are notified with a final number of athlete places. Appeals to the number of places allocated to a NGB will be dealt with within 7 days of notification to CGNI.
June 2022 – date TBC	Athlete nominations close

These timings will be updated as information becomes available from the Birmingham 2022 Organising Committee. If the timings change, the amended Policy will immediately be circulated to the named Commonwealth Games Liaison Officers and Lead Coaches within each sport.

With agreement of both parties, a governing body and CGNI may agree on a final number of athlete places earlier than the Round 5 meeting stated above.

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Criteria

CGNI will select athletes based upon nominations made by NGBs. Only athletes nominated by a member NGB will be considered.

The Commonwealth Games is a world class sporting event and athletes representing Northern Ireland will therefore be required to demonstrate their ability to perform at this level.

CGNI will select athletes based upon the following ranked criteria:

1. Potential Birmingham 2022 medallist
2. Potential top 8 position at Birmingham 2022
3. Developmental athlete, on an upwards trajectory within a NGB performance system, with the potential to obtain a top 8 position at the 2026 Commonwealth Games

During the Games Preparation Meetings, NGBs will be required to provide information to support the potential inclusion of named athletes.

The criteria will be applied to all individual entries, team sports and directly invited athletes.

If more athletes meet the criteria than places available, the ranked criteria order will apply, and the panel will exercise subjectivity in allocating places to sports within the lowest criteria used.

Athletes must meet the eligibility criteria of the Commonwealth Games Federation.

Athletes must be in good standing with their respective NGB.

Athletes must be in good standing with WADA.

Athletes must have signed a Team Member Agreement prior to selection. The Agreement will become active 4 hours after CGNI has notified the NGB of selection.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the CGNI Safeguarding Policy and Team Member Agreement.

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The Selection Process

At each round of Team Preparation Meetings, NGBs will have the opportunity to discuss the merits of their respective athletes. From round 2 onwards, an indicative number of places will be provided to each NGB. This number may alter from meeting to meeting as more information becomes available, new athletes are discussed, form alters, injury occurs etc.

The meetings will be conducted by the Chef de Mission, with support from the General Team Managers and staff from Sports Institute Northern Ireland. Following the round 5 Games Preparation Meetings, the Chef de Mission will make a recommendation to the CGNI Board regarding the final number of places allocated to each sport. Once approved by the CGNI Board, this number will be confirmed by email to each NGB.

The number of places recommended for each sport will be based upon the numbers deemed likely to meet the published criteria. This is the subjective view of the panel hosting the Games Preparation Meetings based upon the information presented to them.

If more athletes meet the criteria than places available, the ranked criteria order will apply, and the panel will exercise subjectivity in allocating places to sports within the lowest criteria used.

If insufficient numbers of athletes meet the criteria to fill all the places offered by the Organising Committee, the panel may decide to recommend that places are offered to sports which do not meet the criteria. This will be a subjective decision based upon the benefits to be gained by that sport.

Running concurrently with the Team Preparation Meetings, each NGB is required to develop and implement a process for identifying athletes suitable for nomination to CGNI. The NGB is solely responsible for this nomination process.

For administrative reasons, CGNI may ask NGBs to provide a 'Long List' of athletes during 2021. These are athletes who may possibly be nominated by the NGB. It must be made clear to athletes that being 'Long Listed' is not an indication of selection.

Nominations can be submitted by NGBs to CGNI from January 2022 onwards. To be considered valid, nominations must be accompanied with all relevant paperwork, including signed Team Member Agreements.

The CGNI Board will make selections based upon the number of places awarded to sports and the ranked nominations received from those NGBs.

Confirmation of athlete selection will be made by email to the address provided by NGBs on the nomination paperwork.

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Appeals Process

The first indicative number of athlete places awarded to NGBs will be provided after the second round of Games Preparation Meetings in March 2021. Rounds 3, 4 and 5 of the Games Preparation Meetings act as an ongoing appeals process as the NGB has an opportunity to present new information to justify the inclusion of more athletes. Following Round 5 of the Games Preparation Meetings, each sport will be notified by email of the final number of athlete places offered.

Any appeal to this final number of athlete places must be made in writing to CGNI within 48 hours of notification. The appeal should consider whether the published selection process has been followed and whether the stated criteria has been applied.

Only a NGB can appeal the number of places that it has been offered.

Athletes cannot appeal against decisions made by CGNI. Any athlete appeal should be directed to their NGB. Experience shows that athlete appeals are most likely to relate to the ranked order of nomination devised by the NGB.

The appeals panel will consist of a CGNI Board member and two persons drawn from member sports not connected to the appeal. This appeals panel will be co-ordinated by the NI Sports Forum.

If a NGB is dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal, the case should be taken to Sport Resolutions UK, which is recognised as the final arbitrator regarding selection to TeamNI.