10 April 2020.

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**Sports Hardship Fund**

As the country deals with coronavirus (COVID-19), we know sport and physical recreation organisations are facing a hugely difficult period of time.

Communities Minister Deirdre Hargey MLA has today launched a £500,000 Hardship Fund for the sports sector.  Sports clubs and sporting organisations from the voluntary and community sector, which are unable to receive support from other Government Covid-19 Mitigation Funds, will be able to apply to Sport NI for a small grant of £2,000 to help with immediate financial commitments to maintain their facilities during the Covid-19 restrictions.

Sport NI CEO Antoinette McKeown said, “The COVID19 crisis has had an immediate impact on the whole sports sector which comprises 80 governing bodies and approximately 4,000 clubs and over half the population who engage regularly in sport and physical recreation. The sports sector has lost critical income and it is essential that we provide a lifeline to our valued clubs and their members who are playing a vital role as volunteers, helping local communities fight back in this crisis. Sport provides intrinsic mental, emotional and physical benefits and delivers significantly for society.  Clubs are at the heart of our communities, supported by their governing bodies of sport and provide a sense of community connection, belonging and resilience, making a significant contribution to their local economy. It is vital therefore that sport is protected so that it prevails to support our recovery from Covid 19. Sport NI is delighted to work in partnership with the Department for Communities to deliver this much needed fund”.

**Notes to editors:**

In partnership with the Department for Communities, the Sports Hardship Fund aims to deliver immediate funding to sports clubs and other organisations delivering sporting activities who are experiencing immediate financial hardship and ineligible to apply for other Government Grants recently announced to deal with the impact of Covid-19 restrictions.

The types of organisations eligible include Governing Bodies of Sport, local sports clubs forced to close at short notice but who are facing ongoing costs around rent or lease costs, sports facility maintenance and utility bills, and community and voluntary sector organisations; and charities who deliver or enable sport and physical recreation.

Any organisation which can access support through other related government financial packages should do so in the first instance. This fund will operate on a ‘rolling’ basis with no current specified closing date.

**How much we will fund**

Each successful applicant will receive **£2,000 for costs incurred from 1st April 2020.**

**Where to apply**

Please [click here](http://www.sportni.net/funding/our-funding-programmes/sports-hardship-fund) to read the programme guidance note and if eligible begin an online application for the financial support fund.

**For further information contact:**

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