



# COMMUNITY SPORTS NETWORK

Active | Empowered | Connected



# Building Community Strategy 2024 - 2029

Active | Empowered | Connected

PREPARED BY:

Community Sports Network

Charity Number: NIC103693

[www.communitysportsnetwork.org](http://www.communitysportsnetwork.org)

# CONTENTS

**Foreword    2**

**Executive Summary    5**

**About CSN    7**

Where we are?    7

Where we are going?    8

Vision, Mission & Values    10

**Planning and Consultation Process    12**

The Consultation    12

Consultation Findings    13

Strategic Alignment    14

Outcome Based Accountability    18

Our Response    19

**Strategic Framework, Outcomes and Objectives    23**

Financial Success    23

Business Success    25

Effective & Efficient Delivery    28

Recognised & Valued Brand    30

**Resourcing our Plan and Achieving our Outcomes    32**

**Conclusion    42**





# FOREWORD

CSN is proud to present this Building Community Strategy 2024- 2029 showcasing our work to date and outlining our aspirations for the next five years. The strategy is the result of extensive collaboration and on behalf of the organisation, I would like to acknowledge and thank all those who contributed to it including our partners, stakeholders, statutory representatives, our Board members and the entire CSN team. Your insights have been invaluable and your continued engagement will be crucial to our success.

During our last strategy period, CSN faced unprecedented challenges as indeed did the wider Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). These included a pandemic, the outworking's of Brexit, the prolonged absence of devolved government and the sector is also experiencing high fiscal insecurity with almost impossible demands on the public purse. Nonetheless, demand for our services in the community continues to increase; physical and mental health demands post-pandemic remain substantial while Brexit and debates on our constitutional future have renewed political tensions threatening a still fragile peace.

These environmental and fiscal challenges and opportunities make it imperative that VCS organisations engage in advanced levels of collaboration and partnership in order to minimise duplication, to deliver multiple impacts and to lead communities to transition from consumers of support services to co-operative producers of locally supported, sustainable services.

Governance issues remain a consideration in the sector and evidence based impact will be key while strong, ethical leadership of emerging networks and partnerships will be of paramount importance moving forward.

In recognition of these complex factors CSN engaged in a comprehensive, evidence based, strategic review of the organisation and its role in Sport for Development (S4D). We are grateful to the Dormant Accounts Fund NI for its recognition of the importance of enhanced strategic development and its significant financial support for the same, without whom this work would not have been possible. This document sets out our key priorities for action over the next five years providing CSN with a high level of strategic focus and direction. Developing an agile, resilient and sustainable organisation capable of responding to the demands of a permanently complex environment.

We remain committed to the delivery of reliable, quality, cost effective programmes which has always been at the heart of the organisation. This is underpinned by timely and transparent digital data management, carried out under robust and



ethical governance in support of multiple statutory departmental objectives. For example, the Department for Communities' Active Living, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland and the Department for Justice' Prisons 25 for 25 Strategy.

Although I write as the sitting Chair at the time of publication, this position had been held by our recently retired Chair, Tom Scott, who held this position for 13 years and under whose guidance this strategic development process started. Tom has been a stalwart of CSN and we owe much to his dedication and fortitude. We are delighted that he continues to support the team as a board member.

This Building Community Strategy 2024-2029 presents significant ambition. It positions CSN to be a leading sport for development organisation in the sector. We know that this will require informed planning, strategic and targeted investment, meaningful partnerships, and difficult decisions to achieve our vision, mission, and strategic outcomes. I am confident that the CSN team, together with our partners and stakeholders, are well-positioned to achieve our goals and navigate the challenges ahead.

*Margaret Patterson-McMahon*

Margaret Patterson-McMahon  
Chairperson CSN  
Community Sports Network







***“CSN envisions a future where  
inclusivity, integrity and  
sustainability thrive, creating an  
active, empowered and  
connected society.”***



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we set our sights on realising our strategic outcomes and advancing our organisational goals, our commitment to excellence, innovation, and collaboration drives us to pursue our objectives with determination and purpose. The team at CSN believes that this 5-year strategy is challenging, ambitious, but achievable. This Building Community Strategy 2024-2029 provides an overview of how CSN can work with more people, in more communities, and across many different regions. It also provides a context for working with other partner organisations that will help us to deliver more impactful programmes and create more opportunities for people and communities to be Active, Empowered, and Connected.

At the heart of our strategy is a vision of thriving, empowered communities where every person has the opportunity to actively participate, grow, and connect. CSN is a grassroots, charitable organisation that often works with the most disadvantaged in our society. Our mission is to work with and enhance the lives of people by fostering inclusive environments that promote well-being and build resilient communities.

Our Building Community Strategy is structured around four main strategic outcomes:

1. Financial Success
2. Business Success
3. Effective and Efficient Delivery
4. Recognised and Valued Brand

Each of these objectives is integral to our overall mission and will guide our actions and decisions over the next five years.

Throughout our strategy, you will see how good governance, outcome-based accountability, and strategic leadership are essential to achieving our goals. We are committed to upholding the highest standards of governance, ensuring that our actions are transparent and our impacts measurable. Our leadership team will drive this strategy forward, embracing the principles of accountability and integrity at every step.

Our strategy is designed not only to guide CSN's efforts but also to engage and inspire our stakeholders. This is important to our stakeholders because it outlines a clear, actionable plan for creating positive change in the communities we serve. By understanding our vision and strategic outcomes, stakeholders can see how their support and involvement contribute to broader social impacts.



We understand that under the current social and economic climate, many challenges will be faced in order to implement this plan. Ensuring financial stability and growth is critical. We aim to continue to diversify our funding sources, increase revenue through innovative fundraising initiatives, and ensure prudent financial management. By achieving financial success, we can sustain and expand our programmes, reaching more individuals and communities in need.

To thrive, we must operate efficiently and effectively. This involves optimising our internal processes, enhancing our technological capabilities, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Business success will enable us to deliver high-quality services consistently, with an ability to respond to the often changing needs of particular communities.

Delivering our programmes and services in an effective and efficient manner is paramount. We will focus on streamlining operations, improving programme design, and ensuring that our initiatives are evidence-based and outcome-driven. This will allow us to maximise our impact and achieve our mission more effectively.

Building a strong, recognised brand will enhance our ability to attract support and resources. We will invest in marketing and communications to raise awareness of our work, highlight our successes, and demonstrate the value we bring to communities. A recognised and valued brand will open new opportunities for collaboration and growth.

This strategy is not just a roadmap for CSN but a call to action for everyone involved. Together, we can build stronger, more resilient communities. We invite you to join us on this journey and contribute to making a lasting, positive impact.

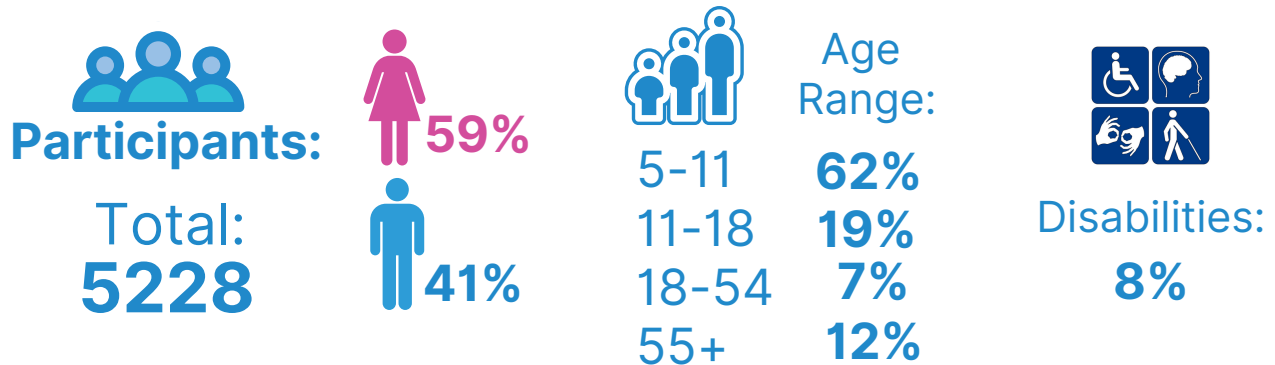
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Shaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" and the last name "Shaw" clearly distinguishable.

Peter Shaw  
Chief Executive Officer  
Community Sports Network

# ABOUT CSN

CSN is a highly respected VCS organisation specialising in sport for development (S4D), with a 18-year track record of proven impact.

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?



## History

Est. **2006**  
Participants: **124,000**  
Programmes: **6,330**  
Sessions: **68,500**

## Our team



The team are recognised experts in engaging with communities to design and deliver need driven, quality programmes, identifying and building on existing local assets and organisations for sustainable long-term impact. This is achieved using an Asset Based Community Development Approach (ABCD) which engages existing community led organisations for trusted pathways for access and delivery of programmes in partnership with local stakeholders. CSN also place a strong focus on leadership development with emerging leaders often remaining within the community and contributing to further leadership development for long-term impact.

CSN has a high level of strategic alignment and is ideally placed to deliver key statutory messaging quickly and effectively in hard to reach communities meeting strategic outcomes for statutory partners and funders. The team have expert level S4D skills with the ability to quickly embed structured messaging for any key social development objectives such as health, nutrition, peace, employability or leadership, into sport, play and physical activity. This is done a discreet, fun and impactful manner making CSN an ideal partner for statutory bodies in need of cost-effective complex, cross cutting delivery solutions.

This is supported through an Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) approach which CSN has embedded to monitor and evaluate programmes. The OBA approach is based on working backwards from wider societal impacts, understanding what the impact measurers you wish to achieve are and then creating a step by step approach to obtain your outcome and collect the relevant data. To ensure robustness, reliability and accuracy CSN use a range of different analytical software tools. CSN is committed to harnessing technology across all its activities with a focus on paperless processes, the use of AI tools in its administration and the recent investment in an electric powered van to support programme delivery.

## WHERE ARE WE GOING?

This CSN Building Community 2024-2029 Strategy harnesses these core competencies; quality, cost-effective delivery in hard to reach communities, an ABCD approach to community development and leadership, investment in technology led administration providing transparent OBA and governance, and a high level of strategic alignment. CSN has invested in its infrastructure and its team and is well placed to play a leadership role in building community for its participants, within the sector.





*“I use CSN because the coaches have the ability to develop each child’s maximum potential whilst teaching them the fundamentals of play.”*





# VISION, MISSION & VALUES

## Vision

CSN envisions a future where inclusivity, integrity and sustainability thrive, creating an active, empowered and connected society.

## Mission

To empower individuals and communities through inclusive participation, fostering inclusivity, integrity, and sustainability. CSN strive to create a welcoming and accessible environment where everyone can thrive, regardless of background or ability. Through transparent governance, ethical leadership, and a commitment to diversity and environmental responsibility, we aim to inspire positive change and promote holistic well-being for all.

## Values

CSN values serve as the guiding principles that underpin its actions and decisions, shape the organisational culture and define the approach to achieving the vision of the organisation. There are five values that define the ethos at CSN.

**Equity:** CSN is committed to inclusivity, ensuring that everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, has equal access and opportunities.

**Honesty:** To uphold truthfulness and sincerity in all interactions, fostering trust and transparency within the organisation and across stakeholders.

**Integrity:** To prioritise respect and ethical conduct, always striving to do the right thing, even when faced with challenges or difficult decisions.


**Respect:** To give due regard to the feelings and rights of everyone, valuing diversity and fostering an environment of mutual understanding and appreciation.

**Sustainability:** CSN is dedicated to responsible stewardship of resources, both environmental and organisational, ensuring long-term viability and positive impact for generations to come.

As we implement this Strategy, CSN remains committed to growth and evolution. We will regularly assess our values, vision, and mission to ensure alignment with our desired organisational culture and identity.







***"An opportunity to kick a ball again - something I didn't think I would be able to do at my stage in life. Even better than the exercise it provides, I have made a host of new friends"***





# PLANNING & CONSULTATION PROCESS

This CSN Building Community Strategy 2024-2029 is designed to establish objectives and outcomes for the development of CSN for the next 5 years. It aims to position CSN as a lead organisation in the S4D sector leading in developing best practice. This is for measurement of impact of outcomes to support the demands on statutory bodies to evidence impact for investment. The emphasis is on sustainable quality programme delivery, improved strategic alignment supported by evidenced measurement of social return for investment and underpinned by good governance.

## THE CONSULTATION

In preparation for developing this strategy, CSN commissioned an extensive consultation facilitated by Virago Business Consulting. The consultation was carried out through 1-1 interviews, facilitated group feedback and survey tools, both within the organisation and externally. Twenty one 1-1 interviews elicited sensitive stakeholder and strategic perspectives from key relationship partners and funders such as National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) and The Rank Foundation, governing bodies (NICVA), key stakeholders including Health Trusts and Public Health Agency (PHA), representatives from statutory departments such as Department for Communities, and client bodies including Heads of participating schools as well as all Board members and all employees.

Some analyses were carried out in collaboration with the CSN team through participative team review of key criteria; including assessment of organisational infrastructure and employee development. These took the form of facilitated feedback sessions and surveys. The consultation also reviewed the outcomes of the previous strategy and analysed the current internal environment and the infrastructure of the organisation. It took into account the emerging concerns of organisational structure, employee career development and senior management succession planning as well as a review of evidenced impact measurement and governance criterion.

The purpose of the consultation was a robust assessment of the complex macro environment of the VCS and S4D sectors in the emerging post-Covid, post-Brexit market. It also examined the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and reviewed stakeholder and statutory alignment in order to provide recommendations for the next strategy period.



Key to the analysis was the identification of inimitable core competencies of CSN, developed over years through its unique pathway, which differentiate CSN in the sector and which could be strategically harnessed for sustainable development and impact in response to complex emerging sector trends and increased community demands. Attention was given to CSN's desire and the emerging opportunity to expand geographically for broader reach and to scale for increased community impact in line with statutory objectives with a focus on resources required to achieve this.

## CONSULTATION FINDINGS

Consultative feedback, detailed in full in the CSN Strategic Review, found that CSN was a highly trusted partner for both communities and stakeholders with an unequalled reputation for quality, timely, impactful long-term community development. It is a mature organisation with strong and stable leadership at Senior Management and Trustee level and a committed, skilled and experienced team. The team is supported by mature stakeholder relationships nurtured over many years. CSN delivers long-term impact at community level making multiple outcomes from constrained resources evidenced with robust and transparent data management and governance.

CSN excels in programme development, delivery, and community impact, demonstrating a profound understanding of diverse customer needs. Its client-facing activities are particularly strong, generating high-impact outcomes and earning high regard in the Sport for Development (S4D) sector. The organisation's unique approach to multi-touch relationship building within communities results in both immediate and long-term benefits through a distinctive engagement process.

This strategy for fostering resilient communities encompasses the development and delivery of programmes by CSN, which offer a range of opportunities including:

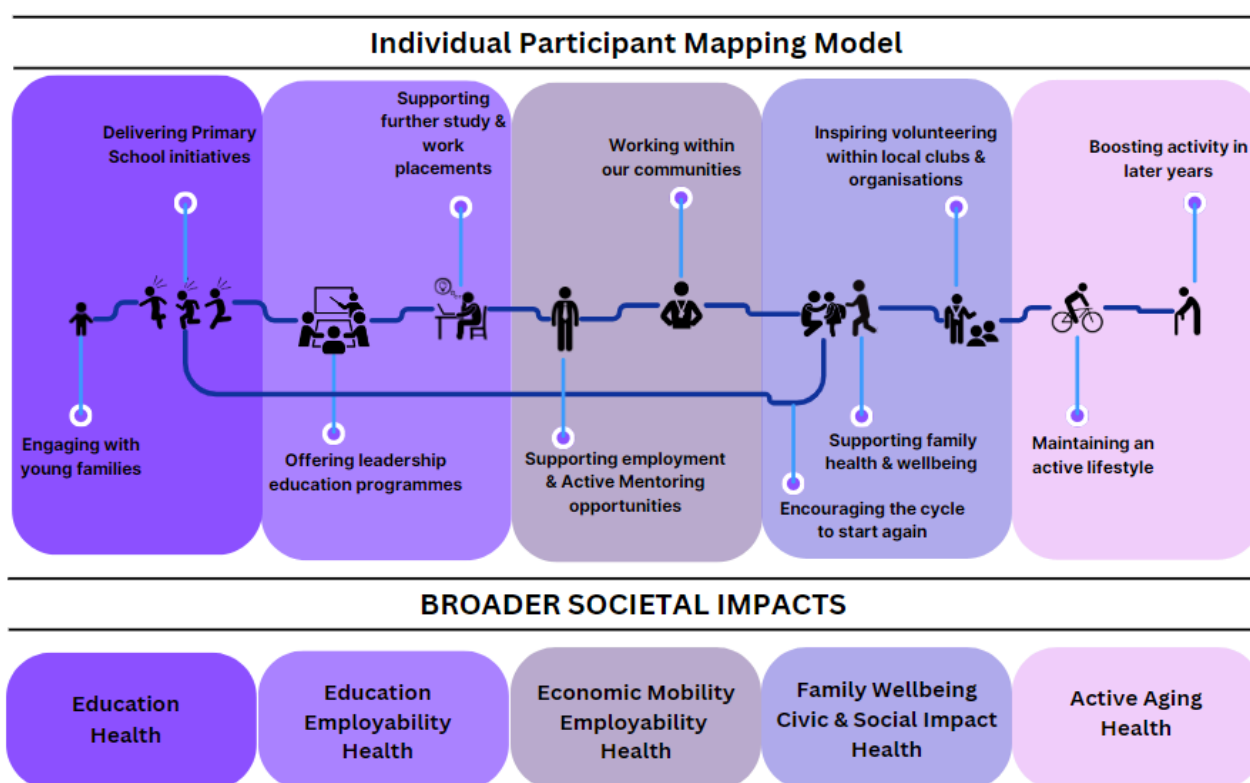
- Leadership roles
- Volunteering opportunities
- Employment prospects
- Education and skill development

Furthermore, these programmes are intergenerational, engaging individuals in long-term purposeful activities. The graph, Fig 1 offers an overview of intergenerational multi-touch points and broader strategic societal impacts.





Fig 1 Participant and societal impacts.



## STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

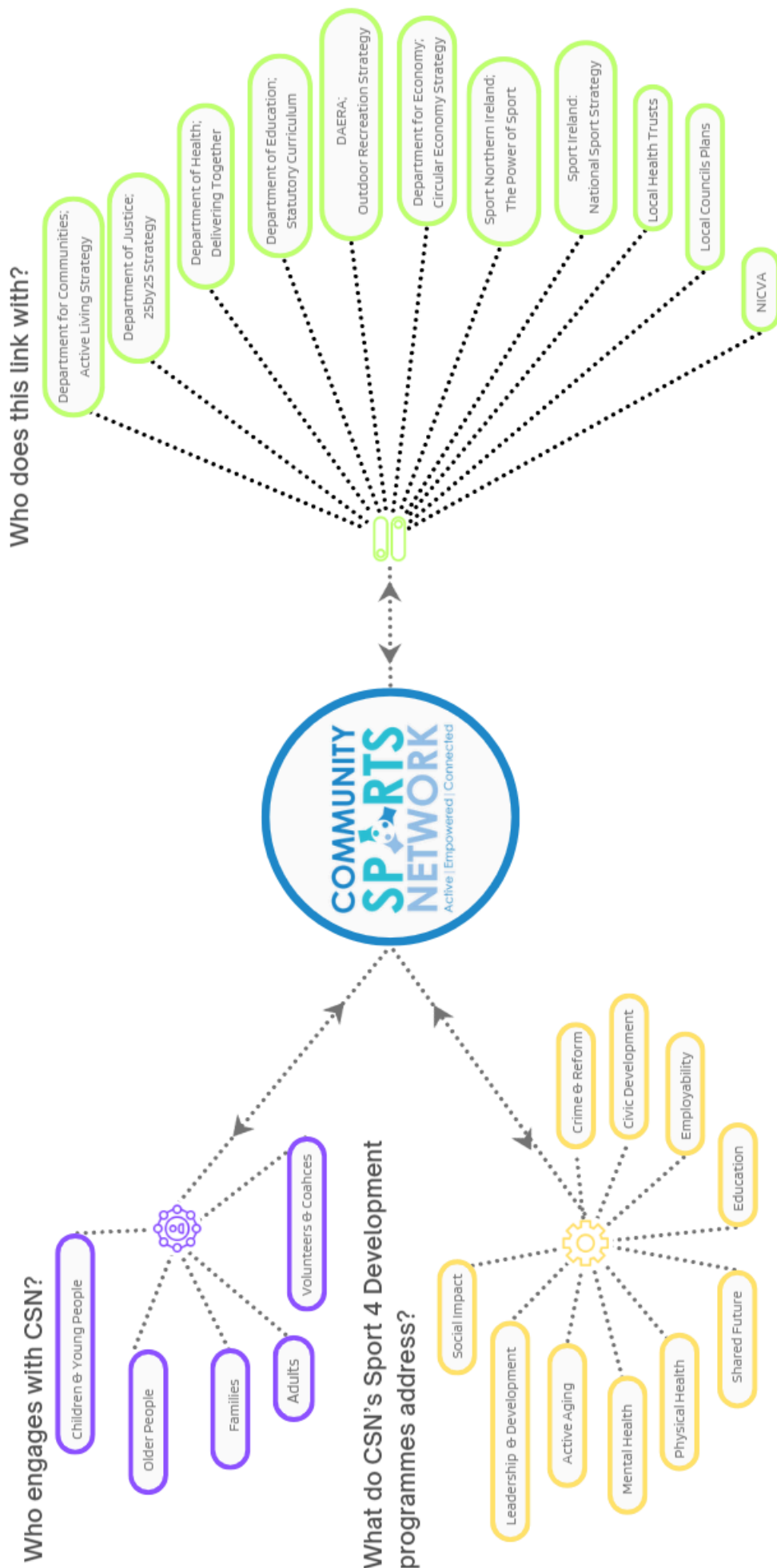
The consultative review found that CSN is particularly well placed to meet a cross-section of local, regional and national strategic priorities and policy for Northern Ireland as well as fitting overarching national strategies from the UK, ROI and at international level (Fig. 2).





Fig. 2: CSN Strategic Alignment - multi-touch points for cross-cutting strategic fit.

## CSN Multi Touch Points



The organisation is ideally situated to deliver on strategic outcomes included in the new Draft Strategy for Government regarding development of confident, equal and healthy communities. CSN has shown through programmes like SheerSKILL that it already has multiple touch points on the sports and physical continuum presented within the DfC New Sport and Physical Activity Strategy draft for Northern Ireland and a clearly identifiable role within the Sports and Physical Activity Ecosystem model. This fit extends to key elements of the strategies of arms length and supporting organisations such as Sport NI's draft corporate plan 2020-2025 and NICVA's Policy Manifesto 2016.

The organisation also has a well established impact track record in the key themes within DfC New Active Living, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland relating to Covid-recovery of physical activity, participation and inclusion, partnership and promoting the benefits of sport and physical activity. CSN's core competency in developing and delivering key strategic messaging through sports into hard to reach communities over multi-touch points are also key to hitting cross-cutting interdepartmental strategic priorities in a complex community development ecosystem.


CSN also evidences strong alignment with the policies and objectives of the NI Public Health Agency (PHA) as outlined in Making Life Better 2012- 2023 to build community capacity to help address health inequalities in Northern Ireland. This is strongly evidenced with the demand for the Munch Club programmes and the success of the CSN Sport for Development Hubs project developed with the Northern Health & Social Care Trust in tandem with the four councils within the Northern Trust Area. Further engagement with local Councils and community planning is recommended by stakeholders to expand this programme and enhance this strategic fit.

In addition, CSN's 'Through the Gate,' 'Fit Futures' and 'Community Sports Support Hubs' (CSSH) programmes are congruent with the objectives of the Department of Justice and the 'SheerSKILL' programme is a strategic fit with the objectives within the enriched curriculum outlined by the Department of Education advances a plethora of cross-cutting policy objectives to a high degree of strategic fit. However, data collection regarding these strategic alignments and mapping of the strategic fit to policies is not robust and CSN could significantly improve on its ability to demonstrate the significant strength of the organisations strategic fit to stakeholders.

However, stakeholders highlighted that the organisation remains under recognised and underfunded at statutory level despite having a high level of strategic alignment across multiple departments. This also despite overwhelming feedback that CSN had established best practice in many areas including governance and OBA and was ideally placed to lead the sector forward in







*"It was great to interact with new people from different areas and backgrounds. I'd recommend anyone taking part on SheerSKILL as it offers so much for your C.V."*





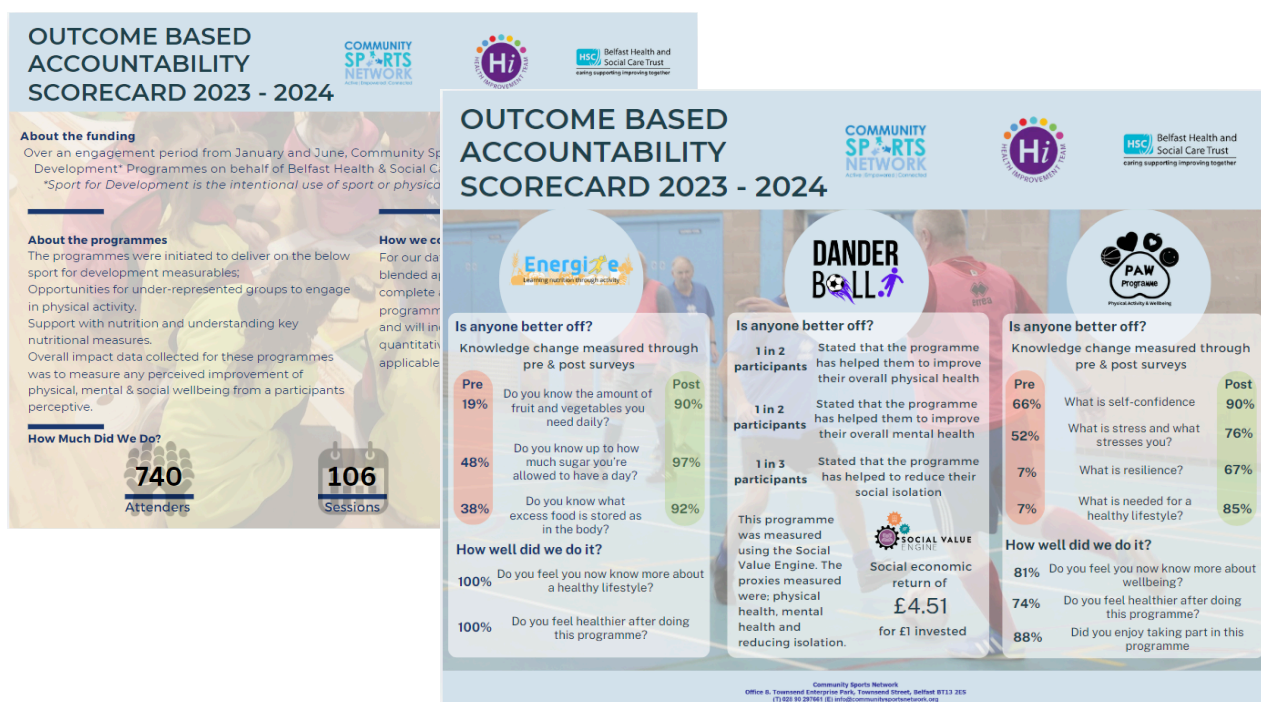
collaboration with statutory bodies, key stakeholders and partners. Stakeholders consistently and strongly reported that CSN could and should be playing a stronger leadership role at statutory level, contributing to models of best practice and driving partnership and consultation to support statutory objectives and the VCS sector.

CSN could and should be playing a strong leadership role at statutory level, influencing community planning policy, contributing to development of models of best practice, championing community development programmes, leading and driving consultations, bringing key stakeholders together to create programmes that support statutory objectives and being active in research for, and training of, next generation community workers through collaboration with the institutes of education.

# OUTCOME BASED ACCOUNTABILITY

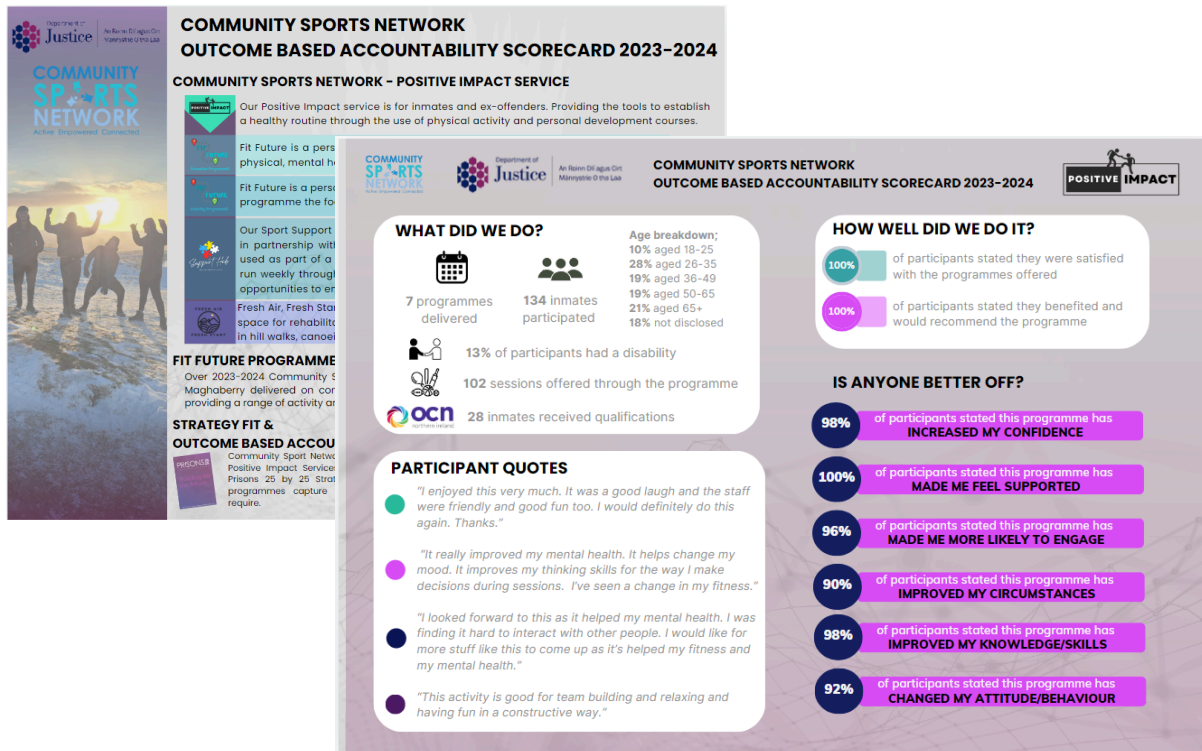
CSN has established best practice with an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) database and maintains a robust and transparent system which allows the organisation to evidence impact and social return on investment. This is achieved on a programme by programme basis and is evidenced as demonstrated by fig 3 and fig 4.

Fig 3 - Outcome Based Accountability Scorecard Belfast Health & Social Care Trust



And Fig 4, is an example of an OBA scorecard for Department of Justice.

Fig 4 - Outcome Based Accountability Scorecard Department of Justice



CSN demonstrated a high level of strategic readiness with the senior management team to expand geographically and to scale. However as a third sector organisation there have been scant resources to develop a strategic infrastructure to capitalise on the quality programme delivery and leadership development that CSN delivers. Data collection that evidences impact for strategic partners and stakeholders could be made more transparent which would allow CSN to more clearly demonstrate the significant strength of the organisation to meet stakeholder and statutory outcomes.

## OUR RESPONSE

The final outcome of the consultation was this comprehensive, '4th generation' Strategic Framework. This type of strategic plan differentiates from traditional 'control focus' and 'performance measurement' strategic plans. It is a '4th generation' strategic plan designed specifically to support agile decision making, resilience and adaptability of an organisation while still retaining the benefits of traditional control and performance measurement criteria. This is most suitable for use during time periods of significant change and for market and macro environments undergoing disruption; circumstances which all currently apply to the VCS sector, their stakeholders and broader environment and which are likely to continue in the medium to long term.



This is a narrative strategic plan supported with a robust operational and financial foundation. It has been developed in a modular style to facilitate dynamic use for adaptation for operational, funding, trustee or stakeholder audiences as appropriate. The strategy was developed in-house with support by experts on the CSN Strategic Development Subcommittee and it integrates the Business Model Canvas (BMC) tool used by the team for dynamic programme management. This will allow for the Strategic Framework to be a ‘living’ resource; integrated within the organisation as a dynamic, interactive tool for employees, management and trustees.

A scorecard style action plan supports this framework to convert the strategic outcomes into specific short term performance targets for a rolling 1-2 year time horizon with action items and measurables indicated for review and management.

The CSN Building Community 2024-2029 Strategy is a framework of four integrated objectives. These are designed to respond to the consultative imperative for CSN to harness its undisputed expertise in effective, impactful programme delivery. Taking a leadership role in the sector in driving collaborative partnership and establishment of best practice in support of statutory objectives for community development. It aims to build on the core competencies of CSN in order to achieve and maintain a vibrant, sustainable and impactful organisation in the face of known and unknown challenges of an uncertain and unstable statutory environment allowing for dynamic responsiveness to expected and unexpected challenges.

Each objective is supplemented with stated results targets and measurement criteria and is underpinned by a detailed operational plan to support each objective. Each objective is within the capacity and resources of CSN to deliver or a plan is in place to acquire capacities or resources as required. A detailed description of the four strategic outcomes and related activities, and measurements is presented below.

These four integrated objectives are:

#### **Financial Success:**

**Development of a sustainable investment model through diversity of funding across multiple sources to support a strong and financially robust organisation underpinned by diversification of income streams with effective cost control.**

#### **Business Success:**

**Establishment of an elevated strategic function for CSN to meet the dynamic and complex environment in which the VCS sector operates as well as the increased and increasing demands for community development resulting in a resilient team supported by ongoing capacity building.**





#### Effective & Efficient Delivery:

continued effective, efficient delivery of participant centred quality programmes underpinned by CSN's comprehensive impact measurement frameworks supporting strategic partners data management requirements.

#### Recognised and Valued Brand:

Increased visibility of the CSN brand and ethos including taking a leadership role in development and governance in S4D and within the VCS sector to support and develop the sector and statutory bodies in these challenging and complex times.

Each outcome is supplemented with stated results, targets and measurement criteria, and is underpinned by a detailed operational plan to support each outcome. Each outcome is within the capacity and resources of CSN to deliver or a plan is in place to acquire capacities or resources as required. A detailed description of the four strategic outcomes and related activities, and measurements is presented below.





***“CSN has helped build my confidence  
and become more comfortable  
around people I don’t know”***





# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK, OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES

## Outcome 1: Financial Success

### WE WILL:

Focus on a sustainable investment model that shows diversity of funding across multiple sources.

### RESULTING IN:

A strong and financially independent organisation.

### MEASURED BY:

Diversification of income streams and financial services with effective cost control

### 1.1 Financial Management

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Maintain an effective financial system with robust planning and reporting functions.	Continued recording of accurate financial transactions.	100%	Maintained
	Reduce the average time required for financial rep	35%	-10%
	Improve automated systems for data collection and analysis to improve reporting efficiency.	Initiated	Maintained



### 1.1 Financial Management

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Maintain and improve a comprehensive financial planning process that includes budgeting and forecasting	Yearly detailed budget plan produced with realtime accurate income and expenditure	Initiated	Maintained

### 1.2 Funding Sources

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Diversify funding sources to ensure overall charitable vision & outcomes are achieved	Diversify funding sources		
	Public Funding - % of total income	62.5%	Decrease to 50%
	Business Services Funding - % of total income	15%	Increase to 20%
	Charitable Funding - % of total income	22.5%	Decrease to 20%
	Corporate Funding - % of total income	0%	Increase to 10%

### 1.3 Assets, Infrastructure & Resources

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Develop and enhance the charity's assets, infrastructure and resources in order to achieve vision and mission	Increase the level of CSN assets	1x Vehicle, 1x Premises	3x Vehicles, 1x Bespoke Built Asset, 3x Remote Premises





## Outcome 2: Business Success

### WE WILL:

Establish a strategic development and management function within CSN.

### RESULTING IN:

A upskilled CSN team with strong strategic function for the organisation to build resilience and strength for the future.

### MEASURED BY:

Continuously monitoring of organisation growth and capacity building. The quantity of external awards achieved.

### 2.1 Organisational Growth

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Achieve sustainable growth by expanding the reach and impact of Community Sports Network's programs and services.	Continue to expand operationally and geographically.	4800 yearly participants	Deviate no more than 10% +/- per year
	Number of programmes in current council areas	180 programmes	Deviate no more than 10% +/- per year
	Number of programmes offered across NI, border regions and geographical areas.	7 geographical areas	Increase 50%



## 2.2 Innovation

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement within Community Sports Network to stay responsive to evolving needs and trends in the sport for development sector	Set up a focused Community Sport Network Innovation Team to review and respond to new ways of working	Initiated	Completed by 2025

## 2.3 Organisational Capacity

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
To invest in and supporting learning and continued professional development of trustees, staff and volunteers.	Funding allocated to CPD of trustees, staff and volunteer	£5000 per year	Increase of 100%
	Time allocated to CPD of trustees, staff and volunteer	2% per year	Increase to 5%
	Trustees, staff and volunteers satisfied with level of support provided.	Unknown	90%+ satisfied





## 2.4 Effective Recruitment and Retention of Staff

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Develop and implement innovative recruitment strategies in line with best practice guidelines	AGO Sub Committee to update procedures to recruit trustees, ambassadors, interns and staff.	Initiated	By September 2024
Implement regular and effective communication channels to promote transparency and information sharing.	Employees reporting that they are satisfied with CSN's approach to communication and feedback	Unknown	75%

## 2.5 External Recognition

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
To work towards achieving industry standard accreditation	Number of ISO awards achieved	0	2 quality awards

## 2.6 Develop strong and effective partnerships

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Develop strategic partnerships with relevant government departments, agencies, district councils, health trusts and other relevant organisation	Number of strategic partnerships established and maintain;		
	Government department and agencies	4	Increase to 6
	Health trusts and district councils	8	Increase to 15
	Local on-the-ground community and third sector organisations	100+	Maintained



## Outcome 3: Effective & Efficient Delivery

### WE WILL:

Focus on achieving effective and efficient delivery aimed at ensuring cost-effective, quality service provision.

### RESULTING IN:

Optimised resource allocation with the developing of participant-centred services underpinned by comprehensive impact measurement frameworks, and maintaining leadership standards in the sector.

### MEASURED BY:

Reduced resource wastage, increase in satisfaction rates and robust impact measurement reports

### 3.1 Optimise delivery

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Optimise resource allocation to ensure efficient utilization and cost-effectiveness.	Reduction in staff resourced wasted	8%	Decrease by 4%

### 3.2 Quality Service

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Develop a participant centred service that meets customer expectations.	Participants satisfied with the service received. (Contracted and longer term programmes - 3month+)	Unknown	85+% are satisfied
	Participants who would recommend CSN and its services to other organisations (Contracted and longer term programmes - 3month+)	Unknown	85+% are satisfied





### 3.3 Measuring Impact

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Design, review and implement a comprehensive project measuring and reporting framework in line with OBA and other impact measurements	Align programmes, project and services to OBA framework.	25% of programmes are linked to OBA	75%+ programmes linked to OBA
	Integrate technology solutions to enable real-time tracking and reporting of project progress and results.	Initiated	Completed by 2025

### 3.4 Leader in the Sector

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
To operate to best practice in line with Code of Good Governance	AGO to review and continue delivering on-going best practice on a regular bases	Twice yearly	Maintain



## Outcome 4: Recognised & Valued Brand

### WE WILL:

Focus on establishing a recognised brand & ethos

### RESULTING IN:

Quick recognition of the branding and organisation

### MEASURED BY:

Increase visibility and a well-defined communication plan.

### 4.1 Brand Visibility

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
Use a range of social media platforms to promote our work and its impact to the widest possible audience	Number of new followers across our social media channels,		
	Facebook	3036	Increase by 30%
	Instagram	666	Increase by 200%
	X	869	Increase by 20%
	YouTube	40	Increase by 50%

### 4.2 Communication Plan

Objective	Measures of Success	Baseline	Target
To develop and implement a communication plan to enhance the profile and brand of Community Sports Network by showcasing its impact and achievements	Communication Plan developed and implemented by Community Sports Network	Initiated	Completed by March 2025





*“Everyone feels included and gets to experience a wide and varied range of skills, appropriate to age and ability.”*





# RESOURCING OUR PLAN AND ACHIEVING OUR OUTCOMES

As CSN embarks on this journey to achieve our strategic outcomes and fulfil our mission, it's imperative to acknowledge the various challenges and obstacles that lie ahead. These challenges range from external factors such as government instability and regulatory compliance, to internal considerations such as staff retention and technology integration. Resourcing the strategy both financially and with organisational infrastructure will be key to achieving these outcomes. CSN has already been addressing these challenges during the pandemic recovery period.

## Financial Success

Both CSN, and the sector as a collective, are acutely aware of the impact local government instability can have on an already struggling sector. Lack of direction and financial planning can impact disproportionately on third sector organisations and over the last few years several VCS organisations have had to close their doors. CSN is acutely aware of the need for due diligence when it comes to reliance on public sector finances and this is reflected in the focus on a diverse and strategic funding plan to allow the organisation to be more agile to these changing circumstances outside their control.

Additionally, as government elections take place we need to be conscious of the changes in government policies or funding priorities which may impact the organisation's ability to secure necessary support or grants for initiatives. CSN seeks to enhance its organisational sustainability through the development of a diversified income portfolio managed under strong governance within a positive culture. Through developing additional charitable and corporate partnerships the organisation seeks to contribute to a sustained period for delivery of programmes in line with this strategy (Fig. 5).

By delivering strategic alignment, engaging in transparent, timely and continuous OBA measurement, offering the ability to deliver quality programmes on time, and which represent value for money, CSN can seek to obtain sustainable public funding over a longer contracted period as opposed to short term.



Fig. 5: Forecast Change in Income 2024-2029

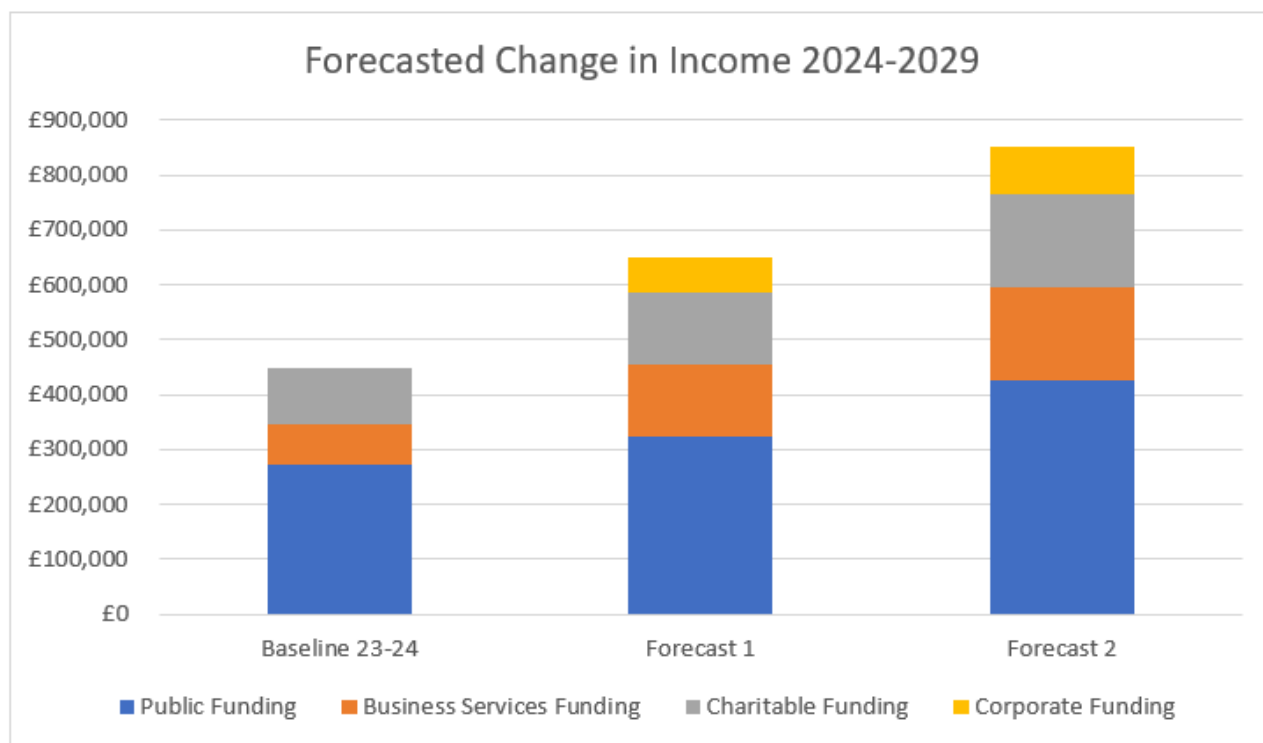


Fig 5. presents the current baseline income for CSN for the fiscal year 2023-2024, alongside two sets of forecasted figures. Forecast 1 is based on reliable projections considering a challenging statutory environment, accounting for potential risks and uncertainties due to regulatory changes. Forecast 2 assumes a stable statutory environment, offering a more optimistic outlook. Both forecasts incorporate income from developing partnerships, such as with Jaguars UK to develop junior American Football in Ireland, Peace Plus Amplify Project with Youth Action NI, aiming for broader reach across Ireland, and other partnerships to be realised.

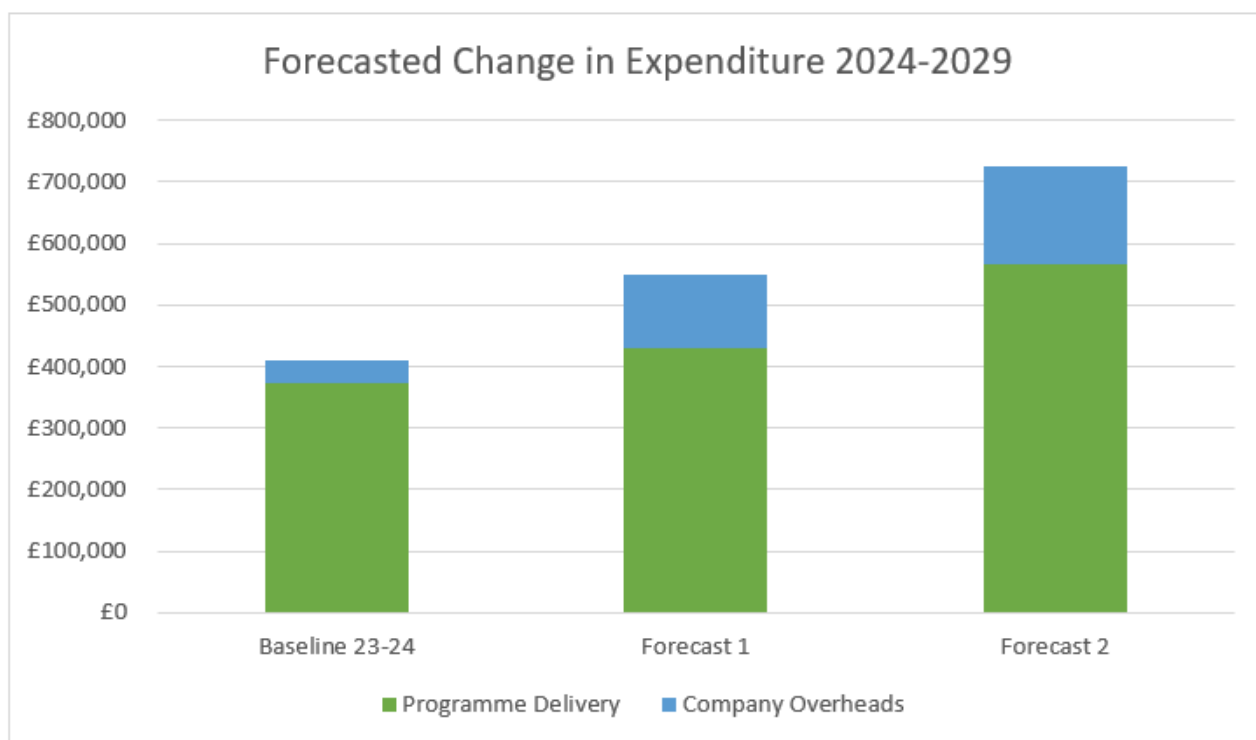
By delivering enhanced strategic alignment supported by transparent, timely and continuous OBA measurement, offering the ability to deliver quality programmes on time which represent value for money, CSN can seek to obtain sustainable public funding over a longer contracted period as opposed to short term.

As a “not for profit” body, financial management systems must be robust to allow for full accountability at all times and to ensure that there is a sustained viability. CSN prioritises funding towards programme delivery and continues to make efficiencies in administrative costs through the use of technology. The organisation maintains a level of reserves which is inline with their reserves policy, which will be continually reviewed as forecasted change (Fig 6).





Fig. 6: Forecast Change in Expenditure 2024-2029



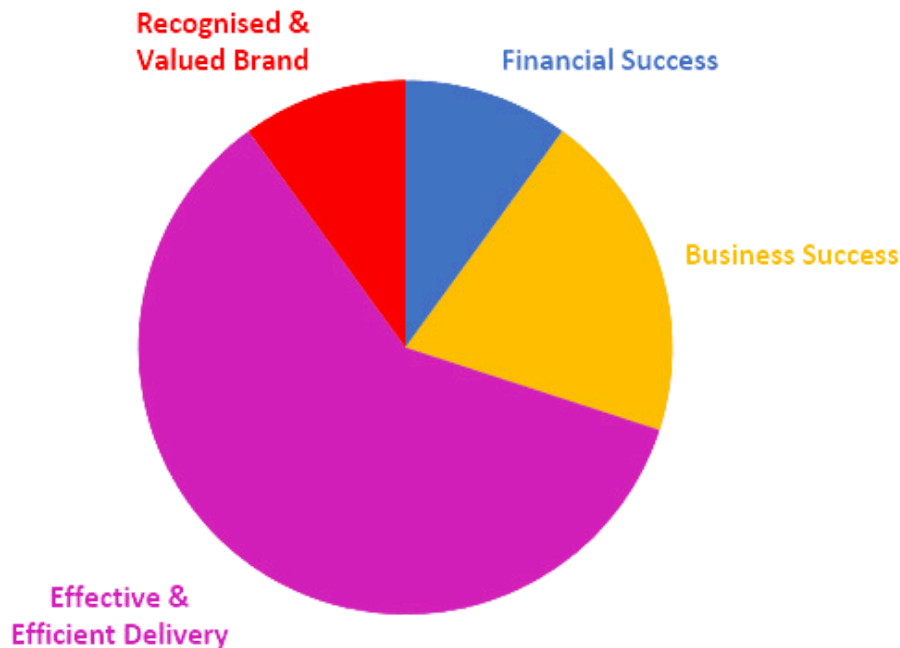
Programme delivery remains the largest portion of expenditure and CSN will continue to prioritise this in respect of ethical responsibilities for statutory funding. CSN currently supports an average of 4800 participants per year through 180 programmes with a core team of 14 which represents a high delivery ratio. Supporting the team to reduce administrative time with the introduction of digital collection of OBA and the use of AI tools will improve efficiency.

CSN's delivery plan has been aligned with the four strategic objectives to highlight the allocation of resources prioritising effective and efficient programme delivery. The second largest allocation goes to Business Success which includes programme development and innovation as well as team recruitment and development to support programme delivery. It also includes investment in strategic partnerships (Fig. 7)



Fig. 7: Resource Allocation by Strategic Outcome

## RESOURCE ALLOCATION BY STRATEGIC OUTCOME



These forecasts are underpinned by detailed financial analysis and expenditure projections that will support the strategic objectives and operational plans. A scheduled skills review for the team is planned for September 2024, which will assess financial expertise and skills required for fiscal scrutiny and any additional requirements or resources will be implemented from the resource allocation for Financial Success.

## Business Success

During the post pandemic period CSN actively engaged in developing a robust strategic infrastructure to support the team's aspirations for increased impact and growth of the organisation. Supported by the Dormant Funds Account a post of Director of Operations was created to allow time for strategic alignment. The organisation has made additions to the board targeting gaps in key expertise in strategy, governance as well as in support of statutory alignment. The outcome of this investment is evidenced in a timely review of the organisation's constitution, articles and terms of reference which were all renewed with the welcomed support of NICVA. This has positioned CSN for growth and expansion geographically including the legal positioning to operate in partnership cross border and outside NI. Subcommittees, chaired by specific expertise have been established for Strategic Development & Administration and Governance, and the board review in 2024 will facilitate the addition of an Audit and Risk sub-Committee.



The BMC innovations has provided an agile and resilient foundation for programme delivery and has positioned CSN for sustainable growth, and the leadership team has improved its level of strategic readiness to meet the increased demands of this strategy.

Technology and use of technology in the sector is developing at a fast rate. Staying abreast of technological advancements and innovation trends may require continuous investment in infrastructure, training, and adaptation of new tools to remain competitive and efficient. CSN has embraced this direction moving to paperless administration and non-print brand documents and will continue to invest in both training and tools such as iPads for digital OBA management under the objective of Business Success and Financial Success.

Another challenge to growth is building and sustaining effective partnerships with government agencies, corporate sponsors, and funding bodies. This will require significant time, effort, and negotiation skills to align interests and objectives. CSN is actively engaged in this endeavour, through calculated strategic alignment and stakeholder engagement. They aim to enrol government agencies, corporate sponsors, and funding bodies around their vision that results in building resilient communities.





## Effective & Efficient Delivery

Quality, timely, agile and impactful programme delivery is at the heart of CSN and the demand for S4D solutions has never been greater. In an ever changing and evolving society, CSN needs to better understand social and cultural barriers, such as gender inequality, accessibility issues, and cultural differences in participation programmes. As an organisation, it is important to reflect society to meet the mission of “creating an active, empowered and connected society”. CSN will need to remain agile and understand the need for tailored programmes, sensitivity and robust training, and maintain strong community outreach effort.

Recruiting and retaining qualified staff is a significant factor facing third sector organisations and charities, especially in competitive job markets where other sectors often provide security, better pay and conditions, and bonuses. Whilst staff retention is good, losing staff could pose a challenge, affect the continuity of programmes, growth of services and impact of CSN.

The senior team are mindful of this and have a key focus to ensure staff are supported and happy during their time at CSN. To increase adaptability and agility in the area of human resources, as well as supporting good fiscal governance, CSN are actively creating strong partnerships with other like-minded organisations to share human resources, materials and expertise to help manage workload and quality of service.

Harnessing technology in support of live team led programme delivery will support CSN growth aspirations. The Covid-19 pandemic drove participants to online solutions, CSN adapted to this reality very strongly. Although live team delivery will always be a priority, digital tools to support that are welcome, including instantly recorded digital feedback from participants that feeds into the OBA system under digital security that immediately meets safeguarding and GDPR requirements. Capturing impact in support of statutory reporting and partner and stakeholder outcomes will be more timely, efficient and more effective.

## Recognised & Valued Brand

To become a recognised and valued brand, CSN will focus on establishing a distinct and respected brand identity and ethos. This will result in quick recognition of their branding and organisation, fostering a deeper connection with their audiences. CSN strategy will be resourced through targeted initiatives and activities designed to enhance their visibility and communicate their impact effectively.





*“Great partnership for supporting healthy living for families and it’s all done in a fun way.”*





They will use a range of social media platforms to promote their work and its impact to the widest possible audience. By leveraging platforms such as; Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube, CSN aims to significantly increase their online presence and engagement. The success of their efforts will be measured by the number of new followers across their social media channels, demonstrating an expanding reach and influence.

Developing and implementing a comprehensive communication plan is central to enhancing the profile and brand of CSN. This plan will showcase their impact and achievements, ensuring that their message reaches and resonates with their target audiences. The communication plan will be meticulously crafted and executed by CSN, with its effectiveness measured by the successful development and implementation of the plan itself.

An example of one key initiative to boost CSN's brand visibility is the introduction of an electric vehicle. This initiative not only aligns with the Charities commitment to sustainability but also serves as a mobile advertisement for CSN, increasing their visibility in the communities they serve. Advancements in technology will also be introduced to support live items such as digital testimonials which can also support brand recognition through digital media.

CSN is confident that by pursuing these activities and initiatives, they will emerge as a quality brand with greater visibility, recognized for its contributions and impact in the community. Their commitment to excellence, innovation, and strategic leadership will guide them in achieving these objectives, ultimately enhancing their reputation and expanding reach.

In order to deliver success on this ambitious and exciting strategy and achieve their vision and mission they will;

- Promote inclusivity and diversity in programming and roles, ensuring that everyone in the community feels welcome and valued regardless of background or ability.
- Establish clear quality standards, monitor program outcomes against required standards such as Outcome Based Accountability, and solicit feedback from participants and stakeholders to continuously improve service delivery and ensure high-quality experiences.
- Foster a culture of innovation and adaptability within the organisation, encouraging staff to explore new ideas, experiment with different approaches and continuously assess and adopt relevant technologies and innovations to streamline operations, enhance communication, and improve service delivery.





- Invest in staff training, career development opportunities, and competitive compensation packages to attract and retain talented individuals who are committed to the organisation's mission.
- Establish strong relationships with government officials and policymakers to advocate for policies and funding that support S4D programmes and initiatives.
- Partner with like-minded organisations over a broad geographical reach and learn from both successes and failures.
- Implement a diversified funding strategy that includes grants, corporate sponsors, donations, and earned revenue streams to reduce dependency on any single funding source and ensure financial sustainability.
- Ensure CSN governance meets the transparent and ethical requirements suitable for management of public funds in an era of increasing fiscal scrutiny.

By focusing on these points, CSN can work towards achieving their outcomes and make a positive impact in the community through sport for development practices.







***“CSN programmes give me a really good ‘pick me up.’ They are something I look forward to every week. I’ve met some really good people, enjoy the craic and the facilitators do a great job.”***



# CONCLUSION

As we set our sights on realising our strategic outcomes and advancing our organisational goals our commitment to excellence, innovation, and collaboration drives us to pursue our objectives with unwavering determination and purpose.

The team at CSN believe that this 5-year strategy is both challenging, ambitious and achievable. This Building Community Strategy 2024-2029 provides an overview of how CSN can work with more people, in more communities, and across many different regions. It also provides a context for working with other partner organisations that will help us to deliver more impactful programmes and create more opportunities for people and communities to be Active, Empowered and Connected.

CSN is a grassroots, charitable organisation that often works with the most disadvantaged in our society. However, to upscale and build on the strong foundation already established, ongoing and sustainable resources will be required. We understand that under the current social and economic climate, many challenges will be faced in order to implement this plan.

By identifying and understanding the challenges ahead we can proactively plan and strategise to mitigate the impact, adapt to changing circumstances, and ultimately navigate a path towards success with resilience and determination.

The strategy clearly sets out CSN's priorities under Financial Success, Business Success, Effective and Efficient Delivery, and Recognised and Valued Brand and we believe these prioritised outputs will be achieved by 2029.

Finally, we would like to thank the CSN Strategic Development Group, Trustees, and Staff for their dedication, insights, and expertise in shaping and framing the content of this strategic plan. Through calculated strategic alignment, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement, we aim to transform our vision into tangible results that make a positive impact on our community and stakeholders. Using our collective strengths, talents, partnerships and resources from our staff and trustees, we are poised to achieve our outcomes and fulfil our mission with integrity and excellence.







# COMMUNITY SPORTS NETWORK

Active | Empowered | Connected

Community Sports Network  
Townsend Enterprise Park, Belfast  
028 90 297661

[info@communitysportsnetwork.org](mailto:info@communitysportsnetwork.org)  
[www.communitysportsnetwork.org](http://www.communitysportsnetwork.org)

Charity Number: NIC103693