



# EQUALITY GUIDANCE FOR CLUBS



## **Equality Guidance for Clubs**

Athletics NI have produced the guidance below to assist and support Clubs on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion issues, in accordance with our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policies](#).

### **Anti-Discrimination Legislation**

Athletics Northern Ireland, the National Governing Body for athletics within Northern Ireland is fully committed to the principles of diversity, inclusion and equality of opportunity and is responsible for ensuring that athletics is accessible to all and in compliance with the relevant legislation as listed below:

- Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 (as amended)
- Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (as amended)
- Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (as amended)
- Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (as amended)
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995
- Equality (Disability, etc.) (Northern Ireland) Order 2000
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006
- Northern Ireland Act 1998

We endorse the principles of sports equality and strive to ensure that everyone who wishes to participate in athletics, including athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, staff and those within the governance structure of Athletics NI and our affiliated clubs has equal opportunity to participate to the fullest extent and without intimidation, harassment or abuse.

The protected characteristics as defined in the above legislation are:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Religious or Political belief
4. Race/ Nationality/ Ethnic Origin
5. Sex
6. Gender
7. Gender reassignment
8. Sexual Orientation
9. Marriage or Civil Partnership Status (Pregnancy & Maternity)

### **Equality Policy**

All Athletics NI affiliated clubs must:

- Adopt the Athletics NI Equality & Diversity policy, or produce their own Equality & Diversity policy that is consistent with Athletics NI's own
- Ensure that their committees, members and volunteers behave in accordance with the policy
- Ensure that access to membership is open and inclusive
- Support such measures and initiative that Athletics NI may institute to take part in to advance the aims of this policy.

A copy of the Athletics NI Equality & Diversity Policy can be found [here](#).

### **Support for Clubs**

- As part of the Club Development Framework, which is one of the fundamental elements of the Athletics NI 2022- 2025 Strategy, Athletics NI will bring together support and resources to facilitate clubs in their mission to create an inclusive environment where athletes and runners enjoy positive progress, and to contribute to the growth of the sport.
- Athletics NI will continue to facilitate training and support for clubs in the areas of equality and diversity.

### **Best Practice**

- The club has a code of conduct for members and its committee/ staff. Ensure this is publicised indicating your zero- tolerance policy towards all bullying or harassment of people with protected characteristics.
- The club has a grievance policy and complaints procedure and it is accessible on the club website or group.

### **Annual Equality Monitoring**

Athletics NI is committed to making the sport of athletics accessible to all. We will audit and monitor our business activities regularly and take appropriate steps if it appears that our commitment to equality is not being delivered effectively. Annual equality monitoring is carried out on staff, board, coaches, officials, members and participants to identify any current areas of under-representation or potential inequalities.

If you have any queries relating to equality or the Athletics NI Equality & Diversity Policy, please contact our Equality Officer: [shauna.bratten@athleticsni.org](mailto:shauna.bratten@athleticsni.org)

### **Equality Training**

Athletics NI are committed to ensuring that everyone involved in athletics (Board, staff, committees, volunteers, officials, coaches, etc) have access to equality training about key equality issues. All staff and Board members have undergone equality training.

Free online training can be undertaken at:

- <https://elearning.acas.org.uk/course/>
- Click on Equality and Diversity.
- You will need to register – it's free.

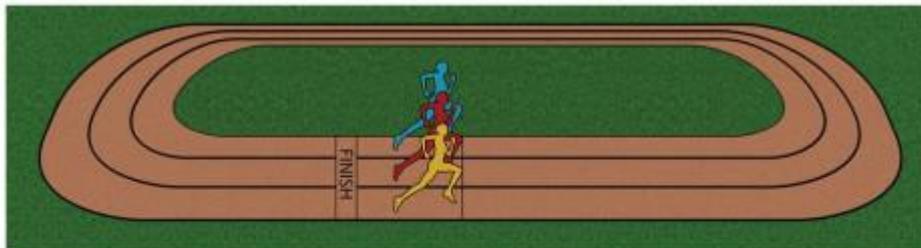
Please note the training above will mention the Equality Act 2010, which does not cover Northern Ireland, however, the principles of equality that are highlighted in the training are still of value.

For the purpose of effective monitoring and keeping an accurate training log, it would be beneficial if you can let our Equality Officer know if you have completed any equality training, or if you would like more information about other training courses.

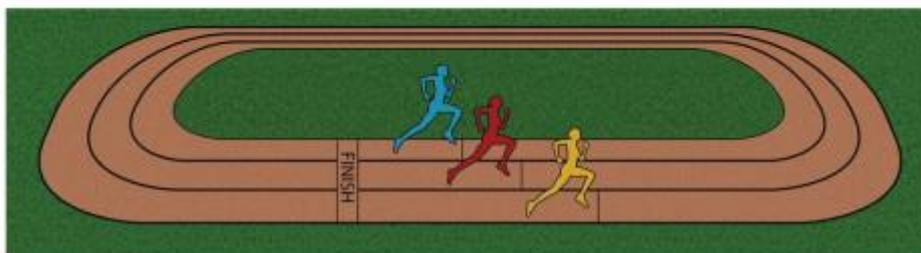
## Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

### What is Equality, Diversity & Inclusion?

The general belief is that Equality means treating everyone the same. This is not the case.



EQUALITY



EQUITY

Source: <https://qippscasa.wordpress.com/2017/01/12/equality-vs-equity/>

For example, on the athletics track pictured above, the group of runners are lined up at the same start line for a 400m race, meaning the runner in the outside lane will have to run further than the runner in the inside lane. Therefore, the equal starting point isn't equitable and fair to all the runners. The second picture shows the runners again, except this time they have a staggered start to allow for the lane differences. This ensures that each runner is running the same distance: this is equity. It ensures that the race is fair in that it will be determined by the speed of the runner, not whether they had an advantageous starting point.

**Equality** is about making sure people are treated fairly and are given the opportunity to participate, taking into account that people have different needs.

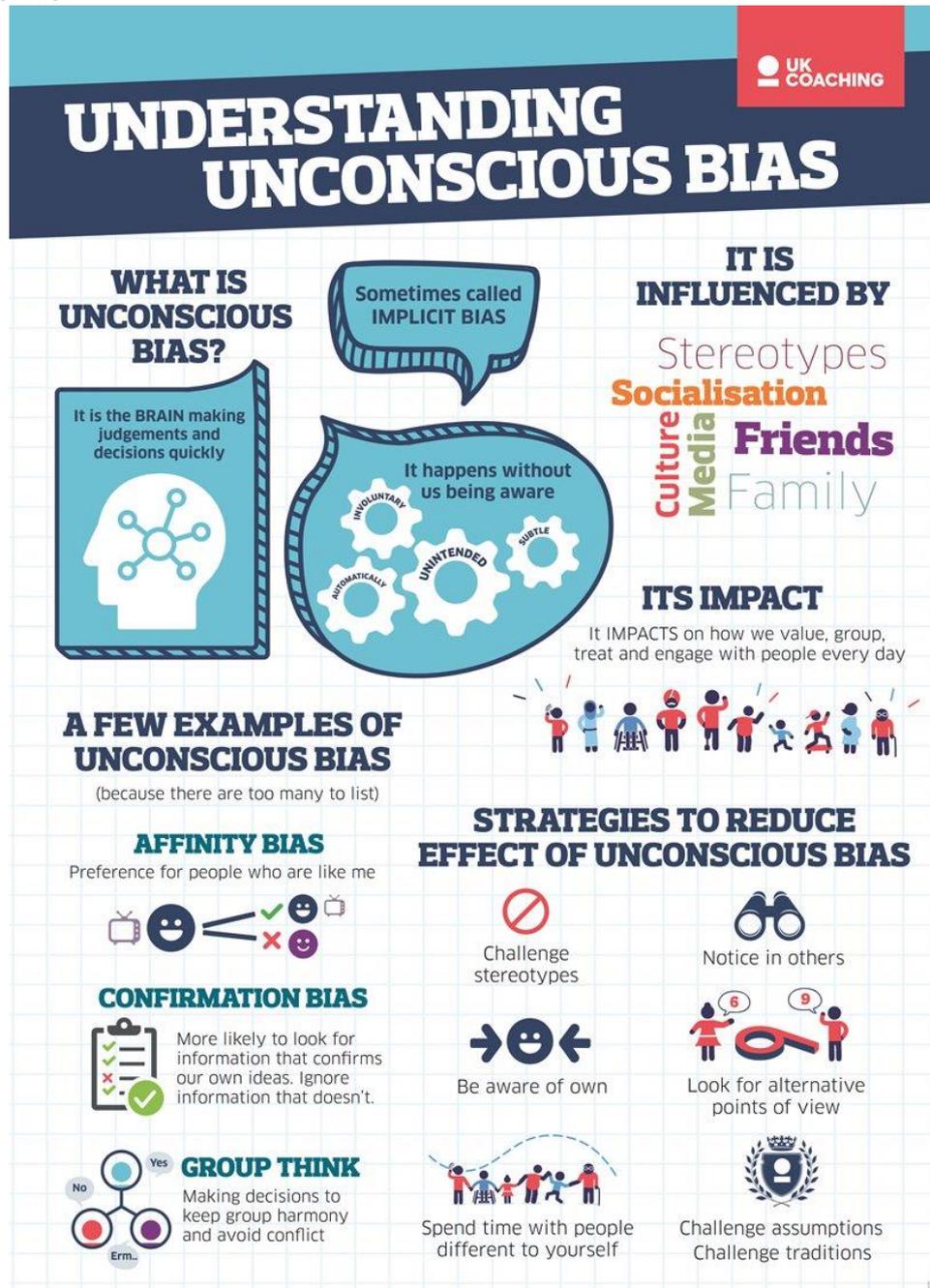
**Diversity** recognises and respects that everyone is different and that a uniform approach to managing staff, athletes, coaches and members does not achieve fairness for everyone. By taking account of individual backgrounds, knowledge, skills and personal needs, you and your club can harness a range of experience to build a more effective community.

**Inclusion** the elements of equality and diversity put into practice. This is the actions you and your club take to provide equal access to opportunities and resources for your members, taking into account those who may be traditionally marginalized or excluded and the differing needs of your club community.

## Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias is our underlying attitudes or stereotypes that we unconsciously apply to another person, or a group of people that affects how we understand and engage with them.

For example, when joining a new club, people will automatically gravitate to those people that are like them, without realising it. The graphic below from UK Coaching explains some types of unconscious bias and ways to address this:



**UK COACHING**

# UNDERSTANDING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

**WHAT IS UNCONSCIOUS BIAS?**  
It is the **BRAIN** making judgements and decisions quickly

Sometimes called **IMPLICIT BIAS**

It happens without us being aware

**IT IS INFLUENCED BY**  
Stereotypes  
Socialisation  
Culture  
Media  
Friends  
Family

**ITS IMPACT**  
It **IMPACTS** on how we value, group, treat and engage with people every day

**A FEW EXAMPLES OF UNCONSCIOUS BIAS**  
(because there are too many to list)

**AFFINITY BIAS**  
Preference for people who are like me

**CONFIRMATION BIAS**  
More likely to look for information that confirms our own ideas. Ignore information that doesn't.

**GROUP THINK**  
Making decisions to keep group harmony and avoid conflict

**STRATEGIES TO REDUCE EFFECT OF UNCONSCIOUS BIAS**

- Challenge stereotypes
- Notice in others
- Be aware of own
- Look for alternative points of view
- Spend time with people different to yourself
- Challenge assumptions
- Challenge traditions

Our assumptions of those around us, are likely to be based on the stereotypes we have learnt about throughout our lives and most of us will not be aware when we apply these to others. However, if our assumptions are negative, these can show in our facial expressions or body language. These subtle behaviours are called micro-aggressions and left unchecked these can lead to inequalities and unlawful discrimination.

Be aware that we all have unconscious biases, but we can choose to confront and manage these.

## Protected Characteristics

### Age

*Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006*

The regulations above protect individuals against age related discrimination in terms of recruitment, education, promotion and training.

Athletics NI offers competition opportunities for all age groups, starting from athletes aged 8 through to Masters (no upper age limit).

### **Best Practice**

The club encourages participation for people of all ages (8+), or, if they do not offer a Junior section, clearly advertises that they are a Senior only club. Coaching, training and facilities should be tailored to meet the needs of all individuals, ensuring that coaching staff have the correct qualification to deliver appropriate programmes for all ages.

For clubs who do have a junior section, they must have a trained Safeguarding Officer and adhere to the Athletics NI Safeguarding Welfare Policy, which can be found below: [Athletics NI Safeguarding Welfare Policy](#)

### Disability

*Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995*

Disability is defined as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

This can include people with:

- Physical or mobility impairments
- Visual impairments
- Hearing impairments
- Learning difficulties
- Severe mental health conditions (such as depression)
- Medical conditions (for example, epilepsy, arthritis, diabetes)

Athletics Northern Ireland work together with Disability Sport Northern Ireland to provide training and competition opportunities for athletes with a physical, sensory or learning disability.

We provide a pathway for para athletes from beginners through to high performance. We provide competition for various levels of para athletics which are integrated with mainstream competitions. We run taster session for children age 8-17 years old at different times during the year like Easter and Summer and we host 6 para sessions between September – April for athletes 12 years through to seniors, these sessions are suitable for beginners to developmental athletes.

We arrange for the top British Athletics & Paralympics Ireland para coaches to run workshops throughout the year that coaches, athletes and volunteers can register to attend, including:

- Athletics NI Disability Inclusion workshop – including guide running
- Athletics NI wheelchair racing workshop
- UKA Disability Inclusion online module
- Coaches CPD – coaches can attend our Para sessions with their athletes

### **Access and Equipment**

All clubs should ensure that the facility used for training is accessible, has disabled parking and additional equipment is provided where necessary.

### **Best Practice**

- Clubs should incorporate para athletes into mainstream activity where possible. They may also wish to consider a disability section, where appropriate, which provides participation opportunities for a wider community.
- The Club ensures that coaches and members are provided opportunities to access disability inclusion training
- The Club work with appropriate partners to ensure that provision is made for disability access and equipment (provisions for visually and hearing impaired etc).

Find out more about our Para Athletics programme and training for Coaches [here](#). Or you can contact our Para Development Officer, Heather Ardis: [heather.ardis@athleticsni.org](mailto:heather.ardis@athleticsni.org)

### **Religious or Political Belief**

*Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (as amended)*

The Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 (FETO) makes it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of religious belief and/or political opinion.

Athletics Northern Ireland observes national religious holidays and strives to accommodate those when providing appropriate competition opportunities and events.

### **Best Practice**

- The club understands/ recognises the barriers to participant for people from different religious groups and works to support inclusion of these groups.
- The club is familiar with religious holidays and festivals, observance of religious beliefs, dietary restrictions, cultural differences or restrictions and clothing restrictions and makes reasonable provisions to assist when these coincide with training.
- When organising events, if possible, check the Religious Festival Calendar [UK](#) & [Ireland](#).

### **Race/ Nationality/ Ethnic Origin**

*Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (as amended)*

The Race Relations Order makes it illegal to treat anyone less favourably on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic and national origin. Segregation on racial grounds also constitutes discrimination.

Athletics Northern Ireland does not tolerate racial discrimination or abuse. As a national governing body, we are working with UK Athletics and the other Home Country Federations in the recent 'Lets Talk About Race' campaign to better understand and accommodate the needs of ethnic minorities within our sport.

### **Best practice**

- The Club understands/recognises the barriers to participation for people from different ethnic backgrounds and works with Athletics Northern Ireland or key partners to support inclusion of these groups.
- The Club positively encourages inclusion from all ethnic groups
- The Club reflects the diversity of their wider community
- The Club takes prompt and decisive action against any member(s) whose behaviour or language is inappropriate or offensive to or about people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Use your disciplinary procedures to manage this.

## Sex

### *Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976*

The Sex Discrimination Order (SDO) makes it illegal to discriminate against:

- An individual on the grounds of his/her/their sex
- Married persons in employment
- On the grounds of pregnancy and maternity leave

Athletics Northern Ireland provides competition opportunities for both male and female athletes.

### **Best Practice**

- Clubs provide training and competition opportunities for all members, regardless of their sex.
- The club actively encourages those who may be under represented, for example, female coaches training and developing their skills to reach further on the coaching pathway.
- Where possible each club should ensure personal safety of female members at the end of a session – safe parking, lighting etc.

## Gender

The World Health Organisation describes sex as characteristics that are biologically defined (the anatomy of an individual's reproductive system, and secondary sex characteristics), whereas Gender is based on socially constructed features. Someone's gender can refer to either the social roles based on the sex of the person, or the person's own identification of themselves.



**Sex**  
Biological traits that society associates with being male or female

**Gender**  
Cultural meanings attached to being masculine & feminine, which influence personal identities  
E.g. Man, Woman, Transgender, Intersex, Gender Queer, among others

**Sexuality**  
Sexual attraction, practices & identity which may or may not align with sex and gender  
E.g. Heterosexual, Homosexual (Gay or Lesbian), Bisexual, Queer, among others

**OTHER**  
socialist

Athletics Northern Ireland recognise that not all members will feel comfortable within traditional gender roles of 'male' or 'female'. We have therefore supported race organisers who have introduced non-binary categories into many events, including the Belfast City Marathon. We will continue to support event organisers to include a non-binary category into their events.

### **What do we mean by non-binary?**

The term non-binary refers to a person, who feels that their gender cannot be simply defined by either

'man' or 'woman', and instead identifies as either having a gender which is in-between or beyond these two categories; fluctuates between the two categories, or has no gender, either permanently or some of the time.

**Best Practice:**

- Where possible, consider gender neutral facilities. Possible solutions will depend on the facilities where training or event is held. Please talk to anyone in your club who identifies themselves as non-binary to discuss the best way solution for all.
- Have a non-binary gender option on your membership form. Where possible, you should allow people to opt out of selecting a title or provide a gender-neutral option. The most popular gender-neutral title is Mx.

**Gender Reassignment**

*Gender Reassignment Regulations (NI) 1999*

The 1999 Regulations amended the SDO to make it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of gender reassignment (sex change) in employment and training. Further amendments in 2008 introduced protection from discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment in the provision of goods, facilities, services or premises.

**Trans Inclusion**

Trans or transgender is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth ([www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms))

Athletics Northern Ireland have developed a Transgender and Non-Binary Inclusion Policy which aligns with the UK Athletics Policy and aims to protect those who identify as trans-gender or non-binary and promote the inclusion of all athletes within the sport. The policy can be found here: <https://athleticsni.org/Governance/Equality>

**Best Practice**

- The Club understands/recognises the barriers to participation for trans and non-binary people.
- Treat the trans person with dignity and respect.
- Respect the private and confidential nature of the person's situation
- Agree with the trans person how information is to be shared with others if this is necessary
- Support the trans person with their choice of changing facilities where possible – a conversation should be had around where this person feels most comfortable changing. Complaints from other users or competitors must be handled carefully. It is the duty of the club and competition officials to ensure that confidentiality is not compromised, and that members and competitors are not subjected to abuse, whether physical or verbal, on any ground.
- Take prompt and decisive action against anyone in the organisation whose behaviour or language is inappropriate or offensive to or about trans people. Use your disciplinary procedures to manage this.

**Sexual Orientation**

*Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003*  
*Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006*

This protects against discrimination whether you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual and also applies to those who are believed to be of a particular sexual orientation, regardless of whether or not they are.

Athletics NI strives to ensure that any events or competitions organised by the governing body are inclusive to all, regardless of their sexual orientation. We continue to work the UK Athletics, the other Home Country Federation and the Athletics Pride Network to increase awareness and to engage with all areas of the community.

### **Best Practice**

- Clubs should understand/recognise the barriers to participation for LGBT people and works with their National Club Manager to support inclusion.
- The Club undergo Equality training in order to increase awareness, effective community engagement and consultation.
- The Club uses inclusive language on website and in policies and have targeted promotional material.
- The Club takes prompt and decisive action against anyone in the organisation whose behaviour or language is inappropriate or offensive to or about LGBT people. Use your disciplinary procedures to manage this.

### **Marriage or Civil Partnership Status**

#### *Civil Partnership Act 2004*

The Civil Partnership Act provides a legal definition and parity of treatment for same sex couples and opposite sex couples in relation to employment benefits and pension rights.

There is no specific guidance offered to Clubs on this protected characteristic and we do not ask this question on our Equality Monitoring survey, but please contact the Equality Officer if you have any questions relating to it.

### **Pregnancy or Maternity**

There is no specific guidance offered to Clubs on this protected characteristic and we do not ask this question on our Equality Monitoring survey, but please contact the Equality Officer if you have any questions relating to it or would like further advice on tailored training during pregnancy.

Athletics Northern Ireland have developed the [Female Athlete Health](#) section of our website which gives guidelines for Post-Natal returning to running, including exercises and tests that the athlete can try themselves before returning to a structured training session, and contact information for Female Health Professionals.



## Mental Health and Wellbeing

Looking after your mental health is vitally important and there have been many positive steps taken in recent years to highlight the importance of good mental health and wellbeing, not just in sport, but in society in general. Being both physically active and being involved in sport can have a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. It can help improve the participant's mood, concentration levels, sleeping habits, resilience, can help lower anxiety levels by providing a safe social space, and boost their self-confidence.

As with everything, it is important to exercise moderation, especially in elite sport. Regimes of continuous training, performance and selection can add significant pressure on an athlete or coaches mental health and challenge their resilience.

Athletics Northern Ireland have partnered with Believe Perform in 2020 to help support coaches, through education, to become more aware of mental health issues and support them to recognise the signs and know where and when to seek help. Below we have the Public Health Agency's 'Take 5: Steps to Wellbeing':

### **Connect**

Connect with the people around you: family, friends, colleagues and neighbours at home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these relationships as the cornerstones of your life and spend time developing them. Joining your local running or athletics club can help you build relationships and be social while you enjoy your sport.

### **Be Active**

Go for a walk or run, cycle, play a game, garden or dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity that you enjoy; one that suits your level of mobility and fitness. Being active helps your well being by boosting those endorphins and giving you that sense of achievement.

### **Take notice**

Be observant, look for something beautiful or remark on something unusual. Savour the moment, whether you are on a bus or in a taxi, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

### **Keep learning**

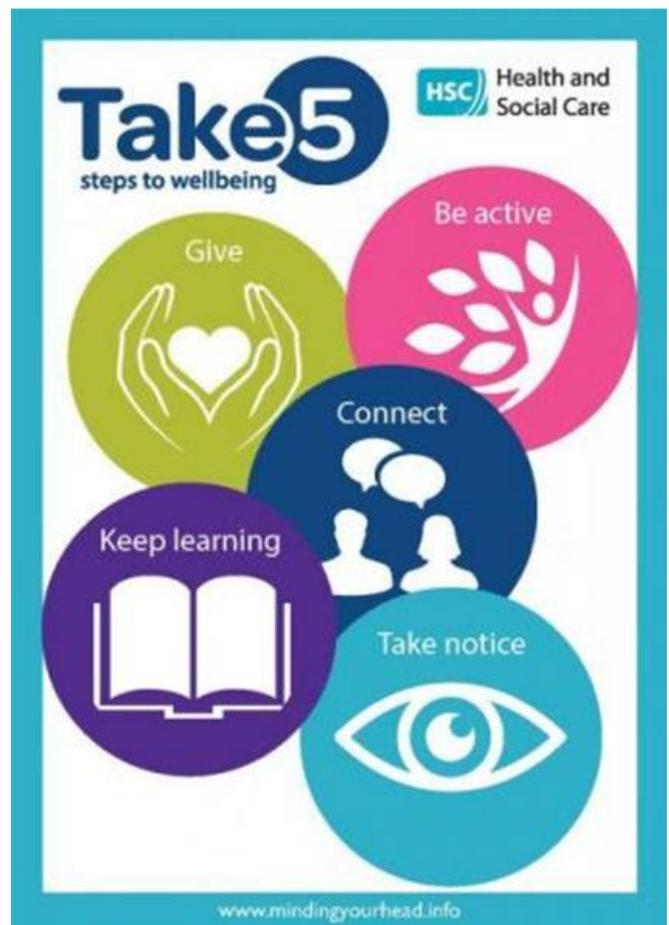
Don't be afraid to try something new, rediscover an old hobby or sign up for a course. Take on a different responsibility, fix a bike, learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy. Learning new things will make you more confident, as well as being fun to do.

### **Give**

Do something nice for a friend or stranger, thank someone, smile, volunteer your time or consider joining a community group. Look out as well as in. Seeing yourself and your happiness linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you. Volunteering at your local running or athletics club, or becoming a Technical official will help you give back and will help further support the athletics community.

We have a list of helpful resources and support services available on our website:

<https://athleticsni.org/Welfare/Athlete-Health-&-Support/Mental-Health-Support>



## Further Information and Resources

### [Equality Commission NI](#)

A non-departmental public body providing support and services to the public and promoting equality throughout Northern Ireland.

### [Sport Northern Ireland](#)

Regional government sports council for Northern Ireland, providing support and services to sporting governing bodies.

### [Disability Sport Northern Ireland](#)

Northern Ireland's main disability sports charity, working to improve the health and wellbeing of people with disabilities through sport and active recreation.

### [Stonewall](#)

A national charity that campaigns for the equality of LGBTQ+ individuals across the UK.

### [Rainbow Project](#)

The Rainbow Project is a health organisation that works to improve the physical, mental and emotional health and well-being of LGBTQ+ people in Northern Ireland.

### [NSPCC/ CPSU](#)

The Child Protection in Sport Unit provides various resources for safeguarding young people in sport.

## **Athletics NI Contact Details:**

### **Equality Officer:**

Athletics Northern Ireland  
Athletics House  
Old Coach Road  
Belfast  
BT9 5PR  
Email: [shauna.bratten@athleticsni.org](mailto:shauna.bratten@athleticsni.org)

### **Welfare Officer:**

Athletics Northern Ireland  
Athletics House  
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