

# Belfast City Council

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## Amateur Boxing Strategy 2012 -2022

**A Review**



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# 1. Executive Summary

## Research

**1.1** This report presents a review of Belfast City Council's Amateur Boxing Strategy 2012-2022 after the first phase of its implementation. The review re-visits the strategy's baseline information and assessed progress with the strategy's action plan. Research for the review includes:-

- ◇ A survey of boxing clubs, capturing baseline information to enable comparisons with 2012; 29 returns were obtained.
- ◇ A survey of schools and youth centres/leisure centres involved in the Non Contact Boxing Programme; 23 returns were obtained.
- ◇ A Focus Group with clubs to assess their awareness of the strategy, its impact on boxing and how it might be improved in the next phase of implementation.
- ◇ A Focus Group with schools.
- ◇ Consultation with a range of key groups/organisations having an interest in the strategy.

**1.2** From the research, the following key points emerge:-

- ◇ The landscape of Belfast's boxing clubs has changed since 2012. Two clubs have folded (Poleglass ABC and Sacred Heart ABC); the City of Belfast Boxing Academy (previously Castlereagh ABC) has moved premises; five new clubs have started up – Ballysillan ABC, Ledley Hall Boys and Girls Club Trust Ltd ABC, Ormeau Road ABC, St Michael's ABC and Tullycarnet ABC; St Teresa's ABC has recently affiliated as a boxing club;<sup>(1)</sup> Knocknagoney ABC is a fledgling project not constituted during the review period. Since the review was undertaken Ashfield Boxing Academy has been established and affiliated to the IABA in April 2016 and the Belfast Metropolitan College has established a Boxing Academy which also affiliated to the IABA in early 2016.
- ◇ Boxing is currently governed on an all island basis with the recognised governing body the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) based in Dublin.

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<sup>(1)</sup> St Teresa's ABC was working towards affiliation during the review period; it affiliated in April 2016.

A separate entity, the Northern Ireland Boxing Association (NIBA) has been established as a limited company. Whilst the NIBA is not yet a recognised governing body, several clubs have affiliated to it. Of the five new clubs, Ledley Hall ABC, Ormeau Road ABC, St Michael's ABC and St Teresa's ABC have affiliated to the IABA; it's not known to which governing body Tullycarnet ABC (also known as TAGIT) has affiliated and Knocknagoney is still in the early stages of club formation. Clubs not affiliated to a recognised governing body cannot compete at national or international level.

- ◇ Membership has risen from 1,999 in 2012 to 2,397 in 2015, a 20% increase. This would appear to be a substantial uplift in a relatively short period which begs the question; is the boxing infrastructure geared up to cope with rising membership? The most marked change is in the number of clubs with between 51 to 100 members, from 14 clubs in 2012 to 19 clubs in 2015. Also, one club records having over 200 members for the first time.
- ◇ Across the board female membership shows substantial increases although it is still well short of male membership. Under 11 Girls rose from 77 to 125 whilst Under 11 Boys rose from 340 to 578, both around a 40% increase but with girls only contributing about 18% to the new total. The massive increase in the Under 11 years membership is probably down to the high profile that boxing is enjoying presently with amateur medal successes and Carl Frampton's professional achievements. The increase may also be partly due to the raised awareness of boxing and the opportunities it presents through the work of the strategy, especially the Non Contact Boxing Programme. However the scale of increased membership presents a significant challenge to all clubs if they wish to sustain the trend and build on it; in other words, what is the membership capacity of the clubs?
- ◇ The number of volunteers (non-coaches) has jumped from 123 to 201, an average of around 7 volunteers per club. The number of female volunteers has shot up from 3 in 2012 to 40 in 2015. Whilst this picture is encouraging it's not clear what sort of tasks non-coaching volunteers carry out and the extent of their contribution to the clubs. There needs to be a greater understanding by the clubs of the need for non-coaching volunteers, what skills they should bring to the club and how they can contribute to the club's development.

- ◇ Regarding Access NI certification the situation has improved both for coaches and volunteers. For coaches, the percentage of those holding an Access NI certificate has risen from 96% in 2012 to 98.5% in 2015 whilst those without an Access NI certificate has correspondingly fallen from 4% to 1.5%. For volunteers, those with an Access NI certificate has risen from 71% to 83% with a corresponding fall in those without. It should be noted that some Access NI applications may have been pending during the review period and may now be in place. Not all volunteers within a boxing club require an Access NI check, particularly an enhanced check which is required only for volunteers who have frequent and regular unsupervised access to children, young people and vulnerable adults. Council continues to work in partnership with the IABA who seek to ensure all coaches and volunteers are Access NI checked. Council advocates continuous improvement in safeguarding practice in all areas of club management from supervision of children or adults participating or involved, training and awareness at all levels within the club and reporting concerns and Access NI management, etc. These are the areas Council seeks assurance in and invests resources with the IABA to support safeguarding within the boxing fraternity.
- ◇ Of the 29 club survey responses, 27 clubs are affiliated to the IABA and 2 to the NI Boxing Association; 3 more clubs have obtained charitable status bringing the total to 19; 3 clubs are now registered as a company limited by guarantee, an increase of 1; 27 clubs now report having a Management Committee in place, 24 clubs have a President, 28 clubs have a Secretary and 26 have a Treasurer. These findings for governance and management portray a healthy state of affairs, however the survey simply records that governance measures are in place – it cannot assess their effectiveness.
- ◇ Club development plans are either in place or being worked up in 25 clubs, demonstrating that clubs understand the importance of having a structured approach to their development. These plans were not inspected for this review so it's not possible to comment on exactly what they are seeking to achieve, how realistic they are and how they inform the day-to-day operation of clubs.
- ◇ Clubs' income would appear to have fallen, especially the number of clubs receiving donations, falling from 16 clubs in 2012 to 6 in 2015. Only 9 of the

29 clubs provided a complete breakdown of income, the remainder mostly noting they don't record the amounts of funding received. This begs the question, that with 26 of the 29 clubs saying they have a Treasurer, what is that person's role and what financial records are actually kept?

- ◇ Facilities at clubs have improved considerably in the past three years as a result of recent capital programmes. These improvements have undoubtedly supported membership growth, especially female membership. However it's seen that basic accommodation for females, whilst significantly improved, still falls behind accommodation for males.

	No of clubs with facility	
	2012	2015
Female Changing	8	18
Female Showers	9	14
Female Toilets	14	22
Male Changing	19	24
Male Showers	19	21
Male Toilets	19	25

Whilst facilities are getting better there is still some way to go to the point where all clubs offer modern fit for purpose boxing facilities.

- ◇ The Non Contact Boxing Programme has been something of a runaway success story with the quality of coaches and the programme receiving unanimous praise. Where it does fall down is in not creating links/pathways between schools and clubs to encourage and enable children to move from the programme into a club although it's also noted children may be finding their own way into a club having enjoyed the non contact sessions.
- ◇ The strategy has been well received by all stakeholders. It is perhaps the clubs themselves who look upon the strategy with the most discerning eye so it's encouraging to find that 8 out of 10 clubs attending the clubs Focus Group reckon their club has either *a lot* or *a bit* (6 registered *a lot*, 2 registered *a bit*) of ownership of boxing development by the Council across the City. All 10 clubs answered either *yes* (9 clubs) or *a bit* (1 club) when asked "*is Belfast's Boxing Strategy working for your club.*" The governing bodies and Sport NI recognise the strategy as having a positive impact.

## Recommendations

- 1.3** So the broad outcome of the review of baseline information is that the strategy, complemented by capital works, has progressed a number of its indicators. It has been well received by stakeholders. The recommendations for the next phase of implementation recognise that existing actions will continue on their delivery path, therefore the primary intention of the recommendations is to improve the strategy’s actions as they move forward. They are presented here in no particular order:-

Recommendation
Continue the Non-Contact Boxing Programme, with a direct link between clubs and schools/youth centres.
Develop governance and management through volunteers.
Reach out to the community with boxing programmes linked to fitness, well-being and health.
Progress with the Strategy’s Actions should be monitored and reported on a regular basis.
Provide mentoring support to clubs for selected Actions.
Liaise with schools in relation to staging boxing events in school premises.
Engage with the IABA Ulster Branch in complementary activities.
Look to qualify more coaches
Assess the <i>carrying capacity</i> of each club in each membership category and plan for projected increases.

- 1.4** This review looks at the strategy after the first three years of its implementation; the strategy is not quite a third of the way through its full ten year period. The overall view, based on survey and consultation work, is that the strategy is having a positive impact and influence on boxing clubs and boxing development throughout the City. All of the strategy’s 22 actions remain valid and should be continued although it’s noted that some actions have progressed faster than others. The series of recommendations here presented is designed to complement and supplement the existing strategic actions.