



Promoting Physical Activity with Older People

A RESOURCE FOR SPORTS DEVELOPMENT TEAMS AND LEISURE CENTRES

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The Ageing Well / Community Sport initiative was developed by Age Concern Northern Ireland in partnership with Sport Northern Ireland and the Big Lottery Fund. This initiative aims to increase participation in physical activity and sport by older people and improve uptake of council run leisure facilities.

Age Concern Northern Ireland has developed partnerships with six local authority councils through the Community Sport initiative. These council areas include Belfast, Coleraine, Craigavon, Fermanagh, Lisburn and Newry and Mourne. These existing partnerships have offered older people throughout Northern Ireland the opportunity to increase their physical activity levels and connect with their peers through sport and exercise.

The Community Sport initiative began with taster days in each area with the aim of encouraging older people to participate in various forms of physical activity. This was followed by a series of on going physical activity programmes including Tai Chi, yoga, boccia, new age curling, aerobics and dance, all of which were designed specifically for those aged over 50.

There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that it is never too late to become engaged in physical activity, yet for many older people this is something of a challenge.

Older people have traditionally had a low uptake of leisure facilities and services and low levels of involvement in physical activity and sport. This resource will assist service providers (within leisure services and sports development teams) to increase uptake of marginalised older people in physical activity and sport and assist them in setting up and delivering physical activity programmes for older people.

This resource can be used by Sports Development and Physical Activity teams in conjunction with 'Guidelines for Organising a Sport Event or Activity Day for Older People'. The experience and learning obtained through the Community Sports Development initiative has assisted the development of this resource.

1.	Making the case for physical activity and older people	
1.1	What is an older person?	5
1.2	Older people in Northern Ireland	5
1.3	What is physical activity?.....	5
1.4	Why is physical activity important for older people?.....	6
1.5	How much physical activity is enough?.....	6
1.6	What are the benefits of physical activity?.....	7
1.7	Health messages related to physical activity	8
2.	Factors affecting planning	
2.1	What are the barriers for older people?.....	10
2.2	Possible solutions to barriers.....	11
2.3	Ways older people can become active.....	13
2.4	Targeting older people	14
3.	Planning and implementing	
3.1	Planning activities and programmes for older people	15
3.2	Engaging and involving older people	16
3.3	Facilities.....	17
3.4	Guidelines for safe & effective physical activity programmes	18
3.5	Marketing and public relations.....	19
3.6	Training for those working with older people	20
4.	Appendices	
	Appendix 1 - Audit tool	26
	Appendix 2 - Action plan	27
5.	References	29



1

Making the case for Physical Activities and Older People

1.1 What is an Older Person?

Age Concern, the World Health Organisation and sport and recreation bodies traditionally define the older person as a person over the age of 50. However, the British Heart Foundation (Active for Later Life, 2003) notes that, chronological age is not a reliable means of deciding when a person becomes 'old', as there are 'old' 50 year olds and 'young' 70 year olds. Self-identification may be more accurate.

1.2 Older People in Northern Ireland

- At present people of pensionable age make up 16.3% of the total population.
- By 2040 the proportion of people over 60 in Northern Ireland will double.
- By 2040 there will be a 57% increase in the over-75 population as people live longer and healthier lives. (NISRA, 2007)

Age should not be an issue when it comes to being active. Physical activity should not be limited by age, even if the degree of

involvement varies according to an individual's capacity. (Older, Smarter, Fitter, 2002).

1.3 What is Physical Activity?

Physical activity is: "Any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that result in energy expenditure." (Bouchard et al, 1990). This can involve any activity from walking or swimming to gardening or cleaning.

Compared to exercise, which has been defined as: "Leisure time physical activity which is planned and structured, and repetitive bodily movement undertaken to improve or maintain one or more components of physical fitness." (Bouchard et al, 1990).

1.4 Why is Physical Activity Important for Older People?

Shepherd, R (1997) states, "A regular programme of moderate exercise is a very appropriate recommendation for almost all older adults. Moreover, there is no known pharmacological remedy that can so safely and effectively reduce a person's biological age and experience his or her quality adjusted life expectancy."

Skelton, Young et al (1999) notes, "Despite the increase in the promotion of exercise and physical activity for the prevention of functional decline and disease, people in the UK become less physically active as they age."

Facts

Among the 55-64 age group 31% are reported as being sedentary, this number increases to 42% among the 65-74 age range, and to 63% among the over 75 age group.

Sedentary behaviour is generally higher among older women.

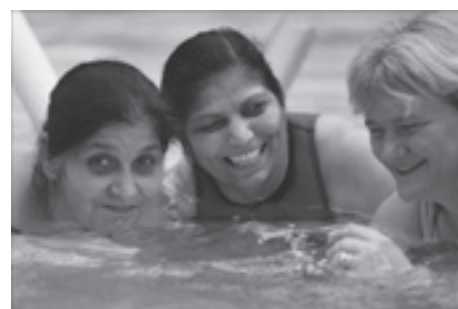
In the over 70s, 25% of women and 7% of men do not have sufficient leg strength to get out of a chair without using their arms.

Crossing a road within the time allowed on traffic light controlled crossing requires an average walking speed that is higher than that achieved by most 70 year olds.

(Ageing Well, Fact Sheet 1, 2007)

1.5 How much Physical Activity is Enough?

- All adults should aim towards getting 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least five days of the week.
- Moderate means breathing a little faster and feeling slightly warmer than usual but you are still able to maintain conversation.
- Physical activity can be added up during the day to reach 30 minutes.
- It is important to start slowly, starting with maybe 10 minutes per day and working up to 30 minutes.
- It should be acknowledged that any activity is better than none at all, and older, inactive people should be encouraged to start at a level of activity with which they are comfortable - this may be as little as 5 minutes to begin with.



1.6 What are the Benefits of Physical Activity?

A significant area of concern for older people is loss of independence. Exercising regularly and attaining a reasonable degree of physical fitness would help an older person meet the demands of their daily routine. It is never too late to start!

The human body responds to exercise, no matter what its age and there is a range of physical, psychological and social benefits.

<p>POTENTIAL PHYSICAL BENEFITS</p>	<p>Reduced risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and some cancers</p> <p>Reduced mortality</p> <p>Improved strength in a variety of neurological disorders</p> <p>Improved walking ability</p> <p>Reduction and control of high blood pressure</p> <p>Enhancement of the immune system</p> <p>Prevention of post-menopausal osteoporosis and protection against risk of falls</p> <p>Weight control and management</p> <p>Improved sleep quality</p> <p>Reduction in accidental falls</p> <p>Improvement of fitness related to mobility and independence</p>
<p>POTENTIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS</p>	<p>Promotion of good mental health</p> <p>Reduction in stress, anxiety and overall wellbeing</p> <p>Reduction in symptoms of depression</p> <p>Improvements in self-esteem</p> <p>Positive perceptions of health</p> <p>Improved aspects of cognitive function</p>
<p>POTENTIAL SOCIAL BENEFITS</p>	<p>Empowerment</p> <p>Enhanced social integration</p> <p>Formation of new friendships Widening of social networks</p> <p>Enhanced intergenerational activity</p> <p>Promotion of a more positive and active image of older people</p> <p>Maintenance of caring skills</p> <p>Provision of opportunities for relaxation, enjoyment, and a chance to let off steam and have fun</p>

(Ageing Well, Fact Sheet 1, 2007)

1.7 Health Messages related to Physical Activity

The following health messages were developed by Age Concern Northern Ireland and the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland as part of the 'Actively Ageing Well' poster campaign and photographic exhibition during 2005.

- People of all ages can benefit from physical activity. The greatest benefits are gained by inactive people who start to take part in regular physical activity. People can feel the benefits as soon as they begin.
- Physical activity programmes can be an excellent way for community and older people's groups to work together promoting mutual understanding and good relations in and between communities.
- Joining a class or group, or going with a friend, can make physical activity a social event. There are physical activity opportunities for everyone, including older people, in leisure centres, community organisations and older people's groups.
- Trying different types of activities is a good way to find out what is on offer in the local community. This can develop an interest in being active regularly. Start a new activity for just 10 minutes at a time and build up gradually.
- Different types of physical activities can provide different benefits.
For example:
 - * Walking for strength
 - * Swimming for flexibility
 - * Tai Chi for balance
 - * Dancing for co-ordination
- Building physical activity into your daily routine, learning new skills or activities and having fun, all make being active easier.
- Being active is an important factor for people in staying healthy and independent. Choose any physical activity - it is never too late to start. Any health worries should be checked with a GP first.
- Regular physical activity can:
 - * Reduce stress, aid relaxation and improve sleep.
 - * Provide opportunities for people to get out and about and make new friends.
 - * Increase stamina to deal with everyday tasks.
- As well as helping the heart and lungs to work well, regular physical activity can:
 - * Help control high blood pressure and diabetes.
 - * Slow down the loss of bone density and help prevent fractures.
 - * Improve posture, balance, flexibility and co-ordination and so reduce the risk of a serious fall.
- Just 30 minutes a day of moderate exercise such as, dancing or brisk walking can make all the difference to people's health.

2

Factors affecting planning**2.1 What are the Barriers for Older People?**

Many older people believe that exercise is no longer appropriate. Some of the common barriers that prevent older people participating in physical activity are as follows -

Barriers to Physical Activity for Older People

AT AN INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	Lack of interest/confidence Myths and perceptions Embarrassment Cost Transport Fear	Loneliness Previous experiences Family advice/commitment Gender influences Time restraints Cultural beliefs
AT A COMMUNITY LEVEL	Attitudes Community safety Transport	Social support Expertise Cost
AT A SPORTS/ LEISURE ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL	Lack of facilities/tutors Attitude Priority Expertise Apathy	Safety concerns Sport & recreation policy Access/location Social support Cost
AT A STATUTORY LEVEL	Priority Cost Attitude	

(Physical Activity Counts, Age Concern Northern Ireland, 2002) and (Ageing Well, Fact Sheet 5, 2007)

2.2 Possible Solutions to Barriers

These are some of the more common barriers to activity identified by older people. The responses highlighted provide guidance into sustaining conversations when barriers/concerns are presented by the participant.

Barrier I'm worried I might hurt myself

Possible Response It doesn't have to be vigorous to benefit your health

B I have to take it easy

PR Talk to your GP about your health conditions and make sure it is safe to be physically active

B My aches and pains will get worse

PR Actually, exercise has been known to reduce pain and stiffness

B I have never been good at sport

PR Being active doesn't mean you have to play sports; you can go cycling or walking

B I am afraid that I will fall

PR A lot of people feel that way too. Is there someone that could walk with you? Physical activity can make you stronger, which will prevent you from falling

B I just can't fit physical activity into my schedule

PR You could make use of active living opportunities, walk to do errands or shopping. Do some gardening?

B I wouldn't want to go on my own

PR Is there someone who could go with you? Is there something you could do at home?

B It's just too expensive to join a gym

PR There are discounts for seniors for a number of programmes. Walking doesn't cost anything

B I am embarrassed about how I will look when I exercise

PR Lots of other people feel that way. All shapes and sizes take part, you'd be surprised

B I really can't see myself starting up a new activity at my age

PR Why not, there are still lots of opportunities for you to learn something new. Why not check it out first, and see if you might like it

B It wouldn't have any effect, it's too late, I'm too old

PR There are lots of programmes for older adults. Physical activity benefits anyone at any age. It's never too late

B I am too clumsy

PR Walking is a simple activity that you know you can do. Physical activity can improve your coordination!

B I have no transport of my own, and getting out on my own is difficult

PR There are many things you can do at home to keep you active. There is a bus route right to that swimming pool that you could take

Another way to overcome barriers is to motivate leaders of older people's groups and explain some of the benefits of physical activity and let them know that physical activity is important to their quality of life.

Any concerns about medical conditions should always be addressed to their GP.

(Laventure, 2005)

2.3 Ways that Older people can become Active

Physical activity can be a part of everyday life. Some people will have certain health conditions and should talk to their GP before starting to increase their physical activity. Older people can become active through:

- Walking
- Cycling
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Posting a letter
- Walking up the stairs
- Playing with Grandchildren
- Gardening
- Chair based activities
- Assisted walking programmes
- Activity in bed (gentle stretches)
- Joining an activity class
- Stretching and strengthening exercises
- Bowling
- Golf
- Take the dog for a walk
- Wash your car
- Get off the bus a few stops early and walk
- Clean out your kitchen cupboards
- Join an aqua fitness class
- Water your houseplants

The above list is a guide for overall active living and popular activities for older people. However this list is only an example. At an individual level an older person may choose to take up a new sport or activity that they may not have previously considered e.g. kayaking, clay pigeon shooting, archery, orienteering, other water sports, team sports i.e. rugby and soccer.

2.4 Targeting Older People

When targeting older people it is important to:

- Ensure that the opportunities presented are fun and provide opportunities for socialisation.
 - Address the social and economic barriers for older people such as access to venues, timing, costs, transport and safety.
 - Consider the needs of black and minority ethnic groups who may have cultural issues that deter them from participating.
 - Involve the older person in the planning and development of programmes.
 - Tailor the programme to the functional level of the individual or group.
 - Develop innovative and creative programmes that avoid the stereotyping of the older person and promote positive images of older people.
- Build the skills of the workforce through education and training.
 - Develop partnerships with a range of service providers.

Please see appendices I and II - audit tool and action plan. Both templates will assist in initial planning of programmes and activities.



3

Planning and Implementing**3.1 Planning Activities and Programmes for Older People**

As well as the undeniable health benefits of physical activity, it is important to consider what prospective participants see as important in attracting them to any physical activity programme.

The following strategies are important considerations in encouraging involvement:

- Provide social activities in addition to participation and competition opportunities.
- Maintain fees and costs at an affordable level.
- Keep equipment requirements to a minimum.
- Find out the most convenient times and days for the activity to take place.
- Promote realistic role models.
- Market the fun and social benefits of physical activity rather than just images of fitness.
- Train coaches and leaders who empathise with the needs of older people, or train older people themselves.
- Overcome transport difficulties, e.g. - encourage car pooling.
- Promote sports with a traditionally older membership (e.g. Tai Chi, golf, bowls), but also try activities which challenge traditional expectations of age-appropriate activity, like cycling, low impact aerobics.
- Develop multi-sport festivals, taster days targeting older people.
- Establish Masters categories within sports and sporting events.
- Develop new or modified sports suitable for older people.
- Develop a partnership approach to increase the success of the programme, e.g. partnership with local older people's groups, housing associations, schools or colleges for intergenerational programmes.

(Older, Smarter, Fitter, 2002) and (Ageing Well, Fact Sheet 6, 2007)

3.2 Engaging and Involving Older People

Engaging with older people

What works?

Support for existing groups to develop activities and widen membership. Community development support to widen engagement. Older people's advisory groups and forums to drive change forward. Funding to value older people's contribution. Developing staff capacity to fully engage with older people. Involving older people as activity leaders, teachers and tutors.

Better meeting the needs of older people through improved information

What works?

Co-ordinated 'person-based' information, face-to-face and by telephone. Creative ways of targeting publicity to older people. Older people actively contributing to producing and giving information. Local flexibility for joint working between managers and front line staff.

Better meeting the needs of older people - through delivering services differently

What works?

A range of services provides flexibility to meet individual needs. Help with mobility improves older people's independence. Older people can contribute to getting services right first time. Managers and front line staff need motivation and training for joint working.

There is agreement that involving local communities and older people in developing strategies and action plans improves the quality and effectiveness of programmes (Nichols, 1999 cited in Active for Later Life Manual, 2003).

- Older people should be at the centre of development and should inform the promotion of physical activity.
- Older people are a heterogeneous group and no single approach will guarantee success.
- Older people are the best source of information on overcoming the barriers faced by older people.
- Promoting physical activity with older people can be effective both in the short and longer term.
- Physical activity strategies endorse the need to promote physical activity with older people.

3.3 Facilities

In order to encourage as many older people as possible to use your leisure centres or facilities, it is important to look at other existing venues and ask the following questions or facilities:-

Is the leisure centre...

1. Acceptable to older people?

- Warm facilities, including swimming pools
- Some older people prefer single sex changing rooms
- Area for socialising
- Warm welcome and good customer care

2. Accessible to older people?

- Clear signage
- Microphones for tutors
- User changing facilities

3. Affordable for older people?

- Is the pricing policy appropriate and flexible?

4. Safe for older people?

- Tutors experienced in working with older people
- Safe and enjoyable but also challenging and stimulating

(Participation and Older People, 2003)

It is imperative that these issues are addressed in any initial planning and they be included in any consultation with older people.

3.4 Guidelines for Safe and Effective Physical Activity Programmes

When organising physical activity classes / events for older people it is imperative that everything is conducted in a safe and effective manner. The Older, Smarter, Fitter manual (2001) and the Senior Peer Mentor Pack (2005) outlines the following guidelines:

- Ensure the tutor is suitable for teaching a class of older people and has appropriate qualifications.
- Ensure the leader, participants and venue are covered by insurance.
- All participants, who will exceed their normal activity levels in the class, should be made aware of the need to consult their doctor and obtain a clearance before taking part.
- Safety procedures of the venue should be of a high standard.
- The class leader should be aware of any medication that participants are currently taking and be sure this medication is at hand before the class starts.
- The program should be appropriate for the class and adapted for individual needs and abilities.
- Individuals should be advised to stop physical activity if they feel pain, dizziness, feverish or they feel unwell, tired or sick.
- Encourage individuals to drink water before and after being active.
- Ensure appropriate clothing and footwear is worn.
- Start slowly when being physically active and gradually build up activity levels.

3.5 Marketing and PR

Having considered all the factors that will encourage older people to become involved in physical activity, the specific programs still need to be promoted. After all, provision of physical activity involves more than developing a program and hoping people will show up. Organisations involved in the creation of physical activity programs all have a part to play in that promotion.

Local councils and leisure centres can:

- Consider how well your organisation caters for the needs of older people. Do you have programmes or events specifically designed to suit the needs of older people?
- Collect information about the physical activity needs and preferences of older people in your area.
- Develop your program, taking into account the key motivators, as well as physical and social requirements. Involve older people in the development of your programme. This will help ensure that the programme meets needs as well as help with promoting the programme within your local community.
- Tie into local community network to promote your programme i.e. local newspaper, radio, community groups etc.
- Distribute campaign posters and brochures.
- Link into active older role models to encourage new participants to link into programmes.
- Include material on physical activity for older people in council and leisure centres, newsletters, publications and websites.
- Set up a display about physical activity options for older people in the leisure centre or local libraries.
- Assess what physical activity opportunities are available for older people in your area. Consider running a public forum to discuss issues in relation to physical activity programmes and possible solutions.
- Use positive and appropriate images of older people participating in physical activity in all publications. If possible make the information available in different formats / languages and make sure it is culturally sensitive.

(Older, Smarter, Fitter Manual, 2001)

3.6 Training for those Working with Older People

The provision of appropriate training for all those involved in leading, teaching and instructing in physical activity programmes is an essential element of the planning phase of older people's activities.

Training courses for those delivering physical activity programmes for older people is a relatively recent area of development. When considering individual courses, local co-ordinators will need to consider carefully -

- How appropriate the course content is.
- The experience and expertise of the course tutor team.
- External validation and continuing education requirement.
- Assessment procedures and certification.
- Access to national courses at a local level.
- The national reputation and credibility of courses.

They will also need to ensure that the courses meet the necessary quality standards and are meaningful in educational terms.

In the past, work in providing physical activity opportunities for older people was largely undertaken by, for example, exercise teachers, fitness instructors, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. However, more recently there have been new developments, with a range of providers developing new opportunities for older people, for example, sports based programmes designed for older people in a range of community settings and health clubs and leisure centre programmes targeting older people.

The variety of types of provision has arisen in response to the diversity of interests, health needs and functional capacities found among older people. To meet these needs it is essential to widen training provision to include different levels of training delivery by different groups of people, including both professionals and volunteers.

All types of physical activity can be made more enjoyable, safer and more effective through the education of the participants and facilitators, but the training requirements will vary greatly in relation to the intended outcome and the intensity of the activity. Using the three strands of the 'Active for Later Life' framework - Making Activity Choices, Increasing the Circle of Life, and Moving in the Later Years can help to match programmes and appropriate training to the different needs of the older person.

(Active for Later Life Manual, 2003)

Training

TRAINING PROVIDER	TRAINING AREA AND TYPE
<p>Belfast Health and Social Services Trust Knockbracken Healthcare Park Saintfield Road Belfast BT8 8BH Contact: Joanna Gribben T: 028 9056 4949 E: joanna.gribben@belfasttrust.hscni.net</p>	<p>Health for Life Programme. Covers a range of topics including physical activity</p>
<p>Boccia Development Group NI North Belfast Sports Forum Oldpark Terrace Belfast BT14 6NP Contact: Robert McQuiston T: 028 9056 4941 E: nbss@btconnect.com</p>	<p>Boccia Training</p>
<p>Disability Sports NI Unit 10 Ormeau Business Park 8 Cromac Avenue Belfast BT7 2JA T: 028 9050 8255 E: info@dsni.co.uk W: www.dsni.co.uk</p>	<p>Access to disability and sports specific training- covers all age groups</p>
<p>Fitness Northern Ireland 147 Holywood Road Belfast BT4 3BE T: 028 9070 4080 E: fitnessni@aol.com</p>	<p>Exercise for the Older Adult 50+</p>
<p>Governing Bodies of Sport Sport Northern Ireland House of Sport Upper Malone Road Belfast BT9 5LA T: 028 9038 1222 E: info@sportni.net W: www.sportni.net</p>	<p>Appropriate training for specific sports</p>

TRAINING PROVIDER	TRAINING AREA AND TYPE
<p>HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD Note: Courses are organised by the Physical Activity Co-ordinators from each Health Board area. Contact details are as follows:-</p> <p>Northern H&SS Board Homefirst Community Trust Health Promotion Service Spruce House Cushendall Road Ballymena BT43 6HL Contact: David Porter T: 028 2563 5575 E: david.porter@northerntrust.hscni.net</p> <p>Southern H&SS Board Southern Area Health Promotion Department St. Luke's Hospital Loughgall Road Armagh BT61 7NQ T: 028 3741 2424 E: health.promotion@southerntrust.hscni.net</p> <p>Eastern H&SS Board Department Public Health Champion House 12-22 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8BS Contact: Kim Kensett T: 028 9032 1313 E: kkensett@ehssb.n-i.nhs.uk</p> <p>Western H&SS Board Westcare Business Service Lime Villa 12c Gransha Park Clooney Road Derry BT47 6WJ Contact: Deborah Hunter T: 028 7186 5127 E: Deborah.Hunter@westcare.n-i.nhs.uk</p>	<p>Walk Leader training GP Exercise Referral Schemes</p>

TRAINING PROVIDER	TRAINING AREA AND TYPE
<p>Champion House 12-22 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8BS Contact: Nicola McCabe (Healthwise Officer) T: 028 9055 3663 E: nmccabe@ehssb.n-i.nhs.uk</p>	<p>Walk Leader training GP Exercise Referral Schemes (continued)</p>
<p>Lifedock 406 Beersbridge Road Belfast BT5 5EB Contacts: Jacquie Guinn T: 028 9084 8282 M: 07743 180175 Karen Case T: 028 9022 0393 M: 07904 019840 E: info@lifedock.com W: www.lifedock.com</p>	<p>Chair Based activity - Levels I and II Dance Leader Award</p>
<p>Sport Northern Ireland House of Sport Upper Malone Road Belfast BT9 5LA Contact: Surrane Gallagher T: 028 9038 3809 E: coaching@sportni.net W: www.sportni.net</p>	<p>Sport for all leader award: Older person's module</p>
<p>Train Direct Unit 3D Maryland Industrial Estate 286 Ballygowan Road Belfast BT23 6BL T: 028 9044 9989 E: info@traindirect.net W: www.traindirect.net</p>	<p>Offer various courses including YMCA, VTCT, OCR</p>

4

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: AUDIT TOOL

Where are we now?	Where do we want to be?
What physical activities do we currently provide? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal • Supervised • External Leaders 	
How often do the activities take place?	
Do we have any initiatives to increase habitual and independent activity?	
Do we hold any special activity events? Eg festivals, activity days, taster days	
What equipment do we have available to us? Eg flexibands, balls, a minibus	
What space/facilities are accessible to us? Eg venues, outside areas for walking	
Staffing - does anyone have any particular interests/areas of expertise?	
What physical activity resources are available to us? Eg Good practice guide	
Do we have any relevant links to community activity/sports clubs/leisure providers?	

APPENDIX 2: ACTION PLAN				
Goal	Tasks	Who	Resource/ Cost Implications	Timeline of Action
Increase of range of equipment that is available	<p>Check what is currently available</p> <p>Check activity section for additional equipment needs</p> <p>Check catalogues</p>	Staff member who will take responsibility for each task	<p>How much will new equipment cost?</p> <p>Is there a budget to pay for this?</p> <p>If not, seek alternative ways of raising funds</p>	Exactly when do you intend to have the new equipment available for use?

5

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE