



# Get Active-Stay Active

Older Adults



LOTTERY FUNDED

The lead agency for developing sport in Northern Ireland

*Sport Northern Ireland is keen to promote the message that sport and physical activity are for everyone and that the benefits of an active lifestyle should be fully embraced and enjoyed by all.*

It is widely recognised that there are differences in participation rates in sport and physical activity among certain groups within the population. We know generally that:

- Men participate more than women;
- People without a disability participate more than people with a disability; and
- Younger people participate more than older people.

We all therefore need to do more to provide additional opportunities that promote and maintain active lifestyles among an ageing population; and encourage active ageing through lifelong participation in sport and physical activity.

#### **Did you know that in Northern Ireland...?<sup>1,2</sup>**

- Over half a million people are over 55 – that's 32% of the total population.
- Only 26% of people aged over 50 achieve the recommended amount of weekly physical activity (30 minutes, 5 days a week) compared with 35% of the total population.
- 79% of over 50 year olds never participate in moderate intensity sport.
- Current life expectancy is 75 years for men and 80 for women.
- More people are over the age of 50 than under the age of 19.
- By 2030 the number of people over 50 will have increased by more than 30%.
- Activity programmes for improving strength and balance can reduce the risk of falls by as much as 55%.
- 20% of older people admit that they cannot remember the last time they did any exercise.
- From the age of 30, strength, endurance, bone density and flexibility are all 'lost' at a rate of 10% per decade. Muscle power is lost at a rate of 30% per decade.
- 50% of all functional decline among older people can be attributed to physical inactivity.
- The most popular physical activities for people aged over 50 are walking, golf and/or pitch and putt and going to the gym or swimming<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Age Concern Help the Aged NI, Positive Ageing: is Government's ageing strategy fit for purpose? 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Northern Ireland adult 'Sport and Physical Activity Survey' (SAPAS), 2010.

## Getting Active: About the Sport in Our Community Programme

Sport Northern Ireland invested £3.6 million to deliver the Sport in Our Community Investment Programme from 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2010<sup>3</sup>.

Among the aims of the programme was a desire to support and deliver creative and innovative projects resulting in an increase in participation in sport and physical activity among underrepresented groups, specifically older people.

**121,171 people took part in Sport in Our Community projects. 6% of these individuals were aged 45 or over<sup>4</sup>, as shown in Table 1.**

**Table 1: Number of Older Participants (aged 45 plus)**

	SPORT IN OUR COMMUNITY PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS					TOTAL
	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	
Total number of reported participants	15,226	24,295	37,162	40,224	4,264	121,171
Number of reported participants aged 45-64 years	531	614	1,253	1,755	10	4,163
Number of reported participants aged 65+	296	341	879	1,079	0	2,595
Total number of reported participants aged 45+	827	955	2,132	2,834	10	6,758
% of reported Participants aged 45+	5%	4%	6%	7%	1%	6%

<sup>3</sup> Investments made to the Education and Library Boards were extended through to the 30 June 2010, to coincide with the school year. These three month extensions are included as 2010-11.

The number of older people participating in activities delivered by Sport in Our Community projects increased annually throughout the programme. In Year 4, 2,834 of programme participants were recorded as aged 45 or over, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Age Profile of Sport in Our Community Programme Participants (%)**



This increase is reflective of the number of projects delivering activities specifically for older people.



<sup>4</sup> Data was captured to reflect the categories used in the 2001 Census.

<sup>5</sup> The low percentage of older programme participants in 2010-11 is due to project delivery being limited to the three Education and Library Boards.



## **Staying Active:** At home and in your community

*Sport Northern Ireland's investment in 34 Sport in Our Community projects enabled the development of specific programmes aimed at getting people active, and helping them to stay active.*



### **Older Men's Swimming Programme Derry Healthy Cities**

Derry Healthy Cities delivered an Older Men's Swimming Programme in partnership with Roe Ageing Well at the Roe Valley Leisure Centre.

The programme was aimed at men aged 55-65+ who had a disability or long-term illness and their carers.

Some of the participants were referred to the programme by their GP as part of a treatment programme to help with a number of health conditions, such as arthritis, joint replacements, heart attacks and heart surgery.

Through increased participation in physical activity participant's health and well-being was improved through increased levels of fitness, flexibility and improvements in mood.

The programme also increased the participant's knowledge of the benefits of physical activity and promoted social inclusion of older people, people with a disability and their carers in healthy lifestyle and physical activity programmes.

### **Intergenerational Dance Programme Derry City Council (Waterside Neighbourhood Renewal Area)**

The Intergenerational Dance Programme has been running for over four years with the groups receiving three hours of line dancing tuition

from a qualified instructor every week, with participants ranging in age from eight to 80.

The programme rotates every ten weeks between The Cosy Club based in Richmond Hall on the City Side and CAW/Nelson Drive Action Group based in the halls of the Tullyally District Development Group in the Waterside. Due to the success of the programme the group size has increased from 20 to over 40 regular participants.

### **Active Lives Club Lisburn City Council**

The club initially ran for 12 weeks, targeting all 50+ groups within the council area. It is now a weekly mainstream feature at the Leisureplex, aiming to get older people active.

There are over 90 club members, who are overseen by a steering group established to give participants the opportunity to manage their own sports activity programmes. Activities include badminton, line dancing, swimming, tai chi, yoga, and the gym.

### **Ageing Well Project Coleraine Borough Council**

Established in partnership with Age NI, the Ageing Well Project encourages older people to become more physically active, by offering weekly physical activities that includes sauna, spin classes and swimming at the local leisure centre. The project delivers tailored programmes to group members and for many, participation in

the project enabled their first ever visit to a leisure centre. Participants report increases in activity levels and while they enjoy the structured activities also pursue other opportunities for physical activity outside of the project.

### **Rasharkin Luncheon Club Ballymoney Borough Council**

In consultation with senior citizens living in this rural area Ballymoney Borough Council identified a need to provide opportunities for older people to 'get active'. The Rasharkin Luncheon Club was formed and is held on a weekly basis during the winter months offering a range of activities suitable to participants needs. Activities delivered include bocchia, indoor bowling, new age kurling, and tri-golf.

Twenty-four older people regularly attend these physical activity sessions and in addition benefit from the social aspects and the opportunity to socialise with other members of their local community. Participants also have opportunities to receive advice on healthy lifestyles and health checks.



## Dolores' Story

Dolores is 'over 65' and regularly takes part in many of the activities such as boccia and armchair aerobics delivered by the Older and Active Project at the Shaftesbury Recreation Centre. It has been a real 'bonus' for Dolores as she has suffered poor health for some time and takes various medications. The activities and exercises have really helped her level of fitness and she feels much more flexible now. She and her fellow participants are also given advice on diet and nutrition and which Dolores thinks has improved her diet.

Dolores could not dance before being involved in the project but now she says, after the activities, she really looks forward to *"a wee dance and a cup of tea"*.

A number of Dolores' neighbours who are also senior citizens use the fitness suite at Shaftesbury Recreation Centre. With growing confidence and having established a basic level of fitness Dolores and other members of the Older and Active Programme now feel ready to take on some further exercise and hope to include sessions in the fitness suite as one of their activities in the near future.

Dolores is adamant that she could not have contemplated undertaking such a level of physical exercise a few months ago. She has also begun to enjoy the social side of the centre's activities and the cross community aspects.

A group from Donegall Pass recently visited the Shaftesbury Recreation Centre and a film, produced in the 1970's was shown of Cooke Street in the Ormeau area. Dolores was surprised and delighted that she herself appeared in the film. She commented, *"It was a good bonding ..people from the Pass were delighted...it was a very positive thing"*.

## What we know now

### Five key learning points:

1. Older women tend to participate in physical activity more than older men, who tend to prefer a more competitive environment and traditional sports.
2. An average day is not full of free time - older people often have family responsibilities including caring for children.
3. School holidays curtail participation opportunities for older people unless there is also provision for children's activities.
4. A key motivation is health and fitness but socialising is also important.
5. Programme planners should consider the needs of 'active' and 'inactive' people aged over 50 and 'active' and 'inactive' older people aged 65 plus.



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## About Sport Northern Ireland

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Sport Northern Ireland is the leading public body for the development of sport in Northern Ireland. Its corporate vision is: *“a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport which contributes to a peaceful, fair and prosperous society”*.

Sport Northern Ireland promotes the benefits of lifelong participation in sport and physical activity and the value of an active lifestyle for all – and especially among older people.

The full report *Get Active-Stay Active: Impact of the Sport in Our Community Programme* is available to download at: [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

This document is available in other accessible formats on request, and online at [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

Sport Northern Ireland  
House of Sport  
2a Upper Malone Road  
Belfast BT9 5LA  
T: (028) 9038 1222  
E: [info@sportni.net](mailto:info@sportni.net)  
W: [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

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