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STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Melvin Community Sport Programme

Evaluation Report



July 2008

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Melvin Community Sport Programme Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Strabane District Council has presented this executive summary as a quick reference guide to a more full and detailed evaluation, which assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of two specific elements of the Melvin Community Sport Programme, namely the Men's Fitness Initiative and the Schools Fitness Challenge.

Terms of Reference and Methodology

In line with Sport NI's award criteria Strabane District Council were required to conduct an independent evaluation of the Men's Fitness Initiative and the Schools Fitness Challenge. As such the following terms of reference were agreed to conduct this work effectively:

- ❖ The degree to which the Melvin Community Sport Programme has been effective in achieving the objectives outlined in their application and Letter of Offer from Sport NI.
- ❖ The efficiency with which the Melvin Community Sport Programme expended the grant to achieve the objectives outlined in their application and Letter of Offer from Sport NI.
- ❖ Overall conclusions about the execution and likely impact of the programme.
- ❖ Recommendations about the delivery of any future programmes based on the conclusions of this evaluation.

Subsequently a targeted methodology was formulated to address each of these issues which is included the following:

- ❖ Desktop research to review all appropriate and available documentary information
- ❖ Interviews with programme staff
- ❖ Telephone and interview consultation with 9 programme participants and two delivery coaches

- ❖ Postal survey to all participant schools
- ❖ Interviewed partner delivery agent
- ❖ Benchmarked project with other similar projects
- ❖ Critique of Melvin Community Sport Programme monitoring and evaluation information / documentation

Sport Northern Ireland's Big Lottery Funded Community Sport Programme

Strabane District Council secured £112,500 from Sport NI's Community Sport Programme to fund the delivery employment of 1 Development Officer and 3 Coordinators, as well as the delivery of a range of community focused sports programmes for identified disadvantaged communities within the local Strabane area. Specifically, this evaluation relates the delivery of the Men's Health Initiative and the Schools Fitness Challenge, which were delivered as part of this overall programme. The programme aimed to meet the following Sport NI objectives:

- ❖ To increase levels of sustained participation in sport and physical activity among under-represented groups
- ❖ To improve the health and well-being of programme participants
- ❖ To develop capacity and build community participation and cohesion
- ❖ To establish and support the development of structures to sustain longer term provision for The Community Sport Programme across Northern Ireland

Effectiveness in delivering the Project Objectives

The programmes were assessed against nine specific objectives as outlined in the original Community Sport application, including:

- i) An active more healthy community among specific target groups
- ii) Increased community awareness of sports, recreation and healthy living opportunities
- iii) Reduction in illness with linkages to low levels of physical activity and diet
- iv) Increased social inclusion and community ownership
- v) Increased participation in sports groups and community activities
- vi) Increased participation in complementary programmes including GP referral schemes from within the target areas
- vii) Improved linkages and partnership working between agencies

- viii) Development of sustainable skills including volunteering, personal development skills, and coaching which are transferable and can be used beyond the life span of the programme
- ix) Model of practice to inform future programme delivery

The Men's Health Initiative and the Children's Fitness Challenge contributed successfully to all of these objectives to varying degrees, most notably increasing participation in sports and community activities as well as the development of sustainable skills. This section also details some case study examples which provide additional qualitative evidence of associated benefits for participants.

Financial Efficiency in delivering the Project Objectives

The programmes financial management was very good with all but one of the actual costs falling within budgeted estimates, namely programme costs. An element of this total overspend of £8,536.99 can be contextualised by the increase in the provision of the Men's Health Initiative from one night to two nights per week. Another interesting point to note is that Sport NI's contribution covered the financial outlay associated with the programmes with the Council's contribution allocated to hosting the officer.

Other Qualitative Findings from Consultation

Consultation highlighted a range of qualitative information that demonstrated the programme successfully achieved a range of objectives and aims. The qualitative information is broken down into the following:

- Quality of Experience
- Community Development Networks
- Strategic Development and Legacy
- Engaging Target Groups (Sedentary Males & Young people)

Recommendations for Development of Outreach Programme

Six recommendations were presented based on the information generated from the consultation and the extensive experience of the consultant. This included, for example, the need work in partnership with appropriate agencies and organisations for the benefit the overall programme delivery. These recommendations should be considered for the delivery of future programmes of this nature in the area.

Conclusion

A brief summary shows that the Melvin Community Sport Programme have achieved the majority of their targets. The original target of 15 participants in the Men's Fitness Initiative was met and sustained during the 14 months it has been running, while 15 Primary Schools took part in the School's Fitness Challenge, against a target of 1. Qualitative feedback indicated this entire group of schools enjoyed the programme and would be willing to participate in future in any future provision. The target community have been made more aware of the benefits of sport and physical activity by learning new techniques and methods of keeping fit, as well as supplementary programmes including health checks and nutritional advice.

Introduction and Background to the Melvin Community Sports Programme

2.1 Introduction

This section looks at the background of how the Melvin Community Sport Programme was established and how the need for it was identified. It also outlines the role of the staff of the Melvin Community Sport Programme in the day-to-day activities of the programme.

2.2 Background to Melvin Community Sport Programme

In 2003 Sport NI secured £2.4 million from the Big Lottery Fund to deliver the Community Sport Programme with the specific aim of improving the health and well-being of those communities most at risk of low levels of participation in sport and physical recreation.

Strabane District Council submitted an application to this programme to deliver the Melvin Community Sport Programme, in conjunction with a formally established community partnership consisting of seven local community organisations (detailed below) and a number of sports clubs. This funding allowed Strabane District Council and the Community Partnership to recruit and employ one Development Officer and three Coordinators as well as fund the delivery of a significant number of programmes targeting those resident in identified disadvantaged areas / wards of the town. Specifically, this evaluation will focus on the assessment of the Men's Fitness programme and the Schools Fitness Challenge.

- Ballycolman Community Association
- Melmount Forum
- Calverts Community Association
- Chestnut Park Residents Association
- Strabane Caring Service
- Cairdre
- Strabane Youth Association

Based at the Melvin Sports Complex and Community Hall, this was the first time a diverse multi sports programme was delivered within the East Ward (ranked 10th on the Noble multiple deprivation measure and 27th within the health domain rankings).

2.3 Melvin Community Sport Programme Aims and Objectives

The Melvin Community Sport Programme aims to provide new sporting and recreational opportunities within the Strabane area aimed at improving the overall health and well being of the identified disadvantaged communities. These programmes are also used to address wider social objectives such as social inclusion, community relations, employment and reconciliation.

The overall community sport programme, funded by Sport NI, identified the following aims:

- i) An active more healthy community among specific target groups;
- ii) Increased community awareness of sports, recreation and healthy living opportunities;
- iii) Reduction in illness with linkages to low levels of physical activity and diet;
- iv) Increased social inclusion and community ownership;
- v) Increased participation in sports groups and community activities;
- vi) Increased participation in complementary programmes including GP referral schemes from within the target areas;
- vii) Improved linkages and partnership working between agencies;
- viii) Development of sustainable skills including volunteering, personal development skills, and coaching which are transferable and can be used beyond the life span of the programme; and
- ix) Model of practice to inform future programme delivery.

The relevant programme aims will be used to assess the delivery of the Men's Fitness programme and the Schools Fitness Challenge, which will be detailed in section 5 of this report.

2.4 Melvin Community Sport Programme Location

The focus of the programme delivery was the Melvin Community Sport Complex and Community Hall. The Schools Fitness Challenge also used appropriate school facilities for a proportion of the activities.

The Complex provided a prime location for the activities as it the only outdoor recreation site in the Town and represented a very accessible venue for the target participants (those living within the East ward).

2.5 Melvin Community Sport Programme Operational Activities and Staff

The overall programme initially identified a target population of 4,612 across the Town who were deemed 'disadvantaged'. To deliver these activities to this target population it was. A Community Sports Development Officer was recruited to deliver these functions. The table below outlines the specific staff and their current responsibilities with regard to the programme.

Name	Job Title / Role	Current Responsibilities
Ryan Porter	Community Sports Development Officer	Co-ordinating and planning the programme; Managing the resources available; Assisting with monitoring and evaluation; Making health and safety arrangements; Ensuring that information about the project is easily available and that local groups are consulted about any developments.

Terms of Reference and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the terms of reference agreed by Sport NI and the Melvin Community Sport Programme. It goes on to outline the methodology and actions that have been taken to gather the raw data and complete the evaluation.

3.2 Terms of Reference

As an integral part of the Sport NI Community Sport Programme, Strabane District Council has been tasked with appointing an independent evaluator to critique and report on the Programme.

The following terms of reference were agreed before commencement of the project:

- a) The degree to which the Melvin Community Sport Programme has been effective in achieving the objectives outlined in their application and Letter of Offer from Sport NI.
- b) The efficiency with which the Melvin Community Sport Programme expended the grant to achieve the objectives outlined in their application and Letter of Offer from Sport NI.
- c) Overall conclusions about the execution and likely impact of the programme.
- d) Recommendations about the delivery of any future programmes based on the conclusions of this evaluation.

3.3 Evaluation Methodology

Copius Consulting, in developing a framework for the evaluation objectives, agreed the following methodology with the Melvin Community Sport team.

Agreed Methodology	Work Undertaken
Develop an understanding of the project - it's objectives and strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertook in depth interviews with the programme staff • Ongoing correspondence between Melvin Community Sport and Copius Consulting throughout the evaluation process
Develop an understanding of the objectives of the programme Funder in financing the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed the Sport NI Community Sport Programme objectives and criteria for Funding • Reviewed the Community Sport Programme application • Reviewed the Sport NI Letter of Offer
Develop and understanding of how the project has been delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carried out interviews with 9 of the programme participants and 2 individuals who assisted with delivery aspects of the programme. <p><i>Schools Fitness Challenge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drumnabeg Primary School - Envagh - St Columba, Clady - Killen Primary School - Ardstraw - St Pats, Donemana - Erganagh <p><i>Men's Fitness Initiative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seamus McAdams - Liam Curran <p><i>Men's Fitness Initiative Coach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Warren O'Hagan <p><i>Derry Healthy Cities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eamon O'Kane
Develop an understanding and report on the likely impact of the programme on participants and the wider community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Benchmark this project with other community development projects in the area • A critical analysis of the Melvin Community Sport Programme monitoring and evaluation information
Identify any changes that should be made to any future programmes based on the learning's drawn from this 3 year programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed with the Strabane District Council Community Sport team future actions for the project • Developed a number of recommendations based on suggestions from key clients and best practice community development in Strabane

3.4 Presentation of Findings

The findings of the evaluation are detailed over the next 4 chapters. The Sport NI Community Sport Programme is examined firstly before critiquing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Melvin Community Sport Programme, namely the Men's Fitness Initiative and Schools Fitness Challenge. A qualitative overview of the findings is presented before a chapter designated to future suggestions and recommendations is presented in Chapter 8.

3.5 Conclusion

The Research Design and presentation has been developed specifically to help the Strabane District Council, the Community Partnership and the Melvin Community Sport team to make more informed decisions about its future delivery and direction of its Outreach Programme.

The staff members of the Programme agreed the Research methodology, and their input into the evaluation has enabled them to assess the effectiveness of the project in greater depth.

The Methodology and associated actions are shown in Chapter 3.3.

Sport Northern Ireland's Big Lottery Funded Community Sport Programme

4.1 Introduction

This section gives some specific information about the Sport NI before developing a more in depth analysis of the Community Sport Programme, which they currently manage.

4.2 Sport NI

Sport NI is a Non - Departmental Public Body of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and is charged with the development of sport in Northern Ireland. DCAL's vision is of a *"confident, creative, informed and vibrant community."*

The vision for Sport NI is embedded in DCAL's vision: Through sport, to contribute to an inclusive, confident, creative, informed and vibrant community."

Sport NI's role is to provide a vision and strategic leadership for sport. It is committed to targeting support and delivering tangible outcomes that benefit the sporting community and wider society. Sport NI values the important contribution made by the community, voluntary and statutory sectors to sport in Northern Ireland and work closely with these sectors to build capacity and sustainability in development. Sport NI designs and implements programmes and partnerships that contribute to the following objectives:

- Increased participation in sport and physical activity
- Improved sporting performances
- Improved efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of sport

In the attainment of Sport NI's strategic objectives, the following Corporate Outcomes will be realised.

1. Professional, accountable and autonomous sporting organisations
2. Increased levels of spectators attending sporting events

3. Increased participation in sport and physical activity especially among under represented groups
4. Increased number of athletes with improved sporting performance
5. Contribution to broader government priorities
6. Increased efficiency and effectiveness in the attainment of corporate outcomes

Sport NI's business is designed to provide people, especially young people and under represented groups, with pathways and options for lifelong sporting and personal development

4.3 Community Sport Programme

In 2003 Sport NI secured £2.4 Million from the Big Lottery Fund to deliver the Community Sport Programme with the specific aim of improving the health and well being of those communities most at risk of low levels of participation in sport and physical recreation. The Community Sport Programme aims to improve the health and well being of individuals and build community cohesion through increased participation of children, young people and adults in areas of high social need and groups traditionally marginalised in sport and physical activity and in particular:

"Community Sport Programme" Aim	How the Melvin Community Sport Programme Achieves Sport NI's Aims:
To increase levels of sustained participation in sport and physical activity among under-represented groups	The Programme targets individuals who, in the past, have not been involved in sport and physical activity. By making them more aware of their health and how to maintain a healthy lifestyle, it is hoped that these people will continue and potentially increase their participation in sport and physical activity over the longer term.
To improve the health and well-being of programme participants	(100%) of programme participants have indicated their health and well being has improved as a result of their participation in the programmes. The programme provided local children and adult males to take part in physical activity which they had not had previously - Schools Fitness Challenge (3-5 20 minute sessions per week at home or in school for 6weeks) and Men's Fitness Initiative (one night per week for 16 weeks).

To develop capacity and build community participation and cohesion	The programme gave individuals the opportunity to engage in training or to gain experience coaching a group of adults or children, which allowed more people from the Strabane area to gain essential skills and learn how to use them.
To establish and support the development of structures to sustain longer term provision for the Community Sport Programme across Northern Ireland	The programme developed a partnership between Strabane District Council and a range of community groups and sports clubs, therefore establishing a structure to allow this longer term participation. This has been demonstrated on the formalisation and development of the Men's Fitness Initiative where the programme has now progressed to 2 nights which the participants self fund.

Sport NI believes that by investing in community sport, real progress can be made in meeting Sport NI's Corporate Plan outcomes, which include:

- Increased number of physically literate young people;
- Increased participation in sport and physical activity among under represented groups;
- A competent sporting workforce;
- Professional, accountable and autonomous sporting organisations; and
- Increased efficiency through improved planning and administration;

4.4 Melvin Community Sport Specific Application Details and Award from the Funding Agency

The initial application to the Sport NI Community Sport Programme was submitted in July 2004. Following confirmation of successful application in June 2004, the Melvin Community Sport Programme was awarded a total of £112,500 for the three year programme.

As part of their application they identified a number of forecasted outputs and outcomes.

As well as achieving the objectives detailed in section 2.4, the application identified a range of community based sports programmes that would be delivered, including:

- Development of a community sport ‘champion’ programme in partnership with local groups. This network will be used to promote the programme within particular areas and interest groups and to assist consultation.
- Sports specific coaching in the mainstream outdoor sports targeted development skills and coaching which are transferable and can be used beyond the life span of the programme.
- Model of practice to inform future programme delivery through sports clubs, youth clubs, community groups involving participation mainly by young people and offering programmes at introductory and developmental levels.
- Sporting and recreational activities in the centre sports hall including introductory activities aimed mainly at young people, women and older people.
- Healthy living activities - light exercise programmes and walking groups on routes in the park and the adjoining riverside walkway targeted at sedentary groups.
- Healthy living education programme which will include links with statutory and voluntary health care professionals who will be used to provide focused education programmes based on the health needs of the area; the GP referral scheme; the WELB; ageing well network and the NI physical activity strategy group.
- Development of diversionary sporting and recreation activities in the partnership with neighbourhood renewal and community safety agencies based on identified local needs.
- Training and development programmes for reference group, champions and coaches

4.5 Conclusion

The above section gives some context to the work of the Sport NI and the Community Sport Programme and the initial application that was submitted by Strabane District Council and the Community Partnership to Sport NI.

Effectiveness in delivering project objectives

5.1 Introduction

In designing and agreeing the evaluation formation, the staff at the Melvin Community Sport Programme agreed that the focus and presentation of findings should be targeted at the Programme's objectives:

- x) An active more healthy community among specific target groups
- xi) Increased community awareness of sports, recreation and healthy living opportunities
- xii) Reduction in illness with linkages to low levels of physical activity and diet
- xiii) Increased social inclusion and community ownership
- xiv) Increased participation in sports groups and community activities
- xv) Increased participation in complementary programmes including GP referral schemes from within the target areas
- xvi) Improved linkages and partnership working between agencies
- xvii) Development of sustainable skills including volunteering, personal development skills, and coaching which are transferable and can be used beyond the life span of the programme
- xviii) Model of practice to inform future programme delivery

5.2 How the Project's Objectives were met

Below we have looked at each of Melvin Community Sport's objectives in turn and through consultation with staff members and project participants we have been able to comment on what was done on each objective.

5.2.1 Objective 1 - An active more healthy community among specific target groups

Two of the main areas of the programme involved targeting school children and sedentary men. Both of these proved very successful, with participants and leaders from each of the programmes commenting on how much everyone enjoyed the activities.

The School's Fitness Challenge saw 243 pupils taking part in the programme from 15 different schools from the local area. Over the 6 weeks the programme was delivered, more than 60% of the pupils that took part showed improvement in at least 1 of the 4 exercises.

Meanwhile, the Men's Fitness Initiative has been running for 14 months, and has attracted an average of 16 men per session. The Programme began with 1 session per week, but this had now been increased to 2 sessions per week due to demands from the participants.

During the consultation, a common theme in relation to the schools' Fitness Challenge was that all of the children enjoyed taking part, for a variety of reasons, including the chance to compete and the attitude of the coaches. It was also commented by many of the teacher's in charge that they seen a dramatic increase in the ability of their pupils over the course of the programme, and that all of the children involved were very keen to take part in the training activities between the tests.

CASESTUDY 1: Drumabeg Primary School

During the Schools Fitness Challenge the pupils of Drumabeg PS practiced the exercises they were given for 20 minutes every day in school, and the teacher in charge commented that they saw a huge improvement in the children's performance over the course of the programme. The pupils still take part in the exercise programme they were given during school PE classes.

Some reasons given for not taking part in sport and physical activity included a lack of opportunities and simply finding it difficult to break habits of not exercising. But from the consultation and the results of the programme it is clear that many people who previously found it difficult to get involved in sport and physical activity now enjoy taking part, and have learnt more about living a healthy lifestyle.

5.2.2 Objective 2 - Increased community awareness of sports, recreation and healthy living opportunities

Several of the respondents stated they now had greater awareness of the importance of personal fitness and an increased knowledge of healthier eating and exercising methods.

CASESTUDY 2: 42 year old, Male who took part in the Men's Fitness Initiative

From taking part in the Men's Fitness Programme this participant said that he was now more aware of his personal fitness and that the programme has raised his awareness of nutrition. He said he is now, *"thinking healthier and eating healthier."*

The health checks provided by Derry Healthy Cities allowed participants to identify issues that may have affected them previously. A member of Derry Healthy Cities commended the developmental nature of the Melvin Community Sport Programme delivery and programme and their effectiveness in following up on these health checks. Unlike similar projects, which simply provide health checks, Melvin Community Sport had a lot more substance, recommending additional services to users and signposting what participants may be interested in.

This formed the basis of an overall health education programme which included; ladies taster weeks (spinning, tai chi, cancer awareness, stress sessions and smoking cessation).

5.2.3 Objective 3 - Increased social inclusion and community ownership

As with many community development initiatives, this project aimed to positively impact social inclusion. By its very it is difficult to measure this using quantitative methods and therefore must rely purely on qualitative findings from the consultation.

Staff delivering the Melvin Community Sport Programme and participants in the programme alike, both stated they witnessed improvements in participants' relationships between each other. This was especially notable in the Men's Fitness Programme, where the men taking part in the activities had not previously met each other. During the consultation it was a common theme that everyone involved enjoyed the opportunity to make new friends and the camaraderie that developed over the course of the project.

By delivering the majority of events at the Melvin Sport Complex, this has made members of the community more comfortable with visiting and using the Complex. Users and staff

indicated that it would be easier to attract participants to the site for any future programmes as a result.

5.2.4 Objective 4 - Increased participation in sports groups and community activities

This programme has helped to make people more aware of the importance of their personal health and improved their perception of the enjoyable gained from their involvement in the group activities. The Men's Fitness Initiative still attracted a core group of 16 participants, with numbers fluctuating between 10 and 28 depending on a range of external factors, including, other commitments and the weather.

The original target of the Men's Fitness Initiative was to get 15 males involved in a regular basis; the programme has surpassed that original target. The programme engaged men between the ages of 22 and 57, and due to the connection with Sion Swifts FC they were able to target and make links with former footballers.

Nearly 50% of the schools interviewed regarding the programme stated they still practiced the exercises delivered during the Schools Fitness Challenge. This shows that the teachers felt the programme had a positive impact on the children and the fact that the children still want to take part in the exercises is very encouraging.

The teacher-training element of the programme successfully ensured that teachers had the necessary basic skills and capacity to continue delivering new activities, which has facilitated the sustainability of the project.

5.2.5 Objective 5 - Increased participation in complementary programmes including GP referral schemes from within the target areas

As part of the Men's Fitness Programme participants were offered a health check to help monitor improvements in health and fitness over the course of the programme. This has encouraged three of the participants to continue to have regular health checks (2 for blood pressure and 1 for cholesterol checks) and 15 participants indicated the programme has helped to remove the stigma of asking a doctor for advice on minor issues, or even just out of general interest.

CASE STUDY 3: 43 year old, Male

The free health check offered made this participant more aware of the importance of getting advice on health issues. He said, *"It made me realise that it is important to get checked by doctors for issues other than blood pressure and cholesterol. It acted as a catalyst to get other checks, such as, thyroids and prostate, ect."*

5.2.6 Objective 6 - Improved linkages and partnership working between agencies

The Melvin Community Sport Programme was delivered through a range of agencies, with Strabane District Council being the lead partner. These community partners included:

- Ballycolman Community Association
- Melmount Forum
- Calverts Community Association
- Chestnut Park Residents Association
- Strabane Caring Service
- Cairdre
- Strabane Youth Association

The range of stakeholders involved added significant value to the overall promotion and delivery of the programme and subsequently the success associated with it.

In the future, it is hoped that these agencies and other community organisations within Strabane will be able to work together even more effectively on any similar community development projects based on the experience this project has profiled. As such it will be promoted and showcased as an example of best practice throughout Strabane and the surrounding areas.

Several of the Primary Schools that took part in the Schools Fitness Challenge were pleased with how the project was run and positive attitude and approach of the staff, below is an example of one such school.

CASESTUDY 4: Envagh Primary School

The teacher in charge mentioned that the pupils liked working with the Melvin Community Sport staff and enjoyed taking part in the exercises and feeling fit. Due to the positive experience they would be open to the idea of participating in future programmes.

5.2.7 Objective 7 - Development of sustainable skills including volunteering, personal development skills, and coaching which are transferable and can be used beyond the life span of the programme

Throughout the lifetime of this programme six multi-sports coaches and volunteers were given the opportunity to develop, either through gaining additional training or having the opportunity to gain practical new experiences.

CASE STUDY 5: 40 year old, Male - Coach in the Men's Fitness Initiative

Taking part in the Melvin Community Sport Programme allowed this coach to gain experience working with adults, as opposed to children, and also gave him the opportunity to learn and try out new drills with the participants.

In connection with the School's Fitness Challenge, four teachers from the participating Primary Schools were invited to receive training on how to teach school pupils fundamental skills. This has helped increase the confidence of those teachers involved and ensure that they can continue to deliver a range of child friendly activities in the school setting without the presence of one of the Melvin Community Sport's coaches.

5.2.8 Objective 8 - Model of practice to inform future programme delivery

It is obvious these Programmes have had a positive effect on the people it has impacted, and therefore, future projects in the Strabane area could do well to learn from it.

Throughout the consultation there were positive comments on a range of aspects of the Programme. The staff were regularly praised throughout the consultation, with many people highlighting their professionalism and expertise as being key to their group's enjoyment of the programme.

Another example of best practice was how well the Melvin Community Sport staff followed-up the health checks that took part throughout the Programme, as was expressed by Eamon O'Kane of Derry Healthy Cities (Case Study 6).

CASESTUDY 6: Eamon O'Kane (Derry Healthy Cities)

One aspect of the programme I was particularly pleased with was the follow-up to the health checks, unlike similar programmes who don't do any kind of follow-up to the tests. The Melvin Community Sport staff are very good at signposting participants to ensure they are made aware of any programmes and services that may be of benefit for them.

It is hoped that in the future the School's Fitness Challenge will become an annual event, which is conceivable given the success of the programme in the pilot year. This would lead to having a recognised and established programme, with the possibility of developing links into local sports clubs to ensure that participants.

As stated previously these programmes will be showcased as examples of good practice throughout the area in that they developed the necessary infrastructure (partners and stakeholders) to deliver successfully, the range and nature of activities were based on demand and adequate marketing and promotions were used to attract and secure participation from designated groups.

5.3 Benchmark Against Initial Project Forecasted Outputs

When the initial application was made a series of forecasted outputs were drawn up, below is a table showing the progress Melvin Community Sport have made on each of these areas.

Forecasted Outputs	Current Status	Evaluator Comment
Engage with 840 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ < 17 = 300 ❖ 18 -24 = 120 ❖ 25 - 34 = 60 ❖ 35 - 54 = 150 ❖ 55 - 64 =150 ❖ 65+ = 60 	Engaged with 271 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ < 17 = 243 ❖ 18 -24 = 2 ❖ 25 - 34 = 10 ❖ 35 - 54 = 14 ❖ 55 - 64 = 2 ❖ 65+ = 0 	Some of this information was not captured within the scope of the evaluation as the targets incorporate the overall community sport programme but the
Engage with 25 organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Pre-school = 2 ❖ Primary schools = 1 ❖ Higher & Further Education = 1 ❖ Sports Clubs = 10 ❖ Youth Clubs = 3 ❖ Community Groups = 6 ❖ Residents Associations = 1 ❖ Health organisations = 1 	Engaged with 24 organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Pre-school = 0 ❖ Primary schools = 15 ❖ Higher & Further Education = 0 ❖ Sports Clubs = 1 ❖ Youth Clubs = 0 ❖ Community Groups = 6 ❖ Residents Associations = 1 ❖ Health organisations = 1 	evaluation focused on the Men's Fitness Initiative and the Schools Fitness Challenge only. As such it would be unfair to assess programme targets against these KPI's. That said, a number of the targets were met by these programmes alone including engagement with resident associations and health organisations, and in some cases exceeded expectations with Primary School participation - with 15 schools involved.
Original forecast for participants in the Men's Fitness Initiative was to attract and maintain at least 15 regular participants.	A core group of 16 men took part in the programme, with numbers varying from 28 (maximum) and 10 (minimum) depending on a range of external factors.	This target has been met and exceeded. The high maximum of 28 shows that there is still interest from the local community, and that potentially the core group can be increased further.

5.4 Conclusion

It is clear that the programme formed an integral element of an overall programme of activity delivered by the Council's Community Sport Programme. As such it would be misleading to assess the designated Men's Health Initiative and Children's Fitness Challenge against the overall community sport programme targets.

It must be noted though that the some of the overall targets were met (community groups, health organisations and residents associations, and in some cases exceeded, namely the number of primary schools involved).

Financial efficiency in delivering project objectives

6.1 Introduction

This section gives a brief overview of the funding that was made available through the Community Sport Programme and the efficiencies with which the money has been spent on achieving project objectives.

6.2 Budget and Analysis of Expenditure

Sport NI through its Community Sport Programme has supplied the financial resources to enable the Melvin Community Sport Programme to be implemented throughout the Strabane District Council area. Two parts of this programme included the Men's Fitness Initiative and the School's Fitness Challenge. There was a small charge to participants in the Men's Fitness Initiative, £10 for 8 weeks or £2 per night attended.

The breakdown of the expenditure over the three years was as follows:

Heading	Budget as per Application	Sport NI contribution	Total Expenditure
Salary	90,000	67,646.79	67,646.79
Travel and Subsistence	6,000	3,025.96	3,025.96
Administration Costs	9,000	4,617.74	4,617.74
Staff Development and Training	3,000	1,365	1,365
Recruitment and Selection	4,000	603.80	603.80
Programme Costs	18,000	26,536.99	26,536.99
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	130,000	103,796.28	103,796.28

6.3 Conclusion

Again this budget allocation focused on the delivery of the overall Community Sport Programme and the specific financial information regarding the individual Men's Health Initiative and Children's Fitness Challenge was not broken down. However, against the budget allocation as per Sport NI application the actual costs fell well within the expected levels of expenditure with the exception of the programme costs. An element of this additional spend of £8536.99 can be explained by the increase provision of the Men's Health Initiative from one night to two nights per week. This increase resulted from the demand and desire from the men involved.

It should also be noted the entire financial contribution to the Community Sport Programme came from Sport NI with Strabane District Council contributing through hosting the officer at the Melvin Sports Complex.

Other Qualitative Findings from Consultation

7.1 Introduction

In addition to the Project Aims and Objectives, the Melvin Community Sport staff were keen to develop a better understanding of the following areas:

- Quality of Experience
- Community Development Networks
- Strategic Development and Legacy
- Engaging Target Groups (Sedentary Males & Young people)

7.2 Quality of Experience

Of the organisations consulted, there was positive feedback relating to the activities that took place through the Melvin Community Sport Programme. The Schools Fitness Challenge, appeared to be very popular with the school pupils, who enjoyed all aspects of the initiative, especially the testing. This Programme was so successful that some of the schools are still using the exercises they were taught for the programme during PE classes in school, such as Ergangh Primary School;

CASE STUDY 7: Ergangh Primary School

During the Programme the children enjoyed the Programme, and in particular the testing aspect of it. The children are still very keen to continue using the exercises that they used for training during the course of the programme during PE classes in school.

Feedback on the Men's Fitness Initiative was also very positive. All the consultees were very pleased with how the programme went and feel that they got some real benefits from taking part. The benefits ranged from simply making new friends and having a good time to becoming more aware of their personal fitness and how to live a healthy lifestyle.

All those consulted praised the Melvin Community Sport team. Their facilitation skills were highlighted as a strength, with many consultees expressing how well the staff delivered programmes and dealt with any problems that arose.

7.3 Community Development Networks

One of the major strengths of the project was the relationship between Strabane District Council and the local community organisations. Throughout the programme the team at Melvin Community Sport and Strabane District Council worked with a range of schools (6 secondary and 22 primary schools), community organisations (19) and sports clubs (45).

In order to expand the catchment of the project and engage with as many people as possible, for any future programmes it would be useful to make contact with any community development networks and community sport networks in a bid to further developing the project.

7.4 Strategic Development and Legacy

All of the groups and participants consulted were very supportive of the way the Programme has come to life over the past three years. The staff have been fully supportive and ensured that the project has progressed over the past few years.

There are currently plans to ensure that the School's Fitness Challenge is established as an annual event, which will hopefully involve more schools from the area. Due to the success of the Men's Fitness Initiative a sustainable programme has now been established with participants paying £3 per session with a small contribution from Strabane District Council to cover costs.

Having already established links with a range of community organisations and sports clubs, any future programmes should look to maintain and build upon these relationships. In depth planning should be undertaken for any proposed programmes and by including groups that have already been involved in the programme then this will ensure that they are given a sense of ownership and the activities are meeting their needs.

7.5 Engaging Target Groups (Sedentary Males & Young People)

The Melvin Community Sport Programme set out to target people that would not normally be involved in sport. The School's Fitness Challenge helped to achieve this, by engaging with young boys and girls, some of whom do not regularly participate in sport and physical activity. Introducing them to fitness testing seemed to have a positive effect, with teachers saying that the testing part of the programme proved very popular with the children.

The Men's Fitness Initiative also targeted men who are not regular participants in sport and physical activity. Some of these men had wanted to get more involved in sport, but for a range of reasons had not been able to. Melvin Community Sport accommodated these men, and gave them a safe and relaxed atmosphere where they could participate and improve their awareness of healthy living and to improve their general health.

For example, local taxi companies, were targeted as well as promotional activities in local health centres, mail drop, community newsletters, community websites, direct contact with sports clubs and poster campaign.

7.6 Conclusion

The above chapter gives some qualitative information on specific areas of the outreach programme that the Melvin Community Sport staff may find useful to be aware of. The above 4 areas are further discussed in the recommendations section.

Recommendations for Development of Outreach Programme

8.1 Introduction

This section presents a number of recommendations, which have been based on the evidence and the interviews carried out throughout the duration of this project.

8.2.1 Recommendation 1 - Seek public funding to sustain and develop existing programmes

Over the past 3 years there have been huge steps made in the development of this project. If the Programme was to end and nothing was brought in to replace it, then a lot of the work put in over the past 3 years will have been wasted.

The Melvin Community Sport staff and the Partnership should be looking into possible avenues of funding for future programmes.

It must be taken into account the process and timeframe involved in attracting large scale funding for multiple salaries and project running costs, therefore it is recommended this is given priority.

Due to large reductions in public funding, any future Programmes may have to address issues other than health and participation in sport. Therefore, any planning and strategic development should look at how the project could address a wider social agenda, including issues like, crime prevention, employment and good relations.

8.2.2 Recommendation 2 - Continue to target specific under represented groups, for example, women, young people and the elderly

The project to date has already engaged a number of young people and middle-aged males who were previously considered sedentary. However, more could be done to engage people who would traditionally not engage in sport.

One recommendation made was that taster sessions could be introduced to community associations catering for women and the elderly. These are two social groups that generally would not participate in sport, but given the right opportunities and encourage there is no reason why the majority of them cannot.

It may involve turning attention away from 'traditional' sports, such as, soccer, Gaelic games, rugby and athletics, and concentrating more on alternative approaches, for example, dance, aerobics and walking. It would also be essential to follow-up these activities with health education, as has been done with the Men's Fitness Initiative, to ensure that the projects have a lasting impact on the participants.

8.2.3 Recommendation 3 - Continue to use and promote the Melvin Sports Complex to establish it as a base for Community initiatives

The Men's Fitness Initiative took place in the Melvin Sports Complex and any of the participants consulted were happy with the facilities available. However, the majority of the schools that took part in the Schools Fitness Challenge that were consulted did not attend the Melvin Sports Complex at any stage of the programme, and those that did only attended once.

By continuing to use the Complex as a centre for any future community and sports development projects the participants of the project will feel more comfortable using the Complex and be more willing to attend it for other events. The advantage of this approach is that members of the local community will begin to see the Complex as somewhere safe and welcoming that the whole community can use, not just those heavily involved in sport.

One suggestion would be to hold at least one session, most likely the final session, of any programmes run off-site at the Melvin Sport Complex. By doing this the participants won't be asked to come to an unfamiliar place to take part in a new activity. They will be feel comfortable in their usual surroundings, for example, community centre, local playing fields, and culminating with an opportunity to visit and use the Melvin Sport Complex to complete their programme.

This approach would be particularly applicable to programmes such as the Schools Fitness Challenge, where it may not be practical to transport up to 20 children once a week, but where it is suitable for a one off event. It would also give the participants encouragement and something to work towards.

8.2.4 Recommendation 4 - Set up an Advisory Committee to get opinions on what form future programmes should take

Any future programmes should take advice from the local community in order to make sure they are meeting the needs of the community.

The optimal method to achieve this would be the formation of an Advisory Committee, consisting of members of local community groups and sports clubs who are best placed to identify the issues and needs of the local community. It may also be worthwhile to have Committee members from organisations such as the Western Health Board, Strabane District Council and Western Education and Library Board, for example, to be involved directly or updated regularly of any progress.

By meeting quarterly, this committee would be able to have a positive influence on the direction of any programmes that are being proposed. Having a wide selection of members from varying fields will allow any community development project to foresee any potential problems well in advance and also help them to address a selection of social issues with their programmes.

8.2.5 Recommendation 5 - Explore the possibility of delivering taster sessions at other venues and advertising in different areas to attract unconventional users

Although running events at the Melvin Sports Complex has its benefits, it also could limit the people that could potentially participate in it. Using a number of facility throughout the District area could enhance and increase the participant numbers and deliver wider benefits to the community across the entire District.

Therefore, it would be beneficial to hold taster sessions in community venues, i.e. church halls, community centres, schools. This way the Programme would become more widely known and more people would come into contact with the Programme and have a chance to see it in action.

Advertising methods should also be targeted thus ensuring the necessary message is reaching the target population, for example, programmes targeting people who suffer from ill health could utilise promotional posters displayed in GP surgeries. This would help the Programme to get more people with poor health issues who need health improvement programmes and health education.

8.2.6 Recommendation 6 - Continue to attract and develop relationships with local community development and community sports networks.

In order to run an effective project it is essential that good, effective relationships are developed and that the appropriate groups are involved. It is also important to ensure that as large a catchment area as possible are informed of the project to be certain that the entire community is provided access to the programme.

The most effective way to do this is to establish links with any community development networks and community sports networks within the Strabane District area. This will ensure that all the local community groups and sports clubs in the area are made aware of the programme and given the opportunity to participate.

Other agencies should be contacted and informed of the Programme as well, such as, local health group networks (i.e. GP's Forum), Western Health Board, Sport NI and Western Educational Library Board. This will allow any future programmes to keep informed of any new government strategies, avenues for funding and receive expert advice on how they should modify their programmes.

8.3 Conclusion

The recommendations listed above were based on comments and evidence collected during the consultation and research gathering. Based on best practice and experience of Community Sports Development the consultants have identified six recommendations for the Men's Fitness Initiative and the Schools Fitness Challenge that the staff and of Strabane District Council, Melvin Community Sport as well as Sport NI should give due consideration to regarding the future of the respective programmes.

Conclusion

9.1 Conclusion

This evaluation was carried out throughout the months of June and July of 2008. As part of the contract with Sport NI, the Melvin Community Sport Programme built in a programme evaluation process that would allow an independent organisation to assess their outreach delivery and present positive suggestions for the development of the project. The Melvin Community Sport Programme was keen that the evaluation looked at specific elements of the project and took in both quantitative and qualitative information.

The report goes through a phased approach detailing the history of the project, the award made by Sport NI's Community Sport Programme and the methodology with which the research was conducted.

A brief summary shows that the Melvin Community Sport Programme have achieved the majority of their targets. The original target of 15 participants in the Men's Fitness Initiative was met and sustained during the 14 months it has been running, while 15 Primary Schools took part in the School's Fitness Challenge, against a target of 1. Qualitative feedback indicated this entire group of schools enjoyed the programme and would be willing to participate in future in any future provision. The target community have been made more aware of the benefits of sport and physical activity by learning new techniques and methods of keeping fit, as well as supplementary programmes including health checks and nutritional advice.

The Melvin Community Sport Programme has managed the financial support from Sport NI with detail and should be commended for aligning all of their expenditure to the budget that was agreed in June 2005.

Feedback was taken from consultees in a number of areas including quality of experience, outreach programme delivery, strategic development and engaging with local people from the Strabane District. The feedback received has resulted in the development of six clear recommendations that will help Melvin Community Sport in their bid to deliver an effective sport and community development project.