



**YOUR School**

**YOUR Club**

A Practical Guide to Achieving  
Community Use of  
School Sports Facilities.

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# Foreword

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As Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure I am delighted to introduce 'Your School, Your Club - a Practical Guide to Achieving Community Use of School Sports Facilities'.

'Your School, Your Club' is the result of collaborative work between DCAL, Sport NI, the Department of Education (DE) and other educational and non-educational stakeholders. The document has been written with the support of my colleague John O'Dowd MLA, Minister for Education, and has been written in a manner that is intended to complement additional guidance on community use of schools from DE.

By opening the doors outside of normal school hours, I believe there is enormous potential for schools in the north of Ireland to place themselves at the heart of local communities. It is my belief that community use of school sports facilities can greatly contribute to addressing some of the most prevalent issues in our society.

For example, community use of schools can improve access to sporting provision in areas of deprivation, promote equality, help tackle poverty and social exclusion, whilst also providing positive opportunities for improving the mental health and well-being of our communities. In the current economic climate a greater emphasis must also be placed on developing strategic partnerships in order to revitalise existing sports facilities or to develop new/additional provision. Responsibility does not rest with any one sector or organisation, but together, we can address shortfalls in sporting provision, and in turn we can contribute to improving the health and well-being of all our people.

Furthermore, DCAL's 10 year strategy for sport, Sport Matters, amongst other issues, focuses heavily both on addressing inequalities in sporting opportunities amongst a range of groups of people and 'driving up' participation levels.

In particular, one of the key objectives of Sport Matters is to ensure that, by 2019, 90% of the population have quality accredited, multi-sport facilities that have the capacity to meet demand within 20 minutes travel time. It further envisages that by 2019, the north will have developed a range of new, improved and shared sports facilities.

The 'Your School Your Club Guide' has been drawn up in recognition of the fact that sporting collaboration with the wider education sector, and schools in particular, is a key contributor to the achievement of these objectives. It also recognises the potential benefits to education in terms of maintaining and strengthening respect for local schools, and better academic achievement for pupils. It goes on to offer guidance to organisations that can either influence or facilitate community use of school sports facilities and identifies various approaches to delivering successful community use projects and provides a range of relevant and successful case studies.

It is my pleasure, therefore, to promote to the 'Your School, Your Club Guide' and the wider initiative to promote community use of school sports facilities.

I invite and encourage all stakeholders to consider the Guide carefully and to work positively and effectively together to meet the challenges it presents in the best interests of sport, schools and our wider community.

**Carál Ní Chuilín**  
*Minister of Culture,  
Arts & Leisure*

# Réamhrá

Tá lúcháir orm mar Aire Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta 'Do Scoil, Do Chlub – Treoir Phraiticiúil maidir leis an Dóigh ar Féidir Úsáid Phobail na nÁiseanna Spóirt i Scoileanna a Bhaint Amach.'

Forbraíodh 'Do Scoil, Do Chlub' mar gheall ar chomhoibriú idir RCEF, Spóirt TÉ, an Roinn Oideachais (RO) agus páirtithe leasmhara oideachasúla agus neamhoideachasúla. Scríobhadh an doiciméad le tacaíocht mo chomhghleacaí, John O'Dowd CTR, an tAire Oideachais, agus tá sé mar aidhm aige cur le treoir bhreise ón RO maidir le húsáid phobail scoileanna.

Trí dhoirse na scoileanna a oscailt taobh amuigh de ghnáthuaireanta scoile, creidim go dtig le scoileanna i dtuaisceart na hÉireann iad féin a chur ag croílár na bpobal áitiúil. Is é mo bharúil go dtig le húsáid phobail na n-áiseanna spóirt i scoileanna cuidiú le haghaidh a thabhairt ar chuid de na saincheisteanna is leitheadaí nár sochaí. Mar shampla, tig le húsáid phobail na scoileanna rochtain ar sholáthar spóirt i limistéir dhíothacha a fheabhsú, comhionannas a chur chun cinn, cuidiú le dul i ngleic le bochtaineacht agus eisiámh sóisialta, fad is go dtig léi deiseanna dearfacha a chur ar fáil le meabhairshláinte agus folláine ár bpobal a fheabhsú. Mar gheall ar an dóigh a bhfuil cúrsaí eacnamaíochta faoi

láthair caithfear béim níos mó a chur ar chomhpháirtíochtaí straitéiseacha a fhorbairt le háiseanna spóirt atá ann cheana féin a athbheochan nó le soláthar úr/breise a fhorbairt. Ní thiteann an fhreagracht seo ar aon earnáil ná ar aon eagraíocht amháin, ach le chéile, tig linn aghaidh a thabhairt ar easnaimh i soláthar spóirt, agus in am is i dtráth tig linn cur le sláinte agus le folláine ár ndaoine uile a fheabhsú.

Ina theannta sin, díróinn straitéis 10 mbliana RCEF maidir le Spóirt, Sport Matters, i measc saincheisteanna eile, go mór ar aghaidh a thabhairt ar mhíchothromaíochtaí i ndeiseanna spóirt i measc réimse grúpaí daoine agus leibhéil rannpháirtíochta a 'mhéadú go mór'. Ceann de na príomhchuspóirí in Sport Matters ná a chinntiú, faoi 2019, go mbeidh áiseanna creidiúnaithe ilspóirt ag 90% den daonra a bhfuil sé d'acmhainn acu freastal ar éileamh laistigh de 20 nóiméad d'am taistil. Beartaítear fosta go bhforbrófar réimse áiseanna úra, feabhsaithe agus comhroinnte sa tuaisceart faoin bhliain 2019.

Dréachtaíodh an Treoir 'Do Scoil, Do Chlub' ar bhealach a aithníonn go gcuireann comhoibriú spóirt leis an mhórearnáil oideachais, agus scoileanna go háirithe, go mór leis na cuspóirí sin a bhaint amach. Aithníonn sí fosta

na buntáistí a d'fhéadfadh bheith ann d'oideachas i dtaca le meas ar scoileanna áitiúla a choinneáil agus a neartú, ioncam méadaithe agus gnóthachtáil acadúil níos fearr do dhaltaí. Leanann sí ar aghaidh agus tairgeann sí treoir d'eagraíochtaí atá ábalta dul i bhfeidhm ar úsáid phobail na n-áiseanna spóirt i scoileanna nó í sin a éascú agus sainaitníonn sí cuir chuige éagsúla maidir le tionscadail rathúla úsáid phobail agus cuireann sí réimse cás-staidéir ábhartha agus rathúla ar fáil.

Cuireann sé ríméad orm, mar sin, an treoir 'Do Scoil, Do Chlub' a chur chun cinn agus an mórtionscnamh le húsáid phobail na n-áiseanna spóirt i scoileanna a chur chun cinn. Tugaim cuireadh do gach páirtí leasmhar agus impím orthu breithniú cúramach a dhéanamh ar an Treoir agus oibriú go dearfach agus go héifeachtach le chéile chun aghaidh a thabhairt ar na dúshláin a eascraíonn aisti ar mhaithe le spóirt, ar mhaithe le scoileanna agus ar mhaithe lenár bpobal.

## Carál Ní Chuilín

An tAire Cultúir,  
Ealaíon & Fóillíochta

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# Purpose and Vision

This document has been developed to offer guidance to organisations that can either influence or facilitate community use of school sports facilities. It highlights various approaches to community use of sports facilities, the core principals of community use, a vision for community use and a number of examples of best practice from across the north of Ireland. Its vision is...

***'Schools are vehicles mobilising communities into a culture of participation in sport and physical recreation'.***



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# Introduction

Northern Ireland schools have the potential to transform sport and club infrastructure whilst supporting the delivery of education and the development of local communities.

By growing and establishing new community sport hubs on the school estate, a sport participation legacy for all can be created. These consist of new and established facilities that could provide sustainable environments and a base to grow governing body, club and community sports participation; whilst also improving satisfaction with sporting experiences.

The valuable supply of sporting facilities within the school estate is evidenced by the following statistics extracted from the Active Places facilities database:

- 55% of sports halls (with three courts or more) in the north of Ireland are located on the school estate;
- 35% of grass pitches in the north of Ireland are located on the school estate; and
- 29% of synthetic turf pitches are located on the school estate.

### **Sport Northern Ireland Research Headline Finding**

In 2009, Sport Northern Ireland's Active Places Research Report identified a significant shortfall in sports facilities throughout the north of Ireland. The report highlights the valuable supply of sporting facilities within the school estate and suggests that if this infrastructure was opened to local communities, school facilities could considerably assist in 'bridging the sports facilities gap' in the north of Ireland.



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## The Benefits of Community Use

# The integration of community sport and sports clubs into schools has many benefits to the community, the school, and academic achievement.

## 3.1 Community benefits

- Community use of schools has the potential to address the significant shortfalls identified by Sport Northern Ireland in sports facility provision throughout the north of Ireland.
- Communities would directly benefit in being able to access more and better quality facilities for sport.
- Increased opportunities lead to an increase in participation and results in improvements in public health including childhood obesity.
- Education sites where sports facilities and youth centres are provided would be a key setting for delivery of positive activities for young people.
- Opportunities for volunteering, gaining sports qualifications, casual and sessional work, and using these transferable skills improves the economic vitality of the community.
- Exposing young people to positive experiences and redirection from potential anti-social activities.

## 3.2 School benefits

- Wider community use of school premises can enhance perceptions of the school within the local community and provide opportunities for greater parental and community involvement in schools.
- Developing a community approach to sports opportunities could open up a range of other sources of funding (e.g. Big Lottery or Sport Northern Ireland), particularly where projects clearly contribute to government priorities (e.g. Sport Matters, Every School a Good School, etc.).
- A community approach to some sports facilities can be financially sustainable and can contribute towards healthier and fitter communities.
- Through strategic partnerships with other organisations (district councils, sports governing bodies, and others) the school could benefit from better facilities and services than schools could provide on their own.
- The use of schools by pupils in a community environment would

encourage young people to value and respect school premises. It could also lead to less vandalism, whilst also encouraging better attendance levels during the day.

## 3.3 Educational benefits

Fred Coalter's latest report on the 'Rationale for Sport' (2012) suggests that there is a widespread assumption that taking part in sport and other physical activity results in better academic achievement. The paper states that the presumed (although unproven) mechanisms underpinning this relationship vary and include:

- Increased energy derived from fitness;
- Productive diversion resulting from time away from the classroom;
- Reduced disruptive behaviour;
- Improved cognitive functioning as a result of increased cerebral blood flow or improvement of brain neurotransmitters; and
- A relationship between motor and mental skills and increased self-esteem.

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# Policy Context



A mix of strategic documents relating to sport and physical recreation and education set the context for this guidance document.

#### **4.1 Sport Matters: the Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009-2019**

Sport Matters articulates the vision expressed and endorsed by respondents and the Northern Ireland Executive during the development of, and consultation on, Sport Matters. That vision is:

**'...a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport...'**

Sport Matters identifies 26 high level targets and sets the key strategic priorities for sport and physical recreation over the next ten years. The high level targets are structured to reflect the current and anticipated needs of sport and physical recreation as expressed through consultation. These relate to:

- Participation;
- Performance; and
- Places.

#### **4.2 Schools for the Future, the Independent Strategic Review of Education (2009)**

The Independent Strategic Review was announced in March 2006 with the following terms of reference: "To examine funding of the education system, in particular the strategic planning and organisation of the schools' estate, taking account of the curriculum changes, including the wider provision for 14-19 year olds, and also demographic trends."

Chapter 9 of the Strategic Review discusses a strategic approach to planning the schools' estate. The report recommends that school facilities (including sports facilities) should be made available to outside groups at reasonable cost, with schools and other providers working together to share the provision and maintenance of facilities.

The report also recommends a coordinated approach to the provision of new facilities and the refurbishment of existing facilities. Schools should also take account of provision at other schools in close proximity; other provision in the area (district councils, sports clubs, etc.), and the sports/ activities offered by the school.

#### **4.3 Community Use of School Premises - Working Group Report (2010)**

In seeking to maximise and make the most cost effective use of the school estate, the Department of Education (DE) established a Working Group to produce a Report outlining a set of practical, workable and cost neutral recommendations to help inform policy and operations with regard to enhancing community use of the school estate.

The Working Group submitted its Report in 2010. A paper was subsequently published by DE which provided comments on the Report and each of its 36 recommendations. The comments reflected the outcome of an internal review of the Report within DE and analysis of the responses received from a range of external partners following wider consultation undertaken across Government Departments and other public bodies.

The DE comments paper outlines that in light of an extremely challenging economic landscape and increasing pressure on school budgets, further guidance should be developed to support schools to overcome any difficulties they may face in increasing community access to their premises.

Given extensive experience on this issue the Education and Library Boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools have been requested to draft guidance material. The guidance will seek to enhance provision by providing necessary advice and support that will assist school leaders in dealing with the practical issues involved when making school premises available for wider community use. The guidance is intended for all schools but may also be circulated to other interested parties when finalised. It is anticipated that the guidance will be finalised by December 2012.

#### **4.4 Joint ELB/CCMS Working Group – Community Use of School Premises: A Guidance Toolkit for Schools (2013)**

In advance of the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) a further Working Group led by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and the Education and Library Boards (ELBs), with input from other school sectors and other relevant stakeholders, was tasked with developing operational guidance for schools. The guidance seeks to enhance current levels of community provision by providing the necessary encouragement, advice and support that will assist school leaders in dealing with the practical issues involved when making school premises available for wider community use. The document includes advice on the following key areas:

- Ownership and Control of School Premises;
- Operational Management;
- Health and Safety;
- Child Protection;
- Human Resources; and
- Finance.

The guidance is available to view on the DE webpage.

#### **4.5 Sport Matters Monitoring Group (May 2012)**

At the May 2012 meeting of the Sports Matters Monitoring Group (SMMG), chaired by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) Minister, DE indicated that a Working Group (referenced in 4.3) had been established to develop practical guidance to help schools enhance the community use of their facilities.

At the same meeting, the DCAL Minister requested that Sport Northern Ireland draft a guidance document specific to enhancing community use of school sports facilities. Sport Northern Ireland and DE agreed at the meeting that both guidance documents would be complementary to one another.



A photograph of a gym. In the background, a man in a dark blue t-shirt and black shorts is running on a treadmill. In the foreground, a man in a light blue striped polo shirt and grey trousers is lying on a bench, performing a dumbbell bench press. The gym has a green floor, several treadmills, and racks of dumbbells. A large white number '5' is inside a white circle on the left side of the image.

5

## Approaches to Community Use

Schools, district councils and others can generally approach arrangements for the community use of school sports facilities from an administrative perspective. Broadly speaking, they can opt for one of two main models for the management and funding of community use of school sports facilities:

### **5.1 Single Management**

In this model, a single organisation is responsible for managing the facilities at all times (including school hours), and all operational staff are employed by that organisation. The management organisation can be the school, the district council, a management contractor delivering a PPI scheme or even an independent organisation such as a trust (see page 14 for Case Study 1).

### **5.2 Dual Management**

In this model the sports facilities are managed by a partnership between the school (responsible for overseeing and funding school use) and another organisation (responsible for all aspects of community use). The overall budget for operating the sports facilities would be split between the partners and each would control their own proportion of it. Effective cooperation between the partners is essential.

Generally dual management should focus more on community and customer needs and a desire to achieve agreed and clearly stated sporting, social and financial outcomes (see page 15 for Case Study 2).

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# Case Study 1

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## **Project Title:**

De La Salle College  
(Post Primary)

## **Theme:**

Single Management Approach  
Facility use should be  
financially viable

## **Background**

Prior to opening the school's sports facilities for community use in 2009 and identifying a significant need from within the local community to access quality leisure provision, De La Salle College made an application to the Big Lottery Fund for a multi-use project. The application was for the construction of an enhanced (100% larger) Sports Hall (six courts) to accommodate a wide variety of sports and community events. From the outset, the project had the commitment of local sports clubs and community youth organisations.

## **Single Management Approach**

The community use of the school's sports facilities are managed by a senior member of college staff, who in turn has sourced other staff from within the College to work as leisure attendants and reception staff. External staff have also been recruited to provide specialist services such as fitness instruction and personal training.

The sports facilities at the College were branded as 'De La Salle Sports Complex' to provide a sense of community ownership and a professional identity. The facilities are also instantly recognisable as a sports complex for the community and local sporting clubs, whilst still maintaining the important De La Salle link with the College for pupils and staff. In September 2009, De La Salle Sports Complex opened its doors to the community and has been evolving our products and services continually. The ethos of 'Get Fit for Life' is representative of the transition from school sports facilities to community sports complex.

Community use of the La Salle Sports Complex is managed in a manner that is financially sustainable for the College. In 2010 the school developed and opened a fitness suite for community use and this has been a resonating success. Furthermore, in September 2012 the College added an additional strength and conditioning suite, which is well used by local sports clubs.

In addition to the enhanced sports hall (with tiered seating for 200 people), fitness suite and strength and conditioning suite, the existing changing provision, minor hall and spin studio were all opened up for community use, enabling a much more extensive use by a variety of sporting clubs and community users.

Some examples of sporting activities and Community use include:

- Indoor/winter training venue for GAA and soccer clubs;
- Home training and competition venue for ladies and men's Super League basketball;
- Home training and competition venue for local netball clubs;
- Local 5-a-side soccer leagues;
- Gymnastics and trampoline clubs (Home of NI squads);
- Ballet and dance clubs;
- Boxercise, spin and kettlebell classes; rowing; and zumba dance;
- Fitness suite memberships; and
- Local youth clubs.

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## Case Study 2

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### Project Title:

Boys' Model School  
(Post primary)

### Theme:

Dual Management Approach

### Background

Amey and the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) signed a major strategic partnering agreement in 2008. The long-term partnership will refurbish or rebuild and maintain for 25 years many of the schools (including the Belfast Boys' Model School), libraries and youth clubs in Belfast that are currently managed by the BELB, to a value of up to £400 million.

### Dual Management Approach

Amey has an obligation under the Belfast Schools contract to develop community benefit by maximising the utilisation of the school's estate outside of core academic hours through engaging with the local community and implementing a social enterprise economy. Alongside day to day educational provision, the Belfast Boys' Model School has been designed to provide facilities for the wider community to use for community activities, in particular sport and recreation.

Sport and recreation facilities at the Belfast Boys' Model School include:

- Enhanced (100% larger) sports hall (six courts);
- Synthetic six-lane athletics track;
- 3rd generation soccer pitch (floodlit);
- Sand-based hockey pitch;
- Grass rugby pitch;
- Outdoor changing pavilion;
- Dance studios; and
- Health improvement and intervention facilities.

The requirement to engage with the community could have been met using a number of well tried private sector initiatives such as simple third party lettings of the school facilities to specialist private sector organisations for sports activities or summer camps, etc.

The Amey solution was to establish a partnership based integrated layered structure, embracing the interests, and skills and experience of all stakeholders. The stakeholders include a host of local organisations, agencies and community representatives to bring fresh approaches to the community management of school facilities, whereby creating the opportunity for maximum community benefit.

The business model is simple - Amey and its social enterprise partner Artemis will let the school facilities outside of core school time and reinvest the surplus revenue into community focused learning and skills initiatives.

Although only opened in September 2010, interest from a cold start has been impressive with a range of community sport and physical activity initiatives being fulfilled such as:

- Dance partnerships running regular dance classes and competitions in contemporary dance, ballet, salsa, ballroom, etc.;
- Sports partnerships running various age-based junior teams in football, hockey, softball, fencing, etc.;
- Newly formed athletics and hockey clubs using the schools as their competition 'home' ground; and
- Various clubs/organisations establishing their regular meeting programmes in the halls/outdoor sports facilities.



6

## Core Principles of Community Use

The concept of community use of school sports facilities can be contextualised by six core principles with associated case studies.

### **6.1 Developing effective community use of school facilities involves much more than simply opening the doors**

The challenge is to promote and manage community use in ways which will achieve worthwhile results in terms of sport and generate school and community benefits, without being in any way detrimental to the financial running of the facility or socially exclusive.

In order to meet the costs associated with providing community use, it is recommended that schools follow DE guidance and charge for the use of their sports facilities on the basis of full cost recovery. Striking an appropriate balance between potentially conflicting requirements, such as attracting low participant groups and the provision of a high quality service at affordable charges can be an issue but one which can be overcome by working with key partners such as District Councils (see page 19 for Case Study 3 and page 27 for Case Study 8).

### **6.2 Schools do not exist in isolation**

Ensuring schools are at the heart of their community is considered to be an essential component of achieving success, particularly for schools where there is disengagement of parents and where communities have a sense of being disenfranchised or excluded. Schools have the potential to act as a catalyst for community regeneration if careful thought is given to how schools plan the use of their facilities for the benefit of the community.

Whoever is responsible for the strategic management of school sports facilities should seek to play a key role in the preparation and implementation of any existing local sport and recreation strategies (see page 20 for Case Study 4).

### **6.3 School sports should provide clear pathways to community sport**

Most schools provide an environment that has the potential to encourage physical literacy and a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport. Schools often provide the first experiences of sport or physical recreation and therefore play a significant role in ensuring that participation continues throughout and beyond a young person's education.

Where possible, schools should consider providing or hosting community sporting opportunities that complement the main physical education (PE) activities of the school. As a result, schools would play an important sports development role in creating a clear pathway for pupils from school PE to community club sport and into sports governing body structures (see page 23 for Case Study 5).

#### **6.4 Voluntary clubs are vital to the majority of community users participating regularly in sport**

Voluntary clubs provide a social context for sport, and the best and most 'development-minded' clubs are well run and will welcome new members of all ages and both genders, and seek to integrate people with disabilities or learning difficulties.

For some activities, such as team sports, gymnastics and martial arts, an established club structure is essential in order to provide the appropriate coaching, sporting development, sports governing body support, and technical expertise (see page 24 for Case Study 6).

#### **6.5 Schools should complement not compete with other local sports facilities or community centres**

Where school sports facilities are located in close proximity to other similar facilities, whether they are school, public, voluntary or commercial, whoever is operating the school facilities should seek to work in partnership with these to ensure their programmes are complementary and mutually-beneficial (see page 26 for Case Study 7).

#### **6.6 Facility use should be financially viable**

Schools should consider the financial sustainability of community use before deciding to open their sports facilities outside of school hours. The development of a robust and sustainable business plan covering a medium to long-term period is recommended. Furthermore, schools should take account of DE guidance, which prohibits the use of the Local Management of Schools (LMS) budget to subsidise community use, and recommends that schools charge for the use of their sports facilities on the basis of full cost recovery.

When developing a suitable business plan or a charging structure, schools may wish to consider some of the following costs which could be recovered (it may also be helpful to refer to the DE guidance for further advice on charges and costs):

- Building Supervision/ Security;
- Administration;
- Cleaning;
- Energy;
- Equipment Hire/ Replacement; and
- Maintenance (general and facility specific).

A blocked booked facility is potentially easier to administer than pay and play and may reduce the need for site supervision thereby potentially saving further costs (see page 14 for Case Study 1).

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## Case Study 3

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### Project Title:

Castle Tower Parents and Friends, Ballymena

### Themes:

Developing effective community use of school facilities involves much more than simply opening the doors

### Background

Sport Northern Ireland's programme 'Sport Matters - Capital and Equipment Programme' was a small grants programme for projects up to £30,000. Priorities for the programme were:

- To support the outcomes in Sport Matters;
- To support the needs of low capacity applicants and areas of historically low uptake of Sport Northern Ireland capital funding;
- To encourage applications from 'minor sports';
- To prioritise sports organisations/clubs (via a high weighted scoring) who have not received Sport Northern Ireland capital funding in previous years (number of years may be programme specific);

- To prioritise sports organisations/clubs in areas of high social need and rural deprivation; and
- To assist in the delivery of schemes aligned with 'Bridging the Gap'.

Castle Tower School is a special needs school in Ballymena, formed from the amalgamation of three schools in 2007. Their 'Parents and Friends Association' secured an award from Sport Northern Ireland towards physical activity equipment, outdoor activity equipment and an indoor climbing wall; all designed with children with special needs in mind to promote physical literacy and motor skills development.

### Developing effective community use of school facilities involves much more than simply opening the doors

In this case, the target community is the children with a wide range of mobility, cognitive and sensory disabilities who do not have access to appropriately designed equipment in an environment that is also accessible, and with appropriate supervision and support during use. In many cases the children require one-to-one supervision.

These children come to the school from many miles around and have transport provided to return them home at the end of the school day, preventing them from accessing after school sports activity.

This project required a much more creative approach than the simple provision of a pitch or sports hall. In this instance, collaborative working between the three campuses that now form the Castle Tower School has allowed the children to access physical activity before school, and during lunch-break in a structured and supervised manner. The school has also supported a Summer Scheme that utilised the equipment, and has outreach programmes with other schools outside the area to come and access this specialist equipment.

The provision of a range of physical activities for the children at the school has reduced violent behaviour and promoted social skills such as taking turns and sharing. The children are reported as calmer both in school and at home. In this case the project's community is the community of severely disabled children in a wide area, and a specialist approach to the provision of physical activity in addition to the core curriculum has been applied.

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## Case Study 4

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### Project Title:

St Colm's High School,  
Draperstown (St Canice's  
Educational Trust)

### Theme:

Schools do not exist  
in isolation

### Background

The school, situated in a rural area with poor transport infrastructure, wished to install a 3G training pitch with fencing and floodlights on the grounds of the school. The purpose of the project was to improve the sports facility provision for the school itself, local primary schools, local community groups and a range of sports clubs.

Prior to this project for outdoor facilities, the school was the focal point of a project to provide a four-court sports hall and gym, again as a combined school and community facility.

### Schools do not exist in isolation

This project, to extend an indoor sporting facility already shared by the school and local community to include outdoor all year round sports provision in a rural area with few sports facilities, demonstrated the importance of the wider school network and the strength in depth of the community supporting this project.

The previous experience of the school and community group in developing and operating the sports hall enabled them to propose a project that demonstrated links to a wide range of regional, national and sports-specific strategies. The capacity in this community has ensured that a rurally disadvantaged area now has an excellent sporting infrastructure supported by all who live there.

Alone, the school has an enrolment of 436 pupils, which cannot demonstrate sufficient demand for a 3G pitch without additional users. The eight partner primary schools equally had insufficient demand and resources as individuals. This is similarly the case with the sports clubs and community groups who are users of the facility.

The project is achieving its wide range of outcomes by: developing GP referral schemes; aerobics, dance and pilates activities; 'midnight sports' programmes; summer schemes; coaching programmes in basketball, GAA, and soccer; 'have a go' nights; taster sessions; child protection courses; and a recruitment campaign for volunteers.

In particular the project will have a positive impact on local primary schools who have limited, if any, facilities of their own yet need to provide two hours of physical activity per week to meet the needs of the revised curriculum.





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# Case Study 5

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## Project Title:

Lurgan Junior High School

## Themes:

Dual Management

School sports should provide clear pathways to community sport

## Background

The construction of a sand-dressed synthetic pitch, 3G pitch, floodlighting, fencing and enabling and access works within the grounds of Lurgan Junior High School for school, after school, club and community use.

The project was mobilised by the school making an application to both Sport Northern Ireland and Big Lottery Fund for a multi-use project, the extensive support of the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) Adviser for PE and Sport, the commitment of local hockey and football clubs, and the willingness of Craigavon Borough Council to manage the facility outside school hours.

## Dual Management

The Board, school and Council recognised that by working together the project could deliver more than the sum of its parts. They also recognised that the school was the strongest partner to manage and coordinate the daytime and school usage, and that the Council had more capacity in terms of after school and community use. They agreed to a 25-year licence agreement from the Board to the Council, which apportioned core hours to both school and Council. They also agreed to share maintenance, operating and replacement costs, and to ensure at the transition between users the premises were clean and tidy, and fit for use.

In addition to the new pitches, assisted by grant funding, the Board and school included the pre-existing changing rooms within the premises accessible by the community. This has enabled a more extensive and flexible use of the whole facility than could have been made without the availability of on-site changing.

A detailed usage plan is in place, with the school and Council responsible for each managing, coordinating, resourcing, and recording usage within their core hours.

## School sports should provide clear pathways to community sport

The school already had a history of strong after school sport, in particular in football and hockey. They had good relationships with local football and hockey clubs, and pathways to sustained participation through these relationships. The sports facilities on site were inadequate to support the demand for use by the school and clubs, but had the potential to facilitate a community hub for sport within the local area.

A total of 29 groups demonstrated their need to use the new facilities, ranging from junior tag rugby to senior ladies hockey. As a result of this project, partnerships have been built with the following groups:

- Nine local schools and colleges;
- Local community groups;
- Craigavon Borough Council;
- Lurgan Ladies Hockey Club;
- Glenavon FC; and
- Lower Maze FC.

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## Case Study 6

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### **Project Title:**

Hillsborough Community Association (Downshire Primary School)

### **Themes:**

Voluntary clubs are vital to the majority of community users participating regularly in sport

### **Background**

This project arose from an opportunity to extend the scope of the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) funded re-provision of the primary school in Hillsborough. A new primary school was built, including a sports hall accessible from the school in the daytime and from the adjacent community centre in the evening. In addition, the community centre has a multi-purpose hall, meeting rooms, changing rooms, and natural and synthetic pitches.

The community centre hosts a vast range of activities for all the community, from Spanish classes to arts club, jujitsu to salsa classes. It hosts 'pay and play' usage for casual recreation and is home to indoor and outdoor sports clubs.

### **Voluntary clubs are vital to the majority of community users participating regularly in sport**

The community association promotes sports and physical activity for all ages and in many ways. Users and local residents are regularly canvassed to ensure that the range of participation opportunities reflects the needs of the local community. Whilst a number of classes (such as circuit training and yoga) are suitable for individuals wishing to participate in physical activity at a personal level, for those wishing to develop skills in a sport (especially team sports such as football) the fact that the community centre provides a home base for many clubs is a key success factor.

Basketball, fencing, football, and martial arts clubs are based at the centre. The club structure offers the opportunity for participants to learn and develop sports skills in a structured manner, often leading to competition. The governance oversight applied by the centre management ensures that coaching qualifications and other relevant governance checks have been notified to the centre, giving parents a level of assurance of the quality of experience their children will have joining a club here.



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## Case Study 7

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### **Project Title:**

Hillsborough Community Assoc. (Downshire Primary School)

### **Theme:**

Schools should complement not compete with other sports facilities or community centres

### **Background**

This project arose from an opportunity to extend the scope of the SEELB funded primary school in Hillsborough. A new primary school was built, including a sports hall accessible from the school in the daytime and from the adjacent community centre in the evening. In addition, the community centre has a multi-purpose hall, meeting rooms, changing rooms, natural and synthetic pitches.

The community centre hosts a vast range of activities for all the community, from Spanish classes to arts club, jujitsu to salsa classes. It hosts 'pay and play' usage for casual recreation and is home to indoor and outdoor sports clubs.

### **Schools should complement not compete with other sports facilities or community centres**

Lisburn City Council were the lead funder for the sports and community facilities in this project. The project is located three miles from the main Lisburn LeisurePlex with a wide range of wet and dry sports facilities. All partners were keen to ensure that the facility mix at the centre was relevant to the needs of the local community, but did not attempt to displace existing sporting users from other clubs, or leisure centre users.

Consideration was given to both the design of the facilities, and the operating and charging model to ensure that it complemented the local sports infrastructure. The school and community association ensure that the local community is constantly being heard and take steps to address emerging issues. This is of great benefit in working within communities as external providers can be at arms-length from potential problems until they become significant.

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## Case Study 8

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### Project Title:

Markethill High School – Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

### Theme:

Developing effective community use of school facilities involves much more than simply opening the doors

### Background

Sport Northern Ireland's programme 'Sport Matters – Capital and Equipment Programme' was a small grants programme for projects up to £30,000. Priorities for the programme were:

- To support the outcomes in Sport Matters;
- To support the needs of low capacity applicants and areas of historically low uptake of Sport Northern Ireland capital funding;
- To encourage applications from 'minor sports';
- To prioritise sports organisations/clubs (via a high weighted scoring) who have not received Sport Northern Ireland capital funding in previous years (number of years may be programme specific);

- To prioritise sports organisations/clubs in areas of high social need and rural deprivation; and
- To assist in the delivery of schemes aligned with 'Bridging the Gap'.

Markethill High School and their PTA scored exceptionally well and succeeded in a highly competitive funding round in securing an award from Sport Northern Ireland towards the provision of equipment for a school/community gym, to be sited in a room within the PE department of the school.

### Developing effective community use of school facilities involves much more than simply opening the doors

For some applicants this award would have been sufficient for their needs. However, this school and PTA mobilised the pupils to undertake a sponsored walk, raising an additional £7,000 towards the project to enhance the scope of the Sport Northern Ireland award. This massive effort by the pupils has also given them a sense of ownership of the project and raised awareness and wider community engagement with the scheme.

In addition, the Board and school undertook negotiations with Armagh City and District Council, who have agreed to redeploy Council staff to the gym to allow for a pilot project for evening openings to the local community. The provision of experienced staff allows not just for supervised use, but advice on exercise and lifestyle programmes for users to gain more benefit from the gym. This creative approach from public bodies (requiring a problem-solving approach to aspects such as insurance and access) in an era of funding austerity has allowed the reach of a modest investment by Sport Northern Ireland to have the potential for significant health and sporting benefits both to the school pupils and their families and all in the local community, for whom the nearest gym is over six miles away.

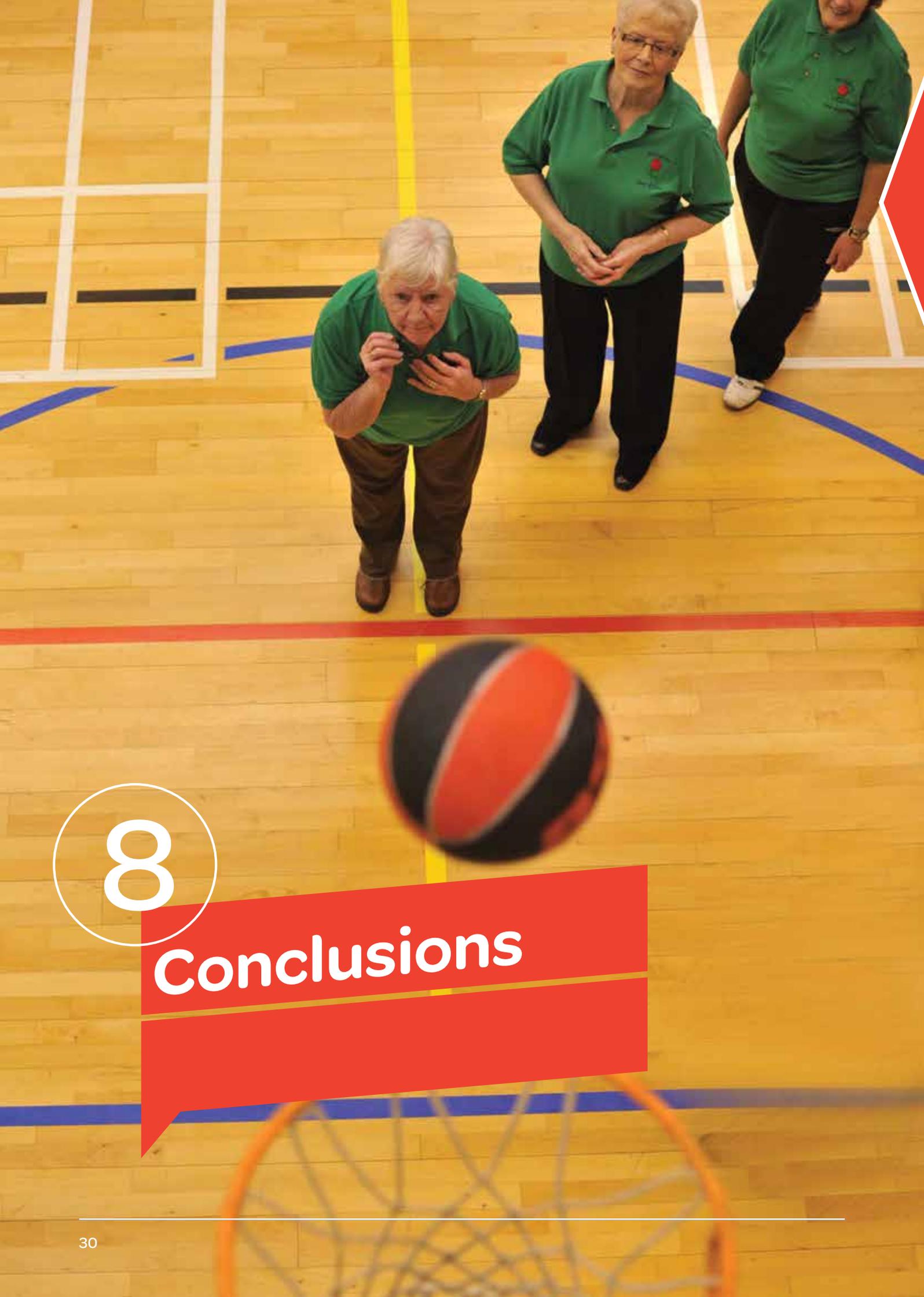


7

**What Could  
Community Use  
Look Like?**

## Community use of school sports facilities could:

- Involve partnerships with district councils, clubs, community organisations and others that will positively embed the school in the local community;
- Encourage a medium/ long-term management partner with a sustainable business plan;
- Seek support from district councils, clubs, community organisations and others to provide the school with appropriately vetted staff to support during and after school sport activities;
- Provide access to specialist coaching during curriculum time;
- Provide a link from the extra-curricular programme into the community programme, building on interest generated;
- Provide a route into a structured offering of recreational and competitive opportunities;
- Have a management structure for the use of sports facilities that provides financial sustainability; and
- Promote the development of a 'community based club' offering grassroots to competitive level opportunities for all ages, genders and target groups.



# 8

## Conclusions

The community, school and educational benefits of community use of school sports facilities are well documented and there are numerous policy documents (including the Bain Report, Every School a Good School and Sport Matters) that encourage greater community use of the school estate. There are, however, still many schools which make little or no provision for wider community use.

A range of perceived barriers may currently prevent some schools from opening their premises for wider community use. The guidance toolkit by DE has been developed to help schools overcome these barriers, as well as providing advice and assistance on a range of practical issues.

From strategic planning to a willingness to work together, the 'Your School, Your Club Guide' shows how effective community use can be achieved. Some examples of community use already exist in the north of Ireland but there is the enormous potential for more. Examples, including those highlighted in the DE guidance have realised similar benefits to the projects case studied within this document.

Effective community use of school sports facilities is not simply a matter of filling space and promoting the school to its local community. It also involves helping to develop local sport and recreation; ensuring that all users are treated with respect and receive high standards of customer care; providing value for money; good working conditions; and job satisfaction for staff.

Most importantly, community use of school sports facilities may at times require specialist sport and recreation management input. Effective recreation management inputs can, when required, help to create worthwhile and tangible benefits and outcomes for both schools and their communities.

### **Sport Northern Ireland Research Headline Finding**

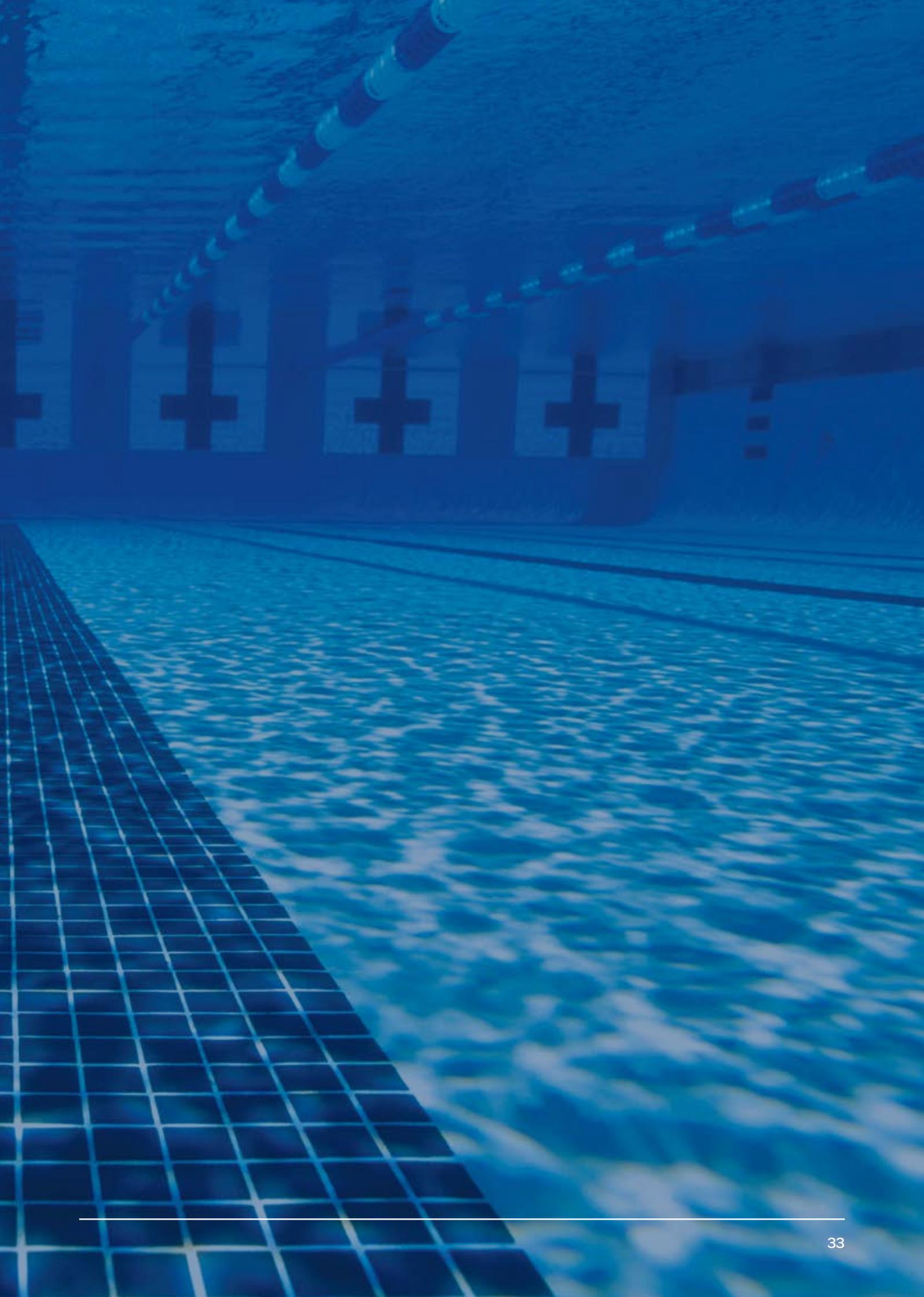
A post primary school survey carried out by Sport Northern Ireland in 2012 (with a 45% response rate) indicated that 80% of those post primary schools that do not offer their sports facilities for community use, would consider doing so in the future.

### **Author**

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- Department of Education
- Downshire Primary School, Hillsborough
- Education and Library Boards
- Hillsborough Community Association
- Lurgan Junior High School, Lurgan
- Markethill High School
- St Colm's High School, Draperstown



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