

# ACTIVE PEOPLE: HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY SPORT INVESTMENT ON PUBLIC HEALTH



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## FOREWORD



I am delighted to introduce Sport Northern Ireland's review of sports' contribution to improving public health. In this report, Sport Northern Ireland highlights the impact that has been made by its investment in community sport projects that help to reduce health inequalities and improve quality of life through participation in sport and physical recreation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in our community sport investments for their drive, passion and commitment in contributing to improving public health and their achievements to date. I welcome the contribution made by community sport towards the achievements of Sport Northern Ireland's core business objectives and in particular in tackling key public health issues.

There is no clear dividing line between 'health related physical activity' and participation in sport and physical recreation, indeed participation in all forms of physical activity has been shown to have a positive impact on physical and mental health and well being. While the growing 'obesity epidemic' remains a major health concern, other emerging health concerns linked to physical inactivity include an increased risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, type II diabetes, premature death, and mental health related illnesses.

'Sport Matters': The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation (2009-19) sets out the case for ongoing and increased investment in sport and physical recreation. The benefits of a physically active society extend beyond the health sector, bringing economic benefits in terms of reduced health care costs, increased productivity, healthier physical and social environments, better performing schools and workplaces, increased participation in sport and physical recreation, and improved sporting achievement.

I firmly believe that Sport Northern Ireland and the community based projects in which we have invested have played a crucial role in enhancing the public health of people in Northern Ireland. The case studies within this report articulate the impact of sport and physical activity on public health. We must all continue to advocate the need for increased investment to build on this good work, and ensure that participation levels continue to increase and that opportunities are sustained.

**Dominic Walsh**  
Chair  
Sport Northern Ireland

## INTRODUCTION

### About Sport Northern Ireland

Sport Northern Ireland is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) of the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and is the leading public body for the development of sport in Northern Ireland. Its corporate vision is: **“a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport which contributes to a peaceful, fair and prosperous society”**.

In practice this means Sport Northern Ireland creates and develops programmes and partnerships that will contribute to the achievement of its strategic objectives. Sport Northern Ireland has six key priority areas; two of which are particularly relevant to achieving public health outcomes\*:

Table 1

Corporate Outcomes	Priority Areas
Professional, accountable and autonomous sporting organisations	Strong Partners
Improved safety of major sporting venues	Safer Places
Increased participation in sport and physical recreation, especially among under represented groups	Active People*
Increased number of athletes with improved sporting performance	Successful Athletes
Contribution to broader government priorities	Advocacy of sport and physical recreation*
Increased efficiency and effectiveness in the attainment corporate outcomes	Supporting delivery and of leadership

### Purpose of this publication

The purpose of this publication is to demonstrate how Sport Northern Ireland's investment in community sport contributes towards the achievement of public health outcomes.

This report draws information from 'The Value of Sport and Physical Recreation – Contributing to Improved Public Health,' completed by FKB Consulting and Dennis McCoy Consulting in early 2010.

The report presents a summary of the health benefits of participation in sport and physical activity, the types of projects delivered through Sport Northern Ireland community sport investment and their public health outcomes. These outcomes are further demonstrated



through the inclusion of a range of project case studies and participant's personal stories across the five Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trust areas.

The project case studies and personal stories have been presented within the report to highlight the impact of community sport in increasing participation and delivering both treatment and preventative programmes on specific public health issues such as:

- Tackling obesity in young people;
- Treating Multiple Sclerosis (MS); and
- Supporting mental health clients.

### What is Sport?

The widely accepted definition of sport is: "All forms of physical activity which through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing, forming social relationships, or obtaining results in competition at all levels."<sup>1</sup>

### What is Public Health?

Public Health is defined as: "the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts and informed choices of society, organisations, public and private, communities and individuals."<sup>2</sup>

### Sport, Physical Activity and Improving Public Health

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

Sport and physical activity can have a profound effect on peoples' lives, and plays a crucial role in improving community cohesion, educational attainment and self confidence. However, one of sport's greatest contributions to other government objectives is its positive impact on public health.

<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe

<sup>2</sup> 'Public Health Function Review in Northern Ireland: The Policy Context' (2004)





Evidence suggests strongly that sport and physical activity delivers many physical and mental health benefits and that these health benefits result in economic savings through a lower burden upon health services. However, the benefits of a physically active society extend beyond the health sector including increased productivity, healthier physical and social environments, better performing schools and workplaces, increased participation in sport and physical recreation, and improved sporting achievement.

A correlation may also exist between indicators of health inequalities and lower rates of participation in sport. These inequalities exist between communities of interest, such as people with disability, older men, and ethnic minority communities, as well as between communities living in areas of high social need and more affluent communities.

Since 2003 Sport Northern Ireland has invested in community sport - working at a local level to introduce communities to regular sport and physical recreation activities. Community sport is about 'grassroots' sports delivery, and typically targets individuals who are not current participants in sport and/or physical activity.



In 2008 Sport Northern Ireland and the Health Promotion Agency (now the Public Health Agency) signed 'Active for Health' a joint charter for enhancing health through sport and physical activity. Central to the charter is the recognition of the importance of regular physical activity in maintaining good health and well-being. Having acknowledged this relationship between healthy lifestyles and regular participation in sport and physical activity, Sport Northern Ireland is committed to the implementation of the charter and will work in partnership to create and develop the conditions and opportunities to enable more people to become more active to enhance their health and well-being.

This publication tracks the development of community sport in Northern Ireland and through case studies and personal stories highlights the positive contribution made by a number of projects across a wide range of public health issues.





## THE CASE FOR SPORT

### Investing in Community Sport

Sport Northern Ireland believes that it is only through targeted investment that meaningful and sustainable progress can be made in developing sport and physical recreation in communities.

Between 2003 and 2010, Sport Northern Ireland invested in excess of £8 million (of revenue funding) in community sport.



The Community Sport Programme was first piloted by Sport Northern Ireland during the period 2003 to 2005. The aims of the pilot programme were to:

- Increase levels of sustained participation in sport and physical activity in areas of high social and economic disadvantage and among those groups traditionally marginalised through the development and delivery of programmes;
- Improve the health and well-being of programme participants through involvement in sport and physical activity programmes; and

- Establish and support the development of structures to sustain the longer-term provision of the Community Sport Programme across Northern Ireland.

Building on the pilot programme, the Community Sport Programme (2005-08) specifically aimed to improve the health and well-being of those communities most at risk of low levels of participation in sport and physical recreation. The programme also aimed to build community cohesion through increasing participation amongst children, young people and adults in areas of high social need and groups traditionally marginalised in sport and physical activity.

The Sport in Our Community Programme (2006-10) set out to support and deliver innovative and creative projects which met at least one of the following three cross-cutting themes:

- The development and improvement of physical literacy;
- The development of opportunities for people with disabilities; and/or
- The creation of sport or physical activity in areas of high social need for those who have not previously had a sustained interest in sport or physical activity.

Investment in community sport programmes was framed around the employment of a network of Community Sports Development Officers (CSDOs) across Northern Ireland.

The CSDOs reported significant annual increases in the number of referrals to sport and physical activity by a health professional as a primary health enhancement tool either as a preventative or treatment programme.

Many individuals highlighted that their participation in community sport had been genuinely life changing, and reported significant achievements relating to physical, social and emotional improvements including:

- Improved health and well-being;
- Better sleep patterns;
- Significant levels of extended family involvement in physical activity;
- Changes in diet and nutrition;
- Reductions in alcohol consumption;
- Positive impacts on confidence and positive body image; and
- A desire to be seen as role models.

### Cost Effectiveness of Community Sport

Between 2005-10 Sport Northern Ireland investment in community sport created over 153,000 regular participants in sport and physical activity. In 2005 each regular participant cost Sport Northern Ireland £60.50. By 2010 this cost was reduced to £33.00.

The new Sport Northern Ireland Active Communities Programme will further build on the work and is expected to invest £13.4m to provide more than 425,000 individuals in the period 2010 to 2015 with new participation opportunities reducing the cost per regular participant even further to £31.53.





## 'Sport Matters': The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009-19

In partnership with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Sport Northern Ireland has developed 'Sport Matters': The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009 - 2019. It is an ambitious document which sets out the case for ongoing and increased investment in sport and physical recreation. In return, this investment will help deliver a range of sporting, education and health outcomes.

'Sport Matters' sets out a range of commitments for Government, working through Sport Northern Ireland in partnership with a variety of public, private, sporting and community organisations; and highlights the need for a cross departmental approach to its implementation, particularly those responsible for health, education and regeneration.

It proposes a vision of 'a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport', and outlines the Government's desire that "by 2019 active lifestyles will be the norm" and that "the value of sport and physical recreation in contributing to health and community cohesion will be understood and supported".

The importance of increasing participation in sport and physical recreation is recognised through the inclusion of a number of participation targets linked to key steps for success. Some of these key steps link sport to public health and include:

- Promoting sport and physical recreation to the sedentary population;
- Promoting sport and physical recreation as a primary health improvement tool;
- Encouraging employers to provide opportunities for active lifestyles; and
- Establishing 'Active Schools Partnerships', linking health, education and community sport.

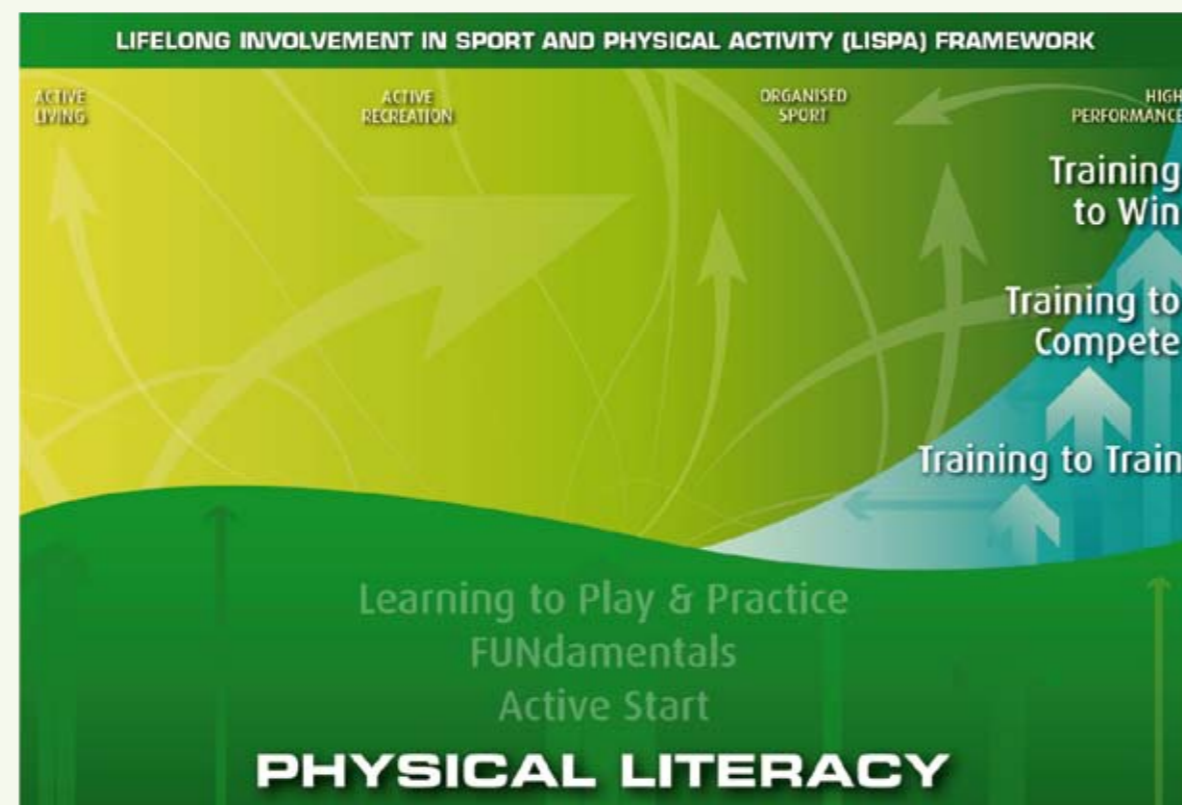
## Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity (LISPA)

The Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity (LISPA)<sup>3</sup> model (Figure 1) has been endorsed as a robust framework across the UK, the Irish Republic and beyond. This enables 'joined up' thinking in sports development policy and practice and offers the prospect of higher levels of participation and sporting success.

The main elements of the LISPA model deal with the development of Physical Literacy, Lifelong Physical Activity and Performance Sport.

The fluidity implied within the framework recognises that during the course of their life, an individual may follow a number of different routes.

Figure 1



## Addressing Public Health Issues through Participating in Sport and Physical Activity

Table 2

### Inactivity Facts

The cost attributable to physical inactivity includes over 2,100 deaths each year in Northern Ireland.

Throughout the UK, diabetes is thought to cost the Health Service around £1 million an hour. In Northern Ireland, that translates into around £1 million a day.

Type 2 diabetes is closely related to obesity and has a huge economic impact.

Over 62,000 people (around five percent of the population over 20 years of age) have type 2 diabetes –this could rise to over 81,000 by 2015.<sup>4</sup>

Tackling obesity could save the health service in Northern Ireland £8.4 million, reduce sickness absence by 170,000 days and add an extra ten years of life onto an individual's life span.<sup>5</sup>

Recent data indicates nearly 60% of the adult population is either overweight or obese; nearly one quarter of children will be obese in the next few years.

Between 2005 and 2015 the number of people in Northern Ireland with Type 2 Diabetes will rise by circa 17,000 to 84,000.<sup>6</sup>

Two thirds of cancer can be prevented through lifestyle changes (e.g. more exercise or changes to eating habits) - the links between cancer and obesity are not widely known or understood.<sup>7</sup>

According to the World Health Organisation about 7% of all diseases, about one third of coronary heart disease and stroke and almost 60% of hypertension disease are secondary to overweight and obesity.

A 10% reduction in weight can have a series of positive benefits including a 40% reduction in obesity-related cancer deaths, reduced blood pressure and cholesterol.<sup>8</sup>

One third of all deaths in Northern Ireland are caused by heart disease and stroke – 40% of strokes can be prevented.<sup>9</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Northern Ireland Audit Office (2009)

<sup>5</sup> BMA – Obesity Enquiry submission (2009)

<sup>6</sup> Institute of Public Health – Obesity Enquiry submission (2009)

<sup>7</sup> Institute of Public Health – Obesity Enquiry submission (2009)

<sup>8</sup> The Northern Health and Social Care Trust- Obesity Enquiry submission (2009)

<sup>9</sup> The Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke Association - Obesity Enquiry submission (2009)

<sup>3</sup> LISPA framework, Sport Northern Ireland/Irish Sports Council (2007)



Table 3

**Impact – The Costs of Obesity (and associated illness/disease)**

Estimated that obesity causes over 450 deaths per annum; equivalent to over 4,000 expected years of life lost; 260,000 working days lost each year; and the approximate cost to the economy of £500 million.<sup>10</sup>

Estimated that the total annual cost of obesity and overweight would be around £6.6–£7.4 billion. Of this total, around £991–£1,124 million related to the direct healthcare costs of treating obesity and its consequences.<sup>11</sup>

In the United Kingdom by 2050, 60 % of males and 50 % of females could be obese, adding £5.5 billion to the annual cost of the NHS, with wider costs to society and business estimated at £49.9 billion.

By 2050 we will be spending around £10 billion per annum on direct Health Service costs associated with obesity – additionally costs of £50 billion per annum will be associated with lost productivity and workforce issues.<sup>12</sup>

Estimated that lost earnings (lost potential national output) directly attributable to obesity £2,350–£2,600 million.

Around 34,000 deaths annually are attributable to obesity, one-third of which occur before retirement age. These account for an annual total of 45 000 lost working years.

There were around 15.5–16 million days of certified incapacity directly attributable to obesity in 2002.<sup>13</sup>

Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) is estimated to cost the UK economy just under £7.9 billion per year with around 45% of this is due to direct health care costs, 40% to production losses and 16% to informal care.

For the Health Service; the direct costs of obesity in 2002 were estimated at £46-49 million per year and the costs of treating the consequences of obesity at approximately £945-£1,075 million per year.

The treatment of diabetes and its complications costs the NHS 5% of its budget; £3.5 billion per year/£9.6 million per day.

In 2003 CHD cost the UK health care system around £3,500 million. Stroke care costs the NHS about £2.8 billion per year.

Estimates have shown that more CHD deaths can be attributed to physical inactivity (37%) than to smoking (19%) or high blood pressure (13%).<sup>14</sup>

Obesity is estimated to cause 450 deaths per year, £14.2 million in lost productivity and £90 million cost to health and social care.<sup>15</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Investing for Health Strategy (2002)

<sup>11</sup> House of Commons Select Committee (2004)

<sup>12</sup> Foresight Report (2007)

<sup>13</sup> McCormick and Stone (2007)

<sup>14</sup> British Heart Foundation National Centre (2007)

<sup>15</sup> Institute of Public Health – Obesity Enquiry submission (2009)



## WHO DELIVERS?

### Summary of Community Sport Investment

Of the £8 million (revenue funding) invested by Sport Northern Ireland, £1.2 million has gone to three strategic enabling agencies, who work across Northern Ireland in partnership with others on a range of community sport projects. These agencies are:

1. Disability Sports Northern Ireland;
2. PlayBoard NI; and
3. Age Concern NI (now Age Concern/Help the Aged NI)



Disability Sports Northern Ireland (DSNI) has over 80 member organisations or groups, consisting of sports clubs and organisations, special schools, adult centres and residential homes.

DSNI works across Northern Ireland delivering support and advice towards the achievement of its objectives which include policy development, community participation, training and coach education and performance sport.

PlayBoard NI is the leading agency for children's play, working to improve the quality of children's lives by increasing their opportunity to play. Sport Northern Ireland's investment focused on the Fit for Play Programme, developed as a preventative project designed to tackle obesity and improve the long-term health and well-being of children.

The project encouraged physical play, healthy snacking and access to the outdoor environment as the method through which children could maintain/improve their health and well-being.

As many older people had never entered a leisure centre in their lives before or had never before undertaken any form of physical activity or exercise since leaving school; the main issue for Age Concern NI was to break down barriers of perceptions about exercise amongst the older persons themselves.

Age Concern NI worked with over 60 groups and seven councils to build capacity within the groups by investing in training programmes for group leaders. Accredited courses were organised and leaders trained to run activities such as dance, chair-based aerobics, and walking. The leaders and groups were then linked to councils, leisure centres and other local groups.

Age Concern NI also worked with leisure centre staff to help them understand that the goals and focus for older people could be different from a younger person's, e.g. the social aspect of the activity is often as important as the physical benefit. Other issues that needed to be addressed included concerns about safety and a lack of experience amongst leisure centre staff in dealing with issues around older people being involved in exercise.

Table 4 summarises the total Sport Northern Ireland investment (excluding the three strategic awards) in community sport across each Health and Social Care Trust area.





Figure 2

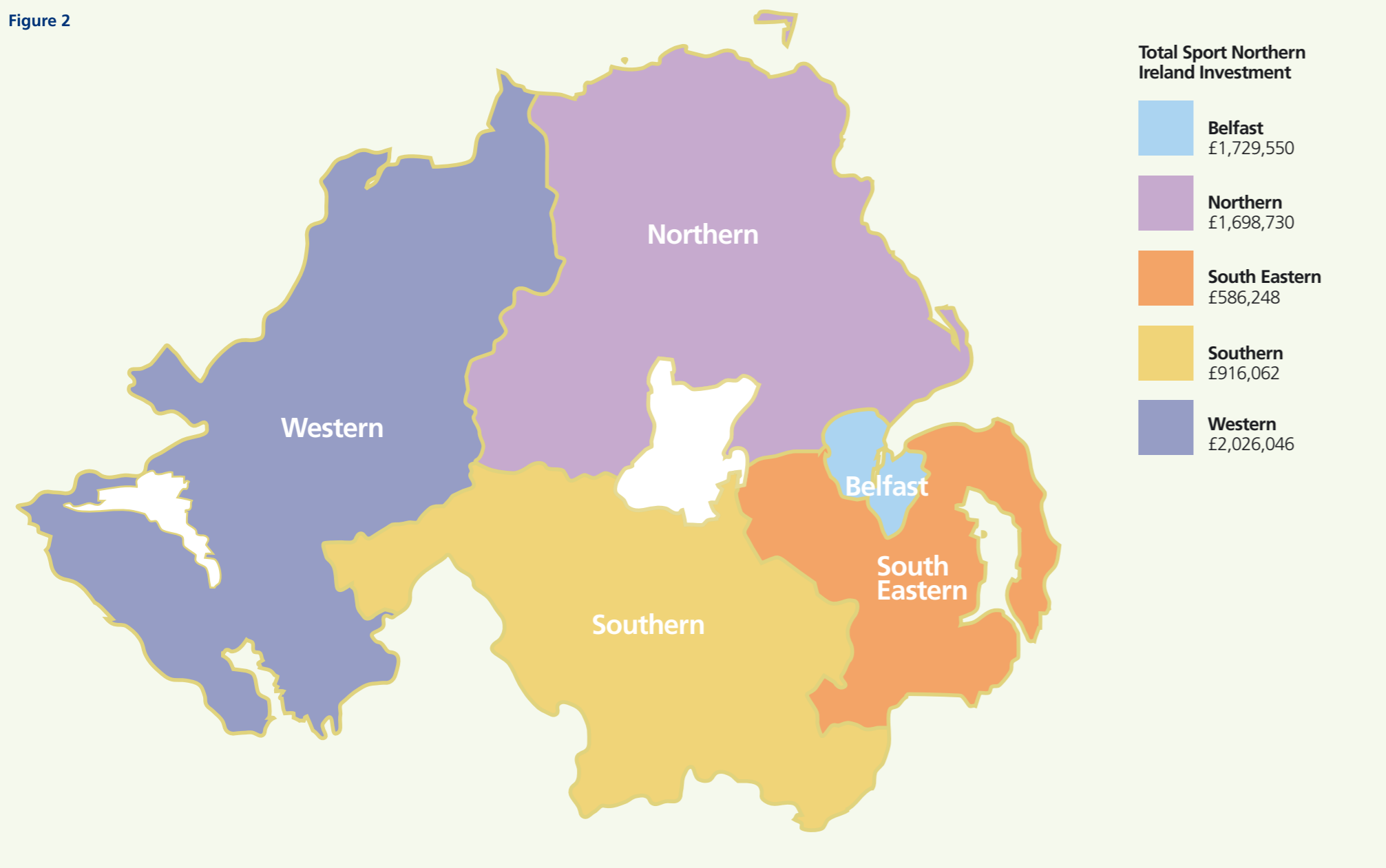


Figure 2 summarises the total Sport Northern Ireland investment in Community Sport across each Health and Social Care Trust area from 2003-10.

Table 4

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST	LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISTRICT	PARTNER ORGANISATIONS	TOTAL SPORT NORTHERN IRELAND INVESTMENT £	TOTAL ADDITIONAL FUNDING GENERATED £	AMOUNT GENERATED FOR EVERY £1 OF SPORT NORTHERN IRELAND INVESTMENT
Belfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belfast</li> <li>Castlereagh</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Castlereagh Borough Council</li> <li>Clarendon Development Association</li> <li>East Belfast Partnership Board</li> <li>Greater Shankill Partnership</li> <li>Greater Village Regeneration Trust</li> <li>Lagan Watersports</li> <li>Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group</li> <li>North Belfast Play Forum</li> <li>North Belfast Sports Forum</li> <li>Upper Springfield Development Trust</li> </ul>	1,729,550	5,144,343	£1 : £2.97
Northern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Antrim</li> <li>Ballymena</li> <li>Ballymoney</li> <li>Carrickfergus</li> <li>Coleraine</li> <li>Cookstown</li> <li>Larne</li> <li>Magherafelt</li> <li>Moyle</li> <li>Newtownabbey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ballymena Borough Council</li> <li>Ballymoney Borough Council</li> <li>Coleraine Borough Council</li> <li>Cookstown District Sports Forum</li> <li>Larne Borough Council</li> <li>Moyle District Council</li> <li>North Eastern Education and Library Board</li> <li>Sport North East</li> <li>University of Ulster</li> </ul>	1,698,730	1,507,436	£1 : £0.89
South Eastern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Down</li> <li>Newtownards</li> <li>North Down</li> <li>Lisburn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Down Clubmark</li> <li>Lisburn City Council</li> <li>South Eastern Education and Library Board</li> <li>Sport South East</li> </ul>	586,248	205,016	£1 : £0.35
Southern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armagh</li> <li>Banbridge</li> <li>Craigavon</li> <li>Dungannon</li> <li>Newry and Mourne</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brownlow Campus Sports Trust</li> <li>Craigavon Borough Council</li> <li>Craigavon Sports Advisory Council</li> <li>Newry and Mourne Carers</li> <li>Southern Education and Library Board</li> <li>Southern Sports Partnership</li> </ul>	916,062	528,895	£1 : £0.58
Western	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Derry</li> <li>Fermanagh</li> <li>Limavady</li> <li>Omagh</li> <li>Strabane</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Derry Healthy Cities</li> <li>Derry City Council</li> <li>Old Library Trust</li> <li>Strabane District Council</li> <li>Omagh District Council</li> <li>Youth Sport Omagh</li> </ul>	2,026,046	5,144,343	£1 : £2.54

Health and Social Care Trust and Local Government District data drawn from relevant websites.



## WHAT WORKS?

Five case studies are presented covering the Health and Social Care Trusts and focusing on the public health impact of Sport Northern Ireland's community sport investment across the:

1. Western Health and Social Care Trust;
2. Northern Health and Social Care Trust;
3. Southern Health and Social Care Trust;
4. Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;  
and
5. South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.







## Western Health and Social Care Trust

**Sport Northern Ireland's partner organisations in the Western Trust area have designed and delivered a number of innovative programmes across a wide range of participants, including disabled people, families, young teenage mums and older people and addressed a variety of public health issues including sexual health, drugs, alcohol and substance abuse, and obesity.**

The delivery of sport and physical activity as part of a treatment programme is demonstrated through:

- Fit Futures Yoga Schools Programme (Mental Health);
- Exercise Referral (Diabetes);
- Choices (Women with BMI >25); and
- Inclusive Games (Young Stroke survivors).

Over £613,000 was generated in additional funding for programmes and included contributions from:

- Chest, Heart and Stroke;
- Healthy Towns Initiative;
- Department of Social Development;

- Department of Employment and Learning;
- Extended schools;
- Sport Relief; and
- Derry Credit Union.

The diverse range of community/voluntary, education sector and statutory sector project partners contributed to the success of the programmes including Shantallow Strollers, The University of Ulster (Coleraine), Caw Nelson Drive Action Group, Bogside and Brandywell Health Forum, Glen Development Initiative, Destined and Strabane District Caring Services.

This case study consists of number of projects implemented by:

1. **Foyle Active Futures (Derry Healthy Cities);**
2. **Old Library Trust Healthy Living Centre; and**
3. **Derry City Council - Fit Futures.**

Foyle Active Futures' aim is to increase the involvement of people with disabilities in physical activity.

The Old Library Trust Healthy Living Centre is a neighbourhood health project based in the Creggan estate in Derry, but serving also the wider Creggan, Brandywell, Bogside and Fountain areas.

Fit Futures (Derry City Council) operates in conjunction with the Outer North Neighbourhood Partnership. Its main area of operation is in the 30,000 person catchment area mainly comprised of Carnhill, Galliagh and Shantallow.



All projects featured in this case study target people whose social or geographical isolation has prevented them from participation in organised sport and physical activity.

Many groups traditionally under represented in sport and physical activity have benefited from community sport programmes across the Western Trust area. The Foyle Active Futures project, for example, is specifically aimed at increasing involvement of people with disabilities and has delivered a wide range of activities to more than 1,500 people. Fit Futures has worked with Traveller children through the schools programme and with children generally. It has also targeted women and older people. The GP referral programmes and general fitness programme run by the Old Library Trust specifically target people with health needs and disabilities.

Foyle Active Futures supported Limavady Ageing Well which specifically caters for people aged over 50. Its objectives are to encourage older people to become more physically active, to encourage them into local leisure facilities thereby increasing levels of fitness and physical activity. The project offered weekly physical activities that included armchair aerobics, aqua-aerobics and yoga.

The Fit Futures Yoga Schools Programme operated within a cluster of seven primary

schools delivering yoga to over 300 young people within the Outer North area of Derry. The Yoga in Schools Programme delivered one 30 minute session per week with each class of primary seven pupils. The programme was aimed at encouraging healthy lifestyles and energising the children to become more active.

Driving 2 Health (Old Library Trust) involved 20 local taxi drivers over a six-month period, encouraging more physical activity and raising awareness of unhealthy eating practices through group exercise sessions and tailored individual gym sessions. Participants devoted three hours a week to the programme at first, with one hour in a circuit class at the gym, one hour in a nutritional class and an hour with a personal trainer.

### KEY ENABLERS

#### Partners and Other Funders

One of the big successes of community sport projects in the Western Trust area is the amount of partnership working that has been delivered. It was clear that there are effective linkages operating at local and at area level e.g. the work of Fit Futures in the north side of Derry/Londonderry is embedded in the work of the Outer North Neighbourhood Partnership, Shantallow Community Residents Association, local community groups and schools.



In the Bogside, Brandywell and Creggan the Old Library Trust operates in an area where there appears to be a high level of social capital, where local people are reachable through their friendship and kinship networks. This has enabled the Trust to build up a considerable profile as a community hub around which it delivers sports and physical activity. The project also works closely with Derry City Council, in particular the Community Sport Programme within the Triax area in developing and delivering joint programmes.

Across the wider geographic area that encompasses Derry, Strabane and Limavady Councils, the Foyle Active Futures project has focussed effectively on linking projects and resources together in a way that enables a better use of resources, sharing of good practice and engendering a sense of joint achievement. Partnerships have also brought considerable economic benefits, e.g. Foyle Active Futures project secured £73,295 in additional funding from a range of partners including the Western Health and Social Services Board, Public Health Agency, Sports Relief and the Western Health Action Zone.

### Capacity of Organisations to Run Projects

Networking activities have been crucial to project success as some of the smaller community groups and organisations

that promote projects are often in a weak position in terms of skills and membership. The Old Library Trust's approach has been to focus on becoming an effective community hub, creating confidence and trust within the communities in which they are based.

### Barriers to Getting Projects and Activities Off the Ground

There have been a number of barriers to initiating projects in the Western Trust Area, some of which have been overcome and some of which remain as obstacles. The project staff at Old Library Trust had to expend considerable efforts to get their Exercise Referral Scheme off the ground, creating appropriate relationships with medical staff and participants alike to gain their confidence and trust. In the Shantallow and Galliagh areas there is a lack of facilities which remains a barrier to the amount and nature of community sport that can take place.

### Catalysts and Enablers

Gaining trust and understanding from partners and participants is the kind of barrier that good coordination and skilled community work can overcome. One very important enabler is therefore having community based staff who are known and trusted by their communities and who understand the nature of the everyday lives of the people and the needs of the area.



The staff at the Old Library Trust are local to the area and have gained the confidence of their community which acts as a strong enabler in getting projects off the ground and in attracting the right participants to their programmes.

Good networking and strong partnerships have been major enablers to the success of projects in the Western Trust area as highlighted below:

“Collectively we have more ‘thinking power’ and can use each other’s expertise. The needs of projects are often similar,

(transport, facilities, access for people with disabilities), and networking organisations together helped us find joint solutions.”

To take full advantage of these enablers, staff members skilled in networking and partnerships are vital. Foyle Active Futures staff clearly recognised the importance of networking at an early stage and their efforts in this regard has built a strong sense of joint working and sharing.

Rooting sport and physical activity firmly in local need and working closely with local groups has also been a positive enabler for

the Fit Futures project in the Outer North Neighbourhood Partnership area. Best described as symbiotic relationships, the Community Sports Development Officer, Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership, Shantallow Resident’s Association, local schools and other community groups are dependent on each other to deliver activities that meets the needs of the local population. The recognition by officers of the need to work from a community development perspective has been a major plank in the success of projects in the Outer North area. There is also evidence that the pro-activity of community sport staff and project staff has been an essential enabler to getting, and keeping, participants involved.

## IMPACTS

### Objective Measurement

The ‘Fit Futures in Schools Programme’ for Primary 7 pupils, involves 15 minutes of education based on a health theme followed by an hour of physical activity which supports the theme. This programme resulted in significant increases in the fitness levels of participants, increased physical activity levels and an improvement in energy intakes.

Measurements taken by project staff show that the 35 participants in the 12 week Walk Challenge programme run by Foyle

Active Futures lost over 10% of body fat. Participants also reported positive changes to their eating patterns as a result of workshops in healthy eating awareness.

Data from a health forum run in the Bogside and Brandywell areas shows that participants undertaking a range of physical activities and in receipt of talks on healthy lifestyles reduced their average cholesterol reading from 5.14 to 4.6 over a period of 12 weeks and evidenced significant weight loss.

### Participants’ Views

The strongest evidence of health impacts comes from people who participate in projects. The outcomes range from physical to psychological and social impacts such as improved fitness, weight loss, an increase in independence and a decrease in social isolation.

## PAULINE’S STORY

Pauline Doherty from Limavady is 50 years old and has been deaf since birth. She is a qualified sign language teacher and works as the information Officer for “Hands That Talk” (Dungiven), a registered charity that supports people who are deaf or who have a hearing impairment.

Members of Hands that Talk identified Tai Chi as an activity they would like to take part in as it wasn’t possible for them to

attend in their community as they needed an interpreter to be able to do so. Pauline first discovered Tai Chi through a 12 week course. At first she was just another member of the class, but the instructor, Danny Butterfield noticed that she had a real flair for it. Pauline, herself really enjoyed the activity. As she told the local newspaper, the Derry Journal:

“I just really connected with it. It was a beautiful feeling. I could feel the blood circulating through my body. I felt as if it gave me inner strength. It’s really helped me relax, and given me inner strength on days where I might have felt a bit down. My life has got a lot better.”

But participating as a member of the class was not enough for Pauline, she wanted to help other people from the deaf community to learn and share the enjoyment that she gets from Tai Chi. So she took the necessary training and became the first deaf Tai Chi instructor in Northern Ireland. Now she is fully qualified to teach the Qigong, a holistic Tai Chi system of self-healing exercise and meditation, to members of the deaf and hearing impaired community. Pauline points to the numerous health benefits of Tai Chi:

“There are so many health benefits that we weren’t aware of, for example, losing weight, lowering blood pressure and so on.”

Thanks to the partnership between Foyle Active Futures and Hands That Talk, deaf people and those with hearing impairments can now enjoy Tai Chi instructed in sign by Pauline. As Pauline says:

“Deaf people could not get involved in activities like this before...barriers have been removed.”

Pauline has since led a number of exhibitions in Qi Quong across Northern Ireland.

Participants from the Old Library Trust were similarly enthusiastic about the impacts that activities had upon them. The leader of the Driving 2 Health course for taxi drivers reported that all participants had improved their BMI and that there were visible improvements in their physical characteristics.

Many individuals who were first introduced to sport and physical activity through these community sport projects are now continuing to participate independently. As one participant said:

“I would never have gone to a gym at all. This gave me a stepping stone; now I have confidence to go to other gyms and try out other things.”



## EAMONN'S STORY

Eamonn is a young man in his twenties who, by his own description, was very obese. Before taking up exercise and healthier eating, his life was extremely limited, he didn't leave the house, he had few friends and he lacked confidence because of his size.

Eamonn's mother was instrumental in getting him involved in the Old Library Trust Healthy Living Centre's physical activity programmes. Eamonn took regular exercise classes and received advice on nutrition and diet at the Old Library Trust.

At first Eamonn didn't lose weight and became disillusioned, but the Community Sports Development Officers encouraged him into continuing. "George and Tommy phoned every day .... gave me support, so that in the end I really wanted to go every day."

Eamonn has now lost 10 stone and his weight continues to drop. Because he is more confident about how he looks, Eamonn now swims regularly. "It gave me confidence to go swimming, I was so heavy I never went before."

He has become known in the local area as a visible example of how taking regular

physical activity and eating healthily can reduce obesity. He has also become a role model for others and young people often ask him how he has lost weight and seek his advice on healthy eating and exercise. Because of his success, other obese young people have started along the same exercise and healthy eating path.

Eamonn's mother has now joined the exercise and healthy living programme along with her five other children. As a result, another of her children has also lost five stone and she says; "we buy much more healthy food and we eat much better."

As a result her own and her family's progress, her depression has improved to the degree that she has been able to cease taking her medication.

The impact of the project organised by the Foyle Disability Resource Centre as part of Foyle Active Futures, is highlighted by a participant:

"I am a person with a physical disability. The opportunity to take part in any physical activities has been very limited for me during my life, since there are very few that are designed and accessible to let me participate. (Through Foyle Active Futures) I have undertaken a wide range of physical activities including boccia, kurling,

armchair-based exercises, orienteering and watersports. I have developed both physically and mentally...I have gotten stronger...I now have more stamina...I feel better about myself....more confident in myself."

## SUSTAINABILITY

A legacy exists in the Western Trust area in terms of the networks, linkages and facilities that have been forged and will provide a continuing vehicle for sport and physical activity.

There is now a cohort of people who participate in sport and physical activity that would not have existed prior to community sport investment who demonstrate a strong willingness to continue their participation.

On the demand side there is sustainable and ongoing need; while on the supply side there are now vehicles for delivery in terms of facilities, equipment and networking infrastructure. However, there is a universal view that continued investment is essential in sustaining projects.

Furthermore, the continuance of CSDOs is essential in providing an engine to drive projects forward, to match need to activities and continue to create and sustain the partnerships and linkages that can deliver successful projects.







## Northern Health and Social Care Trust

**Although not the primary objective of many community sport investments in the Northern Trust area, a number of programmes were delivered in partnership with health organisations, e.g. Northern Physical Activity Partnership, Northern Investing for Health Partnership and Environmental Health Departments which attracted over £30,000 in additional funding to support the implementation.**

Specific projects delivered for public health outcomes included:

- Fun, Food and Fitness and Full of Beans Activity Programme for young people;
- Girls Night Out for women in rural areas; and
- Wellman Project for men in rural areas.

A number of programmes have been sustained by the partner organisations, and participants provided with exits routes into mainstream council sports development programmes e.g. Activ8 Wildcat clubs and Active Age Programme.

This case study consists of six projects developed by the CSDOs in:

1. **Larne Borough Council;**
2. **Ballymoney Borough Council; and**
3. **Coleraine Borough Council.**

Active Choice is a GP Referral project in Larne for people with ongoing health problems such as depression, heart disease and obesity. As partners in the project, GP practices refer participants to a 12 week programme following an assessment of their physical activity needs.

Key health measurements are taken by a physical activity consultant at the initial assessment and at regular intervals throughout the project. Each participant is given a tailored programme of exercise - usually consisting of a combination of

swimming and fitness training. Participants meet with their physical activity consultant regularly throughout the 12 weeks to discuss their progress and receive advice and support.

Larne Ladies Morning is designed to attract women of any age into the Leisure Centre in Larne, and particularly women who have not taken recent physical exercise. The women only sessions were devised because women traditionally have a lower participation rate than men and because mixed sessions were a perceived barrier to them becoming active users of the leisure centre. A special low £1 entrance rate was offered initially which provided access to all centre activities such as swimming, fitness room, aerobics class, sauna, jacuzzi, as well as the opportunity to play sports such as badminton. Tea, coffee and fruit are provided during breaks between activities. Initially advertised in the local press with news of its development spreading rapidly by word of mouth, it has resulted in an average of 40 regular attendees from across the Borough.

Larne Midnight Soccer is run as a partnership project jointly funded and supported by community sport, the Community Safety Partnership and PSNI and mainly attracts young male participants. Larne Midnight Soccer is a diversionary project, which allows young

people to undertake healthy activity, replacing the opportunity for anti-social or unhealthy behaviour.

Ballymoney Midnight Soccer utilises the multi-use pitches within the local housing estates with local communities responsible for organising their own teams. The objectives of the project were aimed at diverting young males (aged 14 to 17) from unhealthy levels of alcohol/drug use and its associated risky behaviours (including violence, accidental harm and underage sex) and anti-social behaviour.

The Coast project (Coleraine) is aimed at people aged 18 and over with mental health difficulties, some of whom were in residential accommodation, others living in the community. Some participants came from the Ross Thompson Unit which caters for people suffering from depressive illness. The objectives of the project were to build up confidence, lift mood levels, improve self esteem and raise general fitness levels.

Coleraine Ageing Well Project is specifically for people aged over 50. Its objectives are to encourage older people to become more physically active, to encourage them into the local gym and leisure facilities. The project offered weekly physical activities that included swimming, sauna, spin classes, and jacuzzi. The project originally drew on partner funding from Age Concern





NI's community sport project, but is now a mainstream project paid for from the Council's community sport programme costs.

Those under represented in sport and physical activity have benefited from the community sport projects and would not

have participated otherwise in sport and/or physical activity, e.g.:

- Women through the Ladies Morning;
- Disadvantaged youth through Midnight Soccer and other community based projects;
- People with long-term health problems

and disabilities through the Active Choice and the Coast project;

- Older people through the Ageing Well project;
- Some unemployed people have gone through community sport projects and moved on to get their coaching badges

from the IFA, which could lead to paid employment; and

- Ethnic minorities through the Asian 50plus forum.

## KEY ENABLERS

### Partners and Other Funders

Sport Northern Ireland's investment in CSDO posts and accompanying programme costs have been a major enabler to getting community sport projects initiated in each area. Additional funding has come from a variety of sources including Age Concern, the Public Health Agency, and Community Safety Partnerships. The North Eastern Education and Library Board has also been an active partner and has provided good support to the work of the officers in projects aimed specifically at young people.

CSDOs emphasised the need to have good links into communities as essential to getting projects accepted and off the ground, e.g. to ensure good levels of referral, time was invested in building and maintaining good relationships with stakeholders so that projects were founded within a supportive partnership arrangement. CSDOs have extensive linkages into the local community infrastructure and are a known point of contact for local groups who wish to develop sport or physical activity.



### Capacity of Organisations to Run Projects

Some of the community associations in the area organise and plan well, with these usually being groups with more experienced people on their committees. The over 50's groups tend to be best organised. Less organised groups tend to be poor at communicating their needs and do not give much feedback about the success or suitability of the projects delivered.

As most community sport projects are initiated by the lead organisation in partnership with established agencies or other professionals, low capacity within communities is not necessarily a barrier. However, in the case of Larne Midnight Soccer it was clear from the community leader involved that communities vary in their capacity to take on and take ownership of projects.

"The more disadvantaged the community, the less well placed it is to take ownership and sustain a project."

The community leader was uncertain whether the local communities would continue with the project if he had to direct his energies to projects elsewhere.

### Barriers to Getting Projects and Activities Off the Ground

In the Coleraine area competition and antagonism between some local groups and their representative associations can sometimes foil attempts to initiate projects. This can stem from an unwillingness to join with other communities in joint projects and from an attitude of wanting separate and equal provision at all times.

Some communities within the Larne area display an unwillingness to get involved in things that are run by the Council which is a potential barrier to the development and delivery of projects.

Active Choice required considerable financial resource as the qualified physical activity consultants (Wright Foundation Level 3 Fitness Instructors) command around £25 per hour. Even though participants clearly benefit from improved health and fitness, no funding comes from the health sector for this project. Currently there are many more people wishing to join Active Choice than can be financially afforded and a limited number of accredited consultants and their availability is also a constricting factor.

The Coast project is dependent upon transport being available to take participants to the facilities, who by the nature of their illnesses are unlikely to



go out on their own. Transport is often unavailable and project staff are using their own vehicles to ferry participants to and fro.

### Getting Projects Off the Ground – Catalysts and Enablers

The effort of CSDOs in encouraging partnerships and working within their own networks is a considerable enabler as well organised partners have made it much easier to get projects going. Schools have opened up their facilities and the Northern Education and Library Board has been a very effective partner in this regard. Successfully finding partners who have similar health and fitness objectives to the community sport programme has been essential, e.g. the Northern Health Trust, Age Concern. Identifying partners who have some 'start up' funding available has also been beneficial.

The Ladies Morning in Larne is a good example of enabling a project by ensuring that it meets people's needs - in this case helping them to get onto the first step of the physical activity ladder by addressing the barriers to participation. Women have found it easier to become involved in a women only group: it was less threatening, offered a more supportive environment and provided them with greater privacy. The cost barrier was addressed by offering a

special low entrance fee for the project, though the project now charges £3 which does not now seem to be a barrier.

The Coast Project in Coleraine and surrounding area is another example of how good partnership working enables people to gain access to sport and physical activity. This was a joint approach with the Northern Health and Social Services Trust linking in with their mental health programmes. Participants all have mental health problems including depressive and schizophrenic illnesses and undertake a range of activities including boccia, new age kurling, 5 a-side soccer and spin classes.

The Ageing Well Project was originally a partnership between Age Concern and Coleraine Borough Council. Initial planning meetings focussed on the facilities required, the level of coaching support and what the participants would want from the programme. A pilot day was held in Coleraine Leisure Centre and acting on the feedback from that day, a 12 week block of activities was set up, tailored to the specific needs of the age group. The project now covers 10 week blocks of activities. For many, participation in the programme enabled their first ever visit to a leisure centre.

The Midnight Soccer projects in Larne and Ballymoney were set up following on from



the success of Midnight Soccer projects in Belfast. The CSDOs initially approached the PSNI who offered support through making their Officers available to help with activities. The local Community Safety

Partnerships provided funding for both projects. In Larne, advertising in schools helped to find participants, whilst in Ballymoney the local contacts were used to identify participants and teams.

## IMPACTS

### Objective Measurement

Active Choice (Larne) is specifically designed to improve the basic health and fitness of participants and collates health related data to monitor participants. Anonymous sample records show for one woman a weight loss of 10 kilos and considerable reduction in blood pressure and resting heart rate over the 12 week period. Her consultant report states: "She has also overcome a lack of confidence in swimming and now swims regularly as a form of Cardio Vascular exercise." Another participant's blood pressure dropped from 150/87 (high) to 116/71 (normal) and a feel-good score improvement from 4 to 9.

### Participants' Views

One participant in the Active Choice project, and who described herself as a 'recovering chocaholic' said that she is "not as lazy" as she used to be and now walks to the shops instead of taking the car. Another participant, having tried every diet and every weight loss programme going has lost three stone since joining the project and commented: "my blood pressure and heart rate have reduced and my lung capacity has increased."

## THE LARNE LADIES STORY

Participants at a focus group report very positive health and social benefits including significant weight loss, an improvement in energy levels, improved fitness and greater strength. One woman reported that her GP had commented on her improved back strength after she had been taking Pilates. Another commented that her general vigour had improved, "I'm a go-getter now - not as lazy as I was before." A further participant said: "I can walk up the hill to my house now, I couldn't do that before."

Being a participant also provides social support - able to share problems with one another and support each other in difficult times. "I have made new friends and improved my social life." Another reported that when her husband died she found great support and caring from the members of the group.

Larne Ladies is a good example of identifying and actively addressing barriers to women's participation and facilitating the delivery of the benefits of sport and physical activity.

Health professionals suggest that the Coast project had positive impacts in lifting the mood of people suffering from depressive illnesses. Participants were mostly male, living in the community and as a result of their mood states, many of them were likely

to remain housebound, without routine, encouraging a lack of exercise, poor eating and sleeping habits. Observation on home visits show noticeable improvements in mood states following their participation in the Coast project.

Participants from the Ageing Well Project report increases in activity levels and while they enjoy the structured activities have also been pursuing other opportunities for physical activity outside of the project.

Whilst there is no hard data on health improvements from the Midnight Soccer projects, the leaders report changes in smoking behaviour amongst some participants as they become fitter and realise the impact that smoking was having on their health and on their soccer performance. The leaders also argue that the diversionary element keeps young people away from risky behaviour that could otherwise be injurious to their health.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Delivering Active Choice is expensive in terms of the physical activity consultants, although it is hoped to have this expertise 'in house' at Larne Borough Council from early 2010. The Larne Ladies Morning is now self financing through the £3 weekly charge and is sustainable in the longer term both financially and in terms of membership.

Larne's Midnight Soccer's sustainability depends a great deal on whether the communities involved can develop the capacity and volunteering necessary to keep it going. The manager for the project reports that he needs to move on and establish Midnight Soccer schemes in other areas, and fears that the existing schemes may then fall away. Their sustainability will depend on volunteer development. In Coleraine, the Council has taken the Midnight Soccer project into its mainstream community sport programme. It is well attended, has built up a good infrastructure and a set of people who run it. As a result the programme will be sustained into the future as long as a council community sport budget exists.

To date there have been three blocks of the Coast Project activities and it is viewed as a model of good practice. The sustainability of the project depends on the continuing involvement of the CSDO, the health professionals involved and the council community sport budget. The Coleraine Ageing Well Project is now funded wholly from the Council's community sport budget. It is well attended and is likely to run well into the future, but only as long as the council community sport budget continues to exist.





## Southern Health and Social Care Trust

**Community sport investments within the Southern Trust area have generated an additional £146,000 for health based programmes from a range of funding sources, e.g. Department of Social Development, Southern Investing for Health Partnership, Big Lottery, Northern Bank, Awards for All and the Local Community Fund.**

Examples of programmes delivered include:

- Active4Life delivered by the Southern Sports Partnership for overweight and obese year 8 pupils;
- Deaf Swim Club delivered in partnership with the Ulster Deaf Sports Council resulting in swimmers competing at the NI Championships and the UK Disabled Swimming Championships;
- Mental health golf programme resulting in a number of participants playing independently; and
- Filipino Health Programme in association with the Craigavon Filipino Support Network developing badminton and basketball as core sports.

Craigavon Borough Council's Sports Development Team (inclusive of Community Sports Development) works in partnership with over 70 organisations and from March 2006 to September 2009 delivered to 3,947 participants across the community sport programme (1,586 female; 2,361 male). Impacting on public health, in the widest sense and widest definition of public health, is a primary focus of all community sport programme activity.

This case study focuses on the following six projects delivered by Craigavon Borough Council and draws widely on the experience of other partners, project leaders and participants.

1. **SLUG (Sport and Leisure Users Group);**
2. **Multiple Sclerosis Activity Group;**
3. **DV8 Youth Sports Projects;**
4. **Childhood Obesity;**
5. **Aspergers Saturday Club; and**
6. **Community Health Challenge.**

SLUG (Sport and Leisure Users Group) has been meeting for over four years and has recently become constituted and formalised. The main aims of the group are:

- To develop new opportunities and promote existing physical activity opportunities for people with a disability;
- To provide a voice for the disabled sporting community;
- To identify and challenge access issues; and
- To strengthen working relationships between agencies and sectors.

The SLUG has a strong board of disabled office bearers who have all undergone committee training. Recently the group were successful in a funding application to Awards for All and received £5,995 to deliver a range of disability sports projects.

Initially a six-week pilot programme, the Multiple Sclerosis Activity Group offers physical activity to adult clients in the Craigavon area who have been diagnosed with MS. The programme includes both higher mobility and lower mobility groups, delivered at Waves Leisure Complex, Lurgan. The programme allows clients to be reintroduced to a leisure centre setting and offers a number of new





games and activities, including pilates, boccia, new age kurling, chair-based activity, and yoga and relaxation, with an aim to enable participants to contribute to the self management of their lifelong health condition.

DV8 Youth Sports Projects was first developed in 2004 and has evolved into a well branded umbrella term for a variety of projects that aim to provide sports participation, training and education, and personal development opportunities for young people. The participants are selected in consultation with local youth, community/voluntary organisations and identified by their organisation as being 'at risk' of anti-social behaviour.

A number of initiatives developed by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, supported by the Sports Development Unit targeted children and young people at risk of childhood obesity. A toolkit was developed to assist health professionals to advise families how to eat more healthily and to be more active, giving supportive information to motivate families and practical tips on how to set goals, reducing time spent in front of TVs and computers, and on family games and activities.

The Dietetics Department of the Trust also delivered sessions for young people in Cascades Leisure Centre around healthy choices and a centre instructor leads a

weekly activity session. Parents were invited to join some of the sessions and received advice on choosing the healthy option when doing the weekly shop.

The Aspergers Saturday Club began as a six-week pilot programme, delivering arts and sports activities for children with Aspergers aged eight to 11. Based at Taghnevan Community Centre, eight teenagers also attend the project as buddies to the young people.

Due to ongoing demand from participants and parents, a steering group and a parent support group was established to oversee the development of the project. The club now meets monthly to participate in a range of sports including multi-skills, tri-golf, soccer, boccia and new age kurling.

The Community Health Challenge is held annually over a six week period in October and November. During the Challenge, 13 teams of five, aimed to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, eat a proper breakfast and take as much exercise as possible. Teams received points for each portion of fruit or vegetables consumed, for eating a good breakfast and one point for every 10 minutes of exercise they performed. This led to a presentation evening where trophies are presented to the participating teams.

With the high degree of coordination between partner organisations and the



Sports Development Unit a range of under-represented groups have been successfully targeted, and in particular people with disabilities e.g. the Disability Access Programme delivered to young people with a learning disability in a partnership between the 18-25 project in Craigavon and the Southern Health Trust, and includes

personal development, alcohol awareness and sexual health.

While much of project activity is open to participants from across Craigavon, under-represented groups and non traditional participants have been a particular focus of community sport through tailored programmes.

## KEY ENABLERS

### Partners and Other Funders

Craigavon Borough Council's Sports Development Team have worked hard at building and maintaining partnerships and have established strong working relationships with many groups and

organisations, e.g. the Active Inclusion project acquired new partners in the health sector leading to work with a range of mental health groups. Engaging with the Health sector is as much a key challenge as well as a key achievement, due to the investment in time needed to build trust and relationships.

Partnership working lies at the heart of community sport and the six sample projects are good examples of this.

SLUG is made up of individuals with a disability, disability group representatives and statutory agencies. The MS Activity Group is a partnership initiative with the Trust's Community Physiotherapy team. The DV8 projects has funding from the Department of Social Development, Peace II, the Community Safety Partnership, Southern Investing for Health Partnership, and Big Lottery. Partners in the Aspergers Saturday Club include the Children with Disabilities Team at the Trust, Taghnevan Community Centre, the Youth Service and Aspergers Charities. The Community Health Challenge is run in partnership with Banbridge District Council and the Health Trust.

Partnership working enables the Sports Development Team to work with local community groups and sports clubs to assist them in securing additional funding to run community sports programmes.





### Barriers to Getting Projects and Activities Off the Ground

The lack of suitable accessible facilities has been a barrier to engaging disabled people in community sport. SLUG brings together a range of statutory sector representatives and

service users and aims to break down such barriers to participation for disabled users.

The availability of facilities and a lack of suitable transport to and from venues is one of the main barriers to engaging people in sport and physical activity in the Craigavon



area. The cost of accessing facilities is prohibitive especially for programmes delivered beyond a 12-week period.

### Getting Projects Off the Ground – Catalysts and Enablers

To encourage the development of a range of projects sports development staff invested a great deal of effort into demonstrating the value of getting people to become more active to potential participants and their carers; highlighting the benefits that physical activity can bring to the medical problems experienced by specific target groups.

“Treatment has traditionally been hospital based but if we can get people into Leisure Centres then we can make greater impact on recovery and lifestyle.”

Giving participants the confidence to take part in activities is an enabler to encourage sustained participation. Partners and practitioners in the Young Persons Project, which works with people who have a physical/sensory disability, state that the biggest issues in getting projects up and running are:

- Getting people out of the house;
- Supporting people with confidence building; and
- Nurturing individuals to the point where they are able to take the opportunities for physical activity that are provided.

Knowledge of where the greatest need exists and matching that need to provision by identifying and engaging with suitable partners is also key. CSDOs play a vital role in mapping out provision in the area, and developing appropriate partnerships with other providers in health, leisure and sport sectors.

Access to good coaching is also an important enabler - coaching delivered to a high standard is a significant enabler for those whose initial experiences of participation spurs them on to become more fully involved in sport and physical activity. The role of project staff is to motivate participants to the point where they are ready to engage with sport and for coaches to provide the skills and encouragement to take part in a sport and/or physical activity.

Initial investment from Sport Northern Ireland is a vital enabler in that it gives projects access to experienced CSDOs and coaches. CSDOs were also seen as playing an important role in helping with funding applications, particularly within a restricted funding environment.

## IMPACTS

### Objective Measurement

While there is a lack of hard data on the health impacts of community sport interventions, good qualitative information

is available mostly through participant feedback and continual project assessment.

Evidence is however available from the work place health project which focuses on the health and well being of staff and includes, sport and physical activity, advice on healthy eating, and healthy lifestyles including stress reduction, relaxation and smoking cessation. Community sport staff are involved in the delivery of sport and physical activity within the programme. Through their annual employee health check, the project reported improved productivity, reduction in absenteeism as well as a range of additional health benefits.

### Participants’ Views

As a result of the MS Activity Group programme a number of physical and social benefits were evident, with some clients improving their overall mobility, manual dexterity and walking speed. Many clients commented that they had gained greater confidence, balance, self-esteem, improved function and enjoyed the opportunity to meet other people with MS. The group has also started a yoga programme which has had a major impact on participants. Whilst core fitness is an important issue within the group, reducing isolation through social contact has also had major benefits:

## SUSAN’S STORY

Susan is 60 years old and became involved with the MS Group in 2008 when she was introduced to the group by her physiotherapist. Until that time she was unaware of any community based initiatives or projects that she could actively participate in. The MS Group is now a member of the Sport and Leisure Users Group (SLUG) and Susan is now active in a number of sports and is a keen organiser for the group.

“...and I absolutely love it – I play boccia and new age curling mainly in Craigavon Leisure Centre but I recently travelled to the Antrim Forum to participate in the Northern Ireland championships and we have now bought our own equipment to practice.”

Whilst maintaining health is a key consideration for Susan - particularly increasing mobility, the social interaction and being part of a much larger group (the MS Group has 90 registered members) is the main attraction. Susan is a wheelchair user and the yoga programme has also had a major impact on her mobility.

“I have actually managed to lose some weight, not a great deal, but it’s not easy when your mobility is limited.”

Susan’s improved fitness has, in part, been driven by the support she has received from the group. She has been encouraged

to push herself and to set a target of becoming fitter and more active.

“Without the MS Group we would have nothing and nowhere to go. I have MS and arthritis and for many years I had nowhere to go - I had nothing, no interaction with other people. Interaction is important for your health too; I was isolated then but now with the sport I have fun – without it I don’t know what I would do, I would be lost.”

Susan is keen to emphasise that sport has improved both her physical and mental well being. Susan is certain that she will continue at this level of activity and is also likely to increase her involvement with the aim of improving her mobility.

“I would try nearly anything...any activity – I hope we get more opportunities to try more sports.”

The ability for community sport to influence social isolation also impacts upon people with mental health difficulties. Two participants from Praxis who had become involved in sport and physical activity reported that sport has: “acted as a relief, a distraction from some of the everyday problems; it’s fun, that’s why we do it.” Both participants had found it difficult to access other groups, difficult to feel a part of a group and reported increased self-confidence and improved general well-being.

Some participants who had their first opportunities to improve their health through community sport initiatives in the area have gone on to have a wider involvement in a number of different sports. Six of the participants in the Fit 4 U project, delivered in association with SLUG, have now taken out gym memberships and continue to go to the gym independently. Others who participated in the cycling offered by the project purchased bikes so that they could further develop their interest.

Other participants who had been involved in a range of community sport projects now volunteer and coach with a number of the programmes delivered through the CSDOs.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Whilst many effective partnerships have been established through the work of Sports Development Team, the community sport activity is likely to dissipate over time if these officers do not remain in place and continue to invigorate this work. The role of the CSDOs in coordinating, attracting further funding, accessing coaches and networking is key to the continued success of community sport programmes. However, piecemeal funding and the short term nature of funding can make sustainability very difficult to achieve.





## Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

**Partner organisations within the Belfast Trust have worked together as a network of projects on the delivery of a number of city wide programmes, including the Summer Mobile Sports Team delivered to young people from neighbourhood renewal areas during school holidays.**

Partners have ranged from the Community Safety Partnership, Dundonald Family and Community Initiative, District Policing Partnership and provided additional funding, advice and guidance in the planning and delivery of programmes.

This case study focuses primarily on two projects delivered in partnership by the Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG) and the Greater Village Regeneration Trust (GVRT):

- 1. Midnight Soccer; and**
- 2. Older and Active Programme.**

Midnight Soccer aims to tackle anti-social behaviour in young men and to divert them into activities that are supportive of fitness and healthier lifestyles. The project

also addresses alcohol, drug and substance abuse amongst its participants and impacts on the wider community which benefits from a much quieter Saturday evening when young men are involved in the project (between the hours of 9.00pm and midnight).

The Older and Active programme is a partnership between GVRT, South Belfast Highway to Health, LORAG and Castlereagh Borough Council. The programme consists of a number of eight week programmes at different venues during the year. The half day sessions cater for a range of activities including boccia, new age kurling, community safety, home safety, therapy day, physiotherapy sessions, bus trips (e.g. a trip to Stormont) and social events.

## KEY ENABLERS

### Partners and Other Funders

A wide range of partners and funders have been involved in delivering community sport programmes in Belfast. The positive effect of partnership working has shown results

in terms of successful funding applications and successful programme delivery. CSDOs estimate that 85% of their work is in partnership programmes – partly reflective of the continuity provided by CSDOs who have been in post for the duration of community sport. Links developed

with partners across the city are have also been key in attracting new funding i.e. for funding applications made jointly with other partners. New partnerships are also being continuously created, e.g. in 2010 the Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) programme will be delivered, with

the aim of promoting physical activity and exercise and balanced healthy diets amongst COPD patients in South Belfast.

### Barriers to Getting Projects and Activities Off the Ground

Many of the sport and physical activity projects require a large amount of networking with local communities, engendering trust between projects and host communities and raising the profile of community sports development staff. While this can be time consuming it ensures that the project is delivered successfully. Matching the community need to the right funding source and ensuring that the right project staff (coaches and volunteers) are available to deliver the project are also seen to be barriers to establishing projects.

### Getting Projects Off the Ground – Catalysts and Enablers

CSDOs are vital enablers in the delivery of a whole range of projects and programmes. As the network of Belfast community sport projects has become more embedded across the North, West and South of the city, communities have begun to ‘buy into’ the ethos and approach of the projects and communities are reported to be broadening their horizons; more prepared to work together and more prepared to engage in cross-community activities. Working together as a network of projects can enable projects to get started very quickly in Belfast.





A comparatively high level of volunteering in Belfast projects is also a key enabler e.g. in Midnight Soccer there are 10 teams each with a volunteer leader.

“We couldn’t run half the programmes

without volunteers, for example for the intervention programmes on a Friday night I rely on a number of people giving up their time – that’s people in the local area giving up their time because they want to help.”



## SEAN’S STORY

Sean is 18 years old, from South Belfast and first became involved in community sport as a participant.

“The Community Sport Programme is well known in our area, I did a few programmes as a participant and then over time, working with Ronan I got interested in getting a job working in community sport when I left school. I now go the local college; I suppose I am a bit like an apprentice. I go to college to get the theory and then I do my placement back at the centre. I co-deliver stuff with Ronan, mostly after schools sports and activity sessions at night. You have to work with young children - at first it was hard working with them, but it gets easier, they respect you... You can see the kids are motivated to be there, determined, they know me from the area, and you get to see the same kids again and again so they get to know you even more. I am building up new skills and I am enjoying this, I am fitter because I am always on the go.”

## IMPACTS

### Objective Measurement

It is perceived that collecting health related project information poses many difficulties for projects, for example, data confidentiality, participant anonymity or stigmatising people with weight issue.

However, despite a number of projects funded by the Trust collecting some data (referred to as ‘feel-good factor data’) during 12 week programmes, data is no longer collected after the funding for these programmes finishes.

### Participants’ Views

CSDOs and project staff have an in depth knowledge of many of their participants because they are from the same communities. Many personally know participants’ families so the impact of project delivery can be informally monitored. An example of observed health impacts comes from a project which provides access to a sports hall for children two or three times a week for 45-60 minutes, during which they were able to run around and have fun without much structure other than supervision. The impact of this provision included more physically active children (many of whom have no other access to play opportunities – no gardens to play in – too young to be let out to play). Anecdotal evidence from parents demonstrated that the children are going to bed earlier as they are physically tired by the exercise. Around this exercise was an environment where access to healthy snacks and water instead was readily available.

The view of a project leader involved in Midnight Soccer is that the project not only

benefits health and fitness in participants, but also addresses alcohol and drug abuse. The project also enables some young people to start down a lasting path towards a different life.

The impact of Midnight Soccer is spread well beyond the project itself into the wider lives of participants and their communities.

“By taking the kids out of the area and keeping them occupied in a healthy activity it is a tremendous relief for the community generally. Communities are safer and happier. We had pensioners in the area who used to get tortured regularly every Saturday night and now that’s not happening so that has a (positive) effect on their mental health.”

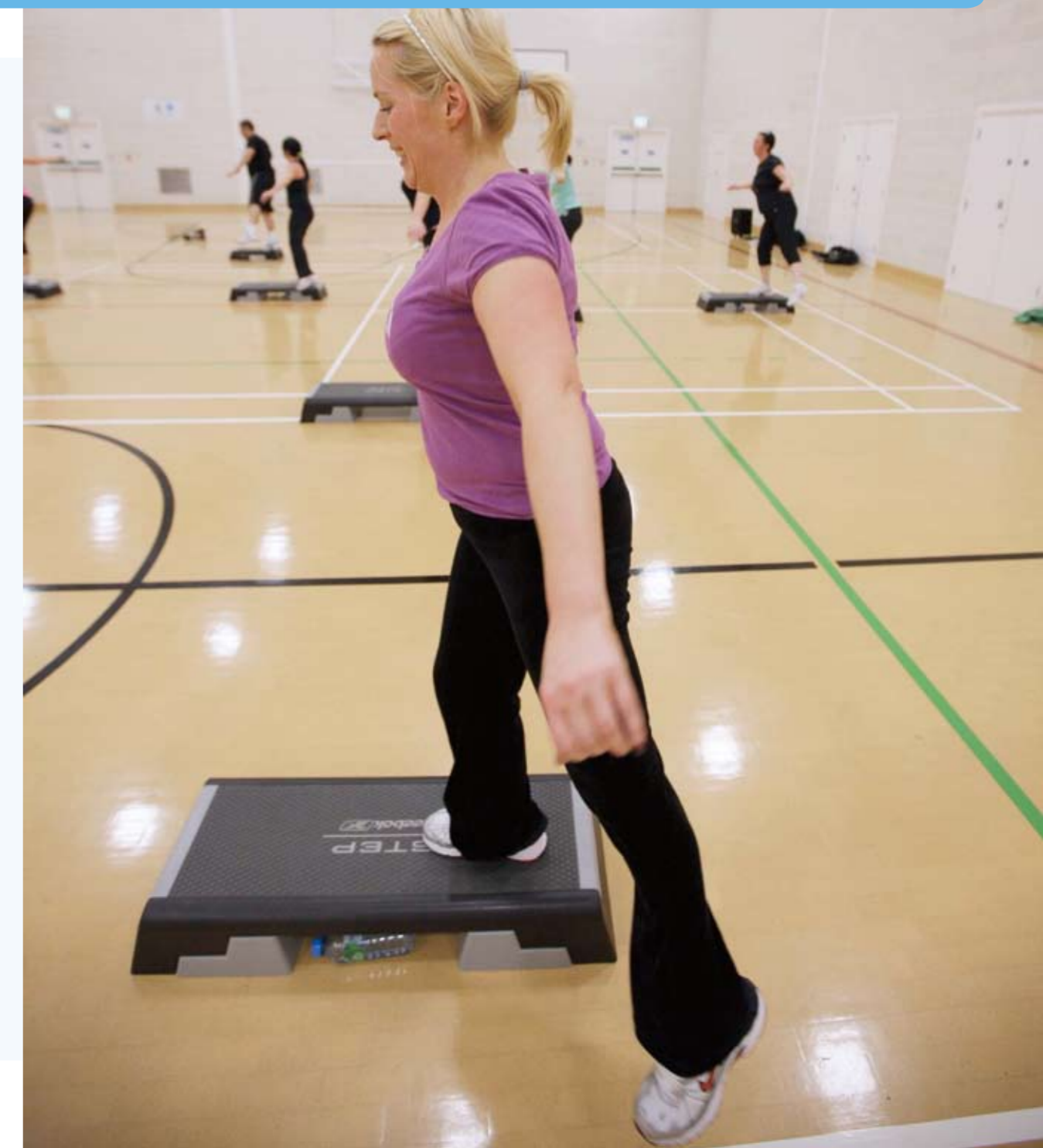
Anecdotal evidence exists on the positive mental health impact of the Older and Active Programme. Evidence is also provided of barriers being broken down between communities, building relationships, improved mental health, and improved physical well-being. The programme gets older people out of their house and involved in community activity, for many of whom their lives can be otherwise limited to the house.

“...so we are sure that issues like isolation are being addressed and we are sure that visits to GPs in the area are reduced through the programmes we deliver such as aerobics and relaxation.”

## SUSTAINABILITY

With so much partnership working generated, there is an element of sustainability in the Belfast area. However, this very much depends on the continuing work of CSDOs; without their energising, networking and sports development skills, the level of community sport will inevitably diminish.

Community sport projects within the Belfast Trust area have been engaged with a range of funders about strategic funding issues. Initial discussions have taken place with Belfast City Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Department of Social Development, Belfast Regeneration Office and other agencies.







## South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

**Community sport investments have delivered a range of projects including the development of a network of multi-skills clubs across the area linked to programmes under the Sport Northern Ireland Activ8 brand. Other area wide projects have included FRESH in conjunction with the Belfast Trust. Many of the community sport projects accessed additional funding and programme delivery support from the Eastern Area Physical Activity Coordinating Group.**

This case study consists of three projects in the greater Lisburn area:

- 1. Bring Your Parent to School Day;**
- 2. The Young Mother and Toddler Group; and**
- 3. Midnight Soccer.**

Bring your Parent to School Day was run by the Community Sports Development Unit of Lisburn City Council in conjunction with the South Eastern Education and Library Board and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. In the first instance, school nurses identified children that were overweight and/or obese so that their

parents could be targeted with specific information about improving their health and physical literacy. Parents visited their children's schools and were given talks, practical advice and information on hot topics such as dental health and hygiene, healthy eating and exercise. Practical demonstrations of multi-skills games were also given to show parents how to activate their children.

The Young Mothers and Toddlers Group/ Brook Activity Centre Exercise Classes is a prime example of working in partnership to satisfy two needs. While an ongoing

exercise class in the Brook Centre, Twinbrook was looking for a boost in participant numbers, the crèche in the nearby nursery school found itself with available spaces. This led to a partnership arrangement whereby parents who wanted to exercise could leave their children in the crèche whilst they attended class. The six young mothers who have been able to take advantage of this would have been unable to participate in the exercise classes without the crèche facilities. The project was funded from Lisburn City Council's community sport budget and the crèche facility also supported by the Surestart programme. Participants take part in aerobics classes, boxercise and dancercise with additional programme content, such as 'Cook It' and 'Way to Health' delivered by the Colin Neighbourhood Partnership.

Young people in the Lisburn area have the opportunity to attend Midnight Soccer on a Friday night either at Laurelhill Sports Zone or the Brook Activity Centre. The purpose of the Midnight Soccer programme is to reduce the incidence of anti-social behaviour and to involve young people in exercise who would not normally access mainstream sport. The Colin Midnight Soccer scheme is for young people aged 14 to 17 at the Brook Activity Centre between the hours of 9.00pm and midnight with project partners including Lisburn City Council, the PSNI and Big Lottery.

## ENABLING PROJECTS

### Partners and Other Funders

Most community sport activity is delivered in partnership with a range of sectors that include PSNI, Health Trust and the Education and Library Board plus a range of community and voluntary sector groups and/or organisations. Partnership underlines all aspects of project delivery. CSOs have been proactive in seeking out partners building on the fact that there are many well developed community and voluntary groups, many with full time staff members in addition to a strong volunteer base.

The development of good working relationships and strong partnerships has also been a major enabler to getting the example community sport projects initiated in the area. These have included the South Eastern Education and Library Board, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, Surestart, Lisburn Community Safety Partnership, Colin Neighbourhood Partnership and Big Lottery. Surestart commented that the Mother and Toddler group was an example of true partnership working with Colin Neighbourhood Partnership working alongside this project to deliver specific elements of the programme. The PSNI and Colin Neighbourhood Partnership are extremely supportive of the Midnight Soccer programme.







### Barriers to Getting Projects and Activities Off the Ground

Once partnerships had been established there are no particular barriers to getting projects off the ground, however maintaining and sustaining the programmes once they have started is problematic at times. Most problems encountered were to do with attitudes and general commitment to programmes. For example, in the Bring your Parent to School Day parents either wouldn't or couldn't get along to it. This did not stop the programme happening but it did impact on its success in terms of numbers attending.

The Midnight Soccer scheme drew some young people as 'hangers on' which affected the policing of the programme. It resulted in some tension and unrest amongst staff and volunteers as they were 'waiting for an incident to happen', which caused some resistance for sustaining the programme.

### Getting Projects Off the Ground – Catalysts and Enablers

The effort of CSDOs in encouraging partnerships and working within their own networks is a considerable enabler to initiating projects. Midnight Soccer is a good example of this with one of the keys to the success of the Colin Midnight Soccer being enablement through the Brook Community Association. This has proved to be a 'hands on' partnership with

the local community fully engaged through volunteering, coaching and recruitment of participants.

Spotting a gap in the market and networking has also been an enabler as exemplified by the Mother and Toddler group enabling women to participate in regular physical activity.

Initial programme funding made available from community sport has enabled projects to be kick started. Showcasing successes to Council members and using the local press to highlight good projects has proved useful in achieving support. Elected members show considerable interest in successful projects which cut across a number of themes, which helps to draw Council support and lever additional funding.

## IMPACT

### Participant's Views

The majority of participants in Midnight Soccer programmes said that they felt more confident about themselves and had a healthier lifestyle than would have been the case without their involvement in the project.

## COLIN MIDNIGHT SOCCER

Midnight Soccer schemes act as diversionary activities, filling young people's time with a healthy activity that contributes to their fitness, confidence and self esteem. They keep young people occupied during evening hours when they might otherwise be involved in anti-social behaviour. Before Midnight Soccer schemes came along, some of the young people said that they would otherwise have been 'just hanging about', 'getting into trouble', and 'street drinking'.

Whilst some said that they attended other youth groups, six out of 10 would not have

been part of any youth group if they had not been involved in Midnight Soccer; eight out of 10 said that they would otherwise have been walking the streets and drinking; and two out of 10 said that they would have been involved in drugs misuse if they had not been involved in the Midnight Soccer scheme.

Participants had also made new friends and could see greater opportunities for positive things to do with their time. Young people have been applauded by their local neighbourhood partnership:

"These young people need to be commended for their commitment (to

participation in the scheme) especially during cold and wet weather."

The manager of the crèche facility in Twinbrook believes that community sport has made a tremendous difference to those who have participated. When the parents arrive back from classes they are, she says: "pumped with adrenaline and are so enthusiastic. They really appreciate the time that the crèche allows them to do exercise. They enjoy being together and have built up relationships with other mums and have started to go walking together."

As a direct result of the exercise project participants in the Brook Activity centre

have become interested in better dietary practices and have joined a six week 'Cook It' programme which focuses on healthy eating. They also attend a 'Way to Health' programme that looks at different ways of cooking food as a way of losing weight and becoming healthier.

The Bring a Parent to School Day received a very positive response from parents with CSDOs reporting an increase in physical activity amongst those who participated and schools reporting feedback from pupils that their diets and lifestyles have become healthier as a result of the project.

## SUSTAINABILITY

The continuance of community sport is critical to the sustainability of these projects and the wider community sport activity in this area. There appears to be an underlying apathy amongst some potential participants, that can only be overcome by the proactive engagement and opportunities that the work of the CSDOs provides.

The Midnight Soccer schemes are resource intensive, in terms of facilities, volunteers and coaches. Whilst there is a good level of volunteering in Midnight Soccer, if funding for facilities and coaches becomes unavailable volunteers alone are unlikely to sustain the programmes.





## WHY INVESTING IN COMMUNITY SPORT WORKS

### Key Enablers

The evidence and case studies presented in this report clearly demonstrate that the organisations funded under community sport and the local delivery of projects has indeed worked. They have impacted positively on host communities and improved the quality of life of those involved. They worked – in the past.

The key to good policy making is to identify the common core elements within these success stories and determine how these same ‘key enablers’ can help shape success – in the future.

In the following section Sport Northern Ireland identifies what it believes to be the key enablers to success.



### Partnership Working

The amount of partnership engagement and networking has had substantial benefits in terms of linking need to activity, connecting projects to facilities, building trust, bringing in appropriate leaders, coaches, volunteers and the expertise of the CSDO.

These benefits also extend to the development of a supportive network of CSDOs, skilled to provide peer encouragement within their sphere of influence. Networking is particularly strong where the role of CSDO is strongly

embedded within a tradition of utilising community development principles for the development of sport and physical activity.

Partner organisations have been particularly supportive of new initiatives such as the Sport Northern Ireland Active Communities Programme which obliged non-traditional partnerships to have an impact on increasing participation levels amongst those under represented in sport and physical activity.

“The opportunities for true partnership working with health and education are considerable. A more strategic approach

is needed to tackle health challenges, not just between education and health but also looking at local authorities. True partnership addressing the challenges to public health is needed - we need the full engagement of all interested parties.”

Effective partnerships and strong working relationships have led to the development of strong bonds of trust between providers, agencies, project leaders and funding agencies and a genuine sense of being jointly engaged in improving the health and well-being of participants.

The partnership approach has also been effective in leveraging considerable additional funding to local community sport delivery and physical activity projects from the appropriate partners.

### Investment

The initial Sport Northern Ireland investment is seen by partner organisations as the keystone enabler. Without this injection of investment there would not be the network of CSDOs to create partnerships, carry out needs analysis, develop and deliver projects, engage participants and keep momentum in community sport activities. This initial ‘pump prime’ funding for salaries and initial programme costs enables organisations to lever additional funding from other organisations to deliver programmes which meet a number of different agenda.

### Structures and Staff

Community based CSDOs are an important enabler to getting projects up and running. An insight and understanding of the nature of the everyday lives of the people and the needs of the area is key, as is an ability to gain the trust and the confidence of their community quickly. CSDOs with local knowledge who understand the need to be rooted within the community are very effective in delivering successful projects.

CSDOs recognise the need to work from a community development perspective. Encouraging communities to ‘buy into’ the ethos and approach of the projects; broadening their horizons, and creating the circumstances under which they are more prepared to work together and more prepared to engage in activities lead to the greatest yield in outputs and outcomes.

Giving participants the confidence to take part is also important. Partners and practitioners state that the biggest issue in getting projects up and running are getting people out of the house, supporting people with confidence building and nurturing individuals to the point where they are able to take up the opportunities for physical activity that are provided. Providing this type of support, often on a one-to-one basis is not only time consuming for the CSDO and also require good

communication, persuasion and negotiation skills.

Access to good quality coaching is also an important enabler - which cannot be over emphasised.

“There are too many stories about people with physical disabilities trying to access leisure centres or sporting opportunities only to have a bad initial experience due to inexperienced or under trained staff members – one bad experience like that and you lose people.”

Good coaches are particularly valued as they create a positive experience for the participant. Coaches that are particularly skilled in providing a supportive and fun learning environment for the casual participant enable a seamless transition to a committed participant – more likely therefore to sustain their involvement in sport and physical activity and maintain their level of good health.

The availability of volunteers is also an important enabler. Volunteers provide a strong peer support network, and are a potential for new coaches. Volunteers in sport and physical activity are also more likely to be committed participants which provide valuable role models for the casual participant.

### The Evidence

Sport Northern Ireland makes decisions that are based on evidence. It responds to the need to strengthen the evidence base for decision making in sport at all levels, and seeks to put in place a coherent framework for research and evaluation that is responsive to the research needs and priorities for sport.

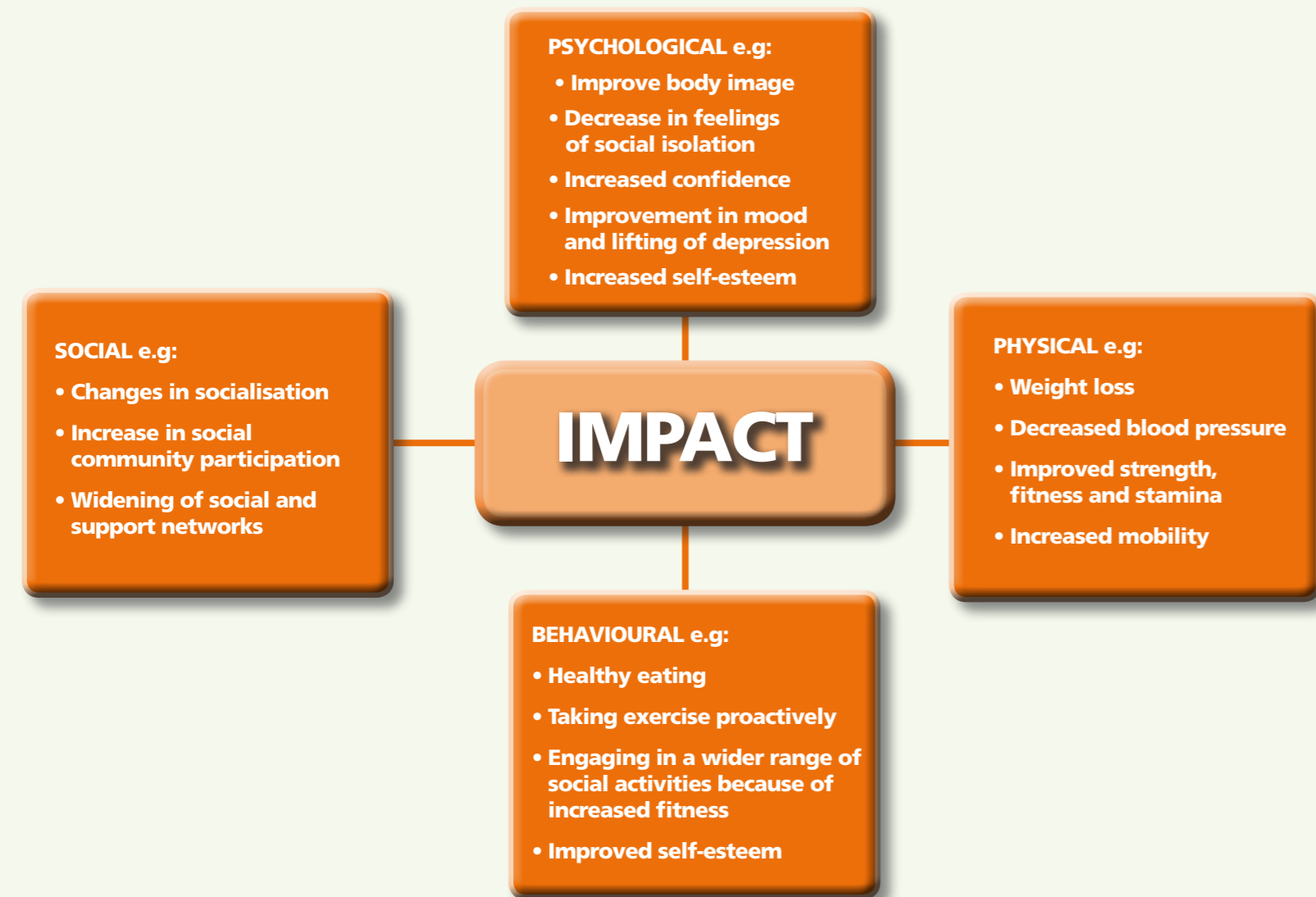
Increasingly questions are being asked of the rationale for investment in sport and the expected returns (outputs and outcomes) in the short, medium and longer term. Over the course of the evolution of community sport, Sport Northern Ireland has emphasised the development of its monitoring and evaluation framework which has led to the availability of robust data across a range of key performance indicators.

The availability of reliable quantitative and qualitative evidence enables Sport Northern Ireland to frame discussions and develop good policy.

Project level data suggests that there are positive health outcomes and a positive economic impact. The case studies included within this report are persuasive that community sport interventions have a positive outcome on general measures of health, fitness and well-being, as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3**  
**IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**



Among the best available evidence of health impacts comes directly from project participants who identify a wide range of positive health and wellbeing impacts from participating in sport and physical activity. These impacts are at a number of levels as depicted in Figure 3.

### Challenges

#### Measuring Impact

Whilst some community sport projects primarily target increases in health and fitness, the application of a consistent objective measurement of basic health factors such as weight, Body Mass Index (BMI), and blood pressure has been difficult to achieve. Community sport projects aimed at improving health of participants tend to adopt 'ad hoc' approaches to measuring impact and where evidence does exist it is often not collected pre, during and post the project intervention. While there are models that can quantify the economic savings gained from sport and an increase in physical activity, large scale data exercises are necessary to collect the appropriate information as a baseline. If objective project level measures, such as weight, height and blood pressure, are to be relied upon then its collection needs to become much more widespread and its practice needs to be standardised and applied consistently.

This approach presents two main challenges for measuring impact:

1. Economic benefit - where there is an identified need for a robust and consistent methodology which will have both programme and project level impact and
2. Health benefit - where the need is to move beyond anecdotal 'feel-good factors' into the most appropriate hard data indicators.

#### Sustaining Participation Across the Life Course

For a number of individuals participation in community sport projects may be the first foray into sport and physical activity. For many, it leads to people proactively seeking other opportunities to play sport or to take exercise or fitness training. These range from simply going for walks more often, to going independently to the gym and to joining sports clubs and being active in organised sport. Without the opportunity to get a 'first foot on the ladder', most of these people would not now be engaged in lifelong participation.

One of the key factors impacting on public health is the provision and availability of sustainable participation opportunities in a variety of sport and physical activity.

"If we want to see an impact on health we need to see greater frequency of participation, not just programmes that offer

one hour-long session once a week. For children and young people schools are clearly a pathway to sustainable participation, so too are community centres, but a big issue is the infra-structure, there are a raft of issues surrounding the cost of insurance, lack of multi-skills coaches and training as well as facilities and accessibility."

The pro-activity of the CSDOs has proved to be an essential enabler to getting, and keeping participants involved; with a great deal of effort devoted to demonstrating to potential participants and their carers the value of getting people active and highlighting the benefits that lifelong physical activity can bring.

There is therefore a clear need to engage new participants in sport and physical activity and retain those who are already involved, where the challenge is to review what is on offer. Recent work<sup>16</sup> on market segmentation has modeled population level involvement in, and commitment to sport as shown in Figure 4.

Aligning this market segmentation with the LISPA Framework (Figure 1) suggests

that the biggest untapped market for increasing participation rates lies in the area of Organised Recreation and Active Living (specifically 'Active Travel') and in 'Play'.

In order to sustain participation the under development of participation opportunities which enable progression from community programmes to community and sports clubs needs to be addressed. To facilitate this, the establishment of an environment that creates, strengthens and sustains opportunities that support lifelong participation in sport and physical recreation in sports clubs and community settings is essential.

This is grounded in the evidence, experience and belief that members of sports clubs are more likely to be committed to, and to sustain, regular, frequent and lifelong involvement in their chosen sport and/or physical activity. Developing a strengthened network of organisations including governing bodies of sport, sports clubs, community organisations and district councils will therefore provide a seamless experience of sport.

**Figure 4**

Disinterested	Casual participant	Committed participant
(unlikely to get involved on a sustained basis)	(predisposed to participate but require support and facilitation to become 'committed'; could just as easily slide into 'disinterested')	('the sporty type')
20%	50%	30%

<sup>16</sup>Youth Sport Trust (2008)



## CONCLUSION

### Key statements

The evidence presented in this report demonstrates that Sport Northern Ireland's investments in Community Sport projects have delivered tangible, measurable and sustainable improvements in physical, mental and emotional health for those involved in the projects. Many of those same participants would not otherwise have been engaged in sport or physical activity – their journey from sedentary lifestyles to regular, frequent and sustained physical activity has not only delivered individual health benefits but has also enabled community benefits to be realised, not least in terms of downstream costs savings in reactive health interventions.

Having analysed and reviewed the case studies in this research project, it is possible to identify a number of central tenets in Table 5 in respect of community sport and public health.



Table 5

1	The coordinating and facilitating work of Community Sports Development Officers has substantial benefits in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linking need to activity;</li> <li>• Connecting projects to facilities;</li> <li>• Accessing additional funding;</li> <li>• Bringing in appropriate leaders, coaches, volunteers; and</li> <li>• Sharing their level of knowledge and expertise.</li> </ul>
2	The projects which deliver the greatest public health outcomes have been jointly supported by sport and health.
3	Collecting and collating the data to evidence public health outcomes is resource intensive and projects require additional support to do this effectively.
4	The evidence available suggests that all community sport interventions have made a contribution to improving at least one aspect of public health.
5	To evidence genuine public health outcomes, it is essential that data is collected before, during and after the community sport intervention. The availability of a suite of standardised assessment protocols and tools enhances the systematic capture of such data.
6	The systematic collation of monitoring and evaluation data through community sport interventions has further strengthened the growing body of evidence linking participation in sport and physical recreation to improved public health outcomes.
7	A core strength of the community sport impact review has been the availability of qualitative and quantitative data from the projects.
8	The case studies in this report provide evidence of the cost effectiveness of preventative investments and interventions through community sport compared to the reactive cost of later medical interventions.





## Coordinated Planning

A range of agencies and government departments acknowledge the public health problems associated with a lack of participation in physical activity and sport; however there remains a lack of coordinated planning at a policy level. Further partnerships are required between a range of government departments, district councils, physical activity facilitators, schools and colleges, community and voluntary organisations, health trusts, GP practices and public and private employers to facilitate further co-operation between health and sport.

Greater recognition of the benefits of medical and health professionals and the sport and physical activity workforce engaging with each other is required to fully realise the potential.



## The Future Role for Sport and Physical Activity

While the volume of evidence for achieving health improvements through participation in sport and physical activity is mounting, the challenge for sport is to proactively contribute to influencing a culture shift to change inactive lifestyles. Individuals must take greater interest in their own health and well-being. By applying some of the lessons learnt through recent successful social marketing campaigns (e.g. smoking cessation and the wearing of seat belts) we can increase awareness that being regularly active through participation in organised sport or casual recreation significantly contributes to a healthy lifestyle.

Sport Northern Ireland is committed to increasing sustained participation rates which as we have demonstrated will deliver public health outcomes. In its drive to increase the levels of participation amongst the population, Sport Northern Ireland recognises the challenge of building on the achievements to date and to 'deliver the goods' over the next ten years. This is only possible by looking beyond sectoral interests and working in close partnership, planning together, pooling resources and sharing knowledge and expertise.

This report highlights the value of investing in sport and physical activity in making a contribution to improved public health. Sport Northern Ireland will continue to make effective use of case study data to support the case that investment in community sport across Northern Ireland delivers significant health benefits to individuals and to communities.





## NOTES