

# *Girls Physical Activity Providers' Guide*

## **National Overview of Best Practices, Challenges and Recommendations on Physical Activity Initiatives for Girls<sup>1</sup>**

Mary O'Sullivan, Director  
Eimear Enright & Hayley Harrison, Researchers  
Physical Education, Physical Activity, and Youth Sport  
(PEPAYS) Research Centre  
University of Limerick  
Ireland

### **In Partnership with:**

Elaine O'Connor, Coordinator, Limerick City Sports Partnership  
Mairéad Kelly, Health Services Executive, West Region



---

<sup>1</sup> Electronic copy of Final Report available on [www.ul.ie/pepays](http://www.ul.ie/pepays)

<b>Table of Contents</b>		<b>Page</b>
	<i>Executive Summary</i>	5
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	7
	1.1 Context for the Study	7
	1.2 Research Goal and Objectives	8
	1.3 Significance of the Research Project	8
	1.4 Research Methodology	9
	1.5 Establishing a National Data Base	9
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Survey of Physical Activity Initiatives for Adolescent Girls</b>	11
	2.1 Response Rate	11
	2.2 Physical Activity Providers Nationwide	
	2.2.1. National Governing Bodies of Sport	11
	2.2.2. Local Sport Partnerships & Health Service Executive	11
	2.2.3. Youth Programmes	12
	2.2.4. Other Providers	12
	2.3 Characteristics of Physical Activity Initiatives	13
	2.3.1. Focus	13
	2.3.2. Scale	13
	2.3.3. Location	14
	2.3.4. Duration	14
	2.3.5. Gender	15
	2.3.6. Evaluation	15
	2.3.7. Sustainability	15
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Eight Case Studies of Physical Activity Initiatives</b>	17
	3.1 Case Selection	17
	3.2 Case Study 1: Gaelic4Girls	18
	3.3 Case Study 2: Women in Golf	20
	3.4 Case Study 3: Girls Schools Rugby	23
	3.5 Case Study 4: Teen Scene	26
	3.6 Case Study 5: Girls Active	29
	3.7 Case Study 6: Empowering Women Through Sport	32
	3.8 Case Study 7: Active 8 and Active 8 Expansion	36
	3.9 Case Study 8: Girls Activity Programme	40
	3.10 Other Initiatives for Girls	42
	3.11 Initiatives with Potential for Younger Populations	43
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Best Practices in Girls Physical Activity Provision</b>	44
	4.1 Human Resources	44
	4.2 Programming Decisions	45
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Key Challenges to Girls Physical Activity Provision</b>	47
	5.1 Sourcing Tutors	47
	5.2 Funding	47
	5.3 Rural Physical Activity Provision	48
	5.4 Motivation and Retention	48
	5.5 Investment in Schools and Communities	48
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Recommendations and Conclusions</b>	49
	6.1 Policy Recommendations	49
	6.2 Programme Recommendations	53
	6.3 Research Recommendations	53
	6/4 Conclusion	55
	<b>References</b>	
	<b>Appendices</b>	

**Figure Titles**

		<b>Page</b>
Figure 1.	Providers of Physical Activity Initiatives for Adolescent Girls	13
Figure 2.	Focus of the Adolescent Initiatives by Category	13
Figure 3.	National Scale of Physical Activity Initiatives	13
Figure 4.	Participants Catered for in Physical Activity Initiatives	14
Figure 5.	Location of Physical Activity Initiatives	14
Figure 6.	Duration of Physical Activity Initiatives	14
Figure 7	Population Target for Physical Activity Initiative	15
Figure 8	Evaluation of Physical Activity Initiatives	15

**List of Appendices<sup>2</sup>**

<b>Appendix</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Appendix Page</b>
1	Initial GAP Questionnaire	3
2	Database of projects	5
3	National Governing Body Membership Statistics	9
4	Women In Sport Funded Projects	12
5	Teen Scene Resources	13
6	Active8 (Limerick) Resources	22
7	Gaelic4Girls Resources	25
8	Can Sport Make a Difference to Me (Project Resources)	26

---

<sup>2</sup> Appendices provided under separate cover. Can also be accessed via electronic format at [www.ul.ie/pepays](http://www.ul.ie/pepays)

## Executive Summary

There has been growing interest and concern about the physical activity levels of girls and women in Ireland. In 2002, the *Health Behaviour in School Aged Children Survey* reported physical activity levels of 12-14 year old girls decreased from 49% of the population in 1998 to 44% in 2002. Numerous studies have highlighted how girls' participation in physical activity is lower than that of boys and is characterised by a sharp decline during adolescence (National Taskforce on Obesity, 2005). The Oireachtas report on Women in Sport in 2004 recommended Government consider additional funding to improve participation levels of girls and women. In October 2005, the Minister of Arts, Sport, and Tourism launched the Irish Sports Council initiative, *Women in Sport*, aimed at increased participation of women and girls in sport and regular physical activity. To date, €3.25m has been provided to the Sport Council for this initiative.

Noting the increasing support for girls' and women's engagement in physical activity, the purpose of this project was to undertake research on the current provision of physical activity opportunities for girls given the absence of such data in an Irish context. The specific objectives of the *Girls Activity Providers' (GAP)* project were to (a) compile, synthesise and distribute information related to girls' access to and leadership roles in physical activity, (b) identify best practices and characteristics of programmes supporting girls involvement in physical activity, (c) present implications for action related to policy, programme content, programme delivery, programme design etc. and (d) inform future development, research, and innovation related to female involvement in physical activity in the Irish context.

Data were gathered from three main sources. A questionnaire was sent to over 400 local and national agencies considered potentially to be involved in providing physical activity services to adolescent girls. Second, all funded proposals from the 2005 Women in Sport initiative were analysed. Third, eight initiatives were selected and case studies conducted. Details of the case studies and project resources (i.e. appendices for this report) can be downloaded from the Physical Education, Physical Activity, and Youth Sport Research Centre (PE PAYS) website at [www.ul.ie/pepays](http://www.ul.ie/pepays).

The findings highlighted a number of Irish agencies attempting to provide opportunities for girls to participate in sport and physical activity. Some of the best practices have been where providers recognise people as their most valuable resource by involving stakeholders in decision making, collaborating with other agencies, investing in school-community links, establishing databases of tutors and key personnel, and appointing local organizers for national projects who understand the local context and adolescent girls' needs. Best practices in programming included the attention paid to advertising and marketing to adolescent girls, timing of initiatives, active engagement of participants, fee structures, flexible scheduling, and using feedback mechanisms to revise programme offerings and delivery mechanisms. The key challenges for providers have been in sourcing tutors, funding, rural provision, motivating and retaining girls, and establishing structures that allow for projects to be sustained beyond the funding cycle.

This report presents a series of recommendations including extending the local sport partnership system nationwide, specific targeting of programmes to adolescent girls, recognising and investing in the changing role of physical education teachers, supporting schools as Active Schools in the promotion of physical activity for both students and staff, taking seriously the voice of the adolescent in programme design, building on existing

knowledge bases and best practices, investing in research around enhancers and inhibitors to adolescent girls' involvement in physical activity, and paying greater attention to leadership roles for girls and women in sustaining their interest in these initiatives. This research project was a beginning effort and raised as many questions as it did answers. We hope the report will highlight the need for further research into this area and facilitate a better understanding of how to promote and increase high quality physical activity opportunities and access to all young girls and women in Ireland.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Context for the Study

Attracting more women into sport is a key element of our participation strategy, which is all about breaking down barriers and increasing participation in sport (Treacy, 2005).

There have been growing concerns about the physical activity levels of young Irish girls. The Health Behaviour in School Aged Children Survey (HBSC, 2002) reported the physical activity levels of 12-14 year old girls decreased from 49% of the population in 1998 to 44% in 2002 and this drop, which represents a global trend, is occurring at a younger age. The Irish Sport Council estimated that “national participation in sport stands at 32.7% for females and 62.3% for males” (as noted in the Oireachtas Report, 2005). More recently, the Irish Sports Council CEO noted that “less than one in five Irish women came close to conducting the accumulated 30 minutes of physical activity per day, for at least five days per week, recommended by the World Health Organisation for good health (Treacy, 2006).

Research has consistently shown there is a wide range of inequalities when it comes to girls and women’s participation in sport and active leisure activities in the Irish context (Connor, 2003; Fahey, Delaney, and Gannon, 2005). The Take Part (Physical Activity Research for Teenagers) Study of east of Ireland 15-17 year olds reported that females were “significantly less likely to be physically active than their regularly active counterparts in Northern Ireland (Irish Heart Foundation, 2005). These data are not dissimilar to international data (Cavill, Biddle, & Sallis, 2001; Sallis, Proschaska, & Taylor, 2000).

From a public health perspective, Irish children’s weight is also receiving much national attention. The Irish National Taskforce on Obesity (2005) included data from the National Dental Health Survey (2001-2002) showing girls (aged 5-8 years and 13-15 years) at “distinctly higher levels of overweight than the boys” (p.26) and girls rather than boys perceiving a greater cultural pressure to be “slim”.

Physical activity has important cultural as well as health benefits. There are many determinants of physical activity including education level, gender, family and peer group influences. How then do we explain the increasing levels of sedentary behaviour among adolescents, and adolescent girls in particular? One of the important determinants of physical activity among adolescents is gender. There are numerous reports highlighting girls’ participation in physical activity is lower than that of boys and is characterised by a sharp decline during adolescence (National Taskforce on Obesity, 2005). There have been calls for physical activity interventions to support girls and women’s involvement in sport and physical activity. Such interventions are most effective when they influence behaviour at multiple levels such as the intrapersonal, social, environmental, and policy levels.

The Oireachtas Report (2004) “Women in Sport” recommended, “The Government and the ISC [Irish Sports Council] need to consider the issue of additional funding for

national governing bodies and others who provide special programmes to improve the participation and integration of women with a disability” (p.3). In October 2005, the Minister of Arts, Sport, and Tourism (AST) launched the Irish Sports Council initiative aimed at increased participation of women and girls of all ages in sport and regular physical activity. Over €750,000 was allocated to this initiative with over half a million:

*directed into fourteen innovative projects devised by various governing bodies, that are aimed at bringing women and young girls into sport or to retain and re-engage former participants. A further €131,000 has also been allocated across all sixteen local sports partnerships for similar locally based projects, aimed at specific target groups. This website has been developed, to communicate the positive aspects of sports participation, outline the existing projects, profile sportswomen, and provide links to where women can find participation opportunities (Women in Sport Website: <http://www.womeninsport.ie/>).*

In 2006, the Minister announced a further allocation of €2.5 million for this initiative. The Irish Sports Council’s Women in Sport initiative (Irish Sports Council, 2005), which is supported from these funds has sought to enable interested groups and organizations to design and implement physical activity/sport programmes, which directly target the female population. The initiative hopes to address the falling numbers of females involved in sport and physical activity (HBSC, 2002).

## 1.2 Research Goal and Objectives

Noting the increasing interest and support for girls and women’s engagement in physical activity, the **purpose of this project** was to undertake research on the current provision of physical activity opportunities for girls in the Republic of Ireland given the absence of such data in an Irish context. The specific objectives of the Girls Activity Providers’ (GAP) project were to:

- (a) compile, synthesise and distribute information related to girls’ access to physical activities and to leadership roles in physical activity
- (b) identify best practices
- (c) collate the characteristics of high quality programmes supporting girls involvement in physical activity
- (d) present some implications for action-policy, programme content, programme delivery, programme design etc. and
- (e) inform future development and innovation with evidence-based research and best practice examples with an aim to direct female involvement in physical activity

## 1.3 Significance of the Project

More information is needed to better understand what motivates young girls and what activities sustain their interest in participation during the critical phase of adolescence. There are a growing number of projects in Ireland (including the Women in Sport Initiative) attempting to tackle this challenge. The contribution of this project to understanding and increasing girls’ involvement in physical activity and sport is threefold.



**First**, it provides the beginnings of a database on national initiatives focussed on increasing adolescent girls' involvement in physical activity.

**Second**, the case studies provide descriptions of physical activity initiatives that can be adapted by local providers across the country for their local contexts.

**Third**, the discussion of best practices and challenges in designing, implementing, and sustaining such initiatives provides relevant information to potential providers of physical activity programmes, especially for adolescent girls.

It is intended that aspects of the report should offer support and assistance to both programme providers and policy makers with the ultimate aim of increasing the participation (in whatever capacity) of adolescent girls in physical activity and/or sport. It is also hoped the report will facilitate co-operation amongst existing programme providers while also offering support to those willing to initiate new programmes or run an existing programme in a new location.

The report is intended to act as a guide for providers of girls' physical activity initiatives and as foundation research in better understanding girls and women's involvement in sport and physical activity in the Irish context. Time and financial constraints did not allow primary information from girls participating in the programmes to be gathered. The case study data was gathered from key providers.

#### **1.4 Research Methodology**

Information on female involvement in physical activity and sport in the Irish context is quite limited. One data source is information submitted annually to the Irish Sports Council (ISC) by the National Governing Bodies (NGB's) of sport. These reports provide a summary of membership (female membership where appropriate) but do not include participation levels in specific sports. This data collection system is not yet considered reliable (Smyth, 2006).

A second challenge relates to data collection for activity programmes outside the purview of the Irish Sports Council. While dance is currently a popular leisure time activity for young girls (de Roiste & Dineen, 2005), there are no reliable data nationally on participation levels or membership of dance clubs/schools in its various forms. A third challenge is the lack of reliable data on recreational initiatives such as aerobics, swimming or walking for this age group. Leisure centre data (when maintained) are often limited to membership and/or attendance but not participation levels in specific activities. The latest figures for this sector can be found in Appendix 3. The largest registrations for female membership for physical activity, as provided by the Irish Sports Council, are for Community Games followed by the Ladies Gaelic Football Association and Basketball Ireland.

#### **1.5 Establishing a Data Base**

Initial work was necessary to generate a list of potential agencies and organisations that service girls between the ages of 12-18 and who provide physical activity experiences as part of their mission. School led initiatives in this database were excluded as recent

data on children in school sport has been compiled by the ESRI (Fahey, Delaney, & Gannon, 2005).

A list was generated of over 439 local organisations representing more than 10 national agencies that provided services to adolescent girls (See Appendix 2). The relevant providers included NGBs, Local Sport Partnerships, Youth Services, and HSE Physical Activity Coordinators. The GAP questionnaire was distributed to all 439 organizations.

Second, the 2005 Women in Sport funded projects by the ISC were reviewed and a questionnaire sent to the coordinators. They were also reviewed as potential case studies (see Appendix 4 for Women in Sport funded projects). The following funded projects proposed by National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) and Local Sport Partnerships were included in the database as they focussed in whole or in part on adolescent females:

- Six (6) projects targeted the 12-18 age range (Camogie, Rowing, Ladies Golf, Leinster Rugby, Ladies GAA (2), & Special Olympics)
- Four (4) projects targeted at groups of women/girls in the 12-18 age range (Ladies GAA, Surfing, Special Olympics & Boxing)

The Local Sports Partnership (LSP) funded projects included:

- Six (6) projects targeted the 12-18 age range (Clare, Co. Cork, Kerry (2), Laois & Mayo LSPs)
- Seven (7) projects targeted groups of women/girls in the 12-18 age range (Donegal, Fingal, Limerick City, Mayo, Meath/Westmeath, North Tipperary & Roscommon).

While the GAP project tried to gather information on as many initiatives as possible; the nature of the data collection method (i.e. questionnaire), meant some projects, especially locally funded projects, may have been missed. The list of projects, therefore, while extensive, was not exhaustive. The questionnaire gathered information on providers and the scope of their initiative. Data on the purpose, scale, location, duration, number of participants, gender mix, evaluation and sustainability of the projects were also collected (Appendix 1 presents the questionnaire sent to each agency).

The second source of data was the completion of eight (8) case studies documenting a diversity of initiatives provided for adolescent girls across the country. The director/coordinator of the initiative was contacted and printed materials (flyers, resources packets, documents) related to the initiative were gathered for review. A face-to-face interview with the coordinator was also conducted to gather details about the design, funding, implementation, and sustainability of the initiative. The interview was normally conducted on site and lasted between one and two hours.

Chapter two presents key findings from the questionnaire while chapter three presents an in-depth analysis of eight physical activity initiatives nationwide.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **NATIONAL SURVEY OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INITIATIVES FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS**

This chapter provides an overview of the larger dataset, with specific reference to categories of provider and significant project characteristics such as purpose, scale, number of participants, duration, location, gender mix, evaluation and sustainability mechanisms.

#### **2.1 Questionnaire Response Rate**

There were 96 responses to the questionnaire. Forty (40) respondents indicated they had no relevant programmes that addressed physical activity for adolescent girls. There were 55 completed questionnaires, and one referral to a website containing programme information. From these 56 completed questionnaires and our document analysis of the Women in Sport funded projects, 51 projects were selected as meeting our criteria for inclusion in the study (i.e. physical activity for girls aged 12-18 was a key focus of the initiative). Projects were excluded primarily on the basis of the target population, that is, they were not targeted to the 12-18 year age group.

The following section provides information on the providers, focus of the initiative, scale, location, duration, participants, evaluation, and sustainability of the projects. Each aspect of the initiative is described with a graphic representation of the data.

#### **2.2 Physical Activity Providers Nationwide**

##### **2.2.1. National Governing Bodies**

The National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) sponsored sixteen of the 51 projects and were quite distinct in their focus from other providers. The focus of their initiatives was aimed at the development of their specific sports with a certain population rather a focus on the characteristics of the target population (i.e. adolescent girls) and how they might engage them with their sport. Several NGBs have strong national infrastructures and many have appointed sport development officers at both national and regional level. Their projects, targeted to adolescent girls, tended to be delivered regionally and nationally and seemed to be sustained or deemed sustainable by the project directors. With the exception of the Irish Basketball Association (who run a coach's official programme for the 12-18 year old age group), and the Leinster Women's Rugby initiative (who offer a coaching and refereeing programme in leprechaun rugby for interested students and teachers), the NGB projects did not offer leadership roles to their youth membership. The focus was getting girls to participate and be actively engagement in the sport. The mixed gender NGBs (e.g. Volleyball Association of Ireland (VAI), Irish Sailing Association (ISA) etc) tended to offer the same programmes for boys and girls and used no specific strategies to encourage participation by one group over the other.

##### **2.2.2 Local Sport Partnerships and Health Services Executive**

Data were gathered from ten LSP and HSE projects. They are grouped together as the research has shown these agencies to favour partnership initiatives, although not always necessarily with one another. Nine (9) of the projects from our larger dataset were connected to a Local Sports Partnerships and five (5) of these were initiated and/or

supported by the HSE. The focus of all projects supported by both agencies was on increasing the activity levels of a specific sub group of girls: specifically those who do not participate in physical activity regularly as distinct from girls who are already somewhat active and trying to increase their levels of activity on a more regular basis.

The localised initiatives supported by these partnerships within their catchment area, like “Can Sport Make a Difference to Me?” and “5alive” were run by one agency, such as, one Sports Partnership. However they were deemed by their providers to be less likely to be sustained or sustainable once the funding has been expended. Those delivered at regional level, usually within a larger HSE area, for example “Girls Active” and “Active8” were collaborative projects, and have proved to be sustainable over several years.

A commitment to collaboration at the operational level often characterised these projects. The type of physical activities was less important in the design of the initiative. Opportunities were provided for participants to be involved in the selection of activities (e.g. Teen Scene), and in various leadership roles (e.g. Girls Active, Active8) and participant feedback was sought in the design (e.g. Girls Active), programme implementation (e.g. Teenscene) and evaluation phases (e.g. Can Sport make a difference to me?) of these interventions.

### **2.2.3 Youth Programmes**

We found 21 physical activity initiatives supported by various youth agencies, such as Youthreach, Youth Services, School Completion Programmes (SCPs) and other youth organisations. They were grouped together as they shared a common perspective in relation to what they viewed as the benefits of physical activity programmes for this population of young people. Personal and social benefits of engagement were rated highly, with physical activity viewed as an important medium for character development. The physical activity initiatives supported by Youthreach were delivered mostly either as part of the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Leisure and Recreation module or the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) accredited Health Related Fitness module. These modules were not originally designed specifically for girls and weren't usually evaluated. However the structured nature of the programme as part of an accreditation system ensured they were sustained.

### **2.2.4 Other providers**

The four (4) projects subsumed within this category include a programme run by the Catholic Guides of Ireland, which promoted increased involvement of girls in physical activity through its CHOICES programme; a RAPID sports access project in Mallow, and two activity projects run through Traveller Training Centres. These projects did not lend themselves to easy categorisation. However, they provide further evidence of the range and diversity of physical activity providers nationally and were included in the larger database for that reason.

The 51 projects were categorised according to their providers. Any programme initiative that was organized and supported by a local sport club was categorized as a National Governing Body (NGB) of Sport initiative. Any activity supported by a local sport partnership or community partnership was categorized as a partnership initiative. Any programme organized and/or sponsored by a youth service agency was categorized as a youth programme. Programmes that did not fit either of these categories (n=4) were classified as other.

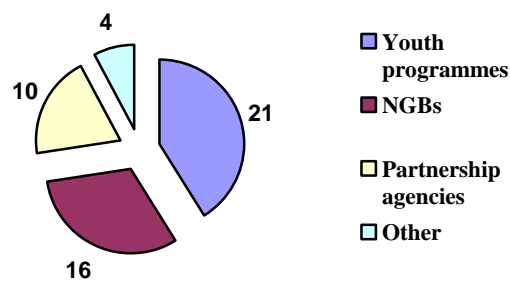


Fig. 1. Providers of Physical Activity Initiatives for Adolescent Girls

### 2.3 Characteristics of Physical Activity Initiatives

#### 2.3.1 Focus of the Physical Activity Projects

Of the 51 projects, ten (10) projects listed more than one purpose for the project. The vast majority of the providers cited activity as the primary purpose and most often the sole purpose of their initiatives.

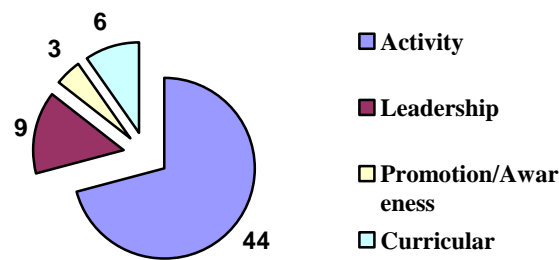


Fig.2. The Focus of the Adolescent Projects by Category

#### 2.3.2 Scale of the Projects

Each project was assessed in relation to whether it was delivered at the local, regional or national level and also the number of participants the project served (See Fig. 3). The majority (69%), of the initiatives were local initiatives.

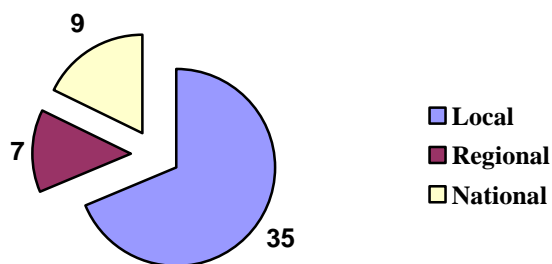


Fig. 3. National Scale of the Physical Activity Projects

The size of the projects ranged from six (6) participants to an estimated 3000 participants reflecting the diversity of the projects currently undertaken in support of girls’ physical activity options.

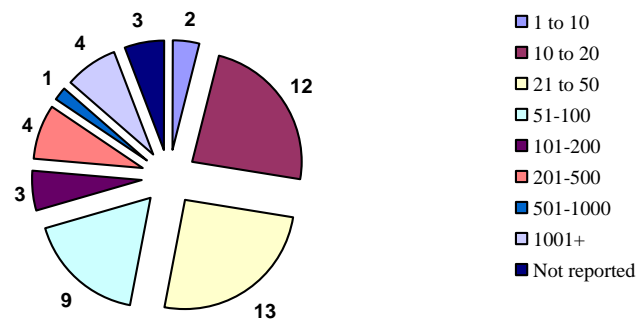


Fig. 4. Participants Catered for in Physical Activity Initiatives.

**2.3.3 Location**

The majority of projects were community (15) or school (11) based (as distinct from school initiated), with a significant number of projects (15), relying on both school and community facilities. Youth centres emerged as small (6) though valuable resource for physical activity initiatives.

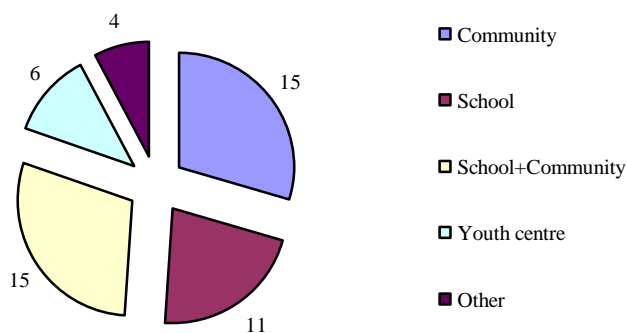


Fig. 5. Location of Physical Activity Initiatives

**2.3.4 Duration**

There was huge variability in the duration (i.e. engagement of girls over time) of physical activity initiatives presented. They ranged from a one-day blitz to an annual programme of weekly sessions. The majority of the projects (35 of 51) lasted more than 21 weeks with 22 of the projects (43%) lasting more than 10months. The typical length of an individual session was two hours.

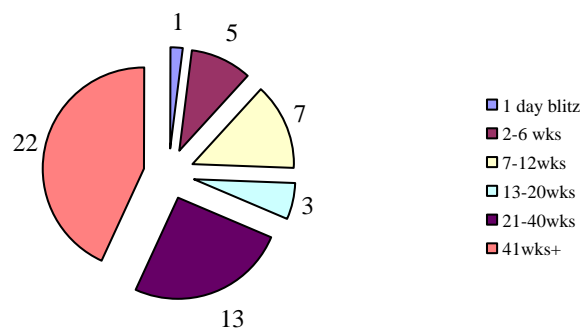


Fig. 6. Duration of Physical Activity Initiatives

### 2.3.5 Gender

From the outset we were interested in initiatives targeted specifically at increasing the involvement of girls (aged 12-18) in physical activity and sport and made this explicit in the letter that accompanied the questionnaire. However, we received information on a diverse range of projects, many of which included male as well as the targeted female population (See Fig 7). Providers, who identified significant challenges and successes in providing activity for girls in their projects, were included as part of dataset.

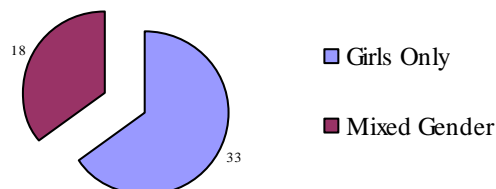


Fig. 7. Population Target for Physical Activity Initiative

### 2.3.6 Evaluation

Providers were asked if the initiative had been evaluated and if yes, how. Evaluation refers to both formal and informal evaluations. Little more than half of the providers (27 of 47) noted an evaluation component to their initiative (See Fig 8). The NGBs and Partnership projects seem to have embraced the idea of evaluation. This may be attributed to the ISCs requirement of an evaluation mechanism for projects it funds. An evaluation culture was evidently lacking for initiatives provided by those in youth services where evaluation was the exception rather than the norm.

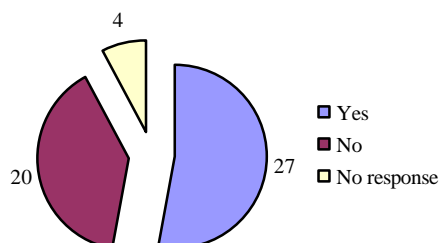


Fig. 8. Evaluation of Physical Activity Initiatives

### 2.3.7 Sustainability

Sustainability refers to degree to which an initiative has or is likely to sustain itself beyond the lifetime of the initial seed funding. The provider was asked in the questionnaire whether the programme had been sustained and if not, why and if yes, how". The majority (44 of 51) of the providers believed their initiatives to be sustainable. Those projects that were not sustained nor deemed by their providers to be sustainable tended to be more localised and independent initiatives. Lack of resources was the most cited reason for their lack of sustainability.

## 2.4 Summary

We have learned from this limited data-base of the substantive interest by a range of agencies in providing opportunities to engage adolescent girls in physical activity experiences. There is a cohort of both National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Sport

Partnerships that recognize this group of adolescents as an important target group and have designed weekly programmes lasting upwards of several months to attract two types of young women. The NGBs have focussed on getting more girls into their specific sport while most of the other agencies have used a variety of physical activities to motivate the typically non-active girl to be physically active. Finding ways to sustain the project beyond the life of initial seed monies is a challenge for many providers and providers who have partnered with one or more agencies have deemed their projects more sustainable over time. Gaining greater insight into how some groups attracted and sustained large populations of adolescent girls to be physically active over time was the focus of the in-depth case studies presented in the next chapter.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CASE STUDIES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INITIATIVES FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS**

#### **3.1. Case Selection**

The larger database identified 51 projects/programmes nationally that are currently running or have been run recently for girls aged between 12 and 18 years of age and promote increased levels of physical activity. We sought to learn about some of the successes and challenges for the providers of these programmes and how other potential providers could learn from their experiences.

Funding for the project would not allow for us to meet with all of the programme providers. Instead a number of projects were chosen for more in-depth review and analysis and a series of case studies are presented in this chapter. Collectively these case studies demonstrate a wide range of programmes nationally in terms of scale (size of the project) and design (structure and delivery of the programme).

Each case study includes a short justification for its inclusion in this chapter. A standard template is used to present the key attributes for each case study. Following each case study there is a short narrative on the information obtained with additional observations made following interviewees and informal interactions with the case study programme provider(s).

### 3.2. Case Study 1: *Gaelic4Girls Profile*

<b>Title:</b>	<b>“Gaelic4Girls”</b>	
<b>Focus:</b>	<b>Aim:</b> To increase the numbers of young girls playing ladies Gaelic football, specifically in disadvantaged areas nationally.	
<b>Providers:</b>	Cumann Peile Gael Na Mban and Dublin City Council.	
<b>Scope:</b>	<b>Budget:</b> €8400 <b>Funded by:</b> Cumann Peile Gael Na Mban, (€4000): Dublin City Council (€4000) and self-funded (€400). Each girl paid €5 on first night for the 6-week project. <b>No. of Participants:</b> 80 <b>Location:</b> Crumlin ; Dublin <b>Duration:</b> 6 week programme (2hr sessions)	
<b>Target Population:</b>	9-13 yr old girls	
<b>Description of the Project:</b> What do you do?	Circuit of skills.... 4 different stations and 4 groups of girls worked their way around stations with two skills at each station taught through fun games. Mini blitz games at end of each session. Last session was a blitz session to which some dignitaries were invited. Girls were all presented with certificates and t-shirts, footballs and medals.	
<b>Delivery Processes:</b> Who delivers the programme to participants and how do they deliver it?	8 coaches took part in an induction day, which consisted of a code of ethics workshop, a fundamental skills workshop, and an information session on the context and the girls they would be coaching. Five of the coaches were high profile inter county ladies Gaelic footballers. The other coaches were ladies football tutors and sports development officers.  Coaches paid €360 each for 6x2 hr sessions. Cumann Peile Gael Na Mban has a nationwide database of Ladies Football tutors.	
<b>Programme Documentation:</b> Supporting reports/manuals /resource packs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posters</li> <li>• Flyers</li> <li>• Programme outline</li> <li>• Certificates</li> </ul>	
<b>Evaluation:</b> Have you evaluated the initiative? If yes, how? What have you found?	Yes – via questionnaire to the 8 coaches. Findings – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaches were full of praise for the programme</li> <li>• Coaches felt supported and pleased to be involved in planning of the sessions</li> <li>• Coaches enjoyed coaching and felt sure the girls had thoroughly enjoyed it.</li> <li>• Coaches felt the programme could have been extended beyond six (6) weeks</li> </ul>	
<b>Successes of Project to Date:</b>	<b>Challenges the Project has faced:</b>	
Retention rate...75 of the 80 girls still participating in the final week of the project. No follow up data beyond 6 sessions	To provide these girls with a club to continue playing on a regular basis. What do we know about how many were invited to a club? Joined a club?	
The coaches’ investment in the project. They took ownership of the project as they were given the responsibility of choosing the games etc and that enabled the programme to be flexible.		
Coaches reported the girls very excited about certificates and medals they received upon completion of the course.		

<p><b>Sustainability:</b> Has the project been sustained/Is the project sustainable? - Please comment</p>	<p>A week long summer camp was planned in order to maintain girls' interest while clubs are being organised for those who wish to continue playing. There is a goal to run the project next year in Fingal, Cabra and Kilbarrack.</p>
<p><b>Other:</b> Is there any other information you can provide that may be useful to other providers?</p>	<p>An enclosed pitch/area was key to the success of the project, assisting with access to playtime and ensuring safety at all times.</p>
<p><b>Contact Info:</b> Name, address, phone no. and email of those individuals key to the projects existence and/or continuation</p>	<p>Paula Prunty, National Games Development Officer, Cumann Peile Gael Na Mban, Level 6, Cusack Stand, Croke Park, Dublin 3. Email: <a href="mailto:paula@ladiesgaelic.ie">paula@ladiesgaelic.ie</a> Phone: 01-8363156 Fax: 01-8363111 Web: <a href="http://www.ladiesgaelic.ie">www.ladiesgaelic.ie</a></p>

Gaelic football, as one of the national games, holds a special place in Ireland's sporting culture. There are currently 112,000 members of Cumann Peile Gael Na Mban, with the latest membership figures showing a 33.3% rise in numbers in the period between 2000 and 2005 (Irish Sport Council, 2006a). *Gaelic4Girls* is one of a number of initiatives introduced by the organisation to increase participation by girls in Gaelic Football. The Irish Sport Council's Women-in-Sport initiative funded this project noting the initiative:

- at it's crux was a girls only team sport
- was simple in design and deemed sustainable
- was supported by the NGB who was willing to facilitate the roll out of this programme in other areas.

The programme has proven more popular than organisers anticipated. The girls demonstrated great enthusiasm, with over 90% of them attending each session. The project highlighted the growth potential for the sport in other such areas. It is a small but successful step in addressing the interests of young girls in a team sport. The employment of qualified coaches with authority to design large parts of the programme was a key element of its success. The girls received high quality coaching and the coaches were allowed the freedom to make decisions they believed in the best interests of their young athletes. The coaches felt valued and NGB benefited from the programme being run so professionally. The format of the programme appears relatively simple and easy to replicate. The challenges for "scaling up this project" relate to acquiring high quality coaches with a level of commitment to the programme and appropriate safe venues where the sessions can take place. The certificates awarded at the end of the programme appeared to be very important to the girls who took part. This aspect of the programme had been designed to appeal to the specific age group and is something other programme providers might replicate.

### 3.3. Case Study 2: Women in Golf Profile

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Women in Golf (Pilot programme)</b>
<b>Focus:</b>	<p><b>Aims:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To introduce new players to the game</li> <li>• To encourage beginners to become regular participants</li> </ul> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a coaching programme for women</li> <li>• Create awareness and develop a “Beginner” membership of the ILGU supported by an E-Club facility for non golf club members</li> <li>• Provide a pathway to golf membership and full participation</li> <li>• Appoint volunteer co-ordinators to liaise with schools &amp; clubs for the purpose of promoting participation in golf</li> <li>• Appoint local volunteers to assist the running of the programme</li> <li>• Target schools (one, initially, for the purposes of the pilot programme) in relation to introducing TY students to the game of golf</li> <li>• Organise, in conjunction with the PGA, coaching days that cover all aspects of the game</li> <li>• Develop a specific beginner page on the ILGU website to cover aspects of the game relevant to beginners</li> </ul>
<b>Providers:</b>	I.L.G.U.
<b>Scope:</b>	<p><b>Budget:</b> €200,000 (to include the setting up of an E-club &amp; work with older/business women)</p> <p><b>Funded by:</b> ISC - €95,000 ILGU - €85,000 Entry Fees - €20,000</p> <p><b>Participants in pilot programme:</b> 36 TY students 36 professional women</p> <p><b>Location:</b> Local second level school &amp; Stepside golf facility</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 3 hrs per session (2 hrs practical and 1 theory) - 36 participants in each group. Envisaged as 2 session programme plus one round of golf.</p>
<b>Target Population:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional/business women (non-golfers)</li> <li>• Female TY students (non-golfers)</li> </ul>
<b>Description of the Pilot Project:</b> What do you do?	<p>Golf is perceived as being a staid and strict individual sport which does not lend itself to the beginner and/or young people and specifically not the young female.</p> <p>Programme aimed to break down these perceptions and teach the targeted groups about the game of golf (including the long game, short game, rules &amp; etiquette). There were practical and theoretical elements to the programme letting the participants try the game of golf in a friendly and non-competitive, non- threatening environment.</p>
<b>Delivery Processes:</b> Who delivers the programme to participants and how do they deliver it?	<p>Two PGA trained tutors delivered programme practically (two hours) and theoretically (one hour) each session. TY students received their tuition/classes during school time and were not charged. (The professional women were charged €10 which covered the first session)</p> <p>Pilot project consisted of 3 group lessons plus one 18 hole competition. The ILGU offered to provide equipment, but kids brought their own</p>
<b>Programme Documentation:</b> Do you have supporting reports/manuals/resource packs?	<p>None for the pilot programme –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sourcing the school was done by word of mouth.</li> <li>• Instruction manuals already exist, e.g., Junior Golf Ireland</li> </ul>

<p><b>Evaluation:</b> Have you evaluated the initiative? If yes, how? What have you found?</p>	<p>Nothing done formally, but the girls were very enthusiastic about the programme as were the business women. Participants were asked to complete a feedback questionnaire, which is used to refine the session for the next group. Initial findings show that the TY girls thought it was great fun and provided them with a new and alternative activity to participate in with their peers. Ultimately the project hopes to encourage women of all standards and ages to “get started in golf”, to enjoy the game and, by doing so, increase the number of women and girls playing golf.</p>
<p><b>Successes of the Project to Date:</b></p>	<p><b>Challenges the Project has faced:</b></p>
<p>Enthusiasm and enjoyment of the game from the participants</p>	<p>None in relation to the pilot programme.</p>
<p>Breaking down the pre-conceived notions of the game of golf</p>	<p><b>Challenges anticipated when the programme expands:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attracting suitable volunteers to lead the programme at a local level (sourcing the qualified tutors will not be a problem)</li> <li>2. Cost and availability of golf club membership particularly on the East Coast is a significant challenge.</li> <li>3. E-Club membership could ultimately compete with golf club membership and the number of women joining clubs could fall</li> <li>4. As the programme grows it will need full time staff (Development Officer) to work with the PGA and ILGU volunteers to increase participation across the entire country.</li> </ol>
<p>Over whelming response to the programme from women who would like to get started in the game – there is a clear need for this initiative</p>	
<p><b>Sustainability:</b> Has project been sustained? Is project sustainable?</p>	<p>The project is very simple in its design and quite short. It has the potential for sustainability but not going long enough to know it this will happen.</p>
<p><b>Other:</b> Is there any other information you can provide that may be useful to other providers?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Even without a great deal of technical knowledge, the practical sessions proved to be a better learning environment than the classroom.</li> <li>2. TY students wanted/needed their peers around them. The professional women were less concerned about this issue.</li> <li>3. The I.L.G.U. noted that getting out and starting the programme was more beneficial than spending the time designing information leaflets/flyers etc. (As the programme expands this will probably change).</li> </ol>
<p><b>Contact Info:</b></p>	<p>Sinead Heraty, I.L.G.U., 1 Clonskeagh Square, Clonskeagh Rd. Dublin 14 Tel: 01 2696244 Fax: 01 2838670 Email: <a href="mailto:info@ilgu.ie">info@ilgu.ie</a> Web: <a href="http://www.ilgu.ie">www.ilgu.ie</a></p>

The leadership of the Irish Ladies Golf Union (ILGU) believe that if you are taught to play golf as a child, even if you drop out of the sport as an adolescent, you will return to the sport of golf in adult life. This is an interesting claim and research is needed to support its

veracity given the significance of the implications were it to be true. The ILGU initiated the Women in Golf project to introduce new players to the game and targeted transition year girls. They believed they would have more success with this age group given the potential for greater freedom on the school timetable and the increased time allocated to P.E. during this senior cycle period. (MacPhail, Halbert, McEvelly, Hutchinson, & MacDonncha (2005).

This project was funded by the Irish Sports Council's Women-in-Sport initiative and was chosen because:

- golf is played by boys and girls though at present there are relatively few girls aged 12-18 in the sport
- the project might break down barriers associated with girls participation in golf
- the project was supported by the NGB and they were willing to facilitate the roll out in other areas (contact [Sinead Heraty](#) at the I.L.G.U. for details)

This pilot programme proved very successful with relatively little organization or administration on the part of the I.L.G.U. Should the programme expand, the administrative element will undoubtedly become larger and additional personnel will need to be employed given the logistics of increasing playing numbers.

Golf club access is an issue (cost, membership etc.) to be addressed. Whilst there are golf clubs across the country, the largest concentration of them are on the east coast of Ireland, so it may be somewhat easier to run this programme in certain parts of the country than others. Careful selection of the schools is considered important in the next phase of the programme as teachers at participating schools will be important role models and/or important supporters of the students' involvement. Expanding this programme can provide access and critical golf instruction to more girls in Ireland.

### 3.4 Case Study 3: Girl's School Rugby Profile

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Girl's School Rugby Project</b>
<b>Focus:</b>	<p><b>Aim:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase interest &amp; participation among girls in community and girls' schools in order to create an overall feeder system into local clubs</li> <li>• To increase player participation in schools rugby</li> <li>• To recruit, retain and develop coaches and referees within girls' school rugby</li> <li>• To establish a comprehensive administrative structure to ensure the future and viability of girls school rugby within the women's rugby administrative structures.</li> </ul> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To increase participation in schools by girls</li> <li>• To increase awareness of the girls' schools rugby project</li> <li>• To establish support structures for new and developing schools</li> <li>• To ensure retention of schools and players</li> <li>• To create a consistent structure of schools and age grade girls rugby across Leinster</li> <li>• To encourage increased participation in coaching and refereeing girls' schools rugby</li> <li>• To increase the number of qualified coaches within girls schools rugby</li> </ul>
<b>Providers:</b>	Leinster Women's Rugby
<b>Scope:</b>	<p><b>Budget:</b> The ISC supports the project by funding a Schools Development Officer and related projects.</p> <p><b>Funded by:</b> ISC</p> <p><b>No. of Participants:</b> 1100 (from 40 different schools)</p> <p><b>Location:</b> Community and 'girls only' schools across Leinster rugby clubs</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> nine months (2005-2006)</p>
<b>Target Population:</b>	Secondary school age girls (largest numbers from Transition Year)
<b>Description of the Project:</b> What do you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A coaching and refereeing programme for 'Leprechaun Rugby' was delivered to schoolgirls (alongside organised competitions) for all age grades. The Schools Development Officer coaches both students and their P.E. teachers for the purpose of sustainability.</li> <li>• A schools section has been developed on the Leinster Rugby webpage and is updated regularly with news and results</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery Processes:</b> Who delivers the programme to participants and how do they deliver it?	<p>The Leinster Schools Development Officer spends her time in schools coaching or facilitating coaching sessions.</p> <p>Depending on the schools timetable, requirements and preferences sessions are provided in school time or as extra-curricular sessions.</p> <p>Equipment for the programme was provided by the ISC funding (with some additional local sponsorship) as was the coaching and refereeing courses that were run in conjunction with the practical coaching sessions – these are open to both school staff and pupils. (No charges made to the school or the participants, the only financial element is for club affiliation)</p>

<b>Programme Documentation:</b> Do you have any supporting reports/manuals/resource packs?	Girls Schools Rugby Project : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flyer</li> <li>• Information booklet</li> <li>• 2006 Review document</li> <li>• Strategic Plan (2005-2008)</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation:</b> Have you evaluated the initiative? If yes, how? What have you found?	Yes – Report provided to the ISC Findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls and their teachers very enthusiastic about the programme</li> <li>• A section on the Leinster Rugby website created for the project, (news, results etc.) and frequently updated with news on women’s rugby in general – this allows the girls to see the larger rugby culture and allows them to be part of a growing rugby community.</li> <li>• Local rugby clubs have begun to forge links with schools</li> </ul>
<b>Successes of the Project to Date:</b>	<b>Challenges the Project has faced:</b>
1. The increased numbers of girls participating in school rugby	1. With only one paid member of staff to deliver the programme, not as many schools have been facilitated as showed an initial interest – more staff needed to meet the demand for the project.
2. Increased numbers of women’s rugby teams within clubs	2. Trying to get P.E. teachers to ‘buy in’ to the project, not just allowing the schools development officer to do all work/coaching –P.E. teacher a vital link if programme is to be sustained in the school.
3. Girls really enjoy it, something new.	3. Obtaining funding/sponsorship and support to continue the programme.
4. Leprechaun rugby more aligned to formal game than tag rugby. More carry-over to ‘full rules’ teams.	4. Deciding how much time to allocate to each school
<b>Sustainability:</b> Has the project been sustained/Is the project sustainable? - Please comment	Project will continue in 2006-2007 as funding is approved. Programme is still funding dependent although the following developments (if continued) <b>may</b> make the programme more independent: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If P.E. teachers in schools currently being served by the Schools Development Officer, take advantage of coaching and refereeing courses offered and deliver the content as part of PE programme.</li> <li>• If the local clubs, through their Youth Development Officers, begin to work with more girls in schools than at present</li> <li>• If other areas partake in programme and national school leagues can be set up (Munster have expressed interest in Leinster programme)</li> </ul>
<b>Other:</b> Is there any other information you can provide that may be useful to other providers?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Schools needed a lot more support/help than was anticipated – they were not able to run the programme themselves as yet.</li> <li>2. Go and talk to people who show an interest and then get out there and ‘do it’.</li> <li>3. Initially work with schools that have a local rugby club as they have best chance of sustainability given community links</li> <li>4. P.E. teacher is a very important person in this: programme, need to work with them and not independent of them.</li> <li>5. Schools in ‘disadvantaged areas’ seemed to ‘love’ the programme</li> <li>6. Projects and programmes in women’s sport seem to move a lot more slowly than in predominantly male sports – but keep at it!</li> </ol>
<b>Contact Info:</b>	Caitriona Bergin, Women’s Development Officer, Leinster Rugby, 55 Main St, Donnybrook, Dublin 4 Tel: 087 2967689 Email: <a href="mailto:cbergin@leinsterrugby.ie">cbergin@leinsterrugby.ie</a> Web: <a href="http://www.leinsterrugby.ie">www.leinsterrugby.ie</a>



Rugby is a hugely popular sport in Ireland across all provinces. The women's game is gaining in recognition and has, in recent years, become affiliated with the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU). This rugby project was designed and implemented by [Leinster Rugby](#) who employ a Women's Development Officer (i.e. [Caitriona Bergin](#), WDO). Not all branches of the I.R.F.U. have invested in a W.D.O. to expand rugby membership among females.

A number of variations to the game of rugby have been made to attract young people into the game, primarily 'tag rugby' and 'leprechaun rugby'. Both are popular in schools although 'leprechaun rugby' has characteristics more similar to the adult game and it was on this basis that the ISC (Women in Sport initiative) funded this project.

This project was funded by the ISC (Women-in-Sport) and chosen because

- rugby is a mixed sex, team sport
- rugby is a growing women's sport
- sustainable links are made between the schools and the community (local rugby clubs)
- the project has the support of the NGB
- the Leinster Women's Rugby Development Officer was willing to facilitate rollout of the programme in other areas (contact [Caitriona Bergin](#) for details)

This project was very successful in the targeted Leinster schools. The programme was, however, almost completely dependent on the Schools Development Officer. To make the programme sustainable this post would need to be a permanent position. If this post could be funded for a couple of years, more time should be spent building the P.E. teachers' capacities to teach/coach rugby and less time on coaching the girls directly by the WDO.

The Girl's Schools Rugby Project targeted schools that had a rugby club in close proximity. It was important to link the schools to a club as this increases the sustainability of the programme. Munster Rugby has shown an interest in running the programme and if this development takes place, it paves the way for girls' competitions across the provinces, which will raise the sport's profile and the number of girls participating.

### 3.5 Case Study 4: *Teen Scene*

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Teen Scene</b>
<b>Focus:</b>	<p><b>Aim:</b> To stimulate interest in physical activity amongst 12-19 yr old females.</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To highlight the importance of physical activity for female adolescents</li> <li>• To encourage greater participation amongst females</li> <li>• To provide easily accessible physical activity opportunities for 2<sup>nd</sup> level female students</li> <li>• To offer ‘new’ activity opportunities, tailored specifically for this cohort of adolescents</li> <li>• To involve the students in decision making at these sessions i.e. selection of music, themes and peer demonstration of set moves</li> <li>• To measure physical activity patterns of the participants, monitor adherence, and evaluate the impact of the programme after 4 months duration</li> </ul>
<b>Providers:</b>	Kerry Local Sports Partnership and Institute of Technology, Tralee
<b>Scope:</b>	<p><b>Budget:</b> €20, 000</p> <p><b>Funded by:</b> Irish Sports Council (€6325) &amp; self funded (€24 per participant for 16 wk programme: €6000 approx)</p> <p><b>No. of Participants:</b> 250</p> <p><b>Location:</b> Schools, Youth Clubs, Community Centres</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 16 weeks.</p>
<b>Target Population:</b>	Girls aged 12-19 Offered to schools, youth clubs and community centres
<b>Description of the Project:</b> What do you do?	The project incorporates organised indoor aerobic exercise activities using appropriately chosen music for this age cohort. Novelty is added to the sessions by incorporating Kai Bo, Boxercise, Hip Hop and other current trends. Students are encouraged to choose music, exercise moves and to take a leadership aspect within these sessions.
<b>Delivery Processes:</b> Who delivers the programme to participants and how do they deliver it?	<p>Instructors with a variety of exercise expertise were sourced in various locations across the county. IT Tralee helped in the recruitment of tutors and the partnership also contacted the NCEF and accessed their register for the Kerry region. Exercise instructors who did not have professional exercise leadership qualifications (NCEF or equivalent) were encouraged to undertake a course subsidised by the LSP, provided they committed to maintain their involvement in the provision of classes to this age group for a set period stipulated.</p> <p>Tutors were paid €40 an hour and 50c a mile.</p>
<b>Other Key Personnel:</b>	Local Organisers: In the schools these tended to be teachers and in the community it was usually volunteer leaders.
<b>Programme Documentation:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teenscene Exercise Programme flyer and expression of interest form</li> <li>• Summary sheet of evaluation of programme.</li> <li>• Screening Form</li> <li>• Tutor description and Application Form</li> <li>• Pre and Post-intervention questionnaires</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation:</b>	The project monitored through LSP, and two BSc. students evaluated the project from its inception, role out and four months into activation. The evaluation results were presented to the KLSP and also served the academic requirements for the students’ degree programme.

Successes of the Project to Date:	Challenges the Project has faced:
<b>Regular activity</b> for this age group. Many not active previously.	<b>Local organiser involvement</b> was a key to success of programme...low involvement often associated with increased drop out.
<b>Variety of activity</b> proved very successful to keep participation levels high.	Large amount of administrative support needed
<b>Flexibility of programme</b> (in relation to content)	Keeping <b>motivation</b> up
	<b>Sourcing tutors</b> specifically for dance and for those in more rural locations.
<b>Sustainability:</b>	The project will be repeated however it is not entirely sustainable for classes run in more rural areas as the cost of the tutor needs to be subsidised.
<b>Other:</b> Is there any other information you can provide that may be useful to other providers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Specifically selected 16 weeks to be the length of the programme because we wanted to create habit” forming practices for the teens.</li> <li>• Collecting money up front generated greater commitment from the participants</li> <li>• Role of Local Organiser was a key factor...knew the teens and the context</li> <li>• Debriefing meeting with all tutors at beginning of programme was very useful to ensure they were clear on objectives of programme. Also sharing contact details advised so coverage of sessions could be arranged in the event of sickness etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Contact Info:</b>	Imelda Roche, Kerry Local Sports Partnership Unit 6, Tom Crean Centre, ITT, North Campus Tralee, Co. Kerry <b>Tel:</b> 066-7184776 <b>Mob:</b> 0872043631 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:info@kerrylsp.ie">info@kerrylsp.ie</a> <b>Web:</b> <a href="http://www.kerrylsp.ie/">www.kerrylsp.ie/</a>

Teen Scene was designed and implemented by the Kerry Local Sports Partnership. It is one of only a few projects to target all adolescent girls within a certain geographical area without having a particular sport or specific target group in mind. Adolescent girls who did not participate regularly or those from disadvantaged backgrounds were at the heart of the initiative. The programme was also designed to run in a number of different locations including schools, youth clubs and community centres. Most other projects were located at a school (either within or outside school time)

Both the school based and the community based elements of the programme required a large amount of administrative support which was supplied by the Kerry Local Sports Partnership.

This project was funded by the ISC (Women-in-Sport) and was chosen because

- it spans the school, club and community settings
- it was a longer programme of activity than most others
- it allowed the girls some element of choice in the programme e.g. the type of music used and the themes of the sessions provided on a weekly basis

- The Kerry LSP was willing to facilitate the roll out of this or similar programmes elsewhere (contact the [Kerry Local Sports Partnership](#) for details)

This programme was simple in design but quite complex in its application. The primary reason for this was that the programme was run in a number of locations across the Kerry area, all requiring tutors/instructors to lead the sessions and the Kerry LSP personnel had to ensure smooth running of the programme across the different locations at various times. In reality, this was difficult to orchestrate and ideally required more than one person from Kerry LSP to oversee the project.

The courses were all successful, but there is a need to have a centrally held (Kerry LSP) database of qualified tutors for all the different activities offered. This would have ensured earlier roll out of the programme and made contacting potential tutors easier. The Kerry LSP accessed existing databases of tutors more than other programmes but they still felt that a centrally held register would be of benefit especially in the broad area of dance forms.

Teen Scene, like many other programmes, charged the girls a small sum of money to enrol in the programme and they felt that this was one of the things that kept them coming back each week. The money for the entire programme was collected at the start of the sixteen (16) week programme and this was deemed to be very important in the adolescents' commitment to the programme. Teen Scene will continue to run in its' current form, but the ultimate aim is for the community to run it themselves. One group has already initiated this change, and the Kerry LSP has welcomed the initiative.

### 3.6. Case Study 5: *Girls Active*

<b>Title:</b>	<b>“Girls Active”</b>
<b>Focus:</b>	<b>Aim:</b> To increase the physical activity levels of teenage girls not currently involved in activity.
<b>Providers:</b>	Health Services Executive-North West Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership/Sligo VEC Donegal Sports Partnership
<b>Scope:</b>	<b>Budget: Not available</b> <b>Funded by:</b> Irish Sports Council and HSE-North West <b>No. of Participants:</b> 250 participants per year <b>Location:</b> Schools in the Sligo/Donegal region <b>Duration:</b> A minimum of three activities over a total of 15 weeks after school.
<b>Target Population:</b>	Girls in 2 <sup>nd</sup> year and above not currently involved in physical activity.
<b>Description of the Project:</b>	<p>“Girls Active” involves school based extra-curricular activities and aims to develop more supportive environments for girls to participate. “Girls Active” provides teenage girls the opportunity to become involved in the organisation of the programme at their school.</p> <p>It also involves training for co-ordinating teachers, support in the form of school visits and telephone calls, and leadership training for the participating girls. In each school the co-ordinating teacher recruited girls to participate in the programme and supported them in selecting activities they were interested in and in organising instructors for these activities.</p> <p>Selected activities included Hip-Hop Dance, Kick aerobics, Ju-Jitsu, Tai Chi, Kickboxing, Tai Bo, Yoga, and Volleyball.</p>
<b>Delivery Processes:</b> Who delivers the programme to participants and how do they deliver it?	<p>A co-ordinating teacher was appointed in each school. This teacher participated in a one-day training course which focused on the co-ordinators expectations, the initial consultation report, how to structure/organise activities, terms and conditions of the project, roles of the co-ordinators and support agencies and tips on getting started.</p> <p>Two girls representing each of the participating schools participated in a weekend overnight training course. The aim of the training was to enable the girls to review and develop the skills of organising and promoting a physical activity programme for their peers through sharing with other students and experiencing some physical activities themselves. The content focused on the benefits of physical activity, communication skills, organisational skills, motivation and promotional skills.</p> <p>The programme structure planned for two support visits to each participating school. On the support visits, a meeting took place with the co-ordinating teacher, the girls’ representative participating in the programme and the school principal where possible.</p> <p>A small database of instructors/coaches was also made available to the co-ordinators.</p>
<b>Programme Documentation:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation document “Consulting with Teenage Girls on Being and Getting Active” on which development of Girls Active is based.</li> <li>• Flyer</li> <li>• Programme Report 2003/2004</li> </ul>

<p><b>Evaluation:</b> Have you evaluated the initiative? If yes, how? What have you found?</p>	<p>The 2003/2004 programme evaluated internally through focus groups, questionnaires and interviews. Another evaluation in 2005/6 conducted. An external evaluation of the programme currently taking place.</p> <p>Benefits of programme highlighted by co-ordinating teachers included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ownership by the girls</li> <li>• Non-competitive nature of activities</li> <li>• Higher levels of participation and</li> <li>• Increased confidence</li> </ul> <p>Advice received from co-ordinators regarding programme future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for an up to date regionalised database of instructors.</li> <li>• Create an information sheet for instructors, coaches and parents regarding the principles of girls active.</li> <li>• Transport was a major issue for many schools and it was suggested that part of the grant be made available for transport.</li> <li>• Co-ordinating teachers saw the need to extend the programme throughout the school. They felt the involvement of more teachers would improve the long-term sustainability of the programme.</li> <li>• The girls who participated in “Girls Active” provided feedback through questionnaires, group and individual discussion. The following summarises the responses from the one to one interviews:</li> <li>• The girls rated the programme 9.25 out of 10.</li> <li>• They favoured the small all girls groups.</li> <li>• The activities were more relaxed.</li> <li>• The girls liked working with music and exercise.</li> <li>• Their confidence, concentration fitness and communication improved.</li> <li>• They had fun, made friends, and got to know the teachers better.</li> <li>• They learnt to organise and promote the programme.</li> <li>• They became more interested in sport and some continued with the activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Successes of the Project to Date:</b></p>	<p><b>Challenges the Project has faced:</b></p>
<p>Increased participation in physical activity by non-active girls.</p>	<p>Accessing instructors/leaders at an affordable fee to deliver programmes. Instructors for aerobics, Tai Chi, Pilates etc cost more than traditional sport coaches.</p>
<p>Greater promotion of physical activity for teenage girls in schools.</p>	<p>Getting school policies developed around Girls Active.</p>
<p>Positive impact on girls’ participation in curricular PE also.</p>	<p>Transport home in rural areas from extra-curricular programmes.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability:</b></p>	<p>The project has been sustained successfully for three years and extended each year to involve more schools. Continued funding from the HSE and the ISC has made this possible.</p>
<p><b>Other:</b></p>	
<p><b>Contact Info:</b></p>	<p><b>Maire McCallion</b>, Health Promotion Officer, HSE-North West while involved in this project Email: Marie is working for 2005-2006 at IT Sligo and can be contacted there about this project. <b>Alternatively contact:</b> <b>Deirdre Lavin</b>, Sligo Sport &amp; Recreation Partnership, VEC Offices, Riverside, Sligo. Tel : 071-9161511 Email : <a href="mailto:info@sligosportandrecreation.ie">info@sligosportandrecreation.ie</a></p>

The Girls Active programme in the Sligo Donegal region has been running for the longest amount of time (three years) and has a lot of ‘experience’ in connecting with young girls. It is run in a number of different schools across quite a wide geographical area spanning two counties and has stayed focused on its original format of providing extra-curricular school activities to females. The programme was devised and developed in conjunction with the consultation document “Consulting with Teenage Girls on Being and Getting Active”. As best we can tell, Girls Active was the first programme to use such an approach and a resource. The programme offers training for both its co-ordinators and the participating girls (in the form of leadership training) and therefore extends its benefits beyond the purely physical, and aids future sustainability.

This project was ISC (Women-in-Sport) funded and was chosen because

- it is a school focused extra-curricular programme
- it has been running successfully for a number of years, therefore showing sustainability
- it spanned a larger area and number of schools/centres than other programmes
- it has been evaluated
- the girls were provided an element of choice in the activities
- printed materials are available from the providers and they are willing to share their experience of the programme with other interested parties

The internal evaluation phases of the programme have led to subtle changes in the programme, but in essence the programme remains unchanged, which is testament to the initial design. Due to the number of schools involved in the project, there are lots of key personnel (one co-ordinator in each school) and whilst this is good, it is quite difficult for area co-ordinators to get everyone together for the purposes of both planning and evaluation. The challenge of recruiting suitably qualified instructors for all the locations, remains, and a call has been made for a centrally located database of tutors and instructors. This was an issue for most of the non-NGB based programmes and could be a very useful task for a larger regional/national agency (HSE/ISC other?). This issue will be discussed later in the report under challenges for provision.

### 3.7. Case Study 6: *Empowering Women Through Sport*

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Empowering Women <i>through</i> Sport</b>
<b>Focus:</b>	<p><b>Aims:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop and increase the quality of sporting activities available to women of all ages in Corduff</li> <li>• To create a supportive and safe environment which offers women of all ages the opportunity to get involved in a variety of physical activities</li> <li>• To empower women to realise their potential and leadership abilities and by so doing gain a sense of self-worth, and acceptance within the community</li> <li>• To enrich female participants lives by allowing them to receive recognition for their efforts and commitment rather than focusing on achievement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six activities to be offered in the first year</li> <li>• Twenty adult women to try a variety of sports in the first twelve months</li> <li>• Adult women encouraged to obtain a basic coaching qualification and/or FETEC accreditation in a sporting activity</li> <li>• Forty young women involved in a variety of sporting activities</li> <li>• Increased local women’s involvement in proposed sport facility in Corduff</li> <li>• Dedicated plan developed to promote women’s ongoing involvement in the new sports facility</li> <li>• Increase in women’s personal fitness</li> <li>• Increase links between women and young people in the area</li> <li>• Creation of a positive perception of women’s participation in sports</li> </ul>
<b>Providers:</b>	Fingal County Council Fingal Sports Partnership County Dublin VEC.
<b>Scope:</b>	<p><b>Budget:</b> €42,800  <b>Funded by:</b>          €16500 from Fingal Co. Co.          €16300 from ISC          €10000 ‘in kind’ from Co. Dublin  <b>Participants:</b> 25 young women (originally),          15 for soccer and 10 for dance with some cross over of participants. 18 by end of programme  <b>Location:</b> Community: ...Corduff all weather pitch, Riversdale Community College, Corduff Scout Den, Blanchardstown walking routes.  <b>Duration:</b> 16 weeks</p>
<b>Target Population:</b>	Initially women of all ages living in the Corduff area, with a particular focus on those under eighteen years.



<p><b>Description of the Project:</b> What do you do?</p>	<p><b>Girls' soccer:</b> 25 girls ranging in ages from 11-14 started soccer training. A core group of 18 or 19 were retained and a soccer team was formed. The girls U14 team entered a summer soccer league in May 2006 until September 2006. The team has now been affiliated with a local soccer club (with the assistance of the local FAI Development Officer). Participants paid €3 per match (which included training twice a week and gear washed)</p> <p><b>Dance programme:</b> 25 girls between the ages of 12 and 18 were involved in a dance programme once a week. 15 girls were retained in this element of the programme. Participants paid €1 per session</p> <p><b>Women's walking club:</b> 18 adult women are currently involved in the Women's Walking Club. This group of women walk three miles, three times a week. They were preparing to take part in the Mini marathon. Walking 'maps' are currently being prepared for use by the women, showing local routes (of various distances) and distance milestones along the way.</p> <p><b>Aerobics club:</b> This was aimed at the older women but some younger women were interested and now take part. 18 or 19 initially took part with retention of 10-12. Participants paid €2 per session.</p> <p>The aim to achieve some qualifications for the women was not pursued - getting participation rates up became the initial and sole aim, but qualifications remain an objective for the future.</p>
<p><b>Delivery Processes:</b> Who delivers the programme to participants and how do they deliver it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Corduff Community Youth Project Youth Workers and two volunteers run soccer training twice a week. There is a link-in with the local FAI Development Officer and further participation is expected through the Pepsi Soccer Camps and the FAI's 'Kick-start' programmes. Some have taken Kick-start 1 qualification (2)</li> <li>• External instructors/part-time teachers instruct in the dance course</li> <li>• Youth Workers organize and participate in the walking club</li> <li>• Instructor pay rates: between €38 and €52 per hour plus travelling expenses (commensurate with experience)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Programme Documentation:</b></p>	<p>A report on the programme submitted to the Irish Sports Council</p>
<p><b>Evaluation:</b> Have you evaluated the initiative? If yes, how? What have you found?</p>	<p>No formal evaluation</p> <p>Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women and girls <b>are</b> participating in activities that they weren't doing previously</li> <li>• The girls are more skilful at soccer and their confidence and social skills have improved enormously</li> </ul>
<p><b>Successes of the Project to Date:</b></p>	<p><b>Challenges the Project has faced:</b></p>
<p>1. Women and girls are participating</p>	<p>1. Getting the support from the community for the project (this did improve over the course of the programme)</p>
<p>2. Good parental support for the U18 girls</p>	<p>2. Getting the girls and women to participate in the first place (older women were even more difficult than the U18's)</p>
<p>3. Co-operation with and from the FAI</p>	<p>3. Sourcing and securing tutors for various aspects of the programme</p>
<p>4. Local sponsorship for soccer jerseys</p>	<p>4. Breaking down the negative perception of women and girls being involved in physical activity.</p>

5. Two participants from each group (soccer, dance etc.) became members of a youth forum which became the 'voice' for their particular group. This increased their responsibility and self-esteem levels	
<b>Sustainability:</b> Has the project been sustained/Is the project sustainable? - Please comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It will continue if funding for the project continues</li> <li>• Assuming some carryover of participants from the first programme it is hoped that the leadership/qualification element of the initial proposal will become a reality.</li> <li>• It is proposed to investigate the possibility of linking in with existing fitness/activity providers e.g. local gyms and their instructors. This would enable the participants to become familiar with existing and sustainable outlets to continue their activity programme when the Women-in-Sport initiative is complete</li> </ul>
<b>Other:</b>	
<b>Contact Info:</b> Name, address, phone no. and email of those individuals key to the projects existence and/or continuation	<p>Siobhan McGuinness ; Fingal County Council Community, Recreation and Amenities Dept County Hall ; Main Street Swords ; Dublin Tel : 01 890 6724 Email : <a href="mailto:siobhan.mcguinness@fingalcoco.ie">siobhan.mcguinness@fingalcoco.ie</a> Web : <a href="http://www.fingalcoco.ie">www.fingalcoco.ie</a></p> <p><b>Fiona Costello</b> Corduff Community Youth Project Corduff Scout Den : Corduff ; Blanchardstown ; Dublin 15 Tel : 086 6054126 Email: <a href="mailto:youthservice@bysforoige.ie">youthservice@bysforoige.ie</a> Web: <a href="http://www.ncge.ie/service.asp?id=DYS738">www.ncge.ie/service.asp?id=DYS738</a></p>

Empowering Women Through Sport is a programme aimed at groups of girls and women (different ages/stages of life) implemented in the Corduff area of County Dublin. The case study focuses on two of these groups, although reference is made to other groups. This programme differed from other non-NGB based programmes in that a team game was selected as one of the key activities for the girls to pursue. Recent studies (e.g. ESRI study on School Children and Sport in Ireland: Fahey et al, 2005) suggest that girls prefer individual, non-competitive activities in preference to competitive team sports. This programme, however, showed that competitive sports are popular and have a role to play in the lives of some, if not all, adolescent females.

This project was ISC (Women-in-Sport) funded and was chosen because

- it is based solely in the community
- the project was linked with gaining a FETAC award for participants
- it was targeted at a specific geographical location
- it was funded by one organization, but delivered by another

One of the aims of this project was for the women and girls to gain at least one FETAC qualification as a result of participating in the programme. To date, this has proven impossible, as getting groups of women motivated to engage in physical activity regularly took longer than the providers envisaged. The providers are still working towards a qualification for the girls and women and realistically it will come towards the end of a second phase of the programme.

The success of the soccer team/training and the enthusiasm for it proved to be a surprise for the providers. The soccer element of the programme was a success and will be sustained

through affiliation with a soccer league. For this programme to be truly sustainable, more funding is required. Higher profile for the project by the Council would also be helpful.

### 3.8. Case Study 7: Active8

<b>Title:</b>	<b>ACTIVE 8/Expansion of ACTIVE 8</b>	
<b>Focus:</b>	<p><b>Aim:</b> To promote increased physical activity among teenage girls through a peer-mentoring programme.</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To highlight the importance of physical activity for female adolescents</li> <li>• To create tailor made opportunities for girls in their communities</li> <li>• To link young teenage girls to tailor made opportunities for them in their community</li> <li>• To increase activity levels among young teenage girls</li> </ul>	
<b>Providers:</b>	Health Service Executive - South Area and Cork County and Kerry Local Sports Partnerships.	
<b>Scope:</b>	<p><b>Budget:</b> Initial pilot for Active8 with funding for Expanded Active 8: € 3,000. <b>Funded :</b> Health Promotion Department.</p> <p><b>Participants:</b> 50 per school (25 mentors and 25 mentees)</p> <p><b>Location:</b> Post Primary School and Community Centre</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 10 weeks (included 8 weeks of journal keeping)</p>	
<b>Target Population:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> year and 2 <sup>nd</sup> year girls.	
<b>Description of the Project:</b> What do you do?	<p>Initial pilot programme took place in schools and involved senior students being trained to mentor their junior peers through eight weeks of physical activity. Participants recorded progress in their individual Active8 journal. Following completion of the programme Senior and Junior students are awarded certificates in physical activity, peer mentoring and physical activity participation respectively.</p> <p>Circuits, Dance, and Walking were the activities used in the pilot scheme.</p> <p>The expanded programme sought to extend Active8 to the community. Programme of activities for this programme was based on feedback from girls who participated in pilot project. Activities include hip-hop dance, kickboxing, step aerobics and tai boxing.</p>	
<b>Delivery Processes:</b>	Health Promotion Department Staff deliver Peer Mentor Training to Senior Students and Staff via an onsite school visit. Workshop was 3 hours.	
<b>Programme Documentation:</b>	Activity journal, peer mentor manual and documented student feedback on programme.	
<b>Evaluation:</b>	<p><b>Key performance indicators are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of girls continuing with the programme after it moved from the school</li> <li>• Number of schools /communities participating in extended programme</li> <li>• Feedback from both participants and local organisers on the programme</li> </ul>	
<b>Successes of the Project to Date:</b>	<b>Challenges the Project has faced:</b>	
<p>Student displaying high levels of enjoyment and establishing new friendships</p> <p>Girls introduced to new and enjoyable activities, i.e., hip hop, dance, kick boxing, resulting in girls joining clubs within localities</p> <p>Use of journal and diary as motivator</p>	<p>Timetabling – Difficult to achieve 10 successive weeks in the school term</p>	

<b>Sustainability:</b> Has the project been sustained/Is the project sustainable	Recently the Health Promotion Department partnered with the Kerry Local Sports Partnership and Kerry Diocesan Youth Service to extend the programme into the community (i.e. Expansion of Active 8-received W.I.S. funding). A programme of activities based on views and feedback from the girls participating in the programme will be operated and launched within a community centre.
<b>Other:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training should be delivered during Sept/Oct period to avoid interruptions later in the year</li> <li>• Suggestion - school(s) should organize additional activities for girls to participate in during the 10 week programme</li> </ul>
<b>Contact Info:</b>	Cora Carrigg, formerly Health Promotion Department, Now Kerry Local Sports Partnership, Unit 6, Tom Crean Centre ITT, North Campus, Tralee, Co. Kerry. <b>Tel:</b> 0667184776 <b>Email:</b> info@kerrylsp.ie; <b>Website:</b> www.kerrylsp.ie/

This project was originally designed and run by the Southern Health Board in 2002/3. The Co. Cork LSP was funded by the ISC (Women-in-Sport initiative) to run the programme in 2005/6 and it has been evaluated and consequently run again by Aine Lambe from I.T. Tralee (funded by the Mid West HSE) in a Co. Limerick secondary school. An expansion of Active8 run by Kerry LSP was also funded by the ISC (Women in Sport initiative).

To understand this project, both the original Active8 programme in the Southern region and the programme run in Co. Limerick have been included here. The expansion of Active8 to the community, by the Kerry LSP, has not been as successful as the school-based programme. A brief summary and contact details for people involved in the Expansion project are provided in Appendix 2. There are also some details about the expansion noted in the first of the two case studies.

Active8 is one of only a few projects/programmes that has migrated (with the approval of the original provider – HSE South) and launched in a different location.

Active8 was chosen as a case study because:

- it has been run in both school and community settings
- it has migrated from one geographical area to another
- it has been formally evaluated
- it has an element of adolescent responsibility built into the programme
- there are printed materials associated with the project
- it has been a sustained programme

The newer project in Co. Limerick is presented below.

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Active8</b>
<b>Focus:</b>	<p><b>Aim:</b> To promote increased physical activity levels among teenage girls through activity intervention and a peer mentoring programme.</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To highlight the importance of physical activity for female adolescents</li> <li>2. To increase activity levels among female adolescents</li> <li>3. To encourage responsibility and leadership skills in female adolescents</li> </ol>

<b>Providers:</b>	HSE, Mid West area Limerick County Sports Partnership
<b>Scope (Limerick project):</b>	<b>Budget:</b> €1600 <b>Funded by:</b> Mid West HSE <b>No. of Participants:</b> 45 <b>Location:</b> A Co. Limerick secondary school <b>Duration:</b> 8 weeks
<b>Target Population:</b>	1st & 4th year female secondary school pupils
<b>Description of the Project:</b>	The intervention was an 8 week physical activity mentoring programme. Prior to implementation four workshops were facilitated with the TY students. On the basis of discussion generated through these sessions, the 8 week intervention was designed, specifically targeting the group's physical activity preferences. The Active 8 initiative was facilitated by the HSE coordinator every week for the duration of the programme. The taster sessions of physical activity made available were aerobics, circuit training, games and a day trip to an outdoor adventure centre. The facilitator met mentors and mentees throughout the programme for support and feedback purposes. The students were required to complete pre and post intervention questionnaires.
<b>Delivery Processes:</b> Who delivers the programme to participants and how do they deliver it?	Delivered solely by the organizer of the programme with the assistance of the P.E. teachers within the school and specialist tutors at the Outdoor Centre (for that element of the programme). As there were 45 pupils, the group was split into two. Each group received one hour per week during the lunch break at school. The programme was delivered in the schools' P.E. hall except for the week when they went to the Outdoor Centre.
<b>Programme Documentation:</b>	None
<b>Evaluation:</b> Have you evaluated the initiative? If yes, how? What have you found?	Yes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of physical activity undertaken by the participating girls did increase from pre to post intervention and the girls were seen to progress in the stages of change.</li> <li>• The girls enjoyed the activities and have become more aware of other activity possibilities in their area. (They have asked for dance and martial arts next term!)</li> <li>• The diary/activity journal (from the original programme) was not popular with the girls and most chose not to fill it in.</li> <li>• All the girls increased in confidence and skill level</li> <li>• The 4<sup>th</sup> year girls generally felt that their self esteem had improved</li> </ul>
<b>Successes of the Project to Date:</b>	<b>Challenges the Project has faced:</b>
More girls participating in physical activity	
Girls became more aware of their current lifestyle habits	
4 <sup>th</sup> year students were confident and capable enough to mentor a small group of 1 <sup>st</sup> year pupils	
The girls liked the fact that they were able to help design the programme.	
<b>Sustainability:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Co-ordinator will revisit and extend the programme in the school during the next school year.</li> <li>2. PE teachers in school will implement alternative forms of physical activity during lunchtimes to compliment the Active8 programme.</li> <li>3. Schools from a wider geographical area have shown an interest</li> </ol>

<p><b>Other:</b> Is there any other information you can provide that may be useful to other providers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This project requires the support of the school and specifically the P.E. teachers within the school.</li> <li>• The programme would benefit from being longer, maybe a full term?</li> <li>• In order for this programme to be available all year round it would need ‘buy in’ from the local community.</li> <li>• Youth leaders coming into the school to talk to or lead practical sessions with the girls, would be a positive step towards linking the school with the community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Contact Info:</b></p>	<p>Aine Lambe ; Limerick Health Promotion, Carnegie Centre, Bishop St. Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick. Tel:069-61430 Email:aine@mailh.hse.ie</p>

When projects migrate it is to be expected that they will be revised and adapted to align with local contexts. The original project followed a specific structure and format for delivery of the programme and the project in Co. Limerick seems more flexible. It should be expected that different personnel would interpret and make changes as they see appropriate to the new setting.

Both project providers identify that a longer programme would be more beneficial (eight weeks is too short) and that the mentoring part of the programme, was a successful and important part of the project.

As with other projects, sourcing the tutors was an area of concern and one that took “too long” in the initial (pre roll-out) stages. Active8, through the strands illustrated here, has shown sustainability. It can also be adapted to suit individual/group needs in other regions of the country.

### 3.9. Case Study 8. *Girl's Activity Programme*

<b>Title:</b>	<b>G.A.P. (Girl's Activity Programme)</b>	
<b>Focus:</b>	<p><b>Aim:</b> To provide a 12 week taster programme to girls aged 14-18 who had dropped out or do not engage in regular P.A./sport in the Bray area</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase number of girls (14-18yrs) participating in sport/PA</li> <li>2. Increase number of girls who wish to take part in GAP programme</li> <li>3. Increase awareness amongst the girls about the benefits of regular PA &amp; leading a healthy lifestyle</li> </ol>	
<b>Providers:</b>	Co. Wicklow VEC Sports Promotion Unit	
<b>Scope:</b>	<p><b>Budget:</b> €600</p> <p><b>Funded by:</b> Bray Local Development Group</p> <p><b>No. of Participants:</b> 33 (approx 8-12 in each of the 4 locations)</p> <p><b>Location:</b> 4 centres in Bray (existing youth group meeting times &amp; venues)</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 12 weeks</p>	
<b>Target Population:</b>	14-18 year old girls who had dropped out or did not engage in regular sport or P.A. (targeted locally through youth groups/school completion programmes etc.)	
<b>Description of the Project:</b> What do you do?	3 activities chosen (Yoga, aerobics and hip-hop) and delivered to the girls in their local/usual youth group location. They were instructed in the activity itself but also on other things such as warm-ups, cool-downs, stretching & the benefits of exercise and participation in PA. No payment was taken for the course from the participants.	
<b>Delivery Processes:</b> Who delivers the programme to participants and how do they deliver it?	Delivered by specialist instructors (sourced & paid for by Co. Wicklow VEC Sports Promotion Unit [leader – Tracy Bunyan]) in yoga (4 classes), hip-hop (5 classes) and aerobics (3 classes). Regular youth leaders also participated	
<b>Programme Documentation:</b> Do you have any supporting reports/manuals/resource packs?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Proposal document</li> <li>2. Information letter to participant group leaders</li> <li>3. G.A.P. feedback &amp; evaluation questionnaire</li> <li>4. Sports needs questionnaire</li> <li>5. Final report</li> </ol>	
<b>Evaluation:</b> Have you evaluated the initiative? If yes, how? What have you found?	<p>Questionnaire – returned/completed by 19 of the 33 participants.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hip hop &amp; aerobics were the two best received activities</li> <li>• 89% of the girls said they would like to receive more classes in the activities they covered in the programme</li> <li>• They would like to see classes in gymnastics, kickboxing, table tennis &amp; football</li> <li>• 79% said the programme had encouraged them to become more active in sports – some of the reasons given were: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. enjoyment of sports suited to them</li> <li>2. programme allowed them to see which sports/activities they liked:</li> <li>3. to keep fit</li> <li>4. they got a buzz from doing the activities</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	
<b>Successes of Project to Date:</b>	<b>Challenges the Project has faced:</b>	
Girls participated & wanted to continue with programme or variation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Getting the girls motivated to participate</li> <li>2. 'Selling' the project to the girls &amp; their leaders</li> </ol>	



<p><b>Sustainability:</b> Has the project been sustained/Is the project sustainable? - Please comment</p>	<p>Yes – due to run again this Autumn, with an altered programme of activities. Other comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One group are running a programme of aerobics themselves without the involvement of the Co. Wicklow VEC Sports Promotion Unit</li> <li>2. Funding of €1000 has been received from the HSE for Autumn '06</li> <li>3. Youth groups, leaders &amp; venues are already in place, it's now about devising a suitable programme &amp; sourcing instructors [now done]</li> </ol>
<p><b>Other:</b> Is there any other information you can provide that may be useful to other providers?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Try to have as close a relationship as possible with the youth worker/leaders that generally look after the girls; as that is the easiest way to access/target groups and they will be more willing to participate if they know you.</li> <li>2. Keep to existing times/routines of the girls/groups i.e. if their youth group meets on Wednesday at 7 pm, then that is the time that the activity should be delivered.</li> <li>3. Try and provide for the needs of the target group – things that <i>they</i> are interested in</li> <li>4. If it's not working, don't be afraid to change it</li> </ol>
<p><b>Contact Info:</b></p>	<p>Tracy Bunyan , S.P.U., C/o Bray Youth Service, Florence Rd., Bray, Co. Wicklow Tel: 01 2828324 Email: <a href="mailto:tbunyan@wicklowvec.ie">tbunyan@wicklowvec.ie</a> Web: <a href="http://www.wicklowvec.ie">www.wicklowvec.ie</a></p>

The Girl's Activity Programme is a small-scale programme and provided a 12-week taster programme to girls, aged 14-18, who had dropped out or did not engage in regular P.A./sport in the Bray area. A programme of activity was devised which targeted specific groups of adolescent females according to their usual evening time/youth group activities. This was important as it was considered to be a waste of time trying to change their social habits of going out on certain nights to certain places. This strategy seemed to pay dividends, as attendance/retention rates were quite high for this initiative.

Some of the activities the girls asked for were “not possible” due to (among other things) insurance. Other project/programme managers around the country got around this by offering the activity in a specialist location/club, and not the community hall, where the specialist tutors could work more freely and therefore already have insurance.

This programme highlighted the fact that a programme can still be run for the benefit of adolescent girls without it costing the pupils, tutors or organisers a great deal of money.

This programme was chosen because:

- it operated on a significantly smaller budget than any of the other programmes/projects
- it's target population was girls who had dropped out or did not engage in sport or physical activity
- it worked closely with the established youth groups & leaders in the area
- the programme has been adapted beyond pilot to other area and sustainable
- [Tracy Bunyan](#) (programme leader) is willing to facilitate the roll out of this or similar programmes in other locations.

The main concerns for the programme providers were sourcing tutors/instructors for the activities that the girls chose and securing adequate funding. The girls had an opportunity to help devise their own programme and were also allowed to change it if it wasn't going too well. These two things are seen as being vitally important to the success of the programme and they will continue to be at the centre of the next phase of the programme. The enthusiasm shown by the overall leader of the programme is carried over in to the day to day running of the programme and this has a positive effect on the programme itself and the participating girls. Care must now be taken to institutionalize the programme so that it is not too reliant on the energy and enthusiasm of one person.

As with many other projects, key personnel are vital to the success of this project and if it were to be 'taken elsewhere', the local leaders would be at the forefront in both the design and delivery of the course.

### **3.10. Summary of case studies**

The nine (9) case studies shown here are examples of programmes or projects that have been successfully delivered to girls in the 12-18 age range. They show elements of good practice as well as offering a number of strategies to cope with situations both within and beyond the control of the programme leaders.

A cross case analysis of these case studies was conducted and a series of challenges and best practices were highlighted. These findings are found in the next two chapters.

### **3.11. Other significant projects/programmes**

There were a number of projects that did not meet the specific criteria for inclusion as a case study. However, programme providers might find information on these projects helpful in terms of one or more of their characteristics: target population, budget, geographical location, etc. We have therefore, provided a brief description of these projects/programmes and contact information to secure additional information.

The **Avondu Development Group** work in conjunction with the RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) co-ordinator in Mallow and run a series of girls only initiatives in the 12-16 age range. Recent programmes include after school and summer programmes, kayaking, walking, soccer, athletics and leadership programmes. Contact details: Email: [e.dennehy@avandhudevelopment.ie](mailto:e.dennehy@avandhudevelopment.ie)

The **5 Alive programme** was devised and delivered by Limerick City Sports Partnership in a local secondary school. It was a five (5) week plan and focused on healthy eating and increasing physical activity. Flyers, fact sheets, work sheets and food journal templates have been produced. Contact details: Web: [www.limerickcitysports.ie](http://www.limerickcitysports.ie)

The **Wexford School Completion Programme** has a varied programme of activities and has been chosen to demonstrate this range. Their partners are the C.D.P.S./G.A.A., 'Crime Diversion projects' and Youth Services. To date participants have experienced volleyball, orienteering, basketball, camogie, dance and outdoor pursuits. Dance has proved to be the most successful activity. Contact details: Marguerite Furlong, Wexford School Completion Programme, Tel: 053 71765

Kerry Local Sports Partnership operated an **Expansion of Active 8**. The programme was moved from the school environment into the community. Contact details: Cora Carrig or Imelda Roche. **Email:** [info@kerrylsp.ie](mailto:info@kerrylsp.ie)

Mayo Local Sports Partnership ran a **Hip to Hop Dance Project** aimed at girls who do not normally participate in sport. A locally based dance teacher led fun, non-competitive dance sessions over a period of ten (10) weeks in five (5) different locations using school or community halls. Contact details: Charlie Lambert. Email: [clambert@mayococo.ie](mailto:clambert@mayococo.ie)

Clare Local Sports Partnership.Aimed ran the **Can Sport Make a Difference to Me** project. It was aimed at girls in Transition Year and their mothers, looking to increase their physical activity levels and their appreciation of a physically active lifestyle. It was a weekly programme run over 27 weeks in two (2) 2<sup>nd</sup> level schools. Contact details: Tom Crowe. Web: [www.claresportspartnership.ie](http://www.claresportspartnership.ie)

The Catholic Guides of Ireland operates **CHOICES** (Creativity, Health, Outdoors, International, Communication, Environment, Special projects) throughout the country. Some projects undertaken by the Guides are related to physical activity. Contact details: [www.girlguidesireland.ie](http://www.girlguidesireland.ie)

Walking is a popular activity for women of all ages. Many LSP's (e.g. Mayo & Kildare) have set up walking clubs as have many local councils. Some examples can be found in Fingal Co. Council (contact [Siobhan McGuinness](mailto:Siobhan.McGuinness@fingal.ie) for details) or Limerick City Sports Partnership (contact [Elaine O'Connor](mailto:Elaine.O'Connor@limerickcitysports.ie) for details)

### 3.12. Projects with Potential for Younger Populations

The following four projects present interesting ideas that could be adapted for adolescent girls but are not currently targeted at this age group.

**Women in Motion** is a joint initiative between Meath & Westmeath Sport Partnerships developing women's skills as coaches/leaders. Contact details: Mary Murphy, Sports Officer. Web: [www.meathlocalsportspartnership.ie](http://www.meathlocalsportspartnership.ie)

The **GAA Go Games** is a modified games initiative and could be adapted for other sports and target groups. See website at [http://gamesdevelopment.gaa.ie/page/go\\_games.html](http://gamesdevelopment.gaa.ie/page/go_games.html)

The Irish Handball Council's **mini-handball initiative** has elements, which could be incorporated into other programmes and adolescent girls. There are flyers, posters, fact sheets, equipment order forms etc. available. Contact website: [www.handball.ie](http://www.handball.ie)

Cumann Camogaiochta na nGael's most recent initiative proposes a one day blitz in each of four third level institutions across the country. Secondary schools are invited to participate in a seven-a-side competition. There are structures for the teachers who participated. See website: [www.camogie.ie](http://www.camogie.ie).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### BEST PRACTICES IN GIRLS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROVISION

We completed a cross case analysis of the case studies. This involved reading the transcripts of the interviews conducted with the key personnel for each of the eight (8) projects that served as case studies looking for common themes or patterns. We also reviewed project information and materials provided by the designated contact personnel for the projects, looking for trends across projects. We compared these findings with information gathered from our larger database of projects and sought out key themes related to best practices. The best practice characteristics, which have been gleaned from the case studies, have been organised under two headings, Human Resources and Programming Decisions. This is not an exhaustive list of best practices but rather is intended to stimulate thought regarding how best to structure and provide physical activity opportunities for girls. Implications for policy, research and programming will appear as recommendations in the final chapter of this report.

#### 4.1. Human Resources

Six personnel considerations are discussed below as key factors in the successful marketing, implementation, and/or sustainability of high quality programming for young adolescent girls.

##### 4.1.1 Recognise people as your most valuable resource

The success of many of the projects was attributed to the energy and commitment of key personnel. Participants better appreciated projects where they had consistent interactions with key personnel. It was also noted that some participation by these key personnel in the activity sessions constituted positive role modelling, which was well received by the participants. In the Girls Activity Programme, for example, it was reported that the most successful activity sessions tended to be those in which the leaders participated with the girls.

##### 4.1.2. Involve stakeholders in decision-making

The nature of the involvement of the key stakeholders (e.g., adolescent girls) in the initiative was significant. When the participants, coaches/tutors, principals, PE teachers etc. were involved to some extent in decision-making processes regarding the planning, implementation and evaluation of the initiative, success and sustainability was more likely. Girls Active, for example, was informed by consultation with adolescent girls, involved some of the girls and their coordinating teachers in project information and the design of workshops and invited all stakeholders to contribute to evaluating the project and to comment on strategies for improvement.

##### 4.1.3 Collaborate with other agencies

Partnership programmes were more likely to succeed and to be sustained rather than projects initiated by one agency, particularly a small local group. The HSE and Local Sports Partnerships in particular seem to have become aware of, value, and are taking advantage of joint initiatives. Other successful examples of partnership projects included “Empowering Women through Sport” whose providers highly commended the contribution of the FAI to their success and “Teen Scene” which benefited from the support of students from the Institute of Technology, Tralee, who helped to evaluate aspects of their initiative.

#### **4.1.4 Invest in school and community links**

For purposes of sustainability it is not a good idea to rely on key personnel alone regardless of how important they are in getting the project started. Investing in school and community links, specifically in the creation of an infrastructure for the successful continuation of the project, is necessary and should be planned for upfront if the project is to be sustained. This means investing time and resources into building the project into the formal structure of one or more agencies, training new coaches, teachers, and tutors and gaining their support for the project. The Active8 (HSE-mid west area case-study) is a good example of a school-based initiative, which has become embedded in the school's extra-curricular activity schedule and will continue in the coming year under the supervision of the PE teachers in the school.

Helping the female participants make connections with physical activity providers and opportunities for continued participation outside the immediate location of the project and in their community is vital in order to keep the girls focused on a physical activity pathway. Project providers should avail of community activity directories, which are often available through the local sports partnerships, or local agencies may need to develop their own database of community facilities and activities based on the interests of your target group.

#### **4.1.5 Request contact information**

It is important to plan for and ensure the project creates a database of contact information for tutors, facility operators, participants and other key personnel. It is also helpful when working with a pool of tutors to encourage them to share their contact information so that if they are unable to attend sessions they can arrange their own class/session coverage. This ensures continuity of service for participants, a key factor in getting them to return to the programme on a regular basis. Such coverage sends a positive message to participants.

#### **4.1.6 Appoint a local organiser**

With large regional or national projects that run in more than one area, it is advisable to appoint a local organiser for each location. These organisers should know the girls' needs and interests and be thoroughly familiar with the local context. Local organiser involvement was highlighted as key to the success of the "Teen Scene" project.

### **4.2 Programming Decisions**

#### **4.2.1 Market projects specifically to girls even when attracting boys and girls**

Some programmes reviewed were focussed on attracting boys and girls. In projects targeted at mixed gender adolescent groups, motivation and retention of girls was the most frequently highlighted challenge. Neither was a priority issue in those projects targeted specifically at girls. To get more girls involved you need to design and deliver a programme that speaks to their interests. This does not mean that there can't be mixed gender groups but your successful recruitment of both groups requires different approaches and at least some aspects of the programme should recognise different student needs.

#### **4.2.2 Advertise to your target group**

"Gaelic4Girls", "Teen Scene", "Girls Active"...projects with catchy titles work. Teenage girls are consumers in a consumer culture and projects need to be marketed to them. Colourful flyers and posters and various incentives e.g. the promise of certificates upon completion, free t-shirts etc. all serve to increase the girls' interest in the project at the outset. These types of incentives seem to be more important for girls than for most boys.

#### **4.2.3 Timing is important**

Certain terms in the school year are more likely to have fewer interruptions and thus more likely to ensure regular attendance by participants. Pre-Christmas has been recommended as a good time for in-school interventions to take place. Consultation with the school in this regard is recommended to ensure the project does not interfere with regular school activities. Similarly with community-based projects, finding out what other activities are run in the community and timetabling around these and the other commitments of your participants can facilitate better attendance.

#### **4.2.4 Charge a nominal fee**

Payment by the participants emerged as a contested issue from the provider feedback. Some of the providers felt that asking for even nominal payment (e.g. €2 per session) constituted yet another barrier to increasing the number of girls who might be active. Those who did charge a nominal fee saw positive links between participant payment and attendance, participation and retention rates, observing that the girls were more likely to invest in and continue with the programme if they had made a nominal payment for it. It worked best when this fee was paid upfront for a given number of sessions e.g. €20 paid on the first session of a ten week block.

#### **4.2.5 Flexible, context specific projects work**

Building elements of choice and flexibility into the programme has proved to be advantageous. The project can then be adapted to fit the context. Ownership by the stakeholders is increased as they have choices in relation to certain aspects of what becomes 'their' programme e.g. in "Teen Scene" the girls chose the activities and decided when it was time to change activities.

#### **4.2.6 Offer roles of responsibility to the participants**

"Active8" involved the students as peer mentors. The Girls Schools Rugby project offered a coaching and refereeing programmes for the girls. Engaging participants in various roles of responsibility such as referring, coaching, teaching, record-keeping, public relations officers etc. serves not only to foster responsibility in the participants and to authenticate and extend their physical activity experiences, but also to improve the sustainability prospects of the project, as it begins to become self-resourcing.

#### **4.2.7 Reflect on and evaluate what you do and revise the project based on the information (praxis)**

Programmes that were regularly evaluated, and more importantly when project leaders acted on the feedback, reaped the benefits e.g. "Girls Active". Evaluation should involve all of the stakeholders.

#### **4.2.8 Recognise the girls' achievement and that of key personnel**

Certificates of completion should be awarded at the end of successfully completed programmes. Inviting parents, community agencies and personnel involved in the project to an achievement ceremony serves to recognise and foster community investment and celebrates the project and participants' accomplishments. The "Gaelic4Girls" project for example, invited participants, parents, funding partners, coaches and local dignitaries to their *achievement evening*, which was very well attended and received by all stakeholders.

The following chapter outlines the key challenges in the provision of girls physical activity as experienced by the coordinators of the projects we reviewed.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### KEY CHALLENGES TO GIRLS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROVISION

The key challenges to girls physical activity provision emerged from a cross case analysis of the case studies. This involved reading the transcripts of the interviews conducted with key personnel for each of the eight (8) case study projects. We read these case studies searching for key issues within and then across all the cases. We compared the findings from the case studies with information gathered from our larger database of projects and sought to uncover key themes related to these challenges.

There were some challenges that were reiterated by the different providers such as youth sport programme providers, youth service providers and school completion programme providers. The challenges that emerged consistently across all three of these categories were challenges related to funding, transportation costs, access to facilities, and gaining and maintaining the interests of girls in the programme offerings.

For Youth Sport providers additional issues related to appropriate quality and quantity of equipment, “meeting young peoples needs especially girls”, and what was described as “finding suitable sports for girls”. The School Completion Programmes (SCPs) faced similar challenges associated with the retention of girls and noted difficulties in finding suitably qualified coaches to work with this population of adolescents. The challenges reported by the Youth Services related to a lack of adequate facilities to offer exciting and different programming and the resources necessary that might better meet the needs of girls in mixed group activities and sourcing tutors that could support these programming initiatives. These providers commented on how boys were “over-competitive” and this disposition did not align very well with the interests of most of the girls they recruited to their programmes.

The following challenges are described in more detail below. The goal here is to provide some specific details of these challenges

#### 5.1 Sourcing Tutors

Sourcing tutors, in particular for non-traditional activities and for rural areas, proved problematic with many of the providers highlighting this as their greatest challenge. This was a challenge specific to non-NGB agencies. Some of these agencies have begun to develop their own databases in response to this challenge. Others found the National Certificate in Exercise and Fitness (NCEF) regional databases useful. For the NGBs sourcing qualified coaches did not emerge as an issue due to their coaching programmes and national databases however sourcing suitably qualified volunteers was highlighted as a challenge by a number of the NGBs.

#### 5.2. Funding

This was a far greater issue for the non-NGB projects reviewed. Fees for transport, especially from rural areas, facilities, and tutor costs were all highlighted as challenges, and the sustainability of projects was often deemed funding dependent. Many of the projects reviewed had received funding from the Women in Sport initiative. The challenge for these initiatives now lies in trying to integrate these projects into the existing infrastructure and

ensuring their sustainability beyond the Women in Sport scheme. Specific recommendations relating to funding are made in chapter 6.

### **5.3. Rural physical activity provision**

Initiating and maintaining projects in rural areas proved quite problematic for a number of providers. Locating experienced tutors in the local areas and organising facilities in rural areas proven a major challenge for a number of providers. The dispersed numbers of adolescent girls in rural areas and the difficulties with transportation for this population age made it difficult to ensure regular attendance of young girls at any one session and this made it hard to sustain a critical mass of committed young girls over time. The Minister for Children noted a similar challenge in accessing facilities at the launch of the consultation document on the National Recreation Policy for Young People (Lenihan, 2006).

### **5.4. Motivation and retention of girls**

This was the most frequently cited challenge of the mixed programmes. It was rarely reported as a challenge by projects targeted specifically at girls. Girls tend to prefer different types of physical activity and pursue it for different reasons than boys do. Programmes that did not acknowledge this experienced difficulties in supporting and sustaining girls' participation in physical activity. This does not mean that mixed gender programmes can't work but it does require providers to have a better appreciation of different interests of adolescents and recognise that different approaches need to be taken to meet the needs of different populations. We also need to be careful that we appreciate that not all girls have similar interests.

### **5.5. Investment of schools and communities**

All providers recognised the importance of getting schools and communities to invest in their projects. Challenges arose with regard to getting PE teachers, in particular, to 'buy in' to particular projects. PE teachers need to be open to making connections with community agencies that are targeting their physical activity provision to specific groups of difficult to motivate students.

The next and final chapter draws together the findings from the cases studies, the challenges and best practices to provide a set of recommendations about how best to provide greater access to and provision of sustained involvement in quality physical activity and sport experiences by young girls.



## CHAPTER SIX

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

It is intended that the case-study examples, the best practices and key challenges as generated by the physical activity providers' feedback and outlined previously will provide useful information to potential and practicing providers of physical activity programmes nationwide and support their practices with physical activity provision for adolescent girls. Creating a policy context, which supports providers in their pursuit of good practice, is critical if we are serious about systematically addressing girls' physical activity needs.

Given our interactions with a variety of programme providers as part of this data collection effort, we note a general concern with increasing the physical activity participation levels among the entire population. Prior to the Irish Sports Council initiative on Women in Sport, there was an absence of specific strategies relating to girls and young women's participation in sport and physical activity in Ireland.

We must look to systematically building a culture that fosters girls' and young women's involvement in sport and physical activity. This requires all those interested and involved in sport and physical activity provision for young people to look at current policies and practices and mount a cohesive challenge to existing practices, which either marginalize and/or inhibit the participation of a section of the population, in this case all young adolescent girls regardless of their skill or motivation levels. The following recommendations, relating to implications for policy, programming and research, are grounded in the findings of this research project.

#### 6.1. Policy

##### 6.1.1 [Extend the Local Sports Partnership \(LSP\) system nationwide.](#)

There is need for more LSPs around the country. This structure seems to be quite successful in bringing various agencies together around the physical activity and sporting needs of a community and would benefit from greater investment. The structure seems to be particularly successful in targeting members of the community who have not been physically active on a regular basis and seem to have found ways to work in partnership with other agencies (as part of their mission) to support and/or coordinate a variety of pathways to physically active recreation. The local partnership approach to developing and funding recreation opportunities was a key issue in the consultation document for the upcoming National Recreation Policy for Young People (Roe, 2006).

##### 6.1.2 [Recognise and invest in the changing role of PE teachers.](#)

Young people learn in and through their experiences with popular culture and physical activity in particular (Sandford & Rich, 2006). Effective teachers make lesson content interesting and relevant to students by connecting it with their everyday lives which greatly assists their learning (Rovegno, 2006). Physical education classes in primary and post primary school can be a key foundation in developing positive adolescent attitudes and confidence to engage in regular physical activity outside of school time. Recent research in Ireland has suggested that very few adolescents report physical education as a motivator to participation in recreation (Roe, 2006). What are implications of such findings and the current report for the kinds of preparation physical education teachers need if we are to

expect PE teachers to be boundary crossers? Boundary crossing means teachers helping young people make connections between school PE programmes, in-school sport and PA programmes, and local community activities and infrastructure for Sport and PA. This may require a different mindset for many PE teachers and teacher educators. It may also mean reconstructing a different kind of job description for PE teachers in Irish schools. Teachers would now spend part of their time teaching physical education and part of their time coordinating physical recreation activities with outside providers. This would allow students to consolidate and extend what they are learning in the physical education programme with their outside physical recreation and sporting experiences.

### 6.1.3 Advocate for Active Schools that promote increased levels of physical activity among staff and students.

The Health Promoting Schools (HPS) concept has been developing in Ireland since the early nineties via the National Health Promotion Strategy. The strategy contends that 'a health promoting school can be characterised as a school constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working. As one of the primary tenets of a HPS is physical activity promotion, the HPS initiative provides a supportive existing infrastructure within which to pursue the above recommendation. HPSs contend that students, teachers, and parents all have some responsibility for their own health related behaviour and lifestyle and also all have a part to play in meeting the health needs of the school community, and therefore acknowledges that the activity levels of students is not the sole responsibility of the PE teacher; it is a school wide responsibility (Lahiff, 2002). For further information on this see the webpage on the School as a setting for Health Promotion (<http://www.healthpromotion.ie/topics>)

### 6.1.4 Take Seriously the Voice of the Client/Adolescent.

Consulting with young people should be a more central feature of all sport and physical activity initiatives designed to increase young people's participation levels in sport and physical recreation. This is perhaps one of the more important recommendations we can make in this report as providers noted greater commitment and satisfaction by girls to the initiatives where they were involved in decision making processes relating to what and/or how the initiative was delivered. Such a recommendation ties in with much of the recent research and policy making around young people in Ireland. In 2000, The National Children's Office launched a ten-year plan designed to encourage greater involvement by young people in decision-making regarding all matters that affect them. The mission statement of the strategic plan "*Our Children, Their Lives*" (NCO, 2000) makes clear that all young people in Ireland should have a voice in matters that impact them (including their physical recreation) and their views should be given due consideration in accordance with their age and maturity:

*An Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential* (NCO, 2000, p.4)

Our recommendation for greater voice for the young person in their sporting and physical recreation lives also aligns with the perspectives advocated in the consultation report for the development of a National Recreation Policy for Young People (2006): "consultation

with young people emerged as the most important issue in relation to developing opportunities for young people. There was consensus on the issue that developing and funding recreational opportunities without talking to young people is pointless” (p. 36). The National Play Policy (2004) also argued for engaging young people in the design, development, management, and evaluation of public play and recreation facilities and National Play Resource Centre’s website states such consultation is a requirement for public funds (see [www.playinireland.ie/policy.htm](http://www.playinireland.ie/policy.htm)).

#### 6.1.5 Funding agencies and Providers must take the role of evaluation more seriously.

Funding should be provided to support evaluation components by external agencies/agents, and proposals for funding should require the applicant to make explicit the mechanisms they intend to use to evaluate their initiatives and how they will use that feedback to adapt and revise their programme offerings and/or delivery. There is growing evidence that funding agencies have expectations that providers should include an evaluative component to their proposal. It is equally clear that not many sport and physical activity providers have the knowledge, expertise or financial support to complete a high quality evaluation process. We recommend that sufficient funds (of medium to large grants) need to be made available to providers to either hire consultants to complete the evaluation of their programme efforts or provide sufficient training in evaluation so that providers can complete this component of the work. In granting cycles, funding providers should assess new applications in part on how well the agency completed and used the evaluation data to inform their practice in a previously funded initiative.

#### 6.1.6 Build disaggregated membership/client databases.

We need more disaggregated data about young people’s involvement in sport and physical activity. It is not sufficient to report data for adolescent patterns of physical activity as important as those data are. Disaggregated data refer to sets of data broken down into their variable characteristics including age, gender, ethnicity, disability etc. Sex disaggregated data would make it possible to see what profile of girls and young women (for example, how many adolescent girls, how many women with disabilities etc.) are registered with particular physical activity providers. These data would enable the providers to show how successful they are with particular populations, and enable funding agencies to identify and reward those initiatives that are reaching out to an increasingly diverse female population.

#### 6.1.7 Funding agencies need to consider the profiles of the population their investment is likely to reach and not reach.

While it is necessary and appropriate for funding agencies to support and maintain strong existing infrastructures, such as those developed by some of the larger NGBs, it is also necessary that funding agencies are mindful of the changing population profile in terms of their interests from sporting and recreational perspectives. While funding agencies need assurances that providers have the necessary infrastructure to implement and/or sustain an initiative proposed for a specific group, funders need to be mindful that smaller agencies or initiatives, especially those targeted to “difficult to engage” populations, need to be specifically encouraged and supported to develop into stable organizations that can support the physical activity and sporting needs of the target population. At a national level policy makers, educators, and sport providers need to be sure that funding does not privilege some and discriminate against emerging or minor sports or physical activity providers to a

specific target audience that traditional agencies have not targeted successfully if at all. Funding schemes like the Women in Sport initiative is one attempt to redress the balance.

#### 6.1.8 Build on existing knowledge bases and good practices.

There are a number of providers nationwide who have successfully engaged young girls in regular involvement and/or leadership in physical activity and some were highlighted in the case studies chapter of this report. There are also a small but growing number of Irish documents that describe key characteristics of high quality provision of sport and physically active recreation for the adolescent population (de Roiste & Dineen, 2005; Fahey, Delaney, & Gannon, 2005; National Children's Office 2000, 2004; Roe, 2006). We recommend more funding providers alert potential providers to these and other reports and in their funding proposal demonstrate how they learned from the successes and challenges of other projects and reports to inform their current proposal. This will allow us, nationally, to accumulate knowledge and build upon an existing knowledge base rather than local and national agencies having to reinvent the wheel. We should also encourage communication across providers and encourage providers to build on existing good practices as part of their grant proposals. Support should be shown to providers who seek to scale up existing programmes that have shown promise with new or more diverse target populations and support should be provided for the development of information and resources that address the success of their efforts at adaptation and revision. A clearing-house (i.e. web page as one option) of such efforts would be a positive way of disseminating good practice to other potential providers.

#### 6.1.9. Dance

A key finding from this report and others (de Roiste & Dineen, 2005. Connor, 2003) is that an increasing number of girls are interested in being active but not in more structured and competitive sports and physical activities. Dance in a variety of forms has been quite effective in attracting and retaining young girls to be physically active in a number of the programmes highlighted in this report. Roe (2006), in her report for the forthcoming National Recreation Policy, cited dance as "the fourth most successful programme for recreational projects or programmes for young people" (p. 32). At a philosophical level one might ask the question whether dance is an art form or a physical recreation activity. In essence, dance can viewed as both an art form and a popular physical recreation activity.

There are many private dance providers but at the national infrastructure level there seems to be no systemic way to support dance as a physical activity pathway. The Sports Council is charged with encouraging more people, including young people to be active. If this agency limits its support to sport narrowly defined rather than physical activity more broadly defined, a successful pathway to engage young girls and women may be eliminated from direct Council funding and support. There is no national governing body for dance and dance activities so increasing access for young people to various dance forms not typically supported by the Council for the Performing Arts is somewhat problematic. Will the National Recreation Policy designate a space for dance activities as a recreational medium? Dance and dance providers seem to fall between the cracks in terms of public funding for this recreational activity. Dance has been supported by local sports partnership and the HSE as part of their physical activity initiatives. Funding agencies at the national level need to discuss how this physical activity pathway can be better supported as the evidence suggests it is a major interest area for girls and a positive pathway for active involvement of this target population.

## 6.2 Programme

### 6.2.1 Design: Targeting Programmes

Knowing your target audience/clientele and seeking to engage them by focusing the content and delivery on their needs/interests/context is critical to providing high quality programmes that young people will find satisfying. If you wish to get more girls involved then you need to design and deliver physical activity programmes that speak to their interests. This does not mean that mixed gender programmes can't be successful. They can and they are. However if we wish to increase the numbers of girls committed to physical activity participation, providers must begin to recognise and respond to the diversity of the young people they serve, in at least some aspects of their programming.

### 6.2.2 Embed roles and responsibilities for young people into programmes

Attention to leadership components and participant voices are two important aspects of provision for girls in particular. They may not always see the physical activity as the central reason to join, but allowing some leadership/coaching/managing opportunities may entice them to stay affiliated to the club/project. Examples of this can be seen in the Active8 project and also the Leinster schoolgirls rugby project; these projects are highlighted in the 'Case Studies' and in 'Best Practices' sections of this report. There is a need for more support for leadership and adolescent mentor training within the context of physical activity provision for girls and young women. In the UK a Sports Leadership programme is organized and run by 'Sports Leaders UK' (see [www.bst.org.uk](http://www.bst.org.uk)). A total of eight different awards are offered, aimed at different sections of the community. The two most relevant to this study are the Young Leader award (aimed at young people below the age of fourteen) and the Women, Get set, Go! award (aimed at women of all ages). These awards have become an integral part of many sport and youth programmes across the UK and are nationally recognised. In the Irish context, a range of awards similar to those available in the UK would be a welcome addition to the programmes already on offer.

### 6.2.3 Marketing

Marketing is an important but often neglected facet of physical activity provision. Effective marketing by physical activity providers can move girls closer to making a decision to participate in physical activity. Just as strategic decisions need to be made about project design and implementation, specific strategies are also important for effective project promotion. Adolescent girls are submerged in a consumer culture and have become sophisticated consumers who appreciate and respond to marketing. Catchy titles (e.g. "Gaelic4Girls", "Teen Scene", and "Girls Active"), colourful flyers and posters and various incentives (e.g. free t-shirts etc.) work to stimulate interest at the outset. Taking time and using part of the budget for careful marketing of the initiative to young girls in places where they gather regularly (shopping mall, school, local young centre etc.) will be money well spent. Funding agencies should allow submissions on funding proposals for such budget items.

## 6.3 Research

If Ireland is to ensure that more of its young people, particularly more of its young girls are motivated to get involved and stay involved in positive physical activity and leisure



pursuits, we need to better understand the factors that enhance and inhibit young people's access to, engagement with, and long term commitment to sport and physical activity experiences. Good research can inform policy makers as well as educators and sport and physical activity providers. We need to know a lot more about the behaviour not only of these young people in terms of their sport and physical activity pattern. We also need to know much more about the values and practices of the people, agencies and structures that provide such opportunities for young people. The lines of research that are presented below are not provided in any rank order and the list is not exhaustive. We have a very small research base on contemporary sport and physical activity patterns of young people in the Irish context (Connor, 2003, Fahey et al, 2005, de Roiste & Dineen, 2005, Collier, MacPhail, & O'Sullivan, In Press, Woods, Nelson, O'Gorman, Kearney & Moyna, 2005) and these research questions are suggested as pertinent given the current context in which we structure and deliver sport and physical activity in Ireland.

### 6.3.1 What are enhancers and inhibitors to Irish adolescent girls' involvement in physical activity?

Recent Irish research suggests that adolescent girls are less likely than boys to meet recommended physical activity guidelines (Woods et al., 2005). Increasing the knowledge and capacity of physical activity providers to address the determinants of physical activity for girls and young women requires us to consult with girls and young women and work collaboratively to identify the factors that enhance and inhibit their involvement in physical activity (de Roiste & Dineen 2005; Fahey, 2005). This research project accessed the provider perspective on activity provision for young girls. We need more in-depth research (i.e., observation of participation patterns and interviews with young people) that addresses the female participants' views of best practices in physical activity and how they think physical activity provision might be restructured to best meet their needs and interests? The preliminary work done by Girls Active in Sligo and Donegal is exemplary of this kind of consultation to a programme. They are currently evaluating how the young women who participated perceived that component of the programme. We need much more detailed research to identify the experiences and preferences of different young girls for the specific sport and activity programmes in which they are engaged (Fahey, 2005).

### 6.3.2 What is the current situation with regard to girls and young women's participation in leadership roles in sport and physical activity?

What opportunities exist that allow girls and young women to pursue leadership roles in sport and physical activity, what is the uptake, and what can be done to increase the provision of such opportunities? Can we access and learn from the experiences of girls and young women who have pursued these leadership opportunities?

### 6.3.3 What are the remits of Sports Development Officers, School Development Officers Women's Sports Development Officer and Physical Activity Coordinators?

We have seen a significant increase in funding by NGBs and the Irish Sport Council in the appointments of national and regional level sport development officers as well as in some cases school development officers and women sports development officers. At about the same time the HSE invested considerable funds with the appointment of physical activity coordinators in various counties across the country. These appointments are a key strategy by many providers to engage more young people in sport and physical activity (in some cases this is not their main responsibility and for some officers young people are not part of their charge at all). Given the level of personnel investment, research needs to be

conducted to better understand the extent of this investment at the national sport and physical activity infrastructure. How are these job descriptions defined, and what are the general tasks, functions, and responsibilities currently attached to these positions? What challenges do these officers and health promotion coordinators face and what training have they received? In what ways are they facilitating the increasing engagement of young people in particular and what do they see as the challenges and opportunities of working with this target population of adolescent girls?

#### 6.3.4 What can be learnt from the successes of the private sector in meeting the physical activity needs of girls and young women?

We know that the social and economic value of sport to the Irish economy is significant (Delaney & Fahey, 2005). What we know very little about is the extent to which the private sector is meeting the needs of girls and women and the uptake by girls and women of these services.

#### 6.3.5 Physical activity provision for women of all ages

The recent draft document ‘Lifelong Involvement in Sport & Physical Activity’ (LISPA) sponsored by the Irish Sport Council outlines a pathway for participants of recreational sporting activity in Ireland. It addresses issues surrounding greater and more sustained involvement of more people of all ages in sport and/or physical activity across their lifespan. To achieve the goals of the LISPA consultation document and one of the key functions of the Irish Sport Council related to increasing participation, further research needs to be undertaken to better establish the needs of girls and women, who wish to participate in sport without the pressure of competition as well as those who wish to be involved in recreational and competitive leagues and activities.

### 6.4 Conclusions

This research project sought to better understand the nature and scope of more and better physical activity provision nationwide for girls. It was a very beginning effort to catalogue efforts to generate greater interest and involvement by girls in regular participation in physical activity and sport. This is an issue that has been highlighted as a growing concern by the many organizations including the Sports Council, the National Obesity Task Force, and the Physical Education Association of Ireland. The cases studies, in particular, provided us with descriptions of the scope of projects supported by National Governing Bodies of Sport, Local Sport Partnerships, the Health Services Executive and local agencies as well as some initial understandings of the challenges they face and the kinds of best practices that generate interest and engagement by girls in physical activity. We expect these chapters will be of specific benefit to other potential providers of physical activity for girls and women and learn from the successes and challenges of others. We hope this research report will highlight the value and need for further research into this area so that we can better provide for and promote high quality physical activity opportunities and access to all young girls and women. This report raised as many questions as it did answers and we hope it will be the catalyst for other research in this area.

## References

Cavill, N., Biddle, S., & Sallis, J. (2001). *Health enhancing physical activity, fitness, and health*. International Proceedings and Consensus Statement. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Collier, C., MacPhail, A., & O'Sullivan, M. (In Review). Student Discourse on Physical Activity and Sport among Irish young people. *Irish Educational Studies*.

Connor, S. (2003) *Youth Sport in Ireland: The Sporting, Leisure and Lifestyle Patterns of Irish Adolescents*. Dublin: The Liffey Press .

De Roiste, A. & Dineen, J. (2005). Young People's Views about Opportunities, Barriers and Supports to Recreation and Leisure: A Research Report by Cork Institute of Technology on behalf of the National Children's Office. Dublin: Brunswick Press.

Delaney, L & Fahey, T. (2005). *Social and Economic Value of Sport in Ireland*. Dublin: ESRI.

Department of Health and Children (2005) *Obesity-The Policy Challenges: The Report of the National Taskforce on Obesity*. Dublin: Department of Health and Children.

Fahey, T., Delaney, L., and Gannon, B., (2005). "School Children and Sport in Ireland." Dublin, Economic and Social Research Institute.

Irish Sport Council (2006a). *2005 Annual Report for Ladies Gaelic Football*. Unpublished report to Irish Sports Council. Dublin: ISC.

Irish Sport Council (2006). €2.25 million for Women's Sport in 2006. Retrieved on August 30, 2006 at [http://www.womeninsport.ie/aboutus/about\\_isc.aspx](http://www.womeninsport.ie/aboutus/about_isc.aspx).

Kelleher C, Nic Gabhainn S, Friel S, Corrigan H, Nolan G, Sixsmith J, Walsh O & Cooke M. (2003) The National Health and Lifestyle Surveys (II) Survey of Lifestyle, Attitudes and Nutrition (SLÁN) and the Irish Health Behaviour in School-Aged children survey (HBSC). Department of Health and Children: Dublin. Department of Health and Children: Dublin.

Lahiff, J. (2002) The development of a health promoting schools model in Ireland. In B.B. Jensen & V. Simovska (Eds.) *Models of Health Promoting Schools in Europe*. World Health Organisation: Copenhagen.

Lenihan, B. (2006). *Minister for Children launches Report of the Public Consultation for the development of the National Teenage Recreation Policy*. Press Release March 20. Retrieved on Nov. 1 2006 at <http://www.playinireland.ie/news.htm>

Liston, K. and Menzies, G. (eds.) (2004) *Women and Sport: Fifth Report of the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs*. Dublin: Government Publications Office.



MacPhail, A., Halbert, J., McEvilly, N., Hutchinson, C., & MacDonncha, C. (2005). The constraints of post-primary physical education in Ireland: principals' and teachers' views and experiences. *Irish Educational Studies*, 24, 1, 77-91.

National Children's Office (2004). *Ready, Steady, Play: A National Play Policy*. Dublin: Government Publications. Retrieved on November 1, 2006 at <http://www.playinireland.ie/downloads.htm>.

Roe, S. (2006). *The Report on the Public Consultation for the Development of the National Recreation Policy for Young People*. Offices of the Minister for Children & Department of Health & Children. Dublin: Government Publications

Rovegno, I. (2006). Situated perspectives on learning. In D. Kirk, D. Macdonald, & M. O'Sullivan, (Eds.). *Handbook of Physical Education*, 262-274.

Sallis, J. F., J. J. Prochaska, and W. C. Taylor. A review of correlates of physical activity of children and adolescents. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*. Vol. 32, No. 5, pp. 963-975, 2000.

Sandford, R. & Rich, E. (2006). Learner and popular culture. In D. Kirk, D. Macdonald, & M. O'Sullivan (Eds.). *The Handbook of Physical Education*, 275-291. London: Sage.

Woods, C., Nelson, N., O'Gorman, D., Kearney, J. & Moyna, N. (2005). *The Take Part Study: Physical Activity Research for Teenagers. A report for the Irish Heart Foundation, the Health Services Executive and Fingal Sports Partnership*. Dublin: DCU.