

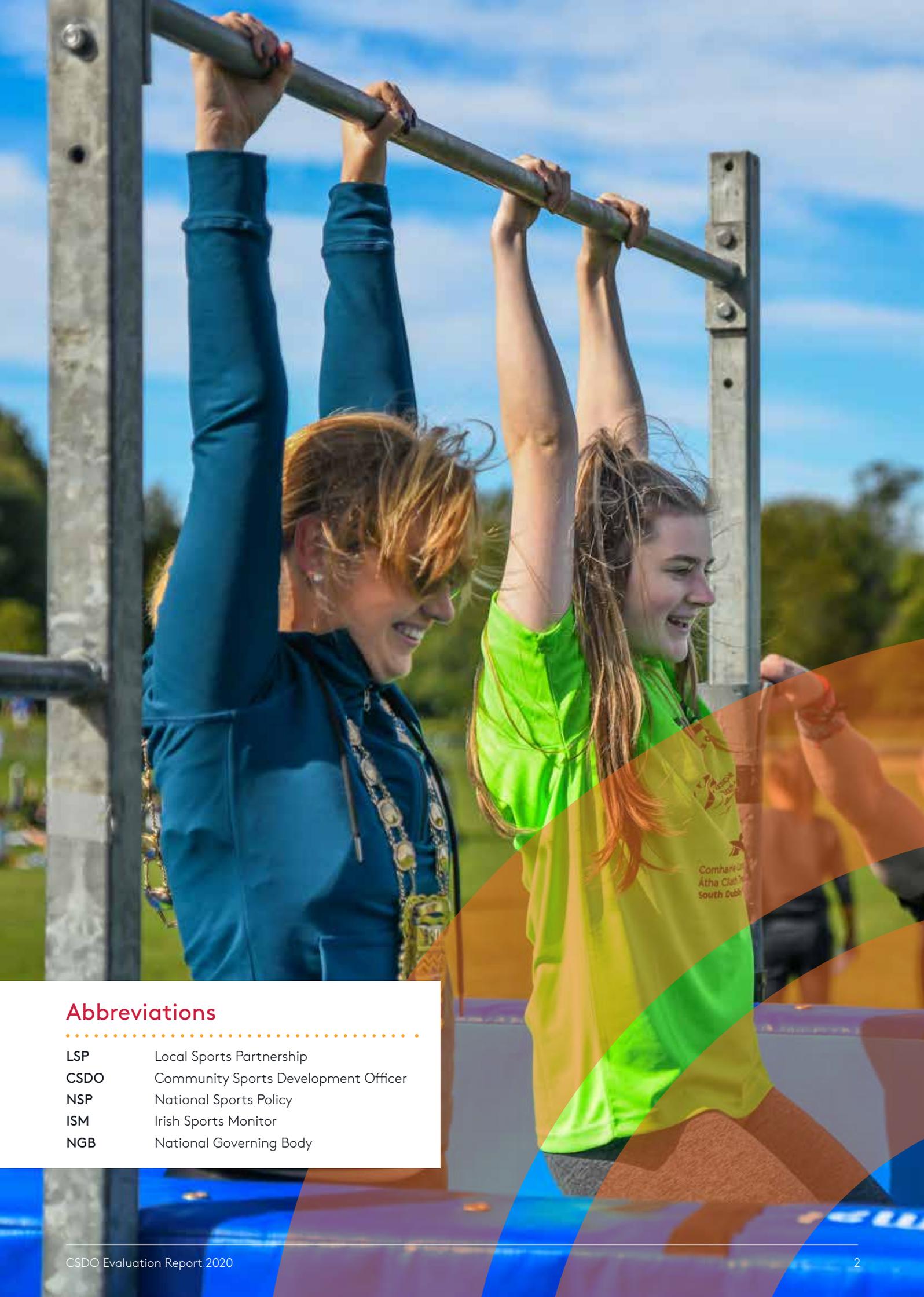


SPÓRT
ÉIREANN
RANPHÁIRTÍOCHT

SPORT
IRELAND
PARTICIPATION

Community Sports Development Officers Evaluation Report 2020





Abbreviations

LSP	Local Sports Partnership
CSDO	Community Sports Development Officer
NSP	National Sports Policy
ISM	Irish Sports Monitor
NGB	National Governing Body

Foreword

On behalf of Sport Ireland, I am pleased to welcome the publication of the Community Sports Development Officer (CSDO) Programme Evaluation Report. The CSDO programme was established in 2016 to strengthen and enhance capacity of the Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) to further develop locally led plans and more long-term sustainable physical activity programmes. Funded by Sport Ireland, there was a nationwide roll out of the programme in 2019, with one CSDO now in every LSP.

The role of Sport Ireland and its Local Sports Partnerships is to co-ordinate and promote the development of sport at local level and increase levels of participation in sport and physical activity. Since their inception, CSDOs have sought to achieve this by supporting the development of exciting and dynamic opportunities to increase participation, building the capacity of smaller NGBs and working with trusted professionals and valued volunteers to instil sustainable local leadership for sport within communities.

The investment in the Community Sports Development Officer programme has led to CSDOs across the country engaging in a wide variety of actions to support the development of sport and physical activity participation at a community level.

In 2019 over half a million people from communities across Ireland took part in sport and physical activity opportunities organised by Local Sports Partnerships. CSDOs have been fundamental in developing and providing these impactful opportunities that make people's lives better, creating a positive legacy that can last a lifetime.

The insights gained through the development of this report have demonstrated the importance of robust evaluation systems throughout Sport Ireland's investment work. Sport Ireland is committed to ensuring that the appropriate level of monitoring, evaluation and research work is carried out to safeguard its investments and ensure a sustainable approach is taken across sport in Ireland.

I would like to acknowledge the staff within Sport Ireland who carried out this evaluation process and the work of the CSDOs, Local Sports Partnerships and local partner organisations who develop and deliver sport at community level. I would also like to acknowledge the investment made through Sport Ireland by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.



John Treacy
Chief Executive
Sport Ireland

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1

Executive Summary

1.1 Overview

This report presents the findings of a qualitative evaluation of the Community Sports Development Officer (CSDO) programme, which is funded through Sport Ireland and is delivered by the network of Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs).

The CSDO programme was first established in 2016 with the aim to foster and encourage a culture of active participation, supporting opportunities for and access to, sport and physical activity through LSPs. The three primary goals of the CSDO programme are; to support the development of exciting and dynamic opportunities to increase participation for people who are sedentary; to build capacity of smaller NGBs that do not currently have development officers and other stakeholders to deliver services to increase participation; and to develop sustainable local leadership for sport within communities.

The purpose of this evaluation was to understand to what extent were the goals and actions of the CSDO programme implemented. This evaluation also explored the key successes and challenges that the CSDO programme has experienced and aimed to determine which goals the CSDOs need further support in achieving.

1.2 Methodology

An evaluation framework was developed based on the aims and objectives of the CSDO programme as outlined in the original programme guidelines. Semi structured interviews with 28 CSDOs from 27 LSPs were carried out between September – November 2019. All interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically using QDA Miner Lite.

1.3 Key Learnings

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the extent to which the goals and actions of the CSDO programme have been implemented. It was found that the actions of the CSDO programme are being carried out to a great extent across the network of CSDOs, especially under the pillars of **community activation, planning and relationship building**. These actions align with the original intention for the CSDO programme and enable a conclusion that the programme is a positive investment across the LSP network. Actions under the pillars of Research, and Monitoring and Evaluation require continued support from Sport Ireland in the form of templates, training and capacity building.

This evaluation also aimed to explore the key successes and challenges that the CSDO programme has experienced. Some minor modifications and adjustments to the programme were suggested to overcome the challenges, and are all noted within this report.

While establishing causality between actions of the CSDO programme and goals of the programme being fulfilled was determined as beyond the scope of this evaluation, it is clear that CSDOs have taken and continue to take tangible action to deliver on all three goals. CSDOs are able to do this by way of collaboration with other individuals within the LSP, relevant partner organisations on the ground and NGBs. The evaluation found that the support CSDOs receive from these bodies is crucial to fulfilling their objectives and indeed, continued support from all the actors listed above is required for the achievement of all three goals.

To conclude this evaluation, a number of key areas that CSDOs should continue to focus on to support their own goals and the targets of the NSP were identified:

- To continue to align their work with the actions outlined in the CSDO framework, guided by the needs of their LSP.
- To continue to engage with communities and target groups to activate communities. This includes consulting with participants and local partners to assess needs and develop sustainable approaches to providing participation opportunities.
- To support the development of strong partnership working between local partners and stakeholders, with a particular focus on strengthening links between schools and clubs.
- To engage with other CSDOs and LSP staff where possible in order to develop good working relationships and share best practice across the network.
- To maintain and develop existing relationships with NGBs while making a particular effort to engage smaller NGBs in new partnerships.
- To continue to employ monitoring and evaluation approaches where possible in order to evidence the impact of LSP work.

2

Introduction and Background

2.1 Community Sports Development Officers

The CSDO programme was first established in 2016 to support the delivery of the **National Physical Activity Plan Action 46** 'to strengthen and enhance capacity of the LSPs to further develop locally led plans and more long-term sustainable physical activity programmes'.

The **aim** of the programme is to foster and encourage a culture of active participation, supporting opportunities for and access to, sport and physical activity through Local Sports Partnerships.

Goals of the CSDO programme:

1. Support the development of exciting and dynamic opportunities to increase participation for people who are sedentary.
2. Capacity build smaller NGBs that do not currently have development officers and other stakeholders to deliver services to increase participation.
3. Develop sustainable local leadership for sport within communities.

2.2 Introduction and purpose of the report

This report presents the findings of a qualitative evaluation of the Community Sports Development Officer (CSDO) programme. The CSDO programme is funded through Sport Ireland and is delivered by the network of Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) in partnership with local communities. The objective of this evaluation is:

- To assess the extent to which the goals and actions of the CSDO programme have been implemented by carrying out a process evaluation.

The evaluation will seek to answer some additional questions such as:

- What are the key successes and challenges that the CSDO programme has experienced?
- Which goals do the CSDOs need support in achieving?

This report and its findings are informed by semi-structured interviews with CSDOs from 27 LSPs. At the time of data collection, two LSPs were in the process of recruiting CSDOs. Full evaluation methodology is outlined in chapter three. The findings are presented in chapter four, leading on to chapter five which outlines the key insights to support the future direction of the CSDO programme.

In 2019, there was a nationwide rollout of the CSDO programme and therefore, it is imperative that the objectives of the programme are reviewed to reflect the current policy landscape with the launch of the National Sports Policy (NSP) in 2018. This evaluation will highlight areas for renewed focus to ensure continued support to deliver not only on the National Physical Activity Plan's actions but also on the objectives of the NSP.

2.3 Local Sports Partnerships

A network of 29 Local Sports Partnerships was established between 2000 and 2009, one LSP in every county, with the exception of Dublin where there are four LSPs. LSPs have a collective resource of 223 full time or part time staff and 29 CSDOs, one in every LSP. LSPs undertake a wide range of actions with the aim of increasing sport and physical activity participation levels in their local communities.

These actions are grouped within four outcome areas:

- Working to develop clubs, coaches and volunteers, and supporting partnerships between local sports clubs, community based organisations, and sector agencies.
- Creating greater opportunities for access to training and education in relation to sports and physical activity provision.
- Provision of targeted programmes, events, and initiatives to increase physical activity and sport participation.
- Providing information about sport and physical activity to create awareness and access.

The latest LSP annual report (2019) found that 466,380 people participated in initiatives delivered by the LSP network in 2019.

3

Evaluation Methodology

This chapter sets out the evaluation methodology including the development of an evaluation framework, approaches to data collection and analysis, as well as identifying some limitations, assumptions and challenges relevant to the findings.

3.1 Evaluation Framework

In order to achieve the goals of the CSDO programme, a number of objectives and associated actions were developed by Sport Ireland in 2016. These objectives and actions were used to develop the below evaluation framework.

Objectives	Actions	KPIs
1. Research	1.1 Establish a baseline in the communities chosen for intervention	1.1.1 Baseline levels established for interventions rolled out by the CSDO - documented formally or informally
	1.2 Conduct an audit of local clubs and update where this has already been completed	1.2.1 Regular audits of local clubs undertaken with documented audit reports produced
2. Community Activation	2.1 Consult and work with new communities to identify need and demand for new activities	2.1.1 Needs analysis undertaken with all communities to identify priority areas of work
	2.2 Provide guidance and support to develop sustainable community sports clubs	2.2.1 Training & education and other supports provided to local clubs by CSDOs
	2.3 Establish a sports forum that will enable clubs to work together	2.3.1 Sports forum established in local communities
	2.4 Tackle local barriers to sports participation through targeted programmes and initiatives	2.4.1 Barriers to participation identified in needs analysis and targeted initiatives implemented
	2.5 Support and maintain strong links between schools and community sports clubs	2.5.1 Positive relationships facilitated within stakeholders in the community including schools and community sports clubs
3. Planning	3.1 Develop action plans in line with the needs of the community	3.1.1 Needs of the community identified through a needs analysis
		3.2.1 Relevant action plans developed
4. Relationship Building	4.1 Work with smaller NGBs that do not currently have development officers to increase opportunities for participation	4.1.1 Relationships developed with small NGBs
		4.2.1 Initiatives facilitated to increase participation opportunities
5. Facilitation	5.1 Support the continued roll out of Sport Ireland investment 5.2 Coordinate and facilitate training and development opportunities	5.1.1 Contribute to the roll out of all Sport Ireland investment including DAF projects
		5.2.1 CSDO position furthers the shared vision of Sport Ireland and LSPs
		5.3.1 Number of training and development opportunities facilitated
		5.4.1 Pathways provided for those that completed training
6. Evaluation	6.1 Implement a M&E framework for all projects	6.1.1 M&E templates created and implemented for various projects
		6.2.1 Initiative monitoring undertaken and evaluation reports produced
7. Financial Management	7.1 Establish a financial monitoring template for the operational budget	7.1.1 Financial monitoring template established to feed into the operational budget



3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews. The evaluation framework was used by the Sport Ireland Evaluation team to develop a semi-structured interview guide. Sport Ireland evaluation executives conducted semi-structured interviews with 28 CSDOs from 27 LSPs. At the time of data collection, two LSPs were in the process of recruiting CSDOs, while one LSP had two staff members fulfilling the role of CSDO on a part time basis.

CSDOs received a copy of the semi-structured interview question guide in advance of the interview. All interviews were conducted over the phone and were recorded. The interviews lasted roughly 30-40 minutes each. During the interviews, prompts were used where necessary to encourage the respondents to elaborate further on points of interest. All data was gathered during the period September-November 2019.

3.3 Data Analysis

Recordings of all interviews were transcribed and reviewed for accuracy. All transcript data was analysed thematically using the evaluation framework as a guide to predetermine themes. These themes were further broken down into agreed codes. These can be defined as words or short phrases that capture the meaning of each theme. Record of the coding was captured using Microsoft word.

Using QDA Miner Lite, a qualitative data analysis programme, each coding was applied and a portion of the transcribed material was collated into a word document that captured extracts from the interview relating to each theme. During this and all subsequent stages, memos were also written by team members to capture reflections on the codes, the data, the emerging themes and any other insights that were relevant to exploring the themes further.

The next stage consisted of the combination and amalgamation of codes into candidate themes. This involved looking for the relationships between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes (e.g. main overarching themes and sub-themes within them). The final themes were decided based on their presence in the data and their relevance in answering the objectives of the evaluation. The Evaluation Team ensured that an inductive approach was maintained during the analysis, allowing the themes to emerge from the data itself, rather than forcing pre-conceptions of the CSDO programme.

3.4 Limitations

Efforts have been made to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. However, as with any evaluation, there are certain limitations, as outlined below;

Open-ended interview approach

The semi-structured interview guide was designed using open-ended questions. Open ended questions have been advantageous for this evaluation as they have been regarded by the respondents as less threatening, and also, they allowed each CSDO to give unrestrained or free responses, resulting in rich and varied insights that could not have been captured quantitatively. They provided a vast amount of information that included feelings, attitudes and understandings of the subject. This allowed the evaluation team to better access the respondents' true feelings on an issue.

Closed-ended questions, because of the simplicity and limit of the answers, may not offer the respondents choices that actually reflect their real feelings, which are fundamental to capturing the objectives of this evaluation. While closed-ended questions are quicker to interpret and allow for more consistency in responses, it was agreed at the outset that open ended questions were a more suitable approach.

Whereas It could be considered a limitation using only open-ended questions due to them being time consuming and intricate to interpret, by using open-ended questions it would yield richer and more in depth insights from interviewees, allowing them to describe their experiences at length.

Subjective interpretation of the data

As evaluators, we ensured that an inductive approach was maintained to the best of our ability during the analysis, allowing the themes and conclusions to emerge from the data we collected without forcing pre-conceptions or theoretical conclusions on the subject area. We have made our best efforts to be as objective as possible, using qualitative analysis software to support the development of codes and relevant themes. While, it is impossible to completely remove a certain level of subjectivity we have aimed to maintain as unbiased an approach as possible when interpreting the data.

Transcription Quality

During the transcribing stage of the evaluation, poor audio quality of a small number of interviews resulted in them being untranscribable and therefore were unable to be used within this evaluation.

Ethical Considerations

All the CSDOs who partook the interviews were informed in advance about the purposes of this evaluation and requested to give their informed consent to participate. In order to maintain anonymity, their names are not included on the quotes used throughout this document.

3.5 Assumptions

Previous Sport Ireland evaluations have set out a number of assumptions in respect to the definition of key variables. This evaluation has adopted the same definitions in the interest of consistency. Please refer to section 7.2 in the appendix for a description of these assumptions.



4

Results – Summary of CSDO Interview Findings

4.1 CSDO Role

4.1.1 Variety of the role

It is evident that CSDOs are extremely busy in their roles, undertaking a huge variety of tasks. Most CSDOs indicate that a large piece of their work appears to be admin heavy and office based, with some time also spent on the ground meeting participants, tutors, and other partners. For some CSDOs, this has taken some getting used to, having come from a background of more hands-on work such as personal training, sports coaching, and working in gyms/leisure centres.

As well as engaging with partners through phone calls, meetings, and emails, CSDOs spend a significant amount of time completing funding applications and processing administration. In addition to submitting grant applications to Sport Ireland, CSDOs are also involved in working with other partners in this respect, such as the HSE, Healthy Ireland, and Pobal, while also administering grants to local clubs and communities. One CSDO officer noted that while an increase in levels of funding being allocated to the LSPs is welcome, this goes hand in hand with an increased workload on the LSP staff.

The CSDO role involves a great deal of multitasking. This involves working with the LSP team, overseeing operations, engaging with internal and external stakeholders (coaches, communities, NGBs, schools, state agencies, SI etc.) and partners (through steering groups, meetings), and managing and engaging in planning according to the needs of the LSP (i.e. securing funding, grant applications, organising and reporting of programmes and events). In addition, CSDOs engage in other areas of work including:

- Establishing participation programmes and Training and Education courses
- Attracting participants to register for programmes
- Sourcing appropriate tutors/coaches
- Working with tutors to ensure appropriate delivery of programmes
- Building relationships between local partners such as NGBs, schools,
- Supporting and guiding clubs and communities with various issues as they arise
- Performing needs analysis in communities
- Monitoring and evaluation of programmes
- Working with other LSP staff to develop operational plans and reports

“A programme could run fine in one place and it could be different in another because of issues or the facilities or whatever. Just trying to deal with and overcome those barriers. Monitoring the projects, the payments throughout, dealing with invoices and all that stuff. The general finances of running programmes and then reporting on projects. We might have to report to the HSE or to you guys or whatever.”

“I am constantly writing down the list of what’s priority for tomorrow. The 10 things I need to do for tomorrow and then you realize five of them are done and there’s 8 more things you had to do during the day. I don’t feel that I’m ever on top of it because there’s so much stuff”

Due to the large variety of work that officers undertake, it has been noted by some officers, that being clever with time management is hugely important to succeed in the role. This is exemplified by some officers who indicated how they try to take advantage of periods when there are less events and initiatives running in order to complete admin heavy tasks such as funding submissions, reporting, and planning. Due to their busy and varied workloads, it can be difficult to fit everything into the working day, requiring them to prioritise tasks.

4.1.2 Working with Communities and Target Groups

Interviewees believed in the importance of the CSDO role, particularly in working with communities to address low levels of sports participation and physical activity in Ireland. CSDOs consider that they have a key role to play in increasing sports participation and physical activity, with a particular focus on engaging with and providing participation opportunities for target groups such as older adults, women, and children. A number of CSDOs pointed to culture and the built environment to explain lower physical activity levels in Ireland. Some argued that Ireland is not built to encourage sport and physical activity, particularly in relation to the provision of active travel infrastructure such as cycle lanes, footpaths and pedestrian crossings. However, it was noted that availability of sports facilities and active transport infrastructure varies across, and even within, counties.

“Older adults are still at 32% or 33% of making the (physical activity) guidelines and most of them don’t even know what the guidelines are despite all Healthy Ireland, despite all national physical activity plans. I think there is a need for it. I think we’re not going to change things overnight. It has to be sustained because if the roles aren’t there, and we are looking at little gains, so we’re back so far and the physical activity levels are so low”

Some interviewees observed and spoke of a cultural shift, where sport and physical activity engagement is becoming more fashionable than it was in the past. One CSDO noted the encouraging trend that the ISM has shown in recent years, with greater numbers of people regularly participating in sport and physical activity. It was highlighted that this trend needs to continue and the CSDO role was considered as vital by interviewees to sustainably support these new trends, with particular focus on creating opportunities for target groups and hard to reach communities where participation gradients remain. It was noted that LSPs could offer a safe avenue for participation, where opportunities are offered at an appropriate level, particularly for beginners.

As mentioned before, the CSDOs undertake a variety of tasks as part of their role. Working closely with communities is highlighted by many CSDOs as a critical and rewarding piece of their work. CSDOs build relationships and partnerships at a local level that enables them to create more awareness about the work of the LSP, which ensures that existing resources can be maximised when implementing initiatives and that sustainable programme structures are built to provide long term provision of sports and recreation programmes. Fundamentally, these partnerships help curate community participation and cohesion while increasing the capacity of those within the community by developing their skills and social network contacts.

Working closely with communities, CSDOs undertake needs analyses, identify challenges and opportunities, and determine what is feasible in terms of funding, and programmes. In the course of this work, CSDOs are able to bring communities together, identifying and encouraging influential local leaders, which are seen as a vital to achieving positive engagement among communities.

“I think we need as Community Sports Development Officers to remind people that there are great people in the community”

“From the very start we’d be doing needs analysis and then looking at- I suppose, identifying gaps in communities and seeing what’s actually needed, then looking to see can I realistically implement that. We’re looking at my partners, potential partners and looking at potential funding sources for this. Then we’ll be looking at planning and pre-development work.”

4.1.3 Support in the role

CSDOs feel well supported in their roles. Officers spoke about positive relationships with their colleagues on their respective LSP teams. These relationships are facilitated by sharing of workloads and responsibilities, and regular communication through team meetings where there is opportunity to discuss and share issues that may arise, and seek support when required. The use of a team WhatsApp group was also noted by one CSDO as a useful tool to stay in regular contact with their colleagues. Officers also spoke about positive relationships with their respective LSPs Coordinators. Despite being extremely busy, coordinators appear to be very open and approachable in terms of discussing and managing workloads, whilst also being open and supportive to CSDOs pursuing personal training and development opportunities. In addition to this, the management structure of some LSPs also offers a pathway for some CSDOs, where they can see potential to develop and grow in the role and the organisation.

“The coordinator is open and approachable as well too, and supportive, and there is always some form of training throughout the year”

CSDOs also spoke positively about the support they receive externally. Officers welcomed the opportunities provided by Sport Ireland in terms of networking, training, and resource development. This support has helped CSDOs to develop and feel more confident in their role, as well as clarifying the areas of work that CSDOs need to focus on.

“I cannot stress how much support I do get. It’s really, really positive and not necessarily lacking in any way. The more you learn and the more you train with Sport Ireland, then the more we can become aware of what the overall picture and overall what Sport Ireland wants from the LSPs and the CSDO, what we should be prioritising. That all really helps.”

Networking and getting to know staff and CSDOs from other LSPs has added a great deal of value to the work that CSDOs do in terms of sharing information and supporting each other’s work. One CSDO said the following about her engagement with a fellow officer:

“I’m trying to do an orienteering thing and I know...., chatting about it at the last meeting she had mentioned she had done stuff like that. So I wanted to check in with her and she was asking about our programme here. That’s good, when you know somebody personally, it’s just easier to pick up the phone and talk to them.”

CSDOs also spoke about having positive working relationships with a number of other external partners including Local Authorities and the HSE, despite what some perceive to be a lack of joined up thinking at times.

4.1.4 Strategic Approach vs Direct Delivery

CSDOs appear to spend the majority of their time taking a strategic approach to the delivery of their work that primarily involves building relationships with key delivery partners, and empowering communities to take ownership of programmes. As mentioned previously, many of the officers come from a background of direct delivery, previously working as coaches, gym instructors, and personal trainers, and find the hands-on experience of being out on the ground at programmes very appealing and rewarding. However, the majority of officers noted that taking a strategic approach makes more sense in terms of maximising output because it allows for greater levels of sustainability to be built in to the work of the LSPs. Many officers spoke about trying to develop sustainable programmes from the outset, ultimately allowing communities to take ownership of the initiatives.

“At the start I was more hands-on, down on the ground facilitation out there, but as the role progressed and I stepped back maybe more as a coordination role. I spend more time in the office, which ideally is what you want to do, if you want to really maximise output”

“I suppose when we go into the communities, we do talk about sustainability. We are transparent with them. We do try to talk about it and start saying there has to be some sort of exit strategy....Because we do not want to run like a four week bespoke programme that it's going to end after four weeks and it's not going to go anywhere. And I suppose it's just maybe trying to have that conversation with people. We find it's easier to have that face to face, than by phone initially”

CSDOs highlighted the importance and necessity of getting out and about, developing relationships with participants and local partners face to face, particularly early on in the role. As CSDOs develop these relationships, and become more accustomed to the role, they develop the confidence to take a step back into a more coordination role, and empower local leaders and partners to take ownership of programmes. Officers noted that they try to be in contact regularly with participants and programmes that are ongoing, often at the first and last sessions of a programme. They also check in regularly with programme tutors or coaches, making sure that initiatives are running smoothly. CSDOs acknowledged that coaches and tutors have the expertise required in their particular sports to be able to deliver initiatives to a high standard. As mentioned previously, most CSDOs acknowledge the greater reach they can have when taking a management role in programme delivery. However, some CSDOs appear to be involved in directly delivering initiatives to a greater extent than others. One reason for this can be a lack of available tutors or coaches in specific areas or for specific programmes. In these cases, CSDOs should prioritise the development of tutor and volunteer bases that can support the delivery of programmes on the ground.

“I suppose that's where I was finding it harder to get a tutor, so I went out and delivered that myself... I know our job is not to be out delivering the programmes. It's to try and organize it and get it up and running, but sometimes it's good to kind of go out and see what is actually going on out in the community”

4.2 Partners

CSDOs acknowledge that an important aspect of their role is to develop and maintain relationships with appropriate partner organisations and groups. They appear to engage with a wide range of partners at local level e.g. NGBs, HSE, Local Authorities, schools, youth centres, community centres, Men's Sheds, Active Retirement groups etc. CSDOs acknowledge the value that partnership working can offer, how important this is to the work of the LSP, and how this allows much greater achievement compared to working in isolation. The benefits of partnership working as outlined by CSDOs include:

- Greater engagement with communities and target groups
- Creating links and encouraging collaboration between partners
- Securing funding
- Access to resources and facilities
- Access to greater levels of expertise
- Creating greater opportunities and pathways for participants
- Greater promotion of programmes and events, and the work of the LSP
- Pursuing a common agenda and sharing the workload

Many CSDOs spoke positively of how working with partners greatly supported the LSPs to activate specific target groups. It is clear that certain partner organisations have greater access to certain target groups of people e.g. Active Retirement groups, men's sheds, schools, family resource centres etc. Working closely with these organisations allows the LSP to reach these groups such as disadvantaged groups, older adults, migrants, school kids etc. These organisations also understand the particular needs and issues that these target groups have, and can provide guidance to the LSP on the best approach to take when engaging them in sport and physical activity.

“It was more important for me to be maybe back in the office or going to meetings, planning and building relationships with NGBs and stakeholders. Of course, it's difficult when you're trying to do it all yourself so the biggest thing is to build relationships”

“you have some areas like in the disadvantaged communities and the RAPID areas that need quite a big effort, it takes more than just throwing down a programme, you need quite a bit of strategic development and working with groups in the community. Say for example, this summer there was a sports month and physical activity month. We worked with the community centre here and we worked with the family resource centre. We worked with youth service. We put a programme together and there was arts and other things in that programme as well, and we just linked in to see what they wanted and what would work in the area.”

4.2.1 Partners – Schools

Schools were identified by many CSDOs as a key partner in their work. The huge number of children that schools have access to make engagement with schools a no brainer. CSDOs engage with schools in a variety of ways including promoting teacher training, creating links to NGBs, sharing resources and information, and providing general support and advice. Many officers noted the importance of building relationships with teachers and making them aware of the supports that the LSP can offer. Working closely with teachers to understand and identify the needs of schools has allowed CSDOs to effectively support school-aged children to engage in sport and physical activity.

“when I’ve been out with the different schools, I chat with the teacher after and say, “What do you want,” as an example, or “What can we help you with?” and what has come out of that so far is just athletics programmes and once-off sessions with them. Could be a three or four-week block. I think when you’re out there, you should be trying to maximize your involvement and what else can you do for them. It’s your general relationship-building with them.”

Many CSDOs stressed the importance of providing school aged children with the opportunity to engage in a range of sports at a young age. It is hoped that this exposure will allow more children to find a sport that they enjoy participating in, particularly those that may not have an interest in traditional or mainstream sports. Creating links between schools and NGBs is an important driver of this work.

4.2.1.1 Building Teacher Capability

CSDOs acknowledge that they do not have the capacity to visit every school in their area and therefore must maximise their use of resources in order to engage effectively with schools. Officers spoke about how they engage with teachers in a number of ways to support the delivery of sport and physical activity opportunities in schools. Some officers spoke about providing programme equipment and resources, while others spoke about maintaining regular communication and raising the awareness of opportunities by providing information on various NGB programmes that schools can get involved with.

While some school-based programmes are delivered by tutors, many CSDOs emphasise the importance of providing teacher training for a variety of sports in order to complement teachers existing knowledge and skills. This helps to ensure that teachers have the confidence and competence to deliver high quality opportunities to the children in their school. Close engagement with NGBs is noted as a key enabler of this work.

“I’ll start with the school’s first, this is obviously my first year and going out the schools. I have totally changed the whole way we work with schools this year. I decided to go on a kind of teacher training route and empowering individuals on the ground to actually deliver themselves so we don’t have to go out to school because obviously I don’t have the capacity to be going out to schools.”

4.2.1.2 Linking schools and NGBs

CSDOs provide an important link between schools and NGBs and appear to successfully assist in promoting effective collaborations between many schools and NGBs. Linking schools with NGBs has provided schools with programme resources and equipment, training and education opportunities, greater awareness of available opportunities, and general guidance. It also provides support for traditionally less popular sports, thereby offering more choice in sport and physical activity opportunities to children.

“what I’ve actually done is I’ve rang all the different NGBs with different resources, actually for schools and I asked them permission if I could actually advertise their opportunities on our leaflets so we could get it out to schools at a local level so after that, I developed a lot of relationships with them and a lot of them came back wanting to work with us”

A number of CSDOs highlighted how valuable they think the school NGB link is, especially for less popular sports that are trying to grow their reach. Getting a foothold in schools through school sports days, taster sessions etc. is acknowledged as a great way to introduce new sports to children with the potential of growing the interest in the sport. While minority sports may not have many clubs established in some areas, growing the interest in their sport through schools may lead to greater demand for such clubs to be established.

“If you want to grow a sport you have to get into the schools and that’s what we’re providing.”

“Potentially, there could be children in schools who could miss out on stuff like tug of war, or badminton or whatever, volleyball. I know that there’s no clubs on the ground in here but just because there’s not now, doesn’t mean that there can’t be any in the future. If there’s guys doing it in school then there’s potential, but If they never do it there will never be any clubs there.”

4.2.2 Partners – NGBs

CSDOs appear to do a good job of building relationships with NGBs and are aware of the importance and value of these relationships. While most CSDOs spoke about their engagement with the larger NGBs like the GAA, FAI, and IRFU, many officers also mentioned a number of smaller NGBs who they have engaged with successfully. The word cloud below illustrates the wide range of NGBs and sports that CSDOs referred to when speaking about their work.



According to CSDOs, NGBs generally appear to be very open and eager to working with LSPs. The nature of these relationships and engagements vary depending on the NGB involved and the type of work they are engaging in at the time. Engagements include phone calls to stay up to date with recent programmes and events, sharing of guidance and expertise on how to set up a new club, making connections with schools and communities to deliver programmes, and much more. One CSDO outlined how they explore the strategic plans of NGBs before engaging with them, to identify areas where the LSP can support and work with them.

4.2.2.1 Mutually Beneficial Relationship

CSDOs see the relationship with NGBs as a mutually beneficial one. Some CSDOs highlighted that some of the larger, better resourced NGBs have enough staff to run their own programmes and are quite independent in this respect, with little need for support from the LSP. NGBs that are less well resourced often require more support in terms of organising or rolling out programmes or events.

“You’d link in with all the NGBs, some of them it’s more networking with the NGB. Whereas the Tug of War Ireland, they don’t have as much capacity as say, some of the other bigger NGBs with several development officers, so you’d really give a dig out to Tug of War, in terms of helping to facilitate them. As I said, that’s why we’d be happy to go in and do a quick refresher in a school or try and get a new school on board with Tug of War”

CSDOs recognise that they play an important role, particularly in linking smaller NGBs to local communities and schools. While CSDOs can offer the local link and expertise, NGBs offer the sport specific expertise and guidance that CSDOs may lack.

“I wasn’t an expert on any particular sport because there was so many sports in my mind and so it was difficult to know everything about every individual sport. And I think the NGBs give us that expertise and knowledge of, for example when I was working with a kayaking club at a local level, I am the local development officer, they’ve known me for the last two years, I know a lot of places by name, and it’s great. And for Canoeing Ireland to give me all the information about what you need to do to set up a club, equipped me with even more information to bring back to locals.”

By linking NGBs to local communities and schools, CSDOs feel that they are able to do a better job of engaging communities by providing access to a wide variety of participation opportunities. Further developing, providing opportunities and building relationships with small NGBs remains a key objective for CSDOs going forward.

4.2.2.2 Barriers to successful partnerships with NGBs

Despite the positive relationships that have been forged between NGBs and LSPs, there does appear to be some barriers that limit the development of these relationships. There are a large number of NGBs to engage with, so it is difficult to engage with all of them to the same extent. One CSDO outlined her approach of maintaining existing relationships with NGBs while selecting two or three NGBs per year to focus on developing new relationships with.

A lack of resources also means that some of the less well-resourced NGBs can be difficult to engage with at times, making it difficult for CSDOs to achieve on their objectives of supporting small NGBs. For example, it can be a challenge to engage with smaller NGBs that have a limited number of development officers. This can be particularly evident in some areas of the country where NGBs do not have any development officers on the ground. Despite a willingness to work closely with LSPs, financial resources also limit the engagement that NGBs are able to provide.



“it’s easier to engage with some NGBs than others. What I mean by that is if you take the GAA for example, I think we’ve five to six full-time coaches. Versus if I draw a parallel with my own sport, handball, just two development officers for the whole country”

“They’re very supportive and very willing to help in any capacity they can but again financially would be a big constraint”

4.3 Activating Communities

CSDOs have highlighted a number of important factors that can support communities to increase their engagement in sport and physical activity.

4.3.1 Supporting Community Ownership

CSDOs spoke about the importance of offering local communities various supports in increasing sport and physical activity opportunities. Initially, officers aim to provide quite a lot of support to community clubs and groups, as it is often volunteers who are involved in setting up or running a club, organising a participation initiative, or marketing their facilities and initiatives to the public.

Volunteers often do not have the required skills or experience in coordinating opportunities for participants, so support from the LSP is required early on. While offering this initial support, CSDOs aim to develop the skills and knowledge of local leaders and volunteers, so the LSP can ultimately step back and move into more of a facilitator role, allowing communities and clubs to take more ownership of the process.

CSDOs spoke about their variety of experiences from supporting volunteers in setting up new sports clubs, to supporting existing clubs and groups in marketing their facilities and initiatives.

“What we find is when we put the programme in place, and when the calendar is in place, it takes a little bit of the workload initially off the community groups, because a lot of times they’re the volunteers, or even if they’re in a paid capacity, they may have not coordinated physical activity in the past. We’re there to help and to make it seem a little bit easier to plan and coordinate. As they gain experience, in some communities, they’ve coordinated or they worked together on two Operation Transformation’s. Next year, it’s going to be a little bit easier for them to take ownership”

Many CSDOs mentioned the importance of sustainability in their engagements with communities, highlighting how important it is to have a long-term vision for what they want to achieve in a given community. Developing the skills and knowledge of local leaders is seen as a key element in developing sustainable opportunities locally and building community ownership.

Identifying key individuals within the community and supporting them was noted as a vital element in empowering communities to develop participation opportunities. One officer spoke about the importance of having well trained people delivering initiatives and coordinating opportunities, stating that participants are willing to pay to engage in opportunities when they are delivered by competent instructors, leading to further sustainability. Within schools, teachers were identified as key partners to build partnerships with. Building the capability of teachers to lead sports opportunities was identified as a more sustainable strategy than regularly sending tutors/coaches into schools to deliver programmes.

“So trying to look at your exit plan almost straight away in terms of when you are making a programme, that if the LSP wasn’t involved anymore, could that programme still continue on if that’s through empowering the community and trying to put in the foundation blocks in the community from day one. So that the community are almost taking ownership of it, and it’s just been facilitated through the sports partnership rather than being run by the sports partnership”

“you’re always thinking, be it six weeks down the road at the end of a programme, or 10 weeks, or whatever the programme duration is of what is our exit plan here, is it a follow on? Are they being signposted into the local club, or is that instructor going to keep on that six week programme? What is the end of this programme and what does it look like? Or what are we setting out to do with this programme?”



4.3.2 Approach to Engaging Communities

Some CSDOs explained how the views and goals of the LSP might be quite different to those of the community. Therefore, it is acknowledged that close engagement with communities is required in order to assess their needs and perspectives, and to identify areas of opportunity where the LSP can offer support. CSDOs have recognised that no two communities are the same and that every engagement, therefore, must be tailored to the needs of each community.

Many CSDOs begin their engagement processes by liaising with other LSP staff and some NGBs to establish what opportunities and resources are currently available to a community.

“The other thing is every community is different. It’s not like one size unfortunately doesn’t fit every community that’s out there.”

“I think there is an awful lot of activity happening out there. In my opinion, it’s just the fact that it’s not coordinated. People don’t know what’s going on. Often I find the communities I work with, I go in there initially first and they’re like there’s nothing going on. Then actually when you sit down and do this kind of informal audit and you go “There is a women’s Pilates group happening on Tuesday night or there is a Zumba class happening or there is something happening for somebody with disabilities.”

4.3.3 Identifying Community Need

Identifying key stakeholders and the right community leaders is another important step CSDOs take in the community engagement process. CSDOs described how consultations have taken place with relevant stakeholders in the form of targeted focus groups, community meetings or even as informal chats. These stakeholders vary depending on circumstances and the nature of the programme, but have included:

- members of LSP boards and staff;
- programme partners;
- community representatives, schools
- education authorities,
- various local authority departments;
- youth groups;
- community groups;
- sports clubs etc.

These consultations allow a range of information to be collected and provide CSDOs with extensive knowledge of the target community and area.

“So, as I said earlier on, it’s about going in and meeting communities and seeing what they have existing all ready. Then, trying to fill in the gaps then for that hard to reach target group, that your stereotypical GAA, or your soccer, your rugby or your general just going to the gym, just doesn’t fit them and you’re trying to look at different programmes then that you try and target that hard to reach group.”

CSDOs have emphasised the importance of maintaining sustainable engagement with communities, ensuring that communities and their representative organisations continue to be involved, instilling a sense of ownership and cooperation – all of which can contribute to the success and sustainability of programmes.

“I think just getting involved in the communities and getting to know people and getting to know the different groups and working with the different groups and putting on programmes for them that they see they can actually do. It’s not all about going to the gym and going into a structured plan. Fitness can be fun and just because you’re reaching the age of 30 doesn’t mean you can’t play basketball anymore, or you can’t play walking football...just to try and change their mind-set I suppose.”

4.3.4 Activating target groups

CSDOs have found that some groups or communities can be difficult to engage at times, but have highlighted a number of strategies that support successful engagement:

Approach 1 – Needs Analyses

By engaging in comprehensive needs analyses, CSDOs are able to better understand the needs of specific communities and target groups. This has given CSDOs an understanding of a wide range of factors that may explain why certain groups of people do not take part in sport. Such factors can include lack of confidence, lack of awareness of opportunities, a perception that such provision is not for them, or a lack of understanding of the potential benefits to be derived from participation.

“I suppose, you have some areas like in the disadvantaged communities and the RAPID areas that need quite a bit more support. It takes more than just throwing down a programme, you need quite a bit of strategic development and working with groups in the community”

Approach 2 – Linking with Local Partner Organisations

Consulting and working with local partner organisations is another strategy that supports CSDOs to engage with target groups. Such partners include family resource centres, youth groups, men’s sheds, active retirement groups, schools etc. These partners are familiar with LSP target groups such as those who are socio economically disadvantaged, young people, older men, migrants etc. By working with such partners, CSDOs are better equipped to engage, understand and cater to the needs of these target groups.

Other CSDOs spoke about the importance of linking in with local clubs in order to reach target groups and support sustainable participation. One CSDO linked in with the LGFA to set up a Gaelic for Girls programme through local GAA clubs. This programme allowed the CSDO to reach her target audience of young females. A pathway for sustained engagement was then available to the participants as many of them subsequently joined their local GAA clubs.

“that would be a hugely disadvantaged area, there’s an awful lot of issues there..... for example for Play Day we’re planning a Family Fun Day. We worked with Youth Services, a family resource centre and community groups. Trying to bring them on board, because they really know the people in the area and the best approach to take”

Approach 3 – Ensuring Target Group Involvement

CSDOs have also recognised that consulting with and giving communities and target groups a voice in the development of a programme can have great benefits. This can support the target group to develop a level of ownership of the programme that can add to its sustainability. Identification and empowerment of local leaders is also an important factor in maintaining sustainable engagement with certain target groups.

Activating and maintaining sustainable engagement with communities and target groups is central to the work that CSDOs do. By ensuring target group involvement in the development of tailored programmes, it remains a fundamental approach to successfully encouraging greater uptake from the target group in question.

4.3.5 Engagement with clubs

Many CSDOs see clubs as playing a vital role in supporting programme participants to sustain their engagement in physical activity. In many cases, CSDOs try to involve clubs in the running of programmes, or at least signpost participants to a local club following the completion of a programme.

“The tutors probably try and work for the clubs as well and have an impact on the club with the programme. Whether it’s cycling or swimming, or running or jogging or walking, whatever, so that the programme doesn’t just end and that’s it. That it will follow on, that there’s a structure so that people can continue.”

CSDOs also support and advise local clubs in the needs of certain communities. A number of CSDOs gave examples of how they supported local clubs to develop new and welcoming approaches in order to attract beginners who may not feel very confident about visiting a club. Such approaches included running taster sessions, and raising awareness that the clubs caters for a range of abilities, not just elite athletes.

“We sat down with them and we said that there’s a need for Couch to 5K for people that want to start running but they’re afraid to come to the athletics club because they think it’s professional runners and competitions et cetera, and the coaches took all that on board and they worked with us for two years.”

Other areas where CSDOs engage closely with clubs is in providing training and education supports to club officers and volunteers. In addition, CSDOs are supportive of communities trying to set up new clubs, and provide guidance and support by linking in the relevant NGB with the local community.

“Now they are looking at developing a rowing community here, there’s been a lot of meetings in the lead up to that, and I’ve done some development work with other clubs, going out and meeting with them. So I’m helping to develop a club and set up a committee.”

“these would be directly kids from the community, trying to set up a kind of committee. A committee that we’re going to try and get somebody from that on to our steering group. So, we’ll actually have the voice of the young person or the young people and they will have all the agencies sitting around the table. We’re working on that. I think it’s going to be a bit of a long process but that’s where we’re going to”

4.4 Challenges

CSDOs outlined a number of the main challenges that they face with their role. These challenges are a combination of internal ambiguities of the CSDO programme structure and the societal changes CSDOs face when developing and implementing tailored physical activity programmes. These challenges are thematically explored in the sections below.

4.4.1 Recruiting and maintaining a bank of tutors, coaches and volunteers

CSDOs highlighted the challenges experienced in recruiting and maintaining a bank of reliable tutors and coaches to deliver programmes and courses. Having more support on the ground to deliver programmes and events is necessary to give CSDOs the space to step back from direct delivery and work more tactically. Tutors appear to be easier recruited to deliver programmes for sports that are more mainstream. Many CSDOs described how it could be difficult to recruit tutors for less mainstream sports, programmes and courses. There is less demand for these alternative opportunities and as a result, only a limited amount of work can be provided to tutors with qualifications in these areas. This has sometimes led to difficulty when organising training courses with some of the smaller NGBs, which might attract a smaller numbers of participants.

“We have a list here. We have a couple of tutors that are available a good bit. If you have something on they’re quite free and flexible. For some other activities, we don’t have enough tutors. Depends on the activity”

*“I have access to communities that we work with in a place called *****. If I was to drive to ***** now, it would take me two hours, and geography is a huge barrier as well, a main cost as well it just a case of further initial engagement to get a programme off the ground.”*

Geographic location can also present a barrier when trying to recruit tutors to deliver programmes, CSDOs used the example that it is not ideal to ask tutors to travel long distances just to deliver one hour long programmes. The CSDOs try to schedule programmes, recruit tutors and provide appropriate incentives to avoid such situations. As well as being a barrier for tutors travelling to deliver programmes, geographical location can be a challenge in the case of larger counties where CSDOs cannot easily meet face to face with communities without travelling a long distance. Geographic distance can also act as a barrier, when the majority of national training and events tend to take place in a Dublin location. Having the majority of events in a Dublin location means there is less accessibility for those based further from Dublin.

4.4.2 Awareness of LSPs and CSDOs in partner organisations and communities

CSDOs feel that in some cases the people or organisations they are trying to engage with do not necessarily know what the LSP is or what its role is. This lack of awareness can also apply to the CSDO role itself. Those who do not understand what the role of an LSP or CSDO is can sometimes have unrealistic expectations from the LSP. CSDOs believe that raising awareness of the LSP and what services it provides is an important piece of work. Sometimes communities can take for granted what the LSP can offer, which makes it more difficult to take a step back and allow the community to take ownership of a project. Raising awareness of the LSP role can help overcome this barrier.

“Just spreading the word of the LSP and what the LSP does. Because there wasn’t a development officer before me, it was a very new role, it was just about getting out and getting hands- on. That’s why it’s good to actually get hands-on and actually deliver some programmes in the community, so you can get up and running a lot quicker that way and build up a bit more of a network”

4.4.3 Empowering communities

CSDOs feel that a fine balance needs to be struck, between developing relationships and building trust, and then handing ownership to the community. In many cases, it is volunteers in the community that CSDOs work with who can sometimes lack the skills and experience necessary to coordinate programmes effectively. It can sometimes take longer than expected to get things off the ground and build the required knowledge, skills and motivation in the community. CSDOs acknowledged that volunteers are time-limited, having to balance full-time jobs as well as family commitments with their volunteering responsibilities.

“It’s a slow process, you have to almost win the community over in terms of that you’re not really an outside organization, you’re trying to say we want to be part of your community, or to empower your community. We’re not just with the local sport partnership, we’re a part of your community. Trying to get that trust with them, and just empowering that community then, in terms of showing them how they can help develop their own programmes, but with the support of us. That can be from training or whatever their needs are from their level.”

4.4.4 Competing priorities and values

There is also the challenge of working with different partners who may not share the same enthusiasm for engaging in physical activity, due to having various competing priorities. CSDOs spoke about reaching out to different partners with ideas and programmes and sometimes not hearing anything back or receiving a negative response, which they can find frustrating. A lack of joined up thinking, particularly within county councils was also mentioned as an issue that sometimes occurs. However, CSDOs recognise that other organisations and departments can have other priorities and sometimes physical activity is down the list in terms of their importance.

“I suppose to encapsulate, the priority of physical activity in the Family Resource centre is way down the list. You can go in as a development officer gung-ho, I’m going to make all of these people active.it’s putting food on the table in the morning, It’s learning how to work online and dealing with addiction, family mediation, they’re all top of the agenda in resource centres.”

4.4.5 Engaging with Target Groups

Engaging with the various target groups can also present a challenge for CSDOs, as these groups may not always see the benefit of engaging in physical activity or may not consider it important in their lives. CSDOs have iterated the importance in engaging with these groups to change this perception of physical activity that exists, educate them on the benefits and raise awareness of the opportunities that are available in their community.

Tailoring methods of communication to engage with target groups can be challenging at times. Older people for example, might not be as well connected to social media and see what opportunities are available, so it is important to reach these groups through other channels.

“I suppose, just trying to get different groups together and meet with them, give them the information of what we’re doing, educate them on what can be done, provide the training courses and work with the governing bodies to do that”

“The older, ageing people as well mightn’t have access to social media, they’re not going to see things popping up on Facebook or Instagram, they’re not going to have access to websites.”

4.4.6 Affordability and Accessibility to Facilities

Affordable access to appropriate facilities can pose a challenge for many CSDOs. These facilities are often quite costly to acquire and as a result can be difficult to access. Availability of additional funding to cover the cost of accessing facilities is frequently a barrier to the work of CSDOs.

Accessibility of facilities is a concern in certain parts of the country as there are a limited number of leisure centres, pools, and sports halls available across the country. This results in scheduling difficulty when certain facilities are in high demand.

“I think funding is obviously big. The cost of renting facilities can be quite expensive and stuff like that. I think people will pay if they are getting a good service and to get a good service you got to have someone good behind it delivering the programme. Whether it be volunteers or paid coaches, that I don’t know. I guess that’s the way forward for it to be sustainable.”

4.4.7 Clarity of role

While CSDOs are aware that they have a clear goal of trying to increase levels of sports participation and physical activity, there appears to be great variety in the tasks that CSDOs undertake at a local level. Some CSDOs feel that there is a lack of clarity in their role and that guidelines would add clarity for them. The wide variety of tasks which CSDOs perform is a welcome challenge for many, however officers feel that they do not have detailed knowledge of what goes on from county to county. CSDOs place great value on networking with each other and with other partners such as NGBs, and have suggested that a greater number of networking opportunities would be welcome. CSDOs acknowledged that Sport Ireland facilitate a number of networking opportunities, and are not responsible for creating every networking opportunity. Regional networking events and conference calls organised by the CSDO network themselves were suggested by some CSDOs as a way of improving networking and cross county learning.

"I actually don't really know what they're doing with their area. Just in regards to what the role is and what their aim is for the CSDO is. I don't know exactly what they're doing in their role and that's where I was saying that if we could network a little bit more, that would be good as well."

"there is a variance in the role. I don't know is there a clear detailed outline as what the CSDO role should be? Or does it just vary from whatever happens in each county?"

4.4.8 Evaluation of programmes

Evaluation of programmes and initiatives is a fundamental aspect to the CSDOs role, as it allows them to interpret if they are doing what they set out to achieve i.e. targeting a specific audience, increasing participation, generating awareness etc. CSDOs have spoken of the importance of evaluation but highlighted the administrative burden involved as a major challenge.

"I think the challenging part is probably the evaluation of the programmes I think. Managing that is definitely tricky, there's no doubt about it"

Sometimes consultants are recruited in order to conduct evaluations for a given LSP. Nevertheless, due to financial constraints, not all LSPs are in the position to contract out evaluations to consultants.

"We would have taken a consultancy company if we had the money to come in and do our reports for us because it's just so time-consuming. You don't get to go out and administer the questionnaires and sit with them and take them back in, you just don't have the time. Then to process it all and produce a report would be just too time consuming -- from my point of view it just genuinely wouldn't be possible"



4.4.9 CSDO contracts of employment

CSDOs have iterated that while they receive significant amount of support from their own LSP and Sport Ireland to fulfil the duties of their role to the best of their ability, the short-term nature of CSDO contracts makes the CSDO position difficult. This fuels a lack of security and also contributes to greater turnover in the CSDO network.

“The role is fabulous. I suppose if there was some support, having just the one year fixed contract, so you don’t have the sense of security, that you’re doing a great job and I adore what I do, but it’d be great to know that I don’t have to look again in a year. You know, will I get the contract again or will the money be there. So there’s uncertainty from that point of view.”

Sustainability of the role is a pertinent concern for the current cohort of CSDOs, one that needs to be explored and resolved to allow CSDOs focus on external challenges that their role undoubtedly faces and provide the security needed that will allow them to fully immerse themselves in their role.

“The role, again, the sustainability of the role is funding reliant”



4.4.10 Summary of Challenges and Identified Actions

Challenge	Recommended Action/ Area for Focus	Responsible Agency	Supporting Agency
Recruiting and maintaining a bank of tutors, coaches and volunteers	Increased focus on the development of tutor and volunteer bases which can support the delivery of programmes on the ground.	LSPs, NGBs	
Lack of Awareness of LSPs and CSDOs in partner organisations and communities leading to unrealistic expectations	National LSP Communications strategy	Sport Ireland	LSPs
Lack of resources to empower communities	Increased focus on training and development of leadership opportunities in order to support those identified as key individuals within a community.	LSPs	Sport Ireland
Competing priorities and values of partner agencies	Systems approach to improving levels of physical activity in the country.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Sport Ireland, LSPs	Local Authorities
Engaging with appropriate target groups	Tailored methods of communication to reach specific target groups, reach target groups using partners	Sport Ireland, LSPs	
Facilities - affordability and accessibility	Developing relationships to access existing facilities, charging a fee to participants where appropriate, and maintaining an up to date database of available facilities	LSPs	
Improved networking and clarity of role	Regional and virtual CSDO networking meetings that are led by CSDOs themselves	CSDOs	LSPs, Sport Ireland
Evaluation of programmes	Sport Ireland will endeavour to provide further and continuous training on all aspects of evaluation to CSDOs and provide support in ensuring that evaluation is included as an important work practice going forward	Sport Ireland	
CSDO contracts of employment	Sport Ireland to consider potential solutions to this issue.	Sport Ireland	

5

Discussion

5.1 CSDO Priorities

The CSDO framework provides guidance on the variety of tasks that officers should focus on. However, each LSP will have different priorities and each community will have different needs, which will place greater focus on some areas of the framework than others. Sport Ireland will continue to support the network with resources such as Club and Community development guidelines, guidelines for engaging with older adults, guidelines for engaging PWDs, evaluation training etc. In addition, evaluation reports such as this one will highlight areas of focus for CSDOs as well as the LSP network.

5.2 Networking

CSDOs feel well connected and supported in their roles. They maintain good relationships with internal and external colleagues and avail of networking and professional development opportunities. It is important that these opportunities continue to be made available from a local and national level to CSDOs and the LSP network. It is acknowledged that Sport Ireland facilitate a number of valuable networking opportunities at a national level throughout the year. However, further opportunities would be welcomed by CSDOs. While Sport Ireland will continue to offer networking and training opportunities at a national level, LSPs and their staff should also take the initiative to organise networking opportunities at both national and regional levels where appropriate.

Due to the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the use video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Teams, and Skype has become widespread. This move to video conferencing has allowed Sport Ireland to host more regular meetings and events with LSPs, without the need for attendees to travel long distances, which is challenging for some. Sport Ireland will continue to make use of these communications channels, while also recognising that a certain number of LSP meetings and events will likely be held in Dublin in the future. It is hoped that CSDOs and LSPs will also take advantage of the use of video conferencing, to engage with local partners and communities, where traveling long distances may previously have been required.

5.3 Administration

As CSDOs engage in a wide variety of tasks, it is clear that organisation and time management is a key element to being successful in the role. A lot of time appears to be spent dealing with administrative duties, and each LSP will approach this work in various ways. To support the work of CSDOs and the LSP network, Sport Ireland will continue to work closely with LSP working groups, as well as the wider network, to refine and develop the efficiency of our work. To this end, we will continue to develop and refine grant applications documents, reporting documents, evaluation requirements etc. Sport Ireland will also continue to engage with other LSP funding agencies with the aim of aligning reporting requirements to reduce duplication of administration for LSPs. LSPs should also continue to work with local funders to this end.

There has been a national discussion about the benefits of using a Central Registration System within the network to help automate some of the administrative work of LSPs. Many LSPs have already adopted the use of CRM systems locally with excellent results. These systems maximise efficiency and productivity while reducing administration and encouraging team collaboration on projects. Sport Ireland are currently working on developing a central registration system to support the work of the Participation unit and the LSP network. It has been highlighted that some Local Authority based LSPs cannot access certain IT programmes and features due to IT restrictions. This issue will be taken into account as Sport Ireland works with the network to establish the central registration system.

5.4 Contract Length

The short term nature of CSDO contract length has led to a lack of security in the role. This evaluation highlights how important the role of the CSDO is and how they are a fundamental player in meeting national targets set for increasing levels of participation. LSPs have previously noted their difficulty in attracting and retaining staff due to the short-term nature of contracts and would like to be able to provide assurance for their staff in relation to contract length. Sport Ireland are aware of this issue and will continue to consider all possible solutions to creating longer term contracts for CSDOs.

5.5 Planning and Development

It is understandable that some CSDOs feel drawn to the opportunity of directly delivering programmes, particularly those who are new to the role and come from a background of directly delivering programmes as coaches, personal trainers or gym instructors. However, as officers themselves have noted, taking a more facilitatory approach to programme development and delivery is a much more scalable and sustainable way to support the aims and goals of the NSP. While CSDOs may be required to directly deliver programmes occasionally, it is recommended that officers move away from this approach where possible. Recruitment of appropriate coaches and tutors, and building capacity of local leaders and volunteers to coordinate and deliver opportunities locally will support this approach. Under the National Sports Policy, the development of a stronger and more diverse volunteering base will be a central objective of building capacity within the sports sector. By investing in volunteering training and development and increasing the number of local volunteers, this will free CSDOs to continue focusing on developing action plans in line with the needs of the community, building stronger partnerships with schools, NGBs, and other local organisations, and coordinate the development of greater opportunities for participants.

The issue of recruiting and retaining a reliable bank of tutors to coordinate and deliver initiatives is a challenge for CSDOs and LSPs. Sharing of contract staff and tutors across neighbouring counties should be encouraged where possible, particularly those that are capable of delivering opportunities for sports that are traditionally less popular. Appropriate planning and coordination of these opportunities for tutors will also provide an incentive for their continued engagement with the LSP. While tutors offer an important resource for LSPs, it is vital to continue to provide support and capacity building opportunities to local leaders and volunteers in clubs and communities. Close engagement with NGBs is required to continue making these opportunities available at a local level.

A fundamental component of planning and development for CSDOs is undertaking comprehensive community needs analysis and consulting with target groups. As every community is different, this engagement is critical in order to build a full picture of a given community and shed light on issues of importance. One of the challenges faced by CSDOs when conducting a needs analysis is trying to assess whether a community is ready to engage with the LSP. Sport Ireland will work with LSP network to identify and scope out the various approaches and resources that are in use in identifying community need and readiness. Based on this work we will develop standard guidelines/template for LSPs to follow when engaging new communities.

5.6 Community Activation

CSDOs are acutely aware of the need to provide opportunities to underrepresented groups to engage in sport and physical activity in communities. The National Sports Policy speaks about reducing the gradients among underrepresented groups. However, the ISM concludes that while there has been significant advances in eliminating the gender gap in sports participation, there are still persistent social and disability gradients that need to be tackled.

This poses a number of challenges due to the large numbers of target groups being made up of populations who traditionally engage less, or not at all, with local physical activity, sport, health or other community offers. These groups are often at increased risk of social exclusion and the knock-on effects of being isolated from the rest of the population, which can include poor physical and/or mental health, lack of opportunities for social mobility and decreased individual and/or community development. Determining how best to engage with them can be tricky at times for CSDOs. However, where a lack of engagement and opportunity exists within a community, planned and well-delivered research can generate the understanding required. CSDOs are getting out in the community to speak to leaders, activists and ordinary residents, allowing exploration and revelation of unidentified existing assets within the community. Utilising qualitative techniques such as interviews, focus groups and direct consultations should continue as a model of best practice to engage with and listen to what individuals and communities are saying. These techniques aim to achieve this by allowing to explore below the surface of existing perceptions to understand the unique strengths and challenges of these distinct groups.

Officers also noted how important it is to engage with partner organisations who have direct access to these target groups. Examples include men's sheds and active retirement groups to engage with older adults, foróige and youth centres to engage with disadvantaged youth, and direct provision centres and traveller groups to engage with ethnic minorities.



Dormant Account programmes like the Community Sports Hubs, Urban Adventure, and Volunteer Supports etc. are a huge support in tackling issues around disadvantage and disability in sport. Innovative programmes that aim to tackle societal gradients are welcomed for Dormant Account funding and it is important for CSDOs to make this a priority in their action plan.

The lack of, and expense of hiring facilities is an issue in some areas according to CSDOs. Further developing partnerships with schools and gaining access to their facilities might go some way to solving this issue. Requiring participants to pay a fee for attending programmes can also support in managing the costs of these facilities. Maintaining an accurate record of facilities that are available in the county will also support the LSP in planning and coordinating participation opportunities.

5.7 Relationship Building

CSDOs have noted that they engage with a wide variety of partners in the course of their work, with largely positive experiences. Many positive relationships have been developed with NGBs. Working with the larger NGBs appears to be more straightforward for CSDOs. Larger NGBs are better resourced and independent and therefore appear to require less resources and support from CSDOs and LSPs. It is important for CSDOs to maintain strong links with the larger NGBs and continue to work with them to roll out programmes, link them to clubs and schools, promote their opportunities, deliver coach education courses etc.

Working with smaller NGBs is a priority for CSDOs as outlined in the CSDO framework. Smaller NGBs have fewer resources and as a result need more support from LSPs. The challenge facing CSDOs is that due to these NGBs having fewer resources, they can be more difficult to engage with, often because they have fewer development officers. Limited financial resources has also been recognised as a challenge for the smaller NGBs. Despite this, the current evaluation has found that CSDOs are engaging successfully with a wide variety of smaller NGBs. CSDOs should continue this engagement while also aiming to develop new relationships with other small NGBs. A potential approach to this, as highlighted by one CSDO, is to select two or three new NGBs each year to approach and engage with.

While working closely with NGBs, CSDOs have supported clubs by providing training and education opportunities, advice and guidance on programme development, club development grants, and advice on setting up new clubs etc. CSDOs have indicated that they see clubs as providing a pathway to sustain participation. Therefore, CSDOs are keen to involve clubs in programme delivery, encouraging participants to join a local club once a programme has ended. This is a useful strategy to develop sustainable participation and should be continued. It is particularly important to encourage school-aged participants to engage with local clubs. While not explicitly mentioned in this evaluation, CSDOs should encourage partnership between schools and clubs in order to achieve this.

A key partner for LSPs are schools, and CSDOs appear to engage with them heavily. By engaging with schools effectively, CSDOs can reach and activate huge numbers of young people. CSDOs acknowledge how important it is to engage with school-aged children. Creating opportunities and engaging children at a young age can support the development of life long physical activity habits and decrease the incidence of drop out. CSDOs appear to have engaged with schools effectively by linking them to NGBs, upskilling teachers, providing programme support and resources, and raising awareness of opportunities etc.



The LSP Annual Report 2019 shows that LSPs already reach a large number of participants at primary school age. However, more emphasis is needed on reaching adolescents in greater numbers as this is the time where a large incidence of drop out occurs. The Children’s Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study 2018 found that 80% of primary school children participate in community sport at least once per week, while this figure drops to 58% among post primary children. Reaching secondary level children in greater numbers and providing opportunities to engage in a wide variety of sports should be a key focus. LSPs should also aim to develop partnerships with preschools who they do not appear to engage with as heavily as primary schools.

A number of officers note the need to develop a culture and environment in Ireland that is more conducive to sport and physical activity engagement, particularly in relation to active travel. Collaborating with other partners will play a key role in realising this ambition. There is particular need to work with local authority departments such as planning, traffic, housing, and community development in order to support the development of this aim. One CSDO highlighted their disappointment at the lack of joined up thinking that is sometimes evident within a local authority. Making sure that sport and physical activity is on the agenda when local authorities are developing local development plans will aid in strengthening the transformational power of sport, furthering LSPs ambitions around participation and encouraging an ethos of cross-sectoral partnership ethos.

Despite the positive partnerships that CSDOs generally engage in, some partners appear to be less receptive to the opportunities provided by the LSP. While some partners may not see the promotion of physical activity as a priority, it is important that CSDOs recognise the competing demands that other organisations have to focus on i.e. mental health, nutrition, education, transport. While trying to engage with various organisations, it is important for CSDOs and LSPs to identify common areas of interest, where the agenda of the LSP and a potential partner agency can align. Acknowledging these competing demands and focusing on mutual agendas should help LSPs collaborate with various partners such as family resource centres, youth groups, local authority departments etc.

5.8 Evaluation

While it presents a number of challenges, the majority of CSDOs are engaged in the evaluation process with Sport Ireland. Evaluation is critical in making strong evidence informed decisions in achieving sporting policy targets. The most notable are the sports participation goals which, under the new 2020 Government, increased from 50% of adults regularly playing sport to 60% of adults regularly playing sport by 2027, as set out in the NSP. Crucial to bringing this target to life is the capacity of Sport Ireland to make informed decisions based on outputs gathered from evaluation systems we have in place.

LSPs have an important role to play in submitting the required data to input into the evaluation process. The Single Item Measure (M1) is an example of this. The use of M1 allows us to gather quantitative data required to assess which initiatives are successful in moving individuals from low levels of activity to higher levels of activity. Further, the M1 template by design, allows us to gather demographic data on who these initiatives are targeting in terms of gender, age and socio-economic status. CSDOs have a fundamental role in managing the implementation of the M1 and to ensure that the collection of M1 is incorporated into programme design. They are also responsible for ensuring that M1 returns to Sport Ireland are completed fully and include correct information, as it is vital for this process to succeed.

CSDOs are also required to include initiative monitoring and evaluation as part of their work package. This allows them to build on their local capacity by improving programme and services and to measure and report on outcomes they wish to achieve. Having a robust local monitoring and evaluation system in place will also assist in attracting funders and encourage buy in of community-based partners.

The administrative burden has been highlighted as a challenge when carrying out evaluation and to assist, Sport Ireland will endeavour to provide further and continuous training on all aspects of evaluation to CSDOs and provide support in ensuring that evaluation is included as an important work practice going forward.

6

Summary and Conclusion

This evaluation report has identified that investment in the Community Sports Development Officer programme has led to CSDOs across the country engaging in a wide variety of actions to support the development of sport and physical activity participation. These actions align with the original intention for the CSDO programme and enable a conclusion that the programme is a positive investment across the LSP network. While highlighting the great work that CSDOs do, this report has also identified some challenges that CSDOs face. The discussion around these challenges, as well as the CSDO framework included in this report should provide clarity and guidance for CSDOs on these issues.

6.1 Key successes in meeting the goals of the CSDO programme

- There appears to be a good level of networking and engagement within the LSP and CSDO network, which supports the work of CSDOs. This engagement has been made more accessible by the recent move to online communications brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Rather than directly delivering initiatives themselves, the majority of CSDOs are intent on recruitment of appropriate coaches and tutors, and building capacity of local leaders and volunteers to coordinate and deliver opportunities locally. By investing in volunteering training and development, and increasing the number of local volunteers, CSDOs can continue to focus on developing action plans in line with the needs of the community, build stronger partnerships with schools, NGBs, and other local organisations, and coordinate the development of greater opportunities for participants.
- CSDOs are getting out and about in the community to speak to leaders, activists and ordinary residents, allowing exploration to understand the unique strengths and challenges of distinct groups. It is important for CSDOs to continue engaging with target groups and working with partners to understand need, and develop pilot programmes aimed at addressing participation gradients in sport around disadvantage and disability that are suitable for Dormant Account funding. Innovative programmes that aim to tackle societal gradients are welcomed for this funding and it is important for CSDOs to make this a priority in their action plan.
- CSDOs have noted that they engage with a wide variety of partners in the course of their work, with largely positive experiences. Many positive relationships have been developed, particularly with NGBs. Larger NGBs are better resourced and independent, and therefore appear to require fewer resources and support from CSDOs and LSPs. The current evaluation has found that CSDOs are also engaging successfully with a wide variety of smaller NGBs. CSDOs should continue this engagement while also aiming to develop new relationships with other small NGBs.
- CSDOs have supported clubs by providing training and education opportunities, advice and guidance on programme development, club development grants, and advice on setting up new clubs etc. CSDOs have indicated that they see clubs as providing a pathway to sustain participation. While not explicitly mentioned in this evaluation, CSDOs should encourage partnership between schools and clubs in order to achieve this.
- A key partner for LSPs are schools, and CSDOs appear to engage with them heavily. By engaging with schools effectively, CSDOs can reach and activate huge numbers of young people. CSDOs acknowledge how important it is to engage with school-aged children. CSDOs appear to have engaged with schools effectively by linking them to NGBs, upskilling teachers, providing programme support and resources, and raising awareness of opportunities etc.

6.2 Key challenges in meeting the goals of the CSDO programme

- Much of the work that CSDOs spend time on is administratively heavy, so continued engagement from LSPs with Sport Ireland and other partners to refine and reduce the administrative burden for LSPs would be welcome. The potential development of a CRM for the LSP network is a promising development, which will support the network to maximise efficiency.
- The short-term nature of CSDO contract length has led to a lack of security in the role, and as a result a high turnover of CSDOs in the network. This is acknowledged by Sport Ireland, who will continue to consider solutions to this issue. The issue of recruiting and retaining a reliable bank of tutors to coordinate and deliver initiatives can be a challenge for CSDOs and LSPs. Potential solutions to this issue include sharing tutors across counties, and better planning and coordination of opportunities for contract staff.

- A challenge faced by CSDOs when conducting community needs analysis is trying to assess whether a community is ready to engage with the LSP. Sport Ireland will work with the LSP network to identify and scope out the various approaches and resources that are in use in identifying community need and readiness. Based on this work we will develop standard guidelines/template for LSPs to follow when engaging new communities.
- The lack of, and expense of hiring facilities is an issue in some areas according to CSDOs. Potential solutions to overcome this challenge include developing relationships to access existing facilities, charging a fee to participants where appropriate, and maintaining an up to date database of available facilities.
- A number of officers note the need to develop a culture and environment in Ireland that is more conducive to sport and physical activity engagement, particularly in relation to active travel. Collaborating with other partners will play a key role in realising this ambition. There is particular need to work with local authority departments such as planning, traffic, housing, and community development in order to support the development of this aim.
- While some partners may not see the promotion of physical activity as a priority, it is important that CSDOs recognise the competing demands that other organisations have. Acknowledging these competing demands and focusing on mutual agendas should help LSPs collaborate with various partners such as family resource centres, youth groups, local authority departments etc.
- The administrative burden has been highlighted as a challenge when carrying out evaluation. To assist, Sport Ireland will endeavour to provide further and continuous training on all aspects of evaluation to CSDOs and provide support in ensuring that evaluation is included as an important work practice going forward.

6.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the extent to which the goals and actions of the CSDO programme have been implemented. **It is found that the actions of the CSDO programme are being carried out to a great extent across the network of CSDOs, especially under the pillars of community activation, planning and relationship building. These actions align with the original intention for the CSDO programme and enable a conclusion that the programme is a positive investment across the LSP network.** Actions under the pillars of Research and Monitoring and Evaluation require continued support from Sport Ireland in the form of templates, training and capacity building.

While establishing causality between actions of the CSDO programme and goals of the programme being fulfilled was determined as beyond the scope of this evaluation, it is clear that CSDOs have taken and continue to take tangible action to deliver on all three goals. CSDOs are able to do this by way of collaboration with other individuals within the LSP, relevant partner organisations on the ground and NGBs. The evaluation found that the support CSDOs receive from these bodies is crucial to fulfilling their objectives and indeed, continued support from all the actors listed above is required for the achievement of all three goals.

Below are some key areas that CSDOs should continue to focus on to support the targets of the National Sports Policy.

- Continue to align their work with the actions outlined in the CSDO framework, guided by the needs of their LSP.
- Continue to engage with communities and target groups to activate communities. This includes consulting with participants and local partners to assess needs and develop sustainable approaches to providing participation opportunities.
- Support the development of strong partnership working between local partners and stakeholders, with a particular focus on strengthening links between schools and clubs.
- Engage with other CSDOs and LSP staff where possible in order to develop good working relationships and share best practice across the network.
- Maintain and develop existing relationships with NGBs while making a particular effort to engage smaller NGBs in new partnerships.
- Continue to employ monitoring and evaluation approaches where possible in order to evidence the impact of LSP work.

Appendices

7.1 Evaluation Framework

Objectives	Actions	KPIs	Extent to which these actions have been met		
1. Research	1.1	Establish a baseline in the communities chosen for intervention	1.1.1	Baseline levels established for interventions rolled out by the CSDO - documented formally or informally	Awareness of national level findings relating to levels of PA i.e. ISM & CSSPA reports. Local evaluation and consultation taking place. Strong engagement with clubs and adequate supports being provided. Unclear if documented audit process is in place.
	1.2	Conduct an audit of local clubs and update where this has already been completed	1.2.1	Regular audits of local clubs undertaken with documented audit reports produced	
2. Community Activation	2.1	Consult and work with new communities to identify need and demand for new activities	2.1.1	Needs analysis undertaken with all communities to identify priority areas of work	Regular consultation with communities and stakeholders to identify need and agree appropriate approach to activate communities. Strong engagement with clubs and provision of various supports including training and education. Evidence of effective partnership working in communities between a range of stakeholders. Unclear if there are strong links being developed between schools and clubs.
	2.2	Provide guidance and support to develop sustainable community sports clubs	2.2.1	Training & education and other supports provided to local clubs by CSDOs	
	2.3	Establish a sports forum that will enable clubs to work together	2.3.1	Sports forum established in local communities	
	2.4	Tackle local barriers to sports participation through targeted programmes and initiatives	2.4.1	Barriers to participation identified in needs analysis and targeted initiatives implemented	
	2.5	Support and maintain strong links between schools and community sports clubs	2.5.1	Positive relationships facilitated within stakeholders in the community including schools and community sports clubs	
3. Planning	3.1	Develop action plans in line with the needs of the community	3.1.1	Needs of the community identified through a needs analysis	Regular consultation with communities and stakeholders to identify need and agree appropriate approach to activate communities and specific target groups.
			3.2.1	Relevant action plans developed	
4. Relationship Building	4.1	Work with smaller NGBs that do not currently have development officers to increase opportunities for participation	4.1.1	Relationships developed with small NGBs	Engagement with a wide selection of NGBs. Creation of strong links between NGBs and schools.
			4.2.1	Initiatives facilitated to increase participation opportunities	
5. Facilitation	5.1	Support the continued roll out of Sport Ireland investment	5.1.1	Contribute to the roll out of all Sport Ireland investment including DAF projects	CSDOs are clear on their aim of increasing levels of sport and physical activity participation, supported by Sport Ireland investment, including DAF projects such as CSHs and Volunteer Supports. CSDOs engagement with clubs provides a sustainable pathway for those that have completed programmes and training courses
	5.2	Coordinate and facilitate training and development opportunities	5.2.1	CSDO position furthers the shared vision of Sport Ireland and LSPs	
			5.3.1	Number of training and development opportunities facilitated	
			5.4.1	Pathways provided for those that completed training	
6. Evaluation	6.1	Implement a M&E framework for all projects	6.1.1	M&E templates created and implemented for various projects	CSDOs are engaged in monitoring and evaluation of programmes, despite some challenges
			6.2.1	Initiative monitoring undertaken and evaluation reports produced	
7. Financial Management	7.1	Establish a financial monitoring template for the operational budget	7.1.1	Financial monitoring template established to feed into the operational budget	CSDOs spend a lot of time on administration work such as the development of operational plans and reports, requiring budgeted figures for each action

7.2 Assumptions

Community

The word 'community' is a broad term used to define groups of people, whether they are stakeholders, interest groups or citizen groups. A community may be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interests (community of practice), or a community of affiliation or identity such as industry or sporting club. For the purpose of this evaluation, community is the geographic location i.e. community of place.

Participation

The National Sports Policy 2018-2027 states that participation in sport takes many forms. "Individuals can take part informally or formally, in competition or recreationally, on their own or as a part of a group or team, as a beginner or at a top level. Socially they can volunteer for many different roles, be a member of one or more sports clubs, or attend sporting events as a spectator". The evaluation uses this definition.

Recreational Sport

As stated in the Sport Ireland Act 2015, "Recreational Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or regular participation, aim at - a) expressing or improving physical fitness and mental wellbeing and b) forming social relationships." The evaluation uses this definition.

Community Leader

For the purpose of this evaluation, a community leader is one who possesses confidence, as a result of experience and expertise, to lead members of the community in the area of Sport and Physical Activity. A community leader does not necessarily have to be trained with formal qualifications but nonetheless possesses the skills and knowledge that influences their capability as a leader.

Volunteers

The term 'volunteering' refers to "*helping others... and receiving either no remuneration or only expenses*" (Taylor et al., 2003: 6). Adopting Taylor et al (2003: 6) definition, volunteering includes both formal and informal volunteering given that people may give their time both within a club setting or help others in sport outside a club environment.





SPÓRT
ÉIREANN
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SPORT
IRELAND
PARTICIPATION

Sport Ireland
The Court Yard
Sport Ireland National Sports Campus
Snugborough Road
Blanchardstown
Dublin 15
D15 PN0N

www.sportireland.ie