



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND

# Sport Ireland Active Cities Evaluation Summary Report

October 2021



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gcuntas díomhaoin  
the dormant  
accounts fund

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Ireland, **34%** of the population and **13%** of children meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines. As one of many initiatives to address this, Sport Ireland, the authority tasked with the development of sport in Ireland, developed the Active Cities Fund, an €800,000 investment supported by the Dormant Accounts Fund (DAF). The Active Cities Fund invests in five cities (Dublin, Waterford, Galway, Cork and Limerick) via the eight relevant Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) and was developed in line with the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA) framework.

It can be broken down into four key pillars:



## CREATE ACTIVE SOCIETIES:

Enhance the knowledge, understanding and appreciation for the multiple benefits of regular sport and physical activity, for all abilities and ages.



## CREATE ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS:

Active Cities should create and maintain safe places and spaces in which citizens can engage in regular sport and physical activity.



## CREATE ACTIVE PEOPLE:

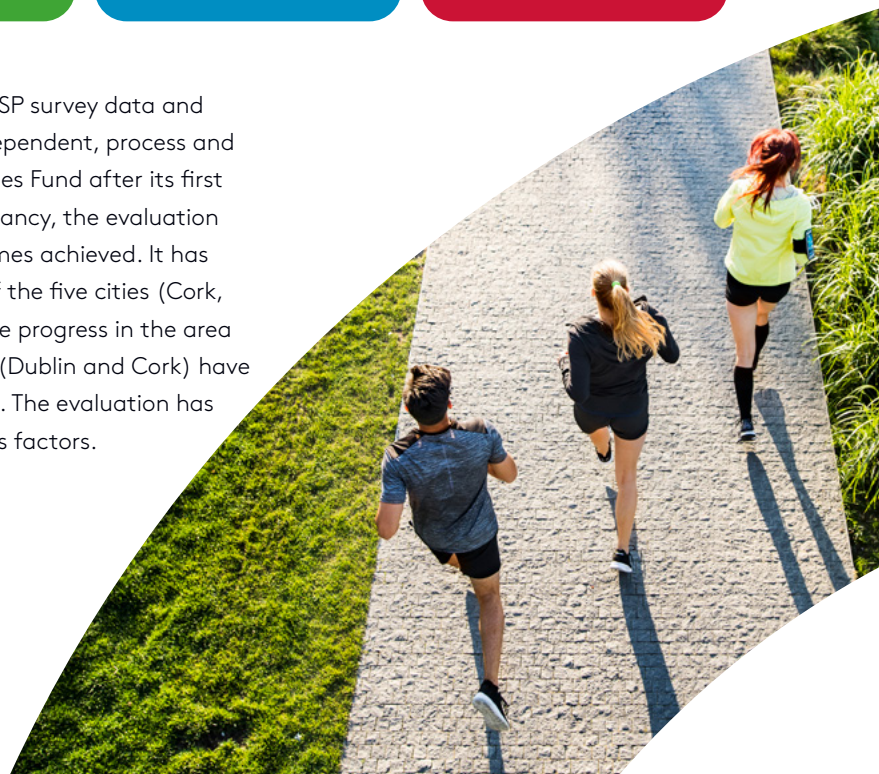
Promote and create access to programmes and opportunities to assist people of all ages and abilities to engage in regular sport and physical activity as communities, families and individuals.



## CREATE ACTIVE SYSTEMS:

Implementation of coordinated international, national and subnational action to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour.

Informed by semi-structured interviews with LSPs, LSP survey data and stakeholder survey data, this report sets out an independent, process and outcomes evaluation of the Sport Ireland Active Cities Fund after its first year. As the Active Cities projects are still in their infancy, the evaluation could not be conclusive about the impact or outcomes achieved. It has however, identified several areas of progress; four of the five cities (Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Dublin) have all made some progress in the area of Active Systems and Environments and two cities (Dublin and Cork) have made progress in Active Societies and Active People. The evaluation has also identified a number of emerging critical success factors.





### These include:

- **Availability of funding/resources:** this has provided the impetus for LSPs to reach out and connect with key strategic decision-making partners and assisted LSPs to 'get a seat at the table' through which they can influence decisions and policies on sport and physical activity.
- **Proactive approach by LSPs:** The Active Cities fund has provided a mandate for LSPs to pursue a long term, strategic and systems-based approach, which for the most part, was not existent prior to the fund. The fund has precipitated a mind-set shift within LSPs about the potential of their own contribution and thus stimulated a more proactive approach, moving from an expectation that others should reach out to engage them.
- **Role of the Local Authority:** In all cities, the Local Authority is responsible for the provision of public services and facilities. It has ownership of the spaces and places that the LSPs seek to complement through the Active Cities Fund (e.g. walkways and parks) as well as resources and funding that can be used to realise, scale or sustain various Active Cities projects. For the five LSPs established within the Local Authority, the employment of their Local Coordinator is dependent on buy in from their Local Authority's Chief Executive.
- **Selling the value of physical activity:** LSPs reflect that an individual's current interest/position on sport and physical activity can influence their engagement with Active Cities. Until such time that an Active City reaches a 'tipping point', has systemic or institutional buy in, it will continuously have to 'sell' its concept to stakeholders.

### Reflective of the analysis and key findings within this report, the following is recommended:

- **Strategic Position:** The National Coordinator for Active Cities should engage with National equivalents responsible for Healthy Ireland, Healthy Cities, Healthy Counties, Healthy Workplaces and Active Travel to appropriately position Active Cities with other National agendas.
- **Sustainable Funding Model:** Active Cities projects, in line with their continued focus on Active Systems and Active Environments, should begin to plan for sustainability at an early stage, identifying potential long-term sustainable funding opportunities.
- **National Shared Learning:** The National Coordinator for Active Cities should build on the Active Cities Network, convening two or three meetings with the LSPs annually – retaining ownership, drive and coordination of the Active Cities projects within the network of LSPs.
- **Proportionate Focus:** The proportionate focus for Active Cities in year 2 should remain on Active Systems and Active Environments
- **Budget Allocation:** LSPs should ensure proportionate focus of budgets aligned to the focus of their Active Cities action plans and there should be flexibility on capital spend timeframes to allow for greater spend during the later years of the project.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** To enable the continued evaluation of Active Cities, data collection and ongoing monitoring in line with the Active Cities Evaluation Framework should continue during year 2. This should be augmented by an external, independent evaluator, with key consideration on how to best attribute and account for activity under Active People given its alignment and overlap with core LSP activity.



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