



Submission by the County and City Management Association (CCMA)

To The

**Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport, and Media
(TCASM)**

On

‘Inclusion in Sport’

April 2023

Introduction

1. The **County and City Management Association (CCMA)** is the ‘representative voice’ of the Local Government Management Network. The CCMA members are Chief Executives of the County and City Councils and the Assistant Chief Executives of Dublin City Council. It is a non-statutory body that works to ensure that the influence of local authority Chief Executives is brought to bear on the development and implementation of relevant policy and legislative frameworks. The CCMA operates through a number of established committees, each of which is concerned with specific policy areas. The CCMA Rural Development, Community, Culture and Heritage (RCCH) Committee is the committee that engages with key stakeholders aligned to our community remit including the area of Sports development.
2. Local Authorities play a critical role in developing and supporting communities across the country and have been central to the development and work of Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) since their inception. The Local Sports Partnerships were established as a mechanism to engage with ‘hard to reach’ groups in terms of their sport participation in our communities. Work through the Partnerships has been progressed through collaboration with key stakeholders including Sport Ireland in its role as one of the

national governing bodies for sport. There is a significant annual investment in sports development in communities across the country with the provision of over €10 million in Local Sports Partnerships through core funding from Sport Ireland in 2023. This financial investment is realised through the provision of expertise and supports, such as local advisory and training programmes, grant aiding community sports activities, developing and supporting sports infrastructure and our collaborative work at local and national level.

Policy and Partnership

National Sports Policy

3. The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM) has responsibility for the national policy and legislative framework and funding programmes to support the stimulation and development of Sport in Ireland. A key strategic goal of the Department's Sports Division is to enhance access to and to recognise the social and economic contribution of Sport in Ireland. The key goals are to:
 1. Increase participation and interest in sport at all levels.
 2. Improve standards of performance and to develop sports facilities at national, regional, and local level.
4. In developing and implementing local sports policy, Local Authorities look to the National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027 which sets out the Vision for Sport in 2027 and defines the actions to achieve our goals in this area. The policy recognises the important contribution that sport makes to Ireland and the key roles played by the National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), the Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) and the representative sporting organisations.

Delivering the National Sports Agenda Locally

5. Through a network of Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) whose work is underpinned by locally specific 'Agreements' with Sport Ireland, each Local Authority works in partnership to ensure all our communities have every opportunity to experience the health and social benefits that participation in sport and physical activity offers. 19 of the Local Sports

Partnerships are based within Local Authority Departments and this allows for a multiagency approach to the provision of inclusion in sport, physical activity and recreation throughout the counties. It also allows for a strong linkage with the work of, for example, the Healthy Ireland Co-ordinator and across a number of Local Authorities, the Sláintecare Local Development Officer. The remaining Local Sports Partnerships are managed and run by external service providers on behalf of the Local Authority.

Sport and Disability

6. Many Local Sports Partnerships offer training workshops to the sports community that focus on promoting inclusivity for people with disabilities. The workshops provide education for coaches and volunteers on disability awareness and inclusion in sports and physical activities. The training and education courses delivered include but are not limited to:
 - Sports Inclusion Disability Awareness Training
 - Autism in Sport
 - Inclusive Outdoor Adventure Training
 - Accessing the Great Outdoors
 - Inclusive Fitness Training
7. Sports Partnerships provide disability inclusion sports and physical activity camps and programmes for children and teenagers with disabilities or neurodiversity diagnoses. The programmes are designed to provide a range of activities that promote physical fitness, social interaction, and personal development. Collaborations with national governing bodies and community engagement help to ensure that these programmes are inclusive, accessible to all and sustainable.
8. Local Sports Partnerships collaborate with organisations with common goals, like HSE Day Care Services. By identifying the needs and interests of HSE Day Care Services clients, Local Sports Partnerships provide physical activity programmes including yoga, dance and circuit fitness. These programmes are designed to be accessible and are delivered in community settings, allowing participants from different HSE Day Care Services to attend.

This approach makes the programmes more affordable, sustainable and provides opportunities for social interaction with new people in the community.

Sports and Older Adults

9. The Local Sports Partnerships promote active ageing by engaging more older people in physical activity. This is achieved through delivering a range of training and upskilling initiatives for physical activity by older people in the community. This includes organising annual programmes of events which provide opportunities for older people to partake in recreational sport. In addition, organising training to enable staff working in care settings to deliver health enhancing activity sessions. Some initiatives include: -

Power for Parkinson's

10. The 'Power for Parkinson's' programme was a huge success and in 2020 the programme was short listed for the All-Ireland Community and Council Award for Wicklow County Council under the 'Community Initiative Award Entry'.

Exercise Booklet for the vulnerable during the COVID19 pandemic

11. A number of Local Sports Partnerships designed exercise booklets at the start of the pandemic which targeted those cocooning at home. The booklets were distributed through various Meals on Wheels, Community Groups, Care & Nursing Homes, Garda Stations and Municipal Districts and also e-mailed to people interested.

Sport and Ethnic Minorities

12. Building inclusive and empowered communities is central to the work of Local Authorities and this has been even more critical over the past twelve months. Provision of sporting programmes which encourage the participation of ethnic minority groups is of great importance and many of the programmes have been very successful. These include programmes which have supported residents in Direct Provision Services, Traveller Communities and those arriving in Ireland to flee the war in Ukraine. In addition, Swim Summer Programmes, Dance Camp and Gym programmes for residents of Direct

Provision Centres and programmes aimed specifically at encouraging integration between Ukrainian nationals and local young people have been developed. These programmes also served as a way of encouraging young Ukrainian people to join local youth groups, where they can benefit from ongoing supports at a particularly challenging time in their lives.

Sport and Women

13. Sport Ireland's Governance Code for Sport includes a key objective to progress towards a greater gender balance in board membership of funded bodies. Local Authorities working with key partners are committed to achieving this objective for all Local Sports Partnerships.
14. Empowering Women through Sport and Physical Activity, the Local Sports Partnerships are providing opportunities for women of all ages to get involved or re-engage with sport and physical activity. An example of this is the delivery of the Get All Girls Active programme (GAGA), school multi-sport programmes, ongoing women in sport programmes and by linkage with national initiatives for example the 20x20 'if she can't see it she can't be it' campaign and the current Sport Ireland initiative 'Her Moves' campaign. Other programmes included Women's Sheds, Traveller Woman Dance Fit Programme, Women's Mountain Bike Courses in conjunction with Cycling Ireland.

Grassroots Sport and Socioeconomic Diversity

15. Many Local Sports Partnerships contribute to the employment of development officers working with sporting stakeholders such as the GAA and other sporting organisations. These Officers are delivering grassroots sports to the populations they support, specifically those in socioeconomic difficulty and those with disabilities. Local Sports Partnerships regularly collaborate with National Governing Bodies of sport to support them delivering grassroots activities. A further example of this are webinars delivered to support clubs to make applications and avail of Sports Capital Grants.

Sport and LGBTQIA+ Communities

16. Local Sports Partnerships engage with the LGBTQIA+ community to promote inclusion in sport in a safe environment. An example of some of the programmes provided are Weekly Inclusive Volleyball Programmes delivered in partnership with other stakeholders. The LCSPs also work closely with Sporting Pride the National Governing Body for LGTTQUA+ and provide support and services through promoting initiatives, providing access to facilities and collaborating on programmes.

Our Rural Future

17. Local Authorities are key stakeholders in the delivery of the national Rural Development Policy, “Our Rural Future”. The policy provided for the development and publication of the new National Outdoor Recreation Strategy which has a number of actions to be delivered through the sector and which will require partnership and collaborative work with Sport Ireland to implement.

Summary

18. Local Authorities through the work of the Local Sports Partnerships are focused on continuous improvement in the area of disability sports inclusion. As espoused in our National Sports Policy, sport must be welcoming and inclusive, offering appropriate opportunities for participation and improvement for all. The development of disability inclusion policies underpinning the national policies for Sport allows for the necessary cultural change to be realised. The Local Government sector welcomed Sport Ireland’s Policy on Diversity and Inclusion in Sport. The sector is committed to the vision of ‘A sport sector that celebrates diversity, promotes inclusion, and is proactive in providing opportunities for lifelong participation for everyone’. In addition, the research commissioned in 2020 by Sport Ireland to better understand the issues relating to diversity and inclusion in sport was welcomed. The research provides useful and reliable insights into the experiences, gaps, challenges and barriers experienced by people from diverse communities which we can all learn from.

19. In addition to Sport Ireland funding, funding programmes like the CLÁR Programme supports hundreds of projects to allow for the development of community and sports facilities, youth clubs, playgrounds and many more facilities. As envisioned for the programme, these community and sports projects will make our towns and villages more vibrant places to live and more attractive, inclusive destinations to visit.

Appendix 1: Examples of Sports Programmes across the Local Government Sector Spanning the Themes Highlighted

1.1 Cork City Council 54th - International Childrens Games

Cork City Council led a delegation to compete in the 54th International Childrens Games in Coventry in 2022. 18 young athletes, all aged 14 or 15, represented Cork in 3v3 Basketball, Soccer, Wall Climbing & Table Tennis.

Corks young athletes had the opportunity to compete with young people from 72 cities around the world, an experience which enriched them culturally as well as offering them a new challenge in their sporting career.

Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr. Deirdre Forde travelled with the team and while she represented Cork at a number of Civic functions, she was also there to cheer on our young people while they competed.

While athletic ability was taken into account, over 50% of the team were chosen from disadvantaged areas. The trip was fully funded so there were no financial pressures on the families of the children attending. For many of these children it was their first experience of international competition and opened their eyes to opportunities available to them through sport. A number of these young people have gone on to be selected for Irish teams in the last 6 months. The team of 18 athletes included 11 females. This was done in a conscious effort to encourage females, at a key drop out age from sport, to stay involved in sport.

Cork City Council has recently accepted an invitation to send a delegation to compete in the 55th International Childrens Games which will take place in South Korea this July. We have no doubt that this trip will offer an even richer cultural experience for our athletes.

1.2 Wicklow County Council - Her Wicklow, Her Outdoors Festival

HER Outdoors Week ran from the 8th to the 14th of August 2022. In conjunction with this national event, this year Wicklow Sports and Recreation Partnership launched their first Her Wicklow, Her Outdoors Festival. The aim of this week was to celebrate and encourage more

females to get out and enjoy the benefits of being in the outdoors in Wicklow while bringing visibility to the opportunities to get involved in outdoor physical activity. From mountain to sea, Wicklow's varied landscape offered an amazing playground for a wide variety of outdoor activities. 24 events took place across 15 different locations in Wicklow from hiking, pony trekking, orienteering, kayaking and many more. Over 300 women of all ages and abilities took part in the events.

1.3 Wexford County Council – Addressing Low Participation Groups

Sports Active Wexford continuously encourages and enables locally identified low-participation groups access opportunities for meaningful participation in physical activity. In addition to being a major contributor to the health and overall well-being of the individual, physical activity can contribute positively to social inclusion and integration, promote a sense of identity and belonging, and bring people together in positive and social community settings. Participation in events and programmes provide opportunities for marginalised groups to interact and integrate with other social groups and opportunities to showcase their talents and challenge commonly held stereotypes. Many marginalised groups are under-represented in physical activity in County Wexford and (in line with the core focus of the Local Sports Partnership network) we will support developments for greater inclusion.

Our Objectives Our Priority Actions Our Key Outcomes

To promote the concept of active ageing by engaging more older people in physical activity more often.

- Deliver a range of training and upskilling initiatives for leaders of physical activity by older people in the community.
- Organise an annual programme of events and programmes which provide opportunities for older people to partake in recreational sport.
- Organise training to enable staff working in care settings to deliver health-enhancing activity sessions.

To support regular meaningful participation in physical activity by people with a disability

To actively encourage the involvement of other locally identified marginalised groups in physical activity. These include Traveller Community, Syrian and Ukrainian refugee community's woman and girls of all ages.

1.4 Carlow County Council – ConnectFit

Programme: ConnectFit

What was the purpose of the Programme: To engage older adults in functional fitness.

What were the aims of the Programme:

1. To increase physical activity levels of older adults in Carlow (both healthy older adults and those with chronic medical conditions), thereby increasing physical fitness, functional abilities, and quality of life.
2. To investigate the effectiveness of different delivery methods for physical activity programmes for older adults (online, home-based, and advice-only).
3. What was involved in the running of the Programme/Initiative/Event?

Older adults and people with chronic illnesses from the Carlow area were recruited by Carlow LSP using the existing networks (Age-Friendly Network, Community Gardaí, GPs, OTs etc.)

Participants underwent telephone screening with IT Carlow researchers to determine eligibility and group allocation (Healthy, Chronic medical conditions, Frail, or not eligible to participate)

Each participant was then randomly allocated to a group for an 8 Week Programme:

- Group A: Strength training, delivered online via Zoom
- Group B: Strength training, completed independently at home
- Group C: (Control Group) - Social events such as quizzes, delivered online via Zoom. Followed by 8 weeks of the most effective strength training intervention.

All training programmes included two sessions per week.

All training programmes were designed based on current evidence and best-practice guidelines for this population, and included appropriate warm-ups, exercises, and cool-downs.

Group A was instructor-led. Groups B received weekly 'check-in' phone calls from the project team. Group C participated in an online social programme via zoom weekly.

Required equipment was provided to all groups using Dormant Account Funds and was purchased and distributed via Carlow Sports Partnership. Following the research study Group C was offered the same programme as Group A.

What were the outcomes of the Programme/Initiative/Event?

The instructor-led online strength training group (Group A) experienced the greatest benefit from the programme. Following the programme Group A performed best across a number of physical assessments including upper-body and lower-body assessments measured via the 30s Arm-curl test and the Sit-to-Stand.

What are the next steps for the Programme/Initiative/Event?

The next step for the programme is to further investigate the effectiveness of different delivery methods for physical activity programmes for older adults (face-to-face, semi-supervised, and online).

Quotes from participants, teachers, parents, partners etc.?

"The pace that you guys went at was very good. When I started telling friends about what I was doing they were amazed, they said they would never be able to do that. I think a lot of it is in your mind and you have to visualise yourself doing these things and then you do them. Whereas some people just can't see themselves. I noticed a huge change in my daily activities"

– Female, 72

"Understanding the proper way of lifting the kettlebells was important, the way yourself and Conor took such time to make sure we were doing it right. You did say "hold on there now" and you did keep at us to do it right, even though we were hoping you'd leave us alone, to master the right technique" – Female, 70

"First when I saw squats and chair squats I said "oh lord, I don't know about this" but then when I got in on them and started doing them I was surprised and delighted to be able to do

them. Then the stronger I felt I was getting, I could feel the burn when I was training and I said gosh this does actually feel very nice, you probably could get addicted to that feeling” –

Female, 66 “it was great that we could partake in this programme through zoom. Otherwise we would’ve had nothing, it was an absolute god send there for a while for the 10 or 12 weeks while it went on” - Male, 74

“If you go from starting with the 4kg weight and progress to being able to use the 12kg weight then you know you’ve made progress. So you think to yourself, what’s the potential to lift even heavier things. I mean, the look of my arms was better and the strength was better” – Female, 69

“It made a lot of difference to my strength and legs and shoulders. If you don’t keep doing it you’ll gradually weaken again” – Male, 76

“The community that we had created through the programme was a big help” – Female, 73

Findings:

- Ninety participants aged over 60 volunteered to partake in the Connect Fit Research Project, with 30 participants assigned to each group (online, home, control).
- Drop-out rates were highest amongst the home group (11), followed by the control group (7). The online group only had 2 dropouts.
- Of the 70 participants that completed the research study, 66% of them were female.
- Sixty-eight was the average participant age.

While all groups appeared to have improved in some outcome measures (including the control group). The online group experienced the greatest benefit from the strength training intervention across the outcome measures. The online group experienced a 46% performance increase in the primary outcome measure of the research study assessing lower limb strength (30s Sit-to-Stand).

From a wellbeing perspective, the health-related quality of life and exercise self-efficacy improved significantly in both the online and home exercise groups.

1.5 Dublin City Council - Sport and Disability

The DCSWP have responsibility for the provision of sport & physical activity for people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+, mental health, Travelling community, direct provision and homeless services and other minority groupings. Through our Sports Inclusion & Integration Officer's (SIIO's) we also have a responsibility for education and training in this area and provide training for staff, coaches, clubs, organisations, schools and members of the public.

Below are highlights of DCSWP 2022/2023 ongoing Sport Inclusion & Integration Programmes.

- Sport For All Visually Impaired Indoor Rowing programme in partnership with Vision Ireland and DCSWP Co-funded Rowing Officer
- The Sport For All Table Cricket (adapted cricket) programme is aimed at young people age 10-18 years and delivered in partnership with Enable Ireland, Sandymount and the DCSWP Co-funded Cricket Officer
- Sport for All Accessible powerboat wheelchair programme is delivered in partnership with various organisations, targeted at all ages and facilitated by Dublin City Council's East Wall Water Sports Centre.
- Learn 2 Cycle programme aimed at young people with additional needs looking to start or improve cycling – aimed at young people aged 4 – 18 years.
- The Activator Pole Walking programme is aimed at older adults age 55+ years with physical and intellectual disabilities. This continues in 2023 in partnership with St. Vincent's Centre, Navan Rd.
- DCSWP's Inclusive Football is delivered in partnership with Shelbourne FC – this programme began in 2022 in partnership with Ann Murray, a volunteer with extensive

experience in sports coaching and in working with people with additional needs. It continues for 2023. Shelbourne FC is now in the final phases of attaining

Football for All Status. This will provide key support and funding for the programme which will support coaching, increase the number of participants and events the programme has now also created a working relationship with Special Olympics Ireland to ensure there are pathways in place for those participants who would like to further advance their sporting journey.

- DCSWP provided a winter and spring venue for weekly training in Poppintree Sports and Leisure Centre in Ballymun. The weekly programme has 50+ participants ranging in age from 16-40. Participants are engaged with through residential and supported services such as St. Michaels House, Prosper and Vision Ireland.