



Offaly Sports Partnership Mid Year Report

Compiled by Eamonn Henry, Coordinator Offaly Sports Partnership

Contents	
Introduction	1
Strategic Goal 1: Promoting Inclusion	3
Strategic Goal 2: Building Capacity	6
Strategic Goal 3: Sustainable Infrastructure	9
Strategic Goal 4: Developing Partnership	11
Conclusion	12

Introduction

Offaly Sports Partnership was initiated in 2003 and received full designation from the Irish Sports Council in 2006. It is an inter agency group which is a sub structure of Offaly County Development Board and its core funding is received from the Irish Sports Council. The make up of the Partnership Board is as follows: -



Patron - Matt Connor

Statutory Sector

Offaly County Council - Ann Dillon

Health Services Executive - Clodagh Armitage

An Garda Síochana - Sgt Ollie Baker

Offaly VEC - Miriam O'Callaghan

FÁS - Séan O'Brien

Public Representatives - Cllr John Carroll and Cllr Percy Clendennen

Local and Rural Development Companies

OAK Partnership - Pat League

Tullamore Wider Options - Ann Starling

Offaly Leader - John Moran

West Offaly Partnership - Padraig Boland (Chairperson)

Disability Sector - Orla Dempsey

Private Sector - Barry Keegan

Sports Sector

Athletics and Boxing - Georgina Tuohey

FAI - Karl Bond Snr

Camogie - Gráinne McIntyre

GAA - Hughie Egan

Community Games - Jude Feehan

Third Level Sector - Joe Meegan

The Partnership currently employs three full time staff: -

- Partnership Coordinator - Eamonn Henry (post funded by the Irish Sports Council)

- Partnership Administrator - Olivia Murphy (post funded by the Irish Sports Council)
- Sports Inclusion Disability Officer - Claire Grehan (post funded by Dormant Accounts)



Eamonn Henry
Coordinator



Olivia Murphy
Administrator



Claire Grehan
Sports Inclusion
Disability Officer

Additionally a student placement programme is run in conjunction with Athlone and Tralee Institutes of Technology. Emma Bunworth, a 4th year student of Sport and Leisure at Tralee Institute of Technology has been on placement with the Partnership this year. Trina McNicholas, a graduate of the Bachelor of Arts in Business Studies in Sports Management in Athlone Institute of Technology has commenced a placement based in OAK Partnership to deliver one of the actions in the operational plan of Offaly Sports Partnership.



At the end of 2007, the Partnership concluded its strategic planning process. A three year strategic plan 2008 - 2010 went to print at the start of 2008. This plan was formally launched by the Chief Executive Officer of the Irish Sports Council, John Treacy on the 10th March 2008 in the Tullamore Court Hotel at a function attended by over one hundred people representing the Irish Sports Council, Offaly County Development Board, the Management Committee of the Sports Partnership, local councillors, Oireachtas members, staff of Offaly County Council, representatives of National Governing Bodies of Sport, schools, clubs and other interested parties.

The plan set out four strategic goals: -

1. Promoting inclusion (to increase the level of participation in sport by targeted low participation groups)
2. Building capacity (to build the capacity of sports clubs, schools and communities to deliver high quality sporting experiences)
3. Sustainable infrastructure (to support the development of sustainable sports facilities in the county)
4. Developing partnership (to develop a partnership approach to sports development in the county)

This report will give a brief overview of work completed to date in 2008 under each of the four strategic goals as laid out in the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Goal 1: Promoting Inclusion

Offaly Sports Partnership is committed to the ideal of sport for all and believes that people of all ages, abilities, needs and interest have the right to partake in sport. In achieving this goal, the Partnership have identified six low participation groups in the county for targeted support. The identified groups are: -

1. People with a disability
2. Travellers
3. Migrant communities
4. Older people
5. Disadvantaged young people
6. Women

Progress in reaching out to these groups is detailed below: -

1. People with a Disability

Claire Grehan commenced work as the Sports Inclusion Disability Officer in March. In her short time with the Partnership, Claire has made huge progress in bringing sport and physical activity programmes to people with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities. She has also formed very positive working relationships with a number of disability organisations including Down Syndrome Ireland, Irish Wheelchair Association, National Learning Network, Rehab Care, special education schools and Special Olympics Ireland.



Among the activities organised, delivered or jointly planned and delivered are: -

- Three “come try days” for children with disabilities, the National Learning Network and Down Syndrome Ireland
- A kit fit programme for people with intellectual disabilities in Rehab Care
- Boccia programme with National Learning Network, Rehab Care and the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary Services
- Lawn Bowls programmes with the Peter Bradley Foundation and Rehab Care
- A summer athletics programme in conjunction with Irish Wheelchair Association, Sport



To date a total of 93 people with disabilities have been reached by Claire; and Offaly Sports Partnership in conjunction with the Offaly Centre for Independent Living are currently developing an ambitious proposal under the Community Services Programme designed to create sustainable structures for the continued delivery of sport and physical activity programmes to people with disabilities in the county. Updates on the progress of this project will be made in future reports.

In addition, Claire is also planning: -

- A transition year disability awareness programme for roll out in September
- A Midlands Boccia League in conjunction with Westmeath Sports Partnership for the Irish Wheelchair Association, the National Learning Network and Rehab Care
- To develop power soccer in conjunction with the SIDO in Westmeath and the FAI Development Officers
- An ASA Helper certificate (swimming for people with disabilities) course in September

2. Travellers in Sport



Offaly Sports Partnership established a Travellers in Sport working group in 2007. This working group continues to meet on a regular basis. Support has been secured from the HSE Traveller Health Unit, Tullamore Wider Options (local development company) and the VEC to deliver a physical activity tutor training programme for 10 members of the Traveller community in county Offaly. A coordinator, Claire Quinn has been appointed by Tullamore Wider Options to commence this training programme in September. It is hoped that at least 7 of the trained tutors will be employed on a part time basis over 3 years to deliver sport and physical activity programmes to the wider community of Travellers in county Offaly through a Pobal funded Community Services Programme. A technical support grant to develop a three year business plan has been secured from Pobal, and this business plan is due to be completed by the end of October.

3. Migrants in Sport



As a result of funding received from the Department of Justice in 2007 as part of the National Action Plan Against racism, the Partnership has continued to roll out a number of programmes to support migrant participation in sport in 2008. Activities this year have included a Midlands Volleyball Tournament in conjunction with the Volleyball Association of Ireland with 12 teams participating; a sports hall athletics programme in the towns of Tullamore and Edenderry with over 200 children participating (approximately 70:30 ratio), the participation of migrants as guests in the County's Senior Track and Field Championships, and the hosting of our annual international games festival in the sports of basketball, volleyball and soccer in July.



In addition, it is planned to hold a sparing competition for juveniles in September in conjunction with the Offaly Boxing County Board.

4. Older People in Sport



Go for Life activities are being coordinated by Olivia Murphy, Administrator Offaly Sports Partnership. A number of other initiatives are also under development at the moment. These include the establishment of an Older Men in Sport working group. The first in a series of Older Men in Sport Consultation days has taken place. Over twenty five older men were in attendance and all had the opportunity to try out some new activities including Boccia, Gym machines, Kurling and Pitchy. Frank Fahey of Fizzical, Martina Mullin of Go for Life and members of the Older Men in Sport working group were also in attendance, and helped to facilitate a number of discussions on the barriers to older men participating in sport, the importance of physical activity for older men and the development of a potential winter programme of physical activities for older men. Additional consultation days are due to take place in September.



In addition, following on from discussions with John Leahy, GAA Coaching and Games Development Officer, plans are being made to commence the playing of Gaelic football and Hurling for masters.

5. Disadvantaged Youth

Following funding received from the Dormant Accounts Fund under the Sport for Disadvantaged Young Persons strand in 2007, the Partnership maintained contact with each of the groups funded. Five groups were supported in the rollout of their programmes. It is notable that three of the five beneficiaries of the programme have also submitted expressions of interest under the Community Service Programme 2008.

6. Women in Sport



A number of women in sport circuit training programmes carried over from 2007 have taken place in various clubs and locations throughout the county - Lusmagh, Tullamore and Gracefield. At least one of these programmes will continue with the support of Cúl le Chéile, a Community Development Project based in Portarlinton.

Strategic Goal 2: Building Capacity

Offaly Sports Partnership recognises that sports clubs, schools and communities, and especially volunteers in each of these areas have a major role to play in the future development of sport in the county. In working to build the capacity of the sports sector in the county, the work of the Partnership in 2008 has focused on:-

1. Research into fitness levels of children
2. Support of school based activities
3. Developing and delivering collaborative projects with National Governing Bodies
4. Offering coach/volunteer education and training programmes
5. Operating a club development scheme
6. Advancing plans to increase investment in sport in the county

1. Research into fitness levels of children



Emma Bunworth, a fourth year student of Sport and Leisure at Tralee IT has undertaken a comprehensive fitness assessment in eighteen schools in Offaly. A total of 727 students were tested using the agility challenge of IFTA (International Fun in Team Athletics). Of seven possible awards/rankings that could be achieved (gold, silver, bronze, blue, green, yellow and orange), 75% of the pupils at age nine ranked in the lowest two.

Limited data from the United Kingdom places Offaly below average scores in two primary schools, while the top performances in Offaly matched the average scores in an athletics club sampled in the United Kingdom. Emma now plans to carry out a comparable study in Kerry as part of her final year thesis to compare the performance of children in both counties. We have been informed that the Ontario Government in Canada has provided IFTA with a grant to monitor fitness levels of 50,000 children over a two year period using the same testing methods.

Emma has presented her findings to date to the Board of Offaly Sports Partnership and has contacted each participating school to indicate how the school and each individual pupil performed. It is hoped that as a body of comparable information on fitness norms both inside and outside of Ireland emerges, appropriate responses to improve fundamental sports and motor skills will be developed. Offaly Sports Partnership is very grateful to Emma for this comprehensive piece of work. We are also grateful to the eighteen schools and 727 pupils that participated.

2. School based activities

Through the student placement programme, Offaly Sports Partnership offered support to nineteen primary schools on aspects of the physical education curriculum which the individual schools felt needed to be strengthened. The main activities supported on the programme were athletics, basketball, gymnastics, dance, orienteering and innovative games.



The Partnership also continues to deliver the Buntús programme of the Irish Sports Council to primary schools in the county. Two special education schools were reached before the summer holidays. The roll out of sports specific programmes will commence in the September to December school term.

3. Collaborative projects with National Governing Bodies

The Partnership has been involved with two projects this year involving two governing bodies of Sport working collaboratively. The first project involved the promotion of Tag and Mini Rugby through local Community Games structures. The Partnership facilitated the coming together of Offaly Community Games and the Regional Development Officers for the Leinster and Connaught branches of the Irish Rugby Football Union. Rugby training was out reached to ten Community Games areas with over four hundred children (boys and girls) participating in the project. Each Community Games area was provided with a rugby training kit. The Partnership is open to exploring whether the Community Games programme of activities and its grass roots structures can continue to be used as a mechanism for the promotion of minority sports.

The second collaborative project has been a pre season cross country and summer fitness programme delivered in conjunction with Athletics Ireland's Regional Development Officer Paul McNamara, Athletics Offaly, Offaly GAA, Athlone and Tralee Institutes of Technology, OAK Partnership and the Edenderry Community Development Project. The project has been delivered in twelve GAA fields across the county and over three hundred children participated in the programme. The project was led out by the two students on placement, Emma Bunworth and Trina McNicholas; and three GAA coaches supported them in their delivery of this project. Weather conditions and summer holiday interruptions proved problematic; however this project represents a small first step in starting a process of rejuvenating juvenile athletics. The Games Promotion and Development Officer of Offaly GAA, John Leahy recognises that the additional fitness training and out of season opportunities in a complementary sport is mutually beneficial to strengthening the native games.



In addition to joint collaborative workings between governing bodies, Offaly Sports Partnership has also collaborated with the Football Association of Ireland, the Volleyball Association of Ireland, Basketball Ireland and Athletics Ireland in the delivery of the migrants in sport programme.

4. Coach/Volunteer education and training

Seventy five coaches/volunteers have received training in the following: -



- Code of Ethics - twenty two coaches/volunteers
- Basic first aid - fourteen volunteers
- Heartsaver AED programme - twenty four coaches/volunteers. This programme was rolled out by Offaly GAA and supported by the Ambulance Services and Offaly Sports Partnership



- Lucozade Sports Education Programme - twenty five participants attended this programme in Birr



5. Club Development Grant Scheme

Offaly Sports Partnership amended the criteria for the Club Development Grant Scheme in 2007 in order that it take on a more developmental focus. Nineteen grants totaling € 20,000 were distributed on the 10th March 2008 in conjunction with the launch of the Strategic Plan.

The following were the nineteen beneficiaries: -

Club Name	Amount	Club Name	Amount
Ballinamere/OSSE Special Olympics	€1,500.00	Killeigh Schoolboys/Schoolgirls Soccer Club	€1,000.00
Brosna Community Games	€1,300.00	Offaly Ladies Football Club	€1,000.00
Doon GAA Club	€1,300.00	Tubber GAA Club	€1,000.00
Tullamore Hockey Club	€1,300.00	An Clarach Bord na nÓg	€900.00
Tullamore Tennis Club	€1,000.00	Country Club Badminton Club	€900.00
Edenderry Town Schoolboys/Schoolgrls Soccer Club	€1,200.00	Drumcullen Camogie Club	€900.00
Tullamore Camogie Club	€1,200.00	Moneygall Football Club	€900.00
Birr Camogie Club	€1,000.00	St Sinchill's Camogie Club	€900.00
Daingean Community Games	€1,000.00	Kinnitty Badminton Club	€700.00
Kilcormac/Killoughey Camogie Club	€1,000.00	Total	€20,000.00

6. Investment in Sport

Offaly Sports Partnership established an Investment in Sport working group this year, with the primary function of this group being to establish whether adequate funding can be secured to employ a dedicated Sports Development Officer for the county and additional programme funding to go with the role. This group is et to report back by the end of the year.

Strategic Goal 3: Sustainable Infrastructure

Offaly Sports Partnership believes that forward planning for sports facilities should aim to marry the twin issues of inclusion and sustainability in order that optimum usage is achieved.

The Partnership is also further committed to supporting the sports sector to maximise investment to the county under the Sports Capital Programme. As in previous years, Offaly Sports Partnership delivered a planning workshop at the end of 2007 in advance of the Department's call for applications. It circulated the criteria and application forms, and provided advice, assistance and letters of support to individual clubs as necessary. The Partnership also continues to monitor changes in the programme criteria and advises clubs on their implications, however small they may be. In addition, the Partnership also monitors the performance of the county relative to other counties each year. In 2008, the total grants approved under the programme fell from the 2007 high of € 85m to € 50.25m. Approvals for Offaly were down from € 2m to € 1.265m. The county however ranked third in terms of per capita allocations for the second year in a row.

County	Lottery allocation (€)	Per capita allowance (€)	% National average
Limerick	€4,683,000.00	€25.44	221.47
Tipperary	€3,281,000.00	€21.98	191.36
Offaly	€1,265,000.00	€17.85	155.37
Monaghan	€933,635.00	€16.67	142.13
Westmeath	€1,317,000.00	€16.60	144.48
Waterford	€1,544,000.00	€14.30	124.49
Clare	€1,562,000.00	€14.08	122.54
Donegal	€1,926,000.00	€13.08	113.84
Louth	€1,433,000.00	€12.88	112.1
Laois	€799,000.00	€11.91	103.71
Meath	€1,938,000.00	€11.90	103.6
Dublin	€13,840,865.00	€11.66	101.48
Longford	€397,000.00	€11.54	100.48
Mayo	€1,380,500.00	€11.15	97.03
Cork	€4,485,000.00	€9.32	81.11
Sligo	€555,000.00	€9.11	79.33
Cavan	€576,000.00	€9.00	78.34
Kilkenny	€780,000.00	€8.91	77.54
Kerry	€1,223,000.00	€8.75	76.13
Wicklow	€1,103,000.00	€8.74	76.08
Wexford	€1,133,500.00	€8.60	74.89
Galway	€1,722,500.00	€7.44	64.72
Carlow	€366,500.00	€7.28	63.36
Kildare	€1,336,500.00	€7.10	62.43
Roscommon	€409,000.00	€6.96	60.58
Leitrim	€260,000.00	€1.59	13.88
Total	€50,250,000.00	€11.49	100



The successful applicants for Offaly were: -

Club name	Amount
Offaly GAA County Board, O'Connor Park	€500,000.00
Clara GAA Club	€150,000.00
Banagher United Soccer Club	€80,000.00
Irish Parachute Club Ltd	€80,000.00
St Rynagh's Hurling Club	€80,000.00
Coolderry GAA Club	€65,000.00
St Brigid's GAA Club	€60,000.00
Tullamore Rugby Club	€60,000.00
Bracknagh GAA Club	€55,000.00
Shinrone Development Ltd	€45,000.00
Killurin GAA Club	€40,000.00
Tubber GAA Club	€25,000.00
Walsh Island GAA Club	€25,000.00
Total	€1,265,000.00



The Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government with the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism has asked all Local Authorities to conduct audits of Community, Arts and Sports facilities by year end. Offaly Sports Partnership is working closely with the Community and Enterprise section of Offaly County Council to ensure that the sports facilities audit is as comprehensive as possible.

Strategic Goal 4: Developing Partnership

Offaly Sports Partnership are confident that increased cooperation between the key providers and stakeholders in sport will enhance sports provision and raise levels of participation in sport into the future. The Strategic Plan has set four key objectives on how partnership working can be enhanced, specifically in the areas of: -

1. The identity of Offaly Sports Partnership
2. Coordination and collaboration between key provider agencies in the county
3. Communications
4. Effective structures

1. Promoting the identity of Offaly Sports Partnership

The identity of the Partnership has been promoted through: -

- The launch of the Strategic Plan on the 10th March 2008
- Presentations made to three county boards to date in Offaly (Offaly Badminton, Offaly Ladies Football County Board and Athletics Offaly)
- Communications issued to stakeholders (e.g. newsletter, correspondence , etc)

2. Coordination and collaboration

As already highlighted in this report, there has been effective collaboration between governing bodies of sport promoting programmes of mutual benefit. Coordination among partners has commenced through the working groups established by the Partnership (see section 4, structures). It is the aim of the Offaly Sports Partnership to ensure that there is a greater level of coordination with stakeholders when developing the annual operating plans of the Partnership in the future.

3. Communications

The Partnership website (www.offalysports.ie) went live in 2008 and a radio campaign (Radio Active) was developed in conjunction with Laois and Westmeath Sports Partnerships, and Midlands 103fm. The Partnership also produces a quarterly newsletter which is sent out to all stakeholders and other interested parties.

4. Effective structures

To oversee and support the growing workload of Offaly Sports Partnership, the following substructures were put in place: -

- Offaly Sports Partnership Executive Committee
- Three working groups referred to previously in this report (Travellers in Sport, Investment in Sport and Older Men in Sport)

Both the Women in Sport working group and the Sports Ability Forum are yet to be convened.

In addition to sub structures, the Partnership Administrator, Olivia Murphy has been working to ensure that financial analysis structures in line with the reporting requirements of various funders are in place.

Conclusion

2008 has been quite successful to date. This is largely due to: -

- The appointment of an effective staff team (including the students on placement) to support the delivery of an increased workload
- The completion and launch of our Strategic Plan 2008 - 2010 which has given focus to the work of the Partnership
- The commitment of members of the Board, those participating on sub structures of the Partnership, and other stakeholders with whom we have positively collaborated
- The ongoing support of the Irish Sports Council and colleagues from other counties
- The various programme funders (Irish Sports Council, Dormant Accounts, Pobal, Offaly County Council, National Action Plan Against Racism, Health Services Executive, Tullamore Wider Options, OAK Partnership and Edenderry Community Development Project)

We did encounter some delays with a couple of programmes and the Irish summer has not been the best; nonetheless we feel a positive start has been made in a number of areas.

We are likely to face into a more difficult economic climate in the future. This may have some impact on our work and is already evident as we endeavour to secure funding to appoint a dedicated Sports Development Officer. It is therefore imperative that we display the work that we are doing as worthwhile and that it represents real value for money.