

Offaly Sports Partnership Annual Report

Compiled by Eamonn Henry, Coordinator Offaly Sports Partnership

Contents	
Introduction	1
Overview of the year / Changed operating envi-	1
Staffing & personnel	3
Changes at Board & Ex-	4
Strategic plan imple-	7
Strategic goal 1	8
Strategic goal 2	14
Strategic goal 3	23
Strategic goal 4	24
Conclusion	26

Introduction



Offaly Sports Partnership was initiated in 2003 and received full designation from the Irish Sports Council in 2006 with a full time coordinator being appointed at the end of the year. Following an expansion of the Board and broad consultations in 2007, a three year

Strategic Plan which focuses on four thematic goals was launched at the start of 2008.

The Partnership is an inter agency sub group of Offaly County Development Board and its core funding comes from the Irish Sports Council.

The following report gives an overview of the work of the Partnership in 2009. It will set out a brief overview of the year, changes to the operating environment, staffing and on the Board of the Partnership. It also outlines activities under its four key strategic goals.

Overview of the Year / Changed Operating Environment

Overall, 2009 was a very successful year despite a more difficult operating environment. Changed economic circumstances and reductions in public finances had a number of negative impacts on the work and plans of the Partnership: -

- Major projects for which external funding from other Government Departments was to be sought were suspended or put on hold. Further details of these specific plans are outlined in this report
- Uncertainties concerning local budgets meant that it was more difficult to develop local co funding arrangements with our local partners
- The pending cessation of once off Dormant Accounts funding of the Sports Inclusion Disability Officer (SIDO) programme created uncertainty as to our future work with people with a disability. Significant time was allocated to national efforts to save this very valuable programme and to local efforts in securing co funding for the coming 12 months
- The recruitment embargo within the public sector prevented us from directly hosting a student from the Tralee Institute of Technology as in previous years

- With the coordinator's contract of employment finishing in October, significant work was undertaken by our Chairperson, County Manager and the Human Resources section of Offaly Local Authorities to secure derogation for the continuation of this post, fully funded by the Irish Sports Council
- The continued suspension of the Sports Capital programme impacted negatively on our strategy to support the development of the sporting infrastructure of the county
- Our commitment to our working groups suffered with some being suspended due to funding uncertainties concerning the projects they were developing and others not being afforded the same levels of staff support due to a reallocation of staff time to frontline services

Despite the challenges of a more difficult operating environment, there are many positives to be taken from 2009: -

- The Irish Sports Council has remained fully committed to the Sports Partnerships. With roll out of the National Network of Local Sports Partnerships now complete, the Irish Sports Council increased funding of participation in sports through the Partnerships in 2009 despite cuts in its own overall budget
- The Irish Sports Council's commitment to Offaly was manifested through approvals totalling €167,820 being received, a new three year heads of agreement being signed with Offaly County Council, and its support of Offaly's application for derogation for the renewal of the Sports Partnership Coordinator's employment contract
- Local partnered arrangements to help address personnel issues were established with local bodies. This facilitated the Partnership to deliver programmes which were dependent on suitably trained personnel. Further details of these arrangements are contained under staffing and personnel
- Collaboration with our international partners saw the adaptation, for use in Offaly, of successful innovative projects for children and young people. Further details of these programmes are contained in the "Developing Capacity" section of this report
- The profile of the Partnership was enhanced through engaging three of the county's Olympians in our projects
- Regional collaboration was enhanced through joint delivery of a volunteering action with our colleagues in Laois, Longford and Westmeath
- Through redeployment of some staff functions, and through greater engagement with local partners, we managed to respond to demand for our programmes

Overall, 2009 was a year of change for the Partnership, brought on by the impact of changed economic circumstances. Less time was allocated to working groups, and to developing large projects for submission to individual Government Departments. More time was needed to respond to the impact of changing circumstances and to put in place new arrangements with local partners to deliver our programmes.

Staffing and Personnel

The Partnership continued to employ three full time staff in 2009 - Eamonn Henry, Coordinator (post funded by the Irish Sports Council); Olivia Murphy, Administrator (post funded by the Irish Sports Council); and Claire Grehan, Sports Inclusion Disability Office (post funded by Pobal).



Three full time staff members of Offaly Sports Partnership in 2008 from left to right, Eamonn Henry Co ordinator; Olivia Murphy Administrator; Claire Grehan Sports Inclusion Disability Officer

Additionally Bronwyn Shiels, a 4th year student of Sport and Leisure at Tralee Institute of Technology was on student placement to support the delivery of the work of the Partnership in 2009. This placement was kindly hosted by Offaly Local Development Company in its Banagher office.

Catherine Collins, a 3rd year student of Sport and Health Sciences at Dublin City University was on placement with the Health Services Executive Health Promotion Unit in 2009. Catherine supported the delivery of the Partnership's "School Sport Star" project in north Offaly.

Further actions of the Partnership, one involving the training of sports tutors from within the Traveller community was coordinated by Claire Quinn (Tullamore Wider Options, a local development company, acted as employer for this project); while a second programme, FAST Kids / Sportshall Athletics delivered to 20 primary schools in Offaly was delivered with the support of coaches, James Nolan, Gordon Kennedy, Buntu Milsana and Eimear Brennan (St Mary's Youth and Community Centre, acted as administrator for the tutor contracts for this project). Offaly Sports Partnership is incredibly grateful to Bronwyn, Catherine, Claire, James, Gordon, Buntu, Eimear and all our volunteers for their hard work and dedication during the year.



From top left to bottom right, Bronwyn Shiels (IT Tralee student placement), Catherine Collins (HSE student placement, Claire Quinn (Travellers in sport programme coordinator), James Nolan (FAST Kids / Sportshall Athletics), Gordon Kennedy and Buntu Milsana (Sportshall Athletics). Missing from the programme staff line up is Eimear Brennan (Sports Hall Athletics)

Changes at Board and Executive

The following changes occurred at Board level in 2009 -



Monica Cleary was nominated by Offaly County Council to replace Ann Dillon. Offaly Sports Partnership wishes to thank Ann for her work since 2003 when she was instrumental in establishing the interim Sports Partnership in the county. We are delighted to have Monica who has a strong background in sport on our Board and Executive.

Monica Cleary



Ann Dillon,



Councillor Danny Owens replaced Councillor Percy Clendennen as a public representative following the local elections. We want to thank Councillor Clendennen for his work and welcome Councillor Owens. Councillor Owens is a renowned hurler and was a member of the first County senior team to win an All Ireland in 1981

Cllr Danny Owens



*Cllr Percy Clenden
nen,*



Orla Dempsey (*shown left*) who was the interim representative of the disability sector has been replaced by Kathleen Carroll who was nominated by the Sports Ability Forum. Both Orla and Kathleen are involved in promoting participation opportunities for people with physical and sensory disabilities, and both have worked closely with our Sports Inclusion Disability Officer.



FÁS asked to withdraw its representative Sean O'Brien (*shown left*) due to an increasing work load in the current economic climate. Sean has been involved with the Partnership since it was established in 2003 representing both Offaly VEC and FÁS at different times. He has represented the Partnership at a number of workshops and trainings organised by the Irish Sports Council and we want to thank him for this. Despite their withdrawal from the Board we hope to work closely with FÁS in the future to identify opportunities of mutual benefit.



The merging of the four local and rural development companies in the county has seen representation reduce from four to one. Padraig Boland (*shown left*) is now the sole representative of the sector. The Partnership is very grateful to Pat Leogue, John Moran and Ann Starling for their work in representing the sector on the Partnership and hope that they will continue to be associated with the work of the Partnership.



Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick (*shown left*) joined the board of the Partnership as the County Development Board (CDB) Liaison. Cllr Fitzpatrick is currently Chairperson of the CDB, and has a keen interest in sport, particularly rugby.

The composition of the Board at the end of 2009 was as follows: - (see below)

Sector	Represented by
Patron of the Partnership	Matt Connor
Statutory Sector (4)	
Offaly County Council	Monica Cleary
Offaly VEC	Miriam O'Callaghan
Health Services Executive	Clodagh Armitage
An Garda Síochana	Sgt Ollie Baker
Local and Rural Development (1)	Padraig Boland
Offaly County Development Board	Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick
Private Sector (1)	Barry Keegan
Disability Sector (1)	Kathleen Carroll
Third Level Sector (1)	Joe Meegan
Public Representatives (2)	Cllr John Carroll
	Cllr Danny Owens
Sports Sector (5)	
GAA	Hughie Egan
FAI	Karl Bond Snr
Athletics and Boxing	Georgina Tuohey
Camogie	Gráinne McIntyre
Community Games	Jude Feehan

The AGM of the Partnership was held on the 25th March 2009. The officers and executive committee for 2009 was: -

Chair - Miriam O'Callaghan replaced Pdraig Boland who had served as Chair of the Partnership from 2003

Vice Chair - Cllr John Carroll

Secretary - Eamonn Henry

Financial Monitor - Barry Keegan was elected to this post which had been filled by Cllr John Carroll

County Manager's Representative - Monica Cleary replaced Ann Dillon by virtue of her nomination from Offaly County Council

County Development Board Liaison - Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick, as the CDB nominee automatically filled this role

Sports Sector Representative - Gráinne McIntyre was re-elected to represent the sports sector on the Executive



Executive Committee members, left to right - Miriam O'Callaghan, Chair; Cllr John Carroll, Vice Chair; Barry Keegan, Financial Monitor; Monica Cleary, Employer's Representative; Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick, CDB Liaison; Gráinne McIntyre, Sports sector representative



Strategic Plan Implementation

During 2009, the Partnership continued implementing programmes as outlined in our three year strategic plan 2008 - 2010. 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).

The remaining sections in this report will give an overview of work completed in 2009 under each of the strategic goals.

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 interests have the right to partake in sport. In achieving this goal, the Partnership 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 on the following pages: -



1. People with a Disability

Claire Grehan has continued the work she commenced in 2008 in bringing sport and physical activity programmes to people with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities. She has continued to develop positive working relationships with a number of disability organisations including Down Syndrome Ireland, the Irish Wheelchair Association, the National Learning Network, Rehab Care, and Special Olympics Ireland. She has also formed new working relationships with the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary Services, St Cronin's Day Services Birr, Riverview Resources Services Birr, Shine Organisation, and Laois Offaly Families For Autism in 2009. Among the activities organised and delivered, or jointly planned and delivered were: -



- Children's sports camps for families with autistic children
- Kit fit programmes for people with intellectual disabilities in Rehab Care and the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary Services;
- Boccia programmes for the National Learning Network, Rehab Care and the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary Services, St Cronin's Day Services Birr and Riverview Resources Services Birr



- A summer athletics programme in conjunction with the Irish Wheelchair Association, Sport
- Two Amateur Swimming Association's Helper's Certificate (for swimming for people with disabilities);
- Transition Year Disability Awareness programmes with St Rynagh's Secondary School, Banagher and Tullamore College;
- 3rd level Disability Awareness programmes with Athlone Institute of Technology and Moate Business College



- Power Soccer for users of power wheelchairs with limited mobility;
- Additionally funding for the purchase of an adapted rowing boat was dispersed to Offaly Rowing Club in 2009 in support of their efforts to prepare people with a disability to participate in the 2010 Paralympic Games

A strategic plan for increasing the involvement of people with a disability in physical activity 2010 - 2012 was developed with the support of the Sports Ability Forum. This strategic plan was launched in December 2009 in the Kilcruttin School of Special Education with an attendance of approximately 30 people representing the Offaly County Development Board, the Management Committee of the Sports Partnership, local councillors, staff of Offaly County Council, representatives of National Governing Bodies of Sport, schools, clubs and other interested parties. The





plan sets out three strategic goals: -

1. Improving information
2. Enabling access
3. Empowering providers

Updates on the progress of implementing the strategic goals detailed in this document will be made in future reports.

To date, a total of 396 (202 in 2008, 194 in 2009) people with disabilities have been reached by Claire, and the organisations she works with. Some have gone on and competed at national and international level (e.g. Midlands United Power Soccer Club competed in and won both the Leinster and National Power Soccer Championships in 2009; while Nicole Turner competed in the World Dwarf Games and came home with 5 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze medal).



From left to right, Midlands United with their trophy after winning the National Power Soccer Championships in July 2009; Nicole Turner showing off her 5 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze medal from the World Dwarf Games held in Belfast in August 2009

In support of Claire's work, Offaly Sports Partnership in conjunction with the Offaly Centre for Independent Living submitted a proposal under the Community Services Programme 2008. This proposal is currently on hold within the Department as a result of the current difficulties in the public finances.

Support of €15,000 was secured from the Health Services Executive, through the Offaly Centre for Independent Living, toward the purchase of adapted sports equipment. This will help further the range of sporting options for people with a disability in the county.

Claire is one of 20 Sports Inclusion Disability Officers in Ireland funded from the Dormant Accounts, and is a member of the national network of Sports Inclusion Disability Officers. Funding for her post has been secured up until July 2011.



2. Travellers in Sport

Offaly Sports Partnership established a Travellers in Sport working group in 2007 with the remit of developing actions and strategies to increase Traveller participation in sport and physical activity. This group established a two pronged strategy of: -

1. Developing a training programme to equip a number of Travellers with the skills to deliver peer led sports and physical activity programmes to the wider community of Travellers in the county;
2. Securing funding, possibly through a labour market scheme to employ a number of the aforementioned trainees to deliver the activity programmes to other Travellers;

The Travellers in Sport Coordinator Claire Quinn managed a programme of work placement for trainees that completed the accredited training programme in 2008. Funding was received from the Irish Sports Council towards two targeted actions to be led out by the trainees. Delivery of these actions was dependent on support from the Community Services Programme of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs being received. Unfortunately, this did not materialise in the current economic climate. It is proposed to reallocate the Irish Sports Council funding to a number of integration actions targeting Travellers and other ethnic minorities in 2010, and to encourage trainees from the Traveller in Sport project to deliver these actions.

3. Migrants in Sport

The Migrants in Sport funding received from the Department of Justice in 2007 as part of the National Action Plan Against Racism was finally expended in 2009.



An evaluation of the programme was carried out by Martin Kennedy on behalf of Offaly Sports Partnership in March 2009. The general thrust of the evaluation was positive while highlighting the complexities of working with new and sometimes mobile communities. Ongoing work with migrant communities was targeted at some schools with high migrant populations. This was done in order to reach out more to those communities that are setting down roots in the county.

Specific ongoing work with adult communities was deferred due to the high mobility among those we worked with in the past.

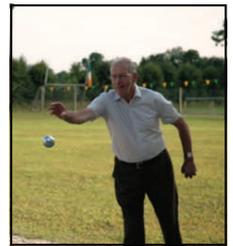
4. Older People in Sport



Go for Life activities were coordinated by Olivia Murphy, Administrator, Offaly Sports Partnership. The range of activities delivered included: -

1. Go for Life information / taster sessions - five sessions were delivered, three of which were delivered in conjunction with the Offaly Local Development Company. 98 participants, in total, attended these sessions. Further information / taster sessions will be held in 2010 in conjunction with the Offaly Local Development Company, with at least one session being held in each electoral area (i.e. Birr, Edenderry, Ferbane and Tullamore).

2. Older Men in Sport - an evaluation of the 2008 pilot programme (o50s Boccia for Men) was carried out in June 2009. Much of the feedback given was positive (*'Thankfully, the league interfered with my telly viewing time!'; 'The league got older men that wouldn't be involved in anything back on their feet again!'; '... helps to be physically active...'; '...excellent get to gether and good laugh...'; '... led us to explore other areas ...'*). There was also a great interest in the programme being delivered again over the winter of 2009 / spring of 2010. As a result of this interest, the first round of the league was held in November / December 2009 with five groups (Ballycumber, Banagher, Belmont, Clonbullogue and Rahan) and over 60 men participating



Action from various older people in sport activities - Older men in sport; Go for Life sessions

5. Disadvantaged Youth

No new projects targeting disadvantaged youth were delivered in 2009.

6. Women in Sport



Four women in sport programmes were identified for delivery in 2009. Of the four programmes identified for delivery, only one, the Pauline Curley Marathon Relay was delivered in 2009 (further information on the Pauline Curley Marathon Relay is contained in the "Building Capacity" section of this report).

The Fit 4 Girls programme and the Community Games Minority Sports for Girls is due to be delivered in 2010, while the Traveller Women in Sport initiative is due to be amalgamated into a larger programme, targeting disadvantaged groups including Travellers, disadvantaged communities and migrants, due for delivery in 2010.

Summary

In summary, Offaly Sports Partnership maintained its commitment to low participation groups in 2009, albeit that support to specific groups such as migrants and Travellers was reduced.

It is clear that people with a disability received greater support than other groups thereby highlighting the difference that a dedicated officer can make.

Opportunities to secure match funding to invest in individual target groups reduced, and there will be a need for us to re-examine our approach to supporting these groups in our next planning phase, when resources will be reduced.

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 2009 has focused on:-

1. A continued commitment to improve fitness levels among children in the county with a particular focus on innovative programmes. The success of this measure was due largely to our engagement of three of the county's Olympians, and the development of a working relationship with international partners;
2. Support of voluntary efforts;
3. Operating a club development grant scheme;
4. Continuing to pursue investment opportunities for the advancement of sport in the county.

The following pages present an overview of each of these areas of work.

1. Innovative programmes to improve children's fitness



Building on the work and recommendations of Emma Bunworth's (*shown left*) 2008 research into fitness and agility levels among school children in Offaly, the Partnership developed strategic links with international partners; the International Fun and Team Athletics (IFTA), the United Kingdom's Amateur Athletics Association (AAA), and three of the county's Olympians to adapt and deliver innovative programmes to children and young people.

In February, the Coordinator of the Partnership, Eamonn Henry accepted an invitation from the AAA to attend one of its team relay programmes for children, and a meeting in relation to the "Maratón Internacional" project.



Action from AAA's Sports Hall Athletics in Birmingham 2009



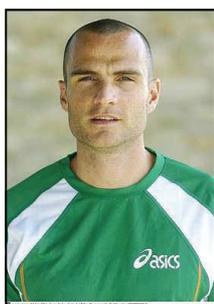
Following on from this meeting, an application in conjunction with Offaly's most successful Olympian, James Nolan (*shown left*) was made to Social Entrepreneurs Ireland to develop the FAST Kids project, and to expand Sportshall Athletics across the county. In expanding this project, the county's youngest Olympian, Gordon Kennedy (*shown right*) was engaged to support its delivery.



Another project, the Pauline Curley Inter Schools Relay Marathon was also developed with the endorsement of the county's only female Olympian, Pauline Curley (*shown left*), to date.

Details of these projects and other schools based activities are outlined below.

i. FAST Kids / ii. Sportshall Athletics



With a start up grant from Social Entrepreneurs Ireland, Olympian James Nolan (*shown left*) established the FAST (Fun, Agility, Speed and Technical-proficiency) Kids project to address the poor motor skills evident among children in the county in 2008. James' work to date has involved the establishment of a promotional website (www.fastkids.ie); the delivery of a 10 week intervention in Daingean primary school establishing that improvements in core fundamental skills can be achieved with a focused intervention; and the expansion of the Sportshall Athletics programme across the county in the winter months.

Following James' 10 week intervention in Daingean, the 83 children from 4th to 6th class in the school were tested using the IFTA Agility Challenge, the same test used by Emma Bunworth in 2008 when she tested 727 children across the county. The results of the tests showed vast improvements in Daingean when compared to the baseline position of the county as illustrated in the table below.

Award achieved	Offaly start 2008 - 727 children tested	Daingean end 2009 - 83 children tested
Gold	0%	7%
Silver	0%	6%
Bronze	0.5%	12%
Blue	2.5%	47%
Green	15%	19%
Yellow	41%	9%
Orange	41%	0%

The Sportshall Athletics programme, which was piloted in 2008, was expanded to 20 schools in

2009. Up to 1,600 children participated on the two month programme, and over 1,100 children participated in the second annual inter schools fun competition held in St Mary's Youth and Community Centre over five days in December.



The event proved very popular, and the Partnership in conjunction with its counterparts in Laois, Meath and Westmeath, and FAST Kids made plans for an inter county jamboree as a first step to further expand the activity in Ireland.



Based on the success and potential of this activity, James will be making a further application to Social Entrepreneurs Ireland for support towards the expansion of this work. We also plan to further strengthen our working relationship with our international partners to bring new innovative programmes for children to Offaly.



Action from the Sportshall Athletics fun competition in December 2009



iii. Pauline Curley Inter Schools Simultaneous Marathon Relay

This project which was endorsed by Pauline Curley, and supported by the Health Services Executive under the Irish Sports Council's Women in Sport programme was a challenge designed to improve the basic endurance of teenage girls.

The challenge (which was based on the "Maratón Internacional" project) was an inter schools team relay race, with each team competing simultaneously at remote locations. Each participating team entered a team of 21 girls to run the 42km marathon with the baton being changed after every 200m. The teams were

set two challenges: -

1. To run the marathon distance, as a team, in a time faster than that achieved by Pauline when she qualified to run at the Olympics
2. To cover the distance in the fastest time of all competing teams



Five post primary schools entered teams in the competition - St Mary' Secondary School Edenderry, Sacred Heart Tullamore, Tullamore College, Presentation Secondary School Killina and St Brendan's Community School Birr.

The competition was a very exciting event with updates coming in at 12 - 15 minute intervals. The visit of Olympic medallist, national marathon record holder and Chief Executive Officer of the Irish Sports Council, John Treacy added to the sense of occasion. The race was eventually won by St Brendan's of Birr, with all five teams achieving the target of running faster than Pauline's qualifying time.



Action from the Pauline Curley Marathon Relay

iv. School Superstar programme

A new children's programme called "School Superstars" was developed by the Partnership in consultation with the Health Services Executive (HSE) for delivery in primary schools in the spring / summer period. This ten event programme which combined fitness and sports specific skills was based on the Superstars competition which was popular in the 1980s. The sports specific aspects of the programme were designed for delivery using equipment from the Buntús programme which is in most primary schools. The programme was made possible through the student placement programmes hosted by the Offaly Local Development Company in Banagher and the HSE. Offaly Sports Partnership is very grateful to Bronwyn Sheils and Catherine Collins who worked with the eight beneficiary schools on this programme.



Three of the 10 challenges in the School Super Star programme - Gaelic solo, skipping, hockey dribble and shoot

v. Other programmes including Buntús and Buntús Start



In addition to the Sports Hall Athletics and Super Star programmes, the Partnership continued to deliver the Buntús programme of the Irish Sports Council within primary schools. The table below lists all the primary schools that benefited from the work of the Partnership in 2009, and the specific programmes they participated in.

School	Buntús	School Superstar	FAST Kids / Sport-shall Athletics
Ceann Eitigh NS,		X	
Coolderry Central NS			X
Crinkle NS		X	
Daingean NS			X
Gaelcoil an Eiscir Riada			X
Geashill NS		X	X
Lumcloon NS	X		
Monasterois NS		X	X

School	Buntús	School Superstar	FAST Kids / Sport-
Naomh Mhuire NS,	X		
Scoil Bhríde, Croghan		X	
Scoil Bhríde, Kilcrut- tin			X
Scoil Chartaigh Naofa			X
Scoil Mhuire, Cloney- gowan			X
Scoil Mhuire, Kilcor- mac			X
Scoil Mhuire, Kilcrut- tin			X
Scoil Mhuire Naofa			X
Scoil Naomh Cholum- chille	X		
Scoil Naomh Eoin	X		X
Seir Kieran's NS,			X
Shinrone NS			X
St Callin's NS			X
St Colman's NS		X	X
St Francis NS			X
St Jospeh's NS			X
St Mary's NS		X	
St Philomena's NS			X
St Rynagh's NS		X	



In addition to these schools, 31 childcare providers benefited from their participation in the Buntús Start programme.



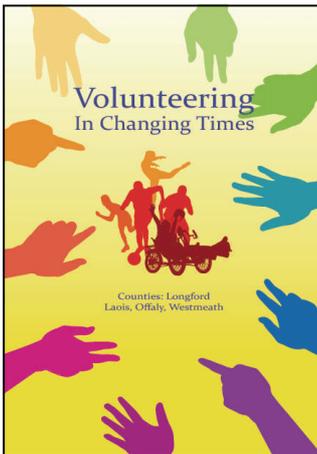
2. Support of voluntary efforts

i. Training



The Partnership's educational and training programme for volunteers was limited to the ongoing provision of Code of Ethics training in 2009. 72 volunteers completed this programme in 2009.

ii. Volunteering recruitment and retention booklet



In response to repeated concerns about reduced volunteering, the Sports Partnerships in the Midlands came together to produce a new resource. Entitled "Volunteering in Changing Times", this booklet set out to take a fresh look at how to identify, recruit and retain volunteers.

To coincide with the launch of the booklet, two workshops on the theme of volunteerism were held; one on the 10th June in the Killeshin Hotel Portlaoise, and the second one on the 11th June in Belvedere House, Mullingar.



The event in Portlaoise was organised by the Sports Partnerships in Laois and Offaly, and was attended by over 50 people representing 30 clubs. Speakers on the night included Miriam O'Callaghan, Offaly Sports Partnership Chair and former President of Cumann Camogaíochta na nGael; Niamh Dowler, Community Forum Support Worker, Offaly County Council; and Pat Ryan, Portlaoise Boxing Club.

The publication, "Volunteering in Changing Times", has been distributed to sports clubs on the Partnership's database, and is available to download from its website, www.offalysports.ie.

The Partnership has been contacted by a subgroup of CCnnG seeking to use the contents of this publication in developing its national volunteering policies.

3. Club Development Grant Scheme

20 clubs shared a total of € 15,000 under the 2009 scheme. Grants were allocated as follows -

Club	Amount allocated	Club	Amount allocated
Ballinamere Special Olympics	€700.00	Shinrone United Football	€700.00
Birr Camogie	€700.00	St Brendan's Athletics	€700.00
Birr Town Football	€900.00	St Carthage's Football	€600.00
Boyneside Tug of War	€600.00	Tullamore & District Angling	€500.00
Brosna Community Games	€700.00	Tullamore Camogie	€900.00
Doon GAA	€1,000.00	Tullamore Canoe	€1,000.00
Kinnitty Camogie	€700.00	Tullamore Hockey	€900.00
Lloyd Park Bowling	€600.00	Tullamore Ladies Football	€1,000.00
Lusmagh Camogie	€700.00	Tullamore Phoenix American Football	€600.00
Mucklagh School-boys / girls Football	€900.00	Wolftrap Cycling	€600.00

4. Pursuing investment opportunities for the advancement of sport in the county

Offaly Sports Partnership established an Investment in Sport working group in 2008, with the remit of establishing whether adequate funding could be secured to employ a dedicated Sports Development Officer for the county, and additional funding towards programme costs. Changes in economic circumstances and future staff embargoes resulted in the work of the group being deferred. However the group recommended that where opportunities arose they should be pursued.



In 2009, the Partnership worked with former Olympian James Nolan, who holds a degree in Sports Management, to develop an application to Social Entrepreneurs Ireland designed to address poor motor skills among children. The proposal sought to have James engaged for two years to transfer successful international children's programmes to Ireland. James secured a grant of €6,000 towards pilot work to demonstrate that the international programmes are transferable, and he will reapply for full two year funding again in 2010.



The Partnership continued to liaise with the two employers heading up funding applications to the Community Services Programme for peer led initiatives for Travellers and people with a disability. Cumulatively these applications exceeded €250,000 per annum. However, the programme is not funding new applications at the moment.



The Offaly Centre for Independent Living, was also supported in making a funding application for adapted sports equipment to the Health Services Executive / National Lottery Grant Scheme, and was awarded €15,000.



The Partnership established a Women in Sport working group to examine the participation of women within decision making structures of sport with a view to responding to an anticipated funding call from the "Equality for Women Measure" of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. This group was facilitated by Dr Linda Greene of the

Women's Education Research Resource Centre at University College Dublin. As the funding call did not materialize, the work of this group was deferred after five meetings.

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.

Limited progress was made in 2009 on the attainment of this strategic goal due to the ongoing suspension of the Sports Capital Programme. The Partnership did however undertake some valuable work that will have a future bearing on sports facilities in the county: -

1. An audit of sports facilities for the county has been completed, and this facilities directory has been posted on the Partnership's website (www.offalysports.ie). This exercise involved the collection of GIS references for the mapping of all facilities, and the forwarding of these references to the Department. The audit information will be used to inform future facility planning.
2. Inputs were made by the Partnership to the Network of County and City managers in relation to the draft "Facilities Strategy" which was circulated by the Department.
3. The Partnership participated on the "Infrastructure Working Group of Offaly GAA" in relation to the development of its strategic plan.

While it is difficult to show immediate impacts of our work in 2009, the Partnership remains committed to supporting infrastructural development in a conducive operating environment. The work done in 2009 will provide valuable information for future planning.

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. Communications;
3. Coordination and collaboration between key provider agencies in the county;
4. Effective structures.

Much of this work suffered in 2009 due to the changed economic circumstances, the loss of a communications budget from the Irish Sports Council, and the prioritisation of limited resources to frontline delivery.

1. Promoting the identity of Offaly Sports Partnership / 2. Communications

Work in this area was limited to: -

- Continual updating of our website (www.offalysports.ie) as an information source for the public. The provision of weekly news reports and the online availability of club and facility directories in 2009 have made our website more relevant to the sports sector.
- Usage of the local media to publicise the events and activities of the Partnership. The coverage of events such as the Pauline Curley Marathon Relay, the launch of the volunteering booklet and the ongoing success of the Midlands United Power Soccer team were well profiled within the media

Due to the loss of our communications budget, the quarterly newsletters of the Partnership were suspended. New low cost means of communicating to the sports sector will be examined in 2010.

3. Coordination and collaboration

The Partnership collaborated closely with other Partnerships in 2009. Examples of such collaborations included the development of the volunteering booklet by the Midlands Sports Partnerships (Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath), and the planning of an inter county sportshall jamboree in 2010 (Laois, Meath, Offaly and Westmeath).

The major area of collaboration with the sports sector during the year concerned the gathering of GIS references for the mapping of sports facilities in the county.

4. Effective structures

The use of sub structures and ad hoc working groups remains important to advancing the work of the Partnership. The Older Men in Sport (renamed Older People in Sport) working group continued to meet in 2009.

In the absence of further communication pertaining to the Community Services Programme, the Travellers in Sport working group was temporarily suspended.

Two new working groups were put in place to advance specific pieces of work: -

1. The Sports Ability Forum oversaw the development of a strategic plan to increase the participation of people with disabilities in sport and physical activity.
2. The Women in Sport working group examined the participation of women in sport within the decision making structures in the hope of making a funding application to the "Equality for Women Measure", administered by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

While changed economic conditions has meant that it was not possible to use all the deliberations of our various working groups to maximum effect, a lot of very valuable work has been done which may be drawn on again in the future.

Conclusion

2009 was quite a successful year despite a more difficult operating environment. The Partnership redeployed its limited human and time resources to secure front line services in a changed economic environment, and every effort was made to secure funding and derogation as necessary for staff contracts.

Meeting the 50% match funding requirement of the Irish Sports Council is going to be a major challenge in the future. Up until 2009, the Partnership was very effective in securing external funding, particularly from national sources. Most available funding streams have now dried up.

It is apt that 2010 will be a year of review and forward planning so we can determine together our future approach to securing support to increase participation.

