



**OFFALY
SPORTS
PARTNERSHIP**

An Irish Sports Council Initiative

OFFALY SPORTS PARTNERSHIP **STRATEGIC PLAN** **2011 - 2015**



EVERYONE'S PARTICIPATION COUNTS!

**THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL**
an organisation of the



Offaly County Development Board
GROWING OFFALY TOGETHER

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FORWARD



Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick, Chairman,
Offaly County Development Board



Declan Kirrane, Director Of Services,
Offaly County Council

On behalf of Offaly County Development Board, we wish to give our full endorsement and the endorsement of our members to this five year strategic plan of the Sports Partnership.

The County Development Board was instrumental in identifying the need for a Sports Partnership for Offaly back in 2002 and the Community & Enterprise Section of Offaly County Council took the lead in establishing the inter-agency Partnership in 2003. The signing of the first Heads of Agreement between Offaly County Council and the Irish Sports Council in 2006 was a key milestone in the evolution of the Sports Partnership in Offaly.

This first agreement ensured that core funding for targeted sports development flowed annually from the Irish Sports Council to the county. This support, together with other supports from local and national sources, have made a significant contribution to:

- Increasing participation in sport within the county
- Delivering targeted interventions for low participation groups
- Leading out inclusive programmes that are improving the fitness of the county's children
- Assisting sports clubs and other bodies secure supports for infrastructural development
- Providing a range of training courses for teachers, coaches and volunteer leaders

This new plan seeks to build on the achievements of the Partnership to date. It is based on an analysis of the current context within which the Partnership will operate while retaining its focus on its long term vision of *A county with a vibrant sports culture which is inclusive of all people.* We recommend that all local bodies and agencies should cooperate with the Sports Partnership in the attainment of this vision. As the body responsible for coordinating strategies for economic, social and cultural development in Offaly, we remain committed to monitoring the excellent work of Offaly Sports Partnership as set out in this plan and to being an advocate for its work.

“We want to pay tribute to everyone involved in the preparation of this plan and to thank the Irish Sports Council for its continued invaluable support.”

IRISH SPORTS COUNCIL

Since its establishment in 1999, the Irish Sports Council has produced four strategies. Central to these strategies has been the importance of establishing a sustainable national structure for local sports development to increase and then maintain levels of sports participation.

The Irish Sports Council considers the strategic planning process to be an essential step in the development of Local Sports Partnerships. This step can bring many benefits such as matching the needs of the local communities to the priorities of the Partnership. It is then possible to quantify the resources required effectively to achieve these priorities and answer local needs. This ensures that the plan can be a working document, which will show results over its lifetime.

This is the second strategy of the Co. Offaly Sports Partnership. It aims to build on the benefits accrued over the life of the first strategy and to ensure that the Co. Offaly Sports Partnership grows in strength and continues to be the key agency in providing opportunities for more people to become involved in sport and physical activity in the next few years and beyond.

This document is the final product of an intensive process of examination, evaluation, consultation and discussion in the future direction of the Partnership. I would like to thank all those who contributed to the strategy process and I wish everybody involved in the Co. Offaly Sports Partnership all the best for the future.



John Treacy, Chief Executive Officer,
The Irish Sports Council



Matt Connor, Patron
Offaly Sports Partnership

In many ways sport has defined us. Our county teams - initially in football, then in hurling and currently in camogie, have gained a deserved reputation for refusing to lie down, of overcoming great odds, of displaying positive and courageous characteristics. We have tasted success in many sporting disciplines, in both team and individual sports, and we have frequently boxed above our weight, delivering the knockout blow more often than seemed possible.

But sport is not always about success and I'm extremely pleased with the emphasis on participation in this plan. The benefits of sports participation for young people is recognised world-wide. It doesn't really matter what sport our young people play. Any sport hoping to engage our youth must compete with Playstations and X-Boxes, and internet-based Social Networking much more than its sister sports. The focus on participation will help young people choose a healthier way of life where real friendships can be developed and all

sports can benefit from that choice. Sporting participation is not only a youth need. All age-groups require support in accessing sports that match their capacity for physical activity and meet their changing needs. That can mean more indoor opportunities for active age groups or seeking suitable sporting opportunities for those just finishing competitive playing careers. It can mean seeking to somehow turn traditional individual sports like athletics into collective disciplines for participation purposes or working to make it easier for people to cycle more.

Sport is a marvellous life tool. For too long that tool has been handed only to our young, and very often only to the most talented young. Our challenge is to make that tool accessible to everyone and at the same time, to provide as many people as possible across all age-groups with the skills required to make the most of that tool. Better quality of life will result for all who master the tool. Sporting success will surely follow!

“ Sport has been good to Offaly. It has given us many great days. It has instilled in us a sense of pride in our county.”

OFFALY SPORTS PARTNERSHIP



Miriam O'Callaghan, Chairperson,
Offaly Sports Partnership

Moving into the first half of a new decade we are pleased to present our vision and plan for increasing participation in sport and physical activity in Offaly. This plan is based on our underlying belief that **everyone's participation counts** and is unique in that it is informed from a social equality perspective.

2010 was a year of reflection and review for us in Offaly Sports Partnership so we could develop a plan to build on our achievements to date and start to tackle the barriers to increasing participation which still exist.

The plan we have produced takes account of changed economic circumstances, both nationally and locally, and the new challenges which have emerged as a result. While acknowledging that we are facing into a more difficult operating environment we believe that this plan clearly sets out the priorities to be addressed and it is with confidence that we will move forward into the next five years.



Eamonn Henry, Coordinator,
Offaly Sports Partnership

We want to convey our sincere thanks to everyone that helped shape this five year plan:

- Martin Kennedy who conducted a comprehensive independent review of our work to date and the 42 people that gave of their time when consulted for the review.
- The groups and individuals that responded to our public call for written submissions
- The 100+ people that attended our planning workshops and the invited speakers that made valuable inputs
- The Board and Planning Group of Offaly Sports Partnership and all the agencies that they represent, who met as needed to progress all aspects of the plan
- The staff of the Partnership that prepared the various discussion papers in order for us to have a focused framework for progressing the planning process
- Offaly County Development Board and its member agencies for its endorsement of our plan.
- Offaly County Council for its continued hosting and support of our work
- John Treacy, CEO of the Irish Sports Council, and his team within the participation unit who have always been available to offer encouragement, support and advice
- We also wish to acknowledge the views, opinions and Departmental priorities as set out by Minister Mary Hanafin when she addressed a meeting, of Local Sports Partnerships in Tullamore in May 2010. These priorities were taken on board in the preparation of this plan.

“ We believe that with the cooperation of all key stakeholders that this plan will make a significant difference to achieving more active lifestyles for the population of the Faithful County.”

WHO ARE WE?

2.1

We are an inter agency and multi sectorial sub group of Offaly County Development Board. We are hosted within the Community & Enterprise Section of Offaly County Council. We receive annual core funding from the Irish Sports Council towards the realization of its national participation objectives at a local level.

OUR BACKGROUND

2.2

We were established in 2003 at a meeting convened by the Community & Enterprise Section of Offaly County Council. In the same year we developed our first submission to increase participation in sport and physical activity in Co. Offaly.

For three years Offaly County Council hosted students to help advance some of our priorities. In 2006 the Irish Sports Council and Offaly County Council signed Heads of Agreement concerning the hosting, governance and funding of our Sports Partnership. Following this we joined the national network of Local Sports Partnerships and we received our first core funding grant from the Irish Sports Council. A Sports Partnership Coordinator was appointed at the end of 2006.

In 2007 we expanded our Board to include all relevant stakeholder agencies and sectors. Following lengthy consultations our first strategic plan ("Offaly Sports Partnership Strategic Plan 2008 – 2010 inclusive") was developed. In 2008 we launched the aforementioned plan and a further two staff members were appointed – an administrator and a Sports Inclusion Disability Officer.

For the past three years we have delivered on our first strategic plan. Based on an external review, learning to date, the taking of submissions and further consultation we have developed this new strategic plan for the coming five years.



John Treacy,
Niall Sweeney and
members of Offaly Sports
Partnership

*A meeting to agree terms of
Offaly County Council's hosting
of the Partnership 2006*

OUR REMIT

2.3

Our remit is to achieve sustained local **increases in participation levels in sport, physical activity and active living** in Co. Offaly in line with the national participation objectives of the Irish Sports Council. This is reflected in our vision and mission.

OUR VALUES

2.4

The over-arching theme of this strategic plan, “everyone’s participation counts”, is underpinned by the **values of inclusion, partnership, respect, acknowledgement and equality.**

Inclusion – we seek to be people centred in our work in order to ensure that our interventions are both responsive to, and accepted by the maximum number of people that we target.

Partnership – we seek to work in partnership with all stakeholders committed to increasing participation in order to maximise impacts for our county.

Respect – we will be respectful of all people with whom we work for the advancement of our goals.

Acknowledgement – we recognise and acknowledge that the task of maintaining and increasing participation levels in sport within our county is huge and is something that we cannot do alone. We are therefore very appreciative of the efforts of all people and organisations that contribute to this, particularly those that give freely of their own time to do so.

Equality – we are committed to a culture of equality to advance participation opportunities for all, to this end we have developed an equality statement to guide our work.

EQUALITY STATEMENT

2.4.1

Offaly Sports Partnership believes that all people, irrespective of ability, age, cultural background, educational attainment, ethnicity, family status, gender, marital status, physical, mental and intellectual capabilities, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation, are entitled to enjoy the benefits of improved physical and mental health derived from their participation in sport and physical activity.

We recognise that not all people have equal opportunity to participate in sport and we commit ourselves to ensuring that our programmes reach out to under represented groups and to advocate for a society where inclusive participation becomes the norm.



Vision

Offaly to be a county with a vibrant sports culture which is inclusive of all people

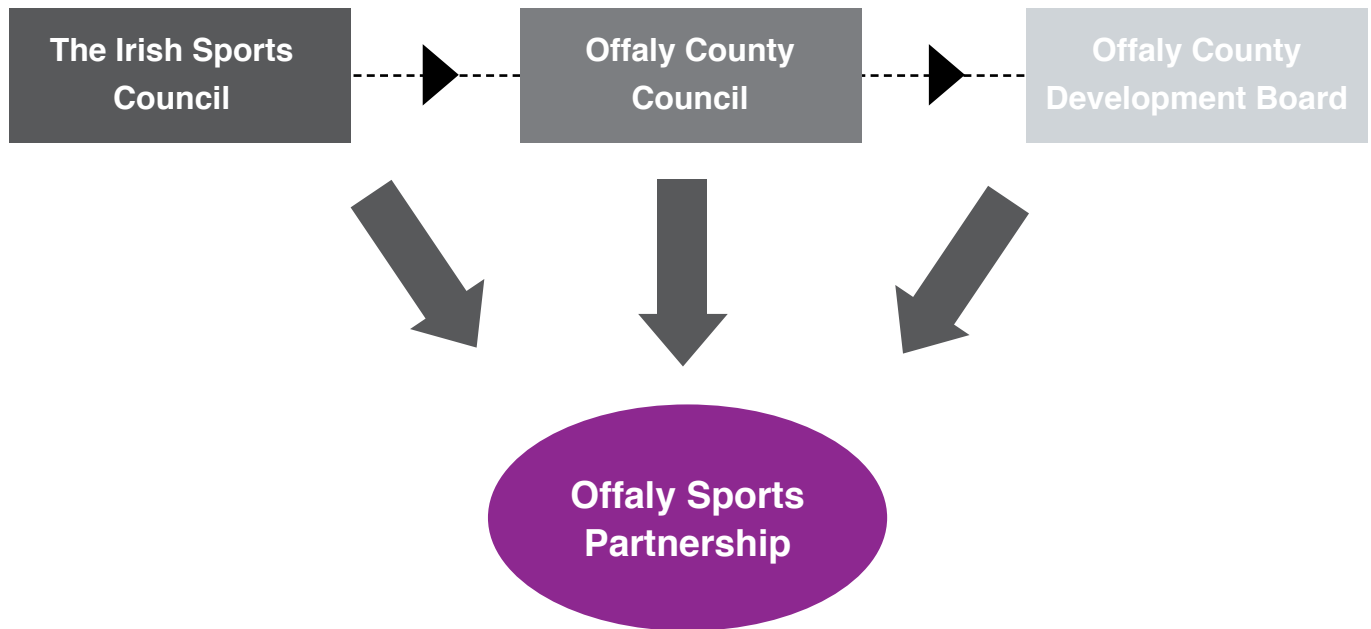
Mission

To actively support inclusive measures to increase participation in sport in Offaly



OUR STRUCTURE

As an inter agency and multi sectoral sub group of Offaly County Development Board, hosted by Offaly County Council and externally funded by the Irish Sports Council, the roles of the various bodies associated with our work are as illustrated below and described across:



2.5.1 The Irish Sports Council

- Has signed Heads of Agreement with Offaly County Council which hosts the Sports Partnership
- Approves, in whole or in part, the annual work programmes and core budgets for the Sports Partnership
- Provides core funding for the work of the Sports Partnership to the County Council
- Provides information, advice and support to the Board and staff of the Sports Partnership
- Monitors programme delivery and financial expenditure of the Sports Partnership

2.5.2 Offaly County Council

- Has signed Heads of Agreement with the Irish Sports Council
- Is the employer of the Sports Partnership staff (recruited according to the HR policies of the County Council)
- Receives and administers the annual core funding grant of the Irish Sports Council
- Provides administrative, IT and other back up supports to the Sports Partnership
- Facilitates the work of the County Development Board through its Community & Enterprise section (within which the Sports Partnership is based)
- Has a range of policies against which daily operations of the Sports Partnership are conducted (e.g. HR, financial, Health & Safety)

2.5.3 Offaly County Development Board

- The inter agency, multi sectoral parent body of the Sports Partnership
- Elects from its membership a liaison officer to sit on the Board of Offaly Sports Partnership
- Receives the annual priorities and regular updates from the Sports Partnership)

2.5.4 Offaly Sports Partnership

- A sub group of Offaly County Development Board comprised of a Board of sixteen representatives of key stakeholder agencies, sporting bodies and public representatives
- Develops and oversees implementation of the strategic plan and annual work plans
- Approves the annual SPEAK* report and financial returns of the Partnership to the Irish Sports Council
- Elects at its AGM, an officer Board and executive to act on its behalf between meetings
- Approves the terms of reference for working groups to advance specific pieces of work, and elects from its membership, a chairperson for each working group

SPEAK (Strategic Planning Evaluation and Knowledge) is the common self evaluation tool used in all Local Sports Partnerships to record details of the local operating environment, resources available to the Sports Partnership, and the outputs and impacts of the Sports Partnership's work each year.

OUR BOARD

2.6

A major strength of our Partnership is the calibre and commitment of our Board members to the advancement of sport and physical activity. While representing stakeholder agencies or sectoral interests, the members also have huge sporting experience and knowledge.*

OUR STAFF

2.7

We currently have a staff team of three (a Coordinator, an Administrator and a Sports Inclusion Disability Officer) who are very committed to their work and also have a keen interest and involvement in sport.*



Since obtaining formal designation and core funding from the Irish Sports Council our key achievements to date have included:

- Delivery of a range of training courses for 369 club coaches and volunteers
- Provision of sports equipment and teacher training to over 90% of primary schools in the county
- Delivery of fun filled fitness programmes to 50% of primary schools
- Creation of participation opportunities for over 300 people with a disability
- Provided advice and technical support to clubs applying for capital funding to the National Lottery
- Provided small grants totalling €112,500 to 127 clubs for projects to increase participation locally
- Delivered community based leader training and physical activity programmes to 1,187 adults in the county
- Delivered a number of programmes reaching out to low participation groups such as Travellers, migrants, older people, teenage girls and women, and disadvantaged young people

An independent review of our work by external researcher Martin Kennedy has verified the enormous scope and depth of all our undertakings and endeavours. Summary findings from this review will be outlined in the next chapter when setting out the context for this, our new plan. A copy of the review can be viewed and downloaded from:

www.offalysports/publications
("OSP Review 2008 - 2010")



THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

3.1.1 The Irish Sports Council

The impetus for the establishment and funding of a national network of Local Sports Partnerships came from the Irish Sports Council. Since 2000 the Sports Council has produced four 3-year strategic statements. Each of these strategies have affirmed and reaffirmed the Sport's Council's commitment to increasing participation and the role of Sports Partnerships to drive this objective at a local level. Given the importance of the Irish Sports Council in sustaining the work of Local Sports Partnerships, its national participation priorities must be incorporated into any local strategy.

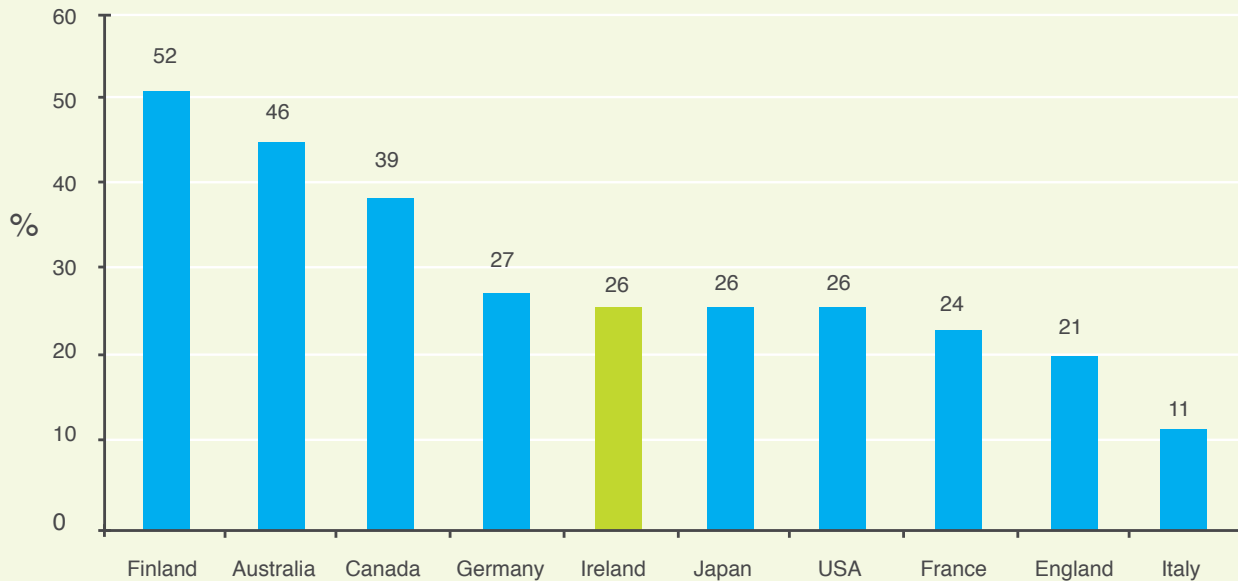


3.1.2 Current Strategic Statement of the Irish Sports Council

The current Strategic Statement of the Irish Sports Council (“2009 – 2011. *Building Sport for Life: The Next Phase*”) is unique in that it incorporates the first national participation strategy. This strategy envisions **“a more active and healthy Ireland”** and has as its Mission to **“Foster and encourage a culture of Active Participation, supporting opportunities for access to sport and physical activity”**.

The strategy notes that Ireland currently ranks approximately mid-way between those countries with the highest levels of participation and those with the lowest and it aims to move Ireland closer to the higher level participation countries such as Finland, New Zealand and Canada (see diagram across)

International comparison of participation in sport and exercise by adults (proportion who participated in moderate to vigorous sport or exercise lasting at least 30 minutes on three days during the previous week)



The Sports Council sets out both specific, and yet to be defined, participation targets for the medium to long term:

- To increase the percentage of the adult population participating in sport from 33% (in 2007) to 45% by 2020. (This equates to a 1% net increase in adult participation levels per annum)
- To reduce the numbers of adults who are sedentary from 18% (in 2007) to 13% by 2020 (a net reduction of approximately 0.42% per annum)
- Appropriate targets to increase participation in children's sport and physical activity to be set based on research being undertaken in this area (see section 3.1.4 on children's participation)
- To grow, in line with the overall participation targets, the number of people taking part in locally delivered participation programmes of Local Sports Partnerships; the number of women and girls taking part in "Women in Sport" programmes; and the number of clubs and groups receiving advice and support from the Local Sports Partnership network

3.1.3 Target Groups of the Irish Sports Council

The current strategic statement of the Irish Sports Council names under represented groups in Irish sport requiring specific targeting, namely older people, disadvantaged communities, women and people with a disability.

Other groups eligible for targeted support include the unemployed, Travellers and youth at risk.

In an address to the Local Sports Partnership network in May 2010, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Mary Hanafin TD asked for a strong focus on:

- Children and young people to afford them a positive introduction to sport
- People with a disability
- Girls and women
- Initiatives to reach the unemployed



3.1.4 Children's Participation in Sport and Physical Activity

In October 2010 the Irish Sports Council launched the Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity study. This detailed survey outlined a series of findings under the following six categories:

1. Physical activity and health indices
2. Physical education
3. Extra-curricular sport
4. Extra-school sport
5. Active travel
6. Sedentary behaviour

The major headline finding from this survey was:

- Only 19% of primary school children and 12% of post primary children meet the Department of Health and Children's health goal of at least 60 minutes moderate to vigorous physical activity daily

A recommendation that the above rates of participation be increased to 30% and 20% respectively by the year 2020 was made. Based on the findings of the study, a national baseline of fifteen indicators was established and fifteen medium to long term targets were recommended by the researchers.**

CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

3.2

3

Three very definite challenges requiring local action arise from the national context as set by the Sports Council's strategy

1. How will we increase adult participation levels locally in line with the targets set out in the national participation strategy?

2. How can we contribute to further increasing children's participation in line with the recommendations of the Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity study?

3. How will we ensure that under represented groups are targeted in a manner that will result in sustained participation levels?

3.2.1 Increasing adult participation levels locally

Taken at face value, the targets of an annual net increase of 1% per annum in adult participation rates would appear attainable, as would the target of reducing sedentary lifestyles by 0.42% per annum. When converted into actual numbers of adults in Co. Offaly, these targets are as follows:

- An annual net increase of at least 538 adults participating in sport and physical activity (or almost 2,700 in the lifetime of this five year strategic plan)
- An annual net reduction of sedentary living by at least 226 adults (or over 1,100 in the lifetime of this five year strategic plan)

Overcoming this challenge becomes more ambitious should we endeavour to achieve the national participation target of 45% by 2020. According to the annual report of the Irish Sports Monitor for 2008, *"living in Dublin city, Offaly and (especially) Westmeath continued to have a significantly negative influence on participation, while living in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown continued to have a strong positive influence"*. The report goes on to show participation levels in the Midlands (at 26.8%) to be the lowest of eight regions surveyed. Thus for Offaly to work to the 2020 target of 45%, annual net increases of 1.65% of the adult population will be needed. This equates to a net increase of 888 adults per annum (or almost 4,500 in the lifetime of this five year strategic plan). Clearly the attainment of this target will require a concerted drive focused on the general adult population right across the entire county.

3.2.2 Increasing the participation of children locally

Targets for increasing participation in sport and physical activity by children have yet to be approved by the Irish Sports Council. Achieving the main targets proposed by the research team that undertook the Children's Participation in Sport and Physical Activity study would require the following:

- A net increase of at least 929 primary school children and 422 post primary school children from across Co. Offaly reaching the Department of Health and Children's health goal of at least 60 minutes moderate to vigorous physical activity daily by the year 2020

The table in Appendix 2 converts all the fifteen baseline figures and recommended targets into actual numbers of children in Co. Offaly.**

An Alternative Approach to Children's Participation

In a recently published paper* our coordinator Eamonn Henry and local Olympian James Nolan (founder of the FAST^ Kids project) put forward an alternative view regarding the measuring of children's participation. They argue for an approach where a child's ability to perform an appropriate set of physical exertions relative to age and gender is measured and compared against expected universal norms – a concept they refer to as the “national fitness age”. They also make the case for improving the nation's fitness age over time.

In making the case for an output based measure, rather than a measure based on inputs (i.e. time spent in training sessions etc) they contend that the quality of a child's participation and lifestyle can be better gauged and that an over emphasise on body size can be avoided. This approach can also serve as the foundation of a long term player/athlete development model with flexibility and fundamental motor skills development being encouraged at a young age as opposed to an over emphasis on sport specific specialisation when a child's ABCs (agility, balance and coordination) are not fully developed.

In our work to date we have used a number of the child friendly tests of the SPORTSHALL development team in the UK. *** Our use of the various tests suggests that children in Co. Offaly lag behind children in the UK in terms of agility, balance and coordination but are ahead of them in terms of endurance capacity

*Sport and Fitness –
The Case for Child Friendly Fitness Testing and Monitoring in Aspirations for Ireland,
New Ways Forward. 2010, Edited by Susannah Kingston, The Columba Press, Dublin

3.2.3 Ensuring that under represented groups are targeted for sustainable participation

Our strategy for the coming five years will be delivered from an equality perspective as enshrined in the equality statement that we have adopted. Our work to date has been successful in reaching out to a large number of under represented groups. This has been independently verified by an external review of our first plan. Making our programmes more sustainable is a challenge that was highlighted. Further details are contained in the following section which outlines the local context.



THE LOCAL CONTEXT

3.3

In presenting the local context for the next five years the following will be summarised:

- Changes locally since the production of our first strategic plan
- Findings and recommendations from the independent review of our first strategy
- Submissions received from the sports sector and the public



3.3.1 Local Changes

The most notable local change since the production of our first strategic plan has been of an economic nature and include:

- A marked increase in the level of unemployment. Currently there are 8,838 persons signing for unemployment benefits or assistance at employment exchanges in the county compared to 3,136 in 2007
- Reduced disposable income
- The commencement of outward migration from the county

It is reasonable to conclude that individual spending on sport has reduced during the economic downturn as had investment in sporting facilities following suspension of the Sports Capital Programme in 2008. However a number of very positive developments appear to have occurred in the period:

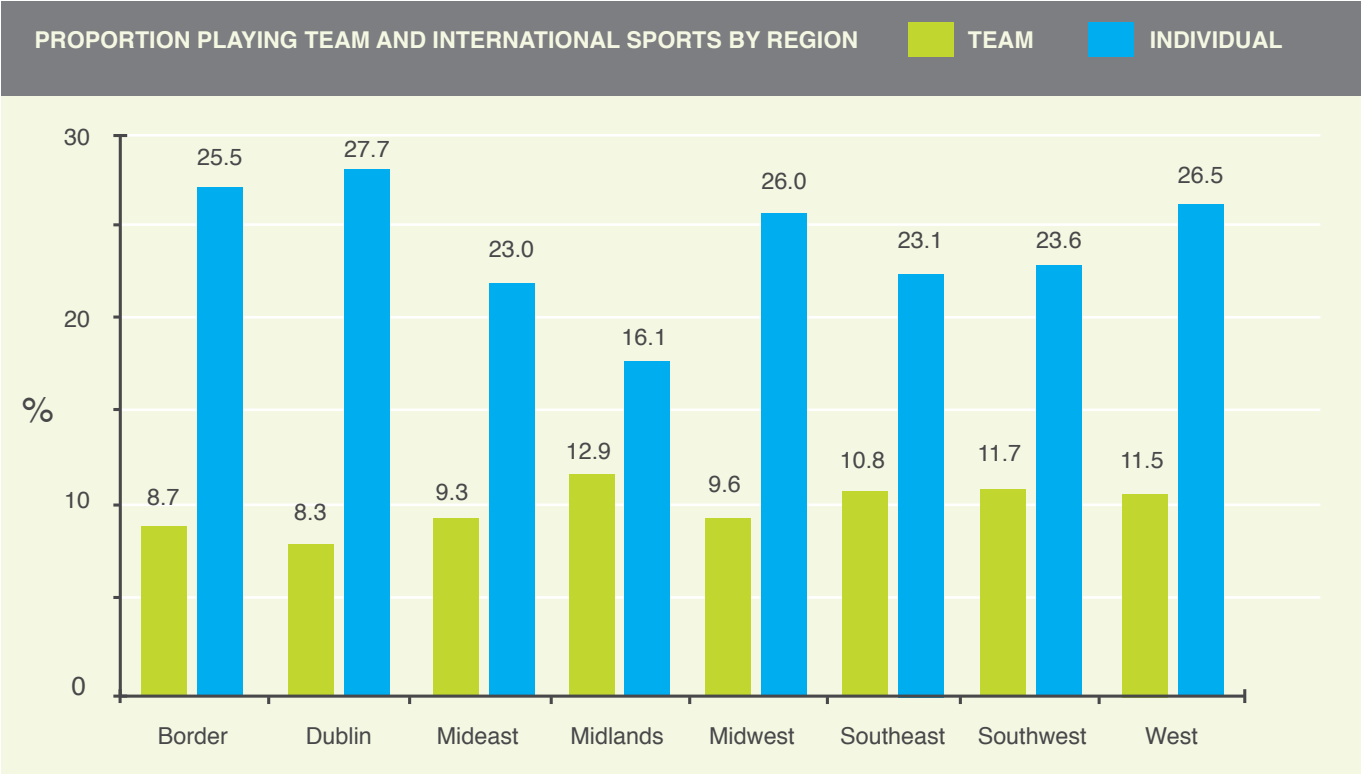
- There seems to be greater involvement in community based activity with membership of Offaly Community Forum increasing to 370 registered groups compared to just over 200 in 2007
- The number of sports clubs in the county has increased. When we produced our first strategy there were 247 clubs on our database - currently there are 280
- The level of participation in team sport in the county is among the highest in Ireland. Whereas the Irish Sports Monitor showed the Midlands as having the lowest rates of overall participation (at 26.8%), it noted the opposite to be the case for team sports (see diagram across)
- Despite suspension of the Sports Capital Programme new public facilities have been developed or completed in the county since the production of our first plan



O' Connor Park, Tullamore



Shannon Harbour



3.3.2 External Review

A detailed external review of our first strategic plan was undertaken from May – August 2010. A total of 42 people representing 27 stakeholders were interviewed as part of the review. In summary the review found:

- A clarity of vision and purpose
- The Sports Partnership attempting to deliver on a very broad agenda
- A high level of enthusiasm and commitment among board and staff
- A professional ethic, approach and systematic planning and delivery of work commitments
- The full completion of over two thirds of planned actions
- Reductions in financial resources for the work of the Sports Partnership
- A need to be realistic going forward regarding what might be achieved within such a broad agenda and within a more difficult operating environment
- Very positive impacts made with work in schools and inclusion work with a number of target groups (e.g. people with a disability, older people, migrants and Travellers)
- Good relations with sporting organisations (big and small), but different agendas and cultures at times (e.g. performance versus inclusion)
- Openness on the part of stakeholders for greater engagement and dialogue
- Tensions exist on questions of:
 - Whether to drive developments to make things happen or to advocate that others lead?
 - Whether to continue with delivery of innovative approaches, which has been a major strength of the Sports Partnership, or to invest more time in equipping others to deliver?
 - What should be the future scope of our work at a time of diminishing resources?

THE EXTERNAL REVIEW MADE EIGHT RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Strong input of staff needed in determining details of the strategy
2. Continue development of inclusive fitness work with children in the primary schools sector and explore how the capacity of the bigger sporting organisations (such as the GAA) can be linked to this programme
3. Support for the disability sector to remain a key priority
4. Explore, through a partnership-based working group, an initiative for increasing participation among the unemployed
5. In respect of specific target groups
- the Partnership should not put undue time and energy into taking up local roles but should prioritize capacity building opportunities among members of the target groups and provide programme options to those groups that demonstrate greatest capacity to sustain them
6. While recognising the need for long term sustainability, the piloting of new innovative delivery approaches should remain part of any future mix of the Partnership's activity
7. The Partnership should recognise its limited scope to work on club development; therefore interventions must be "strategic" and based on ongoing dialogue with clubs
8. The Partnership build into its annual work plan opportunities for structured dialogue with key social and sports organisations in the county

A copy of the external review can be viewed and downloaded from www.offalysports/publications ("OSP Review 2008 - 2010")

3.3.3 Submissions received

Following completion of the strategic review the Partnership made a call for public submissions. It also hosted a planning workshop, attended by over 100 people in September 2010. A number of the aspirations of those that responded are summarized in the table across.



SEPTEMBER 2010, AN TAOISEACH BRIAN COWEN ADDRESSING PLANNING WORKSHOP WITH JOHN TREACY, CEO, THE IRISH SPORTS COUNCIL AND CLLR EDDIE FITZPATRICK, CHAIRMAN, OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

Prioritize getting more children and young people involved in sport and physical activity

Create a greater variety of sport and physical activities for children

Expand the SPORTSHALL programme and introduce award schemes

Implement a player pathway programme in the county

Look at other approaches to physical activity for people not interested in sport (e.g. dance)

Deliver programmes like active ladies and a range of other initiatives for people over the age of 30 (e.g. masters football, soccer, basketball etc)

Employ a Sports Development Officer for the county

Deliver a range of inter generational activities

Deliver a range of multi cultural activities

Use local successes to develop sport to target groups (e.g. success of county's camogie team, Shane Lowry's golfing achievements etc)

Have clubs pool resources to set up a sports science facility within the county

Make club development applications less cumbersome and translate into other languages

Amend board structure to have non Irish nationals represented, teachers and the leisure industry

Develop opportunities for mass participation events within the county that will also make an economic return to the county

Support local area planning for sport and physical activity (particularly in rural areas) with a focus on low or no cost participation options which will:

- Use local school facilities, club facilities and community facilities for delivery of activities
- Exploit the local environment for maximum benefit
- Train local unemployed people with an interest in sport to lead out planned activities under the supervision of a local committee

THEMES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Following analysis of the national context and Sports Council priorities, findings from the external review, submissions received and deliberations from the planning workshop, the Board agreed the overarching theme of **everyone's participation counts** for this plan and the following individual priority themes for the next five years:

1. Lifelong Involvement in Sport

To support a culture of lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity in Offaly

2. Sustainable Inclusion

To deliver measures to involve, sustain and mainstream the inclusion of under represented groups in sport and physical activity in the county

3. Dialogue to Increase Participation

To facilitate dialogue between stakeholders to support sustained increases in participation

4. The Marketing of Sport

To market sport and the Sports Partnership inside and outside the county





PRIORITY THEME I:

4.I

LIFELONG INVOLVEMENT IN SPORT

STRATEGIC GOAL: To support a culture of lifelong involvement in Sport and physical activity in offaly

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	OUTCOMES
4.1.1 To support quality introductions to sport and improvements in the fundamental motor skills of children up to the age of 12 years	Support play based initiatives for children of pre school age	Improved introduction to sport for toddlers and young children
	Use the FAST (Fun, Agility, Speed and Technical-proficiency) approach in all programmes targeting children of primary school age	
	Be a leader in promoting innovative programmes of international good practise for children	Children that are fitter, more agile and with improved endurance capacity (which can be verified with age appropriate tests)
	Collaborate with Community Games and governing bodies of minority sports in the promotion of a range of sporting opportunities for children of primary school age	Greater range of sporting opportunities available for children of primaru school age
4.1.2 To reduce drop out from sport and physical activity in teenage years	Collaborate with the National Governing Bodies of Sport to promote a range of sporting opportunities for teenagers	Greater range of sports available for teenagers
	Collaborate with community based organisations and youth organisations to promote a range of recreational sporting opportunities for teenagers	Greater range of recreational sporting opportunities for teenagers)
	Collaborate with post primary schools to promote a range of sporting and physical activity opportunities for teenagers	Greater range of sporting and physical activity opportunities for teenagers in post primary schools (particularly extra curricular activity)
	Positively promote initiatives to address the imbalance of opportunities for teenage girls to participate in sport and physical activity	Greater participation of girls in team and individual sports, and physical activity)

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	OUTCOMES
4.1.3 a To increase participation in sport and physical activity among the adult population of the county (in line with the Irish Sports Council's target of a 1% increase in the participation of adults in sport and physical activity per annum) 4.1.3 b To improve the retention levels of adults in sport during their adult years	Promote adult participation in mass participation events (e.g. marathons, triathlons, cycle tours, etc)	Greater participation of adults from Co. Offaly in mass participation events
	Support initiatives designed to increase the continued participation of older people in physical activity	Greater continued participation of older people in physical activity
	Support initiatives designed to empower communities to develop and implement locally relevant plans to increase participation in sport and physical activity through the exploitation of local resources (e.g. facilities, natural resources, personnel, etc)	Increased participation opportunities for people in the community
	Collaborate with the National Governing Bodies of Sport to promote a range of masters games and recreational sport for adults	Greater use of local resources in the delivery of sport and physical activity
		More adults over the age of 35 years returning to sport or continuing to participate in sport
4.1.4 To develop a culture of inter generational participation in sport and physical activity in the county	Support initiatives to increase inter generational participation in sport and physical activity	Increased opportunities for inter generational participation in sport and physical activity
	Support the reestablishment of traditional sports days in the county that include inter generational sporting activities	
4.1.5 To strengthen and expand the sports sector in the county	Provide a range of relevant information, training and advice to the sports sector	More clubs, more sporting codes and more volunteers in the county
	Develop (and take into communities) a generic "Start a Club and Volunteering" Road show	
	Provide quality coach/tutor training for volunteers	
	Explore the potential for providing suitable work experience for volunteers in sport in sport within their communities	
4.1.6 To support the provision of improved sports facilities in a changing environment	Review, on an annual basis, opportunities for sports capital development and advise sporting and community organisations accordingly	Co. Offaly receiving a reasonable proportion of any new funding for sports capital development (relative to the size of its population)

PRIORITY THEME 2:

SUSTAINABLE INCLUSION

4.2

STRATEGIC GOAL: To deliver measures to involve, sustain and mainstream the inclusion of under represented groups[^] in sport and physical activity in the county

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	OUTCOMES
4.2.1 To further increase the participation of under represented groups in sport and physical activity	Deliver, in partnership with stakeholders, a range of innovative participation programmes for the 8 groups identified	Short term increases in people from under represented target groups taking part in sport
4.2.2 To improve retention of under represented groups in sport and physical activity	Ensure that the lifelong participation programmes of the Partnership specifically target the retention of under represented target groups	Culture of inclusion supporting the retention of low participation groups in sporting activity
4.2.3 To develop capacity among under represented target groups to lead sports and physical activity programmes	<p>Provide opportunities for people from under represented target groups to achieve coaching qualifications and referee badges</p> <p>Provide a liaison link between trained personnel from under represented target groups with mainstream clubs of their sporting preference</p>	Greater involvement of under represented target groups in the mainstream sports sector
4.2.5 To break down barriers to participation experienced by under represented groups	Establish one working group each year to examine barriers to participation experienced by a specific group and make recommendations as necessary as to what should be done to address these	More strategically focused responses to the needs of target groups

[^] Priority Groups identified - People with a disability, The unemployed, Women and Girls, Older people, Youth at risk, Low income communities (Rural and Urban), Travellers and people of an ethnic minority.

DIALOGUE TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION

STRATEGIC GOAL: To facilitate dialogue between stakeholders to support sustained increases in participation

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	OUTCOMES
4.3.1 To improve the effectiveness of Offaly Sports Partnership through enhanced structures and sub structures	Establish and facilitate two working groups each year whose remit will be the attainment of increased participation through focused planning and/or interventions around specific under represented groups, or through pursuit of a thematic priority	Increased participation as a result of the deliberations of working groups and follow up actions by the Partnership and/ or local stakeholders
	Conduct an in-depth mid term review of this plan in 2013 and review the make up of the Board accordingly	Deliberations from review and any reconstituting of the Board strengthening the delivery capacity of the Partnership
4.3.2 To further increase participation among under represented groups and within rural locations	Develop 3 target group specific plans in the lifetime of this strategic plan to further increase their participation Facilitate 3 rural communities to develop and manage delivery of local participation plans based on an analysis of local small area participation and of local resources and environment	Participation levels of specific under represented groups and locations targeted further increased
4.3.3 Improve collaborations with governing bodies of sport and local stakeholders	Create space each year for in-depth discussions with at least one governing body of sport, and at least one local stakeholder to explore possibilities for joint collaborations to further increase participation	Quality collaborative undertakings as a result of discussions

PRIORITY THEME 4:

THE MARKETING OF SPORT

4.4

STRATEGIC GOAL: To market sport and the Sports Partnership inside and outside the county

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	OUTCOMES
4.4.1 To create, in the public mind, an immediate association between the Offaly Sports Partnership brand and sports participation for all	To widely promote the logo of the Partnership in all communications, public meetings, events, conferences, public awareness campaigns, on tee shirts and medallions for mass participation events and to seek local and national media coverage of the work of the Sports Partnership	The logo of Offaly Sports Partnership is known by a large proportion of the population and is positively associated with participation for all
4.4.2 To increase economic returns from sport to Co. Offaly while increasing local participation in the process	Host a range of participation events in the county to be marketed internally and externally and to include provision for advanced preparation by local training groups	Greater number of participation events in the county Local increases in participation from local events
4.4.3 To enhance the income earning potential of the local sports sector	Explore opportunities for enhanced business planning of sport and sport provision by a select number of groups within the sports sector	Increased income generating potential in the sector
4.4.4 To increase participation in conjunction with sporting success within the county	To develop and promote a range of events with the endorsement of successful sporting teams and sports persons from the county	County's sporting heroes marketing sports participation

The four strategic goals and associated objectives set out in this document outline the focus and intent of Offaly Sports Partnership up to the end of 2015. It is recognised, however, that new opportunities and ideas will evolve over the course of the plan and that the plan is subject to external factors and constraints such as personnel, funding and policy change. In order to manage the delivery of this Strategic Plan most effectively, annual Operational Plans will be produced at the beginning of each year outlining measurable actions, lead agencies and performance indicators.

FINANCING THE PLAN

5.2

Irish Sports Council Funding

The Irish Sports Council provides annual core funding to assist Local Sports Partnerships under the headings of:

- Core Staff
- Overheads and Administration
- National Participation Programmes
- Education and Training

Additionally Local Sports Partnerships can currently apply to the Irish Sports Council for part funding of:

- Targeted local participation programmes
- Employment of a Local Sports Inclusion Disability Officer
- Local Women in Sport projects
- Local projects adhering to the eligibility criteria of the HSE funded “Get Ireland Active Programme”

In line with the recommendation of the Fitzpatrick Review of Local Sports Partnerships in 2005, match funding (in cash or in kind) of at least 50% is ordinarily required

5.2.2 Other Funding sources

To complement the core funding provided by the Irish Sports Council additional funding for specific actions in the annual operational plans will be sought from:

- Partner agencies locally
- Statutory bodies, other government departments and the European Union should opportunities arise
- Participants fees in certain circumstances
- Corporate funding or private sponsorship towards certain events

As we commence local delivery of this strategic plan, we recognise that there will be fewer opportunities to secure external financial support towards the delivery of our plan. In this regard more effective partnering arrangements will be needed to maximise the impact of scarce resources.

HUMAN RESOURCES

5.3

We will endeavour to maintain current staffing levels and to engage external tutors as necessary to assist in rolling out new and innovative programmes.

However, given the need to achieve substantial improvements in participation levels right across Co. Offaly, access to high quality committed and enthusiastic volunteer sports leaders will be essential. In conjunction with local agencies, we will endeavour to provide quality training for

volunteers and persons eligible to participate on labour market initiatives to equip them with the skills necessary to lead out local participation projects. We will also endeavour to provide locally based work experience opportunities for the aforementioned trainees and for third level students of sport and recreation programmes.

While delivery of individual actions and programmes will vary, we will attempt to combine an approach that marries the twin aims of innovative delivery with the attainment of a legacy of long term sustained increases in participation.

We recognise that once off interventions will not necessarily result in continued participation. We are also aware that should we continually take the lead we will create dependencies that will reduce the likelihood of local sustainability.

Delivery of individual participation projects will be generally based on a four step approach over a maximum of three years –

- **Step 1** – Pilot a local innovative project
- **Step 2** – Review and expand the pilot to more locations or groups. Develop plans for local delivery
- **Step 3** – Train local leaders and oversee their local delivery
- **Step 4** – Phase out and hand over

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

5.5

We will monitor and evaluate this plan and our work on an ongoing basis:

- Activity reports from the coordinator and working groups will be reviewed regularly and checked against annual work plans
- An annual report, which will attempt to gauge the outcome of our work will be presented to our AGM
- We will conduct an annual review of our work for the Irish Sports Council using the SPEAK monitoring system
- We will study findings from independent research reports as these relate to us, especially the Irish Sports Monitor
- We will undertake an in-depth mid term review of this plan in 2013 (to include a review of structures)
- We will undertake a comprehensive external review of this plan in 2015 in preparation for a new plan in 2016

APPENDIX

CURRENT BOARD AND STAFF OF OFFALY SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

MEMBERS



Clodagh Armitage
The HSE



Sergeant Ollie Baker
An Garda Síochána



Padraig Boland
Offaly Local
Development Company



Karl Bond Senior
Sports Sector – FAI



Jude Feehan
Sports Sector-
Community Games



Eamon Flynn
Sports Sector – GAA



Tom Godley
Sports Sector – Athletics



Barry Keegan
The Private Sector

STAFF



Eamonn Henry
Sports Coordinator



Councillor John Carroll
Public Representative



Kathleen Carroll
Offaly Sports-ability Forum



Monica Cleary
Offaly County Council



Councillor Eddie Fitzpatrick
Offaly County
Development Board



Grainne McIntyre
Sports Sector – Camogie



Joe Meegan
Third Level Sector -
AIT



Miriam O'Callaghan
Offaly VEC



Councillor Danny Owens
Public Representative



Claire Grehan
Sports Inclusion
Disability Officer



Olivia Murphy
Administrator

APPENDIX

2

BASELINES AND TARGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

The table below is reproduced from the Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study. It sets out the recommended targets that the research team are making for the medium to longer term. Specific targets are yet to be agreed by the Irish Sports Council. The percentages contained in the recommendations have been converted into actual numbers of children in Co. Offaly using stationary figures of 8,446 children of primary school age and 5,274 young people of post primary age in the county. These figures are highlighted in white

ACTIVITY TYPE	CURRENT STATUS (2009)	ACTIVITY GOAL	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
General Physical Activity	19% of primary children (1,605 of 8,446) meet DHC health goal of > 60min MVPA daily. 12% of post-primary children (633 of 5,274) meet the DHC health goal of > 60 mins of MVPA daily	Increase to minimum of 30% (2,534). Increase to minimum of 20% (1,055)	2020 2020	DHC, DES, DTCS, DT, DEHLG.
Physical Education	35% of primary pupils (2,956 of 8,446) received the DES minimum requirement of 60 minutes per week 10% post-primary pupils (527 of 5,274) received the DES minimum of 120 minutes per week	Increase % meeting 60 minute requirement to 50%. (4,223) Increase % meeting 120 minute requirement to 20% (1,054)	2020 2020	DES
Extra-Curricular Sport and Physical Activity	63% primary children (5,321 of 8,446) participate at least once a week. 24% (2,027 of 8,446) never take part in extra-curricular activity clubs	Increase to 73%. (6,166) Focus on those who participate once a week or less often. Decrease to 20% (1,689) by broadening range of activities available.	2015 2015	DTCS, DES, DHC.
	73% post-primary pupils (3,850 of 5,274) participate at least once a week. 16% (844 of 5,274) never take part in extra-curricular activity clubs	Increase to 80% (4,219). Focus on those who participate once a week or less often. Decrease to 10% (527) by broadening range of activities available.	2015 201	

DTCS – Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport (formally, Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism)

DHC – Department of Health and Children

DT – Department of Transport, **DES** – Department of Education and Science

DEHLG – Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

ACTIVITY TYPE	CURRENT STATUS (2009)	ACTIVITY GOAL	TIMELINE	
Extra-School Sport and Physical Activity	<p>83% primary children (7,010 of 8,446) participate at least once a week.</p> <p>11% (929 from 8,446) never take part in community-based sports clubs</p> <p>64% post-primary pupils (3,375 from 5,247) participate at least once a week.</p> <p>34% (1,793 of 5,274) never take part in community-based sports clubs</p>	<p>Increase to 85% (7,179). Focus on those who participate only once a week or less often.</p> <p>Decrease to 10% (845) by broadening range of activities available.</p> <p>Increase to 70% (1,055). Focus on those who participate once a week or less often.</p> <p>Decrease to 20% (1,055) by broadening range of activities available, and offering more for recreational athletes.</p>	<p>2015</p> <p>2012</p> <p>2015</p> <p>2020</p>	DTCS, DEHLG, DES, DHC.
Active Travel	<p>31% primary children (2,618 of 8,446) walked to school, 1% (845) cycled.</p> <p>40% post-primary youth (2,110 of 5,274) walked to school, 3% (158) cycled.</p>	<p>Increase to 40% (3,378) walking, 5% (422) cycling.</p> <p>Increase to 50% (2,637) walking, 5% (264) cycling</p>	<p>2020</p> <p>2020</p>	DT, DES, DEHLG, DHC.
Sedentary Behaviour	<p>Less than 1% of children and youth (137 of 13,720) met the health recommendation of < 120 minutes of sedentary screen time during daylight hours.</p>	<p>Increase this to 10% (1,372).</p>	<p>2020</p>	DHC, DES, DT, DTCS, DEHLG.

APPENDIX

THE AGILITY CHALLENGE (DECATHLON) PARTICIPATION

The agility challenge has been developed and refined over a number of years. In the decathlon challenge, the child undertakes 10 consecutive tests in a circuit as illustrated. The performance in each test is converted into a points score (much like score tables in track and field heptatolon and decathlon competitions) and the results of all ten tests are added to arrive at an overall score.

The child's score can then be plotted on a fitness chart which can show whether the result is above or below expected norms for the age and gender (and indeed how far above or below the general population the child ranks). These tests have been incorporated in the Aviva sports awards scheme in the UK where children can now aspire to achieve awards for improved fitness.

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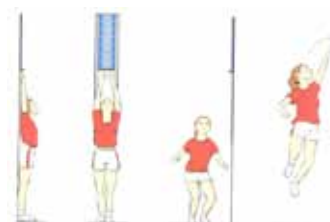


1 Balance Test

2 Standing Long Jump

3 Speed Bounce

4 Target Throw



5 High Stepper

6 Medicine Ball Push

7 Vertical Jump



8 Shuttle Run

9 Soft Javelin Throw

10 Standing Triple Jump

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