



THE
IRISH SPORTS
COUNCIL



AN CRÓCHMHAIRE SPÓIRT

LOCAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS

SPEAK Report 2007

LOCAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS (LSPs)

SPEAK Report 2007

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Message from the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism

I am pleased to welcome the publication of this first report on the work of the Sports Partnerships. This document is very timely and important in view of the development of the National Network of 33 Sports Partnerships. In particular I welcome the full roll out of the LSP Programme, in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government.

In October 2005 the Fitzpatrick report, commissioned by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism identified the need for the Irish Sports Council to introduce a formal monitoring and evaluation framework for the Sports Partnerships. I would like to congratulate the Irish Sports Council in addressing this recommendation in such a short time.

I would like to congratulate the Sports Partnerships and their Voluntary Boards and I look forward to seeing a complete report from a full National Network of Local Sports Partnerships.



Séamus Brennan TD
Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism



Foreword: Chairperson of the Irish Sports Council

I welcome this first report detailing the work of the Sports Partnerships and its evaluation of the impact that this has on the clubs and communities in each County.

Local Sports Partnerships although a relatively new concept in Irish Sport are now firmly embedded in the local infrastructure of clubs and communities, establishing, providing and supporting increased opportunities for everyone to participate in a wider range of activities thus creating a more active lifestyle.

The report is reassuring and very positive in terms of the work which the Sports Partnerships are carrying out at local level. In the 22 Partnership projects that contributed to this report we have 52 full time people employed and approx. a further 100 employed part time on various activities within the LSP structure. This is a substantial investment in Sport at local level and is set to expand even further now with the full National Network due to be launched in April 2008.

The report also highlights the challenges faced at local level and the cooperation of working partners in addressing these. Many of the projects detailed have multiple partners contributing and working together on a variety of initiatives at local level. This is evidence of real partnership, which is proven worldwide as a comprehensive, effective and very efficient model of development, or in this context Sports Development.

The Sports Partnerships receive their core funding from the Irish Sports Council, which in turn enables them to source and secure extra funding for local projects from a variety of other sources. The report clearly shows that the Partnerships have been very successful at this and now source substantial programme funding from a variety of areas.

The variety and extent of target groups within the context of the LSPs work also shows a healthy bias towards disadvantaged areas/communities/groups and children of a school going age. This is where the Sports partnerships are making the greatest difference and having the most impact on the primary objective of “increasing participation”, and also highlights the power of Sport as a magnificent resource in any community.

In conclusion I would like to express my thanks to all of the 22 Local Sports Partnerships staff, Boards of Management and volunteers who work on a daily basis to ensure that this initiative is successful and impacts on the lives of so many, regardless of the level or sport in which they participate.



Ossie Kilkenny
Chairperson
Irish Sports Council



Introduction: Chief Executive Irish Sports Council

The Irish Sports Council has recognised that the partnerships are an excellent mechanism for delivering recreational sport at local level and that their social significance spreads well beyond sport. As a result of their hard work and dedication the LSPs have simultaneously made major contributions in a number of key areas, including health, education, environment and disadvantaged communities.

This SPEAK report on the Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs), for the first time present us with an overall picture of our work across the Country at local level. In a very clear and comprehensive way this report documents the environment in which we operate and the challenges which we face. In real terms it sets out who our Partners are in the Community and at Board level, and ultimately the target groups which we engage with, in our wide and varied list of projects and initiatives.

The information when compiled and analysed, enables us to have a greater awareness and understanding of the challenges that we face and the networks that we create to assist in the high level objective of: “increasing participation in sport, recreation and physical activity”.

As the number of Sports Partnerships grows to our full compliment of 33, due to be launched April 2008, we can use the information gathered in SPEAK to share best practice, monitor trends and address areas for improvement to ensure that Sports Partnership are sustained, grow and continue to develop as a valuable resource to every community across the sporting sector.



John Treacy
Chief Executive
Irish Sports Council

Background

This report is based on information provided for 2007 by 22 Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) using the SPEAK self-evaluation system.

SPEAK (Strategic Planning, Evaluation and Knowledge Networking) offers organisations the capacity to self-evaluate, leading to a comprehensive understanding of the work of the organisation and the impacts of that work, and uses that new understanding to improve strategic and work planning for the organisation.

Information provided through SPEAK from each LSP is collated into a national programme database, creating a database of enormous potential to understand the full programme and its impacts, and most importantly to influence the direction of the programme and related areas of policy and practice.

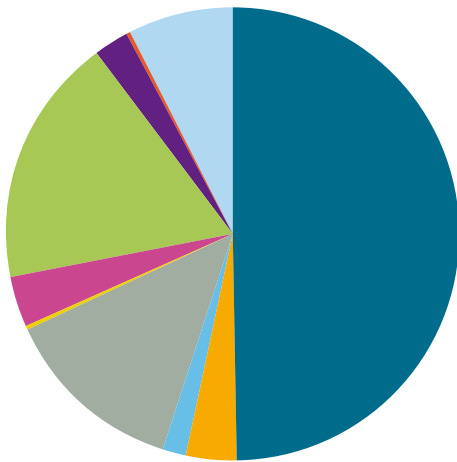
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Resources and Funding



1.1 Project Funding Sources

Core funding to the LSPs from the Irish Sports Council (ISC) accounts for about half of their total funding, the other half of their funding is raised by them from other sources.



Total Funding- All LSPs	Euros	Percentage
Irish Sports Council	3,649,119.00	48.83
HSE	271,753.00	3.64
VEC	115,342.00	1.54
Local Authority	1,106,475.00	14.80
LEADER	16,000.00	0.21
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform	262,367.00	3.51
Dormant Accounts	1,310,119.00	17.53
Buntús	181,945.00	2.43
FÁS	31,100.00	0.42
Other Funding	529,620.00	7.09
Total	7,473,840.00	100.00

After core funding from the ISC, the Dormant Accounts were the next single most significant source of funding for the LSPs in 2007. Next in importance as funders are the Local Authorities.

Other funding includes one off grants that individual LSPs administered, as well as a range of funding streams that were accessed, including national programmes such as Women In Sport.

1.2 LSP Management and Staff

Boards of Management Participation and Representation

LSPs have boards of management drawn from key areas of expertise within the county sporting and community voluntary sectors. All statutory bodies, organisations and groups operating in local areas with a responsibility for or interest in sports development are invited to participate in the LSP.

- A total of 348 people served on LSP boards in 2007, two thirds of whom were male
- Average number of just over 20 hours in 2007 was committed by each management committee.

The involvement of the Vocational Education Committees (VEC), City and County councils, Health Service Executive (HSE), FÁS, Universities, Colleges, Institutes of Technology, commercial companies, sports' clubs, National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and community groups in the Partnership is promoted.

The Board is responsible for all the activities of the Sports Partnership. These responsibilities can be divided into six main areas:

- To govern the organisation through the proper administration of its affairs
- To provide leadership for the organisation
- To plan the strategy for the development of the organisation
- To establish partnerships with other organisations who can help develop the organisation
- To manage the people involved in running the organisation
- To implement the strategic plans for the organisation and monitor their progress
- To ensure a realistic programme of participation and performance in the organisation as a consequence of the previous six responsibilities

LSPs review the membership of their board on an ongoing basis.

Working Partner Representation

The following table gives a breakdown of the level of working partner participation on the boards of management of the 22 LSPs.

Working Partner	Number of LSPs
VEC	22
Local Authority	21
Health Service Executive	21
Community/ Voluntary Forum	20
Disability Organisations	17
Area Based Partnerships	15
Third Level Institutes	15
Registered Sporting Organisations	14
County/ City Development Board	14
FÁS	12
Youth Services Organisations	12
Community Organisations	11
Pobal/ LEADER	9
Gardaí	9
Sports Forum	8
Primary Schools	6
Post-Primary Schools	4
Chamber of Commerce	3
Education Centres	2
Other Government Departments	2
Age and Opportunity	2
Tourism Agencies	1
County Childcare Committee	1
Institute of Leisure Amenity Management	1

LSP Staff

LSPs have staff which are funded by the ISC and staff funded through other sources. Apart from LSP co-ordinators and administrators, many staff who work within the LSP structures are either tutors in a number of sporting codes or sports development officers. Some of these are employed by the LSP.

In 2007, the 22 LSPs directly employed a total of 52 staff, 39 female and 13 male. A further 100 people were employed directly/ indirectly within the LSP structure.

1.3 Development of LSP Network

In 2007, there were 22 LSPs working throughout the country. Some 12 LSPs have been in existence since 2001-2, a further four came on board in 2004, with the remaining six developed in 2006-7.

Local Sports Partnership	Year Established
North Tipperary Sports Partnership	2001
Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership	2001
Roscommon Sports Partnership	2001
Clare Sports Partnership	2001
Donegal Sports Partnership	2001
Kildare Local Sports Partnership	2001
Laois Sports Partnership	2001
Fingal Sports Partnership	2001
County Cork Local Sports Partnership Limited	2002
Meath Local Sports Partnership	2002
Waterford Sports Partnership	2002
Limerick City Sports Partnership	2002
Kerry Local Sports Partnership	2004
Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership	2004
Mayo Sports Partnership	2004
Westmeath Sports Partnership	2004
Carlow Sports Partnership	2006
Offaly Local Sports Partnership	2006
Monaghan Sports Partnership	2006
County Limerick Local Sports Partnership	2007
South Tipperary Sports Partnership	2007
Galway City Sports Partnership	2007

Of the 22 LSPs, some 9 operate under the County Development Board/ Local Authority structure, with the remaining 13 operating as limited companies.

The year 2008 will see the extension of this network to include every local authority area in Ireland, involving the development of a further eleven LSPs and the launch of a full national network. In line with the recommendations from the Fitzpatrick review, these eleven will also operate under the CDB/ Local Authority structure.

2

What do LSPs Do?



2.1 Introduction

The Irish Sports Council identified a specific rationale for partnerships as a mechanism for establishing a sustainable infrastructure to assist all those involved in local sports development. This involves delivering sport to local people by working closely with partner agencies, by increasing usage of existing local resources and working towards long-term local sports development and the primary objective of increasing participation in sport, recreation and physical activity.

This section examines the context in which LSPs find themselves, as they work to deliver upon these aims. The key questions involve:

- What challenges do they face?
- What other responses affect their working environment?
- How do they work to address these challenges?

The working methods employed by LSPs are described.

2.2 Challenges

LSPs point to a broad range of internal and external challenges. Foremost among the internal challenges are the following

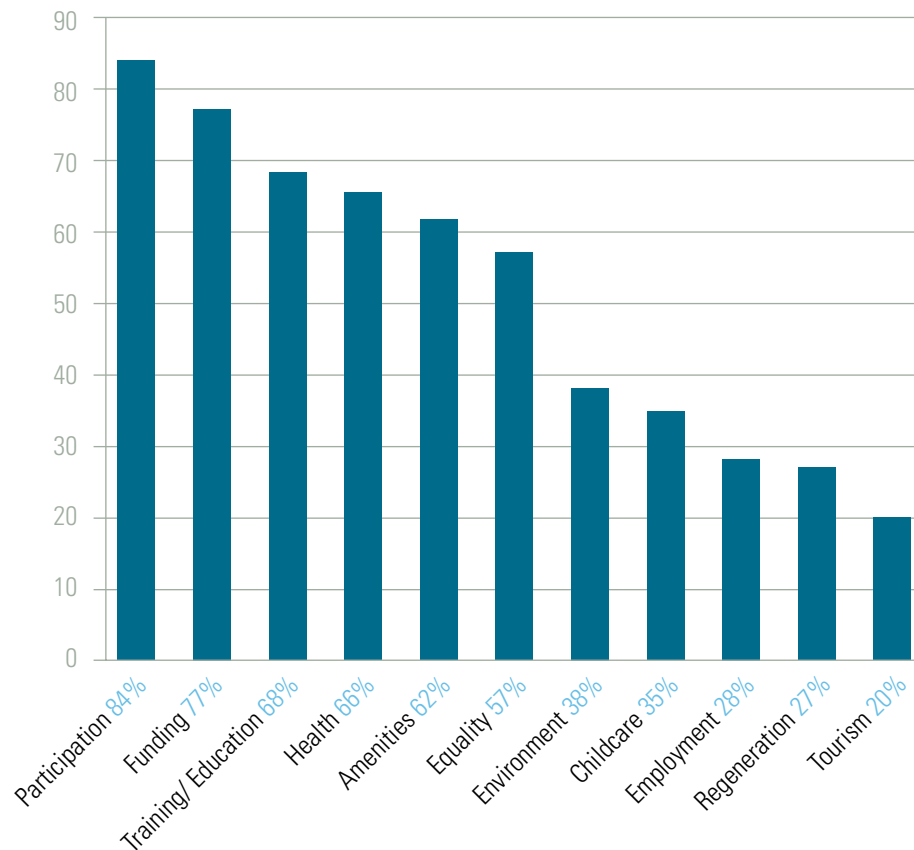
- To work towards developing the LSP as a sports hub/ one stop shop for the county;
- Sourcing funding for programmes and the management and distribution of funding secured is challenging and time consuming;
- Ensure that governance within the LSP is of the highest standard and that correct policies and procedures are adhered to;
- Time management is an issue because of the volume of work involved. Work needs to be prioritised and managed effectively and efficiently to achieve targets;
- Securing funding for additional staff is essential;

External challenges facing LSPs relate to the following:

- The co-ordination of sports activities, under-utilisation of facilities and poor communication between key actors;
- The development and support of local sporting clubs is a key challenge. This will demand the training of key people within these clubs and access to funding in this regard;
- A further challenge relates to the promotion of participation in sports and physical activities for key target groups, including youth, older people, minority ethnic groups including Travellers, women and people with a disability;

- Increasing the quantity and quality of training available to coaches, volunteers, teachers, parents, leaders and administrators to enhance sport and physical activities within the community;
- Challenge of including a sports dimension to the work of organisations charged with dealing with rural isolation and urban disadvantage;

The LSPs ranked the key external development challenges. The following table presents an overview of the ranking of key issues by the 22 LSPs.



Promoting participation is the most significant challenge facing LSPs, followed by the challenges of the funding environment.

“The key focus of the Sports Partnership is to bring about an increase in participation rates in specific population groups through the delivery of exercise programmes in local communities and to deliver educational programmes and training courses to coaches, teachers, club administrators and community physical activity leaders. In addition the sourcing of funding to resource the delivery of community based exercise programmes for specific target groups has been identified as a key objective.”
(County Cork LSP)

Regeneration and tourism are important challenges to be addressed for some counties, but rank among lowest priorities for the 22 LSPs.

2.3 Other Relevant Responses

A diversity of responses reflects the range of different settings, experiences and resources available to LSPs. As LSPs become more established in their communities, their ability to become the key driver of sports development will grow, as will their capacity to engage with partner agencies and influence their agendas.

LSPs have sought to describe the main features of the statutory or 'mainstream' responses in 2007 to the challenges identified above. Over time, they will track and monitor this response environment to examine what may have changed or remained the same.

For many counties, the most positive development in this response environment has been the involvement of partner agencies in the planning work of LSPs, leading to a commitment to the vision and direction of the partnerships. This "buy in" is crucial for LSPs to be able to deliver their programmes.

The sustained funding commitments by partner agencies to LSPs (including in-kind contributions) has been another key supporting factor. This has allowed LSPs to continue to actively secure funding from outside sources to address key challenges in the sporting community.

A positive development in the response environment involves the increase in the number of sports development officers/ regional development officers put in place by National Governing Bodies. Programme delivery has increased accordingly and this has led to increased participation.

The promotion of health through the medium of physical activity has become a higher concern for the HSE and partnerships in this area allow LSPs to reach high priority target groups.

Local Play and Recreation Strategies are being developed to ensure adequate provision of play and recreation facilities in line with national guidelines. LSPs are working in partnership to influence the direction of their planning work. Many local authorities are also taking a lead in the development of amenities and facilities.

An increased commitment by sporting organisations to engage with training opportunities for their members, officials and volunteers is an important development in the response environment. It means an ongoing demand for course places and an increase in the capacities of local groups and organisations.

This extra support being directed at volunteers has an indirect cost, in that it is very often the same volunteers who are being expected to participate in a wider range of activities. This can lead to burn out of the volunteer base. However, positive local developments include the establishment of volunteer networks and centres. LSPs are working with such local actors in this area.

Community sector organisations are recognising the importance of including sports development as a theme in their work, especially in the area of youth work.

"CANDO Community Partnership continue to roll out sports development projects and set up new projects to support clubs and community groups and increase participation in sport."
(Carlow LSP)

2.4 Addressing Development Challenges

Given the set of challenges with which LSPs are faced, and the external response environment that affects their ability to programme work and respond to needs, what is it that LSPs actually do?

Working methods refer to a set of functions or roles that LSPs fulfill. There are eight of these, and they have been agreed as the basic working methods used in delivering the Local Sports Partnership programme. The following are the eight LSP working methods:

1. Developing a set of local information resources

Each LSP has developed a range of resources for their community. Included here would be online databases of local sporting organisations, amenities and facilities. Other resources may relate to documents that highlight the range of sporting activities available to certain target groups. LSPs have also worked on translated documents.

2. Providing information to individuals

This work relates to the information-giving activities of LSPs, involving a range of communication strategies, and specific outreach work with target groups and information sharing with working partners.

3. Supporting and Developing Groups

Local Sports Partnerships provide ongoing help or support to a wide range of sporting organizations and community groups in the community. The nature of that assistance can be to help with efforts to secure funding, support with organisational or management tasks; or other issues.

4. Providing Sports Training and Education

LSPs provide opportunities for people to participate in training, educational or sporting courses.

5. Disseminating a Message of Active, Healthy Lifestyle

LSPs involve themselves in dissemination and networking activities within the community through attendance at meetings, committee membership or other structured involvement in groups, committees etc. locally. This kind of dissemination work and networking can be done for a range of reasons – including keeping the LSP informed of what else is happening in the community; making a commitment, on behalf of the LSP, to an issue that requires a collective response; or ‘once-off’ networking (where a number of groups have come together to make sure something happens).

6. Delivery of Projects and Programmes

LSPs are instrumental in establishing projects and programmes in their communities. Irish Sports Council national programmes¹ make up a large part of this work. Developing local responses and innovative projects is also an important element of this work.

7. Establishment of Networks and Linked Initiatives

LSPs are also instrumental in establishing and contributing to the development of networks and linked initiatives.

8. Influencing Policy with regard to Sport

LSPs aim to involve themselves in activities that have an implication for policy. This refers to all work that is likely to influence the policy of particular agencies, service providers or organisations. This could be work undertaken locally – but it is more likely to have significance beyond their own community.

¹ See appendix 1 for description of ISC National Programmes, including Buntus, Code of Ethics, Active Leadership and Go For Life.

LSPs keep a record of time being spent on each working method in order to see where the main commitments are to these different ways of working or forms of intervention. Collecting this information will allow for annual comparisons and an overview of the whole LSP's annual commitment to different working methods.

These 'working method' headings are used in the SPEAK self evaluation system as headings for tracking outputs and impacts. It becomes possible to look at achievements relative to how much time the LSP has invested in this part of their work. Chapter Four will provide a detailed analysis of these outputs and impacts.

3

Who do LSPs Work With?

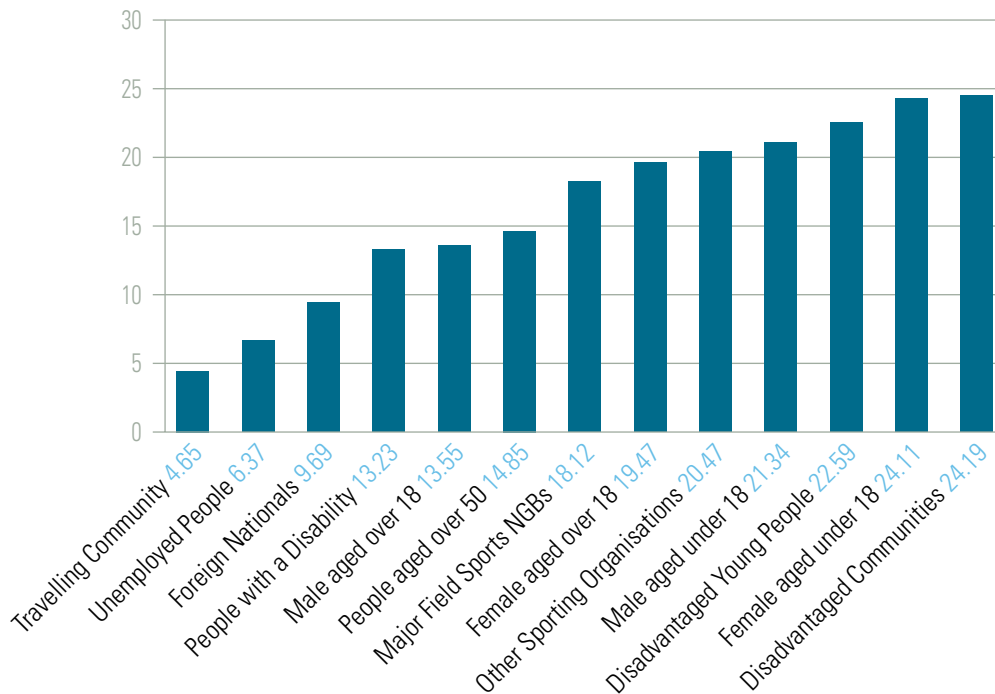


3.1 Introduction

In SPEAK, LSPs examined with whom they worked in 2007. In analysing the time dedicated to their working methods, they divided this time between work with working partners and with direct target groups. Recording this breakdown has allowed LSPs to keep an eye on the ‘balance’ in their work - and how this might change over time.

3.2 Time with Different Target Groups

LSPs estimated with whom the partnership spends most working time in 2007. The following table shows the percentage distribution of time spent with the different target groups.²



The pattern of work shows the importance of people living in disadvantaged communities and children of school-going age as key target groups (demonstrating the importance of the formal and informal education sectors as working partners for LSPs, as well as the importance of organisations working to combat disadvantage).

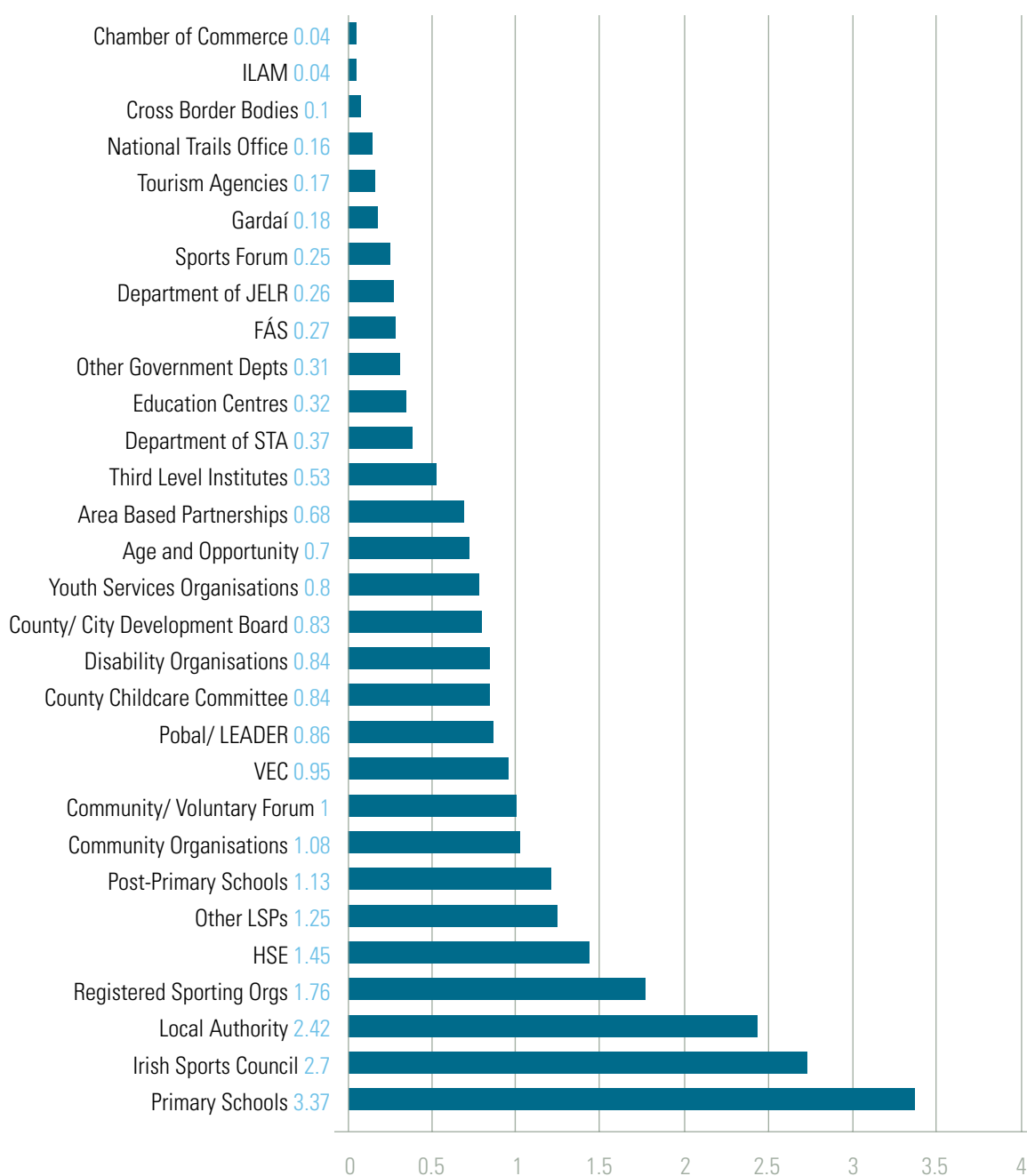
“Meath LSP works closely with RAPID and other agencies in delivering programs to the residents of the RAPID estates. (Communities in Action Programme etc.) Participants on the summer camp leader training and active leadership were representative of the disadvantaged communities in Navan. The Communities In Action initiative and the Active Leadership training are both targeted at people from disadvantaged communities.”
(Meath LSP)

² The target groups are not mutually exclusive, so percentages will not total to 100%

Though the percentage of time committed to people with a disability as a specific target group is low, the funding of a number of Sports Inclusion Development Officers in 2008 will ensure that this focus will increase.

3.3 'Working Partners' of LSPs

Working partners are those organisations and agencies (and personnel from them) with whom the LSP has established ongoing relationships. The following graph shows the time committed by LSPs to the various working partners, as a percentage of their total time committed to external working methods.



The highest values are assigned to Primary schools. This is typically related to the range of Buntus programmes, which have been a key focus for national roll-out across the partnerships.

The Irish Sports Council is also prominent, given its role in providing ongoing support and guidance across the network. At development stage of a partnership, this level of support is crucial.

“In its initial year the Sports Partnership received a lot of support and advice from the Irish Sports Council and the provision of in-service days with other LSP co-ordinators proving to be a valuable resource.”
(Monaghan LSP)

4

What Have LSPs Achieved - Outputs and Impacts?



4.1 Introduction

LSP outputs and impacts can be broadly summarised under the following main headings:

- Firstly, the extent to which they are providing information hubs and points of contact for all sections of the communities in each county– this encompasses the provision of useful resources to individuals and groups as well as referral to other agencies when relevant;
- Secondly, the extent to which they are promoting the sustainability of the local sporting development ‘infrastructure’, by helping groups and through providing quality opportunities for education and training at local level- this involves the provision of training courses targeting volunteers as well as developing access to sports specific courses;
- Thirdly, the extent to which they are engaging to directly increase levels of local participation, especially amongst specific target groups such as older people, girls and women, people with disabilities, unemployed people and those who live in identified disadvantaged communities- this relates to the work of LSPs in establishing and delivering projects as well as developing linked initiatives in their communities;
- Fourthly, the extent to which they provide an important source of knowledge, experience and expertise in the field of sports development, and can make positive contribution to building partnerships and influencing policy through local networking, dissemination activities and policy work.

This section analyses the manner in which the partnerships have promoted the development of sport and provided leadership, co-ordination and direction, particularly in terms of the specific activities undertaken in 2007 with regard to these four headings.

4.2 Understanding “LSP Maintenance Work”

Many of the LSPs are in the early stages of their development. Much time has therefore been spent by the LSP staff and their Boards of Management in 2007 in ongoing internal training, development and maintenance work with the aim of building up their internal capacity to deliver.

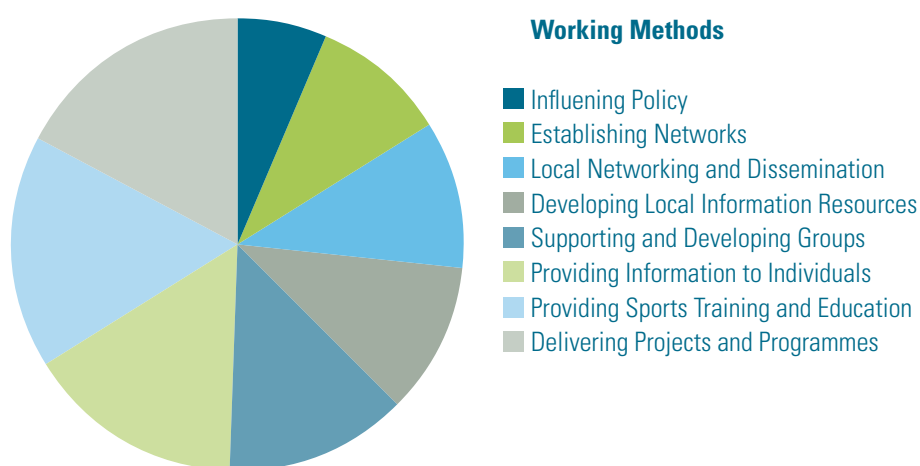
Each LSP has examined their time commitment in 2007 to what has been termed “LSP maintenance work”, i.e. tasks relating to staff training and support, board recruitment and support, staff and board meetings, securing and maintaining appropriate premises, developing internal policies and procedures, dealing with financial reporting commitments and engaging in strategic planning exercises.

By examining this aspect of their internal work in much detail, LSPs have developed a detailed understanding of the critical importance of this aspect of their work. Without adequate time being visibly committed to this maintenance work, LSPs have explained that they would not be able to open their doors to the public and engage with partner agencies and their target groups.

For many LSPs, the time commitment to these tasks reached up to 40% of total time available. The key tasks that demanded most time of co-ordinators related to strategic planning work, as well as support that they were providing to their boards and their staff. It is evident that for LSPs without an administrator in place, the co-ordinator was more focused on the internal workload, to the exclusion of external work with partner agencies and target groups.

4.3 Working Methods

Each LSP engaged in an analysis of where their time went in 2007 beyond their work in LSP maintenance. The following chart gives a breakdown of the time committed to LSP work with partner agencies and directly with target groups, according to their eight specific working methods.



The three most significant working methods in 2007 were firstly the delivery of projects and programmes, secondly the provision of sports training and education opportunities and thirdly the provision of information to the local community.

Further analysis of the figures gives an indication that (of the time that LSPs were engaged in external work³):

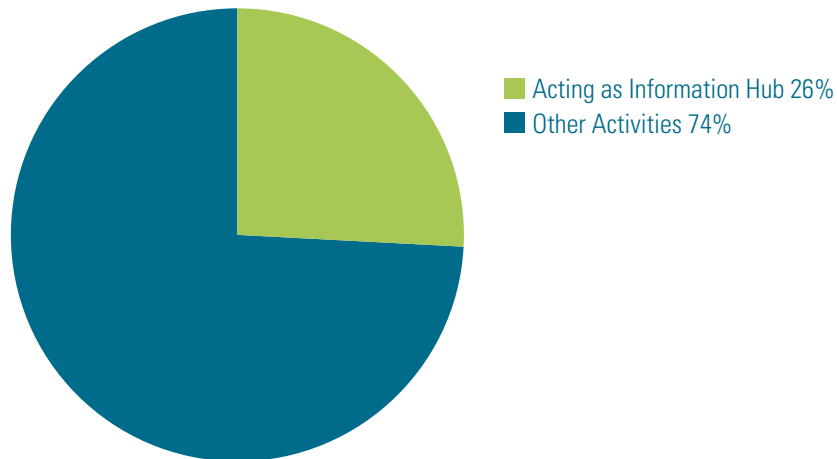
- 26% of time was spent on information related tasks;
- 30% of time developing local sporting infrastructure through providing training and supporting groups
- 27% of time engaging in project work, promoting national Irish Sports Council programmes, as well as developing innovative local projects and linked initiatives
- 17% of time networking locally, engaging in dissemination activities and working to influence policy with regard to sports and physical activities

The following sections examine these four areas of LSP work- information provision, infrastructural development, project delivery and policy work.

³ Internal work of the LSPs makes up almost 40% of total time available to LSP staff. The time commitment to external working methods makes up the remaining 60%.

4.4 Acting as Information Hubs and Points of Contact

LSPs have invested one quarter of their time in the area of information gathering and provision. This has been an important area of work for all LSPs, those newly established and those who have been in place for a number of years.



The act of establishing the partnership as a focal point for the community in the area of sports development and physical activity has been instrumental in ensuring that the wider public has engaged with the LSPs not just about accessing general or specific sport-related information, but also about gaining awareness of the full range of local activities and national initiatives that the LSPs promote.

Time committed to this area of work has been spent by developing resources for their target groups in order to inform them about the range of available sporting facilities and amenities and organizations active locally.

This has involved the development, maintenance and regular updating of LSP databases, county profiles and websites, as well as drawing together useful information in various formats, including the production of regular newsletters, booklets and brochures in a number of languages.

LSPs also act as a one stop shop for all the information needs of their community with regard to sports and physical activity. People drop in to the LSP offices, make phone calls or send emails seeking information or advice from the LSP teams. The queries may be related to specific local initiatives focusing on particular target groups, or more general queries about for example issues regarding nutrition.

How have LSPs tracked and measured this work?

LSPs have endeavoured to track their work with a number of indicators in mind. Where possible, LSPs keep a note of

- the number of hits on their websites,
- the number of times sporting organisations access their databases, as well as their directories on sporting organisations and facilities and amenities
- the number of requests for project reports and other information resources

LSPs produce a range of such resources that are distributed widely within their communities. Newsletters are sent out regularly, as are specific annual publications, such as directories of summer camps, training calendars and A-Z listings.

LSPs have estimated that in 2007, over 62,500 individuals made direct contact in order to seek information from the 22 offices, by making a visit to the office, making a phone call or by email. Some 12% of these people were referred on to partner agencies or specific sporting organisations.

What has been the impact of this work?

Through the process of completing analysis of the impacts and other secondary effects of their work, LSPs endeavoured to gauge feedback from working partners and target groups about the benefits and use of the information resources that they produced. LSPs also collected other evidence to demonstrate impacts arising from the use of their resources within clubs and partner agencies.

The following impacts were adjudged to have resulted:

1. Feedback and evidence of greater levels of awareness about access to opportunities in the area of sports and physical activity

“Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership (SSRP) makes a wide range of information resources available to the community. Given the volume of usage of the diverse range of resources (with regard to sporting organisations, sporting facilities/ amenities and sporting projects) the Sligo sporting community is well informed on sporting information in the county.”
(Sligo LSP)

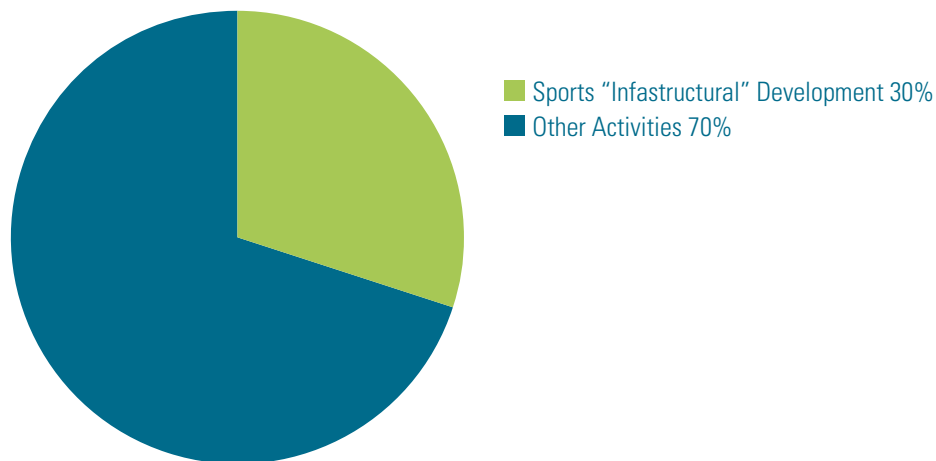
2. Evidence of people becoming involved in the work of sporting organisations
3. Greater levels of awareness about the work of the partnership in other areas
4. Greater cohesion of work through information sharing and pooling of resources

“More contact between National Governing Bodies of Sport through development officers has led to at least 15 Governing Bodies of Sport Development Officers disseminate their information through our website and distribution database.”
(Mayo LSP)

5. Closer relationships with key working partners through effective co-ordination and referral practices
6. Availability of important resources for organisations working with LSP target groups

4.5 Contributing to the local sporting development 'infrastructure'

LSPs have spent some 30% of their external working time in working towards developing a more sustainable local sporting development “infrastructure”. This was an important rationale for the Irish Sports Council in expanding the network of LSPs throughout the country.



By enhancing local coach deployment, providing quality training for volunteers and officials and by working closely in a supportive role with a wide range of sporting and community sector organisations, LSPs are ensuring that sustainability is a central theme in their overall work.

LSPs are working to promote sustainable structures to assist all those involved to meet the challenges facing local sports development. This involves ensuring a quality platform for the training of tutors, club volunteers and officials as well as members of the identified LSP target groups.

As well as working to ensure that there is such a qualified body of local expertise available to sporting clubs and organisations, LSPs have also worked closely with individual groups from the community and voluntary as well as from the informal and formal education sectors to support their efforts in engaging with an agenda of including sports and physical activity in their work. This can be time intensive work, involving an element of outreach, support and consistency in follow up. LSPs have worked with many groups to develop autonomous structures, codes of practice, as well as identifying possible relevant funding streams and then supporting them in applying for such funding.

Through this commitment by LSPs to the local sports and community infrastructure, there is a constant flow of newly trained tutors and volunteers emerging annually in each county, as well as the ongoing development of the capacity of local groups and organisations to fend for themselves and indirectly promote the aims of the LSPs with their own target groups.

How have LSPs tracked and measured this work?

LSPs keep detailed records on the numbers of participants completing the range of training programmes that take place under their auspices. Between 22 LSPs in 2007, over 10,000 participants completed locally planned and delivered courses, as well as Irish Sports Council national programmes⁴.

LSPs worked with 2987 groups in 2007 with regard to the area of funding. This includes participation in information workshops ran by the LSPs, as well as outreach work and one-to-one support.

⁴ See appendix 1 for a description of the Irish Sports Council National Programmes, referenced in this report

Again detailed information has been collected for tracking and evaluation purposes by the LSPs with regard to this support work.

While supporting groups in the area of funding was an important element in ensuring that groups were able to develop and become more autonomous, LSPs also provided critical support for groups in developing their organisational or management structures and dealing with particular policy issues. Some 745 groups accessed such supports from the LSPs either through participation in specific workshops or through individual contact.

LSPs provided support with regard to challenges for groups in the areas of dealing with volunteers, leadership and planning.

What has been the impact of this work?

LSPs engaged with partner agencies and target groups to assess any benefits of their support work with groups and their training programmes. They collected evidence of the following impacts:

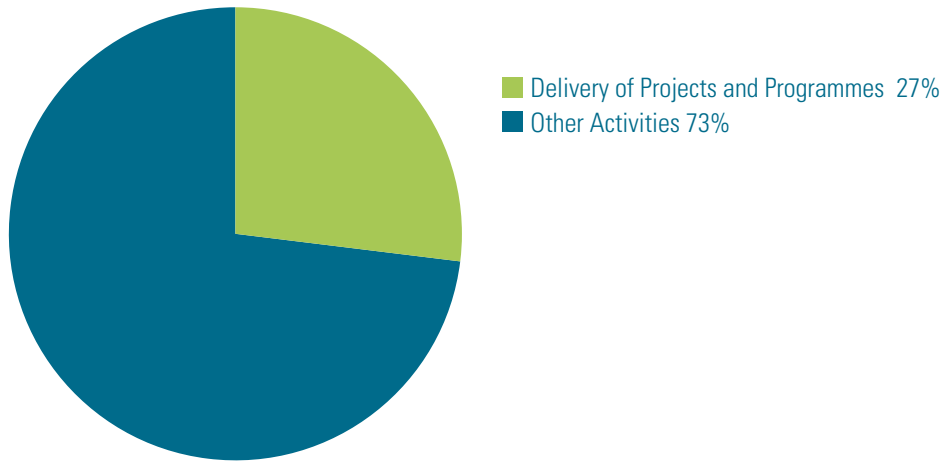
1. Strengthening of the capacity of local sporting organisations and the overall sports development infrastructure, including enhanced local coach deployment,
2. Specific target groups benefiting directly as a result of increased local capacities and extra funding
3. Promoting and developing the base of trained volunteers and community leaders in the area of sports and physical activity
4. Groups having achieved funding as a result of support from LSPs
5. Groups becoming more autonomous, competent and confident in dealing with club development issues
6. Greater capacity within existing clubs to deliver quality sporting opportunities, leading to increased participation in sport and recreation, as well as new clubs emerging and taking root

SSRP has demonstrated a significant impact in the area of supporting and developing groups. Key successes have been achieved as a result of SSRP assisting groups in accessing funding as outlined below:

- i. 19 groups in Sligo successful in accessing funding under the DAST Capital Grants Scheme with €1.479m sourced.
- ii. 18 groups in Sligo successful in accessing funding under the Age and Opportunity Scheme with €10,575 sourced.
- iii. 24 groups in Sligo successful in accessing funding under the Dormant Accounts Disadvantaged Youth measure with €30,000 sourced.
- iv. 5 groups in Sligo successful in accessing funding under the Dormant Accounts NPAR with €30,000 sourced.
- v. 9 groups in Sligo successful in accessing funding under the ISC Women in Sport with €26,255 sourced. (Sligo LSP)

4.6 Engaging to directly increase levels of local participation

Local Sports Partnerships committed some 27% of their overall available time to the area of project and programme delivery.



By working directly with key local actors and identified target groups on innovative projects as well as delivering national programmes, LSPs have been working at a grassroots level across their communities to promote the overall participation rates of people in sports, recreation and physical activity.

LSPs have developed a deep understanding of the local context in which they are working and the realities of their communities and target groups with regard to sports development. This allows them to respond directly to their needs with a clear focus on the promotion of participation.

As well as delivering the national Irish Sports Council programmes, each LSP is constantly establishing new projects, overseeing the delivery of innovative initiatives and year by year creating links with a wider range of partner agencies. As LSPs have engaged in more project-driven work, their contact with target groups has grown organically.

LSPs have identified a number of clear priorities with regard to their role in this area.

“The Partnership is not directly delivering the activities for most of the larger projects. The role is to organise, co-ordinate and oversee the running of activities by working partners, paid tutors and volunteers. When not involved in the direct delivery, it is still important that the Partnership is on site for some of the activities to monitor progress, quality of delivery and maintain a relationship with the target groups. With the addition of a Recreation & Sports Development Officer position, the workload of the Partnership hasn't lessened. More programmes are being delivered which increases the administration required.” (Kilkenny LSP)

How have LSPs tracked and measured this work?

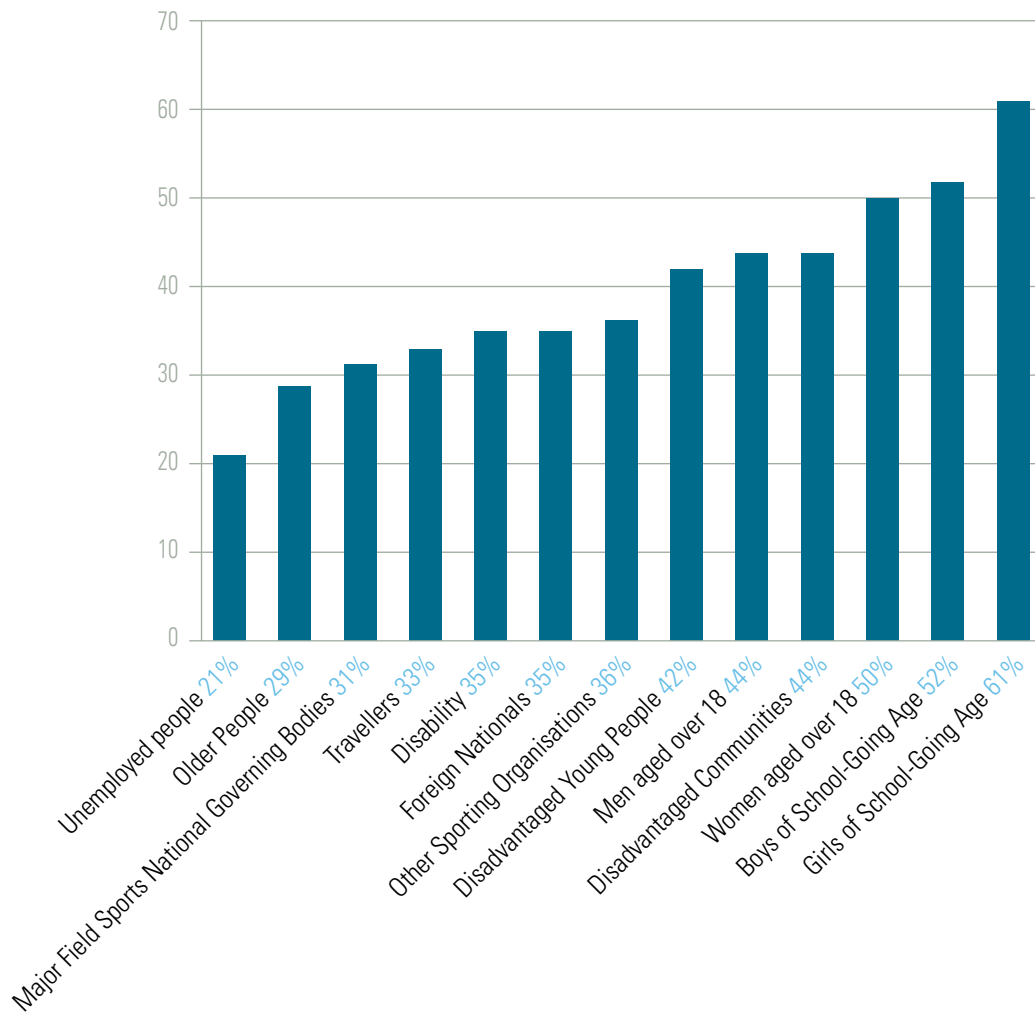
LSPs monitor their work in this area by maintaining records on each project or programme in which they play a role or have some responsibility. This role may have initially been central to the establishment of the project and may involve ongoing concerted effort to ensure that the project continues to exist. The role may alternatively be more supportive and involves occasional involvement. The project may also have had a finite duration and ended without the need for further contact from the LSP.

In 2007, LSPs were involved in the establishment or delivery of some 323 projects and 89 linked initiatives, in the majority of which they played a lead role.

LSPs have examined the range of groups that have been targeted by these projects, programmes and initiatives. The following chart presents a breakdown of target groups who have been involved in some or all aspects of this work, including

- consultation, design and planning;
- support of the delivery;
- simply being the beneficiaries, participants or end-users;
- co-ordination and administration
- evaluation and feedback.

There is evidently some overlap of target groups as end users of particular initiatives. However this chart gives a clear indication of the wide ranging project-led work of LSPs.



Case Study 1: Ag Súgradh Le Chéile (Donegal LSP)

This programme has been developed by the HSE and is actively supported by the Donegal LSP. It is delivered by qualified tutors to promote active play. The programme aims to encourage children to be active by promoting Active Play for both children & parents. It is aimed at Junior Infants to Second Class.

It is a part of an overall parenting programme offered by HSE (NW) called Ag Fas Le Chéile. Training is offered to Primary Schools – where parents are invited in to participate.

5 tutors have been trained, 58 Courses were held in 2006/7 school year with 944 pupils benefiting. €9500 in funding was secured in order to deliver the programme.

A challenge has related to the lack of available part time tutors to deliver the programme.

What has been the impact of this work?

The numbers of people participating, the funding secured and the numbers of people employed can be thought of as key impact indicators of this work. The following table presents a summary of this data for 2007.

Indicator	Projects/ Programmes	Linked Initiatives
No. of Active projects where data is available for 2007	248	64
Total number of People Participating (including participants on selected training projects)	52,554	2,414
Total number of People Employed (including tutors, etc.)	230	15

Through their involvement in this range of projects, LSPs have directly and indirectly contributed to the generation of €2.7 million in funding for projects, programmes and initiatives working towards the promotion of participation in sports and physical activity. Some 245 people have also been employed in these projects, many as tutors.

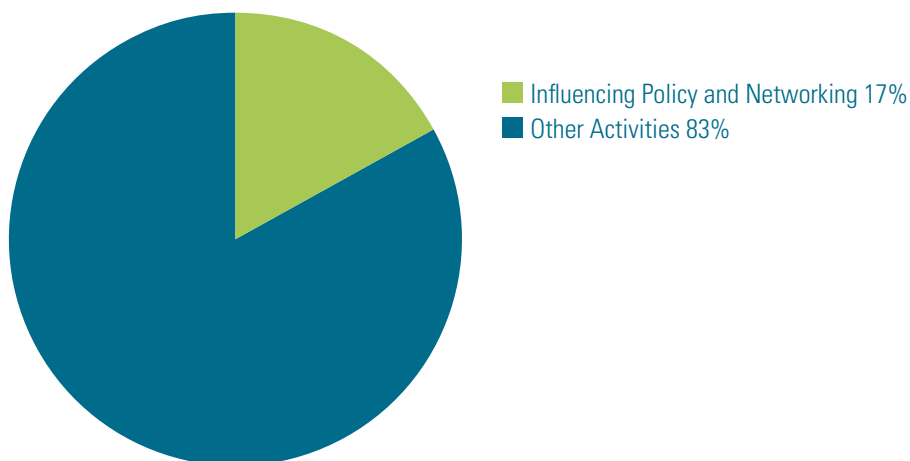
LSPs engaged with partner agencies and target groups to assess any further benefits of their direct project work. They collected evidence of the following impacts:

1. Increased participation in sport and physical activity among a number of target groups and a greater degree of engagement with low participation target group
2. New clubs/ sections of clubs emerging from range of initiatives
3. The growth in membership of sporting organisations as well as participation in the activities of community and voluntary based organisations as a result of assistance in the provision of sports/ physical activity opportunities

4. A more autonomous local sports development infrastructure due to the increased capacity of local organisations to organise sports/ physical activity opportunities
5. More sustainable local sports development infrastructure due to the increase in the knowledge base of groups and organisations that have participated in programmes with an educational or training focus
6. A more cohesive and co-ordinated local infrastructure due to relationship building and the establishment of key contacts which will lead to further initiatives

4.7 Building partnerships/ networks and influencing policy

LSPs spent some 17% of their time working in the area of policy and local networking. As partnerships become more embedded in the local sports development infrastructure, their potential to lobby for change and to build effective partnerships with policymakers will develop incrementally.



This area of work has been focused on disseminating the key partnership message of promoting a healthy lifestyle through their participation within a range of local networks and inter-disciplinary committees. LSPs have promoted this message through numerous conference presentations, as well as working closely with policymakers within regional and national networks. LSPs have contributed to academic publications as well as producing valuable research reports.

Awareness raising activities have been organised in conjunction with partner agencies, seeking to reach a wide audience of LSP target groups.

The end goal of this work relates to placing the LSP as a key shaper of local, regional and national policy with regards to sports development and related issues. It is acknowledged by the LSPs that there are many challenges associated with gaining access to the relevant corridors of power.

However, as LSPs become recognised as a one stop shop with regard to information, education and implementation, opportunities to lobby and influence relevant policymakers increase. This is evident from the work of the longer established LSPs in this area.

How have LSPs tracked and measured this work?

LSPs keep track of the extent of their dissemination work in relation to the themes that they address as well as the kind of local committees that they are asked to join. The following examples illustrate the range of awareness raising and local networking activities undertaken by LSPs.

Relationships are built with community based organisations in order to access hard to reach target groups. This often involves using innovative means. Many themes are tackled as these relationships develop.

LSPs endeavoured to record involvement in activities that have an implication for policy. While this referred to work undertaken locally, it also related to work that has a significance beyond the immediate community of the LSP.

LSPs have actively participated in seminars and conferences that had a policy theme. Participation in county-wide, regional or national networks is a further element of the work of LSPs. They have also been involved in some 70 pieces of research and publications. The main focus of this work was around the key themes of participation, funding, health and education.

The longer established LSPs tended to have a greater involvement in local, regional and national networks. Publications included handbooks, studies, research and evaluation reports.

The development of strong relationships with the local authority has allowed for significant levels of engagement to take place as well as the opportunities for direct lobbying.

What has been the impact of this work?

LSPs have worked to disseminate their message, build strong relationships with partner agencies, forge new partnerships and networks, with the concerted aim of being able to strategically position themselves as the local knowledge broker in the area of sports development. Some LSPs are reaching that position, whereby they can influence the development of policy in their locality.

For the majority of LSPs, the challenge is to continue to build networks and examine the effectiveness of their time commitment to this area.

LSPs engaged with partner agencies and target groups to assess any impacts of their networking and dissemination activities. They collected evidence of the following impacts:

1. Greater awareness of the message of healthy living amongst your working partners, through networking and dissemination activities with local community organisations

“Meath Older People’s Network was established to provide a forum and network for the older people to address generic issues at a county wide level as well as to provide a strong united voice representing older people. The network is now independent and sources its funding from the HSE. MLSP in association with the HSE Older People Service took the lead in establishing this network. There are upwards of 120 participants in the Network.”
(Meath LSP)

2. Increased knowledge and access to information for sporting organisations and community groups through attendance at conferences and through accessing LSP publications
3. Local dissemination and lobbying work has influenced the activities of other agencies
4. Expansion of the general membership of networks
5. Greater integration, co-ordination and complementarity of services locally as a result of local networking and dissemination activities

Mid West LSP Network was established to share ideas across a number of LSP’s so as to develop best practice. It was an opportunity to meet all NGB development officers so as to share best practice and develop Course calendars.

The network was responsible

- for hosting a coaching forum for 360 coaches
- for hosting information sharing of best practice for coaching between all represented NGB’s
- for promoting and providing information on Inclusion for all its NGB members (40)

(Mid West Network of LSPs)

6. A direct increase in the availability of funding to the LSP as a result of networking, lobbying and policy work

5

Strengths and Challenges



5.1 Introduction

The achievements of the LSPs are possible only through an adherence to an ethos that recognises the importance of building inclusive, equal and trusting relationships with members of the community and working partners. LSPs were asked to outline factors that helped and factors that hindered their work.

5.2 Strengths or Factors Assisting the Work

There are common helping factors affecting LSPs as they work.

1. Dedicated funding from the Irish Sports Council represents the most important factor in the ability of LSPs to continue to provide the full range of services and supports, especially for target groups and volunteers at local level. This funding has enabled LSPs to leverage new funding opportunities to pilot and create new project ideas and possibilities.
2. The presence of more dedicated professional staff in the area of sports development has ensured that it is possible to reach more people and groups in the community. Also, the increased availability of quality tutors to deliver training is a key element in the development of capacity in the sports infrastructure.
3. Building strong relationships with partner agencies has been an important facilitating factor. These relationships are based on equality and trust and this process takes time. It is the cornerstone of much of the work of LSPs and leads to important intended and often unintended impacts. It leads to committed partnerships.
4. Access to up to date, relevant and shared information is a significant factor with regard to all aspects of the work of LSPs.
5. The delivery of quality projects, programmes and initiatives allows for the LSP reputation to grow within the policymaking arena. Promoting local awareness among partner agencies of the role that LSPs can play in establishing, delivering and assisting projects is an enabling factor.
6. The development of the LSP network has ensured greater co-operation and a pooling of knowledge and resources.

5.3 Challenges or Factors Hindering the Work

Many of the factors identified as posing threats or barriers to progress are related to human resources demands being placed on LSPs to support extra work.

1. It is evident that LSPs are constrained when it comes to prioritising demands for engagement with groups by virtue of limited human and financial resources.
2. The cyclical nature and workload of LSPs means that their ability to reflect on their completed work or to take on new initiatives is finite.

3. Difficulties in accessing the harder to reach target groups can present challenges for LSPs. It can often be a challenge to find innovative means of engaging with groups. A further hindering factor relates to the degree of resources necessary to engage in effective capacity building with these groups.
4. The lack of flexibility and the sometimes restricted nature in funding criteria can sometimes play a hindering role in the aims of LSPs to assist target groups.
5. Lack of available resources at local level within clubs can be another hindering factor, particularly with regard to the support of projects in areas such as club development.
6. When helping groups with regard to funding, the high degree of time that is spent on administrative functions (for both the LSP and sports club) is a hindering factor. Volunteers in sports clubs and community organisations are often under more and more pressure.

6

Summary



This report is based on information provided for 2007 by 22 Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) using the SPEAK self-evaluation system. Information provided through SPEAK from each LSP is collated into a national programme database. This report is based on an analysis of the 2007 database.

6.1 Project Resources and Funding

One half of all funding that LSPs have leveraged in 2007 has been from sources external to their core funding from the Irish Sports Council.

There is a high level of engagement and co-operation from the range of key partner agencies, evidenced from their involvement on LSP boards of management.

In 2007, the 22 LSPs directly employed a total of 52 staff, with a further 100 people working directly or indirectly within the LSP structure.

The year 2008 will see the full roll out of the LSP network to all counties.

6.2 What challenges do LSPs face?

LSPs face common challenges in terms of developing their own capacity for taking action. The local setting in which they operate has an obvious bearing on this capacity. The following challenges are considered to be the most significant:

- The co-ordination of sports activities, under-utilisation of facilities and poor communication between key actors;
- The development and support of local sporting clubs and the implied demands for the training of key people within these clubs;
- The promotion of participation in sports and physical activities for key target groups, including youth, older people, minority ethnic groups, Travellers, women and people with a disability;
- Increasing the quantity and quality of training available to coaches, volunteers, teachers, parents, leaders and administrators to enhance sport and physical activities within the community;

6.3 Who do LSPs work with?

The LSPs work with a broad range of target groups and partner agencies.

The pattern of work shows the importance of people living in disadvantaged communities and children of school-going age as key target groups. This gives an indication of the importance of the formal and informal education sectors as working partners for LSPs, as well as the importance of community-based organisations working to combat disadvantage.

LSPs typically engage with a wide range of statutory and community based organisations, but have most contact with the education sector.

The support and assistance provided by the Irish Sports Council and the LSP Network has been very beneficial.

6.4 What have LSPs achieved?

LSP outputs and impacts can be broadly summarised under four main headings in relation to the extent to which they:

1. Act as an information hub and contact point for individuals and groups;
2. Promote the sustainability of the local sporting development 'infrastructure', by helping groups and providing quality opportunities for education and training;
3. Engage to directly increase levels of local participation, among specific target groups, by establishing and delivering projects and linked initiatives;
4. Build effective partnerships through local networking, dissemination activities and policy work.

Acting as a contact point, over 62,500 individuals in 2007 were advised, given information or referred on to other services through a visit to their premises, a phone call or by email. LSPs produce a range of such resources that are distributed widely within their communities. Newsletters are sent out regularly, as are specific annual publications, such as directories of summer camps, training calendars and A-Z listings.

The impact of these activities means greater awareness within the community of the range of sports, recreational and physical activities. This leads to higher levels of involvement and engagement within local sports organisations.

In 2007, over 10,000 participants completed locally planned and delivered courses, as well as national Irish Sports Council programmes. As a result, the base of trained volunteers and community leaders in the area of sports and physical activity has increased.

LSPs worked with 2,987 groups in 2007 with regard to the area of funding, through information workshops, as well as outreach work and one-to-one support. Through receiving funding, the capacity of local sporting organisations has been augmented. Groups are becoming more autonomous, competent and confident in dealing with club development issues.

In 2007, LSPs were involved in the establishment or delivery of some 323 projects and 89 linked initiatives, in the majority of which they played a lead role. Some 55,000 people participated in these

projects, ranging from intercultural community festivals, walking or cycling events, projects targeting specific target groups to ongoing linked initiatives with partner agencies in the areas of health promotion or informal education.

The impact of these activities relates to the empowerment of groups and individuals, integration of marginalised groups and the promotion of participation within the local sports, recreation and physical activities community.

LSPs have been active in networks concerning participation, health and education, enhancing co-operation between local statutory, education, community and sporting sectors. Through building strong relationships with community based organisations, LSPs have been able to access hard to reach target groups, often using innovative means.

Through active participation at seminars, conferences and workshops, LSPs have presented their key message and established new links with groups enabling them to share knowledge and gain new expertise.

6.5 Strengths and Challenges

The most important helping factor for LSPs relates to the dedicated funding from the Irish Sports Council. This allows them to continue to provide the full range of services and supports, especially for target groups and volunteers at local level. This funding has enabled LSPs to leverage new funding opportunities to pilot and create new project ideas and possibilities.

The presence of more dedicated professional staff in the area of sports development has ensured that it is possible to reach more people and groups in the community.

Building strong and committed relationships with partner agencies has been an important facilitating factor. This is the cornerstone of much of the work of LSPs and leads to important intended and often unintended impacts.

The ability to access up to date, relevant and shared information is a significant helping factor with regard to all aspects of the work of LSPs. The development of the LSP network has ensured greater co-operation in this regard as well as a pooling of general knowledge and resources.

Many of the factors identified as posing threats or barriers to progress are related to human resources demands being placed on LSPs to support extra work.

LSP resources are often focused on accessing the harder to reach target groups. The degree of resources necessary to engage in effective capacity building with these groups is high. It can often be a challenge to find innovative means of engaging with groups.

When helping groups with regard to funding, the high degree of time that is spent on administrative functions (for both the LSP and sports club) is a hindering factor. Lack of available resources at local level within clubs can act as a challenge, particularly as volunteers in sports clubs and community organisations are often under more and more pressure.

Appendix 1

**Irish Sports Council
National Programmes**



1. Active Leadership Training

The award is designed to provide trained, knowledgeable and enthusiastic community based physical activity leaders. Leaders will be equipped to work in a wide range of locations including local clubs, community groups, workplaces, community centres and sports' clubs. Leaders will aim to increase participation rates in physical activity in a variety of practical ways: -

1. Encourage a wide range of people, such as friends, colleagues and contacts to take up active leisure pursuits
2. Apply their knowledge and skills to plan, organise and lead safe, enjoyable activity sessions with small groups
3. Assist in the planning, organising and running of community sports days

In brief, the training course has been developed by a cross border Development Committee comprising representatives of the Irish Sports Council, the Sports Council for Northern Ireland, and Sport for All tutors from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The intended outcome is that the trainee leader will be competent and confident in taking charge of a group for physical activity sessions. Specifically, the successful leader will be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to plan, organise and lead physical activity sessions within their own group setting

The training courses are organised at local level by Local Sports Partnership.

2. Buntús

Buntús Play and Buntús Multi Sport are two programmes developed to support teachers and other adults in introducing young people to sport and helping to develop their interests. Teachers in schools in support of the Physical Education curriculum initially deliver Buntús Play and Buntús Multi Sport.

The three key components of the programme – training, resource cards and equipment – are designed to provide easy to understand, and accessible support to give children a fun, but high quality, introduction to sport.

Buntús Start is a comprehensive physical activity programme for children aged 2-5 years old. It has been designed for use in pre-school settings so that pre-school and playgroup leaders can provide a wide range of learning opportunities for young children to develop their fundamental motor skills, manipulative skills, co-ordination and balancing skills and develop a positive attitude to physical activity.

Buntús Start helps adults working with children to establish positive attitudes to activity and a healthy lifestyle through enjoyable activity with children. Buntús Start offers a combination of adult-initiated and child-led activities and enables adults to choose and plan appropriate activities as well as giving children opportunities to freely select and explore. Whilst using Buntús Start children have opportunities to develop naturally through individual involvement in physical play, small group activity and to participate in whole-group activity.

3. Go For Life

Go for Life is the national programme for sport and physical activity for older people. The aim of Go for Life is to involve more older adults in all aspects of sport and physical activity more often. The thrust of the programme is to empower and enable older people by reaching out to active retirement associations, senior citizens groups, day care and community centres around the country, to ensure that more older people are more active, more often.

Go for Life is an Age & Opportunity initiative funded by the Irish Sports Council. The Go for Life team at Age and Opportunity administers the Go for Life programme, working in partnership with the Health Service Executive, each area of which has a Go for Life coordinator, and the Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs). There are many different elements to the Go for Life programme.

4. Code of Ethics

A central goal for all those involved in sport for young people is to provide a safe, positive and nurturing environment where children can develop and enhance their physical and social skills. Promoting a child-centred environment should go hand in hand with identifying and eliminating practices that impact negatively on safe and enjoyable participation in sport for young people.

In order to achieve this, the Irish Sports Council roll out a 4-hour basic awareness training module for leaders within sports club and a further 6-hour club children's officer workshop to support club children's officers in the implementation of the code in their clubs. These courses are rolled out through the LSP network, targeting sports leaders and other officers, as well as children's officer and designated persons within clubs.

As well as undertaking child protection training, all governing bodies of sport and related organisations should adopt child protection policies and procedures as outlined in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*.

As a result of participating in the workshops, children's officers / sports leaders will be able to:

- Implement best practice in protecting the welfare of participants
- Create a child-centred environment within the sports club
- List categories of abuse and some indicators associated with abuse
- Make appropriate response to a disclosure
- Make a report to designated officer or appropriate statutory authorities

