

ANNUAL REPORT

2017



Portlaoise Leisure Centre
Moneyballytyrrell
Portlaoise
Co. Laois
R32 YP11



#LaoisActive

*“Supporting sport & physical activity for all the
people of County Laois”*



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Foreword



Chairperson's Address

On behalf of Laois Sports Partnership, we are delighted to welcome this annual report, which provides an overview of the work of the Partnership in 2017.

We are delighted to report that interagency and stakeholder collaboration is a major factor in the successful delivery of many participation opportunities for all. This report gives a snapshot of these interventions and of trends in modern recreational sport / physical activity.

The Partnership has made significant advances and has particularly increased the number of locally delivered programme through our SVT Community Sports Hub and newly established Errill Rathdowney Activity Hub. **In 2017 Laois Sports Partnership engaged 15,094 people in 153 programmes and delivered 41 training courses to 541 people.**

Target groups focused on during 2017 included children and young people, disadvantaged communities, men 16-40, integration initiatives, lifestyle intervention programmes and programmes for people with a disability, unemployed and teenage girls/ women.

We will continue to serve the people of Laois with the intention of fulfilling our mission to “Lead, co-ordinate, support, inform and deliver a range of sports and physical activity opportunities for our community”. Sport and physical activity play a big part in the lives of people in County Laois and the growth of participation is evident through the numbers who are now participating in all activities. We now in Laois Sports Partnership want all persons even those who do not take part in sports, easy access to both established and new sports as well as recreation and physical activity. It is also important that we continue to invest and develop our ranges of activities as there are ever increasing lifestyle health issues in Ireland. We work together with our local communities to create an environment that improves activity, health and wellbeing. With the population growth of the county it is key that Laois Sports Partnership continues to grow its strategic capacity and is supported as the lead agency for sports participation in County Laois.

Finally I would like to thank Sport Ireland, our partner agencies, volunteers, clubs and community voluntary organisations for their ongoing support and commitment to Laois Sports Partnership. I am confident that while the Strategic plan 2017-2021 provides significant challenges, it will enable the Laois Sports Partnership to continue on in a positive and productive manner to ensure this implementation of the visions and goals of LSP.

Is mise le meas
Eibhlín Smith

Introduction

This annual report presents the information collected using the SPEAK LSP-level evaluation software. The data itself, which is referred to throughout this report, is available in electronic format and forms part of a national database of activity which is published by Sport Ireland.

The software collected data in four key areas:

The Operational Environment

That is, the community in which the LSP operates, the main issues facing that community and the other responses to those issues. In this section, there is some information about matters internal to the LSP - such as funding and staffing - also presented. This data is collected at a LSP level.

The Resource Audit

Here we look at how the time and effort of the LSP was spent. In particular it looks at

- The amount of time spent on **LSP Maintenance**. That is, time spent performing tasks that are necessary to keep the LSP 'on the road'.
- The amount of time spent on each **Working Method**. For example, how much time was spent on one Working Method as opposed to another Working Method.
- Work with the different **Target Groups** and **Working Partners**.
- The **Development Issues** being addressed in the work.

In the Resource Audit, each staff and volunteers in the LSP provides information about his or her own work. In this report that information is collated for all staff and volunteers and is presented for the LSP as a whole.

LSP Outputs

This looks at the direct Outputs of the LSP work under each Working Method. Much of this information is quantitative in nature.

LSP Impacts

This looks at the broader Impacts of that work. What did it actually mean - both for participants and the community - more broadly? Much of this information is descriptive in nature.

Not all the data collected is presented, but it is available from the database.

LSP Staffing

The information on staff is detailed below:

LSP Staff

In this section, you are asked to describe the total staff and trainee or volunteer complement of your LSP, including their full time equivalent.

Enter your staff, trainee and voluntary worker numbers below.

		Persons	FTE
Staff funded solely by Sport Ireland	Male	1	
	Female	2	
	Total	3	0

		Persons	FTE
Staff part-funded by Sport Ireland	Male		
	Female	2	
	Total	2	0

		Persons	FTE
Staff funded solely by other partners	Male		
	Female		
	Total	0	

LSP Tutors and Trainees

Enter the number of interns, job placements and trainees (FTE = Full Time Equivalent)

		Persons	FTE
Job placements and Interns	Male	4	
	Female	1	
	Total	5	3

		Persons	FTE
Contracted tutors	Male	2	
	Female	6	
	Total	8	

We utilise placements from TÚS and CE placements .

LSP Management

LSP Management

FRCs rely on the input of their voluntary management committee for ongoing internal management, planning and evaluation, as well as support for the development of programme activities. The gender breakdown of the management committee is as follows

Male	4
Female	7

The levels of knowledge at committee level available to the FRC in relation to your target groups are listed below.

Primary Level Children, Second Level Boys, Second Level Girls, Women, Older Person, Unemployed, People with a Physical Disability, People with a Sensory Disability, People with an Intellectual Disability, People Experiencing Mental Health Difficulties, Traveller Community, Young People at Risk, Disadvantaged Communities, Sports Coaches

The representation from working partners is presented below.

E & TBs, HSE, LCDC, Local Authority, Local Organisations, Local Sports Clubs, Primary Schools, Second Level Schools, Public Participation Network

Skillsets present within current Board

Financial, Management/ Governance, Human Resources

Board of Directors

Eibhlin Smith	Board member role	Chairperson
Jamie O'Hanlon	Board member role	Financial Officer
Annmarie Maher	Board member role	Secretary
Clodagh Armitage	Board member role	Director
Maura Brophy	Board member role	Director
Louis Brennan	Board member role	Vice Chair
John Finn	Board member role	Director
Marion Condren	Board member role	Director
Karen Phelan	Board member role	Director
Marian O'Boyle	Board member role	Director

Staff Liaison Sub-Group	Eibhlin Smith Louis Brennan Jamie O'Hanlon
Finance Sub-Group	Jamie O'Hanlon Annmarie Maher Eibhlin Smith Louis Brennan
Premises Sub-Group	Annmarie Maher
Human Resources Sub-Group	Eibhlin Smith Louis Brennan
Volunteer Sub-Group	Clodagh Armitage Louis Brennan Eibhlin Smith Marion Condren Marian O'Boyle
Compliance Sub-Group	Eibhlin Smith Annmarie Maher Clodagh Armitage Karen Phelan
Disability Sub-Group	John Finn

Internal Policy

General Policies and Procedures

Strategy	Yes
Annual Report	Yes
Annual Accounts	Yes
Management Accounts	Yes
Annual Action Plan	Yes
Specific Action Plans (specific programmes, SIDP, etc)	Yes
Signed Heads of Agreement with Sport Ireland	Yes
Signed Terms and Conditions of Funding with Sport Ireland	Yes
Signed Terms and Conditions of Dormant Accounts Funding with Sport Ireland	Yes
Tax Clearance Cert	Yes
Anti-racism Code of Practice	No
Child Protection Policy	Yes
Safeguarding Statement	In process
Equality of Opportunity / Equal Status	Yes
Code of Practice for working with LGBT Communities	No
A Data Protection Policy	Yes
Public Relations/ Media Policy	Yes
Working Alone Policy	Yes
Whistle Blowing Policy	Yes
Risk Register	Yes
Fixed Asset Register	Yes
Club/Sports Directory	Yes
Contacts Database	Yes
Programme/Event/Training Course Evaluation Policy	Yes
Years of Current/Latest Strategy (from/to)	2017 to 2021
Dates of heads of agreement with Sport Ireland (from/to)	13/11/17 to 13/11/20
Expiry Date of Tax Clearance Cert	23/6/18
Corporate Governance	Yes
Volunteers Policy	Yes
Board Handbook	Yes
Confidentiality Policy	Yes
Terms of Reference for the Board, Sub-Groups, Working Groups and Advisory Groups	Yes
Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members	Yes
Recruitment of Board Members	Yes
Induction of Board Members	Yes
Code of Conduct for Board Members	Yes
Turnover of Board Members	Yes
Board Succession Plan	Yes
Board Appraisal Process	In Process
Schedule of Matters Reserved for Board's Decision	Yes
Schedule of Board Meetings	Yes
Board Meeting Agendas	Yes
Board Meeting Minutes (Signed)	Yes
Board Charter / Memorandum and Articles of Association	Yes
Board Meetings without Staff Present	not applicable

Internal Policy & Board of Directors

Policy on Conflicts of Interest	Yes
Non-Attendance of Directors at Meetings	Yes
Not acting in the best interests of the Company	Yes
Financial Policies and Procedures	Yes
Financial Reporting to Board	Yes
Financial Reporting Procedures	Yes
Progress Reporting to Board	Yes
Expenditure Authorisation Levels	Yes
Procurement Procedures	Yes
Company Law Compliance / Schedule of Statutory Obligations	Yes
Policies and Procedures in Relation to Employment	
Staff Hand Book	Yes
Confidentiality Policy	Yes
Health and Safety Statement and Policy	Yes
Bullying and harassment Policy (Including Sexual Harassment)	Yes
Dignity and Respect at Work	Yes
Code of Conduct for Staff	Yes
Disciplinary and Grievance	Yes
Policy on Conflicts of Interest	Yes
Recruitment and Selection	Yes
Supervision and Support	Yes
Time Off In Lieu	Yes
Career Breaks	Yes
Job Sharing	Yes
Family Friendly Workplace	No
Options related to Work Hours	Yes
IT Policy/ Internet Use Policy	Yes
Travel Policy	Yes
Statutory / Non Statutory Leave Arrangements	Yes
Performance Appraisal Process	Yes
Governance Code for the Community and Voluntary Sector	
Has your LSP signed up to the Governance Code for the Community and Voluntary Sector?	Yes
John Finn	
When did the board member's term begin? (Year)	2012
When is the board member's term due to end? (Year)	2018
What organisation(s) does the board member belong to?	Disability
What skills/ expertise does the board member bring?	Expertise in Disability, Campaigning, Leadership, knowledge of sport sector and recreation sector.
Jamie O'Hanlon	
When did the board member's term begin? (Year)	2011
When is the board member's term due to end? (Year)	2018
What organisation(s) does the board member belong to?	Avid Partners
What skills/ expertise does the board member bring?	Financial, Business Development, Conflict Resolution, Consultancy, Leadership, Governance, Legal, Management

Board of Directors

Annmarie Maher	When did the board member's term begin? (Year) 2012 When is the board member's term due to end? (Year) 2018 What organisation(s) does the board member belong to? Laois County Council What skills/ expertise does the board member bring? Event Management, Strategic Planning & Management, Knowledge of the sport and recreation sector, Networks and sector relationships, policy implementation, Sports development, Understanding of sport structures, Understanding of wider recreational activities/issues.
Clodagh Armitage	When did the board member's term begin? (Year) 0 When is the board member's term due to end? (Year) 0 What organisation(s) does the board member belong to? Health Service Executive What skills/ expertise does the board member bring? Diversity and Inclusion, Understanding of wider recreational activities/issues.
Maura Brophy	When did the board member's term begin? (Year) 2016 When is the board member's term due to end? (Year) 2019 What organisation(s) does the board member belong to? Laois Offaly Education & Training Board What skills/ expertise does the board member bring? Consultancy, Diversity and inclusion, Strategic Planning & Management, Member relations, Networks and sector relationships, Policy implementation
Louis Brennan	When did the board member's term begin? (Year) 2010 When is the board member's term due to end? (Year) 2018 What organisation(s) does the board member belong to? Community Representative What skills/ expertise does the board member bring? Business Development, Campaigning, Change Management, Consultancy, Fundraising, Strategic Planning & Management, Leadership, Governance, HR, Management, Policy Implementation, Networks .
Eibhlin Smith	When did the board member's term begin? (Year) 2015 When is the board member's term due to end? (Year) 2018 What organisation(s) does the board member belong to? Laois Public Participation Network What skills/ expertise does the board member bring? Change Management, Consultancy, Strategic Planning & Management, Governance, Knowledge of the sport and recreation sector, Policy implementation, Networks and sector relationships

Board of Directors

Marion Condren	When did the board member's term begin? (Year) 2015 When is the board member's term due to end? (Year) 2017 What organisation(s) does the board member belong to? Laois Public Participation Network What skills/ expertise does the board member bring? Diversity and inclusion, knowledge of the sport and recreation sector
Karen Phelan	When did the board member's term begin? (Year) 2015 When is the board member's term due to end? (Year) 2017 What organisation(s) does the board member belong to? Primary Schools Representative What skills/ expertise does the board member bring? Consultancy, Knowledge of the sport and recreation sector, Member relations, Schools and High Education
Marian O'Boyle	When did the board member's term begin? (Year) 2015 When is the board member's term due to end? (Year) 2017 What organisation(s) does the board member belong to? Secondary School Representative What skills/ expertise does the board member bring? Consultancy, Diversity and inclusion, Member relations, Schools and High Education



Case Study True Transformation

We delivered 6 True Transformation programmes funded by the Health Service Executive with a specific one targeting women over 50 and a men's only group specific to their needs. Over 100 people participated who continue to be physically active in regular training sessions and fun runs and walks supported by True Fitness.

Quotes/Testimonials

"Overall the course covers total wellbeing, from eating and exercising properly! I feel so much better in myself and I actually have the proof of how much good the course has done me - having been on a high dose of tablets for high blood pressure for over ten years now, I was totally thrilled when my doctor halved my prescription dose. What a wonderful feeling that was!!!! Another big plus in my opinion of True Transformation was that everyone taking part was in the same age group and it was women only thus leaving no reason for embarrassment or self-consciousness! They were also a great group of women, we had some great laughs and enjoyed meeting up".

"I found the programme a truly transforming experience, I have found that my attitude to health & fitness and my own view of my body has changed for the better. I now am incorporating the advice and guidance into my daily life"

Case Study

Anne is a 74 year old lady who lost 36lbs and reduced many of her chronic conditions. Anne cannot operate a computer and found it a little stressful to have to write a testimonial, so we decided to interview her and transcribe her responses as per her consent. To follow are the questions we asked and the answers she gave us.

Q1. What did you think of the health workshops?

Very engaging, very interesting, exceptional content and delivery.

Q2. What changes did you make to your nutrition as a result of the programme?

I cut out white bread and by default I cut out a lot of butter, jam and marmalade. I used to buy 3-4 pots of marmalade at a time, but I don't buy it anymore. This in turn meant I cut a lot of unnecessary sugar out of my diet. I moved to McCambridges brown bread or porridge bread. I didn't change my breakfast, lunch and dinner very much, but I did cut out the treats. I kept my few glasses of gin. This is the first Christmas I did not touch a sweet!

Q3. What did you think of the training sessions initially?

Frightening. I don't or didn't walk so I found that one very difficult. I said I would go to the walking classes as long as it didn't rain and for 18 Tuesday nights in a row there was no rain in Portarlinton from 7-8pm, so I kept going. I didn't walk as far as everybody else, I was slower than the others, they caught up on me and passed me out, but I found it very enjoyable and very easy because I was always encouraged to go at my own pace and I got better every week. I got to know everybody, it was very sociable. I found it very sociable. I met people I hadn't seen in years, I found it very friendly and I enjoyed the help that everybody gave me.

Q4. What do you think of the training sessions now?

I love the stretching sessions. I have missed a few weeks of the outdoor session in December, but I am going back to them when it gets a little brighter outside. I love how sociable the classes are. I have got to know everyone and I love the help they give me. I do my own version of the exercises. I can't believe I am back in training on 2nd January. I can't believe I am still here. I keep telling everyone about it and telling them to come. I can see a big difference between me (physical and functional ability) and other people my age and younger.

Q5. What changes did you notice in your daily activities as a result of the programme?

Big changes. I found a big difference going up and down stairs and doing all of the things I do every day. I went on holidays in November and it was a tough holiday physically. I was the oldest person on the bus. I was able to go on excursions I wouldn't have been able to go on before True Transformation and the TRX classes. It was absolutely fantastic.

Q6. Would you recommend the programme?

Yes. Absolutely. I keep telling everyone to come. You should try to do more work with older people. My friends keep telling me how well I look. I told you at the start of the programme I wanted to go shopping in my own wardrobe because I have so many lovely things that didn't fit. Now I can shop in my own wardrobe and I am delighted.



Youth Wellness Board



Oisín McConville Barrowhouse GAA



Oisín McConville & Pádraig Bannon



Gambling Through Life Talk



Senator Frances Black Timahoe



Gavin Hennigan Adventurist

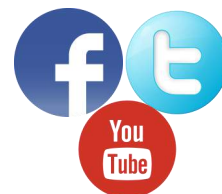


Asthma in Sport Talk



Kathleen Gorman Memorial Talk

LSP's Media



Ideally a Communication Officers would enhance our work in providing information and resources and allow us to concentrate on other areas of the LSP work. Continuous promotion of all our activities through our **website**, **social media** (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), **newspapers** (Leinster Express & Laois Nationalist), **posters** and **newsletters** has definitely increased information requests to the office. Highlighting our Sports Inclusion Disability (S.I.D.) programmes through these outlets has also helped us to promote inclusion around the county. Our S.I.D. profile is growing annually with a wider range of opportunities to participate now available and with more clubs engaging around inclusion for all e.g. we worked closely with Portlaoise Wrestling Club to develop wrestling for people with disabilities in Laois and have run 3 Disability Inclusion Training courses in 2017, which also helps to create more awareness around inclusion, along with the up-skilling of volunteers in local clubs. This give people with disabilities more confidence with engaging in their local clubs.

We utilise all our social media platforms to communicate the work of the LSP and set up events through Facebook and have monthly page slots in local papers to promote the work of the LSP. We do annual reports, mid-year reports, newsletters and updated our website in 2016 which also promotes the key messages of the LSP. High profile campaigns with partner agencies such as **Laois Connects**, Healthy Ireland projects through LCDC, etc. also help increase our profile and communicate the work we do.



Using social media outlets has given us a great platform to promote the work of the LSP and we have seen an increase in our **Facebook** likes from 2,507 to 3,013 ; **Twitter** followers from 995 to over 1,115 and visits to our website has increased to over 7,250 hits. We are constantly looking at other methods of increasing our profile and communicating the work of the LSP .

We were involved in more campaigns this year particularly youth wellness boards for secondary schools in partnership with Portlaoise Rotary Club and Mental Health Ireland and our SVT Community Sports Hub.. Our **Kathleen Gorman Memorial Talk** attracted huge interest from media locally as we utilised high profile speaker Senator Frances Black and also had talks from Gavin Hennigan Adventurist, Seamus Callaghan Tipperary GAA, Ross King Laois GAA Sport—A Breadth of Air and Oisín McConville his story Gambling through Life which helped local lad Pádraig Bannon go viral with his personal story to help others.



Also from information we sent to clubs/organisation regarding grants e.g. Sports Capital Grant's and Go for Life saw an increase in calls seeking further information and assistance.



Promotional tools such as our **signage and inflatable arch for fun runs** has assisted us in engaging clubs and organisations and reaching a wider audience. Following information we sent to clubs/organisations regarding our fun run signage available to them over 19 clubs/organisations, from athletic clubs to GAA clubs and walking clubs utilised the signage for their events with over 3,000 people participating.

This assisted us in the brand promotion of the Laois Sports Partnership and is an invaluable asset for clubs.



Laois Sports Partnership updated its print **Club Directory** in 2015, which promotes the key messages of the LSP, these are handed out to clubs/organisations and members of the public. In 2017 we updated the web version.

Laois County Council printed a **directory of summer activities for children and young people** which was distributed through schools. Laois Connects also assists us in heightening the profile of the work we do and communicate the message of benefits of physical activity for positive mental health and wellbeing. LSP office is receiving more footfall into the office and have seen an increase in queries relating to sport and physical activity.



A major factor which the Laois Sports Partnership considers to have helped in achieving outputs include an increased profile of LSP activities in the local newspapers, with a monthly page in both the **Leinster Express** and the **Laois Nationalist**. This not only affords the community the opportunity to keep updated on activities in their area but also highlights our S.I.D. programme with a monthly profile being included in the article.

Use of Media (including Social Media)

Number of radio interviews	0
Number of articles in local press/radio	150
Number of articles in national press/radio	0
LSP Website: Number of new articles	330
LSP Website: Number of hits	7,250
Facebook: Number of posts/updates	1,500
Facebook: Number of Followers	3,013
Twitter: Number of tweets	4,025
Twitter: Number of Followers	1115
Twitter: Number Following	590
Number of texts sent via text service	5,500
TOTAL	23,473



Club Development Work

Providing Funding Information

Number of clubs worked with (one to one basis)	55
Number of clubs worked with (through group sessions)	25
Number of group information sessions run	1
Number of clubs supported in making funding applications (one to one basis)	40
Number of clubs supported in fundraising strategies (one to one basis)	0

Supporting Club Development

Number of clubs/groups supported in the delivery of activities	35
Number of clubs/groups helped in developing their organisational or management structures	2
Number of clubs/groups helped in tackling particular development or policy issues	0
Number of clubs/groups helped in tackling particular governance issues	2
Number of clubs attending Club Development Workshops	25

There are approximately **389** clubs in the Laois area and Laois Sports Partnership work in conjunction with these to help with development and support. Training courses, advice and activity sessions are vital to the continual success of local clubs.

The main **Target Groups** involved are Children of pre-school age; Children of primary school age; Girls of secondary school age; Women aged 18-50; Men aged 18-50; Older People; People with a physical disability; People with an intellectual disability; People with a sensory disability; People experiencing mental health difficulties; Unemployed people; Travellers; People of migrant communities; Disadvantaged Communities; Coaches; Sports club volunteers.



We delivered training for coaches locally through the NGB's including FAI, Athletics, GAA, Basketball Ireland. We also delivered a number of Sport Ireland training such as **Active Leadership, Safeguarding Training, Disability Inclusion Training and Coaching Children Series workshop** courses which enhances club development work. Clubs are more aware of being inclusive and accessible to all due to the S.I.D. Programme. Increasing programmes and participants within the S.I.D. programme has allowed for increased work in the area of Club Development such as accessibility audits for inclusion. Through our Active Communities programme we delivered Active Leadership training as an initiative to the group.



Improved linkages with clubs and implementing support initiatives such as inflatable arch and signage for fun runs has been hugely successful both in terms of promotion to the wider community but also supporting clubs/organisation when funding resources are scarce.



We have supported a number of clubs in **meet and train events** over the past couple of years which has raised our profile as a supporting organisation locally. Streets of Portlaoise 5km 2017 saw approximately 630 adults take part, 100 of them were from a Meet & Train programme. 400 children also took part in this event, which we have continued to support since it started up.

Vicarstown Parkrun is going from strength to strength with approx. 41 runners weekly. Also a Junior Parkrun was established through the SVT Community Sports Hub in 2017 with approx. 35 children weekly and we have linked community events to both Vicarstown Parkrun's as finale events to encourage greater participation and future sustainability.



The process of updating our **clubs directory** annually renews direct contact with the most recent active club contacts and a new booklet is being planned for 2018.

Our **Basketball** for primary schools programme utilised local coaches to deliver coaching with 19 schools, with approximately 800 children receiving coaching. 920 students from 26 schools participated in a Blitz Day in May. This initiative has led to Primary Schools Mini-Basketball National Committee utilising this model and is now linking with schools in Portlaoise area who have established a league with 7 schools participating and 140 children.





Our **Sports Hall Athletics Programme** is continuing to be successful with 35 schools and 1,522 children participating. Of these schools one student had visual impairments and was delighted with the efforts made to ensure she could participate, as she was often left out of physical activities and 30 students were from St. Francis School. 48 students from Shanaghmore N.S. represented Laois at the Sports Hall Athletics Festival 2017 in Athlone.

The continual promotion of the **Laois Walks Festival** has assisted us in helping people establish formal walking groups within Laois with 2 newly established groups in 2017 which are linking in to the Get Ireland Walking initiative. The increased interest in walking in Laois has led also to Activator Poles training and further training in Nordic Walking.



Other programmes run throughout the year include; True Transformation; Active Living; Fit Schools, Portlaoise Street Leagues, Activator Poles, Nordic Walking, Community Coaching, Teenscene etc



LSP Funding

Core & Challenge funding from Sport Ireland	219,184
Sport Ireland Dormant Accounts Funding	112,450
Local Authority	6,250
HSE	16,000
Leader/ Local Development Company	2,000
Income Generated from Courses, Programmes, Events	2,018
Other	35,940
TOTAL	393,842

Received funding from Sport Ireland Dormant Accounts, Health Service Executive, Laois Partnership, Laois County Council, Go for Life, Healthy Ireland Funding through LCDC, Dept of Health and Dept. of Justice & Equality

Training & Education

Letter from one of our Community Coaching participants

Dear Caroline and Laois Sports Partnership team,

I just wanted to say a huge thank you for everything over the last few months. The Community Coaching Course (Level 1) has been an absolutely massive help to me since I started in September, and giving me a new lease of life, a fresh start. The dedication shown by all the staff has really made the course an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. Each of the different elements of the course have challenged me in different ways, and brought about new levels of confidence in myself and my abilities. It has also giving me a new interest in different sports, cricket and athletics being added to my long list of interests.

Aside from the general benefits of the course, it has also been of huge benefit to my own mental health. Having struggled with a gambling addiction for a number of years, I entered treatment in July. I started the Community Coaching Course the week after leaving, and it has been an absolutely amazing experience. From meeting new people, having a schedule/routine to stick to, gaining new qualifications and so much more, I have been able to get my life back on track. On top of that, getting to meet Oisín McConville through the Mental Health Awareness Campaign, that was organised in conjunction with Laois Connects, gave me the confidence to talk about my own personal issues. Since that meeting, I have been approached by local newspapers and a national campaign to talk about my story. I have also had friends and people from the wider community come to me with their own issues, looking for advice. Without the confidence I have built up from both the course, and the meeting with Oisín, there is no way I would have had the confidence to talk about it. So not only have you all helped me, the support and encouragement you have given me has also helped numerous other people. The support I have got from all you since has also been incredible. On top of that, the work experience module has allowed me to gain experience in both the fitness industry and more coaching experience.

I will never be able to thank you all enough for all you have done for me. The hard work I have seen in the organising of all the workshops has been brilliant, but for me the enthusiasm shown by all the staff has been absolutely amazing. Seeing the love each of you has for your job created a desire in me to finally put my head down and try for the job I want. Having finally got around to completing a course (I left college twice), I have a new drive and determination to better myself, and finally go back to college to do Physical Education Teaching.

So a big thank you to Caroline, James, Majella, Catriona, Sinead, Roisin and Jamie. A special thank you to James, who got me involved in the course in the first place and has always been at the end of the phone if I had any questions or concerns.

Thanks again guys. I might even see you all in 2018 for Level 2.

Providing Training & Education

Mental Health Awareness has become a major focus over the past few years. People are becoming more conscious of the fact that they have to look after their mind as well as their body. In addition it has been highlighted that participation in sport and physical activity has a positive effect on your mind. Our **Sport Seminar's** covered Oisin McConville "Gambling Though Life, My Story, Gavin Hennigan "Turning your Life into an adventure", Seamus Callinan & Dr. Tariq Sport—A Breath of Fresh Air saw 390 people attend with 150 people attended the Kathleen Gorman Memorial Talk in association with SVT Community Sports Hub with special guest Senator Frances Black. SafeTALK delivered by the Health Service Executive saw 15 people attend. Through out the week there was 14 walks across the County, 2 x Special Parkruns which launched the Laois Connects Week and Yoga all promoting positive health and wellbeing with over 366 people participating.



2015 saw a change to the **Code of Ethics** and **Child Protection Officer** training courses, which are now **Safeguarding 1 (Basic Awareness)**, **2 (Club Children's Officer)** and **3 (Designated Liaison Person)**. Due to demand, we ran 13

Safeguarding 1 courses with 165 participants and 1 x Safeguarding 2 course with 9 participants and 8 participants on Safeguarding 3 course in 2017.

There was an increased interest also in providing activities for people with a disability such as wrestling being just one of the newest activities. Four **CARA Disability Inclusion Training** courses were completed in 2017 with 77 participants.



Our **Community Coaching Programme** was a great success again in 2017 which was funded by Sport Ireland through Dormant Accounts. It is a partnership initiative between HSE, Laois Sports Partnership, Laois Partnership, Laois County Council and Laois ETB in conjunction with the, FAI, GAA, Athletics Ireland. The Community Coaching Programme is a direct response to the rise in unemployment, the need for provision of quality education & training for those that are unemployed and the needs that have arisen within organisations such as Laois Sports Partnership to provide programmes and education to those who are currently unemployed and have no previous coaching qualifications. It also has the benefit of providing qualified and trained coaches who can be added to a coaching database and used to fill the need which may arise for coaches to be employed on a sessional basis to deliver programmes and coaching in the future with agencies, sports clubs, the youth sector, voluntary & community sector. The programme provides participants with both practical and theoretical sport-related skills in order to help them find relevant work experience in their local community. Foundation level focuses on the fundamentals such as Soccer, GAA and Athletics, Safeguarding, Disability Inclusion etc. In 2017 we completed a Foundation Course with 15 participants with 8 participants looking to advance to Level 2.



Schools

Schools also require more education and training in upskilling particular in generic and minority sports and Laois Sports Partnership are constantly striving to fill this gap in education in **basketball, badminton, Fit Schools, Be Active After School** and **Sports Hall Athletics**.

SID Programme

The Sports Inclusion Disability programme provided training to volunteers while participants enjoyed programmes such as Summer Athletics, Basketball, Rugby, Wheelchair Hurling, Junior activity club., Wrestling. 613 Adults, 126 children participated in programmes in 2017 with assistance from 245 volunteers.

We support meet and train events, including offering our Inflatable Arch and fun run signage which widens our profile in the county.

We provide in house training to our work placement participants, we have seen a huge increase in the number of placement requests this year. We provide continuous training to our CE placements whom assist programme delivery.

The **Club Development Grants** are very important to clubs and organisations as the small funding goes a long way in assisting them to upskill their volunteers. Feedback from clubs have indicated that even small funding which they receive goes along way in upskilling volunteers and participating in National Governing Bodies coaching courses.

Local Projects

Local Projects are very important to the LSP profile within the County as we are seeing an increase in demand for community activities to assist whether it be by organising some physical activity or liaising with sporting organisations to get involved. The value of sport and physical activity increased in 2017 with more partner agencies utilising sport and physical activity as a mechanism to reach hard to reach target groups. Local Projects allows us to meet the needs of the people in Laois and the type of programme interventions they require.

The **True Transformation** proved successful again this year, with six groups and 100 participants completing the programme. This is a 6-week programme which focuses on providing information and advice to participants as well as physical activity.

The programme has proven to be very successful. We have successfully and consistently achieved significant improvements in the physical and metabolic characteristics of the participants. Overall we are very happy with the content of the programme and plan to continue to incorporate the 4 key elements in each programme. The 4 key elements are (i) home based and on site exercise training, (ii) nutrition plans and workshops, (iii) health education workshops, and (iv) assessment of fasting blood samples to determine metabolic health.

The **Disability Boccia League** has proven very successful and is increasing in numbers of teams participating year on year with 80 participants, 14 teams in 2017. The teams practice weekly in their centres and travel to play each other in the Boccia League over 6 months with the grand finale hosted by Laois Sports Partnership.



Laois Connects showcases the power of multi-agencies working in partnership to provide a wide range of supports and activities in promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.

The **Sports Leader Award** is a Level 1 Award in Sports Leadership which provides an ideal starting point for learners aged 13 years and over who wish to develop their leadership skills, whilst under the direct supervision of their Tutor/Assessor or other suitably qualified adult. The syllabus is designed to develop generic leadership skills that can be



applied to a variety of sports and/or recreational situations as well as contributing to the personal development of the learner. It consists of six units of work including a one hour demonstration of leadership and the award will take approximately 33 guided learning hours. The Level 1 Award in Sports Leadership is a practical award in which learners must demonstrate their ability to lead others in simple sport/activity. We delivered 3 Level 1 courses with 64 participants and ran 1 x Level 2 Award for 26 participants.

Volunteers are vital for the delivery of many of the disability programs. We are very lucky to have a large number of helpful and committed volunteers. There is now an increased awareness of the **SID programme** by partners, and volunteers play a huge part in assisting delivery of disability programmes. However, continually having to fundraise for the SID programme impedes the delivery of individual programmes.

It is critical for Laois Sports Partnership to secure annual funding to match funding received from Sport Ireland. All our partner agencies support this programme with contributions received towards programme delivery from Laois County Council and the Health Service Executive .

Promotion of the work of the LSP through our monthly news page and social media which is growing assists us in spreading the word of the work of the LSP and engaging with target groups.

The importance of partner supports at local level is critical to the success of Laois Sports Partnership in delivering local projects based on needs analysis locally. In 2017 we received supports from **Local Clubs & Organisations, Health Service Executive, Laois Partnership, Laois Offaly Education Training Board, Department of Social Protection, Department of Children & Youth Affairs, Dept. of Justice and Equality and Laois County Council** for programmes such as True Transformation, Portlaoise Street Leagues, Community Coaching Programme, Integration programmes, etc.

Funding was a huge assistance in delivering local projects this year with our partner agencies the Health Service Executive supporting our True Transformation Programme which was very successful.



Time Committed To Different Working Methods

Make an estimate of the total number of days that staff have committed to the LSP for the year	220 Days
What percentage of this time is funded or supported through Sport Ireland core funding.	100%
Estimate of FRC's total time spent on project development and administration	50%

The Sports Inclusion Disability Officer role is 50% funded by Sport Ireland and supported locally by Laois County Council and Health Service Executive.

All staff are utilising Salesforce to manage LSP workload, operational plan for the year, task management, roles and responsibilities, track training and programmes as well as diary management.

We are working with our partner agencies in delivering and assisting local programmes.

Conclusion—2017 in Review

- **LSP TRAINING & EDUCATION – 41 TRAINING COURSES WITH 591 PEOPLE RECEIVING CERTIFICATION**
- **LSP PROGRAMMES – 153 PROGRAMMES WITH 15,094 PEOPLE PARTICIPATING**

Case Study SVT Community Sports

Stradbally, Vicarstown and Timahoe communities work together to develop better sport and physical activity opportunities for their people

The Stradbally, Vicarstown and Timahoe Community Sports Hub has managed to reach a whopping 8,500 participants in its first year with 3,500 of these participants regularly participating in weekly activities.

Stradbally parish comprises the small town of Stradbally and nearby villages of Timahoe and Vicarstown (SVT). An active community report which was conducted in 2012 identified excellent amenities in the local area that were under-utilised but highlighted the need for more opportunities for people in the Stradbally area to be more physically active. This was the catalyst behind the development of the SVT Community Sports Hub.

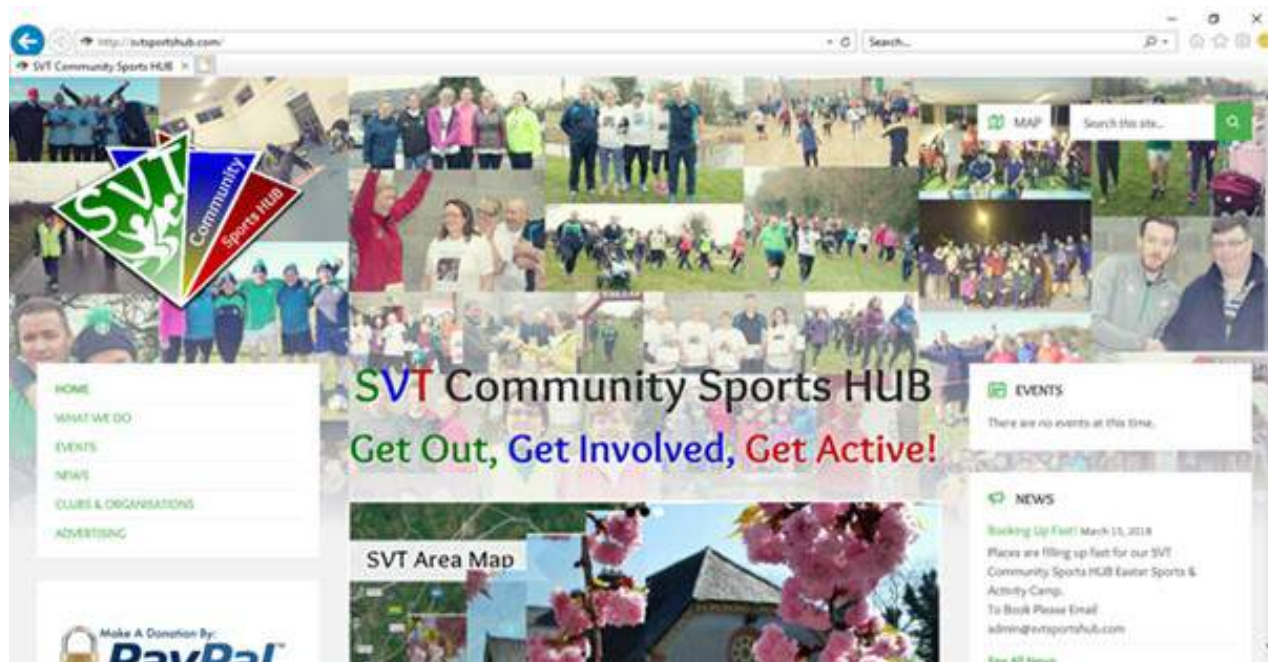
The SVT Community Sports Hub project is a strong example of partnership working. Laois LSP consulted with the local communities, sports clubs, parkrun, active retirement groups, youth organisations, Waterways Ireland, Laois Water Safety, Laois County Council, HSE, Laois/Offaly ETB, Laois Public Participation Network and Stradbally Facility Development to develop the Hub. The people being targeted by the hub include young people who are not active or have dropped out, men over 35 who have stopped playing sport and have not taken up a replacement activity, rural dwellers who are isolated in a Clár area, a high concentration of older adults in the wider area, who have specific sport and recreation needs and a high concentration of unemployed females, in comparison with the national average.

“SVT HUB Challenge has inspired me to get out of the viscous circle of obesity and get the up and going again. I have received so much good in my life since I started the journey a few short weeks ago. I thought my life was over. I was finished and all I could do was wait for the inevitable horrible end I had accepted as my fate. But now it’s changed oh so much thanks to beautiful people such as you and Dominic and the rest of the co-ordinators of SVT and of course to everyone who came along to support me. I can’t thank you all enough, you have literally saved my life.” - Timahoe Leader.

The hub is centred on two Community Halls at either end of the Parish (in Timahoe and Vicarstown) and four GAA clubs, two soccer clubs and an athletics club. The GAA club facilities incorporate outdoor walking tracks which have been utilised significantly over 2017 as a clear result of SVT Community Hub. There are numerous outdoor facilities in the area including a walking path along the banks of the Grand Canal which hosts a parkrun and junior parkrun every Saturday and Sunday morning. A new SVT Canoeing & Kayaking club was launched in April 2018. The two community halls now host a range of indoor activities which complement the outdoor activities; these include Sportshall Athletics, Basketball, Badminton, Indoor Soccer, Wheelchair Rugby, Bowling, and Winter Athletics Training.



The Hub has recruited 6 new committee members and 50 volunteers and there are two Active Retirement groups now using the sports hub. There are four primary schools serving the Parish and each are fully committed to the importance of physical activity for the children and are involved in the development of the hub. A new website has been set up to promote the sports hub – <http://svtsportshub.com/>
The Hub will continue to increase awareness of the activities available including the promotion of community leadership through appropriate training to build capacity on the ground. New activities will be introduced, to increase use of the Grand Canal and the Hub will continue to build on older adult days. More focus will be put on young people, especially those who were never active, or those who have dropped out of physical activity and a stronger link will be created with Primary schools in 2018 .



Laois Connects Oisín McConville Talk Gambling—My Life, gives courage to one young local man to share his story

Story as told by Pádraig Bannon, Community Coaching Participant 2017

As part of Mental Health Awareness Week, I was asked would I be willing to talk about my own experience, my ongoing battle. I thought long and hard about it, but in the end decided if my story could help someone else, then I need to do it. So here it goes...

Gambling - My "Secret" Addiction

I suppose I'll start at the start. I grew up just outside Portlaoise, with my mam, dad, sister and brother. By all accounts, I had a "normal" childhood. There were good times and bad times, but nothing I couldn't manage. I had (and luckily still have) a fantastic family, great friends and a huge love for sport. From as early as I can remember, I had a ball in my hands or at my feet, and between GAA and soccer, played sports all year round.

I was fairly good in school. I got decent Junior and Leaving Certificates with minimal effort or stress (at least on my behalf). All in all, I was a normal young lad growing up in Ireland. I enjoyed a few drinks, watched a lot of sport and had a lot of friends. Life was good. But little did I know that beneath the surface there was a serious issue just waiting to be released.

The gambling bug hit me at an early age, but it stayed hidden, dormant, for years. But when it finally did erupt, it hit me and my life hard. Very hard.

Gambling has been around a long, long time and as an industry, is growing each and every day. Bookie shops are in most cities, towns and villages in Ireland, not to mention the addition of online bookmakers. Casinos, slot machines, poker machines. They're everywhere. Even the lotto and scratchcards are available easily in the majority of shops in Ireland. For the majority of people, this isn't an issue. They play the lotto, have a bet on the Grand National or during Cheltenham and the like. But they then go on with life as normal, win, lose or draw. For a compulsive gambler, such as myself, everything revolved around the next bet, and how I could get the money to finance it! I was dragged in by the bright lights, the free bets, the chance of winning enough money to set myself up for life. I stayed because I couldn't leave. It began to take over my whole life. Every sub conscious and conscious thought was how I could get money to gamble, where I could gamble, what I would gamble on, and what I would win!

The say 1 in 8 people who gamble will develop a compulsion to gamble. You're twice as likely to develop this compulsion if you play competitive sports, and three times as likely if you play a competitive team sports. An average GAA panel has 24 players. You do the Maths. So many sports people try so hard to stay away from alcohol and drugs that they end up with gambling as their hobby, their release. And this definitely happened to me.

Lies, secrecy and deception go hand in hand with a compulsive gambling addiction, and I was an expert in all three. I lied, cheated, scammed and pulled every trick I could think of in order to get money to gamble. Some of the excuses I came up with to get money were just crazy, imaginative, but absolute madness. Car problems, not getting paid properly and card/bank problems were just some of the "problems" I invented to get a loan of money from family and friends, which usually wouldn't be paid back. The amount of time I'd get myself a new phone or Playstation or whatever only for it to "break" a few weeks later. In reality, I would have a big win, splash out, then have a run of losing days and have to sell these new possessions again to get money to gamble. This happened all the time. I'd say I bought 4/5 new iPhones on prepay at different stages.. Maybe even 6 or 7. The worse of it all, I resorted to stealing on numerous occasions, and this is probably the aspect I struggle with the most.

When I think back on what I did, I feel physically sick at the thought of it. It feels like it wasn't even me a lot of the time! I was brought up with good morals and a respect for people, but during that time, the height of my addiction, people didn't matter; they were secondary in my life. Gambling was the most important thing, all that mattered. I lost people I really and truly genuinely cared about because all the lies fell apart, and all trust and respect was gone. I avoided people



because I was ashamed and embarrassed. But I didn't stop gambling. These feelings passed. I was never one for showing too much emotion, and I could hide my feelings expertly. So well in fact, that they basically disappeared. I didn't care about anyone or anything, myself included. All I could think about was getting money. Either cash in my hand, or money in my account, so I could have a bet. Just so I could feel that rush for a few minutes. Like a heroin addict getting his fix, I was getting mine. They say a gambling addiction ultimately ends in one of three ways if not treated: Homeless, in Jail, or death. At different stages, I was close to each of these. But none have happened to me, not yet anyway.

My personal breaking point came in January of this year 2017. In all honesty, I had had enough warnings on previous occasions, but I did what I did best and danced around the messes I had made, manipulating people to do things the way I wanted. But this time, that couldn't and wouldn't happen. It wasn't me who decided I had enough, it was basically an intervention after some shameful things came to light. In truth, I had wanted to stop gambling for a long long time, but my ego wouldn't let me ask for help, and I was powerless over my addiction to stop on my own. On January 25th, I went to my first Gambler's Anonymous meeting in Cuan Mhuire, Athy. I instantly made a connection with the people in the room. There was a comfort in knowing I wasn't alone. There was a glimmer of hope in seeing people further down the road of recovery, to see that life can change for the better. I continued with these meetings in Athy, as well as GA in Portlaoise and Newbridge, for several months. I was also going to an addiction counsellor for a more in depth look at myself. The support I have had from my family, friends and the wider community during this time has been absolutely phenomenal and over whelming. Lifts to meetings, a friendly text and chat, advice and everything else. For a long time I thought I was alone. My addiction and my mind made me believe that. But that couldn't have been further from the truth. I had amazing support around me, both professionally and just people that knew and cared about me. All I had to do was ask. I had lied to myself and others for so many years, I found one of the hardest things in my recovery was to trust myself and others enough to be open and honest. But when I finally did, I felt the weight of the world lift off my shoulders. I no longer had to remember all the lies I was telling, I could be honest with people and trust them not to judge me or throw it back in my face. People can be amazing and so supportive if you just give them a chance. In July of this year, I went to a treatment centre called Aiseiri in Wexford. Four weeks that I didn't particularly want to do (especially in the middle of Championship) but four weeks that have changed my life. I will never be able to thank the staff and people I met there enough for what they did for me. The best thing I can do is too not go back to that life again. To live a more "normal" life instead.

In the two months I've been home, my life has changed immeasurably. It's far from perfect, but it's a far cry from where I was mentally a few months ago. I'm starting to enjoy the simple things in life, like time with my family, chatting with the lads, watching a game on a Sunday afternoon. I've learned to be more open and honest, and that it's okay to take a step back sometimes and have a bit of time for myself.

I guess if I want to help people, maybe these are some of the warnings signs you could look out for; either in yourself or a loved one.

- **Spending a lot of time alone in bookies, casinos, or online.**
- **Never having money despite working 5 days a week.**
- **New possessions on a regular basis, only for them to disappear a short time later with no real explanation**
- **Isolating from others**
- **Denial about amount of bets, time in bookies/casinos etc**
- **Betting your last €10 rather than getting yourself food**
- **An obsession with form of horses, teams etc and spending hours studying for the perfect winner**

If you find yourself answering yes to one or more of these questions, maybe try a GA meeting. They're free, non-judgmental and easy to find. You may or may not have a problem. But better safe than sorry.

Well that's basically it. I'll put a list of numbers of different organisations at the bottom of this. If you're struggling and feel you can't talk to a family member or friend, I'd strongly urge you to use a number from below. Even send me a message and I'll help in any way I can. Even if it's just directing you to someone else. Every life is important, but you only get one. What you do with it is up to you. Don't throw it away over your ego. Ask for help. Remember you are never alone!

Strategic Plan 2017 –2021

We launch our fourth Strategic Plan which we look forward to implementing over the next 5 years. In 2017.

While the plan outlines the many functions and priorities of the LSP, our commitment to increasing participation in Sport and Physical Activity remains the key outcome sought from this Strategy. We want to continue to provide quality participation opportunities which are inclusive of all ages, abilities and fitness levels. By achieving this we hope to inform, educate and enable the people of Laois to live a positive, healthy and balanced lifestyle.

This Strategy was developed following consultation with key Stakeholders and a review of current research and trends around participation in Physical Activity. The Strategic Sub Committee was also guided by the new National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland which was launched by Healthy Ireland in January 2016.

Key to the success of Laois Sports Partnership has been the strong involvement, support and investment by our partners, agencies, stakeholders and community organisations. A partnership approach to the planning, delivering and resourcing of LSP projects and programmes has resulted in a greater impact within the communities. We also greatly value the contribution of volunteers within sports clubs and community groups who are crucial in providing regular Physical Activity and Sporting Opportunities throughout Laois.

We would like to thank the Board of Directors (past and present) and the Strategic Sub Committee for their continued support and contribution of time and effort to the workings of Laois Sports Partnership.

Thanks to C.E. John Treacy, Sport Ireland also and in particular the staff in the Participation Unit for their constant encouragement, support and advice. Thank you to Mr. Humphrey Murphy (ILC) for his valued support and professional consultation on this Plan.

Finally, we would like to thank the staff of Róisín Lawlor, Catriona Slattery, James Kelly, Majella Fennelly, our Tutors, CE Workers, TÚS workers and volunteers for their assistance in the delivery of our programmes, without whom our goals could not be met.





Laois Sports Partnership - Strategic Plan 2017 - 2021

Who we are:

Laois Sports Partnership is a company limited by guarantee (Company Act, 2014) which was formed in 2001 under the direction of Sport Ireland to co-ordinate, promote and support the development of physical activity in Laois. We are governed by a Board of Management whose Members represent the statutory, community and voluntary sector.

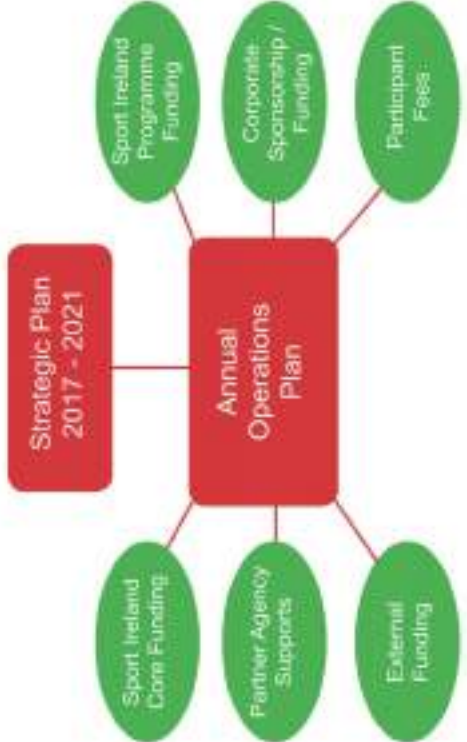


Ethos of Laois Sports Partnership:

Vision: The vision of the Board of Laois Sports Partnership is for lifelong participation in sports and physical activities in county Laois.
Mission Statement: The mission of the Board of Laois LSP is to 'Lead, Co-ordinate, Support, Inform and Deliver a range of Sports and Physical Activity opportunities for our community'.

Values: The Board of Laois LSP values opportunities for all and particular supports for some.
Objectives: Laois Sports Partnership Strategic Plan will be guided by four pillars, with the key aims of increasing participation in sport, and to insure that local resources are used to best effect.

- ### 4 Pillars of Laois LSP:
1. Increase levels of participation
 2. More sustainable infrastructure
 3. Greater access to training & education
 4. Improved access to information



#LaoisActive

- Information -
- Education -
- Implementation -

- Themes underpinning the pillars in our strategic plan are to:
1. Co-ordinate, lead and monitor recreational sports and physical activities in county Laois through partnership work.
 2. Increase the number of people taking part in sports and physical activities in county Laois.
 3. Deliver sustained participation in sports and physical activity.
 4. Support the needs of physical activity recreational and competitive for groups and individuals.
 5. Communicate the sports and physical activity opportunities in the county.

"supporting sport & physical activity for all the people of County Laois"





LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP
COMHAR SPÓIRT NA LAOISE

— SPORT IRELAND —

GET IN TOUCH:



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