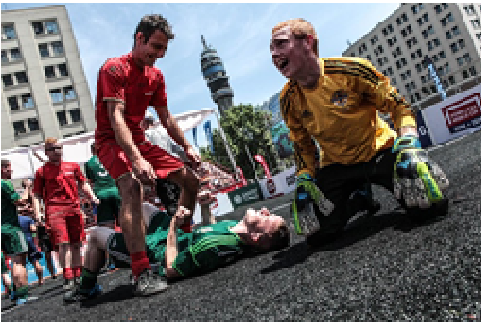


A Sporting Chance

Evaluation of Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion through Sport

Executive Summary



1. Executive Summary

Introducing the programme

1. Ulster Rugby, the Irish Football Association (IFA) and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) are delivering the Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion (PETPSE) through Sport programme on behalf of the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL).
2. Just under £4 million has been invested in this programme. The current funding is coming to completion in March 2015 having started in February 2013. This report assessed the programme's success against its objectives, its overall impact and considerations for future delivery.

Sport can help deliver a wide range of outcomes in the NI context

3. The Programme for Government, NI Executive and Departmental policies highlight the potential application of sport and physical activity for a range of outcomes including economic, health and well-being and social cohesion.
4. With the economy being the number one priority for the Executive it is recognised that sport has a positive economic value within society directly through employment, through positive links to tourism and social cohesion. Sport helps individual development and productivity, while also preventing higher societal costs in relation to health and well-being.
5. The governing bodies recognise their broader social role within their strategies. The IFA has a goal to "Reach beyond the game – use the power of football for health, education and social development". The GAA strategy talks of the GAA's End Purpose: Community Development, Inclusion and Cohesion. The IRFU (Ulster Branch) has an objective of "creating welcoming and sustainable clubs that serve the needs of the community".
6. Sport is a powerful medium through which to capture interest and attention, and to communicate information, challenge attitudes and change behaviours.

The programme has been successful in achieving objectives

7. Taking the three sports together, the assessment found that 17 of the 20 PETPSE programme wide objectives are projected to be fully or largely achieved (some will be exceeded) with partial achievement in three others.

Headline impacts - Social Inclusion

8. The inclusion of people with disabilities has been a key success for the programme. There has been significant impact for individuals and families; increased access and participation opportunities for people with disabilities; and increased awareness and capabilities relating to disability and inclusion.

Impact Story 1- Including people with disabilities in team sport

Lightning Powerchair FC were founded in 2013. Initially only three participants had power chairs, the programme has provided six more. The team plays weekly and have begun to play against other teams. A father of one of the team, William, highlighted what it meant to his son, saying he “loved playing the sport, being part of a team and making friends through it.” He also told of how the impact continued beyond the game time, with “William and the others chatting about the game on Facebook later in the evening”. He said this was particularly poignant, “as one of the team, Daniel, was unable to speak and communication with the others during the game was very difficult, but he was able to join in the chat online afterwards.”

9. The inclusion of women has had a heightened focus within rugby realising additional players (almost 1500), female teams (11), female coaches (over 100) and employment of female rugby officers (3). The IFA and GAA have continued to develop their already established female participation (including growing network of female coaches etc.).
10. The IFA has led a number of innovative initiatives focused on inclusion of other marginalised groups: the Street League engages homeless people through football; Women’s World United works with female ethnic minorities; and various initiatives engage young people at risk (e.g. Interface Cage Project).

Impact Story 2 – Using sport to support and reintegrate homeless people

Karl played for the NI Street League team in Chile during the Homeless World Cup. He is currently living in temporary accommodation, having been homeless for several years. He is currently working through a mental health disorder, linked to trauma brought on through association with paramilitary activity. Since attending Street League, Karl has successfully completed his Mental Health and Suicide Awareness accredited courses, and is due to complete his ICT Essential Skills qualification shortly.

Headline impacts – Employment and Skills

11. The programme has delivered education, skills and employment outcomes. The programme has: supported employment directly (21 people have been employed within the governing bodies); employed 49 people on a casual basis by IFA (as educational resource facilitators, interface cage co-ordinators and football for all grassroots co-ordinators); has delivered initiatives which have led to further employment outcomes (e.g. the GAA Youth Employment Scheme and the Ulster Rugby Community Gym Initiative have led to 23 sustainable employment outcomes for previously unemployed people); and developed new levels of interest and engagement in enterprise among school children (via the award winning IFA Enterprise Initiative).

Impact Story 3 – Sport can be a pathway to skills and employment

Kevin had been unemployed for seven months when he undertook the GAA's Youth Employment Scheme. He said the coaching school was enjoyable and brought something different every day. A key part of the experience was "*talking in front of groups every day*" when out applying the coaching in the schools. He said this helped give him more confidence and "*helped in the interview process and helped secure the job*". He now works as a Community Sports Co-ordinator for Cookstown Council.

12. The infrastructure of clubs, coaches and volunteers has been strengthened. The investment in the quality and skills of the people involved in programme delivery influences the quantity and quality of outcomes and impact. This strengthening of "human capital" is an impact that continues beyond the programme duration.

Headline impacts – Health and Well-being

13. There has been significant investment in health and well-being initiatives. More people are participating in rugby, football and Gaelic games; health specific initiatives have been delivered to schools, clubs and coaches; a health and well-being infrastructure is being established in GAA. What can be said is that the reach of this programme has been extensive, including into hard to reach, vulnerable groups such as young men in socially deprived areas, and the feedback has been positive. Considering the potential costs to society of dealing with obesity, mental health and other issues which the programmes have focused on, if it contributes to prevention to a small amount of this, it is likely to have been a positive investment.

Impact Story 4 – Tackling health inequalities

An unused commercial unit in Ballybeen housing estate may seem an unusual location for Ulster Rugby. Through their community gym initiative Ulster Rugby

has reached into working class communities in both loyalist (e.g. Ballybeen) and nationalist (e.g. the Colin area of west Belfast) areas. In Ballybeen the Men's Motivational Group has developed the community gym which now boasts 150 members. Andy Tyrie of the group explains that the equipment and fitness instructor training *"has made a big impact. Many of those using the gym would not have previously been members of a gym. Why? Because they are local, feel comfortable with the volunteers running it and it is priced very reasonably, removing any cost barriers. Indeed an integrated approach allows free use of the gym to those who are completing a numeracy and literacy course."*

Value for Money

14. Given the programme's strong delivery against objectives and the scale of in-kind contribution (collectively the governing bodies identified in excess of £2.3 million contribution, based on resources from governing bodies and volunteer time monetised at minimum wage levels) set against the potential cost to society of poverty and social exclusion the programme has delivered good value for money. Notably the programme will continue to provide a positive return on investment into the future, for example through ongoing health and well-being outcomes.

A compelling case to build on the programme's positive momentum

15. There are compelling reasons to continue this programme:
 - a. the three main sports working together is a powerful social message;
 - b. these sports offer a powerful combination of 'reach' and 'hook'. We estimate that approximately 150,000 people regularly play in the three sports across Northern Ireland. Many thousands more participate through volunteering. This reach stretches across religious, class, ethnic, age and gender backgrounds. Sport is an important part of many people's lives.
 - c. the programme makes a difference in terms of social inclusion; employment and skills and health and well-being. There is a positive economic outcomes as these impacts have both revenue generating and cost-saving consequences for wider society;
 - d. the programme helps deliver a central sporting policy: Sports Matters – Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019;
 - e. there is an increased ambition and capability within the governing bodies in relation to delivery of wider societal goals such as improving health and well-being and supporting social cohesion;
 - f. there is an expectation among certain groups (e.g. disability sector) of sustained and increased opportunities to participate; and

- g. future investment will leverage cash and in-kind contribution from sporting bodies, volunteers and private sponsorship.

Enhancing future outcomes

16. Thinking on future direction should focus on ways of further enhancing the programme so as to further heighten the quality and quantity of outcomes.

17. The following should be reference points in framing future programming:

- a. the development and design process should be collaborative in nature and should build on the successes and learning to date;
- b. there should be collaborative headline projects (for example increasing Disability Participation or Female Participation/Leadership) with each sport's customised programmes running underneath;
- c. there is value in Northern Ireland's societal context for the three sports to be seen to deliver together. Therefore an additional step could be identification of an initiative(s) which can be delivered jointly on the ground. This would have value in terms of demonstrating a joined-up approach, but also potentially adding value in terms of efficiency and effectiveness;
- d. strategic alignment – what activity best helps deliver the sports' governing bodies goals and wider government goals. Within this the design should account for complementary programmes (e.g. relationship with the DENI programme on physical literacy);
- e. invest in the education and training of those who design and deliver such interventions. The quality of the inputs from those designing and delivering the programme will influence the scale and quality of outcomes;
- f. ensure clarity of targeting in the design of the programme. for example if the programme wants to prevent obesity, then what age and social group is most vulnerable to this and what practical targets can be set;
- g. SMART objectives should be aligned to this which can be aggregated across the programme and aligned with central government objectives; and
- h. Build in a programme wide monitoring and evaluation approach from the outset. A greater coherence of approach would assist in, setting the baseline, measurement of hard to quantify impacts, aggregation of impact and alignment of impacts against programme wide targets. This will ensure messages regarding contribution to government targets and impact of high profile issues are clear and ready to communicate.

Leveraging other resources and focusing on priorities

18. The current programme included funding and in-kind contribution from the sporting bodies and volunteers. Any future programme should formally recognise this contribution and potentially plan to increase this contribution relative to the government contribution over the programme's duration. This could include:
 - a. Cash contribution from governing body towards activity;
 - b. Funding leveraged as private sponsorship;
 - c. In-kind contribution from governing body; and
 - d. In-kind contribution facilitated via volunteers associated with the sport.
19. Any future programme should sustain prioritised elements of the programme. The governing bodies have already undertaken analysis to help identify a leaner programme that could be taken forward focusing on key priorities.



The PETPSE programme has helped ensure relations between the sports are stronger than ever. This was emphasised in a recent charity GAA match hosted at the Kingspan Stadium, home to Ulster Rugby.

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