

Laois Sports Partnership

DISABILITY PLAN 2012 - 2016

Introduction - Sports Inclusion Disability Officer (SIDO) Program

Many people with disabilities are precluded from participating in sports activities and often it is simply because of a lack of understanding on the part of service and facility providers. The SIDO Program intends to address the imbalance in opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in Sport and Physical Activity, through working in partnership with all stakeholders.



Garrett Culliton
Sports Inclusion Disability Officer

Main Objectives are to:

- Increase the number of people with disabilities participating in sport & physical activity on a regular basis.
- Increase the number of participation opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sport and physical activity.
- Support current participation and the work of disability sports and physical activity clubs and disability organisations.
- Encourage and support mainstream sports and physical activity clubs in the area of inclusion.

To achieve our goal, the following key areas have been identified

1. Research & Needs Analysis
2. Education
3. Advocacy
4. Care Settings
5. Training
6. Program of Activities
7. Monitoring & Evaluation

For further information, please contact Garrett on (057) 8671248.

1. Research & Needs Analysis

According to the 2011 census the population of Laois consisted of 80,559 people.

Of the total population of Laois 5,872 have a disability with the majority of these being within the ages of 65 years and over. As can be seen from the table below the overall figure is broken down into different age groups.

0-14 years	15-24 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65 years and over	Total
607	423	1,128	1,681	2,033	5,872

From the age of 0 – 5 years there are no day services for children with a disability. There are 2 schools within Laois which solely cater for children with a disability from the age of 5 years to 18 years; these are both based in Portlaoise.

From 18 years + there are 12 centres which cater for adults with a disability. These centres are dispersed around the county of Laois, with the majority being within a 10mile radius of Portlaoise town. Bordering Counties would also cater for adults with a disability from Laois in their care services.

In a study carried out by the National Disability Authority it was found that People with a chronic illness or disability are less likely to be in a club or an association. Severely hampering disability reduces membership of clubs by 20 percentage points relative to non-disabled people; reduces the rate of meeting people regularly, by 7 percentage points; and reduces the incidence of talking to the neighbours by 15 percentage points.

Barriers to participation for people with a disability

According to Flanagan (2008) the barriers to participation for people with a disability are as follows:

Intrinsic barriers

- Knowledge about the benefits of physical activity
- Poor attitude and self concept
- Poor body image
- Embarrassment
- Over protected as a child and adult
- Fear of failure

Extrinsic barriers

- Transport
- Money
- Physical Access
- No programmes
- Poor Training, coaches, teachers, etc
- Poor Attitude of Staff, no Disability Awareness Training
- No friends going

From our own experience of talking to various disability groups other barriers to participation can include:

- Difficulties to access clients with a disability
- Personal awareness

Benefits to participation in Physical Activity

- Increased confidence and assertiveness
- More energy
- Improved social skills
- Awakening of potential
- Reduced effects of disability
- Greater acceptance of difference
- Highlights Ability
- Fun

Persons with a disability often experience barriers towards social inclusion – the low rate of employment coupled with a disability means that people with a disability often experience isolation and a lack of opportunities to become involved in employment, recreational, sporting or community activities.

This social exclusion is recognised under local and national plans to address social inclusion. Under the local development social inclusion programme (LDSIP), persons with a disability are identified as one of the key target groups for future work under the expanded programme.

Sport and involvement in recreational activity is a key strategy toward addressing the factors which cause social exclusion among persons with a disability. Being involved in an activity brings a person into social networks and develops physical, emotional and mental strengths within the person. However a recent consultation with persons with a disability (as part of the LDSIP expansion process) identified continuing barriers for people with a disability which also affect their ability to become involved in recreational activities.

The most pertinent issues identified by the group include

- A lack of community based indoor facilities to encourage play which are accessible for people with a disability
- a need for more accessible forms of transport, in particular Taxis and buses
- a lack of training for people on how to cope with a disability or on disability awareness and prejudices among the general population.

The SIDO programme will hope to tackle some of the barriers faced by persons with a disability through its work in Laois.

Disability Sub-Committee

To help us achieve our goal, we have a Disability Sub-Committee in place, to assist us.

The main purpose of the Committee is to get suggestions and feedback from all, regarding how we could tackle the issue of getting more people with disabilities involved in Sport or Physical Activity. The Committee are not part of the running of the SIDO post as such, but their suggestions and feedback, from their experience in the areas they are involved in, are a very valuable source of information to us.

We have representation on the Committee from the following agencies:

- LSP, Board of Directors
- IWA, Centre for people with Physical Disabilities
- Laochra Laois Special Olympics Club
- NLN, Centre for people with Intellectual Disabilities
- National Association for Deaf People (NADP)
- Council for Special Education, Laois
- Community Mental Health Centre
- National Council for the Blind (NCBI)
- County Development Board Laois Co Co
- Irish Wheelchair Assoc, Sports Section
- HSE, Disability Services
- Disability Federation of Ireland

CARA Adapted Physical Activity Centre

We also work closely with the CARA APA Centre in Tralee, to try and achieve our objectives.

The Irish Sports Council has supported the CARA Centre in appointing a national Co-ordinator to advise the SIDOs on our work. This Co-ordinator, Niamh Daffy, plays a key role in providing training to the SIDOs and assisting us in developing plans and programmes for people with a disability all around the country. Niamh is based at the CARA Centre at the Institute of Technology in Tralee.

2. Education

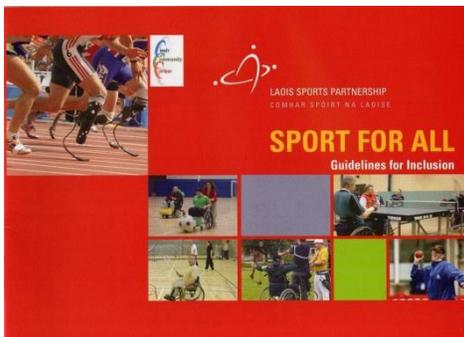
With the enormous success of the Special Olympics in 2003 people are generally more aware of the issue of disability. But a person with a disability such as dyslexia (difficulty in reading and writing properly) or deafness is not as easily identifiable and how do we deal with this if they present themselves at our club or facility.

We have undertaken a number of initiatives to try to educate both the general public and people with a disability around the benefits of physical activity and the inclusion of people with disabilities within mainstream clubs.

Sport for All – Guidelines for Inclusion

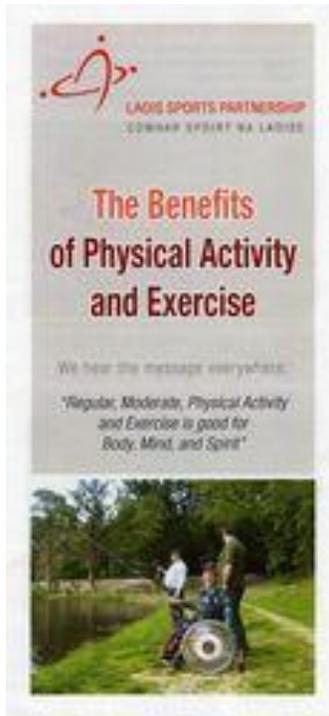
This booklet was developed to try and broaden the knowledge level of people in our community about the issue of disability and make people comfortable when dealing with people with various forms of disabilities – physical, intellectual, sensory, mental health or emotional/behavioral difficulties. It has been developed for use by anyone involved in a sports club - be they administrator, coach or player - for community groups and facility owners. The points addressed in the booklet have come directly from people with disabilities and are intended as an easy reference guide for people so that they are aware of the **(sometimes common sense)** elements that can make life more comfortable for all parties.

People with disabilities also have the fear of entering an environment where others may not understand their problems or how to address them properly. Knowing that the community is more aware can help to increase their confidence and willingness to integrate more fully in the community. This booklet is not meant to be a medical journal or a buildings guideline and does not claim to have all the answers, but we hope that it will be a tool to break down the knowledge (and fear) barriers that exist and that it will serve to increase participation in sport and physical activity by people with disabilities in our community.



Benefits of Physical Activity and Exercise

The Merits of Exercise — from preventing chronic health conditions to boosting confidence and self-esteem — are hard to ignore. And the benefits are for everyone, regardless of age, sex or physical ability. Laois Sports Partnership has produced a Brochure on the Benefits of Physical Activity and Exercise, highlighting the fact that the Benefits *are* for everyone. Contact the office for a copy.



3. Advocacy

Laois Sports Partnership is committed to the promotion of sport, to all sectors of our society. We actively promote the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities, and try to work towards eliminating the physical or social obstacles that exist within Sport and in all aspects of life.

Our policy is to develop and promote opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sport at a level of their choice. We encourage everyone to participate regardless of age, ability or disability.

We also have representation on the following;

- Laois County Council Disability Forum - Raising awareness of disability issues within the County in all areas not just sport
- Laois/Offaly Centre of Independent Living
- Irish Wheelchair Association – Sport Executive Committee

Accessibility

We live in a diverse society, where social inclusion is becoming a worldwide issue and the demographics are changing; in particular the population is ageing and there is increased immigration. A report entitled “2010: A Europe Accessible for All” highlighted that accessibility is a key to autonomy, inclusion and sustainable development.

Sustainability is now high on the agenda for all and accessibility is a major factor in the delivery of a more sustainable environment.

An accessible building has benefits for all. It is safer, healthier, more comfortable and easily adapted to changing needs.

Although the right to access the built environment is universal, the opportunity to access the built environment is not. Many people with disabilities are faced with barriers that exclude them from participating as equal citizens. These barriers can be attitudinal and societal as well as physical and affect people with different impairments at different times of their lives.

Having completed a ‘Universal Accessibility Auditing Course’ with the University of Ulster, we intend to work with the Clubs and Leisure Facilities of Laois to try to achieve access for all, to the Sport and Physical Activity arena.

4. Activities in Care Settings

As stated earlier, there are 12 centres around Laois that cater for people with disabilities so one of our major goals is to assist these centres with providing physical activity for their clients. We will provide information on existing activities that are available and also to introduce new activities that the clients may be interested in trying out. The SIDO program for 2012 plans to continue working with all the centres and creating new links where possible.

5. Training of Staff/Volunteers

Disability Awareness Training Workshop

The overall aim of this workshop is to increase the involvement of people with a disability in sports clubs including playing, spectating, coaching, officiating, administration, etc. Specifically, this initiative is focused on providing an initial basic training program for sports clubs wishing to achieve this aim.

We are encouraging clubs and community groups to put a Disability Liaison Person in place, in the same way as they already have a Chairperson or a Secretary or a Children's/Youth Officer. (This person does not have to be an expert in disability affairs but simply someone with a level of awareness training and a point of reference for people with a disability).

To this end we have developed this short, two and a half hour, Disability Awareness Training Workshop to provide this person with the tools to carry out this role. Completing this workshop and carrying out a small access audit on your club's facilities will result in any club or organization receiving a Laois Sports Partnership *Level 1 Certificate*. We would envisage this certificate to be of benefit to all clubs, for many reasons, not least in assisting your club when applying for grant aid.

We feel that inclusivity is the way forward. It is only right that everyone has the opportunity to be involved in local community activities. An accessible environment has benefits for all. It is safer, healthier, more comfortable and easily adapted to changing needs.

6. Program of Activities

This is probably the key area of the SIDO role. Apart from providing activities for fun and recreational purposes we want to see everyone getting the health benefits that go along with partaking in Physical Activity. We hope, in time, to give everyone a chance to try any activity they might be interested in, but at present the main activities we have been focusing on are

- Tandem Cycling
- Wheelchair Basketball
- Athletics
- Fishing
- Boccia
- Spinning
- Swimming
- Soccer
- Fitness/Gym work
- Basketball
- Badminton

Schools

It is widely known that the earlier people are introduced to Sport and Physical Activity, the more likely they are to stay at it, throughout life. Catching children in schools, therefore, is obviously an important area and we plan to work with students with a disability and their teachers to ensure that everyone gets a chance to partake in their schools PE program.

7. Monitoring & Evaluation

Collecting information so that one can check regularly on their service's progress (monitoring) and look back to find out what difference the service has made (evaluation) should be part of any service's routine work. Monitoring and Evaluation are fundamental to the continued existence and improvement of a service. This is important from an accountability and service development point of view.

Accountability

- to service users
- to funders
- to tax payers
- to the wider field

Service development

- knowing what works and why
- knowing what helps
- knowing how to make improvements
- demonstrating your effectiveness to funders
- getting ideas for future services

We will monitor & evaluate the project on an ongoing basis as per event we run but mainly on a six monthly and yearly basis through a number of means.

SPEAK Self Evaluation System

This system which has been introduced to the Local Sports Partnerships by the Irish Sports Council. SPEAK (Strategic Planning, Evaluation and Knowledge Networking) offers the capacity to self-evaluate, leading to a comprehensive understanding of the work of our organisation and the impacts of that work, and uses that new understanding to improve strategic and work planning for the organisation.

Functions and Purpose of SPEAK

- Strategic Planning: producing information to assist staff and management to make informed decisions
- Evaluations: ongoing internal review; cross project periodic assessments; facility for external inputs
- And Knowledge: networking based on sharing information between projects, counties, regions and themes.

Other forms of monitoring will be through:

- LSP – Annual Report
- Disability Sub-Committee
- CARA APA Centre
- Monitoring of this Plan