



LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP
COMHAR SPÓIRT NA LAOISE

— SPORT IRELAND —

“

*Lead, co-ordinate,
support, inform and
deliver a range of sports
and physical activity
opportunities for our
community*



GET IN TOUCH

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So far this year we have emerged from a virtual world to slowly resuming outdoor events. We are now entering a phase of adapting to a new normal and returning to sport. Laois Sports Partnership are committed to providing a safe and healthy return to sport environment for all our staff, coaches, tutors, participants and partner organisations.

All LSP staff and contracted tutors are responsible for the implementation of our COVID-19 Return to Sport Protocols. In line with our Health & Safety guidelines we will endeavour to provide a suitable and safe environment for activities to take place and look forward to welcoming you all again.

This Mid Year Report gives a flavour of some of the events hosted this year, both remotely in the first quarter of the year, and then the socially distanced events hosted by Laois Sports Partnership, as the country began to reopen and events were allowed take place outdoors, in line with Covid-19 safety protocols.

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Delivery of Sport Safeguarding Courses online

Despite Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns, Laois Sports Partnership continued to deliver courses online, in particular Safeguarding 1, 2 and 3, which club coaches are required by law to have in place.



A central goal for all involved in children's sport is to provide a safe, positive and nurturing environment where children can develop and enhance their physical and social skills.

So far this year in 2021, Laois Sports Partnership has run 9 Safeguarding 1 courses, four Safeguarding 2 courses and one Safeguarding 3 courses.

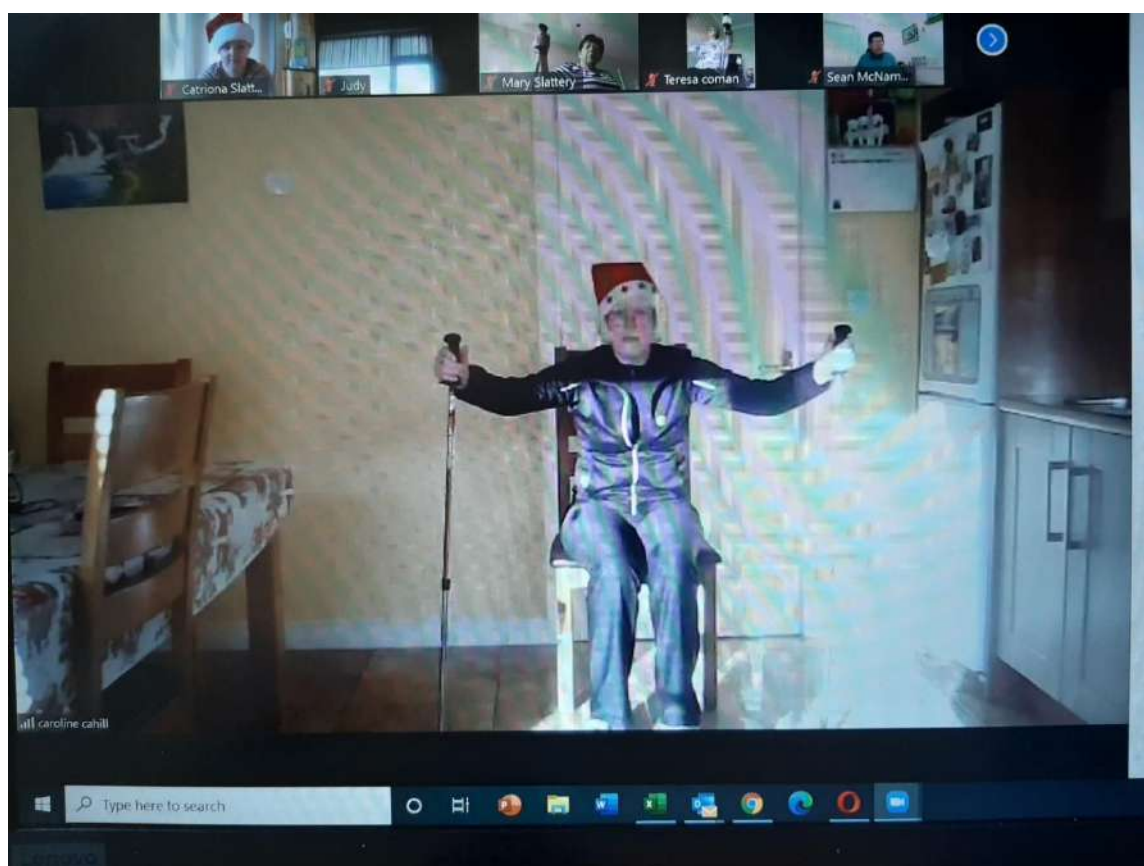
- A total of 105 people completed the Safeguarding 1 course
- For the Safeguarding 2 course, there were 45 participants
- For the Safeguarding 3 course, a total of 11 participants completed it

Activating our Communities through a Pandemic

Laois Sports Partnership supported by Laois Age Friendly Alliance and Healthy Ireland Laois have been able to support older adults to stay active with their activator pole programme.

The activator programme was developed by Frank Fahy, FitWalk Ireland for older people to assist in managing post/hip knee surgery, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's Disease, Osteoarthritis and fall prevention. The benefits in using these poles for exercise are to improve stability, reduces impact on hip and knee joints, develop core strength, improve posture and promotes better gait pattern.

In previous years our activator programme consisting of 6 week workshops which were delivered to communities all over Laois. Activator Poles have been purchased through funding from Healthy Ireland Laois and tutors trained up during this time. When lockdown was lifted last Summer our tutors who completed this training were out delivering socially distanced outdoor sessions in Derrycastle Portarlinton, Portlaoise and Mountrath. Clients who were already familiar with the safe and correct use of the poles, were able to borrow them for their personal use during earlier phases of lockdown. We celebrated a lot of birthdays by playing a favourite song and we even had some solo singing from some participants during these socially distanced sessions. This programme began in 2020 and carried over into 2021.



Just before lockdown the staff of Laois Sports Partnership organised Zoom training for Portlaoise Active Retirement Group in Portlaoise Parish Centre. Declan and the staff really looked after everyone that day and members of the Active Retirement group came along individually to Portlaoise Parish Centre and the LSP staff trained everyone up on how to use zoom.

Testimonials

I was first introduced to Laois Sports Partnership about 2 years ago, when Frank Fahey from Fit Walk Ireland demonstrated how to use Activator Poles {Fit Sticks} in the Gandon Inn.

Being a sufferer from Parkinsons I have problems with gait, and muscle stiffness. I found the use of the poles very helpful and improved my posture and gait.

Thanks to Catriona Slattery and the girls in LSP we had group walks guided by Donie Molloy around Derryounce Lakes and Emo Court. This was particularly welcome as we could meet which was socially very beneficial.

During Covid 19 lockdown we did online zoom twice a week, activator poles on Tuesdays demonstrated by Caroline and exercise to music demonstrated by Maureen Culleton.

I found the social aspect of the outings and the zoom classes to be as important as the exercise.

These are all done at one's own pace, always light hearted and ending with a sing song. This lockdown can be a very isolating time for people so all of the above helped me immensely.

Fintan

“On behalf of the members of Portarlinton Age Friendly Group, I feel I must let you know how much the support you are giving is appreciated, and welcome in these uncertain and frightening times we are struggling to get through every day. As you know, we are in the groups most at risk, and have lost our freedom, we must endeavour to protect our mental health and that is why Laois Age Friendly is so important to us. We are really enjoying our activator classes, the DVD’s are much appreciated by the people who have not got zoom. We want to extend our sincerest thanks for all you do especially to Laois Sports Partnership”.

Sincerely yours,
Judy Barrett
Chairperson

We have regularly enjoyed wonderful support from Laois Sports Partnership, but especially since March 2020 and the subsequent COVID-19 challenges. They have given tremendous assistance to us and the individuals we support during this pandemic.

Just a little example of how they have supported us:

Facilitating Online support through Zoom at least twice weekly, supplied us with well-being manuals offering resources and pertinent information, supplied exercise DVD's, Activator poles for all, safety gear; high-vis vest and hats, inclusive and supported walking groups with additional safety measures. Additionally, their frequent availability is greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,

Everyone at The Red Door Day Service (including individuals living at home).

Mom and Me Bootcamp



The Mom and Me Bootcamp was set up online for mothers and daughters to participate in an online exercise bootcamp. The bootcamp took place via zoom on a Tuesday and Friday nights for 4 weeks.

The bootcamp exercises involved partner workouts in addition to using equipment that can be got around the house i.e. footballs, chairs and couches.

The bootcamp finished on Friday last with great praise from participants. "The bootcamp was great fun, thanks a million for everything", "Many thanks for everything, we really enjoyed it and will miss it". It was enjoyed by all participants. "Tonight was great, you really pushed us", with some even looking for it to continue. There was over 67 participants who had signed up for the bootcamp.

The bootcamp was aimed at increasing physical activity amongst women and developing more interaction and bonding amongst families. The partner workouts really worked great and allowed parents/guardians and children to work as a team and to have a laugh while doing so. It was great to see a smile on participants faces. There was also a little competition along the way.

Laois Virtual 5k a huge success!

Laois Sports Partnership in association with Portlaoise Athletics Club organised the LAOIS 5K VIRTUAL RUN/WALK over 5 days from the 17th - 21st of March 2021.

About 700 Runners/walkers and complete beginners joined in for the "Laois 5km Virtual Run/Walk. We had participants from every corner of Laois and from other counties in Ireland as well as families participating as far as California and beyond.

Funded by Laois Sports Partnership through the Healthy Ireland Keep Well Campaign, we wanted to encourage people of all abilities to take part and run/walk/wheel the 5km from 17th – 21st March. The first 380 participants who registered for the event received a fabulous blue running top which were posted out prior to the event.

Portlaoise AC supported participants for the last 6 weeks through their journey to completing a 5km at whatever pace you could. Couch to 5k training plans were available for beginners and advanced through experienced coaches from the Club.

Proceeds from the event will be used to support activity programmes for people with visual impairments through Laois Sports Partnership and Portlaoise Athletics Club, with a donation also being made to Laois Guide Dogs. €4,000 was raised which was to be split 50-50 between Portlaoise AC & Laois Guide Dogs.

Portlaoise AC Invite You To Join The

Laois 5K

Virtual Walk / Run

**SCAN FOR MORE INFO
& REGISTRATION
ON EVENTBRITE**

€12 P.P
Includes T-Shirt

€6 P.P
Without T-Shirt

**A Donation
Will Be Made
To Laois
Guide Dogs**

<https://bit.ly/36CHG9r>

Background:

In 2020 we launched our first C25K programme for people with visual impairments with Portlaoise AC. The programme was very successful, with participants being able to enjoy guide running for the first time with the support of other athletes from the running club.

We want to build on the success of this programme which can be done now because of the fantastic support from everyone that registered and supported the event.

Participants enjoyed getting out for their activity and enjoyed the benefits of getting out in the “fresh air” which in turn improves quality of life, improves sleep, improved physical fitness, improved wellbeing, reduces stress and anxiety. When people are in natural surroundings, physical activity releases endorphins which gives us that “feel good” feeling.

We have received great feedback from participants. I am sure you will agree with the sentiment.

Testimonial 1

"I have completed many 5k walks over the years but nothing like the virtual 5K yesterday. To say I felt pride is an understatement. For the first time in over a year I could feel that sense of community in the air. We walked with our heads held high, a smile on our face and waved to so many in their blue T-shirt's. With the sun on our backs, we started out supporting Laois Guide Dogs and Portlaoise Athletics Club but by the end it meant so much more Thank You..."



Testimonial 2

My daughter, Emily, and I were honoured to join in the event. We participated remotely from California along with our 2 Golden, Daisy and Lady.

NOTE: We are descendants of the Cullens of Abbeyleix. My wife, Katie, and I had a magical visit to County Laois 2 years ago and stay in close contact with Trudy Mhic An Earla and Sile Headen. We definitely plan to return.

It was truly an honour to participate in the 5K run and support such worthy organizations. Although our feet were in California, our hearts were with all of you in County Laois!



Students from Barnashrone NS put the Bubbles and Pods equipment to good use, as the photographs above show.

LAOIS SPORTS PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTED OVER 60 PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN LAOIS WITH BUBBLES & PODS EQUIPMENT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN

Case Study: Barnashrone NS

What games or activities were most popular?

Athletics equipment

How did having the equipment & resources benefit the pupils and teachers?

The equipment was of fantastic quality and was used during orienteering & PE with the older classes and also PE & circuits activities with the younger & special needs groups

Did you encounter any challenges or wish to provide additional feedback, either positive or negative?

We really appreciate the amount of equipment we received and the booklet of activities and games cards was much appreciated.

Which equipment option did your school avail:

Athletics and Basketball

How many teachers in your school used the basketball session planners/online resources?

1



Activator poles return in Portarlington

One of the first events to return in group settings post lockdown was our Activator Poles class in Portarlington.

The classes returned in pods of 15 Portarlington Leisure Centre on Tuesday, May 25.

The activator poles classes were delivered outdoors for several weeks and despite some light rain showers on one day, no sessions were missed, with a large turnout for all events.

In particular, the social nature of the event, and the chance to meet up with old friends and perhaps make some new ones, was a welcome opportunity for those who had missed out on group activities for so long.

Wellness walks make a welcome return!

A sunny day, an impromptu sing-song and a declaration that Laois Sports Partnership sports co-ordinators are gold-medal standard – it's fair to say that the return of the walking programme at Derryounce Lakes and Walkway was a complete success.

The first of a six-week wellness walk programme was delivered on Thursday morning of last week and there was a palpable enthusiasm for the event and the social interaction it offered those taking part, even with all social distance measures and precautions in place.



Donie Molloy imparts some information to the group at Derryounce

Once all the formalities were completed by SIDO Sports Inclusion Disability Officer Catriona Slattery, and some debate about whether the area was in Laois or Offaly, the two groups set off on their walk around the idyllic setting. For those who haven't yet visited the site on the outskirts of Portarlinton, it is already a valuable amenity in the community with huge potential for further development.

And if you didn't know that before, you certainly would after listening to walk leader Donie Molloy, of Port Trail Walking Group. From advice to "walk with your eyes", and information on the history or Nugent's Hill, he is a font of knowledge and information.

The enthusiasm for the walk was very much in evidence amongst the participants who lapped up Donie's good-humoured nature.

In fact, there was such a good mood about the place, that the group stopped to sing an impromptu "You Are My Sunshine", led by Maureen Culleton from Rathdowney.

After that, Donie treated the group to some knowledge about the fairies that inhabit the woods before showing everyone how to eat nettles.

"I trained Bear Grylls," was Donie's explanation.

Thankfully, no one else followed his lead although a discussion on the iron content of nettles and their use as a plant fertiliser ensued.

With various routes available to walk, depending on the distance that suits, Derrycastle Lakes and Walkway has been a popular destination for many for some time now.

And with ambitious plans to develop it further with an additional lake and coffee shop, Donie predicted that it would surpass the popular Lough Boora, situated in Offaly, between Tullamore and Cloghan.

With an attractive woodland setting on offer for walks, as well as the route around the lake, the location is an ideal one to enjoy nature and exercise together.

There was certainly no doubt either that those who undertook the walk last week were keen to complete the next five instalments of the event.

Five more weeks of the sold-out wellness walk followed this event with more similar events due to be hosted by Laois Sports Partnership in the coming months.



The Wellness Walks programme ran for 6 weeks at Derrycastle before moving to Emo Court Parklands



DELIVERY OF PROGRAMMES SO FAR . . .

Laois Sports Partnership continues to work in the local community providing a wide range of activities

Walking programmes

Laois Fit
Teenagers

Self Defence

Activator
Poles

Rock steady
boxing

Swimming
events

Laois Sports Partnership aims to provide programmes for all ages and abilities to get everybody in the community active



39 programmes have been started or completed in the first six months of 2021

3,330 people have taken part in courses run by LSP so far in 2021



www.laoissports.ie

VARIED PROGRAMME

Laois Sports Partnership prides itself on delivering a wide and varied programme of events for people in the community.

Sporting activities are tailored to reach all ages, from those just starting out in school to the more elderly in our community.

Events are planned to cover all types of activity, whether it is walking, cycling, swimming or kayaking, as we in Laois Sports Partnership look to cater for everyone.

While lockdown restrictions caused us to move online to reach into our community over the past year or so, as lockdown restrictions ease, events have returned outdoors, and have been greatly received by people eager to get active and also enjoy a more sociable experience.

More events are planned for the second half of the year, with some exciting activities to look forward to in the coming months...

Bubbles and Pods' prove a big hit at Castlecuffe NS

Castlecuffe NS was a buzz of excitement in June as they got to put their 'Bubbles & Pods' equipment to good use, while also having the opportunity to practise their basketball skills.

Community sports development officer Eimear Bryant visited the school to show the full potential of the equipment supplied to the school and help the children with some fun exercises and activities.

"It was great to see the children enjoy using the equipment so much and help them to make the most of it," Eimear said.

She added that the children really enjoyed the activities as the countdown to the end of the school year continues.

Blessed with good weather and sunshine, the day proved a very successful one for all involved.

The 'Bubbles and Pods' programme was made possible through funding Laois Sports Partnership received from Sport Ireland and Healthy Ireland, with additional training supports and resources provided by our partners in Basketball Ireland.

The equipment proved very useful, particularly during Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, with activities being confined to outdoors in pods of 15.

Basketball was also very much on the agenda with basketball coach Shay Dooley also paying the school a visit on the day to coach basketball skills and play some games.



EVENTS STAGED IN LAOIS

LSP sporting activities resume after lockdown

Successful socially distanced events hosted across county



Basketball course in Bloom HQ

Successful skills and events were held in Mountrath with a basketball blitz due to be held in August



Swimmin' Women

A very popular series of swimming events for women were staged in Ballinkill Outdoor Pool earlier this year



Couch to 50k cycle for women

A cycling course teaching the fundamental skills of cycling was hosted in Portlaoise. The tutor-led programme aimed to build up from basic cycling ability to a 50k cycle.



Wellness walking programmes

Once lockdown restrictions were lifted, Wellness Walks were held at Derryounce, followed by Emo Court



Activator poles classes prove a hit once again

Having had to be held online for a number of months, the activator poles classes proved a big hit in locations including Portarlinton and Rathdowney



Family cycling events!

The family cycling event hosted by the SVT Hub continues to be a popular event, getting all the family outdoors for some enjoyable exercise...

www.laoisports.ie

Funding in the community

Over €40,000 is to be distributed to almost 70 clubs in Laois to help them return to sport and physical activities post Covid-19 lockdown, it was announced by Laois Sports Partnership in June.

Caroline Myers, Head of Laois Sports Partnership said: "We are delighted to announce over €40,000 in grants has been awarded to 68 clubs and organisations in Laois to support their return to sport and physical activity and provide opportunities for all to grow participation".

Funding was awarded under 3 strands:

1. The Community Support Fund to support local clubs and community groups with the aim to impact participation in the COVID-19 public health era and support the goals set out in the National Sports Policy and National Physical Activity Plan.
2. Women In Sport funding to raise overall physical activity levels among women and to support women's roles within sports organisations.
3. LSP Club Development Fund – Small Grant Scheme aims to encourage the set up of new clubs and assist existing clubs to increase.

Trilogy Triathlon club smashes 'We Care' charity target as Pam runs 100k in 2 days

Pam Grogan ran an amazing 100km over two days last weekend as part of a host of fundraising events hosted by the Trilogy Triathlon club.



The We Care Campaign was held over the last week of June to raise funds for Family Carers Ireland and Portlaoise Educate Together N.S.

The incredible undertaking by Pam and her Trilogy Triathlon colleagues was to raise funds for Le Cheile ASD Classes in Portlaoise Educate Together N.S.

They set themselves a target of €10,000 to raise for both causes, and this has been significantly surpassed.

"I decided to do the 100k over two days because I wanted to include the children and the community and try and get people involved," Pam explained.

"I wanted to be able to raise awareness and because people might be able to donate less at the moment, so it was important to have more donors," Pam explained.

Because the event was to raise funds for autism and support services, Pam said the theme was very much about inclusion and getting as many people involved as possible.

The undertaking by Pam certainly was a challenging one. “It has taken over my life for the past six months, in addition to my full-time job,” she said.

“I don’t think people realise what it takes to do 100km in two days, and managing to come away injury free,” Pam said.

On each day, it was a case of doing a 10k run, going home for a 90 minute break and getting something to eat and then heading back for another 10k run, 5 times in total, each day. “At the end, I was just thrilled to have done it,” she enthused.

Pam said the support of the TrilogY Club in Portlaoise was invaluable to her. “They are a great group to be a part of,” she said.

The impact they had on the local community and the profile they raised for their chosen charities, was what was particularly rewarding for Pam and all those involved.

Laois Sports Partnership was also delighted to be able to help out with a financial contribution towards the cost of t-shirts. Pam said this helped them to be particularly visible on the day and greatly increase the profile of the event.



Pam and some of the We Care runners in the t-shirts sponsored by Laois Sports Partnership



TRAINING COURSES PROVIDED DURING LOCKDOWN

27 online training courses delivered

GAA Foundation

Safeguarding 1, 2 & 3

Disability Inclusion

Autism in Sport

Running your sports club

Sports Leader

"The key aims of the LSP are to increase participation in sport, and to ensure that local resources are used to best effect."



235 people attended online courses delivered by Laois Sports Partnership up to June 2021

27 online training courses were provided in first six months of 2021

Check us out on www.laoissports.ie

REMOTE TRAINING

With the traditional face-to-face training sessions not available during Covid-19 lockdown restrictions earlier in the year, Laois Sports Partnership successfully provided a number of courses online.

Courses were provided to suit all groups and levels of ability.

In particular, the Safeguarding courses were heavily subscribed and proved very popular as clubs used the opportunity to get coaches trained and certified and ready to return to action later in the year.

As the lockdown restrictions eased during the year, outdoor activities returned on a phased basis and were very well received throughout the county.

As we move to the second half of the year, there is optimism that restrictions will ease further, allowing more sporting events to resume.

Looking forward, Laois Sports Partnership will be involved in a number of national events including the Her Outdoors Campaign and the European Week of Sport.

This is in addition to the events being run locally in the community by Laois Sports Partnership in the coming weeks and months ahead as the opening up of the country increases more.

As the year progresses, we all hope to get back to more sporting activities for all, so Laois Sports Partnership can continue to do what it does best.

