

**Get Ireland Active!**  
**National Physical Activity Plan**  
**for Ireland:**  
**First Summary**  
**Progress Report 2017**



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A detailed Appendix accompanies this Summary report, this is available at

<http://www.healthyiireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/NPAP-Implementation-Report-Appendix.pdf>

# NATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLAN

## FIRST SUMMARY PROGRESS REPORT 2017

### Background

*Get Ireland Active!* – the National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland was launched on 14 January 2016. While the NPAP contains 60 actions grouped under 8 Actions Areas, the key target identified in the Plan is to increase the number of people taking regular exercise by 1% per annum over the lifetime of the Plan. This will be achieved by giving people more opportunities to be active and making physical activity a normal part of everyday life.

An Implementation Group has been established to progress the recommendations of the Plan. It is co-chaired by the Departments of Health and Transport, Tourism and Sport. It includes representatives from the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs, Education and Skills, Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and from the HSE, Sport Ireland (formerly the Irish Sports Council), the Federation of Irish Sport, the County and City Management Association and the academic sector.

The purpose of this Summary Report is to give a brief overview of the achievements to date under the NPAP and to highlight some of the positive developments which have taken place to promote physical activity in Ireland.

### Structure of the Report

The 60 Actions in the National Physical Activity Plan are grouped under 8 Action Areas as follows:

***Action area 1 – Public Awareness, Education and Communications***

***Action area 2 - Children and Young People***

***Action area 3 - Health***

***Action area 4 – Environment***

***Action area 5 – Workplaces***

***Action area 6 – Sport and Physical Activity in the Community***

***Action area 7 - Research, Monitoring and Evaluation***

***Action area 8 - Implementation through Partnership***

This Report provides a “headline” view of key achievements in each of the above areas to date, and demonstrates that the Plan has already achieved much in the intervening two years.

The Government continues to maintain a high level of focus on delivering the actions in the Plan and a significant target was reached in September 2017 with the establishment of the Healthy Ireland Fund. The Fund is intended as an innovative mechanism to stimulate and support inter-sectoral action and partnership working to enhance participation and ownership of the Healthy Ireland agenda in sectors beyond Health, such as those concerned with sport, education, the environment, children and young people.

It is aimed at supporting evidence-based initiatives to support implementation of key policies and strategies under Healthy Ireland, including the Obesity Policy, the Physical Activity Plan, Tobacco Free Ireland, the Sexual Health Strategy and others, and will have a focus on supporting measures aimed at children and young families and disadvantaged groups or communities.

In Budget 2017 an allocation of €5 million was allocated to ‘kick-start’ the Fund. Details of the projects and initiatives which have benefitted are outlined under the relevant Action Areas. A further €5m has been made available for the Fund in Budget 2018. A more detailed report of progress on all of the actions contained in the Plan will be available on [www.healthyireland.ie](http://www.healthyireland.ie)

### **Action area 1 – Public Awareness, Education and Communication**

*Irish people will better understand the health benefits of physical activity and how to be more active in their daily lives.*

An essential goal for communication of the Plan is to enhance general knowledge among the public and all other relevant stakeholders of the benefits of physical activity and how to be active. One element of this is to raise awareness of the health and wellbeing benefits of being physically active and of how to build the recommended levels of physical activity into daily routines.

*Key achievements in this action area:*

- The Get Ireland Active website has been developed as a “one stop shop” for physical activity with information and links to resources including sports and recreation facilities. A social media campaign to promote physical activity has also been maintained with 60,000 Facebook members, 2,440 Twitter followers and 33,000 Instagram engagements.
- A number of national campaigns are now being undertaken annually, including the European Week of Sport, which included 480 events this year and engaged with over 50,000 participants.
- These events included:
  - The Great Dublin Bike Ride. With 6,000 participants in 2017, this is a flagship event for the European Week of Sport and has benefitted from €105,000 in HI funding.
  - National Fitness Day - over 100 gyms and leisure centres offering free classes and services, facilitated by €40,000 in HI funding.
  - Parkrun promotional days
  - Sport Against Racism Ireland (SARI) Soccerfest
  - Family Sports Festival at the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus, which provided opportunities for people of all ages to come and see the world class facilities available on the campus
  - #Be Active Schools Campaign – Run Around Europe Challenge
- Funding of €38,000 has been provided by the Healthy Ireland Fund to support Sport Ireland’s involvement with the Operation Transformation TV programme, which reaches an audience of 500,000+

## **Action area 2 - Children and Young People**

*Children and young people will learn the necessary skills for confident engagement with physical activity and will have opportunities to adopt an active way of life.*

Physical activity plays an important role in the lives of children and young people. It is vital for healthy growth and development. Whether in a school setting or otherwise, it is important that children develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours which are likely to enhance lifelong engagement in physical activity and good health.

*Key achievements in this action area:*

- The Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme has been launched this September and will form a major component of Junior Cycle for students enrolled in this year's and subsequent First Year intakes. The Wellbeing Programme commits to providing 300 hours across 3 years (eventually rising to 400 hours) and includes an increase in time allocated to Physical Education (PE).
- The Active School Flag (ASF) is awarded to schools that strive to achieve a physically educated and physically active school community. The process aims to get more schools, more active, more often. As of October 2017 there are 626 schools with Active Flag status and there are 131,875 students attending these schools. The Programme has enrolled 1010 schools since inception; a number of these schools have completed their first 3 year Active School Flag and are going through the renewal process. The Active School Flag programme has received €213,000 in HI funding in 2017.
- A programme of continuous professional development in physical education has been developed; the *Get Active! Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport for Children and Young People: a Guiding Framework*, has been published by the Professional Development Service for Teachers. The programme also includes workshops, seminars and online resources for Fundamental Movement Skills provided to schools.
- Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework, has a strong focus on wellbeing of all children in early years setting. The promotion of physical activity is now an integral part of the Aistear framework and the introduction of a second free preschool year should significantly increase opportunities for learning and physical activity through play.
- Resources have been provided for the development of physical activity in early childhood (0-5 year olds) with Active Play Everyday, an online resource, and the delivery of a physical activity module in the Healthy Ireland Smart Start Programme provided to pre-schools.
- Funding of €3.8m has been offered to Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs). The funding to CYPSCs will support implementation of actions in their Plans which align with Healthy Ireland and with Outcome 1 Area (Active and Healthy Children) of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* child policy Framework. DCYA are providing co-funding of €400,000 to support the role of the CYPSCs at local level.

### **Action area 3 - Health**

*The Health Service will promote greater awareness and understanding of the health benefits of physical activity and deliver programmes to encourage increased participation.*

The Health Service has a pivotal role to play in providing leadership in the promotion of physical activity through ensuring greater awareness and understanding of the role physical activity plays as part of a healthy lifestyle and in delivering programmes which promote, educate, support and encourage physical activity generally.

*Key achievements in this action area:*

- Earlier this year, the new Brief Intervention Model, *Making Every Contact Count*, was published by the HSE. This approach recognises that, amongst the 30 million contacts the population has with health services annually, there is an opportunity to effect behavioural change where necessary - focusing on the four key areas of tobacco use, harmful alcohol consumption, physical inactivity and unhealthy eating.
- In partnership with the universities, delivery of a module entitled *Making Every Contact Count* has been included in undergraduate training for all Health disciplines, beginning in September 2017. This integrated module focuses on chronic disease prevention, and includes training with regard to the preventative and treatment role of physical activity as a core component.
- The *Making Every Contact Count* Continuous Professional Development Programme has been launched. This initiative will inform health professionals with regard to use of routine patient consultation time to support patients in making healthier lifestyle choices, in order to achieve positive long-term behavioural change. Implementing this programme will result in patients being routinely asked about the main lifestyle risk factors for chronic disease - tobacco use, alcohol & substance use, diet, and physical activity levels. 7,000 staff are to undergo training each year.
- Training in brief interventions is also to be rolled out, commencing next year.
- Work is underway on the development of guidelines and supports for the promotion of physical activity for organisations providing mental health and disability services.

#### **Action area 4 – Environment**

*Ireland's natural and built environments promote increased levels of physical activity.*

Promoting the use of the natural and built environment and promoting active transport are the most practical and sustainable ways to increase physical activity as part of everyday routine. Access to appropriate facilities such as walkways, cycle paths and parks can provide, encourage or enhance the opportunities, support and choices for being physically active.

*Key achievements in this action area:*

- The majority of Local Authorities have now developed walking and cycling strategies as part of their City or County Development Plan, Local Economic Community Plan or as part of a specific walking or cycling strategy; a further number of such plans are in development.
- *Ireland 2040, Our Plan; National Planning Framework* is currently at an advanced stage of development. The National Planning Framework (NPF) will take account of the need to prioritise planning and further development of walking/cycling and general recreational/physical activity infrastructure; publication is expected before the end of 2017.
- Significant progress was made under the Smarter Travel Areas programme, Active Travel towns programme and National Cycle Network programme, with a number of funded projects now substantially complete.
- Public consultation is currently being undertaken on the development of a National Greenway Strategy.

#### **Action area 5 – Workplaces**

*Employers will make it easier for people to be more physically active as part of everyday working lives.*

Workplaces have an important role in encouraging and supporting opportunities for physical activity in daily lives, particularly given the length of the working day and considerable commuting times for many Irish people.

*Key achievements in this action area:*

- The development of a National Framework for Healthy Workplaces has commenced, overseen by a sub-group co-chaired by the Department of Health and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.
- A public consultation process which consisted of a launch, three regional meetings and an online questionnaire, has been completed and a report on the findings will be published in the coming months.
- Funding was provided by both Departments for the development of a Post Graduate Course on Workplace Wellness, based at the National University of Galway
- The Smarter Travel Workplace and Campus Programmes continue to develop, with 149 active partners currently.

### **Action area 6 – Sport and Physical Activity in the Community**

*Local stakeholders work together to promote active communities and increase physical activity levels among all members of the community with a particular focus on disadvantaged areas, people with disabilities, older people, women and those who are otherwise socially excluded.*

There are many good examples in Ireland of community-based programmes which encourage greater participation in physical activity by targeting communities, neighbourhoods, families, parents, and disadvantaged groups. These programmes also provide social benefits, as they harness community resources and mobilise people to engage with their neighbours and community. If more is done to develop community level interventions, through developing better partnership and working arrangements, this will address barriers to participation and encourage access.

As an aid to future developments in this area, the development of a new National Sports Policy is nearing completion. It is envisaged that it will be published in the coming months.

#### *Key achievements in this action area:*

- €15.1m funding has been provided by Sport Ireland and the Dormant Account Fund to strengthen and enhance the capacity of Local Sports Partnerships to further develop locally led plans and more long-term sustainable physical activity.
- Community Sport and Physical Activity Hubs in disadvantaged areas continue to be supported as follows:
  - Continued development of the original nine community sports hubs with additional funding opportunities provided to support progression.
  - In 2016, six new community sports hubs were established with a further nine hubs being developed in 2017.
  - Linkages with Sport Irelands Community Coaching programmes have been developed, allowing for increased community engagement and leadership from within.
- The Get Ireland Walking - Active Community Walking Programme was run in 24 counties through the Local Sports Partnership network in 2016. A new Get Ireland Walking Strategy has been launched which will see 100 new Active Community Walking Groups being delivered with 29 Local Sports Partnerships across the country, as well as training for new walking leaders in a range of rural and urban communities. €100,000 has been provided from the HI fund for implementation of the Strategy and delivery of the Active Community Walking Programme.
- In 2017 Get Ireland Walking is expanding to deliver two new walking programmes, one in association with the Irish Men's Shed Association and the other focussed on disadvantaged communities.
- Operation Transformation - €38,000 in Healthy Ireland funding has been provided for support in delivering a programme of national walking and parkrun events which will build on the success of the television programme.
- A Sport Ireland Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities will be launched next month which continues the supports provided to many organisations, including national governing bodies of sport, local sports partnerships, CARA Centre and Paralympics Ireland, to extend and develop physical activity programmes for people with disabilities and their families.
- Special Olympics Young Athletes Programme - €54,000 in Healthy Ireland funding has been allocated to provide for a pilot programme in training a specific group – young children with an intellectual disability – as an integral part of Special Olympics.



*Action area 6 continued*

- The European Week of Sport ran from the 23rd -30th September. The European Week of Sport is a week-long celebration of sport and physical activity and had 500 events taking place nationally throughout the week. €146,000 from the Healthy Ireland fund supported flagship events which included the Great Dublin Bike Ride and the National Fitness Day. The week also hosted Ireland's first ever Family Sportfest and the #BeActive Schools' Campaign.
- Funding from the Dormant Accounts Scheme is being used to implement and support participation programmes with a focus on disadvantaged communities. €3.8m in funding was provided in 2016 with a further €5m in 2017. Programmes which will benefit from this funding include:
  - Community Sports and Physical Activity Hubs
  - Community Coaching
  - Sports Disability Training Framework
  - Youth Leadership
  - North East Inner City Initiative
  - National Governing Body of Sport Physical Activity Projects
  - National Governing Body of Sport programme addressing drop out from physical activity and sport.
- Progress is being made on fostering a culture of physical activity for health in Ireland through the development of new programmes such as:
  - Get Ireland Running - received €150,000 in funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund in 2016
  - Get Ireland Cycling - received €150,000 in funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund in 2016 and €30,000 in Healthy Ireland funding
  - Get Ireland Swimming - received €150,000 in funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund in 2016 and €150,000 in Healthy Ireland funding in 2017
  - A cyclist road safety training programme, Cycle Right, has been developed for school age children and has received €150,000 in HI funding.
- Healthy Ireland funding of approx. €3.8m has been offered to Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs). The funding will support implementation of key action areas identified in Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) and national policies, as well as actions through the recently-established Healthy Cities and Counties Network.
- Beat The Street is an innovative, large scale, mass participation physical activity initiative which is being piloted in Dublin, Waterford and Limerick in 2017. The initiative has received €140,000 in funding from the Department of Health as well as €235,000 from Dormant Account funds and support from local authorities.

**Action area 7 - Research, Monitoring and Evaluation**

We will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public measures through the monitoring and evaluation of participation, policies and programmes relating to physical activity.

Research, monitoring and evaluation is vital both for describing the current levels of people meeting the recommended levels of physical activity and existing barriers to participation, and also for developing a future direction of physical activity policies and programme delivery which is based on sound evidence. It is important to develop a comprehensive framework for gathering data and evidence to underpin evidence informed policy making.

Key achievements in this action area:

- The annual Healthy Ireland Survey was commissioned to enhance data collection and monitoring capacity to track progress in achieving targets to evaluate the success of Healthy Ireland. The first Healthy Ireland Survey Report was published in October 2015, and the report on the second wave was published in October 2016. Wave 3 will be published in the coming weeks and data collection for Wave 4 has commenced. Survey results give an up-to-date picture of the health of the population including data on attitudes and behaviour to physical activity and sedentary behaviour.
- The Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study (CSPPA) is a comprehensive research project which assesses participation in physical activity, physical education, extra-curricular and extra-school sport among 10-18 year olds. The last study was carried out in 2009/2010. Sport Ireland and Department of Health/Healthy Ireland are jointly funding the cost of the follow up study, which will be completed by end 2018.
- The Irish Sports Monitor study is an annual survey of physical and social participation in sport and other forms of exercise. The 2017 survey is currently underway.

**Action area 8 - Implementation through Partnership**

*Leadership, co-ordination and oversight will drive implementation of this Plan and will include representation from key stakeholders.*

Clear vision, leadership, partnership and coordination will be necessary to drive implementation of the Plan. This will require a concerted effort across central and local government, in the community and voluntary sector and supported by education, the business community and others. This will ensure that better results are obtained from existing programmes and resources, that reform occurs where necessary and that encouragement is given to the development of new partnerships.

*Key achievements in this action area:*

- A cross sectoral implementation group has now been established and meets regularly to drive implementation of the Plan. Three sub groups are in the process of being established in order to focus on the specific action areas of:
  - Children and Young People
  - Research, Monitoring and Evaluation
  - Public Awareness, Education and Communication
- The Healthy Ireland Fund is now established. A large number of physical activity initiatives are now benefitting from HI funding.
- The National Sports Policy, due to be published in Autumn 2017, will address the issue of funding for sport and physical activity.
- Key stakeholders are engaging at both a global and European level on the physical activity agenda via the WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity and the Health Enhancing Physical Activity Policy Audit Tool.