



— SLIGO SPORT —  
— & RECREATION —  
— PARTNERSHIP —  
— SPORT IRELAND —

**Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership  
Enniscrone Community Sports Hub  
Summary Evaluation Report 2023**



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND



ciste na  
gcuntas díomhaoin  
the dormant  
accounts fund





## Table of Contents

About S3 Solutions	4
The Authors	4
Acknowledgements	4
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction to the Report</b>	<b>7</b>
Introduction and Purpose of the Report	7
Report Objectives	7
Introduction to Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership	8
Introduction to the Hub Funder: Sport Ireland	8
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>9</b>
Introduction	9
Defining Success	9
Data Collection	9
<b>Rationale &amp; Context for the Hub</b>	<b>10</b>
Introduction	10
Introduction to the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub	10
<b>Hub Implementation and Delivery</b>	<b>11</b>
Introduction	11
Hub Management Structure	11
Hub Delivery Model	12
<b>Evaluation Findings</b>	<b>16</b>
How Much Did the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub Do?	16
How Well Did the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub Do?	16
Was Anyone Better Off as a Result of the Hub?	17
<b>Key Learning: Factors Contributing to Success</b>	<b>18</b>
Role of the Hub Coordinator	18
<b>Key Learning: Area Based Hubs</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Key Learning: Alignment to Dormant Accounts</b>	<b>22</b>
Economic Disadvantage	22
Social Disadvantage	22
Educational Disadvantage	23
Persons with a Disability	23
<b>Key Learning: Strategic Relevance</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Key Learning: Future Development &amp; Areas for Improvement</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b>	<b>26</b>
Conclusions	26
Recommendations	27
<b>Case Study: Open Water Programme</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Case Study: West Sligo Athletics Club</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Case Study: Razorbacks Basketball Club</b>	<b>32</b>

## About S3 Solutions

Established in 2013, S3 Solutions is an independent consultancy company delivering on a mission to “leave a positive and lasting impact on the people, organisations and communities we work with, supporting social change.”

S3 Solutions works specifically with community & voluntary and public sector organisations to deliver meaningful social change. S3 Solutions brings together a multidisciplinary team of experienced researchers, social impact analysts, business and economic consultants to provide applied social research through highly engaging consulting services that produce actionable insights and innovative solutions.

## The Authors

Georgia O’Kane is a Senior Consultant (Research and Evaluation Division) at S3 Solutions and led the delivery and formation of this evaluation.

## Acknowledgements

This evaluation was commissioned by Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership. We would like to thank the Sligo Sport and Recreational Partnership Board of Directors, Deirdre Lavin (SSRP CEO) and Diane Middleton Cox (Community Sports Development Officer and Enniscrone Community Sports Hub Coordinator) for their commissioning of and trust in our research efforts. The commitment of Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership to this contract has enabled a comprehensive evaluation report.

We would also like to thank the partner organisations involved in the development and delivery of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub including local sports clubs, local commercial sports providers, local community organisations, Swim Ireland, and Sligo County Council. These organisations participated in the consultation process, providing invaluable insight to the operations of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub, the partnership with Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership and with each other, and the impact of the Hub for its participants and the Enniscrone Community.

Finally, we would like to extend our gratitude to people of Enniscrone for their participation in the community survey, sharing key insights on the current sport and physical activity provision in the area and their views on the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub.

## Foreword

On behalf of Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership, we are pleased to welcome the publication of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub Evaluation Report. This evaluation focuses on Years 1-3 of a 5-year project.

At the outset, we are delighted to note the broad range of community and agency stakeholders who participated in the evaluation, and we thank them for their valued input.

Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership is committed to facilitating opportunities for people to participate in sport and physical activity with a particular focus on disadvantaged communities. The Community Sports Hubs has enabled this to be achieved.

The choice of Enniscrone as a Hub site was informed by a key first step which involved a detailed local community needs analysis. During this process, community organisations demonstrated a keen desire and ambition to establish a Hub; this commitment followed through once the Hub activity commenced. This resulted in the planning and delivery of many successful sport and physical activity programmes, inclusive of all ages and ability levels, and included the development of 3 new minority sports clubs: a noteworthy achievement.

The insights presented in this evaluation highlight that investment in the development of a Community Sports Hub has made a significant impact, improving opportunities for participation with a resulting positive impact on the health and wellbeing of participants.

We extend our thanks to the volunteers in sports clubs and community organisations for their enthusiasm and commitment in building their capacity to lead and deliver quality programmes, many of which are referenced throughout this report.

We wish to acknowledge the positive collaboration and investment support from our local partner agencies including Sligo County Council, West Sligo Family Resource Centre and Swim Ireland, which has been a critical success factor in enabling the Hub to deliver on its targets.

We wish to acknowledge the expertise, dedication and drive of SSRP Senior Community Sports Development Officer Diane Middleton Cox for her professionalism in coordinating the Hub and the evaluation.

We acknowledge Sport Ireland for the funding made available for this evaluation and we also wish to thank S3 Solutions for facilitating the evaluation.

SSRP looks forward to taking the learning from this evaluation and applying it as we continue to work with all partners to further build capacity and deliver sustained, quality sport and physical activity programme opportunities led by strong community sports organisations in Enniscrone.



Emer Concannon  
Chairperson  
Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership



Deirdre Lavin  
Chief Executive Officer  
Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership

# Introduction to the Report

## Introduction and Purpose of the Report

This report sets out an independent and objective evaluation of Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership's Enniscrone Community Sports Hub. Launched in 2020, the Hub aims to increase participation in sport and physical activity in the area through a partnership approach to delivery.

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the nature of the approach taken by Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership (SSRP) in the management and delivery of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub and the extent to which this has led to the development of sustainable activities, pathways, relationships, and the sustainability of the Hub itself, since its establishment.

## Report Objectives

The objectives of this evaluation report are to:

- Determine possible changes to participation rates in the Hub area.
- Assess the effectiveness of Hub delivery, evaluating performance in the context of wider policy objectives and funding criteria and identifying key enablers and inhibitors to success.
- Examine the adequacy of Hub implementation/administration structures and systems.
- Gather evidence of the impact of the project on participants.
- Produce evidence-based recommendations for improvement in service efficiency and effectiveness.



## Introduction to Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership

Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership (SSRP) is one of 29 Local Sports Partnerships in Ireland. SSRP operates in partnership with government agencies, local authorities, NGBs, sports clubs, communities and schools to facilitate physical activity programmes and events that promote increased participation in sport and physical activity and builds sport and physical activity capacity by providing training and education opportunities for clubs, communities, coaches and volunteers.

The aim of SSRP is:

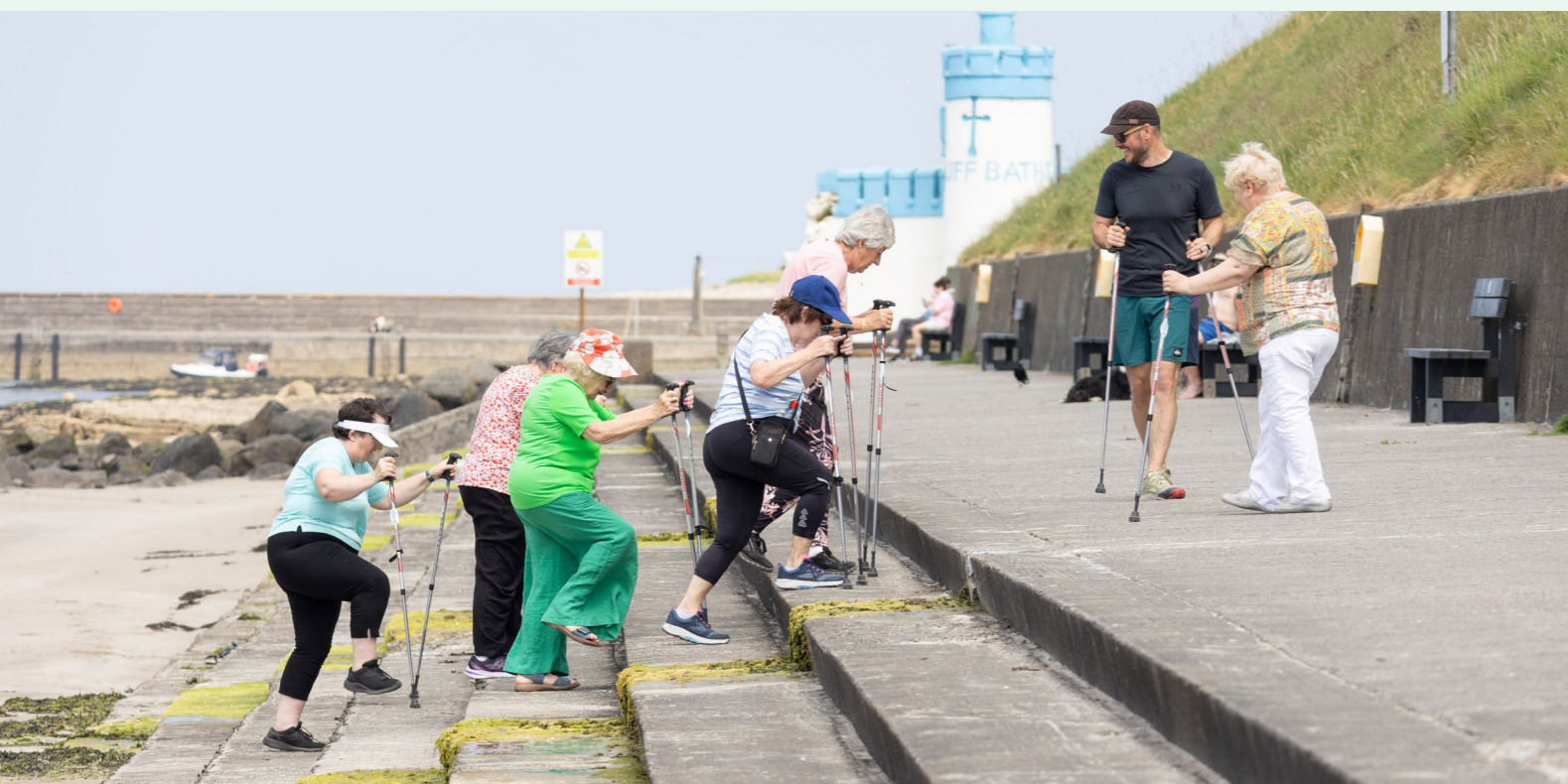
*“Sport and Recreation:  
A Way of Life in Sligo.”*



SSRP seeks to increase physical activity participation by ensuring there is a broad range of opportunities for everyone in County Sligo. SSRP's delivery is premised on the belief that sport and physical activity should be enjoyable, make us feel good, improve our health and wellbeing, increase our skills and introduce us to new people and places.

## Introduction to the Hub Funder: Sport Ireland

Community Sports Hubs are funded by Sport Ireland under Dormant Accounts. Sport Ireland is the authority tasked with the development of sport in Ireland. This includes participation in sport, high performance sport, anti-doping, coaching and the development of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus. Community Sports Hubs are one of a number of interventions and initiatives aimed at tackling disadvantage and increasing participation in sport and physical activity among people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.



## Methodology

### Introduction

This section sets out the methodology used to carry out the evaluation.

### Defining Success

This evaluation is aided by an Outcomes Based Accountability Framework (OBA) which underpins the methodology. OBA is a recognised tool for effective impact measurement and provides a framework for measuring the impact of interventions and initiatives on outcomes and enables discussions to take place about how to continually improve those outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Centrally, this evaluation framework seeks to answer three key questions:

- How much did the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub do?
- How well did the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub do?
- Was anyone better off as a result of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub?

The indicators under this framework align with the evaluation framework developed by Sport Ireland for the Community Sports & Physical Activity Hubs: Evaluation Report 2019.

### Data Collection

The evaluation adopted a mixed method approach to data collection. This included the following activity, carried out between October and December 2023:



**Desk-based analysis of Hub data** including details of the needs analysis, monitoring reports from 2020-2023 and M1/PACE+ data from the Open Water Programme



**1 web-based survey for members of the Enniscrone community** and/or participants of Hub activities (170 responses)



**Consultations with 12 Hub partners** including 5 community sports providers, 4 community organisations, 2 commercial sports providers, and Sligo County Council

<sup>1</sup> Orme, S. (2021) Outcomes Based Accountability: A Refresher. Available at: <https://www.assemblyresearchmatters.org/2021/05/20/outcomes-based-accountability-a-refresher/>

# Rationale & Context for the Hub

## Introduction

This section introduces Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership's (SSRP) Enniscrone Community Sports Hub and sets out the context within which it was conceptualised and delivered, offering an insight to the rationale for the Hub.

## Introduction to the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub

Community Sports Hubs are a collective of progressive sports clubs and other local organisations that want to work together to improve the sports offered in their local community. The objective is to bring those interested in promoting sports participation together to plan, coordinate and deliver increased sport and physical activity opportunities. The Community Sports Hubs provide information, support and advice on a wide range of sports and physical activities to make it easier for people to become more active. Funded by Sport Ireland through Dormant Accounts, the Hubs have a focus on disadvantaged communities such as people who are economically or socially disadvantaged; people who are educationally disadvantaged; and/or persons with a disability.

The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub was formed in 2020. Enniscrone is a small seaside town in County Sligo with a population of 1,291. The demographics of the area synergise strongly with Dormant Accounts' focus on disadvantaged communities. The majority of Enniscrone falls within the electoral divisions of Kilglass and Castleconor West, both of which are rated marginally below average in terms of deprivation; Kilglass at -5.38 and Castleconor West at -0.70. Enniscrone also has higher rates of disability amongst its population than the State (29% vs. 22%), lower levels of employment (47% vs 56%), and lower levels of education, with 22% of the Enniscrone population achieving no education past lower secondary school level compared with 19% of the State.

Whilst focusing on disadvantaged communities, Enniscrone Community Sports Hub aims to increase the number of people of all ages and backgrounds participating in physical activity in their community through pathways for participation and capacity building. This is facilitated through a model of delivery which has a partnership approach at its core. The Hub offers a range of sporting activities to the geographical area, and aims to grow participation, engage with community and sporting groups, encourage more community leadership, enhance facilities, and bring stakeholders together to plan and deliver sport. Key areas of work for the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub include capacity building; programming; building strong clubs; and enhancing facility usage.

# Hub Implementation & Delivery

## Introduction

Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership (SSRP) submitted an application to Sport Ireland's Dormant Accounts Fund in 2019 and received initial funding of €62,500 to establish a 5-year Community Sport Hub in Enniscrone in 2020. Further funding was provided for 2021 (€40,000), 2022 (€30,000), and 2023 (€20,000). Additionally, indirect funding and in kind investment was provided annually by Sligo County Council, HSE, and SSRP.

This section outlines the history and operations of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub from its establishment in 2020, including details about how the Hub was implemented, the stakeholders involved, and key delivery achievements to date.

## Hub Management Structure



The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub is facilitated by SSRP, with Hub coordination overseen by the SSRP Senior Community Sports Development Officer. There are ten central and committed partners involved in the management and delivery of the Hub. This includes West Sligo Family Resource Centre which operates as the overall local co-ordinating body, providing access to key target groups who are most in need and staffing capacity to support the initiative from an administration and communications perspective. Other partners include Sligo County Council, NGBs, community organisations, and sports clubs who work collectively to increase sport and physical activity participation and opportunities in the area. Each partner signs a Partnership Agreement with SSRP which formalises the relationship and sets out each partner's individual role, the targets and timelines of the partnership and relevant funding arrangements.

## Hub Delivery Model

Enniscrone Community Sports Hub encompasses a model of delivery which has a partnership approach at its core, aiming to enhance community leadership, community capacity and collaboration between key area stakeholders in the planning and delivery of sport. This model is displayed below:

### Partnership Working

Hub delivery focuses on a bottom-up partnership approach whereby SSRP acts as a facilitator, seeking input and ideas from organisations and individuals in Enniscrone.

Partnerships are formalised through Partnership Agreements and partners work together to share ideas and develop, promote and deliver sport and physical activity opportunities which align with the needs of the area. This includes the determination of facility development opportunities, appropriate capital investments and the identification of training and capacity building needs.

Key achievements in this area include the development of a strong community network



### Training and Capacity Building

The Hub's bottom-up approach and focus on sustainability places an emphasis on the development of club and community capacity in Enniscrone. The Hub focuses on empowering club and community group personnel to facilitate sport and physical activity through governance and best practice support such as safeguarding and vetting policies, and through a range of training and development opportunities delivered based on need.

### Sport and Physical Activity Programming

SSRP and Hub Partners work together to facilitate sport and physical activity programming in Enniscrone. This includes the creation of new sports clubs, the delivery of national programmes at the local level and the development of a diverse range of sport and physical activities led by local community groups.

The following sub-sections further explore and provide greater detail on the delivery model.

## Foundation of the Hub: Needs Analysis

The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub was formed in response to a needs analysis conducted in April 2019. In preparation, a small number of taster sessions for physical activity programmes were facilitated to build relationships with local organisations. SSRP then developed an informative Community Sports Hub presentation along with community group and club audit forms. This process focused on reaching local clubs, facility providers and community groups through local promotion and engagement in advance of the community consultation. Despite its rural isolation and level of disadvantage, SSRP witnessed a high-level of community response and cooperation with this process. The consultation evidenced a significant need for a Hub in the area, with local sports clubs, community organisations and local partners displaying readiness to undertake this project and deliver on its goals.

11 groups involving 14 participants were represented in the needs analysis including:

- Castleconnor GAA
- Castleconnor Community Council
- Enniscrone Community Council
- Enniscrone Golf Club
- Enniscrone/Kilglass Community Games
- Enniscrone/Kilglass GAA
- Enniscrone Walking Club
- Irish Surfing Association
- Sligo GAA
- Waterpoint Leisure Centre
- West Sligo Family Resource Centre

Following collective engagement, SSRP conducted one-to-one meetings with participants and groups from the area. The following barriers and gaps were identified:



Based on the needs analysis, the central achievements sought of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub include:

- Forming a new Community Sports Development Forum
- Development of a new athletics training facility and club
- Creation of new opportunities for women, men, youth and older adults
- Increasing usage of local facilities.

## Summary of Sport and Physical Activity

**3739** Total number of participants engaged in sport and physical activity programmes

**229** Total number of sport and physical activity programmes delivered through the Hub

Key achievements include:

- > **3 new minority sports clubs developed:** Razorbacks Basketball Club, West Sligo Athletics Club and Enniscrone Surf Lifesaving
- > **Club-Community outreach programmes:** including Operation Transformation with Enniscrone Kilglass GAA Club and Walking Football with Kilglass Enniscrone United FC
- > **Inclusive programmes:** including a 'disability golf for youth' programme delivered with Enniscrone Golf Club and 'Surf Therapy for young people with autism'; delivered with 7th Wave Surf Club
- > **Online physical activity programmes:** Men's Indoor Rowing, Women's Pilates, Teen Fitness and Youth Dance
- > **Community-led programmes:** including Community Walking Programmes; Stronger for Longer; and Youth Multi-Sport Camps
- > **National Initiatives:** Men on the Move; SwimminWomen; Bike Week; HerOutdoors Week; National Play Day; AquaMoves (HerMoves); Open Water Programmes



### Sport-Specific Training

- Activator Poles
- Athletic Leader 1
- Basketball Ireland Coaching Award
- Online Social Tennis
- Online Walking Leader

- Orienteering
- Sprocket Rocket Cycling
- Walking Football Coaching
- Water Safety

### Generic Training

- Active Leadership
- First Aid
- Safeguarding 1
- Women in Sport Leadership

## COVID-19 Pandemic

The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub was first established in 2020, paralleling the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic's restrictions on social gathering affected the formation and delivery of the Hub, necessitating the adaptation of delivery to this context. Planned in-person programming was remodeled for online delivery or replaced with remote activities. The redesign of Enniscrone sports programming paralleled the adaptation of all of SSRP's programming for pandemic delivery. Once online, SSRP focused on bringing these new opportunities to the Enniscrone Community, allowing local people to access programming in their homes which, outside of the pandemic, would have required travel to Sligo town and beyond.

The Hub remained focused on creating strong community links with partners, local agencies, and community groups during the pandemic. Whilst an official launch of the Hub was originally planned for 2020, this was instead instigated informally by the Hub Coordinator who contacted lead partners to begin Hub operations.

## Summary of Training and Capacity Building

**155** Total number of participants engaged in training and capacity building programmes

**21** Total number of training and capacity building programmes delivered through the Hub



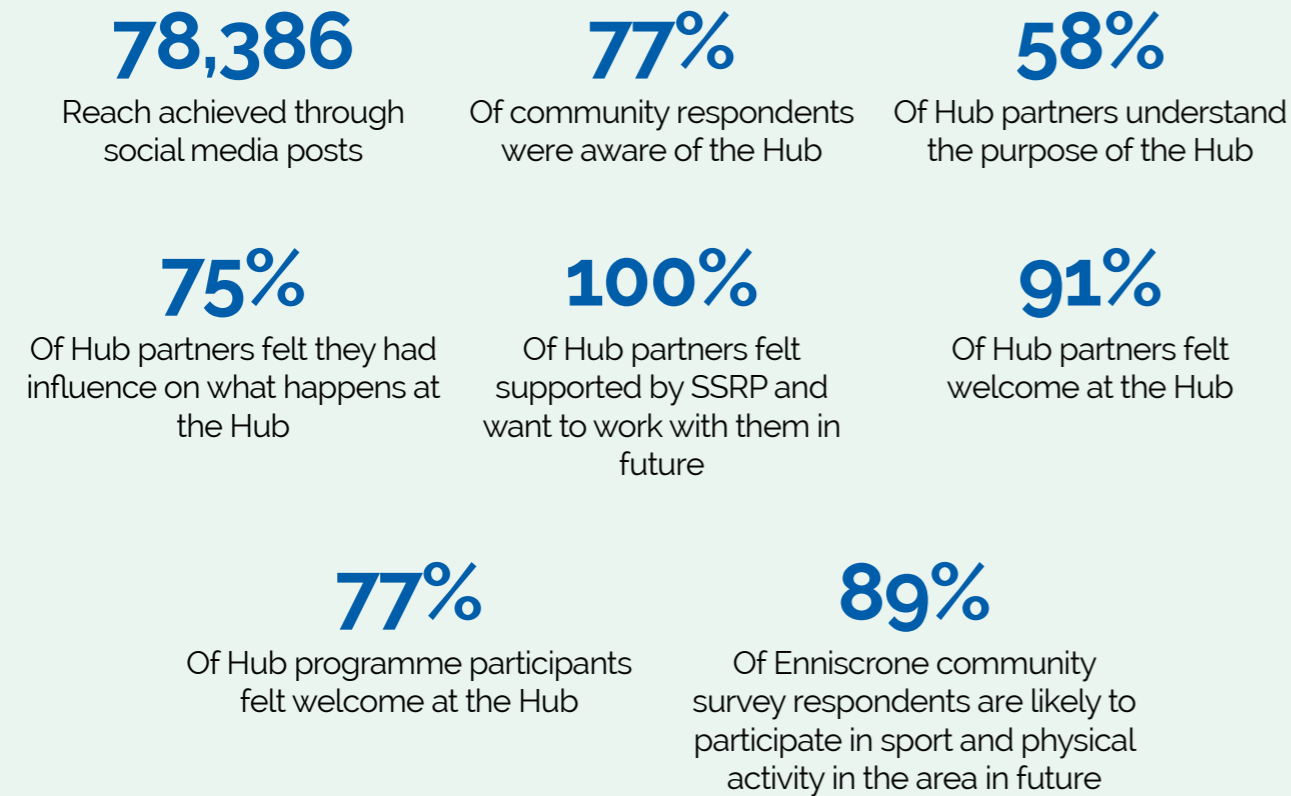


# Evaluation Findings

## How Much Did the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub Do?

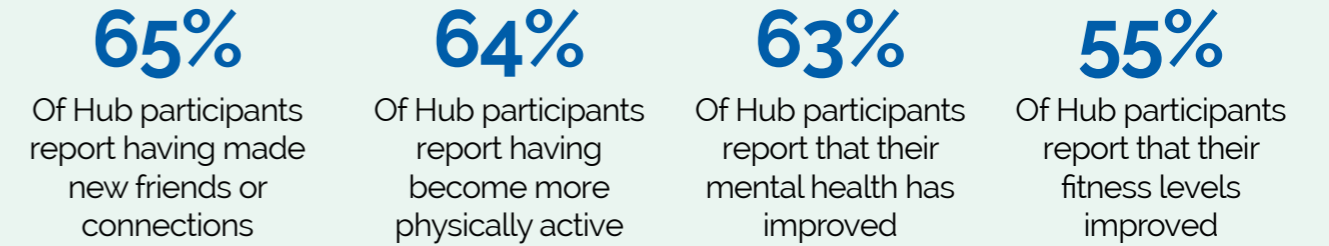


## How Well Did the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub Do?

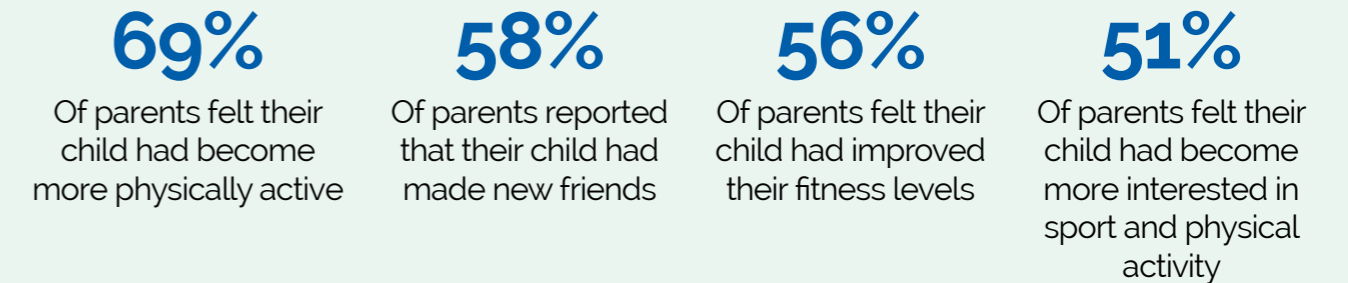


## Was Anyone Better Off as a Result of the Hub?

### Impact on Hub Programme Participants (Adult)



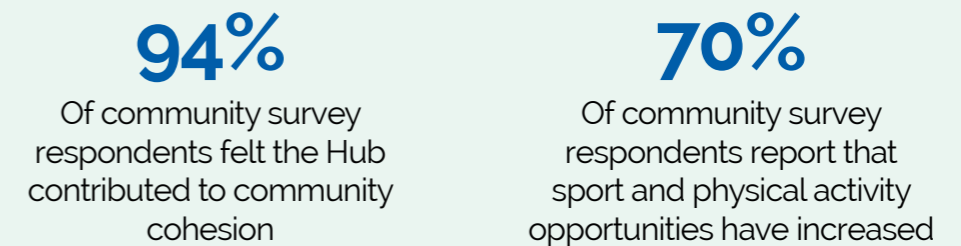
### Impact on Hub Programme Participants (Youth)



### Impact on Hub Partners



### Impact on the Enniscrone Community



# Key Learning: Factors Contributing to Success

## Role of the Hub Coordinator

Hub partners frequently highlighted the importance of the Hub Coordinator as an accessible point of contact with necessary knowledge and expertise who local partners could contact with questions or ideas around sport and physical activity in the area. The Hub Coordinator was the central driver behind the development of relationships with local sports clubs/providers and community organisations and promoted the internal collaboration of Hub partners. The Hub Coordinator also promoted cross-work with other members of SSRP, seeking their expertise and facilitating connections between these members of staff and the Enniscrone Community.

## Capacity Building and Partnership Development

The Hub delivery model focuses on building the capacity of local sports clubs, community organisations, coaches and volunteers and creates a bottom-up partnership approach facilitating knowledge sharing, collaboration and the co-development of sport and physical activity opportunities. The evaluation survey revealed that training and capacity building workshops had positive impacts on individuals' confidence to inhabit positions of leadership and to encourage participation in physical activity, as well as on the skills needed to facilitate sports activities and the likelihood of individuals volunteering in the community in future. In terms of partnerships, partners reported having developed inter-community partnerships and a relationship with SSRP. The establishment of partnership working in Enniscrone and generation of positive impacts for community capacity promotes sustainability, instilling the knowledge, experience and relationships necessary to not only maintain progress made to date, but to continue the development of diverse and accessible sport and physical activity opportunities which are aligned to the needs of the local area in future.

## Alignment to Local Need

The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub has been developed with the needs of the local community in mind. Whilst SSRP has played a central facilitatory role, the Hub focused on local partnership working, bringing together Sligo County Council, NGBs, local community organisations, and sports clubs to enhance community leadership and collaboration in the planning and delivery of sport and physical activity. This approach was cemented from the outset with SSRP conducting a needs analysis comprising a club and community audit form, one-to-one meetings with 11 local organisations, and physical activity taster sessions to build relationships and gain a greater understanding of community need. The barriers and

gaps identified through this process informed key areas of focus for the Hub. Throughout delivery, SSRP has maintained focus on community consultation through its network of local partners. With emphasis placed on the views and ideas of local partners and the community, the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub has delivered programming and training which are in alignment with local need. This is a significant contributory factor to the positive impacts generated through the Hub, with the focus on diverse, accessible and inclusive opportunities, maximising the benefits of the Hub for the local community.

## Local Advertising

Building on knowledge acquired through over twenty years of operation and with a continued focus on aligning operations to local need, SSRP relied on local advertising to raise awareness of the Hub. This approach synergises with the findings of Sport Ireland's Community Sports and Physical Activity Hubs Evaluation Report (2019)<sup>2</sup> which suggests that Hub's should tailor their marketing to the local community. For specific programming in Enniscrone, individual flyers were produced and promoted locally via the host organisation and on SSRP social media channels. SSRP engaged with local partners to ensure that information relating to the Hub and available physical activity opportunities reached potential participants directly. It is evident that this approach contributed to success; 71% of respondents to the community survey stated that, since the establishment of the Hub, the level of advertising for sport and physical activity opportunities had increased in Enniscrone. Further, a greater proportion of community survey respondents reported that they access information about local sport and physical activity opportunities through local community groups (52%) and local sports clubs (44%) rather than from SSRP (33%).

## Strategic Relationships

Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership operates within a robust collaborative and partnership ethos which has underpinned the success of the Hub to date. SSRP engaged in strategic collaboration with both Swim Ireland and Sligo County Council during Hub delivery. Swim Ireland provided specialised expertise and support for the open water programming and infrastructure elements whilst the strong relationship between SSRP and Sligo County Council supported the successful development of equipment and infrastructure. A track record of partnership working enabled SSRP and Sligo County Council to work together to enhance the facilities for open water swimming, to cater to growing demand. This strategic partnership enhanced overall access to the beach and provided buoys, signage, benches and coat racks at Enniscrone Pier. To address access for people with disabilities and those with reduced mobility, a beach access mat was installed at the beach with key supports provided by Sligo County Council. Notably, Sligo County Council stated that the installation of the beach access mat had knock-on effects for local development, informing the approach to beach access mat provision more widely and inspiring a similar development in another area of the County.

<sup>2</sup> Sport Ireland (2019) Community Sports and Physical Activity Hubs Evaluation Report. Available at: <https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2020-04/csh-phase-23-final.pdf>

## Flexibility of Approach

The flexibility of SSRP and Hub partners during delivery and their willingness to adapt to challenges encountered created the foundations upon which the success of the Hub was built. The COVID-19 pandemic was highlighted as a key example of this flexibility. The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub commenced in 2020, alongside the outbreak of the pandemic and its associated social distancing restrictions. Despite this, the Hub has delivered extensive impact for the Enniscrone area in its first three years of delivery. Whilst SSRP staff reported that the development of partnerships in the area was initially slow during the pandemic, the Hub's focus remained creating strong community links during this time, and all 12 organisations consulted subsequently reported engagement with SSRP on Hub activities. The pandemic also failed to halt the delivery of Hub programming; a total of 229 individual programmes have been delivered through the Hub, 28 in 2020 and 60 in 2021 when the pandemic was at its height. This was facilitated by work of SSRP and their associated programme partners in adapting programmes for remote delivery. Access to other SSRP programmes delivered during the pandemic was also opened up to the Enniscrone community, evidencing SSRP's efforts to capitalise on the opportunity provided by online delivery.



## Key Learning: Area Based Hubs

SSRP staff referenced findings from previous evaluations of Community Sports Hubs which suggested that facility-based Hubs were more impactful and effective than area-based Hubs. Staff discussed this conclusion, reflecting on the success and key achievements of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub. Sport Ireland's Community Sports & Physical Activity Hubs Evaluation Report (2019)<sup>3</sup> reported that:

*"Partners and coordinators find it easier to define and connect the term 'hub' to a facility based project and there are emerging feelings that it will be easier to sustain. The notion of a facility based project is perceived to be more closely aligned to the 'hub' concept as opposed to a more outreach based approach and participants may find it easier to connect with something that has a clearly identifiable location [...] Those partners and coordinators involved in area based hubs were more likely to identify logistical and coordination challenges and were also more likely to reference barriers to sustainability than those in facility based hubs."*

Contrary to these findings, 77% of respondents to the community survey and 58% of partners indicated that they were aware of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub, evidencing an understanding of the function and purpose of the Hub and connection to the term despite the Hub's area-based composition. Similarly, whilst it is evident that work remains to build the capacity of local partners and to begin to transfer more responsibility to the local level, over two years of Hub delivery remain and a wide range of impacts have already been facilitated for Hub participants, local sports clubs and community organisations, and the Enniscrone community.



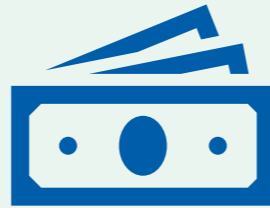
<sup>3</sup> Sport Ireland (2019) Community Sports and Physical Activity Hubs Evaluation Report. Available at: <https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2020-04/csh-phase-23-final.pdf>

# Key Learning: Alignment to Dormant Accounts

The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub was funded by Sport Ireland under Dormant Accounts. The Hub sought to increase participation in sport and physical activity with a particular focus on disadvantaged communities such as people who are economically or socially disadvantaged; people who are educationally disadvantaged; and/or persons with a disability. SSRP staff felt that the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub had targeted the right people, stating that during delivery, there was a concerted effort to “target the disadvantaged and work with those most in need.” The contribution of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub to the enhancement of opportunities for Dormant Account’s key target groups is summarised below.

## Economic Disadvantage

The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub has provided funding to provide subsidised sport and physical activity opportunities in the area. Sports clubs/providers referenced the provision of financial support through the Hub which aided in the purchase of equipment and the subsidising of programming to increase accessibility for local people. 15% of respondents to the community survey identified that they were from families of low income. Of these respondents, 76% felt they could comfortably afford to access sports clubs in Enniscrone and 72% felt they could comfortably afford to access sports or physical activity programming in Enniscrone. 72% of these respondents had accessed programming through the Hub and 78% felt that accessibility of sport and physical activity opportunities had improved since the Hub’s establishment. Just 14% felt cost was a barrier to sport and physical activity participation in Enniscrone.



## Social Disadvantage

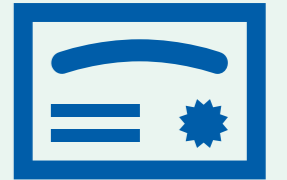
The consultation to inform this evaluation revealed a range of impacts for groups which often experience social disadvantage. 11 programmes were delivered which were specifically designed to be inclusive of older adults, with both chair yoga and activator walking poles programmes proving popular with this demographic. Partners referenced the impact for older adults who in the past have been underserved by sport and physical activity opportunities in Enniscrone and now have a new social outlet which promotes their physical and mental health and wellbeing. 11% of respondents to the community survey were aged 65 or over, with 89% of these respondents accessing sport and physical activity opportunities through the Hub, and 44% accessing training opportunities through the Hub. Secondly, consultation also revealed the impact of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub for refugees and asylum seekers in Enniscrone. The area has seen an increase



in this population in recent years, and Hub partners reported that recent sport and physical activity opportunities have supported the new Ukrainian population to integrate into the area. Two sports clubs/providers indicated that refugees and asylum seekers had accessed their programming, and multiple references were made to the provision of Sanctuary Runners, an athletics programme designed specifically for this population.

## Educational Disadvantage

14% of respondents to the community survey reported educational attainment at or below upper secondary school level. Of these respondents, 44% had accessed training opportunities, most commonly Activator Poles Leader (19%), Women in Sports Leadership (19%), and Walking Leader (13%). Those that accessed training reported having developed skills which will support their facilitation of sports activities and feeling more comfortable in positions of leadership.

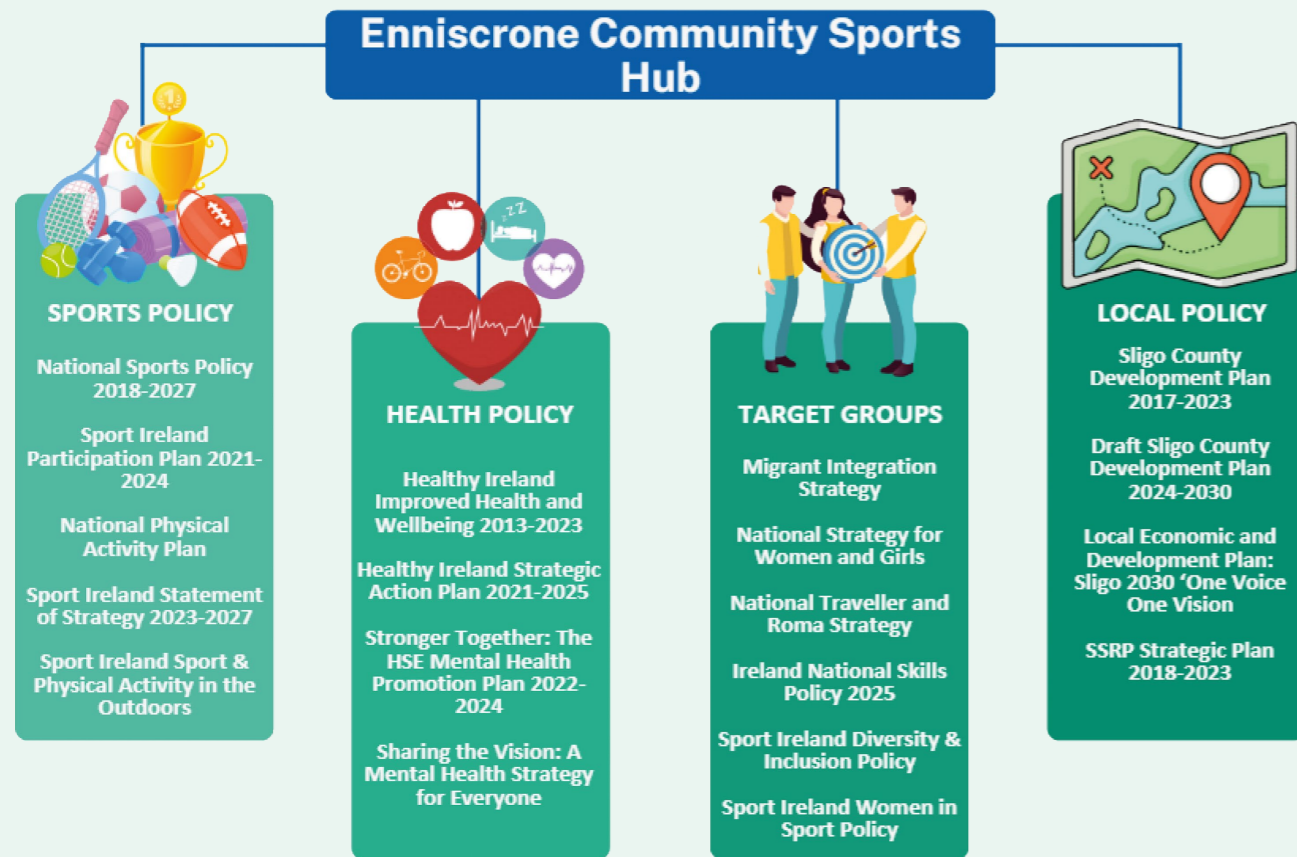


## Persons with a Disability

3 programmes have been delivered for people with disabilities through the Hub and the SSRP SIDO works to facilitate opportunities in Enniscrone and to create awareness of opportunities through formal links with organisations such as the Children’s Disability Network. It was felt that efforts to improve the capacity of local sports providers would increase the number of accessible programmes delivered in future. 5% of respondents to the community survey identified as having a disability. Of these respondents, 60% felt they could easily access sports clubs and sport and physical activity programming in Enniscrone. 100% of respondents with disabilities reported utilising local facilities for physical activity, 80% had accessed Hub programming and 60% accessed training opportunities. Further, 40% felt that the accessibility of sport and physical activity opportunities had improved since the Hub’s establishment, with no respondent reporting disability as a barrier to participation in sport and physical activity in Enniscrone.



# Key Learning: Strategic Relevance



Given that the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub seeks to promote sports participation, increase sport and physical activity opportunities and make it easier for people to become active, there is natural synergy between the Hub and a range of local and national policy. The Hub aligns with national sports policy in its shared commitment to increasing the number of people who are active; developing Enniscrone as an active area through a community partnership approach; and placing a focus on those who have traditionally had fewer opportunities to take part in sport. The latter also synergises with policies targeting specific populations and the Hub's commitment to the Dormant Accounts target groups. In supporting people to become more physically active, the Hub intersects with national health policy, providing people with opportunities to maintain good physical health, positive mental health and psychological wellbeing.

Finally, given its location, the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub aligns with County-level policy, synergising strongly with the Local Economic Development Plan which commits to "building the capacity of sports clubs and community organisations to facilitate sport for all, with a focus on minority sports when developing further Community Sports Hubs in disadvantaged areas." Finally, the Hub is in alignment with wider SSRP policy, with commitments made to "develop and sustain Community Sports Hubs as welcoming, safe and fun spaces for sport and physical activity underpinned by local capacity building."

# Key Learning: Future Development & Areas for Improvement

## Awareness and Understanding of the Hub

42% of partners were unaware of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub and/or unable to describe the functioning and purpose of the Hub (N=5). Given the partnership approach upon which the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub was founded and the nature of the Hub as a time-limited programme, SSRP should continue their work to engage new and existing partners, further incorporating them into Hub management and delivery. This would promote a greater sense of ownership over the activities at the Hub and will contribute to capacity of partners, enabling them to continue the positive development of sport and physical activity in Enniscrone following the Hub's conclusion.

## Continued Focus on the Capacity of Partner Organisations

Whilst successes have been achieved, there remains a need for continued focus on improving the capacity of partner organisations in Enniscrone. Synergising with the commentary in the above section, there is a need to create further opportunities for partnership working, increase capacity, and promote collaboration on Hub activities to promote the sustainability of local sports clubs and prepare Hub partners for the conclusion of the Hub in two years' time. The capacity of Hub partners could be developed by addressing identified support needs and capacity could be improved by targeting the organisational health of sports clubs/providers, ensuring sustainability through improved organisational resilience, communication pathways, and planning.

## Measuring Impact on Participation

Just one programme delivered through the Hub collected M1 and PACE+ data and, given the early development stage of many clubs/programmes in the area, little formal or informal impact measurement or feedback on delivery is being collected. With feedback from Hub partners suggesting that they would benefit from support with impact measurement (N=3), it is evident that work is needed to facilitate the wide-spread implementation of impact measurement systems so as to ensure that the impact of the Hub on the participation in sport and physical activity can be determined more accurately. With the development stage of clubs in mind, this could involve an initial focus on informal assessment, ensuring regular check-ins with participants and feedback sought on delivery to ensure alignment to need. Partners may also benefit from a shared development process, with SSRP helping to create clear and measurable indicators of success.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Conclusions

The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub offers a clear link between the issues it sought to address, the programming and activities it delivered, and the outcomes it intended to achieve. **The Hub has achieved significant success at the mid-point of delivery.** Critical to the achievements delivered through the Hub was the highly participatory, bottom-up partnership approach to Hub development and management. A series of conclusions are presented below:

- ▶ The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub has **increased sport and physical activity opportunities** in the area.
- ▶ Whilst limited M1 and PACE+ data was available to assess the Hub's impact on sport and physical activity participation in Enniscrone, it is evident that the Hub has delivered purposefully to the **increase of physical activity and fitness levels** in the community.
- ▶ The Hub has successfully implemented a **partnership-based approach** and has **promoted meaningful collaboration** between local sports clubs, sports providers, community organisations and Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership. The Hub has engaged with community/sporting groups and brought stakeholders together to plan and deliver sport.
- ▶ Hub partners feel **supported by SSRP and trust the organisation.**
- ▶ Whilst a Hub Coordinator within SSRP has lead responsibility for the Enniscrone Community Sport and Physical Activity Hub, the Hub is **embedded in SSRP strategy and benefits from the experience and expertise of the entire staff team.**
- ▶ The Hub has **encouraged more community leadership** by facilitating training and promoting the capacity of local clubs, community organisations and individuals.
- ▶ The Hub has **increased the sustainability and accessibility of sport and physical activity programming** in Enniscrone, increasing the capacity of local clubs, community organisations, coaches and volunteers whose training and experience will outlast the Hub.
- ▶ The Hub has made concerted effort to **target traditionally hard to reach groups** and has **delivered for the key target groups associated with Dormant Accounts.**
- ▶ The Hub is **strategically aligned** with the priorities of multiple nationwide and local policies and strategies.
- ▶ The Hub **offers lessons in relation to the remaining delivery** of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub and the development of future Community Sports Hubs.

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Continued Focus on Capacity Building

The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub is contributing purposefully to the increase of sport and physical activity opportunities in the area through a partnership approach. Whilst positive progress has been made in the areas of partnership building and sport clubs/provider capacity development, it is important that work in this area continues to ensure the positive work of the Hub can be furthered by local sports partners once Hub funding ceases. With this in mind, it is recommended that the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub continue its focus on promoting inter-partner collaboration, increasing capacity, and promote collaboration on Hub activities to promote the sustainability of local sports clubs and programming facilitated by local community groups. The focus in the final two years of Hub delivery should include the transfer of critical knowledge from the Hub Coordinator to local partners, and targeted training to address the support needs of partners.

### Recommendation 2: Impact Measurement & Follow-Up Evaluation

Limited statistical data was available to assess the impact of the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub on local participation rates. Additionally, feedback from Hub partners suggests the need for impact measurement to support organisational sustainability, future delivery, and to ensure provision is continually aligned with local need. It is therefore recommended that the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub host impact measurement training for Hub partners and local sport and physical activity clubs/providers within the next 6 months. This training should be pitched at a level which aligns with the development stage of each club/provider and should be cognisant of Sport Ireland's ongoing work to develop a system for the management of programme registrations and the collection of M1 data. It is further recommended that, resources depending, a follow-up evaluation be considered at the conclusion of the Hub to provide overall conclusions about the impact of the Enniscrone Hub on local sport and physical activity participation.

### Recommendation 3: Hard-to-Reach and Underserved Groups

The Enniscrone Community Sports Hub has reportedly improved the accessibility of sport and physical activity opportunities in the area and numerous impacts have been delivered for Dormant Accounts key target groups. However, consultation revealed that barriers to participation in sport and physical activity persist in Enniscrone, and Hub partners identified that a number of gaps still exist. Synergising with the recommendations outlined above, it is recommended that the Enniscrone Community Sports Hub place further emphasis on building the capacity of local partners to deliver activities for the Dormant Accounts target groups, whilst seeking to address other gaps in provision as identified through this evaluation.

## Case Study: Open Water Programme



*"The SSRP Hub Coordinator introduced me to the Hub; SSRP were 100% behind the programme. We started to work in collaboration to ensure the links went out into the local community."*

*Swim Ireland Representative*

### Introduction to the Programme

The Open Water Programme operates through a partnership approach between SSRP, Swim Ireland and Enniscrone & District Community Council who promote and deliver open water swimming programmes targeting local people. The programme aims to improve the confidence of participants to swim in the open water and seeks to increase skills and knowledge about how to safely engage in physical activity and recreation in open water.

### Programme Development

- 1 Collaboration between Swim Ireland, SSRP and Enniscrone & District Council
- 2 Partnership agreement signed cementing the roles and responsibilities of SSRP, Swim Ireland and local community organisations
- 3 Appropriately qualified Swim Ireland registered instructors and lifeguards identified to deliver the programme

### Delivery Model



Team of 3 coaches: beach lifeguard, Level 2 open water coach and an assistant



Programme is delivered at Enniscrone pier with equipment enhanced and beach accessibility addressed

### Delivery



**428**  
Total  
Participants



**28**  
Total Programmes  
Delivered

- ▶ Investment in 6 buoys, galvanised wall hooks and seated bench to improve facilities to support open water swimming at the Pier
- ▶ Upgrade of beach changing facilities and toilets, and beach access mat installed to improve accessibility for all

*"When the programme started first it was to get people out in the water because the pools were closed. I would characterise the delivery as successful. People like the security of going out there in the water and knowing there's a lifeguard with them and they like the structure of having someone there providing instructions."*

*- Swim Ireland Manager of the Enniscrone Open Water Programme*

### Impact of the Programme



**Physical Activity:** 73% of youth participants and 20% of adult participants reported an improvement in their physical activity levels following engagement with the Open Water Programme, indicating a positive impact

**Mental Health:** Stakeholders highlighted the strong links between physical activity, physical fitness, regular socialisation and positive mental health.



**Safety and Skills:** The programme improved the confidence of participants to swim in open water and increased skills and knowledge about how to safely engage in physical activity and recreation in open water.

### Sustainability and Plans for the Future

The Swim Ireland Strategic Plan for 2022-2026 commits to developing and growing open water swimming and plans are in place with SSRP to continue programme delivery in Enniscrone, attracting sustained interest. Future plans will involve continued collaboration with the prioritisation of beach accessibility and the provision of programmes for people with disabilities and people on low incomes.



## Case Study: West Sligo Athletics Club



### Introduction to the Club

West Sligo Athletics Club was born from the Enniscrone & District Community Council's concept for an athletics track. With considerable local interest found for this development, the Community Council facilitated a public meeting which formed a club committee in 2022. SSRP and Athletics Ireland have supported the club committee with guidance, education and training and support to establish a new club. Athletics programming began in 2023.

### Programme Development

- 1 Signed contractual agreement between SSRP and Enniscrone & District Community Council confirming grant aid towards the Castlefield athletics track
- 2 Public meeting facilitated by Enniscrone & District Community Council to discuss a club development plan. A committee was subsequently formed
- 3 SSRP provided training, advice and support on club governance
- 4 SSRP, with support from Athletics Ireland, provided subsidised coach education and training for new volunteers
- 5 SSRP provided West Sligo Athletics club with new athletics equipment
- 6 West Sligo Athletics Club became affiliated with Athletics Ireland
- 7 Partnership agreements put in place between SSRP and West Sligo Athletics Club to support a new club development programmes and events
- 8 Outreach community links developed with the West Sligo Family Resource Centre and Sanctuary Runners to support a local programme

### Delivery



Team of 3 coaches and 5 committee members



Catering to a large area, within and around Enniscrone



**Jan-June 2023:**  
4 weekly athletics sessions



**Sept-Dec 2023:**  
Weekly cross country provision for 8-17 year olds

West Sligo Athletics Club operates a membership model with **55** adult members and **196** juvenile members (17 and under):

*"In Summer 2023 we held 3k & 5k events in Easkey, Castleconnor, and Enniscrone to create awareness of our existence and to get people into athletics. Around 140-150 people took part and each race was held as a fundraiser."*

- West Sligo Athletics Committee Member

### Impact of the Programme



**Physical Activity:** West Sligo AC provides weekly athletics programming to members, providing consistent exercise and a positive influence on fitness levels.

**Lifelong Participation:** Committee members feel that in engaging a large cohort of young people alongside adults up to the age of 60, the Club promotes participation across the life course.



**Community Cohesion and Integration:** Committee members noted that the Club brings people of different ages and backgrounds together who otherwise may not meet, including long-term local residents and new migrant populations.

**Mental Health:** Stakeholders highlighted the strong links between physical activity, physical fitness, regular socialisation and positive mental health.



### Sustainability and Plans for the Future

- ▶ 3 year club financial projections in place
- ▶ Central focus on completing the athletics track
- ▶ Continued focus on coach development to meet programme demand
- ▶ Continued collaboration with SSRP, Athletics Ireland and the West Sligo FRC planned as well as the development of further community partners on future club development plans



## Case Study: Razorbacks Basketball Club



*"The Hub Coordinator was the link between our two ideas. It's been great to have her support. She organised a basketball coaching course so that we could get people trained up; that wouldn't have happened without her."*

*Razorbacks Coach*

### Introduction to the Club

Razorbacks Basketball Club was established in 2022. The Club was established based on two separate ideas. The first centred on a youth team for the Enniscrone/Castleconnor area and the second focused on a form of basketball called SOCIA-BALL; a programme designed to reengage women in basketball using a social and non-competitive model. Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership were aware of both ideas and brought the relevant individuals together to form one Club.

### Programme Development

- 1 SSRP responded to a request from a volunteer hoping to establish a youth basketball club, and provided guidance and support on club governance including the development of a safeguarding policy and vetting procedure
- 2 In parallel, SSRP responded to a request from Castleconnor Community Centre to support a pilot a recreational Social Ball programme for adults, providing governance support with the committee to facilitate a programme.
- 3 SSRP organised a basketball coaching course with support from Basketball Ireland to build local capacity to deliver basketball programmes
- 4 Local demand for basketball was high and capacity to deliver was limited; SSRP encouraged and supported both programmes to combine to form one club.
- 5 Supported by an SSRP 'Club Start-Up Grant', the club affiliated with Basketball Ireland.
- 6 SSRP provided start up basketball equipment and a back board

### Delivery



Team of 3 coaches and 3 committee members

**30**

Adult female participants regularly attending



Catering to both Castleconnor and Enniscrone

**10**

Adult male participants regularly attending



**Adult Sessions:**  
2 weekly sessions for women and 1 for men

**45**

Children and young people regularly attending



**Youth Sessions:**  
3 weekly sessions for 8-14 year olds

**3**

Ukrainian refugees regularly attending

### Impact of the Programme



**Physical Activity:** Razorbacks Basketball Club provides weekly basketball programming to young people and adults, providing consistent exercise and having a positive influence on fitness levels.



**Social Interaction and Opportunities for Integration:** The focus of the Club is on non-competitive social basketball, providing regular opportunities for interaction and fun shared activities. The Club also has regular attendance from Ukrainian refugees, offering an opportunity for integration.



**Mental Health:** Stakeholders highlighted the strong links between physical activity, physical fitness, regular socialisation and positive mental health.

*"People are buzzing with the Club. Some haven't played since school, and it gave everyone this injection of something and made them feel good again. The social side of it is great too."*

*Razorbacks Coach*

### Sustainability and Plans for the Future

- Recruit additional members to become volunteers/coaches to support the growth of the club
- Support additional education and training requirements to grow a coaching team to engage new target groups including adult men and teenage girls.
- Maintain a central focus on providing a non competitive environment
- Ensure all partners sustain a collaborative approach

