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The Value of Local Authority Investment in Active Recreation in Terms of Citizen Life Satisfaction and Levels of Physical Activity

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The Value of Local Authority Investment in Active Recreation in Terms of Citizen Life Satisfaction and Levels of Physical Activity

Lee Patrick Conor Rushe

Master of Science by Research
2016
The Value of Local Authority Investment in Active Recreation in Terms of Citizen Life Satisfaction and Levels of Physical Activity

By Lee Patrick Conor Rushe

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for The Degree of Masters of Science by Research

Research Supervisors:
Una Moynihan and Jackie Gallagher

Submitted to the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), May 2016
ABSTRACT

Local authorities in Ireland have historically had an input in to the delivery of sport and physical activity nationwide, and are often seen as a key player in this area (Irish Sports Council, 2013). Various legal acts governing Irish local authorities outline the role of local authorities in the provision of sport and physical activity (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012; Government of Ireland, 2014). Local authorities provide sport and physical activity opportunities through the provision of facilities predominantly and to a lesser extent through the provision of programmes and employment of personnel. Varying approaches to this provision are evident with local authorities employing a direct, enabler and/or partnership approach to provision (Smith, 1997).

The aim of the study was to investigate the commitment of local authorities to the provision of sport and physical activity and the resulting impact on citizen life dimensions.

The methods of investigation were as follows; a survey of local authority personnel (n=9), semi-structured interviews of town clerks with responsibility for sport and physical activity provision (n=3) and an analysis of local authority development plans (n=9). A citizen survey (n=272) investigated a range of individual and collective life dimensions e.g. quality of life.

The study revealed that there is no consistency in the level of provision to sport and physical activity amongst local authorities of similar size. In addition high levels of local authority commitment to sport and physical activity can influence citizens perceptions of their town, thus citizens living in towns with higher levels of commitment tended to perceive their towns more positively (p=.009). This high level of commitment also positively impacts on women’s participation in vigorous physical activity (p=.036). In addition a significant correlation existed between the number of monitoring and evaluation methods carried out by a local authority and their overall commitment levels.
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION
1.1 INTRODUCTION

For over two hundred years, sport and physical activity has had a role to play in Irish local authority operations (Duffy, 1996). The role played by local authorities in terms of commitment has differed dramatically through that period and the importance afforded to sport and physical activity has fluctuated (Duffy, 1996).

As the author will highlight, pre-independence in 1922 which saw the end to Ireland's war of independence against the British (The Irish Story, 2012), the Irish local authorities played an active role in the provision of sport and physical activity, this continued until the establishment of the 'Free State' in 1922 (Duffy, 1996). Although policy developments were occurring around sport and physical activity provision, the Free State did not fully view sport and physical activity as an important policy area (Duffy, 1996). This was until the 1960's when a growing importance was placed on sport and physical activity as will be highlighted in the following section using chronological developments.

Throughout pre-independence in Ireland the Irish Government's involvement in sport and recreation was clear. A policy example of this came in the nineteenth century when the Irish government created the Baths and Washhouses (IRELAND) Act (1846) (Government of Ireland, 2013), which subsequently continued through to the middle of the twentieth century, with variations existing today (Government of Ireland, 2013). This involvement was in a direct provisional context and the local authorities were also required to provide personnel such as lifeguards for the health and safety of the citizens (Government of Ireland, 1948). This highlights that some degree of importance was placed on being physically active by the Irish Government. Prior to the foundation of the Irish State in the eighteenth century there was no direct interest in sport by local authorities or any other arm of government (Duffy, 1996). It was the civil society that encouraged the promotion of sporting provision, leading to formations such as the establishment of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884 (Gaelic Athletic Association, 2016).
The nineteenth century witnessed the establishment of various sporting organisations, for example the Football Association of Ireland in 1921 (Football Association of Ireland, 2009), as well as the expansion of the school sport system to formal competition in the early twentieth century (Duffy, 1996).

However, as loosely as physical activity and active recreation was controlled in Ireland, it then became a formal concern with establishment of the Free State in 1922. With the formation of the Free State, Irish local authorities placed less of an importance on sport and physical activity than before. Interest and commitment to sport and physical activity dwindled in comparison to that of the nineteenth century, and it wasn’t until later in the twentieth century and towards the 1960’s that sport began to receive more attention and commitment (Duffy, 1996).

Towards the later decades of the twentieth century and from the late 1960’s there was the ‘boom’ in sport related policy development and government commitment to sport, physical activity and recreation (Duffy, 1996). In 1969, the Sport Section was established, followed by the Irish government’s commitment of £107,000 in grant aid to National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport in the same year. In 1977, the White Paper ‘A Policy for Youth and Sport’ was developed and implemented (Department of Education and Science, 2003). This policy was followed by a number of Irish government led initiatives such as the ‘Sport for All’ campaigns initiated in 1976 as well as the ‘Recreation Management’ higher education course established in the Regional Technical College Waterford (now Waterford Institute of Technology) in 1979 (Duffy, 1996). The significance of this is that the first recreation professionals were educated in Ireland.

This enhanced focus on policy direction has continued in Ireland until the current day. The Irish Sports Council was also set-up under the Irish Sports Council Act (1999), with the promotion of physical activity for health purposes being an important part of its brief (Irish Sports Council, 2014).
In more recent times and throughout the twenty first century, the local authorities in Ireland have had a more ‘hands-on’ approach to sport and physical activity which will be highlighted later in this chapter and throughout this thesis. This approach has occurred as a result of the establishment of local development planning, and community and enterprise sections, followed by the establishment of the Local Sports Partnership in the early 2000’s. The current legislation governing Irish local authorities outlines the role (s) that they play in the provision of sport, recreation and various other leisure activities (Government of Ireland, 2001; Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012).

In recent times, on the international scene, official local government commitment to sport and physical activity has been widespread and substantial (Scottish Office, 1999; Sport England, 2009; The Scottish Government, 2013; Federation of Irish Sport, 2014). As well as acknowledging the need for the improvement of community sports facility provision and standards for performance at elite level, government’s view sport and physical activity as a solution to broader social goals (Bloyce and Smith, 2010). Politicians, policy makers and key sports people share this belief and maintain the drive to commit to this area (Coalter, 2007). Many politicians support the commitment to sport and choose to target sport for political gain. Many people in Ireland, as well as the United Kingdom and around the world are involved in sport in some way, whether it is supporting a club, county or province, watching sport, or playing some form recreationally, or at a performance or elite level. This highlights the power of sport in reaching the mass populations of countries across the globe.

Sport and physical activity can also have a positive impact on a number of social concerns such as;
- the power to encourage children and young adults away from crime and drug influenced lives (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2000, cited in World Health Organisation, 2014a; Smith and Waddington, 2004),
- contribute to the reduction of sedentary lifestyle related diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, osteoarthritis, depression (WHO, 1999; WHO, 2004; Sattlemair and Ratey, 2009; Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2014a),
- decrease the economic strain on the health systems (National Health Service, 2013; CDC, 2014b),
- improved citizen life satisfaction (Tasiemski et a., 2006; Penn State University, 2014),
- increased work productivity and decreasing sick-days, contributing to a more effective and efficient workforce (Proper and van Mechelen, 2007)
- Better cognitive functioning in adults and children and the improvement of "learning, memory, concentration and mood" (Sattlemair and Ratey, 2009, p.1) in children, thus increasing the potential for a more fulfilling and independent future.

This view of sport having a significant power to influence society is not simply reflective of the United Kingdom and Ireland, but is shared widely around the world, particularly with first world countries (Muir, 2011). First world governments assign significant attention and proportions of their annual budgets to sport and physical as highlighted by Coalter (2007, p.14) who states,

"New Labour government in the UK in 1997 placed sport more centrally on the broader social policy agenda, largely because of the presumed externalities, or benefits, associated with participation".
The rationale underpinning this commitment varies from country to country but quite often, similar desired outputs and outcomes are articulated.

Crabbe and Blackshaw (2004, p.22) also write, "the notion of the 'power of sport' to do social good has increasingly come to prominence on both social policy agendas and sports management and marketing strategies".

These impacts are also mirrored by Long and Sanderson (2001, p.201), who suggest, "There is sufficient cause to believe that community benefits can be obtained from sport and leisure activities".

Although it is commonly accepted across key decision makers worldwide, that sport and physical activity is positive and that the commitment of resources to sport and physical activity will result in positive outcomes, there is still a lack of clear evidence of this positive impact (Coalter, 2007). There are distinct links between a more active society and a fitter and healthier society, although this is where all readable evidence ceases to exist (Coalter, 2007). There exists little definitive evidence of sport and physical activity contributing to the wider social goals, as sport and physical activity initiatives often lack suitable and reliable monitoring and evaluation frameworks (Coalter, 2007). These impacts are assumed and supported simply by the key decision maker's perceptions.

The lack of evidence to support sport and physical activity positive impacts, as identified above, has led to this research being undertaken and questioning the value of local authority commitment to sport and physical activity. It is important to investigate this now, as times are becoming increasingly difficult financially.

This research will also provide baseline information on what local authorities provide in Irish towns with regards to sport, physical activity and recreation facilities and amenities. With a high level of focus from the Irish government on increasing the quality of life for all, this research will establish whether there is a link to citizen quality of life and levels of commitment to sport and physical activity.
It is important to understand what local authorities are obliged to provide in terms of facilities and amenities and whether or not, this provision is evident in Irish towns.

1.2 RESEARCH TOPIC

The following section will highlight to the reader the purpose of the study and a justification as to why the research is being carried out.

1.2.1 Purpose of the Research

The principle purpose of this study is to explore local authority commitment to sport and physical activity and to discover whether or not local authority commitment to sport and physical activity impacts on citizen life satisfaction, physical activity levels, social cohesion, and citizen perceptions of their local authority. Indicators for commitment are identified in terms of local authority provision of sport and physical activity facilities, dedicated sport and physical activity personnel and physical activity programmes commissioned. The economic situation of Ireland has led to a decrease in available resources in many social policy areas, including sport, hence resources are being rationalised and proven results are becoming increasingly demanded (Ruane and Lunn, 2013).

The study will also delve into what monitoring and evaluation has been carried out by local authorities around sport and physical activity provision. The research will explore baseline information on whether sport and physical activity serves a purpose related to local authority corporate goals, as identified by Sugrue (2004) in terms of citizen quality of life, and whether it deserves the recognition it currently receives in Irish policy. If no impact can be discovered from current evidence and existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks, the author will propose guidelines for assessing impact of sport and physical activity provision.
A good practice example of an appropriate and effective framework for local authority monitoring and evaluation of sport and physical activity initiatives could be that of the Social Return on Investment (SRol) (King, 2013). This is a practice that assists local authorities in evaluating programmes or initiatives by using a “cost-benefit analysis that accounts for various type of impact that services and programmes have” (Lawler et al., cited in King, 2013). Essentially, this practice will undertake a specific analysis or evaluation to identify or determine whether a plan or intervention has achieved its desired impacts, and to what extent (King, 2013).

1.2.2 Justification of the Research

The main justification of the research was to explore local authority commitment and whether or not the commitment to sport and physical activity by local authorities was providing the citizens with positive impacts in terms of quality of life and physical activity levels. Conversely, if it had no impact, it begged the question as to what local authorities are doing and how they are doing it.

The timing of this research coincided with the implementation of the Department of Environment’s Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government strategy as were the new proposals for local authority reforms in Ireland (Department of Environment, 2012). This strategy was published in October 2012 and was set to be put into action in 2014. The strategy focuses heavily on local government in Ireland and the amalgamation of many town and borough councils. This action plan would significantly decrease the number of Councillors and the number of local and regional authorities. The renewing of these structures, the first time it has been updated since the 19th Century, was to introduce more effective democratic arrangements, in order to increase efficiency and to provide better value for money for the people it serves (Department of Environment, 2012). This proposed research will provide details and in-depth information on the impact of local authority provision and commitment to sport and recreation. The new direction set out by this policy strenuously highlights...
the state’s desire to provide accountability for investment and/or evaluate schemes and initiatives, similar to the objectives of this research.

A key component in public policy and planning recently has been a growing emphasis on monitoring and evaluation frameworks (Hylton and Bramham, 2007). This has been emphasised - not only for local authorities to endorse commitment with hard evidence - but also to ensure any commitment in broad provision and initiatives showed results. With more pressure now being placed on local authorities to produce results, it was important to provide evidence of any impacts and outputs, or if there is no impact from commitment, this too was important to highlight. The historical lack of monitoring and evaluation in sport and physical activity is highlighted by Bloyce and Smith (2010, p.20) who write;

"The frequent failure to integrate these processes throughout all phases of the policy process can be related to the general absence of a culture of monitoring and evaluation within the sports development profession, and the tendency for some policy makers and SDOs to be resistant to such processes."

The growing emphasis on ‘accountability’ by local authorities as a principle of service management, has meant monitoring and evaluation has become an increasingly prominent area of policy attention. Furthermore, it was crucial to do this research in order to influence the direction of commitment in sport and physical activity at local level in the future. By doing this, local authorities have a better chance of optimising results and increasing the robustness of evidence to support or refute assumed social benefits of sport.

There is no one-way by which local authorities must approach sport and physical activity provision in Ireland, no template for operations. Smith (1997) articulates the various approaches and roles local authorities can play in their delivery of sport and physical activity. These are;

- Direct Provider: this involved local authorities directly providing, ‘facilities, skill development courses and the opportunity to participate’ (Smith, 1997, p13).
An Enabler: this approach requires the application of human and financial resources to encourage others to provide the facilities and opportunities for activity (Smith, 1997).

A partner: with this approach local authority's tended to work closely with external agencies with a structure and plan in order to achieve the objectives agreed (Smith, 1997).

This research will not only capture what is being done by Irish local authorities, but also, how it is done.

In 2001, the Irish Sports Council (ISC) published its first strategy entitled A New Era for Sport. This strategy highlighted the need for better sports co-ordination at a local level which could be achieved through a Local Sports Partnership (LSP) set-up. Within these partnerships, the local authorities were seen as a key player (Sugrue, 2004). Therefore it was important to explore the provision of facilities, sport focused personnel and programmes via collaborative working as this may provide a context to explain this approach to local sports development.

1.3 AIMS

The key aim of this research is to determine if commitment to sport and physical activity in terms of facilities, programmes and personnel, by local authorities (town/borough councils) has an impact on citizen life satisfaction, neighbourhood cohesion, quality of life, and physical activity levels and citizens perceptions of their towns.

1.4 OBJECTIVES
In order to achieve the aim of the research, the researcher has developed five key objectives as follows;

1. Quantify the commitment of Town and Borough Councils to sport, physical activity and active recreation in terms of personnel, facilities and programme delivery.
2. Identify the catalysts and barriers for commitment to sport and physical activity by Town and Borough Councils.
3. Conduct an analysis of the impact of Town and Borough Council's commitment to sport and physical activity on individual and collective dimensions of community life.
4. Examine Town and Borough Council’s monitoring and evaluation practices for sport and physical activity provision.
5. Identify guiding principles for impactful local sports development by Irish Town and Borough Councils.

1.5 VISION OF RESEARCH

To mirror the thoughts of the reputed writer in this research area, Fred Coalter, the author believes that sport has a positive impact on physical activity levels, life satisfaction, quality of life, and various other wider social goals. This impact is often difficult to prove or disprove and is often seen as mythological (Coalter, 2007).

It is predicted that this research may highlight certain deficiencies in the direction of sport and physical activity commitment as many countries, organisations and government departments have varying views on where commitment of resources should be targeted. The author also feels this research could produce results that highlight a lack of substantial monitoring and evaluation in place to measure commitment to sport and physical activity.
This research will attempt to go some way to provide evidence of a link between commitment to sport and physical activity and various benefits and impacts targeted by this commitment. Direct impacts and benefits include; (i) improved quality of life, (ii) improved life satisfaction (iii) increased physical activity levels, (iv) increased social cohesion, and (v) increased/enhanced perception of towns by local citizens.

1.6 SCOPE OF RESEARCH

This section will now discuss the limitations and delimitations that impacted upon this research project.

1.6.1 Limitations

A number of limitations apply to this research regarding the sample population and methodology utilised within the research. The first and most obvious limitation comes in the size of the sample population. The research has been carried out on a select number of towns that meet the population criteria. As this research is being carried out over a two year period, the amount of data collected was limited for the researcher within this time frame. As time was essential, the researcher choose the towns carefully, carried out a pilot study, and finally collected the data for each town based on the willingness of the relevant local authority post holder to participate in the research. Another limitation facing the researcher is the sample size of the citizen surveys due to the research being carried out from a town away from the majority of the citizens. This meant the researcher had to rely on participants completing the surveys and sending them back or else going online to complete them. This was a limitation as it may not have been possible for the participants to access the surveys due to lack of accessibility to computers and internet.

1.6.2 Delimitations

There are a number of delimitations on this research which include the following;
- The study is delimited to town/borough councils with populations of 20,000 (+/- 4,000) (Appendix A).
- All towns to be of a similar size and provide a geographical spread.
- The local authority survey was completed by an employee of a local authority in a position of significant responsibility, either the Director of Services or Town Clerk, and who has significant knowledge of the operations of the local authority in respect of sports and physical activity provision.
- The researcher chose to interview one employee in a subset of sample towns as it is believed this person would be in a position to provide the desired information and because any more interviews of this nature may take up precious time to transcribe and analyse. The interviewees were selected based on their local authority ranking as either 'Low', 'Medium', or 'High Performance' in respect to sport and physical activity provision. The ranking was based on a scoring system devised from the survey which they completed first.
- The sample groups for the citizen survey include; ethnic minorities, unemployed, employed, transition year students, older adults (65+) and individuals with disabilities.
- The questionnaires were all self-administered.

1.7 THESIS FORMAT

This thesis has been devised into six chapters with each addressing a particular aspect of the research. Chapter one provides an introduction to the research undertaken, the aim and objectives are outlined, a purpose and justification is provided, as well as the vision of the research, scope of the research and the limitations and delimitations of the research. This chapter will be followed by chapter two, the review of literature.

Chapter two will contain a review of the available relevant literature on the research topics. It will provide a broad insight into policy surrounding the commitment to sport
and physical activity at a national level. Some comparative policy analysis from Europe will also be outlined. Various local authority policies, planning and strategic documents regarding sport and physical activity will be explored. Also critiqued will be literature on sport's wider social role, the power sport has to influence wider societal aspects including sport and physical activity's perceived ability to impact citizen's life satisfaction, quality of life, social cohesion and how people perceive their towns. Finally, this chapter will also explore literature surrounding the monitoring and evaluation of sport and physical activity provision.

Chapter three of this thesis will provide a detailed account of the methodology adopted for this research. It will present both a detailed descriptive account of the research procedure and the justification of how the field research was conducted and the resulting data analysed.

The fourth chapter of this thesis will present the results and a discussion of the research. These results will be presented using graphical illustrations where deemed appropriate.

The concluding chapter will provide the conclusions and recommendations based on the research carried out.
CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF LITERATURE
2.1 INTRODUCTION

Sport, physical activity and active recreation are viewed by many governments as instruments to achieve various policy aims and objectives, such as strengthening communities and social networks (DCMS, 2010). The perceived impact that a physically active society has on other areas of public policy such as; health, well-being and community development has led to sustained commitment to sport and recreation in recent times (Sport Scotland, 2005).

The inclusion of sport in legislation governing Irish Local Government dates back to the 19th Century (Duffy, 1997). The Irish Local Government Act (2001) and the Local Government Reform Act (2014) mandates local authorities to provide, in varying capacities, sport, physical activity and active recreation opportunities to “promote the interests of the community” (Local Government Reform Act 2014, pg.66). This has led to local authorities being significant stakeholders in providing opportunities for sport and recreation for the Irish Public.

With more emphasis, as Smith (1997) suggests, being placed on a fitter and more active society and the benefits that come with that, it is crucial to establish and monitor the results of any commitment. Local authorities as part of the wider public service are increasingly being pressurised to produce results and provide a certain degree of ‘value for money’ for citizens (Ruane and Lunn 2013). This has been an historic failing of most local authorities in Ireland and the UK, particularly when it comes to measuring the impact of sport and physical activity provision (Coalter, 2007). Coalter (1995 p.17), also highlighted the lack of monitoring and evaluating data collected regarding sport and leisure in the UK context, he writes,

"Performance definition and the collection of monitoring and evaluation data is not widespread... only a minority of authorities can demonstrate their achievements in terms of numbers of people participating in sports and recreation. Even some which place a
great emphasis on social objectives have only qualitative evidence to demonstrate their achievements...Objectives are rarely quantified and success or failure in meeting objectives rarely measured or monitored.”

This supports the argument that local authorities have not placed adequate emphasis on providing quantitative or qualitative data to support commitment to sport and recreation.

By measuring various outcomes and outputs; such as physical activity levels and citizen life satisfaction, the author believes measurable results of the value of local authority commitment can be identified.

The goal of the Irish Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (2015) is;

“To increase participation and interest in sport, to improve standards of performance and to develop sports facilities at national, regional and local level, thereby contributing to healthier lifestyles and an improved overall quality of life, through a Departmental policy and resource framework in partnership with its Agencies, other Government Departments and the National Governing Bodies of Sport.”

The above mission statement highlights the Irish Government’s rationale for committing to sport and recreation.

This review of literature will focus on the provision of facilities, personnel and programmes for sport, physical activity and recreation, by town and borough councils in Ireland, as well as considering aspects of monitoring and evaluation of this provision. The author will provide an in-depth analysis of available national and international literature on these key themes, which have been informed by the objectives of this research, throughout the following chapter.

2.2 LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN IRELAND

This research was undertaken at a time when the Irish Government was restructuring local authorities as described in the document, ‘Putting People First’ (2012). It is evident from existing literature, the diverse and dynamic role Irish local authorities play and the need for local authorities to dramatically change to “keep pace with the demands of modern life” (Carroll, 2000 p.22).
Irish Local Government has been in existence since the enactment of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898 (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2013). It remained structurally the same, for over one hundred years until the introduction of the Local Government Reform Act (2014). Roche (1982, p.1) defines Irish local authorities "as a system of administration in political sub-divisions of a state, by elected bodies having substantial control over local affairs..." whilst John Stewart defines local authority as "a political institution for the authoritative determination of community values" (Stewart and Stoker, 1992, p.240). Essentially, local government involves the devolution of functions and powers to locally elected representative authorities (Chubb, 1982).

Irish local government complies with such a description and is based on the ideal of a government created by local people to "service the needs and priorities of local communities" (Carroll, 2000, p.15). Essentially, the mission of local authorities is to foster the overall well-being of their communities (Carroll, 2000). Thus, local authorities aim predominantly to deal with the concerns and issues faced by those within their jurisdiction (Stewart and Stoker, 1992). This is a broad role encompassing many aspects including; housing, roads and traffic, water supply and sewerage, development plans, environmental protection, miscellaneous activities and most significantly perhaps- for the purpose of this study, sport, recreation and amenity provision (Dooney and O'Toole, 1998).

Since this research began and the data was collected, the structure of Irish local authorities has changed for the first time in over one hundred years and as of 2014 the number of local authorities has been reduced from one hundred and fourteen to thirty one. This reform has taken place under the Local Government Reform Act 2014, (Government of Ireland, 2014). Each council has a Chief Executive, previously known as city or county manager, who is the manager of the local authority (Government of Ireland, 2014).
As local authorities have an input into many aspects of society; planning, housing, roads, environmental protection, as well as recreation and amenities, their overall aim is to create a better more enjoyable community (Callanan and Keogan, 2003). What is important to note at this point is that of all the local government functions, recreation and amenity is not the only one relevant to sport and physical activity and that others have an important part to play, especially in terms of infrastructure; road transportation and safety are crucial for active transport such as walking, running and cycling, development initiatives and controls are critical with respect to protecting urban spaces for recreation.

Local authorities view active recreation as a means by which to promote the interest of local communities (Local Government Reform Act, 2014, pg.66). The ways in which sport and active recreation can be used to promote wider social goals will be discussed later in this chapter

2.3 NATIONAL POLICY FOR SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION

There are a number of reasons why the Irish Government has developed policies to drive the provision of and commitment to sport, physical activity and recreation opportunities through local authorities. Sport is used in many ways socially, politically, and economically (Volkwein-Caplan, 2004; Government of Ireland, 2014) and is seen as impacting citizen life satisfaction (Coalter, 2007). Sport is viewed as having a positive impact on individual citizen health and lifestyle, as well as a positive impact on society i.e. providing a better quality of life, improving the image of towns, and reducing health costs (Gaborit, 2010; British Heart Foundation National Centre, 2014). The following section of this review of literature will highlight the background to the Irish government’s commitment to sport, physical activity and recreation policy.

Physical activity and active recreation has long been a formal concern of Irish government, although resources afforded to sport has not always been seen as significant. In the nineteenth century the Irish government created the Baths and
Washhouses (IRELAND) Act (1846) (Irish Government, 2013). This led to some of the first public baths - which were the forerunners to the public swimming pools today - being built in Ireland by local authorities. In 1885 The Corporation Wash House on Tara Street, Dublin was developed and opened for public use (Dublin City Public Libraries, 2013). This was an early indicator of the commitment to public health through recreation by the Irish government.

From the eighteenth and the early years of the nineteenth century, sporting organisations began to be created and developed by civic society following increased central government commitment (Duffy, 1997). One example was the inception of the Dublin Association Football Club in 1883; later leading to the Football Association of Ireland in 1921 (Football Association of Ireland, 2009). The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) was subsequently formed in 1884 (Gaelic Athletic Association, 2016)

Sport in the early 1900’s developed as civic society responding to the needs of Irish communities. However, with the establishment of the ‘Free State’ in 1922 very little happened in respect of state engagement in this aspect of social policy. It wasn’t until the middle of the twentieth century that things began to shift. With the introduction of television leading to the growth of sport coverage in the media, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in the 1950’s regarded the coverage of sport as one of its obligations (Jarvie, 2006). Duffy (1997) reported that television first arrived in Ireland in 1961 and that media coverage of facilities and amenities in other countries was one of the prompts for the Irish government to first invest public monies in sport in 1969.

Following the influence of media and television on sport in Ireland, various politicians were recorded as supporting the provision of sport by central and local government. Mr. Oscar Traynor, a Fianna Fail member was debating the Housing (Amendment) Bill, 1950 – where he argued for the preservation of land for sport and recreation in the face of pressure for land for housing. He argued,
“Under Section 12, land which has been devoted extensively towards providing recreation grounds and sports fields can be acquired. I hope that as far as the City of Dublin is concerned these sports fields will not be acquired. I am as anxious, and perhaps more anxious than most Deputies, to see some kind of relief brought to the citizens of Dublin with relation to providing them with housing accommodation. But I would be very sorry to think some of these recreation grounds and sports fields, which constitute an open lung in housing centres, will be taken away and built on.”


Towards the middle of the twentieth century, there was a ‘boom’ in sport related policy development and government commitment to sport, physical activity and recreation. In 1969 the Sport Section was established as a subsection of the Department of Education, followed by the Irish government’s commitment of £107,000 in grant aid to National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport in the same year (Duffy, 1997). In 1977, The White Paper ‘A Policy for Youth and Sport’ was developed and implemented (The Department of Education and Science, 2003). This policy was followed by a number of Irish government led initiatives such as the ‘Sport for All’ campaign of 1978 (Duffy 1997).

By the 1960/70’s sport was becoming more of a concern with many influential people recognising the importance of the provision of sport and physical activity. In 1978 COSPOIR, the National Sports Council was established. This was in the wake of the development of the Sport for All Charter by the Council of Europe (1979). The key roles of COSPOIR were;

- “To act as adviser to the Minister of State at the Department of Education in relation to the implementation of the government’s policy on Sport for All, and
- To promote initiatives and innovative measures in regard to:
  I. The development of sport and physical recreation and leisure pursuits, and
  II. The raising of standards of performance in competitive sport.”

(Houlihan, 1997, pg. 90)

COSPOIR operated within these terms of reference between 1978 and 1988 and was established on a three-year renewal basis. In 1988 the government chose not to reappoint COSPOIR due to their concern that the body had expanded its remit ‘rather
too liberally' (Houlihan, 1997, pg. 90) and because of the uncertainty surrounding its role in the policy process. Houlihan (1997, pg.90) adds,

"The dismissive treatment of COSPOIR by the government prompted little comment from the sport's governing bodies or the Physical Education Association of Ireland, which had developed an increasing antipathy to the Council due to the latter's unrepresentativeness."

This perspective from Barrie Houlihan indicates a certain amount of poor management of sport from COSPOIR and with poor relationships with various other key bodies, the development of sport was not as fast-moving as it could have been.

COSPOIR was not operational again until 1992 when it was re-established with a reduced membership - from forty to twenty-three - and a more "simplified remit" (Houlihan, 1997, pg. 90). This simplified remit was to "advise the Minister of State on all aspects of sport and recreation" (Houlihan, 1997, pg. 90). However Duffy (1997) reports that COSPOIR was not reappointed after its term had lapsed in 1995 but rather a sports strategy group was appointed by the Minister of Sport to advise on the terms of reference of a sports council in the context of a national sports policy document.

The gradual extension of the policy ambitions of the Sports Section was paralleled by a steady growth in its funding.

"In 1970 the total amount of grant aid distributed to sports organisations amounted to just over 100,000 Irish punts and by 1979 it had risen to 620,000 Irish punts. Funding then continued through the 1980's, and received a major injection of funding with the introduction of the national lottery (Lotto) in 1986. The lottery was designed to provide additional funding for youth, sport/recreation, arts and culture and the Irish language and from 1988, the first full year when lottery funding was available, the total distribution to sport and recreation has averaged almost 10 million Irish punts per year."

(Houlihan, 1997, pg. 91)

The National Lottery Act (1986) brought a commitment to apply funds from the lottery to a number of purposes, including sport, although this commitment was at the Irish Government's discretion (Government of Ireland, 2013b).
1997 witnessed the establishment of the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation in Ireland. This was the Irish government’s first department established to specifically oversee sport and recreation and the first time that a minister for sport sat at the cabinet table. This department has since been renamed as the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. The department looks to “build our legacy to enrich our lives both as active participants and as a country which values vibrant, local community identity and the achievements of our sporting heroes” (DTTAS, 2016, available at www.dttas.ie/sport).

The public consultation process mentioned earlier which was commenced in 1995 resulted in the publication of ‘Targeting Sporting Change in Ireland’. This document sought to bring together all elements of sport in a cohesive way for the benefit of all those involved in sport (Hallmann and Petry, 2013). The document’s significance was reflected in much of its contents, subsequently becoming Irish sports policy. The bottom line of this document was that ‘sport is good’ (Moller, 2014).

Moving towards the millennium, sport continued to grow with policy support from government. The Irish Sports Council (ISC) was set-up under the Irish Sports Council Act, 1999, with the promotion of physical activity for health purposes as an important part of its brief. The ISC is split up in to nine major divisions with the over-arching vision where:

- ‘sport contributes to enhancing the quality of life and everyone is encouraged and valued in sport;
- young people see sport participation as an integral and enjoyable part of their busy lives;
- individuals can develop their sporting abilities and enhance their enjoyment, limited only by their talent and commitment;
- Irish sportsmen and women achieve consistent world-class performance, fairly’

(Irish Sports Council, 2015, available at www.irishsportscouncil.ie/about_us/)

The establishment of the statutory ISC, although late by international standards, represented another move in the right direction to align with other countries in the development of sport and physical activity.
The ISC in its first strategy – A New Era for Sport (2000) – promoted the notion of Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) to enhance participation opportunities in sport at a local level. During the period covered by this strategy, the ISC established its first twelve LSPs. Carrying on the recreational approach to sport, the key aims of the LSPs are to increase participation in sport and to ensure that local resources are used to best effect (Irish Sports Council, 2015).

In 2006 the Irish Institute of Sport was established. This was a sub-division of the Irish Sports Council and focused predominantly on elite sport (Hallmann and Petry, 2013). From 1999 up until the recession in 2008, financial support for the Irish Sports Council grew significantly. This allowed for the development and progression of sport in Ireland. Between 2008 and 2012 spending in sport and recreation was dramatically cut in comparison to other social policy areas. Elite sport funding however remained strong, as opposed to participation spending, which suffered (Lunn, 2009). These changes in funding and commitment must send a certain message to local authorities, one that puts less of a focus on encouraging sports participation and more on performance. What is clear though is that the Irish Government, along with many of the world’s other countries, both developed and developing, clearly feel that whether it is economic, political, and social or the health of the nation, sport, physical activity and recreation has a positive part to play in society. Evidence suggests that the significant drop in financial support led to a drop in sport and physical activity participation (ESRI, 2008). The ESRI (2008, available at: https://www.esri.ie/news/irish-sports-monitor-report-2008/) reported that

“2008 reveals a significant drop of 2% in active participation in sport among adults, from 32.9% to 30.8%. The evidence strongly suggests that the recession was behind the drop in active participation.”

Recreation, sport and physical activity are now perceived as important facets for positively contributing to and impacting many aspects of society (Houlihan and White, 2002; Coalter, 2007). One of these perceived positive impacts is the ability to create a positive environment and a healthy lifestyle for participating children (British Heart Foundation National Centre, 2014). This was also evidenced in the ‘Ready, Steady,
Play: A National Play Policy’, which was published in 2004 by the National Children’s Office and the ‘National Recreation Policy for Young People’ (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2007), with both documents providing a framework for the development of public play and recreation facilities in Ireland. The overall aim of these strategies is to ensure that all children have access to a range of quality play and recreation opportunities to enrich their childhood. Through these policies funding has been directed towards the development of play and recreation infrastructure to include:

- New and redeveloped local authority play and recreation facilities (playgrounds and multiuse games areas)
- Sports and arts programmes targeting children and young people, and
- Improved opportunities for play, recreation and sports facilities within schools.

(Government of Ireland, 2007)

These strategies were developed at central government level however their implementation is wholly dependent on local authority engagement and support.

What is certain is that sport, physical activity and recreation are featuring more prominently on the agenda of the Irish government, as well as international governments (Grix and Carmichael, 2012; Collins and Kay, 2014). Government support comes mainly in the form of facility supply through capital grant schemes. A review of Department of Sport budgets between 2010 and 2014 demonstrates that 44% of the national sport budget is allocated to capital developments (DTTAS, 2016). Central government offers some support to local authorities financially to improve the provision of sport and physical activity at grassroots level through the Department of Sport capital grant scheme. However the community and voluntary sector is the main beneficiary of this scheme.

2.4 LOCAL AUTHORITY SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROVISION
Historically, local authorities have influenced the provision of parks, play grounds and recreational areas zoned by the authority and often operated in conjunction with local clubs and organisations (Duffy 1997; Council of Europe 2001; Callanan and Keogan, 2003). The Local Government Act 2001 and the Reform Act 2014, permit local authorities to provide facilities for recreation and amenity. Traditionally local authorities have met this mandate through the provision of swimming pools, open space and town parks (Callanan and Keogan, 2003). Local authorities can also obtain land by agreement or by compulsory purchase order for recreational facilities (Callanan and Keogan, 2003). The provision of local recreational facilities has historically been divided between local authorities, local communities and local clubs (Torkildsen, 2010). However, due to rising costs and a reduction in public resources, private sector companies and organisations have become increasingly involved in the provision of sport and physical activity (Nichols et al., 2005).

As previously mentioned, the provision of sport, physical activity and active recreation are historical functions afforded to Irish local authorities. Section 67 of the Local Government Act, 2001 highlights the role of local authorities specifically to sport. This section provides local authorities with a mandate to engage,

"...in such activities or do such things as it considers necessary or desirable to promote the interests of the local community in relation to...
(1) general recreation and leisure activities and
(2) sports, games and similar activities."

(Government of Ireland, 2001, p.62)

The role to provide for sport, physical activity and recreation is also highlighted in various other documents. ‘Targeting sporting Change in Ireland’ highlighted the important, if often under-appreciated, role of local authorities in relation to sport (Department of Education, 1997). More recently still, ‘A New Era for Sport’ highlights the commitment of local authorities and other organisations to enhance

"local co-ordination [and] to ensure that sport contributes to the achievement of national social and other objectives and resources are used to best effect."

(Irish Sports Council, 2000, p.13)
The importance of the local authority commitment to Irish sport should not be underestimated. In Ireland local authorities make an extensive input to local sport and according to the Department of Education (1997, p.21), local authorities “provide the greatest funding to sport in Ireland” and are “one of the leading operators of sports facilities in Ireland”.

However the Local Government Reform act (2014) allows local authorities to delegate the community interest functions (including recreation and amenity provision) to Local Community Development Committees

“for the purposes of developing, co-ordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development”

(Government of Ireland, 2014, pg. 51)

This proposed change could be interpreted in two ways – a reduction in commitment by local authorities or a response to the European Union principle of subsidiarity. The data from this study could be useful in the future in assisting a judgement on this matter.

2.4.1 Styles of Local Authority Sport and Physical Activity and Recreation Provision

It is important to understand that each local authority may take a different approach to the provision of sport and physical activity opportunities. The discretionary tone of the governing legislation (Government of Ireland, 2001, section 67) allows for local authorities to take whatever approach they choose and provide whatever level of commitment they see fit. This discretionary tone was continued in the 2014 Reform act which states that Local Development Committees,

“...may enter into an agreement in writing with a public authority, local development or community development body, or other person for the carrying out of those functions by such an authority, body or person, as the case may be, which the Committee considers appropriate to be carried out by such an authority, body or person, subject to such terms, conditions, restrictions and other requirements as the Committee considers necessary and specifies in the agreement.”

(Government of Ireland, 2014, pg. 54)
It is now important to highlight the various approaches a local authority may take to local sports development and the creation of sporting opportunities in the community.

Having developed corporate strategies in relation to sport, it is important for local authorities to efficiently and effectively implement their strategies at a local level in order to maximise outputs and outcomes for members of the community. Smith (1997) outlined three different organisational approaches a local authority can take to implement these strategies and these are largely echoed by King (2012). An historical approach in Ireland is a local authority playing the role of ‘direct provider’. This involves local authorities directly providing “facilities, skill development courses and the opportunity to participate” (Smith, 1997, p.13). According to Smith (1997) and King (2012), this had been the approach traditionally taken by UK local authorities and government agencies.

Another approach a local authority may take is by acting as an enabler,

> “Which requires the application of human and financial resources to encourage others to provide the facilities and opportunities for activity necessary to meet their own or the community’s needs.”

(Smith, 1997, p.13-14)

This broadens the role of the local authority and essentially leads to the sharing of some developmental responsibility with other agencies (Smith, 1997; Torkildsen, 2010). This approach may arise when a local authority does not, due to varying circumstances, have the resources necessary to carry out the required tasks to reach a certain strategic goal; therefore applying what resources they do have to enabling others to achieve the desired results. An example of this would be a funding scheme set up to support local clubs in ‘kick-starting’ a new club, or attracting new members to increase participation rates in sport in a town and leasing land to local clubs on long term basis or urban space/land being zoned for recreation.

The third and final approach as articulated by Smith (1997) is the partnership approach. This approach is in practice when for example, a local authority is required
to work more closely with an external agency and with a structure and plan. Partnerships involve greater interdependency than an ‘enabler’ role. Smith (1997) highlights the importance of building and sustaining partnerships with a number of agencies in the community such as schools and sport and leisure facilities, in encouraging children to become more active. Similarly to the ‘enabler’ approach, the ‘partnership’ approach is often established as a result of lack of resources with a number of external agencies keen to join forces for similar causes. This approach is viewed by Hylton and Bramham (2007) as essential for best practice. Due to the potential positive results of a partnership approach, a greater emphasis is now placed on partnership working (Bowtell, 2006). A practical example of the utilisation of this approach in Ireland is the partnership agreements between Irish local authorities and other local voluntary and statutory agencies in the Local Sports Partnerships arrangements, initiated by the Irish Sports Council in 2001. This involved the development of alliances between public and voluntary agencies to enhance local sport opportunities for all citizens.

The three approaches as identified by Smith (1997) highlight how various local authorities may approach the creation of sport, physical activity and recreation opportunities.

With respect to the UK context, the Local Government Association (2009) states that local councils are being encouraged to engage with external stakeholders in commissioning sports services – using a process of ‘joined-up’ provision to maximise strategic impact. The possible roles to be undertaken by local government include:

- Providing strong political leadership,
- Joining up activity across the area,
- Working within the Local Sport Partnership (LSP) to maximise opportunities for sport,
- Putting in place good commissioning processes for sport,
- Providing funding and resources,
• Determining local priorities for sport and examining what sport can do for other priorities.

(Local Government Association and Sport England, 2009)

Sport England and the Local Government Association (2009) believe that local authorities can achieve many desired outcomes by putting these suggestions into practice. This highlights the importance of local authorities implementing traits of all three approaches for the best possible outcomes.

It is important to understand the important role local authorities have to play in the provision of sport, physical activity and active recreation opportunities in Ireland and abroad as Watt, (1998, p.25) stated,

"Local politicians and local government can have an enormous effect on sports provision and management. Local authorities are the key providers. Their role is crucial and should never be underestimated."

2.4.2 Facilities Provision

As highlighted earlier in section 2.3 a key contribution of the government to sport, physical activity and recreation is the provision of facilities and amenities. Facilities and amenities should be provided for people of all ages, genders, ethnicities and ability, not simply for beginners or elite athletes, but for all those wishing to participate (Council of Europe, 2001). The WHO (2014, pg.9) asserts, “environments should be promoted that facilitate physical activity, and supportive infrastructure should be set up to increase access to, and use of, suitable facilities”. Not only is it important for the government to provide facilities and amenities for citizens; governments should provide accurate and balanced information on opportunities to take part in sport, physical activity and recreation, along with information on the benefits and the risks. Governments need to consider actions that will result in the provision of balanced information for citizens that easily allows them to make healthy choices, and to ensure the availability of appropriate health promotion and education programmes (WHO, 2005). They should also be proactive in advising citizens on how, where and why they
should take part in sport, physical activity or active recreation. The Local Sports Partnerships in Ireland play a key role in this information transfer and marketing, as the partnerships across the country host databases of clubs and facilities on their websites. As local authorities are members of these partnerships they are making an indirect contribution to this important function.

Local authorities in Ireland have a responsibility to provide facilities and amenities for various sports, physical activities and active recreation opportunities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2004, Local Authority Reform Act, 2014). Irish local authorities traditionally focused on the provision of two main facilities, which are swimming pools and playgrounds (Sugrue 2004; Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2004). Playgrounds facilitated by the local authority include “playgrounds where the local authority assists in the development of a playground through financial assistance or equipment provided by the local authority to, for example, a community group” (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2004, p.65), - an example of enabling the provision of sport and physical opportunities. A direct provider/enabling approach is obvious with local authority facilitated leisure facilities including “facilities where the local authority either directly or through a management company manages one or more swimming pools in the area, or where the local authority provides a swimming pool via a PPP arrangement” (Department of Environment, 2004, p.66). This commitment in 2013 through the Sports Capital Grant Scheme was to the tune of €5,541,714 which was allocated to various town and county councils for the development of swimming pools through the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme (DTTAS, 2015).

There are also instances whereby local authorities are also obligated to provide land and open spaces to “preserve, provide and improve recreational amenity and open space” (Dublin City Council, 2009). This zoning includes all amenity open space lands that can be divided into three broad categories as follows:

1. Public open space
2. Private open space

3. Sports facilities in private ownership

(Dublin City Council, 2009)

In a sporting and recreation sense, a positive from this open space policy is that one of the only new developments allowed in these areas is that for the purposes of increased amenity/recreational developments (Dublin City Council, 2009). These zoned areas are recognised as amenities provided for sport, physical activity and recreation in their own right. The downside to these open spaces is that there may the possibility of the land being unsuitable for any form of sport or physical activity e.g. it can be unsafe for use due to its topography or location. There may also not be sufficient quality of walkways, lighting or surface. This may limit the opportunities provided to increase participation, yet local authorities can still claim the land to be sport and physical activity provision, an inaccurate yet intangible declaration. There are no obligations on local authorities to upgrade open spaces to a prescribed standard; hence neighbourhoods can have wasted land.

However, local authorities often provide a lot more in terms of pitches, leisure facilities, dance studios, golf course etc. although service indicators have not traditionally been applied to these facilities and services (Sugrue, 2004). This fact makes it difficult to measure and fully appreciate the scope of what exactly local authorities provide to increase the participation in sport, physical activity and active recreation.

2.4.3 Programming

Torkilsden (2010) asserts that programmes involve the planning, scheduling, timetabling and implantation of activities and services. Resulting from the commitment of many local authorities to the direct provision of facilities, which
include swimming pools, fitness suites and sports halls, they are by default involved in sport and physical activity programming.

In their enabling relationships with various local sporting clubs and bodies they also facilitate, albeit indirectly, a number of sport and physical activity programmes. Although there are no specific references in the Local Government (2001) or Local Authority Reform (2014) Acts suggesting an obligation for government or local authorities to provide programmes for sport and physical activity, there have been a number of interventions over the years that would constitute programme delivery support.

The Irish Sports Council provides funding to the NGBs in Ireland which allows them to deliver programmes through their networks of clubs. The relationships that many clubs have with their local authorities is that of an enabling relationship; therefore it is reasonable to suggest that local authorities have a role in the support of these programmes. An example of this is the Women in Sport (WIS) initiative launched by the ISC in 2005 which was designed to address the difference between male and female interaction with sport (Hallman and Petry, 2013).

The ISC also funds the LSPs to deliver programmes to increase participation amongst all citizens nationwide. Local authorities are a key component to LSPs, therefore providing support for programme delivery in an enabling capacity. One example of this is in 2005 when the North Tipperary Sports Partnership worked with four communities, based in urban, rural, disadvantaged and inter-county areas, helping them to develop and implement locally relevant sport and physical activity action plans. Each community formed a Local Action Group. The partnership then worked with this group to identify attitudes, needs, barriers and participation rates. The Partnership then provided support in the form of training or small grants to deliver on the locally appropriate needs-related Active Community Action Plans (DTTAS, 2005).

Through the Social Inclusion Development Programmes (SIDP) delivered by the LSPs, but funded through the ISC, it also highlights a commitment by local authorities to
sport and physical activity programmes albeit as a partner/enabler. Through this programme local authorities tend to employ a Sports Inclusion Development Officer (SIDO).

Further evidence of local authority support to sport and physical activity programme provision comes in the form of the Cycle to Work Scheme (through the revenue commissioners). This scheme is set up to incentivise the purchase of bicycles to encourage employees to use instead of motorised transport. The local authority's role here is to provide the infrastructure to support this. Finally, the Health of Ireland Framework which is driven by the HSE and aims to promote physical activity as lifestyle options is implemented nationwide whilst the local authorities are seen as key stakeholders in this.

2.4.4 Personnel

As part of the setup of the LSPs, each LSP employed a Local Sports Coordinator and/or Development Officer who reports to the board of each respective LSP. The functions of these individuals revolve around information, education and implementation. The Coordinator is also responsible for the implementation of the local sports strategy (Lunn, 2006; ISC, 2015).

Also, as touched upon in the section above, through the SIDP, local authorities have a tendency to employ a SIDO. This person was responsible for delivering sports to all areas of the community with a focus on disadvantaged citizens, or those with the least access to sport i.e. lower income families or individuals with disabilities (ISC, 2015).

LSPs also assist in the recruitment and managing of volunteers.

2.4.5 Local Authority Monitoring, Tracking and Evaluation of Sport and Physical Activity

An important aspect of planning and implementing all initiatives - be it local authority or not - is monitoring, tracking and evaluation. The success or impact of any plan cannot be accurately measured without an appropriate monitoring and evaluation
framework in place (Coalter, 2007). This is especially crucial in sports planning, as it provides evidence and quantifiable support for future commitment to ensure that local authorities remain active in improving sport, physical activity and recreation opportunities. The importance of monitoring and evaluation is articulated by Kusek and Rist (2004, p.11) who claim,

"Monitoring and evaluation is a powerful public-management tool that can be used to improve the way governments and organizations achieve results. Just as governments need financial, human resource and accountability systems, governments also need good performance feedback systems."

The failure to adequately and continuously monitor and evaluate programmes is a matter of concern that has blighted sports development historically (Coalter, 2007; Bloyce and Smith, 2009). Without such inbuilt monitoring, tracking and evaluation processes, it becomes increasingly difficult to evaluate the intended and unintended outcomes of those programmes, and so their efficacy is difficult to determine (Bloyce and Smith, 2009).

Historically, issues have always existed with the monitoring, tracking and evaluation of sports development initiatives and not just that of local authority services (Coalter, 2007). This is a challenge that has been recognised in sports programmes throughout the developed world e.g. Canada, USA, Australia and Great Britain (Coalter, 2007). There is also the issue of monitoring and evaluation frameworks simply being absent within the sports development profession, with some policy-makers and sports development officers being resistant to the auditing process (Bloyce and Smith, 2009). There are a number of factors to explain the absence of impact measurement, including ideological reasons, as well the lack of awareness of the processes involved in monitoring, tracking and evaluation. The fear factor of 'blame' can also impact the practice of effective monitoring, tracking and evaluation frameworks. Monitoring, tracking and evaluation can indicate perceived failure and blame, so should a programme or elements of a programme be perceived to be failing according to the agreed criteria and objectives, it may be straightforward to identify who or what is the cause of that (Bloyce et al., 2008; Coalter, 2007; and Pawson, 2006). The process of
monitoring, tracking and evaluation can also be costly which may restrict local authorities. Other problems are evident within monitoring, tracking and evaluation frameworks, especially when delivered by government bodies, as Weiss (1993, p.96) states,

"Because of the political processes of persuasion and negotiation that are required to get a programme enacted, inflated promises are made in the guise of programme goals. Furthermore, the goals often lack the clarity and intellectual coherence the evaluation criteria should have."

As discussed previously, local authorities can take one of at least three approaches to sports development provision - direct provision, enabler and partner (Smith, 1997). Regardless of what approach a local authority takes, it is fundamental to monitor any programmes or initiatives. Smith (1997, p.14) writes,

"Whether acting as a direct provider, enabler, or partner, a Local Authority has the responsibility of monitoring the outcomes of the commitment of public resources, both to ensure that the objectives of its strategic sports plan and value for money are being achieved. The achievement of the objectives of the Strategic Plan can rarely be justified on an 'at any cost' basis."

As mentioned under section 2.4, according to the Local Government Act (2001) local authorities can take measures to engage in activities to promote the interests of the local community (Local Government, 2001, Section 66). Incorporated within this Act are activities under the umbrellas of sport, physical activity and recreation. The Government Reform Act (2014) also reflects this and in section 45 highlights how all services provided and allocated by the local authorities must be accounted for.

The drive towards more accountability and better monitoring and evaluation is highlighted as a well-established principle as evidenced in a range of policy documents e.g.; 'Better Local Government – A Programme for Change' (1996) and later in 'Delivering Value for People – Service Indicators in Local Authorities' (2004) published by The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The latter describes how local authorities will be monitored for service delivery, including that of sport, physical activity and recreation services. Indeed its significance is emphasised in the Local Government Reform Act (2014).
Monitoring local authority performance is achieved through the use of a quality awards scheme, project team analysis, published public documents and through the use of performance indicators (Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB), 2005). Independent and government bodies are also involved in the local authority monitoring process, with the results published yearly by individual local authorities (LGMSB, 2005). Local authorities publish details of their operations in local Development Plans. These detailed manuscripts show how a local authority provides services and allocates funding.

Performance indicators are in existence to measure the performance of the local authority’s service delivery (Irish Government, 2014). The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009, p.251) highlights the fact that performance indicators do not provide an accurate reading of the local authority performance, but rather a general overview, stating, “performance indicators provide a general overview of a service and do not on their own give a complete view of local authorities’ performances”. Another crucial point to make clear regarding performance indicators are that they generally direct action, therefore what gets measured gets done. The need to ‘measure what matters’ is also highlighted in the literature, otherwise service delivery may focus on activities that lead to results that are less meaningful in terms of the development of a service, as they are not asking the right questions. In other words, the nature of the service indicators developed, particularly for sport, ensures that the questions being asked (service indicators) are about services that are actually being provided and not about what needs to be provided. It is more likely that the responses will be intangible or provide positive responses, therefore failing to highlight other important issues of what needs to be done.

Performance indicators seek to provide a balanced view of overall service performance over a period of time. They aim to identify best practice and encourage local authorities to improve their own performance levels through the services they provide, highlighting efficient service delivery and customer satisfaction results as
important aspects to improve and maintain (Boyle, 2013). Twenty-one service indicators were introduced to Irish Local Authorities in 2000 and were expanded to forty-two in 2004 (Local Government Management Services Board, 2011). This gives government officials quantifiable indicators relating to the performance of each local authority in various areas of service delivery and hence provides the opportunity to judge the relative success of each local authority.

Traditionally, the only performance/service indicators used for Irish local authority recreation and amenity service delivery consisted of;

- Recreational Services – Playground Provision
- Swimming Pools

(The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2004; Sugrue 2004; LGMA, 2007).

This led to gaps in tracking commitment, as local authorities have always been involved with providing more than parks and swimming pools in each jurisdiction (Sugrue, 2004).

There has since been a shift in language in terms of service indicators and monitoring, tracking and evaluation in the recreational context in Ireland. This came about between the 2007 and 2008 service indicator reports. Since then the following indicators apply:

- Number of children's playgrounds per 1000 population provided directly by local authorities,
- Number of children's playgrounds per 1000 population facilitated by local authorities and,
- Number of visitors to local authority-facilitated leisure facilities per 1000.

(LGMA, 2015)
It is clear from the language shift that local governments in Ireland recognise that they provide more than just swimming pools and playgrounds and by changing to language to ‘leisure facilities’ they are covering this. What is also clear from the change in language and subsequent change in service indicators is that pre-2008, it was solely focused on the facilities and amenities that the local authorities directly provided in comparison to the ‘new’ language which uses the word ‘facilitates’. This highlights how local authorities are recognising the shift from directly providing sport and physical activity amenities, to providing them via other approaches, e.g. partnership and enabling. Facilities are all-encompassing, so again this language covers all forms of leisure facility provision.

Auditing service provision of local authorities is a difficult task, which in turn can impact the identification of service gaps. The results of performance indicators are compiled by the Local Government Management Service Board and the Local Government Computer Services Board, audited by an Independent Assessment and presented to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government annually (Local Government Management Services Board, 2011).

It is evident that the Irish Government is attempting to put in place processes to monitor, track and evaluate some areas of sport and physical activity service delivery impacts. The Irish Sports Monitor is a unit within the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and is commissioned by the Irish Sports Council to undertake research annually to measure adult participation in sport and physical activity (Irish Sports Council, 2013). With this being the only systematic process of monitoring participation on a countrywide scale, it becomes increasingly difficult to quantify any positive results of any commitment to sport, physical activity and recreation in the local authority context. It also highlights and supports broader ideologies of how local authorities and the Irish Government presume that through providing resources for sport, physical activity and recreation, positive contributions to society will be made regardless of processes of evaluation. This is out-dated practice and in order to maximise the quality
of life of all citizens in Ireland, all commitment must be strategically planned and the benefits of this can only be maximised if there is a framework for monitoring, tracking and evaluation (Coalter, 2007; Bloyce and Smith, 2009).

An example of a potential driver of change to the process of monitoring and evaluation is the Social Return on Investment (King 2013; World Press, 2015). This approach provides social value creators, evaluators and investors, with the language and tools to express social return on investment. SROI Canada builds a broad-based understanding of how social value is created and provides opportunities for every level of practitioner to build their own skill in relation to SROI (World Press, 2015).

The SROI is a framework for measuring and accounting for this much broader concept of value; it seeks to reduce inequality and environmental degradation and improve wellbeing by incorporating social, environmental and economic costs and benefits similar to those researched in this piece of work (Nicholls et al. 2009). Nicholls et al. (2009, p.8) writes,

"SROI measures change in ways that are relevant to the people or organisations that experience or contribute to it. It tells the story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them. This enables a ratio of benefits to costs to be calculated. For example, a ratio of 3:1 indicates that an investment of £1 delivers £3 of social value."

SROI is about value, rather than money. Money is simply a common unit and as such is a useful and widely accepted way of conveying value (Nicholls et al, 2009). As this research aims to measure the impact and value of local authority commitment to sport and physical activity on various dimensions of citizens’ lives, this framework presents philosophical and procedural options to be considered by the Irish government and local authorities to better quantify the value of what they do.

2.5 WIDER SOCIAL ROLE OF SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION
The historical link between sport and wider social developments is relatively short (Crompton et al, 1996, cited in Collins et al, 1999). Prior to the 1960’s and 1970’s, there was little, if any, systematic central government interest in sport (Coalter, 2007, p.18, Duffy 1996). This was due to a lack of evidence of a credible direct link between sports and social benefits, although now, it is a lot more widely recognised. The claimed potential benefits of participation in sport by key writers are summarised as:

- Physical fitness and improved health (Svoboda, 1994),
- Improved mental health and physical well-being, leading to the reduction of anxiety and stress; personality development via improved self-concept (Keller et al., 1998),
- Physical and global self-esteem/confidence, self-confidence and increased locus of control (Wankel and Sefton, 1994),
- Socio-psychological benefits such as empathy, integrity, tolerance, cooperation, trustworthiness and the development of social skills (Reid et al., 1994)
- Broader sociological impacts such as increased community identity, social coherence and integration, collectively referred to as social capital (Collins et al., 1999; Coalter et al., 2000).

2.5.1 Social Benefits

Putnam (2000) also suggests that sport is often pointed to in international research as a key generator of social capital. The Irish Government Reform Act 2014 is increasingly concerned with addressing issues such as community cohesion, social inclusion and active citizenship, or, in more general terms, social capital. The communities that are rich in social capital are defined by Putnam (2000) as those that have:

- Strong community networks/civic infrastructure;
- Widespread involvement in the organisational life of the community;
- A sense of local identity, solidarity and equality; and
- High levels of interpersonal trust and reciprocal support.
According to Putnam (2000) there is a strong link between volunteering in society and social capital, therefore sport is a great platform to achieve this. According to The National Economic and Social Forum’s report, ‘The Policy Implications of Social Capital’ (2003), volunteering for sport is the main form of volunteering in Ireland. This is further evidence of sports’ potential to impact social capital and its capacity to support social development. According to survey data collected for the report, 13.5% of adults in Ireland in 1999-2000 volunteered for sport and recreation, compared to 7.7% who volunteered for the next largest category of activity (that associated with religion and church bodies) (NESF, 2003). Delaney and Fahey (2005, pg.2) also found that sport was “particularly important as a cause of volunteering”.

Community regeneration, which is about improving the social, economic and environmental aspects of an area, can also be significantly impacted upon by sport and physical activity commitment (The Scottish Government, 2010). The problems faced by people and their communities are multi-dimensional. The solutions to these problems are not, therefore, to be found in fragmented and bureaucratically defined approaches. A holistic approach is required which challenges old ways of working and cuts across departmental and organisational boundaries. Sport has often led the way in promoting ‘joined-up’ ways of working. Local authorities in particular have been at the vanguard of many of these developments and have a pivotal role to play (Sport England, 1999).

Sport has also been often seen as an important tool for improving levels of anti-social behaviour and criminal activity among young people which are a major problem for society as a whole, and particularly so for people living in poorer neighbourhoods. An example of this according to the Federation of Irish Sport (2015) is, that “Garda calls out dropped by approximately 49% in Finglas & Ballymun during the 6 weeks of the FAI’s midnight leagues”, a direct result of investment in sporting initiatives. The causes of crime and disaffection among young people are complex and multi-dimensional. It would be naive to think, and unrealistic to claim, that sport alone can reduce the levels of youth crime in society. However, according to Sport England (1999), over the last 15
years or so, ‘sports, outdoor pursuits and constructive leisure activities have become a well-established feature of initiatives whose aim is to divert offenders and young people at risk away from crime’. Research evidence to support the effectiveness of sport in reducing criminality among young people is limited by a lack of high-quality systematic evaluation. However, strong experiential evidence exists to show that sport has a part to play in preventing crime.

2.5.2 Economic Benefits

The economic value of sport is also attracting growing attention (Delaney and Fahey 2005; Irish Sports Council 2010; Federation of Irish Sport, 2015)

According to the Federation of Irish Sport,

- Government gets a return of €149 for every €100 invested in sport
- Sport sector supports 40,000 jobs
- Sport contributes 1.4% of GDP
- Sport generates €2.4 billion of household spending

(The Federation of Irish Sport, 2015)

There are a number of other important wider socio-economic benefits arising from participation in sport and sport-related volunteering as the study (an) ‘Assessment of Economic Impact of Sport in Ireland’ highlights:

- ‘The benefits for well-being through participation in sport;
- The particular benefits for health through increased physical activity;
- Through sustaining a healthier population, sport reduces the costs of the health service;
- Increased productivity with associated economic benefits;
- Community benefits, including the contribution to social capital and social cohesion arising from participation and volunteering more generally;
- The wider impacts on the Irish population arising from investment in success of elite sport, incentivising further participatory and community-related benefits; and
- The financial benefits for the Exchequer through increased economic activity and reduced health service costs’

(Irish Sports Council, 2010 pg.46)
The economic role of sport and physical activity is now widely recognised. At the international level, for example, Olympic competitions would not be possible without the sponsorship of big corporations; “Perhaps the single best illustration is corporate America’s partnership with the city of Atlanta in the 1996 Olympic Games” (Bryant and McElroy, 1997, p.5). Private business regularly assists in financing sporting events, whether they are locally or nationally e.g. building sports stadiums, underwriting youth competitions, and more (Volkwein-Caplan, 2004, p.16).

It is also said that sport has a role in increasing economic activity — it can be an asset in attracting foreign tourists, inward investment and business investment and it can in itself provide significant employment as a growing service activity (O’Connor, 2009). The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (2013) describes how sport and recreation have other benefits for the nation, both economic in terms of sports tourism, employment opportunities through growth in the sector; and socially in terms of better physical and mental health and wellbeing. Sport can be instrumental and act as an alternative diversion for young people at risk of engaging in anti-social activity, drug abuse or other criminal activity (Collins, 2003; Government of Ireland, 2007).

In addition to the economic regeneration benefits that flow from commitment and investment in sport, substantial financial savings can be made in a country’s economy from the health gains associated with the increased levels of physical activity throughout the population (Sport England, 1999; European Council, 2001).

Coinciding with economic benefits, regeneration and inward investment, sport can also have a significant impact on employment and this is no more evident than in Ireland (Irish Sports Council, 2010). This is in itself a wider societal impact of sport, but also links with the financial benefits of sport. The employment contribution of sport and sport-related activities is calculated on the basis of wage payments and average wages/salaries by sector (Irish Sports Council, 2010).

According to the Irish Sports Council (2010), sport and sport-related activities support employment in the Irish economy of 38,225 persons as of 2008. Of the total employed
through various branches of sport, 6,100 of these are employed through the
Government sector both centrally and locally supported sports related full-time jobs.
This statistic is the equivalent to two per cent of the total Irish employment (Irish
Sports Council, 2010). These statistics further highlight the power of sport and the size
of the sport sector in Ireland, particularly for employment and also the value of
Government employment of sport-specific employees.

These statistics highlight the enormity of the sport sector for employment in Ireland.
Continuing the commitment to sport will sustain this and further highlights the
importance of sport in Ireland.

Although a substantial amount of research has been carried out on sports programmes
and their effects on wider society, there is little evidence to prove that sport is the
answer. There are many reasons for sport to be considered negative. In Northern
Ireland and Glasgow, an example of this is the riots and sectarianism created by
football matches between Glentoran, Cliftonville, Crusaders and Linfield Football Clubs
and Glasgow Rangers and Celtic Football Clubs respectively. These are due to local
rivalry, which is sometimes perpetuated by religious conflict (Hughes, 1997). A larger
scale example is the Hillsborough disaster (1989) where ninety-six Liverpool Football
fans were killed and seven hundred and sixty-six injured as a result of crushing in the
stadium. The amount of money sport-related injuries cost the Australian community in
2005 was two billion dollars (Victoria State Government, 2013). Taking these incidents
and repercussions into account, a case can be made that sport and physical activity
may not produce the benefits most Governments desire.

Sport, like so much else in life, is neither good nor bad in itself but as human beings we
can use it for good or bad purposes (Ilmarinen, 2012). We hold no magic wand to turn
it into a panacea for peace and understanding but what we can do is use sport for
social good through the way in which it is delivered. As previously mentioned, sport
has this unique capability for having a positive social impact but realising this capability
is the difficult part, particularly for local authorities. Therefore having the most
appropriate ethos for the delivery of sport, or sports development as a whole is one which emphasises a partnership-based approach for local authorities (Houlihan and White, 2002; Bloyce et al., 2008; Houlihan and Lindsey, 2015). Houlihan and Lindsey (2012, pg. 150) highlight the success of a partnership approach as by stating that “the strong collaborative ethos amongst local agencies was reinforced by the achievement of valued outcomes”.

2.5.3 Health Benefits of Sport, Physical Activity and Exercise

Improving the health of individuals and communities is a priority for the Government (Irish Government, 2001; Department of Health, 2014). Considerable emphasis is being put on health promotion and disease prevention in addition to modernising and increasing the capacity of health care provision (Department of Health, 2014).

Participation in sport and an active lifestyle have long been associated with benefits to health. This relationship seems obvious and is now backed by a strong body of research evidence (WHO, 2013b; WHO, 2014). Recent evidence suggests that it is not only vigorous physical activity that leads to significant health gains but that moderate levels can contribute e.g. cycling and brisk walking (WHO, 2004; Sport Scotland, 2005; WHO, 2014). Moderate training of an endurance nature and other exercise activities, not only have a preventive effect on various illnesses and pre-illness states such as the metabolic syndrome and cancer, but are also effective in treating patients in the rehabilitation phase after illness, e.g. cardiovascular or cancer (Jennen and Uhlenbruck, 2004).

What often underpins government commitment of resources to sport, physical activity and recreation is the beneficial impact they may have on a nation’s health. Being physically active is seen by many as key to a healthier and more enjoyable life in people of all social backgrounds and ages (European Food Information Council (EUFIC), 1998; American Heart Association, 2014). In the UK, The Health Education Authority, as part of its ‘Active for Life’ campaign, now recommends 30 minutes of moderate-
intensity activity on at least five days a week, or 150 minutes over the course of the week, as sufficient to confer significant health benefits and considers this an appropriate message to encourage the majority of the population to be active (Sport England, 1999; DTTAS, 2008; NHS, 2013b). According to the Federation of Irish Sport, "sport changes lives" and;

- 'Physical inactivity is responsible for 6% of deaths globally,
- UK research indicates that 11% of their health spend each year is due to physical inactivity,
- €1.6billion is the estimated cost of physical inactivity in Ireland,
- Australia estimates that for every 1% of the population that becomes active, 122 deaths from heart disease, non-insulin dependent diabetes and colon cancer could be eradicated'.

(Federation of Irish Sport, 2014)

In Ireland, the basic rationale underpinning Government commitment and support to sport, physical activity and recreation is the significant health benefits conferred on those who participate in it, as well as social benefits for the wider community. The Government of Ireland (2007, p. 222) writes,

"Participation in sport, whether at the level of competitive sport, recreational sport or active leisure activity, can yield physical and psychological well-being as well as fostering social development, both in terms of the individual and the community. Participation in sport also teaches discipline and team activity generates positive inter-personal skill."

It is also well documented in international academic literature that people who play sport are healthier and enjoy reduced risk of various serious diseases. According to the Irish Sports Council (2010, p.35) among the health benefits of sport for which there is an abundance of evidence are:

- "Halves the risk of getting type 2 diabetes and helps to control diabetes and prevent long-term complications for those who already have the condition;
- Reduce high blood pressure, stroke and heart attack;
- Beneficial effects for those with arthritis and lower back pain;
- Reduces the overall risk of cancer, prevents bowel cancer and reduces the risk of breast cancer in women after the menopause;"
The effect of exercise on the pathologies listed above is supported by a range of other authors (Fox and Riddock, 2000; CDC, 2006; WHO, 2004).

The Irish Sports Council (2010) acknowledged the positive health benefits of regular physical activity and the evidence to support this assertion is widespread (WHO 1997; National Health Service, 2014; American Heart Association, 2013 Saxton and Daley 2010; National Institute of Ageing, 2011; Royal College of Physicians, 2012), which are, it

• "Helps to maintain a healthy weight in combination with a balanced diet;
• Helps to promote healthy growth and development in children, as well as maintaining their energy balance, psychological well-being and social interaction;
• Strengthens immune system and improve sleep; and
• Promotes better mental health, reducing stress, treating and reducing depression."

(Irish Sports Council 2010 p.35)

The World Health Organisation (1997) actively promotes health, wellbeing and physical activity amongst the full diversity of society. The WHO (1997) suggests physical activity is an essential component of everyday life and appears to be the single, most effective means whereby individuals can influence health and functional ability, including those with disabilities. Thus being physically active is important to all individuals across the life stages.

2.6 INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS OF SPORT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND RECREATION

The following section will now provide an outline of the literature surrounding the various perceived benefits of sport and physical.

2.6.1 Life satisfaction

According to Neugarten (1996, pg. 296), the definition of life satisfaction is "an individual's evaluation of his/her present or past life, his/her satisfaction or his/her happiness". The measurement of life satisfaction involves an attempt to understand
the processes by which an individual views his/her past, as well as feelings about present lifestyle and future expectations (McConatha and McConatha, 1989 cited in Volkwein-Caplan, 2004).

Along with the various other benefits perceived to accompany the development of physical activity opportunities, is the belief that with an active lifestyle comes an improved individual satisfaction with life. Exercise, especially, has a significant influence on life satisfaction as a feeling of physical fitness is regarded as synonymous with good health (Jennen and Uhlenbruck, 2004).

According to a study by Zullig and White (2010), participation in vigorous activity had no effect on either life satisfaction or self-rated health of middle school boys. However, girls who had taken part in vigorous activity in the last week were significantly more satisfied with their life compared to girls who had not, but participation in vigorous activity had no effect on their self-rated health. Playing in a sports team was also linked to higher life satisfaction in both boys and girls. In addition, boys were five times more likely, and girls 30 times more likely, to describe their health as fair/poor when they were not playing on a sports team. Zulling and White (2010, pg. 28) conclude,

"Our study demonstrates the benefits of youth sports participation on self-rated health and life satisfaction among youth at a critical juncture in adolescent development. Our findings suggest that sports team participation may enhance school connectedness, social support and bonding among friends and teammates."

Not only has research shown that being involved in physical activity and sport is beneficial for the life satisfaction of children, but evidence also suggests improved levels of life satisfaction in adults and older adults when they participate in sport. Figure 2.1 reports the findings of Jennen and Uhlenbruck (2004) who carried out an investigation of thirteen thousand people on the basis of socio-economic panel polls with respect to life contentment, health status and leisure-time activities. Figure 2.1 shows the relationship between the frequency of exercise activity and life satisfaction. Life satisfaction reaches the highest level for those performing exercise and sport
activities on a daily basis. Life satisfaction is diminished when people are not as physically active.

[Image of a bar chart showing frequency of sports activity and life satisfaction]

Figure 2.1: Frequency of Sports Activity versus Life Satisfaction (Jennen and Uhlenbruck, 2004)

It is presumed that greater activity throughout an individual’s life and continued into later life, leads to greater satisfaction with life in later years (National Institute of Ageing, 2011). Results of a telephone survey of four hundred adults aged forty and above, demonstrated the independent contribution of leisure to life satisfaction (Kelly, 2009). Social activity and travel are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction for those aged 65-74 and family and home-based activity for those aged 75 and over. Leisure in later life is found to provide a context for interaction with significant others and for self-investment (Kelly, 2009). ‘Activity Theory’ of ageing proposes that the more active persons are in their later years the greater will be their satisfaction with life and their ability to cope with problems (Hendricks and Hendricks, 1981; Longino and Kart, 1982). “Activity” has been defined as engagement in regular or patterned action with others, other than routine maintenance (Lemon, Bengston, and Peterson, 1972). Initial literature reviews reported a positive relationship between such activity and subjective well-being, improved life satisfaction (Adams, 1971; Kelly, 2009).
As a result of several pieces of existing research, there is evidence to support the hypothesis that sport, physical activity and recreation may play a pivotal role in the betterment of life satisfaction through all ages. This evidence highlights the importance of committing support and resources to sport and active recreation as it suggests that citizens in receipt of this support will reap the benefits.

2.6.2 Quality of Life

It is valuable at this stage to supply the reader with a definition of what the researcher means by quality of life, as well as providing an overview of literature in the area of sport, physical activity and recreation and its link with impacting people's quality of life.

Considerable agreement exists that quality of life is multidimensional. Coverage may be categorised within five dimensions: physical wellbeing, material wellbeing, social wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, and development and activity (Felce and Perry, 1995). Earnest (2013) emphasizes that quality of life includes the physical, emotional and social aspects of well-being, such as, physical functioning versus role limitation attributable to physical or emotional problems, bodily pain and energy level. Quality of life, as Hörnquist (1990, pg. 69) explains,

"...covers life as a whole as well as different subdomains of life. Life quality is defined as perceived global satisfaction and satisfaction within a number of key domains with special emphasis on well-being."

As we can gather from the definitions provided, quality of life is a broad indicator of all aspects of an individual's life.

As mentioned earlier in this review of literature, it is evident from existing literature that the Irish Government, and more specifically local authorities, has a specific desire to enhance Irish citizen's quality of life (Smith, 1997; Government of Ireland, 2007; Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012). Through a number of policies, strategies and plans the Irish Government aims to use sport and
physical activity to contribute to the improvement of the Irish citizens' quality of life (Government of Ireland, 2007).

Physical activity helps to improve one's quality of life, as well as contributing to the delaying or prevention of various chronic illnesses and diseases linked to aging, whilst maintaining quality of life and independence longer in older adults (American Heart Association, 2013). A study by researchers at the University of Bath has found that moderate exercise can help to improve the quality of life for people with Type 2 diabetes.


"A moderately intensive exercise programme consistent with public health recommendations in sedentary individuals with diabetes is likely to result in improved quality of life and they further recommend that exercise interventions should be advocated further as a standard care for individuals with diabetes."

In the USA, it is reported that those who exercise acquire improvements in all areas of quality of life: agility, energy, overall health, mental health, emotional well-being and functioning in social situations (Hellmich, 2010). Similar to government visions and planning in Ireland, quality of life is a central issue in modern aging in the USA. It's no longer about how long you live; it's how long you live well.

Quality of life is also seen to be associated with body mass index (BMI) (Won Dong et al., 2005). According to Won Dong et al. (2005), in a Korean study, they state that obesity-related quality of life decreased as BMI increased. Persons who had a self-body image of being fat had a low quality of life. For Korean adults over 20 and under 65, a higher BMI is associated with a lower obesity-related quality of life.

As well as the healthy population, people with existing illnesses and diagnoses can benefit from physical activity in terms of quality of life. With millions of people worldwide and thousands in Ireland having experiences with various cancers, whether being diagnosed or knowing someone who has, it is now recognised as being vitally important to develop interventions to maintain quality of life following a diagnosis.
Studies have consistently demonstrated that physical exercise has a positive effect on quality of life following cancer diagnosis, including physical and functional well-being (e.g. functional capacity, muscular strength, body composition, nausea, fatigue) and psychological and emotional well-being e.g. personality functioning, mood states, self-esteem, and quality of life (Courneya and Friedenreich, 1999).

Research into the impact of sports participation on people with disabilities has indicated that as well as those with separate diagnosed diseases, individuals with physical disabilities who participated in adapted sports had significantly higher quality of life and life satisfaction scores, compared with individuals with physical disabilities not involved in adapted sports, according to study results published in Disability and Health Journal (2012).

"Participation in adapted sports by people with physical disabilities facilitates establishment of social contact and psychological health, and helps individuals with a disability focus on their abilities rather than their disabilities."

(Murphy, 2012, pg.1)

2.6.3 Social and Neighbourhood Cohesion

Social cohesion refers to the bonds that bring society together; it is based on material conditions such as employment, income, health, education and housing, which facilitate good relations between and within communities (Cox, 2012). Social cohesion includes a shared sense of purpose/values and is about creating an environment where people not just have equity of opportunity, networks and shared social norms but they also feel valued, trusted, and connected.

Sport, physical activity and active recreation can positively contribute to many of the factors which builds social cohesion, such as better physical and mental health, high educational attainment, reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, creating better employment opportunities and earning potential, and ensuring a fit and healthy workforce (Irish Sports Council, 2005; Cox, 2012). Cox (2012, pg. 148) writes,
"It is commonly acknowledged in society that sport, physical activity and recreation can be used as a tool for social cohesion, yet social cohesion and its associated concepts are difficult to evidence in a robust way."

Sam Ramsamy (available at www.Olymic.com, 2013), a member of the executive board of the International Olympic Committee until 2014, also supports this as he writes, "Today there is no doubt that sport plays a fundamental role in the development of social cohesion."

Much of the work in this area is theoretical and while the research is empirical, it's usually difficult to fully understand causality and the relationships evidenced, although research is suggestive of a range of mechanisms through which sport and recreation can have a positive impact on enhancing social cohesion. What is easier to demonstrate is that sport and recreation positively contribute to many of the factors that build social cohesion, such as better physical and mental health, high educational attainment, reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, creating better employment opportunities and earning potential, and ensuring a fit and healthy workforce, much of which are supported by evidence throughout this chapter.

It is also worth highlighting that competitive sport in particular can enhance and reflect the divisions that exist in our society. As much as sport can have a positive impact on social cohesion, it can also be detrimental and cause negativity.

Sport can also just reflect society's differences and divisions too. All of our inequalities are reflected on the sports field and sports activities can be divided in failing to grasp the opportunity to build bridges between communities (Coventry University, 2015).

Within theoretical and policy debates concerning social cohesion, the neighbourhood has re-emerged as an important setting for many of the processes which supposedly shape social identity and life-chances (Forrest and Kearns, 2001).
Linked closely to social cohesion is neighbourhood cohesion which is a more about a smaller more focused population in various neighbourhoods within a town. Similarly to social cohesion, neighbourhood cohesion is very much about the education, housing, health and relations within a neighbourhood (Sampson, 2002). A neighbourhood can also be recognised as a community within a larger community.

Just as sport can impact social cohesion it can have the same influence on smaller communities, “sport can unite communities – and the country as a whole - in common cause” (Institute of Community Cohesion, 2007, p. 1). As previously highlighted, sport can provide the platform for the development of health, education, and social skills which can improve neighbourhood cohesion within a town. There are limitations on how far sport can go, for example, sport won’t have a profound impact on the standard of accommodation or housing in a neighbourhood but through the investment in sporting infrastructure (facilities, programmes and personnel), it may make a neighbourhood a more attractive place to live (Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) (2013).

The reach of sport and the potential it has to improve the cohesiveness amongst greater societies and smaller neighbourhoods is there to be seen. Although historically the robustness of the evidence may be questioned, many writers in this area and in sport firmly stand by this. This research will work to support or disprove these beliefs amongst neighbourhoods in Ireland.

2.6.4 Social Inclusion

As the researcher sets out to establish the impact of local authority commitment to sport and physical activity on individual and collective dimensions of community life, research and academic information surrounding sport and its link to social inclusion will be outlined.
The European Union (2010, pg. 3) sees social inclusion as a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. Social inclusion also ensures that vulnerable groups and persons have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and that they can access their fundamental rights.

The European Commission (2010) believes that sport has major potential as a tool for promoting social inclusion and social cohesion in European societies, as it provides citizens with opportunities to create social networks and interact with others. It can help immigrants and ethnic minorities to develop relations with other members of the society and constitutes a tool for reaching out to the underprivileged, disadvantaged or groups at risk of or facing discrimination. The European Union executive also notes that through its contribution to economic growth and job creation, sport can also help to revitalise disadvantaged areas (Council of Europe, 2010).

There is international emphasis on and enthusiasm for the idea that sport can contribute to social inclusion strategies. Sport now features in various targeted initiatives, including ‘Positive Futures’: a ‘sport and activity based social inclusion programme’ currently operating in England and Wales. The processes through which these ‘sports-based interventions’ might promote ‘social inclusion’ require, further investigation as clear evidence does not currently exist in a strong capacity (Kelly, 2011).

Sport has often been utilised as a practical tool to engage various people in their communities through volunteering, resulting in higher levels of leadership, community engagement and altruism among young people (Sport and Development, 2014). Positive peer relationships between young people are encouraged through physical activity and coaching is considered a key aspect of how physical activity can contribute to social inclusion among young people (Sport and Development, 2014). According to The Scottish Government (2010) sport can also help to foster a sense of belonging, build self-esteem and confidence, bring people together, reduce crime, create routes into jobs and improve health and fitness.
Inclusion is a term used by people with disabilities and other disability rights advocates for the idea that all organisations should freely, openly and without pity accommodate any person with a disability without restrictions or limitations of any kind (Downs and Black, 2012). This idea of inclusion has been on the agenda of international governments since the publication of the 2006 UN Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities – a convention still to be ratified by the Irish government. Article 30 of this agreement articulates the right of people with disabilities to ‘participate in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport’.

The aims of sport, physical activity and recreation for individuals with a disability are and should be no different to those of any other person. Everyone is entitled to a broad, balanced, progressive, differentiated and relevant programme of physical activities. In most cases, some will have greater difficulties than others in terms of active participation, therefore it is important that provision be made for their inclusion alongside their non-disabled peers (Vickerman, 2007). It is also imperative that, should it be necessary for an activity or equipment to be modified or substituted, it maintains its integrity and in no way is presented as a tokenistic gesture (Vickerman, 2007). Individuals with a disability by their very nature possess a wide range of personal and specific needs, which have enormous complexity and diversity. To offer a comprehensive physical activity programme that caters for such diversity may present considerable challenges for sports professionals. However, the skills that are learned and experienced by disabled individuals will support them and carry them forward throughout their life (Kasser and Lytle 2005) whilst assisting them towards active and worthwhile roles within society (Vickerman, 2007).

The growing awareness of Irish policy makers of the need to target the inclusion of people with disabilities is evidenced by the employment of Sports Inclusion Disability Officers (SIDOs) by many local sports partnerships as well as the establishment of the National Centre for Adapted Physical Activity (CARA Centre) in the Institute of Technology, Tralee (ITT) in 2007 (Irish Sports Council, 2015).
2.6.5 Perception of Town

Another dimension of community life focused on through this study is the perception of towns. The researcher will now highlight the literature surrounding the impact of positive perception of towns by citizens.

Perception by definition is "a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem" (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2016).

It has been identified that perceptions by citizens can be improved by better provision of sport and physical activity opportunities, as highlighted by the Town and County Planning Association (2013, pg. 3), who write, "In recent years culture, arts and sport have been widely used to drive regeneration, build cohesive communities and change the way that places are perceived".

This positive perception can be achieved through better walking and cycling provision as well as the provision of community facilities (Department of Environment, Health and Local Government, 2013).

Research indicates that the positive impacts of this sport and physical activity provision in towns as identified by De Bourdeaudhuij et al. (2015) include;

- Increased physical activity levels
- Increased employment levels
- Increased property value
- Better feeling of safety

2.7 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this review of literature has provided an extensive insight in to the available literature for the field of study. This chapter was written in a sequential manner based on the objectives of the research.
The literature has identified that local authorities, governed by the Department of Environment, have a long history of involvement in the delivery of sport and physical activity provision. This has predominantly been facility and amenity focused.

In Ireland local authorities have a very wide remit which includes engineering, community relations and enterprise development (Department of Environment, 2007). It is clear that sport and physical activity, although on the agenda for local authorities, is not a priority area in comparison to the likes of engineering and enterprise development.

It was also identified throughout this chapter that sport is a cross cutting social policy (Hylton and Bramham, 2007), and covers health (physical and mental), community, youth development, and community safety.

The author highlighted how sport and physical activity may deliver desirable social outcomes; many of which are linked to local authority corporate objectives (Sugrue, 2004). It was highlighted how sport and physical activity can provide benefits at the level of the individual citizen e.g. quality of life.

Also discussed was the growing emphasis on accountability for the use of public funding so monitoring, tracking and evaluation has been identified as being a significant future challenge for local authority providers.

The next chapter will outline the research approach undertaken to address the aim and objectives of the study.
3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will describe the methodology applied to achieve the research objectives set out in chapter one. The chapter will begin by restating the aim and objectives of the research and detailing the methods deployed to achieve each objective. The author will then provide an outline of the approaches and instruments used to collate the data for this research, while providing justifications for these choices. The final section of this chapter will describe how the data generated in the conducting of this research were analysed, before a brief conclusion completes this chapter.

3.1.1 Restatement of Aim and Objectives

The key aim of this research was to determine if commitment to sport and physical activity by local authorities (town/borough councils), in terms of facilities, programmes and personnel, has an impact on citizen life satisfaction, quality of life, neighbourhood cohesion and physical activity patterns.

Table 3.1, below, provides detailed information on the objectives of this research linked to the methods used in order to achieve each objective.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Methods (Refer to Appendices)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Quantify the commitment of Local Authorities regarding sport, physical activity and active recreation in terms of personnel, facilities and programme delivery. | - Local Authority Survey  
- Local Authority Interview  
- Review of Literature (Local authority policy documents) |
| 2. Identify the catalysts and barriers for commitment to sport and physical activity by Local Authorities. | - Review of Literature (Nation and international practice)  
- Local Authority Interview  
- Local Authority Town Development Plans |
| 3. Conduct an analysis of the impact of Local Authority commitment to sport and physical activity on individual and collective dimensions of community life. | - Citizen Survey  
- Local Authority Survey |
| 4. Examine Local Authority monitoring and evaluation practices for sport and physical activity provision. | - Local Authority Survey  
- Local Authority Interview |
| 5. Identify guiding principles for impactful local sports development by Local Authorities. | - Review of Literature  
- Local Authority Survey  
- Local Authority Interview |
3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS UTILISED

The purpose of this section is to describe the research approach and data collection methods used in the conducting of this research. This following illustration (figure 3.1) provides an overview of the research approach and data collection procedures used in the conduct of this research.

Figure 3.1 Overview of Data Collection Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review of Academic Literature Sep '12 - May '14</th>
<th>Highlight key themes and issues relevant to topic of research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examine status afforded to sport and physical activity in Local Authority Policy Documents Sep '12 - May '14</td>
<td>Analysis of Central Government Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compilation, Distribution and Analysis of Local Authority Survey June '13 - March '14</td>
<td>The Provision of Sporting Facilities, Programmes and/or Sport Specific Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compilation, Distribution and Analysis of Citizen Survey July '13 - March '14</td>
<td>Physical Activity Patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design, Carry-Out and Analysis of Local Authority Interview (subset of local authority survey) March '14</td>
<td>The Strengths of Local Authority Provision of Sport and Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Insights of Good Practice in Relation to the Delivery of Sport and Recreation in Irish Local Authorities Sep '12 - May '16</td>
<td>Highlight the Best Approaches and Methods of Good Practice for Local Sports Development based on literature review and the outcomes of the quantitative and qualitative research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary Sources

Primary Sources
As depicted in the illustration above the author used a mixed methods research approach and thus integrated qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and analysis approaches (Creswell et al., 2003).

Qualitative research and quantitative research can be distinguished in several ways. First, whereas quantitative research counts occurrences (e.g. estimates prevalence, frequency, magnitude, incidence), qualitative research describes the complexity, breadth, or range of occurrences or phenomena. Second, whereas quantitative research seeks to statistically test hypotheses, qualitative research seeks to generate explanations about a phenomenon, its precursors, and its consequences (Curry et al., 2009). Thirdly, quantitative research is performed in randomized or nonrandomized experimental and natural settings and generates numeric data through standardized processes and instruments with predetermined response categories (Williams, 2007). Qualitative research occurs in natural (rather than experimental) settings and produces text-based data, through open-ended discussions and observations.

Each method of research has its own benefits, as well as limitations, as the author will touch upon further on in this chapter. The limitations of each can be countered by using a mixed method approach (Northwest Nazarene University, 2016).

Mixed methods are increasingly recognized as valuable, because they can capitalize on the respective strengths of each approach (Creswell, 2003). Pairing quantitative and qualitative components of a larger study can achieve various aims, including corroborating findings, generating more complete data and using results from one method to enhance insights attained with the complementary method (Wisdom and Creswell, 2013). Approaches to mixed-methods studies differ on the basis of the sequence in which the components occur and the emphasis given to each (Creswell and Clark, 2007). The qualitative and quantitative components may be performed concurrently or sequentially, and emphasis may be placed on either component or equal weight given to both. For instance, a preliminary quantitative component may
serve to generate hypotheses or to develop the content for a questionnaire to be used in a follow-up qualitative study. From the perspective of this research study the use of a mixed methods approach helped to validate conclusions drawn from each research method. The following two sections will provide an overview of each approach, both quantitative and qualitative.

3.2.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research uses data that is expressed in numerical form through numbers, calculations, tables, or percentages i.e. involving measurable quantities, numbers. Gratton and Jones (2004, p.21) write, "The use of numerical measurement and analysis is referred to as a quantitative approach, that is research that involves measurable 'quantities'." Gratton and Jones (2004, p.21) include an example of when to use quantitative methods which are relevant to this research,

"...you may be interested in the relationship between economic investment in sport and subsequent success. This (quantitative research) would give you a set of numerical data, which could then be statistically analysed to determine whether a relationship exists between the two."

All quantitative research aims to quantify a result. Surveys and statistical questionnaires can be created to produce a quantifiable result.

The quantitative research instruments used for this study consist of:

- A local authority survey i.e. completed by a staff member with responsibility for sport and physical activity provision.
- A citizen survey which was completed by a sample group from each of the local authority areas.

Each survey contains a substantial amount of questions on a number of different key areas. Each response to the questions carries a score which will make the quantification of the results easier for the researcher and enhance the reliability.
Depending on the type of research being carried out, quantitative research provides advantages such as numerical reliability. The evidence can be considered ‘hard evidence’ and is harder to misinterpret. Figures and numbers can also be easily transferred to tables and chart for data to be easily presented. Working with surveys with numerical scales provides a researcher with a more simple way of extracting results and presenting them concisely. Other advantages include; precision - through quantitative and reliable measurement, control - through sampling and design, ability to produce causality statements, through the use of controlled experiments and, the research is replicable (Burns, 2000).

In addition the United States Institute of Peace identified the following advantages of qualitative research

- “It can be used when large quantities of data need to be collected.
- The result is usually numerical (quantifiable) and hence considered more “objective”.
- The data is considered quantifiable and usually generalizable to a larger population.
- It can allow SFCG to see changes over time and help develop quantitative indicators.
- It can provide a clear, quantitative measure to be used for grants and proposals.”

(United State Institute of Peace, 2014, p. 4)

While there are distinct advantages to utilising a quantitative research approach, limitations of the approach are also evident. Burnes (2000) has argued that quantitative research has a mechanistic ethos that tends to exclude notions of freedom, choice and moral responsibility; quantification can become an end in itself. It fails to take account of people’s unique ability to interpret their experiences, construct their own meanings and act on these. It leads to the assumption that facts are true and the same for all people all of the time. Quantitative research often produces banal and trivial findings, of little consequence, due to the restriction on and the controlling of variables. In addition, quantitative research is not totally objective because the researcher is subjectively involved in the very choice of a problem as worthy of investigation and in the interpretation of the results (Sukamolson, 2013).
To overcome these potential shortcomings, this research process utilized qualitative approaches to offer more depth of perspective and to validate the quantitative findings.

3.2.2 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is as Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.10) write,

"...any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations."

Qualitative research distinguishes itself from quantitative research in that it does not rest any of its evidence on the logic of mathematics, numbers or statistical analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.8) support this contrast between the two methods,

"The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity...Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructive nature of reality...In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of casual relationships between variables, not processes."

Unlike quantitative research, the issue of 'how many' is not relevant. Examples of qualitative instruments include focus groups, questionnaires and interviews. Qualitative research is a valuable tool to further explain quantitative findings (Punch, 2006). In the case of this research, qualitative research will be carried out in the form of an interview, semi-structured by nature, with a subset of the local authority personnel who respond to the survey. This will give the researcher the opportunities to probe further and discuss findings from the local authority survey. This interview research technique will be described later in this chapter.

There are various advantages to an interactive interview approach; these begin with the opportunity for the researcher to analyse a person's attitude and emotions when discussing a certain topic. This gives the researcher the perfect opportunity to observe their subject. The researcher can then gather information that is communicated verbally by the subject as well as information which could not be gathered through
quantitative methods of research such as; body language, facial expressions and voice tones. These factors quite often give a more accurate and honest account on the subject's behalf and as long as the researcher can pick up on these, the results will be much more reliable and conclusive (Brewerton and Millward, 2001). Miles and Huberman (2002) elaborate on the strengths of qualitative research, stating that it focuses on naturally occurring events, claiming that its emphasis is normally on a specific case and involves face-to-face collection of data. Furthermore, they consider the biggest advantage of qualitative research is the potential to reveal complexity, providing data containing broad descriptions that are embedded in real context and have a degree of truthfulness.

The problem of adequate validity or reliability is a major criticism of qualitative research (McRoy, 2013). Due to the subjective nature of qualitative data and its origin in single contexts, it is difficult to apply conventional standards of reliability and validity. Contexts, situations, events, conditions and interactions cannot be replicated to any extent, nor can generalisations be made to a wider context than the one studied with any confidence. The time required for data collection, analysis and interpretation is lengthy. The researcher's presence may have a profound effect on the subjects of study, as well as issues of anonymity and confidentiality arising when selecting findings (Burns, 2000).

In order to overcome the limitations of a qualitative approach, the author is combining this with a quantitative approach for validity and reliability. The researcher will use the qualitative approach as a tool to probe deeper into the answers provided in the quantitative data collection phase. The researcher is also using a semi-structured interview for qualitative data collection in order to give the subject the opportunity to feel less pressured to respond directly and in a restricted manner, on the other hand, the subject will feel at ease and respond in a manner comfortable for them.

Silverman (1997) believes interviewing is undoubtedly the most widely applied technique for conducting systematic social inquiry. This will provide the research with
information from the 'inside', regarding the planning and commitment to sport and physical activity and perceptions of sport and physical activity's impact on wider social goals. This is viewed as a key strand of this research.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

This research was carried out over the course of an eighteen month period, from September 2012 to March 2014. The researcher used a three phase approach to collecting data, as depicted in section 3.1.1, figure 3.1. The first phase of the research began with the researcher reviewing extensive amounts of literature from September 2012. This was ongoing and continued until May 2016. Throughout this phase the author read and analysed material to capture perspective themes of this study including government and local authority policy and practices.

The second phase of the research which began in June 2013 and was completed at the beginning of March 2014, consisted of the citizen and local authority surveys being completed. The citizen survey was completed by individuals living in the towns being studied and the local authority survey completed by the individual in charge of sport and recreation in the subject towns.

The final phase of data collection which was the local authority semi-structured interview was completed by all subjects in March 2014. Table 3.2 below highlights the various methods of data collection matched with the stakeholder and theme to which each method aligns.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a) Survey</td>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>- Physical Activity Patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(electronic)</td>
<td>- Active Retired</td>
<td>- Life Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- People with Disabilities</td>
<td>- Town and Town Council Perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Transition Year Students</td>
<td>- Social Cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ethnic Minorities</td>
<td>- Quality of Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b) Survey</td>
<td>Local Authority (LA) Representative</td>
<td>- Provision of Sporting Facilities, Programmes and/or Sport Specific Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(electronic)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Role Played by Local Authority; An Enabler/Partner/Direct Provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Monitoring, Tracking and Evaluation of Sporting Interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Interview (Semi-structured)</td>
<td>Local Authority Personnel (subset of survey)</td>
<td>- Local Authority Sport and Recreation Provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Monitoring and Evaluation of Sport and Physical Activity Provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Vision of the Future for Sport and Physical Activity Direction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.2 Citizen Survey

The citizen survey was designed to capture each of the subject citizen's life satisfaction, physical activity levels and patterns, quality of life, ease of access to local recreational facilities, social cohesion perceptions and their perception of their local authority and town. This survey was designed using a combination of various validated surveys depicted in the table below and took no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Table 3.3 Composition of the Citizen Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Survey</td>
<td>Life satisfaction</td>
<td>Diener's Life Satisfaction Survey (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town and borough council perception</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport and recreation facilities and amenities</td>
<td>Special Eurobarometer: Sport and Physical Activity (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Information</td>
<td>Central Statistics Office Ireland (2012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decision to use a survey to examine the various themes highlighted above was chosen based on the effectiveness of such an instrument in extracting personal data,
which provided an individual outlook and perception of each participant in respect of each theme of the survey. The survey also allowed for the collection of data from a geographically diverse and dispersed sample population, as it was not necessary for the researcher to be present at the time of completion. It was also practical for the survey to be created electronically using an online survey creator Survey Monkey which meant the survey was easily distributed electronically.

The survey was designed to be user friendly and straightforward for the participant, therefore the survey incorporated mainly closed questions, rather than open-ended questions.

The rationale for the selection of these themes was that they emerged from the literature in relation to the various areas seen to be a target for improvement through sport and physical activity (Coalter 2007). These various areas are also viewed to fall within the remit of local government in Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2001).

The survey is divided up into nine key sections. These sections are as follows;

1) The first section of questions is entitled 'Satisfaction with Life'. Informed by Deiner's (1993) 'The Satisfaction with Life Scale' (SWLS), the author has included five statements with which the participant may agree or disagree. The participant must indicate their answer by ticking the appropriate box for each statement. These statements were included to assess satisfaction with the respondent’s life as a whole (Pavot and Diener, 1993).

2) Section two of the survey is a question on 'Quality of Life'. This question is a single question to discover the overall quality of life of the participant. The participant is required to rate their response with a score that most accurately applies to them. This question was originally designed to contain a 7-point scale and was developed and used by Andrews and Withey (1976), but was later reduced to a 5-point scale by the Neighbourhood Quality of Life Study (NQLS) Group (Sallis et al., 2003).
3) The third section entitled 'Social Cohesion of Neighbourhood' was also selected from Neighbourhood Quality of Life Study, which is an observational epidemiologic study designed to compare multiple health outcomes among residents of neighbourhoods. The Social Cohesion of Neighbourhood section was taken from a study by Sampson et al. (1997) and provides the respondent with a Likert scale with five statements to which they have the option of showing the level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. The respondent provided one answer per statement and this indicates the feelings towards the social cohesion of their neighbourhood.

4) The fourth section of the citizen survey is 'Perception of Town'. This section aims to establish the personal perception of the respondent for the town in which they live. This section provides a matrix of five statements and similar to the previous section, the respondent has a number of agree/disagree statements and will choose one for each statement, one that best suits the feeling.

5) Section number five of the survey is on 'Places for Walking and Cycling'. This section is made up of seven statements in a similar format to the previous sections with a four-point Likert scale to choose from in highlighting whether or not they agree with the statements made. These seven statements to evaluate a neighbourhood's area for walking and cycling were taken and used from Saelens et al. (2003) 'Neighbourhood Environment Walkability Scale' (NEWS).

6) Section six is entitled 'Convenient Facilities' and highlights the respondent's knowledge of convenient facilities where they can exercise in their respective towns, and which is on a frequently travelled route, either within a 5-minute drive or 10-minute walk from work or home. The list of facilities the respondent has to answer to are delimited to those that traditionally come under the remit
of local authority provision. The respondent is also asked whether each facility has been used by them within the last three months. This section of the survey was selected from Sallis et al. (1998).

7) Section seven is a follow on and linked to section six and the first statement from this section was also taken from Sallis et al. (1998). The second statement in this section was taken from the European Commission (2010) ‘Special Eurobarometer: Sport and Physical Activity’. This is a statement regarding local provision for sport and physical activity opportunities. It provided a measure of their perception of physical activity in the town.

8) Section eight is designed to gauge the physical activity levels and patterns of the respondent. This section contains six specific questions taken directly from the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (Ekelund et al., 2003).

9) The final section of the survey is the personal information section which aims to provide a profile of the respondents. The questions for this section were selected from those included in the Irish Census (2001).

As a result of the pilot study, the researcher decided that the best approach to distribute the survey was to do so electronically.

This survey was administered electronically via the internet and e-mail and hardcopies were also distributed. When firstly administering the surveys, the researcher contacted the local sports partnership (LSP) coordinator for each of the towns via e-mail and then followed up with a telephone call. The first email was an introduction and outline of the purpose of the study to establish their willingness to assist in the distribution of the survey. The follow up telephone call was then to clarify the approach to getting the surveys completed. There was another more detailed e-mail to confirm what was agreed on the telephone, and this e-mail included a link to the online survey. The reason the LSP co-ordinator was targeted was due to them being in a position to
provide contact information on various societal groups’ e.g. active retired, ethnic minorities, unemployed, and transition year students, as he/she was in frequent contact with these groups or had contact details for someone who was. Also, for the citizen survey, the Town Clerk or Director of Services from each of the eleven sample towns was used as a network to reach the employed.

As previously stated, hardcopies were also issued in order to increase response rates amongst target towns, where the local authority survey was completed. In order to obtain the relevant contact information for each of the groups/clubs issued with hardcopies, the author searched various Local Sports Partnership directories and county council websites. For the schools, the author searched the Department of Education website (http://www.education.ie/en/Find-a-School/, 2014). This made sending out the surveys a lot more efficient and effective. The citizen survey took no longer than 15 minutes per respondent to complete (Appendix B).

3.3.3 Piloting the Citizen Survey

The term ‘pilot’ refers to mini versions of a full-scale study (also called 'feasibility' studies), as well as the specific pre-testing of a particular research instrument such as a questionnaire or interview schedule. Pilot studies are a crucial element of a good study design. Conducting a pilot study does not guarantee success in the main study, but it does increase the likelihood (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). Pilot studies fulfil a number of key functions and can provide the researcher with an important insight for progression (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001).

In completing the pilot, the town of Killarney was selected due to its geographical convenience and it being close to the size of the target towns. The target for the pilot study was to engage as many individuals as possible from the selected town. This proved difficult as people were reluctant to take part as there appeared to be no incentive for them to do so and they were being required to give up their own time to complete the survey. The researcher received sixty-five surveys from Killarney;
although these numbers did not represent an even spread of the societal groups targeted to take part.

During the pilot study, the researcher printed and distributed the surveys physically to a number of different groups and not all responded even though they were contacted via e-mail, telephone and post prior to the surveys being administered.

This prompted a change in strategy in how the survey was to be administered. The researcher then created an online survey using the survey tool ‘Survey Monkey’. This meant the survey could be administered electronically via e-mailed link, as well as physically if required.

As a result of the pilot study, the following actions and changes were made for the data collection process:

- The survey was converted electronically so that individuals were able to complete the survey online and the survey could be e-mailed directly to participants for easier access.

- The researcher included the town list so as only participants from the delimited towns knew to complete the survey.

3.3.4 Reliability and Validity of the Citizen Survey

When circulating the survey, measures were taken to minimise threats to the reliability of the data received.

- The same procedure was followed in all cases i.e. identical surveys were circulated to all participants.

- Secondly, each participant was urged to answer as accurately and honestly as possible in the hope of avoiding subject bias, whereby the respondent tries to give what is perceived to be the ‘correct’ answer.
• All participants were given alternative options in completing the survey which included over the telephone with the researcher.

• The same societal groups were targeted in each town where possible. This was in order to increase the academic value of the study and to increase reliability.

In terms of validity, the survey was designed based on a number of other successful surveys previously tried and tested. There was also a pilot study carried out for the survey which proved to be an invaluable exercise. An analysis of the responses was considered to verify that the study was appropriate to examine the aspects of the subject it was designed to evaluate. Another test of validity was the expert review carried out by a civil servant from the Department of the Environment, whereby this individual, who would be aware of the subtle issues relating to both local authorities and sport, was asked to consider the questionnaire.

3.3.5 Response Rate to Citizen Survey

According to Sullivan (2001), the response rate is a measure of the co-operation received in relation to a survey as it describes the proportion of the population who engaged and completed the survey. In relation to the citizen survey, it was not possible to gauge exactly what percentage responded as the researcher sent the survey to an unknown quantity of individuals across all target towns. By the end of the data collection process, the researcher had received in total 272 completed surveys. This averages out at 25 surveys per town although some towns had a significantly better response rate than others.

3.3.6 Local Authority Survey

The aim of the local authority survey was to attain all information possible to assess commitment levels of the target local authorities.

The local authority survey, as highlighted in figure 3.3, measured the following factors;

- Perception of sports impact on wider social goals
- The style of local authority provision i.e. (i) direct provider, (ii) enabler or (iii) partner
- The local authority commitment to programmes, personnel and facilities
- The monitoring and evaluation practices
- Service delivery
- Knowledge exchange with other public agencies and,
- Disability proofing

The local authority survey which measures the commitment of local authorities to sport and physical activity contains a scoring system for the resources provided by each council. The survey scores the local authority on their approach to sport and physical activity i.e. direct provider, enabler, and/or partner, and scores them on their provision of facilities e.g. soccer pitches, walkways, tennis courts, golf courts, running tracks, the initiatives/programmes they carry out, and finally, the human resources assigned to sport and physical activity. The monitoring and evaluation practices of sport and physical activity will also be explored. The score of each component will enable ranking in terms of resourcing of and contribution to sport and physical activity.

The local authority survey was administered to the individual of each target town who was in charge of sport and recreation provision. In most cases, this was the Town Clerk or Director of Services. This identified individual was firstly contacted via email by the researcher asking for their cooperation and providing basic information on the background and rationale of the research as well as a copy of the local authority survey. The researcher then followed that up with a phone call in order to provide further information and obtain their agreement to participate in the research. In the case of no response to the first email and phone call, the researcher sent another email containing similar information to the first email a month after the first email. If this was also unsuccessful, the researcher sent a final opportunity to take part in the research which was done via email and one last phone call.
This local authority survey was administered both electronically and by the post to the selected person in each of the target town councils. The completed survey was then sent back to the researcher to score, then code and analyse. The local authority survey was administered before the citizen survey as the response to the local authority survey would determine which towns the researcher targeted for the citizen surveys in order to obtain correlating sets of data.

3.3.7 Local Authority Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interviews set out to capture information not possible to capture using quantitative methods e.g. survey. The selection sample for the local authority interviews were based on a subset of the local authority survey and secondly, based on the length of time they have been in their respective positions. The longer each local authority employee is in their position, the better they would be to provide the author with the required level of information drawn from their experience (Appendix D).

The interviews were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere with the intention of obtaining information that will provide invaluable quality in terms of in-depth and fruitful explanations, as well as rich descriptions and experiences.

As touched upon previously, there are a number of advantages of semi-structured interviews including, as Bernard (2004, p.191), state;

"Semi structured interviewing works very well in projects where you are dealing with managers, bureaucrats, and elite members of a community- people who are accustomed to efficient use of their time. It demonstrates that you are fully in control of what you want from an interview but leaves you and your respondent to follow new leads. It shows that you are prepared and competent but that you are not trying to exercise excessive control over the respondent."

Coolican (2004), states that through the relatively informal but guided nature of semi-structured interviews, opportunities are created for unexpected data to emerge. A more semi-structured approach tends to produce richer, more realistic and perhaps more genuine responses from an interviewee. In addition, using a semi-structured method of interviewing allows for questions to be altered or asked at different times.
according to how the interview is developing, therefore providing a much more flowing interview. In support, Coolican (2004, p.145) states that in using a semi-structured interview over a structured interview,

"The researcher has the advantage of flexibility towards the respondent and of asking questions in a more informal, relaxed atmosphere in which complete and meaningful answers, kept in context, may be more forthcoming."

The subjects chosen for the interview were selected based on suitability due to time spent in their respective positions within each organisation. The factors discussed within the interview were the same as those of the local authority survey (Appendix C).

The Town Clerk survey took no longer than 45 minutes per respondent. The Town Clerk interviews took between 40-45 minutes to complete and were conducted in a quiet room with no other background noise, no interruptions and no one aside from the Town Clerk and researcher over-heard the interview.

3.3.8 Design of Local Authority Interview Schedule

The process of drafting the interview schedule began by identifying key themes informed by the literature review and addressing these themes with suitable questions e.g. catalysts and barriers to commitment, monitoring and evaluation of sport and physical activity provision. Bell (2005) described this as a two stage process of firstly, preparing a topic and secondly preparing various questions relating to that topic, so that the questions can cover the topic being investigated. The interview administered (Appendix D) was designed following key themes of the research and corresponded with those used in the design of the local authority survey as follows:

- **Strengths as a Local Authority – Merits of Local Authority Provision in a General Sense in Ireland.** Throughout this section of the interview, the researcher asked the participant to highlight the strengths of local authorities in Ireland regarding sport and recreation, and to explain what they are doing and doing well. The researcher also probed in to what the
catalysts for involvement in sport and recreation were, for each respective local authority.

- **Local Authority Sport and Recreation Provision.** In this section of the interview, the researcher asked the participant if sport and recreation was a live area for debate amongst local authorities and how often the participant attended sport and recreation training and conferences. The researcher also sought to gather information on the pros and cons of being a direct provider, enabler and partner, and in what context each of these approaches works best. The researcher also asked the subject if he/she was aware of any examples of good practice and where they look for examples of good practice.

- **Sport and Recreation Monitoring and Evaluation.** This section explored the existing frameworks in place for sport and recreation monitoring and evaluation, and how often monitoring and evaluation of sport and physical activity is carried out. The researcher also enquired about who that individual and local authority was accountable to, where they reported any findings. The researcher then aimed to discover whether the participant was aware of any methods of good practice for monitoring and evaluation.

- **Local Authority Vision – What the future looks like.** The final section covered in this semi-structured interview probed how the subject felt local authority provision of sport and recreation would look like in 10/15 years, and how the role of local authorities may change, if at all. The researcher then probed deeper to find out what the catalysts of change may be.

The interview featured mainly open-ended questions with the intention of extracting the views of the respondent and not focusing on those of the interviewer (Denscombe, 2002). The interview schedule was flexible yet focused on the key themes. This allowed the interviewer to elaborate and probe the responses of the participant if necessary. The researcher ensured that the questions asked in each interview were not leading and that all interviewees were asked the same questions although the order
may have varied throughout each interview; such is the nature of semi-structured interviews.

Similar to the local authority survey sampling technique, the interview sampling technique used for the semi-structured interview was purposive. The respondents were selected based on their position within the local authority, namely those in senior positions, and/or with decision making authority, who had knowledge of both sport in their locality and the operations of the local authority for which they are employed. All of these factors make the individuals selected ideal for the information desired.

One individual per town selected participated in the interview.

3.3.9 Reliability and Validity of Local Authority Interview Data

In order to ensure that data received from the semi-structured interviews was reliable, a number of recommended steps were followed. Firstly, an interview schedule was designed so as to issue all interviewees with the same questions and issues. All data collected was handled and treated in a consistent manner with all interviews being recorded before being transcribed by the researcher word-for-word at the earliest possible time (Gratton and Jones, 2004).

To increase the levels of validity, extensive background reading was carried out which was put into themes and written up in the review of literature. There was then a pilot study carried out to ensure the subjects interpreted the questions correctly and were in the position to answer them suitably. There is a danger of compromising the validity of the answers as the participant may want to answer the questions in a way that shows the organisation they are representing in an 'inaccurately' positive light, hence the importance of honesty was stressed to the interviewee. Therefore, the researcher critically assessed each answer the respondent gave and was able to do this by probing deeper into the answers.
3.3.10 Response Rate to Local Authority Interviews

The interviews were carried out on a subset of the local authority survey. From the eleven responses, the researcher chose to interview three of these. In order to get a range of perspectives the researcher interviewed an individual from a local authority that scored well on the local authority survey, as well as someone that scored poorly and finally, one in the middle.

All three were accepted at two weeks' notice and carried out by the researcher in each of the chosen towns.

3.3.11 Piloting the Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interview was piloted in the same town as the citizen and local authority survey's pilots were completed. It was deemed appropriate to interview a person with a high level of authority within the local authority as it was reflective of what the researcher wanted to achieve in the data collection phase. The interview was conducted on February 20th 2014 and lasted 33 minutes. The pilot was an opportunity for the researcher to test the content, questions and relevance of the interview. Feedback was requested from the respondent as this provided an expert opinion on what was included in the interview, the feedback was positive and no changes occurred as a result.

The interview was transcribed and coded and the data were analysed, these details will be outlined later.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to respect all of the participants in this study, the author has carried out a number of appropriate steps including an application for ethical approval as well as a risk assessment for ethical practices. By paying attention to ethical considerations, the
author is doing the utmost to retain the anonymity of the participants as well as maintaining the integrity of the study.

All electronic data was stored on the Institute of Technology Tralee’s (ITT) computing system (X drive) and kept secure through password protection, firewall and encryption technology.

All paper data (transcripts, written surveys, sensitive information etc...) was placed into a locked storage cabin in a locked, password secured office. Also, to ensure the protection of data, all audio files was transcribed by the researcher and all transcripts stored on the Institutes X-drive. All information was stored on a password protected hard drive. No names were included on any of the research instruments. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

All interviews were electronically recorded onto a dictaphone application on a smart device. This type of recording offers a permanent record which is therefore complete in terms of any speech that occurs during an interview as well as it being a simplistic procedure. Each interview was then transcribed for the author to code and study. Denscombe (2002), states that text is much easier to interpret and analyse in comparison to listening to a recording. Taking this into consideration, once all interviews were completed, detailed transcriptions were then carried out for each. Interviews were then deleted once the information was transcribed, reviewed and analysed.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

3.5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The citizen survey and local authority survey data was then processed through the statistical analysis programme, IBM SPSS Statistics 21, which allowed the researcher to analyse results from the surveys. A variety of analytical test were used to enable the researcher to draw conclusions, comparisons and charts to show significant findings.
Descriptive statistics of the data were generated to estimate mean, minimum, maximum and standard deviation scores of the results obtained. Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to test for difference between variables while Spearman Rank-Order Correlations were used to determine if a relationship existed between variables. Chapter 4 will describe and discuss the results obtained.

3.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Data analysis for in-depth qualitative interviews should be conducted in four general areas – revisiting, selection for relevance, sorting and comparing (Imms and Ereaut, 2002). Qualitative researchers can and should use methods of analysis that are explicit, systematic, and reproducible. Some experts argue that a single researcher conducting all the coding is both sufficient and preferred, particularly in social studies in which the individual researcher is inextricably enmeshed in the data collection and analysis (Malterud, 2001). All semi-structured interview data was analysed manually by the researcher.

The researcher used a technique called thematic analysis. Thematic analysis moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes. The advantage of such an analytical approach lies in its flexibility, which allows the researcher to tailor it to meet the requirements of the investigation at hand (Carson, 2001).

In completing the thematic analysis, the following steps were followed as identified by Braun and Clarke (2006);

1. Becoming familiar with the data
   - Each transcript was read and re-read in order to become familiar with what was said and with the content of the transcripts. Initial patterns and repeating issues were identified, for example, catalysts and barriers to sport and physical activity commitment by local authorities.

2. Generating initial codes
Each transcript was then analysed for recurring patterns which were then sorted into an initial list. This is a systematic way of organising and identifying meaningful data and is otherwise referred to as coding. An example of this is when analysing a transcript and discovering that financial and land usage were identified as barriers to commitment. These were assigned initial codes.

3. Searching for themes

As the transcripts were read and re-read a number of themes became evident. An example of these themes was the inconsistent approach by Irish local authorities in the levels of commitment to sport and physical activity. When reviewing other transcripts, financial barriers and land usage restrictions were also identified and this led to the theme of barriers to commitment.

4. Reviewing the themes

This step involved refining and reviewing the previously identified themes, looking for connections and overlap between them.

5. Defining and naming themes

This step led to the defining and refining of the existing themes to be presented.

6. Producing the report

As evidence in the following chapter.

Data were then sorted. Codes are then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis (Bernard, 2010). It was a case of preparing the data collected so it could be easily analysed. The results that were gathered from the data were compared and contrasted for similarities and differences with the established theory. This information led to the information based in the following chapter of results.

The following analytical process, informed by the work of Wach and Ward (2013) was used to carry out an analysis of the town plans selected for inclusion in this research.
1. Setting inclusion criteria for the documents:

The inclusion criteria was on town populations as mentioned previously and their development plans (Appendix E).

2. Collecting documents

All local authority town development plans were retrieved online via the relevant local authority websites.

3. Key areas of analysis articulated

The policy documents were originally reviewed and analysed with reference to the themes identified in the review of literature in respect to catalysts and barriers. Furthermore, the overall commitment of the local authority was determined under four criteria;

- Separate chapter for sport and active recreation,
- SMART goals,
- Number of goal/objectives,
- Mention of local sports partnership.

4. Document coding and analysis

Each document was analysed to determine the extent to which the town plan addressed sport or recreation provision or considered each of the identified 'themes' for commitment to the provision of sport and recreation. Text relevant to each theme was highlighted and coded.

Previously identified themes were refined and reviewed, connections and overlap between themes was considered. Consideration was also given to the validity of each theme, ensuring that each theme connects to the data. This led to the defining and refining of the existing themes to be presented and thus enable the analysis of the data within each theme and finally the production of the results presented in Chapter 4.
3.6 CONCLUSION

As highlighted throughout this chapter, the data collection for this research was carried out in a number of phases. The data collection began with the author researching various academic literature and various other relevant secondary sources. The primary data were also collected in phases with the administration of the local authority survey followed closely by the citizen survey making up phase one. The interviews of the local authority personnel was the second phase of primary data collection, before the author researched and identified the good practice for local sports development which was ongoing and completed in May 2016.
CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse and discuss the results from the data collected for this study. The author will discuss the findings from all the data collection instruments including:

(i) local authority employee survey (n=9) (Appendix C),
(ii) town citizen survey (n=272) (Appendix B),
(iii) local authority interviews (n=3) (Appendix D),
(iv) local authority strategic planning documents (n=9) (Appendix E).

The analysis methods used to complete this chapter include;

- Statistical analysis of citizen and local authority surveys
- Thematic analysis of local authority semi-structured interviews
- Content analysis of Irish Local Government policy documentation looking for information on programmes, personnel, facilities, catalysts and barriers for commitment to sport and physical activity and monitoring and evaluation criteria

The aim is to discuss and explore the relevance of this data in relation to the literature reviewed and the objectives set out at the beginning of the research process.

The chapter will be broken up into six main sections, the first section outlines the profile of respondents, the second presents the patterns of local authority commitment to sport and physical activity, the next section discusses the catalysts and barriers to local authority commitment to this social policy area. The penultimate section discusses the impact of this commitment to the lives of citizens will be highlighted, whilst the final section of analysis will look at the monitoring and evaluation practices across the local authorities.
4.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

4.2.1 Local Authority Personnel

As previously described in chapter three, the towns selected for this study met the criteria of having a population of 20,000 (+/- 4,000). Local authorities' participation was entirely voluntary.

For this study, the response rate to the local authority survey was 64% (9/14). All local authority surveys were completed by individual employees with designated responsibility for sport, recreation and physical activity policy in the town. In most cases, this was the Town Clerk (n=7), although for the other two surveys completed, it was completed by the Director of Services (n=1) and Senior Executive Parks Superintendent (n=1) as highlighted in table 4.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Town Clerk</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Parks Superintendent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Club Member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Profile of Town Council Respondents
Table 4.1 illustrates the fact that all respondents from the town councils were male and the majority (78%) of respondents were a member of a sports club, indicating that sport had a part to play in the majority of the respondent’s personal life.

### 4.2.1 Profile of Citizens

The citizen survey was completed by 272 individuals from the towns where local authority surveys had been completed and returned. For the citizen surveys, the author targeted towns for which local authority surveys were completed. This was so the author could compare data directly between town local authorities and the town’s citizens.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>106 (42 percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>146 (58 percent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>251 (99 percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2 (1 percent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>35 (14 percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>215 (86 percent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.2 Profile of Citizen Survey Respondents**

As table 4.2 illustrates, of the citizens that did complete the survey, 42 percent were male and 58 percent were female. The vast majority of respondents (94%) were white/white Irish and 2 percent Asian. This reflects the national citizen profile depicted within the most recently published CSO statistics. The Irish census in 2011 also reported that 13% of the Irish population has some form of disability (Central Statistics Office, 2011), again this was reflective of the profile of those that participated in the research study as depicted in table 4.2 above.
4.3 THE COMMITMENT OF TOWN COUNCILS TO SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND ACTIVE RECREATION IN TERMS OF PERSONNEL, FACILITIES AND PROGRAMME DELIVERY

As previously described, this research set out to establish the level of commitment by Irish local authorities to sport and physical activity and did so by focusing on three areas of provision; facilities, programmes and the employment of sport specific personnel. By understanding the level of commitment to these three areas of sport provision, it is possible to gauge how committed Irish local authorities are to the provision of sport and physical activity and the impact this commitment has on various facets of citizen life. This section will now outline the findings extracted from the research instruments outlined in section 4.1.

In the local authority survey, respondents enumerated their organisation's level of commitment to each of these three variables and a point was awarded for each commitment on an equal basis - irrespective of whether it was by means of direct provision, enabling or partnership provision.

Table 4.3 below quantifies the level of commitment by Irish local authorities to sport and physical activity. This information provides a sense of scale of provision and also provides information on what approach is most commonly used, or preferred, in terms of local authority sport and physical activity delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Provision</th>
<th>Local Authority 1</th>
<th>Local Authority 2</th>
<th>Local Authority 3</th>
<th>Local Authority 4</th>
<th>Local Authority 5</th>
<th>Local Authority 6</th>
<th>Local Authority 7</th>
<th>Local Authority 8</th>
<th>Local Authority 9</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Programmes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Personnel</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Facilities</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct provision Programmes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct provision Personnel</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In analysing the information presented in table 4.3, it is clearly evident that there are differing levels of commitment towards sport and physical activity provision across the local authorities in Ireland. Whereas one local authority achieved an overall score of 64 for their commitment levels, another local authority had significantly lower levels of commitment with a score of 14. Two of the nine local authorities scored less than 20 (n=16 and n=14) overall in the study, whilst five local authorities have scores of between 20 and 30 (n=20, n=24, n=25, n=25 and n=28). Two local authorities scored particularly highly in comparison to the others (n=51 and n=64).

Looking at the data regarding the methods of provision, partnership provision (n=60) is the least preferred approach. This is the case in spite of government’s emphasised importance and drive towards partnership working (Irish Sports Council, 2001; Bowtell, 2006), as evidenced by the initiation of the Local Sports Partnerships and despite local authorities being seen as key players in these (Irish Sports Council, 2009). As illustrated above in table 4.3 the partnership method of delivery (n=60) features less often than either enabling (n=93) or direct provision (n=105). Furthermore, the variation of...
delivery methods also reflects King (2012), who concluded that local authorities in England do not conform to a single 'model' of sport and recreation delivery.

Table 4.3 also highlights how Irish local authorities much prefer to provide facilities (n=144) as opposed to programmes (n=78) and personnel (n=45). This is somewhat surprising as it is reasonable to anticipate that direct provision of facilities is more costly considering the current financial status of local authorities. This is though in line with the Department of Education (1997, pg.21) which states that local authorities are “one of the leading operators of sports facilities in Ireland”. As identified by Sugrue (2004), traditionally Irish local authorities were evaluated in the policy area of sport and recreation by only two indicators - the provision of swimming pools and playgrounds. This may explain the preference for facility provision over programme and personnel provision.

The following three sub sections will further breakdown the data regarding local authority commitment to personnel, facilities and programmes.

A follow-up analysis of the town development plans showed that only three of the nine local authority plans had separate chapters dedicated to sport and physical activity/active recreation (33%). Although the others didn’t have specifically dedicated chapters, they did mention sport and physical activity/active recreation. Thus documentation supports the numerical data that indicates a wide variation in the levels of commitment to sport and physical activity amongst local authorities.

A Mann Whitney U test was used to see if there is a difference between local authority development plans with a dedicated chapter in terms of the overall score for commitment. There is no significant difference (p=.381) in overall between those who have a chapter dedicated to sport and recreation and those that don’t. This implies that development plans are not influencing or informing performance.

A similar finding was identified when testing for correlations between local authority commitment levels and number of goals in each local authority development plan.
This also indicates the sport and physical commitment levels are not informed by the number of goals in the development plans.

Table 4.4 below gives an oversight as to what was discovered through an analysis of the town development plans. In brief, three local authorities had separate chapters for sport and active recreation, one development plan contained SMART goals, all plans had some form of goal/objective relating to sport and active recreation, whilst three of the nine mentioned their local sports partnership. Six of the nine town development plans contained details about specific groups targeted through the provision of sport and active recreation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town Development Plan Overview</th>
<th>Local Authority 1</th>
<th>Local Authority 2</th>
<th>Local Authority 3</th>
<th>Local Authority 4</th>
<th>Local Authority 5</th>
<th>Local Authority 6</th>
<th>Local Authority 7</th>
<th>Local Authority 8</th>
<th>Local Authority 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separate Chapter for Sport and Active Recreation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART Goals</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Goals/Objectives</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention of LSP</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓ (9)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓ (2)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention of Specific Target Groups</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓ (8)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓ (2)</td>
<td>✓ (1)</td>
<td>✓ (1)</td>
<td>✓ (1)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓ (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Overview and Breakdown of Town Development Plan Findings

4.3.1 Town Council’s Commitment to the Provision of Personnel in Sport and Physical Activity

Section 4 (a) of the local authority survey investigated the commitment of each Irish local authority to the employment of sport and physical activity personnel. This section
began by investigating what sport/leisure professionals were directly employed by the local authorities themselves, or instances where they contributed to employment, either through an enabling or a partnership arrangement. The survey explored both the number of employees under each of the three methods of delivery and the job titles. A total of forty-four individuals are employed in sport and recreation across the nine local authorities.

Each local authority was scored for the number of sport and physical activity professionals they employed and this is indicated in the table 4.2 above. Of the three areas of provision, personnel is the area least supported (n=44), in comparison to programmes (n=78) and facilities (n=144).

Table 4.3 also highlights that the least preferred approach to sports professional employment is a partnership approach (n=5) for all participating local authorities. This differs dramatically from the number of employees employed both directly (n=20) and through an enabler approach (n=19). This is an interesting statistic giving that the local authorities are key stakeholders in the Irish Sports Partnerships across the country meaning that a partnership approach to employing sports professionals is strongly encouraged (Irish Sports Council, 2001).

Table 4.5 below gives an overview as to exactly what sport and physical activity professionals were employed by the Irish local authorities.

When analysing the professionals the local authorities employed, there is a common practice amongst the majority of Irish local authorities when it comes to employing leisure managers and life guards. 67 percent directly employed leisure managers whilst a majority of 56 percent directly employed life guards. Just less than half of the local authorities directly employed sports development officers (SDOs) and fitness instructors (n= 4).

As well as the direct provision of personnel, some local authorities also enable the employment of some sport and recreation personnel, as indicated by the table 4.5. In
terms of enabling employment of these professionals, similarly to direct provision, leisure managers are the most frequently employed, alongside SDOs and fitness instructors (all 56 percent). The second most frequently enabled professional is a life guard (33 percent), with one position of 'other' (11 percent) being enabled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>Direct N (%)</th>
<th>Partnership N (%)</th>
<th>Enabling N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leisure manager</td>
<td>6 (67%)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>5 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Guard</td>
<td>5 (56%)</td>
<td>SDO/Leisure Manager/Fitness Instructor 1 (11%)</td>
<td>3 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDO/Fitness Instructor</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>Other 1 (11%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 Reported Employment of Personnel by Town Council in Rank Order

These employment statistics perhaps reinforce the preference for local authorities to provide facilities and employ their own staff in these facilities as opposed to 'sharing' the delivery of sport and physical activity amongst other agencies. This appears particularly strong for leisure managers and life guards as these are two professionals generally required in sports facilities.

In summarising the employee provision by Irish local authorities, table 4.6 below further indicates that clear differences exist between the levels of commitment by local authorities, similar in size, and the employment of sport and physical activity professionals.

The mean number of employees employed is five for each local authority and the modal three. Local authorities in Ireland are clearly inconsistent when it comes to the provision of sports professionals. Some local authorities are doing substantially more than others in terms of employment commitment to sport and physical activity.
Employee Provision by Irish Local Authorities (Total = 44)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6 Maximum, Minimum, Mean and Modal Statistics for Employment of Sports Professionals by Local Authorities

According to data presented in table 4.7 below, local sports clubs were the most popular organisations for enabling the employment of sports professionals with 33% (n=3) of local authorities selecting them. The next most frequent enabling partner was the VEC with 22% (n=2). The HSE, Gardai and 'Other' all had one selection as an organisation the local authority enables to employ sports professionals and similarly to facility provision, the OPW was not selected for this section. This is an interesting exclusion as Irish local authorities choose not to work with the OPW in any form of collaborative provision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enabling Approach</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Partnership Approach</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Clubs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>Local Clubs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Gardai</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>HSE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPW</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>OPW</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7 Collaborations for Provision of Sport and Physical Activity Professionals

Only two organisations were selected on one occasion each as a partner for employment and those were the VEC and 'Other'. No other organisation was partnered with for the employment of sports professionals which is a clear suggestion that Irish local authorities act primarily as direct providers and/or enablers when it comes to the provision of sports professional employees (table 4.7). Based on the data collected, there is a slight preference by Irish local authorities to work in collaboration (enabler and partner) for the employment of sports professionals than to directly
employ them. This was discovered as a comparison between the cumulative figures of sports professionals employed through enabling and partnership working compared to those directly employed (table 4.7).

4.3.2 Town Council's Commitment to the Provision of Facilities for Sport and Physical Activity

The third section (Q3 a) of the local authority survey (Appendix C) investigated the sports and physical activity facilities each local authority provided and by what method they provided the facility (direct provider, partner or enabler).

Table 4.2 (above) highlights that of the three areas of provision assessed; facilities are the most prominent form of sport and physical activity provision. The highest score for the provision of facilities was n=41 compared to the lowest which was n=7 (by two local authorities) showing a large difference in levels of commitment amongst local authorities. The standout score for facility provision of n=41 was from the local authority with the highest overall score for provision. The average number of facilities provided overall was n=16.

The most preferred method of providing the facilities was through direct provision (n=63) with little separating partnership provision (n=41) and enabling provision (n=40) of sport and physical activity facilities.

Table 4.8 below sets out exactly how many Irish local authorities provide sport and physical activity facilities in rank order. It also shows a spread of approaches taken when providing these facilities.
It is clear from the data (table 4.8) that there are similarities in what facility is most frequently provided through each approach. In terms of direct provision, the facility provided for by all responding Irish local authorities are public play areas (n=9, 100%). This is a statistic that reflects the Department of Environment (2001), which highlights that it is a local authority responsibility to provide public play areas as well as swimming pools. This is in contrast to the most frequently provided facility through collaborative working which is playing fields (partnership and enabling, n=5) and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Facility Provision N (%)</th>
<th>Partnership Facility Provision N (%)</th>
<th>Enabling Facility Provision N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Play Areas</td>
<td>Playing Fields</td>
<td>Playing Fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (100%)</td>
<td>5 (56%)</td>
<td>5 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking Trails/Bike lanes</td>
<td>Basketball Court/Running Track/ Swimming Pool</td>
<td>Aerobic/Dance Studio/ Health Spa/Public Play Area/ Recreation Centre/ Swimming Pool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (89%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing Fields</td>
<td>Beach, Lake, River Amenity/Health Spa/Public Play Area</td>
<td>Basketball Court/ Running Track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (67%)</td>
<td>3 (33%)</td>
<td>3 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Courts/Health Spa/Recreation Centres/Swimming Pool</td>
<td>Aerobic/Dance Studio/Squash Court/Walking Trails</td>
<td>Beach, Lake or River Amenity/Squash Court/Walking Trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (56%)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aerobic/Dance Studio/Beach, Lake or River Amenity/Running Track</td>
<td>Bike Lanes/Golf Course/Martial Arts Studio</td>
<td>Bike Lanes/Trails/Golf Course/Martial Arts Studio/Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (33%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martial Arts Studio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash Court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 Number of Local Authorities Providing Facilities in Rank Order
recreation centres (partnership, n=5). Table 4.8 also provides a breakdown of other facilities provided for by Irish local authorities. It is also worth reporting that only 56 percent of local authorities provided swimming pools directly, which is a substantial difference to public play areas. This is interesting to note as swimming pools and play grounds are the two categories/facilities that have been traditionally used as performance indicators by the Department of Environment for local authorities in the policy area of sport and recreation (Sugrue, 2004). Hence, all other facilities provided are at the discretion of each individual local authority, be it Town/Borough or County Councils. This suggests why facilities are more frequently provided than programmes and personnel, which aligns with Irish policy regarding what form of provision is provided and is echoed by Dooney and O'Toole (1998), Callanan and Keogan (2003), and the Government of Ireland (2014).

When it comes to local authority provision of sport, physical activity and recreation facilities, there are a number of external agencies and organisations available to work with as either a partner or enabler. In terms of Irish local authority sport and physical activity operations, 67% (n=6) of local authorities work in partnership with local sports clubs, which is the most popular choice of partner (Table 4.9). The second most frequently used partner for facility provision was the Vocational Educational Committees (VECs) which was partnered with by 56% (n=5) of Irish local authorities respectively. The Gardai (33%, n=3) came in as the third most frequently partnered organisation for sport and physical activity provision and the Health Service Executive (HSE) and ‘Other’ (22%, n=2) fourth. Interestingly, the Irish Office of Public Works (OPW) was not a partner for any of the local authorities in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enabling Approach</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Partnership Approach</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Clubs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>Local Clubs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardai</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Gardai</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>HSE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPW</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>OPW</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9 Collaborations for Provision of Sport and Physical Activity Facilities
When acting as an enabler of sport, physical activity and recreation facility provision, Irish local authorities were asked about the frequency of working with the same organisations as the partnership working and the table 4.9 above highlights the similarities in results between the partnership organisations and those organisations that are enabled through the local authorities.

Local sports clubs were again the most frequently enabled organisation with 78% (n=7) of local authorities stating that they acted as an enabler to local sports clubs for the provision of sport, physical activity and recreation facilities. As you can see from the table 4.9, the VEC (33%, n=3) and the Gardaí and HSE (both 22%, n=2) were the second and third most collaborated with organisation in enabling facility provision. The least used organisations were the OPW and ‘Other’, both with 11% (n=1) of local authorities.

4.3.3 Town Council's Commitment to the Provision of Programmes for Sport and Physical Activity

The research continues by investigating the commitment of Irish local authorities to the provision of sport and recreation programmes. The necessary data to study this section was collated in the local authority survey in questions 5 (a) and 5 (b) (See Appendix C).

The results previously presented in table 4.3 indicate that programme provision is the second most frequently provided for area of sport and physical activity provision (n=78). The favoured method for programme provision amongst Irish local authorities is as an enabler (n=33) ahead of direct provider (n=30) and partner (n=15). This is in contrast to the provision of personnel and facilities which were both more frequently provided for through a direct approach. The highest score across the local authorities for programme provision was n=15 (two local authorities), with the lowest score being n=3.
Table 4.10 below illustrates a breakdown of commitment by local authorities to programmes for selected target groups. It is clearly depicted (table 4.10) that a vast majority of local authorities provide programmes for all social groups asked about within the local authority survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Groups</th>
<th>Number of Local Authorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Older Adults</td>
<td>100% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young People</td>
<td>100% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with Disabilities</td>
<td>89% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority Tenants</td>
<td>78% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People at Risk</td>
<td>78% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>11% (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10 Local Authority Target Groups for Programme Provision

As you can see from the table 4.10, there appears to be a consistent approach to programme provision amongst Irish local authorities. The vast majority of local authorities reportedly target the similar target groups.

This is not fully supported by the information sourced from the town council development plans. In analysing these plans for further details around programme provision, only six of the nine development plans contained any mention of specific target groups for sport and physical activity provision. A total of eight specific target groups were mentioned in the town council plans as highlighted in table 4.11 below.

This information would suggest that a lot more goes on in terms of programme provision by the local authorities, presumably done at their discretion. The most frequently mentioned target group amongst the development plans is ‘Children/Youth’ (n=6) which is perhaps as a direct result of it being policy and therefore local authorities must provide for this group (Department of Health and Children, 2007).
When questioned about sport and recreation programme provision, two of the three interviewees (interviewees 2, and 3) mentioned a number of specific target groups. Interviewee two specifically mentions children and the elderly as two groups they target through sport and physical activity provision. Interviewee 3 mentioned women as a target group when discussing various programmes, states, “They hit a lot of boxes that we are trying to get to like women’s sport” (Interviewee 3). Interviewee 3 also talks about targeting obese adults and children as well as disadvantaged groups (n=2) and girls/women. Although these mentions were in no great detail and relatively brief, interviewees 2 and 3 do support the data collected from the town council development plans and that of the local authority survey. Particularly in the case of children as a target group, this group is strongly provided for according to the survey information, town development plans and in two of the three interviews. Again, this could be as a result of government policy, specifically the National Recreation Policy for Young People (Department of Health and Children, 2007).

In summarising the programme provision for sport and recreation, the vast majority of Irish local authorities provide some level of commitment to programme provision, with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Groups</th>
<th>Number of Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children/Youth</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantaged Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls/Women</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Nationals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older People</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with Disabilities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Residents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11 Target Groups Mentioned in Town Development Plans
the most popular approach being the enabler approach, followed by a direct provider approach. The least popular approach to programme delivery is via a partnership approach (See table 4.2).

Table 4.12 below gives a breakdown of agencies with which local authorities work with in the delivery of programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Agency</th>
<th>Enabler Programme Provision Frequency</th>
<th>Partner Programme Delivery Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSC</td>
<td>7/9</td>
<td>1/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardaí</td>
<td>6/9</td>
<td>0/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSE</td>
<td>5/9</td>
<td>0/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>2/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1/9</td>
<td>0/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twin Towns</td>
<td>1/9</td>
<td>0/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPW</td>
<td>0/9</td>
<td>0/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12 Collaborative Agencies for the Provision of Sport and Recreation Programmes

In terms of an enabling approach, the most frequently collaborated with agency for programme delivery was local sports clubs which was selected by 78% (n=7) of responding local authorities. The second most frequently enabled agency was the Gardaí which was selected by 67% (n=6) of responding local authorities to this question. The third was the HSE which was selected by all five responding local authorities for this particular question. The VEC returned with 22% (n=2) from three responses and twin towns 11% (n=1) from three responses respectively. The OPW was not selected as an agency for collaborative working for programme delivery. ‘Other’ was selected by one local authority as an enabling partner for programme delivery.

When analysing the partnership collaboration for programme provision, there was a lack of responses, which perhaps indicates that few local authorities had partnership arrangements for this area of sport and physical activity provision.

The VEC was the most partnered organisation for programme provision with two local authorities (22%) stating that they worked in partnership with the VEC for the delivery
of sport and physical activity programmes. Local sports clubs (11%) were the second most frequently partnered partner and no other organisation was partnered with according to the responding local authorities. According to this data, the local authorities had no partnership arrangement in place with the OPW, HSE, Gardai, or 'Other', for sport and physical activity programme provision.

In comparing this data with information obtained through the review of literature, there does not appear to be consistency in the collaborative working between local authorities and external agencies in programme provision. This is despite the local authorities being seen as key players in the delivery of sport and physical activity provision (Irish Sports Council, 2013), whilst a collaborative approach is often encouraged (Smith, 1997; Torkildsen, 2010). This lack of evidence in collaborative working further highlights the local authorities desire to directly provide programmes themselves, targeting the social groups based on their own specific objectives.

Table 4.13 shows that the maximum number of sport and recreation programmes provided by Irish local authorities is 15 with the minimum being 3. This is a substantial difference and suggests a lack of consistency amongst local authorities in this area of provision. This may also suggest a lack of policy governing this area of operations. The mean/average number of programmes being provided by the local authorities is n=9 and the most frequent amount of programmes (modal) provided is n=10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Provision by Irish Local Authorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13 Maximum, Minimum, Mean and Modal Statistics for Irish Local Authority Sport and Recreation Programme Provision
It can be concluded that the local authority itself decides what target groups are provided in terms of sport and physical activity programmes, and how much they provide in terms of level of commitment. Although there are consistencies in terms of target group data extracted from the local authority surveys, this is not fully reflected in the interview data or document analysis. The main consistency throughout all sources of data is that local authorities are targeting young people/children through sport and physical activity provision.

Local authorities also appear to prefer an enabling approach to programme provision as opposed to a partnership approach.

4.4 THE CATALYSTS AND BARRIERS FOR COMMITMENT TO SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

This section reports the findings relating to the catalysts and barriers for local authority commitment to sport and physical activity. The data were collected from three sources; the local authority employee survey, the local authority interview, and document analysis (Local Authority Town Development Plans).

4.4.1 The Catalysts for Commitment to Sport and Physical Activity by Local Authorities

The local authority survey provided information relating to catalysts for commitment and began by questioning the employees on their belief of the benefits of sport and physical activity. All but one local authority scored between 34 and 40 (see table 4.14 below), with 40 being the maximum for strongly agreeing with the benefits of sport and physical activity (Appendix C). Considering the vast majority scored so highly, this ‘belief’ in the power of sport and physical activity can be interpreted as a catalyst for provision. Even the respondent that scored relatively low in comparison to the others, still scored over half of the total available (n=26 out of 40). This perceived belief of the power of sport is highlighted by Coalter (2007), yet research has yet to fully support this.
The data were mined to explore if any relationship exists between the beliefs of the person with responsibility for sport and recreation and overall provision (table 4.14).

The data (table 4.15) suggests that there is no statistically significant correlation between the two and that the direct belief systems of the local authority employees does not necessarily influence the commitment level of the local authority which they represent ($r=.387$). The bunching of the belief score may account for this result. Discovering that only one respondent scored below 34 out of 40 shows that there was an extremely strong overall belief that sport has significant benefits. There was almost
a 'group-think' for the benefits of sport, with only one participant disagreeing - indicating a possible barrier to provision.

An analysis of the interview data from the three local authority employees suggests that there is no clear and consistent stimulus that drives local authority commitment. Interviewee 1 explained that their local authority acted as a "functional local authority that has to promote amenity and recreation", which was one of two main catalysts. This aligns with the Local Government Act, 2014, which highlights the obligation of local authorities to provide swimming pools and play areas, and is supported by Sugrue (2004). Interviewee 1 also suggested that the second main catalyst was having a sports partnership based at the local authority, meaning they were obliged to commit to the provision of sport and physical activity as a result. Local authorities are seen as key players in the local sports partnerships and this is clearly the case as these partnerships are impacting on the commitment of sports provision (Irish Sports Council, 2001; Sugrue, 2004).

Interviewee 2 on the other hand stated completely different catalysts for their commitment to sport and physical activity provision. These catalysts were based mainly around individual involvement in sport and the success of the local sports teams. Interviewee 2 states,

"The catalyst is probably the success on the playing fields of the adult teams that represent (the locality). Particularly the hurling, it is an amazing catalyst here to the extent that it has possibly eclipsed quite a number of other sports that might have been stronger here before. Hurling has taken things on to a new level entirely. Another catalyst is the number of people with a sporting background who are elected to the local authority and who also promote active recreation etc... They are, I think, the main catalysts".

(Interviewee 2)
‘Success’ as a driver of commitment is also reflected by the Irish Sports Council (2010) who identified that there are wider impacts on the Irish population arising from investment in elite sport, incentivising further participatory and community-related benefits.

Similarly to interviewee 2, interviewee 3 also discussed individual involvement in sport and local success as catalysts to sport and physical activity provision. Interviewee 3 highlighted a number of specific local people and athletes as being key drivers to the local authorities’ push for sport and physical activity provision. For the purpose of the local authority’s anonymity, those individuals shall remain unnamed.

Interviewee 3 identified a number of other catalysts, including the local authority’s commitment to reducing health issues such as obesity, “there’s this obesity thing, all these things going on at the moment, so they are definitely one of the catalysts”, support by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011), Mayo Clinic (2012), and the American Heart Association (2014). Interviewee 3 also mentioned the importance of provision for women and girls in order for them to participate more, as it is recognised that they are an under-represented group and they too should be involved in sport and physical activity. Interviewee 3 discussed the provision of gymnastics and boxing clubs as specific methods of giving women and girls access to sport and physical activity. These catalysts are consistent with the literature supporting commitment to sport and physical activity. Physical inactivity in childhood can develop through the life stages and influence various health factors later in life such as cardiovascular disease and obesity (Hussey et al., 2001; Royal College of Physicians, 2012; WHO, 2013b). With a traditional gap in participation amongst boys and girls (British Heart Foundation National Centre, 2014), the Department of Health (2006) published a report in Ireland highlighting the gender differences between Irish boys and girls with 63% of boys and 43% of girls exercising four or more times a week. Thus it is a clear objective that the Irish local authorities are doing what they can in
recognising this literature and closing the gender gap in participation through programme provision.

In further analysing the town development plans, a number of catalysts were identified across the Irish local authorities. Table 4.16 below gives details of the various themes as catalysts that drive local authority commitment to sport and physical activity/active recreation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalysts/Themes</th>
<th>Number of Town Development Plans Identifying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Life</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social (socialisation and social inclusion)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment with National Policy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean Environment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing Participation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Number of Town Development Plans Identifying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Public Lands Available</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited by Finance and Resources</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.16 Themes Identified as Catalysts and Barriers for Commitment by Local Authorities

Table 4.16 shows that quality of life is the most common catalyst discovered in the analysis and the only one identified by the majority of local authorities (n=5). The data suggests that this catalyst is the most prevalent amongst the town development plans. This information aligns with the literature found and in analysing Irish government
policy which addresses the need to use sport and physical activity to contribute to the improvement of the Irish citizens’ quality of life (Smith, 1997; Government of Ireland, 2007; Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012).

With the European Commission’s (2011, p.2) belief that sport has “major potential as a tool for promoting social inclusion and social cohesion in European societies”, Irish local authorities appear to be following suit as the next most frequently identified catalyst was categorised as ‘social’ which broadly covered socialisation, social inclusion, benefiting residents and social and cultural benefits (n=4).

Also in line with national and international literature, health and a clean environment were identified in the plans of three local authorities (Government of Ireland, 2007; Government of Ireland, 2013a).

The development plans highlighted a number of other catalysts not mentioned by the interviewees. These mainly revolved around recognising the importance sport plays in building social capital,

‘(an) essential component of everyday life, playing a valuable social, cultural and economic role, providing enjoyment for people, a livelihood for some, and promoting a healthy lifestyle’

(Local Authority 3 Town Development Plan, pg. 65).

This ‘building of social capital’ is in line with the literature reviewed, as published findings include sport as having the capacity to increase ‘social capital’ – the degree of social interaction, interpersonal trust and shared understanding enjoyed by individuals in communities (Irish Sport Council, 2004; Coalter, 2007).

Increasing participation and target groups were further identified catalysts for two local authorities, whilst ‘others’ was identified by one local authority as a catalyst for commitment to sport and physical activity
A further analysis of development plans highlights how accessibility to facilities and social capital drives their commitment,

‘the provision of open space, recreation and amenity facilities, which can cater for the demands of an increasing population and which will be accessible for all sectors and age groups of the population is a central element in the delivery of sustainable communities’

(Local Authority 7 Town Development Plan, pg. 11).

This is supported by Navan Town Council, which focuses specifically on provision for children, ‘play and recreational opportunities are essential for children...Children’s need for play remains constant across time and territories’ (Local Authority 4 Town Development Plan, 2013, pg. 144)

To summarise, it has been identified above that there are a number of catalysts for Irish local authorities to commit to sport and physical activity. These catalysts have been identified as being relatively inconsistent across the local authorities analysed. The surveys and interviews highlighted different catalysts for some local authorities not provided in any of their development plans, and vice versa. This information indicates that local authorities have differing agendas when committing to sport and the belief of the benefits of sport by individuals with policy responsibility does not necessarily drive commitment levels, but instead may drive the direction of commitment. As previously highlighted, the majority of the Irish local authority catalysts for sport and physical activity provision are strongly supported by research in this area whilst aligning with various government objectives.

4.4.2 The Barriers for Commitment to Sport and Physical Activity by Local Authorities

The National Children’s Office (2005, p.11) highlight a number of barriers for participation in sport and physical activity such as “structural barriers... lack of money,
time, facilities...”. This research sought to seek further clarification as to what barriers existed to the local authorities in their commitment level for the provision of sport and physical activity.

No specific information on barriers to commitment was obtained through the local authority survey. Though there may be some suggestion from the statistical data that a barrier to provision is the person of influence in the local authority, as indicated by the outlier discovered when exploring beliefs held on the benefits of sport (see table 4.14 above). This person may have the influence and control to dictate what levels of commitment their local authority provides and if they have a personal feeling towards a certain direction, they may support that, as this data indicates. Delving further into the profile of the outlier in respect of beliefs about the benefits of sport, the data indicates that this is a person is not a member of any sports club, which is different to all other respondents and their town scored the second lowest in terms of overall commitment levels.

To support this assumption, this outlier is employed by a local authority who, judging by their town development plans, firmly believe in the benefits of sport,

‘The Councils recognise that sport is an essential component of everyday life, playing a valuable social, cultural and economic role, providing enjoyment for people, a livelihood for some, and promoting a healthy lifestyle’

(Local Authority 3 Town Development Plan, 2013)

This information also suggests that the belief and commitment level of the local authority person charged with the responsibility for sport and physical activity does not directly correlate with the town council’s plans. It is also worth noting at this point that this ‘outlier’ works for a local authority that clearly favours an ‘enabler’ approach to sport and physical activity commitment which indicates a hands-off approach.
Interviewee 3 was the only interviewee to mention barriers to commitment to sport and physical activity provision, and discussed a number of barriers similar to those identified by the National Children’s Office (2005). Interviewee 3 stated;

“I suppose trying to have the money as well is the problem. And, I suppose, a big issue you have is having enough land to cater for demand. That’s probably the main issues. We don’t have enough land when sports clubs come looking for land”

(Interviewee 3)

Both of the other interviewees did not provide any information as to barriers to commitment to sport and physical activity.

The document analysis of the local authority town development plans, as highlighted in table 4.14 above, identified two barriers to commitment to sport and physical activity by local authorities, both of which are mirrored in the literature and by interviewee 3. These barriers are ‘limited public lands available and limited finance and resources’, both identified in one development plan (Local Authority 2).

In terms of identifying barriers to commitment, it was not entirely consistent across the research what the main barriers are. When looking specifically at the relevant literature, interview data and the town development plan analysis, it is consistent that the lack of land and financial resources are barriers for commitment, although these are only mentioned by a small minority of local authorities. These barriers are further supported historically by the literature surrounding sports development as highlighted by Amara et al. (2005), who describes material disparities such as resources, facilities, programmes, financials, equipment and personnel available for sport and physical activity participation, as being significant factors in differing levels of participation.

Regardless of the lack of identified barriers present for local authorities in Ireland, they are still seen as key players to the provision of sport and physical activity (Department of Environment, 2001; Callanan and Keogan, 2003; Irish Sports Council, 2009).
4.5 THE IMPACT OF LOCAL AUTHORITY COMMITMENT TO SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ON INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY LIFE

This section reports the findings relating to the impact of local authority commitment to sport and physical activity on individual and collective dimensions of community life. This data were collected from one source which was the citizen survey (Appendix B). The dimensions of community life analysed were:

- Life Satisfaction
- Quality of Life
- Physical Activity Levels
- Neighbourhood Cohesion and,
- Citizen Perception of their Town

The researcher began by testing all data sets to see whether or not they were normally distributed and did this using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results would dictate what test would be used to analyse the data. The normality tests for all individual life dimensions indicated that the data were not normally distributed; therefore non-parametric tests were conducted for correlations. This research also looked at differences and for this used Mann-Whitney tests.

Table 4.17 provides an overview of results from the tests carried out investigating the impact of local authority commitment on the various life dimensions of citizens in terms of the correlations between local authority commitment and collective individual benefits. The following sections will discuss these results further.
Table 4.17 Correlations between Local Authority Commitment and Citizen Life Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of life</th>
<th>Town Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Life Satisfaction Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Perception Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.202**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Social Cohesion Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Total Mins Walking Per Week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Total Mins Vigorous Activity Per Week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Total Mins Moderate Activity Per Week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This section analyses the link between the levels of commitment of Irish local authorities and its impact on the life satisfaction levels of the citizens living in that town.

In analysing the data from the citizen survey, table 4.17 highlights, through a Spearman test, that there is not a significant relationship (R= .003, P= .959) between current provision levels of Irish local authorities and its impact on citizen life satisfaction levels. This lack of relationship does not reflect research carried out by
Jennen and Uhlenbruck (2004) and Zullig and White (2010) who suggest that life satisfaction not only improves with sport and physical activity participation, especially amongst children and young adults, but can also diminish as people become less active.

4.4.2 Individual Dimension – Quality of Life

This section analyses the link between the levels of commitment of Irish local authorities and its impact on the quality of life of their towns’ citizens.

The Spearman test carried out indicates that there is not a significant relationship (R= .033, P= .613) between provision levels and its impact on citizen quality of life. These results are not echoed by the literature which indicates that participation in physical activity levels are strongly linked to improved quality of life amongst citizens. The literature directly links physical activity with helping improve quality of life (American Heart Association, 2013). This is reflected both nationally and internationally (Government of Ireland, 2007; Hellmich, 2010)

4.4.3 Individual Dimension – Physical Activity Levels

This section analyses the link between the levels of commitment of Irish local authorities and its impact on the physical activity levels of citizens. The analysis is carried out for the population, as a whole as well as for males and females separately.

Local authorities in Ireland are seen as key players in providing opportunities for citizens to participate in physical activity (Irish Sports Council, 2011). They “provide the greatest funding to sport in Ireland” and are “one of the leading operators of sports facilities in Ireland” (Department of Education, 1997, p.21). They do this in order to
provide the citizens of Ireland with maximum opportunities to be physically active in turn, reap the rewards of an active life (Government of Ireland, 2014).

Table 4.17 has identified no significant interaction between local authority level of commitment to sport and physical activity (walking (R= .024, P= .712), moderate activity (R= .011, P= .860), and vigorous activity (R= .000, P= .999). However, a binary logistic regression test (table 4.18) indicates that the more positively a female perceives her town and the more vigorously active she is, the more likely her town is to commit to sport and physical activity provision.

Females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction Total</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td>1.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOL</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>1.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total social cohesion</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.144</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td>.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total perception of town</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>6.764</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>1.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times spent walking</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times spent vigorous</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>4.380</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>1.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times spent moderate</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1.792</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.181</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.489</td>
<td>1.229</td>
<td>1.467</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>.226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.18 Binary Logistic Regression Test for Females on Commitment vs. Physical Activity Levels and Perception
Males

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LifeSatisfactionTotal</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.882</td>
<td>.992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QOL</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>.357</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.944</td>
<td>.975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalsocialcohesion</td>
<td>-.032</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.286</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.593</td>
<td>.969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalperceptionoftown</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.975</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.323</td>
<td>1.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timespentwalking</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.819</td>
<td>.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timespentvigorous</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>2.738</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>1.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timespentmoderate</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>1.292</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.256</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>1.715</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.992</td>
<td>.982</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.19 Binary Logistic Regression Test for Females on Commitment vs. Physical Activity Levels and Perception

This data are particularly interesting as it indicates that females who perceive their town more positively and who are vigorously active are more likely to come from a town with high levels of commitment to sport and physical activity. These results are not the same for males (table 4.19).

4.4.4 Collective Dimension – Levels of Social Cohesion in Town Neighbourhoods

This section analyses the link between the levels of commitment of Irish local authorities and its impact on the levels of social cohesion within the neighbourhoods for their citizens.

The Spearman test carried out (table 4.17) indicates that there is not a significant relationship (R= .002, P= .974) between provision levels and its impact on social cohesion. However, a Mann-Whitney U test indicated a significant difference (P= .041) between male (m=115) and female (m=148) cohesion scores. These results do not support the literature which indicates that participation in physical activity levels are
linked to improved levels of social cohesion. In does not support various Irish research findings, in particular, the research carried out by the Irish Sports Council (2010) which highlights that participation and volunteering in sport and physical activity has community benefits, including the contribution to social capital and social cohesion.

4.4.5 Collective Dimension – Perception of Town

This section analyses the link between the levels of commitment of Irish local authorities and its impact on the towns’ citizens’ perception of their town.

The Spearman test carried out (table 4.17) indicates that there is a low correlation ($R = .202, P = .001$) between provision levels and its impact on citizen perception of their towns. These results are echoed by the literature which indicates that provision of sport and physical activity opportunities has a positive impact on how a person perceives their town (Department of Environment, Health and Local Government, 2013; Town and County Planning Association 2013), and the benefits of these perceptions (De Bourdeaudhuij et al., 2015). A Mann-Whitney U test also showed a significant difference ($P = .020$) between male perception scores ($m=114$) and female scores ($m=149$).

This data is particularly interesting as it indicates that females who perceive their town more positively ($P = .009$) and who are vigorously active ($P = .036$) are more likely to come from a town with higher levels of commitment to sport and physical activity. These results are not the same in males which perhaps indicates that females are more perceptive than males in terms of how they view their town as a result of sport and physical activity provision.

4.5 LOCAL AUTHORITY MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES FOR SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROVISION

This section will provide an analysis of the Irish local authority practices with respect to monitoring and evaluation of sport and physical activity.
As highlighted in chapter two, monitoring and evaluation is an important aspect of any planning and implementing all initiatives - be it local authority or not. Coalter (2007) highlights that the success or impact of any plan cannot be accurately measured without an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework in place.

When investigating correlation between the quantitative data for the total commitment levels of local authority obtained through the local authority survey, and the total number of methods used for monitoring and evaluation by the local authorities (table 4.19), it was discovered that there is a significant correlation \( r = 0.003 \) between the two. This suggests that the number of methods used to monitor and evaluate sport and physical activity provision in Ireland is informed by the overall commitment levels of local authorities.

Table 4.19 below provides an overview of the methods used by each local authority in order to monitor and evaluate its commitment to sport and physical activity provision. It clearly shows a significant gap in commitment to monitoring and evaluation. 33\% (n=3) of local authorities do not use any of the methods mentioned in the survey (see below) to monitor and evaluate their commitment to sport and physical activity. This is in stark contrast to 44\% (n=4) of local authorities who carry out at least five (one used six) of the listed methods of monitoring and evaluation. The other 22\% (n=2) of local authorities used one of the forms of monitoring and evaluation. It is worth noting that the 44\% of local authorities who used at least five methods of monitoring and evaluation also happen to be the four highest scoring local authorities for overall commitment to sport and physical activity provision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority Provision Score</th>
<th>Community Consultation</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Needs Assessments</th>
<th>Surveys</th>
<th>Facility Records</th>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total methods of M&amp;E used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority 1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

129
Table 4.19 Methods of Monitoring and Evaluation by Irish Local Authorities for Sport and Physical Activity

This data highlights a mixed approach to monitoring and evaluation by Irish local authorities. This is not surprising given that the field of monitoring and evaluation in sport is widely considered to be an 'historical issue' (Coalter, 2007; Bloyce and Smith, 2009). It is also possible that some local authorities do little or no monitoring and evaluation as it is strongly associated with accountability and assigning blame. Therefore, should a programme, or elements of the programme, be perceived to be failing according to the agreed criteria and objectives, this may reflect poorly upon the local authority (Pawson, 2006; Coalter, 2007; Bloyce et al., 2008). It can also be a costly process for which many local authorities don’t see the value (Weiss, 1993).

In terms of methods of monitoring and evaluation, there is not much of a preference by local authorities. Forty four percent (n=4) of local authorities used community consultations and surveys as a method for monitoring and evaluation. These were the two most popular choices. These methods were followed by all the other options. Thirty three percent (n=3) selected focus groups, needs assessments, facility records, questionnaires and others. It is therefore not obvious to gauge what method works best for Irish local authority monitoring and evaluation of sport and physical activity.
provision, although it does highlight a lack of a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation.

As well as the aforementioned methods of monitoring and evaluation, in Ireland, local authorities are encouraged to use service indicators in order to monitor service delivery (LGMSB, 2005). Table 4.20 below provides data as to what extent the local authority employees believe these performance indicators are used. The results show that only 11% (n=1) of local authority respondents strongly agree that these are actively used while a further 11% (n=1) agree that they are. 33% (n=3) are neutral, whilst 33% (n=3) strongly disagree that performance indicators are actively used to monitor and evaluate sport and recreation. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009) highlights how performance indicators do not provide an accurate reading of the local authority performance, more so a general overview. This lack of accurate information is perhaps reflected in the local authority's approaches to using performance indicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Indicators are Actively Used to Monitor and Evaluate Sport and Recreation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongly Agree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agree</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutral</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disagree</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.20 Perceived Use of Performance Indicators Used by Local Authorities

In analysing the local authority interviews, there is a further sense of inconsistency when it comes to monitoring and evaluation. Interviewee 2 gave the following statement when asked about their monitoring and evaluation practices;

"Regards our own active recreation, rather than sporting recreation, we count cyclists and we count the foot fall on the streets in the city. They give you a footfall, a traffic count, a cyclist count, which is what we are interested in really." (Interviewee 2)
On the other hand, when asked if they carried out any monitoring and evaluation, Interviewee 3 responded, “not that I know of”. Interviewee 3 continued,

“Town playgrounds let’s say, and pitches, you would just see if they are being used or not. The playgrounds, we knew ourselves the playgrounds were being used, every time we would go by it there were children on it so we would know that.” (Interviewee 3)

Interviewee 1 mentioned how they get their information from the local sports partnership that provide details on “how many events they hold through the year or what sports they have promoted or how many events they have promoted”.

In terms of performance/service indicators, there was a similar response. Interviewee 1 remarks that performance indicators are used for “things that involve recreation”. Interviewee 2 did not mention their use of performance indicators, whilst Interviewee 3 provided a vague answer when asked about their use of performance indicators. Interviewee 3 states, “We probably sent stuff up to them (County Council) but I don’t know because they are all done from the County Council”.

As highlighted in the interview data, the approaches discussed by the interviewees are inconsistent. This information further highlights Coalter (2007), in that monitoring and evaluation of sport and physical activity is an issue. It is clear that the local authorities in Ireland do not have an approach used countrywide. This makes the monitoring and evaluation of sport and physical activity extremely difficult to do and the data in many ways becomes incomparable.

To summarise, the information presented on monitoring and evaluation for sport and physical activity provision indicates that there is an inconsistent approach across all local authorities in Ireland. From the survey data, there are consistencies in that the local authorities who are the top providers in terms of commitment score tend to carry out more monitoring and evaluation in comparison to their counterparts who have lower commitment scores. In terms of performance indicators as a method of
monitoring and evaluating sport and physical activity, a minority (33%) either agree or strongly agree that performance indicators are actively used, whilst a majority (66%) are neutral or disagree that they are used. This is consistent with the interview data of interviewee 3 (33%) who confirmed that performance indicators were actively used.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has analysed the research findings from the study and discussed these findings against the context of pertinent literature in the field of local authority involvement in the provision of sport and physical activity, their roles and its impact. The following final chapter will take these findings and make some recommendations in order to further investigate the impact of local authority commitment to sport and physical activity and identify guiding principles for impactful sport and physical activity delivery.
CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
5.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed, local authorities in Ireland have long been one of the most significant contributors to the provision of sport and physical activity (Sugrue, 2004; Irish Sports Council, 2011). To this day they are seen as one of the major providers of facilities for sport and physical activity in Ireland. Alongside facility provision, local authorities have often been contributors to other forms of provision such as programmes and personnel, and have historically achieved this through a variety of approaches. Local authorities can act as direct providers, enablers or partners. Through providing sport and physical activity, it is the intentions of the local authorities to achieve a variety of outcomes related to society citizen life dimensions.

Local authorities are policy bound to provide a variety of facilities including swimming pools and playgrounds so all other provision appears to be left to the discretion of the local authority itself. There also exists a number of policy documents, highlighted throughout chapter two, which strongly encourage and support programme provision although there is nothing suggesting that local authorities must comply and/or employ sport and physical activity professionals. Through the data obtained in the local authority survey, it was evident that there was not a consistent approach in terms of levels of commitment to sport and physical activity provision amongst local authorities in Ireland. Some local authorities received a high commitment score whilst other scored an extremely low in overall commitment. Local authorities had a preference to provide facilities, ahead of programmes and then personnel.

It became clear that local authorities have a certain level of autonomy when it comes to commitment levels to sport and physical activity, therefore it was important to understand the catalysts and barriers to this commitment. Identifying what drove or limited provision is important to understanding how best to deliver effective provision and see if the local authorities faced similar challenges. It became apparent (although no significant correlation was discovered) that one potential catalyst to commitment was the belief in the power of sport by the person responsible for the direction of
sport and physical activity provision in the local authority. Whilst this was also seen as a potential barrier, for example, lower levels of commitment would be provided by a council where the town clerk did not believe that sport made significant impacts on citizen life dimensions. The most consistent catalysts for commitment across the data from the three research sources included:

- Quality of Life
- Social Benefits
- Aligning with Government Policy
- Health
- Increasing Participation and,
- Targeting Specific Societal Groups (more specifically, women and girls).

The barriers to provision of sport and physical activity commitment indicated through the research mirrored the literature reviewed in that the two main barriers identified by local authorities were, limited public lands and limited financial resources.

Through the different forms of provision, below are a number of identified outcomes sought by local authorities;

- Life Satisfaction
- Quality of Life
- Physical Activity Levels
- Neighbourhood Cohesion
- Citizen Perception of the Town

Whilst these outcomes are widely recognised to be achievable through sport and physical activity provision, it is important to recognise whether or not they are actually being achieved. Historically, there has been a relatively unchallenged acceptance that sport and physical activity provide positive outcomes (Coalter, 2007) and these assumptions have often driven policy, internationally and in Ireland. It is important though to understand the significance of local authority commitment to sport and
physical activity in relation to desired outcomes, and identify whether or not their approach and commitment is having the anticipated effect.

The citizen survey data analysis highlighted some significant results not identified in the literature which was that, females who positively perceive their town and who are vigorously active are more likely to come from a town with higher levels of commitment to sport and physical activity. No other significant impacts were discovered which was surprising given the strength of literature claiming the impact sport and physical activity had on these various life dimensions.

As monitoring and evaluation is seen as a key component to the planning and delivery of sport and physical activity (Coalter, 2007; Bloyce and Smith, 2009), local authority practices were investigated and analysed. The first results indicted clear disparities amongst local authorities with some not carrying out any methods of monitoring and evaluation whilst others were carrying out five or six methods. The results also indicated that there was a significant correlation (r=.003) between the levels of commitment of local authorities and their commitment to monitoring and evaluation. The local authorities who scored highly in terms of overall commitment tended to carry out significantly more monitoring and evaluation than those with lower commitment levels. Those who scored highly in their commitment levels also tended to use a very mixed approach to monitoring and evaluation.

5.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR IMPACTFUL SPORTS DEVELOPMENT BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

An objective of this research was to identify guiding principles for impactful sports development for local authorities in Ireland. The following guiding principles were discovered throughout the review of literature and whilst analysing all other data, these are the areas where the author believes local authorities in Ireland can address to provide more of an impactful approach with the sport and physical activity provision.
1. The planning process for sport and physical activity should align with those identified in the local plan-making process, particularly where there is a need to promote specific actions and achieve objectives (TCPA, 2013). Furthermore plans should reflect national strategic priorities in order to enhance coherency between local authorities and reduce the evident inconsistencies in policy and practice identified in this study. There is a need to ensure that the planning system and local authority development plans are ‘plan-led’. This means the decisions are made in accordance with policies and strategic priorities for local authorities. These plans and subsequent decisions should be supported by a comparable evidence base across all local authorities. However all decisions should be based on local evidence on the quality and quantity of existing provision, and the local potential to extend opportunities to participate in, and engage with, sporting activities (TCPA, 2013).

2. Throughout this study, it has been identified that there is an inconsistent approach to collaborative working by Irish local authorities with respect to sport and physical activity provision. To achieve a more impactful approach to commitment, it is therefore necessary for local authority personnel with responsibility for sport and active recreation to work with public health professionals and other policy makers and practitioners (e.g. the education sector, police, community development and youth organisations as well as sporting bodies) (De Bourdeaudhuij et al., 2015). In each case there is a need for role clarity and a shared sense of purpose in order to agree goals and criteria for successful achievement of these goals (Hylton and Bramham, 2007).

3. Engagement with communities and stakeholders in the sport sector early in the plan making process will be of greater benefit than simply responding to a consultation at draft plan stage (TCPA, 2013). In order to democratise and make more relevant any plan that is devised to cater for local need there is a
requirement to give voice to local representatives across life-stages, ethnic groupings and ability levels (Council of Europe, 2010).

4. Under the Reform Act, 2014, local authorities are delegating some responsibility – not exclusive responsibility – to local development agencies for ‘community interests’, which may include sport and recreation. With that in mind, it is important that a department within the local authority assumes responsibility for monitoring and tracking the work of this third party organisation. With that in mind, it is essential for a local authority to establish a framework to monitor and evaluate any commitment to sport and physical activity (Rist, 2004; Coalter, 2007). With the correct framework, local authorities will be able to more accurately establish the impact of any commitment.

5. Providing an adequate and appropriate infrastructure as sporting facilities and services are important elements of a locality’s community infrastructure (TCPA, 2013).

6. Following on the identified inconsistencies of local authorities with regards to collaboration, the WHO (2006) also strongly encourages the building of partnerships with the private, voluntary sectors, as well as with the professional and community sectors. This is aimed at improving partnership working which has been identified as a weakness of Irish local authorities and improve planning, infrastructures, and engagement with provision (WHO, 2006). While local authorities have been a key member of local sports partnerships since their inception over a decade ago, the evidence suggests that they have not fully embraced this role. The need for training in the operations of partnership working is evident. This training needs to be focused on the person/department with responsibility for sport and recreation within the local authority. Partnership working involves building and maintaining
trusting and respectful relationships – these need to be fully resourced in respect of time and effort in order for mutual benefit to be gained for all partners.

7. Being clear about intended outcomes from the beginning of the planning process, and being clear about how these outcomes are to be fed into the planning process, whether through a strategy, an action plan, or a supplementary planning document is paramount. This will help inform the monitoring and evaluation frameworks recommended also (Coalter, 2007; TCPA, 2013).

8. Show leadership in the delivery and promotion of sport and physical activity provision. Create local role models and set the example for the citizens (WHO, 2006). The recruitment and training of local authority personnel for the position of sport and recreation co-ordinator requires significant attention to ensure that the person has both the professional competencies and the personal commitment to work strategically with other organisations and individuals, to negotiate goals and strategies to develop local sport for the optimal benefit of all citizens, irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity or disability status.

5.3 CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

The following table provides an overview of the research objectives set out at the beginning of this research project and presents a summary of the study findings associated with each objective.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Research Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Quantify the commitment of Local Authorities regarding sport, physical</td>
<td>The quantitative data highlighted inconsistent levels of commitment between local authorities. Where one local authority scored the lowest of 14 for overall provision, another scored the highest of 64.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity and active recreation in terms of personnel, facilities and</td>
<td>The most frequent area of provision was facilities (144), which was significantly more than the lowest area of provision, personnel (44), whilst programmes scored 78 overall by participating local authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programme delivery.</td>
<td>The analysis of approaches to provision indicated that direct provider approach was the most likely (113) followed by an enabling approach (93) and a partner approach (60).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To identify the catalysts and barriers for commitment to sport and</td>
<td>The data on catalysts to commitment was not consistent across the quantitative and qualitative data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical activity by Local Authorities.</td>
<td>A number of catalysts identified in through the qualitative data include (improving);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Quality of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social Betterment (social inclusion and socialisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Aligning with National Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Local success was also discovered as a catalyst to commitment by a number of local authorities.

The quantitative data indicated that there is no significant correlation between local authority beliefs of sport and their commitment levels. Yet on the other hand, it is possible that a barrier may be beliefs, as the outlying local authority respondent who didn’t feel as strongly about the impact of sport also happened to work for one of the lowest scoring local authorities for overall provision.

The other notable barriers to commitment for local authorities were limited public lands available as well as limited finances and resources.

3. Conduct an analysis of the impact of Local Authority commitment to sport and physical activity on individual and collective dimensions of community life.

The quantitative data highlighted that there is a significant relationship between how females perceive their town, participation in vigorous physical activity and the local authority commitment levels. The more a local authority commits to the
provision of sport and physical activity, the more likely it is that the females of that town will perceive it more positively and take part in more vigorous physical activity.

No other significant relationships were discovered between local authority commitment levels and citizen life dimensions.

| 4. Examine Local Authority monitoring and evaluation practices for sport and physical activity provision. | This research identified that there is a very significant correlation between the number of methods local authorities use to monitor and evaluate sport and physical activity delivery and the overall commitment levels of local authorities. This indicates that the overall commitment levels to sport and physical activity inform the level of monitoring and evaluation carried out.

The qualitative and quantitative data indicated that there is an inconsistent approach to the monitoring and evaluation of sport and physical activity by local authorities in Ireland.

It was also identified through the qualitative and quantitative data that there is a very significant relationship between the number of methods for monitoring and evaluation and the overall commitment levels of local authorities. Those who are committing more to sport, are doing |
more to monitor and evaluate the impact of this commitment. There is no specifically preferred form of monitoring and evaluation.

The quantitative and qualitative data also indicates that there is not a consistent approach to the use of performance indicators as a method for monitoring and evaluation.

| 5. Identify guiding principles for impactful local sports development by Local Authorities. | See the following section |

Table 5.1 Summary of Findings against Research Objectives

This research began by identifying support of the historical approach by local authorities in Ireland with respect to being predominantly direct providers for the provision of sport and physical activity (Smith, 1997). This is a similar approach taken to other nations and doesn’t appear to have changed much in recent times. Despite recommendations by Sport England (2009), Local Government Association (2009) and the Irish Sports Council (2011) suggesting a collaborative approach as being the most effective way to achieve wider social outcomes, local authorities in Ireland, perhaps as a result of government policy, are a long way off having this as their preferred approach to sport and physical activity delivery. Given the fact that a direct provider approach has and still is the preferred approach to the delivery of sport and physical activity provision, it is also therefore difficult to gauge what the most effective method of delivery is.

It is also evident through this research that there are a number of catalysts that drive local authority commitment to sport and physical activity. These catalysts threw up no
surprises and are representative of the research carried out in the area of sports impact on wider social outcomes (Houlihan and White, 2002; Coalter, 2007; Department of Health, 2014). These catalysts are widely supported by the literature, particularly around quality of life, social inclusion/socialisation, under-represented groups and health. What was also identified as a catalyst to provision in Ireland is the success of local clubs and athletes. It is not clear whether or not this is a catalyst specific to Irish local authorities or is reflected internationally.

In terms of barriers identified through this research, there were two notable barriers to commitment for local authorities, which were limited public lands available, as well as limited finances and resources. The barriers were identified by the persons responsible for the delivery of sport and physical activity provision and are in line with historical barriers (Amara et al., 2005). No other barriers were identified throughout the research.

So is it worth it?... The investigation into the impact of local authority commitment to sport and physical activity on citizen life dimensions is ultimately what is trying to be achieved through this research. The answer is that it is worth it if local authorities care for how their citizens perceive the town and how physically active the female population is. As previously highlighted, there is a significant relationship between how females perceive their town, participation in vigorous physical activity and the local authority commitment levels. The more a local authority commits to the provision of sport and physical activity, the more likely it is that the females of that town will perceive it more positively and take part in more vigorous physical activity.

The research did not highlight any other significant relationships between the overall level of commitment by local authorities and the other dimensions of citizen life. That being said, it is enough to say commitment is worth it as they are not only improving how female citizens perceived their town, but they are also simultaneously ‘hitting’ an under-represented target group for participation in vigorous physical activity. This was
already previously identified as a catalyst for commitment so they are showing signs of success in achieving this.

The qualitative and quantitative data indicated that there is an inconsistent approach to the monitoring and evaluation of sport and physical activity by local authorities in Ireland.

Monitoring and evaluation is linked to accountability and responsibility which there is a push for amongst local authorities, particularly given financial situation of recent times. Without effective monitoring and evaluation, it becomes increasingly difficult to evaluate the intended and unintended outcomes of provision, and so their efficacy is difficult to determine. The research has identified clear inconsistencies in the local authority’s monitoring and evaluation practices. Some local authorities have no practices in place whatsoever whilst others are using up to six, and possibly more, methods in order to monitor and evaluate their provision.

These results both compound and contradict the historical failure to adequately and continuously monitor and evaluate sport and physical activity provision which has dogged sports development historically (Coalter, 2007; Bloyce and Smith, 2009). On one hand, you have 44% of local authorities using at least five methods of monitoring and evaluation, whilst 33% use one method and 22% of local authorities doing no form of monitoring and evaluation of their sport and physical activity provision.

The research did identify a very significant correlation (r=.889) between the number of methods for monitoring and evaluation and the overall commitment score of local authorities. This highlights that that the overall level of provision informs the monitoring and evaluation practices of local authorities. In short, local authorities who are committing more to sport are also doing more to monitor and evaluate the impact of this commitment. Although, it was not obvious from the research what the preferred form of monitoring and evaluation was.
Through the quantitative and qualitative data, the research also indicates that there is not a consistent approach to the use of performance indicators as a method for monitoring and evaluation.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding chapters and sections have reported and discussed the results of this research and have identified a number of significant findings as well as some results that would benefit from further research. Due to the importance of local authorities in Ireland as sport and physical activity providers, it merits more research to be carried out in order to guide their planning and delivery of sport and physical activity in the future to ensure more impactful approach.

Local Authority Commitment

The Local Government Reform Act (2014) will potentially change the operational approach of local authorities to programmes which are classified as being in the ‘community interest’. Thus the findings of this study may be viewed as baseline for future studies measuring how the reforms have impacted upon local authority commitment levels. Investigations of consistency across local authorities since the change will also be pertinent, given the increased emphasis on accountability under the new legislation.

More research needs to be carried out internationally to discover the most effective forms of sport and physical activity provision in order to guide future practice for Irish local authorities. Due to the current inconsistent nature of sport and physical activity provision in Ireland and other jurisdictions, this information would assist local authorities in many countries in their future planning.

Catalysts and Barriers

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Catalysts and barriers are perceived so are they real? More research needs to be carried out to identify whether these are real; this research found the main documented catalyst for commitment to sport and physical activity was *quality of life* yet this research indicates that there is no significant correlation between commitment levels of local authorities to sport and recreation and quality of life. While acknowledging that the instrument used in the study has its origins in the United States and hence there may be some cultural issues – there will be a need to identify/develop a quality of life instrument tailored to local authority use.

Following on from the perceived catalysts identified through the study, it would be worthwhile researching the educational background and training of the local authority personnel responsible for sport and physical activity.

**Impact of Commitment on Citizen Life Dimensions**

This research has identified that commitment levels impact citizen perception of their town as well as identifying that women who perceive their town positively and who are vigorously active tend to come from towns with high sport and physical activity provision. More research needs to be carried out to see if there are more under-represented groups impacted by local authority commitment e.g. ethnic minorities, disabled, older adults. A number of local authorities identified target groups in their planning documentation – there is a need to explore the potential power of local provision to a range of life dimensions of these target groups. This can only be done through sustained and rigorous research activities.

**Monitoring and Evaluation of Sport and Physical Activity Commitment**

The results of this study indicted a strong relationship with overall local authority commitment scores and the number of methods used to monitor and evaluate sport and physical activity. More research needs to be carried out to identify what the most
effective methods of monitoring and evaluation are for Irish local authorities. What gets measured gets done is an adage in the corporate world, likewise the need to measure what matters is recognised. Clarity of purpose on behalf of local authorities is required in respect of sport and recreation in order for them to identify the desired outcomes of their efforts in this policy area and subsequently monitor their efforts to provide accountability for the use of resources while simultaneously generating ongoing learning to inform their future efforts.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A

List of the participating local authorities. The order of this list is alphabetical and in no way linked to the numbered local authorities throughout the research.

1. Carlow
2. Celbridge
3. Clonmel
4. Ennis
5. Kilkenny
6. Naas
7. Navan
8. Tralee
9. Wexford
Appendix B

Citizen Survey

We lend your time to assisting in this research by completing the following survey.

Please remember ..... 

1. A) There are no right or wrong answers
2. B) Your identity will be kept anonymous and never revealed
3. C) Please answer all questions
4. D) Please provide only one answer per question
5. E) Please be open and honest with all answers

If you prefer, please call 0667145674 and we can do some or all of the survey by phone. Alternatively, you email ushe@research.ittralee.ie for more information.

1. **Satisfaction with Life**

We are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the scale below, indicate your agreement by placing a tick in the box which represents your views.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ways my life is close to my dreams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions of my life are good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have gotten the things I want in life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I live my life over, I wish I change almost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quality of Life**

Things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole? **Please circle your answer.**

1. Very satisfied
2. Moderately satisfied
3. No feelings either way
4. Moderately dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied
**Social Cohesion of Neighbourhood**

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? **Please tick one box for each statement.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People around my neighbourhood are willing to help their other neighbours.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a close-knit neighbourhood.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in this neighbourhood can be trusted.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in this neighbourhood generally get along with each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in this neighbourhood do not share the same values.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Perception of Town**

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? **Please tick one box for each statement.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with where I am living.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My town is well kept and maintained.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are suitable facilities for sport and physical activities in my town.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My town contains an adequate space for sport and physical activity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It did not change anything about my interest in sport and physical activity facilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Places for Walking and Cycling**

Please tick the appropriate box for each statement that best applies to you and your neighbourhood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are footpaths on most of the streets in my neighbourhood.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths in my neighbourhood are well maintained (even, and not a lot of cracks).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are bicycle or pedestrian trails in or near my neighbourhood that are easy to get to.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paths are separated from the road/traffic in my neighbourhood by parked cars.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a grass/dirt strip that separates the streets from paths in my neighbourhood.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is safe to ride a bike in or near my neighbourhood.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are facilities to cycle in or near my neighbourhood, special use lanes, separate paths or trails, shared use for cyclists and pedestrians.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Convenient Facilities

Each of these places where you can exercise, please indicate if it is on a frequently travelled route (e.g., to and from work) or within a 5-minute drive or 10-minute walk from your work or home. Please tick one answer for each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>DON'T KNOW</th>
<th>IF YES, PLEASE TICK IF YOU HAVE USED THIS FACILITY IN THE PAST 3 MONTHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aeroic/dance studio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basketball court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beach, lake, or river</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bike lane or trails</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>golf course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health spa/gym</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partial arts studio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laying field (soccer, football, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public park</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public recreation centre /sports hall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>racquetball/squash court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>running track</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swimming pool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walking/hiking trails</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tennis courts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you say that... (Please tick the appropriate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neighbourhood has several free or low cost recreation facilities, such as parks, walking trails, bike paths, recreation centres, playgrounds, public swimming pools, community centre, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sports clubs and other local providers offer many opportunities to be physically active.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You are almost there.
Recreation, Sport, and Leisure-Time Physical Activity

This section is about all the physical activities that you did in the last 7 days solely for recreation, sport, exercise or leisure. Please answer or tick where appropriate.

During the last 7 days, on how many days did you walk for at least 10 minutes at a time in your leisure time?

_____ Days per week or □ none [If none, go to question 3]

How much time did you usually spend on ONE of those days walking in your leisure time?

___ Hours ______ minutes per day

Think about only those physical activities that you did for at least 10 minutes at a time. During the last 7 days, on how many days did you do vigorous physical activities like aerobics, running, fast bicycling, or fast swimming in your leisure time?

_____ Days per week or □ none [If none, go to question 5]

How much time did you usually spend on ONE of those days doing vigorous physical activities in your leisure time?

___ Hours ______ minutes per day

Again, think about only those physical activities that you did for at least 10 minutes at a time. During the last 7 days, on how many days did you do moderate physical activities like bicycling at a regular pace, swimming at a regular pace, and doubles tennis in your leisure time?

_____ Days per week or □ none

How much time did you usually spend on ONE of those days doing moderate physical activities in your leisure time?

___ Hours ______ minutes per day
**Personal Information**

- **Address**: 
- **How long have you lived in your area?**: ____ YEARS _____ MONTHS
- **Is your place of work/study within a 15 kilometre radius of your home? Please Tick Appropriate Box**
  - NO

**Please Tick Appropriate Box**

- 16-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66+

**Gender**:
- Male
- Female

**Ethnicity**:
- (Irish, British, Other)
- Chinese
- Irish
- Mixed Race (White and Black Caribbean / White and Black African / White and Asian / Other Mixed)
- Indian / Pakistani / Bangladeshi / Other Asian
- Caribbean / African / Other Black

**Disability**: (Do you have a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits your daily activities or what you do). YES NO

**Economic Status (Please tick appropriate answer)**:
- Looking for payment or profit
- Employed
- Student or pupil
- Caring after home/family
- Red from employment
- Able to work due to permanent sickness or illness

**Please answer the following questions by ticking either yes or no.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you a member of any local sports club?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a playing member e.g. do you compete and/or play on a team?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In past 4 weeks, have you done volunteer work with any political/sporting/religious/charitable organisation?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I done......You are finished.

Thank you, your help is much appreciated.
Appendix C

Local Authority Employee Survey

Lend your time to assisting in this research by completing the following survey.

remember....

- There are no right or wrong answers
- Your identity will be kept anonymous and never revealed
- Please answer all questions
- Please be open and honest with all answer

refer, please call 067145674 and we can do some or all of the survey by phone. Alternatively, you email re@research.ittra.ie for more information.

Consider the potential impact of sport, physical activity and recreation at community level listed below. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement. Please refer to the table below to answer, ticking the appropriate boxes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Activity and Recreation make a positive contribution to...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Stewardship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Safety (i.e., crime prevention)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Cohesion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ism Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d Investment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rate on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest) the role of the local authority by which you are employed, in the provision of physical activity opportunities.

1 (Lowest) 5 (Middle) 10 (Highest)
Facility and Amenity Provision

Please complete the table by ticking the appropriate box, for each of the approaches.

Read the descriptions of different styles of Authority provision alongside.

| A Direct Provider Approach: “This involves local authorities directly providing facilities, skill development courses and the opportunity to participate”. (Smith, 1997, p.13) |
| A Enabler Approach: “...This involves the application of human and financial resources to encourage others to provide the facilities and level of activity necessary to meet their own or the community’s needs”. (Smith, 1997, p.13-14) ‘Sharing of developmental responsibility with other agencies’. |
| A Partner Approach: Fostering partnerships with potential partner agencies such as schools, sport and leisure facilities and commercial organisations. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility/Amenity Provision</th>
<th>Do you directly provide the facilities below?</th>
<th>Do you enable others to provide the facilities below?</th>
<th>Do you have a partnership arrangement to provide the facilities below?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aic/Dance studio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etball court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h, lake or river amenities e.g. Jetty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lanes/trails</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h gym/spa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tial arts studio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ing field (soccer, football etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recreation centre /Sports hall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ing track</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ash/racquetball court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nning pool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ing/hiking trails</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e of the above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or: (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you ticked ‘YES’ as an enabler or partner, please complete table 3 (b) below, otherwise go to question 4 (a).
Collaborations for Sport and Recreation on Facility Provision

Please complete the table by ticking the appropriate box, for each of the approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An Enabler Approach:</th>
<th>A Partner Approach:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;...This involves the application of human and financial resources to encourage others to provide the facilities and level of activity necessary to meet their own or the community's needs&quot;. (Smith, 1997, p.13-14)</td>
<td>Fostering partnerships with potential partner agencies such as schools, sport and leisure facilities and commercial organisations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please tick (YES/NO) the organisations that you are an enabler to for sport and recreation.</th>
<th>Please tick (YES/NO) the organisations your local authority collaborates with for sport and recreation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i Sports Clubs

j (please specify)
## Sport and Recreation Employment

Please complete the table by ticking the appropriate box, for each of the approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Direct Provider Approach:</td>
<td>&quot;This involves local authorities directly providing facilities, skill development courses and the opportunity to participate&quot;. (Smith, 1997, p.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Enabler Approach:</td>
<td>&quot;...This involves the application of human and financial resources to encourage others to provide the facilities and level of activity necessary to meet their own or the community's needs&quot;. (Smith, 1997, p.13-14) 'Sharing of developmental responsibility with other agencies'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Partner Approach:</td>
<td>Fostering partnerships with potential partner agencies such as schools, sport and leisure facilities and commercial organisations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Please tick (YES/NO) who you directly employ for sport and recreation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports Development Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifeguard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness Instructor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Please tick (YES/NO) whether your local authority contributes funding to the employment of the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports Development Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifeguard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness Instructor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Please tick (YES/NO) if your local authority jointly employs any of the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VEC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPW</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardaí</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Sports Clubs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have ticked ‘YES’ in the table above as an enabler or partner, please complete table 4 (b) below, otherwise go to section 5 (a).
Sport and Recreation Programme Delivery

Please complete the table by ticking the appropriate box, for each of the approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Direct Provider Approach: “This involves local authorities directly providing facilities, skill development courses and the opportunity to participate”. (Smith, 1997, p.13)</th>
<th>An Enabler Approach: “…This involves the application of human and financial resources to encourage others to provide the facilities and level of activity necessary to meet their own or the community’s needs”. (Smith, 1997, p.13-14) Sharing of developmental responsibility with other agencies.</th>
<th>A Partner Approach: Fostering partnerships with potential partner agencies such as schools, sport and leisure facilities and commercial organisations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you directly involved in delivering sport and recreation programmes to any of the following? Please tick yes or no.</td>
<td>Do you enable organisations to deliver sport and recreation programmes to the following? Please tick yes or no.</td>
<td>Do you work in partnership with other organisations to deliver sport and recreation programmes to the following? Please tick yes or no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age People</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority Tenants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age People at Risk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age with Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered yes as an enabler/partner, please complete table 5 (b) below, otherwise go to section 6.

Please tick (YES/NO) the organisations your local authority enables, in the delivery of sport and recreation programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority Tenants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age People at Risk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age with Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please tick (YES/NO) who your local authority has a partnership agreement with to deliver sport and recreational programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority Tenants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age People at Risk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age with Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Monitoring, Tracking and Evaluation**

Do you use community consultation to monitor, track and evaluate sport and recreation initiatives?

**Base tick your answer.**

- [ ] YES
- [ ] NO

**How do you monitor, track and evaluate investment in sport and recreation?**

**Base tick (YES/NO) for each method.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Records</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Disability Proofing**

**Base read the below question and tick the appropriate answer.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you done a disability audit of public sport and recreation facilities/amenities?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you done a disability audit of public footpaths?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have local authority staff responsible for sport and recreation been trained on disability awareness?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Service Delivery**

**Base tick your answers.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice indicators are actively used to monitor sport and recreation delivery of services.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Knowledge Exchange

Has a delegation from your local authority ever gone to another town to learn more about sport, physical activity and recreation provision? **Please tick your answer.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If yes, please complete the questions below, otherwise go to section 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have visited town(s)/city (ies) in Ireland?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has, please state where?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have visited town(s)/city (ies) abroad?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has, please state where?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal Information

What is the title of your current position?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Less than 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 1-2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 3-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 10+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How long have you been in this position?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Less than 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 1-2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 3-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 10+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How long have you worked for the local authority?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Less than 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 1-2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 3-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 10+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age of residence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 16-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 26-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 36-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 46-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 56-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] 66+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethnicity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Irish, British, Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Chinese/Chinese Irish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] White/Black Caribbean / White/Black African / White/Asian / Other Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Indian / Pakistani / Bangladeshi / Other Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Caribbean / African / Other Black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits your daily activities or what you do? **YES** **NO**

Are you a member of any local sports club? **YES** **NO**

Are you a playing member e.g. do you compete and/or play on a team? **YES** **NO**
Recreation, Sport, and Leisure-Time Physical Activity

This section is about all the physical activities that you did in the last 7 days solely for recreation, sport, exercise or leisure. Please answer or tick where appropriate.

During the last 7 days, on how many days did you walk for at least 10 minutes at a time in your leisure time?

_____ Days per week or □ none [If none, go to question 3]

How much time did you usually spend on ONE of those days walking in your leisure time?

____ Hours ______ minutes per day

Think about only those physical activities that you did for at least 10 minutes at a time. During the last 7 days, on how many days did you do vigorous physical activities like aerobics, running, fast bicycling, or fast swimming in your leisure time?

_____ Days per week or □ none [If none, go to question 5]

How much time did you usually spend on ONE of those days doing vigorous physical activities in your leisure time?

____ Hours ______ minutes per day

Again, think about only those physical activities that you did for at least 10 minutes at a time. During the last 7 days, on how many days did you do moderate physical activities like bicycling at a regular pace, swimming at a regular pace, and doubles tennis in your leisure time?

_____ Days per week or □ none

How much time did you usually spend on ONE of those days doing moderate physical activities in your leisure time?

____ Hours ______ minutes per day

You're finished.

Thank you for your time and effort.
Appendix D

Local Authority Interview Schedule
My name is Lee Rushe. I am a Masters student at the Institute of Technology Tralee. I am carrying out research 'investigating the impact of local authority commitment to sport and recreation focusing on life satisfaction and physical activity levels'.

The purpose of this interview is to gain valuable qualitative data from an Irish local authority perspective. All interviews are recorded and all data stored on a password secure hard-drive. All participants will remain anonymous throughout the research process and may withdraw their participation at any time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths as a Local Authority – Merits of Local Authority provision in a general sense in Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- If you were to write a statement, what is it you do well? What are the strengths of LA’s in Ireland regarding sport and recreation provision? What are you doing, and what are you doing well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the catalysts for involvement in sport and recreation for this Local Authority?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority sport and recreation provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Is sport and recreation a live area for debate between local authority’s and how often do you attend conferences and training on sport and recreation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What are the pros and cons of being a direct provider, enabler and partner?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In what context does each approach (DP/EN/PT) work best?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are you aware of any examples of good practice? Where do you look to for good practice?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitoring and Evaluation (M&amp;E)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- What are you existing frameworks for monitoring and evaluation of sport and recreation? Is this done annually?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Who is it you are accountable to? Where do you report your findings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Are you aware of good practice elsewhere?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision - Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- What might LA provision look like in the future? Could you outline to me how you see the role of LA provision in 10/15 years’ time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What do you see as the drivers for change?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

This is a list of the participating local authority’s town development plan links. The order of this list is alphabetical and in no way linked to the numbered local authorities throughout the research.


2. Celbridge -


5. Kilkenny -
   [http://ourplan.kilkenny.ie/sites/default/files/cityplan/Adopted%20City%20Plan%20for%20printing.pdf](http://ourplan.kilkenny.ie/sites/default/files/cityplan/Adopted%20City%20Plan%20for%20printing.pdf)

6. Naas -

7. Navan -
   [http://www.meath.ie/CountyCouncil/Publications/PlanningPublications/Navan](http://www.meath.ie/CountyCouncil/Publications/PlanningPublications/Navan)
8. Tralee -

9. Wexford -