

Evaluation of Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative

Submitted to

Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership

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Acronyms

ABCD	Asset-Based Community Development
CRiSP	Centre for Research in the Social Professions
ESRI	Economics and Social Research Institute
HSE	Health Services Executive
LSPs	Local Sports Partnerships
SDO	Sports Development Officer
SSRP	Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership

Executive Summary

Overview

Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership (SSRP) has co-ordinated the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative since 2006. SSRP work with partner agencies including Sligo County Council, Cranmore Regeneration Office, Cranmore Co-Operative Society and the Health Services Executive, to promote physical activity and health for residents of the Cranmore Estate. In addition they are integral in helping the residents to use sport as a tool for developing their community and building capacity in the area.

The role of Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership

Responsibility for working with partner agencies to strategically plan, develop and co-ordinate sport and recreation programmes in the Cranmore estate rests with SSRP and this is enabled through funding primarily from Sligo County Council administered through Cranmore Regeneration Office with support from the Health Service Executive. The model of delivery reflects a strong focus on working in partnership with relevant agencies at a strategic level. SSRP do not directly deliver programmes, but rather provide support, resources and expertise to community volunteers and organisations. SSRP is the link between the community and other important contacts such as coaches, sports clubs in the town and county and the funding bodies. They actively promote collaboration between agencies and sectors, as well as providing access to activities outside of the estate including some cross border engagement. SSRP have an important role in facilitating education and training for volunteers and participants with a view to building capacity at community level. SSRP in conjunction with partner agencies and the Cranmore community aims to increase the levels of physical activity of residents in the Cranmore estate; to enhance community spirit and social interaction; expand the use of existing sports facilities in the region and improve the physical and mental health of individuals. Furthermore they advocate the use of physical activity and sport as part of a wider community development strategy.

Evaluation of regeneration through sport initiative

In order to determine how effectively the model that is currently being used by SSRP to deliver the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport initiative is working, an external evaluation was commissioned. As there were no existing evaluation criteria for the programmes that are being run, an exploratory approach was taken. Therefore the evaluation was based on trying to establish if the short and medium term outcomes that form part of the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative logic model are being met (see Appendix B). Primarily the focus was to gather qualitative data from the stakeholders to determine what impact SSRP is having. In order to undertake the evaluation interviews and focus groups were undertaken with SSRP staff, Cranmore Regeneration Office Manager, Cranmore Co-operative Society and the various stakeholders such as residents,

volunteers, coaches and managers who are involved in co-ordinating the activities. Furthermore a class organised by the women's fitness group was attended to facilitate observation of how the sports programmes are run and to make as determination as to the quality of the provision. A number of themes emerged from the primary research which could form a benchmark from which future evaluations could be undertaken.

Outcomes from the initiative

The level of physical activity programmes and participants on these programmes has increased since 2006. The programmes target a range of groups including youth, men, women and older adults and it includes unemployed, Travellers, people with a disability and new communities. Activities are diverse and comprise; soccer, boxing, GAA, basketball, swimming, dance, boules, fitness classes and 'meet and train' groups (see Appendix C for list of programmes and participation rates). The qualitative data suggests that physical and mental health of those who participate in the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative is improving. Some community stakeholders commented that the number of anti-social issues in the estate has decreased as a result of the community wardens, CCTV and the SSRP programmes.

Morale in the community has improved as a result of the combined regeneration of the physical and social environment. Confidence has improved for participants across the various demographic profiles. Integration within the community has increased and education in relation to anti-racism and anti-bullying has been undertaken as well as educational activities related to healthy eating and healthy heart initiatives.

Active leadership, coaching skills, first aid, child protection and ethics training have been provided to members of the local community. SSRP have been able to provide equipment and marketing and promotional support to various sports groups who have been established in the estate.

Local sports facilities such as Cleveragh Park and the outdoor gym at Doorly Park have been used for various activities, and the use of these facilities is likely to have increased as a result. Social network capital has been improved for residents and a number of people have undertaken sporting activities in the locality that they previously would not have had the confidence or means to embark on.

There is evidence of strong collaboration and partnership working at all levels between the various agencies and local stakeholders. The impact of the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative has been acknowledged in terms of the continued development of the estate and the surrounding area; the importance of sport has been embedded in the future strategic plans for the social regeneration of Cranmore and the East Ward of Sligo.

Critical success factors

Planning and collaborative engagement at a strategic level is very important for the success of the project and crucially there is evidence of commitment to community development through sport in the Cranmore area which is reflected in the strategic plan for SSRP and the Cranmore Social

Regeneration Plan co-ordinated by Cranmore Regeneration Office on behalf of Sligo County Council. Significantly these high level plans are backed up by annual operational plans developed by SSRP and Cranmore Regeneration Office, in consultation with the community.

Funding made available to SSRP primarily by Sligo County Council through the Cranmore Regeneration Office and the Health Service Executive is critical in enabling SSRP to dedicate Sports Development Officer time to oversee and support the initiative.

The collaborative approach to programme delivery that has been adopted by SSRP is one of the critical success factors for the regeneration through sport initiative. Community stakeholders are confident in the commitment that SSRP have in them both in terms of improving physical and mental health and also building capacity in the community. Education and training have been provided to local volunteers, which has empowered the community to be more actively involved in devising and running their own physical activities.

The continuity of support from SSRP emerged as being one of the most critical success factors, as they play an important role in troubleshooting if difficulties emerge during programme delivery at a local level. Significant trust has been developed between SSRP and the residents in Cranmore. The expertise that SSRP have in health promotion and improving physical activity levels are important, but also critical is their role in developing network social capital. SSRP are the link between the residents of Cranmore and the other sporting clubs and societies in Sligo town and county. In addition, the database of fully qualified community coaches that SSRP have developed has helped to ensure that there is expert support available for a very wide range of sporting and recreational activities through direct delivery or mentoring.

SSRP noted how critical the support of the community organisations in Cranmore are to the delivery of the project in that they are the link organisations for SSRP who take ownership of programmes and in doing so provide insurance, facilities, volunteers and programme monitoring all of which is agreed through formal partnership agreements with SSRP. In addition the SSRP noted the critical contribution the community volunteers makes in terms of their capacity as the people on the ground to recruit and encourage participants to take part in programmes. The strength of the working relationship between SSRP and the community organisations is fundamental to the success of the programme.

Challenges to successful implementation

One of the main barriers identified in terms of successful implementation of the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative was the difficulty in securing volunteers. There appears to be an over-reliance of a number of willing individuals and there is a danger that these people will become exhausted and step down from their positions as a result.

Furthermore the lack of a suitable indoor space is a significant restriction. Given the climate it is important to ensure that there is a suitable location where sporting activities can be undertaken during inclement weather, this is important particularly when trying to sustain activity among people who are transitioning from a sedentary to active lifestyle.

Difficulty remains in activating the adolescents in the estate, but there is a strong intergenerational influence that has resulted in increased participation by adults whose children became engaged in programmes and vice versa. It is imperative that a youth worker in the community is maintained at all times, to ensure that SSRP have a link person to work with when establishing programmes for the adolescent cohort.

According to SSRP, the lack of existing community structures, including sports clubs where sport can be promoted and developed, poses a challenges. Unlike other communities where guidance can be provided to existing clubs, in Cranmore there is a need to initially establish, and then develop, such clubs which is a significantly more complex undertaking.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations have been made to try to retain the elements of the model that are working well and to further enhance the regeneration through sport initiative. It is recommended that the current level of support that SSRP provide to the Cranmore regeneration programme be at least maintained and an exit strategy should not be considered in the medium term. Multiannual funding would help to ensure that strategic plans could be made and aims and objectives based on actual rather than aspirational funding would be desirable. The model of delivery that is currently being used for the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative is working well and should be considered for replication in other similar communities. Also, it has the potential to be of use for partner agencies, such as the HSE, wishing to provide complimentary programmes in health promotion. A formal internal evaluation process in SSRP which would allow for self-evaluation to be undertaken on a regular basis to measure and assess performance against an agreed evaluation framework is recommended. A formal structure for monitoring people who cease participation in sport initiatives should ideally be implemented in the hope that feedback as to why they have disengaged can be gleaned. Consideration to a formal method of allowing for people who are unable to afford the financial contribution for classes to participate without impinging on the generosity of others would be useful. A buddy system to complement the existing online social media platforms would be useful to recruit and encourage new members to participate in physical activity, with the reassurance of someone who they can identify with. While the SSRP is already engaged in supporting a number of sports programmes in the local schools, additional resources ideally should be channelled to try to use an approach that combines school, family and community to try to mobilise the adolescent population.

1.0 Introduction, scope and research process

1.1 Introduction

Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership (SSRP) is responsible for having co-ordinated, implemented, and continuing to support the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative, in partnership with local stakeholders including residents and local volunteers, in addition to other relevant bodies such as the Cranmore Regeneration Office, Sligo County Council, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and various sporting organisations in the region. The work of SSRP is enabled primarily through funding from Sligo County Council through the Cranmore Regeneration Office and additional support from Sligo County Council, the HSE and the Irish Sports Council. In a bid to ensure that best practice is being achieved and in an effort to ascertain how the initiative can be improved, the decision was taken to have an independent evaluation conducted. This report has been compiled by Dr Carol Moran from the Centre for Research in the Social Professions (CRiSP) at the Institute of Technology, Sligo.

1.2 Scope of the evaluation

The purpose of this report is to provide an evaluation of the Cranmore Regeneration Through Sport Initiative, co-ordinated by SSRP, with support from stakeholders in the Cranmore community, as part of the regeneration of Cranmore and the East Ward in Sligo. The focus of this evaluation is just this particular initiative, although reference is made to some of the other programmes that are running in tandem with this initiative such as the social plan for the regeneration of the East Ward. The brief for the evaluation can be viewed in Appendix A.

1.3 Research process

The evaluation is based on the existing literature related to the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport initiative as well as the wider literature relating to the social and economic impact that such programmes are likely to deliver. Secondary research was undertaken to determine the context in which this project is run. Reports from Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership, Cranmore Regeneration Office, Sligo County Council and the Irish Sports Council were consulted, and a broader literature related to the positive impact of sport on health and communities was explored.

As quantitative data is gathered and presented in annual reports by the SSRP, this research focuses on qualitative data that was gathered through a number of interviews and focus groups that were conducted with stakeholders involved in the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative. Qualitative responses are shown in italics throughout this report, but the data remains anonymous so as to protect the identity of those who participated in the research. This anonymity was assured to try to elicit honest and open responses from participants.

As the management of the Cranmore Regeneration Office was in transition at the time of data collection, the outgoing Manager of the Cranmore Regeneration Office was interviewed. An interview was also conducted with the Sports Co-ordinator and the Community Sports Development Officer (SDO) from SSRP.

Three focus groups were undertaken. The first focus group comprised the Community Development Worker and Office Manager of the Cranmore Co-operative Society. The second and third focus groups comprised various stakeholders such as residents, volunteers, coaches and managers who are involved in co-ordinating the activities undertaken as part of the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative.

Furthermore, observation was also used to try to determine how effective the initiative is at a grass roots level. The author participated in one of the activities that is organised in partnership with the SSRP, the women's fitness group which takes place at the Seán Fallon pitch in Cranmore, and the observations from that experience are used to further enhance the evaluation. The use of triangulation is intended to increase the validity of the findings and demonstrate the rigour with which this evaluation was conducted.

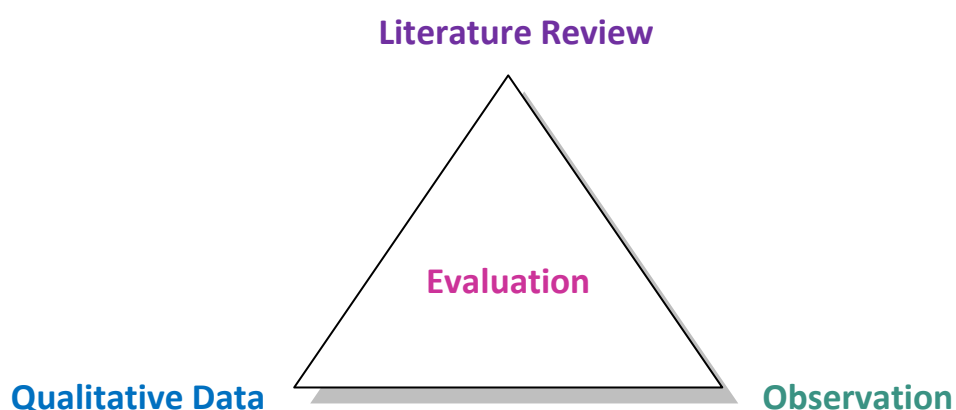


Figure 1: Triangulation Method

Open and axial coding was used to develop main themes from the qualitative data. Initially the interviews and focus groups were recorded and were then transcribed verbatim to maintain the integrity of the opinions that had been expressed. Open coding was then applied to establish the main themes that emerged from the data. These initial topics were then organised into broader themes. The transcripts which were generated and the researcher notes that were taken during the data collection, along with the observations have been used to determine how the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative is being implemented and the impact that it is having.

1.4 Reporting structure

This evaluation aims to be evidence based and therefore qualitative data is used where appropriate to demonstrate how the opinions expressed have been reached. A number of recommendations based on the research undertaken and existing literature are advanced and each recommendation is accompanied by an implementation section which suggests practical ways in which the recommendations can be realised.

2.0 Context

2.1 Introduction

There is little doubt of the physiological benefits of increased physical activity which is one of the core components of the work undertaken by Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership. However, sport and recreational activities also have a very significant positive affect on mental health and the socialisation of those who participate. This section briefly outlines some of the benefits associated with sports and recreation activities with a view to determining what benefits should be achieved by SSRP and their partner agencies, in order to evaluate if these benefits are being achieved successfully.

2.2 Benefits of physical activity

The benefits of sports for physical and mental wellbeing are well documented. Physical inactivity is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease and a widening variety of other chronic diseases, including diabetes mellitus, cancer (colon and breast), obesity, hypertension, bone and joint diseases (osteoporosis and osteoarthritis), and depression (Warburton et al. 2006; Morris, 2014). While some diseases are not preventable, physical inactivity is the number one “modifiable risk factor” (Warbuton, Nicol & Bredin, 2006: 801) which can be addressed by individuals and society. While physical activity has long been recommended for the prevention or indeed treatment of cardiovascular disease, the current literature also outlines the positive impact it can have on prevention of other serious illnesses which have major quality of life and potentially fatal implications for sufferers, such as those listed above.

Morris reports that “the children of physically inactive parents are six times more likely to be inactive themselves. They are also likely to underperform in school, be less productive in the workforce, and suffer from substantially higher rates of illness and disease” (Morris, 2014: 55). This demonstrates the fundamental importance of trying to ensure that activity is encouraged in an intergenerational manner. In addition, Morris argues that the cognitive benefit of sport and the unique power of sport/activity to drive community cohesion are often under reported. Therefore for anyone who would suggest that investment in sport initiatives should be minimised would not only be advocating a society in which health would deteriorate but also one in which academic potential and workforce productivity would be minimised.

The Irish Sports Council reported in 2010 that more Irish adults were participating in sport than at any other time in our country’s history and almost 75% of all children participate in sport twice a week, which they acknowledge “is a remarkable level of engagement” (Irish Sports Council, 2010). The 2010 report also outlines the major economic impact that investment in sport offers for the state. According to their research every €100 invested by the Government achieves €149 in sports related taxes. This further exemplifies why investment in sport is worthwhile, even from a purely neoliberal marketization perspective.

2.3 Community based efforts to promote physical activity

Efforts to promote physical activity come in various guises, but research suggests that “interventions delivered through personal contact as well as tailored interventions appeared most effective” (Bock, Jarczok and Litaker, 2013: 12). This means that the interventions should be based on the requirements of those who are being targeted and have some meaningful outcome for participants. Furthermore, personal contact is required to improve participation rates; “mass mailings, posters and media campaigns contributed relative little to the total number of recruited participants... techniques involving some form of personal contact including word-of-mouth communication appear useful in promoting awareness of physical activity programmes” (2013: 12). This highlights the importance of having a voice in the community who will be an advocate for physical activity and become a role model for those who aspire to become physically active.

Cleland et al. (2012) discovered through their systematic literature review related to the effectiveness of physical activity interventions in socio-economically disadvantaged communities that interventions were more successful with the adult population than with the child or adolescent populations, but concluded that adolescent physical activity could be increased through school based interventions with family or community involvement. This highlights the importance of a multi-agency approach in trying to mobilise the adolescent cohort in particular.

Hillsdon et al. (2005) suggested that interventions which combine professional guidance, self-direction and on-going support are most likely to be effective. Supports which remove barriers like transport or childcare are a particularly useful incentive to increase physical activity. Such barriers are likely to help contribute to the fact that women in “socioeconomically disadvantaged neighbourhoods [are] at increased risk of inactive lifestyles” (Cleland, 2010: 2015).

2.4 Building network social capital

The gap between the least and most affluent in society is matched by a disparity in health across the socio-economic spectrum (Goldman, 2001). The people who are least well off in society are disproportionately affected by chronic diseases and are less physically active (Eyler et al, 2002; Gidlow et al., 2006; MacIntyre and Mutrie, 2004 cited in Cleland et al., 2012). The Economics and Social Research Institutes (ESRI) report on sport and social disadvantage (2007: ix) found that “people with low household income or low educational attainment are much less likely to play sport and much more likely to be completely sedentary (defined as neither playing any sport nor taking a recreational walk of two miles or more during the previous 12 months)”; however, they also noted that there was no evidence that these people were generally less motivated or less interested in sport.

Furthermore the ESRI outlined that Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) accounted for just 2 per cent of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism’s sport budget (2007: xiv) despite the fact that the LSPs play a pivotal role in mobilising people in socially disadvantaged areas to participate in sport. While investment in physical infrastructure is important to ensure that there are facilities available for

people who want to participate in sport, building the infrastructure is futile unless it is going to be used. The LSPs are the link between the physical infrastructure and the people who are physically inactive and would benefit from using the facilities, thus they are fundamental to building network social capital by assisting people in accessing infrastructure that is available for them.

The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in the United States suggest that “social support intervention in community setting focus on building, strengthening and maintaining social networks that provide supportive relationships for physical activity behaviour change” (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2011: 21). They suggest that buddy systems or contracts between participants can encourage physical activity. Furthermore they report that one of the key considerations is the sustainability year round of an activity; the example being walking, where they suggest that alternate indoor spaces for inclement weather should be identified. They suggest that reminders and support in the form of phone calls to and from participants help to sustain involvement and prevent or reduce dropout rates.

Sport and recreation activities allow individuals to meet and interact with people who they may not previously have had the opportunity to network with. “Within the network capital approach, the term social network usually refers to the pattern of a person’s social connections, while network social capital refers to the amount and quality of resources that a person might access through their social networks” (Legh-Jones & Moore, 2012: 1362). Improving the amount and quality of resources that people in Cranmore can access through their social networks is another important feature of the SSRP regeneration through sport initiative. By providing the link between existing facilities, clubs and supports that are available locally and the residents in the Cranmore estate they can improve the levels of physical activity. Mummery et al. argue that “...low social capital was associated with physical inactivity” (2008: 308), therefore improving social capital is likely to improve physical activity and as a result physical and mental health. Given that research has indicated that “individuals who did not participate in any formal associations were more likely to be physically inactive compared to those with high levels of participation” (Legh-Jones & Moore, 2012: 1362) strengthens the argument for providing support that helps people to access formal associations that can facilitate their physical activity.

Social capital in health suggests that social networks may influence health in several ways, including the diffusion of knowledge about healthy behaviours and lifestyles, and the maintenance of healthy behavioural norms through informal social control (Yu et al., 2011; Berkman, 1985; Cassel, 1976). Building social capital in the Cranmore Estate will improve activity and health levels for the residents.

3.0 Implementation of Cranmore Regeneration through Sport initiative

3.1 Introduction

The Cranmore Regeneration Project was initiated by Sligo Borough Council in 2005 as part of a broader plan aimed at improving the quality of life in the Cranmore Estate in the East Ward of Sligo through better co-ordination of services, community development and integrated planning. Sligo County Council has co-ordinated investment of almost €21 million in regeneration initiatives between 2004 and 2013 in the Sligo East City Regeneration Project for Cranmore and Environs (Sligo County Council, 2014). Investment in the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport initiative has amounted to €150,615 between 2008 and 2014.

As part of this plan sport and recreation were recognised as having the potential to enhance quality of life. The Cranmore Regeneration through Sport programme aims to improve the quality of life of individuals and build community cohesion through increased participation of children, young people and adults in sport and physical activity (Sligo Sports and Recreation Partnership, 2014).

The role of SSRP has been embedded in the new Sligo East City Regeneration Social Plan. The goals for the social regeneration plan include:

1. Enable resilience within the communities for the regeneration area such that local people are better able to manage and report to external shocks to their local area whether economic, social or environmental.
2. Resource the communities of the regeneration area such that local people can avail of opportunities that arise as part of the regeneration process, that emerge with the implementation of this plan, and that develop due to the changing economic context at a national level
3. Stimulate a flourishing within the communities of the regeneration areas such that local people have the capabilities to lead the sort of lives that they have reason to value.

Sligo East City Regeneration Social Plan, 2014)

SSRP are focused on building social capital as well as increasing levels of physical activity and improving the mental and physical health of the community. Thus they are integral in helping to achieve the outcomes listed above by co-ordinating activities in conjunction with local partners.

3.2 The role of Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership

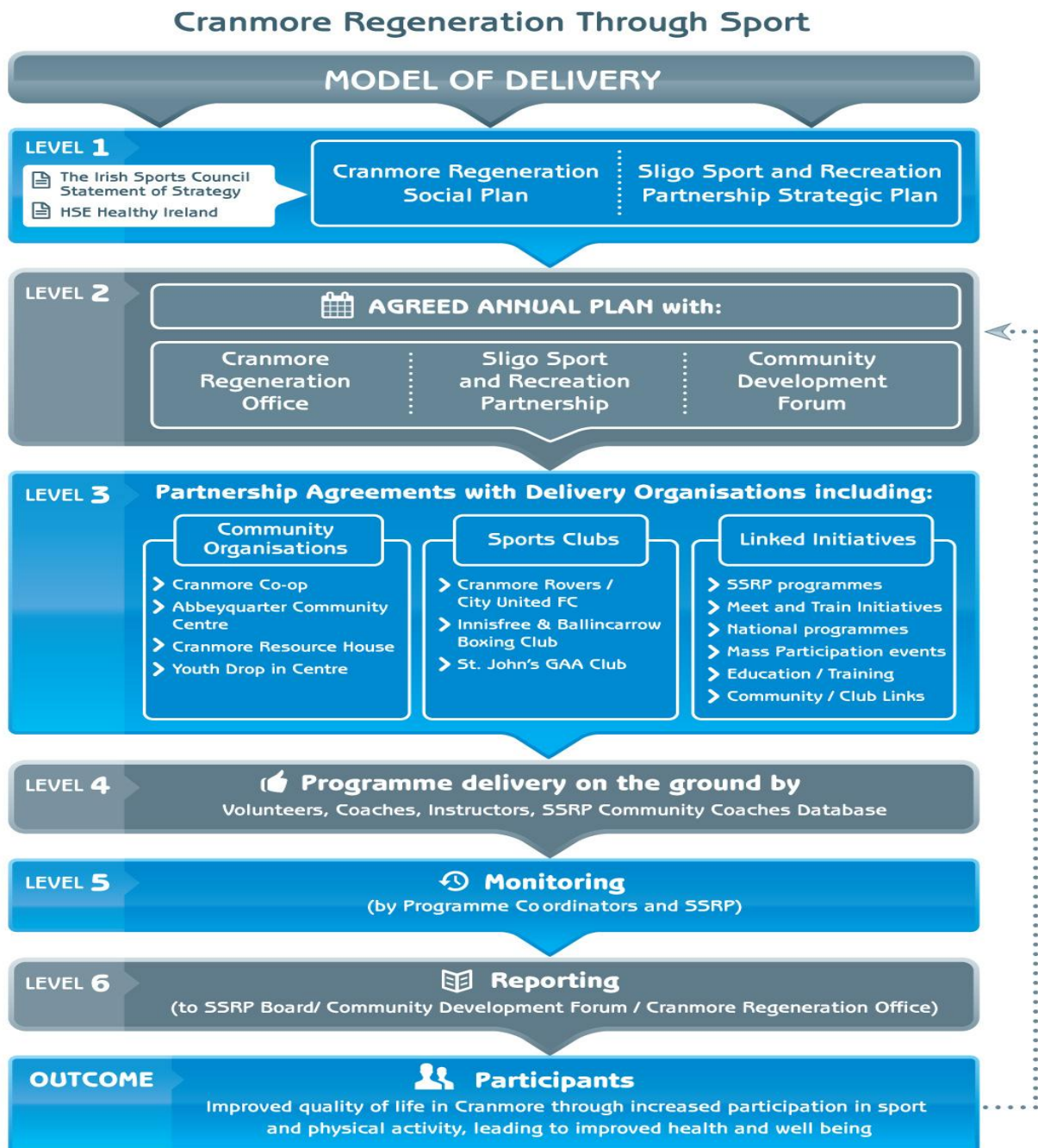
Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership (SSRP) were recognised as an appropriate body with the relevant skills and experience to act as a partner to the community in the Cranmore Estate in developing and co-ordinating sport and recreation in the area. Local partner agencies with whom SSRP engages with at a strategic level include Cranmore Regeneration Office, Sligo County Council and the HSE; while SSRP links with organisations including Cranmore Co-op and the Abbeyquarter Community Centre at an operational level.

SSRP are engaged in at a strategic level in ensuring that sport and physical activity are central to social and community development plans in the region. They are engaged in planning and co-ordinating services with their partner agencies to ensure that existing resources can be maximised when implementing initiatives like the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative. SSRP is not only involved in the initiation of sport and recreation programmes in the community, but it is also very focused on ensuring that sustainable structures are built to provide long term provision of sports and recreation programmes. Furthermore the SSRP has a clear focus on ensuring that the programmes they deliver will build community participation and cohesion while increasing the capacity of those within the community by developing their skills and social network contacts.

There is little doubt that the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative has and will continue to improve the physical and mental health of those who participate (see section 4.0). However, the focus of the SSRP is more far reaching than simply providing the opportunity for residents to become more physically active. Their focus is on empowering members of the community to participate at the organisational and operational level also; to equip them with the skills required to run such programmes independently in the future. Through this process more socially inclusive communities can develop.

3.3 The model of delivery

The model of delivery involves an engagement with stakeholders at a series of levels as depicted in Figure 1.



3.3.1 Level 1

Firstly, at a strategic level the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport initiative is firmly embedded in the strategic plans of the lead stakeholders Sligo County Council, Cranmore Regeneration Office, Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership and is in line with the Healthy Ireland national framework for health and wellbeing (Department of Health, 2013). The SSRP developed the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Logic Model as a framework which identifies the inputs, activities and outputs sought from the project (see Appendix B).

3.3.2 Level 2

Arising from this high level commitment an annual operational plan is agreed through collaboration involving the Cranmore Regeneration Office (Manager) and SSRP (Sports Co-ordinator and SDO); this is done in consultation with the Community Development Forum. In addition, the annual plan is also informed through consultations with sports clubs and community organisations.

3.3.3 Level 3

All actions identified in the annual operational plan are linked to a community organisation or sports club on the ground in Cranmore that will take ownership for leading out on the activity. Linked to this is the development of Community Partnership Agreements for each programme which includes defining roles and responsibilities. In addition, appropriate linked initiatives taking place in the wider community are directed into the Cranmore Community.

3.3.4 Level 4

On the ground delivery of sports and recreation programmes is supported by club coaches, volunteers and instructors with the resource of the SSRP Community Coaches database contributing significantly at this level.

3.3.5 Level 5

Monitoring is primarily undertaken through the collection of quantitative data and is built into the Partnership Agreement with responsibility assigned to the community co-ordinating body.

3.3.6 Level 6

Reporting and information sharing is conducted by the SSRP SDO with community stakeholders through weekly meetings of the Community Development Forum; while the SSRP Board receive project updates five times annually and formal end of year reporting to the Cranmore Regeneration Office also takes place.

The process of implementing the model described above requires the input of and co-operation from a number of sources. There is no direct provision from the SSRP; the Sports Development Officer (SDO) from the SSRP works closely with the local stakeholders particularly Cranmore Co-op, the Cranmore Regeneration Office and the Abbeyquarter Community Centre to identify sports and recreation programmes that would be of interest, and are likely to be successful, in the community. Ideas are often generated from the ground up, and if an interest in an activity is advanced it will be

assessed to determine whether or not it will be feasible and sustainable long-term. When a feasible activity has been identified SSRP are able to consult their database of registered coaches who they know are fully qualified and Garda vetted and put them in contact with the volunteers who will manage the logistics of the programme on a weekly basis, with support as required from the SDO. Alternatively, local volunteers are trained to a level whereby they are able to sustain the programme themselves.

In 2013, SSRP delivered a six week multi-sport programme in tandem with the Abbeyquarter After-School staff, who was then able to sustain the programme in their weekly delivery schedule. Also, SSRP provided a coach to deliver five sessions to inactive older adults and then trained the outreach worker in the Monday Morning Club to deliver a fun chair based physical activity programme on an on-going basis. Furthermore the SDO assisted the club in applying for a 'Go for Life' grant which they were successful in securing to support their programme for 2014. These examples demonstrate the commitment that SSRP has to building capacity in the community rather than providing ad hoc sessions with no strategic vision.

Furthermore SSRP are able to advise the community of opportunities that might exist for development of a new programme within the estate, or the opportunity to participate in other programmes that are being provide and promoted at a more regional level, such as the 'Couch to 5K' or 'Sofa to Saddle' initiatives that have taken place in Sligo.

They have a very important role in ensuring that residents in Cranmore are aware of the facilities that are available locally and trying to encourage them to use them. For example, the newly developed Cleveragh Park is now used as the training ground for St. John's GAA Club youth teams and the number of participants from the Cranmore Estate has increased. Furthermore the outdoor gym at Doorly Park has been used to facilitate a six week outdoor gym programme which again included many participants from the Cranmore Estate. Encouraging people to use the facilities that already exist is an important way to ensure that the investments that have already been made in the physical environment realise a healthy return. The support that they provide is essential in encouraging people who have not previously participated in sport and fitness to do so, and in addition helps to ensure that regular activity is maintained by those who have been activated. "Individuals who receive positive support for physical activity are more likely to engage in regular activity than those who lack support" (Cerini & Leslie, 2008; Gile-Corti & Donovan, 2002).

Under the guidance of SSRP residents are encouraged to participate in events such as the 'Come and Try' event which offered taster sessions in GAA, Rugby, Cycling and Walking. Such sessions are important as they allow people the opportunity to try a new sport without having to purchase equipment or commit a large amount of money for a number of lessons. It also encourages people to participate in sports that previously they may have believed were 'not for them', based on stereotypes that can become the reality if opportunity is not evenly shared in society (see section 4.5).

Some of the funding for the various programmes comes from SSRP, but this is supplemented by a contribution that is made by participants. Also the other agencies, such as the Cranmore Resource House, who are working in Cranmore, have been able to provide transport and other supports to compliment the work of SSRP. A 'Golden Swimmers' initiative which involved a combination of aqua-aerobics and swimming lessons for adults over 50 was provided for residents, as the SDO was

able to negotiate a reduced fee for participants. It is clear that the involvement of SSRP and the SDO allows access to activities that may be too costly for participants or indeed community groups to become involved in without their support.

Fundamentally, SSRP provides the expert link between the residents in the estate, the partner agencies working in Cranmore, the local facilities, the expert coaches, the local sports clubs, the funding applications and local and national sport and recreation initiatives. Effectively SSRP is central to creating and supporting a hub of activities in the Cranmore Estate, around which the network is built which allows residents in the Cranmore Estate to benefit from activities in their own community and provides them with a route to engage in activities outside of their community that they might otherwise have not participated in. Legh-Jones & Moore (2012: 1366) argue that “social participation may increase one’s access to information about physical activity opportunities or the importance of physical activity for health”, they also warn that a lack of networking opportunity will increase inactivity and also decrease the opportunities to develop one’s own network capital.

This is precisely what SSRP are facilitating, the opportunity for people to try out sports in their own community with the support of their local volunteers but with the added benefit of having access to the wide network that SSRP enjoy in terms of partner agencies and existing sports and social clubs in the town and county. In addition the level of knowledge that SSRP have about existing initiatives that are run by themselves or agencies like Sligo County Council and the HSE ensures that programmes are not replicated where a suitable club or facility already exists. That said, SSRP plays an integral role in helping to provide the route through which Cranmore residents can develop the confidence and contacts required to achieve membership of the existing clubs and societies that may be of interest to them.

“...[SSRP] were link in obviously with the [institute of technology], link in with the regional sports centre, linked in with all the clubs in the town and county, so we saw them as the key.”

“[SSRP] have done tremendous work in linking groups from the athletics clubs to tennis to all different sports into the community in Cranmore. I remember at one point thinking, for a child in Cranmore, whatever interest you had, there was an opportunity to actually develop it.”

4.0 Emergent themes from the evaluation

The following section outlines the themes that emerged from the interviews, focus groups and observation that was undertaken to evaluate the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative. Qualitative data was gathered through the primary research and this data was then coded to establish main themes that emerged from the data. The inductive process involves using the words and descriptions of those who participated in the research to develop main themes that can help to build an understanding of how the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative is having impacting on the stakeholders and also to help to identify any challenges that exist. The themes emerge when phrases, comments, topics and issues that were common across a number of sources are evident in the data. That is to say that a topic which is presented below is based on more than one individual's perception, thus increasing the validity and relevance of the theme.

4.1 Physical Activity

The Cranmore Regeneration through Sport initiative has been successful in increasing the level of physical activity of residents.

The range and diversity of activities supported by the SSRP in Cranmore, indicates the intention and drive by SSRP to accommodate the varying needs of the community to participate in physical activity. From the initial idea of a new programme start up, the SSRP has worked with individuals and community organisations in co-ordinating, implementing and monitoring a diverse range of sporting opportunities.

Between 2008 and 2013 SSRP has facilitated 1219 youth participant places on 50 physical activity programmes (see Appendix C) involving:

Soccer	GAA	Basketball	Boxing
Tennis	Cycling	Rowing	Summer Camps
Multi-Sport	Dance	Surfing	Sports Days
Golf	Angling	Athletics	Snorkelling

Cranmore youth have benefitted from sport club outreach programmes and linked initiatives with the Cranmore community involving St. John's GAA Club, Ballinacarrow/ Innisfree Boxing Clubs, Sligo All Stars Basketball Club, Sligo Rugby Club and Strandhill Golf Club.

Between 2008 to 2013, SSRP facilitated 24 adult programmes involving 354 adult participant places including:

Walking	Swimming	Rebounding	Circuit Training
Bootcamp	Golf	Chair Aerobics	Boules
Tai chi	Go for Life Games	Boxercise	Soccer
Angling	Fitness classes		

Linked initiatives with the wider community outside Cranmore involved participation by adults in Couch 2 5K, Sofa 2 Saddle, Operation Transformation Walks, Seniors Sports Fest, Outdoor Gym programmes and Bike Week.

Furthermore, 31 participants have taken part in a range of SSRP training and education programmes in areas including Active Leadership, First Aid, Code of Ethics, Walking Leader, Go for Life Games and sports specific areas of Soccer and Kick Boxing (see Appendix D).

Bock, Jarczok and Litaker (2013) argue that interventions aimed at increasing physical activity are more effective when they involved some degree of personal contact and are culturally tailored; this suggests that there needs to be personal contact with the people who the programme is aimed at and the activities must be relevant to their culture, interests and demographics. The programmes that are being delivered by SSRP conform to both of these conditions. Firstly, the community organisations are integral in having the hands on recruitment methods to inform residents of the programmes that are available and the work-of-mouth from early participants helps to maintain interest in the activities and increase the overall level of physical activity in the estate. Furthermore reliable community volunteers are integral to ensuring that children in the community are recruited and escorted to and from some of the activities. Without the support to mobilise children within the estate it would be extremely difficult to get new programmes established. Secondly, SSRP work with members of the community to tailor activities to include sports that residents have expressed an interest in or are culturally aligned to, where possible.

For many taking the first step to become engaged in physical activity is the hardest, by removing the barriers and providing activities in the locality you are likely to increase the number of participants and improve their fitness levels.

“It’s a break, it’s affordable, it goes on on their own doorstep.”

“...there was plenty of sports infrastructure in the area, there’s no shortage of it but there seemed to be a barrier that people from the area weren’t really utilising it to its maximum, to their maximum benefit.”

“Like I seen [sic] the kids when they started here first and they couldn’t run halfway across the field, they were out of breath but now they can run up and down and I’m going, ‘please stop!’”

4.2 Health benefits

Mental and physical health benefits and social wellbeing were noted by many of the participants, and of course this is reflective of the large body of literature which exists to demonstrate the positive relationship between increased physical activity and improved health outcomes. The mental health benefits of increased physical activity emerged during the interviews and focus groups and the way in which increased engagement in sport can improve confidence were also discussed.

“...even though they are only children you have to take it into that context that some of them have things that they do need this release and they go up boxing and they know that they are in a safe environment for that hour and it’s so happy for them.”

“It’s really built up their confidence.”

“It’s also a great boost for the kids... their confidence comes through.”

“...they have a bit of craic and it is good, it’s good for mental health and it’s good for your confidence and everything else.”

“...it’s important to see that life, and I’m not being... but life outside of Cranmore, the bigger picture but it is, it’s confidence and even mental health, everything.”

“...there’s no doubt sport has a direct impact on mental health and mental health has an impact on educational performance.”

The community is benefitting from the increased number of residents who are now engaged in third level education and have found that people are willing to give back to the community.

“...there’s [sic] more people now in Cranmore now in third level education... what we have found they want to use their skills for the betterment of their community.”

The health benefits of increased physical activity are well documented, but some of the programmes being run as part of the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport initiative have taken health promotion a step further.

“...we have done the healthy heart diet with the Traveller men... so at the moment they are getting their blood pressure and their cholesterol done for gym passes...”

“When [daughter’s name] starts going to all these courses and stuff and she’s gone back and she’s like, ‘Ah Mammy, would you not just have an apple instead of that’.”

“...it’s nice to show [the children] that there is a healthy way of eating instead of just sitting down with junk food at the computer game...”

The focus on health more broadly was also evident in the fitness class that was undertaken as part of the evaluation. The quality of the coaching was excellent, and the atmosphere was collegial and welcoming. During recovery between the various stages of the exercise class there was informal discussions around what would be the best type of snack to have, what types of food were best

consumed prior to the class and how well another member who was absent that evening was doing in their fitness and weight loss programme. While the exercises were ongoing the instructor advised as to the impact the various exercises were likely to have and the different stages of the work out from warm up to when the 'fat burning' had commenced. The information was very useful and interesting and presented in such a natural way during an appropriate context that it was much more likely to have a meaningful impact on the participants than a leaflet or poster could ever have.

4.3 Sustainable SSRP investment and programmes

As outlined in section 2, the level of social support has a direct impact on the level of engagement with physical activity that people undertake. SSRP in conjunction with community stakeholders have been offering support to the Cranmore residents on an on-going basis since 2006, their sustained commitment to the estate and to the improvement of health and wellbeing for its residents is recognised by the local community.

"...some agencies came in, drifted in and drifted out but [SSRP] are the long sustained agency... it encouraged other agencies to come in."

It has taken time to build up relationships and trust in the community and SSRP are realistic in acknowledging that progress is occurring, but does so at a slow pace and often it is a case of,

"...for every few steps forward there's a few backwards... we're in it for the long haul and the Cranmore regeneration team has to be in there for the long haul, that's the bottom line."

"... where the sports partnership is concerned we get huge commitment from them, we get huge commitment, there's a huge buy-in from them and there's a huge belief in this community. There is a huge belief and support for this community."

"They're [SSRP] not just there for the photo opportunity."

Sustainability of programmes and the participants' engagement with sport and recreation are central to the work for SSRP and their partner agencies. This is why SSRP are not engaging in direct provision of services, but rather are engaging with volunteers and community leaders to ensure that the programmes are run in tandem with them with a view to self-delivery in the future.

"...it's only sustainable if it's going to be community led."

This approach is very much in keeping with the asset based community development (ABCD) model that is used by the Cranmore Co-op. ABCD is a methodology that seeks to uncover the skills and experience available in a community and use them as the foundation for future sustainable development. This methodology helps to ensure the services and programmes are closely aligned to the needs of the community, but equally that latent ability and skills that exist in the community can be nourished and contribute to future sustainability of programmes.

The sustainability of the individual programmes are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that only those that are sustainable and are engaging a significant number of participants continue to be supported. The quantitative data that is used to determine the level of sustainability is recorded and

stored by the SDO. The stakeholders believe that SSRP take a fair but firm approach when deciding whether or not certain programmes are sustainable.

“...sports partnership have their hand on the pulse... and look at it not with a critical eye, look at it with a supportive eye.”

Normally programmes that are run tend to be over a period of weeks or months rather than one day events which helps to contribute to sustained engagement with physical activity.

4.4 Volunteers

All of the individuals and agencies that participated in this research identified the important role that volunteers play in making the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative work. The difficulty with running programmes that are heavily dependent on volunteerism is of course that volunteers cannot be compelled to continue to participate and sustaining volunteers can be difficult. A theme that emerged from a number of sources was the fact that the same few volunteers tend to be revisited over and over and they are overworked.

“...sustaining the volunteers is a challenge... the same resources are kind of being pulled on all the time...”

“Things can fall down in the community as well, so that’s why you actually need mentors... to have their hand on the pulse... and someone else can take up the mantle.”

“...we rely heavily on volunteers... but we try not to burn them out either...”

“...there have been times [volunteers] were burnt out, we were all burnt out, you know... a pool of volunteers that you reuse...”

“At the minute, I’m a bit of everything on the committee...”

When volunteers do ‘burn out’ or become unavailable for any other reason, it is important that there is a constant body there that is able to pick up the pieces and fill the void until new volunteers can be identified, recruited and trained. It does not appear that SSRP will be in a position to step away in the foreseeable future. They are an integral support to the various groups who are running sports and recreation activities in and around the estate.

4.5 Funding

Despite the acceptance from SSRP and their partner agencies that they are committed to Cranmore in the long term, funding for their programmes is awarded on an annual basis.

There is a fear that success in some programmes may make them a victim of their own success where outside observers determine that a programme is successful and therefore will not require additional funding.

“...sometimes the funding has ceased and the knock on effect has been very damaging, and it takes as long them to restart it...”

“...unless you put more resources in, what goes on is going to get more diluted...”

Based on this evaluation, it would be desirable to see longer term funding being secured. While the SSRP are working on the basis of being involved for the foreseeable future, it is unrealistic to be able to set credible achievable targets for the medium term without some security related to the funding that would be available. Historically strategic plans have been based on “*implicit understandings*” and assurances that funding bodies “*wouldn’t be likely to pull*” funds, however, this is not satisfactory. The suggestion would be that funding should be awarded for a minimum of three years in order to allow the SSRP and partners to develop a more strategic focus. There is little doubt that additional funding is likely to have an increased positive impact in the area.

“...there has been massive advancement between 2011 and 2014 and in actual fact that would coincide with the increase in funding towards the sports development role...”

Given the importance of ensuring better physical and mental health for all, it is very important to acknowledge the link that has been identified between additional funding and additional positive outcomes. A cost benefits analysis of the potential cost savings achieved by improving health and wellbeing versus the additional funding for programmes that contribute to improving those variables would be worthwhile to demonstrate the economic as well as social impact of improved health.

4.6 Capacity building

Evidence of capacity building at a number of levels emerged from the qualitative data. This ranged from getting buy in from parents to become involved in ensuring that their children were present for various sporting activities to providing training in coaching and leadership for volunteers in the community and helping to increase community spirit in the estate. The Cranmore Co-op used Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) as the model on which it has developed and SSRP has played an important role in helping people to develop skills that they have identified.

“... [SDO] has been marvellous in enabling us to [enhance our skills] and sustaining it.”

“...we would recruit volunteers... we would get sports training for them, ethics training, identify people in the community that would of value in motivating youth...”

“... [SSRP] literally hold our hands for so long and then gradually let it go.”

“Sligo Partnership... enabled us to get the funding so they [football club] could design their own logo, have their own identity.. Sports Partnership arranged for all the courses, football courses, ethics courses, first-aid courses, child protection, all of that...”

SSRP have been involved in providing active leadership training for local volunteers who once had been trained and provided with equipment they were able to deliver a sports programme themselves. This type of capacity building is not only positive for the participants who will avail of the sports programme but also empowers the individuals who are trained and become leaders in

their own community. This is evidence of how social capital is being developed through the work of SSRP.

“...it’s been very empowering for the community and what I see has developed is that people are taking more responsibility.”

The social plan for the area was cognisant that the local community needs to be part of the regeneration process and as such every effort has been made to try to ensure that capacity is being built and residents are being empowered.

“[regeneration] had to have a strong social element it had to build on the community fabric that was there and build capacity.”

“...this was there community and they were part of the solution, they weren’t part of the problem.”

The belief that the community have in the SSRP is reflective of the belief that they perceive SSRP has in them. A genuine commitment from SSRP was acknowledged by all of the participants in this research.

“... there’s huge commitment from the sports partnership... they do believe in the community and do you know what, they take such pride and they’re delighted... to see a good turnout like our family fun days, our Christmas, every day. They support it all.”

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that anti-social behaviour has been in decline since the SSRP have become involved in the regeneration project. A multi-level approach including community wardens and CCTV along with greater opportunity for positive engagement in physical activity is reaping rewards.

“...from an estate management perspective, we’ve seen a massive drop in anti-social behaviour, a massive drop.”

“It keeps [the children] out of trouble as well.”

4.7 Building network capital

Network capital is being built through the activities of SSRP and their partner agencies, this is not by accident as sport was identified as being one of the ways in which residents could develop their own network initially, and the participation of SSRP then helps those who do engage to access other networks outside of the estate.

“...we saw sports as an ideal way of actually reaching out to people and bringing them in in a non-threatening way, and there they might learn and network about other things that were happening, you know, the bigger social regeneration picture... it was a tool for social inclusion.”

One of the stakeholders revealed how the Couch to 5K initiative which was organised by SSRP for the wider community in Sligo was an activity that she engaged in due to the encouragement of the SDO who she was familiar with from the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative.

“I was the only one from Cranmore and I thought ‘Oh Jesus, I’m never going to do it’... I met people that I would never dream about meeting in my lifetime, you know, and it wasn’t about where I lived or where I was from it was just totally different.”

The data above clearly indicates how this person believes that they have had the opportunity to network with people that they would not have had access to had it not been for their engagement with SSRP wider community activities.

“It can be quite daunting like to walk into a class and not know anybody.”

“[SSRP] have such a network, such contact: Australians, Maori guys coming here doing tag rugby...how would you get kids snorkelling down to Mullaghmore...”

“...not just talking about financial support, it’s what you know, it’s who you know, it’s the skills that the sports partnership have, it’s the group of people they work with, not just [SDO].”

The programmes that are run in the estate provide the opportunity for people to engage in classes in their local community, in a non-threatening environment, which will allow the individual to develop their confidence and in time transition into a sports club or facility outside of the estate if they so wish.

4.8 Facilities

The physical regeneration that has taken place in the Cranmore estate has had a very visible impact and provides a very positive backdrop in which the social regeneration can also occur. While there is no doubt that additional facilities would be welcomed in Cranmore, one of the volunteers also identified the need to ensure that residents are aware of the facilities that are currently available in the estate.

“Half the children don’t even see these things [courts, pitches]... it’s just to get them down and see what’s available...”

The use of the facilities at Cleveragh Park for GAA training has encouraged many parents to take responsibility for getting their children to the training grounds, a task that previously had to be undertaken by volunteers.

“... before we would have to pick the kids up and drop the kids to the place where now the parents are willing to bring them to that area and come back in time and pick them up.”

However, the one major issue that did emerge was the lack of a suitable indoor facility which could be used during inclement weather and the difficulty of trying to maintain numbers in various programmes when classes are cancelled due to turn out because of bad weather was identified.

“...we are in a country, we don’t have the weather for it and that’s what gets you, you know, the soccer lads and the boxing... people cry off...”

“...you wouldn’t expect the kids to go out and play if it’s lashing rain, you wouldn’t do it yourself, you wouldn’t expect the kids to do it because they’d end up getting sick.”

“...they are going to go – oh, well, it wasn’t on last Monday so I’m not going to bother with that...”

“...we don’t have a large hall... there is consultations... all of the suggestions that came out was disability access, sports facilities.”

“...ideally if you had a massive hall you could do anything you want with the children. In the winter it’s not feasible to go out.”

There is a difficulty in getting some residents to avail of the facilities that are available locally such as the outdoor gym or Cleveragh Park, however, it is important to acknowledge that when people are transitioning from a sedentary lifestyle to one of physical activity the change is gradual and what might appear as a short journey, if you have a car, could be a significant distance for somebody who is just engaging in exercise for the first time. Furthermore, some of the clubs that are located in the town are simply too far away for children to access safely on foot which increases the demand for volunteers to accompany them and reduces the likelihood of participation.

4.9 Integration

Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership and the programmes that they are involved in with community organisations are fundamental in improving levels of integration with the estate and outside. The types of integration that were mentioned by stakeholders ranged from cross border;

“...we have also travelled cross border with [SSRP]”

to the Traveller community;

“...we want to integrate the Traveller kids into communities... with [SDO’s] help we are able to integrate them more... they are all treated the same and they see that.”

“...the football we have a mix of everybody, you know, Travellers, you know and kids from around the area and we don’t treat them any differently at all and you expect them to do the same.”

to integration of men and women;

“...even the women now are walking with the men in the walking group.”

and to the integration of perceived social classes;

“Someone in the group might go, ‘I’d love to try golf’ and another guy might go ‘I don’t know I’ve never played golf, that’s for posh people’ and next thing, you know, we show the guys how to play golf!”

Initially there was a soccer team of all Traveller men, but over time the team evolved to include members of the settled community also, all with a desire to be successful at their chosen sport. Some of the activities such as Boccia that are offered as part of the SSRP programme are particularly important in terms of integration as they are suitable for adults and children with physical, intellectual or sensory disabilities (Foley, 2014).

Furthermore the discussion around integration mentioned the fact that discrimination is learned behaviour as opposed to an innate drive.

“...the problems come from the adults, because the kids are innocent.”

The important role that sport plays in trying to eliminate racism through better education and integration should be acknowledged, and according to the stakeholders who participated, is part of what SSRP has been able to achieve. Through the SDO education around racism and sport and community leadership was provided and it was noted that this is a great way of dealing with bullying and aggression which can be a significant issues in relation to estate management more broadly.

4.10 Affordability

The data from the interviews and focus groups demonstrated the financial strain that many of the people who participate in the programmes co-ordinated by SSRP as part of the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative are under. There was a degree of discretion being applied when allowing access to the various classes, particularly for the children who were unable to pay their own way.

“...we fund the club ourselves and we charge €1... and €2... but some nights kids come and they haven’t got it and you can’t turn them away, you know, like how can you tell a five year old kid or a six year old kid...”

“...some kids turn up and they mightn’t have the money and you just don’t say... you work with that...”

However, it was not just the children who have difficulty in finding money for sport or fitness activities and the programmes that are run in Cranmore are much more affordable than private classes that are offered elsewhere in Sligo. Generally an hour of fitness instruction in the private market would cost somewhere between €5 - €7 at the lower end of the market, and this compares with a €2 cost for classes in Cranmore.

“...we have people engaged in adult classes... they wouldn’t have the confidence to go to a class, they probably wouldn’t have the money for, you know, private classes.”

While the financial difficulties were acknowledged, what was also noted was the importance of having some fee associated with the classes to ensure that there was perceived value associated

with the class. This increases ownership and maintains a clientele who were genuinely interested in engaging positively with the activity.

“...we found out at the beginning that if everything was kind of free and they weren’t offering maybe €1 or €2 ... there was no seriousness in it...if people aren’t paying in.”

4.11 Intergenerational learning and social support

The programmes that are co-ordinated by SSRP focus on people of all ages in the Cranmore estate, this is very important given that the ESRI (2007) reported that having a parent who did not play sport was one of the four mediating factors found to create an indirect link between social disadvantage and reduced playing of sport. The relationship of positive influence between parents and children is not one directional, and parents have become engaged in sports as a result of seeing their children engage.

“...parents have engaged because their children have been engaged... and that’s been engaging the older community then to come on-board.”

“...by us targeting the kids we are also targeting parents...”

“...if [the children] see the adults doing it, they’ll go.”

One of the volunteers interestingly identified that the clubs not only offer an outlet for children, but that the time they spend there is perhaps a break for the parents or guardian also.

“Well our aim is to get the kids off the street and give them something to do, you know, give the adults a break for an hour as well every week, and some love to stay and mind the kids as well.”

“It’s really built up their confidence and their enjoyability [sic] factor as well, getting out of their house, away from their kids...”

Sporting activities offer parents the opportunity to engage with their children in a positive way, but encouraging them and becoming involved in something that their children enjoy.

“When the kids see there is someone actually like there that’s encouraging and watching them... it encourages them... [they] can’t wait to get back next week... it’s great to see.”

5.0 Conclusions & recommendations:

5.1 Conclusion

Praise for the work that is being carried out by SSRP was easily found. The various stakeholders who participated in this evaluation were very impressed with the level of engagement and commitment that has been shown to the community by the SSRP. The Sports Development Officer in particular was given glowing reviews; and her personable approach combined with her level of professionalism and expertise is highly regarded on both the service provider and service user sides. The objectivity that is offered by having an external expert such as the SDO was also a common theme.

“[SDO] is kind of like the rock to be honest...we come up with the ideas but [she] sets the ball in motion and then shows us how to keep it moving...”

“[SDO] has been very, very beneficial on the ground because she bring in that kind of objectivity that has to do with sport and not to do with any kind of local [tension]”

“[SDO] doesn’t have to deal with the politics or that... [she] can go and deliver a programme and work with other groups.

The commitment that SSRP have given to Cranmore is very much appreciated by the stakeholders and there was some concern expressed as to how any retrenchment of the supports given by SSRP would be detrimental to the community. Even the fact that an evaluation was being undertaken caused some concern among stakeholders, who feared that this might be the first step to reducing the involvement of SSRP. The evidence suggests that while the process of empowerment of community member to become coaches and leaders of the various programmes that SSRP have been involved in is an important aspect of the work that they do, there is little doubt that their level of expertise is still required to ensure that programmes can be maintained and that there is a support structure in place for the local community when they encounter difficulties.

There was some indication that residents felt that they were subject to a lot of external evaluation, and as such, it would be preferable that suitable internal evaluation practices could be formalised by SSRP to minimise the amount of external evaluation required.

“We’ve had loads of people come in, loads of researchers, loads of consultants things put up on shelves, nothing done...It’s all talk, it’s all people getting big salaries.”

While the objectivity of external evaluation is extremely important, the dignity of the residents is paramount and over assessing and over evaluating this population will likely reinforce their status as socially or economically disadvantaged, which is not how they view themselves. This community is extremely proud of what they have achieved with the help of SSRP and the partner agencies. They believe that they have been listened to and that they have been consulted throughout the current regeneration project. Retaining this consultative approach is essential in ensuring continued buy in from the local community and continuing to empower people to be integral in the development of their own locality.

“This time it’s different, very, very different, it’s been... consultation from the word go, everything is consultation and that’s where the co-op come in because they are the voice of the community.”

Evidence from the research indicates that the work being undertaken by SSRP is being conducted in a very professional and well-structured manner. There is intentionally no direct delivery of programmes as the focus is not just on providing sport and recreational opportunities in the locality, but is also firmly on trying to build capacity in the community. While significant progress has been made to date, there is little doubt that this good work would be quickly undone if the support were to be removed. The objectivity that is offered by an external body is required to ensure that local agendas or political wrangling does not override the provision of life enhancing services to the local population.

Network social capital, confidence and opportunities are being increased for the people who are availing of the programmes that are run by SSRP. It appears that the adolescent youth are perhaps the most difficult to reach and motivate, but levels of engagement from the children and adults are very encouraging.

A very practical approach is being followed in the sense that SSRP act as a link between the residents in Cranmore, the various partner agencies involved in the regeneration of the estate and local sports clubs and facilities. SSRP are helping to ensure that people in Cranmore have the opportunity to try new physical activities in a non-threatening supportive environment within their own estate. However, there is a conscious effort being made to ensure that where possible activities being carried out by local clubs and societies are not being replicated. Rather, SSRP is providing a route through which people can enter into the existing sports programmes in Sligo town and county.

The model of delivery (as outlined in section 3) helps to ensure that the work of SSRP is embedded at a strategic level with the relevant partner and funding agencies, and also that the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative is part of SSRP’s strategic plan. Partnership agreements with community organisations, sports clubs and other local and national linked sports initiatives ensure that each partner or agency has a clearly defined role which helps to ensure the realisation of programmes on the ground.

The current funding structure is not ideal. The funding is multi-agency which in itself is difficult and time consuming in terms of applications and supporting documentation, but also it is likely to impact on the ability to be truly strategically focussed. Multi annual funding would be preferable from at least one source, for a minimum period of three years.

The recommendations that are presented are based on the evidence that was gathered during this research and the existing literature on physical activity and community development. Each recommendation is accompanied by an implementation section which clearly outlines how the recommendation can be realised. While every effort has been made to try to ensure that the recommendations are cost neutral, there will be time and effort required which will have to be allocated and funded.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Sustained investment by SSRP required

The current level of support invested in the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport initiative by SSRP needs to be at least maintained, or increased with a view to achieving additional positive outcomes.

“...I can categorically say that it wouldn’t, wouldn’t sustain...social capital is building within the community... it takes at least a generation.” (Source not from SSRP)

As the literature outlined (Hillsdon, 2005; Cleland, 2010; Cleland, 2012) community based interventions to improve physical activity in socio-economically disadvantaged areas work best when barriers are removed, and self-directed provision is guided by professional expertise. Currently this mix of requirements is being met through the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport initiative and it appears that this community is not at a point that an exit strategy for the short to medium term could be considered.

The commitment shown by SSRP to the Cranmore community was evident from the research, and the SDO has clearly been identified as having a pivotal role in ensuring that programmes are co-ordinated and facilitated successfully. She is the link between SSRP, the community in Cranmore and the wider community. Furthermore the Sports Co-ordinator has a critical role in ensuring that Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative remains embedded in the strategy of SSRP and its partner agencies to ensure that the positive outcomes that have been achieved can be sustained or potentially increased.

Implementation 1:

On-going support should be maintained and the capacity building and empowerment of local volunteers, coaches and leaders should continue. An exit strategy is not something that should be considered in the short to medium term (3-5 years). It is much better to maintain a programme that is working effectively rather than to take the chance of letting it fail and having to try to build it again from nothing.

Recommendation 2: Model of delivery

The model of delivery adopted is an appropriate and effective process for delivering community sport in a disadvantaged community and has the potential to be transferred and replicated elsewhere. Elements of the model which are working very effectively include the strategic approach to planning, the partnership process by agencies and the engagement with the community which focuses on capacity building. The importance of the community organisations in having a combination of paid youth workers and volunteers available to support the delivery of programmes must be emphasised and hence SSRP is very reliant on this support structure. It is recommended that this relationship is nurtured and supported.

Implementation 2:

The current model being used to co-ordinate the Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Initiative is working very well. From the strategic to operational level there is evidence of successful partnership building between the relevant agencies and the residents. The model of delivery that exists offers the opportunity to improve health outcomes in the community and could possibly be replicated in other similar communities. Furthermore, the model has the potential to be used as a vehicle through which partner agencies such as the HSE could deliver health promotion in the community setting. The Healthy Ireland framework views this partnership model as essential to the promotion of health and well-being. As Sligo aims to achieve Healthy City status, the infrastructure that is in place has the potential to be valuable in achieving this goal, certainly within this community if not beyond.

Recommendation 3: Funding

Multiannual funding should be provided to allow the SSRP to develop strategic plans that are founded in realistic rather than aspirational budget and funding projections. Any expansion of the Regeneration through Sport Initiative beyond its current level must be met with appropriate additional funds.

Furthermore, investment in an indoor facility should be considered for the area. This investment would have to be secured from partner agencies, but the work of SSRP could greatly be enhanced if there were indoor facilities available. Greater continuity of physical activity could be achieved for residents if a suitable indoor space was available.

Implementation 3:

Funding bodies should be contacted and a proposal put forward as to how the strategic plans of the SSRP could be better implemented if there was funding secured for a number of years in advance. In addition, reference should be made to the return on investment the sports funding offers. If the cost benefit analysis suggested in section 4.5 were undertaken this would help to reinforce the value associated with investment in initiatives that increase physical activity levels, improve health and wellbeing and develop the community. Unfortunately there is little else that can be done when the decision rests with the funding bodies, but clearly presenting the difficulties associated with annual funding, such as the resources required completing application processes on an annual basis from various agencies and the difficulty of creating a long term vision for the programmes when the funding is not guaranteed. While the staff at SSRP has been working effectively under the current funding structure, it is not ideal and does little to improve morale of committed staff members.

Recommendation 4: Formal internal evaluation process for SSRP

A formal internal evaluation process for the SSRP would be desirable. This would allow timely feedback on how effectively their services and supports are being delivered, and allow reflection on current work practices. Currently quantitative data is being captured for the various programmes

that are part of the regeneration through sport initiative; however, the collection of additional qualitative data would also be preferable given that their services have a meaningful impact on people, which is best captured through qualitative rather than quantitative data. The Regeneration through Sport Active Communities Logic Model that is currently in use is valuable in that it clearly indicates that inputs and activities that are underway and the short and medium term outcomes that are desired. However, there needs to be a clearer approach to identifying how the outcomes can be measured effectively. Self-evaluation is a very useful tool to try to identify areas of improvement in one's own professional practice or the practices of their organisation with the added benefit that improvement areas that are identified by staff themselves tend to have higher levels of allegiance than those imposed by management or funding bodies.

Implementation 4:

Training should be provided to the SSRP team in relation to self-evaluation practices. This would ideally facilitate the creation of a quality framework from which the self-evaluation can be benchmarked. Quality areas of interest could be identified, quality standards could then be set and evaluation criteria determined in addition to what will suffice as evidence of the criteria being met. The logic model that is currently in use could prove a good starting point from which the evaluation framework could be developed. Given the enthusiasm of the SSRP staff, it is likely that they would be willing to participate in such a programme, however, it may not be possible given their current work schedules, and therefore such a practice would have to be resourced and should not be added to an existing workload without the required resources in place.

Recommendation 5: Monitoring drop out

Participants who were participating in programmes who have now ceased to participate should be contacted to try to establish why they are no longer using the programme provided as part of the regeneration through sport initiative. It emerged that the number of people participating in the swimming programme had dropped from ten, to four, but it was not known why this had happened.

"... I don't know if it's the time of the year or whether people have got confident..."

In an ideal scenario the situation would be that people now feel confident enough to participate in the physical activity without the support of the SSRP, however, if this is not measured it is difficult to assess whether this is the case or if in fact there has just been a waning of interest due to the time of year or other factors.

Implementation 5:

When registering for an activity, participants should be asked to indicate if they are willing to be contacted at a future date to get their opinion on the programmes they participate in. This will ensure that follow up can be conducted within the parameter of data protection legislation and also ensure that only people who have indicated a willingness to be contacted are contacted, thus minimising the intrusion on people who no longer want to use the service and do not wish to be contacted.

If numbers on a particular programme have decreased significantly, based on the participation data that is being gathered, then the willing participants should be contacted to try to establish what the issue was that led to a reduction. Remedial action can then be taken if the issues related to scheduling, facilities or staff, or where appropriate, an informed decision could be made to terminate a programme that is no longer feasible.

Recommendation 6: Managing programme affordability

While it is very worthy to ask participants for a small fee which allows for the purchase of insurance and other necessities, some consideration should be given to those who cannot afford €1 or €2. The payment of the fee is a great way to ensure that participants really buy into the process, literally and figuratively, and increases the perceived value of the service that they are using. However, while the amount might seem small it is likely to be prohibitive for some members of the community, particularly children who do not have the support of their parents for their chosen activity.

Implementation 6:

While it would be impractical and inappropriate for SSRP to undertake responsibility for the allocation of discretionary places for participants who cannot afford the fee, they could have a role in enabling the local volunteers to implement a system whereby children (or adults) who cannot afford the fee could be facilitated. For example, perhaps the volunteer who collects the fee could issue a token (laminated ticket for example) to those who pay which could then be presented to the coach on entry to the pitch/hall, but would have the discretion to give a token without payment to participants who they know have genuine financial difficulty or children who are not being supported by their parents. This type of system is not intended to undermine the important role of the fee acknowledged in the previous section, but rather to compliment it and ensure that nobody is excluded from participation on the basis of financial difficulty. While the data gathered indicates that discretion is already being used, this type of system would formalise it and a note could be made of those who are receiving discretionary places to ensure that the generosity is not exploited.

Recommendation 7: Buddy system

A buddy system, as advocated by the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, would be useful in encouraging residents to become physically active and to remain physically active. While some people may not be willing or able to volunteer at the level of a coach or to take responsibility for ensuring equipment is stored and maintained, they may be willing and able to act as a buddy for new members who participate in physical activities. People who have not previously engaged in physical activity may feel intimidated and have doubts about their ability to complete a class given their current level of fitness, assurances from the coaches, while useful, might not be as convincing as the assurance of someone who has just recently become physically active. Facebook groups are already run by some of the volunteers which keep participants informed of class times, social events etc., this social platform is very useful in encouraging and maintaining participation but a person approach such as the buddy system would complement the social network.

Implementation 7:

Coaches and volunteers could identify participants in the SSRP programmes who have sustained their activity for a period of time (approx. 6 weeks) and are enjoying the programme. These participants could then be asked to be a 'buddy' with new members or be asked if they would be willing to recruit another person to the activity. The buddy would offer support during the class and also communicate outside to remind the new member of the next class and encourage them to attend again.

Recommendation 8: Engaging adolescents

A focus on adolescent residents would be desirable to try to increase their participation rates. Adolescents have already been specifically targeted with events such as mountain biking and stand up paddling, and while these initiatives have been successful, an opportunity to engage more teenagers and improve uptake of the available activities may be presented through close liaison with local schools. As the literature (Cleland, 2012) suggests that a combination of school based intervention with the support of family and community is most effective, this type of structure should be considered. Currently the family and community support is being addressed by SSRP and their partner agencies, but further development in terms of links with the relevant schools would be beneficial. One of the more successful ways of engaging teenagers to date is through adventure sports such as kayaking, stand up paddling, rowing and given the proximity of Cranmore to the Garavogue and Lake Isle of Innisfree and Sligo Kayak and Rowing club headquarters ,opportunities for real and meaningful engagement through these sport could be pursued.

Implementation 8:

Perhaps a sports and recreation day could be organised for local schools in the estate or the locality e.g. Cleveragh. This would allow the school to avail of existing facilities and also introduce the adolescents who are resident in Cranmore to the facilities at the same time as their peers. While the facilities exist there also needs to be guidance as to how to best use them e.g. outdoor gym equipment. It is difficult to motivate adolescents during their recreational time in particular, however, if this could be introduced as part of their school day they may be more likely to participate.

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Appendix A: SSRP Evaluation Brief

Research Scope: (as per tender document)

The scope of the evaluation of the Cranmore Regeneration Sports Initiative will include

- Analysis of the process of implementation of the Cranmore Regeneration Sports Initiative
- Assessing the personal and community impact of the programme
- Analysis of the critical success factors
- Recommendations
- Model for community led sport and physical activity produced
- Evaluation Report

Appendix B: Cranmore Regeneration through Sport Logic Model



Appendix C: SSRP Programmes and Participation Rates

Cranmore Youth Sports Programmes 2008 - 2013

Year	Linked with	Activity	Participant Places	Annual Total
2013	Cranmore Co-op	Multi-Sport	50	311
	Cranmore Co-op	Boxing	23	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Multi-Sport	28	
	Cranmore Co-op	Soccer	30	
	Cranmore Co-op	Summer Camp	30	
	Resource House	Summer Camp	40	
	Cranmore Regeneration	Regeneration Shield	60	
	Resource House	Sports Day	20	
	Cranmore Co-op	Family fun day	30	
2012	Cranmore Rovers	Soccer	45	271
	Cranmore Co-op	Boxing	16	
	Cranmore Co-op	Dance	60	
	Resource House	Summer Camp	30	
	Cranmore Co-op	Sports Day	40	
	Cranmore Co-op	Family Fun Day	50	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Multi-Sport	30	
2011	Sligo GAA	GAA	17	267
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Cycling Camp	10	
	Cranmore Co-op	Golf	20	
	Cranmore Co-op	Boxing	14	
	Cranmore Co-op	Dance	26	
	Cranmore Co-op	Basketball	41	
	Resource House	Tennis Camp	23	
	Sligo Athletics	Athletics	30	
	Resource House	Surfing	10	
	Resource House	Summer Camp	25	
	Cranmore Co-op	Angling	8	
	F.A.I	Soccer Camp	8	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Anti-racism Sport	5	
	Cranmore Co-op	Snorkelling	9	
	Cranmore Co-op	Cross Border Sports	8	
Resource House	Tennis	13		
2010	Abbeyquarter Centre	Cycling Camp	10	138
	Cranmore Co-op	Angling	10	
	Cranmore Co-op	Dance	30	
	Cranmore Co-op	Boxing	8	
	Cranmore Co-op	Golf	32	
	Sligo GAA	GAA	15	
	Resource House	Tennis	8	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Multi-sport	25	
2009	Resource House	Tennis	15	85
	Cranmore Co-op	Soccer	15	
	Cranmore Co-op	Basketball	15	
	Cranmore Co-op	Dance	30	
	Cranmore Co-op	Boxing	10	
2008	Cranmore Co-op	Dance	55	147
	Sligo GAA	GAA	30	
	Cranmore Co-op	Soccer	30	
	Cranmore Co-op	Basketball	20	
	Cranmore Co-op	Boxing	12	

Cranmore Adult Sports Programmes 2008 -2013

Year	Linked Organisation	Activity	Participant Places	Annual Total
2013	Cranmore Co-op	Rebounding	34	108
	Cranmore Co-op	Boxercise	16	
	Cranmore Co-op	Circuit Training	12	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Mature Movers	8	
	Cranmore	Boot Camp	10	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Aqua Aerobics	10	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Men's Golf	12	
Abbeyquarter Centre	Chair Based Exercise	6		
2012	Cranmore Co-op	Circuit Training	14	91
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Men's Boules	8	
	Cranmore Co-op	Soccer	35	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Boot Camp	20	
	Cranmore Co-op	Rebounding	14	
2011	Abbeyquarter Centre	Pitch & Putt	10	99
	Cranmore Community Platform	Soccer	15	
	Cranmore Co-op	Fitness Class	10	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Walking	4	
	Cranmore Community Platform	Walkathon	50	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Tai Chi	6	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Ladies Fitness	4	
2010	Abbeyquarter Centre	Angling	6	30
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Snooker	14	
	Abbeyquarter Centre	Swimming	10	
2009	Abbeyquarter Centre	Angling	14	14
2008	Cranmore Community Platform	Fitness Classes	12	12

Appendix D: SSRP Training and Education Programmes

Education and Training Course Description	Participant numbers
Go for Life games- Physical activity for older adults leadership training.	4
Active Leadership- Physical activity leadership training for staff/volunteers, working in community organisations.	12
Walking Leader- Training to lead community walking groups.	2
First Aid- Occupational first aid course.	5
Code of Ethics- Child safety and awareness course for coaches/leaders in sports clubs/community centres	4
Kickboxing Instructor	2
Soccer Kickstart 1	2