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Community Sport Initiative



## Developing Our Community Through Promoting Our Health

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<b>Location</b>	Derrynoose, County Armagh, NI
<b>Programme</b>	Active Lifestyles
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<b>Date of research</b>	February 2007

### Project description

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Derrynoose is in a very rural area where the only physical activities available were Gaelic sport. For those children who did not want to take part in competitive contact sports, there was no alternative without travelling to other towns. Similarly, there was nothing available for adults wanting to be active but not through contact sport. The Derrynoose Community Association's local centre had developed a good local demand in sporty activities, use of the IT suite and social events, so the management committee saw an opportunity to build on this demand to attract a wider audience.

There was also a lot of new housing in the village that had attracted new residents who now lacked local social connections, so the project aimed to use physical activities as a route to involving more isolated people in the community.

The Community Development Association runs the wider activities of the centre through a management committee, and the Active Lifestyles project has a subcommittee that focuses on its activities and development. The project also has a part-time project co-ordinator who looks after the activities.

Following a fair to identify demand for a range of activities, the project has launched a programme of weekly activities ranging from yoga for children and adults (separately) to line dancing and "fighting fit".<sup>1</sup> Some of the originally suggested activities are being combined in the first six-week session so that participants can get a taste of different types of activity and then choose the ones they like best.

The activities got started in January 2007 and they have already had more people come to the second week of classes than the first, as people bring their friends along. The project will run for two years.

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<sup>1</sup> Salsa, yoga, fighting fit (incorporating combat training and circuits), line dancing, Irish dancing, walking, workouts and aerobics, kickboxing and boxercise. Badminton will be starting soon, and tennis coaching is planned for the summer. Treadmill and exercise bike will be available when there is someone trained to man the room.



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## Project aims and objectives

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To develop physical activity, social and health initiatives to ensure that as many local people as possible access their local community and take part. The project particularly targets those people who were not coming in to the centre already.

In some cases, this may mean first hooking people and then promoting health awareness and involvement in physical activity.

## Project delivery

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How does the project deliver its activities? Does it employ staff? (How many FT, PT, sessional staff?)

The Community Development Association plans and markets the activities and, at this stage, buys in activity leaders to deliver the sessions. Once the demand for particular activities is well established, perhaps after summer 2007, the plan is to train volunteers at the centre to become activity leaders, thus making the sessions more sustainable to run and skilling up local people.

The project co-ordinator is employed for 15 hours a week, though she has been working more than that to address the higher than expected demand. In such an isolated area, it can be hard to find people with the right combination of skills, so the job was pitched as part time to attract the available people. However, in practice, more hours would be useful better meet the demand. She is supported by a subcommittee made up of four people with diverse backgrounds that brainstorm together to develop the project as it goes along.

Does the project have any partnerships? Does the project work with other bodies or as part of a wider initiative, apart from the Community Sport Initiative?

The project is part of the Community Development Association's wider activities and benefits from this synergy. For example, mothers who only brought their children to sport activities at the centre before heard about the new activities and now come on their own – such as yoga, line dancing or “bums and tums”. And having other activities at the centre – drama, youth group, marching band, indoor bowls – gives people who join an Active Lifestyles class something else to try in a familiar place. The CDA is a good platform for marketing the project, and the project brings a wider range of people into the centre.

The project also works in close partnership with the local primary school, which has its new premises next door. The partnership means the project can run children's yoga at the after school club at the school, and the school can use the centre's hall, IT facilities and football pitch for its activities. Having access to the school's hall as a spare venue also gives the project flexibility for times when its own hall is booked for special events that would conflict with classes.

The partnership also allows both the project and the school to serve a wider audience and meet their needs more flexibly. Before the Active Lifestyles project, the school could only offer sporty after school activities to its pupils. Now it has reached more children through the yoga classes, dance classes and boxercise. With the wider range of facilities and activities on offer, both the school and CDA benefit from having more starting opportunities for children and families and more opportunities to progress within those new activities.



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Does your project rely on volunteers, how are they supported, and do they deliver? Are there issues around recruiting and retaining volunteers?

At this point, the project has not yet recruited volunteers except for the subcommittee that runs the project. They are supported by the wider management committee.

After the summer, the project expects to train up volunteer activity leaders to meet demand. They will be recruited from people who already come to the centre and have a commitment to the community.

How has your project targeted beneficiaries? (or promoted itself?) Has this worked? Did one particular method work best with certain groups?

The fair targeted people whose families may have used the centre but who had not used it for themselves, as well as the wider community. It was promoted through the local schools, parish bulletin and posters in local shops, as well as leaflets at the centre. It was a very effective way of testing demand for specific activities before launching them.

For the children's after school yoga, the project co-ordinator and head teacher sent a joint letter home to all the pupils' parents about the class. The head teacher's backing was very important in giving the class credibility.

Mothers of children already using the centre have been delighted to find the centre they already know has designed just for them that gives them time out to just enjoy without other responsibilities.

## Project Links

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As well as the strong partnership links with the local primary school next door, the project is starting to make contact with:

- the local senior citizens group to use the project;
- a youth group in a neighbouring village for badminton competitions; and
- a local disabled group.

They are also interested in learning from other Active Lifestyles projects with experience of work with disabled people.

## Project performance and impacts

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How is the project performing to date? Is it meeting its aims and objectives? What outputs or outcomes can the project report at this point?

The project has succeeded already in opening up opportunities that suit people who were not previously involved in the community and many such people have started to come to classes and meet new people. People are talking about getting to "do something just for me."

- Although the project had only got off the ground in the last few weeks before the case study visit, it had already generated great demand – with *increasing* demand in the second week, rather than losing people.



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- We interviewed people from two classes – Fighting Fit and adult Yoga. The Fighting Fit people were particularly likely to have not been very active before and wanted to get out and get fitter while meeting people and doing something for themselves. They were taking the opportunity to get active.
- The Yoga participants were generally more active already through walking or going to the gym, but were keen to take up yoga to complement their other activities. Several had always been interested in yoga but never had the opportunity on their doorstep before.
- The attendance at the fair, number of forms declaring interest in an activity, and the children's participation at after school yoga has all been more than double what was anticipated.
- While the project is in a predominantly Catholic area, it is attracting participation from Protestants as well and they are having a laugh together.

#### What evidence is there of physical benefits?

The project had only been going for one or two weeks when we visited, but those participants we spoke to who had experienced a session or two said that it was energising and that they were feeling new muscles. Another added that it was distressing. All planned to keep coming back.

The project's registration forms ask about levels of physical activity when they arrive (using the questions from the [www.bigcsi.com](http://www.bigcsi.com) website) and also about any illnesses or ailments. Follow up forms after a few months will check for increases in daily physical activity and improvements in health.

#### What evidence is there of wider community benefit? (above and beyond the project objectives). Has there been any "added value" as a result of your project?

The project's objectives are about inclusivity and they are already achieving this. People are meeting their neighbours and feeling better about having "something for me" in the local community rather than only bringing their children to the centre.

The biggest surprise has been the level demand. The subcommittee expected maybe 20-30 people to come to the fair, and instead it was more like 60-80. They received 119 forms registering interest in the different classes. In the school where activities were always sporty, they expected around 10-12 children to be interested in after school yoga, but instead 29 turned up and have been very enthusiastic.

## Issues or barriers to progress

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#### Has the project come up against any issues or barriers e.g. travel or childcare? How did the project deal with this? What was the result of this action?

Because of the local culture there were some questions about whether yoga conflicted with Catholicism, but the amount of interest from children quickly showed that yoga was simply a healthy form of exercise to be enjoyed. The combined message from school, community development association and church demonstrates the project is truly at the heart of this small rural community.

"Transport deprivation" affects many people in Derrynoose and the surrounding area. Those who cannot drive or do not have access to transport cannot take part in activities outside the area. One of the project's main premises was to provide activities on the



doorstep of residents of Derrynoose, so that it overcomes the transport barrier partly. However, some people live on outlying farms or in neighbouring villages, and they may need further transport support if they do not have cars.

For instance, the project is starting to make links with other groups outside the village, such as the senior citizens club in the next small town. To attract these people they starting to consider the need for a community bus for the active events held for the club.

There are two aspects of their bid they would now have done differently, with hindsight.

- The ratio of instructors' fees to training in the budget is higher than they now would like. Better to have asked for more training budget to allow more people to be trained up to sustain the project.
- Notice that the primary school's toilets were inaccessible from the school's hall after hours and include a budget for new toilets in the bid.

## Good Practice

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- The project has been particularly successful in reaching new people by identifying non-sporty physical activities and then testing the demand for these before starting its programming.
- Grouping some of the less well-known activities together for six weeks of tasters also introduces people to more activities than they might otherwise have had a chance. This also helps to manage the project co-ordinator's time with a more viable number of events to market.
- Integrating project activities with the well-established activities at the Community Development Association centre and school has given it a head start with its profile.
- Appealing to people who previously felt there was nothing for them because they weren't sporty.
- Providing a social spin to activities with a chance to chat during warm up and to have a laugh and meet new people.
- If someone can't come to an activity they were interested in because the time doesn't work for them, encourage them to try other activities that fit better. (Several people take this opportunity.)

### Location

- The project takes place in a well-established and well-known venue that many people come to bring family members even if they have no history of using the facilities themselves. This means awareness raising gets a head start.
- Linking in with the local primary school next door also provides access to a big market and more facilities.

### Management

- Ensure that the project co-ordinator knows the local community and its culture well. This will help to appeal to the way people think and to avoid pitfalls.
- Choose a mix of forward-thinking people with different perspectives for the management committee of the project, and see the project as a journey to explore along the way.



- This also means they have kept the management and staffing tightly focused for now, so the project co-ordinator doesn't have to spend lots of time briefing and debriefing many people
- Related to this, be clear whose role is whose so the co-ordinator is not overwhelmed.
- If the project is part of a wider organisation, make sure to have a subcommittee to focus on the project so that there is time and space to think creatively together and give it the attention and support it needs.
- Be willing to brainstorm and don't say no to anything at the start.

### Programming activity and staffing

- Test the waters the first few months, and then establish true demand once people have had a chance to see what they actually like in practice.
- In trying to meet the unexpectedly high demand, the project management group has tried to focus on quality over quantity to give people a positive experience that will encourage them to keep coming back.
- Using bought-in instructors has helped the project get lots of activities off the ground quickly.
- Choosing activity leaders the target participants can identify with has also been important – for example, a more lively male yoga instructor, a fighting fit instructor with curves of her own.
- Once established, different groups can just run on their own, with only advice from the co-ordinator.
- Asking clients to pay in six-week blocks does wonders for their commitment and also means the co-ordinator only has to come to the first class. (£12 for six weeks)
- Combining some activities into six-week tasters makes the programming more manageable for the co-ordinator and gives participants the chance to try more activities within their schedule.

### Partnership

- Sharing facilities with nearby partners like the school and the wider activities of the Community Development Association provides instant market access and recognition and allows for synergy between activities.
- Being based at the heart of the community is essential.
- People using the project will gradually be developed as partners – whether by word of mouth marketing now or activity leading later.

## Future

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Where is the project going? How will it fund itself in the future? What does it hope to achieve? How will it do this?

The project will keep testing the current activities until summer, then keep people's attention with summer-related activities outdoors, then take stock and strengthen the activities that have the greatest demand, including new ones.

- It aims to gradually shift from paid instructors to trained volunteers from the wider centre so that its costs are low and income from course fees pays expenses.



- The subcommittee are keen to expand the range of participants to include senior citizen clubs and children with disabilities. They are interested in sharing learning with other projects like CHIPS in Banbridge (see case study).
- There may be other links to be made, such as competitions with other school clubs.
- As they see new opportunities, they will look out for suitable funding, starting with toilets for the school hall to open that up as a venue for wider use after school hours.

Above all, the project will evolve to fit local needs and become a well-established part of local community life, helping people make connections and take a healthy part in the community.

#### How is participation maintained? How will it be maintained in the future?

The project was only just started at the time of the case study visit, but already there were ideas for maintaining participation.

- Paying in advance for 6 week blocks of classes gives participants a sense of commitment and time to develop the habit of coming along. It is also short enough to not be daunting or too expensive.
- Encouraging a social atmosphere and making people feel the activities were designed for them to treat themselves makes them keen to keep coming back – and bring their friends.
- By introducing other healthy activities in the future such as aromatherapy and Indian head massage as hooks, the project may be able to reach new audiences that are still shy of physical activity. Then, when these people are in the habit of getting out of the house, they can try physical activities too.
- Over the summer, the project is considering outdoor activities such as walks for children and treasure hunts that will let people be outdoors and still involved and active.

During the summer, the project plans to take stock of what has worked, and then build on that with a big event showcasing the established activities and new ones proposed, as well as bringing in speakers on healthy living and raising the profile of Active Lifestyles. New hooks will include:

- involving previous participants in leading courses, after they have been trained;
- activities based on tested demand; and
- new activities that people have been asking for.

#### What will happen to those that have been trained and gained qualifications as part of the project?

- Because they are committed volunteers, they will be able to stay on and keep the bond with participants and help to develop new activities.