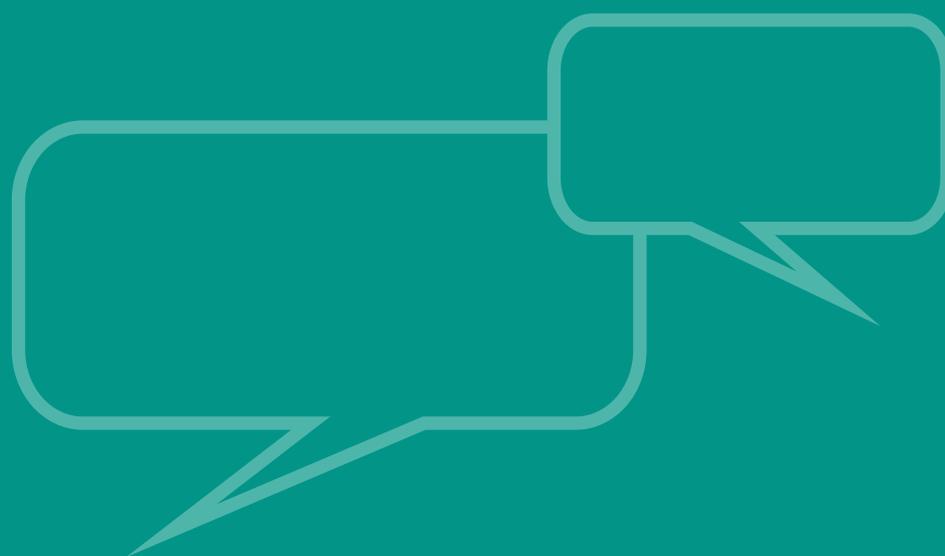


THE REPORT OF THE PUBLIC  
CONSULTATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
**THE NATIONAL  
RECREATION POLICY  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**



OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN  
OIFIG AN AIRE DO LEANAÍ



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND CHILDREN  
AN ROINN SLÁINTE AGUS LEANAÍ

# MINISTER'S FOREWORD



I am delighted to launch the Report of the Public Consultation on the Development of the Recreation Policy for Young People.

We undertook a public consultation to give all interested parties, including young people a chance to have a say in the development of the Recreation Policy. Over 900 people responded and of these three quarters were under the age of 18. I am particularly pleased with the interest shown by young persons in the process.

The consultation has indicated broad support among the public for the general direction of the recreation policy as set out in the consultation document. It also provides valuable information on a range of issues relevant to the development of the policy. These include the single biggest need identified for recreation, the importance of consulting with young persons in the development of recreation facilities and programmes and issues relating to the development and funding of recreation.

The consultation is one strand in the preparatory work for the development of the policy. In addition, we published, in December 2005, research on young persons' views about opportunities, barriers and supports to recreation in Ireland.

The next step will be the publication of the Recreation Policy. In finalising that policy, my Office and the Recreation Policy Steering Group will carefully consider the key issues emerging from the public consultation.

*Brian Lenihan*

**Brian Lenihan, T.D.,  
Minister for Children**

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# 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of the Minister for Children (formerly the National Children's Office or NCO) is developing a recreation policy for young people of secondary school age. A consultation document was published in 2005 by the National Children's Office (NCO, 2005a); it set out the reasons for developing the policy, as well as the principles and objectives that were considered to underpin its development. A public consultation was then conducted, the purpose of which was to gather views, comments and suggestions for the development of the recreation policy based on the consultation document.

The consultation document and the public consultation questionnaire were sent to every secondary school in Ireland, as well as to those involved in the provision of recreation for young people. The questionnaire could also be completed on-line at the website of the National Children's Office. Overall, 940 people responded to the public consultation, with three-quarters of all respondents being under the age of 18 years.

There was a high level of agreement with the definition of recreation (96%), the vision for recreation (87%) and the seven objectives (mean = 96%) set out in the consultation document.

The most frequently reported barriers to participation in recreation for young people were lack of recreational facilities and activities (24%); money (23%); transport (16%); time (8%); gender (4%); lack of interest/laziness (4%); and friends/peers (2%). Analysis of the barriers to participation suggests that some young people have difficulties in accessing recreation.

The most commonly reported motivators to participation in recreation for young people were friends (28%); enjoyment (22%); keeping fit (15%); parents and family (11%); teachers and coaches (9%); celebrities (5%); and physical education or PE (3%). Analysis of the motivators to participation suggests that the majority of young people who responded have high levels of intrinsic motivation or are self-motivated.

The requirement of more recreational facilities was identified as the single biggest need as regards recreation for young people. The most requested recreational facility was somewhere for young people to 'hang out' with their friends — a place that is safe, warm, indoors, affordable, relaxed and legitimate, and where they can have a sense of ownership, go in their free time and not get into trouble.

Youth clubs were the most frequently cited example of a recreation project or programme that works well for young people. The main reason given for the success of recreational projects or programmes was consultation with young people. The key issues in relation to developing and funding recreational opportunities for young people included, again, consultation with young people and developing a local partnership approach. Consultation with young people emerged as a fundamental theme throughout the public consultation. This coincides with Objective 1 of the proposed recreation policy and Goal 1 of the National

Children's Strategy (2000), which states that '*children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity*'.

The importance of both structured and unstructured recreation in the lives of young people is evident from the results of the public consultation. The majority of examples of recreational projects or programmes that work well for young people consisted of structured recreation. The significance of unstructured recreation was highlighted by the single biggest need arising from the consultation, i.e. recreational facilities for young people to hang out with their friends.

The key issues emerging from the public consultation will be carefully considered by the Office of the Minister for Children and the Recreation Policy Steering Group when finalising the recreation policy. These include facilitating improved access to recreation for young people; consulting with young people in the development of recreational opportunities and involving them in organisational structures; and consideration of the importance of both structured and unstructured recreation in the lives of young people.



# 1: INTRODUCTION

This document is a report of the public consultation for the development of a recreation policy for young people. The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the various themes, concerns and issues raised by young people, adults and organisations during the public consultation process.

## BACKGROUND

The Office of the Minister for Children is developing a recreation policy that will be aimed at young people of secondary school age (12-18 years). The policy will deal with recreation programmes and facilities that are funded by Government. A consultation document was published in 2005 which set out the reasons for developing the policy, as well as the principles and objectives that were considered to underpin its development (NCO, 2005a). A public consultation was carried out in 2005 to gather views, comments and suggestions for the development of the recreation policy based on the consultation document. It also set out the general direction, inclusive of its objectives, which the policy proposed to follow. Research was also conducted during 2005 to support the development of the recreation policy by exploring the opportunities, barriers and supports that young people experience with regard to recreation and leisure (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005).

The importance of recreation in the lives of young people is well documented. The lack of play and recreational facilities was the most frequently raised issue by young people in the public consultation for the development of the National Children's Strategy (2000). The issue of recreational facilities for young people has also been raised at every Dáil na nÓg (National Youth Parliament) to date.

Research suggests that what young people do in their free time affects their development, how they integrate into society and their future lives (Verma and Larson, 2003). Both structured and unstructured recreation can be beneficial to young people's development. Structured recreation can increase self-esteem, provide the benefits associated with being a member of a group and help integrate young people into their communities. Participating in activities that involve physical activity has important benefits in terms of overall health and fitness (Laidlaw Foundation, 2001). Young people tend to engage in more unstructured recreation activities as they grow older, replacing organised activities with ones they control themselves (*ibid*). Friends are a very important part of young people's lives and they spend much of their time 'hanging out' with, talking to and visiting their friends (Hendry *et al*, 1993; Connor, 2003; Verma and Larson, 2003).

## POLICY CONTEXT

The consultation document sets out the background for developing a recreation policy. It identifies the main government departments and agencies that provide recreation opportunities for young people, as well as the very important role played by the voluntary and community sectors. Key policy documents in the area

of recreation for young people include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the National Children's Strategy (2000), the Programme for Government (2002) and the National Play Policy (NCO, 2003).

## PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The purpose of the public consultation was, firstly, to assess support for the principles and objectives of the policy as set out in the consultation document and, secondly, to seek responses on the following issues:

- the main barriers and motivators to participation in recreation;
- the single biggest need as regards recreation for young people;
- the key issues that need to be addressed in developing and funding recreation opportunities for young people;
- examples of recreation projects and programmes for young people that work well.

## METHODOLOGY

The public consultation questionnaire consisted of (1) a short summary of the consultation document and (2) a response form designed to gather views, comments and suggestions for the development of the recreation policy.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections:

- The first section gathered demographic information.
- The second section measured levels of agreement with the definition and vision for recreation through two closed questions (see *Chapter 2*). It also contained two open-ended questions asking respondents to report what they considered to be the three main barriers and the three main motivators to participation in recreation for young people (see *Chapters 3 and 4*).
- The third section contained seven closed questions designed to measure levels of agreement with the seven objectives of the recreation policy (see *Chapter 2*).
- The fourth section contained five open-ended questions asking respondents (1) if there was anything they would like to add or change with regard to the objectives of the policy; (2) to assess the single biggest need in terms of recreation for young people in their area and why (see *Chapter 5*); (3) to give a specific example of a recreation project or programme for young people that worked well in their area and why they thought it was successful (see *Chapter 6*); (4) to describe the key issues that need to be addressed in developing and funding recreation opportunities for young people (see *Chapter 7*); and (5) to advise on any important issues missing in the recreation policy as proposed.

The majority of questions in the questionnaire were closed, which resulted in a structured format enabling easier analysis. The open-ended questions required deeper analysis since many of the items had very diverse responses. For example, there was a wide range of answers given to the question asking respondents for a specific example of a recreation project or programme for young people that worked well.

## RESPONSE RATE

A summary and response form was sent to every secondary school in the country and to all organisations involved in the provision of recreation for young people.

The response form was also available to answer on-line at the website of the Office of the Minister for Children. Overall, 940 people responded to the public consultation.

## RESPONDENT PROFILES

Of the 940 respondents who responded to the public consultation, 795 (85%) responded as an individual and 145 (15%) responded on behalf of an organisation.

### Gender

There was a good gender balance among respondents, with 511 (57%) female and 383 (43%) male.

### Age

In terms of age, 225 (25%) were aged 12-14 years; 457 (50%) were aged 15-17 years; and 222 (25%) were aged 18 years or over. Therefore, young people accounted for 75% of all respondents. The high response rate of young people to the public consultation can be accounted for by the fact that questionnaires were sent to every secondary school in the country. The suggestion of filling in the questionnaire as part of Civic, Social and Political Education classes was also made in a cover letter, which appears to have taken place in many instances.

### Involvement in the provision of recreation

Respondents were asked whether or not they were directly involved in the provision of a recreation service for young people. Out of the 742 respondents who answered this question, 178 (24%) were directly involved in the provision of a recreation service for young people, while 564 (76%) were not.

### Types of organisation

As can be seen in Table 1, of the 145 respondents who responded on behalf of an organisation, 67 (46%) responded on behalf of a voluntary organisation; 26 (18%) on behalf of a local authority; 18 (12%) on behalf of a community organisation; 5 (3.5%) on behalf of a business; 6 (4%) on behalf of a charitable organisation; 4 (3%) on behalf of a health board or a health-related authority; 5 (3.5%) on behalf of a government department; and 14 (10%) on behalf of 'other' organisations. 'Other' organisations included non-governmental organisations, educational institutions, private recreational organisations, religious organisations and private recreation service providers.

**Table 1: Respondents and types of organisation**

TYPES OF ORGANISATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Voluntary organisation	67	46
Local authority	26	18
Community organisation	18	12
Business	5	3.5
Charitable organisation	6	4
Health board or health-related organisation	4	3
Government department	5	3.5
Other	14	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>100</b>

## Geographical spread of respondents

Table 2 details the geographical spread of those who responded to the public consultation. The county with the highest response rate was Dublin (17%), followed by Cork (11%), Donegal (8%) and Louth (8%). There was at least one respondent from each county.

**Table 2: Geographical spread of respondents**

COUNTY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Carlow	2	0
Cavan	7	1
Clare	4	0
Cork	103	11
Donegal	72	8
Dublin	162	17
Galway	26	3
Kerry	18	2
Kildare	17	2
Kilkenny	5	1
Laois	23	2
Leitrim	1	0
Limerick	40	4
Longford	1	0
Louth	78	8
Mayo	4	0
Meath	9	1
Monaghan	4	0
Offaly	63	7
Roscommon	22	2
Sligo	69	7
Tipperary	17	2
Waterford	41	4
Westmeath	6	1
Wexford	16	2
Wicklow	62	7
Other	1	0
Not specified	67	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>100</b>

# 2: RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION — GENERAL

## DEFINITION OF RECREATION

The consultation document defined 'recreation' as *'comprising all socially acceptable activities in which a person may choose to take part that will make his or her leisure time more interesting, more enjoyable and personally satisfying'* (Laidlaw Foundation, 2001). Recreation can therefore include such diverse activities as reading, recreational sport, art, music in a group, 'hanging out', camping, and surfing the web. (The recreation policy will not deal with competitive sport.)

Out of a total of 940 respondents, 707 (96%) respondents agreed with this definition of recreation, while 32 (4%) respondents disagreed with it. More adults agreed with the definition than young people. A number of respondents stated that they were unhappy or uncertain about the use of the term 'socially acceptable' in the definition; they considered the term to be unclear, had difficulty with its exact definition and had concerns about who would decide what recreational activities are 'socially acceptable'. One respondent suggested a clearer, more straightforward and teenager-friendly definition should be drafted, with input from young people such as those from Dáil na nÓg (National Youth Parliament). One organisation suggested replacing the phrase 'socially acceptable' with the word 'positive'.

## VISION FOR RECREATION

Respondents were asked whether or not they agreed with the following vision for recreation in Ireland, as set out in the consultation document: *'An Ireland where the importance of recreation is recognised so that young people experience a range of quality recreational opportunities to enrich their lives and promote their physical, mental and social well-being.'*

Out of a total of 940 respondents, 813 (87%) respondents agreed with this vision for recreation in Ireland, while 124 (13%) disagreed with it. There were no significant differences between the opinion of adults and young people in terms of agreement with the vision for recreation. One organisation recommended that the promotion of 'cultural well-being' should be included in the vision, together with physical, mental and social well-being.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles were proposed in the consultation document. They are drawn from the consultation process of the National Children's Strategy (2000) and are similar to those underpinning the National Play Policy (NCO, 2003). They also reflect the values set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989).

The guiding principles are:

- **Centred on young people:** The best interests of young people should be a primary consideration in planning publicly funded recreational opportunities.

Young people should be active participants in planning and implementing programmes and facilities, having due regard to their age and experience.

- **Family and community oriented:** Publicly funded programmes and recreational facilities should be established in a manner that supports and empowers families and communities.
- **Equitable:** All young people should have equality of opportunity and access to publicly funded recreation. A key element should be to target investment at communities most in need.
- **Inclusive:** The diversity of young people's experiences, cultures, lifestyles and levels of ability should be recognised in the design and implementation of recreation programmes and facilities.
- **Action oriented:** Publicly funded recreation programmes and facilities should be focused on achieving specified results to agreed standards in a targeted and cost-effective manner.
- **Integrated:** Recreation programmes and facilities should be delivered in a coordinated manner through integrated needs-analysis and policy planning.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE RECREATION POLICY

Following on from these principles, which reflect the key issues identified in the academic literature and research, one of the aims of the public consultation was to assess support for the seven objectives of the recreation policy, as set out in the consultation document, and the actions proposed to implement them. The findings for each objective are given below.

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### OBJECTIVE 1

**Give young people a voice in the design and implementation of recreation policies and facilities.**

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Goal 1 of the National Children's Strategy (2000) is to give children and young people a voice in matters that affect them and to ensure that their views are given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. The Office of the Minister for Children is encouraging government departments and local authorities to consider young people at the planning stage of policy proposals and new initiatives. Initiatives designed without the input of young people can result in inappropriate programmes.

The consultation document proposed that local authorities and other agencies commit to the involvement of young people in planning publicly funded recreation programmes and facilities, particularly at local level.

#### Agreement with Objective 1

- 813 (97%) respondents agreed with Objective 1, while 23 (3%) respondents disagreed.
- One youth organisation considered this objective to be *'the key to all other objectives'*.
- One respondent pointed out that giving young people a voice in the development of recreation programmes is significant in terms of a sense of achievement and self-esteem.

#### Consultation with young people

- A number of respondents recommended that young people should be consulted with more often, should be listened to more, and that their involvement should not be *'tokenistic'*.

- A local partnership remarked that the involvement of young people in the development of recreational facilities and activities, especially in their own area, *'needs to be a mandatory requirement in the development of any such facility'*.
- An organisation representing young people felt that as well as listening to young people, they should also be involved in the monitoring of programmes and the use of facilities.
- An Arts organisation suggested using structures at local level, such as Comhairle na nÓg (Youth Council), to give young people a voice. They, in turn, would be able to link with local authority Arts and cultural groups responsible for the development of programmes and venues in this area.

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## OBJECTIVE 2:

### Promote structured recreation for young people and examine ways to motivate them to be involved

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Structured recreation involves activities that young people *choose* to do and which include some element of being instructed and developing skills. This could include a range of activities, including recreational sports, games, arts, music, membership of youth groups and other hobbies. Evidence suggests that there are positive physical, psychological and social benefits to be gained from structured recreation, provided that the programmes and the social environment in which they take place are appropriate.

The consultation document proposed that the recreation policy would address the following areas: examine the barriers that prevent young people from participating in structured recreation and physical activity; promote the benefits of physical activity and encourage young people, especially girls, to participate in physical activity; encourage other activities, including arts, music and drama, as well as participation in clubs and activities in the summer holidays; get the most use out of existing facilities, including schools; and highlight the value of other initiatives and activities, including those run by cultural institutions in the State, such as museums and galleries.

#### Agreement with Objective 2

- 738 (96%) respondents agreed with Objective 2, while 31 (4%) respondents disagreed.

#### Overemphasis on structured recreation

- While the majority of respondents (96%) agreed with Objective 2, a number of respondents felt there was an overemphasis on structured recreation and considered unstructured recreation to be just as important as structured recreation.
- One youth organisation stated that *'emphasis should be taken off "structured" activities; they should be flexible and decided by the young people themselves'*.
- One respondent remarked that structured recreation inevitably involves adult supervision, which can put off young people getting involved.
- Another young person stated that *'teenagers don't like being told what to do'* and encouraged the policy to *'set guidelines, not rules'*.
- Adults and young people in the 15-17 age category were most likely to disapprove of an overemphasis on structured recreation. The issue was not raised by any respondent in the 12-14 age category. This suggests that adolescents become less tolerant of structured recreation as they get older; which correlates with previous research findings (Laidlaw Foundation, 2001).

- It should be noted, however, that although an overemphasis on structured recreation was questioned by a number of respondents, youth clubs emerged as the most frequently reported example of recreation working well for young people. Examples of youth clubs that are successful appear to have a balance between having a clear structure and the teenagers themselves being active participants in the organisational structure of the club.

### **Inclusion of cultural well-being**

- An Arts organisation recommended that cultural well-being should also be included in Objective 2 through the promotion of cultural programmes and the highlighting of their benefits: *'There is a double need here, both to illustrate the range and depth of exciting and innovative arts programmes and initiatives taking place with young people in the country, and the need to intensively research the impact of these initiatives. Also in terms of promoting benefits of physical activity, routes outside sport, which may be more attractive to young women, should be highlighted — dance, drama, theatre and circus.'*

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## **OBJECTIVE 3:**

### **Ensure that the leisure/recreation needs of young people are met through the development of youth-friendly and safe facilities and environments**

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While there is a strong focus on organised activities in the case of young teenagers, from the age of 14 on, there is a move towards more casual recreation that young people control themselves, such as skateboarding, biking and use of the Internet.

Hanging out with friends is an important part of growing up for most young people (Hendry *et al*, 1993; Connor, 2003; Verma and Larson, 2003). However, 'hanging out' is, or can be, perceived as threatening or anti-social by local communities. It is often due to a lack of alternatives and having 'no place to go' that results in young people gathering in inappropriate places.

Young people have repeatedly identified the lack of attractive, alcohol-free venues where they can go at night as a serious gap in the recreational opportunities available to them. This issue was raised by young people at the 2005 Dáil na nÓg and they suggested that more leisure centres, youth clubs and drop-in centres are needed (NCO, 2005b).

Young people may also be just as concerned about their personal safety as adults and may perceive threats to themselves from adults and other groups (Department of Transport (UK), 2002; Childhood Development Initiative Tallaght, 2004).

Youth-friendly and safe environments include dedicated spaces or facilities for young people. But it also goes beyond this, to providing a youth-friendly environment. Recreation does not just take place in those physical spaces allocated to it, but also occurs in pathways around homes and schools, and around all buildings and spaces in the locality. A recent study has highlighted the importance of the physical environment in promoting physical activity (Fahey *et al*, 2004).

The consultation document proposed that the recreation policy would examine the following areas: the barriers to the development of youth-friendly and safe facilities and environments; what is happening internationally in this area; additional issues, such as the development of youth drop-in centres; measures that will encourage alcohol-free discos and other venues where young people can meet at night; and the implications for young people's recreation in the design of the wider environment.

### Agreement with Objective 3

- 792 (96%) respondents agreed with Objective 3, while 36 (4%) respondents disagreed.
- A number of respondents felt this objective was an essential component of the policy. Access to youth-friendly and safe facilities and environments was considered to be a right of all young people.
- The need for widespread access to recreational facilities was raised by one respondent: *'We need to create society where access to facilities and recreation is the norm and youth don't think twice about it.'*

### Need for somewhere to hang out

- Somewhere for young people to hang out, such as youth drop-in centres and youth cafés, was singled out as an 'identified need'.
- The recommendation to highlight the need for somewhere for young people to hang out coincides with the finding of the single biggest need as regards recreation for young people (see Chapter 5).
- An organisation representing young people stated that *'young people's need to "do nothing" sometimes is just as important as the "doing" or "achieving" that often characterises their free time'*.
- Another organisation argued that *'young people need a place where they can't be moved from'*.
- The provision of non-alcoholic venues for young people was considered to be very important. According to one respondent, *'a non-alcohol environment is vital to ensure young people will see that they can enjoy themselves without alcohol'*.

### Consultation with young people

- An Arts organisation suggested that young people themselves should have a say in the planning of facilities and environments they will use. An example was given of work being carried out in this area in Co. Galway, where a local authority arts programme has an Architect in Residence working with young people in schools to build their understanding of architectural practices in a safe environment.

### Safety

- The issue of safety in terms of the development of youth-friendly and safe facilities and environments for young people was raised by a number of respondents. Maintaining safety between groups of young people within facilities and environments, as well as between young people and other people in the surroundings of such amenities, were raised as important issues.
- An organisation representing young people felt efforts should be made so that facilities for young people are not taken over by gangs.
- Another respondent raised the issue of what exactly is a safe facility. According to this respondent, people's perceptions of what is safe can often lead to tensions between young people and older generations. For example, a community may view the construction of a facility for young people to hang out in as a threat to their safety, even though it may be a perceived threat rather than an actual threat.

### Recreation needs of young Travellers

- A group representing Travellers recommended that the recreational needs of young Travellers be met through Objective 3. They requested that the needs of Travellers be considered in relation to the design and maintenance of Traveller accommodation since recreation takes place within this environment.

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## OBJECTIVE 4:

### Maximise the range of recreational opportunities available for young people who are marginalised, disadvantaged or who have a disability

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The recreation policy is aimed at *all* young people. However, some young people have additional needs, including:

- young people from low income families;
- young people from the Traveller Community;
- young people from ethnic minority groups;
- young people who are at risk of drug misuse;
- young people who are at risk of offending;
- young people with disabilities;
- young people who are ill;
- young people living in rural areas.

The consultation document proposed that the recreation policy would identify the factors that make for successful interventions with high risk and disadvantaged young people; deal with the recreation needs of young people who are ill or who have disabilities; and deal with the issue of access, particularly transport.

#### Agreement with Objective 4

- 806 (97%) respondents agreed with Objective 4, while 22 (3%) respondents disagreed.

#### Young Travellers

- A group representing Travellers felt that young Travellers should be included in existing mainstream recreational services. In their opinion, *'additional resources are needed to support Traveller participation'*.

#### Young people with disabilities

- An organisation representing people with disabilities requested that the needs and interests of young people with disabilities be included in all the objectives, not just in Objective 4.
- There was also a call by a number of young respondents for young people with disabilities to be included in more mainstream recreational opportunities in order to facilitate social integration. As one respondent suggested, *'Encourage leisure centres/drama groups to bring disabled people into that activity with children that are already involved'*.

#### Disadvantaged young people

- A number of respondents felt that recreation could act as an important positive influence in the lives of disadvantaged young people.
- In the opinion of one respondent, mixing young disadvantaged people with young people from stable homes through recreation could provide them with positive role models.
- One young respondent suggested that recreational facilities could also provide forms of counselling for young people with problems, as well as useful information for those who need it: *'The area of recreation should also be used as a councillor/help service for teenagers with problems. Whether at school, home, with drugs or drink, or for people looking for someone to give them sex education. It is a serious matter for young people and it is sometimes what we need the most.'*

## Contribution of the arts

- An Arts organisation put forward the value of the arts in addressing the recreational and broader needs of young people with additional needs. It suggested that more research on the possible benefits should be carried out in this area: *'The arts are particularly conducive to exploring issues such as cultural diversity where traditional forms of cultural expression and their synergy can be explored in very creative ways'*.

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## OBJECTIVE 5:

### Ensure that relevant qualifications/standards are met in the provision of recreation/leisure activities

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This objective will deal with standards in relation to the quality and safety of recreational facilities used by young people. It will also seek to address issues about the qualifications of people dealing with young people in recreational settings.

The consultation document proposed that the recreation policy would address the following areas: outline relevant legislation and codes of practice, along with information about who has responsibility for them; address important gaps or lack of progress in the area; deal with training and other requirements for staff/volunteers working with young people in recreational settings; set out the role of new mechanisms in providing information; support and advise on a range of issues, including child protection and safety; and share examples of good practice in the field.

### Agreement with Objective 5

- 766 (93%) respondents agreed with Objective 5, while 58 (7%) respondents disagreed. The slightly lower level of agreement with this objective compared with the other objectives is perhaps due to the fact that some respondents felt there needed to be a balance between encouraging appropriately qualified and trained people to be involved in recreation and not discouraging volunteers.
- An organisation concerned with the rights of children and young people considered Objective 5 to be vital in terms of the screening and professionalising of those who come in contact with children and young people through recreation.

### 'Over-professionalisation' of recreation

- While the majority of respondents (93%) agreed with Objective 5, a number of respondents had a problem with any attempts to 'over-professionalise' the area of recreation since they felt it could be off-putting to many existing or new volunteers.
- As one youth club leader stated: *'A lot of recreation will depend on voluntary/community help. Start mentioning "qualifications" and these helpers get fewer and scarce'*.

### Qualifications

- Some respondents felt that requiring a qualification to be involved in recreation is not always necessary. One respondent felt that *'a qualification may not be necessary in every instance, for example, in supervising a youth club or in training an Under-7 soccer team'*.
- The diversity of qualifications needed in the field of recreation was also raised as an issue.

- In addition, one respondent felt that there were not enough Irish-based training courses available in this area to make the objective a reality.
- The issue of the cost of training and the possibility of costs being passed on to young people was raised by one respondent: *'While I agree with the principle, I would be wary of this perhaps increasing costs on young people, who ultimately as a result may not be able to participate.'*

### Encourage young leaders

- A number of respondents recommended that young people be encouraged to take up roles as leaders instead of encouraging qualified adults to do so. Having young leaders and facilitators of recreation may also encourage more young people to take part in recreation. As one young person pointed out, *'It's not cool to have it [recreation] run by adults.'*

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## OBJECTIVE 6:

### Develop a partnership approach in developing and funding recreational opportunities across the statutory, community and voluntary sectors

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The National Children's Strategy (2000) outlines the case for child-focused, needs-driven supports and services. It also highlights the importance of finding better ways to link services.

At national level, there is no single government department responsible for the provision of recreation programmes and facilities for young people. Responsibility rests with a number of government departments and statutory bodies.

At local level, the Local Government Act provides broad discretionary powers for a local authority to take action to promote the interests of the local community, including the support of amenity, sport and recreational facilities (Government of Ireland, 2001). A range of other structures also exist at local level and play an important role in providing recreation programmes for young people, including County and City Development Boards, the Health Service Executive, VECs, local sports partnerships, local drugs task forces, local development groups and the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund. The recreation needs of young people could not be met without the enormous contribution made by the voluntary and community sectors.

One of the issues identified in the consultation document was whether we are making the best use of the resources we have so that they meet the requirements of young people. This concerns not only human and financial resources, but also buildings and facilities. Because of the large number of organisations involved, the challenge is to find ways of engaging them to maximise recreation opportunities for young people.

On the funding of recreation, Ireland would appear to be unusual in the extent to which facilities are funded by central Government, yet managed locally. Different elements of the same project may also be funded from a number of government sources. In some cases where funding has been provided for capital expenditure, it has been difficult to secure funding on an ongoing basis for maintenance, inspection and staff costs. Specific provision for current and administration costs has, however, been made by some funds, such as the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (YPF SF) which provides funding for managers, youth workers and running costs in youth centres developed under the YPF SF.

The consultation document proposed that the recreation policy would address the following areas: explore partnership approaches using existing structures; take account of the very important contribution that volunteers make to recreation; develop partnerships with young people in terms of volunteering; and examine issues concerning the funding of public recreational facilities and programmes.

### Agreement with Objective 6

- 757 (95%) respondents agreed with Objective 6, while 38 (5%) respondents disagreed.

### Suggestions for implementation

- While the majority of respondents (95%) agreed with Objective 6, a few respondents felt it would be difficult to implement and sustain. The question as to who would be the 'lead' agency in the development and funding of recreation was raised.
- A recommendation was made for more integration between sectors involved in recreational services.
- A business organisation suggested getting businesses involved in a partnership approach to recreation.
- A community organisation felt that local communities and parents, with the support of qualified personnel, should be directing recreational activities and facilities.
- An organisation representing young people suggested that schools, the local county council and those involved in youth services should develop a partnership approach to develop recreation opportunities. But it was recommended that young people have the same influence as adults: *'Schools, youth services and county council should work together, but adults cannot take over'.*

### Government grants for recreation

- An organisation representing young people felt that there should be a trust fund set up by Government to fund recreational facilities.
- This point was echoed by an individual respondent, who believed that young people should not suffer as a result of living in a community that was not active in supporting recreation: *'If the community is unable or unwilling to help fund or cooperate with youth recreation programmes, facilities, etc., the Government will provide more money to help fund youth recreation instead'.*

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## OBJECTIVE 7:

### Improve information on, evaluation of and monitoring of leisure/recreational provision for young people in Ireland

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Research and information is necessary to help government departments and other service providers develop and provide appropriate recreational facilities and programmes for young people.

It would also appear that, while there is a lot happening on the ground, there is a lack of information available both to service users and service providers on existing recreational facilities and programmes.

This objective will also outline how the implementation of the recreation policy will be monitored and evaluated.

The consultation document proposed that the Office of the Minister for Children will work with other government departments and agencies to establish what is

available at present and also to examine how best to provide information for young people on recreation opportunities, including the contribution that new technology can make in this regard.

### Agreement with Objective 7

- 775 (97%) respondents agreed with Objective 7, while 36 (3%) respondents disagreed.

### Difficulties with implementation

- While the majority of respondents (97%) agreed with Objective 7, a small number questioned how this objective would be implemented. They had concerns as to how all young people, especially those outside of schools and the marginalised, would be reached. They felt this was important since these groups of young people could benefit most from recreation.

### Suggestions for implementation

- A number of respondents suggested ways in which this objective could be implemented. Suggestions included promoting recreation through the education system and dissemination of information on recreation through the Internet.
- A local sports partnership remarked that there is, in fact, a lot of information available on recreation for young people; the problem is pointing them in the right direction.
- The Internet was suggested as a practical source of information: *'A lot of this information is "out there" — [we] need to tell young people where to access it and put info on websites, etc. where young people will access it.'*
- An organisation representing young people suggested a web-based directory of recreation, which could be possibly linked with websites used by young people, such as [www.skool.ie](http://www.skool.ie).
- An Arts organisation requested that in the event of a website being set up to provide information for young people on recreation, that the arts be given equal status to other areas of recreation.

### Objective on mental health

The recommendation for the inclusion of a new objective on mental health was suggested by a local authority and an individual aged 15-17 years. These respondents felt that the benefits of recreation in terms of the mental health of young people should be highlighted.

## SUMMARY

Overall, there was a very strong level of agreement with the seven objectives of the recreation policy, with an average rate of agreement of 96%. Only 25% of respondents made comments about adding to or changing the objectives. There were significant differences in the numbers of young people and adults who made comments about the objectives. Just under one-fifth (19%) of young people in both age categories (aged 12-14 and 15-17) made comments about the objectives, compared with 57% of adults.

Areas of the objectives suggested for review included the overemphasis on structured recreation in Objective 2; the need for somewhere for young people to hang out as an important element of Objective 3; the dangers of 'over-professionalisation' of those involved in the provision of recreation in Objective 5; and the suggestion of taking a local partnership approach to developing and funding recreational opportunities in Objective 7. The inclusion of a new objective on mental health was also recommended.

### 3: RESULTS — BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN RECREATION

There are a number of barriers that can either hinder or discourage participation in recreational activities. The consultation document gave examples of barriers to participation in recreation taken from the international literature, such as gender, age and income (Laidlaw Foundation, 2001). It also set out examples of barriers that may be significant in the Irish context, such as lack of appropriate facilities; accessibility and opening times of facilities; lack of staff to manage facilities; lack of free time; inappropriate programmes; teenage employment; availability/pressure of drug/alcohol use; transport; and safety issues (e.g. real or perceived threats from young people outside of their own group/territory).

The hierarchical model of leisure constraints by Crawford *et al* (1991) suggests that the barriers people encounter and their ability, or inability, to overcome these affects their participation, or non-participation, in leisure activities. Leisure preferences are formed when *intrapersonal barriers* are absent or have, with supports, been overcome. People may encounter *interpersonal barriers*, particularly where a partner or group is required for the activity, as is the case, for example, in activities such as tennis, choir or scouts. Finally, participation will occur if there are no insurmountable *structural barriers*, such as a lack of facilities, money, time or transport.

The research commissioned for the development of the recreation policy adapted the hierarchical model of leisure constraints to measure the barriers and supports to leisure participation of young Irish people (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005).



## BARRIERS IDENTIFIED IN THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Respondents were asked what they considered to be the three main barriers to participation in recreation. Figure 1 sets out the most frequently reported barriers to participation as identified in the public consultation and Figure 2 analyses the motivators to participation by age and gender.

It should be noted that the questionnaire gave the examples of the following barriers, which may have influenced respondents' choices of barriers: 'If you are a boy or a girl, what's available for you; money; and lack of transport?'

Figure 1: Barriers to participation in recreation

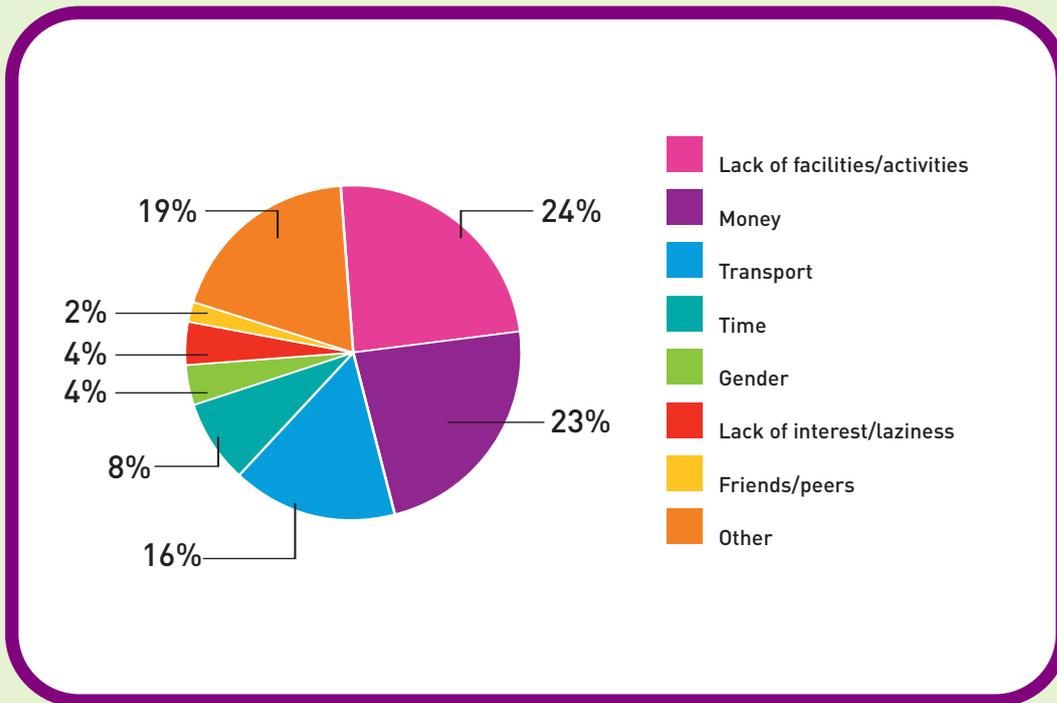
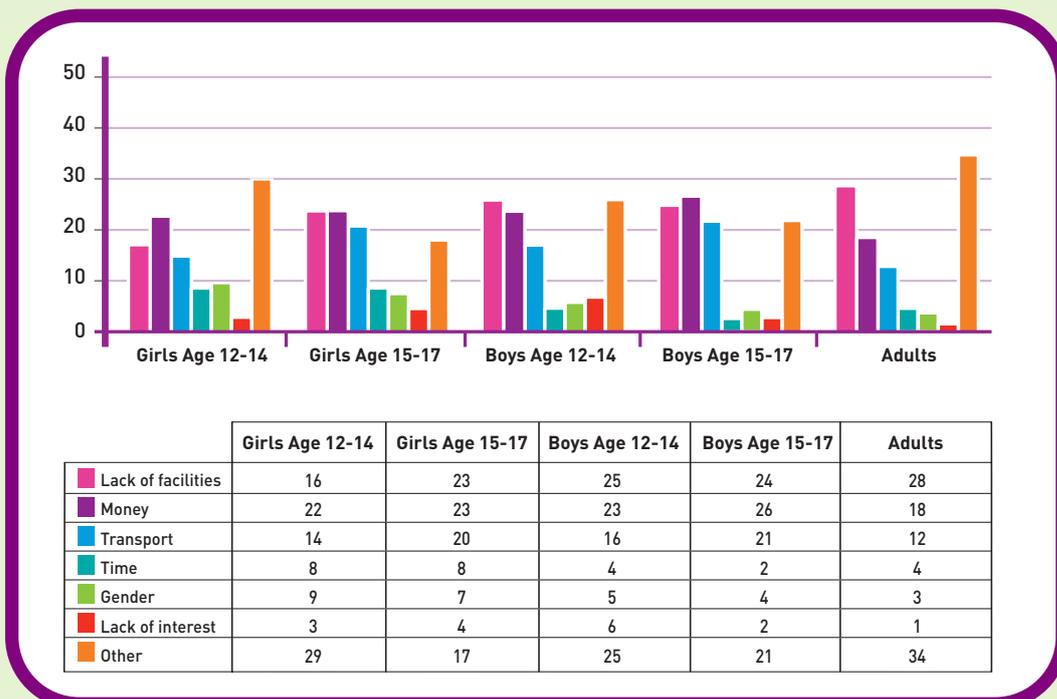


Figure 2: Motivators to participation in recreation by age and gender



### **Lack of recreational facilities and activities**

The most frequently reported barrier to participation in recreation for young people was lack of recreational facilities and activities. According to almost one-quarter (24%) of respondents, what is available for young people in terms of recreation is a significant barrier to participation. A number of respondents reported having no recreational facilities or activities available in their area. Other respondents felt recreation provision was inadequate or not needs-specific to young people in their area.

Many respondents felt where they live acts as a barrier to participation in recreation. Rural respondents most frequently reported having a narrow range of recreational facilities and activities in their area. According to a number of respondents from rural areas, the GAA is the only available recreation for young people in their area. Similarly, de Róiste and Dinneen (2005) found that young people from rural areas had a lower perception of leisure provision in their area than those living in urban areas.

Lack of recreational facilities and activities was most frequently identified as a barrier by adults, followed by young people aged 15-17. Boys were more likely to report lack of recreational facilities and activities as a barrier than girls.

### **Money**

The second most frequently reported barrier to participation in recreation for young people was money. According to 23% of respondents, having little or no money combined with the high cost of commercial recreational activities acts as a barrier to accessing recreation. Young people reported money as a barrier to participation in recreation more frequently than adults.

### **Transport**

The third most frequently reported barrier to participation in recreation was transport. According to 16% of respondents, lack of adequate transport restricts young people's participation levels in recreation. Transport emerged as an issue for young people from all areas; however, it was a particular issue for young people living in rural areas. A number of rural respondents reported feelings of isolation, boredom and lack of independence due to inadequate transport. Young people reported transport as a barrier more frequently than adults.

Transport appears to increase in significance as a barrier with age. It was reported as a barrier by 21% of boys and 20% of girls aged 15-17, compared with 16% of boys and 14% of girls aged 12-14. Similarly, de Róiste and Dinneen (2005) found that older age groups are significantly more likely to report difficulties with transport than younger age groups, perhaps reflecting the 'broadening horizons of the late adolescent's recreational sphere'.

### **Time**

The fourth most frequently reported barrier to participation in recreation was time (8%). Reasons reported for not having enough time were school, homework and study, other activities such as music lessons, and socialising with friends. A very small number of respondents said working part-time was a barrier to participation. Time was more likely to be perceived as a barrier by young people than by adults. Time was also reported as a barrier more frequently by girls (8% in both age categories) than by boys (4% in 12-14 age category and only 2% in 15-17 age category). De Róiste and Dinneen (2005) also found that time is a more significant barrier for girls than for boys, with 43% of girls spending most of their free time on homework and study as compared with 29% of boys.

### Gender

The fifth most frequently reported barrier to participation in recreation was gender. According to 4% of respondents, gender can block participation. These respondents felt that there are more recreational activities and opportunities available to boys than there are to girls, especially in terms of sport. Gender was more frequently reported as a barrier among girls than among boys.

### Lack of interest and laziness

Lack of interest in recreational activities and laziness was reported as a barrier by 4% of respondents. It was more likely to be perceived as a barrier by young people than by adults, and was most frequently reported by boys in the 12-14 age category (6%).

### Friends and peers

Only 2% of respondents reported friends and peers as a barrier to participation in recreation.



### Other barriers

Other barriers to participation in recreation identified by respondents included discrimination on the grounds of age, social status, disability, religion, race, culture and lack of ability. A number of young people reported fear, intimidation, bullying, self-consciousness and being shy as barriers to participation in recreation.

Further barriers to recreation included lack of volunteers, leaders, coaches, parental permission, lack of government policy and funding for recreation, lack of information about recreation, lack of young people's say in recreation, not enough physical education (PE) in schools, drink, drugs, smoking, insurance, society's attitude towards recreation, off-putting teachers or coaches, TV and computer games, and the weather.

## SUMMARY

The most frequently reported barriers to participation in recreation for young people were *structural barriers*. These included lack of recreational facilities and activities (24%); money (23%); transport (16%); time (8%); lack of volunteers to act as leaders and coaches; lack of information on recreation; insufficient physical education in schools; and the weather.

The most common barriers for young people therefore relate to access to recreation. The public consultation found that transport increases as a barrier with age and affects young people from rural areas predominantly. Time was also found to increase as a barrier with age and is a more significant barrier for girls than for boys. These findings correlate with previous research (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005).

*Intrapersonal barriers* identified in the public consultation included lack of interest and/or laziness (4%), friends and peers (2%), shyness, self-consciousness and lack of ability. Preference for sedentary recreation (such as watching television and playing computer games) and participation in anti-social behaviour (such as drinking, smoking and taking drugs) are further examples of intrapersonal barriers identified. On the whole, there was a low level of intrapersonal barriers reported in the public consultation, which shows that the majority of young people have high levels of intrinsic motivation in relation to leisure participation.

*Interpersonal barriers* identified in the public consultation included off-putting leaders and coaches, parental permission, fear; intimidation, bullying and discrimination by age, gender, religion, race, culture, lack of ability and disability. Overall, there were very few interpersonal barriers reported, which shows that the majority of young people have a high level of interpersonal support with regard to leisure participation.

In conclusion, structural barriers that create problems in relation to accessing recreation are most likely to influence participation in recreation for young people.



# 4: RESULTS — MOTIVATORS TO PARTICIPATION IN RECREATION

The hierarchical model of leisure constraints proposes that leisure preferences are formed when intrapersonal barriers are absent or have, with supports, been overcome (Crawford *et al*, 1991). Positive interpersonal motivators and a lack of structural barriers also facilitate leisure participation.

There are a number of recognised motivators or supports that encourage participation in recreation. Motivators can be extrinsic (interpersonal) or intrinsic (intrapersonal). Extrinsic motivators can include role models (e.g. parents, other adults, friends or celebrities or physical education classes). Intrinsic supports are individual characteristics, traits and beliefs that enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and that encourage or enhance participation in leisure. Intrinsic motivators are more concerned with personal satisfaction, a sense of enjoyment, positive self-esteem and self-image (Connor, 2003; Christchurch City Council, 2001; Department of Community Services (Nova Scotia), 1999).

## MOTIVATORS IDENTIFIED IN THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Respondents were asked what they considered to be the three main motivators to participation in recreation. Figure 3 sets out the most frequently reported motivators to participation in recreation identified in the public consultation and Figure 4 analyses the motivators to participation by age and gender.

It should be noted that the questionnaire gave the examples of the following motivators, which may have influenced respondents' choices of motivators: parents, teachers/coaches, celebrities, PE classes, friends, enjoyment and keeping fit.

Figure 3: Motivators to participation in recreation

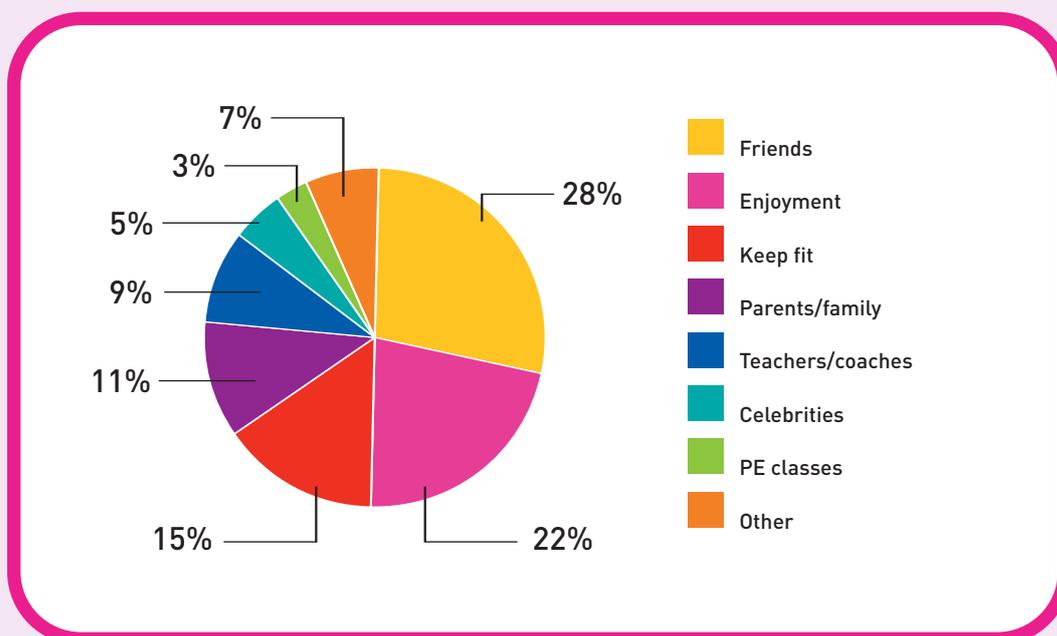
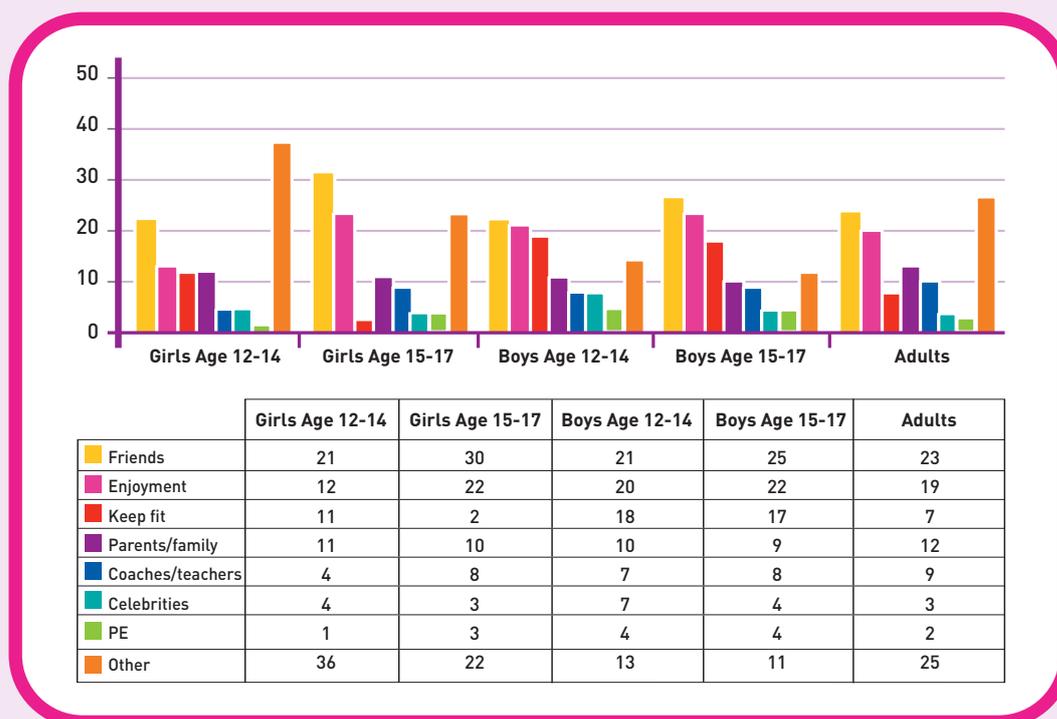


Figure 4: Motivators to participation in recreation by age and gender



### Friends

The most frequently reported motivator to participation in recreation was friends (28%). This included wanting to get involved in the same recreational activities as friends and peers, as well as viewing recreation as a way of making new friends, meeting new people, mixing and socialising. Similarly, de Róiste and Dinneen (2005) found that almost 50% of young people agreed they would only participate in a new activity if their friends were too. Friends were the most reported motivator to participation in recreation across all ages and genders. Girls in the 15-17 age category reported friends as motivators most frequently. Almost one-third (30%) stated friends were responsible for their participation in recreation, compared with 25% of boys aged 15-17 years, 21% of boys and girls aged 12-14, and 23% of adults.

### Enjoyment

The second most frequently reported motivator to participation in recreation was enjoyment. According to 22% of respondents, enjoying themselves and having fun is what encourages young people to get involved in recreation. Enjoyment has been identified as a key motivator to positive leisure time for all ages, but particularly for young people (Christchurch City Council, 2001; National Heart Alliance, 2001). Enjoyment was the second most reported motivator across all ages and genders. Girls aged 12-14 were least likely to report enjoyment as a motivator. Only 12% reported enjoyment as a motivator; compared with 22% of boys and girls in the 15-17 age category, 20% of boys in the 12-14 age category, and 19% of adults.

### Keeping fit

Keeping fit was the third most frequently reported motivator to participation in recreation for young people. Keeping fit and healthy were reported as reasons to participate in recreational activities by 15% of respondents. A very small number of respondents cited weight issues. Keeping fit was more frequently reported as a motivator by boys than by girls. A high percentage of boys in both age categories

(18% in 12-14 age category and 17% in 15-17 age category) reported keeping fit as a motivator, compared with 11% of girls in the 12-14 age category and only 2% of girls in the 15-17 age category. Young people were more likely to report keeping fit as a motivator than adults.



### Parents and family

The fourth most frequently reported motivator to participation in recreation was parents and family (11%). Parents and family were reported as motivators at an equal rate across all ages and gender. Respondents felt that young people were more likely to get involved in recreation if they are encouraged by their parents and family. The example set by parents and siblings involved in recreation was also judged to be an important motivator. This would correlate with previous research, which highlights the importance of the family, in particular the father, in terms of involvement in leisure (Lewko and Greendorfer, 1998).

### Teachers and coaches

The fifth most reported motivator to participation in recreation was teachers and coaches. According to 9% of respondents, having good, friendly and encouraging teachers and coaches is an important factor in encouraging young people to take part in recreation. Coaches and teachers were reported as motivators at a similar rate among all ages and gender, apart from girls in the 12-14 age category who reported them at a much lower level.

### Celebrities

Celebrities were the next most commonly reported motivator to participation in recreation. Celebrities, such as sports stars, act as motivators according to 5% of respondents. Celebrities were most rated as motivators by boys in the 12-14 age category and least rated by adults and girls aged 15-17.

## Physical education (PE)

PE was reported as a motivator to participation in recreation for young people by 3% of respondents. It was reported as a motivator more frequently by boys (4% in the 12-14 and 15-17 age categories) than by girls (only 1% in 12-14 age category and 3% in the 15-17 age category).

## Other motivators

Other motivators to participation in recreation identified by respondents included having an interest in recreational activities, self-motivation, having access to recreational facilities and organisations, the media, boredom, winning, being part of a team, relaxation, and wanting to become famous.



## SUMMARY

The most frequently reported motivators to participation in recreation for young people identified in the public consultation were *intrinsic or intrapersonal supports*. These included friends (28%), enjoyment (22%), and keeping fit (15%), self-motivation, having an interest in a recreational activity, enjoying competition, and relaxation. Since intrapersonal motivators were the most commonly reported motivators, this would suggest that the majority of young people who responded have high levels of intrinsic motivation or are self-motivated.

*Extrinsic or interpersonal motivators* accounted for a quarter of all reported motivators in the public consultation. These included parents and family (11%), teachers and coaches (9%), celebrities (5%) and being part of a team. The significant number of interpersonal motivators identified by respondents indicates the high level of interpersonal support for young people taking part in recreational activities.

*Structural motivators* identified in the public consultation included having a good PE structure in schools, having access to recreational facilities and provisions, and the influence of the media. Overall, structural motivators were the least commonly reported motivator, which suggests that they have the least significance in terms of influencing young people's participation in recreation.

In conclusion, intrinsic or intrapersonal motivators are the most significant motivators to participation in recreation. In other words, being self-motivated is the most common indicator of participation in recreation for young people.

# 5: RESULTS — RECREATIONAL NEEDS IDENTIFIED

This section of the report deals with the open-ended questions featured in the public consultation questionnaire. These included the following:

- What is the single biggest need in your area as regards recreation for young people?
- Can you give an example of a specific recreation project or programme for young people that worked well in your area and why do you think it was successful?
- What are the key issues that you think need to be addressed in developing funding and recreational opportunities for young people?

The responses to these open-ended questions were rich in detail, varied in content and provided a great deal of important information.

## THE SINGLE BIGGEST NEED IDENTIFIED BY RESPONDENTS

Respondents were asked what they considered to be the single biggest need as regards recreation for young people in their area.

### More recreation facilities

The most frequently reported need was the *provision of more recreational facilities*. A large number of respondents reported a lack of facilities or inadequate facilities for young people in their area. The recreational facilities identified were a place to 'hang out'; parks and sports pitches; swimming pools; community halls and centres; cinemas; public gyms; skate parks; and tennis and basketball courts.

While more recreational facilities emerged as the single biggest need across all age groups, this need was most frequently reported by young people in the 15-17 age category. This group placed more emphasis on commercial facilities, such as swimming pools and cinemas, than those in the 12-14 age category.

The need for more recreational facilities also emerged from the study conducted by de Róiste and Dinneen (2005). They found that 59% of young people believe that there is very little leisure provision for adolescents in their locality. Results also showed that no provision of, or facility for, an activity was the most common reason cited by young people for not joining an activity that they would like to join.

### Somewhere to hang out

The most requested recreational facility was somewhere for young people to go with their friends — '*We have nowhere to hang out with our friends*'. Youth centres, shelters, cafés, and drop-in centres, as well as the use of existing facilities, were mentioned as options for places to hang out. The demand for somewhere to hang out reflects the findings of de Róiste and Dinneen (2005), whose research established that over 90% of young Irish people in all age groups enjoy hanging around with their friends. While 'hanging out' is sometimes viewed as negative or anti-social behaviour, it has been identified as an important part of young people's development (Verma and Larson, 2003; Hendry *et al*, 1993).

Facilities for young people to hang out were predominantly identified as a need by females. This coincides with previous research in which girls show a preference for hanging out in indoor locations, whereas boys prefer outdoor locations (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005; Frith, 1978; Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1984; James, 1998). Focus groups carried out by de Róiste and Dinneen (*ibid*) found that females only reported hanging out indoors *'in pals' bedrooms*, whereas males only reported outdoor locations, such as *'in the park'*, *'in the estate'* and *'around the shops'*.

The following quotes highlight the types of hang-out facilities young people want:

- *'In my area we need a place where teenagers can hang out and socialise with each other.'*
- *'A youth centre with facilities for music, band practice, art, gig space, 'chill-out' space, free Internet access and discussion room. A small outdoor area with grass would also be a beneficial addition, but the centre would be priority. It should be young people on the Board in charge of the centre and the youth worker acting in response to their needs as outlined by THEM.'*
- *'Even if they opened the parish halls and put in a few couches, we could hang out there.'*

The key requirements set out by young people for a hang-out facility included:

- somewhere safe;
- somewhere warm;
- somewhere indoors;
- somewhere affordable;
- somewhere relaxed;
- somewhere legitimate;
- somewhere young people can go in their free time;
- somewhere young people will not get into trouble;
- somewhere young people have a sense of ownership.

Looking more closely at these requirements, the following valuable information was gathered.

**Somewhere safe:** Safety was identified as a major issue for young people in the public consultation. Due to the lack of appropriate facilities to hang out in, some young people reported feeling unsafe and vulnerable when doing so. A number of young people, particularly those from rural areas, reported feeling unsafe hanging out due to inadequate lighting and footpaths. The following quotes from young people highlight the issue of safety:

- *'My biggest need is I don't have somewhere safe to hang out with my friends; we have nowhere to go that is suitable.'*
- *'Somewhere children and young people can go to play/hang out and feel safe without being afraid of getting kidnapped or abused.'*

**Somewhere legitimate:** Having somewhere to hang out that is legitimate in the eyes of their parents, their communities and the Gardaí was identified as an important issue for young people, as the following quotes demonstrate:

- *'Somewhere to just hang out safely with your friends. Somewhere your parents won't mind you going to.'*
- *People think we look like ruffians if we hang around the main street.*
- *'A place to hang out with no hassle from Gardaí.'*

**Somewhere young people will not get into trouble:** Many young people reported hanging out in public areas, such as in parks and on the streets. Young people themselves have identified that hanging out in certain environments can lead to anti-

social behaviour, such as alcohol and drug misuse. As seen from the following quotes, young people want an alternative to getting involved in anti-social behaviour:

- *'We need somewhere to go and hang out on the weekends and weeknights because we have nowhere to go and we only end up getting into trouble for causing harm'.*
- *'Somewhere to just sit and play games because most kids are getting into trouble because there is nothing else to do'.*

Adults also expressed the opinion that young people need somewhere to go that will divert them away from anti-social behaviour:

- *'A more casual 'hang-out' that will get young people off the streets, away from under-age drinking and drug abuse'.*

**Somewhere to go in your free time:** Having somewhere to hang out in their free time, such as in the evening time, after school, during holidays and at the weekends, was raised as an issue by young people. Many young respondents reported not having many options of places to go at night-time and at weekends. For many young people, there are no places where they can go and hang out that do not involve alcohol or commercial interests. As one young respondent pointed out:

- *'There is no good focal or meeting point in my area where young people can simply 'hang out' or socialise that isn't dominated by commercial interest... surely one doesn't need to purchase alcohol or spend great deals of money to have a good time. I find that there simply is no other alternative for people my age'.*

**Somewhere young people have a sense of ownership:** Young people also identified as important having a sense of ownership of hang-out facilities. A number of respondents felt that consultation with young people prior to setting up facilities is essential for their success. As one young respondent stated:

- *'Young people need somewhere to go which they feel they have ownership of and where they can relax and 'hang out'.*

### More recreational activities

The availability of *more varied types of recreational activities* for all young people also emerged as a need. Respondents requested that more recreation activities be made available for young people, not only through more varieties of sporting activities but also through the availability of activities apart from sport. As one respondent stated: *'Activities should suit people who aren't interested in sport!'*

The requirement of gender-specific recreational activities was highlighted by one female respondent, who identified her single biggest need as *'Activities that will suit girls as there are many activities for boys but nothing that caters for girls' interests, such as drama, dance, etc'.*

The need for more non-competitive sport was also highlighted in the public consultation. Many respondents requested that all sports and recreational activities be made accessible to young people of all ranges of ability. The need for a wider range of recreational activities to be made available for young people living in rural areas was raised by a number of respondents. Frequently, the GAA is the only recreation option for young people in rural areas. As one respondent explained, *'I live in the countryside and beside the GAA, recreational activities are non-existent. As a result I have to travel into the city all the time'.*

The need for free or very cheap recreational activities for young people was also raised as an important issue. As one respondent stated, there is a need for *'more things to do that don't cost an arm and a leg'.*

### More volunteers

A number of respondents felt the single biggest need as regards recreation for young people is more volunteers to act as leaders, coaches, trainers and helpers. Respondents documented the difficulties of operating recreational activities and facilities without the help of volunteers. The following statement made by one respondent outlines the need for volunteers to run recreation programmes and suggests why they are becoming scarce: *'Fewer people are available to do so in the past ten years. Volunteers see this type of work as being unrewarding and possibly as another form of "babysitting". Volunteers generally do not want to make a long-term commitment to a project.'*

### More information on recreation

More information on what is available for young people was identified as a need by a number of respondents. As one young respondent stated, *'They should tell you what there is going on in your area'*. One organisation raised this issue, as well as the need for the Government to promote the benefits of recreation to young people: *'We feel the biggest need is for information on what activities are available and promote these in an effective manner, coupled with an education focus from across departments on the benefits of recreation and physical activity.'*

### Transport

Transport was identified as an important need, particularly for those living in rural areas. Research carried out for the development of the recreation policy also found that transport is more likely to affect young people living in rural areas (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005). Adults identified transport as a need more frequently than young people. One respondent summed it up by stating, *'Transportation is the major issue. Recreational activities are all well and good, but useless if you cannot get there.'*

## SUMMARY

The single biggest need in terms of recreation to emerge from the public consultation was the provision of more recreational facilities and activities. The most frequently requested facility was somewhere for young people to hang out with their friends. This reflects recent research which found that over 90% of young people enjoy hanging around with friends in their free time (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005). The key characteristics required by young people for such a 'hang-out' facility were somewhere that is safe, warm, indoors, affordable, relaxed and legitimate, where young people will have a sense of ownership, can go in their free time and will not get into trouble. Suggestions for types of hang-out facilities included youth centres, shelters, cafés and drop-in centres. Females were most likely to request a facility to hang out in. This correlates with previous findings, which show that females prefer to hang out indoors, whereas males prefer to hang out outdoors (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005; Frith, 1978; Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1984; James, 1998).

Other recreational facilities requested included more parks and sports pitches, swimming pools, community halls and centres, cinemas, public gyms, skate parks, and tennis and basketball courts. Older adolescents were more likely to request more commercial recreational facilities. Also called for were a wider range of recreational activities, as well as non-competitive sport and alternatives to sport. More volunteers, information on recreation and transport were also considered to be significant needs.

# 6: RESULTS — RECREATION THAT WORKS WELL

The public consultation asked respondents to give an example of a specific recreation project or programme for young people that worked well in their area and why they thought it was successful.

The most commonly reported examples of recreation that works well were youth clubs, the GAA, sporting, drama, music and dance clubs, the scouts or guides, voluntary work, youth cafés and drop-in centres, and community projects. Other successful recreation projects or programmes included summer camps, youth projects, skate parks and discos.

The main reason given for the success of recreation projects and programmes was consultation with young people and involvement of young people in the organisational structure of projects or programmes. This is clear throughout the examples given below by respondents.

One organisation that carried out its own consultation with young people concluded: *'Recreation projects are only successful when the needs and wants of young people in local areas are taken into consideration in the design of the project... The voice of young people must be listened to and respected when designing and providing recreation activities so that young people are interested in the project, open to participating and feel empowered by the project.'*

## EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL RECREATIONAL PROJECTS OR PROGRAMMES

### Youth clubs

Youth clubs were the most frequently cited example by all ages of a successful recreational project or programme for young people. This finding coincides with recent research which found that youth clubs were the most popular type of community or charity group among young Irish people (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005). Reasons given why youth clubs work well included:

- they are fun;
- well structured;
- well supervised;
- well-trained staff;
- keep young people out of trouble;
- educate young people about alcohol and drugs;
- are a good place to make friends and mix with other young people;
- expose young people to new activities;
- help young people mix better within their communities.

The most cited youth club was Foróige, the National Youth Development Organisation. Foróige youth clubs were most commonly mentioned by young people in the 15-17 age category. One young member of Foróige explains why the organisation is so successful: *'It gives teenagers in my area an opportunity to meet up,*

*enjoy ourselves and get involved in activities, which we wouldn't otherwise have an opportunity to do, e.g. designing a website, making a radio programme, various workshops, trips, etc. It has also helped the community view young people in a more positive light, e.g. raising money for charity, village clean-ups, tending the grounds around the community centre'.*

A Foróige leader details a project her youth club undertook and explains why it was successful: *'In my local rural area, our youth club produced a local telephone directory for the residents of the area, very successful and necessary we thought. All the members worked very well together and had to go to each house for permission to use the telephone number, so they learned a lot about the area and its people. Eventually, when all the books were sold and with local advertising, we covered our costs'.*

Other youth clubs mentioned as examples of recreation projects or programmes that work well were the No-Name clubs (a national youth organisation, founded to provide young people with an alternative to pub culture) and BASTA! Youth Collective from Wicklow. The following quotes demonstrate why these projects worked well:

- A member of the Naas No-Name club says: *'[It is successful] because it provided an alternative, non-academic atmosphere for both males and females, where the peer pressure of under-age drinking alcohol is not felt.'*
- A member of the BASTA! Youth Collective says: *'The all-ages gigs we've organised locally (albeit with difficulty finding a venue) have acted not only as a platform for young people to hang out, but have created a space for young people to hang out and chat. There are also stalls at the gigs giving out free information about political issues that young people have showed enormous interest in as it is affecting them or their peers and the world they are coming into.'*

### **The GAA**

The GAA was the second most frequently cited example of recreation that works well for young people. Reasons given why the GAA works well included:

- it is well organised;
- very good facilities and coaches;
- gives young people something to do in the evenings and at weekends;
- keeps young people fit;
- keeps young people out of trouble;
- is fun;
- caters for boys and girls of all ages;
- is safe;
- promotes teamwork and good social skills;
- is a good way to make new friends and mix with other young people;
- interacts with local schools;
- creates a sense of community and national pride.

The popularity of the GAA among young people is well documented (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005; Connor, 2003; Fahey et al, 2005). One respondent explains why the GAA works well in her community: *'GAA Club, lots of interested adults involved, interaction with school, good facilities, teens help younger children, cheap admission to Croke Park for young people'.*

A teacher describes how setting up a girls' Gaelic football team in her school was a great success, from which the girls, their parents and she herself gained satisfaction: *'Girls' football. It was and is successful because the girls enjoy it. I also enjoy it. Parents support and encourage their children. The girls also play with local clubs, thus improving their skill. In four years, we went from no football to winning a county final'.*

## Scouts and guides

Scouts and guides were the third most frequently cited example of recreation for young people that works well. The popularity of scouts and guides among young Irish people is recognised in previous research (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005; Connor, 2003). The scouts and guides were only mentioned as an example by young people in the 15-17 age category and adults in the public consultation, which contradicts recent research which found there was a drop-off in membership with age (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005).

Reasons given for the scouts and guides working well included:

- they are well organised;
- have dedicated and enthusiastic leaders;
- give young people something to do;
- are a good way to meet other young people;
- provide a mix of young people from different backgrounds;
- give young people an opportunity to travel;
- good fun;
- good facilities and locations;
- enjoyable activities;
- keep young people interested;
- teach important social and life skills;
- are an alternative to the pub culture;
- cater for the needs of different age groups;
- promote a healthy outdoor lifestyle;
- have community support and promote a sense of community.

The following quotes describe why the scouts and guides are successful:

- *'Scouts brought my peers and friends together and taught us life skills and other skills'.*
- *'Scouts was a good meeting place and [somewhere to] have fun. It would give us more choices instead of having to go to a pub or a club'.*
- *'Girl guides/Scouts are very popular in our area as they cater for all the needs of different age groups separately and let them mix with people of different backgrounds and all the leaders are very enthusiastic and dedicated'.*

## Clubs

Sports, dancing, music or drama clubs were the fourth most commonly cited examples of successful recreational projects or programmes for young people. While young people of all ages identified sports and other clubs as examples of recreation that work well, those in the 15-17 age category referred to a broader range of sports than the younger age category. As well as the GAA, which was the most mentioned sports club, other sports clubs given as examples included soccer (indoor and outdoor), boxing, swimming, surfing, snooker, fishing, rowing, volleyball, rugby, golf, hockey, kick-boxing, horse riding, athletics, tennis, tag rugby, basketball, badminton and sailing.

Non-sporting clubs included ballet, acrobatics, drama, youth orchestras, marching bands, cookery groups, photography, chess, creative writing, Boys' club, fit club, Girls' Active, Young Women's Club, carnival club and the Legion of Mary.

The following quotes highlight examples of clubs that work well for young people and why they were considered successful:

- *'A swimming club in my area. It worked well because all of us worked as a team and we achieved many goals'.*

- 'A badminton club for young people is a meeting place and [somewhere] to have a good time. I think it has been successful because of the commitment of the leaders'.
- 'As part of our Girls' Active programme, we had three sessions of horse riding lessons. It was a new experience to all the girls, everyone started off the same. Really enjoyable and fun'.
- 'Marching bands gave members a structured safe environment for us to meet, learn skills, enjoy and perform music, and get opportunities to travel in and out of Ireland'.



### Voluntary work

Voluntary work featured as the fifth most cited example of a recreational project or programme that works well for young people. Research carried out for the development of the recreation policy found that groups that engage in voluntary work were the third most popular type of community or charity group among young Irish people, proving more popular among older adolescents (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005). This was reflected in the public consultation, with volunteering being given as an example by young people in the 15-17 age category and adults. The popularity of voluntary and charity work may reflect the impact of the transition year school programme, which often introduces young people to voluntary work.

Examples given of voluntary work included the Best Buddies programme (which pairs a young person with disabilities with a peer without disabilities); the Irish Wheelchair Association's Stepping Stone Project; short-term integrated youth projects involving young people with and without disability participating equally in a project that enabled them to reach a specific goal over a specific time; Special Olympics clubs; homework clubs (where young people help other young people with schoolwork); Operation Zambia (involving fund-raising and travelling to Zambia to work on community projects for three weeks); and Foróige volunteer projects.

The following quotes show examples of voluntary work carried out by young people that worked well.

- A leader of a Foróige project reports: *'We got involved with our local active retirement group last Christmas. About 12 of our young people (mostly boys, aged 14) sang Christmas carols and the girls did Irish dancing. The senior citizens sang to their hearts' content. It was brilliant — the young people were fantastic, voices, tone, perfect! All had refreshment and chat and craic afterwards. Both of these groups have lots to learn from each other and we hope to continue to foster this very special relationship'.*
- A member of a Best Buddies programme states: *'In my opinion the Best Buddies programme that is run in our school is one of the best recreational projects that I have seen. It works so well because the people who have the disability are treated as equals and not separated for their disabilities'.*
- A member of a Homework Club recalls: *'A Homework Club was run by the Youth Resource Centre. Students from Transition Year acted as leaders, helping children in certain areas with their homework for one hour a week. The club was supervised by two adults; however, the responsibility led ultimately to a feeling of achievement and maturity among the students. The students felt like they were making a positive contribution to their community'.*

### Community projects

Several community projects and programmes were mentioned as being successful in terms of involvement of young people in recreation. Examples included the Community Games; community resource centres; a sports access for youth initiative; neighbourhood youth projects; after-school programmes for young people; a community rugby project; community projects for disadvantaged young people or those with special needs; grinds organised in community centres; social action projects which involved young people visiting old people in nursing homes; the building of playgrounds and bicycle paths; and the regeneration of parks.

The following quote details a community project that worked well and why it was successful. It concerns the regeneration of the Diamond Park in central Dublin's Sean McDermot Street and Gardiner Street:

- *'The detailed consultation closely involved young people and involved them in the creation of furniture for the park. This resulted in a different park than was initially envisaged and one that is full with young people all the time now. The young people argued that the pitches should be kept. The park is very small and it had not been thought viable. In fact, the pitches — football and basketball — now attract hundreds of young people to the park every day'.*

### Youth cafés and drop-in centres

Youth cafés and drop-in centres were mentioned by a number of respondents as examples of recreation projects for young people that work well. Reasons given for their success included:

- they are safe;
- well run;
- cheap;
- a good place to meet other young people;
- provide a place for young people to hang out;
- provide a platform for young people to air their needs;
- young people have a say in running and organising them.

The benefits of youth cafés were outlined by one youth worker: *'As a youth worker, I see the benefit that the development of youth cafés in the city and county are providing a space for young people to gather and interact in a safe environment. These facilities also provide an opportunity to engage young people to put forward their needs'*.

Specific examples given of youth cafés and drop-in centres that work well included the Gaf in Galway; the Crib Youth Project and Health Café in Sligo; and the Cryptic Youth Drop-in Centre in Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. The following quotes illustrate the success of two of these:

- *'The Gaf in Galway — comfortable hang-out area with casual supervision, and encourages young people to develop their interests (e.g. photography), promotes health and develops social skills. Free use of equipment, including guitars, pool table and jukebox'.*
- *Cryptic Youth Drop-in Centre, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin: 'This is successful because young people can drop in and out as they please. There is free food and drinks available and you can bring your own music'.*

### **Other projects and programmes**

Other examples given of successful recreational projects and programmes for young people included summer projects, camps and schools, intercultural youth exchanges, youth bands, early school-leaver projects, the Millennium Project (which involved young people burying time capsules), town bands, marching bands, life-saving classes and first-aid courses.

### **SUMMARY**

The majority of examples of recreational projects or programmes that work well for young people consisted of structured recreation, i.e. organised activities. The most commonly cited examples of such successful projects were youth clubs. This correlates with previous findings on the popularity of youth clubs among young Irish people (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005). Reasons given for the success of youth clubs were that they are fun, well structured, well supervised, have well-trained staff, keep young people out of trouble, educate young people and are a good place to make friends and socialise.

The second most mentioned example of recreation working well was the GAA, followed by scouts and guides; sporting, dance, music and drama clubs; voluntary work; community projects; and youth cafés and drop-in centres.

The primary reason given for the success of recreational projects or programmes was consultation with young people. While young people clearly enjoy participating in structured recreation, it would appear that giving them a role in the organisational structure of projects or programmes is the key to their success. For example, young people in Foróige elect their own club committee and manage and operate the club in cooperation with adult leaders.

# 7: KEY ISSUES IN DEVELOPING AND FUNDING RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Objective 6 of the recreation policy, as set out in the consultation document, proposes to 'develop a partnership approach in developing and funding recreational opportunities across the statutory, community and voluntary sectors'. The National Children's Strategy (2000) outlines the case for child-focused, needs-driven supports and services. It also highlights the importance of finding better ways to link services.

The public consultation asked respondents what they considered to be the key issues that need to be addressed in developing and funding recreational opportunities for young people.

## CONSULTATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Consultation with young people emerged as the most important issue in relation to developing recreational opportunities for young people. There was consensus on the issue that developing and funding recreational opportunities without talking to young people is pointless. Young people reported a higher likelihood of participation in recreational activities and facilities that they have been consulted about because it gives them a sense of ownership and acquires their approval. Respondents stressed that young people should be involved in consultation from the beginning to the end of projects in a meaningful way. There was also a feeling that the voice of young people needs to be heard and listened to more at local and community levels, as well as at government policy levels. Furthermore, respondents emphasised that recreational opportunities have to be needs-specific. A number of respondents recommended a needs-assessment for each community in terms of recreation.

### General consultation

A number of respondents felt that everyone in a community should be consulted when developing and funding recreational facilities and activities there. In addition to young people, who were considered to be the most important group, consultation was recommended with all other parties involved, including parents, local government, community organisations and forums, sports clubs, religious organisations and local businesses.

### A partnership approach

A number of respondents felt that a local partnership approach to developing and funding recreational opportunities was essential for their success. For example, respondents felt that local organisations, as well as schools and clubs, should work together to develop recreation in the community. An interagency and a cross-departmental approach were also recommended. In addition, a mind change as regards recreation for many organisations, such as local authorities, was advised.

## FUNDING

According to respondents in the public consultation, the key issue in funding recreational opportunities for young people was the need for more Government funding for recreation in general. Other recommendations included:

- funding at both national and local level;
- fewer lines of funding;
- more funding for the voluntary sector;
- equal distribution of funding;
- restricting funding to recreational projects or programmes with a proven track record;
- clearer targets and responsibilities attached to funding;
- on-going monitoring of funding;
- no funding for administration;
- subsidised transport for young people;
- development of sponsorship links between businesses and recreation;
- tax incentives for the private sector to provide more recreational services;
- tax incentives for volunteers.

### OTHER KEY ISSUES

Other key issues raised in relation to addressing the development and funding of recreational opportunities included access, transport, insurance, safety, obesity, drugs, changing Ireland's drink culture, training for those involved in recreation, developing careers in recreation, catering for disabled and disadvantaged young people, providing more information on recreation to young people, promotion of the benefits of recreation to young people, educating parents on the benefits of recreation, giving an alternative to sport, encouraging participation, and more PE in schools.



### SUMMARY

Consultation with young people emerged as the key issue in relation to developing recreational opportunities for young people. It was felt that recreational projects and programmes were more likely to be successful if young people were involved in their planning and organisational structure. This reflects the findings given in Chapter 6 as regards the main reason recreation for young people is successful.

Developing a local partnership approach in terms of developing and funding recreational opportunities for young people was also considered to be very important. This would involve young people, parents, schools, local government, community organisations and forums, local sports clubs, local religious organisations and local businesses all working together to develop and fund recreation in their community.

There was also a call for an increase in Government funding for recreational opportunities.

# 8: MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

## DEFINITION OF RECREATION

There was a high level of agreement (96%) with the definition of recreation as set out in the public consultation document. However, a number of respondents had a problem with the use of the term 'socially acceptable' in the definition to describe recreational activities.

## VISION FOR RECREATION

There was a high level of agreement with the vision for recreation as set out in the public consultation document, with 87% of respondents agreeing with the vision. The inclusion of 'cultural well-being' in the vision for recreation was recommended, in addition to the existing physical, mental and social well-being.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE RECREATION POLICY

Overall, there was a very high level of agreement with the seven objectives of the recreation policy, with an average agreement rate of 96%. Three-quarters of respondents did not wish to add to or change anything about the objectives. Adults were more likely to comment on the objectives, with 57% of adults making comments compared with just under one-fifth (195) of young people in both age categories (12-14 and 15-17).

Elements of the objectives which respondents wished to add to or change included:

- the overemphasis on structured recreation in relation to Objective 2, although examples of structured recreation were reported as the most popular form of recreation by young people;
- the need for somewhere for young people to hang out as an important element of Objective 3;
- the dangers of 'over professionalisation' of those involved in the provision of recreation in relation to Objective 5, which some felt could deter volunteers;

An additional objective for the recreation policy was also recommended — to include an objective on mental health.

## BARRIERS AND MOTIVATORS TO PARTICIPATION IN RECREATION

In order to best understand the barriers and motivators to participation in recreation for young people identified in the public consultation, a hierarchical model of leisure constraints was used as an analytical framework, based on the work of Crawford *et al* (1991). It proposes that three types of constraints on leisure exist: intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural. It is believed leisure preferences are formed and participation in recreation takes place:

- when intrapersonal barriers are absent or have, with supports, been overcome (these barriers relate to individual characteristics, traits and beliefs that enable or promote the formation of leisure preferences and that can encourage or enhance participation in recreation);

- when interpersonal barriers, relating to interpersonal interaction, are absent or overcome;
- when there are no insurmountable structural barriers, which relate to physical or material constraints on leisure participation, such as lack of money or transport.

### **Structural barriers**

The most frequently reported barriers to participation in recreation for young people were structural. The four most reported barriers were lack of recreational facilities and activities (24%); money (23%); transport (16%); and time (8%). Further down the list came a lack of volunteers to act as leaders and coaches, lack of information on recreation, insufficient PE in schools, and the weather. The four main barriers cited represent almost three-quarters of all identified barriers and collectively relate to access to recreation. Therefore, it would appear that access to recreation is the single most significant barrier to participation in recreation for young people. Access to recreation was identified as a ubiquitous barrier for young people, but transport and lack of recreation provision emerged as particularly significant barriers for those living in rural areas and for those with additional needs.

It is difficult to determine to what extent the structural barriers identified in the public consultation are real or perceived. It is possible that some young people perceive there is nothing available for them in terms of recreation due to lack of information. Therefore, perhaps better dissemination of information on what is available for young people in terms of recreation is necessary.

### **Intrapersonal barriers**

Intrapersonal barriers identified in the public consultation included lack of interest and laziness (4%), friends and peers (2%), shyness, self-consciousness, lack of ability, a preference for sedentary recreation (such as watching TV and playing computer games) and participation in anti-social behaviour (such as drinking, smoking and taking drugs). Overall, there was a low percentage of intrapersonal barriers reported, which shows that the majority of young people have high levels of intrinsic motivation when it comes to participating in recreation.

### **Interpersonal barriers**

Interpersonal barriers identified in the public consultation included off-putting leaders and coaches, parental permission, fear, intimidation, bullying and discrimination by gender (4%), age, religion, race, culture, lack of ability and disability. Overall, there was a low percentage of interpersonal barriers reported, which shows that the majority of young people have a high level of interpersonal support with regard to participation in recreation.

### **Intrapersonal motivators**

The most frequently reported motivators to participation in recreation for young people were intrinsic or intrapersonal supports, which included friends (28%), enjoyment (22%), keeping fit (15%), self-motivation, having an interest in a recreational activity, enjoyment of winning, and relaxation. As intrapersonal motivators were the most frequently reported motivators to participation, it would suggest that the majority of young people have high levels of intrinsic motivation and are self-motivated.

### **Interpersonal motivators**

Interpersonal motivators also emerged as significant motivators to participation in recreation for young people. Interpersonal motivators identified included parents

and family (11%), teachers and coaches (9%), celebrities (5%) and being part of a team. This demonstrates the high level of interpersonal support for young people taking part in recreational activities from parents, teachers and coaches.

### **Structural motivators**

Structural motivators identified included having a good PE structure in schools, having access to recreational facilities and provisions, and the influence of the media.

It would appear that structural barriers are more significant in hindering participation in recreation than structural motivators are at encouraging participation in recreation.

### **THE SINGLE BIGGEST NEED IDENTIFIED FOR RECREATION**

The provision of more recreational facilities was identified as the single biggest need in regard to recreation for young people. The most requested facility was somewhere for young people to hang out with their friends. The key requirements set out by young people in terms of such a facility included somewhere that is safe, warm, indoors, affordable, relaxed and legitimate, a place where they have a sense of ownership, can go in their free time and where they will not get into trouble. Youth drop-in centres, shelters and cafés, as well as existing facilities, were all suggested as possible venues for young people to hang out.



### **UNSTRUCTURED RECREATION**

The importance of unstructured and casual recreation in the lives of young people is evident from the results of the single biggest need identified, which was somewhere to hang out with friends. Hanging out with friends is an unstructured recreation activity that is very popular among young Irish people (de Róiste and Dinneen, 2005). While hanging out with friends is sometimes perceived as threatening or anti-social behaviour, it has been identified as an important part of young people's development (Verma and Larson, 2003; Hendry *et al*, 1993). Providing a specific facility for young people to hang out in could serve to change people's perceptions of 'hanging out' and potentially legitimise it as a recreational activity.

## STRUCTURED RECREATION

The popularity of structured recreation is evident from the examples of recreation that work best for young people (see *Chapter 6*). While a number of respondents disagreed with Objective 2 on the grounds that there was an overemphasis on structured recreation, it should be noted that the most frequently reported examples of successful recreation projects and programmes for young people were structured in nature. These included youth clubs; the GAA; sporting, drama, music and dance clubs; the scouts and guides; voluntary work; youth cafés and drop-in centres; and community projects.

The popularity of structured recreational projects and programmes highlights the importance of structured recreation in the lives of young people. However, it appears that consultation with young people is an important element in the structured activities that young people perceive as working well.

Young people's interest in structured recreation is positive since its benefits include increased self-esteem, greater tolerance and understanding of others, and integration of young people into their communities (Laidlaw Foundation, 2001).

## CONSULTATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

The importance of consultation with young people emerged as a key theme throughout the public consultation. There was a very high level of agreement with Objective 1 (97%), which proposes to *'give young people a voice in the design and implementation of recreation policies and facilities'*. Consultation with young people was considered to be essential for the successful implementation of Objective 3, which proposes to *'ensure that the leisure/recreation needs of young people are met through the development of youth-friendly and safe facilities and environments'*.

Examples of successful recreation projects or programmes had a common thread of consultation and involvement of young people in their organisational structure. Respondents recommended consultation with young people for the development of hang-out facilities to ensure their success. Consultation with young people, as well as with other key stakeholders, was identified as the most crucial matter in developing and funding recreational opportunities for young people.

Therefore, it is clear that consultation with young people is an essential component in the development and success of recreational opportunities for young people. This finding corresponds with Objective 1 of the proposed recreation policy and Goal 1 of the National Children's Strategy (2000), which states that *'children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity'*.

## KEY ISSUES IN DEVELOPING AND FUNDING RECREATION

As well as consultation with young people, consultation with other parties — parents, local government, community organisations and forums, sports clubs, religious organisations and businesses — was also recommended as part of taking a local partnership approach to developing and funding recreation. More Government funding to be made available for recreational opportunities was also suggested. Again, consultation emerged as the key factor for success, as well as a local partnership approach.

# 9: OUTCOME OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY

A number of changes and considerations will be taken on board as a result of the views, comments and suggestions expressed in the public consultation.

The definition of recreation as set out in the consultation document has been changed. The term 'socially acceptable' has been replaced with the word 'positive'. Thus, the revised definition now states that recreation can be described as *'comprising all positive activities in which a person may choose to take part that will make his or her leisure time more interesting, more enjoyable and personally satisfying'*.

The vision for recreation as set out in the consultation document has also been changed. 'Cultural well-being' has been included in the vision, together with physical, mental and social well-being. Therefore, the revised vision for recreation is: *'An Ireland where the importance of recreation is recognised so that young people experience a range of quality recreational opportunities to enrich their lives and promote their physical, mental, social and cultural well-being.'*

A number of the objectives set out in the consultation document may also be subject to change in order to reflect the views of the public consultation.

The key issues emerging from the public consultation will be carefully considered by the Office of the Minister for Children and the Recreation Policy Steering Group when finalising the recreation policy. These issues include

- facilitating improved access to recreation for young people;
- consulting with young people in the development of recreational opportunities and involving them in organisational structures;
- consideration of the importance of both structured and unstructured recreation in the lives of young people.

## DEVELOPMENT OF RECREATION POLICY

A Recreation Policy Steering Group has been established by the Office of the Minister for Children. This group will finalise the recreation policy, taking into account the views, comments and suggestions expressed in the public consultation. Part of the work of the group will be to consider what specific actions government departments and agencies could take to develop, expand and improve recreational opportunities for young people.

The recreation policy aims to provide strategic direction to enable government departments, local authorities, County and City Development Boards, the youth sector, the community and voluntary sectors, and any other interested parties to develop recreational facilities and opportunities in an informed and appropriate manner.

The recreation policy will be launched in 2006.

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