

LONGITUDINAL EVALUATION OF PROJECT FUTSAL



Football Used Towards
Social Advancement & Learning

Centre for Youth Research & Development
Department of Applied Social Studies
Maynooth University



WELSH
FOOTBALL
TRUST



IRELAND WALES
2007 – 2013

Longitudinal Evaluation of Project Futsal

By

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Project FUTSAL¹ was a cross-national initiative covering multiple sites in diverse settings, delivering an intensive educational programme with a variety of dimensions (personal development, adult education, football coaching) to individuals and communities whose prior experience of structured learning contexts may be limited and perhaps disempowering; while also aiming to encompass a pan-disability dimension in each hub area. Project FUTSAL was a joint initiative between the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and the Welsh Football Trust (WFT) and secured funding from the European Regional Development Fund's Inter Reg IVA Ireland Wales Programme 2007-2013 under its theme for the Sustainable Regeneration of Communities. The overall aim of Project FUTSAL was to provide education and work opportunities for people in disadvantaged areas and to empower specific target groups to be involved in the sustainable regeneration of their local communities through employment and volunteerism in the field of sport.

The project has run for three years and has seen resources invested in twelve communities by the Ireland Wales Programme, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and the Welsh Football Trust (WFT). Project FUTSAL has involved the sharing of best practice between the two associations. It has included the setting up of football education centres (hubs) coordinated by FAI/WFT staff. A structured academic programme of adult education, personal development, football coaching education and work/volunteer placements was offered to participants from the local community at each hub, along with pan-disability training. The target ratio of male to female participants was 50:50, although this proved challenging in practice. The main objectives were to enhance participants' employability and/or enhance their prospects of going onto further education.

Evaluation of Project Futsal

The overall aim of the research was to assess the impact of programme intervention on participants and communities in which the project was rolled out. The research also assessed the project's impact on work opportunities, education and community involvement; while also exploring the extent to which it produced positive social benefits, including value for money. The following key questions were addressed:

- Has the project contributed to positive outcomes for participants?
- Has the project contributed to community development and regeneration?
- What is the effectiveness of the programme, as perceived by the various stakeholders?
- What value for money does the intervention provide?

¹ **Project Futsal** - FUTSAL is an acronym meaning **F**ootball **U**sed **T**owards **S**ocial **A**dvancement and **L**earning.

The mixed methods research design included a number of qualitative and quantitative components. Longitudinal data collection included the administration of two separate questionnaires to each participant on site, both at baseline (programme entry) and end point (completion of programme). One of these questionnaires dealt with community and social participation and general wellbeing, while the other focused on physical wellbeing and health. A post-participation questionnaire was also administered by phone. Quantitative data on volunteer hours was also provided by the FAI, allowing for an analysis of community volunteerism. In addition to this, the study also included a series of qualitative focus groups with participants, as well as interviews with hub officers, interns, assistants and associated training staff and tutors. A final component of the research design was the completion of a value-for-money study. This study focused on one hub, analysing potential savings to the state, and concentrating on two main headings, namely health and employment.

Findings

1. Has the project contributed to positive outcomes for participants?

A combination of quantitative and qualitative measures provide insight into the ways in which Project FUTSAL has contributed to positive outcomes for participants in both Ireland and Wales, including improved levels of health and fitness and enhanced wellbeing, confidence, self-esteem, motivation and subjective agency.

Ireland

Longitudinal quantitative findings show increased social and community participation and voluntary activity over time. While 49.6% of participants in the Irish hubs reported helping with or attending activities organised in their local area at least once a week prior to participation, this rose to 69.7% at the end point among the 'matched' follow-up sample. In addition, the number of participants actively providing help for other people (excluding work, family or volunteering) within the previous twelve months also increased substantially, from 25.6% at baseline to 42.7% at end point. Further, participants showed an increase in engagement in work for voluntary/charitable organisations. While 34.7% of participants indicated that they participated in work for voluntary or charitable organisations at least once a week at baseline, this figure had increased to 68.9% by end point.

Findings also show increased participation in physical activities and satisfaction with general health over time. The overall group reported relatively high levels of satisfaction with their general health at baseline, with 71% stating that they were 'satisfied' (49.6%) or 'very satisfied' (21.4%). At end point this cumulative figure increased to 85.8% and in particular the number reporting themselves as 'very satisfied' with their general health rose from 21.4% to 40%. There was also an improvement in those describing their fitness levels as 'very good' - going from 15.4% to 32.5% - while conversely, those describing their fitness levels as 'bad'/'very bad' decreased from 17.1% to 2.5%. Participants also described improved energy levels between baseline and end point. Those describing their energy levels as either 'good' or 'very good' had risen from 58.9% to 77.3% by end point.

Awards data also highlights the success of the programme in Ireland. With an average of 25 participants commencing in each of the seven hubs, there was a 38.3% full award rate in 2012/2013, and a 33.7% full award rate in 2013/2014, considerably higher than the 2012 national average of 22.7% for full major award achievements by individuals undertaking Level 5-6 awards (ESRI, 2014).

Participants were also asked to respond to a series of wellbeing statements (adapted from the European Social Survey) at both the beginning and end of the programme. A positive change was recorded for ten of these statements, with three of these being statistically significant:

- 'In general, I feel very positive about myself';
- 'Most days I feel a sense of achievement from what I do';
- 'I like planning and preparing for the future'.

Negative changes were recorded for two of the statements, but neither was found to be statistically significant. One significant gender difference was recorded at baseline, with males being more likely to feel 'positive about themselves', while three significant gender differences were recorded at end point: female participants were more likely to report their lives as being 'close to how they would like them to be' and male participants were more likely to feel 'optimistic about the future' and to 'enjoy learning new things'.

These findings point to improved outcomes for Project FUTSAL participants in Ireland, particularly regarding subjective outlook and sense of agency.

Wales

Welsh participants showed a decrease in 'meeting socially' between baseline and end point, with the proportion meeting several times a week with friends, relatives or work colleagues moving from 75% to 65%. This decrease can possibly be explained by participants having less available social time during involvement with Project FUTSAL. While 55% stated that they had helped with or attended activities in their local area at least once a month at baseline, this figure increased to 60% at end point. The number of participants actively providing help for other people at least once a month increased substantially from 30% at baseline to 47.4% at end point. Almost one third of participants (31.6%) indicated that they participated in work for voluntary or charitable organisations at least once a week at baseline, and this decreased marginally to 30% at end point. The lack of improvements in relation to some aspects of social and community participation may well relate to the much shorter duration of the programme in Wales (three months).

Those indicating they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their general health increased from 75% at baseline to 80% at end point. Participants' description of their fitness levels shows relatively little change, with a small decrease of those describing them a 'good'/'very good' from 70% at baseline to 65% at end point. There was an increase in those describing their fitness levels as 'very good' from 20% to 35%. At baseline, 60% of participants reported engaging in fitness activities 'frequently' or 'very often', while at end point this cumulative figure was 80%. In particular, those reporting that they did so 'very often' increased from 35% to 50%. Participants describing their

energy levels as 'good' more than doubled from 20% to 50%, although at the same time the proportion describing their energy levels as 'very good' fell from 40% to 20%. There were therefore some contrasting findings within the data collected in Wales, although taken as a whole they indicate small increases in community participation and voluntary activity alongside improved levels of participation in fitness activities.

Post-Participation Data

A post-participation phone survey was administered to 80 participants in Ireland, representing approximately 19% of the overall participants for the three years. While these cannot claim to give a definitive account of participants' progression pathways, they are consistent with the other positive findings in this study. The figures represent a substantial reduction in the level of unemployment experienced by the respondents prior to participation in Project FUTSAL. While 40% of participants indicated that they had been mostly unemployed in the time since completing the programme, 16.3% had been mostly employed full-time, 17.5% had been mostly employed part-time, and 21.3% had been in further education/training post-participation. Participants also sustained their commitments to voluntary activities post-programme. Of those moving into employment, a range of roles were identified including work in sports and sports sales, general sales, customer service, warehouse work, porter work and internships.

Because the post-participation survey was based on a sample of former participants it does not capture the number of graduates who went on to work with the FAI as interns. This was a significant proportion. In year one of the programme (2011/2012), 18 graduates were recruited by the FAI as interns. In year two (2012/2013), this figure rose to 30 graduates, with 14 interns recruited from the year three graduates (2013/2014).

Participants indicated a high level of agreement that their participation in Project FUTSAL helped prepare them for employment, improved their long-term career prospects, improved their coaching skills and prepared them for further education/training. Almost all (95%) said they would recommend Project FUTSAL to others.

Overall, Project FUTSAL has contributed to positive outcomes for participants in both Ireland and Wales. These outcomes include improved levels of health and fitness; and improved wellbeing, confidence, self-esteem, motivation and subjective agency. The value of the programme extends beyond direct employment outcomes to success in engaging participants, enhancing personal development pathways including advancement to further education, contributing to an improved sense of agency and improved perceptions of employability in the longer term.

2. Has the project contributed to community development and regeneration?

Volunteering has played a key role in the delivery of Project FUTSAL across Ireland and Wales, contributing to community engagement as well as individual development for participants. Staff and participants across all hubs were enthusiastic about volunteerism and committing to volunteer activities in the community. Data provided above regarding outcomes for Ireland indicates that participants' engagement with voluntary

work increased from 34.7% at to 68.9% by end point. Post-participation data also shows sustained voluntary activity post-programme. On the other hand, data for Wales showed little change over the (shorter) duration of the programme.

Data on hours committed to volunteering collected centrally by the FAI indicate a cumulative total of 22,470 volunteering hours for the 2012/2013 academic year across all hubs in Ireland, benefitting a total of 61,269 participants. Corresponding data from Wales showed a commitment of 6762 volunteer hours, benefitting a total of 3,254 participants. The types of activities undertaken in Ireland varied, including volunteering in schools, clubs and with disability groups as part of work experience for the programme, in addition to working with the Late Night Leagues² and match volunteering. Longitudinal data collected from participant surveys shows increased frequency in participation in voluntary activities from baseline to end point. In Wales, volunteerism is incorporated through football camps, futsal tournaments, a range of sports days and also match and stadia support.

The pan-disability element of Project FUTSAL contributed to community development by engaging the participants in related coaching and training and through the organisation of local events, creating a resource for local clubs wishing to engage in pan-disability football. A planned element of Project FUTSAL from the outset was the setting up pan-disability football teams in the hubs, with a view to encouraging and assisting local communities to support the delivery of football to a wider range of players with disabilities in their communities. The model drew on shared learnings from the Welsh Football Trust model of community-based pan-disability football teams. Regular engagement between officers in the FAI and the Welsh Football Trust (WFT) during the course of Project FUTSAL enabled the sharing of ideas, contributing to the development of the pan-disability component of the project. Visits made to view the Welsh programme by the FAI Football for All coordinator enabled liaison with WFT officials, local pan-disability clubs and parents of players involved, with a view to progressing and sustaining the pan-disability programme.

While the pan-disability teams themselves were not established, there were a range of very valuable related outcomes. Project participants in Ireland were trained to deliver pan-disability football sessions, and hub participants were linked with local football clubs which developed pan-disability football programmes and provided regular coaching sessions. Feedback relating to disability elements of the programme was very positive, with staff reporting the experiences as beneficial for participants and participants reporting encouraging experiences working with people with disabilities.

In addition to outcomes in relation to employment, employability and progression to further education, Project FUTSAL has actively promoted volunteerism as a means of community development and regeneration. In addition, the pan-disability training has created a resource for local clubs wishing to engage in pan-disability football. These elements of the project have been of mutual benefit to participants and to schools, clubs and the local communities in which the hubs were based.

² The Late Night Leagues are a diversionary programme incorporating soccer leagues at various locations across Dublin, aimed at encouraging at risk young people to participate in meaningful activities.

3. What is the effectiveness of the programme, as perceived by the various stakeholders?

Ireland

Participants emphasized the value of the programme as a 'stepping stone', contributing to personal development pathways by providing improved confidence and motivation. Students reflected that while it may not lead to direct employment, it may facilitate progression to further education or new opportunities. In Ireland, the development officers, educational providers and local authorities reported positive working relationships. Equally, development officers also indicated an overall positive view of the work of the tutors. The addition of interns in the second year of hubs was described as particularly useful by officers and participants, providing additional organizational support to the programme, but also encouragement to current students. Participants were largely satisfied with programme content in Ireland. Staff and students typically reported positive experiences of volunteering and disability football training and events.

'The way the course was run, the education part of it, everything was just absolutely perfect for me. I just want to push this as far as I can, and obviously it is just a dream that something comes out of this at the end.'

'It's win-win, the schools are getting great training, the kids are getting great training, the coaches are getting great confidence going in there.'

Participants drew positive comparisons to other experiences of education, describing their enthusiasm for the subject, the support of staff and their relationship with educational providers as important. It is clear that the adult education approach was successful in this regard. It is also clear that football was an important contributing factor to participants joining and continuing with Project FUTSAL.

Some challenges presented in Ireland. Officers found time management a challenge, with many balancing competing workloads and commitments, but most thought that this improved after the 'bedding down' period of the first year. Staff in Ireland were generally satisfied with the support provided by the FAI.

'We were very apprehensive last time round but we've found it easier this time. The FAI have respect for the fact that it takes more than the number of hours allocated.'

In some cases, participants expressed concern over access to social welfare payments, and in the rural hub, travel was an issue, though this mostly related to the location of the hub and the distance travelled. Achieving the gender quota was also challenging in Ireland, with the urban hubs being more successful. Respondents made it clear that that female participants were actively targeted but with less success than hoped. It is anticipated that more recent initiatives and an overall growth in girls' and women's football will contribute to improved levels of participation in this context in the future. It was found that where female participants joined, they had a particularly keen interest in football.

The commitment of the ETB and FAI staff was highlighted as particularly important in retaining participants. While drop-off was an issue in a minority of cases, many participants who left did so because other positive opportunities arose. Generally, staff were satisfied with attendance and participation.

'The attendance was good. I mean there was a core group that would attend every single class and then there was a few that would jump in and out. But I mean you are going to get that across the board anyway.'

Wales

Participants in Wales entered the programme with relatively low levels of formal educational attainment compared to the Irish cohort. Accordingly, they undertook Essential Skills educational components focusing on literacy and numeracy. Some participants in Wales were less motivated to participate in these Essential Skills components, but were more enthusiastic about the football and coaching elements of the course, again highlighting the value of football as a means of engagement. Students and staff reported positive experiences of volunteering and disability football training and events.

'One of the best things about it was meeting people, being friends and then getting to do activities and tournaments.'

'Once they finish the course, they will have a link with the club, you build a relationship with them, they want to be involved and to volunteer...There is an ethos of not just the course has ended, but getting involved.'

Participants in Wales also drew positive comparisons with other previous experiences of education. While the officers and hub assistants described positive working relationships with the individual tutors, some organizational and management issues with the colleges were present. Staff reported that improved support and involvement from the local clubs and the Welsh Football Trust would have been beneficial in the overall running and management of the project.

Meeting the gender quota was also a difficulty across all hubs in Wales. Participants were also particularly concerned about travel and transport costs, possibly a reflection of the lower rates of social welfare payments. It is also of note that some participants were less enthusiastic about their prospects after the programme, with some indicating that 'there are no paid opportunities' for graduates and that at the end of the programme 'there is nothing'. Participants also expressed concern that while they grew 'more confident' throughout the duration of the programme, this may not be sustained.

'It has been an issue, especially with travel costs with buses because in this hub, none of them have their own transport.'

Staff provided reasons why some participants failed to complete the course, reporting that for some the course wasn't suitable and for others alternative commitments were an issue, and 'of course we've had a few who have dropped out'. The different structure, content and pacing of the programme in Wales has undoubtedly contributed to different perceptions of Project FUTSAL.

4. What value for money does the intervention provide?

A value-for-money study was conducted by Ms Eilís Lawlor of Just Economics to assess the potential economic benefits of the programme. Firstly, employment benefits have significant economic impact in terms of both the improved financial wellbeing of participants and the potential cost savings for the state. Secondly, the health outcomes

that have been demonstrated through the primary research indicate improvements in physical wellbeing that can deliver long-term economic value. Accordingly, three economically-based outcomes have been identified: increased employment salary, lowered levels of unemployment and a benefit to the state in terms of increased taxes and reduced benefits. Three non-economic outcomes have also been included: impacts on physical health; mental health; and crime.

Calculations were made using a benefit period of seven years and including anticipated benefits along with a small number of possible negative outcomes. Utilising the values attributed to the identified economic and social outcomes and projecting over seven years, the annual saving is approximately €12,374 per participant. In relation to health outcomes, participant data indicates an overall increased level of exercise/fitness activities, albeit with a relatively high baseline figure; this points to lower levels of health risks for participants over time. Using national data on the development of cardio-vascular diseases, whereby 30% of the population are at risk, and based on research findings regarding the reduction in risk of CVD that can be brought about by improved fitness, it is estimated that the annual saving per incident avoided is €1,575.

These figures represent potential public expenditure savings for individuals participating in Project FUTSAL, providing additional endorsement of the significance and value of the programme in contributing to a range of positive outcomes for participants and the state.

Strengths

Based on the findings of this research, it is possible to identify a number of strengths of Project FUTSAL:

- Project FUTSAL has contributed to positive outcomes for participants in both Ireland and Wales. There is statistical evidence of such outcomes including improved levels of health and fitness in addition to improved confidence, self-esteem, motivation and subjective agency. Overall, these findings signify improved wellbeing for participants.
- Whilst there is value in the programme in creating direct employment for participants, it is particularly strong in engaging participants, contributing to the opening up of personal development pathways including advancement to further education, contributing to improved agency and improved employability in the longer term.
- The volunteer dimension of the programme has made a valuable contribution to community development and regeneration.
- The commitment to pan-disability training has created a resource for local clubs wishing to engage in pan-disability football.
- Football was particularly successful as a 'hook' in attracting and retaining students across Project FUTSAL hubs, highlighting the importance of sports-based programmes in promoting social inclusion and participation in education.
- Positive working relationships with education providers and local authorities contributed significantly to the success of Project FUTSAL in Ireland. The commitment of project staff is another key factor.

- The adult education approach taken in the project has been successful, with participants reporting that Project FUTSAL compared favourably with other experiences of education. .
- Project FUTSAL represents value for money, in that its positive outcomes can be assessed as representing potential public expenditure savings.
- The cross-national collaborative approach to Project FUTSAL enabled opportunities for shared learning, creating the potential to inform adult education and sports inclusion policy at a local and national level in both Ireland and Wales.
- Project FUTSAL has provided participants with very positive subjective experiences. Almost all participants surveyed post-programme in Ireland (95%) would recommend the project.
- The integration of an evaluation study into the project has contributed to a growing body of research on sport and social inclusion. The research contributes empirical data which is of value in the policy context, in Ireland and Wales and further afield.

Challenges

A number of challenges have been identified during the research, highlighting opportunities for learning for future sports inclusion programmes:

- Officers in Ireland found time management a challenge, with many balancing competing workloads and commitments, although they spoke in positive terms about support from the FAI. It is clear that programme interns provided additional valuable support in this regard.
- Staff in Wales were committed to the programme but expressed some concern over the resources and support provided by the Welsh Football Trust. Some of these difficulties may have had an impact on participant outcomes.
- The structure, content and pacing of the programme in Wales differed significantly from the programme in Ireland. While this makes a direct comparison difficult, the shorter duration of the programme in Wales may have contributed to less positive outcomes for participants, in addition to less optimism in relation to post-participation pathways.
- The programme in Wales was designed to meet the needs of participants with lower prior levels of formal education, as evidenced by the inclusion of Essential Skills educational components focusing on literacy and numeracy. Some participants in Wales were less motivated to participate in these Essential Skills components.
- While participants across hubs expressed concern in relation to travel and transport, this was a particular issue for those attending rural hubs in Ireland and Wales, and may have contributed to drop-off rates and reduced levels of participation by those affected.
- The question of reaching 'saturation point' of potential participants was an issue in less-populated rural hubs, which would have implications for sustainability.
- Achieving the intended gender balance was a challenge in both Ireland and Wales, with the urban hubs more successful in this regard. While male participants were more inclined to respond to general advertising, female participation was often encouraged through personal contact with staff. It is

anticipated that improved initiatives relating to girls' and women's football could contribute to improved levels of participation in the future.

- The administration of the research required ongoing organisational support from all staff in Ireland and Wales. It is important that staff have an understanding of the research process and the value of the research within the context of the overall work of the organisation.

Recommendations

Based on the strengths and challenges identified here, the following recommendations can be made:

- The FAI should build on the strong relationships it has established with education providers with a view to the continuation of Project FUTSAL or similar sports-based education programmes.
- The current policy context, in both Ireland and Wales and in relation to both sports development and to youth provision, favours an increased emphasis on collaboration, interagency and inter-professional initiatives and the project partners could fruitfully seek out further opportunities in this respect.
- This research has found examples of good practice in formalising relationships, roles and responsibilities between partners at local level which could be used as the basis for common approaches in future programmes.
- The Football Association of Ireland and the Welsh Football Trust should continue to strengthen their commitment to inclusiveness through the provision of pan-disability training and other initiatives that will benefit people with disabilities.
- Future programmes should aim at an enhanced gender balance through proactive and timely steps to address the challenges identified by participants and staff in this research.
- This research confirms that, provided adequate resources and supports are in place, programmes with a longer duration are generally more likely to be able to facilitate positive outcomes than shorter ones.
- The commitment to volunteering, through Project FUTSAL and otherwise, should be sustained as a contribution to community development as well as to local grassroots football.
- Building on the positive shared learning from this project, the Football Association of Ireland and the Welsh Football Trust should continue to consider and promote the benefits of local, national and cross-national collaborative practice.
- The effectiveness of sport, and particularly football, as a means of engaging (or re-engaging) 'non-traditional learners' with education and training systems merits further attention and action by all those concerned with facilitating and supporting young people's transitions.

Based on analysis of an extensive body of data collected during the longitudinal evaluation of Project FUTSAL, it can confidently be concluded that the programme has contributed to positive outcomes for participants and communities.

1. Introduction

Project FUTSAL³ was a cross-border and cross-national initiative covering multiple sites in diverse settings, delivering an intensive educational programme with a variety of dimensions (personal development, adult education, football coaching) to individuals and communities whose prior experience of structured learning contexts may be limited and perhaps disempowering; while also aiming to work in pan-disability contexts in each hub area. It was a joint initiative between the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and the Welsh Football Trust (WFT) with the core aim of utilising football as a social inclusion tool in order to facilitate innovative community regeneration. The project secured funding from the European Regional Development Fund's Inter Reg IVA Ireland Wales Programme 2007-2013 under its theme for the Sustainable Regeneration of Communities. The overall aim of the project was to provide education and work opportunities for people in disadvantaged areas and to influence and assist community regeneration via employment and volunteerism in the field of sport. The project aimed to empower specific target groups to be involved in the sustainable regeneration of their local communities.

1.1 FUTSAL football

Futsal was first introduced as a 'new discipline' by FIFA in 1988 and is now recognised as the official form of five-a-side football. FIFA, football's world governing body, has made a commitment to promote and structure the sport of futsal globally, by means of competitions, courses and other proactive measures, and to encourage its members to do the same. One such member is UEFA, Europe's governing body of football. UEFA ran its first European futsal tournament in 1996 and now oversees the European Futsal Championships (a competition contested by international squads) and the UEFA Futsal Cup contested by clubs. European teams also compete in the FIFA Futsal World Cup.

Futsal is played with a smaller ball with less bounce than a regular football. The rules create an emphasis on improvisation, creativity and technique as well as ball control

³ **Project Futsal** - FUTSAL is an acronym meaning **F**ootball **U**sed **T**owards **S**ocial **A**dvancement and **L**earning.

and passing in small spaces. It is these key factors that make futsal the ideal vehicle by which to hone and develop key football skills of young players. Futsal is the game of choice used in the FAI's social inclusion programmes, which led to the idea of using the word FUTSAL as an acronym for this project – 'Football Used Towards Social Advancement and Learning'.

1.2 FAI Futsal strategy and Project FUTSAL

The mission of the FAI's Futsal Strategy is to establish FUTSAL as the preferred version of five-a-side football in Ireland and to increase and sustain participation at all age and ability levels by promoting and developing the game as a complementary format within the football family. This involves the promotion of the game at grassroots level for both children and adults, the provision of futsal-specific coach and referee education, high-level competition and proper marketing and management of futsal. The strategy is aimed at promoting the official five-a-side game in Ireland and does not relate directly to Project FUTSAL. However, the use of futsal towards the promotion of social inclusion and learning is complementary to the overall strategy.

The FAI's Late Night League programme is delivered through the medium of futsal and attracts hundreds of participants, often otherwise marginalised members of society, who flock to city venues for a six-week period over the winter to play the game. While futsal, like other sports, has its own inherent positive value, two studies (one in Ballymun and one in Tallaght West) have been conducted into its additional advantages as a form of 'diversion' for young people who may be at risk of involvement with the justice system. Garda call-outs for anti-social behaviour were monitored in these areas the week before a late night league began, throughout the presence of the league, and the week immediately after the league finished. In Ballymun, Garda call-outs decreased by 51% during the hours the league was running and in Tallaght West the decrease was 52%. This suggests an appetite among some of those who may not otherwise engage in any formalised, structured activity to play futsal.

Project FUTSAL was a joint initiative between the FAI and the WFT and aims to use the discipline of futsal as a way of attracting people back into mainstream education. It was anticipated that, by offering targeted social groups more futsal, it could be tied in with

educational modules that may be useful in gaining entry into the labour force. Futsal is growing across Wales and Ireland and is in constant need of new coaches and administrators. As it is played indoors, the need for venues is also prevalent, with opportunities for facility regeneration where this need exists.

1.2.1 Awards

Project FUTSAL has been awarded AONTAS STAR Award in the nationwide category. The STAR Awards recognise and celebrate collaborative work undertaken by adult learning initiatives in communities. The award was given in recognition of the project in helping people who are unemployed to gain accredited education in the area of sports and recreation.

Project FUTSAL was also awarded a bronze award in the Best Project category at the 2013 UEFA Grassroots Day Awards. The awards aim to recognise the achievements of the best leaders, clubs and projects in the grassroots game around Europe.

1.3 Project FUTSAL in practice

The project has run for three years and has seen resources invested in twelve communities by the Ireland Wales Programme, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and the Welsh Football Trust (WFT). Project FUTSAL has involved the sharing of best practice between the two associations. It has included the setting up of Football Education Centres (hubs), delivering pan-disability training in each hub, and conducting longitudinal research on the effectiveness of football towards social inclusion and learning within disadvantaged communities.

1.3.1 Football education centres: hubs

The Project FUTSAL hubs acted as education centres coordinated by FAI/WFT staff. A structured academic programme of adult education, personal development, football coaching education and work/volunteer placements was offered to participants from the local community at each hub. The target ratio of male to female participants was 50:50, although this proved challenging in practice. The main objectives were to enhance participants' employability and/or enhance their prospects of going onto

further education. The hubs were rolled out on a phased basis with three beginning in September 2011 in Ireland reaching a final total of seven hubs in Ireland during 2012/13. In Wales one hub was rolled out in October 2011 and a total of five hubs were established during the lifetime of the project.

1.3.2 Hubs and awards: Ireland

There were seven Project FUTSAL hubs established in Ireland. The Ballymun, Collinstown and Corduff hubs were based in Dublin, with additional hubs in Waterford, Carlow, Wexford and Tipperary. Each hub had two allocated officers (full or part-time) and from 2012 onwards, hubs had the benefit of interns selected from participants from previous years.

- The Ballymun Project FUTSAL Campus was spread over four venues and saw classes and practical sessions being held in Poppintree Sports Centre, Ballymun Leisure Centre, Whitehall College ETB Outreach Centre and 'Dublin City University (DCU) in the Community', Shangan Road. The Ballymun Campus was run in partnership with DCU in the Community, Whitehall College of Further Education and Ballymun Regeneration.
- The Project FUTSAL Waterford hub was located in Kingfisher Leisure Centre on the Tramore Road. This hub was run in partnership with Waterford County Council, Waterford City Council and Waterford ETB.
- The Project FUTSAL Carlow hub was located in Bagenalstown, County Carlow. The hub was run with Carlow County Council and the Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board.
- The Project FUTSAL Wexford hub was located in Wexford Youths FC. This hub was run in partnership with Wexford County Council, and the Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board.

- The Project FUTSAL Clonmel hub was located in Clonmel Town FC and Army Barracks in Clonmel. This hub was run in partnership with South Tipperary County Council, and the Tipperary Education and Training Board.
- The Project FUTSAL South Dublin hub was located in Collinstown Park Community School, Dublin. This hub was run in partnership with South Dublin County Council, and the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board.
- The Project FUTSAL Fingal hub was located in the Corduff Sports Centre, Dublin 15. This hub was run in partnership with Fingal County Council, and the County Dublin ETB.

The number of participants in each hub varied. While most hubs aimed for 30 participants, restrictions in some areas reduced the intake to a maximum of 20. While the numbers ranged from 15-25, most hubs reached the higher end of the scale. Project FUTSAL ran for one academic year in each hub, with content divided between core and optional educational components, which were largely provided by local Education and Training Boards (ETBs), formerly Vocational Educational Committees (VECs). The FAI delivered coaching and other components. Participants worked towards achieving a FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council) Level 5 award on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) for the overall programme, but were also awarded individual certificates for components. (FETAC's functions were transferred to Quality and Qualifications Ireland in 2012.) Participants also completed FAI accredited coaching awards including Kickstart 1 and 2 and could also advance to completing the Youth Certificate, an award based on coaching players aged 13-18 years. During the course, participants also completed a work experience module, coaching in their locality in schools, community centres or clubs.

Examples of educational components include:

- Communications Studies
- Exercise and Fitness
- Information Technology

- Occupational First Aid
- Health Related Fitness
- Sport & Community Development
- Sport and Recreation Studies
- Leisure Facility Operations

Examples of additional and FAI delivered components include:

- Kick Start 1 – Introduction to Coaching
- Kick Start 2 – Introduction to Coaching
- Youth Certificate
- Stadia Stewarding
- Pan-disability Certificate
- Introductory Referees Course
- First Aid
- Video Match Analysis
- DCU Masterclass series (Ballymun hub)
- Work Experience

1.3.3 Hubs and awards: Wales

There were five Project FUTSAL hubs in Wales, based in Llandudno, Llangefni, Prestatyn, Bangor and Colwyn Bay. The hubs were supported by one central officer and supported by hub assistants. The hubs were based in football clubs, with the educational components delivered by local college tutors, and the football components delivered by hub assistants, supported by additional trainers. The hubs ran in conjunction with local colleges, including Coleg Harlech and WEA Cymru. The Project FUTSAL course in Wales differed significantly from the Irish programme, running for two days a week over a twelve week period. The programme offered a range of certifications and awards. Examples of football awards include:

- Football Leaders Award
- CSLA (Community Sports Leaders Award)
- Introduction to Futsal Certificate
- First Aid

- Footballers with a Disability Certificate

Additional awards are also offered, such as a Welfare and Child Protection Certificate, along with a range of Essential Skills for Work and Life awards, including the following:

Table 1.1 Essential Skills Awards: Wales

Applying for work
Researching employment opportunities
Confidence building
Choosing the right job
Interview skills
Developing writing skills, report writing
Speaking and listening, providing & receiving information
Writing to persuade
Calculations and measurements
Contributing to discussions
Writing to communicate information
Writing to describe
Collection and presentation of data
Extracting data
Following instructional and explanatory texts
Fractions, decimals and percentages
Obtaining information and opinions from texts
Probability
Ratios and proportions
Whole numbers, problem solving and calculations
Reading for purpose
Using time
Using measurements
Using ICT systems
Safe and healthy working practices when using ICT
Finding, selecting and exchanging information using ICT
Developing and presenting information using ICT

1.3.4 Recruitment

Recruitment took place through a variety of channels. Participants reported learning about Project FUTSAL through their FAI connections including through their local clubs, contact with local development officers, club circular emails, FAI summer camps, the FAI website and related FAI Facebook pages. Other participants reported seeing flyers, posters and advertisements in local newspapers, civic centres, job centres and social welfare offices. Word of mouth was also a means by which participants learned about the course, including recommendations from previous participants. Officers reported that one-to-one conversations, often in clubs, and word of mouth were particularly effective as a means of recruitment. Additionally, officers in one hub in Ireland described two alternative posters that were designed, with a view to attracting different genders; one in the traditional green colours associated with the FAI and one in pink and red, specifically targeting potential female applicants. Participants were also recruited through social media with officers and participants identifying the benefits of project Facebook pages in recruitment and dissemination of information. There were also reports of successful use of a Twitter account in one hub.

1.3.5 Football experience

The majority of the Project FUTSAL participants had some football experience, having played/coached football locally in clubs, participated in summer camps, or completed previous coaching training. A small number of participants came from other sports backgrounds. The standard of student varied across hubs and within hubs. Qualitative data points to a lower level of formal educational achievement prior to participation among participants in Wales. Officers and interns report that while health and fitness are important, football expertise is not essential for successful participation. Officers also claim that a football background is not vital as a lot of the content is delivered 'from scratch' and there is an opportunity to learn on the course. Participants report that basic skills are important but that the standard varies and support is provided.

1.4 Pan-Disability football

The FAI introduced a dedicated Football for All National Coordinator in 2002 to deliver a programme of support to enable people with disabilities to participate in football. However, this support generally focussed on accommodating groups in segregated environments and the opportunities to play football for people with disabilities were limited. The FAI recognised that providing opportunities for people to play in a pan-disability environment would open up more regular playing opportunities and reflect a more inclusive ethos. A planned element of Project FUTSAL involved setting up pan-disability football teams attached to each hub, with a view to encouraging and assisting local communities around the hubs to support the delivery of football to a wider range of players with disabilities in their communities. Examination of the Welsh Football Trust model of community based pan-disability football teams provided a reference point for the programme in Ireland.

Regular engagement between officers in the FAI and the Welsh Football Trust (WFT) during the course of Project FUTSAL enabled the sharing of ideas, contributing to the development of the pan-disability component of Project FUTSAL football. Visits to view the Welsh programme by the FAI Football for All coordinator enabled liaison with WFT officials, local pan-disability clubs and parents of players involved, with a view to progressing and sustaining the pan-disability programme.

Project participants in Ireland were trained to deliver pan-disability football sessions, creating a resource for local clubs wishing to engage in pan-disability football. Hub participants linked with local football clubs which developed pan-disability football programmes and provided regular coaching sessions. In Clonmel, two hub participants set up a regular Saturday morning pan-disability football club which saw up to twenty five children with varying disabilities participate in football on a regular basis. A hub participant from Dublin now manages the Irish amputee football team while another Dublin project graduate coaches with the Irish Paralympics football team. In Wales, hub participants have also been active helping to deliver football events to groups involved in mental health and autism.

During the course of Project FUTSAL, three national participation events were run with teams travelling from Wales to join the Irish clubs in pan-disability football festivals. Two such festivals were delivered at Shamrock Rovers FC stadium in Tallaght in 2012 and 2013 with a further indoor festival delivered at the National Basketball Arena in Tallaght in 2014.

Feedback relating to disability elements of the programme was generally very positive, with staff reporting the experiences as positive for participants and participants reporting encouraging experiences working with people with disabilities.

1.5 Evaluation of Project FUTSAL

A significant element of Project FUTSAL was the undertaking of longitudinal research on the effectiveness of football as a tool towards social inclusion and learning within disadvantaged communities. The overall aim of the research was to assess the impact of programme intervention on participants and communities in which the project was rolled out. The research also assessed football's impact on work opportunities, education and community involvement; while also exploring the extent to which the project produced positive social benefits, including value for money.

1.5.1 Research questions

While a broad set of initial research questions and objectives were identified by the FAI and WFT, during the course of the evaluation the research team adapted these, in consultation with the FAI and WFT, resulting in the following key questions:

- Has the project contributed to positive outcomes for participants?
- Has the project contributed to community development and regeneration?
- What is the effectiveness of the programme, as perceived by the various stakeholders?
- What value for money does the intervention provide?

Taken together these questions have been designed to address key issues and research objectives relating to the evaluation of Project FUTSAL, including both an assessment of the outcomes for participants and the local areas/communities where hubs are located, as well as the implementation and effectiveness of the programme.

1.5.2 Research design

The mixed methods research design, as described in Chapter 3, included a number of qualitative and quantitative components, as well as a value-for-money assessment. The longitudinal data collection included the administration of two separate questionnaires to each participant on site, both at baseline (programme entry) and end point (completion of programme). One of these questionnaires dealt with community and social participation and general wellbeing, while the other focused on physical wellbeing and health. Together, when administered at the beginning and end of the programme, they facilitated the measurement of some of the important outcomes for Project FUTSAL participants. A post-participation questionnaire was also administered by phone. This was combined with data provided by officers to facilitate an analysis of participant pathway outcomes. Quantitative data on volunteer hours was also provided by the FAI, contributing to analysis of community volunteerism.

In addition to this, the study also included a series of qualitative focus groups with participants, along with a series of interviews with hub officers, interns, assistants and associated training staff and tutors. The qualitative data provided insight into the context, opportunities and challenges faced by Project FUTSAL organisers and participants, informing further analysis and recommendations.

A final component of the research design was the completion of a value-for-money study. This study focused on one hub, analysing savings to the state, and concentrating on two main headings, namely health and employment. This design is described in more detail in Chapter 3: Research Design.

2. The Context

2.1 Introduction

Project FUTSAL aimed to provide education and work opportunities for people in disadvantaged areas and to influence and assist community regeneration via employment and volunteerism in the field of sport. The relationship between physical activity, community wellbeing and social capital is borne out in the literature, with research studies highlighting the contribution of sport in various contexts to public health, social cohesion (Delaney & Fahey, 2005) and social mobility (Spaaij, 2009). Statutory and voluntary organisations have utilised sport as a medium to promote social inclusion. However, it has been acknowledged that sport ‘cannot be viewed in isolation from other social spheres, such as the family, education, labour market and government’ (Spaaij, 2009: 262). This section explores the current landscape providing an Irish and Welsh context to the research, while also identifying the relevant literature within which the analysis can be framed.

2.2 The Irish context

2.2.1 Education and policy

Children and young people in Ireland attend compulsory education from age 6 to 16. The second level education sector comprises secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Participants take two major public examinations set by the State Examinations Commission; the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate. Third level education in Ireland is mainly provided by universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education. A number of alternative programmes for early school leavers are also available; adult, further and community education provide additional educational opportunities, with a view to addressing skills needs and promoting equality and social inclusion (Department of Education and Science, 2014).

The Irish education and training system has recently seen significant reform. The Further Education and Training Act was signed into law in July 2013, providing for the establishment of SOLAS (An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna), the new Further Education and Training Authority, and the dissolution of FÁS, the National Training Authority. The Education and Training Boards Act (2013) provided for the

merging of the Vocational Educational Committees (VECs) into a smaller number of Education and Training Boards (ETBs), and for the transfer of the FÁS training centres to these boards. The ETBs now act as the main provider for adult education and training, including full and part-time programmes in further education, with certification in alignment with the National Framework of Qualifications (Department of Education and Skills, 2013). Opportunities for learners include the Leaving Cert Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Cert Applied (LCA), Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) programmes, Youthreach programmes for early school leavers, and awards accredited by the former Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), whose functions were transferred to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in 2012. 'FETAC awards' range from level 1-6 on the National Framework of Qualifications and are offered at over 1,200 centres in Ireland. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI, 2014) report that of 40,544 individuals undertaking Level 5-6 awards in 2012, just 22.71% achieved the full major award.

There are a number of support measures in place for those returning to education to study for a further qualification, including the Back to Education Allowance (BTEI) and allowances to undertake Youthreach courses. Schemes such as the JobBridge Internship scheme and JobsPlus targeted employment subsidies were also introduced by the Irish Government to target unemployment. The Government's *Action Plan for Jobs* initiative was launched in early 2012 with a view to creating the conditions to support private-sector led, export-orientated economic growth and job creation (OECD, 2014a). In addition, the Government's 50 point plan on labour activation, *Pathways to Work* aims to fight long-term unemployment, providing an integrated employment and income support service. Finally, European Union member states endorsed the principle of the 'Youth Guarantee' in April 2013. The initiative offers a young person aged 18 to 24 a job, work experience, apprenticeship, training or combined work and training within a period of four months after leaving school or becoming unemployed (National Youth Council of Ireland, 2014).

2.2.2 Youth unemployment

Byrne and Smyth (2010) report that disengagement from school is a significant source of inequality in Irish society. Each year, around 9,000 young people in Ireland leave

school before taking the Leaving Certificate. Those leaving school early are more likely to be from working class and unemployed households, with working class males especially likely to leave school early. Schools with a concentration of participants from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to have higher drop-out rates. Byrne and Smyth also found that the majority of early school leavers experience unemployment at some point, with those in employment more likely to be working in insecure and low-skilled areas. Early school leavers often see 'no way back' to second-level education to improve their prospects. The 'collapse' in youth employment resulting from the deep fiscal crisis serves to exacerbate this problem (OECD, 2014b).

In April 2014, the youth unemployment rate was 22.5% in the European Union and 23.5% in the euro area, compared with 23.6% and 23.9% respectively in April 2013 (Eurostat, 2013a). Despite small decreases, unemployment remains a significant issue for young people in Ireland, with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) highlighting the 26% level of joblessness among members of the workforce aged under 24 (OECD, 2014b) and the need for 'more attention' in tackling youth unemployment. It is also reported that unemployment is higher for young people with lower levels of qualification, and their labour force participation is below that of those with higher qualifications. The initial rise in youth unemployment was also much more rapid for males, remaining so for several years (Eurostat, 2013b).

2.2.3 Sports participation among young people

A study on sports participation conducted jointly by the ESRI and the Sports Council of Ireland (2013) found that while primary school children are more likely to engage in regular sporting activity, many drop out of regular activity during second level. Females are more likely to drop out of regular activity at post-primary level (Lunn et al., 2013). The study also finds that while most adults believe sporting activity is good for them and want to be more active, a number of factors including leaving education, work commitments, and family responsibilities lead many to drop out. 'By the time individuals reach adulthood, participation is strongly associated with socio-economic status (measured by educational attainment, income and occupational class), age and gender' (Lunn et al., 2013: xiii). Dropout rates are higher among early school leavers, possibly linked to disaffection with the school or a breakdown in the student

relationship with the school. In addition, a gender gap emerged, with females much less likely to participate in sport during adolescence. Despite this, the report found that girls are as likely as boys to participate prior to adolescence and adult women are as likely to take up sports as men (Lunn et al., 2013).

2.2.4 Sport and disability

Participation is increasingly promoted through a range of initiatives. The Irish Sports Council (ISC) has committed to supporting the development of sport and physical activity opportunities for people with disabilities, committing improved funding towards a Sport Inclusion Disability Officer Programme, supporting the work of Sports Inclusion Disability Officers in Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) across the country (Irish Sports Council, 2014). The Steering Committee of the National Sports Inclusion Disability Programme includes members from a range of related organisations, including Special Olympics Ireland, the Irish Sports Council, Local Sports Partnerships, CARA Centre/IT Tralee, Football Association of Ireland, Paralympic Council of Ireland, Irish Wheelchair Association, Cerebral Palsy Sport Ireland and the Disability Federation of Ireland (ISC, 2014).

Organisations also support athletes in competitive sport. Special Olympics Ireland is a sports organisation for people with an intellectual disability, with a view to supporting athletes to develop physically and emotionally. Special Olympics Ireland currently has almost 11,000 registered athletes in Ireland, supported by 25,000 volunteers (Special Olympics, 2013). Paralympics Ireland is the National Paralympic Committee for Ireland and aims to ensure that Paralympic sports are accessible and to support athletes to represent Ireland at the Paralympic Games (Paralympics Ireland, 2014).

A range of pan-disability sports endeavours run across Ireland in various contexts. The FAI's Football for All Programme was initiated to assist and develop football opportunities for all players with a disability in their local community, encouraging players with a disability to participate in football (FAI, 2014). An example is the Waterford Sports Partnership Pan-Disability Football for All Club, catering for young people aged 6 to 16 with all types of disabilities (Waterford Sports Partnership, 2012).

2.3 The Welsh Context

2.3.1 Education and policy

Education in Wales is compulsory from the ages of 5 to 16. The second level education system covers Key Stages 3 and 4 of the Welsh National Curriculum. At second level, students study for AS-level and A-level qualifications. Students also have the option of obtaining National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Notably, a significant number of students in Wales are educated entirely or largely through the Welsh language (Welsh Government, 2014). Education and training for the 14–19 phase has been the focus of reform in recent years creating a framework of balanced and flexible ‘learning pathways’ for 14 to 19-year-olds (European Commission, 2013a).

Higher education in Wales is provided by self-governing institutions, and qualifications are awarded on the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) (European Commission, 2013b). Further education (FE) opportunities are also provided for people over the compulsory school age. This training is provided by FE institutions and a range of public, private and voluntary sector training providers, including academic, vocational and work based learning. Vocational qualifications are available from Entry Level to Level 8 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). Adult learning is also provided by local authorities in Wales, including non-accredited, accredited and leisure-orientated courses (Welsh Government, 2014a).

There are a number of government policies contributing to strategy towards an educated and skilled workforce in Wales. In January 2008, the Welsh Government published *Skills That Work for Wales*. Building on previous consultations and reports, this document identified priorities including improving the levels of basic literacy and numeracy skills in the workforce; ensuring everyone has skills essential to take up employment and maintain their employability within the labour market; and establishing effective and efficient learning provision. In 2009, the Welsh Government’s strategy for higher education, *For Our Future: The 21st Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales* identified a vision including that of higher education providers equipping individuals, whatever their background, with the knowledge, skills and attributes to achieve maximum intellectual and personal fulfilment; offering

flexible, accessible and learner centred provision; and contributing to the reviving and sustaining of communities and the shaping of a democratic, civilised and inclusive society.

In June 2011, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) provided a report on request for advice from the Minister for Education and Skills. The report, *The Future Structure of Higher Education in Wales*, sets out recommendations including a structure of no more than six institutions to replace the current 11 (European Commission (2013a)). The 2014 Higher Education (Wales) Bill sets out to improve the structure of Higher Education in Wales by ensuring, among other provisions, that equal access to higher education is prioritised, that fee limits are enforced and that the HEFCW continues to provide assurance regarding the financial management of higher education providers (Welsh Government, 2014c).

The Welsh Government has implemented a range of measures aimed at tackling youth unemployment and disadvantage among young people. The *14-19 Learning Pathways* policy (originally proposed in 2002 and given statutory effect in 2009) focussed on learners' engagement and progression to post-16 learning; the 2009-10 *Young Recruits* programme created additional opportunities for young people to access apprenticeship places; the *Pathways to Apprenticeship* programme was set up to ensure that young people could access high quality skills training where it was not available through employment-based apprenticeships. Other relevant programmes are the 2011 *Traineeship Programme* for those aged 16-18, and *Steps to Employment* for those aged 18-plus who are not in employment, education or training (Office for National Statistics, 2014)

2.3.2 Youth unemployment

The Labour Force Survey from March to May 2014 shows that the employment rate in Wales was 69.2%. Youth unemployment (16 to 24 year olds) for the same period was 20.2% of the economically active population, above the UK average of 19.4%. For the year ending 31 March 2014, 44,400 people aged 16-24 in Wales were unemployed, a reduction of 5.4% over the year. This represented 20.2% of the economically active in this age group, with the equivalent rate for all of the UK being 19.4% (Welsh

Government, 2014b). The Office for National Statistics (2014) reports that long term youth unemployment has a number of detrimental effects for both the individual and society, with youth unemployment representing a failure to take advantage of Wales's productive potential. Youth unemployment also reinforces intergenerational transmission of poverty and could lead to disenchantment among young people who do not feel they have the same opportunities as adults. Further, sustained unemployment can lead to lower future earnings for young people. (Office for National Statistics, 2014).

The 2013 Annual Survey of School Leavers conducted by Careers Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government shows a small reduction in young people known to be 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET). Of the Year 11 cohort of school leavers known to be NEET, the proportion of females unable to enter EET was nearly two and a half times as large as the proportion of males (22% compared with 9%) (Careers Wales, 2013). Further, research by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB, 2012) found that 82% of 140 businesses it surveyed were worried about the basic skills of young people leaving school at 16, with small and medium sized companies concerned about the literacy and numeracy of school leavers in Wales (Federation of Small Businesses, 2012)

2.3.3 Sports participation among young people

A 2009 survey of almost 13,000 young people by the Sports Council Wales found that 47% of secondary school pupils were taking part in extracurricular sport at least once a week, with participation figures decreasing with age. It was found that football, rugby and athletics were more popular among boys, with netball, athletics and gymnastics more commonly undertaken by girls. Further, a greater proportion of boys (59%) than girls (47%) reported representing their school in competition. Again, this figure dropped with age, with an average of 67% of year 7 pupils competing for their school, compared with 47% in year 11 (Sports Council Wales, 2009). A 2013 Sport Wales Survey of 110,000 7-16 year old schoolchildren found that the vast majority (91%) of children enjoy school sport. The survey also provides evidence that boys (44%) were more likely than girls (36%) to participate in sport and physical activity. 54% of those surveyed were members of a sports clubs, compared with 45% in 2011. Again, a gender disparity emerged, with a greater number of boys (61%) than girls (46%) reporting sports club membership (Sport Wales, 2013).

2.3.4 Sport and disability

Support for sports participation for people with disabilities in Wales is met on many levels. The Federation of Disability Sport Wales is the national pan-disability governing body. Disability Sport Wales is committed to a vision of inspiring the delivery of bigger and better outcomes for sport, considering its role as pivotal in driving transformational change in this area. Part of this change involves challenging 'partners and the wider social landscape to accept and embrace inclusion, and in doing so, provide even greater levels of activity for disabled people' (Disability Sport Wales, 2014).

Special Olympics Wales supports training and competition for people with learning disabilities in Olympic-type sports, providing competitors with 'continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community' (Special Olympics, 2014). Wales is also well represented at Paralympics level, with a total of 39 Welsh athletes representing Great Britain in competition across 14 sports at the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

The Welsh Football Trust also supports disability football, with a national coordinator appointed in 2004 and a grassroots structure strategy developed in 2005. By 2010, there were 24 disability community clubs across Wales, with 532 registered members. Through the initiative, events including a national pan-disability club festival and schools competition run annually. The current disability football strategy for Wales focuses on the establishment of national teams and regional performance centres for disability groups, as well as increasing the number of players and establishing 66 pan-disability teams (Welsh Football Trust, 2014).

2.4 The research context

2.4.1 Sport and social change

An extensive body of research explores the role of sport as a catalyst for social change, supporting social inclusion and contributing to public health and crime prevention, while acting as a tool of community development and urban regeneration. In doing so, it

is also acknowledged that sport 'cannot be viewed in isolation from other social spheres, such as the family, education, labour market and government' (Spaaij, 2009: 262). A number of studies explore the role of sports-based interventions in this process.

Studies highlight the benefits of sports-based interventions to participants. Coalter et al. (2000) found that some of the greatest gains from activity sports programmes relate to psychological health and increased feelings of wellbeing. Coalter et al. (2000) also found that sport can be used to attract under-achieving pupils to educational programmes and that there are mutually beneficial opportunities to involve professional football and other clubs in the development of integrated sport/ education programmes. 'The value of sports-orientated employment programmes may lie less in their directly vocational effectiveness than in their appeal to groups of long-term unemployed and the reduction of social inclusion through the development of 'employment networks'. (Coalter et al., 2000: 2). Coalter also highlights the value of related activities, including volunteering, arguing that because of its high social and economic value, volunteering in sport offers 'possibilities for the development of a sense of self-esteem and social purpose' (Coalter et al., 2000: 3). Further, a number of factors may underpin the success of a programme, including appropriate and convenient local facilities, recognising the importance of friendship groups, and providing reassurance that 'people just like them' are participating.

Collins and Butler (2010) conducted a large scale qualitative and quantitative study of the outcomes of participation in a sports training scheme in disadvantaged areas of Nottingham. Collins and Butler also explore the factors contributing the success of such participation and identify the role of clubs and parents in encouraging participation. They found that such schemes can bridge institutional gaps while introducing young people to environments where they feel safe and comfortable and that they can make progress.

Similarly, Haudenhuyse et al. (2014) found that that sports club participation generated positive and supportive experiences for socially vulnerable young people. Exploring the lived experiences of traditional sports setting among socially vulnerable young people

in Flemish sports clubs, Huaudenhuyse et al. (2014) also report that creating those experiences requires specific efforts on behalf of the sports clubs and coaches.

2.4.2 Opportunities and challenges

Further research also provides a critique of the extent to which sports-based inclusion programmes can achieve social change. Liu (2009) looked at evidence based performance of leisure facilities and the under-representation of disadvantaged groups, finding that there is little evaluation evidence of the extent to which people might become socially included through sport. Liu contends that while underrepresentation exists, causes of (and changes in) such under-representation are not clear and can only be hypothesised, with more research needed. Vandermeersch (2013) explored sports participation among socially vulnerable children and adolescents in Belgium. The quantitative study of 3005 children also found that social vulnerability is related to a lower likelihood of involvement in club organised sport. Specifically, children from poor households were less likely to attend sports clubs, meaning that resources are thus likely to be spent on those who already have more (2013: 13).

Kelly (2010) explored the role of sports-based interventions in supporting social inclusion, analysing the UK Positive Futures projects. Kelly (2010) found that while programmes achieve varying degrees of success in providing sport for all and free sporting opportunities for young people who might otherwise be excluded, their overall impact on the exclusionary process is limited. The outcome evaluation research suggested that the overall impact on youth unemployment and educational underachievement was much lower than the high participant numbers might imply (2010: 144). Despite this, Kelly (2010) reported that the projects will alleviate some of the consequences of exclusion for a minority but will also likely benefit young people in unexpected or unmeasured ways.

Spaaj (2009) analysed recreational sport's contribution to the social mobility of disadvantaged urban youth, studying a sports-based intervention Sport Steward Programme in the Netherlands, which aimed to improve the social outlook and employability of long-term unemployed and underemployed youth. Spaaj found that in many respects it failed to break through the system of social reproduction, arguing that

the programme can be better viewed as having created (limited stocks of) cultural capital. Spaaj (2009) found that sport acts as a useful hook for engaging disadvantaged youth, while also playing a role in linking them to social networks outside their local community, enabling them to leverage a wider range of resources 'within and beyond the immediate community' (Spaaj, 2009, 261).

Spaaj contends that 'the impact of sport on an individual's social position can be analysed in terms of the effects of sport engagement on different forms of capital and the ways in which these forms of capital are transferred to different social spheres' (Spaaj, 2009: 249). In this case, the programme facilitated the creation of cultural capital. The programme concentrated on engaging disadvantaged youth rather than immediate, short-term economic improvement, seeking 'to encourage young people to engage with projects, opening up potential personal development pathways' (Spaaj, 2009: 262). Spaaj makes a case for the creation of intragenerational mobility- short term mobility within a generation achieved through sports participation generation (Spaaj, 2009: 249).

Spaaj argues that the transformative capacity of sport-based intervention programmes for disadvantaged youth is dependent on a social and personal development approach, beyond the limits of offering sports activities (2009: 262). Spaaj (2009) contends that there are a number of constraints to determining the long term outcomes of sports-based intervention programmes, including educational dispositions, family circumstances and financial pressures.

Spaaj (2013) further explored sports programmes' ability to address worklessness, identifying that there is a limit on what sport can do, and that it cannot overcome the wider issues influencing the success of programmes aiming to move workless people to employment. While the approach taken in the cases studies is successful for some young people, it fails to alter the underlying causes of worklessness for others. Staff are forced to make decisions about whom they work with, meaning that the external policy agendas driving their work may mean that those most in need are not provided with sustained support (Spaaj, 2013).

Spaaj (2013) notes that studies measure outcomes in terms of the numbers of young people in work or moving toward work by re-enrolment in education and training. Spaaj (2013) advocates a shift away from measuring outcomes in terms of job attainment and the development of approaches that are responsive to the local area within which the projects are embedded, including providing people with volunteering opportunities (2013: 1622).

2.4.3 Football and social inclusion

A smaller number of research studies directly explore the role of football in supporting social inclusion. Sherry explored the role of sports programmes in the (re)engagement of marginalised people within the broader community, using the Australian homeless world cup 'Street Socceroos' as a case study. Sherry found that participation in sport can provide 'beneficial outcomes for participants, and through a process of (re)engagement, [can] develop social capital' (Sherry, 2010: 59). Sherry argues that while it is difficult to establish a cause and effect relationship between sport programmes and social inclusion or social capital, particularly where it is linked with other sports services, sport participation provides opportunities for people to be active and accepted members of the community, restoring self-esteem and developing a sense of belonging, which are identifiable indicators of social capital (2010:68). This is most noticeable among marginalised and socially excluded groups, with further benefits including the generation of economic and cultural capital, through more stable housing, employment and study. Sherry also reports that the benefits extend well beyond the initial sense of achievement. In a further analysis Sherry (2012) corroborates findings relating to the value of support from others including staff, reporting that part of the programme's success is due to the establishment of relationships between players and coaches, the former providing a non-threatening re-engagement with community and the ability to place trust in others and build social networks. Sherry (2012) reports that the passion and dedication of the coaching staff and support services are vital to the outcomes.

Brown et al. (2010) agree that clubs should have a better understanding of how their business has wider community impacts, including the opening of their facilities to disadvantaged groups. Overall, research suggests that much of the value gained from football is entirely social in nature, including feeling part of the locality and the

generation of local pride; building friendships; having a sense of community and communality with other people; and sharing experiences with other supporters (Brown et al., 2010: 51). Brown et al. point to the role of local authorities, who are increasingly active as partners to football clubs and share agendas on community cohesion, education, regeneration of the built environment, sport and physical activity and social inclusion (Brown et al., 2010: 51).

2.4.4 Need for research

Other studies acknowledge the need for increased research in the area of sport and social inclusion, with Rush (2006) arguing that insufficient attention has been paid by social scientists to the link between sports policy and overall social policy. Bailey (2007) explored the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion, focussing on a UK policy context. Bailey found that there is an increased need for rigorous evaluations of the outcomes of participation in physical education and sports. Further, the issue is not whether increased sports participation can be viewed as contributing to personal and community development and the reduction of social exclusion but what contribution participation can make to a range of social needs and problems (Bailey, 2007: 86).

The value of football as a tool to support social inclusion and community development merits further research. Tacon (2007:1) points out that 'rigorous evaluations of football-based social inclusion projects are rarely carried out', while Spaaj (2009) and Coalter (2008) also report that empirical evidence for the social outcomes of such programmes is limited. A UK Supporters Direct study on the social and community value of football (Brown et al., 2010) found that 'research into the social and community value of football clubs themselves...is largely absent' (2010: 56).

2.4.5 Sport and disability

The benefits of sports for people with disabilities is also recognised in the literature. Examining the relations among numerous Special Olympics activities and participant self-concept and adaptive behaviour, Weiss et al. (2003) highlight the importance of competition and sport for individuals with developmental disabilities. Martin (2010)

explored the psychosocial dynamics of youth disability sport, finding that positive and negative experiences exist, with sport settings not inherently a context that promotes wellbeing among participants all of the time. Children's self-esteem may be threatened when they perceive help to be offered based on a negative assessment of their ability. Further, able bodied-children are conscious that children with disabilities may be teased, and this impacts on their decisions to play. In contrast to this, Martin (2010) also reported that sports environments can provide opportunities for social support, with role models providing invaluable examples of self-efficacy. Similarly, encouragement from parents was deemed to be particularly beneficial.

Wedgewood (2010) points out that people with impairments are not a homogenous group, so while the health benefits may be universal, the other aspects of sporting experiences will vary due to a wide range of factors. This is confirmed by research in the Irish context which suggests that young people with different types of disabilities may have different sporting preferences; young people with sensory impairments for example may prefer individual sports rather than team ones (de Róiste and Dineen, 2005; Lalor et al., 2007).

Clear patterns of restricted access and opportunity are evident among young people with disabilities. A recent survey for Sport England (Finch et al., 2001), for example, found that young people with a disability were far less likely to take part in extra-curricular or out-of-school sporting activities. For example, 16% of the sample of young people with a disability had taken part in extra-curricular sport compared with 45% of a general sample of young people, and 47% of young people with a disability had taken part in sport at the weekend compared with 74% of the overall sample. Summarising evidence in this area, the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS, 2000) identified a range of barriers to participation, including self-consciousness, low levels of confidence and, significantly for our interests, negative school experiences.

3. Research Design

3.1 Introduction

The evaluation of the Project FUTSAL aims to assess the impact and effectiveness of the programme in producing meaningful outcomes for both individual participants and local communities where hubs were located; as well as the efficacy of sports-based education programmes in aiding in processes of social inclusion/participation, employability and progression to further education/training. The research employs a mixed methods approach, which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative elements, in order to address these multiple aims.

Quantitative elements included the use of two survey instruments, which were administered to Project FUTSAL participants, during programme years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, at the commencement and conclusion of their involvement in the programme. These surveys provided demographic information about participants, as well as data relating to their levels of social participation and physical and mental wellbeing. A further quantitative component was a post-participation survey to track post-participation experiences with a particular emphasis on progression to employment and/or further education/training. Additional quantitative data was provided by the FAI and the WFT in relation to additional demographic information, volunteer hours completed and numbers of participants completing and receiving awards.

The qualitative elements of the evaluation included a series of phased semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders, including development officers, hub assistants, educational staff and interns, as well as focus group discussions with participants. These interviews and discussions were supplemented with observations of some of the programme activities, including class and coaching sessions. The data collection strategy is summarised in Table 3.1 and described in more detail below.

Table 3.1 Summary of Data Collection Methods

Qualitative	Quantitative
Group discussions with participants at baseline and endpoint across all hubs	Participation and wellbeing survey administered at baseline and end point across all hubs
Interviews with officers and interns at baseline and endpoint across all hubs	Health and fitness survey administered at baseline and end point across all hubs
Interviews with education providers (ETB tutors, coordinators)	Post-participation survey administered by phone to previous participants
Observation	Value-for-money study

3.2 Research methods and data collection

3.2.1 Longitudinal survey administration

Two quantitative instruments designed by the research team, with key questions adapted from the European Social Survey, were administered to participants at the beginning and end of their participation in the programme (see Appendix 1 and 2). The data from the questionnaires provide baseline statistics on participants and follow up data to identify and assess any changes that may have occurred over the duration of their participation. The questionnaires were designed to address key issues relevant to the processes and intended outcomes of Project FUTSAL, including: social and community participation; personal and social wellbeing; health, fitness and sport activities; diet; and leisure activities.

Across the seven Irish Hubs, the questionnaires were administered on a pre- and post-participation basis with participants in two separate years of the programme (2012-13 and 2013-14). In the five Welsh hubs, the surveys were administered to two cohorts in 2012-13 and 2013-14; however owing to difficulties with the timing of the baseline surveys with the first cohort it was not possible to collect longitudinal data from this group.

For the most part, the surveys were administered by members of the research team during fieldwork visits to the Project FUTSAL Hubs, during which other forms of data collection also took place. In a small number of cases, development officers and hub assistants were sent questionnaires to administer to participants and return to the research team.

3.2.2 Post-participation survey

A post-participation survey was designed and administered in early 2014 in order to follow-up with previous participants of Project FUTSAL (n=80) (see Appendix 3). This focused on progression pathways into employment and/or further education/training, as well as participants' retrospective assessment of the programme's value in promoting their personal development, increasing their employability and preparing them for employment and/or education.

The survey was administered via telephone as it was anticipated that this would aid in getting a better response rate than a postal or online survey. However, there were practical challenges in this process, including changed phone numbers and identifying suitable times to conduct the survey.

3.2.3 Interview series and focus groups

In order to gather more detailed information on the implementation and impact of Project FUTSAL a series of interviews and focus groups were conducted throughout the study. For both methods a flexible approach was adopted whereby interview guides with open-ended questions were used to guide the interviews, with prompts used where needed.

Focus groups were used to explore the opinions and experiences of participants in relation to Project FUTSAL. Focus groups are based on researchers actively encouraging participation and discussion within a group, and using this group interaction as a means of developing knowledge and understanding (see Flick, 2006; Barbour, 2007). Such discussion allows for the corroboration or challenging of the views expressed by members. The group thus provides a forum for understanding how social meaning is constructed and negotiated within the group as well as for reconsidering individual

opinions. In particular, the focus group approach was used as it privileges the interaction *between* participants.

Researchers met with participants across the different hubs at the beginning and end of their involvement with the programme. The initial meetings with participants were focused on their reasons for applying, their previous experiences of education and what they hoped to gain from engaging with Project FUTSAL. The end point focus groups were designed to explore participants' views on their overall experiences of the programme, including what elements they enjoyed or found beneficial, challenges they encountered and areas that might be improved and their assessment of the various components.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with development officers and hub assistants in Ireland and Wales. As with the participant focus groups, these were conducted at the start and end of the programme between 2012 and 2014, but some were also conducted during the running of the programme. These interviews were used to explore experiences of staff directly implementing the programme. A number of key areas were addressed in these interviews, including working with participants, collaboration with educational providers and other partners, benefits of the programme, and challenges encountered. Each interviewee met with members of the research team three to four times, which allowed for a reflection on the implementation of the programme over time and a qualitative longitudinal assessment of its development and impact.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with FAI interns, who were previous participants on the programme, employed to assist in the running of Project FUTSAL hubs. These interviews addressed their experience of the programme and their role as interns, with reference to what they gained from Project FUTSAL and its overall impact on them.

Finally, semi-structured interviews were also carried out with ETB staff involved in the delivery of academic/class-based elements of Project FUTSAL. These interviews focused on staff experiences of working with the group, particularly in comparison with their other teaching work, the integration of educational components within the programme, and the working relationship with the FAI and its staff.

3.2.4 Observation

A small series of observations were used to develop an understanding of the ongoing development and implementation of Project FUTSAL, which provided insight into the role and operational work of staff, as well as the activities undertaken by participants as part of the programme. These observations were undertaken to supplement other forms of data collected and afforded the research team the opportunity for direct experience of elements of Project FUTSAL, including classroom education, physical training sessions and coaching activities run by participants for local schools and projects.

3.2.5 Value-for-money study

Members of the research team worked with Ms Eilis Lawlor in conducting a value-for-money study of Project FUTSAL. There is an increasing requirement for programmes and services, particular those in receipt of public funding, to indicate the level of cost-benefit or savings that may accrue as a result of their implementation. The value-for-money study conducted as part of the evaluation of Project FUTSAL sought to assess the overall monetary impact of the programme in terms of savings for the state. In particular, this involved identifying short-, medium- and long-term outcomes in order to assess whether the programme could potentially produce future savings or cost benefits. The focus of this element of the study was on savings arising from participants moving from unemployment to employment and/or education, as well as broader health benefits which could lessen the reliance on health services in the future. Essentially, this approach involves utilising primary and secondary data on short and medium term outcomes (e.g. increased skills & qualifications/employability) to predict potential long-term outcomes (e.g. employment) and the associated impact on costs (e.g. social welfare costs). For the purposes of this study, and given the relative lack of relevant data in the Irish context, the value-for-money element of this evaluation is based on a case study of one local hub area. The findings are presented in Appendix 4.

3.3 Research ethics

The research design and individual research instruments used in this study were approved by Maynooth University's Social Research Ethics Subcommittee. Specific attention was paid to ensuring that all participants provided informed consent for their

involvement in the study and that all information received would be anonymous and confidential.

All participants in the evaluation were provided with an information sheet/consent form, which outlined the purpose of the study and its ethical considerations. This sheet informed participants that their involvement in the research was voluntary and that they had the right to decline or, having agreed to participate, could withdraw at any stage. Participants were also informed that all data would be anonymised and aggregated, upholding their rights to confidentiality and privacy.

The research team were careful to maintain appropriate information security standards in relation to the data collected. All data was stored on password protected computers, with physical data, including completed questionnaires and interview transcripts, stored in locked filing cabinets.

3.4 Limitations and learning

A number of points should be borne in mind in interpreting the findings of this research. Firstly, many of the actual or potential outcomes arising from participation in Project FUTSAL may well occur over a longer time than the evaluation (e.g. engagement in further education, activating employability skills). While data has been collected on these impacts up to the point at which the evaluation was taking place (e.g. transition to further education/employment), we can only speculate on the enduring impact of the programme on participants. However, significant amounts of short- to medium-term data point towards positive outcomes in the implementation and impact of Project FUTSAL.

Secondly, it should be noted that there were difficulties in gaining access to a full set of longitudinal data in some cases. However, this gap in quantitative data has to a considerable extent been ameliorated by the collection of a very substantial amount of qualitative data relating to participants' experiences of the programme.

4. Quantitative Findings

4.1 Introduction

As indicated in Chapter 3, two quantitative instruments designed by the research team, with key questions adapted from the European Social Survey, were administered to participants at the start and end points of their participation in Project FUTSAL. The questionnaires were designed to address key issues relevant to the processes and intended outcomes of Project FUTSAL and the evaluation. These issues include: social and community participation; personal and social wellbeing; health and fitness.

These were either administered by the researchers during fieldwork visits to Project FUTSAL Hubs or sent to the relevant development officers (with detailed instructions) who administered them to participants and then returned them to the evaluation team. The data from the initial round of questionnaires provided baseline statistics on participants. The questionnaires were subsequently re-administered at the end of the programme to collect comparative end point data in order to identify and assess any changes that may have occurred.

Subsequently a post-participation survey was administered to previous participants. This focused on their progression and pathways into employment and/or further education/training, as well as their retrospective assessment of the value of the programme in building their capacity for this progression.

4.2. Longitudinal cohorts

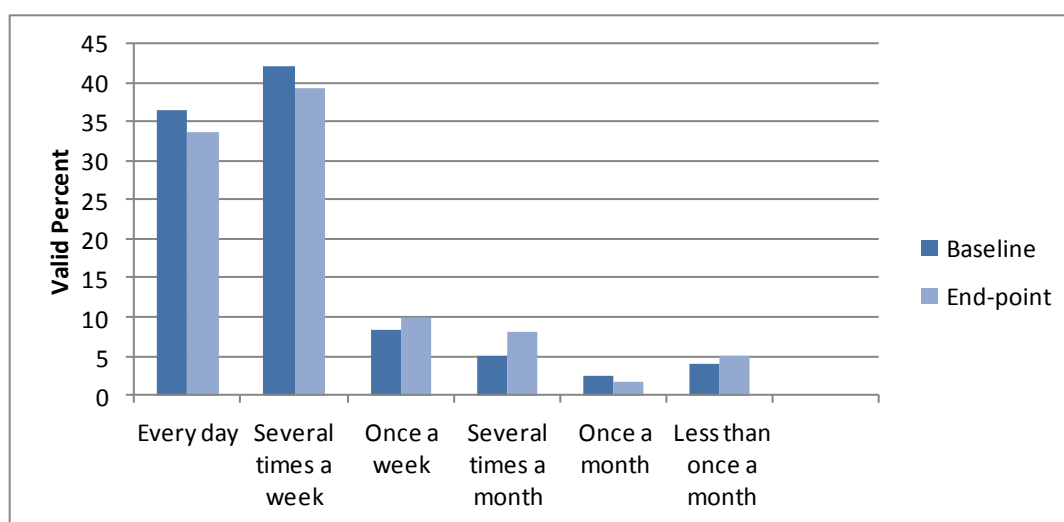
In Ireland, questionnaires were administered across two years of Project FUTSAL – 2012/13 and 2013/14. In 2012/13, the overall baseline sample was n=195 and the end point sample was n=87. Owing to initial issues in the administration of the survey, the directly matched group for this year was n=63. The 2013/14 baseline sample was n=158 while the matched end point sample was n=59. In Wales matched data was collected for one cohort group across the five hubs in 2013/2014. The baseline sample was n=38 with matched sample at end point n=20.

4.3 Longitudinal findings: Ireland

4.3.1 Social and community participation

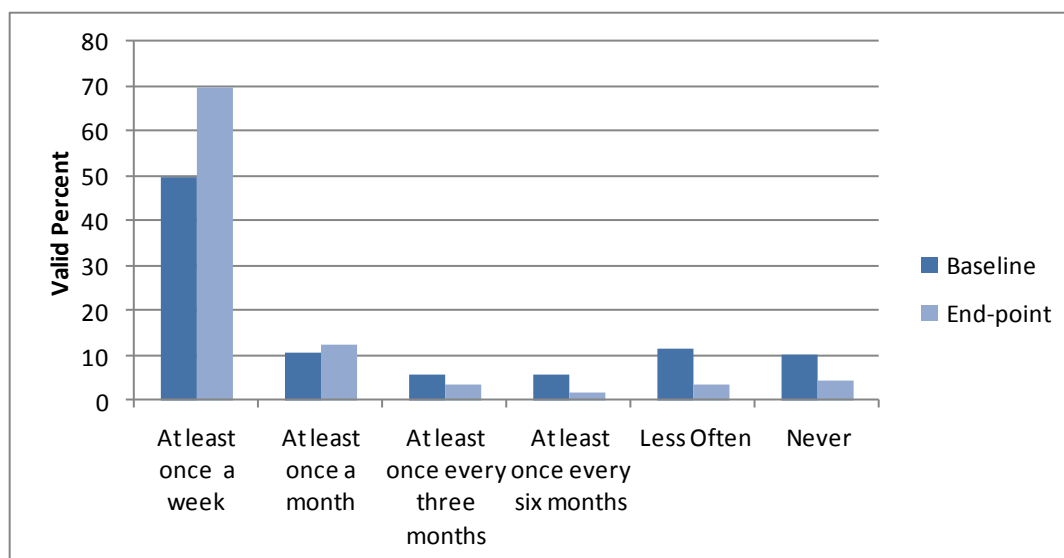
The data collected shows a drop in the frequency of sociable activity between baseline and end point, from 78.5% to 72.9% stating they 'meet socially' with friends, relatives or work colleagues several times a week or more. This may be because participation in the programme has led to their having less time to socialise. There was a gender difference in these findings. The change for male participants was from 79% at baseline (n=87) to 71.5% at end point. For female participants, however, there was an increase from 64% at baseline (n=17) to 73.5% at end point. (Because of some missing data, resulting in different numbers at baseline and end point for responses to some items, n values for males and females are included in this section. If n is not given separately for the end point it can be taken that it is the same as at baseline.)

Figure 4.1: Meeting Socially With Friends/ Relatives/ Work Colleagues



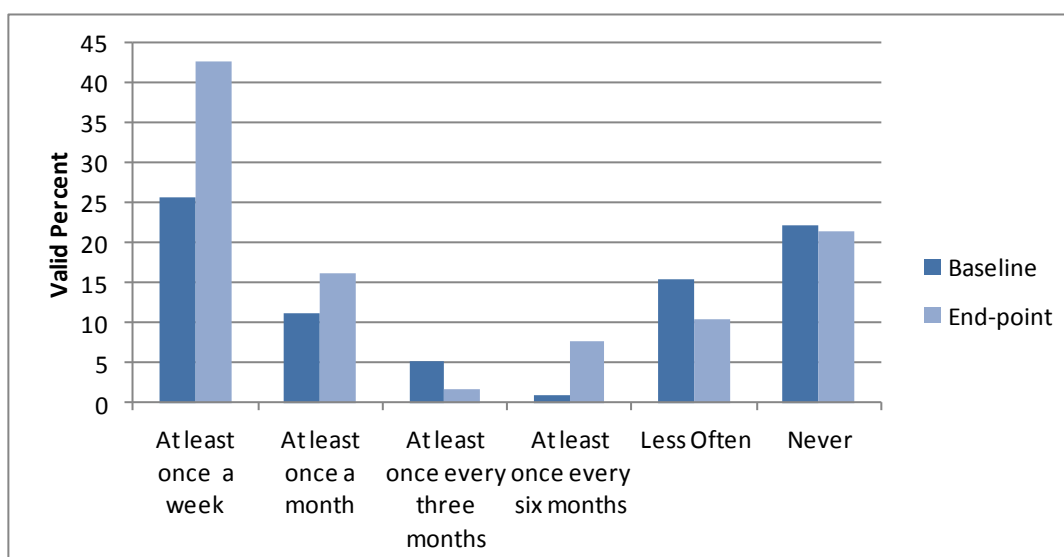
More strikingly, levels of community participation and voluntary activity have increased across the groups from both years. 49.6% reported helping with or attending activities organised in their local area at least once a week prior to participation, which rose to 69.7% at the end point (see Figure 4.2). In relation to gender comparison, at baseline male respondents (n=87, 54%) were more likely to participate in local activities at least once a week than female respondents (n=17, 35%). However, rates were similar for both groups at end point, with males increasing to 69% and females to 65%, consistent with the overall trend reported.

Figure 4.2: Helping with/attending activities organised in your local area at least once a week



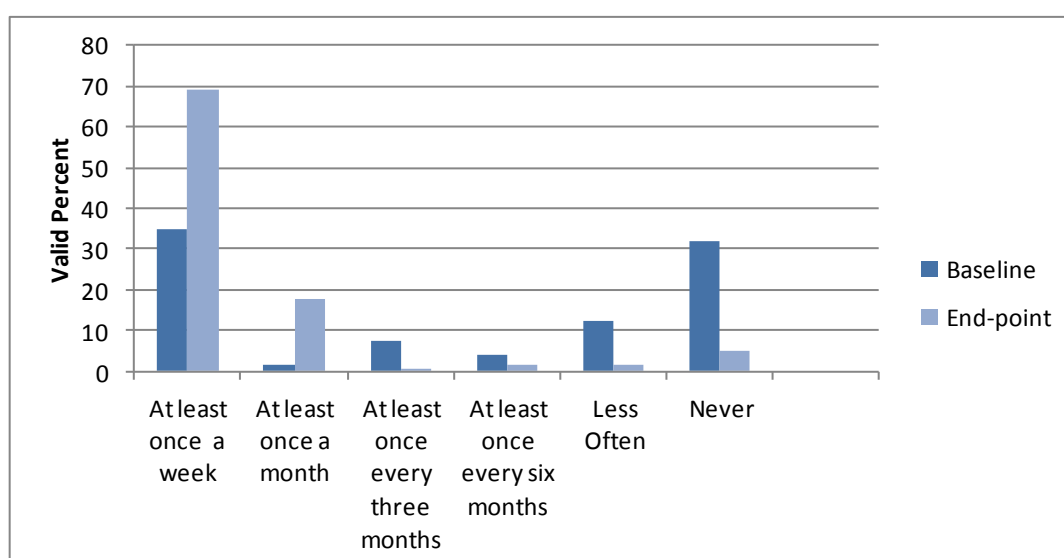
The number of participants actively providing help for other people at least once a week (excluding work, family or volunteering) within the last twelve months also increased significantly. 25.6% of participants reported providing help at least once a week at baseline, increasing to 42.7% at end point (see Figure 4.3). The figure for males actively providing help at least once a week was 24% at baseline (n=84) compared with 41% for females (n=17); however, at end point, both males (n=86) and females (n=16) were at the same level, 44%.

Figure 4.3: Actively Providing Help for Other People



Equally, participants showed an increase in engagement in work for voluntary/charitable organisations. In the baseline survey, 34.7% of participants indicated that they participated in work for voluntary or charitable organisations at least once a week, while at follow-up this figure had increased to 68.9% (see Figure 4.4). For males participating in work for voluntary or charitable organisations at least once a week, the figure increased from a baseline figure (n=87) of 40% to an end point (n=86) figure of 63%; while female respondents showed an increase from a baseline (n=17) of 29% to an end point (n=16) figure of 75%.

Figure 4.4: Participation in work for voluntary/charitable organisations



While these increases can, in part, be explained by participants' work experience as part of Project FUTSAL, through which they engaged in voluntary coaching with local clubs and primary schools, participants indicated a sustained involvement in these activities. When asked to specify the nature of these voluntary activities, participants indicated that this was primarily coaching with a significant number indicating various, and in many cases multiple, forms of involvement with local underage teams and schools. Equally, in group interviews with participants many stated that they had committed to a continued engagement in these activities beyond the time frame of the programme itself.

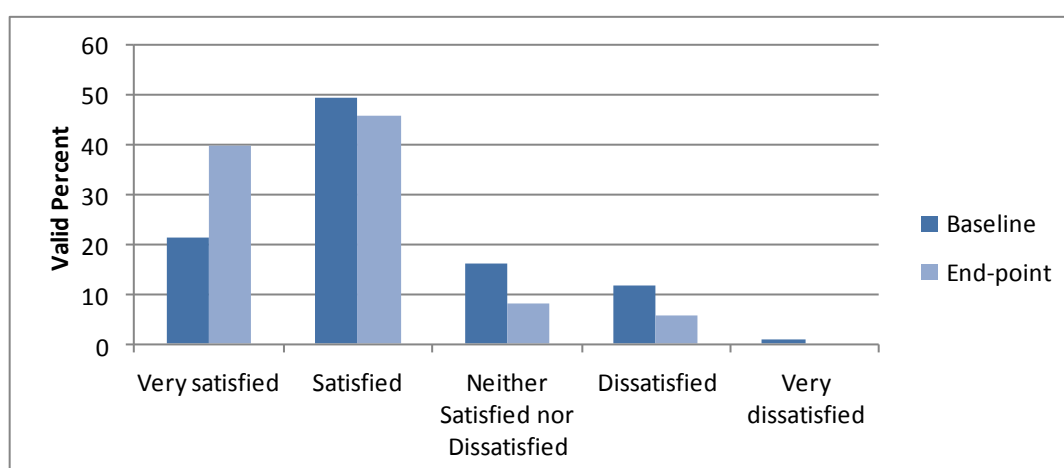
These findings indicate a positive outcome for Project FUTSAL in relation to enhancing community participation and involvement by participants. Equally, the level of this engagement indicates the direct use and application of skills gained through the programme in local communities. This engagement has significant potential benefits for local clubs and schools in terms of the numbers of volunteers, particularly those with relevant skills, working in their communities and for children and young people participating in sports.

4.3.2 Health and fitness

A number of measures were used to assess participants' general health and fitness, including their rating of their satisfaction with their general health, the perception of their energy levels, and their engagement in fitness activities. A significant element of Project FUTSAL was dedicated to improving participants' understanding of issues relating to health and fitness both through the coaching skills and educational components of the programme. FAI development officers also informally indicated that they were keen to improve the overall fitness of participants on the programme.

The overall sample report relatively high levels of satisfaction with their general health at baseline, with 71% stating that they were 'satisfied' (49.6%) or 'very satisfied' (21.4%). At end point this cumulative figure increased to 85.8% and in particular the number reporting themselves as 'very satisfied' with their general health rose from 21.4% to 40% (see Figure 4. 5).

Figure 4.5: Levels of Satisfaction with General Health

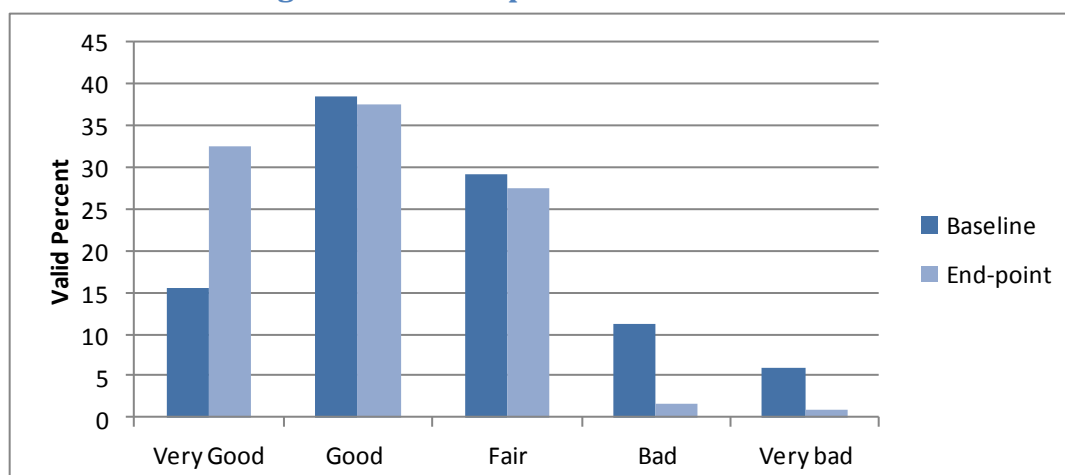


In relation to gender, at baseline 23.5% of male respondents (n=86) reported being 'very satisfied' with their general health, with 43.5% indicating 'satisfaction'; while at end point (n=86) 46.5% of male respondents reported being 'very satisfied' with their general health, with 37% stating they were 'satisfied'. In comparison, female respondents reported slightly higher levels of satisfaction at baseline (n=17), with 18% indicating they were 'very satisfied' and 70% stating they were 'satisfied'; while at end point (n=17) 29% reported being 'very satisfied' with 59% indicating they were 'satisfied'.

Participants also reported improvements in their fitness levels between baseline and end point. Those describing their fitness levels as 'very good' increased from 15.4% of participants to 32.5%, while conversely those describing their fitness levels as 'bad'/'very bad' decreased from 17.1% to 2.5% (see Figure 4.6).

Male participants had a slightly higher level of positive self-reporting on fitness levels. At baseline (n=85) 17.5% of males characterised their fitness levels as 'very good', while at end point (n=86) this increased to 37%. For female respondents the baseline (n=17) figure for 'very good' was 6% with an end point (n=17) increase to 17.5%. While males were more positive overall in relation to their fitness levels, none of the female respondents at end point described their fitness levels as either 'bad' or 'very bad'.

Figure 4.6: Description of Fitness Levels

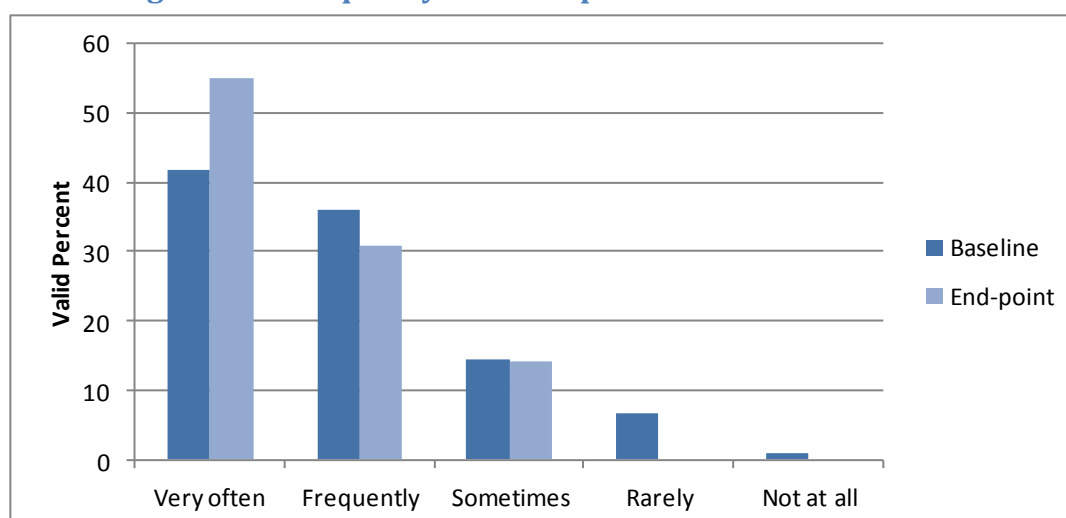


At baseline 77.8% reported participating in fitness activities either 'frequently' or 'very often', while at follow up this increased to 85.8%. More specifically, those reporting

participating in fitness activities ‘very often’ increased from 41.9% to 55% (see Figure 4.7).

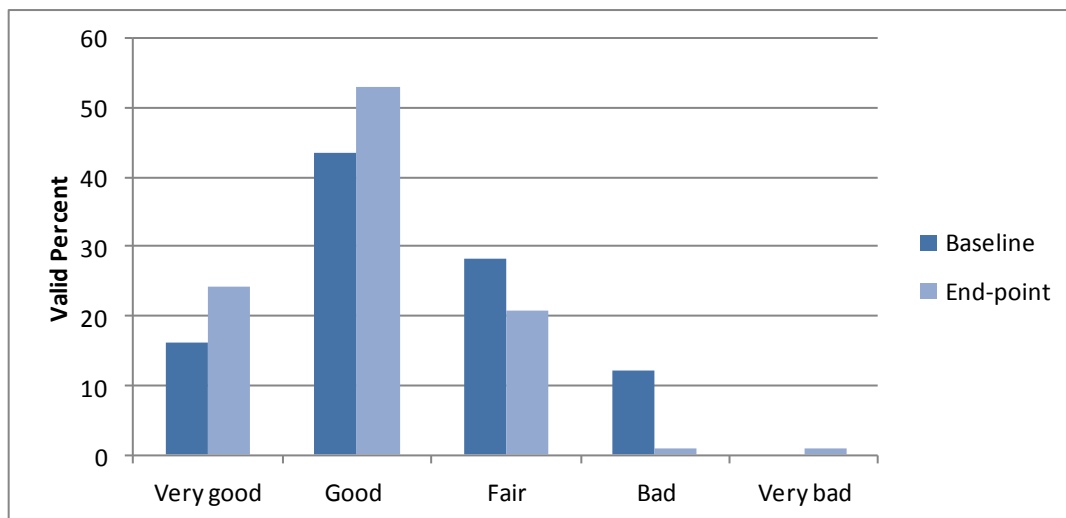
Broken down by gender, the level of male respondents reporting participation in fitness activities either ‘frequently’ or ‘very often’ increased from a baseline (n=85) figure of 76.5% to 85% at endpoint (n=85), while for female respondents the very high baseline level of 94% remained unchanged at end point. In relation to the ‘very often’ category males reported an increase from 43.5% at baseline to 52% at end point; while female responses showed an end point (n=17) figure of 76%, compared with a baseline (n=17) figure of 47%.

Figure 4.7: Frequency of Participation in Fitness Activities



Participants also described improved energy levels between baseline and end point. Those describing their energy levels as either ‘good’ or ‘very good’ increased from 58.9% to 77.3% (see Figure 8). At baseline (n=85) 55% of male respondents characterised their energy levels as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ compared to an end point (n=82) figure of 77%. For females the equivalent baseline (n=17) figure was 76.5% with an increase to 81% at end point (n=16).

Figure 4.8: Description of Energy Levels



In summary, these findings indicate overall improvement in participants' satisfaction with their general health, fitness levels, engagement in fitness activities and energy levels. While improvements in physical fitness and general health were not among the express intended outcomes of Project FUTSAL, the figures indicate an increased level of physical activity and improved energy levels that represent significant individual benefits for participants.

4.3.3 Optimism and wellbeing

Participants were asked to respond to a series of statements on various aspects of their optimism and wellbeing, adapted from the European Social Survey⁴ (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Optimism and Wellbeing Statements

I'm always optimistic about my future
In general I feel very positive about myself
At times I feel as if I am a failure
On the whole, my life is close to how I would like it to be
I feel I am free to decide for myself how to live my life

⁴European Social Survey:

http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round6/fieldwork/source/ESS6_source_main_questionnaire.pdf

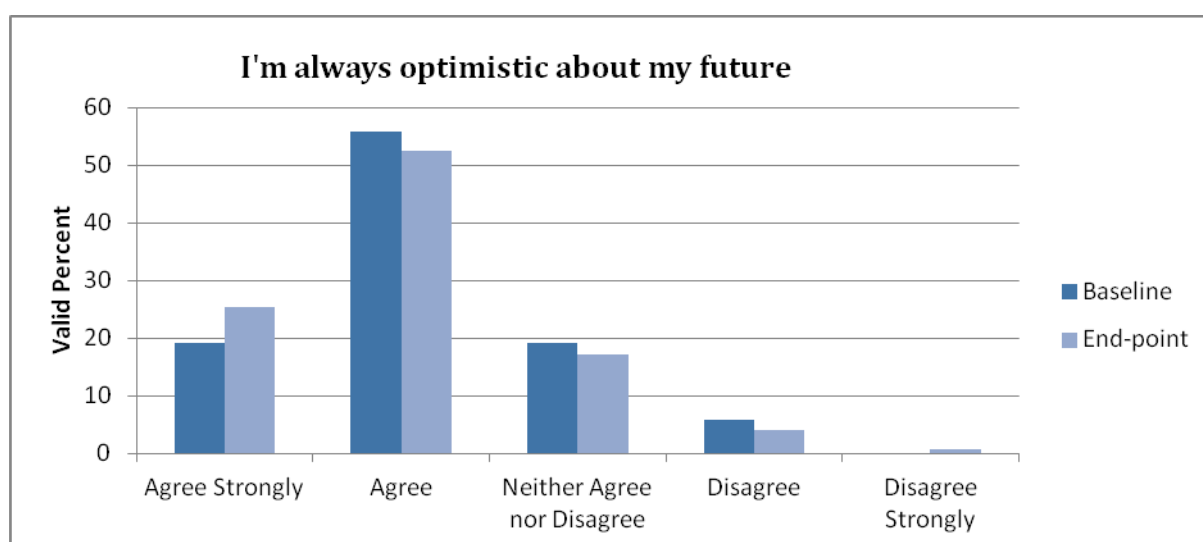
In my daily life, I seldom have time to do the things I really enjoy
In my general life, I get very little chance to show how capable I am
I love learning new things
Most days I feel a sense of achievement from what I do
I like planning and preparing for the future
When things go wrong in my life, it takes me a long time to get back to normal
My life involves a lot of physical activity

Paired samples t-tests were conducted to evaluate the statistical significance of changes in participants' responses to these items. In addition, t-tests were run to assess whether there were significant gender differences in responses.

4.3.3.1 I'm always optimistic about my future

In response to the statement 'I'm always optimistic about my future', 75% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, increasing to 77.9% at end point. In addition, while 5.8% disagreed or disagreed strongly at baseline, this figure decreased to 4.9% at end point, indicating improved levels of optimism among participants (see Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9: I'm always optimistic about my future



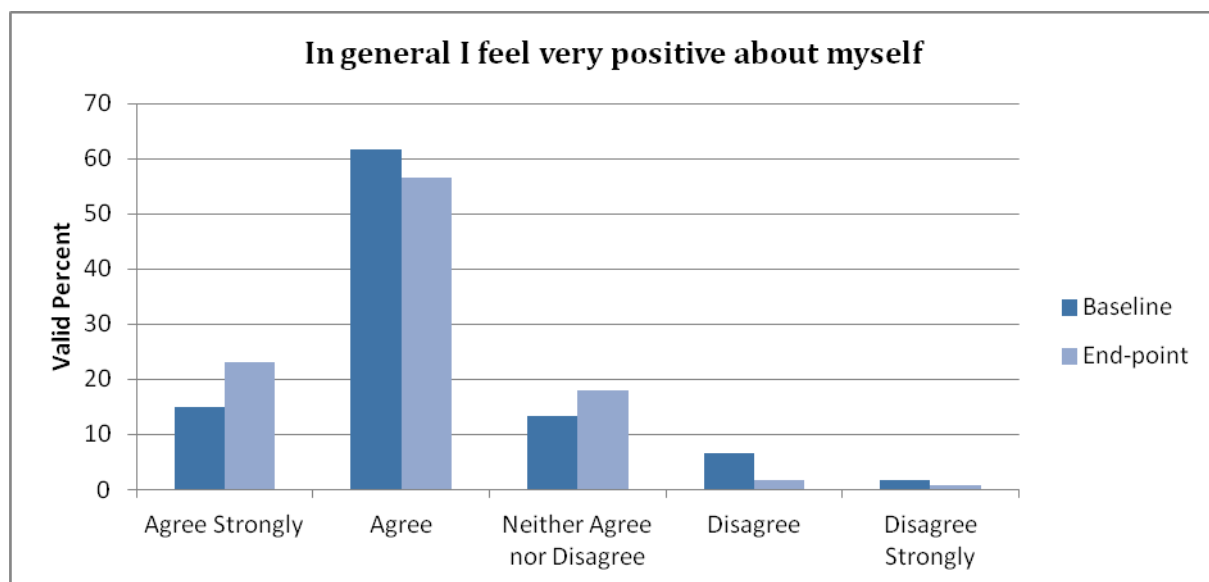
Further, a paired samples t-test showed an overall positive change in responses to the statement between baseline (mean=2.12, SD=0.78) and end point (mean 2.01, SD=

0.80). This change in mean scores, however, was not significant ($t(119) = 1.38, p > .05$). Looking at gender, there was no significant difference at baseline between responses for males (mean=2.09, SD=0.93) and females (mean=2.36, SD=0.87; $t(248) = -1.8, p = 0.7$ (two tailed)). At end point, however, there was a significant difference in responses, with males (mean=1.86, SD=0.73) responding more positively than females (mean=2.29, SD=0.96; $t(103) = -2.1, p = 0.4$ (two tailed)).

4.3.3.2 In general, I feel very positive about myself

In response to the statement 'In general, I feel very positive about myself', 76.7% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, increasing to 79.6% at end point. In addition, while 8.4% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement at baseline, this figure decreased to 2.4% at end point, indicating improved self-perception among participants (see Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10: In general, I feel very positive about myself



A paired samples t-test showed an overall positive change in responses to the statement 'In general I feel very positive about myself' between baseline (mean 2.23, SD=0.96) and end point (mean 2.01, SD=0.74). This change in mean scores was found to be statistically significant ($t(119) = 2.47, p > .05$). At baseline, there was a significant gender difference in responses to this item, with males (mean=2.09, SD=0.85) responding more positively than females (mean=2.36, SD=0.87; $t(247) = -1.98, p = 0.05$ (two tailed)). At

end point, however, there was no significant difference (mean for males=1.93, SD=0.71; (mean for females =2.29, SD=0.92); $t(103) = -1.84$, $p=0.07$ (two tailed)).

4.3.3.3 At times I feel as if I am a failure

In response to the statement 'At times I feel as if I am a failure', 20.2% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, decreasing to 10.7% at end point. In addition, while 57.1% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement at baseline, this figure increased to 60.6% at end point.

Figure 4.11: At times I feel as if I am a failure

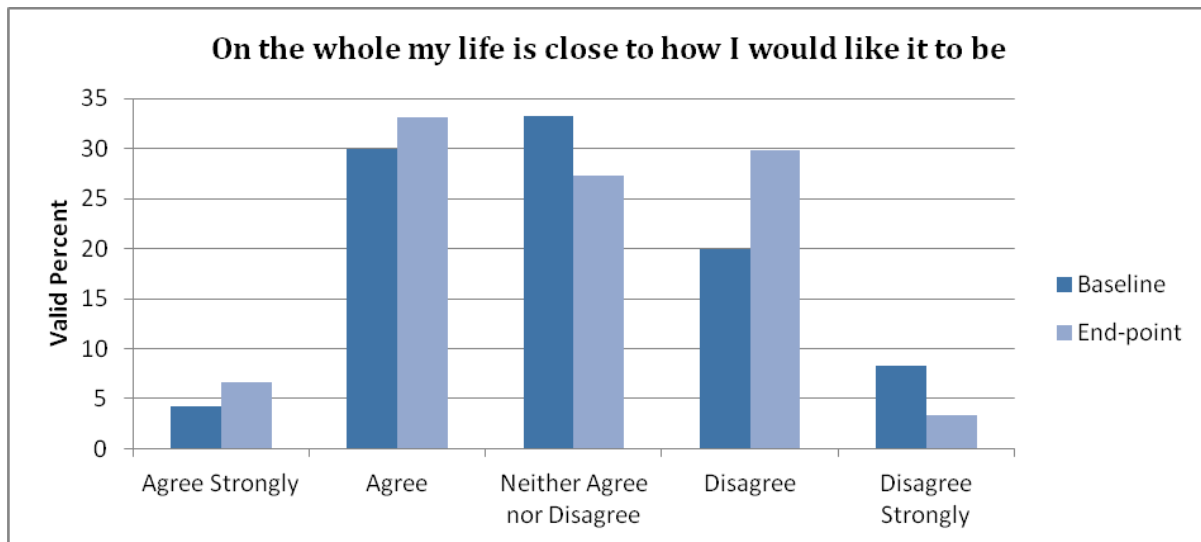


A paired samples t-test showed an overall positive change in responses to the statement 'At times I feel as if I am a failure' between baseline (mean=3.60, SD=1.14) and end point (mean 3.66, SD=0.99). This change in mean scores, however, was not significant ($t(118) = .54$, $p>.05$). There was no significant gender difference at baseline or end point.

4.3.3.4 On the whole my life is close to how I would like it to be

In response to the statement 'On the whole my life is close to how I would like it to be', 34.2% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, increasing to 39.7% at end point. In addition, while 28.3% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement at baseline, this figure increased to 33.1% at end point, indicating improved scores for participants over time (see Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12: On the whole, my life is close to how I would like it to be

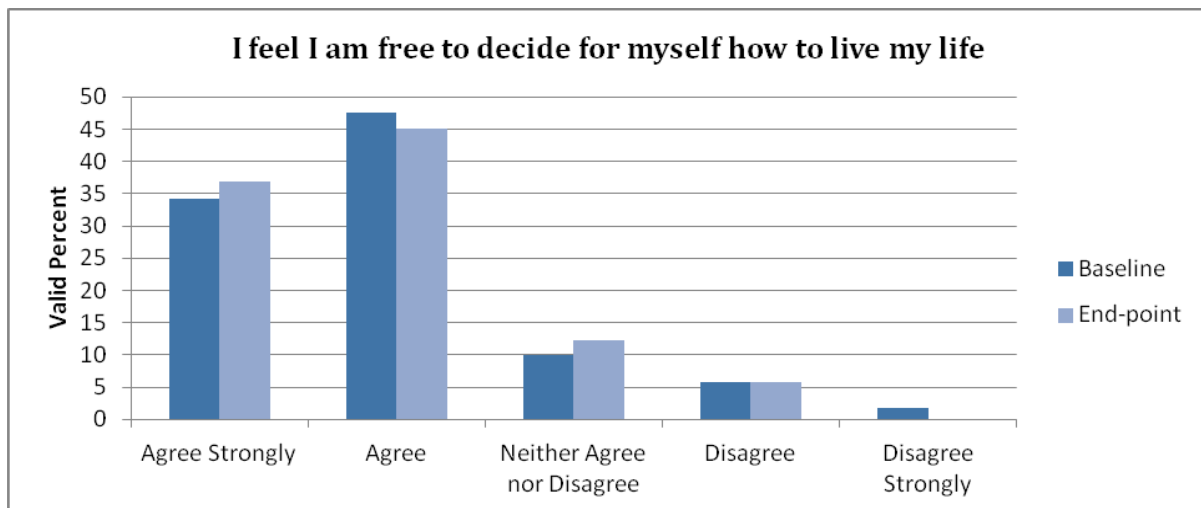


A paired samples t-test showed that the change between baseline (mean=3.18, SD=1.17) and end point (mean 2.90, SD=1.01) was not statistically significant ($t(118) = 1.88$, $p > .05$). In terms of gender there was no statistical difference at baseline. At end point, however, there was a significant difference with males responding less positively than females (mean for males=2.93, SD=0.99; mean for females=2.31, SD=0.79; $t(102) = 2.36$, $p = 0.02$ (two tailed)).

4.3.3.5 I feel I am free to decide for myself how to live my life

In response to the statement 'I feel I am free to decide for myself how to live my life', 81.7% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, and the figure was almost exactly the same (82%) at end point. While 7.5% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement at baseline, this figure decreased to 5.7% at end point, indicating a small improvement for participants (see Figure 4.13).

Figure 4.13: I feel I am free to decide for myself how to live my life

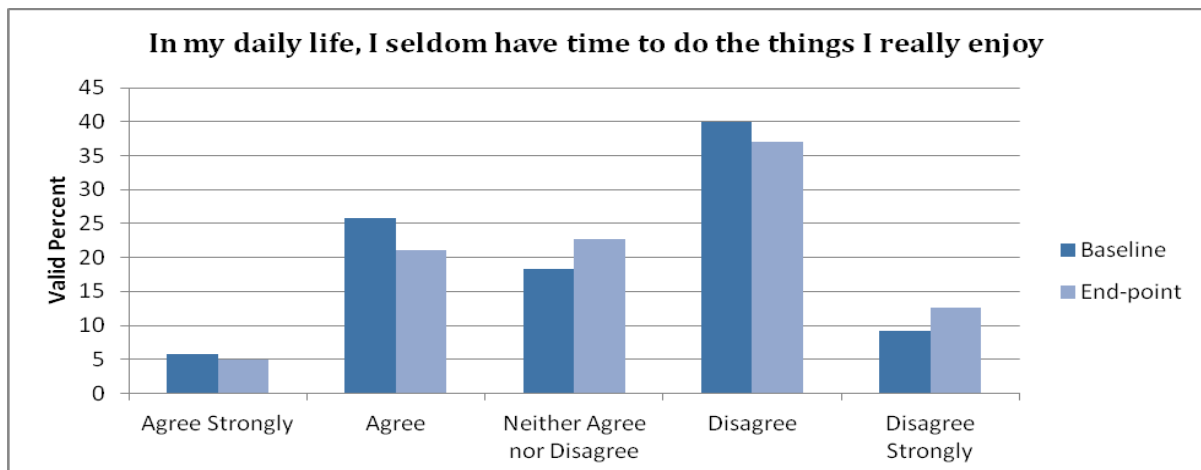


Paired samples t-tests showed that the change in mean scores between baseline and endpoint was not statistically significant and that there were no significant gender differences.

4.3.3.6 In my daily life, I seldom have time to do the things I really enjoy

In response to the statement 'In my daily life, I seldom have time to do things I really enjoy', 31.6% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, decreasing to 26% at end point. In addition, while 49.2% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement at baseline, this figure increased to 49.6% at end point, indicating a positive change over time (see Figure 4.14).

Figure 4.14: In my daily life, I seldom have time to do the things I really enjoy

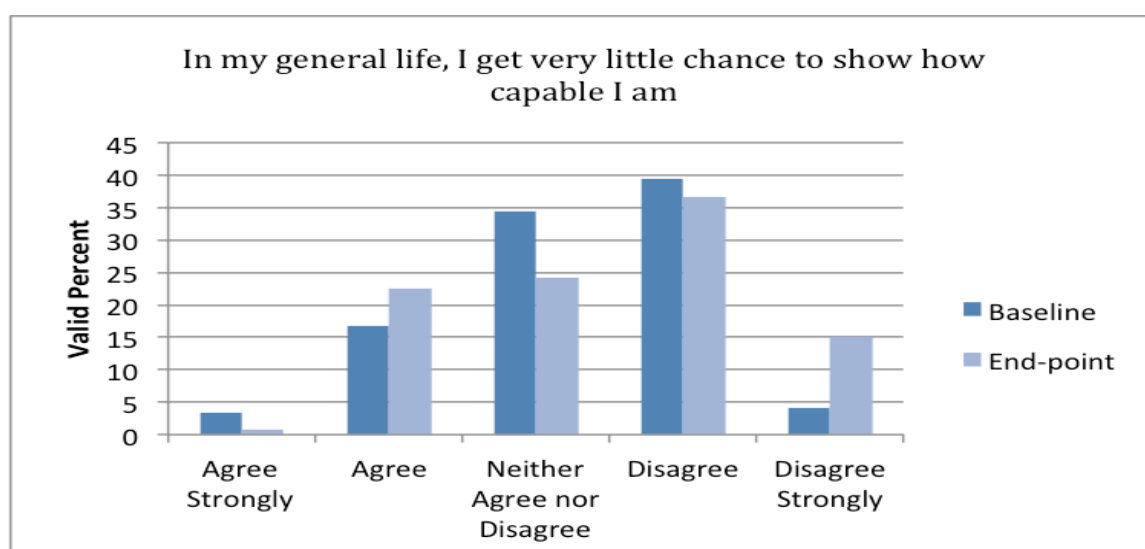


Paired samples t-tests showed that the change in mean scores between baseline and endpoint was not statistically significant and that there were no significant gender differences.

4.3.3.7 In my general life, I get very little chance to show how capable I am

In response to the statement 'In my general life, I get very little chance to show how capable I am', 20.2% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, and interestingly increased slightly to 23.3% at end point. In contrast, while 43.7% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement at baseline, this figure increased to 51.7% at end point (see Figure 4.15).

Figure 4.15: In my general life, I get very little chance to show how capable I am

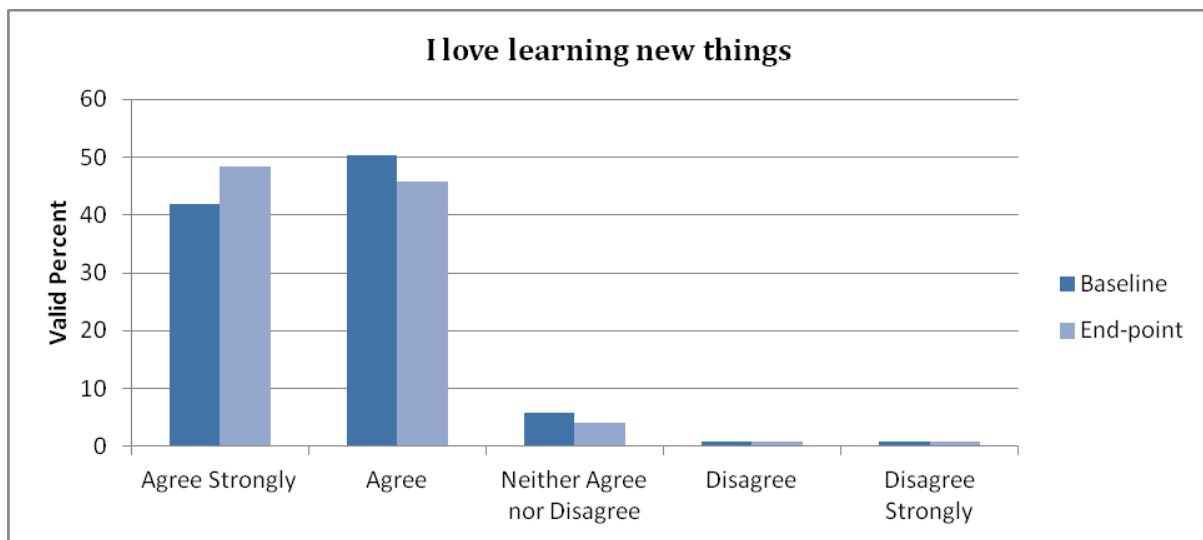


Paired samples t-tests showed that the change in mean scores between baseline and endpoint was not statistically significant and that there were no significant gender differences.

4.3.3.8 I love learning new things

In response to the statement 'I love learning new things', 92.4% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, increasing slightly to 94.1% at end point. In addition, while 0.8% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement at baseline, this figure decreased to 0% at end point (see Figure 4.16).

Figure 4.16: I love learning new things

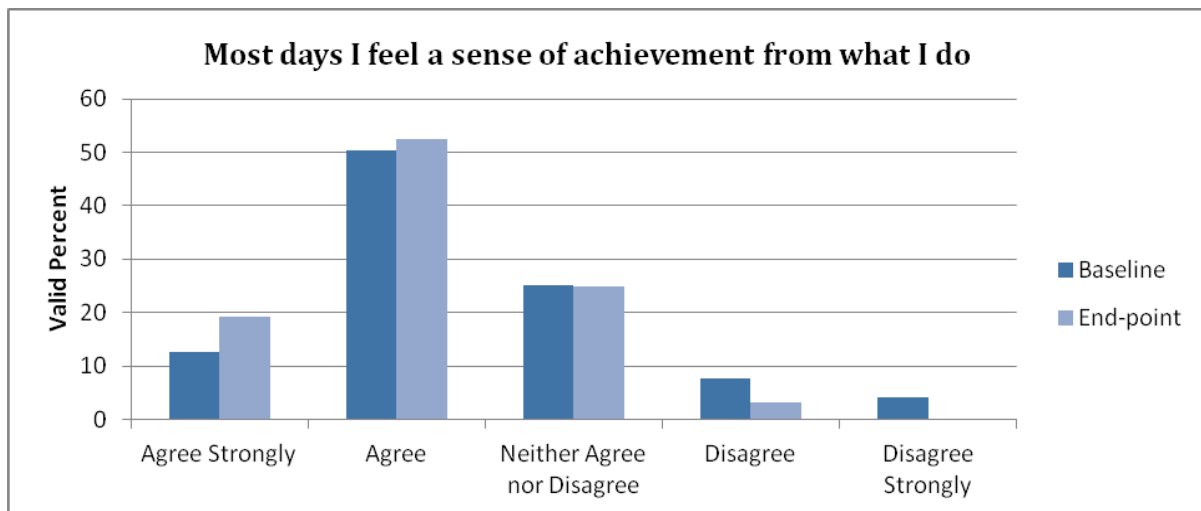


However, a paired samples t-test showed an overall negative change in responses to the statement 'I love learning new things' between baseline (mean=1.69, SD=0.75) and end point (mean 1.76, SD=2.01), although the change was not statistically significant ($t(117) = -.4, p>.05$). Broken down by gender, there was no significance at baseline, but at end point males were significantly more likely to respond positively than females (mean for males=1.48, SD=0.57; mean for females=2.88, SD=4.97; $t(102) = -2.6, p=0.01$ (two tailed)).

4.4.4.9 Most days I feel a sense of achievement from what I do

In response to the statement 'Most days I feel a sense of achievement from what I do', 63% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, increasing to 72.1% at end point. In addition, while 11.8% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement at baseline, this figure decreased to 3.3% at end point, indicating an improvement for participants over time (see Figure 4.17).

Figure 4.17: Most days I feel a sense of achievement from what I do

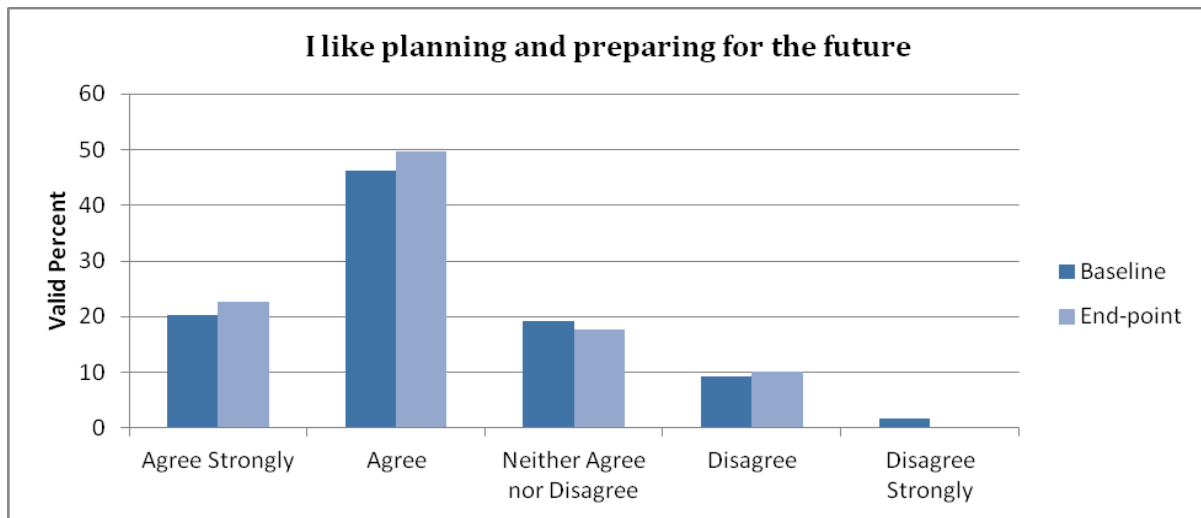


A paired samples t-test showed the change in mean scores between baseline and end point to be statistically significant (mean at baseline=2.41, SD=0.95; mean at end point 2.13, SD=0.76; $t(117) = 3.00$, $p < .05$). There was no significant difference between males and female responses at either baseline or end point.

4.3.3.10 I like planning and preparing for the future

In response to the statement 'I like planning and preparing for the future', 66.4% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, increasing to 72.3% at end point. In addition, while 10.9% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement at baseline, this figure decreased to 10.1% at end point, indicating a small positive change (see Figure 4.18).

Figure 4.18: I like planning and preparing for the future

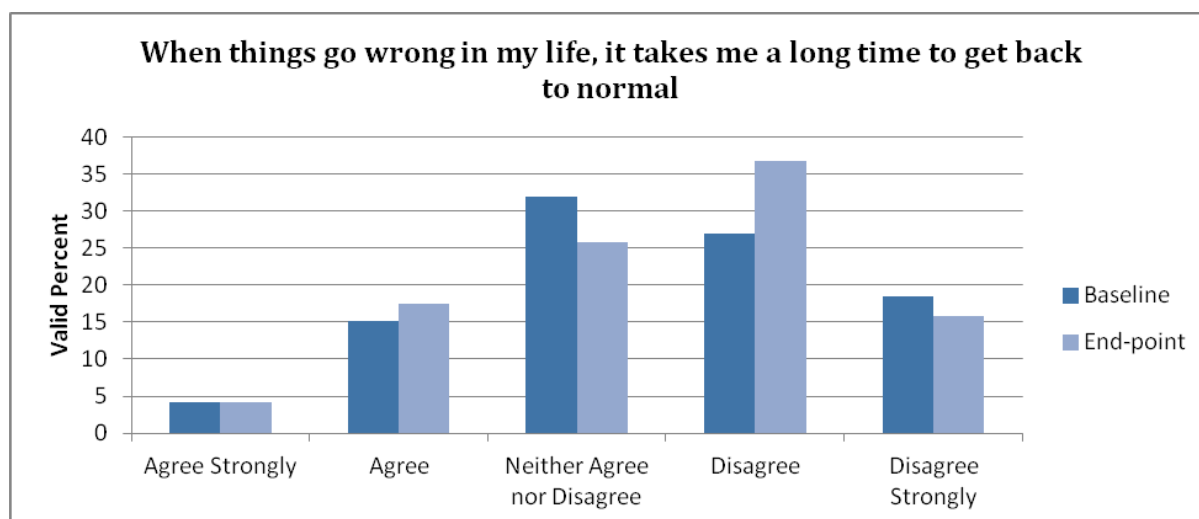


A paired samples t-test showed the change in mean scores between baseline and end point to be statistically significant (mean at baseline=2.38, SD=1.16; mean at end point=2.13, SD=0.89 $t(116) = 2.19$, $p < .05$). There was no significant difference between males and female responses at either baseline or end point.

4.3.3.11 When things go wrong in my life, it takes me a long time to get back to normal

In response to the statement 'When things go wrong in my life, it takes me a long time to get back to normal', 19.3% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, increasing slightly to 21.7% at end point. In contrast, while 45.4% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement at baseline, this figure increased to 52.5% at end point (see Figure 4.19).

Figure 4.19: When things go wrong in my life, it takes me a long time to get back to normal

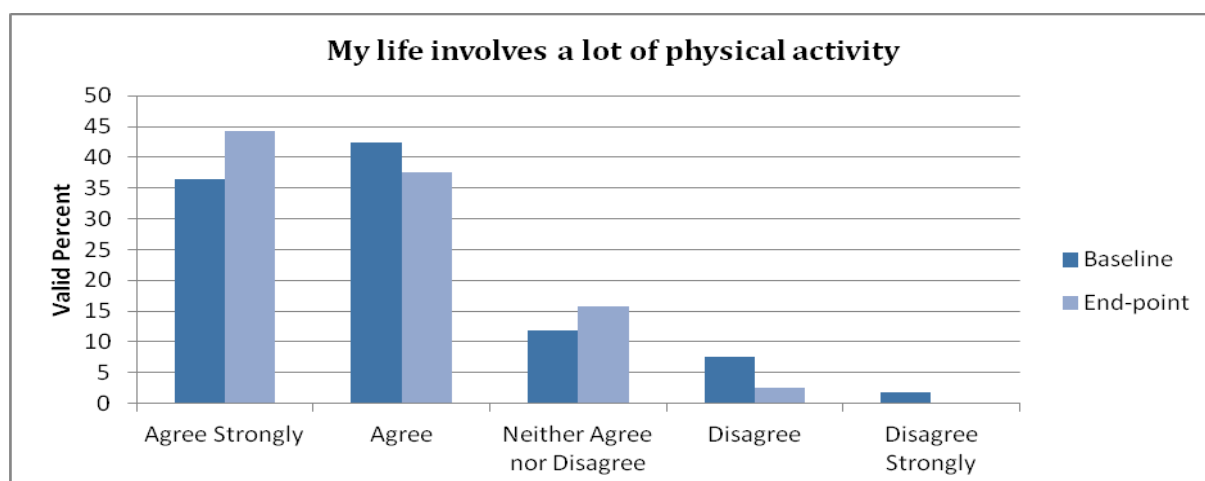


A paired samples t-test showed that the minor negative change in responses to this item was not statistically significant. Furthermore, there were no significant gender differences.

4.3.3.12 My life involves a lot of physical activity

In response to the statement 'My life involves a lot of physical activity', 78.8% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly at baseline, increasing slightly to 81.7% at end point. In addition, while 9.3% disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement at baseline, this figure decreased to 2.5% at end point, indicating a small improvement in scores for participants over time (see Figure 4.20).

Figure 4.20: My life involves a lot of physical activity



Paired samples t-tests showed that the change in mean scores between baseline and endpoint was not statistically significant and that there were no significant gender differences.

Table 4.2: Changes Reported in Wellbeing Statements

Statement	Change	Statistical Significance	Gender Baseline	Gender End point
I'm always optimistic about my future	Positive	Not significant	No difference	Males more positive
In general, I feel very positive about myself	Positive	Significant	Males more positive	No difference
At times I feel as if I am a failure	Positive	Not significant	No difference	No difference
On the whole, my life is close to how I would like it to be	Positive	Not significant	No difference	Females more positive
I feel I am free to decide for myself how to live my life	Positive	Not significant	No difference	No difference
In my daily life, I seldom have time to do the things I really enjoy	Positive	Not significant	No difference	No difference
In my daily life I get very little chance to show how capable I am	Positive	Not significant	No difference	No difference
I love learning new things	Negative	Not significant	No difference	Males more positive
Most days I feel a sense of achievement from what I do	Positive	Significant	No difference	No difference
I like planning and preparing for the future	Positive	Significant	No difference	No difference
When things go wrong in my life, it generally takes me a long time to get back to normal	Negative	Not significant	No difference	No difference
My life involves a lot of physical activity	Positive	Not significant	No difference	No difference

In summary, ten positive changes were reported, three of which were statistically significant. These findings point to improved outcomes and progress for Project FUTSAL participants, particularly in the context of subjective outlook and agency, with participants more likely to feel 'very positive about themselves', with a 'sense of achievement' and 'planning for the future'. Two negative changes were identified but neither was found to be statistically significant. One significant difference was recorded for gender at baseline, with males more likely to feel 'positive' about themselves, while three differences were recorded at end point: female participants were more likely to

report their lives being ‘closer to how they would like them to be’ and male participants were more likely to feel ‘optimistic about the future’ and to ‘enjoy learning new things’.

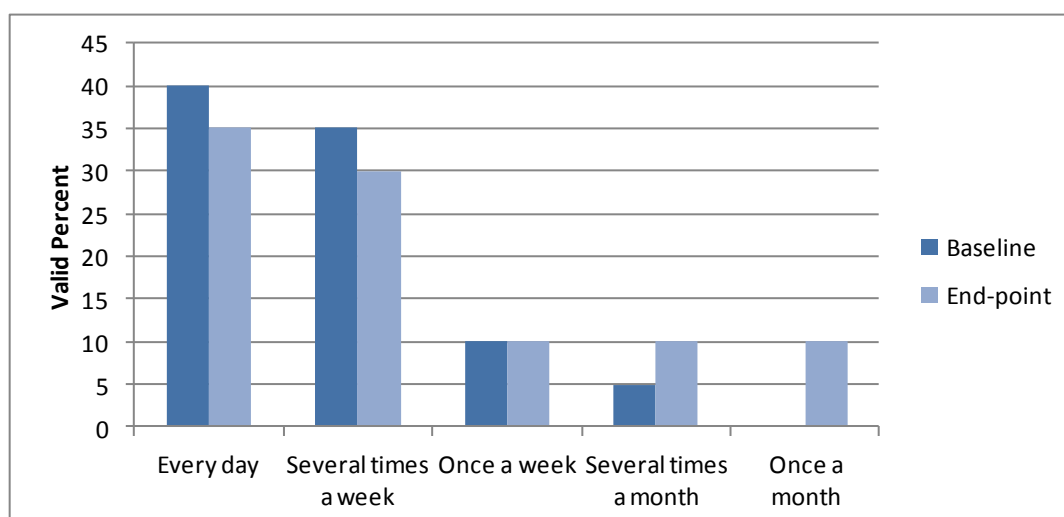
4.4 Longitudinal findings: Wales

The smaller matched cohort for Wales (n=20) reflects the smaller intake of participants across the Welsh Hubs. Furthermore, initial difficulties with the timing of baseline surveys for one cohort meant that accurate comparison with end point data was not possible. The group for which findings are presented here completed the survey in November 2013 and January 2014 at the commencement and conclusion of their participation in the programme (which was considerably shorter than the Irish-based programmes).

4.4.1 Social and community participation

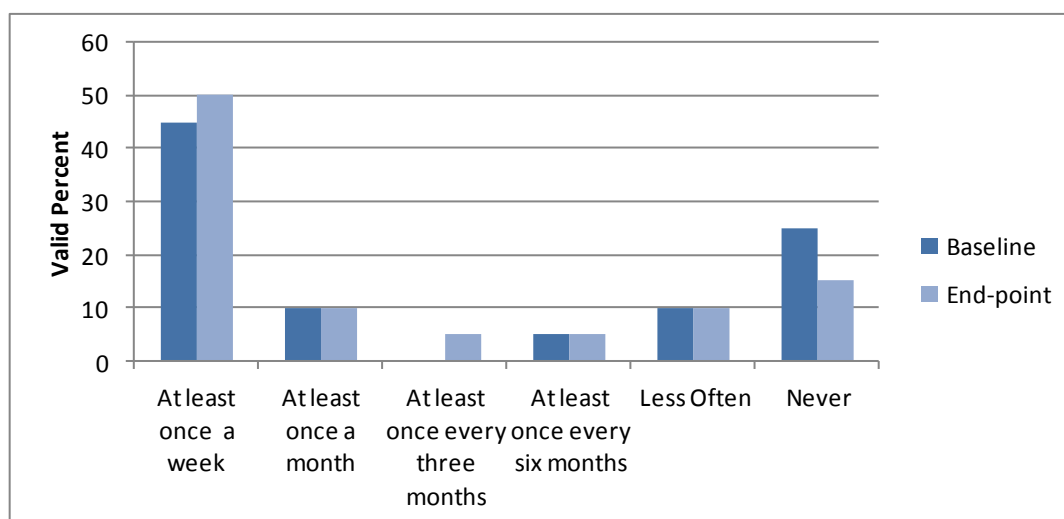
As mentioned previously, the overall baseline data for Wales indicates relatively positive levels of personal and social activity amongst participants. Similar to the Irish participants, the reported levels of meeting socially several times a week or more with friends, relatives or work colleagues decreased between baseline and end point, from 75% to 65%. As noted earlier, this decrease can possibly be due to participants having less available social time during involvement with Project FUTSAL.

Figure 4.21: Meeting Socially With Friends/ Relatives/ Work Colleagues



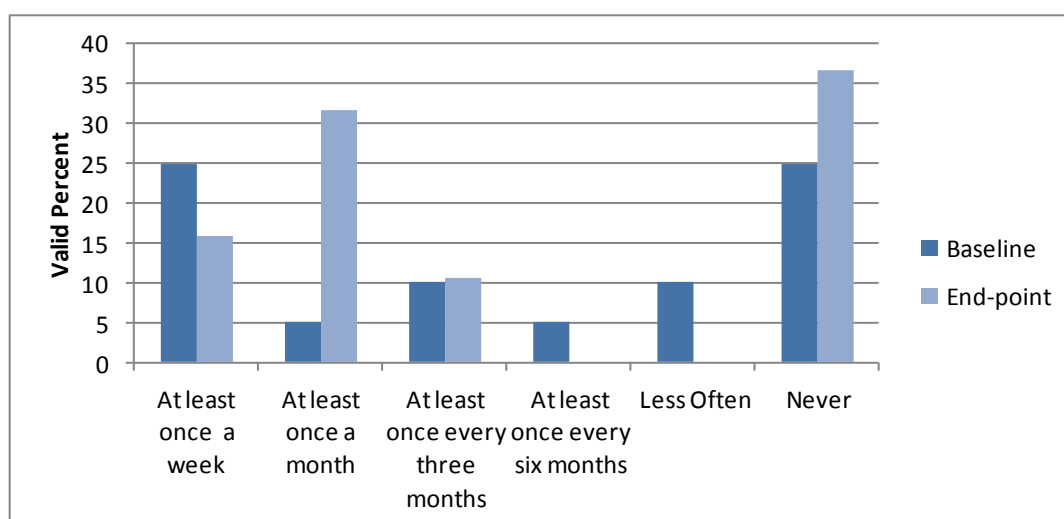
Levels of community participation and voluntary activity showed some small increases among participants in Wales. At baseline, 55% stated that they had helped with or attended activities in their local area at least once a month. This figure increased to 60% at end point (see Figure 4.22).

Figure 4.22: Helping with/Attending Activities Organised in Your Local Area



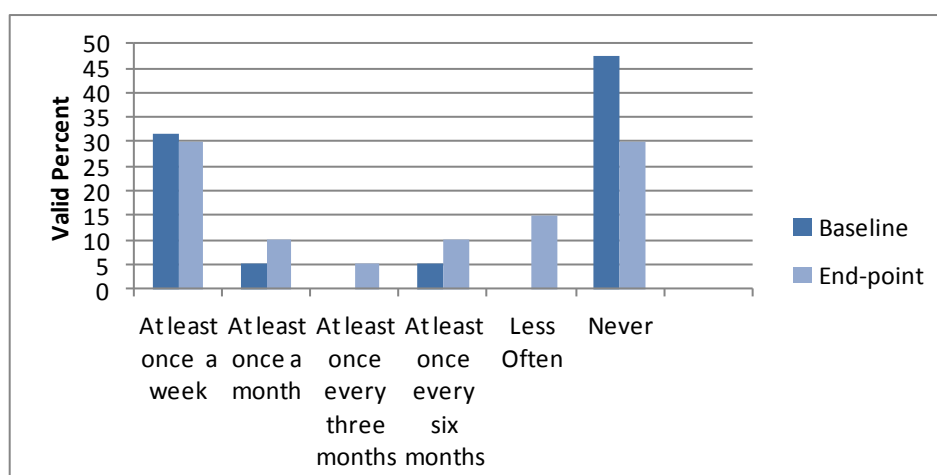
The proportion of participants actively providing help for other people (excluding work, family or volunteering) at least once a month increased substantially from 30% at baseline to 47.4% at end point (see Figure 4.23). Unusually, while 25% reported never actively providing help for other people at baseline, this figure increased to 36.8% at end point.

Figure 4.23: Actively Providing Help for Other People



In the baseline survey, 31.6% of participants indicated that they participated in work for voluntary or charitable organisations at least once a week, while at follow-up this figure decreased marginally to 30% (see Figure 4.24).

Figure 4.24: Participation in Work for Voluntary/Charitable Organisations

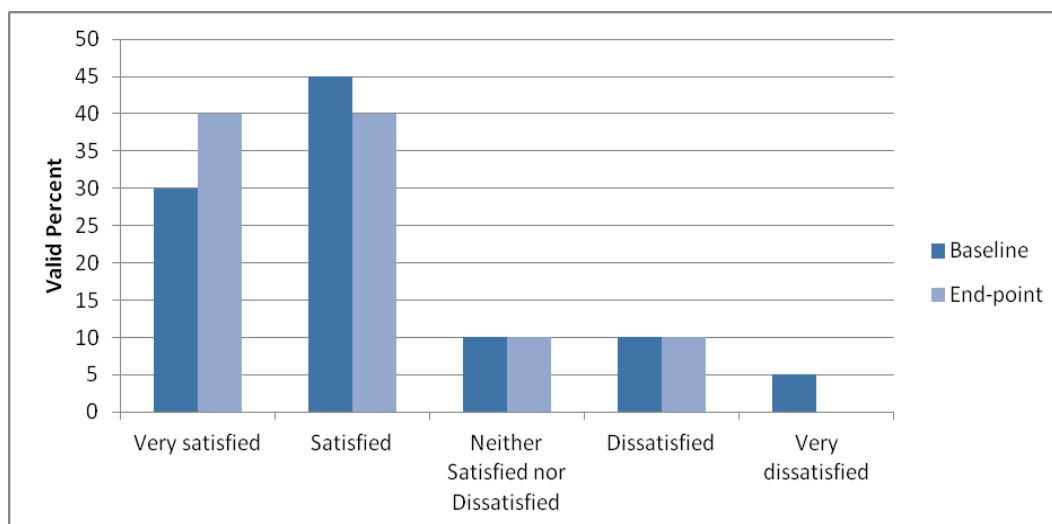


The lack of improvements in relation to some aspects of social and community participation may well relate to the considerably shorter duration of the programme in Wales (3 months), which afforded less time for participants to become involved in community activities in their local areas.

4.4.2 Health and fitness

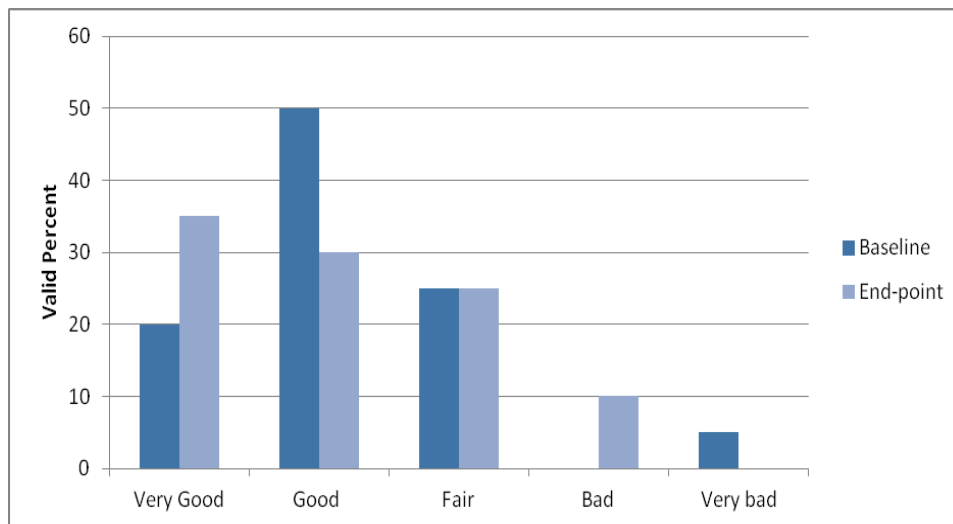
The level of reported improvements in health and fitness was also somewhat less than found in Ireland. In relation to participants' satisfaction with their general health, between baseline and end point those indicating they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' increased from 75% to 80% (see Figure 4.25).

Figure 4.25: Levels of Satisfaction with General Health



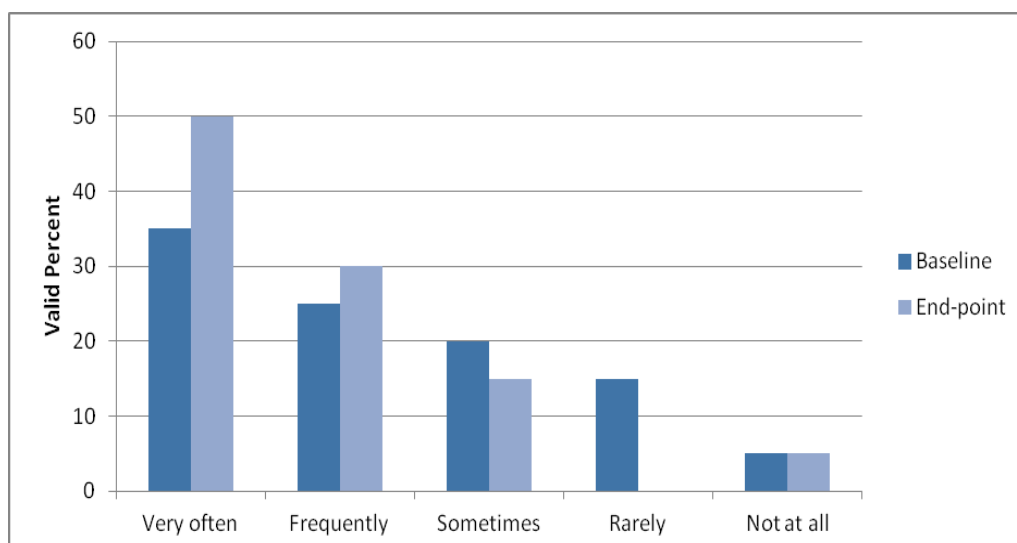
Participants' description of their fitness levels showed little change, with a small decrease in the proportion describing them as 'good'/'very good' from 70% at baseline to 65% at end point. However, more specifically, there was an increase in those describing them as 'very good' from 20% to 35% (see Figure 4.26).

Figure 4.26: Description of Fitness Levels



Overall participation in fitness activities did increase considerably between baseline and end point. At baseline, 60% of participants reported engaging in fitness activities ‘frequently’ or ‘very often’, while at end point this cumulative figure was 80%. In particular, those reporting that they did so ‘very often’ increased from 35% to 50% (see Figure 4.27). Those reporting exercising four times a week or more remained unchanged between baseline and end point (45%).

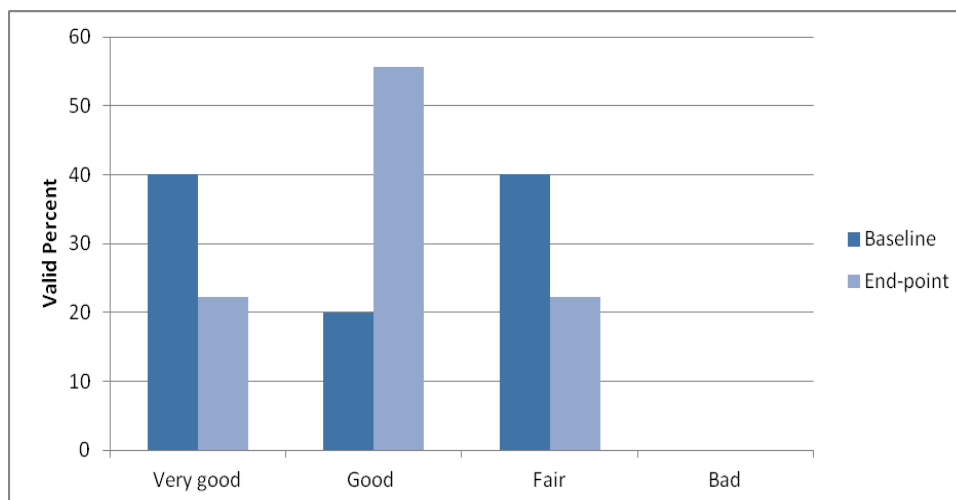
Figure 4.27: Frequency of Participation in Fitness Activities



The proportion of participants describing their energy levels as ‘good’/‘very good’ increased from 60% to 70% between baseline and end point. However, the numbers

stating their energy levels were very good decreased from 40% to 20%, while those reporting them as 'good' increased from 20% to 50% (see Figure 4.28).

Figure 4.28: Description of Energy Levels 2012/13



As already stated, while the Welsh sample shows less positive outcomes in relation to social/community participation and health and fitness when compared with the Irish groups, this may, in large part, be explained by the shorter time frame of the programme in Wales. It should also be repeated that some baseline findings for the Welsh participants, particularly in relation to health and fitness, were relatively high.

4.5 Volunteering

Project FUTSAL aimed to provide education and work opportunities for young people in disadvantaged areas and to influence and assist community regeneration via employment and volunteerism in the field of sport. As discussed in the previous chapter, the social value of volunteering has been widely acknowledged in the literature. Volunteering has played a key role in the delivery of Project FUTSAL across Ireland and Wales, contributing to community development as well as having individual benefits for participants.

4.5.1 Ireland

Data on hours committed to volunteering activity across the hubs was collected centrally by the FAI. Table 4.3 below presents volunteering data from all seven Irish hubs for 2013/2013. The data includes the cumulative number of hours for each hub, while also provided information on the number of participants.

Table 4.3 Project FUTSAL Volunteering Ireland Sept 2013 - May 2014

2012/2013		Number of Hours	Number of Participants
Ballymun		1184	7255
Carlow		2943	4445
Clonmel		4661	11150
Collinstown		2540	11558
Corduff		2023	3716
Waterford	<i>schools</i>	2372	1460
	<i>club</i>	1156	314
	<i>disability</i>	390	130
Wexford	Wexford Town	1218.5	4421
	New Ross	2238	10831
	Enniscorthy	935	1770
	Gorey	810	4219
TOTAL		22470.5	61269

The types of activities vary, including volunteering in schools, clubs and with disability groups as part of work experience for the programme, in addition to working with the Late Night Leagues⁵ and match volunteering. Revisiting data from the surveys

⁵ The Late Night Leagues are a diversionary programme incorporating football leagues at various locations across Dublin, aimed at encouraging at risk young people to participate in constructive activities.

administered, it is clear that participants showed increased frequency in participation in voluntary activities from baseline to end point. For the 2012/2013 matched cohort, 27.3% of participants indicated that they participated in voluntary activities at least once a week at baseline, while at follow-up this figure increased to 75.8%. For the 2013/2014 matched cohort, 40.7% of participants indicated at baseline that in the past twelve months they had participated in voluntary activities at least once a week, while at follow-up this figure increased to 57.6%. Factoring in those who indicated that they participated in voluntary activity at least once a month, the cumulative increase is from 42.4% at baseline to 77.9% at follow up. In addition, qualitative findings confirm that staff and participants were enthusiastic about volunteerism and committing to volunteer activities in the community:

'There are two lads who are doing a lot of work in their own community which I think they will develop that and hopefully through the voluntary work that they are doing will get some paid work from it.'

'What I said to the lads last week, now that the course is over don't turn your back on the [voluntary work in] clubs. A few of you start taking it on board now, stick with it.'

'Just like refereeing at Special Olympics...in fairness they all put their names down for the Special Olympics, they came out to visit them and they put their name to down to volunteer. So they went along to that on Saturdays and stuff, it was good experience for them.'

'The club, which is just right beside us here, have a disability football club set up where, well two of the lads were involved in the club...assisting with the coaching on that.'

It is clear from this data that volunteerism was a particularly important element of the delivery of Project FUTSAL in Ireland and that its value in terms of community and individual development is recognised by staff and participants. It is also likely that the cumulative volunteer and participant hours indicated contribute to positive outcomes

for the local schools, the local community and disability groups and is therefore mutually beneficial.

4.5.2 Wales

Volunteering also played a crucial role in the delivery of Project FUTSAL across all five hubs in Wales. Volunteerism was incorporated through football camps, disability tournaments, FUTSAL tournaments, female 'turn up and play' sessions, a range of sports days and also match and stadia support.

Table 4.4 Project FUTSAL Volunteering Wales (cumulative sum of all years)

Hub	Number of Hours	Number of Participants
Llangefni	2526	960
Colwyn Bay	1176	612
Prestatyn	1960	823
Bangor	400	307
Llandudno	700	552
Total	6762	3254

Qualitative data also highlights the ways in which volunteerism has contributed to individual personal development among participants and the role this is likely to play in long term employability.

'For them, it has been a big turnaround, a couple of the lads who were difficult at first have made a complete 180 degree... they have the confidence, they are enjoying it, even if they only start off in a small way doing some volunteering or getting involved in doing some coaching... it starts them in the right direction.'

'Once they finish the course, they will have a link with the club, you build a relationship with them, they want to be involved and to volunteer...There is an ethos of not just the course has ended, but getting involved.'

'We can encourage people to get involved in volunteering and people volunteer regularly and consistently and reliably, it is very, very rare, if they do a good job and they are reliable, that they don't end up working for us in some shape or form.'

Both quantitative and qualitative data therefore confirm the role of volunteering in Project FUTSAL in Wales and the value attached to it by staff and participants.

4.6 Awards

Data relating to awards (and components of awards) attained by participants has been collected by the individual hub officers in Ireland. This data provides information about participant educational outcomes and achievements, and when analysed in the context of the post-participation survey and participant outcomes data it provides insight into programme outcomes and pathways in Ireland. Incomplete data from Ireland is available for the 2012/2013 cohort and for 2013/2014 for the majority of hubs. This is presented in Table 4.5 below. No specific award data was available for Wales at the time of completing this report.

Table 4.5 Award & Component Award Information: Ireland

HUB	12/13			13/14		
	Full Award	Component	Youth Cert	Full Award	Component	Youth Cert
Ballymun	6	9	11	5	9	9
Carlow	9	7	4	0	6	0
Collinstown	5	8	6	7	8	3
Clonmel	12	15	9	9	5	6
Corduff	5	11	5	7	9	8
Waterford	12	12	6	14	14	4
Wexford	18	7	12	14	5	10
TOTALS	67	69	53	59	49	40

The figures in Table 4.5 relate to Level 5 awards on the Irish National Framework for Qualifications (NFQ). (They were formerly referred to as 'FETAC awards' until the Further Education and Training Awards Council was subsumed into Quality and Qualifications Ireland.). The number of full major awards achieved at Level 5 reflects the number of students in each hub who successfully completed all eight modules in which they participated. The numbers for award 'components' identify those who were awarded up to seven individual certificates for components but did not complete all eight. Those who are unsuccessful in a component have the option to repeat it. Examples of educational components for which participants achieved individual awards or certificates are Communications Studies, Exercise and Fitness, Information Technology, First Aid, Health Related Fitness, Sport & Community Development, and Leisure Facility Operations. Participants also received certifications in Coaching, Pan-Disability Coaching, Video Match Analysis, Refereeing and Goalkeeping. A number of

participants in each hub advanced to the competitive Youth Certificate, an award for coaching players aged 13-18 year olds.

Using an average of 25 participants commencing in each of the seven hubs, the full award total of 67 represents a 38.3% full award rate in 2012/2013, and a 33.7% full award rate in 2013/2014, higher than the 2012 national average for full major award achievements by individuals undertaking Level 5-6 awards (ESRI, 2014).

4.7 Post-participation survey

4.7.1 Background and demographic information

As part of the evaluation of Project FUTSAL a telephone survey with past participants was administered in order to track the impact of the programme over time. In particular, this survey was designed to assess respondents' post-participation employment status and/or progression to education/training; and their perception of the impact of the programme on this progression.

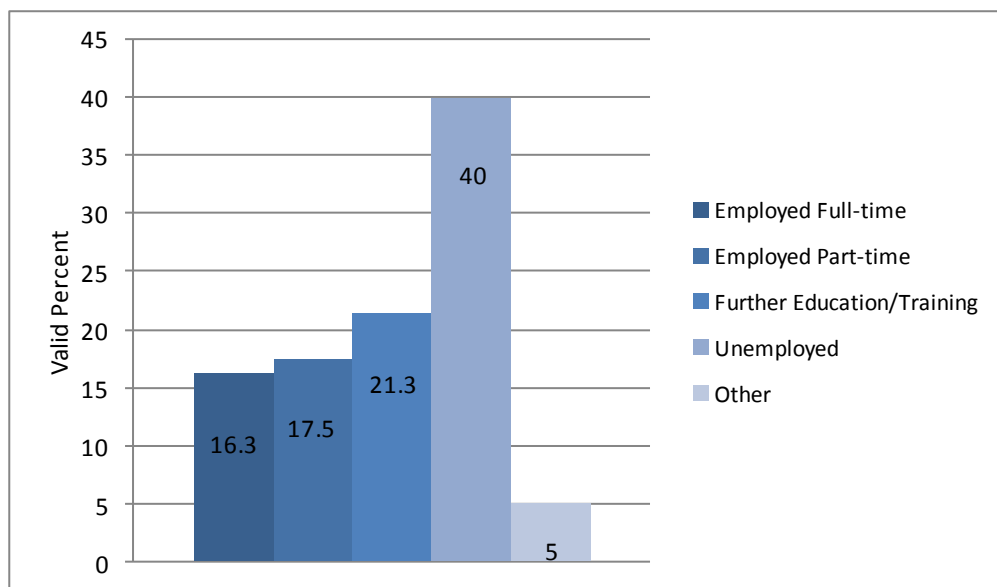
Overall, 80 previous participants in the programme completed the survey, representing approximately 19% of overall intake across three years in Ireland (a response rate broadly in line with the norm for telephone surveys). Of these 69 were male and 11 were female. As regards year of participation in Project FUTSAL, 15 were from 2011/12, 42 from 2012/13 and 23 from 2013/14. Participants from six of the seven hubs are represented in the survey responses, including: Ballymun, 18; Clonmel, 15; Collinstown, 8; Corduff, 2; Waterford, 13; and Wexford, 24. Respondents were asked to indicate their previous highest educational attainment and their primary status in the 12 months prior to participating in Project FUTSAL. More than two thirds of respondents (67.5%) indicated that the Leaving Certificate was their highest educational qualification, with 12.5% having their Junior/Intermediate/Group Certificate, 8.8% holding a FETAC Qualification, 2.5% a technical/vocational qualification and 5% stating that they had no prior qualifications. A considerable majority of respondents (63.7 %) indicated that they were mostly unemployed in the 12 months prior to participation in Project FUTSAL, with 14.5% stating that they were in education/further training (including second level) while 18.8% stated that they were employed (including full-time and part-time employment).

4.7.2 Post-participation pathways

The data shows positive post-participation pathways in terms of employment and progression to further education/training. Respondents were asked to indicate their main employment status in the period since completing the programme. The responses represent a substantial reduction in the level of unemployment that had been experienced by respondents prior to participation in Project FUTSAL. While 40%

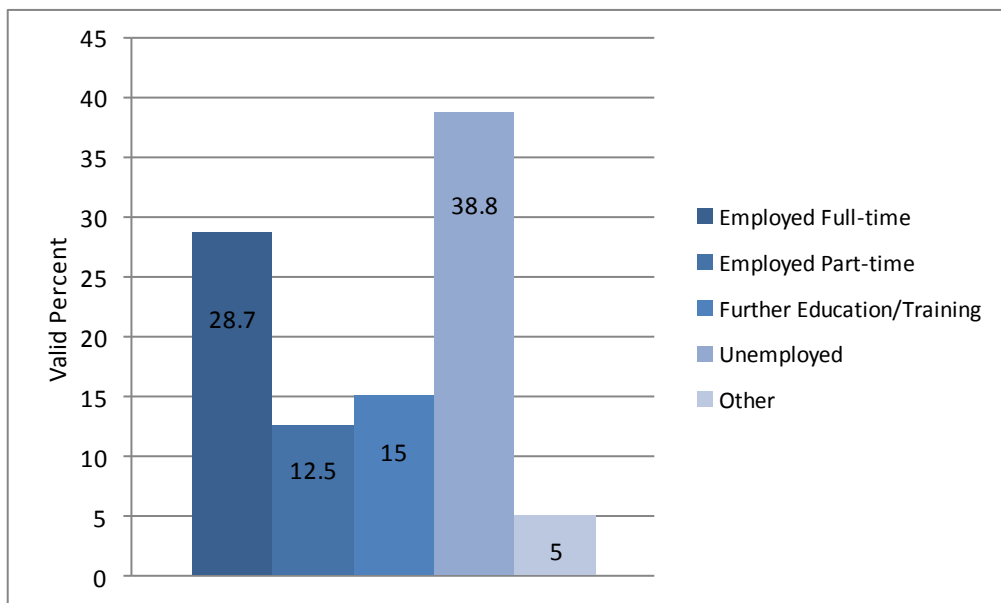
responded that they had been mostly unemployed since completing Project Futsal, 16.3% had been mostly employed full-time, 17.5% had been mostly employed part-time, and 21.3% had been in further education/training (see Figure 4.29). Moreover, 46.8% also indicated that since participating in Project FUTSAL they had participated in further education/training. The nature of the courses pursued varied, but most continued studying in the area of sports/leisure at different levels.

Figure 4.29 Post-Participation General Employment Status: Ireland



Respondents were also asked to indicate their current employment status (at the time of survey administration), with the figures showing slightly higher numbers in full-time employment (28.7%) at that specific time point (see Figure 4.30).

Figure 4.30 Post-Participation Current Employment Status: Ireland



In relation to voluntary activity, a high proportion of respondents (75%), were involved in voluntary and/or charity activities prior to participation with a small post-participation increase to 80%. Respondents also indicated a substantial increase in the frequency of exercise/fitness activities, with 59.8% reporting that they currently did so at least four times a week compared to 28.8% prior to participating in Project FUTSAL.

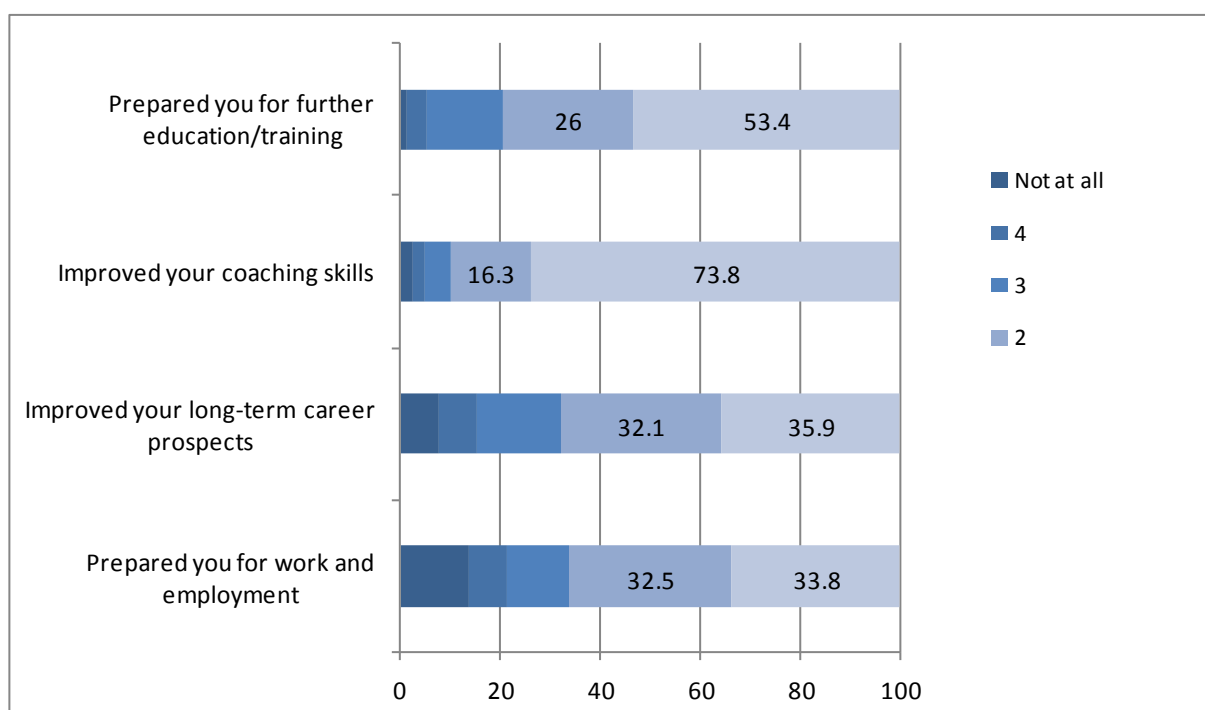
Also relevant here – and not fully reflected in the figures above because they are based on a sample survey - is the fact that a significant proportion of students completing the programme went on to work with the FAI as interns. In year one of the programme (2011/2012), 18 graduates were recruited by the FAI as interns. In year two (2012/2013), this figure rose to 30 graduates, with 14 interns recruited from the year three graduates (2013/2014).

4.7.3 Assessment of Project FUTSAL

Respondents were also asked to indicate more broadly the impact of Project FUTSAL in providing them with suitable skills/competencies for employment, enhancing their long-term career prospects, preparing them for further education/training, and improving their coaching skills. Respondents were asked to score on a scale from one to

five the extent of their agreement with a range of statements relating to these indicators. Overall, respondents were positive on the impact their participation in the programme has had across these areas (see Figure 4.31).

Figure 4.31 Assessment of Project FUTSAL



As the above table shows, respondents indicated a high level of agreement that their participation in Project FUTSAL helped prepare them for employment, improved their long-term career prospects, improved their coaching skills and prepared them for further education/training. However, it is noticeable that respondents indicate a greater level of agreement with the relevance of Project FUTSAL for improving coaching skills and preparing them for further education/training; this suggests that the programme, while improving employability for participants, may be more important to participants' reengagement with education or as part of a process of further education/training.

Reflecting on the qualitative data collected from participants during their involvement in the programme, survey respondents highlighted a number of key benefits arising from their participation in Project FUTSAL. These include: improved communication/public-speaking skills; enhanced confidence and self-esteem; improved health, fitness and general wellbeing; new skills including IT skills, MS Word proficiency, CV

preparation; enhanced academic learning, opportunities for personal development and progression into further education or employment; and improved social skills, group work skills and enhanced social networks.

When asked how likely they would be to choose Project FUTSAL again, 64.5% indicated that they would be very likely to do so, with a further 14.5% indicating that would be likely. A huge majority of respondents (95%) indicated that they would recommend Project FUTSAL. A number of reasons were given for this, including: renewed commitment to local area through volunteering and coaching in the community; completion of coaching badges and opportunities to complete Youth Certificate and progress to further coaching training; improved daily motivation, returning to education, preparation for the routine of employment; improved opportunities for career progression, a 'stepping stone' to further education and improved employment prospects; completion of disability and diversity training, new awareness of disability and diversity issues; the opportunity to meet new people and establish new friendships and new social networks.

4.7.4 Conclusion

Qualitative and quantitative data provides more detail on graduate pathways and opportunities after the programme. These post-participation survey figures represent a substantial reduction in prior levels of unemployment. Of those moving into employment, a range of roles were identified including work in sports and sports sales, general sales, customer service, warehouse work, porter work and JobBridge⁶ work. Graduates from some hubs also took up Internships with the FAI.

In addition, 21.3% went on to further education/training, again in a variety of contexts. The nature of the courses pursued varied, however, most continued studying in the area of sports/leisure at different levels, including sports and exercise, strength and

⁶JobBridge is the National Internship Scheme providing work experience placements for Interns for a 6 or 9 month period.

conditioning, and leisure and recreation. Other courses included social studies, financial management, Train the Trainer⁷ and computers.

Information held by the FAI itself provides additional insights into football-related pathways for graduates:

- a student and an intern at Corduff is working in India with Reading FC Academy;
- a student and intern in Wexford has been offered a job with Coventry City in the UK;
- a student from Corduff has secured a professional football contract with a French club.

The data shows positive post-participation pathways in terms of employment and progression to further education/training. Overall, respondents were also positive about the impact of their participation in the programme. Respondents indicated a high level of agreement that their participation in Project FUTSAL helped prepare them for employment, improved their long-term career prospects, improved their coaching skills and prepared them for further education/training.

⁷ The Train the Trainer course is designed to equip a participant with the skills and knowledge to run, manage and deliver effective training programmes.

4.8 Value-for-Money Study⁸

As part of the evaluation of Project FUTSAL a value-for-money study was conducted by Ms Eilís Lawlor of Just Economics to assess the potential economic benefits of the programme, particularly with respect to the potential savings accruing both for public/government expenditure and to individuals. In general, Project FUTSAL is consistent with a broader suite of policies and interventions aiming to improve participation in education, training and employment and improved outcomes in relation to employability and overall wellbeing.

Two key outcomes of Project FUTSAL were identified as having the most material impact in terms of economic value. Firstly, employment benefits, which for the participants are considered potentially substantial, have significant economic impact for both the improved financial wellbeing of participants and the potential cost savings for the state. Secondly, the health outcomes that have been demonstrated through the primary research indicate improvements in physical wellbeing that can deliver long-term economic value.

Accordingly, three economic related outcomes have been identified: employment salary, lowered levels of unemployment and a benefit to the State in terms of increased taxes and reduced benefits. Three non-economic outcomes have also been included: impacts on physical health; mental health; and crime. Outcomes were calculated using existing data relating to costs for young people and society if they are not in education, training or employment. Primarily, UK data was used owing to gaps in or lack of relevant Irish data, however, it is anticipated that the data is comparable owing to social and cultural similarities.

Using a benefit period of seven years and including anticipated benefits along with a small number of possible negative outcomes. Utilising the values attributed to the identified economic and social outcomes and projecting over seven years the annual saving is approximately €12,374 per participant.

⁸ The full Value for Money document, including outcome costs, is available as an appendix to this report.

In relation to health outcomes, participant data indicates an overall increased level of exercise/fitness activities, albeit with a relatively high baseline figure; this points to lower levels of health risks for participants over time. Using national data on the development of cardio-vascular diseases, whereby 30% of the population are at risk, and based on research findings regarding the reduction in risk of CVD that can be brought about by improved fitness, it is estimated that the annual saving per incident avoided is €1,575.

5. Qualitative Findings

This section explores the perceptions of participants, officers, interns, hub assistants and education providers in Ireland and Wales, across the duration of Project FUTSAL. Throughout the research lifecycle, site visits provided opportunities for one-to-one interviews with officers, interns, hub assistants and education providers, as well as focus group sessions with participants. The conversations explored programme experiences, including opportunities presented and challenges faced by participation; teaching and education including course structure and comparisons to other experiences of education; education provider perspectives; and training and support provided by the FAI and the Welsh Football Trust. Given the different organisational structure of the programmes in Ireland and Wales, separate analysis of both contexts is provided. The relevant findings are drawn together for analysis in Chapter 6: Discussion.

5.1 Ireland

There were a total of seven Project FUTSAL hubs in Ireland. The Ballymun, Collinstown and Corduff hubs were based in Dublin, with additional hubs in Waterford, Carlow, Wexford and Tipperary. Each hub had two allocated officers (full or part-time) and from 2012 onwards, hubs had the benefit of interns selected from participants from previous years. The number of participants in each hub varied, with hubs typically recruiting between 20 and 30 participants per annum. Project FUTSAL ran for one academic year in each hub, with content divided between educational components, which were largely provided by local Education and Training Boards (ETBs) (formerly Vocational Educational Committees, VECs) and FAI delivered coaching components. Participants worked towards achieving a Level 5 award (on the National Framework of Qualifications) for the overall programme, but were also awarded individual certificates for components. Participants completed FAI accredited coaching awards including Kickstart 1 and 2 and could also take the Youth Certificate, an award for coaching players aged 13-18 years. Finally, participants completed a work experience module, coaching in their locality in schools, community centres or clubs.

5.1.1 Recruitment

Participants described finding out about Project FUTSAL via a variety of means, including through their local clubs, contact with local development officers, club circular emails, FAI summer camps, the FAI website and related FAI Facebook pages. Other participants reported seeing flyers, posters and advertisements in local newspapers, civic centres, job centres and social welfare offices. Word of mouth was also a means by which participants learned about the course, including recommendations from previous participants. Officers reported that one-to-one conversations, often in clubs, and word of mouth were particularly effective as a means of recruitment.

Some hubs found alternative means of advertising the programme successful. One development officer describes the design of two separate posters, one in the traditional green colours associated with the FAI and one in pink and red, specifically targeting potential female applicants. Social media were also found to be a valuable advertising tool, with officers in one hub reporting that a Facebook page was particularly useful in attracting applications. In another hub, there was some interest from female applicants after a female intern advertised the course on Facebook. Elsewhere, officers promoted the course through a Twitter account and received a good response. Participants generally found the course to be well advertised, with some groups claiming that increased social media promotion would improve the advertising campaign as a whole and draw more applicants. Development officers suggested that one-to-one communication may be the best way to recruit female participants, some of whom may have concerns about joining a football-based course. For example, officers in one hub did coaching sessions with local women's football teams and used the time to inform the players about the course.

5.1.2 Football background

The majority of the Project FUTSAL participants had football experience, having played/coached football locally in clubs, participated in summer camps, or completed previous coaching training. A small number of participants came from other sports backgrounds, with an experienced hockey player in one hub and a student from a GAA background in another hub. The level of experience varied across and within hubs. In

one hub, interns reported that there was a lower level of football experience among participants than in the previous year. Officers and interns reported that while health and fitness are important, football expertise is not essential for successful coaching. Interns in one hub believed that 'a good player does not make a good coach' and suggested that aiming the programme at a wider audience might lower participant attrition rates. Officers also agreed that a football background was not vital as a lot of the content was delivered 'from scratch' and there was an opportunity to learn on the course. Participants themselves also generally took the view that basic skills were important but that the standard varied and that officers, interns and fellow participants were supportive.

5.1.3 Programme experiences

5.1.3.1 Group integration

Officers, interns and participants for the most part reported a positive group dynamic and good group integration across all hubs and years. It was usually the case that a number of participants would already know one another, either from club memberships or from local areas.

'The dynamic is good in the group. Some of them are naturally quiet...some of the younger participants are helping the older people on the course.'

'You can see groups forming but generally, they communicate well and engage and participate in all activities.'

One development officer stated that despite initial concerns that people might do the course 'just for the sake of it', there was a 'good buzz' throughout and he was confident that some participants could pursue further education after the course. In another hub, officers indicated that the group was initially 'standoffish' but had since integrated well. Participants themselves suggested that group activities were effective in supporting integration. In one hub, officers and tutors carried out ice-breaking activities with participants to facilitate group integration while in another, participants described how the interaction as a consequence of completing Kickstart 1 and 2 was successful in supporting group integration.

5.1.3.2 Opportunities

The participants in the hubs were largely enthusiastic about their participation and progress. As one said, 'we are all here by choice'. They described what they hoped to get from the course, including: increased knowledge and experience of health and fitness; football and coaching skills; coaching badges, including the Youth Cert; potential advancement to third level; and job opportunities in sports and recreation. For some participants, the course was an opportunity to leave unemployment and return to education, while others described it as a 'stepping stone' to further opportunities. Across the hubs and years, all participants in focus groups were able to identify potential pathways from the programme.

Participants described new-found 'confidence in dealing with people' and looking forward to 'the work experience'. Participants also described an advantage of the programme as meeting new people and having the opportunity to work with schools and the community and 'make a contribution'. Participants talked about seeing the disadvantage faced by younger people in their local areas and the lack of a social or recreational outlet for these young people, and said they wanted to make a difference. Some of the participants had researched opportunities for further education beyond the course, including four-year sports and recreation course in Carlow IT and a similar programme in Blanchardstown IT.

5.1.3.3 Challenges

Participants also described the challenges they faced on the course. In the rural hub, travel was a source of concern. Participants in other hubs also described transport and getting to and from the venue as a challenge, with some reporting that the distance travelled was leaving them tired. Car-pooling took place in some of the hubs, to overcome the burden of cost in attending the classes.

There were consistent issues with participants' financial support, including welfare payments and Back to Education Allowance (BTE), with some participants unable to continue on Project FUTSAL without any financial support. Issues included difficulties liaising with social welfare offices, situations where a participant was under two years out of education and previous participation in FETAC Level 5 Courses.

Welfare-related issues were addressed in a variety of ways across the hubs, with participants receiving support from officers, tutors and local councillors. In one hub officers reported a small number of issues, largely relating to BTE allowance, and they were generally satisfied with explanations around this. In another hub, some of the older participants researched the BTE issues and were able to help the younger participants. Elsewhere officers found a point of contact in the local civic office and were able to deal directly with an individual to support the participants. In another example, officers managed the BTE application process, handing the forms to the participants as they came onto the course. Officers reported negotiating with the social welfare office to put participants on a part-time course where there were issues with eligibility, with only a small number not in receipt of money. In one hub, participants expressed concern at the uncertainty of their situation, with some of those commencing on the programme having no confirmation of whether they would retain their welfare payments.

In one instance, the tutor supported participants with welfare-related issues, while a local councillor offered support and advice to a participant who was a single parent. In another hub, some female participants left the programme, unable to resolve issues of funding with the social welfare office. Similarly, officers also expressed disappointment at a 'good' participant dropping out, unable to retain their social welfare payment should they take a place on the course. In one hub, a representative from social protection was invited to the induction day and gave a brief talk and was available for questions with participants, which proved helpful. Participants reported receiving different responses from different welfare officers, a failure of the Social Welfare Office to recognise the course and becoming frustrated with the process. After the initial rollout of the hubs, officers reported feeling better prepared for dealing with this as an issue, and ready to identify more quickly whether a potential participant would be entitled to any benefit.

Finally, participants across the hubs commented that there was a need for more official FAI clothing for the course participants. Participants were provided with one kit and were required to wear their official tracksuit and t-shirt, especially when working in schools and on placement. This presented difficulties, where long days meant it could be

problematic to clean the kit for the following day. The provision of a second kit per participant or a second t-shirt would alleviate this difficulty. This issue remained in some hubs for the second year of the programme.

5.1.4 Teaching and education

5.1.4.1 Core modules

Officers reported that most participants were aware in advance of the academic side of the programme and prepared for it, although some of the participants were more focused on the sport related aspects of the course. Participants indicated that tutors tried to make all content relevant to sport and football, and thought there was a good balance between the classroom work and the physical aspects of the course. Where this was an issue, it was reported that it was rectified in the second year of hub, drawing on the experiences from the initial rollout of the programme.

In one hub, however, officers described difficulties arising because some participants were not prepared for the intensity of the workload. In another hub, participants were expected to maintain an 85% attendance rate (it was 75% the previous year). In one hub, some participants indicated to officers that they might struggle with the academic element of the programme and after a conversation with the school principal extra support was made available for these participants.

Overall, participants were generally more focused on the sport and coaching elements rather than academic content. In one hub, some of the participants who hadn't been in education for some time expressed surprise at the amount of academic content. The officers were conscious of this and were keen to find a 'happy medium' to ensure all participants were supported. Participants elsewhere who had been out of education reported that 'parts of it are hard' and 'for some of us starting off again, it's different'. The participants felt supported in their learning, claiming that the tutors were 'easy to talk to, if you have any questions about the course' and that 'it matters to them if you're showing up or not showing up, there's professionalism there'. Occasionally, participants described how three-hour classes can be tough without a break and how it is difficult to maintain concentration.

5.1.4.2 Other experiences of education

Participants consistently compared Project FUTSAL favourably with other experiences of education, describing how tutors were approachable and accessible and were 'not standing over the participants'. Participants also described a more relaxed atmosphere when compared to school and spoke about being 'treated as an adult' by their tutors, many of whom had techniques for managing boredom and motivating participants. Participants were also enthusiastic about the increased number of opportunities to work together on projects. In one hub, participants described how tutors had come from adult education and were equipped to relate to diverse groups with different experiences of education. Participants also favoured the increased responsibility afforded to them on the course and taking control of their own progress on the programme.

5.1.4.3 Class size

Officers and participants both mentioned the importance of class size in engaging and motivating the hub participants. Officers in one hub reported that it was difficult to manage a large group and that they had to 'keep an eye' on the participants and have one-to-one sessions to ensure that they were up to date with their studies.

'It would be easier for the lecturers if the group was broken in two, if there was money or support for an extra staff member.'

In another hub, where the group was divided into two, officers and participants alike reported the benefits, stating that it was 'easier to complete the work in smaller groups' and that attendance was high.

5.1.5 Programme interns

5.1.5.1 Motivation

The Project FUTSAL interns offered an array of reasons for returning to the programme as interns, including continued involvement with the FAI and local football, further employment opportunities and a lead in to further or third level education. In one hub interns reported enjoying the course the previous year and hoping for continued involvement, so as to help new participants coming through and to pass on their

experience. Interns reported increased confidence from participating in the programme and stated that this confidence and increased motivation would hopefully lead to possibilities of employment and further education. Their own participation had provided them with the skills needed to work with current participants.

'Personally it just makes you feel a bit better about yourself.'

'We done disability awareness now it is second nature, it just comes easy, you don't think twice about it [sic].'

'You are confident, you are on the ball, it is just a whole different mindset and if there is opportunities there, you are more likely to take them up and react to them whereas you mightn't have if you didn't do the course [sic].'

'This time we were stepping up to coach with them and I wasn't nervous at all. I was just so used to it, there was no pressure, I knew what I was doing.'

5.1.5.2 Opportunities

Interns hoped that the role would be a way of 'getting a foot in the door' for other football-related employment opportunities in Ireland. In one hub, interns expressed an interest in gaining more experience and more responsibility in different aspects of the work, including coaching and administration. Elsewhere, interns hoped for an opportunity to develop their skills further.

'The way the course was run, the education part of it, everything was just absolutely perfect for me. I just want to push this as far as I can, and obviously it is just a dream that something comes out of this at the end.'

Other interns expressed an interest in working with the FAI summer camps and were considering coaching opportunities in the United States. One intern spoke enthusiastically about accepting a college place for the following year.

5.1.5.3 Activities and work

The duties assigned to the interns varied but they reported satisfaction with the level of responsibility and the opportunity 'to work on your own initiative'. For example, the interns in one hub were encouraged to go out into the community and work on

‘something that interests them’. A female intern was focusing on getting young women interested in football in the schools. Another female intern took to managing the under-14s Waterford team, a step up from a previous role as an assistant manager. In another hub, officers said it was an advantage having a female intern to support the female participants on the course. Across the hubs, the interns assisted in various aspects of running and administering the course – including coaching and supporting officers with Kickstart training, helping participants with their work and dealing with issues relating to work experience in schools.

Officers in one hub highlighted the value of having the interns and report a degree of flexibility in how they could be used, as their practical training meant they were equipped to assist in the delivery of a variety of FAI programmes in the hub area. In another hub, interns were reported as helping development officers with administrative tasks, allowing the officers to have more free time to do other work: ‘Sometimes if the development officers have to go off... go to different schools and try to get in there, it leaves us with a bit of responsibility here to be around if the participants needs us. It frees up [the officer’s] time as well, they have a lot on’. In another hub, the interns also had responsibility for linking in with local schools and clubs to promote and encourage female participation in football from a young age.

5.1.5.4 Benefits to the programme

Officers and participants alike were positive about the addition of interns to the programme. Across the hubs, it was also reported that interns were frequently asked questions about the course by participants. Questions asked related to course content, social welfare queries and questions around training and coaching. At one hub, interns attended the induction day for participants and were asked about course by incoming participants. An officer describing a planned scheme for the interns to act as mentors for a smaller group of participants. A student in one hub described the interns as ‘very beneficial; when you’re out of school for twenty years to have them to ask [questions to]’. Another participant referred to interns as being ‘between the officers and us and it’s easier to relate to them’. This view was echoed in a comment from one of the interns themselves: ‘We are in between so we would probably be talking to them more on a personal basis or they would probably come to us with problems quicker than they

would come to [the officer], just because of the positions'. It was not surprising therefore that many current participants were expressing an interest in becoming interns themselves.

Overall, interns thought that they were in a position to offer support to the newer participants, a claim corroborated by hub participants who described how easy it was to relate to the interns, some of whom they may know from their local communities. Officers explained that they could direct participants to interns for support 'because they have experienced it' and are in a position to provide 'invaluable personal insights'.

5.1.6 Development officers

The commitment of the FAI development officers to their roles was reflected in the feedback from hub participants and interns, with officers described as approachable, enthusiastic and helpful: 'They make everything really straightforward...giving that extra help'. The interns reported that officers were viewed positively among participants and there was a sense that the officers were seen as doing a good job, ensuring participants were motivated, participating and succeeding on the course.

5.1.6.1 Challenges

Officers reported occasional difficulties with the organisation of the course, including dissatisfaction with the venues. In one hub, where Project FUTSAL is taking place in a second level school, officers described having limited access to the school hall/ gym and having limited space. Describing the venue as 'easy to get to', officers reported that despite this, there was 'limited space' and participants were without a base or dedicated space, with examples given of workshops being moved around a number of rooms.

In another hub, timetable negotiations were described as 'difficult', a result of the demand on the facilities. Officers reported difficulties finding the balance with other school programmes and with the placements: 'It is difficult to manage because of getting agreement from all stakeholders, including the schools and venues'. The location of the venue was also problematic for some participants in the rural hub with no base for participants, despite some travelling long distances daily. Officers also reported

difficulties organising the timetable with the school, resulting in the timetable being finalised quite close to the start of the course.

Elsewhere, officers had difficulty organising educational aspects of the course with the ETB. This resulted in timetable problems, and consequently participants in the hub could receive short notice of upcoming plans. However, there was some indication that the organisational difficulties eased with experience. Officers in one hub who were running the programme for the second time said they were 'well ahead of themselves' compared to last year, and described 'far less organising' as a result of experience in organising the course.

For newly established hubs, some initial bedding down was necessary. For example, officers in a new hub suggest that it is still a learning experience for them; however, they could contact other officers for advice, which proved a useful resource. While they were satisfied with the core modules, they often have to do additional workshops themselves to keep things fresh for participants. The officers suggested that the establishment of a suite of workshops for the course would help create a more uniform level of content for participants.

Garda vetting also presented difficulties, with officers in one hub awaiting clearance for participants before they could work with schools. In most hubs, this was overcome by completing the process at interview stage. Aside from core module and training venues, development officers describe good, long-standing relationships with local schools and were well-positioned to gain access to the schools when organising placements for participants.

5.1.6.2. Time management

While the time commitment to the programme expected from officers varied depending on their other responsibilities, many reported an overrun on their designated hours. There were reports of difficulty in balancing a range of commitments. There was also pressure in the regional hubs, where officers had to engage in a considerable amount of travel. This was somewhat alleviated in cases where the officers had experience of running a hub from the previous year.

However officers reported that the FAI was aware of the difficulties and allowed them to prioritize certain programmes, respecting the demands on their time. Officers indicated that Project FUTSAL was their main focus, with ‘other programmes taken away’, and that they could not otherwise run the hub. One officer stated:

‘We were very apprehensive last time round but we’ve found it easier this time. The FAI have respect for the fact that it takes more than the number of hours allocated.’

Another development officer said that while FUTSAL was taking up slightly more time than expected, ‘the FAI have been good in allowing us to cut back where needed on other projects’.

5.1.6.3 Training

Officers were provided with induction and training to support various aspects of their roles, including conflict resolution. The training was seen as beneficial, especially for those with less experience in the area, supporting them in dealing with problems as they arose on the course. It was also useful as an opportunity for new Project FUTSAL hub officers to ask questions and prepare for their roles. In one location, officers describe the training as valuable, but no more so than the experience of the programme from the previous year. Experienced officers found that they had dealt with many of the scenarios in their roles and were less likely to benefit from the training. It was also clear that the officers had their own working relationships, knew one another and were likely to phone one another on a regular basis, including phoning more experienced officers with queries about the hubs.

5.1.7 Educational providers and stakeholders

A key objective of Project FUTSAL was to encourage reengagement with education and achieve positive educational outcomes for participants. As indicated, for many of those participating on the course a primary incentive has been the opportunity to work on football coaching skills and practice rather than educational attainment. The provision of educational content within Project FUTSAL’s Irish hubs, excluding football coaching, has been carried out by the Education & Training Board (ETB), formerly the VEC. Our data indicates that there has been a high level of engagement with the programme by

local ETB tutors and coordinators, which has been of benefit to the development, implementation and management of Project FUTSAL. In particular, local ETB Tutors and coordinators indicated a commitment to the course and a belief in its potential benefits for participants in terms of improving educational outcomes and promoting employability. In Dublin in particular, the FAI had an existing link with the ETB in relation to the delivery of sports-based courses. Equally, the ETB generally had a high level of competency in the design and delivery of programmes relating to areas of sport, health and fitness; and more generally extensive experience in engaging with 'hard-to-reach' or marginalised groups.

Drawing on interviews with both groups conducted at the end of Year 2 of the programme, the findings indicate that overall there were good inter-personal relationships between tutors and development officers, which helped facilitate implementation of the programme. While hubs varied in how they were organised and resourced the informal communication and positive relationships were an important element in the successful running of the programme and in addressing any challenges that emerged.

5.1.7.1 Intra-hub relationships between FAI and ETB staff

While the overall responsibility for the implementation of Project FUTSAL lay with the FAI, including the Project Manager and the local development officers, the on-the-ground delivery of the programme included significant input from ETB tutors and coordinators. Therefore, in delivering the course it was important that there was strong buy-in from the ETB, as well as coordinated working relationships between individuals and organisations.

In terms of designing and developing the course, an ETB coordinator recognised the benefits of working with FAI in expanding and enhancing the existing Sports & Recreation courses they had available:

'I knew there was something missing, and the something missing was the FAI, you really needed the FAI on board to do all the football related stuff. I probably would have liked it, when I was doing the original sports and rec. I would have liked it to

be multi-sport... The FAI were the most easy to work with and were coming back to me with everything. So then the football just seemed to be the clearest route to go down.'

Across the Project FUTSAL hubs the tutors and coordinators indicated a strong level of communication between themselves and the development officers. This related to both formal and informal contact to discuss any issues arising with participants (e.g. non-attendance, academic performance) and general organisational updates (e.g. timetabling). It was indicated that ETB coordinators and tutors would have formal meetings to address any issues across their courses, including Project FUTSAL, and to liaise with participants around their progress. For example, as one local ETB coordinator indicated:

'I would have also been getting Tutor monthly reports... and on a monthly basis then I would have reviewed certain things each month... And we would have given review and feedback to the learners in terms of their progress and their results.'

The tutors also demonstrated an awareness of working together amongst themselves and with the FAI in order to best address any issues with participants and help them progress through the course:

'We do a lot of communication amongst ourselves so if we notice a student that has a problem then they are noticed, they are looked at and discussed and spoken to.'

Overall, communication with the FAI was viewed as extremely positive by ETB staff, who indicated that the development officers were available and easy to work with. As one tutor, speaking about working with the relevant development officer, indicated:

'I would say it has been very positive... I think [development officer] was very professional and very accomplished in everything he did... I think he was a very good role model for them [participants] and he was very interested in them and from my point of view he was very easy to work with, he was very professional.'

In particular, the relationship between ETB staff and development officers was viewed as valuable as it was open and honest in dealing with any issues:

'The FAI, I had no difficulty to deal with whatsoever, we worked really well. But I think we worked well because we were honest. If we had a problem we said it... I think communication, and we had that.'

Overall, FAI development officers across the constituent Project FUTSAL hubs were positive in their assessment of the work of the ETB coordinators and tutors, as well as their working relationship with them. As one development officer indicated, developing a clear plan of work with the ETB was an important element in the management and running of the programme:

'We sat down a couple of weeks before the course and we outlined a timetable and I think once everyone had a plan and idea in their head what was going on we have never had any issues if we had to change days... It was all done and the relationship has been very good.'

While generally development officers were positive about their relationship with coordinators and tutors, in some instances resources were a problem in relation to staffing numbers available. One hub had only one tutor for the course; however, the development officer felt that the tutor's enthusiasm for the course helped limit any potential issues. Equally, across the hubs development officers shared tutors' opinion that regular communication was a useful means of dealing with any challenges in running the course. While in many cases this was done informally between officers and tutors, in some cases regular meetings were also scheduled.

'What helped is that we would have met every four to six weeks as a group of Tutors and we would have went through each participant... We were able to manage that and I think that really helped.'

5.1.7.2 Programme opportunities

ETB staff identified the benefits of the programme in terms of participants and the community, reporting the participants would benefit from a qualification in addition to improved confidence and self-esteem, while the wider community would benefit in terms of club participation.

'Well two probably, again our main aim would always be really just talking about building up people's confidence and their self esteem, their coping skills and get them a qualification that they can be proud of if they haven't had that in the past.'

'So similarly on this particular course the benefit for the wider community has been back to the clubs, that each person that is participating in the course is generally a member of, so in terms of say professional standard of training and development that has been good for their local club.'

'It's win-win, the schools are getting great training, the kids are getting great training, the coaches are getting great confidence going in there.'

5.1.7.3 Programme challenges

For the most part, it was reported by ETB staff that participant 'drop-off' was typical of similar programmes they had run, although there were differences across hubs and in one case the coordinator said it was 'higher than we would want'. ETB staff also highlighted the need for additional support for some participants and the challenges in working with those who were at different standards.

'It's not worse or no better than the other [ETB programmes], the attendance is very good.'

'The attendance was good. I mean there was a core group that would attend every single class and then there was a few that would jump in and out. But I mean you are going to get that across the board anyway.'

'I think no matter what supports you put in for some people, if it is pitched too high for them, it is pitched too high for them.'

Officers also felt that where the tutors adopted an adult education approach, this helped make participants feel more comfortable in the programme. In some cases, the ETB were able to provide additional resources to participants, for example guidance on post-participation pathways, which was seen as beneficial. Equally, given that many of the participants were primarily interested in football elements of course, officers recognised the hard work that tutors put in to keep participants motivated and engaged:

'A lot of them have stuck through it, which is a testament to the Tutors to keep them involved and obviously to themselves, that they were motivated enough.'

'I think a lot of the participants did find it different to their school experience which would have been quite negative for a long time, that they welcomed that aspect.'

'I have horticulture students as well and they are doing communications and they just think they are going to be in a garden all the time and suddenly they have this academic work to do and it is the thing that catches them most. They don't enjoy it as much.'

'They would have got a lot of extra support, particularly from [the Tutor], [the Tutor] had the weaker learners in [that] group. [The Tutor] is a trained literacy Tutor so generally I would have matched the skills of the Tutor to the particular group.'

5.1.7.4 Conclusion

Overall, it was felt by ETB staff that they had established positive working relationships with development officers, which assisted in managing the programme and working well with participants. Equally, development officers also indicated an overall positive view of the tutors in terms of their enthusiasm and engagement with participants and the programme. While the level of resources varied, it was felt the ETB overall worked to provide valuable support to officers in implementing Project FUTSAL.

While informal and interpersonal relationships are seen as having a significant positive impact on running the programme, in further developing the implementation of Project FUTSAL a more formal structure, as is already in place in some hubs, would benefit the communication between the organizations and their respective staff.

5.2 Wales

There were a total of five Project FUTSAL hubs in Wales, based in LLandudno, LLangefni, Prestatyn, Bangor and Colwyn Bay. The hubs were supported by one central officer with additional support from hub assistants. The hubs were based in football clubs, with the educational components delivered by local college tutors, and the

football components delivered by hub assistants, supported by additional trainers. The hubs were run in conjunction with local colleges, including Coleg Harlech and WEA Cymru. The Project FUTSAL course in Wales differed significantly from the Irish programme, running for two days a week over a twelve week period.

5.2.1 Recruitment and football background

In Wales, participants were recruited through similar means to their Irish counterparts, including local media advertising and press releases, advertising in the job centres and working links with local organisations. Some difficulty was reported in recruiting participants, particularly with regard to job centres and 'sharing outcomes'.

'It was advertised online, it was advertised in local papers, it was handed out in flyers, it was put up on council notice boards, I spent some days going into the local job centre, community groups and youth groups to try and engage.'

'We used football as a tool to get them to open up to us and be enthusiastic about coming on the course.'

'We have had difficulty recruiting participants, the job centres have agendas and are reluctant to refer people, they have certain organisations they will endorse.'

'They are starting to do it now, the issue is funding ...they are a bit reluctant to share outcomes.'

Because attracting participants was a challenge for some of the hubs, all applicants were accepted. It was reported that this in turn affected motivation and participation levels among participants.

'They feel it is optional, even though we have tried to push them and let the job centres know if they don't show up.'

While not all participants were from football coaching backgrounds, it was reported that most played football in some capacity and many had good technical ability.

5.2.2 Programme experiences

5.2.2.1 Group integration

In general, it was reported that the groups integrated well, with hub assistants and participants all positive about group dynamics. An officer reported that getting to know the participants as soon as possible is of paramount importance to the group, including 'building a rapport from day one' and 'making them feel comfortable'.

Where there was a considerable range in the age profile of participants, it was reported that this did not impede progress on the programme but rather supported the learning process, with the participants typically working together.

'The dynamic in the group is good, they get on and they get involved in the events that we organise.'

'There are a couple who are older but they work well with the younger participants, key an eye and vice versa, work together.'

'At first some of the older participants were concerned that they were going to be stuck in a room with younger lads, but within a couple of weeks and a couple of sessions together, they gelled really well and the age difference, you can't even notice it at times.'

'We are like a family now.'

5.2.2.2 Opportunities

Staff in Wales were conscious of the opportunities and prospects for participants participating in Project FUTSAL, in the context of 'regenerating the local area' and improved 'confidence and wellbeing'. Staff were keen to highlight 'transferrable skills', that they described as 'unquantifiable', and believed that the programme improved employability, while also providing a stepping stone to further opportunities in coaching, and further education. Staff also acknowledged that using football as a 'hook' helps motivate participants.

'For them, it has been a big turnaround, a couple of the lads who were difficult at first have made a complete 180 degree...they have the confidence, they are enjoying it, and yes I am hopeful that they will go on and even if they only start off in a small way doing some volunteering or getting involved in doing some coaching...it starts them in the right direction.'

'What we have done over the twelve weeks is give them the unquantifiable, so you can't give them a qualification in confidence but you can take them to that next step.'

'I just hope that maybe some seeds have been sown, some ideas, with the abilities that they have got and the experience that they have got, that they might not have thought about going down a certain avenue.'

Participants were keen to identify the benefits, including their educational qualifications and attainments, as well as improved confidence. Generally, participants in Wales reported that they would recommend the course to others.

'I am going to get my C licence in coaching, which allows me to coach a football team in Wales.'

'Yes, I would recommend the course, I think it was well tutored, not too difficult but not too easy.'

The participants also described the benefits of taking part in Project FUTSAL in social terms, often referring to making new friends and getting to know people. They valued the motivation to pursue activities daily, compared with 'doing nothing'. When asked to provide one word that summed up their experience of the course, participants selected positive words, namely 'enjoyable', 'fun' and 'excellent'. When asked what they enjoyed most, the participants largely responded most positively to the football-based elements of the programme, including coaching and the related certificates and qualifications.

'One of the best things about it was meeting people, being friends and then getting to do activities and tournaments.'

'It gets me out of the house, otherwise I might have stayed at home playing the computer and doing nothing.'

'The coaching side, because that's what it's about really, gaining the coaching certificates.'

Staff and participants were also conscious that employability is a key programme outcome and discussed the opportunities for employment for graduates. A hub assistant who had previously completed the programme argued that 'there are opportunities', citing his own position as an example. Another assistant described a variety of related roles that may be available to graduates, including 'stadium security, ground maintenance, and match hospitality'. Participants described the benefits of CV preparation and mock job interview as part of the programme. While it was reported that the qualifications and certifications were particularly beneficial, it was also acknowledged that gains may not be immediate and may be dependent on further education or volunteering. Assistants also indicated that their links with local clubs were useful in placing participants into volunteer positions which could support future employment opportunities.

'I have got a level 2 community sport leaders award, I have got a First Aid certificate and I have attended a course on child welfare and CRB'. For me as an Officer, that would be the basic skills that I would say, ok the person is employable.'

A former student, now working as a hub assistant, had benefitted from the programme and was keen to describe its value;

'Yes, brilliant, I couldn't actually believe there was such a course. ...It was something I wanted to try and get into but I didn't know how before this. I didn't know such a course existed but everything, in terms of even the education side, the CSLA, the community sports leader award, everything about the course I have enjoyed.'

It is also of note that some participants were less enthusiastic about their prospects after the programme, with some indicating that 'there are no paid opportunities' for graduates and that at the end of the programme 'there is nothing'. In some hubs, graduates returned to complete an additional run of the programme. Participants also expressed concern that while they grew 'more confident' throughout the duration of the programme, this may not be sustained, with one participant stating that 'after the course is finished '[I] tend to go back into the state of not wanting to go out or anything like that'.

The benefits of volunteering were also highlighted by participants and staff in Wales, particularly in the context of sustaining connections with clubs and the community as graduates, and contributing to improved employability.

'They might not know it but the more they do, the better their chances of employment.'

'Once they finish the course, they will have a link with the club, you build a relationship with them, they want to be involved and to volunteer...There is an ethos of not just the course has ended, but getting involved.'

'We can encourage people to get involved in volunteering and people volunteer regularly and consistently and reliably, it is very, very rare, if they do a good job and they are reliable, that they don't end up working for us in some shape or form.'

'We don't just leave them hanging at the end of the course, there are exit routes, into local organisations.'

5.2.2.3 Challenges

In addition to some concerns around participant opportunities and prospects post-programme, some challenges presented in terms of student motivation, drop-off rates and transport to some hub venues. Staff provided reasons why some participants fail to complete the course, reporting that for some, the course wasn't suitable and for others, alternative commitments were an issue; 'of course we've had a few who have dropped out'. In one instance, a female participant had childcare commitments, in another several participants gained employment, while it was also reported that some participants failed to show up and eventually departed, often down to 'a bit of a motivation issue'. In addition to this, it was reported that there was reluctance among some participants to take the Essentials Skills component of the programme, studying literacy and numeracy. As a consequence of fewer participants in some hubs, difficulties presented in some aspects of the practical exercises.

'We started with 12 candidates of which four have already gone into full time employment. We have another two here today that will be going into full time employment as well.'

'[Former participant] has got a job, one of the lads has gone to the army, there were some that just moved on or didn't turn up again.'

'One of the reasons was the essential skills, they didn't want to do it.'

Issues with transport also differed from hub to hub, with some reports of difficulties. This was attributed to local transport options and locations of hubs. Specifically, the cost of bus transport arose, with assistants in some hubs reporting repayment of costs at the end of the programme. While it was reported that carpooling in some hubs helped overcome this issue, this wasn't an option for participants across all hubs.

'Some of them cycle, some of them get lifts, we share it amongst cars.'

'It has been an issue, especially with travel costs with buses because in this hub, none of them have their own transport.'

'Some can't afford to come, it is £6.80 for a return ticket for some of them and this is three days a week out of their benefits, so I understand where they are coming from.'

'We can pay their travel, we take their tickets and pay them at the end of the course.'

5.2.3 Teaching and education

5.2.3.1 Core modules

Participants and staff also discussed the core modules undertaken on the programme, highlighting the challenges of the restricted programme duration and the challenge in teaching literacy and numeracy on a football based programme. Tutors described needing to tailor the modules for the group, finding that they are 'restricted for how much we can do', with one tutor adding 'I just question with a ten week course, you feel there is not enough time really'. Despite this, tutors emphasised the importance of using football as a 'hook' to engage the participants with the academic aspects of the programme, conceding that the 'football context' is best placed to ensure motivation, 'because they like playing football'. As such, 'we try to have a football theme on the literacy and the numeracy', for example 'can you design a fitness circuit for a junior

football team or something like that'. While it was acknowledged that this was successful in engaging participants, it was also acknowledged by some participants (albeit likely those who remained on the programme) what while the classroom-based work was not as enjoyable as the practical football experience, 'it helped a lot'. While commenting on the programme content and modules, shortcomings were also highlighted, with some hubs failing to complete elements of the programme as originally advertised. For example, in one hub participants were critical of not having the opportunity to complete first aid training. This was a source of frustration to staff and participants.

The broad spectrum of ability levels of participants was identified as a barrier to progress in some of the hubs, with staff noting that this can present challenges in tailoring the content to each individual student.

'It is a challenge, but I come from the basic skills department so it is part of the job really that we do get a range of levels in all our classes to be honest.'

'There is a massive difference in the participants, some have qualifications before coming and just want to come in for the football, and then we have some that didn't finish school and haven't got any essential skills really, so it is difficult to prepare for each individual student.'

5.2.3.2 Other experiences of education

Staff and participants commented on the broader context of education provision on the programme. Staff acknowledged the vulnerability of participants and the related need to provide an alternative educational context to sustain participation and engagement. It was also acknowledged that the group required 'life skills' that they might not have accumulated in the way other groups would have, and the need for ongoing support for this process. Similarly, participants report positive comparisons to previous experiences of education, namely the support provided by staff and the nature of their relationships with hub staff.

'They have been let down, which I think in this day and age is unforgivable really... you just wonder why are they falling through the net.'

'Sitting in a formal classroom style would not suit this group at all and I have got to accept that...I try and pull them out individually and see what we can do.'

'The mentors aren't constantly on your back, do this, do that sort of thing. It is more like 'you do the work and will just watch you and help when it is needed.'

'[The tutor] is not too serious, you can have a laugh with him...I am probably going to miss him to be honest, miss having a laugh with him.'

5.2.3.3 Education providers

While general feedback relating to the education providers was positive, from both participants and hub staff, there was some support for introducing hub education providers ('I think we should have our own educators, our own tutors'), with one member of staff expressing concern at the value for money provided by the colleges. 'Everyone is scared of sharing outcomes and duplication', 'they are focussed on meeting their targets'. There was support for hub-based independent tutors, also acting as hub assistants, with a staff member arguing that 'the administration would be a lot easier'.

There was some inconsistency in what the colleges were willing to offer, and how it was offered, reported to be down to a different system in Wales. 'One college would deliver Level 1 or 2 but the other would only deliver Level 2'. In addition, some concern was expressed in one hub about the delivery of some of the content, including the first aid; 'It is all theory, there was no practical, they will forget it all'. Finally, staff commented on the benefits of a fixed timetable, and consistency across all hubs in this regard, noting that it could facilitate collaboration.

'We didn't have a structured timetable...but we have reached a system now it has sort of been fixed and that will continue on to next time.'

'I think it would be quite good if the hubs started at the same times, at the moment it is staggered...we could do a mini tournament or an activity where the hubs could do something together...I think that would be quite good.'

5.2.3.4 Disability football

Disability training, coaching and football engagement differed from hub to hub, with staff describing football camps and a disability festival. All feedback relating to disability elements of the programme were positive, with staff reporting the experiences as positive for participants and participants reporting encouraging experiences working with people with disabilities.

'One of the local disability coaches attended a football camp and had brief chat with the lads.'

'We did a Disability Festival in Colwyn Bay. We also did a motivate festival for people with learning difficulties...17 teams turned up.'

'We had the disability festival there and I had a full taxi, so the interest is there'.

'The signed up for it and they really loved it, the feedback was good, the feedback from people there on the day too. They did more than they thought they were going to do.'

'We have had letters from [some of the organisations we have worked with] basically praising the participants and the project, for the professionalism, how it was run.'

5.2.4 Programme staff and support

Staff were generally positive about relationships with one another, however there was a perception among the staff in Wales that the programme was under-resourced therefore not capable of mirroring the programme in Ireland, with the officer in Wales arguing that this was 'impossible with the resources we had, and the logistics'. The Wales officer also reported; 'I had a blank canvas, so what I built, I built myself... I have done everything'. Staff also drew attention to the involvement of the Welsh Football trust in the project;

'I think there could be support from the Welsh Football Trust, at times we have been left to it, maybe sometimes communication could have been better.'

This concern was echoed by a Project FUTSAL Wales participant, who perceived shortcomings in the commitment of the Welsh Football Trust;

'I would like to see more of an input from the people who organise it, for them to show an interest in the hubs, because we haven't seen anybody, apart from Tony, it's just a complete lack of interest to be honest.'

Concern was also expressed over the ongoing relationships with local clubs, with some issues emerging over the extent of involvement of the clubs. Increased involvement from job centres was also highlighted as potentially beneficial to the programme.

'I would like to see more involvement [from the clubs] with the project. As far as developing this into a larger and bigger enterprise, they need to have more involvement' 'There needs to be a template for each up, with strict guidelines as to what their responsibilities are.'

'More of an involvement with the job centres and organisations like that, in terms of signposting participants.'

Staff described giving valuable support to one another in their roles, and identified the benefits of staff meetings with the Wales officer, as well as the opportunity to meet with staff from the Irish hubs. Overall, staff were conscious of the difference in the operation of Project FUTSAL in Ireland and Wales.

'We have a staff meeting every month to basically just compare and contrast what we are doing differently...basically to form action plans around anything.'

'We went down to Cardiff, all of the hub assistants to meet with our equivalents in Ireland to compare and contrast the differences, it has been quite eye-opening, it has been quite different.'

5.2.5 Gender

The Wales hubs had few female participants, with numbers varying from zero to three or four participants. Staff acknowledged that it was difficult to attract female participants onto the programme but indicated that they were endeavouring to improve levels of female football participation locally and nationally, and that this could potentially contribute to improved numbers over time.

'The two we have had in [the hub] in previous courses, and they were fantastic and they were involved with girl's teams but it seems to be the same in other areas there is not much interest.'

'The Football Trust has a massive female football programme, and an International girls' team...and on a local level they have regional squads.'

'We have got involved with under 10s girls turn up and play...the participants will be coaching on that...We will try and increase and try and get more women and girls involved in football and hopefully it will have a knock on effect on this course.'

'Colwyn Bay have set up a ladies team and have been inundated with women who want to sign up for the team, so were hoping to get more. Maybe on the next course, it will encourage more women to come.'

5.3 Conclusion

This section explored the perceptions of participants, officers, interns, hub assistants and education providers in Ireland and Wales, across the duration of Project FUTSAL. The conversations explored programme experiences, including opportunities presented and challenges faced by participants; teaching and education including course structure and comparisons to other experiences of education; education provider perspectives; and training and support provided by the FAI and the Welsh Football Trust.

There are some similarities and differences between the Irish and Welsh hubs in participant profiles, levels of engagement and stakeholder perspectives. Participants were recruited by similar means in Ireland and Wales, however participants in the Irish hubs entered the programme with a higher standard of prior education in general and this was reflected in the programme content. In Wales, participants undertook Essential Skills numeracy and literacy modules. In both contexts, some of the academic content was a source of frustration for participants, although there was general agreement on the value of the work. In both contexts, while students typically had prior football experience, not all had coaching experience and this was not deemed necessary for participation. Similarly, group integration across all hubs was positive, regardless of differences in demographic variables such as age profiles. In both contexts, participants saw the programme as a 'stepping stone', providing them with improved confidence and

additional qualifications, with a general perspective that while it may not lead to direct employment, it may facilitate advancement to further education or new opportunities. While participants in the Irish hubs were particularly interested in advancing to further education beyond the programme, participants in Wales were generally less optimistic about post programme pathways.

For participants in all hubs in Ireland and Wales, the programme presented some challenges. In Ireland, participants expressed concern over access to social welfare payments, and in the rural hub, travel was an issue, though this mostly related to the location of the hub and the distance travelled. In Wales, more participants were concerned about travel and transport costs, possibly a reflection of the lower rates of social welfare payments.

Participants were largely satisfied with programme content; however some participants in Wales were less motivated to participate in the Essential Skills components. Across all hubs, participants were particularly enthusiastic about the football and coaching elements of the course.

Similarly, students and staff reported positive experiences of volunteering and disability football training and events. Across the hubs, participants drew positive comparisons with other experiences of education, describing their enthusiasm for the subject, the support of staff and their relationship with educational providers as important. In Ireland, the addition of interns in the second year of hubs was described as particularly useful by both officers and participants, providing additional organizational support to the programme, but also encouragement to current students.

In Ireland, the educational providers established positive working relationships with development officers. Development officers also gave a positive overall assessment of the work of the tutors. In Wales, while the officer and hub assistants described positive working relationships with the individual tutors, some organizational and management issues with the colleges presented. In Ireland, officers found time management a challenge, with many balancing competing workloads and commitments, but they described how this improved after the 'bedding down' period of the first year. Staff in

Ireland were generally satisfied with the support provided by the FAI. In Wales, staff reported that improved support and involvement from the local clubs and the Welsh Football Trust would have been beneficial in the overall running and management of the project.

6. Discussion

The evaluation of Project FUTSAL was informed directly by the aims and objectives of the programme. Project FUTSAL aimed to use football as a social inclusion tool in order to facilitate innovative community regeneration. It aimed to provide education and work opportunities for people in disadvantaged areas and to influence and assist community regeneration via employment and volunteerism in the field of sport. The relationship between physical activity, community wellbeing and social capital is borne out in the literature, with research studies highlighting the contribution of sport in various contexts to public health, social cohesion (Delaney & Fahey, 2005) and social mobility (Spaaij, 2009). Various statutory and voluntary organisations have utilised sport as a medium to promote social inclusion, but it is clear that sport 'cannot be viewed in isolation from other social spheres, such as the family, education, labour market and government' (Spaaij, 2009: 262).

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme in providing education and delivering outcomes, a number of research methods were employed. Longitudinal data collection included the administration of two separate questionnaires to each participant on site, both at baseline (programme entry) and end point (completion of programme). One of these questionnaires dealt with community and social participation and general wellbeing, while the other focused on physical wellbeing and health. Together, when administered at the beginning and end of the programme, they facilitated the measurement of some of the important outcomes for Project FUTSAL participants. A post-participation survey was also administered by phone with programme participants, providing insight into pathways to third level education and employability. Quantitative data on volunteer hours was also provided by the programme coordinators, contributing to analysis of community volunteerism.

In addition to this, a series of qualitative focus groups with participants were conducted, as well as interviews with hub officers, interns, assistants and associated training staff and tutors. The qualitative data provided insight into the context, opportunities and challenges faced by Project FUTSAL organisers and participants, the relationship between the stakeholders and the benefits and challenges of the cross-border partnership, informing further analysis and recommendations. A final component of the

research design was the completion of a value-for-money study. The study focussed on one hub, analysing savings to the state, and concentrating on two main outcomes, namely health and employment.

This section discusses the findings in relation to the key research questions, while also providing a set of recommendations. The identified research questions were as follows:

- Has the project contributed to positive outcomes for participants?
- Has the project contributed to community development and regeneration?
- What is the effectiveness of the programme, as perceived by the various stakeholders?
- What value for money does the intervention provide?

6.1 Has the project contributed to positive outcomes for participants?

Research suggests that much of the value gained from football is social in nature, including feeling part of the locality and the generation of local pride; building friendships; having a sense of community and communality with other people; and sharing experiences with other supporters (Brown et al., 2010: 51). It has also been found (Coalter et al., 2000) that some of the greatest gains from activity sports programmes relate to psychological health and increased feelings of wellbeing. Sherry reports that these benefits are most noticeable among marginalised and excluded groups and can extend well beyond the initial sense of achievement, providing opportunities for people to be active and accepted members of the community, restoring self-esteem and developing a sense of belonging, all of which are identifiable indicators of social capital (Sherry, 2010:68). A combination of quantitative and qualitative measures provide insight into the ways in which Project FUTSAL has contributed to positive outcomes for participants in both Ireland and Wales, including improved levels of health and fitness and enhanced wellbeing, confidence, self-esteem, motivation and subjective agency.

6.1.1 Ireland

In Ireland, longitudinal quantitative data indicates increased social and community participation and voluntary activity over time. While 49.6% of participants in the Irish

hubs reported helping with or attending activities organised in their local area at least once a week prior to participation, this rose to 69.7% at the end point. In addition, the number of participants actively providing help for other people (excluding work, family or volunteering) within the previous twelve months also increased significantly for the Irish cohort, with 25.6% of participants reported providing help at baseline, increasing to 42.7% at end point. Further, participants showed an increase in engagement in work for voluntary/charitable organisations. While 34.7% of participants indicated that they participated in work for voluntary or charitable organisations at least once a week at baseline, this figure had increased to 68.9% by end point.

These findings indicate a positive outcome for Project FUTSAL in relation to enhancing community participation and involvement by participants. Equally, the level of this engagement indicates the direct use and application of skills gained through the programme in local communities. This engagement has significant potential benefits for local clubs and schools in terms of the numbers of volunteers, particularly those with relevant skills, working in their communities and for children and young people participating in sports at a community level.

Additional longitudinal data from the Irish cohort shows improved commitment to physical activities and levels of satisfaction with general health over time. The overall cohort reported relatively high levels of satisfaction with their general health at baseline, with 71% stating that they were 'satisfied' (49.6%) or 'very satisfied' (21.4%). At end point this cumulative figure increased to 85.8% and in particular the number reporting themselves as 'very satisfied' with their general health rose from 21.4% to 40%. Participants also reported improvements in their fitness levels between baseline and end point. The cohort showed an improvement in those describing their fitness levels as 'very good' - going from 15.4% of participants to 32.5% - while conversely, those describing their fitness levels as 'bad'/'very bad' decreased from 17.1% to 2.5%. Participants also described improved energy levels between baseline and end point. Those describing their energy levels as either 'good' or 'very good' had risen from 58.9% to 77.3% by end point. Awards data also highlights the success of the programme in Ireland. With an average of 25 participants commencing in each of the seven hubs, there was a 38.3% full award rate in 2012/2013, and a 33.7% full award rate in

2013/2014, higher than the 2012 national average of 22.7% for full major award achievements by individuals undertaking Level 5-6 awards (ESRI, 2014).

Cumulatively, these findings indicate improvements amongst participants across a number of measures of physical fitness and general health. While not a key intended outcome of the programme, the figures indicate an increased level of physical activity and improved energy levels that relate to important individual benefits for participants. More generally, such outcomes can be understood in relation to an improved level of general wellbeing accruing to the participants through their involvement with Project FUTSAL.

Participants were also asked to respond to a series of statements adapted from the European Social Survey, summarised in the Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Changes Reported in Wellbeing Statements

Statement	Change	Statistical Significance	Gender Baseline	Gender End point
I'm always optimistic about my future	Positive	Not significant	No difference	Males more positive
In general, I feel very positive about myself	Positive	Significant	Males more positive	No difference
At times I feel as if I am a failure	Positive	Not significant	No difference	No difference
On the whole, my life is close to how I would like it to be	Positive	Not significant	No difference	Females more positive
I feel I am free to decide for myself how to live my life	Positive	Not significant	No difference	No difference
In my daily life, I seldom have time to do the things I really enjoy	Positive	Not significant	No difference	No difference
In my daily life I get very little chance to show how capable I am	Positive	Not significant	No difference	No difference
I love learning new things	Negative	Not significant	No difference	Males more positive
Most days I feel a sense of achievement from what I do	Positive	Significant	No difference	No difference
I like planning and preparing for the future	Positive	Significant	No difference	No difference
When things go wrong in my life, it generally takes me a long time to get back	Negative	Not significant	No difference	No difference

to normal				
My life involves a lot of physical activity	Positive	Not significant	No difference	No difference

In summary, ten positive changes were reported, three of which were statistically significant. Two negative changes were identified for the full sample, but neither was found to be statistically significant. One difference was recorded for gender at baseline, with males responding more positively to feeling 'positive' about themselves, while three differences were recorded at end point: female participants were more likely to report their lives as being 'closer to how they would like them to be' and male participants were more likely to feel 'optimistic about the future' and to 'enjoy learning new things'.

These outcomes in relation to improved wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem were supported by qualitative data, where participants reported improved confidence, subjective agency and motivation.

'That is the major word, confidence, it inspires confidence in you.'

'I personally think there's a lot of stuff, if I have been told on the first day, there's no way I would have done it. Like, we do exercise to music or circuit training classes, where we have to stand up and actually put on the class. I would have said no way, but then you do them. And when the third one comes around, you're not even thinking like that anymore. So, confidence is definitely a big thing.'

'You are confident, you are on the ball, it is just a whole different mindset and if there is opportunities there, you are more likely to take them up and react to them whereas you mightn't have if you didn't do the course [sic].'

Participants were also positive about the ways in which participation on the programme brought structure and routine to their lives, providing a new opportunity and improved subjective agency and motivation.

'I think from the course it just gets you up and going again, motivation like, as I said I spent two and a half years unemployed and I done the course, it got me motivated again and I promised myself I am not going back to lying around all day doing nothing. I will do something. So in that case it is good to get people involved in football and sport and that but personally it just makes you feel a bit better about yourself.'

These findings point to improved outcomes and progress for Project FUTSAL participants in Ireland, particularly in the context of subjective outlook and agency, with participants feeling significantly more positive about themselves, with 'a sense of achievement' and 'planning for the future'.

6.1.2 Wales

Longitudinal quantitative data for Wales indicates some increased social and community participation and voluntary activity over time. For the matched group, while reported levels of meeting socially several times a week or more with friends, relatives or work colleagues decreased between baseline and end point, moving from 75% to 65%, this decrease can possibly be explained by participants have less available social time during involvement with Project FUTSAL. Levels of community participation and voluntary activity showed some small increases for the matched cohort in Wales. While 55% stated that they had helped with or attended activities in their local area at least once a month at baseline, this figure increased to 60% at end point. The number of participants actively providing help for other people at least once a month increased from 30% at baseline to 47.4% at end point. Unusually, while 25% reported never actively providing help for other people at baseline, this figure increased to 36.8% at end point. In the baseline survey, 31.6% of participants indicated that they participated in work for voluntary or charitable organisations at least once a week, while at follow-up this figure decreased marginally to 30%. The lack of improvements in relation to social and community participation may well relate to the much shorter duration of the programme in Wales (three months), which afforded less time for participants to become involved in community activities in their local areas.

There were lower levels of reported improvement in health and fitness in Wales, probably also a result of the considerably shorter programme. In relation to participants' satisfaction with their general health, between baseline and end point those indicating they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' increased from 75% to 80%. Equally, participants' description of their fitness levels shows relatively little change, with a small decrease of those describing them a 'good'/'very good' from 70% at baseline to 65% at end point. On the other hand there was an increase in those describing them as 'very good' from 20% to 35%. Overall participation in fitness

activities did increase between baseline and end point. At baseline, 60% of participants reported engaging in fitness activities 'frequently' or 'very often', while at end point this cumulative figure was 80%. In particular, those reporting that they did so 'very often' increased from 35% to 50%. The figure for those reporting exercising four times a week or more remained unchanged between baseline and end point. In relation to participants' description of their energy levels, the reporting of this as 'good'/'very good' increased from 60% to 70% between baseline and end point. However, the numbers stating their energy levels were very good decreased from 40% to 20%, while those reporting them as 'good' increased from 20% to 50%. There were therefore some contrasting findings in the data for Wales, although overall they indicate small increases in community participation and voluntary activity alongside improved levels of participation in fitness activities.

Qualitative data provides further insight on outcomes for participants in Wales, with a mixture of responses. The participants described the benefits of taking part in Project FUTSAL in social terms, often referring to making new friends and getting to know people. Participants also described the programme in terms of motivation to pursue activities daily, compared with 'doing nothing'. Others described the educational outcomes and possible avenues for employment post-participation.

'One of the best things about it was meeting people, being friends and then getting to do activities and tournaments.'

'It gets me out of the house, otherwise I might have stayed at home playing the computer and doing nothing.'

'The coaching side, because that's what it's about really, gaining the coaching certificates.'

'I am going to get my C licence in coaching, which allows me to coach a football team in Wales.'

'Yes, I would recommend the course, I think it was well tutored, not too difficult but not too easy.'

It is also of note that some participants were less enthusiastic about their prospects after the programme, with some indicating that 'there are no paid opportunities' for graduates and that at the end of the programme 'there is nothing'. In some hubs, graduates returned to complete an additional run of the programme. Participants also

expressed concern that while they grew ‘more confident’ throughout the duration of the programme, this may not be sustained, with one participant stating that ‘after the course is finished ‘[I] tend to go back into the state of not wanting to go out or anything like that’.

6.1.3 Post-participation data

Qualitative and quantitative data also provides more detail on graduate pathways and opportunities post-programme. Post-participation survey data (n=80) from a phone survey administered to participants in Ireland shows positive post-participation pathways in terms of employment and progression to further education/training. The figures represent a substantial reduction in the level of unemployment experienced by the sample prior to participation in Project FUTSAL. While 40% of participants indicated that they had been mostly unemployed, 16.3% had been mostly employed full-time, 17.5% had been mostly employed part-time, and 21.3% had been in further education/training. Participants also sustained their commitments to voluntary activities post-programme. Of those moving into employment, a range of roles were identified including work in sports and sports sales, general sales, customer service, warehouse work, porter work and JobBridge⁹ work. In addition, 21.3% had been in further education/training, again in a variety of contexts. A range of courses had been pursued; most continued studying in the area of sports/leisure at different levels, including sports and exercise, strength and conditioning, and leisure and recreation. Other courses included social studies, financial management, Train the Trainer¹⁰ and computer-based courses.

Also relevant here – and not fully reflected in the figures above because they are based on a sample survey - is the fact that a significant proportion of students completing the programme went on to work with the FAI as interns. In year one of the programme (2011/2012), 18 graduates were recruited by the FAI as interns. In year two

⁹JobBridge is the National Internship Scheme providing work experience placements for Interns for a 6 or 9 month period.

¹⁰ The Train the Trainer course is designed to equip a participant with the skills and knowledge to run, manage and deliver effective training programmes.

(2012/2013), this figure rose to 30 graduates, with 14 interns recruited from the year three graduate (2013/2014).

These post-participation survey figures indicate a substantial reduction in the level of unemployment experienced by the cohort prior to participation in Project FUTSAL. Overall, participants were positive about the impact of their participation in the programme. Participants indicated a high level of agreement that their participation in Project FUTSAL helped prepare them for employment, improved their long-term career prospects, improved their coaching skills and prepared them for further education/training.

An important outcome for participants was improved subjective agency, with participants future-looking, considering new avenues and opportunities post-programme and inspired by potential new work prospects.

'...people are on about there is no opportunities in the country at all but there is opportunities there [sic], you just have to be prepared to go and look and find them... Kick Start 1, Kick Start 2 or Youth Cert, it can open up the area of travel for yourself, to go abroad to do coaching as well. Maybe young lads have it in their mind they want to go and play professional football, but if that doesn't work out, if you go and do your education, you can go coaching and still be involved in the sport but not at that high level.'

'...one lad that has got a Kick Start 1, he has gone to California for the summer, nine months, paid, and accommodation paid for and all and he only has Kick Start 1.'

'And Robbie is going as well...he is one of the interns...he is off now at the end of June, he is going to Canada.'

Data from the post-participation survey also indicates a greater level of agreement with the relevance of Project FUTSAL for improving coaching skills and preparation for further education/training. This suggests that the programme, while improving employability for participants, is also very important to participants' reengagement with education or as part of a process of further education/training.

Overall, Project FUTSAL has contributed to positive outcomes for participants in both Ireland and Wales. These outcomes include improved levels of health and

fitness; and improved wellbeing, confidence, self-esteem, motivation and subjective agency. The value of the programme extends beyond direct employment outcomes to success in engaging participants, opening up of personal development pathways including advancement to further education, contributing to improved agency and improved perceptions of employability in the longer term.

6.2 Has the project contributed to community development and regeneration?

In addition to the positive outcomes identified above in terms of post-participation pathways through advancement to further education and employment, improved subjective agency, and motivation of participants, the most effective component of the programme in relation to community development was the volunteering element, achieved through work experience in a range of contexts, including work with schools and the organisation of football festivals and pan-disability tournaments. The high social and economic value of volunteering has been identified in the literature (Coalter et al., 2000). In addition, Spaaj (2013) identifies the importance of volunteering to outcome measurement. Spaaj advocates a shift away from measuring outcomes in terms of job attainment and instead recommends approaches that are responsive to the local area within which the projects are embedded, including providing people with volunteering opportunities (2013: 1622).

Volunteering has played a key role in the delivery of Project FUTSAL across Ireland and Wales, contributing to community engagement as well as individual development for participants. Staff and participants across all hubs were enthusiastic about volunteerism and committing to volunteer activities in the community. Staff and participants recognised the value of volunteering in terms of community and individual development. Data provided above regarding outcomes for Ireland indicates that participants' engagement with voluntary work increased from 34.7% at baseline to 68.9% by end point. Post-participation data also shows sustained voluntary activity post-programme. On the other hand, data for Wales showed little change over the (shorter) duration of the programme.

Volunteerism provides mutually beneficial positive outcomes for local schools, the local community and disability groups. Data on hours committed to volunteering collected centrally by the FAI indicates a cumulative total of 22,470 volunteering hours for the 2012/2013 academic year across all hubs in Ireland, benefitting a total of 61,269 participants. Corresponding data from Wales showed a commitment of 6762 volunteer hours, benefitting a total of 3,254 participants. The types of activities undertaken in Ireland varied, including volunteering in schools, clubs and with disability groups as part of work experience for the programme, in addition to working with the Late Night Leagues¹¹ and match volunteering. Longitudinal data collected from participant surveys shows increased frequency in participation in voluntary activities from baseline to end point. In Wales, volunteerism is incorporated through football camps, FUTSAL tournaments, a range of sports days and also match and stadia support.

Additional qualitative data also highlights the ways in which volunteerism has contributed to individual personal development among participants, particularly in terms of commitment to their communities. Staff noted:

'Once they finish the course, they will have a link with the club, you build a relationship with them, they want to be involved and to volunteer...There is an ethos of not just the course has ended, but getting involved.'

'There are two lads who are doing a lot of work in their own community which I think they will develop that and hopefully through the voluntary work that they are doing will get some paid work from it.'

The benefits of volunteering were also highlighted by participants and staff in Wales, particularly in the context of sustaining connections with clubs and the community as graduates, and contributing to improved opportunities.

'We don't just leave them hanging at the end of the course, there are exit routes, into local organisations.'

The pan-disability element of Project FUTSAL contributed to community development by engaging the participants in related coaching and training and through the

¹¹ The Late Night Leagues are a diversionary programme incorporating soccer leagues at various locations across Dublin, aimed at encouraging at risk young people to participate in meaningful activities.

organisation of pan-disability events, creating a resource for local clubs wishing to engage in pan-disability football. In the spirit of inclusiveness, a planned element of Project FUTSAL from the outset was the setting up pan-disability football teams in the hubs, with a view to encouraging and assisting local communities to support the delivery of football to a wider range of players with disabilities in their communities. The model drew on shared learnings from the Welsh Football Trust model of community-based pan-disability football teams. Regular engagement between officers in the FAI and the Welsh Football Trust (WFT) during the course of Project FUTSAL enabled the sharing of ideas, contributing to the development of the pan-disability component of Project FUTSAL football. Visits made to view the Welsh programme by the FAI Football for All coordinator enabled liaison with WFT officials, local pan-disability clubs and parents of players involved, with a view to progressing and sustaining the pan-disability programme.

While the pan-disability teams themselves were not established, there were a range of very valuable related outcomes. Project participants in Ireland were trained to deliver pan-disability football sessions, and hub participants were linked with local football clubs which developed pan-disability football programmes and provided regular coaching sessions. In Clonmel, two hub participants set up a regular Saturday morning pan-disability football club which saw up to twenty five children with varying disabilities participate in football on a regular basis. A hub participant from Dublin now manages the Irish amputee football team while another Dublin project graduate coaches with the Irish Paralympics football team. In Wales, hub participants have also been active helping to deliver football events to groups involved in mental health and autism. During the course of Project FUTSAL, three national participation events were run with teams travelling from Wales to join the Irish clubs in pan-disability football festivals. Two such festivals were delivered at Shamrock Rovers FC stadium in Tallaght in 2012 and 2013 with a further indoor festival delivered at the National Basketball Arena in Tallaght in 2014. Feedback relating to disability elements of the programme was mostly very positive, with staff reporting the experiences as beneficial for participants and participants reporting encouraging experiences working with people with disabilities.

In addition to outcomes in relation to employment, employability and progression to further education, Project FUTSAL has actively promoted volunteerism as a means of community development and regeneration. In addition, the pan-disability training has created a resource for local clubs wishing to engage in pan-disability football. These elements of the project have been of mutual benefit to participants and to schools, clubs and the local communities in which the hubs were based.

6.3 What is the effectiveness of the programme, as perceived by the various stakeholders?

Qualitative data from officers, interns, hub assistants and education providers in Ireland and Wales, across the duration of Project FUTSAL sheds light on the stakeholder perceptions of the effectiveness of the programme.

6.3.1 Ireland

Participants in the Irish hubs were entering the programme with a higher level of prior educational attainment in general and this was reflected in the programme content. In the post-participation survey 67.5% of participants in Ireland stated that the Leaving Certificate was their highest educational qualification, with 12.5% having their Junior/Intermediate/Group Certificate, 8.8% holding a FETAC Qualification, 2.5% with a technical/vocational qualification and 5% stating that they had no prior qualifications. Participants typically had football experience, but this was not deemed necessary for participation. Group integration across all groups was positive, regardless of differences in demographic variables such as age and gender profiles. As reported in outcomes above, participants saw the programme as a 'stepping stone' contributing to personal development pathways by providing improved confidence and motivation. Students reflected that while it may not lead to direct employment, it may facilitate progression to further education or new opportunities.

'The way the course was run, the education part of it, everything was just absolutely perfect for me. I just want to push this as far as I can, and obviously it is just a dream that something comes out of this at the end.'

In Ireland, the development officers, educational providers and local authorities reported positive working relationships. Equally, development officers also indicated an overall positive view of the tutors. The addition of interns in the second year of hubs was described as particularly useful by officers and participants, providing additional organizational support to the programme, but also encouragement to current students. Participants were largely satisfied with programme content in Ireland. Staff and students typically reported positive experiences of volunteering and disability football training and events.

'It's win-win, the schools are getting great training, the kids are getting great training, the coaches are getting great confidence going in there.'

Across the hubs, participants drew positive comparisons to other experiences of education, describing their enthusiasm for the subject, the support of staff and their relationship with educational providers as important. It is clear that the adult education approach is successful in this regard.

'I think a lot of the participants did find it different to their school experience which would have been quite negative for a long time, that they welcomed that aspect.'

It is also clear that football was an important contributing factor to participants joining and continuing with Project FUTSAL. This is reflected in the literature, with Coalter et al. (2000) reporting that sport can be used to attract under-achieving pupils to educational programmes, and also suggesting that links with clubs in the development of integrated sport/education programmes are mutually beneficial. Spaaj (2009) found that sport acts as a useful 'hook' for engaging disadvantaged young people, while also playing a role in linking them to social networks outside their local community, enabling them to leverage a wider range of resources 'within and beyond the immediate community' (Spaaj, 2009, 261).

Some challenges presented in Ireland. Officers found time management a challenge, with many balancing competing workloads and commitments, but most thought that this improved after the 'bedding down' period of the first year. Staff in Ireland were generally satisfied with the support provided by the FAI.

'We were very apprehensive last time round but we've found it easier this time. The FAI have respect for the fact that it takes more than the number of hours allocated.'

In some cases, participants expressed concern over access to social welfare payments, and in the rural hub, travel was an issue, though this mostly related to the location of the hub and the distance travelled. This, along with the likelihood of reaching saturation point of potential participants may have had an impact on outcomes.

Achieving the gender quota was also challenging in Ireland, with the urban hubs being more successful. Respondents made it clear that female participants were actively targeted but with less success than hoped. It is anticipated that more recent initiatives and an overall growth in female football will contribute to improved levels of

participation in this context in the future. It was found that where female participants joined, they had a particularly keen interest in football.

'...the girls on the course last year were all brilliant footballers, better than the boys. Whereas the boys are saying, well I play a bit of ball, I will do this course. But only girls who are really, really good at football are going to sign up for a football course.'

'We started with seven girls. One pulled out at the start, another had an accident, so there will be five of us finished. The interest wasn't there this year but from other girls speaking with us girls, they are showing interest. If the course runs next year, there is interest for it.'

In Ireland, staff reported a variety of reasons for participant drop-off, with some indicating that it was typical of similar programmes and others reporting that it was higher than normal. Generally, staff were satisfied, reporting that attendance was good. The commitment of the ETB and FAI staff was also highlighted as particularly important in retaining participants.

'I don't think the people who have stopped coming is a reflection on the course itself. I know quite a few of them anyway and it is just laziness on their part. Two of them live on the same road as me and I used to get them up every morning and then I started staying somewhere else...and then they just stopped coming then. So I don't think that reflects on the course, it's just laziness on their part.'

'The attendance was good. I mean there was a core group that would attend every single class and then there was a few that would jump in and out. But I mean you are going to get that across the board anyway.'

'A lot of them have stuck through it, which is a testament to the Tutors to keep them involved and obviously to themselves, that they were motivated enough.'

6.3.2 Wales

Participants in Wales entered the programme with relatively low levels of formal educational attainment compared to the Irish cohort. Accordingly, they undertook Essential Skills educational components focussing on literacy and numeracy. Some participants in Wales were less motivated to participate in these Essential Skills components, but were more enthusiastic about the football and coaching elements of the course, again highlighting the value of football as a means of engagement.

Similarly, while students typically had football experience, not all had coaching experience and this was not deemed necessary for participation. Group integration across all hubs was perceived as positive, regardless of differences in demographic variables such as age and gender profiles. Similarly, students and staff reported positive experiences of volunteering and disability football training and events.

'One of the best things about it was meeting people, being friends and then getting to do activities and tournaments.'

'It gets me out of the house, otherwise I might have stayed at home playing the computer and doing nothing.'

'The coaching side, because that's what it's about really, gaining the coaching certificates.'

'Once they finish the course, they will have a link with the club, you build a relationship with them, they want to be involved and to volunteer...There is an ethos of not just the course has ended, but getting involved.'

Participants frequently drew positive comparisons with other previous experiences of education. It is clear that the adult education approach was successful in this regard. In contrast, while the officers and hub assistants described positive working relationships with the individual tutors, some organizational and management issues with the colleges were present. Staff reported that improved support and involvement from the local clubs and the Welsh Football Trust would have been beneficial in the overall running and management of the project.

There were a number of other challenges. Meeting the gender quota was also a difficulty across all hubs in Wales. Participants were also particularly concerned about travel and transport costs, possibly a reflection of the lower rates of social welfare payments. This was also attributed to local transport options and locations of hubs. Specifically, the cost of bus transport was referred to, with assistants in some hubs reporting repayment of costs at the end of the programme. While it was reported that carpooling in some hubs helped overcome the issue, this wasn't an option for participants across all hubs.

'It has been an issue, especially with travel costs with buses because in this hub, none of them have their own transport.'

'Some can't afford to come, it is £6.80 for a return ticket for some of them and this is three days a week out of their benefits, so I understand where they are coming from.'

'We can pay their travel, we take their tickets and pay them at the end of the course.'

It is also of note that some participants were less enthusiastic about their prospects after the programme, with some indicating that 'there are no paid opportunities' for graduates and that at the end of the programme 'there is nothing'. In some hubs, graduates returned to complete an additional run of the programme. Participants also expressed concern that while they grew 'more confident' throughout the duration of the programme, this may not be sustained, with one participant stating that:

'After the course is finished '[I] tend to go back into the state of not wanting to go out or anything like that.'

In addition to some concerns around participant opportunities and prospects post-programme, some challenges presented in terms of student motivation and drop off rates. Staff provided reasons why some participants failed to complete the course, reporting that for some the course wasn't suitable and for others alternative commitments were an issue, and 'of course we've had a few who have dropped out'. It was also reported that some participants failed to show up and eventually departed, often down to 'a bit of a motivation issue'.

'We started with 12 candidates of which four have already gone into full time employment. We have another two here today that will be going into full time employment as well.'

The different structure, content and pacing of the programme in Wales has undoubtedly contributed to different perceptions of Project FUTSAL. Overall, participants were positive about the social and community participation aspects of the programme. Participants were also more satisfied with the football components of the programme, and less enthusiastic about the educational offerings, particularly the emphasis on Essential Skills modules.

6.3.3 Additional perceptions

Additional data from the post-participation survey administered to Irish participants provides further insight into their perceptions. Respondents indicated a high level of agreement that their participation in Project FUTSAL helped prepare them for employment, improved their long-term career prospects, improved their coaching skills and prepared them for further education/training. Respondents also highlighted a number of key benefits arising from their participation in Project FUTSAL. These included: improved communication/public-speaking skills; enhanced confidence and self-esteem; improved health, fitness and general wellbeing; new skills including IT skills, MS Word proficiency, CV preparation; enhanced academic learning, opportunities for personal development and progression into further education or employment; and improved social skills, group work skills and enhanced social networks.

Almost two thirds of participants (64.5%) indicated that they would be very likely to take Project FUTSAL again, with a further 14.5% indicating that would be likely. An overwhelming majority (95%) of participants indicated that they would recommend Project FUTSAL. A number of reasons were given for this, including: renewed commitment to local area through volunteering and coaching in the community; completion of coaching badges and opportunities to complete Youth Certificate and progress to further coaching training; improved daily motivation, returning to education, preparation for the routine of employment; improved opportunities for career progression, a 'stepping stone' to further education, and improved employment prospects; completion of disability and diversity training, new awareness of disability and diversity issues; the opportunity to meet new people and establish new friendships and new social networks.

6.4 What value for money does the intervention provide?

As part of the evaluation of Project FUTSAL a value-for-money study was conducted to assess the potential economic benefits of the programme; particularly with respect to the potential savings accruing both for public/government expenditure and to individuals. In general, Project FUTSAL is consistent with a broader suite of policies and interventions aiming to improve participation in education, training and employment and improved outcomes in relation to employability and overall wellbeing. Two key outcomes of Project FUTSAL were identified as having the most material impact in terms of economic value.

Firstly, employment benefits have significant economic impact in terms of both the improved financial wellbeing of participants and the potential cost savings for the state. Secondly, the health outcomes that have been demonstrated through the primary research indicate improvements in physical wellbeing that can deliver long-term economic value.

Accordingly, three economically-based outcomes have been identified: increased employment salary, lowered levels of unemployment and a benefit to the state in terms of increased taxes and reduced benefits. Three non-economic outcomes have also been included: impacts on physical health; mental health; and crime. Outcomes were calculated using existing data relating to costs for young people and society if they are not in education, training or employment. Primarily UK data was used owing to gaps in or lack of relevant Irish data. However, it is anticipated that the data is comparable owing to social and cultural similarities.

Calculations were made using a benefit period of seven years and including anticipated benefits along with a small number of possible negative outcomes. Utilising the values attributed to the identified economic and social outcomes and projecting over seven years the annual saving is approximately €12,374 per participant. In relation to health outcomes, participant data indicates an overall increased level of exercise/fitness activities, albeit with a relatively high baseline figure; this points to lower levels of health risks for participants over time. Using national data on the development of cardio-vascular diseases, whereby 30% of the population are at risk, and based on

research findings regarding the reduction in risk of CVD that can be brought about by improved fitness, it is estimated that the annual saving per incident avoided is €1,575.

These figures represent potential public expenditure savings for individuals participating in Project FUTSAL, providing additional endorsement of the significance and value of the programme in contributing to a range of positive outcomes for participants and the state.

6.5 Strengths, Challenges & Recommendations

6.5.1 Strengths

Based on the findings of this research, it is possible to identify a number of strengths of Project FUTSAL:

- Project FUTSAL has contributed to positive outcomes for participants in both Ireland and Wales. There is statistical evidence of such outcomes including improved levels of health and fitness in addition to improved confidence, self-esteem, motivation and subjective agency. Overall, these findings signify improved wellbeing for participants.
- Whilst there is value in the programme in creating direct employment for participants, it is particularly strong in engaging participants, contributing to the opening up of personal development pathways including advancement to further education, contributing to improved agency and improved employability in the longer term.
- The volunteer dimension of the programme has made a valuable contribution to community development and regeneration.
- The commitment to pan-disability training has created a resource for local clubs wishing to engage in pan-disability football.
- Football was particularly successful as a 'hook' in attracting and retaining students across Project FUTSAL hubs, highlighting the importance of sports-based programmes in promoting social inclusion and participation in education.
- Positive working relationships with education providers and local authorities contributed significantly to the success of Project FUTSAL in Ireland. The commitment of project staff is another key factor.
- The adult education approach taken in the project has been successful, with participants reporting that Project FUTSAL compared favourably with other experiences of education.
- Project FUTSAL represents value for money, in that its positive outcomes can be assessed as representing potential public expenditure savings.

- The cross-national collaborative approach to Project FUTSAL enabled opportunities for shared learning, creating the potential to inform adult education and sports inclusion policy at a local and national level in both Ireland and Wales.
- Project FUTSAL has provided participants with very positive subjective experiences. Almost all participants surveyed post-programme in Ireland (95%) would recommend the project.
- The integration of an evaluation study into the project has contributed to a growing body of research on sport and social inclusion. The research contributes empirical data which is of value in the policy context, in Ireland and Wales and further afield.

6.5.2 Challenges

A number of challenges have been identified during the research, highlighting opportunities for learning for future sports inclusion programmes:

- Officers in Ireland found time management a challenge, with many balancing competing workloads and commitments, although they spoke in positive terms about support from the FAI. It is clear that programme interns provided additional valuable support in this regard.
- Staff in Wales were committed to the programme but expressed some concern over the resources and support provided by the Welsh Football Trust. Some of these difficulties may have had an impact on participant outcomes.
- The structure, content and pacing of the programme in Wales differed significantly from the programme in Ireland. While this makes a direct comparison difficult, the shorter duration of the programme in Wales may have contributed to less positive outcomes for participants, in addition to less optimism in relation to post-participation pathways.
- The programme in Wales was designed to meet the needs of participants with lower prior levels of formal education, as evidenced by the inclusion of Essential Skills educational components focusing on literacy and numeracy. Some

participants in Wales were less motivated to participate in these Essential Skills components.

- While participants across hubs expressed concern in relation to travel and transport, this was a particular issue for those attending rural hubs in Ireland and Wales, and may have contributed to drop-off rates and reduced levels of participation by those affected.
- The question of reaching 'saturation point' of potential participants was an issue in less-populated rural hubs, which would have implications for sustainability.
- Achieving the intended gender balance was a challenge in both Ireland and Wales, with the urban hubs more successful in this regard. While male participants were more inclined to respond to general advertising, female participation was often encouraged through personal contact with staff. It is anticipated that improved initiatives relating to girls' and women's football could contribute to improved levels of participation in the future.
- The administration of the research required ongoing organisational support from all staff in Ireland and Wales. It is important that staff have an understanding of the research process and the value of the research within the context of the overall work of the organisation.

6.5.3 Recommendations

Based on the strengths and challenges identified here, the following recommendations can be made:

- The FAI should build on the strong relationships it has established with education providers with a view to the continuation of Project FUTSAL or similar sports-based education programmes.
- The current policy context, in both Ireland and Wales and in relation to both sports development and to youth provision, favours an increased emphasis on collaboration, interagency and inter-professional initiatives and the project partners could fruitfully seek out further opportunities in this respect.

- This research has found examples of good practice in formalising relationships, roles and responsibilities between partners at local level which could be used as the basis for common approaches in future programmes.
- The Football Association of Ireland and the Welsh Football Trust should continue to strengthen their commitment to inclusiveness through the provision of pan-disability training and other initiatives that will benefit people with disabilities.
- Future programmes should aim at an enhanced gender balance through proactive and timely steps to address the challenges identified by participants and staff in this research.
- This research confirms that, provided adequate resources and supports are in place, programmes with a longer duration are generally more likely to be able to facilitate positive outcomes than shorter ones.
- The commitment to volunteering, through Project FUTSAL and otherwise, should be sustained as a contribution to community development as well as to local grassroots football.
- Building on the positive shared learning from this project, the Football Association of Ireland and the Welsh Football Trust should continue to consider and promote the benefits of local, national and cross-national collaborative practice.
- The effectiveness of sport, and particularly football, as a means of engaging (or re-engaging) 'non-traditional learners' with education and training systems merits further attention and action by all those concerned with facilitating and supporting young people's transitions.

Based on analysis of an extensive body of data collecting during the Longitudinal Evaluation of Project FUTSAL, it can confidently be concluded that the programme contributes to positive outcomes for participants and communities.

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APPENDIX 1



Evaluation of FAI Project Futsal
Department of Applied Social Studies
National University of Ireland, Maynooth

No. _____

For Office Use Only

Participant Questionnaire I:

This short questionnaire is designed to gather some information about how you spend your time and how you think things are going in your life. You will be asked to complete it again at the end of Project FUTSAL as part of the research into the effectiveness of the project. Thank you for your help with the research.

Demographic Information

What is your date of birth? /...../..... (DD/MM/YY)

What is your gender? Male [] Female []

Section A

A1 How often do you meet socially (by your own choice) with friends, relatives or work colleagues? *Please tick [✓] **one** answer only.*

- | | |
|------------------------|--------|
| Never | [] |
| Less than once a month | [] |
| Once a month | [] |
| Several times a month | [] |

Once a week	[]
Several times a week	[]
Every day	[]
Don't know	[]

A2 In the past 12 months, how often did you help with or attend activities organised in your local area? *Please tick [√] one answer only.*

At least once a week	[]
At least once a month	[]
At least once every 3 months	[]
At least once every 6 months	[]
Less often	[]
Never	[]
Don't know	[]

A3 In the past 12 months, how often did you get involved in work for voluntary or charitable organisations? *Please tick [√] one answer only.*

At least once a week	[]
At least once a month	[]
At least once every three months	[]
At least once every six months	[]
Less often	[]
Never	[]
Don't know	[]

A4 If you **have** been involved in voluntary or charitable work in the past 12 months, could you name the organisation(s)? (Otherwise go to the next question.)

A5 *Not counting* anything you do for your family, in your work, or in voluntary organisations, how often, in the past 12 months, did you actively provide help for other people? *Please tick [✓] one answer only.*

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| At least once a week | [] |
| At least once a month | [] |
| At least once every three months | [] |
| At least once every six months | [] |
| Less often | [] |
| Never | [] |
| Don't know | [] |

A6 If you **did** provide such help in the past 12 months, could you say what form it took? (Otherwise go to the next question.)

A7 How would you describe your health in general (both physical and mental)?
 Please tick [✓] **one** answer only.

- | | |
|------------|-----|
| Very good | [] |
| Good | [] |
| Fair | [] |
| Bad | [] |
| Very bad | [] |
| Don't know | [] |

Section B

Please say how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

*Please put a circle around **one** number in each case, for example around the number 2 if you agree with the statement, or around 5 if you disagree strongly.*

Agree Agree Neither Disagree Disagree Don't

	strongly		agree nor disagree		strongly	know
B1 I'm always optimistic about my future	1	2	3	4	5	6
B2 In general I feel very positive about myself	1	2	3	4	5	6
B3 At times I feel as if I am a failure	1	2	3	4	5	6
B4 On the whole my life is close to how I would like it to be	1	2	3	4	5	6
B5 I feel I am free to decide for myself how to live my life	1	2	3	4	5	6
B6 In my daily life, I seldom have time to do the things I really enjoy	1	2	3	4	5	6
B7 In my daily life, I get very little chance to show how capable I am	1	2	3	4	5	6

B8 I love learning new things	1	2	3	4	5	6
B9 Most days I feel a sense of achievement from what I do	1	2	3	4	5	6
B10 I like planning and preparing for the future	1	2	3	4	5	6
B11 When things go wrong in my life, it generally takes me a long time to get back to normal	1	2	3	4	5	6
B12 My life involves a lot of physical activity	1	2	3	4	5	6

Many thanks again for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

APPENDIX 2



Evaluation of FAI Project Futsal
Department of Applied Social Studies
National University of Ireland, Maynooth

No. _____
For Office Use Only

Participant Questionnaire 2 Follow-Up 2013

This short questionnaire is designed to gather some information about your health and fitness. Thank you for your help with the research.

1. How satisfied are you with your general health? *Please tick [✓] **one** answer only.*

Very satisfied	[]
Satisfied	[]
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	[]
Dissatisfied	[]
Very dissatisfied	[]

2. How would you describe your fitness levels?

Please tick [✓] **one** answer only.

Very good	[]
Good	[]
Fair	[]
Bad	[]
Very bad	[]
Don't know	[]

3. How often do you participate in fitness activities? Please tick [✓] **one** answer only.

Very often	[]
Frequently	[]
Sometimes	[]
Rarely	[]
Not at all	[]

4. Have any of the following prevented you from participating as much as you would like to in fitness activities? Please tick [✓] *as many as apply*.

Time	[]
Money	[]
Access/ Convenience	[]
Other*	[]

*If other, please specify

5. How often do you usually exercise in your free time so much that you would get out of breath or sweat? *Please tick [✓] **one** answer only.*

Everyday	[]
4 to 6 times a week	[]
2 to 3 times a week	[]
Once a week	[]
Once a month	[]
Less than once a month	[]
Never	[]

6. How often do you eat or drink any of the following? *Please tick [✓] **one** answer for each item.*

	More than once a day	Once a day	Once a week but not daily	Rarely	
Never					
Fruit	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Raw vegetables	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Cooked vegetables	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Coke or other soft drinks that contain sugar	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Sweets (candy or Chocolate)	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Cakes or pastries	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]
Potato crisps	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Chips/ Fried potatoes ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐

Hamburgers/ Hotdogs / ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐

Sausages

Wholewheat/ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐

Rye bread

Low fat milk ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Full fat milk ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Coffee ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

7. How would you describe your energy levels on most days? *Please tick ☐ **one** answer only.*

Very good ☐

Good ☐

Fair ☐

Bad ☐

Very bad ☐

Don't know ☐

8. How many hours a day do you usually watch tv? *Please tick ☐ **one** answer only.*

Not at all ☐

Less than half an hour ☐

Half an hour to 1 hour ☐

2 to 3 hours ☐

4 hours ☐

More than 4 hours ☐

9. How many hours a week do you usually play computer games? *Please tick [✓] **one** answer only.*

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Not at all | [] |
| Less than 1 hour a week | [] |
| 1 to 3 hours | [] |
| 4 to 6 hours | [] |
| 7 to 9 hours | [] |
| 10 hours or more | [] |

10. How many hours a week do you usually spend browsing the Internet/using social networking sites? *Please tick [✓] **one** answer only.*

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Not at all | [] |
| Less than 1 hour a week | [] |
| 1 to 3 hours | [] |
| 4 to 6 hours | [] |
| 7 to 9 hours | [] |
| 10 hours or more | [] |

Many thanks again for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

Evaluation of Project FUTSAL – Post-Participation Survey

Section A: Background Information

A1 Date of birth: ____/____/____ (dd/mm/yy) **A2** Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

A3 Which Project FUTSAL Hub did you participate in?

- Bagnelstown/Carlow ☐
- Ballymun ☐
- Clonmel ☐
- Collinstown/Clondalkin ☐
- Corduf ☐
- Waterford ☐
- Wexford ☐

A4 What year did you start on Project FUTSAL? 2011 2012 (circle appropriate year)

Section B: Pre-FUTSAL Participation Information

B1 What was your highest educational qualification **before** participating in Project FUTSAL?

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| No qualifications | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Junior/Intermediate/Group Certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leaving Certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leaving Certificate Applied | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Technical/Vocational Qualification (e.g. apprenticeship) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| FETAC Qualification | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| HETAC Qualification | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Third Level Diploma/Certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Third Level Degree | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Postgraduate Qualification | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

B2 During the 12 months **before** participating in Project FUTSAL what was your main employment status? (Please tick one)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Employed full-time | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employed part-time | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School (2 nd Level) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Education/Professional training | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unemployed | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

B3 Before participating in Project FUTSAL what was your primary/main area of work experience? (e.g. retail, construction, etc.)

B4 During the 12 months **before** participating in Project FUTSAL did you do any voluntary activities without pay?

Yes ☐ No ☐

B5 If you did engage in voluntary activities before participating in Project FUTSAL please specify the nature of your activities?

B6 Before participating in Project FUTSAL how often, on average, did you participate in exercise and/or fitness activities? (Please tick one)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Everyday | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 to 6 times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 to 3 times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Once a month | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Less than once a month | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Section C: Post-FUTSAL Information

C1 Since completing your participation in Project FUTSAL what has been your main employment status?

- I have spent most of the time in full-time employment ☐
 - I have spent most of the time in part-time employment ☐
 - I have been most of the time unemployed ☐
 - I have been most of the time in further study/professional training ☐
 - Other (please specify) ☐
-

C2 Since completing your participation in Project FUTSAL have you done any voluntary activity/activities without pay?

Yes ☐ No ☐

C3 If you have done any voluntary activity/activities since completing your participation in Project FUTSAL please specify the nature of your activities? (e.g. football coaching)

C4 Since completing your participation in Project FUTSAL how often, on average, have you participated in exercise and/or fitness activities? (Please tick one)

- Everyday ☐
- 4 to 6 times a week ☐
- 2 to 3 times a week ☐
- Once a week ☐
- Once a month ☐
- Less than once a month ☐
- Never ☐

Section D: Employment & Work

D1 What is your **current** employment status/primary activity?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Employed full-time | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Employed part-time | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Education/Professional training | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unemployed | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
-

If you are **currently employed**, either full-time or part-time, please answer the following questions otherwise skip to Question D5

D2 What is your contract type?

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| Permanent | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Temporary | <input type="checkbox"/> |

D3 What is your job title/position?

D4 What is the main business/sector of your current employer (e.g. supermarket, clothes retail, etc.)?

D5 Have you been in other employment elsewhere/at another time since finishing Project FUTSAL?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please provide details (if no, please go to Section E):

<i>Begin-End</i>	<i>Full-time or part-time?</i>	<i>Permanent or temporary?</i>	<i>Position and</i>
-------------------------	---------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	----------------------------

(month/year)

sector

Begin Full-time ☐ Permanent ☐

____/____ Part-time ☐ Temporary ☐

End Position_____

____/____ Sector_____

Section E: Education & Training

E1 Since completing Project FUTSAL have you participated in any further education/training courses?

No ☐ go to section F

Yes ☐ (please specify by completing Questions E2 to E4)

E2 If you have participated in further education/training please answer the following

<i>Name/type of training</i>	<i>Duration (in months)</i>	<i>Certification received</i>
-------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

E3 Who is/did providing/provide this education course/training? (e.g.ETB/Institute of technology/University etc.)

E4 To what extent on a scale of 1 to 5, with '1' being not at all and '5' being to a very high extent , do you feel that Project FUTSAL prepared you for undertaking further education/training?

Not at all

To a very high extent

1 2 3 4 5

Section F: General Assessment of Project FUTSAL

F1 In your opinion, to what extent on a scale of 1 to 5, with '1' being not at all and '5' being to a very high extent, has participating in Project FUTSAL helped you...

	Not at all		To a very high extent		
Prepare for work and employment	1	2	3	4	5
Find a satisfying job	1	2	3	4	5
Improve your long-term career prospects	1	2	3	4	5
Improve your coaching skills	1	2	3	4	5
Improve your fitness levels	1	2	3	4	5

F2 What other benefits, if any, have there been for you as a result of participating in Project FUTSAL? (e.g. personal development, confidence, fitness etc.)

F3 Looking back, if you were free to choose again, how likely on a scale of 1 to 5, with '1' being not likely at all and '5' being very likely, would you be to...

	Not likely at all			Very likely	
Choose to participate in Project FUTSAL	1	2	3	4	5

F3 Would you recommend Project FUTSAL to others? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

F4 Please give reason for your answer?

Value-for-Money Study

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Background

As part of the evaluation of Project FUTSAL a value-for-money study was conducted in order to assess the potential economic benefits of the programme. In this context, economic benefits refer to savings both in public/government expenditure and to individuals. While a full cost benefit analysis of Project FUTSAL was not estimated, this component of the evaluation focused on identifying where the main costs and benefits are likely to arise and placed indicative values on the types of cost savings that could be realized. One hub was taken as a case study.

Two key outcomes of Project FUTSAL were identified as having the most material impact in terms of economic value. Firstly, employment benefits, which for the group of young people in question are considered potentially substantial, have significant economic impact for both the improved financial wellbeing of participants and the potential cost savings for the state. Secondly, the health outcomes that have been demonstrated through the primary research indicate improvements in physical wellbeing that can deliver long-term economic value. While other material or economic outcomes from Project FUTSAL may be hypothesised, these are considered the most significant and they are also the ones for which the best primary and secondary data are available.

The Social & Economic Impact of Youth Unemployment

In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on developing effective policies to assist young people above the age of compulsory education and not in employment, education or training (NEET). Much of this is in response to research demonstrating the detrimental long run effect that this has and, equally, the rising levels of youth unemployment across the EU. Young people who are classified as NEET will often move in and out of short-term employment for the rest of their lives and have poorer economic and social outcomes even into old age (Coles et al., 2010). Aside from these individual costs, it is also recognized that this has significant costs for relevant state expenditure. For example, in the UK, lifetime costs to the State of a young person being NEET have been estimated at around £100,000 per year.ⁱ Since this research has been carried out, there has been a change in policy to make further education and training obligatory to an older age group. There is recognition that even for those leaving school with qualifications, periods of unemployment at this stage of their lives can be detrimental to their careers and working life.

Research by Eurofound, which is based on the wider 15-29 group, also reported substantial social costs of young people being NEET. Their research found that Ireland has one of the highest NEET rates in Europe (22 per cent) and estimated the loss to productivity to be in the region of 2 per cent of GDP or 3.2 billion Euro. In addition, they report that:

‘Being NEET has severe adverse consequences for the individual, society and the economy. Spending time as NEET may lead to a wide range of social disadvantages, such as disaffection, insecure and poor future employment, youth offending, and mental and physical health problems. ‘ (p2).

The categorization of young people as NEET varies from country to country. For example, the Scottish Executive limits the definition to young people between 16 and 19, whereas a report by Eurofound (2012) classifies this group as aged between 15 and 29, as just mentioned. In this research project, we interpret NEET as young people aged between 16 and 24 years; a category into which a high proportion of Project FUTSAL participants would fall. However, given currently available data a proportion of the research on which this analysis is based focuses on outcomes for a sub-group of NEETs (e.g. aged 16-18). As there are no similar data available on the wider group, we have used these costs.

Whilst we consider this to be a reasonable compromise, there is a risk that the 16–18 age group is more vulnerable and as a result we have reduced the number of outcomes included in the original research to reduce the risk of overclaiming benefits.

Economic Impact of Project FUTSAL

These first set of calculations are based on the costs to young people and society of being NEET when they leave school. While we do not have data on longer-term outcomes for the Project FUTSAL participants, it is anticipated that a proportion will avoid the long-term costs associated with being NEET. As similar research is not available for Ireland, secondary data from the UK provides us with estimates of the probabilities of negative social and economic outcomes for those not in education or training when they leave school (Coles et al., 2010; Godfrey et al., 2002). The expectation is that the young people in both countries would have broadly similar experiences owing to social and cultural similarities. In addition, the Eurofound research describe NEETs as generally being a homogenous group and found similar experiences for young people under 30 who are not in employment or training across the European Union.

Of the cohort of 30 Project FUTSAL participants in the hub selected for inclusion in this study, 22 would qualify as being NEET (aged 16-24 and out of work since leaving school). Eight of these were successful in finding employment or training at follow-up. They were also segmented by the age at which someone started the course (3=19, 1=20, 2=21, 2=22) to take account of the fact that the period of unemployment that would effect the transition from school would not be relevant to those older than 19.

While there are also positive employment outcomes for six older participants, these have not been monetised for two reasons. They are older than the NEET age bracket and cannot be included in these calculations and there is insufficient primary data about their circumstances

to enable us to meaningfully value their employment outcomes. However, there are likely to be benefits in terms of improved economic circumstances and well-being, particularly as the qualitative data collected indicates a high proportion of these participants had been long-term unemployed and/or hold low levels of educational attainment. It is also the case that employment prospects deteriorate with age for workers with fewer qualifications (Chan and Stevens, 2001).

Specifically, three economic related outcomes have been identified: reduced salary, unemployment and a benefit to the State in terms of increased taxes and reduced benefits. Three non-economic outcomes have also been included, impacts on physical health, mental health and crime. The likelihood that negative outcomes will be experienced in these areas is drawn from Godfrey et al., (2002). Crime has been split for males and females because the probability of being involved in crime based on NEET status varies considerably by gender.

As mentioned, Project FUTSAL participants are older than the 16-18 age group focused on in the NEET research. They also have a Leaving Certificate, which may also make them less vulnerable to remaining out of work than those who left school early. Nonetheless, they have all been out of employment for a substantial period of time and it is expected that the long-term impacts would be similar. In addition, within a loose labour market jobs for young people without qualifications are extremely scarce, making the benefits to them of gaining work even greater.

Nevertheless, to avoid overestimating benefits and to take account of the differences in Project FUTSAL participants, a smaller number of negative outcomes have been included in this analysis. Also, the benefit period has been reduced from life-time costs to seven years (the length of the short-term costs identified by Coles et.al. (2010)). While ideally this study should include deadweight factors, including substitution effects, due to limited primary data on participants they have not been taken into account for this study.

Economic and social outcomes

Coles et. al. (2010) estimate that in the short term, NEETs will experience an average period of unemployment of 9 months. They also estimate a short-term wage penalty of about 30%. Taxes and benefits have been calculated based on this period of unemployment and wage loss.

For the social outcomes, crime and mental health are based on the probability that someone will have a problem in a particular area that relates to their NEET status (Godfrey et al., 2002). These are multiplied by the number of incidences and the cost estimates set out in Table 1. For physical health, it is assumed that as a result of the intervention, all of the eight participants do not qualify for the medical card for at least one year.

Table 1: Costs and sources

Cost	Number of	Value per annum	Source
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	participants	(€)	
Average industrial wage	8	25,950	CSO (2012)
Cost of unemployment (loss of tax and benefit)	8	15,000	(O'Neill et al., 2010)
Per capita cost of healthcare	8	312	MacMahon 2011 and author's own calculation.
Cost of medical card	8	2655	Criminal justice budget (2011) divided by the number of crimes (author's calculation)
Costs of mental health per incident	8	2569	Adapted by the author from (O'Shea and Kennelly, 2008)

To arrive at a total figure, we multiply the number of participants by the value of the outcome. This is then projected over seven years and a discount rate is applied to it to calculate the present value. This gives a 'lifetime' figure of €586,000¹². This equates to €71,000 per individual that has a positive outcome over the seven year period. When calculated on a per participant basis (i.e. divided by the 30 participants) the figure is €19,000. The annual saving to the State is approximately €12,374 per participant.

Health outcomes

In the area of physical health and wellbeing it is anticipated that the benefits are likely to be high as Project FUTSAL has a significant emphasis on improving participants' knowledge of and participation in exercise and fitness. In terms of potential economic value, it is hypothesized that such improvements in physical health would lead to benefits in terms of lowering the need to use health care services. There are also productivity benefits but these have not been calculated due to a lack of data.

While it is difficult to place a cost on preventative services, there is a considerable amount of research on cardiovascular disease and associated costs, which is one of the most prevalent lifestyle-related diseases in Ireland. We have generated figures to give an indication of potential deferred costs from positive lifestyle changes such as those achieved by Project FUTSAL. Research published in the journal *Circulation* in 2011 found that improved fitness over a six-year study period was associated with a 19 percent decrease in the risk of heart

¹² Net Present Value (NPV) is a way of comparing the value of money now with the value of money in the future. It takes account of the fact that we discount the value of future benefits and discounts them back to their value today. The discount rate used in this research was 3.5 per cent, which is the recommended rate for social goods used by HM Treasury.

disease and stroke-related deaths in men—and a 15 percent lower risk of death from any cause¹³.

In Ireland, it is estimated that 30% of people suffer from hypertension, heart disease or stroke (Balanda et al., 2010). Using this figure it can be anticipated, therefore, that 30% of our cohort or ten participants would develop CVD in the future. These figures are used to estimate savings to the health service arising from the identified health outcomes accruing from Project FUTSAL. However, the British Heart Foundation has also estimated indirect costs from CVD relating to reduced productivity from morbidity, mortality and informal care (Nichols et al., 2012). In the UK, these are at least as high as the direct healthcare costs. Table 2 breaks down the costs included in the calculations. Whilst we have not included these here, it may be worth considering in any future research project in this area.

Table 2: Costs and Sources

Cost	Value	Source
Total healthcare spend	€1.4 billion	Department of Health
Percentage of sufferers	30%	(Balanda et al., 2010)
Proportion of health budget spent on CVD, CHD and stroke	7.4%	(Nichols et al., 2012)
Cost per sufferer	€829	Author's calculation
Reduction in risk from exercising	19%	See above

Of the ten participants who might be expected to develop CVD in the future, we assume that 19 per cent will not develop the disease due to an increase in exercise. We estimate therefore that two participants will not develop a chronic condition in this area at an average cost of €829 per sufferer. The annual saving per incident avoided is therefore €1,575. One caveat to this figure is that the baseline for exercise is already high. It may be that this risk is not already present for some of the participants. However, a lack of physical exercise is also related to other chronic conditions such as diabetes and overall longevity, whereas this analysis has been restricted solely to CVD.

Recommendations

Conducting economic analysis requires specific types of data that can show causal links between activities and outcomes to which monetary values can then be attached. It also requires estimates of counterfactuals to reduce the risk that the outcomes are unrelated to intervention. The best economic analyses are therefore based on high quality primary data that is geared towards the economic questions being asked. It is important to build these in at the outset of the project to ensure that the analysis does not have to rely on existing research, proxy data or inputted values. It is recommended that future research in this area

¹³ American Heart Association (2011), <http://www.healthline.com/health/heart-disease/exercise-statistics#1>

captures more robust employment/service use data at baseline that can be compared to exit and follow up.

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ⁱ The Prince's Trust *The Costs of Exclusion*

