



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

**Compiled by the
Healthy Offaly Team**



Contents

Background to Healthy Offaly	3
Healthy Ireland fund	3
• National context	3
• Local context	4
Healthy Ireland Offaly projects 2021	5
• Fit Class / Active Me	5
• Building healthier communities	6
• Grow your own & Healthy eating	6
• Eco spaces as places of health & wellbeing	6
• Community mental health supports	7
• Community mental health – small grants scheme	7
• Community engagement	7
• Community resilience fund	8
Ministerial visit	9
Conclusion	9
Appendices	10
• Membership of Healthy Offaly team	10

Background to Healthy Offaly

National context

Healthy Ireland, the government framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland over the coming generation was launched in March 2013.

Healthy Ireland sets out a wide framework of actions that will be undertaken by Government Departments, public sector organisations, businesses, communities and individuals to improve health and wellbeing and reduce the risks posed to future generations.

The vision is...

“A Healthy Ireland, where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone’s responsibility”.

The framework describes four high-level goals and 64 actions that will work together to achieve the goals: -

1. Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life
2. Reduce health inequalities
3. Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing
4. Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland

Updated key themes for round 3 of the Healthy Offaly Fund include: -

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| i. Overweight and Obesity | iv. Alcohol & Drugs |
| ii. Mental health | v. Sexual health |
| iii. Smoking | vi. Spaces & Places for Health & Wellbeing |

Local context

In May 2018, the Healthy Offaly Strategic Plan was adopted by the Offaly Local Development Committee and Offaly County Council; and on the 14th June 2018, the Healthy Offaly Plan was officially launched.

To oversee the implementation of the Health Offaly Plan, a Healthy Offaly Team (HOT) was established. HOT is an amalgam of the Building Healthy Communities group (an Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC) initiative) and the Healthy Offaly working group (established by Offaly Local and Community Development Committee (Offaly LCDC) in 2017). HOT adopted an inter-agency model of operation using community development approaches to work directly with local communities to implement actions that address the determinants of health in their communities.

The team has the following joint operational focus areas: -

- implementation of the Healthy Offaly strategy 2018 – 2020
- improve and support positive mental health and suicide awareness in communities in Offaly
- facilitate communities to develop positive responses and plans to emerging community issues; and develop their own capacity, skills and ability to respond to these issues
- support parents in county Offaly

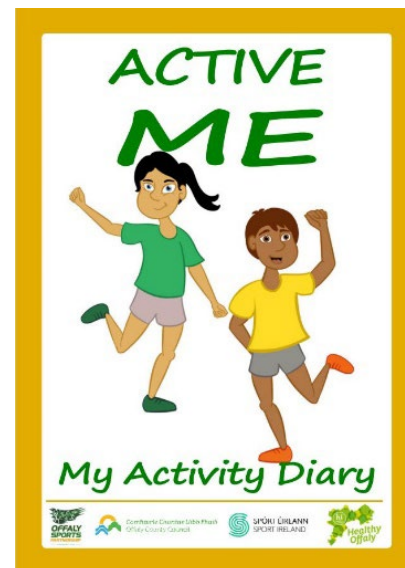
An annual work plan is approved by the Offaly LCDC. On approval, HOT coordinates applications for to secure Healthy Ireland funding to implement the actions outlined in the annual work plan. Furthermore, HOT monitors the implementation of these actions, and makes bi annual progress reports to Offaly LCDC; as well as submitting an annual report to the December meeting of the Offaly LCDC.

Healthy Offaly projects 2021

Throughout 2021 the Healthy Offaly team continued to oversee delivery of the Healthy Offaly plan. The Covid-19 pandemic continued to adversely affect the work of Healthy Offaly in 2021. Amendments to key actions had to be made throughout the year to ensure service delivery continued. In October Pobal and the Department of Health extended the deadline for completion of all Healthy Ireland funded actions from 31st December 2021 to 31st March 2022. This extension was granted as a recognition of the difficulties counties were experiencing in delivering actions due to Covid-19 Restrictions. Key actions delivered during 2021 included:

Fit class / Active Me: This action was formulated to deliver a targeted physical activity intervention in up to 10 primary schools in the Mid, North and West Offaly area; the programme is supported by a Fit Class coordinator, resources and an end of year (June) testing programme. Covid-19 restrictions have had a detrimental effect on the delivery of the programme; and it has been reconstituted from an in school delivery project, to the development and dissemination of a physical activity diary resource, “Active Me” for primary schools in the academic year 2021 / 2022.

“Active Me” replaced delivery of the in school “Fit Class” programme which was unable to go ahead due to ongoing Covid-19 health restrictions. The “Active Me” resource was developed by Frank Fahey of Fizzical Ltd. and illustrated by Andrea Cooke. The resource provides hints and tips for parents and teachers to encourage children to be more physically active on a daily and weekly basis; and in much the same way as pupils have a homework journal to ensure that they are keeping their school work up to date, the activity diary encourages a prioritisation of daily physical activity also. 10,000 “Active Me” diaries were distributed; with an additional 100 diaries translated into Irish and disseminated among the three Gaelscoileanna in Offaly



Building Healthier Communities with a focus on rural Offaly

Many of the 'Meals on Wheels' and 'Community Garden' activities being delivered under this action continued without interruption. As restrictions eased from May onwards, outdoor walking programmes were recommenced.

Other activities that re-commenced under this action included a Community Gym Initiative in Moneygall; a '5 a side' soccer street league in Scurragh, Birr; Boccia in Bracknagh;, and a social walking group in Claren.



Grow your own & Healthy Eating



Moneygall & Bracknagh grow it yourself groups continue to be supported. Both have drawn down nearly the majority of their Healthy Offaly funding which was mainly spent on materials for the garden. Bracknagh also purchased a sensory board to support people with disabilities to use the garden.

Social farming sessions have also taken place which were part-funded by Teagasc.

In Ferbane a new group, Coole Eco-Community has been established. This new project hosted three workshops for local people over September, October and November on foraging, organic food growing.

In Ballycumber a polytunnel with materials for planting and was provided in late August to continue into the winter months.

Eco spaces as places of health and wellbeing

The Tullamore equine group re-commenced their sessions following the easing of Covid19 restrictions. Six sessions were completed with 15 children and young people aged 4-16 from Cloncollig Housing Estate. A tarmacked area in the estate was also painted to facilitate children's games (hopscotch, snakes and ladders etc.

The Shinrone sensory group has completed a looped walk and are developing a sensory area by the river and throughout the village; while in Lusmagh a planted area in the village green has been developed which compliments the new walking route in the area.

Community Mental Health Supports

Two activities were delivered given the ongoing health crisis:

- two Family Resource Centres (Arden View, Tullamore; and Clara) continued to support the roll out of mental health wellness programmes and crisis intervention counselling for disadvantaged families.
- the Delivery of Fearless Workshops has experienced significant challenges throughout the year. In July the action was amended to instead purchase books and printed material as the implementing partners Midland Area Parenting Partnership could not deliver 'in person' workshop due to restrictions on numbers. In November however the M.A.P.P. dissolved completely with no progress made on the action.

The Healthy Offaly Team have since applied to and received approval from Pobal to repurpose this action to create three pilot 'social hubs' for older vulnerable people in the Communities of Mount Bolus, Kilcormac and Kinnitty. These hubs will bring together people in a relaxed social setting to avail of a series of health and well-being initiatives to enhance physical and mental health. Kilcormac Development Association will oversee the project on behalf of Healthy Offaly at all three sites. All activities are expected to commence in early 2022.

Community Mental Health - Small Grants Scheme

Of the 13 groups supported under the Community Mental Health Fund Small Grants Scheme, 12 have completed their projects. The remaining project yet to conclude is OLDC's Little Things Campaign in the Marian Hostel, Tullamore. Covid-19 restrictions severely hampered progress in relation to completing the project, however, all is on course to be delivered in December 2021. Once all projects are finished the total spend will be €30,000.

Community Engagement

As part of the Community Engagement action two activities were delivered.

The first of these activities focused on the delivery of **1:1 Physical Activity supports for older adults and people with disabilities**; and was developed as a direct response to the imposition of Covid-19 health restrictions in 2020 which resulted in the requirement for older adults and people with disabilities to immediately cocoon from mid-March. 2021 saw a number of the original 47

participants from 2020 complete their personalised sport and physical activity programmes in the first half of the year following the re-imposition of Covid-19 health restrictions.



The second activity concerned the delivery of **therapeutic physical activity supports for people with disabilities and their support networks**.

One fourth of a wider community mental health support programme, this activity element was designed to support delivery of therapeutic physical activity programmes for children with disabilities, their parents and family members (e.g. therapeutic riding, July provision, etc.).

Among the projects delivered as part of this activity in 2021 were three July provision days for over 100 children from nine primary schools, a multi-sport camp for children with additional needs and their siblings, and an inclusive GAA Cúl camp for 20 children with additional needs and their siblings

The Laois / Offaly Childrens’ and Young Persons’ Services Committee (Laois / Offaly CYPSC) also provided funding to Offaly Sports Partnership to support the ongoing delivery of its **1:1 physical activity supports for people with disabilities**. Following the success of the 2020 programme, another 35 people with disabilities were supported with individualised sport and physical activity programmes; while 20 children with disabilities were supported to learn how to cycle



Community Resilience Fund

In Quarter 4 of 2020, Healthy Ireland Offaly also secured €67,225 in funding on behalf of Offaly County Council under the Healthy Ireland / Sláinte Care Community Resilience Fund.

In partnership with its Community Partners, Healthy Offaly oversaw the animation and delivery of 17 Covid-19 targeted actions all across the County.

In addition to Healthy Offaly’s ‘Keep Well’ campaign messages broadcast on radio and print media, a few of the measures to assist the public included a free period products pilot in Council owned publicly accessed buildings; Ukulele lessons with Music Generation, Offaly; Play Therapy programmes with Parents First; and Care Packs distributed by Offaly Local Development Company and North Offaly Community Development Network.

Ministerial Visit

On 27th & 28th September 2021, Frank Feighan T.D., Minister of State for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy visited three Healthy Ireland funded projects.

Healthy Offaly were delighted to be selected by the Department of Health for a Ministerial visit. Minister Feighan was keen to see how funding granted by his Department has made a difference to groups in the communities they serve.

The three projects visited over the two days were Moneygall Community Garden, Arden View Family & Community Resource Centre and Kilcormac Development Association. The Minister was extremely impressed by the activities of Healthy Offaly and its partners. He commended the excellent work of all three groups and noted the innovative work practices he has witnessed which was a testament to the resilience of local communities in the County.



Conclusion

Delivery of the Healthy Ireland Offaly plan has been facilitated via funding from the Healthy Ireland Fund in 2021. The funding is administered nationally by Pobal.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Healthy Offaly team (HOT)

- Sarah Kennedy, Offaly Local Development Company (Chair)
- Dermot Egan, Healthy Offaly Coordinator, Offaly County Council
- Clodagh Armitage, Health Services Executive (HSE)
- Josephine Rigney, HSE Resource Officer for suicide prevention in Laois and Offaly
- Gillian Cunningham, Laois / Offaly Education & Training Board (LOETB)
- Áine Brummell, Offaly County Childcare Committee
- Brian Pey, Offaly County Council
- Sarah Mc Cann / Martina Needham, Offaly Libraries
- Ann Dillon, Offaly Local Community Development Committee (Offaly LCDC)
- Bridie Costello Hynes, Offaly Public Participation Network
- Eamonn Henry, Offaly Sports Partnership
- Olivia Murphy, Offaly Sports Partnership