

**Lifelong Involvement in Sport
and Physical Activity:
The LISPA Model**

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Glossary of Common Terms

Child-centred – addressing the needs of the child by increasing relevant opportunities to participate and develop.

Deliberate play – an exploration of physical capacities in various contexts while maximising inherent enjoyment.

Deliberate practice – involvement in structured training that is an important factor in the development of expertise within a sport or activity.

FUNDamentals – overall development of the young person’s physical capabilities and fundamental movement skills, primarily focusing on agility, balance, coordination and speed.

Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity (LIPSA) model – a policy that facilitates and promotes the development of fundamental movement skills and specific sports skills. Also develops a positive attitude towards sport and physical activity with a view to opening quality pathways for the maximum number of participants in long-term player/athlete development and recreation.

Long-term player/athlete development (LTPAD) pathway – a series of phases that underpin the balanced and long-term development of high performance athletes.

Long-term recreation (LTR) pathway – a pathway that encourages those individuals who choose to stay involved in sport and physical activity at a recreational level.

Multi-sport – involvement in a number of sporting activities and/or generic underpinning activities and tactics that can be promoted within and across a range of sports, e.g. throwing, kicking, attack, defence.

Physical activity – involves any bodily movement produced by contraction of skeletal muscle that subsequently increases energy expenditure. Such activity is not necessarily recognised as recreation or sport.

Physical literacy – the ability to perform fundamental and specialised movement skills, e.g. running, jumping, throwing, catching.

Recreation – based on the needs of the individual, less goal-orientated, less constrained by rules and more spontaneous than sport per se. Sports done in an informal setting by an individual or on a non-competitive basis can be recreational.

Sport – all forms of physical activity that, through casual or regular participation, expresses or improves physical fitness and mental well-being and forms social relationships. Can include an increase in frequency, intensity and competition relevant to physical activity or recreation.

Overview

Introduction

This consultation paper outlines a proposed model of lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity (LISPA) and is written as a policy document for the attention of all those involved in sport and physical activity. The paper acknowledges the absence of a clear model of lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity and the need to map out those opportunities that are available to participants.

The consultation document was developed by a working group as follows:

- Anne-Marie Hughes (Irish Sports Council)
- Shane Keane (Irish Sports Council)
- Deirdre Lyons (National Coaching and Training Centre)
- Sheelagh Quinn (National Coaching and Training Centre)
- Ann MacPhail (External Facilitator, University of Limerick)

Feedback from the consultation phase of the National Coaching and Training Centre (NCTC) 2003 publication *Building Pathways in Irish Sport: Towards a plan for the sporting health and well-being of the nation* highlighted the need for a wider, all-inclusive model for long-term involvement in physical activity that caters for recreational and lifelong participation and recommended that such a model should dovetail with the long-term player/athlete development (LTPAD) model. Another key issue to emerge was that the basic principles guiding the LTPAD model, i.e. multi-sport, child-centred approach and adaptation to suit individual needs, should be more evident. A third concern was the role of a number of agencies in the delivery of such a model.

These three concerns have informed and directed the LISPA working group and have resulted in a model that promotes a systematic approach to creating an environment that enables participants to achieve their optimum potential. By learning the fundamentals of movement and developing a positive attitude to sport and physical activity, people are provided with a pathway to continue lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity.

The LISPA working group agreed the following terms of reference:

- To develop a national policy that will guide the development of the LISPA framework
- To incorporate the National Coaching Development Programme (NCDP), the *Building Pathways* consultation documents and other related developments within the current system to inform the national framework
- To identify those who have a role in promoting lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity

Document Structure and Related Feedback

The document is divided into five sections and seeks views on:

- the need for an Irish model of lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity (section 1)
- key recommendations underpinning lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity (section 2)
- the LISPA model (section 3)
- potential agencies involved in delivering and promoting the LISPA model (section 4)
- recommendations (section 5)

Any other general comments related to the document are encouraged.

How to Respond

A response form is included in the document. We would prefer to receive your responses electronically. Your response can be e-mailed to deirdre.lyons@ul.ie

Alternatively, postal responses should be sent to;

Name: Ms. Deirdre Lyons

Address: National Coaching & Training Centre, University of Limerick, Limerick Road, Co. Limerick, Ireland

E-mail: Deirdre.Lyons@ul.ie

Please mark your response 'LISPA consultation'.

A PDF version of the document and response form can be found on the ISC web site (www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/) and the NCTC web site (www.nctc.ul.ie/).

The consultation period will last from mid-October 2005 to 31 January 2006. If you wish your views to be treated in confidence, please state this in your response.

Stages

Following this consultation, the compilation of feedback and recommendations from the feedback will be presented to the Irish Sports Council Board in April 2006. A sub-committee, initially developed by the ISC and NCTC, should be appointed to collate and disseminate feedback. It is envisaged that the foundations of the LISPA model would be revisited with a view to informing an implementation plan. The same sub-committee will also be responsible for the establishment of a comprehensive implementation of the LISPA model. Copies of all the responses received through the consultation process will be made available.

In relation to the working group's third term of reference (*To identify those who have a role in promoting lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity*), further work is necessary at the consultation phase in identifying and including all agencies who have a role in supporting and promoting the LISPA model.

Executive Summary

1. A LISPA model is vital if, within Ireland, we are to address the inter-relationship between physical activity, sport and health, increase participation rates within sport and physical activity, provide support for high performance involvement in sport and assist in the planning and resourcing of sport and physical activity (see section 1).
2. A number of essential foundations underpin the LISPA model. These include the promotion of a child-centred approach, a distinction between deliberate play and deliberate practice and recognising individual difference (see section 2).
3. The LISPA model encompasses all levels of participation and lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. Within the LISPA model, there are two pathways and four opportunities for continued involvement in the model. The proposed model promotes two main pathways, long-term recreation pathway (LTR) and long-term player/athlete development (LTPAD). The LTR pathway allows individuals to choose to stay involved in sport and physical activity. The LTPAD pathway allows individuals to become more serious about their involvement in sport and move towards elite performance (see section 3).
4. Within the LISPA model, particular emphasis is placed on the 'FUNdamental' and 'Learning to Play and Practice' phases, which are common to both pathways. Both phases are essential for a safe, educational and multi-sport experience to sport and physical activity. Additionally, both phases provide the foundation for lifelong and/or elite involvement and participation in sport (see section 3). It is anticipated that transferable (fundamental movement) skills and appropriate sporting behaviours would widen the accessibility of sport and physical activity to all.
5. Four opportunities for continued involvement in the LISPA model are available to participants: active living, active recreation, organised sport and high performance. Each opportunity aims to accommodate an individual's preference to the extent to which they wish to continue and develop their involvement in sport and physical activity (see section 3).
6. Considerations for the effective implementation of the LISPA model includes rates of participation, retention and dropout, early specialisation and late entry to sport and physical activity (see section 3).
7. A number of education, coaching, physical activity, physical education and sport agencies within Ireland have a crucial role to play in the delivery and promotion of the LISPA model. The LISPA model has the potential to form an alliance and foster integration between agencies in a bid to pursue a common aim of encouraging lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity (see section 4).

1. *An Irish Model of Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity*

1.1 *Introduction*

The Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity (LISPA) model is a systematic approach that will assist in creating an environment that enables participants to achieve their optimum potential. By learning the fundamentals of movement and developing a positive attitude to sport and physical activity, people are provided with a pathway to continue lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity.

Informed by international and Irish-based research, there are a number of issues that highlight the need for an Irish model of lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. These issues include falling rates of physical activity across the population, a higher incident of obesity and associated health-related problems, a significant drop-off in participation rates within sports, which is more pronounced in females, and falling standards of elite athletes competing at international level^{[1][2][3][4][5]}. Feedback on NCTC's *Building Pathways in Irish Sport* consultation paper suggested the need for a wider, all-inclusive model that caters for all levels of physical activity and sport involvement^[6].

Informed by research within an Irish context, there are a number of issues that highlight the need for an Irish model of lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. These include the relationship between physical activity, sport and health, participation rates within sport and physical activity, high performance involvement in sport and the planning and resource of sport and physical activity.

1.2 *The Physical Activity, Sport and Health Relationship*

1.2.1 *Physical Activity*

Recreational sport and physical activity should be accessible to all, encompass all age groups and cater for all abilities. Clubs and organisations should aim to equip children and young people with the skills they need to be involved in sport and physical activity so that they remain involved throughout their life in line with their choices and capabilities. Sport and physical activity have the potential to be positive habits that can enhance an individual's lifestyle, and may have important implications for health.

1.2.2 *Sport*

Sport is a healthy leisure activity that gives participants a chance to experience enjoyment and competition and acquire positive outcomes such as enhanced physical and mental health, challenge, social interactions, skill enhancement and physical development. Involvement in sport is considered an important 'character builder' for participants. Through participation, individuals can have fun and enjoyment, learn and develop life skills, make new friends and experience sport in a way that will enhance their personal growth throughout the course of their lives. These benefits will occur through a positive approach to sport that places the needs of the individual first and winning and competition second. One suggested way of pursuing such benefits is through a multi-sport approach.

Participation in youth sport can enhance academic performance and reduce school dropout, and can be positively correlated with educational attainment and adult career achievements^[7]. To be effective, however, programmes should provide opportunities for youth participation in and leadership of activities that emphasise the development of life skills within the context of a sustained and caring adult-youth relationship.

Competition can be an attractive dimension of continued involvement in sport and physical activity. While striving for success and maximising potential is pursued through involvement in sport and physical activity, sport tends to provide a more structured approach to competition. Sport can accommodate those who wish to pursue a level of excellence within a particular sporting activity.

1.2.3 Health

Physical activity plays a vital role in health and well-being and is an essential factor in the promotion of a positive approach to physical and mental health [8] [9]. Creating a habit in childhood of regular physical activity can make it easier to continue such behaviour in later years, thus preserving a healthier life for a longer period of time [10]. By providing youth with the opportunity for social and personal development, a society lays the foundation for improving their well-being. Sport and physical activity play an essential role in promoting these benefits.

1.3 Participation Rates Within Sport and Physical Activity

Participation in sport and physical activity is influenced by a variety of factors. The increase in sedentary lifestyles, the decrease in work-related physical activity, and reduced leisure-time activity identifies a trend towards physical inactivity^[11]. However, at an individual level, participants tend to stay in sport and physical activity if their experiences are positive ones. Positive experiences are generally characterised as those that are fun and that provide a sense of achievement and opportunities to learn and apply new skills. If adults and young people enjoy their early experiences of sport and physical activity, they are more likely to stay involved in the long term, thereby impacting positively on the health and well-being of the future adult population.

Focusing on fun, skill development, individual needs and maximum participation will encourage people to stay involved and achieve success at all levels in line with their choices and potential, thereby reducing dropout rates and enhancing physical activity involvement across the lifespan.

Other factors that can affect an individual's participation and involvement in sport and physical activity include age, ability and time of entry. It is imperative that those who promote involvement in sport and physical activity are able to accommodate the range of factors at play when planning for sports and physical activity development. Inclusion issues underpinning the LISPA model are discussed in section 2.4.

1.4 Support for High Performance Involvement in Sport

An effective LISPA model will help to facilitate participants who wish to pursue a pathway to competition and excellence at the highest levels. By promoting the development of fundamental movement skills and specific sports skills, the expectation is that, from a broader base that accommodates a high number of participants, there is a stronger chance of participants making their way, if they choose, to high performance involvement in sport. It is also envisaged that by developing a wider range of fundamental movement skills and specific sports skills, players/athletes will be able to attain higher and more sustained levels of success.

The model will also help to provide a participant-centred basis for planning and decision-making, present a basis on which to evaluate the structure and effectiveness of competition programmes and offer a framework for the audit of programmes at each phase of an athlete's development.

1.5 Planning and Resourcing Sport and Physical Activity

In promoting a culture of healthy physical activity, the role of physical education, youth sports, participation and performance are linked. To develop these independently is expensive and ineffective. However, by focusing on the common building blocks that all young people need, we are reducing costs and increasing the benefits associated with sport and physical activity participation.

As Ireland moves towards the further development of its sports system, the need to clearly map out a model for lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity has become evident. This strategy will pose a challenge to all agencies within the sports system to consider the objectives, structures and policies in pursuit of these goals.

The LISPA model will have an impact on the entire range of sports and physical activity systems in Ireland, including participants, parents, leaders, coaches, clubs, schools, community groups, teachers, physical educators, educational institutions, local sports partnerships (LSPs), national governing bodies of sport (NGBs), sports science and medical

professionals, the Irish Sports Council (ISC), the National Coaching and Training Centre (NCTC), the Olympic and Paralympic Councils of Ireland (OCI/PCI) and several government departments.

1.6 Summary

A LIPSA model is vital if, within Ireland, we are to address the inter-relationship between physical activity, sport and health, increase participation rates within sport and physical activity, provide support for high performance involvement in sport and assist in the planning and resourcing of sport and physical activity. Before discussing the LIPSA model, the key foundations that inform the model are discussed in section 2.

2. Key Foundations Underpinning Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity

2.1 Introduction

There are a number of key foundations that underpin lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity, such as:

- a child-centred approach, where the needs of young people are central to the activities
- the distinction between 'deliberate play' and 'deliberate practice'
- inclusion for all

2.2 Child-Centred Approach to Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity

The essential elements of a child-centred approach to sport and physical activity are fun, personal achievement and physical literacy in line with the needs, choices and capacities of each young person.

There are many reasons why young people want to take part in sport and physical activity. They want to learn new skills, make new friends, be part of a group, win and be successful and experience excitement, challenges and action. Most of all they want to have fun. The importance of a child-centred approach cannot be over-emphasised, whereby **the needs of the young person are central to the activities**. There is a need to identify what children's needs are at each stage of their development – not only their physical needs but also their psychosocial needs – especially during adolescence where a high level of dropout can occur.

Sport should promote a child-centred perspective with an emphasis on increasing opportunities to participate in various sports and physical activities within school, club and community. Such opportunities should provide a level of personal success and achievement for each participant. In the early years, a multi-sport approach should be promoted, with choice and specialisation coming later in the child's development.

It is vital that young people achieve the fundamentals of physical activity and sport, e.g. running, jumping, catching, throwing etc, before progressing within a sports programme. Thus, at all levels, it is important that young people are given opportunities to develop a basic range of skills across a variety of sports and physical activities. This will enable them to choose the activities they can and want to be involved in. Specialised training should only take place after a strong fundamental and multi-sport programme and when/if the participant has chosen to specialise within a particular sport. It has been shown that involvement before age 12 does not hinder the attainment of elite performance in most sports. In addition, variety can provide a motivational context that promotes long-term participation at a recreational level and/or investment in one sport ^[12] ^[13].

A child-centred approach and lifelong involvement includes children and young people developing their 'physical literacy'.

- Physical literacy is the ability to perform fundamental and specialised movement skills such as running, jumping, throwing and catching ^[14]. This can help to develop the knowledge, understanding and ability to analyse sport and physical activity.
- Physical literacy also includes a positive disposition to participation. Within Ireland, while numeracy and literacy are highly valued, the development of physical literacy falls short of what is necessary ^[1]. This imbalance needs to be addressed as a matter of priority, and a number of gaps within the Irish sports system that currently inhibit the development of physical literacy have been discussed elsewhere.

- Every child should be provided with the opportunity to develop physical literacy in line with his or her choices and capabilities. Some marginalised groups may need additional support to ensure provision and development of these fundamental skills.

2.3 Deliberate Practice and Deliberate Play

Throughout their development and involvement in sport and physical activities, individuals can engage in various types of activities that can be categorised into two main categories:

- Play – free play and deliberate play
- Practice – structured practice and deliberate practice

A significant component of the early experiences of elite and recreational athletes is widespread involvement in a range of organised sports and 'deliberate play' activities [15]. This involvement in deliberate play is an important factor in the development of expertise at the later stage.

Contrary to the deliberate practice activities that are generally designed to maximise performance, deliberate play activities are designed to maximise inherent enjoyment.

Play is characteristically unstructured, loosely monitored by adults and inherently enjoyable for participants. Practice, on the other hand, is usually organised, structured and carefully monitored by adults. Generally, young people move along a continuum from free play to structured practice. Often in organised sports, young people move quickly into very structured adult-led sessions without an opportunity to develop their skills in an informal setting. Deliberate play should be given equal attention while young people are progressing along the continuum as it has as much to offer as structured adult-led sessions.

Deliberate play activities are regulated by flexible rules adapted from standardised sports rules and are set up and monitored by children or by an adult involved in the activity. For example, soccer and basketball rules are regularly changed to suit the needs of children playing in the street, in the park or in youth sport leagues. Children typically modify the rules of the sport (as they perceive them) to find a point where their version most resembles the sport and yet allows them to play it at their level. The parameters of sport can be changed and adjusted to meet children's needs and demands. These activities are categorised as deliberate play (see Figure 1).

The sense of control and self-regulation associated with children's sustained involvement in deliberate play may afford greater opportunities for learning specific skills and contributing to long-term sport participation. High amounts of deliberate play activities at a young age can provide children with a motivational advantage that early involvement in deliberate practice activities would not. From a skill acquisition perspective, deliberate play can serve as a way for youth to explore their physical capacities in various contexts, not necessarily in a formal setting.

Figure 1: Contrasting elements of play and practice

	PLAY		PRACTICE	
	Free Play	Deliberate Play	Structured Practice	Deliberate Practice
Sources of enjoyment	Intrinsic	→	→	Extrinsic
Structured	Flexible	→	→	Organised
Monitored	Loosely monitored	→	→	Carefully monitored
Correction	Not immediate	→	→	Immediate
Specificity of training	General	→	→	Specialised

Source: Jean Cote, 'Education Through Sport Participation: A Developmental Perspective' presented at the European Launch of the European Year of Education through Sport 2004, 29 January 2004, Dublin, Ireland.

2.4 *Recognising Individual Difference*

It is important to recognise that people should progress within this LISPA model on the basis of their own individual needs. Irrespective of their choice of sport or activity, people will differ in their development within their chosen activity due to a number of factors, such as age and capability.

2.4.1 **Individual Learning Patterns**

It is vitally important to be conscious of the fact that young people differ in their ability to acquire skills and move through the various stages of involvement in sport and physical activity. Different rates of learning are evident between and across boys and girls, are the mediums through which young people learn more effectively. The emotional development of young people can also aid or hinder their learning pattern. Those involved in promoting involvement in sport and physical activity should be aware of and able to accommodate such differences in learning patterns. The importance of individualisation needs to be acknowledged in relation to involvement in and transitions between physical activity and sport [6].

2.4.2 **Age-Related Issues and Maturation**

A particular age-related issue is that of chronological and developmental age. Chronological age refers to the number of years and days elapsed since birth.

It is imperative that all those involved in promoting and delivering sport and physical activity are aware that children of the same chronological age can differ by several years in their level of biological and developmental maturation, i.e. the degree of physical, mental, cognitive and emotional maturity. There also needs to be awareness that specific disabilities may dramatically change the timing and sequence of childhood and adolescent development.

Trainability refers to the genetic makeup of individuals as they respond individually to specific stimuli and adapt accordingly. For example, both aerobic and strength trainability is dependent on maturation levels; therefore, a different emphasis needs to be placed on these components at different times for early, average or late maturers. A change in practice is required in order to make such decisions on individual needs and maturation levels rather than on chronological age.

2.4.3 **Disability Issues Related to Entry and Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity**

As alluded to in earlier sections, there needs to be awareness that specific disabilities may dramatically change the timing and sequence of factors that impact on individuals' time of entry and subsequent involvement in sport and physical activity development. Individuals and groups with disabilities may need additional support to ensure provision and development of fundamental movement skills. There is an expectation that the labelling of ages for an individual's progression in sport and physical activity may not accommodate all individuals with disabilities. Such individuals may, by the nature, type and severity of their disability, need to participate in age bands outside of their chronological age.

2.5 *Summary*

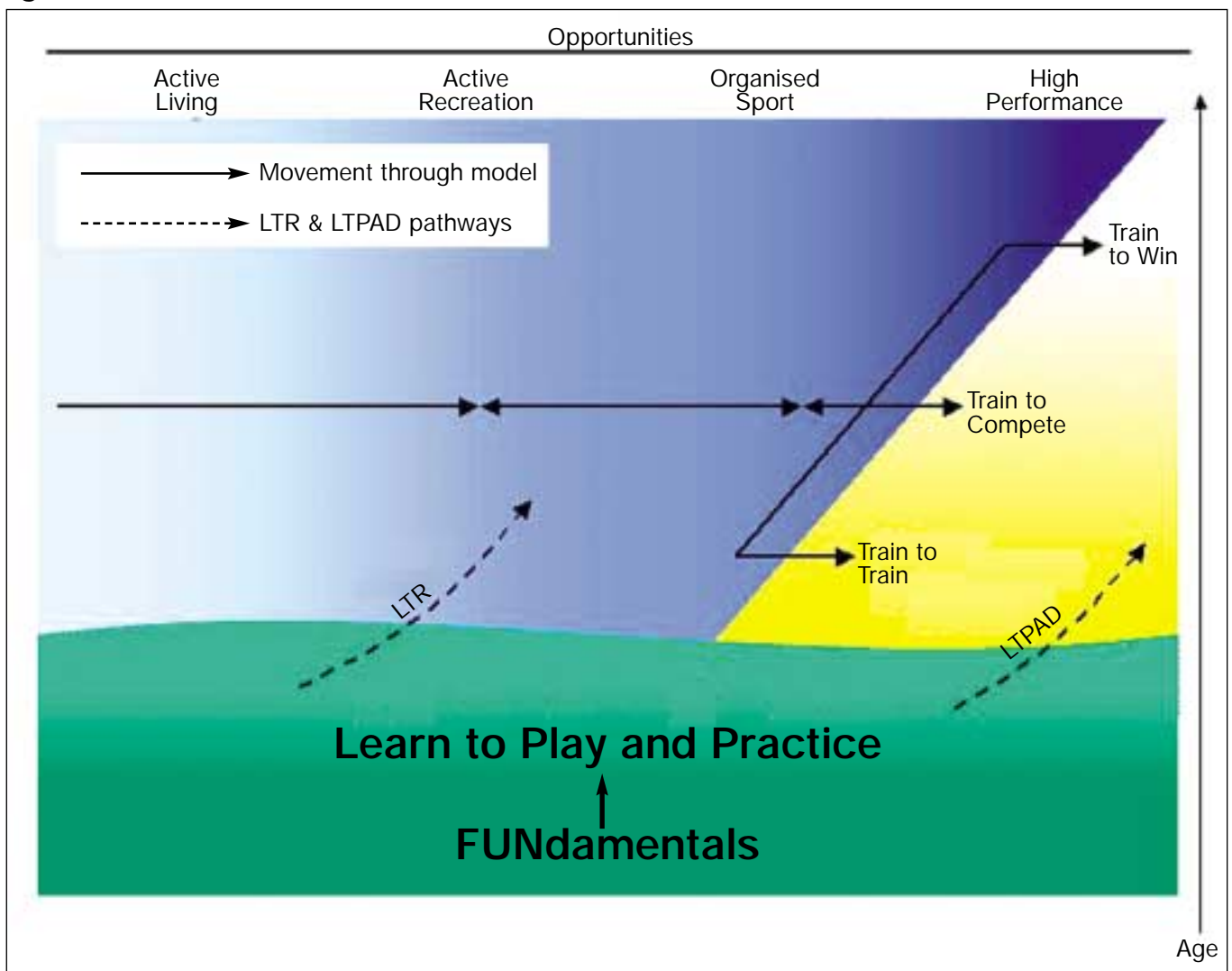
The following key foundations underpin the LISPA model: the promotion of a child-centred approach, the distinction between deliberate play and deliberate practice, and individual difference. The way in which such key foundations inform the LISPA model is evident in section 3, where the different elements and pathways that make up the model are explained.

3. The LISPA Model

3.1 Introduction to the LISPA Model

The LISPA model is illustrated in Figure 2. The model includes two pathways (a long-term recreation (LTR) pathway and a long-term player/athlete development (LTPAD) pathway) and four opportunities (active living, active recreation, organised sport and high performance) for continued involvement in the model. Particular emphasis is placed on the significance of the FUNdamental and Learning to Play and Practice phases, which are conveyed as the foundations of the model. The model suggests that the introduction to sport and physical activity should focus on both phases for all individuals.

Figure 2: LISPA model



The FUNdamental and Learning to Play and Practice phases of the LISPA model provide the foundations for lifelong physical activity and competitive sport performances. If the knowledge base of general movement skills (physical literacy) and technical/tactical skills for an active lifestyle is not provided, it is likely that participants may not develop to their maximum potential.

Once individuals have experienced the FUNdamental and Learning to Play and Practice phases, there are four opportunities for continued involvement and further development in sport and physical activity. These are active living, active recreation, organised sport and high performance. Opportunities are not necessarily discreet from each other, and individuals can move wherever and whenever appropriate.

The LISPA model aims to provide an opportunity for a healthy lifelong participation in sport and physical activity through involvement in two main pathways:

- a **long-term recreation (LTR) pathway**. The LTR pathway encourages those individuals who choose to stay involved in sport and physical activity at a recreational level. It results in participants pursuing active living, active recreation and elements of organised sport opportunities.
- a **long-term player/athlete development (LTPAD) pathway**. The LTPAD pathway is a series of phases that underpin the balanced and long-term development of high performance athletes. This results in participants pursuing elements of organised sport and high performance opportunities ^[1].

3.2 FUNdamentals and Learn to Play and Practice

3.2.1 The FUNdamental Phase™

The objective of the FUNdamental phase is to learn all fundamental movement skills through a positive fun approach. This phase is common to both the LTR and LTPAD pathways.

Fundamental movement skills underpin all aspects of the individual's subsequent development in sport and physical activity. While all phases of the LISPA model should be well structured and maintain an element of fun, these two qualities are particularly relevant at this phase. The development of physical literacy (fundamental movement skills) using a positive, fun approach will contribute significantly to future athletic achievement. Participation in a wide range of sports and activities is also encouraged.

The emphasis of the FUNdamental phase is on the overall development of the child's physical capacities and fundamental movement skills, such as running, jumping, throwing and catching. The ABCs of athleticism, agility, balance, coordination and speed are also important elements of this phase. All of the above skills should be developed using basic, appropriate and enjoyable games, ensuring the correct basic techniques are taught.

If children and parents have a preferred sport or activity, participation once or twice a week is recommended. However, participation in other sports and activities three or four times per week is beneficial for future development. If children decide not to enter the organised sports stream, the skills they have acquired during the FUNdamental phase will still benefit them when they engage in recreational activities, which will enhance their enjoyment of the activities and their quality of life and health.

3.2.2 The Learning to Play and Practice Phase

The objective of the Learning to Play and Practice phase is to learn overall sports skills and specialised movement skills through a positive fun approach. This phase is common to both the LTR and LTPAD pathways.

This phase should be about developing skills, playing a range of sports and becoming familiar with the habit of practice and playing. This would take place initially in informal settings and gradually become more structured and formal as the phase progresses. While the Learning to Play and Practice phase recognises that not all individuals will choose to pursue organised sports, those who do not will be equipped during this phase with the skills necessary to allow them to remain active throughout their lives.

Specialised movement skills are developed after fundamental skills have been acquired. Bypassing the fundamental and specialised skill development phases is likely to have a negative effect on the child's future engagement in sport and physical activity. Between the ages of 8 and 12, children are developmentally ready to acquire general sports skills that are

the cornerstones of all athletic development. If these skills are not learned during the Learning to Play and Practice phase, a significant window of opportunity will have been lost and the ability of the young participant to reach his/her full sports potential will have been compromised.

The emphasis within this phase should be on training rather than on competition. Activities should be structured to promote fun, and those directing such activities should not compromise their inherent fun and enjoyment by over-structuring or over-coaching certain elements.

3.3 Opportunities for Continued Involvement in the LISPA Model

Once individuals have experienced the FUNdamental and Learning to Play and Practice phases, many opportunities are afforded to them to continue their involvement in sport and physical activity. Each opportunity aims to accommodate an individual's preference to the extent to which they wish to continue and develop their involvement in sport and physical activity. Depending on their choice of opportunities, individuals may decide to remain within or move between the LTR and LTPAD pathways. Individuals can make one of four choices:

- **Active living:** A way of life that values physical activity as an essential part of living, characterised by the integration of physical activity into daily routines, e.g. walking whenever you can, cycling to work, gardening etc.
- **Active recreation:** The use of leisure time for activities that require moderate energy expenditure and produce health and/or social benefits, usually performed in a non-competitive setting, e.g. going to the gym, walking, jogging, swimming, social soccer/tag rugby etc.
- **Organised sport:** Participation in sports that have a significant element of planned and purposeful physical activity with competitive goals. Organised sports participation involves competing at all levels including local, club, county, provincial and national levels, e.g. local leagues in basketball, county championships in hurling, regional competitions in swimming.
- **High performance:** Long-term commitment to training and competing at the highest standard in pursuit of excellence at national and international levels.

Those involved in active living, active recreation and organised sport are most likely to pursue the LTR pathway. Those involved in organised sport and looking to move to the high performance stage are most likely to pursue the LTPAD pathway. The LISPA model is not necessarily linear, i.e. not all individuals will strive to move from one stage to another. There needs to be an acknowledgement and understanding that individuals may choose to move between pathways, to remain where they are or to drop out from sport and physical activity altogether.

3.4 Long-Term Recreation (LTR) Pathway

The LTR pathway encourages those individuals who choose to stay involved in sport and physical activity at a recreational level.

While adults can now choose from a range of physical pursuits, recent surveys have shown that there is a marked decline among adults in rates of physical activity [6]. Research has also indicated that most adults do not wish to participate in organised structured physical activities, particularly as they get older. They wish to pursue activities that improve physical health and increase social opportunities in a cost-effective environment without too much pressure on time.

The LTR pathway is based on the needs of the individual, is less goal-orientated, less constrained by rules and more spontaneous than sport *per se*. Sports done in an informal setting by an individual or on a non-competitive basis can be recreational, e.g. swimming, fishing, running, walking, etc. Once individuals have experienced the FUNdamental and Learning to Play and Practice phases of the model, it is possible that some may not yet have decided whether to specialise in one particular sport or to participate in sport and physical activity for social reasons.

3.5 Long-Term Player/Athlete Development (LTPAD) Pathway [16]

The LTPAD pathway is a series of phases that underpin the balanced and long-term development of high performance athletes.

This pathway includes the Training to Train, Training to Compete and Training to Win phases. The objectives of each phase are noted here:

- **The Training to Train phase™:** During the Training to Train phase, individuals consolidate basic sport-specific skills and tactics. However, the trainability of the individual will depend on their maturation level. Therefore, the structure and emphasis of training programmes should be dependent on whether the participants are early, average or late maturers.
- **The Training to Compete phase™:** This phase of development is introduced after the goals and objectives of the Training to Train stage have been achieved. During the Training to Compete phase, high intensity individual-event and position-specific training is provided to participants all year round. Participants, who are now proficient at performing both basic and sport-specific skills, learn to perform these skills under a variety of competitive conditions during training.
- **The Training to Win phase™:** This is the final phase of athletic preparation. All of the participant's capacities are now fully established and the focus of training has shifted to the maximisation of performance. Individuals are trained to peak for major competitions. Training is characterised by high intensity and relatively high volume. Frequent preventative breaks help to avoid physical and mental burnout.

Further discussion on what each phase entails is detailed in NCTC's *Building Pathways in Irish Sport* consultation paper [1]. The paper also discusses the different demands that the individual faces at each phase of their development if they are to negotiate each phase.

3.6 Considerations for the LISPA Model

3.6.1 Rates of Participation

There should be a strong emphasis on enjoyment and on forms of activity that are attractive to adolescents.

Current rates of participation show that young people's participation peaks around 14-15 years of age, with declining rates of activity among adolescents, especially young girls. This consequently affects future involvement or non-involvement in sport and physical activity for both boys and girls because many do not resume participation in sport. It is believed that the type and intensity of opportunities available to young people may contribute to such a decline. The introduction of a strong fundamental and multi-sport programme within Irish sport may challenge and change the current participation rates in adolescent sport and physical activity. Recent research and current programmes show that adolescents are choosing non-traditional types of activities and less structured forms of competition [5] [10].

School physical education programmes, community-based sports activities, family-based activities and NGB recreational programmes all have the potential to contribute to adolescent participation. These programmes should be proactive in highlighting the benefits and fun associated with sport and physical activity and in encouraging teenagers to stay involved in physical activity. Young people need to understand the changes that are associated with puberty and how staying involved in sport and physical activity can contribute positively to this phase of their lives.

3.6.2 Retention and Dropout

The LISPA model is not necessarily linear, i.e. not all individuals will strive to move logically within either pathway. It should be noted that despite the best efforts by sports leaders and organisations, some individuals might simply end their participation by dropping out of sport or physical activity at any stage. Others may choose to retain their level of involvement in sport and physical activity once they have reached their chosen level. In addition, some individuals may have an opportunity to move between pathways. The opportunity also exists for individuals who may have dropped out of sport and physical activity to re-enter the system.

3.6.3 Early Specialisation

It is vital that young people achieve the fundamentals of movement before progressing within a sports programme. Individuals who specialise at an early age achieve success at an early age but rarely ever repeat this success as senior athletes. It is important that individuals have the opportunity to sample the fundamental skills of physical activity and sport, such as running, jumping, catching and throwing etc, before specialising. Specialised training should take place after

a strong fundamental and multi-sport programme and when, or if, the participant has chosen to specialise within a particular sport or position within that sport.

Both early and late specialisation can be accommodated within the LISPA model. The challenge for early specialisation sports is to combine the FUNdamental and Learning to Play and Practice phases or to amalgamate them into a single phase, such as the Training to Train phase. This is only applicable to sports such as diving, skating, gymnastics and rhythmic gymnastics. Late specialisation sports require a generalised approach to early training. In these sports, the emphasis of training should be on the development of general, fundamental movement and technical-tactical skills.

3.6.4 Late Entry to Sport and Physical Activity

An objective of this document is to highlight the opportunities that a LISPA model can provide for young people's lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. There is an acknowledgement that the document is also relevant to those who enter sport and physical activity at different points and at different ages. The choice and availability of group-based and individual leisure time physical activities is another consideration. Individuals who want to keep a recreational sport involvement should have the opportunities to be involved in various sports and training activities that suit their specific needs.

It is imperative that, regardless of their time of entry to sport and physical activity, participants should be encouraged and provided with opportunities to be involved in various sports and physical activities that suit their specific needs.

3.7 Summary of the LISPA Model

- Within the LISPA model, there are **two pathways** (a long-term recreation (LTR) pathway and a long-term player/athlete development (LTPAD) pathway) and **four opportunities** (active living, active recreation, organised sport and high performance) for continued involvement in the LISPA model.
- The model suggests that the introduction to sport and physical activity should focus on both the FUNdamental and Learning to Play and Practice phases for all individuals. The FUNdamental and Learning to Play and Practice phases of the model provide the foundations for lifelong physical activity and competitive sport performances.
- The objective of the FUNdamental phase is to learn all fundamental movement skills (physical literacy) through a positive fun approach.
- The objective of the Learning to Play and Practice phase is to learn overall sports skills and specialised movement skills through a positive fun, multi-sport approach.
- Once individuals have experienced the FUNdamental and Learning to Play and Practice phases, there are four opportunities for continued involvement and further development in sport and physical activity: active living, active recreation, organised sport and high performance.
- The four opportunities of active living, active recreation, organised sport and high performance are pursued to differing extents through the LTR and LTPAD pathways.
- The LTR pathway accommodates those individuals who choose to stay involved in sport at a recreational level and results in participants pursuing active living, active recreation and elements of organised sport opportunities.
- The LTPAD pathway encourages individuals to specialise in sports and progress towards elite performance. This results in participants pursuing elements of organised sport and high performance opportunities.

4. Agencies Involved in Delivering and Promoting the LISPA Model

There are a number of agencies within Ireland that are crucial to the delivery and promotion of the LISPA model. The model has the potential to form an alliance and foster integration between those involved in education, coaching, physical activity, physical education and sport, thereby encouraging collaboration in the promotion of lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. While the noted agencies have, through their own strategies, identified physical activity and/or sport as important to their organisations' aims, the list is by no means exhaustive. A number of agencies are already pursuing work that relates to the LISPA model.

It is anticipated that the model will allow such agencies to:

- be cognisant of how their work can relate to planning and implementing a common strategy towards lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity
- pursue and maintain strong links between agencies at national and local level
- continue to provide opportunities for involvement in sport and physical activity at particular phases of the model

Coach Education Tutors

To date over 550 tutors have been trained in the National Coaching Development Plan (NCDP). The role of the coach education tutor is vital to the implementation of LISPA. The multiplier effect of good tutors on participants is vast. For example, if each of 20 coaches from one tutor-led coach education course went on to work with 20 participants, the good work of the tutor would impact on 400 participants. Over a tutor's career, this figure would be much higher. For example, if a tutor were to deliver 12 courses in total, he/she would have a positive influence on 240 coaches and 4,800 participants.

Coaches

While the main agencies need to agree to adopt and promote the LISPA model and align their work with it, those that will implement it and make the difference are the sports leaders at local, regional and national level. Many of these leaders are coaches who work on a regular basis on sport fields, courts, tracks and other environments where sport/physical activity takes place. The education and support of these coaches by NGBs, the ISC, NCTC, local sports partnerships (LSPs), clubs and schools can impact lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity in a real way for children, participants and performers in Ireland.

Clubs

Clubs, like NGBs, need to buy into the philosophy of the LISPA model so that they can organise their structures and practices in line with the LISPA framework. Similar to the role of sport and leisure facilities, LISPA could also help clubs to keep people involved in sport and physical activity throughout their lives.

Government Departments

At least four government departments have an investment in the LISPA model. The mission of the Department of Art, Sport and Tourism includes facilitating greater access to sport and encouraging excellence in sporting achievement, both of which are possible through involvement in the LISPA model. The Department of Education and Science strives to provide high-quality education that will enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society and contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development. The LISPA model is grounded in a high-quality educational experience, particularly at the FUNdamental and Learn to Play and Practice phases, and can contribute in varying degrees to Ireland's development, more obviously from a social and cultural perspective. The mission of the Department of Health and Children is to encourage individuals to achieve their full health potential; it is envisaged that

lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity can assist in achieving such a goal. Support is needed from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to engineer physical activity back into the Irish way of life, and this can be addressed by the maintenance of green open spaces and the construction of safe cycle paths and walkways.

Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM) Ireland

Facilities with proactive management working to an agreed targeted programme can, and do, make a significant contribution to the sport and physical activity agenda. A nationwide network of such managed facilities, supported by a network of sports development and physical activity professionals and part of a focused and ongoing sport and physical activity initiative, could provide the vehicle for positive results. It has to be recognised that Ireland has a less than clement climate, so participants either need to be highly motivated to face the elements throughout the year or need access to attractive marketed and targeted programmed facilities that are geared to provide positive experiences. It is to this regard that ILAM Ireland can, through educating and encouraging its members, facility managers, sports development officers, educationalists and others, support the aims and objectives of the LISPA model. ILAM Ireland can make a significant contribution by mobilising a large percentage of the population through its network.

Irish Heart Foundation (IHF)

The IHF is the only national voluntary organisation in Ireland working to reduce premature death and disability from heart disease and stroke through research, education and community service. Health promotion has been undertaken under the banner of 'Happy Heart' and includes a number of initiatives aimed at primary and post-primary schools (Action for Life), community (Happy Heart Groups, Irish Heart Week) and the workplace (Happy Heart at Work). The mission of the IHF is to help reduce premature death and disability from cardiovascular disease. For the immediate future, efforts will be targeted at helping to create an environment for all Irish citizens in which the healthier choice becomes the easier choice; it is possible that this work can be aligned with the LISPA model.

Irish Sports Council (ISC) and Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs)

The mission of the ISC is to plan, lead and coordinate the sustainable development of competitive and recreational sport in Ireland. The ISC carries out its mission through the three strategies of participation, performance and elite sport. In order to achieve its participation strategy, the LSP initiative was developed to increase participation and ensure local resources are used to best effect. LSPs provide a mechanism for delivering recreational sport to local people. The ISC has established a joint initiative with the Economic and Social Research Institute to provide a descriptive account of levels and patterns of current sport and leisure-time activity and on the social and economic value of sport in Ireland. It is anticipated that such findings will inform the ISC when designing programmes in relation to lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity.

National Certificate in Exercise and Fitness (NCEF)

The NCEF is a national training scheme for individuals wishing to train as exercise and fitness instructors in Ireland. The NCEF delivers a comprehensive programme covering various levels of study and specialist areas, and the philosophy of the LISPA model could be further integrated into the current programme, perhaps in relation to specialist areas of study such as health-related activity for children, which currently provides participants with the skills, knowledge and competencies to teach safe, fun and effective health-related activity to children aged 4-12 years. The NCEF programme has a wide instructor base that works with young people and adults in numerous sporting and physical activity environments such as leisure clubs, youth clubs and summer camps, and has huge potential to promote the philosophy of the LISPA model through such situations.

National Children's Office (NCO)

One objective of the NCO is that children will have access to play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood. The NCO has identified a lack of choice in pursuing physical activity and a focus on competition in preparing a recreational policy for 12-18 year-olds. The NCO recognises the importance of play in promoting developmental needs of young people and in keeping children healthy and active. The NCO can assist in the rollout of the

LISPA model in relation to the promotion of play through already established relationships between the Health Promotion Unit, the health boards and other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies.

National Coaching and Training Centre (NCTC)

The LISPA model will act as a framework for efficient planning and development of all of the work of NCTC, but specifically in the areas of player/athlete services and the national coaching development plan (NCDP).

1. Player/Athlete Services

NCTC will have the main responsibility for developing the long-term player/athlete development (LTPAD) pathway under the guidance of its technical advisory group (TAG). NCTC's role will be to develop the LTPAD pathway in line with the LISPA model. Its role will also be to advise on the capacities that should be developed among Irish athletes and players at the different stages of the pathway and on the appropriate supports to be put in place to enhance these capacities.

2. National Coaching Development Plan (NCDP)

The NCDP consists of a partnership between more than 50 NGBs and NCTC. Over 29,000 coaches from 39 sports have been certified to date. The NCDP third cycle will seek to align the five-level coaching ladder at its core with the LISPA model, ensuring all participants can have a qualified coach to support their sport/physical activity pathway. The third cycle will also seek to support coaches by providing opportunities to stay up-to-date on best practice and to meet and discuss coaching issues with other, experienced coaches. This will involve NCTC optimising its working relationships with the ISC, LSPs, NGBs, tutors and coaches.

National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs)

These are key delivery agencies in Irish sport. Their support for LISPA is vital. To date, many NGBs have started to develop sports-specific long-term player/athlete development models. These NGBs have also been involved in the NCDP. Work on both these areas can be built on in the implementation of LISPA. The resources available and the potential role of NCTC would need to be clarified.

Olympic Council of Ireland (IOC)/Paralympic Council of Ireland

According to the Olympic charter, the role of national Olympic committees (NCOs) is to encourage the development of high performance sport as well as sport for all. The IOC's mission is to consistently encourage the Olympic spirit among youth and assist the Irish government to carry out programmes of physical culture, recreation and health for the youth. The LISPA model has the potential to not only encourage the development of high performance sport and sport for all but also provides a framework in which a number of current programmes can be situated. The LISPA model can contribute to the integration of everyone with an appreciation that sport can make a difference in everybody's life. Subsequently, the philosophy of the Paralympic movement that physical activity gives individuals with a disability the opportunity to reach their potential, achieve self-determination and have fun is achievable within the LISPA model.

Parents

Parents/guardians have the primary responsibility for the care and welfare of young people. Parental support is an essential element in the development of children's involvement in the LISPA model – their support and interest positively correlate to a child's enjoyment and enthusiasm for sport and physical activity. Parents need to be aware of the importance of promoting a lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity philosophy to their children, and this may be most effective when parents themselves pursue such a philosophy.

Physical Education (in Schools)

The influence that physical education teachers potentially have in the promotion of active lifestyles in young people is yet to be capitalised upon. Physical education teachers are challenged by the search to identify the most effective method of promoting physical activity. The physical education profession has a key role to play in promoting physical activity,

providing appropriate exercise guidance and empowering young people to make informed exercise choices.

Based on international trends, there is a concern in Ireland as to how school (physical education) curricula can be effective in developing lifestyles that may help children to become active adults and how schools can use their full potential to promote health and increase active lifestyles [3] [8] [10]. Such sentiments are evident in the revised primary physical education syllabus and the revised junior cycle physical education syllabus. School physical education needs a support structure that not only pursues the investment that school physical education can have in promoting particular phases of the LISPA model (most likely FUNdamentals and Learn to Play and Practice) but also communicates with agencies external to the school setting that are striving towards a shared provision in physical education and physical activity. The Irish Primary Physical Education Association (IPPEA) and the Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI) may be the necessary structures in which this can be pursued. The IPPEA strives to promote physical education and healthy lifestyles and support the needs of primary teachers in the area of physical education. The PEA has identified four key areas in promoting physical education within the school system: build public policy that ensures physical education as an entitlement for all students, create supportive environments, strengthen links with the community health and sporting services, and develop professional competencies.

Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE)

Those involved in preparing teachers of physical education have an obligation to inform prospective teachers of current philosophies and practices in the promotion of sport and physical activity, not only within the school structure but in the wider community context. Prospective teachers should be encouraged to acknowledge the work and involvement of others, such as coaches and sports leaders, in providing complementary physical activity experiences to that of physical education. More specifically, there is a need to promote an understanding of people in 'different roles' pursuing 'common goals' in an attempt to communicate a shared investment to provide better provision in physical education and physical activity.

Sport and Leisure Facilities

The LISPA philosophy can help owners and managers of sporting and leisure facilities to understand the role such facilities can play in delivering appropriate sports and activities to all. LISPA also has a role to play in the marketing of sport and leisure facilities with a view to keeping people involved in sport and physical activity across the lifespan.

Sports Science and Medical Support Network (SSMSN)

The SSMSN needs to be informed of the principles that underpin the LISPA model, specifically as they relate to the LTPAD pathway. By understanding LISPA, the SSMSN can enhance players/athletes' development, training and performance by giving appropriate supports to players and athletes during the different phases of the pathway.

Third-Level Sector

There are now numerous third-level study options available within Ireland that incorporate sport, sport science, physical activity, physical education, health and exercise. Opportunities exist to share and develop the key foundations underpinning the LISPA model and encourage those studying related areas to work towards the promotion of lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity within the contexts graduates are looking to service, such as schools, clubs, leisure facilities, etc. Third-level institutes also tend to have excellent facilities available for sport and recreation, and there are many instances where the general public are encouraged to access such facilities. This, along with the potential for third-level institutes to award scholarships to support high-performance athletes, illustrates potential ways in which they can support the LISPA model.

Summary

Many agencies have a role to play in creating, promoting and maintaining lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. Irrespective of the extent of an agency's involvement and responsibility, the LISPA model provides a framework in which each agency can invest in pursuing a common strategy towards lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. LISPA also encourages agencies to pursue and maintain links on the understanding that the model is most likely to be effective if agencies can identify at what particular phase(s) of the model they can provide a quality experience and equal access for involvement in sport and physical activity.

5. Recommendations

1. An investment in support and funding for the promotion of the LISPA model, directed by the ISC, is necessary if all those involved in supporting and promoting the model are to understand and deliver such a philosophy.
2. The strategy, operational plans and programmes of the ISC and NCTC should maximise the support for the LISPA model.
3. Funding for the implementation of the LISPA model should be reviewed in line with the following:
 - (a) LISPA implementation should become the key strategic priority of the ISC in its 2006–2008 strategy.
 - (b) The allocation of the ISC budget should be reviewed, with emphasis on additional resources being made available to NGBs and NCTC.
 - (c) Special budget measures allocated to NGBs should be considered as part of the implementation of LISPA.
 - (d) The ISC should seek additional funding from the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism for development of the LISPA model.
4. The training of all those who have a role in supporting and promoting lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity to be adjusted in line with the proposed model of LISPA. Training programmes should focus on equipping such individuals with the skills to promote participation and the related opportunities to remain involved in the LISPA model. The ability to engage adults who have not had a significant involvement in physical activity or who have dropped out needs to form a particular focus of training.
5. The development of the full range of motor skills at the FUNdamental and Learning to Play and Practice phases needs to be promoted by all agencies pursuing the essential elements of a child-centred approach to sport and physical activity, i.e. fun, personal achievement and physical literacy. A FUNdamentals manual needs to be developed for use across all sports.
6. The detail of the revised coaching ladder to be subject to further analysis, with a view to finalising the framework for inclusion in the third cycle of the national coaching development programme (NCDP).
7. With a view to revisiting the foundations of the LISPA model to inform an implementation plan, this consultation document to be distributed to all agencies who may have an involvement in supporting and promoting such a model.
8. Further exploration of elements related to the LTR pathway is necessary through research and development.

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