

Sports Inclusion Development Programme

2009

Claire Grehan has continued the work she commenced in 2008 in bringing sport and physical activity programmes to people with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities.

She has continued to develop positive working relationships with a number of disability organisations including Down Syndrome Ireland, the Irish Wheelchair Association, the National Learning Network, Rehab Care, and Special Olympics Ireland.

She has also formed new working relationships with the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary Services, St Cronin's Day Services Birr, Riverview Resources Services Birr, Shine Organisation, and Laois Offaly Families for Autism in 2009.

Among the activities organised and delivered, or jointly planned and delivered were: -

- Children's sports camps for families with autistic children
- Kit fit programmes for people with intellectual disabilities in Rehab Care and the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary Services;
- Boccia programmes for the National Learning Network, Rehab Care and the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary Services, St Cronin's Day Services Birr and Riverview Resources Services Birr
- A summer athletics programme in conjunction with the Irish Wheelchair Association, Sport
- Two Amateur Swimming Association's Helper's Certificate (for swimming for people with disabilities);
- Transition Year Disability Awareness programmes with St Rynagh's Secondary School, Banagher and Tullamore College;
- 3rd level Disability Awareness programmes with Athlone Institute of Technology and Moate Business College
- Power Soccer for users of power wheelchairs with limited mobility;

Additionally funding for the purchase of an adapted rowing boat was dispersed to Offaly Rowing Club in 2009 in support of their efforts to prepare people with a disability to participate in the 2010 Paralympic Games

A strategic plan for increasing the involvement of people with a disability in physical activity 2010 - 2012 was developed with the support of the Sports Ability Forum. This strategic plan was launched in December 2009 in the Kilcruittin School of Special Education with an attendance of approximately 30 people representing the Offaly County Development Board, the Management Committee of the Sports Partnership, local councillors, staff of Offaly County Council, representatives of National Governing Bodies of Sport, schools, clubs and other interested parties. The plan sets out three strategic goals: -

1. Improving information
2. Enabling access
3. Empowering providers

Updates on the progress of implementing the strategic goals detailed in this document will be made in future reports.

To date, a total of 396 (202 in 2008, 194 in 2009) people with disabilities have been reached by Claire, and the organisations she works with. Some have gone on and competed at national and international level (e.g. Midlands United Power Soccer Club competed in and won both the Leinster and National Power Soccer Championships in 2009; while Nicole Turner competed in the World Dwarf Games and came home with 5 gold, 2 silver and 1 bronze medal).

In support of Claire's work, Offaly Sports Partnership in conjunction with the Offaly Centre for Independent Living submitted a proposal under the Community Services Programme 2008. This proposal is currently on hold within the Department as a result of the current difficulties in the public finances.

Support of €15,000 was secured from the Health Services Executive, through the Offaly Centre for Independent Living, toward the purchase of adapted sports equipment. This will help further the range of sporting options for people with a disability in the county.

Claire is one of 17 Sports Inclusion Disability Officers in Ireland funded from the Dormant Accounts, and is a member of the national network of Sports Inclusion Disability Officers. Funding for her post has been secured up until July 2011.