



Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland



The Societal Effects of Sport in Northern Ireland: Examining Marginalisation and Mental Health Issues

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Sport for Development

- Sport as a means of complimenting broader social development agendas
- Primarily targeted at ‘vulnerable’ youth
- Aim is to influence the culturally ‘hard to measure’ factors that are often the root cause of these problems
- Sport is viewed as a ‘social glue



Sport for Good

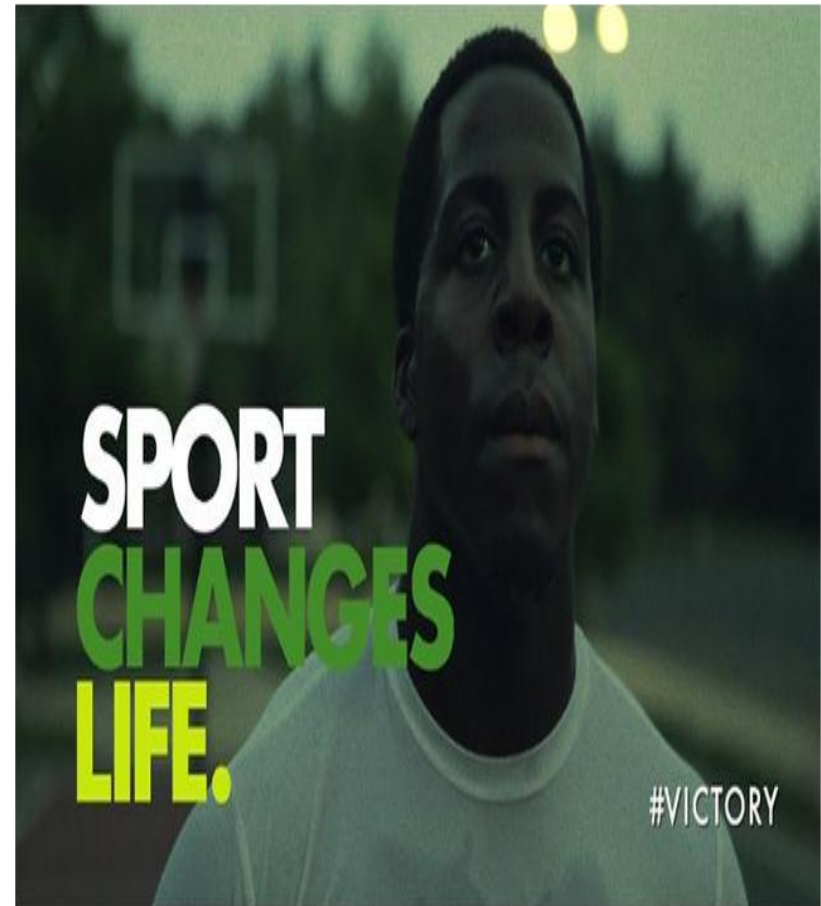
- Sport can make a difference, is often local and cost-effective and may address isolation
- It is the nature, quality and salience of the activity that is critical
- Certain principles need to exist if sport is to assist in the delivery of social outcomes
- Clear need for training and education for those who work in this field



Quelle: Davies/Dart (2005): MSC guide, on <<http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf>>

Factors that have some success...

- Coalter and Taylor (2010) identify key aspects of 'sport for development' that appear to have some impact
- Case for alternative, lifestyle sport as opposed to 'mainstream' activities
- SCLF and 'ehoops' / YES programme
- Use of sport to encourage enhanced engagement with Higher Education



Sport and mental health...

Sport and Physical Activity (PA) for all

Sport and PA intervention for those with mental illness

Sport settings as venue for mental health awareness and promotion.

Sport and PA for all

- associated physical and MH benefits
- Large overlap in MH symptoms and the positive effects of sport and PA
- Evidence reinforces the “sport is good” message.
- Other evidence PA can compromise health.
- Overexposure: linked to overtraining, injury, burnout, immunological suppression and infection, diabetes and eating disorders.
- Overtraining and burnout strongly correlate with affective disorders such as major depressive disorder.
- Injury, competitive failure, and retirement from sport precipitate depression in athletes.

- acknowledging the darker side of sport and PA = a realist synthesis approach when making policy decisions and planning public messaging.

- Need to routinely monitor and evaluate the impact of sports participation on wellbeing.

- Need evidence of prevalence of mental health issues in competitive sports setting.

Sport and PA intervention

- both clinical and nonclinical populations benefit from physical activity (either preventative or therapeutic benefits, compared favourably with pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy).
- Continuing debate surrounds the amount and types of physical activity needed for health benefits.
- Interventions report impact on similar aspects of mental wellbeing (e.g. anxiety, depression and self-esteem).
- Both bodies of research recommend that exercise and physical activity should be one element of an intervention approach.

- insufficient evidence of what works
- audit of current interventions vital (qualitative and quantitative)
- Apply best practice in design and evaluation of programmes.
- Make future informed decisions on sport and mental health initiatives.

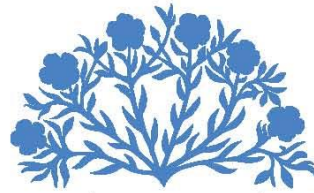
Sport setting for promotion of MH

- High numbers currently involved in sport and physical activity across Northern Ireland.
- Potential role of the sport and leisure sector as a vehicle for promoting important mental health awareness and suicide prevention messages.
- E.g. “Mental health and Wellbeing in Sport” Pilot Programme. 25 sporting clubs in Northern Ireland (Gaelic football, Soccer, Rugby, Golf and Boxing).
- The aim of the pilot is to gauge the impact of mental health messaging in sporting environments.

-a realist synthesis approach needed depending on the setting (i.e. competitive or recreational)

-Feedback and evaluation is essential to assess impact.

-Best practice collaboration with experts required to ensure outcome measures.



Northern Ireland
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