



Incorporating **Age & Opportunity active**,  
The National Sport and Physical Activity Programme  
for Older People



# LOCKED UP, LOCKED IN, LOCKED OUT!

The impact of Covid-19 on physical activity in older people's groups



**“Look! We are simply a group... normally constantly involved in parish and community activities, or socialising among ourselves... we can't do anything until it's safe to do so. We are locked up! in! out!”**

ICA Member

In September 2020 Age & Opportunity asked you how Covid-19 restrictions had impacted on opportunities for your group to be physically active. Here is a summary of what we learned from 700 survey responses and four focus groups.

- Covid-19 restrictions have been devastating for groups and fear of getting Covid-19 is the biggest barrier to recommencing group activities, including physical activity.
- Groups are an important part of your communities and the lives of your members, and physical activities are a core part of all group schedules.
- Groups with access to safe outdoor and indoor spaces fared better when restrictions were lifted somewhat.
- Individuals with access to the internet have more opportunities for contact with their group.
- Men's groups have been less successful at keeping in touch and getting together.
- Communication during this crisis has not always been clear or satisfactory. However, internet, phone, post and broadcast media could hold solutions for groups to keep in touch and to keep active.
- In the aftermath of Covid-19 supports such as access to bigger venues, safe transport, more enabling environments, more and varied physical activity resources for groups and a positive outlook about ageing will be crucial to bringing groups back to life and back to physical activity.

As restrictions are lifted you want:

- **ideas and inspiration** about physical activity that you can carry forward yourselves.
- **information about physical activity** shared beyond the internet so that everyone can access it.
- **the difficulties faced by older people during this crisis to be recognised** and responded to appropriately on a national level.

## What Age & Opportunity can offer :

- **Upskilling** - We aim to support our PALs (Physical Activity Leaders) to deliver activities to their groups by upskilling these leaders in the use of technologies such as Zoom, Facebook and WhatsApp.
- **Offline Resources** - We will develop more offline resources to add to our existing offerings, for the large number of older people who do not have access to the internet. These resources are available free of charge and will be disseminated through our existing network of PALs.
- **Outdoor Activities** - We will put more emphasis on outdoor activities going forward e.g. Providing PALs with resources and knowledge to lead their peers in walking activities and cycling leader programmes.
- **Digital Divide** - We will be exploring opportunities to help reduce the digital divide among older people so that going forward they will not be disadvantaged in this regard.
- **Movement Minutes** - We will continue to deliver Movement Minutes, a physical activity initiative delivered through Facebook and available on our YouTube channel, for our online community.
- **FitLine** - our free telephone based motivation line is being expanded to have a nationwide reach thanks to support from Sport Ireland and the Healthy Ireland Keep Well campaign. For information call **1800 303 545**.