



Waterford Institute *of* Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE

‘Policy and Practice: Women in Sport in Ireland – What has changed?’

A case study of the Women’s Gaelic Players Association (WGPA) and an analysis of the situation for women in sport in Ireland

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Award Sought	Degree of Masters (Research)
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Submitted to Waterford Institute of Technology,
November 2019

Abstract

Purpose. The purpose of this study is to analyse Irish sports policies and strategy documents in relation to women's sport in Ireland and to use a case study approach to track the evolution, formation and impact of the WGPA in order to provide an up-to-date, detailed and accurate account of the structures, policy, roles and developments since the Women in Sport Report 2004 (WISR) (Oireachtas, 2004). **Methods.** A macro-meso-micro frame analysis was used for this research, whereby the topic was studied from all three levels of analysis. The 'action research case study' structure was considered best for the overarching methodology due to its flexibility, complimentary nature of case studies to action research and the necessity of the WGPA research to be studied in perspective and applied to the wider context of women in sport (WIS) in Ireland. Quantitative data was yielded by the participants' completion of a questionnaire, which generated a picture of the reality of being a female intercounty player in 2017. The questionnaire allowed for the analysis of the impacts that the WGPA has had on members since inception and areas that need addressing in relation to the evolution of the organisation. The questionnaire assisted with the identification of issues, trends and patterns in both camogie and ladies football. Qualitative research consisted of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and document analysis of policies relating to WIS in Ireland and focus group interviews with WGPA members. Attendance at meetings, content analysis of meeting minutes, field notes, and content analysis of websites and social media platforms were used to compliment the data gathered and to construct the timelines and mini case studies interspersed throughout the study. **Results.** While there have been many improvements in the area of WIS in Ireland in recent years, very few of the developments were as a result of policy. Appropriately implemented policy, underpinned by adequate funding is essential for the development of WIS in Ireland. Any new policy such as the Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport (SIPWIS) needs to be reviewed, monitored and evaluated regularly. The WGPA has had a positive impact overall and has evolved considerably since its inception. A greater number of players identify as elite athletes and players cited increased recognition for their efforts because of increased media coverage of games, player of the month/year/all-star trip initiatives, and promotion of role models and advocates. Players have highlighted increased on and off field support through government grants, mentoring and counselling services, as benefits of WGPA membership. **Conclusion.** As a starting point for policy formation, research is required in several areas. The positive impact of the WGPA has been felt by players and observed by government funding agencies, policy makers and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport both within and outside of women's Gaelic games. Initiatives such as educating the player on the importance of the player role, the creation of more role models, illustrating the commitment of the players, campaigns for increased visibility and strategies aimed at expanding partnerships to increase revenue, are integral to the future of the WGPA and women's sport in Ireland. Cross collaboration between bodies such as the WGPA, NGBs and government agencies can aid further advancements for WIS in Ireland at every level.

Declaration of Originality



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'I hereby declare that the writing of this thesis and the research contained within is entirely my own work other than the counsel of my supervisor and that it has not been submitted for any academic award, or part thereof, at this or any other educational establishment'

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

Throughout the writing of this dissertation I have received a great deal of support and assistance from many people.

I would first like to say a very big thank you to my supervisor, Dr Jean McArdle. Thank you for all your patience, guidance, support and encouragement over the course of this project. It was greatly appreciated and I could not have completed it without you.

To Aoife Lane, whose expertise was invaluable in the formulating of the research topic, thank you for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to pursue this research.

To the WGPA, I would like to gratefully acknowledge and thank you for the funding received towards this research. Thank you in particular to Gemma Begley for liaising with me in relation to this and making it a seamless process for me. Not having to stress about the finances of the project made a huge difference to me.

To all the staff in Waterford Institute of Technology, thank you for all your assistance over the course of my research.

I would like to thank my parents and my brother for their continued love and support during the completion of this research, without which the current study would not have been possible. Thank you for always being there for me with wise counsel and a sympathetic ear.

Thank you to my aunts for your extremely useful help with the formatting, editing and proofreading of the project and for remaining patient with me at all times.

Thank you to my friends and teammates who provided me with happy distractions to rest my mind outside of my research and helped me to find the balance between work and play.

Finally, I would like to thank the participants of this study. Their time and effort is greatly appreciated and this study would not have been possible without their assistance.

Julia White.

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Glossary

AFL	Australian Football League	NBPA	National Basketball Players Association
AFLW	AFL Women's	NGB	National Governing Body
APSE	Associated Press Sports Editors	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation	NHLPA	National Hockey League Players' Association
BT Sport	BitTorrent Sport	NOC	National Olympic Committee
CAAWS	Canadian Association for Advancement of Women and Sport	NSP	National Sports Policy 2018 - 2027
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	PA	Player Association
CNN	Cable News Network	PE	Physical Education
CONCACAF	Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football	PEAI	Physical Education Association of Ireland
CSA	Conseil Supérieur de L'Audiovisuel	PFA	Professional Footballers Association
ESB	Electricity Supply Board	PFAI	Professional Footballers' Association of Ireland
ESPN	Entertainment and Sports Programming Network	PR	Public Relations
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute	PSG	Paris Saint-Germain F.C.
EU	European Union	PWC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
FA	Football Association	ROIWNST	Republic of Ireland Women's National Soccer Team
FAI	Football Association of Ireland	RTÉ	Raidió Teilifís Éireann
FC	Football Club	SIDO	Sport Inclusion Disability Officer
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association	SIPWIS	Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport
FifPro	International Federation of Professional Footballers' Associations	SLG	Sports Leadership Group
FIS	Federation of Irish Sport	TD	Teachta Dála
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association	UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation	UK	United Kingdom
GPA	Gaelic Player Association	UN	United Nations
GSSS	Global Sports Salaries Survey	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
HP	High Performance	US	United States
IABA	Irish Athletic Boxing Association	USWNT	United States Women's National Soccer Team
IBF	International Boxing Federation	WBA	World Boxing Association
IOC	International Olympic Committee	WBC	World Boxing Council
IRFU	Irish Rugby Football Union	WBO	World Boxing Organisation
ISC	Irish Sports Council	WFA	Women's Football Association
ISM	Irish Sports Monitor	WFAI	Women's Football Association of Ireland
ITV	Interactive Television	WGPA	Women's Gaelic Players Association
IWG	International Working Group on Women and Sport	WHWC	Women's Hockey World Cup
IWNHT	Ireland Women's National Hockey Team	WIS	Women in Sport
IWNRUT	Ireland Women's National Rugby Union Team	WISR	Women in Sport Report 2004
IWRFU	Irish Women's Rugby Football Union	WNBA	Women's National Basketball Association
LA	Los Angeles	WRWC	Women's Rugby World Cup
LGFA	Ladies Gaelic Football Association	WSF	Women's Sports Foundation
LSP	Local Sports Partnership	WSFF	Women's Sports and Fitness Foundation
MLBPA	Major League Baseball Players Association	WSL	Women's Super League
MP	Member of Parliament		
NBA	National Basketball Association		
NBC	National Broadcasting Company		

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

'Irish females have demonstrated a passion for spectating and being involved (from recreational to elite level) in sports and physical activities, though this involvement has generally not been acknowledged in the same way as male involvement in sport.' (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 11). The focus of this research is the policy and practice associated with women's sport in Ireland today. Specifically, the purpose of this chapter is to outline the justification for and background to this research. It aims to provide the reader with an overview of the structure of the thesis. Table 1 provides context and sets the scene for what will follow, acting as an adequate reference point for many of the themes explored and discussed throughout the study. This table is a guiding point to the research that has been completed. A more in depth timeline is available in Appendix A.

Table 1. Women in sport in Ireland timeline: 2013 – 2019.

2013	<p>Lisa Fallon became Ireland's first ever female manager of a senior men's team, Lakelands FC.</p> <p>Ireland Women's National Rugby Union Team (IWNURUT) won the 6 Nations Grand Slam for the first time ever.</p>
2014	<p>IWNURUT beat New Zealand for the 1st time ever and finish 4th in the 2014 Women's Rugby World Cup (WRWC).</p> <p>Stephanie Roche's goal was nominated for the FIFA Puskas Goal of the Year Award.</p> <p>Katie Taylor won her record-equalling 5th consecutive World Championship title and 6th European and EU Elite titles.</p> <p>Ireland Senior Women's National 3x3 Basketball Team qualified for the European Championship and the first European Games in Baku in 2015 under the Olympic flag. First time an Irish basketball team participated in an Olympic event since 1948.</p>
2015	<p>IWNURUT lifted the Six Nations trophy.</p> <p>IRFU hosted a major Women's Sevens International event in UCD but provided no programmes.</p> <p>LGFA Finals record attendance of 31,083 - largest attendance at a female European sporting event in 2015.</p> <p>WGPA set up.</p>
2016	<p>Sport for Business held the first Women in Irish Sport Conference.</p> <p>Junior minister Patrick O'Donovan proposed a gender quota policy detailing a 30 per cent ratio of women on the boards of all sporting bodies, it was subsequently squashed.</p> <p>Joanne Cantwell was the first woman to anchor RTÉ's coverage of the Champions League.</p>

The women's FAI Cup final, televised live for the 4th year in a row, was played as a double-header with the men's final in the Aviva.

LGFA Finals record attendance of 34,445.

2017

Republic of Ireland Women's National Soccer Team (ROIWNST) demanded better conditions from the FAI.

LGFA Finals record attendance of 46,286 - up 12,000 from 2016 and the highest attendance at a female sporting event in Europe in 2017.

Rena Buckley won her 18th All-Ireland intercounty medal, the most ever won by a male or female player in Ireland.

RTÉ televised the All-Ireland Senior Camogie quarter-finals live for the first time.

IRFU advertised for a new head coach for the IWNRTUT on a part time contract for 6-months.

Joy Neville won World Rugby Referee of the Year at the World Rugby Awards.

Ireland hosted the WRWC.

The Ireland Women's National Hockey Team (IWNHT) had no sponsor heading into their world cup Year, members of squad had to pay €550 euro out of their own pockets to cover expenses such as accommodation, buses etc.

WGPA Government Grants.

2018

20x20 initiative launched by Federation of Irish Sport.

Gender targets outlined in Action 32 of the new NSP 2018-2027.

Women in Sport Review established by Sport Ireland.

11 women mentioned in the RTÉ Year of Sport Review out of a total of 86 sportspeople or teams.

2 of the 6 books shortlisted in the An Post Sport Book of the Year category telling the stories of women, written by women.

Liam Harbison, Sport Ireland, announced the medal winning ratio for Irish athletes swung from 70% Men and 30% Women to 45% Men and 55% Women.

Youth Olympic Games team had 11 females and 5 males.

RTÉ release original documentary series 'We Run the World' shadowing 5 of Ireland's elite female athletes.

Katie Taylor documentary 'Katie' was released and received 100% review on Rotten Tomatoes and was also available to stream on Netflix.

The IWNHT became the first Irish team ever to make a world cup final. They finished second overall and secured silver medals.

IWNHT players nominated in two different categories for the 2018 International Hockey Star Awards.

Shirley McCay, Ireland Hockey player, became the most capped athlete in Ireland ever.

SoftCo extended their pre-hockey world cup sponsorship of IWNHT up until at least 2021.

The IWNHT claimed a holy trinity of the RTÉ, Irish Independent and The Irish Times 'Team of the Year' accolades for 2018.

Kellie Harrington claimed the AIBA Lightweight World Title 2018. The first Irish boxer to win world medals at two different weights. Later crowned 'Best European Female Boxer of 2018'.

Stephanie Meadow was named the 2018 Irish Golf Writers' Professional of the Year - the first woman to win the award in its 43-year existence.

Cora Staunton's autobiography entitled 'Game Changer', released as the first autobiography from a female GAA sports star. It was crowned the 2018 Bord Gáis Energy Sports Book of the Year.

Joanne Cantwell becomes the first female presenter of the Sunday Game.

LGFA Finals record attendance of 50,141.

Denise O'Sullivan crowned MVP by 2018 NWSL Champions North Carolina Courage.

Katie Taylor announced as the 'WBA Female Boxer of the Year 2018'.

2019

First Women in Sport Policy launched by Sport Ireland.

First Women in Sport Steering Committee set up and 1st Women in Sport Lead appointed.

RTÉ and TG4 showed all 52 matches live with free to air coverage in the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup (WWC), for the first time ever.

Katie Taylor became Female Lightweight Undisputed World Champion - holding the belts for WBA, IBF, WBO, and WBC.

LGFA All-Ireland Semi Finals took place in Croke Park for first time in history and attracted a record crowd of 10,866 for a Semi Final.

Lidl announce 4th year of partnership with LGFA.

Dublin Ladies Football team played 2 double header NFL fixtures in Croke Park for the first time.

Fiona McHale, Mayo Ladies football All Star and WGPA national executive committee member, appointed as coach to Claremorris Senior Football team.

President of GAA John Horan announced congress to vote on LGFA and Camogie addition to GAA board.

LGFA announced 12-month Female Leadership Programme.

'The W' podcast launched.

Scrum Queens podcast launched.

4,637 in attendance for Ireland V England IWNROT match in Donnybrook - record crowd for a standalone fixture in the home of Irish women's rugby.

Park Developments rolled out a 4-year support package providing 23 IWNROT players with bursaries to enable them to train and compete on a semi-professional basis.

18 LGFA players committed to the 2020 AFLW season.

RTÉ televised all 3 All-Ireland Camogie finals for the first time ever.

Ciara Mageean became first Irish woman to reach a world 1500m final since Sonia O'Sullivan in 1997.

1.2 Justification for Research

Sport in Ireland, as in many other countries around the world, is an integral part of society (Discovering Ireland, 2019; Federation of Irish Sport, 2013; Rouse, 2015; Sport Ireland, 2018). In the most watched Irish TV programmes of 2018, sports featured six times on the top ten list; with Six Nations and Guinness Series rugby matches and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup Final 2018, placing 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place respectively (Kelly, 2019). The topic of women in sport (WIS) in particular; has long been a contested issue in the academic world. According to Warde (2006) gender is one of the most discriminating variables within sport, which has led to many studies examining inequality and gender stereotypes in sport (Koivula, 1995; Schmalz and Kerstetter, 2006) to name but a few. However, Liston (2014) found that there is an absence of critical discourses relating to WIS in Ireland. In Ireland, sociology has never had the official status or public recognition that adheres to dominant discipline areas such as history, economics or psychology (Share, Corcoran and Conway, 2012). 'Considering: the low status of sociology in Ireland generally and the lack of sports researchers within Irish sociology' (Liston, 2004, p. 207) this is perhaps not surprising. Perhaps, as a result of this, policy relating to WIS in Ireland has also not been analysed in depth, nor have the realities or experiences of female athletes in Ireland today ever been reviewed or investigated in any prior research.

In March 2003, the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs decided to investigate the issues relating to WIS in Ireland and appointed Deputy Jimmy Deenihan, Teachta Dála (TD) as its rapporteur. The Joint Committee initiated the investigation in part because they felt women in Ireland's 'involvement has generally not been acknowledged in the same way as male involvement in sport' (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 1). The aims were clear; 'it is hoped that it can provide further impetus to those who are genuinely motivated to promote female sports in Ireland as well as providing an up- to-date and informed discussion of relevant issues in this area' (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 11). In July 2004, the published report provided a detailed and extensive review into female sport in Ireland and the challenges it faced along with 23 recommendations on what the committee believed to be the best way to promote and develop women's sport in Ireland. To date there has been no official research conducted investigating the development and success of each of the 23 recommendations of the Women in Sport Report 2004 (WISR) (Oireachtas, 2004) from 2004 to the present time.

Liston (2014) asserted that females have gradually increased their participation in sports and physical activities on the island of Ireland in the past 20 years. The State of the Nation Report (Lidl, 2017) found that 2 in 5 Irish girls between the ages of 12-17 play sport and 33% of Irish male adults and 23% of Irish female adults play sport. According to the Irish Sports Monitor (ISM)

Report 2017 (Sport Ireland, 2017) gender gaps in sports participation in Ireland (4.5%) were narrower than at any point since the ISM was introduced in 2007 when participation rates were, 15.7%. Moreover, increased participation among females aged 45 and older means that they are now more likely to participate in sport than males of the same age. However, while the research by Liston (2001; 2014), the ISM Report 2017 and Lidl (2017) provides valuable and insightful data on the participation rates of women in sport in Ireland, there is a severe dearth of research relating to the experiences of women playing sports in Ireland today. Therefore, it has been difficult to comprehend the impact the recommendations of the report have had and almost impossible to track the progress of women's sport in Ireland over the past number of years in line with what the Joint Committee intended on achieving. Consequently, in order to examine whether all, if any, of the recommendations of the report have been met, the proposed aim of this study is to provide an updated account and context of WIS in Ireland today by reviewing and analysing the policy and practice associated with women's high performance sport in Ireland. Using a mixed methods approach, a critical analysis of Irish sports policy and strategy will be conducted and contextualised with particular reference to women's sport in Ireland.

This research also aims to give a detailed analysis of the impact of the Women's Gaelic Players Association (WGPA) on women's experiences within Gaelic games. Ladies Football and Camogie, games indigenous to Ireland, are the largest female sports in the country. According to the State of the Nation Report (Lidl, 2017, p. 14), 60% of girls aged 12-17 participating in sport, play Gaelic football, making it the most popular sport in Ireland for this demographic. Camogie, representing 28% of the same population, is second. Soccer, basketball and swimming trail behind both of these sports at 21%, 11% and 11% respectively. The WGPA was chosen as a focus of this research as it represents the interests of intercounty camogie and ladies football players; the elite amateur athletes who play at the top level of these sports (WGPA, 2019).

The research was considered to be specifically pertinent at the current time given the recent success of the Ireland Women's National Hockey Team (IWNHT) in the 2018 Women's Hockey World Cup (WHWC) (becoming the first Irish team ever to reach a world cup final in any sport), the launch of the 20x20 Campaign in October 2018, the newly published Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport (SIPWIS) in March 2019, and the formation of the new Women in Sport Steering Committee in March 2019, to name but a few examples.

1.3 Background to Research

1.3.1 An Overview: Women in Sport in Ireland

Liston (2014) argued that, similar to developments internationally, females have gradually increased their participation in sports and physical activities in Ireland over the past 20 years. Many positive developments are listed in Table 1 and Appendix A. However, despite this, many elite Irish female athletes have been critical of the state of women's sport in Ireland. In a series of interviews carried out by Marie Crowe in 2018 and published online by Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ), a number of female Irish athletes were questioned regarding their treatment on and off the pitch as female athletes (Crowe, 2018). Many of their answers would indicate that the recommendations of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) have not been fulfilled to date, 15 years after the publication of the report. When asked if they felt that men and women are on an even footing in their sport, the majority, nine out of eleven athletes responded 'No'. The following quote from Irish rugby player, Jenny Murphy consolidates this:

'No, 'No. The men's game is professional, so they can fully focus on being the best rugby player possible. Female rugby players in Ireland work full-time and manage training around their nine to five. England, New Zealand and France are making huge steps in bringing the women's game into a professional era. The countries that have gone down this route are playing some fantastic rugby and young girls can look to their national team and see a viable career. The divide between these teams will grow if other unions don't act and invest more in their women's teams'.

(Crowe, 2018).

The only two athletes who felt gender equity was apparent in their sport were involved with athletics. Irish middle-distance runner Ciara Mageean stated,

'I am very lucky in my sport because I feel it is one of the few sports in the world where men and women are somewhat equal...There are challenges to do with minority sports being represented and that is a conversation for another day. It is very clear to me that our female sports stars do not get the same opportunities as their male counterparts.'

(Crowe, 2018).

Mayo ladies football player Fiona McHale elaborated on some of the issues present in her opinion:

'Ladies football has made massive strides over the past decade in terms of media coverage, sponsorship deals and participation levels with public interest also growing, as seen from record breaking attendances in Croke Park on All-Ireland finals day. Having said that, I feel this covers over the cracks for the general public in how they view the female player and there is a lack of awareness of the massive gender disparities that exist in our games. Budgets for intercounty teams are minuscule compared with our male counterparts, with a typical ladies' football team's yearly budget the equivalent of some of the top men's teams training camps. Female teams are still battling with the

use of local facilities for training, home county ground use for league and championship games and most struggle to bag the major sponsorship deals that admirably some of the more established teams are making. The lack of financial support in terms of food provision after training for some and travel expenses for all leaves some very talented players with no other option but to choose part-time jobs over playing inter county football.'

(Crowe, 2018).

Equal opportunities, funding and investment inequality, discrimination and stereotyping, cultural barriers and promotion were cited as other issues and Irish hockey player Deirdre Duke felt that; 'the biggest issue with women's hockey compared to the men's is attendance figures. Particularly when there are international fixtures in Ireland, the number of people attending the women's game would be considerably fewer than the men's.' (Crowe, 2018). This is supported by a survey carried out by Teneo Sports for the Irish Times (2018) showing that only 13% of Irish people say they attended a women's sports event in 2018. This is reduced to 12% when looking at females only attending female sports events, while males are at 14 %. Cork camogie goalkeeper Aoife Murray echoes this by saying that 'women do not overly support women' (Crowe, 2018). In an article written by Meagher (2018), Elaine Buckley from RTE's sport also consolidates the issues surrounding attendance of female sporting events:

'That was a great attendance (referring to the aforementioned All-Ireland Ladies Football final 2018 record breaking attendance figures) but it's not reflected in the earlier rounds...It was wonderful to see so many people on Dame Street [during the official homecoming reception for the Irish Women's Hockey Team who finished Runners Up in the Women's World Cup 2018] and to know that so many watched the final on TV, but will that support be carried over the next time Ireland plays? How many people will go to the next international match?'

(Meagher, 2018).

Buckley believes a cultural shift is needed when it comes to boosting participation and attendances. 'What about the women who take part in sport now? If they went out and supported elite athletes in their own sports that would be a great start. The mind-set has to change and it can change.' The elite athletes interviewed by Crowe (2018) suggested many changes that could be made to improve conditions experienced by female athletes on and off the pitch in Ireland. Examples of the suggestions include the following:

- Ensure more women are in key positions and decision-making roles within the game
- Create positive female athletic role models against the discriminating stereotype, investments in to women's sport and offer more financial support made available.

- Celebrate and promote women's sports for what it is - as an important member of the sporting family
- Help sponsors and brands to recognise how they can harness the power of women's sport
- Encourage sponsors and governing bodies to promote and stage competitions that inspire the next generation of young girls - creating platforms on which female athletes can shine

Many of the athletes interviewed also felt that more coverage would lead to and assist with the delivery of the aforementioned changes necessary and the rewards they would reap. Ciara Mageean in particular felt that 'with more coverage would come more sponsorship, more support, greater participation etc.' (Crowe 2018). Irish rugby player Eimear Considine came to the same conclusions:

'Support for female athletes cannot be generated if it is not made more easily accessible/visible for the public to see them. I think increased media coverage of games, sponsorship and the use of female players for promotion of the sport will help make this happen. Letting the public get to know the players as people and athletes because they have so much to offer on and off the field'

(Crowe, 2018).

1.3.2 An Overview: Women in Sport in Gaelic Games

The Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) was founded in 1974 and the Camogie Association in 1904. Both are all-island (32-county) organisations, established separately to each other and to the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). Women between the ages of 18 - 45 are most likely to be playing Gaelic football or camogie (Lidl, 2017). According to the 2017 ISM report, from 2015 to 2017, there was an increase from 0.8% to 1.2% of women in Ireland playing Gaelic football and an increase of 0.5% to 0.6% playing camogie (Sport Ireland, 2017). In 2010, the Camogie Association had 540 clubs with the aim of reaching 750 clubs by 2015 (Irish Independent, 2010). This does not appear to have occurred, with Wikipedia being the only source of this information since 2010, reporting that in 2019 the Camogie Association had 550 clubs and 85,000 members (Wikipedia, 2019). According to the LGFA Strategic Roadmap 2017-2022, the LGFA has experienced large increases in membership over the past number of years growing from over 117,000 members in 2008 to 188,000 in 2018, an increase of 60% in ten years (LGFA, 2018).

'Let's Make Things Better – A Profile of Intercounty Ladies Football and Camogie Players' (WGPA, 2014), was a survey of 586 intercounty ladies footballers and camogie players conducted by Aoife Lane in 2014. The rationale was to gather concrete information about the experiences of female

intercounty players in Ireland and about their perceptions of player welfare issues, using a nationally representative sample of ladies' football and camogie players. According to the report, when the participants were surveyed about player welfare, the responses suggested a disconnect between their playing commitments, associated health and wellbeing and current provisions for player welfare. Approximately only 33% of players had access to hot showers at training and only 7% of respondents indicated that they received expenses for travelling to training. Seventy-five per cent of the respondents had experienced an injury at some stage during their career while 43% indicated that they had to take time off work/college due to that injury. A large proportion of female players (62%) did not receive payment for expenses associated with their injuries. A similar number (63%) indicated they had been 'out of pocket' on some occasion due to county commitments, particularly due to injury. Eighty-eight per cent of camogie players buy their own hurls. Female players felt frustrated at the lack of recognition they feel they receive, 'I feel female sports players get very little recognition for what they do' and 'I play and coach camogie as I love the game but when you do not get acknowledgement. It's very hard', (WGPA, 2014, p. 16). Some key concluding points from 'Let's Make Things Better' indicated that players were overwhelmingly supportive of a national player representative group (99.6%) who would advocate and provide for players in a playing, personal, and professional context, and were willing to work collectively to promote related player led initiatives and their sport. This was also reflective of the wider issues facing WIS in Ireland. In an attempt to enhance the position and welfare of the Gaelic players in both football and camogie, a decision was made by a number of players and interested parties to establish their own player's association to enhance, protect and promote the needs of their senior county players. 'Minimum standards' was chosen by players as the number one priority for the player representative group. Access to physiotherapy, travel expenses, shower facilities, and food after training were highlighted as priorities for achieving these minimum standards. Some other examples of priorities were identified as education support, career advice, financial support, emotional and wellbeing support and increased media coverage (WGPA, 2014, p. 18).

1.4 Purpose

A number of objectives were used to facilitate the macro-meso-micro framework of this study. They included:

- An analysis of Irish sports policies and strategy documents; these were examined through an analysis of the organisational values that relate to the development and structures within women's sport

- A detailed account of the context of WIS in Ireland by providing an overview of structures, policy, roles and developments since 2004 (general and high-performance (HP) sport)
- A case study approach, tracking the evolution, formation and impact of the WGPA in order for their role and perceived impact in both Gaelic games and women's sport in general in Ireland to be documented accurately

Micro-level research studies included individuals and one-on-one interactions, meso-level research studies groups, and macro-level research studies institutions and policies. (De Carlo, 2018). The macro-meso-micro frame analysis, whereby the topic was studied from all three levels of analysis, was the approach used for this research. The macro-meso-micro frame analysis is a useful way of studying the transition of a policy from high-level idea to programme in action; it can identify differences at a local (micro) level in the implementation of multi-site programmes that would help understand differences in programme effectiveness (Caldwell and Mays, 2012).

1.5 Research Questions

1. Structures, policy, roles and developments since 2004: How will policy analysis inform us of developments and implemented programmes and possible progress within women's sport in Ireland since the Women in Sport Report? (macro and meso)
2. WGPA evolution, formation and impact: What will an examination of the evolution, formation and possible impact tell us about the role and position of women in sport in Ireland today? (meso and micro)

1.6 Methodological Approach

A methodological challenge with this study was trying to capture the progress and impact of evolving studies. The landscape of WIS in Ireland is changing rapidly, as is the progression of the WGPA. Therefore, in order to capture the trends and developments in WIS in Ireland to the most accurate degree from the micro to the macro, it was decided that a traditional approach would not be effective. It was predicted that much of the findings and results that could be gathered and analysed through a traditional approach would not be as up-to-date as possible in line with the ever advancing nature of the topic. Instead, as a result of this, two studies within the overall study was deemed most appropriate, by means of a combination of action research and case study methodologies. Chapter Three looks at the comprehensive and critical analysis of policies and strategy related to WIS in Ireland (macro) and the roles and development of WIS in Ireland (meso), while Chapter Four examines the formation, evolution and impact of the elite level player

representative group, the WGPA (meso and micro). The specific methodology used in analysing the two studies will be detailed in the relevant chapters.

The 'action research case study' method (McManners, 2016) was chosen as the guiding methodology for this research as it combines the focus on inquiry and action offered by action research with the case study methodology described by Yin (2014). The methodology was considered best for the overarching methodology due to its flexibility and the necessity of the WGPA research to be studied in context and applied to the wider context of WIS in Ireland (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Whitehead, Taket and Smith, 2003). Prendevill et al. (2017) and Yin (2014) also highlighted the complimentary nature of case studies to action research. It allows researchers to go beyond the role of neutral observer to a participatory role whilst retaining academic rigour (McManners, 2016). Brown (2015) states the advantage of a case study is that you get to know the status quo in all its facets and so you gain a deep insight into your field of study. It was thought this approach could also serve to challenge prevailing assumptions about WIS in Ireland. This could also guide new directions in future research, provide an opportunity to pursue action, leading to the resolution of some of the issues and barriers to the development of WIS in Ireland going forward; particularly in relation to members of the WGPA (Eisenhardt, 1989; Emmel, 2013; Gerring, 2004; Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010; Seawright and Gerring, 2008).

Mixed methods were the chosen methods of this 'action research case study' overarching methodology. Mixed methods research may be defined as an approach that 'combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for the broad purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration' (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007, p. 123). By combining the two, mixed methods can strengthen research as no method is without weakness or bias (Webb et al., 1966). Mixed methods must not be confused with multi-methods research that uses combinations of methods that result in the same kind of data (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Mixed method research design was considered as it is a central feature of the overall guiding methodologies of action research (Cresswell, 2009) and the case study (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010). Two main collection techniques were used in the generation of data. Quantitative research is the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques (Given, 2008). Quantitative data was yielded by the participants' completion of a questionnaire, which aided the depiction of the reality of being a female intercounty player in 2017. The questionnaire also allowed for the analysis of the impacts the WGPA has had on members since it was set up and areas that need to be

addressed in relation to the evolution of the organisation. Finally, the questionnaire also assisted with the identification of issues, trends and patterns in both camogie and ladies football.

Qualitative data are in depth descriptions of circumstances, people, interactions, observed behaviours, events, attitudes, thoughts and beliefs and direct quotes (Patton, 2001, 2005). It may also include excerpts or entire passages from personal or organisational documents such as correspondence, records/diaries, and case histories (Patton, 2005). At this point it is important to mention that qualitative data is usually in the form of text (i.e. interview transcriptions or organisational documents); however, it may also include non-textual data such as tables, pictures, audio and video recordings (Patton, 2005; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The qualitative research consisted of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of WIS in Ireland, focus group interviews with WGPA members, and document analysis of policies relating to WIS in Ireland. Attendance at meetings, content analysis of meeting minutes, field notes, and content analysis of websites and social media platforms were also used to compliment the data gathered for both studies and also to construct mini case studies interspersed throughout Chapter Three and Chapter Four. Holsti (1969) provides a broad definition of content analysis as the application of scientific methods to documentary evidence. Content analysis enables the analysis of data to be structured and may be used in both qualitative and quantitative studies (Neuendorf, 2002). Typically based on an individual's perspective, qualitative content analysis is similar to textual analysis in that it is primarily interpretive in nature, and often does not utilise statistics for data analysis. Such approaches have previously been used and recommended in the literature (Becker et al., 2002; Butterfoss et al., 2006).

1.7 Experimental design

1.7.1 Procedure

This study was divided into four distinct phases. As mentioned previously, the data collection methods detailed below, handwritten field notes from meetings and content analysis of websites and social media platforms were made by the author throughout the four phases. Examples of the field notes can be found in Appendix S.

Phase 1

- a) Using content analysis of website and social media platforms and reports, start a timeline associated with the formation of the WGPA and also a timeline which contextualises any changes in women's sport since the WISR was published in 2004 (Oireachtas, 2004)

- b) Start analysis of Irish policy documents related to the development and promotion of sport, in particular the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004), the National Sports Policy 2018-2027 (NSP) (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS), 2018) and the SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019)
- c) Start mapping of events leading up to and including the formation of the WGPA and mapping of events occurring nationally with WIS

Phase 2

- d) Survey to assess the current needs of the members of the WGPA to examine awareness of the current members to the role and function of the WGPA

Phase 3

- e) Focus group interviews with WGPA committee and key members

Phase 4

- f) Semi structured stakeholder interviews with focus on the context of WIS in Ireland
- g) Continuation of analysis of Irish policy documents related to development and promotion of sport, in particular the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004), the NSP (DTTAS, 2018) and the SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019)
- h) Analysis of all up to date WGPA reports and documents, to enhance the understanding of the role and function of the WGPA. This information could be used to inform future decision making and direction of the association

1.7.2 Population of Interest

The participants of this study were drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds. The population of interest were sports policy makers and government funding agencies, along with corporate business who are interested in supporting and sponsoring women's sport. Many of the National Governing Bodies (NGB's) of sport (65) in Ireland who have first-hand evidence of the disparity in sports. Media companies such as RTÉ and Teilifís na Gaeilge (TG4) who have been developing their journalism to be more inclusive of women. The WGPA and their members, who are visionary in their quest to promote and develop Gaelic games for women.

1.7.3 Ethical Clearance

Before starting this study, the researchers submitted a Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) Application for Ethical Approval to the School of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee,

which is a sub-committee of WIT's Academic Council. This was necessary as the study involved human subjects, some of which were under the age of eighteen. Low-risk cases involving participants aged 16-18 can be handled by local procedures (University of Cambridge, 2019) complying with WIT regulations. Departments must ensure the following: written informed consent is obtained, parental/gatekeeper knowledge has been obtained (formal consent may be required in some settings), participant information and participant consent documentation is appropriately drafted, investigator has been trained in dealing with non-adult participants, survey design is appropriate to the age group, and use of non-adult participants is warranted. This is particularly relevant to student projects; protocols for use of for example school or similar settings have been observed (University of Cambridge, 2019).

All of the players gave their consent to be involved with this study through the WGPA which acted like a gatekeeper for the construction of the questions and for access to the participants. An outline of the research aims, rationale, populations of interest, sampling methods, data collection, data analysis methods and appropriate themes to be discussed in the interviews (Appendix D), focus group interviews (Appendix N) and a questionnaire (Appendix L) were also submitted. The researcher also read and understood the Data Protection Act 1988 & 2003. Aspects such as: obtain and process personal data fairly, process it only in ways compatible with the purposes for which it was given initially, keep personal data safe and secure, keep data accurate, complete and up-to-date, ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive, provide a copy of his/her personal data to any individual, on request; were relevant to this study. After receiving ethical approval from WIT Research Ethics Committee, the researcher began the participant recruitment process. It has been highlighted that one of the main ethical implications in any social research project is that no false or misrepresentation of information is portrayed to the respondents (Sarantakos, 2012). All potential participants received e-mails outlining information related to the study. No false information was given to respondents. To decrease the likelihood of any misunderstanding, subjects were sent an e-mail outlining information about the purpose of the study and what was hoped to be achieved through their contribution in the study; any potential risks were also outlined. Contact details of the researcher were included so that any further queries in relation to the study could be answered. Bryman (2016) highlights that confidentiality is of the utmost importance when it comes to research. In the case of this study, this involves keeping all data anonymous and stored safely and securely. Proper anonymisation ensures that privacy is protected and that sensitive data cannot be directly associated with any specific individual. Confidentiality was protected through a password-protected computer and all relevant data stored on it was also protected by a password. All questionnaires were stored in a locked cabinet

to which only the researcher had access. All individual and organisations identities were kept confidential. The researcher and her supervisors are the only people who had access to the data that was stored in accordance with data protection procedures. Data was stored for an appropriate period of time only. It is crucial in this research project that no organisation is misrepresented. Individuals may access their own personal data upon request. All interviewees were also sent the interview transcript to review. Finally, participants were informed that they may opt out of the study before, during or after their initial participation (Silverman, 2013).

1.7.4 Limitations

There has been some opposition to the use of mixed methods research due in part to the perceived lack of incompatibility of the underlying paradigms in quantitative and qualitative research arguing that the dissimilarities in quantitative and qualitative approaches are so different that the methods cannot be mixed (Howe, 1988; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). A disadvantage of participant observation such as the field notes, is the difficulty of documenting the data – it is hard to write down everything that is important while you are in the act of participating and observing. Relying on one's memory and one's own personal discipline to write down and expand upon your observations as soon as and as completely as possible is difficult and is inherently a subjective exercise whereas research requires objectivity (Mack et al., 2005). In order to combat this, the researcher ensured that descriptions of observations only were noted and not interpretations of what were seen in order to filter out personal biases. While challenging to get accustomed to this at the beginning, it is also recommended that more than one focus group is conducted so that comparisons and similarities may be drawn across the groups; 'one group is insufficient, as the researcher will be unable to know whether the outcome is unique to the behaviour of the group,' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 288). This however was somewhat out of the researchers control as it arose as a result of issues relating to the availability of the participants. A larger sample size may have produced more reliable results as advised by Patton (2001, 2005). Content analysis alone cannot give the answers to research questions but this limitation can be lessened if combined with another method, more appropriate to measuring those aspects (e.g. surveys, interview), as was the case in this research (Holsti, 1969).

The data from individual interviews, focus group interviews and the questionnaire was collected from different time periods during the overall study. While this may be viewed as a limitation, it could also be seen as a strength and complimentary of the overarching action research case study methodology. Furthermore, as mentioned in section 1.6 all data was supplemented by the field notes, content analysis of meeting minutes, and content analysis of websites and social media platforms (Caldwell and Mays, 2012).

1.8 Summary

This chapter introduced the study for the dissertation as a whole, presented an overview of the background and problem statement, outlined the rationale and purpose of the study, stated the research questions and study significance, and gave an overview of the methodological approach used during the course of this dissertation research. Chapter Two reviews the current literature in the areas of women's sport relating to history, policy, funding and revenue, media and player associations. Chapter Three reports on macro and meso elements of the study, providing answers to research question one 'Structures, policy, roles and developments since 2004 - How will policy analysis inform us of developments and implemented programmes and changes within women's sport in Ireland since the Women in Sport Report?' Chapter Four explores the micro elements, answering the second research question 'WGPA evolution, formation and impact – What will the examination of the evolution, formation and possible impact tell us about the role and position of women in sport in Ireland today?' Both Chapter Three and Chapter Four contain literature reviews, methodologies, results, discussions and conclusions relevant to the particular research questions. Finally, Chapter Five summarises the findings, suggests implications of the study results and makes recommendations for further study.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Historically, men's near-exclusive hold over the sporting world relegated women to the margins of sports, creating a patch-worked and, at times, fractured history of female sports participation and women's pursuit for equality in sports (Banister, 2017) marked by division and discrimination (United Nations, 2007, p. 2). Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Games in 1896, described women's sport as; 'the most unaesthetic sight human eyes could contemplate' and that 'an Olympiad with females would be impractical, uninteresting, and improper' (Wigmore, 2016). Due to the popularity of women's football in England during World War 1 (FA, 2019), there was a fear that the women's game could affect the male Football League attendances (Doble, 2015; Weeks, 2017). Therefore, in 1921 the Football Association (FA) in England deemed the sport 'quite unsuitable for females' (The FA, 2019). FA affiliated clubs were forbidden from allowing women's football on their grounds (Dunn and Welford, 2014). The ban was not overturned until 1971, 50 years later, following the formation of the Women's Football Association (WFA) (Wigmore, 2016). The lengthy ban is said to have caused a profound effect on women's football in England, with the game struggling to recover its early popularity in terms of status and support (Williams, 2013). Karren Brady, former managing director of Birmingham City F.C. and current Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of West Ham United F.C., once said that; 'In sport a woman has to be twice as good as the men to be thought of as even half as good' (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 2019; Financial Times, 2013; Neate, 2019). Cunningham (2008) and Walker and Sartore-Baldwin (2013) noted that gender inequity in sport has become institutionalised - it has become a norm so entrenched it is barely recognized and even more rarely challenged. McClung and Blinde (2002) found that female athletes felt their status in athletics is secondary to that of men and that women's sport 'doesn't really matter'.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the international literature surrounding the history and development of WIS, policy relating to women and sport and the purpose and structure of player associations in order to provide context for the exploration of these same themes within the Irish context investigated in Chapters Three and Chapter Four.

2.1.1 Structure of Chapter Two

- Exploration of origins of gender issues in sport
- Examination of policy to combat these prevailing problems, paying particular attention to the areas of funding, media coverage and their impact on increased corporate investment

- Investigation of the literature pertaining to player associations and their role and function in players lives as a result of policy (or lack thereof) in the relevant sporting organisations

2.2 Gender Issues in Sport

2.2.1 Origins of Traditional Female Stereotypes and Athletic Female Stereotypes

Sport is often the plaything of the political apparatus and therefore critical sociology is an essential corrective to this tendency that can help puncture some of sport's most egregious pretensions and mystifications (Rowe, 2016). Speaking under the heading 'Why Sport Needs Sociology and Why Sociology Needs Sport' at The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) Sport Thematic Group Symposium in Melbourne, Professor David Rowe spoke of how sociology can help guide sports organisations and policy makers in eschewing the superficial preoccupation with effect and neglect of cause that inevitably inhibit its development as a progressive social institution' (Rowe, 2016). In light of these findings by Rowe, it is clear that sport sociology literature provides context to the origins and history of WIS and is therefore explored in detail in this section in order to uncover and explore the origins of sexism that has traditionally prevailed in sport.

Sexism may be defined as 'prejudice or discrimination based on sex; usually, discrimination against women' and the 'behaviour, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex' (Merriam-Webster, 2019). Fink (2016) argues that 'unimpeded sexism' plays a significant role in many of the gender inequity issues for girls and WIS, 'from the lack of women in leadership positions, to the qualitative and quantitative differences in media coverage, to negative working conditions, to the dearth of corporate sponsorship for women's sports' (Fink, 2016, p. 3). In order to understand the origin of the deeply embedded gender inequity and sexism that exists in the sport world, it is first necessary to explore gender stereotypes and the role of sport and gender in society in general.

Kane (2011) called sport one of the most powerful economic, social, and political institutions on the planet. Sport is a very prominent social institution in almost every society because it combines the characteristics found in any institution with a unique appeal, duplicated only by, perhaps, religion (Frey and Eitzen, 1991). Thompson (1988, p. 209) argues that; 'sport symbolises an idealised version of . . . social order'. For example, Marie Murphy, Professor of Sport and Exercise Sciences at Ulster University, points out that the countries where there is the smallest gap in sports participation between men and women; Sweden, Finland and Denmark, are also the nations that

have a lengthy and much-lauded track record when it comes to bridging the gender gap in pay, employment and opportunities (Meagher, 2018). Feminist theories of sport sociology focus on how sports reproduce gendered ideas and practices related to physicality, sexuality, and the body (Coakley, 2001). Burton, Grappendorf, and Henderson (2011) used social role theory and role congruity theory, each of which proposes society has strongly embedded stereotypical beliefs about how men and women should behave. Social role theory contends that there are qualities and behavioural tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex as well as expectations regarding the roles men and women should occupy (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Role congruity theory can be used to examine the congruence between stereotypical female gender roles and women's positions in the sports world (Cejka and Eagly, 1999). Shaw and Slack (2002), Shaw and Hoerber (2003), Shaw and Frisby (2006), and Hoerber (2007) used the concept of dominant discourses of masculinities and femininities that are 'the taken for granted meanings of what it is to be a man or woman in society' (p. 351). People are bombarded with gender stereotypes from birth until death (Malszecki and Cavar, 2001, p. 161; Zimmerman and Reaville, 2011, p. 41). For example, in the western world, males are expected to be agentic. Agentic attributes include being forceful, self-confident, self-sufficient, strong, independent, and athletic. Conversely, females are expected to be more communal. Communal attributes typically include being compassionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, generous, quiet, obedient, and attractive. (Heilman, 2001). Society demands compliance to the enforced gender order and therefore this expectation of femininity often results in women being dissuaded from lifting weights, sweating, grunting, being aggressive, participating and competing in sports and physical activities (Wilde, 2007). Traditionally, when women do cross the line and exhibit these so-called 'manly traits', their gender identity, sexual orientation, values, and social roles are often questioned (Griffin, 1998). Negative stigmas are often attached to athletic women, and consequently are used as a mechanism to control and limit women's participation in sports (Wilde, 2007). Therefore, sports have traditionally been restricted to and associated with males, masculinity, and the 'manly domain' (Sherrow, 1996; Woolum, 1998).

2.2.2 Gender Issues in Current Day Context

Unfortunately, traditional female stereotypes continue to prevail (Wilde, 2007). The suggestion made by Shilling (2012) that, 'many women have far fewer opportunities than men to turn any participation they may have in physical activities into social, cultural or economic capital', (p. 147), still rings true today. Elias and Scotson (2008) are also still relevant when they described female athletes as an 'outsider' group and one that has hitherto lacked the organisational resources and

networks of mutual assistance to significantly shift the uneven balance of power between the sexes in their favour.

2.2.2.1 Women in Positions of Power in Sports

In 2012, Jason King wrote a piece in ESPN on Andrea Hudy, the first female strength coach for a men's Division I intercollegiate basketball team. Head coach of the team, Bill Self, is quoted as saying, 'I didn't want to hire her... Lew [Perkins, then athletic director of the franchise] would say 'if you just meet her once, you are going to love her.' But I kept saying, I don't want to hire a woman to be a men's strength coach, who does that?' (Fink, 2016, p. 3). Fink (2016) argues if the word 'woman' was substituted with any other demographic characteristic in this statement, there would be a great deal of uproar. However, in the story, the reporter did not highlight or question Self's discriminatory attitude at all, because in sport, it is 'normal' to think that women are not suitable for certain jobs solely due to their gender. 'It is our unchecked attitudes about gender that continue to negatively impact girls' and women's experiences in sport.' (Fink, 2016, p. 3). In a Women in Sport (2018) report, it was found that 40% of women in the elite sport industry face gender discrimination. In 2015, according to the 'Women in Sport Stats Pack for Media' (Women in Sport, 2018) 49% of Sport England funded NGBs had less than a quarter of their board membership made up of women and over a quarter of boards surveyed reported a lower percentage of women on their boards compared with the prior year. Twenty-three per cent of NGB chief executives were female, 11% of NGB chairs, 33% of NGB development directors and 18% of NGB performance directors. Almost half of National Olympic Committees surveyed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) had fewer than 20% of women on their Executive Boards, including ten nations who had no women at all (Wigmore, 2016).

2.2.2.2 Pay Gap

In an article written by The Line (2016) it was highlighted that women have fewer opportunities to have a career in elite level sports and this is not because of their abilities but purely because of their gender. Gender inequality in football is more entrenched than in politics, business, medicine and space exploration, according to the annual global sports salaries survey (Sporting Intelligence, 2018) that compared the employment status and pay of thousands of male and female footballers worldwide. According to the survey, there are 137,021 male professional footballers in the world while there are only 1,287 female professionals. This figure represents just 0.93% and compares unfavourably with even the most traditionally male-dominated industries suggesting that football is perhaps the most unequal profession in the world. In politics, for example, 32% of MPs in the UK are women; in medicine 11% of surgeons in the UK are women (Kelner, 2017). Professional

soccer player Neymar earned €36.7 million from PSG for the 2017-18 season purely for his playing contract, without taking into account the millions more he received in commercial deals (Kelner, 2017). His salary is almost exactly the same as 1,693 female players in France, Germany, England, the US, Sweden, Australia and Mexico combined, according to the Sporting Intelligence (2018) annual salary survey. In England, the English players in the FA Women's Super League receive an average of £26,752 (€30,000) a year while the men in the Premier League are paid an average of £2.64m (€2.9m), or 99 times that figure. FIFA pays every team prize money just for competing in both the men's and women's world cup. World football's governing body, FIFA, says the £24m awarded to participating teams in 2019 is double the amount of 2015, but £315m was given to teams at the men's 2018 tournament. Australia's players' union, Professional Footballers Australia, says the difference - amounts to 'discrimination'. There was a £270 million-pound difference for the 2014 and 2015 tournaments, while this has increased to £291 million pounds for the 2018 and 2019 editions (Lynch, 2019; Magowan, 2019).

The pay gap is not solely limited to football unfortunately. In Forbes' ranking of the world's highest paid athletes, not a single female featured in the top 100 (Forbes, 2018; O'Halloran, 2018). To highlight the gender wage gap in the AFLW in Australia in 2019, The average salary for male AFL players which increased from \$309,000 to \$371,000 in June 2018. It was reported that six AFL players earned salaries of \$1 million dollars or more in 2018 (ABC, 2017; Fox Sports, 2019; Schetzer, 2018). This is in stark contrast to the AFLW, whose top players, not average, but top, earned \$24,600 in 2019. In 2017, in the US, male basketball players in the top league, the National Basketball Association (NBA), earned around 100 times that of their counterparts in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). On average, NBA players earn £5.498m a year, while WNBA players earn £57,490 (Kelner, 2017). Female athletes in the world of golf receive an average of 17% of what men receive in the same field (Ramirez, 2018). According to Forbes Magazine, the gender wage gap for coaches is extremely high as well. At Duke University, the men's basketball coach makes almost \$10 million annually, whereas the women's basketball coach makes a little over \$700,000. In March 2016, male and female cricket teams from across the world descended upon India, where the men's and women's World Twenty20 competitions were played simultaneously. The International Cricket Council funded all the men's teams to fly business class, but only paid the women's teams to fly economy class. The integration of the men's and women's tournaments only highlighted how differently competitors were treated. The total prize money for the men's event was \$5.6m, 16 times the \$400,000 for the women's tournament (Wigmore, 2016). In tennis, all grand slam tournaments have paid male and female champions equally since Wimbledon begun doing so in 2007. Combined Masters events such as Indian Wells and Miami

also pay the same to men and women. However, female players are paid significantly less at women only events when compared with similar sized men's events (BBC, 2016). Furthermore, in 2015, Novak Djokovic, the men's number one, earned twice as much as Serena Williams, the women's number one, although both had won three of the four grand slams. Djokovic said that male tennis players should be paid more than female ones, on the grounds that they generate more cash for the sport and, in grand slams, play over five sets rather than three (BBC, 2016; Wigmore, 2016). Serena Williams challenged this statement by pointing out that the women's US Open in 2015 sold out well before the men. However, the 21st century sporting world is one in which tickets sold for sporting events contribute far less to finances than television deals. Men's tennis earns far more from broadcasting rights than the women's game, there are more viewers for the men's ATP tour (973 million) than for the women's WTA events and finals (396 million), and the latest WTA media deal is worth £365m over 10 years; Stuart Watts, CEO of ATP Media, is forecasting £904m revenues over same period. (Fordyce, 2016). Therefore, the argument for equal pay has deeper roots than is often portrayed by many media outlets and athletes calling for change. Before equal pay can be achieved across all sports, perhaps the goal of generating equal revenue needs to be targeted through equal levels of promotion and marketing for both men's and women's teams. This will be discussed further in section 2.3.4.5.

2.2.2.3 Conditions

According to Zeilinger (2015), another inequality that elite female athletes and women working in sport face is that they are expected to play and/or work under different conditions to their male counter-parts. When traveling to the 2012 Olympics, the Japanese women's soccer team flew coach while the men's team flew first class on the same flight. The women's team were the reigning world cup champions at the time and were favoured to win gold at the Olympic Games. The men's team was neither (Reilly, 2015). In 2016, Manchester United fans chanted, 'Get your tits out for the lads' and other obscene comments, over and over again as Chelsea's club doctor Eva Carneiro walked past. No stewards intervened to make them stop, nor did any other fans. No punishment was ever given although footage of the perpetrators exists (Gibson, 2015). In July 2019, US Women's National Team (USWNT) co-captain Megan Rapinoe expressed her frustration at the scheduling of the FIFA Women's World Cup (WWC) final on the same day as two major men's international finals. The game was being played at 15:00 GMT, just hours before Brazil took on Peru in Rio de Janeiro in the final of the Copa America and before the USA men's team attempted to retain the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) Gold Cup against Mexico in the final in Chicago. Rapinoe stated:

‘There are two other finals going on but this is the world cup final, this is like, cancel-everything day. I read somewhere that they said they just didn’t think about it. The world cup final is set so far in advance it is actually unbelievable. I don’t think that we feel the same level of respect, certainly that FIFA has for the men and just in general’

(RTÉ, 2019).

2.2.2.4 Sexism Examples in Media

2.2.2.4.1 Low Coverage

Examples of sexism in sport can also be seen in the amount and type of media coverage received by WIS. Horky and Nieland’s (2011) findings show that 85% of sports coverage and 55% of photography coverage is of male athletes and male sports and according to the Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation (Women in Sport, 2014), only 7% of UK and Irish sports media coverage is devoted to women’s sport. According to a study undertaken by the Tucker Centre for Research on Girls and Women in Sport (University of Minnesota, 2013), 40% of all sports participants in the United States were female, yet women’s sports received only 4% of all sport media coverage. ESPN’s Sports Centre and Fox Sports 1’s Fox Sports Live devoted less than 1% of on-air time to women’s sports in 2014 (excluding slight gains during the 2014 Olympics) and Cooky, Messner and Musto (2015) state that in a University of California 25-year study of televised sports news, starting in 1989, on average, three LA-based stations dedicated 3.2% of their sports coverage to women’s sports. In 2015, Women’s Sport made up 7% of all sports media coverage in the UK. Just over 10% of televised sports coverage was dedicated to women’s sport, 2% of national newspaper sports coverage, 5% of radio sports coverage and 4% of online sports coverage (Women in Sport, 2015). Women’s Sport Week in the UK in 2016 was a Department for Culture, Media and Sport initiative backed by NGBs, Sport England, Women in Sport, Women’s Sport Trust and major broadcasters including the BBC and Sky to showcase women’s sport from the grassroots to the elite. Of the 1,111 by-lines published in the national print press only 1.8% were written by women while just 3.4% of the 1,899 photographs published in the national print press featured women (Martinson, 2016). Between July 2017 and June 2018, ‘Totally Runnable’ looked at nine national papers one day a month and took note of what photographs were used. In total, they found 3,107 pictures of people playing sport. Of those, five were of men and women together, 3,011 were of men and just 91 were of women; 2.9% of the total. On the worst day of their survey, during September 2017, there were 365 pictures of men playing sport and one solitary photograph of a woman. The Guardian topped the poll with 9.8% of the pictures in its sports section featuring women, the Star, the Mirror and the Mail had less than 2%, while the Sun was at the bottom with 0.8% (Aldred, 2018). Furthermore, in an article for The Guardian, Alvarez (2018) wrote that ‘the coverage of women’s sport has actually declined over the last few years’. While women’s sports

get little coverage, these 'sports' stories did make it to the air in 2015: a swarm of bees invading a Red Sox and Yankees game, a giant corndog that cost \$25 at an Arizona Diamondbacks game, a ribbon-cutting for a restaurant opened by Tommy Lasorda, where former Lakers player Kendall Marshall will find a good burrito in Milwaukee (Chipotle), a stray dog that became a spring training mascot for the Brewers (Good, 2015).

2.2.2.4.2 Varying Levels and Types of Media Coverage

Women who violate traditional gender roles are not covered as much by the media as those who conform. According to Vincent (2004) a recurring theme within the symbiotic relationship of sport and mainstream media was the idea that the media have perpetuated a reward system for women athletes who conform to gender hierarchy receiving more coverage than those who do not. Female athletes are much more likely than male athletes to be portrayed in sexually provocative poses. The two women who made the most appearances during Women's Sport Week 2016 across the sports pages of the Mail, Express, Sun, Mirror, Times, Telegraph, The Guardian were tennis players Sharapova and Johanna Konta. Sharapova, who appeared 22 times, was usually photographed wearing day or smart wear rather than sports attire (Martinson, 2016). It has also been found that television has long emphasized individual sports such as swimming and diving and pays less attention to physical contact sports and women playing appropriate gender related sports have the highest coverage (Fink, 2013; Fink and Kensicki, 2002; Jones, Murrell, and Jackson 1999; Nicely, 2007; Tuggle and Owen 1999). By the end of the first week at the Rio Olympics 2016, NBC's prime-time audience was 55% women and women's events dominated prime time screen time 58.5% to 41.5% (The Guardian, 2016). Andrew Billings, an NBC executive commented, 'We'd be naive if we didn't acknowledge that the sports they are showing, a lot of them involve women in swimsuits and leotards. While this may appeal to men, it generally doesn't turn off women.' (The Guardian, 2016). As a result of these findings it seems that women who participate in male appropriate sports, challenge the traditional sex role stereotype and are therefore excluded from coverage because of their failure to conform to the classification of what is socially acceptable (Trolan, 2013).

The coverage female athletes do receive by media has shown that they are more likely to downplay the achievements and emphasise the physical appearance, sexuality, and femininity of the athletes (Christopherson, Janning, and McConnell, 2002; Fink, 2013; Shaw and Amis, 2001). Female athletes are less often judged on ability and performance, and more often on their physical appearance and perceived attractiveness. Female athletes are much more likely than male athletes to be portrayed in sexually provocative poses. For example, a commentator asked the Canadian

player Eugenie Bouchard to ‘give us a twirl’ after her victory in an Australian Open match. In December 2018, Ada Hegerberg became the first woman to be awarded the women’s Ballon d’Or, soccer’s most prestigious honour, having scored nearly 300 goals in her career to date. After giving a speech about how important this was for women’s football and young girls, the French DJ Martin Solveig, the evening’s host, turned to her and asked, ‘Do you know how to twerk?’ (O’Connell, 2018). ‘Why do women still have to put up with that [expletive]?’ tennis player Andy Murray wrote on Instagram in relation to the incident, ‘To everyone who thinks people are overreacting and it was just a joke, it wasn’t. I’ve been involved in sport my whole life and the level of sexism is unreal’ (RTÉ, 2018).

A quantitative study of articles and photographs is particularly damning of mainstream sports media, stating that ‘women tended to not only be under-represented, but trivialised, stereotyped, devalued and marginalised’ (Crossman et al., 2007, p. 28; Kustok, 2010). When female athletes are interviewed in any depth, it is to portray them as mothers, girlfriends or caregiver, stressing those roles over their roles as athletes (Fink 2013, Zeilinger, 2015). Women athletes are women first and an athlete second, and this is a leading component in the trivialization of them as athletes. A since-deleted tweet sent from the England’s Football Association’s account, Begley (2015) reported, read; ‘Our #Lionesses go back to being mothers, partners and daughters today, but they have taken on another title — heroes.’ These athletes should have been celebrated for their skills. Instead, thanks to ever-pervasive gender stereotypes, a major organization still felt the need to remind their fans of the team members’ supposed real place — in their homes, with their families. Another example of trivialisation is evident in an article by the Irish Times (2018), which finds it ‘depressing how often this happens with WIS: they achieve something remarkable – and then it gets overshadowed by someone else’s bad behaviour.’ For example, Naomi Osaka’s 2018 US Open victory over Serena Williams got a fraction of the coverage earned by Williams’s on court outburst (Irish Independent, 2018). ‘Serena Williams burns the house down as Naomi Osaka’s brilliance is forgotten’ was an example of one such headline in The Guardian (Graham, 2018). ‘Serena Williams vs. Naomi Osaka: How the U.S. Open Descended into Chaos’ (NY Times, 2018) was another. Media representations of women in the Rio 2016 Olympics also highlight the trivialisation of women’s achievements. An NBC (2016) commentator credited Hungarian swimmer Katinka Hosszu’s husband for her world record-breaking win in the 400m individual medley. Examples include; The Chicago Tribune (2016) tweeted the ‘wife’ of a Chicago Bears football player had won bronze in trap shooting; it was only later that her name was added to the headline (Hunt, 2016). People Magazine (Dyball, 2016) referred to gold-medal winning gymnast Simone Biles as ‘the Michael Jordan of gymnastics’. A BBC commentator referred to a women’s judo event as a ‘catfight’ (Feller,

2016). While a different BBC (2016) presenter, John Inverdale suggested Andy Murray was the 'first person ever to win two Olympic tennis gold medals'. Murray himself pointed out that both Venus and Serena Williams had won several between them (Sweney, 2016). An American newspaper ran with the headline written in large font 'Phelps ties for silver in 100 fly' while '(Katie) Ledecky sets world record in women's 800 metre freestyle' (Associated Press, 2016). Not only did Katie Ledecky set a new world record in the women's 800 metre freestyle, she also became the first woman to win gold in the 200, 400 and 800 metre freestyle races since Debbie Meyer in 1968 (Olympic Games, 2016). However, by putting the news of Ledecky's major record in much smaller font than Phelps' tie for a silver medal, the paper made it seem like even the most historic achievements of a female athlete are less important than a good performance from a man.

In 2017, Musto and his fellow researchers, highlighted the issue of gender-bland sexism. That is when sports commentators downplay the accomplishments of female athletes and convey less excitement about big wins or milestones. If sexualisation of female athletes is not an option, not talking about them at all or talking about them in really boring and bland ways seems to be the alternatives. (Musto, Cooky and Messner, 2017; Nieman Reports, 2019). Sports announcers often seem to rein in their humour and enthusiasm as soon as female athletes are onscreen. 'That's what it feels like when the broadcast focuses on women's sports: 'We're going to give you the main course, then eat your vegetables [the women's sports coverage] and then we'll give you the dessert' (Messner cited in Good, 2015). USWNT co-captain Alex Morgan scored the decisive goal to help her team advance to the FIFA WWC final in July 2019. During her celebration she pretended to sip tea with her pinkie out, seemingly trolling England. Morgan attributed 'sexist double standards' for the criticism she received as a result of her celebration and stated:

'I feel that there is some sort of double standard for females in sports, to feel like we have to be humble in our successes and have to celebrate, but not too much or in a limited fashion. You see men celebrating all over the world in big tournaments, grabbing their (ball)sacks or whatever it is. And when I look at sipping a cup of tea, I am a little taken aback by the criticism.'

(Martinelli, 2019).

These are just a few examples of how inequity is evident in the world of women's sports, but they all speak to taken-for-granted gender ideals that occur within sport, and sexism is the foundation for each (Fink, 2016).

2.3 Policy

2.3.1 The Role of Policy in Combating Gender Issues in Sport

While McClung and Blinde (2002) found that women athletes are beginning to be viewed more positively (especially as women athletes improve, develop to a higher level, and increase in number), it is clear from the examples above that female athletes continue to have a subordinate position in the sports world, thereby perpetuating the idea that sports and athletics continue to be more appropriate in the masculine domain (Fink, 2016; Wilde, 2007). This gender inequality can be paralleled to the patriarchal nature of both society and sport as discussed previously. However, it can also continue to be challenged by encouraging girls and women to be physically active, involved with sports at all levels (i.e. athlete, coach, official, volunteer), and willing to confront traditional female stereotypes (Wilde, 2007). Bell-Altenstad and Vail (1992) stated that in order to do this, for those who are committed to changing women's inferior status in sport, many feel that government policy (an examination of the macro issues in society) is a significant approach. It has been suggested that elite development, and the chance of success for elite athletes, can depend on policy effectiveness and decisions (DeBosscher et al., 2006; 2008; Sotiriadou and Shilbury, 2009). Wilde (2007) also recognises that women's sport has rarely been a priority for policy makers and emphasises the necessity of policy in the quest to transform sport for the benefit of every woman and girl. A policy may be defined as similar to a plan but with less details and no specific decisions or actions outlined (Hecl, 1972; Stewart et al., 2004). Bull et al. (2004, p. 18) defined policies as; 'a guide to action to achieve intended goals, initiated by government, non-government or private sector organizations, and can occur on a written (within legislation, policy documents) or on an unwritten basis (within usual practice).' In this research, policy documents are defined as written documents that contain strategies and priorities, define goals and objectives, and are issued by a part of the public administration.

2.3.2 Context of Policy in Current World of Women's Sports

In the last few decades, policy-makers in the UK have shown an increasing commitment to furthering women's participation in sport. Governments, both local and national, have designed sports policies specifically for women (International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG), 2012; Mattila, 2012; Ottesen et al., 2010), as have international institutions such as the United Nations (2007) and the EU (2002). The Spanish and Catalan governments – at both national and regional levels – have also provided clear support for gender policies in sport (Puig, Martínez and García, 2010).

Wilde (2007) firmly believes that it is only through policy that females will continue to make headway in the world of sports. Perhaps it is no coincidence that, with the increase in policies developed for WIS, over the past few decades, it has also been widely reported that girls and women are beginning to establish themselves in the sports world (Wilde, 2007; Kane, 2017). There is undoubtedly now a sense of real momentum in WIS (Sport for Business, 2019), powered by gale force winds rather than intermittent gusts, with accelerating momentum into 2020 (PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), 2019). Comparing traditional female gender stereotypes with those of the 21st century WIS, it is clear that female athletes are beginning to establish themselves in the sports world (Wilde, 2007). Their ability to challenge sexist barriers and restrictive notions about women's physical appearance, athletic ability, and participation in sports, is evident through their increased involvement in sports (International Olympic Committee (IOC), 2018; Sheadler and Wagstaff, 2018; United Nations 2007). For example, the Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires in 2018 marked a new milestone as the first fully gender balanced Olympic event ever (IOC, 2019). Tokyo 2020 is predicted to be the most gender equal Olympic Games yet with female participation of 48.8% expected (IOC, 2018). Before Title IX passed in 1972 (Education Amendments Act of 1972, 2018), a bill that gave girls more access to sports in the United States, only one in every 27 girls played sports. In 2018, the rate was one in three and two in five (Olmstead, 2018). Increased funding and institutional opportunities have been cited as reasons for the 545% increase in the percentage of women playing college sports and a 990% increase in the percentage of women playing high school sport since 1972 (de Varona and Brooke-Marciniak, 2016).

The performance of soccer pundits Alex Scott and Eni Aluko at the FIFA World Cup in Russia in 2018, for BBC and ITV respectively, built their reputations so that Scott is now one of the leading pundits in British football (Otago, 2019; The Guardian, 2018). Another indicator that women's sport is being treated as sport in its own right is the appearance of negative headlines (Kelner, 2019). Evidence suggests that women are no longer being treated as a sparkling adornment to sport (Otago, 2019). Having poor performances remarked upon, as well as the great achievements, is a welcome change because that means equality; it means that women's sport becomes, simply, sport (Otago, 2019). In September 2019 World Rugby rebranded the men's and women's world cup tournaments in an effort to achieve gender neutrality in the sport. The competitions will now be referred to simply as Rugby World Cups with gender no longer included in their titles in a move that World Rugby has heralded as 'the ultimate statement in equality' (BBC, 2019; Farrell, 2019; Meagher, 2019). In 2019, the FA agreed a more than £10m deal with Barclays to sponsor the top tier of English women's club football, the Women's Super League (Ahmed, 2019). In 2016, 30% of those sitting on the boards of sports organisations funded by Sport England were women,

up from 21% in 2009. The IOC Executive Board saw an increase in female members from 21.4% in 2017 to 30.8% in 2018 and to 33% in 2019 (IOC, 2019). According to a report from the Nielsen Company (2018), 84% of general sports fans were interested in women's sports. Ninety-one per cent of the general population would either consider attending live women's sports events or watch them online if they were accessible on free TV (Nielsen, 2018). The same report states that the impact and popularity of women's football is growing exponentially across the globe. Between 2013 and 2017, sponsorship deals announced increased by 37% and their average monetary value by 49% and more than 50% of the most recognisable female team sport athletes are footballers, including Steph Houghton, Hope Solo, Le Sommer and Vero Boquete (Nielsen, 2018). In July 2019, the United States Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) home jersey became the top-selling football jersey for a single season in company history, outselling every European club including leading Nike teams Barcelona and PSG, as well as major footballing nations such as Brazil and England. (Mohamed, 2019). According to Young (2019) the sales figures prove that Nike's investment in female sports is paying. Despite these examples, girls and WIS continue to face obstacles at all levels and in all capacities and continue to require formal policy that advocates and pushes for gender equity in sport (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2011, 2012; Thibault and Harvey, 2013).

2.3.2.1 Canadian Case

Canadian women have a rich history of participation and leadership in sport and the current state of Canadian sport—at all levels—involves, and is vitally dependent upon, women as athletes, coaches, volunteers, administrators, and leaders (Safai, 2013). As described by the Canadian Association for Advancement of Women and Sport (CAAWS) (CAAWS, 2005, 2007), numerous sporting organizations in Canada implemented strategies to recruit females in the sports world. For example, the Canada Games Council implemented gender equity in policies (CAAWS, 2005, p. 7), the Canadian Amateur Wrestling Federation provided equal funding to men and women on the national wrestling team (CAAWS, 2005, p. 8), the Canadian Canoe Association provided a full range of events within all national competitions (p.9), and the Canadian Freestyle Ski Association provided funding for girl's camps, only if a female coach is attending the camp as well (CAAWS, 2005, p. 11). These strategies, along with the Canadian Interuniversity Sport increasing financial rewards for female athletes to equal that of males (CAAWS, 2005, p. 12), and Hockey Canada hosting a free Fun Day for females to try the sport of hockey (CAAWS, 2005, p. 20), demonstrate that invaluable steps were taken to develop policies and strategies aimed to increase girl's and women's involvement and presence in sport.

2.3.3 Policy Issues: Formation, Implementation and Review

Designing and implementing gender equity sports policy is a complex process (Shaw and Frisby, 2006). Translation of a written policy into practice is not always easy or straightforward, and not all policy implementation achieves the expected results (Coalter, 2007). Many gender policies have been implemented more as a result of political pressure (Hovden, 2012; Kay, 1996; Shaw and Penney, 2003). While an organization may be committed to gender equality as a key value, individuals within it can and do interpret this in different or contradictory ways (Hoeber and Frisby, 2001; McKay, 1997; Slack and Parent, 2006; Sparkes, 1994). Therefore, unfortunately, policies may be formulated with no strategy or programme applied in order to implement it (Stewart et al., 2004). This can thereby influence the impact policies may have. It is also important to consider that policies can be constrained by policies, laws and regulations of parent organisations, umbrella organisations, regulatory bodies, community expectations, government policy and legislation (DeBosscher et al., 2006) Hence, wide consultation is key to successful policy formulation and policies should not operate in a vacuum but instead a policy space (Webb, Rowland and Fasano, 1991). In order to evaluate the impact of gender equity policies, Shaw and Penney (2003) argue that the need exists to analyse the competing discourses embedded within organizations, which help frame the possibilities for action or, alternatively, resistance to change. According to Scraton (2018), a growing neo-liberal discourse is challenging and contesting the need for feminism. This represents a significant obstruction to the development of gender policies. This new discourse is eroding many of the institutional gains for gender equity and runs parallel to the 'fear of feminism' that Weiner (2000) also reports. The lack of research conducted at a meso-level (DeBosscher et al., 2006) has also been recognised as a problem associated with evaluating sport policies and calls for further research of sport development issues using a meso-level analysis and how sports organisations translate policies in practice have been made (Sotiriadou and Shilbury, 2009; Kay, 1996; Shaw and Penney, 2003).

The Irish context of policy implementation will be discussed in Chapter Three. The lack of policy will be the most prevalent theme focused on, paying particular attention to the gap of 15 years between the publication of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) recommending various policy actions relating to WIS in Ireland and the new SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019). The assessment of the true nature of this alleged lack of policy for WIS during this time forms the baseline for this study. Chapter Three will also investigate the absence of adequate policy catering to the needs of Irish WIS in the New Sports Policy 2018.

2.3.4 Potential Areas of Focus for Women in Sport Policy

As alluded to previously, there are a number of reasons for and symptoms of the impediment of WIS throughout history related to lack of and poor policy implementation. This section will instead now focus on the specific areas that could aid the improvement and administering of new policy plans, strategies, programmes, systems etc., beginning with the need for more research on specific areas connected to various factions of WIS.

2.3.4.1 Research

Evidence-based practice is the systematic reviewing of the best evidence in order to make informed choices about practice (Raab and Craig, 2016; Sackett, Rosengern and Muir Gray, 1996). Unfortunately, the data collected in sport is typically about male experiences, and not female; despite the fact that approximately half of the population is made up of women (The World Bank, 2017). Indeed, the gender data gap can be seen in practically all domains including sport and exercise medicine, giving only a partial snapshot of the experiences and requirements of females in this space (Perez, 2019). When female athletes are underrepresented in research there are issues when making inferences about data collected in male dominated research domains to inform practice and policy for female athletes. There is a need for research to evolve to adequately and appropriately represent individuals of all genders and research is needed to underpin advancements in real world practice catering to WIS. Rigorous gender data is a necessary research starting point to allow sports bodies to make informed decisions and policies for females in sport (Curran, Macnamara and Passmore, 2019).

2.3.4.2 Funding

Increased funding and institutional opportunities have been cited as reasons for the 545% increase in the percentage of women playing college sports and a 990% increase in the percentage of women playing high school sports since 1972 in America (Olmstead, 2016). These statistics make it clear that funding, like policy, is vital and fundamental to the development of women's sports. Sotiriadou, Shilbury and Quick (2008) highlight the role of funding in sport in Australia as a reciprocal relationship between funding and elite success. However, the huge funding disparity between male and female sports means that women have had fewer opportunities to play sports, have suffered from inadequate coaching and facilities compared with those enjoyed by men, and have been paid meagre sums, even for playing international sport (Wigmore, 2016). De Varona and Brooke Marciniak (2016) suggest that, perhaps as a result of inconsistencies in policy formation and implementation, sustained equal funding for women's sport has failed to occur in many countries and sporting organisations. The lack of documented

criteria for measuring change and implementation of policy, as well as an absence of compliance measures for NGBs to ensure public funds are allocated equitably within these organizations, can leave well-meaning policies as ‘toothless tigers.’ (Bell-Altenstad and Vail, 1992). In light of this, it is obvious that funding needs to be absolutely central to all policies relating to WIS. The breakdown of the funding for WIS in Ireland as a result of policy, or lack thereof, will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

2.3.4.3 Gender Quotas

According to Orla O’ Connor, Director of the National Women’s Council of Ireland (O’ Neill, 2019), promoting WIS has to be about more than participation - women should be giving out cups, acting as technical directors, developing strategy and applying for funding to benefit athletes of both gender. O’ Connor (O’ Neill, 2019) further believes that the evidence is clear that without a bold instrument, such as the gender quota, change is and will be too slow to come. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2019) define gender quotas as a positive measurement instrument aimed at accelerating the achievement of gender-balanced participation and representation by establishing a defined proportion of places or seats to be filled by, or allocated to, women and/or men, generally under certain rules or criteria. A considerable body of research in the corporate domain (Branson, 2007; Erhardt, Werbel, and Shrader, 2003; Huse and Solberg, 2006; Nielsen and Huse, 2010; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2004) has demonstrated that the ratio of women directors is positively related to board effectiveness, good governance and improved decision-making. Furthermore, according to a comprehensive review of research on women directors on corporate boards, based on more than 400 publications over the past 30 years (Terjesen et al., 2009), corporate governance was improved when women were appointed to boards because they brought “value-adding” talents and represented stakeholders who had previously been excluded. O’ Connor also believes gender quotas will incentivise sporting bodies to look at how women are promoted within the organisation at all levels and deal with possible barriers, for example looking at family-friendly meeting times or mentoring programmes for women (O’Neill, 2016). The example of the experiences of the IOC provides insight into the current pace of gender quota implementation in the sporting context.

While the participation of women in physical activities and the Olympic Games has steadily increased, the percentage of women in governing and administrative bodies of the Olympic Movement has remained low. As mentioned, almost half of National Olympic Committees (NOCs) surveyed by the IOC had fewer than 20% of women on their Executive Boards, including ten nations who had no women at all (Wigmore, 2016). In order to remedy this situation, the IOC set

a gender quota to improve the role and position of WIS; setting an objective of reserving at least 20% of decision-making positions for women (particularly in all executive and legislative bodies) within their structures by the end of 2005 (IOC, 2016, p. 1). By 2016, this was still not achieved. According to the Factsheet for Women in the Olympic Movement (IOC, 2016, p. 2), 27 NOCs had 30% or more women on their Executive Board, 62 NOCs had 20% and 10 NOCs had none. Eleven NOCs were headed by female presidents (out of 135 NOCs who participated in the survey) (IOC Factsheet, 2016, p. 2). The updated Factsheet for Women in the Olympic Movement (IOC, 2018, p. 2) found that a record four women (26.6%) were members of the IOC Executive Board and 17 NOCs were headed by female presidents. These were the only statistics that differed from the results of the 2016 Factsheet and therefore while women in leadership positions are increasing in certain areas, the pace remains slow.

Although a growing body of studies has emerged to examine and understand women's underrepresentation in sport governance (Claringbould and Knoppers, 2007, 2008, 2012; Fasting, 2000; Hovden, 2000; Ottesen et al., 2010) research into the impact of gender targets and quotas is rare. The results of a study by Adriaanse and Schofield (2014) found that a quota of a minimum of three women should be a first condition to advance gender equality in sport governance. It needs to operate, however, in conjunction with other gender dynamics to move toward equal participation by men and women in board decision making. More studies like this are necessary in order to best determine how to implement gender quotas most effectively and successfully.

2.3.4.4 Media

The media is another example of where lack of policy and issues with policy implementation is having a profound effect on the involvement and position of WIS. According to Pederson (2002) the media is one of the most influential forms of socialization in today's society in generating gender values. Indeed, the mass media plays a significant role in the transmission of gender differences and inequality through daily visuals within print and television media (Trolan, 2013). Unfortunately, patriarchal values which have historically been associated with sport and with media institutions, continue to be reinforced by the media, many of which were examined and discussed in great detail in section 2.2.2.4.2 (Trolan, 2013). Packer (2015) attributes the lack of policy surrounding the media to the issue of inferior media representation of WIS and in turn, Godoy-Pressland and Griggs (2014) and Crossman et al. (2007) stress the consequences of inferior media representation, pointing to an amplification of the perceived insignificance of female sports. As is evident in the statistics and examples discussed in section 2.2.2.4.1, it is difficult to identify any policy that has had a significant effect on this problem.

One argument that tries to explain why women receive only 4% of dedicated coverage is that men dominate sports media and media in general, therefore their scope of what they find appealing is limited. In 2014, women composed only 10% of all sports journalists in the US, according to Women's Media Centre (2015). The 2018 Associated Press Sports Editors (APSE) Racial and Gender Report Card found that, at major newspapers and websites in the U.S. and Canada, 90% of sports editors are male (Nieman Reports, 2019). The introduction of gender quotas in policy could offer some reprieve to this particular issue and is a notion that should be explored.

Another argument put forward for the lack of coverage is that no one is interested in women's sport, yet the interest shown on social media and among TV viewers suggests otherwise (Martinson, 2014). Research conducted by Commonwealth Bank (2019) reveals top-level women's sport is soaring in popularity with over half of Australians following women's sport. The research reveals a 48% increase in interest in women's sport among Australians from 2018, with 53% of Australians now watching broadcasts or attending live women's sporting events. A record 2.5 million Australians tuned in on TV and online to follow this season's opening Women's Big Bash League match. The findings of the survey by Commonwealth Bank point to an increase in coverage on TV and more positive and widespread coverage in the media as the reasons behind the surging interest. Therefore, in this instance, it has been proven that more coverage creates more interest; and therefore the case can be made for forming policy that media organisations in a particular country must abide by.

In 2018, Minnesota Lynx's head coach and general manager Cheryl Reeves, challenged media clientele associated with 'The Athletic' on Twitter asking, 'Why would a subscriber-based sports medium that claims 'full access to all sports' limit its earning potential by not covering women's sports? The Athletic does just that ... and its bad business. #tiredofthebias.' (de la Cretaz, 2018). In 2019, the website assigned two writers to almost every Lynx game and practice. While regular coverage of the Minnesota Lynx games was something the website said it always planned to do, Reeve's outspokenness drew wider attention to the issue and undoubtedly prompted faster action (Nieman Reports, 2019). While this is a positive example of how one woman can challenge existing structures and make a change for the better, if sufficient media coverage of WIS is entirely dependent upon direct confrontation by the females involved such as this, the road to equal coverage and appropriate representation seems unachievable.

As is seen throughout this section, media attention is important for players and clubs because it attracts investment, enhances the status of athletes and clubs, and opens up new prospects for development. The European Parliament Research Service (EPRS) (Katsarova, 2019) found that it

might therefore be tempting to seek to tackle the lack of TV coverage for women's sports by introducing mandatory quotas for broadcasters in the EU. Packer (2015) also believes there is a need for a much bigger policy push if the problem of inferior media representation is to be tackled effectively. Women's sport, at least in the eyes of the media, will remain a minority sport until this happens and the levels of participation of girls and WIS will continue to suffer, as will public health as a result. The 20x20 (20x20.ie, 2018) campaign in Ireland will be explored through this lens in Chapter Three.

2.3.4.5 Investment, Marketing and Promotion

Sponsorship is an integral part of sport development in terms of its ability to advocate for gender equality and pay parity, fuel participation and create accessibility for players, increase match day attendances, provide platforms that can amplify the visibility of female athletes, change perceptions surrounding WIS, translate the excitement around big tournaments into domestic fans week in week out, and supply resources and revenue to female sports and sporting events which otherwise may not be financially viable or sustainable (Barron, 2018; Rogers, 2019). In a report by the Women's Sports and Fitness Foundation in 2014, women's sport only received 0.4% of commercial investment in the UK (Women in Sport, 2014). The number and value of deals for women's sport did see a five-fold increase in 2011 and 2012 (the run up to the London Olympic and Paralympic Games), but men's sport also benefited from an increase during that time, so the proportion of investment that reached women's sport remained similar. Worse still, sponsorship levels for women's sport fell back considerably during 2013 (Women in Sport, 2014). According to a 2018 Statista report, women's sports receive only 0.4% of total sponsorships. Without sponsorship, efforts to build valuable and long-standing relationships with fans and volunteers are significantly more challenging. It is clear from these statistics it is difficult to envision how women will ever have the funds to fully develop leagues and players (Rogers, 2018). Comments like; 'In sports TV, the tail wags the dog. The money goes where the audience is', made by sports cinematographer Michael Graber (Wallace, 2016), shine a light on the various excuses that are given to not sponsor women's sports teams. However, recent figures from the 2019 FIFA WWC in France, render the argument made by Graber null and void. It was recorded that 9.83 million viewers watched the world cup opener, peaking at 10.9 million (BBC, 2019). This smashed the previous record of 4.12 million. Almost 12million people tuned in to BBC to watch the dramatic semi-final between England and the USA, making it the most viewed TV programme of 2019 in the UK (Davies, 2019). BBC estimates that there were one billion viewers in total throughout the competition and almost 59 million people watched Brazils last-16 game against hosts France, making it the most watched women's football match of all time (BBC, 2019). The 2018 FIFA World

Cup Final between France and Croatia was watched by 11.4 million US viewers. In contrast, the 2019 FIFA WWC final was watched by 14.3 million US viewers (Patten, 2019).

Despite these clear signs of interest and audiences for women's sports occasionally surpassing that of male teams, investment in many women's sports teams remains lower than their male counterparts. WNBA players recently expressed their frustration at the contribution lack of investment is making to the pay gap after the following comments were made by National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) Executive Director Michele Roberts, 'I think we have to be realistic. The revenue that is generated in the men's game is just much more profitable and generates much more revenue than the women's game does' (Powell, 2019). Sue Bird, all time WNBA leader in assists, expressed her frustrations on her Instagram account:

'Just so everyone understands – as a WNBA player I've never said I should be making the same as an NBA player. We all understand how business and revenue work and we all know the realities. But that's not what the conversation is about. In order to even compare revenues etc. the investment has to be equal. THEN we can talk about revenues. Right now we are talking about closing the investment gap in order to grow the game.'

Many other high profile players such as the 2019 Most Valued Player Elena Delle Donne and Breanna Stewart reposted Bird's message on their own Instagram accounts, (Powell, 2019). The idea that the solution to this issue may lie with how women are marketed by their own leagues is rarely looked at (Alvarez, 2019).

US Soccer gave a team bonus of \$5.4m to the men's team for their Round 16 exit at the 2014 FIFA World Cup, but the federation gave just \$1.7m to the women for winning the 2015 FIFA WWC (Murray, 2015). The most striking thing about this is that the earnings of both teams were not conditioned by the viewership as, according to Forbes, the women's final game was the most-watched soccer match in U.S. history (Women's, 2017). Following this, the women's national team filed a wage discrimination act against US Soccer, and in turn received a significant raise, increased game bonuses, improved per diem stipends, better travel benefits, and more financial aid for players who are pregnant or adopting (Ransom and Rutherford, 2019; The Guardian, 2017). In March 2019, the USWNT team then filed a gender discrimination lawsuit against US Soccer seeking class-action status over 'institutionalised gender discrimination' toward the team. The lawsuit was filed under the Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (ESPN, 2019). The media latched on to the equal pay portion of the lawsuit but ignored other crucial facets such as the argument that the women's team is not marketed or promoted as much as the men, which

they felt leads to lower attendances and merchandise sales (Alvarez, 2019). Washington Mystics WNBA player Elena Delle Donne, further solidified the theory in 2018 when she said:

‘We absolutely do not get promoted as our male counterparts do. Yes, I’m talking about the NBA. When you put millions of dollars into marketing athletes and allowing fans to get to know a player they develop a connection with someone or something you are more engaged and continue to want to see/learn more. How is anyone going to get to know me or any of my colleagues if we aren’t marketed as much?’

(Mandell, 2018).

These examples suggest the root of the problem isn’t what women are paid or what funding they receive; it is the lack of foundation that they have to build from to capitalize on their talent. When the marketing is not there, it gives ammunition to critics to say they don’t generate enough interest. Alvarez (2019) suggests that it is up to the governing bodies of sport to step up and give more money to promote women’s leagues in order to attract large sponsors. This theory would suggest that by implementing policy surrounding the marketing and promotion of women’s sport, NGBs could experience higher rates of sponsor engagement and thereby achieve greater media coverage, attendance figures and extra resources; all of which are vital for the development of women’s sports.

2.4 Player Associations

2.4.1 History and Role of Player Associations in Sport and Policy

Player associations and federations/confederations have developed and created bodies that use policy directives and statements of NGBs as bargaining tools to help players. They pledge themselves to pursuing the collective interests of players in their respective associations and to the growth and enhancement of their respective sports. The pursuit of the former is seen as integral to the success of the latter (Dabscheck, 2017). It could be surmised that they exist to fight for players and combat the issues that arise as a result of lack of policy. UNI World Athletes is an exclusive, global federation of over 100 player and athlete associations, operating in over 60 countries on all continents, representing 85,000 elite and professional athletes in total (Dabscheck, 2017; UNI Global Union, 2015). The European Elite Athletes Association (EU Athletes) was founded in 2008 and is the leading European multi-sport federation of player associations with 35 members in 17 different European countries in a wide range of different sports, representing more than 25,000 elite athletes (EU Athletes, 2019). An examination of the activities of the EU Athletes, find that its leaders participate in a never-ending round of meetings with employer representatives, politicians from different nations, officials of the European Commission and other bodies

discussing issues such as anti-doping, good governance, stands against racism, image rights, gender issues, problems with gambling and the education of players, health and well-being of players, education and second career training (Dabscheck, 2017). Other activities undertaken by EU Athletes are providing support and encouragement to new members, meetings with overseas player associations, providing reports on industrial campaigns and the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements by members. Its consistent line is to be a focal point for the enunciation and defence of athletes' rights in Europe (EU Athletes, 2019).

The World Assembly of UNI World Athletes resolved in Cape Town to pursue six key policy areas as priorities (Schwab, 2015):

1. To advance the good governance of sport
2. To promote the health and safety of professional athletes including their mental health, physical health and social wellbeing
3. To advance the integrity of sport
4. To protect the image rights and privacy of athletes
5. To enhance the development and wellbeing of athletes as people, acknowledging that the career of a professional is short-term and precarious
6. To encourage the organisation of athletes throughout the world, to ensure they are intimately involved in the decision-making of sport

Founded after the Lisbon Treaty (2007) the UNI of World Athletes, stated that EU action would be 'directed at promoting fairness and openness in sporting competitions and cooperation between bodies responsible for sports, and by protecting the physical and moral integrity of sportsmen and sportswomen, especially the youngest sportsmen and sportswomen'. As stated in the 2011 Nyon Declaration, they strive to bring the member player associations together to share best practice, form collective policies on behalf of players, and develop and deliver education and training programmes:

'We take this action based on certain core principles and to address a crisis in the governance of world sport organisations that have removed the athlete from the centre of sport. There is no sport without athletes. Athletes and their collective representatives must play an integral role as stakeholders in all decision-making forums and structures that affect them.'

(UNI Global Union, 2019).

Federations/confederations have also provided support to other players in forming player associations. The Pacific Island Rugby Players' Association received support from colleagues in

New Zealand, and officers of the Australian Athletes Alliance were active in the formation of the Australian Field Hockey Players' Association (Dabscheck, 2017). Amateur associations such as Ireland's Gaelic Player Associations, for both men and women, and the National College Players' Association and College Athletes Players' Association of the USA are mainly concerned with medical, health and welfare needs of members.

2.4.2 Characteristics

Player associations are usually small unions with a high union density. They invariably enrol a high percentage of potential members; they have memberships with a wide distribution of skills and different needs. Membership is more than 90% in the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) and the NBA (Staudohar, 1999, p. 3). In contrast to the general decline in trade unions across the globe, player associations have grown and have a high profile. This is mainly due to the fact that players are perceived as idols/role models and have a positive image. Due to this and despite some extraordinary examples, such as some scandals involving players, society is usually by the side of players and their associations (Rosen and Sanderson, 2001, p. 8). Their membership composition is different from other trade unions. While players all perform the same type of work in the respective games that they play, they vary enormously in terms of their levels of skill. A problem for a player association is to balance the competing demands and diverse interests and needs of its members. Player associations have regularly enjoyed capable and resourceful leaders to pursue their needs. Their main income is not from membership fees but from shares of broadcasting and other player generated income as negotiated as part of collective bargaining agreements. They are standalone bodies rather than organized across sport more generally. For example, basketball, baseball, football and hockey player associations in America operate as separate organizations. Football player associations in different parts of Europe, with the exception of the International Federation of Professional Footballers' Associations (FIFPro), organize and operate as separate bodies. An exception to this is the Norwegian Players Association (NISO), which organizes football, handball and ice hockey players under one single umbrella (Aydin, 2009).

2.4.3 Structure

Organisational structures of player associations are more or less similar in North America and in Europe. Each club provides player representatives/delegates who are elected by the members in the respective clubs. Such representatives serve two major functions. First, they provide a means of communication between members and the association. Second, they participate in the decision-making processes of the association. They appoint the Management Committees and

the CEOs of the respective associations. They, in turn, manage the union according to the Rules of the Union and the decisions taken by the Board of Representatives (Aydin, 2009).

2.4.4 Activities

Distinguishing between the internal and external activities provides a useful way to understand the modus operandi of player's associations. Internal activities are directed to their members and external activities directed mainly to clubs and leagues. Examples of internal activities provided by player associations to members in Europe and the US include occupational consultancy, legal advice and representation in a dispute/disciplinary meetings, second-career education advice and training, life and injury insurances and financial consultancy, protection of medical or other rights and benefits, provision of salary and other information to help in individual contract negotiations, assistance with filing a grievance, assistance with appealing a fine or suspension, and assistance with resolving player/agent disputes (Aydin, 2009).

The main external activity pursued by unions is to enter into collective bargaining agreements with those who employ their members such as leagues and clubs. As well as this almost every player association in Europe is a member of a national or international trade union federation. The English PFA is the member of Trade Unions Congress (TUC) (Aydin, 2007, p. 52-54). In 1965, representatives of player associations from France, Scotland, England, Italy and Holland formed the FIFPro, a confederation of player associations. It has 42 members, the majority of which are based in Europe. Similar confederations exist in a wide range of sports across the world. Especially in the context of recent developments in European football, FIFPro has played an important role in enhancing the rights of players in negotiations with the governing authorities of world and European football and the European Commission (Dabscheck, 2003, 2004 p. 85-86; Siekman and Soek, 2005, p. 652-654). Player associations must also contend with the general public. Because of the high profile of players and their assumption as role models, player associations can utilise their image in support of 'good' causes. For example, football player associations in England, Norway and Denmark are prominent in anti-doping campaigns and virtually all football associations have been active in Show Racism the Red Card Campaigns. The National Hockey League Players' Association (NHLPA) organizes the Hockey Fights Cancer Campaign while the NBPA facilitates the Feed the Children and Annual Holiday Food Giveaway Campaign (Aydin, 2009). While associations are promoting positive societal messages, campaigns such as these are also providing opportunities to increasing revenue for the association through increased marketing and networking possibilities (Business, 2017; Inc.com, 2019). Player associations are

involved in a wide variety of internal and external activities, all with overall the purpose of improving both playing and living conditions for their members.

2.4.5 Problems

Player associations, despite the small size of their memberships, have a more complicated terrain to negotiate than traditional unions. Player associations negotiate relations with league managements, league commissioners, clubs, federations and international organizations (Berry, Gould and Staudohar, 1986, p. 4-12; Mitten et al., 2016, p. 66-70). The high media profile of players, or members, of player associations means that the actions and the stance of player associations are widely reported in the popular media, especially in the sports sections of both the print and electronic media. This public scrutiny constitutes a problem for player associations when they decide to embark on campaigns to improve the lot of members. In initiating any campaign, player associations have to devote resources and time to playing the media campaign and their interactions with leagues and clubs (Staudohar, 1999, p. 7-8). Because player associations have members with substantial variance in their possession of skill, they need to devise programs and policies which take account of such differences to ensure their cohesion and viability in their dealings with clubs and leagues. Also, because top level professional sport is a young person's pursuit, player associations experience a high level of membership turnover, compared to traditional unions. Therefore, player associations need to continuously devote resources to educating new members on the role that they can play in advancing the needs and status of members (Mitten et al., 2016, p. 402). While most professional sport comprises team games, players often have a narrow focus and perceive issues in terms of their own individual needs. By definition, this poses difficulties for player associations wishing to foster a collective consciousness of members. Resources and time need to be devoted to developing a sense of solidarity amongst members (Staudohar, 1999, p. 3).

2.4.6 Effectiveness of Player Associations and Relationship to WIS

While the last quarter of a century has witnessed an unprecedented burst in player association formation, it is difficult predict how successful or otherwise they will be in the future in ensuring that the voices of their members is properly heeded in the policy, governance, conduct and playing of sport. Over 100 of the player associations and seventeen independent contractors have formed since 1990. The only confederation with any longevity is FIFPro. History has shown that it takes player associations lengthy periods of time to obtain achievements for members. Player associations and federations can lose their way, experience difficulties in finding capable and resourceful leaders and will encounter opposition from leagues and sport federations. It is yet to

be seen how UNI World Athletes will proceed in pursuing player rights on a global stage (Dabscheck, 2017). Because there is no research available assessing the triumphs, failures or any of the other headings discussed, of female-only player associations, the same could be said for this demographic of player associations. The WGPA in Ireland is one such example of a female-only player association. The WGPA is unique because of the amateur status of its members, who play Gaelic games. They are heavily dependent upon Irish sport's policy and are often affected by the lack of policy in place. The nature of this type of association provides an interesting base for a study into how player associations go about affecting policy change for the benefits of their members and how much effect they and other unions could have in the wider context of WIS.

2.5 Conclusion

After reviewing the literature, the following appear to be key needs of any policy related to WIS:

- Research into challenges for WIS policy design, implementation and impact and how best to overcome such obstacles
- Exploration of the inclusion of gender quotas
- Equity in media representation targets
- Marketing and promotion targets to recruit sponsors and increase investment
- Adequate funding targets to support media, marketing and promotion targets
- Role of player associations in affecting change in the world of WIS

Policy-makers, researchers, social agents and player associations must be united in the area of sports and physical activity. The application of gender equity policies in a sports organization requires not only an increase in budget, but also a challenge to the underlying gender discourses. The priorities, mind-set and governance of those implementing policies and of translating words into actions are essential to the success of projects of this kind.

3 Women in Sport in Ireland – The Wider Context

3.1 Introduction

In 1997, the Government authorised the establishment of a Taskforce on WIS. It is not clear as to why the Taskforce was established at this time. Research has not been able to clarify the reasoning for its foundation. This taskforce received numerous submissions ‘from interested parties on key issues related to female participation in sports and physical activities’ (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 38). More than one hundred submissions were received from individual sports people, NGBs and other associations involved in sport (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 13). Examples include the Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI), the Irish Female Rugby Football Union, Irish Squash, the National Coaching and Training Centre, and the Olympic Council of Ireland to name but a few (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 39). In 1998, the Taskforce produced a lengthy report that provided impetus for further work in the area, suggesting a number of realistic and actionable policies to increase females’ involvement in sport at all levels (including coaching, administration, decision-making and participation) (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 32). However, the report remains unpublished to date (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 11) and while the report made twenty-six recommendations, relatively few were implemented (Oireachtas, 2004). Therefore, it is not only unclear as to why the Taskforce was set up in the first place, but also as to why resources were used on this venture when the resulting report was not published, and the recommendations were not implemented. In fact, since 1998, changes in the landscape of WIS in Ireland have only occurred in very recent times and many of the proposed policies and changes from the 1998 report remain relevant to today.

In 2003/4, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs considered that it was both a political and socially opportune time to examine the situation of Irish females and their participation and involvement in sport and recreational activity (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 11). According to the Fifth Report on Women in Sport (2004) published by the Joint Committee on behalf of the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2004, the Joint Committee were ‘strongly of the view that women should have a central rather than a potentially marginal role in all sporting activities from leisure based to elite.’ (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 1). There has been no research that investigates if this statement or any of the recommendations of the report have ever been fulfilled. The researchers fear that, like the 1998 Taskforce report, the majority of the 23 recommendations made by the WISR were also not implemented. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to explore this statement by examining the changing landscape of Irish sport policy relating to women’s sport as it has framed and influenced the inclusion (or more often the exclusion) and full involvement of WIS in Ireland since then. The focus of this chapter is predominantly on government level sport policy for women since the WISR was published in 2004 (Oireachtas, 2004). The chapter will explore how the lack of policy relevant to women’s sport in

Ireland has influenced the areas of funding, media, corporate investment and attitudes and interest towards WIS and thereby influenced the development of WIS in general in Ireland. By doing so, it is hoped that research question one will be answered:

1. Structures, policy, roles and developments since 2004: How will policy analysis inform us of developments and implemented programmes and possible progress within women's sport in Ireland since the Women in Sport Report? (macro and meso)

3.1.1 Structure of Chapter Three

- Overview of available literature and data pertaining to WIS in Ireland
- Methods of Investigation
- Results
 - Interviews of stakeholders involved in women's sport in Ireland, intertwined with mini case examples to support the data
 - Analysis of policy documents
- Discussion
- Conclusion

3.2 Overview of the Available Literature Relating to Women in Sport in Ireland

While it was concluded that the 1998 report made twenty-six recommendations and relatively few were implemented (Oireachtas, 2004), the report did however provide some insight into the state of female involvement in sport in Ireland during this time. The following is a summary of the main findings.

Females were poorly represented at decision-making levels in sport. Females' involvement at all levels of sport and recreational activity was substantially less than males' involvement. Young females were dropping out of recreational and sport activities earlier than young males. Various reasons were put forward in the report for females' relatively lower involvement (compared to males) in sport and recreation. Some of the explanations focused on psychological factors such as the need for female role models and a sport paradigm that is not based on male lifestyles. The absence or lack of suitable facilities including female changing areas was also highlighted as well as the absence of suitable crèche provision in existing crèche facilities, which could hinder women with children having the free time to get involved in sport. Media coverage of female sporting events also played an important role in the identification of sporting role models for young females and the portrayal of females as physically empowered individuals. In addition, the lack of

media coverage of female sports meant that marketing and sponsorship of female sports was more difficult to secure. Many of the recommendations were underpinned by the principle of gender-proofing all present and future sports policies to ensure 'a level playing pitch for females' (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 15).

Even though the Irish Sports Council (ISC) acknowledged the absence of national data relating to females in Irish sport and indicated that it is a necessary prerequisite for good planning in relation to females' involvement in sport (Oireachtas, 2004, p.17), unfortunately, there is relatively little literature on all aspects of female involvement in sport in Ireland after this time frame. A study conducted by University College Dublin and Dublin City University entitled 'What About the Girls? Exploring the Gender Data Gap in Talent Development' as recently as 2019 further confirms this dearth of research (Curran, MacNamara and Passmore, 2019). The researchers highlight the fact that the lack of data pertaining to females in sport in Ireland and internationally is problematic. In 2014, the European Journal of Sport Science published a paper entitled: 'Where are all the female participants in Sports and Exercise Medicine research?'. The study concluded that they are not in the research. A 2016 review found the same problem: 27% of studies were all-male, while for the 73% of studies that involved at least some women, 'some' was the operative word (Perez, 2019). In an article published by the Telegraph entitled 'How sports science is failing women' by author of 'Invisible Women', Caroline Criado Perez stated 'the gender data gap in sport is a direct consequence of the way we conceive men as the default. Because we do not think of women as half the global population, we forget to study them. We forget to design for them' (Perez, 2019).

Despite these shortcomings in the literature in both the Irish and international context, more recent existing research pertaining to WIS in Ireland since the 1998 report will frame the remainder of the chapter.

3.2.1 Participation

Liston (2014) found that Ireland mirrors developments internationally in relation to the increased participation of WIS. The State of the Nation Report (Lidl, 2017) found that 40% of Irish girls between the ages of 12-17 play sport while 23% of Irish female adults play sport. The gender gap in sports participation reduced from 15.7% to 4.5% between 2007 and 2017 according to the ISM Report 2017 (Sport Ireland, 2017). However, despite these positive findings, over two out of every five people (44%) indicated that women have fewer opportunities to participate in sport than men; while only 5% feel they have more opportunities. It must also not be forgotten that, while the gender gap in active participation is the lowest it has been since the ISM was introduced in 2007, female participation in sport; both active and social remains lower than participation among

males. Every report in the ISM series has identified a gender gap in sports participation in all its forms. Teenage boys aged 16-19 are still the group most likely to play sport. Women tend to give up at the start of secondary school (50% of girls versus 18% boys drop out during this time) whereas starting college has been shown as a likely time for men to give up (Lidl, 2017). Seventy-six per cent of women and 72% of girls agree that girls give up due to the fact they are not as encouraged to continue as their male counterparts and parents are more likely to discourage their sons from giving up than their daughters (Lidl, 2017). Fourteen per cent of women think it is because sport is 'not relevant for girls' (Lidl, 2017, p. 23).

3.2.2 Participation in Types of Sport in Ireland

Society has also been trained to think of specific sports in terms of genderedness. Men have been encouraged and taught to participate in strenuous, aggressive, competitive team sports, while women have commonly been steered toward individual aesthetically pleasing activities such as gymnastics, figure skating, and synchronized swimming (Schmalz and Kersetter, 2006). Dividing sports along masculine and feminine lines encourages and allows women to accept physical limits that have been placed on them (Birell, 1998 cited in McClung and Blinde, 2002). Therefore, women can be reluctant to break free of traditional gender stereotypes. Liston (2014) found evidence of women's increasing participation in sports seen traditionally as male associated sports, for example; Gaelic football, soccer, and rugby union. The ISM Report 2013 found that Gaelic games were the second most popular category of sports for women in Ireland after gym use and exercise (Irish Sports Council (ISC), 2013). The ISM Report 2017 found that Gaelic football was the most popular team sport participated in by women (1.2%). According to the State of the Nation Report (Lidl, 2017, p. 14), 60% of girls aged 12-17 participating in sport, play Gaelic football, making it the most popular sport in Ireland for this demographic. As stated previously the LGFA has grown from over 117,000 members in 2008 to 188,000 in 2018, a total rise of 60% in ten years (LGFA, 2018). These increases represent a significant growth in the popularity of ladies' Gaelic football. Perhaps they have been enabled through television coverage and sponsorship by TG4, a public broadcaster for Irish-language speakers, since 2000 (Liston, 2010). Added to that, the partnership with the LGFA and Lidl (the supermarket chain) established in 2016 saw them invest €2.5 million between 2016 and 2018 and a commitment to invest a further €3 million in three years. Which led to an announcement in 2018 that they were official retail partners and sponsors of the national league. This represents one of the largest investments in female sports by a sponsor not just in Ireland but also in Europe.

Though not organized on the same island-wide scale as Gaelic football, there was also an increase in the numbers of players registered to the Women's Football Association of Ireland (WFAI) between 2005 and 2014 (Liston, 2014). Approximately, 23,500 Irish females registered as actively playing soccer in the Republic of Ireland in 2014, representing an increase of approximately 17,000 since 2005 (FAI, 2015). According to the State of the Nation Report (Lidl, 2017, p. 14), 21% of girls aged 12-17 participating in sport, play soccer, making it the third most popular sport for this demographic. However, the optics may not be what they seem in relation to these positive steps forward and a more detailed insight into the realities of being an elite soccer player in Ireland are explored in a mini case study of the Republic of Ireland Women's National Soccer Team (ROIWNST) (Appendix T).

In comparison to Gaelic football and soccer, substantially fewer women participate in rugby union in Ireland. The traditional class pattern associated with rugby union is also mirrored in the women's game, though less rigid in recent times (Liston, 2014). There were estimates of 850 female players in Ireland in 2004 (in Liston and Menzies 2004). In the Women in Rugby Action Plan 2018 - 2023 (IRFU, 2018), the number of active female adult players was listed at just 1,341. The plan reported there were 2,500 active youth players and 553 active third level players (IRFU, 2018). The 'Give it a Try' initiative, launched in 2017, aimed for an extra 2,000 females to take up the game across the island in 2017 (Cumiskey, 2017). The five-year strategic vision has stated that the IRFU will invest an additional €4 million in the women's game. (IRFU, 2018).

Despite the increased number of females participating in traditionally male-dominated sports, the figure remains that, in Ireland, 56% of men are strongly encouraged to take up a team sport, while the corresponding number is just 36% for women (Lidl, 2017). Among women there are over 12 times as many participants in individual sports as in team sports (Sport Ireland, 2017, p. 14). Furthermore, while the ISM Report 2017 found that Gaelic football was the most popular team sport participated in by women (1.2%), this represented ninth place on the list of most popular types of sports participated in by females (Sport Ireland, 2017, p. 17). The first eight on the list are sports which can be undertaken by an individual alone (personal exercise, swimming, running, dancing, yoga, cycling, pilates and golf) (Sport Ireland, 2017, p. 84). These findings indicate that although females in sports have come a long way with large increases in involvement in traditionally male associated sports, stereotypes of gender still persist in sports and physical activities 'sex-typing of sports' as described by Wilde is still the case in Ireland (Wilde, 2007, p. 6).

3.2.3 Leadership

Ireland follows the international trend regarding women in positions of leadership in sport. According to 'NGB data', as quoted in the newly released SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019, p. 17), the proportion of CEOs of Irish NGBs who are female stands at 24% and the proportion of female board members in Irish NGBs is less at just 23%. 'Sport Ireland research' (Sport Ireland, 2019, p.17) found that the proportion of female chairs of NGB boards or decision-making authorities is also at just 23%. A report compiled by The Irish Times, discovered that between the 50 places filled by the executive committees or boards of the FAI, IRFU and the GAA, there was just a single female representative (Clarke, 2016). In the most recent ISM Report 2017 (Sport Ireland, 2017, p. 54), when asked about opportunities to be involved in the management and administration of sport, over two-thirds of respondents (68%) overall perceive that 'women have fewer opportunities than men' in this respect.

Minister Patrick O'Donovan proposed to enforce financial penalties if sports bodies in Ireland did not have 30% women on their boards by 2019 (Clarke, 2016). When respondents were asked about this proposal, 60% of them indicated that it would have a positive influence on the administration of sport in Ireland, whereas only 5% indicated that it would have a negative influence. A higher proportion of women (63%) than men (55%) indicated that it would have a positive influence. This suggests that some appetite exists for proactive steps to be taken to redress the prevailing gender differential. In the Off the Ball podcast (2017), Dr Katie Liston reiterated this sentiment, 'There are objective facts that show that we need more women in representative roles and decision-making committees at the higher levels of sport...the gender gap persists in sport in my view more than in other sectors.' Unfortunately, the proposal was subsequently squashed despite the positive reception and literature mentioned by Liston (2017) to back it up. Furthermore, Liston (2017) tweeted "Are quotas the key?". It would seem that certainly the question of whether gender quotas offer a potential solution needs to be explored (Liston, 2017).

Research has also shown that in positions of power or decision making that the average Irish coach was traditionally a white male in his late forties (Larkin, Duffy, and O'Leary, 2007). Not much has changed in this regard. FIFA (2015) reported that the ratio of male to female coaches in women's football in the Republic of Ireland is 9:1. In relation to Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Pro, A and B coaching licences, 99% are held by males while the ratio is 96% male to 4% female for UEFA Pro C coaching licences. The ISM Report 2017 (Sport Ireland, 2017, p. 4) report found that the ratio of male to female coaches in all sport in Ireland is 2.5:1 and the ratio of male to female referees is 2.3:1. The gender differential in volunteering roles remains

consistent, with female involvement more likely to be in areas of providing transport. Despite 68% of people wanting to see more women in coaching roles across women's sport in Ireland from grassroots to county, regional and national level (Liberty Insurance, 2017), women remain quite heavily dependent on male-run facilities, male coaches, and males' organisational capacities as well as financial investments from public and private investors. (Lidl, 2017). The FAI feel it is necessary to combat these shortcomings in order to attain sustainable growth for women's football in Ireland, 'The development of female coaches, referees, administrators and volunteers is needed to support the growth and sustainability of women's football.' (FAI, 2015, p. 12). And according to Louise Evans, communications director for peak national advocacy body Women Sport Australia, this sustainable growth of women's sports will not be achievable and 'will not become the norm until the major sporting codes provide equal training pay and career pathways for women in sport' (Special Broadcasting Service, 2019).

It is also important to note however, as mentioned in section 2.2.1, the trends discussed above may also be present in Ireland as a result of sport mirroring the gender order of society (Fisher, Knust and Johnson, 2013; Glenn, 2016; Liston, 2017). According to worldwide executive search firm, Heidrick and Struggles, Irish public limited companies have emerged at the bottom across a selection of European countries in appointing women to their boards. Women accounted for 29% of 34 boardroom seats filled across Irish publicly-limited companies in 2018, the lowest among seven countries monitored, including France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. The average stood at 38% (Brennan, 2019). Therefore, while the solution put forward by Evans would undoubtedly be successful to a certain degree, it is important to note that the roots of the disparities may run deeper and therefore may require a more substantial cultural shift first and foremost in the wider society context.

3.2.4 Funding

3.2.4.1 State funding

According to the General Scheme of Sport Ireland Bill (DTTAS, 2014), 'Sport Ireland' plans, leads and co-ordinates the development of competitive and recreational sport in Ireland. In relation to funding, Sport Ireland are responsible for the administration of the Grants Scheme for NGBs for funding for Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) and the administration of the International Carding Scheme which supports high performance athletes and emerging talent in Ireland. In 2013, Sport Ireland announced an investment package of €44.5 million for Irish sport, of which €8 million went to high performance, €11.4 million to the various NGB's and €5.1 million to participation through the provision of LSPs. Included in the previous figures is also funding of €0.71 million which funded

the 'Women in Sport' programme (Sport Ireland, 2013). From 2016 - 2018, the allocation of funding for WIS fell to €0.6 million (Gleeson, 2019). More recent details of government funding for WIS will be analysed in section 3.4.2.5 since much of the information pertaining to this area only became available after the commencement of this research. Perhaps a reason for this is because the topic of WIS in Ireland and its accompanying issues have received more visibility in recent times.

3.2.4.2 Corporate Investment

According to the NSP along with funding from Sport Ireland, NGB's, sporting teams and organisations in Ireland need to secure funds from elsewhere through deals such as sponsorship and TV rights (DTTAS, 2018, p. 54). In line with the increasing interest and improving attitudes towards WIS in Ireland, the landscape of corporate investment related to sport in Ireland is changing rapidly. According to John Trainor, CEO of sponsorship and research consulting partner, Onside, 'analysis shows that of all sports deals announced in the first half of 2018, 20% of them were women specific, an increase of 11% on the same period in 2017' (McGee, 2018). Trainor also believes that sport fan-bases are diversifying at pace and sports rights-holders themselves recognise that they need to look beyond traditional demographics to continue to grow among what have been overlooked audiences. 'While nine in 10 males in Ireland are sports fans, so are eight in 10 females. This is a huge opportunity for both sides of the industry- sponsors and rights holders' (McGee, 2018).

While the above comments on corporate investment in women's sports offers optimism around this area, it is necessary to examine the topic further in order to fully comprehend the reality and significance of these seemingly positive steps forward. For example, all brand-spend on women's sport has traditionally been small and while 20% women-specific sponsorship deals might seem like a large amount, it refers solely to the volume of deals as opposed to money invested. 'From a purely monetary point of view, it is entirely conceivable that as much as 90% of all money invested by sponsors goes towards male sports, with women's sports picking up just 10%' (McGee, 2018). As well as this, the focus of sponsorship deals affiliated with WIS seems to be primarily on rewards for the company as opposed to the women they sponsor. Some are describing it as a 'culturally relevant' moment that helps companies tap into new audiences (BBC, 2019). Furthermore, many businesses recognise that investment in women's sport can also send the right messages to existing or prospective employees about the company's values (McGee, 2018). Furthermore, Trainor states 'aligning with a women-centric sport property can be as much as 10 times lower in cost than male-centric equivalents, but certainly not 10 times less effective in their

potential to deliver on key brand measures including reach and brand affinity gains’ (McGee, 2018). The comments made by Rob Hartnett, founder and CEO of Sport for Business in 2013, solidifies this point:

‘The amount of investment is tiny and how far it goes is incredible... [take] the example of Chill Insurance, sponsoring football and hurling in Cork. They’re spending something like a million over three years. For a million euros, they could sponsor women’s sport in Ireland in full. In fact, they could have taken 60% off that price and still sponsor all women’s sport in Ireland. Imagine what that would do for Chill Insurance?’

(Ryan, 2013).

While this comment may be viewed positively when Hartnett proposes the re-directing of money towards women’s sport in Ireland, it may also be seen as derogatory in that it suggests that the funding of two male teams would suffice to help in the development and coverage of all women’s sport in Ireland. The overwhelming message relating to the sponsorship of WIS in Ireland appears to be you don’t have to invest a lot to get back a lot. More detailed analysis of the funding structures relating to Irish WIS will be examined in section 3.4.2.5.3.

3.2.5 Media Coverage

‘When women’s sport makes national news in Ireland it’s either something really good or something really bad’ (O’ Toole, 2018). WIS in Ireland and all over the world have long experienced inequitable media representation as well as inconsistencies in media coverage (Bishop, 2003; Clavio and Eagleman, 2011; Lebel and Danylchuk, 2009; Topic and Erculj, 2008). In July 2018, highlights of the Manchester United versus Liverpool preseason tour match were shown on the TV3 news round up. There were no highlights of the IWNHT overcoming India (1-0) in the (WHWC) (Meaney, 2018). It was only as the competition progressed, finishing with Ireland coming in second place, that the Irish media got fully behind the campaign. Writing for the Irish Examiner in 2014, Derval O’ Rourke, three-time Irish Olympian, felt that the most difficult challenge facing female athletes participating at elite levels of women’s sport is that their efforts, successes and failures are ignored, misrepresented or reduced to the ‘other news’ minority interest sections of the sports pages and broadcast bulletins (O’Rourke, 2014). A research project undertaken by Colm Woods in 2014, Account Executive at PSG Sponsorship (specialists in Sports PR and Sponsorship agency), found that 3.3% was the amount of sports coverage afforded to women’s sports in Ireland (Wood, 2014).

On an international stage, 2018 was a momentous year for Ireland:

- The IWNHT were the first Irish team ever to get to a world cup final

- Katie Taylor retained her IBF and WBA world titles
- Kellie Harrington secured gold at the AIBA World Championships
- Ellen Keane won gold and bronze at the Para-Swimming European Championships
- Sanita Puspure returned with gold from the World Rowing Championships
- The Ireland women's 4x100m team won silver at the World U-20 Athletics Championships

Domestically, the Cork camogie team secured a record 28th All-Ireland title and the TG4 LGFA All-Ireland finals day event broke records for the highest attendance at a female sporting event with a crowd of 50,141. When compared to a crowd of 27,374 in 2014 it is symbolic of how far female sport has come in Ireland. However, despite this growing success enjoyed by female athletes nationally and internationally in recent years, research commissioned by 20x20.ie and conducted by Nielsen in 2018, has found that just 3% of sport's print coverage, 4% of sport's online coverage and 2% of TV sport coverage is dedicated to women's sport in Ireland (AIG, 2018), and less than 20% of all TV sport features women only or mixed sport (Foley, 2018). In this regard, it would seem not much has changed since the earlier studies from 2014 (Wood, 2014). The Teneo Sports and Sponsorship Index, a comprehensive 1,000 person nationally representative survey, specifically focused on examining the views of Irish people towards women's sport in 2018, found that over half of those surveyed (58%) believe that women's sport does not receive sufficient media coverage. This figure rises to 64% when females only were surveyed (O'Keeffe, 2018).

There are however, a few positive examples of signs of change. The 20x20 initiative, launched in 2018, is an all-inclusive movement to shift Ireland's cultural perception of women's sport by 2020. The name of the initiative stands for 20% by 2020. The initiative aims for a 20% increase in media coverage of WIS, a 20% increase in female participation at all levels of sport and a 20% increase in attendance at women's games and events. 'This isn't a 'women for women' initiative, it's 'all of society for all of society' (20x20.ie, 2018). The initiative is partnered with The Federation of Irish Sport, which has 107 members comprised of the NGBs and LSPs across Ireland. Thereby ensuring the vast majority of Ireland's leading sporting organisations have pledged their active support and involvement in the 20x20 campaign (20x20.ie, 2018). Furthermore, RTÉ and TG4 shared coverage throughout the duration of the FIFA WWC 2019, with all games, for the first time ever, free-to-air for Irish viewers (RTÉ, 2019). RTÉ2 and RTÉ Player broadcasted 23 matches including three of the quarter-finals, one semi-final and the final. TG4 broadcasted 29 matches in total including the opening match, one quarter-final, one semi-final, the match for third place and highlights of the final (RTÉ, 2019; Finn, 2019).

3.2.6 Attitudes, Interest and Visibility

In 2014, Malachy Clerkin, a journalist with the Irish Times wrote an article entitled 'If women's sport struggles for coverage it's not because of sexism – it's because you can't make people care'.

He wrote about how he felt that:

'People will engage or they won't and all the marketing and media backing in the world will lead only so many horses to water. You can't make them care about the Cork women's football team no matter how many times you tell them that Irish sport has never and will never again see a team like them. In all honesty, it took the best part of a decade to drum up genuine interest and affection for Katie Taylor. Annalise Murphy, Steph Meadow, Aileen Reid – we could run daily pieces on their whereabouts and their whatabouts and they would still be little more than curiosities to the general public.'

(Clerkin, 2014).

Anna Geary, four-time Camogie All-Ireland winner with Cork and TV and radio personality questions this logic: 'There are many barriers that WIS face but media coverage is a significant issue. Some say the level of coverage is proportionate to the level of interest. But how can you expand audiences if there is limited media space dedicated to women's sports?' (Liberty Insurance, 2015, p. 9). Despite the opinions held by Clerkin relating to the lack of interest in Irish women's sport, Liston (2014) reported decreasing levels of acceptance regarding inequality between the sexes and Clare Balding, author and TV and radio presenter stated that '70% of Irish people believe raising the profile of women's sport is important' (Wise Up, 2015). The findings made by Onside (McGee, 2018) explored in section 3.2.4.2 would also suggest attitudes and interest towards WIS in Ireland are in fact changing rapidly.

In 2015, Liberty Insurance released a summary of research produced in partnership with Millward Brown and Onside called Wise Up. The report aimed to allow people to 'understand more deeply the attitudes and sentiments towards participation in and consumption of women's sports in Ireland' (Liberty Insurance, 2015, p. 2). The report states Irish men included female sports in their sports viewing repertoire, with 1 in 10 actively tuning in to female athletics, rugby and Gaelic football on TV in 2014 (Liberty Insurance, 2015, p. 6). A follow up report, 'A Game of Two Halves', found that one in two people were more aware of women's sport in Ireland in 2017 versus 2016 and 43% were interested in the Women's Rugby World Cup (WRWC) (Liberty Insurance, 2017). The ISM Report, 2017, also surmises that women's sport was improving in terms of the perception and the reality (Sport Ireland, 2017).

According to Stephanie Roche, Irish soccer international, (Meagher, 2018) 'enormous strides' have been taken in recent years when it comes to the both participation in and acceptance of women's

sport. 'We had a record crowd against Holland a few months back. There are a lot of young girls coming - and boys, too. It's good that children of both genders can see that football is a sport for all.' Similarly, for Niamh Briggs, one of the best known of Ireland's current generation of rugby internationals, the interest generated by the IWNHT in the world cup in 2018 demonstrated how far women's sport has come in Ireland:

'You used to hear people in the past saying that people wouldn't watch women playing sport in really big numbers, but the figures from the Women's Hockey World Cup Final show that's not the case at all. Success helps, of course, but there is huge interest in women's sport now, and it's growing... It's normalised now and people don't give you the looks they used to when you said you played rugby. The more people see it and read about it, the more accepted it is.'

(Meagher, 2018).

Figures released from RTÉ showed that the final between Ireland and the Netherlands drew an average audience of 381,500 with a one-minute peak audience of 439,100. This accounts for a 41% share of the available audience as Ireland finished as runners-up in the tournament. Outside GAA, rugby and soccer, these are RTÉ Sport's highest viewing figures since Katie Taylor's gold medal triumph at the 2012 Olympics (Farrell, 2018). Annual attendance at the finals of the LGFA's premier competition, the All-Ireland Championship, has increased steadily over the last number of years - 2014: 27,374, 2015: 31,083, 2016: 34,445, 2017: 46,286, (largest crowd for any female-exclusive sports event in Europe in 2017) 2018: 50,141, and 2019: 56,114 spectators. A total of 666,000 people tuned into TG4's coverage of the 2019 All-Ireland finals from 11.40am to 5.40pm, with an average audience of 252,500 observing the senior final between Dublin and Galway. This represents a rise of over 70,000 from 2018, and makes this the second-highest viewing figure for a ladies' final on TG4 since it first started to broadcast the games in 2001. Viewing peaked at 358,440 and the match took a 30% share (Duffy, 2019). This is another obvious sign of increased interest in women's sports and further contradicts Clerkin's (2014) comments.

However, despite these statistics detailing increased interest and improved attitudes towards WIS in Ireland, areas for concern must also be acknowledged, particularly between different sports. For example, in 2017 and 2018, the All-Ireland Camogie Finals attracted only 44% and 43% of the LGFA finals attendances. TV viewership for male versus female rugby in 2017 was 41% versus 13%, TV viewership of hurling versus camogie in 2016 was 26% versus six per cent (Liberty Insurance, 2017). If these figures are to be rectified, action needs to be taken. Anna Geary believes that; 'We have some fabulous female sports-people in our country, and they need a platform to showcase their talents and to tell their stories' (Irish Independent, 2015). Colm Woods (2014) believes PR

professionals working in women's sport need to build media relationships and start the gentle expansion into an everyday feature:

'The trend is that women's sport is ignorable until something great enough happens that it becomes novel. But public relations agencies help governing bodies and organisations to manage their communications, reputation and commercial sponsorships. On the day to day, PR officers are the reason you hear about sporting successes.'

(Woods, 2014).

The Wise Up report (Liberty Insurance, 2015, p. 13) also found that there was a need to showcase and advocate opportunities for sponsors and brands in women's sports. Encouraging attendance at women's sporting events was predicted as a means of helping to secure increased TV exposure and disrupt convention to showcase female role models (Liberty Insurance, 2015, p. 13). Perhaps it is necessary for NGB's to receive the guidance and support of PR and marketing professionals in order to do this. The strides taken by the IWNHT and partnership between the LGFA and Lidl are perhaps the best examples of how these combined approaches can be successful. These will be explored in greater detail in sections 3.4.1.2.3 and 3.4.1.3.5 respectively.

Other ideas for generating more interest and hence more media coverage included women officiating at the most popular Irish sports and TV or radio station take-overs dedicated to women's sports. It was also indicated that there is a need to set some hard benchmarks to sign up to. For example, it is essential that there is an increase in the media proportion of news and highlights airtime devoted to women's sports and that there is a distinct need to promote WIS through sufficient programming scheduling and content (Wise Up, 2015, p. 6). It would seem that policy relating to the marketing and media coverage of WIS is absolutely necessary in order to achieve these goals.

3.2.7 Summary of Literature Overview

WIS in Ireland has been investigated under a number of headings in this chapter thus far. Many positives relating to the progress made in this sector over the past number of years have been outlined with increased participation of females and increased interest in female sport in particular standing out as the most prominent improvements. However, the fact remains that, although women's sport is more considered, men's sport is still taken more seriously than women's in Ireland (Lidl, 2017, p. 25). If boys do well in sport in school, there is less pressure for them to do well academically than girls; only 66% women, 70% of girls and 63% men feel that girls can benefit just as much as boys when it comes to their future in sport and 54% of women, 52% of girls and 48% of men feel women are less likely to have a career in sport than men. Liston's (2014) findings

appear to remain relevant to Ireland today; that the balance of power between the sexes has not shifted substantially in favour of females and the opportunities for them to participate in sport are by no means equivalent to those of males. Furthermore, andrarchal power ratios between the sexes have not been broken simply by women's increasing participation in sport. Therefore, it can be concluded from the available literature that; 'it is a glaring anomaly that women's involvement in sport in Ireland has, until very recently, been more or less unchallenged, in political, academic and public' as stated by Dr Katie Liston when participating in 'Beyond the Game' (WGPA, 2017). The researchers believe policy has a significant role to play if more substantial developments are to be made that encompasses a number of the relevant factors discussed throughout the literature in this chapter.

3.3 Methods of Investigation

3.3.1 Qualitative Data Collection

As mentioned in section 1.6, mixed methods were the chosen methods of the 'action research case study' overarching methodology for the overall study. Qualitative research methods were selected as the methods used for the study specifically contained in Chapter Three. The qualitative research methods consisted of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of WIS in Ireland and document analysis of policies relating to WIS in Ireland. Content analysis of websites and social media platforms were also used to compliment the other data gathered and also to construct mini case studies relevant to different factions of WIS in Ireland which are interspersed throughout the results. The qualitative data collected for Chapter Three was primarily part of Phase 1 and Phase 4 of the experimental procedure for the overall study (see section 1.7.1).

Phase 1

(a) Using content analysis of website and social media platforms, start a timeline which contextualises any changes in women's sport since the WISR was published in 2004 (Oireachtas, 2004)

(b) Start analysis of Irish policy documents related to the development and promotion of sport, in particular the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004), the NSP (DTTAS, 2018) and the SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019)

Phase 4

(f) Semi structured stakeholder interviews with a focus on the context of WIS in Ireland

(g) Continuation of analysis of Irish policy documents related to development and promotion of sport, in particular the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004), the NSP (DTTAS, 2018) and the SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019)

3.3.1.1 Interviews

Three stakeholders and six policy makers in women's sport were contacted by the researcher via e-mail and asked if they were willing to be interviewed and take part in the research (Appendix C). This e-mail was followed up with a phone call. The stakeholders and policy makers contacted and requested for interview were selected based on their knowledge and role within their respective organisation. As the sample is small, though comprehensive for the scope of the project, it is difficult to provide further information about the informants without the risk of disclosing their identity; instead, they are simply referred to by number (Caldwell and Mays, 2012). Out of the nine people contacted, a total of five made themselves available and participated in individual interviews with the researcher over the course of a four-month period. The interviews took place in a range of different locations to suit the needs of the participants. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they gave the researcher the opportunity to probe fully for responses, clarify any ambiguous, inconsistencies or misinterpretations (Bowling, 2002). These interviews were used to assist the researcher in developing a greater sense of understanding of the roles, perceptions and structures around policy and planning that exist in Ireland, particularly what changes have been developed and implemented in Ireland since the WISR published in 2004 (Oireachtas, 2004). The interview topic guide may be found in Appendix D. They were also to enable the researcher to probe further into perceived and actual opportunities and barriers to WIS. The last question in each interview was an opportunity for the respondent to add anything to the interview that they felt was significant, interesting or important. This was often the most informative question, and in many cases led to one or more additional avenues being explored (Caldwell and Mays, 2012).

3.3.1.2 Policy Document Reviews

There has been limited application of innovative methodologies to the study of sport policy and politics and few articles have contributed to broader methodological debates (Grix et al., 2018). Because translating ideas into specific actions is neither automatic nor easy, to make gender policies in sport effective, it must be ascertained how they are put into practice and how the implementation process can be improved (Soler et al., 2016). Therefore, in order to fully comprehend the impact, the recommendations of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) have had on women's sport in Ireland, any other relevant national policy documents addressing WIS were

sought from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. As well as this, a combination of methods was employed to amass as much information as possible on any other Irish sports policies relating to WIS, including an Internet-based search of documents on the websites of NGBs, Sport Ireland, LSPs and other relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, a search was conducted through the 'Google' search engine using the following keywords: women, sport, Ireland, policy, gender quotas, gender gap, policy, guideline(s), strategy, programs, action plan, national program, stakeholders, policy makers. In relation to the optimal number of documents to assess, while a wide array of documents is better, although ultimately the quality of the document rather than quantity (Bowen, 2009). Bowen adds that documents should be assessed for their completeness; in other words, how selective or comprehensive their data is (2009). Of paramount importance when evaluating documents is not to consider the data as "necessarily precise, accurate, or complete recordings of events that have occurred" (Bowen, 2009, p. 33). After gathering the relevant documents, the researcher developed an organisation scheme and assessed the authenticity of the documents, explored the document's agenda and biases and explored the latent content (O'Leary, 2014). It is important to note that there were only a few relevant documents to choose from. There was rigour involved in the selection, only documents that were government based or from organisations that have could/would have the most impact were considered. After taking all of the above considerations into account, the documents that were subsequently chosen for document analysis in this study are the WISR (Oireachtas 2004), the NSP (DTAS, 2018), and the SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019).

3.3.1.3 Content Analysis, Timelines and Mini Case Studies

According to Batrinca and Treleaven (2014), when conducting content analysis, one should consider multiple sources (e.g., social media, blogs, news, speech and video data). Considering this, the timeline in section 1.1 and Appendix A was composed by carrying out content analysis on approx. 80 Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts and blogs focused on WIS in Ireland along with an evaluation of a large amount of mainstream media outlet publications and articles also related to WIS in Ireland. All accounts, platforms and articles may be found in the reference list of this study. The specific sources were selected using a variety of techniques. The researcher availed of suitable recommendations from the supervisors and participants of the study and also used a Google advanced search using criteria such as the following: '20x20', 'cantseeantbe', 'hersport' 'women sport Ireland', 'NGBs', 'policy women sport'. The researcher also carried out searches using similar words, phrases and hashtags on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. A list of NGBs and a list of carded female athletes were also recovered (FIS, 2019; Sport Ireland, 2019) all of whose social media accounts were also considered for content. It was also ensured all sources

were active within the month previous to data collection before being included in the study. The timeline begins in 2013 in order to coincide with the beginnings of the WGPA. The content analysis also informed other aspects of the study. According to a feasibility study carried out by the UK Department for Work and Pensions (2014) social media are positioned to provide social researchers with a variety of useful data sources, such as: indications of public reaction to specific policy announcements or proposals, insight into public experiences of services governments provide, ways of measuring overall public attention government policies, or awareness of key policy changes, ways of measuring general social trends of importance to the researcher and an insight into the sources of public opinion, such as where people get information on specific government policies.

3.3.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The key components of qualitative data analysis are: organizing the data set; getting acquainted with the data; classifying, coding and interpreting the data; and, presenting and writing up the data (Rowley, 2014). The content analysis method used for the qualitative data analysis of Chapter Three complemented the macro-meso-micro framework underpinning the research mentioned previously in Chapter One, section 1.4.

3.3.2.1 Interviews

All recordings of interviews were transcribed verbatim. The author analysed the interview transcripts by highlighting any significant or recurring themes that coincided with the research questions. Krueger (1994) recommends that the researcher who carries out the data collection should also analyse the data and this strategy was adopted in this study. Deductive thematic coding (Starks and Trinidad, 2007; Miles and Huberman, 1994) in particular was utilised in the analysis of the data. The researcher aimed to identify the most common and relevant themes and planned to group these systematically, thus allowing for the opportunity to draw comparisons between different themes and likewise examine any similarities, links or connections in the discussion. The data was then sorted and was whittled down to leave only the most significantly relevant and meaningful data in relation to the research questions.

3.3.2.2 Timelines and Mini Case Studies

Online content analysis or online textual analysis refers to a collection of research techniques used to describe and make inferences about online material through systematic coding and interpretation (Mishne and Glance, 2006). Online content analysis is a form of content analysis for analysis of Internet-based communication. The digitization and convergence of media pose

fundamental challenges to the staple method of content analysis (Karlsson and Sjovaag, 2015). In particular, the dynamic nature of online material combined with the large and increasing volume of online material specifically related to WIS in Ireland made it particularly challenging for the researcher (Barbera et al., 2014). However, the rewards of the arduous manual nature of gathering and analysing online data lie in the deep knowledge and understanding that can be achieved when researchers engage with the units of analysis on a one-to-one basis (Karlsson and Sjovaag, 2015). Therefore, while the construction of the timeline and mini case studies was time consuming and onerous, the researcher found the means justified the end when the timeline and mini case studies were finalised and added to the study. The researcher also followed the recommendations of the UK Department of Work and Pensions (2014) which found that all social media data should be benchmarked against other sources of data sources.

3.3.2.3 Policy Document Analysis

The content analysis of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004), the NSP (Sport Ireland, 2018), and the SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019) was carried out by means of document analysis, a systematic, qualitative research method for thematically reviewing documents, similar to how focus or interview transcripts are analysed (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis was chosen as it is a social research method and an important research tool in its own right. It is an invaluable part of most schemes of triangulation, the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. Document analysis can be helpful in contextualizing one's research within its subject or field, and ensure research is critical and comprehensive by pointing to questions that need to be asked or to situations that need to be observed (Bowen, 2009). Documents can also contain data that no longer can be observed, provide details that informants have forgotten, and can track change and development. Other examples of studies utilising document analysis for the analysis of policies relating to sport include those by Bekker and Finch (2016), Bennike and Ottesen (2016), Hammon, Penney and Jeanes (2019), Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), O'Gorman (2011) and Strittmatter et al. (2017).

The 'interview' and 'content analysis' techniques were the two document analysis techniques employed by the researcher in this study. When using the interview technique, the researcher treated the documents like respondents or informants by asking questions, then highlighting the answers within the text (O'Leary, 2014). The researcher complimented this technique with thematic analysis, which can be considered a form of pattern recognition with the document's data (Bowen, 2009). This analysis takes emerging themes and makes them into categories used for further analysis. The emerging codes and themes may also serve to "integrate data gathered by different

methods” (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). A table was created to extract and code the data under thematic headings. Following the review of all documents the extracted data was re-reviewed until no new headings emerged (Caldwell and Mays, 2012). The key questions asked and complete list themes are as follows:

- **Consultation/ development process.** How was the process conducted and who were the main stakeholders involved?
- **Time frame:** Does the report have a specific time frame for the overall report and each of its subsequent objectives? SMART objectives: Do each of the objectives follow the SMART guideline? In other words, are they Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time specified?
- **Reference to other/ previous documents.** Is there a clear link from the last report to the current one and are they following on from previous objectives? Are they following specific guidelines?
- **Targets/ recommendations.** Are the recommendations suited to the objectives and are they consistent throughout the document and in line with previous reports? Do the recommendations aid elite high-performance sport or are they focused on participation?
- **Evaluation.** How will/are policies being implemented, evaluated and monitored?
- **Funding.** Are they backing up their aims with appropriate funding and is the funding distributed in line with the objectives and recommendations?

In relation to the content analysis technique used in this study, where the researcher quantifies the use of particular words, phrases and concepts, the researcher focused on keys words such as ‘high performance’, ‘gender’, ‘quota’, ‘inclusion’, ‘recommendation’, ‘review’, ‘evaluation’, ‘fund’, ‘implement’, ‘action’, ‘elite’, ‘equality’, ‘equity’ among others (O’Leary, 2014). The information was then organized into what was “related to the central questions of the research” (Bowen, 2009, p. 32).

3.4 Results

Section 3.4 begins by presenting the results of the interviews, intertwined with mini case studies of various high performance teams in Ireland. The policy document analysis follows separately. The order in which the results are presented in this chapter was chosen because two out of the three policy documents analysed were not in existence at the time of the interviews. Therefore, the researchers felt this order would best represent the developments, implemented programmes and changes in women in sport in Ireland over time most accurately, allowing the interviews and

mini case studies to provide context for the policy that was introduced in Ireland shortly after the interviews took place. Therefore, this order was deemed the most appropriate method for answering research question one.

3.4.1 Interviews and Mini Case Studies

Appendix E provides a full summary of the key themes that arose during the interviews. A number of these themes will now be examined in greater detail acting as the headings for section 3.4.1, accompanied by mini case studies on specific high performing women's sports teams in Ireland. The mini case studies are intertwined in order to compliment and provide relevance to many of the interview quotes. The themes explored are as follows:

- Issues in WIS in Ireland today
- Evidence of growth of WIS in Ireland
- Areas to address relevant to WIS in Ireland today.

3.4.1.1 Issues in Women in Sport in Ireland

Table 2 shows that three out of five of the stakeholders interviewed felt that Sport Ireland have not done enough for WIS in Ireland and being successful has an impact on how WIS progress. Two out of five found women involved in team sports encounter more barriers than those involved in individual sports and also that WIS are perceived as boring. Interestingly, only one out of five cited lack of policy as an issue.

Table 2. Interview results emerging themes relating to issues in WIS in Ireland as a result of lack of policy.

Emerging Themes	Interviewee				
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Sport Ireland has not done enough	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Success necessary for progress	✓	x	✓	x	✓
Women sports perceived as boring	✓	x	x	x	✓
Team sports suffer most	✓	✓	x	x	x
Lack of policy issue	✓	x	x	x	x

3.4.1.1.1 Lack of Policy and Sport Ireland

Lack of policy, as was seen in section 2.3, is attributed to a number of the issues WIS in Ireland have traditionally faced over the last few decades. When asked to give an opinion on Irish policy relating to WIS, Interviewee #1 reflected 'I don't know what is the policy? I don't think there is a

policy. This conversation is going on 40 years now; we should be doing more'. Sport Ireland in particular were mentioned, 'I do think there has been too much talk happening at different meetings with Sport Ireland'. Furthermore,

'I would be critical of the sports council for a long time. I don't think they have any initiatives around women in sport. They have their women in sport funding programme but basically they say to sporting organisations 'come up with an initiative for women in sport and then we'll see if we'll fund it'. So as far as I'm concerned the height of their innovation is to say "ye come up with the ideas and if they're good enough we'll fund it". And I don't think that's good enough from the Irish sports council.'

(Interviewee #1).

There was also confusion in regard to the role Sport Ireland has played in women's sport in Ireland. Interviewee #5 was unclear as to the origins of the Sport Ireland Women in Sport Initiative (ISC, 2005) and its link to the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004):

'I wouldn't know much about it. I'm sure some of it would have stemmed from that. I'm sure there was some sort of influence there. But it wouldn't be a publicised influence. I'm sure in peoples thinking was, starting up this initiative, I'm sure that was in the back of people's minds.'

(Interviewee #5).

Considering the formation of such a programme was a recommendation from the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004), published just a year before it was launched in 2005, this comment points to the lack of respect/effectiveness related to WIS policies in Ireland. Interviewee #5 also commented on how it has been 13 years (at the time of the interview in 2018) since the Sport Ireland Women in Sport programme was started, 'it is the same programme year after year... it is good and it generates a lot of positive results' but it is necessary to 'refresh it and see if what they were doing is right and if they could do more.' Interviewee #4, was the most complimentary of Sport Ireland 'I think Sport Ireland have done an awful lot of work and don't get the credit they possibly deserve around having a 'Women in Sport' programme that they have just increased funding for from €1,000,000 to €2,000,000'. As previously mentioned, at the time of interview the SIPWIS had not yet been announced.

3.4.1.1.2 Media

According to Interviewee #1, the lack of perceived interest in women's sport in Ireland was related to the lack of coverage top female Irish athletes have received, 'for years the argument was to cover things on the basis of interest, they always said there's very few people interested in women's sport, there's far more interest in men's sports so we'll give it all the stories'. Interviewee

#2 also commented on the lack of coverage 'it is really frustrating. If they don't show you don't know it's on, that's the problem. Because they don't show it because they think people want to see this and that is just because that is what has always been done.'

Women involved in team sports were also identified in particular as traditionally suffering more than women involved in individual sports when portrayed in the media 'the team sports get pushed out, in team sports, that's where you suffer most' (Interviewee #1). Interviewee #2 agrees 'in other sports it is probably more equal, say, in athletics'. Furthermore, the lack of appreciation of women involved in team sports has also been an issue 'you always have some people who will judge women's sport off men's sport. Women's sport can be just as compelling as men's sport you just can't be judging them off the same standards sometimes', (Interviewee #1). Interviewee #2 consolidates this:

'I think Ladies Gaelic Football is better than Men's Gaelic Football now and a lot of people say women's rugby is better than men's rugby because you have to find the gaps, you can't run through people, it is more skilful. Men's is very rigid and they do set plays whereas women try to get the head up and play.'

Interviewee #1 described the case of a WIS podcast for a radio station being produced voluntarily for free as they 'couldn't get a sponsor' and there wouldn't be 'enough interest'. After eighteen months, the station was prepared to pay the presenters due to the success of the podcast. The podcast has also increased frequency due to the demand. 'It's shown there is an interest in it and there's been a vehicle for it' (Interviewee #1).

This example correlates with the views of Anna Geary and Clare Balding that were alluded to in section 3.2.6, in that there is in fact interest in women's sport but there needs to be a platform provided first. Only then can more interest be drummed up. It also disproves the feelings held by Malachy Clerkin mentioned previously (Irish Times, 2014). Champion boxer Katie Taylor's experiences with media coverage are also an interesting example in relation to success being necessary for sufficient and appropriate media coverage for women's sports.

3.4.1.1.3 Case Study: Katie Taylor

Katie Taylor is an elite athlete who has been extraordinarily successful at the top level of her sport and yet still does not receive adequate amounts of coverage and exposure in the media. Over one million viewers in Ireland tuned in to watch Katie Taylor win her Olympic gold medal at the London 2012 Olympics (RTÉ, 2012) yet when she won her fifth successive gold medal at the European boxing championships in 2013 the fight was not broadcast on Irish television. Katie's professional debut versus Karina Kopinska in November 2016 was also not broadcast (Watterson, 2016). Three

and a half years after turning professional, Katie fought Delfine Persoon for the WBC belt to become the undisputed champion in the world. A flawless record of 13 wins (six by knockout) and no defeats had seen Taylor acquire the WBA, IBF and WBO lightweight titles. 'Promised to be one of the great sporting events of the year' (Blake, 2019), the fight was once again not broadcast on Irish television and Irish viewers had to pay a subscription fee of €24.95 to watch it legally.

Hargreaves (1994, 1999) suggested that a female athlete's success is never solely attributed to the athletes themselves; there is always a reference to some male representative, behind the scenes, who aided and assisted the athlete in achieving the success. When Katie won gold in the London 2012 Olympics there was rarely an interview or piece in the media on Taylor without mention of her father Pete Taylor and his efforts in implementing her training regime. Conversely, when Katie lost during the first round of the Rio 2016 Olympics, a number of major Irish news outlets and social media sites such as RTÉ, Newstalk, The Journal.ie, The Irish Independent, The42.ie and Balls.ie made reference to the absence of her father in her training set up when reporting the shock loss (Brennan, 2016; Kelly, 2016; Cooney 2016). The 42.ie (2016) published an article (which was viewed 59,136 times) beginning with the following statements; 'What happened to Katie Taylor? Where do you even start? With Pete, whose absence from his daughter's corner has coincided with the worst run of results of her career?'. Providing limited coverage of women participating in competitive sports can result in an underestimation of the number of female athletes and, depending on the language used through its description, can minimise their achievements (Kian, 2007). Former Irish Sports Writer of the Year, Ewan MacKenna (2014) tried to 'contextualise' Katie Taylor's achievements in terms of an 'overall sub-standard' and 'dire' level of competition within the sport of women's boxing. Irish sports website 'Balls.ie' supported these comments with an article titled; 'Ewan McKenna Makes Some Controversial Katie Taylor Comments, But Is He right?' (Farrelly, 2014). There was no mention of how these achievements by Katie and other female athletes around the country are perhaps all the more remarkable given the lack of dedicated facilities, investment and publicity for female sport in general (Farrelly, 2014).

3.4.1.1.4 Conditions and Funding

While it is important to note that issues in WIS are complex and differ for various sports, teams, divisions etc., poor standards and lack of female representation across the board are consistent themes. Interviewee #2 stated 'the females are playing in the furthest corner of the pitch, the bar is not open for them, the lights aren't on, things like that.' A lack of funding (perhaps are a result of lack of policy) is often behind these subpar conditions and discrepancies. Interviewee #4 referred to a survey carried out by the Federation of Irish Sport, '75% of members said they had

WIS programmes and that they have plans to increase women's participation in their sports in areas such as coaching, refereeing, administrating and playing. However only 26% of that 75% said that they had enough funding to do that.' Interviewee #2 mentioned the struggles for funding faced by Irish girls and women who play rugby, 'the IRFU, Rugby Europe do nothing – they just pretty much don't exist. And then World Rugby which really don't have any interaction (with the female side of the game). You would not really receive funding from them.' The examples of the recent struggles of the Ireland Women's National Rugby Union Team (IWNURUT) (section 3.4.1.1.5 below) and the ROIWNST (Appendix T) afford insight into the complex issue surrounding inadequate funding and the poor standards and conditions endured by WIS in Ireland as a result.

3.4.1.1.5 Case Study: Ireland Women's National Rugby Union Team

The year 2013 was a successful one for Irish women's rugby. The IWNURUT won the RBS Six Nations Championship for the first time, watched by a live television audience in Ireland and in which one home international game was attended by a record 3,100 spectators (Liston 2014). In 2014, they recorded a historic win over world champions New Zealand in the WRWC in Paris. This was the first time since 1991 that New Zealand had lost a game in the WRWC (Irish Independent, 2014). The appointment of Tom Tierney - the first full-time professional coach - was confirmed on a three-year deal following this successful WRWC campaign, the team finishing 4th place overall (Irish Times, 2014). Speaking in 2014, David Nucifora, IRFU High Performance Director said; 'The establishment of three full-time positions signifies the IRFU's commitment to creating a high-performance environment for Irish representative women's rugby' (RTÉ, 2014). The 2014 Six Nations competition was also the first time the IWNURUT played a match in the Aviva, the national rugby stadium. The team went on to win the six nations for a second time in 2015. The IRFU's accounts also showed steady rises in funding for women's rugby with a spend of over €2.1 million announced at an annual council meeting in the Aviva Stadium in July 2017 (Farrell, 2017). A further increase of 25% was budgeted for the 2017/18 accounts, an increase of approximately €500,000 as Ireland's Women competed on the international stage in Sevens and the long form of the game. In addition, the Union moved to offer a compensation package to players involved in the WRWC 2017 in UCD and Belfast (Farrell, 2017; Coughlan, 2017).

Unfortunately, the success enjoyed by the IWNURUT on the international stage was not long lasting and positive impacts of the increased funding is difficult to see considering a number of incidents which happened following the announcement. They suffered a 7th/8th – place play-off defeat to Wales during the 2017 WRWC 2017. Allegations of unhappiness in the camp arose due to the association's perceived prioritisation of the Sevens game and lack of funding for the XV's setup

(RTÉ Sport, 2017; Kinsella, 2017). This meant the trio were unavailable for the Six Nations home tie against France. Retired rugby international Ruth O'Reilly expressed her disappointment in the IRFU 'You assumed that the priority would shift to the XV's structure in that final year before the world cup for us but it didn't' (Cummiskey, 2017). The WRWC review, despite revelations of multiple problems was not made public. Shortly after, the decision by the IRFU in 2017 to return the Irish senior women's coaching role to a part-time/casual basis was widely criticised as a significant step backwards with Ruth O'Reilly stating 'That speaks volumes for the organisation it's not a priority at all it speaks volumes for the lack of strategy within the IRFU when it comes to women's rugby. The lack of strategy speaks to the lack of interest and support for it. That's hugely disappointing' (Cummiskey, 2017). Retired international, Jenny Murphy, tweeted: 'A kick in the teeth for players. So much progress made by other nations and we take 5 steps backwards' (Murphy, 2017). Furthermore, in 2018, the IRFU turned down an offer from Rugby Australia for the IWNRUT to play on the undercard of the Irish men's three-test series in Australia, with the host country offering to pay for accommodation (Cummiskey, 2018; RTÉ, 2018). In an article written by Sinead Kissane (2018), it was reported that a source within the IRFU said that not even the Ireland women's head coach, Adam Griggs, knew about the decision to reject the tour to Australia and only heard about it when the news broke in the media. Interviewee #2 commented 'I'm sure a lot of it came down to costs.' Prime-time TV slots offered by RTÉ for their Six Nations games in 2019 were also reportedly turned down (Kissane, 2018). Defending the nature of IRFU investments in the women's game, David Nucifora made the following comments in 2017:

'What England have done is actually smart. They have invested their money back into the club competition. They're trying to create a club competition that has got substance... I think that's not a bad blueprint to try and follow. If we can get the club game right, then things will flow from that'

(Kissane, 2018).

Women's clubs contacted by The Irish Times await similar investment from the IRFU (Cummiskey, 2017). In the IRFU's 'From Grassroots to International Success' (IRFU, 2013), it stated the values of 'Respect, integrity, inclusivity, fun and excellence' should be reflected 'in every aspect of the game'. This is difficult to see in the women's game currently. The 2018 - 2023 Strategic Plan Performance Targets (Figure 1) may be difficult to achieve following the tumultuous few years endured by IWNRUT (IRFU, 2018).



Figure 1. Performance objectives from IRFU 2018 – 2023 Strategic Plan for Women’s Game.

3.4.1.2 Growth of Women in Sport in Ireland is Evident

Section 3.4.1.2 will focus exclusively on those themes related to the evidence of growth of WIS in Ireland, with Table 3 showing that four out of five interviewees felt that growth of WIS is evident in many different areas. The same proportion of participants also acknowledged that certain sports, such as ladies football, are accelerating past other sports played by women in Ireland. More of these areas of growth are explored below such as policy and media among others.

Table 3. Interview results emerging themes relating to the growth of WIS in Ireland.

Emerging Themes	Interviewees				
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Growth evident in many areas	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
LGFA accelerating past other sports	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Media coverage improving	✓	x	x	x	x
Policy discussions cause for hope	✓	x	x	✓	✓

3.4.1.2.1 Policy

Interviewee #1 was particularly excited about the meetings held prior to the launch of the NWISP and the 20x20 initiative:

‘the Olympic council and the federation of Irish sport they have now got together to start a woman in sport initiative. They’ve gone away they’ve taken suggestions and they are trying to produce something to drive policy on women’s sport which is really

interesting. That's people taking initiative. And looking to create campaigns and policies now instead of people just talking about it for years...'

Interviewee #2 also had a more optimistic outlook on the work by Sport Ireland now and in the future 'the sports council are also looking to get ideas on a new policy for women in sport.'

Interviewee #4 was cheerful about the NSP launched on the 25th July 2018 'it has stated that women in sport is an underrepresented region in Ireland. They have committed to acting on that.'

Interviewee #5 also praised the NSP:

'There are a couple of objectives in women in sport, around, gender quotas and participation. I think there are percentages for women on boards identified in that. So there is about maybe 4 or 5 objectives specific to women in sport so the fact that it is in the policy is good, to see it be on the agenda of government and then by it being in policy it really gives Sport Ireland the power as a state agency to deliver on it. I believe that there will be an increase for funding for women in sport so I think that really signals that it is an important agenda item for them, it is not just an objective plucked from the sky, it is something they actually want to see.'

Interviewee #4 was also hopeful for the future of Irish WIS due to the fact that 'policy change now the way sport works, you have to make your funding application in October, you are told in February what you get your funding for.' As a result of this, Interviewee #4 believes that 'a lot more NGBs are going to be applying for funding for women in sport and the target audience and I think targeted audience will then have a trigger effect.' Depending upon a 'trigger effect' as opposed to specific gender guidelines for NGBs to follow is leaving a lot to chance.

3.4.1.2.2 Media

According to Interviewee #3 'we've seen a lot of changes in the last 12 months that are really are positive even in terms of media and women analysing games and stuff like that... I feel there's a huge growth there'. Interviewee #4 also praises the quality of female punditry 'I think women in sport who are doing the commentary now – they're informed, they are able to show that they are articulate, that they know what they are talking about.' According to Interviewee #1, a possible reason for this is the fact the 'Irish times made an editorial decision... their editor Malachy Logan decided that he would devote one page of the paper on a Thursday to women's sport'... it was a very brave thing to do'. It is now a 'brilliant column' and 'every week Sonia O' Sullivan and Joanne O' Riordan have a column on it... they're very open to you know any kind of women's sport' (Interviewee #1). Once again, as a result of media organisations giving a platform to women's sports, the interest has followed and now there are 'lots of editors who say look you know if the story is good enough it doesn't matter what the gender is'. Interviewee #4 also acknowledged the increased exposure WIS in Ireland are receiving:

‘one thing I’ve noticed in the last while, particularly from a Gaelic games background, is the exposure that the games are getting now. I think Ladies Football have been building for a while around their TG4 TV coverage, they’ve grown from having maybe seven or eight games televised a year to 24/25 games televised. That’s important because OK, people might stay at home and not go to the matches but you are actually exposing the game to a huge audience.’

Interviewee #1 also notes that there was a ‘big shift once the internet and websites (and social media) were created’ and this may account for another reason explaining the growth in media coverage of WIS. ‘there’s an infinite resource on the web you know so a newspaper only has so many pages to give the web has way more room to give room to things’ and ‘it’s (social media) I think telling the stories of players really well and making it so that we know who our top players are’. Referring to NGBs taking the initiative to engage with social media accounts and other means of promoting their female athletes:

‘they are now so much more proactive with what they do in terms of organisation and in terms of how they use social media. Even those little social video clips you know and things like the one Laura Lee Walsh did for the Women’s GPA for example. I think people picked up on that stuff and now sponsors have seen the potential of that and you’ve got big sponsors coming in you know and like Littlewoods and Lidl have undoubtedly put pressure on to get more TV coverage. It definitely drives it you know social media’.

(Interviewee #1).

While the fifth interviewee acknowledged that growth is indeed evident in some instances, they were not convinced as to the consistency of growth across all sports. ‘In relation to women in sport I think it is really varied across the different sports. I think some sports have moved ahead of others. I think Ladies GAA in particular have done excellent.’ Interviewee #4 also recognized the inequities, highlighting the need for the government to do ‘an audit of facilities in the country and see where there is a deficit and what type of facilities’ as ‘obviously Dublin is very well catered for but not so much the regional facilities.’ The IWNHT is a positive example of how things have changed significantly in relation to resources available for a woman’s sport team in Ireland. However, inconsistencies still exist and while certain conditions have improved for players, not all areas are growing at the same rate. For example, the mainstream media coverage they received as a result of their success at the world cup in 2018 far outweighs that of 2019, despite them playing in a number of critical Olympic Qualifier games throughout the year.

3.4.1.2.3 Case Study: Ireland Women’s National Hockey Team

The ISC (2006, p. 207) contended that; ‘sponsorship is something that can be vital to the success or even the existence of an NGB’. In Ireland in 2015, women’s only sport attracted just 1% of the

sponsorship market (Liberty Insurance, 2015). The case of sponsorship issues experienced by the IWNHT over the last number of years offers interesting insight into the realities of what it has been like for elite women's teams to accrue funding and corporate investment. Nine months out from a first WHWC appearance in 16 years, Hockey Ireland was still searching for a main sponsor to help fund its high performance programme for the women's national team (Hockey Ireland, 2017). Members of the international squad were required to pay an annual levy of €550 to underwrite the programme (Bailey, 2017). The governing body said, it had been 'quite creative' in its approach and opportunities such as individual match sponsorship and series naming rights had been explored (Bailey, 2017). It was just eight weeks before the tournament began in 2018, that Irish software company and leading global finance automation software provider, SoftCo, confirmed their sponsorship of the team.

After enjoying huge success at the tournament in London, becoming the first ever Irish team to reach a world cup final in any sport, for SoftCo and its founder Susan Spence, a former hockey player herself, it will go down as one of the sponsorship deals of the decade, giving it massive brand exposure to both an Irish and global audience. For Irish Hockey, meanwhile, it provided a much-needed financial injection coming up to a major tournament (McGee, 2018). SoftCo announced the extension of its main sponsorship agreement for the IWNHT up until at least 2021. The partnership with Hockey Ireland will incorporate the 2019 European Championships and the team's qualification campaign to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (Galway Bay FM, 2018) On the back of winning the 2018 WHWC silver medal, Hockey Ireland was allocated €500,000 in high-performance funding from Sport Ireland, in addition to the €1,055,000 core funding the organisation received for 2019. Of that figure, €100,000 was for direct player support (Bailey, 2019). In May 2019, a new four-year sponsorship deal with Park Developments was announced by Hockey Ireland. The investment from Park Developments will support Hockey Ireland in addition to the funding received from Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland and primary shirt sponsor SoftCo (Hockey Ireland, 2019). Park Developments will supply bursaries, which means 23 of the senior women's squad will receive financial support for the Tokyo Olympics qualification process and campaign. This move closer to full-time status is a seismic step forward for the high-performance programme as they bid to qualify for the 2020 Games (Findlater, 2019). Following the success of the world cup, there has been significant debate about how women's sports is funded in Ireland and the constant financial challenges faced by individual female athletes and the sporting organisations they represent (McGee, 2018).

This example also reinforces the previous theme in section 3.4.1.1.2 that once again, improvements in conditions experienced by women in sports is dependent upon success and

interest first and foremost. Interviewee #1 strengthens this argument, 'you strike while the iron's hot' and 'I think it's really important that the quality of play is strong enough to sustain an audience'. WIS will always be open and vulnerable to maltreatment if this is not the case 'the detractors will always have that argument unless you're producing something really high quality'. Interviewee #2 further supports this point when describing below par standards experienced by Irish women's sports teams in the past, stating 'Hockey are still like that!', when referring to the fact that they had no money and players had to fundraise themselves. This is interesting considering the interview took place prior to the success of the 2018 WHWC.

3.4.1.2.4 Other Areas of Growth

The perceived role of athletes surrounding WIS in Ireland have also been cited as positive changes. Interviewee #4 commented on how:

'the athletes themselves have changed. I think they realise that they have an important role to play. Like the majority of females that I know who have achieved are very humble people who don't really like the limelight because they don't want people thinking 'oh who's your wan, who does she think she is there on the radio? But I think that is changing because I think they are realising that they are playing an important role in maybe inspiring the next young girl to take up the game.'

Interviewee #5 spoke about the increased appreciation of women's sport in Ireland 'other changes I've seen is people's perception of women in sport'. Using the example of Katie Taylor, interviewee #5 continued:

'I think Katie Taylor was endeared to the nation and when she was winning her Olympics in London you had male ex boxers commentating on her performance and praising her technically. So I think people stood up and listened. It wasn't just this plaudits for the sake of plaudits, you know they were criticising and I just think you know because it was a man that was critiquing her I think it gave her a bit of status and I think that has gone on now'.

This comment also raises the question as to what part males have to play in raising the standards for WIS in Ireland going forward. Referring to the Sport Ireland Women in Sport Programme, Interviewee #5 feels there has been progress made in specific areas. The interviewee however does not clarify whether this is as a result of the programme or other contributing factors:

'it was really just around raising participation. Now 13 years on we can see that there's been more than just participation for women in sport it is about the leadership and governance having women on boards it is the high performance piece having women involved in elite sport and also volunteering as well for women so now women in sport is viewed as a much broader picture than just participation and being active.'

(Interviewee #5).

None of the recent positive changes in WIS in Ireland discussed in this section has been a direct result of policy as the new policies only came later. If so much can be achieved with little policy in place, the possibilities could be endless if the correct policies addressing the needs of WIS in Ireland were established.

3.4.1.3 Areas to Address in Women in Sport in Ireland

Section 3.4.1.3 examines a variety of different areas that the interviewees feel need to be addressed if the growth of WIS in Ireland is to continue. Table 4 shows how all five interviewees felt there needs to be more women in leadership positions in sport. Gender quotas were identified as strategies to achieving this. Creative initiatives, better marketing and societal targets were also highlighted as actions NGB's could take to improve the experiences of women involved in their relevant sports. A number of other suggestions are investigated throughout section 3.4.1.3 such as the role of players and the role of social media to name but a few.

Table 4. Interview results emerging themes relating to the next steps necessary for WIS in Ireland to develop further.

Emerging Themes	Interviewees				
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Women in leadership positions and gender quotas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Creative initiatives, better marketing, societal targets	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
Power of free copy	✓	x	x	x	x
Preparation of women for realities of equality e.g. more pressure	✓	x	x	x	✓
Conversion of 'followers' to 'supporters'	✓	x	✓	x	✓
More female coaches, referees, administrators	x	x	✓	✓	✓
Education of players to realise importance of their role in fight for equality	x	✓	✓	x	✓
Young players taking the struggle for granted	x	✓	✓	x	✓
Social media echo chamber	✓	x	x	x	x

3.4.1.3.1 The Need for More Policy Relating to Funding and Gender Quotas

According to Interviewee #2 'In terms of policy, there are not enough females out there. You are just trying to get more females involved through every walk of life really and I think that would have a knock-on effect.' When asked if we need new policy for WIS and what type would be necessary and most beneficial to affect positive policy change, interviewee #2 continued 'gender quotas is one of them... at the highest level, more females. I am all for quotas. I don't care if they say 30%, I mean it has been proven, not necessarily in sport but in business, and all the sports organisations now are run like businesses'. Interviewee #1 is also of the view that only good can

come with more women in positions of power. 'Olympic council noticeably has a female president and a female vice president. That's been a change I believe.' Interviewee #4 disagrees to some extent 'my personal opinion is that I believe in gender diversity, I don't believe in gender quotas for the sake of gender quotas'.

When referring to the NSP, Interviewee #5 stated 'We certainly welcome the policy and we welcome any sort of policy specific to women in sport but what we welcome even better is the funding'. Sport Ireland are identified as needing to play a part in this much needed shift in culture 'I think Sport Ireland need to come in on that, they need to go and find the women who are doing all the work in the clubs and provide a pathway for them to come through, and I think that could make a huge change' (Interviewee #3). Furthermore, Interviewee #2 states 'we just need the amount of funding to sports to change in general. We get €110,000 from the government. It is just absorbed. The €110,000 only covers some staff wages really.' Sport Ireland can also 'come in on funding'. Interviewee #1 details the areas that Sport Ireland could make changes:

'I think they should be in schools, there should be promotional material there, there should be all sorts of initiatives to keep girls in sport because we know we don't even have to go into the statistics of the dropout rates. I think they should be more innovative they should be doing something with the department of health. We've seen the power of 'This Girl Can' in England. Which is a social initiative. It's not an elite sport initiative at all. So why can't the Department of health come up with something creative? Particularly if they worked with the sports council?'

Interviewee #4 is also particularly passionate about the need for 'cross collaboration at government level in terms of the departments (health, children, youth affairs and support). Cross collaboration between health education and sport because they are all interacting with each other and all have a role to play in each other's programmes.' Interviewee #2 is hopeful that change is on the horizon:

'we are already making change...we are going to try and look to hit 20%. Which will be a huge change for us. It is currently 2% in the whole of the organisation. Like the main decision-making committee is 2% of females'.

Interviewee #2 is also optimistic given the action recently taken by Sport Ireland also

'I think Sport Ireland are doing a review at the minute. They have brought in consultants to review the whole game and they will make recommendations to Sport Ireland, Women in Sport Grants and funding and all that. There are some organisations out there that any money they get from government, they split it 50/50, male and female. And then after that, if the men make more money in sponsorship and tickets, that's fine, but at least it shows that any money you get from government, that you are willing to split it 50/50.'

3.4.1.3.2 Role of NGBs

However, it is not only policy and the policy makers that need to be pro-active for WIS in Ireland. Interviewee #1 feels very strongly that the responsibility also lies with NGBs stating there is 'huge potential there for women to get much more publicity for their sport' and they need to 'do it themselves first of all through websites' and 'proactive campaigns'. Interviewee #4 also identifies with sentiment that 'ultimately it is up to the NGBs themselves to have that desire and that strategic aim to bring women and more women into their sports'. Interviewee #2 agrees that they can 'design programmes that are attractive to sponsors'.

According to the Irish Sport Social Media Report 2019 (Sport for Business, 2019), in the month of February 2019, the Camogie Association had zero Instagram posts in comparison with 54 made by the LGFA. The LGFA had 39 more Facebook posts and 483 more Twitter posts than the Camogie Association during the same period. These figures may explain in some part the widening gap between the two organisations in areas such as attendance and funding mentioned in section 3.2.6. They may also help to explain the success of the LGFA as a whole, which will be discussed further in section 3.4.1.3.5. Considering the LGFA received an average of 519 engagements per Instagram post in February 2019 alone (Sport for Business, 2019), the figures suggest social media is an area NGBs can utilise as an effective marketing tool (Smith, 2019). However, section 3.4.1.3.4 will detail how caution must be taken in relation to NGBs relying solely on social media to affect change for their organisation and WIS in general.

Interviewee #2 is critical of NGBs who are not enterprising 'we don't help ourselves, say when the hockey girls got their sponsor (Soft Co) they did not do a press release. They didn't invite the press in to do a launch with it or anything like that. This must be challenged.' When a different NGB were hosting a tournament, Interviewee #2 remembers how organisers 'were like we will just tell them that it is on.' This approach is not good enough in the opinion of Interviewee #2. 'It's like 'no, we will bring everyone in and we will make a massive deal. If this was the men's tournament and we had just won the bid, how would we treat it?' The organisation instead held a launch in Belfast and in the opinion of Interviewee #2 'tried to do everything' to replicate the format of the build up to a men's tournament of similar significance:

'I think that is what other governing bodies need to do. You need to tell people that it is on. The women's cricket team are playing Bangladesh on Sunday. Unless you know somebody that is playing cricket, you would not have known that it was on. I even know a lot of people who are playing cricket and I only found out about it a couple of day before. We have to get those fixtures out there. You need a whole calendar of events.'

According to the PwC Sports Survey 2019 (Sport for Business, 2018), Ireland has been ahead of the curve in recognising the impact that smart commercial backing of Women's sport can have as women represent 70-80% of the consumer market through a combination of their buying power and influence. These findings would suggest that there is huge untapped potential in the female audience of women's sport. NGB's catering to female sports must take responsibility to figure out how best to navigate this new information to their organisation's advantage. Headings like 'Left on the Bench – The Marketing of Women in Sport in Ireland' (Maguire, 2019), must become less frequent.

3.4.1.3.3 Role of Players

Interviewee #2 is also adamant that players need to play a role in changing things for the better:

'Social media is the one that everyone now uses. Some of the players have like 5,000 or more followers. So if they re-tweet or keep promoting it themselves at this stage could be very helpful. And even using players as role models as well. We don't do enough of that. With younger players coming through as well they don't seem to realise the importance that they still have towards promoting matches and stuff like that and encouraging people to play, things are being handed to them on a plate.'

Interviewee #4 also endorses the need for harnessing the skills and value players contribute to the development of their sport:

'if you are looking at the county scene and even internationally how many female managers do we have? Or female coaches? We need to look at the number of referees who are female. We need to look at the number of administrators who are at a high level who are female. Therefore, I think we need to look at the pathways for people when they are coming OUT of their sport, when they are transitioning out of either elite sport or competitive sport. Like there is an opportunity for them to stay involved in their sport maybe do an assimilated coaching course or to go back as an ambassador for their sport within their own area.'

3.4.1.3.4 Social Media Echo Chamber

Interviewee #1 recognises the strides WIS has made due to the surge in social media over the last number of years, however the interviewee stresses the importance of not relying solely on this mechanism for the promotion of women's sport:

'there is a danger in social media because we all operate in our own vacuum now so how do you reach people who aren't already interested in your sport? General media does that so in other words if you pick up a newspaper or you flick onto a TV channel you see things that you're not interested in. Your interest goes to things that you wouldn't normally see, and you become interested in it. But social media we're all operating in our own echo chamber. So, you're basically looking at and listening to people who are interested in the exact same things as you are.'

Social media is 'brilliant' but it 'can't do it alone.' There has to be 'a strategy that reaches somewhere outside of that.' Perhaps policy could play a role here too as there is only so much an NGB can do on its own with limited resources. Interviewee #1 feels converting followers into supporters is paramount 'its fine trying to get 20000, 30000, 40000 to an All-Ireland final but why aren't we getting more people to league matches, why aren't we getting more people to championship matches?' Interviewee #3 concurs, 'I think we need to start converting the followers into supporters. For them to come down to Páirc Uí Rinn on a Sunday to watch a National League game and not just Croke Park'. Once again, avoiding the social media echo chamber is key for achieving this according to Interviewee #1 'That's where you're not reaching outside of that small bubble or market I think.'

As stated earlier in section 3.2.5, 20x20 is an all-inclusive movement to shift Ireland's cultural perception of women's sport by 2020 with a 20% increase in media coverage of WIS, a 20% increase in female participation at all levels of sport and a 20% increase in attendance at women's games and events. The 20x20 concept was originated and developed by Along Came a Spider, a Dublin based creative agency passionate about creating ideas with purpose (20x20.ie, 2018). The initiative is partnered with The Federation of Irish Sport and has eight supporting bodies such as Healthy Ireland and NI Sports Forum. Other official partners of 20x20 comprise of RTÉ Sport, Off the Ball.com, SportsJoe.ie, Her.ie, TG4 and Nielsen. It also has the backing and endorsement of 44 NGB's and 16 LSP's. The campaign is sponsored by five businesses including AIG, Investec, KPMG, LIDL and 3. While the movement is undoubtedly a positive step forward for increasing the visibility of WIS in Ireland, the details of the funding behind the project are unavailable and thus far it appears to be largely social media based. Which, given the comments from the interviewees would mean that longevity for the work that they are doing could be problematic if not supported with other mediums.

3.4.1.3.5 Case Study: Increased Investment and Rewards - LGFA and Lidl

Increasing attendances at women's sporting events are also mentioned by interviewee #1 as pathways to enticing more sponsors to get on board. They have a knock-on effect on each other:

'To see over 46k audience really made sponsors and media sit up and take notice. It is no coincidence either that there were record crowds and live TV for our women's world cup soccer qualifiers this year too. Both, I believe, were achieved by very strong media campaigns driven by sponsors (Eir and Aviva).'

The example of the LGFA and Lidl perhaps best explain the directly proportional relationship between increased investment in women's sport and increased rewards that benefit a number of related parties.

In 2016, Lidl became the official retail partner to the LGFA, the title sponsor of the LGFA, the Post Primary Schools competition and the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme. The #SeriousSupport campaign saw the retailer invest over €1.5 million in ladies' Gaelic football in year one. Specific behavioural objectives were to increase interest in participation in the LGFA, encourage young girls to take up the sport and to increase match attendance year on year. Prior to the Lidl sponsorship campaign, attendance at the LGFA finals remained under 30,000. (ADFX Databank, 2018; Chemistry, 2018). In year one of the sponsorship, the championship broke records achieving 34,445 while in year two the deeper effects of the sponsorship really showed with attendance at a record smashing 46,286. These attendances made the LGFA Championship Final the most attended female sporting event in Europe for two years running. In year three the crowd of 50,141 smashed the LGFA records yet again, falling short of the European record for 2018 which reached an enormous 60,739 for a Spanish women's football league clash between Atlético Madrid and Barcelona. LGFA match results are now reported by the national broadcaster, which was never done before (Chemistry, 2018). While the positives for the LGFA are detailed above, the benefits reaped by Lidl must also be taken into account. Lidl Ireland topped the board at the European Sponsorship Association Awards show in London in 2016, winning all three categories in which the German discounter was shortlisted, plus scooping the coveted overall top prize for sponsorship of the year. Lidl was nominated for best overall sponsorship, best sponsorship under €750,000 and best newcomer to sponsorship for its LGFA #SeriousSupport sponsorship campaign. Lidl became the most recalled sports sponsor in Ireland. Just nine months into the sponsorship, Lidl outperformed all other sports sponsors achieving the highest recall for any sports sponsorship in Ireland (Coyne Research, 2019). Lidl's LGFA sponsorship saw it become the brand most associated with any Gaelic sports event by a significant amount. Despite rival SuperValu holding a GAA sponsorship for over eight years, Lidl surpassed them within eight months (Coyne Research, 2019). Outside of Gaelic games, Lidl achieved more than double recall for its sponsorship of LGFA versus the next highest sponsor, Heineken, which has a long and very well established association with rugby (Chemistry, 2018).

The campaign content had a reach of over €8.5 million through social media:

- 116 publications globally reported on the negative issues raised
- Trended in Ireland within 1 hour of launch almost consistently for the 2-day duration of the Ladyball' activity
- Despite being active for just 2 days, 1 in 4 were able to recall the Ladyball activity nationally (Spark Tracker, May 2016)

The brand became much more meaningful to shoppers and is cited as a key reason for selecting Lidl over competitors (MCCP and Coyne cited in Chemistry, 2018). The shopper base is predominantly female and Lidl is now seen as the only brand promoting equality in sport (Spark tracker). The sponsorship campaign also helped Lidl's reputation to soar, becoming Ireland's most reputable supermarket in 2016 (Reprack cited in Chemistry, 2018). In 2016, a quantitative survey conducted by Coyne showed that more people claimed to shop in Lidl monthly in 2016 versus 2015. In 2017, a large piece of quantitative research was undertaken to understand different drivers for shopping with Lidl, with local support (which was driven by the LGFA sponsorship) being cited as one of the key drivers for those who main shop in Lidl. (MCCP cited in Chemistry, 2018).

3.4.1.3.6 Research and Cross Collaboration

Interviewee #4 felt that more research is critical to further the progress of WIS in Ireland. When referring to a survey carried out by the FIS, interviewee #4 referenced one question in particular relating to the type of research that should be prioritised for sports development in general 'when asked if it would be relevant to conduct research, the number one thing that came back was women in sports.' Interviewee #4 continued:

'a lot of people are doing individual research, individual programmes around women in sport so there is no unified approach. Definitely I feel that a lot of the women in sport research that we have is international best practice and I do not think that it is as relevant if the population that it is based on is massive. 'This Girl Can' was a massive campaign in England, they had £10 million behind that budget. It's the right time for research. What you want to try and do with that research is to bring it to the policy makers and the funders and say hey, this is where we are at, it needs to be in-depth enough as well.'

It is obvious from this comment that a cross-collaborative approach is necessary and warranted involving a number of different stakeholders, driven by policy. Interviewee #5 consolidates this 'there is a lot of stuff happening with regard to women in sport and sometimes maybe it is a little disjointed and it doesn't possibly have the strength it would have if it was more of a co-ordinated communication piece.' Interviewee #5 gives an example of a possible benefit of carrying out collaborative research aimed at increasing the numbers of women in coaching and leadership positions in sport:

'women in coaching is a huge area that needs to be addressed and tackled a bit more. We don't have a lot of female coaches not in high performance or not even at age group level or grassroots level. So there needs to be some work done in relation to that and we are trying to uncover why that is and some of the research is interesting because focus groups were done around the country one of the points that was made by a woman was that she was very interested in coaching and really wanted to do it but she

couldn't give up two consecutive weekends out of her time because she had a family so we need to look at how coaching courses are being delivered and are they friendly to the working mother or someone who is trying to juggle multiple things'.

3.4.2 Policy Document Reviews

As explained in section 3.3.2.3, the content analysis of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004), the NSP (Sport Ireland, 2018), and the SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019) will now be explored under the key headings of:

- Consultation and development process
- Timeframe
- SMART objectives
- Evaluation and funding

3.4.2.1 Consultation and Development process

The WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) used the 1998 Taskforce report as its baseline along with existing research data from the 1996, 1999 and 2001 surveys on participation by females in sport, recreation and physical activities. This report also summarises written submissions as well as oral presentations to sessions of the Joint Committee, held before and after Christmas 2003. It highlighted barriers to females' involvement in sport as well as including recommendations for further action, particularly in relation to how females can participate more fully in all aspects of sporting activity in Ireland. The 2004 report recognises that very few of the recommendations of the 1998 report were met (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 11). Therefore, while there is a clear link between the 1998 report and the 2004 report, it can't be said that they were 'following on' from previous objectives as there appeared to be no progress made in too many of the areas highlighted.

In relation to the NSP, according to Minister Shane Ross, the policy was compiled 'following an extensive consultation process' (DTTAS, 2018, p. 4). Furthermore, Ross stated:

'the Government and its agencies cannot deliver the aims of this policy in isolation. Central to the achievement of the planned transformation will be our National Governing Bodies of Sport, our Local Sports Partnerships and the various representative sporting organisations, specifically the Federation of Irish Sport, the Olympic Council of Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, Ireland Active and the CARA Centre amongst others.'

(DTTAS, 2018, p. 4).

However, despite these comments, the exact details of the consultation process are not apparent in the policy and therefore it is difficult to judge whether the aforementioned stakeholders of the policy had an opportunity to contribute.

The SIPWIS was delivered by consultants Lisa Clancy and Sarah O’Shea. According to Sport Ireland:

‘the project stimulated high levels of engagement - 150 people participated in focus groups in Dublin, Limerick, and Sligo, 2,923 people responded to an online survey, 27 LSPs and 46 NGBs completed a gender leadership survey, over 30 stakeholder engagements were conducted’

(Sport Ireland, 2019, p. 9).

It would appear that Sport Ireland engaged in a more thorough research and consultation process when designing the SIPWIS than the attempt made by the Government for the NSP.

However, despite this, the policy acknowledges that ‘there are varying levels of information available which serve as a benchmark to each of the four target areas’. None of the four target areas are directly informed by the research gathered by Sport Ireland mentioned above. The ISM Report 2015-2017, the unpublished CSPPA Report 2018, ‘Sport Ireland research’, and ‘Sport Ireland research 2015’ are instead listed as the sources of information behind the target areas. The fact that some of these sources of research don’t have titles is a cause for concern for their validity. Therefore, it could be surmised that the key objectives and actions put forward by the report may lack up to date and valid research underpinning them. Furthermore, there is no mention of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) report, the last published report relating to WIS only.

3.4.2.2 Time Frame

The WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) contained no specific timeframe. The NSP includes a broad time frame of ten years with a ‘vision’ for Irish Sport in 2027. A list of draft actions for the period to end in 2022 is also available but it is stressed that these are for discussion and consultation purposes only (DTTAS, 2019 p. 1). The SIPWIS does not contain a specific timeframe however it is said to be ‘aligned with the Government’s NSP 2018 - 2027’ (Sport Ireland, 2019, p. 5). The objectives are also quoted as being ‘reflective of the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020’ (Sport Ireland, 2019, p. 10). Neither of these references provides sufficient insight as to when the objectives of the policy will be met.

The following is an example of why the lack of a timeline is worrying for WIS in Ireland. A recommendation from the WISR stated that the ISC were to ‘appoint a full-time Women’s Development Officer with specific responsibility for the implementation of the Brighton Principles (IWG, 1994) across the structures of legislative and voluntary sports organisations’ (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 13). The ISC established the €750, 000 Women in Sport Initiative in 2005. The initiative was aimed at promoting increased participation of women of all ages in sport (ISC, 2005). While,

the gender gap in sports participation in Ireland has decreased by more than 10% since 2007, the initiative failed to address many other issues in the world of WIS in Ireland. Furthermore, the 'dedicated women in sport website' (ISC, 2005) is a Facebook page that has not had any new posts since 2015. May 2019 was the first time that a full time, permanent 'Women in Sport Lead' was appointed. The full-time Women in Sport Lead appointed; Nora Stapleton, will be tasked with leading the development and promotion of women and girl's involvement in sport from leadership to participation to high performance. She will also lead, advocate for, and evaluate the new Women in Sport Policy (Sport Ireland 2019). She will be supported by the Women in Sport Steering Committee also founded in 2019, 15 years after the Oireachtas recommendation. The complete list of members of the Sport Ireland Women in Sport Steering Committee may be found in Appendix F. While it can be concluded that Sport Ireland has appointed a full-time Women in Sport Lead meeting one of the objectives of the 2004 report objectives, it must be noted that the designation came fifteen years after the initial recommendation was made and there is no specific mention of the implementation of the Brighton Principles (IWG, 1994) in the aims of the role. The fact that this recommendation is one of the only recommendations from the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) fulfilled to date, is an even greater cause for concern. Some of these other failed recommendations will be assessed in greater detail in section 3.4.2.4.1, however it would not be remiss to predict the same outcome for the SIPWIS policy due to the lack of a timeline.

3.4.2.3 SMART Objectives

In the foreword of the NSP Minister Shane Ross states that 'given that girls are more likely to give up sport during the adolescent years and that those who play a combination of individual and team sports are more likely to sustain their involvement beyond the school years, this provides a compelling argument for increasing our investment in sport and physical activity programmes' (DTTAS, 2018, p. 4). It is unclear as to why the 'compelling argument' does not include increasing investment in specific female targeted sport and physical activity programmes in light of the former part of the statement by Minister Ross. The statement itself is therefore deemed contradictory in nature. Action 15 (DTTAS, 2018, p. 39) also states that Sport Ireland will 'by mid-2019, advise the Sports Leadership Group around appropriate interim targets (2023) for adult and children's active and social participation in sport'. Again, there is no mention of girls in particular, despite the focus Ross places on them in the foreword. Furthermore, the policy later acknowledges that 'Stemming the withdrawal of young girls, from structured participation in clubs during their teenage years is particularly challenging' and 'recognising that issues around body image and self-confidence can influence behaviour in these formative years, we will consider interventions to mitigate this challenge such as improved changing facilities', (DTTAS, 2018 p. 31). However,

there is no specific action assigned to the issue. In fact, the majority of actions relating to WIS and improving gender gradients, are merely mentioned within actions targeting numerous other minority groups and not specifically women. For example, Action 6 (DTTAS, 2018, p.32) states:

‘Sport Ireland will develop initiatives with the NGBs, LSPs, schools, third level institutions, the CARA Centre and other relevant parties to address participation in sport among adolescents and young adults, particularly females, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, persons with a disability, the LGBTI+ community, the Traveller community and other ethnic minorities.’

Not only are there no ‘specific’ initiatives mentioned, the researcher also believes that this action would not be ‘realistic’ or ‘achievable’ as there are too many gradients being focused on and there is a significant hazard that the case for the female minority would be lost among and diluted by the others. Similar issues arise when analysing Action 27 (DTTAS, 2018, p. 67):

‘the coaching sector should be inclusive and reflect the populations diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religious beliefs and economic circumstances. Sport Ireland will bring forward a volunteering strategy to consider issues around recruitment, retention and recognition, the gradients that exist in volunteering, and how to address the challenges to sustain and grow our volunteer base.’

There are too many minorities with too little specificity mentioned. Once again it is unclear as to why this is the case when WIS is highlighted specifically in the foreword as an important area of improvement. No other minority group is mentioned, yet they receive equal consideration with women throughout the policy. This observation, coupled with the fact that only 21.7% of the recommendations of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) report were met to some degree, it is difficult to believe that recommendations related to WIS in the NSP and the SIPWIS will be fulfilled and therefore do not meet the ‘achievable’ and ‘realistic’ SMART guidelines. Although many of the recommendations made in the 2004 report were not participation focused, that seems to be all that has improved tangibly and significantly for WIS in Ireland, as can be seen in section 3.2. A more thorough evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations from the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) will be investigated in section 3.4.2.4.1 however the researcher will now provide more examples of objectives from the new policies that are questionable as to whether they meet all of the SMART guidelines and the contradictions they present.

Consideration was given to the introduction of mandatory gender quotas linked to funding in the NSP. ‘It is also important to consider the issue of women in leadership positions including as NGB Board members and CEOs. An international comparison reveals that Ireland occupies a mid-table position with less than one in four of all NGBs having at least 30% female members on their

Boards. The situation in respect of CEOs shows about one in seven NGBs having female CEOs' (DTTAS, 2018, p. 70).

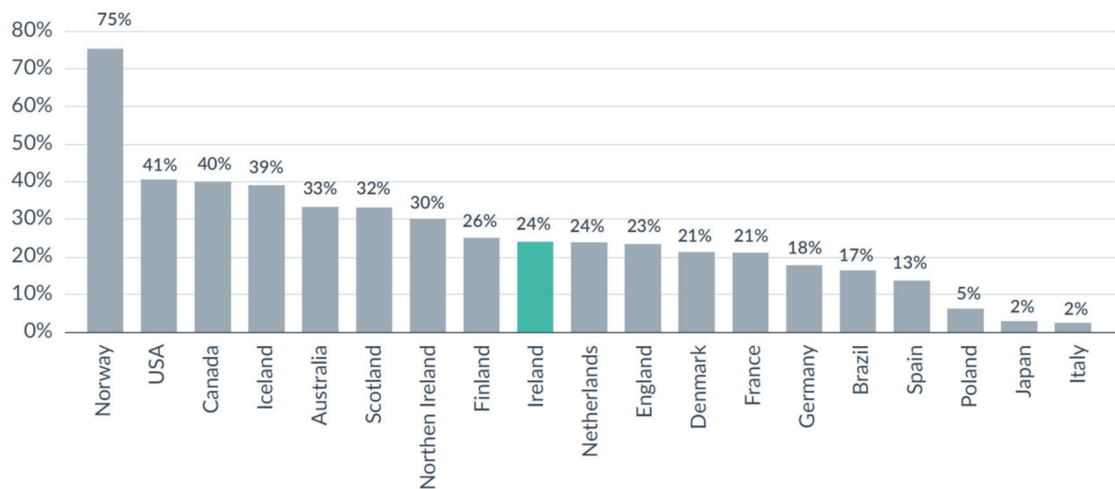


Figure 2. Percentage of NGBs having at least 30% female members on their boards.

However, despite this, many of the NGBs stated that such a move could potentially undermine their effective functioning (DTTAS, 2018, p. 70). Therefore, while Action 32 aims to tackle gender gradient in leadership roles; 'NGBs will be asked to set gender diversity targets and develop equality action plans', there is no specific targets mentioned and no specific timeframe (DTTAS, 2018, p.71). Without these, the action is not 'measurable' and perhaps not 'achievable' or 'realistic'. 'Progress towards greater gender balance in board membership of funded sports bodies' (DTTAS, 2018 p. 20) has also been cited as a key performance indicator with a 30% minimum on each board by 2027. However, the reluctance of the policy to make this an 'action' gives cause for some concern about the commitment of the policy makers to achieving this goal.





TARGET AREA	INDICATORS	BASELINE FIGURE	SOURCE OF INFORMATION/YEAR
 Coaching and Officiating	Ratio of Male to Female Coaches in Sport	2.5:1	ISM 2015 – 2017
	Ratio of Male to Female Referees	2.3:1	ISM 2015 – 2017
 Active Participation	Gender Gap in adult participation in sport	4.5%	ISM 2017
	Reported levels of non-participation in club sport by age group among girls and young women	42% among 14–15 year olds	CSPPA 2018 (currently unpublished)
		63% among 16–17 year olds	
	65% among 18–20 year olds		
% of adult sports club members who are female	42%	ISM 2015 – 2017	
 Leadership & Governance	Proportion of paid CEOs who are female	24%	NGB data
	Proportion of female Chairs of NGB Boards/ Decision Making Authorities	23%	Sport Ireland research
	Proportion of female Board members in National Governing Bodies	23%	NGB data
 Visibility	Proportion of sports print media articles devoted to women's sport	3%	Sport Ireland research 2015 (to be reviewed in 2019)

Figure 3. Summary of Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport target areas for change.

The recommendations of NSP and SIPWIS do not appear to be in line with the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) in any way as there is no mention of the Oireachtas report anywhere in either of the documents. In fact, the new policy seems to repeat many of the recommendations of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) report, without acknowledging that said recommendations have not been implemented 14 years later. For example, recommendation 23 from the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) states the 'ISC should encourage the Centre for Research into Sport and Physical Activity to co-ordinate with established academic centres such as the Centre for Sports Studies at University College Dublin, the Centre for Sport Science and Health, existing sport researchers at Third Level universities as well as all those with experience in this area. While the CRSPA is undertaking a national survey, these findings will not be published in the near future. In this regard, there is an existing body of knowledge (as outlined previously) from which to establish a strong foundation for any research-informed and future policies.' (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 14). Similarly, Action 35 from the NSP (DTTAS, 2018, p. 73) states 'Sport Ireland will develop a research strategy for sport engaging with all key organisations operating within the sector. The strategy should help to create more formal and structured relationships between the practice, policy system and research communities to ensure that the limited resources available in all domains are prioritised towards developing a better understanding of the key policy questions around sport, thereby developing better solutions to the challenges we seek to address.'

According to the SIPWIS, 'there are a number of actions that Sport Ireland will take' to 'address the target areas and achieve the identified objectives' (Sport Ireland, 2019 p. 13). The first action identified 'to appoint a woman in sport lead' is identical to the second recommendation from the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) to 'appoint a Women's Development Officer' (Oireachtas, 2004, p.13). Once again there is no formal acknowledgement of the 2004 report. Furthermore, out of the eleven actions outlined in SIPWIS to achieve the objectives of the four target areas, none of them are time specific. There are also no details as to how each action will be measured and many are vague in nature. For example, one such action is to 'require female athletes in receipt of funding to 'give back' as 'ambassadors for sport', there is no mention of exactly what type of funding would qualify female athletes to do this or in what way they must 'give back' (Sport Ireland, 2019, p. 15). The majority of the actions relate to investment in different areas related to WIS, however the amount/type/source of the investment is not synopsised anywhere in the report. It is for this reason that the researcher deems that none of the actions laid out by the SIPWIS meet the SMART guidelines:

'Our overall policy aim is that facilities, especially those which have been developed using public funds, are fully accessible and available to the broadest range of users. We will continually review how best to ensure that this is the case. We will encourage and facilitate collaborative approaches between Local Authorities, NGBs, LSPs, Ireland Active'

(DTTAS, 2018, p. 47)

It is difficult for the researcher to envisage this statement being fulfilled as a result of the past and current access elite female athletes in Ireland have to the publicly funded facilities mentioned above. According to the NSP over the past 20 years, Ireland's sports facilities at local, regional and national level have been 'substantially improved' with the help of Government support under the Sports Capital, Local Authority Swimming Pool Programmes, and through investment in the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus, Croke Park, Aviva Stadium, Thomond Park, Páirc Uí Chaoimh and other sporting arenas. 'This investment is helping to ensure quality sporting experiences for all adults and children regularly participating in sport, as well as assisting Ireland's top sports persons to compete successfully at the highest levels.' (DTTAS, 2018, p. 41). This may be viewed as a contradictory comment by female athletes in light of the following examples. The Irish Senior International Women's soccer have never played in the Aviva Stadium. In 2017, Dublin and Mayo ladies football teams faced off in the first-ever ladies football league game staged at GAA headquarters, Croke Park, as a curtain raiser to men's senior league game between Dublin and Roscommon. The Cork Senior Ladies Football team, 11 time All-Ireland Champions in 13 years, have never played in Páirc Uí Chaoimh. The most successful GAA players ever, Rena Buckley and

Brieger Corkery, both members of Corks 11-time All-Ireland winning team and holders of 18 All-Ireland medals each, have never played football there (Kissane, 2018). In 2018, hopes were spiked when there were discussions held over the possibility of a triple - header at Páirc Uí Chaoimh for the Munster football finals with the women, minor and men's teams (Kissane, 2018). It was decided a triple-header couldn't take place because there are only four dressing-rooms at Páirc Uí Chaoimh. It was then thought that Páirc Uí Rinn, Cork's second biggest stadium, would host the Ladies Football final. However, it was decided that Páirc Uí Rinn would be used by staff and umpires working at the men's Munster senior and minor finals, as well as underage players participating in half time games (The 42.ie, 2018). It is particularly concerning that underage were prioritised ahead of the elite adult female athletes competing in the Munster final. In January 2019, it was announced that the Cork Ladies Footballers would play two league double-headers and a championship double-header alongside the Cork senior footballers in Páirc Uí Chaoimh later in the year. All three of the fixtures were moved from Páirc Uí Chaoimh for various reasons.

Table 5. Examples of women's sports teams' access to national facilities in Ireland in 2018.

Facility	No. of occasions female teams had access to the facility in 2018
Croke Park	2 – All Ladies Football and Camogie Finals Days
Páirc Uí Chaoimh	1 – Munster Camogie Final
Aviva Stadium	1 – FAI Cup Final

3.4.2.4 Evaluation

The current study appears to be the first time the 2004 report has ever been evaluated or monitored. During the process of evaluation of the recommendations made in the report, the researchers discovered that the majority, 78%, were never implemented, as reflected in Table 6.

3.4.2.4.1 Implementation

Table 6. Standard of completion of each recommendation made by the Rapporteur Jimmy Deenihan in the Women in Sport Report 2004.

No.	Recommendation	Completed	Standard of Completion
1	The Government should establish a Commission on Physical Education, with particular reference to the needs of females particular reference to the needs of females.	X	Incomplete.
2	The ISC appoint a full-time Women's Development Officer with specific responsibility for the implementation of	✓	Complete. While there were two ISC posts, details around their job and work completed were not easy to find and it

No.	Recommendation	Completed	Standard of Completion
	the Brighton Principles across the structures of legislative and voluntary sports organisations.		was 15 years later by the time a Sport Ireland Women in Sport Lead was appointed.
3	As members of the ISC (a proposed signatory of the Brighton Principles) all National Governing Bodies would be obliged to insert a gender equality clause in their constitutions as well as implementing strategies to address this principle.	X	Incomplete.
4	The Government should ensure that all sport policies are underpinned by the Brighton Principles as a matter of priority. The principles and actions of the Brighton Declaration on Females and Sport and the Windhoek Call for Action must be committed to and acted upon.	X	Incomplete. While the NSP succeeds in being underpinned by a number of the Brighton Principles, not all Brighton Principles are accounted for as recommended by the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004), with the Fifth Principle related to High Performance Sport in particular being omitted (Brighton Principle No.5). The NSP also came 15 years after Recommendation 4 was initially made.
5	The Government and ISC need to consider the issue of additional funding for National Governing Bodies and others who provide special programmes to encourage the participation and integration of females with disability. This is closely related to the success of the Special Olympics as well as the increasing profile of disabled athletes.	X	Incomplete. The implementation of this recommendation will be discussed further in section 3.4.2.4.1.
6	The Women's Development Officer should provide advice and assistance (e.g. regional and national courses/seminars/information programmes) for National Governing Bodies and groups of females seeking to increase the involvement of females as coaches, referees and administrators.	X	Incomplete. There was no Women's Development Officer Appointed in order to carry out this recommendation
7	The Sports Council provide guidelines for the planning, design and management of female-friendly sports facilities, particularly in relation to applications for funding.	X	Incomplete.
8	All facilities in receipt of state funding should comply with Sports Council facility guidelines.	✓	Complete.
9	An Annual Women's Sports Award scheme, solely for female athletes, should be organised to highlight the achievements and contributions made by	✓	Complete. The Irish Times and Sport Ireland support women in sport with The Irish Times Sport Ireland Sportswoman of the Year Awards. The awards run over 12

No.	Recommendation	Completed	Standard of Completion
	females within local, regional and national organizations as well as the sporting achievements of females in sport generally.		months with an annual awards ceremony in December. The awards scheme began in 2004 and also has an 'outstanding contribution' award (Irish Times, 2019).
10	The Sports Council should commission a longitudinal research project (as part of the remit of the Centre for Research into Sport and Physical Activity) to establish the depth, breadth, types and content of media coverage of female sports. In addition, print, radio and visual media should consider a research project to produce empirical data on the sporting interests of their consumers.	X	Incomplete.
11	A national survey of the Irish public's interest in female sports coverage.	✓	Complete. While Liberty Insurance published 'Wise Up' (2015), a survey in part dedicated to investigating the Irish public's interest in female sport's coverage, there was no such national survey not carried out by the government or Sport Ireland as a result of the policy.
12	Research into television, radio and print media's preconceptions about what interests the Irish public.	X	Incomplete.
13	Consistent and long-term reporting of international and elite fixtures/results in female sports.	X	Incomplete. This recommendation is vague as it does not allude to who should be responsible for its implementation. Some NGB's and the WGPA have been consistent in their reporting of elite fixtures and while the 20x20 campaign has also aided the recommendation, it cannot be said that this recommendation was met across the board in an acceptable timeframe.
14	A commitment to female sport generally through public service broadcasting. To achieve this, several components must be linked together.	X	Incomplete. Improvements have been noted over the past 2 years as can be seen in the timeline in section 1.1, however once again it has not come soon enough since the recommendation was made.
15	The formation of an Irish Women's Sports Foundation to include representatives of all female sports organisations as well as the National Women's Council.	X	Incomplete. No such foundation exists.
16	Co-operation and membership should be maintained and strengthened with related national and international groups e.g. the IWG and the ICSSPE.	✓	Complete.

No.	Recommendation	Completed	Standard of Completion
17	Support for Irish participation in the next World Conference on Females and Sport in 2006.	X	Incomplete. The implementation of this recommendation will be discussed further in section 3.4.2.4.1.
18	A co-ordinated focus on females and sport by the ISC, the ESRI and the Irish WSF in order to develop coherent policies with realistic targets and measurable outcomes.	X	Incomplete. This recommendation was impossible as no Irish WSF was set up.
19	The Sports Council should implement gender equality strategies in all sports policies, including membership on all Committees.	X	Incomplete. The implementation of this recommendation will be discussed further in section 3.4.2.4.1.
20	The Department of Arts, Sport and tourism should work closely with the WSF to create and implement gender-specific strategies, targets and monitor outcomes for females in sport.	X	Incomplete. This recommendation was impossible as no Irish WSF was set up.
21	The ISC should provide information, models of best practice, and guidelines for practice as well as publicising international research findings on all aspects of female sport, recreational and competitive.	X	Incomplete.
22	The Women's Development Officer, within the ISC, should liaise with media organisations to provide information and training in media skills for sporting bodies seeking to expand the level of coverage of female sport.	X	Incomplete. The Women's Development Officer did not exist until 2019.
23	The ISC should encourage the Centre for Research into Sport and Physical Activity to co-ordinate with established academic centres such as the Centre for Sports Studies at University College Dublin, the Centre for Sport Science and Health, existing sport researchers at Third Level universities as well as all those with experience in this area. While the CRSPA is undertaking a national survey, these findings will not be published in the near future. In this regard, there is an existing body of knowledge (as outlined previously) from which to establish a strong foundation for any research-informed and future policies.	X	Incomplete.

Only five out of the 23 recommendations have been met with any real assurance. The standard of quality to which they have been implemented however lacks consistency. For example, as per recommendation 11, while a national survey of the Irish public's interest in female sports coverage has been carried out, it was not done so by any government body or Sport Ireland. Examples of recommendations that have not been met will now be explored in further detail.

When evaluating recommendation number three the researcher chose to analyse the constitutions of the NGBs depicted in Table 7 in order to establish whether gender equality clauses and strategies are present:

Table 7. Summary of implementation of recommendation no.3 by NGB's.

NGB	Completion of Recommendation No. 3
Athletics Ireland	✓
Football Association of Ireland (FAI)	✓
Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)	x
Hockey Ireland	✓
Irish Athletic Boxing Association (IABA)	x
Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU)	✓
Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA)	x
The Camogie Association	x

Therefore, it can be concluded that recommendation three was not met as not all NGB's have inserted a gender equality clause in their constitutions and not all of those who have gender equality clauses have implemented strategies to address this principle. More detailed descriptions are available in Appendix H.

In relation to recommendation ten, no longitudinal research project was carried out by the ISC or Sport Ireland to establish the depth, breadth, types and content of media coverage of female sports and no research project was carried out by print, radio and visual media producing empirical data on the sporting interests of their consumers was found by the researcher.

An Irish Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) does not exist thereby rendering fulfilment of recommendations fifteen, eighteen and twenty incomplete; there has not been 'a co-ordinated focus on females and sport by the ISC and the ESRI' and therefore it has been impossible to develop 'coherent policies with realistic targets and measurable outcomes' and for the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism to 'work closely with the WSF to create and implement gender-specific strategies, targets and monitor outcomes for females in sport.' (Oireachtas, 2004,

p.14). In May 2006, the '4th World Conference on Women and Sport' took place in Kumamoto, Japan. Approximately, 700 delegates representing 100 nations and regions participated in this Conference. While Ireland did in fact participate, Mrs Elizabeth Coalter, Operation Manager on the International Rugby Board, was the sole representative (Japanese Centre for Research on Women in Sport, 2014). This was curious given the fact that rugby was one of the least popular female sports at that given time (Liston and Menzies, 2004). It is unclear as to whether one representative was sufficient in order to 'support for Irish participation in the next World Conference on Females and Sport' and therefore fulfil recommendation seventeen. There were no such parameters set out by the recommendation. In 2018, Sport Ireland undertook a consultation process focusing on how to encourage more women of all ages and backgrounds to take part and flourish in all aspects of sport whether as participants, volunteers, high performance athletes or employees working in sport (Sport Ireland, 2018). The results of the survey have not yet been published. The researcher found no longitudinal research project on the depth, breadth, types and content of media coverage for female sport carried out by Sport Ireland or by the Centre for Research into Sport and Physical Activity. Finally, despite numerous articles and reports being available on the WSF website relating to various different subsections of WIS, no international research findings on all aspects of female sport, recreational and competitive, were publicised anywhere on the Sport Ireland website or Twitter account. Therefore, the researcher concluded that recommendations 10 and 21 were also not completed.

3.4.2.4.2 Review, Monitoring and Evaluation

The NSP contains a chapter entitled 'Implementation, Monitoring and Review' (DTTAS, 2018, p.97). The chapter began by proposing that a Sports Leadership Group (SLG) be established within three months of the publication of the policy to agree a prioritised Action Plan. In December 2018, the SLG was announced (Sport for Business, 2018). Co-chaired by Ministers Shane Ross and Brendan Griffin, the SLG represents a broad spectrum of relevant Government Departments, Sport Ireland, the wider sports sector, Local Government, the Leisure Sector and the Volunteer Sector who are all key stakeholders in this process. The 15 representatives may be found in Appendix G. The SLG will oversee the implementation of the Action Plan and report biannually on progress to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy. A full mid-term review of the policy will be undertaken in 2023. Action 57 promises to 'develop and publish, by mid-2019, a comprehensive set of key performance indicators (KPIs) covering all elements of the policy' in which 'progress in implementing the policy will be assessed against these indicators.' (DTTAS, 2018, p.99). The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and SLG will develop and agree upon these KPIs.

Unfortunately, the SIPWIS, similar to the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004), incorporates no such information pertaining to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy. Because no evaluation of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) was suggested, the ISC/Sport Ireland and other stakeholders could afford to abide by very little of the recommendations and not be held accountable, as is evidenced in sections 3.4.2.4.1 and 3.4.2.4.2. The concern is that the omission of any mention of the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NWISP would lead to the same poor results that the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) report achieved.

3.4.2.5 Funding

3.4.2.5.1 Women in Sport Report 2004

As mentioned in section 3.2.4.1, in 2005 the ISC launched the €0.75 million Women in Sport Initiative and in 2013 Sport Ireland announced an investment package of €0.71 million funding the Women in Sport programme (Sport Ireland, 2013). From 2016 - 2018, the allocation of funding for the Women in Sport programme fell to €0.6 million (Irish Times, 2019). Because there are no documents available providing information on how each of the recommendations of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) were to be funded, it appears that the figures mentioned above invested in the 'Women in Sport' programme, were responsible for the implementation of all 23 of the recommendations. Perhaps as a result of this, coupled with the lack of review and evaluation structures put in place referred to in section 3.4.2.4.2, so few of the recommendations were fulfilled successfully.

For example, the failure of recommendation five in particular highlights the lack of transparency around the issue of the distribution of appropriate and additional funding 'for National Governing Bodies and others who provide special programmes to encourage the participation and integration of females with disability as well as the increasing profile of disabled athletes' (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 13) According to the Sport Ireland Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities (Sport Ireland, 2017, p. 6), 'Sport Ireland currently funds and works with a range of organisations providing and promoting opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sport and physical activity.' This would suggest that Sport Ireland and the Government are committed to the equal treatment of people with disabilities when it comes to their participation in sport and physical activity in line with Article 30.5 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, there is no breakdown of the funding for special programmes to encourage the participation and integration of females with disability specifically. The researcher analysed a number of other documents referencing sport inclusion of disabilities and detailing funding allocation including the following 'Sport Inclusion Disability Charter Sport

Ireland 2018', 'Sport Ireland Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities 2017', 'Special Olympics Ireland Annual Summary 2017', 'Special Olympics Ireland Financial Statements 2017', 'Special Olympics Ireland Strategy 2016 - 2020', '2006 Quarterly National Household Survey', the Irish Sports Monitor (ISM 2007 – 2015), 'Growing Up in Ireland' and 'The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing', 'Sport Ireland Sport Investment 2019' and finally the previously mentioned NSP along with the SIPWIS. The consistent message that emerged to the researcher was that, 0% of the reports and policies analysed specifically mentioned the funding needs of females.

3.4.2.5.2 National Sport Policy 2018 - 2027

The doubling of Government investment in sport; from the previous annual figure of €111 million to €220m, was one of the standout objectives of the new NSP when it was announced by the Government in July 2018, almost ten years since the last policy document expired. Figure 4 details the increases in funding that were directed to the annual funding streams in order to meet the above targets and the actions and objectives outlined in section 3.4.2.3 in the Sport Ireland Sport Investment document (Sport Ireland, 2019, p. 2)

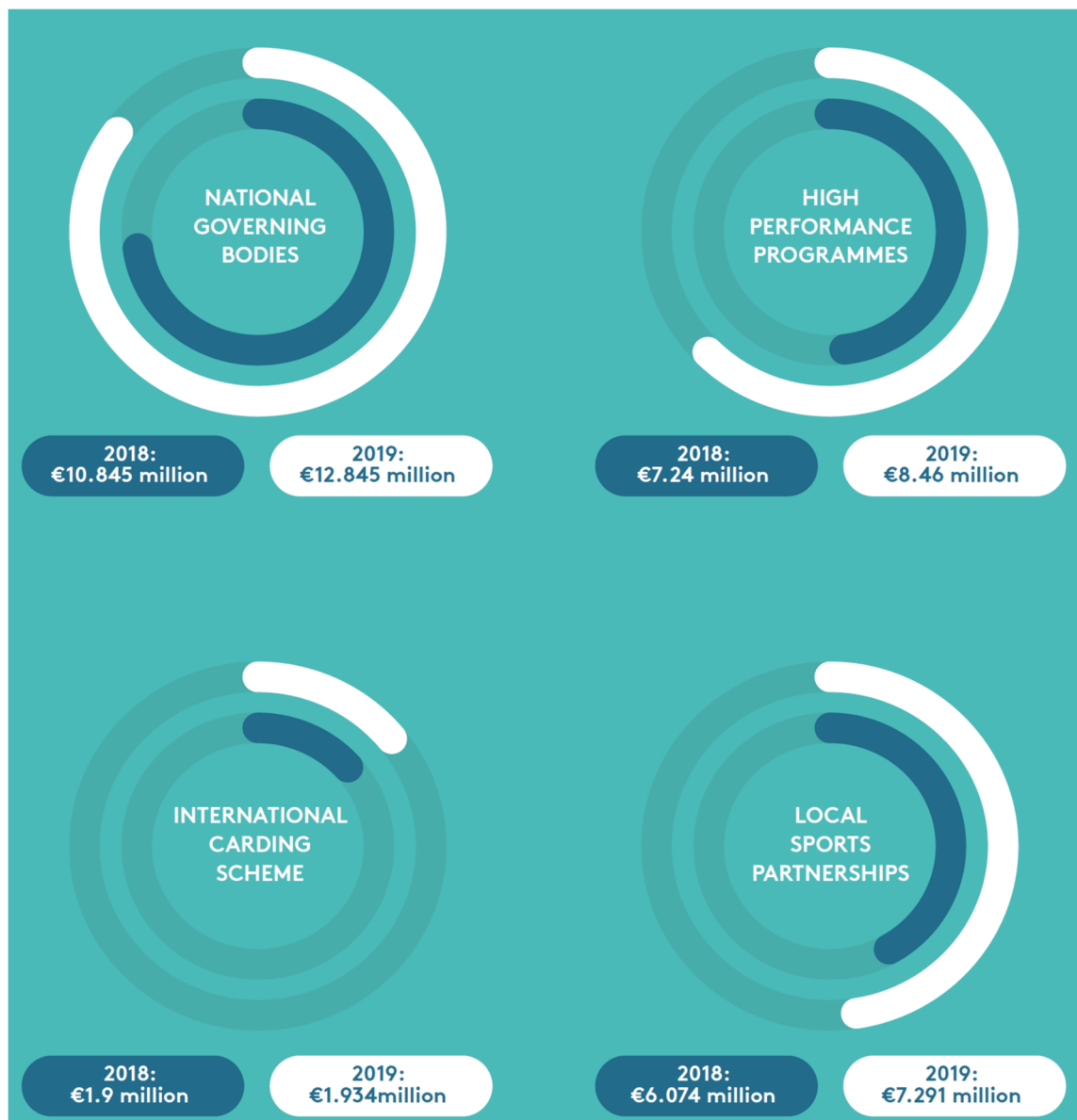


Figure 4. The increases in funding that were directed to the annual funding streams in order to meet NSP 2018 – 2027 targets and the actions and objectives outlined in Sport Ireland Sport Investment 2019.

Other examples of where the funding will go include the doubling of funding for the Women in Sport programme to €2m, the creation of a dedicated €1m programme for Disability Sport through the deployment of a Sport Inclusion Disability Officer (SIDO) in all 26 LSPs countrywide and a €1.5m allocation to high performance programmes in support of Tokyo 2020 preparations (O’ Riordan, 2018). In January 2019, the Department of Sport announced the allocation of almost €6.9 million for sports clubs and community projects under the Sports Capital Programme for 170 projects (Dublin People, 2019). The announcement seemed indicative of appropriate funding being allocated to the specific actions in the NSP. However, upon further examination, it emerged that projects in Minister for Sport Shane Ross’s constituency would account for 5% of the total allocation of State funding, while projects in Minister for Sport, Mr Brendan Griffin’s constituency

of Kerry were allocated a total of €325,200, which accounted for 4.7% of the total amount of funding (Gleeson, 2019). A combined approximately 10% of funding going to the constituencies of the policy makers and funding allocators does not bode well for the distribution of funding for other areas of the policy. While it is great that money has been awarded, there is a concern around whether the funding is going to the right places. Perhaps the onus is being taken away from what is important.

In relation to HP sport, the NSP, (DTTAS, 2018, p. 53) concluded that; ‘a clear sense emerged from Sport Ireland’s Rio Review (2016) that there is room for a more strategic approach and for further enhancements in the high performance system.’ Shilbi and Bingham (2008) contend that focusing and investing in sports which are currently successful on a global level may result in diminishing returns for investment. Striking the appropriate balance of performance targets and other useful goals in sport funding is necessary if desired outcomes such as elite sport development are to be achieved. Therefore, with one of the key strategic objectives of the NSP being to ‘elevate Ireland to the top of the table globally for both participations in sport and HP’ (O’Riordan, 2019), Sport Ireland will launch its full 12-year HP Strategy in 2019, according to the Sport Ireland Sport Investment document (Sport Ireland, 2019). Meanwhile, in February 2019, Sport Ireland confirmed funding of nearly €32 million for governing bodies for sport, direct athlete support and local authorities for 2019. Furthermore, can be seen in Figure 4 the International Carding Scheme increased from €1.9 million in 2018 to €1.934 million in 2019 and athletes who are awarded Carding in 2019 will be funded until December 2020, subject to terms and conditions.

While the increases in funding being awarded to HP programmes mentioned in above is a positive move for elite sport in Ireland, disappointingly, the researcher was unable to find any gender ‘targets’, ‘actions’, ‘objectives’, ‘findings’ anywhere in the new sports policies, previous reviews (E.g. Rio Review), investment reports etc. related to funding female high performance athletes in Ireland. Considering, females make up 50% of the population and have been our most successful high-performance athletes on the world stage over the last number of years (e.g. IWNHT, Katie Taylor, Annalise Murphy etc.), this does not make sense. Analysis of the international carding scheme highlights the obvious gender imbalance in (Appendix I) found that female funding amounts to €608,000 out of a total of €1,934,000. This represents just a 32.4% share. It is disappointing that details of funding addressing this gradient have not surfaced. Furthermore, the following statement found in the NSP is interesting considering Ireland was listed as the 10th richest country in the world in 2018 (Harrington, 2018) and number six in 2019 (Ventura, 2019):

‘When it comes to high performance sport we recognise that we are limited in our ability to compete with wealthier nations which also have larger talent pools. So, in addition to winning medals, success will also be assessed on personal bests, national records achieved in major competitions and numbers of athletes finishing in the top 8/10/20. We will benchmark against ourselves year on year and against nations with similar populations and investment.’

(DTTAS, 2018, p.99).

Again, it is not a question of whether the money is there or not but rather where it is being invested and allocated.

3.4.2.5.3 Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport 2019

As promised by the NSP, in September 2019, Sport Ireland announced details of a multi-year investment of over €3m in NGBs through the re-launched Women in Sport Programme (RTÉ, 2019). It brings Sport Ireland's investment in WIS for 2019 and 2020 to €3,277,000 after €265,000 was also allocated to the 26 LSPs countrywide earlier this year (€8,400 for each LSP representing an increase of 130% from €115,000 in 2018 in this particular sector) (O’Riordan, 2019; Sport Ireland, 2019). Chair of the Sport Ireland Women in Sport Steering Group Lynne Cantwell says the funding will bring policy for women’s sport to life and will tackle more than simply participation and it is hoped that NGBs will embrace projects focused on developing leadership opportunities, and pathways to coaching and officiating (RTÉ, 2019). The rewarding of sporting bodies who achieve greater gender diversity at board level is a key element of the new SIPWIS policy. NGBs are invited to submit requests as part of a competitive-bid process at national level (O’ Riordan, 2019; Sport Ireland, 2019). Despite these developments, the researcher found the exact details of how this particular initiative will be structured and the breakdown of the €3 million investment in ‘women in sport’ challenging to find and decipher in any published reports and policy documents available. Any available figures relating to the WIS funding were impossible to ‘add up’ to €3 million. For example, in the list of NGBs, the Camogie Association and the LGFA are the only two female-only NGBs receiving funding. It is unclear as to whether part of the €3million announced for WIS is included in the figures in Table 8.

Table 8. Sport Ireland NGB comparison of funding breakdown between 2018 and 2019.

NGB	2018 Funding (€)	2019 Funding (€)
LGFA	400, 000	450, 000
The Camogie Association	395, 000	395,000

While the Sport Ireland Sport Investment document (Sport Ireland, 2019) provides details of allocated funding to all NGBs in 2018 and 2019, more clarity and transparency around exactly how much funding each NGB received for females only, and why, would be beneficial. Furthermore, it

could be construed as ironic that women in Ireland still have to be afforded access to specific funding because the NGBs don't provide them with enough themselves, possibly as a result of the lack of policy surrounding this area. As can be seen in Appendix T, the FAI was entirely excluded from the multi-year investment of €3 million into the re-launched Women in Sport programme due to their refusal to meet ministerial demands over governance of the association (Sport Ireland, 2019). While this is not good news for Irish women involved in soccer, it is indicative of the government's determination to place responsibility on NGBs to reach a certain standard if they want to avail of funding, a concept that is supported by the findings of the interviews in section 3.4.1.3.2.

3.5 Discussion

This section will discuss the findings outlined in the previous section of this chapter. Suitable literature will be used in order to compare and contrast the results obtained from this study. Consequently, conclusions will be drawn.

3.5.1 Policy

It is a glaring anomaly that women's involvement in sport in Ireland has, until very recently, been more or less unchallenged, in political, academic and public (Liston 2017). It is apparent from these findings that this statement is accurate; however, it is also clear that change is happening and growth is evident for women in sport in Ireland. As Irish soccer international Stephanie Roche put it 'enormous strides' have been taken in recent years when it comes to both participation in and acceptance of women's sport in Ireland (Meagher, 2018). Many of the results dispel the findings by Cunningham (2008) and Walker and Sartore-Baldwin (2013) which stated that gender inequity in sport has become a norm so entrenched it is barely recognized and even more rarely challenged. However, it is important to note that the world of WIS in Ireland is by no means at an equal level with males. The findings of this study are supported by those of the State of the Nation Report (Lidl, 2017, p. 25) which found that men's sport is still taken more seriously than women's in Ireland. The fact that the current research found that many women have far fewer opportunities than men to turn any participation they may have in physical activity into social, cultural or economic capital is deplorable considering Shilling (1992, 2012, p. 147) originally concluded this 27 years ago.

Unfortunately, the findings by Wilde (2007), which recognised that women's sport has rarely been a priority for policy makers, still ring true today. The WISR (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 11) stated that 'Irish females have demonstrated a passion for spectating and being involved (from recreational

to elite level) in sports and physical activities. Though this involvement has not been acknowledged in the same way as male involvement in sport; prior to 2018, very little had been done by policy makers in Ireland to rectify this. Therefore, the publication of SIPWIS (Sport Ireland 2019) and NSP (DTTAS, 2018) are undoubtedly welcome additions to the WIS in Ireland landscape. The policies committing to improving women's experiences in sport have been long overdue, arriving later than many international counterparts (EU, 2002; IWG, 2012; Mattila, 2012; Ottesen, et al., 2010; Puig, Martínez and García, 2010; United Nations, 2007). The policies also come 15 and 16 years respectively, after the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004). The setting up of the Women in Sport Steering Committee, the appointment of the Women in Sport lead and the recent announcement of the extra funding allocated to facilitate the actions are just a few of the practical and productive outcomes of the SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019) policy thus far. These positive effects offer a significant cause for optimism surrounding the future implementation of other targets and the continuation of strides taken in this area. Wilde (2007) is adamant that it is only through policy, that females will continue to make valuable and significant headway in the world of sports yet the majority of positive changes, has not been as a result of policy but have been occurring despite the lack of policy in this area. Therefore, correctly implemented policy can undoubtedly only aid the WIS in Ireland landscape going forward. This is particularly important for Ireland's elite female athletes (DeBosscher et al., 2006; Sotiriadou and Shilbury, 2009).

Indeed, the implementation of the actions related to WIS will be the biggest markers of success of the policy. However, it is also the biggest source of concern, given the extremely poor completion rate of the recommendations from the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004). It was found that proper evaluation and implementation strategies must be considered to combat the complex process of implementing gender equity sports policy (Hoerber and Frisby, 2001; McKay, 1997; Shaw and Frisby, 2006; Slack and Parent, 2006; Sparkes, 1994; Stewart et al., 2004). Considering this, some elements of both policies appeared flimsy in nature when analysed in depth. In particular, it is worrying that the SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019) does not have a timeframe, does not allude to any form of an evaluation plan, many of the targets use language such as 'aims' and 'hopes' and offer no insight as to what penalties might be incurred should they not be implemented. While the progress of Action 32 from the NSP, 'NGBs will be asked to set gender diversity targets and develop equality action plans and support will be provided for dedicated leadership training programmes for women including governance-related and technical training (DTTAS, 2018, p. 71) will be monitored and reported on annually by Sport Ireland, it is substandard that the SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019) does not contain its own progress report. These omissions could lead one to believe that the policy could be merely an act of tokenism and a strategy by the government to

appear to be doing something to further the cause of WIS in Ireland. It is vital that this will not be the case and it will not be as long as 15 years before the next policy relating to WIS in Ireland is formed. It is hoped that the policies were not published as a result of political pressure as is the case for many gender policies (Hovden, 2012; Kay, 1996; Shaw and Penney, 2003). Symposiums facilitating discussions exploring the gender equity in sport through research – policy – practice dialogue could be an effective way of avoiding hollow policies being formed (Griffith University, 2019). Which in turn aid the encouragement of engagement of industry and government with academic researchers and the sharing of insights about the range of research methodologies being used in universities that could support innovative government directions addressing gender equity in sport.

De Varona and Brooke Marciniak (2016) suggest that, perhaps as a result of inconsistencies in policy formation and implementation, sustained equal funding for women's sport has failed to occur in many countries and sporting organisations, despite funding being absolutely paramount for elite success among other things (Sotiriadou, Shilbury and Quick, 2008). Based on the findings of this study Ireland seems to be guilty of this over the past number of years. While the new funding announced in September 2019 to support effective implementation of the SIPWIS (Sport Ireland, 2019) should aid the completion of some of the shorter term targets, it is critical that adequate funding and the newly introduced compliance measures for NGB's is maintained on a regular basis to avoid the policies becoming 'toothless tigers' (Bell-Altenstad and Vail, 1992).

3.5.2 Unequal Growth Among Sports

The landscape of corporate investment related to sport in Ireland is changing rapidly with 20% of all sports deals announced in the first half of 2018 being women specific, (an increase of 11% on the same period in 2017) (McGee, 2018). However, it was abundantly clear from the findings in the current study that corporate investment is not spread equally among all women's sports in Ireland. Furthermore, certain women's sports in Ireland are moving ahead of others in many other areas such as attendances at games, visibility, and membership figures among others (LGFA, 2017). For example, the Ladies Football Association attracted a crowd of 56, 144 for the All-Ireland Ladies Football Finals in 2019 compared to the Camogie Association attracting just under 25,000 for the All-Ireland Camogie Final in the same year. It is important to note that these kinds of disparities are perhaps a long existing problem not unique to Ireland, with sports such as tennis, swimming and athletics traditionally being perceived as more gender equal (Vincent, 2004; Crowe, 2018). Perhaps as a result of athletes in these sports not violating traditional gender roles as much as others (Jones, Murrell, and Jackson, 1999; Tuggle and Owen, 1999). Regardless of the origins

of the problem or how widespread and entrenched it may be in society, the results from this research suggest that measures must be taken to protect the women involved in sports run by NGBs struggling to keep up with others. While results indicate that the SIPWIS and certain stakeholders argue that it is the duty of NGB's to attract sponsors and improve the overall standards in their particular sport, not all sports are starting off on the same level playing field to enable them to do so. Perhaps there is cause for cross collaboration between NGB's, player associations and government agencies alike to learn best practice from each other and align towards a common goal.

3.5.3 Media

The findings regarding the media coverage of WIS in Ireland, similar to trends internationally, are becoming increasingly ambivalent and conflicting. There are now numerous instances of WIS receiving more mainstream television and radio coverage in Ireland in recent times. For example, all three All Camogie finals were broadcast on RTÉ 2 for the first time ever in September 2019 and RTÉ and TG4 provided full coverage and analysis of the FIFA WWC in June and July 2019. The prevalence of more females involved in commentary and punditry in Ireland is matching trends internationally with Joanne Cantwell and Jacqui Hurley two notable Irish examples (Guardian, 2019; Otago, 2019). However, despite these examples of increases, the available statistics on media coverage in Ireland remain bleak and continuously point towards low and inequitable coverage in comparison to male counterparts, with research by Nielsen (2018) finding that just 3% of print coverage and 4% of online coverage goes to women's only sport in Ireland. Furthermore, it became apparent that in many cases where females in specific sports were in fact receiving somewhat reasonable levels of coverage and certainly more than other female sports, it was as a result of recent successes or certain narratives. The case of the IWNHT acts as a relevant example (Irish Times, 2018). The attitude that only success deserves coverage cannot persist. Instead the attitude held by Mageean (2018) must be encompassed 'with more coverage would come more sponsorship, more support, greater participation etc.'. The success plus media exposure equals increased fan support and increased commercial attractiveness formula is a worrying concept as it does not protect and advance all WIS and allows for the furtherance of certain sports at the detriment of others (Woods, 2014). It is simple in the eyes of Irish rugby player Eimear Considine, 'support for female athletes cannot be generated if it is not made more easily accessible/visible for the public to see them.' (Crowe, 2018).

Another point of contention was the role of social media in the development of WIS in Ireland. The platform of social media for coverage of WIS in Ireland represents many positives in that it

allows women's sports organisations and female athletes to define their sport and themselves. Providing them with complete control over what information supporters and potential fans can or cannot have access to, and is the platform for great personal insights, as the behind the scenes nuggets and insights are exactly what all sports fans are looking for (Woods, 2014). However, it was also contested that the social media echo chamber needs to be avoided. Instead, a greater and more consistent commitment to public service broadcasting is paramount. Very little research exists on this particular facet of the media and the impact it may be having on women's sports.

Finally, campaigns such as 20x20, rely solely on the media for favourable outcome leaving it at somewhat of a disadvantage relative to sustainability. The responsibility for campaigns such as these should lie with concrete policies underpinned by sufficient funding. While 20x20 appears to be generating beneficial results, it is important to understand the role of the media in the campaign and the role of other parties with a vested interest and encourage a uniform approach to its application. Packer (2014) believes there is a need for a 'much bigger policy push' if the problem of inferior media representation is to be tackled effectively. Commonwealth Bank (2019) proved that more coverage creates more interest; therefore, the case can be made for forming policy that media organisations should abide by.

After taking all of the findings into account, longitudinal research into the depth, breadth, types and content of media coverage afforded to WIS in Ireland should take place. Gathering empirical data from print, visual and radio media on the interests of their consumers. Conducting research into preconceptions about what interests the Irish public and a national survey of the Irish public's interest in female sports coverage. There is hope that the Women in Sports Communication plan, to be developed and implemented as part of the visibility target of the SIPWIS policy, will contain details addressing the aforementioned necessities.

3.5.4 Education and Pathways for Women in Sport in Ireland at All Levels

Policy catering to different aspects of WIS and media targets surfaced as a principle and essential item for the continued development of WIS in Ireland. However, there were a number of other shorter-term solutions that emerged in the findings. Players were identified as critical agents for change. It was found that they must be prepared to stand up for the minimum standards they deserve and must not fall into the trap of settling for minor improvements or taking for granted the struggles that have been endured for generations before them. Players must be willing to boycott any circumstances that are not in line with the equal and equitable goals that all WIS in Ireland must have. Players must also act as role models. As Elaine Buckley from RTÉ's sport said,

‘if they (the women involved in sport now) went out and supported elite athletes in their own sports that would be a great start’ (Meagher, 2018).

Education seminars were suggested by interview participants as methods of empowering Irish female athletes to be aware of the minimum standards they should be receiving and the responsibility they have in advancing the cause. However, the results also found that care must be taken that players are allowed to simply play too. Over burdening athletes with off the pitch duties of this nature may not be fair or ethical and may result in players disengaging from the process before rewards are reaped. Utilizing the expertise, experience and dedication of past players also appeared to be a common theme in the findings and solution to the conundrum of overwhelming current players. Pathways for this demographic and for any women interested in becoming involved in leadership positions (coaches, referees, club roles) in sport need to be designed to suit the specific needs of this cohort. Therefore, a research piece could be completed to ascertain how best to coordinate a sensitive approach encompassing all female athletes in Ireland. It is also important to note that once again, while 20x20 is harnessing the power of many of the country’s finest athletes, the focus needs to reach farther than solely seeking a media effect/influence. Efforts such as those mentioned above could aid the campaign in continuing the good work it has achieved thus far and attain a wider impact.

The lead taken by the WGPA and player associations in many of the areas discussed above provide adequate initial blueprints for NGB’s and government agencies as a reference point (Mitten et al., 2016). Annual ‘reps’ days, team talks to squads, ‘rookie’ camps and conferences and networking opportunities for both male and female retired players. Along with regular publication of examples of international findings aligning with Irish WIS and publication of international best practices on WGPA social media channels, are to name but a few of the initiatives that many stakeholders invested to help aid the progression of WIS in Ireland could take, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

3.5.5 Women in Leadership Positions in Sport

The results also suggest that the focus for the continued development of WIS in Ireland seems to remain firmly in the realm of increasing participation and narrowing the gender gap. The severe dearth of research reaching outside the area of participation is still the reality in Ireland. ‘One of the key objectives of the Government’s National Sports Policy is to increase the number of women and girls participating in sport and to eliminate the participation gradient between men and women,’ Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Brendan Griffin TD said speaking at the announcement of the new funding for the SIPWIS at the Sport Ireland Campus in Blanchardstown

(Sport Ireland, 2019). Based on the available information on the topic and the results detailed in section 3.4.1.3.1, the current study found that there is a distinct and very real need for the policymakers and NGB's to pay attention to the lack of women in leadership, administrative, coaching and officiating positions in WIS in Ireland (Clarke, 2016; Fink, 2016; Sport Ireland, 2019, p. 17; Sport Ireland, 2017; Wilde, 2007). It must be noted that Ireland is not alone in this trend with many international bodies including National Olympic Committees producing similarly low figures for this particular area of WIS (Women in Sport, 2017; Wigmore, 2016; IOC, 2016, p. 2). It is unclear as to why the seemingly well supported proposals made by Minister Patrick O Donovan in 2016 (Clarke, 2016) aiming to enforce financial penalties if sports bodies in Ireland did not have 30% women on their boards by 2019 were not followed up.

'While active participation remains vitally important, in line with the Women in Sport Policy, Sport Ireland encouraged funded bodies to look at other areas of involvement as well. The funding process has seen NBGs embrace projects focussed on developing leadership opportunities, and pathways to coaching and officiating. This holistic approach will lead to a step-change in the landscape for women's involvement in sport across the board from grassroots to leadership'

(Sport Ireland, 2019).

While this quote from the SIPWIS offers hope that progress in the numbers of women occupying leadership positions in sport, unfortunately both the SIPWIS and NSP fail to include any form of gender quotas, passing up a brilliant opportunity to address this shortcoming and also to lead the way internationally. This particular omission consolidates the concern that the policies are in fact acts of tokenism and do not aim to significantly change trends in this area, in line with the outcomes of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004).

3.6 Conclusion

Chapter Three found that change is happening and growth is evident for WIS in Ireland. However, WIS in Ireland are by no means at an equal level with men. Women's sport has rarely been a priority for policymakers and therefore regular and appropriate policy, underpinned by adequate funding is essential for the further development of WIS in Ireland. New policy such as the SIPWIS needs to be reviewed, monitored and evaluated regularly in order to ensure correct implementation. Research is vital in many areas as a starting point for policy formation. Media and leadership gender quotas must be explored in relation to their role in future policy. Media coverage of WIS in Ireland is improving but more is needed to generate sufficient support and investment. Commitment to consistent public service broadcasting is required as social media alone is not a sufficient platform for the levels of coverage necessary to further develop WIS.

Policy makers need to be conscious of the fact that some sports played by women are moving ahead of others in Ireland and they must act accordingly to address the disparity. Policy on WIS needs to progress beyond participation gradient targets. There is a distinct and very real need for the policymakers and NGB's to pay attention to the lack of women in leadership, administrative, coaching and officiating positions in WIS in Ireland. Elite female athletes have a role to play to in the continued development of WIS in Ireland. They must be educated correctly in order to contribute and communicate effectively. Cross collaboration between NGBs, government bodies and player associations is needed to align towards a common goal. A lot of positive examples for the forward movement of WIS in Ireland can be taken from the WGPA. Interview participants were in favour of change and development and the key points made in this conclusion were keenly supported.

4 WGPA

4.1 Introduction

County hurlers and footballers are elite amateur athletes who play for the love of Gaelic games and the love of place (Gaelic Players Association (GPA), 2019). Similarly, intercounty players represent the elite performers in their sport in their respective counties (WGPA 2014). Reports suggested these athletes are ‘committed, disciplined, ambitious individuals who make considerable sacrifices and experience emotional and physical challenges in their career but this is largely based on individual accounts’ (WGPA 2014). Prior to 2014, there was no player representative body for intercounty ladies footballers and camogie players of any age and/or grade and little to no data. The WGPA was formally launched in January 2015. Thus far, no research has taken place into the developments and progress (or lack thereof) made by the WGPA since it was set up in 2015. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is predominantly to explore the evolution and impact of the WGPA by examining the formation and structure of the WGPA and the realities of being an elite, amateur, Irish female athlete playing Gaelic games in Ireland today. It is hoped that by doing so, this chapter will complement the themes explored in Chapter 3 and thus provide a more in depth analysis of the reality of a number of elements of the state of WIS in Ireland in recent times. The chapter will focus on the conditions experienced by intercounty female players in Ireland and whether they have changed since the foundation of the player association and whether the WGPA has impacted upon the wider context of WIS in Ireland and thereby influenced the development of WIS in general in Ireland. By doing so, research question two will be answered:

2. WGPA evolution, formation and impact: What will an examination of the evolution, formation and possible impact tell us about the role and position of women in sport in Ireland today? (micro)

Table 9 provides context and sets the scene for what will follow, acting as an adequate reference point for many of the themes explored and discussed throughout the chapter. This table is a guiding point to the research that has been completed. A more in depth timeline is available in Appendix K.

Table 9. WGPA Timeline.

2013	Aoife Lane had conversation with GPA President Dónal Óg Cusack at Camogie All Stars regarding setting up a Players Association.
2014	Players Report by Aoife Lane: Let’s Make Things Better. National Executive Committee set up.

2015	<p>Official Launch of the WGPA.</p> <p>PwC announced as first corporate partner of WGPA.</p> <p>First Regional Reps Days held in Enniskillen and Limerick.</p> <p>‘Behind the Player’ campaign launched with PwC.</p> <p>Camogie Association All Stars accommodates first WGPA Players Player of Year Award.</p> <p>24/7 member support line launched.</p> <p>Skechers partnership launched for WGPA Hero award for Camogie and Ladies Football ‘Player of the Month’.</p> <p>First 7 members of the WGPA participate in the Jim Madden Leadership Programme with GPA.</p> <p>First 12 undergraduate scholarships presented and 4 Masters Scholarships launched with WIT, UL and DCU.</p>
2016	<p>Official Launch of the WGPA.</p> <p>Partnership with Intersport Elverys launched.</p> <p>Personal development coaching service launched for all members.</p> <p>WGPA Government grants - €1,000,000 to highest grade county ladies football and camogie teams.</p> <p>WGPA attend annual GPA event in New York.</p> <p>ICON plc Scholarship partnership launched.</p> <p>Partnership with OPRO Mouthguard launched.</p>
2017	<p>Included in EU Athletes SWAFE project.</p> <p>BackBaller supports Scholarships Recipients.</p> <p>Intersport Elverys and Sunday Independent partnership launched for WGPA Hero award for Camogie and Ladies Football ‘Player of the Month’.</p> <p>Setanta College Strength and Conditioning course discounts for WGPA members announced.</p> <p>Cúl Heroes cards launched including female All Star recipients for the first time.</p> <p>First tranche of government grants released.</p> <p>FitFodder partnership.</p> <p>Pat the Baker partnership launched.</p> <p>First Government Grant workshops take place for intercounty squads.</p> <p>Meeting with Billie Jean King and Women’s Sport Foundation, BJK shared message of support for members.</p> <p>Partnership with Meagher’s Pharmacy launched.</p>

Participation in nationwide sleep out to raise money for homeless, in conjunction with Gaelic Voices for Change and GPA.

2018

Included in EU Athletes SWAFE project.

Players Council formed, 10 players drawn equally from 2 codes.

First WGPA Young Leader of the Year awarded.

First Player welfare day takes place in Setanta College with the aim of maximising performance for members.

4 Person Advisory Group formed.

WGPA members participate in Sport for Business discussion.

Impacts of the Government Grant Scheme Report published.

ICON and new Irish American Partnership for Education students.

2019

National Executive Committee expanded to 11 members.

Maria Kinsella announced as new Chairperson.

Motion passed that will see WGPA structure a formal partnership with GPA.

Squad Charters introduced to squads as part of grant application.

Karakal and WGPA launch Exclusive Hurling Grip.

WGPA release report ‘Camogie - The Players View’.

Setanta Performance workshop.

First Madden Leadership Masterclass.

Members met with Camogie Association to discuss Players’ View Report.

Player Health Check Pilot Programme carried out.

First WGPA midterm regional visits to squads.

Proposed rookie camp for players aged 18 - 23 with GPA

Proposed retired players camp with GPA

Players group set up to tackle issue of travel and injury expenses

Proposed workshops for all student members addressing areas such as finance management, nutrition and study play balance

4.1.1 Structure of Chapter Four

- Overview of available literature and data pertaining to existing Gaelic games player associations in Ireland – the GPA
- Methods of investigation
- Results

- WGPA Formation: History, Set Up, Realities and Need
- WGPA Evolution: Timeline, Structure
- WGPA: Activities
- WGPA Future Direction
- Discussion
- Conclusion

4.2 Overview of Gaelic Games Player Associations in Ireland - GPA

The WGPA is the first female only player association in Ireland and one of only a few in the world to date. As a result, there is very little literature pertaining to female player associations available. While the Gaelic Players Association (GPA) is a male only player association, prior to the set-up of the WGPA, it was the only example of a player association serving amateur, high performance intercounty athletes in Ireland and the world. Therefore, the researchers felt that the GPA would act as a valuable reference point and source of information for the context of an amateur Gaelic games player association. In terms of player associations both in Ireland and around the world, the WGPA is deemed most similar to the GPA in nature as they too represent intercounty athletes playing at the highest possible level. Therefore, the GPA are regarded as the most relevant example of a player association to use for this study. Accordingly, an overview of the history, characteristics, governance structures and activities of the GPA will now be provided in section 4.2.1.

4.2.1 GPA History

The GPA is the officially recognised representative body for intercounty hurlers and footballers, providing supports to over 2,300 current county players across 67 playing squads, and a growing number of former players. Following the increased commercialisation of Gaelic games in the 1990s and a growing commitment expected on the part of the players, the GPA was created by players to advance their welfare requirements and protect the interests of senior intercounty players. It was founded in 1999 but was only formally recognised as the official representative body for male county players in 2010. The GPA is a not-for-profit organisation. Their aim is to promote and protect all aspects of player welfare and to provide an independent voice for players. The GPA have 100% membership; that is 100% of intercounty hurlers and footballers in Ireland are members of the GPA (GPA, 2019).

4.2.2 GPA Structure

The ultimate governing body of the Gaelic Players Association is the National Executive Committee (NEC). The affairs of the association are under the management of the NEC. The NEC is elected annually by the members of the association. The NEC is comprised of a president, chairman and secretary, together with a minimum of ten other members of the association. There are currently 22 members of the NEC. In furtherance of the GPA’s objectives it is necessary to engage in certain financial transactions and contractual arrangements. The most appropriate legal structure through which to conduct these financial and contractual arrangements is a limited company, the Gaelic Players Association DAC. The board of directors of this company are elected by the members of the NEC. The board is currently made up of eight people, including the chairman, president and secretary. Board sub-committees include a finance committee, an audit and risk committee, and a remuneration, people and change committee (GPA, 2018, p. 36). The GPA employ a nine-person staff, headed by a CEO. Finally, there are five national engagement officers who interact with players and help them in their off-field lives and 67 GPA ‘squad reps’ (GPA, 2018, p. 27).

4.2.3 Examples of Internal and External Activities of the GPA

In 2000, the GPA struck the first major sponsorship deal for a group of individual players of Gaelic games. This defied GAA ruling at the time which forbade players from engaging in commercial activity. The sponsorship deal established with Carphone Warehouse introduced the first GPA Player Scholarship Scheme. In 2001, the introduction of formal ‘Player Entitlements’ saw improvements in conditions, mileage rate increase, gear provisions, and meals for intercounty players. After the GPA published an actuaries report into the financial losses incurred by county players, the GAA changed the rules on restricting players from engaging in commercial activity. In 2006, the First Annual GPA Players’ Team Awards were established. A three-year sponsorship deal of the Players Awards by SEAT saw the players’ bodies financial future strengthened and the hurler and footballer of the year presented with a new car each, further enhancing the commercial appeal of county players. In 2008, a government grants scheme was administered to every GPA member. As well as this, 56 third-level students received a GPA scholarship, making its student programme the largest of its kind in Gaelic games. The GPA became a member of EU Athletes in 2009, in which they subsequently hold a position on the board. They are also members of UNI Global Union. The year, 2010 saw the GPA launch the Player Development Programme to assist players with life off the field providing support services for players in education, career development, personal coaching, and health and wellbeing. In 2012, as demand for the Player Development Programme and services increased, the GPA established an Advisory Board in New

York to assist with fundraising and promotional activity in the USA. In 2013, the multi Award winning emotional health and wellbeing campaign – 'WeWearMore' was also launched, promoting mental wellbeing within GPA membership and in wider Irish society. In 2014, the GPA published 'Gambling: A Guide for County Players and Our Games' and the Player Development Programme continued to grow with 'transformational impacts on players'. This programme was subsequently recognised internationally as a world leader in the personal development of athletes. In 2015, the GPA was a leading voice in important societal issues such as the Yes Equality Referendum and they were a strong advocate for charities such as Headstrong, Pieta House, Red Cross Irish flood relief, Unicef, Childhood Cancer Foundation, and SOAR, through the GPA Social Responsibility Programme. It is clear that the GPA harness the status of intercounty players as role models and leaders in their community in order to 'promote positive societal messages (GPA, 2019). Perhaps it is hoped that by supporting these charities the GPA can benefit from increased marketing (Brown, 2014), an ethical and trustworthy corporate identity (Fuoli, 2017) and greater networking opportunities. The GPA Madden Leadership Programme was also established in 2015 for county players with financial support from a US donor. In 2016, a new comprehensive agreement was secured valued at €6.2 million per annum. For the first time ever, GPA funding was linked to a percentage of GAA commercial income, thought to be 17%. Players now also had a greater say in policy decisions of GAA. The GPA has negotiated three Framework Agreements with the GAA. Following the most recent GAA/GPA Recognition Protocol 2017–2019 agreement, both organisations acknowledged that in order to establish the full extent of the demands being placed on senior intercounty players, comprehensive research and analysis was required. The various internal activities undertaken by the GPA in 2017 may be seen in Figure 5.

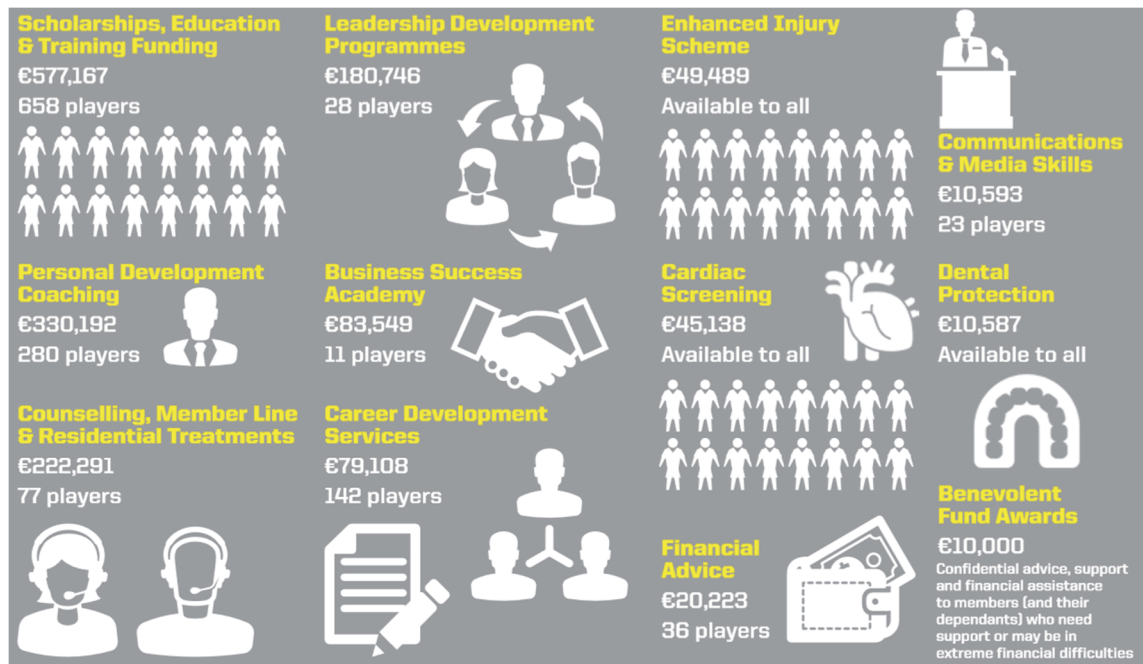


Figure 5. Financial highlights of the GPA 2017.

4.2.4 Summary of Literature Overview

By examining the GPA under the above headings, the scene has been set for the investigation of the formation, impact and evolution of the WGPA in this chapter. The GPA has provided the study with valuable insight into a Gaelic games player association, being the closest relation of the WGPA not only in Ireland but also Europe and the World. While it is expected that many of the internal and external activities carried out by the WGPA are very similar to the GPA, there will also be many differences. The progression of the WGPA relative to its age will also be taken into consideration, relative to the GPA’s development during similar periods. However, the WGPA will predominantly be measured off of their own experiences and existence.

4.3 Methods of Investigation

4.3.1 Timeline of Methods

Phase 1

(a) Start a timeline associated with the formation of the WGPA and activities undertaken

(c) Mapping of events leading up to and including the formation of the WGPA

Phase 2

(d) Survey to assess the current needs of the members of the WGPA and to examine awareness of the current members to the role and function of the WGPA

Phase 3

(e) Focus group interviews with WGPA committee and key members

Phase 4

(f) Interviews with stakeholders to provide insight into relevance of WGPA in wider context of WIS in Ireland

(h) Analysis of all up to date WGPA reports and documents, to enhance the understanding of the role and function of the WGPA. This information could be used to inform future decision making and direction of the association.

4.3.2 Mixed Methods Data Collection

As previously mentioned in Chapter One the methodology utilised in this research and in particular Chapter Four of the research, has been referred to as a ‘mixed method’ approach (Cresswell, 2006, p. 5), defined as an approach that ‘combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for the broad purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration’ (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 123). This must not be confused with multi-methods research that uses combinations of methods that result in the same kind of data (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Two main collection techniques were used in the generation of data. Quantitative data was yielded by the participants’ completion of questionnaires, which allowed for the identification of issues, trends and patterns in both camogie and ladies football; before and after the foundation of the WGPA as well as painting a picture of the reality of being a female intercounty player in 2017. The questionnaires consisted of a mix of open, closed and Likert scale style questions (see Appendix L). The qualitative research consisted primarily of focus group interviews with the participants; this involved open-ended questions in which the participants were encouraged to voice their opinion. However, attendance at meetings, content analysis of meeting minutes, field notes, content analysis of websites and social media platforms, and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders were also carried out as part of the qualitative research and which aided in the construction of a timeline of events for the WGPA (Table 9). Such approaches have previously been used and recommended in the literature (Becker, et al., 2002; Butterfoss et al., 2006). Therefore, while the data from the surveys, focus groups and interviews act as the backbone for this study, the reality of change has also been captured and documented in real time.

4.3.2.1 Quantitative

4.3.2.1.1 Questionnaire

The participants for the questionnaire were all members of the WGPA because it was purely a survey of members only as the aim was to focus on intercounty player’s needs and experiences. The data collected reflects the micro level of the study. All members had the right to abstain from taking part. Exclusion criteria entailed of membership of the WGPA being a mandatory requirement to participate in the survey. It is important that the number and range of participants in a questionnaire survey reflect with reasonable accuracy, the population from which it is drawn (Rowley, 2014, p. 160-162). For the purpose of this research it was important that the sample size was representative of the WGPA population in Ireland (Rowley, 2014).

Table 10. Details of WGPA survey respondents.

Total WGPA Members	Total Respondent Members	% of Completion
1277 Members	459 Members	35.9%
55 Squads	55 Squads	100%

Table 10 shows a total of 459 players responded to the survey out of a total of 1277 members, from 55 squads (ladies football = 32, camogie = 23) across the 32 counties of Ireland. No personal data was gathered on the players to ensure confidentiality and to align with (General Data Protection Regulation) GDPR principles (Citizens Information, 2018). An e-mail was sent out to all the members from the WGPA administrator, informing them of the research that was being undertaken and asking them to complete the survey. This took place prior to GDPR coming into force across the EU in May 2018. The WGPA administrator was the only person with access the WGPA member’s email accounts as the administrator is the only person who deals with the players. This was followed up with an e-email and an attachment to the survey. At least one round of reminders, a week or two after the first questionnaire ‘distribution’ were also sent, in order to optimize the response rate (Rowley, 2014). All members of the WGPA are required to use the internet for registration. Therefore, it was reasonable to assume that the questionnaire population could be targeted effectively using the computer administered on-line survey tool, Survey Monkey®. The use of a computer administered survey in this research was considered advantageous as the researcher was therefore not confined by certain constraints such as the cost of a postal questionnaire (Arber, 1993; Kumar, 2006; Parahoo, 2006) and made it possible to distribute and obtain the information electronically, thus improving the quality of presentation, reducing data entry, saving time and improving the accuracy of the data (Rosenfeld, Booth-Kewley and Edwards, 1993).

The questionnaire used in this research was designed by the researcher and was based on an in depth review of literature to ensure the comprehensiveness of each item (Brewer and Cornelius, 2001; Hale et al., 1999; Martin, Eklund and Mushett, 1997; WGPA Report, 2014). The questionnaire was designed in such a way that participants were required to complete each of the questions, minimising missing answers often found in paper formats. Dillman et al. (2014) have described and tested a tailored design method for survey research. Improving the visual appeal and graphics of surveys by using a font size appropriate for the respondents, ordering items logically without creating unintended response bias, and arranging items clearly on each page can increase the response rate to electronic questionnaires. Attending to these and other issues in electronic questionnaires can help reduce measurement error such as lack of validity or reliability) and help ensure a better response rate. All such design methods were followed in this research.

It was also important that the questions were objective and designed to measure the main constructs (realities of playing - commitment, standards experienced, financial cost, social cost, wellbeing cost; athletic identity measurement, impact of WGPA). In general, the order of questions should be clear, often with questions clustered under theme or section headings. Often earlier questions set the context for later questions (Rowley, 2014). The layout of the questionnaire can be found in Table 11.

Table 11. WGPA questionnaire layout.

Section	Theme	Questions
1	About You	1 – 6
2	Playing History	7 – 17
3	Intercounty Playing Experience	18 – 38
4	Athletic Identity Measurement Scale	39
5	Perceptions of Player Representation Group	40 - 44

Conducting a similar study to one that was conducted earlier but in a different context, can be a valuable addition to knowledge (Rowley, 2014). Provided that sources are acknowledged and the questions are adapted to specific research questions, this is not cheating; it is simply using questions that have already been ‘piloted’ and making it easier to compare research with previous research and to make a clear claim about what is new in the findings (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The questionnaire composed to answer the research questions of this chapter, was informed by the survey used for the ‘Let’s Make Things Better: A Profile of Intercounty Ladies Football and Camogie Players’ with many of the questions being adapted.

As mentioned previously, the questionnaires consisted of a mix of open and closed style questions. Closed questions are quick for respondents (which may increase response rate), and the responses to closed questions are easier to code and analyse, which is particularly important if the number of questionnaires collected is quite large (n=459). Open questions are useful for collecting more in-depth insights, and allow respondents to use their own language and express their own views. However, since they are more time consuming to complete and to analyse, they should only be used when they are the best option. In light of these guidelines, there were only three open questions used in the questionnaire. Questionnaires may include demographic questions in addition to valid and reliable research instruments (Costanzo et al., 2012; DuBenske et al., 2014; Ponto et al., 2010). The demographic questions were largely contained in Section 1 and Section 2 (see Appendix L). Athletic Identity (AI) may be understood as how athlete-subjects, who practice a sport in a systematic and professional way, build the notion of themselves, in relation to the emotions of their interpersonal living and their interactions resulting from sporting practices (Brewer et al., 1993). Studies regarding this subject have shown that this is a social construct, clearly influenced by friends, family, colleagues, trainers, and the sporting context. Brewer et al. (1993) proposed a standardized, psychometrically sound instrument for its evaluation, the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS), which many national and international studies have broadly used to evaluate AI in different sports (Brewer et al. 2010; Fish and Eklund, 2004; Grove, Lamont-Mills and Christensen, 2006; Martin, Eklund and Mushett, 1997; Tasiemski, et al., 2004). Since the early development of the AIMS, researchers have been examining its validity to improve the measurement tool (Brewer and Cornelius, 2001; Hale, James and Stambulova, 1999; Martin, Eklund, and Mushett, 1997). The AIMS was originally written as an 11-item Likert scale instrument, though preliminary analysis of the items led to one of the questions being removed from the instrument, as it showed little variance across respondents (Brewer, Boin and Peptitpas, 1993). Successive trials with the AIMS have led to the evolution of the scale to 10 item and 7 item versions. For this research study a 10 item, pre-validated version of the AIMS is used. The 10 items encompass social identity, self-identity, exclusivity and affective elements of athletic identity (see Appendix L). Each item was rated by the participants on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The items evaluated the thoughts and feelings from athletes' daily experiences. Social identity (Items 3,7), Self-identity (Items 1,2), Negative affectivity (Items 8, 10), and Exclusivity (Items 4, 5, 9).

Once items for the questionnaire were written, the researcher progressed through a series of steps to ensure that each item was clear, unambiguous and appropriate to measure the key construct. This included lengthy discussions with the main supervisors to assess how well the item was

associated with the research aims and proposed constructs. The readability of each item was then assessed and where possible words, sentence length and phrasing were changed to simplify language. Baker and Foy (2008) suggest that piloting tests both the questions (for variation, meaning, difficulty, and respondent interest and attention), and the questionnaire (for ‘flow’, question order, skip patterns, timing, respondent interest, and respondent well-being). A preliminary pilot, just to check that the questions make sense, can be conducted with friends and colleagues, but at least a few questionnaires should be completed by a member of the selected population that is being targeted. One of the advantages of conducting a pilot study is that it can provide advanced warning regarding weakness in a proposed study. These include: where research protocols might not be followed, or whether proposed instruments or methods are inappropriate or too complicated (De Vaus, 1993). Pilot testing ensures that a research instrument can be used properly and that the information obtained is consistent. For this research study pilot questionnaires were sent via email and text message to a selection of WGPA members via the administrator of the WGPA.

4.3.2.2 Qualitative

4.3.2.2.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups have been identified as a research approach that compliments other data collection strategies, in particular quantitative data strategies as is done in this study (Johnson and Christensen, 2012). ‘Focus groups typically allow for emphasis of a specific theme or topic that is explored in depth,’ (Bryman, 2016, p. 346). Focus groups permit certain particular themes to be examined and discussed, with the interaction of the group leading to data and outcomes (Cohen et al., 2000). Despite the seemingly contrived environment of the interviews, the focused nature of the agenda has been proven to yield and produce very meaningful insights from the interaction of the group. ‘The focus group offers the researcher the opportunity to study the ways in which individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon and construct meanings around it,’ (Bryman, 2016, p. 348). They also allow the participants to highlight the most pressing or important matters to them, ‘...participants are able to bring to the fore issues in relation to a topic that they deem to be important or significant,’ (Bryman, 2016, p. 348). An interviewer can use probing comments to obtain more information about a question or topic and can request clarification of an unclear response (Singleton and Straits, 2009). The researcher felt it would make more logical sense to conduct the focus groups after the questionnaire was completed so that the participant felt adequately equipped with vocabulary to express themselves. This is supported by Cohen et al. (2000, p. 288) ‘participants have something to say and feel comfortable saying it’. A set of

predetermined themes guided the focus group conversations (Appendix N). The focus group interviews were transcribed word for word.

The focus group participants included a random sample of seven players who are members of the WGPA. Parahoo (1996) states that focus groups consisting of 6-8 participating members enables the researcher to engage in in-depth enquiry. Players were contacted via email and were requested to take part in a focus group held in Carton House, County Kildare (see Appendix M). A mandatory requirement to participate in the focus group was that they had to be members of the WGPA who were also current intercounty players. Six camogie players and six Ladies Footballers were contacted with the view that there would be at least one camogie player and one ladies footballer representing a county from each of the four provinces, Ulster, Connacht, Leinster and Munster. It was also important that an even spread of playing grades was represented by the participants. Eight players agreed to participate (see Table 12).

Table 12. Geographical spread of focus group participants.

Province	Ladies Football	Camogie
Munster	Clare	N/A
Leinster	Meath	Kilkenny
Connacht	Leitrim, Mayo	Galway
Ulster	Down	Derry

Participants engaged in the focus group directly after attending the 2018 WGPA AGM therefore they were provided with key information pertaining to up to date services available to players, the structure and governance of the WGPA, as well as financial state. Participants had also engaged in group discussions with players across all counties and grades in relation to areas players felt need to be improved in the future. The group participated in a morning workshop on communication and change, reflecting on their personal strengths and ability as leaders. Many shared experiences and areas for development came to the fore, with players identifying positive contributions they can make for their teammates. Having explained the purpose of the focus group to participants, verbal consent was confirmed and the discussion was digitally audio recorded. The focus group was conducted in a meeting room of a hotel.

4.3.2.2.2 Field Notes

The researcher followed the advice of Mack et al. (2005) who found that informal conversation and interaction with members of the study population are important components of qualitative research. They suggest these are recorded in the form of field notes; in as much detail as possible as they can serve as a check against participants’ subjective reporting of what they believe and

do. Participant observation is also useful for gaining an understanding of the relationships among and between people, contexts, ideas, norms, and events; and people’s behaviours and activities – what they do, how frequently, and with whom (Jorgensen, 1989). Observation is the purposeful, selective and systematic way of watching and listening to an interaction or a phenomenon as it takes place (Kumar, 2006). Researchers can also uncover factors necessary for a thorough understanding of the research problem that were unknown when the study was designed, such as potential challenges; it may face (Mack et al., 2005). The researcher was able to gain an insight into the group dynamics, roles, decision-making process and some of the particular issues that arose during the research timeline. The field notes were recorded by the author during various workshops and meetings held by the WGPA throughout the research process.

4.3.2.2.3 Timeline

The timelines of events compiled by the researcher (Table 9, section 4.1), tracking the evolution of the WGPA pre 2015, was done so primarily by conducting a very detailed content analysis of the WGPA twitter account from it’s very first tweet until the current time. All significant events and milestones were included in the timeline. The methods used to construct the timeline were similar to those found in section 3.3.1.3.

4.3.2.2.4 Interviews

The methods used for the interviews with stakeholders, conducted to provide insight into where the WGPA fit in the wider context of WIS in Ireland, can be found in Chapter Three, section 3.3.1.1.

4.3.3 Mixed Methods Data Analysis

4.3.3.1 Quantitative

The following stages of quantitative data analysis were undertaken:

- Checking questionnaires for completion
- Entering data into chosen data analysis software
- Checking and cleaning the data set.
- Understanding the nature of data

Quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed using SPSS Version 22.0. SPSS can help you to check and verify data, and to generate descriptive statistics and charts and graphs to describe and explore data (Rowley, 2014). This package was exceptionally useful for the computation of the data due to the existence of essential features that allowed the author to address the research questions and determine the results of the study as advised by (Paura and

Arhipova, 2014). Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. The data was examined to discover possible important findings using predominantly descriptive statistics. This included finding the mean, standard deviation and frequency for all items in the questionnaire. Total mean scores were also obtained. Typically, the output of univariate analysis is a frequency table, or a chart or diagram (Rowley, 2014). Bivariate analysis focuses on the relationships between two variables. Bivariate analysis was carried out on Q 39. For the open - ended questions in the questionnaire, the key components of qualitative data analysis were discussed in section 3.3.2. These procedures were in accordance with the recommendation by the WIT School of Health Science research ethics in relation to focus group protocol. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was used to calculate internal consistency of the questionnaire. Recoding of the items was conducted where applicable to ensure that all items were scored in the same direction (i.e. positive or negative) and therefore all positively correlated. The test-retest reliability coefficient was .89 ($r=.89$), and the Cronbach’s alpha score was .723, which according to the researchers, indicated the stability of the scores and provided support for the scale’s psychometric integrity.

4.3.3.2 Qualitative

Similar to Chapter Three, section 3.3.2, content analysis methods were used in the analysis of the qualitative data for Chapter Four. These methods complemented the macro-meso-micro framework underpinning the research, mentioned previously in Chapter One, section 1.4. Regarding the analysis of the focus group data specifically, the themes identified may be found in Appendix P.

In relation to the qualitative analysis of the field notes recorded, the field notes were typed up and expanded into richer descriptions (Blackstone, 2012). Guba (1978) states the necessity of the conversion of field notes and observations and their organization into systematic categories of analysis by looking for recurrent regularities in the data which represent patterns that can be sorted into categories (Patton, 1990). Therefore, the researcher looked for patterns across the notes by coding the data (Blackstone, 2012; Mack et al., 2005). Not only did this approach act as a means of triangulation but also allowed a more in depth exploration of the emerging trends represented in the quantitative technique and by using multiple sources the researcher was able to improve the insight into the findings of Chapter Four as ‘no single source of evidence has complete advantage over all the others’ (Yin, 2014, p. 80).

4.4 Results

Results from the qualitative and quantitative data will now be presented in order to answer research question two: ‘WGPA evolution, formation and impact – What will the examination of the evolution, formation and possible impact of the WGPA tell us about the role and position of women in sport in Ireland today?’ The results will be structured so that each part of the research question may be reported on to the greatest level of accuracy. This section will be structured as follows:

- WGPA Formation: History, Set Up, Realities and Need
- WGPA Impact: General Perceptions, Internal Activities, External Activities
- WGPA Evolution: Evolving Structure, Evolving Needs and Future Direction

As data was collected from a number of different sources referenced in section 4.3, the results from these sources will be interspersed throughout this section in order to provide the most holistic and precise overview and summary of the formation, impact and evolution of the WGPA.

4.4.1 Formation of the WGPA

4.4.1.1 History of Set Up - Need for the WGPA

Dr Aoife Lane, founder of the WGPA, had previously sat on the Player Welfare Committee set up by the Camogie Association in 2009. Their aim was to promote health, safety and welfare issues along with investigating matters in relation to player injuries, injury prevention, player insurance and nutrition. However, Lane, a lecturer at the time in Exercise and Health Studies at Waterford IT, felt its remit was too broad as it sought to deal with a myriad of issues relating to players from underage to adult, from club to county (Glennon, 2015). Lane explained the notion of the WGPA had originally been raised by GPA president and former Cork hurler Dónal Óg Cusack, speaking at the Camogie All-Stars in 2013. He asked why weren’t female intercounty players in the GPA (Shannon, 2015). ‘I [Aoife Lane] was interested and followed it up and went to meet the GPA at the time and then got some (county) players together.’ (Sportstalk.ie, 2017). When meeting with the 14 intercounty players she had gathered, she acknowledged that ‘within half an hour of that meeting it was very obvious there was a need for this. It was just the sharing of stories. Like being asked to leave dressing rooms because the lads needed them. Having to pay to train on a county board’s grounds. Not having hot showers. The fact we had seven or eight different counties around the table, they were all kind of going ‘Oh, it’s like that for you too?’ We realised then that this was a national problem’ and while they’d entered that meeting room thinking they’d look to be absorbed into the GPA, they left realising they needed their own group (Shannon, 2015). They

came to the conclusion that 'no, we are not going to tolerate it' (Glennon, 2015). Lane said of the movement 'I suppose, if you have a collective voice and people are aware that you have a national group taking this on, it might make people think twice of letting it happen on both sides – the administration side and the players side.' (Glennon, 2015) and by working with county players only, it was hoped that their activity on the matter would have a knock-on effect in that 'it will also benefit the club players by raising expectations and standards. You would hope that might filter down and that everyone will benefit' (Glennon, 2015).

Following this initial informal research, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Lane followed up by compiling 'Let's Make Things Better – A Profile of Intercounty Ladies Football and Camogie Players' (WGPA, 2014), a survey of 586 intercounty ladies footballers and camogie players in 2014, in order to gather more concrete information about the experiences of female intercounty players in Ireland. The report found that approximately only 33% of players had access to hot showers at training, only 7% of respondents indicated that they received expenses for travelling to training, 62% did not receive payment for expenses associated with injuries and 63% indicated they had been 'out of pocket' on some occasions due to county commitments, particularly due to injury. Some key concluding points from the report indicated that 99.6% of players were of a national player representative group who would advocate and provide for players in a playing, personal, and professional context, and were willing to work collectively to promote related player led initiatives and their sport.

As mentioned in section 4.1 the WGPA was formally launched in January 2015 at a reception in the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin. The main message of the morning was that the WGPA was set up to represent, listen to, and support ladies footballers and camogie players who represent their county at the highest level in their sport. The WGPA ensured that they would commit to improving the playing, personal and professional lives of its members while also promoting players as role models and advocates for the national games. The aims of the WGPA match those of many player associations around the world (Dabscheck, 2017). The 'Let's Make Things Better' report (WGPA, 2014) is the only published research investigating the realities of the female intercounty player experience to date. Therefore, section 4.4.1.2 will provide an update to this research, in the context of the post WGPA set up era.

4.4.1.2 Realities of Being a Female Intercounty Athlete in 2017 - Reaffirming the Need for the Set Up of the WGPA

Details of the participants of the interviews and focus group interviews are provided in section 3.3.1.1 and section 4.3.2.2.1 respectively. Table 13 offers insight to the demographics of the respondents of the questionnaire completed by WGPA members in 2017 for the purpose of this research.

Table 13. Details of the demographics of WGPA questionnaire respondents.

Demographics Questions (n = 459)	Frequency	%Total	Mean	SD
Age				
16 – 20 years	157	34.7%	23.18	4.600
21 – 30 years	267	59.1%		
>30 years	28	6.2%		
Code				
Ladies Football	166	56.4%	1.66	0.568
Camogie	242	38.7%		
Dual	21	4.9%		
Occupation				
Employed	218	47.5%	2.03	0.991
Studying	232	50.5%		
Unemployed	9	2.0%		
Education				
Some/Complete 2 nd Level	98	21.4%	1.79	0.410
Some complete 3 rd Level	361	78.6%		
Area of Education				
Science	51	12.7%	3.72	1.781
Business	82	20.4%		
Arts	39	9.7%		
Health Sciences	101	25.1%		
Engineering	13	3.2%		
Education	116	28.9%		
Current Occupation				
Academic/Research/Teaching	48	18.7%	8.21	4.855
Advertising/PR/Marketing	6	2.3%		
Childhood/Youth/Social Work	6	2.3%		
Engineering/Manufacturing/Processing	4	1.6%		
Environmental/Agriculture	2	0.8%		
Financial Services	29	11.3%		
Government and Public Services	15	5.8%		
Health Care	39	5.2%		
IT	1	0.4%		
Law	1	0.4%		
Property and Housing	21	8.2%		
Retail/Sales	28	10.9%		
Science/Mathematics	3	1.2%		

Demographics Questions (n = 459)	Frequency	%Total	Mean	SD
Sport/Leisure/Event Management	19	7.4%		
Other	35	13.6%		

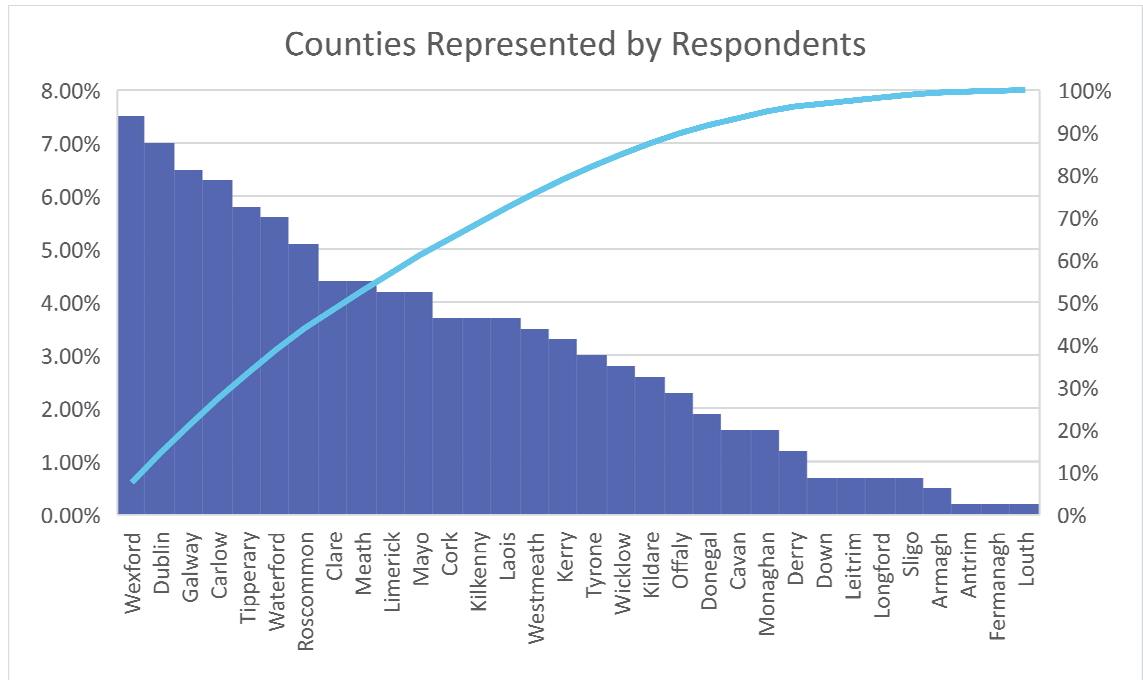


Figure 6. Geographical spread of questionnaire respondents.

Wexford and Dublin were the counties with the highest number of respondents while Antrim, Fermanagh, Louth had the lowest. Figure 6 also shows that there were players from all 32 counties represented within the data.

4.4.1.2.1 Realities of Self-identity and Commitment levels

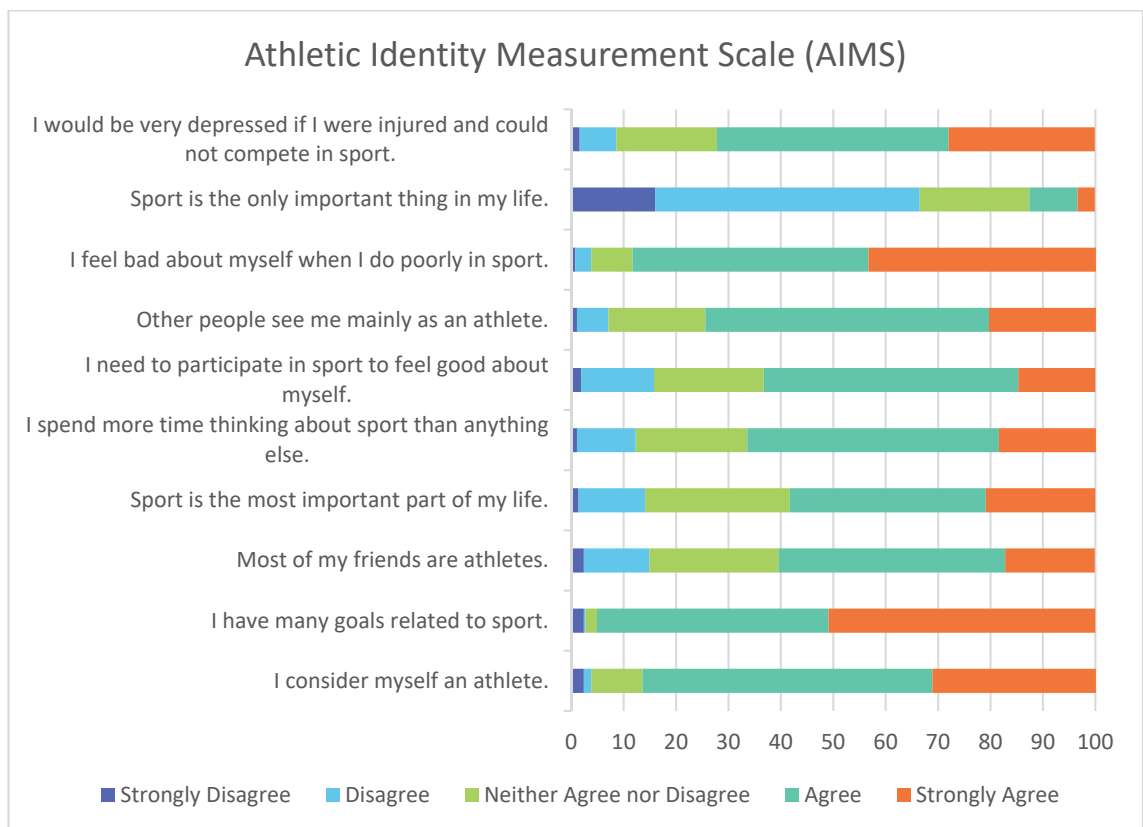


Figure 7. AIMS ratings.

Figure 7 shows the results from the AIMS. This was deemed important to contextualise the players’ views on their own athletic identity given the perceived stature of women’s sport. Figure 7 also shows that in 2017, 87.5% of WGPA members surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that they identify as athletes, 66.5% agreed or strongly agreed that they spend more time thinking about sport than anything else and 58.3% agreed or strongly agreed cited sport is the most important parts of their life.

Table 14. Results of questions relating to commitment levels of WGPA members detailing frequency, %, mean and SD of no. of teams representing, no. of training sessions attended and length of training sessions.

	Frequency	%	Mean	SD
No. of Teams Representing				
1 Team	10	2.3%	2.84	1.061
2 Teams	174	40.7%		
3 Teams	165	38.9%		
4 Teams	51	11.9%		
5 Teams	19	4.4%		
6 Teams	9	2.1%		
No. of Collective County Training Sessions Attended Per Week				

	Frequency	%	Mean	SD
1-2 times	74	19.2%		
3-4 times	302	78.4%		
5-6 times	9	2.3%		
Everyday	0	0.0%		
Average Length of Collective County Training Session				
Less than 1 hour	1	0.3%		
1 – 1.5 hours	306	79.5%		
>1.5 hours	78	20.3%		
Participation in Collective Club Training Sessions During Week				
Yes	272	71.0%	1.29	0.454
No	111	29.0%		
Represented College at 3rd Level Competitions in Past Year				
Yes	217	54.3%	1.46	0.499
No	183	45.8%		

Table 14 shows that, in 2017, 79.6% of respondents were members of two or more teams, 80.7% were training more than two times per week with their county and 71% were participating in additional training sessions with their club.

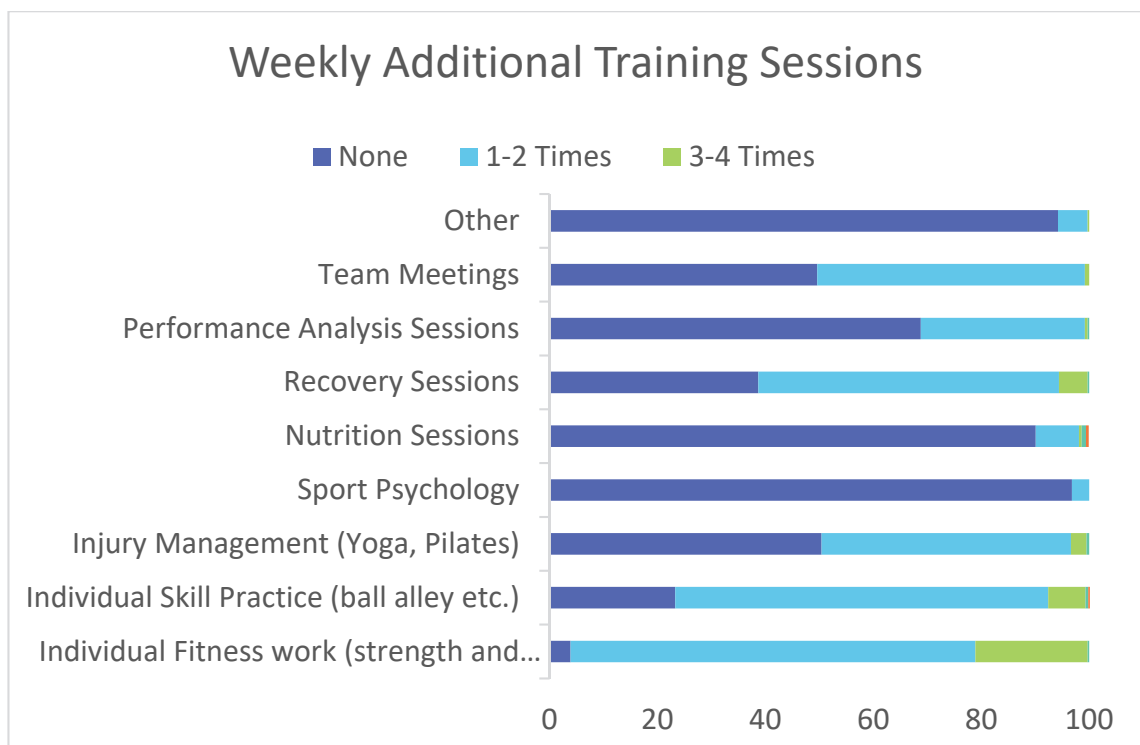


Figure 8. Details of types of additional training sessions attended per week by WGPA members.

Figure 8 shows that, outside of collective team training sessions, 75% of players surveyed participate extra individual fitness sessions 1-2 times per week, 69.1% participate in extra

individual skill practice 1 - 2 times per week and 55.7% undertake extra recovery sessions 1 - 2 times per week.

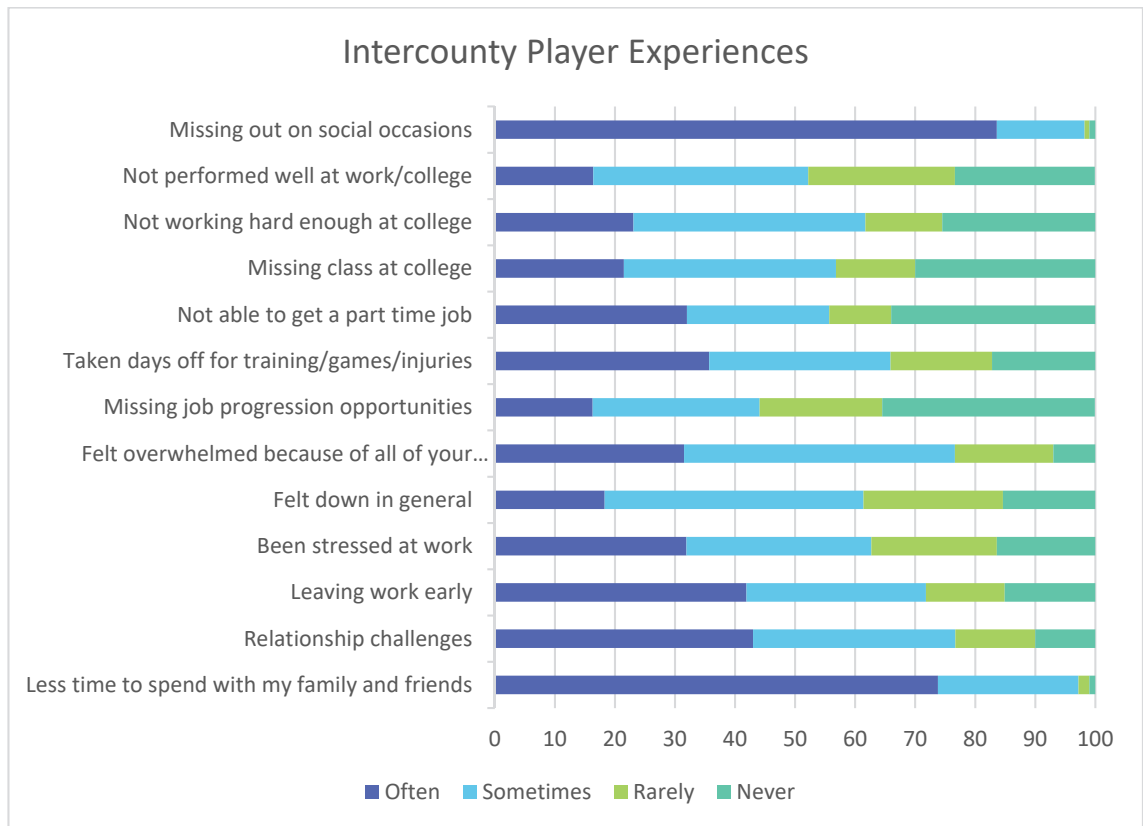


Figure 9. Challenges experiences by WGPA members as a result of being an intercounty player.

Figure 9 shows how as a result of the high level of commitment required by intercounty players, respondents often had less time to spend with family and friends, experienced relationship challenges, missed out on social occasions, were not able to get a part time job, had to take days off work for training/games/injuries and felt overwhelmed because of all of their commitments as an intercounty player. Questionnaire data provides further examples of the sacrifices made by players include having to ‘take unpaid leave from work most Saturdays and needing ‘specific days and evenings off work’ in order to train and to facilitate matches. ‘I could work more hours if I didn't play with my county team’. Injury also presents issues for players ‘if injured I cannot work because it's not a desk job i.e. just had surgery on knee as a result of a county match injury’.

4.4.1.2.2 Realities of Access to Support and Services

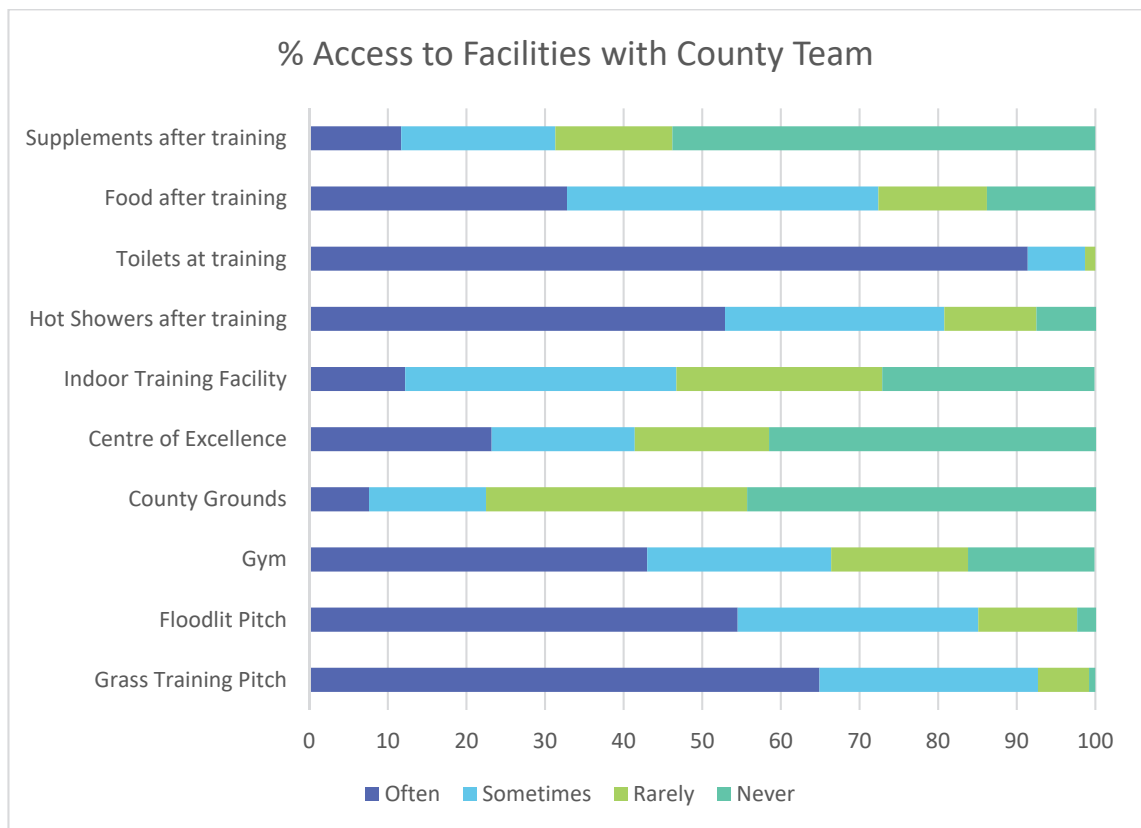


Figure 10. Frequency of access to facilities by intercounty players.

Figure 10 shows that only 52.9% of players often have access to hot showers after training and 32.8% get food. Comparably, the ‘Let’s Make Things Better’ (2014) found that only 33% had access to showers often and 23% got food. While there are increases in both areas since the initial report, the 2017 figures are still low for what should be basic standards for intercounty players especially when compared against male teams. Focus group participant #1 articulated her frustrations with the following statement:

‘I think sometimes our experience is just the lack of consistency. Sometimes we would have access to Centres of Excellence which would mean we would have showers, we would have pitches, we would have lights (which is obviously excellent) but there are other times of the year where we cannot get a pitch at all within the county. I think it is consistency that we are looking for – to have that minimal standard at the very least (and nothing short of that) – i.e. the availability of a pitch, availability of showers etc. We trained for a couple of sessions on the back pitch of a rugby club – we actually got the damaged scrum pitch – where there were no toilets, no showers, no changing rooms at all on that pitch.’

Focus group participant #2 shared her views on the matter also; ‘available facilities are still very much at the discretion of the men. The men take priority. We have been told in the last few sessions that we are now allowed to shower because the men want to close up at a certain time.’

Everything is controlled by the men.’ The following comment from a questionnaire respondent also included details of the struggle she experiences as a result of the high level of commitment required of her accompanied by poor levels of access to support and services ‘I am studying for my Leaving Cert and feel that as a consequence my points will be lower in August but it is a risk I’m willing to take due to the love of the game. It would be made easier if we received hot meals after trainings. But we don’t.’

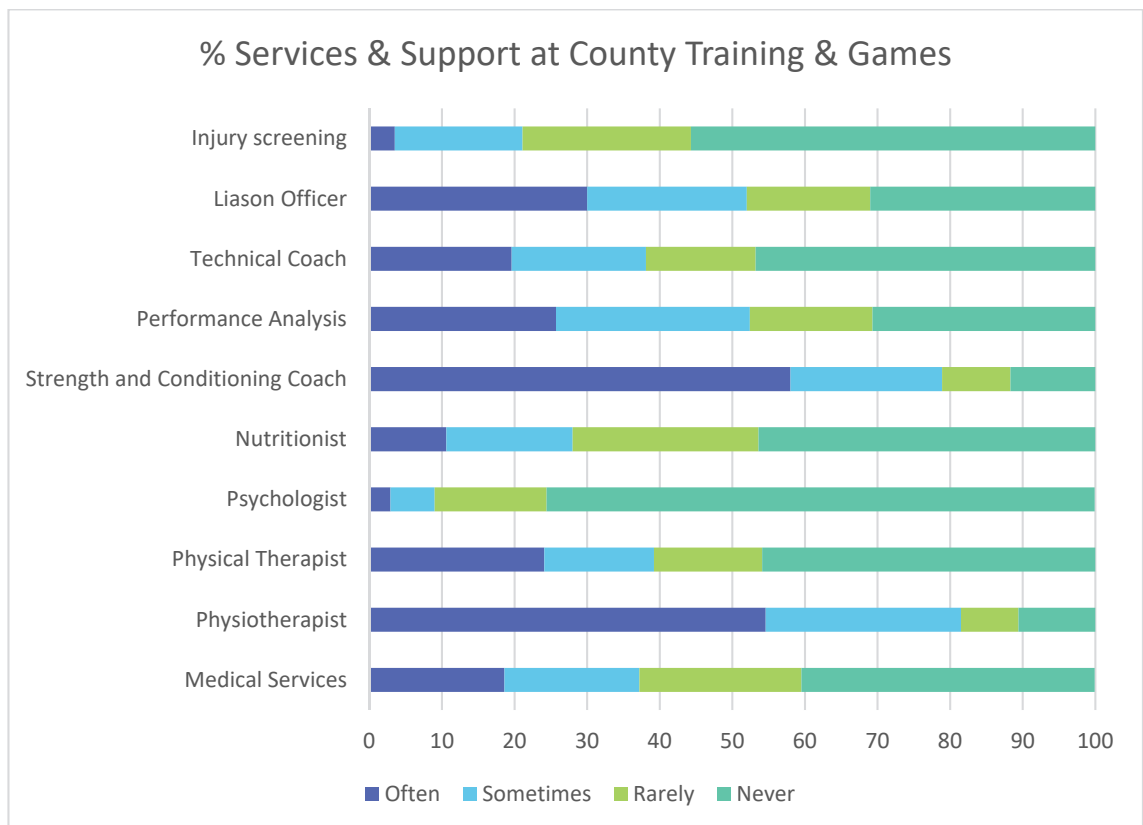


Figure 11. Frequency of access to services and supports by county players at county training sessions and games.

Figure 11 highlights the dearth of sufficient support and services available to players at training and games. Well over half of respondents at 62.7% rarely or never have medical services at training and/or games, 78.9% rarely or never have injury screening and just over half (54.6%) often have access to a physiotherapist. As well as the deficit in adequate medical, injury screening and physiotherapy support services afforded to players, the process of claiming reimbursement for injury expenses is also not of a high standard. Results show that 63.2% of players have had more than one injury during their career to date that has kept them out of playing and training for more than two weeks. Only 44.4% of respondents knew how to claim for an injury, and of those who knew how to claim, only 29% said it was a good process with 35.1% saying it was a poor process. (Fair = 30.9%, Excellent = 4.6%). Only 25% of focus group participants said that their team had a

physio at every training session and match. Focus group participant #2 further stated ‘We have a very good physio who is affiliated to our team but it is €50 a pop... and you have to pay out of your own pocket’. While they can eventually claim through the LGFA injury scheme ‘you are looking at nearly 6 months by the time you get your money back from the time you fill out the relevant forms. It is so tedious.’

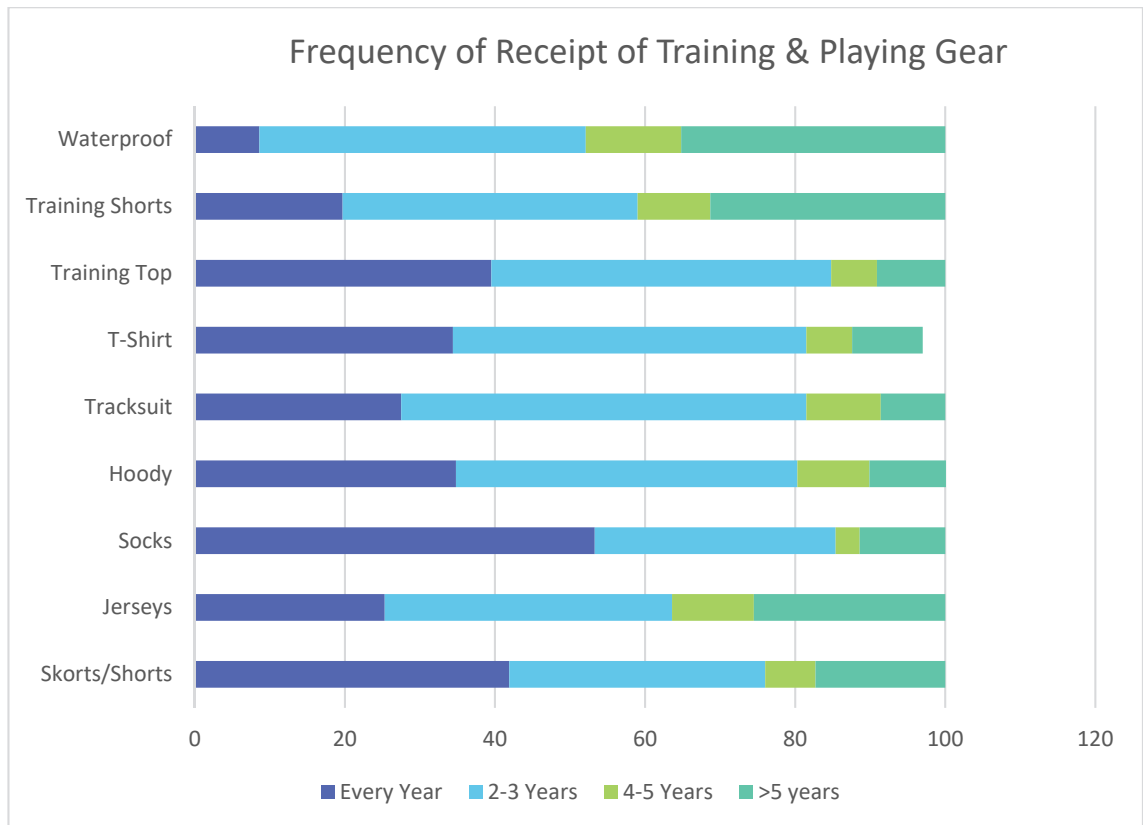


Figure 12. Frequency of receipt of training and playing items of gear by intercounty players.

Figure 12 shows that the majority of players receive most items of training gear only every 2-3 years. Socks are the only item with a greater than one in two chance of being provided to players every year. Most intercounty male teams would receive a new, complete set of training gear including all items in the above list, at the beginning of every new season.

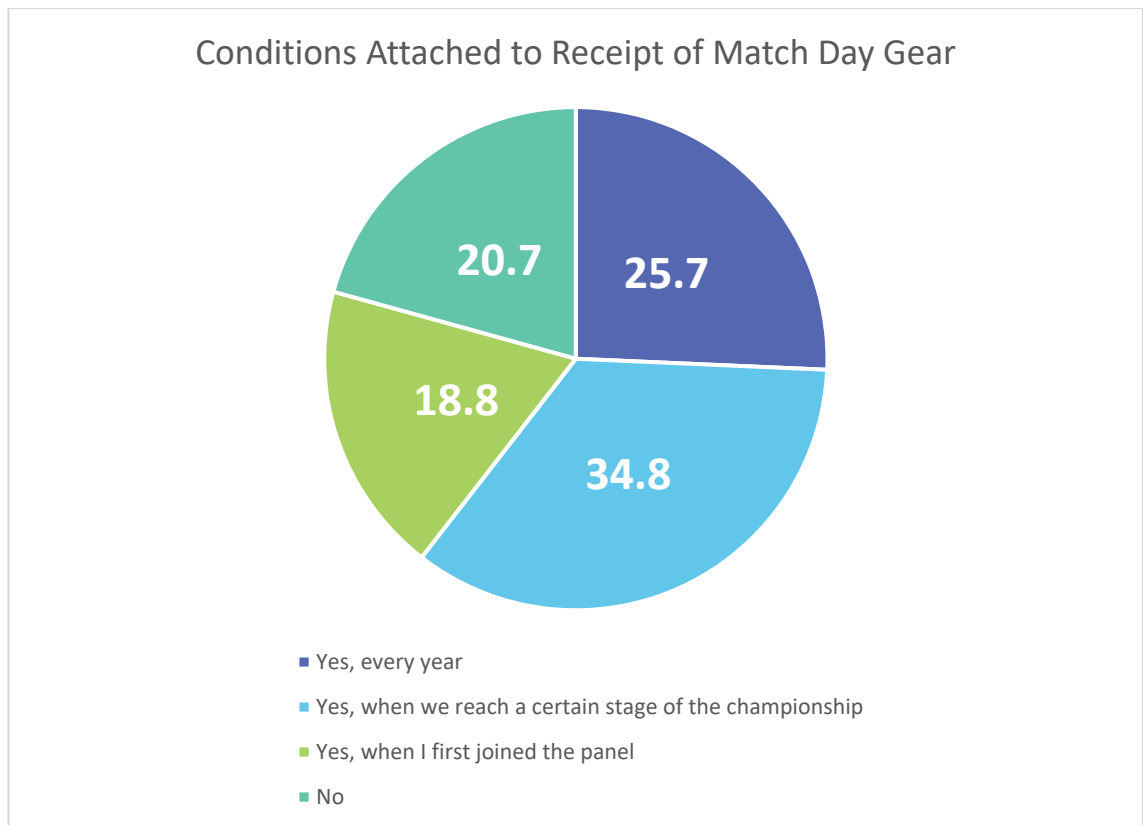


Figure 13. Types of conditions attached to receipt of match day gear by intercounty players.

Figure 13 consolidates data analysed in Figure 12 with the finding that 74.3% of players do not receive match day gear every year unless certain situations arise such as progressing to a certain stage of the championship. Furthermore, 93.5% of intercounty camogie players surveyed purchase their own hurleys. Overall, it appears to be that the WGPA has had a good impact, but female intercounty athletes and WIS in Ireland need more than a players association fighting for their basic needs and minimum playing standards. As was found in Chapter 3, more research, policy and funding are necessary.

4.4.1.2.3 Realities of Financial Difficulties Experienced by Players as a Result of Commitment and Poor Access to Services

Perhaps as a result of players not being provided with free access to many of the supports, services, gear and equipment necessary to compete as an intercounty player, many respondents indicated the financial burden of having to fund these essential requirements themselves.

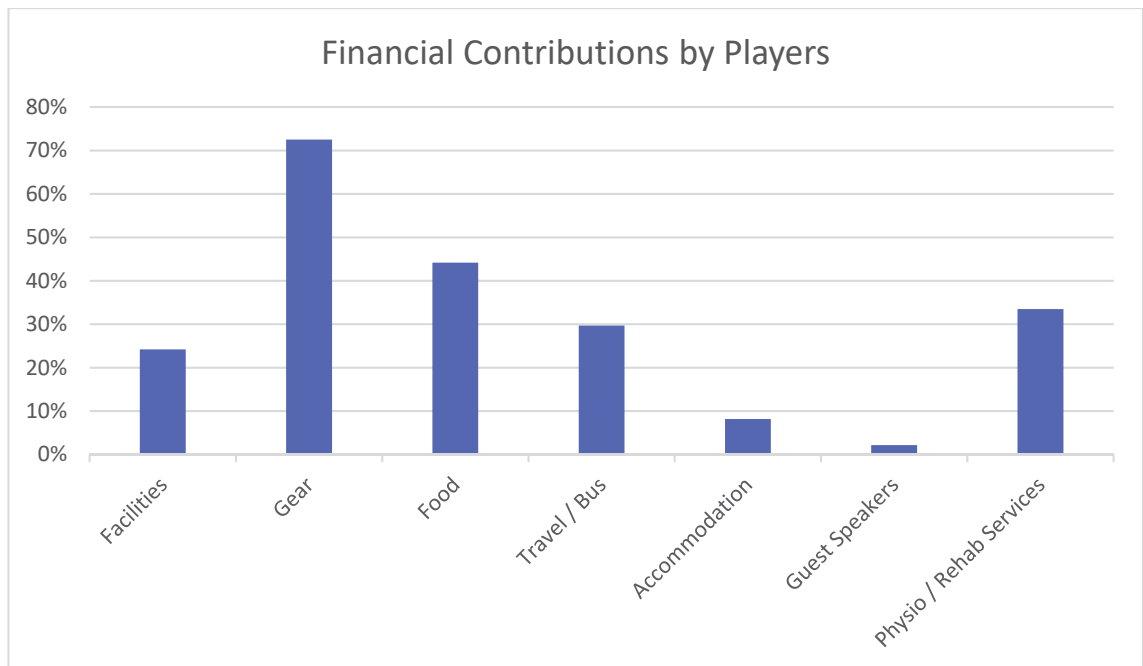


Figure 14. Areas of financial contributions made by intercounty players.

Results found 60% of players indicated that they have lost earnings due to their intercounty commitments. Figure 14 shows the breakdown of the amount of players who are paying to play with their county team. Just under four out of every five intercounty athlete contributes to gear, just over two in every five contribute to food and perhaps most shockingly of all, at least one in every five players in the country must contribute to use the facilities they train/play in. A further 77.6% of players spend up to €40 per week on tailored food and supplements per week for their sport. Focus group participant #3 said that her team:

‘were told everyone had to buy a training top there was no choice but to buy it, and it was €30 to buy. You know, you are giving your time, energy, and then your money!! I mean we obviously want to be there but you shouldn’t really be losing money.’

Another example from a questionnaire respondent describes how they have had to ‘pay €3 per training session and €5 for every bus trip’.

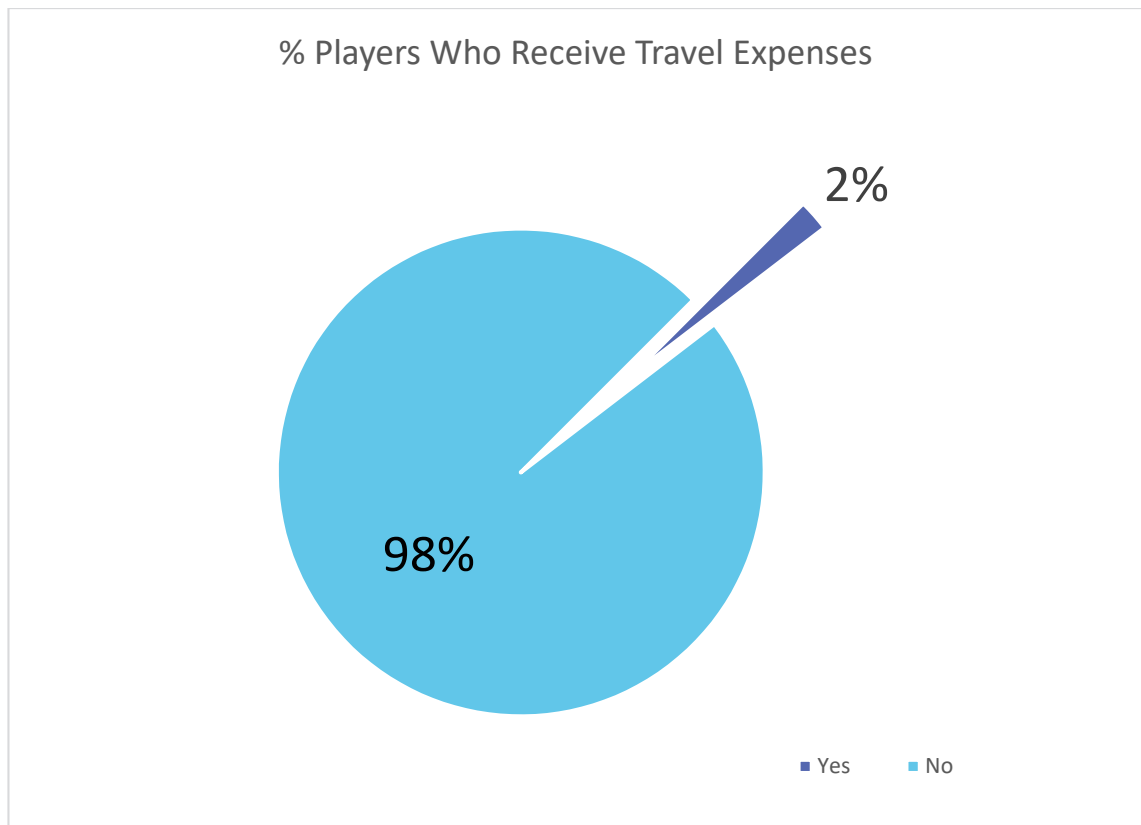


Figure 15. Percentage of intercounty players who receive travel expenses for their intercounty commitments.

Figure 15 shows that travel was found to be a primary cause for lost earnings by 68% of the survey population. The majority of players at 97.9% did not receive travel expenses in 2017 despite 66.3% of players travelling more than 20km to training 3+ times per week with 53.5% travelling alone in their own car, ‘I’m travelling from Waterford city to Limerick 3 times a week - journey of 3 hours up and 3 hours back down. No petrol expenses given’. Petrol and diesel costs are ‘killing’ players, ‘Petrol is the biggest thing for me I spend at least 80-100 euro on petrol a week’. Other players are paying even more, ‘€140 per week between diesel and tolls €2 each session towards training fund’. Players are crying out for reimbursement of these travel expenses ‘After savings, food and diesel money I’m left with very little. I wish there was something in place where players could receive travel expenses or some kind of extra support’.

It is clear from the data presented in this section that WGPA members in 2017 could be described as high performing athletes as a result of their evident commitment to their playing careers and their interaction with the AIMS measurement tool. However, the realities of the conditions experienced by the players in 2017, similar to those mentioned in section 1.3.2 from the ‘Let’s Make Things Better’ report (WGPA, 2014), reaffirm the need for the formation of the WGPA. A clear and recurring theme of insufficient minimum standards for players shows that something had to be done to improve player experiences.

4.4.2 Impact of the WGPA

4.4.2.1 General Perceptions

In relation to the impact of the WGPA on Gaelic games and WIS in Ireland overall, the results seem to indicate that the set-up of the WGPA may be viewed in a positive light. Interviewee #1 praises the set up, ‘I do think the formation of the WGPA was absolutely vital and very effective. I think they’ve done a great job. There was a big vacuum there. I think a lot of the work that they’ve been doing we still haven’t seen the fruits of it yet.’ Interviewee #2 is also full of approval ‘I think the WPGA have done a lot. You can see that from the moment they were set up, that changes had started being made.’ Interviewee #3 agrees but is clear that while there is a lot done there is still a lot left to do,

‘I think improvements have been made in terms of women playing sport in general and how we’re not just accepting the status quo anymore and we’re kind of pushing forward to almost demand more because we deserve it and accepting that we do deserve it rather than just allowing things go the way they are going. But I don’t think we’re where we want to be, and I think in general women aren’t so I think there’s still a lot to do but improvements have been made.’

Interviewee #5 also comes to the same conclusion ‘I think that a voice for women is very good...it just brings a professional level to the sport and I think certainly in relation to high performance that is what women’s sport needs.’

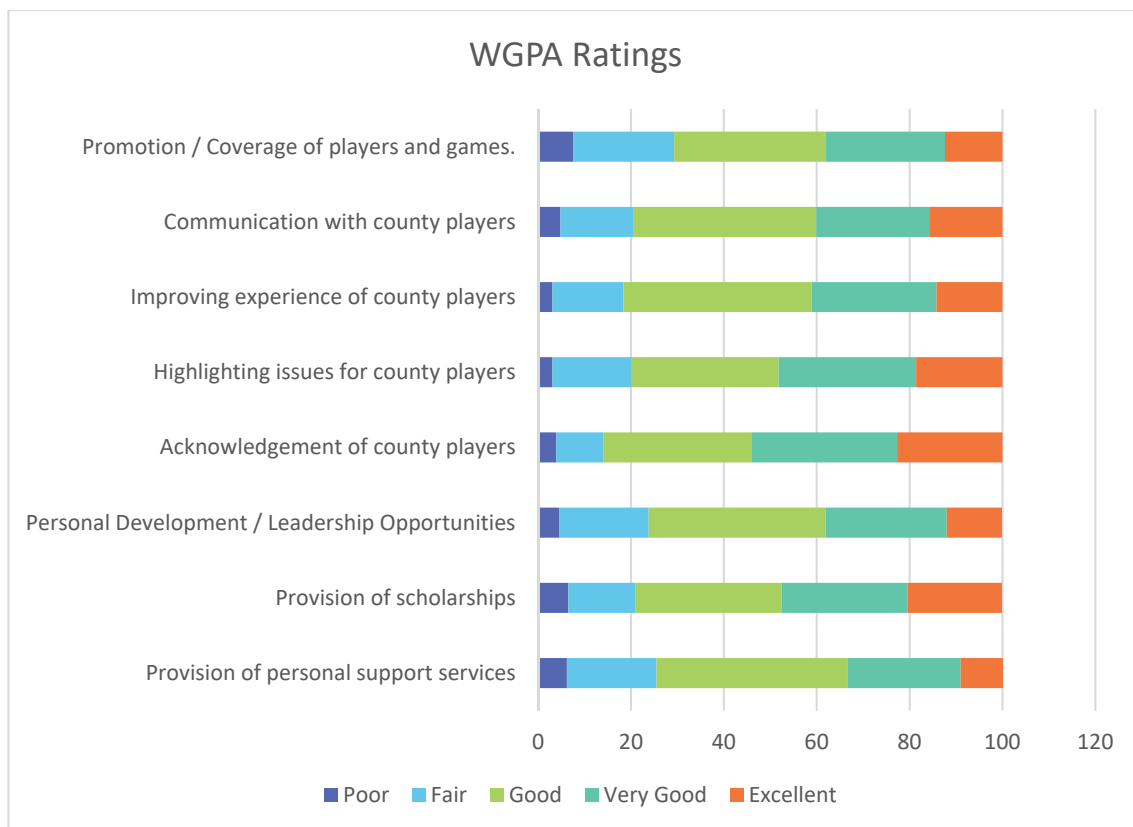


Figure 16. Ratings of the WGPA by WGPA members.

It was found that 79.3% of players in 2017 rated the overall impact of the WGPA as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’, with only 3.1% of respondents rating the WGPA as ‘poor’. Figure 16 concentrates on the impact the WGPA has had on specific areas relating to player welfare. Results show that 86% of respondents found the WGPA has had a ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ impact upon increased acknowledgement of county players, 70.7% rated the WGPA ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ for their promotion and coverage of players and the games, 81.6% found the WGPA has had a ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ impact upon improving the experience of being an intercounty player, 76,1% rated the personal development and leadership opportunities provided to the players by the WGPA to be ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ and 74.6% of players found the WGPA to be ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ in their provision of personal support services to players.

It is obvious from the figures that the WGPA has had a positive impact on a number of areas including increased resources and supports available to intercounty players both on and off the pitch, all improving the overall experiences of playing for their county. Furthermore, the impact of the WGPA is evident in relation to how players view themselves as elite athletes. Focus group participant #6 found ‘when you come here (player rep days) you are spoken of as an elite athlete, but then when you go back to your county and you see the carry on from the men’s side and things like that, you are just made feel like a second class citizen once again.’ It would seem that

the WGPA has influenced intercounty players to view themselves more as elite athletes. Focus group participant #3 contributed:

‘I can see when we all come away from this (player rep day) we are elite athletes and we should consider ourselves that way. In a way the way you view yourself has changed – you see how much is invested in you and people are telling you that you are an elite athlete – that you train three nights a week and that you are representing your county – that the general public and your community are viewing you as an elite athlete and the WGPA has really bought into that, more professionalism has been brought into everything. The WGPA try to get us to be seen as and feel like elite athletes more.’

Section 4.4.2.2 will now explore some of the internal activities that the WGPA have employed that has contributed to the positive impacts the association has had on members thus far, as mentioned above.

4.4.2.2 Internal Activities

Interviewee #4 feels strongly about the impact the internal activities engaged in by the WGPA have had on its members ‘Yeah obviously the WGPA have been a good thing for women in Gaelic games. They seem to have given the players an opportunity to network with each other and talk to each other’. Interviewee #3 further supports this, ‘they help players off the pitch and outside of their playing in terms of mentoring, counselling, scholarships, opportunities to meet with a life coach, the Jim Madden programme, workshop days for teams’. The interviewee believes this approach of ‘just trying to get the most out of the players’ development off the pitch and on the pitch’ is ‘very important’.

Table 15. Rate of member uptake of WGPA services and support opportunities available to members.

WGPA Player Services and Supports	Uptake Numbers
Master’s Degree Scholarships	9
3 rd Level Scholarships	157
Counselling Supports	38
Jim Madden Leadership Graduates	49
Player Team Talks	10
Personal Development Coaching	45
Setanta College Discount Admissions	10
Health Checks Pilot	15
Careers Advice	8

Table 15 gives an insight into the range of internal activities pursued by the WGPA and the uptake of the activities among their members. Appendix Q provides further information in relation to the variety of postgraduate scholarships available to WGPA members.

4.4.2.3 External Activities - Relationships

The researcher will now evaluate the external activities encompassed by the WGPA, exploring how the WGPA navigates their relationships with a number of various stakeholders. Managing these relationships successfully is of critical importance for the WGPA, and any player’s association (Dabscheck, 2017).

4.4.2.3.1 WGPA and the Government, the LGFA and the Camogie Association

On the 15th June 2016, the then Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Patrick O’Donovan TD, announced a two-year agreement, commencing in 2017, to provide support for intercounty ladies Football and camogie players. Grant aid of €1,000,000 over two playing seasons (2017 and 2018), was distributed equally to all highest-grade county teams participating in National League and/or All-Ireland championship competitions. Counties could only use the funds to engage industry accredited personnel. Funds were provided by the Irish Government, distributed through Sport Ireland and administered collaboratively by the LGFA, the Camogie Association and the WGPA through a Scheme Implementation Group (SIG) to support initiatives that will raise standards and provide an enhanced playing and training environment for intercounty players and teams. Each squad received a collective grant of €8500 to be spent on three specific areas; injury prevention and medical cover, maximising player and team performance (e.g. strength and conditioning programmes, sports psychology etc.) and access to specialist training facilities (e.g. gym use, floodlit pitches etc.). The announcement of funding was an outcome of more than 18 months of lobbying and engagement, which culminated in a joint proposal by the WGPA, the Camogie Association the LGFA to the DTTAS. This proposal was underpinned by the research conducted in 2014 entitled ‘Let’s Make Things Better’ (WGPA, 2014). Following the announcement in 2016, in July 2018, details of the second year of the government funding scheme for camogie and ladies football intercounty teams were announced with an increase in funding to all successful applicants. Over €500,000 in funding was be provided to county panels in 2018 to support intercounty camogie and ladies football players in their preparation throughout the year. This represented an increase to €9,000 available to each of the 53 adult intercounty squads and €4,500 to the two teams only involved in one competition, a rise from the €8,000 available in 2017, when an overall figure of €428,000 was awarded. The announcement coincided with an initial evaluation on the scheme which reported significant positive impacts for players, managers and county board officials. Interviewee #4 acknowledges the significance of the government grants for WGPA members ‘the securing of funding for the camogie and ladies football from the government grants has been important because what it is doing is possibly helping the smaller counties who are trying to develop take the burden of finance away to a point’. Interviewee #3 also agreed with

this. A summary of the main findings on the impact the grants have had, as a result of the negotiations made by the WGPA, may be found in Figure 17 and Figure 18 below.

Raising Standards

The core objective of the fund is about raising standards and improving the standard of playing and training environments. Respondents to the survey were asked to rate perceived increases or decreases in standards as a direct result of services/support accessed in the 2017 season. The following represents the views of players/player reps and managers/administrators for comparison:



Figure 17. ‘Raising Standards’ results from 2017 evaluation report on ladies’ football and camogie government grant support scheme.

BEFORE	GOVERNMENT GRANT SCHEME	AFTER
<p>No previous government funding for Inter County LGFA & Camogie</p> <p>Absence of opportunity to engage/access statutory funding for county teams</p> <p>Issues and concerns regarding standards/profile/status and perceptions of the game</p> <p>Frustration amongst associations and players at lack of recognition and support despite required commitment</p> <p>Varied approaches to interaction across counties relating to Inter County team development</p> <p>Annual fundraising requirements created pressure and stress for County boards, management and players</p> <p>Occasional difficulties with attendance at County training</p> <p>Varying levels of funds available to individual Counties (fundraising and sponsorship)</p> <p>Counties at varying levels of development (some did not have teams until 2016)</p>	<p>Scheme Implementation Group established incorporating Camogie Association, LGFA and WGPA with independent chair</p> <p>Central administrator appointed to administer scheme & reporting</p> <p>€425,000 distributed in 2017 in direct grant aid to Inter County Camogie and Football teams</p> <p>23 Camogie teams and 32 Football teams accessed grants up to €8,000 for the 2017 season</p> <p>33% of funds spent on physio at training and matches, 17% to strength and conditioning, 12% to performance analysis, 7% to access gyms and floodlit/astro pitches</p>	<p>Increased access to professional services and facilities leading to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases in standards of injury prevention • Increases in standards of specialist coaching • Increases in standards of player welfare <p>Varying experiences of the grant scheme on team by team basis</p> <p>Increases in the extent to which players view themselves as elite athletes</p> <p>Increases in player input to decision making at County and National level</p> <p>Increases in unity of purpose/ togetherness in County teams with high levels of consultation</p> <p>Increases in player attendance, self-esteem, self-confidence</p> <p>Trickle down effect on motivation and enthusiasm of younger players. Seniors are role models</p> <p>Increases in communication and collaboration between associations</p>

Figure 18. ‘Before and After’ results from 2017 evaluation report on ladies’ football and camogie government grant support scheme.

As can be seen in Figure 18, the ‘after’ findings of initial evaluation of the government grants coincides with many of the results of the WGPA questionnaire presented throughout Chapter Four. For example, the report found increases in the extent to which players view themselves as elite athletes, as a result of the government grants. Not only do Figure 17 and 18 highlight positive effects the government grants have had on players, they also offer insight into the impact the grants have had on other parties such as county boards and management teams (administrators), with 90% of this cohort reporting that the standard of the intercounty game has increased. It must

be noted that the WGPA had to cultivate a working relationship with the Camogie Association and LGFA in order to make the grants a reality; it was not solely the government with which they had to negotiate. Perhaps as a result of this, increases in communication and collaboration between associations were also reported as outcomes of the grants. In the WGPA Annual Report (WGPA, 2018) it was stated; ‘The Grants process has provided a regular forum for formal interaction with the Camogie Association and the LGFA’. Ideally, communication between the three organisations should be maintained and strengthened further. Because the evaluation report found that there were varying experiences of the grant scheme on a team by team basis, it could be beneficial for the three associations to collaborate to investigate how best to eradicate such inequities. This could be of particular importance also in relation to the widening gaps between areas such as finals day attendances, revenues and memberships in the LGFA and the Camogie Association. The WGPA met with the Camogie Association in April 2019 in order to discuss the proposed actions the ‘Camogie 2019: The Players’ View’ report (WGPA, 2019) found (see Appendix R). It is hoped that future engagements between both bodies such as this, will help the Camogie Association reach similar heights to the LGFA in various areas. The example set by the WGPA taking the initiative to encourage collaboration and communication between government bodies, NGBs and player associations with the goal of improving conditions for WIS could be applied to the wider sporting context in Ireland.

4.4.2.3.2 WGPA and the GPA

The WGPA and GPA maintain a healthy relationship. The GPA appointed a new CEO, Paul Flynn, in late 2018. Paul ‘immediately worked to progress the relationship between the GPA and WGPA and is unequivocal in his support for the women’s game’ (WGPA, 2018). A priority for 2019 will be to ‘have a much stronger working relationship with the GPA going forward. This is hugely significant for the WGPA organisation and its members; the support of the GPA will do much to ensure a stronger standing for women in Gaelic games.’

4.4.2.3.3 WGPA Membership of National and International Organisations

The WGPA are part of the EU Athletes and UNI Global Union network. On the back of their collaboration on the SWAFE project with EU Athletes, a guide was produced for other player unions to support female athletes in Athens in June 2017 (WGPA, 2018). WGPA executive members presented on the work of the WGPA and sections of the current research were presented at the project’s follow-up Women in Sport conference in Lisbon in June 2018. Through the global reach of the World Players Association, the WGPA state that they ‘have grown relationships with organisations across Europe and worldwide, including Australia. It is important that we continue

to engage in these networks as they give us ideas and direction about how best to grow our services, advocate for players and respond to player needs.’ The GPA also work closely with a number of other athlete bodies so that ‘through regular dialogue’ they may ‘exchange’ and ‘share information to facilitate improvement and ensure best practice in player welfare and development across the various disciplines’ (GPA, 2019). It is assumed that by collaborating with such bodies, the WGPA has the same purpose in mind to accomplish similar achievements to the GPA such as ‘significant policy development in areas such as anti-doping, athlete transition, protecting the integrity of the games and implementation of minimum standards of care’ (GPA, 2019).

4.4.2.3.4 WGPA and the Public Profile

Interviewee #1 feels that the WGPA have ‘helped with publicity’ for intercounty players. Reasons for this may be attributed to the WGPA’s role in the promotion of their members in the media as accounted for by interviewee #3 ‘I think there is more in terms of media...all the work in terms of the different video clippings and the promotional stuff that the WGPA has done’. The views of Interviewee #1 coincide with this:

‘Even those little social video clips, I think people picked up on that stuff and now sponsors have seen the potential of that and you’ve got big sponsors coming in you know and like Littlewoods and Lidl have undoubtedly put pressure on to get more TV coverage and all that kind of stuff... I think telling the stories of players really well and making it so that we know who our top players are and do you know what we should be aspiring to and all that.’

Focus group participant #7 is particularly in favour of initiatives such as the ‘WGPA Player of the Month’ for getting more of a following from the general public ‘I would say because of the WGPA doing the Sportsperson of the Month, it’s like women are starting to come out and vote and stuff like that’. It was also noticed that certain counties decided to start their own Sportsperson of the Month and ‘there was actually player of the month camogie players winning over hurlers and stuff in Kilkenny – and that is only happening in the last year or so’. Focus group participant #7 also feels that ‘The double-headers are a big thing’, which are continuously encouraged by the WGPA. Focus group participant #5 agrees, ‘there was one camogie game where there was a double header with the hurlers and people have come back – (they might be so invested in the hurling – they were never at a camogie match before) – but afterwards they were like ‘I can’t get over the speed of the camogie match or the skill that ye have’. People didn’t realise any of this – typically these people would not go out and attend a club match.’ This not only strengthens the relationship between players and the public but also adds to the evidence of the positive impact the WGPA have had on raising awareness for players. Focus group participant #1 also expresses approval of this particular trend:

‘to look back to 3 years ago... If people had outstanding league campaigns or outstanding games but only the 20 people or so on the side-line would ever see it or ever know about it whereas now, at least now if somebody is playing really well, it is being picked up on – it is being recognised in the papers, it is being recognised in social media – I think that is where the goal of raising the profile come in like being noted now rather than just the 20 or so odd people there who are watching any particular game knowing about it.’

Interviewee #3 also believes this increased ‘exposure’ of the games and players to the general public through the securing of ‘more and better sponsors’ and TV coverage of the ‘quarter and semi-finals’, ‘the attendances have improved’ and there’s ‘just more awareness as well and it’s just raised the profile and the players are seen more as athletes’. Focus group participant #8 concurs, ‘I suppose the attendances at Croke Park for the ladies football is an indication of how much popularity there is like (among the general public), it kind of speaks for itself really.’ Interviewee #3 also gave an example of the impact the WGPA has had upon members of the wider sporting world. ‘a woman contacted me when I was playing soccer and she was trying to set up something similar you know... I think we’re leading the way and I think other countries are even looking to us. And that’s powerful, that’s great. So yeah, I think we are a strong body.’

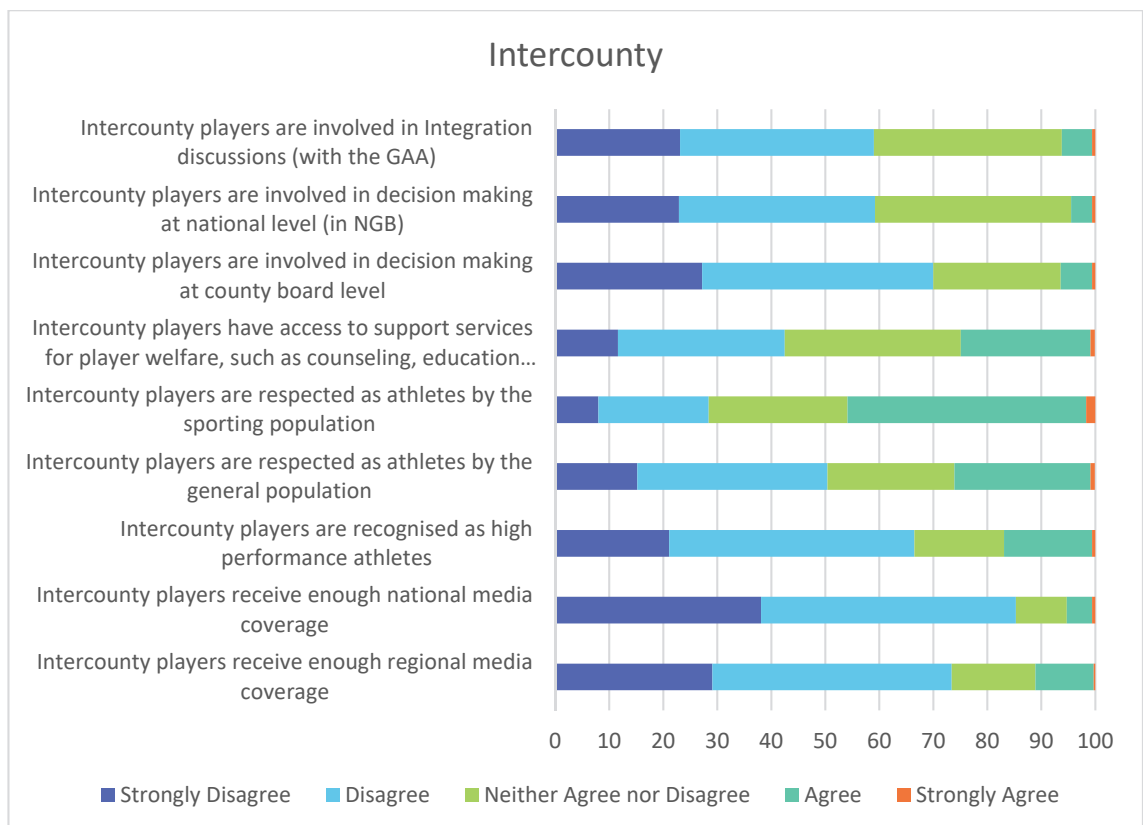


Figure 19. Perceptions concerning the position and power of intercounty players in sporting society and wider.

Despite the feeling that perceptions of intercounty players in the general public have improved significantly, tangible evidence provided in Figure 19 suggests there is still large scope for

advancements in many areas in relation their relationship with the public and their public profile. For example, over 75% of players disagreed that players receive enough national media coverage, 50% agreed that players are not respected as athletes by general population. And only 17.2% agreed or strongly agreed that they are respected as high performance athletes despite 87.5% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they themselves identify as such (Figure 7, section 4.4.1.2.1).

4.4.3 Evolution of the WGPA

The evolution of the WGPA since its formation will now be explored in section 4.4.3.1 and section 4.4.3.2, detailing its progress and areas in which it needs to concentrate on developing further in order for it to continue to evolve in the best possible way going forward. The timeline of events mapping the activities undertaken and milestones achieved by the WGPA to date can be found in Table 9, section 4.1.

4.4.3.1 Evolving WGPA Structure and Membership Composition

Dr Aoife Lane was the first chair of the WGPA from 2014 to 2019. The founding executive included current and past players Fiona McHale from Mayo Ladies Football (Secretary), Kate Kelly from Wexford Camogie (Treasurer), Deirdre Murphy from Clare Camogie, Valerie Mulcahy from Cork Ladies Football, Anna Geary from Cork Camogie and Gemma Begley from Tyrone Ladies Football. Highlights in that period included the roll-out of development programmes for players, the collaboration with the GPA on the Jim Madden Leadership Programme, and the introduction of Government Grants for Ladies Football and Camogie for the first time in 2017. As can be seen in Figure 20, the WGPA is currently led by an 11-member executive team who are elected annually by WGPA members at their AGM and are reflective of their membership. At the WGPA AGM in 2017, the formation of a new subcommittee, to be known as the Players Council was ratified. The aim of the Players Council is to further improve the governance structure of the WGPA and closer align the views and experiences of players with the work of the Executive. Eleven players were drawn from across the country, equally between the two codes and from a range of different experiences and professional backgrounds, to reflect the diversity of the WGPA members. The council acts as consultative group and members serving on the Players Council did so initially for a one-year period until the next AGM in 2018, when positions were open for nominations and a few changes took place. Each county team across both codes has at least two player representatives in place who communicate the views and issues of the players on their squad to the WGPA Executive team. The second role of the player rep is to inform their teammates about the services available through the WGPA and to refer players to the various support systems

available. In 2019, there were 45 camogie reps and 48 ladies football reps. Collective workshops are held to bring reps together to discuss issues around their experiences as intercounty athletes. Sharing their views and knowledge helps players to overcome challenges and improve standards within their county. Reps days are well received by attending members, who regularly post statements on Twitter expressing their gratitude to the WGPA for organising the event, ‘Thanks to all for making Saturday a great day. Thanks to (sponsors) for all the goodies and continued support’ (Curley, 2019). Reps days also include an element of self-development for the attending WGPA reps, equipping them with additional skills and resources to benefit them in all aspects of their life including their playing experience. The WGPA has also organised an Advisory Group, consisting of individuals drawn together for their expertise in various areas relevant to the WGPA such as business and research. Their guidance is invaluable to the executive, in supporting the wider membership.

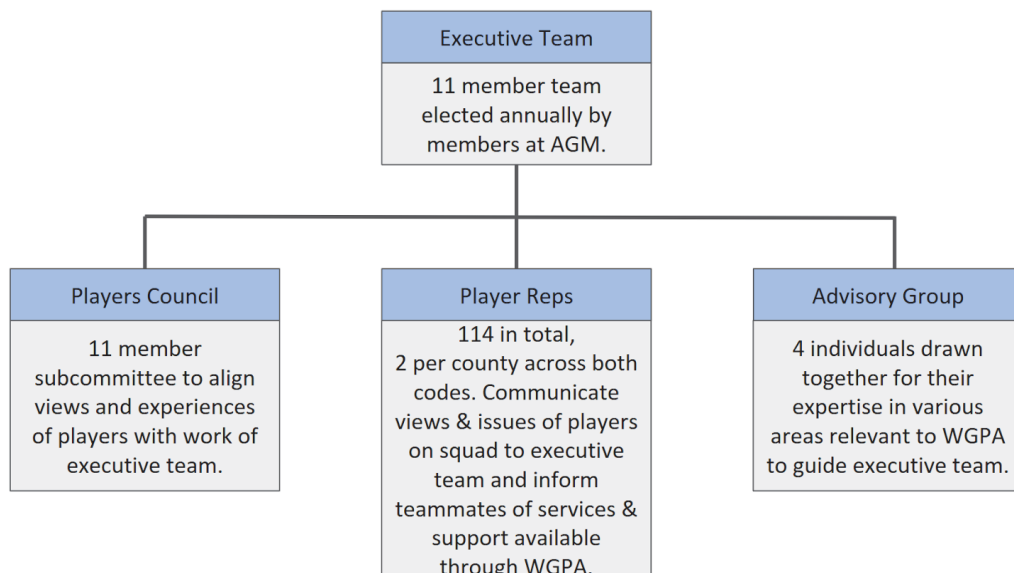


Figure 20. Governance structure of the WGPA.

Some structural differences between the GPA and WGPA are apparent such as the absence of a DAC, a board of directors and a nine-person staff led by a CEO. These differences are possibly due to the longer lifespan of the GPA, the number of members represented by the GPA and the capital at the disposal of the GPA. However, overall, the organisational structure and governance of the WGPA meet the characteristics of player associations supplied by Aydin (2009). These are further supported by ‘the capable and resourceful leadership’ which is obvious given the status of the founding members of the NEC and the advisory group. Other characteristics of player associations evident in the WGPA include the fact that it is a ‘small union with high union density’, it has a

‘varied membership composition’, it has a ‘high profile’ and there is a ‘collective consciousness’ among its members (Aydin, 2009, p. 2)

One of the advantages of the ‘smallness’ associated with player associations is that it enhances their ability to involve members deeply in their decision-making processes and to be democratic organisations run for and by players (Aydin, 2009). The WGPA was set up by players, is led by players and works for players (WGPA, 2015). As Figure 21 shows, current membership stands at 1300, out of a possible total of 1600 intercounty camogie and ladies football players in Ireland. This represents a membership composition of 81.25%. Despite these relatively small numbers, the WGPA also has a high profile (Aydin, 2009) with 6,787 followers on Twitter and 6,259 followers on Instagram. The composition of their members also differs greatly. In 2018, there were 1,600 intercounty ladies footballers and camogie players in Ireland competing in adult intercounty leagues and championships. These players represent their county of residence in intercounty competitions run by the LGFA and the Camogie Association. There are 45 reps for camogie teams and 69 reps for ladies football teams.

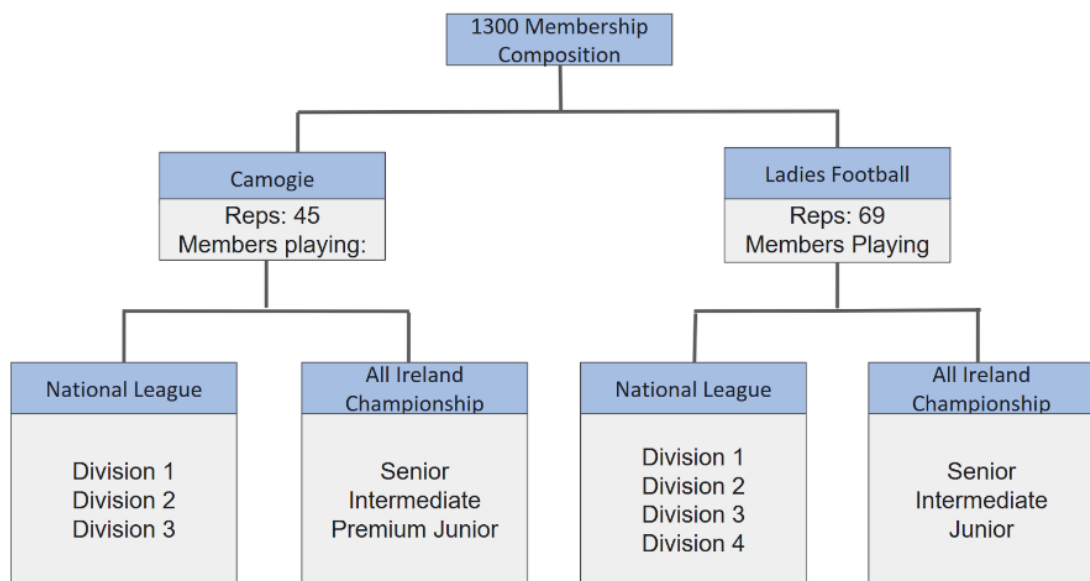


Figure 21. Varied membership composition of the WGPA.

Interviewee #3 feels that the membership composition of WGPA members is evolving and there are noticeable difference between standards in different counties, ‘there’s a big disparity there among counties. I think Dublin ladies football being the capital I think they have more and they’re getting more, and they are benefiting which is great, I think a lot does come with success and I think it is about capitalizing on that like Dublin are.’ This consolidates the findings made by government grants evaluation document, reporting varying experiences of the grant scheme

among different counties. It may be important for the WGPA to recognise this disparity and be aware of other such imbalances and be determined to avoid allowing inequalities to grow in any area that is within their control.

4.4.3.2 Evolving Needs of WGPA - Future Direction

Creating collective consciousness was found to be paramount for the future development of the WGPA. A fear held by Interviewee # 3 regarding the future of the WGPA is that it could be ‘taken for granted by players or that players would just expect everything... or you know that they wouldn’t kind of buy in or that they don’t need to keep fighting and striving for better. There’ll always be a need for it.’ Focus group participant #7 provides evidence for this opinion:

‘it is very hard, you come here and you are in awe of what everyone is saying and then you go back training next week, and the rest of the girls will ask what happened – you try to explain it but it is very hard to bring the whole ‘why people are doing it’ across to everyone. Especially – most people when you ask them to come, they are like ‘Oh that would only take up my day’.

Focus group participant #5 notes that ‘it is not really interesting to many on the squads’ and focus group participant #2 also concludes:

‘I think they don’t fully understand it’ possibly because trying to get that (‘the buzz’ from rep days and sense of raising standards) across to about 30 people in a dressing room is a big challenge. A lot of the younger girls that are coming through don’t really understand. Even the college scholarships have not been something that they have been immersed in yet either. It is about generating the support all year around from everyone – particularly with the younger age groups because, eventually they are going to be the ones sitting here in 3 or 4 years’ time’.

Focus group participant #7 supports the notion that creating a collective consciousness among members is crucial for the development of the WGPA and to avoid the danger of it being taken for granted, ‘Aoife (Lane) was talking about getting out to the squads. I think that is a great idea.’

Interviewee #4 also feels strongly about the need for WGPA to focus on creating role models moving forward, ‘I think they have a huge responsibility in educating the player about the importance of how they are perceived and being role models. Because if you have a player who is a WGPA member they have to act accordingly and act as a role model. As they grow I think that is important.’ Interviewee #4 also believes more work needs to be done to attract more interest and support from the general public:

‘what I would like to see is them illustrating to the general public the work that players do in terms of the ambassadorial things that players do. What I mean by that is that they might be doing some fundraising, or they might be doing some ambassadorial

work that they reflect on the player from beyond. I think they could be creating opportunities for players to be present at different things that actually will highlight the work of the WGPA that it’s being more about them being elite athletes but that they are willing to work you know like that thing they did sleeping out with the homeless you know that kind of thing. Showing that players are empathetic to the wider society, that they are willing to actually give of their name and their time to help a good cause. I think that would help the WGPA maybe in terms of formulating new partnerships, increasing revenue into the WGPA to reinvest in the players in whichever way they want.’

As Interviewee #4 mentions, this could further the chances of the WGPA to attract new sponsors, adding to the strong partnerships already in place with PwC, Pat the Baker, ICON, Elverys, OPRO, Meagher’s Pharmacy, Cúl Heroes, Irish American Partnership.

Involving past players in activities was also mentioned as an avenue the WGPA should explore in the future:

‘I would say in time possibly the goal would be to do more work with past players because I think there’s an opportunity there. Past players who have gone on to pursue different careers who have opportunities maybe to put something back into the WGPA through philanthropic funding or through you know workshops. There’s a substantial amount of players who have gone through the system and who could re-engage in terms of members just because of being past players.’

As mentioned in section 4.4.2.3 the continued evolution of the important relationships the WGPA has with various bodies such as the government, the LGFA, the Camogie Association and the GPA is vital for the future development of the organisation. Interviewee #3 thinks ‘it’s huge that we’re (the WGPA) the one organisation that embodies both the camogie and ladies football associations so it’s a first and I think that’s powerful in itself.’ However, Interviewee #2 feels the Camogie Association and LGFA ‘have to work closer with the WGPA and utilize them a bit more’. Many of the participants in the study also discussed the possibility of the Camogie Association and LGFA joining up with the GAA and the WGPA joining up with the GPA. Interviewee #3 said:

‘I would like to see areas improving like more liaising with the GAA. There are opportunities that are missed I think where we’ve got the same audience and the same people that are interested in both codes you know it doesn’t matter what gender they are genuinely GAA followers, I don’t think we serve them too well and I don’t think it helps our case.’

Interviewee #5 stated ‘it possibly shouldn’t just be two separate groups the GPA and the WGPA’. Interviewee #1 attributes the impact of the WGPA on certain advancements on ‘this whole amalgamation issue’. ‘I think it’s very interesting that at last a terms of agreement document has been brought together (since the set-up of the WGPA)’. However, if more development on such amalgamations were to happen, caution would need to be taken. Interviewee #2 is in favour of

mergers with the male bodies ‘only if it is going to mean added resources.’ Interviewee #2 continues:

‘I think ladies at a County Board level would have way more money and resources if they were linked with the male side of the game. But knowing from working in clubs, working for provinces where there are no separate budgets, it is really hard to get your fair share. You have to have really strong people if you are in with the GAA. It has to be really strong from the top down.’

Interviewee #3 is of a similar opinion and offers ideas as to how such a union needs to be:

‘I think initially I was like ‘Jesus yeah join the GAA it’ll be all great’ and then people were like well they’re not really showing much in terms of what they were offering and what can happen and maybe we would be swallowed up. So, I don’t know where I really stand on it, I think I’d be cautious going into it. I think the one club model is going to lead the way is it not? Where all the four associations in the club come together. I think where a lot of people could learn is from colleges. Like if you look at the likes of UL, the one GAA Development Officer and everyone is all in the one club. And they’re all looked after equally and they all get on and they all benefit I think. I think that’s something to look at anyway.’

These comments are relevant to the wider context of WIS in Ireland also in that the details of how best to achieve equity must be at the forefront of any future conversations surrounding mergers involving male and female sporting bodies.

4.5 Discussion

This section will discuss the findings outlined in the previous section of this chapter. Suitable literature will be used in order to compare and contrast the results obtained from this study. Consequently, conclusions will be drawn.

4.5.1 Direct Impact on Players

It was found that the overall impact of the WGPA has had a positive impact on the organisations members and has impressed onlookers in the wider context of WIS in Ireland. The WGPA has most certainly embodied many of the essential characteristics of player associations, repeatedly being a focal point for the enunciation and defence of athletes rights and have continued to fight for players and combat issues that have arisen as a result of lack of policy (EU Athletes, 2019, Aydin, 200). After four years of existence, the WGPA has achieved similar successes to the GPA at a point on their timeline of development. Similar to the GPA and amateur college athlete’s player associations in the USA, the WGPA has been largely concerned with welfare needs of members (Aydin, 2009). Many of the ‘off the pitch’ work activities and work undertaken by the WGPA have resulted in increased visibility of members, increased reporting of fixtures and results, the

provision of numerous personal, educational and professional development programmes and opportunities for members to engage in various social/community projects. It is critical that these type of programmes continually evolve (Mitten et al., 2016 p. 402). Another noteworthy effect of the WGPA relates to the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS). Camogie and ladies football have long been the most popular sports among women in Ireland (Lidl, 2017; Liston, 2001) and county players have always represented the largest body of elite female athletes. Since the formation of the WGPA players seem to be allowing themselves to publicly identify as elite athletes and government recognition has aided this status. This was evident by the awarding of the government grants, bestowed upon members following the WGPA proposal outlining the requirements needed to match their elite level athletic identities. This development makes it all the more difficult to accept and comprehend the fact that some of the conditions experienced by WGPA members are still significantly below par and compare unfavourably with the current standards enjoyed by GPA members.

Many conditions have improved since the publication of the ‘Let’s Make Things Better’ report; regular facility allocation, strength and conditioning support to name but a few. However, the stark fact remains that only 2% of members receive travel expenses, many players must contribute financially to facility use, bus hire, physiotherapy and food provision and many training and match day medical services are non-existent. It is hoped that the proposed squad charter by the WGPA, mandatory for all county teams in receipt of government grants in 2020, will help to change this and reduce the current high number of players who are left out of pocket as a result of their intercounty commitments. The WGPA is also continuously applying for new sources of funding which is vital in order for them to have valuable effects on their members, as was discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Therefore, on balance, it may be said that the WGPA is doing everything within its power and remit to further the cause of their members and WIS in Ireland. However, the association also has quite a journey ahead. It is necessary to have a qualified optimism about achievements to date in the context of what must yet be contributed to, and directly realised for all of those who play county camogie and ladies football.

4.5.2 Evolution

The respectful manner in which the WGPA manage their multifaceted interactions with various bodies in Irish and international sports must be recognised (Aydin, 2009). The organisation is a prime example of good practice on how to negotiate and cross collaborate with a number of bodies competing for attention (Berry, Gould and Staudohar, 1986, p. 4-12; Mitten, et al. 2016, p. 66-70). Examples include; the government grants beginning in 2016, numerous postgraduate

scholarship arrangements with seven Irish third level institutions, initiation of plans to merge with male counterparts the GPA, participation in the EU Athletes SWAFE project, widespread member participation in national sleep out for homelessness in collaboration with social project Gaelic Voices for Change (GV4C) and the WGPA led player engagement group working in conjunction with the Camogie Association. The extension of the partner base of the WGPA from just one in 2015, to a total of eight just four years later in 2019, must also be acknowledged favourably.

Consideration should be given to the fact that the WGPA provide guidance in such matters to other organisations in Ireland and Europe with the goal of promoting equality in the world of WIS. If the continued growth and evolution of the WGPA is to be achieved, it is necessary for the organisation to maintain and nurture these relationships. The WGPA must tread carefully when agreeing terms for the merger with the GPA in particular. Total GAA funding to the GPA amounted to €2,829,403 in 2017. While a merger with the GPA would undoubtedly bring financial rewards among others, it emerged strongly that, the preservation of the identity of the association that has so conscientiously been constructed, must be considered a priority. Furthermore, it is abundantly clear from the results that the WGPA's best relationship is in fact with their members. Therefore, any change such as this will need to be cautiously consulted upon with all members, as solidarity among members is crucial to the success of any player association (Staudohar, 1999). Aydin (2009) and Staudohar (1999) acknowledge 'a problem for a player association is to balance the competing demands and diverse interests and needs of its members.' Player engagement groups could be a laudable way of ensuring this is addressed throughout any changes undertaken by the WGPA that could affect the experiences of their members.

'Generally, player associations have enjoyed capable and resourceful leaders to pursue their needs' (Aydin, 2009 p.2). The leadership of the association presents another case for deliberation about the future direction it needs to take. The founding leaders of the WGPA were capable individuals, adding a wide variety of skills to the core team which, undoubtedly allowed the association flourish in so many different areas as detailed above.

It was also found that the WGPA offers the ideal guide as to how to prime women for leadership roles outside of the playing remit. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the rookie camps and team talks educating players on the significance of their role in both the current and future context of WIS in Ireland, as well as the retired player conferences to help with transitional periods, are just a few ways in which WGPA methods could be adopted by other NGBs or Sport Ireland.

Finally, taking these examples, among many others, into account, the contribution the WGPA has made to the lives and playing careers of the elite female athletes involved in Gaelic games in Ireland has not been recognised or acknowledged sufficiently in the public domain. Perhaps the WGPA need to utilise their good image more and canvass for more visibility, not just for their members but for the association itself, to 'show off' all of the good work carried out thus far and the impacts it has had on wider society in Ireland (Aydin 2009; Staudohar, 1999 p.7-8). If the WGPA choose to pursue this avenue they can gain confidence from the findings of Rosen and Sanderson, (2001) in that society is usually on the side of players and their associations

4.6 Conclusion

Current president of the Olympic Council of Ireland, Sarah Keane, speaking as former CEO of Swim Ireland in 2012, stated that 'Sport is for everyone and that includes women...I would hope that by 2020 female participants in sport feel their contribution is as recognised and as valued as that of men...'. In contrast to the hopes of Sarah, Irish female county camogie players and ladies footballers do not feel their contribution is as recognised and as valued as that of men. However, as a result of the WGPA, many steps have been taken and many milestones reached that have firmly begun the process to achieving this arduous task. History has shown that it takes player associations lengthy periods of time to obtain achievements for members (Dabscheck, 2017). So similar to the findings made by Aydin (2009) it is difficult to make predictions concerning how successful or otherwise the WGPA will be in the future in ensuring that the voices of their members are properly heeded within the policy, governance, conduct and playing of sport.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a brief description of this study and review the main results obtained, highlight any recommendations to be made based on the results of the study as well as provide possible areas for further research to enhance understanding and development of this area.

5.1.1 Structure of Chapter Five

- Summary of Findings
- Contribution of this research project to WIS in Ireland
- Recommendations for Practice
- Recommendations for Future Study

5.2 Summary of Findings

Based on the literature reviewed and the qualitative and quantitative analyses, a summary of the findings from this research project 'Policy and Practice: Women in Sport in Ireland – What has changed? A case study of the Women's Gaelic Players Association (WGPA) and an analysis of the situation for women in sport in Ireland' follows.

5.2.1 Policy

Women's sport in Ireland has traditionally not been a priority in the formation of sport policy since the WISR. The implementation of the recommendations from this policy has been extremely poor. Lack of governance, funding and monitoring and evaluation structures are in part responsible. As a result of the historical dearth of policy for WIS in Ireland, the formation of the WGPA was needed and its formation has seemed to be somewhat of a catalyst for change. The SIPWIS is a welcome addition to Irish policy relating to WIS. However, rigorous review processes and sufficient funding is needed to ensure this and future policies related to WIS in Ireland are executed to the highest possible standard. The current study found that there is a distinct and very real need for the policymakers and NGB's to pay attention to the lack of women in leadership, administrative, coaching and officiating positions in WIS in Ireland. Wide consultation is key to successful policy formulation and policies should not operate in a vacuum but instead a policy space (Webb, Rowland and Fasano, 1991). The findings of the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004, p. 15) regarding the importance of 'gender-proofing of all present and future sports policies to ensure a level playing pitch for females', remains relevant today.

5.2.2 Practice

The majority of the improvements in WIS in Ireland are not as a result of policy. Practice relating to WIS in Ireland is however developing in a number of different areas such as efforts to close the participation gender gap, the increased visibility and creation of female role models, increased media coverage and increased attendances at female sporting events. The LGFA and the IWNHT are relevant examples for many of these positive developments. The WGPA, representing the largest body of elite sportswomen in Ireland, have played a large role in many of the advancements mentioned above experienced by women. The association has made up for the lack of policy in place by providing many invaluable supports and services for their members. It was found there were increases in the extent to which female intercounty players view themselves as elite athletes as a result of the government grants secured by the work of the WGPA, the Camogie Association and the LGFA. Activities such as regular publication of fixtures and results, international best practice relating to WIS and player associations and using free copy as a strategy for increased media coverage are a few examples of the proactive approach taken by the WGPA that has aided many of the aforementioned improvements, examples from which many NGBs could benefit. It is not only in Ireland that the WGPA are improving conditions for high performance sportswomen, they are also leading the way internationally, providing advice and guidance relating to the successful set up, growth and maintenance of a female only player association to women's teams located around Europe and the world. The 20x20 campaign is also a step in the right direction for the growth of WIS in Ireland and has contributed to the progress made. Many of the leaders of 20x20 are current or retired intercounty players such as ambassadors Laura Twomey (Dublin Camogie) and Sarah Rowe (Mayo Ladies Football) and president of the driving force of the Federation of Irish Sport, Mary O' Connor (Cork Camogie and Ladies Football). With further financial backing and alignment with national policy, NGBs and sports partnerships; this campaign has the potential to keep enhancing the visibility of sport for girls and women in Ireland.

5.2.3 Policy and practice – what needs to change?

Despite many positive developments, females in Ireland are not on an even playing field with their male counterparts in any of the aforementioned areas, most notably in ongoing skewed mainstream media coverage, low numbers of women in leadership positions in sports, and inadequate funding for targets and actions relating to WIS. The WGPA have attempted to tackle these issues and their efforts have been helped by and aligned with progressions such as the 20x20 campaign, new policy development and other positive steps forward such as the appointment of Sarah Keane, the first female president of the Olympic Federation of Ireland.

Similarly, while the results found the impact of the WGPA for its female members has been good overall, there is a lot left to do if the gap between the experiences of male and female intercounty players is to be bridged. Equality and equity must remain the ultimate goal for all athletes, NGBs and player associations involved in women's sport in Ireland. The lack of women in leadership positions in sport are particularly worrying and need to be tackled as a matter of urgency. The notion of gender quotas in policy needs to be revisited in order to address these discrepancies, if there are no positive strides towards a natural change. If the merger between the GPA and WGPA is to occur, discussions concerning gender balanced leadership of the amalgamation and the wants and needs of both sets of members needs to take place.

Much of the research available relating to WIS is not relevant to Irish women. While the current study found that many of the overarching issues are similar to those internationally, there is a lack of research relative to WIS completed on the Irish population. The areas in which future research would be most beneficial to WIS in Ireland will be detailed below in section 5.4. The WGPA realise the importance of research and evaluation to aid in development, having published numerous reports throughout the lifespan of the association to date. The reports have not only assisted with the collection of data for the current study but have also acted as a guiding tool throughout the formation and evolution of the organisation. NGBs, government organisations and social initiatives need to follow the lead of the WGPA in this regard in order to aid positive change. The future of WIS depends not only on women for women initiatives, but all of society for all of society initiatives.

Certain sports in Ireland are moving ahead of others due to some NGB's being more proactive, forward thinking and efficient and effective in their thinking. Ladies football is accelerating beyond all other female sports in relation to participation, media coverage, attendances and securing of sponsors. It is important that gaps between sports do not grow too large, as once again the goal needs to be equity for all female athletes competing at an elite level, regardless of which sport they are engaged in. Again, the WGPA have shown initiative by establishing a camogie player engagement group and devised a report on player's views in order to support camogie players on their quest to level the playing field with ladies footballers. The wheel need not be reinvented, learnings must be applied by benchmarking against successful national and international sporting bodies.

5.3 Contribution of this research project to women in sport in Ireland

Although the political will to promote equity in sport has been evident in the past, less attention has been paid to how sports organizations translate policies into practice in Ireland (Kay, 1996; Shaw and Penney, 2003). As Scraton (2013) suggests, feminist research needs to translate theoretical understanding into transformative practices. One of the difficulties in studying the policy process is discerning how ideas become decisions and how decisions become programmes. Studying the steps in the process using the notion of policy “frames” at the macro, meso, and micro levels allowed for each level to be contextualized and studied in its own right. Working in and across these three levels can help with understanding the success of a policy’s implementation, or to pinpoint where and why it broke down (Caldwell and Mays, 2012).

Research of this nature has not been conducted in Ireland before. Therefore, the main strength of this research is the contribution it makes to the current lack of existing research in the areas of policy, structures, roles and practice relating to WIS in Ireland by highlighting the plight of the athlete, in this case the members of the WGPA. In Ireland, sociology has never had the official status or public recognition that adheres to dominant discipline areas such as history, economics or psychology (Conway, 2006; Share, Corcoran and Conway, 2012). Therefore, it is hoped this research lends itself to reduce this particular shortcoming by providing up to date data relevant to the changes, developments and implemented programmes within women’s sport in Ireland since the WISR (Oireachtas, 2004) through use of this case study framework.

The research also comes at an exciting time for WIS in Ireland as, improvements documented are occurring at an almost daily rate and therefore the research will act as a valuable reference point in the future. Furthermore, the research also contributes to another area that has never been studied before – the formation, impact and evolution of the WGPA. Not only does this part of the research provide an account of the achievements and challenges of the WGPA throughout the duration of its lifespan to date, but also presents further insights into the role and position of WIS in Ireland today through the lens of the female intercounty player.

5.4 Recommendations for Practice

Appropriate policy, underpinned by adequate funding is essential for the development of WIS in Ireland. New policy such as the SIPWIS needs to be reviewed, monitored and evaluated regularly. Policy on WIS needs to progress beyond participation gradient targets. NGBs need audits and education pieces to learn how best to apply for, make use of the much needed funding available

to them and secure investment from corporate sponsors. Sufficient levels of PR and marketing must be afforded to WIS in Ireland if appropriate sponsorship and corporate investment is to be attained to help put women into a sphere closer to that of men. Therefore, gender quotas relating to mainstream media coverage need to be considered for inclusion in future policy in order to achieve this. Similarly, gender quotas addressing the lack of women in leadership, administrative, coaching and officiating positions in WIS in Ireland also needs to be contemplated.

Inter-agency cross collaboration and the sharing of ideas between stakeholders such as; government bodies, NGBs, player associations and female athletes themselves, is necessary if further improvements for WIS are to be achieved on a macro-meso-micro level. Symposiums facilitating discussions exploring the gender equity in sport through research – policy – practice dialogue may be necessary in order to avoid the formation of hollow policies (Griffith University, 2019). This could in turn aid the encouragement of engagement of industry and government with academic researchers and the sharing of insights about the range of research methodologies being used in universities that could support innovative government directions addressing gender equity in sport. NGBs and government agencies can learn a lot from sporting organisations, such as the LGFA, Hockey Ireland and in many ways the WGPA, who are getting it right for athletes in relation to their successful application of strategies for attracting large attendances, tackling issues by setting up player engagement groups and increasing awareness and visibility through social media campaigns to name but a few. NGBs need to have a clear pathway to aid in the progression of women in their sport at all levels and roles, from players to coaches to administrators. They also need to develop proper evaluation and assessment tools to monitor their impact, growth and development. NGBs need to use the platform of social media as effectively as possible to enhance the visibility and promotion of their female athletes and thereby attract corporate investment. Cross collaborative discussions could help NGBs align their actions and goals against the highest possible benchmarks, NGBs must be open and willing to participating in the cross collaborative process. The WGPA have proven proficient in managing multifaceted relations and could be consulted as how best to apply the most effective communication and cooperation strategies for initiating the cross collaboration process. The example set by the WGPA taking the initiative to encourage collaboration and communication between government bodies, NGBs and player associations with the goal of improving conditions for WIS could be applied to the wider sporting context in Ireland.

The WGPA must be aware of the growing gap between corporate investment, attendances and visibility for ladies football players versus camogie players that has occurred over the last number of years (LGFA Strategic Roadmap 2017-2022, 2018, WGPA, 2019). While the set-up of camogie

review group was a proactive step in the right direction, the WGPA need to continue to be sensitive to the current struggles experienced by camogie members and continue to investigate how best they may aid their cause, if at all. The WGPA must maintain strong and capable leadership at all times and must tread carefully when forging new partnerships, ensuring the needs of their members remain a priority. While the WGPA membership base remains relatively steady, the scope of the activities undertaken continues to grow exponentially. The WGPA may need to consider more man power in order to accommodate this and maintain their positive impact. Elite female athletes must be willing to boycott any circumstances that are not in line with the equal and equitable goals that all WIS in Ireland must have. They must be educated correctly in order to contribute most effectively. In particular, they need to be provided with opportunities and pathways that may upskill players who want to help the cause as much as possible. The WGPA offer insight as to how this may be attained through programmes such as the Jim Madden Leadership Programme and the retired players workshop, both in conjunction with the GPA. The advancements made in the area of WIS in Ireland to date must not be taken for granted by younger players in both the WGPA and the wider context. Current and retired players can act as role models for future generations. WGPA player rep days, team talks, and WGPA and GPA rookie camps are just a few examples of the significant work undertaken by the WGPA in the area of educating members on the responsibility they have in relation to this. Relating back to the conclusions of Chapter Three, many other NGBs and stakeholders could benefit from the lessons that these blueprints offer. Player associations experience a high level of membership turnover, therefore the WGPA need to continuously devote resources to educating new members on the role that they can play in advancing the needs and status of members as player association members often have a narrow focus and perceive issues in terms of their own individual needs (Mitten et al., 2016, p. 402).

5.5 Recommendations for Future Study

More research such as the current study which assessed both current context of the macro issues facing women in Irish sport, meso issues related to the role of organisations such as the WGPA and NGBs and the micro issues of the players; could be beneficial if conducted every few years, as the landscape for all WIS is changing at such a rapid pace and it is important to remain relevant with both national and international best practices.

As there is very little data pertaining to WIS in Ireland apart from information regarding levels of female participation, research is required in areas such as the following:

- Performance data of Irish female elite athletes.

- Strategies differentiating support for all NGB's catering to women in Ireland could prove advantageous. The effect this may have on the more successful NGB's must also be considered and the resistance that may arise from it.
- Competing discourses which resist change in the realm of WIS in Ireland
- Barriers to low levels of female media coverage.
- The public's media interests relative to WIS in Ireland.
- The methods of effective PR and marketing campaigns relative to Irish WIS.
- How best to include media, funding, and leadership quotas in future Irish sport policies.
- Identifying the most pressing needs for future WIS policy in Ireland and effective policy implementation methods

In order to guide the next steps for the organisation, the WGPA should conduct more research into what players want from their intercounty experience and also consider a comparative study between the experiences of WGPA members and GPA members. This could help identify the high standards to be reached for the association. Comparative studies between the experiences of other female athletes in a range of sports in Ireland would also be beneficial to distinguish between favourable goals to strive for and poor conditions needing to be eradicated. Research investigating female only player association effectiveness worldwide does not exist. Markers for success could be gained from such a study. A comparative could also be done between the WGPA and other such associations.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Women in Sport in Ireland Full Timeline

2019	
Policy	<p>First Women in Sport Policy launched by Sport Ireland.</p> <p>First Women in Sport Steering Committee set up and First Women in Sport Lead appointed.</p> <p>Women in Sport Funding Programme for NGB's and LSP's relaunched by Sport Ireland - increasing to 2 million euro annually.</p> <p>Camogie receive no increase in funding by Sport Ireland for 2019 - Camogie and Karate only NGBs with no increase.</p> <p>Sport Ireland announced a multi-year investment of over €3 million in National Governing Bodies of Sport through the re-launched Women in Sport Programme.</p>
Boxing	<p>Katie Taylor became Female Lightweight Undisputed World Champion - holding the belts for WBA, IBF, WBO, and WBC.</p> <p>Katie Taylor announced as the WBA Female Boxer of the Year, having made four defences of her lightweight title in 2018.</p> <p>Kellie Harrington crowned 'Best European Female Boxer of 2018' at the Awards in The Netherlands, following a stellar year in which she won lightweight World gold, European bronze AND an 8th National Title.</p>
Soccer	<p>For the first time ever, RTÉ and TG4 showed all 52 matches live with free to air coverage in the 2019 FIFA WWC. Lisa Fallon, the only first team female coach working in men's professional football in Ireland with Cork City FC, also joined Dublin Senior Footballers background team.</p> <p>Lisa Fallon appointed to coaching role with Chelsea FC Women.</p>
Gaelic Games	<p>Ladies Football All-Ireland Finals broke the attendance record set in 2018, attracting a crowd of 56,114.</p> <p>Ladies Football All-Ireland Semi Finals take place in Croke Park for the first time in history, attracting a record crowd for a semi final of 10,866.</p> <p>Wexford camogie unable to field team during National League - received a lot of negative attention for this "bigger than any media than when they won All-Irelands", former manager JJ Doyle.</p> <p>LGFA host first adult player conference "Building A Stronger Me".</p> <p>Lidl announce 4th year of partnership with LGFA - investment of €250,000 in a nationwide school's campaign, with 159 secondary schools across the country to receive receive jerseys and equipment for their teams.</p> <p>Cork Ladies set to play in Páirc Uí Chaoimh for the first time ever; 2 National Football League Division 1 games and the provincial clash of Cork V Kerry in the Munster Championship on Saturday 1st June. The 11-time All-Ireland champions have NEVER played there. The matches did not go ahead.</p> <p>For the first time ever, Dublin Ladies Football team play 2 double header NFL fixtures in Croke Park.</p> <p>Fiona McHale, Mayo Ladies football All Star and WGPA national executive committee member, appointed as Coach to Claremorris Senior Football team.</p> <p>President of GAA John Horan announces congress to vote on LGFA and Camogie addition to GAA board.</p> <p>The LGFA stream 2019 Lidl NFL matches live via their Facebook page. One game from each of the seven rounds of fixtures, along with selected semi-finals.</p>

2019	
	<p>The LGFA confirm a list of 13 football double-header NFL matches with men's Allianz Football League:</p> <p>7 in Division 1 3 in Division 2 in Division 3 1 in Division 4.</p> <p>LGFA announce 12-month Female Leadership Programme with 4 key strands including:</p> <p>Coaching Officiating Administration PR/Media</p> <p>6 Littlewoods Ireland Camogie Leagues matches streamed live on Littlewoods Ireland social channels.</p> <p>Lidl release Ladies National Football League Guide for 2019.</p>
Rugby	<p>Two Irish player's names on World Rugby Women's 7s dream team:</p> <p>Eve Higgins Lucy Mulhall</p> <p>4,637 in attendance for Ireland V England IWNRT match in Donnybrook, a record crowd for a standalone fixture in the home of Irish women's rugby.</p> <p>New women's rugby podcast "Scrum Queens" launched by Kathryn Anastasi, who works full time with talkSPORT.</p>
Hockey	<p>Saba Dublin announced as an official partner for Hockey Ireland, fuelling training sessions and matches on the Tokyo 2020 Olympics qualification quest.</p> <p>Support for the IWNHT team took a giant leap towards a semi-professional basis with the announcement that Park Developments will roll out a four-year support package which will see up to 23 players initially benefit from bursaries.</p>
Horse Racing	<p>19-year-old Emma Doyle made a stunning racing debut on Friday night as she won at the Betvictor Handicap in Dundalk just a day after receiving her jockey licence.</p> <p>Rowing Ireland awarded the "Women and Sport" Achievement Diploma by the IOC in recognition of the outstanding contribution to promoting the development and participation of women and girls in sport.</p>
Australian Football League Women's	<p>The 2019 AFL Women's season saw 5 Irish born-and-bred players sign (including Cora Staunton who also played in the 2018 season). The four new recruits came from a Gaelic football background:</p> <p>Sarah Rowe (Collingwood rookie) Ailish Considine (Adelaide rookie) Yvonne Bonner (GWS Giants rookie) Aisling McCarthy (Western Bulldogs' senior list)</p> <p>Cora Staunton, Yvonne Bonner, Sarah Rowe, Ailish Considine and Aisling McCarthy all renewed terms for the 2020 season and 13 new Irish players will join the 2020 AFL Women's roster:</p> <p>Aileen Gilroy from Mayo Ladies Football and Mairead Seoige from Galway Ladies Football signed for North Melbourne.</p> <p>Clara Fitzpatrick from Down Ladies Football for St.Kilda Aisling Curley from Kildare Ladies football signed for Collingwood.</p> <p>The Kelly sisters from Mayo Ladies Football - Grace and Niamh, signed for West Coast Eagles.</p> <p>Orla O'Dwyer from Tipperary Camogie and Ladies Football signed for the Brisbane Lions.</p>

2019	
	<p>Aine Tighe from Leitrim Ladies Football and Kate Flood from Louth Ladies Football signed for Fremantle.</p> <p>Joanne Doonan from Fermanagh Ladies Football signed for Carlton Blues.</p> <p>Sinead McGoldrick and Niamh McEvoy from Dublin Ladies Football will join Melbourne Demons.</p>
Athletics	Ciara Mageean became first Irish woman to reach a world 1500m final since Sonia O Sullivan in 1997.

2018	
Policy/ Overall	<p>Olive Loughnane joined the board of Sport Ireland, a former world champion and four-time Olympian race-walker.</p> <p>20x20 initiative launched by FIS with the following targets:</p> <p>20% more media coverage of WIS by the end of 2020.</p> <p>20% more female participation whether at player, coach, referee or administration level by the end of 2020.</p> <p>20% more attendance at women's games and events by the end of 2020.</p> <p>Gender targets outlined in Action 32 of the new National Sports Policy 2018-2028: "NGBs will be asked to set gender diversity targets and develop equality action plans. Support will be provided for dedicated leadership training programmes for women including governance-related and technical training (coaching, refereeing and team management). Sport Ireland will monitor their progress in delivering on these and report annually."</p> <p>Women in Sport Review established by Sport Ireland.</p> <p>11 women mentioned in the RTÉ Year of Sport Review out of a total of 86 sports people or teams in total.</p> <p>Only 41% of people said they watched a female sports event in 2018 according to Teneo Ireland's annual research findings.</p> <p>9 women nominated for RTÉ Sportsperson of the Year out of a total of 23 (39%) compared with 4 out of a total of 14 in 2017 (29%).</p> <p>Two of the six books shortlisted in the An Post SPORT BOOK OF THE YEAR category telling the stories of women, written by women.</p> <p>Driven – Rosemary Smith with Ann Ingle.</p> <p>Game Changer – Cora Staunton with Mary White (AWARDED OVERALL WINNER).</p> <p>Liam Harbison, Sport Ireland, announces the medal winning ratio for Irish athletes has swung from 70% Men/30% Women to 45% Men/55% Women in 2018.</p> <p>Shane Ross announced 1.5-million-euro funding for Olympics and world championships - announced in front of IWNHT upon their return to Ireland after they came second in the world cup.</p> <p>Breakdown of the Youth Olympic Games team:</p> <p>Sixteen athletes</p> <p>Nine sports</p> <p>Eleven females</p> <p>Five males</p> <p>RTÉ release original documentary series 'We Run the World' shadowing 5 of Ireland's elite female athletes.</p> <p>Sprinter Phil Healy</p> <p>Hockey player Nicci Daly</p> <p>Tipperary footballer Samantha Lambert</p> <p>Cyclist Orla Walsh</p>

2018	
	Limerick camogie captain Sarah Carey.
Boxing	<p>Kellie Harrington won Irish Times Sport Ireland Sportswoman of the Year.</p> <p>Katie Taylor documentary "Katie" released, 100% review on Rotten Tomatoes.</p> <p>Kellie Harrington claimed the AIBA Lightweight World Title 2018. The first Irish boxer to win world medals at two different weights. She also won European bronze and an 8th national title.</p>
Hockey	<p>The IWNHT - claim a holy trinity of the RTÉ, Irish Independent and The Irish Times 'Team of the Year' accolades 2018.</p> <p>The IWNHT became the first Irish team EVER to make a world cup final. They finished second overall and secured silver medals.</p> <p>Irish women hockey players nominated in TWO different categories for the 2018 International Hockey Star Awards.</p> <p>Ayesha McFarlane for Goalkeeper of the Year.</p> <p>Lena Tice for Rising Star of the Year.</p> <p>SoftCo extended their pre-hockey world cup sponsorship of IWNHT up until at least 2021.</p> <p>The partnership with Hockey Ireland will incorporate the 2019 European Championships, as well as the team's qualification campaign for Tokyo Olympics 2020.</p> <p>IWNHT goes from 16th - 8th in world rankings.</p> <p>Shirley McCay, Ireland Hockey player, became the most capped athlete in Ireland ever.</p>
Horse Racing	Two women who transformed the landscape for female jump jockeys - Katie Walsh and Nina Carbery - retired within 24 hours of each other. The sisters-in-law both rode winners off into the sunset at Punchestown.
Golf	Returning from injury, Stephanie Meadow secures her LPGA Tour card for 2019. She made history when she was named the 2018 Irish Golf Writers' Professional of the Year - the first woman to win the award in its 43 year existence.
Gaelic Games	<p>Cora Staunton autobiography "Game Changer" was released as the first autobiography from a female GAA sports star and was subsequently crowned the 2018 Bord Gáis Energy Sports Book of the Year.</p> <p>"We shout at the players not to tackle in training. You are telling them not to make contact, because you are going to give away a free." Cork Camogie manager Paudie Murray does not hold back with his views on the need for change in the camogie rulebook.</p> <p>Joanne Cantwell becomes the first female presenter of the Sunday Game.</p> <p>Clare hurler Seadna Morey and Clare camogie player Chloe Morey interviewed on RTÉ's "The Big Picture" speaking on disparities between their intercounty experiences in Clare.</p> <p>LGFA run Assimilated Level 1 Course for current and past players only to encourage players to get on coaching pathway.</p> <p>The camogie finals attendance of 21,453 in Croke Park (the biggest in 14 years) beat the figure for the NWSL championship final. The NWSL is one of the top women's soccer leagues in the world, featuring global stars.</p> <p>LGFA achieve record attendance at final - 50,141.</p> <p>Briege Corkery equals Rena Buckley in most medals ever won in Gaelic Games, both Cork dual GAA stars have 18 All-Ireland Intercounty medals each.</p> <p>Details of the second year of the Government Funding Scheme for Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football intercounty teams were announced with an increase in funding to all successful applicants. This coincided with an initial evaluation report on the scheme which reported significant positive impacts for players, managers and county board officials. Over €500,000 in funding was provided to county panels in 2018 to support intercounty Camogie and Ladies Football players in their preparation throughout the year. This represents an increase to €9,000 available to each of the 53 adult intercounty squads and €4,500 to the 2</p>

2018	
	teams only involved in one competition, a rise from the €8,000 available in 2017, when an overall figure of €428,000 was awarded.
Athletics	<p>Natalya Coyle wrote (and swam / fenced / rode / ran / shot) herself into the sporting history books at the Women's Final of the UIPM Pentathlon World Cup in Bulgaria, by winning a super silver to become Ireland's first ever individual WC medallist in the sport.</p> <p>Phil Healy broke national records at both 100M and 200M distances - becoming the first Irish woman in 40 years to hold the two. She clocked 11.28 in the former in June; and 22.99 in the latter in July - the first Irish woman to ever break 23"at 200M.</p> <p>Ciara Mageean claimed both the 800M AND 1500M titles at National Athletic Championships - within the space of 75 minutes. This was the first time that such a double has been completed since Sonia O'Sullivan last did it 18 years ago.</p> <p>EUROPEAN U18 Athletics Championships:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1500M and 3000M Sarah Healy 200M Rhasidat Adeleke 800M Sophie O'Sullivan</p> <p>WORLD U20 Athletics Championships:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">4x100M Gina Akpe-Moses, Patience Jumbo-Gula, Ciara Neville, Molly Scott HIGH JUMP Sommer Lecky</p> <p>A record 7000 women participate in the Dublin Marathon. Lizzie Lee came 3rd overall.</p> <p>Mona McSharry took the Irish Short Course Swimming Championships by storm, including breaking Michelle Smith's 100M Freestyle Irish record set in 1995 - once in her heat, and again in the final to claim the gold. The 18 year old claimed six titles and six national records in total.</p>
Sailing	Sanita Puspure crowned women's single sculls world champion at the World Rowing Championships.
Soccer	Denise O'Sullivan crowned MVP by 2018 NWSL Champions North Carolina Courage.
Swimming	<p>17-year-old Niamh Coyne claimed a silver medal in the 100M breaststroke final for Ireland at the third ever Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires.</p> <p>Women in Sport, Coaching and Mentoring Program launched by Swim Ireland as part of their commitment to get more women involved in coaching roles. The initiative was funded by Sport Ireland.</p>
Cycling	The dynamic duo of Katie-George Dunlevy and Eve McCrystal successfully defended BOTH of their world titles - in the Time Trial, and the Road Race - within the space of 48 hours at the UCI 2018 Para-Cycling Road World Championships in Italy.
Rugby	<p>As part of the IRFU's Strategic Review, led by Mary Quinn and Su Carty, a list of women who represented Ireland in test matches between 1993-2006 was compiled. The players were presented with official caps at a special event honouring their contributions.</p> <p>The Guardian identified "ones-to-watch" for 2019 in football, athletics, cricket, tennis and rugby - with Beibhinn Parsons (16 years of age) listed for rugby after making her debut in November in the Ireland V USA game. Beibhinn also became the youngest ever Irish woman capped.</p>
Australian Football League Women's	<p>2 Irish players on club lists in the AFLW 2018:</p> <p>Ex pat Laura Duryea (Melbourne FC) Cora Staunton (Greater Western Sydney Giants)</p> <p>11 Irish female athletes made the trip to Melbourne to participate in AFLW trial:</p> <p>Aisling Considine (Clare) Aisling Sheridan (Cavan) Aisling Curley (Kildare) Aisling McCarthy (Tipperary)</p>

2018	
	Amanda Maginn (Ulster Rugby) Eimear Gallagher (Donegal) Fiadhna Tangney (Kerry) Mairead Coyne (Connacht Rugby/Ireland) Mary Ryan (Tipperary camogie) Muireann Atkinson (Monaghan) Yvonne McMonagle (Donegal)
Canoeing	Jenny Egan became the senior canoe sprint world championship bronze medallist putting Ireland on the medal table for the FIRST time at a Senior Canoe Sprint World Championships.

2017	
Horse Racing	Jessica Harrington won Irish Times Sport Ireland Sportswoman of the Year.
Soccer	The ROIWNST reached a deal with the FAI over demands for basic entitlements including tracksuits, gym membership and match success fees of less than 500 euro. The deal came after more than a dozen players went public angered at their treatment by the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), with their lawyer describing the women as being "dirt on the boot of the FAI" and "fifth-class citizens". They claimed they had been forced to change out of team tracksuits and official sports gear in airport toilets.
Gaelic Games	LGFA record attendance at final reached 46, 286 - up 12, 000 from 2016. This figure also achieved the highest attendance at a women's sporting event in Europe in 2017. Rena Buckley won her 18th All-Ireland Intercounty medal, the most ever won by a male or female player in Ireland. Blues sister's documentary on RTÉ charted the Dublin Senior Ladies football team's journey to All-Ireland success in 2017. The show was a huge hit among Gaelic games audiences across the country. RTÉ televised the All-Ireland camogie quarter-finals live for the first time.
Rugby	IRFU advertised for a new head coach on a part time contract for 6 months. Joy Neville won World Rugby Referee of the Year at the World Rugby Awards in a year which she officiated at the WRWC final, refereed a senior men's international game (one of the first female referees to do so) and became the first woman to officiate in a Champions Cup game. Ireland hosted the WRWC.
Hockey	The IWNHT had no sponsor heading into their world cup year with it emerging that members of the squad had to pay 550 euro out of their own pockets to cover expenses such as accommodation, buses etc.

2016	
Policy/ Overall	Sport for Business held the first Women in Irish Sport Conference. Junior minister Patrick O'Donovan flagged his intent to enforce a 30 per cent ratio of women on the boards of sporting bodies.
Sailing	Annalise Murphy won Irish Times Sport Ireland Sportswoman of the Year Annalise Murphy won silver after the final race of the women's Laser Radial on Guanabara Bay at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.
Soccer	In April 2016, Joanne Cantwell was the first woman to anchor RTÉ's coverage of the Champions League.

2016	
	The women's FAI Cup final, televised live for the fourth year in a row, was played as a double-header with the men's final in the Aviva. But the match programme devoted just seven of its 50 pages to the women's game. A crowd of 26,400 watched the men but only around 5 per cent of that (1,400) came early to watch the women.
Rugby	Ireland hosted the first women's rugby 15s Autumn internationals which brought the world's top three teams to Belfield and provided programmes free. But Ireland's games, well flagged in newspapers and with just a €5 entry (kids free), all attracted crowds of less than 2,000.
Gaelic Games	<p>RTÉ televised the All-Ireland camogie semi-finals live for the first time and also the Women's World Boxing Championships (TG4 had the rights in 2014).</p> <p>Lidl announced a huge financial investment of €1.5million euro in the LGFA in year 1 of this 3-year agreement which includes a huge advertising, social and in-store branding campaign that will see Lidl mobilise their customers as part of their pledge to provide #SeriousSupport to ladies football. Lidl became the Official Retail Partner to the LGFA and title sponsors of the Lidl Ladies National Football Leagues. This was one of the most significant sponsorship deals in the history of women's sport in Ireland. The deal also saw them become title sponsors for the Lidl Post Primary Schools Competitions, the Lidl Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme as well as offering support during the Championship.</p> <p>The then Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Patrick O'Donovan TD, announced a two-year agreement, commencing in 2017, to provide support for Inter County Ladies Football and Camogie Players. Grant aid of €1,000,000 over two playing seasons (2017 and 2018), was distributed equally to all highest-grade county teams participating in National League and/or All-Ireland championship competitions. Counties could only use the funds to engage industry accredited personnel. Funds were provided by the Irish Government, distributed through Sport Ireland and administered collaboratively by the LGFA, the Camogie Association and the Women's Gaelic Players Association through a Scheme Implementation Group (SIG) to support initiatives that raised standards and provided an enhanced playing and training environment for Inter County players and teams.</p> <p>Camogie and ladies' football, and their independent players' union (the WGPA), commission coverage (written and video) for their own websites and even give free content to mainstream media.</p> <p>The LGFA set a record attendance of 34,445 at the TG4 Ladies' All-Ireland Finals at Croke Park.</p> <p>The Camogie Association also had its highest attendance since 2006 for the All-Ireland Camogie Finals at 20,037.</p>
Para-lympics	<p>Cycling duo Katie-George Dunlevy and Eve McCrystal won gold at the Paralympics</p> <p>Other female winners at the Paralympics include:</p> <p>Swimmer Ellen Keane (bronze),</p> <p>Discus throwers Noelle Lenihan (bronze), Orla Barry (silver) and Niamh McCarthy (silver)</p>
Athletics	<p>Ciara Mageean won bronze in the 1,500m at the European Athletics Championships.</p> <p>Olive Loughnane was retrospectively awarded the gold medal for the 20km walk at the 2009 Berlin World Championships.</p>
2015	
Rugby	<p>IRFU hosted a major women's Sevens International event in UCD but provided no programmes.</p> <p>Irish Rugby's women lifted the Six Nations trophy.</p>

2015	
Gaelic Games	Rena Buckley and Briege Corkery won Irish Times Sport Ireland Sportswoman of the Year. 31,000 supporters came to Croke Park to support the 6 teams competing at the TG4 All-Ireland Finals resulting in the largest attendance at a Female European sporting event in 2015. WGPA formally launched.
Swimming	Fiona Doyle (University of Calgary) won silver and bronze in the 50m and 100m Breaststroke respectively at the World University Games in South Korea.
Squash	The Irish senior women's squash team won bronze at the European Championships.
Golf	Leona Maguire was the World Number One Ranked Amateur Golfer, earning her the Mark H McCormack Medal.
Hockey	The Senior Women's Irish team won Gold at World League 2 Hockey.

2014	
Rugby	Fiona Coughlan led the IWNRT to the semi-finals of the WRWC, overcoming New Zealand (for the first time ever) to finish fourth.
Soccer	Stephanie Roche's goal was nominated for the Fifa Puskas Goal of the Year Award.
Gaelic Games	Briege Corkery won 14 All-Ireland titles between Cork Camogie and Ladies Football.
Boxing	Katie Taylor won her record-equalling fifth consecutive World Championship title and sixth European and European Union Elite titles. Ciara Ginty secured silver in the lightweight boxing division at the Youth Olympics in China.
Archery	Archer Mel Lawton, shooting in the ladies compound section in the World Championship in Turkey, came 8th which is the highest place ever achieved by an Irish archer in this category.
Basketball	The Senior Women's 3x3 Irish basketball team qualified for European Championship and into the first European Games in Baku in 2015 under the Olympic flag. This is the first time an Irish basketball team participated in an Olympic event since 1948 and the first time to ever have qualified, as the 1948 participation was by invitation.
Swimming	Seven Irish Deaf women swam across the English Channel in an impressive time of 14 hours 10 minutes and 44 seconds, becoming the first Deaf relay team in the world to do so.
Golf	Stephanie Meadow placed 4th in the World Amateur Golf Rankings. She was chosen to represent Great Britain and Ireland at the Curtis Cup. She then turned professional in June 2014 and made an incredible debut at the Women's US Open at Pinehurst. Following on from this, she finished third in the ISPS HANDA Ladies European Masters in July. Stephanie made a seamless transition from amateur to professional and is a wonderful ambassador for Irish Ladies Golf.
Squash	The Senior Irish Women's Squash Team came 4th in the European Championships in Italy, despite losing World number 10 Madeline Perry to injury in the championship.
Weight Lifting	A female lifter won her category at the Grand Prix and three women represented Ireland at the Euro Seniors for the first time ever weight lifting.

2013	
Soccer	Lisa Fallon became Ireland's first ever female manager of a senior men's team when she was appointed by Lakelands FC.
Athletics	Sarah Lavin winning Silver at the Junior European Championships in Italy in the 100 metres hurdles. Derval O'Rourke and Ciaran O'Lionard winning bronze medals at the European Indoor Championships in Gothenburg, in the 60m hurdles and 3,000m respectively.

2013	
	Natalya Coyle and Eanna Bailey winning Silver in the Mixed Relay in February, being Ireland's first ever medal at a world cup competition in Modern Pentathlon Aileen Reid's silver medal at the World Series Grand Final in London which was watched by a viewing audience of 41 million
Rugby	IWNRUT winning the Grand Slam for the first time ever
Other	20,000 female participants took part in local Women in Sport programmes Fiona Doyle winning silver medal in 100m Breaststroke at the World University Games setting a new Irish Senior Record Shauna Weldon winning a gold medal in the solo event at the World Baton Twirling International Cup in the Netherlands. Clara Peters bringing home Ireland's First International Ice Skating Medal, taking Bronze in the Ladies Singles event in Australia Mel Lawther coming 8th in the World Archery Championships in Turkey European gold for sailor Annalise Murphy Irish Squash Senior Women's team winning a silver medal at the European Team Championships in May, along with a 6th place at the World Championships Caroline Ryan winning bronze at Track Cycling World Cup in Mexico.

Irish Times Sport Ireland Sportswoman of the Year Award - History	
2018	Kellie Harrington - Boxing
2017	Jessica Harrington - Horse Racing
2016	Annalise Murphy - Sailing
2015	Rena Buckley and Briege Corkery – Ladies Football and Camogie
2014	Katie Taylor - Boxing
2013	Fiona Coughlan - Rugby
2012	Katie Taylor - Boxing
2011	Nina Carberry - Horse Racing
2010	Grainne Murphy - Swimming
2009	Olive Loughnane - Athletics
2008	Katie Taylor - Boxing
2007	Katie Taylor - Boxing
2006	Derval O'Rourke - Athletics
2005	Briege Corkery – Ladies Football and Camogie
2004	Cathy Gannon - Horse Racing

Appendix B

Recommendations from Women in Sport Report 2004

House of the Oireachtas

Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

Fifth Report - Women in Sport 2004

Recommendations by Rapporteur Jimmy Deenihan TD

1. The Government should establish a Commission on Physical Education, with particular reference to the needs of females.
2. The ISC appoint a full-time Women's Development Officer with specific responsibility for the implementation of the Brighton Principles across the structures of legislative and voluntary sports organisations.
3. As members of the ISC (a proposed signatory of the Brighton Principles) all National Governing Bodies would be obliged to insert a gender equality clause in their constitutions as well as implementing strategies to address this principle.
4. The Government should ensure that all sport policies are underpinned by the Brighton Principles as a matter of priority. The principles and actions of the Brighton Declaration on Females and Sport and the Windhoek Call for Action must be committed to and acted upon.
5. The Government and ISC need to consider the issue of additional funding for National Governing Bodies and others who provide special programmes to encourage the participation and integration of females with disability. This is closely related to the success of the Special Olympics as well as the increasing profile of disabled athletes.
6. The Women's Development Officer should provide advice and assistance (e.g. regional and national courses/seminars/information programmes) for National Governing Bodies and groups of females seeking to increase the involvement of females as coaches, referees and administrators.
7. The Sports Council provide guidelines for the planning, design and management of female-friendly sports facilities, particularly in relation to applications for funding.
8. All facilities in receipt of state funding should comply with Sports Council facility guidelines.

9. An Annual Women's Sports Award scheme, solely for female athletes, should be organised to highlight the achievements and contributions made by females within local, regional and national organizations as well as the sporting achievements of females in sport generally.

10. The Sports Council should commission a longitudinal research project (as part of the remit of the Centre for Research into Sport and Physical Activity) to establish the depth, breadth, types and content of media coverage of female sports. In addition, print, radio and visual media should consider a research project to produce empirical data on the sporting interests of their consumers.

11. A national survey of the Irish public's interest in female sports coverage.

12. Research into television, radio and print media's preconceptions about what interests the Irish public.

13. Consistent and long-term reporting of international and elite fixtures/results in female sports.

14. A commitment to female sport generally through public service broadcasting. To achieve this, several components must be linked together.

15. The formation of an Irish Women's Sports Foundation to include representatives of all female sports organisations as well as the National Women's Council.

16. Co-operation and membership should be maintained and strengthened with related national and international groups e.g. the International Working Group and the ICSSPE.

17. Support for Irish participation in the next World Conference on Females and Sport in 2006.

18. A co-ordinated focus on females and sport by the ISC, the ESRI and the Irish WSF in order to develop coherent policies with realistic targets and measurable outcomes.

19. The Sports Council should implement gender equality strategies in all sports policies, including membership on all Committees.

20. The Department of Arts, Sport and tourism should work closely with the WSF to create and implement gender-specific strategies, targets and monitor outcomes for females in sport.

21. The ISC should provide information, models of best practice, and guidelines for practice as well as publicising international research findings on all aspects of female sport, recreational and competitive.

22. The Women's Development Officer, within the ISC, should liaise with media organisations to provide information and training in media skills for sporting bodies seeking to expand the level of coverage of female sport.

23. The ISC should encourage the Centre for Research into Sport and Physical Activity to coordinate with established academic centres such as the Centre for Sports Studies at University College Dublin, the Centre for Sport Science and Health, existing sport researchers at Third Level universities as well as all those with experience in this area. While the CRSPA is undertaking a national survey, these findings will not be published in the near future. In this regard, there is an existing body of knowledge (as outlined previously) from which to establish a strong foundation for any research-informed and future policies.

Recommendations of Joint Committee

1. The Sports Council should implement gender equality strategies appropriate to particular sports policies, including membership of all Committees.

2. The Irish Sports Council, the Government and related Departments with legislative responsibilities for the provision of sport should consider the provision of additional funding to anybody or organisation that submits a programme initiative or scheme to increase female involvement in any aspect of sport.

3. The Government and the ISC should provide information, models of best practice, guidelines for practice as well as publicising international research findings on all aspects of female sport, recreational and competitive.

4. The Government should adopt the Brighton Principles as a matter of priority.

5. As part of the adoption of the Brighton Principles as well as the implementation of realistic targets and measurable outcomes, the Government and the ISC should require all bodies in receipt of Council funding to demonstrate equity in their policies, operations and strategic plans where appropriate.

6. As members of the ISC (a proposed signatory of the Brighton Principles) all National Governing Bodies would be obliged to insert a gender equality clause in their constitutions as well as implementing strategies to address this principle.

7. The Government and ISC need to consider the issue of additional funding for National Governing Bodies and others who provide special programmes to improve the participation and integration of women with a disability. This is closely related to the success of the Special Olympics as well as the increasing profile of disabled athletes.

8. The Government, ISC and the Department of Education and Science need to consider a reorganisation of the PE curriculum in line with arguments put forward by the Physical Education Association of Ireland. Part of this strategy should include the completion of a national survey to establish the availability and extent of physical education provision for women within formal education, within youth and sport sectors and within the community. The European Year of Education through Sport (2004) is an opportune year in which to make coherent attempts to address what has been highlighted by PE teachers and the PEAI as a serious problem in the PE curriculum.

9. The Government, ISC and the Department of Health and Children must raise the profile of the health benefits of sport and recreational activity for women with special reference to osteoporosis and other ailments.

10. The Government and the ISC appoint a full-time Women's Development Officer with specific responsibility for the implementation of the Brighton Principles across the structures of legislative and voluntary sports organisations.

11. The Women's Development Officer should provide advice and assistance (e.g. regional and national courses/seminars/information programmes) for National Governing Bodies and groups of females seeking to increase the involvement of females as coaches, referees and administrators.

12. The Sports Council, with support from the Government, should include guidelines for the planning, design and management of female-friendly sports facilities, particularly in relation to applications for funding.

13. All facilities in receipt of state funding should comply with Sports Council facility guidelines.

14. An Annual Women's Sports Award scheme should be organised to highlight the achievements and contributions made by women within local, regional and national organizations as well as the sporting achievements of WIS generally.

15. The Sports Council should commission a longitudinal research project (as part of the remit of the Centre for Research into Sport and Physical Activity) to establish the depth, breadth, types and

content of media coverage of female sports. In addition, print, radio and visual media should consider a research project to produce empirical data on the sporting interests of their consumers.

16. The Women's Development Officer, within the ISC, should liaise with media organisations to provide information and training in media skills for sporting bodies seeking to expand the level of coverage of female sport.

17. The ISC should encourage the Centre for Research into Sport and Physical Activity to coordinate with established academic centres such as the Centre for Sports Studies at University College Dublin, the Centre for Sport Science and Health, existing sport researchers at Third Level colleges as well as all those with experience in this area. While the CRSPA is undertaking a national survey, these findings will not be published in the near future. In this regard, there is an existing body of knowledge (as outlined previously) from which to establish a strong foundation for any research- informed and future policies.

18. While noting Deputy Deenihan's concept of a Women's Sport Foundation, the Joint Committee would be loathe to see women in any role other than in mainstream sporting activity.

Appendix C

E-mail Requesting Participation in Women in Sport in Ireland Stakeholders Interviews

Dear ****,

My name is Julia White. I am currently a post-graduate student in Waterford Institute of Technology carrying out my research masters in the Department of Health, Sport and Exercise Science. The reason I am writing to you today is to request permission to interview you as part of my research project titled: 'Policy and Practice: Women in Sport in Ireland – What has changed? A case study of the Women's Gaelic Players Association (WGPA) and an analysis of the situation for women in sport in Ireland'. I feel your insights into this subject area could really benefit and strengthen my project and offer deeper understanding to the data that I have already collected.

If you are interested in taking part, I would be very happy to work around your schedule and make it as convenient as possible for you. I could conduct the interview either over the phone or in person and I am very flexible in relation to when/where it could take place. Please let me know if you require any further information on the project before agreeing to participate.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kindest regards,

Julia White

Appendix D

Women in Sport Interview Topic Guide

- Your background and role – involvement in sport, interest, why and how you got drawn towards this type of role
- Your job, what it entails, who you work with most
- Are you familiar with the Oireachtas Report 2004? Do you think the recommendations have been met? Why/why not?
- Views on the position of WIS in Ireland– what changes have you seen over past 10+ years, what are the main issues (past and future), going forward (what can / needs to be done in your opinion?)
- Opinions around the apparent disparity between male and female sports
- Views on Policy Makers: Lack of female representation in influential positions (NGBs, National Organisations, Government etc.)
- Where do you think policy change lies - with the government and/or elsewhere?
- Do you think the government/politicians could do more for WIS? How?
- What is your opinion on gender quotas?
- Views on media representation – most powerful tool in today's world for the promotion of sport and athletes yet there are still cultural, economic and competitive discrepancies in how male and female sport is portrayed.
- Views on gender bias in the media: Language, content, themes, amount of coverage
- Views on funding regarding WIS in Ireland: Clear and apparent inconsistencies in the funding (Corporate / Sponsorship / Private / Government) of male and female sports and player associations.
- Do you think Sport Ireland have a responsibility to provide more equal opportunities for WIS in Ireland?
- Do you think there should be more reports on WIS in Ireland? By who?
- Thoughts on the WGPA?

Appendix E

Summary of Interviews - Emerging Themes

Interviewee	Themes
Interviewee #1	<p>Women in positions of power changing things, female CEOs, women on boards.</p> <p>Social media echo chamber/vacuum – dangerous.</p> <p>Criticism of lack of initiatives by Irish Sports Council and Department of Health, need to be more innovative.</p> <p>Success or the “story being good enough” is important for coverage, attention etc., have to be able to back it up with quality though e.g. women’s soccer team didn’t work exactly, have to be able to back up bold statements or else giving ammunition.</p> <p>Being creative in initiatives and campaigns.</p> <p>Investing long term e.g. giving free copy now to reap benefits in future e.g. WGPA and LGFA.</p> <p>Women having to be prepared to deal with the realities of being treated equally e.g. same criticism as men.</p> <p>“Strike while iron is hot”.</p> <p>WGPA have had good impact.</p> <p>Team sports suffer the most, perceived to be not as exciting - do we need to focus on making the games better e.g. camogie. Women shouldn’t be judged off same standards, create own narrative. Finances. High performance funding to medal chances?</p> <p>There is growth happening in WIS in Ireland.</p> <p>Páirc Uí Chaoimh - why are we not standing up for that.</p> <p>Big numbers at finals but need to get more at matches throughout the year.</p> <p>Irish times happened to have an open minded editor.</p> <p>Sports moving ahead of others.</p> <p>What policy - it has been non-existent.</p>
Interviewee #2	<p>One club type model in Dublin GAA job - worked well, definitely for integration.</p> <p>Rugby has little to no integration in traditional rugby clubs, bit better in the countryside - more community oriented.</p> <p>Get females on committees and boards, gender quotas - comes down to policy, Sport Ireland need to step up.</p> <p>Give it a try, social and marketing initiative.</p> <p>Some sports moving ahead of others in WIS.</p> <p>WGPA huge impact.</p> <p>LGFA and camogie should join - questions whether people are afraid of losing jobs as a barrier to the integration.</p>

Interviewee	Themes
	<p>Only join GAA if it means added resources, hard to get fair share when joined, need to have really strong people top down.</p> <p>County boards are barriers - Páirc Uí Chaoimh.</p> <p>Team sports suffer.</p> <p>Good sponsors are key - soccer good example for the domestic game?</p> <p>Any money from government should be split 50/50, outside of more money brought in from sponsorship etc.</p> <p>Women have to make more noise of things, make a big deal of launches etc.</p> <p>Fixtures calendars in advance.</p> <p>Use players as role models, get them to stand up and be counted, use their voice.</p> <p>Rugby proves if mainstream media show matches, participation can increase - huge positive for encouraging girls to play sport.</p> <p>Female CEOs.</p> <p>Mentoring programmes, leadership etc. very good but players need to buy into it - need to prepare player for life after sport - sees this as important role for player associations.</p>
Interviewee #3	<p>Use player profile to draw attention to the issues.</p> <p>Improvements made - media, funding, exposure drive to push for more.</p> <p>Big disparity among counties - dependent upon success.</p> <p>Should capitalise on it.</p> <p>Wants more liaison with the GAA.</p> <p>Need to serve the genuine GAA followers more - believe they do exist, just want to see matches and not thinking about men or women.</p> <p>County boards need to act more and management to a degree, can't be all down to players.</p> <p>Coaching and managements need to improve for female teams.</p> <p>Helping players off the pitch is also key, Jim Madden, leadership days etc.</p> <p>Ladies football have stepped up.</p> <p>Ladies football and camogie need to liaise more.</p> <p>Not sure where she stands on integration - afraid of being swallowed up.</p> <p>One club model - can learn from colleges.</p> <p>Target female companies, CEOs for sponsorship etc.</p> <p>Players seen more as athletes.</p> <p>Players taking it for granted is a worry.</p>
Interviewee #4	<p>Volunteerism in Ireland is unbelievable - trying to make life for the volunteer easier - more female friendly coaching courses.</p>

Interviewee	Themes
	<p>Dublin very well catered for - not so much regional areas.</p> <p>Collaborate with dept. transport tourism and sport.</p> <p>Links with New Zealand - we should adopt similar systems.</p> <p>Talks a lot about general work but not so much WIS in relation to work being done by federation of Irish sport e.g. why sport matters to society, economy etc.</p> <p>Gaelic games getting more exposure.</p> <p>Ladies football doing very well.</p> <p>Double headers - new audience, collaboration.</p> <p>Plaudits for the sake of plaudits is no good.</p> <p>Changes in people's perceptions of women's sports - Katie Taylor being discussed technically very helpful.</p> <p>Bring in male commentators to critique women - people will listen more?</p> <p>Athletes realise they have an important role to play.</p> <p>No women on 100 richest sports stars.</p> <p>Need to want to watch because it is entertaining and not just for sake of it.</p> <p>Supporters v followers.</p> <p>Female managers and coaches.</p> <p>Administrators at high levels, referees.</p> <p>Look at pathways out of sport, engage past players to get them back involved.</p> <p>Focus can't be just on high performing players, only the best play won't work - club game fixtures.</p> <p>People's perceptions are important - need to focus on education piece.</p> <p>Policy needs to be cross collaborative between NGBs, government, Sport Ireland etc.</p> <p>Women's Quercus formed in the Dáil.</p> <p>Praises sport Ireland.</p> <p>Include mothers.</p> <p>Funding for initiatives is crucial.</p> <p>Target audience important - creating narrative??</p> <p>Gender quotas v gender diversity based on ability.</p> <p>Need for more reports.</p> <p>20/20 campaign??? - individual research is happening but important to unify it too, right time for it.</p> <p>Lots of praise for sport Ireland.</p> <p>WGPA great - funding and other services, at a realistic stage currently.</p>

Interviewee	Themes
	<p>WGPA need to educate the player on the importance of the player role.</p> <p>Past players.</p> <p>Illustrate to the public the work that the players do (WGPA) - not all about them being elite players, willing to give their name to good causes - will help form new partnerships.</p>
Interviewee #5	<p>High performance sports - mentions swimming, boxing, rowing... how are these defined? - They're improving, career paths for women more tailored and mapped out - what about team sports?</p> <p>Talent ID systems important going forward.</p> <p>Sport Ireland monitoring funding and evaluates expenditure.</p> <p>Women in Sport programme operating since 2005 - 13 years, 18 million spent on programmes specifically targeting women - same programme year after year - needed to be refreshed.</p> <p>Supporting female roles in NGBs??</p> <p>Focuses on participation - gap between male and females on the decline.</p> <p>WIS project over the summer.</p> <p>ESRI report - 13 years ago all about participation.</p> <p>Women in sport is now viewed as a much broader picture than just participation.</p> <p>Leadership and governance - women on boards.</p> <p>Volunteering.</p> <p>WIS advisory group just for purpose of project over the summer - publish in January?</p> <p>Oireachtas 2004 not publicised influence on WIS programme in 2005.</p> <p>Good stuff happening in WIS but need more reports and communication about what is happening.</p> <p>National Sports Policy in August until 2027 - sees this as blueprint for what they should focus on for WIS.</p> <p>Gender quotas.</p> <p>Policy gives sport Ireland power.</p> <p>Sport Ireland has no major engagement with GPA or WGPA... not sure how true this is?</p> <p>Success of hockey - they still have a long way to go, success masked this?</p> <p>Coaching is huge area that needs to be addressed.</p>

Emerging Themes	Interviewees				
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
The need for more women in positions of power and gender quotas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The danger of a social media "echo chamber"	✓	x	x	x	x
Sport Ireland is not doing enough for WIS	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Sport Ireland have done a lot for WIS	x	x	x	✓	✓
Success is necessary for progress for WIS in media and in relation to funding	✓	x	✓	x	✓
The need for creative initiatives, marketing, societal targets, narratives etc.	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
The power of free copy	✓	x	x	x	x
Ladies football is accelerating beyond camogie and other sports	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Growth of WIS is evident currently in many areas	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
The question of whether WIS are ready for the realities of being treated equally	✓	x	x	x	✓
The need to convert "followers" of WIS to "supporters"	✓	x	✓	x	✓
The need for more female coaches, referees, administrators	x	x	✓	✓	✓
The feeling that women sports are perceived as boring	✓	x	x	x	✓
The feeling that policy for WIS is improving	x	x	x	✓	✓
The need for players to realise the importance of their role	x	✓	✓	x	✓
The fear that current players take for granted the struggle for WIS	x	✓	✓	x	✓
The feeling that women team sports suffer more than individual sports	✓	✓	x	x	x

Appendix F

Sport Ireland Women in Sport Steering Committee

1. Lynne Cantwell, Chair – Sport Ireland Board
2. Joanne Cantwell – Broadcaster, RTÉ Sport
3. Mary Dorgan – Sport Ireland Board
4. Jenny Egan – International Athlete, Canoeing
5. John Fulham – President, Paralympics Ireland
6. Frances Kavanagh – Former Director of Sport, Special Olympics Ireland
7. Sarah Keane – Chief Executive, Swim Ireland/President, Olympic Federation of Ireland
8. Mary O'Connor – Chief Executive, Federation of Irish Sport
9. Kelli O'Keeffe – Managing Director, Teneo
10. John Sweeney – Coordinator, Clare Sports Partnership

Appendix G

Sports Leadership Group

1. Shane Ross - Minister of State TD
2. Brendan Griffin - Minister of State TD
3. Mary O'Connor - Federation of Irish Sport
4. Deirdre Lavin - Local Sports Partnership Sligo
5. Sarah Keane - Olympic Federation of Ireland
6. John Fulham - Paralympics Ireland
7. Conn McCluskey - Ireland Active
8. Niamh Daffy - CARA Centre
9. Alan Quinlan - Former Rugby International
10. Shane O'Connor Olympic - Federation of Ireland, Athlete's Commission
11. Nina Arwitz - Volunteer Ireland
12. Mr Danny McLoughlin - The County and City Management Association
13. John Treacy - Sport Ireland
14. Ken Spratt Department of Transport - Tourism and Sport
15. Rita Sexton - Department of Education
16. Kate O'Flaherty - Department of Health
17. Geraldine McCarthy - Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Appendix H

Analysis of NGB Gender Equality Clauses

Sport	NGB	Gender Equality Clause	Strategies to address gender principles
Boxing	IABA	<p>Unable to find access to view constitution document - unavailable on website</p> <p>Sport Ireland threatened to withdraw funding in 2017 due to the IABA "continuing to be faithful to an archaic constitution" in relation to HP unit</p> <p>Women's section on website present but not updated since 2012</p>	None present
Rugby	IRFU	<p>No mention of gender in Laws and Regulations</p> <p>The Spirit of Rugby Charter sets out how the Irish Rugby family aspires to live its values through its actions in each aspect of the game from grassroots to professional rugby. The values and standards of all involved, from player, coach, volunteer to spectator are vital to the work and reputation of the game. Our values are our moral compass, on and off the pitch.</p> <p>Diversity of opinion and culture means working together to be a vibrant, respectful organisation - Rugby is a sport of choice for all, it transcends barriers and differences of race, gender, religion and sexual orientation. Players that have a positive life-long experience of the game can remain within the Irish Rugby family throughout their lives, fulfilling roles that enable them to be the best version of themselves.</p> <p>Chapter dedicated to Women in Rugby in IRFU Strategic Plan 2018 - 2023 Core Principles: "We will be a sport with equal opportunity and access for all. 20% or more of our players, coaches, referees, volunteers and committee officials will be females, Increase the opportunities to play the game through a defined pathway and establishment of competitions to</p>	<p>Strategic review correctly places significant emphasis on a number of key strands, identified by the IRFU as central to the future wellbeing of rugby in Ireland including "building a strong base from which to expand the women's game".</p> <p>5 Strategic Priorities for Women in Rugby</p>
Athletics	Athletics Ireland	<p>Athletics Ireland Memorandum and Articles and Bye Laws of the Association (2014).</p> <p>No discrimination whether on grounds of racial, religious, political or gender based or any other kind of discrimination be allowed</p>	The Board shall have regard to the Association's principles of gender equality in the matter of all Board appointments.

Sport	NGB	Gender Equality Clause	Strategies to address gender principles
		<p>in Athletics, and to take all practicable measures to prevent such discrimination.</p> <p>Strive to ensure that for all elected positions in the Association, including the Board, there shall be no discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or any other discrimination.</p>	<p>Commit the Association to the promotion of gender equality throughout all levels of the organisation.</p> <p>Words importing the singular number only shall include the plural number and vice versa; words importing the masculine gender only shall include the feminine and neuter gender and vice versa.</p>
Soccer	FAI	<p>Football belongs to, and should be enjoyed by everyone equally. Our commitment is to confront and eliminate discrimination whether by reason of gender, sexual orientation, race, nationality, ethnic origin, colour, religion or disability.</p> <p>The Association is an equal opportunities employer. They are committed to equality of opportunity within the organisation and to encouraging similar commitment for every organisation or individual acting within the game.</p> <p>Equality of opportunity at the FAI means that in all our activities we shall not discriminate or in any way treat anyone less favourably, on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, race, nationality, ethnic origin, colour, religion or disability. This includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The advertisement of jobs b) The selection of candidates for employment or promotion c) Job location or working environment d) Pay and employment terms and conditions e) Internal training and development activities f) External coaching and education activities and awards g) Football development activities h) Selection for representative teams i) Appointment to honorary positions. 	<p>Football Association of Ireland Rules (2017)</p> <p>Any Participant, who offends, disparages, discriminates against or denigrates someone, or a group of persons, in a derogatory manner on account of 'race', skin colour, language, religion, disability, gender, ethnic and/or national origin(s) or sexual orientation, or perpetrates any other racist/discriminatory and/or contemptuous act, shall be subject to disciplinary sanction. The relevant disciplinary body shall consider and have the power to impose a suspension, fine and/or other sanction as deemed appropriate. In the case of individuals, the minimum suspension shall be for a period of five (5) matches.</p>
Hockey	Hockey Ireland	<p>Constitution of Irish Hockey Company Limited by Guarantee - Memorandum of Association (2014)</p> <p>Hockey Ireland respects the rights, dignity and worth of every person and will treat everyone equally within the context of hockey, regardless of age, ability, gender,</p>	<p>Irish Hockey Company Limited by Guarantee ("Hockey Ireland") Bye Laws</p> <p>Number of Directors - There shall be a maximum of twelve (12) Directors and a minimum of eight (8) Directors with adequate</p>

Sport	NGB	Gender Equality Clause	Strategies to address gender principles
		<p>race, ethnicity, religious belief, sexuality or social/economic status.</p>	<p>representation of each gender on the Board. At any time there shall be at least two (2) Directors from each gender</p> <p>Director Term of Office - Subject to Article 29 (Appointment and Rotation of Directors), all Directors shall be elected for a term of three (3) years and may be re-elected for up to a maximum of six (6) years unless (in the reasonable opinion of the Board) there are exceptional circumstances, in which case the Board may determine that such Director may stand for election for a further three (3) year period. For the purposes of this Article 43, exceptional circumstances shall include (but are not limited to) circumstances where there is an insufficient number of candidates nominated at an AGM and willing to act, such that either the total number of Directors appointed or the number of Directors of one gender appointed would fall below the minimum numbers specified in Article 28 (Number of Directors). A Director may stand for election again provided that at least two (2) years have elapsed from the end of their previous term in office.</p>

Appendix I

Breakdown of International Carding Scheme Funding by Gender

NGB	Female	Total	% Females	Female Funding	Total Funding	%Female out of Total Funding
Athletics Ireland	4	11	36.4%	64,000	192,000	33.3%
Badminton Ireland	1	4	25%	12,000	56,000	21.4%
Canoeing Ireland	1	3	33.3%	20,000	52,000	38.5 %
Cycling Ireland	6	13	46.2%	144,000	268,000	53.7%
Gymnastics Ireland	0	2	0%	0	52,000	0%
Irish Athletic Boxing Association	3	12	33.3%	72,000	188,000	38.3%
Irish Clay Target Shooting Association	1	1	100%	20,000	20,000	100%
Irish Judo Association	1	4	25%	12,000	56,000	21.4%
Irish Sailing Association	2	7	28.6%	24,000	84,000	28.6%
Irish Taekwondo Union	0	1	0%	0	20,000	0%
Pentathlon Ireland	3	4	75%	64,000	104,000	61.5%
Rowing Ireland	5	10	50%	120,000	259,000	46.3%
Swim Ireland	4	10	40%	56,000	144,000	38.9%
Table Tennis Ireland	0	1	0%	0	12,000	0%
Triathlon Ireland	0	2	0%	0	32,000	0%

Appendix J

Breakdown of Funding for Female Athletes with Disabilities

Carded Athletes 2017

NGB	Athlete	Category	Funding
Cycling Ireland	Colin Lynch (para cycling)	Podium	€40,000
Cycling Ireland	Eoghan Clifford (para cycling)	Podium	€40,000
Cycling Ireland	Katie George Dunlevy + Pilot (para cycling)	Podium	€60,000
Cycling Ireland	Damien Vereker + Pilot (para cycling)	World Class	€30,000
Cycling Ireland	Declan Slevin	International	€12,000
Cycling Ireland	Peter Ryan + Pilot (para cycling)	International	€18,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Jason Smyth	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Michael McKillop	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Orla Barry	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Noelle Lenihan	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Niamh McCarthy	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Greta Streimikyte	World Class	€20,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Deirdre Mongan	International	€12,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Orla Comerford	International	€12,000
Paralympic Athletics Ireland	Patrick Monahan	International	€12,000
Paralympic Swimming Ireland	Ellen Keane	Podium	€40,000
Paralympic Swimming Ireland	Nicole Turner	World Class	€20,000
Paralympic Swimming Ireland	James Scully	International	€12,000
Paralympic Swimming Ireland	Ailbhe Kelly	International	€12,000
Paralympic Table Tennis	Rena McCarron	International	€12,000
Paralympic Canoeing	Patrick O'Leary	International	€12,000

Breakdown of Sport Ireland funding for Carded Athletes with Disabilities			
Type of Funding		Female Funding	Male Funding
Level 1	60,000	1 x Level 1 = €60,000	0 x Level 1 = €0
Level 2	40,000	4 x Level 2 = €160,000	4 x Level 2 = €160,000
Level 3	30,000	0 x Level 3 = €0	1 x Level 3 = €30,000
Level 4	20,000	2 x Level 4 = €20,000	0 x Level 4 = €0
Level 5	18,000	0 x Level 5 = €0	1 x Level 5 = €18,000
Level 6	12,000	4 x Level 6 = €48,000	4 x Level 6 = €48,000
Total		€308,000	€256,000

Appendix K

WGPA Full Timeline

2013	
Nov	Aoife Lane had conversation with GPA President Dónal Óg Cusack at Camogie All Stars regarding setting up a Players Association.
2014	
July	<p>Players Report by Aoife Lane: 'Let's Make Things Better'. National Executive Committee set up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aoife Lane • Fiona McHale • Gemma Begley • Deirdre Murphy • Kate Kelly • Valerie Mulcahy • Anna Geary
2015	
Jan-May	<p>Official Launch of WGPA by National Executive Committee. 24/7 member support line launched. PwC announced as first corporate partner of WGPA. First Regional Reps Days held in Enniskillen and Limerick. First 7 WGPA members participated in the Jim Madden Leadership Programme with GPA.</p>
June	Behind the Player' campaign launched with PwC.
Oct	<p>WGPA make a stand on camogie "Coin Toss" controversy with success. First 12 undergraduate scholarships presented and 4 Masters Scholarships launched with WIT, UL and DCU. Skechers partnership launched for WGPA Hero award for Camogie and Ladies Football "Player of the Month". "On Her Side" campaign launched with support from GPA. WGPA and GPA support "Yes Vote" in the Marriage Referendum.</p>
Nov-Dec	<p>Camogie Association All Stars accommodates 1st WGPA Players Player of Year Awards. WGPA and GPA support Special Olympics Ireland. Elverys and Skechers partnerships announced. WGPA and GPA support Special Olympics Ireland.</p>
2016	
Jan-Apr	<p>Skechers announced extension of the Player of the Month Awards. Partnership with Elvery's Intersport launched.</p>
May	<p>ICON plc Sports Scholarship partnership launched. Personal development coaching service launched for all members.</p>
June-Aug	<p>Government Grants - Minister Patrick O'Donovan announced 2-year agreement of €428,000 each to all highest grade county Ladies Football and Camogie teams each year. 'Be You Be Long' campaign launched with Jigsaw.</p>
Sept-Dec	Record attendance of 34,445 at Ladies Football All-Ireland finals. WGPA Support 'Headway Concussion Aware' campaign.

2016	
	<p>WGPA participate in Women, Leadership and Sports "Exploring the leadership that drives success" talk in The University of Limerick in conjunction with PwC.</p> <p>WGPA attend annual GPA event in New York City.</p> <p>WGPA partnership with OPRO Mouthguard.</p> <p>Elverys and Mayo LGFA partnership.</p>

2017	
Jan-Feb	<p>WGPA included in EU Athletes SWAFE project.</p> <p>WGPA Scholarship Presentations.</p>
Mar-Apr	<p>Support for and representation at "Be Bold for Change" seminar held by PwC</p> <p>BackBaller supports scholarships recipients.</p> <p>Elverys and Sunday Independent partnership launched for WGPA Hero award for Camogie and Ladies Football "Player of the Month".</p> <p>WGPA supports ROIWNST during negotiations with FAI and PFAI for better conditions.</p> <p>Setanta College Strength and Conditioning course discounts for WGPA members announced.</p>
May-June	<p>Cúl Heroes cards launched including female All Star recipients for first time</p> <p>Avonmore Protein partnership launched.</p> <p>First tranche of government grants released.</p> <p>Attendance and presentation at EU Athletes SWAFE Conference.</p> <p>FitFodder partnership launched.</p>
July-Sept	<p>Pat the Baker partnership launched with revenue share arrangement - a percentage of all sales go towards the WGPA Player Development Programme.</p> <p>Attendance of 46,286 at Ladies Football All-Ireland final, breaking previous record.</p>
Nov-Dec	<p>WGPA facilitate first Government Grant workshops for county teams</p> <p>World Players United support.</p> <p>Meeting with Billie Jean King and Women's Sport Foundation, BJK shared message of support for members.</p> <p>Partnership with Meagher's Pharmacy launched.</p> <p>WGPA members participate in nationwide sleep out to raise money for the homeless, in conjunction with Gaelic Voices for Change and GPA.</p>

2018	
Jan	<p>3-year anniversary of the WGPA.</p> <p>4th Annual Reps Day and AGM: decided that CEO was to be appointed, two new members on executive: Carol O'Leary and Aine Tighe, decided the formation of a players council was to happen.</p>
Feb-Mar	<p>Players council of 10 formed, drawn equally from two codes.</p> <p>Results of SWAFE project.</p> <p>First WGPA Young Leader of the Year awarded to Laurie Ryan, Clare LGFA.</p> <p>4 Person Advisory Group formed:</p> <p>Siobhan Farrell, CEO, Compete with Compassion.</p> <p>Dr Katie Liston, Senior Lecturer, University of Ulster Jordanstown (UUJ).</p> <p>Walter Palmer, Director, Dartmouth for Life.</p> <p>Linda Mellerick, Director of Operations and CFO, SELC Ireland Ltd.</p>
April-May	<p>Personal development coaching launched.</p> <p>Intercon Boston.</p>

2018	
	<p>First Player Welfare Day in Setanta College, with the aim of maximising performance for members.</p> <p>WGPA participate in 'Every Woman Every Story' at the Dochas Centre, Mountjoy Women's Prison.</p>
June-Oct	<p>First WGPA "Team Talks" carried out.</p> <p>Details of the second year of the Government Funding Scheme for Camogie and Ladies Football intercounty teams were announced with an increase in funding to all successful applicants. This coincided with an initial evaluation report on the scheme which reported significant positive impacts for players, managers and county board officials. Over €500,000 in funding was provided to county panels in 2018 to support intercounty Camogie and Ladies Football players in their preparation throughout the year. This represents an increase to €9,000 available to each of the 53 adult intercounty squads and €4,500 to the 2 teams only involved in one competition, a rise from the €8,000 available in 2017, when an overall figure of €428,000 was awarded.</p> <p>Impacts of the Government Grant Scheme Report published:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 84% of players and 90% of managers see increased standard of the games. -66% of players and 92% of manager's report increased injury prevention. - 70% of player's report increase in elite athlete self-identity. <p>Opro power fit model with WGPA branding launched by Elverys intersport.</p> <p>Attendance of 50,141 at Ladies Football All-Ireland final, breaking previous record.</p>
Nov-Dec	<p>WGPA members participate in Sport for Business discussion - Maria Kinsella, Aoife Lane, Anne Dalton.</p> <p>WGPA members facilitate Dochas Centre anti bullying workshop for inmates.</p>

2019	
Jan-Feb	<p>AGM:</p> <p>National Executive Committee expanded to 11 members with a number of the original members stepping down.</p> <p>Maria Kinsella announced as new Chairperson.</p> <p>Motion passed that will see WGPA structure a formal partnership with GPA.</p> <p>Motion approved for lifelong membership for players stepping down from national executive committee.</p> <p>Squad Charters introduced to squads as part of grant application.</p> <p>Camogie player engagement review group set up.</p>
Mar-Jun	<p>WGPA and GPA sign Scholarship Partnership with the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG).</p> <p>WGPA and GPA sign scholarship partnership with GMIT.</p> <p>Karakal and WGPA launch Exclusive Hurling Grip.</p> <p>WGPA release report "Camogie - The Players View".</p> <p>Setanta Performance workshop.</p> <p>First Madden Leadership Masterclass in conjunction with GPA.</p> <p>GAA had first official entry in Dublin Pride Parade event with WGPA members invited to participate.</p> <p>WGPA Members met with Camogie Association to discuss Players' View Report.</p> <p>First WGPA mid-term regional visits to squads.</p>
July-Oct	<p>Player Health Check Pilot Programme carried out.</p> <p>Players wear pink laces during games in support of Breast Cancer Ireland.</p>

2019	
	<p>WGPA and GPA partner with RSA to promote road safety awareness and encourage young people to put their phones away when driving.</p> <p>WGPA host All-Ireland Ladies Football Finals event for corporate partners.</p> <p>Attendance of 56,114 at Ladies Football All-Ireland final, breaking previous record.</p> <p>Rookie camp for GPA and WGPA members open for application.</p> <p>Article in The Times with the title 'GAA women ought to secure more state funds than the men'.</p>

Appendix L

WGPA Member Questionnaire

[PDF Insert]

Appendix M

E - mail Requesting Participation in WGPA Focus Group Interviews

Dear ***,

How are you? I hope you're keeping well.

I know you're going to the WGPA AGM next Saturday in Carton House. I'm doing research into the policy and practice related to women in sport in Ireland at the moment and I am hoping to do a focus group next Saturday at the end of the day. I am just looking to get the athletes opinions relating to the impact of the WGPA in different areas since it started. The focus group will be made up of 8-10 players from both Ladies Football and Camogie with a good geographical spread. It would be approx. 45 mins in duration. I would be delighted if you would consider taking part please? However, I of course understand if you are not available to do so. I know it is a busy time of year.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you and kindest regards,

Julia White

Appendix N

WGPA Focus Group Interview - Topic Guide

The player

- History of the player
- Motivation for taking part in focus group
- Intercounty experience:
- Training (access to coaches, trainers and managers)
- Intensity (level and amount of training)
- Resources (Training facilities, showers, food, physiotherapist)
- Supports (Personal, Athletic, Financial etc.)

Injury

- Type
- Amount
- Support (Availability of physios on site / at training /matches)
- Access (financial support / insurance)

WGPA

- What you know about it
- Need and relevance of the organisation
- Role and function (current and future)
- Impact of the WGPA within the Football and Camogie Association
- Impact of the WGPA in raising awareness of women's sport in general

Appendix O

WGPA Focus Group Interview Transcripts

Total Athletes Present	8
Counties Represented	Munster – Clare Ladies Football Leinster – Meath Ladies Football, Kilkenny Camogie Ulster – Derry Camogie, Down Ladies Football Connacht – Mayo Ladies Football, Leitrim Ladies Football, Galway Camogie
Code Represented	Ladies Football: 5 Camogie: 3 Dual Stars: 0
Age Profile Present	22 – 28 years
Work Status	Employed: 7 Studying: 1 Unemployed: 0
Occupation/ Areas of Study	Financial services Market Developer Research Education Physiotherapist Architectural Technician IT Sales Science and Engineering
Level of Education	All 8 athletes present had some/complete 3 rd Level Education
Sports Scholarships Received	Yes: 6 No: 2
3rd Level Representation in Past Year	Yes: 2 No: 6
No. of teams playing for	2 Teams: 5 3 Teams: 3
County Training per week	<u>Frequency</u> 3-4 Times per week: 8 <u>Duration</u> 1-1.5 hours: 5 1.5+ hours: 3 <u>Access to regular training facility</u> Yes: 3 No: 4
Club Training per week (7 out of 8 attend)	<u>Number</u> 1 training per week: 4 2 trainings per week: 3
Financial contribution	Food: 3 Gear: 5 Facilities: 2 Accommodation: 1

	Guest speakers: 1 Physio/rehab: 4 Travel/bus: 3
Travel to training	<u>Own car:</u> 8 <u>Distance</u> 21-40km: 4 41-60km: 2 61-80km: 1 80+ km: 1 <u>Expenses</u> Yes: 0 No: 8

Beginning of Interview

JULIA – Tell me about your inter county experience e.g. in relation to training, access to facilities, access to coaches, trainers, managers, or strength and conditioning coaches, any other supports etc.

Clare Ladies Football. In the last 2 years, the team have access to Strength and Conditioning coaching but up to that time, they would not have had any at all in the county. It was more so when Clare Ladies Football dropped back to Intermediate Level they started making more funding available to develop the players and they got better coaches in – they attracted people in from the outside rather than continue with people from within the county who may have had connections to the team. They really looked to outsiders – they got new a new person in which set a different standard for the players.

Meath Ladies Football. My experience would have been quite similar to Laurie’s – when the county dropped a Grade, that management really really recognised that there was more of a need for development. It took the squad a long, long time to get access to coaches and Strength and Condition facilities and to get it right. It was only last year that it was really utilised for the first time and probably for the first half of the year it wasn’t even properly established. It has been a long time coming.

JULIA – Do you think the availability of showers, food, training facilities etc. have changed since the establishment of the WGPA in the last 2 years?

Down Ladies Football. I think we need to change it. We are not quite there yet really in terms of food. Fruit is offered and the girls were not taking it so they have stopped offering it. We have not yet gone as far as us being provided with a hot meal. It seems to be an effort in terms of showers after training. Nothing has changed – particularly in the winter time. People are trying to get away as quickly as they can i.e. we are told to wrap it up, we grab our kit bags and everyone is away so I can’t really imagine there is need but in terms of matches there is a hot shower available so we are fortunate in that way.

Leitrim Ladies Football. On the same subject, I think sometimes our experience is just the lack of consistency. Sometimes we would have access to Centres of Excellence which would mean we would showers, we would pitches, we would have lights (which is obviously excellent) but there are other times of the year where we cannot get a pitch at all within the county – sometimes training is cancelled, sometimes we would be training indoors, sometimes we would be on an astro-turf (which probably would no bigger than the room we are currently in – or even much

smaller). I think it is consistency that we are looking for – to have that minimal standard at the very least (and nothing short of that) – i.e. the availability of a pitch, availability of showers etc. We trained for a couple of sessions on the back pitch of a rugby club – we actually got the damaged scrum pitch – where there were no toilets, no showers, no changing rooms at all on that pitch. Some days it is great when you are at a Centre of Excellence but other days it's not so great.

Meath Ladies Football. I think available facilities are still very much at the discretion of the men. All changing rooms are the same, but it is really up to the men what facilities we get, when we get them (if we get them!). The men take priority. We have been told in the last few sessions that we are now allowed to shower – like we are there, we use the dressing rooms but we are just now allowed to shower there because they men want to close up at a certain time. Everything is controlled by the men.

Kilkenny Camogie. We are kind of lucky enough. We have had a base for the last few years but I have just been thinking now that this is probably because of our management team. We have a base because basically a club, James Stephen's (they have big massive grounds) who our manager's sister is connected to this club and this club gives us a pitch so I think we are lucky enough in that respect. Then in regard to other stuff, the food is kind of subbed for the last couple of years. Anne (our manager) has brought that in. It is kind of on request, for example, the players requested it a few years ago and it was brought in. It is just brought in for championship, i.e. when you are preparing in the weeks leading up to championship, you get hot meals after training. Now it is not spectacular. It is nice. Everyone likes it. It is just a big pot of either curry or noodles basically (or similar stuff). The same guy who provides this food brings lunch boxes now for us and the girls can bring home their meal if they are rushing out the door. It is just something as simple as that – if the girls are rushing out the door they can get their lunch boxes filled and at least they are bringing something home.

JULIA – So do you think it is more management and the set up in individual counties that it boils down to rather than the WGPA influence?

Kilkenny Camogie. For us it is definitely the management. If our Manager walked away in the morning, I think we would be back to 'square one' – we would not have facilities, we would not have the food provided for us and those kind of things.

Leitrim Ladies Football. I fully agree with that as well because I can look back may 6 or 7 years ago when we had a really really proactive kind of management structure in place and they ensured that we had facilities via through our own contacts or through County Board contacts but I would say a lot of it was probably their own contacts and them making the phone calls and them making the necessary arrangements in terms of the food, in terms of Strength and Conditioning, in terms of nutrition. I think if you do not have that drive in the management or even that sort of back up from the management, if you are relying on players to try and get it then it gets kind of lost. The County Board knows that there is not 100% conviction behind whatever you are trying to attain and they can see a way of *not* giving it to you – if they can see a way of maybe being able to pawn this off for a while and not deal with it. I think management are more successful.

Kilkenny Camogie. Yeah, because definitely – even trying to get meals after matches like, it is down to the Management at the end of the day whether we get a meal or not. Like as Aoife said earlier on like, the fact that at the end of the day the goal is have all these standards or expectations in place before you are going back in with your county – if a county ends up with no Manager and they are looking for one, it shouldn't be a case that you are not going to have facilities that year, or your food, or your physiotherapist or anything like that – it should be a step above the Manager – that the Manager shouldn't even have to be worried about that sort of stuff.

The Management Team should not be asking us “oh, do you want food” and stuff like that. It should be a case of these facilities being there, whether you want it or not.

JULIA: That’s very interesting.

JULIA - We will move on now to the a few questions about your experiences with injuries for example if you want to tell me about any types of injuries you have had and the support or lack of support you received in relation to physiotherapists etc.

Galway Camogie. I think for us anyway, we have access to physio whenever we want. The physiotherapist is based in Galway City and if girls feel they need to attend this if they have injuries, we have the access to go in there in our own time. Also with regards to physios coming to training, we don’t actually have this regularly. A physio might come to training on the Thursday for example before the weekend (of a match), but I just don’t feel that this is enough. Fair enough, we do have the option to go into the physio in Galway City ourselves but girls are working and girls are attending college on the squad, and it is not really feasible. I think from that point of view, it would be better if we could have more access to a physiotherapist at the actual training sessions. Obviously on match days, we would always have a physio available.

Derry Camogie. We always get physiotherapists for match days, but our set up is sort of very similar to Galway i.e. nought for training and then, I am a physio myself, so you are sort of getting asked at training “should I pull in here?” and you are like..... It is really annoying that way, but in fairness, with the grants, we can go out of our own time to practice which is great, but we don’t have it at training so it is not ideal for players and managers. Sometimes girls are playing when they are injured and you are saying just “sit out” but they don’t have the time to go to the physio.

Meath Ladies Football. Are you in private practice – do you pay for that yourselves?

Derry Camogie. With the grants, they sort of were like “try and get receipts” but you can’t do that so that is obviously not happening. So we don’t pay for it out of our own pocket, the County Board pay it. To be fair, the system is not abused – the people who are genuinely injured are going to the physio. Sometimes too when there is actually a physio at training (because we don’t get it a lot) like everybody is in to her with her and you can’t get through the session because everybody is at the physio! There are ‘pros and cons’ to that but if your physio can take you even if girls have work and things, you are probably better off in there. We train at the county grounds as well so if somebody is really badly injured, then they just go into the men’s’ physiotherapy. It happens all the time and to be fair, in Derry we train at the Centre of Excellence, so we are not too bad – we get food, all that is good, but there is no specific physio for us – so it is just really up to the physio and they are like “well you are a girl and...”

Meath Ladies Football. Well I think ours has probably gone the opposite way. We have a very good physio who is kind of affiliated to our team but it is 50 Euro a pop every time you have to go and this you have to pay out of your own pocket and then now they are like, “well, actually we want you to go through the LGFA Scheme (which actually is you looking at nearly 6 months to the time you get your money back from the time you fill out the relevant forms). It is so tedious. Girls in college like paying 50 Euro a week, plus driving all the way back to Navan from probably Dublin, to use physios, so

Mayo Ladies Football. Last year we had a physio at our weekend session and we always had one at our match as well, but because of the grant we actually got a physio at our mid-week session 90% of the time. Sometimes we turned up and the roster would be still there and we are like “oh alright okay”, but 90% of the time there was always a physio there during the mid-week sessions

and it really helped girls who were injured or who couldn't train for whatever reason. We didn't really have access to that before whereas now this year we have kind of gone back - we always have access to a physio during the weekend and we always have them for matches, but we don't know if we are going to get that mid-week physio back until later on in the year again. This mid-week physio facility did not happen until later on in the year last year, and I suppose that has happened for the last 3 years. Last year was the first time we had a physio at three sessions a week and even had 2 physios at a match some days (which was great), but it wouldn't have happened without the grant.

JULIA – So just to be clear how many do have a physiotherapist available for every training session?

2 out of the 8 present put up their hands to indicate yes.

Meath Ladies Football. There is an official charge for physio. He works at a clinic. I know he can't be there today because training was changed at the last minute, but he had been there every Friday.

Derry Camogie. It is hard getting physios to actually commit as a Team Member fully. The girl that does our physio is like "I am not taking two nights out of my private practice to go to Dunbeg – she runs her own clinic. It is not feasible for her, she feels she is just wasting money.

Kilkenny Camogie. Our actual physio is a local enough girl so she is playing camogie in Kilkenny. So I'd say the fact that she is there for the last 2 years is because she has such a big interest in camogie. Tom (before that) – it was the same again. It was kind of the management that enforced things there.

Derry Camogie. I think that is true too. If your manager is making a lot of the effort, then our manager saying "I want physio there the whole time" then you are just thinking "you are not going to get that".

Meath Ladies Football. Then you are getting sports therapist – and sometimes this is just not what you need and girls just aren't getting the treatment they require.

Derry Camogie. We are never out of pocket, that is another thing? Do you pay for your own physio?

Meath Ladies Football. If you want to see the physio – we don't have a physio at the minute (only on match days) – if you want to see the physio on a Wednesday, you have to book in – he is so busy – you might like get an appointment at 6 o'clock in the morning or 8 o'clock in the evening. You have to pay the 50 Euro up front then and claim it back thereafter.

Leitrim Ladies Football. Yeah, we would have to pay anytime we go to the physio. We actually have a physical therapist that is our Team Physio so I actually don't know what the story with that is in terms of Croke Park or the funding but if you want to see an actual physiotherapist it would be coming out of your own pocket every time.

Kilkenny Camogie. And you don't get any of that back, no?

Derry Camogie. You can still claim it back through the LGFA but it's a long rigramore.

JULIA – Just leading onto the next question, what about financial support or travel expenses? Has the WGPA impacted on that at all, or has there been any change?

Clare Ladies Football. With Clare, obviously we would have a lot of players based in Limerick. I was travelling up and down and I was the only one able to drive. They never once mentioned “Oh we will give you money for bringing all the girls up and down or whatever”, but then any time we would go to a challenge match, we will always choose to drive instead of getting a bus. We put it to them that if we had to hire a bus, think about how much this would cost whereas if you gave all the drivers 20 or 30 Euro each, we would be much happier to drive and it would be a lot cheaper so they started doing this. That is about the best of it now – anytime we drive to a challenge match, we get 20 or 30 Euro, other than that, we get nothing.

Leitrim Ladies Football. There has been travelling expenses provided in the past. They give a rate of 9 cent per Kilometre and it is anything over 48 Kilometres. For any mileage less than that, you cannot claim anything but if you are driving over 48 Kilometres you will get 9.5 cent per Kilometre; with that there are a load of stipulations in terms of if you are living outside the county, they won't give it to you at weekends because they will say well you were travelling home for the weekends anyway. (Giggle, giggle) There is something there but that has been in place for probably about 10 or 11 years.

Down Ladies Football. Our girls in our county – definitely we don't get expenses. At the start of the year (it wasn't really about the money, it was more the principle), we were told everyone had to buy a training top there was no choice but to buy it, and it was like 30 Pound to buy. You know, you are giving your time, energy, and then your money!! I mean we obviously want to be there but this financial thing I think is a bit of a grey area out there. You shouldn't really be losing money.

Leitrim Ladies Football. I know another squad as well that have to obviously travel and pay their own car expenses to get to training and they also have to pay €4.00 Euro per session to cover expenses for the astro-turf. So they are actually going to training and having to pay €4.00.

Mayo Ladies Football. There were about 5 or 6 of us in Dublin last year and we just used to take turns driving down – we never got any expenses for it. If one of us drove one week, someone else would drive the other week. But as well as that we also had to contribute €2.00 towards the 'kitty' as well per session and €10 (like for a student it was €5.00 per week so as well) so as well as driving down and spending money on diesel or whatever, we also had to contribute to this 'kitty' money as well. That was only kind of gotten rid of towards the end of last year - there is still money in the 'kitty' that we have not spent – it was used for gear – I am not even too sure what else it was used for – it was kind of like a 'drinking fund' almost like (giggle, giggle!!!!) that's shocking.

Kilkenny Camogie. In Kilkenny – we are also the same. We pay €2.00 Euro every night to go training. I presume it's used against their gear and stuff like that as well, but just out of curiosity – you are Mayo is it? (directed at AISLING TARPEY, Mayo Ladies Football) – like you are travelling from Dublin and ye have a big massive Centre of Excellence.

Mayo Ladies Football. We have a Centre of Excellence in Ballyhaunis, yes.

Kilkenny Camogie. And the male footballers train there???

Mayo Ladies Football. They *sometimes* do. Now last week, they trained there and our session got put back by an hour.

Kilkenny Camogie. So, basically ye are training, mostly, sometimes at the same venue, ye have the same chef, and yet the male footballers get a bus from Dublin and ye have to drive?

Mayo Ladies Football. Yeah, and last year, before an All-Ireland Final, there was one time actually some guy (I don't know who he was), he used to ship the boys down as well (like he used to drive them down, like a chauffeur), we got him once and there was 3 of us in the car and it actually broke down on the way down there!!!! (giggle, giggle) and we had to get someone a different car from there. That only happened ONCE so we got one lift to drive us down. The other times then, we shared on a rotation basis.

Kilkenny Camogie. Ye train maybe sometimes on the same night, do ye?

Mayo Ladies Football. Actually there was one time we used to use the Lucan Spa and there was one time when I was parking there, that all the men's cars were parked there as well.

Kilkenny Camogie. Like they get a 26-seater luxury bus from Dublin for the Mayo Footballers but yet they couldn't share it with ye???? It's just crazy, crazy You probably should just go and ask "why can't we get a lift with ye?".

Derry Camogie. Yeah, we shared with the boys when I was a student in Belfast. We just slotted in. We didn't kind of ask. We just hopped on!! That was it. They are not going to say "no you are not allowed on, you are girls", you know.

Mayo Ladies Football. There was only one time that I ever saw that happen – that the men were training the same night. Sometimes we train Monday, Wednesday; sometimes we train Tues, Thurs. We don't have set nights.

Kilkenny Camogie. I just kind of know because my Uncle is a chef with them (giggle, giggle), so I just see that the pitches that the men train on – they have 3 or 4 pitches, with flood lights. I cannot understand why the women couldn't train on the same night at the same venue and if there are girls travelling long distances, that they could share some of the travel???

Mayo Ladies Football. They actually all train at the back of the Centre of Excellence as well and we used always be out the front (because the men did not want anyone to know that they were training there) and we got shipped out to the front. It doesn't make a difference with regard to the pitch but... It could be that nobody has approached them and asked (agreement that this could be the case). Yeah, you would imagine with food and everything, it would cut costs across the board.

Kilkenny Camogie. Like it is the same chef for all of the teams. Maybe it is just an idea.

JULIA - We will move on to what you know about the WGPA, or the need for it (do you think there is a need for it), the role that it plays now and perhaps the role it might have in the future?

Kilkenny Camogie. Aoife was talking there about getting out to the squads. I think that is a great idea. It is very hard, you come here and you are in awe of what everyone is saying and then you go back training next week, and the rest of the girls will ask what happened – you try to explain it but it is very hard to bring the whole "why people are doing it" across to everyone. Especially – most people when you ask them to come, they are like "Oh, that would only take up my day".

Galway Camogie. It is not really interesting to many on the squads.

Leitrim Ladies Football. I think they don't fully understand it. They are listening to us but we are just one of them as well. It is not actually set in stone what the function of the WGPA is etc.

Meath Ladies Football. Like the buzz and the atmosphere and things from days like today, you really get a sense of like raising the standards and I think trying to get that across to about 30 people in a dressing room is a big challenge.

Down Ladies Football. Then trying to get them to push the standards as well – sometimes they might think “ah sur why would we kick up a fuss over that like”, rather than question why we should be getting these things.

Meath Ladies Football. I think – we had a bit of trouble in the first few months of the WGPA, and I reached out to them and they really, really helped us. We had a manager that “walked” and there was a lot of bad press coverage over it and stuff, and the WGPA really really helped us get over that whole issue and helped us liaise with our county board. We were sending the county board an email that they wouldn’t normally email and advised us “maybe say this and maybe say that” and that created a buzz in our camp anyway around the WGPA, but now 3 years on, we have a completely different panel and a lot of the younger girls that are coming through don’t really understand (a lot of the girls are only in 4th, 5th and 6th Year in school). Even the college scholarships hasn’t been something that they have been immersed in yet either, so they don’t really understand how it has helped us in the past so I think it is maybe something that needs to be – like it should not be something you just go to when you need it. It is about generating the support all year around from everyone – particularly with the younger age groups because, eventually they are going to be the ones sitting here in 3 or 4 years time.

Down Ladies Football. I can kind of see if maybe when we all come away from this we are elite athletes and we should consider ourselves that way. The WGPA try to get us to be seen as and feel like elite athletes more so if they invest in themselves (elite athletes) overall they will probably become better players – maybe eat right and not go on the drink as much because they want to perform better. Taking somebody more seriously. Part of the difficulty in college is that “I can’t be bothered, why would I be bothered?”. Think of the resources we have, look at the investment Even professionally, personally and sporting-wise, just become better, so if we can get that message to them I don’t think the girls in sport realise that we are.

JULIA – Do ye view yourselves as elite athletes or what way do you see yourselves?

Clare Ladies Football. You kind of do when you come here. You are spoken of as an elite athlete, but then when you go back to your county and you see the carry on from the men’s side and things like that, and you are just made feel like a second class citizen once again.

Down Ladies Football. I got the benefit of the Madden Programme. If you had a view of yourself it can completely change that. In a way the way you view yourself has changed – you see how much is invested in you and people are telling you that you are an elite athlete – that you train 3 nights a week and that you are representing your county – that the general public and your community are viewing you as an elite athlete and the WGPA has really bought into that, more professionalism has been brought into everything.

JULIA – How do you feel about the WGPA and women’s sport in general? Do you think the WGPA has done anything in making the public appreciate it better or just raising awareness?

Clare Ladies Football. Definitely. Clare and Munster – they are in the newspaper, The Independent – that is just a small example. Just making people aware that even with something that small, recognising people that are doing well in sports etc.

Derry Camogie. I suppose the attendances at Croke Park for the ladies football is an indication of how much popularity there is like the final was the equivalent of a combined attendance at all of the Irish Ladies World Cup Games so it kind of speaks for itself really.

JULIA – What about the camogie final attendance numbers in Croke Park – the fact that the camogie final was nowhere near the ladies football attendance figures. How do you feel about that? Can you think of any reasons why that might be?

Leitrim Ladies Football. I think that Lidl have been on board with the Ladies Footballers and they have definitely done wonders for the sport. Last year, the All-Ireland Camogie Attendance figures were up – Littlewoods had just started their campaign and I think that helped, but Lidl definitely have a lot to answer for with regard to the success of the Ladies Football as well as the WGPA. I think if you look back at 3 years ago – even in terms of advertising league games or provincial finals or anything – it has gone to a whole new level now. It is obviously a combination of things but I think the WGPA definitely played a role in trying to raise that profile.

Kilkenny Camogie. I even think like from that 'Player of the Month' thing (they have actually started doing a sports person player of the month in Kilkenny) and I think that just by the WGPA doing a player of the month that camogie players in Kilkenny – there was actually player of the month camogie players winning over hurlers and stuff in Kilkenny – and that is only happening in the last year or so. I would say because of the WGPA doing the Sportsperson of the Month, it's like women are starting to come out and vote and stuff like that.

Clare Ladies Football. I think a lot of it comes as well back to social media. When I see someone I know now being made Player of the Month, you will always re-tweet it – no matter what. I usually opt to re-tweet all three of them if I know no one – just for getting it out there – its grand like – for who knows that is going on and stuff.

AINE TIGHE, Leitrim Ladies Football. I think all that feeds into the whole way the players seeing themselves – to look back to 3 years ago and see if they/people had outstanding league campaigns or outstanding games but only the 20 people or so on the side-line would ever see it or ever know about it whereas now, at least now if somebody is playing really well, it is being picked up on – it is being recognised in the papers, it is being recognised in social media – I think that is where the goal of raising the profile come in like being noted now rather than just the 20 or so odd people there who are watching any particular game knowing about it.

Galway Camogie. A lot of the time, the camogie matches would fall the same week as the hurling – why not have the double headers. I think that would give massive exposure as well to camogie – people are there, they are at the hurling match – they are going to stay on for the camogie match afterwards. I spoke to people last year – what happened to us was that there was one camogie game where there was a double header with the hurlers, but like people have come back – (they might be so invested in the hurling – they were never at a camogie match before) – but afterwards they were like "I can't get over the speed of the camogie match or the skill that ye have". People didn't realise any of this – typically these people would not go out and attend a club match.

Kilkenny Camogie. The double-headers are a big thing. Like the League Final in Semple Stadium or semi-final against ourselves a couple of years ago – the amount of people – what I like about

Thurles is that there are no seats – so because our match was beforehand, all the avid hurling fans had to be in the stadium early so the attendance at that match was just fantastic for our match – yeah, I think the double headers are going to be a big thing this year going forward.

Mayo Ladies Football. I don't think it is just social media either. I think the TV coverage also has a lot to do with it because you never used see it – but now if you turn on the news at 6 o'clock or whatever there is almost always some footage of some sort of ladies match going on – that was never the case before. I had people even coming to me last week, in January, and they were saying "oh well, I watched the All-Ireland Ladies Football Final in Croke Park in September and I didn't realise Ladies Football was so good". These are people who have never watched a game in their lives; you are like "yeah, well I know!" I do think it is to do with the TV coverage *as well as* the social media coverage.

JULIA – How you feel about government funding? Have you any thoughts on this? Do you notice any change from last year?

Kilkenny Camogie. We are a little bit afraid. Aoife did mention the fact that just to be wary – the money is going to bring up the level – we are a little bit worried after today now thinking what is going to happen that money in replace of the money that was there before I think we will be asking a few questions.

Down Ladies Football. Didn't ye guys go to Croke Park about your grant?

Kilkenny Camogie. Yeah.

Derry Camogie. It frees up other monies if that makes sense. I'm just glad it was capped – the physio was capped. Because I think the county board will just spend 4000 Euro on physio which we should be getting anyway. They capped that money (which is great). Now we can spend the remaining few thousand on something else.

Kilkenny Camogie. Maybe we should be thinking 'outside the box' now that we have this extra resource.

JULIA: You are happy with the cap?

Clare Ladies Football. I think it was very rushed as well – in the first year we had meetings very late about what we could do so you kind of nearly trusted your county board and manager – there was like a lot of agro even though we had mentioned it to them about the grant or whatever, when I asked them about it, they didn't actually know where the money went. This year, we kind involved all of them in what would they like or whatever, because we just had that bit more time to decide what we would spent it on.

Leitrim Ladies Football. Well I think that is really important as well – i.e. that the players are actually really aware of the money, and what it can be spent on etc. because I know from our point of view last year, we would have seen very few differences in terms of our whole set up last year in comparison to the year before – where we felt we had this extra €8,000 – we should have been seeing far more differences that we actually did – a lot of it went into physio (which we would have had previously in any case), a lot of it went into facilities which we would have had to pay for anyway.

Down Ladies Football. It is just about getting the players to make sure and be aware of exactly what the money can be used for and maximising that, so that it is not just used, as you said, to pay for stuff or resources that were already there anyway.

JULIA – Last question - What is your opinion on joining up with the GAA?? Coming together under the one umbrella?

Clare Ladies Football. Some of the girls in the group sessions were saying about the disputes over pitches and stuff - at least if you are joined the GAA you are 50/50 with the men.

Kilkenny Camogie. Our club at home – it is not a GAA Pitch, it is a community pitch, so if the girls have it booked, that's it, the girls have it booked. I presume with the amalgamation it would be separate, that if the girls had it booked...

Clare Ladies Football. Dual players – in the last year or two they are trying to resolve all these problems, but if we all came under the one umbrella there would be no excuse whatsoever, to communicate effectively on the whole issue before a problem arises.

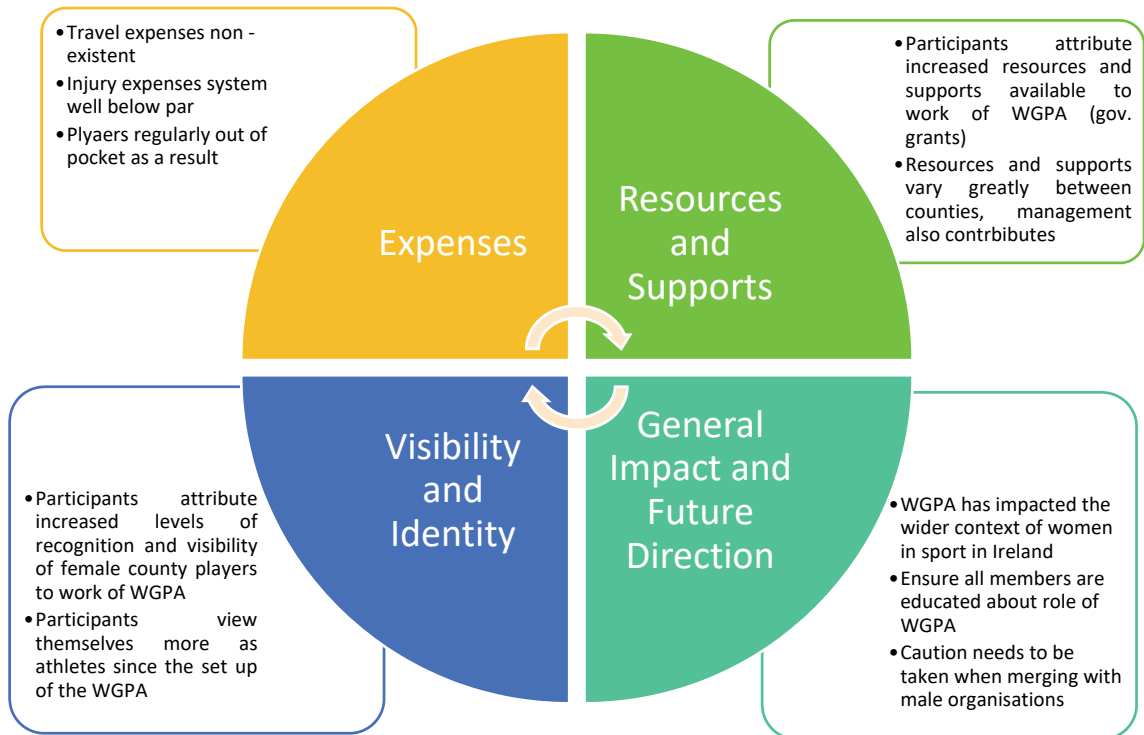
COLLETTE DORMER, Kilkenny Camogie. At least if they are amalgamated or joined together, the pitches are going to be set at the start of the year. I know the (timetables for the) hurling pitches in Kilkenny are going to be out in the next week or two and they know that far in advance, whereas last year, coming into the semi-final I had to argue my case to play a club match or not to play a club match and it was the case if whether you were going to be playing on the county team or not, so in the end, I had to go back to the club and beg them to cancel or postpone it. After the All-Ireland then, we had to play 5 matches in a row because they had to ask for that club match to be cancelled. At least, if it was the men's – you know when the men's matches are going to be, the women's could be the opposite weekend to the men's maybe.

Leitrim Ladies Football. I think the concern we have about that is that the women would not have as strong a voice as the men would have. From my own experience of club at home (we are a separate club to the men), obviously we are trying to work much closer together in the last couple of years with the men, but there is still a little bit of resistance, in terms of particularly the older members of the men's club about the actual impact that our voice is having on decision-making and progress – that would be the only concern – i.e. when you are engaging in such an agreement that you would want to make sure that we are actually going to have our voice heard and things are definitely going to improve for us and we are going. Especially for ladies football – I do think ladies football are doing an awful lot of good things –in terms of promoting the game and in terms of engaging, especially younger children, to Gaelic for Girls, Gaelic for Mothers etc. I think there is loads of really positive things going on so I suppose a balance is required to make sure we keep these initiatives going and don't lose our identity.

JULIA – Thank you so much for taking part and hopefully all this feedback will help – your names will remain anonymous.

Appendix P

Summary of WGPA Focus Group Interviews – Emerging Themes



Appendix Q

Examples of WPGA Internal and External Activities on Behalf of Members

WPGA Services and Partnerships to Date (2019)

All Services Available

- Personal Development Coaching
- Careers Advice and Coaching
- Team Programmes
- Jim Madden leadership Programme
- Setanta College Discounts
- Players Advice and Representation
- Postgraduate Scholarships in: WIT, UL, GMIT, DCU, AIT, NUIG
- Undergraduate Third Level Scholarships
- Counselling Support
- Member Workshops
- Social and Community Initiatives
- Player Awards
- Member Discounts
- Member Support Line

Services Engagement

- Masters Scholarships: 9
- Third Level Scholarships: 157
- Counselling Supports: 38
- Careers Advice: 8
- Jim Madden Leadership: 49
- Player Team Talks: 10 squads
- Personal Development Coaching: 45
- S&C Student Admissions (Setanta Discount): 10

All Partnerships

- PwC
- Pat the Baker
- ICON
- Elverys
- OPRO
- Meagher's Pharmacy
- Cúl Heroes
- Irish American Partnership

WGPA Postgraduate Scholarship Opportunities 2019

Scholarships are available to WGPA members on the following taught Masters courses:

Waterford Institute of Technology (3/4 Funded, Full Time Only)

Master of Business in Marketing
Master of Business in Economics and Finance
Master of Business in Management
Master of Business in Corporate Administration
Master of Business in Human Resource Management

Master of Business in Accounting
Master of Business in Internationalisation
MSc in Business, Innovation, Technology & Entrepreneurship
MSc in Global Financial Information Systems (GFIS)

University of Limerick (Half-Funded, Full Time Only)

MA in Business Management
MA in International Tourism (Full-Time)
Master of Taxation
Masters in International Entrepreneurship Management
MSc in Computational Finance
MSc in Economic & Policy Analysis
MSc in Financial Services

MSc in Human Resource Management (Full-Time) (EPAS Accredited)
MSc in International Management and Global Business
MSc in Marketing, Consumption & Society
MSc in Project Management
MSc in Work & Organisational Psychology/Behaviour (Full-Time)
MSc Risk Management and Insurance

GMIT (Fully-Funded, Full Time Only)

Accounting (Postgraduate Conversion)
Creative Practice (MA)
Creative Practice (PG Dip)
Applied Marine Conservation (MSc)
Applied Sport and Exercise Nutrition (MSc)

Conservation Behaviour (MSc)
Marine Biological Resources (International MSc)
Nursing (Non-EU/EEA Nurses)
MA in Teaching and Learning

****Fully funded research masters also available in areas of recovery, sleep & nutrition**

Dublin City University (Part-Funded, Full Time Only)

MSc in International Accounting and Business
MSc in Management (Aviation Leadership)
MSc Management (Strategy)
MSc Management (Business)
MSc International Management

MSc Human Resource Management
MSc in Finance
MSc in Electronic Commerce (Business)
MSc in Digital Marketing
MSc in Accounting

Athlone Institute of Technology (Half-Funded, Part Time Only)

Executive MBA (2 year, Part-Time Course)

NUI Galway (Fully Funded, Full Time Only)

Accounting (Master of)
Business Analytics (MSc)
Business and Hospitality (MSc)
Business Studies (HDip)
Corporate Finance (MSc)
Digital Marketing (MSc)
Economic Science (HDip)
Global Environmental Economics (MSc)
Health Economics (MSc)
Human Resource Management (MSc)
Information Systems Management (MSc)
Innovation Management (PDip)

International & Comparative Business Law (LLM)
International Accounting & Analytics (MSc)
Technology Commercialisation (PDip)
Technology Management (MSc)
International Accounting & Analytics (MSc)
International & Comparative Disability Law & Policy (LLM)
International Criminal Law (LLM)
International Finance (MEconSc)
International Human Rights (LLM)
International Management (MSc)

International Marketing & Exporting (MSc)
International Migration & Refugee Law & Policy (LLM)
LLB (Bachelor of Laws)
LLM (General)
Marketing Management (MSc)
Peace Operations, Humanitarian Law & Conflict (LLM)
Public Law (LLM)
Strategy, Innovation & People Management (MSc)

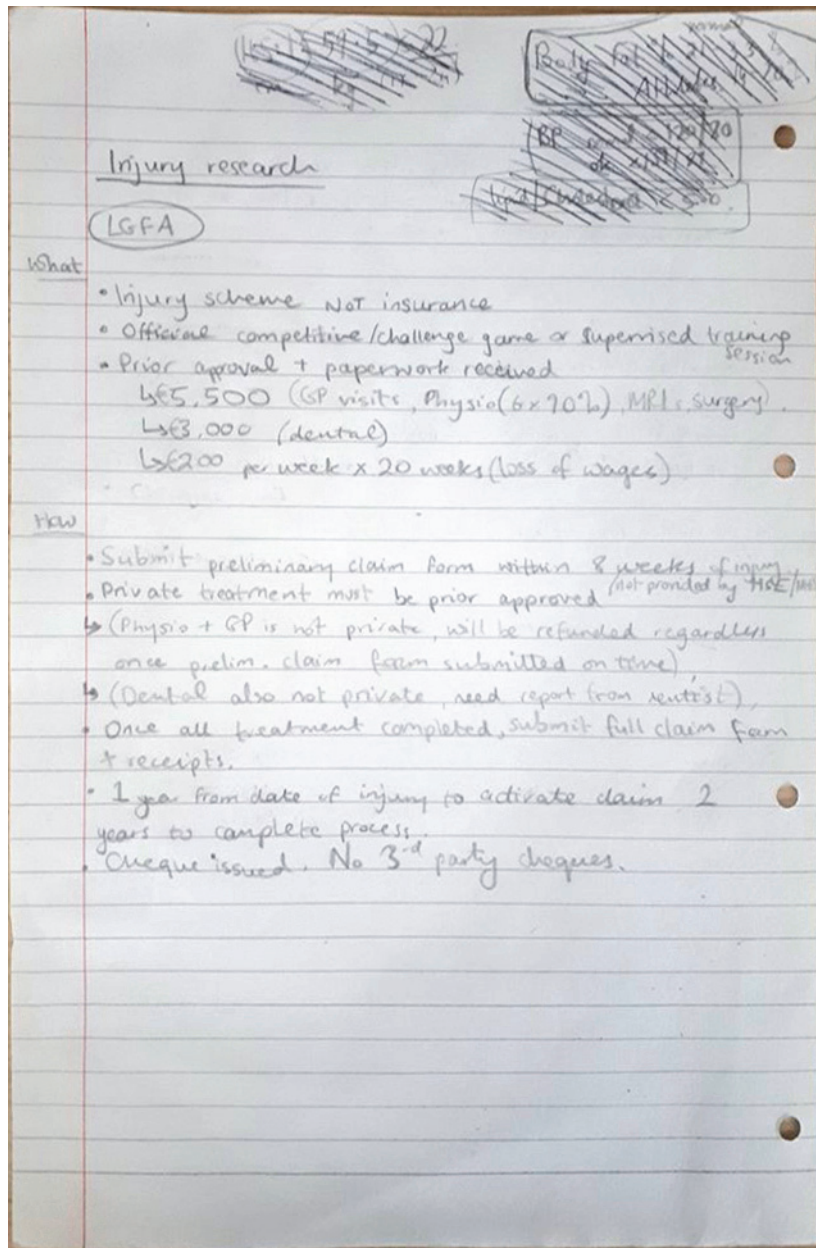
Appendix R

Summary of 'Camogie 2019: The Players View'



Appendix S

Field Note 1 – LGFA Injury Fund



The LGFA injury scheme is not insurance. The fund should supplement other schemes where applicable, i.e. VHI, Irish Life etc. It is unclear as to how players without health insurance should make best use of the fund.

The fund will pay out the following amounts, once all relevant paperwork and prior approval has been received:

- Medical Expenses – €5,500, which includes GP Visits, Physio (6 Sessions @ 90%), MRI's, Consultant Visits and Surgery (once prior approved)
- Dental Expenses – €3,000

- Loss of Wages – A maximum €200 per week for a max of 20 weeks. Applies to all adult members but if you're a juvenile with a part time job, you must pay the adult rate in order to qualify.

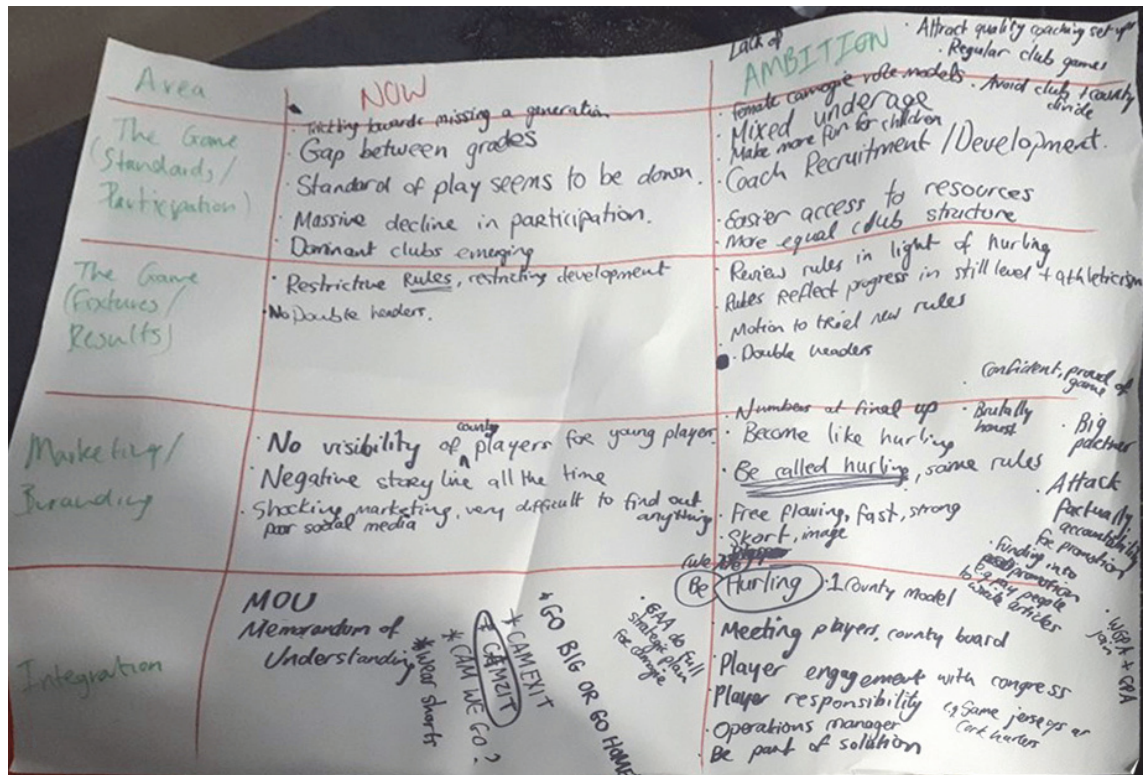
However, the injured party must receive prior approval before organising any of the above – the approval process can take a substantial amount of time.

Furthermore, if a player requires treatment outside of the public system, the LGFA requires the following documentation in original format posted to the office in Croke Park prior to their visit in order to financially reimburse their expenses:

- Medical Letter of Referral from your GP, to say he/she has accessed you and is referring you on for an MRI or Consultant Visit.
- A letter from you the player requesting financial permission for this visit.
- A letter from a consultant for any further private treatment.
- If we do not receive the above pieces of information, along with your Preliminary Claim Form prior to the treatment, then we will not be in a position to reimburse you for these expenses.

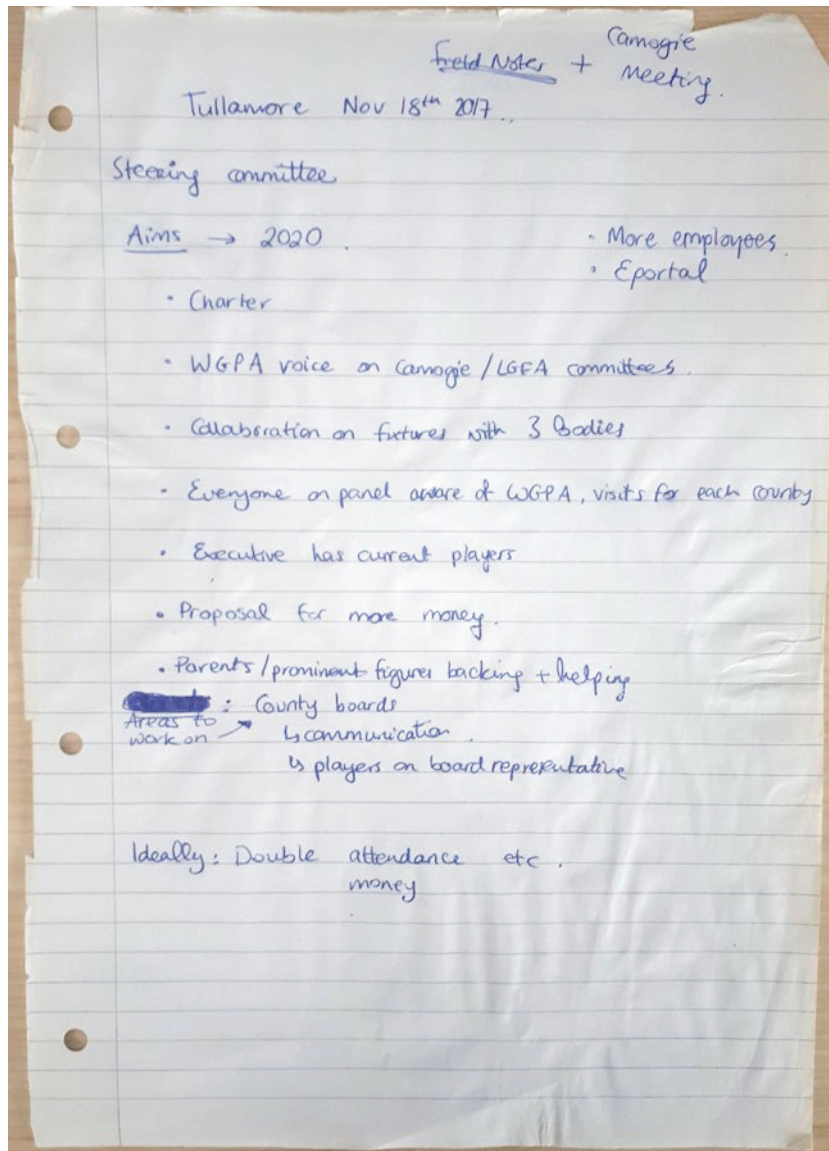
The injury fund is not very useful in cases of emergencies as there would be no time to get prior approval as making a claim is a lengthy process - consisting of 8 steps in total. Also the options open to players to avail of the best treatment are also limited due to these restrictions.

Field Note 2 – Camogie Review Group Notes



Area	NOW	AMBITION
<p>The Game (Standards/ Participation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength, fitness, athletic (but not given chance to showcase this) • A sport that is hard to pick up, learn-life? • Underage - skills - only using ball too up. • Free factors of coaching? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be obvious to the best athletes we can be. GPS/Spine exam • A needed game? More and accessible? • School visits with college coaches.
<p>The Game (Fixtures/ Rules)</p> <p>• Trying to progress for program. ↳ too much of a disconnect between those @ top table + those who play.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refs - No opportunity to learn, not allowed ask/speak to them, fines. - Amount of cards? - Being punished for being "athletic". • Rules + how one plays interpreted? ↳ Physical contact - added fairly. • Fitness Gap between League + Championship. • Worried about knee-high rocks??? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop w/ refs + coaching teams - talk @ start of year what a game + what not. • Access to the essential report. • Physical contact (will help with perception of camogie.) • Should be easier to develop game. • No club games should be on the day of final.
<p>Marketing/ Branding</p> <p>• Little stages of finals for camogie vs ladies football. • Sponsors > do they do enough for camogie community.</p>	<p>(Leon tweets more looking > for flowing game ↳ You forget actual)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not broadcast enough. Highlights poor ↳ when it is, pick the worst bits. ↳ Not even up play or movement. ↳ tokenistic. • Social media or promotion is v. reactive, sometimes not relevant. • Report by some person + pushed to all newspapers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Hoeling"? rather than camogie. • Show 3 great points rather than 2 poor goals. • Stats per player, including shots. ↳ Start setting right angle of camogie. • Highlights show (most games as being videoed now) on social media. • Similar to Jerome Quinn. ↳ Something similar to TCU one L.11. • National Network journalists.
<p>Integration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Len vs Cook in Camogie same level as Lin vs Kik in Hoeling. • Double headers too inconsistent, girls not prepared for one a year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miceox Hoeling fixtures → International Rugby ↳ Journalists cover this. • In favour of becoming one. - for/bk PR

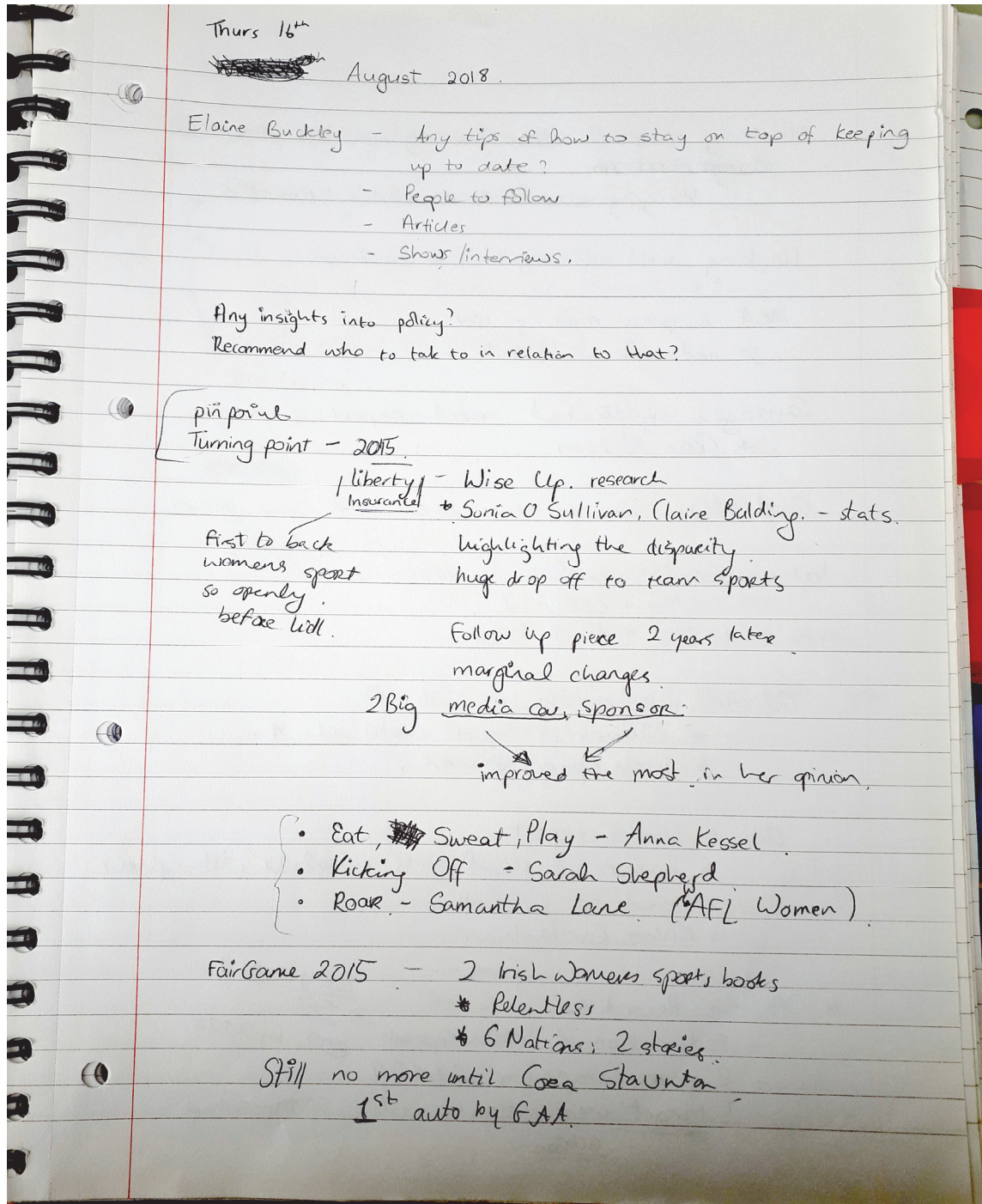
Field Note 3 – WGPA Steering Committee Meeting

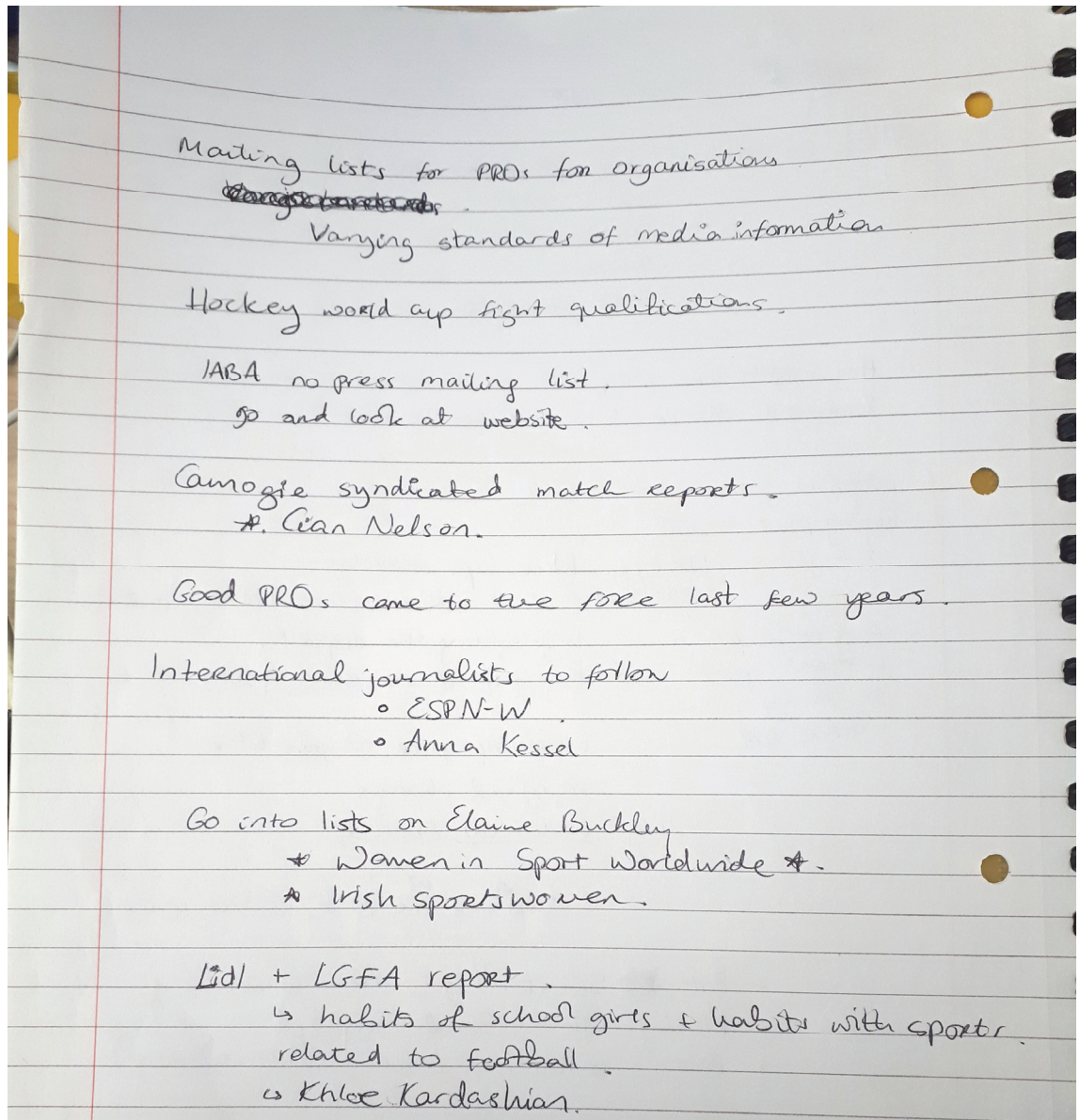


- WGPA needs more employees going forward towards 2020
- WGPA squads need a charter for standards, to be agreed upon by players, management and county boards
- There is a need for a WGPA voice on the Camogie Association and LGFA committees
- There is a need for more collaboration on fixtures between the three bodies – the Camogie Association, LGFA and WGPA
- Every intercounty player on every panel needs to be aware of who the WGPA are, what they are doing, what services they offer etc. Visits to each intercounty team made by WGPA leaders were suggested in order to relay this information.
- The executive needs to include current players continuously. If players on the executive retire, current players need to be added.
- The WGPA need to keep asking the government for more money.
- The WGPA could try to appeal to retired players, parents and prominent figures in the community to help with communication with county boards.
- It would be beneficial if intercounty players were on county boards.

- Short term goals for the Camogie Association and the LGFA should be to continuously increase attendances, sponsorship deals and revenue.

Field Note 4 – Conversation with Elaine Buckley from RTÉ Sport and Fair Game Podcast





Appendix T

Mini Case Study on Republic of Ireland Women's National Soccer Team

Despite the seemingly positive steps forward women's soccer in Ireland has taken in recent years a group of 13 International players supported by players' union, the PFAI, spoke to the media in Dublin in 2017 to paint a different picture of the realities of playing elite soccer in Ireland as a woman. In a booklet produced by the PFAI and presented to the FAI, the primary needs of the players were clearly outlined:

- Access to nutritionist, and individual strength and conditioning programmes.
- Gym membership for squad.
- Hotel accommodation to include at the very least working and reliable Wi-Fi.
- Apparel for travelling to be provided to the squad prior to meeting up at airport.
- More home-based training sessions.
- All non-professional players to receive loss of earnings documented from their employers.
- Goalkeeper coach to remain for campaign, not change from game to game.
- Match fee for all international fixtures of €300.
- Bonus for competitive fixtures of €150 per win and €75 per draw.
- Qualification bonus to be agreed with team captain and player representatives at least four weeks prior to start of qualification campaign.

Players spoke of the humiliation of having to go into a public toilet in airports to change into, and then out of, tracksuits for international as the tracksuits had to be handed back for use by other teams. Aine O Gorman stated that the team were looking for the basics and Emma Byrne noted the issues were not new, but had in fact been occurring for a very long time (Fitzmaurice, 2017). It was claimed that players for the women's senior team have been forced to give up their career due to the financial pressures of playing for the side, without compensation for loss of wages while on duty. Another key issue for the players was the FAI's refusal to allow the PFAI, which also acts for League of Ireland players and represents the senior men's international team, to act for the women's players in any negotiations with the FAI. Correspondence from the FAI which stated that the players going public and taking their stance, would 'endanger their careers at club and international level' was seen as a threat from within the squad. PFAI Solicitor Stuart Gilhooly commented: 'The women's national team is not being treated as a second class citizen, but a fifth class citizen. They are the dirt off the FAI's shoe. That's how they see them.' (Bailey, 2017). A few days following this, the payment of a €300 match fee as well as €150 win and €75 draw bonuses, the introduction with immediate effect of compensation for loss of earnings and the provision of

appropriate tracksuits were among the terms agreed in a comprehensive deal struck between the FAI and Ireland's senior women's team. It was understood that key to a resolution of the dispute was what the players understood to be implicit recognition by the FAI of the principle of collective bargaining and their right to be represented by the footballers' union, the PFAI. It has been estimated that the total financial package agreed was in the region of €100,000, with the players' demands in relation to such issues as gym membership and access to a nutritionist also conceded. SIPTU's Ethel Buckley, one of the officials representing the squad in the negotiations said that what she termed their 'short, sharp and successful campaign' was a reminder that in Irish society women should never accept being treated as second-class citizens. 'I think this dispute is bigger than football. I think it touched something in the country, even among people who have no interest in football, because it spoke so much to gender relations in the country right now. And it was striking that it was out of football, something which has traditionally been seen as quite a male bastion, that this push came for women's rights generally.' (Mackey 2017).

Three years later, with the FAI defying ministerial demands over governance of the association, it was entirely excluded from the multi-year investment of €3 million into the re-launched Women in Sport programme (Sport Ireland, 2019). A total of 41 NGBs are listed as receiving funding – with the IRFU on top with €240,000 – the FAI were awarded nothing. In total €3,277,000 was allocated with Weightlifting Ireland receiving €6,000 more than Irish women's football and Tug of War €20,000 more (Irish Times, 2019). "I think as everybody knows there are a number of issues at present within the FAI in relation to governance which need to be resolved," said Minister of State for Sport Brendan Griffin. 'Until those issues are resolved we as custodians of the people's money, need to be extremely careful to ensure it can all be fully accounted for and that there is full confidence amongst the people that the money is being spent appropriately.' (The Irish Times, 2019).