



## 2021 REPORT

Donegal Bay Inclusive Sports Hub (DBISH) funded through Dormant Accounts via Sport Ireland (2017), is the first community sport and physical activity hub of its kind in Ireland dedicated to providing opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity for people with a disability.

The hub has now been anchored in 3 community sites in South Donegal – Niall Mór Centre Killybegs, Lakeside Centre Ballyshannon and the Finn Valley Centre Stranorlar. A more recent development has been the provision of capital to support Kilcar kayaking club in their endeavour to become an inclusive club and provide opportunities for people with a disability.

Through the needs analysis for the DBISH programme 6 key focus sports were identified by participants and families in the South Donegal area, these were -swimming, swim therapy, equine therapy, surfing, cycling and kayaking. A dedicated action plan has been delivered to help meet the needs of the families located in the area.

The following report summarizes the developments during 2021 and provides case studies from the participants and families who have engaged in the programme.

😊 provided opportunities in 9 sports/physical activities

😊 across 13 locations in South Donegal

😊 engaged with 103 families

😊 a total of 117 children and young adults with a disability participated

### Partner Venues



## Have a look at our activities in 2021...



## 2021 REPORT

# Handcycling

Regular coaching sessions  
at Finn Valley Centre, Stranorlar



11

sessions



12

participants

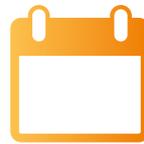


It's been absolutely brilliant for him and he's never taken to any sport like he has to hand cycling. Even if he's exhausted, he wants to be there for the sessions."



# Kayaking

Two terms of four weeks  
at Lakeside Centre, Ballyshannon



16

sessions



20

participants



My daughter was terrified of water but after the sessions her confidence grew. She found it very difficult to separate from me and now she more confident in herself and able to go places without me. My son has found social interactions easier. He would never interact with others but his confidence has grown from the sessions."





## 2021 REPORT

# Stand Up Paddleboarding

Two terms of four weeks  
at Lakeside Centre, Ballyshannon



**12**

sessions



**20**

participants



Matthew's water confidence has increased. The team always let Matthew help out and he has gained so much independence. I have noticed an improvement in his balance and coordination but mostly his confidence to try new things would be the biggest change I've noticed."

# "Shake your Shaka" Family Surf Licence

at Rossnowlagh Beach



**5**

sessions

for

**5**

families



Our family enjoyed the shake your shaka surf lessons. We got so much out of it as a family learning new skills, facing the cold Atlantic sea. We laughed non stop for each session and felt exhausted and exhilarated after."





## 2021 REPORT

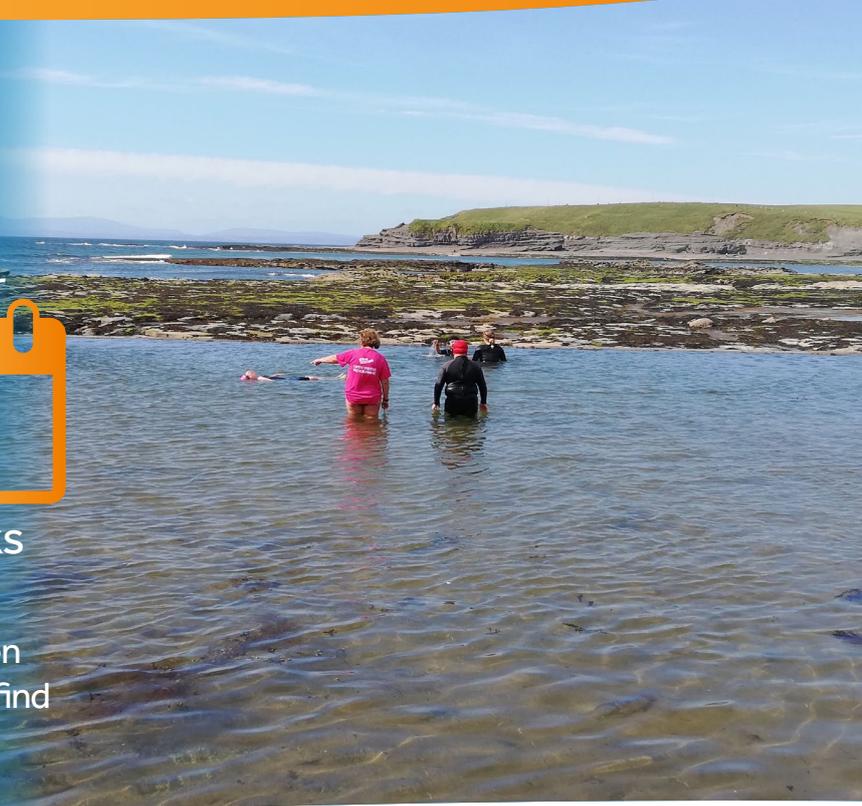
# Open Water Confidence

at Thrupenny Pool, Bundoran



It was a fantastic programme which I would love to see running throughout

the year. As a parent it has been so rewarding to see my sons confidence flourish. It has been the only ASD specific program that we could find for him and it was a credit to all involved.



# Education and Training



It was really enjoyable and I learned a lot"

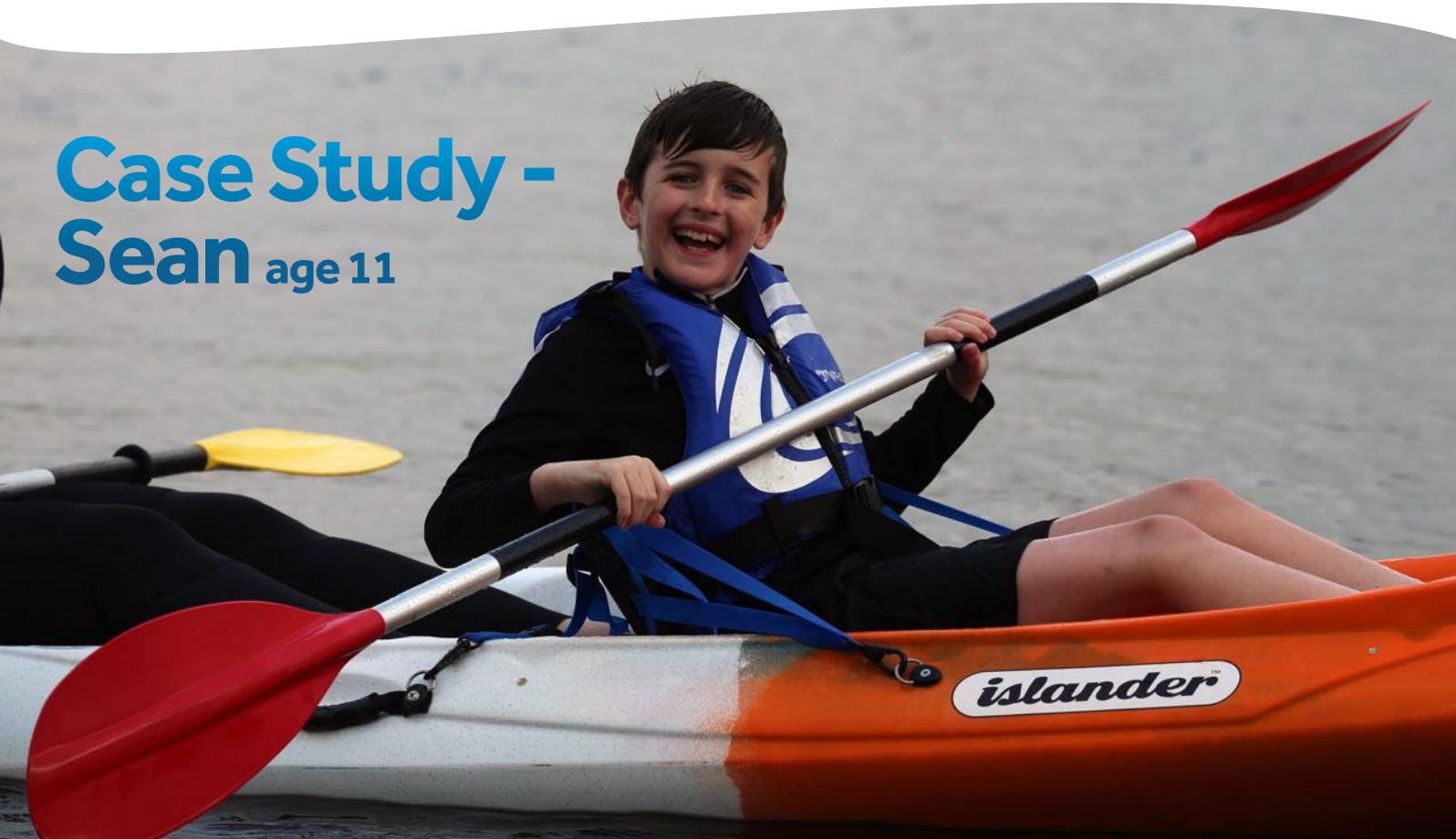
Autism in Sport  
Fully Booked

**20**  
participants





## Case Study - Sean age 11



Sean has autism and along with his father was one of our first "Shake your Shaka" surf families. Before this Sean did not have confidence in the open water. The programme involved five family sessions and his progress was amazing. His father Paul told us that they "were surprised how much he got involved. It took a bit of persuasion to get him there but he really enjoyed it".

Sean also attended our other water sports activities, Kayaking and Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) this summer. Sean had sat on his dad's kayak only once before and was very nervous. He had never been on a SUP before. He was very nervous of the water and would have quite a lot of anxiety around new activities. It took 3 kayaking sessions for him to

relax and actually enjoy participating, thereafter he looked forward to his Wednesday nights.

After the summer sessions finished, Paul told us that "Sean's confidence in the water, and interaction with others progressed to a level that we have never seen in him before. He made a friend in the SUP sessions, was very chatty, loved jumping into the water he once feared. He has since progressed to a week long surf camp and now regularly goes surfing and loves jumping in the huge waves."

He added "The programmes were hugely beneficial to Sean, his confidence in the water, his anxiety around meeting and talking to new people and trying new things have all improved dramatically".



## Case Study - Mary age 21

Before Mary's back injury she used to play Gaelic football for Donegal and was always very active. Following her injury, she has been mostly just doing gym work and walking to keep fit

Mary then booked into our Handcycling sessions. Going to the sessions involved a 2 hour round trip to get there.

Mary told us "It was definitely worth it. I love Handcycling as it gave me the chance to do



more activity and allowed me to get involved in a sport that suited my physical disability".

She added "I felt less disabled when using the handcycle because I was just able to do it without much hassle! I even had the confidence to share it on my social media which I never would've shared anything to do with my disability before".

I wish para-athletics would become more freely available so that I could try out new sports as I love being involved in sport

Everyone was so helpful and accommodating no matter what your needs and it was lovely to be in an environment that didn't judge me because of my disability so thank you!



## Case Study - Mowafi age 7

Mowafi has autism and the open water swim confidence was the first activity he could participate in with Donegal Bay Inclusive Sports Hub.

Prior to the pilot project, Mowafi had been to roughly 70 weeks of swimming lessons in a traditional indoor pool with hardly any improvement.

His mother Michelle told us "It has been fantastic, he now understands the concept behind swimming and rather than running along with his feet. He is actually attempting to lift his limbs and swim".

Michelle praised the specific autism specific initiative "It makes it easier for the children, parents and teachers when all involved know the challenges and can work with and around them. The coaches were fantastic. They were firm yet patient and kind".



Mowafi completed the six week term of open water sessions and now enjoys his trips to near by beaches and local outdoor pools.

Michelle added that his involvement in the activity has made so much difference to him. "It was a fantastic programme which

I would love to see running throughout the year. As a parent it has been so rewarding to see my son's confidence flourish. It has been the only autism specific program that we could find for him for his age and it was a credit to all involved. Initiatives like this are so important for children like Mowafi as it gives them a chance to learn in an environment that understands them. I would really love to see this program run over a longer period of time."

Since the program finished at the end of the summer, Michelle enquired about individual or group lessons at a local indoor pool but the waiting list is long and especially if the child has any additional needs. We hope to launch a new indoor water confidence program next year for children with autism.





## Case Study - Dearbhla age 11

Dearbhla was born with down syndrome and has been diagnosed with juvenile arthritis. Being able to participate in physical activity is very important and she loves being involved in activities and meeting people.

During 2021 Dearbhla participated in various activities organised by Donegal Bay Inclusive Sports Hub as she has done every year since 2018.

She enjoyed weekly Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP) and Kayaking sessions for over four months. Each week it was brilliant to watch her progress with her skills.

Dearbhla also started horse riding following a previous "Come and Try" session with the hub.



Mary, Dearbhla's mother told us "It is wonderful for Dearbhla to have access to many sporting opportunities in the local area. Donegal Bay Inclusive Sports Hub has opened sport to Dearbhla that otherwise she would have access to."

She added "The Hub is a fantastic initiative and wonderful to have it in South Donegal. It gives children a chance to enjoy experiences. The instructors and volunteer team are excellent and show great understanding and patience with the children."





## Case Study - Dean age 9

Dean came to our handcycling sessions at the start of this year. Prior to handcycling Dean had great difficulty using pedals on trikes etc and never really took to foot pedalling. Dean walks predominately on his toes and this further complicates matters when it comes to using foot pedals. Dean also has hypermobility and this affects his joint movement.



Dean was very anxious at the start trying out handcycling but instantly loved it. Handcycling has been absolutely brilliant for Dean and he's never taken to any sport like he has to handcycling. Even if he's exhausted, he wants to be there for each session. Even on the days when it was pouring rain, Dean was adamant that he wanted to go handcycling whilst wearing rain gear. Dean also has sensory processing disorder and has a big issue around wearing gloves. However he borrowed gloves from one of his super instructors Nonie so he could keep going in the cold for a few extra laps. Dean's confidence in trying new things has taken a huge boost since starting.

Dean's mother Meabh told us about his absolute enjoyment of handcycling." It's been absolutely brilliant for him and he's never taken

to any sport like he has to hand cycling. Even if he's exhausted, he wants to be there for the sessions".

She added "The coaches are just absolutely superb with the children. The entire team of Martin, James and Nonie have been just absolutely brilliant with Dean and he thinks they are just super!! They show huge respect and encouragement to Dean and his pride in completing "One more lap" is obvious. Dean even tells his teacher all about handcycling and how he loves it".

We all hope it will be back in 2022. Dean will be there for sure if it is!



## 2021 REPORT

# Online Activity

Exercise for Easter Challenge.

Virtual activity challenge for people with a disability.



# Coming soon!

We are busy planning for 2022 with additional activities in new locations.

Check out Inclusive Kayaking and Stand Up Paddleboarding in Kilcar.





## 2021 REPORT

# Impact

**46**  
children



**11**  
new families  
to the hub

## For more information

For more information on Donegal Bay Inclusive Sports Hub contact;

**Donegal Local Sports Partnership CLG,**

Office No. 7, First Floor Unit, River Front House, Pearse Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal F92 T68V

Tel: **+353 (0)74 9116098**

Mob: **087-3819314**

Email: **info@activedonegal.com**

Web: **www.activedonegal.com**

Facebook: **www.facebook.com/donegalbayinclusivesportshub**

