

Shining a light on success: Utilising implementation science to enhance the reach and adoption of the 'Ireland Lights Up' walking initiative

Submission date 17/04/2024	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date 01/05/2024	Overall study status Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 23/01/2026	Condition category Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

'Ireland Lights Up' encourages GAA clubs across the 32 counties to light up and bring communities together to walk and talk in a safe environment during the dark winter evenings. This research aims to explore the impact of Ireland Lights Up on those who participate in order to capture the benefits of the initiative. It also seeks to understand how effectively the initiative is implemented to enhance its delivery as well as capture its success factors for other sporting bodies to learn from. The data provided will help to inform this work alongside other data and be presented in a publishable academic manuscript.

Who can participate?

Aged 18 years or above, and involved in Ireland Lights Up.

What does the study involve?

'Ireland Lights Up' is an initiative that encourages people of all ages and fitness levels to get out, enjoy the fresh air and walk at their local GAA club in the winter evenings under the safety of their flood lights. Regular participants, club members or people in the local community are all welcome to take part.

Participants' answers to a questionnaire or interview will help researchers better understand who is currently taking part in Ireland Lights Up and how the initiative can be made more accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

The questions are about the participants' background, club membership and how they heard about the initiative.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

There are no risks to participating but participants are under no obligation to complete the survey and choosing not to will in no way reflect negatively upon them.

Where is the study run from?

The study is run from the Department of Health and Sport Exercise Science in South East Technological University in Waterford, Ireland.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

September 2023 to August 2026

Who is funding the study?

Presidents Scholarship Fund through South East Technological University, Ireland.

Who is the main contact?

Nicola Briggs (nicola.briggs@postgrad.wit.ie)

Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific, Principal investigator

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Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

Protocol serial number

WD_2023_34_WSCH

Study information

Scientific Title

An implementation science study evaluating the Ireland Lights Up walking initiative in promoting social participation and physical activity outcomes in community living adults and assessing potential scale-out and sustainability to other National Governing Bodies of Sport

Acronym

ILU

Study objectives

Ireland Lights Up (ILU) is a GAA led, community-based walking initiative and consists of GAA clubs turning on their floodlights and encouraging the local community to walk around their grounds in the winter. The concept of using floodlit sports grounds to facilitate community walking programmes has the potential to be replicated across several sporting bodies. ILU has scaled up from 80 participating clubs to over 1000, demonstrating the initiative as a suitable model to engage multiple population cohorts with physical activity. The opportunity to evaluate an initiative at scale presents valuable opportunities to capture an implementation model that can be transferred across sporting bodies. Yet, a formal evaluation of the process and impact of the initiative has yet to be undertaken. This research aims to use established implementation science frameworks and mixed methods to evaluate the implementation across multiple levels and capture the health impact on participants over time.

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

approved 19/03/2024, South East Technological University School of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Health Science Building, Cork Road Campus, Waterford, X91 K0EK, Ireland; +353 (0) 51 302000; HealthSciencesResearchEthics.WD@setu.ie), ref: SETU/HSREC/23/24/010

Study design

Hybrid type-two effectiveness-implementation multi-center study design to maximise real-world implementation while providing valid estimates of health outcomes

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Efficacy, Prevention, Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Physically inactive and/or socially isolated adults in a community setting

Interventions

The research design employs a mixed methods approach guided by implementation science to systematically apply and sustain efficacious initiatives in real-world contexts. Implementation science will identify core determinants crucial for effective implementation across clubs, focusing on the community setting to maximise reach and adoption. A multi-stakeholder approach, encompassing participant, club, organisation, and systems levels within a socioecological model, will uncover barriers and facilitators of ILU implementation, with strategies to address obstacles for impact and sustainability.

A hybrid type-two effectiveness-implementation study design aims to maximise real-world implementation while providing valid estimates of health outcomes. Using a framework that integrates RE-AIM and the Practical Robust Implementation and Sustainability Model (PRISM), the study will monitor ILU implementation across delivery sites, measuring outcomes and contextual factors. The Intervention Scalability Assessment Tool (ISAT) will assess ILU's scalability through ten domains, informed by the application of RE-AIM/PRISM.

Effectiveness evaluation, critical for scalability assessment, involves health impact assessments via questionnaires up to 12 months and a social value methodological approach. Participatory research methods will integrate social impact principles, including stakeholder mapping, outcome measure consultation, validation of theories of change, measurement of outcomes, and valuation across stakeholder groups. This comprehensive approach aims to inform evidence-based practices for ILU and similar initiatives.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

Measured at baseline, 6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months and 12 months:

1. Life Satisfaction (ONS 4)
2. Loneliness (UCLA Loneliness Scale).
3. Social Support: The Community Life Survey
4. Social Belonging: The Community Life Survey
5. Inclusion: Office for National Statistics. Harmonised Concepts and Questions for Social Data Sources Interim Harmonised Principle.
6. Physical Activity: Milton, K., Bull, F. C., & Bauman, A. (2011) single-item physical activity measure
7. Self-rated health: Lundberg O, Manderbacka K (1996) self-rated health
8. Health Status: EQ-5D
9. Mental Health: Warwick-Edinburgh mental well-being scale (WEMWBS)

Key secondary outcome(s)

Implementation - effectiveness is measured using RE-AIM and PRISM frameworks at baseline, year 2 and year 3

Completion date

31/08/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Participants of Ireland Lights up
2. Club leaders implementing Ireland Lights Up
3. Organisational leaders of Ireland Lights Up
4. Funders of Ireland Lights Up
5. Age \geq 18 years
6. Provides written informed consent

Participant type(s)

Population, Service user

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Mixed

Lower age limit

18 years

Upper age limit

100 years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

363

Key exclusion criteria

Does not meet inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment

01/10/2024

Date of final enrolment

06/01/2026

Locations**Countries of recruitment**

Ireland

Study participating centre

South East Technological University

Health Sciences Building

Cork Road Campus

Cork Road

Waterford
Ireland
X91 K0EK

Study participating centre
Ballygunnar GAA Club
Waterford
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X91 R863

Study participating centre
Aghada GAA Club
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Sponsor information

Organisation
South East Technological University

ROR
<https://ror.org/03fgx6868>

Funder(s)

Funder type
University/education

Funder Name
South East Technological University

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study will be stored in a publicly available repository called SETU Open Access Repository.

Only those on the RT who require specific data for analysis will be given access. Data management and storage will be ethically and legally compliant in line with GDPR. All participants will consent to participate in the study and have their data reported anonymously (as per ethical statement above). In addition, the data linking the individual with their code /pseudonym, will not be stored in the OneDrive folder with all other data. This file will be stored in a separate OneDrive folder by the PI. Data files will only be shared with members of the research team who require access to the data for analytical purposes.

Data will only be stored for 5 years post publication of outcomes. The PI will be responsible for ensuring that the data is secure during storage and is destroyed appropriately post this defined period. During this period, anonymised data can be made available to third parties. The profile of this research project will be housed within the Centre for Health Behaviour Research and contact details of the PI will be accessible there for anyone wishing to access the data for further analysis. Members of the project team (GAA and research team) will define the terms of data use and will licence the same.

To meet the principles of FAIR data management, the final anonymised dataset and associated metadata will be submitted to the SETU Open Access Repository for access and appropriate reuse. If any data are restricted (e.g. due to confidentiality, legal or ethical concerns), only summary statistics or aggregated data will be made available.

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request, Stored in publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol article		28/11/2025	23/01/2026	Yes	No