

## THE CONCEPT

*“Those who do not find time for exercise may have to find time for illness”*

Ireland is currently facing escalating health costs largely stemming from epidemics of obesity, heart disease, diabetes and cancer. These non-communicable diseases largely originate from the environments where we live, work and move about. As a society, we are becoming increasingly inactive due to diminished opportunities to be physically active in everyday life. Research is unequivocal that physical inactivity, coupled with unhealthy food choices, is the major source of these epidemics. Increased levels of physical activity reduce obesity rates and in turn, associated health risks.

With an existing environment that discourages opportunities for physical activity, planners are now more than ever looking for unique ways, such as the provision of outdoor gyms, to put physical activity back into our communities.

*Long term planning for outdoor activity, coupled with innovation and dedication will ensure the health and well being of people can be enhanced, and thus increase their quality of life (Jenkins 2004, p.168, Let's Get Physical: Planning for Outdoor Gyms in Sydney)*

Outdoor Gyms are a relatively new concept to these shores but have become commonplace in many other countries. In Australia, there are outdoor gyms spread all down the coast. Sydney alone has almost 100 individual Outdoor Gyms. In Turkey and Canada outdoor gyms are common in almost every town and city, and in the UK more and more outdoor gyms are appearing every week. The London borough of Camden alone has over 20 outdoor gyms - the most of any local authority area in the UK.

*London city council cites research suggesting that 26% of those who are using the outdoor gyms have never exercised before.*

Outdoor Gyms work on "nudge" thinking; a theory which has been adopted by governments on both sides of the Atlantic. The main idea behind nudge theory is that humans are innately lazy and are more inclined to take the default (easy) choice. The "nudge" is something that is intended to gently guide us into the right direction - whether that's for our own good or the good of society in general.

Now more than ever before, people are becoming increasingly aware of the need to be fit and healthy and to find ways to counteract the effects of a sedentary lifestyle. Indoor gyms can be rather intimidating places for many people who want regular but gentler exercise, not to mention the cost and, quite often, the inaccessibility of such facilities.

**We at OutFit are convinced that Outdoor Gyms are the way forward, and we are working hard to enable everyone to**

**GET OUT and GET FIT.**