

**Press Release**

**May 21st, 2008**

## **Ageist attitudes deter people from exercising in middle and later life**

**Ageism poses a serious barrier for Irish people trying to maintain active lifestyles in middle and later life, a leading authority on physical exercise and health has claimed. Andy Pringle of the Carnegie Research Institute at Leeds Metropolitan University today told personnel from the Irish leisure and fitness sector that an all-prevailing focus on skill development and health-related fitness for younger people was one of the factors which deterred people from taking sufficiently beneficial exercise in their middle and later years.**

Noting that less than one in three Irish people (age 50+) participate in at least one physical activity that raises their breathing rate, he suggested that the low numbers of people exercising was in part at least, the result of ageism - negative judgements of older people and their prejudicial treatment as a consequence. Such ageist judgements hold that people are "too old" for strenuous exercise.

"Ageist attitudes towards older people exercising are disempowering and demotivating for middle aged and older people," Mr Pringle

insisted. "Not only that, such negative stereotyping and disparagement oftentimes goes unchallenged with the result that they may receive prejudicial treatment when accessing sport and leisure facilities."

He suggested that negative and unchallenged attitudes towards older people engaging in beneficial levels of exercise have a demoralising effect on people, resulting in loss of self-esteem. The result is that people become more and more inactive as they get older, with the inevitable consequences of physical and even mental decline.

Mr Pringle was speaking at the launch of an action programme designed to increase the participation of older people in leisure and fitness facilities throughout the country was launched today in Dublin.

The programme, the first of its kind in Ireland, is intended to overcome difficulties which middle-aged and older people encounter when accessing leisure and sports facilities.

**A joint initiative of ILAM – the Irish Leisure Industry body for all Sports, Fitness, Aquatic, Health Spas and Associated Facilities – and the partner agencies involved in 'Say No to Ageism' Week, the National Council on Ageing and Older People, the Equality Authority and the Health Service Executive.**

**For further information contact John Heuston, National Council on Ageing and Older People (01) 674 3240.**