



The GAA Healthy Club

An Club Folláin

CLUB MAITH TOOLKIT



INTRODUCTION

GAA Clubs pride themselves on being at the heart of their communities, and as such are in an ideal position to positively impact upon the health of their members and wider community. The GAA has something for everyone and is built upon lifelong involvement for all the family. As a sporting organisation the GAA club is already doing much to promote positive health; providing opportunities for physical activity, promoting physical fitness, encouraging healthy lifestyles, and allowing people the opportunity to belong to a large community, all of which promote overall wellbeing.

A GAA Healthy Club will ensure that our core activities are carried-out in such a way so that they promote positive health and wellbeing for everyone. A GAA Healthy Club will endeavour to maximise the potential of the GAA in promoting further health benefits to the wider community.

WHAT IS THE GAA HEALTHY CLUB PROJECT

The Healthy Club project aims to help GAA clubs explore how they support the holistic health of their members and the communities they serve by providing opportunities to develop physical, social, emotional, and psychological health.

The project aims to help GAA clubs identify what they are already doing well, identify areas where they can or would like to improve, and empower them to ensure that everyone who engages with their club benefits from the experience in a health-enhancing way, be they players, officers, coaches, parents, supporters, or members of their local community.

The healthy club model, which is based on best national and international practice, also aims to embed a healthy philosophy in a club while integrating health into the day-to-day club activities in a sustainable way. It also aims to strengthen the GAA club's position at the heart of its community, as a beacon of health of everyone.

WHY GET INVOLVED?

Whether or not your club is officially accepted into the GAA Healthy Club Project, there are plenty of things your club can do to promote health and wellbeing.

The reason for getting involved, at any level, is to look out for our member's needs, while also playing a role in making society more healthy in general. We can all accept that there is huge pressure on our health care system, and anything that can be done to alleviate some of the pressure is welcomed. Fortunately, many of the ailments that put most pressure on our health care system are preventable with a more healthy lifestyle.

Physical inactivity causes many of our most common non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and certain cancers. Overweight and obesity remains a huge problem within the population. While the prevalence of mental ill-health causes major concerns in our society.

The activities of our GAA clubs can go a long way to support people in making healthier choices and to ease the burden of preventable ill-health. The Five Steps to Wellbeing model emphasises the holistic way in which being involved with a GAA club can improve our mental and physical health.

The Five Steps to Wellbeing are:

1. Connect
2. Be Active

3. Give
4. Keep Learning
5. Take Notice

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Health and Wellbeing is now deemed official GAA business, and each club should appoint a Healthy Club Officer (HCO) to oversee this activity. Many clubs will opt to appoint a Health & Wellbeing sub-committee in order to effectively manage this area of work. The HCO should link with their County Health & Wellbeing Chairperson, appointed in each county and supported by an official County Health & Wellbeing Committee. Ulster GAA provide a lot of support in this area through a dedicated Community & Health Manager, so clubs should reach-out to Ulster GAA for support and information of programmes and campaigns which are available to clubs.

It is always good to have a plan, so clubs should take time to find out the needs of their community and develop a Health & Wellbeing Action Plan, and Health & Wellbeing Policy to prioritise and drive this work. Health and Wellbeing should be part and parcel of the overall Club Development Plan.

New health and wellbeing initiatives are emerging all the time, so clubs should link with their County and Ulster GAA to see what is available. Collaboration between clubs on health and wellbeing activity is also very useful, so clubs should engage in events organised by their county, Ulster and National GAA as often as possible. Training events are frequently rolled-out, and are also excellent ways in which to network with like-minded people.

Generally, health and wellbeing activity falls under the following categories:

1. Physical Fitness
2. Mental Fitness
3. Gambling, Alcohol & Drug Education
4. Personal & Training Development
5. Community / Club Development

There are a raft of programmes, campaigns and points of support available under the five categories above. Many of these programmes are National GAA initiatives, while Ulster GAA have developed a number of programmes bespoke to Ulster, such as our Live To Play – Road Safety Awareness programme; One Punch Can Kill; specific donations campaigns, and so on. All of our programmes are promoted on Ulster GAA's Health & Wellbeing microsite <https://ulster.gaa.ie/health/> and this should be the first point of reference for clubs in seeking what opportunities exist.

Any programmes being promoted by Ulster or National GAA will be built on strong partnerships with an expert external agency or service provider. The same approach is relevant in the club setting, with those responsible for overseeing health and wellbeing activities not expected to be an expert in it, but are there to communicate, support and signpost to an appropriate service, if necessary. Before undertaking any new project, clubs should find out if a similar project already exists and how to get involved. Projects should be well thought-out and develop the pillars of:

1. Plan
2. Partners
3. Activity
4. Impact

The impact of health and wellbeing promotion within a GAA club can be very far-reaching. HCOs ought to work closely with their Club Executive to ensure health and wellbeing is being promoted through all aspects of club activity.

Useful points of Contact:

Ulster GAA: <https://ulster.gaa.ie/health/>

Email Ulster GAA: maura.mcmenamin.ulster@gaa.ie

National GAA: <https://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/community-and-health/healthy-club/>