

The Healthy GAA Club

An Club Folláin

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. As a sporting organisation the GAA club is already doing much to promote positive health; providing opportunities for physical activity, and promoting physical fitness of its players. Physical activity guidelines in promoting health for adults recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on 5 days, if not all days of the week. Recent data suggests that only 35% of adults on the island are meeting these physical activity guidelines; as a result the prevalence of non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, obesity and type II diabetes are on the increase. Unfortunately the foundations of this trend are being laid-down in young adults, and children also.

Physical activity is also good for our psychological well-being, and as such our mental health is positively affected by being physically active, being connected to a Club, playing in a team, and interacting with others. It is good to know that by just being there our GAA clubs are already contributing to better physical and mental health of its community.

The GAA takes it's responsibility in promoting the health of its members very seriously, and in recent times Ulster GAA has been working closely with statutory agencies in offering support and resources to Clubs. The Heads Up Mental Health Resource, ASAP Brochure, Adult Health Booklet, and Healthy Hamper for Schools are Ulster GAA resources which aim to increase a club's ability to improve its community's health.

From 2014 all counties have been tasked with setting-up a County Health & Well-being Committee to oversee this within their county.

Along with Ulster GAA, your County Health & Well-being Committee is a point of contact for any queries a club may have in relation to these issues. Clubs are required to appoint a Club Health & Well-being Officer who is responsible for:

- Ensuring the club is appropriately represented at training or other events organised through the County Health & Wellbeing Sub-Committee.
- Using the resources available, ensure that appropriate policies such as the Club Drug & Alcohol policy template and the Club Mental Health Charter, are implemented.
- Promoting health activities and partnerships developed at national, provincial, and county level that may benefit club members.
- Where appropriate or necessary, work with local service providers/agencies/charities who are seeking to make their services available to club members.
- Work with the club Executive to promote health messages at club games and events.
- Encourage the club to include the wider community (parents, past players, older men etc) in any health promoting plans or activities.

It is recommended that clubs devise a Club Health and Well-being Policy, with health-related matters having a place on monthly meeting agendas. It is likely that a small working group will be needed to implement all areas of health and well-being within clubs.

New health and well-being initiatives are emerging all the time, so clubs should use their intuition to reach-out to their Community. Some examples of what can be done are as follows:

- Think of ways in which your facilities can be used for physical activity for the wider

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- Community, e.g. walking trails, exercise classes.
- Host an annual Family Fun Day to promote healthy living.
- Work with local service providers to host health education events, or use professionals from within your Club / Community. Such events may focus on; cancer awareness, smoking cessation, women's health, men's health, young people's health, dealing with stress and so on.
- All indoor areas should be non-smoking, with appropriate signage to promote this.
- Coaches should not smoke during training or matches.
- Smoking should be discouraged on club grounds.

Screening

All Club players from 14 years upwards should be aware of the GAA cardiac-screening questionnaire and signposted to medical screening as appropriate.

Mental Health

- Club should use the Heads Up resource.
- Club should liaise with their County Health & Well-being Committee regarding attending training for club members in the area of mental health.

There are specific health issues which clubs can take pro-active approach in promoting health and well-being; for example:

Alcohol

- Cups shall not be filled with alcohol during celebrations.
- No alcoholic drinks promotions will take place in the clubhouse bar at any time.
- Alcohol shall not be served at functions for players aged under 18 years of age.
- Every effort will be made to ensure juvenile medal ceremonies and other juvenile events are not held in pubs.

Smoking

- Cigarettes shall not be sold in the clubhouse.

Health and well-being is a concern for us all. On the whole being involved in the GAA is good for our health, and good for our Communities. Although playing our games and promoting our culture are the aims of our Association we should make every effort to improve the quality of life for our members and wider community.

