

GAA SOCIAL INITIATIVE

PROJECT SUMMARY



WHAT IS THE GAA SOCIAL INITIATIVE?

The mission of the GAA Social Initiative is to make clubs more age-friendly, by increasing the participation of older members of society. Focusing on older men, Social Initiative events are specifically designed with the intention of enriching their lives and respecting the important contribution they have made and can continue to make to community life.

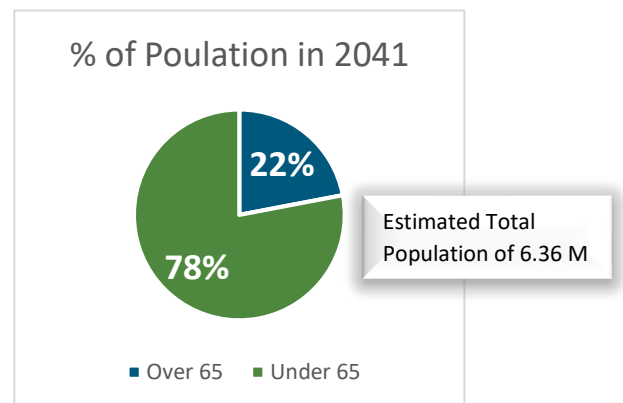
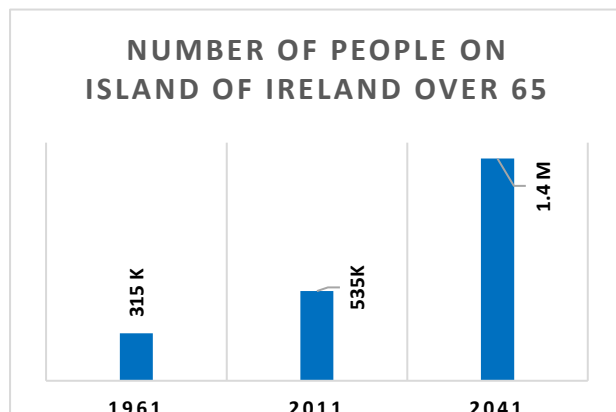
The GAA’s mission statement asserts: “The GAA is a community based volunteer organisation promoting Gaelic Games, culture and *lifelong participation*”. For many age-groups, our games adequately meet their participation needs, however, as an adult gets older their needs alter while participation opportunities tend to diminish. The reality is that many become detached from their GAA club and the connection with what once was an integral part of their lives decreases. This can escalate further, leading to a reduced level of engagement with their community as a whole. The GAA is committed to reversing this trend through the Social Initiative.

The Community and Health Department seeks to increase awareness of and engagement with the GAA Social Initiative. The aim is to re-engage members back into their GAA club and community through our growing network of County Health and Wellbeing Committees and Healthy Club Officers.

We aspire to have a Social Initiative in every club, for older members who have dedicated years of service to their GAA club and community.

Ireland’s Aging Population:

Due to medical and scientific advancements people are now living longer. Census figures report the population of people aged 65 and over on the island of Ireland grows yearly, with an indicated increase of 19.1% between 2011 and 2016, the largest growth level of all the age groupings (Central Statistics Office [CSO], 2017). The CSO estimate the following:



Many studies and reports have indicated that the feelings’ of social isolation and loneliness experienced by older people has risen and continues to rise. These feelings are known to negatively impact on older persons mental and physical health. What tends to happen is, the feeling of loneliness intensifies older people lose confidence, become depressed and withdraw from their community. Subsequently, this may lead to reduced levels of inactivity which can increase the risk of obesity. A further negative impact is the loss of knowledge and skills and reduced contribution made by older people to their communities.

The Importance of Being Socially Included

Regular social interaction, the forming of relationships and connecting within social networks generates higher levels of physical and mental wellbeing in older people. The feeling of connection within a social network elevates self-esteem, which stimulates behaviours beneficial to improving health.

World Health Organisation studies revealed older people who partake in community wide social, leisure, cultural and spiritual activities maintain higher self-esteem and form or nurture supportive and compassionate relationships.

GAA Social Initiative Outcomes

The GAA Social Initiative is one way a club can meet the needs of the aging population in your community.

Many clubs across the 32 counties are involved in GAA Social Initiative activities, such as day trips to matches, Céilí Nights and, trips to Croke Park and GAA Museum. Many of those that have participated have commented on shifting from a sense of *“not belonging anymore”* to feeling revitalised and wanting to re-engage with their GAA club.

The benefits to older people and your GAA club are reciprocal, in that older people feel re-connected with their club, and the club preserves, and benefits from older peoples’ contributions which, goes some way to fulfilling its responsibility to offer community based lifelong participation.

Implementing Social Initiative Activities in your Club

Using a building blocks guidance framework helps clubs navigate a more structured and sustainable approach. Following the steps **Plan, Partners, Activity, The Club**, follows best practice, aiding whole club buy-in and facilitating the achievement of long-term impact.



Plan – The Club sets out what you’d like to achieve, outlines the objectives of how you will achieve - detailing your vision allows you to prepare for other stages.

Partnership - These are the groups or individuals from within the club membership or from outside the club that you can work with to achieve a common goal.

Activity - This is the change that takes place to the physical and cultural environment of the club as part of or as a result of your work.

The Club - This is the action(s) that will take place as part of, or as a result of your efforts

GAA Social Initiative - Croke Park Activity

The perfect opportunity to launch the Social Initiative in your county/club.

We are giving the opportunity to come to Croke Park for a guided tour of the stadium, with a meal afterwards overlooking the pitch. This GAA Social Initiative package rate requires a minimum 20 participants.

GAA Social Initiative Package

*Croke Park Stadium Tour,
Lunch – chicken with seasonal veg, (vegetarian option available)
tea/coffee
€18.50 per person*

*Please note: when booking this package with the GAA Museum the following reference must be used – **GAA Social Initiative Package**

If you would like more information contact:

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Croke Park museum –Lauren Burke Museum Tours:

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Please share with us your ideas of what you would like to see in the new Social Initiative or perhaps share examples of what your club is already doing for its older members.

Continue to check out GAA.ie/community to keep updated with new events and upcoming developments for the Social Initiative.

