



HEALTHY CLUB PROJECT
FAQS



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1. What is the GAA Healthy Club Project (HCP)?

The Healthy Club project is a new way of looking at health in the context of the GAA. It features a unique partnership between the GAA and the HSE. To help it achieve in its ambition to make Ireland a healthier, happier, more connected place, it is kindly supported by Irish Life through a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) investment (2015-2021).

2. What is the aim of the HCP?

The Healthy Club project aims to transform clubs into hubs for health within their communities. GAA clubs already contribute to the health and wellbeing of their members by providing opportunities to develop their physical, social, emotional, and psychological health.

The HCP 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 ultimate aim of the project is to involve every GAA club in the country, thus enhancing the long term health of every community in the 32 counties and ensuring a healthier future for everyone.

What does it involve for participating clubs?

The steps to becoming a Healthy Club are below. This takes place usually over an 18 month period usually but there is room for flexibility depending on club resources and capacity.





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3. What is the timeline for the HCP?

The HCP was created in 2013 and has grown from the genesis of an idea for a small pilot into a programme heralded as an exemplar of the Healthy Ireland framework in action.

The HCP has been rolled out in phased cycles (see Table below) to ensure that the model and resources are evaluated and fit for purpose. Further Phases will open on a cyclical basis and interested clubs will be invited to apply via the GAA's Community and Health website.

Due to capacity it has remained a controlled pilot with the aim to open up expressions of interest to all GAA clubs in Ireland for Phase 5

Phase	Date	Clubs
1	2013 (Q1) – 2015 (Q3)	18 (16 completed)
2	2016 (Q1) – 2017 (Q3)	60 (58 completed)
3	2018 (Q1) – 2019 (Q3)	150 (142 completed)
4	2020 (Q1 – 2021 (Q3)	293 clubs
5	2022 (Q1- 2023 (Q3)	Aim: Open expressions of interest to all 1,600 GAA clubs (target an additional 150- 200 in Phase 5)

4. What clubs are participating in the HCP

Visit <https://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/community-and-health/healthy-club/> for a list of participating clubs

5. How were clubs selected to participate?

Clubs were asked to submit an expression of interest form which aimed to get an overview of what clubs are already doing in the space of health and wellbeing, what capacity the club has to do more work in this space and why the club wants to get involved in the Healthy Club project or clubs who haven't had the opportunity to get involved yet. A scoring system was used to identify clubs who are most suitable for the project considering the above points but also considering the demographics of the club and the geographical location ensuring there is multiples in each county.

6. What are the future plans for the HCP?

The ultimate aim of the project is to involve every GAA club in the country, thus enhancing the long term health of every community in the 32 counties and ensuring a healthier future for everyone. Further Phases will open on a cyclical basis (every 2 years) and interested clubs will be invited to apply via the GAA Community & Health Website <https://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/community-and-health/>

7. Why should a club get involved- what are the benefits?

Clubs who completed the pilot phases have been awarded and recognised as official "Healthy Clubs" which is completely ground breaking and the first of its kind in Ireland. Waterford IT's Centre for Health Behavioural Research has endorsed the project's positive impact on the health orientation and practice of participating clubs.

The following benefits and opportunities provides an evident based rationale on why clubs should get involved:

- Exclusive access to Healthy Club resources
- Increase in membership



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- Improvements in the health promoting activities of clubs specifically with club policy, practice and the club environment (both physical and cultural).
- Opportunity to share learnings and experience with other *like – minded* clubs
- Changes in attitudes towards health for the better
- Better engagement with club activities
- Opening up funding avenues
- Better opportunity to link the local community with club activities
- Sense of achievement
- Set a positive example
- Networking opportunities
- Increase in media coverage both locally and nationally
- Part of a groundbreaking project, first of its kind in Europe.
- Recognition by the GAA and the Health Service Executive (approved by Healthy Ireland)

8. What supports are available to clubs involved in the HCP?

A broad number of supports, including elements of the GAA, the Health Service, and partners, are available to Healthy Clubs. Each stakeholder brings different elements of support to the table and at different stages some supports will become more evident than others when required.

9. What supports are available from the GAA?

- Support from the GAA's County, Provincial and National Health & Wellbeing Committees
- The Healthy Club Project Co-ordinator and Community & Health Department staff
- Healthy Club Steering Committee
- Experience from clubs who participated in previous pilots
- Your Club and County executive committees
- Your Healthy Club Project team (should ideally contain between 4 to 8 members)
- Healthy Club resources

10. What supports are available from the Department of Health/Health Service Executive/Public Health Agency?

- Health Promotion staff and resources within the HSE/Department of Health, including the National Office of Suicide Prevention and mental health department
- Public Health Agency staff and resources (supporting clubs in Northern Ireland)

11. What supports are available from the National Sporting Bodies?

- Sport Ireland and the Local Sports Partnerships network (26 counties) and Sport Northern Ireland (6 counties)
- Access to professional advice and guidance when required



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12. What supports are available from locally identified partners?

- These depend on the demographic and geographic location of the club. Each club is advised to carry out a community mapping exercise and engage with local partners where synergies exist. Feedback from clubs about useful partnerships include local primary and secondary schools, GPs, pharmacies, sports groups, community groups, local sports partnerships, local charities and businesses.

13. What challenges can clubs expect to face?

As with all new projects, the HCP is not without its challenges. Some of the challenges experienced by clubs included:

- **Club capacity:** some clubs found it difficult to recruit personnel for their project teams and at times a lot of work fell onto the shoulders of just one person. The clubs that excelled had an active project team and support from the Club Executive.
- **Resistance:** some clubs referred to the “*old school mentality*” within their clubs which made the project at times a “*hard sell*”. However, the “*small steps*” message resonated with clubs and they kept “*chipping away*” and innovating around how to position this new type of activity within a traditional organisation.
- **Buy in from the club executive committee:** some clubs found that without the backing of their club executive committee, it was difficult to carry out some Healthy Club activities.
- **Documentation:** some clubs, particularly those with limited team members found the documentation element on the portal a challenge. The process and reporting element has since been refined and simplified to make it as user friendly as possible for volunteers. It is also necessary that some members of the Healthy Club team is familiar with computers to document the clubs progress as the accreditation process is done via the online portal.

Even though clubs met and overcame challenges along the way the positive impact the HCP had on fully committed clubs was ground breaking.

14. What commitment is involved?

The steps to becoming a Healthy Club are below. This takes place usually over an 18 month period usually but there is room for flexibility depending on club resources and capacity. The feedback from clubs who have gone through the process is to focus on two areas and embed them into the club culture rather than doing too much and not doing it well - “*slow and steady*” and “*less is more*”. Selected clubs are given an Agreement Form with specific requirements and milestones for participation.



15. What does the evaluation involve?

Clubs are encouraged to document their progress throughout the Healthy Club portal so they can measure the impact of the project on club activities and the general community. Supporting templates are available in the Healthy Clubs Manual to assist clubs on <https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/iq8uib6qge44ad6tpzdi.pdf>

In previous pilots participating clubs were required to engage with the Waterford IT evaluation team. Elements included assessment forms, engagement in focus groups and being open to club visits to get an observation perspective of the HCP in action.

16. What workload is involved?

The workload is largely directed by a club's capacity. The aim is not to try and achieve too much, but to implement simple changes that can have a lasting positive effect on a club's approach to health and wellbeing. As part of this process clubs are required to implement 2 priority areas during an 18 month cycle and adopt the GAA's Critical Incidence Response Plan (CIRP). Popular topics include healthy eating; becoming a smoke-free club; physical activity for non-playing members; engaging older members of the community; emotional wellbeing; gambling, drug, and alcohol education; and inclusion and integration (including the provision of recreational Games for All). Practical case studies from the pilot clubs are available to download on <https://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/community-and-health/healthy-club/>



17. How will Healthy Clubs be recognised?

Clubs will be awarded official “Healthy Club” status upon completion of all steps via the online Healthy Club portal. It is important to note that the process is continuous and doesn’t end after the final step. Healthy Club is not a destination but an ongoing journey to support member’s health and wellbeing and create an overall healthy culture and ethos within the club.

Healthy Clubs recognition periods occur every two years (Q3) where clubs receive official recognition upon completion of all steps via the online Healthy Club portal. Clubs document their progress on the portal which is monitored for recognition purposes and supported through club visits, enabling the project’s impact to be measured. The portal also allows clubs to share their experiences and learnings.

18. How might the Healthy Club Project affect club finances?

- The majority of activities carried out by clubs were cost neutral by engaging with local partners who can supply goods and services to clubs free of charge or at a reduced rate.
- Many clubs successfully sought grant aid for larger projects.
- With Irish Life having made a large Community Social Responsibility investment at a national level, this sets a precedent for clubs to seek out local businesses for this type of engagement on a smaller scale. Some clubs increased commercial interest to fund some of their activities due to partaking in the HCP.

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19. What can clubs not selected for the HCP do?

Many clubs are doing great work in this space but may not necessarily be part of the HCP. Clubs who apply and are not selected to participate are encouraged to continue their work in the area of health and wellbeing. Useful resources are made available via www.gaa.ie/community and through the County Health and Wellbeing Committees. Healthy Club Officer Training is provided in each county by the County Health and Wellbeing Committees who can be contacted using the generic email address chair.hwc.COUNTY@gaa.ie, for example chair.hwc.CLARE@gaa.ie. This training is very interactive and includes practical case studies demonstrating how clubs can implement the steps below. By using this as a guide clubs can be well on their way towards becoming a Healthy Club when applications for the next phase open again.



20. Where can you get more information?

Contact your County Health and Wellbeing Committees using the generic email address chair.hwc.COUNTY@gaa.ie, for example chair.hwc.CLARE@gaa.ie

If you have any further questions about the Healthy Club Project then please contact Aoife O'Brien, GAA's Healthy Club Coordinator Aoife.obrien@gaa.ie