

Mental Fitness Packages

Samaritans Package



**Case study- Cooraclare GAA, Clare**

<b>Club</b>	Cooraclare GAA Club
<b>County</b>	Clare
<b>Location</b>	West Clare
<b>Rural/ Urban</b>	Rural
<b>Codes</b>	Football & Ladies Football
<b>Membership (2016)</b>	400

## Plan

### **Supporting Document: GAA's Mental Health Charter [INSERT HERE]**

Cooraclare GAA are very proactive in developing people as well as players within their club and community. They are mindful of the other factors that influence people's health and wellbeing, such as stress, anxiety etc. Mental fitness is promoted and encouraged as much as physical fitness within the club. Members are encouraged to regularly keep on top of their mental fitness by connecting with the club and in particular speaking to someone when life throws its inevitable challenges. They have established a supportive and safe club environment where club members are made aware of the factors that impact on their wellbeing and also where to go if they need support. The Health & Wellbeing team are the main drivers with strong support from the Club Executive. They adopted the GAA's Mental Health Charter highlighting their commitment to holistic health and wellbeing.

## Partners

*Within the club:* Club Executive, Health & Wellbeing Team, Club PRO, coaches, managers, parents and players

*Outside the club:* The Samaritans, local schools, local businesses and members of the wider community

The Samaritans are based in 32 counties across Ireland and are the official GAA mental health charity. The GAA joined forces with them in a focused bid to tackle the stigma around mental health, and to encourage GAA members throughout Ireland to feel comfortable about seeking help. There are liaison officers in each county who are available to provide support to GAA clubs – check out the link below:

<http://ulster.gaa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2016-Samaritans-Liaison-Officer-Contact-List.pdf>

## Activity

The Samaritans liaison officer in Clare came to Cooraclare GAA club to deliver a series of short talk to the club about the services offered by the Samaritans, how to look after your mental health, and how and why people get in touch with their volunteers. They took a whole club approach and targeted players, coaches, parents, young people and even the wider community.

The Healthy Club team approached all coaches and managers in the club to arrange the session and it turned out that players were the most challenging group to target with their busy schedule. The Samaritans liaison officer was very flexible and adapted the talk slightly so they had a quick session with the players before training.

Following on from this, the team arranged for a session with parents of young people which was also open to members of the wider community to attend. The local schools were brought on board and sent out communication to all parents. Children in the national school were engaged through a poster competition also.

When they talked to players, coaches, club members, they stressed that Samaritans is available to anyone who is struggling to cope and that a caller does not necessarily have to be suicidal to make contact, though some are. Most of the calls and emails are from people who may be lonely, confused, anxious and/or afraid for any number of reasons, including bullying, money problems, relationship issues, work/school/life pressures, etc. No matter the problem they feel that a person can benefit greatly from being given the space to talk about their concerns, to someone who really wants to listen.

Following this Cooraclare GAA continued to raise awareness of mental health as well as the services of the Samaritans through the set-up of a rural, local comedy club. The first of its kind in West Clare! Each Thursday evening in the month of July comedians, the Healthy Club Team, members of the Samaritans and members of the club and community gathered in a local venue to simply laugh and socialise with one another. During these evenings the Samaritans literature would be available and their details shared through the host of the night.

Raising awareness through signage and the club's communication channels was important and one of the most effective steps according to the Healthy Club Team. They advertise the Samaritans helpline, 116 123 through posters, signage and wallet cards. The club website has a designated section for "Wellbeing" and regularly promotes the partnership through its' social media channels. In addition, the club promotes the positive emotional wellbeing campaigns such as #Littlethings <http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie/get-involved/littlethings-campaign/> and 5 Ways to Wellbeing [http://www.southerntrust.hscni.net/pdf/5\\_Ways\\_to\\_Wellbeing\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.southerntrust.hscni.net/pdf/5_Ways_to_Wellbeing_Booklet.pdf)



## **The Club**

The club's commitment to health and wellbeing has been transformative and many of its members, parents and players have commended the club on their efforts. They recognise that the club is one player amongst others in society responsible for promotional positive mental fitness. The club is very open about mental health and the team feel the initiative has reduced the stigma to some extent and people are now more open. The club house and dressing rooms display the posters and members and coaches are more mindful. The club act as the conduit to the Samaritans and although it is difficult to measure the impact the club feel that the change in culture has been a very positive journey. It has also strengthened the relationship with the schools as they are now working together on a regular basis supporting each other's health and wellness initiatives.

Quote from member of the community:

*'...once I heard the club was acknowledging mental health I thought it was a wonderful thing'.*