



HEALTHY CLUB PROJECT
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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. Clubs organically provide meaningful opportunities to socialise, play, and enjoy regular physical activity opportunities. Being part of the Healthy Clubs Project builds on this foundation and provides clubs with a framework to ensure that all aspects on their club are health- enhancing and inclusive. The project is supported by Healthy Ireland, Tomar Trust and Irish Life.

2. What is the aim of the HCP?

The Healthy Club project aims to transform clubs into hubs for health within their communities.

The HCP helps 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 Association, thus enhancing the long term health of every community in the 32 counties and ensuring a healthier future for everyone.

3. What does it involve for participating clubs?

The initial steps to becoming a Healthy Club are included below. This takes place usually over an 18 month period but there is room for flexibility depending on club resources and capacity. Clubs must document their progress on the online Healthy Clubs Portal and when verified, they will gain recognition as a Foundation Level Healthy Club.

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Foundation level Healthy Clubs can subsequently strive for a Silver or Gold Healthy Club Award, if they have the desire and capacity to do so (details of the Silver and Gold Criteria will be shared in due course). All clubs must meet Foundation level requirements first.

4. What does the Foundation Level, Silver Healthy Club & Gold Healthy Club Award involve?

Clubs who are newly recruited must meet all Foundation Level requirements initially (details will be provided at the National Orientation Day on Feb 5th 2022). They can subsequently strive for a Silver or Gold Healthy Club Award, if they have the desire and capacity to do so. An information webinar will take place after the Orientation Day (exact date in Feb 2022 TBC) where the details of the Silver and Gold Criteria will be shared.

Existing clubs (from Phases 1-4) can aim for a Silver or Gold Healthy Club Award if they have the desire and capacity to do so in 2022. An information webinar will take place in Feb 2022 (exact date TBC) where the details of the Silver and Gold Criteria will be shared.

5. What is the timeline for the HCP?

Phase 5 will take place over an 18 month period, Feb 2022- August 2023.

The below table outlines how the project has evolved from a small pilot in 2013 to a national- scale project.

Phase	Date	Clubs
1	2013 (Q1) – 2015 (Q3)	18 (16 completed)
2	2016 (Q1) – 2017 (Q3)	60 (58 completed)



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3	2018 (Q1) – 2019 (Q3)	150 (142 completed)
4	2020 (Q1 – 2021 (Q3)	293 clubs (271 completed)
5	2022 (Q1- 2023 (Q3)	Aim 500 clubs

6. 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. Clubs are listed here once they receive official recognition.

7. How are clubs selected to participate?

Every two years a club recruitment campaign takes place (usually Q4) and interested clubs across the Association are asked to complete an expression of interest form. This submission provides an overview of what clubs are already doing in the space of health and wellbeing, what capacity the club has to do more and why the club wants to get involved. A scoring system is used to identify clubs who are most suitable for the project considering the above points but also considering the socio- demographics of the club, the geographical location and club variation. Clubs that applied for the previous phase of the Healthy Club Project but were unsuccessful are also given additional weighting.

8. What are the future plans for the HCP?

The ultimate aim of the project is to involve every GAA club in the Association, thus enhancing the long term health of every community 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 submit an expression of interest form.

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

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
- 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



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- Part of a groundbreaking project, first of its kind in Europe.
- Recognition by the GAA and the Health Service Executive (approved by Healthy Ireland)

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

A broad number of supports are provided by the GAA and the HCP official partners:

- 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 exclusive resources

Each club is advised to carry out a community mapping exercise and engage with local partners where synergies exist. These depend on the demographic and geographic location of the club. 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.

11. What challenges may a club experience?

Some of the challenges experienced by clubs in previous phases 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 (between 4-8 people) 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.
- **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.
- **Unpredicted events:** The public health restrictions associated with the Covid 19 Pandemic created obvious challenges for clubs (closure of club grounds, financial complications, volunteers working on the front line etc). 14 Phase 4 clubs deferred participation until Phase 5 due to some of the reasons mentioned above.

12. What commitment is involved?

Selected clubs are given an Agreement Form with specific requirements and milestones for participation but generally it involves the following over an 18 month period:

- implementing the 7 Steps of Becoming a Healthy Club
- adopting specific health – related policies
- delivering 3 health- related initiatives.
- attendance at 2 national conferences (in person/online)



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- attendance at 2- 3 provincial information -sharing events (in person/ webinars)
- attendance at 2 information -sharing events with your County Health & Wellbeing Committee and other clubs in your county

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. Clubs who have already gone through the process advise to go "slow and steady" and "less is more".

13. What does the evaluation involve?

Clubs are required to document their progress throughout the Healthy Club. Additional evaluation requirements may be included at different stages. Clubs participating in Phase 5 will be required to support the pre and post evaluation framework which will mainly include sharing questionnaires with members of their club and community who engage with their healthy club activities. This will help measure the impact the project is having on participants lives, physically, emotionally and socially.

14. How will Healthy Clubs be recognised?

Healthy Clubs recognition periods occur every two years (during Q3/Q4) where clubs receive official recognition upon completion of all steps via the online Healthy Club portal. This usually involves an exciting celebratory event in Croke Park where the Healthy Club Officer is awarded with a flag, plaque and certificate on behalf of the club.

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

- The majority of activities carried out by clubs are 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.
- Participating clubs receive a small grant upon completion of the required steps.

16. 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 (only 150- 200 can be accommodated during each phase) are encouraged to continue their efforts by working closely with their County Health and Wellbeing Committees.

In addition, Healthy Club Officer Training is provided multiple times throughout the year and includes practical club case studies. Other useful resources and opportunities are made available via <https://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/community-and-health/>

17. 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



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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