Health Promotion using the settings approach

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health. Settings are then defined places where people live, work, play or go to for education or care in which they spend a lot of time.

A healthy setting supports and helps people to make healthy choices to improve/maintain their health and promote their wellbeing and realise that health is influenced by many factors. Healthy settings can range from schools, colleges, hospitals, sports grounds etc. In each healthy setting there are often a range of rules and regulations put in place in relation to health and those within the setting must adhere to them. Healthy settings can also promote health awareness and set healthy cultures for their members. Exploring the sports club setting is a relatively new approach to health promotion. Being part of sports club means you are part of a certain culture and with each culture there comes certain health behaviours. This makes clubs an excellent entry point in which to promote health for the future.

Within a GAA Club setting, connections between the people and the issues are mapped before health promotion is undertaken using a model known as the Four Building Blocks: Plan, Partners, Activity and The Club. Following this model supports a sustainable approach to the work.

The Plan underpins what the club wants to do/achieve. The Partners are the people/groups the clubs needs buy in and assistance from in order to achieve their goals. Activity represents the programmes or initiatives delivered to club members. The club identifies the positive change that takes place as a result of your efforts (this can be cultural change, health behaviour changes, and even changes to the physical environment of the club, such as the use of health promoting signage etc. or a dedicated section on the club website). Using these building blocks will help ensure your sport club’s approach to health promotion is sustainable and well planned, achieves a better impact and responds to identified needs.

The GAA has also followed the approach of encouraging clubs to appoint a voluntary Health & Wellbeing Officer to champion and oversee such work (with the assistance of a project team). The three primary functions relating to their role are: communicate, support, and signpost. Other sports clubs could tailor this method to suit their needs.

It is important to take an ‘Assets Approach’ to health promotion in a sports club setting. In other words, focus on how your club already supports members’ health, highlight this, and then explore additional opportunities. Fun, health, sociability, performance and achievement are all themes that are experienced through participation in a sports club. Use such aspects as entry points to implementing health promotion ideas and interventions. Your Sports Club for Health can motivate, inspire and educate people to be healthier in many ways.

When implementing your plans make sure that they are manageable and achievable. Delegate the work and don’t take on too much at once. It’s important to have a positive attitude and acknowledge, and to celebrate and enjoy the achievements within the club along the journey.