

Partnership with the Corporate Sector

Case Study: Irish Life/GAA Healthy Clubs Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partnership

Outline of the partners involved

The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is Ireland's largest sporting and cultural organisation. It is a community based, volunteers led organisation responsible for the promotion of traditional Gaelic Games (hurling, Gaelic football, and handball). It has sister Camogie (female hurling) and Ladies Gaelic Football associations. It also has a cultural arm, Scór, which promotes Irish music, dance, culture and language. It has 1,600 clubs in Ireland and over 400 internationally and on every continent. It is famous for reaching into the heart of every parish in Ireland and has over 750,000 members. For more information go to www.gaa.ie

Irish Life is one of Ireland's leading financial services companies with over 1 million customers. For over 75 years, it's been helping people in Ireland look after their life insurance, pension and investment needs. Since July 2013 Irish Life has been part of the Great-West Lifeco group of companies, one of the world's leading life assurance organisations. Irish Life is committed to delivering innovative products backed by the highest standards of customer service. Information correct as of June 2015. For the latest information please see www.greatwestlifeco.com.

Why and how did partnership happen?

In 2014 the GAA was in the process of concluding Phase 1 (two years in duration) of its new Healthy Clubs project. This project, run in partnership with the Irish government's Department of Health, Health Service Executive, and National Office for Suicide Prevention, was designed to empower GAA club members and the communities they serve to better understand and maintain their health. Phase 1 involved a small, controlled, number of clubs (16) to enable testing of the model. In order to grow the project through Phases 2 and 3, additional funding was required.

In 2014 Irish Life also celebrated 75 years in operation in Ireland. The company wanted to celebrate this milestone by entering a meaningful CSR partnership with a worthy programme that was impacting positively on the health and wellbeing of ordinary Irish people in their communities. Irish Life's parent company, Great-West Lifeco, has a long tradition of CSR. The GAA was one of a number of entities invited to pitch the Healthy Clubs project to Irish Life's CSR Committee.

Impressed by the GAA's community-based commitment to health-promotion and the independent evaluation of Phase 1 of the Healthy Clubs project by a team of academics from Waterford Institute of Technology's Centre for Health Behaviour Research, Irish Life decided to generously commit to a three-year €1 million CSR partnership with the GAA to grow the Healthy Clubs project and help it achieve its full potential. The partnership was officially launched in January 2015 by the President of the GAA, Aogán Ó Fearghail, the then Minister for Health in Ireland, Deputy Leo Varadkar, and then CEO of Irish Life, Mr Bill Kyle. See [\(link to video to be inserted here\)](#) for more details.

What are the aims of the partnership?

The aim of the Healthy Clubs project is to use the GAA club setting as a vehicle to deliver health promotion using the World Health Organisation's settings approach to health promotion. The aim of the GAA's partnership with Irish Life is to help ensure that this project achieves its full potential, continues to be thoroughly evaluated, and impacts positively on the lives of thousands of Irish people. The partnership seeks to ensure that finance is not a barrier to achieving this.

How is the partnership managed and implemented?

An agreement document highlighting key requirements under the partnership was signed by a leading representative from the GAA and Irish Life. This included reporting requirements, outline of appropriate use of funding, evaluation requirements, and timelines when discussions on extending the existing partnership would commence, all conditions having been met in the interim. The agreement also allowed for two representatives of Irish Life's CSR Committee to sit on the National Steering Committee of the Healthy Clubs project, to ensure adequate input into future plans and a continuous communication flow to Irish Life's management team. It also contained a commitment from the GAA to offer real engagement opportunities for Irish Life's 2,000 plus staff to support Healthy Club activities, and to assist the company in replicating a Healthy Club style programme for its staff members.

What are the benefits of the partnership?

The benefits of the partnership to the GAA are significant. Irish Life's investment of €1m means that the GAA has been able to grow its Healthy Clubs project and its commitment to the wellbeing of its members without having to divert significant amounts of its financial income from core games and player development activities. It also means that the GAA can afford to have the project comprehensively evaluated. This means any resources developed and implemented are coming from a solid evidence base, and also has the potential to enhance future funding applications to government or other funding bodies. Finally, the funding has enabled the benefits of the programme to reach a much wider audience than would otherwise have been possible.

For Irish Life, the company is seen as genuinely committed to the wellbeing of individuals and communities all over Ireland. It has fostered close working links between Irish Life's representatives and representatives of various statutory health bodies through their participation on the Steering Committee. The relationship was also recognised and shortlisted in the top three CSR partnerships at the annual Sports Industry Awards in Ireland in 2015.