

## Nenagh Éire Óg Case Study at the 2023 National GAA Healthy Clubs Conference in Croke Park

Nenagh Éire Óg were delighted to be invited to share their story of being involved in the GAA Irish Life Healthy Club Project at the 2023 Healthy Clubs conference in Croke Park on Saturday 18 November. As a club that participated as a pilot club in the early days of the initiative, Nenagh Éire Óg is one of sixteen clubs in the country celebrating ten years of being recognised as a Healthy Club this year.

Catherine McTiernan, Club Secretary, Bartley Ryan, former Healthy Club Officer, Conor O'Donovan, Enda O'Sullivan, and Deirdre O'Connor, current Healthy Club Officer, highlighted Nenagh Éire Óg activities in two workshops on the conference agenda. The discussion of activities was facilitated by Jimmy D'Arcy, from Drom & Inch Club, and GAA Youth Leadership & Sustainability Manager at Croke Park.

Catherine McTiernan opened the panel discussion by recounting the early days of the Healthy Club initiative. This was championed by Michael Geaney, with the support of Clare Slattery and the Healthy Club committee at the time. Catherine commented on a talk by Christy Kenneally, organised as a healthy club activity, being one of the most impactful community events in the early years. Some of the 2013-2016 Nenagh Éire Óg newsletters were shown on the slide presentation. Looking back now, these are a wonderful archive of all the various health promotion projects and local community links at the time.

Bartley Ryan gave an overview of the different walking initiatives over the years and noted the amount of fundraising done by the community walking group for various charities. One of Bartley's most memorable events was the walk on Croagh Patrick and the raising of over EUR7000 in funding for Milford Hospice in 2019. He also took the opportunity to mention all the efforts of the Nenagh Éire Óg Covid volunteers to meet the needs of members of the local community during the Pandemic, and the memorable Jerusalem Challenge fundraiser for St. Conlon's Nursing Home.

Deirdre O'Connor described current Healthy Club initiatives. Firstly, she discussed Nenagh Éire Óg collaboration with the local *Defibs for Life* group who are responsible for having ten defibrillators installed at strategic points in the community, sports clubs, schools, and community groups around Nenagh in recent months; and the provision of training in CPR and defibrillator use at the Complex. The liaison of the Club with The Dillon Quirke Foundation regarding the piloting of their cardiac screening programme in December 2023 was also highlighted as a real privilege and honour for Nenagh Éire Óg. More details of this fantastic initiative will follow in the coming days.

Deirdre also gave details of the womens' health initiative running this autumn. This was launched with a talk in October by Helen Ryan, Total Physio Health, where tips on sleep, nutrition, hormonal health, movement, and stress management were shared. In line with the promotion of the long-term benefit of strength training at the guest talk, strength and conditioning is the focus of the current block of classes running on Thursday nights at 8pm at the Complex.

Conor O'Donovan gave a passionate account of the Over 40s (no handpass) Social Hurling initiative last summer. This was well received by the audience who were given copies of the game rules. Workshop participants also enjoyed seeing the clip from YouTube showing a handpass foul, and the subsequent reaction from the players and crowd! Conor put the spotlight on the social aspects of the initiative, and this was supported by Enda O'Sullivan who gave the participant perspective of being involved especially the thrill of togging out and hurling like a young fella again! Enda also prompted the audience to consider how the 'no handpass' concept might be adapted to the Gaelic football context. The further health benefit of players being mentally challenged in the social hurling game, and having to break established habits, and avoid handpassing, was also promoted. Finally, Conor noted his appreciation of local media coverage of the social hurling series. The full-page report by Liam Hogan, Nenagh Guardian, was brought to the attention of the audience. It also features in the accompanying photograph taken at HQ!

The panel closed with a discussion of the current vision of ways to strengthen the potential of developing Nenagh Éire Óg as a hub for the promotion of health in the community and plans to bring a broad range of current activities under the Healthy Club banner. The consideration of ways to bring all age groups across the lifespan into the Club, and to organise intergenerational activities, led to lots of engagement from the audience and interesting ideas and suggestions from clubs all around the country. Deirdre O'Connor noted that the *Five Ways to Wellbeing*, often used in health promotion, will be the framework for Nenagh Éire Óg Healthy Club activities going forward. These are (1) be active; (2) connect; (3) take notice; (4) give; and (5) keep learning. The importance of ongoing engagement with club members and the local community with regard to finding out what activities might be organised or designed was also emphasised.

A link to the Nenagh Éire Óg Healthy Club Community Mapping Survey is available at <https://forms.office.com/e/5MKk0SaLi8>

In the Q&A at the close of the panel, Catherine McTiernan took the opportunity to mention the amount of unseen volunteer work done at Nenagh Éire Óg, such as the huge effort and long hours put in by the Match Day Committee. There is no doubt about it but that this group has a positive impact on all who attend matches at MacDonagh Park. The event at Croke Park was an occasion to celebrate all such volunteering.