

Midleton GAA and St Finbarr's National Hurling & Football Club, Cork

Cork Beats Stress

Midleton GAA club partnered up with the HSE south and St. Finbarr's GAA club, another participating Healthy Club in Cork, to deliver a programme called 'Cork Beats Stress'. The programme consisted of a workshop one night a week for six weeks. Facilitated by a qualified HSE psychologist the programme equipped participants with the skills needed to cope with stress and provided participants with take home booklets on stress management. It was open to all members of the public over 18 years of age and was free. Over the six weeks attendance fluctuated from week to week, however, on average 161 people attended in Midleton GAA and 167 in St. Finbarr's National Hurling and Football club; 25% of programme participants were male.

Findings from the HSE's evaluation of the programme clearly show that participation in this initiative resulted in a clinically significant reduction in symptoms of anxiety, depression and stress. Gains were made regardless of the severity of symptoms.

Running this public health service through the GAA contributed to a reduction in stigma and a normalisation of mental health problems and of help seeking behaviour. This helped reduce barriers which might prevent someone from availing of assistance. The delivery of this mental health initiative through the GAA was associated with more positive connotations, a greater perception that it was local, community based and a service which involved people from all walks of life and which led to great male participation.

This initiative was recently awarded the prestigious HMI award which is given to recognise outstanding achievements of individuals and teams which exemplify innovation, creativity and commitment of people delivering health services. The Cork Beats Stress was selected as joint overall National winner out of 149 others.

St Finbarrs:

Following on from this success St Finbarrs Healthy Club Team have co-ordinated two SafeTALK training workshops in the club. SafeTALK, which stands for 'suicide alertness for everyone' is a training programme that helps people to identify those who may be having thoughts of suicide and teaches ways of helping those people by connecting them with suicide first aid resources. This programme is run by the National Office for Suicide Prevention in line with LivingWorks and the HSE. It involves a 3 hour course which was open to anyone in the club and the wider community over the age of 16. Between the two courses the club had over 40 people take part. The participants were made up of club members including players and coaches, parents and members of the wider community.

Midleton GAA:

Midleton GAA are also concerned with making the club a healthier place through healthy eating programmes. They are currently targeting weekly juvenile training sessions (Under 6s- Under 11s) as they want to educate members about the importance of fuelling their bodies with the right food from an early age. As well as this they encourage coaches, parents, siblings and friends to get involved. The sessions have proved very popular with anywhere from 120 to 180 participants involved on a weekly basis. Parents have found them extremely beneficial as their children

are experimenting with new fruits, ones that they would not even consider trying at home and in addition, their siblings are also getting involved and sampling.