

How can we use social marketing and evidence based health promotion in sporting organisations to change health behaviours?

Ms. Susan Kenny M.Sc., M.I.N.D.I,
HSE/ National Office for Suicide Prevention

The workshop aimed to provide participants with practical overview of implementing health promotion programme within the sports club setting. Mental Health Promotion best practice works at promoting positive mental health at an individual and community level. Participation in sporting organisations is a protective factor for mental health and suicide prevention in addition to promoting physical health and well being. A sports club can be a supportive environment to promote positive mental health through health promotion policies, providing information and through developing the personal skills of members.

Sporting organisations may be instrumental in mobilising community action on health related topics. Finally the impact of sponsorship from the food and alcohol industry needs to be considered by sporting organisations and how such advertising can impact negatively on health behaviours.

The use of *positive* role models to promote health promoting messages can have a significant impact on young people. Role models to whom most young players will respond include other player's, coaches and manager who have the respect of young people. However in choosing role models, organisations need to ensure that the role model relates to the target audience and is a reliable and credible source for a health promotion message.

Examples of international and national programmes that have been shown to promote physical health and wellbeing in sporting organisations include

- ATHENS/ATLAS Programme USA
- Good Sports Programme- Australia
- UK Mental health foundation
- 'See Me' Campaign Scotland
- UK Positive Mental Attitude Football League
- ASAP- GAA Alcohol/Drug Prevention Programme

The 'Less Pints, More Points' a health promotion programme based in the sports club setting targeted at changing the alcohol behaviours within the club setting. It was evaluated, developed and implemented the HSE Dublin North East Region. The programme was completed on a partnership basis between TCD (Department Public Health & Primary Care) & HSE Health Promotion Department Dublin North East Area¹

¹ Susan Kenny^{^^}, Anne O'Farrell*, Prof Shane Allwright*, Dr. Nazih Eldin ^ Gerry Roddy^, Jo-Hanna Ivers*, Dr. Catherine Darker* TCD Department of Public Health and Primary Care ^{^^} National Office for Suicide Prevention, HSE ^Department of Health Promotion, HSE-Dublin North East

The aim of the programme was to reduce high risk alcohol consumption among club members (amount of alcohol per occasion) and alcohol-related harm within the GAA club setting. The background and implementation of the programme was presented with an outline of recommendations from the delivery of the programme.

The intervention programme involved club members including players aged 16 years & over, associate members (club executive, coaches) were invited to participate in programme. Intervention programme comprised of

- Club policy development
- Social marketing campaign
- Team based education programme
- Coach education/training

The evaluation of the programme has been completed using a randomised controlled trial and has been completed by the Department of Public Health and Primary Care, TCD. Findings from the research element of the programme will be published over the coming months.

The following key points are important to remember when utilising sporting organisations to promote positive mental health

- Promote ownership within the organisation
- Utilise existent sporting organisation structure
 - Identify key influencers
 - Recognise competitive season
- Need long term approach 'Once off' programmes are at little benefit

Education programmes within sporting organisations

Education programmes that increase our knowledge and skills are essential to help us work effectively dealing with mental health. Education works best in small bite-sized pieces and if it's done over a period of time rather than in one big event. The use of an outside visitor/speaker to enhance is helpful but the content of what they are going to say and do should always be agreed first and they should not be allowed to educate children in the absence of parents/coaches. In delivering an education element to a programme, one needs to consider the target audience e.g. coaches/trainers, players, Adult or juvenile players,

Social marketing messages need to be relevant to sports performance, recovery and health. Distribution mechanisms for effective delivery of health literature and campaigns within sporting organisations include

- Stadium
- Match Programmes
- Websites
- Club Notes
- Sports Sections Local Newspaper
- Sponsorship