

# Sport



A Home For Lifelong Volunteering

Joint Internal Evaluation Report  
2017-2018



## DfC

Department  
for Communities

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## SECTION 1



# Introduction & Background

Following the success of the Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering programme in 2016/2017, the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby were keen to extend the programme for another year. However, constraints within the political system meant that only a nine-month period of funding could be committed to by the Department for Communities. Thus funding was duly agreed and accepted by the programme partners for a delivery period of nine months from 1 July 2017 until 31 March 2018.

Throughout this nine-month period the programme was supported by Project Officers from each of the three governing bodies:

### Irish FA

#### **Volunteer & Policy Development Officer**

Stephen Garrett (April 2016-January 2017); Michael Carvill (January 2017-March 2018)

#### **Club & Community Development Officer:**

Diarmuid O'Carroll (April 2016-January 2018); Andy Waterworth (February 2018-March 2018)

### Ulster GAA

#### **Volunteer & Policy Development Officer**

Sharon Haughey-Grimley (July 2017-November 2017); Ashelene Groogan (December 2017-March 2018)

**Club & Community Development Officer:** Fionntan O'Dowd

### Ulster Rugby

**Volunteer & Policy Development Officer:** Nicci Wilson (October 2017-March 2018)

#### **Club & Community Development Officer:**

EJ Havlin (October 2017); Andrew Kent (January 2018-March 2018)

This internal evaluation sets out to summarise the achievements of Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering against the joint project objectives. It also provides some feedback on the highlights and challenges of delivering the programme across this nine-month period, with the information presented complementing the joint six-monthly reports and the individual evaluations completed by each governing body.

The partners would like to take this opportunity to thank the Department for Communities for their support in delivering the programme. On both an individual basis and as a collective the partners have been able to deliver a wide programme of activities which have empowered and enriched volunteers, broadened their experience and expanded their opportunities to contribute towards the development of grassroots sport. It is very much appreciated.

## SECTION 2



# Joint Programme Objectives

## Volunteer Recruitment

### Schools Roadshows – one regional event by 31/03/18

For the partnership to:

- Identify two peer leaders per selected school (three schools and six peer leaders per roadshow)
- Provide training to peer leaders with specific emphasis on:
  - Event Management
  - Building Partnerships
  - Community Outreach
  - Funding Provision
  - Inclusive Practice - specifically on Disability Awareness

(Schools to be selected to include those who receive funding under the Extended Schools programme.)

### Schools Roadshow

took place in Banbridge on 19 October 2017

## Enhancing The Volunteer Experience

### Multi-Sport Volunteering Forum

For the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch) Partnership to hold one Multi-Sport Volunteering Forum by 31 March 2018 targeting delivery at engaging volunteers aged 55+.

Potential Themes:

- Social Isolation
- Health & Wellbeing

### Volunteer Mentoring Scheme

For the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch) Partnership to mentor 100 club volunteers by 31 March 2018.

Support and tracking of needs analysis, training provision and volunteer experiences created.

### Stay In The Game – Promoting Lifelong Wellbeing In Sport

was held in the Athletic Grounds in Armagh on Thursday 31 August 2017

**113** volunteers mentored

### Providing Recognition For Volunteering

For the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch) Partnership to hold a Joint Awards Event by 31 March 2018.

### Joint Awards Ceremony

held on 21 February 2018



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## Volunteer Skill Development

### Multi-Sport Lifelong Volunteer Training Programme

For the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch) Partnership to deliver a joint Multi-Sport Lifelong Volunteer Training Programme on areas of common interest to volunteers across the three organisations with one training event held by 31 March 2018.

(Multi-Sport Volunteer Training Programme based on volunteer needs)

### Funding Masterclass

was held at the Girdwood Community Centre in Belfast on Wednesday 15 November 2017

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## Friendly Communities Volunteer Management Programmes

### Creating Welcoming Clubs

To have 15 clubs across the organisations awarded with either their organisations' quality mark or Clubmark (Sport NI) by 31 March 2018.

(Irish FA Club Mark, Ulster GAA Club Maith and IRFU (Ulster Branch) Club Excellence)

**21** clubs awarded  
Clubmark recognition

### Good Relations Programme

For the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch) Partnership to deliver a Good Relations Programme consisting of 25 events aimed at improving relations between communities by 31 March 2018.

Three events will be designed to specifically focus on:

- Older People
- People With Disabilities
- Social Isolation

**46** Good Relations  
programmes delivered

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## Improved Volunteering Opportunities

### Pathways To Volunteering Charter

To develop a joint volunteer recruitment and retention policy template by 31 March 2018 for the purposes of leading innovation at the point of local delivery through clubs.

(The policy to interact with Department guidelines relating to disability, over-50s and diversity of club populations)

### Inter-organisation Volunteering Placement Programme

For the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch) Partnership to deliver an Inter-organisation Volunteering Placement Programme through the provision and opportunities for 15 inter-organisation placements by 31 March 2018.

(Note: An inter-organisation placement is defined as a volunteer recruited from one organisation engaged in a volunteer role with a different organisation)

### Multi-Sport Youth Forum

For the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch) Partnership to deliver a joint Multi-Sport Youth Forum with 24 participants on areas of common interest to volunteers across the three organisations by 31 March 2018.

### Volunteering Charter

was launched on  
15 November 2017

**27** volunteer placements  
were facilitated

**30** volunteers attended the  
Multi-Sport Youth Forum on  
12 March 2018



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## Measuring Impact

### Mapping the club and volunteer experience

For the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch) Partnership to complete three case studies which will reflect on opportunities availed of by clubs and volunteers through this programme from 1 July 2017 to 31 March 2018 and to document and report findings to the Voluntary and Community Division, Department for Communities, when submitting the final project progress report.

### Evaluation and Review

For the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch) Partnership to complete a joint internal evaluation of the project and to document and report findings to the Voluntary and Community Division, Department for Communities, by 30 June 2018.

(Report to consist of four sections, one for each sport and a collective section – contents of report to be agreed with VCD Policy Team prior to writing)

**Three** case studies have been completed

This report completes this target

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## Programme Management

### Strategic Development

For the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch) Partnership to explore opportunities for programme sustainability beyond March 2018.

### Partnership Steering Panel

To have two meetings of the project partnership steering panel over the funding period.

### Progress Reporting

To submit, to the Department's satisfaction, a joint Irish FA/Ulster GAA/IRFU (Ulster Branch) partnership bi-annual Progress Report and Financial Claims by the end of October and April in respect of the preceding period of funding.

The three governing bodies have engaged with CENI and other services in this regard

**Steering Panel meeting** took place on 21 December 2017

**Progress Reports** have been submitted on time



# Programme Highlights

## Schools Roadshow

The Schools Roadshow took place on Thursday 19 October in Banbridge High School.

**46** young people took part representing:

- Banbridge High School (14)
- Newbridge Integrated College (12)
- St Patrick's College, Banbridge (20)

St Patrick's College is involved in the Extended Schools Programme due to their scoring on the multiple deprivation measure which was a target of this roadshow.

In preparation for this event 11 peer leaders met on 10 October 2017 (nine female, two male) from the three schools to avail of interactive training delivered by programme staff. The peer leaders were selected by their schools on the basis of young people studying physical education or a sports-related discipline and who had expressed a desire to fulfil further education or a career in sport. Peer leaders were aged 16-18. The training programme covered the following topics: Event Management, Funding Provision, Community Outreach, Building Partnerships and Disability Awareness. It was jointly delivered by the CCDO and VDPO from each of the three sports and used a range of delivery techniques to best engage the peer leaders. The training programme culminated in a planning session for the multi-sport schools roadshow with the young peer leaders having an opportunity to shape the upcoming event. Roles and responsibilities were discussed and agreed.



Peer leaders overseeing the Schools Roadshow in Banbridge High School



## Multi-Sport Volunteering Forum

The Joint Multi-Sport Volunteering Forum entitled **Stay In The Game – Promoting Lifelong Participation In Sport** was held on Thursday 31 August 2017 at the Armagh Athletic Grounds.

In order to appeal to older members it was decided over various planning meetings between programme staff to deliver an event with a health and wellbeing theme. The event included speakers representing the Public Health Agency, Farm Families Health Checks, AWARE and the NI Sports Forum. These agencies were chosen as they were agencies who had developed partnerships with the sports' governing bodies and had a relevance to people aged 55+. Taking account of feedback received from previous joint events, it was felt that club case studies would be beneficial. Thus club case studies were included from Clonduff GAA covering their involvement in the Healthy Club Project and from the Irish FA focussing on their programme dedicated to older players entitled Back In The Game. The 50 volunteers attending the event engaged enthusiastically with the discussion. Lord Mayor Gareth Wilson of Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Council was also in attendance.



Lord Mayor Gareth Wilson of Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Council with Fiona Teague from the Public Health Agency; Alan Willis, Irish FA; Graffin Parke, IRFU President (Ulster Branch) and Michael Hasson, President Ulster GAA

This event was promoted to clubs as being specifically relevant to older people or people in the club with a remit for providing opportunities for older people. As such the audience demographics reflected the theme of the event and successfully targeted people aged 55+.

## Joint Volunteer Training Programme

A Funding Masterclass was held on 15 November at Girdwood Community Centre. The event was a progression from more basic club finances workshops which have been delivered in the past as part of the Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering programme. Feedback from previous finance-themed events has always



been very positive, with club finances being a recurring theme when club members are asked about any topics on which they would like more information. Neil Irwin, a funding consultant, was sourced to deliver the high level content. 46 club volunteers attended the event.

## Joint Youth Forum

Young volunteers from the three sports took part in a Joint Youth Forum on Monday 12 March at the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park. The event gave young volunteers the opportunity to engage with their peers from other sports while sharing their experiences of volunteering. The event included a myth-busting session whereby young people challenged some of the stereotypes that exist around their sport. This is the first year such an event has been included within the Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering programme and is something which has been a hugely positive addition to the programme.

Many of the attendees at this event were recruited from each sport's individual youth forums which took place earlier in the year. These young volunteers gained multiple opportunities to act as representatives of their club and sport with like-minded peers. Each of the sporting codes will continue to liaise and mentor these young volunteers around other volunteering opportunities which may interest them.

For many of the young volunteers this was their first visit to the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park. The event concluded with a fitting tour of the Education and Heritage Centre at the stadium, enabling some of the young people to learn more about a sport they may have had very little knowledge of.



## Goldmark Awards



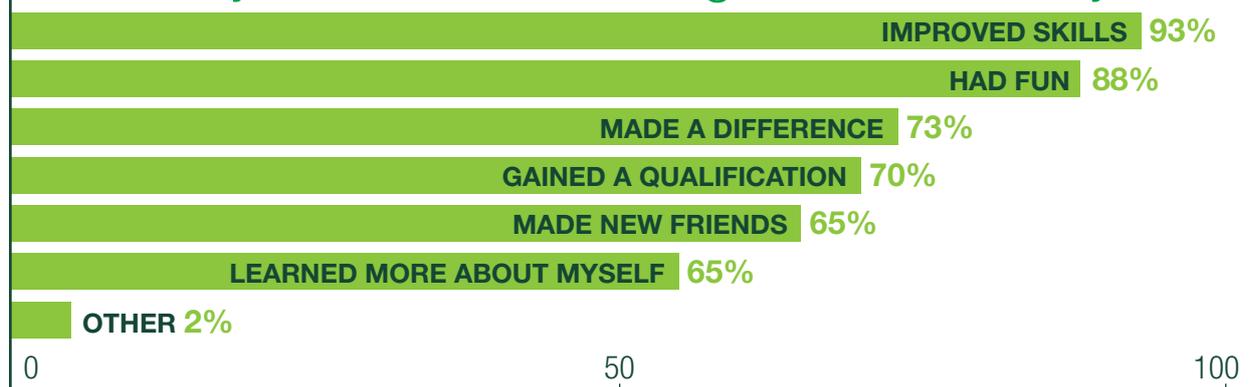
At the Goldmark Awards Ceremony were (from left): Thomas Niblock (Event MC); Craig Gilroy; Graffin Parke (IRFU – Ulster Branch, President); Andy Waterworth; David Martin (Irish FA, President); Eoin Donnelly; Brian McAvoy (Ulster GAA, CEO)

The annual joint Goldmark Awards Ceremony was held on Wednesday 21 February 2018 at the Wellington Park Hotel, Belfast. More than 100 young people who participate in Volunteer Now’s Goldmark Programme received reward and recognition for their contribution for 50 hours, 100 hours and 200 hours of volunteering within their sports clubs. There was also recognition given to volunteers less than 14 years of age who have engaged in the Goldmark Pioneer Award. This award is for young volunteers who are not yet old enough to participate in the Goldmark scheme (14-24 years) but who are keen to begin their volunteering journey. The introduction of the Pioneer Award this year has been a very welcome addition to the Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering programme and speaks volumes of the greater recognition volunteering is receiving in sports clubs as a result of this DfC-funded programme.

The annual Goldmark Awards Ceremony continues to be a highlight in the Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering year and was supported by a number of high profile sports people from each of the three sports, namely Eoin Donnelly (Ulster GAA), Craig Gilroy (Ulster Rugby) and Andy Waterworth (Irish FA).

An interactive session allowed volunteers to voice their opinion on several topics, one of which was their opinion on how they have benefitted from volunteering. Responses are shown below, clearly demonstrating that this event not only celebrates volunteers but also celebrates and raises the profile of volunteering. Young volunteers were encouraged to take their positive messages about volunteering back to their clubs, schools and communities in order to act as leaders within their own peer group.

### How do you think volunteering has benefitted you?



## SECTION 4



# Challenges

Programme delivery over the nine months from July 2017 – March 2018 has thrown up some common challenges and some which were unique to this reporting period.

Each governing body appreciates the challenges which the Department for Communities faced, and still faces, in light of the political impasse and the lack of agreed budgets. This unprecedented situation led to a delay in a decision being made about the extension of the Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering programme. Programme staff were placed on protective notice from 1 January 2017, with possible redundancy at the end of March 2017. This instability resulted in some staff leaving their positions ahead of the end of March, while others were then made redundant on 31 March 2017. A letter of offer was gratefully received in late June informing the project group that nine months would be funded from 1 July 2017 to 31 March 2018.

This was welcome news but posed a number of challenges for the governing bodies who had lost staff and were now trying to recruit for two nine-month posts. Targets were reviewed with the Department for Communities to reflect the shortened programme duration. Work continued in earnest with programme staff making up the shortfall of not having a full quota of staff. Programme staff ought to be commended on their exemplary efforts during this difficult time, with the three sports pulling together to keep the programme progressing as it should. The genuine partnership which has developed between the three sports over the course of DSD and DfC funding is also worth noting.



Participants at the Multi-Sports Schools Roadshow, October 2017



Working on a yearly/nine-monthly contract basis poses the challenge of an inability to plan long term. Yearly/nine-monthly work programmes do not allow the programme to develop to its full potential. Whilst some clubs and volunteers will continue to need support on the more basic elements of club and volunteer development, those who have been engaging in the programme for several years are now seeking support on more advanced projects.



Participants at the Multi-Sports Schools Roadshow, October 2017

The short term nature of the programme does not allow work to progress the level of support which many clubs and volunteers are now requesting. It would be the intense wish of the partnership that the programme be funded over a longer period of time (three to five years) so that programme staff work programmes could become more strategic and offer more long term in-depth support to clubs and volunteers. It is appreciated that this is a problem which is outside of the control of the Department for Communities.

As with any programme which deals primarily with volunteers there are occasions when it can be challenging to get the correct support to volunteers in a way which best suits them. Volunteers generally are only available on weekday evenings and at weekends. Much of programme delivery subsequently takes place at these times, however volunteers by their nature are busy and often have other commitments at these peak times. This is par-for-the-course and as such programme staff have developed resources and support material which volunteers can access at a time which suits them. This year has also seen the development of additional online support, which has been well received by volunteers. The programme staff have become expert in developing programmes based on volunteer feedback. However, even with this approach volunteers can often find it difficult to attend events they wish to attend given other commitments at the peak volunteering times. Many sports volunteers also volunteer in other fields so the window of opportunity to engage with volunteers is often narrow. Thankfully our staff are attentive to volunteer needs and plan their work with such challenges in mind.

## SECTION 5



# Conclusions



Despite difficulties with retaining and recruiting staff given the funding challenges posed by the political impasse, Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering continued to excel in its purpose of supporting clubs and volunteers. Programme staff and project management worked diligently to overcome the challenges and to continue to deliver on the targets set out in the funding agreement.

This nine-month period has seen progression in the level of support given to clubs and volunteers. Capacity within clubs has grown considerably due to the support afforded to them by this programme. Clubs are better placed to see themselves as not only sports clubs but as community hubs which are adding social capital to their local community beyond the realms of sports activity.

This has been reflected in the thematic support offered to clubs and volunteers around such topics as health and wellbeing, inclusive clubs, addressing social isolation and deprivation in this reporting period.

It is encouraging to see that volunteers and clubs who have been engaged in the programme for some time are now seeking support for more advanced projects, indicating their successful upskilling through the Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering programme. There is no doubt that clubs are now very aware of the support and advice which is available to them through the CCDO and VDPO within each governing body. This is not only good for our sports clubs but is also good for the governing body – raising the profile and awareness of the governing body's function within its constituent clubs.

A key highlight of the programme is the wide range of volunteer demographics which the programme now engages with. When this journey first began through the then DSD-funded Sport In The Community project the typical sports volunteer could have been described as a sceptical male aged 50+. Now those engaging with our programmes are male and female of all ages and backgrounds, and they engage with the programme because they know they will benefit from it.



The Goldmark programme continues to go from strength to strength, enabling the programme to deliver a Youth Forum for the first time. Without having Goldmark to pave the way over the past three to four years this would not have been possible.

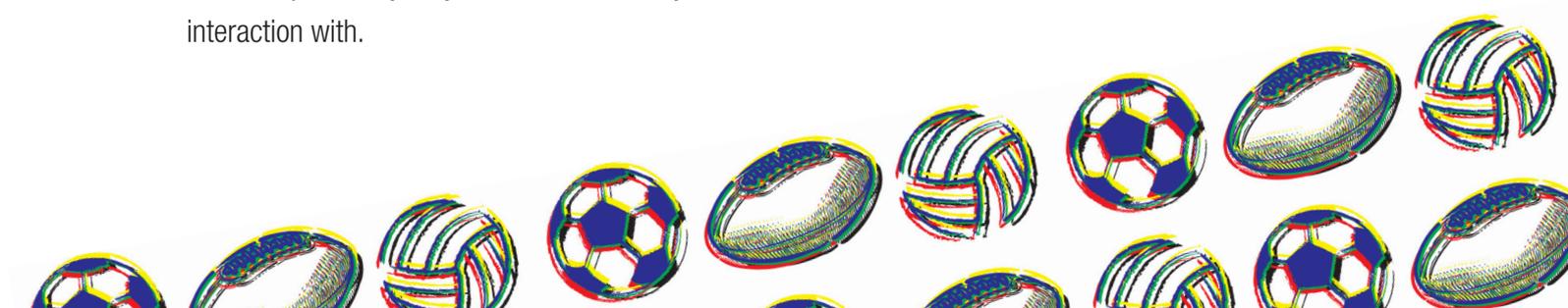
Thus there are obvious examples of where the programme is progressing and extending into new territories. It is recognised by all three sports that this programme has huge potential moving forward, and as previously stated a more long term funding period would open up the exciting opportunities which exist. It is apparent that budgets are tight across all areas, and none more so than within clubs and sporting organisations. Unfortunately, as budgets tighten research shows that sport is often the first area to be affected, meaning that our clubs are under greater financial strain than before. This has a knock-on effect with governing bodies of sport. Although the work undertaken by the CCDO and VDPO is of a hugely important nature to each governing body, these posts could not exist without the very valuable support of the Department for Communities.

The Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering programme continues to be the key programme which engages the three largest governing bodies of sport. There is no doubt it has helped to forge real and meaningful relationships between the three sports, which is an example in itself to how communities can work together. Clubs and volunteers appreciate the opportunity to engage in other sports they may otherwise have very little interaction with.

From a governing body viewpoint the Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering programme is an extremely valuable programme which continues to perform above all expectations. Awareness of the programme continues to grow and that can only positively impact on our many volunteers who are engaging with it.

We can see the tangible improvements in clubs around all aspects of club business and volunteers have never been recognised as greatly as they currently are.

However, it is acknowledged there is still a lot of work to be done, particularly as club volunteers are under increasing pressure with the introduction of new legislation around child protection, GDP and charitable status, to name a few examples. The increasing governance demands on clubs are necessary but also require well planned programmes of support for volunteers in order that sports clubs are compliant. Increasingly we are seeing sports clubs being tasked with looking out for their members' health and wellbeing, and although this is a natural and welcome correlation it adds great pressure to the voluntary effort within clubs. The role of the CCDO and VDPO in supporting club volunteers across these areas cannot be under estimated. It is the strong wish of the Sport – A Home For Lifelong Volunteering partnership that the roles of the CCDO and VDPO can continue long into the future in order to support and empower our sports clubs and volunteers.





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