

GAA-CH DUINE:

GAA-CH DUINE is an initiative with the objective of promoting inclusion and participation for all in GAA. The initiative was formed by the Healthy Club Committee of St. Finbarr's National Hurling and Football Club. One of this year's goals of the committee was to promote inclusion and accessibility to all within the GAA community. It is their view that there is a current lack of services for children who are unable, unsuitable and/or uncomfortable with mainstream sports. As such the committee believes that having a programme which is accessible to all children who, for whatever reason cannot or are not participating in mainstream sports, would be an excellent way of achieving the goal being of a more inclusive and accessible GAA club.

The overall goal of the initiative was to provide a service which offers GAA inclusion to all. The service was available to all children under eighteen with a total of 20 places available. The programme consisted of ten weeks; induction, four weeks gaelic football, four weeks hurling and a closing ceremony with medals presentation. It ran from October 7th to December 9th with between 10-15 present each night.

Prior to commencing the course, most of the coaches received specialised training on group facilitation from an occupational therapist with the vast majority also having experience as coaches previously. All sessions were also pre-planned and facilitated by said occupational therapist who has a distinct interest in sports inclusion and over four years of coaching experience.

The general format, which was outlined to all participants prior, consisted of: warm-up, basic skills drills with multiple variations followed by penalties. With a few bumps and a somewhat shaky beginning, the sessions soon began to take form and subgroups began to emerge. Unsurprisingly, the penalties at the end appeared to be a fan favourite with all of the participants, proving to be just too good for whoever dared to stand between the posts!

In terms of facilitation, with such an excellent and dedicated coaching staff and an enthusiastic and responsive group, the sessions were extremely straight-forward and as such easier to facilitate. It came as no surprise to have parents consistently comment on the excellent coaching staff as it was abundant from day one how their energetic nature and fantastic coaching skills assisted the participants to enjoy all of the sessions. With more than one participant we saw coaches being able to bring them out of their shell and engage more and more each week. It was truly excellent to see

children, who were initially reluctant to engage, begin to come into their own and truly express themselves as players.

As this was a pilot programme, evaluation was an important aspect. Parents and participants were given questionnaires before and after the initiative in order to measure outcomes. Overall the feedback was extremely positive. All responses indicated a desire to re-engage in the service if it continued and also that this programme helped achieve all goals, both parents and participants. Therefore it could be said that, given the positivity of the feedback, this programme was a resounding success, further evident by the fact that despite level of ability and/or engagement all participants were happy overall with the service.