

# Developing School Club Links



## *What is a school-club link?*

A school-club link is an agreement between a school and a community based sports club to work together to:

1. **meet the needs of all young people**, whether they want to get involved:
  - as an elite performer
  - to enjoy the sport and develop their skills
  - for social or recreational reasons
  - to maintain or develop their fitness
  - as a young leader or coach
  - as a club officer
2. **provide new and varied opportunities for young people**
3. **help young people to realize their ambitions** in sport by providing pathways for them to follow
4. **agree good standards of provision** and put in place quality controls and club and school developments to ensure that standards remain high

## *Why Develop Club/School Link?*

- Some schools don't even know what Clubs are in their area
  - Posters, flyers and notes are not enough
  - Personal Contact is the best way to promote your club
- Children get involved if they know what they're dealing with
  - Club coaches seen in the familiar surrounding of their school, Children are more likely to attend the club
- Unless the youth know where opportunities exist to take part in Ladies Gaelic Football, they will never engage them
- Both parties can work together to promote opportunities to participate in the sport much more effectively

## ***How can a Club/ School Link Work?***

*What can the club do?*

- ▶ Provide information and promotional material about the club
- ▶ Run a competition at the school or between local schools in the community
- ▶ Run a club open/fun day at the club for the school
- ▶ Provide coaches to assist with extra curricular clubs
- ▶ Run a few coaching sessions on the school site during term time
- ▶ Provide club facilities for sports day or events

*What can the school do?*

- ▶ Promote club – highlighting upcoming events and matches
- ▶ Provide facilities for training sessions
- ▶ Invite club coaches/ players to speak at assemblies or PTA meetings
- ▶ Dedicate a notice board to the club
- ▶ Provide letters of support for funding applications

## ***Putting a link into practice***

*Getting started*

Those responsible for managing the school-club link need to begin by developing a shared understanding of the main aims of the link and how it will benefit young people. How will it help young people to achieve their potential? What other benefits will it have? Who will take on different roles and responsibilities?

Reaching an agreement – owned jointly by the club and the school – helps to establish ground rules and manage expectations for the link.

The club and school then need to work together to put the link into practice by:

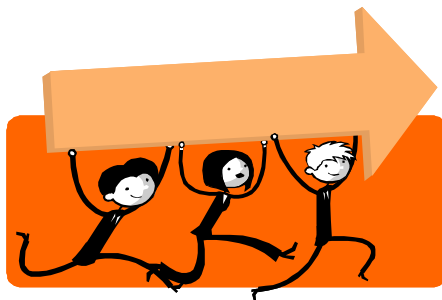
- explaining the benefits of the link to young people, teachers, coaches, parents and club members
- ensuring that young people have enough time to get involved and achieve
- providing the right teachers, coaches and volunteers and making sure that they have attended child protection
- providing enough space and resources
- ensuring that school and club environments are safe and welcoming
- celebrating young people's achievements and involvement
- listening to and acting on the views of young people, parents and others

### *Five Steps to establishing School/ Club Link*

- Step 1 - Write a letter to the school principal outlining the youth activities in the Club
- The club youth/coaching officer and chairperson should hand deliver the letter to the principal
  - Ask for a follow up meeting with the principal and PE co-ordinator
- Step 2 - Meet the principal and the PE co-ordinator
- outline the clubs work in the community
  - highlight the Club youth and coaching programme
- At the meeting:
- make arrangements for promoting the club activities within the school and vice versa
  - agree contacts from both the school and the club
- Step 3 - Establish a Club notice board in the school
- updated weekly
  - informing the children of the club activities and events
- Circulate a monthly newsletter to all the children to encourage them to become involved in the club
- Step 4 - Host school games and blitzes at club pitch
- The club should offer the school use of its facilities for its community and sporting events
- Step 5 - Build on the new partnership
- The club and school should link together on new projects and schemes that will encourage children to get involved in Ladies Gaelic Football

### *Providing the right people*

It is essential to have experienced teachers, coaches, assistants and volunteers who are qualified to work with young people and are keen to improve their expertise. People involved in school-club links need to be committed, enthusiastic and act as positive role models. They should nurture young people's determination and desire by showing confidence in their ability to make progress. They should value young people by listening to their views and celebrating their successes.



*The Co-ordinator:*

- someone to organise and control the development of Ladies Gaelic Football in school
- can be available during school time
- Important to have someone who will actively co-ordinate and be a leader for the process
- Consider the teacher in charge of PE or sport, a schools coach, the school principal, the club development officer or a semi/retired club coach

*Responsibilities:*

- Co-ordinate and consult with members of the club and school committee through an effective communication system, including a formal meeting at least three/four times a year
- On-going liaison with schools coaches throughout the season with regards to problems and requirements
- Consult school staff regarding sessions, games and blitz's, as it may affect other activities in the school
- Remain up-to-date with current coach education and practice, including coaching and safety
- Actively promote Ladies Gaelic Football in the school and acknowledge staff goodwill in the implementation of the programmes

***What makes a School/Club Link Effective and Successful?***

- When a school and club are working well together, they:
  - Talk to each other regularly –COMMUNICATION
  - Respect each other
  - Have a shared vision and approach; Agree expectations and goals
  - Find ways of enabling young people to take part in activity
  - Share and develop teaching and coaching expertise
  - Recognize, share and celebrate achievements
  - Share facilities, equipment and resources



## *Making a link sustainable*

### **Continuity**

Continuity for young people comes through linking the PE curriculum, out of hours activities and the school club link. Young people who join clubs after experiencing particular sports in PE at school are usually more confident in their ability and knowledge. Teachers can help make links by promoting clubs immediately after a unit of work or during an out of hours activity. If young people know a club's coaching staff or other members – perhaps through taster sessions in school or a coach's involvement in an after school activity – this can help their transition from school to club.

### **Shared Standards**

Many schools are proud of their standards in PE and school sport and are anxious that clubs reinforce good practice. In line with this, teachers and coaches need to work together to ensure that they share a common approach to working with young people and involving parents/carers. Areas for discussion might include expected standards of behaviour and attitude (of both young people and adults), preparation and planning, providing positive feedback, and involving young people in their own learning.

### **Agreement**

A formal agreement, whether written or achieved through mutual understanding, should be negotiated at the start of the link and maintained throughout. This should clarify roles and responsibilities, and agree a vision, expectations and goals.

## **What makes a school-club link sustainable?**

### **Understanding and respect**

For a link to be sustainable, the club and school must show respect for one another's role. They need to actively promote and support each other, rather than being in competition for young people's time and commitment. They also need to understand and appreciate the roles and responsibilities of others that support the link.

### **Communication**

Good communication is crucial to a sustainable link. Clubs and schools need to be in regular contact and share each other's achievements, talking about and celebrating young people's progress. Clubs and schools also need to ensure that they communicate well with young people and their parents/carers.

### **Involving young people**

Most coaches and teachers acknowledge that they need at least five to ten young people to establish an effective, sustainable link. However, a high number of participants does not necessarily mean that a link is effective. A better indication is the number of young people who stay year after year, attend regularly and eventually become full members.

### **Coaches in schools**

Many schools value the input of club coaches, as they have good knowledge and are up to date with rules, coaching methods, events and issues in their sport. Having the opportunity to work together strengthens the partnership between coaches and teachers, helping them to share and develop approaches and expertise.

