

Gaelic4Mothers and Others Programme Evaluation December 2022

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Gaelic4Mothers and Others

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Evaluation Introduction and Background

Gaelic4Mothers&Others is a fun, non-competitive and recreational programme for women to play Ladies Gaelic Football (LGF) in their local areas. Gaelic4Mothers&Others will be referred to as G4M&O for ease of readership throughout this report. G4M&O boasts over 250 sites around the island of Ireland. This programme is aimed at females over 25 years of age that are not playing competitively, also targeting those that want to return to playing or those that are new to LGF.

The element of the programme considered in this report is the inclusive programme as delivered in Cork and Galway alongside the respective Local Sports Partnerships. This initiative aimed to increase participation and community spirit, while nurturing inclusion for all within the clubs. Both counties had co-ordinators appointed by the LGFA namely Nora Aherne (Cork) and Claire Burke (Galway). The co-ordinators were responsible for the organisation of workshops for up to 10 clubs in their respective counties from June-September 2022.

The programme was evaluated through a post questionnaire sent to all participants along with an interview with both co-ordinators to decipher their experiences of being involved in the programme. Questions were asked in both a quantitative and qualitative manner to give an in-depth insight into their experiences. The responses were analysed and the report shows the key findings first from a quantitative and then a qualitative perspective and finishes with a list of recommendations for future iterations of this programme.

In the current evaluation, there were 10 clubs involved in the programme from Cork and 9 from Galway with the table below outlining the breakdown of the 48 players, across 13 clubs, that took part in the evaluation process. It is unknown why there is such a disparity between the clubs in terms of participants contributing to the

evaluation, however, such disparate participant numbers are not uncommon in data collection.

Table 1: Number of participants from each G4M&O Club

Club	Number of Participants
Ballinasloe (Galway)	1
Banteer (Cork)	2
Bishopstown (Cork)	2
Carrigtwohill (Cork)	1
Douglas (Cork)	17
Loughrea (Galway)	1
Mayfield (Cork)	5
Naomh Mhuire Oranmore (Galway)	2
Salthill Knocnacarra (Galway)	1
St Furseys (Galway)	2
St Catherines (Cork)	1
St Michaels (Galway)	12
St Nicks (Cork)	1
Total Cork = 29 Total Galway = 19	

In terms of the age profile of the participants it is interesting to note that only one was in the age category of 25-35 and the other 98% were over 36 years of age even though G4M&O programme is open to all those over 25 years of age and not playing competitively. It is common within reports on women of these age profiles that caring responsibilities within the home are a contributory factor to their lack of time for sport and recreational endeavours.

Encouragingly, the vast majority of participants (88%) cited fun as their main reason for joining their club G4M&O group with social purposes also featuring prominently at 80%. Only one participant cited ‘to give something back to the community’ as their reason for joining G4M&O while 40% started playing to be a role model for their friends, family or children which is positive for continued participation in the G4M&O programme.

The courses, as organised by the county co-ordinators alongside staff from the Local Sports Partnership, were attended by a mixture of participants from each club with some proving more popular than others. The table below outlines the workshops and the number of participants from the questionnaire that attended each one. It is worth noting that these figures do not correlate with the attendances observed by the co-ordinators and instead are representative of those that completed the questionnaire. For example, the sports first aid course and safeguarding courses were cancelled in Galway.

Table 2: Number of participants that attended the workshops

Workshop	Number of Participants
Ready Steady Coach	9
Sports First Aid	14
Safeguarding 1	21
Safeguarding 2 (Children’s Officer workshop)	5
CARA Disability Inclusion	5
One Good Coach (Self-paced module)	5
Establishing Inclusive Gaelic Games Programmes in your club	5

Quantitative Results for Gaelic4Mothers and Others Questionnaire

Result 1 - Is your club a One club (i.e. all Gaelic Games under one committee)?

At the end of the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme, an encouraging **48%** of participants self-reported that their club was a ‘One Club’ Gaelic Games setting under one committee.

Aside from this positive data representation, a sizeable **29%** of participants, however, did self-report that their club was not a ‘One Club’ Gaelic Games unit, which does highlight the prevalence of Gaelic Games separation at local community level across differing clubs in Cork and Galway.

The most surprising finding from this evaluation report was the data that revealed how **23%** of participants were unsure if their club was a ‘One Club’ Gaelic Games unit or not. Given the focus in the 2022 iteration of the G4M&O programme in Cork and Galway towards inclusion at club level, it is slightly alarming that 23% of participants at the end of the programme were still unsure if their club met the inclusion criteria for being deemed a One Club setting.

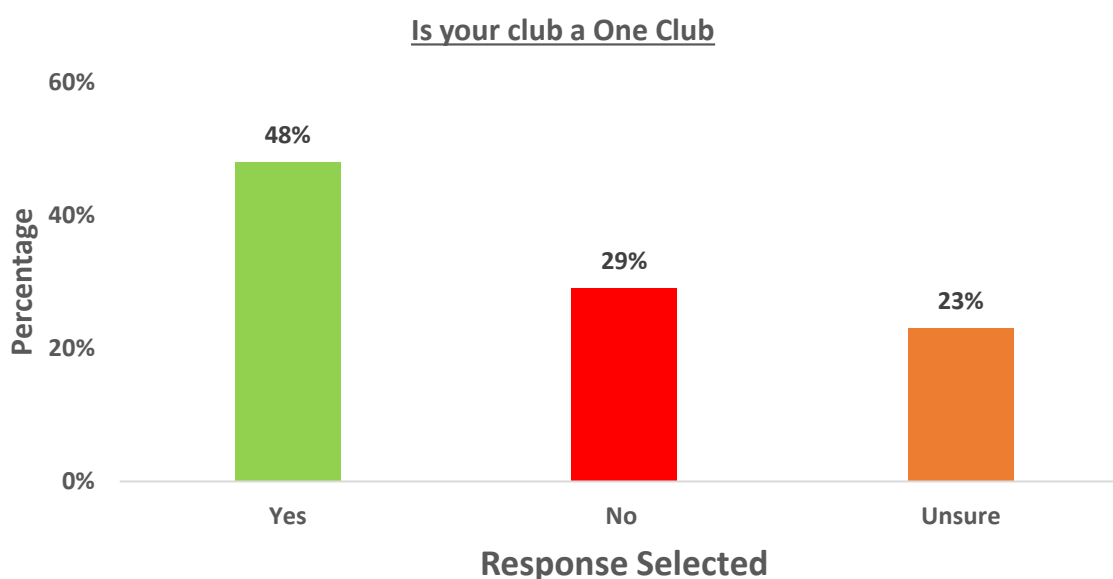


Figure 1. Percentage of participants self-reporting if their club was a One Club

Result 2 - What is your role within the club? (Tick all that apply)

At the end of the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme, an encouraging **94%** of participants self-reported that their involvement within the club could be classified as a Gaelic4Mothers and Others member.

When we examine the volunteer roles of participants within their respective clubs, the data suggests moderate to low levels of volunteering across clubs in Cork and Galway. For example, **31%** of participants involved in this programme consider themselves to be a Helper/Mentor within their club setting. Furthermore, **29%** of participants involved in this programme consider themselves to be a Coach within their club setting.

The most surprising finding from this evaluation report was the low proportion of participants serving in the capacity as a volunteer Club Officer – specifically, **21%** of participants involved in this programme consider themselves to be a Club Officer within their club setting.

Specific promotion work in 2023 for the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme needs to be undertaken to encourage the dual role of participants as both ‘active players’ and ‘active club volunteers’. *Considering the aim of this initiative is to get more volunteers encouraging an inclusive club environment this is an important aspect to consider.*

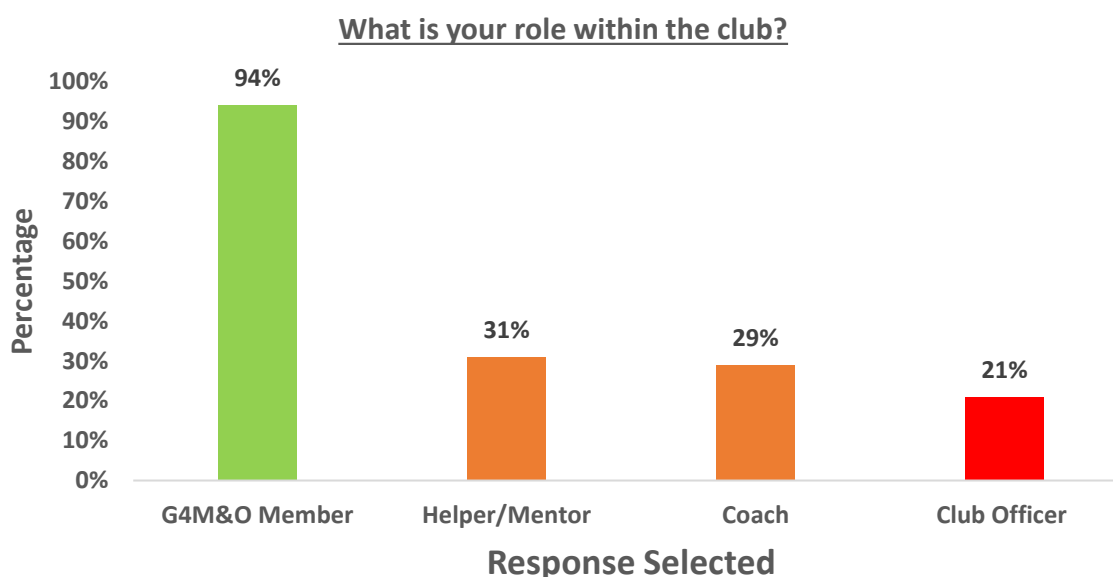


Figure 2. Percentage of participants self-reporting their role within the club

Note. *G4M&O Member* = Gaelic4Mothers & Others Member

Result 3 - How long have you been playing with the G4M&O team in your club?

At the end of the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme, an unsurprising **48%** of participants self-reported that they have been playing with their respective Gaelic4Mothers and Others club team for 1-year. When we examine this timeline duration across the 2- to 3- year cycle, the drop-off in the proportion playing on their team at club level dwindles considerably to **19%**.

The most surprising and unexpected finding from this data-related question was the notably higher **25%** of participants playing on their team at club level for 3- to 4-years. Given the well-established challenges for adult sport engagement over time, it was important to note the very low proportion (only **8%**) of participants from the respective Cork and Galway clubs who self-reported that they have been playing on their team for 5 or more years.

Specific promotion work in 2023 for the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme needs to be undertaken to encourage the sustainability and longevity of participants being involved actively at club level for 5 or more years i.e. long-term commitment to the club.

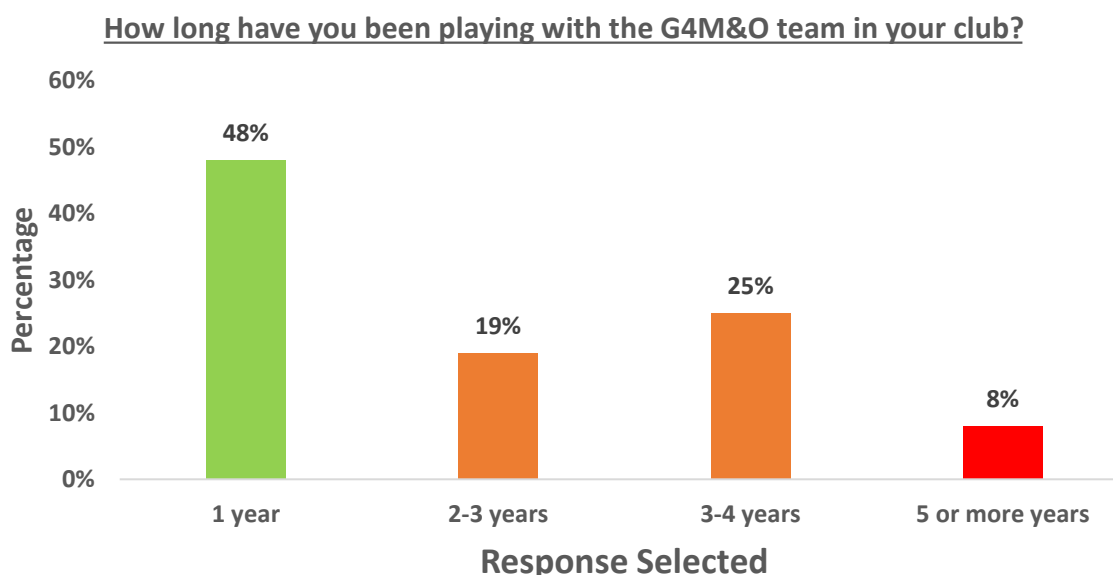


Figure 3. Percentage of participants self-reporting their duration of playing with their Gaelic4Mothers and Others team at club level

Note. *G4M&O Member* = Gaelic4Mothers & Others Member

Result 4 - Which of the following roles are you likely to volunteer in for the 2023 season in your club (Tick all that apply)?

At the end of the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme, 5 x volunteer roles at club level were identified as opportunities for contribution in 2023. The top 5 x volunteer roles in rank order were identified in terms of likelihood to volunteer for in 2023:

1. **Helper with team – 48%**
2. **Committee member – 31%**
3. **Coaching role – 29%**
4. **Club officer – 21%**
5. **Ambassador for inclusion 8%**

While it was somewhat disappointing to note that only 8% of participants identified their likelihood of becoming a club ambassador for inclusion in 2023, it was more alarming to observe **the moderate proportion of participants (27%), who openly stated: ‘I am not in a position to volunteer in 2023’.**

Specific promotion work in 2023 for the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme needs to be undertaken at coach education level (workshops, webinars, online sessions etc...) to prioritise volunteering roles within the area of inclusion, given the diverse and varying societal abilities of children and adults alike in Ireland. Most importantly, the 2023 iteration of this programme needs to showcase evidence-based examples of club level volunteering– to suggest that **27% of participants will not be able to volunteer in 2023** implies that the appetite for such club-level volunteering is at a low-ebb.

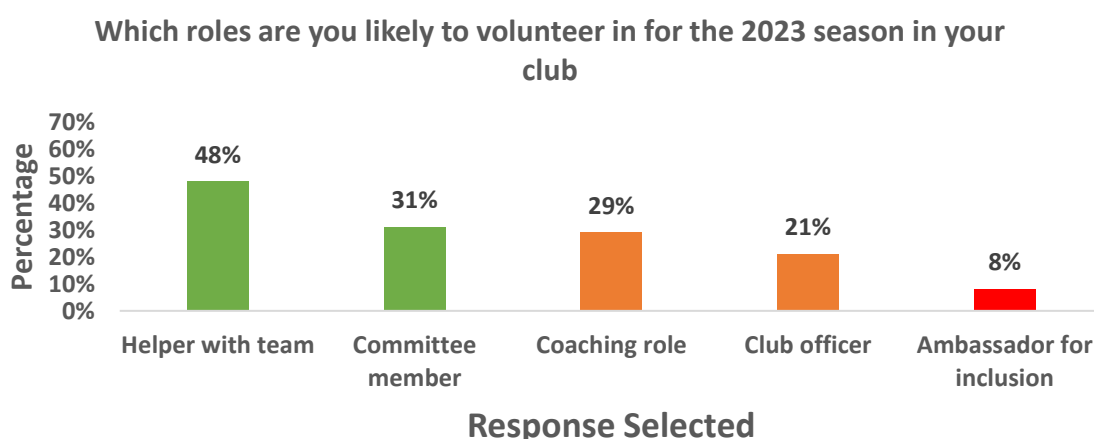


Figure 4. Percentage of participants self-reporting their likelihood for volunteering in a specific capacity at club level in 2023

Result 5 - How likely are you to engage in further LGFA education programmes as a result of this programme?

At the end of the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme, the question was posed to participants as to ‘How likely are you to engage in further LGFA education programmes as a result of this programme?’. Encouragingly, **30% and 37%** of participants respectively self-reported that they were ‘**very likely**’ or ‘**likely**’ to engage in further LGFA education programmes following their engagement with the current Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme.

Aside from these somewhat positive findings, **6% and 12%** of participants respectively self-reported that they were ‘**unlikely**’ or ‘**very unlikely**’ to engage in further LGFA education programmes following their engagement with the current Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme. This suggests that almost a fifth of participants indicated their intent for not participating in such LGFA initiatives any further; if the additional **15%** of participants who self-disclosed that they were ‘**neither likely nor unlikely**’ to engage in further LGFA education programmes, the data suggests that a moderately high proportion of participants (**33%**) were either unsure or unlikely to engage in further LGFA education programmes.

Specific promotion work in 2023 for the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme needs to be undertaken to attract participants to continue their coach or participation journey within the LGFA through meaningful education and practitioner focused pathways.

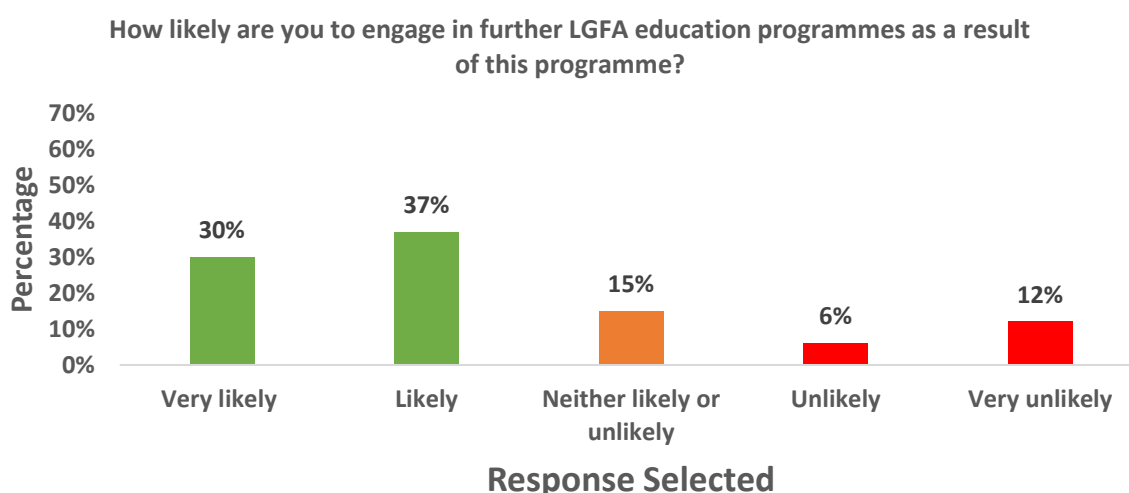


Figure 5. Percentage of participants self-reporting their likelihood for further LGFA education programme engagement in the future

Result 6 - How likely are you to engage in further initiatives being run by the Cork/Galway Local Sports Partnership (LSP) as a result of this programme?

At the end of the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme, the question was posed to participants as to ‘How likely are you to engage in further initiatives being run by the Cork/Galway Local Sports Partnership (LSP) as a result of this programme?’. Encouragingly, **24% and 43%** of participants respectively self-reported that they were ‘**very likely**’ or ‘**likely**’ to engage in further initiatives being run by the Cork/Galway Local Sports Partnership (LSP) following their engagement with the current Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme.

Aside from these somewhat positive findings, **9% and 3%** of participants respectively self-reported that they were ‘**unlikely**’ or ‘**very unlikely**’ to engage in further initiatives being run by the Cork/Galway Local Sports Partnership (LSP) following their engagement with the current Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme. This suggests that 12% of participants indicated their intent for not participating in such LSP initiatives any further; if the additional **21%** of participants who self-disclosed that they were ‘**neither likely nor unlikely**’ to engage in further LSP initiatives, the data again suggests that a moderately high proportion of participants (**33%**) were either unsure or unlikely to engage in further LSP run initiatives.

Specific promotion work in 2023 for the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme needs to be undertaken to attract participants to continue their coach or participation journey within the LSPs through meaningful education and practitioner focused pathways.

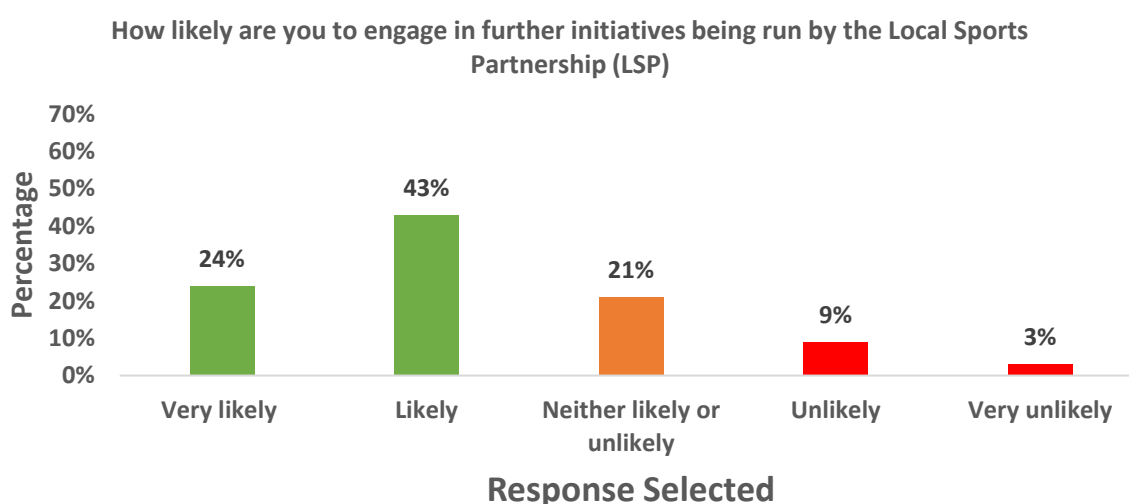


Figure 6. Percentage of participants self-reporting their likelihood for further LSP engagement in the future

Result 7 - How likely are you to encourage other G4M&O clubs to engage in this programme?

At the end of the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme, the question was posed to participants as to ‘How likely are you to encourage other G4M&O clubs to engage in this programme?’. Very encouragingly, **30% and 49%** of participants respectively self-reported that they were ‘**very likely**’ or ‘**likely**’ to encourage other clubs to engage in this programme following their engagement with the current Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme.

Aside from these very positive findings, it must be reported **6% and 3%** of participants respectively self-reported that they were ‘**unlikely**’ or ‘**very unlikely**’ to encourage other clubs to engage with the current Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme. This suggests that 9% of participants indicated their intent for not encouraging other clubs to engage with the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme; if the additional **12%** of participants who self-disclosed that they were ‘**neither likely nor unlikely**’ to encourage other clubs to engage with the current Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme, the data again suggests that a moderate proportion of participants (**21%**) were either unsure or unlikely to encourage other clubs to engage with the programme. Specific promotion work in 2023 for the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme needs to be undertaken to ensure that the initiative is deemed fit for applied practice; specifically, the LGFA need to ensure that the programme meets the needs of club members by highlighting their positive experiences for sharing with other club settings.

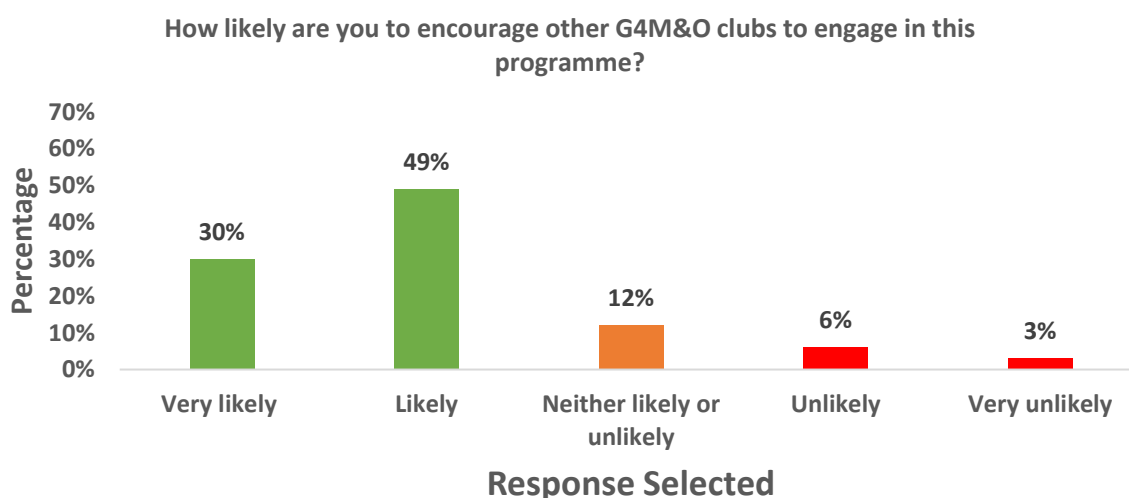





Figure 7. Percentage of participants self-reporting their likelihood for encouraging other clubs to engage in Gaelic4Mothers and Others.

Summary Overview of Main Gaelic4Mothers and Others Questionnaire

In summary, positive findings over time were generally observed across the 7 x measured quantitative variables and domains of interest within the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme in Cork and Galway 2022 – these are denoted in the table below with a green tick identifiable on 4 x occasions below. Three findings regarding challenges to consider for the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme in 2023 were identified from a One Club awareness/implementation, current volunteer role in club, and likelihood to volunteer in the future perspective - these are denoted in the table below with a red X identifiable. In sum, quantitative self-report measurements were taken at upon completion of this Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme. The data presented below suggests a positive programme rollout in Cork and Galway in 2022, however, with specific targeted areas for improvement in 2023.

Table 2: Summary of the questionnaire indicators, which resulted in specific changes over time (green tick = positive; red x = challenges to consider)

One Club Awareness/Implementation	
Current Volunteer Role in Club	
Duration Playing Gaelic4Mothers & Others	
Likelihood to Volunteer in 2023	
Future LGFA education involvement	
Future LSP education involvement	
Likelihood to Encourage Other Clubs in 2023	

Qualitative Results for G4M&O Questionnaire

The questionnaire was completed by 48 women representing 13 clubs that took part in the 2022 G4M&O programme. Many of the participants were very happy with their involvement in the programme and deemed it “*fantastic*”, “*great fun*” and “*a lovely way to meet new people*”. One participant was high in her praise for the programme stating it was “*One of the best experiences I have had*”.

As the focus of the initiative was on increasing the inclusive nature of the clubs it was important to determine what the women felt the challenges were in achieving this aim. The question ‘*What do you see as the challenges you/your club might face with establishing inclusive Gaelic games programmes in your club?*’ received mixed responses. For many they answered with “*not sure*” or “*do not know*” which suggests those participants are unaware of what is involved in establishing the inclusive Gaelic games programmes. Those that had an understanding of the work involved highlighted the need for more volunteers as a major challenge as outlined in the quotes below:

“Recruiting volunteers”

“Lack of volunteers”

“Shortage of volunteers”

“Having the coaching numbers to accommodate expected large numbers”

Others were conscious of the logistics involved in appropriate and accessible space, funds and equipment as cited by the participants:

“Lack of facilities, lack of funds”

“Access to pitches at the appropriate time”

“One of the pitches is not the easiest to access”

“Lack of pitch space”

“Training slots on pitches are biggest challenge in our club”

In addition to volunteers and facilities some participants believe that extra training needed as volunteers is a barrier along with a lack of time to engage in the upskilling and or the training sessions thereafter.

“Doing courses during weekdays/weeknights”

“Upskilling of volunteers”

“People's time”

“Mothers are very busy”

“Availability of coaches and conflicts with other activities particularly children”

Ultimately any attempts to increase inclusiveness at club level requires *“Buy in from members”* and to ensure the clubs are *“getting the right volunteers”* involved.

While the above lists the challenges, the participants encounter, they also suggested elements that would improve their prospects of being a more inclusive club. Further educational opportunities featured strongly in the responses:

“More reading material for clubs”

“Induction programme for volunteers”

“Specific coaching of children with additional needs”

“Further education”

“More short training programmes for volunteers”

For the participants the timing, mode and location of the training is important:

“I wonder are online courses at a specific time better than self-paced courses”

“Programmes to be held in the mid-week evening”

“In person, on location or close to location training”

Insurance and membership are items that require clarification as reported below:

“Standard insurance policy available to all clubs”

“The group that have been trying to set it up have has questions around membership costs and what association you register the kids with and how does insurance work”

“Cheaper insurance and registration costs”

The key to any success in this area is to get *“Buy in from club members”* and *“Greater support from central committee”*. Furthermore, finance and support to help adapt the facilities to the suit all members are also necessary:

“Grant to purchase equipment”

“Proper wheelchair ramp and wheelchair access for upstairs in our clubhouse”

“*Access to how other clubs that have done it*” was deemed important to help the clubs in the initial stages along with “*Specialist coaching for a few weeks*”. The overall timing of the programme during the summer needs changing to increase engagement:

“*Just the timing over the summer was hard to get people to be available*”

One participant commented about a course that was cancelled while she was at the venue due to a lack of numbers. For her an increase in communication and reminders would prevent such occurrences in the future.

As part of the evaluation 13 of the club co-ordinators completed the questionnaire and interviews were conducted with both county co-ordinators to give an insight into their experiences. Generally, the club co-ordinators were content with the programme but many commented that it was difficult to get people to attend courses even though they had shown eagerness at the outset. Such a sentiment was echoed by the county co-ordinators that felt the buy in and engagement from clubs was good at the beginning when they attended the information session. However, there was a need to cancel courses in both counties due to a lack of numbers which was very disappointing.

The main element of feedback from the county co-ordinators was to have greater engagement from the clubs which they believed would be helped if the equipment was dependent on a minimum engagement requirement. Some club co-ordinators did not respond to communications and as a result attendance at courses was poor on occasions. With regards to the courses and the overall aim of the programme the consensus was that the main aim of making the respective clubs more inclusive needs to be further highlighted along with more detailed information on the relevant courses.

The co-ordinators believe and the evaluation supports that the women gained from attending the workshops on a personal level but this does not translate to increasing the number of volunteers particularly relating to improving inclusivity in the club. As with the participants the timing of the programme was deemed a limitation as they commented “*the summer is too busy for Moms to have time to think about it*”.

Overall, the co-ordinator’s feedback is included in the evaluation recommendations for future iterations of the programme.

Gaelic4Mothers and Others Future Recommendations

- Given the future focus in the 2023 iteration of the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme towards inclusion at club level, more awareness must be provided to the programme coordinators and the subsequent participating club members through structured and meaningful LGFA coach and education professional development. In 2023, this programme needs to attract participants to continue their coach or participation journey within the LGFA and the LSP pathways through meaningful education and practitioner focused pathways.
- Specific promotion work in 2023 for the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme needs to be undertaken to encourage the dual role of participants as both ‘active players’ and ‘active club volunteers’. The volunteer message needs to be one of the flagship messages of this future club initiative.
- For the future work in 2023 for the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme, further encouragement towards the sustainability and longevity of participants being involved actively at club level for 5 or more years needs to be highlighted i.e. long-term commitment to the club.
- Specific promotion work in 2023 for the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme needs to be undertaken at coach education level (workshops, webinars, online sessions etc...) to prioritise volunteering roles within the area of inclusion, given the diverse and varying societal abilities of children and adults alike in Ireland. Most importantly, the 2023 iteration of this programme needs to showcase evidence-based examples of club level volunteering– to suggest that 27% of participants will not be able to volunteer in 2023 implies that the appetite for such club-level volunteering is at a low-ebb.
- Specific advocacy work in 2023 for the Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme needs to be undertaken to ensure that the initiative is deemed fit for applied practice; specifically, the LGFA need to ensure that the programme meets the needs of club members by highlighting their positive experiences for sharing with other club settings.
- A clear recommendation from both the participants and the co-ordinators is to change the timing of the programme away from the summer roll out of 2022 and instead to move it to a January to March timeframe. It is understood that

this evaluation is potentially too late for the programme to start in January 2023 but the next preferred timeframe was April to June.

- While both co-ordinators were somewhat disappointed in the level of engagement, on some courses, they suggest opening the courses to all club members rather than just the G4M&O group. This sentiment was shared by the participants with 96% of them saying either ‘yes’ or ‘maybe’ the attendances would have increased if opened up to other club members. To ensure the highest participation levels on all courses it is recommended that places (if not filled) are open to all G4M&O sites in the respective counties to ensure courses are not cancelled. The self-pace modules can be made available to all sites nationally and not just those counties involved in the programme. Additionally, using the clubs as the venue for the various face to face workshops might encourage more to get involved if there was a workshop run in each club.
- In terms of information on workshops and programmes being disseminated to participants 82% felt that the club co-ordinator was the best point of contact with the LSP the least favourite method. The county website was the second least favourite, however, the county social media platforms were the second favourite with 42% of participants wanting communication via this method.
- It is necessary to provide clear insurance and membership details for all clubs not just the G4M&O sites in an effort to increase the inclusive nature of all clubs.
- With regards to the clubs that were targeted to take part in the programme it is recommended by the co-ordinators that interested clubs, in a county, apply to be part of the programme outlining their reasons why and committing to participants attending a minimum number of courses.
- The links between the co-ordinators, the LSP’s, CARA and Croke Park were deemed successful yet, could be enhanced further by having a follow up after courses with a breakdown of attendees. Future iterations should be encouraged to have both county and club co-ordinators meeting or at least be introduced to each other and where possible to have an initial face to face meeting between the club and county co-ordinator. This will benefit overall engagement in the programme as opposed to an element of ‘cold calling’ as occurred in 2022 and referred to in this county co-ordinator quote. *“Made contact with lots of people*

but no contact face to face with them so a more personalised approach is needed or a blended approach so they know who is contacting them.”

- If the aim of the programme in 2023 is to increase inclusivity in clubs the co-ordinators suggest to “*Offer programme to clubs who need support or have an appetite for inclusion or strategy for development rather than G4M&O alone as they are too busy on the pitch themselves and with children to be doing too much off the pitch*” and traditionally the “*G4M&O is an outlet itself and not the driving force for cub inclusion*”. If the aim is targeting new volunteers the teenage player might be a more receptive audience rather than the G4M&O group that are struggling with other time commitments.
- A link between clubs that have previously set up an inclusive programme would be useful where co-ordinators and other members can share ideas and concerns and have a constant source of information in the early stages of set up.

Gaelic4Ma’s Conclusion

While the 2022 G4M&O programme was hugely successful there are some areas identified in the recommendations to enhance the programme further for 2023 and beyond. It is possible that the low number of participants that cited giving back to their community as the reason for starting the G4M&O in their club is aligned with their desire to be future club volunteers. It is also aligned with the co-ordinators opinion that the women are playing this sport as time for themselves solely and are not in a position to start volunteering. Bearing this in mind the LGFA may be better placed focusing on another cohort to be the drivers of the inclusion aspect of their club development plans.

This evaluation concludes with the words of one of the participants that summarises all that is good about the G4M&O and the courses that the 2022 programme organised.

“I love G4M&O, It has opened so many doors for me and has really enriched my life - I am healthier and more motivated to exercise, I have a new group of friends and I have been invited to join committees and groups in my local club which I was not involved in previously.”